Michael Squire

Abstract

Imperial Greek rhetoricians defined ecphrasis in terms of a phenomenological anomaly: ecphrasis is an art of rhetorical displacement – a description that (almost) brings about seeing through hearing. This paper examines cultural ideas about ecphrasis from a reverse perspective, investigating three scenarios where material images were physically juxtaposed alongside Greek epigrams that «ecphrastically» evoke them: a second-century BC funerary monument from Sardis (the «Menophila relief»), the eponymous exedra of the Casa degli Epigrammi at Pompeii, and the «picture-poems» (so-called *technopaegnia*) preserved in the fifteenth book of the

Palatine Anthology

(15.21-22, 24-27). In each case, I argue, the ecphrastic movement from images to words is counterbalanced by a reverse movement from words to images: with the physical images made present alongside each verbal response, audiences were confronted with larger questions about the respective parameters of viewing and reading.

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