

- pp. 12, 37–8 (index 2, ch. 12), ‘patterns of [planetary] radiance’ (*luminum canonica*) clearly excels Rackham’s ‘theory of their light’.
- pp. 12, 44–5 (index 2, ch. 21, and 2.85–8), rendering *geometrica* as ‘geometry’ (consistent with the content of 2.85–8) clearly excels Rackham’s ‘dimensions’.
- pp. 14, 77 (index 2, ch. 79, and 2.188), ‘How days may be defined’ (for *quomodo dies obseruentur*) describes the issue addressed in 2.188, but the verb has a sense hinted at in Rackham’s ‘How days are observed’. Render: ‘What is regarded as a day’ (cf. Lewis & Short, s.v. II.B; *OLD*, s.v. 4).
- pp. 14, 81 (index 2, ch. 88–9, and 2.202–3), ‘The creation of new islands explained; which ones have been created and when’ clearly excels Rackham’s ‘Emergence of islands – reason for; instances and dates of’, for *insularum enascentium ratio; quae et quibus temporibus enatae sint*. However, retain the metaphor, and render: ‘An account of islands born from [the sea]; which ones have been born and when’.

Such technical passages of Book 2 provide narrower scope for translators to find fresh alternatives, because many technical terms admit fewer alternative translations, and they are more stable through decades of English linguistic evolution. Pliny’s frequent moralising outbursts convey the meaning that cosmology and geography have for him – and best display the greater freshness of T&T’s rendering, because Rackham’s style is rather crabbed and tired (compare, e.g., 2.43, 2.87, 2.157–9, 2.174–5, 4.89, 6.89–91). Passages recording *mirabilia* also provide good examples of translational freshness (compare, e.g., 2.101, 2.137–41, 2.193–5, 4.95, 5.45–6, 5.73, 6.35).

Greater legibility, up-to-date site identification and improved accuracy should merit a warm welcome and wide use. T&T have benefited scholars (2.18).

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## ANOTHER COMMENTARY ON SILIUS ITALICUS

BERNSTEIN (N. W.) (ed., trans.) *Silius Italicus: Punica, Book 9. Edited with Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*. Pp. x + 305. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022. Cased, £120, US\$155. ISBN: 978-0-19-883816-6.

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This is B.’s second foray into Silius Italicus’ *Punica*. His previous commentary on Book 2 of the *Punica*, also with the OUP commentary series (cf. *CR* 68 [2018], 426–8), focused on the first pivotal moment of Hannibal’s epic war on Rome, the fall of Saguntum. This new commentary centres on the episode upon which the entire epic hinges, the most iconic battle and crushing defeat Rome ever suffered, the battle of Cannae. It is also the first commentary in English to cover *Punica* Book 9 in its entirety, joining R.J. Littlewood’s 2017 on *Punica* 10, which looks at the second half of the battle and its aftermath. Of all the Cannae books, *Punica* 8–10, only Book 8 now lacks a commentary in English. There is always, of course, E.M. Ariemma’s 2000 volume *Alla Vigilia di Canne. Commentario al Libro VIII dei Punica di Silio Italico* – though more accessible to the doctoral than the undergraduate student.

As for the Latin text, B. follows J. Delz's 1987 Teubner edition, with only four departures, all noted by earlier critics. The English translation is highly readable, mostly fluid, and functions as an excellent companion to the Latin text. It could also easily be read as a stand-alone piece by non-linguist students. B. oscillates between the poetic and the prosaic, making clarity in meaning a priority.

The introduction begins with a short biographical account of Silius' life. Its brevity is a tantalising reminder of just how little we know about the author. Some inferences by modern scholarship about Silius' life experiences using the *Punica* remain tentative, but there is food for thought here, making one wonder what more could lay hidden in the text. Using Pliny's inescapable comment on Silius as a poet who 'wrote with more care (*cura*) than inspiration (*ingenium*)' (*Ep.* 3.7.5), B. springs forth to focus the commentary precisely on the poet's *cura* by showing just how deftly Silius utilises and manipulates the historiographical/rhetorical and the poetic traditions to re-imagine the battle of Cannae as a proto-Pharsalus.

A captivating point that B. reiterates from C.J. Nolan (*The Allure of Battle* [2017], p. 283) is the incongruity of Cannae within the history of Western warfare. Despite its historical allure, especially within the historiographical tradition, combined with the notion that one critical battle can shape the outcome of a war, Cannae did not end the Second Punic War (p. 7). Yet, what proved to be a crushing defeat for the Romans spelt a moral victory for the living, and Rome went on to win the war against the Carthaginians. This is not unlike the battle of Thermopylae for the Spartans (could Silius have thought of it?) and the wider Western world in its (early) modern recuperation. Interactions of Roman with Greek historiography as refracted in Silius is a route worth exploring. There is a hint of that in B.'s note on *Pun.* 9.325–7, where the multitude of thrown spears hiding the sky is reminiscent of a similar image in Hdt. 7.226 at Thermopylae.

