Frontiers of Pleasure: Models of Aesthetic Response in Archaic and Classical Greek Thought by Anastasia-Erasmia Peponi (review)

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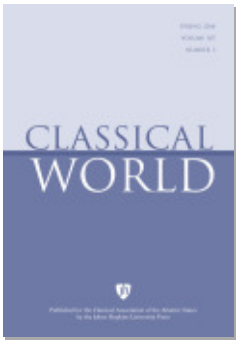

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to nonerotic types of relationship too, including "marriage, politics, religion, even the relationship between narrator and audience" (158).

Caston's book has two major strengths, containing both a detailed examination of a Roman emotion (or emotion scenario), and a well-argued case for necessarily reading love elegy with this emotion in mind. This reviewer would have preferred to see a deeper engagement with modern multidisciplinary research on jealousy, including S. L. Hart and M. Legerstee (eds.), *Handbook of Jealousy: Theory, Research, and Multidisciplinary Approaches* (Malden, Mass. and Oxford 2010); L. Wurmser and H. Jarass (eds.) *Jealousy and Envy: New Views about Two Powerful Feelings* (New York and London 2008); and P. Salovey, P. (ed.), *The Psychology of Jealousy and Envy* (New York 1991).

For example, while jealousy is regularly seen as a complex involving such emotions as anger, fear, or envy, love is rarely included (the inverse of Caston's premise on page 21). Some hold that jealousy stems primarily not from love, but from the desire not to lose something that is "mine"—linking sexual to nonsexual jealousy. Second, while the emotion Caston depicts is clearly related to our (sexual) jealousy, it would be interesting to learn to what extent jealousy in elegy—beyond the first-person perspective—is merely a generic conceit, or how far it reflects Roman jealousy as expressed in other genres or nonliterary evidence. These aspects aside, Caston has added significantly to our so far rather limited knowledge of Roman emotions, and future investigations of Roman love elegy should similarly take her views into account.

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This short but concentrated book is a welcome addition to a series of recent attempts to reclaim aesthetics as a legitimate subject of inquiry in the understanding of Greek culture. For much of the twentieth century, it was academic orthodoxy that aesthetics was not an ancient category of thought or sensibility, but an invention of the eighteenth century. That doctrinaire stance has now been challenged from various angles. Following hard on the heels of James Porter's *The Origins of Aesthetic Thought in Ancient Greece* (2010) and the collection of papers on *Aesthetic Value in Classical Antiquity* edited by Sluiter and Rosen (2012), Peponi's book addresses the "conceptualization of aesthetic pleasure in the realm of *mousikê*," above all in psychosomatic responses to aurally experienced beauty. (A companion volume is promised on the aesthetics of dance.)

Chapter 1 stresses that archaic and classical Greek reflections on poetico-musical beauty differ from the dominant modern model of aesthetic experience as "disengaged" or "disinterested"; *mousikê* intersects with and contributes to life values. But Peponi is concerned to show that Greek responses to beauty

span a spectrum from entranced "tranquility" to erotically charged attraction. Chapter 2 brings together evidence for rapt but "restful" contemplation of beauty from Homer (κηληθμός), Xenophon's *Symposium*, Plato, and Attic vase paintings that depict sympotic figures listening to music.

Chapter 3 moves on to offer a probing account of Homeric responses to song, which display a "split" phenomenology of pleasure and pain. The primary texts here are the Phemius and Demodocus episodes in *Odyssey* books 1 and 8, together with Telemachus' reactions to Menelaus' quasi-poetic storytelling (and the effect of Helen's drugs on the occasion) in book 4. Peponi reads Odysseus' tears at Demodocus' Trojan songs as those of an intensely appreciative "connoisseur"; his grief "by no means negate[s] aesthetic appreciation" (51). (Peponi's perspective, I think, complements my own recent discussion in *Between Ecstasy and Truth*.) In the Platonic terms of *Philebus* and *Republic* 10.605c-d, Odysseus experiences a "mixed pleasure," and one which, as the chapter thought-provokingly argues, suggests a complex meditation on the difference between Odysseus' "self" in life and in song. Reading Homer both with and against Kant, Peponi advances the important thesis that there need be no incompatibility between emotion and judgment in aesthetic experience.

Chapter 4 takes the Odyssean Sirens seriously as a paradigm of one kind of musical impact on the mind. In their hybrid poetic status (somewhere between monodic and choral, and combining elements of lyric and epic), what the Sirens offer points to an "ultimate communion" between singers and audiences. Peponi pursues this thesis, which I find a little too bold (she struggles to explain why the Sirens' music is *lethal*), in part by examining "intrachoral" references to the Sirens in Alcman and Pindar and by invoking comparison with the audience response to the Delian chorus at *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* 162–164.

The book's last two chapters are devoted to the eroticization of aesthetic experience. Chapter 5's central case study is Apollo's reaction to Hermes' citharody at *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* 420–462. With a close focus on the (much disputed) meaning of line 447, Peponi argues that Hermes' music produces a quasi-erotic paralysis in Apollo, a "helplessness" which is once again a kind of "mixed" pleasure (though this time the use of *Philebus* involves, I feel, some contortion). Chapter 6 puts Plato himself center stage, first with an excellent reading of the personification of poetry as a *hetaira* at *Republic* 607–608, and then with a searching inquiry into the implications of the *Republic*'s own erotic aesthetic of μουσικῶς ἐρᾶν in the argument which culminates at 3.401a–c.

This book is itself a pleasure to read. Presentation is mostly good, though the marginal line numbers on 102–103 are awry by one (which affects several subsequent references). The writing at its best is subtle and eloquent, but there is a sprinkling of unidiomatic English that sometimes mars clarity. Peponi's analyses are notable above all for the fine-grained sensitivity she brings to the reading of even very familiar texts; there is also deft use of modern authors (Wilde, Kant, Joyce, Proust) who are set in interesting counterpoint to the ancient materials. If the arguments occasionally strain a little too hard, this is a price worth paying for Peponi's critical astuteness.

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