



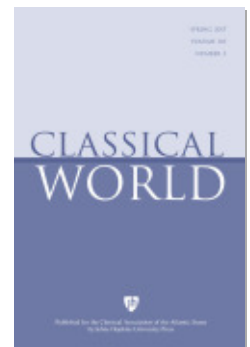
PROJECT MUSE®

Pseudo-Plutarch und Stobaios: Eine synoptische Untersuchung
by Heike Bottler (review)

Leonid Zhmud

Classical World, Volume 110, Number 3, Spring 2017, pp. 424-426 (Review)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press



➔ For additional information about this article
<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/658991>

treating directives) he provides no repertory of them, an omission that limits the usefulness of the book as a tool for further inquiry. And for one who studies details of language, Barrios-Lech could do a better job of translating Latin. Hash is made of a bit from Quintilian (II.3.91) on page 10 (*comoedi* are actors, not poets); moods and tenses are mistaken in *Pseudolus* 657, and by *de persona rustici* the Latin grammarian *Sacerdos* 433 means “in the person of a rustic” (181); Donatus on *An.* 636 (quoted at 162) means by *modo* not “just” but “in this passage” (a standard usage among scholiasts); *ne voluptati mora sit dum iubetur* (Donatus on *Eun.* 179, quoted at 215) means “lest pleasure be delayed while the request is made of her.”

BENJAMIN VICTOR
Université de Montréal

Heike Bottler. *Pseudo-Plutarch und Stobaios: Eine synoptische Untersuchung*. Hypomnemata. Untersuchungen zur Antike und zu ihrem Nachleben, 198. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014. Pp. 552. €99.99. ISBN 978-3-525-25305-2.

All studies of Greek doxography have the same starting point: an epoch-making 1879 edition, *Doxographi Graeci (DG)*, by Hermann Diels, at that time a 31-year-old Gymnasium teacher. Doxography as a genre begins with Theophrastus’ *Φυσικῶν δόξαι*, which featured the teachings of the philosophers from Thales on, whom Aristotle called “physicists.” In the first century B.C. Theophrastus’ compendium was revised and abridged; this version, *Vetusta placita*, was again abridged by Aëtius (first century A.D.), whose name appears only in selections from his work made by Theodoret (fifth century A.D.). Whereas from *Φυσικῶν δόξαι* and *Vetusta placita* only a dozen verbatim fragments and testimonies remain, two independent abridgements of Aëtius, Ps.-Plutarch’s *Placita* (second century A.D.) and Stobaeus’ *Eclogae Physicae* (fifth century A.D.), constitute the basis of the preserved doxographical tradition.

Since the 1980s all stages in the doxographical tradition have been the subject of intensive research and lively debates. Joining this field, Heike Bottler has produced a very learned and meticulously systematic study (a revised version of her 2012 Frankfurt dissertation) of Ps.-Plutarch and Stobaeus. Her aim is to challenge the validity both of Diels’s theory (“*DG* is a highly hypothetical, speculative work,” 16) and of its interpretation by J. Mansfeld and D. Runia, who, though disagreeing with Diels on many important issues, mostly confirmed his reconstruction of Aëtius.¹ Thus, Bottler questions that Ps.-Plutarch and Stobaeus are indeed independent sources. Theodoret too may have consulted Ps.-Plutarch, in which case the Aëtius reconstruction would be seriously undermined. There are also other differences, but given the complexity of Dielsian

¹ J. Mansfeld and D. T. Runia, *Aëtiana: The Method and Intellectual Context of a Doxographer*. Vol. 1: *The Sources*. Vol. 2: *The Compendium* (Leiden and Boston 1997, 2009).

theory, which involves dozens of Greek and Latin sources, they are not that numerous. It would have been much easier for the author to prove her theses on the limited number of persuasive examples, but she has preferred a path that is more difficult and more rewarding for the reader. To study all the textual differences between the first two books of Ps.-Plutarch and Stobaeus, she prints their text in synoptic tables with German translation and adduces other relevant doxographical sources, including an Arabic translation of Ps.-Plutarch by Qusṭā ibn Lūqā (in German translation by H. Daiber). Where the editors of Ps.-Plutarch and Stobaeus give the text with differences from the manuscripts, Bottler returns to the manuscript reading, to avoid the danger of improving the epitomators themselves. This procedure is hardly commendable in itself and, as a previous reviewer has shown, it has been conducted very inconsistently and with many inaccuracies.²

All the variant readings and words occurring only in one version are marked graphically. Special attention is paid to the transmission of the chapter headings. Using a system of sigla, Bottler shows which sources agree and which disagree in respect to each specific reading, thus making the complex picture of textual transmission clearer and more visible. This is the most valuable contribution of the book to the study of doxography.

