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An important methodological problem for the particular questions this book asks has to do with the evaluation of the evidence available, its interpretive potential and its limitations. It is striking, but nowhere emphasized in the book, that the evidence available is very little in comparison with other parts of the Greek world. Leaving aside the testimonies of Pindar and Herodotus, there are only four excavated sanctuaries, nine dedicatory inscriptions, two inventories and a few *horoi*. It is not only the quantity of the evidence that should give pause. One has to enquire into the formation processes of the various bodies of evidence. Polinskaya does not engage with these issues and consistently undervalues the limitations of the bodies of evidence for the particular arguments she puts forward. As a result the question is not even raised, in Chapter 8, why certain gods and certain functions that we would expect in a society of the time are not present in the record, as for instance Hestia, Hermes, or any god relevant to politics, trade, pastoralism, conviviality, and merriment (Dionysus becomes for Polinskaya a god of fertility). It is thus that she can argue that the pantheon of Aigina was manageable and coherent, with little overlap of functions and argue for an evolutionary development of Greek polytheism though time.

The book certainly stands out from other regional studies of religion in its attempt to pinpoint more precisely the local character of Aiginetan religion. This attempt, however, is compromised by an exclusive emphasis on the gods. Polinskaya's confident dismissal, in a single sentence (p. 46), of the importance of looking at the worshippers in a study of religion in a particular society as a "simplification of Durkheim" is rather unfortunate. The book ends up continuing a long tradition of scholarship that thinks, as Polinskaya puts it (p. 71), that no religion can exist without gods, but it can apparently exist, so the implication seems to be, without the worshippers. As a result, and rather frustratingly, the answer to the question of what it was like to be an Aiginetan in the 5th century is only searched for in the imaginary universe of the gods, and not in the realities of what it was like to live and grow up in this small island in these turbulent times.

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Paola Ceccarelli, *Ancient Greek letter writing: A cultural history (600 BC–150 BC)*, Oxford, Oxford University Press 2013, xviii + 435 pp. ISBN 978-0-19-967559-3.

Ancient epistolography has been a focus of intense scholarly interest during the last decades, and Ceccarelli's study is a fine and solid contribution to the discussion. The project began in Ceccarelli's desire to understand the letter as a medium of communication in the correspondence of the Seleucid kings, as stated in the very first sentences of the preface (p. v); this particular issue is focused also in the epilogue, where Ceccarelli states that her goal has been to "explore both the development of letter writing until it became the instrument of royal communication and the connotations acquired by official correspondence" (p. 331). The study is thus framed by questions concerning the letter as a means of official communication. Between the prologue and the epilogue, however, a huge amount of ground is covered and many contexts for letter writing are explored in detail. Thus, not only official letters but also letters between individuals and on private matters are brought into the picture. There are real letters and fictional letters, letters embedded in literary and historical works, letters preserved in inscriptions, on lead, and on papyrus, as well as myths and aetiologies concerning the invention of epistolary writing and of writing in general. A wide range of material is thus covered and discussed from a variety of angles. The over-arching question is never lost, however, and in spite of its richness and chronological leaps the book is lucid and well organized.

The preface begins by lucidly sketching out the positions in epistolary scholarship as well as the purpose and structure of the book, which is divided into an introduction followed by two parts: the first part concerns the background and beginnings of letter writing, while the second part deals with letter writing in the context of the polis.

In the Introduction (Chapter 1) Ceccarelli presents a survey of different kinds of letters together with a terminology for referring to them. She also discusses the practicalities involved in writing and sending letters. Ceccarelli accounts for the sometimes contradictory ways in which the Greek letter manuals categorized letters and for their modern scholarly counterparts. Her own conclusion, however, is that categories based on textual criteria (rather than function) can be more problematic than useful. In her own definition of what a "letter" is, though not neglecting formal elements, she underlines the importance of a spatiotemporal distance as the conceptual foundation for a letter. This distance is textually carried out by deictic markers, but its presuppositions are specifically historical circumstances.

