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**AUTHOR, NARRATOR, AND LITERARY CHARACTER:  
A STUDY OF XENOPHON'S *ANABASIS***

**KEYWORDS:** Xenophon, *Anabasis*, Greek prose, author, implied author, narratology, narrator, narratee, narrative, literary character

**SUMMARY:** The article discusses Xenophon's *Anabasis*. Its main aim is to present some new research perspectives for Classical Studies. It analyzes such aspects of Xenophon's opus as author, implied author, narrator, narratee and narrative, as well as literary character and the human context. The article is a sort of introduction to narratological studies, concerning classical narrative texts, which has not so far been thoroughly tested for its inner structure.

**NARRATOLOGY: INTRODUCTION**

Thanks to Booth and Genette, as well as Chatman and Bal,<sup>1</sup> an analysis of narrative techniques has in last decades become very popular not only in the theory of literature, but also in the field of studies as resistant to methodological novelty as (by its nature) Classics. Thanks to de Jong, Nunlist and Bowie's editorial work, entitled *Narrators, Narratees and Narratives in Ancient Greek Literature* (2004),

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<sup>1</sup> Booth, 1983 (first issue 1961); Genette, 1983 (first issue 1972); Chatman, 1980 (first issue 1978); Bal, 2009 (first issue 1985).

along with a work edited by Grethlein and Rengakos *Narratology and Interpretation: The Content of Narrative Form in Ancient Literature* (2009) narratology proved once again to be an excellent tool to explore internal structures of literary texts. Some interesting papers dealing with narrative issues can be also found in such works as: *Oxford Readings in The Roman Novel* (1999), edited by Harrison, and likewise *Texts, Ideas and the Classics: Scholarship, Theory, and the Classical Literatur* (2001), edited by Harrison as well, with an introduction by Fowler.

As Fowles wisely observed: “The analysis of narrative has a history almost as long as narrative itself, and it is not difficult to find passages in ancient commentators like Servius which anticipate [...] later observations”.<sup>2</sup> But modern narratology, as we understand it now, is said to be born in the twentieth century. It is often stated that in the beginning of the narratology as a modern discipline of humanities there was Propp’s *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928). Others to be mentioned are structuralists Lévi-Strauss and Barthes. The term *narratology* was coined by Todorov in 1967 (*Grammaire du Décaméron*). On the other hand we mustn’t forget the widely-acclaimed novelist Henry James and his profound contribution to the theory of fiction and its impact on the Anglo-American school of theory of narration. James is the one we owe terms like *point of view*.<sup>3</sup> Important books in this branch are also E. M. Forster’s *Aspects of the Novel* (1927) and James Wood’s *How Fiction Works* (2008).

Meanwhile, the theory of narration is still moving on. Singular narratology (sc. structuralist narratology of the twentieth century)<sup>4</sup> now has given way to many narratologies. Plurality of methodological approaches can be easily seen. Feminism, cultural studies and postcolonial studies, as well as such disciplines as history, philosophy and psychology have their own narratologies; cognitive studies also.<sup>5</sup> Grethlein and Rengakos put it that way: “it seems that narratology can make significant contributions to other approaches through a clear profile rather

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<sup>2</sup> Fowler, 2001, p. 65.

<sup>3</sup> Rawlings, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Głowiński, 2004.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Grethlein, Rengakos, 2009, p. 3.

than through lending its name to fashionable labels. Technical analysis of narrative ought not however to be an end in itself, but needs to be made fruitful for interpretation".<sup>6</sup>

Greek and Roman prose, therefore the *Anabasis* as well, no less than the modern novel need to be considered as a highly complex and self-conscious type of narration. Form turns out to be crucial. In my opinion, studying narrative structures of Xenophon's masterpiece should give us a better chance for its deeper understanding.

## NARRATOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF XENOPHON'S ANABASIS

### I. Xenophon as Author

#### 1. Author of the *Anabasis*

Xenophon's *Anabasis* has been referred to in many ways, e.g.: a coming-of-age story, an adventure story, a political tract, a personal apology, and, above all, a war memoir. Of course, as Flower puts it, the *Anabasis* may contain all of the elements mentioned here without being essentially defined or restricted by any of them.<sup>7</sup> In many ways, as we know, Xenophon's work most closely resembles classical pieces of historical narrative, like those of Herodotus or Thucydides. Therefore it is popular to say that literature of Xenophon lacks the historical profundity that we meet in *The Histories* or in *The History of Pelopoleisian War*. Yet it is important to remember these categories are mostly modern and Xenophon's contemporaries may have felt it all in a very different way. In my opinion, ancient Greeks (as well as Romans), had they used modern terminology, would describe the *Anabasis* in terms of that what we simply call a *novel* (note: not a *romance*) and hence Xenophon himself would pass for a *novelist* (not only because of the *Anabasis*, but also for his *Cyropaedia*).<sup>8</sup> And here is why:

A.) Alias. As we read in the *Hellenika* (transl. by Dakyns), "As to how then Cyrus collected an army and with it went up against his

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Flower, 2012, p. 40.

<sup>8</sup> On *Cyropaedia* as a first extant novel see Stadter, 2010, pp. 461-493. For narratological aspects of historiography and relationship between historical writing and literary fiction see White, 1999, pp. 27-45; 1992, pp. 284-299; 2005, pp. 147-157.

brother, and how the battle was fought and how he died, and how in the sequel the Hellenes escaped to the sea (all this), is written by Themistogenes the Syracusan”,<sup>9</sup> This otherwise unknown Themistogenes (name meaning *born of right*) is a pseudonym and ancient people knew it well. As a confirmation of this fact scholars<sup>10</sup> cite Plutarch’s following observation (transl. by Babbitt): “For as for Xenophon, he was his own historian, relating the exploits of the army under his command, but saying that Themistogenes the Syracusan had written the history of them; dedicating the honor of his writing to another, that writing of himself as of another, he might gain the more credit”.<sup>11</sup> Historian or biographer does not usually write under a pseudonym – a novelist does.

B.) Theme. Subject of the *Anabasis*, as well as the auctorial approach to it, significantly differs from what we find in classical historiography. Politics is not a matter. Neither is philosophy of history. Moreover, the famous (only thanks to Xenophon) march of the Ten Thousand should be seen rather as an adventure of the spirit than as an important historical event; its political results were rather minimal. As Flower observes,<sup>12</sup> the *Anabasis* had obvious predecessors not among historical writers, but rather in, e.g., an epic poem *Nostoi (Returns)*, now lost, and in Homer’s *Odyssey*, we could add: the journey of all journeys. Epic poetry, tragedy (sc. Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*), and Xenophon’s opus have this element in common – the journey back home as the main theme. Neither a historiographer, nor a biographer has interest in such matters. Because, as I said before, we’re dealing here with an adventure of the spirit.

C.) Dramatisation. The *Anabasis* as a whole is for sure a highly dramatised piece of literature. While reading we have no doubt the author (I am still talking here about a living person who wrote the *Anabasis*, not yet about the so-called *implied* or *inferred author*) was interested not in discussing theoretical issues, e.g. the sense of history, or the nature of good and evil, but in everyday human matters: loyalty and treason, self-confidence and fear, and, maybe above all, fate of the

<sup>9</sup> Xen., *Hell.* III 1, 2.

<sup>10</sup> Cf., e.g.: Głombiowski, 1993, p. 147; Tsagalis, 2009, p. 452.

<sup>11</sup> Plut., *De glor. Athen.* 1, 345E.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Flower 2012, p. 46.

refugee (or: of any refugee). Human matters, its psychological, moral and physiological aspect, is what interest any novelist the most.

