

MISZELLEN

MENEKRATES ON THE END OF THE *ILIAD*

ΣβΤ Iliad 24.804: Μενεκράτης φησὶν αἰσθόμενον ἑαυτοῦ ἀσθενείας τὸν ποιητὴν καὶ τοῦ μὴ ὁμοίως δύνασθαι φράζειν σιωπῆσαι τὰ μεθ' Ἐκτορα. καλῶς δὲ ἐπαιεῦσατο τὰ λοιπὰ ἑαυτῶ τῶν διηγημάτων [ζητημάτων: corr. Maass] εἰς τὴν Ὀδύσειαν· μικρὰ γὰρ ἦν ἡ ὑπόθεσις περὶ τῆς οἰκίας Ὀδυσσεύος μόνον· τὰ γὰρ λείψανα ἐκεῖ ἃ μὲν Ὀδυσσεύς, ἃ δὲ Νέστωρ καὶ Μενέλαος, ἃ δὲ Δημόδοκος καθαρίζων φησὶν. ἄλλως τε πολιορκίαν μακρὰν οὐκ ἄξιον διηγεῖσθαι.

The name Menecrates appears three times in the scholia to Homer. Herodian cites a Menecrates at ΣΑ(∼ βΤ) Iliad 4.94 and ΣΑ Iliad 11.677; the first of these passages, recording a disagreement with Aristarchus, specifies Menecrates of Miletus. But there is no reason to assume that the Menecrates cited in ΣβΤ Iliad 24.804 (printed above) is the same man. The nature of the comment, exegetical rather than prosodic, is different; and there are other candidates to consider, including Menecrates of Nysa, a pupil of Aristarchus mentioned by Strabo (14.1.48)¹.

In 1906 E. Hefermehl argued that the scholion most probably does refer to Menecrates of Nysa. Drawing attention to parallels between this scholion and the well-known passage in the treatise *On the Sublime* which discusses the *Odyssey* as a work of Homer's old age (9.11–15), Hefermehl also inferred that Longinus' source was a work by Menecrates of Nysa in which the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were compared. This conclusion has been accepted by a number of subsequent scholars².

Hefermehl's arguments assume, however, that the whole scholion is a report of Menecrates' views³. This is not self-evident. It is possible that the scholion combines material from two sources, so that the first sentence reports Menecrates' biographical conjecture, while the rest of the scholion (καλῶς δὲ ...) adds independent literary-critical observations⁴. This combination is not wholly consistent. To

1) Mention should also be made of the grammarian Menecrates of Ephesus, who taught Aratus (Suda A 3745).

2) E. Hefermehl, *Menekrates von Nysa und die Schrift vom Erhabenen*, RhM 61, 1906, 283–303, especially 291–9; followed by (e.g.) W. Buehler, *Beiträge zur Erklärung der Schrift vom Erhabenen*, Göttingen 1964, 44 etc.; D. A. Russell, 'Longinus' *On the Sublime*, Oxford 1964, 95 f. Göbel, *Menekrates* (26), (27), RE XV 1 (1931) 801, ascribes ΣβΤ Iliad 24.804 to both candidates, and attributes a σύγκρισις Ὀδυσσεύς καὶ Ἰλιάδος to Menecrates of Nysa without any indication that the existence of this work is purely conjectural.

3) He prints the scholion only in a reconstructed form, rearranging the material and conflating the b and T recensions.

4) Compare the structure of (e.g.) ΣΤ Iliad 13.658: the first part reports suggested resolutions of the problem arising from the presence of the deceased Pylaemenes at his son's funeral (ὄμωνυμία γὰρ ἐστίν. τινὲς δὲ τὴν ψυγὴν τοῦ πατρὸς); the second adds an independent literary-critical comment on Homer's restraint in not giving the bereaved father a speech at this point (καλῶς δὲ διὰ τὸν καιρὸν λόγους οὐ περιτίθησιν αὐτῶ. ἀλλ' ἐτέρωθι τούτους φυλάττει ἐπὶ Ἐκτορα).

