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## How to Satisfy Everyone: Diverse Readerly Expectations and Multiple Authorial *Personae* in Arrian's *Anabasis*

In his *Ars Rhetorica*, Aristotle warns the aspiring speakers of his age that a rhetor is always invited to convince many different categories of listeners through the same words. The philosopher refers to the differences between three kinds of audiences – the young, the old, and the middle-aged – with regard to their character and mentality (*Rh.* 1388b-1390b). Although Aristotle focuses in this passage on the age of the listeners, there are of course several other criteria for differentiating an ancient audience, such as social and financial status, personal interests, sympathies or aversions, education, or even the place of residence. When Pericles exhorted the Athenians to rely on their Long Walls and not to spare their land about to be devastated by the Peloponnesians (Th. 1.143.3–5; 2.60–64), his advice must have sounded altogether more reasonable to an Athenian merchant than, say, to an Acharnian who based the prosperity of his *oikos* on this land itself.

Aristotle's thoughts are suggestive of the high importance allocated to the heterogeneity of the audience in the eyes of ancient rhetors, and this far the *Ars Rhetorica* is indeed useful for a student of ancient rhetoric. How relevant, though, can such speculations be to another literary genre of antiquity, classical historiography? Is there any gain from asking whether an ancient historiographer took into consideration the diversity of his readership to the same degree as a public speaker did with his audience? Most importantly, did such speculations determine the historian's choices in content and style, at the level of both narrative arrangement and vocabulary? In this paper, by elaborating on Arrian and his *Anabasis of Alexander*, I will answer these questions in the affirmative, by arguing that Arrian has a close eye on the various preconceptions and expectations of a heterogeneous audience.

In trying to apprehend how readerly diversity impacted upon Greek historiography of the Imperial Era, Flavius Arrian's *Anabasis of Alexander* can serve for us as a highly illuminating starting point. Arrian, just like all Greek authors of the Second Sophistic, was particularly concerned about the impression his writings would make for many different kinds of readers. In his case, the Bithynian intellectual wished for his work to impress both his literate compatriots and his Roman readers (including the emperor himself), enabling him to develop his political career in the Roman world. In this respect, the *Anabasis* had to meet the stylistic, ideological, and political specifications of its intellectual environment and to present Arrian as a gifted writer and avid connoisseur of the Attic literature of the glorious Greek

past.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the very subject of the *Anabasis* targeted further disparate and very often colliding categories of readers. By undertaking the narration of the exploits of Alexander the Great, Arrian was initiating a dialogue with both the admirers of the Macedonian conqueror and those who criticized his vanity.<sup>2</sup> Last but not least, the double generic character of this work, drawing from classical historiography (as emblemized by Herodotus and Thucydides) as well as the biographical and encomiastic tradition of Xenophon and Isocrates,<sup>3</sup> invited not only eagle-eyed readers with regard to the critical scrutiny of data but also an audience which expected nothing more than the chance to satisfy their curiosity for anecdotes on Alexander's life.

In this context, the present paper will deal with four levels on which we discern Arrian's effort to affiliate himself with, or to oppose himself to, one or sometimes multiple of the likely categories of readers mentioned above. The levels, or aspects, in question are (a) Arrian's use of epic allusions; (b) his criticism of Alexander; (c) geographical descriptions; and (d) his use of religious myths. The following analysis will stress the consciously rhetorical nature of the *Anabasis*, which is captured above all in Arrian's visible efforts to satisfy many different expectations of his readers by using multiple authorial and ideological masks at the same time. The main focus of this study will thus be an examination of Arrian's rhetoric (through the means of narrative and stylistic techniques) by which he manages to satisfy these various readerly expectations.

## 1 Arrian's use of epic allusions

In undertaking the composition of Alexander's literary portrait, Arrian was no doubt invited to satisfy a heterogeneous readership which would often comprise conflicting expectations. With regard to his use of epic allusions, the readers of earlier and contemporary literature on Alexander were, on the one hand, fully accustomed with his identification with epic figures – above all, Achilles – and generally with the heroising representation of his feats. On the other hand, sources ranging from the Hellenistic Era up to Arrian's time betray readers' aversion to the inordinate use of poetic

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1 For the efforts by Greek intellectuals of the Imperial Era to construct their identity by connecting themselves with the Greek past, and for the political dimension of these efforts, see, as a selection, Anderson 1993; Gleason 1995; Swain 1996, 4–13, 65–100; Goldhill 2001b, 8, 13–20; Preston 2001, 88–93 (with a special focus on Plutarch); Jones 2004; Whitmarsh 2005, 10–40; Wyss 2017. In particular for Arrian, see Swain 1996, 242–248; Carlsen 2014.

2 For ancient sources and bibliography, see Section 2 of this paper.

3 On Herodotus', Thucydides', and Xenophon's influence on Arrian in terms of style, scope and narrative arrangement, see Meyer 1877; Doulcet 1882; Boehner 1885; Grundmann 1885; Stadter 1981; Tonnet 1988. On the encomiastic orientation of the work, see Fears 1974, 122–123; Brunt 1977, 36–44; *HCA* I, 15–16; Stadter 1980, 89–114; Burliga 2013, 7–13. On the rhetoric schemes drawn by Arrian from the laudatory literature of the past and from that of his age, see Bosworth 1988, 135–156; *AAA* II, 658–665.

and epic elements in historical works. We need *not always* have in mind two different categories of readership, namely those who enjoyed reading epic descriptions and those who did not. Rather, these connote two divergent kinds of expectations which very often coexist in the mind of one and the same reader. The inclusion of epic elements had developed into a typical feature of classical historiography from Herodotus to Arrian,<sup>4</sup> and the continuation of this practice should also partly be attributed, apart from the authors' need to imitate and emulate traditional narrative models, to the popularity of the epic descriptions among the contemporary readership. Nonetheless, this does not entail that ancient readers did not expect the historians to avoid exaggeration or licence in the exploitation of epic motifs.

The Homeric 'plating' of the histories of Alexander constitutes an idiosyncratic sub-category of the general practice of incorporating epic elements into historiography. This feature stemmed from Alexander's admiration of the Homeric heroes and his desire to be compared with them.<sup>5</sup> Ancient readers were familiar with stories of Alexander's origins traced back to both Achilles (through his son, Neoptolemus) and the Trojans (through Neoptolemus' marriage to Andromache).<sup>6</sup> Equally popular was the comparison between Alexander and Achilles.<sup>7</sup> The Macedonian king was also presented as speaking the language of the Homeric heroes, while one further *topos* was the epic battle descriptions, which were aimed at foregrounding the king's bravery and military skills.<sup>8</sup>

The authors just cited already reveal that the connection of Alexander with the Homeric world was a common *topos* in sundry literary genres (history, geography, biography, and rhetorical exercises). The extraordinary durability of this association through time, and its simultaneous presence in a number of genres, suggests, if anything, its popularity with ancient readers. One may feel the ancient authors' fear

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4 For ancient views on the relationship between Thucydides and Homer, see Grossi 2016. On Homer and historiography, see collectively the most general and seminal studies of Strasburger 1972 and Rengakos 2006. On Homer and Herodotus, see collectively Caskey 1941–42; Armayor 1977–78; Hollmann 2000; Bakker 2002; Boedeker 2002; Pelling 2006; Kim 2010; Wesselmann 2011; Grethlein 2012. For bibliography on Homer and Thucydides, see Liotsakis 2017, 15–16 n. 56. On Homer and Xenophon, see Howie 1996; Tsaggalis 2002; Yamagata 2012.

5 Arrian 7.14.4. For further ancient sources testifying this view and for further discussion on this subject, see Erskine 2001, 49 n. 13 and 229–232; Zeitlin 2001, 201–202.

6 On Alexander's Molossian descent, see Str. 13.1.27; Paus. 1.11.1; Plu. *Alex.* 2.1. On Lysimachus, Aristotle and his special edition of the *Iliad*, see Plu. *Alex.* 5.8 and 8.2; Ps. Call. 3.4E; *FGrH* 134 F 38.

7 On Alexander as the 'new Achilles', see Tarn 1948 II, 57; Edmunds 1971, 369–376 and 383; Hölscher 1971, 25–27; Brunt 1976, 464–466; Bosworth 1988b, 19–20 and 281–283; Ameling 1988; Mossman 1988 and 1992; Stewart 1993, 78–86; Cohen 1995; Baynham 2001; Koulakiotis 2006, 204–207.

8 See, for instance, Callisthenes (*FGrH* 124), F 25, F 28, F 31, F 32, F 35; *FGrH* 138 F 11 = Arr. *An.* 4.24.3–5 on Ptolemy's *aristeia*; the epic elements in the military narrative of Hegesias of Magnesia (*FGrH* 142, F 5); Plu. *Alex.* 15.8–9 on Alexander's admiration of Achilles' friendships and glory; Curt. 4.6.29, where Alexander drags Betis' body with his chariot as Achilles did Hector's body; Curt. 8.4.26, for a parallelization between Alexander's relationship with Rhoxane and Achilles' with Briseïs. For further parallels, see Chapter IV 'Arrian *Homericus*: Alexander, the epic hero' of Liotsakis 2019a.

that, if they avoid even the slightest connection of Alexander with the epic realm, their reference to him would be deemed lacunose, somehow insufficient or less attractive. This insecurity was certainly the imposition of ongoing readerly demands. Especially with regard to Arrian's age, the connection forged between the greatest Greek conqueror and the Homeric heroes, as originators of most glorious martial ideals of Greece, satisfied the Greeks' need to forget for a moment the fact that they were under Roman occupation and to feel again connected not merely with their glorious past (Alexander) but also with its most brilliant roots (Homer).<sup>9</sup>

On the other hand, the heroization of Alexander and the Macedonians by means of Homeric allusions often disappointed the audience's expectations for historical reliability. In his treatise *How to Write History*, Lucian opposes the unrestrained use of epic elements in laudatory contexts. Lucian argues that such elements distract history from its true goal, namely the faithful representation of truth (*Hist. Conscr.* 8–9). Within the framework of this criticism, Lucian cites an anecdote about Aristobulus, one of Arrian's two principal sources for the *Anabasis*. While exploring India, the story goes, and after reading Aristobulus' fictive account of the single combat between himself and Porus, Alexander threw the book into the river, saying to Aristobulus: "You deserve the same treatment, Aristobulus, for fighting single-handed duels for my sake like that and killing elephants with one throw of the javelin" (*Hist. Conscr.* 12).<sup>10</sup> Elsewhere, Alexander is presented as equally critical of another aspiring 'Homer', when he says to his anonymous chronicler that he would rather choose to be Thersites in Homer's *Iliad* than being Achilles in this author's epic (*FGrH* 72 T 27). Whether Alexander's criticism is aimed at the author's stylistic flaws or the distortive nature of his account, the anecdote is evidently colored with a derogatory tone towards his own epicising self-characterisation.