D.) Discretion. As Flower observed, “Xenophon does not tell the reader who wrote the *Anabasis*, what it is about, why it was written, or what methods were employed in its composition”.<sup>13</sup> In other words, Xenophon acted in the same way as novelists, poets and dramatists act while sharing their work with potential readers: he allowed his opus to live a life of its own. Let us quote here that memorable incipit, that is the first sentence of the *Anabasis* (transl. by Brownson): “Darius and Parysatis had two sons born to them, of whom the elder was Artaxerxes and the younger Cyrus. Now when Darius lay sick and suspected that the end of his life was near, he wished to have both his sons with him”.<sup>14</sup> How different is Xenophon’s attitude from that of the Father of History, in whose *Histories* we read (transl. by Godley): “This is the display of the inquiry of Herodotus of Halicarnassus, so that things done by man not be forgotten in time, and that great and marvellous deeds, some displayed by the Hellenes, some by the barbarians, not lose their glory, including among others what was the cause of their waging war on each other”.<sup>15</sup> Compared with what we call historiography Xenophon seems pure fiction.

## 2. Implied Author of the *Anabasis*

In *The Rhetoric of Fiction* Booth observed: “From the author’s viewpoint, a succesful reading of his book must eliminate all distance between the essential norms of his implied author and the norms of the postulated reader”.<sup>16</sup> First of all: who is the *implied author* and who is the *postulated reader*?

A.) Implied of inferred author. Distinct from the author and the narrator, a concept of the implied author refers to the character/figure/image-of-the-author a reader creates in his mind; this image may differ considerably from the author’s true personality. We could say the implied author is a superior (in my opinion it is also possible to assume

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 43.

<sup>14</sup> Xen., *Anab.* I 1, 1.

<sup>15</sup> Her. I 1, 0.

<sup>16</sup> Booth, 1983, p. 157.

that in some cases, on the other hand, inferior) version of the author himself, some sort of a *second self*.<sup>17</sup> And hence, according do Booth, in each work of the same author there is, or might be, a different implied author. So, the *Anabasis* has its own, the *Cyropaedia* also, and so on.

B.) Implied or postulated reader. The same distinction as above must be made between a reader as a human being holding a book in his hand, apart from many other everyday activities, and a reader as inferred by an author of this particular literary piece. Regardless of reader's beliefs and views, in the real world he must subordinate himself to the book and to the author's vision of the world. We can say an author creates an image of his reader.<sup>18</sup> And here is a simple linguistic example (from a distance the author-reader can be of different kind): a reader encounters in the *Anabasis* the word *parasang*, meaning: a historical Iranian unit of itinerant distance. Never having visited Persia, nor having read Xenophon before, he, even though he is a Greek, probably will have a problem with this unfamiliar term; a note or a dictionary will be needed. However, the implied reader, if there is to be a chance of agreement, is simply obliged to know it.

As a matter of fact we don't really know much about the real writer and soldier called Xenophon of Athens. For us this Xenophon is merely a literary character (this will be discussed more thoroughly in the last section of this paper): "There was a man in the army named Xenophon, an Athenian, who was neither general nor captain nor private, but had accompanied the expedition because Proxenus, an old friend of his, had sent him at his home an invitation to go with him; Proxenus had also promised him that, if he would go, he would make him a friend of Cyrus, whom he himself regarded, so he said, as worth more to him than was his native state".<sup>19</sup> What is known about Xenophon as an author equals a fabricated image he had given us, his readers, in the *Anabasis* – for this is what authors of fiction do. Fortunately, there are some certainties (these are, in other words, essential or fundamental norms that he keeps imposing on the world of the *Anabasis* and on its

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, p. 151.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, p. 138.

<sup>19</sup> Xen., *Anab.* III 1, 4.

inhabitants) we can attribute to the implied author of Xenophon's opus. I will analyze three of them:

A.) The implied author presents a panhellenic attitude. The mere fact that the *Anabasis* is a relation from a panhellenic expedition is significant. Greek tribes are known to be self-sufficient; each of them had their own dialect, history, myths and literary culture. Here, in the *Anabasis* (what does not often occur – not until Alexander the Great), we follow the fate of the “United States of Greece”.

