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Review

Reviewed Work(s): Lucan, Civil War by Susan H. Braund

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*Lucan, Civil War*, translated with an introduction and notes by SUSAN H. BRAUND. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992. 335 pp. Pr. £ 45,—.

In recent years, scholarly interest in Lucan's *Bellum Civile* is steadily growing, as may be concluded from the numerous studies and commentaries on the text which have been published. Now a new English translation of the poem has been added to this material. It comes only a few years after the publication of two other translations of Lucan's work (*Lucan's Civil War*, translated into English verse by P.F. Widdows, Bloomington/Indianapolis

(Indiana University Press) 1988; 294 pp.) and *Lucan, Pharsalia*, translated by Douglas Little, Dunedin, New Zealand (University of Otago Press) 1989; 350 pp.). It seems useful to describe the new translation of Mrs. Braund by comparing it to that of Mr. Widdows in particular.

Both are verse translations, but of different types. Whereas Mr. Widdows has chosen the hexameter as the metre, Mrs. Braund has opted for free verse, with lines of varying length and an underlying iambic rhythm. Though both may be said to produce good results, Mr. Widdows' choice may seem a happier one, since it retains more of the obsessive monotony and rhetorical style of the original. To my taste, his translation is no less powerful and compelling than Lucan's own text, and may even be called 'monumental'. Mr. Widdows has proved that the hexameter can be used in English with great success. Mrs. Braund's text is equally reliable and makes good reading as well, but seems somewhat less vigorous, due to the freer form she has adopted. In many details however, Mrs. Braund remains more faithful to the original than Mr. Widdows. For example, she has retained the same number of lines in her translation, which equally facilitates its consultation. She has not printed subtitles or summaries within the text itself, as Mr. Widdows has. Perhaps most strikingly, she has rendered all cases of apostrophe (a direct address by the poet of a person or thing), one of Lucan's most conspicuous rhetorical devices. Mr. Widdows, like most translators, has done away with many of them.

Mrs. Braund's book is likely to be of great use to students of Roman literature. Her introduction is excellent, providing both a good survey of facts and problems concerning Lucan and his poem, and a brief analysis of his rhetoric and style. Though some sections of the introduction are slightly disappointing (such as the one on the role of women in the poem, p. xxix-xxx), on the whole it is very sensible and adequate, reflecting the results of the best modern scholarship. Equally valuable are the numerous explanatory notes. Taking up no less than 100 pages, they amount to what may be considered as a small commentary on the whole text. Mr. Widdows' introduction and notes have much less to offer, though he has an interesting paragraph on English translations of Lucan (p. xx-xxiii). Mrs. Braund's index of names is more detailed than Mr. Widdows' glossary, which does not refer to places in the text.

In conclusion, it may be said that Mrs. Braund's accurate and reliable translation is a good help for readers of Lucan's difficult

Latin text. Though some literary readers may still prefer the hexameter translation by Mr. Widdows, on the whole Mrs. Braund's version rests more solidly based on modern scholarship. Especially its excellent introduction and notes provide much valuable material for students and scholars. In short, we may welcome its publication.

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