Histos Supplement 12 (2021) 47–61

3

XENOPHON'S *HELLENIKA* ON THE GREEKS' CONTINUOUS WARFARE*

Edith Foster

I

In this paper, I consider the role and formation of some sample campaign and battle narratives in Xenophon's *Hellenika* and pursue the idea that there is a conflict, at least in spirit, between Xenophon's focus on warfare and his authorial statements about the results of warfare. For while Xenophon gives campaign and battle narration more space than either Herodotus or Thucydides,[1] he emphasises that the warfare he is recording leads to no definitive result for anyone. How should we understand this heavy focus on fruitless warfare?

To frame the question in another way: the fact that Xenophon writes many campaign and battle narratives in *Hellenika* seems deceptively 'natural' from our point of view. First, Xenophon was the most militarily experienced of the three founding historians, and wrote not only not only *Hellenika*, but also *Anabasis*, *Cyropaedia*, and military manuals.[2] Second, there's the common sense idea that in *Hellenika*, Xenophon is telling the story of wars, so that he will write up many campaigns and battles in order to tell the story. Finally, there's Xenophon's emphasis on leadership: where are his generals to shine, if not in numerous campaign and battle stories?

In fact, however, the narrative does not follow the events in a 'natural' way: Xenophon omits to tell us about many events of the nearly five decades of warfare he relates, and briefly summarises many others. Like Thucydides' *History*, Xenophon's *Hellenika* is carefully selective, and like Thucydides, Xenophon might have written up more or fewer battle descriptions. The number, length, and character of campaign and battle stories in *Hellenika* thus arises from Xenophon's own decisions. Again, if we want to argue that Xenophon relates so many campaigns and battles mainly in order to feature particular leaders or cities who were exemplary in a good or bad way, we

* The author would like to thank the Institute for Advanced Studies at the University of Strasbourg for its support during the formulation of this paper. Unless otherwise specified, the translations in this paper are my own.

[1] On the amount and density of battle narration in *Hellenica*, see especially Tuplin (1986) 37. For the scholarship that considers the question of the genre of *Hellenika* (i.e., whether it is or is not, historiography), see Riedinger (1991); Nicolai (2006) 695–8; Marincola (2017).

[2] On the latter, cf. Dillery (2017).

may seem to have the same problem as for the battle narratives. How can military leaders be important if the wars themselves are fruitless? In light of these questions, perhaps we can rethink the proportions of *Hellenika* and suggest a reason why *Hellenika* features warfare in the way that it does.

The following paper will largely examine warfare in Book 4, but will refer to the rest of *Hellenika* as much as possible. It will proceed from large to small, considering the overall campaigns and then focusing on particular features of the battle stories. Over the course of this paper, I will sometimes ask how Xenophon compares to Thucydides, whose campaign narratives sometimes feature several successive fights leading to a decisive battle: most famous of all of these series are the three, final, ever more desperate naval battles at Syracuse, leading to Athens' final defeat at sea.[3]

It is perhaps useful to note that this Thucydidean framework has a well-established, in fact traditional, psychological basis: the expectation (or knowledge) that the outcome of the decisive, concluding battle of a campaign will have consequences that determine the further course of the war, or even end the war, draws us through the campaign narratives to their end. The pattern is familiar from Homer's *Iliad*, where all duels climax in the duel between Achilles and Hector in Book 22, at which the fate of Troy is also decided, and from Herodotus, whose main Persian campaign story culminates in the Battle of Plataea in Book 9, which sees the complete destruction of the Persian land forces. Homer and Herodotus must remain in the background in this paper, but it is useful to note the pervasiveness of this pattern of stacking up contests toward a climax, which Xenophon will exploit in his own way.

Admittedly, in Homer, Herodotus, and Thucydides, as in Xenophon, the resolution offered by the outcome of even a decisive victory is temporary. Life goes on, the fighting goes on. But Thucydides lays emphasis on the climax created by an important defeat or victory, and some of his most stirring authorial remarks, for instance where he comments on Athens' total defeat in Sicily, pertain to the outcomes of campaigns.[4]

By contrast, in *Hellenika*, Xenophon lays special emphasis on the futility of expecting that significant changes could result from the outcome of a series of battles. In particular, he frames the two main narratives of the *Hellenika*, namely the stories of the defeat of Athens and then Sparta, with remarks that distance him from expectations that military victory could bring order to human affairs. Thus, in respect to the defeat of Athens, Xenophon describes

[3] Foster (2017) outlines this form of Thucydidean campaign narrative.

[4] Thuc. 7.87.5–6 'It seems to me to be the greatest deed of this war and of the Hellenic wars that we know about from report, both most brilliant for the victors and most disastrous for the defeated. For they were entirely defeated in every way, and suffered nothing less than the total destruction of their forces, infantry and navy and everything else, and few from many returned home'. Similar Thucydidean comments on defeat are not uncommon: cf., e.g., 3.113.6, 98.4; 4.40.1, 48.5; 7.30.3; 8.96.2–3.

the enthusiasm of those who threw down Athens' walls, reporting that this was because of their belief that the fall of Athens' walls would be the 'beginning of peace for Greece' (2.2.23).[5] The irony, from Xenophon's point of view, is evident, since the rest of *Hellenika* is one long tale of the ensuing inter-Greek warfare.