The passages from Lucian in particular, a contemporary of Arrian, indicate that Lucian was invited to write for – and train through his writings – readers who would have more demanding expectations towards the extent and quality of the Homeric elements to be found in Alexander's portrait. This need for a moderate and studied use of epic allusions for credibility's sake had already been shaped since the Hellenistic Era. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE, Polybius openly castigates Callisthenes for distorting the historical truth in his narrative of the battle at Gaugamela by fabricating epic scenes of fighting, such as the one between Alexander and Darius looking for each other in the battlefield (Plb. 12.22 = *FGrH* 124 F35).<sup>11</sup>

Arrian endeavored throughout the *Anabasis* to convey a balanced impression to the reader of his epic delineation of Alexander. His interest is most squarely focused simultaneously both on a need for reliability and on presenting the epic nature of

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<sup>9</sup> Although in antiquity Homer was diachronically questioned as a historical authority, his prestige in the Imperial age as a poet and representative of the Greek glorious past is irrefutable. See, selectively, Zeitlin 2001; Kim 2010, 5–13.

<sup>10</sup> Translation by Kilburn 1959.

<sup>11</sup> Although Polybius' "criticism is again petty" (*HCP* II, 376).

events. Let us examine three test-cases from different parts of the work (Books I, VI, and VII).

To begin with, the very way that Arrian introduces the reader to his work betrays his intention to respect these two divergent – for readers such as Lucian – goals. The *Anabasis* has two prefaces, each of which satisfies one of these goals. In the First Preface, Arrian draws the readers' attention to the trustworthiness and validity of his method in collecting his historical materials, in part by deliberately alluding to the authorities of Herodotus and Thucydides. He opens his prologue with the Herodotean word ἀξιοφηγητότερα to refer to the stories he included in his work (*Pro.* § 1), echoing Herodotus' like-minded use of the word in the introductory parts in his work (*Hdt.* 1.16.2; 1.177; 2.137.5). Furthermore, the first words with which Arrian describes his account are the verb συνέγραψαν and the noun συγγραφῆν. These echo the verb ξυνέγραψε in Thucydides' preface (*Th.* 1.1.1) and the noun συγγραφῆ in Thucydides' opening remarks to his account on the Pentecontaetia (*Th.* 1.97.2).<sup>12</sup> Through these allusions Arrian relates his own methodology in terms of the collection of data and the composition of his account with those of the archetypal models of historiography, Herodotus and Thucydides. In this way, Arrian highlights the quality of his narrative as a historical work. This goal is also served by his programmatic clarifications to the reader of the criteria by which he has assessed the various sources he had at his disposal (*Pro.* §§ 1–2).<sup>13</sup>

In a strikingly different vein, in the Second Preface Arrian's interest shifts towards the laudatory dimension of his account. The historian confesses to the reader that he aspires to glorify the magnitude of Alexander's exploits as Homer did those of Achilles, and he audaciously chooses to present himself as Alexander's Homer when the king arrives at Troy.<sup>14</sup> What is more, the author introduces himself with epic language (1.12.5):

ὅστις δὲ ὦν ταῦτα ὑπὲρ ἑμαυτοῦ γινώσκω, τὸ μὲν ὄνομα οὐδὲν δέομαι ἀναγράψαι, οὐδὲ γὰρ οὐδὲ ἀγνωστον ἐς ἀνθρώπους ἐστίν, οὐδὲ πατρίδα ἣτις μοί ἐστιν οὐδὲ γένος τὸ ἐμόν, οὐδὲ εἰ δὴ τινα ἀρχὴν ἐν τῇ ἑμαυτοῦ ἦρξα' ἀλλ' ἐκεῖνο ἀναγράφω, ὅτι ἐμοὶ πατρίς τε καὶ γένος καὶ ἀρχαὶ οἶδε οἱ λόγοι εἰσὶ τε καὶ ἀπὸ νέου ἔτι ἐγένοντο.

Whoever I may be, this I know in my favor; I need not write my name, for it is not at all unknown among men, nor my country nor my family nor any office I may have held in my own land; this I do set on paper, that country, family, and offices I find and have found from my youth in these tales.

<sup>12</sup> On further narrative loans from Herodotus and Thucydides in Arrian's First Preface, see Stadter 1981, 158 ff.

<sup>13</sup> Stadter 1980, 60–62; *HCA* I, 43–44; *AAA* I, 301–304 and 301, with exhaustive bibliography.

<sup>14</sup> Stadter 1980, 63–65; *HCA* I, 104–107; *AAA* I, 345–350.

As already observed, the sentence ἐμοὶ πατρίς τε καὶ γένος καὶ ἀρχαὶ οἶδε οἱ λόγοι εἰσὶ τε καὶ ἀπὸ νέου ἔτι ἐγένοντο is an echo of Andromache's words to Hector (*Il.* 6.429–430):<sup>15</sup>

Ἔκτορ ἀτὰρ σὺ μοὶ ἔσσι πατὴρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ  
ἠδὲ κασίγνητος, σὺ δέ μοι θαλερός παρακοίτης.

Hector, thus you are father to me, and my honored mother,  
you are my brother, and you it is who are my young husband.

The presence of two prefaces, emphasizing the two goals of the work (reliability and heroization of Alexander's feats), clearly aims to introduce his readers to the two principles that determined the shaping of scenes and episodes of an epic nature: praise and scrutiny.

Arrian's effort to satisfy the ancient readers' twofold need for validity and epic coloring of the war narrative is also discernible in the episode of Alexander's heavy injury during the battle against the Malli (6.9.1–11.8). As a genuinely near-death experience in Alexander's distinguished career, this incident was repeated in many anecdotes and dramatized in many epic descriptions. The surviving sources (Diodorus of Sicily, Plutarch, and Arrian) reveal to us the ancient authors' eagerness to satisfy their readership's expectations for the inclusion of Homeric elements. Plutarch refers to the shimmering glow that emanated from Alexander's shield and struck his enemies with awe. In this depiction Plutarch creates a strong connection between the Macedonian king and Achilles, given that in the *Iliad* the word σέλας, denoting the bright shine of a hero's armor, is used exclusively for Achilles.<sup>16</sup> Diodorus, for his part, creates an echo between Alexander's thoughts and Hector's thoughts in battle.<sup>17</sup>

Arrian states that his purpose in narrating this event is to clarify once and for all which of those glorifying stories were valid and which were not. Again, the Thucydidean phrasing aims at highlighting the author's concern with the reliability of his account. At the same time, the fashioning of the authorial 'I' as a scrupulous researcher again coexists with a respect held towards the traditional epic orientation of the stories on this event. According to Arrian, Alexander (6.9.5):

ἔγνω δὲ ὅτι αὐτοῦ μὲν μένων κινδυνεύσει μηδὲν ὅ τι καὶ λόγου ἄξιον ἀποδεικνύμενος, καταπηδήσας δὲ εἶσω τοῦ τείχους τυχὸν μὲν αὐτῷ τούτῳ ἐκπλήξει τοὺς Ἴνδους, εἰ δὲ μή, καὶ κινδυνεύειν δέοι, μεγάλα ἔργα καὶ τοῖς ἔπειτα πυθέσθαι ἄξια ἐργασάμενος οὐκ ἀσπουδεὶ ἀποθανεῖται – ταῦτα γνοὺς καταπηδᾷ ἀπὸ τοῦ τείχους ἐς τὴν ἄκραν.

<sup>15</sup> Brunt 1976, 53 n. 4; Moles 1985, 166; Bosworth 1988, 33; Gray 1990, 181 n. 7; Swain 1996, 244; *AAA* I, 349.

<sup>16</sup> *Il.* 18.214; *Il.* 19.15–17; *Il.* 19.366–374; *Il.* 19.379. On the epic elements in Plutarch's portrait of Alexander, see Mossman 1988.

<sup>17</sup> D.S. 17.99.1 // *Hom. Il.* 22.105.

[sc. He] realized that by remaining where he was he would be in danger, while not even performing any deed of note, but if he leapt down within the wall he might perhaps by this very action strike the Indians with panic but, if not and danger was inevitable, he might do great deeds, worth hearing to men of later generations, and that glory would attend his death. On this decision he leapt down from the wall into the citadel.

Alexander's thoughts resemble Hector's words in *Il.* 22.304–305:<sup>18</sup>

μη μὲν ἀσπουδί γε καὶ ἀκλειῶς ἀπολοίμην,  
ἀλλὰ μέγα ῥέξας τι καὶ ἐσσομένοισι πυθέσθαι.

Let me at least not die without a struggle, inglorious,  
But do some big thing first, that men to come shall know of it.

Now, it is equally interesting to examine to what degree this emphasis on the Homeric flavor of the episode affected the way Arrian made use of his sources. In the paragraphs following the description of Alexander's *aristeia*, Arrian makes a digression in which he tries to correct some points of misinformation. The historian here proclaims the authority of his work, a proclamation intensified, as said above, by the Thucydidean echo ἀταλαίπωρον at the end of the digression (6.11.8; cf. Th. 1.20.3). This verbal loan suggests that the *Anabasis* was the result of assiduous research and sound acumen, while simultaneously inviting its readers to be equally careful and prudent when reading such stories.

In particular, Arrian touches upon three subjects. First, the details on the number and gravity of Alexander's wounds: while many say that Alexander received first a blow to the head, Arrian follows Ptolemy's version that the king was hurt only in the chest. We can observe a contrast between the many unreliable historians and the dependable Ptolemy. This contrast, resembling the first proem, signals Arrian's intention to convince his readers of the reliability of his account.<sup>19</sup> There is a similar juxtaposition involving two further topics, first the exact place of the battle and second whether Ptolemy was present or not. While some wrote that Ptolemy was the one who removed the arrow from Alexander's chest, Ptolemy himself explains that at that very moment he was conquering other tribes elsewhere (6.11.8).<sup>20</sup>

In comparison with his punctilio on these details, Arrian's indifference with regard to the accuracy of his information in the case of one of the protagonists in the episode, Abreas, is striking. Although Arrian admits that it is not clear whether Abreas stood by Alexander or not (6.11.7),<sup>21</sup> he still takes advantage of the testimonies

<sup>18</sup> Cf. AAA II, 531; Muckensturm-Pouille 2010, 277–279.

