THE FUNERAL ORATION PROJECT: PERICLES AND BEYOND

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Abstract

In democratic Athens a funeral speech was regularly delivered for citizens who had died in war. In 1981, Nicole Loraux published a transformational study of this genre. Loraux claimed that the funeral oration had played the central role in maintaining a stable Athenian identity for two centuries. In spite of its huge impact, her *The Invention of Athens* was far from complete. It did not compare the funeral oration with the other genres of Athenian popular literature. Loraux was thus not able to prove three of her bold claims about the genre. She also left many important questions about the five extant funeral speeches unanswered. I am directing a large international project to complete *The Invention of Athens*. The Funeral Oration Project is undertaking the intertextual analysis that Loraux did not attempt. Project-members first met in Strasbourg in 2018. There was a second meeting in Lyon in 2020. Cambridge University Press is going to publish our nineteen chapters in 2022. This article summarises some of our preliminary results. It focusses on those chapters in our edited volume that directly confirm or refute Loraux's three bold claims. It discusses another chapter that answers important questions about the famous funeral speech of Pericles.

Key-words: Athens – Funeral oration – Athenian democracy – Athenian literature – N. Loraux

Resumen

En la Atenas democrática se pronunciaba regularmente un discurso fúnebre por los ciudadanos que habían muerto en guerra. En 1981, Nicole Loraux publicó un estudio innovador sobre este género. Loraux pretendía que la oración fúnebre había desempeñado el papel central en mantener una estable identidad ateniense por dos siglos. A pesar de su alto impacto, su *Invention d'Athènes* estaba lejos de ser completa. No comparaba la oración funeral con los otros géneros de la literatura popular ateniense. Así, Loraux no pudo probar tres de sus audaces afirmaciones sobre el género. Dejó también sin respuesta muchas preguntas importantes acerca de los cinco discursos fúnebres existentes. Yo estoy dirigiendo un gran proyecto internacional para completar *L'Invention d'Athènes.* El "Funeral Oration Project" está emprendiendo el análisis intertextual que Loraux no intentó. Los integrantes del Proyecto se encontraron la primera vez en Estrasburgo en 2018. Hubo una segunda reunión en Lyon en 2020. La Cambridge University Press va a publicar nuestros diecinueve capítulos en 2022. Este artículo resume algunos de nuestros resultados preliminares. Se enfoca en esos capítulos de nuestro volumen editado que directamente corroboran o refutan las tres audaces afirmaciones de Loraux. Discute otro capítulo que responde importantes preguntas acerca del famoso discurso fúnebre de Pericles.

Palabras clave: Atenas – Oración fúnebre – Democracia ateniense – Literatura ateniense – N. Loraux

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THE FUNERAL ORATION PROJECT: PERICLES AND BEYOND

David M. Pritchard

1. Forty Years after Nicole Loraux

Australians continue to study the celebrated funeral oration attributed to Pericles at school and at university.[1] Often the French are surprised to learn this. For them, Australia is simply a distant land with fierce bushfires and strange animals. Yet, studying ancient Greece in Australia dates back to the arrival of Europeans here two centuries ago.[2] The first colonial leaders of our country feared that civilisation would be lost. Europe was very far away and most of their fellow colonists were convicted criminals. Consequently, they saw it as an urgent task to inculcate such convicts in the core values of the European Enlightenment. These leaders saw studying ancient Greece at school as an important way to achieve this.

The French are no less surprised to learn that Australians come to France to research ancient Greece. They understand why Australian

[1] This article was first delivered as a public lecture for the Queensland History Teachers's Association. I sincerely thank Pip Macdonald for the invitation to speak to QHTA members in 2021. Two fellowships in France have made it possible for me to lead the Funeral Oration Project. The first fellowship, in 2018, was at l'Institut d'études avancées de l'université de Strasbourg and the second, in 2019-20, at le Collegium de Lyon, where I was also an associate member of the Lyon-based HiSoMA. The abbreviations of ancient authors and their works come from the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* and those of journals from *L'Année philologique*. Unless it is indicated otherwise, all translations are my own.

[2] E.g. Pritchard 2020.

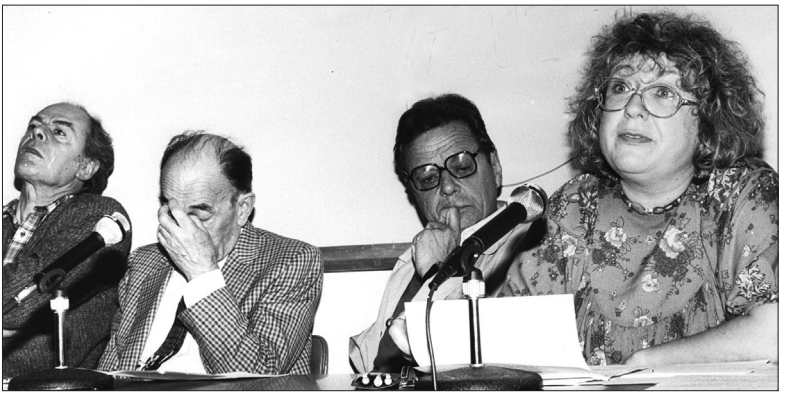

Figura 1: Nicole Loraux habla en una conferencia en Montrouge (Paris) en 1987, junto a Claude Lefort, Louis Dumont y François Furet (de izquierda a derecha). Fotógrafo: Grig Pop. Paris, l'École des hautes études en sciences sociales, neg. no. 152 EHE 520.

