

Joseph DAY Enjoying Gods

Charis and related words in metrical inscriptions on Archaic dedications offer clues for reconstructing readings at the levels of semantics (what *charis* meant) and pragmatics (the *charis* effects of reading while viewing the dedication). Thanks to those meanings and effects, contemporaries could experience inscribed dedications as sites of joyous (*charis*-filled) interaction between humans and gods.

Charis-words appear in petitions that the god experience *charis* in the dedication or give *charis* in return. Usage in Archaic poetry is formally similar, especially in hymns, where *charis* is the beauty and joy that establish friendly, reciprocal relationships with gods in the offering of sacrifices, processions, festivals, dedications, and hymns as gifts. The formal similarities located epigraphic *charis* in this semantic field, and they suggest a parallelism of effect between performing hymns and reading epigrams while viewing dedications.

Performance is characterized by both sensual or emotional heightening and display of communicative artistry, features that epigrams and hymns relate to *charis*. As in hymns, epigraphic *charis* puts the dedication's artistry and effectiveness on display by proclaiming its beauty and likelihood of giving pleasure, in effect, by thematizing it as a successful ritual gift. Such claims would be heard as religiously effective (likely to persuade the god), but also as cues to emergent context, as Depew shows for hymns: in reading an epigram and viewing a dedication, one could experience sensual heightening comparable to that of a miniature hymnic performance and consistent with what *charis* describes in hymns and other poetry. *Charis* for example, named aesthetic qualities of, and viewers' responses to, works of art like those often dedicated and inscribed with epigrams: visual pleasure in the beauty of figures and in the radiance of colors, materials, multifaceted patterning (*poikilia*), and complex construction (*daidal-*) typical of Archaic sculpture. Claims asserted by *charis*-words, therefore, could seem verified by viewers' sensual experiences. "Experience *charis*" could seem a successful prayer as it was uttered. More interesting is "Grant *charis*" and a hymnic variant, "The deity is come to bring *charis*" (Pind. *Parth.* 2.3-5). Heard amidst the delights of viewing or performance, with *charis* sensually experienced, the prayer could seem answered and the assertion verified, that is, the god could seem present and conferring *charis*.

Other features of epigrams and dedications could support that sense of divine presence. If the dedication represented the god, the Greek attitude that such images provided sites for contact with divinity could heighten a sense of presence. The very aesthetic features of sculpture associated with *charis* (beauty, radiance) reflect Greek talk about epiphanies, so that experiencing images could slide into an experience of epiphany. In addition, the god could feel "present" in the discursive space of an epigram's reading and hearing. Epic divine naming formulas could generate a sense of "presence," as Bakker and Foley argue they did in epic performance; and epigraphic deixis (especially apostrophe of the god) brought reader (or hearer) and god into a relationship in discursive space, as two subjects sharing a speech situation.