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**Battling without Beards:  
Synesius of Cyrene's *Calvitii encomium*,  
Arrian's *Anabasis Alexandri* and the  
Alexander discourse of the fourth century AD.\***

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**ABSTRACT** This paper explores the literary tradition of the curious *chreia* that Alexander ordered his men to shave off their beards before battle. The story is represented by various sources from the imperial period but most prominently in the *Encomium of Baldness* by Synesius of Cyrene. The latter source posits that the story comes from the *History of Alexander* by Ptolemy, son of Lagus, but this claim cannot be true when Synesius' version is compared to other extant uses of the *chreia*. This paper exemplifies some of Synesius' methods of working, arguing that we need to invest more energy in appreciating the wider tradition of Alexander in late antiquity to understand our earlier texts.

**KEYWORDS** Alexander; Ptolemy I; Arrian; Synesius of Cyrene; Dio Chrysostom; Julius Africanus; *chreia*; literary tradition; Late Antiquity; early Christian literature.

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“It seems unavoidable that the reputation  
of Arrian and his Alexander history was  
undiminished in the fourth century.”  
BOSWORTH (1980, i, 38)

When reflecting upon the grand career of Brian Bosworth, his historical commentary on Arrian's *Anabasis Alexandri* is inescapable. Though still incomplete, he began the projected three-volume work more than a generation ago, and it will stand as an authoritative tool for all future scholars of Alexander. In the first volume, from which the epigraph is taken, he offers an extensive introduction to Arrian's authorship. It is an intellectual biography, stressing how Arrian represented himself as an authoritative writer of the history of Alexander and how he was read in antiquity and beyond. One of Photius's favourites, Bosworth notes, the Hadrianic Arrian is praised for his literary style and placed higher than most of the Classical historians he was trying to imitate<sup>1</sup>.

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\* I am honoured to be celebrating Brian Bosworth in this first journal issue of *Karanos*. Though with regret I have never had the pleasure of meeting the man himself, I have benefitted immensely from his scholarship. I hope that this paper might have amused him.

<sup>1</sup> Phot. *Bibl. cod.* 92. Cf. BOSWORTH 1980, i, 34.

In the commentary Bosworth is, however, concerned with the actual fragments of Arrian in other texts, as well as the medieval manuscript tradition of the *Anabasis*, and not so much the *Nachleben* of Arrian in Late Antiquity more broadly. For instance, the line quoted above refers primarily to the use of Arrian in the anonymous *Itinerary of Alexander* (*Itinerarium Alexandri*), a Latin work dedicated to the Roman emperor Constantius II (c. AD 340). But Bosworth does not discuss many other texts of the fourth century that interact more subtly with Arrian. To explore this area of his literary fame in this century more fully, I will discuss an intriguing Alexander vignette in Synesius of Cyrene's *Encomium of Baldness* (*Calviti encomium*)<sup>2</sup>.

For thinking about literary reputation, the two prefaces in Arrian's *Anabasis* are particularly pertinent, especially the so-called "Second Preface" (1.12)<sup>3</sup>. Making an allusion to the famous remark Alexander made at Troy—namely, that Achilles should consider himself happy that he had had Homer as a herald—Arrian claims that he is going to be for Alexander what Homer had been for Achilles. The Trojan *chreia* was used in a variety of ways by previous authors but, of the extant testimonies, Arrian is the first to deploy it to proclaim his own fame<sup>4</sup>. Bosworth devotes less attention to the "first" preface—in which Arrian establishes his principal sources, Aristobulus and Ptolemy—because he has addressed this complex relationship in the introduction.

He notes in passing that Arrian's famous assertion of Ptolemy's trustworthiness, that he was a king and could not, therefore, lie, is also made by Synesius. The latter was a well-travelled sophist based in the Pentapolis area of Libya and a student of the famous female Neo-Platonic philosopher, Hypatia of Alexandria<sup>5</sup>. Both Arrian and Synesius insist on the royal authority of King Ptolemy. But what follows in Synesius' account could not be further from the historical work of Arrian. It is a fascinating tale with the premise that Alexander only won his battles against Persia because his soldiers were beardless. Before delving into the implications of this strange story, we turn first to the context of the speech and its author; then we move on to the tale itself and its subtle interaction with Arrian and other Alexander discourse; and, finally, we make some general observations on Arrian's repute that refine Bosworth's remark.

