

Ekphrasis Reshaped

A Different Poetics of Ekphrasis in Hellenistic Poetry, or: A Metapoetics of Aesthetics

Abstract

This chapter is about ekphrastic poetry and its poetology in Hellenistic times, which, according to my thesis, reflects a new aesthetic turn in poetry. The relevant sources are ekphrastic epigrams, which thematize works of art and artifacts. These poetic texts aim to achieve specific aesthetic effects and internal reflections in the perceiving subject. My thesis is that practices can be identified in epigrams that result from philosophical discourses on αἴσθησις / *aisthesis* (sensory perception) and on φαντασία / *phantasia* (imagination). As shown in the first case study, the epigrams about Myron's cow reflect a subject of everyday life that is not beautiful in itself but whose naturalistic representation is considered perfect in art. The poems employ particular practices of (re-)presentation while intentionally breaking the aesthetic illusion. In the second case study, Meleager's ekphrastic epigrams on Praxiteles's statue of Eros, an artfully enacted interaction between poet, artist, and subject becomes apparent. Processing Platonic as well as Stoic ideas, the subjective imagination takes center stage, relying on Eros as a demiurgic, inspiring, and formative force. The old rivalry between poetry and visual art is thus stimulated anew by a contemporary aesthetic discourse, which appears to be inspired by contemporary philosophical concepts.

Keywords

Apate, Ekphrasis, Epigram, Illusion, Phantasia, Poetology, Pseudos

1. Introduction: From Figures of Aesthetic Reflection to Practices

This chapter deals with ekphrastic poetry from the Hellenistic period and its metapoetics, which from this period onwards reflects aesthetic phenomena and criteria.¹ The relevant sources for this project are ekphrastic texts – mainly epigrams – dedicated to works of art and artifacts (e.g., statues, paintings, buildings, artifacts of everyday culture, votive offerings, carpets, funerary monuments). These poetic texts, however,

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aim less at a detailed description or reproduction of the objects than at special aesthetic effects and reflections in the perceiving subject, such as illusion, recognition, attention, amazement, alienation, evaluation, or the establishment of criteria for judgement. These processes of aesthetic reflection represent a ‘different’ aesthetics in the sense of the Tübingen Collaborative Research Center (CRC) 1391 by *implicitly* dealing with concepts, techniques, and modes of the aesthetic (visual, acoustic, haptic, etc.). This implicit ekphrastic poetics concerns on the one hand aspects of production (e.g., artist, materials, stylistic criteria, etc.) and on the other aspects of context and pragmatics. In this regard, philosophical discourses on aesthetics and imagination as well as the fabrication of artifacts, the agency of things, and religious or political contexts and practices are particularly relevant. We can identify a nascent rivalry between poetry and fine arts (*paragone*) motivated by a new aesthetics and new techniques developed in the field of the fine arts and also by the new literary and textual culture of the Hellenistic epigram. Further insights on Hellenistic ekphrastic practices can be gained from contemporary philosophical discourses on αἴσθησις / *aisthesis* (i.e., sensual perception in a broad sense) and φαντασία / *phantasia* (imagination), whose interplay can be observed in the ekphrastic poems. It is thus useful to bear in mind the potential relation between concepts, terminology, and figures of thought – especially metapoetic reflections –, in Hellenistic ekphrastic texts and similar discourses, which we know from Plato and Aristotle, from the Stoa, the Epicureans, and from the Hellenistic (Skeptical) period of the Academy.

The guiding questions of project C1 of CRC 1391, “A Different Poetics of Ekphrasis in Hellenistic Poetry” are: to what extent was the rivalry (*paragone*) between ekphrastic poetry and the fine arts in the Hellenistic period conditioned by current discourses on aesthetics, and how did this affect poetic practices and metapoetic codes? Can we identify interactions between the aesthetic self-reflection of the poetic texts and the philosophical conception of sensual perception? What conclusions can be drawn from this for our understanding of Hellenistic aesthetics in general?

My working hypothesis is that especially in the Hellenistic period, i.e., since the end of the 4th century BCE, a new, ‘different’ poetics of ekphrasis emerges that reflects on current philosophical discourses on aesthetics, sensual perception, and emotional and mental realization and imagination (i.e., the heterological dimension). For this chapter, which summarizes our preliminary results, the focus is mainly on the poetic practices, on the (meta-)poetics of illusion, and the poetic display of aesthetic criteria (i.e., the autological dimension), which all appear frequently in Hellenistic ekphrastic poems. Against the background of a postulated specifically Hellenistic ‘culture of viewing’² figures of aesthetic reflection of various kinds (e.g., a viewing expert, a naive layman; being startled by the life-like quality of an artifact; the illusion of seeing or hearing; the

2 For the discussion on the ‘discourse of viewing,’ see Goldhill 1994; Goldhill 2007; Zanker 2004.

imagination's combinative ability) are to be interpreted and evaluated within various contexts (e.g., literary, textual, social, religious, political, spatial).

2. The State of Research on the Concept of Ekphrasis

Let us first take a brief look at the current state of research on ekphrasis in the field of Classics. Since the 1990s – and especially since the 2000s – ekphrasis has been re-evaluated as a rhetorical and aesthetic phenomenon.³ Central to this approach was the novel analysis of aesthetic and poetic ways of seeing as an interaction between viewer and material artifact or between reader and text. In this context, the Hellenistic ekphrastic epigram attracted new attention as a literary genre, especially in the early 2000s, significantly stimulated by the discovery of the so-called “Milan” Posidippus papyrus.⁴ At the same time, the entire body of Hellenistic poetry (roughly 300 BCE–100 CE) was increasingly perceived as the ‘literary modernity’ of antiquity, due to its complex reflection on changes in media, its new modes of composition, and experimental forms.⁵ In the course of the so-called pictorial turn and the associated rise of visual studies as an independent field of research,⁶ the literary ekphrastic discourses of Greco-Roman antiquity have been reassessed, with particular focus on Hellenistic poetry.⁷

Against this background, it is immediately apparent that the poetological preconditions for ekphrasis are different from those previously postulated. For ekphrastic descriptions are not only – or even primarily – an exact description of objects (as in the later *progymnasmata*, for example), but rather a meta-reflection that focuses not on the object under discussion but on the viewing subjects and their perception of an object or a work of art.⁸ As a result, the long-established definition of ekphrasis as a (purely objective) description of art objects,⁹ must be considered obsolete, especially with regard to Hellenistic texts. Similarly, earlier attempts to use ekphrastic texts to gain new insights into ancient art history or the lost ancient works thematized in such texts – which perhaps never existed – must now be regarded as problematic and methodologically too naïve.¹⁰

3 E.g., Heffernan 1993; Goldhill 1994; 2007; Webb 1999; Webb 2009; Elsner 2002a.

4 See Gutzwiller 2002; Zanker 2003; Zanker 2004; Acosta-Hughes/Kosmetatou/Baumbach 2004; Squire 2013b.

5 See, e.g., Männlein-Robert 2007b; Tueller 2008; Luz 2010; Kwapisz 2013.

6 Mitchell 1994.

7 Manakidou 1993; Goldhill/Osborne 1994; Lévy/Pernot 1997; Gutzwiller 2002; Meyer 2005; Prioux 2007; 2008; Otto 2009; Bartsch/Elsner 2007; Marino/Stavru 2013; Squire 2016; Kampakoglou/Novokhatko 2018.

