VALERIUS MAXIMUS ON ALEXANDER THE GREAT*

Dawid Wardle
University of Cape Town

ABSTRACT

Although no new knowledge about Alexander is to be expected from a Roman collector of moral 
exempla whose material on Alexander derives from Cicero and Pompeius Trogus' Historiae, nonetheless the Tiberian excerptor provides an Alexander whose characterisation casts light on the Early Principate. Through his presentation of Alexander's desire for world conquest, Valerius underlines the imperial achievement of Rome, her effective world domination, and her superiority to Alexander. In reflecting on Alexander's institution of ruler cult, Valerius contrasts the restraint of the Roman imperial model in relation to filiation and forms of worship and the greater merit of her imperial rulers.

The most surprising thing about Diana Spencer's recent monograph on Alexander the Great in Roman thought is that it does not discuss Valerius Maximus' use of Alexander as an exemplum.1 No plausible claim can be made that Valerius is a great author or thinker,2 or that he adds anything substan-

---

1 I gratefully acknowledge the comments of Prof. H.-F.O. Mueller, of the honorand and of the journal's learned referees, but all remaining shortcomings are to the account of the author.

2 D. Spencer, The Roman Alexander: Reading a Cultural Myth (Exeter 2002). The work is reviewed by J.E. Atkinson, Scholia 13.11 (2004) (http://www.classics.und.ac.za/reviews/). By contrast, a recent work primarily on Curtius Rufus' Alexander, E. Baynham, Alexander the Great: the Unique History of Curtius Rufus (Ann Arbor 1998) 25-27, finds space to discuss Valerius, albeit briefly and primarily to show that, while Curtius may draw on the same rhetorical traditions as Valerius, his use of the exempla is different.

---

* I gratefully acknowledge the comments of Prof. H.-F.O. Mueller, of the honorand and of the journal's learned referees, but all remaining shortcomings are to the account of the author.

1 D. Spencer, The Roman Alexander: Reading a Cultural Myth (Exeter 2002). The work is reviewed by J.E. Atkinson, Scholia 13.11 (2004) (http://www.classics.und.ac.za/reviews/). By contrast, a recent work primarily on Curtius Rufus' Alexander, E. Baynham, Alexander the Great: the Unique History of Curtius Rufus (Ann Arbor 1998) 25-27, finds space to discuss Valerius, albeit briefly and primarily to show that, while Curtius may draw on the same rhetorical traditions as Valerius, his use of the exempla is different.

tial to our knowledge of Alexander.\(^3\) We can, however, gather from his collection of *exempla* some idea of how the characterisation of Alexander was developed during the early principate, as Valerius places him among those figures against whose conduct the Roman élite were taught and expected to judge their own.\(^4\)

The first point to make is that Alexander is prominent in Valerius’ work,\(^5\) but the degree to which this is the case has not been recognised. In his nine books of *Facta et Dita Memorabilia*, Valerius arranged some 1000 *exempla* under 91 rubrics,\(^6\) encompassing both Roman and foreign *exempla*. Although the former predominate by over 2:1, the comparatively large proportion of foreign *exempla* in Valerius by comparison with Cicero, as Skidmore has argued, shows the greater openness to alien wisdom of the first *princeps* and the early principate.\(^7\) It is also worth noting that during Augustus’ reign the genre of so-called ‘Universal History’ became increasingly popular,\(^8\) its Greek

---

3 In the preface to his work, Valerius claims that he will bring no *attention cura* to his overall task, and lives up to his claim. M. Lambert, ‘Alexandre vu par Valère Maxime’, *Ludus Magistrals* 23 (1980) 645 and 25 (1981) 13-15, assembles the *exempla* involving Alexander from Valerius, but without any substantive discussion. The best discussion, albeit brief, is by Weleder (note 2) 122-29, who concentrates on the theme of Alexander as world conqueror and its relevance to imperial Rome.


5 Recognised e.g. by Bloomer (note 2) 103: ‘a frequent subject in Valerius’ foreign examples’. Alexander’s prominence should not be regarded as surprising since many genres of Greek literature, biography, autobiography/memoirs and collections of letters (both real and fictitious) blossomed only after Alexander.

6 For one calculation of the exact number of *exempla*, see Wardle (note 2) 11 n. 44, for 91 rubrics, see Weleder (note 2) 9.

7 For the contrast between Valerius and Cicero and Augustus’ personal exception of Greek *exempla* (Suet. *DA* 89.2), see Skidmore (note 4) 20-21. As far as can be ascertained from its meagre remains, Nepos’ *Exempla* also dealt primarily with Roman material; and the one surviving fragment of C. Julius Hyginus’ work of the same name is no basis from which to deduce its contents; Skidmore (note 4) 46-48. Valerius’ inclusion of foreign material into a comprehensive work organised by theme rather than person demonstrates his greater willingness, albeit sometimes for reasons of entertainment (1.6 ext. 1; 2.10 ext. 1; 6.9 ext. 1), to seek paradigmatic material more widely. In doing this Valerius would not have fallen foul of Tiberius, who, although he rejected the use of Greek in the Senate (Suet. *Tit. 71*), nonetheless had a profound appreciation of Greek literature and culture (Suet. *Tit. 70.2-3*).

practitioners including Nicolaus of Damascus, Timagenes and Diodorus Siculus; while Pompeius Trogus' work in Latin, as we shall see, made the exploits of the Hellenistic monarchs readily accessible to Valerius. Nonetheless, Valerius, despite recognising that non-Romans could display virtue, maintains that the Romans were superior by his separation of that material from and its subordination to the Roman exempla and by the occasional explicitly condemning phrase. So Alexander, although the most illustrious of the Greeks (or rather Macedonians), occupies a potentially ambiguous position.

