

This paper argues that the late-antique *vitae* of Pindar and Aeschylus are organized around geographical markers that facilitate an allegorical discussion of genre and style. By attending to the geographical overlap in these lives, we can discern an ancient appreciation of the ‘shared space’ of their poetry. The identification of this sophisticated, embedded literary criticism enhances our understanding of ancient literary biography but also has implications for current scholarly approaches to archaic poetry.

Taking my lead from Barbara Graziosi’s claim that the fictionality of ancient biography should not prevent us from seeking historical truths, albeit of a more figurative nature, in the rather fanciful tales of poets’ lives, I examine how the spaces and places in which the biographers locate their subjects can be understood as a means of articulating complex assessments of the poets’ work which were less easily expressed in the relatively impoverished critical vocabulary of the time.

I begin by establishing that the Ambrosian *vita* of Pindar is primarily concerned to explore the poet’s vast and generically diverse output. The ‘life’ is organized around anecdotes arising from the composition of poems in different genres with each compositional event further distinguished by a specific geographical location, mapping Pindar’s generic output across the Greek Mediterranean and thereby establishing a conceptual geography of poetic production.

After exploring the implications of this conceptual map, and in particular the surprisingly central position of Athens, I turn to the Aeschylean *vita*. Unlike the generically and geographically variegated biography of Pindar, Aeschylus’ life is mapped between two poles, Athens and Sicily. A close examination of the tragic poet’s relocation, late in life, to the court of Hieron reveals an engagement with the particular style of Aeschylean tragedy, locating Aeschylus’ work both in relation to the broader frame of fifth century poetry and within the more limited sphere of tragedy.

Finally, the life of Simonides is introduced as a geographical and poetic link between Pindar and Aeschylus, each of whom is said to have met him in the court of Hieron. I explore the implications of reading the maps of these three poets’ lives together, arguing that the geographic commonalities reflect the biographers’ consciousness of poetic connections in the generically distinct works of these contemporaries. If such shared poetic space was apparent to ancient critics, perhaps we should accordingly adjust our present-day conceptual maps.