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Literary Perspectives on Pseudo-Xenophon's *Athenaion Politeia*

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Abstract

Title: Literary Perspectives on Pseudo-Xenophon’s Athenaios Politeia
This dissertation offers an original interpretation of Pseudo-Xenophon’s Athenaios Politeia. I contend that exploring literary perspectives – illuminating context and performance – produces enlightening results of greater hermeneutical profit than previous, historical approaches.

Chapter One – Pseudo-Xenophon: the problem of genre
Chapter One evaluates problems of assigning ‘genre’ to the AP, providing an over-arching reference point for the dissertation. I investigate categorisation/s of the AP as ‘serious political manifesto’ (for example), analysing why these classifications remain unsatisfactory. I rekindle the hypothesis that the AP is closely akin to sympotic/private literature, offering comparisons from contemporary (quasi-)sympotic literature and material culture.

Chapter Two – Pseudo-Xenophon, Sophism and Rhetoric
Chapter Two expands my investigation of ‘context’ and ‘performance’: seeking the author’s intellectual background. I analyse PX’s application of rhetorical devices and ‘theoretical trickery’, examining ironic and/or pejorative terms, methods of expression, possible comedic value, formulaic language, vocabulary, repetition, anaphora, asyndeton, hyperbole, chiasmus, antithesis, etc. Comparison with contemporary texts demonstrates PX’s grasp of sophistic arts – important for evaluating PX’s ‘intention’ and ‘sincerity’.

Chapter Three – Pseudo-Xenophon, the Sea and the Thalassocracy
‘Thalassocracy’, fundamental to the AP, was a common, controversial topic in fifth/fourth century sources. I interpret examples of these attitudes towards sea-power – corresponding to the values, preoccupations, perspectives and contexts of its critics/supporters – as reference points for evaluating PX’s re-presentation of this common topos: how and why did thalassocracy interest PX’s audience?

Chapter Four – Pericles, Cleon and Pseudo-Xenophon (with an Appendix on PX and Old Comedy)
Chapter Four compares the AP with the Thucydidean speeches of Pericles and Cleon, foregrounding ‘audience expectation’ and ‘authorial perspective’. The speeches reveal approaches to material appropriate for public display – reinforcing, by comparison, the argument that the AP was intended for private display. I investigate re-presentations between these texts: Thucydides’ treatment of political/social issues is diplomatic, whereas PX re-presents ‘Realpolitik’ in action. I assign the AP a persuasive – not informative – function, but demonstrate, nevertheless, that PX’s re-presentation of Athens is not a misrepresentation. An appendix offers corroborative examples: manipulation of similar topos from the contemporary perspective of comedy.

Appendix – On the Dating of the Athenaios Politeia
Consequent to the above analyses, I propose a date in the 390s.