

Give a detailed account of Alexander's relationship with Roxanne in the sources and include analysis of reasons for the differences. Focus upon Quintus Curtius Rufus 8.4.21-30; Plutarch Alex. 47.4; Arrian 4.19.5-6

Roxanne, the daughter of Oxyartes was the wife of Alexander the Great and as such, she is mentioned in a number of sources¹. Quintus Curtius Rufus, Plutarch and Arrian all mention Roxanne in some manner and despite referencing the same moment in history, the moment in which Roxanne and Alexander meet, there are stark differences that can be found for a number of reasons². The main factors behind this being that the authors of these pieces all had their own agenda and biases, owing to the time and traditions in which they were steeped in.

Of the three sources, Quintus Curtius Rufus (8.4.21-30) gives the most detailed and lengthy discussion of the moment Alexander and Roxanne met and as such, much can be gleaned from the passages³. He was a Roman historian and despite his work, not much is truly known about him and references to his work within others of the time cannot be found⁴. Likely writing in the Imperial period due to suggestions that the Parthian Empire was a contemporary fixture, and due to the Roman people having both a dislike and interest in kingship, Alexander would have been an interesting topic for them to explore, whilst also not needing Curtius to present him in an overly moral manner⁵. Within this source, Roxanne is detailed to be the daughter of Oxyartes, and was "a maiden of remarkable beauty"⁶. However, the tone of this source is not one which is positive toward Roxanne and their subsequent union, as despite the overtones of a happy circumstance and atmosphere, cynical lines run throughout. For example, whilst Alexander's immediate infatuation with Roxanne was framed as something expected as "the eyes of all" were drawn to her, him falling for her was not portrayed as a simple act of falling in love⁷. Instead, Alexander is portrayed in a weaker manner as Curtius writes that he "now had less mastery over his passions amid the constant indulgence of Fortune."⁸ This, combined with stating that she came from "obscure birth" undermines Alexander's character and decision making, and frames the whole event as a snap decision rather than a logical and thought-out move⁹.

Curtius also ensures to make it clear that Alexander's "friends were ashamed" but were not allowed to speak out due to the fact that free speech had been banned¹⁰. This places it in stark contrast to Arrian (4.19.5-6) who outright states that Alexander's decision to marry her rather than "violate her as a war captive" was one which he could only "approve" and "not censure"¹¹. In one, the dissent of those who knew Alexander is stated clearly, and due to a lack of censure and framing it as a common opinion, could be taken as agreement from the author. In the other source, however, the main opinion not of Oxyartes or his people was one of approval.

This, when viewed in conjunction with the fact that this is only mentioned briefly, and Roxanne is often paid much less attention in Greek sources, is likely due to the contemporary feelings toward

¹ Müller, 2012, p.295

² Quintus Curtius Rufus, 8.4.23-30; Plutarch, *Alex*, 47.4; Arrian, 4.19.5-6

³ Quintus Curtius Rufus, 8.4.23-30

⁴ Baynham, 1998, p.2

⁵ Baynham, 1988, p.8,11

⁶ Quintus Curtius Rufus, 8.4.23

⁷ Quintus Curtius Rufus, 8.4.24

⁸ Quintus Curtius Rufus, 8.4.24

⁹ Quintus Curtius Rufus, 8.4.25

¹⁰ Quintus Curtius Rufus, 8.4.30

¹¹ Arrian, 4.19.5-6

Alexander and the image which the authors wished to craft¹². Painting it as purely positive, and exemplifying the fact that within Arrian's *Anabasis* (4.19.5-6) his reason for marriage was crafted as him not being "ready to violate a war captive", makes it clear that exalting Alexander's moral character was the main motivation for writing¹³. This was typical of the narrative of the time, where the figure of Alexander was one who was connected to heroes and due to Roxanne being symbolic of Alexander's "unpopular Persian policy", she was often cast aside so as to bring less of a narrative focus toward it¹⁴. In fact, within Arrian's work, this was shown with the love match aspect of the pairing being given a lot less emphasis than the other two sources, instead it focussed on his self-control, and how he was morally good for waiting until marriage rather than taking her as a war captive "despite his passion"¹⁵.

Plutarch within his *Life of Alexander* (47.4), which was a biography of the Macedonian King, described the coupling as "a love affair", and as a Greek author from a similar period, he too did not delve much into the relationship between Alexander and Roxanne¹⁶. His morality still factored greatly, as was typical of the Greek sources, with Plutarch stating that "he would not consent to approach...without the sanction of law"¹⁷. This depicted him as a lawful man, and the whole section was one which made Alexander appear in the greatest possible light, even stating that "the barbarians...were beyond measure fond" of him¹⁸. This, more than the other two sources, has more of an echo of the earlier Hellenistic love theme that dominated Greek Alexander Romance¹⁹. However, with morality still playing a major role and Roxanne a minor one, it is clear that he was still on theme with his contemporaries with a narrative focus on Alexander's portrayal as a hero²⁰.

Overall, whilst the main themes of the tale remain quite consistent between the three sources- that it was a love affair, she was beautiful, and Alexander refused to violate her as a war captive, the manner in which it is portrayed and the amount it is spoken of differs greatly²¹. Curtius frames the moment he decides to marry Roxanne as one of impulse and very little to do with politics whilst Arrian makes the moment almost entirely about Alexander's moral compass²². And, of the three, Plutarch makes the most out of defining it as a romantic storyline, one which whilst still demonstrates Alexander's morality, was a pleasant affair with no real strife²³. These different themes show that there is no one true recording of the moment in question, and that different times and authors favour aimed to present Alexander's character in particular in vastly different manners whilst still keeping the core of the matter the same.

¹² Müller, 2012, p.307

¹³ Arrian 4.19.5

¹⁴ Müller, 2012, p.307

¹⁵ Arrian 4.19.5

¹⁶ Plutarch, *Alex*, 47.4

¹⁷ Plutarch, *Alex*, 47.4

¹⁸ Plutarch, *Alex*, 47.4

¹⁹ Müller, 2012, p.307

²⁰ Müller, 2012, p.307

²¹ Quintus Curtius Rufus, 8.4.23-30; Plutarch, *Alex*, 47.4; Arrian, 4.19.5-6

²² Quintus Curtius Rufus, 8.4.23-30; Arrian, 4.19.5-6

²³ Plutarch, *Alex*, 47.4

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