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E. BUCKLEY and M. T. DINTER (EDS), *A COMPANION TO THE NERONIAN AGE*. Chichester/Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013. Pp. xvi + 486, illus. isbn 9781444332728. £120.00.

Erica M. Bexley

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concealment, remains ever receding from the *amator's* view' (5–6). Of course, the relationship, like the beloved quasi-immortal *puella* herself, matures over the course of time, and the eventual transformation of *puella* into *anus* prompts her lover's own 'erotic, civic, and poetic maturation' (5), marking the end of the affair (there are no happy endings in the elegiac story-world) — and his return to civic life.

In elucidating this erotic, poetic and narrative life-cycle, G. takes as the starting point for her analysis a detailed consideration of the temporality of the human life course and its milestones, treating time in the discourse and drama of elegy as an embodied concept: 'that is, time as measured by a single erotically motivated human subject, and used to organize that subject's experience in terms of a past, present, and future' (10). That subject's experience is not only gendered but grounded in a specific socio-historical context, and G. offers an exemplary overview of the asymmetrical timelines open to the elegiac poet-lover and his *puella* in a chapter on 'Coming-of-Age in Augustan Rome', in which she argues that 'the Princeps' interventions in the life cycles of his subjects prompted the concerns of time, ageing, and immortality so evident in elegiac poetry' (33). Indeed, the next three chapters go on to illustrate how the male elegiac *amator* appropriates the time-line and temporal attributes of the *puella* in order (temporarily) to resist the accelerated maturity encouraged and exemplified by the Princeps and so to realize the pleasures of an 'arrested development'. The first of these, 'Taming the *Velox Puella*', offers a nicely nuanced close reading of Propertius 1.1 (treated as 'a template for those temporal pressures felt throughout Propertian elegy' (59)), and shows how 'the performance of the elegiac lament, with all its cyclical wandering, completed through groans and prayers ... allows the *amator* to confront his temporality' (82). The following chapter, 'Two *Senes*: Delia and Messalla' focuses predominantly upon the so-called 'Delia cycle' of the Tibullan corpus, to explore 'how the ideal of *inertia* and the static existence it implies shapes the life course and love story of the Tibullan *amator*' (86). And the final chapter in this section, 'Ovid: Elegy at the Crossroads' convincingly argues that 'Ovid uses the Callimachean *recusatio* as a delaying strategy *par excellence*: the poet-lover of the *Amores* conflates elegy's frequently recognized erotic deferrals with the generic deferrals that hinder his evolution towards writing patriotically inspired verse' (115).

The second half of the book looks more closely at the temporal qualities associated with elegy's *puellae*, here making fuller use of Kristeva's concept of 'women's time' and its Lacanian (and Platonic) foundations, to show some of the ways in which the elegiac figure of the 'abandoned beloved' (146) articulates both the *puella* and *amator's* gendered and 'genred' experiences of time: 'that is, an experience defined by repetition, cyclicity, and spatial enclosure' (146). This section offers a persuasive demonstration of the ways in which the marginalized elegiac *puella* 'offers the poet-lover a space of retreat, a suspension of the literary and political ideologies that threaten to shape the course of his life' (254). The *puer delicatus* receives some attention here (187–9), but it is noticeable that elegy's only extant female poet, Sulpicia, does not. She is marginalized to an early footnote (5 n. 12), and it does seem something of a missed opportunity to have excluded Sulpicia's poetry from this study, given the potential insights into *le temps des femmes* in Augustan Rome and Augustan love elegy that her work clearly has to show.

Nevertheless, this volume represents an innovative, persuasive and very welcome new study of Roman elegy. It includes some particularly fine close readings of individual poems (especially Propertius 1.1 and 1.3, Tibullus 1.3 and 1.4, and Ovid, *Amores* 1.8), carries its theoretical learning lightly, and should be required reading for all students of Augustan literature.

University of Bristol
G.Liveley@bristol.ac.uk

GENEVIEVE LIVELY

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E. BUCKLEY and M. T. DINTER (EDS), *A COMPANION TO THE NERONIAN AGE*. Chichester/Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013. Pp. xvi + 486, illus. ISBN 9781444332728. £120.00.