<sup>19</sup> AAA II, 535.

<sup>20</sup> For this passage, see also Stadter 1980, 70.

<sup>21</sup> The other sources do not mention this man. D.S. (17.99.4) includes only Peucestas; Plu. (*Alex.* 63) records that the man who died protecting Alexander was named Limnaeus and not Abreas; Curt. (9.5.14–15) names Peucestas, Timaeus, Leonnatus, and Aristonus. Among them, Timaeus was the one who died.

by including this man in the episode in order to compose a clearly Homeric scene of his death (6.10.1): “shot with an arrow in the face” (τοξευθεῖς ἐς τὸ πρόσωπον). Abreas’ case characteristically exemplifies the way in which Arrian’s intention to add epic coloring to his account was reconciled with his need for accuracy.

The same technique is discernible in the account of Alexander’s mourning of Hephaestion. Arrian opens his narration with the typical words ἔνθα δὴ καὶ ἄλλοι ἄλλα ἀνέγραψαν (7.14.2), which, just as in the First Preface and in Alexander’s *aristeia* against the Malli, show to the reader that Arrian will adopt a critical and scrutinizing attitude towards the information he will report.<sup>22</sup> This preparation of the reader is confirmed immediately as Arrian hastens to make clear that those who circulated many of these anecdotes were not motivated by their need to discover and disseminate the truth, but by their desire to accuse or absolve Alexander of improprieties he committed in his immoderate sorrow for the death of his friend (7.14.2–3). With this in mind, Arrian records the following information on Alexander’s mourning, which can be categorized in the following way:

*i.* Stories that Arrian neither accepts nor rejects. This material concerns the length of time that Alexander remained lying over Hephaestion’s body and his decision to execute Glaucias, the doctor who was deemed responsible for Hephaestion’s death (7.14.3–4). *ii.* Those stories that depict Alexander as imitating Achilles (cutting off his hair, etc.), which Arrian accepts, in the belief that Alexander may well have wanted to honor Hephaestion by imitating Achilles (7.14.4). *iii.* Rumors that present Alexander as behaving like a madman and/or in a hubristic fashion. For example, the king is said to have ordered the temple of Asclepius at Ecbatana to be razed to the ground. Arrian rejects this information because, in his view, this deed does not fit well with Alexander’s character. It resembles instead Xerxes’ whipping of the Hellespont (7.14.5). *iv.* Information offered by all sources. In light of Arrian’s statement in the First Preface that stories related by the majority of sources should be deemed more trustworthy, we may conclude that Arrian indeed believes such anecdotes on Alexander’s mourning. These anecdotes comprise the following: Alexander mourns for three days without eating; he orders the barbarians to participate in the mourning; he does not change the name of Hephaestion’s chiliarchy; and he plans to hold athletic and musical games in honor of Hephaestion (7.14.8–10).

At first glance it might seem that Arrian aims here to distinguish historical truth from fictive stories. However, in looking more closely at Arrian’s categorization of the anecdotes, we will see that the criterion by which he accepts or rejects the sources in this case is not only the degree to which they are mostly or completely in agreement with each other, but also whether they portray Alexander in a positive or negative

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *Pro.*: ἄλλοι μὲν δὴ ἄλλα ὑπὲρ Ἀλεξάνδρου ἀνέγραψαν, [...] ἀλλ’ ἐμοὶ Πτολεμαῖός τε καὶ Ἀριστόβουλος πιστότεροι ἔδοξαν; 1.11.2: καὶ ἄλλοι ἄλλα ἐπεθείαζον τῶν μάντεων, Ἀρίστανδρος δέ; 4.14.4: πολλὰ δὲ καὶ ἄλλα ὑπὲρ τούτων αὐτῶν ἄλλοι ἄλλως ἀφηγήσαντο, ἀλλ’ ἐμοὶ ταῦτα ἀποχρῶντα ἔστω ἀναγεγραμμένα, where the ἄλλοι ἄλλα undervalues the validity of the opinion of the many in contrast to one single individual’s reliability.



fashion. Stories that present the king as behaving like a madman, being disrespectful to the gods, or showing arrogance towards men, are rejected, while those which stress his pain and piety and thereby cause the readers' sympathy and admiration are accepted.

In this spirit, Arrian seems to accept an anecdote that draws a parallel between Alexander's love for Hephaestion and Achilles' love for Patroclus. On his way to Babylon, Alexander meets envoys from many Greek cities, including Epidaurus. According to the sources, Alexander satisfied the Epidaurians' requests and gave them a votive offering to take back to Asclepius, telling them (7.14.6):

καίπερ οὐκ ἐπιεικῶς κέχρηταί μοι ὁ Ἀσκληπιός, οὐ σώσας μοι τὸν ἐταῖρον ὄντινα ἴσον τῆ ἐμαυτοῦ κεφαλῇ ἦγον.

Yet Asclepius has not been kind to me, in failing to save for me the comrade whom I valued as much as my life.

Alexander's phrasing ἴσον τῆ ἐμαυτοῦ κεφαλῇ echoes Achilles' words ἴσον ἐμῇ κεφαλῇ in *Il.* 18.82 (in mourning Patroclus).<sup>23</sup> This anecdote demonstrates Alexander's love for Hephaestion and his respect for the gods even during hard times in his life. Arrian invites us here to sympathize with Alexander and admire him for his piety and humanity in the face of adversity. In this way, this episode is used by Arrian as a counterargument against those who claim that Alexander had been disrespectful to Asclepius. What is more, as in the case of the Malli, the culmination of epic elements in Alexander's words to the Epidaurians matches with Arrian's superficial respect for historiographical conscientiousness.

## 2 Criticisms of Alexander

Arrian's efforts to satisfy the differing expectations of his audience are also evident in the way he castigates Alexander's choices. On the one hand, the historian gives serious consideration to the traditional criticism of some debated aspects of Alexander's character. On the other hand, he seems to be particularly cautious in expressing his complaints against Alexander, paying special attention to the restrictions 'imposed' by his contemporary Roman political environment.

Negative reactions towards Alexander's choices are traceable in a variety of sources, stemming already from the Hellenistic Era. We find pejorative comments on Alexander's arrogance and his immoderate lust for conquests in the texts of Stoics such as Seneca (*Ben.* 2.16.2), Quintilian (*Inst.* 1.1.9), Clement of Alexandria (*Paed.* 1.7.55), and Cicero (*Off.* 1.26.90). The Macedonian king's ethical flaws gradually became *topoi* in Greco-Roman literature, as testified by sundry passages from Latin

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23 AAA II, 609.

works.<sup>24</sup> By Arrian's age, every writer who chose Alexander and his career as a subject matter was invited to adopt a position, either covertly or openly, on the popular debate surrounding the ambivalent features of the king's character. Arrian was no exception to this rule.<sup>25</sup>

On the other hand, the exercise of aiming criticisms against a king of the past was far from a safe practice in Rome. There are several examples of poets and prose writers who lost their lives because their works were interpreted as covert attacks against the Emperor. In Tiberius' reign, a poet was sentenced to death because he presented in a tragedy Agamemnon as a tyrant.<sup>26</sup> Again under Tiberius, the historian Aulus Cremutius Cordus faced the same fate for extolling Brutus and Cassius.<sup>27</sup> Three quarters of a century later, Helvidius Priscus the younger lost his life for writing a farce about Paris and Oenone, since his work was taken as an irony towards Domitian's divorce.<sup>28</sup>

Now, after his lifelong experience of Roman political life, Arrian must have been well aware of the dangers that his criticisms against Alexander could pose for the Roman aristocracy if read as an implicit attack against monarchy or, even worse, against the Emperor. Nor did he merely suspect that his oeuvre would be read by Roman politicians and the Emperor; this was in fact one of his purposes in writing his works. To mention only a few examples that signal this, after his circumnavigation of the Euxinus Pontus around 131 AD, he wrote a *Periplous* of the coastline and offered it as a gift to his friend and Emperor Hadrian. Some years later, inspired very plausibly by his success against the Alani during his legateship of Cappadocia (c. 135 AD), he wrote his *Ἑκταξίς κατὰ Ἀλάνων*, a work on the battle arrangements against the Alani. What is more, both Photius and *Suda Lexicon* testify that he received some of his offices, including his consulship of c. 129/130 AD, due to his prestige as a literate man.<sup>29</sup> Although both sources are admittedly doubtful, I would agree with the view that "Arrian's military and cultural activities were concomitant".<sup>30</sup> Such an author could hardly ignore the danger of being misinterpreted by the Roman elite at points where his criticisms against Alexander would inevitably touch upon issues of monarchy.

In what follows, let us examine an episode in which Arrian is clearly shown to engage with the traditional debate concerning Alexander's flaws, which simultaneously demonstrates his respect to the institution of monarchy. This is the episode

<sup>24</sup> For a discussion of these as well as further sources, see Fear's (1974) excellent discussion. Cf. Brunt 1977.

<sup>25</sup> See Burliga (2013), who has recently offered a very comprehensive discussion of the way that Arrian opens a dialogue with the contemporary debate of Alexander's character.

<sup>26</sup> Suet. *Tib.* 61.3; D.C. 58.24.3–4.

<sup>27</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 4.34; D.C. 57.24.2–3; Suet. *Tib.* 61.3; *Cal.* 16.1; Sen. *Ad Marc.* 1.2.4; Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.104. <sup>28</sup> Suet. *Dom.* 10.3. For all three examples, see Fears 1974, 124–125.

<sup>29</sup> Phot. 17b 15–17; Suid. s.v. Ἀρριανός.

<sup>30</sup> Bosworth 1972, 165.

on the murder of Clitus in Book IV. Here is a summary of the unit: during a symposium in honor of the Dioscuri, some fellow diners were flattering Alexander by claiming that both the Dioscuri's feats as well as those of Hercules and Philip were far inferior to his own achievements. Clitus, who had always opposed Alexander's embracing of eastern customs, began to attack Alexander under the influence of wine, arguing that such boasts were hubristic towards the gods, an insult to Philip, and did not reflect the truth. At the height of his outburst, Clitus raised his right hand and shouted at Alexander that this was the hand that had saved him in the battle of the River Granicus, and not his divine origins. Finally, Alexander, unable to control his anger and similarly intoxicated, took a spear and killed Clitus (4.8.1–9.6). After making some comments exculpating Alexander and laying the blame on Clitus, Arrian mentions that a flatterer of Alexander, Anaxarchus of Abdera, observing how disconsolate the king was after his action, comforted him by saying that whatever a king does is just.