## I. SYNESIUS' CAREER AND THE CALVITII ENCOMIUM

Born of an aristocratic Christian family in Cyrene in the early 370s, Synesius received a thorough education beyond the stage of a grammarian at Alexandria. He briefly travelled to Greece around the late 390s and to Constantinople as an emissary to the emperor Arcadius in 399. Here he proved his worth as an orator and political thinker by arguing a case of tax remission and being invited to deliver a speech on kingship. Returning to North Africa after some years, he came into ever closer contact with leading members of the church, Theophilus the Patriarch of Alexandria in particular, and he became more involved with the political affairs of the principal North African

<sup>2</sup> For the complex scholarly debate regarding the date of this speech, c. 396/7, see the introduction to the text in LACOMBRADÉ 1978-2008, iv, 1-10.

<sup>3</sup> ANDERSON 1980; STADTER 1981; MOLES 1985; TONNET 1988, 69-84; MARINCOLA 1989; GARY 1990; SISTI 2002; HIDBER 2004; BOSWORTH 2007, 447; TÓTH 2009; BORGEAUD 2010; RODRÍGUEZ HORRILLO 2011.

<sup>4</sup> See e.g. Cic. *Arch.* 10.24; Arr. *An.* 1.12.1-5; Plu. *Alex.* 15.9; Ps.-Callisth. 1.42.9-12 KROLL; *SHA* Probus 1.1-2; Jul. *Or.* 8.250d; Them. *Or.* 19.339 SCHENKL *et al.*; Jerome *Life of Hilarion* prologue. For the innumerable medieval versions of this popular saying, see CARY 1956, 108 n. 31.

<sup>5</sup> Ptolemy *BNJ* 136 F 11 HOWE from Synesius of Cyrene *Enc. Calv.* §§ 15-6.

cities. Although he hesitated to take up the episcopal seat of busy Ptolemais because of his philosophical convictions, his family and his preference for the quiet life of the countryside, he eventually accepted the position and spent the rest of his life presiding over the See until he died sometime after 413<sup>6</sup>.

He was a prolific author, and his writings range between “pagan” classicising orations, such as the *De Regno* given before emperor Arcadius, and Christian productions, such as the beautiful hymn, ‘Lord Jesus, think on me’, which is in the English hymnal and sung during the season of Lent. But it is difficult to say anything with great confidence about the nature and chronology of these texts, except the speech delivered before the emperor, because of a general lack of actual context for the pieces delivered. Many orations were epideictic pieces, rhetorical show-orations that displayed the artistic skills of Synesius, and could have been performed anywhere in the cities he visited. They were presumably delivered on the spur of the moment, an unprepared speech on a particular topic, embellished with sophisticated allusions to the standardised literary *topoi* of the Greek and Roman worlds. For a familiar example, one may think of Plutarch’s two-part oration *De Alexandri Magni fortuna aut virtute* (326d-345b), timed orations that were improvised in front of audience and performed to display Plutarch’s rhetorical talents<sup>7</sup>. In such a performance, Synesius would not pause to think or reconsider what he said, but there was probably an opportunity to edit his piece before he published it, which he himself suggests towards the end of the *Encomium* (§ 24).

One of Synesius’ favourite founts of inspiration was Dio Chrysostom of Prusa, the celebrated Greek orator, who flourished under Nerva and Trajan. Arrian was very young when Dio was in his prime as a highly distinguished sophist. Synesius represents Dio as a cynic philosopher in a short treatise with the terse title *Dio*. In this work, Synesius defends Dio against the accusations of the third-century sophist Philostratus, who contrasts Dio’s sophistry unfavourably with the “true” philosophy of Apollonius of Tyana. In Synesius’ text, by contrast, Dio’s ascetic and contemplative life is projected as an ideal model for imitation in terms of artful oratory and philosophical devotion. This outspoken respect for Dio is maintained elsewhere in Synesius’ *oeuvre*, but especially in the *Encomium of Baldness*, in which the underpinning argument is constantly engaging with Dio’s lost *Praise of Hair* (*Encomium comae*). Indeed, we can piece together some of the contents of Dio’s speech from Synesius’ engaging response to it.

