The *Iliad* on Epigram: Generic Competition and the Poetics of Memorialization

In his recent study of time in the *Iliad*, Garcia (2013) has argued that tombs (and other material objects) are complements to the Homeric idea of *kleos*. Based on an interpretation of the formula *kleos aphthiton*, he argues that Homeric *kleos* always encodes a sense of its own eventual decay and demise. Thus, tombs and other seemingly durable constructions provide a glimpse of the impending loss of memory to which even Homeric poetry itself will succumb. Although I agree with Grethlein (2014) that Garcia's argument, which interprets the alpha privative of *aphthiton* in the famous Homeric phrase as encoding the sense "not yet," is mistaken, Garcia's point about the *Iliad's* presentation of the decay of tombs (along with the memories they represent) still has significance for our interpretation of the poetics of Homeric epic. Grethlein (2008) too has recognized Homer's presentation of the limited life-span of objects (tombs included) in the epic and Nagy (1983 and 1979) has shown that tombs in particular contain modes of memorialization that run parallel to the poetics of epic *kleos*. In this paper, I will investigate the Homeric poetics of tombs, reading them, with Garcia, as complements to the Homeric idea of *kleos*, but, rather than parallel formations, I will argue that tombs are deployed in Homer as a contrast to epic memorialization.

As Grethlein (2008) has argued, from the point of view of the Homeric poems, the physical decay to which tombs succumb is a negative foil to the everlasting glory of epic song. However, if we reverse the direction of our critical lens and look at the epic poems from the point of view of Archaic funerary monuments, their very monumentality can be seen as an attempt to participate in the ever-lasting *kleos* of epic. In fact, several inscriptions on Archaic tombs attempt to realize the kind of fame promised by Homeric epic, often cast in language and meter shared with the Homeric tradition. The Archaic funerary monument in its totality (i.e., in

its monumentality and spatiality, as well as in its poetic program) acts, as Svenbro (1993) argued, as a "machine to produce *kleos*" and, as such, offers its configuration of features in order to participate in the premier Archaic mode of memorialization.  If, from the point of view of the funeral monument, tomb and epic are part of the same system of memorialization, and, from the point of view of the epics, tombs are inferior and qualitatively different modes of memorialization, then we are justified in postulating a competition in memorialization among the two modes.  In an effort to understand the Homeric poetics of this competition, I will offer a brief overview of all the instances of tombs in the epics, then narrow my focus to one that, even in antiquity, was seen as particularly "epigrammatic," the hypothetical tomb described by Hector at Il. 7.81-91.  Through an analysis of this passage's relationship to extant examples of Archaic funerary monuments, I will argue that the Iliad ironizes the memorializing potential of such funerary monuments, thus, implicitly showcasing its own superior poetics of memorialization.

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