



Lorenz, Katharina (2010) "Dialectics at a standstill": archaic kouroi-cum-epigram as I-box. In: Archaic and classical Greek epigram. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 131-148. ISBN 978-0-521-11805-7

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*'Dialectics at a standstill': archaic  
kouroi-cum-epigram as I-Box*

*Katharina Lorenz*

Epigrams on sculptural monuments generate a phenomenon that everyone interested in media studies would be thrilled by: the combination of two different media, a visual and a verbal, the monument and the text. Yet although the difference between these two media – the verbal and the visual – seems straightforward when considered abstractly, it is anything but this when experienced on a three-dimensional object.<sup>1</sup> Complicated forces are at work: on the one hand, the verbal is visualised necessarily – it is written on the monument and has to be perceived through the eyes; so the position and style of the writing become important aspects in transmitting the verbal message. On the other hand, the content of the visual is channelled through the verbal because it serves as the material carrier of the latter: the verbal might make the audience focus on certain aspects of the visual, make them think about a specific situation in which the visual belongs, and thus let the visual lose its full impact or gain meanings which are not represented in the visual itself.

This situation of constantly generating and re-negotiating meanings, which is sometimes referred to as 'multistability' in regard to pictures,<sup>2</sup> can be excellently characterised by Walter Benjamin's take on the ambiguity which he considers as the pictorial image of dialectics, as 'dialectics at a standstill';<sup>3</sup> when looking at Archaic monuments one could equally well talk about 'petrified dialectics'. Presuming such a dialectic situation, it seems unlikely that textual and visual information on a monument could ever be mutually redundant in their design and content; rather they are always relying on each other, supporting each other to create a communicative potential that surmounts the sum of the information established in its

My thanks go to Susanne Turner for her help and valuable advice.

<sup>1</sup> For discussion of the characteristics of the visual and the textual: Mitchell 1986: 7–150; Gadamer 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Mitchell 1994: 45; Doleve-Gandelmann/Gandelmann 1989.

<sup>3</sup> Benjamin 1986: 124–5.

individual elements. And yet, such a redundancy of the textual and the visual has again and again been taken for granted. The main reason for this is the exclusivity with which the individual disciplines frequently conduct their research on these multimedia objects, either focusing on the epigrams or on the sculpture, and each presupposing their results to apply equally to the other medium. And even in approaches which focus more strongly on the contextualisation of e.g. the verbal the focus on one medium tends to keep the upper hand in the analysis.<sup>4</sup>

This paper sets out to work towards an actual combined analysis of both the media involved in creating an epigram-monument, an attempt at multi-platform analysis as it were, focusing on the contributions of both the verbal and the visual towards a multimedia context and on the messages thus transmitted towards its audience.<sup>5</sup> My main aim is to examine the structures of multistability which characterise these two-media monuments, and also to what extent it is the recipients alone who sustain such a notion of multistable information delivery – through approaching, watching, reading, or talking. And in showing how 1960s American minimalist art, or rather William Mitchell's analysis of it,<sup>6</sup> can help to frame an experience of a monument-cum-epigram my concern is to understand epigram-monuments not as container for two media but as a dual-media situation.

#### ARCHAIC *KOUROI* WITH EPIGRAMS – A CASE OF *MANUAL MODE*?

Die Bilder haben schon immer geredet, ebenso wie sie von Anfang an angedredet worden sind. Aber jetzt bedienen sie sich der Schriftsprache, in der eine Rede aufgezeichnet ist, und benutzen das neue Medium wie eine Gebrauchsanleitung, um sich selber zu erklären. Schon in diesem Augenblick trennen sich die Funktionen von Bild und Schrift, die beide einen Bund miteinander eingehen, aber auch ihre Kompetenzen aufteilen. (Belting 2002: 166)

My quest is limited to monuments depicting the Archaic male, the *kouroi*, and the writing which is on them or which comes with them.<sup>7</sup> The human body in its living form is frequently considered to be the key repository of images and of viewers-as-embodied, a place for producing and subsequently perceiving

<sup>4</sup> E.g. Day 2000, analysing the Mantichus Apollo, who is by far more concerned with the epigram than the statuette as material carrier even though his analysis of how reading the writing makes the figure walk is striking.

