This is the first modern attempt to put aesthetics back on the map in classical studies. James I. Porter traces the origins of aesthetic thought and inquiry in their broadest manifestations as they evolved from before Homer down to the fourth century and then into later antiquity, with an emphasis on Greece in its earlier phases. Greek aesthetics, he argues, originated in an attention to the senses and to matter as opposed to the formalism and idealism that were enshrined by Plato and Aristotle and through whose lens most subsequent views of ancient art and aesthetics have typically been filtered. Treating aesthetics in this way can help us perceive the commonly shared basis of the diverse arts of antiquity. Reorienting our view of the ancient vocabularies of art and experience around matter and sensation, this book dramatically changes how we look upon the ancient achievements in these same areas.

James I. Porter is Professor of Classics at the University of California, Irvine. Recent publications include Classical Pasts: The Classical Traditions of Greece and Rome (edited, 2006), and Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future (2000).
THE ORIGINS OF AESTHETIC THOUGHT IN ANCIENT GREECE:
MATTER, SENSATION, AND EXPERIENCE

JAMES I. PORTER
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Acknowledgments

Though this study had a short gestation, it belongs to a larger project with a longer history that for reasons of presentation I have been obliged to partition into three separate studies. My acknowledgments of thanks and debts must, accordingly, be partitioned as well.

I have been thinking about Greek and Roman aesthetics, in particular its materialist varieties from Democritus to Longinus, for a long while. My first encounter reaches back to my days in graduate school, which culminated in a doctoral thesis about the influence of atomism on Greek and Roman aesthetic thought. Life took me in different directions that, fortunately or otherwise, prevented me from publishing that work. Twenty-odd years and a few unrelated books later, with the experience gained in the interim, I was able to return to the question of the earliest traditions of classical aesthetics with fresh eyes. Nevertheless, thanks are due to those who guided me in the earliest stage of my career when my interest in the topic was first kindled: Tom Rosenmeyer, Mark Griffith, Dalia Judovitz, and Phil Damon. A long detour through Hellenistic literary criticism by way of Philodemus and the Herculaneum papyri, but also later Greek and Roman authors, permitted me to develop one aspect of this project in a series of book chapters and articles, which will form the core of a second volume devoted specifically to developments in literary aesthetics after Aristotle. Further debts to friends and colleagues will be signaled there. A third volume will treat the sublime tradition that culminates in Longinus. Down the road, I hope to treat the atomistic tradition of aesthetic inquiry in a shorter and inevitably speculative study on Democritus and his aftermath.

The present volume originated as an introductory chapter to the post-Aristotelian study, but it quickly evolved into a preliminary study with a life of its own and as a prequel volume to the later studies. It has been greatly stimulated and improved by exchanges on particular chapters or points of interest with a number of colleagues, including
Sara Ahbel-Rappe, David Blank, Armand D’Angour, Eric Downing, Jaš Elsner, John Franklin, Philip Hardie, Brooke Holmes, Gregory Hutchinson, Richard Janko, Monte Johnson, Josh Katz, André Laks, Marjorie Levinson, James Lesher, Margie Miles, Andrea Nightingale, Neil O’Sullivan, Alex Potts, Peter Raiton, Ralph Rosen, Ruth Scodel, Niall Slater, Ineke Sluiter, Michael Squire, Andrew Stewart, Ken Walton, James Warren, and Tim Whitmarsh. My debts to other scholars, including any I have forgotten to name in this short list, will be evident from the pages that follow, not least from the footnotes.

Because much of this material was drafted in a condition of rapid and self-imposed exile during a year of leave during 2005–06 and then revised over the next three years, most of it did not receive the benefit of test-driving before audiences, though some of it did, largely once the MS was completed. Parts of the book were read before audiences in Paris and Los Angeles (The Getty Research Institute), and at the Universities of Pennsylvania, California at Irvine, Santa Barbara, and Santa Cruz, Michigan, Chicago, and Cambridge. An early predecessor to the final chapter was first launched as a talk with the same title at Corpus Christi College, Oxford in spring of 2003. I am grateful to all those present for their remarks at the time. Finally, a few parts of this book managed to appear in print, either as precursors, excerpts, or spin-offs. These will be signaled in the notes as necessary.

Fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities and Princeton’s Council of the Humanities gave me the leisure I needed to press forward with my research at critical moments. The semester I spent in the Classics Department at Princeton during the fall of 2004 was particularly invigorating, and it left its mark on the opening chapter, the first that I conceived for this volume, and on parts of the final chapter. The University of Michigan, where I spent most of my professional life until recently, proved an invaluable source of support throughout, both institutionally and collegially. Release time at the University of California, Irvine during fall and spring 2007–08 allowed me to undertake the bulk of the final revisions. Maria Pantelia, my department chair at the time and now colleague, helped smooth the transition to Irvine and also offered valuable suggestions on the final draft of the MS. A succession of editorial assistants enabled me to wean out errors of all kinds, while Kevin Batton heroically constructed the index locorum, the first he had ever made. Barbara Hird generously shared with me some of the secrets of her fine art of indexing, which helped make sense of my own task as I blundered my way through the subject index. I am grateful to the members of the
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editorial team at Cambridge University Press – Liz Hanlon, Jodie Barnes, Jo Breeze, Tom O’Reilly, and especially Linda Woodward – for their professional expertise during the production process. Michael Sharp, my primary editor at the Press, has been exceptionally supportive of my evolving projects from start to finish, and I wish to thank him for his encouragement throughout. Needless to say, any errors that remain are solely my own responsibility.

For help with obtaining illustrations and permissions, beyond the institutions to be credited below, I would like to acknowledge in particular Alan Bowman and Charles Crowther of The Centre for the Study of Ancient Documents in Oxford, Alessia Dimartino, Alicja Egbert of The Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley, Helmut Engelmann, David Gill, Jasmine Moorehead of the Weinstein Gallery in San Francisco, Ann Sinfield of the Chazen Museum of Art at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Peggy Sotirakopoulou, and Mark Wilson Jones. Nick Cahill kindly supplied me with readings of the Chazen vase based on rigorous autopsy at a time when my access was limited to a digital image. A grant from the UCI Humanities Center helped defray the costs of the illustrations. Special thanks go to George Castanis and his sons, Thaddeus and Gus, for providing me with the splendid cover image by Muriel Castanis, Roman, No Arms. It is a special pleasure to pay tribute to her artistic vision of the sublime matter of the Graeco-Roman past.

Finally, I wish to dedicate this book to my family: my mother Ellie, my brothers Bob and John, my son Gabriel, and – in memoriam – my father, Arthur E. Porter.
Note on translations

Where translators are given by name only, translations are drawn either from the editions listed in the Abbreviations or from the following sources:


**Ak.** I. Kant (1902 –) *Gesammelte Schriften*, 29 vols. Berlin. (= “Akademie” edn.).

**Austin** C. Austin (ed.) (1968) *Nova fragmenta Euripidea in papyris reperta*. Berlin.


**CIL** *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (1863 –). Berlin.


**CMG** *Corpus Medicorum Graecorum* (1908 –) Leipzig and Berlin.


List of abbreviations

**FGE**

**FGHist**

**FHS&G**

**GG**

**GL**

**G–P**

**IG**
*Inscriptiones Graecae*, (1873 –) Berlin.

**IGR**

**ILS**

**IRG**
*Inscripciones Romanas de Galicia* (1949 –). Santiago.

**K–A**

**K–R–S**

**LP**

**MXG**

**OCD²**

**PMG**

**Radermacher**
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<td>SEG</td>
<td>Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum (1923–). Leiden and Amsterdam.</td>
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