Poetic Garlands

Hellenistic Epigrams in Context

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The epigram, as its name indicates, is a written form, often a verse inscription. From the eighth or seventh century B.C. epigrams, among our earliest examples of writing in the Greek alphabet, were chiseled on grave monuments to commemorate the dead and on votive offerings to explain the act of dedication.[1] Numerous verbal and metrical parallels show that epigrams, composed first in hexameters and later primarily in elegiac couplets, drew from the same

1. Pre-Hellenistic verse inscriptions have been collected by Peter A. Hansen, *Carmina epigraphica Graeca saeculorum VII–V a. Chr. n.* (Berlin, 1983) and *Carmina epigraphica Graeca saeculi IV a. Chr. n.* (Berlin, 1989). For a survey of the earliest inscriptions, down to 650 B.C., see Barry B. Powell, *Homer and the Origin of the Greek Alphabet* (Cambridge, 1991) 123–80. No comprehensive edition of verse inscriptions, including those from later antiquity, has appeared since Georg Kaibel, ed., *Epigrammata Graeca ex lapidibus conlecta* (Berlin, 1878), but sepulchral epigrams through the late period may be found in Werner Peek, ed., *Griechische Vers-Inschriften* I (Berlin, 1955) and, selectively, in *Griechische Grabgedichte* (Berlin, 1960). The reader is cautioned, however, that Peek includes many epigrams preserved in manuscript and perhaps never intended for inscription. A comprehensive book on ancient epigram is yet to be written, but general discussions may be found in R. Reitzenstein, "Epigramm," *RE* 11 HB (1907) 71–111; J. Geffcken, "Studien zum griechischen Epigramm," *NJA* 39 (1917) 88–117, reprinted in shortened form in *Das Epigramm: Zur Geschichte einer inschriftlicher und literarischen Gattung*, ed. Gerhard Pfohl (Darmstadt, 1969) 21–46; Hermann Beckby, ed., *Anthologia Graeca* (Munich, 1957) I 9–99; and, for the later Greek period, R. Keydell, "Epigramm," *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 5 (1962) 539–77. Two more recent books go some way toward filling this gap. Marion Lausberg, *Das Einzeldistichon: Studien zum antiken Epigramm* (Munich, 1982), though ostensibly concerned only with two-line poems, surveys much of the history of Greco-Roman epigram as well as the history of scholarship on epigram. Pierre Laurens, *L'abeille dans l'ambre: célébration de l'épigramme* (Paris, 1989) covers literary epigrams from the beginning of the Hellenistic age through the Renaissance, but with a concentration on the Latin poems.

traditional language found in epic and elegy.[2] Although some scholars, by associating writtenness with literature, have placed epigram at the head of the western literary tradition and others have compared inscribed verse to the occasional poetry of the oral period,[3] it is my own view that early Greek culture granted to epigram, in comparison with the major poetic forms of epic, elegy, and lyric, an aesthetic value like that of "craft to art."[4] It was the writtenness of the epigram, as its essential feature, that for centuries confined it to the ranks of the minor arts, to the category of the decorative and the trivial. During this period literary works of higher rank obtained written form only for mnemonic purposes, to be preserved for the next oral performance.[5] The epigram, on the other hand, unlike any other archaic or classical poetic form, was intended

2. For these parallels, see Paul Friedländer with Herbert Hoffleit, *Epigrammata: Greek Inscriptions in Verse from the Beginnings to the Persian Wars* (Berkeley, 1948) 65–70; A. E. Raubitschek, "Das Denkmal-Epigramm," *L'épigramme grecque* in Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique 14 (Geneva, 1968) 3–26; and B. Gentili, "Epigramma ed elegia," *L'épigramme grecque* 39–81. On the change to elegiac in the sixth century, see M. B. Wallace, "The Metres of Early Greek Epigrams," in *Greek Poetry and Philosophy: Studies in Honour of Leonard Woodbury*, ed. Douglas Gerber (Chico, 1984) 303–17.

3. For celebration of epigram's position in western literature, see Raubitschek 5 and, more elaborately, Helmet Häusle, *Einfache und frühe Formen des griechischen Epigramms* in Commentationes Aenipontanae 25 (Innsbruck, 1979). For the comparison of epigram to oral song, see G. B. Walsh, "Callimachean Passages: The Rhetoric of Epitaph in Epigram," *Arethusa* 24 (1991) 79 and J. W. Day, "Rituals in Stone: Early Greek Grave Epigrams and Monuments," *JHS* 109 (1989) 26, who likens the role of the epitaph reader to that of a praise poet.

4. In his use of this phrase, Friedländer 1 seems to have in mind the essential merit of inscribed verse, while I am referring only to ancient aesthetic evaluation.

