IS THERE PANEGYRIC IN CLASSICAL GREEK ART?

Robin Osborne

If we think to praise someone we will normally do so in words. We may thank someone with a gift, but we expect praise not simply to register something about the disposition of the giver of praise towards the object of praise, but to convey some information about the object of praise. Images do indeed convey information, but can images convey praise? In this paper I briefly outline some of the variables which determine whether an act counts as an act of praise, and I then explore the circumstances in which ancient art managed acts of praise. I argue that praise is possible in art only within a highly structured context, and that such stable contexts are absent from classical Greek art.

The Structures of Praise

Three parties are involved in any act of praise: the one praised, the one praising, and the audience of the praise[1]. Whether a given representation counts as praise will be affected by the nature of these three parties. It will also be affected by the nature of the occasion. A description which would count as high praise to a student taking part in her first dramatic production might be no praise at all to a professional actor. An audience of proud parents will hear as praise what an audience of drama critics would not regard as praise at all; Aristotle observed (*Rhetoric* 1415b27-29, tr. Rhys Roberts) that 'In speeches of display we must make the hearer feel that the eulogy includes either himself or his family or his way of life or something or other of the kind'.

To praise requires being able to occupy a position from which what is said will be heard as praise. If an academic goes into a high school and gives a

[1] This paper would not have been conceived but for the kind invitation of the Fondazione Canussio to the Convegno 'Dicere Laudes: Elogio, Comunicazione, Creazione del Consenso' in Cividale del Friuli in September 2010, and it would not have taken the form that it does but for the stimulation of the other papers and the discussion on that occasion. I am grateful to Gianpaolo Urso for his organisation of the occasion, to all who took part in the conference, and to Ben Keim and Caroline Vout for comments on earlier drafts.

talk, and a fifteen-year-old comes up privately afterwards and says 'You are wonderful, you know even more than I do', this will not be received as praise but as inappropriately pretentious. If the same student, however, stands up at the end of the talk and, on behalf of the school, thanks the academic, drawing attention to the fact that his knowledge surpasses what the school can otherwise command, that academic will receive this graciously as praise. In the first case the student spoke only with his own insignificant authority, in the latter he assumed the authority, and the collective expertise, of the whole listening audience.

Private praise is possible, but only in circumstances where the giver of praise commands a certain power in relation to the person to whom the praise is given. The giver of praise in these circumstances carries with him or her those over whom he or she has power – the words of praise may in fact be given privately, but the fiction is created that there is a third party acceding to the praise. Those who are effectively powerless cannot praise the powerful privately, for they not only carry no implicit wider public with them, they also have no alternative. They can, however, praise the powerful publicly, since speaking in front of others enables them to assume the support of their audience, and the larger the audience or the more what that audience thinks matters, the greater their (potential) power.

If representations can be perceived as praise only in some circumstances and from some sources, source and circumstances are not enough to turn a representation into praise. To be perceived as praise, representations must also take a particular form. The tropes of praise depend upon selection. Only select qualities of the object of praise are described: praise is for virtue, according to Aristotle (*Rhetoric* 1366a23-24), and the Aristotelian virtues are 'justice, courage, temperance, magnificence, magnanimity, liberality, gentleness, prudence, wisdom' (*Rhetoric* 1366b1-3). More calculatingly, praise is for what is esteemed: 'Everything, in fact, that is esteemed [*to timion*] we are to represent as fine [*to kalon*]. After all, people regard the two things as much the same' (*Rhetoric* 1367b11-12, based on Rhys Roberts' rather wordy version). Only some of the descriptors that might possibly be applied to a particular person, object, or circumstance are employed: as Aristotle puts it (*Rhetoric* 1367a35) 'the stupid man is an honest fellow' (tr. Rhys Roberts). The later teacher of rhetoric Aristides (*Ars Rhetorica* 161(1 505 Sp.), using the Greek terms *auxesis*, *paraleipsis*, *parabole*, and *euphemia*), detailed that the way to do this was to exaggerate the meritorious features, suppress the undesirable ones, make favourable contrasts with other things, and turn unpleasant into pleasant facts.

