

Paul ROCHE, *Lucan: De Bello Civili, Book I. Edited with Introduction, Text, and Commentary*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, XI + 418 pp., ISBN 978-0-19-955699-1, £ 79.00.

GETTY published his commentary on book I in 1940¹, so we had to wait almost 70 years for a new, more extensive analysis. The short remarks by WUILLEUMIER and LE BONNIEC (as footnotes, 1962)² and more comprehensive commentary by GAGLIARDI (1989)³ filled the gap only partially (VIANSINO provided the whole poem with notes mainly by collecting comparandas, 1995; however, ROCHE [= R.] did not list this edition in the bibliography⁴). Lucan studies have flourished astonishingly, especially in the last two decades. Apart from numerous papers scattered throughout various journals we have been given new monographs, collective works, and commentaries. Justifying the need for a new commentary to book I is therefore redundant.

The work consists of an extensive introduction (pp. 1–64), text (with short critical apparatus, pp. 65–87), commentary (pp. 91–390), and comprehensive bibliography (pp. 391–406). It ends with helpful indices (*index verborum, locorum, nominum et rerum*, pp. 407–418). Defining in the preface the goals of his commentary, R. speaks “of respectfully preserving what is good, of reworking, correcting, or extending what seems now less relevant in GETTY’s 1940 commentary...” (p. VII). These aims have most certainly been achieved. In his introduction, GETTY discussed in turn Lucan’s life and work, problem of the hero of the poem, Lucan’s historical authorities, geographical knowledge, and rhetoric. R. omits three issues brought up by GETTY, namely biography, geography and the problem of the hero, but supplements and updates considerably the last two matters, and expands the introduction with issues overlooked by his predecessor. He therefore discusses the structure of book I, its significance for the whole poem and connections between the book and the other parts; moreover, he analyses not only the historical sources but also relationships between Lucan and Homer, Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Manilius, and Seneca. R. examines Stoic elements as well, and brings up matters of narration – the problem of apostrophe in particular (he bases himself on CULLER’s statements⁵). One of more important issues discussed in the first part of the introduction is the change of the narrator’s attitude in the poem – his relation to the principate, pp. 5–10 (some scholars, recognizing this change, divide the poem into books I–III and following). R. opts for consistency⁶ and on pp. 7–10 discusses in more detail two crucial passages which are used as arguments for the narrator’s change (the invocation of Nero, ll. 33–66 – here, he emphasizes the conventional nature of the panegyric; the positive portrayal of Domitius, ll. 478–534). However, it is not only Lucan’s attitude towards Caesar and the principate that fits into discussion about the “unity” of the poem, but also the narrator’s relation to Pompey. We may, to put it simply,

¹ M. Annaei Lucani *De bello civili liber I*, ed. by R.J. GETTY, Cambridge 1940.

² M. Annaeus Lucanus, *Bellum Ciuile, Liber I*, édition, introduction et commentaire de P. WUILLEUMIER, H. Le BONNIEC, Paris 1962 (Erasmie. Collection de textes latins commentés 8).

³ M. Annaei Lucani *Belli civilis liber primus*, testo critico, introd. e comm. a cura di D. GAGLIARDI, Napoli 1989.

⁴ M. Annaeus Lucanus, *La Guerra civile (Farsaglia)*, 2 vols., testo critico, trad. e comm. a cura di G. VIANSINO, Milano 1995 (Classici greci e latini 89–90).

⁵ J. CULLER, *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction*, London 1981 (quoted by R. on p. 61).

⁶ Summing up the discussion, R. writes (p. 7): “Nothing in books one to three reaches the same fever pitch of the invective against empire in book seven, but it is in the nature of a climax, such as Pharsalus, that more emphatic statements of thematic preoccupations come to the fore”.

distinguish three standpoints (adopting BARTSCH's words, who analyses this problem): "...there is no change, there is change [...]. Others are more forthright in declaring the narrator's stance as simply ambivalent throughout the poem, with no detectable change in one direction or another"⁷. She herself writes about the narrator's increasing adoration towards Pompey⁸. I would like to know R.'s opinion on this matter. Moreover, the book introduces and characterizes main protagonists (when interpreting *synkrisis* R. stresses that it is equally unfavourable for both, p. 6). A few sentences devoted to the central characters of the poem would be valid. The issue of the consistency of the poem is also connected to the biographical aspect. R. rightly omitted Lucan's life – for it is difficult to say anything new here – but a short presentation of the problem of Lucan as a Neronian poet would be much welcome, all the more because we also know such extreme opinions as the one delivered by MASTERS, according to whom the poem should be treated as "propaganda *qua* propaganda"⁹. GETTY devotes a detailed chapter to Lucan's geographical sources, whereas R. skips this aspect altogether. Discussion regarding Lucan's knowledge of geography is indeed unnecessary, although touching up on another issue, namely the use of geographical imagery as a vehicle of constructing the meaning of the poem, would be worthwhile. I should, however, do the author justice, as he directs his attention to this topic in the commentary itself (ad 100–103, 392–465).

The text is based on HOUSMAN's edition (1926), from which R. departs in five places. The differences between the texts of R., HOUSMAN, GETTY and SHACKLETON BAILEY are listed in the table on pp. 62 f.

