Aisthesis

Seeing through Plato's Looking Glass.
Mythos and *Mimesis* from *Republic* to *Poetics*

Andrea Capra

(Università di Milano)
Andrea.Capra@unimi.it

Abstract. This paper revisits Plato's and Aristotle's views on *mimesis* with a special emphasis on *mythos* as an integral part of it. I argue that the *Republic*'s notorious "mirror argument" is in fact *ad hominem*: first, Plato likely has in mind Agathon's mirror in Aristophanes' *Thesmoforiazusae*, where tragedy is construed as *mimesis*; second, the tongue-in-cheek claim that mirrors can reproduce invisible Hades, when read in combination with the following eschatological myth, suggests that Plato was not committed to a mirror-like view of art; third, the very omission of *mythos* shows that the argument is a self-consciously one-sided one, designed to caricature the artists' own pretensions of mirror-like realism. These points reinforce Stephen Halliwell's claim that Western aesthetics has been haunted by a «ghostly misapprehension» of Plato's mirror. Further evidence comes from Aristotle's "literary" (as opposed to Plato's "sociological") discussion: rather than to the "mirror argument", the beginning of the *Poetics* points to the *Phaedo* as the best source of information about Plato's views on poetry.

Key words. Plato, Aristotle, mimesis, mythos, mirror.

However we decide to translate the elusive Greek word *mimesis*, in the context of the present volume there is no need to justify its presence in my subtitle. Why *mythos*, though? Plato's *Republic* 3 conceptualizes poetry as a form of *diegesis*[1], and, as Gérard Genette (1979) rightly emphasized, does not recognize lyric as a form of poetry: nonrepresentational poetry is simply not part of the picture. In fact, *Republic* 2-3 discusses poetry as a form of mythical narrative, with an exclusive focus on tragedy and epic poetry, which happen to be treated as belonging to one and the same category[2]. As a consequence, *mythoi* take centre stage throughout, and prove integral to the very notion of poetry. As for Aristotle's *Poetics*, *mythos* is by far the most important part of tragedy, and the poet is famously defined as maker of *mythoi* rather than of verses (9.1251b27-28).

---

[1] Cf. *Republic* 3.392c-d discussed below.
[2] At 10.607a Homer is famously called «the first and greatest of tragic poets».

As scholars often remark, in *Poetics*, as opposed to Aristotle's other works and to classical usage at large, *mythos* acquires the unprecedented meaning of plot or structure, and has been often construed in proto-narratological terms[3].

These sketchy indications should be sufficient to realize the importance of *mythos* for *mimesis* (and vice-versa). However, one last reference to my subtitle is perhaps in order, as I would like to stress the preposition "from". A comprehensive treatment of *both* Platonic and Aristotelian *mimesis*, even within the limits of *Republic* and *Poetics*, is of course outside of the question, and I should warn the reader that, in accordance with the strict criteria set by "Aisthesis", I will keep footnotes and bibliographical references to a minimum. Yet one of the functions traditionally connected with introductory papers is to take the bull by the horns, that is to broach general, even over-debated issues. My strategy will be to work on the intersections between *mimesis* and *mythos* as well as between Plato and Aristotle. My hope is to combine references to general problems with a few close (and, I hope, at least in part, original) readings of specific texts, mostly from Plato's *Republic* and with a focus on Plato's mirror in book 10. I hope I will be able to "see through" it, i.e. to provide a better understanding of this celebrated image and to trace its underlying background.

When addressing Plato, it is hardly possible to steer clear of hermeneutics. It is customary for scholars to wonder why Plato wrote dialogues. I usually go for a bolder and more Socratic question: *what* is a Platonic dialogue? Aristotle – and here is my first "intersection" – comes close to addressing such a question when, in the *Politics*, he tells us what the dialogues are like:

τὸ μὲν οὖν περιττὸν ἔχουσι πάντες οἱ τοῦ Σωκράτους λόγοι καὶ τὸ κομψὸν καὶ τὸ καινοτόμον καὶ τὸ ζητητικόν

Socrates' logoi are never commonplace; they always exhibit grace and originality and inquiry. (Aristotle, Politics 2.1265a10-12, transl. Jowett)

Aristotle is criticizing the *Republic* and the *Laws*, so these words refer no doubt to Plato. According to this quasi-definition, which Stephen Halliwell rightly emphasizes in his discussion of Platonic *mimesis*, the dialogues should be construed as thought-experiments (Halliwell [2002]: 38). No less interestingly, in the *Poetics* (1.1247b9-20) Aristotle classifies the dialogues as mimetic works, which he carefully distinguishes from history and from the assertoric mode of pre-Socratic writing, whether in verse or prose. On this view, the primary aim of Platonic dialogues is not to convey a set of doctrines established once and for all, but to stir and provoke the reader. The reception of the *Republic* is a famously complicated affair, in which anti-Platonic defences of art are counterbalanced by the emergence of a number of Platonic aesthetics, most memorably discussed in Panofsky's *Idea* (1960). To judge from this paradoxical outcome, Plato's provocations surely hit the mark. Strictly speaking, moreover, Plato's remarks on *mimesis*, insofar as they are expressed in a fictional, mimetic dialogue, are in fact "meta-mimetic", something that arguably adds to the provocation.

It would be misleading to restrict our understanding of Platonic *mimesis* to the well-known, or even notorious, passages of the *Republic*, all the more so if we entertain the idea that the dialogues resemble, at least to a certain extent, thought experiments. In fact other dialogues make it clear that Plato, time and again, endorses the production of *good* images, which are sometimes referred to with words from the *mimesis* family (Gonzalez [1998], ch. 5). Yet I have promised to take the bull by the horns, so let us face the alleged villain of our story, that is *mimesis* as discussed in the *Republic*.

In books 2-3, a long section is devoted to the education of the 'guardians', namely the special corps of citizens designed to defend and preserve the city and its values. It is worth having a look at the very beginning of the discussion:

θρέψονται δὲ δὴ ἡμῖν οὗτοι καὶ παιδευθήσονται τίνα τρόπον; καὶ ἆρά τι προὔργου ἡμῖν ἐστιν αὐτὸ

---

[3] Cf. e.g. Fusillo [1986], Belfiore [2000] and Zimmermann [2009]. More bibliography in Capra [2017].