The apologetic coloring of this episode is indisputable. Alexander is presented as being regretful of his deed and is somewhat vindicated in the eyes of the reader due to Clitus' effrontery. Furthermore, the king, immediately after killing Clitus, tries to kill himself as well and cries for days for having killed one of his dearest friends.<sup>31</sup> However, once again, Arrian tries to maintain a balance between his intention to delineate a favorable portrait of Alexander and the demands of those readers who are disposed to castigate Alexander's arrogance. As for the Alexander 'haters', Arrian affiliates with them by opening his account of Clitus' death with the following words (*An.* 4.7.5–8.1):

καὶ τὰ Ἀλεξάνδρου μεγάλα πράγματα ἐς τεκμηρίωσιν τίθεμαι ὡς οὔτε τὸ σῶμα ὄτω εἶη καρτερόν, οὔτε ὅστις γένοι ἐπιφανής, οὔτε κατὰ πόλεμον εἰ δὴ τις διευτυχοίη ἔτι μᾶλλον ἢ Ἀλέξανδρος, οὐδὲ εἰ τὴν Λιβύην τις πρὸς τῇ Ἀσίᾳ, καθάπερ οὖν ἐπενόει ἐκεῖνος, ἐκπεριλεύσας κατάσχοι, οὐδὲ εἰ τὴν Εὐρώπην ἐπὶ τῇ Ἀσίᾳ τε καὶ Λιβύῃ τρίτην, τούτων πάντων οὐδέν τι ὄφελος ἐς εὐδαιμονίαν ἀνθρώπου, εἰ μὴ σωφρονεῖν ἐν ταύτῳ ὑπάρχοι τούτῳ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ τῷ τὰ μεγάλα, ὡς δοκεῖ, πράγματα πράξαντι. ἔνθα δὴ καὶ τὸ Κλείτου τοῦ Δρωπίδου πάθημα καὶ τὴν Ἀλεξάνδρου ἐπ' αὐτῷ ξυμφορὰν, εἰ καὶ ὀλίγον ὕστερον ἐπράχθη, οὐκ ἔξω τοῦ καιροῦ ἀφηγήσομαι.

[...] I take it that nothing is clearer proof than Alexander's great successes of the truth that neither bodily strength in anyone, nor distinction of birth, nor continuous good fortune in war, greater even than Alexander's – no matter if a man were to sail out right round Libya as well as Asia and subdue them, as Alexander actually thought of doing, or were to make Europe, with Asia and Libya, a third part of his empire – that not one of all these things is any contribution to man's happiness, unless the man whose achievements are apparently so great were to possess at the same time command of his own passions. At this point it will not be unseasonable to relate also the death of Clitus son of Dropides and what happened to Alexander after it.

<sup>31</sup> On the apologetic tone of this account as well as of the entire digression of *An.* 4.8–14, see Brunt 1976, 532–544; Stadter 1980, 73–74; Hammond 1993, 241–242; *HCA* II, 96–97; *AAA* II, 414–415.

It has been rigorously argued that Arrian, in maintaining a critical stance towards Alexander, was influenced by the efforts of other historiographers in the Imperial era to stress the gradual corruption of the Roman emperors due to the great power they obtained by taking over the throne.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, we should not hasten to seek Arrian's influences *exclusively* in post-Classical literature. Examples such as those of Pausanias and Alcibiades suffice to prove that works elaborating on the prestigious Greek past, with which Arrian was familiar with, could have offered him equally striking models, thereby inspiring him to focus on the gradual corrosion of Alexander's character following his military success.<sup>33</sup> Besides, the more general issue of the inevitability of the fall of empires, that is also latent in Arrian's words, may have been a favorite subject of Imperial historiography, but it had also already been crystallised as a *topos* in the accounts of Arrian's classical models, Herodotus and Thucydides.<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, the contrast between a positive stance towards Alexander's vision to conquer the Persian Empire and the negativity towards the continuation of his expedition to India mirrors the feelings of many Macedonians who followed Alexander. This resentment of Alexander's local following for his imperialist aspirations was similarly deeply felt in the accounts of some of the earliest historians of Alexander, whom Arrian had certainly read.<sup>35</sup> So, even whilst in this case Arrian implicitly targets Roman monarchy, he also satisfies the traditional interest of the readers of historiography in the corruption of empires due to the power they come to enjoy. And, above these inherited factors, Arrian also engages with the traditional debate surrounding Alexander as an ethical exemplar.

At the same time, the episode of Clitus' murder is enlightening in terms of how Arrian's presentation of Alexander was shaped by the expectations of the Roman sociopolitical milieu. As demonstrated above, in the Imperial period, there was a constant production of works of all genres, written in both Greek and Latin, which aimed to expound and comment on the features of the ideal monarch. Arrian, who belonged to the intellectual elite of his age and was a conspicuous official of the Roman state and friend of the Emperor, characteristically endeavors to remind the Roman readership that he was more than familiar with, and respectful towards, this royal agenda. This strategy is exemplified by Arrian's criticism towards Alexander's flatterers (*An.* 4.8.3):

καί τινες τῶν παρόντων κολακεία τῆ Ἀλεξάνδρου, οἷοι δὴ ἄνδρες διέφθειράν τε αἰεὶ καὶ οὔποτε παύσονται ἐπιτρέβοντες τὰ τῶν αἰε βασιλέων πράγματα, κατ' οὐδὲν ἀξιοῦν συμβάλλειν Ἀλεξάνδρῳ τε καὶ τοῖς Ἀλεξάνδρου ἔργοις τὸν Πολυδεύκην καὶ τὸν Κάστορα.

<sup>32</sup> Schwartz *RE* II, 1, col. 1235. Cf. most recently Carlsen's (2016) illuminating thoughts and discussion of sources.

<sup>33</sup> For the connections that an ancient reader could make between Alexander, Pausanias, and Alcibiades, see Gribble 1999, 1–28.

<sup>34</sup> Burliga 2013.

<sup>35</sup> Arr. *An.* 7.14.2.

Some of the company, that type of men who always have spoiled and always will continue to harm the interests of the reigning monarch, out of flattery to Alexander, gave out as their opinion that there was no comparison between Castor and Pollux and Alexander and his achievements.

This is also the case in Arrian's castigation of Clitus' effrontery (*An.* 4.8.6 and 4.9.1):

οὐδὲ ἐγὼ ἐπαινῶ τὸν λόγον, ἀλλὰ ἱκανὸν γὰρ εἶναι τίθεμαι ἐν τοιᾷδε παροινίᾳ τὸ καθ' αὐτὸν σιγῶντα ἔχειν μηδὲ τὰ αὐτὰ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἐς κολακείαν πλημμελεῖν.

I do not commend Clitus either; I rather think it enough, amid such drunkenness, for a man to keep his own views to himself, and so avoid the errors of flattery of the rest.

Καὶ ἐγὼ Κλεῖτον μὲν τῆς ὕβρεως τῆς ἐς τὸν βασιλέα τὸν αὐτοῦ μεγαλωστὶ μέμφομαι

I myself strongly blame Clitus for his insulting behavior towards his king.

I would thus say that, in the Clitus episode, Arrian intends to affiliate simultaneously with three different categories of readers: Alexander's haters, his admirers, and the imperial Roman circle.

### 3 Geographical considerations

Arrian's simultaneous interest in miscellaneous readerly demands is also discernible in his rich exploitation and presentation of geographical information. Also at this level, the handling of one and the same subject often aims at juggling and satisfying simultaneously divergent expectations of the audience and, in doing so, at eliciting multi-levelled reactions. At this point, however, in order to render our analysis as comprehensible as possible, we need first express some thoughts about the degree to which Alexander's expedition in Asia, and the literary rendition of this subject, contributed to the enrichment of the geographical knowledge of an ancient readership and to the development of the genre of geography.

It is common knowledge that Alexander radically changed the Greco-Roman audience's view of the world. First, the Macedonians visited lands and peoples that were up to that time totally unknown to the West. Furthermore, after the conquest of the East, even well-known areas of Asia would no longer be treated as bereft of interest, simply by being remote and foreign parts of the earth. Those lands now started attracting the interest of peoples from the West too, as they were for the first time seen as an equal part of the Greco-Roman world.<sup>36</sup> The first historians of

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<sup>36</sup> Roller 2010, 6–7; Gehrke 2011; Dueck 2012, 12–13; Bianchetti 2013, 79–82; Engels 2013, 88; Gehrke 2016; *HTGGS*, 15.

Alexander combined in forming a massive production of works rich in ethnographic and geographic details about the newly conquered lands.<sup>37</sup>

This compositional fever during the Hellenistic Era reaches its peak in Eratosthenes' *Geography*, written in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE. Eratosthenes concluded that the readers of his age had to redefine their own view of the world. For him it was more than clear that Alexander's conquests and discoveries had permanently changed the contemporary audience's view of both the shape of the inhabited world and the distribution of its borders. The depiction of a new and greatly enlarged world-order thus emerged as one of the central goals of Eratosthenes' *Geography*<sup>38</sup> and his main sources for some areas of the world were the works of the first historians of Alexander themselves.<sup>39</sup>

Now, Arrian lived five centuries later than Eratosthenes, and by then a well-informed reader of Arrian's age was in a position to recognize that the geographic accounts found in the Hellenistic literature on Alexander were to a significant degree unreliable and outdated. Whether in order to magnify Alexander's and their own feats or to amuse their audience with exotic and sensational stories, these writers often distorted the geographic appearance of remote areas, altered their names, and offered exaggerated and 'caricatured' descriptions of the peoples they encountered during the expedition.<sup>40</sup>

Already in the Hellenistic period, Eratosthenes repeatedly warns his readers of the unreliability of such geographic and ethnographic descriptions and of their thinly veiled propagandistic goals (Arr. *An.* 5.3.1). Almost two centuries later, a similar kind of protectiveness shown by an author towards his readership is evident in Strabo's *Geography*. Strabo gives his readers alarm that, although the Scythians' territory extended mostly from the Danube to the Caspian Sea, including the areas crossed by the river Tanais (today, the Don), Alexander's historians, such as Polyclitus of Larissa, in their effort to argue that Alexander conquered these lands too, gave the river Jaxartes (today, the Syr Darya) the name 'Tanais' and identified it with the river Don, which was assumed to be the natural border between Europe and Asia (Str. 11.509–510 = *FGrH* 128, F 7). In this way, Alexander's victory over the Scythians on the banks of the Jaxartes was taken to prove that the Macedonian king conquered some parts of the area between the Black and the Caspian Seas. Now, as far as Arrian's age is concerned, we may mention Lucian's irony towards the incredible presentations of peoples in his *True Stories*, as well as Arrian's own derogatory comments on the fictive

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<sup>37</sup> On the geographical descriptions in the historical narrative tradition of Alexander, see, most recently, Bucciantini 2016 (on Nearchus, Onesicritus, Ptolemy, Aristobulus).

