POLITICS AND WINE DON'T MIX:
RECONCILING CONTRADICTIONS IN ARRIAN'S ANABASIS

A Thesis

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Since she has been foremost in my mind as I approach the end of this thesis, I would like to dedicate it to my grandmother, Bertha Lea “BB” Taylor (1925-2014). Without her strength and dedication to family I wouldn’t have had many of the opportunities that have come to me in life. She was a wonderful mother to my father and instilled in our family values I can only hope to live by: hard work, sheer grit, faith, neighborliness, thrift, and humor. She gave me the precious gifts of unconditional love and acceptance, as well as the gift, which I undervalued for many years, of belonging to a proud community. To quote Angie Debo, the great historian of Oklahoma (herself quoting Plutarch): “As for me, I live in a small town, where I am willing to continue, lest it grow smaller.”
CHAPTER ONE

1. Introduction

In 331 B.C., the Greek world reached the zenith of its power when a combined Graeco-Macedonian force defeated the armies of the Persian Empire at Gaugamela. Centuries later the philosopher Arrian, Greek by origin but fully integrated into the Roman Empire as a member of the Senate and friend of the emperor Hadrian, decided to write a history of this invasion with special emphasis on its pivotal figure, Alexander the Great. Why Arrian chose to devote his most important work (as he emphasizes in the Anabasis' introduction, 1.12) to Alexander is a question that, at least in part, this thesis will address. First we must assume, however, that literary works do not exist in a vacuum but are the products of specific times, locations, and cultures, and that, consciously or unconsciously, they address questions and problems that are relevant to both author and reader. One problem for Arrian, on the most obvious level, was that an account worthy of Alexander had not yet been written (1.pr).

As is so often the case with ancient literature, however, Arrian's Anabasis is far more than a simple history book, at least as we conceive the writing of history today. For us, history is diligently researched, often written in chronological fashion, with a preference for objective reporting – the historian is not supposed to inject his opinion into
the factual narrative. A cursory look at ancient histories shows that this was not the case for the ancient Greeks and Romans.\textsuperscript{1} History was moralistic, polemical, rhetorical, and interwoven with dramatic and tragic elements in order to educate the elite reader. Combined with a selective reporting of facts – the ancient historian could include things that never actually happened or leave out things that did – these elements helped to construct a particular understanding of history which then served as a warning to the astute reader. I will discuss this in more depth in the second chapter; for now, Herodotos can serve as a good example. His work is, ostensibly, an account of the wars between Greece and Persia, and he does factually describe events such as Marathon, Salamis, Plataea, giving one the impression that he has done research on these events. This seduces the reader into taking other items in the work more seriously. However, Herodotos also incorporates mythological and tragic elements that combine to make his work not just a history, but an exposition of a particular \textit{conception} of history (“people, cities, or empires that overextend themselves out of arrogance are doomed to failure”) that he builds up from the very beginning, reinforces throughout by repeated variations of the concept, and gives full flower to with the story that ends the work (Kyros and the Persians), which is hard to understand if one has not already absorbed Herodotos’ conception of history.\textsuperscript{2}

\textsuperscript{1} A. J Woodman, \textit{Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies} (London; Portland, Or.: Croom Helm ; Areopagita Press, 1988), 36.

A great deal of detailed scholarship on the intertextuality of Graeco-Roman literature shows that authors writing even one, two, or three centuries later were still utilizing the techniques and themes of classical authors. As a result, these themes sometimes appear in the literature of periods to which they are no longer relevant—or their meaning has been adapted even when the terminology remains the same. It is with this framework in mind that I will examine what has been called the “Great Digression,” a break in Arrian’s *Anabasis* that occurs in Book 4, the work’s middle. It looks at three of the more unsavory incidents of Alexander’s career—the murder of Kleitos, the proskynesis debate, and the Pages’ conspiracy—and paints a portrait of Alexander that is unusually harsh for Arrian, who has a deserved reputation for being the most apologetic Alexander historian. It is further puzzling because it directly contradicts, in tone and statement, Arrian’s assessment of Alexander’s career and personality at the end of the *Anabasis* (7.28–30), which, by virtue of its summing up the entire work, we should take as representing Arrian’s actual stance toward Alexander. Here he says that Alexander did not

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over-indulge in alcohol, but only stayed at drinking sessions to please his friends and that
his adoption of Persian elements was a political move to placate his Persian subjects, as
were his claims to divine origins.

The Great Digression’s overarching theme, in fact, is the opposite of what Arrian
says in Book 7, as he delves at length into Alexander’s increasing Medism and its effects on
Alexander’s friends, subjects, and Alexander himself. Medizing’s primary meaning is
political, describing Greeks who supported the Great King during the Persian Wars. But as
we shall see in our discussion of Herodotos, its emotive, cultural meaning is far weightier;
to Medize – to support the Persians, or to act like them – has “a specially derogatory and
odious connotation,” entailing moral degeneration and a betrayal of fundamental Greek
principles. Medizers “rejected the peculiar manner of life characteristic of the Greek world
in favor of the corrupting life-style of the East.”6 Each episode of the Great Digression
illustrates an aspect of Medism that perfectly slots in with the traditional Graeco-Roman
stance toward the “barbarian other.” The first episode, Kleitos’ murder, shows the dangers
of the hangers-on who jockey for position by appeasing the (Great) King, as well as the
increasingly limited free speech allowed even to the closest of Alexander’s Companions7 –
who were, of course, supposed to be largely the King’s equals, in the sense that the

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6 David F. Graf, “Medism: The Origin and Significance of the Term,” The Journal of Hellenic Studies 104

7 The Companions (hetairoi) were the cream of the Macedonian/Greek aristocracy. They comprised the
Companion Cavalry, a highly skilled and mobile cavalry unit commanded by Alexander himself. Still more
elite Companions acted as Alexander’s bodyguard (somatophylakes). Some of the Companions were also his
syntrophoi and had been raised and educated together with Alexander.
The Macedonian king was *primus inter pares*. The second episode, the debates on proskynesis, touches on the distinctions between mortal and immortal: where, precisely, does the (Great) King fit into this schema, and what honors are properly accorded to a king who has achieved such monumental feats as Alexander? The final episode is the Pages' conspiracy, which addresses the ability of the King to offend the dignity of the Macedonian elite and their obligation to preserve, and avenge outrages against, this dignity. The offense in question is partly against the *body* of one of the Pages, which I think is no accident considering that Persian nobles often encountered similar treatment from the Great King. Indeed, the Digression begins with Alexander administering Persian-style justice to the satrap Bessos, whose ears and nose are removed before his execution.

By framing Alexander's objectionable actions in terms of Medism, then, Arrian is able to tap into the Greeks' historic tendency to equate tyranny and injustice with Easterners. It is a form of cultural shorthand: mention courtly hangers-on, and a reader can recall, for example, Herodotos' Persian courtiers who know Xerxes is leading them to their doom, but are unable to speak against the Great King's wishes. A reader may also recall that an author can condemn a Greek accused of Medizing not by saying so directly, but by showing that he is beginning to surround himself with an entourage, or dress more

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9 When writing about Graeco-Roman perceptions of “the East” we must, unfortunately, avail ourselves of their vocabulary, which means treating “the East” as a monolithic whole and – when discussing the Greeks in particular – using “Persian” to represent “the East.” (In much the same way, colloquial slang usually uses “Arab” to refer to any denizen of the Middle East regardless of origin or ethnicity.) The term “orientalize” also seems the best way to translate what the Greeks meant by “Medize.”
luxuriously, or throw sumptuous banquets. It is also shorthand, then, for bad government
that mistreats free citizens. In their experience of autocracy, many Romans of the early
Imperial period adapted this discourse on monarchy as an indirect way to speak about
their “disenfranchisement... to power, and its emasculation of a typical elite conciliar
body.” For them, however, there was the added tension that the Greeks with whose ideas
they were engaging could be considered, to the Roman mind, Eastern themselves and
could exhibit the same sort of degeneracy, slavishness, and effeminacy the Greeks had
attributed to the Persians. And, while Alexander represented one of the Greek world's
greatest achievements, he himself was the sort of figure detested by the Romans, a rex,
and had become more “tyrannical” the further East he went.

By keeping in mind this background, we can resolve the contradictions between
the Great Digression and the end of the Anabasis. In the former, Arrian portrays
Alexander as an Eastern despot, a tyrannical alcoholic. In the latter, he praises Alexander
and says that Alexander did not drink excessively, and that any Persian elements he
adopted were done to appease his Persian subjects (7.29.3). I take it for granted that Arrian
was a precise writer who had not simply forgotten what he wrote in an earlier book. If so,
we should ask why Arrian – a native of the formerly autocratic Bithynia, Roman senator,
friend to the princeps – portrays Alexander as a Medizer throughout the Great Digression.
I suggest that he did so for the exact same reasons as the classical historians who wrote

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10 Diana Spencer, The Roman Alexander: Reading a Cultural Myth (Univ of Exeter Pr, 2002), 190.

about the East: to define what was Greek by pairing it with what was not; to provide an example, and a warning, to readers of the dangers of arrogance, overreaching, and loss of self-control; and to provide insights into the best way to organize society, and how to live so that one does not suffer the fates of Kyros, Kroisos, Pausanias, and other such unlucky Medes and Medizers.

2. Bithynia before Rome

Another interesting element of the Great Digression is its anachronism. That is, if this segment of the Anabasis were given without contextualization to a reader familiar with classical Greek literature, he would probably guess it had been written not long after Alexander's death. It portrays the Persians much as Euripides, or Aiskhylos, or Herodotos had, emphasizing their luxury and wealth, their subservience to a Great King, their barbaric treatment of prisoners, etc. One might generously suggest that Arrian is attempting to recreate the historical circumstances and beliefs of the fourth century B.C., to remove himself, an author of the second century A.D., from the story. But he does, in fact, break into the narrative at one point and correct it from his perspective as a member of the Imperial elite when he denies that the Romans ever sent embassies to Alexander (7.15). And he is at other points not shy about inserting himself into the Anabasis to correct faulty facts or views about Alexander; indeed, he does this in the Great Digression itself. If one of the Digression's concerns is about the propriety of proskynesis, which to Greeks of the fourth century implied that those performing the ritual were doing so for
religious purposes, in the belief that the Great King was a god, why does Arrian not correct this? It would certainly have made Alexander look better.

Perhaps the Greek world of Arrian's time had still not revised its assumptions about proskynesis. Still, the Great Digression, as I think will become clear when we analyze it in depth, has an odd sort of antique quality in its treatment of the Persians, which is surprising when we consider Arrian's background. He was, after all, born in a land that fought on the side of Darios and Xerxes during the Persian Wars.12 By Xenophon's time, though still a Persian satrapy in name, Bithynia had some degree of independence,13 and Alexander the Great's army seems to have encountered an independent kingdom, or one in the process of becoming so.14 It was, at any rate, an area that for most of its history had a monarchical government, and one that strongly incentivized its urban upper classes to Hellenize.15 Although the Bithynian kings had, especially during the Hellenistic period, a great deal of power over rural Bithynians in particular, the Hellenized elite benefited from serving in the Bithynian administration and acting as liaisons between the king and other monarchs.16

12 Hdt. 7.75.
There was certainly a strong division between the urban elite, who were either Hellenes or Hellenizers, and the rural lower classes, who were mostly native Bithynians. But that did not preclude the elite from identifying themselves as Bithynian, as well. Arrian, for his part, wrote a history of Bithynia, which suggests that, in some way, the country was important to him. Certainly Bithynia had an old and impressive pedigree as an example of the influence of Hellenism in the East, as well as a history of supporting Greek and Eastern culture over Western influence.

3. Roman Bithynia

In 74 B.C. the last Bithynian king, Nikomedes IV, willed Bithynia to Rome. Roman publicani, however, had already been active in the area; Bithynia had de facto lost much of its independence as early as the second century B.C., as its kings began to appeal to Rome for help with their foreign relations. The Bithynians, therefore, had some experience of Rome, and it was, by and large, an experience of the Romans as financial oppressors, the burden of which must have been disproportionately shouldered by the non-urban, non-elite portion of the population. So oppressive were the tax-collectors, in fact, that when Rome asked Nikomedes III to contribute troops for a war effort, he replied that he was

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18 Plb. 36.3.1. The Roman commission sent to Bithynia around 150 B.C. gives us Cato’s famous quip that the commissioners had neither feet, nor head, nor intelligence (Plb. 37.6).

19 Finley Hooper, Roman Realities (Wayne State University Press, 1979). The actual nature of the publicani’s business in Bithynia is, however, confused. Badian posits that the agricultural tax may only have been collected by the publicani in Roman Asia: Ernst Badian, Publicans and Sinners: Private Enterprise in the Service of the Roman Republic (Cornell University Press, 1972).
unable to do so, since the *publicani* had sold most of the Bithynians into slavery.\(^{20}\) On the other hand, the publicans are not the only guilty ones here. The country-dwellers of Bithynia were considered the legal property of the king; if in need of cash, he could use his own subjects to back a loan.\(^{21}\) The non-urban population, therefore, had good reason to hate both Rome and their own kings. Naturally, however, they were more prepared to take action against foreigners, and in their disaffection from the Romans they were joined by the Hellenized upper class, which had also suffered the burden of Rome’s demands on it.\(^{22}\)

Some scholars have attributed anti-Roman sentiment to the “rabble” or the “mob”;\(^{23}\) more nuanced reading allows for the Roman presence to have become so odious to “ordinary people of all classes, ethnic groups, and walks of life” that they were willing to undertake the most radical of all solutions: the extermination of the Roman presence in Asia.\(^{24}\) In 88 B.C., as many as 80,000 men, women, children, and slaves of Italic stock were killed on one day.\(^{25}\)

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\(^{20}\) Diod. 37.6.

\(^{21}\) Michael Ivanovitch Rostovtzeff, *The Social & Economic History of the Hellenistic World*, vol. 3 (The Clarendon Press, 1959), 82; Badian, *Publicans and Sinners*, 88–89. I do not think, however, that every Bithynian sold into slavery ended up there because of the king, as Plutarch blames Bithynian hatred for the Romans on the *publicani*.

\(^{22}\) Rostovtzeff., 937.

\(^{23}\) Rostovtzeff attributes the Asiatic Vespers to the “rabble” of Asia: *ibid.*, *The Social & Economic History of the Hellenistic World*, 938.


