

## The Funeral Oration as Alternative to Homeric Poetry in Classical Athens

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In this paper I would like to study the Athenian funeral oration as a democratic alternative to Homeric poetry. Pericles' programmatic statement in his funeral oration: «We need no Homer to sing our praise, nor anyone else who with his verses may delight for a moment» (Thucydides 2. 41. 4) implies such an alternative. I will frame my inquiry within the context of the transition from orality to literacy and argue that literacy brought with it the creation of new literary genres. Consequently, older (oral) genres were perceived as sociologically and ideologically biased. The new social reality of democratic Athens demanded a new type of praise that was, on the one hand, specifically Athenian and, on the other hand, could assume the grandeur of epic.<sup>1</sup>

Homeric epic was regularly performed in Athens since Peisistratus' time, but was also most probably standardized there throughout the classical period.<sup>2</sup> Contemporary to the standardization of epic we find the creation of funeral orations. What at first sight could be taken as a measure of the «good health» enjoyed by

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<sup>1</sup> Other genres such as tragedy and historiography might as well be considered as heirs of epic. Indeed, Aristotle in his *Poetics* 1448b suggests tragedy might be a continuation of epic and both Herodotus and Thucydides make direct comparisons to Homer at the beginning of their works. Historiography, with its desire for objectivity and global perspective, is not specifically Athenian, whereas tragedy questions and searches values that are asserted in the funeral oration. Furthermore, the funeral oration claims to be an unquestioned vehicle of representation of Athenian identity. It assumes from epic the purpose of teaching new generations how to behave in imitation of the acts of their ancestors.

<sup>2</sup> G. Nagy *Homeric Questions*, Austin, 1996, p. 42.

both genres is called into question by the writers of orations, who insist on the fact that the heroes they sing surpass the Homeric ones.<sup>3</sup> The writers of orations also see their composition as exceeding those of the poets. Since its inception the funeral oration is conceived as an alternative to and in competition with epic and what epic represents, the paradigm of values of the aristocratic oral society. Thus, the funeral oration emerges as a paradigm of those values associated not only with democracy, but also with literacy.<sup>4</sup> Although fundamentally oral, the funeral speech was composed and preserved in writing and thus became instrumental for the acceptance of the new *paideia*, which is necessary for a young person to learn in order to interact in society.<sup>5</sup>

Nicole Loraux, who has studied the funeral oration in detail, explains how it was an Athenian development used to apprehend the communal identity. She refers to this development as crossing the border between *threnos* and *logos*, i.e., from praising the dead through a traditional poetic form to praising them through an innovation in prose. Loraux believes that the aristocratic idea of the glorified death (the «beautiful death» of the speeches) is represented in democratic Athens by having all citizens share in a privilege once reserved for few.<sup>6</sup> In spite of the change from individual glory to the collective glory of the city, a continuation in language and

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<sup>3</sup> This claim is as well valid for Herodotus and Thucydides with the difference that orators stress the Athenian nature of their heroes.

<sup>4</sup> I have included the terms *aristocratic* and *democratic* besides oral and literary because I believe that there is a connection between them as I will try to show. In favour of this connection is J. R. Goody-I. Watt «The Consequences of Literacy 69-84», in J. R. Goody (ed.) *Literacy in Traditional Societies*, Cambridge, 1968 p. 55; more skeptical about this connection is W. V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, Cambridge, Mass.-London, 1989, p. 79 who considers that only 5-10% of Athenian citizens were literate. Harris 1989: 62-63 also considers that non-aristocratic citizens were encouraged by the consciousness of their own worth to «learn letters». This development was only dated from the 480s and following.

<sup>5</sup> K. Robb, *Literacy and Paideia in Ancient Greece*, New York-Oxford, 1994, p. 33.

<sup>6</sup> N. Loraux, «Mourir devant Troie, tomber pour Athenes: de la gloire du héros a l'idée de la cité» 27-43 in G. Gnoli and J.P. Vernant (eds.) *La mort, les morts dans la sociétés anciennes*, Cambridge, 1982, p. 30.

motifs was stressed. The change was mostly quantitative, not qualitative. The death of the warrior was a model of the social norms both in the epic world and in the city.<sup>7</sup> Thus, to follow her argument, literacy (implied in *logos*) goes hand in hand with a kind of collectivization. Democratization is not a change in values, but rather an expansion of those traditional aristocratic values to all society. It is for this reason that funeral speeches come to take over the traditional duty of funeral praise poetry and epic.

Formally, the shift from orality to literacy is linked in the Greek world to the creation and development of a literary prose, which took place during archaic times in response to the demand for cataloguing and textual organizing encouraged at the borders of the Greek world.<sup>8</sup> The repercussions of the shift from orality to literacy can be best seen in the case of the funeral oration because examples can be found from the 470s to the 320s, thus covering most of the classical period.<sup>9</sup> The majority of Greek literature that has come down to us was composed during the classical period of Greek history in Athens. Any assertion about the expansion of literacy as reflected in literature inevitably is Athenocentric. Therefore the funeral oration as a genre that is specifically Athenian can be illustrative of the transitional phase between orality and literacy. Furthermore, one has to take into account the different character of the fifth and fourth centuries. Generally, during the fourth century there is increased evidence of literacy in public, professional and private spheres, whereas for the fifth century evidence is more limited.<sup>10</sup> The increase in the use of writing during the fifth century in Athens culminated in the adoption of the Ionic alphabet under the archon Euclides (403/2), an adoption that could be taken as an indication that writing and the use of books were familiar enough in all levels of society that spelling needed to be regulari-

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<sup>7</sup> Loraux 1982: 27.

<sup>8</sup> Goody 1968: 42-49, 54 argues that these tendencies were direct effect of literacy in the first place.

<sup>9</sup> S. Hornblower, *A Commentary on Thucydides*, vol. 1, Oxford, 1991, p. 292 dates the first speech to 464, after the battle of Drabescos.

