

THE DEATH OF CYRUS THE YOUNGER

The use made of Ctesias' *Persica* in Xenophon's *Anabasis* has been the subject of much discussion.¹ The death of Cyrus is one episode for which the sources are relatively good, and a comparison of them can cast light upon Xenophon's method of writing and his intentions.

Plutarch, in his *Artaxerxes*, rewrites Ctesias' version as follows:

Κύρος . . . ἤλαυνεν εἰς αὐτὸν βασιλέα τὸν ἵππον, καὶ αὐτὸς εἰς ἐκείνον, ἀμφοτέροι σιωπῇ. . . . Κύρος δ' ἐπ' αὐτὸν ἐξακοντίσας διὰ τοῦ θώρακος ἔτρωσε τὸ στήθος, ὅσον ἐνδύναμι δύο δακτύλους τὸ ἀκόντιον, πεσεῖν δ' αὐτὸν ὑπὸ τῆς πληγῆς ἀπὸ τοῦ ἵππου. . . . [Κύρος] ἐπαίρομενος δὲ τῇ νίκῃ καὶ μεστὸς ὦν ὀργῆς καὶ θράσους, διεξήλαυνε βοῶν 'Εξίστασθε πενιχροί. τοῦτο δὲ περσιστὶ πολλάκις αὐτοῦ βοῶντος, οἱ μὲν ἐξίσταντο προσκυνούντες, ἀποπίπτει δὲ τῆς κεφαλῆς ἡ τιὰρα τοῦ Κύρου. καὶ παρατρέχων νεανίας Πέρσης ὄνομα Μιθριδάτης ἀκοντίῳ βάλλει τὸν κρόταφον αὐτοῦ παρὰ τὸν ὀφθαλμόν, ἀγνοῶν ὅστις εἴη. . . . εἰς οὖν ἐκείνων [Καύνιων] ἐτόλμησεν ἀγνοῶν ἐξόπισθεν βαλεῖν τὸν Κύρον ἀκοντίῳ. τῆς δὲ περὶ τὴν ἰγνύαν φλεβὸς ἀναρραγείσης, πεσὼν ὁ Κύρος ἕμα παίει πρὸς τινι λίθῳ τὸν τετρωμένον κρόταφον, καὶ ἀποθνήσκει.

Cyrus rode against the King himself, and the King against him, both without a word. . . . But Cyrus threw his spear at the King and wounded him in the chest through the thorax, so that the weapon sank in two fingers deep, and the King fell from his horse with the blow. . . . But [Cyrus] lifted up by his victory, and full of passion and confidence, rode on through his foes, crying out, 'Clear the way, you beggars!' Thus he cried out many times, in Persian, and they cleared the way, and made him their obeisance. But Cyrus' tiara fell from his head, and a young Persian, Mithridates by name, running to his side, struck the side of his forehead beside the eye with his spear, not knowing who he was. . . . Accordingly, one of them [Caunians], not knowing who Cyrus was, ventured to smite him from behind with his spear. The vein at the back of Cyrus' knee was ruptured and he fell, and at the same time struck his wounded temple against a stone, and so died.

(B. Perrin, trans, modified)²

Xenophon writes, in his *Anabasis*:

ἐνθα δὲ Κύρος δείσας μὴ ὀπισθεν γινόμενος [Ἀρταξέρξης] κατακόψῃ τὸ 'Ελληνικὸν ἐλαύνει ἀντίος. . . . ὡς δ' ἡ τροπὴ ἐγένετο, διασπείρονται καὶ οἱ Κύρου ἐξακόσιοι εἰς τὸ διώκειν ὀρμήσαντες, πλὴν πάνυ ὀλίγοι ἀμφ' αὐτὸν κατελείφθησαν, σχεδὸν οἱ ὁμοτράπεζοι καλούμενοι. σὺν τούτοις δὲ ὦν καθορᾷ βασιλέα καὶ τὸ ἀμφ' ἐκείνον στίφος· καὶ εὐθὺς οὐκ ἠνέσχετο, ἀλλ' εἰπὼν Τὸν ἄνδρα ὁρῶ ἵετο ἐπ' αὐτὸν καὶ παίει κατὰ τὸ στέρνον καὶ τιτρώσκει διὰ τοῦ θώρακος, ὥς φησι Κτησίας ὁ ἰατρός, καὶ ἰᾶσθαι αὐτὸς τὸ τραυμά φησι. παύοντα δ' αὐτὸν ἀκοντίζει τις παλτῶ ὑπὸ τὸν ὀφθαλμόν βιαίως· καὶ ἐνταῦθα μαχόμενοι καὶ βασιλεὺς καὶ Κύρος καὶ οἱ ἀμφ' αὐτοὺς ὑπὲρ ἑκατέρου, ὅπόσοι μὲν τῶν ἀμφὶ βασιλέα ἀπέθνησκον Κτησίας λέγει· παρ' ἐκείνῳ γὰρ ἦν· Κύρος δὲ αὐτὸς τε ἀπέθανε καὶ ὁκτῶ οἱ ἄριστοι τῶν περὶ αὐτὸν ἔκειντο ἐπ' αὐτῷ. Ἀρταπάτης δ' ὁ πιστότατος αὐτῶ τῶν σκηπτοῦχων θεράπων λέγεται, ἐπειδὴ πεπτωκότεα εἶδε Κύρον, καταπηδήσας ἀπὸ τοῦ ἵππου περιπεσεῖν αὐτῷ. καὶ οἱ μὲν φασὶ βασιλέα κελεύσαι τινα ἐπισφάζει αὐτὸν Κύρῳ, οἱ δ' εἰ αὐτὸν ἐπισφάξασθαι σπασάμενον τὸν ἀκινάκην· εἶχε γὰρ

¹ See, for example, H. R. Breitenbach, 'Xenophon', *RE* IXA, 2 (Stuttgart, 1967), 1569–2052; J. M. Bigwood, 'The ancient accounts of the battle of Cunaxa', *AJP* 104 (1983), 340–57; F. Jacoby, 'Ctesias', *RE* XI, 2 (Stuttgart, 1922), 2032–73; G. Cawkwell's introduction to R. Warner (trans.), *Xenophon: The Persian Expedition* (London, 1972); and most recently O. Lendle, *Kommentar zu Xenophons Anabasis* (Darmstadt, 1995), 74–5.

