HAL
open science

Greek Anthology

Jean-Luc Fournet

To cite this version:

Jean-Luc Fournet. Greek Anthology. Roger S. Bagnall; Kai Brodersen; Craige Brian Champion; Andrew Erskine; Sabine R. Huebner. Encyclopedia of Ancient History, VI, pp.2982-2983, 2013, 10.1002/9781444338386.wbeah12095 . hal-01597500

HAL Id: hal-01597500

https://hal.science/hal-01597500v1

Submitted on 28 Sep 2017

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Greek Anthology

JEAN-LUC FOURNET

The *Greek Anthology* (*AG*) is the conventional name given to the most important collection of Greek epigrams. It is composed of the fifteen books of the *Palatine Anthology* (whose name is due to the manuscript of the Palatine Library in Heidelberg, which transmitted it to us) plus a sixteenth one (also called *Appendix Planudea*) containing 388 epigrams the modern editors excerpted from another anthology compiled in 1301 by Maximus Planudes (*Planudean Anthology*).

This literary monument of nearly 4,100 epigrams (around twenty-five thousand verses) is interesting first for the history of its creation, inseparably linked to that of the epigrammatic genre: the *Anthology* (literally "collection of flowers") is the result of a slow stratification over a millennium of which the most important stages are (1) Meleager's *Wreath*, edited around 100 BCE, and giving much room, beside some remote precursors (Archilochus, Sappho, Simonides) and contemporaries, to the Alexandrian poets who marked the flowering of the epigrammatic genre in the third century BCE; (2) the *Wreath* of Philippus of Thessalonike, under Nero, collecting pieces composed in the meantime; (3) Agathias' *Cycle* (567 CE) gathering epigrams by recent or contemporary poets. It is the merit of Constantine Cephalas to have combined thematically, in Constantinople around 900, those three collections along with others: this new anthology served as a basis for the compilers of the *Palatine Anthology* around 950 and later on to Maximus Planudes for his own *Anthology*.

Because of its volume and its huge timespan (seventh century BCE–tenth century CE), the *AG* is above all an invaluable document on the epigrammatic genre. It evidences the evolution of the epigram which, while being initially an inscription on a monument or an object (epitaph, *ex-voto*, dedication), quickly freed itself from them to some extent and from the traditional circumstances of its production to become a fully-fledged literary genre that, particularly from the Hellenistic period onwards, invaded the private sphere (especially with the development of the amatory epigrams). The constituent books of the *AG* give a good idea of the various fields it covered: ecphrastic poetry, that is, describing works of art (II and III), amatory (V), votive (VI), sepulchral (VII and the majority of VIII), epideictic or illustrative (IX), hortatory (X), bacchic and satirical (XI), pederastic (XII) epigrams, arithmetical problems, riddles, and oracles (XIV). The variety of themes and functions accounts for the variety of tones (solemn or intimate, serious or humorous/ironical, sober or mannered, etc.) and of the meters (elegiac distichs, hexameters, iambic trimeters, but also a great number of rarer meters, especially in Book XIII, owing to which the *AG* is the most complete catalogue of the meters used by Greek-speaking authors).

Since the epigram is the genre par excellence of intimacy, unlike other literary forms, the *AG* is also and above all an extraordinary document on the private life of the Ancients, their psychology, their manners, and their customs. Nothing portrays better than it does, in all their variety, the most intimate, picturesque, and unknown sides of ancient societies even at their humblest levels, either pagan or Christian, from Archaic and Classical Greece to Middle Byzantine Constantinople via the Hellenistic and Roman East.

SEE ALSO: Epigram; Hellenism, Byzantine.

REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

Beckby, H. (1965–67) *Tusculum-Bücherei*, 2nd ed. Munich (selection).

Cameron, A. (1993) *The Greek anthology from Meleager to Planudes*. Oxford.

Gow, A. S. F. and Page, D. L. (1965) *The Greek anthology. Hellenistic epigrams*. Cambridge.

The Encyclopedia of Ancient History, First Edition. Edited by Roger S. Bagnall, Kai Brodersen, Craige B. Champion, Andrew Erskine, and Sabine R. Huebner, print pages 2982–2983.

© 2013 Blackwell Publishing Ltd. Published 2013 by Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

DOI: 10.1002/9781444338386.wbeah12095

Gow, A. S. F. and Page, D. L. (1968) *The garland of Philip and some contemporary epigrams.* Cambridge.

Page, D. L. (1981) *Further Greek epigrams before* AD *50 from the Greek anthology and other sources.* Cambridge.

Patton, W. R. (1916–18) *Greek Anthology.* London.

Stadtmüller, H. (1894–1906) *Anthologia Graece epigrammatum cum Planudea.* Leipzig (VIII, end of IX and X–XVI are missing).

Waltz, P., Soury, G., Buffière, F., and Aubreton, R. (1928–94) *Anthologie grecque.* Paris (X is missing).