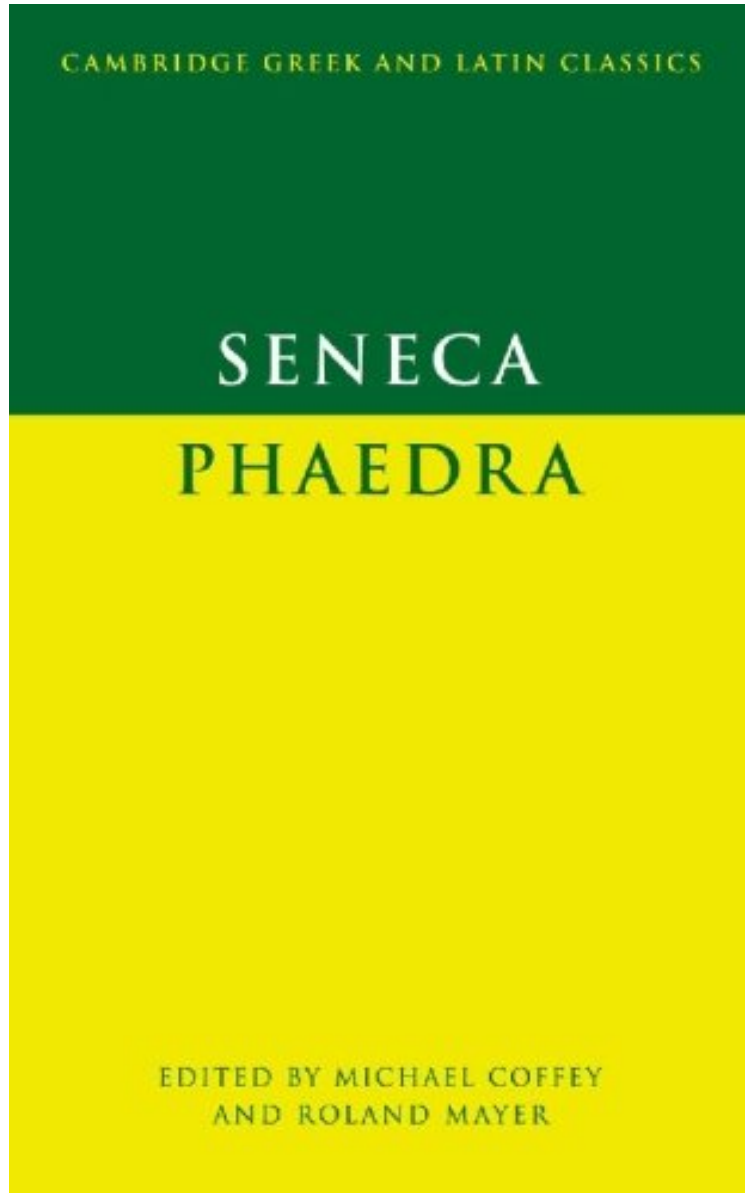


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Seneca: Phaedra (Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics)

Lucius Annaeus Seneca

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Lucius Annaeus Seneca : Seneca: Phaedra (Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Seneca: Phaedra (Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The Phaedra-Hippolytus-Theseus story, LatinizedBy Owen

