

BOOK REVIEW

Archaic and Classical Greek Epigram. Edited by Manuel BAUMBACH, Andrej PETROVIC and Ivana PETROVIC. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Hardcover, £63.00/\$104.00. ISBN 978-0-521-11805-7.

In his renowned handbook of Greek literature, first published in 1957, Albin Lesky devoted a scant page to pre-Hellenistic Greek epigrams (a corpus of some 900 verse inscriptions dating from 800 to 300 BCE). Lesky felt it necessary to justify even this much attention, given the genre's status as "craft" rather than "art." Recent decades have been more hospitable to the topic, thanks in part to Peter Allan Hansen's two-volume edition of *Carmina Epigraphica Graeca* (Berlin and New York, 1983/89). In addition to many articles, not a few of them by contributors to the present volume, two monographs on archaic and classical epigrams have recently appeared: Christos Tsagalis, *Inscribing Sorrow: Fourth-Century Attic Funerary Epigrams* (Berlin and New York, 2008) and Joseph W. Day, *Archaic Greek Epigram and Dedication* (Cambridge, 2010). The present edited volume, based on a conference on Greek epigram held in Castle Rauschholzhausen, Germany in 2005, provides the most comprehensive introduction to early elegy. The useful bibliography generally extends through 2007, with scattered citations of some later scholarship.

The volume incorporates a wide range of approaches. In particular, the anthropological turn in Hellenic studies, as well as the integration of material culture and philology, have had a great and profitable impact on the study of early inscriptions. The editors introduce the volume with a substantial essay, valuable not least for its succinct summary of the history of scholarship on Greek epigrams. The rest of the book is divided into two parts of unequal length, Contextualization (Chapters 2–13) and Literarization (Chapters 14–17), with further sub-groupings within these divisions. I will address the chapters in each subsection, and conclude with a few general comments.

The first section, "Speaking and Reading: the Dialogue between Epigram and Passer-by," plunges into a long-standing and still controversial debate. Thomas A. Schmitz ("Speaker and Addressee in early Greek Epigram and Lyric") asks how written texts engage their audiences in comparison with performed

texts. Focusing especially on the second-person discourse of Sappho and Alcaeus, he concludes that both kinds of discourse seek to “create a special space for communication that is clearly demarcated from pragmatic, everyday discourse.” Schmitz argues that both kinds of discourse feature a fictional addressee: epigrams establish an imaginary future reader, while the putative addressee of lyric (e.g. Alcaeus’ reviled Pittacus) is not actually present in the performance context. Michael A. Tueller continues the discussion with a catalogue and analysis of the developing role of the passer-by in early epigram—a figure mentioned only occasionally, and only in Attica, before 500 BCE. Gjert Vertrheim’s paper on “voice in sepulchral epigrams” again uses early lyric poetry as a comparandum. He notes that first- and second-person characters in both lyric and epigrams are poetic constructs, and points out that epigrams are more likely to affirm communal values than personal lyric, where the speaker is often given a counter-cultural persona.

A second group of papers deals with “Art and Viewing: the Spatial Context.” Barbara E. Borg writes on the elaborate sculpted and inscribed “chest of Kypselos” dedicated at Olympia, no longer extant but elaborately described by Pausanias (5.17.5–19.10). Borg argues persuasively that the scenes on the chest are accompanied by epic-influenced hexametric inscriptions which not only identify the scene but also “guide the viewer” in how to receive it. She hypothesizes that the chest was designed by/for the Kypselids of Corinth, but does not examine how their interests would connect with the content. A fine chapter by Catherine Keesling focuses on the Callimachus monument on the Athenian Acropolis. The inscriptions on this Nike-topped column include a problematic change of perspective that suggests they consist of two separate epigrams. Keesling argues that the entire monument was dedicated by the city of Athens to commemorate the battle of Marathon—the first public monument for a victory in a military “contest,” and one that already stresses the Hellenic component of the Persian Wars. Very different is Katharina Lorenz’ contribution, “Dialectics at a Standstill: Archaic *kouroi*-cum-epigram as *I-Box*.” Lorenz adopts techniques of media-studies to discuss the ever-shifting relationship among the object inscribed, the text, and the audience. To the experience of viewing inscribed archaic *kouroi* she compares such self-consciously dialectical works as Robert Morris’ 1962 *I-Box* and Maya Lin’s 1982 acclaimed Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC.

Chapters 8 and 9 make up the sub-section on “Epigram and Performance: the Religious Context.” William D. Furley contends that “a dedicatory epigram

represents a symbolic caption to an act of worship” and does not attempt to record what was actually said at the occasion. In this context Furley also considers the function of *korai* and *kouroi* dedications; like Lorenz and other contributors, he focuses on the objects dedicated as well as the inscriptions. Catherine Trümpy’s chapter on the beginnings of dedicatory and sepulchral epigrams surveys the geographical range, themes, and functions of early inscriptions; in fact, her contribution would make a good introduction to the topic. Trümpy ends by comparing early epigram and choral lyric; she has good observations on their similarities, but might have given more attention to fundamental differences in how the two forms communicate (reading vs. performance).

