

Self-Epitomization: The Practice of Summarizing One's Own Work

In scholarship on ancient technical and scientific writing, epitomes (abridgements, summaries, and the like) have sometimes been marginalized because of their largely secondary and derivative nature (Fögen 2005; Asper 2007). In recent years, however, the question of how intellectual communities ("schools," professions, societies) preserve, transmit, and transform knowledge has found increased interest among classical scholars. In this context, epitomes move to the center of attention (Horster/Reitz 2010; also Rossum-Steenbeek 1998). But many facets of this widely-used text type (Galdi 1922; Opelt 1962) are still unexplored, among them the interesting phenomenon of "self-epitomization," the practice of epitomizing one's own work.

In part one of the paper, a list of ancient writers for whom self-epitomization is attested will be presented. Representing different periods and disciplines, they are, for the most part, Greek authors (Epicurus, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Galen, and seven others), while two are Roman (Varro and Lactantius). It quickly emerges that the self-epitomizers were highly prolific and influential writers, central figures who have profoundly shaped their intellectual disciplines. In addition, these authors were active in vibrant and intensely competitive environments (Lloyd 1996; von Staden 1997). This suggests that their self-summaries were written for instructional as well as for strategic reasons, because they increase their authors' communicative reach (Delattre 2009; Bowler 2009).

The paper's second part will introduce the largely unknown preface of Galen's *Synopsis de pulsibus*, a one-book summary of his own, much longer treatise *De pulsibus* (*On Pulses*, 16 books). This passage contains keen observations on the advantages but also the disadvantages of the production and use of summary-literature. According to Galen, summaries teach facts but

not the evidence or reasoning behind them; good summaries can be helpful if used appropriately, bad summaries are always harmful.

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