ANDREW ZISSOS, *Valerius Flaccus'* Argonautica *Book I*. Edited with Introduction, Translation, and Commentary by A. Z., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. lxx + 450, ISBN: 978-0-19-921949-0.

The novelist E.M.Forster would perhaps have been surprised (*The Longest Journey*, Ch.17; on which see Zissos, *IJCT* 13, 2006, 182): this commentary is the fourth on *Arg*. 1 in seven years, after F.Spaltenstein (on 1 and 2, 2002), A.J.Kleywegt (2005), and D.Galli (2007). It is in some areas the most comprehensive; but the serious student of the poem will do well to consult all four (e.g., to take one or two small points of language, on the alliteration in 351 see also Galli, and on *linquimus* in 543 Kleywegt).

The introduction is excellent, in range and in detail (including bibliography); it deserves to be a standard account of the poem for some time to come. *Arg*. 1.5-7, *si Cumaeae mihi conscia vatis / stat casta cortina domo, si laurea digna / fronte viret*, is an assertion of poetic authority; Zissos rightly cites Barchiesi (p.xiv, n.9). He himself suggests that 'the narrating persona is presented as [a *quindecimvir*] for reasons of literary authority' (p.xiv), as 'an authorial pose' (p.80). But these lines go much further in particular and concrete detail than, e.g., Horace's pose in *carm*. 3.1.1ff.; in so far as the poet does present himself here as a *quindecimvir*, it seems unlikely that he would have done so if his audience knew that he did not hold that position of such high status. Zissos might also have mentioned here Spaltenstein's expulsion of the *quindecimvir* from the Latin (as he does in W.Dominik *et al.*, (edd.), *Writing Politics*, Leiden 2009, 355, n.17). Zissos settles on a period of composition of the poem 'starting... not earlier than 70, and extending at least into the early 80s' (p.xv). But if composition did extend into the 80s (4.507 is after 24 August 79, under Titus) then it is at least a little less certain, *prima facie*, that it was (always) Valerius who influenced Statius and Silius (p.xiv; Zissos refers to his discussion in *IJCT* 13(2006), 166f.). On some features of the narrative of the poem, such as 'fragmented temporality', Zissos rightly recalls F. Mehmel's stimulating comparison with Apollonius' *Argonautica* (pp.xxxii-iii). He notices 'perhaps the most radical disturbance of "natural temporality"' in 1.484-97, 700-8; 2.6-9. J.Peters (whom Zissos cites) observed that Valerius has handled the time to distance relations of Apollonius' itinerary very violently in 2.6-9; but it is not clear that 1.700-8 is a 'flashback' (n. *ad loc.*) to the time of 484-97. At 700-1 Pelias has climbed to the top of a height (surely not while the *Argo* was still at the shore); from there he might well still see the sails of the ship even after they had vanished beyond the horizon for the mothers in 494ff. His soldiers are at sea

level (702-3), and do not necessarily see the ship; *visu... inani* in the simile (707) is ambiguous (Kleywegt, *ANRW* II, 32.4, 2479) and also allows that they do not. If there is an incoherence here, it is that Pelias apparently does not see the storm of 574-692. The complete but perhaps slightly compressed account of the history of the evidence for the text (pp.lxvi-lxx) would have been easier reading for those not familiar with the debates if he had included a stemma.

Zissos' own text is not as sensational as he seems to announce in his preface ('likely to arouse consternation', p.[v]); his discussion of particular points in the text is sometimes not as full as Kleywegt's, but his argument is usually clear enough. His translation serves satisfactorily the purpose for which he intends it ('comprehensible English', p.[v]); but (e.g.) at 571-2 he omits *protinus* and *amborum*, and at 658 the translations of *socer* and *ulnis* do not do the Latin the service the notes on the two words do them (but *ulnis* < *ulna*, not ***ulnus*).