To establish how Alexander fares in Valerius, it is necessary to formulate a methodology which must involve more than just counting appearances of his name. While considering the totality of references that Valerius makes to an individual must be part of any analysis, there must also be some differentiation of the function of individual references. For example, in the Roman context, if an individual's name appeared simply as part of a consular dating formula (e.g. 2.4.4, 7) that would imply nothing as to the author's assessment of his character. Within the specifically chosen exemplary format of Valerius' work one should make some distinction between instances where an individual is the exemplar of a virtue or vice and those where he appears as a subsidiary character in 'someone else's exemplum'. This is not to argue that, in a work so clearly articulated by moral categories and replete with authorial confirmations of these values, Valerius abstains from moral judgement where an individual is not the exemplar, but where, in this case, his focus is not on Alexander and he does not clearly label his behaviour with some evaluative terms, it is not always a straightforward matter to determine Valerius' attitude. For example, in an exemplum primarily concerned with Aristotle's wise advice to Callisthenes, namely to speak with Alexander as little and as agreeably as possible, the explicit moral Valerius draws is that Callisthenes came to regret forgetting Aristotle's advice. Alexander's

9 The Greeks are characterised as a gentis ad fingendum paratae (4.7.4), where the simulation is very different from that practised by statesman and generals for the good of the people (cf. 1.2). Prof. Mueller alerts me to a typical Valerian inconsistency in that a mere three exempla after his condemnation of Greek mendacity he informs the reader that aliaque bene facta refero Romanae urbis candor hortatur (47 ext. 1).


11 Wélder (note 2) 123 n. 541 appears to appreciate something of the problem in connection with Hannibal, who appears in many exempla where a Roman is the exemplar, but does not extend this to his treatment of Alexander.
behaviour is recorded without comment, but the ancient and modern reader of the anecdote rightly supposes that the introduction of προσκυνήσεως was inimical to Greek and Roman taste and therefore that some criticism of Alexander is at least implied.\footnote{1.7.2 ext. 11. προσκυνήσεως was not only inimical to Macedonian taste, but also to Roman attitudes; see Suet. V. 2.5 and Dio 59.27.5; also A. Alfoldi, Die monarchische Repräsentation im römischen Kaiserreich (Darmstadt 1970) 62-63. Valerius’ description of Alexander’s ears as regia would probably also be prejudicial to the Roman ear. In the previous example on Philip’s criticism of Alexander for attempting to secure the support of some Macedonians by bribery, Valerius expressly commends Philip’s criticism as probabile, so that we know his attitude, but comparison with Frontinus’ inclusion of Philip’s bribery as a useful technique for inducing treachery (Stat. 3.2.5) shows that without authorial guidance the reader could legitimately form very different opinions.} It is less easy, however, to be certain about Valerius’ evaluation of Alexander’s behaviour in deliberately slowing down a sacrifice while his attendant was suffering a severe burn in order to ascertain the limits of the latter’s bravery\footnote{3.3 ext. 1. This example is without extant parallels which might guide as to its place in the Alexander tradition. While the commendable endurance of C. Mucius Scaevola and Pompeius (3.3.1-2) illustrates the fortitude of the Roman people’s endurance of pain, and Macedonian toughness was viewed similarly, Alexander’s action in deliberately increasing the boy’s suffering is different from that of Rome’s enemies Posenna and King Gentius.} – Valerius’ exemplar of bravery is the boy, but rather than as a laudable means of testing the boy’s courage Alexander’s action could just as easily be interpreted as cruelty. Again, under the rubric of miracula, Valerius describes Alexander’s question to Callanus as he was about to immolate himself and the divinely inspired response which indicated the imminent death of Alexander. When Valerius provides no specific guidance, is the reader to understand Alexander as a somewhat crass ruler humiliated by superior wisdom or to form no negative opinion about his response to a novel form of death?\footnote{1.8 ext. 10. Valerius has taken this example directly from Cicero’s De Divinatione (1.47). The figure of Callanu was somewhat controversial and was characterised in varying degrees of hostility in the Alexander sources; cf. A.B. Bosworth, ‘Calanus and the Brahman opposition’, in W. Will (ed.), Alexander der Große. Eine Weltüberung und ihre Hintergrund (Bonn 1998) 180-203. The brevity of Cicero’s and Valerius’ example, concerned primarily with the prophetic nature of Callanu’s words, obscure the wider characterisation of the protagonists.}

Below are tabulated the exempla in which Alexander appears with a classification, where that is possible, of the attitude Valerius takes to him. Potentially questionable classifications are explained in the attached footnotes:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exemplum</th>
<th>Is Alexander the exemplar?(^{15})</th>
<th>Character of his Portrayal(^{16})</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 ext. 5</td>
<td>x(^{17})</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 ext. 1</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7 ext. 2</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8 ext. 10</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 ext. 1</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 ext. 4</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8 ext. 6</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 ext. 3</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x(^{18})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 ext. 4</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7 ext. 2</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 ext. 1</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6 ext. 5</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x(^{19})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{15}\) ✓ = yes; x = no.

\(^{16}\) ✓ = positive; x = negative; = = not morally loaded; ? = impossible to determine.

\(^{17}\) The extreme brevity of Paris' epitome of Milesian Ceres may conceal that Alexander was the exemplar, but it is more natural to read the exemplum as demonstrating the goddess' power to protect her own secrets, and to hold that it was constructed by Valerius in the same way as three Roman exempla (1.1.17-19) in which Hercules, Apollo and Asclepius avenge themselves.

\(^{18}\) In these two exempla from the rubric de abstinentia et continenti (see below for text and adaptation from Ciceron), Valerius celebrates the virtue of a Platonic and a Cynic philosopher in resisting the 'temptation' Alexander set before them. Both incidents featured prominently in the Alexander tradition and illustrate the topos of the wise man getting the better of the ruler: Xenocrates (Plut. Alex. 8.5; Mor. 181e, 331e, 333b; Suda s.v. Συνεκροτήστως [3.494 Adler]; Diog. Laert. 4.8); Diogenes (Plut. Alex. 14.2-4; Mor. 331f, 605d, 782a; Arrian, Anab. 7.2.1). While the current orthodoxy is that the Peripatetic and Stoic schools did not adopt formal and consistent views of Alexander (e.g. E. Badian, 'The eunuch Baguas: a study in method', CQ 8 [1958] 153-57; E. Menchiting, 'Peripatetiker über Alexander', Historia 12 [1963] 151-49; R. F. Pear, 'The Stoic view of the career and character of Alexander', Philekris 98 [1974] 113-30), it seems that there was widespread philosophical criticism of Alexander for τιτως and his descent into 'tyranny'. It seems reasonable to conclude that, even if Valerius took these exempla from Pompeius Trogus rather than a philosophical source, the thrust of the exempla is to contrast Alexander negatively with the philosophers; in particular Valerius' concluding framing of the Diogenes meeting underlines that Alexander's motive was the buying of friendship. Whereas Alexander could have been represented as concerned with wisdom or the well-being of the schools, Valerius presents a negative version.