5. See, in general, B. M. W. Knox, "Books and Readers in the Greek World: From the Beginnings to Alexandria," *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature* I, ed. P. E. Easterling and B. M. W. Knox (Cambridge, 1985) 4. On the rarity of books in the fifth century, see E. G. Turner, *Athenian Books in the Fifth and Fourth Centuries B.C.* (London, 1952); H. R. Immerwahr, "Book Rolls on Attic Vases," in *Classical, Medieval, and Renaissance Studies in Honor of B. L. Ullman* I, ed. C. Henderson, Jr. (Rome, 1964) 17–48, where the use of scrolls for oral recitation is evident; and William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989) 84–88. On the existence of written poetic texts in the "song culture" of ancient Greece, see John Herington, *Poetry into Drama: Early Tragedy and the Greek Poetic Tradition* (Berkeley, 1985) 45–47, 201–6.

Important studies on the change from a predominantly oral to a predominantly literate culture include: Eric Havelock, *Preface to Plato* (Oxford, 1963), *The Literate Revolution in Greece and Its Cultural Consequences* (Princeton, 1982), and *The Muse Learns to Write: Reflections on Orality and Literacy from Antiquity to the Present* (New Haven, 1986); J. Goody and I. Watt, "The Consequences of Literacy," in *Literacy in Traditional Societies*, ed. Jack Goody (Cambridge, 1968) 27–68; Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy* (London, 1982). These works should be read in conjunction with the revision in the theoretical approach to orality and literacy put forth by, e.g., Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Poetry: Its Nature, Significance, and Social Context* (Cambridge, 1977) and Rosalind Thomas, *Oral Tradition and Written Record in Classical Athens* (Cambridge, 1989) and *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge, 1992).

not for public recitation but for private reading whenever a passerby, whose curiosity was piqued by a monument or dedication, paused briefly to peruse the inscription.[6] Although the solitary reading of an epigram does anticipate the experience of later book readers, within this cultural context verse inscriptions were valued more for their practical function of praise and commemoration than purely as literary objects. The literariness of an inscription was further limited because the reader's aesthetic experience involved visually perceived objects as well as discourse—it was based on the shape of the letters as much as the poetic quality of the verse and on the relationship of the inscription to the crafted object of which it was a part.[7] As long as the epigram was confined to its monument, it was excluded from the arena of oral discourse where poetry could obtain rank and status by performance, and reperformance, before a collective audience.

Only at the beginning of the Hellenistic age did epigrams emerge as fully literary forms; in fact, they became a favorite of those on the cutting edge of literary development.[8] Certain authors, like Posidippus and Leonidas, were known primarily or exclusively as epigrammatists, while poets better known for their work in other genres, like Callimachus and Theocritus, also composed significant quantities of epigrams. Epigram is in some ways the most characteristic of Hellenistic poetic forms. Because of its inherited brevity and conciseness, its necessary concern with the personal and the particular, it conformed well

6. Jesper Svenbro, *Phrasikleia: An Anthropology of Reading in Ancient Greece*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Ithaca, 1993) 44–63 has argued that an inscription was normally read by a single reader to a group of auditors, but he produces a doubtful text of a single epigram (108 *CEG*) as his only evidence for this custom. While such a "performance" of an epigram may sometimes have taken place, surely it was also common, we may suppose more common, for an epigram to be read by a single reader. Nor should we assume that inscriptions were always read aloud. While B. M. W. Knox, "Silent Reading in Antiquity," *GRBS* 9 (1968) 433–34, has shown that silent reading was not unusual in the fifth century, there is no reason to doubt that it was accomplished at an even earlier date.

7. For the dependence of an epigram's meaning upon its relationship with its monument, see Raubitschek 3 and Häusle 88–105. Christoph W. Clairmont, *Gravestone and Epigram: Greek Memorials from the Archaic and Classical Period* (Mainz, 1970) is concerned with the relationship between stone and inscription in the narrower sense of what the verse reveals about the figures represented on the monument.

8. M. Puelma, "Ἐπίγραμμα—*epigramma*: Aspekte einer Wortgeschichte," *MH* 53 (1996) 123–39 has recently argued that epigram was not canonized as a poetic genre until the time of Martial. His argument is primarily a semantic one, based on the fact that the word ἐπίγραμμα does not appear in the texts of Hellenistic epigrammatists. Though the poets themselves do use a variety of terms to refer to their short poetry, ample evidence shows that ἐπίγραμμα was a standard designation for short verse in the third century B.C.; see Chapter 2. As with other new Hellenistic poetic forms, such as pastoral, the genre itself was practiced by poets before the terminology to designate the genre became fixed. Praxis preceded canonization.

to the Callimachean aesthetic preference for the miniature, the intricate, and the fragmented. The term later used by Philip of Thessalonica to designate the brevity characteristic of the epigram (ὀλιγοστιχίην, 1.6 G-P, *Garland* = *AP* 4.2.6) echoes Callimachus' programmatic term for his own short poetry (ὀλιγόστιχος, fr. 1.9 Pf.).[9] The illusion of inscription maintained in many literary epigrams may also have boosted the genre's appeal to this bookish age, concerned with the visual as well as the more strictly literary aspects of the written word.[10]

