

REVIEW

A NEW EDITION OF JUSTIN, BOOKS 11–23

Justin, *Abrégé des Histoires Philippiques du Trogue Pompée II. Livres XI–XXIII*. Collection des Université de France. Série Latine. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2018. Pp. 277. Paperback, €59.00. ISBN 978-2-251-01479-1.

The only preserved work of Justin is the *Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus*, and until recent decades modern scholarship has regarded him as an incompetent historian and a mediocre writer. New translations, commentaries, and critical readings of his work have continued to change the former *communis opinio*, and nothing indicates that Justin will return to his former obscurity. J. C. Yardley translated Justin’s work into English in 1994, and L. Ballesteros Pastor published a commentary on the section of the work devoted to the Mithridatic Wars in 2013. Recent works also include the analyses of Justin’s work in the context of the ancient genre of universal history by A. Borgna and D. Hofmann.¹ In addition to these important publications, three multi-authored volumes entitled *Studi sull’Epitome di Giustino* have been published in the last decade.²

Modern scholarship has abandoned the sterile *Quellenfrage* and the hunt for the original Pompeius Trogus. Justin is now considered as an historian in his own right and with his own opinions, although his work is sometimes still characterised as ‘a clumsy abridgement’ and described as ‘notoriously marred by historiographical inaccuracies, inexplicable omissions and an apparently ineffective editing’.³ According to Justin (43.5.11–12), Pompeius Trogus was a third-generation Roman citizen from Gaul whose father had served under Caesar. Trogus apparently wrote his *Philippic History* in the second half of the first century BCE and only one further work, *On Animals*, is ascribed to him. The title *Philippic History* is still a mystery. The adjective ‘Philippic’ can refer both to the battlefield in Macedonia, where the Republicans lost the civil war, and to persons such as Philip II, who plays a prominent role in Books 7–9. It could also be an allusion to the universal historical work entitled *Philippica* by Theopompos of Chios, whom Trogus used as one of his sources. Scholars have also suggested that ‘Philippic’ refers to either the philosophy of the work or

¹ Yardley and Develin (1994); Ballesteros Pastor (2013); Borgna (2018); Hofmann (2018).

² Bearzot and Landucci (2014); Bearzot and Landucci (2015); Galimberti and Zecchini (2016). See now also Emberger (2019).

³ Borgna (2018) 293 (English summary).

Cicero's famous speeches against Mark Antony, but none of these explanations is entirely convincing: 'Unfortunately, it is the vague appropriateness of the adjective "Philippic" to so many of the aspects of the history (content, scope, style and context) that makes it impossible to say with confidence which one—if, indeed, only one—recommended the title to the author.'⁴

Universal history as a literary genre originated in the Greek historiography of the fourth century BCE, but Ephoros and other writers are poorly preserved and almost only names to us. Modern scholars have, however, distinguished between a synchronic model, represented by (among others) Polybios, and a diachronic one, with Diodorus Siculus as the best-preserved example. This twofold model seems to be too simple, but as a literary genre universal history flourished in the first century BCE, although Pompeius Trogus is apparently the only one writing in Latin, and seems to have modelled his work after Diodorus.⁵ Justin's heavily abbreviated epitome of Pompeius Trogus' universal history begins with the Assyrian king Ninus and continues down to Augustus in forty-four books, but two-thirds of the text are dedicated to Alexander the Great and Hellenistic history.

The obvious problem is to distinguish between the original work written by Trogus and Justin's reworking of it. Modern scholars have debated to which degree Justin reworked or abbreviated Trogus' work and have tried to identify the passages where Trogus is believed to be quoted *verbatim*. It is an unsolvable question. Justin's work is a selection or rather an abbreviation, because Orosius called Justin an epitomator.⁶ Justin has been called 'a mystery', 'more orator than historian', and 'an unknown author of unknown date'.⁷ This is all accurate. Justin only tells us in the preface that he excerpted Trogus' forty-four books in his *otium* in Rome, but he does not indicate the purpose of the stay in the capital or his native land:

During a period of free time which we had in the city, I excerpted from his forty-four published volumes all the most noteworthy material. I omitted what did not make pleasurable reading or serve to provide a moral, and I produced a brief anthology of sorts to refresh the memory of those who had studied history in Greek, and to provide instruction for those who had not.⁸

⁴ Yardley and Heckel (1997) 25; see also Mineo ap. Mineo and Zecchini (2016) XV–XIX, with references.

⁵ On Pompeius Trogus see also Levene (2007) 623–9.

⁶ Oros. 1.8.1: *Pompeius historicus eiusque breuiator Iustinus*. Baynham (2003) 28: 'heavily abbreviated'.

⁷ Yardley (1994) 3 and (1997) 17; Yarrow (2006) III.

