

Flavius Arrianus: the New Xenophon

Philip A. Stadter

IT SOMETIMES HAPPENS that a great writer is thrown into obscurity by the very success of his work and the interest aroused by his subject. James Boswell for many years was remembered as little more than the rather dissolute biographer of Samuel Johnson, and some marveled that so petty a man was ever able to produce such an imposing portrait. As interest turned, however, and the widespread publication of Boswell's journals allowed the man to be known in more depth, Boswell emerged as a man in some ways no less remarkable than his remarkable friend. The biographer was recognized as a great figure and the book as but one product of a brilliant mind and a distinctive personality. Much the same may be said of Arrian, a historian more ignored than obscure, whose literary triumph, the *Anabasis of Alexander*, by its very success has turned the attention of classical scholars from its author to Alexander himself. This focus on the subject of the history to the exclusion of the historian—a focus risky for the historian of Alexander's conquest, reprehensible for the historiographer—has not infrequently produced studies of sources with no knowledge of the man using those sources, and evaluations of aims, opinions and judgements with no thought of the man who conceived them.

Recently, however, with the renewed interest now being shown in the Greek revival of the second century, Arrian has begun to receive his rightful attention as the man who saved the historical portrait of one of the world's great conquerors from the cloud of romance. With this justification, I will discuss here a small, yet interesting, problem concerning Arrian himself, for the light it may shed on him as an author.

The patriarch Photius, in a brief biographical note following a summary of the lost *Parthica* of Arrian,¹ tells us that he was called *Ξενοφώντα νέον*—the new Xenophon. He goes on to speak of his cul-

¹ Photius, *Bibliotheca* cod. 58, 17b Bekker.

ture (*παιδεία*), his consulship, and his numerous books collecting discourses of his master, Epictetus, and concludes by noting that he has a plain style and is very much an imitator of Xenophon. This same epithet, "the new Xenophon," is mentioned by Suidas (*s.v.* Ἀρριανός, no. 3868 Adler) and is frequently repeated in Renaissance editions. Photius unfortunately does not say *who* gave him this name (he uses an indefinite plural: ἐπωνόμαζον δὲ αὐτὸν Ξενοφῶντα νέον); but the context of his statement, immediately before the list of Arrian's twenty books of the talks of Epictetus, suggests that he thought that the name was applied partially in recognition of these writings, which may be thought to parallel the *Memorabilia*, *Symposium* and *Apology* written by Xenophon as a record of Socrates. Photius' judgement of Arrian's style marks another resemblance which might have merited for Arrian the title of the "new Xenophon."

In fact, the resemblance between Xenophon and Arrian in terms of literary production is even greater than Photius suggests, as many scholars have noted. Not only did Arrian write works immortalizing his teacher, a man who wrote nothing himself, as did Xenophon, but the very title of his best known work, the *Anabasis of Alexander*, is a literary reminiscence of Xenophon's *Anabasis of Cyrus*, the fame of which Arrian recalls in an important passage early in Book I. Xenophon's account is also recalled several times in the course of the *Anabasis* (2.4.3, at the Cilician gates; 2.7.8, Alexander's speech comparing his struggle at Issus to Xenophon's success; 2.8.11, on the Persian battle formation; 7.13.4, on the Amazons) and even the seven books of this latter *Anabasis* recall the number of books of the former.

Among works less well known, Arrian also wrote a *Cynegeticus*, as did Xenophon: in fact, Arrian tells us that he is completing the work of Xenophon by writing of innovations in hunting unknown to the earlier writer. The *Hipparchicus* of Xenophon, on the duties of the cavalry commander, is similar to Arrian's *Tactica*, a large part of which is devoted to Roman cavalry tactics; and the *Hellenica* of Xenophon may be paralleled by Arrian's lost historical works, the *Bithynica*, *Parthica*, *Alanica*, and *History of the Successors*.

