general response from Imperial poets to the tight strictures placed upon the keeping of time by Caesar, Augustus, and their successors. And while he sensibly argues (153–63) that the audience should not be inclined to read a facile political allegory into the characters presented (e.g. Atreus as Nero), S. grows increasingly fretful that this otherwise sensitive and rational audience somehow is dangerously liable to surrender itself to fits of ecstatic passion and immoral irrationality in its confrontation with the protagonist's utter triumph.

S.'s project, it turns out, is to analyse the devices in Senecan tragedy which might insulate the audience from unmediated tragic experience and its powerful inducement to the pleasures of evil (including, I suppose, the irresistible temptation to bake children in stews). S. moves toward a view of Senecan theatre as protective of its imperilled audience with the anti-dramatic devices of Brechtian 'epic theatre', which, in effect, buffer and distance the audience from a real experience of tragedy. Senecan drama can only succeed in so far as it must fail as theatre and is, in effect, closeted once again in the name of protecting the audience for its own good. S. concludes (p. 255), 'There is too much pleasure in Atreus for the author or the audience to be unaffected by it . . . There is pleasure to be found in passions, and it is a pleasure that *Thyestes* and Atreus want us to share with them'. Beside turning the odd *proficiens* aside from the straight and narrow ascent to Stoic perfection, S. never lays out what he thinks that effect is upon an audience (past or present) or how he himself in all of his close work with the play has managed to avoid its seductions. Granted that Seneca's target audience is not altar boys, go ahead and experience *Thyestes*; its pleasures are worth the risks.

Generally well proofed, only a few slips need mending: read 'W.H'. for 'W.S'. Auden (p. 117); 'Apollonian' for 'Apollinean' (p. 121); 'the Fury's' for 'Juno's' (p. 181); 'Terence' for 'Terentius' (p. 280); 'Pelopidai' appears throughout—a strange choice for a book on Roman literature.

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SENECA'S TRAGEDIES COMPLETED

J. G. FITCH (ed., trans.): *Seneca IX: Tragedies II:* Oedipus, Agamemnon, Thyestes, Hercules on Oeta, Octavia. (Loeb Classical Library 78.) Pp. viii + 654. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2004. Cased, £14.50. ISBN: 0-674-99610-0.

This second volume of Seneca's tragedies completes John Fitch's new Loeb edition of the plays. (For the first volume see *CR* 53 [2003], 369–70, where many of my comments apply to this volume too.) The pattern follows that of the first volume, except that the general introduction is assumed and not repeated here. But we have as before very useful introductions to the individual plays, giving the background to the drama, discussing sources, and analyzing Seneca's treatment of themes and characters. Further help is provided by footnotes throughout, and F. seems to have a realistic perception of what a modern reader/student can and cannot be expected to know when facing a classical text. For these plays too he gives his own text, with a highly selective apparatus where a difference in readings matters; and he prints many of his own conjectures, which are always defensible and often persuasive (*Oed.* 179, 1052; *Ag.* 315, 738, 810; *Thy.* 58, 1074; *HO* 183, 318, 388, 472, 681, 727, 746, 1079,

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1099, 1220/1, 1245, 1255, 1402, 1459, 1506, 1563, 1595, 1885, 1951; *Oct.* 49, 232, 262, 858). The translation is predictably clear and accurate: as before, straight prose is used for the iambics, and a line-by-line translation for the choruses and other lyrical passages (e.g. Thyestes' drunken meditation at *Thy.* 920ff.). We are also given the occasional stage direction: this is useful, as, without begging the question of stage performance, it is reasonable to ask what is supposed to be going on in the action, and this is often a real problem in Seneca's plays.

The introductory notes to individual plays are judicious and helpful, especially for those coming to the tragedies for the first time, and F. is good at highlighting points of interest, e.g. a rare piece of unambiguously Stoic teaching in *Oed.* 980–94, which is also a good example of Seneca using the chorus to express an alternative viewpoint. Seneca's eclectic use of sources is seen in the Agamemnon, where Aeschylus is only a distant ancestor, and it seems clear that Seneca is drawing also on Roman republican drama—and on non-dramatic sources too. The *Thyestes* is one of the most interesting of the tragedies, and F. endorses the view that it is Seneca's masterpiece, because of its 'integration of . . . dramaturgy, rhetoric, themes, imagery, moral and political issues' (p. 224). It is also remarkable for the number of its references to the world of Rome, which suggests that the play has a direct relevance to contemporary events. Another notable feature is that it has no extant source, although the titles of many plays on this theme are known, including ones by Sophocles, Euripides, and Accius. With *Hercules Oetaeus* and *Octavia* we come to plays for which Senecan authorship is disputed (*HO*) and rejected (*Oct.*). *HO* is the longest play to survive from antiquity, and some have thought that though it is not entirely by Seneca, he may at least have had a hand in it. F. subscribes to the view that he did not, and tentatively dates the play to the end of the first century A.D. or early in the second century. What is clear is that the author knew the genuine tragedies, as he repeatedly borrows or remodels passages from them. Few nowadays believe that Seneca wrote *Octavia*, though here too the author borrows from Seneca's tragedies and his prose works. A likely guess is that the play dates from shortly after Nero's death in 68, and F. rightly stresses its value in being our only surviving play on a Roman historical subject (*praetexta*). An index of names applying to both volumes completes the work; and F. and the LCL deserve our warm thanks for a helpful and attractive aid to Senecan studies, from which scholars and students alike will benefit.

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OCTAVIA

R. FERRI: Octavia. *A Play Attributed to Seneca*. Edited with Introduction and Commentary. (Cambridge Classical Texts and Commentaries 41.) Pp. x + 471. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Cased, £70, US$100. ISBN: 0-521-82326-9.

The anonymous tragedy on Nero's divorce of Octavia and his marriage to Poppaea is one of the most interesting dramas to have survived antiquity; we are lucky to have it. But we have rarely acknowledged our luck, and, with the honourable exception of John Herington, few have engaged with it at all sympathetically. A full-scale edition

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