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Ancient Greek Poets as Teachers

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Ancient Greek Poets as Teachers

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to underline the indirect aspects that qualify the ancient Greek poets as teachers. Poetry was a mean of commemorating the past, but also of glorifying contemporary events so as to be remembered by future generations. The poets were a source of knowledge and a means of communication (through their itinerant performances). It is of interest to analyze the reasons why poets engaged in pan-Hellenic competitions: for self-publicity (compare the situation, for example, with that of the later sophists or philosophers who were looking for students by attending such gatherings), for establishing authority over their works (see also the role of *sphragis* for that matter), the contest as a mean of displaying wisdom. One of the most important things in the poets' performances was to charm the audience. The sophists and even the statesmen learned from the poets how to convince the audience through a performance (see for example the *pompe* of Pisistratus, when entering Athens, described by Herodotus). The imitation, *mimesis*, and the allusions to famous lyrics one identifies in different works (see for example the *Homeridai*, the *Anacreoentea*) shows to some degree a learning process.

These are only a few aspects that pre-dated the institutionalized learning of poetry and music of classical Athens and which will be dealt with in the paper announced.

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The ancient Greek poets asserted to be *the masters of the truth*.¹ The truth in its turn is to be understood as a precise, continuous and coherent disposal of information regarding the past and the present. Therefore the poet is regarded as a depository of knowledge. The fact that the Muses teach the minstrels, as we encounter in the poems of Homer or in those of Hesiod, illustrated by the use of verbs like *legein* (*to speak*) or *didaskhein* (*to teach*), strengthens the idea that the divine inspiration is primary a metaphor for the gain of knowledge.²

As *therapontes* (*servants*) of the Muses they are equally the messengers of the gods. The divinity teaches them and it is their duty to teach others in their turn. For that matter, either they represent themselves or are represented as cicadas³ or nightingales⁴. Cicada is an insect and a metaphor for the autochthony and for the divinely inspired song. Aristotle says that the cicadas lay their eggs in the ground and the insect, once mature, springs out of the earth at the summer solstice and starts to sing. It is the only insect that, although has no mouth, it has a kind of tongue by which cicadas feed with dew and sing.⁵ Practically born of the earth, the cicadas came to represent the idea of autochthony. They appear on Athenian tetradrachms next to an olive branch and to Athena's owl. Cicadas refer to the myth stating that the Athenians were born of the earth.⁶ The Athenians used to adorn themselves with gold or silver fibulae in shape of cicadas. The attic *krobylos*, for example, a double headband, was pinned with such a fibula.⁷ The custom was considered the expression of political conservatism, a gesture of solidarity with the aristocratic faction, an old fashion habit as Aristophanes⁸ stated.⁹

Cicada was also famous for its melodic voice. In order to illustrate the beauty of such a voice, Homer uses a visual metaphor: *the lily voice of the cicadas*.¹⁰ The poet shifts perception from auditory to visual, which Stanford explains as follows: the lily is as pleasant to the eye, as is the voice of the cicadas to the ear.¹¹ Beginning its song at the summer solstice, cicada is equally a messenger.

The most relevant poetic description of the cicada concerning its association with the poet is to be found in a poem pertaining to a follower of Anacreon.¹² Cicada corresponds with the image of the poets under different aspects. Its voice recalls that of the Muses, breathed into the poets, the song was granted to the cicada by the Muses and Apollo, the two gods who

¹ For this matter see Detienne, 1967.

² *Od.*, XXII, 347; Hesiod, *Theogony*, v. 22.

³ Archilochus calls himself a *cicada* (fr. 223), likewise Erinna (F008 – Neri, 2003, p. 167).

⁴ On Stesichorus it is said that a nightingale sat on his mouth at his birth as a prophecy of his clear song (fr. 40, 44). Bacchylides calls himself *the nightingale of Cos* (*Victory Odes*, III, 97).

⁵ Aristotel, *Historia Animalium*, IV, 7; V, 30

(<http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/AriHian.html>).

