

REVIEW

DEBATING THE *HISTORIES* OF
THE ELDER SENECA

Maria Chiara Scappaticcio, ed., *Seneca the Elder and his Rediscovered ‘Historiae ab initio bellorum civilium’*: *New Perspectives on Early-Imperial Roman Historiography*. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2020. Pp. ix + 423. Hardback, £118.00. ISBN 978-3-11-068585-5.

When *The Fragments of the Roman Historians (FRHist)* was published at the end of 2013, the entry on the elder Seneca (no. 74), by Barbara Levick, was very brief: two and a half pages of Introduction in vol. 1, one testimonium and two ‘Possible Fragments’ in vol. 2, and just over a page of commentary in vol. 3. Soon afterwards, however, there began the work, carried out under the European Research Council project PLATINUM,¹ part of the EU’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme, which led to the identification of *PHerc.* 1067 as a fragment of the historical work of the Elder Seneca, previously known only from the fragment of the younger Seneca’s *De uita patris*, discovered by Niebuhr in 1820 in the palimpsest Vat. Pal. Lat. 24.² The results of this work were published by Valeria Piano in *Cronache Ercolanesi* 47 (2017) 163–250 and in June 2018 an International Colloquium to discuss the discovery and related matters was held in Naples; the various contributions constitute the present volume.

Of the sixteen contributors, eleven, naturally enough, are Italian. Of the others, three, Tim Cornell himself, Stephen Oakley, and John Rich, are members of the *FRHist* team,³ while France is represented by Olivier Devillers,⁴ the US by Cynthia Damon and Lewis Sussman. Nine of the Italian

¹ Papyri and Latin Texts: Insights and Updated Methodologies; Scappaticcio herself is the project’s Principal Investigator.

² It also contains a long fragment from Livy Book 91.

³ I hope, of course, that none of them will be offended by anything I say here; equally, lest it be thought that I am pulling my punches, let me say that I have no desire to land any.

⁴ Whom, together with two of the Italian contributors (Chiara Renda and Arturo De Vivo), I had the pleasure of meeting in November 2019, at a conference held in Naples and Santa Maria Capua Vetere, on the theme of ‘Transitions, Political Crisis, and Succession to Power in Latin Historiography of the Imperial Age’, organised by Claudio Buongiovanni and Chiara Renda.

scholars write in their native language, but Scappaticcio and Piano use English; and all the abstracts, which were presumably written by the authors themselves, are in English. It would have been better if they had all been written in Italian: the two papers are perfectly intelligible, but they contain a number of mistakes or unidiomatic expressions; the abstracts, however, sometimes descend into something close to gibberish. If the book had been published by OUP or CUP, most, if not all, of this would have been eliminated by the copy editor. In 2019 De Gruyter published my commentary on Valerius Maximus Book 8: it was a pleasurable experience and the book was produced with amazing speed, but my typescript was not copy edited in the sense that I understand the term; this did not matter much, both because I was writing in my own language and because the typescript had been carefully read by the editors of the series in which the book appeared. In what follows my comments on the individual chapters will be accompanied, in the footnotes, by examples of faulty English (they also contain some other points of detail).

The book is divided into two sections, one professedly focussing on the papyrus itself and how the discovery ‘can be integrated with prior knowledge’ about Seneca’s work, the other presenting ‘a broader view on early-imperial Roman historiography’ (4). That is a fair description of some chapters, but, e.g., Sussman’s appears in the first part, and since it was written in 1972, has nothing to do with the papyrus, while the two chapters investigating possible use of Seneca in, respectively, Suetonius’ life of Tiberius (Damon) and the Tiberian books of Tacitus’ *Annals* (Devillers), appear in different sections (the choice was, perhaps, determined by the fact that Suetonius is the source of the fragment about the death of Tiberius).⁵

I now list, summarise, and, where appropriate, comment on the chapters in the order in which they appear.