A short summary of Synesius’ tongue-in-cheek argument against Dio until the point of the Alexander anecdote will give an impression of the contents in both orations. Adorned with allusions to the Homeric epics, Greek history and Platonic philosophy, Synesius’ preface describes how miserable he once was that his hair was falling out since everyone considered long hair beautiful (§ 1). Slowly growing accustomed to baldness, he began to believe that Dio was deliberately misrepresenting hairy heads in too elaborate terms (§ 2) and composed a more rustic response, taunted by the rhetorical flair of Dio’s essay, part of which Synesius professes to reproduce (§ 3). He proceeds to give “factual evidence” that being bald is better than being shaggy: in the animal kingdom, hairless creatures are more noble than hairy ones, sheep being the dumbest

<sup>6</sup> The following biography is based on Calvacanti in the *EAC* 3, 680-2. Cf. *BNP* s.v. Synesius (J. RIST); CAMERON – LONG 1993, 13-70. LANE FOX 2015, 574 reviews some of the central contributions to the scholarship on Synesius and provides essential bibliographical references for what he calls the ‘uninitiated’.

<sup>7</sup> For these special declamations, see CAMMAROTA 1998; PRANDI 2000; ASIRVATHAM 2005 (fundamental); DJURSLEV 2010, 1-2.

of all (§ 5); the heads of the sharpest philosophers were without hair, since hair could prevent the divine above from reaching the head, like a shell covering a nut (§§ 6-7); the spherical shape of the head when it is bald is a divine form (§ 8); the descriptions of hairy gods are not in accordance with the truth (§ 9); the Egyptians say that hair-like stars are evil omens (§ 10); the shining skin of a bare head lights up in darkness (§ 11); the physical health of bald people is better because the god of health, Asclepius, has no hair (§ 12); the skulls of bald men are stronger, a contention illustrated with historical examples from Herodotus and a digression on the Scythians (§ 13); the idea that hair is more beautiful than baldness, as Dio insists, is not the opinion of everyone (§ 14); and Dio's praise for the well-combed long-haired Spartans in the battle of Thermopylae is an empty eulogy because they suffered a devastating defeat (§ 15).

The ironic tone should be fairly evident from this outline. Helmut Seng has recently shed light on this neglected aspect of an underrated text in the corpus, focussing on the brilliant ways in which Synesius exposes Dio's sophistic arguments by making equally convoluted arguments to counter them<sup>8</sup>. It is in the train of such comic arguments, which are all parodies of vignettes of Greek literature, that Synesius mentions that Dio has intentionally omitted the most glorious Greek battles against the Persians, namely those of Alexander (§§ 15-6), because the Macedonians fought them clean-shaven. Indeed, Synesius makes a further claim that the Macedonians only won the war because of a strategic shave during the final battle against Darius III, which he locates in Arbela (a small hamlet in northern Iraq). He states that he has learned this fact from the *History of Alexander* by Ptolemy, son of Lagus, who had been an eye-witness and was later a king, which is why it would have been shameful for Ptolemy to lie. On this royal authority, Synesius proceeds to give a vivid account of the battle<sup>9</sup>. He relates how a Persian soldier threw away his light weapons, seized a Macedonian by the beard, slid under his opponent, made him fall down and finished the fallen Macedonian with his dagger. Other Persians noticed this impressive feat and began chasing their bearded enemies all across the plain. Because of this, the Macedonian army suffered heavy losses since they did not possess the right armour. Synesius explains that the soldiers were outfitted in heavy armour and styled with their beards, making them ineffective against the lighter, unencumbered Persians. Then he notes that it was in this critical moment that Alexander sounded the retreat to avoid defeat in what he refers to as the 'Battle of Hair', *trichomachia*. The king went on to unleash the barbers on the army; once the soldiers were beardless, they resumed the fighting. Since it was no longer possible for the Persians to hold on, so to speak, the Macedonians secured the already divinely devised victory—it had been prophesied that the Heraclids would defeat the Achaemenids—because of their arms, armour and shaved chins.