⁶ On this myth see Loraux, 2000.

⁷ Miller, 1931, p. 531.

⁸ Aristophanes, *Knights* 1331; *Clouds* 984.

⁹ Hoffmann, 1997, p. 115.

¹⁰ *Il.*, III, 151-152.

¹¹ Stanford, 1969, p. 3-8.

¹² Anacreon (*Anacreontea*), fr. 34.

consecrate the poets in the lyrics of Hesiod¹, it is the prophet or messenger of summer just as the poets are the messengers of the divine word and the old age that doesn't reach it, its likeness to the gods, is linked to the idea of immortality and to the expectation for that matter of the poets through their *voice*, the poetry.

Likewise, the nightingale is known not only for its distinct voice, but also as a messenger of spring.² In the lyrics of Alcaeus the nightingales, the cicadas, cicadas, the swallows greet Apollo on his return from the Hyperboreans, playing the role of minstrels singing not of their own faith, but of the gods.³

The poets identify themselves as messengers of gods through a token whether it is the laurel staff of Hesiod or the lyre of Archilochus. Stesichorus is considered later to have invented the so called *angelic verse*, famous for its swiftness appropriate to messengers.⁴ Hesiod even seems to associate himself to the concert of the Muses by using the plural *archometha* (*let us begin*) right in the beginning of his *Theogony*.⁵ Carrying such an important message implies the consciousness of an irrefutable superiority to others and also the necessity of gathering listeners.⁶ We often encounter though within the poets' lyrics references to their incomplete knowledge when not helped by the Muses. Homer⁷ doesn't know all the details of the Achaean expedition in Troy in the absence of the Muses' help, just as Ibycus⁸ will later state: *for no mortal man could tell each detail*.

The public gathered in the larger context of local or pan-Hellenic festivals or in the smaller one of banquets or groups of people which shared socio-political, religious etc. convictions. The two situations can be identified in the very lyrics of the poets in the so-called *associative plural*. For starters, it is to be found at Homer⁹ and Hesiod¹⁰. Pucci distinguishes in the Homeric poems two types of association: on the one hand with a consortium of poets of some sort, and on the other with his public.¹¹ It is all about an alternative reference from *tell me* to *tell us* which might indicate a different approach from that proposed by Pucci. Homer begins with *tell me* by which he obtains the divine word and continues later on with *tell us* which might be understood as a dissemination of that word to the public by his own means. He associates himself to the public after having been engaged in a unilateral, instructive communication with the Muses. In this case, only the *archometha* of Hesiod would refer to some sort of a consortium, not of the poets, but of the poet joining the divinity in delivering the *aletheia*, *the truth*.

¹ Hesiod, *Theogony*, v. 94-96.

² Sappho, fr. 136.

³ Alcaeus, fr. 307a-c.

⁴ Stesichorus, fr. 275 a.

⁵ Assael, 2006, p. 121.

⁶ Arrighetti, 1987, p. 50.

⁷ *Il.*, II, 486.

⁸ Ibycus, fr. 282a.

⁹ *Od.*, I, 10; *Il.*, II, 486.

¹⁰ Hesiod, *Theogonia*, v. 1.

¹¹ Pucci, 2007, p. 35.

If the sources regarding the participation of the poets to festivals are a direct testimony of their interaction with a larger public, identifying smaller groups gathered around them is more or less deductive. Groups create themselves from the moment someone speaks on their behalf. Hesiod distinguishes himself from the simple shepherds driven only by their *gaster*, by their primary instincts.¹ He is the spokesman of those who choose to lead a different way of life. The key word is *diaita* or *life style*. Through his *Theogony* he establishes a coherent tradition regarding the birth and functioning of the Universe and through his didactic poem, *Works and Days*, Hesiod aims not only at telling the truth about Perses, but also at coming forward with a solution for those who want to organize their *oikos*, their *home*.

