



eCOMMONS

Loyola University Chicago
Loyola eCommons

Classical Studies: Faculty Publications and Other Works

Faculty Publications

1983

R. Mayer, Lucan Civil War VIII

John F. Makowski

Loyola University Chicago, jmakow1@luc.edu

Recommended Citation

Makowski, JF. "R. Mayer, Lucan Civil War VIII" in *The New England Classical Newsletter* 11, 1983, pp. 30-31.

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Faculty Publications at Loyola eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Classical Studies: Faculty Publications and Other Works by an authorized administrator of Loyola eCommons. For more information, please contact ecommons@luc.edu.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/).
© Classical Association of New England, 1983.

The commentary is quite good but brief in comparison with the recent OCT annotated editions. The lemmata are based upon the translation, but the line numbers are synchronized throughout with those of the original. Problems in the text are judiciously treated, and words are not wasted on tangents. Although the translation is so sensitive to meter, the commentary is much too slight on both the meters and the structure of the play. The parabasis, for example, is noted at lines 498-610, but there is no explanation of such terms as *pnigos* used in the commentary.

The Introduction puts the *Knights* very well into its historical context. The editor's views on the manuscript tradition are clearly expressed. There is a useful list of abbreviations and a list of reference works. It is odd that the hypothesis is omitted.

It is regrettable that the rather large, easily legible font of the printed English text is not matched by the photo-offset typewritten Greek text. The resulting appearance belies the considerable importance and merits of this edition.

--Z. Philip Ambrose
Dept. of Classics
University of Vermont
Burlington, VT 05405

* * *

Lucan Civil War VIII Edited with a Commentary. By R. Mayer. Aris & Phillips Ltd., Warminster, Wilts., England. Available in U.S.A. from Humanities Press, Inc., Scholarly Book Publishers-Distributors, Atlantic Highlands, NJ 07716. 1981. x + 197 pp., paperback, ISBN 0-85668-176-8. Hardcover, ISBN 0-85668-155-5, \$29.00.

This volume, a reworking of a doctoral dissertation at Cambridge University, consists of an introduction, the text with Duff's Loeb translation facing it, and a commentary. The author directs the project to the general reader ("perhaps an undergraduate") who would like a sample of the *Pharsalia* but adds that some of the material will necessarily be for the professional scholar. It is unfortunate to say that this book will not be of much benefit either to the undergraduate or to the researcher already familiar with Lucan.

Among the *desiderata* of a text *cum* commentary are -- besides the usual biographical and literary background -- the elucidation of difficult constructions, the identification of names and terms unfamiliar to the reader, and some analysis of the work's literary qualities. The introduction with its infelicitous style (misused antecedents, inconsistency of tenses, unparallel constructions, lack of transitions, and typos) presages some of the book's weaknesses. As for content, the major problem of the introduction is that it contains a great deal of tangential (and sometimes erroneous) matter while failing to provide either necessary background or a treatment of issues central to an understanding of Book 8. For example, the author discusses at some length the characterizations of Sextus, Brutus, and Domitius, all of whom have little or nothing to do with Book 8. In the case of Domitius, irrelevance is compounded with error when Mayer advances the argument that Domitius is limned in Book 2 with a view toward flattering Nero -- a notion disproven by Ahl, Lebek, Lounsbury, and others. Instead of discussing scenes, characters, and problems from other books of the *Pharsalia*, it would have been more useful for the author to have included a summary of the events leading up to Book 8 as well as a systematic treatment of the rhetorical figures used by Lucan. One feels this lack keenly in the commentary when the author refers again and again to technical terms such as *erotema*, *apo koinou*, and syllepsis. That these terms are not defined adequately anywhere in the book would, it seems, pose a serious problem for the undergraduate approaching Lucan for the first time.

Similar difficulties plague the commentary, which shows curious emphases and omissions. The strong point here, it must be said, is the adduction of parallels and antecedents from Lucan's predecessors, Vergil and Ovid, as well as occasional useful syntactical explanations. Especially good is the analysis of sentence construction and rhythm. But a major criticism in this section is that the identification of geographical, historical, and technical terms is done on a hit-or-miss basis. For example, at line 222 occur the words *cum Caspia claustra*. While the comment is helpful in pointing out the triple alliteration, it makes no effort to define or locate the place in question. This is the treatment given to many proper names, which are either passed over in silence or made the object of some digressive remark. As for the interpretation of the episodes in Book 8, the literary analysis which precedes each section of the commentary will be disappointing, especially to the professional scholar. Two examples will suffice. The significance of the Parthians and of Ptolemy, both of whom are thematically important to Book 8, is either ignored or under-evaluated by the author. This is surprising, especially in light of the fact that scholars have treated these aspects of the poem. In this regard, one notices that Mayer seems unfamiliar with Eva Sanford's "The Eastern Question in Lucan's *Bellum Civile*" and with McClosky and Phinney's "Ptolemaeus Tyrannus: The Typification of Nero in the *Pharsalia*."

Finally, one might note that the book contains no bibliography and that the index is exasperatingly incomplete.

--John F. Makowski
Dept. of Classical Studies
Loyola University
Chicago, IL 60626

* * *

Research Tools for the Classics. The Report of the American Philological Association's Ad Hoc Committee on Basic Research Tools. Edited by Roger S. Bagnall. Scholars Press, P.O. Box 2268, Chico, CA 95927. 1980. 61 pp., paperback, \$7.50.

This report as printed consists of two parts, "Conclusions and Recommendations" and "Work in Progress." A third part, a questionnaire answered by some 600 scholars, is not published in the present work.

The first part is further subdivided into nine sections: an introduction (1), discussion of basic principles (2), summary of recommendations (3), and justifications for these (4 through 9). The basic principles set out are unexceptionable, yet it is well to be reminded of them: the international character of classical studies, classical studies as a cluster of disciplines (the original area study?), the importance of continuity in both bibliographic and other projects of an ongoing nature, the limits of available resources ("We cannot afford everything"), and support for the use of modern technology wherever appropriate (as "means and not ends").

Perhaps most interest will focus on the third section with its 22 recommendations, directed as much to NEH and other funding agencies as to APA. Highlights, to this reviewer, were the high priority assigned to computer data banks of various kinds, strong support for TLL and certain other research tools, and the urgent call for development of a cartographic project. In the justifications, it is noted (p. 22) that the serious research scholar must have a decent reading knowledge of French, German, and Italian -- often one might add Spanish as well. Translations from Greek and Latin works are assigned low priorities as *research materials*, but their importance in college education is recognized (p. 23) -- one might mention as well their importance at the high school level and to the general reading public.

In the second part of the report are listed 67 research projects under 13 categories from "Bibliographic Works" through "Oriental Languages" with a brief description of the current status of each.

Overall, this document -- whatever reservations might exist on specific points -- is a harbinger of the future and a realistic attempt to come to terms with it; as such, it deserves widespread notice and discussion.

--Michael P. McHugh
Romance & Classical Languages
University of Connecticut
Storrs, CT 06268