BOOK REVIEWS

Archaic Greek Epigram and Dedication: Representation and Reperformance. By JOSEPH W. DAY. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Pp. [xvii] + 321.

This book is what you might call the full flowering of one central idea that the author had already developed in earlier work, especially "Interactive Offerings: Early Greek Dedicatory Epigrams and Ritual."[1] The idea is that Archaic dedicatory epigrams (principally from Athens) were meant to be read and that, in reading them (aloud), the viewer was recreating an original act of pious devotion to the god. In other words, the act of reading (that is, "reception" of the original text) is a reperformance of the devotional act and a continuation of the religious "message" that the original dedication intended. These dedicatory epigrams tend to be short and stereotyped in their content: "so-and-so dedicated such-and-such to this or that deity." Sometimes the occasion or motivation for the dedication is given: very often the gift to the god is described as the fulfillment of a vow (*ex voto*) or as the rendering up of a ritual share of earnings (ἀπαρχή or δεκάτη). The dedicatory epigram usually stood on the base of the physical object given, whether this was a small simple object or a lavish sculpture. In this way, the epigram "framed" the viewer's "encounter" (to use Joseph Day's favorite expressions) with the dedication. The short epigrammatic text told the viewer who had dedicated the monument, to which god, and sometimes why. Thus, anyone who read out the inscription was reliving, or reawakening, the pious moment of giving to the god, and simultaneously naming the person responsible, thus giving the devotional act new life. D. hammers away at this theme over 250 pages, until it takes on the character of a mantra.[2]

D. constructs his argument around the following key points: (1) the degree to which Greeks actually read the inscriptions that filled their sanctuaries from the Archaic period onward. (2) The concept of *agalma* denoting the beautiful object designed to please both the divine recipient and the human viewer subsequent to the dedication, combined with *mnēma*, the idea of a memorial to the human being and his devotional act, sometimes including details of family and kin. (3) The language of epigram, in

1. Joseph W. Day, "Interactive Offerings: Early Greek Dedicatory Epigrams and Ritual," *HSCP* 96 (1994): 37–74.

2. From p. 4: "My conclusion will be that dedications with epigrams memorialized the ritual of their own dedication," through 101: "The epigram represents or narrates a successful ritual transaction; but it also symbolizes or embodies that event. Whenever it was read out, the result of the transaction was repeated verbally, and the word agalma reproduced in its grammatical function the religious function of the concrete agalma in that original rite, namely, to mediate a relationship between dedicator and god," to (e.g.) 231: "In such ways, an epigram successfully framed encounters with a dedication as rituals and performances; and with its emphasis on the dedicator's act of offering, epigram framed these new occasions as reperformances of that original." But one could quote similar formulations from nearly every page of the book.

particular the divine epithets, which D. says is a kind of shorthand for longer forms such as prayer, epinician, and hymn. Here D. develops the interesting thesis that certain recurring formulae in the Acropolis inscriptions (Athena, daughter of Zeus, Glaukopis, Pallas, Tritogenes) may evoke features of Athena at the Panathenaia, hence that the private devotional act is placed in parallel to the major state festival. (4) The presentation of the dedicator as reflected in the language of the epigrams. Here D. examines the "prosopography" of the epigrams, in particular the ties of kinship (parenthood, marriage, etc.) that the inscriptions record. D. argues that these data aim to secure divine favor and social recognition for the whole family of the dedicator. On the Acropolis korai he is undecided whether they represent human devotees of the goddess (i.e., girls in Athena's service) or, on occasion, the goddess herself.[3] He suggests that even if a man did not have a daughter, his dedication of a kore to Athena would show him as the kind of grandee who had marriageable daughters suited to the service of Athena. This section also considers the "achievement" of a dedicator recorded by epigrams. Here D. concentrates on athletic victor statues, treating them as analogous to other dedications; he adduces epinician poetry as the "long form" to which epigrams celebrating athletic achievement refer. Such victory epigrams are shown convincingly to echo the original *aggelia* of victory at the games. (5) The motif of *charis* in dedicatory epigrams. Here D. compares hymns and prayers, with their emphasis on the relationship of ritual *charis* between worshipper and deity, to show the same mentality in dedicatory inscriptions.

