

ATHANASSAKI (L.) **Aeideto Pan Temenos: hoi Chorikes Parastaseis kai to Koino tous stēn Archaikē kai Prōimē Klasikē Periodo.** Herakleio: Crete University Press, 2009. Pp. 385, illus. €22. 9789605242923.
doi:10.1017/S0075426911000218

The performance practices of a given culture and the socio-political context within which they take place shed light on one another. Athanassaki's study puts a specific and interesting twist on this generally accepted view. One of the author's principal aims is to investigate the evolving dynamic between the performing chorus, on the one hand, and the watching audience, on the other, as well as how this affected interpretation and appreciation of the choral act with all its political and cultural implications.

Athanassaki's main interpretive strategy centres on a taxonomy: choral poetry meant to be performed in public spaces and in the course of *polis*-related rituals is distinguished from that meant to be performed in more private, *symposion*-related, rituals. In the first category the author investigates Pindaric odes such as *Olympian* 14, *Pythian* 6 and 7 as well as Bacchylides' *17th Ode*. In the second category she analyzes Pindaric odes such as *Nemean* 1 and 9 as well as *Olympian* 1. Although Athanassaki clearly believes that these two considerably different performance environments encourage different modes of encoding and deciphering socio-political data, her approach is far from schematic or bipolar. On the contrary, in her first chapter, which includes readings of such poems as Alcman's *Louvre Partheneion* and Bacchylides' *18th Ode*, Athanassaki explains how, along with the reality often registered within a choral song, a second layer of imaginary projections is at work. Thus a careful reader of her book is encouraged to think that each choral song, although primarily meant to represent and comment on its spatio-temporal reality, in fact manipulates the way in which this reality will eventually become fiction in the context of future re-performances. Each re-performance, that is, carries with it the echo of the skillfully inscribed and, one might say, forever fictionalized archetypal performance.

The artful symbiosis of actuality and fictionalization enables not only numerous re-performances of a given choral composition in different places but also an unimpeded potential for shifting from one type of performance

environment to another (for instance, from public space to private). That is, the transmitted signs of the archetypal performance in the re-performed choral song have the power to do at least two things. First, they can insinuate an ideological template through which new audiences can interpret the song. Athanassaki shows, for instance, how the marked sympotic component in Pindar's *Olympian* 1, hovering between recorded past reality and mytho-poetic fabrication, in fact aims at presenting a real tyrant in an essentially apolitical context, well harmonized with the aristocratic sympotic code. Second, they can represent and thus revitalize emotion: the impact on an audience of a (possibly fictionalized) original performance is successfully described, channelled and transmitted to future re-performances. This preservation of the 'original' emotion is crucial in several cases, among which the author singles out Pindar's *Olympian* 14 and *Pythian* 6.

Another significant contribution of Athanassaki's study is her meticulous exploration of the relationship between the verbal and the visual components of choral performances, the latter referring principally to the actual monuments a chorus must have encountered while performing a given ode. The reader is given extensive analyses of important monuments, such as the Treasuries of the Athenians and the Siphnians in Delphi and the Temple of Theseus in Athens. We are led to think that the impressive spectacle of a singing and dancing chorus is enhanced through the additional layer of optical stimuli. The performing chorus responds to the visual cues while prompting the audience to participate in a rich visual adventure. Athanassaki's detailed inquiry into the sculpted and painted artefacts surrounding public choral performances of the late Archaic and early Classical periods turns us into virtual spectators of a reconstructed three-dimensional reality. At the same time, her readings of the tightly interwoven layers of word and image in the chorus' discourse illuminate these performances as rewarding intellectual experiences both for ancient audiences and modern readers.

This is a remarkably important book for all those working on the intersection of performance and culture in Greece. The formatting and presentation by Crete University Press is quite elegant.

ANASTASIA-ERASMIA PEPONI
Stanford University
peponi@stanford.edu