Scappaticcio’s introductory chapter (3–8) largely consists, as one would expect, of summaries of those which follow.⁶ It is followed (9–28) by Cornell’s survey of historical writing in the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius. As General Editor of *FRHist*, Cornell was uniquely qualified to write this chapter: while the team as a whole take responsibility for the whole work, most of us would profess expertise on only part of the long period from Fabius Pictor to the first half of the third century AD; the General Editor had to be closely acquainted with it all. From the beginning of the project, Cornell consistently emphasised

⁵ See p. lv below. Rich’s discussion of the possible use of Seneca by Florus, Appian, and Dio also appears in Part II.

⁶ 3, last paragraph: ‘Bringing a new and important chapter of Latin literature arise out of a charred papyrus’ is not English: read ‘For a new ... to arise ...’. 4, end of second paragraph: ‘perspectives ... contributes’; read either ‘perspective’ or ‘contribute’; third paragraph, two lines from end: delete ‘a’; fourth paragraph, two lines from end: for ‘from’ read ‘of’. 6, third paragraph, last line: for ‘neglected’ read ‘neglect’.

the limits of our knowledge and that we should not make statements which went beyond the evidence. In this chapter, he stresses (Syme is his principal target) that the fact that in many cases we know no more than the name of a historian does not mean that he was of no importance: we possess a large number of fragments of Republican historians because grammarians and lexicographers were interested in their language, which differed markedly from their own, as the Latin of the time of Augustus and Tiberius did not.

Piano (33–50)⁷ presents an abbreviated version of her long article mentioned above. The impetus for the work came from an unpublished intuition of the late Robert Marichal, found in his archive, that *PHerc.* 1067 was the work of an Annaeus Seneca. After the papyrological details, which are beyond me, Piano establishes that the end of the fragment is a *subscriptio*, reading *L. Annaei Senecae*. Piano proceeds to the text itself, which contains a number of significant words: *Caesar, bello Gall[, [A]u[g]usto, [st]uprata mulie[re], rogab[, ut Hat[eri, senatu, Gall[, Auguste, [a]doption[, destinat[, Tiberius*: the political content is obvious. Finally, Piano claims that the traces of the second line of the *subscriptio* are ‘not incompatible’ with *historiae ab initio bellorum civilium*.

Tiziano Dorandi (51–73)⁸ discusses *PHerc.* 1067 in the context of the other Latin papyri at Herculaneum, the *carmen de bello Actiaco* (*PHerc.* 817), *PHerc.* 1475, which contains terms of civil law and has been believed to be an oratorical text, and *PHerc.* 863, of which, apparently, nothing is certain except that it was written in Latin. Dorandi criticises Piano’s suggestion (in her 2017 article; he does not mention her present view) that there was a third line of the *subscriptio* reading *historiae* or *liber/libri*, and believes that the book number alone followed. I do not understand his argument that the position of *historiae* would be ‘una anomala inversione sintattica’; he claims that *liber/libri* as part of a title lacks a parallel, arguing that *liber* + book number in the manuscripts of Livy and Tacitus arose only when the text was transferred from papyrus rolls to a *codex*: the *subscriptio* of a roll surely contained a book number and it is far more likely that it followed *liber* than stood alone. He also makes the highly implausible suggestion (‘in via del tutto ipotetica’) that there was no book number because the roll contained extracts from a number of books and that the graphic signs at one point (see Piano, 36) separated different extracts.

⁷ 32, second paragraph line 6: delete ‘language’; I am not sure what Piano means by ‘that has hitherto been reconstructed’: perhaps ‘has hitherto lacked direct evidence for its content’. 43, line 5: ‘cursory’ is senseless in the context; perhaps ‘out of place’. 44, n. 44: for ‘at’ read ‘in’; delete ‘in any case’. 46, third paragraph line 2: for ‘the Augustus’ succession’ read ‘the succession to Augustus’. 47, line 13: read ‘*Caligula*’ (‘*Caligola*’ is Italian); n. 55: for ‘happened in’ read ‘of’.

⁸ Abstract, line 6: read ‘Younger’; line 7: ‘or possibly a few years ago’ has no sense: n. 76 mentions Levick’s suggestion that the younger Seneca published his father’s work after his return from exile in 49, so perhaps ‘possibly several years later’.

