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A Claudio Barocas, per molti di noi
compagno nell'impegno civile
e nel modo di intendere la ricerca

LA PAROLA, L'IMMAGINE, LA TOMBA

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DEATH AND THE SYMPOSION

Oswyn Murray

This paper attempts to establish the boundary of sympotic discourse in one direction. Its aim is to test the general conception of an opposition between death and the *symposion* in the Greek world, by confronting it with a succession of apparent counter-examples from art, literature, religious belief and ritual practices. It was undertaken initially in the expectation that I could disprove, or at least modify, the general picture; I conclude it now with a challenge to others to succeed where I have failed. In conformity with the usual experience of the cultural historian I expected to find different messages in the different areas of discourse: it is not often that art, ritual and literature speak with the same voice; here too my expectation was confounded. A number of problems of course remain unsolved, and I have tried to signal these.

The methodology combines a Popperian attempt at falsification of the scientific hypothesis with an adherence to the principles of Philippe Ariès. Generalisation about the experience of death is possible because social custom and ritual unify the field of mourning; a developed theology of the afterlife also helps, but this is absent in the Greek world. In any system of representations about death there are also tensions, and therefore slow rhythms of change. But death itself is an individual experience as well as a social one, expressed in the psychology of grief and loss: the mechanisms of ritual mourning are therefore liable to individual variation more than in most areas of religious custom: we desire to be different in death even as we recognise the necessity to conform. Any universal statement in social history is likely to be false, or at least misconceived: I have therefore searched for and welcomed the exceptions to the general pattern of beliefs, for only a rule with exceptions is likely to be a meaningful generalisation. But we should of course seek to explain the exception *.

* The paper has grown through various stages. It began as homage to the land of Ingmar Bergman, and was discussed in 1983 in Stockholm, Gjöteborg, and Oxford. In 1984-85 I presented similar ideas to audiences in Pisa, Rome, Urbino, Naples and Catania. Finally in 1987 the paper was submitted to the gathering of experts on death in Capri. I am grateful

I

ἔπειτα κείσεται βαθυδένδρωι
ἐν χθονὶ συμποσίων τε καὶ λυρᾶν ἄμοιρος
ἰαχᾶς τε παντερπέος αὐλῶν.

Then he will lie in the deep-rooted earth
and share no more in the *symposion*, the lyre,
and the sweet cry of flutes.
(Frag. 1009 Page)

This anonymous choral lyric fragment, surely from a *threnos* or ritual lament [1], expresses better than any modern comment can hope to do the dominant Greek view of death. Death is contrasted with life, it is the absence of all that there is in life — the absence of pain and suffering for some, a release from the fears and uncertainties of this world, and therefore to be welcomed. But for most it is the absence of pleasure, and pleasure is defined from Homer onwards as the pleasures associated with the drinking group:

I say there is no sweeter thing in life than when delight (*euphrosyne*) possesses all the people, and the feasters listen to the bard sitting in order in the halls, and the tables beside them are full of bread and meat, and the wine steward carries round the wine he has drawn from the *krater*, and pours it in the cups. That is the most beautiful thing I know in my heart.
(*Odyssey* 9.5 ff.)

So speaks Odysseus in the palace of Alcinous; and lyric poets echo him throughout the archaic period, singing and performing specifically in that descendant of the Homeric feast, the aristocratic *symposion* [2]. It is a world of youth, of love, sexual enjoyment and music. Already old age brings a diminution of life and its pleasures, and is therefore lamented in the poetry of the *symposion*, in Mimnermus and Anacreon especially. If old age has little place in this world, death is its negation: then he will lie in the deep-rooted earth, and share no more in the *symposion*. If the poetry of death has a certain place here, it is because intimations of mortality are often most present to a man in his moments of greatest pleasure, when intensity of life recalls its fragility: ' The grave's a fine and private place, but none I think do there embrace '.

This view of death as a world where the *symposion* has no place is mirrored in the Greek view of the status of the dead, who are physically incapable of

to all these audiences for the many useful observations and corrections that have accrued, while being painfully conscious of the many faults that remain.

[1] See below n. 31.

[2] See Murray (1983); I withdraw the remarks about the relation between the *symposion* and death made on p. 263 of that article, in favour of the results of the present paper.

partaking in a *symposion*. They may continue to exist as *psychai* in some spiritual sense, but in relation to the pleasures and functions of the body they are mere *eidola*, shadows. They do not walk or dance, they flit; they do not speak or sing, they squeak or hum or are silent. They do not eat in Hades, and it is because they do not drink that they are the ' thirsty dead ' [3]. They lack in fact the physical characteristics that could make the *symposion* a source of pleasure.

This I think we would all accept is the dominant view of the world of the dead in archaic and classical Greece: in so far as there is a general ideology of death and the after-life, it lies here. We would therefore expect a polarity between the *symposion* and death, an opposition between the highest pleasure of life and its absence in death:

οὐδεὶς ἀνθρώπων, ὃν πρῶτ' ἐπὶ γαῖα καλύψηι
εἴς τ' ἔρεβος καταβῆι, δώματα Περσεφόνης,
τέρπεται οὔτε λύρης οὔτ' αὐλητῆρος ἀκούων
οὔτε Διωνύσου δῶρ' ἐπαειρόμενος.
ταῦτ' ἐσορῶν κραδίηι εὖ πείσομαι, ὄφρά τ' ἐλαφρὰ
γούνατα, καὶ κεφαλὴν ἀτρεμέως προφέρω.

Nobody, when the earth once covers him and he descends to the darkness, the abode of Persephone, can rejoice in hearing either the lyre or the flute-player, or be gladdened by the gifts of Dionysus. Knowing this, I follow my heart's desire while my limbs are yet nimble and I bear my head unshaken.
(Theognis 973-8)

There is however a conflict between this prevailing literary conception of death and the existence of a number of categories of monument or ritual practices where death and the *symposion* have seemed to be closely related. In the last generation, the discovery of the Tomba del Tuffatore at Paestum, and the more recent discoveries of the Lycian-Greek tombs of the early fifth century in Anatolia at Elmali and Karaburun, with their very different sympotic representations, seem to make it difficult to assert that there is no connection between the *symposion* and death. The whole history of burial practices in central Italy from the first signs of Greek influence onwards seems to suggest a close relationship between tomb furnishing and a lifestyle based on social differentiation through rites of commensality. In Greece itself, the long known and often studied series of monuments from fourth century Athens, which portray what is generally called a *Totenmahl* or death feast, themselves appear to offer support to the idea of the *symposion* as a central part of the iconography of death. And of course many of the rituals of burial, or

[3] The act of drinking by the dead is associated with the journey to the Underworld in Orphic doctrines (below p. 231), and inversely to the ascent from the Underworld in the Myth of Er in Plato *Republic* 10.621; it is also part of the ritual of necromancy (below n. 35). It seems therefore to relate to an ambiguity of status at moments of transition or contact between living and dead.

festivals such as the Genesia or the Anthesteria, have been held to support a view in which the dead and the living, or the dead in the underworld, partake in the *symposion*.

