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THE ASIDATES EPISODE IN THE *ANABASIS**

The final episode of the *Anabasis* dismays many readers: Xenophon takes a small group of associates to kidnap the household of the wealthy Persian, Asidates. Thereby he himself becomes wealthy. This paper examines several details of the account of that episode. The mature author gives us the unvarnished facts straightforwardly, through the uncritical perspective of the youthful agent. From these brute facts the reader may infer that the mature writer intends a negative judgement about the final episode. The mature Xenophon thus presents some self-criticism. That capacity for self-criticism may come from the influence of Socrates. There are reasons, however, to make a further judgement that Xenophon's admirable capacity for self-criticism was sadly limited. One cannot escape deep disappointment after reflecting on the final episode of the *Anabasis*.

Keywords: Xenophon, *Anabasis*, Asidates, self-criticism, Socrates, slaves

Dissatisfaction with the end of the *Anabasis*

New readers may approach the end of the *Anabasis* with some relief. Our protagonist of Books 3–7 has survived the months-long march from the battle of Cunaxa. And there have been some recent cheering events. Xenophon has just successfully defended himself (7.6.11–38) against an accusation of corruption (7.6.8–10) that could have resulted in his execution (7.6.10; 7.6.36). Having been informed by a seer that his current lack of funds to return home is the result of his having failed to sacrifice to Zeus Meilichios (7.8.4), Zeus the Compassionate, bestower of riches,¹ Xenophon gets favourable omens the very next day after sacrificing to that aspect of Zeus ('a burnt offering of whole

* I thank the Editors and a referee for much useful advice.

¹ S. Brennan and D. Thomas (eds.), *The Landmark Xenophon's Anabasis* (New York, 2021), 257.

piglets according to his paternal custom' [7.8.5]).² On that same day some representatives of Thibron, a general preparing to employ the approximately 5,300 soldiers that remain from the Ten Thousand,³ arrive with advance pay for the soldiers. These representatives of Thibron also bring to Xenophon a horse (7.8.6: 'since they had heard that he delighted in the horse') that he had sold for fifty darics (7.8.6.), and 'they did not want to be paid back' (7.8.6). So, he now has the horse as well as the fifty darics. Fifty darics is a substantial sum equivalent to four years' pay for an ordinary soldier, surely enough for the journey home that Xenophon has in mind (7.1.4–6; 7.1.8; 7.1.38–40).⁴ Xenophon and the group of 5,300 then go to Pergamum. There his hostess is Hellas.

Here, however, for many readers, the saga deteriorates. Hellas advises Xenophon to attack her wealthy Persian neighbour, Asidates, in order to kidnap him and his family and seize his possessions. Xenophon's consultation with a seer yields favourable omens, and Xenophon takes 300 foot soldiers to make the attack. His attack fails. Half of his men are wounded. Others come to their rescue. Then the next day the entire army of 5,300 encounters Asidates and family by chance. The family is seized; 'thus the previous omens turned out' (7.8.23). The army votes to give Xenophon his choice of the booty. He is now wealthy enough to do well for others (7.8.24).

Dissatisfied readers charge Xenophon's final action with multiple faults. His act is 'banditry'.⁵ It is close to being an 'assault of brigands'.⁶ His plunder of an unknown person is 'true hypocrisy', since Xenophon purports to be a pious person.⁷ It is unprovoked.⁸ It is a cold attack done solely for profit.⁹ It is thereby inconsistent with Xenophon's previous disclaimers of personal profit.¹⁰ It is militarily a 'botched

² Translations from the *Anabasis* are mine from the text in C. Brownson and J. Dillery, *Xenophon. 'Anabasis'* (London, 1998).

³ Brennan and Thomas (n. 1), 341.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 389.

⁵ G. Hutchinson, *Xenophon and the Art of Command* (London, 2000), 92.

⁶ F. Durrbach, 'L'Apologie de Xénophon dans l'*Anabase*', *REG* 6 (1893), 381 n. 1.

⁷ E. Delebeque, 'Xénophon, Athènes et Lacédémone. Notes sur la composition de l'*Anabase*', *REG* 59–60 (1946), 122.

⁸ T. Rood, 'Advice and Advisors in Xenophon's *Anabasis*', in D. Spencer and E. Theodorakoupoulos (eds.), *Advice and Its Rhetoric in Greece and Rome* (Bari, 2006), 60.

⁹ F. Bevilacqua, *Xenophon. 'Anabasi'* (Turin, 2002), 709 n. 14.

¹⁰ Durrbach (n. 6) finds that Xenophon's frequent mention of his disinterest makes the reader question the unembarrassed narration of the personal profit of the final episode. J. Dillery, *Xenophon and the History of His Times* (London, 1995), 91, says that the episode depicts the sort of action that Xenophon 'so often deplored'.

attempt'.¹¹ It is a 'debacle' because of an absence of cavalry ensuing from lack of careful planning.¹² Xenophon's pronouncing that the later accidental encounter with Asidates for capture bears out the seer's prophecy manipulates religion to excuse Xenophon's mistake.¹³

A few scholars do not express disappointment or at least give more neutral assessments of the Asidates episode. I cite these in a note.¹⁴ My essay argues for a fresh appreciation of Xenophon's account of the episode by dwelling on some details so far insufficiently considered.

