



Poets' Tombs and Conceptions of Poetry in Ancient Greece

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► To cite this version:

Flore Kimmel-Clauzet. Poets' Tombs and Conceptions of Poetry in Ancient Greece. Tombs of the poets: between text and material culture, Nora Goldschmidt, Barbara Graziosi, Erika Taretto, Sep 2014, Durham, United Kingdom. hal-03076279v2

HAL Id: hal-03076279

<https://hal.science/hal-03076279v2>

Submitted on 8 Jun 2016

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“Poets’ Tombs and Conceptions of Poetry in Ancient Greece”

Tombs, in general, exist to maintain memory of the dead. Their function is to preserve an image of the deceased, either with the words of an epitaph or with a portrait of the dead. But what makes a tomb suitable to be the tomb of a poet? What kind of σῆμα or epitaph fits a poet? As we shall see by reviewing the traditions about the tombs of Homer, Hesiod, Archilochus, Stesichorus, Simonides, Pindarus, Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, there are several ways to answer these questions.

The present study focuses on ancient testimonies about the tombs of Archaic and Classical poets and/or remains of their monuments, in order to see if they refer to the poetic talent of the deceased.¹ The main sources are the ancient biographies, called *Lives*, of the poets, but other texts likewise mention these tombs. We also possess remains of a tomb of Archilochus, inscribed more than a century after his death. Obviously, locations, shapes of monuments or epitaphs cannot describe at length the art of the deceased. By their nature, they imply fragmentary and selective information. But the selection itself informs us about the particular features that are considered worthy of memory, because they are able to define the dead’s identity.

Some words, acts or decorations have undoubtedly been chosen by their author to commemorate the poetic status of the dead. By contrast, others might suggest poetry to the reader or viewer even if it wasn’t their original purpose. They shall nonetheless be included in our survey, because they can shed new light on the evolution of poetic reception through the centuries. Indeed, writing a poetic biography or erecting a monument for a poet is a first step in reception, but the biographical texts and material culture are open to different readings, as is attested by modern studies. On the other hand, these pages shall account only for testimonies that appear of some relevance for the present investigation, because the idea is to highlight some tendencies and chronological evolutions in the conceptions of poets, which require an overview of several cases. Thus, the sepulchral epigrams that are conserved in *Greek Anthologies* will be set aside, unless they are also “the” epitaph transmitted by the rest of the tradition, because these poems are meant to convey metapoetic statements, which are specific to that genre.

We shall suggest that, among all the factors determining the tradition about poets’ tombs, the conception of the poetic genre to which the poets were thought to belong played a growing role through the ages. This phenomenon is very likely to be linked to the emergence of the idea of poetic genres during the 5th century BC and its fulfilment in Alexandrian criticism.² As a matter of fact, the selection of a few authors as perfect illustrations of one genre caused a “specialisation” of each poet, as a representative of one genre only and, inside that genre, of particular traits.

Epic poets: Homer and Hesiod

No antique remains of Homer’s or Hesiod’s tombs survive, but the ancient texts refer to the monuments quite often. The biographical narratives about the two poets have long been proven to rely on Archaic spoken traditions.³ We shouldn’t expect, then, that features of epic

¹ Editions and translations quoted from Loeb Classical Library: Homeric texts and *testimonia*, *Certamen*: West (2003); Hesiodic texts and *testimonia*: Most (2006); *testimonia* on Stesichorus and Simonides: Campbell (1991). Editions of tragic *testimonia* after *TrGF*: Radt (1977) and (1985), Kannicht (2004); translations by Lefkowitz (2012).

² On the story of ancient criticism, see, among others, Pfeiffer (1968) and Ford (2002), with further bibliography.

³ The bibliography on the subject is substantial. For a recent survey with bibliography, see Kivilo (2010).

as a poetic genre shape the whole tradition concerning their tombs. As a matter of fact, they don't, but certain details, maybe of later date, do hint at epic as a genre.

Homer is supposed to have died on the island of Ios, but very few information about his tomb is given in the Ancient sources. The texts only state that he was buried near the sea, “on the very sea-shore”, αὐτοῦ ἐπ' ἀκτῆς, according to the pseudo-Herodotus, whose biography is dated to the 2nd century AD.⁴ Even if this statement is likely to be a *topos* related to the fact that Homer is presumed to have been buried on an island,⁵ the location of the tomb may allude in the reader's mind to the important place of the sea in the *Odyssey* and *Iliad*, where the sea-shore is precisely connected with grief, sorrow, and the idea of death (above all Patroclus' death and Achilles' foretold death).⁶ So it is appropriate to the poet, probably perceived as the composer of those two poems since the first half of the 4th century BC.⁷ Nevertheless, this detail does not define him as a poet, and surely not as an epic poet. But the *Lives* add that the following epigram was inscribed on his monument:

ἐνθάδε τὴν ἱερὰν κεφαλὴν κατὰ γαῖα καλύπτει,
ἄνδρῶν ἡρώων κοσμήτορα, θεῖον Ὅμηρον.⁸

This poem is connected to Homeric poetry in many ways: it rewrites several Homeric verses;⁹ it depicts Homer as a poet of heroic poetry; it gives the poet a sacred status, traditionally connected by Ancient authors to poetic divine inspiration, which seemed implied by the preliminary invocations to the Muses in both *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. The use of hexameter as well as reference to heroes point to epic as a genre. In fact, the ancient texts that are interested in the origins of epic poetry frequently use these two criteria as the defining components of epic.¹⁰

Thus, this is not the shape (which we know nothing about) or the location of the tomb that commemorates Homer as an epic poet, but the supposed inscription of the monument. The function of the epitaph as a reminder of the dead's identity makes it logical. Some sources add that Homer composed this as his own epitaph before dying, which implies that these verses express a self-definition. On this matter, we shall note that pseudo-Herodotus raises against this definition of the dead, particularly as being a self-definition. He affirms that the epigram “was inscribed by the people of Ios at a much later date, after his poetry had spread abroad and become universally admired – it is not by Homer himself”.¹¹ This controversy is relevant to our study, because it could attest that the conception of the poet appearing in the epigram doesn't seem genuine to the writer of the *Vita* attributed to Herodotus. In fact, it is very different from the image given by the rest of Homer's ancient biographies, especially the *Vita Herodoti*, where Homer is more modelled on bards, rhapsodes and sophists than on epic poet.¹²

