

interpretation of the remains of each author to the authors themselves nor in order to outline who, according to the editors, were Parmenides, Zeno and Melissus. Not to say anything suggests that, according to Macé and Brisson, there is nothing to say, i.e. that only some details, not the basic ideas of each of them, deserve refinement: this seems surprising, if only because of the unique – and impressive – competence deployed by Melissus as a connoisseur of the ‘ontological’ section of Parmenides’ poem. Indeed, that Melissus, and only Melissus, reached incomparable levels of understanding of just a section of the poem (that Parmenides’ poem included much more, in addition to the ‘doctrine’ of non-being and being, is largely attested by fragments 10–18 [or at least 10–14 and 16–18] DK as well as by dozens of testimonies) is a bare fact, although the scholarly community was and continues to be often not prepared to acknowledge it.

As a consequence, a polarisation of the attention to the ‘ontological’ section of Parmenides’ poem, much as if the poem finished with fragment 8 or 9 DK, affected not only ancient thinkers such as Gorgias, Plato and Aristotle, but also the scholarly community of the twentieth century and subsequent decades. The present commentators have nothing to say on this point either. The overall impression is that the general readership should take this book with confidence, sure to find in it nothing controversial or surprising.

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## OF GRAVES, OF WORMS AND EPITAPHS

HUNTER (R.) (ed.) *Greek Epitaphic Poetry. A Selection*. Pp. xiv + 280, maps. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. Paper, £26.99, US\$34.99 (Cased, £79.99, US\$105). ISBN: 978-1-108-92604-1 (978-1-108-84398-0 hbk).

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‘*Épigramme à la grecque*: Se dit par dérision d’une épigramme fade et sans sel.’ H.’s selection of Greek epigraphic funerary poetry gives the lie to the French idiom; these epitaphs deny the genre’s lugubrious connotations, proving lively, moving and highly memorable. The collection weaves together an impressively broad range of funerary epigrams from throughout Greek antiquity and seems certain to introduce new readers to an underappreciated corpus. It comes as a welcome complement within the *Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics* series to A. Sens’s selection of *Hellenistic Epigrams* (2020) and those edited in the *Hellenistic Anthology* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2020) and *Greek Poetry of the Imperial Period* (1994) by the late N. Hopkinson, to whom the volume under review pays worthy tribute; the addition of *Greek Epitaphic Poetry* to the series will now encourage readers to compare inscribed epigram with its literary counterpart.

The introduction offers valuable insights into the Homeric inheritance of the epitaphic tradition, the process of commissioning and writing epitaphs, and contemporary visions of death and the underworld. A section anticipating the question ‘Who Wrote Greek Verse-Inscriptions?’ illustrates how thorny this issue is. Comparisons between epitaphs exhibiting conceptual or linguistic parallels reveal that the ‘pattern-books’ reconstructed by some scholars are not an inevitable or necessarily economical explanation of epitaphic repetition. Underlying this discussion is the reappraisal of authorial identity both in twentieth-century reader-driven criticism and more recent work exploring the affordances

of anonymity as a productive category. H.'s chapter in *Poems without Poets* (ed. B. Kayachev [2021]) has contributed to this emerging field, as has T. Geue's work (*Author Unknown* [2019]), which places authorial uncertainty at the heart of textuality. As original 'models' for any particular commemorative mode are irrecoverable, interpretations of inscribed epitaph cannot rely on the genealogical theme-and-variation strategy developed for literary epigram; these poems present instead a picture of endless variation without definitive source.

The text is in two sections: epitaphs for men and for women. This gendered arrangement awkwardly accommodates cases like 28, two epitaphs both commemorating a woman and her son; and, arguably, blurring gender boundaries is characteristic of epitaphic rhetoric. On the one hand, men's epitaphs often say as much about their subjects' life as about their mothers' grief; as H. acknowledges, lamenting the dead was viewed according to an enduring cliché as typically feminine (pp. 7–8). Meanwhile, women's epitaphs celebrating their subjects' adherence to the highly gendered values of *σωφοσύνη* and *χρηστότης* were composed as much for (the benefit of) men as for the women they commemorate. The voices of husband and father ring through many epitaphs for women; even more conspicuous is the master's voice in 45, in which a deceased slave is made to describe his own skin colour as a marker of otherness while praising his master's compassion. Such poems remind us that, like the slave's name, Epitynchanon ('Lucky'), epitaphs can be used to overwrite lived experience, eclipsing memory, despite – and owing to – the genre's origins in aristocratic commemoration.