<sup>10</sup> See R. Thomas, *Oral Tradition and Written Record in Classical Athens*, Cambridge, 1989, pp. 24-25.

zed.<sup>11</sup> The orthographical reform symbolizes the official acceptance of writing as a constitutive element of the new education.<sup>12</sup>

Acceptance of cultural uses of literacy (for example, literary and educational) was also not always obvious. Xenophon (430-355) in the *Oeconomicus* (9.10) presents the landowner Ischomachus giving a list to his wife who presumably could also read it. On the other hand, in the *Memorabilia* (4. 2. 8-13), Xenophon reproduces a dialogue between Socrates and Euthydemus. Socrates asks if it is true that Euthydemus possesses a large collection of books (πολλὰ γράμματα) and when Euthydemus responds that he plans to enlarge his collection, Socrates' curiosity is pricked as to which books he has. Socrates asks first for technical treatises: medical, architectural, mathematical, astronomical, and even the complete works of Homer. But Euthydemus does not have any of these, because he aspires to learn the art of the good statesmen and managers (ἀνθρώποι πολιτικοί, οἰκονομικοί). So Socrates proposes to classify «just» and «unjust» actions in the manner of how treatises classify actions and events. It turns out that such a classification is not possible. It is important to notice that books seem to have been common enough by the end of the fifth century that a private citizen could have a complete copy of Homer, besides numerous professional writings. The Socrates presented here does

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<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, one cannot separate the expansion of writing from its material development. When, for instance, Thucydides expressed that he was writing a «possession for all time», he certainly did not expect his work to be memorized. His assertion implies that he knew that there were the material means to produce books for his work. Any writer who wrote primarily to be read and not performed was sure that his was not a futile enterprise because book production had matured to a point that guaranteed the continuous re-copying of his work. The material development of writing techniques and practices would demand a study of itself.

<sup>12</sup> It is impossible to know, however, how many people were literate. This is in part because literacy is such a difficult term to define. (Harris 1989: 3-24) A person who was able to write a name on an *ostrakon* might not have been able to read the laws inscribed at the *agora*. Writing and reading were separate activities in the ancient world. Furthermore, the sociological spectrum of the readers is also hard to determine. The fact that Aristophanes presents slaves reading in his comedies does not necessarily mean that they were able to read, only that Aristophanes could parody upper class customs.

not oppose such possession. The passage, however, implies that whereas it was accepted that practical skills be taught through books, political virtue, as the summit of Greek education, needed still a different kind of teaching. These two examples from Xenophon illustrate the discrepancy in the acceptance of practical and educational uses of writing.

Reading and writing as constitutive of the new education were largely accepted in the fourth century as a stepping-stone for future endeavours, while still by 423 the emerging *paideia* was still ridiculed in Aristophanes' *Clouds*. Whereas Euripides' library gained him the mockery of Aristophanes' comedies,<sup>13</sup> for Aristotle, also famous for his library, the accumulation of written knowledge became a valuable commodity. Aristotle<sup>14</sup> regarded reading and writing as very useful subjects in the education because they lead to other branches of knowledge, such as business, household management, becoming learned (πρὸς μάθησιν), and also political praxis. His contemporary Isocrates furthermore considered that reading and writing were not important for themselves, but because they built the basis for further knowledge.<sup>15</sup> Isocrates went a step further, since «[he] is the ancient author who more than any other establishe[d] writing as a medium of political expression and activity».<sup>16</sup> In fact, most of his political activity was done in writing,<sup>17</sup> since his speeches were carefully prepared in writing, as he clearly expresses in the *Panathenaios* 1-2, and were not always meant to be delivered in public.<sup>18</sup>

The shift from orality to literacy affects not only the production and reception of literature, but as well the preservation and

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<sup>13</sup> *Frogs* 1407-10.

<sup>14</sup> *Politics* 1338 a 19 and 1338a 40.

<sup>15</sup> *Against the Sophist* 10; *Antidosis* 261-67.

<sup>16</sup> Y. L. Too *The Rhetoric of Identity in Isocrates: Text, Power, Pedagogy*, Cambridge, 1995, p. 114.

<sup>17</sup> R. Thomas, «Prose performance Texts: Epideixis and Written Publication in the Late Fifth and Early Fourth Centuries» 162-188 in H. Yunis (ed.) *Written Texts and the Rise of Literate Culture in Ancient Greece* Cambridge, 2003, p. 187 argues that minority views such as Isocrates' could be circulated in writing to avoid the risk of public humiliation.

<sup>18</sup> D. Mirhady-Y. L. Too. (trans) *Isocrates I* Austin, 2000: xvi.

transmission of values.<sup>19</sup> Once these values could also be preserved through the written record, oral poetic traditions were no longer seen as the sole preserver of values and teachers of society. On the other hand, the role of fiction and entertainment of oral poetry was as well transferred to written genres. One of the most important concomitants of the increasing rivalry between oral preservation of values and written preservation seems to be the contemporaneous development of democracy.<sup>20</sup> A society could not have functioned without rules, which had to be first oral, anchored in the religious and ritual practices to guarantee their stability.<sup>21</sup> Democracy seems to have advanced at the same time as more laws were written down and the law could not be manipulated by a certain sector of society. Inscription of the law allowed for its secularization (it is not the religiously binding *themis* which is inscribed), which in turn helped create a new society.

Although literacy did not create democracy «it went a long way toward making it possible and fostering it».<sup>22</sup> The oral *paideia*, based largely on religious traditions, was more immobile than the written one. Although it might seem contradictory, the fact that the laws were written down encouraged a crisis in values. With laws fixed in writing, disagreement could be expressed on a firm basis.<sup>23</sup> Only in this manner can we understand the *nomos-physis* debate raised by the sophists. The *nomos* became not what was traditional, but specifically the written law.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, the written

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<sup>19</sup> The starting point of the debate of oral poetry as transmission of values: E. A. Havelock, *The Literate Revolution in Greece and its Cultural Consequences* (Princeton, 1982, pp. 131-135, 143 and Goody 1968: 31-34, 51.

<sup>20</sup> Harris 1989: 79.

<sup>21</sup> M. Gagarin, *Early Greek Law*, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London, 1986, p. 144 does not believe that there were oral laws. According to him laws only came about with writing. Writing is the key element in the development of a true legal system.

<sup>22</sup> Robb 1994: 136.

<sup>23</sup> cf. Herodotus 3. 82 and Aeschines, *Against Timarchos* 4-5, who assert that tyranny and Oligarchy can manipulate the law, but in democracy laws belong to all.

