



"CONSOLING HELIODORUS": A REPLY TO MARC KLEIHWEGT'S REVIEW

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cancel out this reference. However, Evans believes that Valerius Flaccus gained the consulship of 100 without any support or influence from Marius (p. 158).

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CONSOLING HELIODORUS: A REPLY TO MARC KLEIJWEGT'S REVIEW

No one, I think, would dispute that the reviewing of scholarly books in learned journals is a practice without which the academic community would be much poorer. Good book reviews serve two principal functions. They advance our knowledge and understanding of an area of scholarship by offering appropriate comment on an author's work, correcting, adding, questioning, challenging, suggesting different perspectives, seeking generally to make improvements, however slight, to the author's achievement. At the same time they perform the role of a consumer guide, reporting to readers what a book contains, for what market it is intended, what its strengths and weaknesses are, and how well it achieves its overall aims. The judgement which all this involves should be informed, considered, and balanced. Though different reviewers will focus on different matters of detail, according to their own interests and expertise, readers of a review should be enabled to see the book in the round, so that they can rapidly assess whether it is likely to be of value for their own work, and in what respects. A reviewer has a duty to depict the book as accurately as possible, and to be fair to the author's intention: a book designed primarily for use by undergraduates should be judged by different criteria from a technical work for scholars, and detailed historical analysis of an author's *oeuvre* should not be expected in a work of textual criticism.

In terms of these principles, serious objections must be raised to Marc Kleijwegt's review of my book, *Consoling Heliodorus*,¹ in the most recent issue of this journal.² It is not that Kleijwegt offers overwhelmingly negative criticism of my work, though it would be surprising if any reader considered his response better than lukewarm. It is, rather, that he fails to assess the book on its own terms, and that such criticism of actual content as he does offer is beset with error and misunderstanding. In what follows I address mainly these broad issues.

1. I begin with the most serious cause for complaint: that Kleijwegt fails to assess my book on its own terms. *Consoling Heliodorus* is a commentary of a traditional nature on an ancient text. Its aim is illuminative; it seeks to enhance understanding and appreciation of Jerome's *Letter* 60 by locating

it in its literary context and by supplying relevant information, comment, and argument, on individual matters of all kinds. Any classicist knows the form. Yet, with one exception, Kleijwegt not only fails to engage with matters of detail, which are the essence of a commentary, but—in what is a long review—does not even mention that the commentary includes detailed discussion of points of textual criticism, Jerome's use of quotations from Scripture and their form, and problems of exegesis and theology, as well as a great deal on history and antiquities. Instead, he spends almost half his review considering what I do not include: that is, a broader examination of ancient attitudes to bereavement and the expression of grief ('bereavement', incidentally, is a word which Kleijwegt repeatedly misuses³). This is indeed a subject of much interest. It is also a great deal more complex than Kleijwegt's epideictic account of the position on pp. 122–4 would have us believe, and calls for a major study in its own right.⁴ To have devoted a few pages of my book to scratching the surface of the subject would have contributed little either to scholarship as a whole or (more importantly) to the understanding and appreciation of Jerome's *Letter* 60.

Kleijwegt's starting-point for his discussion is my observation, in relation to the *exempla* at 5. 2–3 urging fortitude on Jerome's correspondent Heliodorus in his bereavement, that to display fortitude at times of loss was regularly considered virtuous, and that the notion is often found in consolation. This 'casual statement' Kleijwegt considers to reflect 'one of the weaknesses of the book. The *exempla* of fathers who in some cases were not even interested in their sons' burial display a lack of emotion which must come across as rather harsh to most of us. This should have required some explanation in a book that, although intended to be a commentary on one example of consolatory writing,'—here at least is some acknowledgement of my purpose—'purports to contribute to an understanding of pagan and Christian consolation' (p. 121). While the behaviour of those who received the news of their sons' deaths with impassivity may indeed strike us as cold, it does not seem to me incumbent upon a commentator on a literary text which mentions these cases in passing to *explain* this attitude or to locate it in the history of mentalities, as Kleijwegt suggests (pp. 121–2) (in any event, it was not only among the ancients that a stiff upper lip won approval, and the very fact that Pericles, Pulvillus, and the rest became exemplary is evidence that such behaviour, however desirably regarded, was abnormal: how different from that of our own world, then, was ancient practice [as opposed to theory]?).

By concluding his review by comparing my book unfavourably with Jack Winkler's *Constraints of Desire* and David Konstan's *Sexual Symmetry*⁵—assuming these to be the books to which he refers—Kleijwegt finally betrays total misunderstanding of the nature of a commentary, or else must be thought deliberately to have misrepresented my book for purposes of

attacking it. To say that 'for those who are interested in the shaping of human emotions, the book is of rather limited use', and '*Consoling Heliodorus* has missed an opportunity to bring us fully up to date with pagan and Christian ideas on grief and bereavement' (p. 124), is to condemn my book for being itself rather than a work of an altogether different kind.

