

REVIEW

REAL *EPITOME* OR A CUCKOO'S EGG?

Bernard Mineo, ed., *Justin: Abrégé des Histoires Philipiques de Trogue Pompée. Tome I: Livres I–X. Texte établi, traduit et commenté par Bernard Mineo, notes historiques de Giuseppe Zecchini*. Collection latine, 413. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2016. Pp. cv + 512. Paperback, €39.00. ISBN 978-2251-01473-9.

U ntil the present day (too) few editions or translations of Justin's *Epitome* of Pompeius Trogus' *Philippic Histories*, a work in forty-four books plus prologues and foreword, have been available. For those aiming at a scholarly treatment Otto Seel's editions are still the obvious choice, despite the fact that the texts have been constituted rather conservatively.¹ Those who content themselves with only a translation might find themselves very well served with either Yardley's 1994 edition or the online translation in French, dating to 2003 and produced by Marie-Pierre Arnaud-Lindet.² There is also a combination of translation and commentary, in two volumes, on that part of the *Epitome* that relates to Alexander the Great and the Diadochs.³ Now another edition, combining the text, a French translation, and a commentary, has been launched, in the series of Latin authors of the 'collection Budé' by Les Belles Lettres; the volume under review constitutes its first instalment.

Gnaeus Pompeius Trogus (whose *floruit* can be dated to the first century BC), was a Gallo-Roman historian, from the Celtic Vocontii of Gallia Narbonensis. His grandfather apparently acquired Roman citizenship from Gnaeus Pompeius (cf. Just. *Epit.* 43.5.11–12), which explains his '*nomen gentis*', while the author's father probably served under Caesar. In the volume under discussion these, more or less established, facts are severely questioned by Mineo (iii–viii). Justin's source-author is himself a contemporary of Livy, as M. also concedes (viii). Gnaeus Pompeius Trogus is known to have written at least two major works, a zoological work named *De animalibus* (which has not survived, but is referred to both by Flavius Sospater Charisius, the late

¹ Seel (1956) and (1985).

² Yardley (1994). For the translation by Arnaud-Lindet, see <http://www.forumromanum.org/literature/justin/>, which also provides an obsolete translation of the work into English by the Rev. John Selby Watson, dating to 1853, as well as the text in Latin.

³ Yardley (1997) and (2011).

fourth century AD author, discussing the word ‘*lacte*’ in his *Ars Grammatica*,⁴ and several times by Pliny the Elder in the *Naturalis Historia*: for the latter cf. M., ix n. 10) and the *Philippic History* (as the title is referred to in short), which mainly survives through the *Epitome* produced by Justin. The *Philippic History* essentially was a history of the known world down to the time of the Emperor Augustus and it appears to have been sufficiently well read for Trogus to be included in an (unofficial) canon of four great historians writing in Latin, together with Livy, Sallust, and Tacitus.⁵ Of the excerpter, Marcus Junian(i)us Justinus (Justin), next to nothing is known with certainty. Though some facts of his life are allegedly shared in the preface of his work, even these may be the result of some ‘reworking’ (cf. Yardley (1997) 8). Even his *nomen gentis* (or perhaps his second *cognomen*: e.g. M., xlii) is not absolutely certain: it is generally taken to have been ‘Junianus’, but might equally have been ‘Junianius’, as Develin asserts.⁶ The supposed region of his origin also varies from Gaul through Africa to the northern Black Sea coast (cf. M., xliii–xliv). As for the date of his excerpt, estimates vary between AD 144 or 145⁷ and about AD 390 (Syme (1988) 365). Arnaud-Lindet takes a slightly different view: she believes Justin lived around the years of Constantius II (317–61) and his successors. Seel, however, after initially hovering between late third to early fourth century AD, finally puts the date of Justin about AD 200.⁸ Generally, this has become, in spite of Syme’s view, the more or less accepted *terminus ante quem*—until now. M. reopens the discussion and now, following the conclusions of the author of the commentary, Giuseppe Zecchini, clearly opts for a relatively late date, placing Justin in the late fourth to early fifth century AD, i.e., between AD 395–407 (lv–lix), more or less following Syme’s conclusion.

This edition of Justin’s *Epitome* aims to present as comprehensive a picture of the work as possible. As might be expected in such an undertaking, the general introduction is particularly extensive. As already indicated above, one of its goals is to investigate what can be stated with a fair degree of certainty regarding the life and works of Trogus as well as of Justin. One of the notable issues at stake is Trogus’ ideological position. So far, Trogus generally has been seen as an adversary of Rome, the Roman Empire, and/or Augustus—and, by implication, of the moral failings (*inter alia* due to *superbia*) it entailed. Though admitting the presence of a certain cultural

⁴ Cf. Barwick and Kühnert (1997) 130.5–6.