⁴ Τελευτήσας δ' ἐν τῇ Ἰῷ αὐτοῦ ἐπ' ἀκτῆς ἐτάφη ὑπὸ τε τῶν συμπλόων καὶ τῶν πολίτευων, ὅσοι ἐν διαλογῇ ἐγεγέννητο αὐτῷ. “Having died, he was buried on Ios, there on the shore, by his fellow sailors and those of the townspeople who had been in conversation with him.” On the date of the *Vita*, see Kimmel-Clauzet (2013), 401.

⁵ We find the same statements in funeral epigrams about other poets, such as Archilochus, e.g. *App. Anth.* 7.71.

⁶ *Il.* 18.1-147; 23.1-23; 23.59-107; 24.11-13.

⁷ See Pfeiffer (1968), 72-73; Graziosi (2002), 4.

⁸ “Here the earth conceals that sacred head, adorning of warrior heroes, the godly Homer.”

⁹ Kimmel-Clauzet (2013), 166.

¹⁰ Kimmel-Clauzet (forthcoming).

¹¹ Καὶ τὸ ἐλεγείον τόδ' ἐπέγραψαν ἴηται ὕστερον χρόνῳ πολλῷ, ὥς ἤδη ἢ τε ποιήσις ἐξεπεπλώκει καὶ ἐθανυμάζετο ὑπὸ πάντων· οὐ γὰρ Ὅμηρον ἐστίν· (*Vit. Hom.* 36).

¹² On this representation, see Graziosi (2002), 33-40; Kimmel-Clauzet (2015).

The references to Hesiod’s poet status in the stories about his burial near Naupactus and the removal of his remains by the inhabitants of Orchomenus, who were said to have later transferred them to their city,¹³ seem at first glance even less clear than for Homer. They are mostly shaped, as shown first by Angelo Brelich, after heroic myths, transferred and adapted to the poet.¹⁴ But Natasha Bernashdy persuasively argued that some details of the tradition were likely to be related to the content of two passages of the *Works and Days*.¹⁵ More generally, the location of Hesiod’s first tomb in the sacred precinct of the Nemean Zeus could have been easily associated in the reader’s mind with the general scope of the *Works and Days*, which advise to take good care of one’s farm and to observe the Justice of Zeus. The epiclesis “Nemean” alludes both to pasture and justice/revenge (*nemesis*). The supposed epitaph of the first tomb has not come down to us, but we know of at least one epitaph of the second tomb, which has been, according to Tzetzes, erected for Hesiod in Orchomenus’ agora.¹⁶ The epitaph reported by several ancient authors, mostly attributed to Mnasalces, is the following:

Ἄσκη μὲν πατρὶς πολυλήϊος, ἀλλὰ θανόντος
ὅστέα πληξίππων γῇ Μινυᾶς κατέχει
Ἡσιόδου, τοῦ πλείστον ἐν ἀνθρώποις κλέος ἐστὶν
ἀνδρῶν κρινομένων ἐν βασάνῳ σοφίης.¹⁷

The qualification of Ascrea as πολυλήϊος, “with many cornfields”, undoubtedly reminds us of Hesiod’s agricultural advice in the *Works and Days*. The second part of the epitaph echoes both several verses of Archaic poetry and another epigram attributed to Pindar whose content has been demonstrated to point to the 5th century BC:¹⁸

χαίρε δις ἡβήσας καὶ δις τάφου ἀντιβολήσας,
Ἡσιόδ’, ἀνθρώποις μέτρον ἔχων σοφίης.¹⁹

The use of both terms *metron* and *sophiê* – particularly together – hints at a figure of poet. *Sophiê* is the quality commonly claimed by and credited to Archaic poets. As Andrew Ford has underlined, the word *metron* is ambiguous in the Classical period: it means “measure”, as a moral term and a metrical notion.²⁰ The term may even allude to the posture of the poetic voice of the *Works and Days*, who preached observing *metra*.²¹ In Mnasalces’ epigram, the reference to *sophiê*, linked to the allusion to the *Works and Days*, seems to highlight Hesiod’s status as a didactic poet. We shall note that all the elements alluding to Hesiodic poetry in the

¹³ Burial near Naupactus: Paus. 9.38.3, *Certamen* 14; in the precinct of Nemean Zeus: Plut. *Mor.* 162e, Tz *Vita Hesiodi*. Bones transferal to Orchomenus: Paus. 9.38.3-4, Plut. *Mor.* 162e, *Certamen* 14, Procl. ad *Hes.Op.* 631, Tz *Vita Hesiodi*. Texts and commentary in Kimmel-Clauzet (2013), 321-326 and 135-141.

¹⁴ Brelich (1958), 320-322.

¹⁵ Bernashdy (2011). The author supposes that cults of Hesiod in Oinoe and Orchomenos impacted the very text of the *Works and Days*. The lack of evidence for cults including festival with recitation of Hesiodic poetry in both places makes this impossible to prove. It might be only that, as often, the text of the *Works and Days* inspired parts of the biographical tradition about the poet.

¹⁶ We don’t know anything about the shape of the tomb. Many modern critics assume that Hesiod’s tomb was in Minyas’ *tholos*, but Pausanias’ report of Orchomenus’ monuments (9.38.1-10) only states that there was a tomb of Hesiod in Orchomenos, not that it was in the *tholos*, and the way he describes the marvellous *tholos* in contrast to the usual denominations of *taphos/mnêma* used for Hesiod’s tomb let us rather think that Hesiod’s tomb was not in the *tholos*. On this question, see Kimmel-Clauzet (2013), 140-141.