The book's most crucial part is obviously the commentary. It is difficult to reproach R. for any serious shortcomings here. He divided the text into smaller sections, and preceded each with an introduction, where he collectively discusses the most important interpretational problems of the passage, places it in a wider context of the first book as well as the whole poem, and usually analyses its structure. They are then followed by comments line by line, word by word. In every aspect, R. is more scrupulous, more meticulous than his predecessors. He makes comments about passages which GETTY, GAGLIARDI and WUILLEUMIER / LE BONNIC complete dismissed, and quotes more of comparative material. He also pays attention to intertextual, narrative, and structural matters of both longer and shorter passages. For example, apart from well-known and frequently discussed lines of intertextual character, he comments very well ll. 466–522 – Romans' escape from the city in the context of books II and III of the *Aeneid*; the remarks about the proleptic aspect of the vision of the matron (external prolepses) are accurate, too (ad 673–695); see also the detailed structural analysis of ll. 67–97 (the causes of war). R. splendidly used the literature, which has grown since the times of GETTY – some parts of the commentary, especially these which deal with debatable issues, can also serve as an introduction to the subject literature. The quality of R.'s commentary comes to the fore when we compare any of his notes with those of his predecessors – e.g. both GAGLIARDI and WUILLEUMIER / LE BONNIC omit the epithet *ferox* in their remarks ad 30. GETTY only notes how it should be understood ('proud', 'spirited' as Achilles, and quotes Ovid *Her.* 8, 1: *Pyrrhus Achillides*), while R. points out its inconsistency with our historical sources (it is a pity, however, that he did not list them), and widely discusses its origin in Lucan's poem in order to, finally, relate it to Caesar ("Pyrrhus' epithet, *ferox*, recalls the text presentation of Caesar").

Some comments ad locc.

35 f.: I would expect more on the relationship between these two lines. R. notes ad 35 that "the *princeps* is equated with Jupiter". In line 36, however, Caesar and Pompey are juxtaposed with giants. In the mythology the sons of Earth fought with Jupiter and the Olympian gods. Here the war

⁷ Sh. BARTSCH, *Ideology in Cold Blood: A Reading of Lucan's Civil War*, Cambridge, Mass.–London 1997, p. 85.

⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 78 ff.

⁹ J. MASTERS, *Deceiving the Reader: The Political Mission of Lucan's Bellum Civile*, in: J. ELSNER, J. MASTERS (eds.), *Reflections of Nero: Culture, History, and Representation*, Chapel Hill 1994, p. 163.

seems to be fought only between the giants (to which group belong not only Caesar and Pompey, but also their “successors”: Antony and Octavian – the list of battles at 38–43 reaches as far as to the fight between Octavian with Sextus Pompey, and is summed up by the following statement: “multum Roma tamen debet ciuilibus armis/ quod tibi res acta est”, 44 f. Thus, a question emerges: who in fact is Neron, the heir of the giants, ascending to heaven and supposed to be the new lord of the world; perhaps another giant.

24–32, 33–66, 67–80: in these three passages, there are references to the Golden Age of Augustus. Lucan plays with this motif (see R.’s notes ad 28 *inarata*, 60–62 [~ *Aen.* I 291–296, VII 607–610, 620–623, the closing of the ‘gate of war’], 67: “Lucan’s inversion of the *Metamorphoses*’ epic trajectory”). The passages are divided into individual sections, although considering this specific reference to the Golden Age they can be tied more closely, and read together. The invocation to Nero itself does not indeed have to be ironic, but the direct context of lines 24 ff. and 67 ff. (not only the content of the whole poem) seems to be making it such.

115 f.: I would move here the note which appears ad 155 *furit* – that it is the last place where *furor/furere* refers directly to the both leaders, and after that only to Caesar.

111–120: Lucan will refer to this passage (the death of Julia) in book V (by verbal echoes: V 473 f. ~ I 111 f.), in a distinctive point of the poem where the camps of the commanders will be very close to one another for the first time during the war.

140: R. accentuates the proleptic nature of the noun *truncus* (the death of Pompey) but refers us to note ad 685 for details. Notwithstanding, it can be stressed here that it is one of the most significant words in book VIII (see 436, 674, 698, 722, 753, 774).

228–230: lines about Caesar’s speed are the typical beginning delimiter, when the narrator proceeds to describe the actions of the leader. It has to be stressed, however, that military comparisons are meaningful in such delimiter. In spite of their Augustan poetic tradition (R. ad 229 f.), they fit the context well – capturing Ariminum, Caesar is equated with alien and hostile nations with whom Rome was fighting (the Balearic slingers served in Hannibal’s army, see e.g. App. VIII 40, Liv. XXX 33; on Caesar as Hannibal see Lucan. I 31, 303–305 with R.’s commentary ad locc.).

392–465: commenting on the apostrophes in this passage, R. notes that they serve *variatio* (ad 447). This list of Caesar’s armies is at the end dominated by apostrophes (441 ff.). This concentration of apostrophes can be also interpreted as a narrative device directed at the audience of the poem – vast troops seem to be marching before the narrator’s (and thus the audience’s) eyes.

504–507: R. observes ad 508 f. that the crowd fleeing Rome acts completely different than Pompey himself (III 4–6). The same is also worth noting regarding lines 504 ff., especially because R. ends his comment by quoting a passage from *Aeneid* (III 11 f.) to which Lucan will refer in the ending of book II. The meaning of these lines is enhanced also by II. 353 ff. depicting the objections of soldiers going along with Caesar.

522–544: when discussing the meteorological omens we can also bring the Amyclas’s speech from book V (539–559), in which he reads weather signs predicting metaphorical storm. Lucan refers to Virgil’s *Georgics* (I 351–392, 424–464) there, again initiating an intertextual play with his predecessor (on Lucan’s polemic with Virgil *Georg.* I 464–488 and Ovid *Met.* XV 783–798, see R. ad 522–583). These passages are closely connected.

In sum, this is an impressive commentary which makes a great contribution to Lucan scholarship. It is valuable to students and scholars at all levels and it will be an excellent assistance on this book for decades.

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