<sup>5</sup> For a similar take on the matter see Jon Bruss's contribution in this volume (pp. 378–96).

<sup>6</sup> Mitchell 1994: 241–79.

<sup>7</sup> On writing on sculptural grave monuments: Sourvinou-Inwood 1995: 279–97; Day 1994; Day 1989.

images, and a place for remembering images and creating visibility.<sup>8</sup> As such, bodies are the essential basis of the visual, and thus a good place to start considering what happens when textual and visual elements meet. Furthermore, *kouroi* present already an essential conception of the human body. The Archaic male figure as represented in the genre of the *kouros* type is characterised by its uniform appearance: a nude, youthful, muscular (esp. chest and thighs) male body, statically standing upright, the left leg put forward but without a noticeable shifting of body weight, both arms hanging down the sides, clenched fists, the face looking straight to the front, and only the corners of their lips twitching and indicating dynamic movement in what has come to be referred to as the ‘Archaic smile’.<sup>9</sup> *Kouroi* appear all over Greece from c. 600 to c. 470, with considerable stylistic differences throughout the individual regions. They are found used as tomb markers in funerary contexts or as dedications in sanctuaries. Supposedly, they serve the function of idealised *Ersatz* or *Doppelgänger* of a dedicant or a deceased,<sup>10</sup> perhaps even of a god.<sup>11</sup>

Characterised by their identikit appearance, *kouros* statues form a manifestation of the contemporary all-purpose body-concept for the male youth. They are not about representing an individual, they are about – in Michel Foucault’s terms – enacting the docile body, a body specified through the uniform and collective characteristics which present a visual memory theatre of contemporary body concepts, their perception and their meaning within a wider cultural context. And they do this by deliberately de-noticing the individual body as well as the individual context.

Epigrams appear with *kouroi* in two different varieties: either they are directly inscribed in the body, or they come written on a part only connected to the statue, e.g. the base. An example for the former is the colossal statue of the Isches *kouros*, which was found close to its original setting among other sculpture dedications on the Sacred Street in the Heraion on Samos; it is dated to the second quarter of the sixth century BC (fig. 7.1).<sup>12</sup> Here, the inscription is positioned on the left thigh and, with the statue’s overall size of 17.5 feet, was placed well above the heads of most recipients:

ΙΣΧΕΣ ΑΝΕΘΕΚΕΝ ΟΡΕΣΙΩΣ.

Isches, (O)resios’s son, has dedicated (me/it).<sup>13</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Belting 2002: 22–9. <sup>9</sup> On *kouroi*: Richter 1970; Martini 1990; Fuchs/Floren 1987.

<sup>10</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood 1995: 141.

<sup>11</sup> In earlier research, all *kouroi* were supposed to represent Apollo: e.g. Deonna 1909.

<sup>12</sup> Samos, Vathy Museum. See Kyrielleis 1996; Freyer-Schauenburg 1974: 61–105; Matthaiou 1989; Jeffery 1990: 472F; cf. Chamoux 1990; Wesenberg 2000.

<sup>13</sup> Following Rudolf Wachter’s contribution in this volume (pp. 250–60), the latter is the more likely.



Figure 7.1 Isches Kouros. Samos, Vathy Museum 77.

Reading such an inscription asks for a considerable amount of attention; the inscription might be at about the eye level of taller recipients, but they have also to follow the line which runs vertically down the thigh. Placing such a one-liner onto a separate slab on the face of the statue's base would have made things much easier for the recipients. At the same time, we can suppose that this 'sacrificial tag' was of considerable importance to the dedicant, and it was important that it should be seen by others.<sup>14</sup>

If one thinks about the possible advantages of such a tattoo- or brand-like epigram on a *kouros*, the topmost is possibly that it is very hard indeed to separate inscription and object. If it is not erased, which would leave a puzzling *cavea* in a very central position of the *kouros*, epigram and statue will stay together. So considering the statue's purpose of transmitting the dedicant's name together with the dedicated image to contemporary as well as future recipients, this appears as a fairly reliable solution; and this even for an epigram which communicates only the basic facts of the dedication: the dedicant, further specified by his patronymic, as well as his action of dedicating the object.

