

BOOK REVIEW

Metaphorical Coherence: Studies in Seneca's Epistulae Morales. By AARON SJÖBLAD. *Studia Graeca et Latina Lundensia*. Lund: Lund University, 2015. Pp. 84. Paper, \$45.00. ISBN 978-9-163-79425-4.

This exceptionally short work (84 pages including front and end matter) was originally intended to be an article. In his prefatory acknowledgements, Sjöblad thanks the Latin seminar at the University of Lund for helping him to develop his ideas, as well as six Swedish grant agencies that supported the writing and also the printing.

The aim of the work is not to document Seneca's dazzling array of metaphoric and otherwise figurative language; that work has been performed with admirable thoroughness in Mireille Armisen-Marchetti's *Sapientiae facies: Étude sur les images de Sénèque* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1989). Sjöblad's project is rather to document three particular observations concerning Seneca's use of metaphor. Chapter 1 maintains that metaphors connected with the human body, its characteristics and movements, are related to those involving sickness and health and also to those relating to travel or to hand-to-hand combat, e.g. the combat with fortune that begins *Ep.* 13.

The second chapter treats metaphors representing the self or soul as an enclosed space, a "fortress" to be defended against the world. Although this group of metaphors was treated by Armisen-Marchetti and more recently by Shadi Bartsch (*Seneca and the Self*, Cambridge and Oxford, 2009), Sjöblad adds something new in that he also finds a connection to metaphors of commerce, of the stage, and of slavery.

Finally, Chapter 3 considers those elements of Seneca's figurative language that speak of moral progress as a journey toward wisdom and of life as a journey toward death. Sjöblad finds the two metaphors to be strikingly similar, and in consequence puts forward the idea that wisdom and death are "close to each other in meaning" for Seneca (74): even if the road of life is shortened by suicide, the Stoic who maintains his principles has still reached his goal.

To those who read Seneca as a way to learn about ancient Stoicism, Sjöblad's book has little to offer. Considering how much work has been done on Stoic philosophy of mind in recent decades, it is remarkable that Sjöblad can write an

entire chapter on the body-soul analogy in Seneca without ever mentioning that the analogy was used extensively, and in very similar ways, by both Chrysippus and Posidonius (Galen, *PHP* 4.5–6, 5.2; Cic. *Tusc.* 4.23, 30–31). Conceptually, too, Sjöblad fails badly in that he consistently elides the Stoic distinction between sages, those rare beings who have attained both wisdom and its concomitant *apatheia*, and progressors, who aspire toward wisdom but have not attained it. Statements like “[B]oth literal and metaphorical buying and selling, as Seneca sees it, threaten to disturb or damage the inner *apatheia* of the learning Stoic” (51) will not advance anyone’s understanding of Seneca’s thought.

As a literary critic, Sjöblad does rather better. His chief endeavor is to work out the relations among the several source domains from which Seneca most often draws his figurative language, and this project holds significant interest. He gains some traction with the notions of a “conceptual metaphor” (9), which is to say a system of metaphors that helps to advance Seneca’s thinking, and of a “metaphoric blend” (72) that combines information from two input spaces. These are potentially useful tools for analysis of that synergy between doctrine and aesthetics and that is Seneca’s prose. Neither is original with Sjöblad, and Sjöblad’s applications of them are not always convincing; nonetheless, *Metaphorical Coherence* does offer some material for reflection to those with strong interests in Seneca’s prose technique.

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