BOOK REVIEW

No Regrets. Remorse in Classical Antiquity. By LAUREL FULKERSON. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp. xix + 263. Hardcover, $110.00. ISBN 978-0-19-966889-2.

Emotion studies, the "affective turn," contend that human emotions are not only interesting and potentially dangerous but deserve the attention allotted to scientific methods, mechanisms of legal reward and punishment, and theological geographies of hell. Recent volumes have explored the "rivalrous" emotions, *eros*, emotions in art or historiography, and miscellanies (pride, grief, anger, fear, gender differences, etc.), and the reviewer is organizing one on disgust. Limited by our own subjective experience and spotty awareness of past realities, can we now adequately understand different communities of feeling, thought, and perception? Regret and remorse lack the obvious, instinctual, and universal external signals, the somatic markers that reveal anger, joy, or fear.

Some emotions are valorized by display, e.g. weeping and smiling.[1] Other emotions, however, men (and women) keep, kept, or try to keep hidden. Therefore, remorse requires more words and clearer gestures to accompany penitent feelings. Men flourish most their remorse in rare eras that valorize acknowledging (or pretending to acknowledge) moral slippage, serious mistakes, and a change of heart, for example, Emperor Theodosius' notorious massacre of rioting chariot racing fans in Thessalonica and his subsequent contrition.[2]

In this book, Laurel Fulkerson offers a valuable fifty-page introduction examining ancient and modern vocabulary and concepts denoting responsibility acknowledged for bad outcomes. Then ten chapters reflect "emblematic" genres, authors, individuals, and groups in order to examine "the shape" of their emotions and their expression. The book's goal (47) is to outline the shapes that ancient remorse took, its narrower limits, and its different "rules" that now obscure some an-

[1] Remorse, if a visibly marked, life-altering emotion, can now provide a source of power (cf. 218-19).

[2] Fulkerson omits self-disgust and self-loathing. Neoptolemus the shame-filled ephebe, his character still forming, expresses a qualifying *dyskhereia* (Soph. *Phil.* 902-3, cf. 842, 1224, 1248-9).

cient examples. Remorse had significant roles in antiquity, even if they are now "hypocognized." Confessing a change of mind was problematic for them, then, although often a virtue for some of us, now.

Fulkerson contends that the expression of remorse experienced very little change in "pagan" antiquity. She shows that recorded feelings of μεταμέλεια, μετάνοια, and μετάγνοια[3] suggest remorse (genuine and persistent moral perception of fault and willingness to pursue behavioral change). The author astutely examines ancient public processes and strategies of recognizing and acknowledging fault. Sometimes men were moving on and claiming to become better persons, but such postures could be merely status negotiations--not deep internal feelings (8). Public apologies, in any case, then and now, are often highly hedged, strategic verbal maneuvers. When, as usual, no genuine, perceptible mental pain or change of behavior occurs, one cannot discern remorse.

The author demonstrates that presentations of penitence, redemptive actions, and moral progress were responses more likely to be felt, claimed, and acted upon by women, slaves, children, and other oppressed parties, that is, classes whose "weapons" lacked back-up. As she cleverly notes (12), the perceived inferiority of these groups reinforced pressing needs to express regret for disapproved deeds. She recognizes that people then and now manage emotions, rather than merely endure them.

In a chapter on the "Homeric roots of Remorse," Fulkerson focuses on Achilles and Agamemnon's very different performances. Achilles' inclusion of all components of remorse persuades audiences, while Agamemnon's face-saving excuses and peculiar, over-the-top reparations for his clumsy wrongs never deceive wary readers (Chryseis and Briseis, threats in assembly; cf. Odysseus' reprimand of Agamemnon: *Il.* 19.181–3). How he conveys "sorry" to Achilles, what he says and does, and what he suppresses in person characterize merely regret, not remorse. Thus, the semantics of apology disallow Agamemnon's shifty words and actions from the class "apology" and exclude him from a claim to "supplicant" (in *Iliad* IX and XIX).[4] Consequently, Fulkerson's "apologies" for Agamemnon's remorse-free

[3] Latin offers *paenitentia*, and *conscientia*, both positive and negative. Remorse-related *pudet* and *piget*, like *paenitet*, are impersonal, for whatever reason, whether self-absolving or not. The witty author modestly claims to english all quotations with "effortless clumsiness." Fulkerson locates examples of remorse "despite the absence of lexical markers," since emotions are detectable in incidents lacking specific vocabulary (168).

[4] William Miller's *Faking It* (Cambridge 2003) has a salubrious chapter on mandatory apologies entitled "Say it like you mean it!"

behaviors and unrefusable "deal" (54-6) inadequately answer Walter Donlan's and Donna Wilson's persuasive analyses. They argue, from a fuller consideration of the evidence, that Agamemnon's massive, liege-making "gift-attack" negotiates his "loser's" regret into something else, a regret calculated for immediate and long-range profit: all his acts in fact prop up a wobbly hegemony.

In Attic tragedy, Neoptolemus' change of heart is genuine, painful learning. Fulkerson chooses him well for her poster-boy of regret, and his tender age is important. Hermione's performance of remorse in *Andromache, au contraire,* seems rank hypocrisy, a "charade." The female rhetorician verbally and nonverbally manipulates words and gestures to negotiate a precarious situation with the chorus, Orestes, etc. Alexander killed his friend Cleitus, but the extant, admiring historians find ways to excuse his drunken and irascible reactions, alleging his subsequent regrets and remorse.[5] Plutarch's flattering portrait of Alexander and his remorse never shows him changing, just self-indulgent blame and repeated displays of regret.

