Xenophon's Funeral Oration

Near the center of the *Memorabilia* (3.5), Xenophon depicts an encounter between Socrates and Pericles, son of "the famous Pericles" (τοῦ πάνυ Περικλέους, 3.5.1). The latter is despondent about how the Athenian military has been performing, and Socrates encourages him by discussing how Pericles, in turn, can encourage the Athenians. Part of the answer lies in reminding the Athenians of the deeds of their ancestors (3.5.9). Scholars such as Loraux and Dorion have already noted how this passage partakes in the discourse of the *epitaphios*, the annual funeral oration for the Athenian war-dead. In this paper, I argue that *Memorabilia* 3.5 not only reflects the *epitaphios* custom but attempts to correct its methods. Furthermore, Xenophon engages intertextually with other written *epitaphioi*—particularly Thucydides 2.35–46 and Plato's *Menexenus*—in order to argue that his mode of funeral oration is superior not only to the general custom, but also to the versions of his literary predecessors.

Socrates contends that the Athenians need to hear a speech with examples of better conduct, and he and Pericles discuss topics common in the extant *epitaphioi*, such as the virtues of the Athenians (3.5.2–3) and Athenian patriotic myths (3.5.10). Nonetheless, the proposed speech is not meant to be a funeral oration. Indeed, no mention is made of the occasion on which this speech would be given, but the implication is that it would be a protreptic address (προτρέπονται, 3.5.3; προτρεψαίμεθα, 3.5.7) made by a competent military leader (3.5.21) to the troops, as opposed to a civilian-oriented lamentation. In his *Agesilaus* (10.3), Xenophon draws a contrast between an *encomium* and a *threnos*, arguing that the former is more useful. Similarly, in *Memorabilia* 3.5 he implicitly argues that an *epitaphios* would actually be more effective if

separated from its funerary context and if, in addition, it combined a discussion of motivating ideals with clear and decisive teaching about strategy (3.5.25–27).

Regarding his specific literary models, Xenophon uses the genealogy of Socrates' interlocutor in order to signal the status of *Memorabilia* 3.5 as a successor to both Thucydides and Plato: Pericles the Younger is the son of the speaker of the Thucydidean epitaphios as well as the son of the purported author of the Platonic version, Aspasia (*Menex*. 235e–236c). With his choice of interlocutor, Xenophon shows that he recognizes Plato's intertextual game (see further Rosenstock, Zelcer) and redoubles it, while also—as a good historian—erasing Plato's playful anachronism. The conversation itself combines elements of both the Thucydidean *epitaphios* (compare, e.g., Thuc. 2.37.1 with *Mem.* 3.5.14) and the *Menexenus* (compare, e.g., *Menex*. 237d, 239b–c and *Mem*. 3.5.10) in order to produce a hybrid meant to excel either parent.

Finally, Pericles the Younger is an ideal interlocutor for Socrates because of their historical connection: both were put to death by the Athenians, and, in their only attested interaction outside of the *Memorabilia*, Socrates even attempted to save Pericles after the Arginusae debacle (*Hell.* 1.7.15). At several points, *Memorabilia* 3.5 makes oblique comments on this episode, prompting the reader to recall the death of Pericles and, by extension, that of Socrates, which frames and orients the whole of the *Memorabilia* (1.1.1, 4.8; see Gray). The structural importance of 3.5 is compounded by the connections between it and the earlier conversation between the elder Pericles and his other (foster-)son Alcibiades (1.2.40–46; see McNamara, Danzig). The non-funerary '*epitaphios*' proposed in 3.5 is contrasted with the looming loss of Socrates and raises a question key to the thesis of the *Memorabilia*: if Athenians leaders (and writers) made *logoi* like those in the *Memorabilia*, could so much Athenian death—whether by war or by hemlock—have been avoided?

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