\(^{19}\) In an exemplum lauding Aristotle's piety towards his hometown of Stagira, Valerius' rhetorical conclusion, ita non tam utibus strata atque ovium Alexandri quam restituta.
Alexander appears in 23 exempla, but he is the exemplar in just eight. His greatest rival for prominence, Hannibal, features in 36 exempla, but is the exemplar in eleven, of which six concern vices.\(^{21}\) Although he shares this

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|}
\hline
6.4 ext. 3 & ✓ & ✓ \\
7.2 ext. 10 & x & x \\
7.2 ext. 11 & x & x \\
7.2 ext. 13 & x & ? \\
7.3 ext. 1 & x & ✓ \(^{20}\) \\
7.3 ext. 4 & x & x \(^{21}\) \\
811 ext. 2 & ✓ & x \(^{22}\) \\
814 ext. 2 & ✓ & x \(^{24}\) \\
9.3 ext. 1 & ✓ & x \\
9.5 ext. 1 & ✓ & x \\
910 ext. 2 & x & ✓ \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

\(^{20}\) Aristotelis notum est opus signifies Aristotle's fame, whereas the uniform historical tradition blames Philip (e.g. Plut. Alex. 7.2) and most credit Alexander with the restoration (e.g. Plut. Mor. 1126f; Dio Chrys. Or. 47.9; Dio Chrys. 54.; Plin. NH 7.109; but cf. Plut. Alex. 7.2, Dio Chrys. Or. 279).

\(^{21}\) Alexander’s obedience to the command of an oracle and his eager seizing of the opportunity to satisfy the oracle’s demand without shedding human blood should, in Valerius’ eyes, be positive (cf. 1.8 ext. 8-9). Although the term Alexander uses for his intended execution of the innocent donkey-driver is ‘error’, greater emphasis should lie with his acceptance of the donkey-driver’s crafty response.

\(^{22}\) One could imagine a tradition in which Alexander’s non-destruction of Lamp-sacus was as much to his credit as the rebuilding of Stagira, but the existence of this story, which does not fit well with Alexander’s usual treatment of the cities of Asia Minor, suggests an origin in a hostile tradition (cf. H. Berve, Das Alexandereich auf prosopographischer Grundlage [Munich 1926] 2.35-36; A.B. Bosworth, A Historical Commentary on Arrian’s History of Alexander [Oxford 1980] 107-08) or at least a tradition in which the ruler is outwitted by the wise man.

\(^{23}\) The way in which the exempla under the rubric quam magni effectus artium sint (8.11) are organised and the emphasis given by Valerius in the prefatory remarks indicate that the "exemplars" here are the practitioners of the various \textit{artes}.

\(^{24}\) In none of the extant versions of the tradition that Alexander ordered that he be sculpted only by Lysippus (cf. Arr. Anab. 1.16.4; Plut. Alex. 4.1; Mor. 335e; Cic. Fam. 5.12.17; Hor. Ep. 2.1.239; Plin. NH 7.125; see C.O. Brink, Horace on Poetry. Epistles Book II [Cambridge 1982] 247-48) is his scrupulousness criticised.

\(^{25}\) See below p. 149-151.

\(^{26}\) I list here only the eleven exempla in which Hannibal is the exemplar: 1.7 ext. 1; 3.7 ext. 6; 5.1 ext. 6; 7.3 ext. 8; 7.4 ext. 2; 9.1 ext. 1; 9.2 ext. 2; 9.3 ext. 3; 9.5 ext. 3; 9.6 ext. 1; 9.7 ext. 1
status with Hannibal, Rome's most fearsome foe, Alexander is a very prominent non-Roman exemplar in Valerius. My analysis of Valerius' portrayal of Alexander shows that the king exemplifies rather more vices than virtues, a conclusion somewhat different from that reached by most other scholars. In contrast to other early imperial sources, Valerius' Alexander emerges as the flawed yet great conqueror familiar from the Greek tradition.

We should not think, however, that Valerius' Alexander emerges as the result of extensive research and analysis on the author's part. The efforts of the indefatigable 19th century German Quellenforscher have long since revealed that Valerius' pattern of reading was simple and unimpressive. He strays rarely beyond mainstream authors such as Livy, Cicero and Varro and, where he can be checked, often does little more than paraphrase his source, slightly altering word order or using synonyms. A reasonable example of this is his adaptation of Cicero's version of Philip's rebuke to Alexander for attempting to win friends by bribery. Cicero writes: Quae te, malum, inquit, ratio in istam spem inductit, ut eos tibi fideles patientes fere, quos pecunia corruptisses? which Valerius renders: quae te, fili, ratio in hanc tam uanam spem induxit, ut eos tibi fideles Patientes etiam, quos pecunia ad amorem induxit.

ext. 2; 9.8 ext. 1. In the last six references, all from Book 9, Hannibal exemplifies individual vices; positively he exemplifies humanitas in his treatment of dead Roman generals (5.1 ext. 6) and self-confidence (3.7 ext. 6); his attempt to discredit Fabius Maximus, although demonstrating his craftiness was hardly laudable (7.3 ext. 8).

What follows is a simple list of the total number of appearances of other non-Romans (i.e. not only when they are exemplars) compiled from the index to Briscoe's edition: Alcibiades x 4, Anaxagoras x 5, Cyrus the Great x 4, Darius I x 6, Darius III x 6, Dionysius I x 7, Hasdrubal x 5, Mithradates x 12, Pericles x 7, Perseus x 10, Philip of Macedon x 5, Plato x 8, Ptolemy VIII x 4, Pyrrhus x 12, Socrates x 7, Xenocrates x 5, Xerxes x 10.