⁸ Justin, Praef. 4: *horum igitur quattuor et quadraginta voluminum (nam totidem edidit) per otium, quo in urbe versabamur, cognitione quaeque dignissima excerpti et omissis his, quae nec cognoscendi voluptate*

Based on his Latin and the attention paid to Carthage in the work, a North African origin of Justin has been suggested, but the idea of *Africitas* has been discarded and Justin also shows interest in the history of Gaul and Sicily in his epitome of Trogus.⁹ Justin's work is normally dated to the age of the Antonines or the early third century CE. This date rests on stylistic, linguistic, literary, and finally historical arguments. The latter can be found in Book 41, in which Justin mentions the Parthians. R. Syme has, however, argued for a date at the end of fourth century, and G. Zecchini has strengthened this date between the last decades of the fourth or the first years of the fifth century with references to the *Historia Augusta*, in which Trogus appears in a list of Latin historians in danger of disappearing, if no measures are taken to save them. Most recently, D. Hofmann has reached a similar conclusion through a linguistic analysis,¹⁰ but, like Arrian's *Anabasis of Alexander*, the question of the absolute date of Justin's work still 'remains a stumbling block' and 'certainty is hardly attainable'.¹¹

The first volume of Justin in the Collection Budé was published in 2016. It includes the Latin text and a French translation of the first ten books together with a lengthy introduction by the translator Bernard Mineo who is responsible also for the critical apparatus.¹² The historical notes are written by Giuseppe Zecchini, and this division of labour is maintained in the second volume, which includes Books 11–23. A third and final volume on the Hellenistic kingdoms and the history of Rome is in preparation, and thus a new and complete edition will have been published within a few years. Zecchini's historical notes in the second volume (147–245) are excellent with useful, but selective references to other preserved ancient sources and modern scholarship. The notes reflect that Books 11 and 12 on Alexander the Great are the part of Justin's work that have attracted the most attention of modern scholars. Of a total of 351 notes, 140 concern the two books on the Macedonian king that also take up almost one third of the Latin text and French translation. These two books will also be the focus of this review, after a brief presentation of the other parts of the second Justin-volume in the Collection Budé.

The volume begins with the two books on the history of Alexander the Great followed by Books 12–17 by an account of the Diadochi down to the

iucunda nec exemplo errant necessaria, breve veluti florum corpusculum feci, et qui Graece didicissent, quo admonerentur, et qui non didicissent, quo instruerentur. Translations are drawn from Yardley and Heckel (1997).

⁹ See Syme (1988); Yardley and Heckel (1997) 10; and Mineo ap. Mineo and Zecchini (2016) XLIII–XLV, with references to additional literature.

¹⁰ SHA *Aurel.* 2.1; also *Prob.* 2.7. Zecchini (2016); Cartledge (2004) 256: 'a third century CE epitomator'. For an overview of the debate, see Syme (1988) and Borgna (2018) 39–45.

¹¹ Bosworth (1995) 4.

¹² Mineo and Zecchini (2016).

battle of Koroupedion in 281 BCE, in which Lysimachos was killed. The following books comprise the most comprehensive preserved history of Epirus and Carthage, while the Sicilian tyrants, including Dionysios and Agathocles, are the subjects of Books 19–23, where this edition ends. Some of these books, especially the Carthaginian history, constitute an important, but often neglected source, although Justin's narrative is very uneven, and his accuracy varies.¹³ The Latin text of Book 15 comprises only five pages in the Budé edition. Volume 2 also includes a bibliography (247–67) and a short, but useful index of places and names (269–77). There are, however, some minor confusions in the bibliography with references to authors with more than one title published in the same year. Heckel (1981) in note 7 on p. 8 is in fact identical with Heckel (1981a) in the bibliography, and some works mentioned in the notes are missing: e.g., Borghini (1960), (1972), and (1979), together with Champeaux (1982) on p. 145.¹⁴

Justin is normally grouped with Diodorus and Curtius Rufus and together they are characterised as the three extant historians of the so-called Vulgate tradition for the history of Alexander the Great. This tradition, which is thought to derive from Cleitarchos of Alexandria, has been analysed by N. G. L. Hammond in *Three Historians of Alexander the Great* (1983), a work which surprisingly is not included in the bibliography of the Budé translation. Hammond discusses the sources of Justin's account of Alexander, and, although he characterises Justin as 'both ruthless and careless', he also points out that important topics concerning the history of the Macedonian king 'either appear for the first time (for us) in J[ustin] or are more fully treated than in D[iodorus] 17'.¹⁵ According to Justin, Olympias was involved in the assassination of Philip II, and Alexander was poisoned by Antipater and his sons. Hammond argues that Justin, or rather Trogus, abbreviated a lost account by Satyros on these two episodes rather than Cleitarchos, who seems to have been the most popular historian on Alexander the Great in Rome in the late Republic and Early Empire.

