

BOOK REVIEW

Ashes, Images, and Memories: The Presence of the War Dead in Fifth-Century Athens.
By NATHAN T. ARRINGTON. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. Pp. x + 349. Hardcover, \$63.00. ISBN 978-0-19-93690-72.

By the time Pericles delivered his famous funeral oration in 431/0 BC, the custom of burying the war dead at public expense had become such a central element of Athenian life that it passed as 'ancestral' even with Thucydides (2. 34. 1). Although the importance of the ritual is widely acknowledged in modern scholarship, most literature has been selective in its treatment, usually privileging the surviving prose rhetoric composed for the occasion (the *epitaphioi logoi*) or obsessing about chronological and iconographical details of the monuments that once stood in the public cemetery (*dêmosion sêma*) between the Dipylon Gate and the Academy. Arrington's book is the most wide-ranging attempt yet at trying to understand how the verbal and visual means of commemoration interacted in their historical setting. His chief merit is to have resisted deferring explanation to some ulterior level of abstraction: the tradition of state burial emerging from his skilful integration of the evidence is no longer a secondary reflex of processes occurring elsewhere (at the level of politics or ideology) but a concrete practice that played a constitutive role Athens' civic community.

At the core of the book is the dynamic between the commemorative media through which the war dead became present during the ritual as a collective category with recognizable attributes. The focus on transferrable cognitive processes, as opposed to discrete registers of representation, allows Arrington to give the material evidence its due weight and trace the rise of a shared conception of civic death evolving around agonistic struggle and self-sacrifice for the common good. Whereas most previous work has presumed a 'devolution' model, with private imitation of public monuments gradually giving way to elite appropriation of symbols of democratic statehood, Arrington's interpretative framework foregrounds the discontinuities that enable individuals and groups from across the social scale to respond to a common system of signification.

The book is archaeological and phenomenological in structure, moving from the public monuments of the suburban cemetery to those of the city centre and the private memories relayed in portable objects. To trace the origins of public burial, Chapter 1 identifies the features of the custom which undercut most effectively the lavish displays of beautiful and individualized bodies in the elite cemeteries of Archaic Attica—the mass repatriation of cremated remains to a designated location and the commemorative inscription of names as state subjects (i.e. in lists arranged according to political tribe rather than birth place or family connection). Based on the new Marathon monument from Athens (*IG* i³ 503/4) and the pottery reported from one of the (still unpublished) polyandria at Salaminos Street, Arrington argues that the critical elements were in place by 490 BC, much earlier than the previously accepted date for the institution in the 460s BC. In his view, the earlier date associates public burial with other foundational shifts in Athenian communal awareness, ‘Cleisthenic’ if one insists on writing history through the prism of textual tradition.

Chapter 2 studies the spatial logic of the *dêmosion sêma*. Less homogeneous than the tombs of most modern state cemeteries, the loose clusters of monuments near the Academy road communicated their special status apparently through their proximity to the *Marathonomachoi* monument and the tomb of the Tyrannicides, and their juxtaposition to the elite burials to the north-east. Chapter 3 examines how the assimilation of the aristocratic eulogy (in the epitaph) to the new epigraphic format of the casualty list shifted attention from the *arête* of individuals to communal values of resilience. The figured reliefs crowning the lists from the 430s BC accomplished the same shift through battle representations distinguished from contemporary mythological art (and most other traditions of the war monument) by their focus on undecided struggle rather than triumph.

Chapter 4 aims to show how this visual discourse of agonistic warfare was amplified in the city’s major sanctuaries through the prominent images of ‘beautiful’ corpses on the Parthenon (west metopes), the Athena Parthenos shield, the Hephaisteion (east frieze), and the Temple of Athena Nike. In a city where the bodies of the war dead were no longer visible, their sculptural incarnation as tokens of excellence further collectivized the memory process.

The discussion then moves to the private responses to public burial.

Chapter 5 explores how fifth-century BC posthumous private portrait dedications began to play on the virtue of military service in order to harmonize elite ambition with the expectations of democratic restraint. Chapter 6 questions the

long-held consensus that the iconography of private monuments depended on the imagery of public commemoration: in fact, there is no evidence that casualty lists bore figure decoration before private grave reliefs reappeared in the 430s BC, and private commemoration exhibits significant autonomy in its representations, conveying military virtues also in mythology (battle *loutrophoroi*) and preferably through triumph rather than toil.

The independence of private commemoration is further stressed in Chapter 7, discussing the evidence Athenian white-ground *lekythoi* might offer for the *oikos*' involvement. Although no such vessels have been published from an excavated state tomb, Arrington's investigation of how, for instance, the departure scenes by the Achilles Painter reconcile the invisibility of the fallen soldier with the ocular longing of memory affords important insights into the work which pictorial imagination performs, regardless of whether or not a particular vessel was conceived for public burial.

Here as elsewhere in his book, Arrington demonstrates that theoretical debate in classical archaeology can productively coexist with the discipline's empiricist traditions. His analyses are coherent and incisive, from the level of individual objects and sites to the broader debates concerning methodological direction. Readers from different fields and levels of specialization will be amply rewarded.

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