² *FGrH* 688 F 20 = Plu. *Art.* 11; B. Perrin (trans.), *Plutarch's Lives* XI (London, 1926), 148–53. All references in this paper to Ctesias are to this passage unless otherwise specified.

χρυσούν· καὶ στρεπτόν δ' ἐφόρει καὶ ψέλια καὶ τὰλλα ὥσπερ οἱ ἄριστοι Περσῶν· ἐτετίμητο γὰρ ὑπὸ Κύρου δι' εὐνοίαν τε καὶ πιστότητα.

Thereupon Cyrus, fearing lest he [Artaxerxes] might get in the rear of the Greek troops and cut them to pieces, charged to meet him; . . . But when they [Artaxerxes' six thousand cavalry] turned to flight, Cyrus' six hundred, setting out in pursuit, became scattered also, and only a very few were left about him, chiefly his so-called table companions. While attended by these only, he caught sight of the King and the compact body around him; and immediately he did not endure it, but saying 'I see the man', rushed upon him and struck him in the breast and wounded him through his breastplate, as Ctesias the physician says, adding also that he himself healed the wound. While Cyrus was delivering his stroke, however, someone hit him a hard blow under the eye with a javelin; and the men fighting there were the King and Cyrus and the attendants who supported each of them. The number that fell on the King's side is stated by Ctesias, who was with him; on the other side, Cyrus himself was killed and eight of the noblest of his attendants fell on him. Of Artapates, the one among Cyrus' chamberlains who was his most faithful follower, it is told that when he saw Cyrus fallen, he leaped down from his horse and threw his arms about him. And one report is that the King ordered someone to slay him upon the body of Cyrus, while others say that he drew his dagger and slew himself with his own hand; for he had a dagger of gold, and he also wore a necklace and bracelets and all the other ornaments that the noblest Persians wear; for he had been honoured by Cyrus because of his goodwill and trustworthiness. (C. L. Brownson, trans, modified)³

The version of Deinon is recorded by Plutarch thus:

εἰσελάσας βιαίως ὁ Κύρος εἰς τοὺς προτεταγμένους τοῦ βασιλέως κατέτρωσεν αὐτοῦ τὸν ἵππον, ὁ δ' ἀπερρύνη· Τηριβάζου δὲ ἀναβαλόντος αὐτὸν ἐπ' ἄλλον ἵππον ταχὺ καὶ εἰπόντος, ὦ βασιλεῦ, μέμνησο τῆς ἡμέρας ταύτης· οὐ γὰρ ἀξία λήθης ἐστὶ, πάλιν ὁ Κύρος ἐνσεΐσας τῷ ἵππῳ κατέβαλε τὸν Ἀρτοξέρξην. πρὸς δὲ τὴν τρίτην ἐπέλασιν δυσανασχετήσας ὁ βασιλεὺς, καὶ εἰπὼν πρὸς τοὺς παρόντας ὡς βέλτιόν ἐστι μὴ ζῆν, ἀντεξήλαυε τῷ Κύρῳ προπετῶς καὶ ἀπερισκέπτως εἰς ἐναντία βέλη φερομένῳ. καὶ βάλλει μὲν αὐτὸς ἀκοντίῳ, βάλλουσι δ' οἱ περὶ αὐτόν. πίπτει δ' ὁ Κύρος, ὡς μὲν ἔνιοι λέγουσι, πληγῆς ὑπὸ τοῦ βασιλέως, ὡς δ' ἕτεροί τινες, Καρὸς ἀνθρώπου πατάξαντος . . .

Cyrus charged furiously into those drawn up in front of the King, and wounded the King's horse, and the King fell to the ground; but Tiribazus quickly mounted him upon another horse, saying, 'O King, remember this day, for it deserves not to be forgotten'; whereupon Cyrus again plunged in and dismounted Artaxerxes. But at his third assault the King, being enraged, and saying to those who were with him that death was better, rode out against Cyrus, who was rushing out of control and thoughtlessly upon the missiles of his opponents. The King himself hit him with a spear, and he was hit by the attendants of the King. Thus Cyrus fell, as some say, by a wound at the hands of the King, but as some others have it, from the blow of a Carian. (B. Perrin, trans, modified)⁴

Ctesias, who claimed to have been part of Artaxerxes' entourage during the battle of Cunaxa, appears to have based his account upon eye-witness reports at the time of the battle. His twenty-three book *Persica* was written some time after 397.⁵

Xenophon certainly knew Ctesias' work. Just when he wrote the *Anabasis* is a matter of controversy, but it definitely post-dates Ctesias' *Persica*. It was reasonable

³ *FGrH* 688 F 21 = Xen. *An.* 1.8.24-9; C. L. Brownson (trans.), *Xenophon Anabasis* (London, 1992), 78-81.

⁴ *FGrH* 690 F 17 = Plu. *Art.* 10; Perrin (n. 2), 146-9. All references in this paper to Deinon are to this passage unless otherwise specified.

⁵ Ctesias left the court as a messenger from Artaxerxes II to Evagoras and Conon (*FGrH* 688 F 30; *FGrH* 688 F 32; Plu. *Art.* 21.1-3). These negotiations apparently began in the summer of 397, after Dercylidas' truce with Pharnabazus (DS 14.39.2; cf. 38. 3 with Xen. *Hell.* 3.2.20). The campaign proper opened in 396 after a build-up of forces in Cilicia (Philochorus, *FGrH* 328 F 144/5; Xen. *Hell.* 3.4.1). On the chronology of these events, see D. M. Lewis, *Sparta and Persia* (Leiden, 1977), 140-1 with n. 41; S. Hornblower, 'Persia', in D. M. Lewis, J. Boardman, S. Hornblower, and M. Ostwald (edd.), *CAH*² vol. 6, *The Fourth Century B.C.* (Cambridge, 1994), 67.

for him to have used Ctesias, since he was not an eye-witness to Cyrus' death. At that time he was in hot pursuit with the victorious Greeks. Ctesias accordingly is cited twice. The first reference is in relation to the wounding of Artaxerxes (discussed below), and the second refers to Ctesias for the number killed by Cyrus and his attendants. Xenophon also makes anonymous reference to a source for details of the deaths of Artagereses, Artapates, and later Menon.⁶ Xenophon, of course, had his own perspective. He was a great admirer of Cyrus the Younger, praising him in his encomium as the most kingly and the most worthy to rule (βασιλικώτατος τε καὶ ἄρχεω ἀξιώτατος) of all the Persians who had been born since Cyrus the Elder (*An.* 1.9.1). Having risked trouble with the Athenians by accompanying a Persian who had actively assisted the Spartans, it was also in his best interests to portray Cyrus the Younger in a good light (*An.* 3.1.4–7).