Arrian himself clearly felt a close tie with Xenophon, as his frequent citations show: there are more than of any other author except Aristotle and Ptolemy, the chief sources for his history of Alexander. Rather disconcerting, however, is his use in certain works of such words as ἐκείνος, ὁ πάλαι, ὁ πρεσβύτερος—that one, the one of old, the elder

—to distinguish the fourth century philosopher-historian. Thus in the *Periplus Ponti Euxini*, or *Circumnavigation of the Black Sea*, we find at 1.1 ὡς λέγει ὁ Ξενοφῶν ἐκεῖνος, and again in 2.3 οὐχ ὡσπερ ὁ Ξενοφῶν ἐκεῖνος; in 12.5 ταῦτα Ξενοφῶντι τῷ πρεσβυτέρῳ λέλεκται and again in 25.1 μνήμην πεποιήται Ξενοφῶν ὁ πρεσβύτερος. All these passages refer to Xenophon's account of the course of the Ten Thousand along the Black Sea from Trapezus to Byzantium. But why this care to distinguish the author of the *Anabasis of Cyrus*? With which more recent Xenophon might he be confused? The *Cynegeticus* continues the practice: Arrian in the very first words of this treatise refers quite explicitly to Ξενοφῶντι τῷ Γρύλλου, recalling that that Xenophon wrote a work on the same subject, and thereafter on every occasion in the *Cynegeticus* in which Xenophon is mentioned Arrian is very careful to make his reference clear: 3.5 λελεγμένα πρὸς Ξενοφῶντος τοῦ πάλαι; 16.7 ἐκείνῳ γε τῷ Ξενοφῶντι; 21.2 τῷ Ξενοφῶντι ἐκείνῳ; 25.4 παραινεῖ ὁ Ξενοφῶν ἐκεῖνος; 30.2 <ὁ> Ξενοφῶν ἐκεῖνος ἀποφαίνει. How should we explain these expressions? They are in fact absolutely necessary, for Arrian states in several other passages of this work that his own name is Xenophon. ταῦτα λέξω, he says (1.4), ὁμώνυμός τε ὦν αὐτῷ (Xenophon) καὶ πόλεως τῆς αὐτῆς καὶ ἀμφὶ ταῦτὰ ἀπὸ νέου ἐσπουδακώς, κυνηγέσια καὶ στρατηγίαν καὶ σοφίαν. "I will say these things, since I have the same name as he (Xenophon) does, and am from the same city (at this time Arrian was a citizen of Athens) and have been interested in the same things since my youth: hunting and military science and philosophy." Elsewhere he disagrees with the earlier Xenophon, his namesake—οὐ ξύμφημι τῷ ἐμαντοῦ ὁμωνύμῳ (16.6); and further on (22.1), he says that we must be persuaded by him—πειθομένους τῷ ἐμῷ ὁμωνύμῳ . . . Should these passages not be sufficient to demonstrate that the author of the *Cynegeticus* calls himself Xenophon, yet another may be cited. The author concludes a long passage in praise of his faithful hunting dog as follows (5.6): "Thus I am not afraid to set down the name of the dog, so that something of her may be left even for the future, and to say that Xenophon the Athenian had a dog named Horne, which was exceptionally swift and wise and marvelous." This unanimity of evidence for the author's being named Xenophon was so impressive to one reader, that in one manuscript, *Palatinus gr.* 398, in the title of this work—'Αρριανοῦ Κυνηγετικός—'Αρριανοῦ was erased and Ξενοφῶντος 'Αθηναίου τοῦ δευτέρου substituted.

