The Pharsalia Study Guide

The Pharsalia by Lucan

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BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

The *Pharsalia* has been described by Ahl as "a political act as well as a political poem." Written when Nero's true nature could no longer be denied, it is a harrowing portrait of the disintegration of Rome, civil war, and the triumph of a single will. Lucan's unfinished epic was a subject of criticism even as he wrote it. In Petronius's *Satyricon*, a bitterly satiric novel written by another victim of Nero, a character complains that it is not a true epic, but a history, because it did not incorporate divine motivation. Even more important to later readings of the poem was the historian Tacitus's negative portrait of the poet in the *Annales*. From that day to this, Lucan has suffered from Tacitus's portrait and confusion about his approach.

Lucan's ability to paint the terrifying and the unearthly and to produce a pithy quotable line has not endeared him to all critics, but he has never lacked readers. The only copy of a secular poem copied between 550-750 A.D. that survives is a fragment entitled *Pharsalia*. His partisan portraits of Cato, Brutus, and Marcia made them models for medieval clerics and eighteenth century revolutionaries. His treatment of the witch Erictho and her necromancy made a fundamental impression on the western mind. Lucan's influence surfaces in the narratives of witch trials as well as in horror literature. Despite Lucan's references to fate, his use of human will as the source of action and events, rather than divine, is more immediately understandable to modern readers. His vision of dismembered bodies and fractured boundaries holds a mirror up to a century that has descended more than once into horror and chaos.

Author Biography

Of all the poetry Marcus Annaeus Lucanus, better known to English readers as Lucan, wrote during his short life, only his unfinished epic *Pharsalia* survives. The little known about Lucan comes from two biographies that circulated in some manuscripts of *Pharsalia* and from the historian Tacitus's *Annals*. Lucan was born in Cordova in Spain on November 3, A.D. 39. He committed suicide at the order of the emperor Nero on April 30, A.D. 65. The grandson of a famous rhetorician, Seneca the Elder, and the nephew of philosopher, writer, and financier Seneca the Younger, Lucan was brought to Rome as a baby. There he received the usual upper class Roman education in literature and public speaking. He also studied Stoic philosophy. His talent for public speaking had already gained him fame in his teens. Nero, his uncle Seneca's student, encouraged him at first with political appointments, but later the emperor forbade him to plead in the courts, publish his poetry, or even to give private readings. Traditionally, this, rather than a political motive, has been given as the reason Lucan joined a plot to assassinate Nero. Recent scholarship has tended to reject this.

It is uncertain whether Nero's change of attitude towards the poet came from his jealousy of Lucan's talent or his fear of Lucan's philosophical and political beliefs that talent increasingly served. Lucan had written a poem that suggested Nero's involvement in setting the great fire of A.D. 64, which destroyed so much of Rome. It is likely that Lucan's part in a plot to assassinate Nero and to restore the Roman republic was influenced both by his philosophic and political beliefs and his frustration at being denied both the political forum of the law courts and an audience for his poetry. Lucan was, however, by all accounts, one of the main conspirators. Stoicism stressed rationality, control of emotions and inner freedom. It taught the existence of a continuum of order embracing both natural law and human ethics. Stoicism's beliefs and ideals not only permeate *Pharsalia*, they put its followers on a collision course with a ruler like Nero. Despite this, when the plot was discovered, Lucan broke down and implicated other conspirators, including his innocent mother. He was allowed, like his uncles and father to commit suicide. For a Roman and a Stoic, suicide was a dignified and rational way of meeting a hopeless situation and also legally saved his estate for his young widow, Polla. Polla, it seems, never remarried, and celebrated his birthday at least until A.D. 89.

Plot Summary

Overview

The unfinished *Pharsalia* narrates the Roman Civil War's first phase, which ended almost thirty years later in the victory of Caesar's grandnephew Octavius (Augustus), over the forces of Mark Anthony and the Egyptian queen Cleopatra at the naval battle of Actium. It breaks off with Caesar trapped in Alexandria by the Egyptians.

Book One

Lucan begins his epic with themes and images that will run through his work, 'of legality conferred on crime,' images of self-slaughter and self-induced ruin brought on by Rome's own power and her citizens' corruption by wealth and greed. Peace was maintained as long as Crassus, the wealthiest man in Rome, and Julia, daughter of Caesar and wife of Pompey, lived to hold Caesar and Pompey apart. Their deaths left them unencumbered rivals. Caesar, despite a vision of Rome begging him to turn back, defies the senate and crosses the Rubicon, the river of Italy. He takes Ariminum. Curio comes to urge him to take up arms against Pompey and the Senate. Caeser addresses his troops looking for their support. They are wavering when the senior centurion Laelius speaks, pledging absolute loyalty to Caesar even if it means turning his sword on brother, father, or pregnant wife. They swear their allegiance to Caesar. Fear runs before his army; citizens and senators flee Rome. Portents appear. The senior Etruscan augur sees in the entrails of a sacrificed bull the full horror of the republic's collapse. The astrologer Figulus sees it in the stars. The book ends with a Roman matron filled with the spirit of prophecy running frantically through the streets of Rome prophesying the civil war.

Book Two

Mothers and wives besiege the altars with prayer. The men prepare for war. An old man who had lived through their horrors recalls the civil war between Marius and Sulla. His picture of the butchery in Rome will be matched by the horrors of the sea fight at Massila (Marseille). Brutus goes to Cato for advice. Cato tells him he intends to join Pompey's side to protect the republic. Marcia, Cato's former wife, arrives from the funeral of her husband, Cato's friend whom she had married at Cato's request to give the man children. Marcia and Cato marry again. Pompey marches to Capua while Caesar comes down the Italian peninsula, driving all before him. Domitius is surrounded in Corfinium, and handed over to Caesar by his own men. Caesar releases him. Domitus hurries to join Pompey. Pompey withdraws to Calabria, and sends his son to rouse the whole Roman world before setting sail for Greece.

Book Three

Pompey sails for Greece. Sleeping, he has a vision of his dead wife Julia, Caesar's daughter. She reproaches him for his marriage to Cornelia, and brings him a prophetic warning of the underworld's preparations for the Civil War. Caesar is vexed at Pompey's retreat. He sends Curio to secure the grain producing islands of Sardinia and Sicily. He leads his troops to Rome. There the tribune Metellus opposes his rifling of the treasury. Cotta convinces Metellus to give way. Meanwhile, the known world flocks to Pompey. Caesar leaves Rome and marches towards Massilia. There he insists that the city join him in the Civil War. They ask to be allowed not to involve themselves in an internecine Roman war. Caesar lays siege to Massilia. He leaves for Spain, ordering that the siege be kept. The Greeks defeat the Romans at the landward walls. The Romans attack by sea, in a ferocious battle. Men die horrible deaths, their bodies broken and unrecognizable. Massilia falls.

Book Four

Caesar enters Spain where Afranius and Petreius lead the senatorial army. He pitches his camp opposite the senatorial camp. Rains and the melting snows cause a flood and starvation. With the improving weather the two armies move their camps. The camps are now so close soldiers recognize their friends and relatives across the lines. For a short while the ties of blood and friendship seem likely to turn the running tide of war. Petreius, however, goads his men back to warfare, killing the very men whom they had welcomed. Caesar rejoices that he now has the moral high ground. He besieges the republican force in the arid hills until thirst breaks them. Afranius leads his dying men out to sue for peace. He asks only that they not be compelled to fight in Caesar's army. Caesar grants this; the soldiers depart to enjoy the blessings of peace. Caesar's fleet in the adriatic suffers a set back, although in the courage of Vulteius and his men choosing suicide to cheat the republican forces of victory, they achieve a moral victory. Curio, meanwhile, has sailed for Africa and reaches the ruins of Carthage. He expects luck because he pitches his camp at the ruinous camp of Scipio Africanus, conqueror of Carthage. When battle with the North African princes comes, however, his men are slaughtered and he commits suicide. The narrator regrets that Pompey profited by such a defeat. The book ends with a summation of Curio's career and character. A man of enormous talents and patriotism, he had betrayed his country and his promise: Sulla, Marius, Cinna, and all the Caesar's bought their country. Curio sold it.