philosophers might go there. It is a matter of French national pride that 'French theory' conquered the Anglophone world in the 1980s.[3] But few French realise that among students of ancient Greece 'the Paris school' was just as influential.[4] The leading figures of this Paris-based circle of ancient historians were Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet. Reading their books as well as those of younger circle-members completely changed our lives. It turned me and other Australian students of ancient Greece into the cultural historians that we are today.[5]

The book of 'the Paris school' that had the greatest impact on us was *The Invention of Athens* by Nicole Loraux.[6] Before its publication, in 1981, historians had accorded little importance to the funeral oration. For them, the almost annual speeches in honour of the war dead consisted only of clichés.[7] Loraux proved them wrong by showing the central role that this genre played in the maintenance of Athenian self-identity. *The Invention of Athens* demonstrated that each staging of a funeral speech helped the Athenians to maintain the same *imaginaire* ('imaginary') over two centuries. Thus, according to this genre, Athenians were almost always victorious because they were more courageous than the other Greeks. In fighting for the safety or liberty of others, they waged only just wars.

[3] E.g. Storey 2018: 116-39.
[4] E.g. Murray 2019; Stocking 2020.
[5] For cultural history in Australia see e.g. Teo and White 2003.
[6] Loraux 1981. It was quickly translated into English (Loraux 1986).
[7] E.g. Castoriadis 2011: 227-9.

The Invention of Athens was a remarkable achievement. It was striking that Loraux even studied the funeral oration at all (figure 1). This genre endorsed a rampant cultural militarism: it claimed that war brought only benefits and minimised its human costs. This was at odds with the strong anti-militarism on the French left during the 1970s. In studying the funeral oration, Loraux was thus absolutely going against the tide. It is just as remarkable that she did this without the tools that we take for granted. Today, the studies of social memory and oral tradition are well established. This was not the case when Loraux wrote her first book.[8] Indeed, the only tool that she was able to use was French and Italian Marxism of the 1970s. *The Invention of Athens* was also remarkably different from the other works of 'the Paris school'. At the time, Vernant and Vidal-Naquet were researching the basic structures of Greek thought.[9] What Loraux discovered was much more complicated: a complex narrative of self-identity and a series of discursive practices for maintaining it.

In spite of its huge impact, *The Invention of Athens* was far from a complete work. In particular, it did not compare the funeral oration with the other literary genres that Athenian democracy had pioneered. Consequently, Loraux could not prove three of her bold claims. Her first bold claim was that 'the imaginary' that we can observe in the funeral oration had made a big impact on political debates about war and peace. Loraux claimed no less boldly that Athenian democracy did not have the capacity to invent its own core values. Consequently, the classical Athenians were condemned to use traditional aristocratic values. Loraux felt that she had found the evidence for this in the funeral oration. Her third bold claim was that plays and other public speeches generally copied the pro-war message of the funeral oration. This would mean that democratic Athens lacked the strong critique of militarism that is commonplace in democracies today.[10]

The Funeral Oration Project that I am directing seeks to complete *The Invention of Athens* by undertaking this comparison between all the literary genres of Athenian democracy. Already our project is confirming Loraux's first claim. It is true that Athenian politicians often argued for a war in terms of national interests. Nonetheless, their speeches drew just as often on the same self-identity as the funeral oration. Clearly, idealism and wishful thinking also played important roles in Athenian foreign affairs. Yet, the project's intertextual analysis also refutes Loraux's

[8] E.g. Kapach 2020: 330.
[9] E.g. Vernant 1965; Vidal-Naquet 1981: cf. Vernant 1988a.
[10] For this contemporary democratic critique see e.g. Keane 2004; 2010: 379-8.

second bold claim. A military speech is rarely a good opportunity for describing democracy. By contrast, in their political debates, Athenian leaders were very good at justifying core democratic values. By comparing autocracy and democracy, the tragedians did this even better. Nonetheless, the Funeral Oration Project is affirming Loraux's final bold claim. Admittedly, Athenian comedies argued that making love was preferable to war, while tragedies referred indirectly to its heavy human costs. On the other hand, Athenian drama still generally depicted war as a very good thing and the wars that the Athenians had fought as just. Athenian politicians conceded even less: they almost always followed the funeral oration in talking up war's benefits.

2. The Famous Funeral Speech of Pericles

The *epitaphios logos* ('funeral speech') of Pericles is the most famous of the genre's five surviving examples.[11] Traditionally, it was viewed as superior in quality to the other funeral speeches and so rarely compared to them.[12] Among the significant contributions of *The Invention of Athens* was its overturning of this traditional view. Loraux put beyond doubt that Pericles's speech shared numerous *topoi* ('commonplaces') with the four others.[13] Yet, in making her strong case that it was an integral part of a long-stable genre, Loraux neglected three fundamental questions about this specific speech. Answering them is the goal of Bernd Steinbock's excellent chapter in our edited volume. The first question is whether Pericles or Thucydides was the real author. Loraux clearly sided with those who primarily saw it as Periclean.[14] However, she felt no need to make a strong case for his authorship. For Loraux, the focus of earlier scholars on the 'great names' who wrote the extant *epitaphioi logoi* had prevented their study as a genre.[15] Consequently, her book deliberately played down authorship as a serious question in order to emphasise how the speeches were part of a long tradition.[16]

