Reviews

I. LITERATURE

THOMAS BIGGS, *POETICS OF THE FIRST PUNIC WAR*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2020. Pp. xiii + 247, illus. ISBN 9780472132133. £72.95/US$80.00.

After Naevius' initial move to centre Rome in the epic tradition, Biggs finds a reckoning of identity and historical positionality that extends beyond the *Bellum Punicum* and persists widely outside narratives of the events of 264–241. He argues that the collaboration between the war and the 'verse historiography' that Naevius pioneered to commemorate it gives the Romans a venue in which they can see themselves both participating in literary space and reflected in the mirror of their Carthaginian Other. By joining Naevius' project to the precedent of Livius Andronicus' *Odusia* via the shared intent to harmonise Homeric and Roman realities, he emphasises how, from the beginning, Roman literature offers an opening between myth and history for negotiating Roman experience. B.'s wide-ranging ways of interrogating that opening, from intertextuality to an ocean-going 'blue humanities', are laid out by the introduction. The five chapters that follow track the effects of the First Punic War from Livius, writing not about the First Punic War but in its wake, to Naevius, through Horace, Propertius and Virgil, and finally to Silius Italicus, with a detour (ch. 3) to the Vietnam War on TV and in the movies, specifically the hyperreality of *Apocalypse Now* via Baudrillard. An epilogue introduces readers to a classicising monument to America's first quasi-Punic war, the North African naval campaign undertaken during the presidency of Thomas Jefferson.

At each stage, the argument treats textual realities as connected to physical and visual changes in the city of Rome. B. makes a prominent example of Duilius' column, the Roman monument referenced by the early American memorial discussed in the epilogue, as a salient emblem of shifts in Romans' relationship to their physical environment created by fighting and winning the First Punic War. The treatment of early Roman literature as a spatial and social phenomenon as well as a linguistic one supports a broad and appealing argument about Rome's emergence as a literary capital. That said, the claimed 'poetic topography' (82) that links fragments of *BP* to the city feels precariously assembled due to the dispersed and discontinuous state of the evidence. For Augustan poets, B. focuses on how Punic imagery and other ways of evoking the First Punic War threaten to highlight the contrast between foreign and domestic enemies in the naval battles of Augustus' rise to power at Naulochus and Actium. In the purple hues dying Antony's cloak (Hor., *Epod.* 9) or the sea as battlefield (Hor., *Carm.* 2.12), and in the Phoenician columns of the temple of Apollo Palatinus (Prop. 2.31), B. observes the necessity of viewing present-day conflicts in light of the past. Comparisons also highlight the multiple temporalities of the *Aeneid*'s Dido books. B. uses Horace's Regulus Ode, for example, to elucidate how Aeneas' viewing of the temple of Juno becomes a potential encounter with First Punic War realities. When the Trojans depart Carthage in ships rebuilt from African timber, he describes their hybrid fleet as a further vehicle for deconstructing the Rome–Carthage binary, a strong point on which to end ch. 4. For Silius, the alignment of the literary past and the historical past simplifies the timeline. B. nevertheless pushes the discussion of the incorporation of the First Punic War in the *Punica* via ecphrasis and the explicit rhetoric of exemplarity hard in the direction of indeterminacy.

The treatment of what B. terms 'a fragmented cultural fiction' (17) is necessarily and appropriately selective. He has something to say about most of the fragments of *BP*. Their paltriness remains undeniable, and in most places that B. looks, the First Punic War is the war that is not told. The fresh energy that he brings to filling some of the gaps comes not by reconstruction or speculation, though there is some of both, but by demonstrating the war's ongoing availability in the visual environment of Rome, for example in the monuments that simultaneously recall and replace Duilius in the Augustan setting, and in texts that use the war even if they do not mention it. The third chapter, despite the claim that it is 'foundational' (5), on the premise that war as representation will tend to overshadow other sources and forms of memory, labours more to justify itself. It suggests vivid ways of imagining early reception, but B. has little to fall back on

beyond mere plausibility with regard to the mediating role played by textual and physical monuments for audiences who did not personally experience the First Punic War. Contrast the epilogue's documentation that the early American audience did not really get the meaning of their newly erected naval column, though for a learned audience the Roman associations were significant.