Book Five

Winter has come. In Epirus, the Senate sits in session preparing for war. Appius, a senator learned in religious matters, travels to Delphi to consult the oracle. The priestess tries to avoid her duty, but is forced by Appius and the god, Apollo. She speaks but is "not permitted to reveal as much as she is suffered to know," since "the endless chain of events is revealed" to her. Her prophecy to Appius is true but misleading. He finds the peace in Euboea she foretold, in his grave. Caesar faces down

a mutiny. He hurries to Rome and is voted consul. He then rushes to Brundisium. There at first the fleet is becalmed. Eventually, he reaches Greece. Mark Antony is slow to join him with his men. Caesar attempts to sale back to Italy in a small fishing boat, but surviving a ferocious storm, returns to his army in Greece. The storm over, Antony's forces arrive. Pompey recognizes that the war is about to come to a head. He sends Cornelia to the island of Lesbos for safety. Both are grief stricken at parting.

Book Six

The armies encamp on neighboring heights. They move, trying to gain advantage. Caesar plans a great entrenchment to hem in Pompey's troops without their knowing it. Pompey realizes his plan and disperses his troops to stretch Caesar's armies. Pompey's forces are well provisioned, but suffering from disease; Caesar's are unable to re-provision because Pompey holds the coast. Pompey attempts to break out. He is nearly successful, but is held at bay by Scaeva, one of Caesar's centurions. Pompey then breaks out at the seacoast. Caesar rushes to fight him, but suffers a defeat. Pompey does not follow up his initial advantage, but as Caesar withdraws Pompey intends to harry his flight. Pompey is urged to return to Rome, but refuses to do so before he can disband his army. Pompey marches towards Thessaly. Lucan recounts the evil things that have originated in Thessaly. The rivals pitch their camps. Sextus, the son of Pompey, urged by fear, decides to consult the senior witch, Erictho. Sextus finds her working on a spell to keep the war at Philippi. The witch is pleased to help and immediately searches for a suitably fresh corpse and forces it to speak, promising safety from any future necromancy. The soldier describes the dead heroes and villains of Roman history mourning or rejoicing over the battle's outcome. He urges the Pompeians to go bravely to death; they will be admitted to Elyssium, the fields of the blessed.

Book Seven

The morning of Pharsalia dawns. Pompey wakes from a dream in which the citizens in Rome acclaimed him. The army urges a speedy engagement and accuses Pompey of hanging back. Cicero (in his one appearance in the *Pharsalia*), eager to return to the forum, urges Pompey to engage the enemy: "his eloquence gave force to an unsound argument." Pompey has a premonition of the disaster to come. He knows that whichever side wins, horrors and cruelty will follow. The auspices cannot be taken; the bull bolts into the fields and cannot be caught. Caesar, ready for a day of foraging, sees his chance. Caesar urges his army on, telling them the opposing army is full of foreigners; most of the lives they must take are not Roman. Caesar also speaks of his inclination to clemency compared to Pompey and the senate, praying the gods to "give victory to him who does not feel bound to draw the ruthless sword against beaten men, and does not believe that his fellow citizens committed a crime by fighting against him. None of you must smite a foe in the back, and every fugitive must pass as a countryman." Pompey dreads the approach of Caesar's army, and understands his dread as a bad omen. He harangues his troops, urging them to think of Rome, the aged

senators, the mothers of families, Romans yet to be born entreating them to secure their freedom. The battle takes place. The slaughter still leaves the world desolate. Liberty was lost there to generations yet unborn, who had no chance to fight for themselves. The battle turns against the republican army. Pompey leaves the battle, fearing that otherwise the army will stay to be slaughtered. Caesar allows his soldiers to pillage Pompey's deserted camp and denies burial to the dead.

Book Eight

Pompey takes a ship to Lesbos to rejoin Cornelia. She sees Pompey's approach and immediately recognizes the signs of defeat and collapses. The people of Lesbos offer Pompey a secure base. Filled with gratitude, he declines. All grieve the departure of Cornelia who has won their affection with her goodness. Pharsalia's survivors rally to Pompey. He sends King Deiotarus in disguise to see if he can raise the east to their aid. Finally, at Syhedra, he addresses the senators. He asks to whom they should turn for aid, Libya, Egypt, or Parthia. He rejects the first two and suggests Parthia. Lentulus rejects this with disdain because it is un-Roman and against the essential nature of their campaign to preserve liberty. Lentulus urges them to seek aid in Egypt. Egypt meanwhile learns of their approach and takes council. Old Acoreus urges loyalty to their benefactor, Pompey. Pothinus urges the young pharaoh to kill Pompey who will bring Caesar down upon them. Achillas is sent to meet Pompey and kill him. He offers to bring Pompey ashore in his boat. The Romans are suspicious, but Pompey chooses to die rather than to reveal fear. Cornelia begs to accompany him and is refused. Once in the boat, Pompey is murdered; his head is brought to the Pharaoh. Cordus cremates Pompey's body on the seashore, and buries the ashes in hope of retrieving them for Cornelia.

Book Nine

Pompey's spirit soars to heaven. Cato and Brutus are now the leaders of a senatorial partyfreedom." Cornelia grieves, urging her stepsons to freedom." Cornelia grieves, urging her stepsons to carry on the war. Cato gives Pompey a somewhat ambiguous funeral oration, rallies the army and sets sail for Cyrene, which he takes. He and his army set out for Libya. Unable to reach it by sea, he marches over land through the desert, suffering thirst and then poisonous snakes. He refuses to consult the great oracle of Ammon Zeus. A number of his men die spectacularly horrific deaths from snakebites and he refuses with disdain a drink of water from one of his men. Cato shares his men's sufferings and encourages them even at their deaths. Finally, the Psylli protect his army against the snakes. Eventually, they reach Leptis. Caesar, meanwhile, has been tracking Pompey. He visits the site of Troy. Caesar prays to the gods to give him prosperity and promises to restore Troy. He reaches Egypt where he is presented with Pompey's head. Caesar at least feigns horror.

Book Ten

Caesar arrives in Egypt. He visits the tomb of Alexander, giving the narrator the chance to redirect his reader's view of Alexander's achievements, casting an equally unflattering light on Caesar's. Cleopatra seduces Caesar. He pursues his affair with her while the senatorial forces regroup. During a great feast given by Cleopatra in Caesar's honor, Lucan introduces three traditional categories of information about Egypt, the great wealth of the country, its long history, and finally the mystery of the Nile's floods and source. Pothinus, who plotted Pompey's murder, now moves against the other Roman who threatens Egyptian independence and his own position. He convinces the young Pharaoh (Ptolemy) to surprise Caesar, ridding him at one stroke of both the internal (Cleopatra) and external threat to his throne. Pothinus does not follow up his initial advantage. Caesar, energetic and resourceful, takes Ptolomy hostage, and sets fire to the Egyptian fleet , which threatens him. The fire spreads to the city itself. Caesar beheads Porthinus and seizes the city's great Lighthouse, closing Alexandria to shipping. He is preparing to evacuate his army on his own ships when he is brought to bay on the causeway linking the lighthouse to the city by fresh Egyptian forces. The book breaks off with another appearance of the heroic Scaeva.

