

# Narrative Suspense in Arrian's *Indikē*: The Exotic Episodes in the Digression of ch. 29.9-31.9

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Arrian of Nicomedia (2nd century AD), despite his priceless contribution to our knowledge of the ancient world, undoubtedly constitutes one of the most neglected figures in literary studies of ancient historiography. The Bithynian author managed to overcome the fact that he narrated events going back four centuries before his age, and bequeathed to future generations the most reliable historical accounts on Alexander the Great, the *Anabasis of Alexander* and the *Indikē*. However, although these two works have been thoroughly examined as historical sources, little attention has been paid to their narrative features, on the basis of narratology and narrative analysis. The only specialized studies of this kind are a chapter in Hugo Montgomery's book on the *Anabasis*, now fifty years old, Philip Stadter's seminal study on all works of Arrian, and a few articles.<sup>1</sup> Arrian's narrative techniques are not discussed even in the most updated general literary studies of ancient historiography.<sup>2</sup> As a result, the shaping of narrative in Arrian, one of the most important historians in antiquity, remains a considerable desideratum of the research on ancient historical writing. This paper aspires to shed light on Arrian's compositional strategies in the *Indikē*.

Little attention has been paid to the literary and narrative qualities of the *Indikē*,<sup>3</sup> while scholarly interest has traditionally focused on the reasons why Arrian

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<sup>1</sup> Montgomery 1965, 162-232; Stadter 1980; Hidber 2004 and 2007; McInerney 2007.

<sup>2</sup> See most recently Hose 1994; Grethlein 2013.

<sup>3</sup> The most influential efforts to compare Arrian's in the *Indikē* and Strabo's use of Nearchus' account are those of Pearson (1960, 119-125) and Bosworth (1988, 40-46). Cf. Stadter's (1980, 118-131, especially 128ff.) insightful remarks.

decided to compose the work. Arguably the answers offered to date for this question approach the matter from three perceptibly different angles: (a) Arrian's compositional strategy; (b) the influence exercised on him by the Greco-Roman literary tradition of India; and (c) the role of the work in the delineation of the figure of Alexander. As far as issues of composition are concerned, it has aptly been observed that Arrian wrote the *Indikē* partly in order to avoid deviating from the main subject of his account in the *Anabasis*, i.e. Alexander's military achievements.<sup>4</sup> From the aforementioned second point of view, the *Indikē* has also been seen as a reflection of Arrian's wish to be included among a certain category of writers who have described in vivid colors the exotic Indian geography and natural environment.<sup>5</sup> Although repeatedly castigating those authors for offering untrustworthy accounts (*An.* 5.4.3–4; *Ind.* 3.4–6; 5.10–6.3; 9.4; 15.7),<sup>6</sup> Arrian did not resist the allure of impressing his readers by including in the first seventeen chapters of his work some of those remarkable features of this remote 'wonderland'.<sup>7</sup> Lastly, with regard to the role of the work in the delineation of the

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<sup>4</sup> Stadter (1980) 116–118; Brunt (1983) 443–444; Zambrini (1987) 139.

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., Schwarz (1975); Stadter (1980) 119–124; Zambrini (1987); *HCA* II, 10. For ancient sources on the wonders of India, see McCrindle (1901); Reese (1914) for accounts before Alexander; Stadter (1980) 114; Romm (1992) 77–83, 85–91 on Ctesias (cf. Vofchuk 2006), 105–108 on Pliny; 95–103 on Strabo. On Ctesias' *Indica* see *FGrH* 688; Romm (1992) 86–92, 117, 120; Vofchuk (2006); Becerra Romero (2007); Nichols (2011) 18–36, 47–81. On Herodotus and India, see Puskás (1983); Asheri / Lloyd / Corcella (2007) 498–499. On Megasthenes' description of India, see Zambrini (1985); Falconi (2011). On Daemachus and his work on India, see Schwartz, *RE* IV, 2 cols. 2008–2009; Schwarz (1969) and (1975) 184–185. Iambulus' romance survives in summarized form in *D.C.* 2.55–60 and is also mentioned by Lucian (*VH* 1.3) and Tzetzes (*H.* 7.644). On Iambulus and his account, see, selectively, Kroll, *RE* IX, 1 cols. 681–683; Tarn (1939); Mossé (1969); Schwarz (1975) 181–185 and for further bibliography up to his time, 181 n. 2; Winston (1976); Reardon (1989); Romm (1992) 48, 212; Cizek (2006) 56–61; Montanari (2009); Nissan (2009) 294–295; von Möllendorff (2015).

