

INTRODUCTION

1 FUNERARY VERSE-INSCRIPTIONS

This is an anthology of private funerary poems in Greek from the archaic period until later antiquity.¹ The vast majority of these poems were inscribed on tombs or grave *stelai* and served to identify, celebrate and mourn the dead. It is not in fact very difficult to distinguish such ‘funerary’ poems from other types of inscription, even if there are important overlaps in style and subject between, say, some honorific and some epitaphic verse-inscriptions;² what can be much more difficult, however, is to distinguish ‘public’ from ‘private’ inscriptions, and indeed to decide what, if anything, is at stake in the distinction and how that distinction changed over time.³

Our earliest verse epitaphs seem to be ‘private’, in the sense that, as far as we can tell, they were designed and erected by the family of the deceased. For the fifth century, however, our evidence is predominantly Attic, and, from the first three-quarters of the century in particular, we have very few clearly ‘private’ such inscriptions, as opposed to those either sponsored or displayed (or both) by public authorities; this was the age of public burials and public commemorations in *πολυανδρεῖα* or ‘multiple tombs’, which (quite literally) embodied the spirit of public service demanded of male citizens.⁴ ‘Private’ poems too, of course, reflected the ideology of the city in which they were displayed, and we must not assume that a ‘public–private’ distinction mapped exactly on to some ancient equivalent of a modern ‘official–unofficial’ one. ‘Private’ inscriptions, for example, might need ‘public’ blessing to be erected in a particularly prominent place or even to use a particular language of praise. What is,

¹ Poems that are certainly Christian have been excluded, although the ways in which Christian epitaphs take over traditional modes is a subject of great importance in later antiquity; the principal reason for the exclusion was to allow as many non-Christian poems as possible to be included, within the space limitations imposed by the series.

² Throughout I refer to the poems included in this book both as ‘poems’ and as ‘epigrams’; on the ancient use of the term *ἐπίγραμμα* cf. e.g. Bruss 2005: 1–10, Citroni 2019.

³ Cf. Woodhead 1959: 36–7; for the distinction in broader terms cf. e.g. Humphreys 1993: chaps. 1–2 and, with respect to death ritual, Turner 2016: 145–7. For an example of a poem which might be described as both public and private cf. e.g. XII.

⁴ For epigrams connected with public *polyandria* cf. e.g. Lausberg 1982: 126–36, Bing 2017: 108–11.

however, clearly visible already in the fourth century, where the bulk of the evidence comes again from Attica, and becomes ever more obvious in the Hellenistic period (where the evidence is primarily from outside Attica), is the development of a poetic language for what are indeed (to all intents and purposes) private tomb-inscriptions celebrating the virtues of the deceased as a loved member of a family, rather than as a citizen or wife of a citizen; such private inscriptions, nevertheless, continued to reflect public ideology, just as do the ‘private’ inscriptions in any modern graveyard or the memorial tablets displayed in churches.⁵ One of the reasons why tomb-inscriptions of the Hellenistic and imperial periods have in the past attracted the attention of scholars other than epigraphists has indeed been as an important and illuminating source of ‘private’ ethical and familial virtues which were communally approved.

There is, however, an important caveat to be entered. Verse-inscriptions form a small minority of extant epitaphs; the vast majority are in prose, or simply record the name of the deceased or, at most, add a phrase such as *μνήμης χάριν*.⁶ It is a reasonable assumption that, in the archaic and classical periods in particular, the use of verse for private epitaphs was itself a claim to social or elite status.⁷ As antiquity progressed, however, the range of people from different socio-economic levels who marked death with verse-inscriptions seems to have gradually widened, as also did the social range of those commemorated; this will no doubt be connected with the spread of literacy and education, but it is also easy enough to imagine a ‘trickle-down’ of the use of verse, promoted by imitation of elite practice. Nevertheless, verse always remained a minority option, even when those exercising that option seem to have come from relatively humble parts of society, and that must be borne in mind in assessing the attitudes and virtues which verse-inscriptions promulgate.

The earliest surviving epitaphic poems are in hexameters, as also are virtually all early dedicatory verses; these were joined in the later archaic period, roughly from the mid sixth century, by poems in elegiac couplets,

⁵ Cf. further below, pp. 20–1.

