

Stavros Tsitsiridis. *Platons Menexenos: Einleitung, Text, und Kommentar*. Beiträge zur Altertumskunde, 107. Stuttgart: Teubner, 1998. Pp. 429. DM 148.00. (hb.). ISBN 3-519-07656-X.

Tsitsiridis has produced an extremely useful edition of this peculiar and problematic little dialogue—an edition that will be of interest to a broad range of scholars. A revised 1995 Köln dissertation (directed by R. Kassel), it includes an introduction (24–102), revised text (103–25), and extensive commentary (127–419).

The author is interested chiefly in explaining the many historical, literary, linguistic, and textual aspects of the dialogue; for rhetorical *tropes*, he refers the reader (7) to works like Th. Berndt's *De ironia Menexeni Platonici* (1881). While specialists will no doubt be able to quarrel with many of the specifics, Tsitsiridis offers, at each point, a full and fair presentation of the *status quaestionis*, ample bibliography, and generally sober argumentation. The commentary, intended for scholarly reference, is filled with a great deal of interesting erudition. Unfortunately, the indexes (as also the Literaturverzeichnis) are quite inadequate, which detracts from the overall utility of this volume.

Tsitsiridis has not produced a truly critical text. He simply recollated, and not by autopsy, TW and F, already assumed by Burnet and others to be the primary witnesses. For the "sekundären" mss. (which are not here proved to be so), he relies on the reports of Bekker and Stallbaum—including the latter's valuable collection of *Variae Lectiones*. He is, however, able to show that Burnet's reporting of F (based on Král's notoriously poor collations) is "ganz unzuverlässig" (94 n.181); he also improves at several points on Méridier's report of F.

Tsitsiridis' views on the dialogue are set out with clarity in a lengthy introduction. Authenticity is defended (21–41); the composition is dated to ca. 386 B.C., after the Peace of Antalcidas (41–52). This is followed by an excellent account of the dramatic aspects of the dialogue and of the rhetorical structure of the *Epitaphios* (52–63).

Determination of the "Sinn und Bedeutung" of this dialogue is especially problematic. While the speech was taken seriously in antiquity (84 f.), moderns have tended to stress the parodic elements. Tsitsiridis too allows for a certain amount of satire—especially within the frame dialogue, which certainly attacks the rhetoricians (64ff.). But he chooses to stress the moral "earnestness" and the Platonic character of much of the content of the speech (68–80). Clearly, the *Epitaphios* cannot be taken as satire or parody in the narrow sense (81f.). He then suggests (82–85) that the speech might perhaps have been written seriously, a "Volkesrede," directed towards his fellow citizens, as part of a general appeal to traditional values ("... wird in der Rede für traditionelle Werte und Ideale geworben"). The speech would then be seen as an example of the type of philosophic rhetoric proposed in the *Phaedrus* and *Politicus*. Yet this interpretation, too, must be excluded on account of the unequivocally satiric elements to be found throughout (Gorgianic imitations, the almost comic role of Aspasia, strife of the gods, etc.; 85ff.).

The speech, then, serious in measure, playful in measure, is said to be an instance of what Tsitsiridis, following certain literary scholars, calls "Pastiche"—the essence of which resides "auf die Nachahmung und die Ähnlichkeit mit der Vorlage und nicht auf die (verzerrende, komisch wirkende) Veränderung" (88f.). The presence of humorous or subtly parodic elements is dismissed in light of the close association of "Ernst und Spiel" elsewhere in the corpus (89f.). But when he turns from the form of the work to the reasons why Plato produced this curiosity, Tsitsiridis can only offer certain familiar and vaguely formulated "Vermutungen" (91f.; see P. Shorey, *What Plato Said* [Chicago, 1933] 185f.). That the category itself is anachronistic and, therefore, unlikely to reflect Plato's precise intent, does not (apparently) concern the author. In fact, as formulated, this appeal to "pastiche" explains nothing and is little more than a *deus ex machina*.

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CW 93.3 (2000)

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