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978-1-107-07288-6 - Performing Citizenship in Plato's Laws

Lucia Prauscello

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In the *Laws*, Plato theorizes citizenship as simultaneously a political, ethical and aesthetic practice. His reflection on citizenship finds its roots in a descriptive psychology of human experience, with sentience and, above all, volition seen as the primary targets of a lifelong training in the values of citizenship. In the city of Magnesia described in the *Laws*, *erōs* for civic virtue is presented as a motivational resource not only within the reach of the 'ordinary' citizen but also factored in by default in its educational system. Supporting a vision of 'perfect citizenship' based on an internalized obedience to the laws and persuading the entire polity to consent willingly to it requires an ideology that must be rhetorically all-inclusive. In this city, 'ordinary' citizenship itself will be troped as a performative action: Magnesia's choral performances become a fundamental channel for shaping, feeling and communicating a strong sense of civic identity and unity.

LUCIA PRAUSCELLO is University Senior Lecturer in Classics at the University of Cambridge and a Fellow of Trinity Hall. She has published on Greek philology, literature and music. Her monograph *Singing Alexandria: Music between Practice and Textual Transmission* was published in 2006.

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

By education neither an ancient philosopher nor a cultural historian, I have come to Plato's *Laws* from the perspective of someone interested in literary criticism and its history. I soon became fascinated by the inexhaustible richness and complexity of a text that requires a constant process of unpacking and unravelling from its reader. Above all, I was struck by the way in which the *Laws* pervasively engages with the discursive practices of the contemporary *polis* and in particular with *polis* religion. The result is an attempt at narrowing the gap between philosophy and literature in our appreciation of Plato's *Laws*. I am conscious that such a hybrid approach will probably disappoint both the analytical expectations of the philosopher proper and the sophistication of the literary critic. Yet if the book as it is offers some new insights on the strategies of persuasion woven by Plato in the *Laws* and on the resonances that these strategies may have evoked in a contemporary audience, then, with Plato, I can say that καλὸς ὁ κίνδυνος.

The debt of gratitude that I have contracted over the years with colleagues and friends who have patiently read and commented, at some stage or other, on versions of individual chapters or of the whole work is a very large one: I would like in particular to thank Albio Cesare Cassio, Franco Ferrari, Richard Hunter, Leslie Kurke, Salvatore Lavecchia, Geoffrey Lloyd, Donald Mastronarde, Robin Osborne, Anastasia-Erasmia Peponi, Richard Rawles, Ian Rutherford, Frisbee Sheffield, David Sedley, Mario Telò, Olga Tribulato and James Warren. A major debt of gratitude is owed to two persons without whose constant support and guidance this book could not have been written and, in all likelihood, not even conceived: Giovan Battista D'Alessio and Malcom Schofield. They both believed, in different ways, that I had, after all, something to say about

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Plato's *Laws*. How much I owe to their unbounded intellectual and human generosity cannot be adequately put into words. It goes without saying that I alone am responsible for any infelicity, misunderstanding or mistake present in the book.

The bulk of this book was written between 2009 and the early months of 2013. The important volume by A.-E. Peponi (ed.), *Performance and Culture in Plato's Laws*, Cambridge and New York 2013 came out too late (June 2013) for me to engage with it with the thoroughness and detail that it deserves. I have nevertheless tried to incorporate it in my discussion, highlighting both convergences and divergences. I am particularly grateful to B. Kowalzig, L. Kurke, K. Morgan and A.-E. Peponi for allowing me to read the proofs of their contributions ahead of publication. Chapters 3 and 4 include (but are not limited to) a substantially revised and expanded form of some of the material previously published as 'Patterns of chorality in Plato's *Laws*' in D. Yatromanolakis (ed.) *Music and Cultural Politics in Greek and Chinese Societies, vol. I: Greek Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA 2011 [but 2012]: 168–93) and as 'Choral persuasions in Plato's *Laws*' in R. Gagné and M. Govers Hopman (eds.), *Choral Mediations in Greek Tragedy* (Cambridge 2013: 257–77). Chapter 5 is a slightly revised and amplified version of 'Comedy and comic discourse in Plato's *Laws*' in E. Bakola, L. Prauscello and M. Telò (eds.), *Greek Comedy and the Discourse of Genres* (Cambridge 2013: 317–42).

This book is dedicated to my father, in his last illness.

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The text of the *Laws* is that of J. Burnet, *OCT* vol. V; the *Republic* is quoted after S.R. Slings' 2003 *OCT*. Translations, unless otherwise stated, are my own. The abbreviations of the names of ancient authors and their works follow those in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (4th edition) when available, otherwise those of Liddell, Scott and Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (9th edition). Abbreviations of journals are cited after *L'Année philologique*.