Attempts to explain this apparent contradiction in the evidence usually take one of two forms. The most extreme, and also the most common, is to assert two different conceptions of death [4]. One belongs to the world of literature and high culture, in which the dead have become denatured, their status as mere shadows reflecting a process whereby their real ability to harm or benefit the living has been censored out of existence by a sort of cultural superego. On such views Homer and the Homeric epic tradition are usually seen as the villain. Opposed to this literary conception of death is another conception which belongs to the real world of death, a world where the dead continue to exist alongside the living, with needs which (if they are not fulfilled) will result in danger to the living: the placation of the dead is a constant preoccupation of the living. This picture derives much support from comparative studies of death, and belongs to that admirable attempt to assert that the Greeks are both different from us in being less rational, and also like other primitive peoples.

A development of this first approach to the problem is to link the archaeological evidence to the evidence for hero-cult, and to assert that the rituals practised in relation to the dead, sacrifices, libations and so on, are part of a set of beliefs which see the dead as heroes, at least potentially. The sympotic representations can then be connected with the gods, for the heroes can be thought to partake in that other great *symposion* in the sky. It is this nexus of attitudes which has most influenced the conception of the *Totenmahl*, which is perhaps thought of more often as a feast of the heroised dead than as a ritual feast of the living with the dead [5].

There is another form of explanation, which is more often practised on individual monuments than on sympotic funerary evidence as a whole. This is the claim that these monuments reflect the beliefs of a particular sect or sects, that is that they represent life in the Elysian Fields for those who can claim entry to that privileged group. Plato describes the rewards which Musaeus and his son Orpheus provide for the just from the gods:

> For leading them into Hades in their account, and laying them down and providing a *symposion* of the holy, they make them pass the whole of eternity crowned with garlands and drunk, in the belief that the highest reward for virtue is an everlasting intoxication.
>
> (*Republic* 2.363c-d)

[4] As explained by Rohde (1897); perhaps the most extreme versions of this approach were those of Jane Harrison (1903) and Gilbert Murray (1912). Such attitudes have gone through successive transformations since the days of the 'Cambridge School' of J. G. Frazer, F. M. Cornford, Harrison and Murray.

[5] See Harrison (1912) ch. viii; Snodgrass in this volume.

Such Orphic doctrines are often invoked to suggest that a particular group, Orphic, Pythagorean or related to the Eleusinian Mysteries, believed that by rituals in this world they could acquire the privilege of sympotic status in the next [6].

II

The most explicit evidence with which we are concerned is of course artistic; and much of this evidence has been analysed in depth by J.-M. Dentzer in his fundamental iconographic study, *Le motif du banquet couché dans le proche-orient et le monde grec du VII^e au IV^e siècle avant J.-C.* In what follows I begin from his analysis.

As Dentzer argues, portrayals of the reclining banquet scene constitute a motif or set of motifs which have artistic continuity, but not necessarily an identical meaning or function: their meaning can only be understood in terms of context or use. The main contexts in which this motif occurs in Greece are three: firstly the genuinely sympotic, portrayals of *symposia* or related scenes on vases intended for use in the *symposion*; secondly the religious, the votive offering in a sanctuary, in the form of paintings, sculptured plaques or moulded figurines; thirdly the genuinely funerary context, whether of tomb or tombstone with banqueting scene, or tomb furniture or funerary remains recalling the banquet. The iconography itself offers two basic types of representation, the representation of the sympotic group in a frieze composition, and the representation of the single banqueter with his attendants: the iconography of these two groups is largely independent, though both are represented in most types of context.

If we concentrate our attention on funerary representations, it is at once obvious that the sympotic motif, both of the extended group and of the single banqueter, is well represented on the fringes of the Greek world, and that these representations are clearly influenced by the artistic conventions of Greek art. Etruria is one obvious area where the group *symposion* and the single *symposion* have a place in funerary art so central that we must assume they had a place in beliefs about the afterlife [7]. Similarly the tombs in Lycia show the single sympotic figure of the dead man with attendant and seated female figure, painted on the wall above the bier on which the dead man lies; the motif is widespread in Anatolia [8]. These two examples show how, even within the funerary context, the significance of such scenes may vary: Etruscan representations seem closer

[6] For a general bibliography and critique of these various theories in relation to the artistic evidence, see Dentzer (1982) ch. i.

[7] On Etruscan representations see esp. De Marinis (1961), d'Agostino (1983); Stopponi (1983).

[8] For the significance of the examples in Lycia and Anatolia in general, see Dentzer (1982) ch. vi and pp. 541-52.

to a social context of commensality, and may perhaps reflect a belief in the continuity of life after death; while in Lycia the single figure appears closely related to the iconography of royalty in Assyrian and Persian art, for all its Greek colouring and Greek influence: ultimately it derives from the portrayal of the seated figure of the ruler at leisure in surroundings of luxury, and serves to establish a symbolic rank rather than a specific activity in the afterlife [9].

The artistic similarity of these representations to their Greek models does not of course allow us to assert that the ideas behind them are Greek: the beliefs about the afterlife of both Etruscans and Lycians are likely to have been different in important respects from Greek beliefs, and the artistic motif can be borrowed without there being any similarity in religious attitudes. One important fact is however worth noting about both groups. In both Lycia and Etruria societies existed which placed their dead in a monumental complex similar to or at least capable of representing the physical conditions of actual life. The sympotic motif clearly has far more meaning in a society which builds houses for its dead, which does not stuff them, cremated or inhumed, into holes in the ground: for some element of continuity of physical life after death is surely presupposed in such attempts to create proper living conditions for the dead.