Due to the shift of focus from the reconstruction of Aëtius, which Bottler considers very problematic, to the first two books of Ps.-Plutarch and Stobaeus, she devotes the bulk of the book (56–493) to the detailed analysis of various aspects and problems related to each lemma. Again, since no synthesis of this analysis is envisaged, Bottler does not feel the need to take sides in discussions or to offer her own solution. Very often she reports diverse opinions expressed in scholarship, gives arguments pro and contra, but leaves the issue unresolved. In this context, it is understandable why all the differences in opinion with Mansfeld and Runia on the same subjects are painstakingly recorded and then summarized in a special appendix.

The results of the study are presented in “Final Considerations” (493–518). Bottler finds numerous inconsistencies in the material, both in content and structure: between, for example, chapter headings and content, between Ps.-Plutarch and Qusṭā ibn Lūqā, Stobaeus and Ps.-Plutarch, and so on. These are explained as being due to the different versions and stages of redaction that the author relates to all levels of the *Placita* tradition. Thus, Ps.-Plutarch used not one but various sources, Ps.-Plutarch and Stobaeus could have relied on different versions of *Placita*, Qusṭā ibn Lūqā could have translated a different version of Ps.-Plutarch from the one we have; both Stobaeus’ source and his *Eclogae* reveal traces of different redactions. Theodoret used not only Aëtius but also Ps.-Plutarch, though not the same version as is available to us, whereas Theodoret and Stobaeus relied on an “intermediate source X” that “goes back to Theodoret’s source (‘Aëtius?’).”

As such, the existence of different versions of Aëtius and Ps.-Plutarch, as well as of intermediate sources, is possible, yet neither Bottler’s conclusions, formulated very cautiously, nor their textual basis, often limited to one or several examples, make the existence of any of them compelling, let alone all of them together. This, rather, is a case where the fluidity of the doxographical tradition that nobody

² P. Schmitz, *BMCR* 2016.03.11.

denies becomes transformed into a multiplication of essences. None of the key links in the doxographical chain restored by Diels and confirmed by Mansfeld and Runia seems to be undermined by Bottler's criticism and alternative proposals. There are also cases of obvious mistakes, as when, for example, she asserts that the Aëtian *Placita* contained ethical doxography (493) or that biographical elements such as patronymic, city of origin, teacher-student connection, *prōtos heu-retēs*-motif, and so on, do not belong to the original stock of doxography (518), though Theophrastus' fragments clearly demonstrate the opposite.

Notwithstanding these flaws, Bottler's book will be welcomed and used by scholars working in the field as a serious and complex study containing a wealth of philological observations and as a bold attempt to challenge the received tradition.

LEONID ZHMUD

Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg

Simon Perris. *The Gentle, Jealous God: Reading Euripides' Bacchae in English*. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016. Pp. xi, 237. \$114.00. ISBN 978-1-4725-1353-3.

The Gentle, Jealous God raises two key questions of interest to anyone who has taught or read classics in translation: "What do English translations of *Bacchae* have to say? And why should we care?" (169). Perris responds with a carefully researched study of Euripides' masterpiece and its reception, and an engaging close reading of seven distinct English translations of it. Thus, his subject is not only the history of this tragedy, but also the social, intellectual, and cultural contexts that have influenced its interpretation in the Anglophone world.

Leading his reader like a trusted tour guide through a museum of words, Perris begins with an introduction that addresses theories of translation; a chapter on *Bacchae* and Dionysus in their historical context; and one that offers an overview of the many subsequent musical, literary, theatrical, and cinematic treatments of Euripides' tragedy, from the 1703 opera *Penthée* to the 2011 *Hūrai* (Māori for "Jews"). He then turns to his central focus: the translations of Gilbert Murray (1902), H. D. [Hilda Doolittle] (1931), Derek Mahon (1991), Colin Teevan (2002), David Greig (2007), Robin Robertson (2014), and Anne Carson (2015). Through his lucid analysis of these works, Perris argues for the continued relevance of *Bacchae* and its theatre god, as he illustrates the varied cultural interests to which the play has appealed over the centuries.

Of particular value to students and teachers will be his definition of critical terms (a glossary is provided) and his demonstration of literary figures of speech. For example, in his discussion of Greig's *Bacchae*, he Perris (138) identifies the use of "alliteration, sibilance, *w* sounds, diphthongs, and sinuous internal rhyme to describe the maenads playing with snakes: ' . . . dappled dresses with / Live snakes which willingly wound round / Their waists and even sometimes seemed / To kiss them,'(45)." Also of use to students and teachers will be his survey of *Bacchae*'s reception in a variety of genres, and the occasional side-by-side comparisons of translations, such as when he examines a single line from the chorus (ὄναξ Βρόμιε, θεὸς φαίνη μέγας, *Ba.* 1031) as it appears in seven distinct