

The Pomegranate: Marker of Cyclical Time, Seeds of Eternity

Matt Bennett

Assistant Professor

Electronic Media Communications

University of Cincinnati, Blue Ash

Muntz Hall 213.10, 9555 Plainfield Road

Blue Ash, OH 45236

USA

Abstract

In the established symbology of classical Greek funerary art, the pomegranate is invariably referred to as a “symbol of death” or “symbol of fertility.” A close examination of the fruit’s numerous complex associations and relationships will help to shift this reductive perception of the pomegranate to a more nuanced interpretation as a marker of cyclical time (and, by proxy, eternity), of the perceived polarity between male and female, and of a shift in the agrarian mode of production. Funeral ritual is not the only context necessary to understand the “meaning” of grave goods; in the case of the pomegranate as decorative motif, an examination of the fruit as foodstuff and as luxury good is also necessary to uncover its rich associative context. The pomegranate’s use in ancient Greek religion is well known, but to found our understanding of its symbolism in funerary art solely upon symbolic use in myth, text and oral tradition does not go far enough. We must make some attempt to tie myth and symbolism to actual practice and real-world usage, yet, given the scarcity and unreliability of primary sources on food and agriculture in the ancient world, this is no easy task. Through investigation of those few resources available, however, an altered image of the pomegranate begins to crystallize—one of the fruit as a liminal object, mediating between conditions often viewed as opposites: life and death, male and female, immediacy and eternity.

Introduction

In the collection of the J. Paul Getty Museum in Malibu, California, among the exquisite examples of the well-known styles of red and black figure Greek vases, stands an instance of a much less common type of ancient pottery (fig. 1). Attributed to either the Timokrates Painter or the Vouini Painter and dated circa 470-460 B.C., this white-ground *lekythos* was acquired by the museum in 1984 after having surfaced on the New York art market.¹ Just as with other examples of this style of pottery, the piece likely contained oil employed in a funeral ritual and was left in the grave at interment or a subsequent grave visit. Michael Vickers suggests the end of the brief use of this style of pottery coincides with the decline in popularity of cremation in Athens around 400 B.C.; however, any causal relationship between the two phenomena is questioned by Ian Morris in his book, *Death-Ritual and Social Structure in Classical Antiquity*.² In either case, the connection of this type of vessel to the death-rituals of the ancient Greeks has been clearly established, even if scholars do not agree on the exact nature of that relationship.

The iconography drawn upon in decorating the work is also indicative of its use in funerary practice. The museum’s website describes the oil jar as follows:

Intended as a grave gift, this Athenian white-ground *lekythos* depicts family members preparing to visit a loved one’s grave. The woman holds a basket filled with standard funerary offerings: ribbons, wreaths, and *aryballoi*, a type of small oil vessel. The youth holds a pomegranate, a symbol of death.³

In *Greek Burial Customs*, Donna C. Kurtz and John Boardman identify this type of scene, tomb visitation by people “bearing tokens of remembrance,” as the most prominent motif in white-ground *lekythoi*. The Getty Museum website description may have been paraphrased directly from Kurtz and Boardman’s book in identifying these tokens as “vases, garlands, and fillets,” yet *Greek Burial Customs* makes no mention of pomegranates.⁴

¹ “Acquisitions Supplement,” *The J. Paul Getty Museum Journal* 13 (1985): 170, no. 25.

² Ian Morris, *Death-Ritual and Social Structure in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 111.

³ The J. Paul Getty Museum web site, <<http://www.getty.edu/art/gettyguide/artObjectDetails?artobj=12864>>.

⁴ Donna C. Kurtz and John Boardman, *Greek Burial Customs* (London, UK: Thames and Hudson, 1971), 104.