2. The one matter of detail on which Kleijwegt chooses to comment is 'the use of pagan topics and *exempla* in the letter and the explanations offered by Scourfield for their inclusion' (p. 119). His aim is to demonstrate that in making use of these materials Jerome was not motivated merely by literary and specifically consolatory considerations; 'we can also see that Jerome is using pagan *exempla* and references for a different purpose: within the composition of the letter there is a distinct strain between pagan and Christian principles, with the latter always coming out at the top' (p. 121). This contrast between pagan and Christian is quite evident at points in the letter, and it would indeed have been surprising, in a Christian author with a taste for polemic, if it had not appeared. Kleijwegt directs our attention to 14. 2, where Jerome draws a contrast between Plato and Paul, to the latter's advantage, and to c. 4, where the musings of Pythagoras, Democritus, and Socrates on the immortality of the soul are presented as massively overshadowed by the reality and might of Christian resurrection. But most of what Kleijwegt cites to illustrate the general point is not *ad rem*. The contrast between 'the world and the Christian way of life' (p. 120) which he sees in 9. 2 is not the same as a contrast between paganism and Christianity; and (as I point out in the commentary [142, 145]) Nepotianus' presence in the *palatii militia*, which Kleijwegt appears to understand to indicate an un-Christian attachment to the *saeculum*, does not seem to have mattered much to Jerome—it is Nepotianus' deferral of baptism that he finds unsatisfactory.⁶ The discussion of *exempla* is also far from the mark. The purpose of the *exempla* at 5. 2–3 is not 'to show the potential superiority of Christianity' (p. 120), but to goad Heliodorus *not to fall behind* the standard achieved by pagans in dealing with their grief; the risk is that the pagans should appear superior. The quotations from Naevius and Ennius and the reference to Hesiod (?) at 14. 4—which Kleijwegt erroneously calls *exempla*, compounding the confusion between *exempla* and *topoi* already made on p. 119⁷—have nothing to do with showing the superiority of Christianity either. Jerome first illustrates the miseries of life, from which an early death might be regarded as a happy release, and then, at the Ennius fragment, more directly presses Heliodorus not to weep for his nephew: the ordinary people may weep, but a king may not honourably do so, and a bishop still less than a king. The contrast between king and bishop here is not to be seen as a contrast between pagan and Christian (Christian emperors in the fourth century were referred to as *reges*), but,

is so far as it has any real significance at all, between lay and clerical, or temporal and spiritual. The point is that as a bishop Heliodorus has to meet more rigorous standards than would be expected of other people; the pagan origin of the Ennius passage is neither here nor there.

The position which Kleijwegt attempts to establish in this flawed discussion is then used to attack the view set out in my preface (p. viii) that Jerome was a writer 'in whose work . . . the classical tradition can be seen to be accepted and adopted by Christianity, rather than shunned, or even rejected as its polar opposite'. But even if Kleijwegt had fully succeeded in making his point, he would not have undermined the general truth of my assertion for Jerome's work as a whole (or even for *Letter* 60). Remarkably, he attempts to support his view by reference to Jerome's *Letter* 70, in which the writer vigorously defends the use of pagan literature by Christians. By the time of this letter Jerome was no longer (as he had once been) tormented by the question whether a Christian could legitimately read the classics, and what Kleijwegt means by taking issue with my point that in it Jerome displays a 'more relaxed attitude to the use of the classics' (12) (which Kleijwegt typically misquotes⁸) leaves me bewildered.

Kleijwegt's muddled exposition of an untenable view follows an opening statement which maintains that my interpretation of the use of classical *exempla* by Jerome 'lacks clarity' (p. 119). In fact the opacity here lies in Kleijwegt's attempt to demonstrate this; and indeed, what he tries unsuccessfully to show is not this at all, but that I have missed a point. But then this review is not characterised by precision.

3. Finally there are factual errors, of which the following (all from p. 122) are a selection. We do not know the age of the deceased child in *Sen. epist.* 99.⁹ Octavia's grief over Marcellus was not 'acceptable to Roman standards because Octavia was a woman': Seneca criticises it as excessive. At *Lael.* 9 Cicero is not *commiserating* with Cato; the speaker is Laelius, and he is praising Cato's fortitude over that of Paullus. The relevance of *Cic. Cato* 19 and 68 (or should this be 19. 68?) is obscure. These slips are a further reflection of the lack of care and consideration which informs this review.

NOTES

1. *Consoling Heliodorus: A Commentary on Jerome, Letter 60*, Oxford 1993.
2. *A Class* 37 (1994) 118–24.
3. P. 122 'grief and the extent to which one may indulge in bereavement are shaped by society'; 'extreme forms of bereavement were taken to be highly unusual'; 'exceptional bereavement was not condoned'; p. 123 'we find another social restraint on bereavement in 2. 1–2'. The word denotes a factual state, not a feeling or the

expression of that feeling, as a glance at e.g. *The Oxford English Dictionary* would have confirmed.

4. Such a study I hope one day to complete. It will not be rushed; the wide variety of evidence, which has never been systematically collected, requires detailed and nuanced analysis before confident assertions can be made.
5. J.J. Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece*, New York 1989; D. Konstan, *Sexual Symmetry: Love in the Ancient Novel and Related Genres*, Princeton 1994.
6. Kleijwegt is also wrong to say (p. 120) that Nepotianus' wearing of the *cilicium* beneath his uniform was not commendable; 'velut incunabula quaedam nascentis fidei conprobemus', says Jerome at 10. 1 of Nepotianus' Christian practices while in the *militia*. Nor is the wearing of the *cilicium* 'the mark of an incomplete commitment' (pp. 120–1); that is the deferral of baptism. Confusion reigns supreme.
7. He glides from one to the other as if they were the same thing. They are not; see e.g. H. Lausberg, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik*, 2 vols., Munich 1960, 1. 224–5, sect. 407, s.v. 'locus communis', 1. 227–8, sect. 410, s.v. 'exemplum', or even *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edn., Oxford 1989, s.vv. 'exemplum', 'topos'.
8. Cf. particularly his quotation on p. 120 of my translation of part of 14. 5.
9. He is said to be *puer* (9, 14, 22); *parvulus* (1, 2, 23); 'filius incertae spei' (2); 'nutrici adhuc quam patri notiozem' (14); capable of *sermones* and *ioci* (23).

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