<sup>24</sup> *contra* see R. Thomas «Literacy and the City-State in Archaic and Classical Greece» 33-50 in A. K. Bowman-G. Wolf (ed.) *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World*, Cambridge, 1994, p. 37.

laws of democracy fostered the oral component in the presentation of the law. In fact, it has been argued that the interpretation of the law, which took place in litigation, encouraged the democratic consciousness as well as Athenian identity.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, the jury was manned in Athens not by professional magistrates, but by a large number of men selected by lot; this made the deliverance of the speeches of utmost importance because they had to be convinced by the litigants of their interpretation. The jurors of the democratic popular courts enjoyed absolute authority and no accountability, both facts which were acknowledged by the litigants. Therefore, the litigants needed to gain the jurors' support.<sup>26</sup>

It does not come as a surprise that oratory and its teachers developed as part of the expansion of the *nomos*.<sup>27</sup> It is not coincidental that the moral relativism proposed by most sophists emerged at the time of most transparency in the laws. For instance, it is remarkable that the number of Athenian public inscriptions containing decrees increased greatly during the 460s,<sup>28</sup> only some years previous to Protagoras' first arrival to Athens (450-445?). The *isonomia* introduced by Cleisthenes made the laws and decrees common property of the Athenians. On the other hand, the increase of laws also raised the need to interpret them. By 461 Ephialtes introduced *isagoria*, through which every man had the right to speak in the assembly. Ephialtes also transferred most of the judicial powers from the Areopagus to the popular courts. Right after this transfer, litigation rose,<sup>29</sup> and consequently, divergent interpretations of the law. These measures facilitated the development of judicial oratory, which was orally delivered, but was mostly composed in

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<sup>25</sup> S. Johnstone *Disputes and Democracy. The Consequences of Litigation in Ancient Athens*, Austin 1999, pp. 44, 132.

<sup>26</sup> M. R. Christ, *The Litigious Athenian*, Baltimore & London, 1998, pp. 16-20.

<sup>27</sup> The logographoi are contemporary to the sophists, cf. Christ 1998: 16. For writing as a prerequisite of rhetoric as a systematic way of thinking see C. L. Johnstone «Origins of the Rhetorical In Archaic Greece» 1-18 in Johnstone C. L. (ed.) *Theory, Text, Context: Issues in Greek Rhetoric and Oratory*, Albany, 1996p. 5.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas 1994: 43.

<sup>29</sup> Christ 1998: 16.

writing,<sup>30</sup> circulated afterwards, and was based on written laws. The figure of the professional writer of speeches, the *logographos*, appeared. This term was previously reserved for the historian, but by the second half of the fifth century it designated as well the person who wrote speeches to be delivered by others, especially at the courts. The use of the same word for two different professions exemplifies how the speeches at court also fulfilled the need for narrative previously accomplished by the histories.

Also the assembly, which decided political matters, set democratic policies through debates. This necessitated as well the development of political rhetoric. This rhetoric also had the danger of becoming important for entertainment reasons, which was noticed by critics of democracy. Opponents of democracy, naturally, expressed the criticism that uneducated masses could not make informed and beneficial decisions and alerted against the figure of the demagogue.<sup>31</sup> For instance, in a very ironic way, Thucydides 3. 38. 4-7 has Cleon complain about the effect that the words have on the assembly, more than the care of the truth.

οἷτινες εἰώθατε θεαταὶ μὲν τῶν λόγων γίνεσθαι, ἀκροαταὶ δὲ τῶν ἔργων, τὰ μὲν μέλλοντα ἔργα ἀπὸ τῶν εὖ εἰπόντων σκοποῦντες ὡς δυνατὰ γίνεσθαι, τὰ δὲ πεπραγμένα ἤδη, οὐ τὸ δραστῆν πιστότερον ὄψει λαβόντες ἢ τὸ ἀκουσθέν, ἀπὸ τῶν λόγῳ καλῶς ἐπιτιμησάντων. [...] ἀπλῶς τε ἀκοῆς ἢ δονῆ ἡσώμενοι καὶ σοφιστῶν θεαταῖς εἰκότες καθημένοις μᾶλλον ἢ περὶ πόλεως βουλευμένοις.

You are accustomed to be *spectators of words and hearers of deeds*, judging future deeds according as how good speakers make them to be feasible, but the deeds that have been already accomplished you judge according to those who reprove them in a beautiful speech, not taking what has been done in front of your sight as more credible than what you have heard. [...] Simply put, you submit to the pleasures of the ear and are more similar to men who sit as *spectators of sophists* than to men who take counsel for the city.

Thucydides, who disliked Cleon and considered him a demagogue, presents him as an opponent to reconsideration of topics debated, and consequently of democracy itself. Thucydides does so by having Cleon accuse the demos of wanting to be entertained. Cleon plays with the topic that the demos is good but ignorant and therefore needs to be sheltered from demagogues.<sup>32</sup> Although

<sup>30</sup> *contra* R. Thomas *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece*, Cambridge, 1992, p. 124.

<sup>31</sup> H. Yunis, *Taming Democracy. Models of Political Rhetoric in Classical Athens*, Ithaca-London, 1996, pp. 40-43.

<sup>32</sup> Yunis 1996: 88-91.



Cleon's opponent in the Mytilenean debate, Diodotus, upholds the need of speeches to guide people's actions (3. 42. 2), he seems to share as well the view concerning the listeners' lack of responsibility and their tendency to be swayed by insincere speakers who seek their favour more than the truth (3. 43. 5). Both of these speeches created by Thucydides show how the deliberative process could collapse in view of political pressures, which encouraged manipulation of language.<sup>33</sup> In other words, speeches were effective inasmuch as they could affect the demos' decisions. Consequently, the entertainment aspect of the speeches was sought. In fact, even if Cleon protests against the dangers of turning a deliberative oration into an epideictic one, ironically he is shown using all types of rhetorical devices in his speech in order to maintain the demos' vote.<sup>34</sup>

It is precisely the fact that (later) written discourses were (first) presented orally that allowed for them to acquire the entertainment value traditionally held by oral poetry.<sup>35</sup> Oral poetry fulfilled two fundamental functions: 1) to preserve values and 2) to entertain. But once the preservation of values was performed through the written law (*nomos*) it follows that democratic society was in turn responsible for creating a new type of public discourse to match the former functions (preserver of values and entertainment) of oral poetry.<sup>36</sup> This, I suggest, was the role of epideictic oratory, one with a higher degree of fictionality and whose style was conceived as being closest to writing.<sup>37</sup> Consequently, public prose tended to assume the role of entertainment, no longer exclusive of poetic genres. For

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<sup>33</sup> M. C. Leff, «Agency, Performance, and Interpretation in Thucydides Account of the Mytilene Debate» 87-96 in Johnstone C. L., 1996, p. 95.

<sup>34</sup> Yunis 1996: 91.

<sup>35</sup> About when the discourses were written in relation to the oral presentation see Thomas 2003.

<sup>36</sup> Perhaps it is symptomatic that laws as well as Homer and tragedy were placed at the agora in the Metroon primarily to avoid manipulation and particular use and to guarantee their status as common possession. Cf. C. Dué, «Poetry and the Demos: State Regulation of a Civic Possession», in C. W. Blackwell (ed.) *Demos: Classical Athenian Democracy* (A. Mahoney and R. Scaife (eds.) *The Stoa: a consortium for electronic publication in the humanities*) (January 31 2003), 2003.