σκοποῦσι πρὸς τὸ κατιδεῖν οὗπερ ἔνεκα πάντα σκοποῦμεν, δικαιοσύνην τε καὶ ἀδικίαν τίνα τρόπον ἐν πόλει γίγνεται; ἵνα μὴ ἐῶμεν ἱκανὸν λόγον ἢ συχνὸν διεξίωμεν. Καὶ ὁ τοῦ Γλαύκωνος ἀδελφός, Πάνυ μὲν οὖν, ἔφη, ἔγωγε προσδοκῶ προὔργου εἶναι εἰς τοῦτο ταύτην τὴν σκέψιν. Μὰ Δία, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ὦ φίλε Ἀδείμαντε, οὐκ ἄρα ἀφετέον, οὐδ' εἰ μακροτέρα τυγχάνει οὖσα. Οὐ γὰρ οὖν. Ἴθι οὖν, ὥσπερ ἐν μύθῳ μυθολογοῦντές τε καὶ σχολὴν ἄγοντες λόγῳ παιδεύωμεν τοὺς ἄνδρας.

How are they to be reared and educated? Is not this enquiry which may be expected to throw light on the greater enquiry which is our final end – how do justice and injustice grow up in States? For we do not want either to omit what is to the point or to draw out the argument to an inconvenient length.' And Glaucon's brother thought that the enquiry would be of great service to us. Then, I said, 'my dear friend, the task must not be given up, even if somewhat long. Certainly not! Come then, and let us pass a leisure hour in myth-telling, and our myth shall be the education of our heroes. (Plato, Republic 2.376c-d, transl. Jowett)

Remarkably, the *entire* discussion revolving on the education of the guardians is emphatically conceptualized as a "mythological" enterprise.

In what follows, Plato's focus is very much on the *mythoi* governing *mousike*, which will be one of the pillars of education along with gymnastics: this is far from revolutionary, given that such a combination, which is central to Plato's *Laws* as well, was standard in Athens as well as in the Greek world at large. Right from the start, that is when the guardians are babies, attention must be paid to the content of the *mythoi* they are exposed to. Plato seems to recognize the fictional quality of myth by resorting to at least two important words. The first one is *pseudos*: *mythoi* can be factually false, which is acceptable insofar as children are a major focus here. Yet there are "beautiful" lies and "ugly" lies and this is where the legislator must intervene to discipline the activity of the poets (Cf. 2. 377d-e, 3.389b-c, 3.414e-415c). The second word is the verb *platto*, to "mould", which is largely equivalent to Latin *fingo*. This is used to convey two different ideas: on the one hand, one has to

mould the appropriate *mythoi* for the education of the guardians; on the other, one has to mould the guardians themselves. In this way, the *Republic*, or at least this section of the dialogue, is endowed with a mythopoietic quality, one that may be seen as blurring the boundaries between the legislator who moulds the citizens and the poet who moulds the *mythoi* representing the citizens[4].

This section of book 2 introduces the long critique of current poetry that results in the censorship of many passages from tragic and especially epic poetry. These verses – so goes Socrates' argument – fail to represent the dignified and virtuous nature of gods and heroes, with disastrous consequences for the moral education of the guardians. This introductory section explicitly couples poetry with painting in a context that foreshadows the notion of fiction. Yet it is important to notice that no reference is made to *mimesis*[5]. *Mimesis* takes centre stage quite abruptly and much later in the dialogue[6]. At the end of the long censorship of poetry, the focus shifts from the contents of *mythoi* to the way and the mode in which they are delivered. Let us dwell for a moment on this celebrated passage, which is considered to be the ancestor of modern narratology:

Τὰ μὲν δὴ λόγων πέρι ἐχέτω τέλος· τὸ δὲ λέξεως, ὡς ἐγὼ οἶμαι, μετὰ τοῦτο σκεπτέον, καὶ ἡμῖν ἅ τε λεκτέον καὶ ὡς λεκτέον παντελῶς ἐσκέψεται. Καὶ ὁ Ἀδείμαντος, Τοῦτο, ἦ δ' ὅς, οὐ μανθάνω ὅτι λέγεις. Ἀλλὰ μέντοι, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, δεῖ γε· ἴσως οὖν τῇδε μᾶλλον εἴσῃ. ἆρ' οὐ πάντα ὅσα ὑπὸ μυθολόγων ἢ ποιητῶν λέγεται διήγησις οὖσα τυγχάνει ἢ γεγονότων ἢ ὄντων ἢ μελλόντων; Τί γάρ, ἔφη, ἄλλο; Ἆρ' οὖν οὐχὶ ἤτοι ἁπλῇ διηγήσει ἢ διὰ μιμήσεως γιγνομένῃ ἢ δι' ἀμφοτέρων περαίνουσιν; Καὶ τοῦτο, ἦ δ' ὅς, ἔτι δέομαι σαφέστερον μαθεῖν.

---

[4] Compare e.g. *Republic* 3. 377c, 6.500d-e and *Timaeus* 26e.

[5] The only preceding mention of *mimetai* is found at 373b as regards the feverish city.

[6] Except for a couple of passing mentions of the related terms *mimema* and *mimeisthai*, moreover, *mimesis* is not found in the long critique of current poetry that covers what remains of book 2 and a significant part of book three.

Enough of the subjects of poetry: let us now speak of the style; and when this has been considered, both matter and manner will have been completely treated.' 'I do not understand what you mean', said Adeimantus. 'Then I must make you understand; and perhaps I may be more intelligible if I put the matter in this way. You are aware, I suppose, that all mythology and poetry is a narration (diegesis) of events, either past, present, or to come?' 'Certainly', he replied. 'And narration may be either simple narration, or mimesis, or a union of the two? That again, he said, I do not quite understand. (Plato, Republic 3.392c-d, transl. Jowett).

A few points should be stressed here. When it comes to describe poetry, Plato's top category is not *mimesis*, as many tacitly assume, but *diegesis*[7]: qua poetry, all poems are first and foremost narratives, which is why *mythos* is integral to Plato's views on poetry and *mimesis*. Secondly, Adeimantus is clearly taken aback. Part of this must depend on the fact that the very notion of *mimesis* is unclear to him, which is not surprising after all. The noun *mimesis* is never found in the *Republic* before this passage, is rare before Plato and possibly unknown before Socrates' time. As we shall see, its only pre-Platonic occurrence in reference to poetry is found in a funny passage of Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae*[8], where it justifies the transvestism of an all too refined and highbrow poet.

