

Still Speaking: Dialogue on the Roadside Stage in Greek Inscribed and Literary Funerary Epigram

Often, we associate ancient inscriptions with the public language of conquest, victory, and the social context of an elite literary class. But what is striking about the ancient funerary epigram is its ability to speak directly to its intended audience - the passerby of its time. While monuments and the inscribed *stelai* were expensive and reserved for the elite in Archaic and Classical Greece, their placement by the side of well-traveled roads indicated that their message was aimed towards all on the road who passed. Seeing such a marker or *sêma*, a person might be reminded of their own experience of the sorrow from the timeless and classless affliction of losing a loved one. Or they might stop to marvel at the intricacy of the monument. However, the focus of this paper is on a category of funerary epigrams whose inscriptions interacted with its readers in a unique way and later served as a template for literary funerary epigrams: these funerary epigrams engaged in audible dialogue with the passerby through the use of personal pronouns and direct address (i.e., vocative and the second-person imperative) initially with the aim of preserving the *kleos* of the deceased and later used the same constructs to continue to engage silent readers.