Cf. Weide (note 2) 123 n. 544: 'Valerius führt auch alexanderkrítische Beispiele an, die aber eindeutlich in der Minderheit sind'; A.B. Bosworth, Alexander and the East. The Tragedy of Triumph (Oxford 1996) 2 n. 2: 'evenly balanced between virtue and vice', but he has only a partial list of the relevant exempla. Mueller (note 4) 221 n. 138 has the negative predominate 'especially where the gods are concerned'. The conclusion of O. Weipert, Alexander-imitatio und römische Politik in republikanischer Zeit (Diss. Würzburg 1972) 240, that Valerius exhibits no consistent attitude to Alexander is sound.

For example, Seneca's portrayal is of an emperor, see Fears (note 18) 125-28.

See the comprehensive list at Wardle (note 2) 15 n. 68.

See e.g. Wardle (note 2) 15-16 for a handy summary and examples.
A looser form of adaptation can be observed in two Ciceronian examples in which abstinensia and continentia were displayed by Xenocrates and Diogenes the Cynic against Alexander and which are produced by Valerius in the same order, demonstrating that Valerius has taken the whole sequence from Tusculanae Disputationes. Valerius deliberately excludes Xenocrates' acceptance of the token thirty minas, as that would weaken the force of the exemplum and adds a laboured rhetorical introduction to the second exemplum, where Cicero has a simple at vero.

After Cicero and Livy, perhaps the most important source for Valerius was Pompeius Trogus, who, we can conclude reasonably from the remains preserved by his epitomator Justin, provided much of Valerius' material on the East other than Alexander. Trogus' Historiae Philippicae were published in the last years of Augustus and provided the easy sort of predigested, exemplary material written in Latin that Valerius enjoyed, even if the generally hostile view he adopts of towards Alexander was not followed by Valerius. While several of the Alexander exempla in Valerius are plausibly drawn from Trogus, extended close verbal parallels are not evident, for example the exempla describing Darius' mother's misidentification of Hephaestion for Alexander and that with Parmenion's advice to accept the

---

31 Cic. Off. 2.53; Val. Max. 7.2 ext. 10. Valerius introduces a vocative fili for Cicero's colloquial malum, the synonym existimares for putares, futuros for fore and interprets corrupisse by ad amorem tui compulisse. Cicero himself may have derived his Alexander material from Cleitarchus, whom we can infer from his comments was a fashionable source (Leg. 1.7).

32 So rightly Bloomer (note 2) 105.

33 Cic. Tus. 5.92; Val. Max. 4.3 ext 3-4.

34 See Bloomer (note 2) 103-04 for examples.

By a careful phrase by phrase analysis of the story of Alexander's illness at Tarsus, Atkinson demonstrated that there are clear connections between the versions of Valerius, Curtius Rufus and Justin, and therefore a common knowledge of Pompeius Trogus. However, beyond these examples the case for use of Trogus is far less certain, even where Valerius and Curtius share stories. For example, in the story where Alexander gives up his seat by the fire to an old soldier, there are no close verbal parallels and clear differences in detail.

Other stories which are found only in Valerius cannot be assigned a place in the historiographic tradition: the revenge of Milesian Ceres on Alexander's troops as they despoiled her temple, the endurance of a young Macedonian burned while Alexander sacrificed, the wise saying of Demades at the Athenians' refusal of divine honours to Alexander, and Anaximenes' saving of Lampsacus.

It is more profitable for us to look at Valerius' Alexander against the firm historical context of the latter part of Tiberius' reign (the most plausible context for the publication of the work), and to see how Valerius used...
Alexander to reflect on two live issues in particular within Roman society - the extent of Rome's imperial dominions and what form of ruler cult was appropriate.

While the question of Augustus' personal intentions in expanding the empire, whether he aimed at *imperium sine fine*, must remain insoluble, his *Res Gestae* is a claim to world rule, as Claude Nicolet has demonstrated, and certainly this perception of Rome's achievement was shared by the geographer Strabo. For a theme running through his work, which was published c. AD 18, is that Rome effectively ruled the inhabited world: while there were peoples outside her direct sway, either they acknowledged her supremacy or were on the point of submission, or were not worth conquering. Andreas Weiler has brought attention to the importance of 'world-rule' (' Weltherrschaft') as a concept for Valerius too in an extended study. He argues that Tiberius' reign was a key point in the development and further definition of the imperial concept of world-rule and that Tiberius publicised a policy of non-expansion. He concludes his analysis of Valerius' response to this:

did Valerius Maximus write *Facta et Dica Memorabiliae*, Antichthon 23 [1989] 67-80; cf. the idea of F.G.B. Millar, 'Ovid and the *Domus Augusta*: Rome seen from Tomoi', *JRS* 83 [1993] 4, that, while he wrote in the early years of Tiberius' reign, Valerius should really be considered a contemporary of Ovid, influenced rather by the last years of Augustus; the consensus favours a date after AD 31 based on the identification of the unnamed conspirator of 9. 1 *ext.* 4 with Sejanus; see Wardle (note 2) 146.


43 See. K. Clarke, *Between Geography and History: Hellenistic Constructions of the Roman World* (Oxford 1999) 307-28, D. Dueck, *Strabo of Amasia: A Greek Man of Letters in Augustan Rome* (London 2000) 96-129. Britain had sent embassies and conquest would not be profitable (200-01), the Parthians were near submission (288, 839), the Dacians were on the verge of subjugation (305).

44 Weiler (note 2) 45-130. Among earlier studies Nicolet (note 42) sets out the evidence for Roman claims to world empire both from the Late Republic and Early Empire.