8 Goldhill 1994.

9 Cf. Spitzer 1955.

10 On this see above all Friedländer 1912; Pollitt 1974; Laird 1993; Kansteiner et al.: Der Neue Overbeck.

The famous dictum of the Greek poet Simonides that “painting is a silent poetry, poetry is speaking painting” (transmitted by Plutarch in *De gloria Atheniensium* 346F) anticipates the tension between visual art and poetry that will play such a role in later ekphrastic texts. However, it seems that poetic reflection on this tension, and above all the poetic presentation of this *paragone* between the two arts, fully emerges only in Hellenistic literature.¹¹ As Ruth Webb shows, especially with regard to the Hellenistic texts, ekphrasis is not strictly speaking a “verbal translation of a visual representation,”¹² but rather the consciously constructed subjective effect produced by a description.¹³ Central to this effect is the gaze of the observer, or the “hermeneutics of reading / viewing,” activated by description¹⁴ and not the precise descriptive reproduction of the characteristics of an object. This reading or viewing is therefore never objective or neutral, but always subjective and emotional; in this sense, ekphrasis is only effective if it evokes emotions in the reader or viewer that make the described object appear lifelike and allow it to have an impact that causes reflection.¹⁵ This impact relies on its transmedial properties and its potential to combine and reflect on auditory, written, and visual forms of expression.¹⁶ Such ekphrastic qualities create the impression of liveliness and vividness in the reader or viewer.

The specific, complex ekphrastic phenomenon only briefly sketched here is particularly evident in Hellenistic epigrams that focus on the viewer of an object or the act of viewing it from an aesthetic perspective.¹⁷ This situation often arises from an inner-poetic interaction such as a dialogue between a (sometimes only imaginary) observing subject and a perceived, observed object.¹⁸ Epigrams of this kind are often found in anthologies (such as the famous *Anthologia Graeca*), where they are arranged in series according to specific categories and aesthetic reading practices (a particularly well-studied example is the “Milan” Posidippus papyrus).¹⁹ Here, too, the dramatization of the interpretive vision of an observer or observers comes into focus.

Ekphrasis is not primarily about the perceived object but rather about a primarily visual and, in many cases, also intellectual reflection of the observing subject, who becomes involved in the description itself and thus reflects on herself as an observer by

11 See, e.g., Zanker 1981; Carson 1992; Manieri 1998; Franz 1999; Sprigath 2004; Männlein-Robert 2007b; Barkan 2013.

12 E.g., Heffernan 1993; Mitchell 1994.

13 Webb 1999; 2009.

14 Fowler 1991; Elsner 2002b; Goldhill 2007; Squire 2015.

15 Heffernan 1993; Webb 1997; Webb 2016.

16 Boeder 1996; Elsner 2002b; Männlein-Robert 2007a; Männlein-Robert 2007b; Brassat / Squire 2017.

17 Goldhill 1994; 2007; Lauxtermann 1998; Gutzwiller 1998b; Webb 1999; Gutzwiller 2002; Zanker 2003; Prioux 2008; Tueller 2008.

18 Goldhill 1994; Prioux 2007; cf. Männlein-Robert 2007a.

19 Petrović 2005; Zanker 2003; Elsner 2014.

means of the perception and momentary description of the object.²⁰ This characteristic stands out particularly clearly in Hellenistic figure poems, the so-called *technopaignia*, where the textual body of the poem itself constitutes a visual form.²¹ Such *morphogrammata* are characterized by the fact that the lines of the poem visually depict the shape of an object for the reader, who thus at the same time becomes the observer. Moreover, the dynamic relationship between the poetic text and the visual image it forms is almost always confirmed metapoetically or meta-ekphrastically by aesthetic reflections and correspondingly coded terms, images, and *topoi*. The reader becomes the observer, and vice versa. The poem in turn becomes an image, and the image is a poetic text (a sort of ‘body’). In short, *technopaignia* play with the complex interaction between object and recipient on all aesthetic levels and reflect this metapoetically.²² They are to be seen as representative examples of Hellenistic poetics. But as we will see, there are many Hellenistic epigrams that reflect this same metapoetic ekphrastic discourse more implicitly. Moreover, the hermeneutics of viewing proves to be complex in terms of gender and culture, especially in Hellenistic texts in which even seeing from the perspective of a woman or an ethnic – usually non-Greek – minority is addressed. In such cases, alternative strategies for the production of ἐνάργεια (*energeia* / perspicuity) are developed, in which seeing subjects constitute themselves in opposition to a male or Greek perspective (for example, the female art spectators in Theocritus’s *Idyll* 15).²³

With regard to current research on ekphrasis in the broadest sense, there is still no collection of all relevant literary and inscribed poetic ekphrastic texts from the Hellenistic period to the early imperial period (1st century CE). Furthermore, a literary study based on such a text corpus is a considerable desideratum. Such a study could record and analyze contemporary philosophical considerations, theories, and concepts concerning all conceivable acts and modes of sensual perception (αἴσθησις), as well as the aesthetic-intellectual phenomenon of imagination or fantasy (φαντασία) in a readily available textual inventory, and compare and interpret them with regard to the ekphrastic textual testimonies (and vice versa). Our project is dedicated to this undertaking. Since Plato declared material artifacts to be inferior to non-material, transcendent forms in terms of ontological value and also thought traditional poetry spread an impression of illusion that was dangerous for the soul and its capacity for correct judgment, an important focus will be on Aristotle’s concept of *phantasia* and its relation to ἐνάργεια / *energeia*, which he was the first to treat in greater detail and which proved

20 Elsner 2002b; Gutzwiller 2002; Squire 2010; Squire 2013a.

21 Ernst 1991; Luz 2010; Squire 2013b; Kwapisz 2013; Männlein-Robert 2017b.

22 Squire 2013b.

23 Barnard 1991; Skinner 2001; Goldhill 2007.

very influential in the Hellenistic period.²⁴ The use of the term *phantasia* in Hellenistic philosophy shows that in Epicureanism and the Stoa, all reflections on nature or the outside world are postulated to be based on the evidence of perception.²⁵ In this context, *phantasia* is regarded as a necessary link between sensory perception (*aisthesis*) and theoretical knowledge. This is proven not only by the fact that we can experience sensory illusions but also that representations of imperceptible things can be understood as real, verifiable, and ultimately true.²⁶

The goal of this chapter is to show through selected examples how Hellenistic ekphrastic epigrams often reflect philosophical aspects of *aesthesis* and *phantasia*. Again and again, we will also see evidence of a debate with Epicurean positions. In this context, the late Hellenistic philosopher-poets Philodemus and Lucretius are particularly relevant.²⁷ In their texts, the Epicurean theory of *aisthesis* and, above all, visualization is explicitly discussed and negotiated vis-à-vis poetry and its conditions. Within the framework of this project, our aim is to produce a study that will collate the Hellenistic poetological and philosophical reflections on *aisthesis*, *energeia*, and *phantasia* conceptually and culturally, with an immanent Epicurean discourse on ekphrasis. As a first step, this chapter will present some basic observations in order to highlight the modes of interrelation between poetry and art in Hellenistic epigrams in two representative case studies.

3. Cultural and Literary Background of the Hellenistic Ekphrastic Epigram

Let me first present a brief sketch of the cultural and literary background of these epigrams. In the period of Hellenism, beginning in the early 3rd century BCE, in flourishing new cultural metropoleis such as Pergamon and Alexandria, important initiatives were launched to stimulate the contemporary literary scene. Especially in Alexandria, we identify for the first time in ancient Greek culture a systematic process of collecting texts, textualization, and literary criticism. All known and available epic and lyric poems, dramatic compositions, and prose texts of diverse genres were drawn into this process. All these poetic and prose compositions, which until then had mostly circu-

24 Aristot. *Rh.* 1411b22–1412a3; see Watson 1988; Watson 1994; Schofield 1992; Busche 2003; Calboli Montefusco 2005; Papachristou 2013; Sheppard 2014.

25 Long 1971; Zanker 1981; Asmis 1999.

26 See especially on Epicureism: Lee 1978; DeLacy 1989; Scott 1989; Everson 1990; Asmis 1999; on Stoa: Long 1971; Sandbach 1971; Bartsch 2007; Brancacci 2015.