What is also worth mentioning is the fact that Xenophon's Greeks (Athenians and Lacedemonians, and the islanders as well) live in absolute symbiosis and all have in their minds only one goal: to escape from this hostile country and to reach the sea. “My good men, he [Xenophon] said, believe that now you are racing for Greece, racing this very hour back to your wives and children, a little toil for this one moment and no more fighting for the rest of our journey”.<sup>20</sup>

B.) The implied author admires Cyrus. Starting from the information that Cyrus was the victim of false accusation (alleged plot against king Artaxerxes).<sup>21</sup> we hear about him only in a positive tone. Both the narrator and characters pay tribute to the king's younger brother throughout the *Anabasis*. According to the narrator, Cyrus was “a man who was the most kingly and the most worthy to rule of all the Persians who have been born since Cyrus the Elder, as all agree who are reputed to have known Cyrus intimately”,<sup>22</sup> Cyrus was intelligent, brave, modest and law-abiding, expert both in horsemanship and in all military activities; he was also among the best satraps – to the kingdom and to the people living under his jurisdiction.<sup>23</sup>

Among the characters who admire Cyrus are Xenophon of Athens and Klearchos of Sparta, as well as other officers and whole armies. His greatness and decency in just non negotiable. Neither a Greek, nor a Persian ever thought of betraying him; the only exception is Orontas,

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, III 4, 46.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, I 2, 3.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, I 9, 1.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, I 9, 2-7.

who was said to be an architect of a plot against Cyrus. But even his comrades turned out to be Cyrus' loyal and faithful followers.<sup>24</sup>

C.) The implied author despises Tissaphernes. Starting from the information that it was Tissaphernes who falsely accused Cyrus of treason,<sup>25</sup> we, the readers, just know he is the character we shouldn't value at all. Both for the narrator and for the actors Tissaphernes in the main villain; he embodies the worst traits, being in everything quasi the opposite to Cyrus. The toughest nut to crack for the narrator and for the characters (and therefore for us) is, as it seems, Tissaphernes' perfidy and disloyalty.<sup>26</sup>

## II. Xenophon as Narrator

### 1. Narrator

The most central concept of narratology is perhaps that of the narrator. His presence and the nature of this presence in the work of literary fiction is a *sine qua non* while discussing narratological issues (narration, narratee, narrator's dramatization, focalization, point of view etc.).<sup>27</sup> As de Jong puts it, "It is an important principle of narratology that this narrator cannot automatically be equated with the author, even when he bears the same name; rather, he is a creation of that author".<sup>28</sup>

Given that Xenophon's *Anabasis*, being undoubtedly a narrative text, has a narrator, the next step is to analyze his (narrator's) nature and aspects. I shall try to characterize the *Anabasis*' narrator in three steps:

A.) Internal / External. First of all, we have to ask a question whether or not this narrator is also a character in the story he narrates. As for the *Anabasis* the answer is: no, he is not. That means we speak here of an external narrator. It is important that we do not think of the first-person interventions ("The fact which I just stated" [...]; "Now such conduct as

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, I 6, 1-4.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, I 2, 3.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, III 2, 4.

<sup>27</sup> Although, it must be admitted, there are also attempts of adjusting narratological methodologies to non-narratological texts. See, e.g.: Markantonatos, 2002.

<sup>28</sup> De Jong, 2004, p. 1.



this, in my opinion, reveals a man fond of war” etc.),<sup>29</sup> which we know also from e.g. Homer’s *Odyssey* (also externally narrated), as a proof of the internal narrator’s existence in the text. It has nothing to do with it. What is crucial is that the narrator (neither I speak of the author, nor of the character called Xenophon) does not inhabit the world he tells us about; he is not in any case a part of this universe. The narrator in the *Anabasis* is distanced, uninvolved, unemotional.