This entertaining tale falls into two distinct parts: (1) the historicising details of Ptolemy the author and the geographical location, which we are told just after Synesius has spoken of the Spartan defeat; (2) the narrative of the action, which is printed as a separate paragraph in the Budé edition. The former is traditionally viewed as a fragment of Ptolemy or a subtle echo of Arrian, as already said, whereas the latter is taken to be an elaboration of an anecdote also attested in Plutarch and Polyaeus. In the following two sections, I will treat both of these ideas as the result of asking the wrong questions of Synesius' Alexander digression. I believe that we should consider this extraordinary story within its sophistic performance context, namely as an impromptu speech. Understood in this alternative context, the features of the story become much more

<sup>8</sup> SENG 2012. Cf. LANE FOX 2015, 81.

<sup>9</sup> The following summary salutes that of PEARSON 1960, 189.

apparent: through speaking from memory, Synesius weaves together multiple established Alexander traditions to bestow authority upon the most powerful narrative that will support his case against Dio's *Encomium of Hair*. He is not concerned with historical precision or quoting specific authors, but uses the tools from the rhetorical toolbox of Graeco-Roman historical writing to create a compelling argument and, above all, to engage his listeners/readers.

## II. PTOLEMY OR ARRIAN?

Bosworth observed in passing that Arrian's famous verdict on Ptolemy's reliability is echoed in this passage, which was also noticed by Lionel Pearson and subsequent scholarship<sup>10</sup>. Even though neither scholar believed that Synesius consulted Ptolemy first hand, they were unable to prove it. Indeed, on the same page, Pearson suggests that 'Synesius may have found the story attributed to Ptolemy by some writer who preferred to give an "authority" for his stories, to satisfy his readers' pedantic tastes', although the origin of the source is in Pearson's view, 'hardly a matter of great importance'. In other traditions of modern scholarship, Synesius' reference to Ptolemy is accepted as a genuine fragment of Ptolemy's *History* (BNJ 138 F 11 Howe), despite some reservations<sup>11</sup>.

Besides the above objection that Synesius did not consult sources while he was speaking, the geographical detail also indicates that he was not following Ptolemy or Arrian word for word. Arrian gives a longer discussion of the geography of the area of the battle of Arbela, saying that it was actually fought at Gaugamela, a plain some distance from the hamlet of Arbela. He records this piece of information on the authority of his primary sources, Aristobulus of Cassandreia and Ptolemy<sup>12</sup>. This point about Gaugamela is also made briefly in Plutarch's famous Alexander biography<sup>13</sup>. These four sources insist that Gaugamela was the location for the battle, an opinion which is different from the majority of the evidence from other ancient testimonies<sup>14</sup>, as Plutarch states in the same passage. Given Synesius' claim to follow Ptolemy, it is extremely problematic that he actually posits that the location of the battle is Arbela rather than Gaugamela, even if Arrian does briefly revert back to the familiar form of Arbela. But he does so only to disapprove of it, and *his* reversal does not of course mean that Ptolemy would necessarily have done the same. Indeed, Plutarch's passing remark to Gaugamela suggests otherwise.

To dismiss the tale as non-Ptolemaic or Arrianic not solely on this basis would be imprudent, as there are other features of the story that need to be investigated: the

<sup>10</sup> BOSWORTH 1980, 43. Cf. PEARSON 1960, 189.

<sup>11</sup> See JACOBY *Commentary* on Ptolemy *FGH* 138 F 11 (p. 504) with DEMANDT 2009, 18. The arguments go back to ROHDE 1883. Cf. the short commentary on Synesius and Ptolemy by LAMOUREUX – AUJOUAT in the French Budé edition of the text: LACOMBRADÉ 1978-2008, iii, 75-7. Howe's new *BNJ* commentary *ad loc.* accepts the fragment as genuine after some discussion.

<sup>12</sup> *Arr. An.* 6.11.4-6 incorporating Aristobulus *BNJ* 139 F 16 POWNALL and Ptolemy *BNJ* 138 F 10 HOWE. Cf. *Arr. An.* 3.8.7.

<sup>13</sup> *Plu. Alex.* 31.6.

