

REVIEWS

LOVE AND SICKNESS IN ANCIENT LITERATURE

KANELLAKIS (D.) (ed.) *Pathologies of Love in Classical Literature*. (*Trends in Classics* Supplementary Volume 122.) Pp. xiv + 233, colour illus. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2021. Cased, £91, €99.95, US\$114.99. ISBN: 978-3-11-074788-1.

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It is late on a warm summer evening. On a street corner, a couple kiss passionately in full view of passers-by, face masks dangling from their wrists. It is an arresting sight because we are in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, but, then, *erōs* is, and has always been, irresistible.

The collection of essays under review is entitled *Pathologies of Love in Classical Literature*. A volume on this topic could not be more timely or relevant. As Kanellakis observes in the editor's preface: '[h]aving to practise "social distancing" and "self-isolation", to "work from home" and "study via synchronous e-learning platforms" essentially means that to meet the people we love is to put our health, or theirs, at risk. Love has somehow been equated to illness' (p. vii).

This volume appears to have been, both literally and metaphorically, a 'labour of love'. The conference that preceded the publication took place in Oxford in June 2018. The contributors are from Greece, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States and Norway. This is not a hastily thrown together collection of contributions: this is a careful, integrated and thought-provoking volume with common threads of interest and shared goals. The achievement is all the greater given that lockdowns have impeded scholarly access to libraries, university campuses and colleagues.

The aim of the book is clear: it does not set out to present a complete chronological history of the pathology of love in classical antiquity, rather it aims to present a methodology for constructing such a history. Each contribution represents a case study, demonstrating how different sources represent 'pathology' and *erōs*, revealing the narrative patterns that exist in the extant sources and exploring how *erōs* was understood from moral, social and political viewpoints.

Kanellakis's introduction helpfully sets the scene by taking us on a whirlwind tour of the pathology of love in classical literature, starting with Homer and Hesiod and ending with Virgil, Horace, Ovid and the Roman satirists. After leading us through this wide-ranging survey, Kanellakis narrows the focus of the volume to two categories of pathology: (a) love-sickness and (b) deviant sexuality. Recognising the breadth of the term 'love' (both ancient and modern), *erōs* is defined as a 'physical-emotional-mental disease, a social-ethical disorder, or a literary unorthodoxy'. The chapters that follow are organised chronologically.

C. Thumiger's excellent chapter challenges the supposedly obvious and self-explanatory notion of 'love-sickness'. It explores *erōs* as an illness and a pathology with precise triggers and symptoms. Thumiger reads across poetic, philosophical and medical material, quite rightly criticising the segregation between so-called 'high literature' and medical literature as nonsensical. Thumiger explores the triadic relationship between *erōs*, sickness and vision and, more specifically, the idea that *erōs* can become a true and proper disease, caused and triggered by the erotic gaze. Thumiger concludes that the construct we know as 'love-sickness'

emerges from a longstanding, dynamic interaction between medicine, philosophy and religion, each of which compete for control over the human soul, its healing and salvation.

C. Calame's chapter involves a close reading of fragments of archaic melic poetry for insights into pathological love. It is a testament to the poetic depth of the surviving fragments, rather than Calame's analysis, that these fragments reveal so much about the physiological, psychological and emotional effects of *erôs*. Two 'insights' are presented, neither of which are really new since these have been discussed in Calame's previous publications: first, that the gaze is a vehicle for *erôs* and, second, that there is formulaic diction used for the poetic expression of *erôs* regardless of the form, metre or delivery of the poem and regardless of the sex of the protagonists.

A.-S. Valtadorou's chapter is a clear and fascinating discussion of pathological *erôs* in fragments of Euripides' *Aeolus*, *Cretans* and *Protesilaus*. The plots of these fragmentary plays (as far as we can discern) revolve around forms of sexually deviant behaviour, such as sexual intercourse between full siblings, or with an animal or a statue. In keeping with familiar Euripidean tendencies to test conventional views on a variety of topics, Euripides appears to present a deliberately ambiguous picture of pathological love in these plays. By giving his characters an opportunity to 'explain their actions, emotions or motivations', Euripides questions what is considered normal and socially appropriate.

T.K. Hubbard's chapter is (deliberately) provocative on a number of levels. He focuses on what he terms the 'pathological heterosexuality' of ancient Greek males and 'five manifestations of sexual excess' that accompanied it, including rape, seduction of an unmarried girl, adultery with a married woman and undue influence by a wife, concubine or courtesan. Hubbard argues that the Greeks are 'fundamentally different' from other cultures of antiquity because they placed little value on women and viewed dependency or excessively passionate devotion to women as emasculating and undesirable. Hubbard amasses a range of evidence to support his arguments, and he concludes that the ancient Greeks 'figured out' the benefits of sexual and gender fluidity long before us. Not everyone will agree with Hubbard's approach or conclusions, and further discussion will no doubt follow.