⁶ Estimates of numbers vary considerably; there are perhaps some 5,000 verse inscriptions (in all states of preservation) and these are perhaps at most 10 per cent of the epitaphic corpus; the figure for fourth-century Athens has been calculated at some 4 per cent. For discussion and bibliography cf. e.g. Bing–Bruss 2007: 2–3, Wypustek 2013: 1; some thirty years ago Morris 1992: 138 n.7, 156, estimated that there were 10,000 epitaphs from classical Attica alone. On early inscriptions just giving the name of the deceased cf. e.g. Häusle 1979, Sourvinou-Inwood 1995: 160–8.

⁷ Nielsen et al. 1989 argue that, in the fourth century BC, Athenian citizens and non-citizens of all social classes erected tombstones; their discussion does not, however, consider the use of verse.

which in the course of the fifth century became, and remained for the rest of antiquity, the epitaphic metre *par excellence*.⁸ Poems in iambic trimeters are found relatively early and persist throughout antiquity, but seem always to have formed only a very small fraction of epitaphic compositions.⁹ There has been much discussion as to how the extension over time of subject-matter, emotional range and voice in epitaphs is to be linked to the gradual dominance of the elegiac couplet which, from the earliest period, seems to have been open to more personal and empathetic expressions than the more ‘factual’ hexameter, though, unsurprisingly, this is more a matter of nuance than of stark difference.¹⁰ By the time we reach the Hellenistic and imperial periods, in any case, there appears to be no persistent difference of emotional mode between hexameter and elegiac epitaphs.

Throughout Greek antiquity, the use of verse may of itself have been a claim to social status and *paideia*, but striking formal differences occur between, on one hand, the ‘literate’ epigrams of the Hellenistic and imperial periods, roughly speaking the epigrams gathered in *HE*, *GP* and similar collections, and many inscribed poems from the fourth century BC onwards, on the other.¹¹ The differences include such things as the length of poems: ‘literary poets’, or at least their anthologists such as Meleager and Philip, seem on the whole to have preferred one to four couplets as

⁸ The fullest study of the metre and prosody of inscribed epigrams remains Allen 1888; it is in serious need of replacement. For fourth-century Attica see also Tsagalis 2008: 285–302; on metrical practice in the hexameters of fourth-century BC and Hellenistic inscribed epigrams cf. Fantuzzi–Sens 2006 and, for the imperial period, Calderón Dorda 2009. Lightfoot 2007: 154–62 offers an analysis of a partly comparable body of material, namely oracular verse. The commentary draws attention to any noteworthy features in the prosodic or metrical practice of this collection.

⁹ Cf. Allen 1888: 65–6, Wallace 1984: 308–10, Kantzios 2005: 132–42. Our corpus offers a sprinkling of poems in other metres: for trochaic tetrameters cf. *LVI*, *GVI* 588 (imperial Athens), *SEG* 28.437 = Cairon 2009: 141–6, *SGO* 05/01/48, Allen 1888: 66–7; for sotadeans, *XLIII*.

¹⁰ Bowra 1938, esp. pp. 177–81, has been influential here; cf. also, e.g., Friedländer–Hoffleit 1948: 71 on *CEG* 161. Bowie 2010: 319–24 is an important discussion, and cf. also Häusle 1979: 81–6, Wallace 1984, Day 2016. The subject has been brought into particular focus by *SEG* 41.540A (cf. 53.404), a public epitaph from Ambracia in five elegiac couplets dating from perhaps as early as the mid sixth century; cf. e.g. Faraone 2008: 132–6.