<sup>37</sup> Aristotle *Rhetoric* 3.12.5.

instance, Herodotus' prologue to his *Histories* demonstrates this author's consciousness of the entertainment value of his written work, which was orally read, anyways. Epideictic oratory with its fictitious trials and poetic language devices was meant to entertain, Gorgias is a good example of this. Yet epideictic oratory was modelled on real trials and political deliberations, thus it could also be used to educate the masses «in a marked political setting».<sup>38</sup> Besides the characteristic entertainment value, it could also possess a greater social function, just as oral poetry did.

Oral tradition is grounded in human need for narrative. It is not enough to speak in order to communicate immediate dangers or emotions, but deep emotional needs are resolved through communication of stories. Aristotle talks about the cathartic effect of seeing someone suffering and about spectators being moved to pity.<sup>39</sup> Human beings all have this cathartic need, the need to hear and visualize other persons' joys and sufferings with which they can also identify. Our curiosity for other ways of living and other people's destiny is insatiable. It is this aspect of oral tradition that needs to be explored as well when analysing the impact of the shift from orality towards literacy. The Homeric poems do not express that the stories should teach the audience.<sup>40</sup> The internal audience of Phemius, Demodocus or Odysseus, however, is always delighted or at least shows an emotional response, as Penelope's or Odysseus' crying. This emotional response is sought, not teaching. This is no different than Cleon's complaint that the members of the assembly have become spectators of the sophists. The use of the word «spectators» implies a visual way of acquiring knowledge, not an aural one. This in turn implies literacy.<sup>41</sup>

The sophists' preoccupation with adorning speeches became prominent in judicial and political oratory, which according to Cleon's complaint was closer to fictional literature than to the truth. In an

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<sup>38</sup> Yunis 1996: 82.

<sup>39</sup> *Poetics* 1449a.

<sup>40</sup> Exception perhaps is the Meleager story told by Phoinix to Achilles in *Iliad* 9. 527–599.

<sup>41</sup> J. Svenbro, *Phrasikleia: An Anthropology of Reading in Ancient Greece*, Ithaca, 1993, pp. 182–186. For a metaphor of the spectator as the reader see also T. Duff, *Plutarch's Lives: Exploring Virtue and Vice*, Oxford, 1999, pp. 38–43.

effort to make speeches more than entertainment and defend their closeness to the truth, Thucydides, who intended to purify the Homeric inheritance (that is to say the residual oral *paideia*), lets Pericles say in the funeral oration that Athenians needed no Homer or any other poet to praise their achievements (2. 41. 4). During the whole fifth century, even the fourth, writers like Thucydides and Plato fought against the Homeric inheritance because they saw themselves as more sophisticated and intellectually advanced and no longer associated the Homeric inheritance with education. Rather they saw it mostly in terms of pleasure. For the same reason they also fought the sophists and the political system that allowed the presentation of political and judicial issues as if they were the traditional contests of poetry.<sup>42</sup> In other words, the development of democracy that so much encouraged the employment of public oratory allowed it to be conceived as a literary genre, that is to say a genre valued for its entertainment aspect.

Associated with the classical period, and more concretely with democracy, we find the new Attic prose genres of history, philosophy, and oratory. The first two were in fact not new, but they had been previously composed in the Ionic dialect and it was under the democracy that they acquired new status. These two genres have in common the reproduction of oral debates or agonistic discourses, which reflect how literary prose was intended to mirror an oral culture that remained an essential social process. Oratory was not only a genre by itself, but was incorporated into the written discourse as «secondary orality». The interest in agonistic opinions that democracy sustained became a characteristic of classical prose. Written prose mirrored the oral society, but most importantly displaced poetry in this task.

#### FUNERAL ORATIONS

The funeral speeches achieved this displacement of oral poetry through their association with democratic values. In the funeral orations democracy was portrayed as existing since the inception of Athens itself. This is evident in Lysias' *Funeral Oration* (17-18):

ἀλλ' αὐτόχθονες ὄντες τὴν αὐτὴν ἐκέκτημιτο μητέρα καὶ πατρίδα. πρῶτοι δὲ καὶ μόνοι ἐν ἐκείνῳ τῷ χρόνῳ ἐκβαλόντες τὰς παρὰ σφίσιν αὐτοῖς δυναστείας δημοκρατίαν κατεστήσαντο, ἡγούμενοι τὴν πάντων ἐλευθερίαν ὁμόνοιαν εἶναι μεγίστην, κοινὰς δ' ἀλλήλοις

<sup>42</sup> cf. Lysias *Funeral Oration* 2.

τὰς ἐκ τῶν κινδύνων ἐλπίδας ποιήσαντες ἐλευθέραις ταῖς ψυχαῖς ἐπολιτεύοντο, νόμῳ τοὺς ἀγαθοὺς τιμῶτες καὶ τοὺς κακοὺς κολάζοντες.

[our ancestors] were autochthonous and possessed the same mother and fatherland. They were the first and the only ones in that time to establish a *democracy* driving out the ruling classes among them, for they believed the freedom of all to be the greatest unity; and making common to each other the hopes born of the danger they ruled with free souls, *honouring the good and punishing the evil* with the law.

Notice here how the written law is used as a means of praise and blame. These were essential constituents of oral poetics. This is to say that values previously transmitted through epic were transmitted through the writing not only of the law, but also of funeral speeches since they were added by the law to the burial practices as a way of «honouring the good» (Thucydides 2. 34. 1 and 2. 35. 1). The funeral oration celebrates democratic law.

Also in Plato's parody in the *Menexenos*, Aspasia, the alleged speaker of a funeral oration, shares the view that democracy always existed, and even identifies it with aristocracy (238c). Although Plato's intention might have been to criticize democracy, the identification of democracy with aristocracy within the context of the funeral oration implies an identification of the oration as a democratic genre with aristocratic oral poetic genres, especially the epic as its major representative. After the identification of both genres, used to apprehend Athenian identity, the next step is the insistence of the speeches' superiority over epic, thus completing the displacement. This is shown through the nature of orations itself.

