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Review

Reviewed Work(s): Seneca, Four Dialogues by C. D. N. Costa

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Source: *Mnemosyne*, Fourth Series, Vol. 49, Fasc. 5 (Nov., 1996), p. 619

Published by: Brill

LIBRI AD MNEMOSYNNEN MISSI

Seneca, Four dialogues, edited by C.D.N. COSTA. Warminster, Aris & Phillips, 1994. VI, 218 pp.

Roman Stoicism is perhaps best illustrated by the works of Seneca, notably his letters and his so called dialogi. For those who wish to study the latter, only few special tools are available in English. Part of the gap is now filled by this new selection of dialogi with translation and commentary by C. Costa. It is the companion volume to his earlier selection of Seneca's letters (1988). The book is, of course, most welcome, but it is not 'the first serious commentary in English on any of Seneca's Dialogues since Duff (1915)', as the back cover claims. The full commentary on *Ad Marciam* by C.E. Manning (Brill, Leiden 1981) ought at least to have been mentioned.

Prof. Costa has chosen the following pieces: *De Vita Beata*, *De Tranquillitate Animi*, *De Constantia Sapientis*, *Ad Helviam Matrem De Consolatione*. The text, which is basically that of the OCT, is not excerpted but printed completely, with an English translation on the adjacent page. It is preceded by a very short introduction (5 pages) and a select bibliography, and followed by a concise commentary (45 pages) and an index. The commentary mainly deals with subject matter and philosophical aspects.

The rudimentary introduction can hardly be called satisfactory, but the translation and commentary are clear and helpful for anyone who wishes to approach Senecan thought. Particularly effective are the numerous cross-references to Seneca's other works. The commentary would be easier to consult if its lemmata were in Latin rather than English. On a material note, one may deplore the unpleasantly small print of the commentary and the unpractical binding of the volume, which leaves insufficient margins in the middle. This useful volume would deserve a better format.

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