Throughout the book the argument is detailed, meticulous, largely error-free, and well documented and researched. D.'s basic position—that dedicatory epigrams preserve a pious act of giving for posterity—can hardly be seriously questioned. Along the way he provides many judicious discussions of concomitant phenomena. The book can be recommended to anyone interested in what might be called the philosophy of Archaic epigram. D. reconstructs a kind of "Platonic Form" of this poetic subgenre. What the book is not is a philological or historical commentary on the many epigrams discussed by D. That is still a desideratum, given that Peter Hansen only has short critical notes in Latin.[4]

But is the central idea so self-evidently true? Several questions can be raised. Even apart from the unanswerable question as to how many people actually read these epigrams in situ, there is the further matter of the impossibility of knowing what readers thought and felt. Throughout D.'s argument we read statements such as "the reader would have experienced delight and awe . . ." (sc. when viewing a beautiful dedicatory statue and reading the inscribed epigram). But can we be so sure? The Greeks were no more naive, or uniform, than we are. Many, no doubt, will have scoffed at the pretensions of a certain dedicator (whom they perhaps knew and disliked); aesthetic reactions will have been as subjective and various as they are today. D. underestimates the variety of responses people have to art works and assumes a kind of "ideal viewer," like his ideal Platonic form of the epigram itself.

Second, while he claims that epigrams encouraged "reperformances" of the original act of dedication, in fact precisely the reverse could be argued. Instead of maintaining

3. In discussion with Catherine M. Keesling, *The Votive Statues of the Athenian Acropolis* (Cambridge, 2003), in particular.

4. Peter A. Hansen, *Carmina epigraphica Graeca*, 2 vols. (Berlin and New York, 1983, 1989) (= *CEG*).

that someone reading an epigram later "recreated" the original rite of dedication, one could argue that the dedication itself was *designed* to provoke viewings and readings in posterity. That is, that the whole purpose of the inaugural act was to start the chain of readings and viewings, not vice versa that subsequent readings sought to recreate the original moment. For one thing, we know next to nothing about the rites accompanying the dedication of such statuary. For all we know there was no ceremony at all, let alone a religious service, with priest, prayer, libation, and so on, which D. assumes. The artisan may simply have created the votive object and erected it for his client in the given sanctuary without further ado. In other words, the rationale of the votive may have been to *show to posterity* what a pious and successful person so-and-so had been. D.'s insistence on reperformance may be an inversion of the true priorities.

This point is connected with another important consideration concerning dedications. Throughout the book D. emphasizes what one might call the "good faith" of the epigrams, that is, that we should take them at their word: so-and-so really wanted to thank (e.g.) Athena for her gracious favor. D. is not impervious to the element of social display involved in such demonstrative acts, but he downplays its importance. He does indeed consider the two aspects of "piety and display," but rather as an afterthought (pp. 228–29), where others might say that display and self-advertisement may have been *the* dominant social factor. One could plausibly suggest that individuals vied with each other to show off their wealth and piety by devoting lavish gifts to the gods. The better the statue, the larger the *aparchē* or *dekatē*, the greater the social status of the giver. D. clearly privileges piety over display as motive for dedications, and disputes W. H. D. Rouse's view that display gradually took over from piety in the fourth century B.C.E.[5]

There are other, minor, irritations in the book. D. has a curious habit of quoting himself verbatim (on pp. 101, 108–9, 112) as if his earlier works were by an independent authority, and not by himself. He uses some ugly or antiquated words that jar somewhat: "thusly" (pp. 6, 148, 190); "herein" (p. 203); "agglutinative" (p. 207, where "additive" or "composite" seems to be meant). His style is distinctly heavy going. The following sentence is not untypical: "The meaning or force of epithetic and other naming formulas will be understood to consist in the mental results of those people's being cued to a traditional referent they carried in their heads and derived from familiarity with poetry" (p. 132). The Greek text of the epigrams is copied religiously from Hansen, to the extent that errors in the latter are preserved.[6] One or two points in translations or glosses seem questionable: πᾶσι καὶ ἐσομέ[νοισιν in *CEG* 356 is surely "and for all to come," not "all, even those yet to be." In *CEG* 301 (p. 174) δέμοι must be the dative object of καδέθεκεν, so not "being archon over the people of the Athenians," which would require the genitive. Nor, in the same inscription, is the gloss "put down" happy for στέλας καδέθεκεν, where κατατίθημι must be equivalent to καθίστημι, "set up." The plural of Panathenaia is not Panathenaiai (p. 180)! The footnotes are in an eye-strainingly small font.

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5. W. H. D. Rouse, *Greek Votive Offerings: An Essay in the History of Greek Religion* (Cambridge, 1902).

6. Accent on νίκησ[ας in *CEG* 211; breathing missing on ἔχοι in *CEG* 235; accent missing on Τίμαρχος μ' in *CEG* 243.