But the admission of the epigram to the status of a fully literary kind resulted most directly from its new similarity to other, "higher" forms of poetry. Epigrams continued to be composed for inscriptional purposes, but they were increasingly found also in settings where literary discourse was conventionally presented. Terse elegies, resembling epigrams in their brevity, and parodies of inscriptions, probably recited at symposia, are known already from the fifth and fourth centuries.[11] But Asclepiades was apparently the first person to devote himself to the composition of sympotic epigram, which derives its themes from the elegies traditionally performed in the symposium setting. Richard Reitzenstein argued a century ago that Asclepiades and his circle composed their epigrams for performance at Hellenistic banquets.[12] Antipater of Sidon's reputation as an improviser indicates that even ostensibly inscriptional epigrams were recited on

9. It was after Callimachus, however, and after Meleager's *Garland* as well, that epigrammatists began to impose severe limitations on their compositions. See Parmenion 11.1–2 G-P, *Garland* = *AP* 9.342.1–2, φημὶ πολυστιχίην ἐπιγράμματος οὐ κατὰ Μούσας εἶναι, "I tell you that the epigram of many lines does not accord with the Muses"; Cyrillus *AP* 9.369.1, πάγκαλόν ἐστ' ἐπίγραμμα τὸ δίστιχον, "An epigram of two lines is a beautiful thing"; and with a different emphasis, Leonidas of Alexandria *AP* 6.327.2, οὐ γὰρ ἔτι στέργω τὴν δολιχογραφίην, "I no longer care for writing at length." For theoretical considerations of brevity as the essential characteristic of epigram, see Lausberg 20–101.

10. For references in poetry to reading and the appearance of writing on the page, see Peter Bing, *The Well-Read Muse: Present and Past in Callimachus and the Hellenistic Poets* in Hypomnemata 90 (Göttingen, 1988) 10–48.

11. See Ulrich v. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Hellenistische Dichtung in der Zeit des Kallimachos* (Berlin, 1924) I 129–32; B. Gentili 40–43.

12. *Epigramm und Skolion: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der alexandrinischen Dichtung* (Giessen, 1893) 87–96. Although Reitzenstein understood well that these poems were also placed in books, he considers them first and foremost "Lieder beim Gelage" (96). Reitzenstein's thesis has recently been revived by Alan Cameron, *Callimachus and His Critics* (Princeton, 1995) 71–103, who argues that epigram was the "new sympotic poetry of the age" (76). I agree with Cameron that the epigram books of the third century probably incorporated poems originally recited to friends and likely included short poems in nonelegiac meters. But I resist his implication that the collection of these epigrams onto papyrus scrolls was a mere afterthought and so without specific literary intent ("publication of epigrams in book form must have been secondary, a way of preserving the best of the new epigrams rather than the factor that gave birth to them," 78). My study will show that at least in some instances Hellenistic epigrams were composed to occupy key positions in poetry books.

similar occasions.[13] Epigram became virtually indistinguishable from shorter elegy or extracts from longer elegy not only because both were now performed but also because both were now encountered by readers in books. Scholars have pointed to the precedent set by the *Theognidea*, a collection of elegiac passages suitable for recitation at symposia, and to an edition or editions of epigrams attributed to Simonides, gathered both from stone and from the anecdotal tradition.[14] Although both collections underwent evolution in form throughout the Hellenistic period, recent studies dated the prototypes to the end of the fourth century.[15] In all likelihood, then, the formation of these sylloges was precedent to the earliest epigram books rather than coincidental with them. The epigrammatists themselves count among their forerunners the elegists Mimnermus and Antimachus and certain lyric poets (Sappho, Anacreon, and Bacchylides, as well as Simonides) whose preserved works include a number of epigrammatic poems.[16] At the same time that scholarly editions of these poets were being formed, Hellenistic epigrammatists began to collect their own compositions and to publish them in the form of epigram books. Even if Hellenistic poets sometimes composed for the stone and sometimes recited their

13. Cic. *De Or.* 3.194. The practice was still familiar in the first century A.D.: Martial (2.1.9–10) pictures the proper setting for a reading of his epigrams to be a banquet and Leonidas of Alexandria, of Neronian date, assumes that his isopsephic distichs will offer symposium entertainment (*AP* 6.322). Yet within their published form such statements represent an established fiction about epigram performance rather than the author's expectation for the use of his poetry. Leonidas' play with the numerical sums of the letters in his lines of verse could hardly be appreciated orally; for the fictionality of such reference in Martial, see D. P. Fowler, "Martial and the Book," *Ramus* 24 (1995) 31–58.

14. The basic study on the Simonidean sylloge is Marcus Boas, *De epigrammatis Simonideis* (Groningen, 1905); see also D. L. Page, ed., *Further Greek Epigrams* (Cambridge, 1981) 119–23, who accepts only 6 *FGE* (= Hdt. 7.228.3) as genuinely Simonidean.

