



# Frontiers of Pleasure: Models of Aesthetic Response in Archaic and Classical Greek Thought

*Anastasia-Erasmia Peponi*

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*Frontiers of Pleasure* calls into question a number of influential modern notions regarding aesthetics by going back to the very beginnings of aesthetic thought in Greece and raising critical issues regarding conceptions of how one responds to the beautiful. Despite a recent rebirth of interest in aesthetics, extensive discussion of this key cluster of topics has been absent. Anastasia-Erasmia Peponi argues that although the Greek language had no formal term equivalent to the "aesthetic," the notion was deeply rooted in Greek thought. Her analysis centers on a dominant aspect of beauty--the aural--associated with a highly influential sector of culture that comprised both poetry and instrumental music, the "activity of the Muses," or *mousikê*. The main argument relies on a series of close readings of literary and philosophical texts, from Homer and Plato through Kant, Joyce, and Proust. Through detailed attention to such scenes as Odysseus' encounter with the Sirens and Hermes' playing of his lyre for his brother Apollo, she demonstrates that the most telling moments in the conceptualization of the aesthetic come in the Greeks' debates and struggles over intense models of auditory pleasure. Unlike current tendencies to treat poetry as an early, imperfect mode of meditating upon such issues, Peponi claims that Greek poetry and philosophy employed equally complex, albeit different, ways of articulating notions of aesthetic response. Her approach often leads her to partial or total disagreement with earlier interpretations of some of the most well-known Greek texts of the archaic and classical periods. *Frontiers of Pleasure* thus suggests an alternative mode of understanding aesthetics in its entirety, freed from some modern preconceptions that have become a hindrance within the field.



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