

RESEARCH DOCTORAL DRAWING DRAFT

**SUBJECT: THE WORLD OF THEATER IN HELLENISTIC AND  
IMPERIAL EPIGRAMS**

The proposed doctoral dissertation aims to present the world of theater as it appears in the *Palatina* and *Planoudia Anthologia*, from the Classical to the Hellenistic through to the Imperial Era (5th century BC-6th century AD), with particular emphasis on the period from the 3rd century BC until the 6th AD century, and to present the changes that occurred during the Hellenistic and Imperial times in the magical world of the theater as it is depicted in the epigraphic genre.

For this purpose, epigrams will be drawn and examined from V (erotic), VI (votive), VII (funerary), IX (demonstrating), X (stimulating), XI (sympathetic), XII (Children's Muse of Straton), XIII (episodes of various measures) book of the *A.P* as well as epigrams from the *Anthology* of Maximos Planoudes (XVI book). References to the world of theater in so many different epigrams as well as the number of epigrammatists who deal with the subject, each one living and creating at different times, demonstrate the complexity and, at the same time, the magic of the theater.

Initially, there will be a very brief introduction for the epigram itself as a literary genre and then, for the most important ancient collections of epigrams during the post-Classical period; that coincides with the era when epigram creation flourished the most and reached its peak. Special reference shall be made to the *Palatina* and *Planoudia Anthologia* initially with a brief exposition of the subjects contained in the sixteen books and then, a more extensive, one on the themes of the books from which the epigrams to be explored will be drawn.

Following this introduction, this paper will focus on the detailed presentation of the world of theater with the main purpose of highlighting the changes that were made from the Classical over to the Imperial times. We intend to prove that those changes are consistent with the different social, political, cultural and economic circumstances of each era. Theater, as a living reality, seems to influence society and at the same time be influenced by the society in which it is originally created and with which it is in constant interaction.

For example, the theater in Athens of the Classical era, mainly with the three great tragic poets (Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides), was the most important pedagogical instrument for the ancient Athenians, a fact perfectly in-line with the political and social organization of Athens (city-state). On the contrary, during the Hellenistic and Imperial era, where the political and social scenes change, priority is given to the individual himself and not to groups

or masses of people, the theater evolves into a pleasant and carefree way of entertainment for that one person getting help to escape from the unbearable everyday reality.

In addition, one of the most striking and paradoxical antitheses and contradictions that this work aims to highlight and perhaps prove is that, while the epigram as a genre receives its greatest success and prospers during Hellenistic times and beyond, the theater as an artistic genre, -at least in the high form it had during the Classical years-, seems to change significantly and gets new dimensions. Yet another paradox is the fact that the poets choose a very complex and well-thought-out literary genre (the epigram) to speak about, not the high art of theater anymore, but about popular and pleasant artistic happenings. This work may, of course, prove that the contradictions above are not so paradoxical if they are combined and considered within the wider social context and needs of each era.

After the introduction, the main part of the work will consist of four chapters dealing with issues related to the theater world, via the examination of specific epigrams. The examination shall be done in the following format: the epigram under study is presented; there shall be a short introduction for the epigrammatist and his activity; a translation of the epigram; a brief summary of the subject and finally observations related primarily to the content and secondly on the form and the style of the epigram.

In more detail, in the first chapter we will examine epigrams concerning tragic and comic poets, but also mimes or pantomimes. Particularly, the three great tragic (Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides) and comic (mainly Aristophanes) poets of the Classical Period (5th - 4th century BC) will be briefly mentioned and we shall discuss the manner that their work is evaluated in the Hellenistic and the Imperial era (3rd century BC- 6th century AD). Subsequently, we will focus more on poets of the Middle Comedy and, even in more analysis, poets of the New Comedy, the latter's most important representative being Menander. The chapter will conclude with an extensive reference to the type of mimes and pantomimes who held particularly popular artistic performances during the Hellenistic and Imperial era.

In the second chapter we will examine the epigrams about popular tragic myths and mythological heroes and reveal the way they were used by the ancient poets (both tragic and comic) and how they were accepted by the crowds during the Hellenistic and Imperial times. At first, we will state the actual myth or present the mythological entity and its characteristic traits. Then we will note and discuss their acceptance by the ancient classics; finally, the way this evolved (either similarly or differentiated at times) through the Hellenistic and the Imperial era. The epigrams under study reflect on and reenact the reality of each time period. It appears that well-known tragic myths are now used by mimes and pantomimes, sometimes

even from another perspective, while popular mythological heroes are sometimes presented as role-models, subjects of satire or a paradigm to be avoided.

The third chapter will study epigrams whose content involves some recurring motifs that were common and popular in comedy, especially in New, but also in mimes and pantomime performances. Some of the most well-known subjects that are recurrent in the epigrams are: the unfaithful woman, the greed, the drunken woman, the misanthrope and “difficult” man, the sly slave, the glutton, the miserly, the decadent prostitutes, the sterile women, the abandoned children, the illegal or unfulfilled love and much more. All these issues that reflect the complexity and the changes that society suffered were presented mainly by mimes and pantomimes in banquets, private or small public spaces and less frequently in the great theaters of the time.

In the fourth chapter we will analyze those epigrams that refer to the main elements of theater and "performances", such as actors, dancers, singers, musicians, and others. Also, epigrams related to company of actors, entertainers and other theater related guilds, as well as epigrams referring to the paraphernalia or the equipment that the actors and the other artists had to help "impersonate" their roles. Finally, the epigrams examination can possibly give us an evaluation of the social position people of the theatre had and the response they had by their audience and eventually the society.

After the completion of the four chapters, the conclusions of the research shall follow. Among other things, the main objective of the work will be to monitor and highlight the evolution of theater, as it is depicted through the epigram, spanning from the Classical to the Imperial period. Emphasis shall be given on the changes that occurred during the Hellenistic and Imperial periods, changes that probably reflect the deep breakthrough in society itself.