In the next chapter (75–86)⁹ Scappaticcio shows that references in the papyrus to a war in Gaul, a date in June, Haterius, a *poculum*, and adoption all find correspondences in passages of Tacitus or Suetonius, so that Seneca may well have been one of their sources. She also mentions the vocative *Auguste* and could have added that Tacitus reports Tiberius' presence in the Senate on a number of occasions (e.g., the trial of Libo Drusus (*Ann.* 2.29–31)).

Gianfranco Mazzoli's contribution (87–100)¹⁰ contains brief but sensible discussions of the confusion between the two Senecas in the Renaissance, the biological view of Roman history attributed merely to *Seneca* by Lactantius (*FRHist* 74 F 2), the starting point of the elder's historical work, and *unde primum ueritas retro abiit* in the younger Seneca's *de uita patris*.

Emanuele Berti (101–22) seeks to reconstruct the elder Seneca's view of the causes of the civil wars from the preface to the first of the elder's *Controuersiae*, the declamation of Papirius Fabianus in *Contr.* 2, Lucan 1.158–82, and Florus 1.47, concluding that, influenced by Sallust, he regarded them as primarily moral.

Cynthia Damon (123–42) searches Suetonius' biography of Tiberius for passages whose source may be the elder Seneca's history; she is conscious of the speculative nature of the undertaking, but it is justified by the fact that at *Tib.* 73.2 Suetonius cites from *Seneca* an account of Tiberius' death (*FRHist* 74 F 1). Damon eliminates from her search items that were 'not senatorial or annalistic, not set on Capri, not autobiographical ... not antiquarian ... not from Tiberius' speeches and letters, not documentary ... not based on Suetonian autopsy'. The first two to pass the test are *Tib.* 41 on the equestrian jury lists¹¹ and 35.1, where Tiberius releases an *equus Romanus* from a vow never to divorce his wife since she had committed adultery with her son-in-law; Damon then discusses the indubitable case of Tiberius' death, before turning to

⁹ 76, lines 6–7: for 'while working together towards the publication of some of the volumes of *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores*' read 'while they were working together on some ...'; n. 1: for 'with papyrus' read 'on papyrus'; n. 2. For 'On the unpublished work Robert Marichal did' read 'On Robert Marichal's unpublished work'. 77, last line: for 'reveal' read 'reveals'; n. 6: 'On Seneca the Elder's *Historiae*' is followed by 'On Seneca the Elder's historiography' as if they are different things; for 'from indirect witness' read 'not verbatim'; n. 9: 'the only *de uita patris*' makes no sense. 79 n. 15: apart from Suetonius the writers cited (Cicero, Quintilian, the younger Seneca, Fronto) do not belong to 'the historiography of the Imperial Age' (and *Cic. Att.* 1.19.2 does not concern Caesar). 80 n. 23: for 'Libon' read 'Libo'; n. 24: Sentius did not make Martina 'be sent away from Rome': he sent her to Rome; n. 25: for 'increased' read 'longer'.

¹⁰ The abstract is largely unintelligible, but I refrain from attempting to rewrite it.

¹¹ Damon thanks John Ramsey, who published an article on it in *JRS* 95 (2005) 20–37, for help with this matter. At n. 47 she cites 'Santangelo (2012)', which does not appear in the bibliography.

passages concerning the rehabilitation of Germanicus (*Tib.* 54.2; *Cal.* 12.3; 15.1–3; 66; 75.1–3).

The last chapter in Part I, and the longest in the book, is an anomaly, since its author, Lewis Sussman, was not a speaker at the conference. The list of contributors gives his affiliation as University of Florida and the University website lists him as Professor Emeritus.¹² His Ph.D. thesis, *The Elder Seneca as a Critic of Rhetoric*, was submitted to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1969 and was followed by three articles on Seneca, culminating in a book, published at Leiden in 1978. Since then, to the best of my knowledge, his major publications have been limited to a translation of the *declamationes maiores* ascribed to Quintilian (1987) and an edition, with translation and commentary, of Calpurnius Flaccus (1994). The present chapter is a paper, previously unpublished, written in 1972. It largely consists of a survey of the *Controversiae* and *Suasoriae* in an attempt to establish the nature of the history. It is not without interest, but I wonder whether it was justified to devote so large a part of the book to it. The chapter is followed by a brief bibliographical update, by Biagio Santorelli, who also prepared the text for publication.