Likewise, the famous final paragraphs of *Hellenika* (7.5.26–7) show that the wars of Sparta and the Greeks resulted in nothing but further disorder, despite high expectations that the Battle of Mantinea would bring closure:

> Once these things had taken place [i.e., once the battle was over], the opposite of what *all men believed* would happen had occurred. For since nearly *all of Greece* had come together and [the peoples had] taken up positions against each other, there was *no one who did not suppose* that if a battle were fought, those who proved victorious would rule and those who were defeated would be their subjects; but the god so ordered it that both parties set up a trophy as though victorious and neither tried to hinder those who set them up, that both gave back the dead under a truce as though victorious, and both received back their dead under a truce as though defeated, and that while each party claimed to have been victorious, neither was seen to have anything more than before the battle in respect to land, city, or empire; but rather there was even more disorder and confusion in Greece after the battle than before.
>
> I have written to this point; subsequent events will perhaps be the concern of another.

It has been perhaps less noticed that Xenophon's closing remarks say quite a lot about what he thought of his readers. In his view, because everyone important had gathered to fight, his contemporaries (all of them, as he emphasises) expected a decisive outcome at Mantinea. In other words, his contemporaries thought that if large and important cities confronted each other in battle, some resolution would result.

However, their expectation was confounded at Mantinea, a battle at which all the Greek cities had gathered to fight, but which resulted, in Xenophon's view, in no significant gain or loss on any side, but rather only in the continuation of the same confusion and disorder as before. Of course, Xenophon had also written up the Battle of Mantinea so that it fizzles out as soon as Epaminondas dies (cf. 7.5.24–5), and he thus denies every reader, contemporary or not, the sense of a climactic ending. He had no intention, apparently, of satisfying the desire for closure to which Thucydides and Herodotus sometimes appealed. Instead, he seems determined to illustrate

[5] 2.2.23 *νομίζοντες ἐκείνην τὴν ἡμέραν τῇ Ἑλλάδι ἄρχειν τῆς ἐλευθερίας*. For the argument on whether this thought is recorded for the Peloponnesians themselves, their allies, or Athenian refugees, see Kapellos (2011).

that warfare cannot bring the results his contemporaries expected and desired.[6]

This determination resulted in an important effort to represent battle and warfare: Tuplin counted 153 significant battle narratives in Xenophon's representation of the continuous and futile warring of the Greeks.[7] As mentioned above, what follows will analyse Xenophon's description of the Spartans' glory period in Book 4. §2 shows that Xenophon leads the story of successive Spartan victories in the Corinthian War to an anti-climax, although differently than at Mantinea.[8] In §3 I will suggest that Xenophon's descriptions of the battles of the Corinthian War showcase the self-defeating violence of Sparta's decisive victories. I will conclude with the argument that Xenophon shows the Spartans adopting warfare as their main means of regulating Greece, and that his descriptions of Sparta's wars and their outcomes demonstrate that this policy fails. It is not just that the Spartans themselves sometimes make mistakes and sometimes have bad leaders, although all this happens, but that their warfare causes both deep hatreds and frequent imitative competition. The many imitators, all of whom adopt the Spartan model of trying to dominate through warfare, eventually exhaust the Spartans themselves in a series of fruitless wars, which Xenophon writes up partly in order to show that no expectation of future order could be attached to any of this fighting.

II

The battles of Book 4 are set up by what happens in Book 3, which I will review very briefly.

In Book 3 of *Hellenika*, successive Spartan commanders attack Asia Minor. Spartan land campaigning in Asia Minor will have to be abandoned early in Book 4 and can never be resumed. Moreover, its overall results are not good news: first, Persian enmity, particularly that of Sparta's formerly loyal and energetic ally, the satrap Pharnabazus, and second, a war in Greece, since the campaigns of the Spartan king Agesilaus cause the satrap Tithraustes to bribe powerful individuals in Thebes, Corinth, and Argos to make war on Sparta. The final phase of the book begins when the Thebans persuade Athens to join this alliance against Sparta and contrive to begin a war.

This war provokes Sparta's second Greek campaign of Book 3. In their previous campaign, the Spartans had decided to 'teach Elis prudence' (3.2.23

[6] To these passages of frustrated achievement at the beginning and end of *Hellenika* can be added not only the series of battles from Book 4 discussed in this paper, but also Xenophon's relation of Agesilaus' abortive campaign to conquer Persia, which is abandoned at the moment when Agesilaus expected his greatest successes and is never resumed.

[7] See above, n. 1; for comparison, we may note that Paul (1989) 308 counted 86 significant battle narratives for Thucydides.

[8] See below, n. 22.