45 Several ancient authorities (e.g. Tac. *Ann.* 1.114; Cassius Dio 56.33.5-6) allege that Augustus left instructions to Tiberius *oevendi intra terminos imperii*. Some modern scholars believe that the *consilium* was a Tiberian invention to justify an important change of policy; e.g. J. Ober, 'Tiberius and the political testament of Augustus',
in the conflict between the Realpolitik (possibly with the imperial house's new propaganda wishes with regard to the change in foreign policy) and the traditional propaganda of the Princeps, in which he and Rome wanted to see themselves celebrated as conquerors and world-rulers, Valerius decides almost always in favour of the latter, but allows the new approach to flash briefly. In some formulations he leaves the evaluation open - not out of an inability to handle the material or lack of perspective, but out of political circumspection and interest in the actual political questions. The predominant image that Valerius presents, remains, however, that of a Rome which rules the world under its Princeps Tiberius.46

In the light of a historiographical debate on the respective military excellence of Alexander and the Romans, how does Valerius present Alexander?47 Valerius celebrates Alexander as invictus (4.3 ext. 4), an adjective applied only to Julius Caesar among Romans by Valerius, and as such clearly used in a highly positive way.48 Moreover, he characterises him as determined on world conquest: in his introduction to the exemplum of Alexander's kindness to the old Macedonian soldier, Valerius sets the context as dumn
The words quoted follow a rhetorical antithesis, the first half of which celebrates the glory Alexander's military courage deservedly secured for him, *infinitam gloriae bellicae virtus ... meruit*. The original Stoic position was that one should not even lift a finger to acquire glory (*eúdoxia*), but, in response to Carneades' criticisms, later Stoics held that it was worth pursuing for its own sake (Cic. *Fin.* 3.57). In the Roman context, where, against the background of élite solidarity, the pursuit of glory was more problematic, Cicero is our best evidence for the tensions aroused by the topic (e.g. *Fam.* 15.4.13). The two books of his lost *De Gloria* would have provided a full discussion, and perhaps even the material for some of Valerius' *exempla*, but occasional references in *De Officiis* which plausibly repeat some of the argument are our best source for the philosophical and pragmatic problems of *cupiditas gloriae* (1.65; 2.43). See A.R. Dyck, *A Commentary on Cicero, De Officiis* [Ann Arbor 1996] ad loc. See also G. Philipp, 'Zur Problematik des römischen Ruhmesgedankens', *Philologus* 89 (1934) 102-24 and A. Haury, 'Cicéron et la gloire, une pédagogie de la vertu', *Coll. EFR* 22 (1974) 401-17.
Typically Valerius avoids philosophical debate, but he is fully aware of the issues; while he claims merely to present the deeds and demonstrate how great the *cupiditas gloriae* is, the way in which he introduces and comments upon some individual *exempla* further reveals the moral dimension. For example, on C. Fabius’ painting of the walls of the temple of Salus Valerius comments *sordido studio deditum ingenium qualemque illum laborem suum silentio oblitterari voluit*, and he criticises strongly Aristotle’s treatment of Theodectes, *diereum dignum philosophum, cuius stabilendi mores aliquis animi philosopho tradenter*, and there were even those who sought glory by crime and sacrilege. Even if Valerius’ characterisation of Alexander’s *pectus insatiablem laudis* is not prejudicial, his summation of the Alexander *exemplum: angusta homini possessio fuit, quae dorum omnium domicilio sufficit* must embody negative comment in the context of the whole work, throughout which Valerius underlines what is appropriate behaviour for men in a universe controlled by divine providence and defines the limits of human aspiration. If this is correct, then the theme of world conquest as reflected by Valerius’ Alexander is not viewed in a uniformly positive light.

Within Valerius, as Weiléder rightly points out, there is a contrast between Alexander’s aspirations towards world-ruleship and the reality of Rome’s achievement: in despair at Democritus’ thesis of the existences of innumerable worlds Alexander complained to Anaxarchus that he had *not yet acquired* mastery of one world, and in the context of the Sisygambis’ mis-identification of Hephaestion as Alexander, Valerius introduces his com-

---

33 8.14.6 & 8.14 ext. 3.
34 Weiléder (note 2) 127, argues that this must be understood positively, but *insatiabilis* appears only in negative contexts in Valerius (cf. 9.10 ext. 1). Weiléder’s subsidiary argument comes from Valerius’ description of Themistocles’ desire for glory, *ducedemum gloriae, paene adieci gloriari*, where he sees *gloriosus* as positive. Shackleton Bailey (note 45) ad loc. rightly translates by the negative ‘vainglorious’.
35 Cf. Mueller (note 4) 221 n. 138: ‘the condemnation of Valerius’ and Bosworth (note 25) 2 n. 2; Weiléder (note 2) 126 n. 567 notes earlier scholars who share this view. The lengthy opening chapter of Valerius’ work (1.1) illuminates the respective roles of men and gods.
36 Val. Max. 8.14 ext. 2. Neither Valerius nor any other extant version of this anecdote (cf. Juvi. 10.168; Plut. *Mor.* 466d; *Ael. VH* 4.29) provides a context, but it may have been set when Alexander had reached India and realised most clearly that there was more world to be conquered.
ments on Alexander's response by *maximi enim animi rex et iam totum terrarum orhen aut victorius aut spe complexus*. Rome, however, did rule the world and Tiberius could be represented as an earthly Jupiter. What Valerius may be attempting to say through this distinction and his probable doubts about Alexander's ambition for ever wider rule, is that not only were the Roman people (under their divine Principes) the only ones to achieve world empire, but they were also the only ones for whom such a role was appropriate. Moreover, in full accord with Tiberius' position, Valerius' logic implies that further expansion by Rome is unnecessary. He appears, then, to have combined the triumphalism that was appropriate to the Augustan age with Tiberian restraint.

The second theme which seems to have some prominence in Valerius' account of Alexander is that of ruler-cult. As we are not concerned with the historical accuracy of what Valerius records or the sources of his information, three aspects can be highlighted: (i) Alexander's innovations in ruler-cult; (ii) his contemporaries' response to Alexander through cult; and (iii) Valerius' framing of his material.

(i) The first foreign *exemplum* in the chapter *De superbia et impotentia* illustrates the first of these. It presents three stages of Alexander's arrogance:

> Alexandri regis uirtus ac felicitas tribus insolentiae evidentissimis gradibus esultauit: fastidio enim Philippum fouem Hammonem patrem asciuit, tacito morum et cultus Macedonici uestem et instituta Persic a adsumpsit, spret o mortali habitu divinum a emum est, nec fuit ei pudori filium ciuem hominem dissimulare.

