



TRADITIONS OF ROMAN HISTORICAL EPIC

AUGOUSTAKIS (A.), FUCECCHI (M.) (edd.) *Silius Italicus and the Tradition of the Roman Historical Epos*. (Mnemosyne Supplements 458.) Pp. xii + 299. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2022. Cased, €105, US\$127. ISBN: 978-90-04-51849-0.
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Quintilian famously declared that *historia . . . est . . . proxima poetis* (Inst. 10.1.31), and, by definition, the converse is equally true, especially in the genre (or, better, subgenre?) of historical epic, a classic example of W. Kroll's concept of 'Kreuzung der Gattungen'. In the volume under review Augoustakis and Fucecchi gather together an admirably wide-ranging collection of studies on where Silius Italicus and his *Punica* fit in the rich, if incompletely preserved, tradition of Roman (or, perhaps more specifically, Latin) historical epic. Accordingly, in their introduction, the editors offer a survey of the origins and development of historical epic during the Republic (from Naevius and Ennius to Cicero), of the genre's transformation during the Augustan Age (in the hands of Virgil and Ovid) and of its revival under Nero and the Flavians (through Lucan and Silius Italicus). The editors reflect at various points on 'a permanent internal dialectic of the historical epos between' thematically complex poems about the civil wars of the Late Republic and (seemingly) more obviously panegyric poems about Rome's foreign wars, especially those of the recent past (p. 5). Ultimately, as an exploration of this 'peculiar, internal dialectic', 'the principal aim of th[e] volume is to study Silius Italicus' poem as an important step in the development of the Roman historical epic tradition. The *Punica* [is] analyzed as a transitional composition between the beginnings of Roman literature in the Republican age (Naevius and Ennius) and Claudian's panegyric epic in late antiquity' (p. 7).

Part 1, 'The Historical Epic Tradition', delves more deeply into the core issue of genre. In 'Silius Italicus and the Conventions of Historical Epic at Rome', rather than undertaking a study of allusion and intertextuality, G. Manuwald focuses on 'the appropriation of what may be defined as generic features of the literary form of historical epic in Rome and the approach to presenting historical events in epic style' (p. 21). By reviewing the evidence for Silius' engagement with Naevius, Ennius, Virgil and Lucan, as well as Livy, Manuwald arrives at the conclusion that, in form and function, as well as in its strategic use of the past to reflect on the present, the *Punica* is, indeed, 'a typical Roman historical epic' (pp. 31, 33). Likewise, in 'Silius Italicus between Epos and Historiography' P. Esposito offers a survey of epic and historiography in Rome before embarking on a detailed intertextual study of the narrative of the fall of Saguntum in *Punica* 2.457–707 (for which, see also N. Bernstein's commentary). Esposito observes that Silius grounds his narrative in Livy but also transcends his historical 'source' through a complex dialogue with various scenes in Lucan's *Bellum civile*: historical epic emerges as the product of a heady mixture of historiography with a strong infusion of rhetoric.

Part 2, 'Rethinking Roman "Mythical History"', broadens and deepens the investigation by looking beyond historical epic to mythological epic and, in particular, the uniquely Roman conflation of the two in 'mythical history' (for which, see also Chapter 4 of C.E. Muntz, *Diodorus Siculus and the World of the Late Roman Republic* [2017]). In 'Silius Ciceronianus: Regulus as a Reflection of Cicero in *Punica* 6' T. Baier re-examines Silius' engagement with the existing tradition on Regulus and his *devotio* of sorts during the First Punic War, especially with Cicero, *De officiis* 3.97–115: on Baier's reading,

'Ciceronian values are ... given a mythological precedent [in Silius' Regulus]', and, while 'there is no simple moralizing in the Flavian poet's account', 'Regulus is a sort of Ciceronian prototype ... [of] Republican and Stoic values' (pp. 59, 63, 64). In 'Silius Italicus and Ovid's Roman History' R. Marks builds on earlier scholarship, including his own extensive publications, to identify still further allusions in Silius to 'Ovid's handling of ... Roman history' and, in doing so, to demonstrate 'that Silius' view of history as a teleological process realized through the cooperative efforts of the Romans and their gods has an Ovidian basis' (p. 77). By considering generally overlooked passages from both the *Fasti* and the *Metamorphoses*, Marks argues that Silius owes far more to Ovid than is usually acknowledged (something that might also still be said about Lucan). Lastly, in 'Claudian's Silius' N. Bernstein amply documents Silius' pervasive impact on Claudian under four rubrics: Hannibal (as 'a character unlike any earlier one in classical epic'); 'a new vision of Roman political order'; Cannae (as 'one of the most famous battles in Roman history'); and 'a new vision of the natural world and the sublime' (p. 104). Bernstein demonstrates that Claudian owes far more to Silius than is usually acknowledged (and perhaps even as much as he owes to Lucan).

