

How do you see your career as a writer evolving?

Ultimately I would like to make it my full-time job, and my publisher certainly thinks that's a possibility. Unfortunately, so much depends upon the whims of the reading public, New York publishing needs, Hollywood trends and whatnot, and those are very hard to predict. I'll just do the best I can for the next couple of books, and see how things turn out.

Who is your favorite author and which is your favorite book (top three)?

That's the toughest question so far--there are so many! I guess my number one author would have to be Robert Graves, with his "I, Claudius," but he wrote many more books that are well worth reading. I'm also a great fan of Vladimir Nabokov (to whom a young high-school student named Marnie Elizaga introduced me many years ago...), especially "Ada" and "Lolita." Gabriel Garcia Marquez ("One Hundred Years of Solitude") is a master, and for lighter reading, John Irving is a lot of fun. Marguerite Yourcenar ("Hadrian's Memoirs") is another great historical novelist, as is Steven Pressfield ("Gates of Fire"). How many did you ask for again?

When are you going to write an article for *Laico Lines*?

In our family, that job is already taken by Cristina. I don't think I could top her. Anyway, don't I get any credit for this interview?



NEWT HAS READ IT -- HAVE YOU?

NEWT GINGRICH:

Xenophon's *Anabasis* is one of the great historic adventures of the ancient world. It recounts the extraordinary epic of ten thousand Greek mercenaries abandoned around eastern Iraq who fought and marched across modern Turkey against overwhelming odds and returned to Greece by way of the Black Sea.

This novel is a sound first novel, openly based on Xenophon's work, and a good introduction to the challenges faced by Xenophon both in the failing Greece in which Athens had been defeated by the Peloponnesian Wars and the economy and society were both battered and in the long ordeal of first service and then a march of extraordinary endurance.

For anyone interested in thinking about the ancient world, the degree to which cultures have clashed, and the process of survival this is a thought-provoking book.



PAOLO VILLASENOR:

I don't like to read, but this was worth it! Although the backdrop of ancient Greece generally appeals only to academicians and intellectuals (of which I am neither), I found a refreshing universality in Ford's tale of Xenophon. Conflicts ranging from father-son relationships, patriotism, familial loyalty, friendship, cultural differences, and romantic love are all covered in this very well written novel. Ford has shown great ability in describing both the boorish behavior of soldiers-at-war one moment, and the high brow intellectualism of Socratic thought, the next. His adept use of language enhances the reader's ability to visualize the trials and tribulations of the novel's hero, and the situations at hand. This book can appeal to everyone. Hopefully Ford's next novel will come very soon.

IT'S NOT ALL GREEK TO ME REY DAVID:

Mike achieves a worthy life goal that some of us, myself included, only dream of achieving - to not only write a novel, but be published nationally.

The "Ten Thousand" is a fascinating story of the ill-fated campaign of a band of Greek mercenaries in the political chaos following the Peloponnesian War. After the Persian forces pillaged the Greek camp, the Greeks were stranded hundreds of miles from home without the provisions needed to return home. Xenophon, a junior officer who assumed command of the forces after most of the senior officers were treacherously slaughtered, leads his army in a perilous journey through hostile enemy terrain until they reach the Black Sea. Along the way, they were forced to face hostile forces, and barely survived starvation, frostbite, and disease.

The "Ten Thousand" was very interesting and fast-paced. Mike gives you a real feel for the horrific hardships that Xenophon and his army endured, and in my view, does a fine job with his character development. Mike weaves in colorfully drawn details of ancient Greek life which enrich the novel and the characters, but never feel overtly "historical" or forced. I finished this book feeling that I had received a layman's education in an area of history that I was previously only vaguely familiar with. That the author of this nationally published novel is your own relative should be more than enough reason for you to go out right now and buy the book. But if you need more reason, then consider the high marks that I (as one who has read it) give it. This is remarkable writing by any standard.