\(^{25}\) Cic. *De Imp.* 7: *is qui uno die tota in Asia tot in civitatibus uno nuntio atque una significatione omnis civis Romanos necandos trucidandosque curavit.* Even granting the tendency of ancient sources to exaggerate numbers, this is a vivid testament to the hatred for Rome that existed in (at least parts of) Asia Minor at this time. Numbers: Valerius Maximus says that 80,000 were killed (*Mitridatem regem, qui una epistola lxxx*
Granted, this massacre took place in Roman Asia and not in Bithynia. The problems that prompted the Vespers also existed, however, in Bithynia, as we have seen above: the hateful Roman system of tax collection (debt being such a problem that, again, many Bithynians had been enslaved) and their slave trade, far more vigorous than the Greeks or Asians were accustomed to.²⁶ And, in fact, Bithynia had its own Asiatic Vespers in 74 B.C., after the death of Nikomedes IV, when the Heracleans murdered all the publicani in their city. Plutarch attributes the Bithynians’ readiness to throw their lot in with Mithridates, in 74/73 B.C., specifically to “money-lenders and tax-farmers” and specifically says that this attitude was common to all of Asia (ἐνέβαλεν εἰς Βιθυνίαν, τῶν πόλεων αὕτης ἄσμενως ύποδεχομένων οὐ μόνον τούτων, ἄλλα καὶ τὴν Ἀσίαν δὲν ύποτροπή τῶν ἐξηράσθεν νοσημάτων εἶχεν, ἀφόρητα πάσχουσαν ὑπὸ Ῥωμαϊκῶν δανειστῶν καὶ τελωνῶν, Luc.7.5).²⁷ Mithridates’ promise of saving Asia Minor from the publicani would have been attractive to both classes in Bithynia, and he furthermore appealed to Greek sentiments by the mixture of Greek and Persian elements he claimed as the descendant of Alexander the Great, the Seleucids, and the Achaemenids.²⁸ He was the culmination of Alexander’s attempts to fuse Greek with Persian, and he styled himself the savior of Greeks and Asians.
from the Romans. And, as a Graeco-Persian, he represented well the mixed ethnicity and culture that had grown up in Asia Minor, from Phrygia to Bithynia, after Alexander’s conquests. The Bithynians had no trouble throwing their lot in with him; nor did the Greeks of the mainland.

But Mithridates failed, and Bithynia returned fairly quickly to Roman hands. Why, then, go to the trouble of attempting to govern such a potentially hostile territory? Bithynia, of course, was a rich and fertile land, which perhaps explains why the Romans seized the opportunity to govern it rather than ignore it as they had several other inheritances. At any rate, shortly after Nikomedes’ death, Pompey merged Bithynia with the kingdom of Mithridates, forming the province of Bithynia (later known as Bithynia et Pontus). The Pompeian reorganization was a taste of things to come in Bithynia. Pompey instituted a number of changes – called the lex Pompeia - ranging from issues of citizenship to membership in the boule; the specifics are not relevant here, the salient point being that, however autonomous the Bithynians had been, they were now vulnerable to having the entire fabric of their society changed by the Romans. In other ways, the Romans’ coming helped to institutionalize in Bithynia what had been common practice in many Greek cities of the classical and Hellenistic periods: elite control of local

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30 Ibid., 175.

31 Rostovtzeff, *The Social & Economic History of the Hellenistic World*.


33 Madsen, 31.
politics.\textsuperscript{34} It was clearly important to strike a balance between respecting local practice while making sure that Roman interests were served.\textsuperscript{35} Meanwhile the activity of the publicans – the same group who had helped cause such massive unrest in the first place - was formalized into what has been called a “tax cartel,” with revenues tripling “for any publicani willing and able to invest in these new domains.”\textsuperscript{36} In Cicero’s time their depredations were still a problem, and Bithynia’s misfortunes only increased throughout the end of the republican period.\textsuperscript{37} Suffice to say, Bithynia’s early encounters with Rome must have left an increasingly bitter taste in her mouth.

By the end of the republic, then, it is safe to say that Bithynians of every social class must have been, at the very least, ambivalent about, if not outright hostile to, the Romans. Yet by Arrian’s time, to have a career in the Roman government was respectable – certainly Arrian himself was not shy about advertising his successes. What changed between the first century B.C. and the second century A.D.? Imperial government was relatively kind to Bithynia, as Augustus set the tone by relieving the public of its debts.\textsuperscript{38} This trend continued throughout the reign of the Julio-Claudians. It is not to say that the Bithynians ceased being exploited all together, since they regularly sought legal representation at Rome, beginning in Claudius’ time when their governor, Cadius Rufus,

\textsuperscript{34} A common Roman strategy throughout the Empire: Alcock, \textit{Graecia Capta}, 18–19.

\textsuperscript{35} Madsen., 23.

\textsuperscript{36} Karl Moore and David Charles Lewis, \textit{The Origins of Globalization} (Routledge, 2009), 170.

\textsuperscript{37} Harris, “Bithynia,” 871–874.

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 875.
was found guilty of extortion.\textsuperscript{39} But that they could now take their cases to the courts was a marked improvement for the Bithynians, and the emperors increasingly took steps toward reducing the possibility of official corruption.\textsuperscript{40}

Under the Flavians Bithynia continued to enjoy relative peace and prosperity, excepting an oppressive rise in grain prices that presumably affected most Roman territories, not just Bithynia.\textsuperscript{41} The transition from republic to empire, then, seems to have been positive for the Bithynians, who had suffered tremendously from the caprice of their kings and the corruption of officials at Rome during the late republic. Now they experienced (more) attentive government, at the head of which was a vastly powerful figure who offered all the things that men prayed to the gods for: safety, food, honor.\textsuperscript{42} By Arrian’s time, then, affairs in Bithynia had been settled. The emperor who kept the Bithynians safe was honored as a god, and in return he sometimes exhibited a “remarkable attention to detail” regarding local governance.\textsuperscript{43} The emperor and the governor, moreover, worked in tandem with the local elite, who could distinguish themselves from the lower orders both by cooperating with the Romans and by sponsoring festivals and

\textsuperscript{39} Tac. \textit{Ann.} 12.22.

\textsuperscript{40} P. A. Brunt, “Charges of Provincial Maladministration under the Early Principate,” \textit{Historia: Zeitschrift Für Alte Geschichte} 10, no. 2 (April 1, 1961): 194. Brunt’s thesis is that provincial corruption was still a problem under the Principate, which is certainly true, but Bithynia’s administration does seem to have relatively improved under the emperors.

\textsuperscript{41} Harris, “Bithynia,” 882.

\textsuperscript{42} Plut. \textit{Demetr.} 10.

\textsuperscript{43} Harris, “Bithynia,” 887.
financing construction projects. And, overall, the Bithynian elite seems to have enjoyed a decent amount of autonomy. The emperor and the governor could step in when needed, but overall they preferred to let Bithynians handle Bithynian affairs and in this way preserve good relations with the Hellenized elite, who still cherished historical notions of liberty. Increasingly, and in contrast to their support of Mithridates against Rome, the Bithynian elite would come to have more in common with Roman officials than they did with the *hoi polloi* of their own cities, through their shared allegiance to Hellenic culture.

4. *Graecia Capta*

*Cogita te missum in provinciam Achaiam, illam veram et meram Graeciam, in qua primum humanitas litterae, etiam fruges inventae esse creduntur; missum ad ordinandum statum liberarum civitatum, id est ad homines maxime homines, ad liberos maxime liberos, qui ius a natura datum virtute meritis amicitia, foedere denique et religione tenuerunt. Reverere conditores deos et nomina deorum, reverere gloriam veterem et hanc ipsum senectutem, quae in homine venerabilis, in urbibus sacra. Sit apud te honor antiquitati, sit ingentibus factis, sit fabulis quoque. Nihil ex cuiusquam dignitate, nihil ex libertate, nihil etiam ex iactatione decerpseris. Habe ante oculos hanc esse terram, quae nobis miserit iura, quae leges non victis sed petentibus dederit, Athenas esse quas adeas Lacedaemonem esse quam regas; quibus reliquam umbram et residuum libertatis nomen eripere durum ferum barbarum est. Vides a medicis, quamquam in adversa valetudine nihil servi ac liberi different, mollius tamen liberos clementiusque tractari. Recordare quid quaeque civitas fuerit, non ut despicias quod esse desierit.*

44 Jesper Majbom Madsen, *Eager to Be Roman: Greek Response to Roman Rule in Pontus and Bithynia* (Gerlad Duckworth & Co Ltd, 2009), 102, 19.

45 Ibid., 56.

46 *Know that you have been sent to the province of Achaia, that real and pure Greece, where it is believed that *humanitas*, literature, and even agriculture were first discovered. You have been sent to take care of the situation of free communities, that is, to men who are really men, really free, who uphold natural law by virtue, merit, friendship, and finally by the observance of treaties and religion. Honor their founding gods, the names of the gods, and their ancient glory, the very antiquity which is respectable in men but sacred in cities. You should honor their antiquity, their marvelous achievements, and their stories, as well. You should pick away at no one's dignity, freedom, or even boastful pride. Keep in mind that this is the land which gave...*
This quotation from Pliny the Younger, a contemporary of Arrian, sets the stage for us: a Greece subjugated but not inferior to Rome, which gave the Romans their laws (\textit{quae nobis miserit iura}) and whose antiquity remains valuable to the present. Moreover, it is valuable \textit{because} of its past (\textit{reverere gloriam veterem et hanc ipsam senectutem, quae in homine venerabilis}). At the same time, Pliny is quite vague about which time period he is praising; it is some murky point in the distant past, but a decidedly better time for the Greeks than now. And finally, there is an emphasis on Greece’s loss of autonomy: “recall what each city was, so that you not despise it because of what it no longer is.”

We may observe two points from this passage: first, that Greek high culture had become entwined with that of the Romans to form “an imperial elite defined by cultural competence in two languages and literatures”\textsuperscript{47}; second, that the Greek past, not its present, was what interested the Romans and what they expected to encounter when they visited Greece. And Pliny is portraying himself in a certain way by utilizing Greece’s past glory; his familiarity with Greece’s culture is what marks him as a member of the ruling elite. Hellenism had become an essential part of \textit{Romanitas}.

\textsuperscript{47} David Konstan and Suzanne Saïd, \textit{Greeks on Greekness: Viewing the Greek Past under the Roman Empire} (Cambridge Philological Society, 2006), 177.

At the same time, Romans expressed a notable contempt for the Greeks themselves. Pliny's high-minded advice presupposes that a Roman's first reaction upon coming to Greece could be to pick at the natives' dignity, liberty, and pride. Greece was one thing; a Greek was an entirely different animal. The name Graecus itself could have a pejorative sense, or the infantilizing diminutive, Graeculus, could be used.\(^49\) Indeed, the Romans' very insistence on calling the Greeks Graeci rather than Hellenes speaks to a certain disdain for their self-identification.\(^50\)

Meanwhile, Romanization was becoming the key to upward mobility for province-dwellers throughout the Mediterranean.\(^51\) For centuries Hellenization had predominated from Anatolia to Bactria (at least at the elite level), and, from Egypt to India, the ability to speak (or act) Greek had provided access to both social and economic power.\(^52\) The Romans operated along somewhat similar lines, but Romanization provided far more concrete benefits than Hellenization had, such as actual legal enfranchisement for those who served in the Roman army.\(^53\) This "share in imperial government" was so important (and so revolutionary as compared to the Greek style, which had no such habit of


\(^{50}\) Ibid., 79, note 35.

\(^{51}\) For a discussion on the history of this term, see Woolf, *Becoming Roman*, 5–9. As he says, "it is easy for the study of Romanization to become an appraisal of provincial cultures, measured against the standards of supposedly pure Roman culture" but I hope this paper's discussion of, say, Arrian and Tacitus will agree with his statement that "studies of provincial culture need to account for [the Empire's] cultural diversity".


\(^{53}\) Brunt, 161.
enfranchising its allies) that, for example, Roman allies during the Second Punic War staunchly refused to betray Rome – either because of loyalty or because of fear (whether of losing citizenship rights or of Roman retaliation).54 Along with enfranchisement came interest in Graeco-Roman culture and language: the elite in places as distant as Spain and Britain wrote in Latin and knew their Vergil.55 On the other hand, along with the taste they developed for Greek art and literature, the Romans developed their anxiety about the barbarian other even further than the Greeks had: civilization now being divorced from the ability to speak or act Greek, the Romans took over the civilizing mission – since, after all, the Greeks had degenerated into impotency – for the sake of the entire world.56

In contrast, the Greeks before the second century A.D. displayed a conspicuous lack of interest in Roman culture, preferring to speak and write in Greek and remain in their own communities, rather than serve in the army or move to Rome.57 During the second century B.C. – after the Romans definitively put an end to Greek attempts at independence – the Greek elite turned away from what no doubt must have been a discouraging present and developed a strong interest in their (idealized) past, where the old values of ‘freedom’ and ‘autonomy’ could be praised without the political ramifications

54 As Brunt observes, the enfranchisement of the Italians serves as a model for that of the provinces: ibid., 167.
55 Ibid., 166.
56 Woolf, Becoming Roman, 57–60.
57 Madsen, 59.
that might come from actually practicing those values in the present.\textsuperscript{58} They could not exert political dominance over – or independence from – the Romans, but they could surpass them in their cultural accomplishments, and this culture that, in some ways, the Romans had not attained allowed the Greek elite to feel some measure of independence, even superiority.\textsuperscript{59}

Of course, if the past was being valued over the present, and if the Greeks were looking back to the dead for guidance, what value (or lack thereof) was attached to actual living examples? If Greeks were able to improve somewhat their position under the Romans by valorizing past cultural achievements, this might also imply that they could never live up to such achievements. Certainly some Romans felt this to be the case.

Tacitus, a rough contemporary of Arrian, speaks of Athens – beating heart of the idealized Greek past – as “wiped out by disasters” \textit{(tot cladibus extinctos)}.\textsuperscript{60} The Romans, in their travels to Greece, expected to have a very specific experience there: not to enjoy Greece's present but to transport themselves to the past, to be “in the proximity of antique greatness”.\textsuperscript{61} Rather than disappoint them (although they were often disappointed), the Greeks could give them what they wanted, by recreating the past that the Romans had encountered in their readings of Greek history and poetry. So Cicero, at Sparta, witnessed

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\textsuperscript{58} Plutarch, for instance, talks about the hazards of transporting the values of the classical past into the Roman present, \textit{Political Advice} 814a.

\textsuperscript{59} Swain, 89.

\textsuperscript{60} Tac. \textit{Ann.} 2.55.1.

\textsuperscript{61} Alcock, \textit{Graecia Capta}, 226.
the Spartans whipping their young men as if they still lived under the laws of Lycurgus.\textsuperscript{62}

This brings us back to Pliny and his praise of a vague, heroic past and a concurrent silence on an actual, present Greece. We can imagine that the presence of living Greeks may actually have been offensive in its banality: for all that the Romans lamented the destruction of the glory that was Greece, its destruction was partly what drew them there.

Porter comments:

Ideal Greece suffered, we might say, an ideal trauma. Take away the idealization, and all that is left is the broken landscape of Greece, stripped bare of fantasy. The less-than-sublime or less-than-hideous nature of the relics from the past must be concealed at all costs. Knowledge of this truth and the attempt to suppress it again are what constitutes the real traumatic core of the memory of Greece. Nostalgia, in other words... is a cultural strategy, one way of coming to grips with a loss that can only ever be imagined but never experienced as such.\textsuperscript{63}

This coping strategy dovetailed very nicely with Rome’s conception of Greece as something of a museum of antiquities, while Rome itself carried on – better, and with more justification – Greece’s civilizing mission. Alcock quotes Eco’s dry comment on “the crocodile tears of the Roman patrician who reproduced the grandeurs of the very Greece that his country had humiliated.”\textsuperscript{64} How acutely the Greeks felt this irony is impossible to say, but the archaicizing vogue of the Second Sophistic suggests that the Greek elite did feel pricked by the need to play out this drama not only for their own benefit but also for

\textsuperscript{62} Sparteae vero pueri ad aram sic verberibus accipiuntur, ut multus e visceribus sanguis exeat, non numquam etiam, ut, cum ibi essem, audiebam, ad necem. Cic. Tusc. 2.34.


