

## BOOK REVIEW

*Campania in the Flavian Poetic Imagination*. Edited by ANTONY AUGOUSTAKIS and R. JOY LITTLEWOOD. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2019. Pp. xviii + 332. Hardback, \$105.00. ISBN: 978-0-19-880774-2.

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Campania is, in many ways, a place defined by opposing forces. The cool teeming waters of the Bay of Naples compete with the fires of Vesuvius and the lethal fumaroles of the Phlegraean Fields. A center of learning, full of gymnasia and philosophical schools teaching *virtus*, it also acquires a reputation for *vitia* and decidedly unlearned acts. Its tranquility and *otium* could be shattered by seismic activity, war, volcanic eruptions or political violence, and its Golden Age landscape (*Campania felix* in the words of Pliny the Elder) often succumbed to *luxuria* of sybaritic excess. This is a space that has been demarcated in numerous ways by literary, historical and political figures over the centuries, and the essays of this volume make a strong case for the importance of a particularly Flavian view of Campania. While some essays are stronger than others, the cumulative impact of this collection reinforces how these authors highlight and problematize Campania's political, environmental and historical heritage in order to communicate their message and to reflect on their own place in the larger Flavian literary and cultural milieu.

After a crisp introduction by the editors, Buongiovanni sets the scene by giving an overview of literary representations of Naples in the authors that will make up a large majority of this volume: Statius, Martial and Silius Italicus. Buongiovanni stresses how Greek elements of the city made Naples a gateway to Hellenism as well as a worthy second city in the Italian peninsula for writers, artists and social climbers. Ginsberg shows how "Campania became a site of traumatic memory that [Nero] was never quite able to put behind him and that ... Agrippina became a symbol for resistance to Nero through her death in that region" (29). Her piece focuses especially on the way the author of the *Octavia* and Martial align the Campanian waterscape to evoke both literary predecessors and Nero himself. Although

Valerius Flaccus' Argonauts never actually make it to Campania, Krasne investigates the way the volcanic landscape of this region is figured in his *Argonautica*. Through digressions and figurative language, Valerius blends the scientific and poetic tradition around Typhon, Mt. Aetna, the Harpies and the Phlegraean Fields to suggest gigantomachy and, possibly, civil war. Continuing with the volcanoes of the area, Maniotti triangulates Inarime (a.k.a. Ischia) with Aetna and Vesuvius in order to point out how Flavian epicists heighten its volcanic and gigantomachic pedigree.

Two papers consider Martial's epigrams about the region. Wolff accentuates how Baiae acts as an antithesis to Rome, for better (11.80) or worse (1.62), and that the problematics of the patron/client relationship haunt Martial even when in Campania. While this piece offers a nice overview of the evidence, it does not really push the evidence or offer more than cursory analysis. Neger's chapter elucidates the literary background to Martial's Campanian epigrams, whether Catullus (1.18, 4.30), Ovid (1.62) or Silius Italicus and Virgil (4.14, 11.50). The intertexts work to create a variety of associations – comic, tragic or miraculous – and Neger's readings suggest how poetic connections with place can influence the generic space of a work.

Statius devotes a number of poems in his *Silvae* to Campania and five scholars tackle how his poetry creates "a credible picture of the region" (101), but also a picture that is unconventional, imaginative and optimistic. Esposito points out that life goes on in Campania, post-Vesuvius, and Statius' poems elucidate the continuity of agriculture, business, religion and culture more generally (*Silv.* 3.5, 4.4), especially after the construction of the *Via Domitiana* (*Silv.* 4.3). Rosati's reading of *Silv.* 2.2 foregrounds its ephrastic quality and the "mythicization of everyday life" (119) found in the poem. It is a masterful explication. His addition of Epicurean and political connections demonstrates how the villa owner (Pollius Felix) plays "emperor" in the luxurious space of his villa. Felix and Book 3 of the *Silvae* (esp. 3.1, 3.5) are the subjects of the following chapter by Bessone. Her reading of 3.5 makes Naples and its surrounding area (even Baiae!) into an ideal city for *conjugal* love by activating intertexts with Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* and reversing the valence. A similar reversal can be seen in *Silv.* 3.1 where Hercules happily enters a rich temple in the luxurious villa of Pollius, a far cry from Evander's humble home in Vergil's *Aeneid* 8. The textual problems of *Silv.* 4.8 lead Lóio to intertexts, cosmology, prosopography and early Neopolitan history in order to frame her conjectures and conclusions, while Sacerdoti finds Seneca's *Naturales Quaestiones* and trauma theory integral to the understanding of *Silv.* 5.3. While some connections

in Sacerdoti's chapter seemed strained to me, I also found it to be an incredibly rich and fresh perspective on both the poem and post-Vesuvian trauma more generally. The interweaving of personal and regional catastrophe and applicability of trauma studies is a strategy that can yield results in many epochs and in many genres of Greek and Roman literature.<sup>1</sup>

