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FROM POMPONIO LETO TO PIETRO MARSO:
READING SILIUS ITALICUS AT ROME
IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY*

Abstract

This paper presents a comparison of the commentaries on a sample passage of Silius Italicus of three humanists from the Roman *Studium Urbis* from 1469-1483. As a test case, *Pun.* III 557-629 is promising for the way in which a Vergilian framework is adapted in it to prophecy and panegyric of the Flavian dynasty. Hence it gives scope to Leto and Calderini, in particular, to draw on the other Silver Age authors with which they were engaged. Some differences emerge in the ancient sources deployed and in the approaches adopted. Overall, however, this generation of commentators on Silius made an enormous contribution towards the understanding of the poet.

Keywords

Silius Italicus; Giulio Pomponio Leto. Domizio Calderini; Pietro Marso;
panegyric; humanist commentary.

The commentaries written on Latin texts by humanist scholars or recorded by their students in the second half of the fifteenth century are still underused sources for the history of classical scholarship. Part of the reason for this is difficulty of access. Despite a spate of publications in the last years many important works are still available only in manuscript, others only in incunabula or cinquecentine.¹ Probably a more powerful reason is the sheer amount of labour that is required to situate such a commentary. Without a considerable effort of historicization it is not possible to understand the problems that confronted readers of Latin texts in the age of the *editiones principes* and their achievements in dealing with them.²

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1 In the last ten years the situation has changed

enormously with the provision of so many digitized copies of early printed books.

2 On Domizio Calderini's commentaries see DUNSTON 1968; COPPINI 1979, 1996; CAMPANELLI 2001; FIESOLI 2003; ROSSI 2011. Recent signs of interest in commentaries are LO MONACO 1992, PADE 2005, ENENKEL - NELLEN 2013, BERLINCOURT 2013.