For Sappho, superior knowledge is guaranteed only for those who have a share in the *Pierian roses*, meaning in the Muses' gift. Anybody else was condemned to mediocrity, to an afterlife spent among the shadows of the gloomy Hades.² The existence of the group, of the *thiasos*, led by the poetess is deduced on the one hand from the lyrics³ that advised the girls leaving the consortium to hold on to the memory of what they shared for so long, from the direct references of the poetess to her companions⁴, to the house of those who serve the Muses⁵ and on the other hand from the lyrics that express the fierceness towards the girls who decide to join a rival group⁶.

There are other aspects of the Sapphic poetry that present an interest for the group matter. Sappho, given her clearly expressed devotion to Aphrodite, was considered to be her priestess gathering around her devotees of the same cult. The poetess appears to be a choir leader. The choir leader is the one that trains its members in song and dance and all that implies the further on display for larger events such as the religious festivals. In fact it is the processional song that created the premises for the choral lyric. The earliest poem of the kind pertains to Eumelus of Corinth. Only two lyrics were preserved, enough to conclude that the poem was composed for a Messenian choir on the occasion of a representation at Delos.⁷ The difficulty of choral lyric consists in creating a performance that would harmonize the auditory perception with the visual one. The Cologne Papyrus describes Sappho as a teacher for *aristai*, for the feminine elite of Lesbos and Ionia. Nagy considers though we should be seeing in those lyrics the image of Sappho as *choregos*.⁸ The poetess was credited also as the author of the earliest dramatized lyrics.⁹ The relation with the gods, whether it is with the Muses or Aphrodite, is conceived as a two-voiced dialog.

Regarding the definition of Sappho as a teacher, a fragment of a poem is to be considered. Speaking of her fame beyond the Acheron, Sappho imagines

¹ On the difference of status implied by this distinction see Bakker, 2010, p. 37 – 50.

² Sappho, fr. 55.

³ Sappho, fr. 94.

⁴ Sappho, fr. 160.

⁵ Sappho, fr. 150.

⁶ See for this matter the references to fr. 55 of Gentili, 1988, p. 84.

⁷ Campbell (ed.), 2006, p. 262.

⁸ Nagy, 1990, p. 435.

⁹ Herington, 1985, p. 57.

herself taking the *barbitos* or the tortoise shell lyre and starting to sing.¹ According to the lyre typology given by Martin West², the two lyre types mentioned would define the poetess not only as a professional singer but as a teacher as well. The tortoise shell lyre, the *chelys*, was used for banquets or for teaching activities, given that its sounds were not powerful enough so as to sustain a concert. As for the *barbitos* or the harp, it was a complex instrument used by professionals.

The master of the choral lyric seems to have been Alcman. It is said that he composed *parthenia* for a *thiasos* in Sparta to which probably belonged Megalostrata³ and Hegesichora⁴, the last name identifying the leader of the choir. Through those performances, Alcman seems to have dramatized his own role of *didaskalos*.⁵

The enigmatic or metaphoric language of the poets was not only a proof of their wisdom, but also a way of addressing oneself to a specific public, to a group whose members were able to solve the riddle or to decipher the encoded message. Hesiod speaks of the eagle and the nightingale, addressing his *ainos* to a specific category of listeners.⁶ With Alcaeus⁷ we find the metaphor of the ship drifting on the sea through storm, a metaphor later assumed by Theognis⁸. The banquet offers the proper context for grouping and disseminating such socio-political ideas. Alcaeus and later Theognis refer to the group of aristocrats gathered on the same ship that risks sinking because of the new social order. They teach of the values of old aristocrats, they being among them. Solon on the other hand is the poet of a new age, outlining in his elegies a different political context, setting aside the aristocratic privileges.

