not mean that P. is over-conservative. He not infrequently prints conjectures where I print the paradosis or obelize (interesting conjectures that have appeared since my edition include 1.3.10 *omnium*] *omnes* A. Mele; 1.7.3 *in<de> speciem* G. Abbamonte; 3.26.7 *ut* post *hoc faciunt* del. P.). Occasionally, though, his reasons for sticking to the mansucripts are unconvincing. For example, at 6.2.1 he accepts the transmitted text, taking the *stulti*, the *prudentes*, and the *imperiti* to be three separate groups. But elsewhere in S. the *imperiti* are normally indistinguishable from the *stulti*, so this interpretation needs further justification. At 6.12.1 *Archelaus, antiquitatis diligens* the problem lies not in the syntax, as P. appears to think, but in the inherent implausibility of Archelaus being described in these terms. At 7.21.4 *omnibus autem stellis* must refer to the planets alone, hence Gercke's *<V> stellis* and my *stellis <erraticis>*; to defend the paradosis P. needs to show not simply that *stella* can mean 'planet' as opposed to 'heavenly body' in general, which is not in dispute, but that *omnes stellae* can refer to planets to the exclusion of other heavenly bodies. (I have noted a few slips in the apparatus: 1.5.2 *uideamus . . . quo<dam>modo*: the manuscript variants are omitted; 3.10.4 the note should refer to the *transit* in ll. 20–1, not l. 19; 3.16.4 l. 17 *sunt* is in all the manuscripts, not just δW^2; 6.27.4 the note should refer to the *quo* in l. 21, not l. 19; 7.30.5 *habet* for *habeat* is not my conjecture: as my apparatus states, Gercke erroneously attributed this reading to manuscript E.)

Italian readers of the *NQ* have been well served in recent years, for the late D. Vottero produced an earlier edition with introduction, translation and notes (Turin, 1989), which made a useful contribution to the text and interpretation of the *NQ*, and P. does likewise. This is a valuable edition from which all readers of the *NQ* can profit.

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doi:10.1093/clrevj/bni297

LUCAN'S SNAKE BOOK

C. WICK (ed.): *M. Annaeus Lucanus:* Bellum civile. *Liber IX*. Einleitung, Text und Übersetzung. (Beiträge zur Altertumskunde 201.) Pp. xvi + 155, ills. Munich and Leipzig: K. G. Saur Verlag, 2004. Cased, €82. ISBN: 3-598-77813-9.

C. WICK (ed.): *M. Annaeus Lucanus:* Bellum civile. *Liber IX*. Kommentar. (Beiträge zur Altertumskunde 202.) Pp. 448, fig. Munich and Leipzig: K. G. Saur Verlag, 2004. Cased, €96. ISBN: 3-598-77814-7.

One of the most attractive parts of Lucan's epic *Bellum Civile* is its ninth book. Here the reader is presented with some sensational scenes involving all three protagonists of the work. After opening on a short scene picturing the murdered Pompey's 'ascension' to heaven, the book focuses on the anti-Caesarean hero, Cato the Younger, leading his army through the horrible deserts of Libya, while the final 150 lines picture Julius Caesar himself during a highly symbolic visit to the ruins of Troy. The long Cato section contains some remarkable passages in which the poet shows some ingenious variations of standard epic elements. For example, there is a violent sandstorm (444ff.), a catalogue of desert snakes (700ff.), and, in what is probably one

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https://doi.org/10.1093/clrevj/bni298 Published online by Cambridge University Press

of the highlights of the entire poem, a thrilling range of poisoning scenes (733ff.), in which Roman soldiers variously die some form of horrible death as a result of specific snakebites.

Until quite recently there was no modern commentary on Lucan's ninth book. This seems strange, particularly if the renewed interest in Lucan of recent decades is taken into account, but it may be simply due to the sheer length of the book (1108 lines), or to the complexity of some of its subject matter. As if to make up for the lacuna, several publications on Book 9 have appeared within a short time. In 2001 David P. Kubiak published a helpful edition with short notes (fifty-six pages) in the Bryn Mawr Latin Commentaries. In the same year, Christian Rudolf Raschle published a revised dissertation on the snake episode, ll. 587–949 (Frankfurt am Main; reviewed in *CR* 54 [2004], 104–6). And finally there is a new, full commentary on the whole of Book 9 by Claudia Wick. This edition is based on her dissertation on ll. 1–586 (Geneva, 2002), which was subsequently revised and extended. It comes in two beautifully designed volumes, one of which containing the commentary, and presents readers of Lucan with a wealth of material on Book 9.

