

BOOK REVIEW

Ripensare la storia universale Giustino e l'Epitome delle Storie Filippiche di Pompeo Trogo. By ALICE BORGNA. Spudasmata, Band 176. Hildesheim, DE: Georg Olms Verlag, 2018. Pp. 294. Hardback, €54.00. ISBN 978-3-487-15660-6.

Pompeus Trogus is a difficult figure to study. Writing in the age of Augustus, a contemporary or near contemporary of Livy, his writing has been seen as the first genuine universal history written in Latin, and yet his is not a name that many would immediately recognise or turn to for Augustan history. The reason for this is that his work reaches us through the *epitome* of Justin, writing at least two centuries later, and consequently his *Historiae Philippicae* appears in an abridged and artificial form; reflecting Justin's world as much as it does that of Trogus. This makes any study of him difficult, and there remain important questions to ask of both Trogus and Justin, and the work that binds them together. The *Historiae Philippicae* is modeled in part on Theopompus' *Philippica*, but there are much wider influences as well. The original form was a vast collection of forty-four books, that sought to cover the history of the world, up to and including the Augustan age. It is clear that this was not Rome focused, but instead a sweeping study of all known lands and peoples, with ethnographic and geographic digressions, and a variety of different aims and ambitions. There is a temptation to view the condensed version we have as inferior, and to see in the *epitomator* / *abbreviator* a heavy and unsophisticated hand. It is worth recognizing, however, that by Late Antiquity at least, the *epitome* had become the standard version, presenting a slimmed down history of the world (see for instance the comments by Augustine and Orosius).

Borgna is not the first to look at Trogus and Justin and seek to answer some of the difficult questions surrounding the *Historiae Philippicae*. Trogus has been discussed in book length form by Yardley and Heckel (1997) and Yardley, Heckel and Wheatley (2011), Castiglioni (1967), Ferrero (1957), Eichert (1967), Richter (1987) and Seel (1972).¹ However, Borgna's book is a welcome addition to

¹ J. C. Yardley and W. Heckel, *Justin: Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus Books 11–12, Alexander the Great*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997); J. Yardley, P. Wheatley, & W. Heckel, *Justin*.

the historiography, and one that will become essential reading for any new approaches to both Trogus and Justin. The book is divided into 13 chapters, and provides a strong willingness to be led by the original source, and ask new questions of the *epitome*. This runs alongside an excellent engagement with scholarship, and a careful framing of new observations and embryonic arguments. The opening chapters set the scene for the study, work through the basic framework of the source and the two writers (1-3; 15-45). Although we can never really know that much about Trogus (“Di Pompeo Trogo non sappiamo montlo, anzi,” 25), Borgna presents a fluent interpretation of him, placing him in his immediate backdrop and providing a close analysis of the information that Justin gives us in the epitome. There is also a good awareness here of Trogus’ importance and reputation, not just through his historical work but also his other literary interests (28-29). Although the dating issues and the title are well discussed, a touch more could have been made of each, in particular when thinking about when the work was completed (31-36). The discussion of Justin is promising, and although it is so difficult to know for certain about when he was writing, Borgna provides a clear discussion of the various modern approaches (37-45). Taken together these chapters provide a clear and focussed introduction to the topic.

The next three chapters complement one another and demonstrate strong source analysis. In the fifth chapter (“La Tecnica Epitomatoria,” 47-72), Borgna deals with the relationship between the prologues (commonly seen as genuine Trogus) and the content (a paraphrase by Justin). This allows for a perspective on Justin and his aims in his abridgement of the work, creating not a history, but instead *exempla*. Chapter 6 is one of the strongest in the volume (“Giustino e la storia,” 73-107), where Borgna considers the wider scope and aims of Justin, beyond simply those interested in history or historical writing. This section begins by recognizing that the work is “una storia senza spazio né tempo” (73-82)², and this can be read across a number of different levels. Borgna recognises that

Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus, Volume II: Books 13-15: The Successors to Alexander the Great, (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); L. Castiglioni, *Studi Intorno alle ‘Storie Filippiche’ di Giustino* (Rome, 1967); L. Ferrero, *Struttura e metodo dell’Epitome di Giustino* (Torino, 1957); O. Eichert, *Vollständiges Wörterbuch zur Philippischen Geschichte des Justinus*, (Hildesheim, 1967); H. D. Richter, *Untersuchungen zur hellenistischen Historiographie: Die Vorlagen des Pompeius Trogus für die Darstellung der nachalexandrischen hellenistischen Geschichte (Iust. 13-40)*, (Frankfurt, 1987) & O. Seel, *Eine römische Weltgeschichte: Studien zum Text der Epitome des Iustinus und zur Historik des Pompejus Trogus* (Nürnberg, 1972).

² Trans: “A story without space or time.”