Deinon wrote his *Persica* some considerable time after Ctesias and Xenophon had composed the passages under discussion. There is a fair probability that Deinon's version reflected Persian court tradition, that is, stories which originated from the Achaemenid ruling class.⁷ It is impossible to tell how soon after the battle of Cunaxa such stories began to circulate. However, Plutarch has recorded the early retribution visited upon those who would not accept the role assigned to them by Artaxerxes.⁸ This indicates that an official court version was developing soon after the battle. Deinon gives two anonymous versions of the identity of Cyrus' killer. Probably Deinon, conscious of Ctesias' account of the battle, has attempted to present a credible alternative. Deinon's account, although late, illustrates a version of events of which Xenophon seems to have been aware, as his description of the death of Cyrus demonstrates (see discussion below). This makes Xenophon and Deinon beneficiaries of the same tradition, with Xenophon a much earlier recipient.

It is difficult to assess the extent of Xenophon's awareness of this developing court tradition. There was certainly contact between the Greeks and Ariaeus, Tissaphernes, and their armies in the period between the battle of Cunaxa and the arrest of the generals. Tissaphernes had been in regular contact with Artaxerxes, and had

⁶ The dating of the *Anabasis* is controversial. Internal evidence, particularly 5.3.4–13, suggests that it was written when Xenophon was resident in Corinth after 369. Xenophon's references to Ctesias at 1.8.26–7 can hardly be a later gloss, as suggested by F. Dürrbach, 'L'apologie de Xénophon dans l'*Anabase*', *REG* 6 (1893), 343–86, at 363–4. Bigwood (n. 1), 348 considers that Xenophon is implying at 1.8.27 that he does not believe the figure given by Ctesias, but this is a device which enables Xenophon to imply that the number was large without actually giving a definite figure.

λέγεται occurs at *Xen. An.* 1.8.24 regarding Artagereses' death, 1.8.28 concerning Artapates' death, and 2.6.29 referring to the death of Menon the Thessalian. Xenophon uses λέγεται on eleven occasions in the *Anabasis*. Apart from the three references mentioned, only one other reference is to events at the time of the march up country. At 1.2.14 Xenophon reports that it was said the Cilician queen asked Cyrus to exhibit the army. This would presumably have been a record of gossip circulating in the camp at the time. There are three instances which relate to Persian history: 1.2.9 Xerxes' palace, 3.4.11 Medea the king's wife, and 3.5.15 Ecbatana. Three references are concerned with myth: 1.2.8 Apollo flayed Marsayas, 1.2.13 Midas caught the satyr, and 6.2.2 Heracles and Hades. At 5.7.7 Xenophon refers to a common saying.

⁷ R. B. Stevenson, 'Fourth century Greek historical writing about Persia in the period between the accession of Artaxerxes II Mnemon and that of Darius III (404–336 B.C.)', *D.Phil. Thesis* (Oxford, 1985), at 116–17, 186–7. Cf. id., 'Lies and invention in Deinon's *Persica*', in H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg and A. Kuhrt (edd.), *Achaemenid History II—The Greek Sources—Proceedings of the Groningen 1984 Achaemenid History Workshop* (Leiden, 1987), 27–35, at 29–31.

⁸ *Plut. Art.* 14 states that Artaxerxes wished people to think that he himself had killed Cyrus, and chapters 14–16 = *FGrH* 688 F 26 describe the punishment of Mithridates and the Carian for claiming that they had inflicted the fatal injuries.

demonstrated his loyalty. He would have been a willing disseminator of court propaganda, particularly material useful for the destabilizing and demoralizing of the Greeks. The thought that their leader had died futilely wounding a horse, as opposed to almost succeeding in his attempt by valiantly wounding the Great King, would have contributed to the effort to demoralize the Cyreans.⁹

Ctesias, having escaped from the Persian court, was free to write whatever he wished. His version is likely to have recorded more accurately what took place at Cunaxa, and thus represents a refutation of the court tradition. If the rumour that Artaxerxes had been wounded circulated at the time, Ctesias' version would simply have confirmed what Xenophon had heard. The occasions on which Xenophon rejects Ctesias' account are therefore extremely significant.

Xenophon states that Artaxerxes was wounded by Cyrus and supports that claim by referring to Ctesias, who said that he had treated the wound. This is apparently contradicted by Deinon, whose version is that Cyrus wounded Artaxerxes' horse. In all probability, Deinon was drawing on the court tradition which seems to have originated around Artaxerxes shortly after Cunaxa. In that case, Xenophon has demonstrated his awareness of it and refuted it in order to defend Cyrus against the charge of behaving recklessly and, in consequence, making a futile throw (*An.* 1.8.26–8).

Xenophon has chosen to use the version Deinon recorded, rather than that of Ctesias, for the immediate circumstances of Cyrus' death. He writes that Cyrus was killed at the time of the encounter with Artaxerxes, and the possibility that it was the king who was responsible for his death is left open. Specifically, Xenophon's words (*καὶ ἐνταῦθα μαχόμενοι*) exclude Ctesias' version of a later encounter with Mithridates. The detail of the single blow, however, is that described by Ctesias. This produces a version more flattering to Cyrus, because to have been killed by Artaxerxes would have been the most honourable kind of death (*An.* 1.8.27).