¹⁷ “Ascrea, the rich cornland, was my homeland, but now that I have died the land of the horse-smiting Minyan holds my bones, Hesiod’s, whose glory among human beings is the greatest when men are judged in the trials of wisdom.”

¹⁸ Kimmel-Clauzet (2013), 167-168.

¹⁹ “Hail, you who twice were young and twice received a tomb, Hesiod, you who hold the measure of wisdom for human beings.”

²⁰ Ford (2002), 18-20.

²¹ Hes. *Op.*, 694: μέτρα φυλάσσεσθαι· καιρὸς δ’ ἐπὶ πᾶσιν ἄριστος. “Bear in mind measures; rightness is the best in all things.”

traditions surrounding both Hesiod’s tombs seem to refer to the *Works and Days*, the only poem that was unanimously thought to have been composed by him, according to Pausanias.²²

Thus, even if allusions to the specific type of poetry composed are minor,²³ the two poets considered as the best performers of Archaic epic are each given their own distinct kind of epic: heroic epic for Homer, didactic epic for Hesiod, which are precisely the kinds of poetry attributed to both of them by the Alexandrians.²⁴

Iambic Poet: Archilochus

The biographical tradition about Archilochus is strikingly affected by his status as an iambic poet, iambic poetry being generally identified in ancient texts with vituperation and obscenity and being therefore a source of criticism against Archilochus.²⁵ By contrast to this tradition, the inscription on the 6th century BC capital discovered in Paros in 1961, bearing an epitaph for the poet dated to the 4th century BC, does not mention his poetry:

Ἀρχίλοχος Πάριος Τελεσικλέος ἐνθάδε κεῖται,
τῷ Δόκιμος μνημῆιον ὁ Νεοκρέωντος τόδ’ ἔθηκεν.²⁶

This is the most common kind of epitaph, apart from the mention of his origin, which is unusual for a man buried in his own country. Yet it is easily explained here by the honorific function of the monument. Neither the epitaph nor the capital can belong to the genuine tomb of Archilochus. The design of the monument, an ionic column, most likely surmounted by a sphinx, maybe included in an open-air doric temple,²⁷ is clearly heroic (as might be the use of sole hexameter). This confirms the honorific function of the monument, but does not refer to iambic poetry, or to poetry of any kind.

By contrast, if we accept Anne Ohnesorg’s hypothesis that this grave was in the 3rd century BC included in the new *Archilocheion*, a sanctuary dedicated to the poet, where he was honored with the gods, we shall note that the inscriptions preserved on several orthostates belonging to the sanctuary, dating to the 3rd and 1st century BC, deal at length with Archilochus’ poetry.²⁸ The poet’s representation in these inscriptions is complex. Since it is not certain that they belong to a funerary complex, only an overview of the key elements shall be given here. In Mnesiepes’ inscription, as shown by Andrea Rotstein, Archilochus is depicted as an iambic poet, but the inscription promotes a positive view of “mockery” rather than invective, and the obscenity is legitimated by a cultic context.²⁹ Sosthenes’ inscription displays another kind of re-appraisal of iambos, by making it essential to the commemoration of the history of Paros and his citizens’ bravery.³⁰ Contrary to Dokimos’ epigram, which ignores – perhaps chooses to ignore? – Archilochus’ poetry, Mnesiepes’ and Sosthenes’ inscriptions both try to recreate an image of the poet that does not suffer from his bad

²² Paus. 9.31.4.

²³ Compare with the poems of Alcaeus of Messeny (*App.Anth.* 7.1 and 7.55), where the burials of Homer and Hesiod are totally reimagined to fit a specific reading of their poetry (Kimmel-Clauzet (2013, 39-40; 50-51; 182).

²⁴ Cingano (2009), 96-97.

²⁵ Rotstein (2010), 281-352.

²⁶ *CEG* 2, 674: “Archilochos of Paros, son of Telesikles, lies here buried. Dokimos, son of Neokreon, established this as a memorial for him” transl. Clay (2004).

²⁷ On this reconstruction, see Kimmel-Clauzet (2013), 141-145.

²⁸ Ohnesorg (1982) and (2008). On the *Archilocheion* and these inscriptions, see Clay (2004), Ornaghi (2009) and Kimmel-Clauzet (2013), 223-229 (*testimonia*: 340-352), with further bibliography.

²⁹ Rotstein (2010), 293-298. The same idea of Mnesiepes’ inscription as being ‘apologetic’ in terms of poetic genre, responding to literary criticism, is developed in Ornaghi (2009), 176-179.

³⁰ On the use of Archilochus’ quotations to support the public memory of the glorious history of Paros in Sosthenes’ inscription, see Chaniotis (1988), 67-68 and Kimmel-Clauzet (2013), 228.

reputation as iambic poet, by recreating the genre itself. It is obvious these later authors cannot choose to ignore Archilochus’ iambic poetry when he has become the most important representative of the genre for the critics.³¹ Furthermore, the writing of Mnesiepes’ inscription, which imitates a papyrus, reveals its ambition to respond to literary traditions.³²

Lyric Poets: Stesichorus, Simonides and Pindar

6th and 5th century BC lyric poets’ tombs appear to be mainly thought as mirroring the kind of poetry composed by the dead poet. Even the very location or design of some tombs, at least for non-genuine monuments, has been impacted by the reception of the poetry composed. The testimonies conserved allow us to compare the case of three canonical poets:³³ Stesichorus, Simonides and Pindar. As we shall see, the traditions conserved about their tombs amazingly show a distribution of the poets as illustrations of different features of lyric poetry.

