

acknowledging that some of the recent interest in Stoicism derives from deeply problematic misappropriations, as described, for example, by Donna Zuckerberg.<sup>11</sup>

I would like to close this review with a mention of a noteworthy translation. Robin Waterfield, who has published many beautiful translations over the years, now turns his attention to Epictetus (as reported by Arrian). With *Epictetus. The Complete Works*, Waterfield has made a tremendous contribution to students, scholars, and enthusiasts of Stoic philosophy by putting together an annotated translation of the *Handbook*, the *Discourses*, and the remaining fragments.<sup>12</sup> As with his previous work, Waterfield tries to find a balance between ‘accuracy and English fluency and readability’ (xiii). The translation is accompanied by a lucid introduction that offers all the necessary information to access the texts, including details of Epictetus’ life, Arrian’s role in the *Discourses* and the *Handbook*, general account of Stoic philosophy, and Epictetus’ Stoicism and his philosophical training.

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### Reception

Over the last few years, much of public discourse has been concerned with the rise of populist movements across the world. Hindu nationalism, Brexit, and the rise of Le Pen are just some of the phenomena that have garnered attention and concern. Although, in *Rome and America*,<sup>1</sup> classicist and political scientist Dean Hammer does not start with this topic, contemporary populism is his destination, specifically in the shape of Donald Trump and the conditions in which his presidency arose. As Hammer investigates several aspects of both the creation and undoing of self-identity and political norms in the United States, he cites templates, points of comparison, and, finally, warnings in both Rome’s founding myths and the history of its transition from republic to principate.

In many ways, the central question of the work is ‘Who are We?’ (author’s capitalization, 10). Hammer argues that, with *Rome and America* having similarly violent and unsavoury origins, their elites share anxieties regarding the makeup and

<sup>11</sup> D. Zuckerberg, *Not All Dead White Men. Classics and Misogyny in the Digital Age* (Cambridge, MA, 2018), chapter 2.

<sup>12</sup> *Epictetus: The Complete Works. Handbook, Discourses & Fragments*. Translated by Robin Waterfield. Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2022. Pp. xii + 460. Hardback £44, ISBN: 978-0-226-76933-2; paperback £15, ISBN: 978-0-226-76947-9.

<sup>1</sup> *Rome and America. Communities of Strangers, Spectacles of Belonging*. By Dean Hammer. Cambridge, New York, Melbourne and New Delhi, Cambridge University Press, 2023. Pp. xi + 252. 9 illustrations. Hardback £85, ISBN: 978-1-009-24960-7.

true nature of their own compatriots. As a result, he argues, both civilizations have the tendency of seeing themselves as made up of 'Strangers' and of possessing a complex relationship with how the past is recalled and commemorated.

In chapter 1, Hammer compares the *Aeneid* with the Western, especially the 1976 movie *The Outlaw Josey Wales*, directed by and starring Clint Eastwood. Key to this discussion is the experience of wandering, undergone by both the Trojans after their defeat by the Greeks and the European settlers of America, and of what Hammer calls the 'dislocation of memory'. This latter theme derives from the impact on identity wrought by deracination from a place of origin and an encounter with new and difficult terrain. As he does throughout, Hammer draws on a range of theoretical and scholarly approaches, including Detienne and Arendt. He proposes a reading of Aeneas' refusal to show Turnus mercy at the end of the poem in which Aeneas' reaction is a result of trauma from the instability of his wandering. He suffers from 'too much memory' and founds a society based on 'collective mourning' (41, 42). Similarly, Josey Wales is an outcast, immersed in a challenging environment, who manages to rise again. Hammer is not especially interested in film as a medium. Rather, *Josey* is a way into discussing a number of texts and the claim that the Western genre is an 'enactment of the myth of American origins' (43). However, in both cases, these origins create a specific orientation towards the future, in which there is a sense of expansiveness, but also 'exceptionalism and destiny' (57).

In chapter 2, Hammer builds on this idea of expansiveness while investigating more fully issues around shared identity and belonging. In both civilizations, members of different ethnic and racial groups have come to form part of the nation, by a mixture of peaceful and violent means. Hammer discusses the results of the Social War in admitting Italians and Gauls to Roman citizenship (66) and how this legalistic construction of being Roman was viewed in tension with the importance of the Latin language. In light of this, Hammer assesses the attempt of Noah Webster to institute a form of English that binds Americans together (79). Webster's view of language here is linked with ideas from Cicero, Quintilian, Varro, and Cato the Elder. Gender and race do feature in this study, although perhaps less than might be anticipated. Nevertheless, this chapter rightly does include some discussion of the legacy of the transatlantic slave trade, contrasting the approaches of Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. du Bois in their assessment of the status of African Americans. For Hammer, enslavement of Black people provides a challenge to America's remembering of its own history.

