Space in archaic Greek lyric: city, countryside and sea
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SUMMARY

During recent decades the interest in space in the humanities increased to the extent that we can speak of a ‘spatial turn’. Space has become foregrounded particularly in literary studies, both ancient and modern, as the proliferation of books devoted to space in a particular genre or author demonstrates. A number of ongoing projects also attests that, and this thesis on space in archaic Greek lyric (seventh till fifth century BC) is part of one focusing on space in ancient Greek literature led by Irene de Jong (Studies in Ancient Greek Narrative 3). While much scholarship concentrates on the actual spaces in which archaic lyric poems were performed, this thesis investigated the literary representation of space within the lyric poems. In particular, it considered three types of space, namely city, countryside and sea, because they are the most recurrent types.

The first chapter of this thesis consisted of a theoretical framework of space, based on two research questions. The first was of a linguistic nature and regarded the use of spatial diction in comparison to epic poetry: how does the use of this diction (especially epithets) differ on a lexical, referential and semantic level, and what are the effects of its difference? The second and more essential research question was literary and concerned the roles of space, again compared to epic poetry. A theoretical model for it was developed on the basis of narratology, phenomenology and metaphor theory. The first role of space as setting and frame, dominant in the Homeric epics, was related to the temporal structure of narratives, i.e. their chronological or anachronical order, the duration of the narrated time in relation to the narrating time and the frequency of the events recounted. The second role was symbolic: space has either symbolic associations, acquiring a psychologising function to mirror human emotions or forming part of a literary motif, or a symbolic form, i.e. as metaphor or personification.
The theoretical model was applied to microanalyses of 33 lyric poems about the city, countryside and sea in the next three chapters. The second chapter concentrated on the city. The first role as setting and frame was explored for mythological cities like those of Mysia and Troy (the ‘new Archilochus’ and Ibycus 282). A grim effect was established by the use of diction shared with epic poetry, sometimes in combination with the anachronical order of a ‘lyric narrative’. The second role as symbol was at play for contemporary cities: either they were personified in times of the rise of tyrants as a means of dramatisation and persuasion (Solon 4 and Theognis 39-52), or their capture was metaphorical for the downfall of a political system (Theognis 233-236) or for an erotic ‘conquest’ Archilochus 23, Theognis 949-954).

The subject of the third chapter was the countryside. Coastal plains with rivers in Mysia and Troy had a primary role as setting (the ‘new Archilochus’ and Bacchylides 13). Again a grim effect was recognised in the use of diction shared with epic poetry, in combination with the anachronical order of the ‘lyric narratives’. The second, more dominant role of erotic symbol was found to be relevant to fields, meadows and gardens. Fields were either metaphors for female bodies in a sexual context (Pindar Pythian 4 and Theognis 581-528) or had erotic associations which reflected female desire (Anacreon 346<1> and Sappho 96). Gardens were metaphorical for female genitals (Archilochus’ Cologne Epode) or associated with incipient sexuality (Ibycus 286). Meadows were associated with seduction of girls by men (Anacreon 417 and Archilochus’ Cologne Epode), homoerotic love (Theognis 1249-1252) or the goddess of love Aphrodite (Sappho 2).

The fourth chapter investigated the sea. The first role as setting and frame was observed in mythological narratives of the sea journeys of Theseus and the Argonauts (Bacchylides 17 and Pindar Pythian 4). An examination of the temporal structure of the narratives revealed that the scenic presentation, along with the repetition of the most important events, established a dramatic effect in Bacchylides, while the summary with a few scenes emphasising the danger of the journey served as a means of
heroisation. The second role was observed in similes (Bacchylides 13 and Semonides 7): the presentation of the sea as both furious and calm not only illustrated narrative events and emotions, as in Homeric sea similes, but also served as a means of characterisation or praise of people. The third and most significant role was that of symbol of danger, which was reinforced by the use of diction shared with epic poetry and which reflected of emotions of fear (Archilochus 13, 24 and 105, Semonides 1, Simonides 543, Solon 13, Theognis 691-692); in some cases the danger of storm at sea was metaphorical for socio-political upheavals (Alcaeus 6 and 208, Theognis 667-682).

Research on the city, countryside and sea has thus shown that space especially has a symbolic role in archaic Greek lyric. In this respect, archaic Greek lyric has proven to differ from epic poetry, where the role of setting or frame prevails. In the epilogue, I cautiously suggested that the symbolism of space could be connected to the performance context of the symposium of the lyric poems, connecting the ‘spatial turn’ in literary studies to the ‘performative turn’ in lyric scholarship. The riddling use of some of the erotic city metaphors, for example, was linked to the play of guessing in the symposium. On the basis of the wide-spread metaphor of the symposium as a ship at sea in ancient Greek literature and vase paintings, I suggested that poems about the danger of the sea, most notably those embedded in socio-political ship metaphors, strengthened the internal cohesion of the sympotic group. Based on the acknowledgements that the symposium showed a high degree of erotic permissiveness, the fact that lyric poems often locate all kinds of erotic activities in the countryside was interpreted as a a projection of eroticism that goes beyond the communal norms of the polis on a space outside of the polis.