

Speaker and Addressee in Early Greek Epigram and Lyric

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Greek epigrams of the archaic and pre-classical period are an early example of written communication. In an era when the predominant mode of the composition and the reception of poetry was still oral, epigrams were already *written* to be *read*.¹ This may sound trivial, but it makes these inscriptions a fascinating test case for some hypotheses and theories about the nature of early Greek texts. In general, during the archaic period, the reception of poetry took place in a culture of performance.² This does not mean that there was no written text at all. As E. Pöhlmann has convincingly argued, the sheer mass of elegiac, iambic, and lyrical poetry that reached the library in Alexandria suggests that there must have been collections of texts at an early date, and the most economical explanation for this fact is the assumption that the poets themselves produced written texts which were already collected during their lifetime.³ Nevertheless, scholars who emphasize the importance and the special role of performance for early Greek poetry are undoubtedly right in one respect: when a lyric poet like Pindar or Simonides had his songs performed in distant parts of the Greek world, he would often send a script for this performance, yet the public would not care about these written texts; for the audience, the performance *was* the text.

This was true for most forms of poetry in the archaic period. For some genres, we can specify the nature of the occasion that warranted their performance: lyric forms such as *asepinikia* were sung at public celebrations; religious festivals in honor of certain gods produced genres such as the *paian* or the *dithyrambos*.⁴ For other genres, our knowledge of the occasions remains scanty, and we must have recourse to speculation: we still do not know much about the occasions where the most prominent early Greek texts, the Homeric epics, were performed; the nature of early iambus | remains a matter of contention, and there has been a lively discussion about the setting of Sappho's poetry, to name just a few examples.

Hence, while the precise occasion for the performance of early Greek poetry remains mysterious in many cases, there can be little doubt that we are dealing with predominantly oral texts. What is less clear: what exactly did this orality mean for the reception of these texts? Some forty years ago, theorists such as J. Goody and I. Watt, M. McLuhan, or W. Ong have argued that the availability of certain media of communication is a decisive influence on the intellectual development of human societies.⁵ Many traits that we see as characteristic of primitive societies really are consequences of the (exclusive or predominant) orality of these societies. This strong interpretation of orality emphasizes that if we apply our own, 'literal' concepts of literature, text, and author to these compositions, we are constantly in danger of forgetting that these oral forms of communication followed quite different rules. A number of classical scholars has accepted this strong theory of orality and applied it to early Greek culture.⁶ According to them, Greek literature was pervaded by the effects of orality well into the fifth or even fourth century BC. One consequence of this approach is the assumption that archaic poetry was composed to be consumed right away; the act of communication took place

1 On written communication in archaic Greece, see Thomas [60], Pöhlmann [47] and Andersen [1].

2 On the importance of performance in early Greek culture, see the excellent account in Stehle [58].

3 See Pöhlmann [48:1.13–6].

4 See the excellent account in Kannicht [30] = [31:68–99].

5 See Goody/Watt [25], McLuhan [40], and Ong [42].

6 See, e.g., Havelock [28]; Rösler [51]; Gentili [23].

in the given, concrete situation of the performance, and no archaic poet could even imagine that his texts would survive in any form other than oral performances within his community.

This is where early epigrams come into play: if this view is correct, we should expect fundamental differences between written texts such as epigrams and oral texts such as lyric poems. In one area, this pivotal difference produced by different media of communication should be particularly visible: in a predominantly or exclusively oral society as seen by the strong theory of orality, poetry is a type of discourse that aims at producing immediate effects by creating direct interaction between poet and audience.⁷ This ‘pragmatic’ aspect of oral poetry entails that the audience of such texts has no clear understanding of the literary or even fictional nature of poetic texts. W. Rösler has couched this hypothesis in the formula that in the archaic period of Greek literature, fictionality had yet to be discovered.⁸ For the author of an epigram, on the other hand, the context of the communication with her or his public was completely | different.⁹ Unlike an oral performance, which would usually take place on certain well-known and foreseeable occasions such as ritual festivals, public entertainments, or semi-private symposia, the context for reading an epigram was less clearly defined. The authors knew that their readers had the monument before their eyes – hence, deictic references like “here” or “this tomb” were straightforward and could be used without problems. But beyond this material context, it was difficult or impossible to predict in which situation, time, intellectual or emotional state somebody might be reading an epigram. This put the authors of epigrams in a situation unlike, e.g., an elegiac poet: in order to manipulate and influence their readers’ response to their text, they had to anticipate this unforeseeable situation. In the title of a thought-provoking paper, W. Ong has summarized this fact in the words: “The Writer’s Audience Is Always a Fiction.”¹⁰ In this regard, authors of epigrams most clearly were *writers*: at the time of composition, they had to imagine their unknown and potentially remote audience.

