

him in conceiving of, and creating, a form of modern theatre that was radically different from nineteenth- and early twentieth-century bourgeois drama. Even many of his misunderstandings were therefore extraordinarily fruitful.

Revermann uses his own translations from Brecht's German. This is a bit odd, since good translations of most of Brecht's major works do exist in English. In some cases, Revermann's translations are inferior to the existing ones, such as in his rendering of the title of one of Brecht's famous 'learning plays' as *The Measure* (as if it were a yardstick or a ruler). Instead, the existing *The Measures Taken* or *The Decision* are clearly better renderings of the actual German title *Die Maßnahme*. This quibble aside, the book is excellent and thought-provoking. It can be read profitably by anyone interested in modern manifestations of tragedy.

STEPHEN BROCKMANN
Carnegie Mellon University
Email: smb@andrew.cmu.edu

RIEHLE (A.) (ed.) **A Companion to Byzantine Epistolography**. Leiden: Brill, 2020. Pp. xii + 529, illus., facsimiles. €245. 9789004413696.
doi:[10.1017/S0075426923000587](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0075426923000587)

This substantial edited collection is volume 7 of Brill's Companions to the Byzantine World. Following the Introduction by the editor Alexander Riehle, the volume's 17 chapters are divided into four parts: Part 1: 'Contexts for Byzantine Epistolography'; Part 2: 'Byzantine Letter-Writers in Context'; Part 3: 'Forms and Functions of Byzantine Epistolography'; and Part 4: 'Byzantine Epistolography and (Post-)Modern Theory'. They are followed by a General Bibliography (including primary sources, but only those available in translation, and each chapter has its own bibliography too), a General Index, an Index of Greek Terms and an Index of Manuscripts. There are 15 contributors, three of them contributing twice: Alexander Riehle himself, Floris Bernard and Florin Leonte.

Riehle's introduction provides an historical and historiographical overview of Byzantine epistolography, encompassing fundamental issues, such as what a letter is, but also providing a vital guide to the volume itself. He is honest in admitting that it does not include everything that was planned, such as a chapter on the letters of Theodore the Studite, and declares that it 'should be understood as a companion in the proper sense', not as 'an exhaustive handbook, but rather as an eclectic guide giving orientation, raising questions, and providing inspiration' (21). Another qualification is that it is primarily concerned with letters of middle and late Byzantium, since these periods need more study than early Byzantium; we are pointed to the volume *Late Antique Letter Collections* (Berkeley 2016), edited by Cristiana Sogno, Bradley Storin and Edward Watts.

Part 1 consists of three chapters, providing background and comparative material: Thomas Johann Bauer on 'Letter Writing in Antiquity and Early Christianity', Jack Tannous on 'Syriac Epistolography' and Lena Wahlgren-Smith on 'Letter Collections in the Latin West'. Of these the first is most obviously useful, and it is a shame that there was not comparative material for further east, which Riehle himself had expressed a wish for (20).

Part 2 is constituted of two chapters, the case studies on Michael Psellos (by Bernard) and Demetrios Kydonos (by Leonte). These are two of the most absorbing chapters in the collection; case studies allow for the putting of flesh on the bones and bring the issues of epistolography into sharp and vibrant relief. They also allow for interesting comparison

between Psellos and Kydones themselves, both similarities and differences. Presumably this is where the chapter on Theodore the Studite should have been; it's very disappointing it's not here, for the critical ninth century deserves more representation.

Part 3 has a whopping ten chapters, each on a discrete aspect of epistolography: rhetoric (Sofia Kotzabassi), diplomatics (Alexander Beihammer), didacticism (Leonte again), philosophy (Divna Manolova), friendship (Emmanuel C. Bourbouhakis), rituals and codes (Bernard again), the self (Stratis Papaioannou), the *theatron* (Niels Gaul), letters and letter exchange in art (Cecily J. Hilsdale, focusing on the Madrid Skylitzes, the Alexander Romance in Venice and the Vatican *Epithalamion*) and letters in narrative literature (Carolina Cupane, focusing on Byzantine romances but providing a useful summary of letters within historiography too, although chronicles get short shrift). All of these make thoughtful and engaging contributions, and as the volume progresses there are rewarding overlaps and echoes. Once again the volume is most illuminating when specific examples are brought into play, such as Anna Komnene on the letter of Alexios I Komnenos to Henry IV of Germany (214), Nikephoros Gregoras' letter to Helena Kantakouzene Pailaiologina (265–66), Psellos on the public reading of the letter of Pothos to the emperor (321–22, 361–62) and Manuel II Palaiologos on the reading of a letter at a *theatron* (353). Especially arresting is John Mauropous comparing the black ink and white paper of a letter to the contrasting colours of a swallow (186, 317). More on erotic discourse (345) would have been welcome.

Part 4 consists of two chapters. Johannes Preiser-Kapeller demonstrates the value of quantitative network analysis through the case of the letters of Theophylact of Ohrid. The final chapter by Riehle proves to be the most radical in the volume, essentially challenging some of what has gone before. Via reflection on editorial practices, he comes to the question of the production of letter collections and, given the editing and revision of the letters that could occur, he suggests the abandonment of “documentary” readings of individual letters in favor of interpretations of letter-collections as they survive in the manuscripts' (490).

Overall, the volume reveals how far we have come from older negative views about Byzantine literature (especially delightful are the observations of Bourbouhakis on Michael Italikos' playful engagement with the discourse of friendship, 300) but also how much remains to be done. Many of the contributions reference fundamental work on Byzantine letters already produced, such as by Peter Hatlie ('Redeeming Byzantine Epistolography', *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 20 (1996), 213–48) and Margaret Mullett (*Theophylact of Ochrid: Reading the Letters of a Byzantine Archbishop* (Aldershot 1997)), but acknowledge that further substantial studies are required. While not exhaustive this companion serves as a highly useful and stimulating staging post.

SHAUN TOUGHER
Cardiff University
Email: TougherSF@cardiff.ac.uk

RILEY (K.) **Imagining Ithaca: Nostos and Nostalgia since the Great War**. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021. Pp. xiii + 331. £30. 9780198852971.
doi:[10.1017/S0075426923000101](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0075426923000101)

The classicist Richard Bentley famously called Pope's *Iliad* 'a pretty poem ... but you must not call it Homer'. Similarly, *Imagining Ithaca* is charming and intelligent but rarely a book about the *Odyssey* or 'the ancient Greek idea of *nostos*' (1). Rather, Kathleen Riley is interested in different expressions of nostalgia across various case studies, *some* of which have a textual link to Homeric epic or classics more broadly. Riley's frequent use of the adjective