\textsuperscript{64} Alcock, Graecia Capta, 228.
the Romans. This is not to suggest, whatever impression the literature gives, that Greek participation in current affairs dried up and withered; Eastern Greeks in particular were a not uncommon sight in Roman government. Mainland Greeks were less common, which perhaps reinforces the point. Origin from Athens and Sparta suggested the glorious classical past; origin from Greek Asia Minor suggested descent from “kings and tetrarchs.”

Arrian, then, presents for us a rather unexpected, but for his time by no means unconventional, model of a member of the Greek elite in the second century A.D. It is impossible, and perhaps irrelevant, to know whether his ancestors had been ethnically Greek or Bithynian. He was firmly a member of the Hellenizing upper class, and, as typical of the Roman imperial government’s relationship with local elites, his family had likely held Roman citizenship since well before his birth. He was not the only Eastern Greek, nor even the first Bithynian, to join the Roman Senate, but by his equal participation in both worlds furnishes something of a contrast to other Greeks of his time – his teacher Epictetus being one of them, with his staunch refusal to become involved in Roman politics.

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66 Swain suggests a third alternative, that his family may have been Italian: Swain, Hellenism and Empire, 243.
68 Ibid., 183.
5. Arrian’s career

From Arrian’s own words, he seems to have first held political offices in his native
Bithynia (οὐδὲν δέομαι ἀναγράψαι... οὐδὲ εἰ δὴ τινὰ ἀρχὴν ἐν τῇ ἐμαυτοῦ ἔρξα, Anab. 1.12.5) before serving in the Roman army.\(^70\) He was a legate for C. Avidius Nigrinus in 111-114 then, perhaps, took part in the Parthian campaigns in 114; he was suffect consul in 129/130.\(^71\) From 130 to 137 he was the legate of Cappadocia – a distinctive accomplishment, since it was uncommon, at this date, for a Greek to be given such an important posting.\(^72\) After his career in the Senate, Athenian records place him in Athens in 145, where he was archon.\(^73\) Although he never mentions his homeland by name in his surviving works, we know that he wrote a history of his homeland, the *Bithyniaka*. It is a pity this work has not survived, since it could conceivably have offered us a good deal of information on how Arrian regarded himself as a Bithynian. Although local history was always a favorite topic for the Greeks,\(^74\) the fact that Arrian took the time to compose such a history suggests that,

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\(^70\) This passage’s meaning is debatable, but it seems fairly clear that the *patris* he refers to is Bithynia and, therefore, that the offices he has held *in tei heautou* refer to Bithynia as well. Cf. Swain, *Hellenism and Empire*, 244.

\(^71\) Madsen, 68.


\(^74\) John Marincola, *Greek Historians* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 110.
despite spending most of his life in service to Rome, “Roman” was far from the only, or the most important, way in which Arrian identified himself.75

Certainly most of his literary works suggest that he was more culturally attuned to his Greek heritage than to his Roman affiliation. In addition to his Anabasis, which he imagined would place him in the rank of the foremost Greek authors (καὶ ἐπὶ τῷ δὲ σὺν ἀπαξιώ ἐμαυτόν τῶν πρῶτων ἐν τῇ φωνῇ τῇ Ἑλλάδι, 1.12.5) he wrote a work on hunting inspired by Xenophon of Athens’ Kynegitikos; works on India and Cappadocia (specifically, its invasion by the Alani during his legateship); a tactical manual and a letter to Hadrian describing a circumnavigation of the Euxine; and a collection of Epictetus’ teachings.76 Aside from a possible work on Trajan’s Parthian expedition, none of these works are geared to a Roman context; even the letter to Hadrian was part of a recognized Greek genre, the periplus. They are, however, set within a Roman context. Even if Arrian rarely mentions Rome in his writings, Rome dominated the political and intellectual landscape of his life. Just as Greek communities utilized several strategies to cope with the new power that had come to dominate the Mediterranean, so did Greek individuals, and it is therefore worth asking what parts of Arrian’s Anabasis – even if they do not mention Rome explicitly – can be better understood by taking into account Arrian’s multiple contexts: Bithynian, Greek, and Roman.

75 Swain, 70.
76 Stadter, Arrian of Nicomedia, 171.
CHAPTER TWO

1. Themes in Greek historiography

Beginning with Herodotos’s famous prologue, if not earlier, ancient historians used the opening of their works to announce the purpose of their history, why they were writing it, and why they were more qualified to write it than other authors. The very act of writing this introduction was itself an homage to the classical authors, and later introductions often contain the same sorts of organization, themes, and key words as the authors they were imitating. Herodotos, after briefly identifying himself as Halicarnassian, tells us that he is writing so that the ‘deeds of men not be lost to time’ (ὡς μὴτε τὰ γενόμενα ἐξ ἀνθρώπων τῷ χρόνῳ ἐξίτηλα γένηται, Herod. 1.1.0). Thukydides also identifies himself tersely as Θουκυδίδης Ἀθηναῖος: striking brevity, given what we learn later in the work, that he participated in the Peloponnesian War and was exiled from Athens for bungling a command. He emphasizes the importance of both his work (a “possession for the future,” a little later in the first book, 1.22.4) and of his chosen topic: “thinking it would be a great

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78 Exceptionally, he includes both the deeds of Greek men and barbarian men as worthy of remembrance.

79 Thuc. 5.26.5.
war and the most worthy of being discussed of those that happened previously” (ἐλπίσας μέγαν τε ἔσεσθαι καὶ ἄξιολογῶτατον τῶν προγεγενημένων, 1.1.1).

This sort of introduction – identity of the author; reasons for writing the work; some sort of explanation, explicit or implicit, of the author’s conception of history – would become standard. There was room for deviation, however; so Xenophon tends to start his work in medias res, and his Hellenika is an explicit continuation of Thukydides’ history. This came, too, to be a feature of Greek historiography: historical works did not exist in isolation but could depend on each other as explicitly as Xenophon’s depends upon Thukydides, or could recall their predecessors more generally in theme, vocabulary, or historical outlook. This meant, of course, that an author expected his readers to have a good memory of other historical works.

Authorial intrusions are another important feature of Greek historiography, especially important for studying Arrian’s Anabasis, in which he occasionally, and strikingly, interrupts his admiring portrait of Alexander with harsh criticism. The trope was probably adapted from Homer, who used it sparingly and thereby lent his apostrophe to Patroklos, for example, particular weight. Likewise, most ancient historians tended to be absent from their narratives. Gnomic statements abound, but rarely does the author break the illusion of impartiality with ego or first person verbs (Herodotos being a notable exception). And, of course, to mention Homer reminds us that the genres of ancient literature were extremely porous. Not only did epic frequently make its way into ‘history’

88 Chaplin, for example, discusses Arrian’s relationship to Herodotos in vocabulary and historical and thematical outlook: Chaplin, “Conversations in History.”
books, there was a thin boundary between the heroic past and recorded history. In his prologue Herodotos mentions episodes that we would assign to mythology (the abductions of Io and Medea) and says that the Persians consider as the origin of Graeco-Persian conflict the sack of Troy, bringing Homer into his work of history at the very outset.\(^8\) Any reader of the Greek historians would almost certainly have been very familiar with the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*; this was a Homer-centric world. A character in Xenophon recalls that his father made him memorize the entire *Iliad*.\(^8\) It is not surprising, therefore, that Herodotos and Thukydides both quote Homer at several points.\(^8\)

Thukydides is less obviously dependent upon Homer than Herodotos,\(^8\) but Homeric influence is apparent in every early Greek historian who included speeches (and would later become a stock of the trade even for Roman authors), starting with Herodotos, this being one of his major gifts to ancient history.\(^8\) Their historicity is irrelevant; it would have been obvious to most readers that Herodotos could not have been present at, say, Xerxes’ war councils on the invasion of Greece. Speeches are an integral part of Homer, however, and considering the myriad ways in which Greek historians could allude to Homer (themes, character types, word choice), speechifying may have seemed a natural

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\(^8\) Hdt. 1.2.

\(^8\) Xen. *Symp.* 3.5.


\(^8\) Herodotos was *Homerikotatos*: Oswyn Murray, “Herodotos and Hellenistic Culture,” *The Classical Quarterly (New Series)* 22, no. 02 (1972): 203.

epic construction to include in history. As in Homer, Herodotos' speeches often advance the main plot and, in both Herodotos and Thukydides, reveal character in ways the narrative does not. The very subject matters of most Greek history, in fact, recall Homer. The same things that concerned the bard – great men, great battles, the suffering of war, cities and families torn apart – concerned the historians, and this must be, in some way, deliberate. Consider Herodotos and Thukydides' programmatic statements about the purposes of their works, to be contrasted with Homer’s repeated kleos aphthiton.  

μήτε ἐργα μεγάλα τε καὶ θωμαστά, τά μὲν Ἑλλησι τά δὲ βαρβάροις ἀποδεχθέντα, ἀκλεά γένηται

[Herodotos writes] so that the great and awesome deeds accomplished by both Hellenes and barbarians not lose their renown. (Herod. 1.1.0)

κίνησις γάρ αὕτη μεγίστη δὴ τοῖς Ἑλλησιν ἐγένετο καὶ μέρει τινὶ τῶν βαρβάρων

For this was the greatest revolution, not only amongst the Greeks, but also amongst a portion of the barbarians. (Thuc. 1.1)

Thus we also see, beginning with the earliest recorded Greek history, an emphasis on the relations between Greeks and barbarians, which I will examine in greater detail further on.

The techniques of drama were equally important to the Greek historians, particularly the idea that acts of hubris lead to men's downfall. It is difficult to choose specifics from so many examples, but Herodotos' Kroisos is perhaps prototypical of the trope. For Thukydides, the Athenian Empire itself shows tragic influence: there is a

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sobering degradation from the self-confident (hubristic?) Athens described in Perikles' Funeral Oration, to the Athens that destroys Melos, to the Athens struck down from her great height by the plague and the disaster of the Sicilian Expedition. There is much in Xenophon that also borrows from the dramatic conventions of his time, such as the reversals of fortune suffered by his Kyros and Klearchos.\(^\text{87}\) This is a trend that continues into Arrian's time, as Homer, drama, and mythology continue to feature, or be topics of interest, in Hellenistic and Graeco-Roman historiography. Moreover, that the Greek elite continued to read Homer and the classical authors goes mostly without saying; Herodotos and Thukydides especially exerted a huge influence over the forms, language, and subjects of later historiographers.\(^\text{88}\)

Another theme that predominates in Graeco-Roman historiography is the treatment of barbarians: the East-West dichotomy, if one will. Here I reproduce at length an observation from Murray that I believe is key to our study of Arrian:

> It is no accident that the great writers of cultural history appear in or just after such periods [of expansion] – the first age of colonization and of contact with the East, the conquests of Alexander, and those of the middle and late Roman Republic in the West. Ancient writers knew this well.... These periods of expansion are followed by periods when the new vision becomes another stereotype to imprison the imagination.\(^\text{89}\)

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\(^{88}\) Two examples: Nearchos, Alexander's admiral, had read Herodotos: Murray, “Herodotus and Hellenistic Culture,” 206. And it is commonly believed that Alexander himself was an avid reader of Xenophon, although a recent study has challenged this view: Kieran McGroarty, “Did Alexander the Great Read Xenophon?,” *Hermathena*, no. 181 (2006): 105–24.

\(^{89}\) Murray, “Herodotus and Hellenistic Culture,” 201.
I will return to this point, but for now it suffices to observe that we first see an interest in and attempt to describe non-Greeks in Herodotos. On the one hand this can seem natural, since his focus was on the war between the Greeks and the barbarians (Persians), which expanded at least the imaginative borders of the Greek world: they were no longer only citizens of their frog pond, but denizens in a wider world that included subjects of the Persian Empire, which they themselves were in constant danger of becoming. But on the other hand, Herodotos remains one of the authors most sympathetic to the Persians, who otherwise remained Enemy Number One in the Greek imagination until the campaigns of Alexander. He is capable of praising the Persians, as when he says that the worst thing to a Persian is to lie.\textsuperscript{90} The ancients themselves recognized that there was something special about Herodotos in this regard; they called him \textit{philobarbaros}.\textsuperscript{91} Yet even Herodotos, especially when pairing the \textit{mores} of Greeks and Persians, aligns the East with decadence, softness, and luxury.\textsuperscript{92} At the very least we can observe that this dichotomy – Eastern softness, Western stolidity – existed and could be used in different ways for different purposes. Westerners could sometimes act Persian, and Easterners could sometimes act Greek. But the basic polarity is already quite clear in Herodotos.\textsuperscript{93}

\textsuperscript{90} Hdt. 1.138.

\textsuperscript{91} Plut. \textit{De Herod.} 857A.

\textsuperscript{92} Though it is not clear whether, as many other Greeks did, Herodotos believed that the Persians were naturally such or whether he believed that their large empire had caused them to become so (cf. the \textit{Histories}’ ending speech of Kyros). This story certainly invites the reader to imagine whether one of the large empires of Herodotos’ own time, the Athenian Empire, could fall prey to this same fate.

\textsuperscript{93} See, e.g., François Hartog, \textit{The Mirror of Herodotus: The Representation of the Other in the Writing of History} (Univ of California Press, 1988).
Xenophon, who is known to have been one of Arrian’s favorite authors, is a good example of the ‘classic’ Greek attitude towards the East. On the one hand, he traveled widely in the Near East and worked closely with Persians. He was unstinting in his praise of one Persian in particular, Kyros the Younger, in whom he admires the suspiciously Greek character traits of generosity to friends, self-control, and love of freedom (Xen. Anab. 1.9.14-16, 1.7.3). On the other hand, Xenophon’s Kyropaeideia includes a list of characteristics that would come to embody the standard Greek view of the Persian character: decadent, effeminate, and corrupt. Whether he actually believed such things to be true is another topic of investigation altogether, but the point is how this fantasy of the effeminate Persian came to be used when the Greeks were speaking about, or forming, their own identity. If Persians are effeminate, Greeks are virile. If Persians are treacherous, Greeks are steadfast. (This is stereotyping, of course, and stereotypes do not deal with individuals: Greeks could be shifty or Persians could be decent. Clearly the Greeks acknowledged that this could be the case.) Greek culture is so preeminent, in fact, that even Kyros, a man raised in this morally corrupt Persian atmosphere, can recognize the superiority of the Greek way of life, even though – or because? – it is fundamentally opposed to the values Greeks attributed to his culture.