<sup>38</sup> On Eratosthenes' purposes in writing his *Geography*, see Roller 2010, 15–37.

<sup>39</sup> Roller 2010, 16–22.

<sup>40</sup> Arr. *An.* 5.3.1.

core of the Macedonian stories about the Amazons (*An.* 7.13.4–6), and his exotic *fabulae* about Indian fauna and flora (*An.* 5.4.3–4; *Ind.* 3.4–6; 5.10–6.3; 9.4; 15.7).<sup>41</sup>

Such examples suffice to delineate the atmosphere of suspicion in which the readers of the Imperial Era treated geographical literature. Eratosthenes, Strabo, Lucian, Arrian, and many other writers who displayed a similar attitude towards imprecise geographic accounts should not be seen *only* as researchers and writers but also as readers. They represent a certain category of readership, whose distinctive feature is their high education and literary competence. To judge from the fact that we find such reactions in sundry authors, it would not be arbitrary to conclude that, at least from the Hellenistic Era up to Arrian's time, literate readers had been developing a tendency to reveal to less informed readers the false character of the descriptions of the 'new world' in the first histories of Alexander.<sup>42</sup>

In what follows, we can elaborate on one case where Arrian seems to have taken advantage of the different levels of geographical competence of his readers, in order to simultaneously achieve multiple goals. Specifically, we will examine his attitude towards the false naming by the Macedonians of Mt. Hindu Kush. Alexander crossed Hindu Kush in the spring of 329 BCE, during his pursuit of Bessus, the murderer of Darius and aspiring usurper of Alexander's throne. Although the name of the mountain was at that time Parapamissus, the Macedonians named it Caucasus, deliberately identifying it in this way with the Caucasus in the Caspian Sea, where Hercules was said to have freed Prometheus. Furthermore, many other accounts of the mountain had stated that they also found the very cave where the semi-god freed the Titan. The purpose of the falsifiers – and of Alexander too, their instigator – was to magnify in the army's minds Alexander's successful crossing of the mountain range, by conveying the impression that Alexander superseded even Hercules, given that he reached beyond the places visited by the god.<sup>43</sup>

To compare Alexander's feats with those of Hercules and Dionysus was a common practice in Macedonian royal circles during the expedition. This was in part a convenient way for Alexander and his close environment to keep the soldiers' morale high and to convince them that the expedition should be continued Eastwards.<sup>44</sup> Indeed at that time, Alexander needed such inspiring stories more than ever before in his march into Asia. He had already stricken a decisive blow upon the Persian army in his victory at Gaugamela, and, most importantly, Darius was already dead.

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<sup>41</sup> On Arrian's attitude towards the fabulous nature of the literature on India, see Liotsakis 2018 and 2019b.

<sup>42</sup> Needless to say, the general practice of refuting one's predecessors has already been developed since Herodotus. Marincola's (1997) seminal study still remains an imposing benchmark for those studying this issue.

<sup>43</sup> *HCA* II, 214.

<sup>44</sup> On Alexander's relationship with Heracles, see also Hogarth 1887, 320, 326; Balsdon 1950, 377; Edmunds 1971, 372ff. On Alexander's use of Dionysus as a means to control both his men and the natives, see Bosworth 1996a, 121–126 and 1996b; Worthington 2014, 238–239.

Alexander was now the ruler of the Persian Empire, while the most powerful capitals of Asia had surrendered to him, offering him their treasures. All these successes had already combined to convey the impression to the soldiers that their hardships were coming to an end and that they would sooner or later be repatriated. However, Alexander had no intention to leave Asia, and with good reason. Bessus, satrap of Bactria and relative by blood to Darius, had rebelled against Alexander and was preparing an army of resistance to face the Macedonian forces. What is more, he had withdrawn to Bactria, northern of Hindu Kush, and lay there in waiting for Alexander. In order to leave Bessus no time to prepare the revolt, Alexander led his forces through the inhospitable highlands of Hindu Kush during spring, which made the crossing even harder for the Macedonians. The stories relating this crossing to Hercules' visit to the Caucasus of the Caspian Sea were thus aimed to console the Macedonian soldiers and convince them that they had not returned home yet – as their Greek companions of the Corinthian League had already done – but their labors would offer them individual and future *kleos*.

Arrian's first mention of the mountain comes in his narration of its crossing by Alexander and his men (3.28.4–7):

Ἐν τούτῳ δὲ Ἀλέξανδρος πρὸς τὸν Καύκασον τὸ ὄρος ἦγεν, ἵνα καὶ πόλιν ἔκτισε καὶ ὠνόμασεν Ἀλεξάνδρειαν· καὶ θύσας ἐνταῦθα τοῖς θεοῖς ὅσοις νόμος αὐτῷ ὑπερέβαλε τὸ ὄρος τὸν Καύκασον, σατράπην μὲν τῇ χώρᾳ ἐπιτάξας Προέξην, ἄνδρα Πέρσην, τῶν δὲ ἐταίρων Νειλόξενον τὸν Σατύρου ἐπίσκοπον ξὺν στρατιᾷ ἀπολιπών. τὸ δὲ ὄρος ὁ Καύκασος ὑψηλὸν μὲν ἐστὶν ὡσπερ τι ἄλλο τῆς Ἀσίας, ὡς λέγει Ἀριστόβουλος, ψιλὸν δὲ τὸ πολὺ αὐτοῦ τὸ γε ταύτη. μακρὸν γὰρ ὄρος παρατέταται ὁ Καύκασος, ὥστε καὶ τὸν Ταῦρον τὸ ὄρος, ὃς δὴ τὴν Κιλικίαν τε καὶ Παμφυλίαν ἀπείργει, ἀπὸ τοῦ Καυκάσου εἶναι λέγουσι καὶ ἄλλα ὄρη μεγάλα, ἀπὸ τοῦ Καυκάσου διακεκριμένα ἄλλη καὶ ἄλλη ἐπωνυμία κατὰ ἦθη τὰ ἐκάστων. ἀλλὰ ἔν γε τούτῳ τῷ Καυκάσῳ οὐδὲν ἄλλο ὅτι μὴ τέρμινθοι πεφυκάσι καὶ σίλφιον, ὡς λέγει Ἀριστόβουλος· ἀλλὰ καὶ ὡς ἐπωκεῖτο πολλοῖς ἀνθρώποις καὶ πρόβατα πολλὰ καὶ κτήνη ἐνέμοντο, ὅτι καὶ χαίρουσι τῷ σιλφίῳ τὰ πρόβατα, καὶ εἰ ἐκ πολλοῦ πρόβατον σιλφίου αἰσθοῖτο, καὶ θεῖ ἐπ' αὐτὸ καὶ τό τε ἄνθος ἐπιπέμεται καὶ τὴν ῥίζαν ἀνορύττον καὶ ταύτην κατεσθίει. ἐπὶ τῷδε ἐν Κυρήνῃ ὡς μακροτάτῳ ἀπελαύνουσι τὰς ποιμένας τῶν χωρίων, ἵνα αὐτοῖς τὸ σίλφιον φύεται. οἱ δὲ καὶ περιφράσσουσι τὸν χώρον, τοῦ μὴδὲ εἰ πελάσειεν αὐτῷ πρόβατα, δυνατὰ γενέσθαι εἴσω παρελθεῖν, ὅτι πολλοῦ ἄξιον Κυρηναίους τὸ σίλφιον.

Meanwhile Alexander led his army to Mount Caucasus, where he founded a city he called Alexandria. There he sacrificed to the gods to whom he customarily sacrificed, and then crossed the Mount Caucasus, appointing as satrap of the district Proexes, a Persian, with Niloxenes son of Satyrus, one of the Companions, as overseer in command of troops. Mount Caucasus, according to Aristobulus, is as high as any mountain in Asia; most of it is bare, at least on this side. In fact it is a long mountain range, so that they say that even Mount Taurus, which forms the boundary of Cilicia and Pamphylia, is really a part of Mount Caucasus as well as other great mountains which have been distinguished from Mount Caucasus by various names traditional among the different peoples. In this particular Mount Caucasus, however, nothing grows save terebinths and silphium according to Aristobulus. But even so it was inhabited by a large number of people and many flocks and herds grazed there, since the flocks like the silphium, and if they noticed it ever so far away they run to it, nibble its flower, and dig up and eat the root. For this reason in Cyrene they drive their flocks as far as possible from the places where their silphium grows;



some even hurdle off the area, so that even if the flocks approach they cannot get in, since silphium is very valuable to the Cyrenaeans.

Arrian seems to treat these consoling Macedonian accounts in a peculiar way, which has caused scholarly discomfort. As is stated from the passage just quoted, Arrian follows the Macedonians by naming the mountain Caucasus and without clarifying to the reader that the true name of the mountain was Parapamissus. In this way, the historian forces contemporary readers of limited geographical knowledge to believe – or at least to suspect – that the Macedonians visited the Caucasus of Heracles. Only in Book V and in his *Indikē* does he let the reader know that the name ‘Caucasus’ was in fact a fabrication of Macedonian propaganda and that the true name of the mountain range was ‘Parapamissus’. Nonetheless, he shares with the reader his intention to keep calling it ‘Caucasus’. Even for those readers of Arrian’s age who knew that the mountain was named Parapamissus, Arrian’s choice to follow the Macedonian name was certainly not a significant mistake. Since its fabrication, the name ‘Caucasus’ had been consolidated as an alternative for Parapamissus and is also found in geographical works such as that of Strabo.<sup>45</sup> Nonetheless, most of the other surviving sources except Arrian that name Hindu Kush as Caucasus explain to their readers that this nomenclature was a fabrication. A literate reader of Arrian’s age would thus very plausibly complain that Arrian should rather have offered his clarification about the fictive origins of the name in Book 3 and not in Book 5. The question is why he did not do so at the earlier point in his narrative.