Her best argument for Pericles as the author of this oration was the speech's inclusion of epitaphic *topoi*.[17] The quite-obvious weakness

[11] Shear 2013: 511; Todd 2007: 153.
[12] Loraux 1986: 10.
[13] E.g. Loraux 1986: 8-12; cf. Pritchard 1996: 142-3; Thomas 1989: 209-10; Ziolowski 1981: 180-1.
[14] E.g. Loraux 1986: 9, 70, 131, 189, 191-2.
[15] Loraux 1986: 8-12.
[16] Loraux 1986: 346: n. 63.
[17] Loraux 1986: 192, 419 n. 142.

here is evident in the two other examples to which this *epitaphios logos* was closest in date. Lysias and Plato included even more commonplaces in theirs, but they never intended to speak at a public funeral for the war dead.[18] As many a writer in classical Athens, it seems, could pen a decent funeral speech, Thucydides could easily have put one together years afterwards. The second fundamental question is why Pericles's *epitaphios logos* differed so much from what Lysias and Plato would write. They spent over half of their speeches cataloguing military *erga* ('exploits') in mythical and historical times,[19] whereas Pericles skipped this catalogue (Thuc. 2.36.2-4).

Steinbock finds answers to these two questions in the timeliness of Pericles's funeral speech. *The Invention of Athens* denied that the genre ever had any such engagement with immediate politics. For Loraux, a speech which had as a primary purpose the fostering of unity could exhibit only timelessness.[20] Steinbock's chapter proves categorically that the speech of Pericles was part of his careful management of a political crisis. Months earlier, he had convinced the *dēmos* ('people') to abandon Attica in the face of Sparta's anticipated invasion (Thuc. 2.13-14). When, however, they saw their *khōra* ('countryside') being ravaged, they grew angry with him, demanding to be led out to fight.[21] Nevertheless, fighting remained much too dangerous, as Sparta's coalition army was several times larger. Therefore, Pericles was forced to manage their anger as carefully as he could (2.22.1-2). This management clearly extended into the war's first public funeral. The funeral oration's catalogue included standard *erga* in which the Athenians had defeated invaders with much larger armies (e.g. Lys. 2.4-6, 11-17, 20-7). Rehearsing them now ran the risk of reviving the popular clamour to fight. Consequently, Pericles replaced the catalogue with a eulogy of Athenian democracy.[22] While brief praise of *dēmokratia* ('democracy') was a *topos* of the genre, Pericles described it in much more detail than the other orators did. He showed how it had taught the *dēmos* not just courage but also other characteristics that supported their military success.[23] This *epitaphios logos*, it is clear, is not a generic example that Thucydides put together years afterwards. Steinbock is surely right that its close fit with the politics of 431/0 points strongly to Periclean authorship. This timeliness also explains why this example lacked a catalogue of exploits.

[18] E.g. Pritchard 1996: 143-4.
[19] Lys. 2.17-66; Pl. Menex. 239c-46a; Frangeskou 1999: 323.
[20] E.g. Loraux 1986: 77, 129, 151.
[21] Thuc. 2.21; Bosworth 2000: 7; Pritchard 2018: 240.
[22] Bosworth 2000: 5-6; Hesk 2013: 62; Shear 2013: 526.
[23] E.g. Thuc. 2.37.1, 39.1-4, 40.2-4, 41.1-2; Ober 2010: 75-8.

In general, Thucydides criticised the version of Athenian history that funeral orators carefully maintained.[24] In their catalogues of exploits, for example, Athens never changed: it had always been Greece's most-powerful state.[25] In book 1, Thucydides directly challenged this account by arguing that other states, in mythical times, had been more powerful, with Athens rising to the top only after the Second Persian War.[26] Therefore, the third fundamental question about Pericles's funeral speech is why Thucydides, who was a critic of the genre, included it at all. Steinbock's brilliant answer is that he shared the interest that Pericles had displayed in democracy's impact on military affairs. Elsewhere in book 1, Thucydides reconstructed the debate about starting the Peloponnesian War that the Spartans had had with their allies in 432/1. In this debate, the Corinthians compared the 'national' characteristics of the two sides.[27] The Athenians, they argued, were innovative and courageous risk takers, who were selfless (Thuc. 1.70.1-6). The Spartans, according to them, were, by contrast, slow, risk-averse and selfish (71.1-3). In books 3 and 4, Thucydides illustrated how these different characteristics had resulted in Athenian military success in the war's first phase.[28] His Corinthians, of course, saw such characteristics as natural (Thuc. 1.70.9). By putting Pericles's *epitaphios logos* in book 2, Thucydides was instead suggesting instead that the Athenians had actually learnt their characteristics from being socialised in their democracy. Including this *epitaphios logos*, Steinbock concludes, did not undermine his historical revisionism, as Pericles had, helpfully for Thucydides, skipped the genre's traditional account of Athenian history.