Tyrtaeus, Callinus, Mimnermus and later Telesilla are exhorting the soldiers and speak on behalf of heroic values. Their poems speak of the glory and of the beauty of a life lived on the battlefield, of the death as a guarantee of the soldiers' ever after celebration, of immortality, of civic excellence. Their poetic discourse was adapted to an austere society, as was that of the Spartans. A series of anecdotes are eloquent for this matter. Lycurgus speaks of a Spartan law according to which the Spartan soldiers, during the military expeditions, gathered in tents to listen to poems of Tyrtaeus, thinking that in this way the soldiers would be more willing to die for their country.⁹ According to some other Spartan custom every Spartan soldier was supposed to sing after dinner poems of Tyrtaeus. The winner was to be gratified with a piece of meat by the general.¹⁰ Such are the stories that consecrate Tyrtaeus as *paidagogos* for the Spartan community.

¹ Fragments of this poem are to be found at Lardinois, 2011, p. 90.

² West, 1992, p. 50.

³ Alcman, fr. 59b.

⁴ *Ibidem*, fr. 1.

⁵ Herington, 1985, p. 26.

⁶ Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 202.

⁷ Alcaeus, fr. 6.

⁸ Theognis, v. 667-682.

⁹ Lycurgus, *In Leocratem*, 107.

¹⁰ Philochorus, apud Athenaeus, 630f.

Simonides, Bacchylides, Pindar through their glorifying poems play the role of teachers for future generations. Their intention is to transpose to poetry the great deeds of the present by recalling those of the mythical past. The relation with the inspiring divinity is rendered both as a dramatic performance, and as a consortium. The Muses are called to join the poets although they assume some sort of autonomy towards the goddesses.

The poets of the ancient Greek society teach not only when interacting with different categories of audiences, larger or smaller, but they are also teachers to each other. This kind of teaching is reflected within the agonistic contexts, within imitation, within the literary student-teacher *topos* and other *topoi* which brings them together.

The associative plural already mentioned could indicate, among other things, the existence of a group or a community of poets. Even if this fact can not be certified, it might be suggested by the so-called *Homeridae*, poets claiming themselves as descendants of a *Homeric school*. Later on, the successors of Anacreon established what we conventionally call *Anacreontea*, a corpus of poems reminding of Anacreon's poetic style. As for Theognis it has often been spoken of the *Theognidea*.¹

All this successors engage themselves in an emulative process which in subsidiary is an agonistic process. It implies not only imitation, but also criticism that would allow not only the identification with the model to follow, but also to highlight the differentiating traits. Therefore there are some works pertaining to Homers' followers that are often ascribed to Homer himself², and others that have a clearly attested author. In *Anacreontea*, things are even clearer. Patricia Rosenmeyer considers it to be more of an imitation of Anacreon's attitude rather than of his poetic style.³ The Homeric influence is to be found in Alcaeus' lyrics⁴, for example, in those of Mimnermus, Tyrtaeus, Tyrtaeus, Sappho⁵ or Stesichorus⁶, of which is said to have channeled the Homeric flow in his works.

A common trait of the ancient Greek poetics is the enigmatic language or the *ainos*⁷, the use of metaphors, which in time becomes almost conventional in expressing different realities. The octopus is probably the most eloquent example. This marine animal, famous for the way it adapts its color to the rock it clinches, becomes in the ancient Greek poetics from Homer to Pindar the very expression of versatility.⁸ The fox is a metaphor for cunning, for deception and is to be encountered in the lyrics of Archilochus, Simonides of Amorgos or Aesopus. The same goes for cicadas, nightingales, swallows which become metaphors for the minstrels.

¹ Highbarger, 1929, p. 341-359.

² Scott, 1921, p. 20-26.

³ Rosenmeyer, 1992, p. 53-62.

⁴ It is about a Hymn dedicated to Apollo composed by Alcaeus (fr. 307a-c).

⁵ On the allusions to Homeric lyrics in the works of Mimnermus, Tyrtaeus, Sappho etc. see Garner, 1990.

⁶ Stesichorus, fr. 34.

⁷ Nagy, 1990, p. 31; 426; Naddaf, 2009, p. 109.

⁸ *Od.*, I, 1; V, 430-434; *Thebaida*, fr. 8; Theognis, v. 213-218; Pindar, fr. 43.