---

57 4.7 ext. 2.
58 Weleder (note 2) 45-48 rightly takes *maris ac terrae regimen* (1 praef.) as a claim of world dominion achieved; and the extravagant rhetoric of 9.11 ext. 4 praises the gods' preservation of the world. Valerius' frequent use of *orbis terrarum* mostly strengthened by *totus* (eg. 2.7.6; 2.8 praef.) indicates the same; cf. Weleder (note 2) 51. For Rome as master of the world, see Weleder (note 2) 84-90. For implicit comparison of Tiberius and Jupiter, see 5.3.3 and Weleder (note 2) 166.
60 9.5 ext. 1.
Valerius emphasises that Alexander’s virtues, military prowess and success, led to his divine pretensions. He appears to have listed Alexander’s innovations chronologically, and in order of increasing arrogance. Firstly during Alexander’s visit to the oracle of Ammon at Siwa in 331, he was greeted by the priest as ‘son of Ammon’ and thereafter the claim of sonship was acknowledged (and challenged) publicly.61 Secondly in late 330 he had introduced some elements of Persian court dress and ceremonial, and in the late spring of 327 he attempted to impose ἀρχηγών upon all of his subjects, but opposition from his Macedonians and Callisthenes of Olynthus forced him to back down on this issue, for Macedonians at least.62 Thirdly, probably later in his reign and on public occasions, he appeared in the clothes and attributes of various divinities, including those of Ammon.63

Valerius is an author whose work is profoundly influenced by ruler-cult. His language in respect to the imperial family is among the most favourable to have survived in Roman prose authors.64 His thorough-going support of ruler-cult is, however, to some degree shaped by his experience of it in 1st century AD Rome, where political constraints led Augustus and his successor to caution, as far as the official state religion was concerned: no formal

---

61 E.g. Plut. Alex. 17.5. Even if Alexander harboured some idea of a dual human-divine parentage before he visited Siwa, the events at the oracle had a deep effect on him: the sources record instances of his praying to Zeus Ammon as his father and public acknowledgement of the claim of sonship; see A.B. Bosworth, ‘Alexander and Ammon’, in K.H. Kinzl (ed.), Greece and the Eastern Mediterranean in Ancient History and Prehistory (Berlin 1977) 51-75 and idem (note 59) 282-84. Even Callisthenes, who opposed Alexander over ἀρχηγών, was prepared in his histories to depict Alexander as son of Ammon (Strabo 814).

62 For the first stage of his Iranianisation, see A.B. Bosworth, ‘Alexander and the Iranians’, JHS 100 (1980) 5-8; for the Bactra symposium, see Bosworth (note 59) 284-87 and (note 27) 108-12, and below for Valerius’s more detailed exemplum on this.

63 Ephippus (FGrH 126 F 5) provides the most vivid description: Ἀλέξανδρος ό τέσσαρα εὖ θεῖσσας ἔδοξεν ἐν τοῖς δείπνοις, ὅτε μὲν τὴν τοῦ Ἀμμωνος πορφυρά καὶ περσακές καὶ κέρατα καθέτο ὁ θεὸς, ὅτε δὲ τὴν τῆς Αρτέμιδος, ἣν καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ ἄρματος ἔδοξεν πολλάκις, ἐχων τὴν Περσακήν στολήν, ἰπποθηόνην ἄκτους τῶν ομών τὸ τῶν ομών καὶ τὴν σμίγιν, ἐκπέτε φυσίν τοῦ Ἐρμοί.

64 For Valerius’ wholehearted acceptance of ruler-cult and the importance of the subject to his presentation of Julius Caesar, Augustus, Tiberius and the domus Augusta, see Wardle (note 48) esp. 336-43; idem, ‘Valerius Maximus on the domus Augusta, Augustus and Tiberius’, CQ 50 (2000) 479-93, Weiβ (note 2) 48, 295-98 and Mueller (note 4) 13-20.
deification, state temple or priesthood while the emperor lived. Of the three elements of Alexander's *insolentia*, two were very clearly avoided by Augustus and Tiberius: firstly, anything even approximating to προσκύνημα, which could be interpreted as the kind of abase oneself more appropriate to a slave than to a citizen was rejected, as Tiberius' extreme embarrassment when the senator Haterius grabbed him around the knees in making a request illustrates. Secondly, Augustus and Tiberius took care never to appear in public wearing divine attributes. Valerius' third charge against Alexander is more complex from the Roman perspective, as Augustus and Tiberius both placed considerable emphasis in their official nomenclature on divine filiation: Augustus styled himself *Divi filius* and Tiberius *Divi Augusti filius*. Divine filiation, therefore, cannot be objectionable per se, nor the claim of ultimate descent from an Olympian, as various Roman noble families of the Republican and imperial families did, but to style oneself as the direct son of an Olympian deity, let alone of the senior deity in the pantheon, was different. Even in the 4th century BC Clearchus' pretensions to being the son of Zeus were considered extreme, and Demosthenes' proposal to the Athenian assembly that Alexander should be son of Zeus or Poseidon, if he wished, was highly ironical. From the

---


66 Tac. *Ann.* 1.13.6; cf. Suet. *Tib.* 27, where Suetonius includes the incident as evidence of Tiberius' hatred of *adulatio*.

67 Cf. Mueller (note 4) 95. Augustus' policy may have been informed by the very negative interpretation put upon his dressing as Apollo at a private dinner party (Suet. *DA* 70.1-2). Part of the indictment against the bad Caligula was his love of dressing up as different gods and goddesses; e.g. Suet. *Cal.* 52; Philo *Leg.* 75-114; see Gradel (note 65) 146-49.

Even though clear instances of assimilation to the gods can be found on the public coinage of Augustus, unambiguous examples of it are rare after 27 BC and non-existent after 12 BC; J. Pollini, 'Man or god: divine assimilation and imitation in the Late Republic and Early Principate', in K.A. Raaflaub & M. Toher (edd.), *From Republic to Empire: Interpretations of Augustus and his Principate* (Berkeley 1990) esp. 350-57.