But it is the material existence of the epigram as a vital part of the body of the statue which makes it even more impressive. The body of the Isches *kouros* is of such enormous size that it is easy for the viewer to get lost in its vast bodyscape. It is just as easy to lose sight of the inscription. On the other hand, the one-liner, by keeping to its basic form as well as its small size, in contrast underlines the magnificence of the colossus. And furthermore, the epigram sits not anywhere on the body, but on the left thigh, just on that part of the body which is set forward, the one that articulates the otherwise petrified body's potential for movement. With the left leg set in front, protruding into the space surrounding the *kouros*, the epigram is explicitly thrust towards the recipients' attention.

In this combination, the epigram gains additional presence; it is difficult for the recipients to ignore it because it is positioned closer to them than other parts of the body, e.g. the face, and when they are standing directly in front of the statue it is the most visible area, articulating the statue's urge for life. Thus, this positioning of the epigram further underlines that it is only because of the dedicant that this figure has come to life and works as a vivified dedication.

So far, the analysis has taken into account recipients already standing stationary in front of the *kouros*. However, in the different stages of viewing the statue, this situation occurs only towards the very end of the perceptive

<sup>14</sup> William Furley has made this point excellently clear in his contribution in this volume (pp. 151–66).

experience, just before the recipient is about to leave again. Yet, the stages before this moment are even more interesting for understanding the strategies of cooperation between text and image. Michael Tueller has distinguished four stages of approach: (a) motion past the marker, (b) stopping at the marker, (c) looking at the marker, (d) lamenting.<sup>15</sup> When applying this scheme on the perceiving of a monument like the Isches *kouros* the first stage is a recipient walking down the Sacred Street, which – through the confined space as well as other monuments which follow the *kouros* – already creates an expectation on the part of the recipient as to what will be encountered here: an assemblage of praise for the god as well as each of the dedicants celebrating themselves through their sacrifices.<sup>16</sup> From afar, what will be visible of the Isches *kouros* is its sheer size, and the fact that it is of the *kouros* type. Moving on, the block-like design of the *kouros* forces the passer-by to stop in front of it and position him- or herself frontally towards the statue to appreciate it fully, and especially the body parts which articulate its vividness, e.g. the face. The statue does not face the approaching viewer, so before the actual stopping, the recipient's experience of it will only be segmented. Though in essence banal, this act of forcing the viewers to position themselves is significant to understand the period's approach to viewer-object relations, and it is a specific characteristic of archaic and earlier classical art, which will change only in the course of the fourth century.<sup>17</sup> Only after the repositioning, and the exchange of the role of passer-by for recipient, does the epigram come into view.

With a monument like the Isches *kouros* it is clear that it is first the visual object which entices the passer-by to become a recipient, but as it does so, the epigram takes over, underlining the vividness of the object. Above all, the written word individualises the otherwise generic representation and specifies its sacrificial context, not just like any dedication such as the viewer might expect on the Sacred Street anyway, but as the unique offering of Isches. As such, the relationship of text and image in this specific statue does not appear as a situation of 'dialectics at a standstill'. Rather, the epigram which comes with the body seems to work as a manual for the monument, naming and explaining the specific product displayed, and channelling its visual existence into one which is also (or even rather) an audio existence: it is only through the recipient reading out the epigram that the monument

<sup>15</sup> M. A. Tueller in this volume (p. 46).

<sup>16</sup> On perceiving street situations: Kellum 1999. On sacred streets, and particularly Samos: Kron 1988; Herda 1995.

<sup>17</sup> Borbein 1973: 43–212; for an analysis of archaic sculpture in its relation to its perceptive space: Kraemer 1931.

gains its unique existence. This is a situation as characterised by Hans Belting on writing on early Babylonian figural monuments with epigram.<sup>18</sup> It is a mode of interaction one could call the *manual mode*.

This manual mode seems to be fit to explain also the various other figural monuments adorned with inscriptions from the archaic period,<sup>19</sup> and not only male figures: a family dedication from the Samian Heraion, dated to the middle of the sixth century, bears the inscription ‘Geneleus made us’ on the legs of the seated female;<sup>20</sup> and the manual function also appears in an epigram as loquacious as the one that comes with the base of this Nike figure from Delos, also of the middle of the sixth century (*CEG* 425):<sup>21</sup>

Μικκία[δηι τωδ’ αγα]λμα καλον Ν[ικην πτερωεσσαν]  
 Αρχερμω σο[φ]ιεισιν ηκηβω[λε δεχσαι Απωλλων]  
 [τ]οι Χιοι, Μελανος πατροιων ασ[τυ νεμωντι]

Farshooter [Apollo, receive this] fine figure [. . . , worked by] the skills of  
 Archermus, from the Chian Micciades, . . . the paternal city of Melas.

