Paolo Asso, *A Commentary on Lucan,* De Bello Civili *IV. Introduction, edition, and translation*, Berlin – New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010, pp. VIII + 333, ISBN 978-3-11-020385-1.

Paolo Asso offers the first full-scale English edition with commentary on the fourth book of Lucan's epic poem, in which the poet treats Caesar in Ilerda, Vulteius in the Adriatic, and Curio in Africa. Asso provides an introduction of 35 pages, a text (basically Housman's: p. 34) with apparatus (reduced from Badalì: p. 35), facing prose translation, and 193 pages of comments on the Latin text. He follows with a list of works cited, a selective *index locorum*, and a general index.

Asso's introduction begins in traditional mode, with a very full account of the ancient evidence of Lucan's life. He is sensitive to the tendentious nature of this evidence. I doubt the value of Sen. *Helv*. 18.4–5, even if Marcus here is to be identified with Lucan. Too simple a picture is painted of Seneca's benign influence at Nero's court (p. 5). Next a section on 'Lucan's antiphrastic epos' indexes Narducci's influence, but does not engage in Lucan's relationship with Vergil in depth or detail. His discussion of book four and its place in the poem is very useful, especially on Lucan and Caesar. His introductory comments on language and style are very good, especially on diction; on rhetorical devices, he lists Lucan's favourite tropes in the mode of Getty. I found his discussion of meter problematic: 788–93 are marked with 'weaker' and 'stronger' caesurae, diaereses, and select ictus. In these lines I count eight instances of strong caesurae marked 'weaker', the diaresis at 789 is marked as a 'weaker caesura', and the weak main caesura in 792 is missed.

Asso's overall emphasis in the commentary falls upon lexical issues: he notes word frequencies, maps the entry of particular items into (extant) Latin via *TLL*, explains Lucan's phraseology, highlights paradoxes, and offers elucidation on the context of Lucan's narrative. Asso offers excellent notes on medical precision and distinctions in Lucan's Latin: these and his notes on Lucan's legal language could have profitably received a summative comment in the introduction. There are a cluster of outstanding notes at the beginning of Curio's campaigns in Africa, including a very helpful explication of the tribes of Africa.

Throughout, Asso devotes frustratingly little attention in the commentary to intertextuality and the dynamics of the epic tradition. Where Asso does cite allusions made by Lucan or allusions made to Lucan by later authors he generally does not offer an interpretation; 197–8 and 539 are exceptions which show some of the possibilities. For political and biographical background, the reader is referred to entries in *RE* and *Brill's New Pauly* or *Der neue Pauly*; for geography, to the Barrington Atlas. He very often paraphrases Lucan's Latin, or offers assistance with word order, which has made me somewhat unsure of the intended audience for his commentary, especially in light of the detailed

philological notes elsewhere. Notes which paraphrase or re-state the meaning of Lucan's Latin rob him of space for deeper or broader analyses, especially in view of the translation he offers in the edition (cf. e.g. 167–82). I also felt as though the thematic economy of the poem was under-represented in the notes: e.g. at 275 the reader is referred to Leigh's index for sacrificial language, but no discussion of sacrifice in Lucan is offered; I would also have liked a more sustained comparison of Vulteius and the capitulation of Afranius and Petreius (there is some comparison with Juba). Occasionally Asso's help or interpretation is too subjective or of doubtful value (182 'quasi-threefold alliteration' [for q-p-p], 240 on polysyndeton, 254 on the reader 'who feels summoned into the text, as it were, and named "Caesar"', 710 on *sic fatus*). There are a noticeable number of typos in the manuscript.

It is hard not to be influenced by the knowledge that Asso's PhD dissertation was (in part) on 581–824, because there is a clear sense that the commentary gathers renewed energy at 581. From here many of the notes are fuller, and there is further enquiry into internal allusions and the thematic economy of the poem.

Overall, Asso could certainly have pushed further beyond language and usage in the commentary for those of his readers interested in how book four relates to the overall thematic structure of the poem and to the broader epic tradition. I would like to have seen many of the essentially explanatory or summary notes overlaid with more sustained interpretation of the data, but no doubt many will see this as exterior to the task of the commentator. Lucan scholars are indebted to Asso for assembling more help on the important fourth book than has ever before been available. Those looking for help with Lucan's diction and language will be especially well-served.

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