metamorphosis—and is just as much of a *poet*, offering rewards to the interpreter who seeks a deeper significance already in the surface of his seemingly casual *sermones*, where the '"Roman cage" of Latinity' (p. 149) demands semantic overtime from every word.

The book's success lies in its part-for-whole approach, using the three letters as a cross-section of the *Epistulae morales* and of Seneca. The chosen letters, however, have histories that H. leaves unacknowledged; for example, the ruins in the Villa Vazia at modern Torregaveta, identified exclusively from Seneca's letter 55 (cf. http://www.villavazia.it), are too important a reference-point to leave out. Recent secondary treatments are passed over, on H.'s chosen topics of Seneca's celebrity status (e.g. T. N. Habinek, *CA* 19 [2000], 264–303) and the Campanian cycle to which Letters 55 and 86 belong (G. Mazzoli, in A. Setaioli [ed.], *Seneca e la cultura* [Perugia, 1991], pp. 67–87). The book leaves Seneca's milieu sketchy: while contemporaries such as Papirius Fabianus or Remmius Palaemon add much to the discussion, they appear and disappear from view without sufficient introduction. The epistolographic climate is not taken into account, even though Seneca's project may have been inspired by recent publication of Cicero's *Ad Atticum*, and Lucan was writing *Epistulae ex Campania* (now lost) at around the same time. Seneca himself is left disappointingly in shadow. The other writings in prose and verse are not even mentioned (there are two passing references to the *Dialogi*), including the text being written to Lucilius concurrently, the *Natural Questions*.

Some of these aspects follow from H.'s self-conscious attempt to make the book an icon of Seneca's own text, as 'perverse' as Seneca could wish (p. 2). This works well when he captures Seneca's didactics, dramatics, or epigrammatics in his own style, or uses English wordplay to translate conceptual associations (manors/manners, cell/self, 'booking us in', etc.), but H.'s decision to mime the letters' anonymization-effect (he proclaims at the outset that his book will contain 'no dates. Not one.', p. 5) leaves the reader without much of an orienting framework. This said, Senecan studies will be wonderfully transformed if this book has the influence that it deserves.

University of Pennsylvania JAMES KER
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PLINY THE ELDER

S. Carey: *Pliny's Catalogue of Culture. Art and Empire in the* Natural History. Pp. xiv + 208, ills, colour pls. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. Cased, £60. ISBN: 0-19-925913-5.

It would be hard to find a classicist who hasn't raided Pliny's *Natural History* at some point and even harder to find a classicist who has read Pliny's *Natural History* cover to cover with the aim of enjoying a classy, literary read. The literary phenomenon of the work as a whole has remained understudied and undervalued. Instead critics have focused on particular groups of books or particular disciplines represented within Pliny, chopping the book into manageable sizes but thereby losing sight of the work as a whole.

Sorcha Carey sets out to restore wholeness to Pliny by considering the work in its entirety. However, she does not make the mistake of trying to replicate Pliny's encyclopedia with an encyclopedia of Pliny. Rather, she resites the work back in its particular context of early imperial Rome and considers the author himself not as

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simply a wheezy C-list celebrity staggering around the Bay of Naples with a pillow on his head, but as a commentator on and contributor to the growing shape of the Roman empire. In doing so, the book picks up on a series of key themes that inform the work and the material culture on which the book commentates. The choices of theme inevitably reflect our own contemporary concerns with the material culture of antiquity: space and monumentalization (Chapter 3), art, nature, and luxury (Chapters 4 and 5), and memory (Chapter 6).

The concentration on these three themes allows the formation of a strong structure throughout the book and the elegant and controlled discussion of a very unwieldy source text. C. has a good eye for anecdote and arrangement, reflected most enjoyably in the great opening to Chapter 2. Occasionally, the expression is a little odd, particularly in the introduction, but the text is generally very readable. Within each chapter, C. tackles the issues raised through the combination of a broad look beyond the *Natural History* to selected monuments across the empire and a close, careful reading of Pliny's texts. This tactic enables C. to put some neat twists on the most familiar of Plinian tales, such as the old Zeuxis and the Grapes chestnut, and on monuments themselves. Page 167, for example, offers a particularly nice deflation of the charge of 'horror vacui', which is often levelled at the Arch of Argentarii. At the same time, the clarity of the book is boosted by pertinent illustrations and diagrams, including a set of nine colour plates.