The three examples gain their full potential in the combination of the two media, the text and the image, and in this merging of the dual media, a third medium enters the discourse – the sound of speaking – to glue together and manifest the partnership of the two. It is through speaking that e.g. the prayer in the last example is activated, and simultaneously it is through the reader-viewer’s speaking voice that the Geneleus-group can announce themselves as made by the very artist. By relating the text and the visual to each other, the recipients perform a creative act and with this activate the whole monument: they generate a third level of communication, the audio level, and just as well they open the descriptive and/or narrative potential embedded in the text and image.

Through their physical existence the monuments already tell the passer-by a certain story: the powerful youth (in a sanctuary among other gifts for gods), the graceful family with many children (in a sanctuary among other gifts for gods), the swift and equally graceful herald of victory (among other gifts for gods). But as soon as the passer-by becomes their recipient, and through this also their spokesperson, a medium for the media, they gain descriptive and/or narrative depth: the *kouros* is not any male but the gift of Isches and with this comes to represent Isches and his history, while the

<sup>18</sup> Belting 2002: 166. <sup>19</sup> Richter 1968: 324 and Richter 1970: 360 names further examples.

<sup>20</sup> Samos, Vathy Museum 768; Samos, Heraion, Magazin; Berlin, Antikensammlung 1739. Freyer-Schauenburg 1974: 106–30; Kienast 1992; Löhr 2000: 46–73.

<sup>21</sup> Athens, National Archaeological Museum 21. Jeffery 1990: 294–5; Richter 1968: pl. 14a.



family members have names and so also history, and they are produced by an artist famous enough to rely on his label as signifier; this carries with it a whole set of assumptions about the status of the family as well as their taste. And the Nike is supported by a fully integrated historico-topographical account of her maker, which marks the figure not only as a tithe to Apollo but perhaps even more so as a commercial statement for the artist and his origin, since this takes up the larger part of the epigram.

The media-generating potential embedded in bringing together text and image which also creates sound supports Belting's assumption that it is the existence of iconotexts which reveals the distinctly different abilities of each medium. And while some of the things which the two media do for each other – turning a passer-by into a recipient (visual), displaying bodily presence and ability (visual), individualising/historicising the uniform (text), defining the functional intention (text) – can be characterised by a *manual mode* relationship, generating the third medium, and generating it via the external recipient as discourse mediator, points beyond such a relationship; and simultaneously it questions the case of the dialectics-free iconotexts of *manual mode*.

MANUAL MODE IN DISCOURSE – THE I-BOX AS  
ANCILLA NARRATIONIS

‘Lesen bedeutet, den Text des anderen zu rezipieren, ohne in ihm seinen eigenen Platz zu kennzeichnen, ohne ihn neu zu gestalten ...’

‘Wer liest eigentlich? Ich? Oder was von mir?’

Michel de Certeau, ‘Die Lektüre: eine verkannte Tätigkeit’, (Barck 1998: 295.297)

One way to pursue the dialecticism of iconotexts further and reconsider previous mono-media studies is to use insights from the study of American minimalist art of the 1960s, and specifically an installation by Robert Morris, made in 1962. His *I-Box*, conceived long before misleadingly similar sounding arts-and-crafts products, consists of an unpretentiously grey box with the letter ‘I’, made from wood, set in its centre (fig. 7.2).<sup>22</sup> The letter rests on hinges and is adorned with a knob as if a door. When opened the photograph of the artist is unveiled. Thus, on first view, this textual-visual monument seems to be constructed in *manual mode*: textual and visual are redundant, and this not only in regard to their content but also to their placement.

<sup>22</sup> R. Morris, *I-Box*, 1962, Collection of Leo Castelli. See Mitchell 1994: 266–71.

