of *Consolation* that stresses the issues that these later authors respond to, does not really allow himself an interpretation of the whole.

In effect, what had been synthesised in his monograph *M.* allows to be atomised and anatomised in the *Companion*, with the result that no one contributor is obliged to pass judgement on the integral Boethius beyond the confines of *M.*'s introduction. The *Companion* assembles a formidable range of scholars, and they are to be commended both for the quality of their insight and for the freedom of their inquiries. What *M.* the author drew together he as editor has allowed to be pulled apart. It was extremely gracious of him to do so. 'The *Consolation* is written in such a manner as to resist a definitive interpretation' (p. 9), as he says in his introduction; his own views in his monograph are not coterminous with those of his contributors. The *Companion*, which must be read by all who value Boethius, exists not as a summation of agreed-upon conclusions, not as a closing of a well-read book, but as a reopening. What *M.* offers, and what we must be grateful for, is a new starting point for Boethian studies, a new ladder from which to try to climb from Philosophy's *praxis* to her *theôria*.

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BUCHANAN

FORD (P.), GREEN (R.P.H.) (edd.) *George Buchanan. Poet and Dramatist*. Pp. xxxiv + 322, ill. Swansea: The Classical Press of Wales, 2009. Cased, £50, US\$100. ISBN: 978-1-905125-36-4.

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When two of the world's foremost specialists in a particular field join forces and produce a book, expectations run high. In the case of the present volume devoted to the Scottish Neo-Latin writer George Buchanan (1506–1582) – edited by P. Ford, author of *George Buchanan, Prince of Poets* (1982), and R. Green, responsible for the forthcoming critical edition of Buchanan's *Psalmorum Davidis paraphrasis poetica* – these expectations are fulfilled. The book collects sixteen essays, and finds its origin in a conference held at the University of Glasgow in July 2006 as part of the celebrations of the quinqucentenary of Buchanan's birth. The celebrations were justified: Buchanan is without a doubt an important figure in the history of Scottish literature as well as an influential Renaissance Latin author with pan-European appeal. Having studied at the University of St Andrews and in Paris, Buchanan held teaching posts in France, Scotland and Portugal. Later in life, he was appointed member of the General Assembly of the Reformed Church of Scotland, Guardian of the Privy Seal and life member of the Privy Council. His real claim to fame, however, are his Latin writings, which include secular poems, the tragedies *Iephtes* and *Baptistes*, translations from Greek, Scottish and English, a history of Scotland entitled *Rerum Scoticarum historia* and the poetic paraphrases of the Psalms mentioned above. Already during his life, Buchanan was celebrated throughout Europe, earning the honorary title, coined by the French printer Henri Estienne, 'poeta sui saeculi facile princeps'. His work continued to be cherished until the twentieth century, at which time the reading public seems to have lost interest. He nevertheless belongs to the select group of Neo-Latin writers who

continue to attract scholarly attention and whose reputation extends, no matter how modestly, beyond their region of origin and the ivory towers of academia.

The present volume is devoted to the poetic and dramatic work of Buchanan. It opens with a very useful overview of principal events in his life, and a helpful introduction by Green and Ford. The subsequent chapters are divided into four sections. The first, on the secular poetry, starts with an analysis by Ford of Buchanan's poetic achievements and firmly establishes the *raison d'être* of all the following contributions. The other chapters in this section discuss epithets in Buchanan's pastorals (R. Cummings), literary metamorphosis in his didactic poem *De sphaera* (E. Gee), and memorialisation in the commemorative *Iusta* (N. Catellani-Dufrène). They are especially concerned with literary allusion and show that Buchanan, like all good Renaissance Latin writers, manages to combine imitation with innovation. The second part of the book focusses on Buchanan's poetic paraphrases of the Psalms and their musical settings. Two chapters contain a literary analysis of specific examples (by R. Green and E. Buszewicz), one deals with Jean Servin's setting (a somewhat uneven contribution by J. Porter), and M. Duncumb contributes one about the music of Statius Olthof. The third and smallest section deals with the dramas. G. Cardinali places *Baptistes* and *Iephthes* in the context of contemporary dramatic theory, while C. Ferradou and R. Green discuss some aspects and examples of biblical inspiration in the same tragedies. J.-F. Chevalier focusses on the poetics of borrowing in Buchanan's Latin translation of Euripides' *Medea*. The final, and perhaps the most innovative and appealing, part of the book is devoted to the reception of Buchanan's poetry and drama. R.D.S. Jack considers Buchanan's standing within Scottish literature, his own translations and the translations made of his works. The chapter by J. Reid Baxter about modern performances of Buchanan's work would have benefited from a less subjective approach and some illustrations of the actual performances. R. Green, in his fourth contribution, examines three episodes in the transmission and reception of the paraphrases. J. MacQueen adds another eighteenth-century episode of the same by presenting the fictitious exchange of letters between Buchanan and Walter Dennistoun, master of the grammar school at Musselburgh. The book closes with R. Crawford's consideration of 'Buchanan's half millenium', an interesting discussion of the ups and downs of Buchanan's reception and the twentieth-century drop in interest, which he connects with the standing of Latin and the need for presenting and translating Renaissance Latin texts in an attractive way.

