

Aeneas leaves to engage in his climactic encounter with Turnus, he simply vanishes' (p. 189). This is not the only problem with the poem's ending, as readers are aware. Nonetheless, R.'s provocative suggestions flow from a sustained engagement with Ascanius' characterisation and its place in the epic's poetic economy. The topic is concentrated, and at times, narrowly Virgilian, with only a few mentions of Telemachus in the *Odyssey* or other significant poetic models for problematic *rites de passage*, such as perhaps Hylas in Theocritus 13. Ascanius' artificially prolonged childishness allows the much older Aeneas to marry a nubile Lavinia, whose age and Virgilian descriptions correspond to Ascanius much more closely (pp. 108–10, 138): could this be a strategy adopted from the *Odyssey*, where Telemachus' celibacy (in direct contrast with the suitors' and Odysseus' sexual activity) signifies his inadequacy to take over as king? Overall, the book is well produced with no obvious typos and with appropriate scholarly apparatus.

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' A NEW SENECA '

STAR (C.) *Seneca*. Pp. x + 195. London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2017. Paper, £12.99, US\$20 (Cased, £39.50, US\$65). ISBN: 978-1-84885-890-9 (978-1-84885-889-3 hbk).

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The obvious comparisons for this volume are C. Mendell, *Our Seneca* (1941) and M. Griffin, *Seneca: a Philosopher in Politics* (1976). Both books were great successes and remain highly respected; S.'s admiration is nuanced and laudable, referring, for example, to 'Our Seneca' (p. 3). Both, equally, are very much documents of their times; Griffin, especially, invites a revisit. The arc of Seneca's career was that of Cicero's – although both were highly partial to philosophy from an early age, each made his name first in politics and gravitated to philosophy as danger made politics less desirable. S. strikes for balance, the twentieth general handbook in Tauris' *Understanding Classics* Series. Advanced undergraduates and pre-prelim graduate students would seem the intended audience: bibliography is entirely English-language scholarship, further reading is suggested, and the chapters cover the expected topics (politics [in the introduction, esp. pp. 8–24], philosophy, tragedy and *Nachleben*).

The introduction tackles Seneca's biography, and it rehearses well the known facts without becoming bogged down in detail. Refreshingly, Seneca is acquitted of hypocrisy (pp. 18–20), with S. considering the charges as political fictions several successive ages found convenient deflections in their own times. S. stays close to the ancient sources: no analysis is attempted of Seneca's control at a key juncture in Roman politics, nor how Neronian diplomatic initiatives and civic restructuring, that is to say, Seneca's and Burrus', percolated through events in Roman imperial politics and foreign policy, at least, up to the reign of Marcus Aurelius. Nero's three short-lived successors enjoyed significant commands and offices with Seneca and Burrus at the helm, and at least three of their successors as emperor had their early careers in Seneca's gift.

S.'s *The Empire of the Self: Self-Command and Political Speech in Seneca and Petronius* (2012) has done much, along with J. Ker and J.-P. Aygon, to reshape an appreciation of Seneca's philosophy. Not surprisingly, the first chapter, 'Seneca's Philosophy',

is on how Seneca's Middle Stoicism was a humanised advance on the Stoa of Zeno and Chrysippus and rooted also in Roman pragmatic eclecticism. The proof of Seneca's genius is that Plutarch, who knew Latin and lived for a time in Rome, never targeted Seneca but focused instead on the more doctrinaire founders of the philosophy. Epicureanism, another target of Plutarch's Pythagorean-Platonism, is given the credit it deserves (pp. 25–8) as seminal to Seneca, as also are Cynicism and Scepticism (pp. 26–7) as Romans received them through Cicero (pp. 53–4), especially, I think, the *Tusculan Disputations*. Several of Seneca's most prescient topics are given their own sub-sections: *dolor* and *ira* (pp. 34–41), *otium* (pp. 52–6) and Stoic resignation ('Retirement', pp. 56–66), a careful weighing of the *Moral Epistles*. Perhaps the best part of the book is 'Politics and Society' (pp. 42–52), a most engaging synthesis of *On Mercy* and *Apocolocyntosis*.

T. Kohn's 2013 book on Senecan dramaturgy is the touchstone for S. in his chapter on 'Seneca's Tragedies'. Seneca's relationship to Greek and to Latin precursors is discussed briefly (pp. 67–72) and continued in a section on 'Intertextuality and Metatheatre' (pp. 73–9). Since F. Ahl (1986 *et passim*) scholarly opinion has swung in favour of performance; recent studies (e.g. L.D. Ginsberg in *Brill's Companion to Roman Tragedy*, 2015) indicate that the pendulum has stopped. S. reflects the trend ('Performance', pp. 79–83), stressing that no concrete evidence of performance exists before the fifteenth century. 'Politics' (pp. 84–8) comprehends the tragedies in light of *On Mercy* and the *Apocolocyntosis*, and demonstrates that Seneca's qualms about empire pre-dated the plays and might constitute (to bowdlerise Brecht's 'epic theatre', p. 91) an 'epitheatre' of an audience in 'engaged disaffection'. 'Politics' leads naturally into 'Philosophy' (pp. 89–93), and S. rescues Seneca from the equally untenable opposites of either the plays in service of philosophy or a strict compartmentalisation. S. steers a course between didactic and dichotomy, happy to have the areas of his achievement colour one another. Interpretative synopses of the eight plays with uncontested Senecan authorship close the chapter (pp. 93–115).

The last chapter, 'Reception', is divided into Seneca's three greatest periods of influence: in the decades following his death, the Renaissance and in the last 100 years. *Octavia* and the *Hercules Oetaeus* (pp. 120–8) receive deservedly the most attention in the first section, followed by disparate notices across the final centuries of antiquity (pp. 128–34). If Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarch and Chaucer were familiar with Seneca (pp. 134–8), it is the renewed interest in tragedy (pp. 139–61) that returned Seneca to prominence, initially through the *Thyestes* and the *Octavia*, at the time wrongly attributed to him. Soon all his plays appeared in translation or adaptation, and his prose works returned to the classroom. In the last section ('Decline and Rebirth', pp. 161–9), S., significantly, exculpates Eliot (pp. 162–3), regarded during his lifetime as much if not more as a critic (as also Poe until 'The Raven' three years before his death), and so his opinion mattered. As Eliot repositioned Seneca's influence on Shakespeare, equating it with that of Thomas Aquinas on Dante, it opened the door to appreciating Seneca in his own context.

Dr Who, a character of popular culture, has periodic transformations tied to casting changes of the lead role. With each transformation, his personality and stage presence is greatly altered. With S. and this generation of academics and leaders, a new Seneca has also emerged. This is apparent from Peter Stothard's *The Senecans* (2017), the name that four mid-level advisors to Thatcher gave to themselves, seeing a parallel between the Prime Minister and Nero and reading Seneca in a pub in Wapping for clues to survival from her ire. This is very much in line with S.'s final take on Seneca and his times as even more essential solace and direction for the world in which we now find ourselves.

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