

Ekphrasis and Resonance. The Voice of Objects, Rituals, and Sanctuaries in Pausanias (working title)

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Topic

My dissertation project focuses on 2nd century AD Greek writer Pausanias who composed a selection of the accounts and the sites of mainland Greece. More specifically, the passages containing ekphrases (= descriptions) of objects, rituals, and sanctuaries are analysed in the light of ancient ekphrasis theory, modern resonance theory, and several theories on reader guidance in order to show how ekphrases in Pausanias are supposed to function.



The stadium of Olympia today.

Research Questions

At the core of the dissertation project on Pausanias is the question of how his work can be adequately described. This question is a genuinely philological one but has been of high relevance also to hard-facts disciplines – mainly Archaeology, Ancient History, and Religious Studies – because it touches on the question of validity of Pausanias' data. The other research questions are:

- What do ekphrases in Pausanias look like?
- What are the functions of ekphrases in Pausanias?
- How does Pausanias' account relate to ancient realities?
- What could Pausanias possibly have seen at the time when he was visiting Greece?
- Who belongs to the circle of the intended audience?
- How does the text try to evoke emotions and opportunities for a resonant experience?

Sources and Material

There are mainly four sources where I get my information from, the first two being pivotal:

- Pausanias' account
- Newest archeological evidence of the ancient sites and/or objects described by Pausanias
- Other writers from classical antiquity (e.g. Herodotus, Strabo, Dionysius from Alexandria)
- Epigraphical evidence

Aim

The dissertation's aim is twofold: First, a systematic analysis of selected ekphrastic passages in Pausanias, which up to this day has been a desideratum of classical scholarship. Second, a new interpretation of the work's unspoken intention inspired by resonance theory.

Methods

Relying on the assumptions, that the author's unspoken intention is prior to the form of his product and that this same intention must be seen within the framework of 2nd century AD Mediterranean world with all its implications, I intend to trace it back in a methodologically correct way. My interpretation on the one hand builds on the results of a foregone ekphrases-analysis as well as on the form of the text as a whole. On the other hand, it builds on the larger context, in which Pausanias' work is embedded – that is especially the political system, the conditions of literary production, the awareness of literary fiction, the Roman elite's paideia-discourse, and the questions of Greek identity in an increasingly globalized ancient world.



The Parthenon on the Athenian Akropolis in 1978.

Next Steps

The dissertation's expected result is to give a plausible and convincing answer to the core research question about how to describe Pausanias' literary work in an adequate way. In winter term 2020/21 I ambitiously plan to write half of my dissertation, specifically a great part of the the main section and parts of the introductory chapter regarding Pausanias scholarship as well as the question on the audience. The following summer term 2021 is dedicated to the final redaction of the book.

Sources

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/09/Olympia-Stadium_%28KPFC%29.JPG

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/da/The_Parthenon_in_Athens.jpg

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