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R. Joy Littlewood, *A Commentary on Silius Italicus' Punica 10. Edited with Introduction, Translation, and Commentary.* Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp. lxxix, 265. ISBN 9780198713814. \$120.00.

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Preview

R. Joy Littlewood has already published a commentary on Silius' *Punica 7* (Oxford 2011, reviewed [BMCR 2013.10.11](#)). Now a commentary on book 10 follows, which is structured more or less in the same way: a substantial introduction, text and apparatus of Delz's 1987 Teubner edition, and a commentary, with the main difference that this new book also comprises a facing translation of the text. The back cover says that "this commentary offers both philological and stylistic exegesis alongside historical analysis and up to date literary criticism." This is true only as far as regards the last two items of the list, historical analysis and, above all, literary criticism; from a philological point of view, this book exhibits major shortcomings.

The Introduction (64 pages) is divided into seven sections. The first section, on Silius' life and career, is a new version of that contained at the beginning of Littlewood's edition of *Pun. 7*. The second section is devoted to an analysis of Silius' adaptation of Livy in *Pun. 10*. Section 3 offers a treatment of the characters who are the protagonists of the battle of Cannae and of its aftermath: L. Aemilius Paulus, P. Cornelius Scipio, Q. Fabius Maximus, and Hannibal. Section 4 takes its cue from the last two lines of *Pun. 10*, where the poet, having narrated the resurrection of the Romans' morale after the defeat of Cannae, expresses the wish that Carthage were still standing, if after its fall Rome were to change her moral values. Starting from here, Littlewood discusses the themes of empire, *luxus*, and civil war in Silius and more generally in post-Virgilian epic. Section 5 is dedicated to Silius' epic style, with discussions of the structure of *Pun. 10*, of Silius' language and style, of the rhetoric of the speeches, and of similes. Section 6 treats metrical and prosodic aspects of the text. The concluding section is a brief excursus on its transmission and reception.

There follows Delz's text and apparatus, preceded by three pages of 'Sigla', which L. declares she has drawn from Delz's 'Praefatio' (p. lxxvii): we find listed the *sigla*

of the codices and of the ancient editions (XV-XVI century) used by Delz, followed by a bibliography of the works Delz quotes in his apparatus.¹ Unfortunately, this section has been adapted quite carelessly from Delz's preface, and is full of misprints and mistakes.²

The text is connected to the apparatus not in the usual way, but through footnotes, an unwelcome (and poorly executed) novelty: the overlap of the numbers of the notes with that of the lines is a source of constant confusion (the press is to be blamed for this). The commentary is apparently well-organized. Littlewood lemmatizes one or more lines and then offers her observations, which usually include (besides a "second" translation) an explicative paraphrase of the sentences under discussion, some basic stylistic remarks, and comments on literary and historical issues; inter- and intratextuality are Littlewood's dominant interests, and her notes are full of subtle observations on Silius' references to other authors and to other passages of his own poem. Sometimes Littlewood wanders a little too much from her point, but in general the literary aspect of Silius' text is well covered.

Philological exegesis is a different matter. Littlewood handles with difficulty the interpretation of Delz's text and apparatus. Consider for example the three passages in which Delz signals that in his view the text is irremediably corrupt:

112-13 *iamque suis daret ut pugnae documenta †uocantis† | <.....> | et medias hasta uelox praeteruolat auras*: this is the text of Delz, also printed by Littlewood. In her commentary, however, Littlewood lemmatizes the two lines without the *crucis* and without signalling the lacuna. She writes: "Delz decides in favour of the present participle *uocantis* which completes the formal idiom *pugna uocare*, to solicit single combat, found in Virg. *Aen.* 12.125." No: Delz, obelizing *uocantis*, obviously does not accept it, and even rightly admonishes in the apparatus that we should *not* use *Aen.* 12.125 in order to justify *pugnae ... uocantis* here.