The objects of praise are, again following Aristotle, for preference, both singular ('only this man has…' to paraphrase *Rhetoric* 1368a10-13), and de-

liberately chosen by the object of praise ('look at what this man does, and you will see that he does not act at random, but regularly selects what is best…' to paraphrase *Rhetoric* 1367b21-27). Praise is appropriate neither for qualities that are generally shared (one does not praise a man for having two legs or for the fact that he is alive, nor an adult for having more knowledge than a child), nor for qualities that are merely given by nature – though one certainly praises those who enhance qualities endowed by nature (athletes who improve their performance by training, individuals who enhance their beauty by the taste they display in their clothes or jewellery or the way they have their hair styled)[2].

Whether an audience hears a representation as praise is a complex question. Aristotle claims that 'as Socrates used to say, it is not difficult to praise the Athenians to an Athenian audience' (*Rhetoric* 1367b8-9), but that claim, derived from the beginning of the *Menexenus*, massively simplifies the situation. Socrates makes his claim in the face of precisely the contrary claim, that delivering the Funeral Oration at Athens is difficult. Why the debate? Funeral Orations at Athens presumably started off as praise of the particular contingent of men who had died in the year that was being commemorated. The Athenian Council chose an orator to praise a group of dead Athenian citizens in front of the Athenian citizen body as a whole. The speaker on such an occasion could expect to carry his audience with him as he lavished praise on the war dead. They had, after all, voluntarily fought for Athens and given up their lives – a choice that none of those who heard the oration had made. But once the Funeral Oration changed from being praise of a select group of Athenians who had died in battle, and became praise of the city, the task became very much more difficult.

The problem of the Funeral Oration can be put like this: how could an individual, whose authority for speaking derived only from the choice of (a representative body of) citizens, turn round and praise those citizens? For this not to be self-praise would depend upon the chosen individual claiming some special authority – a claim that Athenian democracy was precisely required to deny. Pericles gets round this problem by effectively turning the tables to make the dead praise the city: the Athens which is worthy of praise is the (imaginary) Athens for which these select citizens died. Lysias could take on the role of giver of a funeral oration (whether or not historically delivered) because he was no citizen, but a metic; he spoke with the authority of the world outside Athens. Socrates, to support his case that such praise is easy, quotes a funeral oration that he ascribes to Aspasia – not merely a non-Athenian, and

[2] I shall return below to the way in which praise of beauty selects parts of the body for praise rather than praising the whole.

a woman, but a voice from the past who borrows the authority of Pericles[3].

Despite Aristotle's claim, the correct conclusion to draw from the *Menexenus* is not that it is easy to praise Athens to Athenians, but that it is easy for a non-Athenian to praise Athens to Athenians. When Quintilian quotes this passage of Aristotle he goes on to note that since praise is selected for a particular audience 'there will be no doubt about their judgement, because it will have preceded the speech' (Quintilian 3,7,23). But if the agreement of the audience can be taken for granted, they still have to have someone to agree with. There needs to be a triangulation: the audience of praise, the giver of praise and the object of praise need to be conceptually distinct parties. Praise given by someone who can claim independent authority reinforces the audience in their opinions, and the opinions of the audience then reinforce the praise: as Aristotle rightly remarks 'The ways in which to make them trust the goodness of other people are also the ways in which to make them trust our own' (*Rhetoric* 1366a27-28).

Praise demands the creation of a compact between the giver of the praise and those who hear the praise, and the denial of a compact between the giver of praise and the person praised. Audience and speaker are complicit: those who hear know that praise must take this form, and delight in familiar tropes being employed about unlikely objects or in likely objects being praised in unexpected terms; those who speak know that they are bound to say certain things, and devote their energy to giving the impression that they are free to speak differently. The skill of the person giving praise comes from giving the impression both of knowing the rules and of not being constrained by them. Where there is no compact between speaker and audience, words of praise may be differently perceived by different listeners. At least part of the issue in the reception of Cicero's *Pro Marcello* lies in Cicero's speaking to a body of people whose opinions were divided: how can simple praise be given where different listeners possess different, and violently opposed, values? Arguably only if praise is bestowed on the one quality which demands complicity from both sides – *clementia*[4].