<sup>14</sup> For the battle fought at Arbela, see e.g. Callisthenes *FGH* 124 F 14a from *Str.* 17.1.43; *Str.* 16.1.3-4; *D.S.* 17.53.4, 17.61.3-63.1; *Plin. HN* 2.180; *Fron. Str.* 2.3.19; *Curt.* 5.1.2-3, 6.1.2, 9.2.23; *Polyaen.* 4.3.6, 4.3.17; *Ael. VH* 3.23; *Chronicon Oxyrhynchi FGH* 255 F 2b; *D.C.* 68.26.4; *Amp.* § 16.2 ARNAUD – LINDET; *Lib. Or.* 18.260; *Zos.* 1.4.3. The Arbela location is also the standard one in the rhetorical handbooks, see Alexander Numentius *De Figuris* p. 35 SPENGEL.

shaved beards and the tradition of this particular saying, *chreia*, that other scholars have drawn attention to, and to which we turn next.

### III. THE *CHREIA* TRADITION

Despite the fact that Pearson considered the sources for Synesius generally unimportant, he still drew attention to two possible sources for the sophist's use of the *chreia*<sup>15</sup>. Plutarch relates this story twice: once in the *Life of Theseus* where he relates how Theseus made the Athenians cut their hair for religious and martial reasons; and another reference is made again in his collection of sayings attributed to Alexander, which is a part of the, perhaps spurious, essay *The Sayings of Kings and Commanders* (172b-208a). The second-century AD Macedonian Polyaeus places the *chreia* at the important second position in his handbook on military strategy. In other words, shaving strategically *before* battle is the *second* lesson to be learned about Alexander's general success in warfare. Pearson is right in thinking that these attestations could have inspired Synesius in his wide reading, but there is, I believe, a more likely candidate, which Pearson and those after him, including Bosworth, have not noticed.

The Christian apologist, librarian and intellectual Sextus Julius Africanus compiled a miscellany entitled *Embroideries (kestoi)*, in the early third century. This eclectic genre of alternative histories and strange minutiae arranged together in no apparent order was hugely popular with Christians and pagans alike. For instance, we possess similar works by Aelian, Ptolemy Chennos and Clement of Alexandria. In this age of compilation, Africanus' work is not unusual, nor is it the most distinguished. It survives only in some lengthy fragments. Although they have been collected and published before, there is now a very accessible and erudite volume available in the new series of *die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte (GCS NF)*<sup>16</sup>.

In the pertinent fragment, no. 12, the longest surviving fragment of the text, the author attempts to explain why the Romans could conquer the Macedonians (148 BC at Pydna) and Greeks (146 BC at Corinth), but *not* the contemporary Sassanid 'Persian' power in the Severan age (AD 230s), even though the Persians had been previously defeated by the Greeks and Macedonians under Alexander. Ignoring the fact that Alexander fought more than 500 years previously, his argument thus links Greeks, Romans, Macedonians and Persians in a historical sequence that makes the past relevant for the Roman present. He argues that the armament of Greeks and Macedonians enabled them to be very effective against light-armoured Persians, but not against the heavy-armoured Romans. Conversely, Roman military gear was not effective against the agile Persians. He concludes by suggesting that the Romans could wear a combination of Greek and Roman gear to defeat the contemporary 'Persians'.<sup>17</sup> In this optimised military context, Africanus says of Alexander:

“They assign this use and practise to the soldier king. For Alexander himself was the one who ordered his soldiers to shave off their beards. When someone protested that he was cutting off his facial adornment, he replied, ‘do you not

<sup>15</sup> Plu. *Moralia* 180b (no. 10), *Thes.* 5.4; Polyaeus. 4.3.2.

<sup>16</sup> The older, but very worthy standard edition of VIEILLEFOND 1970, must have been available to Bosworth.

<sup>17</sup> Similar advice on how to defeat Persia was sought by Trajan and supplied by Aelian Tacticus' *Tactica*. His focus is more on tactics than armour, but the Macedonian strategies are the prime example in every category.

know, ignorant civilian, that in battle there is nothing easier to grab hold off than a beard?' Therefore, face to face with such equipment, no barbarian would be able to stand firm, however he should have been fitted out'.  
(Julius Africanus, *Miscellany* F 12.1. *GCS NF* 18.39)<sup>18</sup>.