The absence of the symbol from this otherwise extensive survey is not to say that the depiction of the fruit was unique to this vase and not an element of typical Greek funerary iconography. In fact, in first publishing this particular piece of pottery in 1989, Kurtz refrains from specifically identifying the object the youth holds as a pomegranate and instead refers to it simply as a red “fruit” (the quotation marks are Kurtz’s).⁵ More definite attribution of the fruit must have been made in the intervening time, possibly due to increased recognition of the pomegranate’s use as a funerary offering and as a motif in funerary decoration. Several other sources testify to the fruit’s prominence in Greek death ritual and imagery; for example Robert Garland in *The Greek Way of Death* writes that among food offerings for the dead such as eggs and *melitoutta* (honey-cakes), pomegranates had “special significance,” though he refrains from speculating on just what that significance might have been.⁶ Peter Garnsey, in the caption to a photograph in *Food and Society in Classical Antiquity*, provides a bit more evidence for the significance of the pomegranate and its relationship to the death ritual, but his explication remains cursory:

The laying out of the dead (*prothesis*). The basket (*kalathos*) is filled with eggs and pomegranates. Customarily symbols of life and fertility, in the funerary context they are food for the dead and carry hope for life beyond the grave. The pomegranate is associated with Persephone, wife of Hades.⁷

This often seemingly paradoxical “symbol of life” and yet “symbol of death” appears in the image adorning the Getty’s *lekythos* as a striking, singular visual detail, even among the other superbly rendered elements of the scene. Frozen for eternity in the hand of the black-robed youth who suspends it between his own face and that of the woman opposite him, the pomegranate is framed by conspicuous empty space surrounding it and the upright arm serving as its pedestal. The youth holds the fruit before him at chin-level, but his eyes appear to be directed slightly downward toward it. Though his companion appears to have her face somewhat down-turned toward her own funerary offerings, her eyes also become an index vector pointing toward the fruit. Given this rapturous attention, the pomegranate could be seen as an object of meditation, with the gazes of both the young man and woman attempting to pierce the fruit’s tough rind in deep contemplation of its mysteries. Simultaneously, the pair seem to be looking *through* the fruit at one another, participating in those mysteries concurrently as object and subject, all focused through the prism of the pomegranate.

As a result of the pomegranate’s central placement and the attention it is given by the figures within the scene, the eyes of the present-day museum-goer, witness to the historical mourning rite depicted on the vase, are also drawn to the fruit as focal point, beckoning the viewer to partake in the ritual. The importance of the pomegranate in the tableau painted on the vase is thus buttressed by the scene’s composition; however, just what is it about the pomegranate that warrants such prominence here? Can we rely on the all-too-brief descriptions of the fruit in studies of Greek burial custom mentioned above in order to fully understand the relationship it had to the dead, and thereby to the survivors who used it as a token of mourning? Is the gulf created by both the cultural and temporal transplantation of the image from classical Greece to contemporary California so great that it will not permit entrance to the mysteries being depicted for the present-day viewer?

In this paper, I argue for a shift in perception of the pomegranate as symbol of fertility and death in classical Greek funerary art to a more subtle interpretation as marker of cyclical time (and, by proxy, eternity), of the perceived polarity between male and female, and a shift in the agrarian mode of production. While death associations with the fruit are obviously still quite valid, it is far too reductive to simply refer to the pomegranate as “symbol of death” or “symbol of sex,” as is so often done. Crystallized in this fruit are numerous complex associations and relationships requiring further investigation in order to uncover the pomegranate’s significance to funerary decoration. I heed Morris’ caution in applying the methodology of “direct interpretation” to such symbols-- at the same time that he acknowledges signs as not wholly arbitrary, he also notes specifically about grave goods, “The objects themselves have little inherent meaning; their expressive force comes from their ritual context...”⁸

⁵ Donna C. Kurtz, “Two Athenian White-ground Lekythoi,” In *Greek Vases in the J. Paul Getty Museum*, Vol. 4 (Malibu, CA: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 1989), 124.

⁶ Robert Garland, *The Greek Way of Death*, 2nd ed. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), 113.

⁷ Peter Garnsey, *Food and Society in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 8.

⁸ Morris, 17-19.