Xenophon has accepted Ctesias' account that Cyrus died of a head wound, presumably acknowledging Ctesias' authority on this point. At first sight his account of Cyrus' wounding coheres with Ctesias' version, in which the javelin struck *τὸν κρόταφον αὐτοῦ παρὰ τὸν ὀφθαλμόν*. However, Ctesias locates the wound quite specifically on the temple, whereas Xenophon has changed it to *ὑπὸ τὸν ὀφθαλμόν*, a superficially unnecessary alteration (*An.* 1.8.27).¹⁰ *ὑπὸ* with the accusative of place means 'under' and cannot mean 'beside', as further examples from Xenophon's works show.¹¹ A javelin thrust under the eye would probably have knocked Cyrus backwards off his horse, without necessarily killing him.¹² The passage again looks like apologetic, to defend Cyrus against allegations of recklessness.

Xenophon mentioned at *Anabasis* 1.8.6 that Cyrus' six hundred horsemen wore helmets, but that Cyrus himself went into the battle *ψιλὴν ἔχων τὴν κεφαλὴν*. Xenophon has sought to muddy the waters here. It seems to have been common practice for commanders to remain bare-headed until they were on the point of battle,

⁹ Contact between the Greeks and Ariaeus, Tissaphernes, and their armies, *Xen. An.* 2.1.3–5, 2.1.7–23, 2.2.1–2, 2.2.8–12, 2.3.1–2.4.2, 2.4.9–2.4.22, 2.5.2, 2.5.27; Tissaphernes' loyalty, *An.* 1.2.4–5, 1.8.9.

¹⁰ Joan Bigwood, 'Ctesias of Cnidus', Ph.D. Thesis (Harvard, 1964), 170 notes that one of Ctesias' characteristics is the care he takes in describing the precise location of wounds.

¹¹ LSJ⁹ pp. 1874–5. There are over twenty-five examples of *ὑπὸ* with the accusative of place in Xenophon, e.g. *An.* 1.10.14; *Hell.* 6.2.31; *Cyr.* 1.5.3; *Ages.* 1.23; *Oec.* 18.5.

¹² T. W. Africa, 'The one-eyed man against Rome: an exercise in euhemerism', *Historia* 19 (1970), 528–38, at 528–9.

as Alexander's actions at Gaugamela indicate (Plu. *Alex.* 32.8). The *Anabasis* account deliberately leaves it open to speculation whether Cyrus was bare-headed *throughout* the episode (a refutation of Ctesias' account, discussed below), or whether he put a helmet on just before the battle (and so could have been wounded as discussed below). Xenophon's primary intention in this passage was to refute Ctesias' claim that Cyrus was wearing a tiara, and the implications which flow from that. The juxtaposition of *Kύρου* and *Kύρος* makes his statement emphatic. In Xenophon's account Cyrus behaves impeccably. Yet there is little doubt that Ctesias was right in stating that Cyrus wore the soft leather tiara.¹³

The Persians were making obeisance to Cyrus, until the tiara fell off. I suggest that in the dark they mistook Cyrus for Artaxerxes II. If this is correct, not only was Cyrus wearing a tiara, but he was wearing it upright, the prerogative of the Great King. This explanation makes sense of the importance Ctesias attaches to the tiara, by his specific reference to it falling off. It explains why the Persians were making obeisance to Cyrus when he was wearing the tiara, and why Mithridates attacked him once it had come off. Xenophon's deliberately vague portrayal of Cyrus as being bare-headed, leaving the option that he remained so or put a helmet on later, takes on added significance.¹⁴

A wound on the temple could have been avoided if Cyrus had been wearing a helmet. By writing of an injury under the eye, rejecting the account of the physician Ctesias, Xenophon portrays Cyrus as being wounded where a javelin could have struck if he had been wearing a helmet, rather than being bare-headed because his tiara had fallen off.¹⁵

Plutarch epitomizes both Ctesias and Deinon's comments that Cyrus behaved recklessly and thoughtlessly during the battle.¹⁶ It is as part of his attempt to refute these allegations that Xenophon goes to such effort to reject Ctesias' assertion that Cyrus was wearing the tiara. On examination, though, this effort merely serves to reinforce the veracity of Ctesias' account.

In his description of the wounding of Cyrus, Xenophon clearly wished to portray the young prince as a wise and good leader. He carefully explains the reason for Cyrus' attack on Artaxerxes (*An.* 1.8.24), emphasizing the point that he was in fact acting out of concern for the Greek mercenaries. Xenophon's reason for doing so was to highlight Cyrus' rational and practical assessment of the situation on the battlefield. His good judgement, highlighted in the Artapates episode (discussed below), supports the idea that he was a leader who made correct decisions. Unfortunately, Plutarch has not noted what Ctesias and the court tradition recorded by Deinon had to say about Cyrus' decision to attack. Plutarch's account begins following the death of Artagereses.

Xenophon's choice of language reflects his desire to depict Cyrus as a leader who was in control of himself. The two citations of Ctesias at this point in the narrative are

¹³ Cf. the Scholia to Xen. *An.* 1.8.6 directing attention to Hdt. 3.12, which indicates that the Persians traditionally wore tiaras, and 7.61, where Herodotus describes Persian armour as including the tiara.

¹⁴ Plutarch epitomizes Ctesias' comment (*FGrH* 688 F 20 = Plu. *Art.* 11) that it was dark and Cyrus' enemies did not recognize him and his friends could not find him; Xen. *An.* 2.5.23 τὴν μὲν γὰρ ἐπὶ τῇ κεφαλῇ τιάναν βασιλεῖ μόνῳ ἔξεστιν ὀρθὴν ἔχειν . . .; Plu. *Them.* 29.7–8.

¹⁵ See too the description of the death of Masistius in Hdt. 9.22. The Greeks were unable to kill the Persian cavalry commander because of his thorax of golden scales. When someone noticed what they were doing, he struck Masistius in the eye (παίει μιν ἐς τὸν ὀφθαλμόν). Masistius was presumably wearing a helmet as well as his golden thorax.

