

BOOK REVIEW

Intervisuality. New Approaches to Greek Literature. Edited by ANDREA CAPRA and LUCIA FLORIDI. Berlin, DE and New York, NY: De Gruyter, 2023. Pp. 6 + 347. Hardback, €129.00. ISBN: 9783110795240.

While intervisuality has become a common notion in film studies and mediaeval art history, classicists have hardly ever used it. It is the editors' main goal to apply it to Greek literature, although they pointedly bracket the very term "literature," which has no real equivalent in ancient Greek and is somewhat misleading when it comes to discuss a corpus of texts imbued with orality and inextricably linked with the visual arts. In fact, that is why intervisuality has mileage for the Greek world especially. It is surprising that the notion has taken so long to land in the field.

A very clear introduction explains the project and explores the potential of intervisuality for Greek "literature." It contains a theoretical part that points forward to the opening paper by Aglae Pizzone. Four possible "takes" on intervisuality are outlined: "intervisuality as interfigurativity"; "intervisual patterns"; "intervisuality as interperformativity"; "intervisual reading." Each of them is clearly and usefully described with reference to the seminal work of such influential scholars as Camille and Mirzoeff, who have successfully developed the notion in other areas of the humanities (M. Camille, *Gothic Signs and the Surplus: The Kiss on the Cathedral*, Yale French Studies. Special Issue. *Contexts: Style and Values in Medieval Art and Literature*: 1991, 151-170; N. Mirzoeff, *An Introduction to Visual Culture*, London, New York 1999; N. Mirzoeff, *The Subject of Visual Culture and Introduction to Plug-in theory*. In *The Visual Culture Reader*, ed. N. Mirzoeff, 3-23, 111-115. London, New York 2002², 1st ed. 1998).

As is natural, intervisuality is discussed with reference to its linguistically twin notion, namely, intertextuality. The latter tends to be self-contained, in that it is by and large devoted to the study of text linked with, and referring to, other texts. By contrast, intervisuality, as used in the volume, is about texts evoking mental images with reference to a visual repository shared by authors and audiences. As

such, it is quintessentially intermedial and multidirectional. For example, a text may evoke an image that in turn points back to an image triggered by an earlier text, while at the same time drawing from a well-known visual artefact, through forms of interference that call to mind what philologists term “contamination.”

Greek “literature” is exceptionally rich with such examples. The four “takes” borrowed from other fields may be insufficient to describe such a multi-faceted variety, and that is why the introduction includes a fascinating discussion of Socratic iconography and its intersections, both visual and literary. This complex example nicely illustrates all four “takes” of intervisuality while at the same time exceeding them, thus calling for further theoretical reflection. Accordingly, the editors have asked the contributors, and by extension anyone working in the field, to further explore the notion and adjust it to the specific nature of Greek “literature.”

The volume discusses a wide selection of authors and texts, both in prose and verse, from the Archaic age to Late Antiquity, with an interesting coda by archaeologist Matteo Cadario on Roman texts (and images). The thirteen papers included in this collection are authored by established scholars whose participation in the project speaks for itself. Space constraints prevent me from a full discussion of their contents. I limit myself to briefly sketching the main topics.

The papers are arranged in four parts. Part 1, “*In limine*,” includes, after the editors’ Introduction and Pizzone’s chapter, an impressive paper by Anton Bierl on Aeschylus’s *Oresteia*, which complements, with its many illuminating readings of single passages and its enhanced theoretical awareness, the theoretical framework provided by both the editors and Pizzone. The volume then follows a neat chronological order: Part 2, “Archaic and classical age,” includes papers by George Alexander Gazis (Homeric duels analysed in the light of Bronze age seals), Riccardo Palmisciano (intervisuality in the Greek symposium), Carmine Catenacci (portraits of tyrants, poets, and artists), Cecilia Nobili (intervisual allusions to Athenian public spaces in the works of lyric poets) and Lucia Athanassaki (on the political significance of Euripides’ dialogue in the *Erechtheus* with three important Athenian temples); Part 3, “Hellenistic and Imperial age,” features contributions by Benjamin Acosta-Hughes (on the cult of Arsinoe-Aphrodite in images and texts), Ewen L. Bowie (on the mechanisms of intervisuality in declamation and sung poetry in imperial Greek cities), Lucia Floridi (intertextual and intervisual allusions in Lucian’s *Dialogues of the Sea-Gods* 15), Évelyne Prioux (on Philostratus the Elder and his much debated relationship with Roman poetry, most notably Ovid) and Regina Hörschele (on Aristaenetus’ intervisual allusions to Philostratus); Part 4, “Pointing to Rome,” consists solely of Cadario’s

paper, which explores the visual dimension of *res gestae* with reference to the Roman reception of the *Iliad* in such artefacts as the *Tabulae Iliacae*, and is a very welcome addition, in that it points to future research paths by showing the relevance of Roman imagery to our understanding of Greek culture.

Broader thematic clusters emerge throughout the book: both Nobili and Athanassaki, for instance, deal with architecture; Philostratus is the protagonist of both Prioux's and Höschel's paper; both Floridi and Prioux face the issue of whether Imperial Greek authors could read Latin literature etc.

The book is very well produced, with abundant and excellent images. Typographical errors are virtually non-existent (I could spot none). Detailed indexes and cross-references among the papers give a sense of internal coherence and help the reader navigate this extremely rich collection of essays.

In conclusion, the editors should be praised for producing a thought-provoking volume. While they insist that theirs is just a modest and provisional proposal, the volume is no doubt refreshing and can prove very impactful in the future.

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