Poetry as window and mirror: Hellenistic poets on predecessors, contemporaries and themselves

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APPENDIX: LIST OF HELLENISTIC EPIGRAMS ON POETS

Corpus
The corpus consists of early Hellenistic epigrams dealing with poets, i.e. epigrams produced in the third Century BCE. I have chosen to exclude later Hellenistic authors such as Antipater Sidonius and Thessalonicensis as well as Meleager, because they produced their poetry in a different setting. Problematic are the epigrams attributed to Plato on Aristophanes (14 Diehl), Sappho (AP 9.506) and Pindar (AP 7.35). I follow Gow and Page (1965) in excluding the first two from the Hellenistic age, and attributing the last to Leonidas (20).

Poets of the Past
(Poems marked with an asterisk are discussed in the text.)

Orpheus
   AP 7.9 Damagetus*
   AP 7.10 Anonymous

Arion
   AB 37 Posidippus*

Homer
   AP 7.2 Anonymous
   AP 9.2 Leonidas
   AP 7.1 Alcaeus of Messene
   AP 7.5 Alcaeus of Messene
   AP 7.80 Callimachus (Homer and Creophylus)*

Hesiod
   AP 7.55 Alcaeus of Messene
   AP 7.54 Mnasalces

Pisander
   AP 9.598 Theocritus

Antimachus
   AP 9.63 Asclepiades*

Mimnermus, Antimachus, Hesiod, Homer
   AP 12.168 Posidippus

On the nine lyric poets
   AP 9.184 Anonymous
   AP 9.571 Anonymous

Archilochus
   AP 9.185 Anonymous
   AP 7.664 Theocritus*
   AP 7.351 Dioscorides*
Hipponax
  AP 7.408 Leonidas*
  AP 7.536 Alcaeus of Messene
  AP 13.3 Theocritus*

Alcman
  AP 7.709 Alexander Aetolus

Sappho
  AP 9.189 Anonymous
  Ath.13.696 Posidippus*
  AP 7.407 Dioscorides

Pindar
  AP 7.35 Leonidas

Anacreon
  AP 7.28 Anonymous
  AP 7.24 Pseudo-Simonides
  AP 7.25 Pseudo-Simonides
  AP 7.31 Dioscorides
  APl. 306 Leonidas*
  APl. 307 Leonidas*
  AP 9.599 Theocritus*

Erinna
  AP 9.190 Anonymous
  AP 7.12 Anonymous*
  AP 7.11 Asclepiades
  AP 7.13 Leonidas

Philitas
  AB 63 Posidippus

Thespis
  AP 7.410 Dioscorides

Aeschylus
  AP 7.411 Dioscorides

Sophocles
  AP 7.37 Dioscorides
  AP 7.21 Simmias*
  AP 7.22 Simmias

Euripides
  AP 7.46 Anonymous

Tellen
  AP 7.719 Leonidas

Epicharmus
  AP 9.600 Theocritus
  AP 7.125 Anonymous

Cratinus
  AP 13.29 Nicaenetus of Samos

Heracleitus
  AP 7.479 Theodoridas of Samos
Poets of the Present (Including Self-epitaphs)

Aratus
  AP 9.507 Callimachus*
  AP 9.25 Leonidas*
  SH 712 = Vit. Arat. 1 (King Ptolemy “Physkon”)

Asclepiades
  AP 12.50 Asclepiades*

Callimachus
  AP 7.415 Callimachus*
  AP 7.525 Callimachus*
  AP 9.566 Callimachus*
  AP 11.362 Callimachus*
  AP 12.43 Callimachus*
  AP 11.275 “Apollonius”*

Euphorion
  AP 11.218 Crates*
  AP 7.406 Theodoridas*

Hedylus
  Ath. 11.473a, GP V Hedylus*

Heracleitus
  AP 7.80 Callimachus*

Leonidas
  AP 7.715 Leonidas*
  AP 6.300 Leonidas*
  AP 6.302 Leonidas*

Machon
  AP 7.708 Dioscorides

Mnasalces
  AP 13.21 Theodoridas of Samos*

Nossis
  AP 5.170 Nossis*
  AP 7.718 Nossis*

Posidippus
  SH 705 = AB 118*

Rhinthon
  AP 7.414 Nossis

Sositheus
  AP 7.707 Dioscorides

Theaetetus
  (AP 9.565) Callimachus*
Singing versus Writing in the Epigrams

A. Poets of the Past.

In these epigrams, the profession of the poet is expressed with the following words: ποιητής (AP 7.2, 7.5 Homer; 7.664 Archilochus); ἀοιδός (AP 7.10 Orpheus; 7.1, 7.80 Homer; 7.13 Erinna; 13.29 Cratinus). Apart from these designations, there is a range of words forming a continuum between the two: εὐφώνων Πιερίδων πρόπολος (AP 7.35 Pindar); μουσοποιός (AP 9.598 Pisander; 13.3 Hipponax); ύμνητης (AP 7.19 Alcman); ύμνοπόλος (AP 9.24 Homer; 7.25 Anacreon; 7.13 Erinna); ωἰδοποιός (AP 9.599 Anacreon).

