

Tradition and Innovation in the Epigrams of Anyte

Despite Anyte's prominent place in Meleager's *Garland*, modern scholars have not generally given her epigrams the same attention and approbation as her Hellenistic contemporaries, Erinna and Nossis. Early twentieth-century views of Anyte tended to consider her poetry as "masculine," (Wright 1923; Wilamowitz 1924), dismissing her epigrams as lacking in any "womanly" or "personal" qualities. This assessment of Anyte clearly influenced subsequent scholarship as well (Hutchinson 1988; Skinner 1991). But feminist scholars have re-evaluated Anyte's worth, considering her to be an influential and innovative poet (Snyder 1989; Barnard 1991; Gutzwiller 1998). Gutzwiller, more than anyone, has shown how Anyte may be the first epigrammatist to "project a distinct literary persona," defined specifically by feminine sensibilities and values. Gutzwiller argues that Anyte's feminine persona, reflected in her focus on women, children and rural landscapes, was defined through her deviation from masculine themes and values found in traditional epigram. Male epigrammatists typically celebrate masculine achievements on the battlefield, adopting an impersonal, anonymous voice that reflects the values of the male-dominated and male-governed societies of Classical and Hellenistic Greece.

While my own treatment of Anyte's epigrams builds on Gutzwiller's ground-breaking work, I will argue in this paper that Anyte's innovativeness lies chiefly in her transposition and transformation of masculine discourses, such as those found in Homeric epic and classical public speech, particularly funeral orations. The dynamic interplay between public and private, masculine and feminine, modes of expression, and between the domesticity typically associated with women and established male literary culture, is especially striking in Anyte's animal laments (Geoghegan 1979; Barnard 1991; Gutzwiller 1998). Some scholars have argued, however, that Anyte's sympathy for and even identification with animals in these laments identifies her voice as distinctly feminine, in that such expressions of affection and nurturing are more characteristic of

women than men in Greek society. While Anyte's animal epitaphs may diverge from traditional masculine attitudes to pets and to animals in general (Gutzwiller 1998), Anyte's abundant use of Homeric references, witty word-play, and most importantly, her calm acceptance and dispassionate tone in the face of death and loss, show a departure from the intense emotional engagement characteristic of women's laments.

My essay will focus on Epigram 10, Anyte's lament for a puppy killed by a snake. I will argue that this lament, marked in the poem by praise rather than pathos, suggests a close affinity with public forms of encomia designed to affirm the glorification of death as compensation for personal loss. In addition, the puppy's death leads Anyte to reflect on the capricious and inevitable nature of mortality. Although she clearly expresses compassion for the puppy, she does not express any emotion, any sense of personal pathos, over the death of this animal. The use of epic diction throughout the poem gives the lament a quality of narrative that imparts a distance to the speaker's presentation of the puppy's death. Anyte also draws on formulaic language used in funerary contexts; this links Anyte's expression of grief to public funeral oration as well.

Clearly, Anyte's epigrams do not fit neatly into generic categories, but draw on elements of traditional epigram, women's lament, and on the male-centered discourses of public funeral oration. In Epigram 10 Anyte expresses concern for the death of a noisy little puppy, thus evoking the personal sphere more associated with women than with men. Yet Anyte's calm philosophical attitude presents the death of a puppy as neither heroic nor trivial, but as simply part of a natural process to which all life is subject.

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