

Meanwhile I shall look forward to a wider range of opportunities—not least, to improve my limited (my very limited!) knowledge of the Byzantine commentaries on ancient Greek texts of the twelfth to fifteenth centuries.

There is so much more to be learned.¹⁶

MALCOLM HEATH

University of Leeds, UK

M.F.Heath@Leeds.ac.uk

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Latin literature

Let me start with a fascinating volume that Paolo Felice Sacchi and Marco Formisano have edited on *Epitomic Writing in Late Antiquity and Beyond*,¹ the first volume in the new series *sera tela*, devoted to ‘Studies in Late Antique Literature and its Reception’, edited by Marco Formisano. This inaugural volume gets the new series off to a very good start. Sacchi and Formisano offer a new approach to epitomic writing, seen as a typical product of late antique literary culture. The aim of the volume is to focus not so much on what is lost and cut out in the process of condensation, but on the value of the epitomic as a hermeneutic category as well as on its aesthetic value, both textual and visual. The individual contributions follow this editorial lead admirably closely, examining the interplay of repetition, fragmentation, dismemberment and re-composition, cutting and re-uniting, and defamiliarization, and showing how epitomic writing can be playful and entertaining, how it can represent a sophisticated act of interpretation, and serve as a ‘tool for investigating the very borders and paradoxes of language’ (12), even for conveying a spiritual experience.

The juxtaposition of contributions focusing on classical or late antiquity with those studying twentieth-century texts works very well, and the cross-references between individual chapters contribute to a tightly focused discussion. The editors present their volume itself as an ‘epitome’ (12) – yet an exceptionally rich one, and one that just another epitome, that of the reviewer, can hardly do full justice to. I strongly recommend that readers explore this wonderful volume for themselves. All I can do is to briefly hint at a few highlights: Brian Sowers offers an insightful discussion of epitome in Ausonius’ oeuvre, with specific focus on the *Epitaphia Heroum* (‘epitaphs of heroes’) and *Caesares* (‘Caesars’). I was particularly intrigued by his discussion of the *Epitaphia Heroum*, in which he traces Ausonius’ detailed intertextual engagement not only with Homer, but also with Vergil and others. He neatly draws attention to moments where the source text itself has the character of an epitome of sorts (such as Aeneas’ condensed account of the Trojan War and his journey in Books 2 and 3

¹⁶ *Byzantine Commentaries on Ancient Greek Texts, 12th–15th Centuries*. Edited by Baukje van den Berg, Divina Manolova, and Przemyslaw Marciniak. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. Pp. x + 386. Hardback £90, ISBN: 978-1-316-51465-8.

¹ *Epitomic Writing in Late Antiquity and Beyond. Forms of Unabridged Writing*. Edited by Paolo F. Sacchi and Marco Formisano. London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2023. Pp. 281. 3 black and white figures, 18 colour plates. Hardback £81.00, ISBN: 978-1-35-028193-6.

of the *Aeneid*) and shows how, in addition to literary and intertextual acumen, an imagery of knowledge and memory, but also irony and wit, are key ingredients to Ausonius' epitomizing habit, which unites his seemingly disparate poetic collection.

Jared Hudson very interestingly studies the way Cornelius Nepos, in his *de viris illustribus* ('On Famous Men'), condenses Cato's life – and his own lost volume-length *Cato* – nicely paying attention along the way to Nepos' use of images of condensing, such as pruning, 'economizing', restraint, or diminution. This specific kind of epitome is ultimately placed in a political framework: on the brink of the principate (one could add, the time of Augustus, the champion of increase [*augere*]), Nepos condenses into an easily portable and digestible format the strict champion of an old, Republican morality. Further highlights of the collection include Philip Hardie's contribution on Symphosius' *Aenigmata*, in which he traces the connection between epitome and riddles, Jaś Elsner's exploration of visual epitome in ancient art and how it has influenced both non-Christian and Christian manuscripts, and Scott Mc Gill's study of the verse summaries of the *Aeneid* by the so-called 'twelve wise men'. Matthew Payne, at the end of his contribution on Nonius Marcellus, interestingly raises the question how digital technologies might help us recapture this author's epitomic techniques. The only contribution that strays a bit off course is the final one, by Tim Noens. Offering what is in and by itself an intriguing investigation of the fragmentation of time in Pliny the Younger's *Letters* and Vladimir Nabokov's autobiographical *Speak, Memory*, the author himself admits that the two works in question do not contain an epitomary dimension *stricto sensu*. The conclusions that he draws in the end about epitome therefore feel much less organically connected to the main body of the paper than those of the other contributions. However, Noens is certainly right to remind us that the aspect of time is one that deserves attention in an examination of epitomic writing – just one of the many avenues for further research that this wonderful volume opens up.