Embracing the need to be sceptical in the face of the obscurity imposed on fragmentary texts from multiple directions, B. nevertheless chooses, thank goodness, to say something about what we do have (cards shown at 65 n. 33). His book succeeds in showing the potency of cultural poetics as a tool in early Latin studies. It shines valuable new light on the first Roman poets' inexhaustible relevance to authors and texts of the late republican and imperial era.

University of Massachusetts Amherst BRIAN W. BREED
bbreed@umass.edu
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JASON S. NETHERCUT, ENNIUS NOSTER*: LUCRETIUS AND THE* ANNALES. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021. Pp. x + 260. ISBN 9780197517697. £64.00.

The title of Jason Nethercut's erudite and engaging monograph could not be more apt. Both are about several fascinating subjects. One is Lucretius' use, conceptually and stylistically, of Ennius' Latin epic poem as a literary model for his own *De rerum natura*. Lucretius' reading of Ennius' *Annales* is another. A third is Lucretius' efforts to (re)shape the readers' perception of Rome's first national epic — clearing the field not only for himself but also in the process for Rome's national epic *par excellence*, Vergil's *Aeneid*. With a commendably clear, light and accessible touch, N.'s monograph offers a thoughtful and thought-provoking analysis of these important and challenging subjects; yet perhaps the greatest achievement of this volume is the relationship it compellingly shows between them. Coming away from *Ennius noster*, one will take very seriously the book's central thesis, neatly encapsulated by the wordplay of that title and quotation (*DRN* 1.117). Lucretius' programmatic account of Ennius' dream — receiving his poetic mantle from Homer, indeed being Homer reincarnate (*DRN* 1.112–26) — perhaps even all of *DRN*, is at once about Lucretius' Ennius and our Ennius, we Romans, Lucretius' readers. How deep does this go? And how does Lucretius navigate and close that implicit gap to further his own Epicurean aims?

As N. would have it, Lucretius goes much further and deeper than has hitherto been recognised. His book traces a programme of Lucretian engagement with Ennius' *Annales* in both form and content. This is bolstered by five learned Appendices covering the full philological evidence for the book's core arguments. Those arguments stem in various ways from the analysis of what it deems particularly Ennian archaisms (7). These Ennianisms, it contends, feature throughout *DRN* in ways that are significant by virtue of their presence (individually or in combination), frequency and even at times absence. Taken together, Lucretius' use of such effects constitutes a coherent and deliberate strategy spanning the whole of *DRN*, across which they occur with an overall frequency of 0.26 times per line (9). This is not just a matter of unprecedented stylistic appropriation. It is a means of interpreting acknowledged places of special engagement with the *Annales*, and of revealing new ones. To this proleptic end, the chapters build. Ch. 1 challenges the traditional view of Ennius' influence on Republican epic, suggesting Lucretius himself is responsible for our misconception of its pervasiveness. Ch. 2 contends that Lucretius views epic as inherently philosophical. The Roman conceit of *imperium sine fine* with itself as the centre and head celebrated by the *Annales* therefore represented a philosophical position fundamentally at odds with many of his core Epicurean beliefs — thus meriting thorough-going refutation. Building on this, ch. 3 argues that Lucretius targets particular historical episodes in the *Annales* crucial to that narrative of Roman greatness, stripping them of their significance and glory. Lucretius similarly undermines the value Ennius, or at least his construct of Ennius, placed on history more generally — at best a Pyrrhic victory. Through a process, then, of what N. terms 'provisional argumentation' and course correction over the course of *DRN*, Lucretius gradually demythologises the *Annales* and all it stands for and symbolises, both generally and specifically; thus the fourth and final chapter.