The situation is very different in Greece. There are a number of isolated examples of ' sympotic ' funerary monuments, but they are comparatively rare. There is a small group of such monuments from Cyprus [10]. But elsewhere the only true series of banquet reliefs is the late fifth century and fourth century series from Athens, which is the series normally designated as the *Totenmahl* reliefs; there are of course a number of reliefs from other parts of the Greek world, mostly clearly dependent on these Attic models. It is in fact on the Attic series that the notion of a specific connection between death and the *symposion* in art in the Greek world ultimately rests [11].

The basic iconography of these reliefs is uniform, and they are not works of high art. The central figure is a banqueter, usually bearded and facing left on a couch (*kline*), with a woman seated either on a separate chair or on the couch to the left. But thereafter the iconography of the reliefs falls into two quite separate type groups which correspond to two quite separate functions. The smaller group is that of the single scene just described on an upright funerary *stele* [12]. The relief might reasonably be held to portray a husband and wife pair (R 211), but the names on the *stelai* show that this is not necessarily so. In a couple of instances (R 212, R 416) one name is placed carefully over one of the two figures: the inscription on the first of these, *Titthe chreste* (' good nurse ')

9 The relationship between social rank and funerary representation is however particularly relevant to both Etruscan and Anatolian representations; see d'Agostino (1985) and (1989).

10 Dentzer (1982) pp. 157-60, 279-82; figs. 189-208.

11 Dentzer (1982) ch. vii.

12 Dentzer (1982) pp. 347-54; nos. R 210-7, 416; figs. 466-72, 639.

without a personal name, suggests that it is a slave nurse who is being commemorated; here the male figure, if it represents anyone, must represent the commemorator. In other cases only one person is mentioned, and that person can be a man or a woman [13]. In terms of a meaningful funerary symbolism this is surely remarkable: a scene depicting an essentially male activity, from which respectable women were excluded, is capable of being used for a female burial. The social range of those commemorated and the low level of artistic skill do not encourage a belief that the *symposion* is here seen as a representation of social rank: it suggests rather that this is merely one of a stock set of funerary motifs chosen with little thought of its symbolism by the commemorator. This impression is reinforced by the facts that these *stelai* are not common [14], contain no overtly funerary symbolism, and are artistically derivative on a far larger group of reliefs.

The function of this main group is not (at least primarily) funerary, but votive; for their physical shape shows that they are designed to be displayed in a sanctuary, and their iconography is considerably more elaborate [15]. They are oblong in shape, and beside the main couple they include a number of elements not found on the funerary *stelai*. Firstly a more developed sympotic furniture, including items such as a *krater* and a slave servant (usually naked and smaller in size); and secondly a number of elements which have generally and surely rightly been interpreted as heroic or even divine. The bearded figure often wears a *polos* and often holds a *rhyton* in his right hand. More striking are two elements necessarily excluded from any well run mortal *symposion*. The first is the horse, sketched or framed on the wall, or standing by the *kline*. The second is the snake [16]. To the left of this composition is a group of worshippers usually in smaller scale: the groups are family groups, male, female and children. There is sometimes an animal being brought to sacrifice and an altar.

All these elements clearly designate this larger group of reliefs as different in character from the funerary *stelai*, as reliefs dedicated in a shrine; the working of the edges of the sculptures shows that they were often designed to fit together in rows or in a frame, rather than being free-standing. Many of them are anonymous, but others carry the name of a dedicator and dedicand. It is here that problems begin to arise. Firstly the dedication is not, as we might expect, to a divine or heroised couple, but to the male figure alone. Again the male figure is sometimes given different names, most of them heroic; but more often he is merely designated in the dative, *toi heroi*, ' to the hero '.

13 A man only R 209, 215, 217; a woman only R 210, 212, 216.

14 Dentzer (1982) p. 347 refers to ' une douzaine ' of funerary stelai, compared to ' des centaines d'exemplaires ' of votive reliefs.

15 Dentzer (1982) ch. vii, esp. pp. 301-47, 355-6.

16 The debate on the significance of horse and snake is well summarised in Dentzer (1982) pp. 490-501: the snake is certainly in general a heroic symbol, the horse less clearly so.

Occasionally the dedicand is a god, on two examples appropriately Dionysus [17]. But one particular dedication suggests this to be a secondary use of this set of motifs [18]. The relief bears the inscription:

> Ἀριστομάχη Θεωρίς Ολυμπιόδωρος ἀνέθεσαν
> Διὶ Ἐπιτελείωι φιλίωι καὶ τῆι μήτρι τοῦ Θεοῦ φιλία
> καὶ Τύχηι Ἀγαθῆι τῆι τοῦ Θεοῦ γυναικί.

Aristomache, Theoris, Olympiodoros, dedicated this to Zeus Epiteleios Philios, and to the mother of the god Philia and to Tyche Agathe the wife of the god.

The three gods invoked are a most unusual family trio, not known elsewhere as a group. Moreover there is a problem with the iconography: there are only two divine figures, the usual male and female ones — where is the mother of Zeus? She is scarcely concealed in the naked male attendant. The three dedicators are there, one male and two female, one of the women uncomfortably squeezed out of the picture onto the framing column. The explanation of Nilsson is surely the right one: the divine trio is directly related to the human trio dedicating, who are mother, son and his wife [19]. And the implication is that they have chosen a singularly inappropriate iconographic motif for their dedication. In other words, the motif is one that was in a certain sense ' mass produced ', available in stock. Worshippers and other details on the left of the scene would be added at a later stage to fit the family status of the dedicator; and occasionally the dedicator, from ignorance or personal whim, would use such a plaque for a god rather than a hero. The popularity of the motif led to its also being used occasionally on grave markers at the lower end of the market: the poor quality of the gravestones is significant for their derivative status. The primary representation is of a heroic banquet: the human *Totenmahl* does not exist as an artistic phenomenon.

