



Swansea University  
Prifysgol Abertawe



## Cronfa - Swansea University Open Access Repository

---

This is an author produced version of a paper published in :  
*Classical Review*

Cronfa URL for this paper:  
<http://cronfa.swan.ac.uk/Record/cronfa23367>

---

---

This article is brought to you by Swansea University. Any person downloading material is agreeing to abide by the terms of the repository licence. Authors are personally responsible for adhering to publisher restrictions or conditions. When uploading content they are required to comply with their publisher agreement and the SHERPA RoMEO database to judge whether or not it is copyright safe to add this version of the paper to this repository.

<http://www.swansea.ac.uk/iss/researchsupport/cronfa-support/>

†TESORIERO (C.), MUECKE (F.), NEAL (T.) (edd.) *Lucan*. Pp. xii + 540. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. Cased, £85, US\$135 (Paper, £37.50, US\$65). ISBN: 978-0-19-927722-3 (978-0-19-927723-0 pbk).

doi:10.1017/S0009840X10003094

The introductory blurb of this book states its aim as follows: ‘the series provides students and scholars with a representative selection of the best and most influential articles on a particular author, work, or subject’. In other words, these publications assemble a canon of criticism. It is mildly ironic, if unsurprising, to find the latest volume allotted to Lucan, an author whose relationship with the classical canon has never been comfortable. The *Pharsalia* began the twentieth century at the margins of Latin philology and has moved close to the centre only in the last thirty years. This transition, often contested and never smooth, is something that T.’s volume demonstrates admirably: his collection opens with Fraenkel (1924), that most canonical of German philologists, and concludes with Henderson (1987), whose fiercely iconoclastic reading of the *Pharsalia* has now become a classic in its own right. In addition there is Braund’s engaging introduction, which sets the assembled articles within the wider context of critical work on Lucan while enumerating some of the extreme, partisan reactions that the poem has always provoked.

As an archaeology of scholarship, then, this volume has merit. Containing publications that date from 1924 (Fraenkel) to 1999 (Leigh), it thankfully does not assume that the most recent criticism is always the best. That said, it is difficult to see how some of these articles fit the criterion of ‘most influential’: Helzle’s ‘*Indocilis Privata Loqui*’ (1994) seems an odd choice, as does Friedrich’s somewhat dated ‘Cato, Caesar, and Fortune in Lucan’ (1938). On the other hand, for those essays whose influence is undisputed, the label is not always a compliment. If ‘Lucan’s Use of Virgilian Reminiscence’ (Thompson and Bruère, 1968) is in everybody’s bibliography it is only because we all plunder its plodding list of parallel passages: necessary, maybe, but a very dull read. Besides these debatable selections, there are several glaring omissions: O’Higgins’ 1988 article ‘Lucan as *vates*’ definitely deserves inclusion and Italian scholars are under-represented, so perhaps Narducci’s ‘Il tronco di Pompeo’ (1973). Needless to say, a volume of Lucan criticism that does not contain work by Ahl is just a little shameful.

Still, every reader will advocate his or her own critical canon; this book’s fundamental problems lie with the series, not the selection. As many other reviewers have by now observed,<sup>1</sup> articles considered ‘best and most influential’ are, by reason of their significance, already widely available, so why collect them in a volume? This volume contains five essays not previously translated into English (Fraenkel, 1924; Conte, 1966; Grimal, 1960; Friedrich, 1938; Zwierlein, 1986), but ten out of the seventeen works assembled here are available on JSTOR.

A collection of the most influential articles on Lucan does not necessarily represent the poem’s most significant episodes. The Editor’s purpose included papers on ‘broader issues and themes’ (p. vii) rather than ones focussing on individual books. This is a problem if the series is designed – partly, at least – for students. For instance, it contains no criticism devoted specifically to Erichtho (6.507–830), even though this is arguably the most famous scene. What is an undergraduate to make of the Lucan that emerges from these pages?

If the poem is not fully represented in this volume, a full range of scholarship definitely is. It would have been helpful, however, to group such a wide assortment of material under subheadings, as other books in the series do. One category that springs to mind is ‘Context’, which could embrace Bonner’s ‘Lucan and the Declamation Schools’ (1966), Lintott’s ‘Lucan and the History of the Civil War’ (1971) and Martindale’s ‘The Politician Lucan’ (1984). As it stands, the collection has no principle of arrangement; perhaps this is due to T.’s untimely death. This same fact may account for occasional inconsistencies in translation (only a few of the Dante citations in Fraenkel are rendered into English, see pp. 36–7).

Cornell University

ERICA BEXLEY  
emb268@cornell.edu

<sup>1</sup>See the *BMCR* reviews by S.D. Olson (97.03.06), J. Farrell (02.02.11), C.C. de Jonge (2007.07.07) and G.C. Lacki (2007.09.19).