

## Heracleides of Maroneia and Proxenus of Thebes: Characterization, Structure, and Closure in Xenophon's *Anabasis*

The structure and purpose of Xenophon's *Anabasis* has long puzzled scholars. After detailing the hardships which the Ten Thousand faced during their escape from hostile Persian territory, Xenophon ends his story with the mercenaries returning to the fray under the Spartans (7.8.24). This ending leaves the reader with a discomfiting lack of closure which gives the impression that the story is somehow incomplete or imbalanced (Bradley 2001; Flower 2012, 111). What are readers to make of this story?

This paper brings two minor characters in the *Anabasis* to the fore: Proxenus of Thebes and Heracleides of Maroneia. I examine the ways in which these two characters act as “bookends” in a story with seemingly disparate storylines. My work builds on the scholarship of Bradley (2001) and Grethlein (2012), who argue that there are two primary narrational threads in the *Anabasis* (one of Xenophon the narrator and one of Xenophon the character), and who also argue that multiple subplots coexist which must find resolution. Through my examination of how Heracleides and Proxenus are used in the narrative to drive the plot(s) toward resolution(s), I wish to offer two conclusions about the *Anabasis*.

The first concerns Xenophon's understanding and portrayal of leadership. Through his description of Proxenus' noble character and association with Cyrus, Xenophon is able to extol Cyrus as an ideal leader, whereas Heracleides' dastardly character provides Xenophon an entry point for criticizing the less-than-ideal leadership abilities of Seuthes. Upon Heracleides' fall-from-grace, Xenophon is able to educate Seuthes on what he thinks are the three primary tenets of leadership: courage, justice, and generosity (ἀρετῆς καὶ δικαιοσύνης καὶ γενναιότητος) (7.7.41-42). In this way, Book 7 can be read as a “Seuthepaideia” of sorts. I argue that

Heracleides in Book 7 and Proxenus in Books 1 and 2 can be read as literary foils to each other in an effort by Xenophon to comment on the broader topic of leadership.

The second concerns the historical practice of gift-exchange. The two major instances of *xenia* and gift-exchange again involve both Proxenus (1.1.11, 1.2.3) and Heracleides (7.3.16-20). Book 7 provides a major source for the practice of *xenia* relations between Greeks and Thracians. Although Greeks and Thracians had a long history of political and social interactions (especially Athenian elites: Mitchell 1997; Sears 2013), it is somewhat surprising that Xenophon represents himself as unaware of how gift-exchange worked – twice being “at a loss” (ἠπόρει: 7.3.20; ἠπορεῖτο: 7.3.29). This scene allows Xenophon to provide a contrast between his own uprightness as a leader and the scheming of Heracleides, who swindles the Ten Thousand out of their proper pay. Proxenus, on the other hand, as a *xenos* of Cyrus, is represented by Xenophon as well-versed in the practices and virtues of *xenia* and gift-giving (2.1.10, 2.6.17-20). Whereas Heracleides and Seuthes emphasize the receiving of gifts, Proxenus and Cyrus demonstrate the power of giving gifts as demonstrated in Book 1.

Although the whole of the *Anabasis* is really about Xenophon and his role in the story, the literary roles of the minor characters Proxenus and Heracleides should not be neglected. Through Proxenus and Heracleides, Xenophon provides closure and a coherent shape to the *Anabasis*. Just as Proxenus gave Xenophon his entrance into Cyrus’ company, Heracleides gave Xenophon an opening into telling Seuthes (and the author’s audience) about the ideal characteristics of leadership and gift-giving. By focusing on these two minor characters, I show that it is more than mere coincidence that Heracleides and Proxenus are the characters most closely associated with the two kingly figures in the *Anabasis*, Cyrus and Seuthes.

## Bibliography

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