Justin's approach to historical truth is not visible only in the omissions that can render the narrative of events illogical, confused and painfully inaccurate, but "in alcuni punti, infatti, è possibile intuire un intervento più consapevole da parte del breviatore, che alterebbe il dettato originale per renderlo maggiormente rispondente al gusto suo e del pubblico che ha in mente" (82).³ This demonstrates how Justin was working in a conscious manner, around set interests ("intorno a nuclei di interesse identificabili," 104). Borgna writes: "Giustino non ha tagliato senza discrezione, ma seguendo un criterio sistematico" (104).⁴ In the last chapter of this section Borgna returns to the issues surrounding Justin, the date he was writing and who he really was ("La datazione e l'identità: nuove proposte," 108-127). The argument presented is much bolder here and more explicit in the prose, with the date of 321 suggested as the *terminus ante quem*, drawing upon a panegyric to the emperor for that year. This would not be accepted by all; and the source used can be analysed in a slightly different way, but the analysis leading towards this point is compelling.

The next few chapters move away from Justin and instead return to Trogus. The great strength to this section is how carefully Borgna rebuilds and reconstructs Trogus himself and his work. The writer emerges not just as a historian, but rather an observer and recorder of the natural world, and this bleeds into his historical process and focus, for instance the ethnographic observations ("L'originalità di Pompeo Trogo," 131-155). Chapter 10 provides an extensive study of the alleged anti-Roman focus of the work ("Il senso della storia di Trogo e il suo presunto antiromanesimo," 157-202). There is a temptation, certainly, to see in Trogus' universal history a deliberate snubbing of the Roman past (and present), and this anti-Roman perspective has often hinged on the potential verbatim speech of Mithridates given in the *epitome*. This speech certainly presents a damning indictment of Rome. The king of Pontus speaks of Roman vulnerability, their greatest defeats, intrinsic lust for power and conquest (*atque ut ipsi ferunt conditores suos lupae uberibus altos, sic omnem illum populum luporum animos*

³ Trans: "In some places, in fact, it is possible to recognize a more conscious intervention by the abreviator, that would alter the original dictation to make it more responsive to his taste and the public he has in mind."

⁴ Trans: "Justin did not cut without discretion, but [was] following a methodical criterion."

inexplebiles sanguinis, atque imperii divitiarumque avidos ac ieiunos habere).⁵ In this chapter Borgna paints a very different perspective of Trogus, not as someone who is anti-Rome, but rather celebrating aspects of Roman peace brought by Augustus, and using non-Roman history (of for instance the successors to Alexander) to show the other side of power. This chapter closes by drawing upon a particularly telling depiction of the Princeps from Trogus: “*Nec prius perdomitae provinciae iugum Hispani accipere potuerunt, quam Caesar Augustus perdomito orbe victricia ad eos arma transtulit populumque barbarum ac ferum legibus ad cultiorem vitae usum traductum in formam provinciae redegit*” (202).⁶ The final two chapters are much shorter, and paint rather more embryonic arguments. In Chapter 11 Borgna looks to Book XLIII, identifying a sense of local pride and identity in the work (203-210). Chapter 12 is brief, and makes some useful points concerning the different approaches taken by Livy and Trogus (211-214). The two could be seen as working towards the same goal, a celebration of Roman peace, as Borgna avers “la storia *senza* Roma di Trogo non è quindi una storia *contro* Roma, ma una storia *per* Roma” (212).⁷ These succinct chapters are then followed by a fluent and eloquently framed conclusion (215-220), an extensive bibliography (221-262), clear indices (263-292) and a short English summary (293-294).

To close, Borgna should be commended for providing an excellent and detailed study. The prose is fluent and focussed, and although Pompeus Trogus, Justin and the *Historiae Philippicae* remain difficult to fully grasp and explore, this is a valuable addition to the scholarship. If some of the arguments do hold, then we should look again at when Justin was writing, and what both he and Trogus were seeking to do. One appears to be selecting anecdotes from an ancient history to serve a moralising purpose in rhetorical schools; the other (original) writer appears not to be attacking Rome, but supporting the peace that it brings. This would mean that Trogus’ importance lay not just in his being a Gallic writer of universal history, but rather in exposing the widespread nature of support for peace and the Princeps who forged it. Pompeus Trogus remains a difficult figure

⁵ Trans: “And they themselves say that their founders were nourished by the teats of a wolf, and thus their whole population has the spirit of wolves, insatiably bloodthirsty and wretchedly greedy for power and riches.”

⁶ Trans: “Nor would the Spaniards submit to the yoke, even after their country was over-run, until Caesar Augustus, having subdued the rest of the world, turned his victorious arms against them, and reduced this barbarous and savage people, brought by the influence of laws to a more civilized way of life, into the form of a province.”

⁷ Trans: “Trogus’ history *without* Rome is not therefore history *against* Rome, but history *for* Rome.”

to study, but Borgna has shone a bright and hopeful light upon him, his epitoma-
tor and the work that binds them together.

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