

role of western Asia Minor as the place where a new method of exchange was introduced remains enigmatic. If it was not so different from other places in the Middle East, why was it there that the change took place, while other places with advanced social and economic systems (Middle Eastern kingdoms and Phoenician city-states) clung to traditional ways of doing things? If it was not for economic reasons, was it for cultural ones? The book hints at and in some cases makes a start at presenting solid material ('the hard evidence', p. 5) that will help to throw light on these problems. A major project in the form of an online database (PHANES) of all known electrum coins is now underway (p. 570; 574, n. 23); it is estimated that it will eventually include records of over 10,000 coins. That will be the essential foundation on which to build and to continue the task of sorting, grouping and interpreting the coins along the lines already marked out by several contributions to this book.

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**Marta González González, *Funerary Epigrams of Ancient Greece: Reflections on Literature, Society and Religion*. pp. 224, 11 b/w ill. London: Bloomsbury, 2019. ISBN 978-1-350-06242-9, hardcover £90.**

This book aims to review funerary epigrams from the Archaic and Classical periods, and to place them in their social and religious contexts. It consists of eight chapters, followed by 16 pages of bibliography, an index of inscriptions and table of concordances, plus five pages of indices. The main monuments are illustrated with 11 plain black and white figures, which archaeologists will not find particularly useful.

Only private metrical epitaphs are taken into consideration, mainly hexameters and elegiac distichs. Both original Greek texts and up to date translations are provided, making these sometimes complex and enigmatic epigrams – as well as other literary extracts – available to a wider audience. A list of translated inscriptions would have been welcome.

The first two chapters place the monuments in their literary, political, social, and legal contexts.

Chapter 1 (The Funerary Landscape: A Reflection of the World of the Living) focuses on the latter, and follows the now slightly outdated hypothesis that funerary landscapes mirror the world of the living. It provides a survey of the types of funerary monuments produced in the Archaic and Classical periods, such as *stelai*, funerary vases, *kouroi* and *korai*. The main criticism of this chapter lies in the fact that almost all the evidence comes from Attica, while other regional practices are barely taken into consideration. Also, when discussing the legal aspects of funerary practices, the readers must be aware that the sources apply only to aristocratic and democratic Athens. Chapter 2 (The Literary Forms: Tears of Simonides... and of Pindar) offers a useful survey of the literary context in which funerary epigrams were produced.

The following chapters follow a thematic structure. Chapter 3 (Phrasikleia, *Forever a Maiden*. Kroisos, *Whom Raging Ares Destroyed*) provides a pleasant tour of the funerary landscape of Archaic Attica, focusing on two of the most well-known aristocratic monuments, those for Phrasikleia and Kroisos, completed with other epitaphs for “young nobles”. Youth as a recurring theme in Classical funerary epigrams is discussed in Chapter 4 (How to Deprive the Years of its Spring). The study of the monument for Pausimache leads to two original short studies. The first deals with verses mentioning the moment when the *psyche* abandons the body, while the other focuses on mirrors for women in Attic *stelai*, which the author interprets as a clue that the deceased was unmarried at the time of her death. The “Untimely Death” subchapter offers some considerations of the use of *loutrophoroi* as tomb markers. *Philia*, *philotes*, *philemosyne*, *hetaireia*, and their occasional ambiguity are analysed in the fifth chapter, devoted to friendship and same-sex eroticism between women and between men. Among the epigrams presented, there features a recently discovered monument from Boeotia, the late sixth century stele for Mnasiatheos of Akraiphia. The next two chapters offer a welcome glimpse into the fate of women: in Chapter 6 as wives (Wives and Their Masters), and in Chapter 7 when losing their lives in childbirth. In that same Chapter 7 (Powerful Enemies: Childbirth, the Sea), the author provides a refreshing look on another type of untimely tragic death, the disappearance at sea. The theme of religion, announced in the book’s title, is explored mainly in Chapter 8, which largely focuses on looking for signs of belief about the afterlife (Rewards for Piety... Next to Persephone). A brief discussion of *lamellae aureae* and epitaphs for the initiated is also offered. The most intriguing of the subchapters, entitled “Persephone’s Chamber”,

examines the presence of Hades and Persephone in epitaphs from the fifth and fourth centuries BC.

