

## EDITORS, COMMENTATORS AND STATIUS

LÓIO (A.) (ed.) *Editing and Commenting on Statius' Silvae*. (*Mnemosyne Supplements* 464.) Pp. xiv + 257, b/w & colour ills. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2023. Cased, €114. ISBN: 978-90-04-52841-3. doi:10.1017/S0009840X24000593

Statius' *Silvae* demand much of its editors and commentators. The Dutch humanist Parrhasius felt more confident of a victory over the Lernaean hydra than struggling with the text of Statius ('*malem cum hydra: certior victoriae spes esset*'). At every turn readers of *Silvae* are confronted with a combination of Statius' idiosyncratic style and recherché allusivity, and a seriously potholed manuscript tradition. Despite these challenges, and in tandem with what Lóio identifies as 'an ever-increasing interest in Flavian poetry' (p. 14), there has been a surge in commentaries on the *Silvae* over the last several decades by brave scholars.

This volume, which originated as a conference at the Centre for Classical Studies at the University of Lisbon, organised by the editor Lóio, provides a welcome vantage point from which to reflect upon both recent commentary work on the *Silvae* and the *longue durée* of their textual tradition, from their rediscovery by Poggio in 1417. The volume thus stresses a 'focus on continuity and progression, from the earliest attempts to future endeavours' (p. 12) – a not uncomplicated policy. The volume also comes at a time when the commentary 'genre' has received focused critical attention (R. Gibson and C. Kraus [edd.], *The Classical Commentary* [2002]; C. Kraus and C. Stray [edd.], *Classical Commentaries* [2016]), and the particular value of this volume is that many of the contributors have produced recent commentaries on the *Silvae*, who are, as Lóio points out, 'equipped with the necessary experience to discuss the peculiarities of working on this particularly challenging text' (p. 12). A number of key chapters provide insightful reflections on the processes and inherent challenges of preparing commentaries on the *Silvae*, and devote space to redressing and expanding upon previous comments. A further theme common to several strong chapters (L. Roman, C. Newlands) is the notion of poetry as a form of commentary, including the exegetical nature of the *Silvae* themselves and later poetic responses to them.

Following Lóio's introductory chapter, which provides an admirably lucid overview of the *Silvae*'s textual tradition and the history of its editing and commenting, the volume falls into three sections. Part 1, 'The (First) Rediscovery', contains two chapters devoted to early Italian scholarship on the *Silvae*, following the faltering beginnings of its circulation in the fifteenth century. G. Abbamonte draws attention to the early 'Roman circle of Humanists' working on the *Silvae*, which constitutes an important, and overlooked, interstice between Poggio's discovery and the subsequent flurry of interest in Florence that began in the 1470s, peaking with Angelo Poliziano's 1480–81 lectures on the *Silvae*. Abbamonte maps out a complex network of Roman humanists, such as Giulio Pomponio Leto, Niccolò Perotti and Domizio Calderini, which produced a body of work on the *Silvae* for scholastic purposes, each scholar vying in their ambitions 'to become the "official" interpreter of a text which did not have a previous tradition of commentaries' (pp. 42–3). Thereafter follows a fine chapter by Roman on Poliziano, whose production of his own poetic *silvae* is viewed by Roman as inseparable from his prose commentaries on Statius' *Silvae*, thereby illuminating Poliziano's Humanist approach to education. 'Scholarship, poetry, and pedagogy' thus present 'interconnected threads in the broader tapestry of the Humanist's life's work' (p. 49), and through a range of themes Roman traces the interconnected links that emerge between Poliziano's prose exegesis, his poetry and the

*Silvae*. For Poliziano the *Silvae*'s miscellaneous nature, status as a *praeludium*, self-conscious belatedness and 'multi-source' allusivity offered a fruitful propaedeutic model for students to tackle before reaching the more acceptable texts of the Latin canon. The chapter covers an expansive range of material, but occasionally risks losing sight of the *Silvae* for the trees, and Statius' poetry is overlooked or sidelined at important junctures. For instance, Roman's exploration of 'miscellanies' (pp. 55–62) provides interesting insights into Poliziano's interest in Menippean satire and the 'scholar-poet' Callimachus, but misses another, crucial scholar-poet: Statius' father, who is credited by the poet in *Silvae* 5.3 for many of the literary qualities that Roman discusses throughout the chapter.

Part 2, 'The Sequel: a New Age of Disclosure', gives space to researchers who have engaged with commentary and editorial work on the *Silvae*, and it contains some of the most insightful papers, which provide reflection both on commenting on Statius and on the nature of the commentary form. B. Gibson's chapter is a highlight, drawing attention to the (often overlooked) importance of translation in commentaries, the various attitudes towards their inclusion and the productive use to which translation – not just within the academic commentary – can be put in illuminating textual and interpretative issues. Translation's (perhaps obvious) ability to provide sense and meaning to a text thus provides a crucial exegetical tool for the commentator as well as holding 'an important role to play in the process of editing the text itself' (p. 101). Gibson surveys a number of commentators and translators of Statius as well as turning to examples from his own 2006 commentary on *Silvae* 5, judiciously reassessed. A. Pittà's chapter follows, suggesting a number of pleasing emendations to the text of the *Silvae* as well as arguing for the adoption of older, neglected conjectures, including, at *Silvae* 1.1.85, Manutius' (1502) convincing *quem tradere es ausus* for the Matritensis' *quem traderis ausus*, thus more clearly echoing Statius' *tradere ausus sum* in the preface to *Silvae* 1. Pittà, however, unlike the authors of other chapters in this section, does not develop broader considerations of the commentary form or of the peculiarities of commenting on Statius.