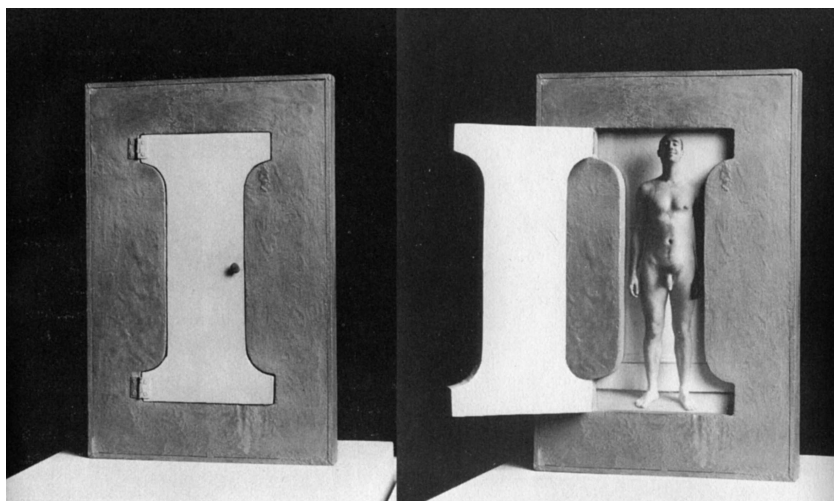


Figure 7.2 Robert Morris, *I-Box*, closed and open, 1962.

Yet, on second thought, the situation does not appear as straightforward. When closed, the 'I' could do various things for the recipient: e.g., when read aloud and used as a metaleptic entrance onto the object's surface, it could offer a point of identification, perhaps self-reflection, and – considering the promising knob – even entice one to follow the way to finding one's self. Yet the actual revelation achieved by removing the textual layer is one of frustration, undermining any possible dynamic of metaleptic approach. The viewer is faced with the image of a smugly smiling and balding male nude. He could be an anonymous middle-aged man, in general rather an image which counteracts any potential identification because of the air of ridicule surrounding him. Thus, the textual layer draws the recipient onto the level of personally identifying with the object, and it is the discrepancy between the textual and the visual which expels the recipient again. And this even more so, because the form of the textual still circumscribes the photo, as if to utter that this man is part of the 'I' – a fact which at least some recipients would deny for the conception of their own 'I', and thus a further factor of alienation.

The *I-Box* shows that an apparently redundant situation between textual and visual does not necessarily have to be of a *manual mode* but rather opens up a situation of enforced dialectics. Also, the focus on the *I-Box* makes aspects apparent which are worth considering when facing a

monument-cum-epigram: (a) the topology of textual and visual layers, and (b) reception aesthetics and possible levels on which recipients can connect with the information transmitted.

When reconsidering the three *manual mode* examples discussed above through these aspects, it is apparent that (a) all are dedications, (b) on two of these figures the epigram is written on the body itself, (c) in all three, it is the epigram which individualises the visual, and not the image which personalises the former, and (d) the epigram on the *kouros* does not mention the object dedicated, whereas the second, on the Geneleos group, refers to the object in the first person plural, as if the figures were reading out loud the epigram. And it is only in the case of the Nike figure, whose epigram appears not on her body but the base underneath, that the epigram talks about her as if she is a neutral third person object.<sup>23</sup>

It is as if the epigrams work as some kind of necessary stamp duty to brand life to the petrified body, a life which obviously cannot be achieved through the identikit figures alone, and a life which can only be transmitted to the recipient by combining uniform body and individualised writing. As mentioned before, on the Isches *kouros* this individualisation takes place on the moving leg, as if the epigram thrives on the already existing (even if meagre) dynamics of the frozen body to further dynamise it. At the same time, a reference to the object is missing in this epigram. This could indicate that such a denotation is not necessary since the figure's presence is obvious anyway, circumscribing the epigram and granting it a place within its vast bodyscape, which works in clear opposition to the *I-Box* body. With these sacrificial monuments it is the body which sets the pace, and even more so, since it is the identikit body which frames the individual writing.

The forces at work between image and text on the *kouros* statues equally well mean that an 'act of reading' as described by Michel de Certeau is not taking place, or rather: the act of reading in the traditional sense is surmounted by an activity which explicitly dictates that the recipient marks his own place in someone else's text – the epigram – by relating the object to it. This is an act eased by the fact that the object which grants the place to the text is a visual representation of the essential male, the docile body. It automatically invites the recipient to identify with this very body and subsequently to grant a place to the text within an externalised bodyscape – the *kouros* – that is only an extension of the recipient. This situation

<sup>23</sup> For the general phenomenon of 'talking statues' see Burzachechi 1962; Kassel 1983; Wachter in this volume (pp. 250–60).

of non-reading but creating, generated by the recipient's act of perception, further underlines the duality of the two media as well as the way this duality is dissolved through acts of perception by the audience.