The main aims and objectives described in the introduction are met. However, this volume only occasionally offers new interpretations or innovative lines of inquiry. The reason is that the selection of primary sources largely focuses on the most famous monuments and texts available, and from one region in particular, Attica. The book's main strength lies primarily in the fact that it examines a wide range of sources, and that it reaches a wide audience: teachers and students, but also scholars who wish to familiarize themselves with other areas of specialism. Although the archaeological and iconographic approaches remain largely superficial, archaeologists will find it valuable to be guided into a deeper understanding of the epigrams, and of their literary context. Philologists, on the other hand, will be able to grasp the social context in which the literary texts were produced, and for what purposes.

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**Robert S. Wagman, *The Cave of the Nymphs at Pharsalus. Studies on a Thessalian Country Shrine*. Brill Studies in Greek and Roman Epigraphy vol. 6. pp. xvi + 164, b/w ill. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2015. ISBN 978-90-04-29761-6, hardcover; ISBN 978-90-04-29762-3, E-book €112.**

The book is a welcome addition to recent works on the cults of the area of Thessaly in anglophone scholarship.<sup>1</sup> Of the various sanctuaries excavated in Thessaly, we have very few systematic studies of sanctuary material. Beyond the Thessalian confines, this book is an important contribution to the topics of Nymph cults and nympholepsy, Greek sanctuaries and their natural environment and indeed cave cults.

The cave of the Nymphs on Mount Karapla close to Pharsalos has long been known in scholarship thanks to its rock inscriptions mentioning Pantalkes, a famous example, alongside Archedamus of Vari

and Onesagoras from Cyprus, of the picturesque fervent devotees of the Nymphs traditionally called nympholepts.<sup>2</sup> Wagman provides a detailed commentary of the two inscriptions from the cave with numerous new suggestions. The two inscriptions aside, the cave itself and its finds have not been hitherto much discussed. The cave was briefly excavated for a week by an Italian team in the 1920s, and the results of this excavation were summarily reported.<sup>3</sup> The book contains a very valuable and extensive topographical analysis of the cave and the wider landscape based on Wagman's visits to the cave. It also contains a systematic presentation of those finds published by Levi, based on the reports and photographs available, because the finds from the cave have been lost.

Wagman tries to reconstruct the experience of visiting the cave. Although not directly acknowledged, the impact of sensory archaeology on the study of sacred spaces is obvious. Throughout the work Wagman also tries to understand the cult in its particular geographic and socio-economic setting. Unlike other studies that have discussed Pantalkes alongside other nympholepts from other places of the Greek world, Wagman's study tries to ground Pantalkes more tightly to the Thessalian social setting.

Indeed, one of the main interests of the book is that the overall picture that Wagman paints is at odds with some dominant trends in scholarship. His argument that the experience of a visit to the cave could hardly be described as a marginal transcendental experience opposes, as Wagman himself points out, 'classic interpretations of caves as places of mystic descent'.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, one of Wagman's arguments is that Pantalkes was portrayed, in the fourth century at least, as a cult founder sharing in the culture and values of the Pharsalian civic elites and indeed the heroized war dead. This is a big hit to traditional visions of nympholepts as religious enthusiasts operating outside and perhaps even against the traditional civic norms.<sup>5</sup> Let me review the merits

<sup>2</sup> Connor 1988; Larson 2001: 11-20; Pache 2011: 37-70; Ustinova 2018: 245-264.

<sup>3</sup> Levi 1923-1924.

<sup>4</sup> See for instance Ustinova 2009, whose work is often cited by Wagman, and more recently Katsarou and Nagel 2021; Papalexandrou 2021, who put forward an image of cave sanctuaries as 'powerful ritual heterotopias'.

<sup>5</sup> Connor (1988), Larson (2001: 11-20), and Ustinova (2018: 245-264) all stress the marginal characteristics of nympholepts, although Connor and Larson acknowledge that the nympholept was partially reintegrated through cult and might have had an important social role. See also Connor 2012: 884 who writes: 'The historical nympholepts... may be best understood as part of a wider resistance to the domination of prestige and authority by aristocratic elites...'

<sup>1</sup> Graninger 2013; Mili 2015.