LITERARY AND PHILOSOPHICAL DANCE DISCOURSE IN LATER GRAECO-ROMAN ANTIQUITY

SCHLAPBACH (K.) *The Anatomy of Dance Discourse. Literary and Philosophical Approaches to Dance in the Later Graeco-Roman World*. Pp. xii + 339, ills. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. Cased, £70, US$90. ISBN: 978-0-19-880772-8.

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This book examines dance discourse in Graeco-Roman antiquity. S. offers interesting and fruitful interpretations of a variety of literary depictions of and philosophical discussions about dance drawn from works ranging from the fourth century BCE to the fifth century CE, with invariably careful contextualisation of sources. Her selection includes many of the most fundamental pieces of extant evidence concerning ancient dance (e.g. passages from Xenophon's *Symposium*, Plato's *Laws*, Plutarch's *Table-Talk*, Athenaeus' *Deipnosophists*, Lucian's *On Dancing*, Libanius' *Oratio* 64) as well as less familiar texts such as the apocryphal Acts of John. The main focus of the book, however, is on approaches to dance dating from the second century CE, for the obvious reason that the majority of the texts selected for analysis date from this period. Unsurprisingly, therefore, S. shows more interest in *orchesis* (or *saltatio*) than in *choreia*. This angle is particularly welcome in the current scholarly debate, as more attention needs to be paid to the realia of dance as an artistic medium and a mimetic art.

Following an excellent introduction, in which S. outlines the central themes of the book and convincingly justifies her methodology, the monograph unfolds in two parts comprising three chapters each. The first part attempts to offer an overview of ancient theories of dance, while the second part consists of a series of meta-poetical readings of literary depictions of dance scenes as well as a study of the motif of dance in Nonnus' *Dionysiaca*. In the first chapter of Part 1, 'The Grammar of Dance', S. discusses the relationship between dance and language, and analyses technical dance terms such as *schema*, *phora* and *deixis*. Chapter 2, 'The Mimesis of Dance between Eloquence and Visual Art', focuses more closely on pantomime, as S. explores the perceived parallel between a dancer and an orator in antiquity, and the interactions between dance and the figurative arts, notably sculpture. This elicits further discussion of the notion of mimetic dance and *schema*. S. examines the words *ethos* and *pathos*, two fundamental terms for our understanding of ancient dance, since Aristotle famously writes in the *Poetics* (1447a) that dance, as a mimetic art, is able to imitate *ethos*, *pathos* and *praxis*. Finally, the third chapter of Part 1 engages with protreptic writings on dance, and the recurrent theme of the dance of heavenly bodies. In so doing, it highlights the particular connection dance shares with philosophy and mystery rites and turns to the question of spectatorship. Most interestingly, S. is able to detect the influence of dance and of its metaphorical and cosmic dimension, which she traces back to mystery cults, in Christian sources such as the works of Augustine and Clement of Alexandria, and the Acts of John.

Part 2 offers sophisticated readings of dance scenes (or ekphrases according to S.'s terminology) which can be interpreted as *mise-en-abîme* that allow ancient authors to display astonishing reflexivity and self-awareness in their craft. Chapter 4, 'Authenticity and Physical Presence', starts with a discussion of the end of Xenophon's *Symposium*, which leads to an exploration of questions of authenticity in dance and of the linked question of the physical presence of performers, especially in the case of the re-enactment of

myths. S. sees a certain form of rivalry between myth and the re-enactment of myth: a lifelike and particularly exceptional performance may paradoxically eclipse the narrative content of the myth it is meant to portray. S. also examines Xenophon's description of the dance of Ariadne and Dionysus through the lens of New Music, which leads her to trace the motif of authentic performances in imperial literature, notably in epigrams. In Chapter 5, 'Dance and Interpretation in Longus and Apuleius', which takes us to the realm of the imperial novel, S. analyses the relationship of representation and reality, and the effect dance can have in shaping the latter. Noting an increasing interest in non-representational art in Late Antiquity, she shows how dance, given its abstract dimension, constitutes an ideal medium to explore the question. In Chapter 6 S. turns to the *Dionysiaca*, a neat counterpart to Chapter 3, which engaged with the reception of ancient dance in Christian sources. In this section S. argues that dance serves as an aesthetic model to Nonnus' poetic art, and proceeds to explore the various ramifications of her thesis.