The difference between the written texts of epigrams and the oral, pragmatic texts of lyric poetry, then, should be most visible in the way both sets of texts envision and present the act of communication between speaker and addressee. This article proposes to compare the ways in which lyric and epigrammatic texts proceed in engaging their public. First, it explores the strategies used by epigrams to establish a communication between (fictional) speaker and (real) reader. It then goes on to ask whether there are fundamental differences in the ways these roles are established in lyrical texts. I want to argue that in both corpora, we can describe and analyze similar strategies of incorporating the act of communication into the text, thus creating a special space for communication that is clearly demarcated from pragmatic, everyday discourse.

Let us begin by looking at some epigrams of a relatively late period which will show more clearly what is meant when I speak of ‘establishing the roles of speaker and audience’. One of Callimachus’s epigrams stages a small dialogue between two voices: |

Τίν με, λειοτάγχ’, ὦνα, σνοκτόνε, φήγινον ὄζον
θῆκε – “τίς;” – Ἀρχίνος. – “ποῖος;” – ὁ Κρής. – “δέχομαι.”

To thee, O Lord, Strangler of the Lion, Slayer of the Boar, I, a branch of oak, am dedicated
– ‘By whom?’ Archinus. ‘Which?’ The Cretan. ‘I accept.’

7 Cf. Gentili [23:3–23].

8 Rösler [52], esp. 302–8; cf. Rösler [53] and Rösler [54].

9 The next paragraphs have profited enormously from Meyer [41:25–88]. However, I am in fundamental disagreement with one aspect of Meyer’s analysis: she presupposes that in early Greek culture, epigrammatical, written communication is always derivative and is always an attempt to reconstruct oral, face-to-face interaction; see esp. Meyer [41:51–2]. This is begging the question: if we want to examine whether early Greek culture was indeed incapable of transcending the limits of pragmatic, oral communication, we must explore the possibility that even a predominantly oral society may have conceived of other modes of communication.

10 Ong [43].

(Callimachus, *Ep.* 34 Pfeiffer = 22 Gow/Page = *AP* 6.351, tr. A. W. Mair)¹¹

This is a clear example of a Hellenistic book-epigram. Modern editions, by using quotation marks and/or dashes in the second line, alert their readers to the fact that the pentameter must be imagined as spoken by two different voices: the first word *θήκε* continues line 1; the second word, the interrogative pronoun *τίς*, is an interruption, coming from an as yet unknown interlocutor. Readers in antiquity had no such punctuation marks to guide them; they had to surmise that a change of speaker took place, and they had to understand that each of the following words is spoken by the two voices in turn. The epigram is a *tour de force*, but Callimachus could be certain that his readers would have no difficulties understanding the literary device because he was playfully quoting and alluding to epigrammatic conventions that date back to the archaic period, as we will shortly see. For the time being, we just note that an ancient reader would most probably read this epigram loud, as was the rule in antiquity.¹² Listening to her or his own voice, this reader would only after reading several words of line 2 realize that he was lending his voice to more than one speaker, that he was staging a miniature drama.

Callimachus provides a striking and elegant example of such an epigrammatic dialogue, but he is not the inventor of this form. An epigram ascribed to Simonides¹³ offers a simpler, but similar dialogic form:

Εἶπον τίς, τίνος ἔσσι, τίνος πατρίδος, τί δ' ἐνίκης;
 Κασμύλος, Εὐαγόρου, Πύθια πύξ, Ῥόδιος.
 'Give your name, father's name, native city, and victory.'
 – 'Casmylus, Euagoras, Rhodes, Pythian boxing.'
 (Simonides *APlan.* 23 = 36 *FGE*, tr. D. A. Campbell) |

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Again, our reader has to realize that (s)he is impersonating two different speakers: the first line is spoken by the reader herself or himself; (s)he is asking the monument for information. In line 2, the monument (or rather, the monument's *honorandus*) answers the questions asked by the reader. Again, the reader's voice enacts two roles at once, speaking in his own *persona* and in the *persona* of the monument's donor.

These examples demonstrate that in the classical and Hellenistic periods, readers were capable of deciphering complex situations of communication. The dialogue between dedicatory offering and god (in Callimachus's epigram) and between reader and *honorandus* (in Simonides's epigram) takes place in an entirely fictional space – the reader's mind. There is no real place where an oaken club and the god Herakles could converse; the stone inscription cannot speak for itself and has to borrow the reader's voice. The change of subject of the utterance (between line 1 and 2 in Simonides's text; within the same line in Callimachus's epigram) signals the extraordinary, quite unpragmatic and unnatural mode of communication. In normal face-to-face conversation, every utterance has one clearly identifiable subject; every voice can be traced back to just one owner. Our epigrams stage a conversation of two disembodied voices which come alive in the act of reading. Readers are thus alerted to the fictional nature of the communication that is taking place in these epigrams.