27 For Philodemus: Zanker 1981; Greenberg 1990; Obbink 1995; Sider 1997; Janko / Mangoni: Philodemus; for Lucretius: Pope 1949; Townend 1965; West 1969; Schrijvers 2007.

lated only in oral or tentatively written form and together constitute the corpus of the famous library in Alexandria, became consistent texts and thus literature in a real sense. Against this background of comprehensive textualization, the epigrammatic genre acquires a special role: while other poetic genres are becoming literary or even ‘book-ish’,²⁸ the ἐπι-γράμμα (*epi-gramma* / in-scription), as its etymology makes clear, had been fixed in written form all along. During many centuries, it is to be found in close proximity or even as part of a σῆμα (*sema*), a tomb, but also a visible sign. This could be a grave, a grave stele, or an ἀνάθημα (*anathema*), i.e., a dedication or an artifact on which the epigrammatic text was fixed. There it provides information on basic details of the object, like the founder or benefactor, the commissioner, the artist, the occasion, a description, and can even reflect the performance of a ritual.²⁹ In the course of the aforementioned textualization of poems, originally inscribed epigrams were transcribed onto papyrus rolls, and collections of epigrams were gathered into books, creating the first anthologies.³⁰ One special feature of Hellenistic epigrams in later anthologies is their arrangement in series devoted to the same artwork or the same subject of artistic interest.³¹ Their penchant for variations on a theme in accord with the rhetorical principles of *variatio* and *aemulatio* gives these texts a strong intertextual dimension. The very fact that Hellenistic epigrams became pure texts in a book led to their collection into rhetorically highly stylized and thoughtfully composed sequences or series. Even in the case of the epigrams on works of art, the original close relation between the material artifact and text is dissolved – the epigrammatic text in itself now must imaginatively evoke an artifact or picture: the direct viewing of an object is now replaced by the reading of a text. On the other hand, readers are required to reconstruct an often complex context with only the help of carefully placed hints and allusions. They are invited to take part in the so-called *Ergänzungsspiel*³² of companion pieces.³³ At this time, contemporary poets undertake the composition of purely literary epigrams, based on the old models and examples, but also try out new forms and consider new ways of speaking about, perceiving, and observing artifacts. My thesis is that beginning in the 3rd century BCE, there is clear evidence for a change or shift in the relation between poetry and the visual arts as poets start to regard themselves and their poems and poetic skills as superior to visual artists. The Hellenistic epigrammatists were grappling with the question of the relationship between poetry and plastic art. This is true of the Hellenistic ekphrastic

28 Pfeiffer 1968, pp. 102–104; Bing 1988, pp. 10–48.

29 The aspect of ritual and performance is emphasized by Day 2007.

30 For further details and criteria of composition and arrangements, see esp. Gutzwiller 1998b, and for the anthology series, see Squire 2010; Krevans 2007.

31 See Cameron 1993; Gutzwiller 1998b; Lauxtermann 1998.

32 Bing 1995.

33 Kirstein 2002.

epigrams, on which I would like to focus now, namely the epigrams about the bronze cow of Myron and Meleager of Gadara's epigrams on Eros and Praxiteles.

4. First Case Study: Epigrams on Myron's Bronze Sculpture of a Cow

First, I would like to focus on the famous bronze sculpture of a cow by the classical sculptor Myron (5th century BCE).³⁴ The original has not survived, but archaeologists have discovered not only depictions on coins,³⁵ but also full sculptural reproductions, especially from the later imperial period. A fountain figure that can be seen today in the Vatican Museums and was already declared by Visconti to be a copy of the Myronian cow and another fountain figure from Herculaneum or Pompeii were identified by Babelon and others as copies of Myron's famous cow – of course it should be mentioned that archaeologists consider these representations of inferior artistic quality.³⁶ This artifact is mainly known because of two famous sequences of altogether 36 epigrams in book 9 of the *Anthologia Palatina*, where this work of art and its artist are variously celebrated, and also because of Ausonius's *Epigrammata Bobiensia* 10–13 and another epigram on the cow, which appears in the new Posidippus papyrus (P.Mil.Vogl.VIII 309.66 Austin/Bastianini). I would like to focus here on the first sequence of epigrams in the *Anthologia Palatina*, almost all of which come from the Hellenistic period (AP 9.713–737), since they are the earliest written literary documents we have about that work of art.³⁷

4.1. Why Myron's Bronze Sculpture of a Cow?

Why did Hellenistic poets who lived more than 150 years after Myron write so many epigrammatic variations on such an old sculpture, and why did they concentrate on Myron and not, for instance, on the famous Athenian artist Phidias? It is striking how fashionable it was and how often the Hellenistic writers of epigrams were drawn to a work by an artist who lived more than 150 years earlier.³⁸ In fact, Myron is the visual artist most frequently mentioned in the *Anthologia Palatina*.³⁹ There is no literary or archaeological evidence for a reference to or discussion of Myron's cow before these epigrams, which

34 This section is a highly condensed version of chapter IV (Mimesis und Poetik zwischen Aisthesis und Ästhetik / IV.1. Die hellenistischen ekphrastischen Epigramme über Myrons Kuh) of Männlein-Robert 2007b, pp. 83–103; cf. Männlein-Robert 2007a, esp. pp. 263–269 (sequences of ekphrastic epigrams).

35 Schwarz 1971, pp. 26f.

36 Corso 1994, p. 71–77.

37 For a list with attributions of the epigrams, see Squire 2010, pp. 625f.

38 See also Speyer 1975.

39 So according to Schwarz 1971, pp. 14–27.

begin in the 3rd century BCE. However, their interest in the sculptor proves to have a purpose, especially when one considers the object in its original context: Myron's cow was placed (as a dedication, an *anathema*) on the Acropolis of Athens, i.e., in a sacred area.⁴⁰ It represented a young sacrificial animal that, according to aristocratic, conservative usage, embodied wealth, fertility, and growth. The subject and its placement thus reveal a deliberately old-fashioned, conservative tendency, even at the time of the creation of this dedication, because it was placed next to the altar of the goddess Athena in the Acropolis and, at the same time, was set in an as it were idyllic context, next to the statue of Eirene and other allegorical symbols of peace and prosperity.⁴¹ This indicates that Myron's cow was meant to be part of a coherent ensemble. Because of this idyllic context, archaeologists also assume a temporal relation between the placement and consecration of the cow and the peace of Nikias (421–415 BCE). The consecration of the cow is thus to be seen against a concrete political-religious background (cf. also the epigram of Theodoridas *AP* 9.743 on a consecration gift consisting of 12 bronze cows after a victory of the Thessalians over the Illyrians).⁴² Archeologists have determined that the area where Myron's cow was set up served as an artistic counterbalance to Phidias, who created the most famous Parthenon sculptures, the Athena Parthenos and the Athena Promachos. Phidias's more traditional sculptures in their urban context stood opposite Myron's rural artifact, which signaled a completely different political or cultural dimension.⁴³

Although they had the same teacher, Hageladas, in the Hellenistic period, Phidias and Myron came to represent very different concepts of art.⁴⁴ The very fact that the Hellenistic epigrammatists would concentrate on Myron and his statue of a cow, but not on the Acropolis artifacts of Phidias, may be because for them, Myron represents the ideal of a modern artist and his cow the ideal modern work of art, which they find highly attractive in terms of characteristic Hellenistic aesthetics: no more statues of gods larger than life, but everyday objects; no longer materials like gold and ivory, but bronze; no longer static and rigid deities, but a lifelike, vivid animal, a cow. Myron's skill in imitating or simulating a real animal was a proficiency hitherto ascribed only to divine or mythic artists like Daedalus, Hephaestus, or Prometheus. In Myron's case, we can go so far as to confirm a mythologization or deification of the human artist, as well as increased self-confidence of the artist himself.⁴⁵ Moreover, the very fact that an

40 See Overbeck: *Antike Schriftquellen*, no. 550–591; for the history of tradition and the work of art itself, see in detail Corso 1994, esp. pp. 56, 60f.; on the fate of this bronze, see the commentary by Bastianini/Gallazzi 2001, p. 192; see also Squire 2010, pp. 594–597.