What the audience expects, and how the speaker's words are heard, are affected by what is known of the object of praise and by what is known of the speaker. Isokrates notes, in the first part of his *Encomium on Helen* (10,13,

[3] As to the other two surviving Athenian Funeral Orations, Hypereides turns his oration into a praise of the general who was in command, and Demosthenes' speech has a good chance of being a school exercise, that is what a later generation would think it appropriate to utter in these circumstances to the earlier generation of Athenians. (See further CANFORA, this volume, whose remarks have prompted the reflections offered here).

[4] See further CONNOLLY, this volume. It is not by chance that clemency turns out to be so important a topic of discussion in a volume devoted to the giving of praise.

tr. Norlin), that 'while on famous subjects [subject that have *doxa*] one rarely finds thoughts which no one has previously uttered, yet on trifling and insignificant topics whatever the speaker may chance to say is entirely original'. When Pliny (*Letters* 2,1,6) praises Tacitus as 'the most eloquent man to give praise' (*laudatus est a consule Cornelio Tacito; nam hic supremus felicitati eius cumulus accessit, laudator eloquentissimus*) that eloquence surely stemmed from the knowledge of the audience that Tacitus was the man readiest to voice blame. No surprise then, that from as early as we have speeches of praise we have speeches that draw attention to the means by which praise is conveyed – as in Gorgias' *Encomium of Helen* or Plato's *Menexenus*.

Praise and the visual arts

Can paintings or sculptures take the place of written or spoken words of praise? Can sculptors and painters persuade people to think well of persons and things by the images they create? To do so, the images need to be able to represent virtue and to be able to represent virtue as the deliberate choice of the person or persons praised. They also need to persuade the viewer that in so representing persons and their actions the artist possesses independent authority, or operates as the agent of some independent authority.

Visual artists have no problem in picking out virtuous actions, for in what they depict they necessarily select and are free to select for virtue. But, more even than words, images depend for their significance upon comparison with other images. And whereas the undesirable stands out in contrast to the rest of the world, the desirable is that to which the world aspires. If the technology of air-brushing is new, the phenomenon goes back to the earliest figurative art. Exaggeration of meritorious features, suppression of undesirable ones, favourable contrasts, these are the graphic artist's techniques, not just the wordsmith's. But in art these are techniques that emphasise the typical, rather than the exceptional. Not for nothing are artists who represent the beautiful made to claim that they have selected and combined features from a whole range of beautiful individuals[5].

One difference between the artists in words and the artist in images is that while a writer or speaker makes a person present by conjuring up their actions and so the qualities implicit in them, the visual artist can only conjure up qualities on the basis of their visible appearance. When I am 'economical with the truth' in describing a person's past actions, or generous with the truth in imputing to them virtues, my description will have no trouble insist-

[5] A story first in Cicero *De Inventione* 2,1. For the long afterlife of this story see Mansfield 2007.

ing that the good qualities are the manifestation of a good character. When the painter or sculptor makes a person or group more handsome by omission or enhancement of features, he may be understood simply to be making them more handsome, bestowing praise less on the individual depicted than on Mother Nature.

More importantly, it is not the recital of past deeds which constitutes praise of a person, but the claim that those deeds were a matter of choice and their recital under the sign of virtue. The deliberate choice of Captain Oates on Captain Scott's Antarctic expedition to leave the tent ('I may be some time'), and the claim that this action constituted courage, is what turns the account of Oates' action into a laudation of Oates. But in providing an account of a person's physical features, and artist is not including them under any sign. No amount of representation of gangrened feet, whether economical or generous with the truth, will itself create praise of the polar explorers – not, at least, outside the context of a monument to a polar expedition.

The painter or sculptor needs a context in order to turn selective description into a display of virtue, for it is only in the right context that the painter or sculptor can make his viewer complicit. The complicity of audience to speaker is complicity to judge this or that action a sign of this or that virtue[6]. It is easy for someone standing outside the Athenian citizen body to praise the Athenians at Athens in the Funeral Oration because, on that defined occasion, the qualities that the audience esteems are known, and because the individual Athenians there praised have shaped their actions to acquire the esteem of observers with those values. Only some painted or sculpted monuments can be reckoned to have carried similar contextual expectations. One might reckon that the statues of the Tyrannicides carried such expectations, but they did so because not only had this act of supposed tyrant-slaying been itself honoured, but tyrant-slaying in general was something that the Athenians repeatedly enjoined upon citizens. With few other monuments can we reckon viewers to have had constant and consistent values. Making clear what people have done is not the same as making clear the qualities they displayed in doing it. Complicity comes in the judgement of quality, not the judgement of fact. As Quintilian put it 'While therefore I do not agree that this encomiastic type of oratory is exclusively concerned with what is honourable, I do agree that it is generally within the Issue of Quality' (3,7,28, tr. Russell)[7].

