



Between Ecstasy and Truth: Interpretations of Greek Poetics from Homer to Longinus

Stephen Halliwell

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As well as producing one of the finest of all poetic traditions, ancient Greek culture produced a major tradition of poetic theory and criticism. Halliwell's volume offers a series of detailed and challenging interpretations of some of the defining authors and texts in the history of ancient Greek poetics: the Homeric epics, Aristophanes' *Frogs*, Plato's *Republic*, Aristotle's *Poetics*, Gorgias's *Helen*, Isocrates' treatises, Philodemus' *On Poems*, and Longinus' *On the Sublime*.

The volume's fundamental concern is with how the Greeks conceptualized the experience of poetry and debated the values of that experience. The book's organizing theme is a recurrent Greek dialectic between ideas of poetry as, on the one hand, a powerfully enthralling experience in its own right (a kind of "ecstasy") and, on the other, a medium for the expression of truths which can exercise lasting influence on its audiences' views of the world. Citing a wide range of modern scholarship, and making frequent connections with later periods of literary theory and aesthetics, Halliwell questions many orthodoxies and received opinions about the texts analyzed. The resulting perspective casts new light on ways in which the Greeks attempted to make sense of the psychology of poetic experience - including the roles of emotion, ethics, imagination, and knowledge - in the life of their culture.

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