Picus' *regia* (Virg. *Aen*. 7.152–93), A. Augoustakis on Hasdrubal's cloak (Sil. *Pun*. 15.425–32) as a 'proleptic sign' (p. 113), then—complementing this nicely—R. Marks on the same text's Liternum paintings (6.660–97) and the *Iliacae pugnae* murals in Juno's temple at Carthage (*Aen*. 1.456–93), and R. Rothaus Caston's attempt to establish a link between Prop. 4.6 and *Aen*. 8.671–713. This last constitutes but a first step in the right direction, because C. identifies the elegiac persona of 4.6 with Propertius and so takes the poem much too seriously (the same applies *mutatis mutandis* to Munich's handling of Catullus' epyllion). All the more persuasive is L. Bowditch's reading of Prop. 2.10: she argues that the poet 'has cast the emperor's military conquests in the diction of elegiac eroticism' (p. 166). Conservative Propertius people will not want to hear that the sexualized Euphrates invites comparison with a *cinaedus* because *negat . . . equitem post terga tueri* (v. 13), but is this an erotic poem or not? Putnam's seminal paper 'Possessiveness, Sexuality and Heroism in the *Aeneid*', *Vergilius* 31 (1985), 1–21 also detected erotic language in battle scenes there, and S. Scully now revisits those to find more in 'Eros and Warfare in Virgil's "Aeneid" and Homer's "Iliad" '.

While S. Foley devotes only a short essay without footnotes to Tibullus' first elegy (and so cannot shed new light on this complex poem), S. Raval takes a long look at the Echo of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (3.359–507). This is commendable, because the poor dear disappears behind Narcissus not only in the poem, but usually in scholarly studies too. However, R. founds her arguments on the textually shaky assertion that 'Echo was once an Orphic figure who had the ability to entrance her audience' (p. 205), and so this presentation of the voice-only nymph is as one-sided as the contributions by Munich and Caston, who similarly fail to take their texts' playful character into account. Putnam's alumni are better able to convince when they follow the trail he blazed in his *Aeneid* studies and analyse related works. V. Panoussi on the Massilia section in the *Pharsalia* provides new insight into Lucan's manipulation of epic topoi, e.g. of the motif 'cutting down a sacred grove'. The series of text interpretations closes with J. Whitta on 'Bernard of Clairvaux in "Paradiso" 31–33', a continuation of Putnam's own study on father-figures in Virgil and Dante ('Virgil's Inferno', *MD* 20/21 [1988], 165–202). After W. comes the paper on the Society of the Dilettanti. This includes a number of illustrations, and one of them shows Sir Bourchier Wrey clasping a punchbowl. Horace Walpole was doubtless right: 'The nominal qualification [for membership] is having been in Italy, and the real one, being drunk' (p. 258). The celebrations for Michael Putnam's seventieth birthday perhaps involved a certain amount of drinking too. But the qualification for membership in the society of professionals that put together this Festschrift was clearly the successful keeping up of scholarly traditions established by their revered teacher.

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SENECA'S *THYESTES*

P. J. Davis: Seneca: *Thyestes*. (Duckworth Companions to Greek and Roman Tragedy.) Pp. 172. London: Duckworth, 2003. Paper, £10.99. ISBN: 0-7156-3222-1.

Thyestes continues to fascinate. Amid the stream of literature on Seneca's master-drama, D.'s user-friendly introduction provides a helpful point of orientation

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for first-time readers while simultaneously offering some perceptive observations to those familiar with the text; in line with the aim of the series, reception too receives substantial attention.

A brief introduction ('Contexts', pp. 9–18) sketches the relationship between artist-emperor and philosopher-dramatist, dates *Thy*. to the early 60s after Seneca's retirement from public life, and notes the popularity of the Atreus–Thyestes theme in the Roman tragic tradition. D. notes that *Thy*. '[embodies] Seneca's reflections upon his experiences during the first decade of Nero's reign' (p. 16), but leaves it at that; and except for a brief comment on Accius' *Atreus* (p. 18), the distinctive anti-tyrannical slant of Roman tragedy is passed over—an aspect surely relevant to a piece as obsessed with questions of power. I return to this point below.

The second chapter on 'Performance History' (pp. 19–36) argues vigorously against the recitation-drama theory that 'Seneca's tragedies are not merely playable: they demand performance upon the stage' (p. 27), a view that continues to gain ground in the English-speaking world. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries it was taken for granted that the tragedies were intended for performance; the modern revival of interest in Seneca has put the dramas back on the stage, with *Thy.* making a remarkable comeback since Vittorio Gassman's production (Rome, 1953). Theatrical stunts like an all-woman cast in Mickey Mouse masks (Antonio Syxty, Milan, 1991) will raise eyebrows, but multimedia and hi-tech effects can powerfully enhance disturbing questions; as one reviewer noted of the 1994 London production, based on Caryl Churchill's version, '*Thyestes* is a play which wonders volubly whether there are any limits to the cruelty human beings will inflict on each other' (p. 35). Classicists concur: see, for example, W. M. Calder, '*Secreti loquimur*: An Interpretation of Seneca's *Thyestes*', *Ramus* 12 (1983), 195–6.