Exploration of two charges

The charge that Xenophon's raid on Asidates is inconsistent with his professed indifference to personal profit is worth exploring. Previously, Xenophon has several times refused payment (for example, 7.1.6; 7.2.10; 7.5.3) from the Thracian Seuthes whom the Cyreans eventually serve for a time. To one meeting with Seuthes, Xenophon brings witnesses, apparently to make it publicly clear that he is not doing any personal profit-making dealings (7.2.24–8). When he speaks to defend himself against accusations that he has been getting pay from Seuthes, he explains to the soldiers that he has received nothing (7.6.16–19). Later on, speaking to Seuthes to move Seuthes to pay what Seuthes owes the soldiers, Xenophon begins by saying that he is asking nothing for himself (7.7.20). His saying that it would have been disgraceful for him to profit when the soldiers were not getting anything and they held him in honour (7.7.39–40) implies that an honoured leader should think primarily of his group's well-being. He refuses to stay with Seuthes for a reward (7.7.51).

¹¹ J. Haywood, 'Divine Narratives in Xenophon's *Anabasis*', *Histos* 10 (2016), 100.

¹² Hutchinson (n. 5), 91–2.

¹³ M. Flower, *Xenophon's Anabasis or The Expedition of Cyrus* (Oxford, 2012), 215.

¹⁴ V. Azoulay, 'Exchange as Entrapment: Mercenary Xenophon', in R. L. Fox (ed.), *The Long March* (New Haven, 2004), 303 n. 34, finds that the action 'does not mar the author's self-representation: Xenophon has left the army, and seizes, quite legitimately, booty'. B. Laforse, 'Xenophon's *Anabasis*: the First War Memoir', *SyllClass* 16 (2005), 26 n. 83, finds 'nothing bitter about the incident. The raid is a success'. E. Baragwanath, 'Xenophon's Foreign Wives', in V. Gray (ed.), *Xenophon* (Oxford, 2010), 57, says: 'Hellas... provides tremendous practical assistance'. P. Bradley, 'Xenophon's "Anabasis": Reading the End with Zeus the Merciful', *Arethusa* 44 (2011), says that the episode 'finds him flush with cash and resources'. See also E. Baragwanath, 'Heroes and Homemakers in Xenophon', in T. Biggs and J. Blum (eds.), *The Epic Journey in Greek and Roman Literature* (Cambridge, 2019), 108–129 and N. Humble, *Xenophon of Athens* (Cambridge, 2021), 14.

Xenophon did not, on the other hand, object to private profit by others in the form of plundering expeditions by independent subgroups of the Cyreans. In their case he objected to private plundering that might have been disastrous for the other Cyreans. Evidence is 5.1.8, where Xenophon advises those that are going off privately for plunder ‘to inform us’ so that the others will know the number absent; the others may assist preparation; the others will know where to go if help is needed; and the others may give advice about the size of the target for plunder. At 6.6.2 a decision to distribute among everyone anything acquired privately implies previous private raids tolerated.

The fact that he allows the soldiers to get profit where they can but disclaims personal profit for himself perhaps suggests that, as their leader, he considers it necessary to focus on more important issues such as the safe management of his group. Similarly, when scorning another’s interest in money (7.7.41) he says that no acquisition (*ktêma*) is finer than virtue, justice, and generosity for a man (*andri*), especially for a leader. Perhaps in the Asidates episode Xenophon no longer considers himself the leader with the leader’s special responsibilities.¹⁵ In that case, the narrator may intend to convey that Xenophon’s raid is not inconsistent with his previous disclaimers of personal profit. On the other hand, that the phrase ‘especially to a leader’ qualifies ‘for a man’ at 7.4.41 implies that profit should rank below virtue and justice for any man. Perhaps with that phrase the narrator gives us the material to infer later that the Asidates raid is inconsistent with Xenophon’s implied view of how any decent man should act.

The charge of brigandage, that is, seizing booty, is also worth exploring. Booty is distinct from pay. Pay implies subservience.¹⁶ The word often translated ‘booty’ is *chrêmata*. The range of uses that LSJ records for *chrêmata* differs somewhat from the range for the relevant sense of the English word ‘booty’.¹⁷ The word ‘booty’ has more of the

¹⁵ As Azoulay suggests, (n. 14), 303, with ‘Xenophon has left the army’.

¹⁶ Azoulay (n. 14), 303, observes that Xenophon’s description avoids putting himself in the ‘fraught position of a recipient’. That is, Xenophon never took on the dishonourable role of a hired worker. A referee suggests a mention of *banausia* (‘vulgarity’) here (although Azoulay does not use the term). Aristotle, at *Politics* 1328b33–1329a2 displays the culture’s persisting dim view of the *banausoi* by excluding them from citizenship in the politeia he considers best. At *Politics* 1338b24–38 Aristotle says that the training of Spartan warriors produces *banausoi* (apparently whether mercenary or not). This complicated topic I will not deal with here.