It has been argued that Arrian, while composing Book 3, had not read Eratosthenes’ account on the Macedonians’ propaganda, and that he did so only when he reached at the point where he had to penetrate the Indian geography during the composition of Book V.<sup>46</sup> However, such a conclusion cannot stand. As Brunt writes, “*though aware of the facts* (my italics), A. prefers to use the nomenclature of his sources”,<sup>47</sup> an observation which is also suggested by the structural and stylistic resemblances of a certain part of the digression to one of those passages where Arrian admits his knowledge of the case (3.28.5):

<sup>45</sup> Arr. *An.* 5.3.1; Str. 2.5.39; 11.5.5; 15.1.11. For further ancient sources, see *HCA* II, 214, 217.

<sup>46</sup> Bosworth (*HCA* I, 10) takes Arrian’s silence about his own visit at Prometheus’ cave as all but confirmatory proof that he wrote the *Anabasis* before his visit to the alleged place of Prometheus’ punishment, which we learn about in *Peripl.* 11.5.

<sup>47</sup> Brunt 1976, 524. Cf. Schwartz *RE* II, 1, col. 1239, who considers ch. 3.28.5 as “die leicht zu erkennenden Eratosthenescitate”. Besides, to accept that Arrian was not aware of Eratosthenes’ text when composing ch. 3.28 presupposes that he read his sources in the course of his writing, which is unlikely. Schwartz (*RE* II, 1, 1238) has aptly described the way Arrian must have worked on Ptolemy’s and Aristobulus’ accounts before choosing them as the most reliable; Arrian must have read them before starting composing his own account. This must have been the case with Eratosthenes and other sources too.

Τὸ δὲ ὄρος ὁ Καύκασος ὑψηλὸν μὲν ἐστὶν ὡσπερ τι ἄλλο τῆς Ἀσίας, ὡς λέγει Ἀριστοβούλος, ψιλὸν δὲ τὸ πολὺ αὐτοῦ τό γε ταύτη. μακρὸν γὰρ ὄρος παρατέταται ὁ Καύκασος, ὥστε καὶ τὸν Ταῦρον τὸ ὄρος, ὃς δὴ τὴν Κιλικίαν τε καὶ Παμφυλίαν ἀπείργει, ἀπὸ τοῦ Καυκάσου εἶναι λέγουσι καὶ ἄλλα ὄρη μεγάλα, ἀπὸ τοῦ Καυκάσου διακεκριμένα ἄλλη καὶ ἄλλη ἐπωνυμία κατὰ ἥθη τὰ ἐκάστων.

Mount Caucasus, according to Aristobulus, is as high as any mountain in Asia; most of it is bare, at least on this side. In fact it is a long mountain range, so that they say that even Mount Taurus, which forms the boundary of Cilicia and Pamphylia, is really a part of Mount Caucasus as well as other great mountains which have been distinguished from Mount Caucasus by various names traditional among the different peoples.

ὄροι δὲ τῆς Ἰνδῶν γῆς πρὸς μὲν βορέου ἀνέμου ὁ Ταῦρος τὸ ὄρος. καλέεται δὲ οὐ Ταῦρος ἔτι ἐν τῇ γῇ ταύτη, ἀλλὰ ἄρχεται μὲν ἀπὸ θαλάσσης ὁ Ταῦρος τῆς κατὰ Παμφύλους τε καὶ Λυκίην καὶ Κίλικας παρατείνει τε ἔστε τὴν πρὸς ἕω θάλασσαν, τέμνων τὴν Ἀσίην πᾶσαν, ἄλλο δὲ ἄλλη καλέεται τὸ ὄρος, τῇ μὲν Παραπάμισσος, τῇ δὲ Ἡμωδός, ἄλλη δὲ Ἴμαον κληρίζεται, καὶ τυχὸν ἄλλα καὶ ἄλλα ἔχει οὐνόματα. Μακεδόνες δὲ οἱ ξὺν Ἀλεξάνδρῳ στρατεύσαντες Καύκασον αὐτὸ ἐκάλεον, ἄλλον τοῦτον Καύκασον, οὐ τὸν Σκυθικόν, ὡς καὶ [τὸν] ἐπέκεινα τοῦ Καυκάσου λόγον κατέχειν ὅτι ἦλθεν Ἀλέξανδρος. (*Ind.* 2.1–4)

The northern boundary of the land of India is Mount Taurus. That is not the name given to it in this land: in fact, while Taurus begins from the sea by Pamphylia and Lycia and Cilicia and reaches as far as the Eastern Ocean, cutting right through Asia, the mountain has different names in different places; in one Parapamissus, in another Emodus, elsewhere Imaon, and perhaps it has all sorts of other names. The Macedonians who fought with Alexander called it Caucasus, a different Caucasus from the Scythian; so that the story ran that Alexander penetrated beyond the Caucasus.

In both passages, Arrian is aware that Hindu Kush is not the Scythian Caucasus (3.28.6: τούτῳ τῷ Καυκάσῳ // *Ind.* 2.4: ἄλλον τοῦτον Καύκασον, οὐ τὸν Σκυθικόν) and that the mountain range is called a different name from area to area. The sole difference is that, in the digression of Book 3 of the *Anabasis*, he does not mention the name Parapamissus, an omission which should certainly not be attributed to his ignorance.

To make arbitrary guesses about when and how Arrian read his sources does not help to offer a sufficient interpretation of Arrian's strategy in this case. By contrast, the approach pursued in this paper, namely to ask how an author endeavours through his work to affiliate himself with certain different kinds of readers, may offer much more felicitous answers. To begin with, we should keep in mind not only that the *Anabasis* has a laudatory character but also that Arrian composed it partly on the basis of the literature of Alexander.<sup>48</sup> Long before Arrian, a tradition of encomiastic accounts had been shaped and the authors of these accounts, such as Callisthenes of Olynthus, Onesicritus, and Arrian's three principal sources, Aristobulus, Ptolemy, and Nearchus, in their effort to extol their king, misrepresented the historical reality. One of the ways in which they did so was to fabricate stories about

<sup>48</sup> On Arrian's sources in the *Anabasis*, see Schwartz *RE* II, 1, cols. 1237 ff.; Strasburger 1934; Kornemann 1935; Brunt 1976, xxix-xxxiii; *HCA* 16–34; Stadter 1980, 66–76; *AAA* I, XXI-XXXVII.

the places visited by Alexander. Although repeatedly castigating such strategies, Arrian very often allowed them to intrude into his own narrative, either unconsciously or on purpose. In this case, I believe, by choosing to name Hindu Kush Caucasus, Arrian wished to show to the reader that his oeuvre belongs to the historiographical tradition of Alexander which coined this name.

We should also take into consideration the relationship of the digression with Arrian's goals in both its immediate and wider context. At this point of the narrative, Alexander must be portrayed as the restorer of justice. The expedition is depicted as a struggle against the disrespectful and corrupted traitors of Darius.<sup>49</sup> Had Arrian included the hubris of Alexander and the Macedonians towards Heracles in his digression, the expedition would somewhat mutate in the reader's mind from a morally legitimate effort to reestablish justice into an arrogant pursuit of *kleos*. For this reason, Arrian waits for the proper moment, i.e. when he purposes to discuss the distortive effects of these military successes on Alexander's character. It is telling, in this respect, that the first time that Arrian engages with the theme of the Macedonians' hubris towards Heracles that led to the fabrication 'Caucasus' is in the Nyssa episode at the beginning of Book V, only after Alexander's hubris in the Aornus narrative against Heracles and his abuse of the rumors about Dionysus in the Nysa account have already prepared the ground for further such examples.<sup>50</sup>

Furthermore, by not mentioning Alexander's competitiveness towards Heracles during his stay in Hindu Kush, Arrian deliberately avoids offering the slightest piece of information to his readers about the inner turmoil in the Macedonian circles. This is because Alexander's boastfulness against Heracles and Dionysus also constitutes one of the main reasons why the king's relationships with some Macedonians duly turned sour. The visit to the oracle of Siwah and the crossing of the Hindu Kush offered Alexander the opportunity to boast that he is equal – if not superior – to Heracles. This is an argument Alexander must have repeatedly taken advantage of in his efforts to convince the Macedonians to follow him into Asia's depths.<sup>51</sup> The crossing of Caucasus, the mountain when Heracles freed Prometheus, was one further strong proof that Alexander himself came from divine stock, since his exploits outdid even those of Heracles. In this respect, this event is closely associated with Cleitus' and Callisthenes' complaints against Alexander's hubristic attitude towards Heracles in the digression of ch. 4.8–14. Arrian could have prepared the reader for this digression by noting that the crossing of Hindu Kush was one of the first feats that were interpreted by Alexander and his flatterers as evidence of his superiority over Heracles. However, he did not flag this comparison here, first because he intended not to touch upon these themes before Book IV, and second because at

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<sup>49</sup> See Chapter II ('March-narrative and characterization') in Liotsakis 2019a.

<sup>50</sup> On Arrian's criticisms of Alexander's propagandistic abuse of the two gods in the events in Aornus and Nysa, see *HCA* II, 213–216. Cf. Chapter I ('Overall design: From praise to criticism') in Liotsakis 2019a.

<sup>51</sup> *HCA* II, 55, 78–79.

this point in the narrative he wishes to portray Alexander as nothing other than the romantic avenger of Darius' murderers.

On the other hand, Arrian is fully aware of the fact that his work would also be read by readers who were more demanding of its historical validity, including, of course, its geographical descriptions. As we have seen, geographers such as Eratosthenes and Strabo long before Arrian had touched upon the propagandistic inaccuracies found in the geographical descriptions of the first histories of Alexander. And Arrian, both in his *Anabasis* and in his *Indikē*, repeatedly clarifies that he preferred to describe the Asian territory on the basis of more reliable works, such as those of Eratosthenes, Megasthenes, and Nearchus. In this way, he signalled his opposition to the flattering accounts of the Hellenistic era and to all those who followed them. For the latter, the name Caucasus was merely a means to glorify Alexander. By contrast, for Eratosthenes, Strabo (11.5.5; 15.1.11), and others it was nothing but a lie. Arrian chose to stand somewhere in the middle. By drawing this name and other similar elements from the first historians of Alexander, he presented his work as a legitimate continuation of the historiographical tradition of the king and served his own narrative goals without disappointing all of his more fastidious historical readers.

