

## I. INTRODUCTION

On the fifth day they did in fact reach the mountain; its name was Theches. Now as soon as the vanguard got to the top of the mountain, a great shout went up. [22] And when Xenophon and the rearguard heard it, they imagined that other enemies were attacking in front; for enemies were following behind them from the district that was in flames, and the rearguard had killed some of them and captured others by setting an ambush, and had also taken about twenty wicker shields covered with raw, shaggy ox-hides. [23] But as the shout kept getting louder and nearer, as the successive ranks that came up all began to run at full speed toward the ranks ahead that were one after another joining in the shout, and as the shout kept growing far louder as the number of men grew steadily greater, it became quite clear to Xenophon that here was something of unusual importance; [24] so he mounted a horse, took with him Lycius and the cavalry, and pushed ahead to lend aid; and in a moment they heard the soldiers shouting, 'The Sea! The Sea!' and passing the word along. (An. 4.7.21–4)<sup>1</sup>

Xenophon's slow recognition that the commotion among the Greek soldiers in front of him is caused by their first glimpse of the Black Sea and the realization that they might complete their journey home, after becoming stranded in the middle of a hostile Persian empire, builds up to the cry *Thalatta! Thalatta!* It has echoed through the centuries, inspiring readers, including even those who encountered it as an adapted translation passage in Wilding's *Greek for Beginners*, the standard introduction to Greek language used in English schools in the later twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> Xenophon's deceptively simple narrative style has lent itself well to classroom use, but, while those who encountered him as one of the first Greek authors they read have sometimes underestimated the subtleties of his style and analysis, more recent scholarship has shown the sophistication of both.

The next chapter of this survey sets out why Xenophon is an important figure, central to our understanding of the political, social, and intellectual history of classical Athens and of interactions between Greeks and the world beyond it. It traces what we know of his life and sets it in historical context, before considering how and when he came to write his works, and what is special and distinctive about them, and showing how his works transcend boundaries of genre.

<sup>1</sup> Translation adapted from Brownson 1922.

<sup>2</sup> Wilding 1957: 57; Rood 2004b.

The remaining chapters treat Xenophon's thought and writing as a systematic whole, moving from the small scale of the household to the large scale of military campaign and empire. This structure reflects the importance of spatiality in his thought.<sup>3</sup> Xenophon's Socrates argued that leadership was the same skill applied to different domains (*Mem.* 3.4.6), and this book is organized along that principle. Starting with Xenophon's thought on life within the household and how it should be organized (Chapter III), subsequent chapters look at the relationship between citizen and city and its expression as a *politeia* (Chapter IV), Xenophon's thought on the military life, the acquisition of military skills, and their deployment on campaign (Chapter V), and his views on leadership and imperial power, the art of ruling larger entities (Chapter VI). The Conclusion moves through time as well as space, taking a necessarily selective look at Xenophon's legacy from antiquity to the present.

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I have taken some translations from Martin Hammond's *Memories of Socrates* (Hammond and Atack 2023) and from the Loeb editions. Other translations are my own, though often referring to the Loeb editions as a starting point.

<sup>3</sup> Rood 2012b.