¹⁷ H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *Greek–English Lexicon*, 9th edn., rev. H. Stuart Jones (Oxford, 1925–40). The online *OED* of March 2022 (<<https://www.oed.com/search/dictionary/>>

connotation of stolen material objects. In some uses *chrêmata* approximates to the English word ‘stuff’. ‘Stuff’ covers any collection of miscellaneous inanimate items. *Chrêmata*, however, also can refer more widely to collections including animals, both non-human and human (e.g. 7.8.17). Although when we read ‘booty’, we may think of gold, jewellery, and silver teapots, it is important to remember that it includes people kidnapped and sold into slavery. For example, at 6.3.2–4 groups of Cyreans seize many *andrapoda* (‘captives’¹⁸; ‘slaves’¹⁹).²⁰

To say, for example, that ‘booty is a highly positive mode of wealth acquisition’²¹ includes the implicit qualification ‘according to the conventions of Xenophon’s setting’. Without the qualification, it is more natural to say of an attack such as Xenophon’s on Asidates that it was theft no worse than many previous actions of the Cyreans.

For accuracy it seems to me necessary, though it is not customary, to observe that the march of the Cyreans was in significant part a massive human trafficking operation. From the start, the Cyreans’ march involved acquiring human booty, and it continued to do so when conditions permitted.²² The acquisition of slaves was a major aim of the

[scope=Entries&q=booty](#)>) gives as the first entry for ‘booty’: ‘plunder, gain, or profit acquired in common and destined to be divided among the winners’. Entry 1a is: ‘that which is taken from an enemy in war; the collective plunder or spoil’. Under entry 3 is: ‘plunder. . . without reference to its being common property’. See A. Dalby, ‘Greeks Abroad: Social Organization and Food Among the Ten Thousand’, *JHS* 112 (1992), 25–6 on distribution of booty in the *Anabasis*.

¹⁸ Brownson and Dillery (n. 2).

¹⁹ Brennan and Thomas (n. 1).

²⁰ J. Lee, *A Greek Army on the March* (Cambridge, 2007), 261, argues for ‘captives’ as the preferred translation of *andrapoda* as Xenophon usually intends it in the *Anabasis*, citing 1.2.27; 2.4.27; 6.3.3; 6.6.38; 7.3.48; 7.6.26–8; 7.7.53; 7.8.19. E. Baragwanath, ‘The Wonder of Freedom: Xenophon on Slavery’, in F. Hobden and C. Tuplin (eds.), *Ethical Principles and Historical Enquiry* (Leiden, 2012), 651 with n. 73, points to the apparent etymology of *andrapoda* as ‘man-footed’. That etymology suggests that being captured transforms a person into simply a body conveniently equipped for service to actual human beings.

²¹ Azoulay (n. 14), 303.

²² At 1.2.27 booty is slaves; at 2.4.27 grain, cattle, and other things; at 5.3.4 booty is captives (*tôn aichmalôtôn*); at 7.8.17 booty is cattle, sheep, and slaves. D. Lewis, ‘Near Eastern Slaves in Classical Attica and the Slave Trade with Persian Territories’, *CQ* 61 (2011), 108, lists, among many sources of slaves, war, brigandage, and the sale and abandonment of children. 4.6.3 gives one instance of child abandonment. A poignant moment occurs when a former slave in Athens, now a peltast, understands the language that the hostiles are speaking (4.8.1–5: ‘I think that this is my native country’). Presumably he was enslaved as a child, or he would recognize his current location more certainly.

Cyreans immediately after the murder of their generals.²³ As they moved into more difficult territory, however, it was unmanageable to herd slaves along, so they kept only a few as personal favourites. Late in their march, on the Black Sea coast and in Thrace, they collected slaves and sold them soon after acquiring to buyers in Asia.²⁴ The sale gave them the more portable wealth of money.²⁵ Their buyers might convey their purchases for sale elsewhere.²⁶

Xenophon was then acting like other Cyreans in making the raid on Asidates' household solely for profit. Brigandage was an expected part of a military campaign. The fact that Asidates and household had done nothing to provoke the attack puts them in company with the targets of previous raids in the expedition of the Cyreans. All along Xenophon acted in perfect accord with the principles that allowed human trafficking. As someone or something quite other than the compatriots whom Xenophon would acknowledge as worthy of his respect, Asidates did not matter. Xenophon felt no obligation of decency toward seizable stuff. (Nor did his contemporaries: at 7.2.6 Aristarchos, the new Spartan official in charge of Byzantium, sells 400 Cyreans that remain in Byzantium into slavery.²⁷)

²³ Lee (n. 20), ch. 5, reports that after the generals' murder and the end of the truce with Tissaphernes, the Cyreans began to plunder the area for profit, and 'thoughts of slave markets ahead must have danced in their heads' (265).

