coming back into focus for the first time since the seventeenth century. It will fire the imaginations of students, and with due cautions it should be put into their hands.

University of Chicago DAVID WRAY
doi:10.1093/clrevj/bni080

A SELF-MARGINALIZING GENIUS

J. HENDERSON: *Morals and Villas in Seneca's* Letters. *Places to Dwell.* Pp. x + 189. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. Cased, £45, US$65. ISBN: 0-521-82944-5

Since scholarship on the *Epistulae morales* has mostly grappled with preliminary questions (reality, unity, etc.), it is refreshing to open a book that takes the text's 'epistoliterary' qualities as a given. Seneca is now a stopover in John Henderson's first-century itinerary, which most recently gave us *Pliny's Statue* (Exeter, 2003). As H. notes, Seneca has taken on different flavors in scholarship in English, French, Italian, and German (he might have added Spanish). But his Seneca is in another language again: his distinctive style of scholarly writing is used here to expose an unfamiliar philosopher. The book will give readers a new sense of what Pliny the Elder meant when he referred to Seneca as *princeps eruditorum* while discussing, yes, vine-growing (*HN* 14.51).

The book meditates upon just three letters, each a 'mimetic parable' describing a visit to a villa: Seneca's own crumbling house just outside of Rome, an image of his own old age (*Ep.* 12), the villa near Cumae that belonged to Servilius Vatia, a refugee from Rome in the time of Tiberius (*Ep.* 55), and the ruin at Liternum where Scipio Africanus Maior lived out his exile (*Ep.* 86). The early chapters present Letter 12 ('SENECA'S') amid a whistle-stop tour of the whole correspondence. The rest of the book presents aspects of Letters 55 and 86 that distinguish their respective villas ('VATIA'S', 'SCIPIO'S'), and the polysemy which Seneca reads into them. To aid the reader in a heavily cross-referential text, H. presents full Latin texts of the focus letters early on, together with his own translations. The book is rounded off with indices and appendices, one of which catalogs all the places and persons named in the *Epistulae*.

Readers familiar with H.'s work will not be surprised to find that many of the book's insights are drawn from naming. H. documents a tendency toward omission of names or lack of external reference (a form of 'sensory-deprivation therapy', p. 6, which puts the reader '*very* alone with Seneca, with the texts of philosophy', p. 44, and ensures maximum impact for the highly descriptive villa-letters). At the same time, names, when used, come in patterns. An example of both tendencies comes at *Ep.* 11.10, where H. reads the tricolon of exemplary figures, Cato + Laelius + whomever you please, as prefiguring (of course) Scipio (pp. 17–18). H. also plays up metaphor: Letter 2's comparison of reading to travel, digestion, and transplantation already defines the terms through which spatial, corporeal, and horticultural symbols in the villa-letters will need to be read. Indeed, metaphor itself is scrutinized as a vehicle of cultural transmission. There is also a political backdrop, though the 'nightmare' is suppressed together with all mention of Nero's name and virtually all mention of Rome itself—which is partly what motivates the search for the villa-haven. At the same time, H. shows, readers of Seneca's text (Lucilius or 'Luciliuses') are actively involved in the creation of meaning, not only parsing the onomastic, metaphorical, and political codes, but also complicit in the text's inculcation of ways of reading. H. himself as a

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https://doi.org/10.1093/clrevj/bni081 Published online by Cambridge University Press

reader seeks to unleash every passage's potential to comment on other moments in the text.

The villa-letters, with their rare and discontinuous forays into the physical world, have been taken as signs of Seneca's resistance to narrative (e.g. E. Sangalli, *Athenaeum* 78 [1988], 53–67), since self-sufficient virtue needs no continuation. H. instead strings these fragments into a narrative. A clue to Letter 86's teleological significance is its containing fully half of the references to Rome (three of six), and H.'s analysis of the (hypothetical) book-structure surrounding it allows him to locate SCIPIO's and its rustic virtue at the center of an 'integrated "body of writing" ' (i.e. the sequence *Epp.* 84–8). SCIPIO's reveals the most about Seneca's designs in the *Epistulae*: a discourse of 'Rome' predicated on Scipio as 'self-marginalizing genius' (p. 100), and a mastery of the techniques of cultural transmission that persist around the ruined villa and its bathhouse, a lasting icon of rusticity. The reading of Letter 86 is deepened along several axes. H. documents Seneca's wresting of Scipio from other genres, not least Ennius' lost *Scipio* poem and Cicero's *De re publica* and *De legibus* (though the influence of Catonian villa-contemplation from Cic. *De sen.* 55–6 is overlooked). He also demonstrates a progression from the earlier villa-letters: VATIA's, for example, a paralytic environment poised between Cumae and Baiae, prefigures SCIPIO's by contrast, with deeper meanings lurking in Servilius Vatia's name. Letter 86's often neglected second half, presenting the seemingly tangential lessons of the villa's present possessor, Vetulenus Aegialus (who Pliny tells us 'cultivated Africanus' Exile', *HN* 14.49), revisits the same topic as the first half in transfigured form, standing in relation to it as garden to villa. Aegialus' lessons on the transplantation of olive trees, with Seneca's viticultural comparisons, allegorize in complicated ways the didactic interrelationships of Scipio, Aegialus, Seneca, Lucilius, Horace, Virgil (whose presentation of symbolic, rather than practical, advice in the *Georgics* Seneca himself seems to perpetuate rather than to redress), and posterity. H. paints a rich but indeterminate picture of these dynamics, either glossing over Seneca's language (in citing *Ep.* 86.21 he more than once omits the crucial term *aduersarium* used of Aegialus [pp. 121, 145]) or equivocating on the letter's gist (on pp. 160–3 it remains unclear how H. reads Seneca's way of naming Aegialus: dignifying or degrading?). But he has tremendous insights on the strange materializations of culture, especially horticulture, in their double life as literary codes. On questions that might have been doctrinal, H. cedes authority to the mimetic, and specificially spatial, modes of the epistolary narrative: 'At once a performance and an analysis of tradition, translation, transfer, metaphor, transcription, transfiguration and transplantation, the derivation of nursery from bathroom at SCIPIO's *tells its own story*' (p. 156).

What kind of Seneca emerges? A work always 'in progress', a post-imperial 'Roman Modernist' (H.'s attractive, if under-explained, epithet) who gives philosophy a shape that does not follow automatically from its Greek models. In the 'anti-dogmatic ethical strategy' of the *Epistulae morales*, 'control is wrested away from cut-and-dried formulae, and handed back for embedding in the thick texture of ongoing life' (p. 138). This texture is shaped by Seneca's aspirations as a contentious reader and re-writer of Latin literature, and by his more than casual interest in symbolic practices such as horticulture, which lends continuity, for example, to Seneca's interest in both (the Garden of) Epicurus and the *Georgics*. The governing metaphor is 'trans-': taking his starting point from Catharine Edwards on the transformation of Seneca's authorial self (*G&R* 44 [1997], 23–38), H. casts the net wider, covering transitions enacted through language, text, culture, and tradition more generally. His Seneca perhaps owns this theme as thoroughly as Ovid owns the closely related theme of

https://doi.org/10.1093/clrevj/bni081 Published online by Cambridge University Press

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
doi:10.1093/clrevj/bni081

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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https://doi.org/10.1093/clrevj/bni081 Published online by Cambridge University Press