Part II of the book opens with Stephen Oakley's discussion of the style of the historians who were contemporary with Seneca. Nearly two thirds of it, not surprisingly, is devoted to Velleius Paterculus,¹³ the only one whose work survives (in part), but Oakley does what he can with the fragments of Arruntius, Fenestella, Cremutius Cordus, Bruttidius Niger, and Aufidius Bassus. He also includes a discussion of the passage of Pompeius Trogus cited verbatim by Justin 38.4–7. The chapter is entitled 'Point and Periodicity': Oakley defines point (201) as 'a striving for point, often manifesting itself in antithesis (regularly being found with a sentence structure that exhibits precise balance), apostrophe, a depiction of the gruesome, and purple passages of prose ...'; 'Periodicity', of course, refers to the use of long periods, with a large number of subordinate clauses. Oakley is a past master at this kind of analysis¹⁴ (see for example the first volume of his commentary on Livy Books 6–10, 128–36) and this chapter is a splendid example of it.

The sources of Tacitus have been much discussed and Olivier Devillers, whose chapter occupies pp. 235–57, himself made a notable contribution with his *Tacite et les sources des Annales* (2003). For the Tiberian books he distinguishes what he calls the 'source fil-rouge'—the writer who provided both Tacitus and Dio with their picture of an emperor who deteriorated, emphasising his dissimulation—from the subsidiary sources. As to the former, he favours,

¹² I am grateful to John Ramsey for sending me a link to the page.

¹³ Valerius Maximus, of course, though much of his material is historical, was not a historian. Frank Goodyear memorably described Valerius and Velleius as 'two well-matched toadies'.

¹⁴ I know that he thinks I do not do enough of it.

cautiously, Aufidius Bassus over Servilius Nonianus, Syme's candidate. He excludes Seneca as a possibility, but regards him as a likely subsidiary source, perhaps utilised for the trial of Libo and the conspiracy of the pseudo-Agrippa Postumus, as well as for some figures of the age of Augustus. Finally, Devillers entertains the possibility that *Ann.* 6.51.3 *suo tantum ingenio utebatur* reflects (he talks of intertextuality) *uiribus suis male uteretur* in the passage of Lactantius which constitutes *FRHist* 74 F 2.

Arturo de Vivo (259–76)¹⁵ investigates possible references to Germanicus in the papyrus (the June date and *Cn*, probably *Cn. Piso*) in conjunction with his portrayal in Seneca's rhetorical works and Tacitus. He suggests that *potur ... metu* in the papyrus might refer to an alleged attempt to poison Germanicus, Drusus, or Tiberius himself and that [*A*]eneam in the papyrus comes from an account of the funeral of Drusus (cf. *Tac. Ann.* 4.9.2).

De Vivo proceeds to discuss *Suasoria* 1, the theme of which, whether Alexander should sail into the Ocean, raises the question of the limits of the Roman empire, a subject of dispute between Tiberius and Germanicus; it contains a citation of part of a poem of Albinovanus Pedo, describing the storm which wrecked the fleet of Germanicus in the North Sea and containing a warning not to transgress the limits laid down by the gods, and also refers to Antony's visit to Athens in 39–38 BC: Tacitus (*Ann.* 2.53.3, 55.1–2) mentions Germanicus' visit to Athens and Piso's violent reaction. The conclusion is that Seneca's portrayal of Germanicus in his history was not favourable. Finally, De Vivo argues that Seneca was the source of Tacitus when he dated the turning point in the principate of Tiberius to the death of Drusus in 23 rather than to that of Germanicus in 19, as do Suetonius and Dio.

