speaker. This fine work will certainly provoke more engagement with the last book of Lucan's epic.

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VIRTUS IN LUCAN

R. SKLENÁŘ: *The Taste for Nothingness. A Study of* Virtus *and Related Themes in Lucan's* Bellum Civile. Pp. x + 158. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003. Cased, US$60/£37.50. ISBN: 0-472-11310-0.

This new addition to the growing number of monographs devoted to Lucan's epic examines the manner in which the meaning of moral terminology used in the poem is crushed under the burden of contradiction (p. 12). Concern with this linguistic phenomenon finds precedent in a number of ancient sources treating or alluding to the breakdown between signified and signifier (esp. Thuc. 3.82; cf. e.g. Catul. 64.405; Virg. *Georg*. 1.505; Ovid *Ars* 1.739–40), as well as in modern and postmodern criticism alike (on Lucan: e.g. J. Henderson, *Ramus* 16 [1987], 122–64; S. Bartsch, *Ideology in Cold Blood. A Reading of Lucan's* Civil War [Cambridge, MA, 1997], esp. pp. 50–61; p. 166 n. 2 for further predecessors). S. claims to part with the latter group in his insistence upon an author who need not imitate the incoherency of his universe to describe it (pp. 1–2). The concept of *uirtus* serves as a unifying theme; particularly, the way in which Lucan gradually and consistently empties this term of its lexical content and applies it in contexts that are antithetical to its normal usage. Stoic cosmology, ethics, and linguistics provide one point of reference for the discussion (esp. pp. 3–11), the heroic code of the *Iliad* another. The author's command and sensitive use of this philosophical material stand as one of the book's overall strengths. Despite S.'s concern to position his work in opposition to what he promotes as 'the orthodox view of Lucan' (pp. 1–2), he is revising and modifying the work of his predecessors (a particular and conscious influence is W. R. Johnson, *Momentary Monsters: Lucan and his Heroes* [Ithaca, 1987]), not presenting a new overall reading of the poem: as S. would have it of Lucan's own adaptation of his predecessors, the (critical) tool in use throughout this study is the screwdriver, not the sledgehammer (p. 3).

The work comprises four chapters. The first (pp. 1–12) serves as an introduction, defines the use of terms such as nihilism, and establishes the Stoic framework against which to read Lucan's dislocation of signified and signifier. The next (pp. 13–58) explores the use of the term *uirtus* as it relates to the battle-scenes at Massilia (pp. 16–23) and Ilerda (pp. 23–6), before concentrating upon the individual characters of Vulteius (pp. 26–34), Curio (pp. 34–45), and Scaeva (pp. 45–58). The final two chapters isolate the main protagonists Cato (pp. 59–100), Pompey (pp. 106–27), and Caesar (pp. 128–51). Because of the nature of *uirtus*, the discussion necessarily gravitates towards individual characters. But, owing to the larger framework established in Chapter 1, its conclusions are relevant to more than just characterization: S. offers a consistent integration of the behaviour, ethics, and presentation of Lucan's heroes with the universe established at the outset of the poem. His treatment of the figure of Cato (revised from *AJPh* 120 [1999], 281–96) is a

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particularly successful example of his method; less convincing is his revisitation of Marti's theory (*AJPh* 66 [1945], 367–73) that Pompey is a stoic *proficiens*.

S. at times oversimplifies or seriously misrepresents the contribution of previous scholarship on the poem. Masters, for example, has achieved much more than simply 'indenturing him (sc. Lucan) to Caesar' (p. 141 n. 58). When the claim is made that 'close reading figures not much more prominently in the recent line of Lucan criticism than it did among its predecessors' (p. 1), one is reminded of Martha Davis's objection to Masters's own, equally spurious, claim ten years ago (*BMCR* 2004.03.25): it is outrageous in light of recent work such as Bartsch's book and M. Leigh's *Lucan: Spectacle and Engagement* (Oxford, 1997). These statements might be expected as relics from the Ph.D. thesis from which the book originates, but in fact S. offers a more objective assessment of his position *vis-à-vis* the pre-1996 critical tradition on the poem in his dissertation (pp. v–vi). Overall, the revision process from thesis to book has been thoughtfully and admirably executed.

Disappointing in general is S.'s refusal to integrate the narrative voice of passages such as 7.641–6: there is clearly more to Lucan than just nihilism—'than the bleakly irrefutable x = not –x of Lucan's universe' (p. 134)—both at the heart of the narrative in Book 7 and elsewhere. One of the hallmarks of recent critical work on this poem (and other imperial literature) has been its attempt to accommodate multiple voices. In S.'s ultimately reductive reading, the promotion of one insistent narrative viewpoint discounts nuances some have considered vital to its overall meaning.

The real value of S.'s contribution to the study of Lucan lies in its detailed and sustained examination of the dynamics informing one important aspect of a larger, already known, phenomenon at work within the epic. Indeed, for advanced students, S. will be among the most accessible (although, perhaps, least provocative) of the book-length studies now available on the poem.

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PETRONIAN IMAGES

V. RIMELL: *Petronius and the Anatomy of Fiction*. Pp. x + 239. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. Cased, £45/US$60. ISBN: 0-521-81586-X.

R.'s book is about imagery binding the mass of the Satyricon together. Key elements are dark and claustrophobic holes (Quartilla's lair, Trimalchio's dining room, the Trojan horse, Bargates' lodging house, Lichas' ship . . .) which are thematic transformations of each other, animals, and eruptions and engulfings of metamorphic bodies overstuffed with food and/or literature. There is a constant erosion of the boundaries between inside and outside, eater and eaten. Latent cannibalism (and civil war) is always lurking in wait (one character after another embodies the Cyclops), and becomes metaphorically and potentially literal in Croton. The Satyricon itself, as its characters are too, is stuffed through gobbling up other texts.

There are good things in R.'s account. While she is strongly opposed to purely comic/entertainment readings, she is right to question what 'pure' comedy might be and raise the question of what kind of comedy this could be. R. is also strong on the way literature works in people: the story of the Widow of Ephesus, for example, enacts how any kind of storytelling is drenched in all sorts of already existing story patterns.

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