15. Martin L. West, *Studies in Greek Elegy and Iambus* (Berlin, 1974) 57 dates the core of the *Theognidea*, that which he calls the "florilegium purum" (lines 19–254), to about 300 B.C. Page (1981) 123 places the core of the Simonides collection "quite early in the Hellenistic period" or, alternatively (210), "in the latter part of the fourth century." This dating assumes that the collection was supplemented with clearly spurious epigrams throughout the third and second centuries, resulting in a much expanded collection used by Meleager; see D. L. Page, ed., *Epigrammata Graeca* (Oxford, 1975) v–viii. John H. Molyneux, *Simonides: A Historical Study* (Wauconda, Ill., 1992) 13–15, who perhaps exaggerates the inconsistency in Page's stated positions, finds credible the hypothesis of an original fourth-century collection.

16. Posidippus (9 G-P = *AP* 12.168) claims inspiration from Mimnermus, Antimachus, Homer, and Hesiod, while Asclepiades' praise of Antimachus' *Lyde* (32 G-P = *AP* 9.63) suggests a similar literary heritage. In listing the epigrammatists anthologized in his *Garland* (1 G-P = *AP* 4.1), Meleager mentions a number of pre-Hellenistic poets: Sappho, Simonides, Bacchylides, Anacreon, Archilochus, and Plato. For epigrams on lyric poets, see S. Barbantani, "I poeti lirici del canone alessandrino nell'epigrammatistica," *Aevum Antiquum* 6 (1993) 5–97.

epigrams to friends at social gatherings,[17] they were nevertheless self-consciously aware that their epigrams would ultimately reside with other poetry in a written context.

Study of the literary art of the Hellenistic epigram is inescapably concerned, then, with epigram as book poetry. But the book epigrams of this era have been preserved for us not in their original collections but by means of successive anthologies compiled from the late Hellenistic period through the Byzantine era.[18] This anthologizing has strongly affected the hermeneutical approaches applied to Greek epigrams, which tend to be read either as isolated poems or as part of a sequence of poems designed to display the skill of successive poets at the art of variation.[19] While such methods of interpretation often make valuable contributions to our understanding of the poems, scholars have sometimes translated the brevity of epigram into a limited potential for meaning and have assessed the variation of themes as an artistic sterility developing over the course of time.[20] To comprehend more fully the appeal of epigram for Hellenistic readers, we need to reconstruct the historical contexts in which these poems were read—above all, the collections compiled or approved by the authors themselves. Toward this goal, the next chapter will survey what can be known about specific editions and what the manuscript and papyrological records tell us

17. Although some epigrams were likely improvised on the spot, others were probably composed in advance and then recited at an opportune moment. In either case, we are dealing with drafts that were presumably improved before circulation in written form.

18. The standard commentaries on Hellenistic epigrams are A. S. F. Gow and D. L. Page, eds., *The Greek Anthology: Hellenistic Epigrams*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1965) and *The Greek Anthology: The Garland of Philip*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1968). Manuscript epigrams omitted by Gow-Page have been edited by Page (1981). There are also a number of important editions of the *Greek Anthology*, which preserves most of the surviving Hellenistic epigrams: Friedrich Jacobs, *Anthologia Graeca*, 13 vols. (Leipzig, 1794–1814) and, with a fuller text of P, *Anthologia Graeca ad fidem codicis olim Palatini nunc Parisini*, 4 vols. (Leipzig, 1813–17); Hugo Stadtmüller, ed., *Anthologia Graeca epigrammatum Palatina cum Planudea*, 3 vols. (Leipzig, 1894–1906), which stops at 9.563; W. R. Paton, ed. and trans., *The Greek Anthology*, Loeb Classical Library, 5 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1916–18); Pierre Waltz *et al.*, eds., *Anthologie grecque*, 13 vols. (Paris, 1928–94); Beckby, 4 vols. (1957–58).

19. The study of Hellenistic epigrams as isolated entities is exemplified by the numerous publications of Giuseppe Giangrande, who examines linguistic usage and thematic convention within the poems; see, for example, "Gli epigrammi alessandrini come arte allusiva," *QUCC* 15 (1973) 7–31. For focus upon a sequence of epigrams linked by variation of a theme, see W. Ludwig, "Die Kunst der Variation im hellenistischen Liebesepigramm," *L'épigramme grecque* 299–334; Sonya L. Tarán, *The Art of Variation in the Hellenistic Epigram* (Leiden, 1979); and Laurens 76–96.

20. See, for instance, the comments of A. W. Bulloch, "Hellenistic Poetry" in *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature* (1985) I 616–17: "The epigram is always particularly concerned with stock themes and variation within the genre, and even poems which strike an apparently intimate note are also written with a view to displaying a literary conceit or figure, or a witticism. For all its fecundity the epigram was never more than a minor form."

about the principles of order and design in those editions. With this information as a guide, we will then be in a position to apply a new interpretive strategy to individual Hellenistic epigrams—to read them *as if* we knew their place in historical collections. But first, we will consider here, more theoretically, the general effects that accrue from placing epigrams in a literary context.[21]