The fourth section, “Propaganda and Memorial: the Historical and Political Context,” discusses material that has been much debated by historians as well as literary scholars. Carolyn Higbie provides a basic overview of inscriptions and other poetry about the Persian War, including the question of how this poetry might have been transmitted. She also pays special attention to inscriptions cited by Plutarch. In a lively essay on “True Lies of Athenian Public Epigrams,” Andrej Petrovic extends his earlier work on historical epigrams by placing them in the framework of “intentional” history. *Inter alia*, Petrovic suggests that an epigram was seen as more trustworthy when it was connected with the name of a famous author (usually Simonides), and analyzes the connection between the past deeds celebrated (typically introduced with *ποτε* “once upon a time”) and the future audience of citizens who should be inspired to emulate those deeds.

Chapters 12 and 13 are grouped under the heading “Generic and Literary Contexts: the Rise and Reception of Epigrammatic Subgenera.” Kathryn Gutzwiller’s learned contribution highlights the relationship between inscribed and literary epigrams. She takes as a starting-point the “Aristotelian” *Peplos*, which she argues was a prose work that included a number of short sepulchral epigrams for panhellenic heroes. From this compilation and others, as well as from texts on vase paintings, Gutzwiller makes a strong case that there was cross-fertilization between inscribed and literary epitaphs as early as the fifth century. Both kinds of funerary epigrams increasingly memorialized even the ordinary dead in terms similar to hero-cult. Rudolf Wachter’s chapter uses linguistic and grammatical evidence to argue for a more differentiated interpretation of inscribed stones, *pinakes*, or pots (especially the famous Nestor’s cup) as “speaking objects.” Wachter maintains that as Greek literacy increases, dedications can be seen to shift from a more oral/formulaic to a more written style.

The book's second and shorter division, "Literarization," begins with an illuminating section called "Losing Context: Intertextuality and Poetic Variation." Richard Hunter questions how certain stylistic traits of Hellenistic epigrams can usefully be compared to earlier Greek poems. He considers not only (indeed, not primarily) early epigrams, but also archaic lyrics to which the later works allude. Noting for example that the trope of a whole city mourning its dead is attested in the *Iliad*, archaic lyric, classical funerary epigrams, and Hellenistic poetry, Hunter asks provocatively how we are to recognize "the emergence of 'the literary'" in a corpus that evidently is *always* interconnected and allusive. Marco Fantuzzi's contribution focuses on classical monuments that bear more than one inscription. He concludes that "Hellenistic epigram most likely derived its taste for the art of variation from its non-book origins," the highly repetitive language of archaic funerary and dedicatory inscriptions. Along the way Fantuzzi offers insightful observations on developments in the "slow" medium of stone vs. the "official" but quicker poetry composed for books.

The volume ends with two papers grouped under the title "Inventing Contexts: Ecphrasis and Narration." Ewen Bowie's essay, with over sixty pages the longest in the collection, deals with "Epigram as Narration" as part of the larger question of whether literary genres exist, and how they influence each other. Bowie observes that narration is an essential component of dedicatory epigrams, since the act of dedication must be communicated, but it is not necessary for funerary epigrams—and yet nearly all early epigrams include some narrative material. Bowie explores this fact in a detailed analysis, with welcome attention to meter among other criteria, and even an appendix on the length of all verse inscriptions 750–400 BC. Jon Steffen Bruss' paper on ecphrasis in epigrams finishes off the collection. After reviewing the Homeric description of Achilles' shield, Bruss uses reader-response criticism to examine the multiple functions of ecphrasis in classical inscriptions. He notes that inscribed epigrams by nature have an ecphrastic character, since they refer to the object of which they are a part. Bruss also addresses relationships between classical and Hellenistic epigrams, and ends the chapter with a clear summary of his points.

Altogether, this is a most timely and valuable collection of essays in a well-produced volume. The illustrations are few, but clear and varied. Greek text is generally translated, although this has been overlooked in a few passages (several examples on p. 32). Some typographical mistakes slipped through, most of them minor (e.g. *Naeram* for *Neaeram*, p. 203 n. 3; *extinguish* on p. 345). Errors I spotted in the Greek include *περιβάρνεται* for *περιμάρνεται* and *γα* for *τε* on p.

86; phi for koppa in *CEG* 391 on p. 325; and on p. 234 βασιλεια is translated (nom.) “queen” instead of (acc.) “palace.” Two editorial decisions of larger scope would have made the volume more user-friendly: the absence of an index locorum is disconcerting, and more cross-references would have enriched the discussion of topics (e.g. future audiences, the first-person speaker) pursued by a number of contributors.

These quibbles aside, the editors deserve applause for producing a marvelous sampler of current work in a (still) under-studied area. While not a book for the casual reader, *Archaic and Classical Greek Epigram* is essential reading for scholars interested in Greek epigraphy, the beginnings of alphabetic writing, and early Greek poetry whether or not inscribed on stone.

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