[6] For a particularly complicated, and revealing, area of complicity at Rome see LEVENE 1997 on the treatment of religious motifs in Roman panegyric.

[7] This point is well brought out by Pacatus (*Panegyrici Latini* 11 (12) 44,4-5): *sed utcumque uirtutis tuae opera curiosae posteritatis oculis artificum manus reddet, cum te uel Alpium dorsa superantem uel flumina obiecta tranantem uel agmen hostile triumphalibus uestigiis atterentem pictorum atque fictorum adsequetur imitatio, clementia, imperator, tua quo caelo, quo pigmento, quo aere auroue ducetur?* (But

Classical art and praise

In the remainder of this paper I want to explore the circumstances in which the context of viewing is or is not sufficiently constraining to allow the artist to produce panegyric. For there are some circumstances in which a painter or sculptor can show a person not merely doing something, but doing something in a virtuous way. One way to do this is to take advantage of the established conventions observed by orators. Mario Torelli (1997) is able to read the Arch of Trajan at Beneventum as a panegyric because the episodes shown on the arch can be identified with the episodes celebrated in Pliny's *Panegyricus*. Contemporary viewers, familiar with the structures of conventional praise, could map the scenes on the arch against the commonplaces of imperial encomium. But that arch also exploits a visual heritage. To quote Torelli, 'The encomiastic discourse of the arch appears to be carried out by the elaborate metamorphosis of an *idéologie imagée*, created centuries before for the "historical" reliefs representing political status and political functions'[8]. The course and structures of political virtue were long-established and firmly in place at Rome, and just as this peculiarly enabled emperors to inhabit them, so too it peculiarly enabled sculptors to give these imperial virtues visible form. The existence of visual conventions enables description to become redescription under the sign of praise.

Within the Greek world the only topic of praise at all comparable to the emperor celebrated in the Latin Panegyrics is the city of Athens invented in the funeral oration. It is precisely because in such orations one does not find 'thoughts which no one has previously uttered', to quote again Isokrates' phrase, that they provide a framework to which sculptors (or painters) might refer. But do they do so?

Both Jerome Pollitt and Henning Wrede have suggested that the frieze of the Parthenon provides just such a visual equivalent of the Funeral Oration[9]. Their case goes like this. In the cavalcade we can discover the Athenian citizen body laid out according to its civic divisions, the tribal units distinguished[10]. Although there is no allusion here to specific events of past history, such as are discussed in every extant Funeral Oration bar the Thucydidean one, there is allusion not merely to the civic structure but to the tribes whose particular con-

however the hand of visual artists present the achievements of your virtue to a curious posterity, whether your likeness by the painter or the sculptor follows you as you overcome the ridge of the Alps, or swim across rivers in your path, or wear down a hostile army with triumphant footsteps, emperor, with what chisel, what pigment, what bronze of gold will they bring out your clemency?)

[8] Torelli 1997, 169.

[9] What follows is not exactly as set out by Pollitt 1997 or Wrede 2008 but follows the spirit of their arguments.

[10] So most fully Jenkins 2005.

tributions to Athenian history Demosthenes was at pains to detail in his Funeral Oration (60,27-31) (fig. 1). In the chariots and *apobatai* we see something of the training and education of the Athenians regularly stressed in funeral orations, something of the competitive glories of festival games to which Perikles is made directly to allude (Thucydides 2,38,1), and something of the 'obedience to the magistrates and the laws' (Thuc. 2,38,3). In the players of the kithara and the aulos and the elderly officials more of the executive structure of the democracy is displayed, allowing the eyes of the audience of the Funeral Oration to imagine here both the 'ordinary citizens' who 'are fair judges of public matters' (Thuc. 2,40,2), and those whose 'advancement in public life falls to reputation for capacity' (Thuc. 2,37,1), and in the particular roles shown up by the red cloaks of the metic tray-bearers we see Athens the host to the rest of the Greek world. All contribute to the Athens that is a city of festivals and sacrifice, but also ready for war, rehearsed by Thucydides' Perikles (2,38,1; 2,39,1).