Such artificial and complex creations were only possible because by the time Simonides wrote, the

11 On this epigram, see Köhnken [35] and Meyer [41:214–7].

12 See the recent debate between Busch [9] and Busch [9].

13 It is notoriously difficult to decide with any degree of certainty whether such ascriptions carry much weight. Most modern scholars remain quite skeptical; Page [45:120] maintains that the ancient evidence is not sufficient to claim his authorship for any of the epigrams ascribed to him. However, I follow Erbse [18] who reminds us that unless we have solid reasons for doubting Simonidean authorship, we should accept the evidence of the *Anthologia Palatina*. I see no compelling reason to athetize the epigram described above; cf. Kassel [32].

epigrammatic genre had already had a long tradition in which authors had explored the possibilities that written epigrammatic communication offered. We will now take a closer look at a number of examples from the archaic period that demonstrate these possibilities.

Μάντικλός μ' ἀνέθηκε φεκαβόλοι ἀργυροτόξοι
 τᾶς {δ} δεκάτας· τὸ δέ, Φοῖβε, δίδοι χαρίφετταν ἀμοιβ[άν].
 Manticlus dedicated me to the far-shooting Lord of the silver bow
 as a tithe. You, Phoebus, give some pleasant favor in return.
CEG 326

29 This epigram was carved on the thighs of a small bronze statuette found in Thebes; it can be dated to
 the beginning of the seventh century BC. It is our earliest certain example¹⁴ for a type of dedicatory
 30 inscription which was | widespread in antiquity, the so-called ‘speaking object’.¹⁵ I do not here want
 to speculate about the origin of this form; rather, I am interested in the way it breaches the norms of
 everyday communication. An archaic recipient would see the monument and read the inscription
 out loud. He would then understand that he was listening, in his own voice, to words spoken by the
 monument: the *με* in line 1 refers to the small statuette that Manticlus has dedicated and which was
 presumably on display in a temple. The addressee of this utterance, the *τὸ* named in line 2, is the
 god Apollo to whom this dedicatory gift is offered. But obviously, these words were inscribed to be
 read by all visitors of the temple; whoever read them would bear testimony to Manticlus’s piety and
 would utter a prayer to Apollo for Manticlus. It is thus clear that the addressee of the text and the
 intended audience differ.

Hence, an ancient reader of this inscription could not fail to realize that he was participating in
 an act of communication that was unlike any pragmatic, everyday speech-act. He was lending his
 voice to an inanimate object and addressing someone who was not physically present at the time
 of the utterance. One is reminded of John Stuart Mill’s famous saying that “poetry is overheard”:
 our reader, every reader was undoubtedly the intended audience for this text, yet (s)he was speaking
 and at the same time listening to an act of communication between two interlocutors who had no
 voice of their own. Given that such inscriptions were ubiquitous, such cases of indirect, fictional
 communication must have been familiar to people even at a quite early date of Greek culture.

One aspect of this epigram is worth mentioning. In an important article, A. Köhnken has
 drawn our attention to one important difference between actual inscriptions and book-epigrams:¹⁶
 inscriptions can presuppose that readers have the object on which or near which they are engraved
 before their eyes; hence, these texts do not need to describe this object at any length. In many cases,
 deictic pronouns refer to this object. A good example is this inscription from Athens (ca. 530–20
 BC):

σοί με, θεά, τόδ' ἄγα[λμ' ἀνέθ]ῆκε Μελάνθυρο[ς ἔργον]
 εὐχσάμενος δε[κὰτ]ῆν παιδι Διὸς μεγάλῳ.
 Melanthyrus dedicated me, this statue, to you, goddess, after he had
 30 vowed the tithe of his successes to the daughter of mighty Zeus.”
CEG 190 |

14 The inscription on the Ischia cup (*CEG 454*) could be of the same type; unfortunately, the decisive letters are lost
 in a lacuna, so we cannot say with confidence whether we should read *ἐ[μμ]ι* or *ἐ[εν τ]ι*; see Pavese [46]Pavese [46],
 who puts forward strong arguments in favor of the first person, Meyer [41:49–51] and R. Wachter’s article in this
 volume [62:252–4].

15 Cf. Burzachechi [8], RaubitschekRaubitschek [49], Svenbro [59:36–52] and the contribution by W. Furley in this
 volume [22]. For a thorough typology of dedicatory inscriptions of this type, see Lazzarini [38].

16 Köhnken [35].

The communicative situation of this text is equivalent to *CEG* 326. Again, a god is addressed; again, the monument itself speaks. This monument refers to itself in the words “this statue” τὸδ’ ἄγαλμα; the reader was aware what this vague term means because he had the actual monument before his eyes. One could argue that all inscriptions in which deictic pronouns such as ὅδε or τόδε (which, in Greek, belong to the sphere of the subject of the utterance) refer to the monument are related to or even special cases of the ‘speaking object’ type.¹⁷

Despite the general vagueness, these inscriptions are careful to convey as much information as a prospective reader is going to need. The author of an epigram had to imagine an audience that had no prior knowledge of the referential context of the communicative act. Obviously, he had to be careful to include, in the case of dedicatory epigrams, the name of the dedicator, the god to whom the gift was offered, maybe the occasion of the dedication and the prayer for just recompense, in the case of funerary epigrams, the name of the deceased, his city, maybe the name of the bereaved, the deceased person’s special virtues, and the circumstances of her or his death. In other words: the author of an epigram had to be capable of *imagining* the act of reception of his text; he had to anticipate what future readers (whom he could not know in person) had to be told in order to understand the inscription. This is in accordance with what we have found out about the act of reading such an epigram: both author and reader had to be able to construct a purely imaginary act of communication that was far remote from any pragmatic, everyday interaction.