In form, epigrams preserved in manuscript do not differ from those found on stone. The inscribed poems of the Hellenistic era often display the same level of poeticity in diction and imagery as the anthologized poems, some of which must themselves have been composed for inscription.[22] The literariness of the Hellenistic epigram depends, then, not upon some "bookish" element in form, style, or theme (though many poems do seem unlikely candidates for inscription), but upon the context in which the poem is found. When an author or editor transfers an epigram from its site of inscription to a papyrus roll, it is signaled by cultural convention that a more literary form of interpretation is now expected of the reader. The poem is no longer an "epigram" in the original sense of an inscription but a representation of such an "epigram." The monument adorned by the epigram is no longer visually present but, like the banqueting hall as the site of sympotic epigram, must now be reconstructed in the reader's imagination. When Gow surmises time and again that certain epigrams were composed to accompany pictorial representations, he points unwittingly to the imaginative process—the mental filling-in of information—that book epigrams commonly evoke. A Pompeian wall painting illustrating an epigram by Leonidas carries this response to the extreme point of re-creation in a visual medium.[23] The painter who represented in fresco Leonidas' scene of three brothers—a fowler, a hunter, and a fisherman—dedicating nets to Pan created a pictorial version of the numerous literary imitations composed by later epigrammatists.

21. For a general discussion of the effects of collection on reading, see N. Fraistat, "Introduction," *Poems in Their Place: The Intertextuality and Order of Poetic Collections*, ed. Neil Fraistat (Chapel Hill, 1986) 3–17 and D. Fenoaltea, "Preface," *The Ladder of High Designs: Structure and Interpretation of the French Lyric Sequence*, ed. Doranne Fenoaltea and David Rubin (Charlottesville, 1991) vii–x. For literary study of an epigram collection, see Ann B. Coiro, *Robert Herrick's "Hesperides" and the Epigram Book Tradition* (Baltimore, 1988).

22. On the heightened poeticity of Hellenistic inscribed verse, see Peek (1960) 37. For discussion of certain epigrams from the *Anthology* that have also been found as inscriptions, see G. Pfohl, "Inschriften in der Anthologia Graeca," *Euphrosyne* 2 (1968) 155–60. On the problem involved in making a strong differentiation between inscribed and literary epigrams, see Lausberg 96–97.

23. 46 G-P = *AP* 6.13. Gow-Page (1965) II 342, 356 seem uncertain whether the fresco was composed for the inscription or vice versa. But the fact that it is one of four sets of painted illustrations of inscriptions argues against the priority of the fresco, since it is highly unlikely that all the inscriptions, with distinct origins, were composed to accompany paintings. For discussion of the paintings and identification of the inscriptions, see Carl Dilthey, *Epigrammatum Graecorum Pompeis repertorum arias* (Diss. Turici, 1876).

As Wolfgang Iser has taught us, the process of imaginatively re-creating the experiential world suggested by the text is a fundamentally literary response to the act of reading.[24]

So too, the placing of an epigram in a book grants the referents of that poem a certain indeterminacy of meaning.[25] The reader of an inscription assumes the persons or events mentioned to be historically real; clearly false or fictional information would disrupt the bonds of trust established by convention between author and reader. But whether the reader of a book epigram knows the referents of the poem to be historical or fictive, or is uncertain of the choice, makes little difference in terms of the expected literary response.[26] Of course, readers may dissect epigrams for the historical information they contain; but in doing so they, as readers, are not fulfilling the role anticipated by the author or editor who gave those epigrams a literary context. The epigram placed in a book, whatever its intended purpose at the time of composition, gives meaning to its referents through exemplification: its subjects become types, presented, gemlike, through brief but specific details.

In an epigram collection, as in any poetry book, the reader encounters a tension between the book as a whole and the poems placed within it. The act of reading is a process of weighing the boundaries of single poems against evidence for cohesiveness of design—formal and thematic similarities, patterns of arrangement, significant placement. Although the privileging of part over whole, or whole over part, is often determined by a reader's own expectations, the epigram book has by its very nature a strong centrifugal force pulling the reader's focus to the isolated poem. Because of its origin as inscribed verse, the epigram form possesses what Barbara Herrnstein Smith has called "maximal closure."[27] As a statement that must define its subject for all time, and in a form short enough to be engraved on stone, the epigram developed the distinctive traits not only of brevity and restraint but also of appearing to have the last word. The reading of an epigram book is a process of continually seeing its subjects briefly but whole, of ending and ending again. Recognizing that satiety comes quickly for the reader of epigrams, Martial limits the length of his books to about a hundred poems (1.118; cf. 2.1, 4.89, 11.108, and 12.5) and encourages

24. *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore, 1978). For the process in relationship to epigram, see P. Bing, "Ergänzungsspiel in the Epigrams of Callimachus," *A&A* 41 (1995) 115–31.

25. For a good discussion of determinate and indeterminate meanings in literary works, see Barbara Herrnstein Smith, *On the Margins of Discourse: The Relation of Literature to Language* (Chicago, 1978) 137–46.

26. For this reason, the attempts of Wilamowitz to distinguish between epigrams composed for inscription and those composed for books has proved ultimately fruitless and futile. For his position that epigrams should be taken as historical unless clearly shown to be fictive, see (1924) I 121.

