

Brian W. BREED
Incorporated Epigrams in Triumviral Poetry

A common thread of allusions to Hellenistic epigrams can be traced through the generically diverse Latin poetry of the 30s BC. This paper aims to highlight the formal significance carried by epigrams as the object of specific imitations in that experimental period of Roman literature between the neoteric "revolution" and the Augustan Age, with specific reference to Virgil's *Eclogues* and Horace's *Satires* 1.

In contrast to the example of their neoteric predecessors, the poets of the triumviral period did not commonly produce epigrams as stand-alone compositions. Rather, when they did adapt model epigrams they did so for the most part within the context of longer poems and collections of poems. This element of incorporation or framing adds to the allusions the potential for reflection upon the formal standing of epigrams as such. Two examples of such incorporated epigrams are the focus of this paper: the more or less direct translation of whole epigrams by Callimachus in Virgil *Eclogue* 9.51-55 and Horace *Satire* 1.2.105-110.

Both of these passages tacitly acknowledge the incorporation of a model from Hellenistic epigram through the dramatization of an allusion as speech, placing the model text in quotes as it were. In *Eclogue* 9 the despairing Moeris speaks a partial translation of Callimachus' Heraclitus epigram (*AP* 7.80 = *epig.* 2 *Pf.* = *G-P* 34). Even as the speaker complains of songs forgotten (*nunc oblita mihi tot carmina* [54]), Virgil's poem enacts a poetic memory of Callimachus. In *Satire* 1.2 an interlocutor speaks, again, in the words of a Callimachean epigram (*AP* 12.102 = *epig.* 31 *Pf.* = *G-P* 1). The satirist is utterly dismissive of *hisce versiculis* (109), even as he displays his own Callimachean principles. His somewhat incoherent literary stance is an element of his characterization in this poem and throughout the collection (see Zetzel in *Arethusa* 13 [1980]). In ways to be explored in this paper, in both cases mimetic speech serves to highlight incorporation and the event of allusion because of the quasi-generic signature of epigram as poetry that is by definition written. But the tension between the creation of a dramatic speech context for the epigram and its written status is an expansion from the suggestiveness of the epigrams themselves, which commonly have the appearance of fragments excerpted from some original context, whether inscriptional or, in the case of the examples considered in this paper, spoken and "symposiastic."

The internal development within Latin poetry from the stand-alone epigrams of the neoterics to the incorporation of adapted epigrams within the context of longer poems thus in a way mirrors the common hermeneutic response to reading the original Hellenistic models. As parts of larger wholes, the epigrams incorporated into the Latin poems are provided with those contextual details, such as a speaker, an interlocutor, and a setting, which have to be supplied on a first reading. This contextualization through incorporation is analogous to what occurs when epigrams are presented in narrative along with the objects on which they are inscribed, as, for instance, at Propertius 2.13.33-36 or *Aeneid* 3.286-288. In the presentation of both inscribed epigrams and spoken ones as part of a larger written text, we might see a reflection of one type of contextual anchor that the

epigrams would have carried for Roman readers, that of the books in which they were collected (see Bing in *A&A* 39 [1993]; Gutzwiller, *Poetic Garlands*). Added thematic point accrues to this type of allusion because the *Eclogues* and *Satires* are early examples of Latin poetry made purposefully for books. Both collections draw on the thematic potential of the difference between their mimetic fictions of speech taking place—whether shepherds’ dialogues or harangues by the satirist—and the written text of the poetry. Formally prominent adaptations of epigrams point perhaps to lessons learned by the early Augustan poets from collections of epigrams.