²⁴ Lee (n. 20). See D. Lewis, 'The Market for Slaves in the Fifth and Fourth Century Aegean', in E. Harris, D. Lewis and M. Woolmer (eds.), *The Ancient Greek Economy* (Cambridge, 2016), 316–36.

²⁵ E. Baragwanath, 'The Non-Combatant Contingent of the Army', in Brennan and Thomas (n. 1), 353, observes that without the pay of Cyrus 'the sale of such booty was their only reliable source of income'. At 5.3.4 captives are sold; 7.7.56 mentions booty-sellers. Lewis (n. 22), 108–10, explains that there was a market for slaves in Asia Minor as well as in Attica. E.g. Asidates has slaves (7.8.12; 7.8.19). Seuthes has slaves (7.3.27; 7.7.53). At 6.6.38 the Cyreans sell their spoils, presumably including captives, at Chrysopolis. At 7.3.38 after a raid under Seuthes there are about a thousand captives; these are sold so that Seuthes can pay the Cyreans (7.4.2). See also Lewis (n. 24).

²⁶ Lewis (n. 24). K. Vlassopoulos, 'From Domination to Property and Back Again', *JHS* 131 (2011), 115–30, advocates understanding *doulos* to refer to a person under domination rather than as human property as our simple word 'slave' suggests. He says (126): 'We can start reinstating the slaves as active subjects of history.' I gather that then we may perhaps consider that some of those that were trafficked to Athens would have roles comfortable to tolerable in a range comparable to a range starting from today's middle managers, on to non-unionized workers, to adjunct faculty, and to today's 'wage-slaves'. There remains the fact that they were torn from their home settings, and bought and sold. Some of those seized were already slaves; some became slaves at the point of seizure. Similarly, at 6.6.38.

²⁷ See also K. Wrenhaven, 'Barbarians at the Gates: Foreign Slaves in Greek City-States', *Electryone* 1 (2013), 4–6. See D. Braund, 'The Slave Supply in Classical Greece', in K. Bradley

Questions about some details of the final passage of the *Anabasis*: tentative answers

I now select some details of the Asidates passage that raise questions for me. Where possible, I will offer tentative answers to my questions. I will later draw some conclusions from my answers. The episode begins when Xenophon and his troops ‘occupy’ (7.8.8: *katalambanousi*) Pergamum. Here my question is: does ‘occupy’ mean they impose their presence upon the regular inhabitants and require from them at least food and possibly services? My question arises because the group of Cyreans that remains with Xenophon now numbers about 5,300.²⁸ It seems to me that a military force of 5,300 men cannot in the mildest sense ‘occupy’ a town (elsewhere the army sometimes prefers to bivouac outdoors instead of in homes).

At Pergamum Xenophon is entertained (7.8.8: *xenoutai*)²⁹ by ‘Hellas, the wife of Gongylos...and mother of Gorgion and Gongylos’. Xenophon describes Hellas only as ‘wife’ (or ‘woman’) and ‘mother’. Hellas is the widow of Gongylus II, whose land was a grant to an ancestor of her husband for favours to Xerxes.³⁰ The secondary literature adds ‘dynast’ and ‘matriarch’ to her description.³¹ Some authors propose that Hellas was a daughter of Themistocles,³² who died in 459 BC. If

and P. Cartledge (eds.), *The Cambridge World History of Slavery. Volume I* (Cambridge, 2012), 112–33.

²⁸ Brennan and Thomas (n. 1), 341.

²⁹ There are different manuscript readings, but they do not seem to affect the sense of the clause.

The Loeb of Brownson and Dillery (n. 2) has *xenoutai Xenophón Helladi*. Thomas (Brennan and Thomas [n. 1]) reads *par’ Helladi*. Both these readings have Xenophon as the subject of the sentence. LSJ lists the passage under *xenoō*, but quotes the different reading *xenoutai w(i) Xenophōnti [par’] Helladi*, where the subject is perhaps impersonal.

³⁰ Brennan and Thomas (n. 1), 465: Gongylus II is dead by 399, when Xenophon visits Hellas. See P. Briant, ‘Dons de terres et de villes: l’Asie mineure dans le context Achéménide’, *REA* 87 (1985), 62–3, for complexities of the status of Gongylus II and his descendants in the Persian territory. I thank a referee for this reference.

³¹ J. Collins and J. Manning, *Revolt and Resistance in the Ancient Classical World and the Near East* (Leiden, 2016), 121. Another woman of similar power of the same era was Mania. Xenophon tells her story at *Hellenica* 3.1.10–13. Baragwanath 2010 (n. 14) discusses Mania’s skills at diplomacy. I thank the referee for suggesting a reference to Mania, which led me to a comparison (see n. 43).

