

## FESTSCHRIFT FOR ADKINS

R. B. LOUDEN, P. SCHOLLMEIER (edd.): *The Greeks and Us: Essays in Honor of A. W. H. Adkins*. Pp. x + 264. Chicago, IL and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996. Cased, \$48/£38. 50 (Paper, \$18.95/£15.25). ISBN: 0-226-49394-6 (0-226-49395-4 pbk).

The influence of Arthur Adkins's first book, *Merit and Responsibility* (extended and supported by later books and articles), has been remarkable and prolonged. It is not merely that Adkins offered a powerful and developed version of the shift between Homeric and classical Greek value systems which stimulated many later writers both by its general thesis and by the details of its analysis. It is also that in his famous opening dictum, 'We're all Kantians now', he set an agenda for the exploration of the relation between modern and ancient notions of the self and of moral agency that is still being worked through. It is particularly apposite that a volume in his honour should be called *The Greeks and Us* (and particularly sad that he died before he could see its completion). Adkins's work is an icon of a fundamental strategy of the modern engagement with ancient Greek culture.

The volume celebrates Adkins and his influence strikingly with a range of distinguished contributors from different fields (with a particular legal and philosophical bias). It consists of six articles, each with a brief critical response, preceded by a brief introduction by the editors, and concluding with a posthumously edited piece by Adkins himself on 'The Speech of Lysias in Plato's *Phaedrus*', paired not with a critique but with a toast to Adkins by David Grene. The structuring power of Adkins's declared post-Kantian agenda is evident throughout, especially when it is being explicitly challenged by Bernard Williams (who adds *The Women of Trachis*, and some reflections on moral pessimism via Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, to the anti-Kantian thesis expressed in *Shame and Necessity*); and especially when it is being explicitly and favourably extended by Paul Schollmeier, who attempts to expand Kantian imperatives into the fields of dance and sport. This is indeed a very particular account of 'The Greeks and Us', which in its pursuit or critique of the moral agency of the Kantian subject seems rather too quick to accept 'The Greeks' and 'us' and 'and' as straightforward, or even, on occasions, self-evident categories. 'The Greeks', for example, includes primarily a brief trip to Hesiod's farm (in a rather impressionistic study of farming and justice by Stephanie Nelson), half a dozen pages on Sophocles, and, as by far the most common point of reference, the philosophical texts of Plato and Aristotle. On such a selective historical and cultural range, opinions that begin 'The Greeks believed . . .' are less likely than usual to appear nuanced or convincing. There is no adequate discussion by the editors of the implications either of this restricted list of Greeks, or of such a limited view of how Greek identity or collectivity itself might be constructed or contested. Similarly, 'us' appears as a rather homogeneous bunch of Anglo-American philosophers and lawyers and teachers, to the extent that when the presumptive normativity of 'us' is briefly questioned, it is challenged because 'there are four major types of moral philosophers'. This version of 'The Greeks and Us' is not one for cultural historians.

This focus can lead to some awkward perspectives. Thus, at one level of assumption Judge Richard Posner, whose work on legal theory is so interesting, when he responds to Martha Nussbaum on the issue of ancient homosexuality and modern law, offers generalizations about 'Modern Americans' (and most of the world) that amusingly suit at least one English stereotype of Judge's Talk: 'People in Mediterranean or Latin

societies will sometimes deny that there *are* any homosexuals in their society . . . because like left-handers their peculiarity, their “deviance”, has little or no social significance.’ How much more care—anthropological, cultural, logical—would it take to make any part of that pronouncement adequate! At another, less strident but equally important level, there is a fine and sparky discussion of Plato’s *Crito* and its arguments for obedience to the *nomoi* (by James Boyd White and Charles Gray), but it is an argument that assumes that ‘law’ itself is a cross-cultural norm. Should the historicity of Greek law not be an issue in this discussion? ‘The Greeks and Us’ is currently and properly a major concern in the academy. Turner, Marchand, and Detienne have argued tellingly for a dynamical and complex relation between modern disciplinary formation and the classical past. Recent modernism (e.g. Derrida, Foucault, Cixous, and Irigaray—not to mention Freud, Nietzsche, and Hegel) has self-consciously constructed itself in and through a view of Greek culture. Greek constructions of Greekness (a field certainly not limited to the classical period) have been increasingly articulated. In the current growth of studies of what has been called ‘nos Grecs, leurs modernes’, this volume has a rather restricted sense of its own project.

That said, there is some carefully articulated work here, and the agonistic structure is politely and consistently followed through. Williams is rightly taken to task for not noting that Hyllus (probably) speaks the final lines of the *Trachiniae*, which may affect how the remarks relate to the play—a criticism which might be extended to *Shame and Necessity*’s strategies of reading. Nussbaum’s account of her involvement in the Colorado law court on the issue of homosexual legislation shows how complex are the power games when philosophy tries to enter politics (as Plato might have testified). More recent writings and decisions (as well as Posner’s comments) call for a further account, I would suggest. White and Gray debate with clarity and force where the persuasiveness of Plato’s *Crito* lies. Yearley’s reading of Melville’s *Billy Budd*, however, is not nuanced enough (in the face of recent Melville studies) and struggles to bring Aquinas and Aristotle to bear. Schollmeier fails to convince his respondent, Candace Vogler, ‘to broaden the Kantian picture’. This is a thoughtful and thought-provoking volume which in proceeding under Adkins’s intellectual aegis does more than merely celebrate one of the most influential of modern classicists.

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## THINGS OLD AND NEW

A. M. KINNEGING: *Aristocracy, Antiquity and History: Classicism in Political Thought*. Pp. xii + 348. New Brunswick, NJ and London: Transaction Publishers, 1996. \$39.95. ISBN: 1-56000-222-0.

This is an enormously enjoyable book, vigorously written in an occasionally idiosyncratic English. Although the central exploration of Roman values is a means to an end, and not in itself of great originality, classicists will find their interest engaged by the insistence that to write history teleologically is systematically to ignore what is lost in changes, by the demonstration of the place of Roman history and texts in the political thought of medieval and early modern France, and by the brief but tantalizing observations on just what it was that romanticism changed.

K., professor of political thought at Leiden, first argues that ‘if one reads the past too much in the light of the present, one is bound to overestimate the importance of