27. *Poetic Closure: A Study of How Poems End* (Chicago, 1968) 197.

the impatient reader to shorten the book even further by selective reading (10.1; cf. 14.2). But in all likelihood, earlier Greek epigrammatists sometimes compiled longer editions, since Hellenistic poetry books had a maximum length of about two thousand lines in comparison with the Roman limit of slightly over one thousand lines.[28] In fact, the new Posidippus collection on the Milan papyrus (P.Mil.Vogl. inv. 1295) is apparently incomplete at one hundred poems, and books of Meleager's *Garland* may have contained as many as three hundred epigrams. Given the brevity of each epigram and the large number of poems in some collections, Greek epigram books, by nature if not also by design, would tend to display a discontinuity of structure that was a hallmark of the Hellenistic literary aesthetic.

Scholars have commonly stressed diversity of arrangement—the Greek ποικιλία or the Latin *variatio*—as the primary principle of ordering developed in the early Hellenistic period and handed on to the Romans.[29] Since in other contexts ποικιλία can refer, concretely, to embroidery or, more abstractly, to intellectual subtlety, it suggests, with reference to literary arrangement, the craft and the intricacy of pattern that is characteristic of Hellenistic poetry and art.[30] But ποικιλία alone would produce collections without structure or unity, and we find in surviving Hellenistic and Roman poetry books that poets employed a number of techniques to weld their diverse poems into a cohesive whole.[31] If

28. Theodor Birt, *Das antike Buchwesen in seinem Verhältniss zur Litteratur* (Berlin, 1882) 291–99 set the average length for both Greek and Roman poetry books at 700 to 1,100 lines and attempted to explain the longer books of Apollonius and Lucretius as early aberrations. But papyrological evidence for Hellenistic scholarly editions plus additional information about Hellenistic poetry books suggests that books between 1,000 and 2,000 lines were the norm for Greek poets; see J. Van Sickle, "The Book-Roll and Some Conventions of the Poetic Book," *Arethusa* 13 (1980) 8–12.

29. The classic studies of variety as a principle of poetic arrangement are Wilhelm Kroll, *Studien zum Verständnis der römischen Literatur* (Stuttgart, 1924) 225–46 and W. Port, "Die Anordnung in Gedichtbüchern der augusteischer Zeit," *Philologus* 35 (1926) 280–308, 427–68. In rhetorical theory the terms ποικιλία and *variatio* are applicable, not just to arrangement, but to every level of composition, from sounds to words to tropes to the ordering of subject matter; for discussion and references, see Michael Roberts, *The Jeweled Style: Poetry and Poetics in Late Antiquity* (Ithaca, 1989) 44–65.

30. See Barbara H. Fowler, *The Hellenistic Aesthetic* (Madison, 1989) 5–22.

31. Matthew Santirocco, *Unity and Design in Horace's "Odes"* (Chapel Hill, 1986) 7, 11 has argued that *variatio* has been overemphasized at the expense of unifying devices. On the techniques of cohesion in the *Aetia*, see Nita Krevans, *The Poet as Editor: Callimachus, Virgil, Horace, Propertius and the Development of the Poetic Book* (Diss. Princeton, 1984) 230–300. On the structure of the *Iambi*, see C. M. Dawson, "The *Iambi* of Callimachus," *YCS* 11 (1950) 142–43 and D. L. Clayman, *Callimachus' "Iambi"* (Leiden, 1980) 48–49. A summary essay on Augustan poetry books is provided by W. S. Anderson, "The Theory and Practice of Poetic Arrangement from Vergil to Ovid" in Fraistat 44–65; additional details in Helena Dettmer, *Horace: A Study in Structure* (Hildesheim, 1983).

the unifying principles of an epigram book can be grasped even by a selective reader, as Martial suggests, that is an advantageous circumstance for the project at hand, since we must deal with the debris of Hellenistic collections. The evidence from papyri and manuscripts adduced in the next chapter will show that Hellenistic editors employed various means of creating cohesion in their collections—grouping by length of poem or by topic, linking poems associatively by verbal repetition or thematic similarity. The poems on the Posidippus papyrus are organized by fairly specific topics (such as stones, omens, shipwrecks), each category given its own heading; and we have strong evidence for complicated sequencing in Meleager's multi-authored anthology as well as evidence that associative bridging within sequences appeared already in earlier single-authored collections. We may justifiably assume, then, that the striking similarities sometimes found between the epigrams attributed to one poet were used in collection for poetic effect. Since one epigram may often do the work of another, we will make no attempt to establish the exact order in these lost collections. Yet even editors with a minimal sense of design may choose to place at points of opening, transition, and closing epigrams that convey specialized, usually programmatic, meaning.[32] Examples are offered by the placement of hymns at the opening of scholarly editions of the archaic poets (such as Sappho, Alcaeus, and Theognis), by the poetic statements within the prologue and epilogue of Callimachus' *Aetia*, by opening and closing poems in many Roman poetry books. In the course of analyzing Hellenistic epigrams from the point of view of their original context, we will find numerous examples of poems whose significance is altered or deepened when their programmatic function within a collection is determined or surmised. The arrangement of a poetry book should be conceptualized, then, as a balance between unifying cohesion and pleasing variety, each a necessary ingredient of an artistically designed collection.