σωφρονίσαι αὐτούς); Xenophon's detailed catalogue of Spartan complaints against Elis shows nothing that could not have been arbitrated (3.2.21–2), particularly by a larger city against a smaller one,[9] but the Spartans nevertheless do to Elis what they will in Books 6 and 7 fight to the death to prevent being done to themselves, namely, they waste Elian land, 'liberate' the Elians' subject allies, and depart after implanting civil strife in the Elians' devastated territory (3.2.24–30). They undertake their second campaign when the Theban plans to begin a war became apparent. The Spartans happily (3.5.5), Xenophon says, decide to attack the Thebans, wanting to put a stop to their hubris' (3.5.5 *παῦσαι τῆς εἰς αὐτοὺς ὕβρεως*).[10] In respect to specific motivations for the Theban campaign he provides a second catalogue of Spartan complaints, which pertains mostly to the Thebans not obeying Spartan commands to follow them to war; [11] the catalogue shows how deeply the Spartan sense of what was due to their leadership conflicted with their stated principle of 'Greek freedom'.

Of course, Book 3 is more complex than I have recounted here. But the main story of Book 3 shows, in my view, that the Spartans have managed to alienate both the Greeks and the Persians through their decisions to campaign, whereas after the Peloponnesian War both the Greeks and the Persians had been their allies. Xenophon is careful to provide causes for Spartan campaigns, and thus to show that the campaigns were undertaken because of decisions and not through necessity; the Spartans had aggressive aims of 'teaching prudence', punishing Theban hubris, or 'liberating' cities, and Agesilaus, individually, but surely with Spartan acquiescence, aimed to conquer Persia.

Book 4, which is the longest book of *Hellenika*, is characterised by a series of big battle narratives, bracketed by accounts of Persian and Aegean affairs. The beginning of Book 4 shows how Agesilaus twice tried and twice failed to

[9] 3.2.21: '… the Lacedaemonians … had long been angry with the Eleans, both because the latter had concluded an alliance with the Athenians, Argives, and Mantineans, and because, alleging that judgment had been rendered against the Lacedaemonians, they had debarred them from both the horse-races and the athletic contests; and this alone did not suffice them, but furthermore, after Lichas had made over his chariot to the Thebans and they were proclaimed victorious, when Lichas came in to put the garland upon his charioteer, they had scourged him, an old man, and driven him out' (Carleton Brownson, trans.).

[10] Xenophon also specifies that the Spartans chose to campaign both against Elis and against Thebes in full consciousness of their simultaneous wars in Asia (3.2.21, 5.5).

[11] 3.5.5: 'the [Spartans] had long been angry with the [Thebans] both on account of their claiming Apollo's tenth at Decelea and their refusing to follow them against Piraeus. Furthermore, they charged them with persuading the Corinthians likewise not to join in that campaign. Again, they recalled that they had refused to permit Agesilaus to sacrifice at Aulis and had cast from the altar the victims already offered, and that they also would not join Agesilaus for the campaign in Asia. They also reasoned that it was a favourable time to lead forth an army against the Thebans and put a stop to their insolent behaviour toward them …' (Carleton Brownson, trans.).

create alliances for himself in Asia Minor.[12] The end of Book 4 shows the resulting Aegean wars between Sparta and the Persians, who were now allied with Athens.

4.2–7 spotlights fighting on land, in Greece. Three formal battle accounts—the stories of the battles of Nemea, Coronea, and Lechaeum, with smaller battle stories interspersed—lead to an anti-climax: the story of the Spartan 'disaster' at Lechaeum. It seems best to review the course of these battles, and after that to discuss their characteristics in more detail.

The story of the Battle of Nemea is the first big battle narrative of Sparta's war against the Thebans and their allies, a war which we call the 'Corinthian War'. It begins with the Spartans calling a levy and choosing Aristodemus to lead (4.2.9). At the same time, Sparta's opponents (that is, Thebes, Corinth, Argos, and Athens, along with smaller cities) assemble and hold a conference in Corinth, at which they vote to take the war to Laconia, since they think that the Spartans, alone and without their allies, will not be strong. However, they never march to Laconia, since the Spartans arrive at Sikyon, near Corinth, while they are still talking.

Once he has brought the combatants to the same area, Xenophon provides a formal catalogue of the cities fighting on each side. This catalogue shows that the Thebans and their allies have about 10,000 more hoplites than the Spartans and their allies, who have about 13,500 hoplites (4.2.16–17).

Next, Xenophon describes the Theban decisions that will account for the defeat of this more numerous force.[13] His description displays the Thebans as poor leaders who are on the one hand reluctant to face the Spartans and on the other willing to ignore an agreement negotiated with their allies to assemble the phalanx sixteen men deep. Instead, they adopt a deeper formation with a shorter front. This formation forces the Athenians, who are facing the Spartans, to move closer to the Thebans and to take up a position that they know is dangerously vulnerable to outflanking (4.2.18). The Spartans take advantage of this situation, leading their forces to a position where they can surround the Athenians.

Xenophon's description of the actual fighting is brief and the main idea is clear: after taking their advantageous position, the Spartans win alone. All of Sparta's allies are defeated, but the Spartans themselves defeat the Athenians, whom they surround and kill in large numbers (4.2.21). In the next sentence, at the climax of the battle narrative, the intact Spartan force successively meets and defeats the Argives, Corinthians, and Thebans, as each party returns to the battlefield from the pursuit of whichever Spartan ally they had beaten (4.2.22). At the end of the story, the Spartans set up a

[12] His alliance with Otys, the king of the Paphlagonians, is scuttled when one of Agesilaus' officers insults the king (4.1.20–8), and his hoped-for renewal of an alliance with the satrap Pharnabazus was either illusory from the start or very short-lived (cf. 4.1.37, 3.11–12, and 8.1).