I very much enjoyed reading T. P. Wiseman's *Catullan Questions Revisited*.² As the title suggests, Wiseman is coming back to his own *Catullan Questions*,³ in a book that combines some new chapters with previously published material – an immensely readable volume, written with Wiseman's characteristic imaginative approach to the ancient world and ancient texts, which at every turn asks some of the very big questions that we as Classicists have to find answers to: What is the relationship between a text and its world? Where are the demarcations between poetic licence and Roman reality? And what role does our own imagination – and novelistic writing – play in the reconstruction of Roman life and poetic meaning? The book is divided into two parts. The first is dedicated to some of the key issues of Catullan scholarship: the identity of Lesbia, the division and unity of the collection as we have it, the question of the original audience of the short poems – Wiseman argues that they were composed first of all for *viva voce* delivery and only later collected into a *libellus* – as well as the background of the long poems, at least some of which, Wiseman argues, might have been performed on stage.

² *Catullan Questions Revisited*. By T. P. Wiseman. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2022. Pp. 200. Hardback £75.00, ISBN: 978-1-00-923574-7.

³ T. P. Wiseman, *Catullan Questions* (Leicester, 1969).

The second part offers reflections on Catullus' Transpadane origin – Wiseman argues that the family was not of Gallic ancestry, but going back to a Roman veteran occupying the site of Sirmio; a further exploration of what Wiseman has already suggested elsewhere,⁴ that Poem 64 might have been the libretto for a danced performance in the context of the Floralia, as well as an intriguing piece on the reception of Clodia in historical novels from the early twentieth to the twenty-first century. At times, I would tend to accord Catullus more poetic licence than Wiseman and, simultaneously, go less far in reconstructing the performance context of Latin literature. For instance, I am not yet fully convinced that the traumatic experience of his brother's death, which he so memorably describes in Poem 68, indeed caused Catullus 'to rethink his life and turn to writing for the general public' (47), i.e. become a writer of satirical plays for the popular stage. However, throughout I found my own assumptions and old reading habits challenged by Wiseman's wonderful book, which deserves a wide readership well beyond Catullan scholars – it is a very inspiring read, showing a great scholar at work as he comes back to his own seminal book and, in the process, asks us to think both more thoroughly and more creatively about our own craft.

Nathan Gilbert, Margaret Graver, and Sean McConnell have edited a volume that sets out to trace the connection of power and persuasion in Cicero's philosophy.⁵ As the editors state in their preface, for a proper assessment of Cicero's philosophy, the importance of his rhetorical training too must be taken into account, as well as the way his philosophy is bound up with the social and political crises of the late Republic and with the practicability of philosophical and political theory. The first two essays, by Raphael Woolf and James Zetzel, confront the question of what rhetoric means for Cicero's philosophy head-on, as Woolf examines the relationship between rhetoric and dialectic in Cicero's thought and Zetzel discusses Cicero's position on the place of philosophy in Roman public life, according to his 'Platonic' dialogues *De oratore* ('The Making of an Orator'), *De re publica* ('The Republic'), and *De legibus* ('Laws'). Georgina White also focuses on the relationship between rhetoric and philosophy by exploring how Cicero's emphasis on characterization, scene-setting, and dramatic embellishment in the *Academica* ('Academics') underscores the theme of epistemological uncertainty, of how to distinguish the real from the unreal, that is his key concern in this dialogue. This focus is nicely complemented by the final two papers: Katharina Volk offers a very interesting discussion of the role played by philosophy in the *pro Marcello* ('On behalf of Marcus Marcellus'), and Sean McConnell explores the presentation of old men in Cicero's *De senectute* ('On old age') of 44 BC and the prominent part that they, according to Cicero, should play in Roman politics, taking the place that, in his earlier *De re publica*, had been occupied by the *optimates* ('aristocrats').