Most striking of all is that this way of thinking about the world continued into Roman times, and that Greeks, in the Roman mindset, now inhabited the role they had

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94 Arrian’s relationship to Xenophon: Stadter, Arrian of Nicomedia, 54.
95 ἐ γὰρ ἰστε ὃτι τὴν ἐλευθερίαν ἔλοιμην ὑπὲρ ἀντὶ ἢν ἢν πάντων καὶ ἄλλων πολλαπλασίων: it is hard to believe these words came from the mouth of a man aspiring to be shahanshah.
allotted to the Persians. Jacobs writes about the ways in which the Romans created stereotypes as a method of colonial control, observing that stereotyping is a process which controls the colonized via visual (also, for our purposes, literary) representation, and that this control involved “creating a fundamentally gendered relationship with the provincials... replicating the social norms of dominating male and dominated female as a basic unit of asymmetrical social interaction”.\footnote{Andrew S. Jacobs, \textit{Christ Circumcised: A Study in Early Christian History and Difference} (Univ of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 17-18. Although as classicists we are more familiar with the literary devices by which the Greeks feminized their nemesis (although, interestingly, in the case of the Greeks and Persians the power dynamics are flipped; we can only imagine how the Persians depicted Greeks to one another), this feminization also comes out quite strongly in Greek pottery.} Control, and its genderization, is of course a key issue in understanding the mindsets of the Greek and Roman elite. Within their cities they dominated almost every aspect of life, political, cultural, military, and religious, and deserved to do so because of their status as free men. This could be especially highlighted by contrast with the Persians, whose masculinity and autonomy, as subjects of an emperor, are in question. This comes out quite strongly in the Greek belief that Persians were devoted to the kind of excessive drinking where control was lost and the self was disintegrated, whereas the Greeks retained the control that was an inherent quality of their free male-ness.\footnote{Anne Carson, “Putting Her in Her Place: Woman, Dirt, and Desire,” in \textit{Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World}, ed. David M. Halperin, John J. Winkler, and Zeitlin, Froma L., 1990, 135–69.} (The Macedonians, of course, who are questionably Greek, drink unmixed wine, which is more likely to make them become truly intoxicated.) When the Greeks lost their political autonomy – one of the key aspects of masculinity – the tables were turned, and they were characterized by the Romans as effeminate,
degraded, and enervated. When the Roman elite, in turn, lost their autonomy under the Principate, the old theme of overindulgence (in feasting, in alcoholic consumption, in luxury items) took on new significance as Roman writers attempted to identify ways in which they might still exercise their autonomy. We will develop these ideas further when we come to the Great Digression, but, suffice to say, bringing the East into a discussion automatically provided opportunities for talking about ways of governing lifestyle and society.

2. Themes in Roman historiography

Although the Romans certainly had literature before they conquered the Greeks,\(^98\) in general Roman authors depended on Greek models when they began writing history and poetry.\(^99\) And, in relying upon their Greek predecessors, the Romans continued to emphasize themes derived from Greek models even when they were using Roman genres (e.g., the annalistic method of writing history);\(^100\) so they, too, employ prologues to state their name, achievements, and what, if any, historical framework they are using.\(^101\) In fact Arrian is a strong exception to this practice, since he leaves his name and his offices – presumably, his consulship at Rome – unspecified.

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\(^101\) See, e.g., the introductions of Livy and Appian.
One of the Romans’ most significant contribution to the practice of writing history was their evolving response to the Principate, which - often disapproving, sometimes outright rebellious – could be expressed most clearly in their writing. That is, Romans began to use literature covertly or overtly to defy the emperor. In the early Principate the reaction was usually one of defiance; Lucan’s furious treatment of Julius Caesar is one of the more obvious examples, while an author like Tacitus furnishes more understated critiques of the emperor.\footnote{Sailor provides a fine analysis of the nuances of Tacitus’ political views and how they impacted his writing. Dylan Sailor, \textit{Writing and Empire in Tacitus} (Cambridge University Press, 2008).} It is important here to be careful when taking Roman Imperial authors at their word. Many members of the elite were angry at the loss of \textit{libertas}, true, but it was a very specific kind of \textit{libertas}: the freedom of the elite to vie against each other and gain everlasting glory, for themselves and their families, in the political arena. The fruits of such contests now went to the emperor, not the consuls. In fact, during the early Principate, when Romans were still working through the implications of the change in government, \textit{not} to partake in politics could function as a display of adherence to ancient \textit{mores}.\footnote{Ibid.} Tacitus is particularly concerned about how the elite can position themselves within the new system without either degrading their dignity through obsequious flattery and collaboration or falling prey to the emperor’s ire –two problems of living under autocracy that the Greeks had already brought out in their presentations of the Persian nobility. This is also a major concern, as we shall see, in the Great Digression.
Moreover, most of the ancient, patrician Italian families had perished during the civil wars. So who was lamenting the loss of old-time *mores*? The new, non-Italian elite, which had begun to be enrolled in the Senate by Caesar: Lucan and Seneca, for example, are of Spanish, not Italian, origin. These Romanized provincials were among the most vociferous defenders of *libertas*, as nearly any passage taken at random from the *Bellum Civile* will illustrate nicely. By Arrian's time the Romanized elite, conscious of its debt and loyalty owed to the emperor, had become less conspicuously opposed to the *novus status*. Their reduced status, however, remained a source of friction and discomfort, as close studies of authors from this period have demonstrated.\(^{104}\) Scholars have also pointed out that the flourishing of the biographical genre – and a corresponding interest in the private lives of individuals - during the High Empire cannot have been coincidental but was intimately tied to the emperor's arrogation of power and prestige, which leads us into our discussion of Arrian's treatment of Alexander.\(^{105}\)

3. Arrian's choice of biographical subject

Arrian was obviously a man of diverse interests: he wrote about military tactics, hunting, philosophy, and geography, to name a few. When he decided to try his hand at history, he had many famous figures from both Greek and Roman history from which to choose. Considering that Arrian was writing at a time not only when the Greek elite were


beginning to assert themselves in the running of the Empire, but when they were most
interested in building an ideological link with Greek heroes of the past, we can perhaps
understand why Arrian chose a Greek figure to be the subject of his history.

Understanding why he chose Alexander, however, requires a bit of a historical digression,
since we must start with the observation that Alexander had not always been a Hellenic
hero. For many of the (mainland) Greeks of his time, Alexander and his father were hated
tyrants, stripping *poleis* of their cherished autonomy by forcing them to be members of
the League of Corinth, attacking them when they revolted, and manipulating their
domestic and foreign politics. Further still, their Greekness itself was debated.

Demosthenes flatly denied that Macedonians were in any way Greek: οὐ μόνον οἶχ

"Ελληνος ὄντος οὐδὲ προσήκοντος οὐδὲν τοῖς "Ελλησιν, ἀλλ᾿ οὐδὲ βαρβάρου ἐντεῦθεν ὅθεν καλὸν
eἰπεῖν, ἀλλ᾿ ὀλέθρου Μακεδόνος, ὅθεν οὐθ᾽ ἀνθραπότητον ἑαυτοῦ οὐδὲν ἦν πρῶτον πρίασθαι

(Dem. 9.31). While this speech is polemical, and some Greeks considered the Macedonians
Hellenes (Alexander I was permitted to participate in the Olympic Games; Isocrates
encouraged Philip to invade Persia as part of a panhellenic expedition), Demosthenes
could not have said this had the issue not at least been open for debate. Ethnic politics
aside, it is safe to say that Alexander was widely loathed by mainland Greeks.106

For the Romans, Alexander became a figure of remarkable plasticity who could be
re-molded to fit any crisis and any agenda. As the Republic spiraled into oblivion, its series

106 Upon hearing of his death, Demades quipped that the Athenians should not believe the report since, if
Alexander were really dead, the whole world would already be stinking of his corpse: ὁ μὲν Δημάδης ἐκέλευε
μὴ προσέχειν: πάλαι γάρ ἄν δὴν δεῖξεν νεκροῦ τὴν σίκουμένην (Plut. Phoc. 22.3).
of “generalissimos” – Scipio Africanus, Pompey, and Caesar - cast themselves as new
Alexanders, trying to tap into some of Alexander’s vitality and fame. The Julio-Claudians
too continued to be fond of Alexander; Augustus visited his tomb and Caligula and Nero
both imitated him. Trajan also, with his military success, vitality, and Eastern
campaigns, linked himself to Alexander. He was attractive to the new emperors because
he was a familiar example of a government in transition from a less autocratic system,
where a king like Philip was primus inter pares, to a government with a divine figure at the
top. But Alexander could also be deployed in the opposite direction. His reign had been
marked by his arrogation of more and more power, whereas the early emperors (especially
Augustus and Tiberius) were conspicuous by what powers they did not hold.

Literary authors in the Republic and throughout the Empire tended to use him as
a bellwether. Republican authors could attempt to persuade the generalissimos of
autocracy’s dangers; an imperial writer like Seneca utilized Alexander as an example of
what his pupil, Nero, should not be, while his nephew Lucan made Alexander the
counterpart to his deranged Caesar. Alexander’s accomplishments, and those of his
Successors, gained more relevance as the imperial period progressed and it became

107 J. M. André, “Alexandre Le Grand, Modèle et Repoussoir Du Prince (d'Auguste À Néron),” in JM Croisille
(éd.), Neronia IV, Alejandro Magno, Modelo de Los Emperadores Romanos, Actes Du IV“colloque
108 Henri Tonnet, Recherches Sur Arrien: Sa Personnalité et Ses Écrits Atticistes (John Benjamins Publishing
Co, 1988), 86; Stadter, Arrian of Nicomedia, 139–141.
110 Cic. Att. 13.28.1-3; Stadter, Arrian of Nicomedia, 104.
absolutely clear that the Republic was dissolved and the Senate subject to an autocrat; the Greek world had passed through this phase already and developed the “vocabulary and rhetorics of monarchical power”.

In a way Alexander becomes a fulcrum for the tug-of-war between the Senate and the Emperor for ultimate power: the senatorial (literary) class trying to persuade the Emperor of the dangers of power (since, of course, they want it for themselves), the Emperor trying to gain as much power as he can without coming to the end met by Alexander or, worse, Caesar. Trajan is the most conspicuous of the Emperors who attempted to fashion their careers after Alexander; alas, his Eastern campaigns were far less successful.

As well as representing either the attraction or the danger of power, Alexander symbolized, for some Romans, the temptations of the East. Going east always meant the possibility of becoming infected by Eastern effeminacy and degeneracy, as had happened to Crassus and Antony. And, although Alexander could be criticized for his mistreatment of the Greek world, he could also be assimilated into the Greek world as yet another example of the Greeks’ corrupting power, wealth, and effeminacy. This seems to be a dominant theme in both the late Republic, when Rome was first exposed to the wealth of the Greek East, and also throughout the Julio-Claudian period, when Alexander at his worst must have seemed very close to the Romans’ present political reality.

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113 Ibid., 189.


astutely observes the emphasis given in our sources (all of whom, Diodorus excepted, were Roman or Roman Greeks) to Alexander’s developing alcohol abuse. This emphasis, she suggests, is “ shorthand for a deeper, degenerative abscess at the heart of the body-politic”.\textsuperscript{16} I agree and would suggest further that this abscess is specifically seen not as a Roman, but as an Eastern, vice that is just one of the many ways the East can ruin a man’s character. Seneca blames Mark Antony’s fall from grace on two things: alcohol and his relationship with Kleopatra, an Eastern (but also Greek) woman.\textsuperscript{17} Excessive drinking, as we have already discussed, had been linked to the East as early as Herodotos.

Therefore, although it might seem “natural” for a Roman Greek to write about Alexander, in reality this was probably the most problematic choice that Arrian could have made. It would have been far less complicated to write about a safer time in history that everyone, even the Romans, could agree had been glorious: classical Athens, for example; Perikles would surely have made a good subject for history.\textsuperscript{18} In addition, a work on a classical (therefore, probably, Athenian) figure would have fit in well with Arrian’s retirement at Athens, when he seemed “exploiter exclusivement les aspects grecs de sa personnalité.”\textsuperscript{19} Perhaps he simply enjoyed a challenge: it was his opinion that, despite the

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 86.

\textsuperscript{17} quae... in externos mores ac vitia non Romana traecit quam ebrietas nec minor vino Cleopatrae amor? Sen. Ep. 83.25.

\textsuperscript{18} Bowie, in his brief survey of Second Sophistic authors, says the most popular topics were the great classical cities and Alexander, but the bulk of his examples are about Athens and Sparta (although we have no doubt lost many of the Alexander-centric works of this period): E. L. Bowie, “Greeks and Their Past in the Second Sophistic,” Past & Present, 1970, 7–8.

\textsuperscript{19} Tonnet, Recherches Sur Arrien, 54.
volume of works about Alexander, no one had ever gotten him quite right. But again, even if his goal were simply to exalt one of the most famous Greek heroes and remind the world that Greece had once had political relevance, this could not have been an easy task.

4. Arrian's Alexander

For the modern scholar, reconstructing Alexander's personality is an especially difficult task. He had already become a “character” in popular romances as early as the third century B.C., and his life and exploits have proven fit for casting into a wide variety of molds. In some early Persian works he is called the “cursed one”; in the Qur'an he is a servant of Allah; in our own day he has been portrayed as megalomaniac (Worthington) and saint (Tarn), as well as been the subject of a film that suggested his career was largely the result of Freudian impulses (Stone). There are historical facts that, without a doubt, occurred, but as past scholarship has treated in detail, some of these facts are present in some authors and missing in others depending on how the author has decided to portray Alexander. The most interesting question, therefore, is how Arrian portrays Alexander's personality and what this could suggest about his aim in writing about Alexander at all.

\[\text{Arr. 1.1.3.}\]

\[\text{Bowie, “Greeks and Their Past in the Second Sophistic,” 17–18.}\]

\[\text{Richard Stoneman, Alexander the Great: A Life in Legend (Yale University Press New Haven, 2008), 41–43.}\]

\[\text{Wa yasalunaka 'an dhil-qarnayni qul sa-atlu 'alaykum minhu. Inna makkannalahu fil ardi wa atanayhu min kuli shayin sababan. "And they ask you (Muhammad) about the Two-Horned One (Alexander); say, I will recite to you a memory of him. Indeed I (Allah) established him in this earth and gave him the means of all things." Qur'an 18:83-84.}\]
Scholars agree that Arrian’s portrayal of Alexander is, by and large, encomiastic.124 He leaves out, or glosses over, some of the more uncomfortable details of Alexander’s career; the burning of Persepolis receives very short treatment (and prompts one of Arrian’s rare criticisms of Alexander, 3.18.12), as does the trial of Philotas, to which Curtius devotes a great deal of space.125 One could argue that this is because Arrian was writing more of a military history of Alexander than a biography (he entirely leaves out, for instance, details about Alexander’s childhood), but he did think that an assessment of Alexander’s personality was an important part of his work, and he ends the Anabasis with such an assessment. A commander’s military choices, and a king’s policies, are indicative of his personality as well, which Arrian understood.

There are several personality traits Arrian emphasizes. First is Alexander’s generosity to both friend and enemy. This is demonstrated very early on when he gives the Thebans the chance to call off their revolt (1.8). Arrian highlights his fairness by describing how the Thebans who “had their city’s interest most at heart” were willing to acquiesce to Alexander, but were overruled. Moreover, Arrian gives the impression of the general sentiment amongst Greeks being that Thebes had reaped the consequences of Medizing during the Persian Wars, among other questionable actions (1.9). Alexander almost always shows restraint to captured individuals, such as Darios’ family and Poros.126 His largesse


125 Curtius, perhaps writing during the first century A.D., may have been closer than the other Roman Alexander historians to the treason trials and numerous suicides of the Julio-Claudian period. He also places considerable emphasis on Alexander’s excessive drinking.