Archaic epigrams offer a number of variations on the theme of the ‘speaking object’; I will mention just a few. It is interesting to note that in funerary epigrams, the speaker can be the monument, as was the case in the dedicatory epigrams we have just analyzed:

Μνᾶμ’ ἐπ’ Ὀλιγέδαι {1} μ’ ὁ πατὴρ ἐπέθεκε θάνοντι

Ὀσθίλος, οἱ πένθος θέκεν ἀποφθίμενος.

His father placed me as a monument on the deceased Oligedas,
Osthilus, whom he caused grief when he died.

CEG 113¹⁸

This text differentiates between the deceased (Ὀλιγέδαι [...] θάνοντι) and the speaking monument (Μνᾶμ’ [...] μ’): it is the monument that speaks in the first person about the dead. In other cases, however, it is either | clearly the deceased who is speaking, or no distinction can be made between the monument and the deceased. The former is especially frequent with communal monuments for those who have died in battle:¹⁹

ἼϞ Ο ξ(εῖ)νε, εὖηυδρῶν ποκ’ ἐναίομες ἄστυ Φορίνθου,

ἱνῦν δ’ ἡα(μὲ) Αἴαντος ἱνᾶσος ἔχει Σαλαμῖς·

ἐνθάδε Φοινίσσας ν(ᾶ)ας καὶ Πέρσας ἡελόντες,

ἱκαὶ Μέδως ἡι(α)ρὰν ἡΕλλάδα ῥυ(σά)μεθα.

Stranger, once we lived in the well-watered city of Corinth, but now Salamis, the island of Ajax, holds us; here we destroyed Phoenician ships and Persians and Medes and saved holy Greece.

CEG 131 = Simonides 11 *FEG*

In this case (as in the arguably most famous of all Greek epigrams, *AP* vii.249 for Leonidas and the

17 Here, I follow the interpretation suggested by Svenbro [59:39–42]. On deictic references in epigrams see Meyer [41:17–9].

18 Cf. Meyer [41:60–1].

19 On this epigram, cf. C. Higbie’s article in this volume [29].

Spartans who died at Thermopylae), the written epigram and its reader lend their voice to the dead. Other examples are less clear: In a funerary inscription from Euboia, dated to the mid-fifth century BC,²⁰ the first line is clearly spoken in the person of the deceased who addresses the passers-by: Χαίρετε τοὶ παριόντες, ἐγὼ δὲ θανὸν κατὰκειμαι (CEG 108); line 4 again distinguishes between the monument and the deceased and speaks in the *persona* of the deceased: καὶ μοι μνμ' ἐπέθηκε. In line 7, however, it is suddenly the monument that is the speaking subject: Τιμαρέτε μ' ἔστεσσε φίλοι ἐπὶ παιδί θανόντι.²¹ In some funerary epigrams from the postclassical period, it is impossible to decide if the first person refers to the monument or to the deceased: when a monument says “I am Herakleia” (GVI 612), is this referring to the person buried here or to her image on the stone?²²

In funerary epigrams, however, we also find acts of communication that are the opposite of what we have seen so far. A badly fragmented inscription from the end of the sixth century BC is a case in point:

— ∞ — ∞ — ∞ — ∞ — ∞ — ∞
 — ∞ — ∞ — ὄ]νεκα πιστὸς ἔφυς.
 [...] because you were faithful.
 CEG 48

32 Looking at these three words, we realize that the addressee of this epigram must be the deceased, who
 33 is male (πιστός) and is referred to in the second | person and in a past tense (ἔφυς). It would be a good
 guess to assume that the speaker must have been a family member, most plausibly the dead man's
 wife, for she is the one person most likely to emphasize her deceased husband's faithfulness. Again, a
 reader of this monument would lend her or his voice to a different speaker: (s)he would impersonate
 the widow and articulate her mourning for her husband. Again, the addressee is someone who cannot
 be addressed in pragmatic, everyday communication because he is dead. The monument's lapidary
 discourse enacts words that can no longer be spoken in real life; again, it is a purely imaginary act of
 communication whose audience is not identical to its addressee.