<sup>6</sup> On the passage from the *Anabasis*, see Stadter (1980) 114–115; *HCA* II, 225–227; *AAA* II, 465–467.

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., Schwarz 1975; Stadter 1980: 119–24; Zambrini 1987; *HCA* II: 10.

image of Alexander, it has been argued that this account is also a part of Arrian's romantic presentation of the imposing and groundbreaking nature of Alexander's expedition.<sup>8</sup>

This essay offers a narratological approach of a specific – and, perhaps, the most distinctive – compositional feature of the *Indikē*, its suspenseful character. At this point, however, some attention should be given as to whether or not suspense can be brought about in historical accounts. Suspense as to how a story will end (the so called “*Spannung auf das Was*”) is undoubtedly hard to elicit, as the audience is often from the outset familiar with the outcome of the events related by the historian. However, it is also unanimously agreed that historical accounts can generate suspense as to how the story will unfold (“*Spannung auf das Wie*”), simply because the audience of a historical work cannot always know the sequence of the events and certain incidents and facts of a historical episode in full detail.<sup>9</sup> Accordingly, the greater part of the *Indikē* (twenty six chapters) constitutes a narration of the voyage of the Macedonian fleet under Nearchus' command near the coastline that extends from the delta of the Indus up to the Persian Gulf, a journey which, as Arrian has already informed us in the *Anabasis*, had a fortuitous end (*An.* 6.28.5–6; 7.5.6; 7.19.3). Even those who begin reading the *Indikē* without having read the *Anabasis* may deduce from the fact that Arrian based his account on that of Nearchus (*Ind.* 20.1) the conclusion that Nearchus succeeded in leading the fleet from the Indus to Babylon. However, we can still feel suspense about certain, unknown details of the voyage and, above all, about how many casualties the fleet will suffer before the end

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<sup>8</sup>Brunt 1983, 444.

<sup>9</sup> This is what Gerrig 1989 defines as “anomalous suspense” and what Rengakos 2005, 81–82 describes as suspense not on *what* will eventually happen but about *how* it will happen. On this kind of suspense in classical historiography, see on Herodotus and Thucydides Rengakos 2006a and b; Rengakos 2011; Grethlein 2009, in general and especially: 159; Miltsios 2009: 484–85 on Polybius.

of the mission, a detail that is never revealed to us either in the *Anabasis* or in the *Indikē*.

In what follows, I will proceed with a close reading of the two suspense episodes of the digression in ch. 29.9-31.9, namely (i) that of the fleet's encounter with the whales and (ii) that of Nearchus' visit to Nosala, the mysterious sacred island to the Sun. Specifically, I will examine (a) the techniques through which Arrian stimulates readerly interest exclusively in those units (suspense on a local level) as well as (b) how these accounts also participate in the creation of suspense with regard to the overall narrative goal of the work, i.e. the survival of the Macedonian fleet (suspense on a global level). The first episode is as follows:

Οἰκία δὲ πεποίηνται οἱ μὲν εὐδαιμονέστατοι αὐτῶν ὅσα κήτεα  
ἐκβάλλει ἡ θάλασσα τούτων τὰ ὀστᾶ ἐπιλεγόμενοι <καὶ> τούτοισιν  
ἀντὶ ξύλων χρεόμενοι, καὶ θύρας τὰ ὀστέα ὅσα πλατέα αὐτῶν  
ἀλίσκεται ἀπὸ τούτων ποιέονται· τοῖσι δὲ πολλοῖς καὶ πενεστέροισιν  
ἀπὸ τῶν ἀκανθῶν τῶν ἰχθύων τὰ οἰκία ποιέεται.