3. Debating War and Peace

The Athenians of the *epitaphios logos* went to war for just reasons: they fought to protect persecuted weaker states, to maintain shared Greek norms or to stop barbarian invasions of Greece.[29] In fighting these wars, the Athenian people were, almost always, victorious. The traditional view is that this rosy-coloured characterisation of Athenian warmaking had no place in foreign-policy debates.[30] For a long time, ancient historians have believed that such debates, in the assembly,

[24] E.g. Loraux 1986: 142.
[25] Loraux 1986: 132, 144, 292; Mills 1997: 50, 62.
[26] Thuc. 1.2-18, 89-117. E.g. Foster 2010: 8-43; Grethlein 2010: 209, 223-8; Loraux 1986: 64-5, 142, 291-2.
[27] Ober 2010: 72-5.
[28] E.g. Thuc. 3.1-50; 4.2-42: Ober 2010: 78-84.
[29] E.g. Dem. 60.10-11; Hyp. 6.5; Lys. 2.4-16, 20-1, 67-8; Pl. *Menex.* 244e-5a; Thuc. 2.40.4-5.
[30] Steinbock 2013: 32-3, 323.

were based solely on the calculation of national interest.[31] For them, the funeral oration was simply an illusion that obscured the *Realpolitik* of Athenian foreign affairs.[32] From the Marxism of the 1970s, however, Loraux learnt that the self-identity of a people mediates their relationship to reality and has a big impact on their public life.[33] Indeed, Loraux boldly claimed that this rosy-coloured account of Athenian wars could well have affected a great deal foreign affairs.[34] In spite of a further claim about intertextuality,[35] however, she never undertook the comparison of the funeral oration with deliberative oratory that was required to put her hypothesis beyond doubt. In his chapter in our edited volume, Peter Hunt aims to complete this critical intertextual analysis.

Initially, however, Hunt casts serious doubt on Loraux's bold claim. Athenian politicians, when debating war or peace, always introduced national-interest reasons.[36] Typically, they emphasised such reasons by beginning or concluding with them.[37] Their reasons ranged from calculations about Greece's balance of power or the state's armed forces to, for example, the cost of a war to the public purse.[38] The school of Realism in International Relations assumes that a state calculates foreign policy only on the basis of such security-related reasons.[39] Therefore, it comes as no surprise that Realists see classical Greece as a historical example supporting their school.[40] Nevertheless, Hunt shows that Athenian politicians, in their debates about war and peace, also regularly argued against the funeral oration's characterisation of the Athenians.[41] Demosthenes, for example, criticised the *dēmos* for not living up to the courage and the justice that their ancestors had shown in the Persian Wars.[42] Andocides, for his part, reminded them of the heavy costs that they had paid for protecting persecuted weaker states (e.g. 3.9, 28-31), while Aeschines supposedly argued that the victories that their funeral speeches celebrated were no proof of future success (e.g. Dem. 19.307). Hunt rightly points out that the need that these politicians felt to argue against the funeral oration reveals the genre's real impact on debates about foreign affairs.

[31] E.g. Finley 1973: 38-71.
[32] Loraux 1986: 13.
[33] E.g. Loraux 1986: 336-7.
[34] E.g. Loraux 1986: 12-13, 83, 97, 131, 328, 333-4, 336-7.
[35] E.g. Loraux 1986: 11.
[36] E.g. Hunt 2010b: 154-84.
[37] For the numerous examples see Hunt 2010b: 157-8.
[38] E.g. Andoc. 3.12, 15, 23-4, 27, 37-9; Dem. 1.27; 15.28-9; 19.291.
[39] For the Realist school see e.g. Keohane 1986.
[40] E.g. Hunt 2010b: 154-7; Pritchard 2019: 9-10.
[41] E.g. Dem. 14; Steinbock 2013: 149-54; Kapach 2020: 332.
[42] E.g. Dem. 1-4, 6, 8-9; Pritchard 2010: 52; Roisman 2005: 115-16.

No less surprising is that the same speeches that emphasised security-related reasons regularly reproduced epitaphic content in support of a war.[43] This is a clear reminder that incongruous ideas could easily subsist side-by-side in Athenian public discourse.[44] Hunt perceptively argues that the funeral oration's biggest political impact came from its rosy-coloured account of Athenian wars.[45] This genre furnished the most-detailed account of military history to which non-elite citizens had access.[46] Because defeats were usually attributed to cowardice,[47] funeral orators cherry-picked historical facts in order to turn defeats into victories, explained them away or, simply, ignored them.[48] The result was that the *dēmos* came to believe that defeats were much less common than they actually were. This erroneous belief compromised their ability accurately to assess the risks of proposed wars.[49] Politicians regularly used this one-sided account of military history as an argument in support of a military campaign.[50] They argued no less often that the *dēmos* could only maintain their reputation for justice in foreign affairs by supporting weaker states in wars.[51] Although Athenian politicians, Hunt concludes, could, if they needed to do so, argue against the funeral oration, this genre, nonetheless, generally nudged assemblygoers towards riskier and more frequent wars. Hunt's chapter thus furnishes a strong confirmation of Loraux's original bold claim.

