

THE DIALECT CHOICE IN THE EPIGRAMS ON MYRON'S *COW**

by

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ABSTRACT: The aim of this paper is to analyse the choice of dialect as a literary device in the series of epigrams on Myron's *Cow*. The epigram series in the *Greek Anthology* consists of 36 epigrams with one preserved in *P. Mil. Vogl.* VIII 309. The epigrams are composed in Attic-Ionic, Doric, and also mixed dialects. I attempt to explain the probable purpose of using these dialectal forms and the intended poetic effect. Firstly, I analyse and compare probably the oldest epigrams in the series (AB 66 by Posidippus in Attic-Ionic and HE 88 by Leonidas in Doric), which already differ in their dialect usage. There is no easy explanation for the choice of Doric in the epigram by Leonidas. However, an analysis and comparison of the successive imitations of these epigrams may offer some answers. Perhaps the ekphrastic and bucolic nature of these epigrams plays a role here. Secondly, I present and try to explain interesting dialect choices in the five epigrams by Antipater of Sidon on Myron's *Cow*. The last part of the article is devoted to the later epigrams in this series, focusing on the choice of Doric forms and their position in the poems.

Myron's bronze sculpture of a cow was not only admired by visitors to Athens, but it also inspired numerous poets, even though we may assume that many of them had not even seen it. The statue, made in the 5th century BCE, was first displayed in Athens, probably on the Acropolis¹. The poems on the topic form a 36 epigram-long series in the *Palatine Anthology* (IX 713–742, 793–798) and the discovery of a poem on this subject in *P. Mil. Vogl.* VIII 309 (AB 66) shed new light on studies of the sequence. In the *Anthology*, there is a make-believe chronology organised by one of the collectors, beginning with an archaising poem fashioned as an inscription on the statue². Within the sequence we may notice the interesting usage of dialect forms; in some of the poems, the predominant dialect is Attic-Ionic, but many contain at least one Doric form, sometimes isolated in a different dialect context.

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¹ Cic. *Verr.* IV 135; É. PRIoux, *Autour de la Vache de Myron: de l'éloge de l'opus nobile à la réflexion sur les genres et les sujets en poésie*, *Aitia* IX 2019, <https://journals.openedition.org/aitia/3500> (access: 9.3.2022).

² K. GUTZWILLER, *Poetic Garlands: Hellenistic Epigrams in Context*, Berkley–Los Angeles 1998, p. 246, n. 42.