¹⁶ A variant reading of Plu. *Art.* 11, Plutarch's epitome of Ctesias, has Cyrus μεστός ὦν ὁρμῆς καὶ θράσους 'full of impetuosity and confidence'. Whichever reading is chosen, Ctesias' comment is that Cyrus behaved recklessly.

part of the same process. The emphasis is upon rationality, control, and a simple reporting of facts, just as the focus of the narrative was rational and controlled. After Cyrus' six hundred had set off in pursuit of Artaxerxes' six thousand, Xenophon states that Cyrus did not endure (the sight of the King) (*οὐκ ἡνέσχετο*) and saying 'I see the man' (*εἰπὼν Τὸν ἄνδρα ὄρω*), rushed (*ἔτετο*) upon the King and inflicted the chest wound (*An.* 1.8.25–6).¹⁷ Ctesias' version is that Cyrus and Artaxerxes charged at each other in silence. Cyrus' friend Ariaeus cast his javelin first, but missed Artaxerxes, who then aimed at Cyrus, but killed Satiphernes, another of Cyrus' friends, instead. Xenophon, however, suppresses the reference to Artaxerxes charging to meet Cyrus. He also makes no mention of anyone else throwing a javelin first. In his version, Cyrus alone takes the initiative and attacks.¹⁸

When writing of Cyrus' instruction to Clearchus to attack the enemy's centre, Xenophon employs the verb 'shouted' (*ἐβόα*), and he uses 'shouted out' (*ἀναβοήσας*) when Abradatas charges into battle in the *Cyropaedia* (*An.* 1.8.12; *Cyr.* 7.1.29). Xenophon's choice of the very restrained 'saying' (*εἰπὼν*) at *Anabasis* 1.8.26 is a further attempt to imply that Cyrus was both in control of himself and understood his position. Once Artaxerxes was dead, Cyrus would have been King, and the danger past.¹⁹ Xenophon writes skilfully, and it is easy to forget that the words and motives he attributes to Cyrus here are highly unlikely to have been heard or known by any survivor because, as he says, most if not all of the companions died with Cyrus (*An.* 1.8.27, 1.9.31).

The words *οὐκ ἡνέσχετο* are of interest, having connotations of a man being provoked beyond the limits of his endurance, rather than impetuously losing control. Xenophon uses *ἀνέχω* in referring to physical as well as mental stamina, but when he combines it with a negative, it almost always refers to a response to intense provocation. Herodotus also uses *ἀνέχω* with the negative primarily in this sense.²⁰ Cyrus held Artaxerxes in contempt, as the letter he is said to have written to the Spartans and his comments to the soothsayer Silanus indicate (*Plu. Art.* 6; *Xen. An.* 1.7.18). By his use of *οὐκ ἡνέσχετο* Xenophon seems to be implying that for Cyrus the fact that Artaxerxes actually dared to take the field against him was a provocation which could not humanly be endured. Again, despite Xenophon's endeavours, this appears to confirm Ctesias and Deinon's statements that Cyrus was behaving recklessly and thoughtlessly.

It is significant that Xenophon does not, in fact, describe the death of Cyrus, but comments in some detail upon that of Artapates. According to Jacoby,²¹ Xenophon was obviously not following Ctesias closely. If he had been, he would have included only the version of Artapates' death which Ctesias knew, instead of two alternatives.

¹⁷ Xenophon often uses the middle form of *ἔημι* with a meaning of 'to attack' or 'to rush upon', e.g. *An.* 1.5.8, 3.4.41, 4.2.7, etc.

¹⁸ Xenophon places Ariaeus on Cyrus' left wing and not in the centre with Cyrus at all (*An.* 1.8.5); cf. Diodorus Siculus' contracted version at 14.23.5. There, both men charged at each other, *ὤρμησαν ἐπ' ἀλλήλους*. This seems to have been (ultimately) derived from Ctesias, whether it was transmitted by way of the Oxyrhynchus Historian as well as Ephorus, or Ephorus alone. On this point see H. D. Westlake, 'Diodorus and the expedition of Cyrus', *Phoenix* 41 (1987), 241–54 = *Studies in Thucydides and Greek History* (Bristol, 1989), 260–73.

¹⁹ In fact Ctesias' version, in which following the wounding of Artaxerxes most of his followers fled, supports this idea.

²⁰ For *ἀνέχω* with the negative in Xenophon see *An.* 5.6.34, 7.7.47; *Hell.* 4.8.4, 6.5.28, 6.5.49; and *Cyr.* 8.4.16. Hdt., e.g. 1.80, 1.207, 1.169, 3.127, and 5.89. Thucydides has one occurrence of *ἀνέχω* with the negative (3.28.2), and it too has a meaning of mental endurance.

²¹ Jacoby (n. 1), 2067.

However, it is not in fact known whether this was described by Ctesias, or whether there was a court version which Deinon later recorded, so Jacoby's inference is unsupported. But for Xenophon the death of Artapates was important. It serves three purposes.

Firstly, it demonstrates emphatically, but elegantly, that Cyrus' judgement was true, in that he was able to select loyal followers. Artapates is characterized as 'the most trustworthy of Cyrus' sceptre-bearers'. Xenophon intends attention here to be centred on the concept of trustworthiness and on Cyrus' judgement. The description of Artapates' jewellery allows Xenophon to keep Cyrus indirectly in focus by referring in yet another way to Artapates' relationship to him. The use of words with similar meanings (here *εὐνοίαν* and *πιστότητα*) is also a technique he employs to add weight to ideas he considers important. This is confirmed by his placement of *εὐνοίαν τε καὶ πιστότητα* as the last words in the section, producing a 'punchline effect' which causes the reader to review the episode. Cyrus had judged this man correctly, implying that his judgement in other circumstances was also accurate (Xen. *An.* 1.8.28).²²

Secondly, Xenophon uses language which equates Artapates' death with an act of sacrifice. In writing of the murder or suicide of Artapates, Xenophon twice uses forms of *ἐπισφάζω*, which has a primary meaning of 'to slaughter over or upon', referring especially to sacrifices at a tomb (*An.* 1.8.29).²³ He employs this verb on only two other occasions, both in the *Cyropaedia* and in connection with sacrificing animals to honour Abradatas, who had been killed by the Egyptians.²⁴ In the *Anabasis* Xenophon's utilization of such a verb twice in the same sentence—once in the active (*ἐπισφάζαι*) and once in the middle voice with an intensifying reflexive (*ἑαυτὸν ἐπισφάσθαι*)²⁵—stresses the high standing in which he believed Cyrus should be held, by implying that the death of Artapates was like a sacrifice. Cyrus' status is thereby enhanced, because sacrifices are usually made to heroes and gods. The sacrifice was the ultimate tribute of loyalty to the status which Xenophon suggests was Cyrus' due.