³² J. P. Six, ‘Monnaies Grecques, Inédites et Incertaines’, *The Numismatic Chronicle and Journal of the Numismatic Society*, Third Series 10 (1890), 192–3 with n. 27. Six infers from Hellas’ unprecedented name that it is likely that she is one of the several daughters of Themistocles, who gave other daughters geographical names (Plut. *Them.* 32). See also T. Braun, ‘The Choice of Dead Politicians in Eupolis’ Demos’, in D. Harvey and J. Wilkins (eds.), *The Rivals of Aristophanes. Studies in Athenian Old Comedy* (Swansea, 2000), 199 with nn.

so, I infer, from the date 459 and from the possible ages for her sons who are not too old to join Thibron's military campaign in 399 (*Hell.* 3.1.6), the further description that Hellas was about sixty years old.³³

Here one question that arises for me is: is it not unusual that Xenophon identifies the woman Hellas as host for his entertainment? Ordinarily one would more expect a son to be host, as head of the household. The verb *xenoutai* at 7.8.8 ('was entertained'³⁴) primarily means 'entered into guest-friendship with'. The verb seems non-standard in connection with a female host. A little earlier at 7.8.5 Xenophon uses *xenountai* to refer to his reception of the representatives of Thibron. Thomas translates 'they entered into guest-friendship with' where 'guest-friendship' is a somewhat formal or technical term.³⁵ His 'Glossary' entry for 'guest-friend'³⁶ (*xenos*) mentions only that men enter into the relationship. If women are not qualified to enter into formal *xenia* relationships, then the verb in connection with a female host must have a less formal sense, perhaps merely 'to treat as a guest'. Thomas translates *xenoutai* by 'is warmly welcomed'.³⁷ Perhaps the explanation for Hellas acting as hostess is that she is an elder and that she had her own household at Pergamon, while the sons' households were in other cities of which they were the rulers (*Hell.* 3.1.6). The verb suggests at least that Hellas and household received Xenophon (and perhaps some subgroup) willingly. Given that an army is now 'occupying' her town, it seems unlikely that she had much choice.

Hellas 'advises him that Asidates, a Persian man, lived in the plain, and she said that if Xenophon went by night with three hundred men [it is possible] to capture him, and not only him but his wife and children and store of wealth – and there was a lot of it' (7.8.9). 'She advises him that...to capture' translates *hautê autô(i) phrazei...labein*. Thomas translates at 7.8.8: 'She pointed out to him that Asidates lived in the plain...and she said that if Xenophon went by night with three hundred men, he would capture him'.³⁸ But Thomas paraphrases as,

32–3. T. Rood, 'Notes' to R. Waterfield, *Xenophon. The Expedition of Cyrus* (Oxford, 2005), 224, finds it implausible that Hellas is a daughter of Themistocles, but omits his reasons.

³³ In estimating her age, Six (n. 32), 192–3, apparently takes *anepsion* as 'grandson'. Braun (n. 32), 199 n. 32, differs.

³⁴ Brownson and Dillery (n. 2).

³⁵ Brennan and Thomas (n. 1).

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 518.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

‘She...advised him to kidnap’.³⁹ See LSJ sense I.3.c for the meaning ‘advise’ for *phrazei*. With dative of person and infinitive it means ‘advise to...’. If *phrazei* governs the infinitive *labein*, Hellas advises him to seize Asidates. Understanding *phrazei* as ‘advises to’ (rather than ‘points out’ or ‘advises that’) more strongly places Hellas as the first mover of the idea of kidnap.⁴⁰ Here my questions are: what are her credentials for giving such military advice? What military experience does she have? Further, does she have her own motives for depriving her neighbour Asidates of his riches? Though she is a subject of the Persian king,⁴¹ she has Greek connections (‘continuing self-identification as Greeks’⁴²). Does she object to Persians? Does she want Asidates out of the way? Because Xenophon does not mention her military credentials or experience, I conclude in answer to my first questions about her that she had none.⁴³ In answer to my other questions, I propose that she may well have wanted to deprive Asidates of his riches; her Greek background may influence her to view Persians as simply insignificant Others; if Asidates is out of the way, she may have more ability to do as she wishes in the area.

As usual, before taking action, Xenophon consults the gods about the future with a sacrifice: ‘Basias the Eleian, who was there acting as seer, said that the sacred signs were very favorable toward him and the man should be easy to capture’ (7.8.10). We are not told what question Xenophon asked of the divination. Obviously, he would not ask: ‘Is this a just and decent thing to do?’ Was his question a simple question, such as: ‘Is it easily possible for me to kidnap Asidates?’ That is what the report of the seer suggests.

The next question-provoking detail is that Xenophon went out for the attack ‘having dined’, taking a subgroup from the army consisting of his closest associates and reliable people he wished to reward (7.8.11). It strikes me as oddly superfluous for the author to say ‘Having dined (*deipnêsas*)’, he set out. It seems obvious that no one would set out for an unprovoked attack mid-dinner. Previous banquets

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 465.

⁴⁰ Baragwanath (n. 14), 57, puts it: ‘she advises Xenophon in precise military detail (7.8.9)’.

⁴¹ C. Tuplin, ‘The Persian Empire’ in Brennan and Thomas (n. 1), 290.

⁴² Brennan and Thomas (n. 1), 465 and n. 7.8.8b.

