in Aeneas (whose 'absence' was a feature of Chapter 2), and assesses the kinds of decision available to a man writing history in the wake of Sallust, Livy, and Augustus.

Although this study is flawed, at times, by a tendency to depend too heavily on some very tenuous allusions, its overall impact should be to remind us of the subtleties and nuances that Velleius' cultural cannibalism and intense generic self-reflexivity can display.

University of Birmingham DIANA SPENCER

RELIGIOUS *EXEMPLA*

H. F. MUELLER: *Roman Religion in Valerius Maximus*. Pp. xv + 266. London and New York: Routledge, 2002. Cased, £50. ISBN: 0-415-27108-8.

This new monograph makes a welcome contribution to an emerging strand of scholarship that takes seriously Valerius Maximus' *Facta et Dicta Memorabilia* as an original, coherent and purposeful work of literature. Valerius' collection of, and commentary upon, largely traditional *exempla* is an excellent source of information about ideology in first-century Rome and is representative of traditional values held outside a narrow élite. Mueller's stated aim is to recover a sense of the religious experience of the Romans through analysis of Valerius' treatment of various aspects of religion. As M. suggests (describing Valerius as 'passionate' about religion, p. 4), religion is a particular concern of the author: close comparison of Valerius' treatment of historical topics with those of other ancient authors highlights his emphasis on, and elaboration of, the religious elements. M. argues convincingly that the work portrays a living system where the gods are closely involved in the affairs of Rome and of individuals in Roman society, and where personal morality is interwoven with religion and guided by divine will. The work is scholarly and detailed, with a clear introduction and full and helpful footnotes. It is, however, aimed at those well versed in Roman culture, with little background or explanation for newcomers; the mass of detail can be confusing.

Chapters 1–3 constitute detailed analyses of Valerius' representation of three individual state gods: Juno, Vesta, and Jupiter. All three gods emerge as figures expressly concerned with the behaviour of mortals who regularly intervene in human affairs. Juno appears concerned primarily with the qualities of *pudicitia* and liberty, Vesta with patriotic self-sacrifice, and Jupiter with state politics and leadership and the maintenance of traditional morality. In Chapter 4, M. explores Valerius' references to Republican religious ritual as a means of heightening his moralizing rhetoric, and in Chapter 5 he discusses Valerius' portrayal of the intersection between morality and religion more generally, arguing that a genuine sense of awe at and devotion to watchful and judgemental gods permeated at least the moral framework of Valerius' work, and perhaps that of Roman society beyond the text.

Throughout the book, we find nuanced and insightful interpretation of individual passages, such as M.'s observation that Valerius' recasting of the story of the sacred chickens and their lying keeper at 7.2.5 has the effect of making an archaic ritual seem relevant to contemporary moral concerns (p. 115), or the perceptive analysis of the language of sacrifical devotion in Valerius' version of the story of Mucius Scaevola in 3.3.1 (p. 126), or of the moral complexities of 6.2 on freedom of speech (p. 164). There

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is much fruitful comparison of Valerius' versions of stories with those of other authors (especially Livy and Cicero) in order to bring out Valerius' particular moral concerns and highlight the originality of his representation. Despite treating the work holistically in his pursuit of coherent representations of religion, M. usually reads each *exemplum* as a self-contained unit without bringing into play the overarching structures of the *Memorabilia*—the organization both of the thematic chapters and within those chapters. At times this is to the detriment of his interpretation: for instance, M.'s conclusion about the moral message of Valerius' Chapter 4.7 about *amicitia* (p. 83) is somewhat reductive; contextualizing this within the work more generally would have led to a more nuanced understanding of the ethical issues that the chapter raises. Occasionally misleading generalizations are made; M. writes of the 'timelessness' of the work (pp. 176 and 42), whereby events are stripped of their historical context. This is indeed a standard feature of Roman *exempla*, but it is not true to say that chronology is irrelevant to Valerius; on the contrary, it is an important factor in his organization of material within each chapter.

Moreover, some of the central assumptions, both about the concept of 'religion' and about the work of Valerius Maximus, that inform M.'s approach are jarring and inhibit a full appreciation of the topic. His analysis of Roman religion is dominated by unexamined Christian language and concepts ('new imperial gospel', p. 43; *spiritus* as 'soul'), and he does not seem to have reaped the benefits of Denis Feeney's perceptive challenges to the concept of 'belief' as an analytical tool for understanding Roman religion (Denis Feeney, *Literature and Religion at Rome* [Cambridge, 1998]). For M., Valerius' audience are 'religiously credulous' (p. 53) as is Valerius (pp. 43, 186 n. 48) who has no qualms about excessive religiosity (p. 201 n. 118). Describing Valerius as transforming one of (the now deified) Caesar's exploits from 'what had been a historical siege' into 'a divine intervention', he does not consider whether this distinction would have made sense in a Roman context, or whether modern categories such as 'historical' and 'divine' fit entirely comfortably onto Roman ways of thinking. M.'s tone can be judgemental: Valerius is described as middle-brow, credulous, unscientific, and very different from the 'urbane' Cicero. M. concedes willingly that Valerius is the author of a literary work, rather than a derivative compiler, and often shows how he has inventively reworked traditional material to serve his own purposes, yet his Valerius is a naïve writer, who 'sees' moral lessons in his material, rather than deliberately crafting them to persuade his reader, and is carried away by emotion that leads him into 'rhetorical elaboration' (p. 102).