Thirdly, this passage seems to have been modelled upon Herodotus 1.45, where the language as well as the storyline are similar. There Adrastus, a Phrygian exile whom Croesus had ordered to protect his son Atys, accidentally kills Atys. Adrastus orders the sorrowing King to kill him (Adrastus) over the corpse (*ἐπικατασφάζει μιν κελεύων τῷ νεκρῷ*), but Croesus felt compassion for him and refused, saying that a god was to blame. Later Adrastus killed himself upon Atys' grave (*ἐπικατασφάζει τῷ τύμβῳ ἑωυτόν*).²⁶

²² Xenophon mentions Artapates in only one other episode (1.6.11). There he is also characterized as 'the most trustworthy of Cyrus' sceptre-bearers'. V. J. Gray, *The Character of Xenophon's Hellenica* (London, 1989), 22 discusses this 'punchline' effect. For Xenophon's use of repetition for emphasis see *ibid.*, 89; The idea that Cyrus' judgement was accurate is carried over into the encomium which follows immediately (*An.* 1.9.1–31).

²³ M. W. Mather and J. W. Hewitt (edd.), *Xenophon Anabasis Books I–IV* (Oklahoma, 1962), 291; LSJ⁹ p. 663.

²⁴ Xen. *Cyr.* 7.3.7 (*ἐπισφαγεῖν*) and 7.3.11 (*ἐπισφαγήσεται*), cf. 7.1.32.

²⁵ The reading *ἑαυτόν* would seem to be correct. Some have suggested that the intensive pronoun should be read instead (*αὐτόν*), but the reflexive pronoun with a middle voice verb appears consistent with classical usage and a change is not obviously required. On this point, see B. Goodall, 'The reflexive pronoun in Xenophon's *Anabasis* and *Hellenica*', *California Studies in Classical Antiquity* 9 (1977), 41–59, at 45, n. 17.

²⁶ Hdt. 1.45.4 and 1.45.18, cf. 1.35. *ἐπικατασφάζω* occurs in Herodotus only in these two passages, and at Hellanicus *FGrH* 4 F 155. The verb *ἐπισφάζω* is only used by Xenophon at *An.* 1.8.28–9 and *Cyr.* 7.3.7, 11 (see below) and is otherwise rare. For the more general issue, see

Xenophon's two versions are introduced as different reports about the death of Artapates (οἱ μὲν φασὶ . . . οἱ δ'). When he saw that Cyrus was dead, Artapates leapt down from his horse and fell upon the corpse (περιπεσεῖν αὐτῷ). In the first version, it is the King who is said to have ordered someone to kill Artapates (βασιλέα κελεῦσαι τινα ἐπισφάξαι αὐτὸν Κύρῳ). This is a deliberate contrast to the grief-stricken father, Croesus, who spared the life of the murderer of his beloved son, exhibiting the prized moral virtue of *φιλανθρωπία*, with the vengeance-seeking brother, Artaxerxes II, who had his brother's attendant killed. Xenophon implies that Artaxerxes lacked *φιλανθρωπία*. There is, too, a pointed contrast between Artapates, the attendant who had proved himself to be the most trustworthy sceptre-bearer of Cyrus, and Artaxerxes, the King who was to prove himself most untrustworthy to the Greeks. Xenophon's alternative version is that Artapates, having drawn his sword, killed himself over the corpse, just as Adrastus did (ἐαυτὸν ἐπισφάσσειν). This raises the question of Artapates' feelings of guilt over the death of Cyrus, and suggests that the sacrifice could have been an act of atonement.

THE MYSTERY OF THE ἐφίππειος πῖλος

The passages referring to the ἐφίππειος πῖλος all derive ultimately from Ctesias.

... ἀποπίπτει δὲ τῆς κεφαλῆς ἡ τιάρα τοῦ Κύρου. καὶ παρατρέχων νεανίας Πέρσης ὄνομα Μιθριδάτης ἀκοντίῳ βάλλει τὸν κρόταφον αὐτοῦ παρὰ τὸν ὀφθαλμόν, ἀγνοῶν ὅστις εἴη. πολὺ δὲ αἷμα τοῦ τραύματος ἐκβαλόντος ἰλιγγιάσας καὶ καρωθεὶς ὁ Κύρος ἔπεσε. καὶ ὁ μὲν ἵππος ὑπεκφυγὼν ἐπλάζετο, τὸν δ' ἐφίππειον πῖλον ἀπορρυνέντα λαμβάνει τοῦ τὸν Κύρον βαλόντος ἀκόλουθος αἵματος περίπλεω.

... But Cyrus' tiara fell from his head, and a young Persian, Mithridates by name, running to his side, struck the side of his forehead beside the eye with his spear, not knowing who he was. Much blood gushed from the wound, and Cyrus, stunned and giddy, fell to the ground. His horse escaped and wandered about the field, but the ἐφίππειος πῖλος, which had fallen off, was captured by the attendant of the man who had struck Cyrus, and it was full of blood.²⁷

ὡς Ἀρτοξέρξης δῶρα ἔδωκε τῷ ἐνέγκαντι τὸν Κύρου πῖλον.

How Artaxerxes gave gifts to the one who brought Cyrus' πῖλος.²⁸

... οἷος δὲ καὶ βουλόμενος δοκεῖν καὶ λέγειν πάντας ἀνθρώπους ὡς αὐτὸς ἀπεκτόνοι Κύρον, Μιθριδάτη τε τῷ βαλόντι πρῶτῳ Κύρον ἐξέπεμψε δῶρα καὶ λέγειν ἐκέλευσε τοὺς διδόντας ὡς Τούτοις σε τιμᾷ ὁ βασιλεὺς ὅτι τὸν ἐφίππειον Κύρου πῖλον εὐρὼν ἀνήνεγκας.