It is important to remember that this book is wilfully selective and not a companion to the life and works of George Buchanan. As the title states, the focus is on Buchanan as poet and dramatist, and the interests of the contributing authors have led to a particular concentration on his paraphrases (which are the topic of the second and figure prominently in the final section). This is partly explained by their importance: they were widely read in Scottish and European schools for generations, and constitute 'one of his greatest gifts to Scottish literary and religious culture' (p. 75).

The collection is edited in an exemplary manner. Unlike some other collections based on conference papers, much thought has been devoted to the general structure and to interaction between the various chapters. The book is intended to appeal to a wide readership, and all passages in Latin have been translated. I suspect that the non-specialist reader will benefit most from the general chapter by Ford and the final section, while the detailed studies in the other contributions are more geared to an academic audience. Specialists will also welcome the critical reappraisal of

the work of the previous generation of scholars (and especially of Ian McFarlane) that permeates the book. As a whole, this collection is a most valuable addition to Buchanan studies and will, one hopes, serve as an example for future volumes focussing on other aspects of Scotland's most famous Latin author.

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STATE POWER

MORRIS (I.), SCHEIDEL (W.) (edd.) *The Dynamics of Ancient Empires. State Power from Assyria to Byzantium*. Pp. xviii + 381, maps. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. Cased, £47. ISBN: 978-0-19-537158-1.

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Here is an important book, featuring major scholars at the top of their game. The scholarship is up to date, the treatment fresh and stimulating. This brief review can touch on only a few high points.

'Introduction.' J. Goldstone and J. Haldon stress cultural transformation and the 'dynamic' nature of social organisation. Considering 'what is unique about empires', they suggest a continuum from 'big-man proto-states' to unified political entities, each form responding to a particular problem. They invoke Weber and Runciman to construct an 'open-ended' process of 'competitive selection' in which the state is gradually distinguished from 'ordinary society', one of many proofs that 'dynamics' in the title is not an idle term. Rome and China, relying on bureaucratic elites and strong state narratives, succeeded in this process. Athens, stingy with citizenship, did not. ('Bureaucratic' alludes to Weberian 'state power' and signals, along with 'dynamics' above, that the volume's title carries theoretical meaning.)

'The Neo-Assyrian Empire.' According to P. Bedford, the state was hierarchic, tributary and 'essentially militaristic in organization'. It controlled means of production, though a 'vibrant private economic sector' coexisted. Surplus, as always, flowed to the centre. To the question, 'What's "New" about the Neo-Assyrian Empire?' Bedford suggests the 'use of imperial ideology to integrate subjugated peoples into the Assyrian "symbolic universe"', and the role of clientship in integrating elites.

'The Achaemenid Empire.' J. Wiesehöfer's essay will startle Herodotus-reared classicists: in Persian documents kings seek a *Pax Achaemenidica*, show 'flexibility' and 'reciprocity' toward subjects, accept local autonomy and religions, and avoid military 'pacification' and population transfers. In Wiesehöfer's counter-narrative, even after the Ionian revolt of 500, Darius reformed his administration and infrastructure, reworked the ideology of Persian kingship, and promoted peace. The empire as a whole was a 'composite', and never imposed 'Persianization' on local solidarities: 'tolerance' kept most of the conquered quiet.

'The Greater Athenian State.' Ian Morris' essay, twice the average length, aligns the three major cities of the fifth century: Athens and Syracuse were capital-intensive, commercial and urban. Sparta was coercion-intensive, militaristic and ruralised. Athens' centralised tax base deepened state capacity, but the Peloponnesian War permanently closed Athens' capital-intensive path, pushed Syracuse back on an authoritarian track and exposed the limits of coercion at Sparta. 'No one city dominated Greece demographically.'