I argue that ritual context is not the only context necessary to understand the “meaning” of grave goods, but in addition, in the case of the pomegranate as decorative motif, an examination of the fruit as foodstuff and as luxury good is also necessary to uncovering its rich associative context. The pomegranate’s use in ancient Greek religion is well known, but to found our understanding of its symbolism in funerary art solely upon its symbolic use in myth, text and oral tradition does not go far enough. We must make some attempt to tie myth and symbolism to actual practice and real-world usage, lest we propose meaning based upon twice-removed symbolism. Given the scarcity and unreliability of primary sources on food and agriculture in the ancient world, this is no easy task. Yet, it is a task that must be undertaken if we are to make some effort in grounding the multivalent symbolism of the pomegranate in more stable referents, perhaps still relevant for contemporary viewers.

The Pomegranate as Symbol of Death

As symbol of death, the pomegranate is well documented in sundry iconological reference texts, cited as relevant not just to the ancient Greeks, but also the Romans, Jews, Christians, and even various Asian cultures. Friedrich Muthmann’s comprehensive iconological study of the pomegranate, *Der Granatapfel*, details the fruit’s use in the art and artifacts of various cultures in the ancient world.⁹ As mentioned earlier, Garnsey cites the connection between this symbolic fruit and the mythological story of Persephone’s abduction by Hades, ruler of the underworld, a lineage well established by other scholars. Commanded by Zeus to allow his captive’s return to the surface to visit her mother, Demeter, Hades does so, but only after binding Persephone to the underworld by tricking her into eating food there: “But he on his part secretly gave her sweet pomegranate seed to eat, taking care for himself that she might not remain continually with the grave, dark-robed Demeter.”¹⁰

It is probably this specific mythological reference with which most contemporary scholars are familiar, yet the pomegranate has had a long history of association with several female deities, not just Persephone. Muthmann, in his chapter on ancient Greece, does include a detailed examination of representations of this story, but before doing so, he traces a lineage of imagery in which the pomegranate is connected with other prominent goddesses such as Aphrodite, Hera, and Athena, as well.¹¹ Michael Byrne confirms associations with Aphrodite, who was traditionally believed to have planted the tree in Cyprus, and with Hera.¹²

Sara Immerwahr has also identified its connection with feminine deities in ancient Greece, assigning particular characteristics of the fruit to a particular goddess:

...its beauty making it an appropriate attribute for Aphrodite, the multiplicity of its seeds with the idea of fruitfulness appropriate for Hera the marriage goddess, and its blood-red juice a symbol of life in death appropriate to the Underworld and the cult of Demeter and Persephone.¹³

To refer to the pomegranate as a “symbol of death” means to ignore the broader associations established with other female deities unrelated to the journey to the underworld. The death attribute is quite strong, however, and evidenced in other cultures such as ancient Egypt as early as the 18th Dynasty, so it cannot be discharged.¹⁴ However, Immerwahr here carefully words her attribution as “life in death.” This helps to resolve the seemingly irresolvable paradox of a fruit that can symbolize life in some contexts and death in others. Conventional dualistic thinking would lead to the conclusion that something with the ability to symbolize polar opposites really symbolizes nothing. The pomegranate, then, might be more accurately described as representing a liminal state in ancient Greek mythology, the threshold of life and death and the transition between the two. In this way, it can simultaneously hold seemingly opposite meanings, and at the same time reveals much about the Greek conception of an afterlife. If Garnsey’s description of the pomegranate as food for the dead is correct, it would imply that the dead, in the common ancient Greek view, enacted some of the same behaviors as in life.

⁹ Friedrich Muthmann, *Der Granatapfel: Symbol des Lebens in der Alten Welt* (Fribourg, Switzerland: Office du livre, 1982), n.p.

¹⁰ Hesiod, “To Demeter,” in *The Homeric Hymns and Homerica*, Loeb Classical Library, 1982, 315.

¹¹ Muthmann, 39-100.

¹² Michael Byrne, “The Pomegranate in Modern Greek Folklore and Ancient Greek Religion,” *Revue des archéologues et historiens d’art de Louvain* 26 (1993): 166.

¹³ Sara A. Immerwahr, “The Pomegranate Vase: Its Origins and Continuity,” *Hesperia* 58, no. 4 (1989): 408.

¹⁴ Immerwahr, 405.

