



The Many Faces of Mimesis

SELECTED ESSAYS FROM THE
THIRD SYMPOSIUM ON THE
HERITAGE OF WESTERN GREECE

EDITED BY HEATHER L. REID
AND JEREMY C. DELONG

The Many Faces of *Mimēsis*

THE HERITAGE OF WESTERN GREECE

Series Editors

Heather L. Reid, Morningside College
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The cultural and intellectual heritage of Western Greece—the coastal areas of Southern Italy and Sicily settled by Hellenes in the 8th and 7th centuries BCE—is sometimes overlooked in academic studies. Yet evidence suggests that poets, playwrights, philosophers, and other maverick intellectuals found fertile ground here for the growth of their ideas and the harvesting of their work. The goal of this series is to explore the distinctive heritage of Western Greece from a variety of disciplinary perspectives including art history, archaeology, classical literature, drama, epigraphy, history, philosophy, and religion.

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Selected Essays from the 2017 Symposium on the
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edited by
Heather L. Reid,
and Jeremy C. DeLong

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Terracotta bell-krater, Greek, South Italian, Paestan circa 360-350 BCE.

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Epigraph

Tell them to remember Syracuse and Ortygia,
which Hieron rules with his pure scepter and with good counsels,
while he attends on the worship of Demeter of the red feet,
and on the festival of her daughter with her white horses,
and on the might of Aetnaean Zeus

(Pindar, *Olympian* 6, 93-96)



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Introduction

Heather L. Reid & Jeremy C. DeLong

Mimēsis is a concept that applies across disciplines to the study of ancient Greek culture. The question and function of imitation, representation, emulation, etc. are relevant to philosophy, poetry, drama, ritual, and material culture. Given its broad-ranging significance, *mimēsis* was chosen as the thematic topic for Fonte Artetusa's Third Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Heritage of Western Greece, held in Siracusa, Sicily in May 2017. The collection of essays that follows has been selected from the papers delivered at that conference, and it clearly demonstrates the extensive presence of *mimēsis* across Western Greek culture.

The keynote essay by Thomas Noble Howe focuses on the Apollonion of Syracuse, which we were able to inspect up close during the conference. This 6th century BCE temple is one of the oldest examples of the Doric order, which Howe interprets, at least partly, as a *mimēsis* of Mycenaean and Egyptian styles by polymaths similar to Thales and Anaximander who heroically expressed their wide-ranging knowledge through architecture.

Part I gathers papers on the contentious topic of *mimēsis* in Plato's *Republic*. Francisco Gonzalez begins with the perplexing but often-overlooked question of how Plato's own use of *mimēsis* is compatible with his damning critique of it. He responds by distinguishing poetic and sophistic *mimēsis* from the philosophical version. The distinction is based on *erōs*, specifically philosophers' ability to be moved by an image's inherent imperfection into desire for the ideal that lies beyond it. Philosophical *mimēsis* exposes its own deficiency, thereby provoking a passion for what lies beyond it. In the next essay, Gene Fendt asks why Socrates reiterates the "three removes" argument three times in *Republic*, and responds with an unconventional interpretation of the *phutourgos* as a knowing human flautist whose music expresses the beauty and order of her soul. Guilherme Motta's article examines the restriction of even noble *mimēsis* to only "rare" occasions in *Republic*. He explains the restriction in educational terms, as an effort to keep *dianoia* (thought) from being dominated by emotion, so that it may later be directed toward philosophical pursuits. Jeremy DeLong analyzes Plato's censorship of poetic content in Bks. II-III, especially the rules for

portraying divine nature. After arguing that these content rules are rooted in the Eleatic tradition, specifically the work of Parmenides, he goes on to consider how this influence suggests that Plato's ensuing censorship of mimetic styles must be narrower than it initially appears. In the section's final essay, Carolina Araújo uses a modern definition of empathy to account for what Plato takes to be the proper response to mimetic poetry in *Republic*, one essential to political and personal flourishing.

The next section deals with *mimēsis* in other Platonic dialogues. Marie-Élise Zovko gathers evidence from *Timeaus*, *Symposium*, *Laws*, and several other works to explore the relationship between *mimēsis* as imitation of the forms and artistic *mimēsis*. She concludes that human virtue, or *becoming like God*, requires a combination of both. *Meno* is the focus of Lidia Palumbo's essay, which argues that Plato explicitly uses *mimēsis* not only to demonstrate the process of learning through *anamnēsis*, but also to represent an argument to be rejected—that knowledge can be inscribed in a soul—with the geometrical example of a triangle being inscribed into a circle. Sean Driscoll examines the *Cratylus*'s claim that names are a *mimēsis* of what they name. Arguing that an impoverished “copy” understanding of *mimēsis* has been projected throughout Plato's works, Driscoll proposes a concept of *eikastic mimēsis*, which imitates not a thing's appearance, but rather its essence. Konstantinos Gkaleas's essay on dance in the *Laws* closes the section. Gkaleas interprets dance as the *mimēsis* of good warriors and citizens in Platonic education, one which uniquely combines the benefits of *μουσική* and *γυμναστική* by simultaneously training body and soul.