4. Democracy in the Funeral Oration and Beyond

Praising democracy was another commonplace of the funeral oration.[52] Indeed, Loraux believed that this genre was 'the only methodical discourse that the Athenian city officially maintained on democracy'.[53] In spite of this, she famously argued that funeral orators hid as many democratic principles and practices as they could, and chose 'aristocratic' terms to describe what could not be hidden.[54] As funeral speeches were, for Loraux, *the* public discourse on the regime,[55]

[43] E.g. Dem. 15, 16; Hunt 2010b: 94-7; Low 2007: 177-86; Steinbock 2013: 25.
[44] E.g. Pritchard 1998: 56.
[45] Hunt 2010a: 234-42.
[46] E.g. Mills 1997: 50, 52; Kapach 2020: 331; Steinbock 2013: 50-1; Thomas 1989: 200, 206, 236.
[47] E.g. Dem. 60.21; Eur. *Or.* 475-88; Lys. 2.64-5; Pritchard 2019: 72.
[48] E.g. Loraux 1986: 132-71; Pritchard 1996: 147; Thomas 1989: 227-31.
[49] E.g Pritchard 2019: 15.
[50] E.g. Dem. 3.16, 20, 24; 4.10, 17, 24; 6.7-11; 9.31, 45; 10.65; 15.5-13, 23-4; 19.303; Steinbock 2013: 143-9.
[51] E.g. Dem. 15.22; 16.14-15.
[52] E.g. Dem. 60.25-7; Hyper. 6.25; Lys. 2.18-19; Pl. *Men.* 238b7-9a; Thuc. 2.37-41.
[53] Loraux 2018: 87. [54] E.g. Loraux 1986: 172-220.
[55] E.g. Loraux 1986: 179.

she deduced from this that 'democracy never acquired a language of its own'.[56] Loraux concluded that the Athenians had instead decided to appease the oligarchs by appropriating their 'aristocratic' language and by hiding the democratic features that they detested.[57] Dominique Lenfant completely refutes this famous argument. Admittedly, the funeral oration described only a few democratic practices.[58] Nevertheless, Lenfant's chapter in *The Athenian Funeral Oration* puts beyond doubt that it never hid democratic principles. In fact, funeral orators described *dēmokratia* as a law-bound regime in which all had legal equality (e.g. Hyper. 6.25; Lys. 2.19; Thuc. 2.37.3). Their praise of democratic *eleutheria* ('freedom') extended to *isēgoria* ('political equality of speech') and *parrhēsia* ('freedom of speech').[59] Plato's funeral speech made no less of *isonomia* or political equality (*Menex.*239a). For his part, Pericles decided to make the genre's *topos* on democracy the main topic of his speech because it helped him to manage, as we have discussed, an immediate political crisis. Consequently, Pericles was able to praise much more of Athenian democracy, including, for example, that it did not make poverty a bar to political participation (e.g. Thuc. 2.2.37.1-2, 40.2).

Lenfant brilliantly shows that such descriptions neither contained 'aristocratic' terms nor pacified the oligarchs. Certainly, opponents of popular government had often used moral terms, such as *agathoi* ('good'), to describe 'the rich' and had attributed *aretē* ('merit') solely to this social class.[60] Nevertheless, Lenfant reminds us that funeral orators never did this: they employed these terms in an exclusively moral sense in their praise of the courage of the Athenians as a whole.[61] Lenfant also points out that fifth-century oligarchs actually detested democratic freedom and *isēgoria*, and saw poverty as a good reason for political exclusion.[62] Consequently, little of what was said at the public funeral for the war dead would have ever pacified them. Lenfant also puts it beyond doubt that the genre's representation of democracy is not unique: tragedy and other public oratory praised no less methodically the same democratic principles.[63] Therefore, Loraux was clearly

[56] Loraux 1986: 217-18, 334. Quotation from Loraux 1986: 334.
[57] E.g. Loraux 1986: 174-5, 209-11.
[58] E.g. Thuc. 2.40.2; Castoriadis 2011: 235-6.
[59] E.g. Dem. 60, 25-6, 28; Lys. 2.18; Thuc. 2.37.2, 43.2; Pl. *Menex.* 239a.
[60] E.g. On *agathos* and *kakos* as terms for social classes see e.g. Thgn. 1.315; [Xen.] *Ath. Pol.* 1.3-9; Adkins 1972: 37-46; Pritchard 2012: 37. For *aretē* as an elite preserve see e.g. [Xen.] *Ath. Pol.* 1.7, 2.19.
[61] E.g. Castoriadis 2011: 231-7; Pritchard 2018: 239.
[62] For their reaction to freedom see e.g. [Xen.] *Ath. Pol.* 1.18; Lenfant 2017: cvii-cviii. For *isēgoria* see e.g. [Xen.] *Ath. Pol.* 1.6. For poverty as a bar to political participation see e.g. Eur. *Supp.* 417-25; Coin-Longeray 2014: 55-7.
[63] E.g. Pritchard 2013: 17-18.

Figura 2: Un jinete ataca a dos hoplitas en retirada al final de la batalla. Escultura en relieve de la tumba pública de los muertos en la guerra de 394/3 aC. Atenas, National Archaeological Museum, inv. no. 2744. Fotografía cortesía de H. R. Goette.

mistaken to claim that the funeral oration was *the* public discourse on democracy. As the terminology that the tragic poets and all public speakers used to describe these principles was new, democracy, it is clear, had succeeded in acquiring its own language.