In this demonstration, largely derived from Dentzer, there is of course an ambiguity, which is part of the wider problem of the status of heroes. Heroes are by definition mortal in origin; their worship recognises this, and often takes place at the hero's tomb. There are certain characteristics of these votive reliefs which might allow us to save the idea of a *Totenmahl* in a modified form. What sort of hero is being represented? It is a hero whose worshippers appear to be family groups, rather than (for instance) tribes or demes. Moreover the hero himself appears to be in a family relationship; for though the woman is never named, she is no *hetaira*: she is an Athenian matron, with that modest gesture of veiling her face with her left hand so often found in representations of respectable women. Is it not possible that the variety of heroes honoured, and the anonymity of so many of them is precisely because they are the heroised dead,

[17] R 221, 449; see Dentzer (1982) pp. 460, 505-9.
[18] R 228; fig. 483, discussed Dentzer (1982) pp. 503-5.
[19] Nilsson (1967) pp. 809-10.

the ancestors of the *gene*, or families of the living? In which case many elements of the *Totenmahl* analysis return. Yet we should note the cautionary words of Walter Burkert: ' The hero cult, in fact, is not an ancestor cult at all; its concern is with effective presence, not with the chain of blood across generations, even though founding ancestors might naturally receive divine honours ' [20].

I do not wish to enter the minefield of hero-worship and ancestor-worship in Greece. It is perhaps sufficient for my purpose to emphasise with Dentzer that these reliefs are not funerary reliefs in the accepted sense of the term: the *symposion* invoked is a *symposion* in the heroic world, not in the world of the ordinary dead or of ritual for the ordinary dead: the *symposion* relates not to the dead, but to those who have escaped death by becoming immortal. We know of course that many *thiasoi* and *eranoi,* ' founded for the sake of pleasure ' as Aristotle says (*NE* 8.1160a19), held *symposia* for, with or in the presence of their tutelary hero: the *symposion* and the feast are an intrinsic part of hero cult. Such considerations will become important when we try to interpret the funerary art of the post-classical age; for here it does seem that the increasing tendency to heroise the ordinary dead and the spread of mystery cults combined to encourage the use of sympotic and Dionysiac artistic representations in funerary contexts [21].

III

I turn now to the two most striking examples of the *symposion* in funerary art, both of which are, as far as I know, unique. Both are undoubtedly funerary monuments, and I will argue that both illustrate in different ways the incompatibility of the motif of the *symposion* with the funerary situation.

The first is a well known funeral monument from the Kerameikos at Athens of the late fourth century, from the funerary *temenos* of Lysimachides [22]. It shows two couples, male and female, on *klinai*, the woman seated, the man reclining; the two men clasp hands. Already the sympotic elements are individual, unlike those in other reliefs: the clasping of hands is a funerary gesture, not a sympotic one, and the pairing of two couples is unique. But intruding into the *symposion*

[20] Burkert (1985) p. 204.
[21] Here one may note for instance the group of painted funerary *naiskoi* from Marsala, now in Palermo Museum, dated from the 3rd century B.C. to 1st century A.D., and combining Punic and Greek elements: they clearly show the dead man as reclining hero (*Markos Sembrosios Heros Agathos*), and even the dead woman as hero (*...io... a Heroa Agatha*: but the reclining figure is still male). For photos of some of these monuments see Amadasi Guzzo (1988) p. 452; Marconi (1969) pl. 39. For Dionysiac themes in funerary art of the Hellenistic and Roman periods see the bibliography in Gasparri (1986) p. 541, and for Roman representations of *symposia* in particular, Wrede (1977).
[22] Dentzer R 199, fig. 457; discussion pp. 352-3, 538-9.

in the foreground appears a boat, rowed by an old man, who (despite the fact it seems to be a trireme) must be Charon. This remarkable and singularly tasteless combination recalls some of the bizarre excesses of the nineteenth century in our own cemeteries [23]: it also demonstrates only too clearly the difficulty of ensuring a specific funerary connotation in a sympotic scene.

Rather different problems of interpretation occur with the Tomba del Tuffatore [24]. Unlike many other funerary sympotic manifestations, it is at least certain that this was never intended to be seen, since it was painted on the inside of a coffin: it represents a private response to death. It therefore invites interpretation in relation to the beliefs of the dead man or those who buried him. But such interpretations must I think start from two observations. The first concerns the iconographic tradition within which the pictures stand. This is not in any sense a funerary tradition, but rather the same tradition which is represented on drinking vessels used in the *symposia* of the living. All the various gestures of the banqueters find ready parallels on Greek pottery. When we say therefore that the atmosphere is gay, not serious, that it is concerned with homosexual love, jealousy, the song of the lyre and the flute, we mean something very specific, that the representations and gestures of the figures are identical with those found in the portrayals of *symposia* among the living. The second observation is another way of putting the first. Leaving aside the musician, who holds what some have thought to be an Orphic egg, but which is in fact a plectrum, there is no potentially funerary element in the composition. These pictures *may* have meaning for the afterlife; but if so, we can never discover this, since all the comparative evidence relates them to life on earth.

Two possible responses may follow. We may say that this is indeed an individual's private protest against death, an assertion of life in the face of death: he has chosen to paint his tomb as a miniature *andron*, where he will lie for eternity surrounded by all that was dear to him in life: the fragments of a tortoiseshell lyre found in the tomb [25] do indeed suggest a man who, whether as professional entertainer or as skilled amateur, was a devotee of the *symposion*. In this case the tomb reflects the same code of values as the poem with which I

[23] The peculiarity of the iconography is the cause of our uncertainty about the identification: see Sourvinou-Inwood (1986) p. 217 no. 57. One is tempted to connect this monument with the contemporary dedication of a banquet relief at Eleusis also by a Lysimachides (R 234): here the iconography (with four divine banqueters, one male reclining and three females seated) is equally unusual, and its interpretation has caused as many problems: see Dentzer pp. 509-11. It may be that the family of Lysimachides was given to innovation in sympotic iconography. For the psychological phenomenon of tastelessness in contemporary funerary monuments, it is enough to take a walk in the Campo Verano at Rome, or glance at the photographs of American monuments in Vermeule (1979).

[24] On the Tomba del Tuffatore see esp. Napoli (1970) with the critique of Dentzer pp. 244-8; d'Agostino (1982).

