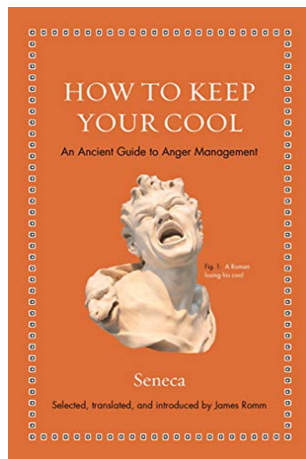


Seneca: How to Keep Your Cool. An Ancient Guide to Anger Management

Romm (J.) (ed., trans.). Pp. xviii + 220. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019. Cased, £13.99, US\$1695. ISBN: 978-0-691-18195-0.

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In these days of Twitter trolling and other social media outbursts, a guide to how to control your anger is just the ticket, and let's face it, Seneca had plenty of cause to control his anger living at the imperial courts of Caligula and later Nero. The Ancient Wisdom for Modern Readers is an excellent series which combines accessibility with sensible advice and gruesome anecdotes and as the jacket says: 'Seneca's thoughts on anger have never been more relevant than today, when uncivil discourse has increasingly infected public debate'. The Latin on the left-

hand page is helpful, mostly corresponding with the sections of English on the right and certainly well-translated; on several occasions I found myself searching for the actual Senecan words just to see how it was done. In particular, and relevant to our post-truth society, I liked *magis enim veritas elucet quo saepius ad manum venit* (truth gets shinier the more it is handled) which according to the helpful notes is a reference to coinage. It is impossible for those who know of Seneca to read this without thinking of the context in which he was writing, but for those new to him, the references to the cruelties of Caligula and Nero are well explained and there is no necessity to study Seneca's life beforehand so it will be accessible to a younger audience. The opening section contains a vivid description of what anger looks like (blazing eyes, red face, trembling lips, feet pounding the earth, and laboured breathing), and Seneca calmly precedes this with a description of someone who has gone mad, which interestingly repeats some signs such as threatening expression, agitated gait, changed skin colour and rapid breathing. He admits that other emotions display themselves equally clearly, but anger is different in that it causes harm to others and this is why it should be curbed. Seneca goes on to describe different types of anger, including that of the prosperous man who has no sense of perspective and is enraged at minor incidents or the man who has unlimited power. The treatise was probably composed in the mid-40s so after Caligula's timely death and therefore not quite so potentially dangerous to the author, though doubtless he would have had plenty more anecdotes had he survived Nero's principate, and the story he tells about Pastor suffering the death of his son with equanimity because he had another whom he wished to preserve, is heart-breaking. Sadly there was more than one story of this kind and Seneca's reaction may well be coloured

by his need to stay alive at court – restrain your anger, do not give your protagonist the pleasure of seeing your ire! The most useful piece of advice to my mind was that revenge, a by-product of anger, should not be taken immediately as it can often fall upon the wrong person; in the same way that in a court you should hear both sides of the story and make a balanced judgement, so you should when you feel someone has done you wrong. What would Clytemnestra do? She certainly employed the delaying tactic, no crime of passion for her, but a dish served cold. The conclusion which Seneca reaches is that everyone is fallible, we are all human, and that the annoyance you feel towards one or two other people for some perceived slight is a minor issue in the scheme of things. We should all attempt to control our anger and the self-importance from which it often springs, (he was writing for the Roman elite) and allow ourselves to be merciful; after all we all die and why should we waste our brief span on such a dangerous emotion? How very stoic, Seneca; perhaps you could have a word with some of those internet trolls?

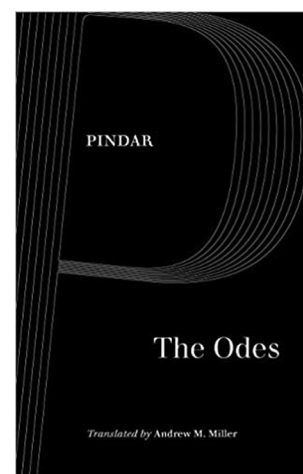
doi:10.1017/S2058631020000288

Eusebius of Caesarea: The History of the Church. Eusebius

Schott (J) (trans). University of California Press: Oakland, CA. 2019. Pp. 552 £14.99 ISBN 978-0-52029-110-2

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Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*, recounting in Greek the history of the Christian Church from Jesus Christ to the Emperor Constantine, is one of the most historically valuable works in the European literary tradition. It is also one of the more difficult ones for students, due to its complex, uneven narrative style and frequent, extensive quotation of (now lost) earlier historical sources.

Students of the 'Christian Herodotus' have generally had to rely on G.A. Williamson's translation for Penguin (1965/1990), which, while elegant and reliable,

lacks the sort of supplemental apparatus to make the text really accessible to the modern student. Consequently, Eusebius' *History* has been long overdue for a new translation with comprehensive notes for classroom and scholarly use.

Jeremy Schott's new translation for the University of California Press, containing just such an accessible translation and the requisite supplementary material for the college student, is thus a welcome event in the study of Early Church and Roman imperial history. Schott's translation is also a welcome companion to his

forthcoming monograph, *Eusebius of Caesarea: Textuality and Tradition in Late Ancient Christianity*.