Chapters 3 and 4 focus more squarely on the role of bodies, which Hammer links with vulnerability, while also adding to his ongoing investigation into the spatial aspects of identity. In chapter 3, the roles of the Samnites and of Native Americans, in the Roman and American imaginations respectively, are compared. Returning us to the earlier discussion of the Western, both signify a primitive and dangerous 'Other' and the forcible conquest of space in the securing of a homeland. Hammer then focuses in more detail on Charles Eastman, a man of Santee Sioux heritage who lived and worked within White America. Hammer analyses his 1916 biography in comparison to the 'bodily memory in Horace's recollections of his Samnite past', arguing that 'Eastman reveals the persistence of bodily memory in the face of the disciplinary mechanisms of space, time, and movement' (119). On the other hand, the physical activities of boxing, gladiators, and theatre are the focus of chapter 4. Again, violence

comes to the fore, as the 'combat body' for both Romans and Americans can manifest in public spectacle the brutal foundations of both societies. Here, questions of ethnicity arise once more, alongside the status of female fighters and the issue of professionalism, which is one of the few places where modern notions of class come fully into view. Throughout this discussion, it is not simply the bodies of the actors themselves that are relevant, but the spectacularization and temporal-spatial dimensions of all performances, wherever they sit on the continuum of sport and theatre.

Chapter 5 is the most urgent in tone, as Hammer compares the rise of the Roman Principate with the downgrading of pre-existing democratic principles in America and the Trump presidency. From the erosion of constitutional norms during the tribuneship of Tiberius Gracchus in 133 BC, a long decline is demonstrated, as Caesar, among others, flouted more conventions, even as conventional institutions such as the Senate, still ostensibly continued (198). In what is admitted to be a somewhat telegraphic outline of the last century of the Republic, Hammer claims that 'by the time Octavian seized power and became Augustus, the only viable political language available was that of individuals, not institutions' (201). The author sees a similar trajectory in America, albeit over a shorter time frame. Starting with Reagan's dislike of government, Hammer traces an increasing reliance on executive power over the two Houses to get things done. At the same time, increasing dissensus, polarization, and partisan hostility has culminated in an absence of faith in democratic norms and the Capitol riots of 6 January. However, while Rome provides a warning of what may eventually happen to American democracy, Hammer is hopeful that, in identifying shared experiences of grief and instability, Americans might reunite and renew a democratic consensus.

Also concerned with American culture, but rather different in tone and approach, is Gregory N. Daugherty's brisk gallivant through receptions of Cleopatra from the late nineteenth century to the present day.<sup>2</sup> With a background in Roman history, Daugherty displays a clear interest in sniffing out which ancient sources may have inspired the different receptions he covers. However, he also shows a passion for elements of (mostly American) popular culture, highlighting throughout those that he favours and those that fall short. Beyond this, one of the programmatic ideas of the book actually comes from Shakespeare's pen: her 'infinite variety', which is certainly demonstrated here.

Daugherty's investigation of the ancient queen as a 'political, philosophical and aesthetic icon' begins with the *fin de siècle*, which, it is claimed, characterized Cleopatra as a *femme fatale*. Rider Haggard's *Cleopatra* (1889) is shown to have emerged from an ongoing interest in the eponymous heroine, but is viewed by Daugherty as having had an important impact on subsequent receptions. Meanwhile, in silent films, the *femme fatale* Cleopatra evolves into a 'vamp', linked with the 'New Woman' and often lacking children, which 'are rare in a vamp narrative' (35). We are reminded here just how unfortunate it is that Theda Bara's 1917 performance is no longer extant.

<sup>2</sup> *The Reception of Cleopatra in the Age of Mass Media*. By Gregory N. Daugherty. IMAGINES – Classical Receptions in the Visual and Performing Arts series. London, New York and Dublin, Bloomsbury, 2023. Pp. xi + 225. 20 black and white illustrations. Hardback £85, ISBN: 978-13-503-4072-5.

