

Bernd LORENZ, *Griechische Grabgedichte Thessaliens. Beispiele für poetische Kleinkunst der Antike*, Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter 2019 (Kalliope – Studien zur griechischen und lateinischen Poesie 16), 294 pp., ISBN 978-3-8253-6941-5, €58.00.

In this book, Bernd LORENZ (= L.) has produced an extensive (294 pp.) collection of Greek funerary verse-inscriptions from Thessaly. The inventory of testimonies is followed by a long introduction dealing with inscriptions in general (first part) and inscribed funerary poems from Thessaly (second part), followed by some concluding remarks (third part). The inventory is basically geographical, arranged according to the importance of regions and cities (Achaia, Thebes, and the like); the subdivisions are arranged chronologically, with subsequent sequences of epigrams for males, females, youth and children. The result is somewhat lacking in coherence, constituting a rather disconcerting accumulation of variously formulated headers with the names of the deceased, their professions, *topoi* appearing in the epigrams, etc. As a result, the inscriptions do not have the chance to receive any systematic, thematic treatment, something which would be only suitable for a selection of Thessalian inscriptions. One could think of a number of distinct categories of verse-inscriptions from this region that are worth studying in their context; not to mention paying attention to specific local features of funerary poetry as compared to other regions. It would be also interesting to learn something about the evolution of the genre. No broader cultural, historical or social aspects are discussed. The introduction is somewhat erratic. On occasions the narrative is inconsistent or simply disrupted by an array of unnecessary digressions, citations, bibliographical references, among them Internet links which come out of the blue – e.g. on p. 19, regarding geography of Thessaly. Proper editing of the book would have done it a service.

The purpose of the collection is defined in an unabashedly subjective manner – Thessaly is a favourite, long-term object of the author's studies (p. 19). In fact, L.'s 1974 Ph.D. (published in 1976) dealt with early verse-inscriptions from Thessaly¹. Also, his intent is to deliver some kind of *Forschungsbericht* with regard to verse-inscriptions and their *Textforschung* and *Rezeptionsgeschichte* (p. 22)

The approximate number of funerary verse-inscriptions from Thessaly is 200 (out of 6000 inscriptions overall). L. has included 117 in his collection, hence more than half of the total number. He does not explain the criteria for his choice. Chronologically, they cover around 1000 years of the ancient history of the region, from the Archaic period to Late Antiquity (the most numerous group, totalling around 30, are Hellenistic, 3rd–1st century BC²). In L.'s view, collecting Late Antique (up to the 4th century AD) verse-inscriptions from Thessaly remains a scholarly *desideratum* of the highest order (p. 25). He does not take into account other, parallel categories of testimonies: epigrams from the *Anthologia Palatina* and “Orphic” tablets.

The texts are dated and references to their origins and places of preservation (mostly museum inventory numbers) are given. Apart from the Greek texts and translations into German (most in prose, some in verse as well) and, if available, into other languages (English, French, Italian and Latin as well as German versions made by others – but with a number of curious omissions of existing translations), we have short, disparate comments or notes and extensive bibliographies (with references to the *editiones principes*) for every single verse-inscription (*Notizen*). The epigraphic

¹ B. LORENZ, *Thessalische Grabgedichte vom 6. bis zum 4. Jahrhundert v. Chr.*, Innsbruck 1976 (Commentationes Aenipontanae 22).

² For which see E. CAIRON, *Les épitaphes métriques hellénistiques du Péloponnèse à la Thessalie*, Budapest 2009.

material is presented without proper, methodical commentary. In contrast to the lemmata, the critical apparatus is minimal or non-existent. Most importantly, the author does not state in his introduction that he was aiming at a new edition (or a revision of earlier editions), something which would entail making editorial decisions to any extent; as a result, his texts are simply collected from a number of existing (even if scattered) editions. Luckily, the collection has been made perfectly searchable: at the end of the volume we have a list of places where the inscriptions are being kept (pp. 279–281), a *comparatio numerorum* (pp. 283–286), chronological tables (pp. 287–288), an index of names appearing in the texts of inscriptions (pp. 289–292) and a list of proveniences (pp. 293–294).

While reading this volume, and recalling the late Louis ROBERT's notoriously strained relations with luminaries of German scholarship in the field of epigraphy, I often wondered what his reaction to this book would have been, and trembling at the thought. Werner PEEK (whom L. calls upon as one of his model scholars, especially as the author of an exemplary collection of translations, *Griechische Grabgedichte*³) received a 30-page long scathing and crushing criticism of his monumental, landmark and sadly unfinished edition of *Vers-Inschriften*⁴.

Overall, L.'s book – despite all appearances – is not so much an in-depth scholarly endeavour as an enthusiastic journey through the world of Thessalian epigraphic poetry, which has been his life-long love – and here is the merit. At its core are lucid, accurate translations of these pieces of *Poetische Kleinkunst*, as the title suggests. For the first time, the German-reading public can read and enjoy at one go such an important part of ancient Greek poetical tradition. I am not sure whether ROBERT would have appreciated this. I do.

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³ W. PEEK, *Griechische Grabgedichte. Griechisch und Deutsch*, Berlin 1960 (Schriften und Quellen der Alten Welt 7).

⁴ L. ROBERT, *Les "Griechische Vers-Inschriften" de W. Peek*, *Gnomon* XXXI 1959, pp. 1–30 = IDEM, *Opera minora selecta. Épigraphie et antiquités grecques*, vol. III, Amsterdam 1969, pp. 1640–1669.