126 A noteworthy exception is Bessos: Arr. 4.7.
enables his friends to live like kings (7.28.3) and he forgives Harpalos for running off with the treasury money (3.6). His lack of concern for money illustrates a second trait, Alexander’s overall self-control, both in war and in his private life. When battles turn particularly bloody, other Macedonians are often blamed (it is to save Perdiccas that Alexander orders a general advance against Thebes, for example). And, instead of being insulted when Darios’ mother mistakes Hephaistion for Alexander, Alexander corrects her gracefully. In this passage in particular we see that Arrian is not just interested in Alexander’s military genius but in his character as well, for he says that this episode seems neither totally true nor totally unbelievable but accurately shows how Alexander would have acted had this actually taken place (2.12).

A famous aspect of Alexander’s personality is his pothos (which is present in all of the historians and may, therefore, contain some germ of historical truth). Tonnet, who devotes a good deal of analysis to this nebulous concept, concludes that Arrian is especially careful to give the impression that “le pothos n’est pas le moteur principal d’Alexandre... [il] s’accompagne de raisons objectives.” Even a desire that some could see as irrational or irresponsible is always subordinated by Arrian to the needs of Alexander’s military objectives. Again we see, therefore, that throughout the Anabasis Arrian employs subtle tactics to deflect criticism against Alexander. Furthermore, Tonnet suggests that Alexander’s pothos, usually motivated by intellectual curiosity, lends something of the “tourist itch” to Alexander – akin to the emperor Hadrian’s fondness for travel.\footnote{Tonnet, Recherches Sur Arrien, 468–469.} It is a
clever way to associate his august patron with the more romantic side of this iconic Greek figure.

It is in the last pages of the *Anabasis* that Arrian gives us a detailed glimpse of his views on Alexander (and therefore on how he has tried to characterize him throughout the work). It is mostly a defense of Alexander on the basis of his youth and excellence, reminding us that Arrian was responding to a great deal of philosophical criticism of Alexander. 128 He also adds that Alexander should be judged more gently because he was the only king of old who felt sorry about his mistakes. 129 Arrian concludes by suggesting that something divine had a hand in Alexander’s birth and his death, that Alexander was unique amongst men (οὐκόνοι συν έμει ἓξω τοῦ θείου φύσει αὖ δοξεὶ ἀνήρ συνεν ἄλλω ἄνθρωπων ἑσικώς, 7.30.2), and that oracles are even now being produced which prove his greatness. The greatest man who had ever been born, then, was a Greek, and I think it is fair to suggest that Arrian did not imagine any Roman, past or future, ever surpassing Alexander (contra Livy, perhaps deliberately). That idea first introduced by Herodotos, the cycle of empires, may have ended with Rome, but the procession of great leaders ended with Alexander. 130

There are two inconsistencies in this summary that should be noted. First, Arrian defends Alexander’s Medizing habits on the basis that this was deliberate policy:

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129 Something of a philosophical innovation, Bosworth notes (and a weak one at that, in my view): Bosworth, *From Arrian to Alexander*, 147.

130 Chaplin, “Conversations in History,” 632.
Alexander was making concessions to the Asians to make them more amenable to their new regime. Second, he says that Alexander was not, contrary to widespread opinion, a heavy drinker but hosted large drinking parties for the sake of his friends (καὶ οἱ πότοι δὲ, ὡς λέγει Ἀριστόβουλος, οὐ τοῦ οἷνου ἐνεκα μακροὶ αὐτῷ ἐγίγνοντο, οὐ γὰρ πίνειν πολὺν οἶνον Ἀλέξανδρον, ἀλλὰ φιλοφροσύνης τῆς ἐς τοὺς ἐταίρους, 7.29.4). This is a puzzling conclusion considering that Arrian spends much of Book 4, the middle of his work, arguing exactly the opposite. In the Great Digression, perhaps one of the most important sections of the Anabasis, Arrian paints a picture of Alexander as growing more and more dissolute under Eastern influence. Moreover, his picture of Eastern corruption could have been lifted straight from a fifth-century Athenian author marveling that Persians wore trousers. One finds it hard to believe that Arrian, a Greek from one of the most multicultural areas in the world, could have held such hackneyed views about the empire that had once ruled his homeland, or that his own straddling of boundaries – Bithynian, Greek, Roman – could not have influenced his portrayal of Alexander beginning to learn just what boundaries he could and could not cross. Or is this an anachronistic view of Arrian, imputing to him an anxiety over identity that he never actually possessed? It has been argued both ways. At any rate, this stark contradiction is one of the most puzzling parts of Arrian’s Anabasis, since he is, on the whole, a conscientious writer and it is highly doubtful that while writing

Book 7 he forgot what he had said in Book 4.\textsuperscript{132} Taking it as a foregone conclusion, then, that Arrian has said exactly what he intended to say, let us turn to Arrian’s crafting of the middle part of the \textit{Anabasis}.

The events covered in the Digression (4.7.3 – 4.14) are the execution of Bessos, the murder of Kleitos, the attempt to introduce proskynesis, and the Pages’ plot. Not all of these events took place at the same time; Arrian has shifted the chronology. Bessos was executed in 329, Kleitos was killed in 328, Alexander tried out proskynesis in 328/7, and the Pages conspired in 327. As Arrian himself tells us, he discusses these events as a unit because he considers them thematically linked (4.14.4). The theme is Alexander’s growing despotism, which manifests itself in his treatment of his friends, enemies, and subordinates. And this despotism is explicitly linked with the East. When Alexander has Bessos executed in the Persian fashion,\textsuperscript{133} that is, by cutting off his nose and ears, Arrian inserts himself into the narrative to criticize Alexander. This is the first time he does so in the Great Digression, but it will not be the last. His criticism is that such mutilation is barbaric (τιμωρία... βαρβαρική, 4.7.4).\textsuperscript{134} The association of Easterners with novel and exquisite ways of exacting punishment would have been familiar to Greek and Roman

\textsuperscript{132} Granting, of course, that he is susceptible, as most ancient historians were, to making factual errors. Photius, however, had a “glowing appreciation for his style,” A.B. Bosworth, \textit{A Historical Commentary on Arrian’s History of Alexander}, 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Pr., 1980), 33–34; Stadter, \textit{Arrian of Nicomedia}, 166–167.

\textsuperscript{133} Which is to be expected, since Bessos is, after all, a Persian satrap and guilty of killing a Persian monarch.

\textsuperscript{134} Arrian uses τιμωρία only twice in the \textit{Anabasis}, once here and once to describe Alexander’s burning of Persepolis. It is perhaps an especially strong word for him: Chaplin, “Conversations in History,” 629.
readers;\textsuperscript{135} moreover, Arrian has already reminded us of Eastern cruelty when Darios captured wounded Macedonian soldiers, maimed them, and killed them (2.7). The reader might, therefore, recognize a shocking role reversal: the Macedonian now mutilates the Persian, taking on one of the outward signs of a despot, the ability to impose by visible marks his authority upon his subjects’ bodies. It is worth pointing out, however, that despite Arrian’s designating it βαρβαρική, Romans had practiced mutilation in his time,\textsuperscript{136} and Greeks were not innocent of devising horrible punishments, either.\textsuperscript{137} Arrian presumably knew this, so it is the non-historical truth he is concerned with here: the truth of ideas, not facts.\textsuperscript{138} Putting historicity aside, this is the episode with which Arrian chooses to start his digression, and it sets the tone for the other incidents.

To illustrate how the Greeks considered the East and despotism to be linked, and the occasional mental gymnastics they performed in order to arrive at this binary, Herodotos, once more, is a good starting place. Herodotos’ influence on later Greek historians, and his use of tragic themes to draw attention to the importance of hubris in men’s affairs, has already been discussed in a previous chapter. Arrian mentions him by name several times, but he also lifts ideas from Herodotos without expressly alerting the

\textsuperscript{135} E.g., scaphism (Plut. Art. 16) and carding (Hdt. 1.92).

\textsuperscript{136} Bosworth, A Historical Commentary on Arrian’s History of Alexander, 1, 48.

\textsuperscript{137} In Herodotos (9.120.4), the Athenians crucify a Persian and force him to watch as they stone his son to death.

\textsuperscript{138} Many studies have been done on the ancient historians’ understanding of how free they were to alter “hard-core facts”. See, e.g., Rutherford, “Structure and Meaning in Epic and Historiography”; Levene, “Historical Allusion and the Nature of the Historical Text,” in Histos (2011 working papers); Woodman, Rhetoric in Classical Historiography.
reader. Either they are subconscious allusions, or Arrian trusts that his readers can make
the connection for themselves. The most obvious borrowing is Arrian's adaption of the
wise advisor trope, a technique closely associated with Herodotos.\textsuperscript{139} The victim of this
trope is the historical Parmenion, who has mostly been, in the historiographical tradition,
reduced to a foil for the younger, more energetic, and audacious Alexander. This comes
across quite strongly in Arrian and adds to our sense that he is, for the most part, an
admirer of Alexander and thus inclined to portray him in a positive light – even when
Alexander's actions are objectively reckless.\textsuperscript{140} For example, Chaplin observes that, at the
Battle of the Granikos, Alexander discounted Parmenion's advice to launch a surprise
attack against the Persians lest he appear cowardly. Alexander's strategy worked, but it
could easily have gone the other way; he himself was nearly killed in the fighting.\textsuperscript{141}

As already mentioned, Herodotos was known as a \textit{barbarophile} in antiquity, and it
is true that his is a far more sympathetic, and open-minded, portrayal of barbarians than
we generally find in Greek literature. When describing cultural customs he is usually
content to report the custom as he has heard of or seen it and refrain from passing
judgment. There are exceptions, of course: he calls the requirement that Babylonian
women sit in Mylitta's temple and wait for a man to purchase the right to have sex with
her “the ugliest of the Babylonian customs”. This is a rare exception, however, and readers

\textsuperscript{139} Chaplin, “Conversations in History,” 621.
\textsuperscript{140} Ibid., 626.
\textsuperscript{141} Elizabeth Carney, “Artifice and Alexander History,” in \textit{Alexander the Great in Fact and Fiction}, ed. A.B.
might be tempted to think that this is a very humane comment on Herodotos’ part, since one of his objections to the practice seems to be that it is humiliating for the uglier women, who are forced to wait at the temple for, perhaps, years.142

Barbarophilia aside, the fundamental framework of the Histories will enjoy a long lifespan in Graeco-Roman literature: a community which grows too large and overextends itself in trying to grow even larger is doomed to be brought down by the very arrogance that compels its overreaching. This framework underpins Herodotos’ construction of his characters, barbarian and Greek. And, for Herodotos, individuals and their flaws are the drivers of history, and individuals are successful or not based on which pole of Herodotos’ framework they occupy. The Histories’ famous ending reveals how important the idea of overreaching was to Herodotos; one would think that, as a Greek writing about the incredible feats achieved by Greek unity, he might conclude his work by extolling this unity or warning about the dangers of disunity. Instead, the Histories ends with a glimpse of Persians past:

142 Hdt. 1.199.
they chose to live on poor land and be rulers rather than work in tilled fields and be enslaved to others. (Hdt. 9.122.3-4)

The implication is clear. The Persians, who once had been bred in circumstances as harsh as the Greeks, by Herodotos’ time have turned out exactly as Kyros predicted. By failing to be content with managing their own land, but seeking to gain others’, they have changed from “men who are good at waging war” to the soft, degenerate slaves the Greeks have come to know. And degenerate is an apt term. By replacing their moderate way of life with an extravagant one, they have somehow violated natural laws and become abnormal and degraded. They are themselves some kind of θωμαστὸν: awe-inspiringly fearful and strange. Xenophon says much the same thing in the Kyropaidia, when he describes how the Persians have become exactly what Kyros warned against. They were formerly excellent horsemen and soldiers (Xen. Kyr. 8.8.14-27) but are now less honest, less pious, less disciplined, and, in general, quite effeminate (θρυπτικῶτεροι πολὺ). They display their soft natures with the extravagant luxuries they now prefer: comfortable furniture, innovative cuisine, thick clothing for the winter and artificial shade in the summer, and aestheticians to paint their faces (τοὺς κοσμητάς, οἱ ύποχρίουσι τε καὶ ἑντρίβουσιν αὐτοὺς καὶ τάλλα ῥυθμίζουσι, Kyr. 8.8.20). Xenophon’s ideas about Persians, therefore, fit firmly into the Herodotean mold.

But again, for Herodotos individuals are the most important elements of history, and his characterization of the Spartan general Pausanias is particularly striking. Herodotos’ Pausanias represents the innocence of luxury and wealth that had prevailed before the Greeks became too entangled in Persian politics. Pausanias is noble and self-
restrained, distinguishing himself by his fair treatment of a woman captive (much as Alexander treats Darios’ wife and mother courteously: Hdt. 9.76; Arr. 2.12.3-8). When he sees Mardonios’ tent, with its gold and silver tables, he is dumbfounded. He orders the cooks to make a Persian meal and a Spartan meal and bursts out laughing at the difference between the two, telling the other Greek generals that the Persians have shown their folly by attacking the impoverished Greeks when they already have such riches (βουλόμενος ύμίν τούτα τόν Μήδαν ἰγεμόνος τὴν φροσύνην δέξαι, ὡς τοιήνες διαίταν ἔχων ἠλπίς ἐς ἡμέας αὐτῶν δίζωρην ἐχοντας παιρησόμενος, Hdt. 9.82.3). The Persians have degenerated, as Kyros warned would happen if they expanded needlessly, and the Greeks of the Persian Wars are now the “men good at waging war.” And, most importantly, they restrict themselves to their impoverished frog pond – preferring to be poor rather than be slaves.

However, Herodotos’ portrayal of Pausanias is not the end of the story. We get the full effect only if we read Thukydides. In his work, what had been a vaguer theme in Herodotos appears as a full-blown type: the Medized Greek. Thukydides clearly expects his reader to have read Herodotos and to remember his presentation of Pausanias, for, when Pausanias appears in the History, he has become a laughably corrupt character. But the reader only appreciates the impact of this when she recalls the disdain for Persian wealth with which Herodotos characterized Pausanias. The full passage is worth quoting:
After he received this letter [from the Persian king], although he was already held in high esteem by the Greeks for his leadership at Plataea, he got even more puffed up and could no longer live in his normal fashion. When he went out of Byzantion he dressed in the Persian fashion and was guarded by Persian and Egyptian bodyguards on his way through Thrace; he provided himself with a Persian table and was unable to check his ambition, but by small actions he revealed the great things he was planning on doing. He made it hard for people to get to him and was so violently angry to everyone that no one was able to approach him. (Thuc. 1.130)

We see in Herodotos, Thukydides, and other Greek writers an intense anxiety associated with the attractions of the East. Contact with the degenerate Persians could spread an infectious disease. The belief that history was merely a record of empires, with each one destined to be toppled by a successor, was a popular one, and there is, among the classical historians, a sense of dread that they were next and that the temptations of the Persian lifestyle (wealth, luxury, comfort, food) could accelerate their decline.¹⁴³ And it is no accident that, according to Herodotos, the last of these temptations is what catches Pausanias’ eye. Dining customs are important indicators of social health and societal values, and communal meals, in particular, are an essential method of bonding and of assuring individuals of their place in society. One remembers the special attention devoted to it in Spartan society. Not only what Spartans ate, but how they ate was proscribed: μέλας ζωμός followed by a small dessert, in a group of perhaps fifteen. This mess was a daily obligation and not even the kings could be absent without excuse.¹⁴⁴ It

was one of the many forms of behavior that Spartans regulated to keep their militaristic
core in fighting shape. And they were especially fearful it would be contaminated by
outside influences, as ends up happening to Pausanias when he sees the Persians’
abundant dining tables. In Herodotos, food is more than what you put in your mouth and
chew. You are what, and how, you eat; the Persians’ expansive tables that catch Pausanias’
eye and which he later emulates reflect, on some basic level, the unnatural acquisitiveness
of the Persian Empire itself.\textsuperscript{145}

5. The Great Digression

Not accidentally, therefore, feasting and dining are an important element of
Arrian’s Great Digression. The Kleitos episode takes place at a festival for Dionysos, god of
intoxication and debauchery.\textsuperscript{146} Almost immediately, Arrian states his disapproval of
Alexander’s drinking habits (his second criticism), saying that they had “recently gone
rather native.”\textsuperscript{147} As we have already seen, in his encomium of Alexander at the end of the
Anabasis, Arrian states the opposite, that Alexander did not over-indulge in alcohol but
preferred to stay at symposia for the companionship. There seem to be two anxieties at
work, one about intoxication, one about Medizing, but I would suggest that they really
amount to concern over the same thing: correct forms of government.