This version distinguishes itself from previous versions in the following ways:

— In Plutarch, the protester is not an unknown soldier but the general Parmenio, whose tenure in the Macedonian army began during the reign of Alexander's father, Philip II. The setting is the eve of an unspecified but major battle at which Alexander calls for a war-council with his generals. Victor Alonso Troncoso has recently situated Plutarch's version of the *chreia* in the context of the disputes between Alexander's men (Ptolemy, Seleucus, Hephaistion, Craterus) who imitated the king's beardless chin and those of Philip's old guard (Parmenio, Antipater) who did not<sup>19</sup>. Polyaeus also refers to Alexander's address to the generals, but this context has fallen out of Julius Africanus and Synesius.

— Whereas Plutarch and Polyaeus place no emphasis on armour at all, Julius Africanus and Synesius share the strong interest in the heavy equipment of the Macedonians and the light-armoured Persians. In fact, both authors make a very similar assessment of the weight of the Macedonian armour and the fact that the Persians could easily pull the Macedonian men down if they grabbed the beard. Synesius also echoes the idea of Julius Africanus that the Persians could no longer stand firm against the Macedonians once the facial hair had been sheared. But the aims of the Alexander digressions in both texts are different: Julius Africanus was interested in the technicalities of Macedonian armour prompted by the problematic situation in contemporary politics; Synesius used these technical details to confer authority upon his story, aiming to repudiate Dio. He elaborates on what is to his own advantage.

Given the striking similarity between Julius Africanus and Synesius, I cannot accept the scholarly view that Plutarch or Polyaeus were the only influences. There is an obvious link between Julius Africanus and Synesius in that they were both North African Christians, who spent much time Alexandria for different purposes. In that city, both writers would have had access to a wealth of Alexander-related material of which we have little to no knowledge. One can only wonder if Ptolemy could be proven to be the actual source for Julius Africanus' argument about the armament. A digression on armour and a stratagem to reflect Alexander's intelligence would perhaps suit the context of Ptolemy's *History of Alexander* very well, if we are still right in thinking that Ptolemy generally emphasised military activities and Alexander's virtuous behaviour<sup>20</sup>. Presumably, the great library of Alexandria, or associated North African libraries, would have retained a copy of the work of its founder (or its founder's father), for as long as it survived in some form. If Ptolemy could be proved to be a genuine source of Julius Africanus, Pearson's explicit lack of interest in the sources for the *chreia* would be somewhat ironic, given the fact that his principal interest was Ptolemy himself as an author and a primary source of Alexander history.

<sup>18</sup> For the whole digression, see Julius Africanus *Miscellany* F 12.1 (*GCS NF* 18.35-41).

<sup>19</sup> ALONSO TRONCOSO 2010, 21.

<sup>20</sup> PEARSON 1960; ROISMAN 1984.

I am, however, sceptical of such a position. Julius Africanus does not commit to a source and could have altered or elaborated on the existing *chreia* tradition that we know from Polyaeus and Plutarch who do not have them on any explicit authority. Because a text is available at a library does not mean someone would consult it or that it was the only option for that particular piece of information. Julius Africanus may also have wanted to make some alterations. He had an argument to make. As for Synesius, I believe the same thing applies: making a passing non-committal reference to a Ptolemaic author is not the same as following Ptolemy's *History of Alexander* as a principal source in the way Arrian does. Arrian is committed to Ptolemy throughout the whole of the *Anabasis*, whereas Synesius does the name-dropping before he tells a story that Arrian (who used Ptolemy) did not know. For comparison, when Ennodius, the fifth-century bishop of Pavia in North Italy, says that Alexander wished only for the poetaster Choerilus to write his praise<sup>21</sup>, he is surely not engaging with the original Greek poem of Choerilus himself, but playing on a verdict passed on the poet by Horace, whose works were widely read in the urban schools<sup>22</sup>.

Another point against seeing Synesius' tale as following tradition mindlessly is the setting of the battle. We have noted the geographic location, but there is also the obvious fact that Alexander did not know about shaving strategically *until* he had fought the Persians. He did not order his men to do it *before* the battle, as he does in every other attested *chreia*. This detail is a new twist.