Funeral orations belong to the so-called epideictic oratory, which according to Aristotle *Rhetoric* 1. 3. 2 expresses the praise or blame of the characters and has as its end the noble or the disgraceful. Aristotle's words alone make us assume that the poetry of praise has been substituted by the prose of praise. Most of the individuals praised through epideictic oratory were mythical like Helen or Palamedes in Gorgias' famous encomia. Epideictic orations were as fictive as epic or Pindaric poetry. They too made allusions to mythical and real ancestors in comparison to the present fallen. Rosalind Thomas analyzes the funeral speech in terms of the «official» *polis* tradition. She thinks that the funeral oration was introduced as part of the process of restricting aristocratic funerals. This implies that the poetry performed at these private burials (elegies/ epic) was replaced by the prose spoken in a collective way. On the other

hand, it is clear for her, after comparing the historians' accounts to the content of the orations, that these were fictional accounts that avoided defeat, or the immoralities of war, to concentrate on Athenian virtue and justice. They also concentrated on achievements in war rather than on civic achievements.<sup>43</sup>

Gorgias, who is said to have composed the first funeral oration, based his rhetoric on the ontological difference between reality and language. Aristotle defines poetry in the *Poetics* 1451a as a genre that narrates events the way they could have happened according to what is probable and necessary, not the way they were, as does history. Speeches too created an alternative reality by presenting events the way they should be, rather than the way they were. Rhetoric introduced a gap between reality and discourse, since rhetoric was not primarily concerned with truth, but with what was probable (*eikos*), and in that sense rhetoric is like poetry.

Epideictic oratory, which was concerned with praise or blame, represented in prose what previously was expressed through poetry: epinicia, elegies, and epic. Epideictic speeches included, as well as funeral orations, speeches at athletic games; epinicia were no longer composed after Pindar's death. In fact, orators like Gorgias, Lysias, and Isocrates are known to have written speeches to be delivered at the occasion of the Olympic games, not praising a concrete individual, but addressing pan-Hellenic concerns not unexpectedly favoring Athens' claims to hegemony. Thus we see in this instance how the transition from an oral society to a literate one was visible in Greece in the shift from poetry to prose.

Also in *Rhetoric* 1. 3. 2, Aristotle classified the audience of the epideictic speeches as *theoroi*- «spectators». The reader in Greece was also understood to be a spectator. Just as a person passively contemplated the theatre, a reader passively lent his vocal organs to the writer, since the reader's voice was not controlled by himself, but by the written text.<sup>44</sup> The passive *spectator* of the funeral speech implies a society that was leaning towards written records more than oral ones. Poetry and prose (*logos*) were not mutually exclusive, they occurred at the same time. But certainly Greek society in the classical period was leaning towards the

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<sup>43</sup> Thomas 1989: 197-237.

<sup>44</sup> Svenbro 1993: 62-63,186.

*logos*. According to the sophists, *logos* was attainable by everybody who was willing to pay to learn the technique. The poet ceased to be considered a wise man, and poetry (other than theatre) no longer had a place in the democratic city. Plato's *Symposium* offers a symptomatic example: it substituted the traditional sympotic poetry with learned speeches and in this dialogue even drama had to yield its place to philosophical prose.

In the fifth century, what poets said was considered «untrue, impossible, improbable, inconsistent or concerned with matters that someone other than the poet could speak with greater authority».<sup>45</sup> Classical Athens was shifting from a society in which poetry implied a divine sanction to a secular society where «the supernatural is not needed and the myth becomes a mere annex to history».<sup>46</sup> As mentioned above, Thucydides (2. 41. 4) recalled Pericles' saying that the Athenians needed no Homer to sing their virtues. Epic belonged to the past, and the new society had a new literature that was expressed in prose. Thucydides, who conceived his history as a «possession for all time», *wrote in prose*, he did not compose in verse. In 1. 21. 1 Thucydides claims to purge his work of the mythic. In doing so his history is not entertaining like his predecessors. Poetry, specifically epic, was no longer needed to maintain the values of the society. By the time the funeral speeches emerged, the Homeric text was probably definitive. Homeric poetry was no longer composed, it was just repeated in performance and even read at schools as a residue of the old *paideia*. Outside the classroom, funeral speeches took over the place of the epics in a society in transition from orality to literacy, as much as speeches at athletics games took over the role of epinician poetry.

Before the speeches, writing was used to record the memory of the dead on a tomb stone. The epigrams engraved on the tombs claimed that they would last forever. Epigrams began to be recorded in the sixth century and were more common in later periods as writing spread. Thomas notices how there seems to have been a law forbidding funeral monuments around 480 until 430, since

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<sup>45</sup> T. Cole, *The Origins of Rhetoric in Ancient Greece*, Baltimore and London, 1991, p. 34.

<sup>46</sup> N. Loraux, *The Invention of Athens. The Funeral Oration in the Classical City*, Harvard, 1986, p. 53.

for these fifty years we lack inscriptions of that kind.<sup>47</sup> This would have certainly been a measure to curb private memorials and foster public ones. Even if the funeral speech is dated to the time after the Persian Wars, the first actual extant testimony is Pericles' speech at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War. This gap seems to be the time for which Thomas assumes the existence of such a law. The lack of inscriptions reflects, in my opinion, not so much the existence of a prohibition, as the struggle between written and oral display of funeral practices. Oral poetry associated with funerals had been exclusive to certain privileged classes. During archaic times inscribed *stele* belonged largely to aristocratic classes. Since the democratic city discouraged private glorification at funerals, both practices were closed to citizens. With the consolidation of the funeral oration, the social stigma associated with funerary monuments disappeared and inscriptions opened up as means of remembrance for middle and lower class citizens. Consequently, writing on funerary monuments became democratic because it was available to larger sectors of society. Rich people still had other means of self-portrayal, but poorer people had, through writing, an instrument of remembrance. Conversely, this released the public oration from naming the fallen publicly. In Pericles' speech, the speaker insists on the power of oral praise beyond any grave markers,<sup>48</sup> and thus emphasizes the public instead of the private. The families preserved their names, but the speeches had the ability to generalize beyond the individual family and remember them as a collective and not as individuals. The oration was a genre understandable only in the context of democracy.

Plato, in his dialogue the *Menexenos*, parodies a speech that Socrates attributes to Aspasia. It is probably the same Periclean speech that Thucydides reproduced. In this speech it is important to notice that Socrates is conscious of the fictional character of the speeches, so he says about them: —*with the splendor and variety of their diction, they bewitch the soul* (235a). It is clear that Socrates (or Plato) does not acknowledge the orations as being «true», because they ascribe to a person both what he has done and what

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<sup>47</sup> Thomas 1994: 38.

<sup>48</sup> D. T. Steiner, *The Tyrant's Writ. Myth and Images of Writing in Ancient Greece*, Princeton, 1994, p. 141.

he has not done (234c). The dialogue raises as well the question of improvisation and preparation, probably by writing, although this is never expressed clearly. Socrates starts:

Καὶ μὴν, ὦ Μενέξενε, πολλαχῆ κινδυνεύει καλὸν εἶναι τὸ ἐν πολέμῳ ἀποθνήσκειν. Καὶ γὰρ ταφῆς καλῆς τε καὶ μεγαλοπρεποῦς τυγχάνει [...] καὶ ἐπαίνου αὐ ἔτυχε [...] ὑπ' ἀνδρῶν σοφῶν τε καὶ οὐκ εἰκῆ ἐπαίνουόντων, ἀλλὰ ἐκ πολλοῦ χρόνου λόγους παρεσκευασμένον.