41 Corso 1994.

42 See more detailed Seelbach 1964, pp. 108–113.

43 In greater details, see Männlein-Robert 2007b, pp. 85–87.

44 For the metapoetic value of Phidias, see Männlein-Robert 2003.

45 For anecdotes on artists enabled to create lifelike artifacts, see Kris/Kurz 1979.

artifact representing a cow is celebrated obviously reflects the contemporary Hellenistic fondness for bucolic subjects that also appears in the literature of the time.

4.2. Aesthetics and Poetics: Illusion and Deceit

What follows is an attempt to show that there is a subtextual aesthetic and poetic discourse in many of the ekphrastic epigrams. For that, however, we must broaden the frame of our study: If we take a closer look at the Hellenistic epigrams, we can see that the statue of Myron's cow is nowhere described in detail; what is described is usually the skillful power of the artist and the effect of illusion that his work of art produces in viewers.⁴⁶ Thus in these texts, the work of art serves mainly as a stimulus to reflect on how one ought to view, consider, and judge the plastic arts. Above all, we find reflection on aesthetics in the literal sense of the word (αἰσθησις / *aisthesis*). Moreover, the spontaneous sensory perception of an observer frequently proves to be wrong, an illusion. Myron's bronze cow is thus a favorite vehicle for contemporary discussion of illusion and illusory effects. This is evident from the striking use of terms like ψεύδος / *pseudos* (lie) and ἀπάτη / *apate* (deceit, fraud). On the other hand, the point of view and the style with which illusion is presented in the epigrams seem to go back to a well-known poetological discussion,⁴⁷ which is now reflected in a work of the plastic arts and thereby discussed and modified in a particular Hellenistic manner. In what follows, we will take a closer look at the phenomenon that I call the *semantics of illusion*.

Since archaic times, poets were supposed to tell the truth and to be teachers of human and divine things because of their close relationship to the Muses. During the period of oral poetry, the poet was to be taken as a custodian of collective memory, yet Hesiod already points out that poets can tell lies as well.⁴⁸ As texts were increasingly written down and literary prose developed, poetry could set aside the obligation to be trustworthy and truthful. From the time of Aristotle, poetry (and for the first time fiction) gained a freedom of its own and was allowed to be artificial in content as well as form. Of course, in archaic poetry, the supposed truth of the poet appears alongside various comments on the ability of poets to lie and deceive, for instance in Hesiod, Solon, Empedocles, Parmenides, Gorgias, and Simonides.⁴⁹ The conundrum exists from

46 See Fuà 1973.

47 More detailed in Männlein-Robert 2007b, pp. 87–93.

48 Hes. *Th.* 22–35, esp. 27f.: ψεύδεα πολλά (many lies); see Grethlein 2021, p. 21.

49 For Hesiod, see note above; Solon fr. 25 Gent.-Pr. = fr. 29 West: πολλά ψεύδονται ἄιοιδοί (many things the poets lie) [cited in Arist. *Metaph.* 983a3]. See as well Empedocles fr. B 17.26, 23.9 DK; Parmenides fr. B 8.52 DK describes his word order as ἀπατηλόν (deceitful), see Garzya 1987, p. 257; cf. Simonides in Plu. *Aud. poet.* 1.15D (= T92 Poltera): ἀπατᾶν (deceit); Rösler 1980; Garzya 1987, p. 246; Puelma 1989; Molyneux 1992, pp. 133, 144 no. 113; Feeney 1993; see also Squire 2010, pp. 600–608, and more recently, Grethlein 2021.

the beginning: it is also the poet's job to lie. In such poetry, at least until Gorgias (last quarter of the 5th century BCE), one cannot immediately decide whether poetic deception is intentional or not. But it is a well-known sophistic principle that poets are able to imitate anything without restriction, and also that poetry can create the same illusion as rhetoric.⁵⁰ Plato's response is well-known: his criticism of poets and poetry in *Republic* X. He uses Socrates to critique the widely accepted absurdity that a poet, like a painter, is able to imitate anything.⁵¹ What Plato actually is doing here is to argue against the sophist Alcidas, who had described Homer's *Odyssey* as a mirror reflecting human life. It is that very point which Plato wants to ridicule in his famous mirror comparison – that is, a painter can most easily paint everything in the world by running around with a mirror in his hands.⁵² Producing works of art in this way means producing things of inferior value in terms of Plato's ontological and ethical system. Such a work of art – let's say a tree – is the imitation of an imitation (the material tree we can see), which is the imitation of the general and true (immaterial) idea of a tree itself. But what we can see even in Plato's harsh attacks on both poetry and painting is the underlying fact that poetry, like painting, was obviously claiming to be universal and have no restrictions on its themes and contents. Plato defines his own position against contemporary sophistic opinions, especially in terms of *apate*, for instance, against Gorgias of Leontinoi, who regards *apate* as an artfully created illusion, as seen in tragedy.⁵³ What Aristotle actually does in his *Poetics* is to refer to the old discourse we see in Gorgias. *Mimesis* is not, as it is for Plato, standing at a distance from the truth, but standing for a sort of truth in its own right, for fiction and fictionality in broader terms. Since Gorgias, deceit or illusion are positive terms. In his opinion, the best tragedian is the one who deceives best. Also, the reader (audience) must have the ability, and willingness, to be deceived. The famous dictum of Simonides states that “the Thessalians are too stupid to be deceived” (transmitted by Plu. *Aud. poet.* 1.15D);⁵⁴ here, deception appears to be the declared task of the poet, and allowing oneself to be deceived is a crucial ability of the audience. Thus the aesthetic criterion of *willingly accepted illusion* – which is so important for the Hellenistic epigrams about Myron's statue, to which we can now return – can be traced back at least to Aristotle. After having seen what *apate*⁵⁵ and *pseudos* meant in

50 ‘Lying’ as the poet's task is still found, e.g., in Call. *Jov.* 65, see Hose 1996, p. 265, see also Call. *epigr.* 13.4 Pf.

51 Halliwell 2000.

52 Pl. *R.* X 596d8–e2; see Männlein-Robert 2002, pp. 14–16.

53 See Gorgias B 23 DK (= Plu. *de glor. Ath.* 5.348C), in detail see Garzya 1987, pp. 245 f. and Grethlein 2021, pp. 25 f., 29–31, 34–39, 45 f., 49 f. and *passim*.

54 Cf. Grethlein 2021, pp. 11, 33 and 142.

55 See Männlein-Robert 2007a, p. 266; Männlein-Robert 2007b, pp. 87–89.

earlier criticism of poetry,⁵⁶ let us concentrate on *pseudos* and consider what it means in the Hellenistic epigrams.

In the epigrams on Myron's cow, 'lie' always means that the statue is confounded with a real or living cow; that viewers, be they human or animal, are deceived, e.g., AP 9.716,⁵⁷ 719, 734, 737 (cf. 739 and 741). In fact, it is an error of the viewer that illuminates the discrepancy between immediate sensory perception and its intellectual reflection, and this error is deliberately caused by the artist himself, so that it is Myron himself who deliberately deceives or it is his art and artistic skill which are described as a lie or fraud; it is in any case an intended and objective fraud. Again, it is the old and well-known theme of the lying poets; the artist can be seen as analogous to the poet. What an artist like Myron does is to lie, for in his perfect works of art, the boundary between nature and art is hardly perceptible. The relation between model and imitation is no longer clear. So *pseudos* means that the artifact 'cow' cannot be distinguished from a real cow at all. After all, art should be seen as almost identical to its natural model.⁵⁸ Above all, we have to realize that in these epigrams, *pseudos* no longer refers to myth and the fantastic, but to completely different, even contrary contents: namely to a secular object of the everyday world. The old discussion about model and imitation is shifted now to things and objects of reality and the sensuous world. It is likely because of his realistic subject that Myron – and not Phidias – is the epigram writers' preferred artist. Besides, the ability to counterfeit reality is exactly the ability of a mythical artist like Hephaestus, Daedalus, and Prometheus.⁵⁹ It is the same with Myron, who we see becoming a mythic figure thanks to these epigrams.