[25] Mentioned briefly in Napoli (1970) p. 67, and now on display in the museum.

began, but in a different spirit, of defiance rather than loss: it is the last gesture of an ancient Don Giovanni, who invites Death to dine with him:

Vivan le femmine,
Viva il buon vino,
Sostegno e gloria
d'umanità

Alternatively, if the iconography does represent an attitude towards the place of the *symposion* in death, it still demonstrates, by its very failure to communicate within the Greek context, that such attitudes were sufficiently rare not to possess a specific iconography of their own. Once again by its very uniqueness this monument seems to me to suggest that death and the *symposion* belong in Greek culture to two opposed worlds. If we want to offer a social explanation of this monument, we will have to connect it with Etruscan or Lucanian attitudes to death, which could perhaps be held to have influenced the conception of death in a city such as Paestum; but such an attempt must await the discovery of a second Tomba del Tuffatore.

IV

Literature and art are products of more or less conscious attitudes to death; but, as A. D. Nock remarked, 'funerary ritual is associated in the main with the tomb and not with the afterlife as theoretically conceived, with things done and not with things held' [26]: there is no strict correlation between custom and belief. However Greek ritual practices are not in themselves conducive to regarding the dead as partaking in *symposia*: both cremation and burial in cist tombs offer too vivid a presentation of physical decomposition to make it easy to regard the dead as continuing to live in the style to which they had become accustomed during life. Most rites connected with the dead seem to be best interpreted as rites of passage for the dead into a new type of 'existence', or rites of purification for the living [27].

It was common practice in the Greek world to place objects of modest value in burials or on the pyre, and many of these are of course objects used in the *symposion*, such as drinking cups and jugs. But there is no sign of the provision of a set of sympotic objects, and many of the most monumental tombs contain little or nothing: there is a striking contrast here with the elaborate sets of equipment for feasting, the rich burials and even the provision of large amphorae of wine, found in the Italian context. The significance of the *Totenteil*, the

[26] Nock (1932) in *Essays* i (1972) pp. 286 f.

[27] Cf. Garland (1985) ch. iv.

' portion of the Dead ', is obscure perhaps even to those who make the offering; but it may involve such responses as the making of gifts to the dead as a sign of respect, the placation of the spirits of the dead, the provision of food and drink for the journey to the Underworld, and the conception that certain objects are the private property of the dead man, even contaminated by his mortality and not to be transferred to the living [28]. Such tabus have force apart from belief: even today one should not step into dead men's shoes. Offering places and offering trenches, containing food and vessels, are occasionally found connected with burials; but these are used only once, during the actual interment; and later visits to the tomb in the classical period involve its honouring with anointing and garlands, rather than any provision of food and drink specifically for the ordinary dead: such offerings seem an indication of heroic status [29]. In the Geometric period the *perideipnon* or wake was celebrated at the tomb; but this was often prohibited in the archaic and classical legislation on funerary rites, and both in Athens and elsewhere it took place in the house of the deceased. The dead man may perhaps be thought of as host, but is not actually present, and there is no empty couch for him; although he is spoken of as a subject for sympotic discourse, he is not addressed personally as in the Roman funerary *laudatio* [30]. It may however have been at such funeral *symposia* that *threnoi* or poetic laments for the dead were performed; the fragment with which I began would take on added poignancy if it were sung on such an occasion [31]. Curiously, given the importance of women in funerary rites, it seems that the *perideipnon* conformed to the usual rule for *symposia* and excluded women [32].

The dedication and display of symbols of status is perhaps the best explanation of the Attic Geometric practice of setting up *kraters* as grave markers. Originally these *kraters* seem to have been the normal mixing bowls of the living, and some even reveal signs of wear on the inside: they seem to be the markers for male graves, as opposed to *pyxides* for female ones; they perhaps signify that the dead man was the aristocratic leader of a sympotic group. Later the *kraters* are made with specifically funerary decoration. The idea that they were intended for use as receptacles of libations to the dead seems now to be discarded: they

[28] For types of offerings see Kurtz and Boardman (1971) pp. 100-2; 203-7; for the significance of the *Totenteil* see Bruck (1926).

[29] *Contra* Garland (1985) ch. vii. For the Genesia see Jacoby (1944). The evidence of tragedy is relevant to hero cult, not the cult of the ordinary dead; see Aesch. *Choeph.* 484 with the note of Garvie (1986) *ad loc.*

[30] For funerary legislation see Jacoby (1944); Ampolo (1984). The only evidence for the deceased as host is Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 5.82, which may refer to later practices.

[31] For *threnoi* see Reiner (1938); Alexiou (1974). Garland (1985) p. 146 refers to an unpublished talk by L. E. Rossi on songs suitable for the *perideipnon*.

[32] The argument for the exclusion of women from the *perideipnon* will be presented elsewhere, in the context of a review of the whole question of the presence or absence of women at family rites of transition.

have holes broken in their bases for practical reasons, either to let out the rainwater, or to render them unusable, or to enable them to be fixed to the mound by a post [33].

Again the old view that once a year the living and the dead joined in a *symposion* is now under attack. It used to be held that the festival of the Anthesteria which, according to Herodotus, defines the Ionian community in contrast to Dorian and other Greek communities, combined a festival for the opening of the wine in spring with a form of *Totenmahl*: why such a combination should occur, and why such a festival of the dead should be confined to Ionian Greeks was never clear. Recently both W. Burkert and Jan Bremmer have shown reason to doubt this interpretation [34]. The drinking contest at the feast of the Choes or Jars on the second day was indeed conducted in a manner which reversed the normal values of the *symposion* — one man to a couch, and the drinking was performed in silence — which might make it seem an occasion suitable for communion between living and dead. But these features may rather have been designed to differentiate it from the normal functioning of the non-familial sympotic grouping; for it seems in fact to have been more of a drunken family occasion, when children were introduced to the pleasures of the *symposion.* The alleged expulsion of the spirits of the dead after the festival with the cry, ' Out of the door, you Keres, the Anthesteria are over ', is now thought to refer to the expulsion of outsiders rather than ghosts, reading *Kares* (Carians) for *Keres*. It is a moot point which is the *lectio difficilior*; and I am not myself entirely convinced by this new interpretation; but it does seem clear that the entertainment of the dead is not an important part of the sympotic ritual of the feast of the Choes.

There seems therefore to be no serious sign in the general ritual practices of the Greeks that they regarded the dead as partaking in the pleasures of the *symposion*, either with the living or apart from the living, or even as needing regular sustenance in the afterlife. In this they differ from other Mediterranean cultures, such as of course especially the Egyptian, but also more significantly the Etruscan and Anatolian cultures, which were so strongly influenced by Greek sympotic practices.