Hannibal's activities in Campania make up a significant part of Silius Italicus' *Punica*, and the following section of this volume is devoted to Silius' depiction of this region. Fucecchi provides the intertextual and intratextual context of the larger "Campanian frame" of the battle of Cannae, especially Hannibal's stop at Laternum and Scipio's relationship with Campania. Biggs stresses how the pleasurable landscape of Campania acts, paradoxically, in a quasi-martial manner in its ability "to undermine Punic success" (202). Silius is self-consciously intertextual throughout the work, and Keith untangles some of the Virgilio-Ovidian knots in his representation of Cumae in Book 12 and the Cumaean bard Teuthras in Book 11. Cumae becomes a literary site through which Silius confirms "his admiration for the epic poets of the Augustan age and bears witness to his literary memory of their epics in his verse, as in his life" (232). In addition to Cumae, Capua is particularly important in the *Punica* and essays by Stocks as well as Pyy and van der Keur clarify the various ways in which it is characterized. It can be seen as fraught middle ground between chthonic monsters and sublime gods with Hannibal/Hercules (and maybe Silius himself) as impious hero or virtuous villain (Stocks). Or it can, like one of the Faceless Men of *Game of Thrones*, offer different doppelgängers to the reader – in their chapter, Pyy and van der Keur carefully delineate Capua as *altera Carthago*, *altera Troia* and *altera Roma*. The city takes on various identities for the characters and intertextual clues hint at its significant "programmatic and narratological functions" (268) for the work as a whole.<sup>2</sup>

A final chapter by Fielding details the impact that Statius' rediscovery in the 15<sup>th</sup> century CE had on the humanist poets of Naples such as Panormita, Pontano

<sup>1</sup>In addition to works like Meineck and Konstan's *Combat Trauma and the Ancient Greeks* (Palgrave 2014) and Doerries' *The Theater of War: What Ancient Greek Tragedies Can Teach Us Today* (Knopf, 2015), courses such as [Christenson's](#) read Roman literature through a trauma lens. A forthcoming volume by Karanika and Panoussi promises to add much to this discussion.

<sup>2</sup>The chapters on Silius, especially those focusing on Capua, can be placed into fruitful dialogue with A. Augoustakis' "Campanian Politics and Poetics in Silius Italicus' *Punica*," *ICS* 40.1 (2015) 155-69. Indeed, six essays in that *ICS* issue spring from an APA panel (2013) on the topic of "Campanian Cultures: Poetics, Location, and Identity."

(especially his *Urania*), Sannazaro and Bembo. To be a poet in Naples was no longer to be in the shadow only of Virgil; now poets also had to take into consideration the Statian poetic landscape. It is a fitting final chapter to this volume as a whole which shows the surprising and original ways in which these poets configure their works against the physical and literary landscape of Campania. This would continue in the writings of Goethe (“Beneath the purest sky, the most treacherous soil; ruins of inconceivable opulence, oppressive and saddening; boiling waters, clefts exhaling sulphur, rocks of slag defying vegetable life, bare, forbidding tracts; and then, at last, on all sides the most luxuriant vegetation, seizing every spot and cranny possible, running over every lifeless object, edging the lakes and brooks, and nourishing a glorious wood of oak on the brink of an ancient crater! And thus one is driven to and fro between nature and the history of nations: one wishes to meditate, and soon feels himself quite unfit for it. In the meantime, however, the living live on merrily, with a joyousness which we, too, would share. Educated persons, belonging to the world and the world's ways, but warned by serious events, become, nevertheless, disposed for reflection. A boundless view of land, sea, and sky ...” – *Letters from Italy*, March 1, 1787), and continues today in the contemporary *Neapolitan Quartet* by Elena Ferrante.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See J. Hughes and C. Buongiovanni (eds.) *Remembering Parthenope: The Reception of Classical Naples from Antiquity to the Present* (Oxford, 2015) for a fine collection about this topic.