Stesichorus enjoyed an original tomb, which “had eight pillars, eight steps and eight corners”, ὀκτὼ κίονας, καὶ ὀκτὼ βαθμοὺς, καὶ ὀκτὼ γωνίας, according to the lexicographers, who refer this to the proverb “πάντα ὀκτώ”. Photius and the *Suda* add that the tomb was located in front of a gate named Stesichorean after the poet.³⁴ This implies that the whole area was devoted to sumptuous commemoration of the poet, and, what is more, that the supposed personality of Stesichorus gave the place its identity.³⁵ In these circumstances, we are allowed to presume that the opposite is also true, and that the original octagonal monument has something to say about the identity of the dead. The earliest source on the design of Stesichorus’ monument is Zenobius,³⁶ who was in activity around the mid 2nd century AD. He was surely relying on earlier sources, but they might be at best Hellenistic, as octagonal monuments seem to have been used in funerary architecture only since the Hellenistic period.³⁷ This monument is, thus, very unlikely to have been the genuine tomb of the poet. Two relevant parallels are an octagonal structure called the Octagon, which was located in the center of ancient Ephesus and dated to the second half of the 1st century BC, and a monument located near the Porta Gemina of Pola in Croatia, dated at the latest to the first quarter of the 1st century AD. The first structure was a monumental tomb, maybe of Ptolemy Arsinoe IV.³⁸ The latter was also for funerary use, but, according to Pierre Gros, it may have been used more for commemorative purposes than for an actual burial, e.g. by sheltering the statues of several dead.³⁹ That characteristic brings it closer to the Stesichorean monument. As to the design of the “tomb”, Silvia Barbantani, who thoroughly studied the tradition about the Stesichorean octagon, persuasively argued that the octagonal shape of the

³¹ Rotstein (2010), 281-318.

³² Kontoleon (1955), 36-39.

³³ On the canon of lyric poets, see Pfeiffer (1968), 203-207 and Barbantani (2010), 1-2 with further bibliography.

³⁴ Phot. *Lex. s.v.* πάντα ὀκτώ: οἱ μὲν Στησίχορον φασὶν ἐν Κατάνηι ταφῆναι πολυτελῶς πρὸς ταῖς ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ Στησιχορείοις πύλαις λεγομέναις. “Some say that Stesichorus was given an expensive burial at Catana near the gates called Steichorean after him”. *Suda s.v.* Στησίχορος: αὐτὸν ἐλθεῖν φασιν εἰς Κατάνην κάκει τελευτῆσαι καὶ ταφῆναι πρὸ τῆς πύλης, ἣτις ἐξ αὐτοῦ Στησιχώρειος προσηγόρευται. “they say that [...] he came to Catana and that he died there and was buried in front of the gate which is called Stesichorean after him.”

³⁵ Lots of monuments were named after poets, e.g. *Homereion*, *Archilocheion*, *Mimnermeion*... on this use of the poets’ names, see Kimmel-Clauzet (2013), 190-192.

³⁶ Cent. 5.78.

³⁷ On the dating of the monument, see also Lefkowitz (2012), 169 n. 54.

³⁸ On the Octagon of Ephesus, see Thür (2004).

³⁹ Gros (2001), 412. On the Octagon of Pola, see Fischer (1996), 143-158 and plates 38-40.

monument – and especially the reference to the number eight – was related to “Hellenistic Pythagorean theories” about “harmony of the universe”, “identified by Pythagoreans with the musical and mathematical systems that shape the world”.⁴⁰ Hence, the Pythagorean idea of musical harmony could have been applied to the poetry of Stesichorus. In fact, several other features of Stesichorus’ biography are obviously influenced by Pythagorism.⁴¹ One might wonder if this original design was also likely to be associated with the image of a cyclic chorus, in accordance to Stesichorus’ image as first founder of choruses⁴², since an octagon fits perfectly in a circle⁴³ while giving specific places to stand, but the lack of evidence forces us to leave the question open.

According to Callimachus, followed by the *Suda*, whose article on Simonides quotes and comments on Callimachus’ poem,⁴⁴ Simonides was buried in Acragas. His tomb was later destroyed by a General during a war, and used for the defence of the town. The passage of Callimachus’ *Aitia* is not fully preserved, but the *Suda* gives us the end of the story: the city was taken by the very place where the tomb used to be located.⁴⁵ The words opening Callimachus’ poem, referring to Camarina’s destiny, allow us to think that he referred to the same fate.⁴⁶ Moreover, both texts show that the profanation of Simonides’ tomb is the sin punished by the fall of the city, by linking this story with the well-known tale of Simonides’ revenge by the Dioscuri at Skopas’ banquet.⁴⁷ Callimachus underlines the parallel between the respect that the General ought to have towards the poet (identified by his epitaph) and the fear he should feel for the Dioscuri, who already helped him during his lifetime, by using a οὐδέ... οὐδέ... clause:

πύργῳ δ' ἐγκατέλεξεν ἐμὴν λίθον οὐδέ τὸ γράμμα
ἥδεσθη τὸ λέγον τὸν με Λεωπρέπεος
κείσθαι Κήϊον ἄνδρα τὸν ἱερόν, ὃς τὰ περισσά
..καὶ μνήμην πρῶτος ὃς ἐφρασάμην,
οὐδ' ὑμέας, Πολύδευκες, ὑπέτρυσεν, οἳ με μέλαθρον
μέλλοντος πίπτειν ἐκτὸς ἔθεσθέ κοτε
δαιτυμόνων ἅπο μούνον, ὅτε Κραννώνιος αἰαῖ

⁴⁰ Barbantani (2010), 34.

⁴¹ Stesichorus as a reincarnation of Homer, *App.Anth.* 7.75 on which see Brink (1972), 558-560 and Barbantani (2010), 35-39; family (among which two brothers geometrians) linked with Pythagoras: on which see Barbantani (2010), 38-39. I am inclined to think that this is more the result of the location of his tomb than of his poetry.

⁴² *Suda*, s.v. Στησίχορος: ἐκλήθη δὲ Στησίχορος, ὅτι πρῶτος κιθαρωδία χορὸν ἔστησεν, “He was called Stesichorus because he was the first to establish (*stesai*) a chorus of singers to the cithara”.

⁴³ The Octagon of Pola had a circular base: Fischer (1996), 143-158.