With other papers in the collection, however, the thematic focus on the interplay of power and persuasion is less explicit, but they still add an interesting new angle on the question of the role the right exercise of power plays in Ciceronian philosophy, such as a

⁴ T. P. Wiseman, *The Roman Audience. Classical Literature as Social History* (Oxford, 2015), 109–10.

⁵ *Power and Persuasion in Cicero's Philosophy*. Edited by Nathan Gilbert, Margaret Graver, and Sean McConnell. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2023. Pp. ix + 268. Hardback £85.00, ISBN: 978-1-00-917033-8.

discussion of the meaning of *in diem vivere* ('living from day to day') in the *Tusculan Disputations* (Geert Roskam), which emblemizes a 'philosophical-rhetorical versatility' (79) that characterizes the work of Cicero the philosopher, the orator, and the politician; of Cicero's engagement with both Greek philosophy and the contemporary Roman context in *De officiis* ('On duties'), Book 3 (Nathan Gilbert); and such as Malcolm Schofield's careful discussion of the meaning of *iuris consensus* ('consensus of justice') in Cicero. Margaret Graver examines Cicero's argument in *De re publica* that honour functions as legitimate motivation for political leaders and has a role to play as well in the education of citizens – a view that, she shows, is more closely related with Hellenistic Stoics than with Plato's *Republic* itself. Jed Atkins' exploration of Cicero's thoughts on the justice of war concludes with some very interesting ideas on how Cicero's position compares with contemporary reflections on war and modern international relations theory. Overall, then, the individual papers show very well how Cicero's philosophy is connected with his political and rhetorical concerns in intricate ways.

Aaron Kachuck aims to introduce a new sphere into our discussions of Roman life and literature in the age of Vergil, broadly conceived; in addition to the public and private spheres, he argues, we need to do full justice to a third one – the solitary sphere.⁶ As Kachuck very interestingly argues in the introduction to his monograph on *The Solitary Sphere in the Age of Virgil*, maybe scholars have been too afraid of reading classical literature '(post) romantically' and so have denied the existence of a solitary sphere in Rome and Roman literature. He sets out to rectify this by studying the 'solitary sphere' in Cicero's late works (letters, *Brutus*, *Orator*, *Laelius de amicitia*, 'Laelius on Friendship'), in Vergil's *Eclogues*, *Georgics*, and *Aeneid*, in Horace, and finally in Propertius. The break with conventional boundaries between 'republican' and 'Augustan' literature as well as between prose and poetry is certainly very welcome and refreshing, and Kachuck successfully traces some connecting lines between Cicero and the Augustan poets. His discussion of the texts, which often branches out to include the biographical tradition on the authors in question as well as the later literary reception of their work, is insightful and thought-provoking, as he shows how the authors he studies carve out solitary spaces, even amidst the hustle and bustle of Roman city life. He is also certainly right that these spaces do exist and must not be neglected by scholars. However, having read Kachuck's book, I would still not go so far as to think that the solitary sphere was really 'at the heart of literature in the age of Virgil' (260), and that it would provide 'a new model for Roman culture' (246) – in fact, in his introduction, Kachuck himself states that what he sees in the literature of the age of Vergil has a precursor in Catullus and becomes particularly prominent in Ovid's *Heroides* and poetry from exile (39–41). I found in Kachuck's work a certain tendency to build his case on somewhat fragile evidence – for instance, when Aeneas is accompanied on the shore of Troy by 'faithful Achates', Kachuck makes the point that, since Achates, as Casali has so wonderfully shown, is an *alter ego* of Aeneas,⁷ and since his name echoes Aeneas' own sorrow (Greek ἄχος), he becomes a 'projection

⁶ *The Solitary Sphere in the Age of Virgil*. By Aaron J. Kachuck. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2021. Pp. 322. Hardback £64.00, ISBN: 978-0-19-757904-6.

