

POETRY AND NUMBER IN GRAECO-ROMAN
ANTIQUITY

Poetry and mathematics might seem to be worlds apart. Nevertheless, a number of Greek and Roman poets incorporated counting and calculation within their verses. Setting the work of authors such as Callimachus, Catullus and Archimedes in dialogue with the less well-known isopsephic epigrams of Leonides of Alexandria and the anonymous arithmetical poems preserved in the *Palatine Anthology*, this book reveals the various roles that number played in ancient poetry. Focusing especially on counting and arithmetic, Max Leventhal demonstrates how the discussion, rejection or enacting of these two operations was bound up with wider conceptions of the nature of poetry. Practices of composing, reading, interpreting and critiquing poetry emerge in these texts as having a numerical component. The result is an illuminating new way of approaching Greek and Latin poetry – and one that reaches across modern disciplinary divisions.

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4 my family and friends, with love;
2 Alex, the 1 that counts the most.

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This book has had a considerably long gestation and several origins. I first began thinking about the intersection of poetry and number as a Master's student. The result was a dissertation on Archimedes' *Cattle Problem*, and it would eventually become an article in *Ramus* (2015), which is substantially reworked and expanded here as Chapter 3. I then pursued a doctorate on a different topic. Still, Leonides of Alexandria and his isopsephic epigrams constituted one distraction from the main task of my thesis; in fact, some of the material of Chapter 2 had originally been submitted to the *Cambridge Classical Journal* as an article. I thank the anonymous reviewers of that piece for their challenging but supportive feedback. A failed Oxford interview in 2008 bears special mention, too, since it was there that I first encountered Catullus *cc.* 5 and 7 – and I have been ruminating on those poems ever since. The beginnings of a postdoctoral position afforded me the time to write up these ideas while, once again, I should have been working on other things. Thus, this book is quite a different beast to one's typical first book in academia. It is the product of a lengthy obsession and not the direct result of my doctoral studies. Yet I hope and believe that the passage of so much time has imbued it with a certain intellectual maturity – of the kind which I did not yet possess as a fresh postgraduate – and has streamlined its arguments so as to avoid the bloatedness that is a residual characteristic of many a thesis turned monograph.

Although this is not the 'book of the thesis', I nevertheless owe a debt of gratitude to several supervisors and mentors, for the profound influence they have had on me as a scholar and as a person. Liba Taub supervised my Master's thesis and has been a continual source of support. She frequently saw the value of my thinking before I did and encouraged me to pursue many lines of enquiry that are now to be found in this book. In that sense, it could

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ABBREVIATIONS AND EDITIONS

Below is a list of abbreviation conventions and editions that I employ in this book. For all else I follow the abbreviations of names and works of Greek and Latin authors as given in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*.

- AB Austin, C. and Bastianini, G. (2002) *Posidippi Pellaei quae supersunt omnia*. Milan.
- AP *Anthologia Palatina (Palatine Anthology)*.
- Broggiato Broggiato, M. (2001) *Cratete di Mallo. I Frammenti: edizione, introduzione e nota*. La Spezia.
- Cougny Cougny, E. (1890) *Epigrammatum anthologia Palatina cum Planudeis et appendice nova epigrammatum veterum ex libris et marmoribus ductorum*, 3 vols. Paris.
- FGE Page, D. L. (1981) *Further Greek Epigrams*. Cambridge.
- GP Gow, A. S. F. and Page, D. L. (1968) *The Greek Anthology: The Garland of Philip and Some Contemporary Epigrams*, 2 vols. Cambridge.
- Harder Harder, M. A. (2012) *Callimachus: Aetia*, 2 vols. Oxford.
- HE Gow, A. S. F. and Page, D. L. (1965) *The Greek Anthology: Hellenistic Epigrams*, 2 vols. Cambridge.
- IEG West, M. L. (1989–92) *Iambi et elegi Graeci ante Alexandrum cantati*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. Oxford.
- IMEGR Bernand, É. (1969) *Inscriptions métriques de l'Égypte gréco-romaine: Recherches sur la poésie épigrammatique des Grecs en Égypte*. Paris.

List of Abbreviations and Editions

KA	Kassel, R. and Austin, C. F. L. (1983–) <i>Poetae comici Graeci</i> . Berlin and New York.
Kerkhecker	Kerkhecker, A. (1999) <i>Callimachus: Iambi</i> . Oxford.
Lightfoot	Lightfoot, J. (2009) <i>A Hellenistic Collection</i> . Cambridge, MA.
Mugler	Mugler, C. (1972) <i>Archimède</i> , 4 vols. Paris.
Pf.	Pfeiffer, R. (1949–53) <i>Callimachus</i> , 2 vols. Oxford.
SH	Lloyd-Jones, H. and Parsons, P. (1983) <i>Supplementum Hellenisticum</i> . Berlin and New York.
Sider	Sider, D. (2020) <i>Simonides: Epigrams and Elegies</i> . Oxford.