take any account of Seneca's lost works, which are not dateable. Nor does he do much to defend his chronology. The late dating of *De Providentia* is circular: it rests on just such an assumption about the development of Seneca's thinking. Similarly, the reason for dating *De Otio* so late is precisely that, according to M., it does not compromise (p. 139): M. does not mention the possibility that the addressee is Annaeus Serenus, in which case the work belongs not later than his death in 62; nor does he engage with its incompleteness and the ambiguity of the last surviving passage. He bolsters this chronology by adducing similarities between themes in these works and those of the *Epistulae Morales*. But these are very varied in subject matter and even contain elements of consolation (*Epp.* 91, 99) that could be similarly related to the earliest works, if we did not know better. As for the middle works, we do not know if *De Beneficiis* was finished, or even started, before Seneca's retirement, only that it is mentioned in *Ep.* 81, whose dramatic date is the early summer of 64.

But the fragility of the scheme does not get in the way of the sensitive analysis of the individual works. M. brings out well the deliberate contrast in stylistic levels and modes of exposition with which Seneca imports variety into the repetition so essential to paedagogy. The days when Seneca was thought to be unable to organize a treatise or even an argument are happily gone. In the wake of Abel's work on the dialogues and M.'s own labours on the letters, painstaking analysis reveals the 'inner form'. Just as welcome is the fact that there is no crude attempt to read precise political messages into the tragedies. Instead, M. stresses their vivid exploration of the dangers of the passions displayed in extreme situations. These horrific portrayals are not merely negative versions of Seneca's prose instruction; they are artistic transformations of the cruelty Seneca saw around him into general accounts of the human condition (p. 219).

M.'s book is well organized, and easy to use. Paragraphs are numbered so that cross-references are precise. Errors are few (but p. 37 n. 52 seriously misrepresents Grimal's view by assigning the putative speech on clemency before the Senate to Nero on 1 January 55, rather than to Seneca on 1 January 56). The book manages to achieve a great deal in a relatively concise format, providing an account of Seneca's life and an analysis of all of his extant works, while also giving students a good idea of the different scholarly approaches that have been taken. M. likes reading Seneca and makes the reader feel that he is interesting to read, and, indeed, to read more than once.

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LUCAN RECLAIMED

P. Esposito, L. Nicastri (edd.): *Interpretare Lucano. Miscellanea di Studi.* (Quaderni del Dipartimento di Scienze dell'Antichità 22.) Pp. 504. Naples: Università degli Studi di Salerno, 1999. Paper, L. 70,000.

What to expect from a voluminous collection of nineteen studies (mostly in Italian) under the noncommittal title 'Interpretare Lucano'? Recent years have certainly showed no lack of scholars devoted to the interpretation of the *Bellum Civile*. On the contrary, apart from translations and commentaries, the annual stream of articles and monographs on the hot-blooded, talented young poet from Cordoba is still waxing.

In the preface to this collection readers are given no real clue as to the scope of the

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book, other than that it aims at taking stock of the past two decades of Lucanean studies. Among the contributors are some famous names such as Renato Badalì and Elaine Fantham, but also many young, still unknown scholars. The volume is not presented as the result of a conference; scholars seem to have been invited to submit their articles, without further thematic guidelines or other focuses that might explicitly unify the volume. The editors claim they have done no more than provide the occasion and prepare the material for the printer.

This modesty may be a little misleading. After a useful survey by one of them (Esposito) of recent scholarship on Lucan, there follow a number of contributions that on closer scrutiny do seem to share some basic principles. As a whole, the volume is more than an aimless mélange of scholarly exercises, and can even be seen as the embodiment of a programmatic statement: 'Lucanean studies must get back to normal.'

So are these studies currently in a state of abnormality? 'Yes', is the clear answer given by Emanuele Narducci. In his prominently placed and provocative essay 'Deconstructing Lucan, ovvero le nozze (coi fichi secchi) di Ermete Trismegisto e di Filologia', Narducci mounts a polemic against recent trends in (Anglo-American) studies of Lucan, notably those by Johnson, Henderson, Masters, and Bartsch. Narducci's views on these studies may be summarized as follows: postmodern scholars increasingly seem to bring their own interests and personal associations as readers into the texts, which are, consequently, connected with ever more bizarre ideas, often distant from or at odds with what they actually say. Notably, postmodern studies tend to get caught in what N. aptly calls the 'fallacia metaletteraria' (p. 57): every line of poetry is reckoned to be about writing poetry. These studies not only make difficult reading (hence the reference to Hermeticism in N.'s title), but if 'anything goes', nothing really counts. The academic credibility of literary criticism is threatened, particularly compared with present-day archeology or history.

