

BOOK REVIEW

Flavian Epic: Oxford Readings in Classical Studies. Edited By ANTONY AUGOUSTAKIS. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. x +538. Hardcover, \$150. ISBN 978-019965-0668.

This is truly the Golden Age of Flavian scholarship—especially on Flavian epic, where publications have never been so abundant. Philip Hardie’s leading study on post-Virgilian epic back in 1993 blazed a trail for scholars to follow. In recent years, this phenomenon culminated in the publications of three Brill’s Companions on each author: Silius Italicus in 2010, Valerius Flaccus in 2014, and Statius in 2015.

The volume under review proposes to take stock of the progress achieved by bringing together previously published articles and book chapters that helped define the great lines of enquiry in the field—so far (allusion/ intertextuality, style, genre, gender, spectatorship /visuality, and poetic engagement with Flavian Rome). The collection is divided into three large sections, each focusing on individual authors.

The first introductory chapter, by the editor, presents us with a review of the scholarship organized by author (Chapter 1: Flavian Epic Renaissance). Despite the claim to being non-exhaustive, it is rather detailed in scope. From the survey, it emerges that the Flavians’ obsession with tradition remains a focal point of Flavian scholarship, overall. By tradition, both Greek and Roman antecedents are meant here, turning intertextuality and/or the business of allusion into an inexhaustible well for literary studies. In fact, owing to the primacy of the *Aeneid* as a model, much work has been done on the Flavians’ relationship with Virgil, understandably. Of course, Lucan’s and Ovid’s crucial influences have been flagged up in relatively recent outputs, as they do in the present volume, but it is worth signalling here the need for more on the defining impact that these two poets had on their Flavian offspring. Indeed, the editor’s concluding note encourages the reader to view this collection as a stepping stone for future research.

Part I kicks off with Valerius Flaccus. Martha A. Davis’ chapter 2 (“*ratis audax*: Valerius Flaccus’ Bold Ship”), nicely ties up with Roberta Nordera’s (chapter 3, “Virgilianisms in Valerius Flaccus: A Contribution to the Study of Epic Language

in the Imperial Age”), by forming a diptych that shows how Valerius writes and engages with the tradition in a pioneering fashion that will set the tone for Flavian aesthetics. Marco Fucecchi’s chapter 4 (“The Restoration of Ancient Models: Epic Tradition and Mannerist Technique in Valerius’ *Argonautica* 6”) and Andrew Zissos’ chapter 5 (“Allusion and Narrative Possibility in the *Argonautica* of Valerius Flaccus”) consist of case studies, which both analyse how Valerius negotiates/innovates the lines of his narrative with/in relation to previous versions of the myth.

Part 2 opens up with Debra Hershkowitz on Statius (chapter 6: “*parce metu*, Cytherea: ‘Failed’ Intertext Repetition in Statius’ *Thebaid*, or Don’t Stop Me If You’ve Heard This One Before”), an excellent study on how a single intertext can inform a text multiple times. Chapter 7 (“Ovid’s Theban Narrative in Statius’ *Thebaid*”) by Alison Keith and Helen Lovatt’s chapter 11 (“Competing Endings: Re-reading the End of Statius’ *Thebaid* through Lucan”) have the merit to identify the importance of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and Lucan as alternative models of influence in the *Thebaid*. S. Georgia Nugent’s chapter 8 (“Statius’ Hypsipyle: Following in the Footsteps of Virgil’s *Aeneid*”) is essential on Statius’ problematic use of female voice.

Nugent also links up with Hershkowitz on mistrusting authoritative voices, and Stephen Hinds’ brilliant study on the timely need to re-assess women’s role as a defining feature of epic genre, not a threat (chapter 12, “Essential Epic: Genre and Gender from Macer to Statius”). Chapter 9 by Joanne Brown on the killing of Opheltes fittingly expands on the Hypsipyle episode and its aftermath, especially on the significance of *mors immatura* for the subsequent narrative (“*lacrimabile nomen Archemorus*: The Babe in the Woods in Statius’ *Thebaid* 4-6”). Neil Bernstein’s contribution on the compromised use of authoritative gaze, as when the gods famously avert their eyes prior to the fratricidal duel, questions the exemplarity and representability of spectacle in epic (chapter 10, “*auferte oculos*: Modes of Spectatorship in *Thebaid* 11”).

Part 3 turns to Silius. In chapter 13, Arthur Pomeroy explores ways in which Silius’ *Punica* engages with depictions of a Rome-to-be in *Aeneid* 8 (“Silius’ Rome: The Rewriting of Vergil’s Vision”). Both chapters 14 (“color *Ovidianus* in Silius’ *Punica*”) and 15 (“*lugendam formae sine uirginitate reliquit*: Reading Pyrene and the Transformation of Landscape in Silius’ *Punica* 3”) by Richard T. Bruère and Antony Augoustakis respectively, are particularly useful on Silius’ reception of Ovid. Raymond Marks, in chapter 16, convincingly argues that through the death of Flaminus and Paulus, Silius frames Trasimene and Cannae as *deuotiones* in order to

make sense of Rome's suffering ("*per uulnera regnum*: Self-destruction, Self-sacrifice and *Deuotio* in Silius' *Punica* 4–10"). In the final chapter, Alessandro Mezzanotte tracks down distilled allusions to Flavian Rome in the *Punica*, an epic he views as an attempt to exalt the Flavian dynasty (chapter 17: "Echoes of the Contemporary World in Silius Italicus").

Each chapter includes updated bibliography and, when possible, a postscript from the author reflecting on where the piece stands in relation to subsequent scholarship. Overall, this is a well-thought collection, extremely useful for students and scholars, either as an introduction to Flavian studies or as a consultation volume for its variety of approaches and extensive bibliography.

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