For understandable reasons, the book's structure seems to depend more on S.'s selection of texts than on any external principle – for instance, S. could have framed her investigations as a set of questions concerning ancient dance as such, rather than allowing the shape of her work to be governed by her choice of close readings. This is not a problem in itself, but makes the book slightly difficult to use and unpractical. However, this is largely counterbalanced by its substance and the high quality of the various discussions. One of the book's weaknesses is perhaps its lack of comprehensiveness, although S. clearly states that this is not its goal. In spite of S.'s careful justification of her methodology, one cannot but feel a certain randomness in the choice of texts selected for close reading as well as a lack of necessity in the way different discussions unfold throughout the monograph. For instance, if Part 1, as advertised, presents an overall framework for dance theory, it also offers an in-depth analysis of particular texts and their contexts, which could also sit well in Part 2. Similarly, although Part 2 is mainly concerned with the meta-poetical dimension of literary depictions of dance scenes, several passages pertain to dance theory. In addition, S.'s examination of dance vocabulary such as *schema*, *phora*, *deixis* or *mimesis* could have been more thorough. Her definitions suffer from the fact that these key terms are only commented on as they appear in the texts examined, and thus their understanding is mainly conditioned by the overall interpretation S. offers of these texts. The impression of disparity also stems from the fact that S. discusses texts of entirely different nature: texts theorising dance, texts describing dance scenes and texts using dance as a motif. It must be said, however, that the problem lies equally in the scarcity of surviving evidence engaging with dance in any depth.

Thanks to her keen diachronic sensitivity, S. does a great job in creating thematic and argumentative coherence around a heterogeneous corpus. The fact that she identifies a continuity of arguments between late-fifth century discourse on *mousike* and discussions on pantomime from the imperial period greatly contributes to the unity of the monograph. The book, moreover, is well written, and the clarity of S.'s prose must also be particularly commended: dance is an elusive subject of study, one particularly difficult to capture and describe through language due to its non-verbal nature. S. broaches a wide range of topics pertaining to the medium of dance (e.g. dance's relationship with the figurative arts, language and poetry, grammar and rhetoric). The great variety of the questions discussed by ancient authors not only makes evident the cultural significance dance possessed throughout Graeco-Roman antiquity, but also highlights the richness, depth and 'modernity' of ancient dance discourse.

Although one may disagree at times with particular interpretations offered by S., this is an important book that offers its readers clear, innovative and sophisticated insight on

ancient theorisation of dance as well as on the meta-poetical dimension of dance scenes in late-antique literature. This monograph will most probably become a reference book on ancient dance and should be read by anyone interested in the study of ancient performance. However, given its great breadth, it will also appeal to a larger array of readers, especially those working on the different authors S. discusses.

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COMPARATIVE STUDIES ON ANCIENT GREECE AND CHINA

LLOYD (G.E.R.), ZHAO (J.J.) (edd.) *Ancient Greece and China Compared*. In collaboration with Qiaosheng Dong. Pp. xvi + 430, figs, ills, map. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. Cased, £90, US$120. ISBN: 978-1-107-08666-1.
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While the contributors to this volume offer an undoubtedly rich and probing exploration of a selection of themes and problems anchored by their specific training and expertise, the more significant outcome arguably lies in their sophisticated handling of the comparative exercise. How do you compare two immense civilisations, each replete with their linguistic, cultural, historical, political, social, economic (one could go on here) particularities? This most basic question is the impetus to the volume, and in these still early days of comparative scholarship we have been offered a primer and a touchstone that will be of much service to present and future researchers.

In the introductory chapter Lloyd, the co-editor of the volume, provides an overview of the methodological complexities underlying comparative work across disciplines. He writes with a mastery that few scholars can display and legitimately wield, and his long-standing experience and skill as one of the early vanguards of Sino-Greek studies come to bear on the searching narrative with which this text opens. The motivating question of *how* one should compare lends itself almost immediately to its negative formulation, or how one should *not* compare, and Lloyd guides the reader through a catalogue of pitfalls to be avoided. Chief amongst these is the laissez-faire comparison, a blind juxtaposing of comparanda problematically freed from their vital contexts, where the motivations for comparison and the methodology that bridges or disconnects ideas across cultures are not accounted for. Such failures usually involve a deeper failure to see one's own situatedness, conceptually speaking, which overwhelms the analysis with false assumptions of identity enabled by the wholesale imposition of one's own categories over the 'other' system. Yet, Lloyd's interests obviously do not lie at the opposite end of the scale, where an autarkic self-understanding of one's own culture and one's values renders the Other strictly incomparable. A fruitful comparative exchange is possible, Lloyd tells us, if it is instead underwritten by the double act of admitting one's conceptual conventions, and thus abstaining from the chimera of a neutral ground of analysis, as well as admitting that one's rootedness in a tradition or culture of concepts does *not* entail a hermetically sealed language