

A Metapoetic Reading of Leonidas AP 7.198

Leonidas of Tarentum was deeply influenced by Anyte of Tegea and most commentators agree that Leonidas' epitaph for a grasshopper (ἀκρίς), AP 7.198, is an imitation of Anyte's Myro poem, AP 7.190 (Gutzwiller 1998, p.112). Not only was Leonidas influenced by Anyte's innovation in the epigrammatic genre of the animal epitaph generally, but he also shared a similar aesthetic and poetic project with her, which sought to elevate the common and focus on everyday themes and marginal characters. This paper, however, seeks to read Leonidas AP 7.198 as a deeper meditation on Leonidas' poetic indebtedness to Anyte, rather than as simply a derivative imitation of one of her epigrams. I argue that the vocabulary of the poem points to a metapoetic interpretation elucidating aspects of Leonidas' style, philosophy and authorial persona. In addition, the focalization and voicing of the epitaph through the voice of the grasshopper, rather than the female voice of the mourner Philaenis, connect Leonidas' epigram with concepts of poetic influence and composition.

The first half of the paper will focus on drawing out the possibility of a metapoetic reading, then I will provide an interpretation of such a reading in light of Leonidas' authorial persona and stylistic affinities. Leonidas AP 7.198 demonstrates a central element of his style, that is, contrasting a slight subject with the grand in vocabulary, hyperbole, and excessive epithets, which is in line with the new ethics of his poetry (Klooster 2019). The choice of an insect occupying a small tomb (καὶ μικρὸς ἰδεῖν καὶ ἐπ' οὐδεός) in AP 7.198 may also be reflective of the persona of the Cynic philosopher, adopted by Leonidas elsewhere, who eats little and lives in poverty in a small hut. The diet of a Cicada is also traditionally humble, often, as in Meleager 7.196, and in the pseudo-Hesiodic *Shield* 393, the Cicada only subsists on dew.

Its consumption of this diet is connected to poetic production; they eat dew in the morning and then sing in the daytime (Davies and Kathirithamby 1986, p.123; Borthwick 1966). These aspects prompt a reading of the grasshopper as not merely a pet, but as a figure for a poet.

The final part of this paper will discuss the representation of Anyte and her poetic voice within the poem as an acknowledgement of her as a poetic predecessor. The persona of Philaenis, the woman who mourns the pet she built a tomb for, seems to be a name with metapoetic significance. It is used in AP 7.486, a poem of Anyte where a mother, Cleina, mourns her daughter Philaenis, who died at a young age. Anyte's human epitaph poems highlight the public expression of the female voice, and the voice of the female poet in particular (Greene 2019, pp.289-294). In addition, the feminine gender of the speaking figure in the epigram (ἄκρις) is emphasized several times (first in line 3: τὴν γὰρ αἰοιδόν), drawing out the presence of the female poetic voice even further. In my reading, Philaenis, a girl with poetic talent valuing the locust for his singing abilities, can be seen as a figure for Anyte, her poetry, or even her poetic style. The poem gives Philaenis/Anyte much agency in the creation of and contribution to the aesthetics of the grasshopper/poet (αἰνοίης, ὄνθροπε, Φιλαινίδα). She is the one who set up the tomb (τὸλίγον ὄρθωσεν σᾶμα) and is in turn the true source and sound lying behind the voice given to the grasshopper (or poet) each time someone reads the epigram.

Works Cited

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