In truth, Menexenos, in many ways it seems that to fall in battle is beautiful. For a man obtains a beautiful and sumptuous funeral [...] he wins praise, [...] at the hand of wise men who do not praise by chance, but in speeches prepared long beforehand. (234c)

ME. νῦν μέντοι οἶμαι ἐγὼ τὸν αἰρεθέντα οὐ πάνυ εὐπορήσειν· ἐξ ὑπογίου γὰρ παντάπασις ἢ αἴρσεις γέγονεν, ὥστε ἴσως ἀναγκασθήσεται ὁ λέγων ὥσπερ αὐτοσχεδιάζειν.

ΣΩ. Πόθεν, ὦ ἄγαθέ; εἰσὶν ἐκάστοις τούτων λόγοι παρεσκευασμένοι, καὶ ἅμα οὐδὲ αὐτοσχεδιάζειν τά γε τοιαῦτα χαλεπόν.

Men.: and I truly think that now the selected speaker will not be too successful; for the selection has been made completely unexpectedly, so that the speaker will likely be obliged to *improvise*.

Soc.: why so, my good sir? Each one of these men has speeches *ready made*, and at the same time it is not difficult to improvise such things. (235 c-d)

ME. Καὶ τί ἂν ἔχοις εἰπεῖν, εἰ δέοι σε λέγειν;

ΣΩ. Αὐτὸς μὲν παρ' ἔμαυτοῦ, ἴσως οὐδέν, ἄσπασίας δὲ καὶ χθὲς ἠκροώμην περαινούσης ἐπιτάφιον λόγον περὶ αὐτῶν τούτων. ἠκούσε γὰρ ἄπερ σὺ λέγεις, ὅτι μέλλοιεν Ἀθηναῖοι αἰρεῖσθαι τὸν ἐροῦντα· ἔπειτα τὰ μὲν ἐκ τοῦ παραχρημά μοι διήξει, ὅσα δέοι λέγειν, τὰ δὲ πρότερον ἐσκεμμένα, ὅτε μοι δοκεῖ συνετίθει τὸν ἐπιτάφιον λόγον, ὃν Περικλῆς εἶπε, περιλείμματ' ἄττα ἐξ ἐκείνου συγκολλῶσα.

Men.: And what could say, if you were required to speak?

Soc.: I by myself, perhaps, nothing; but yesterday I was listening to Aspasia trying out a funeral speech for these same men. For she heard just what you say, that the Athenians were going to select the speaker; and afterwards she delivered to me some parts out of improvisation, such as one ought to speak, other parts she had *previously prepared*, it seems to me from the time when she composed the funeral oration which Pericles delivered, *gluing together* fragments of it. (236a-b)

Although certainly there is room for oral improvisation at the moment of delivery, I believe that the verb *συγκολλάω* «I glue together» is an indication that the prepared composition of the speeches was done by writing. It implies a material, like papyrus, to cut and paste. It parallels, on the other hand, the verb *ῥαψωδέω* «I recite poems» which is conceived as sewing together different parts of poems. Although the metaphor in both cases is similar, perhaps Plato's conscious avoidance of the term *ῥαψωδέω*, which belonged to poetry, indicates a new type of composition, namely a written one. On the other hand, having the speeches prepared beforehand implies



a fixed set of topics which do not compete with the poetic topics but try to complete the body of Athenian mythological and ideological models. Socrates comments on the topics in the speeches:

Ἐυμόλπου μὲν οὖν καὶ Ἀμαζόνων ἐπιστρατευσάντων ἐπὶ τὴν χώραν καὶ τῶν ἐπιπροτέρων ὡς ἠμύναντο, καὶ ὡς ἦμυναν Ἀργεῖοις πρὸς Καδμείους καὶ Ἡρακλείδαις πρὸς Ἀργεῖους, ὃ τε χρόνος βραχὺς ἀξίως διηγήσασθαι, ποιηταὶ τε αὐτῶν ἤδη ἰκανῶς τὴν ἀρετὴν ἐν μουσικῇ ὑμνήσαντες εἰς πάντας μεμνηύκασιν· ἐὰν οὖν ἡμεῖς ἐπιχειρῶμεν τὰ αὐτὰ λόγῳ ψιλῶ κοσμεῖν, τάχ' ἂν δεῦτεροι φανοίμεθα. [...] ὧν δὲ οὐτε ποιητῆς πω δόξαν ἀξίαν ἐπ' ἀξίοις λαβῶν ἔχει ἐτι τ' ἔστιν ἐν ἀμνηστία, τούτων πέρι μοι δοκεῖ χρῆναι ἐπιμνησθῆναι ἐπαινοῦντά τε καὶ προμνῶμενον ἄλλοις ἐς ὧδ' αὖτε καὶ τὴν ἄλλην ποίησιν αὐτὰ θεῖναι πρεπόντως τῶν πραξάντων.

Our time is too short to narrate worthily the story of Eumolpus and the Amazons when they attacked the country and how they expelled still previous invaders, and how they defended the Argives against the Cadmeians and the Heracleidae against the Argives. The poets already sufficiently have shown to all their virtue by *celebrating in songs*; and so, if we were to attempt to adorn the same achievement *in plain prose*, we would quickly come second. [...] But those *deeds for which no poet has yet received deserving renown* for worthy cause, and which lie still in oblivion, it seems to me that is necessary to remember them, praising them myself but *entreating others to put them in songs and in another form of poetry* adequately to those who did them. (239b-c)

Funeral speeches were an alternative to poetry (oral and composed in verse) and at the same time they were also conceived as a future source for them. Speeches were closely connected to the burial ritual. However, this ritual was mostly civic and primarily secular. This means that the connection between word and rite no longer rested on a religious or magical power of the words, but on a «rhetorical» power of words carefully and studiously crafted by a (paid) professional.

A further example of a funeral speech that attempts to displace epic is to be found in Lysias. Lysias' funeral speech was written in honor of the Athenians who died helping the Corinthians in 393. This speech was written almost forty years after Pericles supposedly made his famous speech. Lysias perhaps wrote this speech (its authenticity is doubted), but he did not deliver it, since his metic status would have barred him. Lysias was a *logographos* —«a writer of (prose) speeches». In fact, we do not know if this speech was actually performed; its written character is certainly predominant. Besides the «epic» themes that already appeared in Pericles' speech (not fearing death, the dead being always remembered, the imperishable memory that the city acquired through the courageous deeds of the fallen, and the propaedeutic purpose of their actions), Lysias informs us in his speech about the circumstances of praise. His very first statement is that with

the speech he will declare in prose (*logos*) the virtue of the dead. The valor of the dead has provided the material which not only speeches (*eipein*) but also poetry (*poiein*) would talk about. Lysias expects other writers/ poets to make use of the topics.