⁷ See S. Casali, 'The King of Pain: Aeneas, Achates and "Achos" in *Aeneid* 1', *CQ* 58 (2008), 181–9.

of the hero's own self, a symptom of the poem's 'sad and disjointed' social life (135). I think we must not confuse mirroring or doubling with solitude here, and if Vergil has Aeneas accompanied by a 'faithful' companion, we cannot so easily write him out of the picture. Similarly, that Propertius' friends who figure in his poetry – and Cynthia, in fact – 'give off the scent of being fictions in themselves' (217) does not necessarily mean that the poet wants us to see him as a solitary figure. The case study in the book that convinced me most, actually, is the short discussion of Manilius in the concluding chapter, the poet who seems very much alone in his ability to understand and explain the sky. There is, then, great merit in Kachuck's book, in alerting us to a sphere in the literature of Vergil's age that too easily tends to get overlooked, even if I was not always fully convinced by the readings offered by Kachuck – but maybe that is me alone.

Megan Drinkwater sets out to present a new reading of Ovid's *Heroides*, showing that these fictional letters by mythological heroines and heroes are, contrary to what is often said about these texts, not a mere literary and intertextual play, but actually address political issues of their time, i.e. 'the turbulent transition from Rome as a republic to Rome as an empire' (3).⁸ Drinkwater, quite reasonably, bases her interpretation on the close reading of a few selected letters of the collection, all centred on the Trojan War, its causes, and its consequences: the letters of Dido (*Heroides* 7), Penelope (*Her.* 1), Briseis (*Her.* 3), and letters 5, 16, and 17, by Oenone, Paris, and Helen. Building on previous research on the very rich intertextual dimension of the letters, but also on readings of elegy, such as those by Maria Wyke, as arising from a 'crisis of masculinity evident in the period of transition from republic to principate',⁹ Drinkwater traces the parallels between these letters and the situation in Rome around Octavian's rise to power seen from a contemporary perspective and, when it comes to the double letters, in retrospect at the time of Ovid's exile. She reads the *Heroides* as a comment on 'the translation of Roman citizens from significant members of their fatherland into subjects whose voice holds little weight in social and political discourse' (5).

Given elegy's very complex, but ultimately also very close, relationship with contemporary politics – a debate within which Drinkwater could have situated her work a bit more explicitly – the reading that Drinkwater presents is certainly plausible. Overall, however, I finished reading the book feeling that there are still a few open questions that it does not address, or not in sufficient depth. While Drinkwater displays a keen eye for the generic dimension of the *Heroides* and their play with the conventions and *topoi* of elegy and epic, one of the most salient aspects about the *Heroides* that Drinkwater does not discuss, but that would impinge on her reading, is the pervasive sense of humour that is so often just beneath the surface of the letters in which all-too-famous myths and mythical heroines are given a voice to present themselves in a new light, in a stunning and self-conscious play with the literary tradition. To what extent might the humour of, for instance, Dido's letter to Aeneas subvert what

⁸ *Ovid's Heroides and the Augustan Principate*. By Megan O. Drinkwater. Madison, WI, University of Wisconsin Press, 2022. Pp. 192. Hardback £65.91, ISBN: 978-0-29-933780-3.

⁹ M. Wyke, *The Roman Mistress. Ancient and Modern Representations* (Oxford, 2002), 176.

Drinkwater claims is a reading critical of Vergil's *Aeneid*, or make such a criticism even more scathing?