Some scholars have suggested that Arrian assumed or was given the

name Xenophon when he became a citizen of Athens. We cannot be sure when he received Athenian citizenship—our inscriptional evidence establishes his archonship in 146, a rather late date—but this event is most reasonably placed, as Schwartz argues,² after his retirement from imperial service in 137. At this time, however, he had certainly written the *Periplus*, which can be dated to *ca.* 131–132.³ Thus we know that Arrian used the name Xenophon before he settled at Athens. In an attempt to resolve the problem, Felix Jacoby suggests that the *Cynegeticus*, together with the *Periplus* and the *Alanika*, must have been brought out by Arrian pseudonymously, under the name Xenophon. This seems unlikely. The titles in our manuscripts of both the *Cynegeticus* and *Periplus* clearly ascribe the works to Arrian, and the *Periplus*, which is in the form of a letter, bears the additional superscription *Ἀυτοκράτορι Καίσαρι Τραϊανῶ Ἀδριανῶ Σεβαστῶ Ἀρριανὸς χαίρειν*, “Arrian greets the Emperor Caesar Traianus Hadrianus Augustus.” This letter to Hadrian was meant to be identified with Arrian. Why then the care to distinguish the earlier Xenophon from some later one? The answer, that Arrian’s name was also Xenophon, already presented in my discussion of the *Cynegeticus*, is confirmed by the *Acies contra Alanos*, or *Formation against the Alani*.

In the *Acies* a series of orders, first for a march and then for a battle formation, is very starkly set out, with no attempt at literary refinement. All verbs are imperatives or infinitives. Clearly this is a record of the commands given by Arrian as legate of Cappadocia when he set out against the invading Alani in A.D. 134. In this bare and military list, the commanding officer, who is known to have been Arrian himself, is named Xenophon. In §10 we find *ὁ δὲ ἡγεμὼν τῆς πάσης στρατιᾶς Ξενοφῶν τὸ πολὺ μὲν πρὸ τῶν σημείων τῶν πεζικῶν ἡγείσθω*—“The commander of the whole force, Xenophon, should normally be leading in front of the infantry standards”; and in §22: *οἱ δὲ ἐπίλεκτοι ἵππεῖς ἀμφ’ αὐτὸν Ξενοφῶντα ἔστωσαν*—“Let the select cavalry take their position around Xenophon himself.” In the midst of such an account, written not for literary but for military reasons, an account which faithfully prescribes the movements of the *cohors III Ulpia*

² Eduard Schwartz, *RE s.v. ARRIANUS*, II 1231 = *Griechische Geschichtschreiber* (Leipzig 1959) 132.

³ Schwartz (*art.cit.*, n.2) 1232. Cf. G. Marengi, ed., *Arriano, Periplo del Ponto Eusino* (Napoli 1958) 32.

Petraeorum miliaria equitata sagittariorum, the *ala III Ulpia Auriana* and other specific units, the appearance of the name Xenophon can mean only one thing: that the name of the commander was in fact Xenophon. Such a work would not have been written pseudonymously: there would have been no reason to do so. Thus we may safely conclude that the references in the *Periplus*, the *Acies contra Alanos* and the *Cynegeticus* all demonstrate that one of Arrian's names was Xenophon: his full name would have been Flavius Arrianus Xenophon.

There is no cause for surprise that a Greek who was a Roman citizen should have also a Greek name. A Greek who became a Roman citizen added to his Greek name the *praenomen* and *nomen* of the man who granted him citizenship or of a special benefactor. In the Empire *praenomen* and *nomen* were usually taken from the reigning emperor: hence the great number of Claudii and Flavii in the first century, of Aelii in the second. The *cognomen* had various origins, often being an adjectival form of the *nomen* of a patron. In the case of Arrian, Flavius would have been his *nomen*, probably inherited from his father, who would have received Roman citizenship under one of the Flavian emperors. The *cognomen* Arrianus suggests some connection with an Arrius, a not uncommon name in the first century.⁴ The combination of Greek and Roman names is frequent not only in inscriptions but in literature. Julius Pollux, Claudius Ptolemaeus, Mestrius Plutarchus, Cocceianus Dio, Aelius Aristides, Cassius Dio—all retained their Greek names. What is noteworthy about Arrian is that he regularly used his Latin name rather than his Greek one. Yet this is only to be expected of one who was a Roman senator, with an illustrious career in the imperial administration, culminating in the consulship and service as imperial legate to the difficult frontier province of Cappadocia for six years. Quite suitably only his Roman name appears on the official records and inscriptions which mention him. For the same reason, we know of Plutarch's Roman name, Mestrius, only through an inscription at Delphi, not through his own writings.