It also means that a real food offering can be passed from the hands of the living to those of the dead. Ian Morris admits the Greek and Roman belief in food offerings as nourishing the dead, but argues that this process “must have involved the sort of willing suspension of disbelief which is typical of all ritual discourse.”¹⁵ Whether believed to be real or simply ritualized, it is this translation of the object from the realms of life to those of death that the pomegranate most succinctly represents-- the locus of communion between the two.

As such a trope, the pomegranate is an appropriate motif in the decoration of white-ground *lekythoi*, pottery whose own purpose seems to mirror this meaning. H. A. Shapiro, in “The Iconography of Mourning in Athenian Art,” describes *lekythoi* as “a form of personal communication and communion between the surviving family and the loved one into whose tomb they were placed.”¹⁶ The pomegranate, too, could be defined in this way and, thus, the young man holding the fruit in the white-ground *lekythos* at the Getty might be seen as engaging in a figurative *dexiosis*, or handshake between the living and dead often depicted on gravestones but infrequently occurring on *lekythoi*.¹⁷ Through the pomegranate, the young man and woman on the vase are sharing in the mystery of that transition between life and death.

The Pomegranate as Feminine Symbol

The frequent references to the blood-like fluid of pomegranates reiterate the symbolism of life and death and also connect it firmly to reproduction. Often, the pomegranate is flippantly referred to as “a sexual symbol,” with no further elaboration, as done by Daniel H. Garrison in his *Sexual Culture in Ancient Greece* when discussing the fruit’s relationship to both Persephone¹⁸ and to Athena.¹⁹ While purported to represent fecundity and fruitfulness, in actual usage during classical antiquity and the Middle Ages, the rinds of the fruit were common ingredients in recipes for oral contraceptives and served as abortifacient vaginal suppositories. (Modern science has found the pomegranate’s perceived negative effects on fertility to have some basis in reality.)²⁰ In this regard, the pomegranate again shows its capacity for contradiction. Its associations with both sex and death, while not in complete opposition, do again complicate the symbolism of the pomegranate in its ability to represent seemingly conflicting properties. To attempt the resolution of this conflict, one must examine the relationship between death and sexual reproduction and the roles of women in ancient Greek society.

For the ancient Greeks, these two signs bound up in the fruit are made manifest in the responsibilities of women, who were charged with the care of both corpses and babies. Women, because of menses and childbirth, were already viewed as a source of natural impurity, or *miasma*; since they were already unclean, they would be no more polluted by handling a corpse.²¹ The responsibilities accompanying death and reproduction customarily assigned to women and the joining of these functions symbolically in the pomegranate reaffirm the reading of the fruit as a symbol of the liminal state between life and death. Michel Foucault, in his seminal study of the history of sexuality, examined the inextricable bond between sexuality and death in ancient Greek culture, as reflected in the medical and philosophical texts. One of the reasons he argues for this bond is their perception of the purpose of reproduction as a compensation for death, providing an eternity for the species that was unavailable to the individual and a means of cheating death:

For Aristotle and Plato alike, the sexual act was at the point of junction of an individual life that was bound to perish—and from which, moreover, it drew off a portion of its most precious resources—and an immortality that assumed the concrete form of a survival of the species.²²

¹⁵ Morris, 104.

¹⁶ H. A. Shapiro, “The Iconography of Mourning in Athenian Art,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 95, no. 4 (October 1991): 653.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 654

¹⁸ Daniel H. Garrison, *Sexual Culture in Ancient Greece* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000), 29.

¹⁹ Garrison 191.

²⁰ J.M. Riddle, “Oral contraceptives and early-term abortifacients during classical antiquity and the Middle Ages,” *Past Present* 132, no. 3 (1991), as cited in David W. Still, “Pomegranates: A Botanical Perspective” in Navrinda P. Seeram, Risa N. Schulman, and David Heber, eds, *Pomegranates: Ancient Roots to Modern Medicine* (Boca Raton, FL: Taylor & Francis, 2006): 200.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 634

²² Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité: L’Usage des plaisirs*, 1984, trans. by Robert Hurley, Vintage Books Edition (New York, NY: Random House, 1990), 133-34.