Antonio Pistellato's chapter (277–91)¹⁶ is concerned with the development, which he discusses in reverse order, from Cicero to Josephus, of a 'canon' of tyrannical emperors. Josephus (*AJ* 19.167–80) attributes to *Cn. Sentius Saturninus* a speech in the senate immediately after the assassination of Caligula; Sentius regards Caesar as the first 'tyrant'; contemporaneously with Josephus, Quintilian gives that role to Sulla, with Cinna only a potential tyrant. Pistellato follows Wiseman in regarding Cluvius Rufus as Josephus' source. In the period of Nero, Lucan, nephew of the younger Seneca, saw Alexander as the precursor of Caesar and Pompey, with Sulla and Marius prototypes of the Roman tyrants. The younger Seneca's position is ambiguous, sometimes making the

¹⁵ Abstract, line 5: for 'whit' read 'with'. n. 3 clearly belongs to an old version of the paper, since De Vivo thanks Scappaticcio for letting him read, in 2017, her article in *Latomus* 77 (2018) 1053–89, which is 'ora di prossima pubblicazione'.

¹⁶ On 286 he talks of the 'giovane Pompeo Magno'; he should have made it clear that he is referring to Sex. Pompeius. 289: the ratification of Sulla's *acta* was carried by L. Valerius Flaccus as *interrex* in 82, not after Sulla had ceased to be dictator.

process start with Marius, elsewhere emphasising Alexander or giving prominence to Caesar. He also, unsurprisingly, has things to say about Caligula. As for the elder Seneca, Pistellato says his attitude towards Caesar and Pompey, for the most part, is not negative, but thinks that his portrayal of Alexander is a veiled reference to Caesar and stresses his description of the First Triumvirate as a *turpis societas*. Lastly, Cicero, who after the Ides of March calls Caesar a *tyrannus*, his rule *tyrannis*.

Chiara Torre (293–313)¹⁷ compares the younger Seneca's portrait of Papirius Fabianus in *Epist.* 100 with that of its model, the elder's Preface to *Contr.* 2. She thinks that in describing Fabianus' style Seneca had in mind what Cicero had written about historical style at *de Orat.* 2.62–4 and *Orat.* 62–4, 66. That explains why his quartet of the best Latin writers of philosophy consists of Cicero, Asinius Pollio, Livy,¹⁸ and Fabianus.

Chiara Renda (315–28)¹⁹ compares the division of Roman history into ages in the elder Seneca and Florus. She first addresses the problem of Florus' *nomen*, which appears as *Iulius* in B (Bamberg, Staatsbibliothek, Class. 31 (Renda gives the outdated shelfmark E III 2)), but as *Annaeus* in other manuscripts: if the latter is correct, of course, Florus belonged to the family of the two Senecas. Renda thinks he did, because of the 'massive presence of *Annaeus* in the other manuscripts'. That ignores the rules of stemmatics: B, with Jordanes, constitutes the A class of manuscripts, which, though it contains many corruptions, is generally regarded as the better witness to the text;²⁰ however that may be, its authority is equal to that of all the other manuscripts. Renda, moreover, thinks that her conclusion makes it more likely that, as Canfora argued, the elder Seneca's history, like the part of Florus dealing with Rome's internal conflicts, began with the Gracchi.

The final chapter, 'Appian, Cassius Dio and Seneca the Elder' (329–53), is by John Rich. He has long had a particular interest in the structure of ancient historical works and it plays a major role in his argument here.²¹ Dio followed traditional Roman practice, arranging his work by consular years ('annalistically'). Appian was completely different: he first dealt with Rome's wars, region by region, each in a single Book (of twelve), then with domestic conflicts, beginning with Tiberius Gracchus, again twelve Books, of which only the first

¹⁷ Abstract, line 1: for 'about' read 'of', for 'drawn' read 'modelled', for 'he sets' read 'setting'.

¹⁸ That is the basis of the belief that Livy wrote philosophical dialogues, probably before turning to history.