Despite Hammond's attempted rehabilitation, Justin's reputation as an Alexander historian is still not high. In his recent path-breaking biography of the Macedonian king, A. Demandt had only four references to Justin in the index, which does not include the notes,¹⁶ and in the introduction to the new English translation and commentary on the two books on Alexander, W.

¹³ For Justin as source for the history of Carthage see Brizzi (2015) and in general Yardley (1994) 1.

¹⁴ Champeaux (1982) is included in the bibliography of the first volume, unlike the articles by A. Borghini.

¹⁵ Hammond (1983) 86. For a rather critical view of Hammond's work, see Yardley and Heckel (1997) 36 n. 86.

¹⁶ Demandt (2009) 635.

Heckel called Justin ‘the poorest representative of the so-called “Vulgate tradition”’, and added ‘it is also the work of a man who had neither a great interest in, nor a talent for, the writing of history’.¹⁷ Heckel’s critical commentaries on Justin’s account also include assessments such as ‘the hopelessly confused chronology and sequence of events’ concerning the narrative of Alexander’s interventions in Greece and the more generic critique that ‘in several places, Justin summarises or abbreviates events in such a way as to create historical nonsense’.¹⁸ These are important observations in a discussion of Justin’s value as a source for the life of Alexander, but it does not contribute much to the understanding of Justin’s work and its narrative.

The picture of Alexander the Great in the *Philippic History* is ambiguous, but mostly critical. L. Prandi has in a recent analysis examined three elements in Justin’s narrative. Firstly, she discusses the comparison with Alexander’s father, Philip II, in 9.8, where it is said that that Philip ‘was succeeded by his son Alexander who surpassed his father both in good qualities and bad’.¹⁹ Prandi concludes that the picture of Philip is more positive because Justin ends Book 9 with the statement that ‘with such qualities did the father lay the basis for a world-empire and the son bring to completion the glorious enterprise’.²⁰ Secondly, she discusses Alexander’s cruelty and the murder of Kleitos the Black in a drinking bout. Thirdly, the theme is the terror practised by Alexander during the campaigns.²¹ Based on this analysis, Prandi concludes that Justin presents a critical portrait of the king: ‘personaggio tremendo e crudele soprattutto con chi era più vicino, uomo predestinato alla vittoria, ma non Grande se si considera che viene “sconfitto” nel confronto con il padre’.²² Other scholars also emphasise that Justin or Trogus gives the most negative appraisal of Alexander’s character among the preserved ancient sources. C. Rubincam has even argued that the epithet *Magnus* in Justin’s narrative only functions as a distinguishing label or as a Roman cognomen; this seems, however, to be rather over-stretching the evidence.²³

Justin explicitly conveys his criticism of Alexander the Great in different contexts. The most significant instance is the description of Alexander’s adoption of Persian court protocol, including the dress and diadem of the Dareios,

¹⁷ Yardley and Heckel (1997) 40.

¹⁸ Yardley and Heckel (1997) 38–9. Cartledge (2006): ‘for what that is worth. A sobering thought.’

¹⁹ Justin 9.8.11: *huic Alexander filius successit et virtute et vitiis patre maior.*

²⁰ Justin 9.8.21: *quibus artibus orbis imperii fundamenta pater iecit, operis totius gloriam filius consummauit.*

²¹ Same in Heckel ap. Yardley and Heckel (1997) 211: ‘this view of Alexander is stronger in Justin/Trogus than in other extant Alexander historians’.

²² Prandi (2015) 13.

²³ Rubincam (2015).

where Justin concludes that ‘he had forgotten that great power is lost, not won, by such conduct’.²⁴ Justin also blames him for uncontrolled anger in connection with the murder of Kleitos the Black. This famous episode is also reproduced at length by Arrian, Plutarch, and Curtius Rufus, but Justin’s narrative includes a brief passage on Alexander’s other crimes, including the murder of Parmenion, Philotas, and members of his own family.²⁵ The Roman tradition in the early Principate of ‘Alexander the Tyrant’ and his misdeeds includes elements such as his excessive drinking, the claim to be son of a god, the orientalising conduct at court, especially the introduction of the Persian act of *proskynesis*, his arrogance, growing despotism, and his lack of self-control. Arrian also addresses these criticisms in the so-called ‘Great Digression’ in the middle of his *Anabasis of Alexander*, where he disrupts the chronological narrative and relates three episodes that emphasises different aspects of Alexander’s personality: the murder of Kleitos, the introduction of *proskynesis*, and the Pages’ conspiracy. In contrast to Justin, Arrian excuses these ‘misdeeds due to haste or anger’. Arrian defends Alexander against all criticism and emphasises in his defence the youth of the king and ‘his unbroken good fortune’. The *Anabasis of Alexander* focus on the Macedonian king as a military commander and as a man, but it also contains a few implicit commentaries on the Roman empire of Arrian’s own time, and the same can be observed in Justin’s work.²⁶