E. Sanders represents Xenophon as a 'corrective' to the view of love as presented in Plato or tragedy. Do not be dismayed by the depressing account of the 'typical modern romance' that appears in the first paragraph of this chapter. If you persist, you will find that Sanders's discussion of (primarily) the *Symposium* and the *Cyropaedia* is valuable and right on point. In his reading of the Xenophontic corpus, we see again the central importance of the erotic gaze, followed by stimulation of the senses, physical arousal and behavioural changes, and an intensity of feeling that can ultimately become a type of chronic illness with distinctive symptoms. While unrequited love is agonising, there are said to be only two options for lasting, requited love: a gradual diminution over time as beauty and youth fade, or love of the soul and *philia*.

From Greek literature, we shift focus to Ovid. A.N. Michalopoulos's chapter on the pathology of love in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is very enjoyable. Michalopoulos takes a broad view of Ovid's poetic programme, including the *Ars amatoria* (how to succeed in love), the *Remedia amoris* (how to cure oneself of love) and the *Metamorphoses* (love is an incurable and inescapable force). The ultimate message of the *Metamorphoses* is plain and simple – mortals do not stand a chance against love, especially if Apollo, the god of medicine, himself succumbs to Amor.

T.S. Thorsen's chapter on Ovid's *Heroides* 20–1 presents a new and intriguing interpretation of the erotic warfare (*militia amoris*) alluded to in the letters of Acontius and Cydippe. Thorsen finds that Acontius is love-sick and obsessed with Cydippe's beauty; he is manipulative and states that he is prepared to resort to force. Cydippe, on the other hand, is physically ill (perhaps a victim of Acontius' sorcery or poison), and

she seeks to be with Acontius only to regain her health and ‘get even’. A great deal turns on how one interprets the word *contingere* in the relevant passage, but Thorsen’s reading is both fascinating and compelling.

In the final chapter I.M. Konstantakos examines pathological love in the ‘open’ or ‘fringe’ novels. It is telling that Konstantakos devotes several pages to explaining why these novels are characterised by some as ‘fringe’, but it is also regrettable that he does not simply abandon the artificial concept of the literary ‘fringe’ once and for all. What is fascinating about these important texts is their distinct lack of interest in romantic love: *erôs* is peripheral to the main story and, if it does feature, it is represented as an alternative form of eroticism featuring ‘deviant passions, forbidden liaisons or sexual aberrations’. After examining several episodes in the *Alexander Romance*, the *Life of the Philosopher Secundus*, the *History of Apollonius* and the *Life of Aesop*, Konstantakos posits that this approach was deliberate, to demarcate the ‘open’ novels from the other ‘ancient novels’ and clearly delineate the ‘peculiar identity’ of each form. It seems that what some have designated as ‘fringe’ should simply be understood as ‘unique and distinct’.

This is a rigorous, thought-provoking and thoroughly enjoyable scholarly volume: it is a beginning, not an end, and, perhaps appropriately, it offers no concluding chapter. Will this book satisfy a general reader’s curiosity about *erôs* in the ancient world? Probably not. As it confesses from the outset, it is primarily aimed at an academic readership, it necessarily adopts a narrow focus, and it raises questions and issues that are bound to be pursued further. In this sense, it delivers exactly what it promises, and it fulfils its aim. For the scholar, this book is fascinating and delightful. In keeping with the theme of the desirous gaze, it is a suitably handsome book to own, look at, admire, consult and read closely. It features several alluring colour illustrations from classical and modern art; immaculate quotations from Greek and Latin presented alongside English translations; a helpful anthology of ancient sources; an extensive bibliography; and an excellent *index locorum* and general index. What more could the scholar of *erôs* ask for?

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THE EXPERIENCE OF READING HELLENISTIC AND ROMAN POETRY

GRAMPS (A.) *The Fiction of Occasion in Hellenistic and Roman Poetry*. (*Trends in Classics* Supplementary Volume 118.) Pp. xviii + 209. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2021. Cased, £100, €109.95, US\$126.99. ISBN: 978-3-11-073699-1.

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The Fiction of Occasion is an intriguing title, and its innovative content promises important results for the methodology and critical approach of modern literary theories to Greek and Roman poetic texts. The present book, G.’s doctoral thesis, addresses the problem of presence in Hellenistic and Roman poetry. The ‘problem of presence’ designates the problem of the availability or accessibility to the reader of the imaginary worlds revealed