To summarize, if we look at the striking vocabulary of these texts, we can see an old aesthetic and metapoetic discourse reappearing in the Hellenistic epigrams about Myron's statue.⁶⁰ Its specific terms are transferred now to a work of art, so we may be reminded of the famous phrase of the 'parallel' or 'sister arts.'⁶¹ But in what follows, I will try to indicate some characteristically Hellenistic aspects of art theory, poetics, and philosophy that contribute to a tension between the so-called sister arts.

56 See Grethlein 2021 for the ancient references mentioned and a comprehensive interpretation.

57 Surely Anacreon is not the author, see Page 1981, p. 146; Cameron 1993, p. 82, but even so it is Hellenistic (from the Garland of Meleager).

58 Cf. already Arist. *Ph.* II 8.199a15–17: art is imitating nature, see Blumenberg 2020.

59 See Männlein-Robert 2007b, pp. 17–19 and 24–32.

60 See Puglisi 1985; Meijering 1987; for the metapoetic value of 'lying' in Callimachus and Theocritus, see Männlein-Robert 2007a, pp. 268 f. with notes.

61 Cf. Hagstrum 1958, pp. 3–128.

4.3. Effects of Illusion

In none of the epigrams does the initial illusion, the deception attributed to Myron, remain as such; the illusion created and described is then undermined or subverted. An essential concern of these epigrams is to demonstrate how the illusion as such can be unmasked or even prevented. The described illusion is undermined in the following ways:

(1) By mentioning the artist by name. In almost all epigrams, the explicit naming and identification of the artist, Myron, appears.⁶² This identifies the lifelike cow as an artfully made object. As soon as we know the artist's name, we know it to be an artifact.

(2) By mentioning its material. The extremely frequent (AP 9.716, 717, 727, 728, 735, 736, 737) reference to the bronze from which Myron molded his cow is significant. As soon as it is pointed out that the cow, first described as deceptively genuine, is made of bronze, the illusion is broken. Some of these epigrams explicitly emphasize Myron's artistic treatment of his material (AP 9.716 [choanon], 718, [721], 726, 727, 729, 736 [see also 738–742]). To be sure, the resulting impression that it is an artifact is subsequently challenged by the fact that this effect was not achieved by art (τέχνη / *techne*) but by transformation (e.g., AP 9.716, 717, 736), freezing or fixing the living animal in bronze. The cow is thus an originally living being that has now been fixed in bronze. There is also the frequent remark (AP 9.713, 719, 720, 723, 732.) that the seemingly real cow is trapped or fixed on a stone base (see also AP 9.714). This is another reference not only to the materiality of the work of art but to its placement and display. Apart from the materiality, such a placement, unnatural for a cow, distinguishes the artifact from the real animal.

(3) By mentioning methods of producing the work of art: τέχνη / *techne* (craft, artistic skill), the 'hands' of the artist and the verb πλάττειν / *plattein* (fashion), for instance, identify the cow as a work of art.

(4) By mentioning the incompleteness of the work of art. It is emphasized that Myron's cow is missing organs (AP 9.721, 727, 735) and breath or soul (AP 9.715, 717, 734, 736, 737). Several times the vocal incapacity, or rather, voicelessness, of Myron's cow is thematized (Antipater of Sidon AP 9.724, 728; Adesp. AP 9.727). And yet, Myron's cow sometimes seems to the observer to bellow or moo. This impression is created by the extremely lifelike and realistic design of the cow. Here, however, attention is focused on the typical sound production of a real cow, its bellow, which of course does not occur although it is expected (cf., e.g., the future tense of the verbs in Antipater AP 9.724,

62 He is missing only in Euenus AP 9.717; the following epigr. 718 (Euenus as well) mentions Myron by name again. Obviously Euenus composed multiple such cow epigrams, and this may be the reason why his name is missing in epigr. AP 9.717; see also Antipater of Sidon AP 9.721: this epigram is placed into a series of epigrams by the same author, which may be the reason another naming of Myron was considered to be superfluous; cf. also 721 A, 722, 730.

728).⁶³ This shows a clear limitation of the fine arts. Even though Myron is perfectly able to create a lifelike cow, he is not able to give the material object an essential characteristic of actual life, namely the ability to make sounds with a voice. This is a key criterion for genuine life. On the other hand, in some epigrams of this sequence, Myron's cow seems to appear as a speaker and thus has a voice (see below), which subtly undermines disillusionment about the artist's ability but nevertheless points out for the audience the artificial nature of this artificial product. The frequent evocation of these points implies an obvious limitation of the plastic arts. Therefore, we can observe a disjunction between epigram and artifact because artifacts are deficient and do not deceive the viewer as they are intended to do. In a striking way, plastic art is on the one hand admired because of its artificiality, but on the other is described as deficient. At least in these epigrams on Myron's cow, art does *not* achieve what it aims to achieve: a total illusion.

4.4. The Philosophical Perspective

Now I want to concentrate on the manner of presentation, more exactly: the *perspective* from which the epigrams are delivered. Then I will single out two groups of epigrams:

(a) One in which the cow, the artifact itself, addresses an unspecified audience: AP 9.713, 714, 719, 720, 721, 723, 729–732. In this group we can find the old, oriental epigraphical device of a speaking object.⁶⁴ But as this device had become rare by the middle of the 5th century and survived only in the context of sepulchral cult, the use of a speaking cow in Hellenistic literary epigrams seems to be a conscious archaism.⁶⁵ This can be understood as another implicit means of undermining illusion. For when in the archaic period and later in sepulchral epigrams a speaking object, god, or animal makes the very presence of that god or animal evident, we have to interpret speaking objects in Hellenistic epigrams – such as the speaking cow – as recognizably archaic and therefore obviously artificial. Besides the information about the artist's name, the material he uses, and so on, there are many signs that reveal the cow as a representation. So this phenomenon (a speaking animal) no longer evokes presence but has to be interpreted as a modern Hellenistic device, an obvious hint at artful and artificial 're-presentation.'

(b) Now to the second group of speakers mentioned above, that is the knowing and distanced speaker. As we have seen, the deceit is always based on the sense percep-

63 Squire 2010, pp. 608–612.

64 Cf. Häusle 1979 and esp. Burzachechi 1962 (who describes the speaking objects, animals, things, and so on as an oriental tradition, see p. 48), esp. speaking animals, see pp. 22–25; speaking in first person, see pp. 38–47.