Fig. 1 – Cavalry arrayed in tribal groups on the south frieze of the Parthenon. American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Archives, Alison Frantz Photographic Collection.

How easy it is to see the Parthenon Frieze as a panegyric depends upon what tense one thinks it is written in. The Arch of Trajan at Beneventum can be easily read as a panegyric not least because it is in the past tense. Trajan's Arch includes a frieze showing a Roman triumph, and includes displays of barbarian captives[11]. Victories and their celebration are necessarily hyperbolic occasions and cannot but mark out the victor, whether city or emperor, as special. But is Parthenon frieze also in the past tense? Answering this question depends crucially on what one takes the overall programme of the Parthenon sculptures to be.

The claim that is conventionally repeated is that the sculptures of the Parthenon, like the enterprise of building the Parthenon as a whole, were designed to celebrate Athens' victory over the Persians[12]. The one substantial ancient discussion of the building of the Parthenon, in Plutarch's *Life of Perikles* (esp. chs. 12 and 17), does not in fact talk in these terms, but rather conceives the Parthenon as a project designed to magnify Athens[13]. There is no doubt that Athens' ability to be all-victorious is on display in the Parthenon, not least in the image of Athena with Victory standing on her hand, but by 447 Athens had been in conflict with other Greek states for more than a decade, and in historical terms it is not obvious that at this moment the particular relationship to Persia should be privileged.

The desire to see the Parthenon as a monument to victory over Persia depends upon a particular reading of the sculptures of the metopes and of the reprise of a number of similar themes on the cult statue of Athena Parthenos. On this reading the conflict with the Amazons, in the west metopes, with the centaurs, in the south metopes, with the giants, in the east metopes and the sack of Troy in the north metopes should all be read as analogies for the conflict between Athenians and Persians. That all four sides of the Parthenon showed scenes of conflict is undeniable, but the way in which they were shown, as well as the political situation at Athens when they were sculpted, makes mapping these scenes onto conflict with Persia to celebrate Athenian victory very problematic. It is not simply that the choice seems to have been made to represent the Amazons in normal hoplite costume, rather than as Persian look-alikes, even though the latter option was available. It is also that the scenes of the sack of Troy focus not on glorious victory but on scenes of the Trojans fleeing the city or seeking refuge at a cult image (figs. 2 and 3). Even on the south side, where conflict with centaurs might be taken to be generic, there was a set of metopes in the centre whose subject, though en-

[11] Cf. Beard 2007, 46-47; 125-128.

[12] This claim is worked out in most detail by Castriota 1992.

[13] Cf. Powell 1995; Stadter 1989 *ad locc.*

igmatic, seems to offer no analogies with conflict with Persia. On all sides bar the east, issues of conflict between men and women seem to have bulked large, in a way that they do not in any account of the conflict with Persia. Any claim that what we see on the Parthenon is a rehearsal of victory of Persia ignores the detail of the sculptural programme completely[14].

If the metopes do not engage in particular with the Athenian conflict with Persia, then the motivation for seeing the frieze as the representation of a procession at some particular point in the past is much reduced. In terms of the scenes shown on the frieze, the only visual motivation for taking the representation to be in the past tense is the absence from the representation of certain features which our textual sources indicate were present in the real Panathenaia[15]. But unless one thinks that Athenians approached the frieze with a check-list, it is hard to think that they would have found the absences so anomalous as to undermine their identification of the scene, let alone enough to drive them to identify it as historic. The particular suggestion that the number of figures shown in the procession would lead to an identification of these Athenians with the Athenians who died at Marathon requires a manner of viewing that it is hard to credit[16].

Fig. 2 - 3 – Helen and another woman taking refuge at the statue of Athena when approached by Menelaos and a companion: Parthenon north metopes 24 and 25. Photograph: Hellner. DAI Athens, Neg. Akropolis 2292 and 2308. All rights reserved.

[14] I discuss these issues more fully in Osborne 1994a; Osborne 1994b.
[15] See Boardman 1984.
[16] Boardman 1977.