Κήτεα δὲ μεγάλα ἐν τῇ ἕξω θαλάσῃ βόσκεται, καὶ ἰχθύες πολὺ  
μέζονες ἢ ἐν τῇδε τῇ εἴσω. καὶ λέγει Νέαρχος, ὅποτε ἀπὸ Κυΐζων  
παρέπλεον, ὑπὸ τὴν ἕω ὀφθῆναι ὕδωρ ἄνω ἀναφυσώμενον τῆς  
θαλάσσης οἷά περ ἐκ πρηστήρων βίᾳ ἀναφερόμενον, ἐκπλαγέντας δὲ  
σφᾶς πυνθάνεσθαι τῶν κατηγεομένων τοῦ πλόου ὅτι εἶη καὶ ἀπ' ὅτου  
τὸ πάθημα· τοὺς δὲ ὑποκρίνασθαι ὅτι κήτεα ταῦτα φερόμενα κατὰ τὸν  
πόντον ἀναφυσᾷ ἐς τὸ ἄνω τὸ ὕδωρ. καὶ τοῖσι ναύτησιν ἐκπλαγεῖσιν  
ἐκ τῶν χειρῶν τὰ ἐρετμὰ ἐκπεσεῖν, αὐτὸς δὲ ἐπιὼν παρακαλεῖν τε καὶ  
θαρσύνειν, καὶ κατ' οὐστίνας παραπλέων ἐγένετο, ἐς μέτωπόν τε  
κελεῦσαι καταστῆσαι ὡς ἐπὶ ναυμαχίῃ τὰς νέας, καὶ ἐπαλαλάζοντας

ὄμοῦ τῶ ῥοθίῳ πυκνήν τε καὶ ξὺν κτύπῳ πολλῶ τὴν εἰρεσίην ποιέεσθαι. οὕτως ἀναθαρσῆσαντας ὄμοῦ δὴ πλέειν ἀπὸ ξυνθήματος. ὡς δὲ ἐπέλαζον ἤδη τοῖσι θηρίοισιν, ἔνταῦθα αὐτοὺς μὲν ὅσον αἰ κεφαλὰὶ αὐτοῖσιν ἐχώρειον ἐπαλαλάξαι, τὰς δὲ σάλπιγγας σημῆναι, καὶ τὸν κτύπον ἀπὸ τῆς εἰρεσίης ὡς ἐπὶ μήκιστον κατασχεῖν. οὕτω δὴ ὀρώμενα ἤδη κατὰ τὰς πρῶρας τῶν νεῶν τὰ κήτεα ἐς βυθὸν δύναι ἐκπλαγέντα, καὶ οὐ πολλῶ ὕστερον κατὰ τὰς πρύμνας ἀναδύντα ἀνασχεῖν καὶ τῆς θαλάσσης αὐθις ἀναφυσῆσαι ἐπὶ μέγα. ἔνθεν κρότον τε ἐπὶ τῇ παραλόγῳ σωτηρίᾳ γενέσθαι τῶν ναυτέων, καὶ αἶνον ἐς τὸν Νέαρχον τῆς τε τόλμης καὶ τῆς σοφίης.

The richest among them have built huts by collecting the bones of any large sea animal the sea casts up, and using them in place of beams, with doors made from any flat bones which they get hold of. But the majority, and the poor, have huts made from the backbones of ordinary fishes.

Monstrously large sea animals feed in the outer ocean, much larger than those in our inland sea. Nearchus says that when they were sailing along the coast from Cyiza, about daybreak they saw water being blown upwards from the sea as it might be shot upwards by the force of a waterspout. They were astonished, and asked the pilots what it might be and how it was caused; they replied that it was these great animals spouting up the water as they moved about in the sea. The sailors were so startled that the oars fell from their hands. Nearchus went along the line encouraging and cheering them, and whenever he sailed past them he signaled them to turn the ships in

line towards the animals as if to give them battle, to raise the battle cry in time with the splash of oars and to row with rapid strokes and with a great deal of noise. So they all took heart and sailed together according to the signal. But when they were actually nearing the beasts, then they shouted with all the power of their throats, the trumpets gave the signal, and the rowers made the utmost splashings with their oars. So the animals, now visible at the bows of the ships, were scared and dived into the depths; then not long afterwards they came up to the surface astern and again spouted water over a great expanse of sea. The sailors clapped at their unexpected escape from destruction and praised Nearchus for his courage and cleverness.<sup>10</sup>

