

**Rebecca F. Kennedy, C. Sydnor Roy and Max L. Goldman (edd., trans.), *Race and ethnicity in the classical world: an anthology of primary sources in translation*. Indianapolis; Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2013. Pp. xviii, 405. ISBN 978-16-03-84994-4. \$19.00 (pb).**

This is an admirable project: a substantial collection of passages from Greek and Latin literature to help the reader without knowledge of Greek or Latin or ancient history gain an understanding of ancient concepts of racism and ethnicity. All the texts are offered in a new translation which is almost invariably professional and in good taste. Short introductions assist in interpreting the passages. Clearly the book represents much hard work by the three editors and translators. It is therefore with a good deal of disappointment and frustration that I have to insist on various and significant flaws in the execution of the project, even if this apparently does not agree with the views of the editors at the Publishing Company and anonymous reviewers who are thanked in the Preface (p.xi).

To start with one of the two concepts at the heart of the book, in the Introduction we read: “The ancients would not understand the social construct we call ‘race’” (p.xiii) The editors ignore the essential fact that now, more than at any time in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the term “race” itself is highly controversial. There are essential differences in approach between Europe and the US while, in the US itself, there are important and leading authors who regard it undesirable and confusing to use the term at all in intellectual and academic discourse. The argument that “race” is a social construct, not a biological reality, does not resolve the issue. Yet no attempt has been made to provide the uninformed, but interested reader with even a small selection of crucial modern works on race, racism, and ethnicity. There was no need to cite masses of contemporary biological and social discussions, but a number of essential names should have been mentioned, all of them available in English, such as those of Ruth Benedict, *Race: Science and Politics* (New York, 1940) Ashley Montagu, *Man’s Most Dangerous Myth: The Fallacy of Race* (New York, 1942); Léon Poliakov, *The Aryan myth : a history of racist and nationalist ideas in Europe* (London, 1974) and Albert Memmi, *Racism* (Minneapolis, 2000).

The bibliography regarding works on the ancient world is inadequate in itself. To give one example: Chapter 11, pp.243–262, deals with “Asia: Judaea and the Jewish Diaspora.” It is preposterous that the bibliography fails to list the comprehensive collection of sources in M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, 3 vols. (Jerusalem 1974–1984).

Back to issues of content: it is highly regrettable that the term “race” is used again and again in the translations of a great variety of concepts and passages reproduced in the work under review. Thus we find “shared race” for *homophylon* (Plutarch, *Alexander* 45); “race” as a translation of *to genos* where it means the people of the Hellenes (Isocrates, *Panegyric* 50); “race” is used for the barbarians as a collective entity encompassing most

of mankind: *pan to barabaron genos* (Eurypides, *Andromache*, 173); it is used for the Ionian and Dorian tribal associations: *genos* (Herodotus 1.56); for the pre-Greek population of Greece: “the Pelasgian race”, *genos* again (Aeschylus, *Supplices* 253); for the population of a specific Greek city: the Argive race (Aeschylus, *Supplices* 274); for noble descent: “of noble race”, *eugenes* (Eurypides, *Ion* 291). Cyrus was “of mixed race”, i.e. half Median and half Persian: *genere mixto* (Apuleius, *Apologia* 24); and when Pliny, *NH* 2.80.189 speaks of remote peoples, *gentes*, these are again “races.” According to Pindar, Deucalion and Pyrrha created “the unified race of men, made from stone,” *homodamon lithinon gonon* (Pindar, *Olympian* 9.44–45). These are merely a number of examples given with the aim to show that one highly controversial term, at the heart of the subject under discussion, is used for a great variety of concepts for which there are adequate and precise words in modern English (in which it is no longer customary to speak of “the Scottish race” or “the Irish race”). I regard this as a serious flaw in a work intended for Greek-and-Latinless undergraduates. The authors do indeed note that there is a fair number of ancient terms, all used to denote “a race, an ethnic group, a political unit, or some other social or cultural unit,”(p.xiv) but it is not sufficient to note this once in the introduction if one hopes to provide clarity while presenting almost four hundred pages with masses of isolated bits of text.