As we move to the interwar period, Cleopatra appears somewhat 'gentler'. There is an interesting discussion of Palmolive's advertising campaign, which tapped into recent changes in advertizing strategy to prey on women's insecurities, but also to evoke a mood of luxury, femininity, and romance. It is claimed that, by the end of the campaign, 'it had also helped to change and soften her image, though only temporarily' (43).

Following the Second World War, Daugherty encounters a few different Cleopatras, from the more childlike political novice in the film adaptation of G. B. Shaw's *Caesar and Cleopatra* (1945) to the 'casually murderous' in the Italian peplum *Two Nights with Cleopatra* (1953), starring Sophia Loren (78). This is one of several Italian films in this period that identify the ancient Romans with fascism: *The Legions of Cleopatra* (1959) and *Toto and Cleopatra* (1963) make a similar link, with the latter a 'Plautine comedy' that has Mark Antony perform 'a parody of a Mussolini balcony speech' (81).

The 1963 *Cleopatra* starring Elizabeth Taylor is portrayed as a watershed here. While Daugherty introduces us to several examples of historical and science fiction, Japanese and American comics, and even musical theatre, the film's lack of success is credited with an uptick in parodic receptions and those that capitalize on the scandal surrounding the film. However, by the mid-1970s, the 'Lizpatra effect' is not what it was, and the number of receptions has decreased. Daugherty argues that it was not until 1989, when Anne Rice published the horror novel *The Mummy*, that 'interest in Cleopatra surged' (177). This fantasy element remained with a growing interest in magic, but was accompanied by more 'authentic' and historically grounded Cleopatras in, for example, the television series *Rome*, which receives a relatively lengthy discussion. Nevertheless, it appears that the 2008 recession marked a decreased engagement with her, although we are left to ponder the reasons for this (153).

This work provides many summaries of varying lengths of different receptions of Cleopatra, although occasionally refrains from providing 'spoilers', while offering a general framework for her different *personae* throughout the decades. It is less concerned with the nature of mass media than with tracking these characterizations and their relationship to different sources. The question of Cleopatra's race and ethnicity arises across the book, with Daugherty noting both the problems inherent in projecting a racial identity back onto her and how frequently she is portrayed as white but Orientalized. Several appendices provide lists of receptions of Cleopatra in different media; refreshingly, these include several examples in which she is only a minor character.

Next, we have two publications that investigate the reception of Ovid. *After Ovid* is the product of a conference at the University of L'Aquila in central Italy, although all papers, barring one, are in English 'in the hope that it will both provide greater visibility to the subject and contribute to raising the profile of Italian research more broadly' (8).<sup>3</sup> The chapters investigate the reception of Ovid in both literature and visual arts from Late Antiquity until the eighteenth century. According to Valeria Merola, 'the presence of *Metamorphoses* in Italian literary tradition is ubiquitous and systematic', and this is reflected in the spread of topics in this volume, although there are a few that stray beyond these geographical and textual bounds (353).

<sup>3</sup> *After Ovid. Aspects of the Reception of Ovid in Literature and Iconography*. Edited by Franca Ela Consolino. Turnhout, Brepols, 2022. Pp. 374. 29 colour illustrations, 4 black and white illustrations, 18 tables. Paperback £82, ISBN: 978-25-035-9250-3.

The first three contributions discuss texts from the Late Antique period and include explorations of the impact of Christianity on Ovid's appropriation by these authors. Stefania Filosini identifies the different ways in which Prudentius' *Psychomachia* was shaped with reference to Ovid. This poem, which stages a battle between vice and virtue in the form of female beings, draws from several different classical Latin poets, especially from Virgil and his *Aeneid*, alongside Christian works. Filosina identifies similarities between Prudentius on the levels of both descriptive style and argumentative approach, suggesting, for example, that Prudentius' battle between sobriety and luxury and its Biblical *exempla*, are a counterpart to Bacchus' punishment of the Thebans. Meanwhile, Donato de Gianni shows that the theologian Isidore de Seville (560–636) made use of Ovid across his writings, sometimes directly, but often obliquely or mediated through other authors. Nevertheless, this is all 'informed by an integrationist vision of classical-pagan and Christian thinking' (84).