65 Burzachechi 1962, esp. p. 54; against Burzachechi's argument that the artifacts would finally be seen as 'alive', see Raubitschek 1968, pp. 11–16; Häusle 1979, pp. 43–50; Thomas 1992, pp. 63 f.; Männlein-Robert 2007b, pp. 94 f.

tion – *aesthesis* – of a viewer. But art of this kind cannot so easily be distinguished from nature by pure observation. Instead, a real understanding of an illusionistic work of art can only be reached by going beyond sense perception. A real and deep understanding of a work of art requires an intellectual act, the mind's corrective authority. But what does this mean? It means that in the Hellenistic epigrams on Myron's cow, a new way of looking at artifacts, a new mode of viewing is called for, a mode reflected in the person of the outside speaker / viewer.⁶⁶ If we recognize this aesthetic issue in the epigrams, we can relate it to contemporary philosophical theory on *phantasia*.⁶⁷ For reasons of space, I will only sketch it briefly here. Since Aristotle had given *phantasia* an intermediate position between pure sense perception and pure intellectual capacities, it had become a psychological faculty.⁶⁸ Other philosophical schools, above all Hellenistic ones like the Kepos of Epicurus or the Stoa, were concerned with the topic as well. Especially in Stoic epistemology,⁶⁹ *phantasia* is understood as a result of sense perception but is also validated and accepted through *kataleptike phantasia*, an act of rational judgment. Even if there is no terminological or strictly conceptual influence of Aristotelian or Stoic epistemology on the epigrams about Myron's cow, these philosophical theories and discussion about *phantasia* and the value of *aisthesis* reflect the epistemological discourse about the poetic production of the time, which is intensely concerned with poetic presentation of realistic works of art.⁷⁰ Reflection about optical illusion, which can already be observed in earlier Hellenistic poems, e.g., by the poets Erinna, Theocritus, and Herodas,⁷¹ might be related to an increasing awareness of such new, refined aspects of viewing among the Hellenistic epigrammatists. Thus the epigrams on Myron's cow are closely connected to the discourse on *phantasia* and the critique of sense perception.

The important point is that more than ever before, we find the observer in these epigrams becoming prominent, whose role is to show that the correct judgment of a work of art depends on the viewer. As in the case of Myron's cow, we may find here two modes of viewing. The knowing speaker has the role of rational reception, that is, he speaks from a superior point of view. He always knows the true nature of Myron's cow and unmasks other viewers, like the shepherd or the little calf, who are overwhelmed by artistic illusion. By addressing them directly, his didactic role becomes obvious.⁷² As the one who practices 'correct' viewing, he is superior to the immanent viewers, who rely

66 Cf. Zanker 2004, pp. 72–123, for the viewer's supplementation and integration.

67 Which are for the most part neglected, so Goldhill 1994, p. 207 (but even he doesn't go on in detail), also Gutzwiller 2004b, p. 361. For *phantasia*, see Watson 1994.

68 See Watson 1988, pp. 14–34; Watson 1994, p. 4766; Busche 2003.

69 See Goldhill 1994, pp. 208–210.

70 See Imbert 1979, p. 197 for a similar conclusion.

71 Erinna in AP 6.352 = 3 GP (cf. Männlein-Robert 2007b, pp. 38–43), Theoc. *idyll.* 15.77–149 (Männlein-Robert 2007b, pp. 284–300), Herodas 4 (Männlein-Robert 2007b, pp. 264–279).

72 Männlein-Robert 2007b, p. 102f.

on their sense perception alone and experience an optical illusion. They practice modes of ‘false’ seeing. Thus we can view the Hellenistic epigrams on Myron’s cow as an extensive reflection on how to view a work of art. It is striking that the speaker in these epigrams lacks both the emotional and erotic involvement (see below) often found in other ekphrastic epigrams in which the viewer is drawn in by the beauty, perfection, or lifelikeness of an artifact. This underscores the point that the speaker has an exceptionally rational point of view, that he enacts the intellectual part, so to speak, in the process of viewing. But this presentation of the illusionary effects of art on others and the speaker’s distance from it makes clear that such a concept and style of poetry is conceivable only in a written medium. It is exactly this aspect of literacy which reflects a distance from immediate sense perception. In summary, the ekphrastic epigrams on Myron’s cow reflexively reproduce contemporary poetological and philosophical thought, as well as the latent competition between poetry and plastic arts, between image and text.

5. Second Case Study: Eros in Poetry and Art between Mind and Soul

Comparable to the epigrams about Myron’s cow are some Hellenistic epigrams by the poet Meleager (end of the 2nd century BCE), which reflect the phenomenon of φαντασία / *phantasia* (imagination) in an erotic context and show the clear emotional involvement of a speaker. While previous scholarship has considered Meleager’s epigrams in general as rather sentimental, unoriginal, and epigonal, more recent studies are now positively re-evaluating this kind of scholarly poetry, whose intrinsic value lies precisely in self-referentially reflecting on its method based on imitation and variation.⁷³ Other studies focusing on the composition of Meleager’s “Garland” and the arrangement of the individual epigrams and epigram sequences have revealed the sophisticated structural principles and extraordinarily reflective composition of the epigrams themselves.⁷⁴ In the context of the 12th book of the *Anthologia*, we find a linear sequence of Meleager’s pederastic epigrams (AP 12.54–97).⁷⁵ One group of them praises not only the beloved but also his birthplace (AP 12.55–62). Within this group there are cross connections between two successive epigrams, which can be recognized by their shared vocabulary.⁷⁶ Of interest for us are the two⁷⁷ epigrams AP 12.56 and 57, which are particularly closely related and even interconnected, and on which I will concentrate

73 For the traditional opinion, see for example Ouvré 1894, pp. 44–53; Radinger 1895, esp. pp. 44–53. For the modern opinion, see first Geffcken 1931; also Garrison 1978, pp. 71–93; Tarán 1979, pp. 71–93; Cox 1988; Guidorizzi 1992, esp. pp. 5–12.

74 After Wifstrand 1926, now mainly Gutzwiller 1997; Gutzwiller 1998b.

75 Extensively discussed by Gutzwiller 1997, p. 190.

76 Gutzwiller 1998b, p. 288.

77 On the so-called *Ergänzungsspiele* and Companion Pieces: see above notes 31 and 32.

here.⁷⁸ This is no mere self-variation but an intertextual diptych composition. Both epigrams deal with a statue of Eros by Praxiteles, most likely the famous Eros of Praxiteles, which was placed in the Eros sanctuary of the Macedonian Thespiiai.⁷⁹ It is probably this very Eros that was the subject of numerous epigrams from Hellenism to late antiquity.⁸⁰

5.1. Meleager's Epigrams on Eros

The two epigrams of Meleager AP 12.56 and 57 assume a statue of the Eros of Praxiteles (presumably that of Thespiiai):

Εἰκόνα μὲν Παρίην ζωογλύφος ἄνυσ' Ἔρωτος
 Πραξιτέλης, Κύπριδος παῖδα τυπωσάμενος·
 νῦν δ' ὁ θεῶν κάλλιστος Ἔρωσ ἔμψυχον ἄγαλμα
 αὐτὸν ἀπεικονίσας ἔπλασε Πραξιτέλῃν,
 ὅφρ' ὁ μὲν ἐν θνατοῖς, ὁ δ' ἐν αἰθέρι φίλτρα βραβεύῃ
 γῆς θ' ἅμα καὶ μακάρων σκηπτροφορῶσι Πόθοι.
 ὀλβίστη Μερόπων ἱερὰ πόλις, ἃ θεόπαιδα
 καινὸν Ἔρωτα νέων θρέψεν ὑφαγεμόνα.⁸¹

Praxiteles the sculptor wrought a statue of Love in Parian marble, fashioning the son of Cypris. But now Love, the fairest of the gods, making his own image, hath moulded Praxiteles, a living statue, so that the one amid mortals and the other in heaven may be the dispenser of love-charms, and a Love may wield the sceptre on earth as among the immortals. Most blessed the holy city of the Meropes [*scil. Cos*], which nurtured a new Love, son of a god, to be the prince of the young men.⁸²

Πραξιτέλης, ὁ πάλαι ζωογλύφος, ἄβρὸν ἄγαλμα
 ἄψυχον, μορφᾶς κωφὸν ἔτευξε τύπον
 πέτρον ἐνειδοφορῶν· ὁ δὲ νῦν ἔμψυχα μαγεύων
 τὸν τριπανοῦργον Ἔρωτ' ἔπλασεν ἐν κραδίᾳ.
 ἧ τάχα τοῦνομ' ἔχει ταῦτὸν μόνον, ἔργα δὲ κρέσσω
 οὐ λίθον, ἀλλὰ φρενῶν πνεῦμα μεταρρυθμίσας.
 Ἰλαος πλάσσοι τὸν ἐμὸν τρόπον, ὄφρα τυπώσας
 ἐντὸς ἐμὴν ψυχὴν ναὸν Ἔρωτος ἔχῃ.⁸³

78 Gutzwiller 2002, p. 107. See also Radinger 1895, p. 40 and Gow / Page: Greek Anthology, vol. 2, p. 664; "Within the sequence there are further connections between poems: 12.57, on a boy who is the namesake of the sculptor Praxiteles, is Meleager's self-variation on 12.56," so Gutzwiller 1998b, p. 288. The commentary by Clack 1992, p. 94 for these two epigrams is not sufficient.