To begin with, Arrian elicits suspense through the preparation of the reader for the imposing size and the extraordinary strength of the sea monsters. First, while elaborating on the way in which the Fish-Eaters construct their houses, he stresses the greatness of those animals by clarifying that the wealthiest of the natives built the doors of their houses by using the bones of the whales as timbers. Equally revealing of those creatures' size is the ensuing comparison between the sea monsters and fishes of the Outer Ocean with those of the Inner Ocean (Mediterranean Sea). Arrian's intention to draw the reader's attention to this element is also reflected on a verbal level, namely by the repetition of the epithet μέγας (κῆτεα δὲ μεγάλα, ἰχθύες πολὺ μέζονες). Although not foreshadowing it, the data on the unusual nature of the whales serves as a prelude to the following encounter of the Macedonian fleet with them, in that it excites in advance the reader about the imposing nature of those animals and thereby prepares her

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<sup>10</sup> For the texts of the *Anabasis* and the *Indikē* I follow Roos's 1967-1968 edition. I also use Brunt's 1976-1983 translation for both works.

emotionally for any possible meeting of the fleet with them. This is because, having already been informed about the gigantic bodies of the sea monsters, the reader is invited to read the ensuing encounter not as a routine incident but as a *peripeteia* that carries sinister connotations for the safety of the troops.<sup>11</sup>

One further technique that generates suspense in this incident is the identification of the readers' horizon of knowledge with that of the characters. As readers, we may identify with the characters of a story on a cognitive level, especially when the author forces us to experience what is happening through the eyes, ears, and thoughts of these characters. In such cases, we experience the same anxiety, curiosity, and uncertainty about the final resolution of the story with them, as we receive no further instructions from the author through, say, an authorial comment, a foreshadowing, etc.<sup>12</sup> Accordingly, in this short episode, the omniscient narrator withdraws in order to confine our knowledge to the narrow limits of the sight of the protagonists. We never learn what the whales actually do but instead only what the troops see them doing. The animals appear twice in the episode: when they are first seen by Nearchus' men and, second, in the final scene, in which they dive in front of the ships and come out the water behind them. In both cases,

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<sup>11</sup> On this prerequisite for the creation of suspense, see Brewer / Ohtsuka (1988); de Wied (1994) 109; Dijkstra / Zwaan / Graesser / Magliano (1994) 141; Luelsdorff (1995) 2-3; Miall (1995) 277-279.

<sup>11</sup> For the importance of the feeling of uncertainty in suspense accounts, see de Wied (1994) 109, 111; Dijkstra / Zwaan / Graesser / Magliano (1994) 146; Gerrig / Bernardo (1994); Luelsdorff (1995) 1; Leonard (1996); Hoeken / van Vliet (2000) 285; Wulff (1996) 4-6; Baroni (2007) 269-271. On the so-called phenomenon of 'harm anticipation', see Zillmann (1980); Zillmann (1991); Zillmann (1994) 33; de Wied (1994) 109-111; Vorderer / Wulff / Friedrichsen (1996) viii; Wulff (1996) 7-12.

<sup>12</sup> Compare further Zillmann 1994: 36-49 on the degree to which the reader may identify with the character(s) of a story on a cognitive level. On the other hand, aspects that foreground the author's presence in the text sometimes reveal his or her hindsight (Luelsdorff 1995: 4) and "pragmatic intent" (for this term, see Hunt / Vipond 1986; Dijkstra et al. 1994: 142-43), i.e. his or her goals as to how (s)he expects the readers to apprehend the narrated story. In this respect, the reader is deprived of the opportunity to experience the events narrated in an immediate fashion.

their activity is introduced by the verb ὀρῶ, while their movements and behavior is offered in participles and infinitives (ὀφθῆναι ὕδωρ ἄνω ἀναφυσώμενον τῆς θαλάσσης οἷά περ ἐκ πρηστήρων βία ἀναφερόμενον; οὕτω δὴ ὀρώμενα ἤδη κατὰ τὰς πύργους τῶν νεῶν τὰ κήτεα ἐς βυθὸν δῦναι ἐκπλαγέντα, καὶ οὐ πολλῶ ὕστερον κατὰ τὰς πρύμνας ἀναδύντα ἀνασχεῖν καὶ τῆς θαλάσσης αὐθις ἀναφυσῆσαι ἐπὶ μέγα).