Cavalcades and religious processions are particular past events, but they are also ritual events whose power comes precisely from their recurrence. Unless there are positive indications that we are dealing with a particular occasion, any representation of a procession will have a certain timelessness, pointing back to past events, forward to future events and reflecting also on current events. To represent a procession, as in the representation of family processions on votive reliefs, is to make ever present the act of worship that the procession constitutes. Although such a representation does not capture a unique occasion, that does not mean that it brings out nothing unique. The enigmatic central scene at the culmination of the processions on the east frieze, whatever we take the precise allusion of that scene to be, was surely unique enough to determine recognition. But the uniqueness upon which Athenian Funeral Orations insist is not a matter of particular unique actions but of unique patterns of life. The Funeral Oration stresses qualities that are not visible as what marks Athens out: 'In short, I say that as a city we are the school of Hellas; while I doubt if the world can produce a man, who where he has only himself to depend upon, is equal to so many emergencies, and graced by so happy a versatility as the Athenian' (Thuc. 2,41,1, tr. Crawley). We inevitably read the Parthenon frieze as descriptive of Athens in particular, descriptive indeed of the admirable festive display at Athens upon which the Funeral Oration also insists, but is admiration enough to turn admiration of Athens into panegyric?

Torelli notes that in the Arch of Trajan at Beneventum there is a historical development of events, leading spatially from the borders of empire to its heart and temporally from the beginnings of Trajan's reign to his apotheosis[17]. If we look for such development of events in the Parthenon frieze we can indeed find one – not here in terms of historic allusions nor the mapping of the world, but in terms of the processions that culminate at the east door. Where the Parthenon frieze overlaps with the discourse of the Funeral Oration is in the treatment in the Oration of Athenian relations with the gods. What the various elements of the procession display is Athenian piety towards Athene. Simply by the context of their display these sculpted representations of Athene's birth and interventions in the world constitute a panegyrical redescription of the goddess's virtues. If this is a panegyric, it is a panegyric of Athene. Or, rather, one element of a panegyric of Athene, since the pediments, with the birth of Athene and her contest with Poseidon for Attica, the metopes, with their gigantomachy involving Athene, sack of Troy in which the statue of Athene is a place of refuge, amazonomachy which is probably set at Athens and the sculptures of the base and shield of the statue of Athene itself further contribute to

[17] Torelli 1997, 167.

a hymn to Athene's virtue. Quintilian (3,7,4) was prepared to recognise as an oratorical subject praise of Jupiter Capitolinus, noting that this proved that one could have panegyrics where no doubt was involved, but we might prefer to think of such praise as essentially constituting not so much a panegyric as a hymn. The context of a temple makes hymns of praise for a god possible, perhaps even inevitable. Scholars who have worried that it does not befit a temple to show a procession of contemporary human worshippers are correct at least to the extent that temple sculptures are no place for praise of the city.

The Athenians did, of course, also display both sculpture and paintings in secular contexts. Beginning with the Tyrannicides and then increasingly from the early fourth century, statues of men to whom the Athenians had reason to be grateful were erected in the Agora. No doubt fulsome praise celebrated the award of such statues, but all that the inscriptions recording honour offer is a routine parade of cardinal virtues[18]. Isokrates' *Evagoras* offers us a panegyric of a man who had indeed been awarded honours at Athens, but that comes no closer to the experience of the Assembly. Nevertheless the formulaic sequence in that speech of discussions of ancestry, followed by childhood and education, charmed life and achievements, and finally virtues, shows something of the importance of the generic framework for the audience appreciation of the man.

Late in his treatment of Evagoras, Isocrates explicitly compares what can be done in words and what in art. Isokrates claims that praise in words is more valuable than praise in statues, since words can advertise to the whole world the virtues which others desire to emulate, whereas statues make known locally only the appearance of the body which others cannot emulate (*Evagoras* 73-75). Isokrates' comments confirm that while the statues of the tyrannicides highlighted their action, fourth-century statues advertised appearance. We do not possess statues erected in the early fourth-century in Athens, but surviving portraits make it clear that artists used clothing and pose to characterise the honorand as soldier, orator, philosopher or tragedian, and otherwise explored the character of the individual only in their treatments of the head.