Part III moves on to the reception of Platonic *mimēsis* in Neoplatonism and modern art. Anna Motta argues that *mimēsis* in the Neoplatonic tradition applies to the theory of a world-hierarchy in which lower realities, as a causal reflection of the higher ones, aspire to reunite with the latter. Plato emerges as an expert imitator in this context, capable of producing dialogues that represent higher realities in words. Jure Zovko continues the Neoplatonic theme, focusing on Plotinus's interpretation of Platonic *mimēsis* as one in which artists directly imitate a form of beauty which they find within their souls. In the third essay, Alexander Zistakis emphasizes the social and political effects of *mimēsis* in Plato, observing its instantiation in the modern art

of Cezanne, the Cubists, and the modern art philosophy of Braque, Léger, and Klee. Modern art responds to Plato's criticism of *mimēsis* by reinventing itself as the creative discovery of truth about itself and the world.

Part IV considers the relation between *mimēsis* and human virtues. It begins with Christos Evangeliou's examination of Aristotle's claim in *Poetics* that man is the most mimetic animal. Aristotle lauds both Epic and Tragic art, praising the latter, contra Plato, for its ability to cultivate virtue. Dorota Tymura then considers a specific case of virtuous *mimēsis*, arguing that Antisthenes's effort to emulate Socrates's way of life gave birth to the philosophy of Cynicism. Iris Sulimani's article argues that Diodorus Siculus's universal history was motivated in part by the belief that virtue can be achieved by imitating the deeds of good characters of the past—especially those from Western Greece. Elliott Domagola concludes the section, arguing that Alcibiades's chameleon-like skill of socio-cultural *mimēsis* can be taken as a model for Plato's account of *mimēsis* in *Sophist*.

The fifth section of the book focuses on *mimēsis* in poetry, music, drama and ritual. Jonah Radding opens the section by revealing how Bacchylides expands on Homer's narrative use of *mimēsis* in the fifth *Ode* to address his audience, Hieron of Syracuse, and to call into question the practical utility of its own mythical paradigm. The many connections between music and *mimēsis* in Western Greece is the subject of Giulia Corrente's study, which draws evidence from history, philosophy, drama, ritual, and iconography. Laura Tisi argues that the papyrus fragment POxy2746 offers a post-classical *mimēsis* of Aeschylus, Euripides, and a 4th century BCE Apulian *krater*. Ewa Osek's study of the *Thesmophori* festival in ancient Syracuse reveals that some of the jokes and festival behavior familiar even in today's Carnevale began as a *mimēsis* of ancient myths. Argyri Karanasiou's essay on Plautine comedy closes the section. She argues that Plautus's comedies are not art imitating life, but rather art imitating prior art (Hellenistic comedy), while simultaneously inventing a new art form (the Roman *comoedia palliata*).

Part VI, which examines *mimēsis* in material culture, concludes this thematic collection. Rocío Manuela Cudra-Rubio outlines the various decorative and symbolic employments of small herms in private Roman contexts, showing how they draw upon Hellenic origins and usages.

Jorge Tomás García chronicles the innovations in artistic theory and painting techniques—especially perspectival techniques to fool the eye—developed in ancient Sikyon, and how these innovators fundamentally shifted the ideal of mimetic painting towards a fidelity of representation—an ideal which would substantially influence Renaissance art. Aura Piccioni provides a survey of figurines from Magna Graecia which appear to be mimetically representing actual female dancers—either amateurs or professionals—in various ritual/cult contexts. Finally, José Miguel Puebla Morón provides a detailed analysis of how Punic cities in Sicily (5th-3rd c. BCE) ended up imitating Greek iconography and symbolism on their official coinage.

Overall, these essays demonstrate how fundamental the concept of *mimēsis* is for understanding Western Greek culture. Its natural pervasive presence in art, material culture, and life, led to various philosophical treatments, particularly by Plato. The philosophical legacy of the 4th c. BCE could only have increased awareness of *mimēsis* as a concept and practice within Greek culture, in turn generating new philosophical and artistic responses. By considering the various usages and interdisciplinary perspectives of *mimēsis* offered in this collection, not only can *mimēsis* itself be better understood, but the overall heritage of Western Greece as well.