Part 3, 'Historical Challenges to "National" Epic', sharpens the focus to wrestle with the myriad ways in which historical events (and their subsequently contested memories) destabilise the authority of 'national' epic as a concept and, by extension, the authority of historical epics that aspire to attain that coveted status. In 'Silius Italicus as an Interpreter of Virgil: Dido (and Anna)' S. Casali revisits the key moments in the *Punica* that associate Dido's curse with Hannibal's oath, from the epiphany of the temple/palace of Dido (1.81–92) to the epiphany of Hannibal's shield (2.416–19), culminating in the 'double narrative[s]' (p. 138) of Dido's death right before the battle of Cannae (8.50–3 vs 8.79–103, 114–43; cf. 8.39–43). As Casali rightly emphasises, 'The retelling of Dido's story in *Punica* 8, first by the narrator, and then, twice, by Anna, gives Silius Italicus the opportunity of a virtuoso exercise in exploiting the potential of point of view in parallel narratives' (p. 142). In 'Pompey and Aemilius Paulus, or the Epic Genre between Lucan and Silius Italicus' N. Lanzarone explores the relationship between Lucan and Silius via two of their most intriguing characters, Pompey and Aemilius Paulus, and, by extension, their climactic combats at Pharsalus and Cannae. Throughout L. stresses that, 'while Lucan sees no possibility of redemption after Pharsalus, the Flavian poet sees Cannae as a passage ... to redemption and final triumph' (pp. 154, 163; cf. 161), and accordingly reads an 'optimistic' Silius pitted against a 'pessimistic' Lucan, diametrically opposed in their 'vision[s] of the Roman and imperial reality' (p. 164). In 'From the Rubicon to the Alps: Re-reading Eumolpus' Caesar in Light of Silius Italicus' Hannibal' S. Poletti introduces Petronius and his *Bellum civile* as a/the third member of the triad, as something of a link between Lucan and Silius, via a densely intertextual study of exemplarity (*aemulatio*, *imitatio* and, ultimately, of course, *comparatio*): Hercules serves as the focal point across Latin epic, but especially so for both Hannibal and Caesar in their respective marches over the Alps and assaults on Rome. In this dizzyingly complex interplay between history and literature, historiography and epic, Poletti asserts that 'Eumolpus is a victim of the ironic game of the hidden author, which in this case is particularly elaborate, constituting a sophisticated reflection on a critical moment in the development of Latin epic' (pp. 187–8).

Part 4, 'Viewing Roman History (and Literature) from the Inside', ties everything together via a series of 'contributions specifically dedicated to the study of passages centred on minor characters, or of expressive schemes and modules (e.g., epiphany, narrative digressions)' (p. 12) – but Hannibal, perhaps inevitably, remains in the limelight. In 'Scaevola's *aristeia*: a Complementary Reworking of a Historical Source and Epic

Tradition' F. Fabbri concentrates on the *aristeia* of Scaevola, a (literary) descendant of the legendary C. Mucius Scaevola, during the initial phase of Silius' account of the battle of Cannae (*Punica* 9.370–400). As Fabbri ably demonstrates, Silius' Scaevola looks back not only to Livy's Scaevola, but also to Lucan's (much more ethically fraught) Scaeva, whose gruesome valour at the battle of Dyrrhachium haunted Caesar until the very end of the (unfinished?) *Bellum civile* (10.542–6). In the *Punica* Scaevola's *devotio* by *aristeia* marks the beginning of Silius' narrative of Cannae, while Paulus' *devotio* by *aristeia* in 10.1–325 marks its end as 'two exemplary displays of Roman Republican *virtus*' (p. 199; cf. pp. 206–7). In 'Exul in orbe toto, or, How to Map Future Power in Silius Italicus' C. Schroer offers a refreshingly original reading of the epic through the lens of postcolonialism, 'argu[ing] ... that Silius Italicus maps out in the *Punica* the spaces of Rome's future empire through his depictions of Hannibal in exile' (p. 211) – while also alluding to the fact that the poem includes many (past, present and future) Roman exiles as well, including Camillus, Aemilius Paulus and, most notably, Scipio (the future Africanus). In 'Temples of Song in Silius Italicus' A. Keith illustrates how 'the Flavian epicist exploits a tradition of architectural ekphrasis as literary allegory' – via Virgil's temple of song in *Georgics* 3.1–48 – 'in his descriptions of the temples at Carthage [Book 1], Gades [Book 3], Liternum [Book 6], and Cumae [Book 12]' (pp. 233, 234; see also E. Wedeniwski, *Antike Beschreibung von Türbildern* [2006]). Keith interprets these ekphrases 'as metapoetic meditations on [Silius'] own literary appropriation of admired epic forefathers' (p. 234), and justly points out that Silius mediates our experience of all four temples through Hannibal (pp. 246–7). In '*Romuleos superabit voce nepotes*: Remembering Romulus in Silius Italicus' C. Stocks tackles the complex interplay between the Monarchy and the Empire, via the rise and fall of the Republic, by tracing the thread which connects Domitian, via Octavian/Augustus and Scipio (the future Africanus), all the way back to Romulus/Quirinus. In doing so, Stocks recognises that 'civil war is a thing of the past, even if it is a past that – by virtue of the echoes of civil conflict that we see throughout [the *Punica*] – will never be forgotten' (pp. 250–1), but also claims that Romulus' apotheosis as Quirinus offers a path to divinisation for the chosen few among his many *nepotes*. Lastly, in 'Hannibal Redivivus: Fear and Haunting Memory in Silius Italicus' A. Roumpou underscores the importance of Hannibal's enduring presence in Roman cultural memory long after the Second Punic War, in order to elucidate how 'the Flavian poet rewrites the historic Battle of Zama in an epic way to show how a defeat [i.e. that at the battle of Cannae, followed by the march on Rome] has become an indelible part of Roman national identity in Flavian times' (p. 266; cf. p. 281 and see also A.B. Gallia, *Remembering the Roman Republic* [2012] and S. Wilkinson, *Republicanism during the Early Roman Empire* [2012]).

The volume concludes with a general index and an *index locorum*. All in all, the collection provides an excellent summation of scholarship on the place of the *Punica* in the historical epic tradition and stimulating food for thought for scholars of other poems in the genre.

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