175 *unde genus †tristisque deae† manabat origo*: here too Littlewood does not reproduce the *crucis* in her lemma, and wrongly refers to "Delz's decision to follow the MSS with *tristis deae*." The rest of Littlewood's note is also wrong.

608-11: in line 609 *†uacuis†* is clearly impossible, since the shore is said to be full of people (610-12); Delz in his apparatus records the conjecture *patriis* of Damsté, and his own *notis* and *(solus)que suis* ("i. et ad cives suos solus"). Littlewood prints Delz's text and apparatus, lemmatizes *uacuis* between asterisks (not *crucis*), and incredibly comments: "The image of a solitary figure is crucial and Delz's conjecture of *uacuis* for the corrupt part of line 609 convincingly emphasizes the lonely desolation of the shore."

Other cases in which Littlewood gives an apparently wrong interpretation of the text or of Delz's apparatus include the following:

31-2: it is highly improbable that *inclinato cornu* can refer to the *Carthaginian* wing when the *prima acies* is Roman; this wing will be that of Paulus himself, as Spaltenstein says. Furthermore, *sine more ruebat* associated with *non parca fugae* cannot mean that the Romans' first line "surged forward precipitously" or "rushed forward with reckless speed." It cannot but refer to a retreat and a flight of the Romans' front line.

67-8: *sinit* is problematic, and probably corrupt. In her translation, Littlewood would seem to presuppose *furit* (printed by Duff): “So Hannibal is filled with battle-rage, is he? Strong enough to challenge Jupiter?”; but in her note she translates: “So I suppose Hannibal now has the power to wage war against Jupiter himself,” or, “literally”: “Suppose the Carthaginian allows that he’s (such a man who is) strong enough to attack Jupiter himself.” I am not sure I understand what Littlewood exactly means.

173-4: it is highly improbable that *iacet* has the meaning Littlewood assigns to it: the verb clearly refers to, and anticipates, the death of Phorcys which the poet is about to recount, as confirmed by “the slight echo of Virgil’s Priam (*Aen.* 2.558: *iacet ingens litore truncus*).”

178-80: Littlewood’s translation leaves *incumbens* out; in her note, she translates instead: “While (Phorcys), bearing down fiercely, aimed a blow in his left groin,” but *uiolentius* qualifies *dum laeuum petit ... inguen* (as to this her preceding translation is correct), not *incumbens*, which here has not “the broad sense of pressing an attack,” but instead means that Phorcys “se penche pout frapper, en se tendant en avant” (Spaltenstein). And while “dragged him to the ground” is a correct translation of *detrahat* (“lo tira giù,” Vinchesi), “dragged him *backwards*” (Littlewood in her note, my emphasis) is not.

190-2: *actam in caedes aciem* is the *Roman* battalion, not the Carthaginian one, and *totis mentibus* is to be taken closely not with *praecipitant*, but with *actam ... aciem*: “Then they (the Numidians), from behind and throwing themselves against the backs (of the Romans), crush the (Roman) troops which were engrossed in the carnage”; cf. Livy 22.48.3-4. Duff’s translation is similarly wrong; Spaltenstein and Vinchesi give the right interpretation.

240: surely not: “he ... sat ..., a terrible sight with his face streaming blood above his shield” (L.), but: “he sat down upon his shield, a formidable figure with his gory face” (Duff).

247-9: Damsté’s conjecture is not discussed in the commentary; *perfidus ensis* is awkwardly translated as “his deadly sword”; *peruius*, which is not found “in some MSS,” but in all of them, if we trust Delz’s apparatus, is improperly defined as “*lectio difficilior*.” Moreover, cf. Delz, “Nachlese zu Silius Italicus,” *MH* 54 (1997) 163-74, at 168-9.

264: not: “Lentulus was distraught, and ashamed of his flight,” but, as Delz explains in his apparatus rejecting Blass’ *redit*: “*mens*, sc. fugiendi, *abiit*”: Lentulus was leaving the battlefield, but, seeing Paulus wounded, changed his mind. The Ovidian passages quoted by Littlewood are pseudo-parallels.