Early in the work, yet buried in the notes, is an assertion that 'I have looked for, but not found, traces of irony in the text' (p. 185 n. 27). Illustrative of his view of Valerius as a po-faced and unsophisticated writer (see, for example, p. 41), this statement is nevertheless regularly brought into question by M. himself in the course of his book. He allows that Section 2.1, for instance, is 'unusually ironical', and indeed that an appreciation of its sardonic tone is crucial to interpretation here (pp. 26-7); he twice finds irony in the *Memorabilia* on p. 126, and admits its potential in the picture of Clodius gazing on the shrine of Vesta at 4.2.5 (p. 62). Most revealingly, in an otherwise perceptive discussion of the way Valerius reworks material from Cicero's *On Divination* (pp. 118–21), M. claims that Valerius retells the story of Hannibal and king Prusias 'without the least hint of irony or disbelief'. Cicero has used the story to *ridicule* divination; Valerius appears to *revere* it almost as much as Hannibal's self-confidence. Yet it appears that Valerius has read Cicero and is using his text as a source; surely the possibility should at least be explored that Valerius expects his educated Roman reader to know the alternative use to which his illustrious predecessor put the same anecdote?

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This internal inconsistency is symptomatic of the book's approach; M. is a committed and skilled reader of the text who has taken Valerius' work seriously and worked hard to draw out all its implications—including its irony, moral complexity, and authorial creativity. The book is full of interesting readings of and insights into Valerius' work. Yet the courage of his convictions fails him; M. has a nervous eye out for sceptics who might dismiss Valerius as insincere and toadying to the imperial regime (e.g. p. 162), and his book seems hampered by a desire not to alienate such ungenerous readers.

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SENECA'S *TROADES*

A. J. KEULEN: *L. Annaeus Seneca:* Troades. (*Mnemosyne* Suppl. 212.) Pp. x + 573. Leiden, Boston, and Cologne: Brill, 2001. Cased, US$146. ISBN: 90-04-12004-1.

Aside from *Medea* and *Phaedra*, which exercise a particular attraction for readers with an interest in feministic and gender studies, the *Troades* counts as the most popular play in the corpus of Senecan tragedies. As we continue to be confronted almost daily with appalling reports and pictures of cruel conflicts and wars of conquest in many parts of the world, the fate of the captive Trojan women at the mercy of their Greek conquerors assumes a disturbing relevance for us who cannot but feel compassion for the tragic fate of the old queen Hecuba and the newly widowed Andromache destined to be bereft of her only child. It is not surprising, then, that over the past forty years the *Troades* have been edited, translated, or commented on more than a dozen times, including the publications of F. Caviglia (Rome, 1981), E. Fantham (Princeton, 1982), and A. J. Boyle (Leeds, 1994). The 'long genesis' of the most recent commentary began, as Keulen explains in his preface, at the beginning of the new revival of interest in the tragedy, and passed through several stages including a school edition and a Frisian translation. Well aware of the extensive scholarly tradition that has grown over the years of his preoccupation with the play, the latest commentator has added his own contribution in a more readily accessible form which provides the reader with the most detailed exegesis to date.

After a brief account of Seneca's life and works, the introduction concentrates on questions of dating, literary models, structure, characters, metre, staging, and 'Nachleben'. The most complex characters in the *Troades* are Helena and Agamemnon. Compared with the latter's rôle in later Greek literature, Seneca's portrait of the Achaean leader is distinctly favourable. In fact, the whole scene (vv. 203–359) between Agamemnon, who is depicted as the model king with moderate views, and the impetuous Pyrrhus, who has brutally murdered old Priam and will soon do the same to young innocent Polyxena, is interpreted by K. as serving a pedagogical purpose. Chronologically he links the composition of the scene with the time when Seneca was supervising the education of Nero, i.e. between 51 and 54, and classifies it as a piece of rhetorical training for the classroom. In a similar way, Helena has been assigned a new rôle. Instead of exposing her fickleness and guilt, Seneca has given her part in the myth a psychological dimension by presenting her as a woman who, after having been captive for ten years, now finds herself attacked by both sides and is searching desperately to save herself in a seemingly hopeless situation.

K. takes as a basis for his text Zwierlein's edition in the OCT series (1986, corrected

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