Honorific statues were essentially pegs upon which the laudation was hung. They identified the individual by profession and by personal appearance, and in doing so they set up some expectations about the sort of person he was, but they said nothing further about the individual, either for praise or blame. They offered description, but not the redescription essential to the discourse of praise. When a set of honorific statues were viewed together comparison between them would yield some sense of individual qualities as well as generic ones, but while the context implied that it was for the way in which he dif-

[18] On the editorial process in decrees see Osborne 1999. On the cardinal virtues celebrated see Whitehead 1993.

fered from others that a particular man was honoured, the narrow focus of this attention meant that even when seen en masse these statues fell well short of anything that could be called panegyric (figs. 4 and 5).

Much the same might be said of the classical gravestone. Most commonly attached to a text still more reticent than the text of a decree, Athenian gravestones were a means by which families advertised to a wider world the deaths of their members. The grave reliefs indicated to that wider world the place that the deceased had characteristically occupied, by presenting them as athlete, soldier, matron, priest or priestess. Rarely do the stones venture a narrative: the individuals whose lives are commemorated are fitted into slots rather than given distinctive individual histories.

Fig. 4 - 5 – Portrait statues of the orators Demosthenes (Courtesy Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek 436a) and Aeschines (Schwanke, Neg. D-DAI-Rom 1985.0486); although carved two generations apart these statues draw attention by comparison to the different characters of the two orators.

When a fuller narrative can be constructed, as with the famous monument of Dexileos (fig. 6), whose inscription uniquely tells us about the date of his birth as well as the circumstances of his death, it nevertheless remains the case that these details contribute to pathos rather than to personal praise. The visual presentation of the mounted warrior triumphing over a naked fallen figure magnifies the pathos: we see Dexileos at the same time in the triumphing cavalryman and in the fallen soldier, and the sympathy of the young cavalryman's downcast gaze turns out to be an invitation to turn a downcast gaze of sympathy at the record of Dexileos' own death. The circumstances of Dexileos' death are here turned into the big event of his life – almost certainly for bigger political purposes[19]. The importance of emphasising his death precludes his monument celebrating his life. Here is a case where we do have emphasis on the unique circumstances, but used not to create the superlative picture of the deceased that praising him would require.

Fig. 6 – Grave relief of Dexileos. Courtesy of Hirmer Fotoarchiv, Munich.

[19] Rhodes - Osborne 2003, no. 5; cf. also Osborne 2010a.

On doing without an art of praise

We look in vain, I suggest, for panegyric in Greek art. And for good reason. Panegyric depends on superlative statements and superlative statements can only be established by apt comparisons. Such comparisons themselves require a framework of expectations to be established, and this happens most readily where there is a known and given pattern of achievements. The Roman triumph, and more generally the life of the Roman *imperator*, offered just such a circumstance. Within the Greek city, however, lives took all manner of forms, and such expectations as there were so broadly conceived as to preclude effective comparison. This is not an accident. Even outside the narrow range of democratic cities, the Greek city constructed itself as a city of peers. Few indeed were the occasions for singular praise of an individual; not by chance that our surviving prose laudations are for such oddities as a Spartan king and a Cypriot ruler. It was not the form of the statues of Demetrios Poliorketes that displayed Athenian flattery of him but their material and number. But it was flattery that those statues displayed, precisely because they revealed the honouring of a man without revealing that man as worthy of praise.

Athenian writers and orators did celebrate the whole history of a city, and sculptors might have done had there been occasion to do so. But the resources of the Greek city were primarily devoted to the gods, and such glorification of the polity as there was through the glorification of the gods of the polity. Individual monuments celebrated particular great achievements, especially in battle, but, even such celebrations were tempered, as is emphasised by the story of the Athenians granting permission to Kimon to celebrate his victory at Eion with a monument only on the proviso that that monument carried no names and took the form of three herms. The visual form of that monument served to attract attention, and no one reading the accompanying texts could doubt that a peerless achievement was being celebrated, but it is the achievement that is flagged, not the contribution of those who achieved it, whether those responsible are conceived of narrowly as a particular set of soldiers or more generally as 'the Athenians'.

Encomia depend upon there being a gap in power between those offering the encomium and those receiving it. The powerful will praise a fly more readily than praise their peers. The powerless negotiate their position by praise of the powerful. But encomia and panegyrics alike depend upon a firm set of expectations around and against which those making the praise, and those to whom the praise is advertised, may understand that the great acts described are actually being redescribed as virtuous. Greek art developed various generic expectations, but only exceptionally did it develop any context within which painters or sculptors could redescribe individuals or groups in what

would be recognised as superlative terms. The political necessity for the establishment of permanent praise came only with the enduring imbalances of power to be found in the Roman empire.