68 (i) Augustus: public inscriptions – *ILLS* 83, 91, 8894; coinage e.g. *RRC* i. nos. 534, 537-8, 540; (ii) Tiberius: public inscriptions – *ILLS* 156; coinage – e.g. *RIC* i. p. 95 no. 25, 97 nos. 44-45, 98 no. 69.


70 E.g. Plut. *Mor.* 338f.; Justin 16.5.8-11.

early imperial period even the most extreme propaganda promoting a link between Jupiter and Augustus, the dreams attributed to Catulus and Cicero, stops well short of suggesting sonship.\textsuperscript{72}

Again, the motive that Valerius ascribes for Alexander’s action imports an implicit contrast with more laudable Roman exempla. Valerius’ chapter De piitute erga parenthes encapsulates the Roman attitude that fathers should be honoured and avenged (where necessary) by their children, as was also exemplified by Aeneas in Virgil’s \textit{Aeneid}.\textsuperscript{73} Whereas, Valerius alleges, Alexander despised Philip,\textsuperscript{74} Augustus’ and Tiberius’ filiation was a manifestation of profound gratitude and \textit{pietus} to their human adoptive fathers.\textsuperscript{75}

(ii) Two passages illustrate the response of Alexander’s contemporaries to his innovations in ruler cult. In his chapter \textit{Sapient er dicta aut facta} Valerius presents the consequence of Callisthenes ignoring advice from Aristotle on how to deal with Alexander:\textsuperscript{76}

\begin{quote}
Aristotedes autem, Callisthenen auditorem suum ad Alexandrum dimittens, monuit cum eo aut quam rassisime aut quam iucundissime loqueretur, quo soliciet apud regias aures uel silentio tutor uel sermone eset acceptor. at ille, dum Alexandrum Persica Macedonem salutatitiae gaudentiam obiurgat et ad Macedonicos mores inuitum reuocare beniulce perseverat, spiritu carere iussu seram neglecti salubris consilii paenitentiam egit.
\end{quote}

The \textit{Persica salutatio} at issue was, for the Persians, an act without any religious significance, but its physical forms, either bowing and blowing a

\textsuperscript{72} Suet. \textit{Vit. Aug.} 94.8-9; Cass. Dio 45.2.24.
\textsuperscript{73} 5.4.
\textsuperscript{74} This interpretation was certainly that advanced by Clitus at the banquet (Arr. \textit{Anab.} 4.8.15 Plut. \textit{Alex.} 50.11), but apart from a letter of dubious authenticity sent to Athens in which he called Philip his \textit{patrōs} ἐμοὺ προσαγορευόμενον (Plut. \textit{Alex.} 28.2; see J. R. Hamilton, ‘Alexander and his “so-called” father’, \textit{CQ} 3 [1953] 151-57), Alexander’s public statements regarding Philip were positive; Bosworth (note 59) 283.
\textsuperscript{75} Pace Mueller (note 4) 96, ‘the ungrateful son of Greek history who … turned to foreign gods’, I do not think that the foreignness of Jupiter Ammon is a significant element in the criticism Valerius directs against Alexander. After all, the oracle at Siwa was reenacted at the time Alexander visited it and was consulted by Greek \textit{poleis}, even though by Valerius’ time it could be described by Strabo (813) as almost abandoned.
\textsuperscript{76} 7.2 \textit{ext.} 11.
kiss or complete prostration, were for the Greeks those of a cult act.\textsuperscript{77} Whether Callisthenes' historical opposition was expressed in a private act of non-co-operation or a public speech in a fully-pledged debate, both of which appear in the sources, his rejection of \textit{proskynētēs} would fit perfectly with the traditional attitudes of Romans which is exemplified in the horror at Caligula's attempt to introduce this into Roman court ritual.\textsuperscript{78} So here Valerius is thoroughly conventional, adopting the Roman attitude which in a similarly anachronistic fashion is attributed to Callisthenes by Curtius Rufus.\textsuperscript{79}

In the same chapter Valerius presents a saying of Demades:\textsuperscript{80}

\begin{quote}
\textit{Demadis quoque dictum sapiens: nolentibus enim Atheniensibus diuinos honores Alexandro deernere 'uidete' inquit 'ne, dum caelum custoditis, 

terram amittatis'.}
\end{quote}

In the last months of Alexander's life, after the death of Hephaestion in autumn 324, he probably initiated a policy of seeking official worship from Greek cities.\textsuperscript{81} At the Athenian assembly there was a fierce debate in response to Demades' proposing a decree for Alexander's deification; his opponents won and Demades was fined ten talents for making his proposal.\textsuperscript{82}

\begin{notes}
\item[78] See note 12 above.
\item[80] 7.2 ext.13; cf. Ael. \textit{VH} 5.12.
\item[81] The issue is contested: J.P.V.D. Balsdon, 'The 'divinity' of Alexander', \textit{Historia} 1 (1952) 383-88, questions whether any specific instruction came from Alexander to the Greek states in 324 BC, while E. Fredricksmeyer, 'Three notes on Alexander's deification', \textit{AJAH} 4 (1979) 3-7, argues that the initiative was Alexander's and that the cult-title he sought was 'son of Zeus Ammon'.
\item[82] Athen. 251b. See Bosworth (note 59) 288-90; Balsdon (note 81) 383-84; Badian (note 54) 54-55; Badian (note 77) 25-26; P. Brun, \textit{L'orateur Démade. Essai d'histoire et d'histoire} (Bordeaux 2000) 98-102.
\end{notes}
Two passages reveal explicit framing by Valerius on the subject of Alexander's divinisation through ruler-cult. Firstly, in the passage immediately above, Valerius characterises as *sapiens* Demades' warning to the Athenians. Although this may be understood as Valerius making no comment on whether the proposed divine honours for Alexander were deserved and thus whether Demades' words were laudable other than in terms of *Realpolitik*, we can read this against the background of the controversial introduction of ruler cult by Julius Caesar and its subsequent, carefully controlled role in the Roman state religion, as Valerius' personal endorsement of the phenomenon, one which provided the majority of Rome's citizens with an excellent way of relating to their powerful ruler.83 Indeed, in the passage below Valerius does not object to Alexander's deification.

