

[PDF] Who Killed Homer: The Demise Of Classical Education And The Recovery Of Greek Wisdom

John Heath, Victor Davis Hanson - pdf download free book



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Description:

The answer to the attention-grabbing question posed by classicists Victor Davis Hanson and John Heath in the title of this passionate defense of their field (which is also a damnation of their academic colleagues) is not a pretty one. "It was," they admit sadly, "an inside job."

Why, at the end of the 20th century, should we give a hoot in the first place about a brutal, misogynist society that rose to greatness on the back of slaves? Because, they argue, it *was* the first place; for all the faults of ancient Greece, the seeds of what Western civilization is today were planted there. "What we mean by Greek wisdom," they explain, "is that at the very beginning of Western culture the Greeks provided a blueprint for an ordered and humane society that could transcend time and space, one whose spirit and core values could evolve, sustain, and drive political reform and social change for ages hence."

But Hanson and Heath are not content to simply make a fiery, articulate case for what's *right* about understanding this particular ancient civilization in a contemporary world where more and more non-Western societies openly seek to embrace the democratic spirit. They go on to launch a deliciously vituperative jeremiad on what's *wrong* with the priorities of those entrusted with passing on this wisdom. Classics departments, as portrayed in *Who Killed Homer?*, appear to be filled with politically correct, insecure footnote fawners who, steeped in minutiae, miss the Big Picture. Hanson and Heath have a plan, sure to raise the hackles of tenured professors, for reviving classical studies that emphasizes the importance of teaching, communicating, and popularizing over publishing arcane monographs in journals not even the writer's family will ever read, insisting that the alternative--the extinction of a vivid intellectual pursuit--borders on cultural suicide. --*Jeff Silverman*
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From Publishers Weekly "To help one's friends and hurt one's enemies is the central tenet of Archaic Greek morality," write the authors. Unfortunately, one would have preferred more of the first and rather less of the second. The authors' "enemies" are the orthodoxy-honing, text-diddling academics whom many readers familiar with the culture wars already hope will follow their Scholastic forebears into oblivion. While there is a guilty pleasure to reading the lengthy excerpts that the authors include as examples of the wretched state of academic prose, these really are dead horses, well beaten. But Hanson and Heath, two classicists, each with over two decades of studying and teaching, are luckily unrepentant philhellenes, and they offer a spirited defense of the Greeks; to a lesser extent, the Romans; and the scholars whom they admire. Neatly combating the argument that because Greeks were misogynistic, slave-owning syllogists, they can be ignored, the authors try to remind readers how to think like the ancient Greeks in matters that count. While the Greeks are often blamed for encroaching materialism, avarice, self-indulgence and soullessness, we often fail to consider the countering forces of moderation, civic responsibility and unbending moral code that governed life in a polis. Hanson and Heath shine here, bringing out numerous classical admonitions and cautionary tales from Homer to Antigone, to lessons to be learned from the Greeks at war. Free speech, self-criticism, broad inquisitiveness, democracy, individualism and the like, we are reminded, are good things. Perhaps for their next book, Hanson and Heath will ignore their colleagues and address themselves wholly to the demos. It's what Pericles would have wanted. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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