B.) Primary / Secondary. Next, it is important to diagnose “the level of narration at which the narrator finds himself”.<sup>30</sup> Each story can have many narrators. There are texts in which the primary narrator (he who recounts the main narration) is the only narrator; there are also texts in which the primary narrator is overwhelmed by secondary narrators (see Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!*). As for the primary/secondary narrator the *Anabasis* is nothing but classic. The external primary narrator dominates in the story, however enriching it by allowing secondary narrators to speak from time to time. A good example is Klearchos’ longer speech contained in Chapter 3 Book I, interrupted rarely by the primary narrator. During this it is Klearchos who becomes the leading narrator and it is he who recounts the situation, the circumstances of Cyrus’s expedition and the prospects for the future.<sup>31</sup>

But in Xenophon’s *Anabasis* we have also examples of what we can call a tertiary narrator. This situation can be represented by a simple scheme: the (main) narrator said that Klearchos said that Cyrus said.<sup>32</sup>

C.) Overt / Covert. Narrator who clearly manifests his presence in the text is an overt narrator. This manifestation can be of different types: he can have his own life just like characters (in other words: to be dramatized) or, what is even more common, he can widely comment on the events he narrates - this can be easily found in novel-essay or digressive epis poem. Also in the postmodern prose it was very popular to create a self-conscious, ironic narrator; that is also a form of an overt narrator. Instead, covert narrator is not to be seen or heard of; he is

<sup>29</sup> Xen., *Anab.* II 3, 1; II 6, 6. On the first-person interventions in Xenophon see also Gray, 2006, pp. 111-123.

<sup>30</sup> De Jong, 2004, p. 2.

<sup>31</sup> Xen., *Anab.* I 3.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, I 6.

totally transparent. A good and renown example of a covert narrator in fiction is Hemingway's short story called *The Killers*. It is just impossible to name a one feature characterizing Hemingway's narrator, or to say what he thinks of described situation. Despite Xenophon's narrator displays no dramatization, he, as it was said before, comments on events; rarely but still. That means we are dealing here with a kind of an overt narrator (although discrete).

## 2. Narratee

As an act of communication each narrative requires two elements: a narrator and a narratee (an addressee). Because of the nature of narrative itself every narrator (whether internal or external, primary or secondary, overt or covert) simply needs a narratee, i.e. an instance he addresses his relation. Some aspect of the narrator in Xenophon's *Anabasis* was just now discussed. Now, let's look at the narratee:

A.) Internal / External. As de Jong noticed, "An external narrator usually addresses external narratees".<sup>33</sup> There are, of course, exceptions. For example, in Teodor Parnicki's later novels an external narrator initiates debates with fictional characters, in other words: his creations; that means he addresses internal narratees. But as for narratee (or narratees) – on the primary level of the *Anabasis* – we have no doubt his (their) nature is completely external. Narrator's interventions in Xenophon do not implicate literary characters of his work; the nature of these interventions is, we can say, unilateral. He (the narrator) has no interest in carrying on (or even starting) a conversation with his creations.

B.) Primary / Secondary. When in the *Anabasis* a general (e.g. Klearchos, Xenophon) informs in his speech his troops about an event he knows about (and was a part of it) and they don't (and weren't part of it), he is to be called the internal secondary narrator while the one who listens to him will be diagnosed by us as the external (he would be internal if he had participated in the event) secondary narratee.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> De Jong, 2004, p. 5.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. *ibidem*.

But, as the primary narrator speaks in the *Anabasis* for most of the time (excluding, of course, speeches), we are chiefly dealing here with the primary narratee.

C.) Overt / Covert. As in the case of the primary narrator, a narratee's disclosure can be of two different kinds: overt and covert. When the narrator addresses his narratee, e.g. "you" or "dear reader", or simply by name, we speak of an overt narratee. This kind of narratee can be easily found in epistolography (*cf.* Cicero, Seneca, Pliny the Younger), and this is probably the best example. The narrator is covert when he is not mentioned by name (or any other word) by the narrator. Despite the fact that the *Anabasis*' narrator explains - even unintentionally - a lot during his relation, he does not reveal the identity of his narratees; they are covert.