Few rulers have managed to define an era the way Nero did. If the label 'Neronian' is due partly to accidents of transmission, it is equally due to the emperor himself, who shaped and embodied the culture of his age via his various rôles: aspiring performer; lavish builder; amateur poet; sponsor

of exploration; and general philhellene. Yet to what extent does the ‘Neronian Age’ imply a unified cultural period? And how has Nero’s prominent personality affected the overall scholarly reception of his principate? These two questions are recurrent themes in Buckley and Dinter’s *Companion to the Neronian Age*, which aims not just to (re)evaluate the emperor, but to situate the developments of his era within the wider context of early imperial Rome. It is a major strength of this volume that contributors do not assess Nero in isolation, but treat the society and culture of his age as a bridging moment between Augustan classicism and the *paideia* of the Second Sophistic.

This *Companion* comprises twenty-five chapters, which the editors have grouped into four sections: ‘Nero’; ‘The Empire’; ‘Literature, Art, and Architecture’; and ‘Reception’. The Introduction by Dinter summarizes key themes before discussing the Neronian literary aesthetic as exemplified by Seneca, Lucan and Petronius. The volume concludes with a brief Epilogue by Griffin, who analyses some of the reasons for Nero’s recent rehabilitation among classical scholars.

Chapters on literature constitute by far the strongest and largest part of this book. The Neronian authors represented range from canonical — Seneca (Whitton; Mannering; Buckley; Doody); Lucan (Hardie); Petronius (Murgatroyd); and Persius (Nichols) — to more peripheral figures like Columella (Reitz) and the much contested Calpurnius Siculus (Henderson); there is even a fascinating study of Greek literature under Nero (Hansen). All of these essays offer entertaining and thorough overviews of their material, and all discuss the works’ main themes in a manner appropriate to *Companion* volumes. Two chapters, however, stand out from the rest: Murgatroyd’s, which examines in sensitive detail the complex narrative layers of Petronius’ *Satyrica*; and Whitton’s, which outlines exciting new solutions to the persistent scholarly problems of Seneca’s *Apocolocyntosis*.

If the volume’s treatment of literary material is thorough, it is also a little excessive, and leads to unfortunate overlaps: Seneca’s *NQ* is not so important that it deserves attention from three separate essays (Bryan; Mannering; Doody). A more significant disadvantage is that the volume’s literary focus skews our vision of the Neronian age. Buckley and Dinter allot only one chapter to Nero’s military activity (Braund); to religion (Šterbenc Erker); and to imperial administration (Lavan). Art and architecture fare slightly better (Beste and von Hesberg; Bergmann; Lonrenz; Squire), but even four chapters on this topic can only begin to capture the innovation and influence of Neronian painting and building styles. Squire’s piece on *grotesche* is particularly good at explaining the unique effects generated by Neronian wall painting. It also reveals, incidentally, that the *nachleben* of Neronian art was just as significant and pervasive as that of Neronian literature.

More successful is Buckley and Dinter’s effort to contextualize Nero. The volume’s first section analyses the emperor against the backdrop of typical princely upbringing (Fantham); biographical and historical tradition (Hurley); and Roman attitudes to Greek culture (Mratschek). Again, all of the essays are clear, detailed and relevant, although Fantham perhaps overstates the peculiarity of Nero’s education: most elite Romans would have received as much vocal training as they did military. The second section of this volume widens focus even further, addressing the general state of the empire under Nero, the political structures he inherited and the customs he was expected to follow. Mordine’s chapter is undoubtedly the highlight here: it describes how the imperial household became an increasingly political entity throughout the Julio-Claudian era. It also complements Hurley’s work in the previous section, which argues that historical writing became more biographical in response to a governmental arrangement that concentrated power in the hands of one man. A useful (if unintended) outcome of both essays is that they collapse the assumed difference between ruler and society, bringing readers back to the volume’s central question: what is ‘Neronian’ about the Neronian Age?

Finally, the *Companion* concludes with a brief glance at reception, which covers later representations of Nero himself, as well as his era’s considerable cultural influence. Literature dominates once more, with Lucan (Maes) and Seneca (Braund) occupying two of the four chapters. Such work on reception is inherently difficult because it requires scholars to focus on multiple historical periods and/or cultural traditions. A potential pitfall is that critics lose sight of the original material, as Maes does in a chapter that contains more Dutch history than Lucan *per se*. Braund and Squire achieve a better balance, while Maier gives a fascinating account of Nero’s bizarre afterlife in Jewish and Christian literature.