## 4 Religious myths

Arrian's interest in these multiple-level modes of engaging his contemporaries with his work is also evident in the way he uses religious myths. A myth, depending on how it is exploited by an author, may interact with its readers in a handful of different ways. First, by observing the way that a writer narrates a myth, readers may apprehend the writer's credence, or lack thereof, in the history of reception of the myth, and come to understand whether the author accepts the validity of a myth's content. At the same time, the effect that religious myths can have on readers depends on the readers' own piety. Rationalist readers or atheists often remain unmoved by such stories, as they take them to be untrue. Inversely, pious readers show greater respect to myths and are thus more interested in hearing or reading stories about the deeds of mythical figures and supernatural entities. For this reason, pious readers can often be very sensitive towards the didactic, moral, and ideological messages an author tries to convey through a myth. On the other hand, myths can sometimes amuse all types of readers, although again to different degrees depending on the special interests of each reader.

Let us examine these numerous functions of the religious myths in the famous story of the Gordian knot, as related by Arrian in the *Anabasis*.<sup>52</sup> Gordius, a poor Phrygian husbandman, notices one day that an eagle was standing on his wagon be-

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<sup>52</sup> Cf. Plu. *Alex.* 18.2–4; Curt. 3.1.14–18; Justin 11.7.3–16; Marsyas, *FGrH* 135/6 F 4. For bibliography on Alexander's untying the knot, see *HCA* I, 184 and *AAA* I, 397.

fore night-time. He consults a Telmessian girl about the meaning of the omen and what to do, and the girl advises him to offer a sacrifice to Zeus the King. Gordius follows her advice and later on marries her. The couple have a son, Midas. Meanwhile, after many years, and during a period of civil strife, the Phrygians receive an oracle which declares that political order will come only when a king comes to them in a car. When one day Midas, being escorted by his parents, arrives at the Assembly in his car, the Phrygians believe that he is the man to whom the oracle refers and they make him their king. Midas dedicates his car to Zeus the King as a sign of gratitude for fulfilling the omen of the eagle. What is more, according to the myth the man who would undo the knot of Midas' car would rule Asia. After relating this local myth, Arrian describes how Alexander untied the knot, and completes his account by saying that, during the very night after Alexander untied the knot, thunder and lightning filled the sky. Arrian takes for granted that these natural phenomena were omens sent by the gods to Alexander, who thanked them with sacrifices on the following day (2.3).<sup>53</sup>

The way Arrian relates this myth and the ensuing report of the untying of the knot and the divine signs reveals to the readers his faith in the validity of the myth and his piety.<sup>54</sup> Arrian's choice to narrate the myth in indirect speech might indicate his intention to distance himself from what he narrates.<sup>55</sup> However, the absence of any sign of doubt and the presentation of the thunder and lightning as divine omens to Alexander are very strong signs of Arrian's faith. Last, although the myth would probably not persuade a rationalist reader, it would certainly convince

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53 On this and further similar cases indicating the gods' involvement in Alexander's affairs, see Stadter 1980, 73–74.

54 Arrian was undoubtedly a pious man. In his *Cynegeticus*, he writes that “nothing that happens without the gods turns out well for men. Those who sail the sea start with a prayer to the gods, at least those who care about their safety, and when they set home safe they sacrifice an offering of thanks to the gods of the sea, Poseidon and Amphitrite and the Nereids. Farmers sacrifice to Demeter and her daughter and Dionysus, craftsmen to Athena and Hephaestus, those in education to the Muses and Apollo leader of the Muses and Memory and Hermes, those interested in affairs of love to Aphrodite and Eros and Peitho and the Graces” (Arr. *Cyn.* 35.1–3. Transl. Phillips/Willcock). Similarly, in his *Periplus*, he shares with the Emperor Hadrian his hope that the god will help him force the Colcheans to pay the tribute to Rome (Arr. *Peripl. M. Eux.* 11.2.3). In this statement, according to Brunt (1976, xi), “there is an old-world piety”.

55 Most scholars treat citations and indirect speech as strong signs of the ancient historians' doubts about or distancing from the events they narrate. See Cooper 1974, especially 23–31 on the intrusive infinitives in Herodotus (cf. Cooper 1971, 65–83 and Fehling's (1971, 87–174)); on Thucydides' λέγεται phrases, see Westlake 1977, 346, 349–356; Westlake 1977, 346 on Xenophon; For this approach in Plutarch, see Cook 2001, 329 n. 1 with exhaustive bibliography. On this scheme in classical historiography, see the general studies of Laird 1999, 116–152 and Sulimani 2008. However, indirect speech has a multidimensional function in classical historiography, depending on the occasion. See Cook 2001; Augoustaki 2005, 267–271; Gray 2011, 77–82.

pious readers of the period in which Alexander's conquest of Asia fulfilled the divine will, and would thereby confirm it as a legitimate act.<sup>56</sup>

Myths such as that of the Gordian knot leave the following question open: how can we know whether or not Arrian was concerned about different kinds of readers when composing such myths? The two following examples offer strong evidence that, as in the use of epic allusions and geographic data, Arrian made mention of myths while keeping in mind multiple types of readers and in a bid to create multi-lateral relations between his audience and a myth. The passages in question are the myth on Dionysus' conquests in India in Book 5 of the *Anabasis*, and the myth about the mysterious island of the Sun in the *Indikē*.

To begin with the first of these passages, when Alexander reached the area between the rivers Cophen and Indus, the Nysaeans sent their most distinguished citizen, Acuphis, to him. Acuphis delivered a speech in Alexander's presence in which he asked him to respect the autonomy of his homeland. At the core of Acuphis' argument was the idea that the independence of the city had its roots in Dionysus' visit to India. On his return to Greece, the god, according to the Indian noble, founded Nysa and inhabited it with the men who were unfit for service among his soldiers. He named the place Nysa in memory of his nurse Nyse and the mountain lying next to the city Merus (thigh), given that, according to the legend, Dionysus had been born out of Zeus' thigh.<sup>57</sup> Alexander accepted Acuphis' proposal and respected the autonomy of the Nysaeans, demanding only some horsemen in return. There were also rumors that he visited, in the company of his cavalry and infantry, Mount Merus, where the ivy was said to grow due to the presence of the god. The Macedonians crowned themselves with the ivy (5.1–3). This myth was exploited both by the Nysaeans, in their effort to convince Alexander not to harm their city, as well as by Alexander himself in his effort to convince the Macedonians to follow him before India, in places where not even Dionysus had reached.<sup>58</sup>

Although questioning the stories about the rituals organized by the Macedonians in honor of Dionysus, Arrian does not reject the myth itself about the god's presence in India. However, in contrast to the case of the Gordian knot, Arrian did not accept Dionysus' myth in order to impress the reader about Alexander's feats. The historian repeatedly criticizes Alexander for his emulation of Dionysus and foregrounds the hypocrisy with which the king took advantage of the Indian myth. Arrian's unwillingness to reject the myth rather derives from his piety and his intention to express his sympathy towards the tendency of certain readers to believe the content of such myths. This view is supported by the epilogue to the Nysaeian episode (5.3.1–4):

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<sup>56</sup> On the degree to which the ancient readers' religious beliefs affected their reactions in myths included in historical works, see Liotsakis 2015.

<sup>57</sup> On Alexander's use of Dionysus as a means to control both his men and the natives, see Bosworth 1996a, 121–126; Worthington 2014, 238–239.

<sup>58</sup> *HCA* II, 207–208, and *AAA* II, 458–460, both with further bibliography.

Καὶ ταῦτα ὅπως τις ἐθέλει ὑπολαβῶν ἀπιστεῖτω ἢ πιστευέτω. οὐ γὰρ ἔγωγε Ἐρατοσθένει τῶ Κυρηναίῳ πάντῃ ξυμφέρομαι, ὃς λέγει πάντα ὅσα ἐς τὸ θεῖον ἀναφέρεται ἐκ Μακεδόνων πρὸς χάριν τὴν Ἀλεξάνδρου ἐς τὸ ὑπέρογκον ἐπιφημισθῆναι. [...] ὅμοια δὲ καὶ ὑπὲρ Διονύσου τῆς πλάνης ἀπιστεῖ Ἐρατοσθένης· ἐμοὶ δ' ἐν μέσῳ κείσθων οἱ ὑπὲρ τούτων λόγοι.

However, these tales anyone may believe or not, taking them as he thinks fit. For my part I do not wholly agree with Eratosthenes the Cyrenaean, who says that all the Macedonians ascribe to the divine influence was magnified in this way to please Alexander. [...] Eratosthenes is similarly incredulous about the wandering of Dionysus. As far as I am concerned, the stories about these things must rest open.

Arrian has explained to his readers in advance his reluctance to indiscriminately question religious myths. For him, to use rational reasoning in order to explain myths on the divine constitutes a serious methodological error:

πλήν γε δὴ ὅτι οὐκ ἀκριβῆ ἐξεταστὴν χρὴ εἶναι τῶν ὑπὲρ τοῦ θείου ἐκ παλαιῶ μемуευμένων. τὰ γὰρ τοι κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς ξυντιθέντι οὐ πιστά, ἐπειδὰν τὸ θεῖόν τις προσθῆ τῶ λόγῳ, οὐ πάντῃ ἄπιστα φαίνεται.

Still, one must not be a precise critic of ancient legends that concern the divine. For things which are incredible if you consider them on the basis of probability appear not wholly incredible, when one adds the divine element to the story.