On the other hand, Maria-Pace Pieri finds 'a number of interacting models' in the author Reposianus' *Concubitus Martis et Veneris* (47), including not only a range of Greek and Latin authors, but pantomime performance. This hexameter poem of uncertain date tells the story of the scandalous affair between Mars and Venus, and was part of a collection of poems compiled in Africa. Pieri suggests that the attitude towards adultery found in the *Ars Amatoria* may have informed the one displayed in Resposianus. Ultimately, Pieri suggests that the poem was composed around the fifth century, revealing that Ovid remained popular in Vandal Africa into this period.

As we move into the Middle Ages, the contributors demonstrate an increasing range of methodological approaches. In Francesco Marzella's analysis of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Vita Merlini*, there are frequent evocations, not just of Virgil's *Georgics* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, but also his *Fasti* and *Remedia Amoris*. Lucio Ceccarelli's contribution, the only one in Italian, is an investigation into the use of Ovidian couplet forms in elegiac comedy of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The authors include Vitalis de Blois and Matthew of Vendôme. Through statistical analysis of metrical forms, he finds that the elegists do depart from Ovid's techniques on occasion. Luisa Corona's approach is a linguistic study of how motion has become encoded in the Italian language over time. Corona works with and against Leonard Talmy's dichotomous framework of different languages' communication of different aspects of motion, such as Path, Manner and Ground. Through a diachronic study of motion in the *Metamorphoses* and five Italian translations, she demonstrates that languages may not always fall easily into the dichotomy identified by Talmy.

We then move onto a part of the book more focused on iconography. Giuseppa Z. Zanichelli examines illuminations of the *Metamorphoses*. She claims that, while Ovid's portrayal of transformation was problematic to the Church Fathers, due to its incompatibility with Christian cosmology, 'something changed in the first half of the eleventh century, with the re-emergence from the mists of Celtic culture of the werewolf' (189). Zanichelli focuses on three codices from Northern Italy in the fourteenth century that illuminate the *Ovidius moralizatus*, a moralizing commentary on the *Metamorphoses* thought to have been written by the Benedictine monk Pierre Bersuire (190). While the different codices have varying functions, they all work as a 'gloss for the text' (211). Michele Maccherini also surveys a number of artistic responses to the same text, in this case the story of Narcissus. Examining a range of sculptures and paintings on the subject from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,

he highlights the importance of the natural environment for the topic, and how sculptors by necessity adapted his posture and made him a solitary figure. He also argues that the attribution of a painting of Narcissus to Caravaggio is most likely incorrect.

Costanza Barbieri describes some exquisite fresco decorations by Sebastiano del Piombo in the Renaissance Villa Farnesina. Based on the theme of 'air', these panels reflect the owner's birth horoscope. Barbieri argues that some images 'constitute both a careful and meticulous depiction' of the *Metamorphoses*, but based on the philologist Raphael Regius' moralizing commentary. Barbieri takes us through the different images, systematically contextualizing them within the moralizing tradition and astrological literature.

The final few contributions return us more to literary receptions, with two of these focusing on his female characters. Valeria Merola describes the portrayal of Myrrha in several Italian works, such as Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Alfieri's tragedy, *Mirra*. Responding to the complex and shocking nature of Myrrha's offences, the authors condemn her in a range of ways, and Alfieri is shown to have struggled to turn such a character into a tragic heroine. For Mark Alexander Boyd (1563–1601), a Scottish humanist, the model is the *Heroides* rather than the *Metamorphoses*. He composed responses to the original elegiac letters and then created further letters from his own selection of mythological and historical women. Franca Ela Consolino analyses a letter from Lavinia to Turnus, showing that she 'harnesses literary reminiscences to paint a negative picture of the man she hates', namely, Aeneas (328). Consolino also reproduces the whole of this poem.

The focus on individual authors continues. Fabiola Bartolucci describes how Teofilo Folengo (1491–1544) used Ovidian formations in his narrative poem *Baldus*. This macaronic poem, being a combination of Latin and Italian dialects, is said by Bartolucci to be parodic, and contains such striking images as when 'the sailors become seasick, and cover the Nereids in vomit' (298). Finally, Enrico Botta contextualizes George Sandys' (1578–1644) translation of the *Metamorphoses* with the contemporary colonization of America. This work was the 'earliest book produced in America', and as such is a significant moment for exploring the development of America's self-identity in relation to Europe (336). Botta finds the adoption of an epic work significant due to epic being used frequently as the form for foundational texts. Sandys' awareness that America was in the process of forming its own national identity and culture is seen in the commentary, where he, for example, recognizes Christopher Columbus as the protagonist of the founding mythology of the new continent (344).