⁴⁴ Call. *Aet.* fr. 64; *Suda*, s.v. Σιμωνίδης: ἔοικε δὲ καὶ Καλλίμαχος τούτοις ὁμολογεῖν. οἰκτίζεται γοῦν τὸ ἄθεσμον ἔργον, καὶ λέγοντά γε αὐτὸν ὁ Κυρηναῖος πεποίηκε τὸν γλυκὺν ποιητήν... “Callimachus seems to agree with this. Certainly he pities the sacrilegious deed; at any rate the Cyrenaic poet has represented him, the sweet poet, saying...” (transl. R. Dyer, *Suda* on line).

⁴⁵ οὐκοῦν ὅδε ὁ Φοῖνιξ διαλύει τὸν τάφον τοῦ Σιμωνίδου μάλα ἀκηδῶς τε καὶ ἀνοίκτως, καὶ ἐκ τῶν λίθων τῶνδε ἀνίστησι πύργον: καὶ κατὰ τοῦτον ἐάλω ἡ πόλις, “This Phoenix tore down the tomb of Simonides without care for the burial and pitilessly, and from these stones set up a tower. Thence the city was captured.” (*ibid.*)

⁴⁶ Οὐδ' ἂν τοι Καμάρινα τόσον κακὸν ὀκκόσον ἀνδρός // κινηθεῖς ὀσίου τύμβος ἐπακρεμάσαι “Not even Camarina would be such a threatening disaster as the removal of the tomb of a holy man.” The inhabitants of Camarina had dried a lake near their city, without listening to the oracle of Apollo, who foretold them not to do so, and while they were later besieged, the attackers captured the city by passing through the way that used to be the lake (Serv. A. 3. 701).

⁴⁷ The main sources for this tale are Cic. *De orat.* 2.86.351-3 and Quint. *Inst.* 11.2.11-16. For a record of other sources see Campbell (1991), 379. On this story, see Slater (1972).

ὥλισθεν μεγάλους οἶκος ἐπὶ Σκοπάδας.⁴⁸

The *Suda*’s article shows a ring composition that refers to the best known tale at the beginning and end, and tells the profanation of Simonides’ tomb in the middle. This story is thus supposed to receive its meaning by constant comparison with the other episode. It seems that the sacredness of Simonides, referred to as an ἀνὴρ ὅσιος at the beginning of Callimachus’ poem, is due less to his status as host than to the fact that he sang of the gods and heroes.⁴⁹ The tomb, then, in accordance with the rest of Simonides’ most famous biographical episodes, characterizes Simonides’ poetry as praise poetry, and refers more precisely to a feature of victory odes that seemed to have disconcerted the ancient scholars: the importance of the mythological part.⁵⁰ Yet, another important aspect of Simonides’ poetry, as already noticed by several commentators, is also present in Callimachus’ *aition*: the epigrammatic composition. Callimachus chooses to preserve the lost inscription of the monument, by quoting it – or perhaps rather inventing it.⁵¹ By doing so, he also recalls Simonides’ status as paragon of epigrammatic poetry, which was attested at that time by the many epigrams attributed to him and apophthegmatic tradition, and was in competition with his standing as a lyric poet.

Quite surprisingly, no indication is conserved in the *Lives* of Pindar about his tomb or epitaph. The only – but fundamental – information is given by Pausanias. Visiting Thebes around 170 AD, he reports that Pindar’s tomb is located on the race-course.⁵² The location of the monument is without doubt linked to the poetry composed by Pindar. It recalls Pindar’s role as poet of victory odes, particularly odes to winners of races, which were the most prestigious trial of panhellenic games. The monument commemorates Pindar as a poet, but of only one type of poems: the epinician. We cannot be sure that the monument seen by Pausanias is the genuine tomb of Pindar,⁵³ hence, it would be audacious to affirm that this selection goes back to Pindar’s death. But it is certainly earlier than the selective school *Choice* of the end of the 2nd century AD, which conserved only the four books of epinicians that have come down to us. It is striking that these poems, considered sufficient in preserving the poet’s memory within his monument, are also the poems selected in the *Choice*. This consistency is even more remarkable when one recalls that this is clearly not the main concern of other monuments related to Pindar or of Pindar’s *Lives*. Indeed, when Pausanias visits Thebes, he can see three dedications attributed to Pindar: statues of the Mother of Dindymon, Hermes Agoraios, and Ammon.⁵⁴ These statues remind the visitor of Pindar’s role as a religious poet. So too might have the remains of Pindar’s house, spared by Alexander because

⁴⁸ “and he built my tombstone into a tower and showed no respect for the inscription, which declared that I, son of Leoprepes, lay there, the holy man of Ceos, who (knew?) rare things and was the first to devise a system of memory; nor did he fear you, Polydeuces and your brother, who once got me alone of the banqueters outside the hall which was about to collapse, when alas! the house of Crannon fell upon the mighty Scopads.”

⁴⁹ This is a recurring feature of poets’ *personae*, cf. Kimmel-Clauzet (2013), especially 58-59, 198-199, 261-264 and 278-279.

⁵⁰ See for exemple the idea of Simonides “accustomed to use digressions”, παρεκβάσσει χρῆσθαι εἶωθε (Schol. Pind. *Nem.* 4. 60b). The same kind of commentaries can also be found about Pindar, see Young (1964).

⁵¹ So Barbantani (2010), 47-48. She wonders if the reconstruction of the epitaph is only με Λεωπρέπεος κείσθαι Κήϊον ἄνδρα τὸν ἱερόν, “a very simple prose inscription in the archaic style” or includes τὰ περισσὰ and μνήμην (p. 50). I consider, with Durbec (2006), 73 n. 212, that the epitaph is supposed to include ὃς τὰ περισσὰ ..καὶ μνήμην πρῶτος ὃς ἐφρασάμην, as the syntax suggests. It highlights Simonides’ most famous achievement, as usual in literary sepulchral epigrams, which supports the idea of a Hellenistic forgery.

⁵² Paus. 9.23.2.