Foucault concludes from this, “Hence sexual activity was located within the broad parameters of life and death, of time, becoming, and eternity.”²³ In a belief system that did not concern itself with reincarnation, this concept comes closest to asserting that life is cyclical in nature, if not for the individual, at least for the Greeks as a people. The pomegranate, as a visual symbol, shares in the connection between death and reproduction as outwards sign of an invisible eternity. This connection is decidedly coded as feminine in the Greek systems of mythology and philosophy; this gendered coding is reiterated in visual representation.

With so many sources aligning the pomegranate with female deities in ancient Greece and its associations so closely tied to the responsibilities of women, it might seem strange that a young man should be holding it on the Getty’s vase. Much less established are the fruit’s associations with male qualities, yet there is evidence for this connection. Marilyn Arthur, in her psychoanalytic reading of the myth of Persephone, cites the work of Kerényi Károly in his writings on celebrations to Demeter as defining two groups of plants according to their correlation with deities of either human biological sex. The pomegranate notably falls under both categories, female for its womb-like shape and blood-like fluid, male for its seeds.²⁴ Here too, the pomegranate as symbol has the possibility of reconciling opposites and overcoming the limits of dualistic thinking.

The fruit cannot be simply associated with the female, but simultaneously holds both male and female within its symbolic rind—womb and seed, the union of male and female. This would account for its popular recognition as a symbol of marriage and fecundity and yet unbalances the union of sexes in reaffirming associations with Hera, a female divinity whose oversees such union in marriage. Customarily, realistic votives of the pomegranate were offered to Hera, and many have been found in the excavation of her early sanctuary at Samos.²⁵ The fruit as symbol of the union of male and female also reaffirms its association with Persephone, whose unbroken union with Hades was sealed by her eating of the pomegranate seeds, the myth of which, for Marilyn Arthur, resolves the polarity of male and female.²⁶ This resolution signals a transition from matriarchy to patriarchy after several attempts to resist male domination,²⁷ yet concludes with the gift of agriculture to humankind.²⁸

The Pomegranate as Agrarian Symbol

Agriculture played a large part in the ritual of archaic Greece and in the mindset of a people who believed in an eternal humanity. As mentioned, Foucault argues this belief from the perspective of sex and death. Those phenomena are closely tied to the ancient agrarian cult that came to be associated with Demeter and Persephone, in which a new crop was seen as springing up from the old. Martin P. Nilsson in *Greek Folk Religion*, thus assigns a continuity to the rites of the Eleusinian Mysteries (at which, notably, the pomegranate was seen as a taboo food²⁹) and a belief in eternity:

So it was possible to develop on the foundation of the old agrarian cult a hope of immortality and a belief in the eternity of life, not for the individual but for the generations which spring one from another... The hope and the belief and the morality were those of the end of the archaic age.³⁰

He cites Pindar in confirming the Eleusian Mysteries’ cyclical view of life: “Happy is he who, having seen this, goes beneath the earth; he knows the end of life and he knows its god-sent beginning.”³¹ Humans, upon death, were sewn in the earth to raise a new generation, as viewed through an agrarian lens. However, Nilsson sees this conception of eternity shifting at the end of the fifth century B.C. toward an interest in individual immortality, accompanied by the forgetting of agriculture as “the old foundation of human civilization.”³²

²³ Ibid., 135.

²⁴ Marilyn B. Arthur, “Politics and Pomegranates: An Interpretation of the Homeric Hymn to Demeter,” *Arethusa* 10, no. 1 (Spring 1977): 29.

²⁵ Immerwahr, 407.

²⁶ Arthur, 11.

²⁷ Ibid., 8.

²⁸ Ibid., 33.

²⁹ Garland, 158.

³⁰ Martin P. Nilsson, *Greek Folk Religion*, 1940, reprint (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1961), 63.

³¹ Ibid., 59.

³² Ibid., 63.

