

Intersections

Outline

11:47

Intro:

- Early Greek poetry, such as Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, emerged out of a living oral tradition in which poets composed and recomposed their poems in live performances. Comparative studies in modern oral poetics reveal a similar mix of improvisation and traditional language.
- In these oral, auditory environments, sound plays a crucial role not only in the creation of the poetry but in how it is received by the audience.
- Though this is the case, sound patterns have been generally disregarded in the study of early Greek poetry, considered ornaments of little consequence. Yet to ignore such an organizing principle as sound is to neglect perhaps meaningful associations within the poetry.
 - As the Irish classicist, William Stanford, asks: “Are the powers of vocal sound merely trivial—a touch of onomatopoeia here, a dash of alliteration there—or do those sounds reach deep into the creative processes of the author and into the unconscious mind of the hearer?”
- The goal of our project is to detect and visualize some of these sound patterns in early Greek poetry using digital techniques.
- In our talk, we will show several digital techniques we have applied to the corpus of early Greek poetry in order to identify and visualize these patterns of sound.
- This identification can serve at least three purposes:
 - First, in essence, these techniques act as hypothesis generators, identifying prominent sound features that merit increased attention.
 - Second, these moments of increased sonic patterning may indicate increased attention by the poet to the sound of these passages, as if, to use a car metaphor, the poet turns off the cruise control and switches to manual.
 - Finally, these sound patterns may add to other stylistic features of certain texts, authors, or genres, serving as a 'sonic finger-print' that may otherwise allude the modern audience.

Frequency charts:

word-initial segue

Alliteration:

Stephen

—Th. 752.: here alliteration interacts with another known feature of oral poetics, formulaic substitution.

—WD. 352: and here, alliteration joins etymological and morphological variation.