The expressions for the process/activity itself and its final product also range between these terms. Singing/reciting is expressed by (compounds of) the verbs: ἀείδω (AP 7.664 Archilochus; 9.63 Antimachus; 7.5 Homer); κλάγγω (AP 9.571 Pindar); μελίζεσθαι (APl. 307 Anacreon); μέλπεσθαι (AP 7.21 Sophocles; APl. 306 Anacreon; AP 7.19 Alcman); πνείω (AP 7.55 Hesiod; 7.24, 7.25 Anacreon; 7.407 Sappho; 9.571 Simonides); or the nouns ἀοιδή (AP 7.410 Thespis; Ath. 13.696 Sappho); αὐδά (AP 9.571 Alcaeus; μέλη (AP 7.25 Anacreon); μολπή (AP 7.25 Anacreon); ύμνος (AP 9.189 Sappho); στόμα (AP 7.411 Aeschylus; 9.571 Simonides; 9.184 Pindar); φθέγγω (Ath. 13.696 Sappho; AP 9.571 Bacchylides); φθόγγος (AP 9.571 Simonides).

References to the lyre and hence to singing can be found in (APl. 306, 307, AP 7.24, 7.25 Anacreon; 9.189 Sappho; 7.664 Archilochus; 7.10 Orpheus; AB 37 Arion).

It is further noteworthy that Sappho’s poems are called her “daughters” (AP 7.407); Erinna too is pictured as “giving birth” to her poetry (AP 7.12). Cratinus (AP 13.29) also uses the verb τέκω to describe the production of poetry.

Writing and its products are expressed by: γράμμα (AP 7.80 Homer; 9.63 Antimachus; 9.184 Anacreon; 7.411 Aeschylus); σέλις (AP 9.184 Simonides; Ath. 13.696 Sappho; AP 7.21 Sophocles); συγγράφω (AP 9.598 Pisander).

This leaves verbs and nouns that could both denote writing or the spoken word: ἔπη (AP 7.12 Erinna; 7.2, 7.5 Homer; referring to hexametric poetry); διδασκαλία (AP 7.37 Sophocles); κυδαίνω (AP 7.1 Homer); ὑήματα (AP 9.600 Epicharmus; AP 7.408 Hipponax).

There is also a number of references to (specific) meters or genres (iambi, elegiac distich, melic and epic meter, stichoi, comedy etc.) and to the “300 verses of Erinna, which
conquer Homer’s poetry” (AP 9.190). In general, lyric poets tend to be associated with song, epic poets and dramatists with writing and singing/reciting.

B. Poets of the Present

In these epigrams a similar alternation between ποιέω, ἀείδω, γράφω and more opaque metaphors for the poetic process is found: ποιέω (AP 11.218; AP 7.406, Euphorion); ποίημα (AP 12.43, Callimachus AP 11.218 Euphorion); ποιητής (AP 9.566 Callimachus).

Singing/reciting is expressed by the following words and metaphors: ἀείδω and compound verbs (AB 118 Posidippus; AP 7.525 Callimachus); ἀήδονις (AP 7.414 Rhinthon); ἀοιδή (AP 9.507, Aratus/Aratus AP 7.415, Callimachus); ἀοιδός (AP 9.507 Hesiod); κύκνος (AP 5.135 Zeno); τέττιξ (AP 12.98 Posidippus).

The following expressions seem to indicate improvisation: καίμα συγγελάσαι AP 7.415 (apparently used in opposition to ἀοιδή); παίζω (Ath 11.473a GPV Hedylus).

Writing is expressed by the words βίβλος (AB 118 Posidippus); γράμμα (AP 9.20 Aratus, note that in AP9.507 the same work is referred to by ἀείσμα); γράφω (AP 11.275 Callimachus; AB 118 Posidippus); δέλτον/σέλις (AB 118 Posidippus); ἐν βύβλοις πεπονημένη ... ψύχη (AP 12.98 Posidippus); κομῳδογράφος (AP 7.708 Machon).

This leaves words that would seem to indicate speaking rather than writing: ἔπος (AP 9.507 Aratus/Hesiod Ath. 11.473a GPV Hedylus); ὀρθοεπῆς (AB 118 Posidippus); ύψως (AP 9.507 Aratus).

In some epigrams metaphors for poetry are used that leave unexpressed whether written words are imagined or songs; the humble gifts Leonidas offers to the goddess Lathria in AP 6.300 are usually understood metapoetically; since they suggest material objects, written poems might be intended. A similar claim could be made about AP 6.302, where Leonidas refers to his household stores, which mice try to raid. The “roses” of Nossis (AP 5.170) are more ambiguous, as is her expression for receiving inspiration in AP 7.718 (τάν Σαπφοῖς χαρίτων ἄνθος ἐναυσόμενος). A similar metaphor is found in AP 7.708 (Dioscorides on Machon) ἐν Μούσαις δρήμυ πέφυκε θύμον, referring to the wit of Attic comedy, transferred by Machon from Attica to Alexandria.
Sometimes (expressions containing) Μοῦσα indicate either the poetic
talent/inspiration of a given author (AP 5.134 Cleanthes), or his works (AP 7.715 Leonidas),
or a genre (AP 7.707 Sositheus).