⁵³ On the problematic datation of the monument, see Kimmel-Clauzet (2013), 146-148.

⁵⁴ Paus. 9.25.3 (Mother); 9.17.2 (Hermes); 9.16.1 (Ammon). About Pindar’s representation as founder of the cult of the Mother of the Gods, see Kimmel-Clauzet (2013), 233-235.

of his quasi-religious respect towards the poet.⁵⁵ This aspect appears to be the dominant feature of Pindar’s *Lives* too, where he is, above all, a poet of hymns, paeans and dithyrambs. The biographers aim to show how, at every stage of his life, Pindar can be defined as a man loved by the gods because of all the poems he composed for them.⁵⁶ What can explain, then, the discrepancy between the general image of the poet in the *Lives* and the representation given by his tomb? It might be due to their noncontemporaneous creation, but, since it is as difficult to date the content of the *Lives* as Pindar’s monuments, we ought to leave the question open.

A last interesting document is a fragmentary *declamatio* attributed to Libanios, which states that Pindar has been killed by stoning and left without burial by the inhabitants of Thebes because he composed a poem in praise of Athens, which was considered a betrayal toward Thebes.⁵⁷ Even in an imaginary discourse – but which can be proven to play with the biographical tradition⁵⁸ – the treatment of the dead Pindar in late Antiquity is modelled on the reception of his work.

As we can see, different features of lyric poetry are emphasized for each poet: music and harmony for Stesichorus, specific genres of lyric poetry for Simonides (epinicians and epigrams) and Pindar (epinicians only). And even when they refer to the same poetic genres, the traditions surrounding the monuments – or the monuments themselves – hint at various aspects of the genre: the important place devoted to gods and heroes in victory odes for Simonides, the glory of praising racing winners for Pindar.

Tragic Poets: Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides

The traditions surrounding 5th century BC tragic poets are also modelled on the reception of their practice of tragedy. The whole content of their *Lives* is even more influenced by ideas of tragedy as a genre and each poet’s contribution to that genre than was the case for lyric poets, because their *Lives* appear to have been written together at an earlier stage of their development.⁵⁹ In this context, the testimonies about the poet’s tombs are so regularly part of this representation that some of them have been, already in Antiquity, judged as disappointing. These judgments may be misleading.

Aeschylus’ *Life* states that the poet was magnificently buried by the people of Gela in Sicily, where he was staying when he died. We are ignorant of the shape or precise location of the tomb, but are told that “all who made their living in the tragic theatre went to his tomb to offer sacrifices (ἐνήγιζόν) and recited their plays there”.⁶⁰ The use of the verb ἐνήγιζόν highlights the heroic status attributed to Aeschylus in the *Vita*,⁶¹ but his worshippers are limited to professionals of tragedy. The offering, the performance of tragedies, is also specific to a tragic poet. By contrast, the epitaph transmitted by the tradition surprised Pausanias and Athenaeus because it didn’t mention Aeschylus’ achievements as a poet, but only his bravery as soldier during the Persian Wars.⁶² Their surprise is increased by the fact that they consider Aeschylus himself to be the author of the epitaph, and find difficult to accept that the poet preferred to recall his martial exploits over his poetry, especially considering his poetic fame.

⁵⁵ On the quasi-religious respect expressed towards Pindar’s house by Alexander according to ancient sources, see Kimmel-Clauzet (2013), 230-233.

⁵⁶ On the representation of Pindar as θεοφιλής see Kimmel-Clauzet (2013), 63-69.

⁵⁷ Lib. fr. 49 γ’, 3-4 Foerster.

⁵⁸ Kimmel-Clauzet (2013), 69-72.

⁵⁹ Hanink (2010), 54.

⁶⁰ εἰς τὸ μνήμα δὲ φοιτῶντες ὅσοις ἐν τραγῳδαίᾳ ἦν ὁ βίος ἐνήγιζόν τε καὶ τὰ δράματα ὑπεκρίνοντο (*Vita* 11).

⁶¹ Ekroth (2002), 74-128.

⁶² Paus. 1.14.5; Ath. 14.23, 627d. On these texts, see Kimmel-Clauzet (2013), 169-170.

The absence of explicit reference to Aeschylus’ poetry in his epitaph has always been noted and even considered a proof of authenticity, on the supposition that the soldier’s bravery was more glorious during the Classical period than the gift of poetry.⁶³ But what if this epitaph was a commemoration of Aeschylus’ poetry as much as his bravery? The end of the poem reads as follows:

ἀλκὴν δ’ Εὐδόκιμον Μαραθώνιον ἄλσος ἂν εἴποι
καὶ βαθυχαιτήεις Μῆδος ἐπιστάμενος.⁶⁴

Inevitably, it reminds the reader not only of the Persian War, but also of the *Persians*, a tragedy that had a great success both in Athens (winning the Dionysia in 472 BC) and Sicily, where Aeschylus, according to the *Vita*, “put on” the play “at Hieron’s request and was highly praised for it”.⁶⁵ The *Persians*’ representation as barbarians in Aeschylus’ tragedy is in accordance with the lapidary expression of the last verse, βαθυχαιτήεις Μῆδος.⁶⁶ Furthermore, the compound adjective βαθυχαιτήεις imitates a peculiar feature of Aeschylus’ style, as Aristophanes mocks it in the *Frogs*,⁶⁷ where Aeschylus is depicted as priding himself on having composed *The Persians*.⁶⁸ It would, then, have seemed natural for ancient writers and readers to picture him alluding both to his own bravery and to this specific play in his epitaph.

