

In analysing the sources presented on the eunuch Bagoas, the most immediate and obvious difference in portrayal is that between Dicaerchus (and by extension Athenaeus through the choice to incorporate his work) and Plutarch as opposed to Rufus - which is to say, between the Greek sources and the Roman. Of note is the relative length of Rufus' digression, and its unambiguously moralising character. The masculinity of Orsines, put against the emasculated Bagoas ("[a] male who made [himself] female[...] by prostitution"¹), is not coincidental towards the charged language used to describe each. Consider the following excerpt: "On hearing this, the eunuch exercised the power which he had gained by shame and disgrace against the life of an eminent and guiltless man"². The core of it is thus - that whatever power Bagoas possessed was founded in his "[making himself] female"³, that this was immoral, and that Alexander choosing to heed "the caprice of a catamite"⁴ represented a new low of "[degeneration] from his true self"⁵. In essence, then, the Bagoas of Rufus' account is less of a historical figure than a symbolic archetype in the parable he is crafting of Alexander's career - an archetype with obvious symbolic resonance in 1st century Rome. Orsines, a relative exemplar of civic virtue as the Romans understood it, deals honestly with Alexander, but, for a refusal to compromise his *dignitas* by flattering a deceitful favourite, is killed due to that favourite's ability to start rumours and bend fact. A shadow of Sejanus - or any of the other drivers of the *maiestas* trails - is far from implausible - and the Roman tradition of history as a kind of collection of politically charged aesops can arguably be traced to Tarquin.

What is truly distinctive about the source is how it differs from the remainder. While a case might be made for the Greek tradition treating Alexander's relations with Bagoas as to be celebrated in contrast to the moralising of the Latin, and it is even possible to point to narrative retellings of shows of approval ("he bent back and kissed him deeply, and when the audience shouted approval and applauded, he did as they bid and bent back and kissed him again"⁶), the true discernment lies in the comparative length of Rufus' account next to each of the others (which spanned near a thousand words on these compared with, well, flesh and blood). Not only is the emotive charge of the Latin Rufus wrote in distinctly absent, there is, perhaps, a note of disinterest. Rather than Alexander's relationship with Bagoas being profound enough and the latter grown over-mighty sufficiently, the Greek sources describe his affinity for eunuchs with a touch of the blasé: "Alexander the king loved boys to distraction"⁷, and "We are told, too, that he was once viewing some contests in singing and dancing, being well heated with wine"⁸. Of import here is not simply the substance, but the style. For Rufus, Alexander's career is a quarry of parables fit to be repurposed by a Roman audience; for Plutarch and Athenaeus, despite their Roman citizenship, it is simply history.

¹ (Rufus, Crosby & Cellarius, 1968)

² (Rufus, Crosby & Cellarius, 1968)

³ (Rufus, Crosby & Cellarius, 1968)

⁴ (Rufus, Crosby & Cellarius, 1968)

⁵ (Rufus, Crosby & Cellarius, 1968)

⁶ (Athenaeus and Charles Duke Yonge, 1854)

⁷ (Athenaeus and Charles Duke Yonge, 1854)

⁸ (Plutarch and Scott-Kilvert, 2011)

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