

LIVIA

A. A. BARRETT: *Livia: First Lady of Imperial Rome*. Pp. xix + 425, map, ills. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002. Cased, £25. ISBN: 0-300-09196-6.

The author has done a solid job of work. Sensibly he begins with a 100-page chronological account, 'The Life of Livia', five chapters from 'Family Background' to 'A New Reign' (the longest), then passes to 'Livian Themes'. The central chapter of Part I is (over-dramatically) entitled 'In the Shadows', not because Livia was in disgrace but simply because we do not hear much of her in the first thirty years of her marriage. It is the public and political Livia that is the subject here: the first of the six chapters that constitute 'Livian Themes' is 'The Private Livia'; then we have the wife and the mother, and (the subject to which S. Treggiari contributed in *PBSR* 43 [1975], 48–77) 'The Woman of Substance'. 'Friend, Patron and Protector' comes next, and finally 'Death and Reputation'. Clearly the distinction between the parts is not iron-clad: thematic chapters could have come among chronological ones without discomfort, but to complain of that would be picky. The author, aware of the problems that beset biographers of ancient individuals, has coped with them in a way that others will do well to follow. But then he moves to nineteen appendices (taking a leaf out of the book of Syme, who professed and indulged a liking for them). The most substantial (over seventy pages) is a survey of sources, literary and material. After two footling pages on 'The Roman System of Government', including a description of the *equites* as 'broadly, the commercial middle class' (p. 304), the rest are largely devoted to brief expository essays ('The *Domus Augusta*', 'The Title Augusta in the Julio-Claudian Period') or to well-known knotty problems such as 'The Birth of Drusus', where Barrett plausibly separates betrothal from marriage. There are twenty-nine well-chosen illustrations, a map, chronological list, stemmata, bibliography, and index.

Before considering this structure, the reader should know B.'s intent. While not in love with his subject, he rightly defends her from the grosser charges fostered in popularizing novels. He wonders if misconceptions have arisen from ill-natured jokes. Augustus' summer symptoms in A.D. 14 were intestinal. 'He must have eaten too many of Livia's figs' could pass to 'She must have poisoned him with her figs', then to 'She used her figs to poison him'. B. reaches the sensible conclusion that Velleius and the senate were correct: Livia's power lay in protecting family and advancing friends; the destruction of Germanicus' sons (her great-grandchildren, like Drusus Caesar's twins), to the advantage of an upstart, was not an obvious goal. B. also draws a valuable contrast between Livia, who had to devise a new role, and the women of the next generation, fatally born to it (p. 120). Critical as he is of Tacitus, B. wisely does not damn his chronology of the year A.D. 20 on the basis of the dating of the *SC de Cn. Pisone patre* (p. 90). Secondly, B. is rightly preoccupied with an important theme, the role of women in the state. He rejects H.-W. Ritter's views in *Chiron* 2 (1972), 313–38 (the word 'recently' is to be used cautiously, especially of works thirty years old, p. 154). It is his thesis that Livia's position underwent a change when she was nominated 'Augusta' in her husband's will. The author has no qualms over the 'adoption' (though he knows about 'testamentary adoption', p. 13, but cf. pp. 148–9; the name of E. J. Weinrib, author of an important article in *HSCP* 72 (1968), 247–78, is misspelt).

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Certainly such a change would have been unwelcome to Tiberius, whose views on women in politics are clear (N. Purcell's paper in *PCPS* 32 [1986], 78–105 is indispensable). But sudden change based on that honour is less plausible than gradual advance with the years and a move from wife to mother of the princeps. Nor is it clear why Augustus, having restrained Livia for so long, should finally have decided on a change (pp. 145, 153). The difference between status and authority has to be recognized; half a century later, Nero's infant daughter was awarded the title. The empress's position and power were enhanced along with those of the autocrat, whose dependence on formal grants faded. (This is one way in which the empress's position differed from that of the 'first lady', attractive though Barren's analogy is.) Livia played skilfully, but nothing could be skilful enough for some Romans. It all very well to say that Livia 'anticipated that a . . . woman who meddled where she had no business would attract attention' (p. 28); her problem was to make out where and for whom she had no business. But the author has gone deeply into the roots of her position. Old notions are sometimes evident; those of the Tiberius 'who had spent his career on campaigns and had not yet [in A.D. 14!] become adept in . . . political intrigue' (p. 70, cf. pp. 74 and 146) and of the 'stopgap', not Tiberius but Agrippa, who 'in an unhappy mood departed for the East' (p. 36).

B. has paid for his structure. It means repetition and overmuch flour in the mixture; although the main body of the work is digestible enough, with occasional blips in the style ('gaga'; proceedings intransitively 'wrapped up'). What is the point of the list of literary citations that mention Livia? The section on iconography is much more helpful, and in the body of the text, B.'s discussion of women on the coinage is impressive (pp. 139–40). The epigraphic source-list also serves a useful purpose, but it is a place for misprints, especially in transliterated Greek. Self-denial would have made a slimmer, perhaps less expensive, volume; the same goes for the slighter appendices, many of which could be compressed into notes.

Finally, two groups of minor points. The first concerns Livia's elder son. In 6 B.C. Tiberius decided to leave, not just Rome (he was going East in any case) but Roman political life (p. 51); nor did Julia's supporters (the *plebs*, doubtless) hurl firebrands into the sea, but the Tiber (p. 65). As to poetry, Tiberius did not deliver his father's funeral elegy (p. 27), nor is he known to have required permission for his *conquestio* on the death of L. Caesar (p. 53). About the death of Postumus Tiberius 'nihil disseruit' (Tac. *Ann.* 1.6.2): he may have done more than avoid raising the issue, instead refusing to discuss it at length (p. 69). As to his other writings (p. 230), Tiberius' *acta* were perhaps not a composition of his, and the distinction between *commentarii* and *commentarius* is not justified. The second group is linguistic and typographical. This will be a standard work for students, but a laudable effort to translate technical terms sometimes goes wrong: *abdicavit* and ἀπεκηρύχθη do not mean 'removed' (pp. 58, 61), and the reference of notes (as p. 92 n. 51) is not always clear. For 'committed to . . . authority', *in manu* is offered (p. 116); 'saepe and accurate' is glossed 'wisely and pointedly' (p. 169), and 'Lex Maiestas' appears (p. 167). This from a university press! Other misprints, like those in Appendix 1, also focus on non-English words: *res public*, p. 7; *hede* as Greek for 'already', p. 21; Phillipus, p. 25; *euergetis* (male), p. 195; Cicero's *In Milonem*, p. 306. Students would like a low-price, shortened, and corrected paperback of this valuable book.

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