[33] On *kraters* as grave markers and sexual differentiation, see Kraiker (1961); Coldstream (1968) pp. 39, 350; Kurtz and Boardman (1971) pp. 56-8, and Boardman in this volume. I owe this point originally to discussion with Barbara Bohen in Athens, 1981.

Is it perhaps in this context that we should place the custom of enclosing the ashes of the dead in *kraters* or other vessels used in the *symposion?* The custom is widespread, but has been noted especially in the west at Spina and Agrigento, because of the fine quality of the vases, and the complete absence of a funerary iconography: these are vessels created for normal use by the living. Perhaps their acceptance in the ritual of death expresses a claim to a certain social rank. See Kurtz and Boardman (1971) p. 315; Agrigento (1988).

[34] Burkert (1972) ch. iv; Bremmer (1983) pp. 109-24; for the old view see for instance Harrison (1903) ch. ii; Deubner (1932) pp. 93-122. For the little that is known about the Genesia see Jacoby (1944).

V

We can allow of one important exception, in the field of necromancy. To converse with the dead from Homer onwards it is necessary to give them the means of life. Odysseus offers the dead a trench in which he pours milk and honey, wine, water and barley, and finally blood (*Odyssey* 10.516-40; 11.24-50); these are the gifts required for substantiality. The same ritual is found in Aeschylus' *Persae* and in Herodotus' description of Periander's communion with his dead wife. Such a ritual act is dangerous precisely because it serves to bring the dead back to life [35].

It is in this context that I would place the only known example in literature of a *symposion* of the dead. The anonymous epic poem, the *Alkmaionis*, describes the vicissitudes of the seer Alkmaion son of Amphiaraos, who killed his mother at his father's request and wandered the earth pursued by Furies until he settled in Acarnania. The date of the poem is unknown, but it is earlier than Thucydides, who uses it for information about the early settlement of Acarnania (2.102) [36]. It contained the following scene:

> He laid down the corpses on a broad bed strewn on the ground, and set before them a rich feast and cups as well, and placed crowns on their heads.
> (Frag. 1 Kinkel = 2 Bernabé)

It is a strange passage; since Rohde, it has been recognised as unepic in character: he pointed out that it contained the first known literary example of the crowning of the dead [37]; it is also the only ' epic ' example of the sympotic wreath [38]. Huxley imagined that the ritual honoured the dead [39], in which case it must be related to the cult of heroes. But it is worth considering the possibility that this is no ordinary *Totenmahl*: the *Alkmaionis* was a poem full of strange events and strange practices, devoted to the art of the seer Alkmaion and his father before him. There is something eery and disturbing about this scene: it is perhaps some awesome rite of necromancy, an attempt by magical means to bring the dead back to life, or an occasion for a solemn statement of blood feud, involving joining

35 On necromancy see esp. Aesch. *Persae* 623 ff.; Herod. 5.92; Euripides F 912 Nauck; Plato, *Laws* 909b; Augustine *CD* 7.35. Discussion in Eitrem (1928); Hopfner (1921-4) index s. *Nekromantie*; Broadhead (1960) Appendix III.

36 ' One would suppose from the detail of this story that it was not well known in Thucydides ' day, or not everywhere known ' (Gomme *ad loc.*). Bernabé (1987) follows Wilamowitz in ascribing the epic to the sixth century.

37 Rohde (1897) p. 220 n. 2; generally Blech (1982) pp. 81-108.

38 The sympotic wreath was recognised as un-Homeric by Aristarchus: Severyns (1928) pp. 135-6; on sympotic wreaths Blech (1982) pp. 63-74.

39 Huxley (1969) p. 53.

the dead to the living in order to lay a curse on their slayers, not a mere mark of honour or respect for the heroic dead.

VI

It is only against such a background of general belief that we can explain the attempts of the various mystery cults to offer to initiates a life after death different from that available to the uninitiated. This offer was indeed a large part of their appeal. In the archaic and classical periods we know of the existence of Dionysiac mysteries, the mysteries of Demeter at Eleusis, and of Orphic and Pythagorean doctrines, to mention only the most clearly attested [40]. All of these promised a better or different life after death, and undoubtedly that life was conceived of as including the pleasures of the *symposion*. Plato may have been maligning the Orphics when he accused them of promising eternal drunkenness, but he was certainly repeating popular beliefs. For Herodotus describes the sceptical Greek version of Salmoxis, learned ' from those Greeks who lived on the Hellespont and the Black Sea ' (4.95). According to this account, Salmoxis was a slave of Pythagoras, who returned to Thrace very wealthy, and constructed an *andron* or room for *symposia*; he invited the leaders of the community to it and convinced them that those who were present (that is, those who partook in these strange Greek rites of the *symposion*) ' would never die, but come to a place where they would live for ever among blessings '. Then he built an underground room and lived in it for three years, before returning to convince the Thracians that his account of the afterlife was true. Herodotus does not believe the story, since he thinks that Salmoxis, if he was a man, lived long before Pythagoras. But again it demonstrates a popular Greek view that Thracian beliefs in the afterlife were connected with Pythagorean beliefs, and a popular assimilation of the group of the elect in such mysteries with the *symposion*-group; moreover we must assume that the ' all blessings ' promised after death by Salmoxis included the blessings of the *symposion*, which is the central ritual of the mystery [41].

It may seem a problem that the devotees themselves offer a very different view of the afterlife. The Orphic gold tablets found in tombs concern the journey to the holy land; but it is significant that, when the soul says, ' I am dry with thirst and I perish ', it continues ' give me to drink of the cool water that flows from the lake of Mnemosyne ' [42]; as is appropriate for an account which centres on the journey not the arrival, it is water not wine that the dusty traveller needs.

40 Guthrie (1935); Zuntz (1971); Burkert (1972) ch. v. 5.

41 On this aspect of Orphic belief see Graf (1974) pp. 98-103: ' Das Symposion '.

42 Zuntz (1971) B1 and B2, pp. 358-61. The presence of wine is however now confirmed by the two new fourth century gold tablets found in Thessaly: οἶνον ἔχεις εὔδαίμονα † τμιν † (? τμιάν Merkelbach). See Tsantsanoglou, Parassoglou (1987); Merkelbach (1989).

