Suggested project  
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Ekphrasis and resonance: Representation and reflection of resonance within texts and images in a religious context. The example of Attic tragedy

Texts and images are an essential part of creating and establishing resonance in a religious context. Both media tend to continuously refer back to sacral objects, spaces and ritual acts or religious practices. They represent and present, refer to or speak of them. In the textual media this often occurs in the form of an *ekphrasis* (description, i.e. of an artefact, an object, process, event, cult, religious ceremony, ritual, epiphany), which can be analysed not only with regard to its degree of reference to reality, to its functionality within the text and its constitution of an imaginary and fictive world, but also and especially with regard to the numerous resonant relationships which are established within and by the different media.

The project will be guided by the following considerations: 1) Since the texts (in the *ekphraseis*) and images deal with creating a fictional world, one might ask whether those texts and images offer possibilities of seeing (religious) elements in a society with new eyes, elicited by aesthetic experience. 2) Furthermore, considering the approach of the Research Training Group, it seems especially fruitful to consider how these media not only depict 'silent and resonant relationships in the world', but how they play a part in constituting and constructing those relations. This is made easier by the fact that (ekphrastic) texts tend to include descriptions of both the viewer and the emotions evoked by the object viewed, with the way the viewer experiences the objects guiding our own perceptions. 3) The question of how the self can establish relations to the world is at the heart of resonance theory; religion and art are two significant fields in which these relations are established. Ancient (ekphrastic) texts (and their references to visualised religious objects and images) can thus serve to study self–world relations as they are established in art (poetry, literature, visual arts) and by art, both inwards, toward the (fictional) world of the object itself (poetological), and outwards, towards the audience and the world. While previous research has not yet gone beyond the reconstruction of religious objects or actions, the particular focus of the RTG on resonance theory may contribute to the study of how religious (resonant) experiences of self–world relations were established and experienced in antiquity and which functions rituals and (religious) festivals played in establishing these (resonant) relations. Within the framework of this project, we will be able to consider the function of art in establishing self–world relations in a pre–modern world, especially where not only the individual, but the collective is concerned.
Ekphraseis have always been a topic of interest, especially in more recent research (Webb 2009). However, there is no systematic analysis of their composition and function or of the depicted (religious) themes and their relations to contemporary pictorial media that deal with similar topics. Modern research on intermediality, however, offers excellent conditions for a comprehensive study of image-text-relations in ancient literature and culture (Rippl 2015; Dörr 2014; Wolf 2013), while resonance theory, especially with regard to aesthetics, contributes a new way of conceptualising both the texts and the audiences (viewers, readers). The research indicated here could be conducted with a focus on different literary genera, while cooperation with archaeology would be sensible when discussing pictorial media.

For a dissertation the research question could be applied to Attic drama, e.g., ‘Ritual and resonance in (Attic) drama’. A research project dealing with passages of ekphrasis regarding cult/objects of cult, sacral spaces/festivals and ritual acts in (Attic) drama (tragedies, satyr plays, comedies) seems rewarding; preserved fragments should also be included (Easterling 1988). A systematic analysis of those elements is yet to be produced. Especially when looking at the comedies of Aristophanes, in which, for instance, Attic festivals play an important role, one soon becomes aware of the gap in existing research (Bierl 2001; Bowie 1993). Ritual acts are furthermore an essential element of both tragedy and comedy. They determine types of action and how a situation of usually extreme emotional meaning is or needs to be dealt with. On the one hand the researcher could investigate questions on a textual level (references to reality, textual structure, semantisation, theatricality of the ritual), whereas on the other hand the field of the resonance created by (theatrical) staging could be analysed. It is possible to look into the ‘effectiveness’ of resonances, both with regard to social (horizontal) as well as the experience of transcendent (vertical) dimensions. In this context the (Dionysus) festivals in the comedies of Aristophanes, often found near the end of the play, are of importance, for one can trace both a vertical (with Dionysius) and a horizontal axis of resonance when the audience and the polis are integrated into the events by the play itself. How this is done and written into the text will be considered in the course of the project. The dissertation analyses select plays or passages of (Attic) drama, e.g. Aristophanes’ comedies. Theplays (or passages thereof) are to be analysed with regard to cult, cultic objects, ritual action and reference to (historical) accuracy, as well as to their function within the (comic) play and with regard to how resonance axes were established. How did the play serve to establish genuine (religious) resonance and self–world relations, both of the individual and the collective within the polis? Or do we rather find that a profanation has taken place, moving religious context towards ‘mere entertainment’? With resonance theory in mind, the project would shed new light on the historical-political interpretation of Attic drama. – The same questions could also be asked for Roman tragedy (e.g. Seneca) or for theatrical passages in Roman epic, especially in the early imperial period (Statius Thebais). Another direction could be taken when looking at textual (ekphrastic) passages on cult objects (statues) and ritual action in Hellenistic poetry, e.g. in Callimachus (‘Talking to Statues of God: The Experience
of Gods and Poetology in Callimachean poems’, cf. Hunter 2011), or Apollonius Rhodios (e.g. ‘Cultic Aetia and Rituals as Travel Guides and Narrations of a Poetic World in Apollonius Rhodios’ Argonautica’). How far are ritual and narration related to one another (Nünning/Rupp/Ahn 2013), how far do cult aetia serve to create their own (poetic) world which is conceptualised as a specific (religious) resonance space?

Methods: The methods will be those of Classical philology and modern literary theory (narratology, drama and performance theory, intermediality studies). Within the framework of the IGDK especial consideration will be paid to the meaning and function of aesthetic experience to create resonant self-world relationships. This area will be further developed by showing the role which is played by the ‘construction’ of ‘being touched’, by imagination, fictionality, immersion, as it applies to literature and art.

**Collaborations:** Cooperation concerning the project on ‘resonance within texts and images’ and the project on Pausanias is intended with Ursula Gärtner’s projects on religious ritual practices in Ancient Epic (resonance and poetology) and Hartmut Rosa’s project on ‘Bowls of Hystera’.

**Literature**