Drinkwater follows Rosenmeyer and others in positing that Ovid identifies with the heroines.¹⁰ Since this is the basis of her study, however, this key question would have merited an explicit discussion: to what extent can we take the voices of these elegiac heroes and heroines as a straightforward expression of Ovid's own voice? Does this identification exist everywhere and all the time? And how can we tell? Finally, if we are to see political relevance in the *Heroides*, what exactly would that be? Was there indeed a sense that 'it would be better if Rome had not yielded to Octavian' (52) – and what is the 'Roman normal' (54), a return to which, according to Drinkwater, is reflected in Penelope's letter? A more explicit engagement with the historical background that Drinkwater sees mirrored in the *Heroides* could perhaps have helped to sharpen her point.

In terms of minor quibbles, I found quite a few places where, although the editing of the book is otherwise thorough, the Latin is misspelled (14, 26, 44, 45, 52, 69, 70, 99). I also thought that Drinkwater's comment on the text of *Tristia* 1.6.17–30 (quoted on 56) could have been a bit more specific and philologically rigorous than her somewhat puzzling note saying that 'textual uncertainty prints these lines in different orders' (138, n. 61). Towards the end, I noticed an unnecessary polemic against other approaches, as when intertextual readings are called 'superficial' (96). Overall, however, Drinkwater makes a very worthy attempt at adding a new layer to our understanding of the *Heroides*, which certainly deserve to be appreciated for more than their literary and intertextual virtuosity.

In his most recent book, Timothy Joseph accomplishes nothing less than a re-evaluation of the epic predecessors that are central to Lucan's *Pharsalia* (as Joseph argues it should be called).¹¹ To put it all too briefly, Joseph argues that Lucan does not only engage with his immediate predecessors Vergil and Ovid in his epic, but also keeps looking back to the very beginnings of the epic tradition, i.e. the epics of Homer, and to the beginnings of an epic tradition focusing on the growth and rise of Rome and its empire, in the poetry of Livius Andronicus, Naevius, and Ennius. Joseph's reading goes against a tendency that has been pretty solid in the research on Lucan in recent decades, to emphasize Lucan's engagement with Vergil in the composition of what amounts to an 'anti-*Aeneid*'. While certainly acknowledging Vergil's pervasive influence on Lucan, Joseph stresses that the *Pharsalia* is also in a close and systematic dialogue with earlier epic, in an effort to fashion itself, with respect to these beginnings, as an epic of the end: one that both narrates and marks the death of Rome and the epic tradition as known so far. Concomitant with that is the role of lament in the *Pharsalia*: the epic, Joseph argues, echoes a very long epic tradition of lament, extending it to encompass the whole world that suffered from Rome's civil war. The epic narrator too joins in the lament that he depicts in his text, while capturing Roman greatness at the same time, turning the epic itself into a grand lament both for Rome and for epic literature, whose end it purports to mark.

¹⁰ P. A. Rosenmeyer, 'Ovid's *Heroides* and *Tristia*: Voices from Exile', *Ramus* 26 (1997), 29–56.

¹¹ *Thunder and Lament. Lucan on the Beginnings and Ends of Epic*. By Timothy A. Joseph. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2022. Pp. 304. Hardback £64.00, ISBN: 978-0-19-758214-5.

Throughout his book, Joseph offers compelling analyses of Lucan's sophisticated intertextual relationship with the beginnings of the Greek and Latin epic tradition. While he might be more optimistic than some other scholars on what we can say with confidence on an epic like Naevius' *Bellum Punicum* ('The Punic War'), his readings are certainly convincing and highly stimulating. I very much enjoyed the fourth chapter on epic ships and Lucan's undoing of Rome's control of the sea and of epic, 'the genre that launched on the seas' (167), as well as chapter five on epic *nostos* ('return'). Like so many other epic *topoi*, this Odyssean master trope is thwarted in the *Pharsalia*, in which characters like Cato and Pompey do not achieve a return home – a return that Lucan's Caesar, as Joseph shows, does not even desire in the first place. Joseph's book is a very salutary reminder that our view of epic written after the *Aeneid* is probably still a bit too 'Vergilocentric' and that authors like Ennius deserve a more important place in that tradition than is often acknowledged. I also wonder how this new reading of Lucan's epic might help us see Flavian epic literature in a new light – or at least Statius' *Thebaid*, which is in very close dialogue with Lucan from its first line onwards. Did Statius too – whose *Silvae* 2.7 on Lucan provides a very fitting starting point for Joseph in his introduction – read the *Pharsalia* as setting an end point to a long epic tradition, and does he try to go even further by creating 'more of an end', one situated much earlier, in the time of myth, even before the Trojan War, let alone the foundation of Rome, ever began?

