

Roman attitudes to the East



Roman/Greek sources/bias

Flower, Michael A. "Not Great Man History: Reconceptualizing a Course on Alexander the Great." *Classical World* 100.4 (2007): 417-24: notes neglect of Babylonian evidence

“According to Arrian, during the decisive battle of Gaugamela, Darius was the first to turn and run, after which the other Persians followed suit (*An.* 3.14.3). On the other hand, the relevant entry in the Babylonian Astronomical Diaries, which was written two weeks after the battle, describes what happened rather differently: "The army abandoned Darius and returned to the cities" (AD-330; obv. 17).”

Greek/Roman bias



“Arrian's version has a long history behind it; for it is in keeping with the way that Greek sources are wont to depict fearful Persian kings, beginning with the effeminate and cowardly Xerxes of Aeschylus' *Persians* and Herodotus' *Histories*. Our Graeco-Roman sources are so deeply implicated in sustaining cultural stereotypes that they can not automatically be judged superior to Near Eastern sources.” (Flower, 422)

“The conquests of Alexander are frequently justified in a rather unthinking way by appealing to the spread of Hellenism.” (Flower, 422)



Greek/Roman bias



“With a few notable exceptions, Greek authors of all periods generally depict the Persians as a servile and effeminate people who picked up whatever luxuries they could from the peoples whom they conquered” (Flower, 422)



The East

- religious

Cybele (brought to Rome 204 BC)

(castrated priests, the Galli)

Cult associations of debauchery and effeminacy

- military: Parthia (varying success e.g. Trajan),

Persia



The East



“Curtius enjoys lurid details and, for example, makes Alexander’s liaison with the Amazon queen Thalestris (6.6.1-6) the turning point in his moral decline- just as Mark Antony’s liasion with the oriental queen Cleopatra had proved his downfall” (Stoneman, 2011: 11)

(Greek East)