In an attempt to clarify, Socrates exemplifies the notion of *mimesis* through the direct speech delivered by Chryses in the first rhapsody of the *Iliad*. In doing so, he strongly emphasizes Chryses' old age, something that highlights the need of an all-encompassing transformation on the part of the poet or performer:

τὰ δὲ μετὰ ταῦτα ὥσπερ αὐτὸς ὢν ὁ Χρύσης λέγει καὶ πειρᾶται ἡμᾶς ὅτι μάλιστα ποιῆσαι μὴ Ὅμηρον δοκεῖν εἶναι τὸν λέγοντα ἀλλὰ τὸν ἱερέα, πρεσβύτην ὄντα. καὶ τὴν ἄλλην δὴ πᾶσαν σχεδόν τι οὕτω πεποίηται διήγησιν περί τε τῶν ἐν Ἰλίῳ καὶ περὶ τῶν ἐν Ἰθάκῃ καὶ ὅλῃ Ὀδυσσείᾳ παθημάτων. Οὐκοῦν διήγησις μέν ἐστιν καὶ ὅταν τὰς ῥήσεις ἑκάστοτε λέγῃ

καὶ ὅταν τὰ μεταξὺ τῶν ῥήσεων; Πῶς γὰρ οὔ; Ἀλλ' ὅταν γέ τινα λέγῃ ῥῆσιν ὥς τις ἄλλος ὤν, ἆρ' οὐ τότε ὁμοιοῦν αὐτὸν φήσομεν ὅτι μάλιστα τὴν αὑτοῦ λέξιν ἑκάστῳ ὃν ἂν προείπῃ ὡς ἐροῦντα; Φήσομεν· τί γάρ; Οὐκοῦν τό γε ὁμοιοῦν ἑαυτὸν ἄλλῳ ἢ κατὰ φωνὴν ἢ κατὰ σχῆμα μιμεῖσθαί ἐστιν ἐκεῖνον ᾧ ἄν τις ὁμοιοῖ;

But in what follows he takes the person of Chryses, and then he does all that he can to make us believe that the speaker is not Homer, but the priest himself, that is an old man. And in this double form he has cast the entire narrative of the events which occurred at Troy and in Ithaca and throughout the Odyssey.' 'Yes.' 'And a narrative (diegesis) it remains both in the speeches which the poet recites from time to time and in the intermediate passages?' 'Quite true.' 'But when the poet speaks in the person of another, may we not say that he assimilates his style to that of the person who, as he informs you, is going to speak?' 'Certainly.' 'And is it not the case that this assimilation of himself to another, either by the use of voice or figure, is the imitation of the person whose character he assumes? (Plato, Republic 393b-c, transl. Jowett)

Remarkably, we hear of a transformation that invests *phone*, i.e. the voice, and *schema*, that is the "figure". I use the word "figure" because it accommodates an idea that is prominent in the Greek corresponding term, namely a strong association with bodily postures as found in the visual arts, which from a Greek viewpoint include not only painting and sculpture but also poetry, either in the form of epic performances (rhapsodes were in fact fully-fledged, highly spectacular *actors*) or of theatre productions[9]. As such, the term *schema* is suggestive of psychomotor learning. This helps explain Plato's anxieties about *mimesis*: later in book 3 we hear of how mimetic poetry, in the long run, infiltrates and corrupts the soul, all the more so when children are exposed to it (395c-e), and the corrosive influence of *mimesis* on the soul is a major focus of book 10 as well (605a-606d). Against this danger, it is no use to deploy such highbrow tricks as allegoric interpretations (*hyponoiai*), which were meant to cleanse poetry of its

---

[7] As is shown, most clearly, in Heath [2013], ch. 2.
[8] 140-156, discussed below.

[9] On *schemata*, see Catoni [2008].

violent and impious features (378e). It is no use, as Socrates explains, because the soul, and especially a *child*'s soul, is fatally exposed to the influence exerted by poetry, that is – as the general context implies – by psychomotor learning through performative *schemata*. This is why there is no substantial anachronism in regarding the *Republic*'s approach to *mimesis* as an ultimately sociological and psychophysical one (Cerri [1991]).

So far, I have been stressing a number of points that should make us cautious in addressing the discussion of poetry found in the *Republic*. To summarize: *mimesis* is a relatively novel notion, and its close, if abrupt, association with poetry is based on the strongly performative and narrative character of Greek poetry as expressed through "voice" and "figures". This entails a visual and psychophysical dimension that we moderns rarely associate with poetry. Even so, Plato's ban on mimetic poetry may look like a vaguely paranoid policy, one that is often cited in combination with the idea that Plato, allegedly a former poet according to the biographical tradition, was an ultimately schizophrenic character, whose «attitude is split» (Annas [1998]: 290) and prone to «self-censorship» (Blondell [2002]: 228-245). Such readings, however, rest on surprisingly fragile bases, as I will now try to show.

In book 3, the whole argument closes on Socrates' proposal that only «the pure imitator of the decent» should be admitted in the just city (397c-d, τὸν τοῦ ἐπιεικοῦς μιμητὴν ἄκρατον). This phrase is elusive and would require a very detailed discussion, which I cannot offer here. Let me just recall that the phrase is often thought to refer primarily to the «decent» mode of *diegesis*: on this view, Socrates is saying that excesses of *mimesis* should be avoided, as if he were referring back to the tripartite model that introduces the discussion of poetic *lexis* with a view to advocating the purely non-mimetic form of narrative. As a consequence, Socrates is taken to endorse only poetry involving no or very little *mimesis*, his ban extending to virtually all forms of existing poetry[10]. Yet «the pure

imitator of the decent» is not primarily the practitioner of a decent form of *diegesis*, i.e. with no or little *mimesis*. Rather, he is fact the pure imitator of the decent *man*[11]. What Socrates is advocating here, then, is not a ban on mimetic poetry, but the uncompromising imitation of the good man, whose temperate behaviour, of course, does not require the full array of mimetic voices and figures mentioned a little earlier. Socrates is arguably referring to both contents and modes of poetry, that is, he is combining the two strands of the discussion so far. If this is correct, what Socrates is arguing for is not the demise of *mimesis* qua *mimesis*.

