

A.G.G. Gibson, ed., *The Julio-Claudian Succession: Reality and Perception of the 'Augustan Model.'* Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013. Pp. 179. \$125.00. ISBN 978-90-04-23191-7.

This collection of eight articles and an introduction focuses on questions of succession and more broadly on Augustus' legacy to the four rulers who immediately followed him. It includes several pieces by prominent scholars (primarily British) and, while it covers well mapped territory and takes mostly traditional approaches, several interesting new theses are proposed, and the volume as a whole provides a sound introduction to the current state of scholarship on the most important political-historical questions of the early principate.

The editor's introduction serves mainly to set out the ideological and practical motifs that recur throughout the Julio-Claudian period: traditional Roman dislike of kingship; the availability nonetheless of Hellenistic models; the tendency of uncertain succession to promote intrigue; and the rulers' subtle use of nomenclature and titlature. Gibson also signals the tendency, visible in most of the contributions, to avoid overly reifying the "Augustan model" into a unified normative construct, and to emphasize instead the role of improvisation in a given context. The first contribution, Josiah Osgood's "Suetonius and the Succession to Augustus," examines the notion of Augustus' "succession planning" in the years from 6 BC to AD 4 and the surprisingly sparse evidence for it in Suetonius' *Lives* of Augustus and Tiberius. Osgood steers between Syme and Gruen as contrary scholarly poles (the former stressing Augustus' desire for a biological successor through Germanicus, the latter seeing a genuine ambivalence). The conclusion is closer to the former, and Osgood cogently argues for seeing Gaius' and Lucius' promotion as introducing an emphasis on biological heredity that was the basis for later dynastic problems surrounding Germanicus, Postumus, Agrippina the Elder and even Nero.

The second and third articles, Robin Seager's "Perceptions of the *Domus Augusta*, AD 4-24" and Caroline Vout's "Tiberius and the Invention of Succession," make a remarkable paired diptych, demonstrating how the same historical phenomenon can be presented in almost completely opposite ways depending on one's choice of viewpoint and what source material one emphasizes. Both essays address the progression of Tiberius' public image from AD 4, when he assumed the role of designated successor on Gaius' death, to the early years of his sole principate. For Seager, who surveys the principal inscriptional and artistic sources from the Ticinum Arch to the *Tabula Siarensis*, the story is that of a virtuoso propaganda campaign that sustained the dynasty's role as a symbol of continued internal peace. From Seager's external viewpoint, imperial image-makers smooth over the vicissitudes of premature death and adoption to present an orderly progression from Augustus to an abundant and harmonious line of successors, with Tiberius moving smoothly from a junior to senior role and Germanicus stepping equally smoothly into Tiberius' former position. For Vout, working mainly with literary sources and trying to reconstruct

Tiberius' individual viewpoint, things are entirely different. Instead of a seamless tapestry, the continuity from Augustus is a straitjacket. She sees Tiberius (especially in Suetonius) as man playing a role pre-determined by Augustus but ill-suited for him personally. In Vout's view, Tiberius' reputation for dissimulation and paranoia reflects his consciousness of being unable to play Augustus as well as Augustus had, and of being surrounded by such figures as Germanicus, who by their existence presented alternative interpretations of the Augustan role. Both articles are relatively orthodox in their conclusions, but each is a good example of its own approach, and one can imagine teaching them as a study in methodological contrast.

After these rather broad overview pieces, the next several articles concentrate on more specific problems. Jane Bellemore's "The Identity of Drusus" investigates the grounds for Tacitus' assertion (*Ann.* 2.43.5) that Tiberius favored his biological son over his adopted son and presumed successor Germanicus. Overall, she finds much support for the position. As long as Augustus is alive, Drusus is given honors, but none of the military experience that would make him a viable successor; on Augustus' death, Drusus is immediately given a debut role in the suppression of the Pannonian mutinies, and succeeds with flying colors. The basic thrust of the argument is convincing, but not all points of detail work as well. In particular, Bellemore reads the Senate debate immediately after Augustus' death as Tiberius' unsuccessful attempt to institute some kind of co-rulership with both Germanicus and Drusus. This requires trusting very heavily in the factual accuracy of our sources, but then assembling those facts into a narrative entirely different from what the sources themselves used them for. The motivations of key characters (notably Asinius Gallus) are also not fully explored.