The writings of Lucan's uncle Seneca are the subject of an intriguing monograph by Erica M. Bexley, on characterization in Seneca's tragedies.¹² Starting with the paradox that literary figures on the one hand have no will and agency of their own (and have no 'private life', according to T. S. Eliot) and, on the other hand, appear to us just like 'actual' human characters, Bexley sets out to examine how Seneca's dramas negotiate the balance between characters as textual constructs and as implied human beings. Wisely, to my mind, Bexley remains agnostic on the question of whether Seneca's tragedies were actually intended for performance, recitation, excerpting, or a combination of these, showing instead how the modes of characterization that she singles out would have worked both in an actual performance and in reading or recitation, particularly for an audience that would have been familiar with ancient staging conventions anyway. Structuring her discussion around the themes of behavioural coherence and selfsameness, role models and exemplarity, physical appearance, and the pursuit of autonomy, Bexley demonstrates in a detailed and nuanced discussion how the protagonists of Seneca's tragedies – especially *Medea*, *Thyestes*, *Troades* ('The Trojan Women'), *Hercules*, *Phaedra*, and *Oedipus* – carve out their autonomy and identity in the fictional worlds of the plays, within and against a long literary tradition, and even, paradoxically, in the face of exemplarity, revenge, or suicide.

Throughout, Bexley takes into consideration how recitation or staging with the use of masks would enhance this creation of identity. While it is not her main aim to rehearse the much-discussed question of how Seneca's tragedies relate to his philosophical writings, she does embed her study very productively in Stoic – at times more generally, ancient – debates around issues such as *decorum* ('appropriateness'), identity,

¹² *Seneca's Characters. Fictional Identities and Implied Human Selves*. By Erica M. Bexley. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2022. Pp. x + 388. Paperback £39.99, ISBN: 978-1-10-847760-4. Open access via: <<https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/senecas-characters/4FA37CFEB0A2B13D3343A74D9F58039D>>, accessed 6 June 2023.

autonomy, or suicide and self-determination, showing that the tragedies are in fact well anchored in these broader issues, as they engage in a two-way dialogue between tragedy and philosophy. I found all of these discussions eye-opening and particularly enjoyed those of the interplay of appearance and character, but also of exemplarity and its relationship with individual identity, from which not only scholars of Seneca will learn a lot. In Bexley's study of Seneca's *Medea* in chapter 1 and of revenge in the tragedies more generally in chapter 4, engagement with Kathrin Winter's monograph on 'the evil as artwork' in Seneca's revenge tragedies could have been helpful, since Winter discusses, for instance, the relationship of revenge and reciprocity in *Medea* and *Thyestes* as well.¹³ Apart from that, however, I found little to criticize and much to admire in Bexley's fascinating book.

Dalida Agri studies the role of fear and related emotions such as anger, envy, and hatred in Flavian epic, seen through a Stoic lens.¹⁴ While this approach is of course not wholly new, her book is still worthwhile, as she traces in detail how fear indeed plays an important role in shaping the representation of power, gender, and agency in Valerius' *Argonautica*, Statius' *Thebaid*, and Silius Italicus' *Punica*. In particular, as Agri shows in her first chapter after providing an overview of the Stoic view of emotions, tyrant figures in these three epics are presented as victims of fear, which leads to a symbolic feminization of their character. This lack of power over themselves, as the Stoics would see it, ultimately limits the power that they hold over others and spells their doom.