Further confirmation comes from the *Apology of Socrates*. In an important passage (24c), Socrates seems to be actively promoting the *mimesis* of his own persona: young people, he says, are more than willing to imitate (*mimountai*) him, which is why the death sentence will not succeed in killing the Socratic practice of philosophy (Blondell [2002]: 86). Now, not only the *Phaedo* but also *the Seventh Letter* (118a and 324e respectively), in Plato's own voice, emphatically singles out Socrates as the most just man of his time, which calls to mind the «decent man» mentioned in the *Republic*. It follows that (most of) Plato's dialogues can be construed, among other things, as an outstanding example of "*imitatio Socratis*", most of which is conducted in the purely mimetic mode: pure imitation of the most decent man. If correctly interpreted, then, the passage from the *Republic* should be construed as strongly metamimetic in character, as it points to Plato's own mimetic work[12]. Also, it should be noted that Plato's interest in the *mimesis* of «the most just man

---

[10] This results in an apparent contradiction. As one very sensible critic puts it, «P. seems to be caught between the

view that mimesis is beneficial provided that its object is suitable, and the feeling that there is something potentially harmful about mimesis in itself» (Murray [1996]:13).

[11] Cf. e.g. Lapini [2003], with further bibliography.

[12] It is hardly a coincidence that the items and characters which, according to the *Republic*, must not be the object of direct imitation are found in Plato's narrated (as opposed to dramatic) dialogues only, something that reveals Plato's rationale in choosing either of the two forms. See Capra [2003].

of his time» was not confined to literary composition. In fact, Plato commissioned for the Academy a portrait of Socrates, known as "type A" among the Roman copies. As archaeologist Paul Zanker has argued, this portrait, with its markedly silenic features, was meant as a provocation, something that further groups it in with Plato's mimetic dialogues[13]. Intriguingly, Plato's mimetic portraits of Socrates, both literary and figurative, proved revolutionary.

We now move to book 10. Socrates resumes the subject of poetry, which, we hear, can be better addressed on the basis of what has been established as regards the nature of the soul (*i.e.* in book 4). What can be better assessed, in particular, is what Socrates refers to as an agreement to exclude from the ideal city «all poetry that is mimetic» (*hose mimetike*, 595a). After this notoriously bold claim, Socrates admits to his love of Homer, which he must resist for the sake of truth (595b-c). In an attempt at defining *mimesis*, Socrates then launches into what I will be referring to as the "mirror argument", in which «the painter is classified as an impostor in what is ultimately an attempt to impugn the poet. The classification is achieved by an unfair assimilation of the painter with the sophistic mirror holder» (Bensen Cain [2012]: 188). This is part of Plato's most notorious critique of poetry and art, resulting in the conclusion that *mimesis* is at two removes from truth and unduly nourishes the most emotional part of the soul, with disastrous consequences for its health and stability. As if he were a frustrated lover, Socrates then restates his wish that poetry might one day find good arguments to defend her right to be welcomed in the ideal city (607d-608a). Until then, however, only hymns and encomia will be accepted (607a). Such a restrictive policy is what has emerged from the discussion – *magis amica veritas* – but Socrates justifies it also in the light of what he famously refers to as an old quarrel between poetry and

philosophy (607b). After one last reference to the hard task of keeping his love for poetry in check, Socrates brings the whole discussion to an end by emphasising once again the dangers inherent in poetry (608a-b).

Standard readings of book 10 construe it as the climax of Plato's alleged hatred for poetry. Yet, as Stephen Halliwell has brilliantly shown in his book on *mimesis*, more nuanced readings do better justice to the text as it stands[14]: for example, Socrates' hope that poetry will find good arguments to defend herself and return from her exile is too emphatic and repeatedly stated to be just a touch of irony on Plato's part, and there is ample evidence, both within and outside the *Republic*, that Plato was far from conceiving of poetry and art as mere duplication of things.

In addition, two points are worth mentioning:

1. As a number of scholars have noted, the reference to the ban on all mimetic poetry in books 2 and 3 is manifestly false. The phrase «all mimetic poetry» may refer to the vivid description of *shameless* imitation of all sorts of things, something that is vividly described in books 2-3[15].
2. It should be noted that hymns and encomia are two very flexible words. In the course of the argument, encomium is used for nothing less than Homeric poetry. A survey of Plato's usage of the word *hymnos*, moreover, shows that the term, among other things, can indicate very different genres, including tragedy, prose, and epic[16]. To say that only hymns and encomia should be admitted is not tantamount to ban theatre and epics from the Kallipolis. Rather, it points to a reformed kind of poetry capable of praising correctly the virtues of gods and heroes.

---

[13] Cf. Zanker [1995], ch. 1.5. Very strong evidence on the placing of the statue in the Academy's *mouseion* can be found in Speyer [2001].

[14] Halliwell [2002], esp. ch. 4.

[15] For a forceful defence of the view that *all* mimetic poets are to go, see e.g. Tsouna [2013], with further bibliography.

[16] Velardi [1991]. The *Timaeus-Critias* is conceptualized as a hymn, implicitly providing a telling example of good *mimesis*. See Regali [2012], in particular 32–39.

With all of this in mind, let us now move to the "mirror argument", in which *mimesis* takes the meaning of "copy" or "reproduction". Remarkably, the usage of *mimesis* in book 10 seems to be at odds with what we find in books 2-3, where the word could be rendered with "impersonation" or the likes[17]. However, Socrates now claims that painters and poets produce copies of artefacts, which in turn are copies of ideal paradigms – something that many scholars (mis?)take for the so-called Platonic Forms. Whatever the metaphysical import of the discussion, *mimesis* here means something like reproduction/copy of objects[18]. Socrates implies that artists take a pride in their optical reproduction of anything they like, and yet – he maintains – this is no reason to brag. We thus come to the notorious mirror, an argument that, in the words of Gombrich, «haunted the philosophy of art ever since»[19]:

ὁ αὐτὸς γὰρ οὗτος χειροτέχνης οὐ μόνον πάντα οἷός τε σκεύη ποιῆσαι, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ ἐκ τῆς γῆς φυόμενα ἄπαντα ποιεῖ καὶ ζῷα πάντα ἐργάζεται, τά τε ἄλλα καὶ ἑαυτόν, καὶ πρὸς τούτοις γῆν καὶ οὐρανὸν καὶ θεοὺς καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ τὰ ἐν Ἅιδου ὑπὸ γῆς ἅπαντα ἐργάζεται. Πάνυ θαυμαστόν, ἔφη, λέγεις σοφιστήν. Ἀπιστεῖς; ἦν δ᾽ ἐγώ. καί μοι εἰπέ, τὸ παράπαν οὐκ ἄν σοι δοκεῖ εἶναι τοιοῦτος δημιουργός, ἢ τινὶ μὲν τρόπῳ γενέσθαι ἂν τούτων ἁπάντων ποιητής, τινὶ δὲ οὐκ ἄν; ἢ οὐκ αἰσθάνῃ ὅτι κἂν αὐτὸς οἷός τ᾽ εἴης πάντα ταῦτα ποιῆσαι τρόπῳ γέ τινι; Καὶ τίς, ἔφη, ὁ τρόπος οὗτος; Οὐ χαλεπός, ἦν δ᾽ ἐγώ, ἀλλὰ πολλαχῇ καὶ ταχὺ δημιουργούμενος, τάχιστα δέ

που, εἰ ᾽θέλεις λαβὼν κάτοπτρον περιφέρειν πανταχῇ· ταχὺ μὲν ἥλιον ποιήσεις καὶ τὰ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, ταχὺ δὲ γῆν, ταχὺ δὲ σαυτόν τε καὶ τἆλλα ζῷα καὶ σκεύη καὶ φυτὰ καὶ πάντα ὅσα νυνδὴ ἐλέγετο.

This very same handicraftsman is able to make not only vessels of every kind, but plants and animals, himself and all other things – the earth and heaven, and the gods, and all the things which are in heaven as well as all of the things found under the earth, in Hades.' 'He must be an amazing sophist and no mistake.' 'You are incredulous, aren't you? Do you mean that there is no such maker or creator, or that in one sense there might be a maker of all these things but in another not? Can't you see that there is a way in which you could make them all yourself?' 'What way?' 'An easy way enough; or rather, there are many ways in which the feat might be quickly and easily accomplished, none quicker than that of turning a mirror round and round – you would soon enough make the sun and the heavens, and the earth and yourself, and other animals and plants, and all the other things of which we were just now speaking. (Plato, Republic 596c-e, transl. Jowett)

An elementary application of the principle of charity should warn anyone against the (textually unwarranted) conclusion that Plato was committed to such a naïf position, namely that the complex fabric of poetry and art can be ever reduced to optical reproduction[20]. Besides, it would be easy to produce counter-examples: other passages in other dialogues and in the *Republic* itself tell a very different story[21], and even the silenic portrait of Socrates placed in the Academy was not meant as a realistic 'copy': as archaeologist Luca Giuliani

---

[17] The term is, in fact, extremely complex: Halliwell (2002) distinguishes between no fewer than six different semantic areas pertaining to Platonic *mimesis* (cf. pp. 46–50).

[18] Given that identification, in ancient performative practices, entails the reproduction of exterior postures known as *schemata*, the two prevalent meanings of *mimesis* (books 2-3 vs. book 10) can in fact be reconciled. See Leszl [2007]: 254–255. With its theatrical pedigree, *mimesis* is integral both to Plato's cave and to Plato's hypothesis of the Forms, as Palumbo (2008) has put forward. I cannot address here the much-discussed relationship between *Republic* 10 and the *Sophist*. For a reliable introduction to the problem, see e.g. Notomi [2011].

[19] Gombrich [1977]: 83. Quoted in Halliwell [2002]: 133.

[20] Cf. Halliwell [2002]: 136. «It is crucial, therefore, to notice two things that the mirror simile (and its sequel) does *not* say or entail: first, that all painting actually purports to be a "mirroring" of the world, in the sense of striving for optimum optical fidelity to the appearances of things; second, that painters always or even normally aim to represent actual models in the world (a supposition that we have seen would clash with other passages of the *Republic*)».

[21] Cf. e.g. *Cratylus* 430a-431d, *Laws* 2.656-657 and 7.799a-b (on Egyptian art, i.e. on stylization as a valuable option). See Halliwell [2002]: 45-46 and 126-129.

(1997) has shown, it was rather a self-conscious ideological construction.

I agree with Stephen Halliwell that the "mirror argument" is a provocation tinged with satire and humour, and I refer the reader to his convincing discussion (Halliwell [2002], ch. 4). I would add that Plato's provocation can be more fully appreciated if we bear in mind two points that were arguably as obvious for Plato's contemporaries as they are hard to pick for us moderns.

To begin with, in classical Athens *portable mirrors were the exclusive province of women*, as is abundantly shown by both literary and iconographic evidence (Frontisi-Ducroux, Vernant [1997]). As a consequence, our passage has a comic quality that has gone unnoticed: in spite of the role played by mirrors in Renaissance painting, envisaging the all-male Greek society of tragedians, painters and sophists toying with a portable mirror is a bit like, say, depicting the Wehrmacht armed with pink bras.

Secondly, the idea that art is a mirror-like activity (whatever that may imply) was already current in Plato's time, and this is a point that may be further emphasized. On the iconographic side, many anecdotes extol great painters for their ability to reproduce appearances in such a way as to make them indistinguishable from the real thing – they are famously discussed by Panofsky in the first chapter of his seminal book *Idea* (Panofsky [1960]). As for poetry, some time before Plato tried his hand at the *Republic*, the sophist Alcidamas praised the *Odyssey* for being «a beautiful mirror of life» (note that both "life" and "*Odyssey*" are feminine in Greek)[22]. As early as the first half of the 5th Century, moreover, Pindar had compared poetry to the power of a mirror reflecting great deeds only on the condition that the *goddess* Mnemosyne activates it[23].