The first of the two scenes is particularly telling of the degree to which the identification of the reader's horizon of knowledge with that of the protagonists contributes to the creation of suspense. As we saw, the story begins as follows: While sailing near the city Cyiza, Nearchus and his men saw water being blown upwards from the sea in the shape of a waterspout and, surprised by the odd phenomenon, asked their pilots what it was about. As readers, we thus do not learn from the outset that the men are faced with whales. Needless to say, our knowledge does not exactly coincide with that of the characters, since the preceding introductory data about the sea monsters of the Outer Sea and the way in which the Fish-Eaters used them in the construction of their houses has already predisposed us for the fact that the phenomenon we are reading of must be related with some of those creatures. Even so, these few lines constitute a short delay that adds a few more moments of uncertainty before the ensuing plot development justifies our suspicions. What is more, the very vocabulary in which Arrian delineates the false impression of the troops about the whales highlight the great force of those animals and thereby makes us worry about what harm they can do to the protagonists. We are instantly invited to wonder about the identity of creatures that are so immensely strong (βία) that they can make sea look like a waterspout (οἷά περ ἐκ πρηστήρων) and their behavior can be described as a natural phenomenon (πάθημα).<sup>13</sup> Arrian compels us in this way to fear that the ensuing encounter

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<sup>13</sup> For this use of the term πάθημα in Arrian, cf. *An.* 3.7.6: τῆς σελήνης τὸ πάθημα; *An.* 6.19.1: τὸ

between those monsters of nature and the unlucky sailors will probably cost the lives of some of the latter.

This incident is followed by the episode of the sacred island of the Sun. Here is the text:

εὔτε δὲ παρέπλεον τὴν χώραν τῶν ἰχθυοφάγων, λόγον ἀκούουσι περὶ νήσου τινός, ἣ κεῖται μὲν ἀπέχουσα τῆς ταύτης ἠπείρου σταδίους ἐς ἑκατόν, ἐρήμη δὲ ἐστὶν οἰκητόρων. ταύτην ἰρὴν Ἥλιου ἔλεγον εἶναι οἱ ἐπιχώριοι καὶ Νόσαλα καλέεσθαι, οὐδέ τινα ἀνθρώπων καταίρειν ἐθέλειν ἐς αὐτήν· ὅστις δ' ἂν ἀπειρήνῃ προσχῆ, γίνεσθαι ἀφανέα. ἀλλὰ λέγει Νέαρχος κέρκουρόν σφι ἕνα πλήρωμα ἔχοντα Αἰγυπτίων οὐ πόρρω τῆς νήσου ταύτης γενέσθαι ἀφανέα, καὶ ὑπὲρ τούτου τοὺς ἡγεμόνας τοῦ πλοῦ ἰσχυρίζεσθαι ὅτι ἄρα κατάραντες ὑπ' ἀγνοίης εἰς τὴν νῆσον γένοιτο ἀφανέες. Νέαρχος δὲ πέμπει κύκλω περὶ τὴν νῆσον τριηκόντορον, κελεύσας μὴ κατασχεῖν μὲν ἐς τὴν νῆσον, ἐμβοᾶν δὲ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ὡς μάλιστα ἐν χρῶ παραπλέοντας, καὶ τὸν κυβερνήτην ὀνομάζοντας καὶ ὅτου ἄλλου οὐκ ἀφανὲς τὸ οὔνομα. ὡς δὲ οὐδένα ὑπακούειν, τότε δὲ αὐτὸς λέγει πλεῦσαι ἐς τὴν νῆσον καὶ κατασχεῖν δὴ προσαναγκάσαι τοὺς ναύτας οὐκ ἐθέλοντας, καὶ ἐκβῆναι αὐτὸς καὶ ἐλέγξαι κενὸν μῦθον ἔοντα τὸν περὶ τῆς νήσου λόγον. ἀκοῦσαι δὲ καὶ ἄλλον λόγον ὑπὲρ τῆς νήσου ταύτης λεγόμενον, οἰκῆσαι τὴν νῆσον ταύτην μίαν τῶν Νηρηίδων· τὸ δὲ οὔνομα οὐ λέγεσθαι τῆς Νηρηίδος. ταύτη δὲ ὅστις πελάσειε τῇ νήσῳ, τούτῳ συγγίνεσθαι μὲν, ἰχθὺν δὲ αὐτὸν ἐξ ἀνθρώπου ποιέουσαν ἐμβάλλειν ἐς τὸν πόντον. Ἥλιον δὲ ἀχθεσθέντα τῇ Νηρηίδι κελεύειν