BODYSCAPES – ICONOTEXTS BEYOND  
THE MANUAL MODE

Bodies are not 'full', or filled space (space is always full): they are open space, that is to say in one sense, space that is properly spacious rather than spatial, or that which one could perhaps call place. Bodies are places of existence, and there is no existence without place, without there, without a 'here', a 'here it is' [voici] for the this [ceci]. The body space is neither full, nor empty, there is no outside nor inside, any more than there are no parts, no totality, no functions, no finality. (Jean-Luc Nancy: 'Corpus', Paris 1992, 16, quoted from Mirzoeff 1995: 21)

The three pseudo-*manual mode* iconotexts raise various questions about possible viewer-object relations when faced with dual-media situations, and it is worth exploring this further with iconotexts which display a more complex textual component. On one of the earliest examples of a *kouros*-type statuette, the so-called Manticlus Apollo from Thebes, dated to the early seventh century BC, an epigram runs from the right knee upwards, turning over his genitals, and then down to the left knee (fig. 7.3).<sup>24</sup> With their meandering flow, which makes the reader automatically move (even if only in his mind), the two hexameters underline the legs' dynamic potential, and this much more intensively than e.g. on the Isches *kouros*:<sup>25</sup>

Μάντικλός μ' ἀνέθεκε φεκαβόλοι ἀργυροτόξοι  
τᾶς [δ]δεκάτασ· τὺ δέ, Φοῖβε, δίδοι χαρίφετταν ἀμοιβ[άν]

Manticlus dedicated me to the Far-Shooter of the silver bow  
from the tithe; do you, Phoebus, please give gratifying reward.

At the same time, this placement of the writing on the body not only grants life to the statue but secures its content – the prayer to Apollo – a constant stream of recipients: the unusual position of the epigram is likely to entice the passer-by to stop and read, and perhaps more so than any other more ordinary form of textual accompaniment.<sup>26</sup> And it is this reading, and especially the reading aloud, which re-enacts two things: (a) the prayer,<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 3.997. Day 2000; Depew 1997: 229; Jeffery 1990: 90–1; cf. Johnston 1993.

<sup>25</sup> *CEG* 326. Translation: William Furley, this volume (p. 154).

<sup>26</sup> My thanks go to Peter von Möllendorff for his brilliant ideas on this matter.

<sup>27</sup> Day 2000.

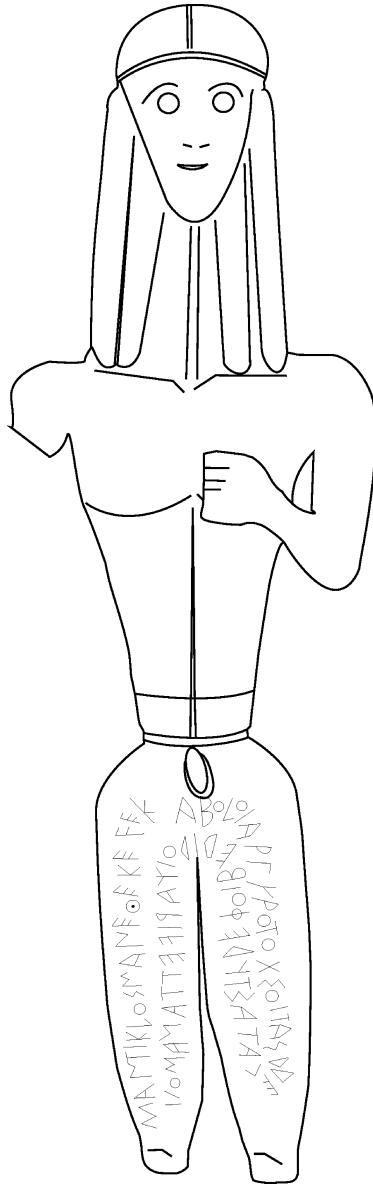


Figure 7.3 Manticlus Apollo.

renewing it not necessarily for the recipient but for the dedicant who has spent his tithe wisely, and (b) the bronze figure of the archer, who appears to be striding in space through the direction of reading, tilting from left to right and back again.