In other cases, the inscription's first person is wavering, and it is difficult to say who the speaker is. One example would be this epigram from the beginning of the fifth century BC:²³

Ἡ καλὸν τὸ μνημα [πα]τήρ ἔστησε θανόσ[ηι]
 Λεαρέτη· οὐ γὰρ [ἔτ]ι ζῶσαν ἔσοφσόμ[εθα].
 Look: her father erected this fine monument for Learete after she died, for we will no longer
 see her in life.
 CEG161

Who is the speaking subject in the first person ἔσοφσόμ[εθα]? Is the reader again overhearing an utterance made by the mourning family? This interpretation is suggested by the adverb οὐ ... [ἔτ]ι “no longer”; it implies that the speaker(s) had previously ‘seen’ Learete and would now be bereaved of her presence. At the same time, I would argue that the reader who hears herself or himself pronouncing this first person plural feels part of this community; (s)he partakes of the mourning, and this universal feeling of bereavement will be a consolation to the family.

20 On this inscription, cf. Svenbro [59:57–73].

21 A similar wavering can be observed in CEG 119 (ca. 450 BC): in line 1, the deceased girl is the speaker (νεπία ἐσ' ἔθανον); lines 3–4 speak in the person of the monument (μνᾶμα [...] σταῖσέ με).

22 If the text of CEG 142 is sound and if Προκλείδης is to be understood as a nominative, we can observe a similar identification of deceased and funerary monument, but scholars are in disagreement about the text and its interpretation; cf. Ecker [17:174–6].

23 Cf. Ecker [17:220–3] and J. S. Bruss's article in this volume [7].

This vague use of the first person plural can be compared to a similarly vague use of the first person singular, the ‘anonymous mourner’. The speaker of the utterance expresses his distress when he thinks of the deceased or when he looks at the tomb. An example can be seen in this Attic inscription from the mid-fifth century:²⁴

Αὐτοκλείδῳ τόδε σῆμα νέῳ προσορῶν ἀνιῶμαι
 καὶ θανάτῳι ...
 I grieve whenever I look on the tomb of young Autoclides,
 and his death ...
CEG 470 |

Recent scholarship has made plausible that we have here a conventional type of funerary epigram in which the reader is invited to share the emotion of the bereaved family-members. The first person is an excellent means to convey this invitation: at the time of writing the epigram, it is functionally empty, to be supplied in the act of reading and pronouncing the inscription. Every reader will make the lament her or his own as her or his voice pronounces the formula “I grieve”.

Finally, we find a number of epigrams in which reader and addressee coincide. This is often the case when epigrams wish the reader well:

Καλλία Αἰγίθιοιο· τὸ δ’ εὔ πρᾶσσ’, [ὄ] παροδοῖτα.
 Belonging to Callias, the son of Aegi(s)thus: fare well, passerby.
CEG 110

The monument, in the briefest possible form, tells us the name and the father’s name of the deceased, both in the genitive case; readers of this inscription from the beginning of the fifth century were already well versed in the conventions of epigrammatic discourse, so they knew that they had to supply something like “[I am the monument of] Callias, the son of Aegi(s)thus.” They would also be able to comprehend the unusual communication in which they heard their own voice addressing themselves and wishing them to fare well.

The epigram addressing the ‘anonymous passer-by’ is another type that occurs frequently and in a number of variations;²⁵ again, we will look at a small number only. Some inscriptions ask the addressee to mourn for the deceased or to perform rituals for her or him:

Ἀντιλόχῳ ποτὶ σῆμ’ ἀγαθῷ καὶ σόφρονος ἀνδρὸς
 [δάκρυ κ]ατάρ[χ]σον, ἐπεὶ καὶ σὲ μένει θάνατος.
 Stranger, make a shed a tear at the tomb of Antilochus, who was a good and modest man,
 for death waits for you, too.
CEG 34

Here, we can see that the author of the text is anticipating the act of reading. He wants to grasp his readers’ attention and secure their kindness,²⁶ and he does so by referring to the one attribute that is absolutely certain: like the dead in whose honor this inscription was written, the reader is a mortal and will die one day. It is obvious that the author is looking for a common ground between the ‘speaker’ in this epigram and the (unknown) addressee; | the argument “you are mortal, too”

24 Cf. Lewis [39]; Meyer [41:78–9]; for the ‘anonymous mourner’ or ‘lamentatore esterno’ cf. Day [14:26–7], Cassio [12].

25 On the passer-by as a stock figure in archaic and classical epigram, see the article by M. A. Tueller in this volume [61].

26 Cf. Day [14:19], who analyzes the role of the epigrammatic speaker as “advocate”, Walsh [63:79–95] and Bing [4].

(whose argumentative value is highlighted by the conjunction ἐπεὶ) fulfils the function that, in an oral performance, would have been produced by the common and communal context.

Another form of address that can frequently be observed in inscriptions is the request to ‘stop’:

Στέθι καὶ οἴκτιρον Κροίσῳ παρὰ σῆμα θανόντος
 ἰὸν ποτ’ ἐνὶ προμάχοις ὄλεσε θῆρως Ἄρες.

Stop and lament at the site of the deceased Croesus’s tomb; mighty Ares killed him once among the fighters.