Such judgements are likely be shared by many scholars who, until now, have not raised their voices against scholars such as Henderson and Masters (or, as N. sharply observes, who could not dare to criticize what has rapidly become the mainstream in Lucanean studies, at the risk of being marginalized). It is therefore good to hear another voice here, and the way N. sticks out his neck may be called courageous.

On the other hand, it must be added that N. repeatedly overstates his case, resorting to cynical remarks and emotional outbursts, and suggesting a total rejection of almost a whole generation of Lucanean scholarship. The only recent study that has found favour with him is Matthew Leigh's *Spectacle and Engagement* (Oxford, 1997). But surely, not everything in the rest of these books on Lucan is sheer nonsense.

One would expect to find a response from one of the attacked scholars elsewhere in the volume. Given the unusually strong tone of N.'s essay, this would have been no more than fair, but no such reply has been included. Instead we find a great number of other contributions, divided into three more groups: first, there are eight larger analyses in the department 'Tra lingua, storia e letteratura' (pp. 87–252). These include essays by Elaine Fantham on Lucan's view of the Republican Senate, and by N. Gagliardi on nominal composites in Lucan. The other contributors here are E. Peluzzi, C. Salemme, M. Leigh, C. Santini, S. Casali, and G. Moretti.

A second group (pp. 253–301) is called 'Note critico-esegetiche', and mainly comprises shorter notices. The first one, by R. Badalì, attacks the Teubner edition of Shackleton-Bailey hardly less sharply than Narducci attacks postmodern studies. The last group (pp. 303–484) is concerned with 'Aspetti del Nachleben Lucaneo', and

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presents material both on Statius and Silius, and on the Medieval and Renaissance periods.

Most of these essays are characterized by elements Narducci would seem to approve of: they are logically sound, accurate, methodologically clear, and well versed in the enormous bibliography on Lucan, as is shown in abundant notes. But for the most part they are also rather unexciting, and in some cases forbidding. One may question, for instance, the relevance for this book of an enormous article about Lucan in Medieval epic (sixty-four pages, including 214 notes and seven pages of separate bibliography), or the practical use of what appears to be a long prepublication (twenty-six pages) of a part of a commentary on Book 9, no matter how welcome such a commentary will prove to be.

This brings me to some concluding remarks. *Interpretare Lucano* obviously wants to oppose postmodern interpretations of Lucan and show how he should be interpreted, namely, according to the established norms of classical ('continental'?) philology. But is this really a convincing and fruitful opposition? Somehow one cannot help feeling uneasy about the whole project. Certainly, some excesses of postmodernism in recent Lucanean studies qualify for correction (I could not agree more). But for one thing, these studies have unquestionably rekindled interest in Lucan and brought new life to Lucanean scholarship. Whether the more traditional approaches exemplified in this collection of essays will produce similar inspiring effects remains to be seen.

A new civil war of 'postmodernists' against 'traditionalists' serves no purpose. It would be a pity if parties took positions opposite one another without seriously entering into dialogue. Gradually advancing knowledge through syntheses of apparent contrasts—is this not what scientific interpretation of texts is all about? Such forms of synthesis are, in fact, quite possible. To give just one example: the seemingly antique scholarly genre of a scientific commentary, not very popular among postmodernists, in fact offers a suitable model for approaches that combine sound philological tradition and present-day interests. (So let us not make civil war, but commentaries!)

Interpretare Lucano is, like all collections of essays, of uneven quality, but it will be useful to all Lucanean scholars. Particularly, the comprehensive essays by Esposito and Narducci may be called indispensable, the former for its broad survey of recent scholarship, the latter for its polemical discussion of what interpreting Lucan should be. We may be sure that the discussion will not end here.

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STATIUS' SOURCES AND STRUCTURES

F. DELARUE: *Stace, poète épique: Originalité et cohérence.* (Bibliothèque d'Études Classiques, 20.) Pp. viii + 453. Leuven and Paris: Éditions Peeters, 2000. Paper. Belg. frs. 2000. ISBN: 2-87723-494-0 (France), 90-429-0861-0 (Leuven).

During the past decade French scholars such as Franchet d'Espèrey, Georgacopoulou, Lesueur, Ripoll, and Taisne have established a sound reputation for their scholarship on Statius. *Stace, poète épique* confirms the standing of Fernand Delarue as one of these important authorities. Originally submitted in the traditional French form of a massively long doctoral thesis in 1990, this monograph has a long genesis

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