Many of these chapters take a highly detailed, philological reading of texts, focusing on meter and word position. They also have appendices containing useful tables of allusions to ancient literature in the texts under discussion. As such, these investigations offer a stimulating variety of approaches to the reception of Ovid, using sources that may be unfamiliar to the lay reader.

Jenny C. Mann also demonstrates the importance of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in the early modern period.<sup>4</sup> Here, however, the poet is significant for his portrayal of

<sup>4</sup> *The Trials of Orpheus: Poetry, Science, and the Early Modern Sublime*. By Jenny C. Mann. Princeton and Woodstock, Princeton University Press, 2021. Pp. xix + 217. 14 black and white illustrations. Hardback £30, ISBN: 978-06-912-1922-6.

Orpheus. Mann uses the figure as a means of exploring English poetics, science, and rhetoric in this period. Many theorists conceived of eloquence as a hidden force that acted on its audience and explored the ways in which this *energeia* or ‘vitality of style’ may function (21). Building on the work of Eric Auerbach, Mann has assigned each section of the book a different ‘figure’ drawn from Ovid. These figures are both rhetorical forms and forces. Here, Mann recounts a tension in defining this word:

Figures are substantial and iconic, but they are also vehicles for an energetic force that may destabilize the formal structures established by figuration (23).

This is just one of several moments at which instability or internal contradiction become important to her analysis.

In her introduction, ‘Trying’, Mann introduces us to a general scheme of Orpheus’ reception. As we saw above, classical authors pose some problems for Christian authors. However, Horace’s description of Orpheus in the *Ars Poetica* has a profound impact on Medieval and Renaissance perceptions of him. The amalgamation of his poetic and priestly qualities with the act of taming savage beasts becomes emblematic of the humanist belief in ‘the power of eloquence to convert savagery into civility’ (13). However, the most important ancient text for the book as a whole is Book 10 of the *Metamorphoses*, in which Orpheus has his encounter with Eurydice and narrates several myths before his grisly death and the beginning of Book 11.

Chapter 1, ‘Meandering’, takes the backwards glance that is critical to Orpheus’ loss of Eurydice and, appropriately, shifts backwards and forwards in time throughout the chapter, examining artistic, philosophical treatments of theme. Mann is concerned with the overwhelming power of poetry on the poet, with one’s successors having an impact – however mediated or interrupted – on later artists. This sense of power is articulated in Longinus’ *On the Sublime*, which Mann believes indirectly shaped early modern poetry through authors’ access to earlier works that were built around formulations of the sublime. However, just as a poet might look back to the work of Sappho in the development of their own creation, the non-linear temporality that is implied by the course of poetic inspiration is mirrored in the Greek ‘key’ pattern found on Roman mosaics in Britain. Their intermittent and partial recoveries ‘exemplify the blocked transmissions of classical culture that so obsessed Renaissance humanists and defined their cultural and intellectual programmes’ (51).

In chapter 2, ‘Binding’, Mann proceeds to develop her examination of the relationship between natural science and the study of rhetoric. The central conceit is Plato’s famous analogy in the *Ion* of poetic power being transmitted from the Muses to the audience via poets, and performers as being like the transmission of magnetic force through iron rings. She compares this figure to the implication of the overwhelming power of speech in poetry in antitheatricalist arguments, as well as the power of Orpheus and image of the chains of Proteus in Virgil’s fourth *Georgic*. Particularly interesting is a discussion of Francis Bacon’s study of ancient myth and his association of Orpheus with the practice of philosophy.

Chapter 3, ‘Drawing’, links to the erotic connotations of attraction and its relationship to eloquence. Mann notes the prominence given to motion in Orpheus’ song in Book 10 of the *Metamorphoses*, which not only signifies erotic desire and arousal but also the power of rhetoric. Mann links to the idea of ‘enthrallment’ and ‘bondage’, and discusses several

Elizabethan *epyllia*, some more widely known than others (123). She describes these as ‘gleefully impure mixtures’ due to their agglomeration of varying themes, approaches, and metrical techniques from different genres and time periods (108). The end result is that many of these poems that take individual stories from Book 10 include original excursions while conveying a deeply enthralling desire.