The core chapter ('Themes and Issues', pp. 37–79) provides a compact discussion of the play's thematic structure and intellectual concerns. Motifs singled out from the prologue include hunger/thirst, dryness/moisture, darkness and the flight of the sun, the force of heredity (here personified in Tantalus) with resulting cyclicity of crime, and Tantalus' reluctant submission to the Fury as prefiguring Thyestes' later capitulation—all fully discussed in the subsequent analysis. Against the interpretation of Thyestes as a *proficiens*, D. argues that his professed 'Stoic' values are only a rationalizing pose that thinly disguises an innate craving for power (his genealogy asserting itself); the real Thyestes reveals himself in his drunken stupor, vindicating Atreus' assessment of him as a symmetrical *alter ego*. And as Thyestes is self-deceiving and 'a fraud' (p. 67) on the philosophical criteria of the second chorus, Atreus, who straddles and confounds the tripartite schema god–man–beast, paradoxically satisfies those same criteria (pp. 65–6) to become a diametrical inversion of the *sapiens*. The chorus is ostensibly custodian of traditional morality, but by its monumental incomprehension of the world of the play—it is regularly out of sync with the preceding action—serves rather to provide a contrapuntal commentary on the unfolding action: as Atreus transgresses traditional boundaries, its own conventional frames become disabled and redundant. (D.'s brief comments here can usefully be supplemented by his previous excellent work on the Senecan chorus.) As transcendental tyrant, Atreus systematically negates also the ideals enumerated in Seneca's *Fürstenspiegel*, the *De clementia*, and emerges as the undisputed winner from the debate with his minister: plainly contemporary political concerns impinge powerfully on the drama, but how are we to understand this? Does Atreus double for Nero (as the author of the *Octavia* appears to have read Seneca)? Is the drama conceived as encoded 'oppositional' literature—or is Nero intended to admire Atreus,

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as Calder has forcefully argued (art. cit., 189)? In a word, what was Seneca's purpose in writing the tragedy? D.'s rejection of the philosophical interpretation of the character Thyestes might lead one to expect more emphasis on these political questions, but he does not take an unambiguous position.

This surprises a little, since the final chapter ('Reception', pp. 81–133) documents how the drama's political themes in particular captured the imagination of later writers, from *Octavia* and Statius' *Thebaid* to European Renaissance drama and beyond. D. reviews both familiar texts (Kyd, Shakespeare, Marston, Jonson) and introduces lesser known reworkings: an outrageous parody by one John Wright (1647), domestic dramas by Crowne (1681) and Crébillon (1707), the political myth again in adaptations by Voltaire (1770) and the Belgian dramatist Hugo Claus (1966). With this most recent rewriting, aimed at 'a generation which had direct experience of maniacal and sadistic tyranny, and lived constantly with the threat of nuclear war' (p. 130), we have come full circle. Together with the cognate second chapter, this overview demonstrates the continuing vitality of the drama and should encourage students of the classical tradition to turn to the original. All in all, D.'s volume is a welcome addition to a valuable series.

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SAINT SENECA

P. VEYNE: *Seneca. The Life of a Stoic*. Translated by D. Sullivan. Pp. xii + 191. New York and London: Routledge, 2003 (originally published as the introduction to *Sénèque: Entretiens, Lettres à Lucilius*, 1993). Cased, £45. ISBN: 0-415-91125-7.

Paul Veyne's preface to Seneca *philosophus* is aimed principally at cultured nonspecialists, in the great French tradition of *haute vulgarisation*. Still, classicists with literary, historical, and especially philosophical interest in Seneca will find ample matter here for reflection, fulmination, and pleasure. But let it be said at once: if you read French with ease, pass over this well enough translated but hastily produced volume (*crimine ab uno*: the first chapter's title, on p. 1, contains a wrong date—for '65 C. E.' read '63 C. E.'). Acquire instead, at a slightly lower price, the handsome 1,312-page paperback French original, now in its fourth reprinting from Robert Laffont in the marvelously successful *Bouquins* series. V.'s preface there accompanies translations of all the extant philosophical prose texts of Seneca save the *NQ*. V. has briefly introduced each separate work, lightly revised the Budé translations, and added useful, interesting notes throughout. The *bouquin* paints a vastly more impressive picture of V.'s engagement with ancient evidence and modern scholarship on Seneca and Stoicism than the book under review, from which even V.'s excellent critical bibliography, with work in English well represented, has unaccountably been excised. Hard not to lament the missed opportunity in all this. Had Routledge engaged an anglophone Senecan scholar to collaborate with the translator (a dozen eligible names spring to mind)—to supply the common English translations of philosophical technical terms, perhaps to add some explanatory comments and further references to V.'s footnotes, and at least to give citations for

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