the perfection of nature, and are therefore the subject of ingenious questioning on the justification of human interventions in nature. The relationship between man (spectator, user, exploiter, destroyer) and nature (creative, divine, maternal) is constantly questioned throughout the book. A. uses several figures of artists and emperors to deepen the objects of study, whether it is the relationship between *ars* and *natura*, or the attitude of people towards works of art. The technical vocabulary of art also benefits from specific studies involving other Latin authors (Cicero, Quintilian). Even if Pliny has been studied a lot in recent years, A. succeeds in opening up new perspectives, through the questions she poses and especially her way of treating them, by establishing relationships, for example between technical innovations (like glass) and the intellectual and classifying project of Pliny, nature and human progress, formal perfection and the ethical and epistemological aim of the *Natural History*. A. shows that through his encyclopaedic work, Pliny draws a 'material and immaterial landscape' which aims to 'preserve and enhance the collective memory of Rome' (109).

This smartly produced book is a timely publication when several scientific and cultural events around the world are celebrating the bimillennium of the birth of Pliny the Elder, so we can expect further publications in the years to come. Linking technical subjects and theoretical reflections, A. offers both a convenient synthesis and stimulating material for thought, proof that after 2,000 years, Pliny's *Natural History* still arouses interest and living reflection.

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DALIDA AGRI, *READING FEAR IN FLAVIAN EPIC: EMOTION, POWER, AND STOICISM*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022. Pp. x+244. ISBN 9780192859303. £65.00.

Scholarship has long recognised the Flavian epic poets' engagement with Hellenistic philosophy (e.g. Colish, *The Stoic Tradition* (1985); Billerbeck, *ANRW* 2.32.5 (1986), 3116–51). In recent years, interest in this topic has blossomed, as evidenced, for instance, by the essays in Keith (ed.), *Philosophical Currents* (2018). Dalida Agri's monograph *Reading Fear in Flavian Epic* is a welcome addition to this growing body of work. A.'s argument centres on the Stoic-inflected portrayal of fear in the poetry of Valerius Flaccus, Statius and Silius Italicus. Taking as her focus the figure of the tyrant, who both experiences and induces fear, A. argues that fear in Flavian epic creates a negative ripple effect, generating turbulent passions within an individual and breeding societal chaos.

An admirably thorough introduction provides important scholarly and historical context, including a detailed treatment of the Stoic theory of the emotions (17–20), Stoic views of tyrants (22–27) and the role of tyranny in the poetic tradition (32–40). In chapter 1, A. takes a bird's-eye view of Flavian epic, arguing that in a variety of poems, tyrants' fear is portrayed as emasculating, threatening to the Roman ideal of virile self-control. A.'s commentary on the gendered nature of fear, which is established in chapter 1 but extended throughout the work, is a highlight of her argument.

Chapters 2 through 4 are in-depth treatments of fear in individual epics. Chapter 2 focuses on Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*. According to A., this poem foregrounds the gap between divine and human knowledge: while the positive interventions of figures such as Juno and Pallas on behalf of the Argonauts demonstrate that Valerius' universe — like the Stoic one — is benevolently ordered, the Argonauts cannot always perceive this benevolence and 'struggle to unshackle themselves' from fear (112). Furthermore, A. argues that the character of Medea initially attempts to fight Stoically against her passions, but ultimately succumbs to them, demonstrating their toxic effects.

In chapter 3, A. turns to Statius' *Thebaid*, arguing with an appeal to the concept of Stoic sympathy that fear and envy in this epic 'breed conflict, which in turn infects the nature of the cosmos and threatens the natural order' (128). The most compelling section of this chapter is its treatment of Tisiphone as an incarnation of the passions. According to A., Tisiphone's frightening appearance

'signpost[s] the fear that should be felt towards harmful emotions' (130), thus suggesting that fear can occasionally fulfill a didactic function.

Finally, chapter 4 centres Silius Italicus' *Punica*. Here, A. fascinatingly argues that Silius' epic illustrates the limits of *metus hostilis*, that is, the idea (endorsed by many Roman historians) that fear of a common enemy unites and strengthens the Roman people. By contrast, in Silius' epic the fear of Hannibal 'foster[s] moral weakness and disunity' (186) among the Romans. Carthage, too, falls prey to fear, of both Hannibal and Rome — ultimately, Silius suggests that the greatest threat to Rome is not an external enemy, but an internal propensity to fear.

This book convincingly proves its thesis that fear in Flavian epic consistently functions as the source of both psychological and social turbulence — in this sense, it is an unequivocal success, and it valuably bolsters the widely accepted understanding of imperial Latin literature as deeply psychological, fascinated with emotions and inner life. My only lingering question concerns A.'s claim that the Flavian poets had an 'active engagement with Stoic ethics' (2). A. has shown definitively that powerful emotions (especially when elicited by tyrants) have negative consequences in Flavian literature, but this idea is a Roman convention. For instance, Livy condemns the way Tarquinius Superbus ruled 'by fear' (*metu*, *AUC* 1.49.4). When does a negative portrayal of the passions become specifically Stoic?

Some of A.'s arguments are more convincing on this point than others. For instance, I was intrigued by A.'s analysis of chariot imagery (often used as a metaphor for the passions by the Stoics) in Silius' *Punica*. By contrast, I was less persuaded by A.'s claims that Flavian epic reflects a Stoic cognitivist view of the emotions, whereby the passions arise from incorrect rational beliefs about the world. At times, A. seems to be supplying the rational beliefs undergirding characters' fear herself. For instance, in describing Pelias' passionately tyrannical rule, A. claims that, 'from the Stoic point of view on emotions arising from belief, such a failure is to be put on the account of Pelias' flawed outlook which values power over all' (51). This is an interesting Stoicising interpretation of the text, but I do not see any evidence that the *Argonautica* itself emphasises the incorrect judgment motivating Pelias' passions. In this context, I was struck by A.'s claim that Euripides' Medea 'shows a Stoic understanding of her emotions' (114). Of course, A. does not mean that Euripides' tragedy directly engages with Stoicism, which did not yet exist when the play was written; rather, she refers to the fact that the Stoics used this theatrical portrayal as an illustration of their theory, believing that Euripides' psychology was compatible with their own. Is this the sense in which the Flavian epics are 'Stoic'? How can we distinguish between a text that is compatible with a philosophical system, and one that directly alludes to it? I would be interested in hearing A.'s perspective on these questions. Still, her book is thorough and provocative. It is especially recommended to the (happily) increasing number of scholars working at the intersection of literature and philosophy.

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CRISTIANO CASTELLETTI (ED.), *VALERIUS FLACCUS,* ARGONAUTICA *BOOK* 8. Edited by Antony Augoustakis, Marco Fucecchi and Gesine Manuwald. (Oxford Commentaries on Flavian Poetry). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022. Pp. xix + 273. ISBN 9780192865892. £90.00.

This commentary represents the culmination of Cristiano Castelletti's work on the *Argonautica*, and is a fitting testament to his impressive erudition and ability to connect the finest points of syntactical and verbal analysis to a wide-ranging and insightful interpretation of the whole. Completed after his untimely death by three leading scholars of Flavian epic — Antony Augoustakis, Marco Fucecchi and Gesine Manuwald — it is thus a labour of love on two counts.

C.'s commentary joins two recent works on *Argonautica* 8 (Lazzarini and Pelluchi, both 2012). In scope, however, it looks much further, using Valerius' final book as the basis for holistic interpretation of the entire poem.