⁴³ In contrast, Xenophon’s description of Mania (*Hell.* 3.1.10–13) informs us that she used a Greek mercenary force for several territorial acquisitions for Pharnabazos, the regional ruler, that she was a spectator of the military action, and that she accompanied the army of Pharnabazos on other occasions. That she hired and viewed those with military competence does not warrant our crediting her with her own military competence, but it at least suggests the possibility.

in the *Anabasis* involve much wine (7.3.24–35). The narrator describes Xenophon as ‘already somewhat drunk’ (*hupo pepôkôs*, 7.3.29) when he speaks at Seuthes’ banquet.⁴⁴ And when Xenophon mentions that Seuthes proposed an attack after a dinner (7.3.35), Xenophon makes a point of saying that Seuthes did not seem drunk (*ouden ti methuonti eikôs*): that attack takes place after they have rested (7.3.39: *anepauonto*). It is natural for the question to arise: is the author suggesting that Xenophon set out after having consumed much wine? My answer is yes (I grant, on the other hand, that the *Anabasis* often specifies someone’s having acted after a meal, for example: 3.5.18; 4.1.14; 4.2.1; 4.2.4; 4.3.9; 4.6.9; 4.6.21; 4.6.22; 5.4.22; 5.4.30; 6.3.21; 6.3.24; 6.4.10).

Next, we read that Xenophon set off with the group of 300 suggested by Hellas: ‘About six hundred other people forced themselves on him and tried to come along too, but the captains drove them off, thinking it was ready money (*hôs hetoimôn chrêmatôn*) and not wanting to have to divide their own share’ (7.8.11). The Brownson and Dillery translation is ‘as though the property was already in hand’.⁴⁵ This seems to be the author’s indication that the group is overconfidently assuming too much – ‘counting its chickens before they are hatched’.

The initial attack by Xenophon’s hoplites involves time-consuming tunnelling through thick brick walls (7.8.13–14). ‘What with their shouts and lighting of beacons’ (7.8.15), a neighbouring force comes to help Asidates, plus ‘Assyrian hoplites, and Hyrcanian cavalry from Komania, about eighty of them, these being in the King’s pay, and in addition about eight hundred peltasts’ and also other troops nearby ‘including cavalry’ (7.8.12–15). Here it is natural to ask if it was not careless of Xenophon, given his sharpened soldiering skills of the last many months, to fail to anticipate that Asidates might get reinforcements. And the natural answer is that it was careless.

Xenophon’s group retreats, taking with them some cattle, sheep, and slaves protected by a rectangle of hoplites; ‘They did this not because they still had their minds on the booty (*chrêmasin*)’ (7.8.16). Rather, they wanted to avoid simply running away, ‘as the enemy would be

⁴⁴ Flower (n. 13), 105, observes that the narrator’s account of Xenophon at Seuthes’ earlier banquet gives (7.3.29) the ‘telling (and probably understated) detail that he had drunk “a little too much”’. Baragwanath (n. 14), 61: ‘a tipsy Xenophon’.

⁴⁵ Brownson and Dillery (n. 2).

bolder and the soldiers would be disheartened' (7.8.16). Here Xenophon informs us that the retreat was a humiliation.⁴⁶

The author next informs us: 'When Gongylos saw how few were the Greeks and how many those attacking them, he came out himself, against his mother's will (*bia(i) tês mêtros*), wishing to take part in the action, and Prokles...also brought help...With difficulty they crossed the river Karkasos, about half of them wounded' (7.8.17–18). Does the fact that Gongylus comes out to help 'against his mother's will' indicate that Hellas had foreseen substantial risk and wanted to keep him out of it? Or did she want the son not in evidence during the raid because, after Xenophon has left, she is going to excuse herself to her Persian neighbours for having been an unwitting facilitator of Xenophon's raid? ('I had no idea they would do that after dinner!'). I am inclined to think that the answer to these questions is yes.

The account continues with the information that, after having sacrificed, Xenophon's group goes off in another direction to conceal his intentions from Asidates, but 'they by chance run into him [Asidates] and they take him and his woman and children and horses and all belonging to him' (7.8. 21–3).⁴⁷ 'And in this way (*houtô*), the previous omens turned out (*apebê*)' (7.8.22). One might take the wording 'turned out' to indicate that, of course, things turned out well.⁴⁸ Or one might take it to indicate that, in this odd and unexpected way, the omens were literally fulfilled. I think the latter gives the intended spirit of the remark. The narrator makes a wry comment rather than a congratulatory one.

I will now use my answers to my questions to draw some fresh conclusions about Xenophon's account of the Asidates episode. One feature of Xenophon's writing especially guides me as I draw my conclusions: the narrator does not identify himself. The conspicuously rare self-references to this unidentified narrator appear only in the first

⁴⁶ The translation of Thomas in Brennan and Thomas (n. 1), 'to prevent the retreat turning into outright flight', makes the embarrassment more evident.