Characters

Achillas

The Egyptian official who kills Pompey on the order of the Pharaoh Ptolomy and his council. He is later executed by the Egyptian princess Arsinoe.

Arruns

The oldest of the Etruscan seers, he is called to Rome in Book I to perform the traditional rites of divination. When he inspects the internal organs of the bull sacrificed to the gods, he discovers that "What we fear is unspeakable, but worse will follow."

Brutus

A Roman senator and follower of Stoicism. He is a descendant of Brutus the first Consul who drove the tyrant king Tarquin Superbus out of Rome and founded the Republic. At first, he intends to join neither side to avoid the guilt of civil war and to free himself to deal with the winner, whether Pompey or Caesar, until Cato convinces him to join Pompey's camp. He sets himself of being the enemy. Brutus was with Cassius, the leader of the group that assassinated Caesar in 44 B.C.

Caesar

The 'antihero' of *Pharsalia*, a Roman general and politician from an ancient Roman clan who claim descent from Iules, son of the Trojan prince Aeneas and the grandson of the goddess Venus. Caesar is fortune's man, but he also makes the most of fortune. He grabs every advantage with both hands. When fortune wavers, he makes his own. He was a master of military engineering. His personal bravery and consideration for his men made him popular with the men in the ranks. The historical Caesar was noted for his clemency, but Lucan plays this down at every turn.

Cato

The moral center□if not the hero□of the *Pharsalia*, Cato has been traditionally seen as the embodiment of Stoic ideals in the service of the Roman state, although Lucan, according to some critics, seriously undercuts his fulfillment of these ideals. Johnson quotes a Stoic text that suggests that Cato is a caricature of every virtue except the one that makes the others palatable: humility. Cato joins Pompey to keep before him the ideals of the Roman republic and the rule of law, so that if he wins he will not think he has won Rome for himself. Ahl describes Cato as more a symbol than a hero, "urging men to fight for themselves, not for someone, or even something, else." Ahl goes on to

note some strikingly Christian echoes in his portrait, notably his desire to be a scapegoat, to 'devote' himself to the gods in self-sacrifice to save the Roman people and their institutions: "This blood redeem the people, this death pay the penalty of whatever Rome's corruption deserves." Unfortunately this is couched in terms of his being the only person who cares about the republic. There is also something jarring about his image of himself as a father mourning his lost son in reference to the Republic; surely the more acceptable image would have been of the son mourning the father.

Cicero

Conspicuous by his almost complete absence from the poem, he was the greatest orator and one of the most important politicians in Rome for nearly forty years. Never a military man, he worked for most of his political life to bring about an equitable consensus among all good citizens, *consensus omnium bonorum*. Cicero was not present at the battle, but Lucan gives him a speech which in context drips with irony to shame Pompey into battle. He insists that Pompey, always the favorite of fortune, fighting in a cause the gods will favor, make use of the luck that has always been his.

Cleopatra

The sister and queen of the young Ptolomy, king of Egypt. She throws her lot in with Caesar, and distracts him from his duties in pursuing war. For Lucan, civil war appears to be preferable to dallying with Cleopatra.

Cornelia

The widow of Crassus's son who died at Carrhae with his father, massacred by the Parthians (the inhabitants of modern Iran). She married Pompey after the death of his wife Julia. The reaction of the people of Lesbos when she leaves the island with her husband presents a picture of a truly lovable woman. She believes herself to be a source of her husband's bad luck.

Crassus

With Pompey and Caesar, Crassus dominated Roman politics until he and his son, Cornelia's first husband, were slaughtered along with their legions in an attempt to conquer the Parthians, the inhabitants of what is now Iran.

Curio

One of the tribunes of the people. These were officials whose duty it was to look after the rights of ordinary citizens. Once a defender of law and liberty, he urges Caesar to

defy the Senate and fight his fellow countrymen. He is, for Lucan, even viler than Caesar. Caesar bought his country's liberty, but Curio sold it. He is a potent symbol of Roman strengths and talents diverted from the good of the commonwealth to personal aggrandizement. His death is described in terms of a sacrifice to the unquiet shades of Carthage.

Deiotarius

A client king, ruler under Roman patronage of part of Asia minor, he is a loyal friend to Pompey and the republican cause. Disguised as a beggar, he is sent by Pompey in the aftermath of the battle of Pharsalia on a secret mission to the king of the Parthians in modern Iran.

Lucius Ahenobarbus Domitius

Lucius Ahenobarbus Domitius is an ancestor of Nero. Lucan treats him with some respect, not because he wishes to flatter Nero, but because he was the one major republican to actually die in battle at Pharsalia.

Erictho

The chief Thracian witch who is more than happy to oblige to contact the god at Delphi. She is the most notorious of the famous Thracian witches; in fact, she has gone beyond their traditional witchcraft to invent spells of her own. In many ways, she is the female equivalent of Caesar.

Figulus

An astrologer whose readings of the stars con-firms the terrible, if enigmatic, prophecies of Arruns. Peace will only bring the endless loss of freedom. He urges the Romans not to pray for an end of the bloodshed because when it ends, their freedom will too.

Gnaeus Pompeius

Pompey's eldest son. His father sends him to raise soldiers and allies all over the Roman world.

Iuba

The king of Libya, who destroys the army of Curio. He is an image of the timeless enmity between Rome and Carthage.

Julia

The daughter and only child of Caesar and the wife of Pompey. She was the child of his beloved first wife Cornelia who died young. When the civil war begins, she is dead, and Pompey is married to another Cornelia, the widow of Crassus' son who died with his father fighting the Persians. At the beginning of Book III, she appears in the guise of a fury (a spirit who punishes kin murder) in a dream to Pompey to prophesy his death and the carnage of the civil war. She resents Pompey's quick remarriage, and tells him that in battle she will appear to him as a constant reminder that the war is, as Lucan wrote at the beginning of *Pharsalia*, not merely between fellow countrymen, but kinsmen.

Laelius

The senior centurion of Caesar's army, his speech in Book I convinces the army to follow Caesar into civil war. Laelius's attitude of unwavering loyalty to Caesar rather than to his country or even his family represents a disastrous change in the late Roman republic. Soldiers' loyalty to a charismatic patron commander rather than to Rome fueled the rise of dictator warlords like Sulla and Marius in Pompey and Caesar's youth, as well as Pompey and Caesar themselves. In Lucan's childhood, the continuing loyalty of the legions to Caesar's family had frustrated an attempt to restore the republic after the murder of the Emperor Caligula. Their preference for the rule of one man rather than the Senate continued after the death of Nero.

Lagus

See Ptolemy

Publius Cornelius Lentulus

Publius Cornelius Lentulus is one of the consuls for 49 B.C. He convened the senate at Epirus and commanded the left wing of the republican forces at Pharsalia. In Book 8, he takes the lead in quashing the idea that the Parthians should be called into the war.

Magnus

See Pompey

Marcia

Cato's wife and the mother of his three children. Cato divorced her so that his childless friend Hortensius could marry her and father a family. In Book II, Hortensius has just died. Marcia comes to Cato from Hortensius' funeral and asks him to marry her again so

she can be with him in his struggle for Rome and die his wife. Some commentators see Marcia as a symbol of Rome.