Nor is the name Xenophon surprising—it appears not infrequently in the Empire: we may recall Gaius Stertinius Xenophon (the Greek doctor of Claudius) and numerous Xenophons mentioned on inscriptions of the first and second centuries; for example, Xenophon, son of

⁴ H. F. Pelham, *English Historical Review* II (1896) 626, suggests that his mother may have been a Roman lady of the *gens Arria*, a family famous in the history of Roman Stoicism.

Xenophon in *SEG XIX 252*, an Athenian inscription of the first century. There is not the slightest difficulty in assigning the name Xenophon to Arrian as well. On the contrary, it is reassuring to discover that Arrian had, and used, a Greek name, for it is clear from his life and work that he never abandoned his Greek heritage. Born and brought up in Nicomedeia in Bithynia, he held a priesthood of Demeter and Kore there. After study with Epictetus, he entered the Roman civil service, becoming consul and imperial legate. If one may judge from the tone of the *Periplus*, he was on close terms with the emperor Hadrian, by whom he would have been thought of as Xenophon. After he left this career, he returned to Greece and settled in Athens. There he lived the quiet life of a gentleman—idyllically described in the *Cynegeticus*—but took on as well the burden of municipal offices such as *archon* and *prytanis*. Nor was his native Bithynia forgotten: his *Bithynica*, written in this period, covered in eight books the history of his native country from mythical times until King Nicomedes bequeathed it to Rome. In this Athenian period, Greek history and life seems to have been uppermost in Arrian's mind. Of his later writings, the only one which deals with Rome was the *Parthica*, in which he treated the various expeditions of Rome against the Parthians, especially that of Trajan in A.D. 116–117. It would be remarkable if a figure so deeply involved in his own Greek heritage did not have a Greek name in addition to that which he held as a Roman citizen.

Thus we find that behind the similarities of literary production and style mentioned by Photius which unite Arrian and Xenophon, son of Gryllus, lies an actual identity of names. Such a coincidence may seem incredible to some, yet when we remember the extraordinary effect a similarity in name to a hero of old, a saint, or a prominent family figure has had on some youths, need we doubt that one Xenophon among the many born in the early Empire felt a strong desire to imitate his famous namesake?

One question remains, however. Why did Arrian refer to himself frequently as Xenophon in his earliest works, the *Periplus*, *Acies*, and *Cynegeticus*, but in the only two late works which are complete, the *Anabasis* and the *Indica*, does not mention his name at all? For it is the titles in the manuscripts and later citations which provide our evidence for Arrian's authorship of these works. The answer, I believe, lies in the famous passage, *Anabasis* 1.12.5, the "second preface." There Arrian tells us, "Whoever I am, I know this about

myself, that I need not set down any name (for it is not unknown to men), nor country (whatever it may be), nor family, nor whether I have held any office in my life: *this* I do set down, that these writings are my country, family and offices, and have been since my youth.” Arrian, now at the height of his powers, no longer need include his name, nor justify his position as was common in this period;⁵ he is well known to all—student of philosophy, Roman consular and writer. Not least a writer, for this passage reminds us of the seriousness of Arrian’s literary pretensions, a seriousness already suggested by his deliberate emulation of Xenophon in his writings. Certainly it is eminently fitting that this man, who brought together so harmoniously in his life and interests the worlds of Greece and Rome, should unite them also in his name: Flavius Arrianus Xenophon.

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA, CHAPEL HILL

January, 1967

⁵ See Appian, *Prooimion* 62; Herodian 1.2.5.