The same state of emulation, with clear intention of differentiating oneself from the model, is to be found later in the poems of Bacchylides.¹ In the poem of Erinna have been recognized traits of the Sapphic poetry. More over, the poetry of Erinna seems to correspond to that of the poets living the transitional period from archaic to classical, especially to that of the poetesses activating between the VIth and Vth centuries B.C. It is a period marked on the one hand by the claim of a literary heritage, and on the other by a new poetic direction, that of claiming authorship. We can easily recognize the influence of Hesiodic poetry over that of Corinna. The *ligyphon* voice of her Muses² reminds of the voice of Hesiods' Hesperides³, the *agon* between Helicon and Cithaeron is a premise for an excursion into the theogonic myth⁴ and the fact that the poetess doesn't seem to have approached other subjects than the ones related to the local mythology supports the theory even more if we think of the Muses called for the very first time *Helliconian* in Hesiods' lyrics⁵, receiving thus a name and a local origin. The poet seems to have created also a paradigm of authentication, of claiming authorship, introducing a short history regarding his origin. Corinna is not the protagonist of such a historical excursion, but the discourse of the prophet Acraephen from the poem *Daughters of Asopus* is similar to the Hesiodic pattern.⁶ The blast of a new age leaves an impression on Corinna's poetry. The poetess speaks in the first person; the *agon* between the two impersonated mountains develops within what it appears to be a courtroom, a clear sign for the birth and evolution of law, principle that will govern the polis.

The literary heritage is valued in the lyrics of other poetesses. Therefore, the sacred grove of Eunostus from the poems of Myrtis⁷ is practically a recreation of Ibycus' *Garden of the Maidens*⁸, the exhortation of Telesilla⁹ is a reminder of those of Tyrtaeus or Callinus and the lyrics of Praxilla are similar to those of Sappho¹⁰ to the extent that their ascription still pendulates between the two¹¹. Later on, Euripides seems to pay a tribute to the archaic poetry when conceiving the virgin grove of Hippolytus in the eponymous tragedy. His literary description reminds us of the apple grove, shaded by roses, of Sappho, of the *Garden of Maidens* or of the sacred grove of Eunostus. *Hippolytus* corresponds with Myrtis poem not only in the literary descriptions, but also in the very theme of the poem. Just like Hippolytus, Eunostus harbors himself

¹ Lefkowitz, 1969, p. 45-96.

² Corinna, fr. 692.

³ Hesiod, *Theogony*, v. 275.

⁴ Corinna, fr. 654.

⁵ Hesiod, *Theogony*, v. 2.

⁶ Corinna, fr. 654.

⁷ Myrtis, fr. 716.

⁸ Ibycus, fr. 286.

⁹ Telesilla, fr. 3.

¹⁰ The lyrics of fr. 747 ascribed to Praxilla speak of the beauty of the stars, of the moon, of apples and pears ripening. They find their Sapphic correspondent in the lyrics dedicated to Hesperus, the night star (fr. 104 a-b) and especially in those where Sappho, speaking of what brings pleasure to the senses, refers specifically to the ripening apples (fr. 105.1).

¹¹ See Praxilla, fr. 749.

from the passion and rejects the advances of women who thought they could make him reconsider, which comes to be fatal to them.

Regarding the association of some poets against all chronological or historical logic is a procedure that underlines on the one hand the poetic legitimacy, and on the other it suggests the poetic follow up. Homer and Hesiod are brought together by a fictive genealogy. According to Ephorus of Cyme, IVth century B.C. historian, Hesiod was the cousin of Homer.¹ Stesichorus likewise is considered the illegitimate son of Hesiod.² Their bringing together is not entirely arbitrary, since the poems of these poets approach mythological or heroic subjects. Stesichorus was even considered one of the *most Homeric poets*.³ Besides the subtleties discussed related especially to the *mimesis* or imitation, the proper student-teacher *topos*, joins poets like Arion and Alcman⁴, Apollodorus and Pindar⁵, Pindar and Myrtis⁶, Myrtis and Corinna⁷ etc.

