

Regina Hoeschele: From Book to Stone: A Lapidary *libellus* in the Villa of Aelian

As is well known, the Hellenistic era saw the transition of epigrams from stone to papyrus. The impact of the genre's dissociation from its physical context and the play of book epigrams with epigraphic conventions have been elucidated in various recent works (e.g. Gutzwiller 1998, Meyer 2005, Hoeschele 2010). Far less studied, though equally intriguing, is the influence that literary epigrams in turn had on their inscriptional counterparts (cf. Bettenworth 2007). My paper addresses this phenomenon by looking at a series of six inscriptions from the Imperial period whose ensemble reflects organizational practices typical of epigrammatic *libelli*. As our panel shows, the artful arrangement of epigrams in books is prefigured by the grouping of poems on monuments or in shrines. Tying in with both the epigraphic and the literary tradition, the author of this ensemble has created a miniature *libellus*, which self-consciously re-inscribes the written page on stone and has its poems interact within a three-dimensional setting.

The texts (*IG* XIV 118, 1188) were discovered south of Rome on two herms in the so-called Villa of Aelian (the author, who refers to himself as Αἰλιανός at 118.6, might be identical with the Second Sophistic writer of that name). Each of the herms represents a famous poet (one Homer, the other Menander) and carries a cycle of three epigrams in his praise: starting with a close imitation of an epitaph for Homer by Antipater of Sidon (*AP* 7.6), Αἰλιανός offers two variations on this theme and juxtaposes the cycle with a series of poems on the neighboring herm, which explicitly justifies the positioning of its subject Menander next to the archaic master (γείτον' Ὀμηρεΐης κεφαλῆς, 1188.10). Following the recent study of Prioux (2008), my paper further illuminates the cross-references between the texts and the ways in which their material setting enhances the ensemble's coherence. The talk is divided into two parts: in a first step I analyze verbal (cf. e.g. θεῖε, 118.4 ~ θεοῦ, 1188.2) and structural links (in both cycles, for instance, it is the middle poem that gives voice to Homer/Menander, while the surrounding epigrams feature a narrator as speaker who addresses the represented poet and/or spectator). In a second step, I argue that the columns with their two sets of poems evoke the notion of two adjacent columns on a papyrus. Significantly, the Greek word for such a column, σελίς, can also denote a crossbeam or junction made of stone, which strengthens the association between the two media. The fact that herms themselves were often linked via wooden beams makes them ideal for the creation of a lapidary *libellus* whose components are both physically and verbally interconnected. At the same time, this assemblage of poems is anticipated by the series of herms that Hipparchus had inscribed and erected throughout Attica (though physically separated, the herms with their epigrammatic *sententiae* do form a proto-*libellus* of sorts).

In sum, I propose to show how the author playfully reverses the transition of epigrams from stone to book and inscribes himself into the tradition of an epigrammatic sub-genre favored by Hellenistic authors, establishing his own claim to fame by giving voice to two of the most prominent figures in the literary history of Hellas: as “Homer” himself remarks, he only speaks ἐνεκ' Αἰλιανοῦ (118.6).