Another effect of reading an epigram in a literary context is an increased awareness of the poet who composed the poem. In inscribed epigram the poet remains anonymous, his persona effaced by the objectivity of the style. In earliest times, when the inscription consisted of a single hexameter or elegiac couplet, the composer may often have been the very person who commissioned the monument or the artisan who designed and constructed it.[33] Later when the

32. See, for instance, J. Van Sickle, "Poetics of Opening and Closure in Meleager, Catullus, and Gallus," *CW* 75 (1981) 65–75 and, for discussion of the opening and closing poems of the Anacreontic anthology, Patricia A. Rosenmeyer, *The Poetics of Imitation: Anacreon and the Anacreontic Tradition* (Cambridge, 1992) 126–37.

33. For the commissioner of the monument as the composer, see Florence A. Gragg, "A Study of the Greek Epigram before 300 B.C.," *Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 46 (1912) 12–13 and Wilamowitz (1924) I 126–27. For sculptors as composers of epigrams, see Clairmont 10; M. Wallace 308–11; Lausberg 121; and Ute Ecker, *Grabmal und Epigramm: Studien zur Frühgriechischen Sepulkraldichtung* (Stuttgart, 1990) 132–49.

poems grew more complex, we may assume that a professional poet, perhaps the local epigrammatist, was more often hired for the task. Although the purpose of early inscriptions was largely encomiastic, to preserve the dedication or the deceased in honorific memory,[34] the epigrammatist, unlike the praise poet, never took up the custom of vocalizing his own participation in the praise. Even when the tombstone or the deceased, the votive offering or the recipient deity speaks or holds a conversation with a passerby, the human presence behind the voice or voices of inscribed epigram is understood to be the person erecting the monument or making the dedication. The proper stance of the epigrammatist, as mere spokesman, is to have no stance at all, to avoid any personal perspective or sentiment. It is first in the fourth century, and then only rarely, that we find poets breaking with this tradition of self-effacement to name themselves as composers of epigrams. The authorial disengagement later associated with epigrammatic style is, then, an inheritance from the traditional objectivity of earlier inscribed verse.

But in the early Hellenistic age the persona of the epigrammatist fully emerged—as a direct result of the collection of epigrams into books. The roots of this phenomenon may lie in symposium recitation of "epigrams," whether intended by their reciters as short elegies or imitations of inscriptions, since performed poetry is necessarily associated with the known characteristics of the performer. An additional factor was, in all likelihood, the scholarly editing of older poets, which must have revealed to Hellenistic epigrammatists the possibilities of the poetry book as a literary form. Readers of poetry books tend to bestow upon similarities of theme, form, and tone the constructed persona of a speaker. The gathering of the poetry attributed to such figures as Sappho, Theognis, and Simonides made evident to the reader of their collected works the thematic and stylistic traits characteristic of each poet. We will find in our analysis of Hellenistic epigram books that the poetic personae of the epigrammatists fall into two categories, one more naturally associated with sympotic and erotic epigram and the other with sepulchral and dedicatory epigram. When the voice speaking within individual poems can be closely identified with the poet, as in sympotic-erotic epigram, the collection may present itself as autobiographical narrative or as a series of personal statements revealing the poet's beliefs and values. When a different voice speaks from poem to poem, as commonly in collections of ostensibly inscriptional verse, the reader may nevertheless fashion a poetic creator responsible for the overall design; the presence of that persona is revealed, amid the multiplicity of voices, through thematic repetition, formal cohesiveness, and uniformity of subject and tone. While in the latter type of collection the reader can usually distinguish the poet's persona from the impersonated voices in the various epigrams, even in

34. On the encomiastic purpose of epigram, see Svenbro 64–79 and Day.

the sympotic-erotic type the reader may perceive a certain distance between the voice of the poet speaking within the epigrams and the seemingly less involved, more controlled persona of the poet who orders the collection and thus the experiences revealed within it.[35]

The reader tends to synthesize a collection's themes, tonalities, and principles of order into a conception of the author's poetic message, heard in no one poem but perceivable by reading across the boundaries of individual poems. The example of the *liber Catulli*, which readers commonly interpret as a history of an unhappy love affair despite the fact that the majority of the poems do not concern Lesbia at all and despite continuing uncertainties about the extent to which Catullus participated in the editing of his collection,[36] indicates that collections including poems of different types on a variety of subjects may yet be synthesized by the reader into a controlling poetic focus. By encountering Hellenistic epigrams only in anthologies, readers have been deprived of the opportunity to hear the larger messages that were surely suggested by at least some of the original collections.[37] The study at hand will reveal that Hellenistic epigram books encouraged a variety of interpretive approaches: as indices of poets' conceptions about their personal experiences and social relationships; as a means of focusing on certain classes of individuals and modes of living so as to make ideological statements; as vehicles for conveying a poet's literary personality and for placing a poet's achievements within the context of literary tradition. Once we recognize that such larger messages may be conveyed by the briefest of poems when gathered into collections, we can see that part of the attraction of the epigram book for early Hellenistic poets was to rival in length

35. An example of this distinction between the poet within and the poet without the collection may be found in Horace's *Sermones*, where J. E. G. Zetzel, "Horace's *Liber Sermonum*: The Structure of Ambiguity," *Arethusa* 13 (1980) 59–77 has identified an ironic tension between the artistry of the ordering poet and the intellectual failures of his moralizing persona.