\textsuperscript{145} A. M. Bowie, “Fate May Harm Me, I Have Dined Today: Near-Eastern Royal Banquets and Greek Symposia

\textsuperscript{146} 4.8-4.9-4.

\textsuperscript{147} καὶ τὰ τῶν πότων ἦδη Ἀλεξάνδρῳ ἐς τὸ βαρβαρικῶτερον γενεωτέριστο: 4.8.2.
Arrian’s encomium of Alexander in book 7 is a clearly-stated summation of all that Arrian has been trying to show about Alexander throughout the *Anabasis*, and we should take him at his word (or Aristoboulos’): he did not believe that Alexander was a heavy drinker (ὡς λέγει Αριστόβουλος... οὐ γὰρ πίνειν πολὺν οἶνον Ἀλέξανδρον, 7.30.4). It was, however, ideologically convenient for him to blame the Kleitos episode on overdrinking in order to demonstrate the dangers of Medizing, or more specifically, of Eastern-style government. Greek writers had linked Easterners, and their banquets, with alcoholic debauchery since the classical period: Herodotos wrote that Persians were very attached to wine (οἶνῳ δὲ κάρτα προσκέαται, 1.133.3) and deliberated over the most serious matters while drunk (μεθυσκόμενοι δὲ ἐώθασι βουλεύεσθαι τὰ σπουδαῖότα τῶν πρηγμάτων). In the *Bacchae* Euripides examined the limits of how far humans could go under the intoxicating influence of Dionysos, the god of alcoholic madness who reminds us at the play’s outset that, to the Greek mind, he is an Eastern import. Strabo tells the story that Kyros the Great tricked some Scythians into getting drunk, then killed them while they reveled naked in Bacchic frenzy. One could compile quite the list, but suffice to say, Greeks associated Easterners with a disintegration of self through a drunken loss of control: a man “whose psyche is wet from drunkenness [is] devoid of both self-control and proper perception” and in danger of becoming womanish, more susceptible to emotion and

148 Λιπὼν... Ασίαν τε πάσαν, ἢ παρ᾽ ἄλμυρὰν ἄλα κεῖται μιγάσιν Ἐλλησι βαρβάροις δὲ ὄμοι πλήρεις ἔχουσα καλλιπυργώτους πόλεις: I left Asia, which has well-towered cities full of Hellenes and barbarians mixed together alongside the salty sea, Eur. Ba. 13-19.

149 οὶ δὲ ὄρχομενοι καὶ βακχεύοντες γυμνοὶ περιέπιπτον τοῖς τῶν πολεμίων ἔπλοις, Strab. 11.8.5.
 uncontrollable passions. As previously discussed, this was an essential component of the Greek distinction between their lifestyle as free citizens and the Persians' womanish enslavement to an autocrat. Greeks certainly drank, but they did not lose the control that justified their political and social dominance. If they did become truly intoxicated, there was some deeper ill at work in society. (Notably, several Greek commentators on the Bacchae assumed that, to account for his strange behavior in the play's last scenes, Pentheus was drunk.)

Moreover, the symposium must have been, for the Macedonians, something of an anxious event in and of itself: this was where Alexander's Companions and courtiers jockeyed for favor and promotion (promotion going hand-in-hand with the demotion, or death, of someone else). Tempers were prone to erupt. At a similar symposium, Philip had tried to attack Alexander with his sword and failed only because he was too drunk to stay on his feet. In this respect, Alexander does seem to have borrowed something from the Persians; his symposia were becoming, like Eastern banquets, an opportunity to showcase his authority and manage multiple intricate ties of loyalty and obligation. If communal dining is one of the most important ways in which humans bond, the

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150 Carson, “Putting Her in Her Place,” 137–138.


153 Whatever the Persians’ drinking habits, it is almost certain that the Macedonians exceeded them in rowdiness: Plut. Alex. 9.8-10.

154 Bowie, “Fate May Harm Me, I Have Dined Today,” 99.
corruption of this important, pro-social practice is not only philosophically disturbing but indicative of a wider problem. We have already seen the nexus of negative associations contained in Persian dining habits, while Spencer reminds us that for the Romans, during the early Principate, banquets had become the setting for heinous acts against family ties and guest friendships:

The dining-room, arguably, was to become a key *locus* for the way in which interpersonal relationships and their attendant obligations were being warped by the political and intellectual changes necessary to accommodate this shuffling tyranny…. Thus Alexander’s alcoholism can act as a model for a poisonous relationship between ruler and state, while his murder of a guest at his banquet functions as a warning to all those who enter into relationships with a solitary ruler.\(^{155}\)

Of course, Arrian is not writing during the Julio-Claudian regime but during a much more stable time for the empire. Yet these societal wounds, preserved for posterity through literature, form part of the genetic material for any Roman writer who was familiar with the classics. Tacitus’ vivid portrait of the public backdrop of Nero’s humiliation and eventual murder of Britannicus shows, I think, that even authors writing under Trajan or Hadrian were capable of understanding, and were perhaps still processing, the emotions prompted by the destabilization of “an important performance of social cohesion” and, to some extent, society at large.\(^{156}\) That we are not dealing with a simple historical yarn, but one of a series of ongoing attempts to deal with the ramifications of the new government,


\(^{156}\) Ibid. Nero first subverted communal eating’s primary function, creating and reinforcing ties of affection, by attempting to humiliate Britannicus publicly at a banquet; he then had him poisoned at a dinner party, *Tac. Ann.* 13.15-16.
is further suggested by Arrian’s next authorial intrusion. At this point he criticizes not Alexander but Kleitos: “I myself do not approve [of Kleitos’] speech, but rather I think it would have been sufficient for him, amid this debauch, to hold his tongue and not fall into the sin of flattery, as the others did” (οὐδὲ ἐγὼ ἐπαινῶ τὸν λόγον, ἀλλὰ ἰκανὸν γὰρ εἶναι τίθεμαι ἐν τοὐφή παροινίᾳ τὸ καθ᾽ αὐτὸν σιγῶντα ἔχειν μηθὲ τὰ αὐτὰ τοῖς ἄλλοις ὡς κολακείαν πλημμελεῖν, 4.8.5). Flattery was also commonly associated with Easterners and autocratic government, another way in which this passage depicts Alexander as Medizing. Arrian’s stricture, however, strikes the ear as having a good deal of contemporary relevance and is very well paralleled in Tacitus’ *Agricola* and *Annales*.

The dilemma for men like Arrian and Tacitus is that they have been very successful under the aegis of the Imperial government, but this has necessitated giving up a measure of their autonomy and free speech, the importance of which, for the Greeks, at least, cannot be overstated.157 Keeping one’s head down and not speaking one’s mind, as Arrian suggests Kleitos should have done, is the very sort of thing that Greeks scorned as innate to the barbaric character.158 Further still, there are examples of Roman senators who, like Kleitos, refused to compromise their principles (or, at least, expressed their anger that the rise of the Principate had ended their own ascendency) and were punished by exile or death. Tacitus is clearly uncomfortable with this, since he attempts to fashion a

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158 Examples abound. Aristotle discusses the category of men for whom, by virtue of their nature, it is beneficial to be ruled by one man: Aristot. *Pol.* 1254b. Before Plataea, a Persian prophesized that his army would lose to the Greeks and says that, although many of his fellow Persians also realize this, they must follow the king out of necessity: Hdt. 9.16.5. After a very long speech by Xerxes during a war council, his courtiers’ reluctance to state their opinions takes up one succinct line: Hdt. 7.10.
new middle ground between those who go to the extremes of either resistance or collaboration. The first group includes men like Thrasea Paetus, whom Tacitus criticizes for throwing away his life for principle's sake yet accomplishing nothing. The preferred way of behaving, instead, is to avoid the worst displays of flattery and obsequiousness while still prospering under the regime and even managing to do some good. Tacitus furnishes the example of Marcus Lepidus, who ensures that the majority of the property of an exiled Roman woman goes to her children and not her accusers:

\[ hunc ego Lepidum temporibus illis gravem et sapientem virum fuisse comperior: nam pleraque ab saevis adulationibus aliorum in melius flexit. neque tamen temperamenti egebat, cum aequabili auctoritate et gratia apud Tiberium viguerit. unde dubitare cogor fato et sorte nascendi, ut cetera, ita principum inclinatio in hos, offensio in illos, an sit aliquid in nostris consiliis liceatque inter abruptam contumaciam et deforme obsequium pergere iter ambitione ac periculis vacuum. \]

I consider this man Lepidus to have been, in those times, a serious and wise man: for he turned many things from the terrible flatteries of others to the better. But he also did not lack temperance, since he flourished with equal authority and favor under Tiberius. From this I am inclined to wonder whether it is by fate or lot of birth that, as in other things, the princeps inclines towards some and is offended at others, or whether there is anything in our own judgment which allows us, between precipitous stubbornness and shameful compliance, to chart a path empty of ambition and danger. (Ann. 4.20.2-3)

He expresses this sentiment more pointedly in his work on his father-in-law:

\[ posse etiam sun malis principbus magnos viros esse, obsequiumque ac modestiam, si industria ac vigor adsint, eo laudis exedere, quo plerique per abrupta enisi, sed in nullum rei publicae usuam ambitiosa morte inclaruerunt. \]

[Let them know that] even under bad princeps there could be great men, and that compliance and restraint, if hard work and vigor are added, can exceed the glory which many achieve through perilous paths, and make their name known through a showy death that is of no use to the Republic. (Ag. 42.5)

Arrian's remarks about Kleitos seem to me very similar to Tacitus' ideas. Their situations
are, of course, not totally analogous; Tacitus was appointed to at least one post by Domitian, while Arrian’s career prospered during the reign of two “good emperors,” Trajan and Hadrian. Yet even Hadrian, long regarded as one of the most enlightened Roman emperors, was not without his spots; the beginning of his reign was marred by the assassination of four opposition senators. While Arrian’s and Tacitus’ situations are similar in some ways – both provincials from families who had, ironically, benefited from the downfall of the old Republican families – they seem, although using the same language, to be coming from different ideological places. Arrian’s life and the rest of his works evince very little concern about the Principate’s vanquishing of freedom and autonomy (probably because Bithynia had not had such for a very long time). Nor do I believe Arrian was thinking as carefully as Tacitus about the moral obligations of living in an autocratic regime. We should remember that in Asia Minor Greeks had lived under monarchies for far longer than the Romans, and that Romans often used their vocabulary to struggle with the novus status’ implications. Still, a certain tendril of anxiety surfaces in the Kleitos passage, perhaps even the suggestion that, to the Greeks at least, Alexander’s autocracy and the princeps’ are not all that different but are both species of the genus “Eastern monarch.”

The theme of despotism continues, with a brief Homeric interlude (4.9.1–4) in which Alexander is cast as Akhilleus (as he was at the beginning of the Anabasis, when he

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took his very first steps upon Asian soil) and Kleitos as Patroklos. It strikes a discordant note, placed as it is between two examples of Alexander's Medizing (his barbaric overdrinking and his murder of Kleitos on the one hand, and his attempt to introduce proskynesis on the other); Alexander's similarity to Akhilleus has previously been cast in a favorable light. It is possible that Arrian wants us to remember, even while he describes Alexander's worst behavior, that Alexander is essentially heroic (being somewhat larger than life, heroes also make larger than normal mistakes). By placing this interlude immediately before the proskynesis episode, which caused so much trouble because the Greeks believed it meant the Persians worshipped their king as a god (it did not\(^\text{161}\)), Arrian is able to show that, whatever pretensions to divinity Alexander made for the sake of appealing to his subjects,\(^\text{163}\) Alexander knew his own limits after all: “And he conceded that, being only a man, he had misstepped” (\(\text{ἀλλὰ ἐμφήσαι γὰρ ἐπταίκέναι ἀνθρωπόν γε ἐντα}, 4.9.6).

The third episode is Alexander's attempt to introduce proskynesis.\(^\text{163}\) Again, Eastern extravagance and a sovereign's mistreatment of those around him (Kleitos was his friend, Kallisthenes his historian, and the Pages, whose plot is next, are more than anyone else under his power and at his mercy) are Arrian's themes here, illustrating the corruption that spreads outward from a monarch who acts like a barbarian rather than like a Greek. In this case the corruption manifests itself in Alexander's wearing Median

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\(^{162}\) As he justifies it in his encomium of Alexander, 7.29.3.

\(^{163}\) 4.9.9-4.12.
dress and arranging his court in Persian fashion, and in the hangers-on that are more appropriate for a Persian leader than for a Greek (4.9.9). The context of this episode is that Alexander attempted to introduce proskynesis at his court. Insult was added to injury when some of Alexander's flatterers began to suggest that Alexander should be worshipped as a deity (the accompanying implication, that Philip was not Alexander's father, had infuriated Kleitos). It is easy to understand why Alexander's troops were infuriated by the combination of these two things, since both involved bestowing on a mortal what was, to the Greek mind, only owed to the gods. To the Persians, however, proskynesis was a simple social ritual, as Herodotos describes with relative open-mindedness (Hdt. 1.134). No Persian doing obeisance thought that he was giving honor to a deity, but since the Greeks only prostrated themselves to their gods, it is easy to see how the misunderstanding arose. It did, however, make Alexander's life more difficult. He tried to introduce proskynesis on two occasions. At the first, the Macedonians who disagreed with this bit of concession to the Persians sat in sullen silence (4.11.1), the first hint, perhaps, of the army's later reluctance to speak out and anger Alexander. In addition, it ironically echoes the trope, discussed above, that the Persians were not free to speak their minds to the Great King. On the second occasion, Alexander seems to be making an even greater attempt to incorporate the Persians into his court. After drinking from a communal cup and doing obeisance to Alexander, each man comes up to be kissed by him (a "kiss which, among the Persians, was only exchanged between social equals or

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More open-mindedness than many modern translators, who often translate proskunein as 'groveling'.