### 3. Narrative

The easiest, and probably the most accurate way of defining a narrative is to call it a sequence of events recounted by the narrator.

Now, I shall look more carefully at the four elements of narrative structure of the *Anabasis*. They are:

A.) Story & Plot. As I stated before, the subject of the story itself is truly remarkable as far as historical writing is concerned. Thousands of refugees marching across hostile country; no history as such, no politics unless it concerns the fate of this peculiar army. The *Anabasis* is a story, not a history; it ought to be read not for the purpose of teaching an example of bravery or to bring and discuss once again the never-ending Greeks-and-Persians story, but with a flashed face, as an art of fiction, for it addresses questions pertaining to human affairs. Moreover, it does so with great mastery both in composition and language, but also in psychological matters.

On the plot Głombiowski wisely noted (transl. into English by myself): "Xenophon has planned the composition of the *Anabasis* consciously and autonomously, planned it not as a follower, but as a great artist. The *Anabasis*'s structure resembles a drama – a Greek tragedy. In the *Anabasis*, as in tragedy, we can discern the preparation (exposition), peripeties and catastrophes, and even a succession of peripeties and catastrophes. The disproportion in the structure of the opus was

introduced on purpose. The description of Cyrus' expedition is only an exposition to the proper drama – the drama of the Greeks during the retreat. Catastrophes are both the death of Cyrus and the murder of Greek army leaders. Peripetias are the seemingly victorious battle of Kunaxa and the apparently successful negotiations with the king and Tissaphernes. All of these dramatic events are direct or indirect results of Cyrus' expedition, hence the title *Anabasis* fully reflects the actual conditions of the on-going drama".<sup>35</sup>

B.) Showing & Telling. The well-known distinction: *showing* versus *telling*, has to do with a different, previously discussed, distinction between covert and overt narrator.<sup>36</sup>

If the narrator is covert, i.e. his presence is a secret for us (he is transparent), his narrative style is manifest in the so-called showing technique. We could also call it a camera-eye technique. The main goal of this method is to visualize the created world, events, characters. A big supporter and famous contributor to this technique was Ernest Hemingway, calling his writing style "The Iceberg Theory", most aptly used in his novella *The Old Man and the Sea*. Instead, if the narrator is overt, i.e. his presence in the "in-between world" is apparent and obvious, his technique is to be called a telling technique, and his narrative is closer to a relation than, let us say, to a series or sequence of paintings. Hence the overt *Anabasis'* narrator, for most of the time, is telling us about The Ten Thousand march. We get from him daily reports on, e.g., how many parasangs the Greek army moved during that or another particular day (and was it snowing); who was present at the council of war and who said what; how the negotiations proceeded, etc.; that is the nature of *Anabasis'*s writing style. There are, however, passages in which the narrator - hiding like a covert one - decides to show us a scene; it happens while there is a need to boost the narrative: "When Xenophon heard that, he leaped down from his horse and pushed Soteridas out of his place in the line, then took his shield away from him and marched on with it as fast as he could; he had on also, as it happened, his cavalry breastplate, and the result was that he was heavily burdened. And he urged the men in front of him to keep going, while he told those who

<sup>35</sup> Głombiowski, 1993, pp. 143.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. De Jong, 2004, pp. 2-3.

were behind to pass along by him, for he found it hard to keep up.”<sup>37</sup> The dynamics of that kind of scenes are unquestionable and the showing technique is the only way for the narrator to be convincing.

Apart from recounting the events (whether by telling or showing), there are other elements of the narrative structure of the *Anabasis* that are worth mentioning.