The commentary is especially rich in its treatment of the place of the poem in 'an unusually complex literary tradition' (p.[v]); it does in some places offer more than seems necessary for an understanding of the poem, e.g. at n. 526-7 on amber, or n.647-9 on Orion in myth, but better perhaps too much than too little. On the other hand no commentary, even perhaps a future electronic commentary, will quite achieve completeness in the description of e.g. Valerius' use of Homer and Virgil. For the relation of the meeting of Peleus and Achilles at *Arg*. 1.255ff. to the meeting of Hector and Astyanax in *Iliad* 6, add to Zissos' careful note *clamantem* (256) as contrast to ἰάχων (*Il* .6.468), and perhaps compare *decurrens* (255) with θέουσα (*Il*. 6.394) (neither detail in AR 1.553ff.). Galli well compares the place of Valerius' catalogue of the Argonauts in the narrative with those of Homer's and Virgil's catalogues (pp. 200-1). On 382, *nec stantes mirabere mille magistros* (anticipating Nestor at Aulis), Zissos might have added Spaltenstein's interpretation from *Il*. 1.260ff. (cf. *Arg*. 3.143ff. with *Il*. 6.68ff.). For accounts 'in the "Homeric" manner' of 'the provenance of a treasured possession' (n.660-5) add *Iliad* 2.101ff. The simile of the lion amid hunters at *Arg*. 1.757-61 as 'an "internalization" of its literary prototypes', that is, a description of a state of mind rather than circumstances of physical danger (p.xlvii and n. *ad loc.*), has precedents at *Od*. 4.791f. (which Zissos lists in his note but does not discuss) and *Aen*. 12.4ff.

Zissos is admirably alert to much else, the contemporary resonance of exploration and conquest, and of tensions of power and suicide in Thessaly, both Greek (Dionysius Scytobrachion) and Roman in Valerius' treatment, the poet's self-reflexive allusions to his place in the literary tradition, language, verse rhythm and sound effects. His extensive account of the language of the poem (in§§ IV and V of the Introduction as well as §VI) should stimulate the reader to careful observation (add to his note on *solverat* in 351 that the sense

there is by hypallage from that recorded in *OLD* 4), and further thought on the history of the language of epic (p. lvi: *auricomus* was probably not a familiar form in Latin when Virgil used it in *Aen.* 6.141; Valerius' use of it in 4.92 is one instance in the subsequent history described by Norden). He draws attention to effects of rhythm and sound in excited speech (n .114-5; to his notes on this monologue add that the frequency of elision in these lines is much higher than the poet's average). Users of commentaries will often be willing to exchange something that is in their commentary for something that is not; so perhaps in this commentary (even allowing the title of Prince Albert II of Monaco, n. 20-1), e.g. Neptune's trident (n. 640-2) for more discussion of Phrixus' passage of the Hellespont, *rapido... concitus aestu*, in the opposite direction to the usual set of the current (cf. n. 291-3). The Hellespont was ἀγάρροος already in the *Iliad*, perhaps in a formula (2.845; 12.30); and the Argonauts' passage is managed much more carefully by Apollonius (1.926-8, with which see Vian *ad loc.* and *RE* VIII, 188.13) and by Valerius himself in his own way (2.584-6, rightly referred by Poortvliet to AR 1.926-8, followed by assistance from Helle, 610-5; *immittit* 613 ~ εἰσέβαλον AR 1.928). But Zissos has written extensively and well on the poem since 1999; and this book is a substantial contribution to scholarship on it.

There are one or two *lapsus memoriae* (p. 354, l.11, Cloanthus' ship, not Aeneas'; Index Nominum, Varro Atacinus, not Atacensis), and a few *lapsus digiti* (p.xxxvii, nn.142, 144, lxvi l.15 Sangallenis, 100 l.29 trysyllabic, 219 l.32 climatic, 386 l.22 is); but the book is produced to the usual high standards of the Press.

W.R.Barnes
University of Auckland
wr.barnes@auckland.ac.nz