All the traditions concerning Sophocles’ burial and tombs depict him not only as a poet, but as the finest tragic poet that ever lived. The most complete source available to us is the poet’s *Life*, which states that Dionysos himself intervened with Lysander in order to allow the funeral to take place.⁶⁹ The decoration of the tomb, a Siren, is – exceptionally – mentioned.⁷⁰ The Siren as a funerary decoration was not uncommon in Sophocles’ time,⁷¹ but it becomes undoubtedly more meaningful when figured on Sophocles’ tomb, as attested by Pausanias’ version of Sophocles’ burial, where the poet is himself called “the new Siren”, τὴν Σεῖρῃνα τὴν νέαν, and is recognised by Lysander by this very appellation.⁷² Pausanias comments: “down to the present day men are wont to liken to a Siren whatever is charming in both poetry and prose”.⁷³ The epitaph of the poet transmitted in the *Life* goes further in

⁶³ Pfohl (1967), 26; Sommerstein (1995-1996), 111-117.

⁶⁴ “The famous grove of Marathon could tell of his courage and the long-haired Mede knew it well” (*Vita* 11).

⁶⁵ Φασὶν ὑπὸ Ἰέρωνος ἀξιοθέεντα ἀναδιδάξαι τοὺς Πέρσας ἐν Σικελίᾳ καὶ λίαν εὐδοκμεῖν (*Vita* 18). The same indication is found in the scholia to Ar. *Ran.* 1028 with a reference to Eratosthenes’ work *On Comedy*.

⁶⁶ There is no reference to long hair in the play, but to thick beard (v. 316). Yet the play ends with the old men’s Chorus mourning and tearing their hair. The image of the Persian with thick or long hair, as Sommerstein (1995-1996, 113) has shown, matches the iconography. It is also very likely to have become a *topos* of the *Persians*’ representation during the Classical period, since Herodotus reports an oracle addressed to the Milesians using the sole substantive adjective κομηταί, “long-haired people”, to refer to the Persians (Hdt 6.19). The bibliography about the physical and moral representation of Persians as barbarians in Aeschylus’ *Persians* is substantial. For recent synthesis with bibliography, see Hall (1989), Georges (1994) and Mauduit (2007).

⁶⁷ The epitaph is considered by Athenaeus (Ath. 14.23, 627d) and Pausanias (Paus. 1.14.5) as written by Aeschylus himself: an imitation of his style would then be expected. For parody of the compound words in Aristophanes see e.g. *Frogs*, 841-842 and 845, which are the first verses pronounced by Aeschylus on stage.

⁶⁸ Ar. *Ran.* 1026-1027.

⁶⁹ *Vita* 15.

⁷⁰ φασὶ δὲ ὅτι καὶ τῷ μνήματι αὐτοῦ σειρῃνα ἐπέστησαν, οἱ δὲ κηληδόνα χαλκῇν (*Vita* 15). “Some say that they put up a statue of a siren on the monument; other, a bronze Celedon” transl. Lefkowitz (2012) modified. On the meaning of the word *kèlèdon*, “enchantress”, which is a suggestion of Huschke for a corrupt manuscript, see Kimmel-Clauzet (2013), 448 n. 99.

⁷¹ Collignon (1911).

⁷² Paus. 1.21.1.

⁷³ εἰώθασι δὲ καὶ νῦν ἔτι ποιημάτων καὶ λόγων τὸ ἐπαγωγὸν Σεῖρῃνι εἰκάζειν (1.21.1; transl. W.H.S. Jones (1917)).

affirming that he “won first prize with his tragic art”.⁷⁴ Another epitaph is mentioned by Valerius Maximus: it apparently included a reference to Sophocles’ last play, *Oedipus at Colonus*, considered a masterpiece superior to all other tragedies.⁷⁵ Hence, there is no other way of commemorating the poet within his tomb than praising his art: the main impression given by all the testimonies concerning Sophocles’ funeral, tomb and epitaph is one of perfection and alluring sweetness.⁷⁶

Euripides’ case is particular, since the poet enjoyed two monuments: a tomb in Macedonia, where he died, and a cenotaph in Athens. The traditions surrounding these two monuments are deeply influenced by the rivalry between Athens and Macedonia, and the political aspects seem at first sight to prevail over the poetical ones.⁷⁷ But each monument does allude to specific features of Euripidean tragedy.

Two marvellous stories are told about Euripides’ tomb in Macedonia. First, the tomb was struck by lightning.⁷⁸ Secondly, two rivers were flowing near his tomb: one was beneficial whereas the other was harmful.⁷⁹ These two stories have long since been considered as containing patterns that belong to heroic myth, but it has not been emphasized enough that they both point to the figure of Orpheus. We find the same patterns in Pausanias, who unites the stories where Orpheus is supposed to have been struck by lightning and where his death and tomb are linked to several wonders involving rivers.⁸⁰ In fact, Orpheus is so to speak superimposed on Euripides’ biographical tradition, which portrays the Macedonian Euripides as a new Orpheus.⁸¹ What does it imply concerning the reception of his work? Without any doubt, the connection between Euripides and Orpheus relies on Euripides’ supposed subversion of traditional religion, as presented in the first place by Aristophanes.⁸²

In Athens, Euripides is supposed to have been mourned by Sophocles and his actors in the odeon, during the *proagôn*.⁸³ As for Aeschylus, his status as tragic poet impacts the very proceedings of his commemoration. Euripides also enjoys a cenotaph near the street that leads to Piraeus. No ancient text records the shape of the monument, but its inscription is often quoted. The epitaph refers to poetry in a very conventional way (πλείστα δὲ Μούσαις τέρψας), which does not seem specific either to tragedy or to Euripidean tragedy.⁸⁴ But the main characterization of Euripides’ particular feature may be less in the content of the epitaph *per se* than in the cultural context of this epigram. Indeed, the epigram is most often credited to Thucydides, and its beginning (Μνήμα μὲν Ἑλλάς ἅπασ’ Εὐριπίδου) rewrites the famous sentence of Pericles’ funeral oration of the dead soldiers in the second book of Thucydides: Ἄνδρῶν γὰρ ἐπιφανῶν πᾶσα γῆ τάφος.⁸⁵ The intertextual echo strikingly stresses

⁷⁴ κρύπτω τῷδε τάφῳ Σοφοκλῇ πρωτεία λαβόντα // τῇ τραγικῇ τέχνῃ, σχῆμα τὸ σεμνότατον. “In this tomb I hide Sophocles who won first prize with his tragic art, a most holy figure.”