Most urban, elite city dwellers no longer produced their own food (although Garnsey admits that some of them must have worked on farms in the vicinity of the cities³³) and became divorced from a direct understanding of agriculture and a seasonal calendar based upon it. This industrialization and commercialization signals a shift not only in the structures of production, distribution, and consumption for the Greeks, but also a shift in the conceptions of time and eternity in their dominant worldview. Guy Debord, in *La société du spectacle*, succinctly describes how myth developed to confirm a cosmic order based upon agrarian production and the rhythmic change of seasons.³⁴ The tale of Persephone and Demeter, one such myth, “explains” life in terms of cyclical time and was constructed as an explanation for the naturally occurring agricultural calendar based on Persephone’s regular journeys between the lands of the living and dead. The gift of grain is bound up in the symbol of the pomegranate not just through this tale, but also linguistically, as the Greek word *kokkos* can be interpreted as pomegranate seed, grain, or genitals.³⁵ This linguistic conflation mirrors the conflation of textual and artistic usage of the fruit as symbol of sexual union and as a reminder of cyclical time.

The concept of linear time replaced cyclical time for urban-dwellers as populations in the towns grew, and, as Nilsson notes, the “old rustic cults” became insufficient in meeting changed social needs.³⁶ But for agricultural laborers, there was still an understanding of cyclical time and a reliance upon the pomegranate as a marker of it. Still today in Greece, the connection between the pomegranate and the cycle of agriculture remains, as evidenced by the common practice of farmers at Epidauros splitting the fruit on the ploughshare, mixing its arils with the first seed and throwing it over the field in hopes of a good harvest.³⁷ Sowing and the prospect of harvest, the full cycle of growth and reaping, are combined in this ritual. The pomegranate’s connection with fruitfulness would justify such usage, even possibly in ancient times. The shrub from which the fruit grows survives in semi-arid conditions with no additional irrigation and was believed to be, in popular thought, drought-resistant.³⁸ This hardiness, combined with its symbolic fruitfulness, makes the pomegranate an attractive amulet for the bountifulness of agriculture.

However, one must question the accessibility of the fruit to the common farmer in ancient Greece to be used for such purposes. Several scholars have argued that the pomegranate was historically a luxury good for the Greeks, available only to the elite. Cheryl Ward, in her study of pomegranate remains found in the excavation of the late 14th century B.C.E. Ulubrun shipwreck, refers to the fruit as a “non-staple”³⁹ and a “luxury food” largely because of the other luxury items accompanying it on the ship.⁴⁰ Immerwahr cites Theophrastus in locating Asia Minor as an important center for production of the fruit in “historical times”⁴¹ and identifies an interruption in availability on the mainland after the Mycenaean trade routes were disrupted until contact was established with the Phoenecians. She goes on to question the growing of the pomegranate in mainland Greece during the Geometric period.⁴²

Certainly, by the late Hellenistic period, the fruit was well-known to writers, such as Dioscorides, who praised it for its astringent qualities, and Columella, who wrote of its use as a flavoring for wines.⁴³ But even in this later period, textual evidence by upper class authors does not mean that the common people had access to the fruit or yet grew it themselves. In fact, Immerwahr argues that the pomegranate’s “exotic nature” and oriental origins “may have contributed to its appropriateness as an attribute for divinities and as a gift for mortals in their journey to the Underworld.”⁴⁴ Its inaccessibility may have made it the perfect object for embodying irresolvable mysteries.

³³ Garnsey, 29.

³⁴ Guy Debord, *La société du spectacle*, 1967, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York, NY: Zone Books, 1995), 93.

³⁵ Garrison, 86.

³⁶ Nilsson, 101.

³⁷ Byrne, 165.

³⁸ Still, 202.

³⁹ Cheryl Ward, “Pomegranates in Eastern Mediterranean Contexts during the Late Bronze Age,” *World Archaeology* 34, no. 3 (February 2003): 530.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 538.

⁴¹ Immerwahr, 408.

⁴² Immerwahr, 409.

⁴³ Ward, 531.

⁴⁴ Immerwahr, 409.

Conclusion

The pomegranate, from its varied and often conflicted iconography in classical Greece, retains potency as a symbol today, but may require some attempt at reconciling its contradictions in order to be meaningful. It is not sufficient to say the fruit represents life in one context and that it represents death in another, or to say that it represents fertility and yet was used as an abortifacient and contraceptive. Instead, a more nuanced understanding of the fruit as a liminal object, mediating between two seemingly opposite states of being, will help to explain how the pomegranate historically has held such paradoxical referents.