⁴⁷ Commentators say that this is for ransom, though the text does not say that specifically. G. Grote, *The History of Greece. Vol. IX* (London, 1862), 173, says: 'The persons of this family were doubtless redeemed by their Persian friends for a large ransom.' Grote cites other precedents. R. Waterfield, *Xenophon's Retreat* (Cambridge, MA, 2006), 175 'for ransom'.

⁴⁸ Thus R. Parker, 'One Man's Piety', in Fox (n. 14), 152: "And thus were the earlier omens fulfilled", remarks Xenophon. Seers were bound to flourish if even their signal failures were interpreted as brilliant successes in this way.' Thus Grote (n. 47), 173, says that Xenophon was 'anxious above all things for the credit of sacrificial prophecy'.

two books.⁴⁹ This narrator presents the events of the months of the march through the perspective of the young participant-observer Xenophon, except for a look into the distant future at 5.3.7–8.

The assessment of the Asidates raid that the reader infers

Xenophon's narrator gives an unvarnished account of the youthful Xenophon's raid. The account wastes no words of evaluation, either of disapproval or of praise.⁵⁰ It provides certain bare or brute facts of that youthful experience. These brute facts provide the reader with the material for some natural inferences about the young Xenophon's foolishness on this occasion. These inferences could not have escaped the mature author or his narrator. The mature author thus implies his own assessment of his youthful behaviour.⁵¹

From the little we are told about Hellas we may infer that Xenophon takes advice from someone that does not clearly have credentials to give it and that may have doubts about its safety.

From the account of consultation with the seer, we may infer that Xenophon is careless with his divinatory question. If he asked the imprecise and unelaborated question 'Is it easy for me to seize Asidates?', he should have taken no encouragement from a divinatory affirmative answer. Unless such a question to a seer includes careful qualifications such as 'under exactly the conditions I propose', as for example in this case, 'with merely my force of 300 hoplites', the answer 'Yes' is no basis for confidence.

From the qualifications 'having dined' and 'as though it was ready money', we may infer that Xenophon sets out with overconfidence, possibly wine-induced.

⁴⁹ See C. Pelling on 'authorial "I's"' in 'Xenophon's and Caesar's third-person narratives – or are they?', in A. Marmorodoro and J. Hill (eds.), *The Author's Voice in Classical and Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 2013), 43. See J. Grethlein, 'Xenophon's *Anabasis* from Character to Narrator', *JHS* 132 (2012), 23–40. P. Bradley, 'Irony and the Narrator in Xenophon's *Anabasis*', in V. Gray (ed.), *Xenophon. Oxford Readings in Classical Studies* (2010, Oxford), 528, says: 'The way the narrator moves his reader from the start of an apparent historical prose text to the end of what is clearly an autobiographical work is both deft and novel.'

⁵⁰ Durrbach (n. 6), 381 n. 1, observes that there is no disapproval. Bradley (n. 49), 534: 'An overly intrusive or partisan narrator might distract or provoke the audience, and negatively colour their evaluation or enjoyment of the story... The events, depicted with no critical or contextual apparatus, are allowed to stand on their own authority.'

⁵¹ Flower (n. 13), 124, observes that the narrator's account in 3.1.4–8 of Xenophon's pre-travel consultation, advised by Socrates, of the Delphic Oracle 'underscores Xenophon's folly' and that Xenophon 'accepts some blame by presenting himself as asking the wrong question of Apollo'.

From the account of the raid, we may infer that Xenophon neglected to use his military expertise to anticipate the obvious problem that Asidates might get reinforcements. From the account of the retreat and the mention of the wounding of half (150) of the group, we may infer that Xenophon unprofessionally put his group at risk.

From the author's – as I take it, wry – comment that the omens were fulfilled 'in this way', we may infer that the author sees that the signs were borne out only in that literal way that divine messages such as oracles are sometimes dreadfully fulfilled.

From all of this, the reader may infer in summary that the young Xenophon acted very foolishly. Were the author more effusive, he might have summed up by adding explicit commentary to the spare, stark, indeed deadpan⁵² description in the *Anabasis*. He might have added, 'Good grief! *What* was Xenophon *thinking* to undertake this raid?! Its final result was a classic example of dumb luck'.

The new view of the final episode of the *Anabasis* that I advocate is that we may acknowledge that the mature Xenophon is quite willing to acknowledge the youthful error that the narrator so clearly describes.⁵³ We may thus appreciate the final episode for its self-criticism.⁵⁴

That willingness to be self-critical is perhaps a Socratic inheritance.⁵⁵

⁵² I borrow the adjective 'deadpan' from Waterfield (n. 47), 134, where he comments on Xenophon's description at 4.1.23–4 of the treatment of one of a pair of captives: 'since he said nothing helpful, he was slaughtered while the other one looked on.'

⁵³ Of the readers cited earlier, only Hutchinson (n. 5), 90–1, credits Xenophon with self-criticism, specifically for the absence of cavalry. My interpretation here suggests several other points of self-criticism.

