

BRENNAN (S.) *Xenophon's Anabasis: A Socratic History*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022. Pp. xiv + 287, illus., map. £90. 9781474489881. doi:[10.1017/S0075426923000046](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0075426923000046)

Since at least 2005, Shane Brennan has been engaged in Xenophontic studies (both for a general audience and specialists), notably focusing on the *Anabasis*. This had culminated in the co-editorship (with David Thomas) of *The Landmark Xenophon's Anabasis* (New York 2021). To his oeuvre he has now added *Xenophon's Anabasis: A Socratic History*, whose purpose he explains as follows: 'This book explores Xenophon's *Anabasis* as a work in its own right and as one that forms an integral part of the author's oeuvre' (viii). However, accessing Xenophon is no easy task, as observed by Fiona Hobden and Christopher Tuplin:

It is not merely for the prosaic reason that a large volume of work is inevitably difficult to navigate. Rather in the twenty-first century Xenophon is 'always already' in reception. The chain of thought that informs our basic understanding of his personality, methods and ideas stretches back from the modern period through the Renaissance and into antiquity. And with each link, Xenophon is tweaked anew, redirecting the contexts of his readings and especially the relationships built between the ancient author and his later reader. This started early on. (*Xenophon: Ethical Principles and Historical Enquiry* (Leiden and Boston 2012), 2)

Nevertheless, I believe Brennan has succeeded in offering a novel reading of one of the ancient world's most famous and celebrated works, largely thanks to his tremendous familiarity with the text. He does so in an introduction, followed by five chapters and a conclusion, adding two tables as appendices, one presenting the data of Xenophon's life, the other a list of his works. A bibliography and an index conclude this work: there is, sadly, no *index locorum*.

Brennan adopts what may be regarded in effect as an interdisciplinary perspective, if, as he indicates (viii), starting from historiographical and literary perspectives. Largely using the translation from the 'Landmark' volume, Brennan offers a broad-ranging consideration of Xenophon's aims in writing this multifaceted work some 30 years after the events it describes. Using as his vehicle the story of Cyrus the Younger's attempt on the Persian throne and its aftermath, Xenophon integrates several (Socratic) themes and concerns in his writings, including leadership (notably discussed in Brennan's Chapter 3), Panhellenism, Sparta and an apology (the main subject of Chapter 4). Other chapters have been dedicated to 'Xenophon the Athenian' (Chapter 1) and the '*Anabasis* in historiographical and literary context' (Chapter 2). However, above all Brennan brings the (hidden) presence of Socrates throughout the *Anabasis* to the fore (clearly summarized in Chapter 5): Brennan demonstrates how Xenophon, presenting himself in the story as a model pupil of the philosopher, elucidates Socratic teachings and values. Ultimately, the *Anabasis* thereby becomes a 'Socratic history', namely a narrative which, though rooted in a historical event or period, serves to embed a reflection of the philosopher and his values. By doing so, '[w]e are implicitly invited to compare the Socrates of Xenophon to other versions of the philosopher, and to other philosophers such as Gorgias, ... and to judge for ourselves which is most beneficial to us, our friends and country' (245).

Brennan also observes, rightly in my view, that the fact:

[t]hat *Anabasis* is set in a historiographical form is undoubtedly one of the reasons why for modern readers it has remained separated from the author's other

philosophical writings, yet in light of their prominence in the oeuvre, perhaps what we should have been looking for is evidence that the work is positively disconnected from the world of Socrates. By way of an answer to the question ‘What is it?’, I suggested *Anabasis* is primarily a ‘Socratic history’, with the philosopher’s values perpetuated through the character of his student on the long retreat homeward of the Greeks who went upcountry with Cyrus the Younger (246).

Brennan’s major contribution to the ongoing assessment both of Xenophon himself and of his oeuvre is to have shown the various ways in which the influence of Socratic education on Xenophon is tangible throughout the *Anabasis*. He concedes that his position nevertheless, and naturally enough, is open for further discussion: ‘[t]he interpretation offered here is incomplete, and another reader might take up one or more of its loose strands, or upend the whole by presenting a case for something entirely different’ (256). All the same, I find his a challenging and very worthwhile voice in the ongoing discussion of this sometimes elusive work (notably as regards Xenophon’s intended audience, in Chapter 2) and Brennan has well served this constantly fascinating author.

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BROCKLISS (W.) **Homeric Imagery and the Natural Environment** (Hellenic Studies Series, 82). Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2019. Pp. 294. \$28.50. 9780674987357. doi:[10.1017/S0075426923000265](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0075426923000265)

In what some still call ‘the West’, the world splits into phenomenological categories such as ‘nature’ and ‘culture’, separating humans and what we make from the planet that created us. To say that this conceptual break is necessarily a feature of modern identity is an understatement. Yet merely asserting so is insufficient now, nearly 20 years after Bruno Latour argued for collapsing our dichotomies in *Politics of Nature* (Cambridge MA 2004) and almost two generations since (western) literary critics started to take ecology seriously as a theoretical impetus in their work.

Despite Clara Bosak-Schroeder’s ecological focus in *Other Natures: Environmental Encounters with Ancient Greek Ethnography* (Oakland 2020) and the 2016 collection edited by Christopher Schliephake, *Ecocriticism, Ecology and the Cultures of Antiquity* (Lanham 2017), classical studies writ large has been rather slow to respond to the ecocritical movement. The story of Homeric scholarship of the past century is largely one of humans *qua* culture: language, history, psychology, arts, religion, etc. (See, of course, recent exceptions such as Alex Purves’ *Space and Time in Ancient Greek Narrative* (Cambridge 2010) and Christos Tsagalis’ *From Listeners to Viewers* (Cambridge MA 2012).)

William Brockliss’ *Homeric Imagery and the Natural Environment* does some of the foundational work needed to address this absence. On the surface, Brockliss’ work does not conform to what an outsider might imagine a work of ecocriticism to be, but his efforts to understand how Greek poets (and hopefully audiences) conceptualized the natural world shows how much corrective work modern readers have to do to break down the wall we have built between ourselves and the *rest* of the natural world.

Brockliss is a fine Homerist who takes literary theory seriously, as evidenced by his work on disability study, new materialism and, more directly, on ecocriticism and Hesiod. This book is less directly engaged with eco-theoretical frames, but instead provides a bridge between traditional philology, metaphor theory and the urgency of the natural