Cramer Good text in a good series; attention in the introduction to the place of Seneca's treatment (itself based on one preserved and one lost play of Euripides) in later European literature. The usual helps for (pretty advanced) student readers of the fairly transparent Latin text. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Review of Mayer/Coffey's *Phaedra* By Ryan Mease The notes in this edition were excellent for a quick comprehension of Seneca--both his general context and specific business with this tragic cycle. The notes were never sparing of historical and mythic context, though often when I found some difficulty with the text itself, whether syntax, vocabulary or grammar, they did little to assist me. I recommend you find an English *Phaedra* for the sore spots in your reading. The editors took no caution to hide their disfavor for the play. An example, 1267n: "This is arguable the worst line in Seneca drama." There are many other moments like this one, include several notes that contrast the *Phaedra* as a weak counterpart to Euripides' *Hippolytus*. The play may, indeed, be terrible, but why not let the reader see that themselves? Overall, this edition presents a clear introduction, readable, compact notes and a careful, slightly presentation of the text. My quibbles are small, not substantial. APPENDIX: On Ahl's *Phaedra* I'm not sure why decided to loop together the reviews for Ahl's translation and Mayer/Coffey's commentary, but, by coincidence, I also made use of Ahl, so I'll offer a short review. I used Ahl as an aid to translation, which was a mistake. His translation is clearly (and masterfully) designed for performance, not scholarship. Ahl works wonders with English prose, but these wonders often fly away from the Latin itself. Ahl admits to this, and I don't insult him for doing so. I would love to see his *Phaedra* performed. That said, because he plays with line numbers and tends to elaborate and clarify by adding to the Latin, the translation is poorly assembled for assisting a Latin reading. APPENDIX SECUNDUS: On Mayer's Duckworth Commentary Oh hell, it looks like has decided that every book on the *Phaedra* is the same book. Here, I'll offer my impression on Mayer's Commentary on the *Phaedra*, published in the Duckworth series. Here, Mayer is a bit lighter in his criticism of the play itself (perhaps it was Coffey who carried all critical weight in the Latin text commentary), but still offers consistent and careful criticism of various later performances and translations. His words are careful, but frank. Of course, the commentary also attempts to offer context and present various uncertainties about Senecan tragedy (performance, Stoicism, political context, etc.). Overall, it's a nice--and brief--companion to the Cambridge Latin text and commentary. 2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Michael Coffey and Roland Mayer's commentary on Seneca's *Phaedra* By Eustathios This is a review of Michael Coffey's and Roland Mayer's commentary on Seneca's *Phaedra* for the Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics series. Overall, I found the commentary somewhat undependable whenever I had occasion to turn to the back to find help for thorny syntax and vocabulary. About half the time there would indeed be an entry that addressed my specific question, albeit too often formulated in indirect or allusive language, and for the other half I found myself left to figure out the grammatical riddles on my own. That being said, I do think it would have involved a far greater amount of time and effort to read this play just using a dictionary and the OCT. In other respects, however, this book is an exceptionally good aid for reading and understanding Senecan tragedy. The introduction is quite sophisticated and does a great deal of interpretive work in contextualizing the *Phaedra* in its historical moment and in the literary tradition that informs it. Many of the notes in the commentary proper are geared toward fulfilling this end as well. Ultimately, the *Phaedra* that emerges from CM's analysis is a play whose poetics and phrasing are heavily indebted to earlier authors (chiefly, Ovid, Vergil, and Horace). CM are also keen to point out and analyze passages that illustrate how Seneca has gone about reworking earlier literary treatments of the myth of *Phaedra* and *Hippolytus*, particularly that of Euripides. The complete text of *Phaedra's* epistle in Ovid's *Heroides* is also included at the end of this volume, although CM do not provide any commentary for it. The reception of Seneca's *Phaedra* in later literature is also addressed in some detail. CM thus do an excellent and thorough job demonstrating the complexity and literary aspirations of Senecan Tragedy. Yet one gets the sense throughout that the commentators are less than convinced about Seneca's skill and competence as a playwright. Here is an illustrative note from page 155: "This scene precipitates the catastrophe. Yet despite its importance to the plot S.'s indifference to dramatic coherence is plain in a number of details. First, the Nurse's decision to incriminate *Hippolytus*, an unheard aside, is without express motive. A competent dramatist is concerned to account for the actions he sets in motion; that is part of his skill." I would have preferred that CM had made the attempt to formulate an explanation for the anomalies and inconsistencies of the *Phaedra* alongside the insinuations that Seneca is just a bad poet, but, on the whole, these occasional digs do not take away too much from the reader's ability to appreciate Seneca's achievement on its own terms.

Seneca's Phaedra occupies an important and influential position in the tradition of European drama. This new edition concentrates on the play's dramatic qualities, examining its Greek and Roman background. The introduction presents discussion of dramaturgy and rhetoric as well as style and textual transmission. An unusual feature is the tracing of the influence of *Phaedra's* story on later European literature and music. The commentary has extensive notes not only on Seneca's language, but also on plot, characterization, and the use of myth.

In addition to proffering such supplementary information as is commonly found in translations aimed at the general public, Ahl argues that the Senecan tragedies were written for production. As for the translations themselves, they are

excellent. They convey an impression of the Senecan poetic style rather than make an attempt to imitate it. Most important, the language is such that it can be clearly articulated and rendered at once comprehensible to an audience. Ahl rightly finds the style and texture of each play different and reflects such a difference in his translations.

~Classical World (Spring 1988) Ahl's translations reveal a genuine, imaginative response to the playwright. His work has a coherent dramatic shape and the quality of lyrical fantasy characteristic of Senecan language. I do not think a translator can come closer to being 'Senecan.' ~Eleanor Winsor Leach, Department of Classical Studies, Indiana University

Language Notes
Text: English (translation) Original Language: Latin
About the Author
Roland Mayer is Professor of Classics in the University of London. He has written widely on a number of Roman authors and issues, and in 1990 with Michael Coffey published an edition with commentary of Seneca's *Phaedra* (Cambridge University Press).