

ANCIENT PHILOSOPHICAL POETICS

What is poetry? Why do human beings produce and consume it? What effects does it have on them? Can it give them insight into truth, or is it dangerously misleading? This book is a wide-ranging study of the very varied answers which ancient philosophers gave to such questions. An extended discussion of Plato's *Republic* shows how the two discussions of poetry are integrated with each other, and with the dialogue's central themes. Aristotle's *Poetics* is read in the context of his understanding of poetry as a natural human behaviour and an intrinsically valuable component of a good human life. Two chapters trace the development of the later Platonist tradition from Plutarch to Plotinus, Longinus and Porphyry, exploring its intellectual debts to Epicurean, allegorical and Stoic approaches to poetry. The book will be essential reading for classicists as well as ancient philosophers and modern philosophers of art and aesthetics.

Key Themes in Ancient Philosophy provides concise books, written by major scholars and accessible to non-specialists, on important themes in ancient philosophy which remain of philosophical interest today.

MALCOLM HEATH is Professor of Greek Language and Literature at the University of Leeds. He has also taught at the Universities of Oxford and St Andrews. His publications include *The Poetics of Greek Tragedy* (1987), *Political Comedy in Aristophanes* (1987), *Unity in Greek Poetics* (1989), *Hermogenes On Issues: Strategies of Argument in Later Greek Rhetoric* (1995), *Interpreting Classical Texts* (2002) and *Menander: A Rhetor in Context* (2004), as well as many journal articles. He has translated Aristotle's *Poetics* for Penguin Classics (1996), and is currently working on a book on Aristotle and the anthropology of poetry.

KEY THEMES IN ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY

SERIES EDITORS

Catherine Osborne

Reader in Philosophy, University of East Anglia

G. R. F. Ferrari

Professor of Classics, University of California, Berkeley

Each book in this new series offers a concise and accessible treatment by a single author of a topic of major philosophical importance in the ancient Greek and Roman world. The emphasis is on a discussion of those debates of real philosophical interest, placed within their historical context. Future volumes will consider topics such as virtue, knowledge, psychology, cosmology, society, love and friendship, cause and explanation and persuasion and argument. The books are designed for use in a teaching context, where they will bridge a gap between general introductions to individual philosophers or periods and specialist monographs. They will also appeal to anyone interested in the enduring influence and significance of ancient philosophy.

ANCIENT PHILOSOPHICAL POETICS

MALCOLM HEATH



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE
 UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
 314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi - 110025, India
 79 Anson Road, #06-04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.
 It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of
 education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
 Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521198790

© Malcolm Heath 2013

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
 and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
 no reproduction of any part may take place without the written
 permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2013

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data
 Heath, Malcolm.

Ancient philosophical poetics / Malcolm Heath.
 p. cm. — (Key themes in ancient philosophy)
 Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-521-19879-0 (hardback) — ISBN 978-0-521-16868-7 (paperback)
 1. Poetics—History—To 1500. 2. Philosophy, Ancient, in literature. 3. Language and
 languages—Philosophy. 4. Plato. Republic. I. Title.

PN1040.H43 2012
 808.1—dc23
 2012023161

ISBN 978-0-521-19879-0 Hardback
 ISBN 978-0-521-16868-7 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or
 accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in
 this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is,
 or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	<i>page</i> vii
Introduction	I
1 Poetry: the roots of a problem	4
1 Archaic poetry	4
2 Philosophical critique	6
2 A radical solution: Plato's <i>Republic</i>	9
1 Does Plato mean what he says?	10
2 <i>Republic</i> : why poetry?	12
3 <i>Republic</i> 2–3: what poets may say	18
4 <i>Republic</i> 3: how poets may say it	21
5 <i>Republic</i> 4–7: extending the framework	25
6 <i>Republic</i> 10: imitation revisited	32
7 Integrating the critique	40
8 Poetry in well-ordered cities	46
9 Poetry in fevered cities	52
3 The natural history of poetry: Aristotle	56
1 What is poetry?	58
2 Thinking biologically	63
3 Poetry as a natural phenomenon	66
4 Nature and cultures	72
5 A cultural history of poetry	75
6 Plot: the 'soul' of poetry	83
7 Poetry's value	95
4 Ways to find truth in falsehood	104
1 Plutarch: poetry in education	104
2 Epicurus: poetry for pleasure	111
3 Allegory: hidden truth	114
4 Ancient wisdom: truth obscured	118
5 Plutarch revisited: <i>On Isis and Osiris</i>	125

vi	<i>Contents</i>	
6	Imaging the gods	127
7	From Plutarch to Porphyry	134
5	The marriage of Homer and Plato	138
1	Platonic resources	138
2	Maximus of Tyre	150
3	Plotinus	162
4	Longinus	169
	<i>Bibliography</i>	180
	<i>Index</i>	193

Preface

My first debt is to the series editors, John Ferrari and Catherine Osborne, for inviting me to write this book. My second, and most important, is to the students on my course ‘Should We Ban Homer?’ in 2009/10: without their engaged and intelligent contributions, developing the material would have been much harder, and much less enjoyable. An anonymous reader for Cambridge University Press provided insightful commentary on the initial outline proposal. Without that stimulus, Chapter 4 would have had even less to say about the Epicureans than it does, and I might have persisted (with however bad a conscience) in my pretexts for not engaging with Plotinus: the resulting change of plan has had beneficial consequences, direct and indirect, throughout Chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 5 also benefited from Timothy Costelloe’s timely invitation to contribute to an edited collection on the history of the sublime (Heath 2012). Some of the ideas in Chapter 2 were refined in the light of discussion of *Republic* 2–3 and 10 at two meetings of the Yorkshire Ancient Philosophy Network in 2010/11. The editors put me further in their debt by making extremely helpful comments on a draft, as did my colleague Regine May.

Chapter 3 draws in part on work undertaken for an ongoing project on Aristotle and the anthropology of poetry (Heath 2008; 2009c; 2009d; 2011); the approach outlined here will in due course be worked out in more detail in a monograph, provisionally entitled *Poetical Animals*. I am grateful to the Arts Humanities Research Council and the Leverhulme Trust for their financial support for this project.