

## Truth and Moral Critique in Arrian's *Anabasis*

As Arrian relates in Book 1 of the *Anabasis*, Alexander, upon reaching Troy in the spring of 334 BC and placing a wreath on Achilles' tomb, is said to have pronounced Achilles happy for having Homer as a herald to preserve his memory (καὶ εὐδαιμόνισεν ἄρα, ὡς λόγος, Ἀλέξανδρος Ἀχιλλεῖα, ὅτι Ὀμήρου κήρυκος ἐς τὴν ἔπειτα μνήμην ἔτυχε, 1.12.1). From here Arrian launches into a discussion of his own part in writing a history of Alexander, the so-called "Second Preface," and it has been argued that Arrian views himself as fulfilling the role of Alexander's Homer (Schepens 1971, Stadter 1980, Moles 1985, Tonnet 1988, Bosworth 1988). Nevertheless, Arrian is not composing an epic poem set in the distant, hazy past like the *Iliad*, but rather a prose work about an individual about whom contemporary works survive. Accordingly, what is the nature of the memory (μνήμη) that Arrian intends to preserve for Alexander?

This topic is best explored through close analysis of the programmatic Second Preface (1.12.2-5) and the conclusion of the *Anabasis* (7.30.3). The former passage has been widely acknowledged as crucial for understanding Arrian's project and his conception of his own role as historian, and many studies have offered valuable insights into Arrian's historiographical program and the complex literary texture of his work (e.g. Schepens 1971, Bosworth 1980, Stadter 1980, Moles 1985, Bosworth 1988, Tonnet 1988, Marincola 1989, Gray 1990, Marincola 1997, Moles 1999). The concluding words of the history, however, although they have received less scholarly attention, are also rich with literary allusions, and they should inform the interpretation of the Second Preface as well as the work as a whole.

In this paper, I investigate what reading these critical passages together can tell us about Arrian's understanding of and approach to writing his history of Alexander. I show that for Arrian it is not possible to arrive at an unfiltered, objective understanding of the past: creative work and personal value judgments, including moral critique, are always parts of the process of constructing a historical narrative. Indeed, moral critique is at the center of Arrian's final programmatic statement at the conclusion of the work (7.30.3), in which truth, in the final instance, rather than referring to the historicity of phenomena, emerges as subjective interpretation.

Accordingly, I contend that Arrian is not presenting himself as Alexander's Homer. The μνήμη that Alexander is said to envy is modeled specifically on that which Homer provided for Achilles: just as Alexander strives to imitate Achilles in his own actions, he also wants his Homer to promote his fame as a herald (κῆρυξ). Arrian, however, is not interested in simply trumpeting the fame of Alexander. Indeed, such an approach echoes the earlier historian Callisthenes' ill-advised statement that he would make Alexander famous (εὐκλείης, 4.10.1-2). Rather, the fame a writer can bestow is only one aspect of historiography, and in the case of Alexander, fame has already been ensured. More important for Arrian is that through his active role as a historian he illuminates Alexander's deeds for his readers (φανερὰ καταστήσειν ἐς ἀνθρώπους τὰ Ἀλεξάνδρου ἔργα, 1.12.4), a phrase that I argue has underappreciated Thucydidean resonances. Alexander in his greatness has provided the raw material for the historian, and now it is Arrian's task to render this material even greater by transforming it through art and ensuring its usefulness. To accomplish this, Arrian, like many Greek writers in the Second Sophistic, turned to the writers of the past for inspiration and models. Nevertheless, his practice of imitation in this process is too complex to state simply that he functions as

Alexander's Homer. Rather, in spite of his superficial attempts at self-effacement in the programmatic passages of the work, the ubiquitous and undeniable personal imprint of the individual historian on the narrative suggests that Arrian functions and can only function as Alexander's Arrian.

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