¹¹ The distinction drawn here between ‘inscribed’ and ‘literary’ poems is, of course, very rough and carries little explanatory force; other dichotomies, all equally rough, in use in the scholarly literature include ‘inscriptions’ vs ‘book poems’ and ‘inscriptions’ vs ‘quasi-inscriptions’. For some guidance to this debate cf. e.g. Bing 2009: 203–16, Sens 2020: 3–5. On the very major distinction imposed by the anonymity of most grave-inscriptions cf. below, pp. 18–19.

being the generically marked length for epigrams,¹² whereas inscribed poems, particularly from the Hellenistic and imperial periods, may be very considerably longer.¹³ So too, the sequencing of hexameters and pentameters in inscribed elegiac poems may show clear differences from literary texts; it is not uncommon in the classical period to find multiple hexameters before a pentameter (see e.g. xxxviii, *CEG* 543) or even groups of consecutive pentameters (cf. *CEG* 171, 518, 524, 592).¹⁴ The treatment in inscribed verses of hiatus, metrical lengthening and other prosodic features can be less regular and ‘polished’ than in ‘literate’ verse, and metrically ‘faulty’ verses, or even (particularly in later antiquity) sequences where it is not clear whether ‘verse’ was intended, are not rare (see e.g. xxxviii, lxxx);¹⁵ broadly speaking, the metrical practice of inscribed poetry can be seen to be looser and less regular than that of the ‘literary’ poets, particularly as the Hellenistic period witnessed a tendency in the composition of literary hexameters towards greater restrictions in the possible structures of the verse than earlier poets, most notably of course Homer, had allowed themselves.¹⁶ ‘Literate’ epigrammatists, we may presume, consciously eliminated some of the ‘rough edges’ of inscriptional practice and adopted metrical and rhythmical ‘regularity’ as one of the ways in which they marked out a sophisticated poetic territory which (pro) claimed both descent and difference from a popular form; such a pattern, which constructs literary history within poetic composition itself, is very familiar from several other forms of post-classical poetry.¹⁷ In these self-imposed restrictions, ‘literate’ poets were the heirs of archaic elegists, such as Mimnermus and Theognis, but they were also influenced (directly or indirectly) by the grammatical activities of scholars who concerned themselves with, and regularly sought to abolish, what appeared to be anomalies in the classical texts, notably Homer, which they studied. For many of the anonymous (to us) poets of inscribed verse, however, technical

¹² This generalisation requires considerable nuancing; many longer ‘literary’ poems survive, and Leonidas of Tarentum, for example, seems regularly to have exceeded these limits.

¹³ In an imperial-age epitaph (of two couplets) from Lydia the dead man requests his children not to adorn his tomb μακροῖς ἐπέεσσιν ... ἐν δολιχοῖς ἐλέγοις (*SGO* 04/05/06, cf. Lausberg 1982: 71–2), and a declared preference for brief epigrams later becomes something of a topos; cf. e.g. Parmenion, *AP* 9.342, Kyrillos, *AP* 9.369. In the *Laws* Plato places a maximum length of four hexameters (‘heroic verses’) on inscribed ‘encomia of the life of the deceased’ (12.958e).

¹⁴ Cf. e.g. Allen 1888: 42–3, Hunter 2019: 138–9.

¹⁵ For later antiquity Agosti 2008 offers important general considerations.

¹⁶ Cf. esp. Fantuzzi–Sens 2006. For a helpful account of the ‘Callimachean’ rules for the hexameter cf. Hopkinson 1984: 51–5.

¹⁷ Cf. e.g. Fantuzzi–Hunter 2004: chap. 1, Sens 2007.

sophistication and consistency of practice were not principal aims of composition; as this collection will demonstrate, the range of poetic ambition on show in Greek inscribed verse is very wide indeed.