[13] Cf. Riedinger (1991) 216–17 on the basic structure of Xenophon's battle narratives.

trophy, and the Thebans and their allies, denied entrance into Corinth, go back to their camp. The battle narrative thus repudiates the allied view that the Spartans are strong because of their allies.

The incredible extent of the victory at Nemea, and the fact that only eight Spartans died (4.3.1), is announced to Agesilaus, who is proceeding down the north-eastern coast of Greece on his way back from campaigning in Asia Minor.[14] Two shorter battle narratives follow. In the first, Agesilaus defeats the famed Thessalian cavalry by correcting a tactical deficiency of his own forces (4.3.6–7).[15] In the second, the satrap Pharnabazus defeats the heavily outnumbered Spartan admiral Peisander in a sea battle at Knidos. Agesilaus, who has claimed centre stage in the narrative, is at first distraught, but then successfully deceives his own forces about the outcome of the battle at Knidos. They come to believe that Peisander died, but was victorious (4.3.14), and Agesilaus can thus claim the benefit of three victories, namely high troop morale.

These stories lead to the account of the battle at Coronea, in northern Boeotia, which Xenophon says was 'like no other of our time' (4.3.16), probably referring to the ferocity of the fighting. This battle narrative again begins with a catalogue, although Xenophon provides no numbers. At Coronea, the Theban and Argive hoplites and cavalry are perhaps equal in number to Agesilaus' forces, which he has collected from Asia Minor and northern Greece (cf. *Ages.* 2.7–8). However, Agesilaus outnumbers his opponents in light-armed troops (4.3.15).

Not that light-armed troops have any role in Xenophon's account of the battle, which again describes the actions of hoplites only. The story of the fighting is short and direct, just a few sentences, as it was also for the Nemea narrative. However, Theban actions here contrast with their manoeuvring at Nemea, since at Coronea the Thebans make a running attack on the Spartans, similar to that which the Athenians had used against the Persians at Marathon. But at the last minute a Spartan officer, Dercylidas, dashes out in front of the Spartan phalanx with his force of mercenaries and leads the Spartans to rout the Theban advance. This ends the first phase of the battle: no one is left for the Spartans to fight, since the Thebans' Argive allies had fled the field at the outset.

However, a second phase of fighting begins when the Thebans try to cross Agesilaus' baggage train to reconnect with Argives; Agesilaus wheels his

[14] Agesilaus' response to this news in *Hellenika*, where he wishes it advertised to the allies remaining in Asia Minor in order to encourage their zeal for Sparta's cause (4.3.2), contrasts with his response to this news in the *Agesilaus*, where he mourns 'that [Greek] men had fallen who might have fought against the barbarians instead' (*Ages.* 7.5).

[15] Agesilaus' solution is, generally speaking, to pursue the cavalry aggressively, a tactic the horsemen are not expecting. His initiative contrasts with the mechanical responses of the unnamed polemarch who led his men into the 'disaster' at Lechaeum (on which, see below).

phalanx around and attacks the Thebans head on, defeating them in what Xenophon emphasises was a very fierce fight. If Dercylidas' initial victory arose from a tactical idea to send fresh runners against the Thebans (who had perhaps started running from too far away), Xenophon suggests that victory in the second stage of the battle was due purely to valour (4.3.19).

Our first two battles have therefore found their high points in the victory of Spartan hoplite ἀρετή. After this battle, Xenophon relates that light-armed troops in neighbouring Locris killed 18 Spartiates, and nearly killed many more, in an evening and night attack (4.3.22–3).[16]

This seems to be but a slight setback. Right now, everything seems to be going very well for the Spartans, who are heading into their third successive victory, at the Battle of Lechaeum,[17] the emotional climax of this series of Spartan victories and by far the most violent, strange, and deadly of the battles.

There is no catalogue. Instead, the story begins with the impious murders, at altars inside Corinth, of Corinthian oligarchs by Corinthian democrats who want to prevent Corinth from abandoning Thebes and rejoining the Spartan alliance (4.4.1–6). It continues as two younger oligarchs, determined to retake their city, admit a division of Spartans, Sikyonians, and Corinthian exiles into the long walls. These invaders fortify themselves behind their own hastily constructed trench and wall and wait through the night for help to arrive (4.4.7–9).

As it turns out, the first help that comes is for the other side, namely Argives who have arrived to help the Corinthian democrats. These Argives advance against the Peloponnesian invaders and defeat the Sikyonians, whom they chase to the sea; at the same time, however, the Corinthian exiles fighting for the Spartans are victorious on their side and head toward the city. Now the Spartans go to help the fleeing Sikyonians and total confusion ensues in a situation where too many different parties are changing direction in the constricted space between the walls. In particular, the Spartans meet and attack the Argives as they are returning from their pursuit of the Sikyonians. Badly harmed, the Argives head for the city, but meet the Corinthian exiles and are hopelessly trapped between enemy forces. A lengthy authorial comment (see below, p. 59) describes the many forms of death the Argives now endure.

