

## BOOK REVIEW

*Music, Text, & Culture in Ancient Greece*. Edited by TOM PHILLIPS and ARMAND D'ANGOUR. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2018. Pp. xiv + 279. Hardback, \$88.00. ISBN: 978-0-19-879446-2.

This collection, which originated in a 2013 Oxford workshop, aims at opening up the study of the musical aspect of Ancient Greek song, a study which the editor's note has been largely the province of a relatively small pool of specialists, to a broader field of classicists. The volume's first part concentrates on how the musical and linguistic features of different texts, spanning archaic epic to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, interact in various, meaningful ways. The second addresses more theoretical matters, such as ancient views on musical education and the aesthetic and sublime effects of music.

The introduction usefully reviews the individual contributions and telegraphs the collection's prevailing theoretical concerns; for instance, the intermediality of Greek song, referring here to the interaction between different media within a single work, and to the transposition of one artistic medium into another. After the introduction, the volume opens with John Franklin's "Epicentric tonality and the Greek lyric tradition," a study of the *mesē* (the central string of a lyre), and "epicentric tonality," that is, the use of the *mesē* as a tonal anchor in the different modal tunings used in Greek lyric song, a practice that Franklin argues was borrowed from Mesopotamian music. The chapter ends by considering the symbolic significance that the *mesē* acquired over time, and the implications of epicentric tonality for the reconstruction of ancient song.

The following two chapters are concerned with the interaction between the music and language of ancient poetry. In "The musical setting of ancient Greek texts," Armand D'Angour studies melodic effects in three works from different periods, and argues that they demonstrate a continuity within the ancient musical tradition. The texts studied are the openings of the Homeric epics; a choral ode from Euripides' *Orestes*, the music for which has survived in Vienna papyrus G2315; and lastly the 2<sup>nd</sup>-century AD "Song of Seikilos." In these close readings, D'Angour draws attention to moments where melodic cues are used to emphasize

thematically significant words and to indicate the continuity of sense or syntax, and where melody seems to imitate language. Tom Phillips' chapter, "Words and the musician: Pindar's dactylo-epitrites," studies three passages from the epinicia for the various ways in which rhythm seems to imitate and even to inflect linguistic meaning. Phillips also offers a nuanced reading of Pindar's exploitation of strophic responsion and rhythmic effects in the paired descriptions of Olympus and Aetna in the opening of *Pythian* 1.

Phillips' discussion of the power of rhythmic responsion between strophes to draw out underlying thematic parallels segues nicely into Oliver Thomas' "Music in Euripides' *Medea*." Thomas argues, from Athenaeus 276a and 453c-454a, that Euripides likely made use of *melodic* responsion in the choral odes of the *Medea*. He then shows that musical discourse crops up throughout this play, in the arguments the nurse and chorus make for innovation in music and gender roles, and lays out a scenario in which melodic responsion might have served to ironize rather than reinforce these ideological stances.

The first part of the volume is closed off by Stelios Psaroudakis' "Mesomedes' *Hymn to the Sun*." Psaroudakis analyzes this 2<sup>nd</sup>-century song, with a special focus on the music's imitative effects. He also identifies an interesting formal feature of its music, namely end-line sequences of three short syllables, which might serve to signal the end of the song.

The second part opens with Naomi Weiss' excellent chapter on mediality in Euripides, "Hearing the syrinx in Euripidean tragedy," which looks at Euripides' habit, in his later plays, of conflating the syrinx and aulos through verbal references and by using the aulos to provide the music during scenes of syrinx-playing. In this way, Euripides seems to follow trends in New Music, which prized the aulos for its mimetic versatility. In conflating these two instruments, Euripides also seems to aim, at least partly, at capitalizing on the symbolic associations of the rustic syrinx and the urbane aulos.

Anastasia-Erasmia Peponi, in "Lyric atmospheres: Plato and mimetic evanescence," shows that in the *Republic*, *Laws* and *Phaedrus*, Plato expresses an anxiety over the potential for the aesthetic effect of music to destabilize linguistic meaning, especially in the case of melic song. She concludes her chapter with a sensitive reading of the *Phaedrus*, in which she shows that the same aesthetic affect that Socrates ascribes to song—Peponi refers to its "*Stimmung*" or "atmosphere"—also permeates the liquid environment of the Attic countryside in which the dialogue is set.

Pierre Destrée, in his chapter, "Aristotle on music for leisure," argues that Aristotle advocates for a system of education in which children are made to study music, and specifically ethical songs, with a view towards producing adults capable of appreciating the aesthetic qualities of song, and of exercising their theoretical "intelligence" (here, *phronēsis*) in the contemplation of musical performance.

James Porter's, "Sounds you cannot hear: Cicero and the tradition of sublime criticism," lays out the historical and conceptual ties between Cicero's view of the ideal orator and the theory of euphony developed by the *kritikoi*, and how they anticipate Longinus' theory of the sublime. Fundamental to Porter's chapter, one of the best in the collection, is how soundlessness, or gaps between sounds, is both a precondition for understanding speech and music and an avenue through which sublime experiences might be produced.

In the volume's final chapter, "Disreputable music: A performance, a defense, and their intertextual and intermedial resonances (Plutarch *Quaest. conv.* 704c4-705b6)," Andrew Barker studies a speech made on behalf of unseemly music in the *Quaestiones Convivales*, and argues that the argument is subverted by an inexperienced use of Platonic and Aristotelean philosophy. Barker also discusses the potential intermediality of Plutarch's description of the performance.

There is much to commend about this collection, which successfully highlights the careful attunement of text and music, as well as the richness of ancient musical discourse. Some of the musical effects identified in the first part of the volume might be debated; interpretations of the imitation of text in music are bound to be subjective, and, as Phillips (87) himself admits, in such a small sample of close readings, some instances of text-music interaction might be accidental. This provisionality does not detract from the high quality of the volume, but rather points to possible lines of research in an exciting and still emerging field.

HANSJORGEN HANSEN

*Radboud University*, H.Hansen@let.ru.nl