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between the king and his royal Relations\textsuperscript{65}). The first attempt clearly included Persians; Arrian does not specify whether this second attempt did, but it is reasonable to assume that it did, and that the kissing was a way of salving both Persian and Macedonian dignity. For the Persians, it definitively included them amongst the Macedonian elite and made it clear that Alexander intended to incorporate them into his new power structure. For the Macedonians, it reminded them that their king was still merely the first among equals.

At this point, when Kallisthenes boldly refuses to bow and yet still comes to Alexander to be kissed, Arrian inserts his opinion into the narrative once more. He condemns both Alexander and Kallisthenes, one for hubris, the other for abrasiveness (\textit{σκαιότης}, 4.12.6). Yet he focuses most of his blame on Kallisthenes for much the same reason that he blamed Kleitos: “I say that it suffices for someone to behave moderately and lift up as much as possible the deeds of the king in whose company he has not blushed to be” (\`αλλά τὸ καθ᾿ αὐτὸν γὰρ κοσμίως τίθεσαι ἐξαρκεῖν φημί, αὐξοντά ὡς ἀνυστὸν τὰ βασιλεῖς πράγματα διὸ τὶς ξυνεῖαι σὺν ἄπηξίωσεν). We are reminded again that, for most of its history, the area in which Arrian was raised had existed quite peacefully under one form of monarchical government or another; certainly Arrian seems to be very confident that his recommendations for behaving before a king are correct. And, although Kallisthenes seems the perfect vehicle to illustrate the dichotomy between Oriental monarch and free, philosophizing Greek (Kallisthenes being a philosopher like Arrian himself), Arrian complicates this simple reading by focusing more on Kallisthenes’ bad

\textsuperscript{65} Fox, \textit{Alexander the Great}, 323.
behavior than on Alexander's. Indeed, Arrian may even be complicating our reading of Herodotos by placing Herodotos’ construction of history in Kallisthenes’ mouth, at the end of a very long speech in *oratio recta* in which he declaims on the essential differences between Greek and barbarian (Greeks honor their kings as men, not as gods; Greeks/Macedonians rule by law, not by compulsion; Greeks love liberty). Kallisthenes’ logic here seems to be that the introduction itself of proskynesis was the start of the Persians’ downfall, or at least that proskynesis is symptomatic of why they could not retain first place in the world:

*ἐὰν δὲ ὑπὲρ Κύρου τοῦ Καμβύσου λέγηται πρώτον προσκυνήθηναι ἀνθρώπων Κύρον καὶ ἐπὶ τόδε ἐμμεῖναι Πέρσας τε καὶ Μῆδας τήν τε την ταπεινότητα, χρὴ ἐνθυμησθαι ὅτι τὸν Κύρον ἐκείνον Σκύθαι ἐσωφόροισαν, πένητες ἄνδρες καὶ αὐτόνομοι, καὶ Δαρείον ἄλλοι αὐτῷ Σκύθαι, καὶ Ξέρξην Ἀθηναῖοι καὶ Λακεδαιμόνιοι, καὶ Ἀρτοξέρξην Κλέαρχος καὶ Ξενοφῶν καὶ οἱ ξύν τούτων μύριοι, καὶ Δαρείου τούτον Ἀλέξανδρος μὴ προσκυνούμενος.*

If it is said concerning Kyros, son of Cambyses, that he was the first among men to be prostrated to, and that afterward this abasement remained the custom amongst the Persians and the Medes, we must consider how the Scythians, poor and autonomous men, humbled that same Kyros, and Darios as well; the Athenians and Spartans humbled Xerxes, Klearchos and Xenophon and the Ten Thousand humbled Artaxerxes, and Alexander himself, to whom no one did obeisance, humbled the Darios of our age. (4.11.9)

This is exactly the point Herodotos had made: the Persians were successful when they preferred to be poor but free, the difference being, of course, that the Greek speaking here had actually seen this principle put into practice whereas, in Herodotos’ time, the Persians had still been a dominant power. The lesson would seem to have been reinforced by history, then. Whatever he might have thought of Herodotos, however, Alexander’s
response to Kallisthenes’ speech is irritation. And indeed, although Alexander himself was not above making speeches about the ennobling qualities of Greek freedom, it is clear that, on some levels, this rhetoric was viewed as empty, since Alexander makes the opposite argument in defending his conquests to the Macedonians. In this speech, at Opis in 324, he paints a much less sentimental picture of men who are good at waging war but are poor:

Φίλιππος γὰρ παραλαβὼν ὑμᾶς πλανήτας καὶ ἀπόρους, ἐν διφθέραις τοὺς πολλοὺς νέμοντας ἀνά τὰ ὅρη πρόβατα ὀλίγα καὶ ὑπέρ τούτων κακῶς μαχομένους Ἰλλυρίων καὶ Τριβαλλίων καὶ τοῖς ὁμόροις Θρακῶν, χλαμύδας μὲν ὑμῖν ἀντὶ τῶν διφθέρων φορεῖν ἑδωκεν, καθήγαγε δὲ ἐκ τῶν ὅρων ἐκ τὰ πεδία, ἀξιομάχους καταστήσας τοῖς προσχώροις τῶν βαρβάρων, ὡς μη χωρίων ἢτι χαράτῃ πιστεύων μᾶλλον ἢ τῇ οὐκείᾳ ἀρετῇ σώζεσθαι, πόλεων τε οἰκήτορας ἀπέφηνε καὶ νόμοις καὶ θεοὶ κρῆσθοι ἐκόσμησεν. αὐτῶν δὲ ἐκείνων τῶν βαρβάρων, ὡς ἰδίων πρόσθεν ἡγεσῶν καὶ ἑφέρεσθε αὐτοὶ τε καὶ τὰ ὑμέτερα, ἡγεμόνας κατέστησεν ἐκ δούλων καὶ ὑπηκόων...

My father inherited you when you were needy and aimlessly roaming about, many of you dressed in animal hides and pasturing a few herds on the mountains and fighting poorly, on their behalf, with the Illyrians and Triballians and Thracians on your borders; he gave you civilized clothing to wear instead of your hides and led you down from the mountains into the plains, making you worthy of fighting the neighboring barbarians and making you understand that you would be saved not by trusting in the strength of your estates but by your own virtue. He showed you how to inhabit cities, and he gave you good laws and habits. He made you, instead of slaves and subjects, leaders of the same barbarians who formerly had harassed you and carried off your property and families. (7.9.2-3)

Here Alexander emphasizes not how wonderful poverty made the Macedonians, but how wretched their circumstances were before Philip came to the throne; in fact, their poverty and rough lifestyle had not stopped them from being subject to the barbarians. This

Ironically, considering the point Kallisthenes is making, he can hardly act on this irritation, whereas Persian kings had been in the habit of, to say the least, roughly handling those who disagreed with them: e.g. Hdt. 7.39.
rupture in logic illustrates, again, the rhetorical nature of ancient historiography as well as how malleable the figure of Alexander had become in historical and philosophical writing, but it also makes us wonder just how thoroughly Arrian agreed with Herodotos’ view of history.\textsuperscript{167} Although Kallisthenes’ speech is a temporary victory for the Macedonian conservatives, whom Alexander tells not to worry any further about the issue of prostration, the Persians’ response to this speech is, especially in contrast to the Macedonians, quite dignified. In silence, they get up one by one and prostrate themselves before Alexander. A Companion, Leonnatos, bursts out laughing at the bow of one Persian (\textit{ἐπιγελάσαι τῷ σχήματι τοῦ Περσοῦ ὡς ταπεινῷ}, 4.12.2), which angers the King. The phrase is ambiguous: does the \textit{ὡς} refer to Leonnatos’ justification for his laughter (“thinking that/as if his manner were abject”), or does Arrian agree with him (“since his manner was abject”)?\textsuperscript{168} But he does introduce the passage with \textit{ἐδόκει}, rather than using some form of \textit{εἶμι} or \textit{γίγνομαι}, and I think it is fair to argue that, Arrian being a politician, he almost certainly would not have admired a person who openly mocks the members of his sovereign’s court. Whatever their private attitudes, Roman magistrates rarely derided conquered persons to their faces once they had been integrated into the system. And,

\textsuperscript{167} Cf. Chaplin, “Conversations in History”; Stadter, \textit{Arrian of Nicomedia}, 166: “Arrian... used the classical writers, especially Xenophon, Herodotos, and Thukydides, as models of style... but not of the substance of his thought.”

\textsuperscript{168} Curtius portrays the Macedonians even more disagreeably in his version of this passage. Polyperchon (instead of Leonnatos) “derisively began to exhort one of the Persians, whose chin was touching the ground, to seek the earth even more, eliciting the ire of Alexander” (\textit{unum ex iis mento contingentem humum per ludibrium coepit hortari, ut vehementius id quateret ad terram, elicuitque iram Alexandrī}), 8.5.22.
indeed, this is Arrian’s main criticism of Kallisthenes himself: his σκαιότης, awkwardness, poor manners.

This leads Arrian to his next item, the Pages’ conspiracy, since Ptolemy and Aristoboulos say that Kallisthenes fomented the plot. He has already alluded to this in 4.10: to a query concerning whom the Athenians hold in the highest honor, Kallisthenes answers Harmodios and Aristogeiton, the tyrannicides. (Moreover, the query comes from Philotas, linking Kallisthenes even further with conspiracy and treason.) Arrian here states very directly that he has not constrained himself with chronology but, since he considers the Pages’ conspiracy to be linked (οἰκεία, 4.14.4) to Kleitos’ story, he has included it in this digression. The question, therefore, is what he thinks these two events have in common.

To summarize briefly the episode as Arrian presents it, one of the Royal Pages, Hermolaos (who was interested in philosophy and therefore in close contact with Kallisthenes, 4.13.2), was punished by Alexander for killing Alexander’s intended target during a hunt; Alexander had him whipped and took his horse away. Hermolaos was aggrieved by Alexander’s arrogance or overstepping (τῇ ὑβρεῖ, 4.13.3) and so concocted a plot with some of his fellow Pages to assassinate him. Unfortunately for Hermolaos, on the chosen night, Alexander foiled the plot by staying up all night drinking, after which one of the Pages lost his nerve and revealed the plot to Ptolemy. The Pages were tortured, put on trial, and executed.

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In Arrian’s account there seem to be two possible explanations for this event. The first is that Hermolaos sought revenge for his perceived mistreatment by Alexander. Did Hermolaos think that he should not have been punished for killing Alexander’s prey? Or did he think his punishment was overly severe? Following Hammond’s interpretation of 4.13.1 (ἐκ Φιλίππου ὕψη καθεστηκὸς), Arrian notes that the institution of the Royal Pages was already in existence during the reign of Philip. It may have included, or indeed been based on, Persian elements (Xenophon describes a similar institution amongst the Persian nobility). If so, it is worth pointing out that it seems to have been traditional for the Persian king to take the first shot in the hunt, and that the punishment for violating this tradition could be quite harsh. As far as Hermolaos’ punishment goes, it does not seem unduly excessive based on the little we know of how Pages were punished by Philip; he beat one Page and executed another (Ael. VH. 14.49). Hermolaos’ reaction, therefore, is somewhat mysterious. Based on well-documented evidence of long-standing tension between Alexander and the Macedonian aristocracy, Carney argues that blaming the conspiracy on a personal grudge constitutes something of a false flag and that the Pages


172 Fox, Alexander the Great, 326. His evidence for the king having priority in the hunt is a fragment of Ktesias (FGrHist 688) where a courtier is exiled for killing an animal before the king, as well as a bit in Plutarch’s Moralia (173D) where Artaxerxes allows others to throw their weapons first (he also lists Xen. Kyrop. 1.4.14, which I do not find convincing).

are another example of Macedonian discontent with Alexander’s “innovative kingship.”

In her view, Arrian attempts to attribute the conspiracy to hurt feelings, but contradicts this interpretation when he includes Hermolaos’ speech in his own defense. Hermolaos admits his guilt but says it is no longer possible for free men to bear Alexander's hubris, then adds a list of Alexander’s crimes: the unjust death of Philotas and the even more unlawful execution of Parmenion, the drunken murder of Kleitos, the Persian dress, the attempt to enforce prostration, and Alexander's drinking bouts and unconscious spells (presumably brought about by over-imbibing). (4.14.2) Saying that the plot arose from a personal grudge, however, does not necessarily deny the seriousness of the reaction the grudge caused (indeed, as Carney observes, the personal was often the political in Macedon). Moreover, important historical events are often attributed by classical writers to individual feelings and/or actions; we could compare the stories that come down to us concerning Pausanias’ motives for murdering Philip.

As Carney observes, Hermolaos’ speech is almost certainly not historical; to add to her argument, the inclusion of Alexander's drinking habits renders the speech suspicious for reasons I have already discussed. The speech is in line, however, with the themes that Arrian has emphasized throughout the Great Digression. In each episode, Arrian has mentioned Alexander’s hubris frankly: he has Kleitos accuse Alexander, or his sycophants, of outraging the gods, ἑτέρων ὑβρίζειν, 4.8.4; the stories about the prostration touch on

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Alexander’s hubris and Arrian does not approve of them, ἐς ὑβρίν τε τὴν Ἀλεξάνδρου, 4.12.6; life was not worth living for Hermolaos if he could not avenge himself on Alexander’s hubris, μὴ τιμωρησαμένῳ Ἀλεξάνδρον τῆς ὑβρεως, 4.13.3. Nor does he approve, however, of those who have been wronged by Alexander’s hubris. We have already seen his criticisms of Kleitos and Kallisthenes, and if he disapproved of them for their lack of respect for the monarch whose service they had willingly entered I think we can fairly surmise that Arrian would also not have approved of courtiers who attempted to murder their sovereign, although he does not explicitly condemn Hermolaos. But it does not seem that Arrian intended to trivialize the Pages’ conspiracy by reducing it to a personal quarrel, since it, too, is a reaction to Alexander’s hubris. And, if all of these events are about politics at large, they are also all, on some level, about the personal. As Alexander’s qualities of generalship and leadership say something about him as a person, so too do his relations with individual members of his court. Indeed, at the very beginning of the digression, Arrian emphasizes the importance of the personal element in these episodes as he gives the reader, in advance, a summation of what she is supposed to take away from the Great Digression:

καὶ ύπαχθήναι Ἀλεξάνδρον ξύμφημη ἐς ζήλον τοῦ Μηδικοῦ τε καὶ Περσικοῦ πλούτου καὶ τῆς κατὰ τοὺς βαρβάρους βασιλέας οὐκ ἱσης ἐς τοὺς υπηκόους ξυνδιαιτήσεως, ἐσθήτα τε ὅτι Μηδικῆν ἀντὶ τῆς Μακεδονικῆς τε καὶ πατρίου Ἡρακλείδης ὡν μετέλαβεν, οὔδαμον ἐπαίνῳ, καὶ τὴν κίταριν τὴν Περσικῆν τῶν νεκρικευμένων ἀντὶ ὅν αὐτὸς ὁ νικῶς πάλαι

176 Interestingly, this is the same word Alexander uses when he tells Darios why he has come to Asia: to avenge Persia’s invasion of Macedon and Greece in the fifth century (τιμωρησαταί βουλόμενος Πέρσας διέβην ἐς τὴν Ἀσίαν, ὑπαρξάντων ῥημῶν, 2.14.4).