CEG 27

Again, we see the author of the epigram anticipating the context of the reception of the text: funeral monuments were lined up along the main roads, outside of the Greek cities. In a way, their authors faced a task similar to the designers of today’s billboards: against stiff competition (there were hundreds of these monuments), they had to secure the public’s attention. Their writers were aware that this public might not be too attentive: in *CEG 28*, the passer-by is imagined as “having other things on his mind” (ἄλλα μενοινῶν).²⁷ The imperative στέθι shows that the author was imagining the context in which his text would be read: his prospective reader is a traveler who must be encouraged and invited to take the time to read this text and “mourn for the dead Croesus”. One could call this imperative a performative verb: the fact that the reader is taking the time to stand and read the text is in itself an appropriate act of pity for the deceased.²⁸

We have seen that epigrammatic communication dislodged many rules that governed pragmatic, everyday interaction. Both writer and reader were keenly aware that the communicative context of an epigrammatic text was special. In particular, the roles of speaker and addressee could be reversed: the reader would utter sentences addressed to herself or himself in her or his own voice, inverting the usual functions of ‘I’ and ‘you’. Writers anticipated these reversals and prepared their texts for such a reception; they were capable of creating a purely imaginary communication. We have seen that in many cases, this epigrammatic mode of communication could not be translated into pragmatic, face to face interaction because the identity of speaker and addressee was wavering or unclear.

We will now turn our attention to some instances of lyric discourse where, as I will argue, similar deviations from pragmatic communication can be observed. There are two special types of address which could be seen as falling into this category but which I will omit to analyze in detail here. The first type can be defined as traditional invocations of the gods, especially of the Muses: hymns open with a vocative of the god invoked, as in Sappho’s fr. 1 Ποικιλόθρον’ ἀθάνατ’ Ἀφρόδιτα “Ornate-throned immortal Aphrodite”²⁹; the Muses are invoked as inspiration for the poetic discourse, as in Sappho fr. 127 δεῦρο δεῦτε Μοῖσαι χρύσιον λίποισαι “Hither again, Muses, leaving the golden [...]”. Both address an interlocutor who is not physically present, not available for pragmatic interaction, but since they follow the special conventions of religious discourse, I will not dwell on this form of address. The second special type are apostrophes to characters of the narrative. As is well known, this is a device used several times in the Homeric epics; the Homeric narrator is especially fond of addressing, e.g., minor characters such as Patroclus in the *Iliad* or Eumaeus in the *Odyssey*.³⁰ Similar addresses can be observed in lyric and elegiac poems, e.g., in the recently found elegies by Simonides (fr. 11.19–20 W.) or in a narrative passage from a poem by Alcaeus (fr. 42.1–4):

27 Cf. Ecker [17:168–73].

28 Cf. Meyer [41:10].

29 Sappho and Alcaeus are quoted after E.-M. Voigt’s edition [55]; the translation are D. A. Campbell’s [11], unless noted otherwise.

30 Cf. Block [5]; de Jong [16:13].

Ὡς λόγος, κάκων ἀ[
 Περράμω καὶ παῖσι
 ἐκ σέθεν πίκρον, π[
 ἴλιον ἱραν.

As the story goes, the bitter [...] of woes [...] for Priam and his sons [...] from you, [...] holy Ilium.

Although no certain reconstruction of this text transmitted on papyrus is possible, the most natural explanation for line 3 would be that Helen is addressed as having been the origin of “woes for Priam and his sons” and having caused the destruction of “holy Ilium”. Again, this address to a person who is not present at the immediate context of the oral performance of the poem and who thus cannot be the object of a pragmatic address seems relevant as a case where the exclusively pragmatic explanation of archaic Greek lyric runs into trouble,³¹ but it could be argued that this is a conventional device that the audience would just accept without paying too much attention, so I will not concentrate on this type of non-pragmatic address here. |

36

37

The first example that will interest us here is situated in a well-defined social setting. Sappho has written a number of wedding-songs which were still famous in late antiquity. Addresses in these songs usually refer to the bride and groom; the first person can be understood as referring to the chorus performing these songs:

ἄλλ' ἐγέρθεις ἡἴθ[έοις
 στείχε σοὶς ὑμάλικ[ας
 ἥπερ ὄσσον ἀ λιγύφω[νος
 ὕπνον [ἰ]δωμεν.

Come, wake up: go to see the young bachelors of your own age [...] we may see [less?] sleep than the clear-voiced [bird?].

Fr. 30.6–9

While the details are not entirely clear, it is obvious that the bridegroom is addressed and that the chorus, who has sung during the entire wedding-night, is referring to itself. In this case, then, there can be no doubt that the pragmatic explanation of the poem is correct.