Bibliography

BARRINGER, J. - HURWIT, J. (edd.) 2005, *Periklean Athens and its Legacy: Problems and Perspectives*, Austin.

BEARD, M. 2007, *The Roman Triumph*, Cambridge, MA.

BERGER, E. (ed.) 1984, *Parthenon-Kongress. Basel, 4.-8. April 1982. Referate und Berichte*, Mainz.

BOARDMAN, J. 1977, *The Parthenon Frieze – Another View*, in HOCKMANN - KRUG 1977, 39-49.

BOARDMAN, J. 1984, *The Parthenon Frieze*, in BERGER 1984, 210-215.

BUITRON-OLIVER, D. (ed.) 1997, *The Interpretation of Architectural Sculpture in Greece and Rome,* Washington, DC.

CASTRIOTA, D. 1992, *Myth, Ethos and Actuality: Official Art in Fifth-Century Athens*, Madison, WI.

COULSON, W.D.E - PALAGIA, O. - SHEAR, T.L. - SHAPIRO, H.A. - FROST, F.J. (edd.) 1994, *The Archaeology of Athens and Attica under the Democracy*, Oxford.

GOLDHILL, S. - OSBORNE, R. (edd.) 1994, *Art and Text in Ancient Greek Culture*, Cambridge.

GOLDHILL, S. - OSBORNE, R. (edd.) 1999, *Performance Culture and Athenian Democracy*, Cambridge.

HOCKMANN, U. - KRUG, A. (edd.) 1977, *Festschrift für Frank Brommer*, Mainz.

JENKINS, I. 2005, *The Parthenon Frieze and Perikles' Cavalry of a Thousand*, in BARRINGER - HURWIT 2005, 147-161.

LEVENE, D.S. 1997, *God and Man in the Classical Latin Panegyric*, "PCPhS" 43, 66-103.

MANSFIELD, E.C. 2007, *Too Beautiful to Picture: Zeuxis, Myth, and Mimesis*, Minneapolis, MN.

OSBORNE, R. 1994a, *Framing the Centaur*, in GOLDHILL - OSBORNE 1994, 52-84.

OSBORNE, R. 1994b, *Democracy and Imperialism in the Panathenaic Procession: The Parthenon Frieze in its Context*, in COULSON - PALAGIA - SHEAR - SHAPIRO - FROST 1994, 143-150 (reprinted with an endnote in OSBORNE 2010a, 306-322).

OSBORNE, R. 1999, *Inscribing Performance*, in GOLDHILL - OSBORNE 1999, 341-358 (reprinted in OSBORNE 2010a, 63-81).

OSBORNE, R. 2010a, *Athens and Athenian Democracy*, Cambridge.

OSBORNE, R. 2010b, *Negotiating Citizen Roles in Attic Funerary Sculpture: Ideology and Event*, in PRITCHARD 2010, 245-265.

POLLITT, J.J. 1997, *The Meaning of the Parthenon Frieze*, in BUITRON-OLIVER 1997, 51-65.

POWELL, A. 1995, *Athens' Pretty Face: Anti-feminine Rhetoric and Fifth-century Controversy over the Parthenon*, in A. POWELL (ed.), *The Greek World*, London, 245-270.

PRITCHARD, D. (ed.) 2010, *War, Democracy and Culture in Classical Athens*, Cambridge.

RHODES, P.J. - OSBORNE, R. 2003, *Greek Historical Inscriptions from the End of the Peloponnesian War to the Death of Alexander*, Oxford.

STADTER, P.A. 1989, *A Commentary on Plutarch's* Pericles, Chapel Hill.

TORELLI, M. 1997, "Ex his casta, ex his tribus replebuntur"*: The Marble Panegyric on the Arch of Trajan at Beneventum*, in BUITRON-OLIVER 1997, 144-177.

WHITEHEAD, D. 1993, *Cardinal Virtues: The Language of Public Approbation in Democratic Athens*, "C&M" 44, 37-75.

WREDE, H. 2008, *Das Lob der Demokratie am Parthenonfries*, Mainz.