

Philodemus' Poetry

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A quote from Sider’s book:

“In addition to the above considerations in the proper assessment of poetry, another important criterion requires that hearing or reading the poem in question provide its audience with pleasure of a correct Epicurean sort. In brief, as Asmis ably demonstrates, ***Epicurus, despite what later detractors said of him, was willing to accept poetry, although with reservations.*** In particular, the wise man could be trusted to have the proper attitude, able to listen to the recitation of poetry without succumbing to its Sirenic charms or accepting its claims to do anything more than provide harmless pleasure. **Poetry, that is, can be classified in Epicurean terms as a natural but unnecessary pleasure.** As such it was allowed a place at the banquets attended by Epicureans, where, at least originally, it was listened to but not subjected to immediate literary criticism, which would detract from the pleasure. ... It is thus possible to apply Philodemus' general view of poetry to the epigram in particular, as the performance of epigrams at dinner parties (see above) fits perfectly into our picture of the symposia held in the Epicurean Gardens of Naples and surroundings.”

Joshua and I discussed some of this briefly before at [RE: Introduction---Joshua's Notes on "The Good Poem According to Philodemus", by Michael McOsker](#)

Another interesting comment by Sider in a footnote: “Like Aristotle, Philodemus demands ordinary human values. Differently from Aristotle, however, Philodemus clearly distinguishes the ‘thought’ of the poem as a whole, as presented by the poet, from the thought of the characters.”