

Epic Elegiacs: Reading *Theognidea* 11-14

This paper examines *Theognidea* 11-14, the prooimial hymn to Artemis, and its relation to the other hymns that open this collection of Greek elegy (1-18). It argues that this hymn is linked with the following hymn to the Muse and Graces; moreover, it suggests that by understanding these hymns as a pair, we can establish a generic framework for elegiac verse more generally in the stance each hymn takes to archaic hexameter.

The *Theognidea* is a key document for understanding generic features of early Greek elegy and recognizing how it engages with other poetic traditions, namely archaic hexameter. The collection preserves some 1400 verses under the name of Theognis and it survives in its own manuscript tradition. This good fortune, nevertheless, is tempered because the *Theognidea* contains elegiac verses attributed by authors independent of the collection to other elegiac poets (Tyrtaeus, Mimnermus, Solon and Euenus). It is clearly a *sylloge* of Greek elegy rather than a collection of authentic verses by Theognis. Moreover, verses within the collection provide evidence for dates that span from 640–479 BCE, an impossible range for any poet (Figueira-Nagy 1985: 1). The challenges posed by this situation are well known and have been well studied (i.e., recently Dorda 2010, Colesanti 2011, and Bowie 2012). While great strides have been made in elucidating generic and formal features of early Greek elegy (Aloni-Iannucci 2007, Farraone 2008, Nagy 2010, and Garner 2011), there is still a great deal of room for reflection on how the *Theognidea*, both the verses in it and the larger collection itself, is evidence for and represents these features.

This paper considers how the four short hymns that open this collection function as a prooimion that highlights generic features of early Greek elegy. L. Edmunds (1985) has argued that Greek elegy, represented in the *Theognidea*, defines itself, in part, through contradistinction to the archaic hexameter of Homer, Hesiod, and the *Homeric Hymns*. To this end, Edmunds suggests that the final hymn of this prooimial section (*Theogn.* 15-18), addressed to the Muses and the Graces, establishes a relationship between the Muses and the elegiac poet that is distinct, in various ways, from the one displayed in archaic epic. A key generic feature of elegy, then, for Edmunds is its contradistinction to archaic epic. This paper attempts to push Edmunds' ideas further by searching for these generic markers in the preceding hymn to Artemis (*Theogn.* 11-14). To this end, it first demonstrates briefly that the four opening hymns are to be understood as a group that actively engages with the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (3). From this pattern, it then demonstrates that the final two hymns, 11-14 (Artemis) and 15-18 (Muses and Graces) are to be understood as a pair; both engage with epic traditions (the Trojan Wars, the wedding of Cadmus) combined with gnomic sentiments connected with themes relevant to the *Theognidea* more generally. Finally, it shows that the addressee (Artemis), the diction, the content (Agamemnon), and the closing gnomic sentiment suggests a stance in relation to the epic tradition that is different from the contradistinction Edmunds highlights for the final hymn. That is, while *Theogn.* 15-18 emphasizes contradistinction to archaic hexameter verse, *Theogn.* 11-14 embrace of this tradition.

While this paper is generally sympathetic to Edmunds' clarification of generic features in Greek elegy, it concludes that when the final hymn (15-18) is understood as a

sympotic pair with the preceding verses (11-14), the defining generic features of elegy become more complex than contradistinction to archaic hexameter. Rather, this pair of prooimial hymns shows us elegiac verses not simply establishing itself as distinct from archaic hexameter as its defining feature but also actively engaging, embracing, and adapting this tradition. Such an understanding is in line with what we know of other elegiac poetry, such as Mimnermus 2W² or Simonides fr. 19W², which recall or quote Homer's simile of the generation of leaves, or Simonides fr. 11 W², which actively engages with Homer in a retelling of the *Iliad*. One generic feature, then, would seem to be engagement and adaptation of archaic hexameter rather than the establishment of a distinction to that tradition.

Bibliography

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