

QUINTUS SMYRNAEUS

LELLI (E.) (ed.) *Quinto di Smirne: Il Seguito dell'Iliade di Omero*. Pp. lxxxviii + 956. Milan: Bompiani, 2013. Cased, €30. ISBN: 978-88-452-7239-4.

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This is a welcome addition to the ever-increasing body of work done on Quintus Smyrnaeus' *Posthomerica*. We now have several trustworthy editions of the text, translations (with running notes) in English, German, Dutch and Italian, several commentaries on individual books, monographs on the whole poem or on particular themes in the poem, and more on the horizon. Quintus' 'anaemic pastiche', as one critic famously described the *Posthomerica*, is seemingly not as anaemic as was once thought. Quintus is now often included in the indexes of books on epic, and is occasionally discussed separately in such books too. If there is any such thing as a Classical canon of authors, Quintus might at last find a place.

This translation (with notes) is the collaborative work of a team of students under the guidance of L. and G. Cerri, each responsible for translation and notes for at least one of the fourteen books. The volume also includes (by five of the team, including L.) an important and sizeable introduction (pp. xvii–lxxxviii). A Greek text, with basic apparatus based loosely on the magisterial edition of Vian (1963–9) but containing a number of small divergences, is set alongside a facing verse translation. Unfortunately, the brief notes appended at the end, for each book, are keyed as endnotes to words in the translation, rather than as lemmata to specific lines, making ease of reference much more difficult. A thorough bibliography of the key works on Quintus is included (though, with one exception, none of the recent work post-2010 is given), as is a very useful index of names with genealogy and *loci* along with a narrative summary of each book.

As with all other research done on Quintus since 1963, this work owes a great debt to Vian's Budé edition. Even the title, *Il seguito dell'Iliade*, alludes to Vian's *La Suite d'Homère*. The notes, too, bear the imprint of Vian's painstaking *Quellenforschung*. Before a useful and encompassing introduction, in the volume's preface we find a lamentable, and irrelevant, assessment of Quintus' ability (pp. xi–xii). Quintus, apparently, had no ambition to scale the heights of Parnassus, but instead what we find is an honest (!) and artistically well-defined task: competence, not brilliance, just as (p. xiii) not everyone can be a Michelangelo. Until scholars stop apologising for the *Posthomerica*, Quintus Smyrnaeus will not be taken seriously. This initial assessment will not facilitate the authors' aim of bringing the text to the general Italian public, as well as to that of the professional Classicist (p. lxxxviii).

The views presented in the introduction, although clearly derivative from previous studies on Quintus, needed to be fully integrated, explicitly, within scholarship to date. The lengthy introduction makes no new arguments about the dating of the *Posthomerica*, but does make some very useful observations on the nature of Quintus' Homeric language. For them, Quintus' reception of Homer is more Alexandrian in technique than has been previously thought, especially in the use of Homeric *hapax legomena*. Quintus' relationship with the Homeric poems, in terms of language and style, is by no means linear. They go so far as to claim that Quintus reads Homer as filtered through Apollonius, that is, that Quintus appropriates as a compositional technique Hellenistic readings of archaic epic. There is ground for such an interpretation (as the present reviewer has attempted to show elsewhere: *CPh* 107.1 [2012], 53–69), but as put in this introduction there is too much generalisation which needs to be set more fully against the research of

W. Appel (*Die homerischen hapax legomena in den Posthomerica des Quintus Smyrnaeus* [1994]) and S. Bär (commentary on Q.S. 1.1–219 [2009]) and others on the subject. It is also not clear what exactly is meant by *Hellenistic* or *Alexandrian*. The introduction interrogates a number of problematic misconceptions about the poem with some excellent conclusions. Sensibly, against the usual suggestion that Quintus composed the *Posthomerica* to replace the Epic Cycle, the possibility that the Cycle was still extant in Quintus' time is not ruled out (p. xxv). Quintus did not need an excuse to write an epic poem, as the evidence for widespread production of large-scale epic at that time suggests. In a short section on Quintus and Latin poetry, which has been *the* focus in Quintean scholarship, they rightly argue that the question remains open: we cannot and could not identify an intentional use of Virgil by Quintus (p. xxxiii). Very useful, and something still largely lacking in scholarship, is the short study of Quintus' use of tragedy (pp. xliiv–liii): they cover some very interesting parallels, but (against Vian) conclude (p. xlv) that tragic influence in Quintus has been overestimated.

Curiously sandwiched between sections on metre and the encompassing history of the text's transmission is a section on the fashionable tendency to call the *Posthomerica* 'second sophistic' (pp. lxxvi–lxxix). Given the widespread epigraphic evidence of poetic contests across Asia Minor, there is a strong chance that parts of this poem were performed (p. xxi). But while some sections of the poem are eminently more rhetorical than what one would find in Homer (for example, the *hoplon krisis* in Book 5), the *Posthomerica* is too faithful to the Homeric originals and is rather unlike the prose compositions which, in style and aims, comprise and define the modern designation Second Sophistic. This conclusion is surely correct, and will perhaps help to re-focus studies on the *Posthomerica* back to its *poetic* inheritance. The editors disappointingly exclude discussion of morality, ethics and philosophy, aspects which are so vital for understanding the poem's anachronistic mix of Homeric and Stoic tenets.

The notes on the poem are the best aspect of this volume. The commentary on each book is relatively full, running, on average, to twenty pages. The notes are detailed and provide a large range of comparanda which are often given critical discussion (to a greater extent than Vian's Budé, but along similar lines to James's 2004 translation). Fuller reference to recent secondary literature should have been integrated (Bär's 2009 commentary on Book 1 is largely ignored, although given in the bibliography); nevertheless, the commentary covers textual, linguistic and literary matters in relative depth. No context is given for the decision to produce a free-verse translation, which on the whole gives an accurate rendering of the original. Epithets are translated mostly literally, and the sentence structure of the original often matched. Translations of Quintus are not legion (A.S. Way's 1914 woe-ful English rendering is still the Loeb edition) and, therefore, this means of bringing Quintus to the wider Italian-speaking public has been long overdue.

This volume is a welcome addition to work on Quintus: it will have an important place in any future work on the text. Vian's Budé edition, however, for its full critical apparatus and reliable text, in addition to the incisive introduction(s) and notes, remains the first point of reference for work on Quintus.

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