The introduction is, as may be expected from academic works in German, systematic and thorough. It dispenses with sections on 'life and work', and rather focuses on the structure of the book and its individual scenes, as well as on its protagonists, notably Cato. In recent Anglo-Saxon approaches to Cato (e.g. by Johnson and Leigh) the 'Stoic sage' who leads his men in a rather devastating campaign through Libya is reduced to a caricature of wisdom, mirroring the absurdity of the war and failure of Stoic philosophy rather than embodying relevant values. These interesting corrections of the Cato image are only briefly mentioned by W., who is quick to reject the approach without much of a serious discussion, qualifying the view as 'interpretatorische Fehlentwicklung' (p. 32). Significantly, in the extensive bibliography some important, if controversial, contributions on Lucan in English are not even mentioned at all. Thus, I missed entries for the studies by Henderson and Masters, surely an inexcusable omission.

Readers familiar with the recent split in Lucanean studies will by now understand that W.'s edition belongs to the continental 'camp', which calls attention again to Lucan as a serious young man, a learned poet with deeply felt philosophical convictions and a political program in defense of old Republican ideals. This approach, exemplified in some recent European scholarship on Lucan, notably by E. Narducci, rejects all hints of postmodern ideas or theory, and reasserts the importance of philological attention for the text and its cultural context. This school of Lucanean studies, while undoubtedly making a necessary correction to some forms of postmodernism, runs the danger of putting back the clock (see also my notice in *CR* 52 [2002], 68–70).

W.'s Lucan is certainly not the exciting, provocative poet of recent Anglo-Saxon studies, but the erudite intellectual as he was known from earlier scholarship. The poet's wide studies of snakes and poisons, of astrology and geometry, of religion and geography all come out clearly and brilliantly in W.'s learned and detailed commentary, which collects abundant material, including numerous parallel places, for virtually every feature of Lucan's text. In this respect, W.'s book renders good service to readers. Anyone who wishes to know all about, for instance, the ancient and modern reality behind Lucan's scenes picturing the various snakes and their poisonous effects will find all the necessary in W.'s edition. However, those who wish to understand more of Lucan's rhetorical schemes, his clever ways to raise pathos, and

https://doi.org/10.1093/clrevj/bni298 Published online by Cambridge University Press

his innovations in the epic genre will have more difficulty to find their way here, as will those who are looking for more immediate help in reading Lucan's dense text.

A word seems due on the adopted text and translation. W. explicitly says that she has not freshly collated the manuscripts, nor systematically followed any of the great twentieth-century editions (Housman, Badalì, Shackleton Bailey) (p. 33), but she does not explain her own principles in this field nor add a comparative table of textual changes. For further discussion readers are simply referred to the individual lemmata of the commentary. On the other hand, the added German translation in prose is a great help, given the difficulty of Lucan's Latin. It contains functional subtitles that assist the reader in finding a specific scene or keeping the overall view. It also relieves the commentary of a number of interpretative remarks. Having clarified her aims as a translator, not without showing some higher aspirations, W. surprisingly ends on a modest note: 'die spröden und starren, ja sperrigen Satzgebilde der Übertragung können nur Wortmaterial widergeben, nicht aber die gedrängte, kühle Schönheit von Lukans Sprachminimalismus' (p. 35). Much as I regret the recurrence of the idea that the classics are in the end impossible to translate, W.'s qualification of Lucan's style is interesting and would seem to ask for further discussion.

W. deserves praise for publishing a full commentary on the whole of Lucan's long and varied Book 9, rather than on highlights or a single passage. The material collected in the commentary is well ordered and accessible, and the two volumes have been designed and printed with care and good taste, although they are excessively priced. The publication will no doubt be a standard work of reference for scholars in the years to come. Having said this, I add that our overall interpretations of Lucan (and of his 'heroes' such as Cato) are not greatly advanced here and that the commentary seems less suited for those who seek immediate assistance in reading.

One cannot help wishing that philological meticulousness and discipline, as represented exemplarily in this publication, could somehow be combined with a rather more adventurous 'Anglo-Saxon' approach to the text. Who will take up the daring task of writing a sound and detailed, postmodern commentary on a section of Lucan's *Bellum Civile*?

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doi:10.1093/clrevj/bni298

PLINY'S ETHNOGRAPHY

T. MURPHY: *Pliny the Elder's* Natural History. *The Empire in the Encyclopaedia.* Pp. x + 233. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. Cased, £50. ISBN: 0-19-926288-8.

Until recently reviews of books about Pliny's *Historia Naturalis* would often begin by noting the author's bold rehabilitation of an unfashionable and neglected subject. The *HN*'s thirty-seven books (containing by Pliny's own estimation 20,000 facts) have long been mined for illuminating nuggets, but the encyclopaedia has suffered critical neglect as a cultural artefact in its own right, characterized as a lapidary accumulation of fact upon dry fact with apparently slight regard for critical appraisal or interpretation.

This neglect is no longer quite the case. Various scholars have published on Pliny, and also on other ancient compilers and excerpters like Athenaeus (Braund and Wilkins, 2003), arguing that the selection and organization of material within such

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