The most explicit accounts of the blessings of the afterlife for the initiate are given by Pindar, and they do not mention the *symposion*. Thus *Olympian* 2:

> All those who have been brave enough to keep their lives completely clear of injustice during three sojourns in each world complete the journey along the highway of Zeus to the tower of Kronos: there ocean breezes blow around the island of the Blessed, and flowers of gold are ablaze, some on dry land from splendid trees, others fed by the water; with chains of these flowers they entwine their arms and weave garlands in keeping with the upright counsels of Rhadamanthys, whom the mighty father (Kronos), husband of Rhea who has her throne above all others, has as his ready partner.
>
> (*Olympian* 2.67 ff.)

The fragments of a *threnos* quoted by Plutarch show a similar scene:

> For them the sun's strength shines below when it is night here, and the park in front of their city is among meadows with red roses and... of shady frankincense trees... and is heavy with trees that bear golden fruit. And some take their pleasure in horses and bodily exercises... others in draughts, others in lyres, and among them prosperity blossoms in full rich flower; a delightful perfume spreads over the place as they constantly bring sacrifices of all kinds to the far-shining fire on the altar of the gods.
>
> (Frags 129-131a)

This happiness is due to ' the rites that free men from toil ', that is the Mysteries.

Although in this account the *symposion* is not directly mentioned, the references to horses, sport, draughts and lyres imply that it must have been included in the normal pleasures of the Greek aristocracy available to the dead initiate. One suspects that Pindar and other writers were reticent on this subject precisely because of the popular stereotype revealed in Plato and Herodotus: the accusation of offering eternal intoxication was too close to the truth to encourage initiates to dwell publicly on this aspect. But that in turn makes it difficult to imagine a specific sympotic iconography of death deriving from the Mystery cults, if only because it is precisely this aspect which was so open to misunderstanding by the uninitiated.

* * *

My conclusion is then a definite one: though no generalisation on the subject of attitudes to death can be without exceptions, there existed in the Greek world a polarity, a more or less absolute distinction between the world of the *symposion* and the world of the dead. The occasional evidences of the sympotic lifestyle in death and the occasional exceptions are to be explained not as part of a systematic vision of the afterlife, but as a pale echo of life itself, a symbol perhaps of the status of the dead man, a defiant gesture by an individual protesting against death, part of the self-definition of an esoteric sect. Of course death, if it is to be more

than the absence of life, must be a reflection of life; but for the Greeks of the classical age that reflection was no more than an *eidolon*, a ghostly shadow. The Greeks saw death as the end of life: that was part of their pessimism. But the price must be paid somewhere: to see death as a continuation of life may give cause for optimism, yet it devalues life itself. The confrontation between death and the *symposion* concerns this attempt to come to terms with mortality. In the context of death, Dionysus of all the gods is especially described as ' the one who may not be named in this place '. The apotropaic formula occurs three times, in Herodotus (2.86.2), in the Demosthenic funeral oration (60.30), and in Plato's parody of a funeral oration (*Menexenus* 238b): it shows precisely that, although the god must not be named, he must be mentioned [43]. That is the meaning of the paradox of Heraclitus:

> ὠυτὸς δὲ Ἀίδης καὶ Διόνυσος

Hades and Dionysus, being opposites, are the same (F 15) [44]. The true mystery lies in the reconciliation of the poles of life and death.

[43] Parker (1983) p. 64 fails to note the significance of this ritual of ' reference without naming '.

[44] For a bibliography and discussion of this fragment, see Marcovich (1967) pp. 252-5; Kahn (1979) pp. 263-6.

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A. Pontrandolfo - G. Prisco - E. Mugione - F. Lafage, *Semata* e *Naiskoi* nella ceramica italiota.

In this paper about 1,500 images of funerary monuments are analyzed.

In the first period of South-Italian vase-painting, the representations of the burial relies on the stele, according to the patterns derived from Attic pottery. In the same time, Apulian ceramists create an original scheme representing the tomb: in many instances the inside of the tomb is visible, showing a male, heroic figure, thus displaying the close relations between the signs of the ritual and those defining the status of the dead.

About 380 B.C., representations of *Orestes* and *Elektra* at *Agamemnon's* tomb appear on South-Italian painted vases. The Sarpedon Painter creates a new scheme, which units real monument and ideal conceptions of the death through the superimposition of the stele on the signs of the heroized dead — real monument and ideal conception of death. About the first decades of the 4th cent. B.C., in Lucanian milieu, and particularly at Heraclea, vase — painters elaborate a new pattern, which aims to the representation of the external space — corresponding to the burial — through a vase covered by a light structure.

Starting from the second quarter of the century, in Apulian milieu, new schemes are borne out: high basement + stele on which a vase rests; plinth on high socie + huge vase; tumulus; shrine + vase inside. In the same time, we begin to find two funerary scenes on both sides of the same vase: on one side, the simple burial, on the other, metaphoric representations of death. Of those, the most complex and widespread expression in Apulian environment is the naiskos with human beings inside. In an area between Ruvo, Canosa and Arpi ceramists use to define funerary scenes in a metaphoric sense through the association with myths and underworld representations connected to eschatologic conceptions.

Finally rises the problem of the relationship with archaeological evidence: indeed, monumental semata are attested in South Italy just from the end of the 4th cent. B.C. — when figured pottery is going to disappear — and in sites as, for example, Taranto where no vase with such kind of representation has beend found.

A. Rouveret, Espace sacré/espace pictural: une hypothèse sur quelques peintures archaïques de Tarquinia.

Beside other recurrent motifs in the decorative patterns of Tarquinian archaic tomb-paintings such as the canopy, the door or the *columen* with confronted animals, the function of a fourth element is underlined: the small trees which mark the inner space of the tomb in a way which seems analogous to the delimitation of the *templum* in Roman religious traditions. After analysing the relations of complementarity or exclusion between the motif of the trees and the other ones, the connections between these structural elements and the motifs with human figures are considered. Progressively until the beginning of the 5th cent. B.C., these figurative elements, from now on recurrent in several tombs, become the fundamental structure in the general set up of the tomb-decoration. Only at the beginning of the 4th cent. B.C. does this pattern change with the introduction of genealogical representations set into the traditional banquet motif.