Of course, we should never forget that Plato's main target is tragedy, and it is a pity we

know so little as to how theatre people promoted and defended their art in the time of Socrates and Plato, not least because tragedies, set as they are in a distant, pre-theatrical past, contain no overt reference to theatre itself. However, the earliest occurrence of the word *mimesis* in relation to poetry has an interesting surprise in store. I am referring to the Aristophanic scene mentioned above, in which Euripides' uncouth relative questions the virility of the tragic poet Agathon, whose wardrobe is, to say the least, ambiguous:

Κη [...] τίς δαὶ κατρόπτου καὶ ξίφους κοινωνία;
 σύ τ᾽ αὐτός, ὦ παῖ, πότερον ὡς ἀνὴρ τρέφει;
καὶ ποῦ πέος; ποῦ χλαῖνα; ποῦ Λακωνικαί;
ἀλλ᾽ ὡς γυνὴ δῆτ᾽; εἶτα ποῦ τὰ τιτθία;
τί φής; τί σιγᾷς; ἀλλὰ δῆτ᾽ ἐκ τοῦ μέλους
ζητῶ σ᾽, ἐπειδή γ᾽ αὐτὸς οὐ βούλει φράσαι;
Αγ. ὦ πρέσβυ πρέσβυ, τοῦ φθόνου μὲν τὸν ψόγον
ἤκουσα, τὴν δ᾽ ἄλγησιν οὐ παρεσχόμην·
ἐγὼ δὲ τὴν ἐσθῆθ᾽ ἅμα γνώμῃ φορῶ.
χρὴ γὰρ ποιητὴν ἄνδρα πρὸς τὰ δράματα
ἃ δεῖ ποιεῖν, πρὸς ταῦτα τοὺς τρόπους ἔχειν.
αὐτίκα γυναικεῖ᾽ ἢν ποιῇ τις δράματα,
μετουσίαν δεῖ τῶν τρόπων τὸ σῶμ᾽ ἔχειν.
Κη. οὐκοῦν κελητίζεις, ὅταν Φαίδραν ποιῇς;
Αγ. ἀνδρεῖα δ᾽ ἢν ποιῇ τις, ἐν τῷ σώματι
ἔνεσθ᾽ ὑπάρχον τοῦθ᾽. ἃ δ᾽ οὐ κεκτήμεθα,
μίμησις ἤδη ταῦτα συνθηρεύεται.

MNESILOCHUS [...] What relation has a mirror to a sword? And you yourself, who are you? Do you pretend to be a man? Where is your tool, pray? Where is the cloak, the footgear that belong to that sex? Are you a woman? Then where are your breasts? Answer me. But you keep silent. Oh! just as you choose; your songs display your character quite sufficiently.
AGATHON Old man, old man, I hear the shafts of jealousy whistling by my ears, but they do not hit me. My dress is in harmony with my thoughts. A poet must adopt the nature of his characters. Thus, if he is placing women on the stage, he must contract all their habits in his own person.
MNESILOCHUS Then you make love horse-fashion when you are composing a Phaedra.
AGATHON If the heroes are men, everything in him will be manly. What we don't possess by nature, we

---

[22] In Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 3.3, 1406b12–13. Further bibliography in Halliwell [2002]: 133.
[23] *Nemean Odes* 7.12-16. Cf. Loscalzo [1996] for a full discussion, with added bibliography.

must acquire by imitation. (transl. "The Athenian Society", London 1912)

This funny scene features *both* the novel word *mimesis and* a portable mirror, which is clearly construed as a symbol of femininity and is apparently an instrument employed by the tragic poet to achieve *mimesis*, i.e. feminization[24]. Even though he presumably uses his mirror for self-inspection rather than to reproduce reality, the effeminate poet Agathon may be seen as the direct ancestor of Plato's painter-poet-sophist brandishing a mirror that gives life to his passive art. If one discounts such comic overtones, it is very tempting to borrow Shakespeare's motto, when Hamlet says that actors should «hold the mirror up to nature»[25], or – to quote a text discussed elsewhere in this volume – Diderot's view of the actor's art as «une glace toujours disposée à montrer les objets et à les montrer avec la même précision, la même force et la même *vérité*»[26]. If such was the boast of poets and artists, in conclusion, we may construe Socrates' mirror as an *ad hominem* argument, a provocation directed against the world of theatre and its growing ambitions of realism, which were particularly prominent in the theatre of Euripides, as Aristophanes' *Frogs* suggests. Reflecting reality is all your lofty art can achieve? Then you might as well brandish a woman's mirror and hold it up to nature. Yet this is not all.

The list of things that the artist is said to be able to reproduce contains one item that could not possibly be captured by a mirror, and this is Hades, the underworld, which the Greeks etymologized as «the invisible place»[27]. Unsurprisingly,

the item is not found in the second list, which refers directly to the mirror. Yet Socrates explicitly claims that the mirror list is coextensive with the artist list. Why? Was Plato snoozing when he wrote this passage? Hardly so.

The *Republic* famously ends with an eschatological myth[28], which is clearly presented as a refashioning of Homer's underworld, complete with direct *mimesis* of speech[29]. It is all the more interesting to note that the closing myth consists precisely in the item that we found missing in the mirror list, that is the invisible afterworld. As a sample of good *mimesis*, the myth cannot be reduced to any narrow, mirror-like notion of art and it is perhaps no coincidence that the word *mythos*, which features so prominently as Socrates discusses *mimesis* in Republic 2-3, is never found in the discussion of *mimesis* in book 10[30]. Interestingly, the *Republic*'s very first mention of *mythos* refers precisely to the terrifying and widespread accounts of Hades (οἱ λεγόμενοι μῦθοι περὶ τῶν ἐν Ἅιδου) that haunt Cephalus' old age (330d). This foreshadows the closing myth, whose function is precisely to displace those stories, and highlights the deliberate deficiency of the mirror argument.

To put it jokingly, not only has Plato provided the "mirror argument" with a distinctly comic note: what is more, by listing invisible Hades among the things supposedly reflected by mirrors, and by severing *mythos* from *mimesis*, he has also inserted a seemingly "invisible" bug designed to undermine it from within.

Let us now move, much more briefly, to Aristotle. I refer once again to Stephen Halliwell, who

---

[24] The import and meaning of *mimesis* in this scene is a much-debated issue. For a first orientation, see Saetta-Cottone [2016]: 186 ff.

[25] *Hamlet* III, ii, l. 22. Still more than Pindar's and Alcidamas' mirrors, Hamlet's is of course much discussed, as it may not point to narrow realism. Its scholarly fortune owes much to Abrams' seminal *The Mirror and the Lamp* [Abrams 1953].

[26] See M. Ortega, this volume, pp. 107-116.

[27] While criticising it, *Cratylus* 404b testifies to the popularity of this etymology.

[28] This contradiction was criticized already in the third century B.C. by Epicurus' pupil Colotes. See Cerri [2000]: 25.

[29] See e.g. Segal [1978]. More bibliography in Capra [2010]: 201.