Moreover, believing, and wishing all men to think, and say, that he [Artaxerxes] had killed Cyrus with his own hand, he sent gifts to Mithridates, the one who first hit Cyrus, and ordered

D. H. Pom. 4.1, who believed that Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, *Anabasis*, and *Hellenica* were influenced by Herodotus rather than Thucydides. Similarities between passages in Herodotus and Xenophon's works have been noted by, for example, Gray (n. 29), 6, and S. W. Hirsch, *The Friendship of the Barbarians—Xenophon and the Persian Empire* (Hanover and London, 1985), 77–8. Gray comments at p. 67 that it is typically Herodotean to give two versions of a story without expressing an opinion as to which version the writer believes to be correct.

²⁷ FGrH 688 F 20 = Plu. *Art.* 11; Perrin (n. 2), 151 (modified).

²⁸ FGrH 688 F 16.

the bearers of the gifts to say: 'This is your reward from the King because you found and brought to him Cyrus' ἐφίππειος πῖλος.'²⁹

καὶ ὁ Σπαραμίζης ἐπιμεδιάσας . . . εἶπεν . . . τί λαμπρόν, ὦ τᾶν, ἣ μέγα, πῖλον εὐρεῖν ἵππου περιρρυέντα καὶ τοῦτον ἀνενεγκεῖν;

Here Sparamizes smiled at him [Mithridates] and said ' . . . What great or brilliant exploit was it, my good fellow, to find a horse's πῖλος that had slipped off, and bring it to the King?'³⁰

εἶπεν οὖν μὴ κατασχών ' Ὑμεῖς μὲν, ὅ τι βούλεσθε, πῖλους λέγετε καὶ φλυάρους . . .

Accordingly, Mithridates threw away constraint and said: 'You can talk as you please about πῖλοι and such nonsense . . .'³¹

The term ἐφίππειος πῖλος only occurs in Plutarch's *Artaxerxes*, where he draws on Ctesias, and it is usually translated 'saddle-cloth'.³² That is indubitably the sense of the neuter substantive, ἐφίππιον, which is used frequently by Greek authors and is carried over into Latin.³³ However, the combination ἐφίππειος πῖλος is unique to Plutarch. It could conceivably refer to a felt saddle-cloth, given that the primary sense of πῖλος is 'felt'. By metonymy, the word is applied to items made out of felt, such as a cap, shoes, mat, or cuirass. At *Cyropaedia* 5.5.7 Xenophon uses πῖλος to refer to Median rugs (Μηδικῶν πέλων), and it is highly probable that felt was used for saddle-cloths. But the most frequent meaning of πῖλος, almost invariable in Plutarch, is a cap or helmet, and in Antiphanes' *Hippeis* we find πῖλος in the sense of helmet alongside and distinct from ἐφίππιον, with its usual meaning of saddle-cloth.³⁴ That suggests that the combination refers to some type of horses' headgear rather than a felt blanket used as a saddle-cloth.

The possibility must be considered that what Ctesias was referring to was Cyrus' headgear. Herodotus considered that the Persian tiara was a type of πῖλος.³⁵ However, Plutarch is quite specific. When he refers, in his rewriting of Ctesias' version, to Cyrus' headgear, he uses the word τιάρα. In describing the object which was taken to Artaxerxes, he writes ἐφίππειος πῖλος. In fact, Plutarch describes the τιάρα as having fallen off prior to the blow from Mithridates. Plutarch's reading of the Ctesian original indicates that the τιάρα and the ἐφίππειος πῖλος were two separate objects.

A felt saddle-cloth could have fallen off, but since it was fastened round the horse's chest with a wide strap, and perhaps there were also straps under the horse's belly and under the tail,³⁶ it would not have slipped off easily. The Persian saddle-cloth was

²⁹ *FGrH* 688 F 26 = Plu. *Art.* 14; Perrin (n. 2), 159 (modified).

³⁰ *FGrH* 688 F 26 = Plu. *Art.* 15; Perrin (n. 2), 161 (modified).

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *LSJ*⁹. At p. 1404 under πῖλος a translation of 'felt cloth' used for horse-cloths is suggested. The only example listed is Plut. *Art.* 11. At p. 745, under ἐφίππιος, where 'for putting on a horse' is the suggested translation, Plut. *Art.* 11 is the only example cited in combination with πῖλος; Perrin (n. 2), 151. These words do not occur either individually or combined elsewhere in the Ctesian fragments. See also item no. 2 of R. Kreis-von Schaeuwen's article on the πῖλος, *RE* XX, 2 (Stuttgart, 1950), 1330–3.

³³ *LSJ*⁹ p. 745; *OLD* p. 612 'ephippium -ii—a cloth on which the rider of a horse sits'.

³⁴ A search of the *TLG* confirms the range of meanings for πῖλος, with by far the most common meaning being 'cap' (e.g. Hdt. 3.12, 7.61, 7.92, Theoc. *Id.* 21.13); Ath. 11.503B = Antiph. *Fr.* 108 (*PCG*), 368.

³⁵ Hdt. 3.12 and 7.61; cf. Hecat. *FGrH* I F 284.

³⁶ B. Goldman, 'The Persian saddle blanket', *Studia Iranica* 13 (1984), 7–18, at 9; and see, for instance, J. Boardman (ed.), *CAH—Plates to Volume IV*, new edn (Cambridge, 1988), pl. 67 of a bronze horseman from the fifth to fourth centuries B.C.

large, covering the whole of the horse's back. It is hard to see how Cyrus could have bled onto it so profusely that it became full of blood in the short time before he fell off.