Nonetheless, Lenfant still acknowledges two differences between these multiple self-portraits of Athenian democracy. Firstly, tragedy, along with forensic and deliberative oratory, discussed quite a few more democratic *practices* than the funeral oration.[64] Secondly, these genres were also much less reluctant then the *epitaphios logos* to recognise division, whether that be the permanent one between 'the rich' and 'the poor' or the short-term one that political debate inevitably created.[65] Lenfant puts down the first difference to democracy's function in the epitaphic genre. This *topos* about it assumed that the Athenian *politeia* ('constitution') was a major cause for Athenian *aretē* ('courage').[66] Typically, funeral orators proved this causality by showing how one or two democratic principles made the *dēmos* courageous (e.g. Dem. 60.26-7). They apparently found that their audiences were content with such a cursory treatment of their *politeia*. Pericles, by contrast, focussed on the wider range of virtues that accounted for military success. Nevertheless, he too remained silent on many democratic features that had no link to war. For Lenfant, the second difference was due to the fact this was a military speech (figura 2). In spite of painful losses, the

[64] E.g. Aesch. *Supp.* 607, 621, 943; Eur. *Supp.* 406-7, 438-9.
[65] For 'the rich' and 'the poor' in old comedy and tragedy see e.g. Griffith 1985; Pritchard 2012: 21-30; 2013: 2-9. For tragedy's mirroring of democratic debate see e.g. Burian 2011; Gallego 2019.
[66] E.g. Dem. 60.25, 27; Pl. *Menex.* 238c; cf. Isoc. 4.150-3; Lys. 2.17-20.

funeral orator had to do all that he could to maintain political unity for sake of the war effort.[67] Avoiding anything that evoked division between the Athenians helped him to achieve this goal.

5. War on Stage

Jason Crowley reminds us how idealised the depiction of *polemos* ('war') was in the funeral oration. Epitaphic Athenians never failed to be courageous, and their wars, in which they were almost always victorious, brought benefits, such as empire, freedom, security and military might.[68] This genre also minimised war's negative side. Consequently, funeral orators never spoke of the violent ends of those who were being buried.[69] Although they had to speak of the grief of bereaved family-members, they told them to supress their negative feelings as much as possible.[70] The actual experience that the *dēmos* had of war was, of course, less one-sided, since each Athenian was obliged to fight for the state and did so frequently.[71] Crowley shows how the *dēmos* expected other literary genres to give much more rounded depictions of their firsthand experience of war. Admittedly, legal speeches still had many courageous Athenians, as, among other reasons, litigants typically sought to prove their own *aretē*.[72] Yet, in proving their courage or their meeting of moral obligations more generally, they often recognised defeats and other negative aspects of *polemos*.[73] When they could, for example, litigants mentioned the wounds that they had acquired in battles or their ransoming of Athenian prisoners of war, which implied that others had preferred surrender to death in battle.[74] Wounds, like prisoners of war, were entirely absent from funeral speeches.[75] Forensic oratory also conceded that some Athenians proved to be cowards, since litigants regularly alleged that their opponents had fled from a battle or had refused to serve in the first place.[76]

[67] E.g. Carey 2007: 243.
[68] For the benefits see e.g. Dem. 60.10-11; Hyper. 6.5, 9, 14, 18-19, 20-2; Lys. 2.20, 24, 26, 33, 44, 47, 55-6, 58; Pl. *Menex.* 240c, 241d-2a; 243d, 244e-5a; Thuc. 2.34.2-4, 36.4, 41.2-5; Mills 2010: 164, 169.
[69] Loraux 2018: 74, 80.
[70] E.g. Dem. 60.32-7; Hyper. 6.41-3; Lys. 2.71-6; Pl. *Menex.*247c-8d; Thuc. 2.44.
[71] For this obligation see e.g. Aesch. *Sept.* 10-20, 415-16; Ar. *Vesp.* 1117-20; Lys. 16.17; Thuc. 1.144.4; 2.41.5, 43.1; Pritchard 2019: 45. For hoplites and sailors fighting every few years see e.g. Lys. 9.4, 15; Pritchard 2019: 6-7, 47, 101-2, 106-7.
[72] E.g. Lys. 16.15, 18; 21.24; Hunt 2010b: 255, 279-82.
[73] For defeats see e.g. Lys. 6.46; 12.43; 14.39-40; 16.4, 12-19; 19.7-23; 20.4-5; 14, 22-5; 26.21-2; 30.11.
[74] For wounds see e.g. Lys. 20.14. For ransoms see e.g. Lys. 12.20; 26.24.
[75] For wounds see e.g. Lys. 20.14. For ransoms see e.g. Lys. 12.20; 26.24.
[76] E.g. Lys. 31.7-9; [Lys.] 6.46; Isoc. 18.47; Christ 2006: 45-142; Pritchard 2019: 119; cf. Lys. 16.15; Lycurg. 1.47-9.