After this third victory, the Spartans tear down a section of Corinth's long walls, and the cities, Xenophon says, no longer send out large campaigns. This is hardly any wonder since the Spartans seem to win every time. But warfare goes on. The Athenian Iphicrates does Sparta's allies considerable damage with his light-armed troops; the allies conceive a panicked fear of

[16] On the light-armed attacks on Spartan hoplites which foreshadow the disaster of Lechaeum, see Foster (2019).

[17] Lechaeum was a harbor inside the long walls that led from Corinth to the sea.

peltasts, much to the Spartans' contempt (4.4.17).[18] As for the Spartans, their successes continue to accumulate: the Athenians rebuild the Corinthian walls, but Agesilaus retakes them, after wasting Argos for good measure.

Now Agesilaus uses a trick to capture the Corinthian stronghold at Peiraeum (4.5.4), and is comfortably watching the distribution and sale of the booty when we first hear of the Spartan disaster, the *pathos*, as Xenophon calls it, near Lechaeum. To anticipate my own argument, this is the anti-climax of the section. While Sparta has been winning very large battles almost without exception, this loss of 250 men will return the situation to the starting point, and except for the accumulating hatreds, of course, it will be as if the three victories we just rehearsed, namely Sparta's victories at Nemea, Coronea, and Lechaeum, never happened. Just as for the Pylos story in Thucydides (4.3–40), then, the loss of a relatively small number of Spartans will change everything: the Thebans, who had been about to seek peace, will abandon that notion (4.5.9), and the Spartans will slink back home across the Peloponnesus, arriving at each city late in the evening and leaving early on the next morning so that the fewest possible observers would see them in their humiliation (4.5.18).

The story of the *pathos* at Lechaeum is longer than any of the preceding battle narratives, and highly literary, since it is charged through with reminiscences of Thermopylae and Pylos. Xenophon creates suspense for the narration of the disaster in advance of relating the events by showing the complete reversal of Agesilaus' mood when he hears that something, the reader does not know what, has gone wrong, by showing that Agesilaus' frantic efforts to help came too late, by reporting that he was concerned for the city (i.e., Sparta), and finally, by reporting, as mentioned, that as a result of this unknown event the Thebans had ceased to ask for peace (4.5.7–9). In addition, and still in advance of his narration of the events, Xenophon shows the response in the Spartan army, much of which was in mourning, except for the relatives of the dead, who glory in the noble deaths of their fathers, sons, or brothers.[19] The reader is compelled to assume that something really major has gone wrong.

From the subsequent story we learn that an unnamed polemarch had been sent on a religious mission, namely to accompany homeward the Spartan Amyclaeans so that they could celebrate the Hyacinthia, a festival that celebrated the Dorian conquest of Laconia. The polemarch had set out from Lechaeum, arrived close to Sikyon, and then split his forces. He headed

[18] On this display of contempt as an adumbration of the ensuing disaster at Lechaeum, see Tuplin (1993) 71.

[19] 4.5.10: *ἅτε δὲ ἀήθους τοῖς Λακεδαιμονίοις γεγενημένης τῆς τοιαύτης συμφορᾶς, πολὺ πένθος ἦν κατὰ τὸ Λακωνικὸν στράτευμα, πλὴν ὅσων ἐτέθνασαν ἐν χώρᾳ ἢ υἱοὶ ἢ πατέρες ἢ ἀδελφοί· οὗτοι δ' ὥσπερ νικηφόροι λαμπροὶ καὶ ἀγαλλόμενοι τῷ οἰκείῳ πάθει περιῆσαν*. For an analysis of this response, see Foster (2019).

back toward Corinth with 600 hoplites, allowing his cavalry to accompany the Amyclaeans onward.

Xenophon specifies that the Spartans did not know about the Athenian hoplites and peltasts in Corinth and had contempt for the Corinthians because of their series of defeats (4.5.12). The Spartans thus felt too safe, as it turned out, since the Athenian generals inside Corinth see their vulnerability, set up their hoplites near Corinth, and attack the Spartan hoplites with their light-armed forces (4.5.13–14). The light-armed Athenians inflict damage on the Spartans immediately upon their attack, and the polemarch sends out the youngest and fastest hoplites in pursuit, but there are immediate deaths, and the Spartans also fall into disorder from running (4.5.15). The next oldest are then ordered in, to no effect except more deaths, and then the Spartan cavalry comes to the rescue, but does not pursue the light-armed attackers aggressively enough to make a difference (4.5.16).[20] Finally, the Spartans are reduced to helplessness, and once they see the Athenian hoplites coming to take advantage of their disorder, they flee. 250 are lost (4.5.17). Agesilaus picks up the rest and makes his forced march back to Sparta (4.5.18).