say that Homer ended the *Iliad* where he did because he was conscious of his failing powers implies that, if his powers had not been failing, he would have carried the story on beyond that point; a continuation of the *Iliad* is what (on Menecrates' view) one would have expected, and the poem's premature curtailment is in need of explanation. This assumption is undermined by the rest of the scholion, which gives good literary reasons for ending the *Iliad* with the burial of Hector: continuing the poem beyond that point would have impoverished the *Odyssey* and bogged the *Iliad* down in a tedious account of a prolonged siege. From this perspective, it would have been surprising if Homer had not curtailed the *Iliad* where he did. It could even be argued, therefore, that the second part of the scholion supplies a refutation of Menecrates' hypothesis; at the very least, we seem to be dealing with two uncoordinated perspectives⁵. There is therefore no reason to believe that the report of Menecrates extends beyond the first sentence of the scholion. A number of consequences follow.

First, we can no longer be sure that Menecrates believed the *Odyssey* to have been composed after the *Iliad*. On Hefermehl's reading of the scholion, Menecrates presumably envisaged Homer, conscious that he could no longer sustain the same level of intensity and heroic elevation, cutting short the *Iliad* and moving on to a less intense and less demanding subject-matter in his old age. But on the alternative reading that I have proposed, it is just as likely that Menecrates accepted what was, according to Lucian (True History 2.20), the majority opinion that the *Odyssey* was composed before the *Iliad*. The curtailment of the *Iliad* would in that case have marked his retirement.

Secondly, we can no longer have confidence in Hefermehl's hypothesis that Menecrates of Nysa wrote a comparison of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and that this was Longinus' source in 9.11–15. A significant difference between the scholion and *On the Sublime* should in any case make us cautious. Longinus claims that the *Odyssey* was composed after the *Iliad*; that this is proved by its use of material 'left over' from the *Iliad*; and that the decline of Homer's powers in old age is reflected in the *Odyssey*'s distinctive, and lesser, qualities. But he does not imply (with Menecrates) that a sense of his declining powers prompted Homer to end the *Iliad* at an earlier point than might have been expected. This is not to deny that there is some connection between the present scholion and the treatise *On the Sublime*. Although the *Odyssey*'s use of the *Iliad*'s residual material is a commonplace in the exegetical scholia⁶, the term *λείψαννα* is used for this residue only in these two passages; and it is striking that in both contexts it occurs alongside the motif of Homer's declining powers. But it is possible that it was precisely the juxtaposition of these two ideas in this scholion (or an antecedent of it) which prompted Longinus to develop the motif in a fresh way.

Thirdly, if the report of Menecrates in the first sentence of the scholion is detached from the literary critical observations which follow, another candidate for the identification must be considered. We know from Dionysius of Halicarnassus (Ant. 1.48.3 = FGrrHist 769 F 3) that Menecrates of Xanthus, the fourth-century historian of Lycia, included events in the Trojan war later than the end of the *Iliad*: he told how, after the funeral of Achilles, Troy was betrayed to the Greeks by

5) Buehler (see n. 2) 48 f. notes that the scholion offers both biographical and 'objective' reasons for not extending the *Iliad* (and rightly cites Aristotle, Poet. 23 for the aesthetic advantage of the *Iliad*'s focus on a short sequence of events selected from the whole story of the Trojan War), but does not observe the possible tension between them.

6) A good collection of references in Buehler (see n. 2) 45–7.

Aeneas. This would provide a plausible context for a comment on why Homer broke off his narrative before he reached these events. It is not hard to find parallels for a fourth-century historian taking an interest in Homer's biography: Ephorus comes to mind at once (FGrHist 70 F 1).

An identification of the Menecrates of ΣbT Iliad 24.804 with Menecrates of Xanthus would, of course, be no less speculative than the identification with Menecrates of Nysa. We should therefore acknowledge that we do not know whose opinion is reported in the first sentence of that scholion.

University of Leeds

Malcolm Heath