⁷⁵ Val.Max. 8.7 ext. 12.

⁷⁶ In addition to the texts already mentioned, see Plin. Nat. 7.29 (109) and Solin 1.118, where Liber Pater calls Sophocles “the prince of tragic theatre” (*tragici cothurni principem*) or “his beloved poet” (*delicias suas*).

⁷⁷ See Hanink (2008), Kimmel-Clauzet (2013), 91-95, 154-160 and 171-173.

⁷⁸ *App. Anth.* 7.48; 7.49; Plut. *Mor.* 59c, *Vita* IA, 10. The *Vita* states that both Euripides’ monuments were struck by lightning, which seems to illustrate the rivalry between them.

⁷⁹ *Vitr.* 8.3.16; Plin. *Nat.* 31.19 (28).

⁸⁰ Paus. 9.30.

⁸¹ Kimmel-Clauzet (2013), 90-91.

⁸² E.g. Ar. *Thesm.* 450-451. Testimonies about Euripides’ supposed impiety in Kannicht (2004), 123-124. This is also the vision of the poet given by his death-stories, see Kimmel-Clauzet (2013), 88-91.

⁸³ Thom.Mag., *Vita*, l. 36-38 Kannicht (2004).

⁸⁴ πλείστα δὲ Μούσαις // τέρψας, ἐκ πολλῶν καὶ τὸν ἔπαινον ἔχει. “Having brought great pleasure with his poetry he also won many men’s praise.”

⁸⁵ “All earth is the grave of the famous men”, 2.43.3.

a recurring feature of Euripidean tragedy, namely the lamentation about war dead, which echoes back the human losses during the Peloponnesian War.

There might also have been another way of referring to Euripides’ status as tragic poet, if we accept the attractive hypothesis of Andreas Scholl, that the well-known neo-Attic relief from the Istanbul national Museum representing Euripides sitting between Dionysus and the *Skènè* was placed on his cenotaph:⁸⁶ Euripides (represented after the Farnese type) is portrayed sitting to the left, facing the allegory of the Scene, holding a papyrus and a mask of Herakles; behind him stands another mask and a statue of Dionysus holding a cantharus. Such a suggestion remains unprovable for the moment, but its value is to raise the question of the complementary function of an epitaph and an image, since the transmitted inscription and the relief give very different images of the poet. Andreas Scholl studies in the same article another funerary relief that is relevant to our concerns here: the Lyme Park relief, which had previously been attributed to Aristophanes’ tomb, and for which he proposes another identification: the poet of the Middle Comic poet Epigenes. The poet is portrayed sitting to the left, holding a papyrus and a comic mask (another comic mask hangs behind him). What seems important here is not the identification of the poet on the relief, but the kind of representation. The relief is dated to the second half of the 4th century BC (around 340). Whoever is portrayed on it is depicted as a comic poet by the use of “attributes” and peculiar features: the presence of comic masks and a papyrus roll, and the pose, seating (and not standing as actors and musicians, *i.e.* performers).⁸⁷ We can be sure, then, that at that time the tombs can use conventional representations to portray a poet, referring specifically to the poetic genre practiced by the dead. The evolution of dead poets’ representations in the literary testimonies surrounding their tombs is undoubtedly corollary to such an evolution in the material culture.

The three canonical poets of tragedy are thus commemorated as poets with common patterns but different details. Not only the design and inscriptions of the monuments, but also funerary customs, are appropriate to them as tragic poets. Nevertheless, each poet is recognized for his own kind of tragic poetry. Aeschylus appears to represent the heroic, perhaps archaic or “epic,” kind of tragedy.⁸⁸ Sophocles incarnates the perfection of the genre, including its musicality. Euripides is represented differently in Macedonia and Athens, and the location of the tomb undoubtedly played a crucial role in the representation of the dead poet.⁸⁹ It seems that the location impacts not only the image of the person, but also, the selection of memorable aspects of his work. Whereas in Macedonia, Euripides’ disturbing attitude toward traditional religion is significant, in Athens, no such implication arises. It could even be the contrary if the Istanbul relief, which is has a religious atmosphere, is proven to belong to the cenotaph.

In conclusion, it appears that poetic genres as practiced had a growing influence on the images of dead Archaic and Classical poets preserved by both literary testimonies about his tomb and material culture, that is, by the society as a whole, and not only scholars. The more recent the poet and/or the ancient sources are, the more perceptible this is. If the idea of epic as a genre impacted only marginally the traditions about Homer and Hesiod, if the notion of iambic poetry seems originally absent from the commemoration of the poet, the lyric and tragic poets have early been approached only as poets, and often as poets of a particular kind of poetry. This phenomenon is even more noticeable for Hellenistic poets: Apollonius of

⁸⁶ Scholl (1995), 236, n. 109.

⁸⁷ On this typical representation of poets on coins, statues and else, particularly in Hellenistic art, see Schefold (1997).

⁸⁸ For such a representation in Aristophanes too see *Frogs*, 1013-1017.

⁸⁹ Kimmel-Clauzet (2012), 556-570.

Rhodes is supposed to have been buried near his mentor, Callimachus,⁹⁰ and stones thrown on Aratus' tomb were said to go to pieces, a phenomenon hinting at the poet's *Phenomena*.⁹¹ Since scholarship about poetic genres cannot be found before the 5th century BC, it is possible that the early-Archaic poets' biographies and monuments have been concerned with the phenomenon only in a later stage of their development. The definition of their poetic skills could then alter the traditions or only rely on a different reading of them. But the conception of the poetic genres composed did not result in a single image for all poets illustrating the same genre; each kept his special features. The idea of a few canonical authors may have itself modified the representation of each poet: every poet shall give his own contribution to the genre, which justify his selection in the canon.

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⁹⁰ *Vita* β l. 12-13.

⁹¹ *Mela* 1.13.71.

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