The introduction includes a detailed synopsis of Book 9 and plenty of material on thematic, intra- and intertextual links. The main episodes are the notorious conflict between the two consuls Paulus and Varro, Solymus' unwitting killing of his father and war prisoner Satricus, who just escaped from his captors, the leaders' harangues and disposition narrative of their forces, the all-too-brief *aristeia* between Hannibal and Scipio, quickly tailed off by divine involvement with a Homeric face-off between Mars and Minerva, the assault of the elephants and Varro's flight. A whole section is dedicated to verbal similarities between *Punica* 9 and Lucan's *Bellum Civile* 7. Here, B. shows Silius' conscientious effort to align Cannae with the decisive battle of Pharsalus that ended the Roman Republic and ushered in the Augustan age (pp. 24–7). As usual, complexities in characterisation are brought to the fore: Hannibal is in turn Pompey and Caesar, thus incestuously Roman (in Lucan, Caesar is cast as another Hannibal, so is Silius' Hannibal playing a refracted version of himself?), and a Roman very much at war with himself, while Paulus and Varro in their discord recall Pompey and Cicero, respectively, making the poetics of civil war and defeat the driving imperative of *Punica* 9. B. does not engage specifically with character-reading in that section, but the list offers plenty of leads for discussion.

The commentary is extremely thorough in its coverage of the Latin text and remarkably rich with verbal echoes, intertextual links and parallels. B. is particularly helpful in highlighting stylistic effects, which often tend to be overlooked in English commentaries. Discussion includes technical aspects of warfare, thus helping with the visualisation of particular scenes, such as the weaponisation of elephants (esp. pp. 247–9), which Silius re-introduces in his imaginary Cannae for dramatic purposes. According to Polybius, no elephants had survived at this point (p. 20). Some of the exciting intertextual links are,

at times, left to stand on their own, with little indication of interpretation. For instance, how does one reconcile allusions to Ovid's Actaeon, Pyramus and Thisbe, Cephalus and Procris, all encapsulated in the Satricus episode, involving a fortuitous parricide? One wonders what B.'s take would be.

Flavian bidirectionality, mainly between Statius and Silius, is briefly mentioned in the introduction, but further developed in the commentary, where echoes and parallels are recorded, though not necessarily framed as such. Two possible instances for bidirectional readings are explicitly highlighted for *Pun.* 9. 244–5 and 307. Links with Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* are treated as early influence. B.'s position on the subject had been outlined in his commentary on *Punica* 2.

The crisis at the heart of Roman leadership at Cannae is a significant theme, which eminently feeds into the poetics of civil war. On the contrasting characterisation of the two consuls, Paulus and Varro, B. notes that Silius adopts a polarising approach that favours a much more hostile portrayal of Varro than we find in Livy. B., siding with R. Marks, also supports the argument that the conflict between the two leaders is one topic among others in *Punica* 9 that demonstrate the ineffectiveness of the Republic and the need for one-man rule. Scholarly views on Varro, however, are beginning to split. C. Burgeon (*La Virtus, la Fides et la Pietas dans les Punica de Silius Italicus* [2020]) recently argued for a positive reading of Varro's flight, in swiftly raising the alarm that allowed Rome to reorganise its army effectively in the aftermath of Cannae. B. omits Burgeon. In B.'s defence, however, publication is such a lengthy process that the latest scholarship is often missed out.

The bibliography, otherwise, offers an insightful guide to contemporary scholarship (with only one omission: Lucarini 2004 on p. 19 n. 40, in reference to 'Le fonte storiche di Silio Italicus', *Athenaeum* 92, pp. 103–26). The volume includes two useful indexes, with a particularly comprehensive *index locorum*, and a helpful list of key Latin words and phrases.

B.'s volume is a wonderful and essential addition to the existing commentaries on Silius. There is an enormous amount of material to stimulate discussion and further study of the *Punica*. Silius is at last gaining scholarly momentum, becoming increasingly well served by the OUP commentary series on Flavian Poetry.

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## JEWISH AND EARLY CHRISTIAN INFLUENCES ON APULEIUS?

SMITH (W. S.) *Religion and Apuleius'* Golden Ass. Pp. xiv + 193, ills. London and New York: Routledge, 2023. Cased, £120, US\$160. ISBN: 978-1-032-19280-2.

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Scholars interested in the ancient novel may recall a monograph by G.G. Gamba, *Petronio Arbitro e i cristiani* (1998), who unconvincingly read the *Satyrica* as a narrative addressed to Nero and allegorically promoting Christianity – see C. Panayotakis, *CR* 49 (1999),