The following three chapters are devoted to the three Flavian epics in turn. Agri shows convincingly how, in the *Argonautica*, fear and hope interact and colour the representation of leadership and agency. In the *Thebaid*, the power struggle on both the human and divine planes is very much predicated on fear and envy, while in the *Punica*, *metus* ('fear') is ubiquitous, crucially shaping Silius' presentation of the Second Punic War as what Agri terms (maybe not completely fortuitously) a 'war on terror'. Agri demonstrates very nicely how different negative emotions depend on and interact with fear, and how the Flavian epicists make very good use of Senecan Stoic images and terminology in their own epic language of emotions. I found particularly interesting the passages where she talks about the gendered implications of these emotions, such as the effeminizing effects of fear. At the end, she raises the intriguing question whether it was 'natural' in some Roman circles to read the *Aeneid* through a Stoic lens, and whether it was therefore 'natural' for later epicists to read Virgil in Stoic terms, via Seneca's own engagement with Vergil's epic (197). While Agri ultimately leaves this question open, her work is still a good reminder that the Flavian epics are not only thoroughly 'Vergilian' and 'Lucanian', but also 'Senecan' in their own different ways.

Katerina Carvounis, Sophia Papaioannou, and Giampiero Scafoglio present a very welcome volume that straddles the boundary between Greek and Latin, by exploring the interactions between later Greek epic and the Latin epic tradition.¹⁵ In the

¹³ K. Winter, *Artificia mali. Das Böse als Kunstwerk in Senecas Rachetragödien* (Heidelberg, 2014).

¹⁴ *Reading Fear in Flavian Epic. Emotion, Power, and Stoicism*. By Dalida Agri. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2022. Pp. x + 244. Hardback £65.00, ISBN: 978-0-19-285930-3.

¹⁵ *Later Greek Epic and the Latin Literary Tradition. Further Explorations*. By Katerina Carvounis, Sophia Papaioannou, and Giampiero Scafoglio. Trends in Classics – Supplementary Volumes, 136. Berlin, de Gruyter, 2023. Pp. vii + 216. Hardback £100.50, ISBN: 978-3-11-079179-2.

introduction, the editors state that a systematic investigation of this interaction is still lacking, even though it is a challenging undertaking in a field where direct intertextual engagement and intercultural interaction is often very hard to ascertain. As this volume successfully shows, however, novel ways of approaching this question are very promising indeed. The tendency of several of the contributions is to shift the balance to the perspective of the reader and to explore which connections between these texts can be established and how they can be interpreted, even beyond verbal or thematic parallels. This approach seems very fruitful, and the volume certainly paves new ways for future research in this area.

I particularly liked the vivid scholarly dialogue between the contributions focusing on Quintus of Smyrna's *Posthomerica*: in the opening chapter, Ursula Gärtner looks back on her own 2005 work on the parallels, discrepancies, and shared motifs between the *Posthomerica* and Vergil's *Aeneid*¹⁶ and surveys how this field of research has developed over time. Silvio Bär takes his cue from this approach (though strangely without explicit reference to Gärtner's paper) and argues that a lot is to be gained by approaching these texts not from the point of view of source criticism, but from a narratological perspective. He – successfully, to my mind – shows that Quintus, in the episodes of Sinon and Laocoon, de-Romanizes the respective scenes in Vergil and questions the authority of the first-person narrator Aeneas in Book 2 of the *Aeneid*, replacing it with the seemingly more objective authority of his own Homeric voice, thus also claiming literary and cultural authority for Greece. The next paper, by Emma Greensmith, in turn responds to both Gärtner and Bär, arguing that, in the two key and much-discussed scenes of Calchas' prophecy of Rome's future glory and the account of how the *testudo* ('tortoise') battle formation was invented, Quintus deliberately distances himself from Vergil, invoking Homer's *Odyssey* instead, and thus ultimately synchronizing Rome's foundational poem into an aetiology of Homeric Greece. This is a thought-provoking dialogue on different methodological and interpretive approaches in a field where traditional notions of intertextuality tend to be challenged. Other papers in the volume find equally intriguing connections with Latin epic in the epics of Claudian, Triphiodorus' *Sack of Troy*, the Orphic *Argonautica*, and Nonnus' *Dionysiaca*, often focusing on meaningful silences as well as programmatic and metapoetic aspects of an intertextual dialogue with the Latin tradition. The volume as a whole is vivid proof of what Helen Lovatt says in her paper on the interplay of Nonnus' reworking of Ovid's Phaethon episode with the intertextual tactics employed in Flavian epic: 'reading Latin and imperial Greek epic together enriches both' (197).