B. d'Agostino, Le immagini e la società in Etruria arcaica.

The aim of this paper is to investigate the relations between archaic Etruscan imagery and society. To that purpose, two particular groups of monuments may be examined: archaic tomb paintings from Tarquinia and funerary reliefs from Chiusi. In both series each monument is decorated by what may be considered a short cycle composed by four or more images.

Though they have the same funerary destination, the two series of monuments act in different ways: in the reliefs from Chiusi we are able to distinguish a male from a female repertory, the former composed by *symposion*, athletic games, warriors; the latter, on the contrary, composed only by funerary scenes such as *prothesis*, ritual mourning and similar. In the painted tombs from Tarquinia, funerary scenes are almost completely lacking and an explanation may be suggested: Tarquinia tombs are family monuments, where the dominant ideology is that of the head of the *oikos*; the gravestones from Chiusi are individual monuments: therefore they are allowed to reflect both male and female personalities. But, while for the *dominus* there exists a repertory of images reflecting seignorial activities, for the *domina* there are no other scenes than the funerary ones or, in a few cases, images borrowed from the male repertory.

L. Cerchiai, Le stelè villanoviane.

" Villanovian gravestones " is a conventional term to indicate a series of funeral monuments — *stelai* with rectangular shaft and discus finial, with engraved decoration — found in Bologna and environs and dating from the first half of the 7th cent. B.C. onwards. They are characterized by a sub-geometrical decoration and by the iconographic subjects of the goat and tree and the chariot with the charioteer.

We are dealing here with a coherent figurative program of the Orientalizing Age, elaborated in the villanovian milieu for a specifically funerary purpose: the analysis of the gifts from the related tombs, reveals the social pertinence of the phaenomenon — related with the ideological pattern of the " prince " — and a differentiation of the iconographic repertoire connected with the sex of the dead.

Finally, the interpretation of this repertoire is clarified by the study of its diffusion in our context, linked to the exchanges established — through the coastal Etrury — with the oriental (syrian and phoenician) as well as the cycladic world.

The identification of the iconographic sources helps us to investigate, on the side of iconology, the meaning of the sacred tree and of the chariot, even with the comparative utilization of the literary and iconographic greek and roman evidence.

O. Murray, Death and the Symposion.

Greek society and Greek culture in the archaic and early classical periods was organised around the *symposion* or ritual drinking group, and the pleasures associated with the *symposion* are in Greek thought the highest pleasures in life. In this respect there exists a polarity between the *symposion* and death, which is portrayed as the absence of life and of those bodily sensations which are exercised in the activities of the *symposion* — eating, drinking, singing and music,

discourse and the pleasures of Aphrodite. This Greek attitude stands in strong contrast to beliefs found in areas like Etruria and Anatolia, despite the strength of the Greek artistic influence.

Certain groups of evidence have suggested that this opposition is not as clear as it might seem. This paper seeks to understand the effect of attitudes to life on attitudes to death, and comes to the following conclusion:

1. The sculpted banquet scenes usually called *Totenmahl* reliefs belong to hero cult and not to the conception of the dead (as J.-M. Dentzer has shown).

2. Individual monuments occasionally show a *symposion* in connection with death (the Tomba del Tuffatore, the Lysimachides monument in the Kerameikos at Athens); but these works show that there was no specific sympotic iconography connected with death.

3. Although sympotic objects (cups, *kraters* etc.) are often found in funerary contexts, there is no evidence in burial customs of a sustained belief in a sympotic after-life; the funeral feast does not involve the participation of the dead, nor are offerings of food and drink regularly made to the dead. The conception of an annual return of the dead to a ritual *symposion* at the Anthesteria should be rejected. The opposition between the *symposion* and death is expressed in the ritual exclusion of the name of Dionysus from the funeral context.

4. The offering of food and drink to the dead was rather associated with necromancy and the raising of spirits: the ritual was a dangerous form of black magic.

5. It is however certain that the mystery cults in general offered the promise of a sympotic life after death, and that this was their main attraction.

6. The point of mediation between death and the *symposion* is to be found in hero cult: by public act or private belief the dead could sometimes be regarded as heroes, and as such could partake in the sympotic life of the immortals.

Thus the very rigidity of this polarity provoked a series of confrontations between life and death, which can be read as an attempt to penetrate the mystery of death, and to resolve the paradox of Heraclitus: ' Hades and Dionysus are the same '.

C. Sourvinou-Inwood, Further aspects of polis religion.

This paper discusses the role and function of priests and priestesses and their relationship to the polis, the financing of cults, the openings and closures of the religious system of the polis, and argues that it was the individual — and not, for example, the *oikos* — that was the primary, the basic cult unit in polis religion, and also that in the classical period polis religion encompased, symbolically legitimated, and regulated all religious activity within the polis, including cults which modern commentators are inclined to consider private, such as *oikos* cults.

I. Baldassarre, Alcune riflessioni sull'urbanistica di Antinoe (Egitto).

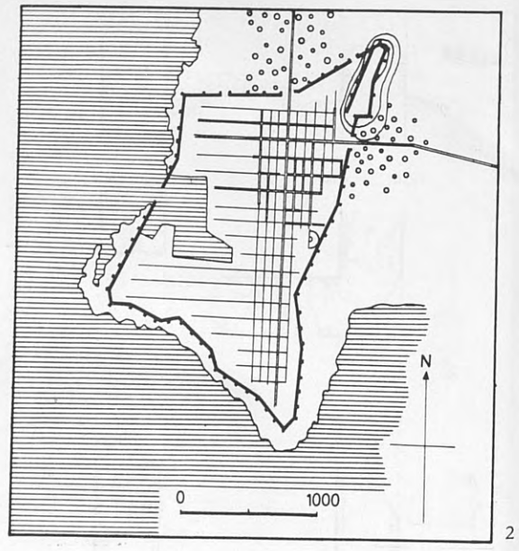
Starting from a new topographical plan of *Antinoe* made by arch. E. Mitchell in 1981-82, it is possible to recognize the basic outline of the original urbanistic lay out of Hadrianic age. The object of the paper is to investigate the principles informing such a conscious and voluntary planning act of the Emperor.

ISTITUTO UNIVERSITARIO ORIENTALE
INV. n. 14071
Dipartimento di Studi del Mondo Classico
e del Mediterraneo Antico

ILLUSTRAZIONI



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2



3

1. Pianta di Antiochia. 2. Pianta di Laodicea. 3. Pianta di Apamea.

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