Crowley puts beyond doubt that old comedy's depiction of war was no less multifaceted. Aristophanes eulogised what the Athenians had done in the Persian Wars as much as the funeral orators did.[77] In praising their past military exploits, he even appropriated their *topoi*.[78] The chorus of his *Knights* thus claims that their fathers were always victorious 'because no one of them, when they saw the enemy, ever counted their number' (569-70). Ignoring numbers was another epitaphic commonplace.[79] For Aristophanes, *polemos* also brought real benefits in foreign affairs.[80] Nevertheless, he also went on to depict war's negative side. In his *Acharnians*, *Peace* and *Lysistrata* characters complained about the *ponoi* ('toils') of military campaigns as well as about the bad food and the lack of sex that they entailed.[81] Nevertheless, it is telling that old comedy carefully avoided any mention of war casualties,[82] which parallels the reluctance of politicians to speak about this human cost.[83] The Athenians of these anti-war comedies fantastically escape military service for the sake of better food and more sex.[84] For them 'peace is a matter of private interest and welfare'.[85] While funny, this was, of course, really immoral: every Athenian was obliged, when serving the state, to put public interests ahead of his personal ones.[86] That the *dēmos* enjoyed comedies where the opposite happened points again to their recognition that war was indeed burdensome.

Tragedy, by contrast, focussed on the negative impact of *polemos* on other people.[87] In his chapter in *The Athenian Funeral Oration*, Crowley rightly argues that this non-Athenian focus allowed this genre to depict many more of war's human costs. Therefore, the tragic poets could acknowledge, among other downsides, that land battles left some survivors with horrific wounds, that prisoners of war could be executed and that acts of genocide were committed against defeated *poleis* ('city-

[77] E.g. Ar. *Ach.* 175-85, 691-701; *Lys.* 674-81; *Nub.* 985-9; *Ran.* 3-34, 190-1, 686-5; Konstan 2010: 191.
[78] E.g. Lech 2019: 106-7; Pritchard 2019: 131.
[79] Lys. 2.24, 37, 40, 63; Pl. *Menex.* 240; Arrington 2015: 107.
[80] E.g. *Pax* 929-35; *Vesp.* 667-9, 862-85, 1075-100.
[81] E.g. Ar. *Ach.* 37-9, 72-3; *Lys.* 99-112, 591-2; *Pax* 346-60, 516-81, 1172-90; Konstan 2010: 190-8; Sommerstein 2014: 226-7.
[82] E.g. Ar. *Lys.* 588-90; Henderson 2017: 616; Sommerstein 2014: 225-6, 228-8, 234; cf. Ar. *Lys.* 37-8; *Pax* 647-56.
[83] Pritchard 2019: 155-6.
[84] E.g. Ar. *Ach.* 130-3, 178-202, 719-1068; *Pax* 289-300, 551-600; Ehrenberg 1951: 309-10; Hunt 2010b: 248-9.
[85] Ehrenberg 1951: 309-10.
[86] E.g. Ar. *Ach.* 598-606; *Eccl.* 205-8; *Eq.* 573-6, 1350-5; [Dem.] 50.63; Isoc. 18.60-1; Lys. 21.24; Pritchard 2019: 119.
[87] Hall 1996: 19; Mills 2010: 181-2.

states').[88] They put on stage relatives who found it much harder than the funeral orators assumed to supress their grief.[89] Euripides famously made such human costs the focus of his many plays about the Trojan War's bloody ending.[90] Indeed, his *Trojan Women* is aptly described as 'a pageant of the miseries of war'.[91] Athena's prologue, in this tragedy, confirms that the victorious Greeks will perish in great number on their voyage home, as they have broken a divinely sanctioned *nomos* ('unwritten law') by sacking her Trojan temples.[92] Cassandra, before she is led away, accurately rehearses the high personal costs that the Greeks continue to pay for their victory (e.g. Eur. *Tro.* 365-82, 427-43). She claims that the Trojans, by contrast, died nobly, defending their *polis* ('city-state'), and so leave behind great *kleos* or glory (e.g. 386-96, 403-5). However, *Trojan Women* even calls this last claim into question: Troy has been destroyed, its men massacred, and its women and children enslaved.[93]

Vernant viewed such questioning as the principal purpose of tragedy.[94] He famously argued that this genre treated the Homeric hero as problematical.[95] Consequently, the tragic poets generally dramatised the clash between the Homeric values that were still current and the new values that were emerging in the classical *polis*.[96] By watching tragedies, according to Vernant, theatregoers learnt that their own ethical reasoning could be 'a problem'.[97] Many Anglophone scholars of tragedy embraced his argument.[98] They went on to claim that such questioning was much more extensive: the genre 'problematised' civic ideology in general.[99] In light of their view's wide currency, it is understandable that scholars often read Euripides's Trojan-War plays as a critique of Athenian militarism.[100] For them, Euripides was treating

[88] For wounds see e.g. Aesch. *Pers.* 249-471; Eur. *Phoen.* 1480-765; *Rhes.* 780-819. For killing prisoners see e.g. Aesch. *Pers.* 417-32; Pritchard 2013: 168. For acts of genocide see e.g. Aesch. *Ag.* 425-65, 782-809; *Sept.* 78-368; Eur. *Hec.* 229-331, 421, 484-518, 658-80; *Phoen.* 180-92; Ducrey 2019: 86-7; Payen 2012: 138-54.
[89] E.g. Aesch. *Ag.* 425-65, 745; *Pers.* 246-434, 515-97, 909-1079; Eur. *Andr.* 91-116, 1037-46; *Phoen.* 1284-479.
[90] Mills 2010: 163-6; Pritchard 2010: 41; Pry 2015: 89-96.
[91] Winnington-Ingram 2003: 63.
[92] Eur. *Tro.* 75-91. For this *nomos* see e.g. Thuc. 4.92.7, 97.2-3, 98.6-7; Pritchard 2013: 169.
[93] Mills 2010: 166; Pry 2015: 91-2.
[94] His first articles on tragedy were published in the late 1960s (Vernant 1988b; 1988d; cf. Stocking 2020: 3).
[95] E.g. Vernant 1988b: 33; 1988d: 25; 1988c: 185-6.
[96] Stocking 2020: 3, 6-7.
[97] Vernant 1988c: 185.
[98] Murray 2019: 299.
[99] E.g. Buxton 1994: 31-4, 212; Croally 1994: 1-16, 40, 43; Goldhill 1986: 57, 60, 69, 74-5, 77; 1990: 114-15; Raaflaub 1989: 49; 1994: 121; Segal 1986; Zeitlin 1990: 132, 145, 148.
[100] E.g. Brillet-Dubois 2010; Croally 1994: 12; Gregory 1991: 98-100; Griffin 1998: 44; Raaflaub 2001: 329-41.

