

BOOK REVIEW

A Commentary on Livy Books 41–45. By JOHN BRISCOE. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. Pp. xx + 823. Hardcover, £148.00/\$225.00. ISBN 978-0-19-921664-2.

This is the last of the four volumes of John Briscoe's massive *Commentary on Livy*, Books 31–45, the first of which appeared in 1973. The content in these last surviving five books, as always with Livy, is a mixed bag of annual events, the most important being the Third Macedonian War. Since the contemporary primary source, Polybius' Books 26–30, is only extant in scattered fragments, Livy's account, which of course used Polybius along with later Roman Annalists, remains the main extant account of these events, which were critical for Roman expansion into the Greek East. This volume, like its predecessors, is not, however, aimed at beginners or casual users of Livy. Anybody who does not know what an autoschediasm is does not even need to begin.

The introduction opens, as in the other volumes of the *Commentary*, with a useful list of passages corresponding to surviving sections of Polybius, as well as indicating where Polybius or an annalist seems to have been the source where Polybius' text is lost. Substantive sections of the introduction also deal with the state of the Roman calendar in these years, give a summary of Livy's account of the Roman declaration of war against Perseus, offer a good discussion of Roman motives for war, discuss pre-war diplomacy and the troops sent to the East. The chronology of events in the five books covered by the *Commentary* is also treated in a separate section, while a review of Roman legions active in these books continues the useful discussion in volume 3.

The commentary proper can then concentrate on explaining the text and its constitution, with the apparently pedestrian but really essential aim of discovering what Livy wrote. While Briscoe, as in the earlier volumes, pays due attention to the multifarious historical and antiquarian matters contained in these books, his main interest remains the constitution of the text. The incomplete, corrupt and dilapidated Vienna codex (Lat. 15) is the sole source for the text of these books, which Briscoe edited for Teubner Stuttgart (1986). Large chunks of the present *Commentary* are concerned to discuss aspects of this edition, which, how-

ever, as Briscoe himself with cruel honesty admits, has so many errors, especially in the textual apparatus, that they all need to be noted and corrected here. This admission carries the unfortunate implication that his Teubner text is, in effect, so unreliable (like the curate's egg, good in parts) that it should not be used without consulting the new *Commentary*. Users of the *Commentary*, however, who may be using the older standard text of Weissenborn–Müller, or even the Loeb of Sage and Schlesinger, will find the repeated corrections of the new Briscoe Teubner irritating; this reviewer also finds Briscoe's assertion that "a list in an appendix would have been unusable" incomprehensible; such a list would at least have allowed owners of his Teubner text to systematically correct it by hand, which they can now only do by reading the whole *Commentary*, looking for the corrections scattered ad loc. throughout. Moreover, Briscoe has also omitted from his List of Abbreviations almost all older contributions to textual criticism (except for W–M (Weissenborn–Müller)) that he discusses in detail, merely referring to his Teubner edition for this information. The new volume is thus not fully usable on its own; it requires at least a copy of Briscoe's self-confessedly unreliable Teubner edition to make sense of many of the discussions of the text. It is, of course, natural and legitimate that Briscoe also continually refers the reader to other volumes of his *Commentary* for historical or geographical details which he has already treated there; it remains a fact, however, that except for Livy aficionados, the new volume, despite the host of valuable detailed discussions of this important text and its historical content, will only be fully usable in a well-stocked Classics library (of which, fortunately, some still exist).

The *Commentary* closes with appendices on "Tenses of the Subjunctive in *Oratio Obliqua*," on Proconsuls and Praetors (a continuation of a discussion in vol. 3), a list of passages concerning the Peregrine Praetor and six pages in small print of Addenda and Corrigenda to volume 3 and to this volume. Five comprehensive indices complete the book, which brings a project to an end that has occupied Briscoe for more than half a century. Despite my criticisms in detail, he must be congratulated on completing his life-work.

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