177 Personal quarrel: Carney, “The Conspiracy of Hermolaus.”
Furthermore I admit that Alexander gradually came to emulate Eastern luxury and a more barbaric monarchy where the king is not the equal of his subjects. I certainly do not approve of the fact that, even though he was a Heraklid, he was unashamed to wear Median dress and the diadem of the conquered Persians, even though he himself was unconquered. I take Alexander’s great accomplishments as proof that neither strength of body nor descent from a glorious race, nor success in war even greater than Alexander’s, or the circumnavigation and possession of Libya in addition to Asia (as Alexander intended to do), or even mastery of Europe in addition to Asia and Libya – none of this is helpful to a man’s happiness, unless he who accomplishes great deeds also has control over himself. (4.7.4-5)

In Arrian’s time, of course, the only ones who had accomplished what Alexander had not were the Romans, who were indeed the masters of the three continents of Europe, Asia, and Libya (as the Greeks called Africa). As we have already seen in a previous chapter, Alexander was often used as a warning, amongst the Romans, of the dangers of excessive political power and the corrupting potential of the East. I believe this helps us to resolve some of the obvious contradictions between the Great Digression and the encomium of Alexander with which Arrian ends the Anabasis. It is still possible to say that, on the whole, Arrian admired Alexander and believed him to be an example of near-perfect Greek achievement. When the occasion called for it, however, and where the historical facts that Arrian must acknowledge provide an opportunity for a discourse on it, the rich literary tradition of Alexander as potential Eastern despot could be deployed. We recall that history can function on two levels for Imperial Greeks: first, as a tool to assert the
cultural independence that still remains to them in reaction to their lack of political
autonomy, and second, as a ready-made mold for the Romans to discuss their new,
autocratic political reality.\footnote{Swain, Hellenism and Empire, 66–89; Bowie, “Greeks and Their Past in the Second Sophistic,” 17–18; Spencer, The Roman Alexander, 38. The emphasis given to classical Athens, however, can sometimes obscure the fact that a large number of Greek cities throughout history were monarchical or oligarchical.} Alexander can clearly fulfill both roles. His was an
achievement so vast that no other individual, not even a Roman, could ever emulate his
success. But he was a disquieting figure on many levels: his strained relationship with
mainland Greeks, particularly Athenians, to whom authors of the Second Sophistic
accorded so much prominence; his own semi-barbarous background; his preference for
giving high governmental roles to conquered peoples; his growing authoritarianism and
his executions of friend and dissident alike. He was, in many ways, more closely related to
the figure of the Roman princeps than to a figure like Themistokles or Perikles, and he
therefore could be a useful prism through which to reflect discussions about good and bad
leadership.

As positive as Arrian is, overall, about Alexander, at this strategically important
midpoint of his work he admits that Alexander fell short of ideal leadership in several
ways. I have tried to show that Arrian did not actually believe that Alexander had become
an Oriental despot – on the contrary, he shows he is capable of recognizing that
Alexander’s most objectionable actions had a political component to them (7.29.3). Rather
Arrian is firmly rooted in the Greek tradition of using the barbarian other to talk about the
self. One does not have to really believe that Alexander came to rely on alcohol excessively,
like a barbarian, in order to engage with the idea that he did. And by doing so one can reflect on the nature of communities and how the most basic social activities (eating and drinking) can become weaponized in the poisonous atmosphere of despotic government.

If one engages with the idea that Alexander tried to introduce proskynesis because he thought himself deserving of divine prerogatives, one can then think about the proper honors that are due to a ruler, how far these honors should extend, and what a citizen's obligation is when the ruler offends his dignity as a free person.

Most of the Great Digression, therefore, is an exercise in political theory, and most of what Arrian says in the beginning of the Digression about Alexander emulating Eastern luxury he refutes at the end of the Anabasis. In addition he praises Alexander's generosity, fearlessness, and strategic genius, and reminds us, in light of those faults of Alexander's which Arrian does admit, of Alexander's youth and capacity for self-reflection and repentance (μεταγνώναι, 7.29.1). As Bosworth reminds us, Arrian's emphasis on this is fairly unprecedented amongst surviving ancient works, and it is interesting that this concept comes to us from Arrian: a Greek from an area which had been under some form of monarchy for a very long time and who was one of the few Greeks, not only to participate in Roman imperial government, but to do so enthusiastically and unabashedly. I will also leave as a suggestion that, if we accept a later dating for the Anabasis’ composition, Arrian had witnessed the ugly beginning of an otherwise fairly peaceful reign, when four senators were assassinated at the outset of Hadrian’s Principate. Of course this belongs to the realm
of speculation, since it is impossible to pin down the *Anabasis*’ date with any accuracy.\footnote{Stadter gives an overview of the arguments for when the *Anabasis* should be dated in an appendix, and I prefer his arguments for a later dating (“after his consulship, in Cappadocia or in Athens”): Stadter, *Arrian of Nicomedia*, 184; see also Syme, “The Career of Arrian,” 181.} But it does match with the focus on personal, interior states that develops under a system of government depriving the governed of the chance to prevent such ugly occurrences;\footnote{Simon Swain, “Biography and Biographic in the Literature of the Roman Empire,” *Portraits: Biographical Representation in the Greek and Latin Literature of the Roman Empire*, 1997, 1–37.} and the Imperial system is just beginning to be handled by the sort of men who conceivably might be swayed by guilt and repentance – a thought that would have been futile in the days of the Julio-Claudians.

Arrian’s stinging criticisms of Alexander in the Great Digression, therefore, are not incompatible with a positive view of him overall. But I have not addressed the last thing Arrian says about Alexander in his prelude to the Digression, that all of the great things that Alexander accomplished are of no benefit to a man who does not have self-control over himself. Indeed, it imparts a certain wistful quality to the praise he gives Alexander at the end of Book 7: if we take Arrian seriously here, and I believe we should, we must take away that none of Alexander’s great qualities and achievements – although admirable and worthy of emulation for Arrian, for Greeks, and for us, Arrian’s readers – held any benefit for him at all. Although there is little in the *Anabasis* to remind us that Arrian was known in antiquity as a philosopher, not a historian,\footnote{Cf. Photios’ description of Arrian’s reputation in antiquity.} here it comes across most strongly, for lack of self-control (\(\mu\eta\ \sigma\omega\phi\rho\rho\omega\nu\epsilon\nu\)) is Arrian’s only criticism of Alexander that he does not later
deny or even temper. Moreover he phrases it as a lesson to this important part of his history: even if someone should do better than Alexander did, and rule over three continents, it will be useless unless he also masters himself. Granted, no individual up to Arrian’s time had accomplished singly more than Alexander had, but it is hard to ignore the fact that, as a result of many individual achievements, whoever was princeps in Arrian’s time was, in fact, master of all three continents. And was the current princeps able to master himself as well? That is, was he the rare individual who could outstrip Alexander in achievement? Again, we are constrained by our lack of certainty regarding the dating of the Anabasis, but an emphasis on σωφρονεῖν seems more apropos to Hadrian’s reign than Trajan’s. Trajan was a military man only (and had not exactly been successful in the East\(^{182}\)), but Hadrian Graeculus was famously a patron of Greek wisdom.

We began with the question of Arrian’s identity: was he anxiously attempting to use Alexander to project an image of Greek superiority? Or was he simply a Greek who was also a Roman senator, taking pride in his accomplishments and seeing no dichotomy between these two aspects of his life? I agree with Stadter: Arrian comes across as a self-confident person, who probably would have been impatient with such questions.\(^{183}\) For him, Alexander was a Greek hero who had accomplished singular feats that could never be equaled. That the Greeks had done it first and best did not exclude partnership with Rome in the future; there was still room for improvement, for the empire to be governed

\(^{182}\) Although, as Stadter observes, it seems Arrian felt he had been successful: Stadter, Arrian of Nicomedia, 141.

\(^{183}\) Ibid., 49.
not only by a great military commander but by a man who had mastered himself (bis vincit qui se vincit). Whether Arrian saw Hadrian as the fulfillment of this possibility is, of course, impossible to know, but at the very least I think we can say that, rather than this being an anxious time for Arrian as it no doubt was for other Greeks, he saw hope for the future in the masters of the present taking the opportunity to learn from the models of the past, as Hadrian would do (regardless of whether Arrian had already written the Anabasis or not).

It has been observed how lucky Alexander was: he had extraordinary gifts, but the energy, accomplishments and reforms of his father enabled him to use his talents to the fullest. Arrian too seems to have been uniquely positioned in history. He had the gifts to succeed in the Roman Senate, the undaunted pride in his past and patria, and the opportunity to see it all come together in Hadrian, who not only respected the ancestral heritage of the Greeks but also, rather than treating Greeks as fossilized relics, sponsored those who had talent to work for the Imperial government, and who walked his Hellenizing talk by choosing a Bithynian Greek, like Arrian, to be his partner. Perhaps not accidentally, the description of Alexander’s suffering after the death of Hephaestion is one of the few parts in the Anabasis where private human emotion, not expressions of virtus or vague pothos, is accorded importance and sympathetically described, with Arrian stating twice that he is giving the reader his opinion:

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184 Ibid., 169.
ἐπεὶ καὶ αὐτῷ Ἀλεξάνδρῳ ἥ Ἡφαιστίωνος τελευτῇ οὐ σιμφρὰ ξυμφορὰ γεγένητο, ὡς καὶ αὐτὸς Ἀλεξάνδρος προαπελθεὶν ἄν δοκεῖ μοι ἐδελῆσαι μᾶλλον ἢ τὸν ημῶν ἦ καὶ Ἑχιλλέα δοκῶ ἐν ἐλέσθαι προαποθανεῖν Πατρόκλου μᾶλλον ἢ τοῦ θανάτου αὐτῷ τιμωρῶν γενέσθαι.

It seems to me, then, that Hephaistion’s death was a terrible disaster for Alexander, and I think he would have preferred to die first rather than try and go on living, no less than I think Akhilleus would have chosen to die before Patroklos rather than be the avenger of his death. (7.16.8)

Which brings us back, of course, to Homer, the foundation for all subsequent Greek writing; and while we may still marvel at Arrian’s confidence (however rhetorical) in placing himself on Homer’s level, I think we can better understand why Arrian did not feel the need to name himself or what particular offices he had held (is he talking about offices held in Bithynia? In Rome? In Athens?). As he says, the Anabasis is his patris, is his genos, is the archai he held: that is, the Anabasis and Alexander represent the pride he felt for his past and his people and, at the same time, his attempt to answer the question, formulated most memorably by the Romans but of paramount importance to the Greeks throughout their history: “whether there is something in our own policies which permits us to proceed between sheer truculence and grotesque compliance along a path cleared of ambition and dread” (Tac. Ann. 4.20.2).

6. Conclusion

Let me quote again this observation by Murray: “These periods of expansion [after colonization, contact with the East, Alexander's conquests, etc.] are followed by periods

85 As I cannot improve upon it, I have used Woodman's translation: A. J Woodman, The Annals (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub., 2004).
when the new vision becomes another stereotype to imprison the imagination.\textsuperscript{186} When I first began writing this paper, the main question I wanted to answer was why Arrian was describing cultures that must have changed dramatically since the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. in much the same terms as the classical historians did. That question is unanswerable, of course, and so I have attempted instead to explain what factors compelled Arrian to rely on the classical construction of Greek-Persian relations. The quote from Murray is, I think, on the harsh side, but it still captures the fact that patterns of thought, and their associated terminology, continue to be used long after the time when they first become relevant. *Libertas* is a good example. It originally meant the unconstrained freedom of the upper classes at Rome to compete with one another for advancement and reputation. It continued to be used, however, well into the Principate, when the practical associations of its original meaning have changed. No one in the Empire could have seriously thought there would be a return to the system where the nobility exercised ultimate power. But it remained an enormously powerful word for the aristocracy because of its associations: *libertas* evoked the Scipios, evoked Cato the Younger – *sed victa Catoni* – evoked Brutus, Cassius, and Cicero.

In the same way, when Arrian borrows from the classical ideology about the East, he is calling upon readers to remember a reality that is radically different from their own. The Greeks are subject to the Romans and the Roman elite is subject to the Emperor. But readers still know what to think when they are presented with a picture of a monarch who

\textsuperscript{186} Murray, “Herodotos and Hellenistic Culture,” 201.
drinks to excess at Dionysiac orgies and who has the power to execute other aristocrats.

And now those old associations might resonate with a new meaning. Some readers might stay at the surface level of the text; others might use the opportunity Arrian provides them of thinking about the Principate, without its ever being invoked.

Overall, however, and as I stated previously, I do not think that Arrian was thinking quite as systematically about Imperial governance as, say, Tacitus. If some of their thoughts about the role of the senatorial class sound similar, it is because, as I have tried to show throughout this paper, they are using the same themes and the same terminology (as I stated earlier, the “genetic material” handed down from author to author) because this was the nature of ancient literature. In fact, Arrian was probably far more comfortable with the nature of the Principate because of his origin from a country that had been historically monarchical. Why should he be greatly disturbed by the Principate when it was only a slight change from how Bithynia had always been governed, and when it provided the same opportunities for advancement as Hellenistic monarchy had before it? Arrian was certainly Romanized in many ways, but an appreciation of his background as a Greek Bithynian means acknowledging that even though both he and Tacitus use the same sort of “genetic material” that activate, for an attentive reader, old debates about society and government, they do not necessarily share the same ideology.

At the risk of taking this metaphor too far, we might observe that the same genes, inherited by different individuals, may express themselves in a variety of ways depending upon the individual’s environment. In this way the contradictions of the Great Digression,
and its anachronistic treatment of Persians, can be comfortably resolved. In recounting the course of Alexander's career, Arrian came to some incidents – Kleitos' murder, the proskynesis debate, the Pages' conspiracy – that allowed him to engage, as Greek and Roman portrayals of the “barbarian other” often did, with notions about freedom, self-control, and the tensions between ruler and ruled. The Great Digression is not a neutral report of a historical fact – that Alexander Medized – but a presentation that “operates, as representations usually do, for a purpose.”

The unhappy consequence of this is that many modern scholars have taken Arrian (as well as other ancient authors who participate in Greek stereotypes about Persian luxury, debauchery, and effeminacy) at his word in the Great Digression without considering its literary nature. In fact it might even be tempting to see the Great Digression as one of the more accurate parts of the Anabasis, since it is a break from Arrian’s usually hagiographical tendencies. In our twenty-first century, the idea that Alexander grew worse the further East he went is depicted in less nakedly Orientalist fashion than it once was, but in some form or other the notion of a contrast between “oriental backwardness” and the liberty-loving and vigorous Greeks persists. In the

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187 The last notion has particular resonance because of Arrian's unique position within the Roman political system, but it seems me that this is more evident to us, as outsiders, than it would have been to him.


190 A modern observation on Western perceptions of the Middle East can be easily adapted to fit ancient Greece: “Very little of the detail, the human density, the passion of [Eastern] life has entered the awareness of even those people [who write about it]. What we have, instead, is a series of crude, essentialized caricatures of the [Eastern] world, presented in such a way as to make that world vulnerable to military
Heady days after the Persian Wars, the Greeks invented “a distinctive new vocabulary of words, symbols, significant actions... and emotional excess” with which to think about their barbarian counterparts, but after centuries of reuse could lose the cultural relevance they originally possessed and become, both for the later Greeks and for us, “stereotypes to imprison the imagination” and dominate our perception of events.191

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