Finally, a new volume in the series 'Ancient Wisdom for Modern Readers' by Princeton University Press: James Romm's translation of Seneca's *De brevitate vitae* ('On the Shortness of Life'), together with his *Moral Epistle 1* and excerpts of 49, which make up the volume entitled *How to Have a Life. An Ancient Guide to Using Our Time Wisely*.¹⁷ This small and attractive book does full justice to the series, whose aim it is to 'present the timeless and timely ideas of classical thinkers in lively

¹⁶ U. Gärtner, *Quintus Smyrnaeus und die Aeneis. Zur Nachwirkung Vergils in der griechischen Literatur der Kaiserzeit* (Munich, 2005).

¹⁷ *How to Have a Life. An Ancient Guide to Using Our Time Wisely*. Seneca. Selected, translated, and introduced by James S. Romm. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2022. Pp. xxi + 175. Hardback £14.99, ISBN: 978-0-69-121912-7.

new translations' and to 'make the practical wisdom of the ancient world accessible for modern life', according to the publisher's website.¹⁸ Romm very nicely helps his readers approach Seneca's text by providing a lively introduction that presents the key facts about Seneca's biography woven into a narrative of the connection between ancient and modern concerns with time.

The text is presented in the original Latin with a facing new translation, which should indeed be a captivating and very thought-provoking read for the non-specialist reader. Romm succeeds at conveying the rhythm and the tone of Seneca's prose in a translation that is both true to the Latin and a very enjoyable read that presents the Senecan text in a new, attractive light (with just some minor inaccuracies: a Latin sentence is left untranslated on 28–9). As Romm explains in the introduction, he has 'pluralized' some of the pronouns, 'to avoid the overwhelming male bias of the original Latin' (xx). Most of the time, this results in changes that are unobtrusive enough. However, occasionally I found Romm's use of pronouns a bit distracting, as when he translates *audet quisquam de alterius superbia queri, qui sibi ipse numquam vacat?* (2) with 'does anyone dare to complain about the arrogance of another, while never making time for him- or herself?' (11). The mention of 'herself' goes against the grain of the Roman relationship between (male) patrons and clients that is evoked throughout the treatise and that Romm explains so well in the introduction (x), as well as Seneca's use of examples in this treatise, which are, of course, from the realm of male occupations. This made me wonder what price we might need to pay to make the ancient texts accessible to modern readers – which, needless to say, is vital for our discipline. Should we assimilate an ancient representation of society to our own, or should we make general readers aware of and encourage them to understand the differences between ancient Rome and modern societies? However one responds to these questions, James Romm has done a wonderful job at making Seneca an intriguing guide to the challenges not only of ancient, but also of modern life – reading this book is certainly time very well spent.

ANKE WALTER

University of Newcastle, UK

anke.walter@newcastle.ac.uk

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Greek history

I commence this review with a major contribution to the study of women in the ancient Greek world.¹ The public invisibility of women in the *poleis* of the archaic and classical

¹⁸ <<https://press.princeton.edu/series/ancient-wisdom-for-modern-readers>>, accessed 6 June 2023.

¹ This is (hopefully) the final review affected by the impossibility of getting books for review as a result of the pandemic and the consequences of Brexit during 2021–2. I apologize once more to authors whose books should have been reviewed earlier.