

Review

ANTONY AUGOUSTAKIS and R. JOY LITTLEWOOD (EDS), *SILIUS ITALICUS: PUNICA, BOOK 3*. Edited, with Introduction, Translation and Commentary (Oxford Commentaries on Flavian Poetry). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023. Pp. xvi + 416, illustrations (black and white), maps. ISBN 9780198821281. £157.50/\$200.00.

While there is no need any longer to call for the rehabilitation of Flavian epic, the resurgence in interest in recent years has resulted in an increasing number of English-language commentaries, including on Silius Italicus' *Punica*. Counting this new commentary by Antony Augoustakis and R. Joy Littlewood on *Punica* 3, commentaries on five books (2, 3, 7, 9 and 10) of this epic have been published by OUP, while two others (on books 13 and 15) are forthcoming in the Oxford Commentaries on Flavian Poetry series. There are probably no two Silian scholars more qualified than A. and L. to write such a commentary. A. and L. have combined their broad knowledge of the epic to produce an erudite commentary on book 3, which revolves around the figure of Hannibal and his famous crossing of the Alps, a narrative replete with an array of exotic places and races, catalogues of troops, dreams and divine prophecies.

As has become the norm in this series, A. and L.'s commentary features an introduction, text, translation, commentary, bibliography and indices. The General Introduction (1–62), which is exceptional for its detail and breadth, focuses on Silius' political and literary background as well as figures, events, themes, textual, linguistic and stylistic matters relevant to book 3. Each of the sections (and sub-sections) is prefaced by useful bibliographies. The sensitivity of A. and L. to the literary and historical dynamics of the *Punica* is evident throughout the introduction.

For the Latin text (even-numbered, 66–144) A. and L. use the Teubner edition by J. Delz (ed.), *Silius Italicus, Punica* (1987), which contains innumerable conjectures, besides the fact that corruption mentioned in the *apparatus criticus* often remains in the text. These considerations theoretically should offer many opportunities for textual emendation. But A. and L. are not primarily interested in textual criticism, as shown in the short treatment of the text and transmission (61–62), the nine changes made to Delz's text (62), the retention of its punctuation, the adoption of its sigla (64–65) in their *apparatus criticus*, and their modifications of Delz's *apparatus*. A. and L. basically have sacrificed close textual criticism for astute literary analysis, which given the authoritative status of Delz's text is exactly what the poem needs at this stage of the *Punica*'s resurgence.

The prose translation (odd-numbered, 67–145), which generally is reminiscent in style and in places similar in phrasing to the translation of A. Augoustakis and N. Bernstein, *Silius Italicus' 'Punica'* (2021), 42–58, is extremely readable and accessible, faithful to the meaning of the Latin text, and therefore will serve the scholar or general reader equally well. In places, though, the use of prose conveys the feeling of a historical genre rather than epic, which could have been resolved by the use of some type of structured verse-form, even free or 'loose' verse. Unlike the previous commentaries of L. on *Punica* 7 and 10, A. and L. opt not to translate the Latin and Greek cited in the main body, including the *lemmata*, and footnotes of the commentary, which makes it less accessible for anyone unversed in these languages. A curious aspect of the layout of the facing pages of Latin text (with *apparatus criticus*) and English translation (66–145) is that each page contains only a half-page of printed text (similarly, maps 1 and 4 are printed on half-pages).

The actual commentary itself, like the introduction, is well organised, clear and concise; the detailed notes are full of acute and penetrating observations on the text and context of the *Punica*. The commentary is divided into sections, each of which consists of an introduction that provides an overview of its content, themes and structure, with Hannibal naturally the main focus of the discussion. The ethnographic and geographical aspects of various figures and groups assume an important role in the commentary, as does Silius' use of natural science. As was the case in L.'s commentaries on *Punica* 7 and 10, a particular strength of A. and L.'s commentary on *Punica* 3 is their rich treatment of intertextual allusions to a host of Silius' predecessors and contemporaries. Passages from *Punica* 3 often are discussed within the broader context of Flavian literature, with the epics of Statius and Valerius Flaccus being the major foci of comparison. A. and L.'s arguments that the *Punica* is a celebration of Roman imperialism (4; cf. 30, 33, 52–53) and that

Silius' Scipio Africanus, Statius' Theseus (notwithstanding 5 n. 32), and Valerius Flaccus' Jason are positive moral forces and represent idealised Flavian emperors (5; cf. 25) are critically problematic, as consequently is their view that Scipio seems to be a philosophical sage and divine hero (49).

The style of academic writing is both eloquent and economical; typographical errors are rare; and the volume is splendidly produced. The introduction and commentary include useful maps of the geographical setting of the book and figures of coins and artefacts that help to contextualise the text. The comprehensive (i.e. not exhaustive) bibliography is up to date on the latest scholarship. The indices of Latin words, Greek words, textual references, and of characters and toponyms are further useful scholarly aids. Given the insightful and informative nature of this extensive commentary, all scholars writing about the *Punica* will need to consult it, not just those working on book 3.

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