¹⁹ Abstract, penultimate line: insert commas after 'phase' and 'acme'.

²⁰ Cf. my remarks in *Gnomon* 91 (2019) 509–10.

²¹ See particularly his article in this journal, 'Structuring Roman History: The Consular Year and the Roman Historical Tradition', *Histos* 1 (1997) = 5 (2011) 1–41.

five survive. Florus, though much shorter, is similar, with foreign wars preceding domestic upheavals. Rich concludes that this cannot be a coincidence and is rather the result of one having influenced the other (their relative chronology, however, cannot be determined). As far as the elder Seneca is concerned, and the related problems discussed elsewhere in the volume, Rich believes that it is impossible to determine whether his work was used by Lucan, Florus, or Appian for historical details, though he may well have been Florus' source for the ages of Rome and Dio's for the conspiracy of Cinna in AD 4; the likely starting point of Seneca's history was the war between Caesar and Pompey; *ab initio bellorum ciuilium* does not mean that Seneca's original plan was to write a history of the civil wars: with all this I agree. True to the principles of *FRHist*, Rich thinks that the citations of Suetonius and Lactantius cannot be attributed with certainty to the elder Seneca: I would change 'Possible' at *FRHist* II.982–3 to 'Probable'.

I conclude with some further remarks on matters of presentation. The principal problems raised by the papyrus concern more than one contributor and there is, inevitably, a considerable amount of repetition. Sometimes individual contributors provide cross references to other chapters but there has been no editorial attempt to do so systematically; this makes the absence of a subject index, desirable in itself, even more regrettable and renders the volume as a whole difficult to use. Moreover, as we have seen, when a contributor discusses something both in this volume and in an earlier work, reference is sometimes made only to the latter.

The indexes, compiled by Mariafrancesca Cozzolino, consist entirely of lists of passages in Greek and Latin authors, papyri, manuscripts, and inscriptions. On 399 she says (i) that the works of Latin authors are abbreviated according to *TLL*, of Greek authors according to *Diccionario Griego-Español*: the latter is a bizarre choice, though there are relatively few citations of Greek writers and it will not create too many difficulties; (ii) that citations of *PHerc* 1067 are given 'per "cr" (cornice) and "pz" (pezzo)' because there is no division into books and/or paragraphs in Piano's edition: how could she have been expected to provide such a thing? (iii) 'Only in Rich "report Appianus" *Bellum Civile* is abbreviated *E.* (*Emphytia*) by declared author's will'. This piece of near nonsense refers to 334, where Rich says that he will use *E.* as an abbreviation for Appian's own title, rather than *Civil Wars*, as it has been called since the Renaissance, because Appian included 'internal upheavals which led to bloodshed' as well as wars between opposing armies.

I make the following comments on the index of passages: (i) the names of Greek authors are Latinised even when there is a generally accepted English form (Appianus, Aristoteles, Arrianus, Dionysius Halicarnassensis, Flavius

Iosephus, Plutarchus; ‘Demostenes’ is presumably the Spanish form); (ii) pseudonymous works appear as, e.g., ‘Pseudus Quintilianus’; (iii) for ‘The Fragments of Roman Historians’ read ‘Fragments of the Roman Historians’; (iv) *SHA* appears, under H, as ‘Scriptores Historiae Augusta’; (v) Livy appears as ‘Livius, T. Patavinus’, with the *periochae* a separate entry ‘operis Liviani integri periochae’; (vi) Sallust’s *Histories* are cited from Maurenbrecher and, for Book 1, the recent edition of La Penna and Funari: it would have been more helpful to cite Ramsey’s Loeb edition (2015).

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The identification of *PHerc.* 1067 as a fragment of the elder Seneca’s *History* is an impressive and important achievement; this volume, containing chapters both directly about and tangential to the papyrus itself, will greatly increase understanding of the issues which it raises. Though I have never myself edited a volume of collected essays, I do not underestimate the problems inherent in doing so, particularly with a group of international contributors, writing in different languages: but the book would have been much improved by greater editorial control (and perhaps a co-editor whose native language was English).

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