

The encomium that traces a life from birth to death claims an unquestioned and seminal place in the history of Greek biography, and Isocrates' foundational importance to the prose genre of such encomia has been recognized (Momigliano 1971, Pernot 1993, Sonnabend 2002). However, because of an unjustly narrow understanding of Isocrates' school, the contribution of Isocrates and his followers to the development and exploration of the genre's possibilities has not been fully appreciated. In the fourth century, encomia of dead individuals were motivated not only by political considerations and literary ambitions, but equally by scholastic competition over the capital of intellectual authority. A more careful survey of the obituary eulogies produced in the years between the death of Evagoras (374/3) and the death of Philip (336, with notable responses ranging from Isocrates of Apollonia's *On Not Performing a Taphos for Philip* to Demosthenes' scathing rebuttal of the encomium of the late Philip by Lamachus of Smyrna, Plut. *Demosth.* 9.1) reveals that Isocrates did more than to set the stage with his *Evagoras* for Xenophon's *Agésilas* a few years later. Rather, Isocrates and Isocrateans were responsible for continued and complex contributions to encomiastic commemoration and the other genres into which it was being transformed. Thus, while these crucial early steps in the history of Greek biography were taken by intellectuals focused on Athens, we must recognize the breadth and variety of the circles involved.

Several new strands in this literary and intellectual history become visible when we consider Isocrates' works and the fragmentary remains of his students' literary activities during these years. An important one is scholastic competition, as it determined both the *agōn* in prose funeral eulogy at the death of Mausolus (352), whose participants (including Theopompus, who is known to have found a place for biography in his history, but whose broader engagement with the intellectual movements of his time can be seen in this context and in related evidence) were writers of remarkable intellectual versatility, as well as the "myriad" (Arist. fr. 68 R³) encomia with which writers memorialized Xenophon's son Gryllus (d. 362), a literary rivalry that provoked Aristotle to write his first work on rhetoric, in which he seems surely to have contested directly the claim Isocrates had first made in his *Evagoras*, to finding the praise appropriate to the truly praiseworthy and virtuous qualities manifested in a life.

The view of prose encomium as developing in this wider, but intensely scholastic, circle makes retrospective sense of Isocrates' claim in *Evagoras* (§8) that in attempting a novel form of "praising a man's *aretē* in *logoi*" he is extending the range of subjects attempted by writers concerned with *philosophia*. Since *philosophia* is itself a field of contest, the passage inevitably suggests the possibility that Isocrates' innovative example—the festival occasion on Cyprus which displayed his unique didactic authority—will lead other orators to rival each other with *logoi* of praise, and we have to concede credit to Isocrates when we see that rival *epitaphioi logoi* were produced by *philosophia*-types in the following decades, a phenomenon for which we do not find a close parallel earlier, even in verse.

Isocrates soon moved to dissociate himself from a kind of encomium that any practiced hand could accomplish; in his epistle to Agesilaus' son Archidamus (*Epist.* IX 1), he expresses fatigue with the steady stream of encomia of the father (presumably including Xenophon's work), offering the didactic authority of his present advice for the son in its place. Consonant with the permanent and traditional Greek association between commemorating the dead and instructing the living, this is an indication (together with Isocrates' many other efforts to cultivate his didactic authority) of what Isocrates also perceived as the limitations of the biographical plan.