Marius

Roman general, dictator, and husband of Caesar's aunt. He was the opponent of Sulla.

Metellus

The tribune of the people who attempts to stop Caesar from breaking into the public treasury to pay his soldiers. Lucan undercuts his stand by observing that it was only his love of money that made him incapable of fear.

Old Roman Man

In Book 2, an old man recounts the sorrows and horrors of the civil war and proscriptions in the time of Sulla. He is the counterpart of the matron inspired with prophecy in Book 1. His description of the murder, mutilation, and inhumane treatment of the dead will be paralleled in every battle of the civil war.

Pompey

Pompey (also known as Magnus) is a successful general and politician who has managed to almost live down his connection with the vicious dictator Sulla. There sometimes appears to be two Pompeys. The first is a man as bloodstained and hungry for power as Caesar. The second is the leader of the fight for *libertas*, not the perfect hero, but as Cato says of him, good in terms of his evil times. Pompey is a man who needs love and admiration. His actions are reactions to the demands others place upon him, of others' perceptions of him. His love for his wife ought to be admirable, but like everything he does in the poem, somehow annoys.

Porthinus

The chamberlain of the young Egyptian king and the power behind the throne. He suggests the murder of Pompey and attempts to kill both Caesar and Cleopatra in the palace at Alexandria. He argues: "If a man would be righteous, let him depart from a court. Virtue is incompatible with absolute power. He who is ashamed of cruelty must always fear it." He is executed by Caesar.

Ptolomy

Ptolemy, also known as Lagus, is the young king of Egypt and brother of Cleopatra. Some writers see in him at least a partial portrait of Nero. The variant name is derived from his ancestor, the first Macedonian king of Egypt.

Roman Matron

Book 1 ends with a series of three prophecies of war. The first two are made by men trained in the reading of the future, Arruns in the Etruscan manner observing the internal organs of sacrificed animals, and Figulus, an astrologer. The final and most clear and violent prophecy is spoken by a Roman matron who is possessed by Apollo, the god of prophecy. While the others are professionals who have been asked to read the signs, her words represent the direct intervention of the divine in human affairs. As a matron (the mother of a family), Apollo's choice of her to be his mouthpiece is particularly poignant. Not only will she naturally fear for the men of her two families, but a defining point in early Roman history was the intervention of the Sabine women to end a battle between their Roman husbands and Sabine fathers and brothers.

Scaeva

A Roman centurion, the paramount example of *virtus* perverted. He single handedly holds off Pompey's army while Caesar brings up reinforcements. Caesar sees Scaeva in the last lines of the *Pharsalia*. It has often been assumed that this must be a vision, but Masters, in his argument that the poem as we have it is complete, although not thoroughly revised, points out that the historical Scaeva survived his much exaggerated wounds at Dyrrachium.

Pompeius Sextus

The younger of Pompey's two sons. He decides out of fear to consult Erichtho. It has been suggested that he is meant as a portrait of Nero.

Sulla

The first of the Roman dictators in the modern sense of the word as opposed to the traditional Roman sense of a man given special constitutional powers for a limited period in times of national crisis. His rule was infamous for massacres and wave after wave of political murders.

Themes

Libertas

Libertas for a Roman citizen meant a web of rights and obligations. Particularly important to the Roman sense of self was the freedom, theoretically, to have a voice in shaping Roman law and policy. They acknowledged only the law and the lawfully constituted magistrates whose power derived from their will. It is easy to dismiss *libertas*, particularly in the late republic, as merely aristocratic privilege. From the *Pharsalia,* it is clear that Lucan is aware of the shortcomings of *libertas* (1.158-82).

Lucan's *libertas* may appear limited or naive to some, but it has touched a chord with every period to which the liberty of the individual to live a considered and self-controlled life in an orderly and humane society has been recognized as a supreme good. It is unfair to speak of his concept of *libertas* as being restricted to one class. Lucan displays the imaginative sympathy to recognize the nobility and *virtus* (courage) of anyone who yearned for the right and the honorable. He carefully draws attention to the Massilians who have left the Romans behind in the practice of their own virtues. They emerge, as no Roman does, clothed in the qualities of the early republic. They are resolute, true to their friends, desiring only to behave with piety towards gods and men.

Suicide and Fratricide

Lucan begins the *Pharsalia* by reminding his audience that the Roman civil war is worse than civil, it is fratricidal. Pompey and Caesar were, as he repeats at every turn, son-in-law and father-in-law, kin against kin. Rome turns its sword upon itself. The speech of the Centurion Laelius is chilling not only for the fanaticism it places in the service of an amoral leader, but also for the complete breakdown of the social contract and common humanity. Laelius will turn his sword against the gods, his father, his brother, even his pregnant wife out of loyalty to Caesar. He has lost the sense of the wounds each such blow would inflict upon him. This sort of war involves all participants in guilt; no man's hands, however righteous his cause, are free from the blood of his brother, his fellow citizen.

Lucan never allows his readers to forget the suicidal nature of the conflict. Even the grammatical structure of Lucan's sentences serves to carry the theme. Again and again the logical object of a sentence is made the grammatical subject as in 4.561-2 "their breasts dashed against the steel, and their throats struck the hand." Lucan uses this because it is a profound expression of the paradox of civil war, where every blow struck wounds the one who strikes even more than the one who receives it.

Nevertheless, suicide has its positive side for Lucan. It is the final weapon against the tyranny of men and events. No one can be forced to endure any evil, if they do not fear death. Death removes a man from all compulsion. It is also, in the sense of the Roman

concept of *devotio*, the means whereby a man offers his life to the gods for the good of the people. The word *devotio* paradoxically and appropriately means both consecrating and cursing. These meanings are reflected in Cato's wish to offer his life to the powers of heaven and hell, to atone for his country's sins.

Fortune, Fate, and Chance

Lucan makes little distinction between fortune and fate. They both correspond roughly to the modern use of "fate," but they are not exactly interchangeable. Servius wrote, "Birth and death are the provinces of fate; all that lies between is the province of fortune." Ahl explains this remark as meaning that Fate is used to suggest the definite and definable order of the world, the ultimate boundaries of life on individuals, nations, and the universe itself. Death is the only certainty in life, and therefore, it is the only thing over which the individual has control and it is the ultimate weapon in defense of freedom. Lucan attributes to natural law the existence of inevitable moral entropy. The empire's own growth brought it to the state where collapse was inevitable.

Chance is only a cause for which men do not understand the reason. Fortune is chance controlled by a higher power. Because it favors certain individuals, fortune appears to have a rudimentary personality. This favor, however irrational or immoral, is a series of occurrences that has a pattern. Fate in the opening of the *Pharsalia* is described as *invidia*, jealous. This might be too little to allow it to be described as a personification, but it recalls the Greek belief that the gods would never allow mankind or its institutions to blur the distinction between the human and the divine through too much success.

Virtus

Virtus is the word behind the modern English "virtue." But while the modern English word tends to mean what is practiced, the Latin focused on the practice. That is *virtus* did not refer to individual virtuous states, like honesty, prudence, humility, but to the strength that carries out right action. The difference between *pietas* and *virtus* is the difference between sterile and unthinking dedication to the *mos maiorem* or traditional customs and values and the conscious thoughtful commitment to discovering and following the good. The suicide of Vulteius and his men is a classic example of the Stoic use of death, but their virtue is thrown away on a man who will reduce men and women to a society where death is the only freedom. The Centurion Scaeva is the embodiment of martial courage and devotion to duty. He withstands the onslaught of an army, but his *virtus* is corrupted because it is directed towards the victory of a tyrant over *libertas*. Caesar's mercy on this view is a punishment to the one who receives it.

