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A.J. BOYLE, *SENECA, THYESTES* / EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION, TRANSLATION, AND COMMENTARY. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp. cxlv + 561. ISBN: 9780198744726. £120.00.

In his new edition of Seneca's *Thyestes*, as in his earlier Oxford editions of Seneca's *Oedipus* (2011) and *Medea* (2014), Antony Boyle provides a detailed translation and commentary prefaced by a thorough introduction. His introduction explores historical, biographical and performance contexts, whilst outlining key issues in Senecan studies, such as 'The Performance Debate' (xli-ii). The introduction serves as a helpful companion to students and scholars alike by signposting intertexts with other Latin authors, and with other Senecan prose and tragedy, providing English translations of Latin quotes throughout.

'The Myth before Seneca' offers a helpful overview of both Latin and Greek precedents, a topic rarely treated elsewhere (lxxii). B. highlights fragmentary tragedies touching on related episodes from across the family myth, such as the Oenomaus tragedies (lxxii-iii), though Sophocles' *Tantalus* is not mentioned. Otherwise, the range of sources is comprehensive, covering tragic fragments, vase-paintings, scholia and testimonia. The list of lesser-known tragedians and their contribution reflects the popularity of the myth before Seneca, though the claim that 'nothing other than the titles' of the fourth-century *Thyestes* tragedies have survived is too pessimistic: little survives.

B. devotes much of the introduction to 'The Play' itself, highlighting key themes and exploring the structure of Senecan drama (lxxxix) to support his commentary on the play as a stage drama. In his analysis, B. focuses on overarching themes, and embeds comments on Seneca's characterisation of *Thyestes* and *Atreus* (xcv). As there is no separate section on characterisation, B.'s parallels between *Thyestes* as Seneca and *Atreus* as Nero appear overstated (cxii). That said, the thematic structure provides helpful points for comparison with Seneca's *Agamemnon* (lxxxvi), *Medea* and *Phaedra* (xcix), giving an overall impression of Seneca's tragic style.

A section on metre (cxxxix-cxliii) supports the translation. The translation reflects the line quantities of Seneca's Latin, and so captures the pace of the dialogue in the original language. The line-for-line translation also emphasises Seneca's rhetorical use of repetition, notably through anaphora (223-4, 613-14, 887) and polyptoton (320). The English elision in the dialogue not only suits the metrical equivalence, but also reflects natural speech for an English reader, in much the same way as Seneca's iambic trimeters differentiate speech from song in the Latin. B. also marks the shift into song by incorporating archaisms to reflect the formal register of the choral odes (882-4) and *Thyestes*' drunken singing (e.g. 'lofty' 923, 'whence'/'whither' 926), though Christian anachronisms such as 'sin' and 'evil' distort Seneca's pagan original (341, 1051-2). In terms of presentation, B. indents in-text evidence for stage directions in both the Latin and English dialogue, providing his stage directions on the English facing page alone. This underscores a variety of possible dramatizations to the reader, rather than B.'s interpretation alone. B.'s stage directions range from describing the use of symbolic props such as the crowning of *Thyestes* (515-30) to signposting *Atreus*' asides to the audience (902-4). Whether the reader agrees that Senecan tragedy was performed or not, B.'s additions enable us to imagine the drama playing out, as a Roman reader/ recitation audience might have done.

The commentary (whose lemmata I refer to in bold) highlights B.'s interventions, explaining the choice of stage directions (e.g. **262-5**), noting which MS variant the lines reflect (e.g. **48-53**), and providing a literal translation of the Latin where necessary (**2**). These justifications clarify the new edition for a specialist reader, whilst students are made aware of both the historical context and textual challenges presented by Seneca's Latin original. B.'s

commentary indicates a vast range of linguistic and thematic points of intertextuality. The references include core texts such as Seneca's tragedies (1038-40), Seneca's prose (107-8), Virgil (685-90), Accius' Atreus, Ennius' Thyestes, Ovid (1030-3), Lucan (696-703) and Plautus (908-12). They also extend to texts that have been compared to Seneca in more recent scholarship, such as satire, pantomime and Laberius' fragments. B.'s claim that 'Lucan, Petronius, and the Flavian poets found the word [planctus] appealing' (1047-51) is a rare occasion where specific references are lacking.

Where relevant, B. refers to an unattributed Sophocles fragment and Accius' unnamed fragments. The testimonium for Sophocles' Thyestes plays is considered in the introduction (lxxii), but the fragments of Euripides' Thyestes are not referenced. Indeed, comparisons with extant Greek tragedy are scarce ('Pietas Ode', 546-622). The commentary instead focuses on the context of Seneca's Thyestes by concentrating on Roman performance traditions and Imperial literature, reflecting a recent shift in studies of Senecan tragedy (cf. Ramus 47.1 (2018)). Rather than looking back to Greek examples, B. looks to the future impact of Seneca's Thyestes on European drama throughout his commentary, carefully integrating reception studies in the commentary as well as the introduction.

This edition accommodates students from classics, theatre and literary studies by exploring historical, biographical and performance contexts that affect the drama, whilst outlining key issues in Senecan studies, such as 'The Performance Debate' (xli). The volume will be useful to students of literature and drama, since the play's reception is emphasised throughout, whilst the translation captures the pace and register of the Latin. For students of Classics, the book provides more literal translations within the commentary, and differentiates Senecan tragedy from Attic tragedy by exploring Roman intertexts. Those researching Seneca will find an outline of textual variants, linguistic parallels in Seneca's tragic corpus and a discussion of Senecan tragedy that is enhanced by Greek parallels rather than encumbered by them.

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