2 THE STYLE OF GREEK EPITAPHIC VERSE

The most significant influence throughout antiquity, taken as a whole, on the language of verse-inscriptions was the language of Homer;¹⁸ as the vast majority of such poems are in hexameters or elegiac couplets, this is hardly surprising. What perhaps is more surprising is that this influence largely remained just that – an influence – rather than a dominant model which was followed everywhere. Although the surviving Greek funerary poetry of the high Roman empire and later antiquity, notably from Asia Minor and Rome, often reflects a fashion for extensive Homerising, and indeed for Homeric centos, in keeping with an important element of contemporary poetics,¹⁹ for most of classical antiquity the language of verse-epitaphs is relatively spare and unadorned in general and wears its Homeric heritage very lightly; the mode is, on the whole, understated, and poems which seem to flaunt allusions to high classical texts are very much in the minority.²⁰ Down to (roughly) the end of the fifth century, composers of verse-inscriptions in linguistic areas outside the Ionic–Attic sphere naturally took over some elements of the inherited Ionic language of the poetic tradition, already adapted as this language was to dactylic verse, and fitted these elements to their own epichoric dialects; there were clearly differences from one area of the Greek mainland to another in the nature of the mixed linguistic form thus produced, and change happened at differing rates in different places, but there is no real evidence for any systematic attempt to make such poems sound notably archaic or epicising.²¹ In this early period, in fact, we can see the gradual development of a mixed literary language, not strongly identified with any particular area, which would serve the epitaphic tradition throughout the Greek world for centuries to come.

¹⁸ Cf. e.g. Di Tillio 1969, Häusle 1979: 79–81, Derderian 2001: 87–9, Tsagalis 2008: 262–8, Bing 2009: chap. 8, Hunter 2018: 4–24, and the papers in Durbec-Trabjær 2017.

¹⁹ For illustrative examples cf. XLII, LXXI, *GVI* 1183 (Caria, AD 172).

²⁰ For an example cf. LXXVI.

²¹ Cf. Mickey 1981, Cassio 2007, Kaczko 2009, Alonso Déniz and Nieto Izquierdo 2009, Gujarró Ruano 2018; Friedländer–Hoffleit 1948, however, give greater prominence to what they see as epicising expressions and local forms than does, e.g., Mickey. On epitaphs before the fifth century more generally see, e.g., Svenbro 1988, Ecker 1990, Derderian 2001: 63–102.

The influence of Homer on the post-classical epitaphic tradition is most visible in the adoption of morphological forms which entered the poetic bloodstream together with the epic hexameter (such as the genitive in -οιο), rather than in wholesale borrowing of Homeric phrases and sentiments. Allusion to specific Homeric passages and characters, notably Achilles, Odysseus and Penelope, certainly does occur (see e.g. ν),²² and the influence of some famous Homeric passages is palpable throughout antiquity. None probably was more important for the epitaphic tradition than a famous passage of Book 7 of the *Iliad* in which Hector prophesies that the Greeks will build a funeral mound (α σῆμα) by the broad Hellespont for the warrior whom he kills in the proposed duel between the two sides:

καί ποτέ τις εἴπησι καί ὀψιγόνων ἀνθρώπων,
 νῆϊ πολυκλήϊδι πλέων ἐπὶ οἴνοπα πόντον·
 ἄνδρὸς μὲν τόδε σῆμα πάλαι κατατεθνηῶτος,
 ὃν ποτ' ἀριστεύοντα κατέκτανε φαίδιμος Ἔκτωρ". 90
 ὡς ποτέ τις ἔρεει, τὸ δ' ἐμὸν κλέος οὔ ποτ' ὀλεῖται.
 Homer, *Iliad* 7.87–91

One day someone of men born in the future will say, as he sails the wine-dark sea in his ship of many benches, 'This is the marker of a man who died long ago, who once, fighting valiantly, was killed by glorious Hector.' This is what someone will say, and my renown will never perish.

As has long been acknowledged, these epigram-like verses seem to reverse the epitaphic convention by which it is the renown of the dead which will never fade; here it is the renown of the victorious killer which shall be preserved. Moreover, the 'passer-by' of the later epitaphic tradition is here remarkably foreshadowed in the 'passing sailor' into whose mouth the epitaph is placed.²³ These verses were to prove extremely influential in the writing of 'real' Greek epitaphs; their influence can plausibly be traced as early as the sixth century BC (cf. IV, *CEG* 112).²⁴ Throughout antiquity,

²² For the use of Homeric characters cf. LXXIV introductory n. and Hunter 2018: 7–8.

²³ Cf. below, p. 31 on Eur. *Alc.* 1000–5. Another Homeric character who was buried by the shore (*Od.* 11.74, 12.11) and is evoked in the subsequent epitaphic tradition is Elpenor, cf. xxxviii, with 293n. A related, but rather different, role for a tomb visible to sailors is found in *CEG* 162, an iambic epitaph from Thasos (c. 500 BC); the idea of a tomb on the shore or near the sea was to remain very powerful in later traditions, cf. Pearce 1983.

