NOT ONE, BUT THREE (ROMAN) ALEXANDERS:
THE EVOLUTION OF THE ROMAN ACCOUNTS OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT

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ABSTRACT

The extant histories for the reign of Alexander the Great were written under the aegis of Rome by men indelibly impacted by their contemporary political and cultural situations. I examine these sources as products of their times in order to demonstrate the ways in which the Alexander myth that permeates the narrative accounts of his reign was, in fact, a Roman creation. This is particularly evident in the portrayal of Alexander as an autocrat. Situating the narrative accounts in specific Roman contexts reveals that accounts of Alexander evolved parallel to the Roman political situation, particularly in the changing dialogue about autocracy from the first century BCE to the middle of the second century CE. Through this contextualization I attempt to demonstrate both that the Alexander presented in the narrative sources is the product of the Roman world and the fundamental pitfalls in attempting to reconstruct a historical Alexander.