79 Corso 1997/1998, p. 69; also Gutzwiller 2004a, p. 385.

80 Gutzwiller 2003, p. 72 with note 16.

81 AP 12.56. Greek text quoted according to Beckby: *Anthologia Graeca*, p. 40.

82 Trans. Paton: *The Greek Anthology*, p. 309.

83 AP 12.57. Greek text quoted according to Beckby: *Anthologia Graeca*, p. 40.

Praxiteles the sculptor of old time wrought a delicate image, but lifeless, the dumb counterfeit of beauty, endowing the stone with form; but this Praxiteles of to-day, creator of living beings by his magic, hath moulded in my heart Love, the rogue of rogues. Perchance, indeed, his name only is the same, but his works are better, since he hath transformed no stone, but the spirit of the mind. Graciously may he mould my character, that when he has formed it he may have within me a temple of Love, even my soul.⁸⁴

This Eros stands in a purely pederastic context. Remarkable is the use of the *termini technici* of visual arts and ekphrastic poetry, which construct inner images in the discourse on creativity and eroticism.⁸⁵ Meleager's erotic transformation of ekphrastic *topoi*,⁸⁶ produces an analogy between the practical experience of love (Eros) and an artistic competition between the god Eros and the human Praxiteles (Mel. AP 12.56 = GP 110).⁸⁷ At first, we identify the traditional epigrammatic *topos*⁸⁸ that a lover (his name is Praxiteles) is compared to the god Eros because of his attractive and beautiful appearance. He is described as deceptively similar to Eros (see, e.g., AP 12.54, 75–78, 111). Beyond that, however, there is an obvious game with names and a game about the subject-object-relation of artist and artwork. On the one hand, Praxiteles is the creator of Eros, on the other hand, Praxiteles is created by Eros, i.e., by the work of art itself.

Significant is the analogy that the god Eros is staged as a visual and creative artist just like the famous sculptor with the name Praxiteles (see l. 4: ἔπλασεν / *eplasen* [he created]). The motif of Eros as a sculptor is only found in the Hellenistic epigrammatist Dioscorides (end of 3rd century BCE): he shows a purely playful Eros, who molds the attractive body of a young boy (AP 12. 37).⁸⁹ With Meleager, however, Eros is drawn far more seriously⁹⁰ and, as it were, demiurgically: Eros creates what he creates in his own image (see below). However, the superiority of his work becomes clear: the contrast is introduced with *vũv δ'* (l. 3: but now) and, in clear contrast to the art of the sculptor Praxiteles, marks a kind of current, modern art of Eros. As is expressly noted, this is living art, a "living statue of a god" (l. 3: ἔμψυχον ἄγαλμα). Beyond the analogy between the visual artist and the creative god Eros, an implicit further analogy can be identified. The poet who praises his beloved Praxiteles as a second Eros is also inspired by love (i.e., by Eros). On the other hand, it is he who depicts the beloved in his poetry and portrays

84 Trans. Paton: The Greek Anthology, p. 309.

85 Cf. the theory of memory ascribed to Simonides, which makes use of loci or imagines 'inner' images; this is also pointed out by Armisen 1980, p. 24.

86 Gutzwiller 2003, esp. p. 68, 71; already Wifstrand 1926, p. 45, points to Mel. AP 12.56 and 57 for the erotic transformation of elements from epigrams that are actually ekphrastic.

87 But see Gutzwiller 2004a.

88 For more details, see Ludwig 1968, pp. 320–332; Radinger 1895, pp. 24–28.

89 See Tarán 1979, pp. 40–43.

90 Cf. against, e.g., Radinger 1895, pp. 20f., who regards the Eros of Meleager as purely "roguish."

him in the image of Eros, as the incarnation of Eros itself. The poet thus points out that he is the creator – inspired by Eros – of a poetic representation of his Eros-like beloved Praxiteles. In this way, the poet places himself on a par with the god Eros and at the same time competes with the sculptor and his stone image, since he, the poet, also gives life to his representation of the beloved and can portray him as inspired (lit. “full of breath,” cf. l. 3: ἔμψυχον / *empsychon*). It is *his* Praxiteles, living in the medium of poetry, which on earth – specifically in the city of Kos – arouses longing because of its beauty (l. 5, 8).⁹¹ Furthermore, from the speaker’s perspective, Eros can be abstracted as a creative impetus (see below), almost as the inspiration and stimulus of the poet Meleager himself.

In the immediately following epigram AP 12.57, there are numerous points of reference which allow individual aspects, hitherto only hinted at or implicit in 56, to emerge more clearly. Here the aspect of Eros as a creative artist is particularly important. The *agalma* of the sculptor and artist Praxiteles is indeed described as ἀβρός (tender), but this sensually perceivable manifestation of Eros seems to be deficient in every respect: The statue is inanimate,⁹² mute, it gives only an outer shape, it is made of stone (l. 2 f.). This is contrasted with a contrary image of Eros (l. 2–8) that is purely internal (l. 4: ἐν καρδίᾳ [in the heart]; l. 8: ἐντὸς ἐμῆν ψυχῇν [in the soul]), animated (cf. l. 3: it belongs to the ἔμψυχα [the animated]), and is not made of stone but made “better” (l. 5 f.). Moreover, this Eros can fundamentally change the state of the soul. By Eros here is meant not only the abstract urge of love but, as the following verses make clear, at the same time the inspirational power of love. In the third distich the speaker appears as a directly involved person (see the accumulation of possessives in l. 7 f.). The person in love in Praxiteles is recognizable as the poet himself, who presents himself as the powerless medium of the magician Eros, who has already become creatively active in his soul (l. 4: ἔπλασεν [he created], which echoes the same word in line 4 of the previous poem, where Eros is the creator). The poet articulates the desire (l. 7 f.) for a shaping of his soul, in which his sense, his Eros-centeredness is to be expressed accordingly.⁹³ This means,

91 The assumption of such complexity can be confirmed if we examine the last distich. Praise is given to Kos, where the beautiful beloved Praxiteles, the incarnation of Eros, grew up. Gutzwiller 2003, p. 85, emphasizes the literary echoes which suggest an intended interconnection within his epigrams. In one of his self-epitaphs (AP 7.418.3, also Gutzwiller 2003, p. 85), Meleager speaks of the fact that he himself lived on Kos in old age, which is where Zeus grew up (see also Gutzwiller 1998a, pp. 83 f.) It is implied here that Ptolemy Philadelphus was born and raised in Kos. The archeget of learned poetry, Philitas of Kos, is also closely connected with Kos in Hellenistic poetry, so that Meleager also seems to allude to this tradition (but possibly also in a provocative way).

92 Cf., however, Robert 1992, p. 394 with note 60, who erroneously declares the Eros statue of Praxiteles as ἔμψυχον.

93 For the expression, see First Corinthians 3:16, also Wifstrand 1926, p. 72. The soul as temple of Eros moreover lets Meleager’s erotic image enter into sharp competition with the erotic image of the artist Praxiteles, which was placed in a concrete temple in Thespiai.

of course, that Eros as a working principle is already active in the poet's soul, and the absence of a subject for the verb πλάσσοι (may he mould) in the final couplet allows the reader to imagine Eros as the artist who molds the speaker (and his perception of Praxiteles).

