

and the recent shift towards a more positive attitude. His concluding essay brings us back to Augoustakis' introduction, and he outlines current scholarly debates which are at last examining the *Punica* as a poetic entity.

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R. J. LITTLEWOOD, *A COMMENTARY ON SILIUS ITALICUS' PUNICA 7*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. Pp. xcix + 276. ISBN 9780199570935. £75.00.

R. Joy Littlewood's commentary on Silius Italicus' *Punica 7* is the first readily available commentary in English on an entire book of this Flavian epic. The reception of this poem has seen many twists of fortune; it was not much read or researched in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In recent decades, however, interest has picked up significantly, signalled most clearly by the publication of *Brill's Companion to Silius Italicus* in 2010 (ed. A. Augoustakis). There has already been a commentary on the entire epic in French by F. Spaltenstein (1986/1990; 2 vols): obviously, because of its greater coverage it cannot be as detailed as a commentary on a single book; it only has a brief introduction, and due to the recent developments in research on Flavian epic, it is already out of date in some aspects of its approach. Besides, there are a few commentaries on individual books, but either they are not in English or they are unpublished dissertations. It is therefore to be hoped that L.'s commentary will start a process of opening up the poem to an English-speaking readership and enable people to engage more closely with Silius Italicus' epic; help as provided by commentaries is all the more necessary since there is no modern English translation.

With a view to giving users a taste of Silius Italicus' poetry and also covering important aspects of the epic, the choice of Book 7 is a good one: this book narrates events from a period in late summer 217 B.C., after Rome's defeat at Lake Trasimene, and shows the dictator Fabius (the 'Cunctator') confronting Hannibal; it includes a number of speeches and character portrayals as well as aetiological digressions that illustrate the origins of the war and its effect on the Italian countryside (see vii–viii, lxxv–lxxix). The book thus presents paradigmatic examples of various types of Silius Italicus' narrative style (albeit no divine scene) and key features of the poem's underlying themes. The volume follows the standard format of a commentary: it consists of an introduction (xv–xcix), the Latin text, derived entirely from the most recent critical edition by J. Delz in the Teubner series (1–28), a map (30–1), the commentary itself (33–251), a bibliography (252–67), and indexes (268–76).

The extensive introduction discusses the life and circumstances of Silius Italicus, his literary models, the protagonists and the structure of *Punica 7*, the poet's epic style, as well as the transmission and reception of *Punica*. In all these respects it presents an up-to-date account of the current state of scholarship with ample bibliographical references; the presentation is clear and readable, though there is a tendency for it to be somewhat narrative with numerous details, which are perhaps not always necessary. A section on the structure and purpose of the whole epic and the place of *Punica 7* within it might have been useful, but thoughts on this issue are frequently given implicitly; such a piece could have been juxtaposed with an overview of the underlying historical events as seen in modern historical scholarship. On a more technical level, the section on language and style could have also covered metrics and prosody.

In line with the fact that *Punica* has been called 'the most intertextual of poems' (M. Wilson 2004; see p. xx) and with developments in recent research, almost half the introduction is devoted to 'Literary Models' (xix–lxii): L. reviews Silius Italicus' relationship to the historical sources Livy and Polybius as well as to the poetic predecessors and contemporaries Homer, Ennius, Virgil, Ovid's *Fasti*, Lucan, Statius and Valerius Flaccus. This is an impressively wide coverage, which goes beyond the frequently adduced Homeric epics and Virgil's *Aeneid* to take account of all the main writers in the genre of narrative epic and, with Virgil's *Georgics* and Ovid's *Fasti*, to include also didactic epic. Numerous intriguing verbal allusions and correspondences in themes and motifs are outlined, some more obvious than others, though sometimes the relevance of this background for an understanding of Silius Italicus' epic could have been made more explicit. Since L. discusses the intertextual connections by means of significant examples, the analysis, perhaps inevitably,

fluctuates between discussing these issues with respect to *Punica* 7 and to Silius Italicus' techniques more generally; the treatment might have been more focused on Book 7 with some cross-references to the detailed commentary.

The emphasis on literary aspects is continued in the commentary: it offers summaries of the narrative for longer and shorter sections, roughly corresponding to the structure of the book laid out in the introduction, accompanied by full bibliographical references, and notes on individual lines. These notes do not go into textual matters and offer few comments on grammatical or linguistic points (though some more explicit discussion of such issues might have been helpful in view of Silius Italicus' sometimes mannered and highly rhetorical style). L. makes up for this by translating almost every Latin lemma after the quotation. Thus, when the commentary is read by turning from lemma to lemma, it basically amounts to a translation of the entire book; hence one wonders whether, if this is provided anyway, it would have been more usefully printed on facing pages with the Latin text. In the actual notes there is full discussion of the narrative movement, of the historical background and, above all, of sources and literary references. Some of these notes seem a bit wordy (with the occasional misprint), and the paraphrase of the plot might have been shortened to allow for more comments on the effect of differences from the historians or of the modified adaptation of material from earlier epic poets. Nevertheless, these notes present a treasure trove of details, which will be an excellent basis for further literary appreciation of this long-neglected poet.

While students and scholars looking for an introduction to Silius Italicus might prefer to start with *Brill's Companion to Silius Italicus*, for people who want to read parts of Silius Italicus' poem, L.'s commentary will now be an important tool, with a 'mini-companion' thrown into the bargain due to the substantial introduction. Even when other books of the epic have received commentaries of their own at some point in the future, L.'s *Punica* 7 will remain a helpful source of information on Silius Italicus.

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F. SCHAFFENRATH (ED.), *SILIUS ITALICUS: AKTEN DER INNSBRUCKER TAGUNG VOM 19.–21. JUNI 2008* (Studien zur klassischen Philologie 164). Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 2010. Pp. 193. ISBN 9783631586587. £36.00.

This volume of essays originates from a conference held at Innsbruck in 2008. The book comprises eleven contributions (five in German, four in English and two in Italian), as well as a short introduction (with the customary summaries for each article) and two indices (*locorum* and *nominum*). Silius Italicus has certainly come into the spotlight in the past few years, with the most recent publication of a Brill Companion (Augoustakis, 2010), two Oxford monographs on the *Punica* (Augoustakis, 2010; Tipping, 2010), and a new Oxford commentary on the seventh book of the poem (Littlewood, 2011). The range and quality of the contributions in this volume vary and in this review, I will concentrate on some noteworthy points raised in four of the eleven chapters included in the book.

Raymond Marks' essay ('Lucan's Curio in the *Punica*') explores the organic relationship between Hannibal and Hercules in Silius' *Punica* and Hercules and Antaeus in Lucan's *De bello civili* 4. Some of the allusions identified by Marks betray the existence of an unmistakable relationship between these characters, while other verbal correspondences can often be ascribed to the demands of hexameter diction and are rather hard-pressed by the author to suit his arguments. Silius indeed deploys the Lucanian portrait of Curio to showcase a contrast between the Romans of the Second Punic War and their degenerate counterparts in the civil wars of the first century B.C.

Thomas Gärtner promotes an appealing argument in his chapter ('Überlegungen zur Makrostruktur der *Punica*'), by revisiting the puzzling number of the seventeen books of the *Punica* and the poem's structure. As he suggests, Silius organizes the poem in two asymmetrical parts: the first thirteen books commemorate Hannibal's successes, while beginning with the fourteenth book, the poet marks a turning point in Roman affairs. The correspondence between the *prooemium* of *Punica* 14 and *Aeneid* 7 confirms Gärtner's thesis; so also does further evidence sought from Walter of Châtillon's twelfth-century *Alexandreis*.