Again, this marks a reading act which is creative rather than only perceptive, and it emphasises also the intelligence of the dedicant: his gift surmounts the ordinary confines of sculpture, which might be perceived as a real human or divine being but in the end is not. This archer, however, can move, at least in the re-enacting mind of the recipient. A god could hardly expect more from an offering, and so the dedicant can hope for a benevolent divine reception of his wishes.

The Manticlus Apollo shows that the functioning of *kouros*-iconotexts, in their combination of life-enacting but formulaic and petrified body-matter with abstract but individualising and live-bringing writing is a very early phenomenon. Also, it underlines that it is a phenomenon confined to sacrificial sculpture, as far as can be deduced from the contextual information available for extant *kouroi*. In the other function the *kouroi* perform, the *grave marker*, the vivification of the statues seems not to be an issue, yet the communicative possibilities of combined media still are.

The well-known *kouros* statue (fig. 7.4) from the cemetery of Anavysos in Attica, dated to around 530 BC, probably belonged to a base with epigram found close by:<sup>28</sup>

στῆθι καὶ οἰκτιρον Κρόισο  
παρὰ σῆμα θανόντος ἦόν  
ποτ' ἐνὶ προμάχοις ὄλεσε  
θῆρος Ἄρες

Stand and take pity by the tomb of deceased Croesus,  
Whom once killed in the front lines furious Ares.

This inscription together with the sculptural figure raises various issues,<sup>29</sup> but one of the more visible of these is the design of the inscription's single lines:<sup>30</sup> the last two words, 'furious Ares' stand out considerably from the rest of the writing because they occupy their own line (fig. 7.5). After approaching Croesus, the recipient's gaze – wandering down to the inscription – could first focus on the last line, thus presuming that he or she is standing in front of the god Ares. Subsequently, the recipient would be

<sup>28</sup> Athens, National Archaeological Museum 3851. *CEG* 27; Jeffery 1962: 143–4, no. 57; Richter 1970: 118–19, no. 136.

<sup>29</sup> See Bruss and Tueller in this volume (pp. 382 and 46).

<sup>30</sup> Thanks for this observation are owed to Ivana Petrovic.

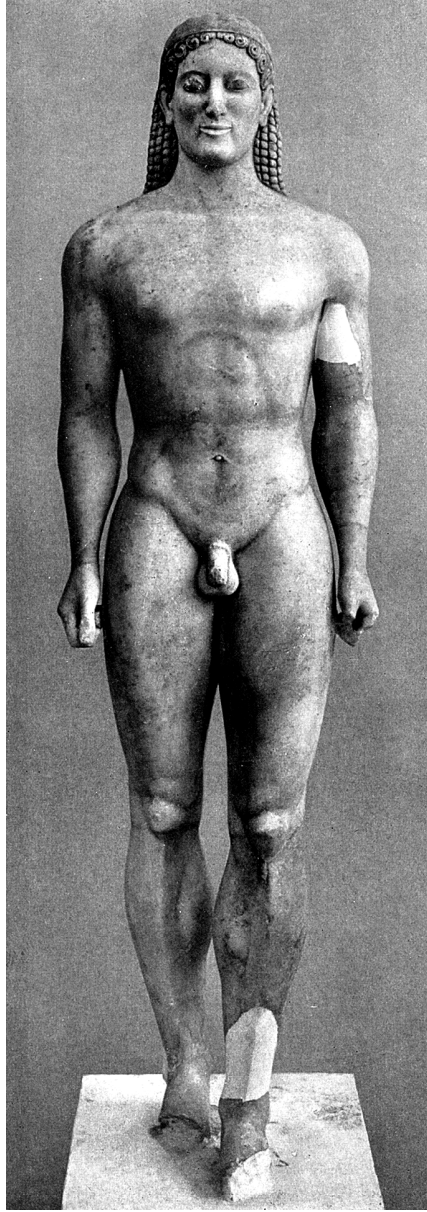


Figure 7.4 Croesus of Anavysos. Athens, National Museum 3851.