[30] Halliwell ([2005]: 54) suggests in passing that «il est manifestement impossible de voir le reflet des dieux ou des Enfers dans un miroir matériel, mais ces sujets sont bien entendu indispensables pour les mythes dont traites les poètes et les peintres». The point I make here proves him right.

convincingly advocates a dual model for Aristotelian *mimesis*: on the one hand, artistic representations exhibit world-like properties, something that points to *mimesis* in the sense of both "impersonation" and "reproduction"; on the other hand, *mimesis* produces «objects that possess a distinctive [...] rationale of their own» (Halliwell [2002]: 152), which is what makes poetry more philosophical than history, as the *Poetics* famously says. *Mimesis* is integral to human behaviour, but refined *mimesis* in the form of poetry and art ends up developing a partly autonomous status.

At least in part, such an autonomous status depends on an altogether new way of looking at Greek poetry, which reflects Aristotle's anti-Platonic predilection for books and the written word as the foundation of philosophy[31]. Time and again, Aristotle makes it clear that he conceptualizes Greek plays and poems as self-contained units (i.e. books) rather than as parts of the performative, mythical and religious continuum inherent in the polis' public festivals[32]: as one critic puts it, «the organicism that Aristotle took from Plato and adapted to his formal and teleological view of poetry gave poetic criticism something of the objectivity of anatomy» (Ford [2002]: 266). To Aristotle, reading is a satisfactory way of consuming and – more importantly – dissecting plays, and the *Poetics* does not have much to say on the effects of theatre on the city, nor on "voice" (*phone*) or "figures" (*schemata*). Gone is Plato's sociological approach, as gone is any anxiety associated with psychomotor learning as a result of tragic performances[33]: in fact, Aristotle goes so far as to claim that competent audiences have no need for *schemata* (26.1462a2-5). This completely new way of looking at theatre is in keeping with the novel meaning Aristotle ends up giving to *mythos*, as I mentioned at the beginning,

and results in an even stronger interconnection between *mythos* and *mimesis*, although they are both seen in a completely different light.

In Aristotle's literary (as opposed to performative) world, *mythos* and *mimesis* turn out to be even more important and interconnected notions than they are in *Republic* 2-3: unlike Plato's, Aristotle's top category to define poetry is not *diegesis* but *mimesis* itself; moreover, *mythos* is the «soul of tragedy», the *condicio sine qua non* for the existence of poetry. Even more striking is Aristotle's "definition" of *mythos* as *mimesis* of an action:

ἔστιν δὲ τῆς μὲν πράξεως ὁ μῦθος ἡ μίμησις, λέγω γὰρ μῦθον τοῦτον τὴν σύνθεσιν τῶν πραγμάτων

And the imitation of the action is mythos. By this term mythos I mean the organisation of the events (synthesin tōn pragmatōn)... (Aristotle, Poetics 6.1450a4-5, transl. Halliwell)

Mythos, then, *is* in fact *mimesis*, and «mimetic (art)», in the *Poetics*, can work as a synonym for poetry itself[34]. Insofar as the object of *mimesis* has become something more abstract and formal, the relationship between these three overlapping terms, namely *mythos*, *mimesis* and *poiesis*, may at times look like one of quasi-identity.

To conclude with one last instance of Platonic/Aristotelian "intersection", it should be noted that the "Aristotelian" meaning of *mythos* as «*mimesis* of an action» does not emerge immediately in the *Poetics*. As I have argued elsewhere, the very beginning of the work, despite its ultimately anti-Platonic outcome, has a strange *Platonic* flavour[35]. Aristotle wants to explore the force and the organization of *mythoi*, something that is crucial for the success of poetry (πῶς δεῖ συνίστασθαι τοὺς μύθους εἰ μέλλει καλῶς ἕξειν ἡ ποίησις, *Poetics* 1.1447a9-10). This closely recalls the beginning of the *Phaedo* (61b) where Socrates devises a kind of

---

[31] Cf. Trabattoni [2005] and Billault [2015].

[32] Cf. the illuminating introduction in Lanza [1987].

[33] I purposely leave out of consideration the elusive notion of *katharsis*, which may be construed as the culmination of the musical education described in the *Politics*: cf. Donini [2008]: CVII-CXIII and my own reservations as expressed in Capra [2017].

[34] Cf. 5,1249b6, where *mimetike* (*scil. techne*) stands for poetry.

[35] Cf. the conclusion of Capra [2014]. For a general comparison between Aristotelian and Platonic *mythos*, cf. Frazier [2013].

poetics in miniature, when he states that *mythos* is crucial for the very definition of poetry (ἐννοήσας ὅτι τὸν ποιητὴν δέοι, εἴπερ μέλλοι ποιητὴς εἶναι, ποιεῖν μύθους). Yet Socrates is speaking of poetic images, and he exemplifies this traditional meaning of *mythos* through Aesop – he claims he has converted to poetry to obey a dream. Accordingly, he has composed a hymn to Apollo and put in verse a bunch of Aesopic fables while in prison. By contrast, in the following chapters of the *Poetics* Aristotle takes leave of old myth and of Aesop's speaking animals and explores *mythos* insofar as it provides plays with their structure, which he dissects in a quasi-anatomical fashion [36]. Yet Aristotle's terminology and certain turns of phrase clearly call to mind the *Phaedo*. I take this as evidence that Aristotle sensed the poetological import of the passage in question when he first addressed the question of myth and *mimesis*, or maybe he just had first-hand knowledge of its intended meaning. Could it be the case that Plato's truer "poetics" is not to be found in the *Republic*'s criticism of *mimesis* but, rather, in Socrates' conversion to poetry on the eve of his death and in a trilogy – *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Phaedo* – designed to promote *imitatio Socratis*? As I said, I have tried to take the bull by the horns, but, one may suspect, that was not the right bull after all.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abrams, M.H., 1953, *The Mirror and the Lamp. Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Annas, J., 1998, *Plato on the Triviality of Literature*, in *Plato. Critical Assessments*, vol. III, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 273-295.

Bensen Cain, R., 2012, *Plato on Mimesis and Mirrors*, "Philosophy and Literature", 36, pp. 187-195.

Belfiore, E., 1992, *Tragic Pleasures. Aristotle on Plot and Emotion*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Belfiore, E., 2000, *Narratological Plots and Aristotle's Mythos*, "Arethusa", 33, pp. 33-70.

Billault, A., 2015, *La pensée de la forme dans la Poétique d'Aristote*, "Bulletin de l'Association Guillaume Budé", 1, pp. 128-142.