After the Introduction the first part of the book begins, comprising Chapters 2–4. In this part Ceccarelli sets out to

explore the historical circumstances governing the production, form and preservation of letters: the ideological backgrounds, the technological conditions and the functions of letters in ancient Greek society. Chapter 2 begins with a discussion about the origins of letter writing which is quickly expanded to a discussion about the origins of alphabetic writing. Ceccarelli analyses early evidence for letter writing from the 6th and 5th centuries and contrasts it with other forms of written communication in a broad sense, such as epigrams and curses (especially the recently published *Orphic lamellae*). One of her conclusions is that epistolary writing in its familiar form (with formulaic greetings and conclusions, shifts between the first and third person, etc.) stabilized as a genre only in the mid-4th century BC. The material underlying this chapter is presented in greater detail in Appendix 1 and 2. Chapter 3 moves on to the question of how traditions on the invention of writing, and in particular letter writing, were represented from Homer via tragedy to early historiography, but also later representations are discussed (e.g. Lucian's account of epistolary formulae in his *A slip of the tongue in greeting*). These representations are then contextualized within a 5th-century debate on the uses of writing. A recurring conclusion is that letter writing was negatively viewed as untrustworthy and bound up with (Eastern) monarchical power. Chapter 4 is a study of letters in historical writing from Herodotus, via Thucydides and Xenophon to Polybius, but also including some lesser-known historians. In Herodotus letter writing is characterized as oriental, deceptive and connected with tyranny. This is not the case in Thucydides or Xenophon, even if letters are still seen as a problematic mode of communication, especially in the context of the polis. Changes in communicative practices eventually led to new views on letter writing, as can be seen in e.g. Polybius and epigraphical records.

Part II is concerned with letter writing within the polis, both in Athens and in the Hellenistic world. Chapter 5 analyses letters in Athenian tragedy and comedy, beginning a comparison between public speech and letter writing. There is a fine discussion on Euripides, in whose work letters are not only specifically mentioned but their used as dramatic devices to drive the plot forward (*Hippolytus*, *Iphigenia in Tauris*, *Iphigenia in Aulis*). The analysis of letters in public speech taken further in Chapter 6 through a discussion of letters in legal and political speeches of the Attic orators and their modes of quoting letters for purposes of persuasion. The chapter also contains some discussion on the first epistolary treatises. Chapter 7 turns to the Hellenistic period and the various views on letter writing found in various cities, not least inscribed official letters, which are provided in Appendix 3. Here, Ceccarelli suggests that letters were more acceptable in cities accustomed to "an oligarchic, personal way of power". The chapter also continues the typological questions from

previous chapters by addressing the formal contrast between decrees and official letters.

In sum, Ceccarelli's book is an impressive scholarly achievement and highly rewarding. The many seeming digressions and detailed analyses are occasionally demanding but the reader is always taken back to the main track, equipped with a fuller understanding than before and ready to embark on the next journey through other materials and perspectives. An important strength of the study is the awareness of geographical and socio-cultural variety when contexts are explored. In spite of the vast material covered and the broad perspective on letter writing no problems are overlooked and the author admits of no simplification. This book will be an obvious reference point for any further investigations into the ancient letter.

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Edwin Carawan, *The Athenian amnesty and reconstructing the law*. Oxford, Oxford University Press 2013, 310 pp. ISBN 978-0-19-967276-9.

Edwin Carawan's book *The Athenian amnesty and reconstructing the law* is a study of the reconciliation that ended civil strife among the Athenians at the close of the 5th century BC, a few years after their loss in the Peloponnesian War against Sparta. This agreement has traditionally been interpreted as an amnesty relating to all past misdeeds of the conflicting oligarchic and democratic parties. An outline of the Athenian settlement in its connection with the most important historical events surrounding it can be rendered as follows:

An "original settlement" probably came about in 403 BC, following the abandonment of the momentary post-war oligarchic regime of "the Thirty", and the consequent restoration of democracy in the city of Athens itself. During the civil strife, succeeding the war against Sparta, the democratic fraction had its seat in Piraeus while the oligarchs were in command in the city of Athens, but after the democrats regained control of the city the members of the oligarchic party were relinquished to Eleusis. Here they were allowed to continue their alternative regime, until resuming hostilities presumably concluded with the "final settlement" of 401 BC and the resultant redemocratization of the whole Athenian city-state.

The three main theses set forth by Carawan regarding this Athenian reconciliation are 1) that the original settlement of 403 was in fact not a blanket pledge of forgiveness, i.e. not an unconditional amnesty, 2) that the accommodations of the