The allegoric interpretation, which seems to have been initiated by Theagenes of Rhegium in the VIth century B.C., has two merits. First of all, it has transformed the poems, Homeric ones especially, into esoteric texts, which could be deciphered only by the wise ones and not by the *hoi polloi* (*the many*), who, according to Heraclitus, believed that all the minstrels were saying was true.⁸ Secondly, the allegoric interpretation gives the instructive course of the poems in general, Homeric in particular. The battle between the gods would then be a battle between the opposing elements of nature. From an ethical point of view, the allegoric exegesis has looked for examples of courage, moderation, lucidity, wisdom etc. The theologians in their turn have looked behind the Homeric lyrics traits of the Greek pantheon. The fact is that all the emergent sciences like philosophy, ethics and theology have looked for and found whatever they needed in order to legitimate themselves. The main lesson the poets taught was that the poetry, as product of divine intervention, gave the right to spoken word perceived as *aletheia*. Thus we see Parmenides, the father of deductive logic, composing hexameters and claiming divine inspiration.⁹ Likewise Thales is thought to have authored a poem called *Nautical Astronomy*¹⁰ and a *skolion* (*drinking song*), the lyrics of which are cited by Diogenes Laertius¹¹.

The philosophers have learned from the poets the importance of the spoken word as opposed to the written one as a stimulant for remembering. The asceticism that characterizes some of them might have been determined by a

¹ *FGrHist*, 70 F1.

² *FGrHist*, 328 F213.

³ Stesichorus, fr. 39.

⁴ Arion, fr. 1.

⁵ Apollodorus, in Campbell (ed.), 1991, p. 295.

⁶ Myrtis, fr. 3.

⁷ Myrtis, fr. 2.

⁸ Naddaf, 2009, p. 107-109.

⁹ Naddaf, 2009, p. 114.

¹⁰ Diogenes Laertius, I, 23.

¹¹ Diogenes Laertius, I, 35.

reinterpretation in this direction of the cicada metaphor. Plato says that the cicadas represent a metamorphosis and a reincarnation of humans transfigured by their encounter with the Muses. Those who follow the Muses tend to neglect their physical necessities delighting themselves with the music. They are soon to be dead from starvation, but will be reborn as cicadas.¹ The theory is based probably on the opposition in Hesiod's lyrics between the shepherds as simple groins and those who are inspired by the Muses, associated thus with the cicadas known to feed themselves only with dew and to have no other physical necessity. It is how the Pythagoreans understand to distinguish themselves from others. They introduce the wearing of a single garment and adopt a vegetarian diet symbolizing on the one hand the intention to gain total control over their bodies and on the other the aloofness from the community, defined, among other things, by the sacrificial meals.² They are characterized by moderation, simplicity, the gravity of expression, which make the Crotonians receive Pythagoras like a god³, the very embodiment of a cicada, if we were to recall the lyrics from *Anacreontea*.

Statesmen saw in the poetic form the guarantee of their political power. Solon was a notorious composer of elegies⁴, Chilon wrote likewise an elegiac poem of 200 lyrics⁵, Periander is supposed to have written a didactic poem⁶ etc. The Pisistratids, like all other tyrants, understood and valued the capacity of poetry to consecrate them, to legitimate them and to educate. Hipparchus invested impressive sums in bringing to Athens renowned poets such as Simonides of Ceos or Anacreon.⁷ Hiero of Syracuse, Thero of Acragas followed his example. Hipparchus is also famous for having placed in the rural perimeters of the city the so-called *Herms* inscribed with pentameter lyrics in order to educate these peripheral communities.⁸ The effort of the tyrant seems to have paid off, as there was found in the rural region of Attica a graffiti dating back in the VIth century B.C. with lyrics referring to a shepherd looking after his flocks.⁹

Pisistratus understood probably more than anyone the importance of the poetic performances. He is the one to have reorganized the Great Panathenaia. Desiring to seduce the audience not only by virtue of their sweet voices, words, songs, but also through their appearance the poets wear impressive costumes, garlands, colorful headbands and crowns, creating the impression of a real epiphany. Pisistratus is the protagonist of such a moment when he forms an alliance with Megacles and conceives a plan to come back to Athens, plan

¹ Plato, *Phaidros*, 259.