Mann argues in chapter 4, ‘Softening’, for the ‘vigorous nonproductivity of . . . soft poetics’ in which poets and rhetoricians of early modern England are both the softeners of their audiences and softened themselves. A further tension is highlighted when Mann notes that Ovidian poetry is simultaneously supposed to ‘civilize’ the savage and ‘effeminize poets and readers’ by virtue of its softening effect (133). In the Elizabethan period, effeminacy could have a range of connotations, but these were informed by both a hierarchy of gender and of race. Mann switches between the softness of the ancient Roman elegiac lover and the various effeminacies of Elizabethan poets, demonstrating how Orpheus comes to represent a challenge to standards of masculinity at once powerful and vulnerable.

Chapter 5 is called ‘Scattering’, but that is a rather innocuous term for much of its content. Orpheus’ *sparagmos* at the hands of the maenads is referred to, but so is the vile rape and mutilation of Philomel by Tereus in Ovid and of Lavinia by Demetrius, Chiron, and Aaron in *Titus Andronicus*. In the case of the fate of Orpheus, who fails to quiet his assailants, Mann argues that this contradicts ‘the fictions that classical rhetoric tells about itself: that it civilizes men, deflecting physical violence and forging new communities’, yet at the same time, rhetoric is scattered through the environment (169). This theme also draws our attention to the problematic blurring of the concepts of rape and seduction that is present in both early modern and ancient Greek culture; Mann looks back to Gorgias’ *Helen* and his attempt to absolve of her guilt due to the power of persuasion. Mann argues that links between rape and eloquence is ‘omnipresent in the rhetorical tradition’ (177). However, as we have seen throughout, the status of poet as vessel indicates that this ‘ravishment’ has implications for poor, scattered Orpheus and his artistic descendants.

The themes and tensions I have highlighted give just a basic sense of what is an immensely rich work, which draws on a range of philosophical, theoretical, and literary texts from ancient and early modern authors. The writing is clear and, yes, persuasive, but rewards a returning reader with yet more nuances.

Lastly, Martin Revermann’s weighty volume *Brecht and Tragedy* takes a capacious view of theatre practitioner Bertolt Brecht’s (1898–1956) relationship to a number of different theatrical traditions, including Greek tragedy, Japanese Noh theatre, Romanticism, and Naturalism.<sup>5</sup> Revermann’s framework for understanding these relationships is the notion of ‘the eristics of reception’, which, he argues, is suggestive of the specific nature of Brecht’s reception of Greek tragedy. This pun on ‘erotics’ replaces desire with the Greek word for strife to highlight the ‘polemical nature of Brecht’s interaction with Greek tragedy, both in its theatrical practice and in the form of its main surviving theorist Aristotle’ (6). Revermann also identifies in Brecht

<sup>5</sup> *Brecht and Tragedy: Radicalism, Traditionalism, Eristics*. By Martin Revermann. Classics After Antiquity series. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2021. Pp. xvii + 474. 4 colour illustrations, 36 black and white illustrations, Hardback £82, ISBN: 978-1-108-48968-3.



a belief in his own 'poetic exceptionalism' and thus argues that the 'certain degree of competitiveness' against other poets that is suggested by the term suits him and his work well (7).

Indeed, this attention to Brecht the man is a key aspect of the first part of the book, which, following a substantial introduction, combines a biographical overview of Brecht's educational and working life and the development of his artistry. We learn of Brecht's professional difficulties following the end of the war. Revermann claims that the period between his examination at the House Committee on Unamerican Activities and the Berlin premiere of *Mother Courage and Her Children* as 'the foundation for his (and Helene Wiegel's) subsequent fame and visibility' (43). Revermann looks both before and after this period, as he assesses the development of his attitudes towards ancient Greek theatre: his critique of Aristotle's *Poetics* and his condemnation of the tragedians as 'barbarian theatre'. There is an in-depth discussion over several chapters of his play *The Antigone of Sophocles*, including his adaptation of Hölderlin's translation, and accompanying book the *Antigonemodell 1948*, first created in Switzerland during this period of 'krisis'. There are reproduced in the volume numerous photographs of the production, in which can be seen the strikingly sparse set, featuring freshly boiled-down horses' heads on bare wooden columns. Meanwhile, the model book is described as 'descriptive, prescriptive, falsifiable and prospective' and as a 'hermeneutic tool', underlining Brecht's unique and 'scientific' approach to theatre-making, but also the potential for his highly controlled works to have a life of their own (191, 212).