Style

Epic Features

Lucan composed his epic in Virgil's shadow. But he absorbed and transformed Virgil and the whole epic tradition back to Homer. He was forced to jettison the traditional gods, not so much by the use of his Stoic education, but because the Virgilian epic and Julio-Claudian propaganda had so closely associated the traditional pantheon with Caesar. His choice and development of the witch Erictho and of the image of Anateus are good examples of his subversion of the Virgilian epic.

Point of View

It is important to distinguish between Lucan and his narrator. Lucan the poet depicts situations and characters so that we look at them one way, while the narrator insists we look at them in another. It is an interesting, if pointless question to ask how the point of view would have changed if the conspiracy against Nero had succeeded.

Setting

The action of *Pharsalia* sweeps back and forth across the Roman world. The choice of setting was dictated largely by history, but the specific treatment of places is atmospheric, pulled between the traditional associations of wild places and city. City equals family and society. Wilderness is danger and horror, the result of the breakdown of society and family.

Imagery and Symbolism

The leading images of the *Pharsalia* are those of shattered boundaries and dismembered bodies. The horrific treatment of men's bodies forces the reader to place both sides before the bar of common humanity. Civil war must destroy even what the republican cause hopes to save. Persistent images of disintegration are a symbol of the violent disintegration of the Roman state and the bonds between friends, kinsmen, and brothers. This is buttressed by the repeated reference to friends and kinsmen, seeing each other across the battle lines.

Related to the image of broken bodies is the image of the broken boundary. Under this category is the crossing of the Rubicon and the deaths of Crassus and Julia who had at the same time joined Pompey and Caesar and kept them from confrontation. Lucan places Crassus and Julia in a continuum with two emotionally potent episodes in Roman history: Romulus's murder of his brother for defi-antly jumping over the lines of Rome's unbuilt walls and the Sabine women's throwing themselves between the opposing forces of their husbands and fathers. The first preyed on the Roman mind with

a sense of fratricidal bloodguilt. The second was a bracing example of woman's *virtus* in the service of duty born of love. Cato in Book 2 pulls together this imagery when he wishes that he could stand between both armies and intercept every blow.

The battle between Curio and Iuba is described in terms of gladiatorial combat. Lucan's focus on the gladiatorial combat hinges on the original function of these combats as funeral games and sacri-fices to the dead. Curio's death is described as an offering to the dead of Carthage.

Lucan's landscapes and their symbolism are firmly within the traditional Latin literature. Fear of the wild, often expressed in terms of forests and mountains, seems to have been embedded in the Roman psyche. Cities represent the natural law of humanity, family, and social cohesion. The wilderness is a place of war, of the breakdown of human society, even on the most basic level of the family.

Digressions

Lucan often inserts apparently extraneous descriptive or narrative passages in the *Pharsalia*. These digressions draw on a well-developed practice in public speaking and are paralleled in the epics of Lucan's contemporaries, Statius and Silius. Lucan's intensity as he tells his main story leaves little space for the delight and technical virtuosity that audiences expected. Lucan's delight and technical virtuosity are placed almost entirely in his digressions and allow his audience to regroup emotionally. Despite their apparent lack of justification in the work as a whole, internally, they are carefully composed. They had to display a thorough knowledge both of their subjects and of their traditional literary treatment. Stylistically, they are dramatic and concrete with neatly turned phasing and pointed moral or philosophical reflection.

The digressions are in fact far more integrated into the narrative proper than is often admitted. The birds-eye view of Brundisium begins with its foundation as a refuge for peaceloving fugitives. The focus narrows line by line from Italy to its extreme southeast corner, to the city itself, the hills behind, the harbour, and to the ships at anchor before opening out again to the sea. The movement of vision recapitulates Pompey's flight through Italy to the refuge of Brundisium and foresees his flight overseas. The description creates not only a sense of place, but more importantly draws the narrative movement into ironic focus.

Rhetoric

Quintillian called Lucan, grandson of the greatest teacher of public speaking in Rome, a better model for a public speaker than for a poet. His poem exploits all the tools of rhetoric, not only in the formal speeches, but also throughout the *Pharsalia.* Rhetoric has a bad connotation for many people, although like all tools, it is morally neutral. Rhetoric is simply the means by which a speaker or writer, but usually a speaker in Rome, can explain a position or idea, and/or convince an audience to adopt a particular attitude towards what has been explained. The duty of the orator or, indeed, of any

writer was to teach, to move, and to entertain. The writer must assemble materials, *inventio*, carefully organize it, *dispositio*, and use language to its best advantage, *elocutio.* He must carefully plan out the introduction and development of his themes, *divisio*, reduce them to apt and striking comments, short, often ironic, but always didactic, *sententiae*. Finally, he must present his facts in a particular light, or *color,* so that his audience will at least experience them from his point of view.

Historical Context

Lucan's World

Lucan set his epic more than a century before his own time. To understand why Lucan should feel so strongly about events that not even his grandfather could have remembered, it is necessary to understand the circumstances in which the young poet found himself, circumstances which were the direct result of the defeat of the senatorial cause. While the empire at large was reasonably well-governed with peace, prosperity and even justice, the upper classes of Rome and Italy suffered the caprices of immediate absolute rule under a series of men who were not immune to either the temptations of their power or the paranoia attendant upon it. Even allowing for the possibility of a certain amount of sensationalism in our sources for events in Rome between Augustus and Nero, it is clear that Rome was a place of enormous uncertainty and real danger for anyone whose place in society involved them in public life. Disengagement was not always a protection because it could be interpreted as a sign of disapproval and disloyalty.

Senatus Populusque Romanus

The tradition of participation in government and public service were vital elements in the formation of the Roman character. The Roman republic was theoretically ruled by the Senate and the People or, in Latin *Plebs*, but was effectively governed by the Senate, three hundred men chosen for life and drawn in general from the landed aristocracy. The senate's position derived from custom rather than any specific law. Its capable handling of affairs, particularly during the life or death struggles with Carthage and the complex situations Rome found itself in with Greece, meant that the Roman people were willing to leave foreign affairs and problems of finance to the Senate.

In 287 B.C., the *Lex Hortensia* had recognized the sovereign authority of the Roman people and had enacted that their resolutions *plebescita* should have the force of law for the whole community. Democracy went no further in Rome, partly because of the expertise that the Senate provided, and partly because the common people were content to leave matters in their hands. Furthermore, the people's representatives, the tribunes, were responsible for bringing in a considerable amount of legislation through the Tribal Assembly and were always at hand to keep an eye on the senate, whose acts they could veto.