μετοικίζεσθαι αὐτὴν ἐκ τῆς νήσου· τὴν δὲ ὁμολογεῖν μὲν ὅτι  
ἐξοικισθήσεται, δεῖσθαι δὲ οἱ τὸ πάθημα <παυθῆναι>. καὶ τὸν Ἥλιον  
ὑποδέξασθαι, τοὺς δὲ δὴ ἀνθρώπους οὐστίνας [ἄν] ἰχθύας ἐξ  
ἀνθρώπων πεποιήκει κατελέσαντα ἀνθρώπους αὐθις ἐξ ἰχθύων  
ποιῆσαι, καὶ ἀπὸ τούτων τῶν Ἰχθυοφάγων τὸ γένος καὶ εἰς  
Ἀλέξανδρον κατελθεῖν. καὶ ταῦτα ὅτι ψεύδεα ἐξελέγχει Νέαρχος, οὐκ  
ἐπαινῶ αὐτὸν ἕγωγε τῆς σχολῆς τε καὶ σοφίης, οὔτε κάρτα χαλεπὰ  
ἐξελεγχθῆναι ἐόντα, ταλαίπωρόν τε ὄν γινώσκων τοὺς παλαιοὺς  
λόγους ἐπιλεγόμενον ἐξελέγχειν ὄντας ψευδέας.

While they were coasting along the territory of the Fish-eaters, they heard a story of an uninhabited island which lies some 100 stades from the mainland here. The local people said it was sacred to Helios and called Nosala, and that no human being put in there of his own will, but that anyone who touched there in ignorance disappeared. However, Nearchus says that when one of his *kerkouroi* with an Egyptian crew disappeared with all hands not far from this land, and the pilots explained this by asserting that it was because they had touched ignorantly on the island that they had disappeared, he sent a triacontor to sail round the island, with orders that they should not put in, but that the crew should shout loudly, while coasting round as near as they dared, and should call on the lost helmsman by name, or on any of the crew whose name they knew. He tells us that as no one answered he himself sailed up to the island, and compelled his crew to put in against their will; he went ashore and exploded this island fairy-tale. They heard another story current about this island, that one of the Nereids dwelt there, whose name was not told; she would have intercourse with anyone who approached the island, but then turn him into a fish and throw him into the sea. Helios became irritated with the Nereid and ordered he to leave the island, and she agreed to

move, but begged that the misery she caused be ended; Helios consented and in compassion for the men she had turned into fishes turned them back again into human beings; they were the ancestors of the people of Fish-eaters down to Alexander's day. Nearchus shows that all this is false, but I do not commend him for his learned discussion, as in my judgement, the stories are easy enough to refute and it is tedious to relate the old tales and then prove them false.

In this episode, Arrian generates suspense through the creation of a sinister atmosphere in the introductory paragraphs. In suspense stories, between this initiating event and the final resolution, the author arranges the intermediate material in such a way that (s)he forces the reader to feel uncertainty about exactly what the eventual outcome will be.<sup>14</sup> When the information of a story succeeds in making us wonder whether the end will be favorable or disastrous for the protagonists, tension is created between our hopes and desire for a happy ending and our fears and concerns about possible calamities. This emotional state is the core of the suspense we experience in the process of reading a story. (c)

Furthermore, the more the number of possible negative outcomes – without, however, excluding the possibility of a favorable ending – the greater our anxiety, as we fear that something bad will happen to the characters (what has been designated “harm anticipation” phenomenon).<sup>15</sup> Accordingly, Arrian opens this episode with the rumors about the danger lurking on this island and in the surrounding waters. The author implies that the disappearances of the unsuspected travelers was the result of the supernatural, as we read that this was the holy island

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<sup>14</sup> de Wied 1994: 109, 111; Dijkstra et al. 1994: 146; Gerrig / Bernardo 1994; Luelsdorff 1995: 1; Leonard 1996; Hoeken / van Vliet 2000: 285; Wulff 1996: 4-6; Baroni 2007: 269-71.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. further Zillmann 1980; Zillmann 1991; Zillmann 1994: 33; de Wied 1994: 109-11; Vorderer / Wulff / Friedrichsen 1996: viii; Wulff 1996: 7-12.

of the god Sun. Arrian is obviously playing with the Greco-Roman readers' superstitions in order to stimulate their interest in the ensuing plot development.