One of the wedding-songs, however, contains an imaginary address that cannot be translated into a pragmatic interaction (fr. 111):

ἱψοὶ δὴ τὸ μέλαθρον,
 ὑμήναον,
 ἀέρρετε, τέκτονες ἄνδρες·
 ὑμήναον.
 γάμβρος †(εἰς)έρχεται ἴσος Ἄρει†.
 <ὑμήναον>
 ἄνδρος μεγάλω πόλυ μέσδων.
 <ὑμήναον.>

31 This trouble is exemplified, e.g., by Bonifazi [6] on Pindar’s ‘deictic acts’. Bonifazi is perfectly aware that Pindar’s complex art often addresses gods, heroes, or actual people who were not present at the performance of the songs. Nevertheless, she postulates that some kind of ‘presence’ must be involved (399): ‘the poet chooses a “you”-deixis, *presumably* pointing to a *physical presence*, but it is not clear which kind of physical presence’ (emphasis added). She explains that such physical presence could be in ‘artistic representations’ or even ‘metaphorical indications’. How such a ‘metaphorical’ presence can also be ‘physical’ is never explained. This is merely avoiding the obvious conclusion that not every ‘you-deixis’ involves a physical presence in the normal sense of the term.

On high the roof – Hymneaus! – raise up, you carpenters – Hymenaeus! The bridegroom is coming, the equal of Ares, much larger than a large man.”

Wedding-songs often contain good-humored (ritual) jests at the expense of the celebrants. In our case, the bridegroom is too “large” to fit under the roof,³² so the carpenters (τέκτονες ἄνδρες) are asked to raise the roof. Of course, there were no real carpenters present at the wedding ceremony; this is a purely imaginary address. The speech act in these lines cannot be translated into pragmatic terms; it takes place in the song only.

37 We will see more examples for such imaginary addresses in the context of symposiastic poetry.
 38 This is a genre that has been especially prominent in | pragmatic interpretations because the importance of the oral performance and the face to face communication between poet and audience seem so clear.³³ Most addresses in this song can easily be interpreted as referring to members of the *hetaireia*, the club of men who were gathered for such ritualized occasions. However, we find again a number of addresses that are not directed at persons present at the symposium. The clearest case is a class that I tentatively call ‘polemical addresses’. In a number of poems by Alcaeus, we find examples of this type:

σύ δὴ τεαύτας ἐκγεγόνων ἔχῃς
 τὰν δόξαν οἷαν ἄνδρες ἐλεύθεροι
 ἔσλων ἔοντες ἐκ τοκῆων ...;

Do you, the son of such a mother, have the reputation that free men of noble parentage have ...?

Fr. 72.11–13

σοὶ μὲν [γ]ὰρ ἤδη περβέβα[τ]αι χρόνος
 for your time has now passed by

Fr. 119.9

Similar polemical addresses can be found in Sappho:

Ἄτθι, σοὶ δ' ἔμεθεν μὲν ἀπήχθετο
 φροντίσδην, ἐπὶ δ' Ἀνδρομέδαν πότῃ.

Atthis, the thought of me has grown hateful to you, and you fly to Andromeda.

Fr. 130.3–4 Voigt = 131 Lobel/Page

καθάνοισα δὲ κείσῃ οὐδέ ποτα μναμοσύνα σέθεν
 ἔσσετ' οὐδὲ πόθα εἰς ὕστερον· οὐ γὰρ πεδέχῃς βρόδων
 τῶν ἐκ Πιερίας, ἀλλ' ἀφάνης κὰν Ἄϊδα δόμῳ
 φοιτάσῃς πεδ' ἀμαύρων νεκύων ἐκπεποταμένα.

But when you die you will lie there, and afterwards there will never be any recollection of you or any longing for you since you have no share in the roses of Pieria; unseen in the house of Hades also, flown from our midst, you will go to and fro among the shadowy corpses.

Fr. 55

In all these cases, the speaker of the poem is addressing someone who is not present at the occasion

32 Kirk [34] has suggested that this is a “ritual obscenity” serving apotropaic purposes: the bridegroom is so big because he is “fantastically ityphallic”.

33 See Rösler [51:37–41]; on the important role of the symposium for early Greek poetry, see Latacz [37:357–95].

38 of the oral performance. And, more importantly: these addresses are not simply translations or
 39 imitations of pragmatic speech-acts. There is no pragmatic frame where Alcaeus could have addressed
 his political opponent Pittacus in words such as the ones in fr. 72. These polemical addresses are
 imaginary; they can only take place in a special space that is remote from the rules and constraints
 of everyday communication – in the poem itself. Both speaker and audience are aware that they are
 sharing this special space and that they are witnessing a particular form of indirect communication.
 The listeners would also grasp that addressee and intended audience of this speech act differ: the
 speaker is uttering a fictional³⁴ address to a woman absent from her circle, yet this utterance is meant
 to be received, to be overheard by the public present at the performance.³⁵

The last class of addresses that we will analyze is intimately connected with the symposium. As
 should be expected, many of the symposiastic poems address the other guests and encourage them
 to drink:

τέγγε πλεύμονας οἴνω, τὸ γὰρ ἄστρον περιτέλλεται
 ἅ δ' ὥρα χαλέπα, πάντα δὲ δίψαισ' ὑπὰ καύματος.

Wet your lungs with wine: the star is coming round, the season is harsh, everything is thirsty
 under the heat ...”

