This book revisits, and sheds fresh light on, some key texts and debates in ancient philosophy. Its twin targets are ‘old chestnuts’ – well-known passages in the works of ancient philosophers about which one might have thought everything there is to say has already been said – and ‘sacred cows’ – views about what ancient philosophers thought, on issues of philosophical importance, that have attained the status of near-unquestioned orthodoxy. Thirteen leading scholars respond to these challenges by offering new perspectives on familiar material and challenging some prevailing orthodoxies. On authors ranging from the Presocratics to Plotinus, this book represents a snapshot of contemporary scholarship in ancient philosophy, and a vigorous and illuminating affirmation of its continuing interest and power. This volume is dedicated to Professor MM McCabe, an inspiring scholar and teacher, colleague and friend to both the editors and the contributors.

Verity Harte is George A. Saden Professor of Philosophy and Classics at Yale University. She is the author of Plato on Parts and Wholes: The Metaphysics of Structure (2002) and co-editor (with M. M. McCabe, R.W. Sharples and Anne Sheppard) of Aristotle and the Stoics Reading Plato (2016) and (with Melissa Lane) of Politeia in Greek and Roman Philosophy (Cambridge, 2013).

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Rereading Ancient Philosophy

Old Chestnuts and Sacred Cows

Edited by

Verity Harte
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Raphael Woolf
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This volume is a tribute to MM McCabe, devoted friend, inspirational teacher and colleague, and superlative scholar, with a gift for philosophical conversation beyond compare.
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Preface

In July 2014, twelve former students and colleagues of Mary Margaret McCabe gathered for a surprise ‘live Festschrift’ in her honour, held in the beautiful town of Figeac, in the Lot in Southwest France. They were Peter Adamson, Joachim Auðurheide, Tad Brennan, Charles Brittain, Amber Carpenter, Verity Harte, Angela Hobbs, Fiona Leigh, Nicole Ooms, Ricardo Salles, Sir Richard Sorabji and Raphael Woolf. The theme of the Figeac Festschrift, as of this volume, was Old Chestnuts and Sacred Cows. We are delighted to include as chapters in this volume many papers that were offered as talks in Figeac and to add contributions from three other scholars: former student Dominic Scott, former colleague Shaul Tor, and former teacher and colleague Malcolm Schofield. It is with enormous pleasure that we present this volume to MM.

Maintaining secrecy regarding a five-day international event requires quite the conspiracy. We would like to thank our co-conspirators, Martin Beddoe, Iain Petrie and Margaret Whittaker, for their tactical support in putting the event on and pulling off the surprise, the participants in Figeac for their self-discipline in maintaining radio silence and the contributors to this volume for keeping its existence in turn secret until the eleventh hour. Last, but not least, we thank MM herself, who, in addition to her many other virtues, is the most wonderfully appreciative person to surprise in this way and who is the inspiration for it all.

Additional thanks are due to Michael Sharp, who has been indefatigable in his support and encouragement of the volume; two anonymous readers for Cambridge University Press; Allison Piñeros Glasscock, for editorial assistance with the volume and preparation of its bibliographies and indices; to Jane Dixon for pointing us to the Franz Marc image that graces the cover of our volume and to the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation for permission to use it.