One further technique through which suspense is brought about is the net of verbal cross-references between the sinister rumors and the following stages of the episode. According to the natives, no one wanted to land on this island (οὐδέ τινα ἀνθρώπων καταίρειν ἐθέλειν ἐς αὐτήν), while those who approached it out of ignorance of the rumors were lost (ὅστις δ' ἂν ἀπειρήν προσχῆ, γίνεσθαι ἀφανέα). These words echo in the ensuing disappearance of the ship from Nearchus' fleet (κέρκουρόν σφι ἓνα πλήρωμα ἔχοντα Αἰγυπτίων οὐ πόρρω τῆς νήσου ταύτης γενέσθαι ἀφανέα) as well as in the explanation offered by the guides κατάραντες ὑπ' ἀγνοίης εἰς τὴν νῆσον γένοιντο ἀφανέες. The verbal resemblances of the paragraphs of the disappearance of Nearchus' ship to the initial rumors conveys the impression that the sayings were valid and, consequently, that the island was indeed dangerous for Nearchus and his men. This also applies to the ultimate stage of the story, namely Nearchus' order to his men to approach Nosala (κατασχεῖν δὴ προσαναγκάσαι τοὺς ναύτας οὐκ ἐθέλοντας). The unwillingness of the troops is reminiscent of the general attitude of the local people towards the island and of the doom of those who visit it. In this respect it partly serves as an element of 'misdirection' for the reader, since it predisposes her for a possible negative outcome in the last scene of Nearchus' landing on the island, which, however, never comes out.

Suspense is also served by an attentive selection of mythical material and the proper placement of this data in suitable points of the episode. Specifically, Arrian seems to have purposely located the story of the Nereid and Helios at the end of the unit in order not to harm the suspenseful character of his narrative. The pejorative comment in the epilogue on Nearchus' effort to refute the validity of old local

myths is particularly telling of Arrian's intentions in composing the whole episode. As he himself admits, 'it is tedious to relate the old tales and then prove them false'. For Arrian, to include in one's account such stories and then to deny their truthfulness is quite tiresome for both the author and the reader. Under the light of this thought, it can be safely argued that Arrian deliberately did not refer from the outset to Nearchus' skepticism towards those local rumors about the island. Endeavoring to hold the reader's interest in the case until the end of the story, he avoided touching upon the myth of the relationship of the island and Helios and Nearchus' doubts about it, since, had he done so, the reader would then have started following the plot having from the very beginning in mind that nothing unusual or supernatural will follow.

So far we have seen how Arrian keeps alive the reader's suspense about the details of these two episodes. In what follows, I will demonstrate the way in which these units contribute to the intensification of the reader's interest in the overall narrative goal of the work, namely the fleet's survival. For this reason, some general remarks on the structure of the *Indikē* would be useful at this point. The work is thematically divided into two parts: While the first seventeen chapters are dedicated to the geography, nature, and peoples of India, the greater part of the work (twenty six chapters) constitutes a narration of the voyage of the Macedonian fleet under Nearchus' command near the coastline that extends from the delta of the Indus up to the Persian Gulf. Its second part, the account of the Macedonian fleet's adventure is built on the basis of a suspenseful structure that invites the reader to worry about the lives of the protagonists and thereby to sympathize with Alexander's concern about the fate of his troops. This narrative whole is, in its turn, organized in two stages: First, the chapters that cover the story from its very beginning (Alexander's decision at the Indus' mouth to undertake the expedition)

until the end of the coasting of the Fish-eaters' territory (20-31.9). At this stage, the narrator invites the readers to worry about the issue of the lack of supplies with which the protagonists are faced; second, the account of the events that lead to Nearchus' meeting with Alexander. In these chapters, the problem of the lack supplies has already been resolved and Arrian now draws our attention to questions such as when and where Nearchus and his men will join the main body of Alexander's forces, when Alexander will at last be relieved from his anxiety about the condition of his fleet, and what his reaction to the news that the troops are safe will be.