Despite its drawbacks, the *Companion to the Neronian Age* is an admirable volume overall. It has hardly any typographical errors and the only peculiarity in its layout is the four colour plates inserted into Bergmann’s chapter but referring to other essays (by Beste and von Hesberg; Lorenz; and Squire).

Buckley and Dinter must be commended for producing a *Companion* as stimulating as it is wide-ranging.

The Australian National University
 erica.bexley@anu.edu.au

ERICA M. BEXLEY

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T. STOVER, *EPIC AND EMPIRE IN VESPASIANIC ROME: A NEW READING OF VALERIUS FLACCUS' ARGONAUTICA*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. Pp. x + 244. ISBN 9780199644087. £55.00.

A good deal of recent scholarship on Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* has attempted to come to grips with its ideological ambivalence, its baffling complexity and the frustrating inconsistency of its thematic and figurative modes. Here is a study that bucks the trend. For Stover, Valerius' epic is a more straightforward text: unswervingly upbeat and positive, it gives enthusiastic and unqualified textual expression to a purported 'Argonautic moment', which is to say, a burst of imperialist zeal and expansionist ardour that characterized the earliest years of the Flavian dynasty — which is when, according to S., the epic was composed.

There is much of value in this book, and all scholars of the Flavian *Argonautica* will need to read it carefully and take its arguments into account. As with S.'s previous work on Valerius, the monograph is full of keen insights and rich observations; a particularly important achievement is its systematic exploration of the influence exerted on Valerius' epic by Lucan's *Bellum Civile*. Taken as a whole, though, *Epic and Empire* does not make a convincing case for its larger assertions.

The study begins with the vexed issue of dating (ch. 1). As the book's title suggests, S. has staked much on a very early period of composition: for him Valerius' epic is a nearly exclusive product of Vespasianic Rome. This is not easily squared with the evidence. Particularly inconvenient is Valerius' mention of the eruption of Vesuvius, which occurred early in the reign of Titus, not far from the midpoint of the text as we have it. S. deals with this by proclaiming 'arbitrary and unwarranted' (12) the assumption that Valerius composed the books of his epic in their narrative order. That is surely a bit strong: the poem is, after all, missing its *ending*, and was produced in an age that featured recitation and publication of individual books of epics as they were written, both of which would have encouraged the natural human inclination to sequential composition. In any event, the conclusion that the Vesuvian verses are a late insertion, added as Valerius was 'putting the finishing touches on his nearly completed epic' (26) does not sit well with the manifest incompleteness of the poem that has come down to us.

S. initiates his 'historicizing' project by elucidating the purported 'Argonautic moment', which is to say, the early years of Vespasian's reign, that gave rise to Valerius' epic (ch. 2). To the extent that these years are characterized as restorative and reconstructive, S. is on solid ground. But for an 'Argonautic moment' S. clearly needs something more, well, 'epic' — which he conjures up with the assertion that Vespasian's principate saw 'the inauguration of a new era marked by unprecedented expansionism' (47) — though in fact it featured neither significant territorial expansion nor ambition thereof. On S.'s reading, the new age of imperialist possibilities under Vespasian — 'a time conducive to heroic greatness and epic achievement' (184) — finds its textual counterpart in Jupiter's articulation of a world plan at 1.531–67, whereby the supreme god inaugurates the first age in which heroic greatness and epic achievement are possible (51). S. is oddly insistent that Valerius makes the voyage of Argo 'the very first epic endeavour of all time' (46, etc.). Among other problems, this overlooks the poet's adjustment of relative mythic chronologies to have Hercules join the Argonautic expedition after completing his Twelve Labours, that most canonical of epic endeavours, which serves as a precedent and recurring paradigm or foil (depending on your view) for the Argonauts' and Jason's own activity.

No less fundamental for S.'s upbeat reading is Valerius' initial invocation to Vespasian (1.7–21), in which the 'Argonautic' Vespasian is praised for his military achievements as an officer in the British campaign of A.D. 43. But in eulogizing Vespasian's achievements as a 'modern Argonaut' Valerius is referring to events that took place under Claudius, a point that is never properly acknowledged and addressed. If the poet is, as S. claims, celebrating the inauguration of a new post-Julio-Claudian age of expansionism, it is surely an embarrassment that his principal point of reference is expansionist activity that took place some three decades earlier under one of the Julio-Claudian emperors.