as problems the occasional acts of genocide against captured cities that the fifth-century Athenians had committed and their generally high regard of *polemos*. This is the common reading that Sophie Mills calls into question in her chapter in our edited volume. Euripides, of course, wrote these anti-war tragedies during the Peloponnesian War. This timing does point to them being reflections of the high costs that the *dēmos* personally bore in fighting this thirty-year conflict.

The first problem with this common reading is tragic distance.[101] In the early years of the genre, Phrynichus staged a tragedy that dramatised Persia's recent sacking of Miletus (Hdt. 6.21). As the Athenians had fought to save this *polis*, theatregoers became visibly distressed. As a result, the *dēmos* imposed a huge fine on Phrynichus for 'reminding them of their troubles'. After this, the tragic poets set their plays, excepting a few about the Second Persian War, only in the distant age of the heroes.[102] To play it safer still, they also set them, most of the time, in other cities, such as Argos, Troy or especially Thebes.[103] Mills clearly explains how such settings made theatregoers feel safely distant from the unpleasantness on stage (e.g. Arist. *Poet.* 1448b10-20). Consequently, they could interpret a play, such as *Trojan Women*, as a general reflection on war's human costs or, if it still felt too close to home, as a sad myth about *other* people.[104] In recent times, Peter Meineck's therapeutic use of tragedy with US veterans of the Second Iraq War confirms the importance of such distance.[105] Meineck shows that while veterans with combat-trauma benefit psychologically from seeing their adverse experiences reflected in tragedies, this depends on them feeling that there is a safe gap between their world and the ancient plays.

The second problem with such a reading is the tragic depiction of mythical Athens. Mills reminds us that the tragedians, when they did set plays at home, confirmed the epitaphic characterisation of the Athenians.[106] This made it even less likely that theatregoers would directly connect any anti-war tragedies to Athenian warmaking. The best examples are the plays of Euripides that dramatised 'standard' myths of the funeral oration. In his *Suppliant Women*, for example, Theseus deliberates democratically before leading the Athenian army to a crushing victory against the Thebans.[107] In doing so, he defends a Panhellenic *nomos*, helps

[101] E.g. Easterling 1997; Vernant 1988b: 33-4.
[102] Hall 1989: 63-4. On the few 'historical' tragedies see e.g. Hall 1996: 7-9.
[103] On Thebes as the preferred tragic setting see e.g. Vidal-Naquet 1988 and especially Zeitlin 1990.
[104] Mills 2010: 177-8.
[105] E.g. Meineck 2012; cf. Torrance 2017: 2.
[106] E.g. Hanink 2013: 294; Loraux 1986: 285; Zeitlin 1990: 146.
[107] E.g. Eur. *Supp.* 346-58, 650-730; Mills 1997: 85-128 *pace* Loraux 1986: 108-9.

the Argive suppliants and wins for Athens a beneficial military alliance.[108] In his *Children of Heracles*, Euripides depicted another Athenian war in the same eulogistic terms: Theseus's son agrees to protect Heracles's persecuted children, leads the Athenians to another smashing victory and earns a no less valuable benefit for the state.[109]

The surprising implication of Mills's excellent chapter is that tragedy, on balance, probably supported Athenian bellicosity. To keep fighting wars, the Athenian *dēmos* needed to acknowledge the human costs.[110] Tragedy let them do this safely by depicting the suffering that *polemos* had caused other people a long time ago. At the same time, it also confirmed that the Athenians had forever fought and won just wars from which they had gained tangible benefits. Tragedy as a genre was thus never an effective counterweight to the militarism of the funeral oration.[111]

[108] E.g. Eur. *Supp.* 526-7, 561-3, 650-730, 1183-212; Mills 2010: 175; Steinbock 2013: 181.
[109] E.g. Eur. *Heracl.* 176-8, 329-32, 799-866, 957-8, 1009-13, 1024-66; Mills 2010: 172-3.
[110] Meineck 2012: 20; Mills 2010: 181-2.
[111] *The Athenian Funeral Oration* also has important chapters by Nathan T. Arrington, Vincent Azoulay and Paulin Ismard, Ryan K. Balot, Thomas Blank, Alastair J. L. Blanshard, Leonhard Burckhardt, Johanna Hanink, Judson Herrman, Nicole Loraux, Neville Morley, Johannes Wienand and Bernhard Zimmermann.

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