To begin with, the episodes of the encounter with the whales and Nosala contribute to the generation of readerly suspense about the questions mentioned above through the technique of the temporal displacement. Given that the fleet met the whales while sailing alongside the coast from Cyiza, Arrian could have related the incident linearly, namely in ch. 27.2, which refers to the fleet's voyage in those waters. However, Arrian chose instead to narrate it analeptically in the digression under examination and his choice should be explained under the light of his aims in ch. 27.2-28.8. In that part of his account, Arrian shapes his narrative in such a way that he elicits suspense concerning the issue of the lack of supplies. In ch. 26.9, he has already given us as readers cause for alarm that there is lack of corn, and thereby caused our uneasiness about the safety of the troops. From this point onwards the narrator will describe the places visited by the fleet with reference to whether they can provide the protagonists with the desired provisions. The inhabitants of the village Cyiza have no corn to offer, but the army finds instead animals, a temporary solution to its problem. The next village too is surrounded by rich vegetation but it by no means offers a resolution to the men's discomforts (27.2). The narrator builds the plot in such a way that he underlines the troops'

suffering from a serious lack of supplies and the difficulties they face in reaching a decisive solution to their problem. Our interest in this matter will reach its peak in the ensuing episode of the battle between Nearchus men and the Fish-eaters. Had Arrian included in this context the episode of the troops' encounter with the sea monsters, he would have interrupted the escalation of the tense with regard to Nearchus' struggle to provide his men with supplies and thereby distracted the reader from the main subject of that narrative stage. As for the Nosala episode, we are not in a position to know exactly when Nearchus visited the island, since its location still remains unknown to us. Nonetheless, Arrian must have avoided narrating it rectilinearly for the same reason.

Furthermore, the two episodes intensify the readers' suspense through retardation, specifically through an interruption to the linear plot. In ch. 28.8, we read that after their defeat in the battle against Nearchus' men, the Fish-Eaters provided the Macedonians with a small quantity of corn, thus offering no permanent solution to the problem of the fleet. This thus foreshadows the ensuing complication of ch. 29.2. However, the reader will be informed that the fleet is absolved of the lack of supplies only three chapters later. After ch. 29.2-8, Arrian deviates from his linear narration in order to offer some information on the Fish-Eaters and to relate analeptically the two suspenseful episodes, first about the fleet's encounter with some whales in the waters of the Fish-Eaters (30) and second about Nearchus's visit to a mysterious island where many ships had been lost (31). Although being narrated analeptically, these two episodes increase the account's suspense on both a local and a global level. First, they make us interested to know whether there will be any casualties in Nearchus's fleet (local/episodic suspense). Second, these episodes belong to an analeptic digression (29.9-31.9) that interrupts the route of the Macedonian fleet from the coastline of the Fish-Eaters to Carmania,

where the supply problems will cease to exist. The episodes thus also generate suspense about the overall goal of this part of the account, the anticipated resolution to the supply problem (global suspense), which has remained in the air since ch. 29.2 and will come out only in ch. 32.4.

Last but not least, the two accounts satisfy both aspects of the *Indikē*'s twofold thematic orientation. On the one hand, as already demonstrated, they participate in the narrative goal of its second part. On the other hand, focusing on the exciting nature of the Indian territory, they offer to the work the exotic flavor that is predominant in its first halve. As I stated at the beginning of this essay, in writing the *Indikē*, Arrian partly aspired to enter the circle of authors who wrote exotic accounts on India. This intention of Arrian is particularly discernible in the first seventeen chapters of the work. First, Arrian tries to impress the reader about the natural environment of India: its rivers are countless, while the four biggest ones surpass in size even the Nile and Istrus, the most significant rivers of the *oikoumenē* (3.9-5.2). Equally impressive is the flora, which includes trees under the shadows of which more than 10,000 people can stand (11.7). In this extraordinary environment, we may also find rare species of animals, about some of which we also learn how they were hunted and captured by the natives (6.8; 13-15). In India, the land of pearls (8.8-13), even the inhabitants fascinate us because of their unusual characteristics, such as those Indians who were taller and slimmer than most other peoples in the world (17.1), or the tribe of lower limits of life expectancy, with its women being able to bring to birth a child from just the age of seven (9.1-8). This material indicates, if anything, that, although avoiding the inclusion of stories and descriptions of teratology typical in most accounts on India, Arrian could not resist his desire to amuse his readership by exploiting the lore on India, or its natural environment, ethnography, and material culture. The stories on the extraordinary

whales and the mysterious island of the Sun should be definitely included among those elements through which Arrian wished to render his work as attractive as possible to a readership already familiar with the exotic literature of the Indian marvels.

## List of Abbreviations

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

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

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

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