The following chapter, 'Commenting on the *Silvae*: Visuality, Versatility, Verisimilitude', is a classic contribution by K. Coleman. In a typically rigorous and illuminating chapter Coleman draws attention to what can be gained by drawing on extra-textual material to explain a text as entrenched in its social world and as poetically invested in material culture as the *Silvae*. The chapter contains excellent interpretations of the effigy of Lucan in 2.7.128–31, identified here (as by Friedrich Vollmer in 1898) as an *imago clipeata*, supported by compelling parallels with Pompeian wall paintings, and of the *torus asper* that Pollius Felix dedicates to Hercules in 3.1.37–8, with *asperitas* connoting a technical term for high-relief carving, again reinforced by *comparanda* in material culture. Occasionally, further steps might be required to produce something more than a neat parallel and to explicate the ways in which the *Silvae* so singularly bridge the 'formalism – historicism' divide. For example, if the slew of rhetorical questions with which the Cupids pepper Venus in *Silvae* 1.2.54–7 evince 'a certain whimsical realism' that is 'instantly recognizable in the visual register' (p. 130), it is also important to contemplate how Statius activates this visual quality, a parallel for which can be found in Quintilian's use of rhetorical questions and disjunctives in his key discussion of *enargeia* (*Inst.* 6.2.31–2). This, however, certainly does not detract from a chapter that shows just how productive conscientious attention to material culture can be for interpreting the *Silvae* – a proposition often preached, but far less practised.

Part 3, 'A Path to the Future: Statian Readings in Augustan Poetry', comprises four chapters dedicated to Statius' engagement with his poetic predecessors. It is uncertain how convincing Augustan intertextuality and allusion is as a model for a putative 'next wave of scholarship' (p. 17), and a few chapters in this section, whilst advancing

compelling, and neglected, Augustan intertexts for the *Silvae*, might whiff slightly too much of 1990's 'New Latin' to afford a truly prophetic glimpse of future Statian studies. In 'Errant Poetics: Rethinking a Comment on *Silvae* 2.2.83–85' Newlands combines a poignant reflection on the process of preparing her own 2011 commentary on *Silvae* 2 with an investigation of an overlooked, and problematic, Virgilian intertext (*Aen.* 6.900–2) that occurs at *Silvae* 2.2.83–5, on the *diaeta* in the villa of Pollius Felix in Surrentum, which raises issues of poetic succession and extends Newlands' important notion of Statius as a poet 'between Naples and Rome'. This cogent investigation could be strengthened further still by Statius' plea, at *Silvae* 5.3.104–15, for Parthenope to tend to his father's tomb: Statius here imagines a counterfactual scenario in which his father would grant fame to Parthenope as a Greek poet, thus replacing the Roman with the Hellenic, and, importantly, Statius' poetic father with his biological one. G. Rosati's chapter on *Silvae* 1.2, the *epithalamium* to Stella Arruntius, convincingly shows how Cupid's *suasoria* to Venus (1.2.65–102) engages with the proem to Ovid's *Remedia amoris* (1–40), here retrofitted to suit the requirements of the Domitianic era. How this ultimately relates to 'editing and commenting' is never quite made clear, and in a volume where the connections between text, intertext and commentary are generally handled intelligibly and suggestively, the oversight is notable. The same might be said for F. Bessone's following chapter 'The Hut and the Temple: Private Aetiology and Augustan Models in *Silvae* 3.1', which argues for an intricate set of intertexts – the most important being *Aeneid* 8 – deployed in Statius' poem, dedicated to Pollius' temple to Hercules, in order to recreate 'for his patron the Augustan myth of Rome's metamorphosis, from brambles to golden shrines' (p. 222). Lóio provides an exemplary final chapter, on *Silvae* 4.4 and Propertius 2.1, and makes a compelling case for how intertextuality can not only uncover hermeneutic possibilities, but can also be 'particularly valuable in establishing and clarifying the text' (p. 226). Given the inherent difficulties in the manuscript traditions of both Propertius and Statius, Lóio explores how establishing intertextual parallels can shed light not only on the target text, but equally on the source. Lóio focuses on a set of connections between the (potentially) lacunose passage *Silvae* 4.4.93–105 and the equally problematic Propertius 2.1.35–8 to draw a number of conclusions, including an astute argument for retaining the often-athetised lines 2.1.37–8, in which *Silvae* 4.4 'becomes a testimony of the transmitted order of Propertius 2.1.35–38' (p. 239).

The editing of the book is generally of a high standard, although a few errors creep into the mix, and there are several incorrect cross-reference citations and bibliographical omissions of cited references. Ultimately, the volume is a welcome addition to an increasing body of scholarship on both Statius' *Silvae* and on the commentary genre, and the contributors combine these two aspects in a number of insightful, highly fertile ways. As the introduction notes, there is much work yet to be done on the *Silvae*'s editorial and commentary history – there are, across the centuries, extensive bodies of Dutch, French, German and English scholarship on the *Silvae* awaiting attention, and the volume shows a productive path forward. Along with this increased attention to the *Silvae*, there is also scope for further reflection on the social and institutional frameworks – including those of contemporary academia – within which textual criticism and commentary takes place: as several chapters show, attention to the (personal, pedagogic, socio-political) motivations behind editorial and exegetical methodologies are as crucial as their outcomes in illuminating both text and scholarship; and if this book stresses a 'focus on continuity and progression' (p. 12), the points of divergence and changes of direction are of equal, if not more, significance.

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