So, in reflecting upon the motif of the pomegranate held in the youth's hand on the white-ground *lekythos* at the Getty Museum, a richness of meaning begins to emanate from the simple fruit. Its multivalence helps to reiterate the importance of the occasion depicted in the tableau: a grave visit. Male and female, by leaving grave goods such as the pomegranate, are participating in the transitional state between life and death. The young man holds up the pomegranate as a reminder of lost cyclical time and as a hope for eternity. This scene, as Shapiro suggests of similar compositions adorning *lekythoi*, betrays "a less immediate experience of death and grief, one filtered through the medium of art, performance, and ideology."⁴⁵ But, in the hesitation of this calculated step back from the immediacy of death, the viewer is given the opportunity to contemplate life, union, and immortality.

References

- "Acquisitions Supplement." *The J. Paul Getty Museum Journal* 13 (1985): 170.
- Arthur, Marilyn B. "Politics and Pomegranates: An Interpretation of the Homeric Hymn to Demeter." *Arethusa* 10, no. 1 (Spring 1977): 7-47.
- Byrne, Michael. "The Pomegranate in Modern Greek Folklore and Ancient Greek Religion." *Revue des archéologues et historiens d'art de Louvain* 26 (1993): 165-169.
- Debord, Guy. *La société du spectacle*. 1967. Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith. New York, NY: Zone Books, 1995.
- Foucault, Michel. *Histoire de la sexualité: L'Usage des plaisirs*. 1984. Translated by Robert Hurley. Vintage Books Edition. New York, NY: Random House, 1990.
- Garland, Robert. *The Greek Way of Death*. 2nd ed. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985.
- Garnsey, Peter. *Food and Society in Classical Antiquity*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Garrison, Daniel H. *Sexual Culture in Ancient Greece*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000.
- Hesiod. *The Homeric Hymns and Homeric*. Loeb Classical Library. 1982.
- Immerwahr, Sara A. "The Pomegranate Vase: Its Origins and Continuity." *Hesperia* 58, no. 4 (1989): 397-410.
- The J. Paul Getty Museum web site. <http://www.getty.edu/art/gettyguide/artObjectDetails?artobj=12864>
- Kurtz, Donna C. *Athenian White Lekythoi: Patterns and Painters*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1975.
- _____. "Two Athenian White-ground Lekythoi." In *Greek Vases in the J. Paul Getty Museum*. Vol. 4. Malibu, CA: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 1989. 113-130.
- Kurtz, Donna C. and John Boardman. *Greek Burial Customs*. London, UK: Thames and Hudson, 1971.
- Morris, Ian. *Death-Ritual and Social Structure in Classical Antiquity*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Muthmann, Friedrich. *Der Granatapfel: Symbol des Lebens in der Alten Welt*. Fribourg, Switzerland: Office du livre, 1982.
- Nilsson, Martin P. *Greek Folk Religion*. 1940. Reprint. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1961.
- Seeram, Navrinda P., Risa N. Schulman, and David Heber, eds. *Pomegranates: Ancient Roots to Modern Medicine*. Boca Raton, FL: Taylor & Francis, 2006.
- Shapiro, H. A. "The Iconography of Mourning in Athenian Art." *American Journal of Archaeology* 95, no. 4 (October 1991): 629-656.
- Ward, Cheryl. "Pomegranates in Eastern Mediterranean Contexts during the Late Bronze Age." *World Archaeology* 34, no. 3 (February 2003): 529-541.

⁴⁵ Shapiro, 625.



Fig. 1. Attributed to Timokrates Painter, vase-painter; attributed to Vouini Painter, vase-painter.

Oil Jar with a Woman Carrying a Basket of Offerings,

ca. 470 B.C. – 460 B.C.

Terracotta, 35.6cm x 6.5cm x 12.1cm.

Malibu, CA: The J. Paul Getty Museum.

84.AE.745