



# Tragic Pleasures: Aristotle on Plot and Emotion (Princeton Legacy Library)

*Elizabeth S. Belfiore*

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Elizabeth Belfiore offers a striking new interpretation of Aristotle's *Poetics* by situating the work within the Aristotelian corpus and in the context of Greek culture in general. In Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, the *Politics*, and the ethical, psychological, logical, physical, and biological works, Belfiore finds extremely important but largely neglected sources for understanding the elliptical statements in the *Poetics*. The author argues that these Aristotelian texts, and those of other ancient writers, call into question the traditional view that *katharsis* in the *Poetics* is a homeopathic process—one in which pity and fear affect emotions like themselves. She maintains, instead, that Aristotle considered *katharsis* to be an allopathic process in which pity and fear purge the soul of shameless, antisocial, and aggressive emotions. While exploring *katharsis*, *Tragic Pleasures* analyzes the closely related question of how the *Poetics* treats the issue of plot structure. In fact, Belfiore's wide-ranging work eventually discusses every central concept in the *Poetics*, including imitation, pity and fear, necessity and probability, character, and kinship relations.

Originally published in 1992.

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