36. For the currently popular view that Catullus is responsible for the order of the entire *liber*, see M. B. Skinner, "Aesthetic Patterning in Catullus," *CW* 81 (1988) 337–40. Fundamental to the acceptance of this view has been the work of Kenneth Quinn, *Catullus: An Interpretation* (London, 1972) 9–53 and T. P. Wiseman, *Catullan Questions* (Leicester, 1969) 1–31. For a recent argument in favor of a posthumous editor for much of the collection, see T. K. Hubbard, "The Catullan Libellus," *Philologus* 127 (1983) 218–37. Paul A. Miller, *Lyric Texts and Lyric Consciousness* (London, 1994) 52–77 has now offered a reading of the Catullan book as a complex set of dialogical relationships between individual poems. For a discussion of how the author Catullus has been constructed from the heterogeneity of his poetry, see William Fitzgerald, *Catullan Provocations: Lyric Poetry and the Drama of Position* (Berkeley, 1995) 19–33.

37. The thematic unity of early Greek epigram books finds reflection in later parallels, such as Strato's Μοῦσα Παιδική devoted to pederastic themes (preserved in *AP* 12.1–11, 175–258, excluding 230, 232–33, 256–57) and some of Martial's books—*de spectaculis* on wonders of the amphitheater, Book 11 organized around the theme of Saturnalian license, Books 13 and 14 on gifts. See N. M. Kay, *Martial, Book XI: A Commentary* (London, 1985) 5–6; J. P. Sullivan, *Martial: The Unexpected Classic* (Cambridge, 1991) 217–21; and D. Fowler.

and function traditionally longer works while yet working within a genre of brief compass and low rank.

In considering the types of messages that were likely delivered by epigram books, we should look to the reasons that epigram, both in isolation and in collected form, appealed so strongly to Hellenistic writers and readers. Epigrams focus on individuals, in their particularity, in their personal relationships with family, friends, and deities, in the crucial moments of their professional and personal lives. In the cosmopolitan world of the Hellenistic era, individual subjectivities were no longer shaped by allegiance to a particular class or an independent political unit. Cities were mixtures of Greeks and non-Greeks, and the Greeks within them were of diverse origins and status, forming allegiance to an autocratic monarch for reasons of personal advantage or necessity rather than because of common political goals. By their focus on the personal and the particular, epigrams could reflect these new bonds—shifting, local, and pragmatic, and much altered from the earlier, inescapable and unquestionable, webs of relationship that enmeshed individuals in the cultural myths of their own polis. Epigram was a traditional poetic form that could yet avoid without excuse the larger social, religious, and political themes dominating earlier Greek literature. As a minor form elevated to major status, a marginal type brought to the center, epigram, matching form to content, could represent individuals as they now were—marginal, drifting, fragmentary and fractured selves.

So too, epigram books, inasmuch as they lacked the unified and balanced structures of earlier literature, as discontinuous and fragmented entities without organic requirements of length or form, were effective representations of the changeable and unpredictable patterns of affiliation that linked Hellenistic individuals one to another.[38] We will find that the epigram books of the third and second centuries were themselves individualized, differentiated from each other through thematizations that are often local, gender-specific, reflective of personal choice rather than social given, expressive of unique tonalities and philosophies. These Hellenistic epigram collections are among (if they do not in fact constitute) the earliest poetry books in the western literary tradition, and for that reason alone are worthy of more attention than they have received in the past. But far from being randomly or haphazardly constructed, or organized through simple or pedantic techniques, what we can know of them suggests that their very fragmented structures were organic to their messages. Yet the coherent unity of each individual epigram also encouraged the shifting of these texts into new contexts, where they formed affiliations that reflected new matrices

38. On cultural affiliation as a substitute or replacement for biological filiation, see Edward W. Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983) 16–24. In an illuminating study of *Idylls* 2, 14, and 15, Joan B. Burton, *Theocritus's Urban Mimes: Mobility, Gender, and Patronage* (Berkeley, 1995) has shown the importance of mobility and internationalism in Theocritus' poetry.

of meaning. As Alan Cameron has recently commented, "The epigram was in fact destined by its very nature to be *anthologized*."[39] By grouping old with new, known with unknown, the poet-editors of epigram anthologies fashioned a literary context for historical intertextuality. In such anthologies the aesthetics of editing, important even for the earliest epigram books, came to the forefront to rival the aesthetics of composition. For an anthologist like the Syrian Meleager, who owed his Greekness to the process of colonization, the ability to project a personal style while maintaining through variation the tradition of Greek literature may have become the new message.

39. *The Greek Anthology from Meleager to Planudes* (Oxford, 1993) 4.