⁵⁴ Dillery (n. 10), 91, referring to Xenophon's professed views about personal profit, thinks it is 'probably asking too much to believe that Xenophon portrayed himself negatively in this final scene'. The discussion above in 'Exploration of two charges' about the charge of inconsistently seeking personal profit leaves open the possibility that the mature author even criticizes that aspect of the raid.

C. Atack, 'Xenophon's Moral Luck: Crisis and Leadership Opportunity in *Anabasis* 3', in T. Rood and M. Tamiolaki (eds.), *Xenophon's 'Anabasis' and its Reception* (Berlin, 2022), 63–83, finds other self-criticism. She interprets Xenophon as 'more acutely critical of the project to manage the group as a community, and of his own speech and actions as he attempts to do so' (p. 63). Also in Rood and Tamiolaki, D. Thomas, 'Xenophon's Woes in Thrace: The Very Model of a Model Mercenary Commander?', raises the question of his title, with the result that Xenophon 'underlines' his failure as a commander' (p. 157).

⁵⁵ My 'Socrates Reproaches Xenophon', presented at the Socratic V conference in Houston in July 2022 briefly discusses Xenophon's self-criticism at *Memorabilia* 1.3.9–13, and, in more detail, his self-criticism in *Anabasis* 3.1.4–8.

The final two details of the Asidates episode

The final two details that Xenophon provides of his youthful experience in the Asidates episode do not provide such material to infer criticism of the youth. First, back at Pergamum Xenophon ‘saluted the god’ (7.8.23), for (*gar*) the entire group (‘the Laconians, the captains, the other generals, and the soldiers’) acted together so that Xenophon has his choice of the booty (7.8.23). And then ‘there was enough [for him] now to do well for someone else’ (7.8.24).⁵⁶

Conclusion

Although I have argued for new appreciation of the account of the final episode of the *Anabasis* as evidence for the mature author’s capacity for self-criticism, study of the final episode also had the effect of provoking this reader’s recognition of how much Xenophon was entangled in the institution of enslavement. It is not only that, in company with his peers, he notices no wrong in slavery. It is in addition that he signs on as at least an observer to a very long project of slave acquisition.⁵⁷ Then finally he makes his own fortune by the sale – either by ransom or into slavery – of persons captured in his attack on Asidates’ estate. Moreover, he continues to see use of slaves as a means to prosperity. His much later *Poroi* proposes importation of tens of thousands of new slaves to Athens.⁵⁸ Even if he envisages better than customary living conditions for them,⁵⁹ his proposal is evidence that an important defective part of his world-view

⁵⁶ T. Rood, ‘Political Thought in Xenophon: Straussian Readings of the *Anabasis*’, *Polis* 32 (2015), 163: ‘[T]he ethics of reciprocity...are at the heart of Xenophon’s presentation of his story: he ends the *Anabasis* wealthy enough to do good to others’ (7.8.23).

⁵⁷ Those who, unlike Xenophon, signed on mercenaries for Cyrus’ expedition, would have seen it as an opportunity to profit from the sale of booty taken during the march: ‘[M]ost of the soldiers had sailed off for this pay-earning operation (*misthophoran*) not from lack of means of living, but hearing about the personal merits (*aretên*) of Cyrus...some even having left behind children, so as, having acquired money, to come back, hearing also that others around Cyrus were doing very well (*polla kai agatha prattein*)’ (*An.* 6.4.8).

⁵⁸ J. Dillery, ‘Xenophon’s *Poroi* and Athenian Imperialism’, *Historia* 42 (1993), 2, considers that a point of the *Poroi* was ‘to showcase his new vision of peace in the Greek world’ and ‘to demonstrate that the city does not need an empire to survive’. S. Schorn, ‘The Philosophical Background of Xenophon’s *Poroi*’, in F. Hobden and C. Tuplin (eds.), *Ethical Principles and Historical Enquiry* (Leiden, 2012), 702, proposes that the *Poroi* argues for ‘a fundamental transformation of the state along the precepts of the Socratic-Xenophontic philosophy’.

⁵⁹ Schorn (n. 58), 710, observes that the *Poroi* ‘ensures that exploiting slaves ruthlessly is financially inadvisable’, and that there is expected ‘a basically good treatment of the mine slaves’ but that Xenophon gives no details.

persists.⁶⁰ There seems no way to avoid great discouragement about Xenophon and his times after reading the *Anabasis*. Xenophon could be self-critical, but his self-critical capacity was sadly limited.⁶¹

SANDRA PETERSON

University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, USA

peter009@umn.edu

⁶⁰ E. Baragwanath (n. 20), 653, says that Xenophon's attitude toward slaves 'assumes their humanity' but that his attitude 'stems from utility rather than humane concern'. See J. Porter, 'The Archaic Roots of Paternalism: Continuity in Attitudes Towards Slaves and Slavery in the *Odyssey*, Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*, and Beyond', *G&R* 68 (2021), 255–77 on Xenophon's views on treatment of slaves.

⁶¹ The Athenian character of Plato's *Laws* similarly takes for granted the possession of slaves (777b–8a).