²⁴ Cf. further Friedländer–Hoffleit 1948: 11 on *CEG* 132, Svenbro 1988: 53, Hunter 2018: 17–18 (with further bibliography). These verses may also be seen as

moreover, poetic memory of certain famous, 'epitaphic' Homeric scenes (the two *nekuiai* of the *Odyssey*, the consolation of Achilles to Priam in *Iliad* 24, etc.) linger over and epicise the commemoration of the less heroic.

The language and themes of verse-epitaphs were not immune to broader developments in Greek poetry; thus, for example, an influence from the language of tragedy is observable in a number of fourth-century Attic poems, and some of the stylistic features which modern scholars associate with developments in the literary poetry of the third century are to be traced in contemporary inscriptions as well (see e.g. xv, LX). It is, however, to be noted that, although epitaphic poems commonly refer to or describe the γόος and θρήνος of those left behind, the more heated rhetorical and stylistic mode of Greek lament, as that is known both from literary representations, notably in tragedy,²⁵ and from the historical record down to modern times,²⁶ is, at least until later antiquity, more often fleetingly suggested in inscriptions, for example by the repetition of an important word or idea (see e.g. 168, 504–7nn.), than fully evoked or imitated; the request to the living to cease from lamentation becomes in fact something of a generically marked feature of the funerary epigram,²⁷ which comes with particular force when expressed by a woman.²⁸

The survival of some poems which clearly do more extensively imitate the manner of lament suggests that, here again, the restraint of the mainstream tradition is a deliberate stylistic choice, perhaps to be connected with the fact that, on the whole, funerary epigrams were productions of male society,²⁹ whereas lamentation for private griefs, though by no means restricted

one of the ancestors of epitaphic poems which greet sailors and are positioned to be seen by them; cf. e.g. *SGO* 17/12/01 (Megiste, late Hellenistic).

²⁵ An instructive example is Medea's 'lament' (in iambic trimeters) over her (still living) children at Eur. *Medea* 1024–37: both the motifs and the language evoke emotional female lament, but such a style is only found in extant epitaphic poetry long after the classical age. Cf. further below, pp. 28–9 on Soph. *Ant.* 806–16.

²⁶ Cf. Alexiou 2002.

²⁷ Cf. e.g. *GVI* 1584.10 (late Hellenistic Mysia), a rejection of θρήνος ἀεικέλιος; the theme is very common, cf. 541, 695nn., Lattimore 1942: 217–18.

²⁸ *SGO* 01/20/24 (Miletus, probably second century BC) is an enlightening example: a dead woman begs her family to cease their mourning, after she has been told that her husband οὐποτε πλήσθη / θρήνων.

²⁹ It is at least suggestive that, in an elegiac (and presumably sympotic) poem, Archilochus urges τλημοσύνη and the rejection of γυναικεῖον πένθος in the face of the painful death of friends at sea (fr. 13 West, cf. Steiner 2012). So too, Achilles tells the grieving Priam that nothing comes of κρυερός γόος, for griefs are the universal lot of mortals (*Il.* 24.522–6). For the persistence of the theme cf. e.g. Seneca, *Ad Polybium* 6.2, 'What is so debasing and womanly (*muliebre*) as to give yourself over to be consumed by grief?'. This 'masculine' tradition of endurance in suffering and a 'middle way' in grief, neither 'unfeeling and savage' (ἀτεγκτον καὶ θηριώδες)

to women, had always been particularly connected with the female world.³⁰ The Platonic Socrates contrasts the pleasure we feel at the lamentations of male heroes in epic or tragedy with the quiet endurance on which we pride ourselves when some grief afflicts our own lives; the latter we then regard as ‘manly’, the former ‘womanly’ (*Rep.* 10.605c9–e1).³¹ Alongside this very broad distinction, however, must be placed the fact, which familiarity has made perhaps less surprising and less studied than it might be, that private funerary poetry for women is no less prominent at all periods, with the partial exception of fifth-century Athens (see above, p. 1), than it is for men. Hellenistic and imperial verse-inscriptions contain some of the most striking expressions of marital love to have survived from antiquity.