My next reservation concerns the statement that there is a “wide variety of theories from the ancient Greeks and Romans concerning human differences (pp.xiv–xvi).” I disagree with the assumption that we are faced with genuine theories in the proper sense of the word. There are theories indeed, notably the classic statement of environmental determinism in the Hippocratic corpus and Aristotle, duly present in Chapter 3, but most of the material in the five chapters on theories does not reflect theories at all, but vague ideas, prejudices and common-places. These are expressed in a large number of texts, varying from philosophical treatises to statements made on the stage in tragedy. This is most obviously the case in Chapter 1, containing eight passages from the *Odyssey* and one from Hesiod, entitled “Early Theories of Foreignness.” No explanation is given here that we are dealing with ancient mythology in epic poetry. The innocent reader is not told that the Phaeacians are no real foreign people but an idealized invention (No. 4). It is not pointed out that the Cyclopes are not regular foreigners, but imaginary monsters at the very lowest level of morality (they are cannibals; No. 5; also: Ch.5, No.8). By contrast, in the same chapter appear Phoenicians who were a real people, for many centuries the target of negative and positive stereotypes in Greek and Latin texts. Again, Hesiod, on the races of men (Chapter 1, passage 9), does not focus on foreigners or ethnicity, but represents a view of the decline of men that does not belong in this work. The difference between these works of literature is not explained and the short introductory passages at the head of the texts are simply inadequate for the purpose. If this work was meant to help undergraduates and interested others to gain an understanding of ancient concepts of ethnicity and foreignness it should have given more guidance.

In Chapter 2 the focus is the essential topic of genealogy and origins. Again, we are given insufficient elucidation. Herodotus 7.150 (Ch. 2, No. 2) gives a Persian tradition, not a Greek one *if* we may believe him. This should at least have been noted in the introduction, for the book does not investigate ancient Persia, but the classical world of Greece and Rome.

All this criticism should not obscure the fact that the book assembles numerous essential and fascinating passages, admirably rendered: Chapter 2, Nos. 3–7 are examples. My regret stems from a feeling that this fine project is likely to fail in its aims. On pp. 16–22 we are given crucial passages from the work of Thucydides (1.2–12; 6.2–6), but I am not sure what a reader unfamiliar with Greek history or the historian Thucydides is to make of them.

Generally speaking, there is little coherence in the collection of texts in this chapter: mythical men made of stone (No. 1), the origins of Rome (Nos. 5–7), the creation of man (No.9), the alleged common origin of Sparta and the Jews (No. 10), the origin of Roman aristocrats according to an Emperor's speech (11), and so on. No. 15, Hyginus *Genealogies*, is instructive both for ideas about descent and about autochthony. All of this is fascinating, but the texts are offered in isolation and, in some cases, are quite off the topic of the book. If the intention is to present a coherent theory, I cannot imagine that this structure will work as a tool.

Chapter 3 deals with environmental determinism. This is the one topic where a genuine ancient theory can be traced which makes this chapter therefore entirely satisfactory.

Chapter 4 is entitled “Genetic Theories,” but we are faced with passages illustrating various and distinct views of descent that cannot properly be described as theories. The Athenian citizenship law (Ch.3, No.1) is no theory, but a piece of xenophobic legislation. This does not detract from the importance of the subject. Passages are included concerning the sensitive topics of eugenics (Nos. 7, 8) and criticism of mixed lineage (Plato, *Laws*, No. 10; Aristotle, *Politics*, No. 11). Autochthony appears again in passages from Euripides' *Ion* (No.4) and *Bacchae* (No. 6), and Plato's *Menexenus* (No.9). Aristotle's doctrine of natural slavery and its impact is represented only by Ch. 4, No.12. It would have deserved more in a four-hundred-page book. Also, a monograph on the subject, Peter Garnsey's *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine* (Cambridge 1996) does not appear in the bibliography.

The last chapter of the first section of the book, Ch. 5, “Custom or Cultural Theories” includes passages from Aeschylus' *Suppliants* (No.1) and Euripides' *Andromache* (No.7). Again we must ask whether statements made on the stage, attributed by poets to characters from ancient mythology, c.q. King Pelasgus and Hermione, reflect a fifth-century theory – they certainly reflect something, but that requires careful and subtle analysis. This need should at least have been mentioned in the introduction and texts like this should not have been presented as representative of a theory. The same goes for No.4, where Herodotus explicitly states that he is describing the actions of an insane

Persian king. Is this representative of anything? That said, there is undoubtedly a good deal in this chapter that is useful and valuable given the aim of the book.

Chapter 6, the first of the geographically organized section gives views of the inhabited world as a whole, complemented by five maps at the beginning of the book, preceding Chapter 1. This is then followed by 275 pages of texts grouped by region. Many elicit both admiration and criticism of the sort indicated above.

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