Afterward, the war continues unabated. Iphicrates and his Athenian peltasts retake some of the Corinthian forts, but the Spartans keep Lechaeum and generally harass Corinth from the sea. Moreover, in the following two sections (4.6–7), the Spartans waste Acarnania and bring it to a forced alliance, and then again waste Argos, doing, as Xenophon says, huge damage (4.7.7). These victories are surely all the more reason to see this single defeat at Lechaeum in perspective. In another account, the *pathos* might have been just an incident.[21] But Xenophon has insisted on its importance. For him, it was a turning point which exposed Spartan vulnerability and allowed the Thebans to hope again.

III

Our sample set of campaign and battle narratives has shown that Xenophon, like Herodotus and Thucydides, uses successive battle accounts to build to a narrative climax.[22] In Book 4, however, the climactic Battle of Lechaeum results in the anti-climactic 'disaster' at Lechaeum, because of which Sparta's series of victories ends without producing positive political results. The fact

[20] This story, in which the unnamed polemarch is ineffective, has sometimes been considered to belong to *Hellenika*'s series of stories in which bad commanders cause the deaths of groups of Spartans; cf. Hau (2015) 227, who cites relevant literature, with Foster (2019).

[21] Cf., e.g., the destruction of 200 Greek guards by light-armed attackers in Bithynian Thrace, which Xenophon himself depicted at 3.5.18–20, without making further comments on any ensuing consequences.

[22] The successive invasions of Laconia in Books 6 and 7, leading to the anti-climactic Battle of Mantinea, form another such series.

that Spartan losses in the 'disaster' are small compared to what they inflict on others underscores the quite shocking vulnerability of any outcomes Sparta might achieve in the big massed battles that were thought to be so important: one needed only to kill (or capture, as at Sphacteria) a few hundred Spartan hoplites to annul the effect of Sparta's victories. Xenophon's presentation of the 'disaster' therefore exposed the weakness of expectations that such victories could create order in Greece. Does an analysis of the battle narratives help to support this contention?

We can make some initial observations about our battle narratives. First, none of our battles featured exhortations, which are, however, fairly rare in *Hellenika*.[23] Second, none of our main battles featured tricks, which are, by contrast, a very regular part of Xenophontic battle narratives.[24] Agesilaus' trick at the Corinthian fort of Peiraeum is the only deception of enemies in our section.[25] Consistent with this, the planning of Spartan generals is not reported for any of the three main battles. Their intelligence is mostly reflected in reports of their initial actions, such as encircling the Athenians at Nemea or constructing a barricade at Lechaeum. At Coronea, Dercylidas leads a running counter-attack, and Agesilaus gives a passionate command to attack the Thebans head-on. However, their thoughts, planning, and intentions for these actions are not reported. Xenophon therefore reserves the representation of thoughtful planning for the anti-climax and the enemy, since for the battles we have discussed here, only Iphicrates and Callias, the Athenian generals who cause the Spartan 'disaster', are shown to assess a battle situation and make a plan according to their perception.[26] The narratives of the three big battles at Nemea, Coronea, and Lechaeum therefore display no exhortations, reported thought, or tricks. Their form is stripped down to the physical competition between the Spartans and their Greek enemies.

Perhaps the aim of this type of battle narrative is to allow Spartan valour, and Agesilaus' valour, to shine all the brighter. And in fact, the victory narratives feature no reversals, such as are common in Thucydidean battle narratives. In Thucydides, the battle hangs in the balance, but then the point of reversal comes, and the defeated lose cohesion and must flee, as for example at the final battle in the Great Harbour of Syracuse (7.69–71). Until the turning point, however, anything can happen.

[23] The two exhortations in *Hellenika* are at 2.4.13–17 (Thrasybulus), and 7.1.30 (Archidamus). For the contrast between *Hellenika* and *Anabasis* in this and many other regards, see Marincola (2017).

[24] Cf. Riedinger (1991) 230–4.

[25] Unless we should also count the passage where Agesilaus lies to his own side about the outcome at Knidos.

[26] The one exception to this is the passage where Agesilaus recognises and fixes his cavalry problem in Thessaly (4.2.10–14).

Our Xenophontic descriptions of Sparta's victories built no such suspense. At Nemea, the Spartans carry all opponents before them: they defeat the Athenians, then the Argives, then the Corinthians, then the Boeotians. At Coronea, they defeat the Thebans twice. At Lechaeum, they attack the Argives, and, once the Argives are completely confused, slaughter them. The victory stories are more impressive than suspenseful. Devices to create suspense, such as warnings, tragic changes of mood, the introduction of an Athenian plan that might or might not work, and the final tragic reversal as the Spartans flee, are, like reported thought, all reserved for the story of the 'disaster'. Xenophon thus leads his Spartans and his reader onward through a succession of secure successes until they reach this anti-climax or reversal of their fortunes.

An analysis of Xenophon's style can help us better understand the character of these stories of direct competition, in which the Spartans are until their catastrophe so dominantly successful. How does Xenophon describe the fighting? In our search for the answer to this question we miss Thucydidean *enargeia*, that is, his depiction in detail of some events of combat. Xenophon's descriptions of fighting are much shorter.

To compensate, Xenophon creates clear themes. The chief feature of the victory stories seems to be Spartan killing of Greek enemies, which is rendered distinct through Xenophon's word choices and stylistic decisions, such as the use of parataxis, asyndeton, and unvaried repetition.