Perhaps the most notable linguistic feature of Greek verse-inscriptions of the classical and Hellenistic period is dialect. Epitaphic poems were, to put it simply, never strongly local in linguistic colour. Doric areas, unsurprisingly, tended to produce poems with standard Doric features, above all the retained long alpha, and the same will be true in some cases for poems in honour of Doric speakers who died outside a Doric region,³² but in the

nor ‘unrestrained and womanish’ (ἐκλελυμένον καὶ γυναικοπρεπέες, 102e), but now rewritten for the πεπαιδευμένοι of imperial Greece, is expressed throughout the Plutarchan *Consolation to Apollonius* (cf. esp. 102c–3a, 112f–13a). Plutarch’s own *Consolation to his wife*, written after the death of their two-year-old daughter, commends her for not displaying the extremes of female grief; cf. also Seneca, *Ad Helviam* 16.1–2.

³⁰ Cf. Alexiou 2002: 108; the laments for Hector at the end of the *Iliad*, led by Andromache, Hecuba and Helen were a primary model for later literary lament. In this matter, we are of course dealing with a spectrum of possibilities, and an area where differences in judgement are almost inevitable; Rossi 1999 is an important discussion, and cf. Suter 2008 on male lamentation in tragedy. To what extent inscribed verse was intended to be spoken out loud and how practice might have changed over time are also crucial questions about which we know far too little and which cannot be discussed at length here. *CEG* 591 and *SGO* 01/12/23 are suggestive and relatively early (fourth century BC) examples of one end of the spectrum. In the former, the reference in the final two verses to γόος and θρήνος acts almost as a self-conscious generic marker (cf. e.g. *GVI* 1263.7–8); in the latter, a third-person description of a mother’s grieving leads into what is almost a ‘citation’ of her lament, αἰᾶ τοὺς ἀδίκως οἰχομένους ὑπὸ γῆν. For relatively extended descriptions of lamentation cf. e.g. *GVI* 1006 (Rheneia, late Hellenistic/early imperial), a mother στενάχῃσε ... ὀλοφυρομένη / στερνοτύποις ἀνίαις ἄλυρον μέλος αἰάζουσα / ἀντὶ γάμων οἰκτροῦς [ἐκλαγ]ε Μοῦσα γόους, *SGO* 01/20/32, 03/05/04.9–10 (Hunter 2019), 05/01/43. LXXIII (imperial Smyrna), which evokes the perpetually mourning Niobe, is an important later example; cf. Szempruch 2019. Meleager’s famous epigrammatic lament for Heliodora (*AP* 7.476 = *HE* 4282–91) elaborates what are hints in the epitaphic tradition; Antipater Sid., *AP* 7.467 (= *HE* 532–9) is an elegiac version of female lament.

³¹ Plato, *Rep.* 10.603e–4d is a very instructive account of one particular version of the ‘male’ response to grief.

³² A clear case seems to be a Hellenistic poem for Epikrates found at Aphrodisias, cf. Chaniotis 2009.

period of the *koinē* there seems never to have been an attempt to create a particularly marked Doric language for verse-inscriptions, such as we find, for example, in the bucolic idylls of Theocritus. Even more striking is the persistent presence of Doric features, usually as a minority phenomenon, in poems from non-Doric areas, notably from the Aegean and from the coast of Asia Minor; dialect mixture, or perhaps rather non-uniformity, is common enough in Hellenistic verse-inscriptions almost to count as one of its generic features.³³ A similar linguistic mixture is, intriguingly, a familiar feature of Hellenistic literary epigram, and one which has been much studied in recent decades;³⁴ despite the considerable scholarly ingenuity which has been applied to the problem, however, it remains often very difficult to perceive the rationale for the choice of one dialect form over another in very many literary epigrams. Very much depends here upon the trustworthiness of our manuscripts, as alternative dialect forms are usually metrically equivalent and thus interchangeable. Some apparent questions of dialect ‘mixture’ may thus be created for us by scribes rather than by poets, although it is very unlikely that this explains (away) the phenomenon as a whole, and papyrus evidence suggests that dialect mixture within single poems was an available poetic resource from the earliest period. In the case of verse-inscriptions, appeal can be (and has been) made to the fact that a stonemason might have spoken (and hence substituted) a different dialect from the one in which the poem he was inscribing was composed, but that too seems an impossibly fragile explanation for such a widespread and persistent pattern. The problem of dialect in verse-inscriptions cannot, in fact, be treated in isolation from two other related questions: who composed verse-inscriptions, and what explains the persistence of particular, almost formulaic, modes of expression across centuries and from very widely different parts of the Greek world?