When examined on its own, the second epigram presents contrasting images of Eros, which are both products of a Praxiteles: the 'old sculptor' Praxiteles and the 'present' beloved. In order to understand this, however, a reader must supplement the text. The name of the work of art created by the sculptor Praxiteles is not mentioned (l. 1–3), then the name of the artist who creates the different Eros is missing (l. 3). This is therefore a supplementary game.⁹⁴ At first it seems that, also due to the explicit reference in l. 5 (ἦ τάχα τοῦνομ' ἔχει ταῦτόν μόνον [indeed, his name only is the same]), an allusion is made to the identity of names of the sculptor Praxiteles with the lover Praxiteles, who was already mentioned in the previous epigram 56. But in this epigram, a reversal now takes place in that the beloved Praxiteles, previously (in 56) the creature of Eros, is now himself called the creator of Eros. Furthermore, an equally animated (lit: ensouled) Eros (cf. AP 12.56.3) is presented as a counter-image to the stone image of Eros. The play from 12.36 with the relationship between artistic creator and work of art, between subject and object of representation, gains a further dimension. The beloved Praxiteles was created by Eros in his own image. Now he creates an Eros in the soul of the speaker, which in turn inspires the speaker to create the poem which depicts this very act of creation: the creation of art initiated by Eros is thus self-referential.

5.2. Philosophical Implications

As we have seen, the Hellenistic variations on the bronze cow of Myron reflect the discussion of the relationship between sensual and mental perception. They also reflect the discussion of the role of the *phantasia* in contemporary philosophical schools. Against this background, the mimetic relation of a work of art to the imitated model as well as the role of the artist become themes. A similar reflection seems to underlie the epigrams of Meleager, which go beyond varying established *topoi* of love epigrams.⁹⁵ In these epigrams, Meleager represents inner, mental, or spiritual images, or 'images in the heart.' With his references to the internalization⁹⁶ of images and to artistic creation

94 On this term, see Bing 1995.

95 More detailed, e.g., on the *topos* of the eyes, through which the inner love fire burns, see Ludwig 1968, p. 316 and *passim*.

96 Garrison 1978, p. 81, also speaks of a striking and for the first time in epigram "internalization of erotic experience," without reference to the philosophical implications (interpretation seems to be purely immanent). Further see – with regard to modern literature – on the phenomena discussed here, Mitchell 1984.

within the soul, which *a priori* is superior to and more durable than material images – and which proves the creativity of the poet to be superior to that of the visual artist – Meleager⁹⁷ offers an extraordinarily innovative anticipation of concepts of phantasy and poetic creativity, in contrast to the conventional conception represented in Cicero's *Orator* (8–10), Quintilian, and Longinus.⁹⁸ Thus already, Meleager localizes the image of Eros in the soul – generated by an abstract godlike Eros – and presents this alone as an appropriate and living archetype. Although we see here an understanding of art and poetry still concentrated on the principle of *mimesis* in the interior of the soul, the conception and impact of such 'inner' images in traditional love epigrams seem particularly remarkable. Not least, the figuration of Eros as the exclusive inspirational stimulus for poetic creation reveals a way of dealing with the theme of phantasy negotiated in contemporary philosophy – only a few decades before Cicero.⁹⁹ Meleager's conception of *phantasia* is based, as far as can be identified, on an idiosyncratic, eclectic combination of Stoic and Platonic elements. The perception of Eros here is not based on a sensuous visual experience (*aisthesis*), which would correspond to the Aristotelian and, above all, the Stoic precondition for *phantasia*, but on a purely emotional, spiritual perception that becomes concrete in the soul and serves as a model for concrete artistic imitation and representation. This is reminiscent of the concept from Plato's Dialogue *Timaios*, where the divine demiurge who creates the world produces everything without a concrete and sensuous model, but only according to the purely noetic model of transcendental ideas and needs the world soul as a mediating instance for the implementation and realization of these ideas in the world of things.¹⁰⁰ Admittedly, Meleager's localization of this creative event in a purely emotional soul space and, moreover, in the soul of the poet, appears to be a reversal and poetic inversion of the original Platonic concept. Eros is a personified abstraction or allegory;¹⁰¹ he seems to be an allegory of a completely irrational emotion¹⁰² that takes over the conventional role of the muse as a divine and inspirational power. In a different vein, Meleager's work is reminiscent of the Stoic concept of *phantasia*, according to which an impression' (τύπωσις / *typosis*) of sensual perception (αἴσθησις / *aistesis*) left in the soul, which has been approved by the author-

97 In general on the innovative character of Meleager's seal, Garrison 1978, esp. p. 77.

98 See in more detail, with reference to Phidias and the classical concept of art, Männlein-Robert 2003.

99 Therefore, further literary, epigrammatic evidence for the reflection of the *phantasia* problem should also be taken into account for somewhat later early imperial poets such as Rufinus (AP 5.27.1f.) and Makedonios Hypatikos (AP 5.235.1–3:) and Damocharis (AP 16.310.1–4).

100 Brisson 1998, pp. 29–54 and 71–106.

101 On the ancient, very broadly conceived concept of allegory, see Shapiro 1986, esp. pp. 4–6.

102 This aspect is also underlined by Guidorizzi 1992, p. 12. Cf. also X. *Mem.* 3.10.6–8, where Socrates discusses with the sculptor Kleiton the question of how to give a statue the expression of emotion (*pathe*).

ity of the mental hegemonic power (ἡγεμονικόν / *hegemonikon*), becomes a model for artistic concretization.

To sum up, in the erotic epigrams discussed above, Meleager reflects on the discourse of *phantasia*, which was particularly intense during the Hellenistic period. Meleager makes use of ekphrastic terminology to contrast the image evoked in the soul's interior with that of the artist Praxiteles. He thus highlights the competition between his own poetic creativity and that of the visual artist. Meleager's epigrams on Eros thus should be considered within the context of the Hellenistic discourse on the ekphrasis of works of art, since they process contemporary discussions of model and imitation, of creativity and the components of phantasy within the soul.

6. Preliminary Results and Perspectives

As an important element of the different poetics of ekphrasis we postulate in the Hellenistic period, we identify a new aesthetic turn in poetics, which emerges implicitly from the texts. The ekphrastic epigrams on Myron's cow reflect on a subject of the everyday world. Although not beautiful in itself, its lifelike representation in art is considered to be perfect. These ekphrastic poems engage in special practices of (re-)presentation while at the same time breaking the aesthetic illusion. Here the interplay of model and imitation goes far beyond the relation between poem and artifact, since we are confronted with many sequential epigrams on the same artifact and theme. Therefore, new dimensions of implicit poetics, poetical techniques and practices, as well as heterological aspects drawn from contemporary philosophical discourse, must be taken into account. The Hellenistic ekphrastic epigrams of Meleager on Praxiteles's statue of Eros are apparently focused on a beautiful subject and its beautiful (re-) presentation, but we identify a skillfully staged, complex interaction between the poet, the artist, and the subject. Here the subjective imagination of Eros comes into focus, which is based on Eros as a demiurgical and inspiring power – a concept known mainly from Plato's philosophy. Implicit (meta-)poetic techniques in the ekphrastic poems deal with new aesthetic criteria, aesthetic effects, emotions, and mental representations of aesthetic phenomena, which had been discussed philosophically since Plato and Aristotle but are refined and transformed in later discussions of individual and subjective epistemological concepts in the Stoa, in the Epicurean School, and the Hellenistic Academy. Thus basically the old rivalry between poetry and the fine arts (*paragone*) that we identified in the Hellenistic ekphrastic poems is to be seen as newly stimulated by a contemporary aesthetic discourse, itself obviously inspired by contemporary philosophical concepts.

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