Section two takes a more expansive view, going beyond Brecht's relationship to Greek tragedy and discussing its situation with respect to several other theatre traditions. Revermann shows how his interest in both Asian (particularly Japanese and Chinese) and ancient Greek performance is a process of selection and construction in service of his aesthetic and political goals (228). On the other hand, Brecht found himself in a difficult spot with the legacy of Naturalism. While he viewed it as part of the 'bourgeois narcotics trade', the movement became popular with socialist governments (232, 230). Between discussions of Schiller and Shakespeare, Revermann investigates Brecht's use of comedy and his adaptation of Aristophanes in his *Pluto Revue*, which shares some ideas with not only *Wealth* but *Assembly Women* too (263). Through a portrayal of the Peloponnesian Wars, Brecht makes some pointed allusions in this 'tragic-comedy' to both World Wars and comments on the selfishness of the ruling class, with Aristophanes himself appearing as muzzled master of ceremonies, merely a 'hireling of the elite' (266). Readers may come to their own conclusions, as Revermann has included his own translation of relevant extant documents.

The final main section takes a tour of several of Brecht's plays and the ways in which they contribute to our understanding of Brecht's own formulation of tragedy and the tragic, relative to the different traditions discussed above. From *Mother Courage and Her Children* and its examination of heroism, we learn that Brecht's view of the tragic is that, instead of promoting the 'self-centred assurance of individual autonomy', as in Schiller, it is 'about enabling others, as a collective, to survive and have a future' (313). This is just one play of many that have important significant female characters – an ongoing theme of this monograph. Heroism is also explored in relation to several other productions, their appropriation of Asian theatre traditions, and Brecht's critique of Aristotle.

Revermann also examines his syncretic use of choruses and claims that Euripides is ‘the most kindred spirit among the ancient playwrights’ in their shared, bleak view of divine–mortal relations (368). These are just a few out of many claims made about differing tragic traditions and their influences on Brecht at every level of his oeuvre.

This study is a challenging read for those new to Brecht’s oeuvre or to the study of twentieth-century theatre. However, Revermann’s erudite oscillation between Brecht, eastern Asian, ancient Greek, and nineteenth-century European theatrical traditions is a stimulating model for those interested in taking a comparatist and globally minded approach to reception studies. Revermann is a champion for his subject, even mounting an apology of sorts for what is sometimes considered to be a coldness in Brecht’s work, arguing that the so-called ‘alienation’ or *Verfremdung* that audiences were supposed to experience is an incorrect translation of the German. Instead, the term denotes a kind of emotional moderation of a ‘relaxed’ and ‘alert’ audience, who are not being asked to emotionally identify with the characters onstage, but rather experience ‘fun’ and ‘learning’, which Revermann considers to be closer to Aristotle’s conception of catharsis than Brecht realized (436–8). Revermann’s somewhat personal and effusive style contributes to the picture of a man deeply engaged with and invested in a number of disparate theatrical and theoretical traditions and in developing both his own and his audiences’ understanding.

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### *General*

Two splendid Oxford Handbooks deserve the opening slot of my review. *The Handbook of Greek and Roman Mythography*<sup>1</sup> contains forty chapters, each of which closes with a helpful section on recommended further reading. The editors have organized the material in five very well-conceived parts. The first section, ‘Mythography from Archaic Greece to the Empire’, naturally wrestles with the question: When does mythography start? Two initial chapters provide their answers, and the rest of the contributions in this section offer an overview of mythography in Greek (Hellenistic and Imperial period) and Latin. The second section aims to provide an overview of individual mythographers: the stars of this section are Apollodorus, Antoninus Liberalis, Parthenius, Conon, and Hyginus. The eighteen chapters provide informative and concise introductions to authors who specialized in mythography, but also to the mythographic tendencies in authors such as Pausanias or Ovid, as well as in the scholia and even mythographical papyri. The third section is on the typical genres or interpretative models with which mythography tends to intersect: rationalizing

<sup>1</sup> *The Oxford Handbook of Greek and Roman Mythography*. Edited by R. Scott Smith and Stephen M. Trzaskoma. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2022. Pp. xviii + 624. Cased £97, ISBN: 978-0-19-06483-12.