The content of the speeches itself seems to be more reduced. In fact, Thucydides (Pericles), Plato, Lysias and Demosthenes mention almost the same mythical and historical episodes, although all asserted they could have included many other examples. It seems that there is a conscious avoidance of competing directly with poetry because as Socrates fears speeches might come only second. On the other hand, by declaring themselves a source of poetry, prose speeches are claiming their primordial role in the citizen's education. There is a reversal in the concept that poetry is the main source of education. As we have noticed, Homer was the principal book used in the schools. However, the educational role of Homeric poetry was questioned outside the schools in different levels of society. The message that the speeches stress is that even poetry like Homer's originated in prose (written) speeches. We see in the next quotation how Lysias states that he is not competing against the paradigm of epic poetry, but against that of other speeches.

ὅμως δὲ ὁ μὲν λόγος μοι περὶ τούτων, ὁ δὲ ἀγὼν οὐ πρὸς τὰ τούτων ἔργα ἀλλὰ πρὸς τοὺς πρότερον ἐπ' αὐτοῖς εἰρηκότας. τοσαύτην γὰρ ἀφθοῖαν παρεσκεύασεν ἡ τούτων ἀρετὴ καὶ τοῖς ποιεῖν δυναμένοις καὶ τοῖς εἰπεῖν βουλευθείσιν, ὥστε κατὰ μὲν πολλὰ τοῖς προτέροις περὶ αὐτῶν εἰρησθαι, πολλὰ δὲ καὶ ἐκείνοις παραλελείφθαι, ἱκανὰ δὲ καὶ τοῖς ἐπιγιγνομένοις ἐξεῖναι εἰπεῖν.

My speech is about these men, nevertheless, my *contest* is not with their deeds, but with those who *have spoken* about them before. For their virtue has provided such abundance, for those who are able *to compose in verse* and for those who have wished to *make a speech*, that many beautiful things have been spoken about them by my predecessors, but many things have been omitted by them, enough for those who succeed them to be able to speak. (2)

Note how the term *eipein* has changed in meaning from denoting «epic» to denoting speaking in prose. The fact that even the funeral oration can be part of a contest informs us about it having assumed the role of poetry. In fact, the actual prose praise would provide material for more poetry. This confirms once more the idea that the speeches were not accurate with respect to the truth, but were fictionalized accounts, which took over the role of epic poetry. However, the fact that they have to delimit their topics and stress that they are praising heroes, also expresses the uneasiness of the transition from an oral to a literate society.

Lysias announces his intention to remember the famous deeds of ancestors who had inspired the actions of the recent dead. He says that there are things worth being remembered both «by singing hymns» and «by telling them in prose utterances of the good ones». «To sing a hymn» was part of the technical language of the epic. It is symptomatic that there was no need to characterize the songs as being either positive or negative, while the prose utterances needed to be clarified as the ones of «the good people». Until then «the good» or noble were associated with poetry at the banquets and in the *epinicia* (cf. Theognis and Pindar). With Lysias we find a reversal of this situation: poetry did not belong to the «good» ones any longer, prose did. However, prose extended the character of being «good» to a larger sector of the population. In that sense there is an association between oral poetry and aristocratic ideals and written prose and democracy.<sup>49</sup>

Lysias starts his praise by describing those ancestors who had defeated mythological adversaries: those who fought the Amazons, those who took part in the campaign of the Seven against Thebes, and those who defended the Heracleidae fleeing from Eurystheus. These topics were also explored in the tragedy and iconography of Athens. The speech reinforced a common ideological background with which all the citizens could identify. Since the epic was not a genre that transmitted democratic values, it came to be controlled by the institutionalized performances at the Panathenaia. Other epics outside the festival disappeared, because they did not contribute to the civic ideology. Lysias also speaks here about anonymous Athenians, rather than about an actual hero, since this would work against the conventions created during the vigor of democratic ideals. The speech continues praising the historical ancestors, those «born out of them» who surpassed them in valour: the heroes of Marathon, Artemisium, Salamis, and Plataea, who presumably received a funeral oration of the kind that Lysias was composing. We do not know for sure if any orations were spoken for the dead from the Persian wars, but certainly the dead were

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<sup>49</sup> The term «good» is highly ideologically charged. It is therefore very important for the speaker to refer to the democratic audience with this term. Cf. Yunis 1996: 39.

given heroic honors, which consequently established the precedent for the orations.<sup>50</sup>

Mythological and historical examples serve the same goal: to teach future generations while exalting the past ones. There is, however, an important difference between an epic and a funeral speech: the first is composed in verse, and by the times of Lysias seems not to have been common any longer, the second is in prose and uses the current form of appealing to the courage of the Athenian people. This, in an indirect way, makes prose better than poetry, since the people praised in prose are better than those praised by poetry. Lysias closes his speech with the assertion that there is no need for lamentation, since death is certain —what could be more in accordance with the epic than that? It is not themes that separate the epic from the funeral speeches. Instead, the older oral poetic genre was substituted by a newer written prose genre which was able to express the same ideas and fulfill the same function in a society that was undergoing profound changes.

The coexistence of verse and prose composition reoccurs as well in Demosthenes' funeral oration. Demosthenes was in charge of the performance of the public speech for the dead at the battle of Chaironea in 338. As Lysias before him, Demosthenes mentions the possibility of praising the dead by means of songs or speeches. He also refers to mythical and real ancestors. Demosthenes is conscious that the real ancestors are not part of a myth yet, because of the short time that has elapsed since their death. He says in paragraph 9:

Τῶν μὲν οὖν εἰς μύθους ἀνενηνεγμένων ἔργων πολλὰ παραλιπῶν τούτων ἐπεμνήσθη  
 ὧν οὕτως ἕκαστον εὐσχήμονας καὶ πολλοὺς ἔχει λόγους ὥστε καὶ τοὺς ἑμμέτρους καὶ  
 τοὺς τῶν ἀδομένων ποιητὰς καὶ πολλοὺς τῶν συγγραφέων ὑποθέσεις τάκεινων ἔργα τῆς  
 αὐτῶν μουσικῆς πεποιῆσθαι. ἃ δὲ τῇ μὲν ἀξία τῶν ἔργων οὐδέν ἐστι τούτων ἐλάττω, τῷ  
 δ' ὑπογλιότερ' εἶναι τοῖς χρόνοις οὕτω μεμυθολόγηται οὐδ' εἰς τὴν ἡρωικὴν ἐπανήκται  
 τάξιν, ταῦτ' ἤδη λέξω.