² Bremmer, 1992, p. 205-214.

³ Diogenes Laertius, VIII, 11.

⁴ Gerber (ed.), 1999, p. 106-165.

⁵ Diogenes Laertius, I, 68.

⁶ Diogenes Laertius, I, 97.

⁷ Anacreon, fr. 6.

⁸ Herington, 1985, p. 93.

⁹ Graffiti presented by the professor Joseph Day in the paper-work *A Muse on Stone or an Un-read Muse? Did Greeks Read Inscribed Epigrams?*, at a conference held on the 17th of January 2012 at the American School of Classical Studies at Athens.

described in its details by Herodotus.¹ He improvises a sacred procession so that it would appear that the very goddess Athena brought him back to the city.² He enters Athens like a real winner, a hero even, if we have in mind the image of Hercules being received into Olympus having Athena as his guide. Staging the epiphany of Athena proves that the manifestation of the divine or heroic presence was more than a poetic conception. We cannot consider that Pisistratus befooled the spirit of Athenians since they accepted him willingly. He associated himself to Peitho, managing to seduce and to convince the audience with his spectacle.

The sophists and the orators also gained profit from the poets. They learned to draw attention through performance in front of an audience and to seduce through the discourse. On Hippias, Gorgias, Empedocles it is said that they would present themselves at pan-Hellenic Games wearing purple gowns, golden crowns and bronze sandals.³ As for Protagoras, Plato says, in a mocking but relevant way, that he used to attract students charming them with a voice like that of Orpheus.⁴ In order to create the impression of a spontaneous speech, the orators used to mask their training that would often make their discourse appear artificial.⁵ They also controlled their gestures given that the over gesturing was viewed as a lack of manners. The actor Kallippides for example is called a monkey for his excessive gesturing.⁶ Solon becomes in the IVth century B.C. the symbol of moderation. A statue represents him with his arm wrapped in his cloak, testifying the above considerations.⁷ The orators were inspired in their practice by the theatrical performances as well. Antiphon for example has written a speech for the trial in which a young man accused his mother of having killed his father by poisoning. Aware of the weakness of his case, Antiphon borrows the traits of tragedy in order to stir up emotions among the jury.⁸ The young man compares his stepmother with Clytemnestra and the poison becomes a metonymy for the killer.

There is also a backside to be considered. The poets might as well corrupt. Xenophanes accuses Homer for having represented in his poems immoral gods; Ibycus, Anacreon and others alike were accused for having corrupted the young men with their ideas.⁹ Later on, Euripides will be charged not only with having promoted an indecent music¹⁰, but also with having ruined Athenian women by exposing in his plays their erotic adventures. The role of the poet was to elude, not to dramatize or to educate with regards to what is corrupt and

¹ Herodotus, I, 60.

² On this event see Sinos, 1993, p. 73-91.

³ Tell, 2007, p. 255.

⁴ Plato, *Protagoras*, 315a (apud Tell, 2007, p. 256).

⁵ Thomas, 2003, p. 357.

⁶ Pickard-Cambridge, 1953, p. 172.

⁷ Zanker, 1995, p. 47.

⁸ Bers, 2009, p. 32.

⁹ Ibycus, fr. 11.

¹⁰ The accusation comes from Aristophanes who dramatizes in his *Frogs* an *agon* in the afterlife between Aeschylus and Euripides.

evil.¹ Pindar appears to be at the antipode of such an image. By suppressing the the memory of failure and by forwarding the good, the poet edits the representation of human experience, so that only the greater deeds would remain to be glorified.²

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¹Walsh, 1946, p. 90-91.

²Walsh, 1946, p. 60-61.

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