

BOOK REVIEW

A Companion to the Flavian Age of Imperial Rome. By ANDREW ZISSOS, ed. Malden, MA and Oxford, UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2016. Pp. Xxii + 602. \$195.00. ISBN 978-444336009.

Emerging from the spasms of violence that marked 69 CE, the Flavian emperors acquired an heirloom not belonging to their family—the principate. Vespasian, who was by birth an outsider but became a career insider, perhaps serves as a fitting standard bearer for the period he and his family superintended. A time of both continuity and substantial revision, the significance of the Flavian Age remains, as Andrew Zissos concludes, “out of all proportion to its brief temporal span” (487).

This is a disciplined Companion. It contains 29 chapters divided into six parts, with four appendices, an extensive Glossary of Terms and Expressions, an Index of Passages, and a General Index. In keeping with Blackwell’s series style, endnotes are kept to a minimum throughout, citations are supplied parenthetically in the text, and each chapter concludes with a list of references and concise suggestions for further reading. Contributors scrupulously translate foreign language quotations into English, with very few exceptions. Chapters are all of roughly equivalent length, and only a handful exceed 20 pages.

The volume consolidates the era’s essential sources and debates in order to offer its readers an up-to-date overview. In his introduction, Zissos compellingly justifies a volume that champions the Flavian present without losing sight of its connections to both past and future, or the pitfalls of periodization. He is careful to complement broader surveys with narrower case studies, and although many chapters focus on the consistent Flavian features of a given topic others use Flavian evidence to reach more general conclusions. This editorial framework ensures that the volume treats the Flavian Age as a multifaceted window into dynamic Roman experiences. The present review will primarily aim to illustrate this feature of the volume before providing a (necessarily brief) summative assessment. For a complete list of chapter titles and contributors, please consult the table of contents appended below.

In Part I, “Preliminary,” a single chapter orients the reader to the era’s central literary, epigraphical, and numismatic sources. Part II, “Dynasty,” approaches the

three Flavian emperors through eight balanced chapters. The first four focus on questions of dynastic background, consolidation of power, biography, and imperial administration in a reign-by-reign review. The section's second half explores thematic developments in dynastic image- and policy-making through the detailed consideration of physical and literary evidence. "Empire," the volume's third part, begins with two chapters that ask broad questions before turning to narrower case studies on Judea and Britain. A medial chapter on "Centers and Peripheries" provides a theoretical focus on the shifting value of space between the imperial center and the provincial margins. Many essays in Parts II and III focus on assessing Flavian policy, and these authors consistently conclude that, where possible, the Flavians favored responsible administrative consolidation that responded to local conditions while retaining flexibility.

The *Companion's* fourth and fifth sections ("Societies and Cultures" and "Literature") demonstrate its commitment to breadth and depth. The first two chapters consider the contested and multifaceted positions of foreigners and women, while the next five chapters draw connections between literature, art, and society. In these compelling essays the volume moves "the Flavian" beyond the career profiles and policy outlines of its big men into a world of diverse and competing experiences. If these essays cannot explore every facet of life from 69 to 96 CE, they nonetheless introduce the reader to the breadth of Roman society in expected locations, like Pompeii or the Colosseum, but also in more surprising places, like the bookshop or the classroom. The *Companion's* literature section is appropriately inclusive. Two wide-ranging chapters on poetry square off against two focused chapters on Latin and Greek prose. This section concludes with a survey of lost literature, again covering both Latin and Greek. Zissos takes the helm in the *Companion's* sixth section, "Reception." A reflection in miniature of the companion itself, these three concluding chapters focus on how reception histories of the period's dynasty, physical remains, and written works have shaped the modern imagination.

This volume makes a strong addition to literature on Flavian Rome because it offers a sweeping introduction to the period and because its chapters talk fruitfully to each other, creating a nuanced and multi-dimensional story. Newcomers will find the *Companion* a valuable starting place while experts will be interested in how the various essays offer insights on recurring preoccupations, such as place, identity, and contingency. Several chapters collect and analyze diffuse materials, and the volume's detailed appendices compound this boon.

Individual essays are of a consistently high quality. This reviewer particularly enjoyed the chapters by Frederik Juliaan Vervaeke (“The Remarkable Rise of the Flavians”), Andrew B. Gallia (“Remaking Rome”), Loránd Déspza (“The Flavians and the Senate”), Randall Pogorzelski (“Centers and Peripheries”), Eleanor Winsor Leach (“Flavian Pompeii: Restoration and Renewal”), Antony Augoustakis (“Literary Culture”), and Neil W. Bernstein (“Flavian Epic”), but all the chapters are worthwhile. The typically ample bibliography that concludes each makes them especially attractive for students, teachers, and researchers looking into new areas. Although most bibliographies were suited to the size of their articles, the volume exhibited a substantial range of bibliographical lengths, from just six references (John Nicols, “The Emperor Vespasian”) to over two pages (Alessandro Launaro, “The Economic Impact of Flavian Rule”). Black and white illustrations and maps accompany several essays, and always appear set amidst or alongside the text where they would be most usefully referenced. Although occasional errors occur, none are serious.

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