To review our battles one last time, Xenophon's few sentences describing Spartan actions at Nemea emphasise that they 'killed many Athenians', that other luckier Athenians 'were not killed' (4.2.21), that 'they killed many [Argives]', further caught up with the Corinthians and then with the Thebans and 'killed many of these' (4.2.22).[27] The repetition of the words 'killed many of' describes the fighting. Xenophon otherwise describes only how the Spartans get access to each successive party, depicting in detail the moment when they let the Argives run past and then attack their unprotected flank. Dercylidas' subsequent announcement to Agesilaus that only eight Spartans died enriches the theme of allied deaths, emphasising that the Spartans did not suffer the fate they inflicted on their fellow Greeks.[28]

Likewise, at Coronea, once Agesilaus has commanded the frontal attack that begins the second stage of the battle, the fighting turns deadly. Xenophon uses epic asyndeton to emphasise the violence of the encounter

[27] 4.2.21–2: *αὐτοὶ δὲ οἱ Λακεδαιμόνιοι ὅσον τε κατέσχον τῶν Ἀθηναίων ἐκράτησαν, καὶ κυκλωσάμενοι τῷ ὑπερέχοντι* ***πολλοὺς ἀπέκτειναν αὐτῶν***, *καὶ ἅτε δὴ ἀπαθεῖς ὄντες, συντεταγμένοι ἐπορεύοντο· καὶ τὰς μὲν τέτταρας φυλὰς τῶν Ἀθηναίων πρὶν ἐκ τῆς διώξεως ἐπαναχωρῆσαι παρῆλθον, ὥστε* ***οὐκ ἀπέθανον αὐτῶν*** *… ὡς δὲ τοῦτ' ἐγένετο, παραθέοντας δὴ παίοντες εἰς τὰ γυμνὰ* ***πολλοὺς ἀπέκτειναν αὐτῶν***. *ἐπελάβοντο δὲ καὶ Κορινθίων ἀναχωρούντων. ἔτι δ' ἐπέτυχον οἱ Λακεδαιμόνιοι καὶ τῶν Θηβαίων τισὶν ἀναχωροῦσιν ἐκ τῆς διώξεως, καὶ* ***ἀπέκτειναν συχνοὺς αὐτῶν***.

[28] See especially Tuplin (1993) 64.

(4.3.19): 'and once they met, they were shoving shields, fighting, killing, being killed. Finally, some of the Thebans broke through toward Helicon, but many were killed retreating'.[29] Once again, we notice that the focus on killing mostly stands in for a description of the fighting.[30]

Most conspicuous is of course the emphasis on the Spartan slayings of helpless enemies at Lechaeum. The Spartans first attack the Argives as they are charging back from their pursuit of the defeated Sikyonians (4.4.11–12):

> And those upon the [Argives'] extreme right, since they were struck on their unprotected sides by the Lacedaemonians, were killed, but those who had collected in a large crowd near the wall were retreating toward the city. But when they happened upon the Corinthian exiles and recognised that they were enemies, they turned back again. And then some of them were destroyed when they climbed up the steps and jumped off the walls, others perished from being shoved and struck around the steps, and still others suffocated from being trampled. [12] The Lacedaemonians, for their part, were at no loss for people to kill; for at that time the god gave to them a deed such as they could never have prayed for. For that a mass of enemies was entrusted to them who were in fear, panic-stricken, exposing their vulnerabilities, in no way turning to fight, but rather all assisting their own destruction in every way—how could anyone not consider this something divine? At that time, certainly, so many fell in a short time as people are accustomed to see heaps of grain, wood, or stones; at that time they were seeing heaps of corpses. The Boeotian guards in the port also died, some on the walls, and others after they had climbed up onto the roofs of the ship sheds.

The passage describes the Spartans as the deadly agents of the gods, who are possibly punishing the impious murderers of the Corinthian oligarchs.[31] At the same time, Xenophon's vivid description places the Spartans in a dubious tradition.[32] His emphasis on the numbers and anonymity of the helpless victims, attained through the simile comparing their corpses to piles of grain, wood, or stones, as if the Spartans were Sophocles' mad Ajax among the helpless herds, or the murderous post-Patroclus Achilles among the hapless Trojans, leaves historiography behind for epic and tragic emphases. The Spartans may be instruments of the gods, but they are also savage killers; in all of these battles, in fact, the Spartans are killing other

[29] 4.3.19: *καὶ συμβαλόντες τὰς ἀσπίδας ἐωθοῦντο, ἐμάχοντο, ἀπέκτεινον, ἀπέθνῃσκον. τέλος δὲ τῶν Θηβαίων οἱ μὲν διαπίπτουσι πρὸς τὸν Ἑλικῶνα, πολλοὶ δ' ἀποχωροῦντες ἀπέθανον.*

[30] Xenophon further sharpens the theme of Greek death at Spartan hands through a contrasting silence: he mentions no Spartan casualties at all for Coronea and Lechaeum, and only the famous eight for Nemea.