Omitting many of the adventures narrated in myths, I have remembered those of which each of them has many and elegant stories, so that the poets in meter and in song as well as many historians have made the deeds of these men their subjects in their own arts. What I am about to say [the deeds of the dead] is in its worth in nothing inferior to the deeds of those [the ancestors], however, because of the closeness to our times *has not yet been mythologized, nor praised in the epic way.*

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<sup>50</sup> Loraux 1986: 29- 30.

With these words, Demosthenes establishes a connection between funeral orations and the epic. The deeds of the previous generations have given to poets and historians much to discuss—the present deeds are praised through his oration. Demosthenes sets his oration on the same level as poetry. Prose was, at his time, the new way to praise persons. But time and repetition of the speeches were presumably responsible for the mythologizing process by progressively embellishing the narration. Some of the ancestors that Demosthenes mentions in his speech were the subject of tragedies, which was the democratic way of doing poetry. This implies that mythologizing and composing in an epic mode might have been different activities. Conscious as he was of the orator's role in society, Demosthenes compares the honor he thinks that he should gain from delivering his speech to the honor that victors in athletic competitions win. He could have instead been designated to pay for the organization of an athletic competition in order to show the courage of the men. Since he has been designated to compose the speech, however, he hopes to get the same recognition as those who either possess the riches to pay for the contests, or the speed or strength to win them. Demosthenes also connects the funeral orations to athletic competitions, reinforcing the connection between epic, games, and death, seen now from a democratic perspective.

Another very interesting point is that Demosthenes believes that the Athenians died so courageously in battle not only because of their «origin, education and habituation to high standard of conduct» (27), but also because of the political system in which they lived (25-26). Democracy inspires people to die courageously because in a democracy praise and blame act as stimuli. In the governments of the few, citizens are plagued by fear and their sense of shame is not awakened. It is noteworthy that Demosthenes assimilates the old dualism praise/ blame with the political institution of democracy. Aristocratic ideals have been assimilated to the democracy. On the other hand, the few who, in previous political systems, claimed the right to praise and be praised now inspire fear in the citizens. Democracy praises and blames in prose speeches which, in Demosthenes' words, are not yet epic. Democracy does not have an epic, although it appropriates its way of expression and its poetic categories. Epic is a genre from the time before democracy. Democracy has made it possible for every citizen to be

praised for his courage, which was previously the prerogative of a select few people. It is understandable then that democracy would not promote epic as a valid genre, since it addressed the few and not all citizens.

As a last example I would like to comment shortly on Hyperides' funeral oration. What is remarkable about this oration, pronounced in 322, is that it praises the general Leosthenes by naming him and presenting Athenian achievements as his own. The oration is totally unusual in that it praises an individual. Ironically, it is spoken for those who fell fighting in the Lamian war through which the Athenians revolted against Macedon after Alexander's death. Even if Leosthenes is contrasted to Philip and Alexander, he receives praise in terms of an extraordinary general. In fact, the speech emphasizes the need of a strong leader and felicitates the Athenians for choosing Leosthenes. This oration is perhaps a confirmation that, even for Athenians, times had indeed changed and democracy was no longer a valid political option. Funeral orations, which were closely tied to democracy, could not survive it. So when democracy disappeared, so did the orations and with them the praise of the anonymous dead.

Unlike in previous orations, there is no mention about the role of the poet in comparison to the speaker and hardly any reference to the mythical past, as if the democratic paradigms were no longer valid. It is rather strange and perhaps an attempt to replace mythical and religious paradigms that Hyperides conceives Leosthenes being greeted in the underworld by the heroes of the past, specifically by those who fought at Troy. These heroes are no longer part of the present life of the city, but live in the remote and inaccessible underworld, also a symptom of the weariness of epic. This description does not only express new religious values, but also disentangles itself from (male) collective ideology. Indeed, Hyperides claims that the Trojan heroes fought on behalf of a wronged woman, whereas Leosthenes saved all Greek women from being wronged. Leosthenes is, therefore, a greater hero than those who fought at Troy. The motives for the fight are brought into the private sphere, since it is not a way of life that is at stake. Right from the start Hyperides says that whatever he might leave unsaid the audience can complete, because they also have been witnesses of the heroic deeds of the fallen. Consequently, Hyperides is leaving the praise to each one's personal recollection and reducing it to the

present actions. The only historical characters that are praised are Miltiades and Themistocles as well as Harmodius and Aristogiton. Interestingly, they are mentioned by name but their achievements are not. Hyperides cannot recount any glorious Athenian deed. He only states that Athens shines like the sun among the other cities in Greece. Silencing the past and turning it into a private matter is symptomatic of the decline of Athenian democracy.

#### CONCLUSION

All cultural manifestations of a certain period work cohesively to represent this period. The transition from orality to literacy during the classical times cannot be separated from the creation of new genres and substitution and abandonment of old ones. Literary styles and tastes respond to deeper changes in society. During the fifth and especially the fourth centuries the development of prose genres is symptomatic of the expansion of literacy to different levels of society. The values expressed in oral poetry or in written prose were modified according to the political circumstances. Epic, sympotic poetry, and epinicia were conceived as aristocratic products. That is why democracy needed a new vehicle to express the communal identity. The funeral oration appears to be such a vehicle. Drawing from mythical and historical examples, it shows a consistent connection with epic, yet it manages to express democratic ideals. When democracy was no longer viable, funeral orations changed too and did no longer praise the anonymous warrior, but the successful general. Funeral orations attest to a changing society and assumed the social role of the epic in the new literacy oriented society.

BERTOLÍN CEBRIÁN, Reyes, «The Funeral Oration as Alternative to Homeric Poetry in Classical Athens», *SPhV* 8 (2005), pp. 1-15.

#### RESUMEN

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La épica oral posee la doble función de transmitir valores a las generaciones venideras y de entretener al público presente. Como

consecuencia del paso de oralidad a escritura la épica ya no se compuso en la ciudad clásica. Los atenienses desarrollaron la oratoria epideíctica, y concretamente, la oración fúnebre para sustituir a la épica en ambas funciones.

PALABRAS CLAVE: oralidad, escritura, discurso funebre, retórica política, democracia y oratoria.

#### ABSTRACT

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Oral epic had a double function. On the one hand, it was a way to transmit values and, on the other, it was used to entertain audiences. As epic ceased to be composed in the classical polis as consequence of the shift from orality to literacy, Athenians developed epideictic oratory, and more specifically the funeral oration, as a way to account for both purposes of epic.

KEYWORDS: orality, literacy, funeral oration, political rhetoric, democracy and oratory.