The Collapse of a System

Lucan never idealized the Roman Republic in its last days. Wealth and widespread slavery, the products of her vast conquests, exacerbated some problems and created others that would have in earlier times been resolved by compromise among a people whose chief characteristic was pragmatism. Much of Roman politics was family-based

and a relatively restricted small group of noble families controlled the consulship, the state religion, and the senate. Loyalty to family and a desire to protect and increase its power became, in the absence of a powerful external enemy, many senators' first aim. Among the people at large, the Tribal Assembly came to represent almost exclusively the wishes of city *plebs*, although, if sufficiently aroused, the generally more conservative small farmers would come in to vote. After the *Lex Claudia* barred senators from taking part in banking or commerce in 218 B.C., a third class arose. The *equites* were originally *plebs* who could afford to serve as mounted soldiers. After senators were barred from trade, they became the entrepreneurial class in Rome, agitating for more influence on government policy. The *equites* were in a position to benefit from Rome's expansion, and their interests became more and more a pretext for further expansion. Enormous wealth flowing into Rome from its conquests upset the traditional economy based on the small farmer. The wealthy could afford slaves to cultivate their land; the small farmer could not. Grain flowing in from large slave cultivated estates in Sicily and Sardinia exacerbated the problem of a class who had suffered enormous losses of manpower in the fight against Carthage. Furthermore, this wealth introduced not only pleasurable distractions to Rome's ruling class, but the possibility of bribing the urban *plebs* to ensure the outcome of elections. Into this changing world in which power was becoming more closely linked with privilege than with duty, two factions emerged in the Senate: The *Optimates* and the *Populares.*

Optimates and Populares

It is wrong to think of the *Optimates* as a reactionary senatorial party and the *Populares* as a democratic or reform party; neither was there any real class distinction between them. All were senators; among the most notorious *Populares* were men of the most ancient families. Whatever their motives and intentions, the real distinction between them is one of method. The *Optimates* controlled the Senate, and by blocking the policies of other senators, led them to seek support from the Tribal Assembly. Some *Populares*, like the Grachi brothers, were genuine reformers concerned about the effects of the growing disparity between rich and poor citizens, but many, if not most, sought personal power.

Stoicism

Stoicism, particularly as it was adapted by the teacher Panaetius of Rhodes, appealed to many Romans because it provided a philosophical basis for such traditional Roman ideals as *virtus* (courage), *pietas* (dutiful love and loyalty), and *gravitas* (seriousness). In Roman Stoicism, a person seeking wisdom and right living could feel love, loyalty, and friendship. They were expected to concern themselves with humanity and, therefore, were not to exclude themselves from political life. In matters of religion, the Roman Stoics, like Stoics in general, rejected the traditional gods of mythology, but believed that God was reason immanent in the universe; divine reason gave men and woman an ethical impulse. Stoicism could be hard and self-sufficient, but the call to follow reason struck a chord in the Roman character.

Taste and the Age of Nero

Morford stressed that Lucan was a product of the age of Nero. Literature had been in the doldrums since the death of Augustus, partly because of the daunting greatness of the works of writers like Virgil, Horace, and Ovid, and partly because of imperial hostility. The first century was an age of scholarship. When we read Lucan on Etruscan forms of divination, on the details of necromancy or on snakes, we must not forget the emperor Claudius's work on Etruscan divination or the elder Pliny's *Natural History*. When education was primarily literary and rhetorical, the treatment of works like the *Aeneid* suggested that epics should be more or less overtly learned. Nero intended to launch a cultural revival. His literary ambitions, combined with a petty nature and an autocratic style of government, meant that true literary activity, which requires freedom of the critical as well as the creative facility, was impossible. A revival of the republicanism that was never far buried in Roman hearts and minds was inevitable. Nero simply did not have the character to compete with Rome or with a philosophy for men's allegiance.

Critical Overview

Lucan wrote with his already claustrophobic world closing in on him. He wrote as if he could not possibly believe that the conspiracy against Nero would succeed; he was no longer rallying his time, but all time to the cause of *libertas*. Criticism of *Pharsalia* has regularly spilled over into criticism of the man who implicated his own mother in the plot against Nero. Political circumstances have set the critical agenda for the *Pharsalia* even more than changes in literary taste. But can this really be wrong when the *Pharsalia* is above all, political literature?

Even while Lucan was at work on his epic, there was critical unease about the suitability of his treatment. It was not that he chose to handle a historical narrative but that he did not make the gods the prime movers in events. Virgil's *Aeneid* had coopted the Roman gods literally into the Julian clan to which Julius Caesar belonged. He had enshrined in his magnificent poetry their belief that they were descended from Iules, son of Aeneas, son of the goddess Venus and grandson of Jupiter himself. Lucan sidestepped this by replacing divine wills with fate and human will. His contemporary, Petronius, criticized the decision, but his criticism is placed in the mouth of such a sleazy character that the traditional assumption that the criticism is serious may be wrong. Nevertheless, the idea that the *Pharsalia* was history rather than epic because of its treatment of causation, is repeated again and again in antiquity and the Middle Ages.

Although Lucan's portrait of Julius Caesar is at odds with that of many medieval writers, he was popular with readers. Four hundred manuscripts of his epic survive, including a fragment that represents the only surviving copy of any secular poem made between c. 550 and c.775 A.D. It was translated into Old Irish and was used by at least one Icelandic saga writer. Lucan was quoted by Aldhem in seventh-century England and in twelfth-century France by Heloise. In the sixteenth century, Christopher Marlowe published a translation of Book 1; Shakespeare adapted its opening lines in *Julius Caesar*; Ben Johnson used a speech from Book 8 in his play *Catiline*. Lucan's politics found him admirers at the end of the eighteenth century. Ahl wrote that he "codified the political rhetoric of liberty."

The later nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century were not so good for Lucan. Both imperialist and socialist ideologies were against him, as well as the steady retreat of classical studies and the overwhelming position of Virgil, both in the curriculum and in criticism. As Greek and Latin's position in western education slowly contracted, Lucan was no longer a standard author. Lucan's idea of liberty and his ambiguous treatment of the imperial nation state lost its hold in both England and Germany. In Germany, national unity had finally arrived under a German Caesar. To the English speaking world, caught between *pax Britannia* and manifest destiny, Julius Caesar and Augustus were the leaders of a benign empire, taking chaos by the scuff of the neck. Attacks on Lucan became personal and vicious. His political ideals were irrelevant; his dedication to them hypocritical; he informed on his own mother. His poetry was lost in the politics; though it is fair to say he brought this on himself by producing one of the most intensely and single-mindedly political poems ever written.

It is a measure of the strength of the Virgilian ideal that when Brisset began Lucan's rehabilitation it was by denying he was a republican. It has been the twentieth century's experience of tyranny and the broken bodies of its victims that has turned the critical tide. Lucan's experience has come home. In the last three decades, interest in Lucan has grown, and it has been positive. Johnson's studies of the characters of Erichtho, Cato and Pompey are not only deeply perceptive, (and often devastatingly funny), they are written by a scholar who makes straight for the heart of the *Pharsalia*. Lucan's "disgusting exaggeration" is neither disgusting nor exaggeration. We should be horrified, but our horror should spring from our lacerated common humanity, not from broken canons of literature. Bartsch reads the *Pharsalia* very much as a document for our time. Her quotations from Arendt and from the experiences of the concentration camps are apt, but her own prose often comes between her and her meaning, let alone her audience. Masters on the other hand provides at least the beginning of the commentary on the *Pharsalia* which it has lacked, the historical background, the sources, the manipulation of history and of the literary tradition, which alone will save the modern reader from flattening Lucan's narrative into mere reportage.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3
- Critical Essay #4

Critical Essay #1

In the following essay, Conrad-O'Briain looks at the Pharsalia *in terms of Roman ideals and education.*

The Romans were deeply practical, and they were also deeply superstitious. Their sense of self was defined in part by the participation in Roman tradition which required strict attention to the details of worship and to the phenomena by which the gods communicated with men. It was also defined, at least for the literate upper classes, by a view of history and of service which was embedded in their language, literature, and which dominated their education. *Romanitas* [the idea and ideal of "Roman-ness"] was not a matter of genes, but of language and outlook. *Romanitas* could be and was taught from the Euphrates to the Irish Sea, from the edge of the Sahara to the lowlands of Scotland. The effects of that teaching remain to this day, so much a part of western thought and institutions that they hide in plain sight. The American pledge of allegiance is pure *Romanitas*. Any Roman hearing it would have instinctively sympathize with the concepts and the way in which they are expressed.