⁵ Cf. *Scriptores Historiae Augustae (SHA) Aurel. 2.1; Prob. 2.7.*

⁶ Develin in Yardley (1994) 4; see also Syme (1988) 369.

⁷ Cf. Steele (1917) 40. Earlier in the paper, Steele asserts that ‘Justinus wrote before 226 A.D. when the Parthian kingdom was overthrown’ (24).

⁸ Seel (1972) 346. Also see e.g. Yardley (1997) 1, 11 for this date.

pessimism in Trogus' work—which, as a matter of fact, is present in many authors because of 'une conception d'histoire qui avait été introduite très tôt dans l'historiographie de la langue latine', i.e. from the second century BC onwards (cf. M., xx)—M. clearly disagrees with this view. He believes that Trogus' work runs in parallel with that of Livy, the latter focusing on the Roman world, the former on the Hellenistic (xxxiii). Perhaps, he suggests, Trogus may even have written parts of his work as a response to Livy (xxxiv) and mirrors the latter's hope of a Roman renaissance.

As he himself indicates, Justin made a selection within Trogus' work to make an epitome. Looking at the prologues of the *Philippic Histories* (cf. M., xlv–li), compiled by an unknown author, we have the opportunity to look deeper into Justin's criteria, which apparently favoured novel-like and tragic stories (l). M. hopes thereby to be able to assess Justin's audience, which he believes to have been 'des notables cultivés des municipes italiens et de l'ensemble du monde romain parlant latin'—thus, really quite an extended audience. I find, however, that such claims add too little substance to the picture: moreover, in the end they often labour an obvious point. At the same time, all the discussions, notably those regarding Justin, show the weakness of the material M. has to work with as well. Though I share many, if not most, of his suggestions,⁹ the evidence is just too little and/or too weak to firmly substantiate them, ultimately leaving them what they are: suggestions, not facts. M. regrettably too often fails to make clear that his conjectures are essentially based on shaky foundations.

He is, however, on much firmer ground in his discussion of the manuscript tradition. In total, there are today some 200-odd manuscripts of (or including) Justin's *Epitome*, divided in three classes. The first of these classes, itself in its turn falling into two families, descends from an archetype, called α (lxx–lxxiv). The second one (designated in the editions as 'classis ι '), essentially consisting of four manuscripts, descends from an archetype referred to as β (M. lxxiv–lxxvi), while the third is represented by the γ -family, of which two manuscripts have been used (lxxvi–lxxviii). In the establishment of the text M. collated seventeen manuscripts, of which ten have been systematically referred to in the *apparatus* (lxxix): he presents a neat *stemma* (lxxx) and a *conspectus siglorum* (lxxxii), followed by a list of relevant prior editions and his bibliography (lxxxiii–cv). This part of M.'s work I find much more accessible than the description of the manuscripts given by Seel ((1985) iv–ix). Even though the latter does describe all relevant manuscripts (admittedly, some classes even more comprehensively than M.'s), his description is much more concise (obviously, some might prefer that approach); moreover, Seel fails to present a *stemma*. Realising that not

⁹ However, I am not convinced of his 'high' date for Justin.

everyone using an edition frequently or even regularly consults either the *apparatus* and/or the *stemma*, I find the presence of a *stemma* nevertheless a bonus for the proper understanding of the relations between different manuscripts, and I miss it when absent.

M.'s presentation of the text starts with the forty-four prologues (1–21) and Justin's preface to his *epitome* of Trogus' work (22–3). Next follows M.'s presentation of Justin's *epitome* of the first ten books (24–148). In brief, they discuss: Book 1: from the Assyrians to the Persians; Book 2: history of the Scythians to the Persian Wars; Book 3: from the death of Xerxes to the Peloponnesian War; Book 4: Sicily; Book 5: from the Decesean War to Cyrus the Younger's expedition; Book 6: wars in Greece from 399–362 BC; Book 7: history of Macedon until the taking of Mothone by Philip II; Books 8 and 9: Philip II of Macedon; and Book 10: history of the Achaemenids from Artaxerxes I to Darius III. In these books Trogus (or Justin?) makes it unmistakably clear that he is a believer in the theory of the succession (or perhaps even transfer) of empires: first the Assyrians, successively followed by Medes, Achaemenid Persians, Macedonians, and Romans. Simultaneously, the diverging lengths of Justin's *epitomes* make clear that Justin was not equally interested in all episodes of Trogus' *Histories*, something confirmed by the fact that we have the prologues, indicating the subjects Trogus discussed in his various books. The understanding of the translation is facilitated by the numerous notes added by M.

Both the text and the translation are easy to follow and the *apparatus* is sufficient, once accustomed to it (it gives the textual variants per paragraph, not line by line). The *apparatus* is sometimes slightly less elaborate than Seel's, but the main variants are certainly present. Moreover, the text itself is easier to read: Seel's edition (at least my copy of it) is a photo-mechanic reprint and ever so slightly out of focus, making the reading of it arduous after a while. M.'s edition of the text is, as far as I could see through a check of twenty-five-odd selected pages, meticulous and without typos. What I like less in the volume under scrutiny is that the so-called historical notes, written by G. Zecchini, are more or less detached from M.'s work. Unlike the procedure in many other volumes in the Budé collection, there is no reference in the translation by M. to the notes by Zecchini, even though there is sufficient scope to do so. It might be helpful to incorporate such references whenever a second impression of this volume is considered and certainly to apply them in the foreseen next volumes of Justin's *Epitome*. In my view, greater coherence between translation and additional historical notes would greatly enhance the user-friendliness of such an essential tool as the translated text of an ancient author. Zecchini's notes themselves are clear and ring a familiar bell with someone (like the reviewer) familiar with, for instance, both the works of Ctesias and Diodorus of Sicily. They are not revolutionary nor particularly

innovative, but are a solid base for further reading and inquiry, and as such serve their purpose well.

At this stage an explanation for the title of my review is necessary. In his introduction to Yardley's translation, Develin argues that Justin did more than merely excerpt Pompeius Trogus' work: 'There is nothing in this which asserts that his excerpts were taken *verbatim* from Trogus rather than reworked by himself' (Yardley (1994) 5). He then continues: 'Indeed, we could gather from the last words of his preface that Justin had claims to his own style,¹⁰ unless we are to believe that the judgement of posterity ... is to be based solely on the quality of his selection and the work from which he chose to select ... Still, there seems to be much that comes from Justin himself, more indeed than in the more summary passages where this has been detected before' (ibid.). And yet, Orosius (1.8 [48]) refers to Justin merely as a '*breviator* (abbreviator)'. Augustine, however, leaves more room, stating that (C.D. 4.6): *Justinus qui graecam, uel potius peregrinam, Trogum Pompeium secutus, non latine tantum, sicut ille, uerum etiam breuiter scripsit historiam ...* ('Justin, who has written a history of the Greeks or rather of foreign peoples, in imitation of Pompeius Trogus, not merely in Latin, like him, but also briefly ...'). Admittedly, much depends on the translation of the word 'secutus'.¹¹ Does the use of this word infer a slavish *epitome* or does it leave room (as the reviewer believes) for the suggestion that Justin, much more than merely epitomising Trogus' work, used it as a stepping stone for an undertaking of his own. If the latter were the case, he laid, figuratively speaking, his cuckoo's egg in Trogus' nest. Worse still, we should in fact have been discussing here Justin's *Philippic Histories* instead of Justin's *Epitome* of Trogus' *Philippic Histories*, to phrase it tersely (and, indeed, quite overstatedly).

However, things are not as dire as they look. Taking into account Justin's words (notably in paragraph four) in his Preface, I think that the truth lies in the middle: Trogus' work certainly was Justin's starting point. However, he freely added and left out to his liking. Nevertheless, I firmly believe that we really still can talk of Justin's *Epitome* of Trogus' *Philippic Histories*, even though we cannot be entirely sure of what exactly had been Trogus' part and what Justin's. Again, Develin's words—already referred to above—appear to ring

¹⁰ Develin refers here to the phrase: *apud posteros, cum obtrectationis inuidia decesserit, industrie testimonium habituro* ('among posterity, when the criticism of envy will have ceased, I shall earn the praise for my industry'): Just. *Praef.* 6.

¹¹ In the NT-tradition (notably in the *Vulgate* but also in the *Vetus Latina*), with which we may assume that Augustine was familiar (he had at least heard of Jerome and his work: August. C.D. 17.43), the word *secundus/m* ('according to') is used for a more direct link between original and author or narrator. Though *secundus* and *secutus* appear to be closely linked, I believe the use of the latter word leaves some room for the author for his own contributions: hence my translation.

true: ‘Still, there seems to be much that comes from Justin himself, more indeed than in the more summary passages where this has been detected before’ (Yardley (1994) 5). In view of the importance of Justin’s *Epitome* of Trogus Pompeius’ *Philippic Histories* in, *inter alia*, an historiographic perspective—and it is regrettable that this work is too often either underrated (cf., e.g. Yardley (1997) 15–16) or even totally neglected—I find it an omission that neither M. nor Zecchini (though I believe it should have been more in M.’s turf) pays any attention to this issue. Again, hopefully, something to be solved in a second impression (technically, then, in fact a second edition). Nevertheless, both M. and Les Belles Lettres deserve to be applauded for the result of their enterprise so far.

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