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No Time for Love: The Chaste Heroes of Plutarch's *Alexander-Caesar*

In the source tradition, Alexander is most often depicted as relentless in his pursuit of empire but self-controlled in most nonmilitary situations, and especially so in his amorous relationships. Julius Caesar, on the other hand, is rarely presented as reserved when it comes to his love life. In his *Alexander-Caesar*, Plutarch for the most part follows the tradition for Alexander, but for Caesar he has deliberately minimized the role of women and the hero's sexual appetite, making him more like Alexander and focusing on his single-minded quest for political and military power. This paper will argue that, with respect to sexual conduct, Plutarch developed his Alexander as the model for a conquering hero and then applied this model to his Caesar. It will further argue that he did not intend to explore Caesar's life in full, nor to conceal or distort the facts of Caesar's love affairs in order to create a more decent or morally pleasing hero. Rather, Plutarch sought to present Caesar as a man uniquely fit and determined to acquire power propel himself, and Rome, toward dictatorship.

Although the sources portray Alexander as prone to bouts of drinking and subsequent rage, in general they are complimentary of his ability to control his sexual desires. Arrian calls him 'most self-controlled in the pleasures of the body' (7.28.2). Curtius praises him for 'control over immoderate urges and a sex-life limited to the fulfillment of natural desire' (10.5.32), but he does chastise him for immoderation in his relationship with Bagoas, whom he calls a 'male whore' who wielded power as an indulgence from Alexander (10.1.41). Plutarch's Alexander is likewise chaste, especially in his treatment of captive women, and the relationship with Bagoas is downplayed to the point where it consists only of a public kiss at the insistence and to the delight of the Macedonian crowd (67). In this pair of *Lives*, Alexander becomes a model of self-control not only for the reader but also for the portrayal of Caesar which is to come.

The historical Caesar is famously more active sexually, with both men and women. Catullus has baldly called him a *cinaedus* (57), and Suetonius spends a chapter 'omitting' and 'passing over' Caesar's alleged affair with King Nicomedes of Bithynia before devoting the three subsequent chapters to his eager and extravagant intrigues with various women (*Divus Iulius* 49-52). Perhaps Caesar's most famous paramour was Cleopatra, the queen of Egypt. In Dio's account, the most explicit of our sources, we find that the queen deliberately used her womanhood to appeal to Caesar's greatest weakness. Cleopatra was contending with her brother for the throne at Alexandria, but rather than request Caesar's support through agents, she met with him personally in order to exploit his tendency to have sex with any woman who came his way (*Roman History* 42.34). In Plutarch's *Caesar*, however, a different man appears. From the very opening of the *Life*, where he deliberately withdraws from a certainly successful career in rhetoric, Plutarch's Caesar is driven to become first man in Rome to the exclusion of all else, including love. Caesar's succession of wives are important for their political connections, not for their beauty or love, and his affair with Cleopatra is portrayed almost completely in terms of power and politics, not of love and desire.

That Plutarch uses the first Life of a pair to establish patterns that are exploited in the second Life has been documented for various pairs of *Lives* (see e.g. C. Pelling, *Miscellanea Plutarchea* 1986, 83-96; P. A. Stadter, *Plutarch and the Historical Tradition* 1992, 41-45; S. Swain, *ICS* 1988, 335-347). In arguing that he also used this technique in the *Alexander–Caesar*, the paper will attempt to demonstrate that the portrait of Caesar is crafted according to the model of Alexander. What is missing from the portrait is not censored but rather, in Plutarch's view, irrelevant. By examining the image of Caesar that emerges from the biography, the paper will show that the details of Caesar's amorous relationships would also have been distracting and detrimental to Plutarch's purpose.