The Reader Makes the Text:
Model Readers on the Move

by

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Abstract

Plutarch and Seneca, with their works on anger, wanted to educate their readers on the subject. But who were they, these readers? This article examines and confronts the “model readers” of both works. It argues that Seneca’s model reader belonged to the Roman elite, professionally busy with something else, but turning to philosophy in order to deal with anger in an appropriate way. Plutarch, on the other hand, wrote for Greeks and Romans who were or could be his friends, probably living an active life but interested in and familiar with philosophy throughout their lives.

Of the writings composed in ancient Greece and Rome on the subject of anger, two have almost entirely come down to us: Seneca’s On Anger (De ira), and Plutarch’s On the Control of Anger (Tie παροισία, De cohibenda ira). Written within sixty years from one another and rooted in the same tradition, these works have much in common. Nonetheless, when reading them, one cannot but notice how different they actually are.

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