C.) Descriptions & Speeches. A true show of skill is Chapter 6 Book II. After the generals were seized and put to death by beheading, the narrator decides to bring us closer to the chiefs who just lost their lives; he gives us the characteristics of Klearchos, Proxenos, Menon, and others. In passages like these the narrator is like a biographer (in some way, his method resembles Suetonian *species* we know from *The Twelve Cesars*). As we learn from the narrator, “Proxenus the Boeotian cherished from his earliest youth an eager desire to become a man capable of dealing with great affairs, and because of this desire he paid money to Gorgias of Leontini. After having studied under him and reaching the conclusion that he had now become competent to rule and, through friendship with the foremost men of his day, to hold his own in conferring benefits, he embarked upon this enterprise with Cyrus, expecting to gain therefrom a famous name, great power, and abundant wealth; but while vehemently desiring these great ends, he nevertheless made it evident also that he would not care to gain any one of them unjustly; rather, he thought that he must secure them justly and honourably, or not at all.”<sup>38</sup> And so on. Thus, descriptions – whether of human beings or landscape<sup>39</sup> – make an alternative to the dynamics of telling/showing method, which reflects the pace of the march back and forth.

As the descriptions, also speeches – mentioned in this paper the several times – are intended to slow a little bit the on-going action, as well as to expand our knowledge and understanding of the human mind and soul, and nature; furthermore, they (speeches) show rhetorical skills of both the author and the actors.

Such skillful distribution of descriptions and speeches throughout the text of the *Anabasis* helped Xenophon to build a compact, uniform

<sup>37</sup> Xen., *Anab.* III 4, 48.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*, II 6, 16.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, I 2, 22-24.

and thoughtful, but above all a truly dramatic narrative we admire him so much for.

### III. Xenophon as Literary Character

#### 1. Xenophon of Athens

For the first time in the *Anabasis* we read about a man known as Xenophon in Chapter 8 Book I: “Then Xenophon, an Athenian, seeing him [Cyrus] from the Greek army, approached so as to meet him and asked if he had any orders to give; and Cyrus pulled up his horse and bade Xenophon tell everybody that the sacrificial victims and omens were all favourable”.<sup>40</sup> Then, he is also mentioned twice in Chapter 5 Book II. But it is not until Book III that Xenophon becomes the main character of the *Anabasis*. We get to know him better in these famous and important words (let us cite it once more): “There was a man in the army named Xenophon, an Athenian, who was neither general nor captain nor private, but had accompanied the expedition because Proxenus, an old friend of his, had sent him at his home an invitation to go with him; Proxenus had also promised him that, if he would go, he would make him a friend of Cyrus, whom he himself regarded, so he said, as worth more to him than was his native state”.<sup>41</sup>

Some would say that such way of introducing a character proves the existence of deficiencies in the area of narrative structure. Why not until Book III? But, as Głombiowski noticed (see above), the *Anabasis*' composition is logical and intentional, and resembles, to some extent, the Greek tragedy. Thus, while reading the *Anabasis* we are obliged to remember that the two catastrophes (Cyrus' death; massacre of the generals) are intended to emphasize the tragedy of the situation, in which Xenophon of Athens and others found themselves so unexpectedly. So, it was consistent to make Cyrus himself the main character in Book I, and Klearchos, leader of the Greek troops - in Book II.

As a result of unfortunate circumstances that the Greeks met in the heart of Persia, Xenophon becomes the leader. Several times he proves to be a good candidate, by delivering some great speeches. In one of them, he encourages the Greeks using these words: “And in my own

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, I 8, 15.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*, III 1, 4.

experience, gentlemen, I have observed this other fact, that those who are anxious in war to save their lives in any way they can, are the very men who usually meet with a base and shameful death; while those who have recognized that death is the common and inevitable portion of all mankind and therefore strive to meet death nobly, are precisely those who are somehow more likely to reach old age and who enjoy a happier existence while they do live”.<sup>42</sup> On the basis of what we read in the *Anabasis*, here and there, we can assume this Xenophon (after all the Athenian) studied rhetorics or philosophy, or both of them in his hometown, the renowned Athens; for sure, he wasn’t a professional soldier. But, fortunately, we do not need to rely only on assumptions. The narrator informs us elsewhere about who was Xenophon’s teacher and what he thought of Xenophon’s plans: “After reading Proxenus’ letter Xenophon conferred with Socrates, the Athenian, about the proposed journey; and Socrates, suspecting that his becoming a friend of Cyrus might be a cause for accusation against Xenophon on the part of the Athenian government, for the reason that Cyrus was thought to have given the Lacedaemonians zealous aid in their war against Athens, advised Xenophon to go to Delphi and consult the god in regard to this journey”.<sup>43</sup>

