
Professor Adkins has written three influential if controversial books on Greek ethics that are interrelated: *Merit and Responsibility, A Study in Greek Values* (1960), *From the Many to the One: A Study of Personality and Views of Human Nature in the Context of Ancient Greek Society, Values and Beliefs* (1970) and *Moral Values and Political Behaviour in Ancient Greece* (1972). Readers of *Polis* may therefore notice with interest the latest book from this author, but they would be disappointed. *Poetic Craft in the Early Greek Elegists* contains practically nothing that is relevant to Greek ethical or political theory, and very little to catch the attention of the Classical scholar.

Adkins goes back here to questions of ancient metre which exercised him when he lectured early in his career on Vergil's *Eclogues*. The Preface sets out a lofty goal - "to establish the resources of language, culture and meter that were available to the early elegists of Greece and to discuss the extent to which each poet made use of his opportunities". There is first a technical introduction devoted mainly to explaining tables of percentages of punctuation, major caesurae and final word length in the hexameters and pentameters to be studied. Then Adkins takes 21 poems from 8 elegists and examines each according to a set procedure of Greek text, literal translation, brief structural comment, and then a "static" analysis of metrical effects followed by a slightly broader
"dynamic" one, which introduces relevant Homeric and Hesiodic parallels.

The whole is incredibly tedious, and even on its own terms what is given as "mandatory" for a hexameter is questionable. Adkins' wealth of learning could have brought these elegies, which are often undeservedly neglected, back into the mainstream of Greek literature. The war poems of the Spartan Tyrtaeus, the political elegaics of Solon, the epigrams of Simonides and many others are full of interest, and could be examined at different levels and from different aspects to engross the attention of a range of readers. One example is a long fragment of Xenophanes, which in a lively and ironic manner compares the benefits of the sportsman and the wise man to the polis, as well as illuminating his own philosophical dicta. But Adkins' general comment on the poem points out the unusual preference for trisyllabic words in final position in the hexameters, the three disyllabic endings and one quadrisyllabic, and a similar preponderance of trisyllabic endings in the pentameters, as well as a pentesyllabic and a comparatively unusual monosyllabic one. The end-stopped and enjambed lines are similarly listed and compared in detail with the preceding fragment. (Information of this kind could however be assimilated by a glance at the printed text of the poems). The "static" analysis goes through the lines mainly elaborating metrical points, whereas the much shorter "dynamic" analysis, which might at last open up the perspective, merely adjudicates briefly on the interpretations of Bowra, Jaeger and Marcovich.