Me paenitet, me miseret, me piget, me tui pudet express Latin aspects of Anglophonic "I'm sorry." Fulkerson first cogently observes that sincere examples rarely occur in [New] comedy, but Aristophanes' characters deserved different analysis. *Adulescens* Moschion in Menander's *Samia* may be briefly remorseful, but this exception proves the rule. Like other comic regretters, this aberrant son has much to feel remorse for (rape of a citizen neighbor, paternity, father's disapproval, juvenile petulance). In Terence, remorse is rarer than efforts to escape just penalties. Such expressions in Plautus are perfunctory or absent, for the young and old(er) *amator*. *Prius te cavisse quam pudere aequom fuit* (*Bacch.* 1017) prates one elder.

Ovid's peculiar contrition permeates his exilic verse, remorse for he knew not exactly what. The implacable Augustus, Mr. Clementia, coerced this posture or imposture from his helpless victims. The chapter begins a series of four on historical, rather than fictive, individuals and groups. Ovid's ingenuity in double-speak leads to wildly inconsistent perceptions, but Fulkerson argues well that Ovid likens Augustus to divine Jupiter—at his irrational worst, as in the *Metamorphoses*—indif-

[5] Fulkerson deems his remorse "fruitless" but proves it to be, rather, absent or insincere, intended to "defuse an unpleasant situation" (97). She might deconstruct regretful and remorseful individuals and groups in earlier historians, e.g., Herodotus and Thucydides.

ferent or sadistic to his pathetic, hopeful, and humiliated petitioners. In the following chapter, Nero suffers from a species of "degenerate remorse" for killing his mother.

Fulkerson next examines four instances of mutinying Roman soldiers. I wish she had addressed the problem of whether and how a collective "feels" or expresses emotions. Scipio, Caesar, and Drusus with Germanicus in CE 14 suffer and surmount spectacles of collective contrition, whether the soldiers felt remorse or feared dire consequences. Soldiers and Germanicus stage vignettes, merely act "*as if*" (*velut paenitentia, Ann.* 1.34.1, 41.1), but Tacitus questions everyone's *bona fides*.

Plutarch's *Lives* support Fulkerson's thesis that high-status adult men in politics are inhibited from showing (even feeling?) remorse by their culture's demand for steadfast consistency. Cato Minor, a parody of consistency, precipitates disasters and never recants anything. Inconstancy signals inconcinnity of the soul, an immature, self-indulgent, or irrational mind, as Seneca repeatedly explains (e.g. 194 n. 20). Self-abasement and remorse for mistakes did not lead to pre-Christian mortification, except perhaps in ironical erotic elegies such as Ovid's *Amores* 1.6, 1.7, 2.16, 3.7 (not considered here). Plutarch eschews portraying sharp changes, instability, in his model subjects' behavior or views (198-212), regret not least. The *Lives* contrast in this respect to the *Moralia.* Plutarch "spins" his subjects' characterological slipperiness, such as Themistocles, Timoleon, Demosthenes, and Cicero. His biographies protreptically select incidents that downplay Demosthenes' lack of fixity but emphasize Cicero's and Antony's tergiversations.

No scholar has previously delineated classical remorse, because regretful emotions, *a fortiori* their expression, rarely offered a promising strategy in antiquity. Ancient impression management demanded foremost consistency of forceful character. Compared to anger, feeling "sorry" was usually an unwise, face-losing, even craven, admission.[6] Admitting mistakes was rarely then advised, admired, or practiced. Regret is significantly less intense than remorse, although frequently confused. Regret ranges from mild disappointment to heartache, but remorse is a lasting, bitter sentiment about failing a responsibility. Fulkerson defines it (15) as

[6] "Sorry" serves too many purposes to mean much. Perhaps that is why the ancients had no equivalent word for such verbal lubrication of social mishaps—or for Yiddish *Klutz*. Henry Hitchings' *Sorry! The English and Their Manners* (London 2013) explores the many uses, some of them quite aggressive, of this modern interjection. Compulsive apologizers destroy any restorative effect. Aristotle's *metameletikos* character--"always repenting"--is unreliable rather than admirable (*EN* 1150a21).

"the unpleasant complex of feelings and actions that are a regular after-effect of incorrect decision making." She argues that remorse faced different rules in classical antiquity, and the differences multiply our perplexity. Her examples eschew philosophical discourse, because even Aristotle's views on the emotions and tragedy are often "extremely narrow" (84n.13). She extracts data chiefly from epic, tragedy, historiography, comedy, and biography.

Assertive self-promotional pronouncements often trapped Hellenes and Romans into indefensible situations of their own making. Winged words and physical assaults cannot be unsaid,[7] apologies threaten community regard, and third parties willing to arbitrate find little oxygen to attempt repairs. Thus, Fulkerson's clever title—*No Regrets*—unintentionally contradicts her argument, since those without regrets cannot experience remorse, but those "bitten" by their own mistakes cannot avoid regretting them. Fulkerson opens up the important issue of "framing remorse debates" (214). She has provided path-breaking analyses of ancient moments of this mordant emotion, and other scholars will supplement her pioneering, case-study coverage.

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[7] Livy's Samnites (9.11.3, cited 173n.44) offer the impossible idea of "rewinding time" and refighting their battle, if the defeated Romans now experience *paenitentia* for their surrender.