[31] Cf. 5.4.1

[32] *Contra*, Riedinger (1991) 252.

Greeks in droves. In Xenophon the consequences of divine jealousy quickly follow, since the *pathos*, in which the Spartans are killed as they perform a religious duty, is the next main story of *Hellenika*.

Moreover, we can legitimately ask whether attacking opponents on their unprotected flanks, wasting the fields of less powerful adversaries, or boasting about the small numbers of Spartan as opposed to allied Greek losses, had reflected Spartan *ἀρετή* in the first place: Xenophon's portrait of Spartan warfare seems as ambiguous as his narrative techniques are clear.

To sum up: The plot of this section of *Hellenika* shows that the Spartans win a succession of large and small battles. The sea battle at Knidos is the only large-scale Spartan defeat of this section, and Agesilaus' lies protect the Spartans from the consequences of this defeat, at least in the short term. The Spartans also waste a lot of land and kill many Greeks, to almost no effect. After all of this fighting and all of these Spartan successes, the Spartans opt for peace close to the beginning of Book 5. Xenophon argues that this is primarily because they are tired of Greek troubles, particularly around Corinth itself, the site of the very victories Xenophon so vividly depicted in Book 4 (5.1.29).[33] He then shows that the Spartans attacked Mantinea as soon as they were satisfied with the peace agreement, for reasons even weaker than those indicated by their complaints with Elis and Thebes (5.1.36–2.1). In other words, the Spartans are among the peoples who trust in military victories to ensure their dominance: in fact, they are the leaders in this, and set an example that all others follow. Their long slide into deterioration in Books 6 and 7, as they are overwhelmed by the response to and imitation of their own bellicosity, ends with the indecisive battle of Mantinea, where the Spartans are barely mentioned, and with a new power which similarly hopes, through warfare, to create an order pleasing to itself. But Xenophon probably thought that the fighting he had already depicted was sufficient to show that this could not work: his focus on fruitless warfare had demonstrated in detail Sparta's belief, and the Greeks' belief, that military victories could secure their power.

[33] 5.1.29: *οἱ δ' αὖ Λακεδαιμόνιοι, φρουροῦντες μόρᾳ μὲν ἐν Λεχαίῳ, μόρᾳ δ' ἐν Ὀρχομενῷ, φυλάττοντες δὲ τὰς πόλεις, αἷς μὲν ἐπίστευον, μὴ ἀπόλοιντο, αἷς δὲ ἠπίστουν, μὴ ἀποσταῖεν, πράγματα δ' ἔχοντες καὶ παρέχοντες περὶ τὴν Κόρινθον, χαλεπῶς ἔφερον τῷ πολέμῳ.*

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Christesen, P. (2017) 'Xenophon's Views on Sparta', in Flower (2017) 376–99.

Dillery, J. (2017) 'Xenophon: The Small Works', in Flower (2017) 195–219.

Flower, M. A., ed. (2017) *The Cambridge Companion to Xenophon* (Cambridge).

Foster, E. (2017) 'Campaign and Battle Narratives in Thucydides', in R. Balot, S. Forsdyke, and E. Foster, edd., *The Oxford Handbook of Thucydides* (New York and Oxford) 301–17.

—— (2019) 'Minor Infantry Defeats and Spartan Deaths in Xenophon's *Hellenica*', in A. Kapellos, ed., *Xenophon and Violence* (Berlin) 83–102.

Hau, L. (2015) *Moral History from Herodotus to Diodorus* (Edinburgh).

Kapellos, A. (2011) 'Xenophon *Hell.* 2.2.23', *PdP* 66: 132–8.

Marincola, J. (2017) 'Xenophon's *Anabasis* and *Hellenika*', in Flower (2017) 103–18.

Nicolai, R. (2006) 'Thucydides Continued', in A. Rengakos and A. Tsakmakis, edd., *Brill's Companion to Thucydides* (Leiden and Boston) 693–719.

Paul, G. M. (1989) 'Two Battles in Thucydides', *EMC/CV* 31: 307–12.

Riedinger, J.-C. (1991) *Étude sur les Helléniques: Xénophon et l'histoire* (Paris)

Romilly, J. de (2012) *The Mind of Thucydides* (Ithaca and London); translation by E. T. Rawlings of *Histoire et raison chez Thucydide* (Paris, 1956).

Rood, T. (2004) 'Xenophon and Diodorus: Continuing Thucydides', in C. J. Tuplin, ed., *Xenophon and His World: Papers from a Conference held in Liverpool in July 1999* (Stuttgart) 341–96.

—— (2017) 'Xenophon's Narrative Style', in Flower (2017) 263–78.

Tuplin, C. J. (1986) 'Military Engagements in Xenophon's *Hellenica*', in I. S. Moxon, J. D. Smart, and A. J. Woodman, edd., *Past Perspectives: Studies in Greek and Roman Historical Writing* (Cambridge) 37–66.

—— (1993) *The Failings of Empire: A Reading of Xenophon* Hellenica *2.3.11–7.5.27* (Stuttgart).

Underhill, G. E. (1900) *A Commentary with Introduction and Appendix on the* Hellenica *of Xenophon* (Oxford).