Zecchini stresses in his historical notes on the two books on Alexander that there are several passages in which Justin draws implicit parallels with Roman history. One example is the Macedonian king’s stay in Phoenicia, where he, according to Justin, met many kings and ‘accepted a number of them as allies, according to the deserts of each, while others he deprived of their thrones, replacing them with new rulers’.²⁷ This description recalls the activities of Pompey, Mark Antony, and Augustus in the same region, and Zecchini rightly concludes: ‘Trogue Pompée était influencé par l’histoire de son temps’. A second example mentioned in Zecchini’s notes is the similarity in the description of the behaviour of Alexander the Great in the battle of Gaugamela and Caesar’s at Alesia, where they both encouraged their soldiers by engaging themselves wherever the danger was greatest.²⁸ A third is the passage recounting the death of Dareios III and Alexander’s reaction to it: ‘when he saw the body he wept at the thought of Dareios’ succumbing to a death so

²⁴ Justin 12.3.12: *immemor prosus tantas opes amitti his morbus, non quaeri solere.*

²⁵ Justin 12.6; Plut. *Al.* 50.1–52.2; Arr. *Anab.* 4.8.3–9.8; Curt. 2.8.

²⁶ Arr. *Anab.* 4.8–14; Carlsen (2014) 217–22. For a recent stimulating analysis of Arrian, see Liotsakis (2019).

²⁷ Justin 11.10.7: *ex his pro meritis singulorum alios in societatem receipt, aliis regnum ademit suffectus in loca eorum novis regibus.* Zecchini, 161.

²⁸ Justin 11.14.5 and Caes. *BG* 7.87–8. Zecchini, 165.

unworthy of his exalted position'.²⁹ According to Plutarch, Caesar shed tears when he saw the seal-ring of the dead Pompey.³⁰

There are more passages in the *Philippic History* with more or less obvious parallels to Roman history and society. Writing in Latin, Justin describes the Macedonian camp in Roman terms, but he adds that 'no company commander was less than 60 years old; hence a glance at the headquarters of the camp would have suggested that here was the senate of some republic of bygone times'. This is of course an exaggeration, but the words *priscae alicuius rei publicae* indicate that this passage is more the observation of Justin than a summary of Trogus, in whose time the memory of the Roman Republic still existed.³¹ Another military matter with Roman connotations is the recruitment and marriage of Macedonian soldiers. According to Justin, Alexander gave the soldiers permission to marry captive women with whom they were already cohabiting. He also allowed these veterans to be replaced by their sons, who had been born in the camps and were called *epigoni*. Augustan legislation forbade soldiers to marry during their military service, but the ban on marriage was abolished by Septimius Severus. Heckel argued that the remark 'may be Trogus' own observation, contrasting the contemporary Roman prohibition on marriage'. On the other hand, Zecchini points to the usual conflict between normative legislation and daily life of many soldiers with informal marriages and illegitimate children living in the *canabae* and *vici* next to the legionary camps; this passage could well reflect Justin's own time.³²

Another episode betraying a Roman reminiscence is the anecdote regarding the Indian queen Cleophis, whose name only appears in Latin sources. Justin recalls that she surrendered to Alexander, but was restored to the throne after sleeping with him. He then continues with an obvious parallel with Caesar, Cleopatra, and Caesarion: 'the child fathered by the king she named Alexander'.³³ Other examples, such as the mythical traditions on Alexander's and Augustus' divine descents, could be mentioned, and contextual and close

²⁹ Justin 11.15.14: *quae ubi Alexander nuntiata sunt, viso corpore defuncti tam indignam illo fastigio mortem lacrimis prosecutus est.*

³⁰ Plut. *Caes.* 48.2; Plut. *Pomp.* 85.5. Zecchini, 168.

³¹ Justin 11.6.6: *ordines quoque nemo nisi sexagenarius duxit, ut, si, principia castorum cerneret, senatum te priscae alicuius rei publicae videre diceret.* Yardley and Heckel (1997) 113; *contra* Zecchini, 156.

³² Justin 12.4. Yardley and Heckel (1997) 206–8; Zecchini, 173. On the marriage of Roman soldiers see Phang (2001) and Scheidel (2011).

³³ Justin 12.7.10: *filiumque ab eo genitum Alexandrum nominavit.* Yardley and Heckel (1997) 241–2; Zecchini, 178; Demandt (2009) 246, includes Indian sources.

readings of Justin's work seem to provide new insights not only into the two books on Alexander the Great, but into our understanding of the *Philippic History* as a whole. Such analyses are now very much facilitated by this new edition with French translation and historical notes in the Collection Budé.

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