3 WHO WROTE GREEK VERSE-INSCRIPTIONS?

In the absence of anything like clear evidence, scholars have normally had to construct the most plausible-seeming narrative for how the vast majority of funerary inscriptions came into being. A version of that narrative, which makes no real allowance for change over time, runs as follows. The family of the deceased, or perhaps the deceased him/herself before death, would approach a stonemason to purchase a *stēlē* or other form of tomb-marker;

³³ Cf. Threatte 1980: 131, Garulli 2012: 12. It must be stressed that much basic work remains to be done in mapping the dialect of verse-inscriptions from particular regions against the prose-inscriptions from the same area.

³⁴ Cf. e.g. Sens 2004, 2020: 9–10, Bowie 2016, Coughlan 2016, 2020.

arrangements for an inscription would be agreed at the same time. The text of the inscription might already have been agreed with the deceased before his/her death (or indeed the deceased might have composed the verses to be inscribed),³⁵ or would be composed by a member of the deceased's family, a bereaved parent or spouse, for example, or a friend of the deceased,³⁶ or the stonemason would either put the family in touch with a professional composer, perhaps a γραμματικός who composed verses 'on the side', or offer them 'ready-made' verse-patterns which could be easily adapted to individual circumstances. It is this last possibility that has always raised the issue of the existence of 'pattern-books', that is collections of adaptable verses (or whole poems) available for constant re-use;³⁷ the existence of such collections, whatever form they actually took, seems the most economical way to explain the remarkable similarities in some epitaphic verse, both across wide stretches of time and space in the Greek world and within smaller, well-defined areas and periods. Oral memory and transmission also may have been more important than we tend to imagine – very many epitaphs are short and simple enough to recall and pass on – but some form of textual preservation and transmission seems inevitable. The real evidence for such pattern-books is at best fragile, but the inferences to be drawn from similarities between some extant poems seem to offer few alternatives.

Even if the existence of collections of re-usable templates or collections of earlier poems seems the most economical way to account for some of the evidence, the 'sameness' of inscribed epitaphs should not be overstated. A quick glance, for example, at the many poems which begin with a request to the passer-by to stop and read the inscription (*GVI* 1302–29) will reveal that, however similar the opening verse or couplet, the poems then go their own, often very divergent, ways. Some inscriptional templates may have been little more than 'Look (δέρκεο), stranger, at this tomb ...' (see

³⁵ Cf. 233n. There are several surviving anecdotes about people composing their own epitaphs; cf. e.g. Lucian, *Demonax* 44, *Vita Homeri* 5.48–52 Allen (Homer had composed his own epitaph).

³⁶ An intriguing (and textually difficult) passage is Theocritus, *AP* 7.661.3–4 (= *HE* 3418–19), which proclaims that the dead man was buried by his ἐταῖροι and that χύμνοθέτης αὐτοῖς δαιμονίως φίλος ἦν; it is hard not to understand that the 'poet' refers to the composer of verses on his tomb, whether that be this epigram itself or another on a tomb elsewhere.

³⁷ Cf. Lattimore 1942: 18–20, Tsagalis 2008: 52–6, Garulli 2012: 217, Barbantani 2019: 168–9, all citing earlier literature. Drew-Bear 1979 discusses an instructive corpus of eighteen closely related epitaphs, largely from various parts of Phrygia and covering some six centuries or more; cf. also Lougovaya 2011. Horsley 2000 is an account of what we can say about the very fragile grip of Greek versification and its transmission in Pisidia.