Liberty that comes of recognizing that without law only the strong are free was *Romanitas*' essential, if often betrayed, ideal. Virgil enshrines it in the *Aeneid*. Other nations would produce greater art, literature and science, but Rome shall rule and crown peace with law, to spare the humble and to fight the proud to the end. A fine ideal, perhaps, but real? Ideals always take a battering in real life. Human nature hasn't changed between Lucan's or his heroes' days and this. A craze for power and insatiable greed brought down the Roman republic.

For the upper classes in Rome, at least, the first century of the empire was more often than not a claustrophobic horror; normal decency and humanity were stood on their head. But the ideal remained, and there were always men and women who tried to follow it, even if to quote Cato on Pompey, they "were inferior to our ancestors." Some of them, like Cicero, died defending the republic, some of them died, like Lucan, in conspiracies against madmen, or even like Scribonius and Paetus, simply against the idea of an emperor. Others, like the Plinies, Agricola, even emperors, Titus, Trajan, Antonius, Marcus Aurelius, simply tried to do their duty by those around them, with whatever abilities they had. For what else was a Roman to do? A Roman defined himself by public life, by public service, by the mutual respect and aid of patron and client, of friend and kinsman. He was a public being. To live retired, far away from public life was the fate of the old, the exiled or the extremely eccentric.

And what were the Roman's tools in living out this ideal? The spoken and written word was his tool, more important than the short sword carried by every Roman soldier from new recruit to legate. To persuade, to explain, to use this power effectively for the good of the state and for one's friends and dependants was the duty, and purpose, the life's blood of every good Roman. His whole education was based on language and the uses of language. He was taught to take texts apart and see how and why they worked. He learned to pick and chose his material, to catch the emotions of his audience. He

learned the importance of the right word, the exact example, the telling anecdote. He learned or tried to learn how to swing an angry crowd, a wet, footsore knot of soldiers, or a group of grave, experienced old men behind him. Everything an educated Roman knew was directed by the use he would make of it in public life. Every educated man was educated to be a statesman, or at least a politician. For some the arena would be the senate and the great law courts in Rome, but throughout the empire, in Roman colonies and in local market towns, Roman citizens and provincials alike were repeating the same process and living on their own local stages the same lives.

This is the background of Lucan's *Pharsalia* and of Lucan himself. The ideal, the education, the defining mode of life had claimed him. He was from a provincial family that had made good, and that had made good by producing the greatest teacher of public speaking of his day, his grandfather Seneca the Elder. His uncle the younger Seneca had become a senator, the tutor and the advisor of an emperor. Lucan had inherited all the sparkling talent of his family. He could persuade, he could move, he could catch the eye and the mind. So why is Lucan the suicide, the failed conspirator, the author of an unrevised if not unfinished (Masters, 1992, 216-259) epic? Because of the ideal and because of the nature of *Romanitas* and Roman education, because he found that the lack of real *libertas* could not be replaced by private integrity and interior freedom, and it was self-delusion to believe otherwise. Lucan believed that liberty and participation in the making and defining of law were at the heart of *Romanitas*.

He found himself in the Rome of Nero in a place where he was excluded from the work which defined his existence as a Roman, the only existence which he desired or could even imagine. It was not that Nero had barred him from defending clients in the law courts, from giving public readings of his poetry. That was only the result of Lucan's realizing that the Roman system could not and did not work as long as it was headed by a man above the law, whose only curb was his own sanity or the assassin's sword. Perhaps his view of events were colored like those of the republican senators a century before, the resentment of a young man who felt that he should be at the center of real power, where the decisions were made, though he could have been there had he been willing.

As Bartsch (1997) reminds us, Lucan believed in his tools, just like every writer who takes on a totalitarian regime does. If those tools had served to establish the imperial ideal, to defend the status quo, he would wrench them back and stand them on their head. Did Nero want a golden age of poetry? Lucan would give him poetry to match the world he had created in Rome, horror for horror. Did Nero want to be a god? Well then how could he complain if a poet begged him not to unbalance the heavens with his divine weight, when everyone including the pudgy young emperor knew that the gods were known by their great size (Ahl, 1996, 26).

Rhetoric and rhetoricians have always had bad press. There is something rather unsavory, in many peoples' minds, about learning and planning the art of persuasion, of getting your views across, but rhetoric is only a tool. It can be used for good or for evil. The woman who, through careful presentation of facts and an appeal to the penalties of the law (and with a few judicious and emotive references to human suffering), convinces

investors to force their company to clean up its toxic waste dump is praised, but she is using the same tools as her sister successfully defending an unsavory client. In Lucan's eyes, the gods had been hijacked, the sword had been seized by this obscenity of rule, but the words, the formidable arsenal of rhetoric, was still his.

So Lucan wrote a rhetorical epic. He had to persuade, and he had to persuade quickly and thoroughly before the words, drained of their real meaning by imperial propaganda, were lost to him too. He must transmit the claustrophobia and despair of his world to his audience, make them face the unthinkable so that they would do the unthinkable, reject the Julio-Claudians and all their works and all their empty glories. From the opening lines of the poem he drums it home. Jealous fate may have resented the power of the Roman people, but those people, the greater and the lesser, were eager tools in the hands of fate. This cooperation is what gave us civil war, and ultimately Nero, with Roman blood spilt by Roman hands, while Rome was still ringed with enemies. And what were these Roman deaths like? Worse still, how died the noble Massillians, more Roman in their attitudes than the Romans themselves? They died, bodies broken, smashed beyond recognition.

In Lucan's work the gods of Rome predict no happy culmination to Jupiter's plans. They predict only the crime and pollution of civil war and the death of the *libertas* that was to be Rome's great gift as a nation to all men. Where is the piety of the divine Julio-Claudians when their founder treats the gods and Rome like nothing more than the spirits of his household shrine? Julius Caesar's manic energy, his ability to seize events and make his will the fate of the weak, are a reproach, not only to every one of the republican figures who oppose him, but to Lucan's audience.

Lucan creates a world crashing down, a world in which his audience are still dazed survivors walking around in the ruins. It is a world in which decency survives, but that decency is presented in a way which give the Roman people little comfort. The Roman women who crowd the altars, the picture of traditional piety, the Roman men who take up their weapons against their own countrymen and kin, seem powerless to cry halt. They allow themselves to be led rather than to bring their own collective power to bear on events. Cornelia, the pattern of a Roman matron, the pattern of a Roman, drawing foreigners to admiration by her *virtus*, is the personification of the bad fortune. Lentulus is eloquent in his denunciation of paying a price for victory which will be a defeat of their ideals, but his eloquence sets in motion the chain of events which will lead to Pompey's death and the disintegration of the republican will to fight. With Cato, Lucan kills any comfortable hope that personal freedom and integrity can be maintained under the rule not of the law, but of one man. Cato has no illusions, he will not retire into philosophic consolation. He will not live with a selfish illusion of freedom, while he can commit the final rebellion of death. And if the good are impotent, the bad are busy making the better side worse. One after another, Lucan draws the portraits of Roman senators who sell their birthright, who shame their class and country. The gifted Curio sells his country's freedom. Appius wakes the long silent oracle of Delphi simply to find out, at a time when the senate cannot even meet in Rome, how things will go for him. The great Pompey's younger son, crawling to a witch rather than the gods, watches one of his father's own men dragged unwillingly from the safety of death to learn what cannot help him.