As I already said, along with Book III Xenophon of Athens, being one of the leaders of the retreat to Greece from inner Persia, becomes the main character in (another) Xenophon’s *Anabasis*. Finding himself in a new position, he proves himself to be a good commander of the army (to be more precise: of the rearguard) – until they (the Greeks) reached the coast and shouted the most famous phrase: “The Sea! The Sea!”<sup>44</sup> But, although he was no doubt a good and respected leader, there was a time that the Greek soldiers blamed him that he wanted to set up a colony at Pontus (still far away from home), for – as we hear from the opus’ external primary narrator – “it seemed to him [Xenophon] that it was a fine thing to gain additional territory and power for Greece by founding a city”.<sup>45</sup> Yet, the soldiers didn’t “stand in need of

<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem*, III 1, 43.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*, III 1, 5.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, IV 7, 24.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*, V 6, 15.

reputation for bravery, but of a safe return".<sup>46</sup> Being unwelcomed in Athens (as the one who associated with the Lacedaemonians), he surely was embittered.

According to Stoff, there are basically two ways of transforming historical figures into literary characters: *reconstruction* and *creation*.<sup>47</sup> The goal of reconstruction is to revive a person, and to enrich and authenticate the literary world. A created character is the opposite to a reconstructed one; its purpose is to verify a historiographical or philosophical thesis that underlies the mechanisms governing the (artificial, literary) world. Xenophon of Athens, as all other *Anabasis* characters, seems to be a reconstruction of Xenophon the author (which corresponds with the uninvolved, external narrator).

## 2. Human Context

While discussing the status of a literary character Stoff enumerates four sets of features: author-character relationship, psychological and philosophical aspects of the character's personality, human context, and conventionalization.<sup>48</sup> I am interested particularly in one of them: the human context, which, according to what Harvey says, is the only way to specify who we (human beings) really are.<sup>49</sup>

Because of the discretion of the *Anabasis*' narrator and his moderation in characterizing Xenophon the Athenian, the best way to get to know him is a closer look at interpersonal relationships. Thus the narrator helps us to know two things: what was Xenophon, and what wasn't Xenophon. These words of Cheirisophos are significant: "Hitherto, Xenophon, I have known you only to the extent of having heard that you were an Athenian, but now I commend you both for your words and your deeds, and I should be glad if we had very many of your sort; for it would be a blessing to the entire army".<sup>50</sup> As we see, the characters get to know each other the same time we get to know them.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*, VI 5, 14.

<sup>47</sup> Stoff, 1997, pp. 96-97.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, p. 93-94.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Harvey, 1965, p. 53.

<sup>50</sup> Xen., *Anab.* III 1, 45.



In Book II we read: “And now it was about full-market time, and heralds arrived from the King and Tissaphernes, all of them barbarians except one, a Greek named Phalinus, who, as it chanced, was with Tissaphernes and was held in honour by him; for this Phalinus professed to be an expert in tactics and the handling of heavy infantry”.<sup>51</sup> Why the narrator tell us about it? We can assume that his aim was to point out Phalinus’ indolence in contrast to Xenophon’s knowledge of strategies.

## CONCLUSIONS

Of course, it is not possible to exhaust such a vast subject, while trying to put it on these several pages. The main purpose of this paper was to show in what ways modern narratology contributes to modern day Classical Studies.

There are many narratological problems which are omitted here because of the lack of space, e.g. focalization, point of view, direct or indirect speech, as well as order, time, space, and mood. Those and others - also in relation to the *Anabasis* - may, and should be examined with care they deserve.

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*, II 1, 7.

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