For reasons I'll make clear below, I think it is easily the best single volume edition of the *Ecclesiastical History* now available in English. As I do not have substantive criticisms of the present volume, I'll endeavour to show why it will, I think, become the definitive translation and edition of the *Ecclesiastical History* for scholarly and classroom purposes. (Others have spoken to its achievement *qua* translation; here I note its impact for the general reading public.)

I'll start with a bit of background on Eusebius' *History*, say more about Schott's achievements in this edition, and conclude with some notes on its classroom effectiveness.

Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* (traditionally *Historia Ecclesiastica*) is our principal historical source detailing the early years of the Christian Church in the eastern Mediterranean. (One of the criticisms of Eusebius is his relative ignorance of Christianity's emerging Latin dimension in the Roman West.)

In it, Eusebius charts the parallel history of the successive regimes of Roman emperors and their provincial governors in the Roman East and the accession of the ecclesiastical government of the Eastern Church. The Church begins with Jesus, spreads under the proselytising of the Apostles and the sacrifices and persecution of the martyrs under Rome, and eventually organises around ancient urban episcopacies in the Greek-speaking East and in Rome itself.

The Roman empire, in contrast, undergoes successive convulsions of insurrection and invasion, resulting in infighting that threatens to tear the empire in two.

In a climactic conclusion to his history, Eusebius combines the narrative of these two parallel polities in Constantine's military and political triumph, on the one hand, and his conversion to Christianity (*in hoc signo vinces*), on the other, completing a synthesis of Rome and the Christian Church.

The *Ecclesiastical History*, then, presents a rich, unparalleled source for Early Church and Roman imperial history and a vivid contemporary account of how late ancient Romans made sense of the Constantinian ascendancy.

But its importance has not necessarily translated into sustained scholarly engagement or, even, much student interest. For while it has been a busy season for Eusebian studies since the publication of T.M. Barnes' *Constantine and Eusebius* (Harvard UP 1981), most commentators have focused on other parts of Eusebius' many-faced oeuvre, elaborating on Eusebius as apologist and dogmatist. This might be due to the uneven, complicated structure for the *Ecclesiastical History* and its heavy use of quotation from other (often lost) sources. This makes the text confusing for the general reader and scholar alike.

And so Schott's contribution in the form of a readable, well-introduced translation with extensive, helpful notes is a seminal event in scholarship of the Early Church.

In addition to the translation and notes, Schott has included a spectacular 30-page introduction pitched for the general reader, an introductory overview that includes parallel ancient Christian and 'pagan' sources for the dates covered in Eusebius' chronology, extensive notes, two helpful appendices, and an excellent bibliography.

Together, these make for a singular achievement in Eusebian studies. I anticipate this volume will become the standard translation, and generations of students and teachers will appreciate Eusebius through this edition.

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Seneca: Medea

Slaney, H. Pp. vi + 198, ills. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019. Cased, £70. ISBN: 978-1-4742-5661-6.

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This book, as part of the 'Bloomsbury Companions to Greek and Roman Tragedy', offers an extensive, thoroughly researched, and sometimes unexpected range of perspectives on Seneca's *Medea*. The structure of the work is taut, with the first four chapters covering the usual topics for an introductory volume, *viz* the play in its historic and generic context, the plot in its mythological context, key themes, and features of style.

Alongside the traditional historical readings of Seneca's tragedy, such as comparisons with contemporary imperial figures,

Slaney draws on the entire Senecan corpus to inform readings of the play in its own time; there is a focus on his Stoic essays, and a particularly striking section against the traditional reading of Medea's anger and actions as a negative *exemplum* (pp.7-8). Slaney is happy to present contradictory readings without dictating conclusions; this is one of the book's strongest features.

The second chapter, exploring the inheritance, Senecan innovations, and later reception of the Medea myth is similarly expansive, covering familiar intertextual references to Euripides, Ovid, and Apollonius Rhodius. Among these, the identification of Seneca's *Medea* as a mid-point in a specifically Roman tradition, for instance the significance of the Argo as *prima ratis* (pp.43-45), is compelling and a neat illustration of the concept of intertext. The real highlight of the chapter is the inclusion of a detailed exploration of Greek and Roman artistic representations of the Medea myth, given equality with literary readings.

Three key themes are selected for particular exploration: repetition and return; the natural world; metatheatre. Of these Slaney is best on the natural world, as she draws together and compares examples from across the play. The section on metatheatre was ripe for development into a discussion on Roman theatre more generally, and was perhaps a missed opportunity, but nonetheless could provide a good starting point for further investigation. In the fourth chapter, Slaney passionately argues against perceptions of Seneca's Latin as bombastic. She makes emphatic use of word frequency analysis, with focus both on the impact of repeated use, and the totemic power of a single word.

However, it is in the final section of the fourth chapter, as well as the two following, that this work departs from what is typically expected of a general introduction. Slaney has a background in Reception Studies, and employs detailed explorations of non-classical translations and stagings to illuminate her reading of Seneca. For instance, the section on the first English translation (Studley, 1566) is 11 pages long (pp.108-118), and follows a narrative on how Studley's verbosity