Chapters 1 and 2 deal with the introductory comments; an overview of treatments of Pliny and his text and of the principles of totality. In the case of this last topic, it is a shame (but unavoidable given the long publishing process) that this discussion cannot take account of John Henderson's treatment in his recent book, *Pliny's Statue* (Exeter, 2002) of Pliny the Younger's description of his uncle's other works in *Ep.* 3.5.

Chapter 3, on space and monuments, perhaps feels the least sure of itself. The general point of the chapter is sound and convincing, tracking the monumentalization of a geography of conquest. The choice of monuments is particularly interesting as it takes the reader to less familiar monuments, such as Augustus's trophy at La Turbie. Several steps in the argument are a little hard to follow, however. The sudden appearance of Trajan's column (pp. 56–7) could perhaps be better integrated into the text, with more discussion of the differences between image and text. Similarly, the interesting assertion of a development in Roman ways of visualizing empire from processes of assimilation to celebrations of difference would certainly repay further investigation.

Chapters 4 and 5 of this book have already been published as articles and it is fair to say that these chapters feel the most assured. They return us to the most picked-over section of Pliny's work, Books 34–6, which deal with minerals and, by extension, the development of painting and sculpture. By discussing the grottoes and frescoes of Italy, these chapters embed Pliny firmly into contemporary, domestic culture alongside the public sphere discussed in Chapter 3. Both these chapters are full of nice observations and elegant argument based on close readings of both art and text. The section on art and nature is particularly rewarding. Again, in Chapter 4, the choice of focusing on close readings inevitably involves cutting down on macroscopic investigation of the phenomenon of collecting. A more lengthy bibliography on collecting might have prompted some interesting, alternative ways of viewing the collection as microcosm.

The episodic nature of thematic chapters can sometimes lead the reader to feel he/she is losing sight of Pliny. The discussion of memory in Chapter 6, whilst providing an important and conclusive endnote that Pliny's work is a memorial to empire (and

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hence will become a memorial to him), is attached to a somewhat token piece of his text. The idea that Pliny has deliberately included a (brief) discussion of portraiture as a way of making his own work more memorable seems a little forced, since the actual passage is so short.

However, if there was any doubt at all about the cohesiveness of the project, C. demonstrates her strong control over the material, by weaving it all together very deftly in the conclusion. Pliny is revealed as the author of empire, taking a Greek tradition of learning and turning it into a vehicle for Roman conquest. This book, then, offers a neat way of dealing with Pliny's huge work and of presenting it as more than just the sum of its diverse and lengthy parts. From this point of view, C. does an excellent job of inserting Pliny more squarely into the wider concerns of contemporary scholarship. A possible criticism would be that there are some big, difficult, and potentially messy questions lurking beneath the surface here that have been suppressed for the sake of neatness—but how does one author go about dealing with everything?

University of Bristol S. HALES
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TACITUS' *HISTORIES*

H. HAYNES: *The History of Make-Believe. Tacitus on Imperial Rome.* Pp. xii + 231. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2003. Cased, US$55, £36.95. ISBN: 0-520-23650-5.

The examination of ideology as a tool used to create political stability has offered valuable insights into governmental systems both modern and ancient. In this sometimes fascinating, sometimes exasperating study of Tacitus' *Histories*, H. seeks to apply this concept to imperial Rome and the writings of its greatest historian. Tacitus is seen as a critic of an ideology within which he himself works, tracing how a belief system was created in the period between Augustus and Trajan that would result in a world of make-believe. If, in response to the crisis of the *res publica*, Augustus was able to replace *libertas* with a façade of a restored Republic, the death of Nero created the crisis that is the focus of the first books of the *Histories.* Only the divinization of the emperor Vespasian offered a solution to the psychological trauma of the end of Julio-Claudian rule, but that only by the substitution of *superstitio* for the previous Roman system of *religio*, and the suppression of civil war by the creation of a strong 'Other' in the Jews and the Batavi to reinforce Roman identity. H. regards this new ideology as so successful that all acquiesced with imperial authority, leaving the only possibility of change in a violent eruption from outside the boundaries of the empire.

H. is strongly influenced by the work of Slavoj Zizek on modern ideology, while also drawing on continental thinkers such as Althusser, Baudrillard, Derrida, Foucault, and Lacan. The path leads back through Freud and Marx to Cicero and ultimately to Plato, who is seen as the intellectual inspiration for Tacitus' writing. This is a heady mix and perhaps a welcome antidote to treatments that would view Tacitus primarily as a rhetorician. Concepts such as the *simulacrum*, an empty reference with no relationship to reality, are 'good for thinking with' in the confusion of the Roman civil wars. They may also mislead: it is dangerous to compare the Caesars with 'Caesarism' and the

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