Secondly, in the chapter *De ina aut odio*, Valerius suggests that Alexander's cruel treatment of three friends *almost* prevented his deification:84

Alexandrum incandia sua propriomodo caelo deripuit: nam quid obstitit quo minus illuc adsurgaret nisi Lysimachus ioni objectus et Clitus hasta traecus et Callisthenes mori istus, quia tres maximas victorias totidem amicorum iniustis caelibus uicto relictis?

It appears that Valerius places Alexander's three victims in the chronological order of their mistreatment. If the story of Lysimachus' being cast to a lion is a twisting of the events at the famous lion-hunt in the forests of Bazaer a, the context was the Sogdian campaign of 328.85 The stabbing of his long-time friend Cleitus at a banquet in the late summer of 328 was the immediate and direct consequence of his opposition to talk about the

---


84 9.3 ext. 1.

85 Although Justin alleges that Alexander had Lysimachus exposed to a fierce lion because the latter had taken pity on Callisthenes during his punishment after the Pages' Conspiracy (15.3.6) this conflicts with the order of the three victims' fate in Curtius Rufus. Curtius (8.1.14-17) records that, in the most reliable version of the incident, Alexander ordered Lysimachus aside and killed the lion himself, and that the negative version derives from it. Valerius took the story from Pompeius Trogus (cf. Justin 15.3.7-8), who himself inherited it from a Hellenistic source, possibly Duris of Samos; see W. Heckel, *The Marshals of Alexander's Empire* (London 1992) 268-71. Lysimachus survived.
deification of Alexander,\textsuperscript{86} the execution of Callisthenes in 327, on the grounds of his involvement in the Pagen's Conspiracy, was a more oblique consequence of his opposition to proskynēsis.\textsuperscript{87}

Valerius did not have Appian's benefit of hindsight, who could summarise nearly two centuries of Roman practice of deifying dead emperors, 'Romānum tūn ekástote tūn ārkhin tūn ārkhina, īn miā tūkhī tyrannikō̂s ἐν ἐπιμήκτος, ἀποθανύστα ἐξοίκιζ̣n',\textsuperscript{88} but knew that for the Romans deification was the reward for virtues and merit. Augustus himself could make the joke to Tiberius after deliberately losing while gambling \textit{benignitas mea ad caelestem gloriam effert}, but underlying this was a sober understanding of the Roman approach to deification.\textsuperscript{89} Indeed Valerius himself, in the highly rhetorical introduction to the final chapter of his material on virtues, \textit{Quae cuique magnifigent}, connects as the most conspicuous example of the \textit{praemia virtutis et operum} Augustus' elevation to divine status: \textit{cui ascensus in caelum putet, quaevis maxima, debito tamen minora sunt quae in terris tribuantur.}\textsuperscript{90} A complex character such as Alexander, who in Valerius' presentation at least displayed as many vices as virtues, might find deification harder to achieve than either Augustus or Valerius' Tiberius - little did he know (or choose to conjecture) about the latter's fate.\textsuperscript{91}

---

\textsuperscript{86} According to Curtius Rufus (8.42), Cleitus' verbal attack on Alexander at Maracanda culminated with mockery of the oracle by which Alexander called himself the son of Zeus, according to Arrian (\textit{Anab.} 4.8.1-3), the quarrel began as Cleitus rebutted the flattery of those who claimed that Alexander's exploits surpassed those of Castor, Pollux and Hercules. The details are plausible and, despite its chronological displacement in Arrian's account, is based on first-hand sources; Bosworth (note 14) 99-103. For a fundamentally political explanation, see Heckel (note 85) 36-37, and for the addition of personal anger at the ridiculing of his brother-in-law at the symposium, see E.D. Carney, 'The death of Cleitus', \textit{GRBS} 22 (1981) 157-58.

\textsuperscript{87} For Callisthenes' role at the Bactra symposium, see above. Although his involvement in the plot was not proved, he was tortured and crucified (\textit{Anab.} 4.14.3; Curt. Ruf. 8.8.21) and his treatment was notoriously severe; see Bosworth (note 27) 114; for the various versions of his death, see Heckel (note 85) 270.

\textsuperscript{88} App. \textit{BC} 2.148.

\textsuperscript{89} Suet. \textit{D.} 71.3. See Gradel (note 65) 281-82.

\textsuperscript{90} 8.15 \textit{praef}. On the structural significance of this passage, see Weidler (note 2) 15 n. 51. Further aspects are discussed by Mueller (note 4) 17-18, 79-80.

\textsuperscript{91} Cf. Suet. \textit{Tib.} 75.1-2.
Conclusion

Valerius' Alexander is the most prominent Greek among his exemplars and the characters with whom they interacted. While Alexander exhibits a mixture of virtues and vices, in Valerius' presentation the latter are demonstrably predominant. Valerius composed his Alexander, as far as we can tell, from easily accessible sources such as Cicero's philosophical works and Pompeius Trogus' *Historiae Philippiae* rather than his own researches. Moreover, although he preserves some *exempla* without extant parallels, he adds little to our knowledge of Alexander. Nonetheless, Valerius' treatment of two themes relating to issues in particular, world-conquest and ruler-cult, reflects light on his own day. Valerius, the proud Roman and supporter of the current imperial dispensation, can, through the multifaceted figure of Alexander, assert the greater achievement of the Roman empire and the greater merits of her imperial rulers. For the loyal Valerius (as for Strabo), Tiberius' termination of further imperial expansion was not incompatible with the notion that Rome already ruled the world. Moreover, the character and achievements of Augustus and Tiberius won for them secure divinity, unshadowed by excessive harshness and unbolstered by demeaning cultic impositions.
Acta Classica

Acta Classica is published annually by the Classical Association of South Africa. The journal has been in production since 1958. It is listed on both the ISI and the SAPSE list of approved publications.

For further information go to: