

J. Fisher, *The Annals of Q. Ennius and the Italic Tradition*. Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 2014. Pp. x + 206. ISBN 13: 978-1-4214-1129-3. ISBN 10: 1-4214-1129-6.

Jay Fisher's book investigates Ennius' *Annals* from an original point of view by addressing issues of linguistic and cultural hybridity. It aims to show that Ennius referred to traditional Italic cultural practices like ritual and warfare through sophisticated intertextual strategies. Since those practices reflected the interconnectedness of the peoples of the 'central Italian koine', the result is a text characterized by the simultaneous presence of elements from different cultures.

As the author explains in Chapter 1 ('Ennius and the Italic Tradition', pp. 1–26), his analysis focuses on the presence, in the *Annals*, of 'traditional collocations', i.e. 'habitual meaningful co-occurrence[s] of two or more words', which are characterized by their frequency and semantic relevance (p. 3). In the same chapter, he offers some examples of how collocations could work and how Ennius could allude to them in subtle ways in order to enhance the meaning of his poetic narrative.

This introductory chapter is illustrative of both the qualities and the shortcomings of the book as a whole: some fine readings stand side by side with interpretations based on hardly demonstrable assumptions. Fisher convincingly argues, for example, that *Ann.* 232 Sk. *non semper vostra evortit: nunc Iuppiter hac stat*, from Book 7 and possibly from a hortatory speech by Hannibal, alludes to the cultic title *Iuppiter Stator*. He also argues that it could simultaneously hint at an Oscan version of the same deity, *Iuppiter Versor*, attested by an inscription from Lucania. Because the temple of Jupiter Stator was built during the Samnite Wars (Liv. 10, 36, 11), Fisher thinks it may have been a response to the Oscan *Iuppiter Versor*. Ennius, by placing the two roots of *verto* and *sto* close to each other, may have been consciously hinting at the story of the temple; the fragment could thus play on the idea of Roman victory and anticipate the ultimate Roman success in the Second Punic War. This hypothesis is fascinating, but the assumption that the temple of Jupiter Stator was vowed in opposition to the Oscan *Iuppiter Versor* does not seem to rest on any demonstrable evidences — or, at least, Fisher does not mention any. The passage he quotes from Cicero's first speech against Catiline (Cic. *Cat.* 1, 18) cannot be taken as a suggestion that the two roots of *verto* and *sto* were both felt to be related to *Iuppiter Stator*: the two verbs *exstitit* and *everto* here stand in no special relationship apart from appearing within the distance of a few lines, and *exstitit* (a very common verb in Latin) has no military connotations at all.

Chapter 2 ('The *Annals* and the Greek Tradition', pp. 27–56) analyzes some of what are normally regarded as Greek elements in the *Annals*, in order to show that they are rather components of multicultural hybrids. In the last part of the chapter, Fisher sets out what he terms 'a radical hypothesis', namely that the famous allusion to *Iliad* 2 contained in *ann.* 469–470 Sk. (*Non si lingua loqui saperet quibus, ora decem sint / in me, tum ferro cor sit pectusque revinctum*) 'appropriates a traditional collocation of the language of Latin curses' (p. 48). This is, in my opinion, one of the weakest arguments in the book. Fisher quotes a passage from Plautus (*Truc.* 224–226) and the 'epitaph of Naevius' (from Gell. 1, 24, 2), in which *lingua* and *loqui* are associated, to

demonstrate that *lingua loqui* is a traditional collocation. Moreover, as Plautus' passage comes some lines after a mention of a *naenia* ('funeral chant'), and the other text is an epitaph, Fisher concludes that *lingua loqui* could belong to funeral contexts. However, the presence of *loquier lingua Latina* in Naevius' epitaph is connected not to the funeral context, but to the fact that poetry is the main subject. And one occurrence in Plautus is too little to suggest that a funereal connotation applied to an idiomatic expression like *lingua loqui*. Fisher goes on to observe that *lingua loqui* could be related to expressions found in curse tablets, which wished that the victim might lose the ability to speak. However, as Fisher himself admits, there is no occurrence of *lingua loqui* in the tablets. It is thus very hard to associate their various expressions with the fragment of Ennius: the only shared elements are the presence of the very common Latin verb *loqui* + a modal verb, which, however, is not the same in Ennius and in the tablets. This is too little to imply a relationship between the Ennian fragment and the language of curses, even under Fisher's premise that the possibility he suggests 'will push the limits of system reference to the extreme' (p. 49).

Chapter 3 ('Ritual and Myth in the *Augurium Romuli*, *Annals* 72-91', pp. 57-86) investigates the rich texture of expressions derived from the reference field of augury in the fragment of *Annals* 1 that narrates the augury of Romulus and Remus. This, together with Chapter 5, is the most convincing section of Fisher's volume. The author demonstrates that the repetition of words formed by the roots of *avis* and *specere* – which together compose the noun *auspicium* – creates a pattern of ring composition, highlighting the central themes of sight and augury. Moreover, he perceptively analyzes the presence of other traditional collocations, and shows how these could hint to variants of the legend, or color the outcome of the auspice with ambiguity.

Chapter 4 ('Ritual, *Militia* and History in Book 6 of the *Annals*', pp. 87-126) concentrates on the account of the war against Pyrrhus in Book 6. Fisher devotes special attention to the fragment (*ann.* 183-190 Sk.) containing Pyrrhus' promise that he will return Roman hostages without ransom. He suggests that the king here misuses some traditional collocations that were normally used to indicate a reciprocal exchange, by applying them to an act which, though noble, appears to be unilateral; and he rightly stresses the shortcomings of Pyrrhus' ethics, as opposed to a more flexible Roman behavioral code (I have come to a similar conclusion, although from a different perspective, in my 2012 monograph on Ennius' *Annals*).¹ I find it more difficult to share the author's conclusion that the theme of exchange is especially prominent in Book 6. For example, the parallel he sees between Pyrrhus and the Roman general P. Decius Mus (whose *devotio*, i.e. a form of ritualized exchange with the gods, is the subject of *ann.* 191-194 Sk.) seems to owe too much to the fact that Decius' *devotio* is among the most easily recognizable events in what remains of the book. We simply do not know, however, whether Ennius actually opposed the *devotio* to Pyrrhus' behavior, or whether other Roman characters played a more prominent role than Decius did.

¹ V. Fabrizio, *Mores veteresque novosque: rappresentazioni del passato e del presente di Roma negli Annales di Ennio* (Pisa, 2012) pp. 127-150.

In Chapter 5 ('Ritual, Kinship and Myth in Book 1 of the *Annals*', pp. 127–162), the author goes back to the narrative of Roman origins in order to show the interplay between the modes of 'system reference' (in Fisher's terminology) to ritual and kinship in Ennius' account.

The volume is closed by a brief concluding chapter ('The *Annals* of Quintus Ennius and the Modern Tradition', pp. 163–165), a (quite concise) bibliography, and an index of names.

Jay Fisher's study is stimulating reading and offers new and interesting perspectives on Ennius' *Annals*. The author, moreover, has the merit of admitting uncertainty when his analysis rests on hypothetical assumptions. On the other side, one is sometimes left with the impression that too much is simply suggested as a possibility and too little is based on sound evidence.

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