Figure 7.5 Croesus of Anavysos, inscription.

forced into an *Ergänzungsspiel* in which – with reading the epigram – the statue changes from presenting the god to depicting one of his victims. In this way, the reading of the epigram not only continually changes or re-specifies the result of the previous visual experience but also supplies the figure with an additional virtuous depth, again a creative act. This *Ergänzungsspiel* grants the figure the identity of the god of war, and even when subsequently changed into a lamentable victim, the association of the powerful and divine still remains with the body, and even more so, because it embodies the generic powerful male. Thus again, a *manual-mode* element in the text – the information about who has caused the death – turns into an aspect modifying and enhancing the actual object.

Yet although both types of inscription force a creative act there seems to be a distinctive difference in cases where the epigram is embedded in the body. The epigram on the body specifies and individualises the object on display. The writing outside the body does the same, but the possibilities of connecting it to the object on display are more diffuse, including the chance of non-connection through losing either the object or the inscription. Also, whereas the epigram on the body clearly has a life-generating power, epigrams like the one which comes with the Croesus *kouros* have not: the *Ergänzungsspiel* might modify the meaning of the sculpture but it does not animate it. So with the violating or revitalising of the funerary image of the deceased through an embodied inscription not extant in the archaic period, the funerary epigrams rather stimulate a rereading of the image, raising the uniform body which they accompany to a divine sphere, either of heroism or of pity.

#### STATUE, EPIGRAM AND RECIPIENT – THE DIALECTIC TRINITY

Die Stabilität des traditionellen Bildes kann nicht mehr automatisch vorausgesetzt werden. (Groys 2003: 107)



The *kouroi*-cum-epigram encountered above show that the dual-media situations created by these iconotexts can have various effects on the meaning of the whole monument: they turn the passer-by into a recipient who – by lending his voice as third medium to the discourse – can activate various fields of meaning, specifying and individualising the body on display, animating or modifying it, and by identifying with the body he can also become the place of the writing and subsequently apply it to his own purpose. The users' instructions are written or (better) generated in the dialogue between the two media with the recipient. The epigrams do not emulate a visual experience as an ephrasis does, but interact with the visual experience. Together, the three media create an object ready for reception, and one richer than just the sum of its elements.

This reliance on the recipient as the nodal point for generating the iconotext leads of course to a perceptive process characterised by its multistability in which meanings are created and constantly negotiated between the three participating forces. The success relies on the viewer–reader: if the passer-by chooses to remain in his role and establishes no connection between the media, or only perceives one of them, the monument's transmission is reduced; at the same time, the constant re-negotiation between various connections and the subsequent pool of meanings needs an alert recipient who can easily float through these layers of content and put them together into a fully-integrated experience. On the other hand, what can be gained by the experiment is worth the risk: relying on the recipient as a viewer–reader, as a mediator of the media as well as generator of a media-triad means that the petrified monument gains life or can become divine.

The appearance of epigrams on or with archaic male bodies is a case of an *I-Box*, not a redundant amalgamation of two exclusionary media, but the clash of a frozen body with dynamising writing which projects itself as a dialectic situation within its recipients. This dialectic situation, then, is a process of re-negotiation not only between different media but also between shifting identifications: it is not only the monument which is constantly modified between a uniform and an individual body but also the recipient, who finds identification in a generic body and subsequently can modify the individualising epigram to apply to his own life, but who is simultaneously always pushed out of identifying with the body because of its individualised writing.

With this multistability of even the recipient's position, and with the user's instruction written in the dialogue between the media, the recipients also become a medium, vital for the existence of the monument. This strategy of including the viewer in the formative process of the monument is found in



Figure 7.6 Maya Lin, Vietnam Veterans Memorial (Washington, DC), 1982.

the epigram-monuments of the Vietnam Memorial by Maya Lin (fig. 7.6), where the recipient, while reading the names of the deceased, can watch him- or herself turning into their background foil in the highly polished, reflecting granite. Here, the recipient becomes the place of the writing, again an act surmounting the standard act of reading. And even though the reflective qualities of the marble from which the *kouroi*-monuments were made were certainly not as good, these archaic monuments succeeded at doing something mankind has always aimed at: giving life to the statue, turning marble into flesh, by forcing the visual, the textual, and the recipient into a situation of petrified dialectics.