Mapping the Movement of Lyric Poets in the Archaic and Classical Greek World

(http://polyphemus.stanford.edu)

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Our project is a study of the movement of lyric poets in the archaic and classical Greek world. In this time period, the most important for lyric poetry in antiquity, the travel of poets like Pindar and Simonides formed a vital part of the economy of symbolic capital between city-states: democratic assemblies and tyrants competed to attract the most prestigious poets, the Athenian empire drew talent to Athens from across its range, and religious festivals offered venues for poets to showcase their talent before audiences from across the Greek world. An important recent study on this movement is Hunter and Rutherford (eds) *Wandering Poets in Ancient Greek Culture: Travel, Locality and Pan-Hellenism* (2009).

Our goal is to create an interactive map for the Network for the Study of Archaic and Classical Greek Song (<http://greeksong.ruhosting.nl>) that will allow users to see where poets travelled and select poets according to criteria like genre and instrument. We wish for users to be able to ask questions like:

* Do lyric poets come from one type of political or cultural regime, or several?
* What are the major centers of poetic production?
* Are poets associated with Athens from cities that are part of the Athenian empire?
* Are particular cities more interested in some genres than others?
* Are some cities particularly closely linked by the movement of poets (i.e. do many poets go from Melos to Athens)?

We have created a preliminary version of this tool with CartoDB which is publicly accessible at <http://polyphemus.stanford.edu>. CartoDB is a combination SQL server and GIS provider that allows users to ask SQL queries and update the map in real-time.

We have created our dataset from two prosopographies of ancient Greek musicians: Stefanis *Dionysiakoi technitai* (1988) and Aspiotes *Prosopographia musica Graeca* (2006). For this preliminary version we selected poets from 450 BCE to 400 BCE and gathered information on birthplace, other associated cities, genres, and instruments. We included these in CSV files (in Excel) and uploaded them to a SQL database on the CartoDB website. Our preliminary maps on the server show two kinds of maps: a bubble map, where each city is represented by a bubble whose size shows the number of poets, and a line map, which shows poets through lines from their birthplace to other cities they are associated with. In each case onscreen guides allow the user to choose poets according to criteria like time-period, relationship to the city, instrument, and genre. Javascript in the webpage converts the selection to a SQL query which is passed to the CartoDB server and updates the map.

Our goals lie in two directions: one relating to the dataset, one relating to its visualization. First, we would like to expand the dataset to include all the information relating to poets active in the Archaic and Classical periods (roughly 700 BCE to 330 BCE), and perhaps further into the Hellenistic and Roman periods (down to perhaps 300 CE). Second, we would like to improve the visualization proper and the user interface. The current representation of movement is clunky and difficult for the user to interpret, and the user interface is demanding for the novice to understand and successfully use.

We believe that our project would benefit from the expertise of the Humanities + Design community, and we look forward to being able to contribute in turn in any way we can.