Fr. 347

We can see a simple relation between the speaker of this poem and the addressee: the first person is a
 guest at a symposium who addresses his companions; addressee and audience are identical. We have
 thus a poem which suggests a pragmatist reading. However, other cases are less straightforward.
 Here is an example where the relation between addressee and audience is more complex:

ἀλλ' ἀνήτω μὲν περὶ ταῖς δέραισι
 περθέτω πλέκταις ὑπαθύμιδᾶς τις.

Come, let someone put woven garlands of anise about our necks.”

Fr. 362 |

Κάτ τὰς πόλλα πλαθοίσας κεφάλας κάκχεέ μοι μύρον,
 καὶ κάτ τὸ πολίω στήθεος.

Pour perfume over my head, which has suffered much, and over my grey chest ...

Fr. 50

κάββαλε τὸν χεῖμων', ἐπὶ μὲν τίθεις
 πῦρ, ἐν δὲ κέρναις οἶνον ἀφειδέως
 μέλιχρον, αὐτὰρ ἀμφὶ κόρσᾳ

34 I am using this term purposefully here: if it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, we should have the courage to call it a duck ... On the prehistory of Greek fictionality, see Finkelberg [20]. I am particularly happy to see that more recent contributions which adhere to the “pragmatist” model are now prepared to admit that some elements may be fictional; cf., e.g., D’Alessio [15:268]: “As with every literary communication, we must always bear in mind that part of the deictic setting may be fictional. There is no point in denying this possibility for archaic lyric, and quite a few texts may be invoked in support of this interpretation”; Felson [19:366] and the conclusions of Athanassaki [2:341]. In my view, however, these admissions invalidate the entire approach; D’Alessio’s attempts to distinguish between “necessary fictionality” and a more general, “stronger fictionality” are merely special pleadings to salvage a discredited theory.

35 Cf. Scodel [57:60–1], in one of the best contributions on the subject: “[...] one of the particular effects of this poetry for outsiders is precisely the sense of eavesdropping, of admission, to a small, enclosed world.” Athanassaki [2:336–8] on Pindar’s *Olympian* 1 rightly remarks that in this ode, “the extensive use of second-person deixis produces the effect of proximity, real or imagined.”

μόλθακον ἀμφιβάλων γνόφαλλον.

Down with the storm! Stoke up the fire, mix the honeysweet wine unsparingly, and put a soft fillet around your brows.”

Fr. 338.5–8

The person addressed in these three poems is undoubtedly a slave who is present at the symposium and who is asked to perform services for the guests: mix and pour the wine, build the fire. Yet the intended audience for the poem is certainly not the slave, but the other guests. What I want to stress is the difference between the distribution of roles in fr. 347 and 338: in the former case, the audience is invited to identify with the addressee; while they listen to the performer, they will feel that his words are an invitation to themselves. In fr. 338, on the other hand, the audience is invited to identify with the speaker; they will feel that the request to pour wine and to kindle the fire is shared by all of the guests.³⁶

Symposiastic poetry thus allows for different modes of communication: the ‘I’ and ‘you’ in the poems are not positions fixed by pragmatic rules; instead, they are open functions that need to be realized in the act of listening to and interpreting the poem. We have observed similar phenomena in epigrams: for the reader of an inscription, it was unclear whether he was to identify with the speaker or the addressee of the text.

I would argue that these observations invalidate the strong pragmatic position for the interpretation of early Greek lyric. The public of our archaic epigrams and of the lyrical poems we have analyzed was identical. Recipients who had learned about the possibilities in epigrammatic communication would not forget these lessons while they were listening to orally performed poetry. Both epigrammatic and lyrical communication were a type of discourse unlike everyday speech. Both created imaginary roles for speaker and addressee in which the recipient had to find her or his position by interpretation. Both provided a special, fictionalized space in which this extraordinary communication could take place. This shows that the claims for a fundamental difference between oral and written communication are exaggerated and misleading.³⁷ Undoubtedly, by reading the inscriptions loud, by listening to their own performance, readers of epigrams were also listeners. By realizing the vague and unclear positions of speaker and addressee in lyric poems, listeners were at the same time *readers*; to this extent, we can say that lyric poetry was not only *heard* but also *read*.

36 Cf. Schlaffer [56:42]: “When a reader sees the classical formula of European lyric ‘I love you’, he will never assume the role of the beloved ‘you’, but always that of the loving ‘I’. [...] This reversal of the common pragmatical function of personal pronouns is the fundament of the fictionality of lyric for here the grammatical rule that the personal pronoun ‘I’ can only be used in one’s own speech is suspended.” [my translation].

37 See Finnegan [21:23–4] on the common mistake of believing that oral poetry must necessarily be “primitive”; cf. Calame [10:426–7]: “Contrary to what has been stated by others, such a double deictic reference, implying both *deixis ad oculos* and *Deixis am Phantasma*, is also possible in a poem that depends on an oral recitation.”

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