"YEAH, AND ROBERT DE NIRO IS YOUR COUSIN..." MITOS VILLASENOR:

I was so proud to see Mike's book prominently displayed at Barnes and Noble under New Authors. I bought two copies and as I was paying I told the lady at the register that I was actually related to the author! She just looked at me and smiled. I can't believe she didn't believe me!!

NEWT HAS READ IT -- HAVE YOU?
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CARLO SANTAYANA:

DISCLAIMER:

To comply with the Editor-in-Chief's chosen theme for this issue of Laico Lines, this book review was intentionally written in Taglish – a task that goes against the normal writing habits and principles of the author of this book review. On a lighter note, the author's initial dread at the thought of writing in Taglish was quickly replaced with enjoyment and fun. Although this will not become a habit, I have to admit: it's *nakaka-alIW* to write this way!

I was excited to read Mike's book *The Ten Thousand* so I stopped by the local bookstore to get a copy. I was *medyo busog* anyway, so I started reading during my lunch break. The opening chapters were an enthralling account of how Greek soldiers made *sugod* a fortress and how some of them got *ihaw* by an ancient flame thrower, a weapon I had once heard about on the Discovery Channel. So, not only was this book exciting, it was also historically accurate, offering an insightful look at what human life was like before the time of Christ.

The novel is about the adventures Xenophon, an Athenian *señorito* who became an officer in a mercenary army. It is narrated by his friend and *yayo*, Themistogenes, or Theo for short. Theo recounts the travels he made with his *alaga*, and how Xenophon got into a fight with his dad, how they made *luwas* to see a *manghuhula* who was *mahilig sumagot in bugtong*, and how they joined the army. Theo also writes about a girl he meets while traveling, and how the girl becomes his *syota*. While serving under Clearchus, a General who was *siga* and *basagulero*, Xenophon learns how to command his own troops. He even displays enough leadership and *pakisama* to get the bigger, more *mayabang* Spartan and Athenian soldiers to become *barkada* with the smaller, but equally *matinik* Rhodian soldiers who used *tirador* to fight the enemy instead of a sword or *pana*. The story traces the journey from Greece to Babylon and back again. It is fraught with the perils of traveling in hostile territory, and how remaining troops, merely a fraction of the original ten thousand, have to deal with making *tawid* the *ilog*, staying focused when they're *praning*, and entrusting their fate to the gods when faced with the impossible. This last tribulation is something I find rather difficult to explain... the words escape me when I try to write about it, but I know the feeling very well. *Ay nako, bahala na*, you know what I'm talking about.

GLOSSARY:

Nakaka-alIW –amusing

Medyo – rather, somewhat

Busog – full, not hungry
Sugod – to charge, to attack
Ihaw – barbecued
Señorito – pampered young boy
Yayo – male nanny, manservant
Alaga – ward, person under one's care/watch
Luwas – to leave town on a long journey
Manghuhula – fortuneteller
Mahilig – fond
Sumagot – to answer, to reply to a question
Bugtong – riddle
Syota – girlfriend
Siga – tough guy
Basagulero –skull crusher (literal)
Pakisama –camaraderie, ability to connect with others
Mayabang – arrogant, snobbish
Barkada –a group of buddies
Matinik – proficient, skilled
Tirador – slingshot
Pana –bow and arrow
Tawid – to cross, to traverse
Ilog – river
Praning – paranoid

Will Mike Ford's next book be The Ten Thousand Laicos?

RANDY VILLASENOR:

The first chapters hit me like the first battle scene of the movie *Gladiator*. The description was so vivid that I felt the scalding oil poured on the attackers in so enclosed a space. I could hear the arrows sing, I could feel the pain of sheared flesh,

I wished I could see through the smoke, but I could taste and smell the blooded attackers. Ford's book hits the senses. You ARE there and you wish you WERE NOT there. I was at first drawn by the historicity of Xenophon, the warrior scholar. With Mike's well chosen language and generous sprinkle of Greek words defined, my education is complete.

POPOY:

Is there a video? I'll just wait for the video.

NINI:

The best part about the book was the acknowledgments section in which he thanked Cristina.