Arrian seems to be equally unwilling to reject the stories on Dionysus in India, also when touching upon them in his *Indikē* (*Ind.* 1.4–7):

Νυσαῖοι δὲ οὐκ Ἰνδικὸν γένος ἐστίν, ἀλλὰ τῶν ἅμα Διονύσῳ ἐλθόντων ἐς τὴν γῆν τὴν Ἰνδῶν, τυχὸν μὲν [καὶ] Ἑλλήνων, ὅσοι ἀπόμαχοι αὐτῶν ἐγένοντο ἐν τοῖς πολέμοις οὐστίνας πρὸς Ἰνδοὺς Διόνυσος ἐπολέμησε, τυχὸν δὲ καὶ τῶν ἐπιχωρίων τοὺς ἐθέλοντας τοῖς Ἑλλησι συνώκισε, τὴν τε χώραν Νυσαίην ὠνόμασεν ἀπὸ τῆς τροφοῦ τῆς Νύσης Διόνυσος καὶ τὴν πόλιν αὐτὴν Νύσαν. καὶ τὸ ὄρος τὸ πρὸς τῇ πόλει, ὅπου ἐν τῆσιν ὑπωρείησιν ὄκισται ἡ Νύσα, Μηρὸς κληρίζεται ἐπὶ τῇ συμφωρῇ ἣτινι ἐχρήσατο εὐθὺς γενόμενος. ταῦτα μὲν οἱ ποιηταὶ ἐπὶ Διονύσῳ ἐποίησαν, καὶ ἐξήγεισθων αὐτὰ ὅσοι λόγοι Ἑλλήνων ἢ βαρβάρων.

The Nysaeans are not an Indian race, but [are] part of those who came with Dionysus to India, perhaps Greeks who became unfit for service in the wars Dionysus waged with the Indians, perhaps also volunteers of the neighboring tribes whom Dionysus settled together with the Greeks. He called the country Nysaea from the mountain Nysa, and the city itself Nysa. The mountain near the city, on whose foothills Nysa is built, is also called Merus (thigh) because of the incident at the moment of Dionysus' birth. All this the poets sang of Dionysus; and I leave interpretation to learned Greeks or barbarians.

In the *Anabasis* Arrian's opposition to Eratosthenes' tendency to reject religious myths was declared straightforwardly and, in light of this passage, the words from the *Indikē* "and I leave interpretation to learned Greeks or barbarians" must also refer to Eratosthenes and be taken as ironic. Arrian does not altogether mean to distinguish himself from the 'learned' readers to whom he is referring. After all, in both prefaces to his *Anabasis* he has fashioned himself as a distinguished man of letters, which suggests that Arrian wrote the *Anabasis* fully aware of his noted reputation in

his intellectual environment.<sup>59</sup> He is rather attacking his ‘peers’ for being over-suspicious towards stories of a supernatural content. Arrian’s words in the *Indikē* reflect his view that the most suspicious readers were those of deepest learning. Yet at the same time, Arrian expresses his faith in gods and encourages pious readers not to hesitate to accept such stories as true. He is also aware of the fact that some other readers, such as Eratosthenes, would probably hasten to deem his judgment naïve. For this reason, he avoids excessive dogmatism on either side; he clarifies that he does not disagree with *all* the objections of Eratosthenes and that he does not believe *all* the supernatural legends fabricated by Macedonian propaganda (οὐ γὰρ ἔγωγε Ἐρατοσθένει τῷ Κυρηναίῳ πάντη ξυμφέρομαι, ὃς λέγει πάντα ὅσα ἐς τὸ θεῖον [...] ἐς τὸ ὑπέρογκον ἐπιφημισθῆναι). Arrian is obviously endeavoring here to compromise two elements which must have often been considered by some readers as mutually contradictory: faith and rationalism.

The chapters of the *Indikē* on the sacred island of the Sun reveal one further reason why Arrian included mythical narratives in his oeuvre.<sup>60</sup> When Nearchus and his fleet visited the lands of the Fish-Eaters, the locals warned them that there was a mysterious island in those waters and that whoever entered its waters disappeared. After a short suspenseful episode, Arrian reveals to the reader that, in the end, Nearchus landed on the island safely. Arrian closes his account with a local myth which explained in some way the mysterious disappearances around the island (*Ind.* 31.6–8):

ἀκοῦσαι δὲ καὶ ἄλλον λόγον ὑπὲρ τῆς νήσου ταύτης λεγόμενον, οἰκῆσαι τὴν νῆσον ταύτην μίαν τῶν Νηρηίδων· τὸ δὲ οὐνομα οὐ λέγεσθαι τῆς Νηρηίδος. ταύτη δὲ ὅστις πελάσειε τῇ νήσῳ, τοῦτ᾽ αὖτε συγγίνεσθαι μὲν, ἰχθύν δὲ αὐτὸν ἐξ ἀνθρώπου ποιέουσιν ἐμβάλλειν ἐς τὸν πόντον. Ἥλιον δὲ ἀχθεσθέντα τῇ Νηρηίδι κελεύειν μετοικίζεσθαι αὐτὴν ἐκ τῆς νήσου· τὴν δὲ ὁμολογεῖν μὲν ὅτι ἐξοικισθήσεται, δεῖσθαι δὲ οἱ τὸ πάθημα <παυθῆναι>. καὶ τὸν Ἥλιον ὑποδέξασθαι, τοὺς δὲ δὴ ἀνθρώπους οὐστίνας [ἄν] ἰχθύας ἐξ ἀνθρώπων πεποιήκει κατελεήσαντα ἀνθρώπους αὐθις ἐξ ἰχθύων ποιῆσαι, καὶ ἀπὸ τούτων τῶν Ἰχθυοφάγων τὸ γένος καὶ εἰς Ἀλέξανδρον κατελθεῖν.

They heard another story current about this island, that one of the Nereids dwelt there, whose name was not told; she would have intercourse with anyone who approached the island, but then turn him into a fish and throw him into the sea. Helios became irritated with the Nereid and ordered her to leave the island, and she agreed to move, but begged that the misery she caused be ended; Helios consented and in compassion for the men she had turned into fishes turned them back again into human beings; they were the ancestors of the people of Fish-eaters down to Alexander’s day.

59 Cf. Lucian (*Alex.* 2) (Arrian’s younger contemporary), who praises Arrian as “a life-long devotee of letters” (transl. Harmon 1925, 177). On Arrian’s life and literary development see Schwartz *RE* II, 1, cols. 1230–1236; Hartmann 1907; Wirth 1964; Bosworth 1972 and for further bibliography up to his time see 163, nn. 1 and 4; Brunt 1976, xix–xiv; Wheeler 1977; Stadter 1980, 1–18; Syme 1982; Vidal-Naquet 1984; Bosworth 1988, 16–37, especially on Arrian’s historical production; Tonnet 1988, 1–101; Swain 1996, 242–248; *AAA* I, XI–XIX.

60 On this story and its significance for understanding Arrian’s use of sensational tales, see Liotsakis 2018.



Arrian castigates Nearchus for doubting the myth (*Ind.* 31.9):

καὶ ταῦτα ὅτι ψεύδεα ἐξελέγχει Νέαρχος, οὐκ ἐπαινῶ αὐτὸν ἔγωγε τῆς σχολῆς τε καὶ σοφίης, οὔτε κάρτα χαλεπὰ ἐξελεγχθῆναι ἐόντα, ταλαίπωρόν τε ὄν γινώσκων τοὺς παλαιούς λόγους ἐπιλεγόμενον ἐξελέγειν ὄντας ψευδέας.

Nearchus shows that all this is false, but I do not commend him for his learned discussion, as in my judgement, the stories are easy enough to refute and it is tedious to relate the old tales and then prove them false.

As in the myth of Dionysus, Arrian attacks here the habit of literate readers to make a show of their knowledge and intellectualism by questioning the validity of myths. What is more, this case reveals to us that Arrian's unwillingness to refute the content of supernatural tales is also motivated by one further goal, namely to induce the reader's pleasure. In the words "it is tedious to relate old tales and then prove them false" (ταλαίπωρόν τε ὄν γινώσκων τοὺς παλαιούς λόγους ἐπιλεγόμενον ἐξελέγειν ὄντας ψευδέας) Arrian might very probably mean that it is boring for the author *too* to record such stories, in order merely to refute them. Nonetheless, Arrian also touches here upon the negative effect of such strategies on the *reader* as well. On my view, Arrian implies in this case that writers should leave open the possibility that such stories are true in order to keep the audience's interest unabated from beginning to end.

Our analysis offers strong evidence that Arrian took into consideration an abundance of readerly expectations when recording myths in the *Anabasis* and in the *Indikē*, and that he thereby aimed at eliciting several, different reactions from his contemporaries. For Arrian, an author should relate a myth without being naïve and whilst respecting the need of rationalist readers for logical scrutiny of such stories. On the other hand, Arrian seems to believe that an author should fearlessly admit his belief of such stories, when this is necessary, without being afraid of such sceptical readers. Last but not least, writers should by no means spoil these stories for the reader by scrutinizing their truthfulness. Arrian endeavors to preserve the balance between his readership's need for three elements: rationalism, respect for their religious faith, and pleasure.

**CONCLUSION:** The abundance of passages and the thematic areas analysed in this discussion leads to the conclusion that Arrian's concern for the issue of readerly diversity was one of the overarching compositional principles in the *Anabasis of Alexander*. It is not merely that different parts of the work satisfy different readerly needs. The author does much more than this; he frequently takes into consideration several readerly groups and a number of his audience's needs in the composition of one and the same episode. In this respect, I would say, an extremely cautious, multi-criteria approach of single events in the *Anabasis* is followed that aims at a constantly multi-targeted communication with the audience. This indefatigable inclination to juggle and balance as many readerly expectations as possible should be seen in light

of the rhetorical way of life endorsed by the Greek intellectuals of the Second Sophistic. The Greek *litterati* of the Imperial Era, especially those of similar political aspirations to Arrian's, saw their oeuvre as an integral part of their daily *ethopoia*. Their prose writings, including historical accounts such as the *Anabasis*, thus demonstrate the same purpose as their rhetoric speeches: namely the wish to satisfy everyone. In the acme of literary criticism and in the suppressive atmosphere of the Roman monarchic arena, Herodotus' and Thucydides' relatively carefree compositions had already become a pie in the sky.

## List of Abbreviations

AAB = Sisti, F. (2001–2004), *Anabasi di Alessandro*, vols. I-II, Milan.

FGrH = Jacoby, F. (1929–1930), *Die Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker Nr. 106–261 Text*, vol. II B and *Kommentar zu Nr. 106–261*, Berlin.

HCA = Bosworth, A.B. (1980–1995), *A Historical Commentary on Arrian's History of Alexander*, Oxford / New York.

HCP = Walbank, F.W. (1957), *A Historical Commentary on Polybius*, Oxford.

HTGGS = Roller, D.W. (2018), *A Historical and Topographical Guide to the Geography of Strabo*, Cambridge.

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