The commentary is a *ἔργον* for scholars not only of epigram, but of ancient burial practices, rites of passage, cosmologies, afterlives and countless further topics. It provides much useful material contextualisation, drawing on the insights of *The Materiality of Text* (edd. A. Petrovic, I. Petrovic, E. Thomas [2019]), and brims with rich *comparanda* drawn widely from Greek and Latin literature. These literary parallels raise an important question: by what standard should we judge epigraphic poetry? Is philology, with its preoccupation with a literary standard, equipped to engage with the striking symbolism of these poems on their own terms? H.'s volume does an excellent job of reversing a common prejudice about inscribed epitaph, revealing its potential for remarkable originality and ingenuity. Crucially, the commentary resists simplifying complexity, instead embracing the difficulty of the poems' imagery. The unfamiliar and puzzling can enhance memorability among inscriptions vying for readers' attention. A typical example is *τερπνὸ ἄχη* at 37.14: to read, against word order, οὐδὲ ... *τερπνά* ('a son's premature death gives his mother grief, not delight') produces a verse too banal to bother inscribing. The oxymoron might imply that other kinds of grief seem pleasant compared to the unique misery of burying one's son or, as H. ingeniously suggests, that a son's death denies his mother the satisfaction of parenting.

Unlike epitaph's 'ideal reader', the passer-by, who considers a poem and moves on, literary critics solve, explain and often alter the texts they read. H. balances these readerly responsibilities admirably. His introduction highlights important differences between approaching literary and epigraphic texts with the traditional tools of textual criticism (pp. 17–18). Pragmatically avoiding emendation where unnecessary, he provides a measured consideration where multiple solutions have been proposed and seldom obelises. On occasion, he offers and defends new readings, including the excellent *παπτάζοντ[α]* for original *παπταίνοντ[α]* (p. 100). The textual discussion is anything but dry, encouraging readers to contemplate for themselves the challenges of approaching ancient texts unfiltered through a commentarial tradition of two millennia.

H.'s notes provide ample help with unusual word forms and rare glosses without patronising readers. There are a few instances where additional linguistic commentary might have enriched discussion of an epigram. 10.1–3 is a case in point: 'If Fortune had

escorted you [through life] and set you on the path of manhood . . .’, begins the epitaph; such a protasis, apparently hypothetical since its addressee has died, should certainly introduce a counterfactual condition. Yet the apodosis is an indicative statement: ‘in hope, at least, you *were* great and in your potential, Macareus, to be charioteer of tragic composition for the Greeks’ (reviewer’s translations). H. indicates that the condition is not structurally counterfactual, but leaves open the connection between protasis and apodosis, which seem directly at odds. While emending γ[ε] to κ[ε] would be relatively straightforward, it would confuse the pathos of ἐλπίδι and τῷ μέλλειν; as H. says, ‘there *was* real hope for Macareus’ (p. 80). Perhaps the simplest interpretation construes the two clauses as syntactically disconnected, separable by an *ano teleia*: ‘If (only) Fortune had sent you on your way (etc.)! You were great in hope . . .’ (so P. Ghiron-Bistagne, *Recherches sur les acteurs dans la Grèce antique* [1974], p. 112). The arresting garden-path sentence, with its broken condition, underscores the dramatic interruption of Macareus’ life by his premature death.

Metre receives attention primarily where a verse is faulty and where it produces a stylistic effect. H. is perhaps overzealous in prosecuting violations of Naeke’s Bridge – cases such as 18.5 and 33.9 are exempted, rather than mitigated, by their proclitics, while a few genuine metrical faults, including 34.5, 59.1, 70.7 (Naeke’s Bridge) and 39.5, 80.3 (Hermann’s Bridge), are spared censure. As the introduction highlights, irregularities like the intrusive pyrrhic at 33.18 and iamb at 56.2 offer less certain ground for emendation in epigraphic than literary texts; these have been used to reconstruct stages in a poem’s production, speculative but appealing conjectures that help bring these texts to life. It is less clear how we should interpret the non-observance of Callimachus’ exacting standards for elegiacs, such as Hermann’s and Naeke’s Bridges, by Hellenistic composers of scannable verses; before drawing conclusions about an anonymous author’s poetics, we must remember that we have only a small sample of their output – often fewer than six verses at a time: even Homer nods occasionally, Callimachean ὄρτυνῆ notwithstanding.

While some readers might mourn Christian epitaph’s exclusion from the volume, there are constraints of space to be considered and a very rich world of pagan epitaph to be explored. As it stands, the collection spans a millennium, beginning in the seventh century BCE and concluding in the third century CE. This wide chronological scope allows readers to survey the length and breadth of Greek antiquity through its eloquent dead; it is an exciting and enlightening *nekylia*, which no passer-by should pass by.

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## AN INTRODUCTION TO GREEK TRAGEDY

FLETCHER (J.) *Classical Greek Tragedy*. Pp. xii + 161, ill. London and New York: Methuen Drama, 2022. Paper, £14.99, US\$19.95 (Cased, £45, US\$61). ISBN: 978-1-350-14456-9 (978-1-350-14457-6 hbk).

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Students and non-specialists seeking a quick and seamless introduction to Athenian tragedy should look no further than this handy little book. In four chapters F. covers the