On the basis of this discussion, I would not consider the story, as it is told in Synesius' text, a fragment of Ptolemy's *History of Alexander*. Given the performance context of Synesius' speech, my contention is that he was not engaging with one single specific source in any direct way. He uses material selectively from several sources, as he composes the story on the fly. Indeed, in all the previous chapters of the *Encomium of Baldness*, he deploys multiple authors or literary *topoi* at the same time. Memorising and combining them rapidly was no hindrance. To prove that Synesius used Ptolemy in any direct way is ultimately much more difficult than arguing that his Alexander anecdote was grounded in a contemporary context of allusive rhetoric and performance culture. Yet, it does raise questions about Synesius' presumed reference to Arrian.

#### IV. UNDIMINISHED FAME?

Synesius did not pay any special respect to Arrian. Even if he passes the same verdict on the trustworthiness of King Ptolemy, he does not grant Arrian explicit mention or pride of place. Indeed, he has not used Arrian for anything else in the digression. He did not have any author in front of him as he was speaking, as we do when we are attempting to check references. He juxtaposes material from memory, as he saw fit with the aim to repudiate Dio's argument in the *Praise of Hair*. I believe that we need to give Synesius due credit for composing this tale and avoid the pitfall of believing that he engaged exclusively with one particular author. We need to appreciate these orators on their own terms and in their own contexts.

I contend that we still require a more complete view of Arrian's reception. It is certainly misleading to consult Antoon Roos' survey of manuscripts and late antique

<sup>21</sup> Ennodius of Pavia *Panegyricus Regi Theodorico* § 17 (CSEL 6.282-3).

<sup>22</sup> Pace DEMANDT 2009, 2. For Choerilus of Iasus, see HECKEL 2006, s.v. 'Choerilus'. For the verdict in Horace, see *Letters* 2.1.232-44.



references to Arrian, as Bosworth has done<sup>23</sup>, because it does not take into consideration that the vast majority of the fourth-century texts echo Arrian allusively and, therefore, are not included in that survey. For instance, the greatest late antique historiographical tradition that began in the fourth century, the Christian chronicle, does not build on Arrian in any way<sup>24</sup>. As for the strange *Itinerarium Alexandri* that Bosworth discusses in some detail, it is also evident that the author has incorporated Arrian's work into a longer narrative, which is as much based on Arrian as it is on alternative Alexander traditions, such as the Greek *Alexander Romance*<sup>25</sup>. The late antique was, however, not able to prioritise between texts in the rich tradition available to him. It is telling that Bosworth could only find references to Arrian in this text and a passing mention in the orations of the court rhetorician Themistius. This pattern indicates to me seems that Arrian had not yet established himself as the principal witness to the purest "Alexander Gospel".

Instead I would consider Photius' praise for Arrian a product of the ninth-century Byzantine tradition rather than apply his words to the fourth century. There are probably excellent reasons why the Greek early medieval intellectuals held Arrian in high esteem, why the manuscript tradition for Arrian is so good in comparison to others, and why his work became the preferred source of Alexander history from the European Enlightenment onwards<sup>26</sup>, but they are not to be found in the fourth century. I hope that further research into the Alexander discourse of this period and other periods will help to shed light on the interest in Alexander across the divides of literary genres, languages, geography and religion<sup>27</sup>.

#### ABBREVIATIONS

<i>BNJ</i>	<i>Brill's New Jacoby</i> . Leiden.
<i>BNP</i>	<i>Brill's New Pauly</i> . Leiden.
<i>CSEL</i>	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i> . Salzburg.
<i>EAC</i>	Di Berardino <i>et al.</i> 2014.
<i>GCS NF</i>	<i>Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte</i> . Neue Folge.

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<sup>23</sup> ROOS – WIRTH 2002, i, xxxvi-xli; ii, 315-20 (reprinted volumes).

<sup>24</sup> For these, see JOUANNO 2001.

<sup>25</sup> For other parallels between Arrian and the Greek *Alexander Romance*, see MCINERNEY 2007.

<sup>26</sup> One of the key conclusions in BRIANT 2012.

<sup>27</sup> There is a brief survey of the literature in KOULAKIOTIS 2006, 13 n. 5 with further bibliography.

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