Xenophon refers to Persian saddle-cloths as *κασᾶς* . . . *τούσδε τοὺς ἐφιππίους* and uses the words *ἐφιππίον* and *ἐποχον* for saddle-cloths generally. Photius epitomizes Agatharchides' comment that Ptolemy II gave to Greek mercenaries he had recruited and to their horses 'equipment made of felt (*στολὰς* . . . *πιλητάς*), which they in that land call *κασᾶς*, that conceal the whole body except the eyes'.³⁷

The *ἐφιππίους πῖλος* was full of blood (*αἵματος περίπλεως*). Cyrus' wound was a devastating blow. Possibly the temporal artery was severed, leading to the loss of a large amount of blood. The main injury, though, appears to have been the rupturing of the frontal branch of the middle meningeal artery, an important artery running through a thin bone casing at the temple. Blood would, as described, gush out (*ἐκβαλόντος*). There would also be haemorrhaging into the space between the outermost membrane of the brain and the skull. Ctesias describes Cyrus as being dizzy and stunned, and says that he fell from his horse. He was having difficulty recovering from the blow. Some eunuchs tried to put him on another horse, but he was unable to ride. They supported him as he tried to walk. He was drowsy and reeling. In a study of twenty-nine consecutive cases of acute extradural haematoma, it was found that twenty-five of the twenty-nine showed a deterioration in the level of consciousness, and only eleven had a lucid interval before the onset of clinical signs of brain injury. The haematoma which formed compressed the brain 'with alarming suddenness' and led very quickly to dizziness, loss of balance, and death. This modern research suggests that Ctesias has accurately recorded Cyrus' symptoms.³⁸ Ctesias goes on to say that Cyrus was subsequently struck in the back of the knee by a Caunian and died after hitting his wounded temple on a stone, but from his earlier description, this does not appear to have been the actual cause of death.³⁹

Xenophon describes the armour for the Persian horses at Cunaxa as *προμετωπίδια* ('frontlets' for the forehead) and *προστερνίδια* (coverings for the horses' chests) (*An.* 1.8.6–7). He does not refer to any sort of *πῖλος* which, as a keen horseman, he would almost certainly have noticed and commented upon. Somewhere in his other works he would also have evaluated its usefulness. Cyrus' horse may have been equipped differently from the other horses, but again I think Xenophon would have said so. On the other hand Ctesias, as recorded in Plutarch's *Artaxerxes*, does not use Xenophon's terminology in discussing events surrounding the death of Cyrus.

A frontlet which extended over the horse's head would meet all the requirements. Of most importance, Xenophon mentions it under the more familiar terminology. It fits the meaning of the words *ἐφιππίους πῖλος* which Plutarch attributes to Ctesias. It is small enough to become full of blood, as Ctesias describes, according to Plutarch's version. It could fall off when the rider did, particularly from a horse that was rearing

³⁷ Xen. *Cyr.* 8.3.6, cf. 8.3.7 and 8, *Eq.* 7.5, 12.8, 12.9, *Eq. Mag.* 8.4; Phot. *Bibl.* 250, 445b; S. M. Burstein suggests that Agatharchides is referring to Aithiopia when he says *οἱ κατὰ τὴν χώραν ἐκείνην*, but since he has just mentioned that Ptolemy recruited mercenaries in Greece, I think Agatharchides must mean Greece (*Agatharchides of Chidus* [London, 1989], 52, n. 3).

³⁸ G. J. Romanes (reviser), *Cunningham's Manual of Practical Anatomy*, volume 3: *Head and Neck and Brain* (London, 1967¹³), 63 says of the middle meningeal artery: 'This is a small but important artery, because its frontal branch is the commonest source of extradural haemorrhage, and it lies adjacent to the motor area of the brain, which may be compressed by such a collection of blood'; W. B. Irby, 'Concomitant injuries—diagnosis and concepts of treatment', in id. (ed.), *Facial Trauma and Concomitant Problems* (Saint Louis, 1974), 72–120 at 89; W. Lewin, *The Management of Head Injuries* (London, 1966), 84.

³⁹ *FGrH* 688 F 20 = Plu. *Art.* 11.

and hard to control, as Cyrus' horse Pasacas is said to have been. In a military context, the word *πίλος* makes one think immediately of something worn on the head.⁴⁰

The position would fit the description of Cyrus' wound. Cyrus was not knocked off Pasacas by the force of Mithridates' blow. It was the effects of the rupturing of the frontal branch of the middle meningeal artery that caused him to become stunned and giddy. In this scenario, one might hypothesize that Cyrus slumped forward, bleeding profusely onto the horse's head, before falling, perhaps dragging the horse's frontlet off as he fell.

Similar frontlets have been found on a sixth-century B.C. chariot model from Cyprus, which fell under Persian domination in the latter part of the sixth century. As yet there is nothing explicit in representations of Persian armour which matches the horse armour attributed by Xenophon and later by Curtius Rufus to Persian cavalry.⁴¹

SUMMARY

Plutarch's excerpt of Ctesias' version of the death of Cyrus makes fascinating reading. Although Ctesias has an unenviable reputation among scholars from antiquity onwards for fabrication and self-promotion, his description of the effects of trauma to the temple match well the clinical signs listed in a modern study of such injuries. Since he was a doctor from a family of doctors, this is not surprising, but it does suggest that his account here can be relied upon.

It is possible that the *ἐφίππειος πίλος* was a saddle-cloth, as it is usually translated. However, a frontlet would appear to be a more satisfactory translation in view of the meaning of the words individually, the nature of Cyrus' injury, and the effects it would have had upon him.

In this paper I have attempted to demonstrate that Xenophon was not working in a vacuum when he wrote his *Anabasis*. He was influenced by earlier authors, contemporary authors, and by stories that were circulating through Persian and Greek society at the time. His portrayal of events surrounding the death of Cyrus, and Cyrus' wounding in particular, show that Xenophon carefully crafted his material. He selected his words with skill, kept the image of Cyrus before us by commenting in different ways upon the relationship of others to him, and attempted to explain the reasons for Cyrus' actions (even when he could not have known them).

He has taken the opportunity to make a philosophical comment upon the loyalty of an attendant and the lack of virtue of a king. Primarily, however, Xenophon's account is a dramatic and deliberate rebuttal of the eye-witness version recorded by Ctesias and what appears to have been the Persian court tradition which was later written down by Deionon.⁴²

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⁴⁰ *FGrH* 688 F 19 = *Plu. Art.* 9, cf. n. 34 above.

⁴¹ J. Boardman (ed.), *CAH—Plates to Volume III*, new edn (Cambridge, 1984), pl. 217; Curt. 3.11.15.

⁴² I am most grateful to Professor Brian Bosworth of the University of Western Australia for his suggestions for improvement of earlier drafts of this paper. The anonymous referee and the editor have made detailed and constructive comments which were extremely helpful, and I thank them for their suggestions.