Roger Rees' "The Lousy Reputation of Piso" looks at the *Laus Pisonis*, an anonymous praise-poem addressed apparently to the Calpurnius Piso who led a conspiracy against Nero. Rees, building on Ted Champlin's 1989 treatment, argues for the poem's influence not only on Martial and Juvenal, but also on Tacitus, whose portrait of Piso Rees sees as a consciously intended "corrective" to the anonymous *laudator*. This in turn suggests to Rees that the kinds of panegyric discourses most associated with Late Antiquity manifested themselves from the earliest phases of the Principate. The argument is more suggestive than conclusive, but Rees makes a good case for incorporating this intertextual perspective into readings of Tacitus' Pisonian narrative.

With Alisdair Gibson's "Claudius and the Politics of AD 41," the focus shifts from texts to coins, in particular a couple of issues from the very start of Claudius' reign (*BMCRE Claud.* 5, 8–10, unfortunately not provided as illustrations) in which the new emperor appears on the reverse clasping hands with a representative of the Praetorian Guard under the legends *PRAET[ORIANI] RECEP[TI]* and *IMPER[ATOR] RECEP[TUS]*. Gibson rightly sees these as Claudius' attempt to gain a symbolic position of control over the force that had put him in power, and makes some interesting suggestions regarding the spatial composition and its different

meaning for different audiences. However, his conclusion (130) that “the Praetorian coins of AD 41 probably saved Claudius and the Julio-Claudian principate” from the early conspiracies of Scribonianus *et al.* is in itself greatly overdrawn and indicative of the rather mechanistic and old-fashioned approach to coins as propaganda that characterizes the article as a whole. Emma Buckley’s “Constructing Neronian Identity in the Pseudo-Senecan *Octavia*” is in its approach the most literary essay of the volume, being an intertextual reading of the several episodes in the *Octavia* when characters adduce precedents from earlier Julio-Claudian history. Nero is particularly prone to do so, and in Buckley’s view he uses his own set of intertexts (above all Senecan tragedy and Lucan’s portrait of Caesar) to write himself a new script as tyrant and gleeful megalomaniac, distinct from the Augustan tradition as represented by the *Aeneid* and re-worked by the real Seneca, whose *De Clementia* is heavily alluded to by the Seneca character in the *Octavia*. Although Buckley’s arguments vary in their cogency (the reading of Caesarian *clementia* in Lucan is somewhat murky), she makes a strong case for the *Octavia* as an important source for post-Neronian impressions of the fallen dynasty.

The last article, John Drinkwater’s “Nero and the Half-Baked Principate,” is perhaps the most ambitious of the volume. It explores Nero’s education as heir apparent as a case study for a comprehensive future study of the “job description” of the Roman *princeps*. Drinkwater’s most original contribution is to take as his paradigm a kind of interest-group politics more often associated with the high and late empire, and to read Nero as an early example of a late-Severan-and-Gordian-style figurehead emperor, rather than, as is more common, to take earlier reigns as models from which later ones depart. The approach is a promising one, but given its brevity, Drinkwater’s article inevitably raises more questions than it answers, especially about why such a system required quite so much violent intrigue to maintain its equilibrium. In addition, the piece often tends to see the problems of politics in overly intellectual terms, as if regimes rise and fall based on the coherence of their theoretical underpinnings, and Drinkwater tends to assume *a priori* that the Julio-Claudians’ lack of a “proper monarchy” was a critical problem.

Overall, the book, which stems from a 2008 conference in St. Andrews, is more than the sum of its parts and deserves a full reading, if only to demonstrate the breadth of approaches that are now available to historians trying to replace older models of the Principate with an picture that, while retaining conceptual clarity, does justice to the complexity and uniqueness of the form of monarchy that Augustus and his descendants contrived.

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