Blondell, R, 2002, *The Play of Character in Plato's Dialogues*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Capra, A., 2003, *Dialoghi narrati e dialoghi drammatici in Platone*, in (a cura di), *Platone e la tradizione platonica*, ed. M. Bonazzi and F. Trabattoni, Milan: Cisalpino, pp. 3-30.

Capra, A., 2010, *Plato's Hesiod and the Will of Zeus. Philosophical Rhapsody in the Timaeus and the Critias*, in *Plato and Hesiod*, ed. G.R. Boys-Stones and J. Haubold, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 200-218.

Capra, A., 2014, *Plato's four Muses. The Phaedrus and the Poetics of Philosophy*, Washington DC-Cambridge MA: CHS-Harvard University Press.

Capra A., 2017, *Aristotle's Poetics and the Anatomy of Tragedy*, in *The Poetics in Its Aristotelian Context*, ed. P. Destrée, M. Heath and D. Munteanu, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, forthcoming.

Catoni, M.L., 2008, *La comunicazione non-verbale in Grecia antica*, Turin: Bollati Boringhieri.

Cerri, G. 1991, *Platone sociologo della comunicazione*, Milan: Il Saggiatore.

Cerri, G. 2000, *Dalla dialettica all'epos: Platone, "Repubblica" X, "Timeo", "Crizia"*, in *La struttura del dialogo platonico*, ed. G. Casertano, Naples: Loffredo, pp. 7-34.

Donini, P. (ed.), 2008, *Aristotele, Poetica*. Turin: Einaudi.

Ford, A., 2002, *The Origins of Criticism. Literary Culture and Poetic Theory in Classical Greece*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Frazier, F., 2013, *La spécificité du concept aristotélicien de 'muthos': une relecture de la Poétique*," in F, *Renaissances de la tragédie: la Poétique d'Aristote et le genre tragique, de l'antiquité à l'époque contemporaine*, ed. L. Malhomme, G. Miletti, G.M. Rispoli and M.A. Zagdoun, Naples: Giannini, pp. 103-123.

---

[36] On the anti-Platonic import of Aristotelian *mythos* in the *Poetics*, see Belfiore [1992]: 85-86 and Sissa [2006]: 80.

Frontisi-Ducroux F., Vernant J.P, 1997, *Dans l'œil du miroir*, Paris : Editions Odile Jacob.

Fusillo, M., 1986, 'Mythos' *aristotelico e 'récit' narratologico*, "Strumenti Critici", 52, pp. 381-392.

Genette, G., 1979, *Introduction à l'architexte*, Paris: Seuil.

Giuliani, L., 1997, *Das älteste Sokrates-Bildnis: ein physiognomisches porträt wider die Physiognomiker*, in *Bildnisse: Die europäische Tradition der Portraitkunst*, ed. W. Schlink, Freiburg: Rombach, pp. 11-55.

Gombrich, E.H., 1977, *Art and Illusion*, 5th ed., Oxford: Phaidon.

Gonzalez, F. J., 1998, *Dialectic and Dialogue: Plato's Practice of Philosophical Inquiry*, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Halliwell, S., 2002, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient Texts and Modern Problems*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Halliwell, S., 2005, *La mimèsis reconsidérée: une optique platonicienne*, in *Études sur la République de Platon*, I. De la justice. ed. M. Disxaut, Paris: Vrin, pp. 43-63.

Heath, M., 2013, *Ancient Philosophical Poetics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lanza, D. (ed.), 1987, *Aristotele, Poetica*. Milan: Rizzoli

Lapini, W., 2003, Platone e le critiche alla 'mimesis', in Id., *Studi di filologia filosofica greca*, Florence: Olschki, pp. 137-166.

Loscalzo, D., 1996, *Lo specchio della poesia (Pi. N. 7. 12-6)*, "Sileno", 22, pp. 359-367.

Murray, P. (ed.), 1996, *Plato on Poetry. Ion, Republic 376e-398b, Republic 595-608b*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Notomi, N., 2011, *Image-Making In Republic X And The Sophist: Plato's Criticism Of The Poet And The Sophist*, in *Plato and the Poets*, ed. P. Destrée and F.G. Hermann, Leiden: Brill, pp. 299-326.

Palumbo, L., 2008, *Μίμησις. Rappresentazione, teatro e mondo nei dialoghi di Platone e nella Poetica di Aristotele*, Naples: Loffredo.

Panofsky, E., 1960, *Idea. Ein Beitrag zur Begriffsgeschichte der älteren Kunsttheorie*, 2. Verbesserte Auflage, Berlin: Hessling.

Regali, M., 2012, *Il poeta e il demiurgo. Teoria e prassi della produzione letteraria nel Timeo e nel Crizia di Platone*. Sankt Augustin: Akademia Verlag.

Saetta-Cottone, R. (ed.), 2016, *Aristophane, Les Thesmophories ou La Fête des femmes*, Texte, traduction, introduction et commentaire, Paris: Editions de Boccard.

Segal, C., 1978, *The Myth was Saved: Reflections on Homer and the Mythology of Plato's Republic*, "Hermes", 106, pp. 315-336.

Sissa, G., 2006, *A Theatrical Poetics: Recognition and the Structural Emotions of Tragedy*, "Arion", 14, pp. 35-92.

Speyer, A., 2001, *The Erliest Bust of Socrates? New Observations to Philochoros in PHerc. 1021 Col.2.*, "Cronache Ercolanesi", 31, pp. 81-95.

Trabattoni, F., 2005, *La verità nascosta. Oralità e scrittura in Platone e nella Grecia classica*, Rome: Carocci.

Tsouna, V., 2013, *Mimesis and the Platonic Dialogue*, "Rhizomata" 1, pp. 1-29.

Velardi, R., 1991, *Le origini dell'inno in prosa tra V e IV secolo a.C.: Menandro Retore e Platone*, in *L'inno tra rituale e letteratura nel mondo antico*, ed. A.C. Cassio and G. Cerri, "Aion" 13, pp. 205–231.

Zanker, P., 1995, *The Mask of Socrates. The Image of the Intellectual in Antiquity*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Zimmermann, B., 2009, *Zum Begriff Mythos in der griechischen Literatur*, in *Mythische Wiederkehr: der Ödipus- und Medea-Mythos im Wandel der Zeiten*, ed. B. Zimmermann, Freiburg: Rombach, pp. 11-16.