420-1: Littlewood misunderstands Delz’s apparatus: *exilio collectis* is not “his suggestion,” but the text unanimously transmitted by the MSS, that he wants to leave untouched because of *Aen.* 2.798 *collectam exilio pubes*. (Delz’s suggestion, instead, is that two hemistichs are fallen after *collectis*, and that <*contemptus*> *Marte* is to be supplied.) Littlewood’s translation is unsatisfactory and does not seem to cohere with what she says in her note.

538-9: Littlewood refers *Titania ... / orbita* to the moon (not impossible in itself), with no comment; in the apparatus one reads: “*Titania ... orbita i. solaris currus*, v. Håkanson et adde Lucan. 9, 691.” Spaltenstein discusses the issue.

643-4: “They were determined to restore to life the kingdom of Aeneas,” Littlewood, following Duff; rather, “they were determined to bring back the kingdom of Aeneas under the laws of destiny,” i.e. to bring back Rome to those *fata* which gave her world dominion (as Vinchesi lucidly explains).

Besides almost never discussing the textual variants or the conjectures signalled in Delz’s apparatus or printed by him in his text, Littlewood almost never discusses the interpretations of her predecessors, and Silius’ exegetical tradition is ignored (only rarely she refers to Spaltenstein, sometimes in a confused or wrong way: see for example the note on 389-90; Maria Assunta Vinchesi’s excellent Italian translation (Milan 2001) is never mentioned); whereas the bibliography on literary issues is up-to-date, Littlewood does not quote any articles on textual matters. Furthermore, the book could have been edited more carefully, since we find a few misprints, especially in the Latin quotations.³ There are also other minor inaccuracies.⁴

To sum up, this is an uneven work: Littlewood is very good on literary matters, especially on issues of intra- and intertextuality, but also on broader issues of characterization and cultural significance; her notes often develop into interesting mini-essays, with in-depth comparative analyses of the historiographic sources. As an example of Littlewood’s cleverness as a literary critic, one can refer to the shrewd observations she often makes on the significance of proper names: see for example on the names of Crista (p. 77), Luca (p. 87), Telesinus (p. 89), Galba (p. 99), Curio (p. 103), Paulus himself (“There is wordplay on Paulus’ name in the phrase *nec parua ... imago* as there is in the contiguity of *Paulo* and *ingens* in line 305,” p. 127). One feels, however, that perhaps Littlewood could have written a monograph instead than a commentary, since she does not seem totally comfortable with the practices of textual criticism and philological exegesis.

Notes:

1. No departures are signalled from Delz’s text, though there is a divergence at line 382, where Littlewood reads *credidit* instead of *creditur*; the apparatus ad loc. should have been modified as well.

2. v means “editions Venetae annis 1483, 1492, 1493”; in the bibliography items are absent that are subsequently quoted in the apparatus (and are correctly present in Delz’s list; e.g. Henry’s *Aeneidea*, quoted in the apparatus to line 579; W. S. Watt, *BICS* 31 (1984) 153-60, quoted in the apparatus to line 302, etc.); titles are misquoted (Damsté wrote “Notulae,” not “Notae”); surnames are misspelled (“Håkansson,” twice); references are wrong: Damsté’s relevant article is not the one in *Mnemosyne* 38 (1910) 115-26, but that in 39 (1911) 113-14; Summers’ is not *CR* 14 (1900) 48-50, but *ibid.* 305-9; etc.

3. p. lxxiii: *De primo bello Punica*; p. 98: instead of *uictim* read *uicti*; p. 104: instead of *Hadriana* read *Hadriaca*; p. 123: instead of *partum* read *patrum*; p. 151: instead of *nostrum* read *nostram*; p. 173: instead of *permit* read *premit* (in the lemma itself); p. 180: instead of *accepit* read *adspexit* (again, in the lemma).

4. Sometimes Littlewood lemmatizes and comments on a different text from that

of Delz that she herself prints: see lines 474, 529, 554.

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