Why does Lucan force his audience down the road of claustrophobic despair, cutting of each possibly retreat, thwarting the efforts and gifts of every decent character, leaving power in the hands of the two characters who single-mindedly pursue power, for whom no act is too vile, who will sacrifice kin and force the gods to do their bidding□Caesar and his female counterpart, Erichtho? How similar they are, ever hungry for battle, ever inventive in finding new ways to force the events or the gods to do their bidding. The answer may lie, if it lies anywhere, at the end of Lentulus's speech in Book 8, "*Quantum, spes ultima rerum, libertatis habes*" "*A last hope, how much freedom you have.*" Forced to see the cause and the plain face of their predicament, perhaps they will finally seize events like a Caesar.

Source: Helen Conrad-O'Briain, for *Epics for Students*, Gale, 2001.

Critical Essay #2

Author Shadi Bartsch discusses the importance of Lucan's major themes in this excerpt.

The previous two chapters have presented the grounds for a grippingly negative interpretation of the *Civil War*. This reading has had a powerful pull for recent readers of the epic; indeed, the present critical climate has rendered it one of the most compelling positions on the poem. The collapse of the autonomous individual amid the wreck of linguistic systems and subject-object relations, the hopelessness of meaningful narrative in a meaningless world, the impossibility of representing the trauma of Romans killing Romans□"Shun this part of the war, O mind, and leave it in darkness, and let no time learn of such evils from my poetry, that so great is the license granted to civil war"□all these are undeniable aspects of Lucan's epic world, and for readers of our times I think they are more than undeniable: they ring true with an evocation of the particular horrors of the twentieth century. Lucan's attempt to convey what he would represent as the unspeakable physical and psychological brutalities of the civil wars of the first century B.C. fastens, uncannily enough, upon the actual truths of what happens to the human subject *in extremis* and on the realities of the societal and psychic results of the totalitarian agenda, and so he produces a picture that has curious resonances in the history of our own century. Certainly Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia have rendered unhappily familiar such regimes' assault on moral standards, the surveillance of citizens, the spread of fear, the paradoxes that arise from the overturning of norms of law and human behavior. We know well that terror is the tool of all such regimes□"the essence of totalitarian government," in Hannah Arendt's words. And Arendt, along with Czeslaw Milosz, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, and other voices from the past, all attest to totalitarianism's focus on "the destruction of a man's rights, the killing of the juridical person in him □ the murder of the moral person in man". Suddenly the darkest visions of the human imagination become alive in history, and, with them,

> it becomes evident that things which for thousands of years the human imagination had banished to a realm beyond human competence can be manufactured right here on earth □ The totalitarian hell proves only that the power of man is greater than [one] ever dared to think, and that man can realize hellish fantasies without making the sky fall or the earth open.

I bring up this analogy here because it is diffi-cult for readers of Lucan not to be struck by parallel after parallel between the visions of his imagination and our own history. As I have noted, even the figure of the restless, madly self-confident Julius Caesar, that demonic and charismatic force "who felt he had accomplished nothing while anything still remained to be done", seems tailor-made to evoke, for us, a crucial feature of such regimes□the charisma invested in the figure of the leader and the exaggeration of his powers of agency. Henderson remarks that Caesar himself seems to represent the very principle of "subjectivity as active agency" in this poem in which other subjectivities are faring less well; similarly with Hitler, who himself and whose regime was associated with

energy and agency: Arendt notes the "perpetual motion mania of totalitarian movements which can remain in power only so long as they keep moving and set everything around them in motion." Moreover, Hitler's regime identified itself with the forces of nature and history: its rise to power was supposedly inevitable and inexorable, its present existence temporally eternal, as evidence by the well-known Nazi projection of the "Thousand Year Reich" and "revolutionary immortality," and the National Socialists' belief that they were children of the gods□like Lucan's Julio-Claudians, claimers of spurious divinity. Finally, Arendt notes the moral cynicism of the leaders: "would-be totalitarian rulers usually start their careers by boasting of the past crimes and carefully outlining their future ones □ The propaganda value of evil deeds and general contempt for moral standards is independent of mere self-interest, supposedly the most powerful psychological factor in politics." These men believe everything is permitted to them: Lucan's Caesar, anyone? The Third Reich meets the Pax Romana.

Our knowledge of Stalinist and fascist regimes aside, I think we read Lucan's epic with another, still darker piece of recent history as our lens. I am referring here to the Holocaust: not only to its unnarratability, but to the scattered testimony of its survivors and the deliberate and crushing destruction of the very idea of the human that was so successfully carried out by its Nazi perpetrators. Here, too, Lucan's grim visions may become for us more than the fancy of a long-dead poet striving for the expression of evil, precisely because the inexorable disintegration of subjectivity, the sense of the futility of language, the complete loss of agency, are not themes alien to our times: we know that these developments are possible as the goals of those who would destroy millions of their fellow beings. The topic is a difficult one, and far beyond my powers: here I would just like to remind my readers of how some scholars and writers have *tried* to talk about the Holocaust, and to suggest that Lucan's view of a world gone mad may mean more than he could have guessed to his readers.

Source: Shadi Bartsch, *Ideology in Cold Blood: A Reading of Lucan's Civil War,* Harvard University Press, 1997, pp. 66-8.

Critical Essay #3

In this essay, the author examines the uses of divided communities in Lucan's Bellum Civile*.*

Lucan's *Bellum Civile* is riven with ethical contradictions. It is not simply that different voices within the poem disagree about the proper moral evaluation of particular actions and patterns of behavior; such disagreement is widely present in ancient epic. Rather, these voices, including the narrative voice itself, are collectively enmeshed in a web of competing ethical discourses and modes of valuation that are more or less equally authoritative yet irreconcilable. Thus actions can be evaluated in more than one ethical framework□not only by different voices embracing alternative modes of valuation, but even by a single voice as it applies now one evaluative framework and now another. This paper will contend that these competing ethical discourses, and the contradictory moral judgments that derive from them, are necessary features of the condition of civil war as Lucan represents it. For these discourses and judgments are based in competing, irreconcilable conceptions of the Roman community. Indeed, the fracturing of ethical discourse in Lucan may constitute a literary strategy for representing civil war: the warring of two groups within society is reflected in the competition between alternative ethical discourses. Finally, I consider some of the ideological ramifications of Lucan's literary choices. For by portraying specific modes of discourse as he does, and by making them compete in certain ways, Lucan makes his civil war a context in which he can recreate, explore, and participate in the ideological struggles of his own day.

I. Traditional Roman Ethical Discourse

Before turning to Lucan, however, I must describe crucial features of the received ethical system of the late republican and early imperial aristocracy. I call this system "traditional" because these aristocrats regarded it as passed down from their ancestors, the *maiores*, unchanged since time immemorial. Its values consisted in particular conceptions of proper behavior, closely linked with an interest in status and position: praise was bestowed for behavior that enhanced the position of the aristocracy with respect to other groups, and of individual aristocrats with respect to other aristocrats. These behavior patterns and status concerns were encoded in the familiar moral vocabulary of the Latin language: *virtus*, *pietas*, *fas*, *ius*, *fides*, *laus*, *honor*, *gloria*, *nobilitas*, *dignitas* (along with their opposites), and so on. Although the content of these terms was always subject to contestation, all Roman aristocrats nevertheless operated with regard to this mapping of ethical space□that is, all accepted the validity of the moral categories in which the terms *nobilis*, *pius*, *fidus*, etc., designate positive value. Thus their collective acceptance of this mapping□their judging of others according to these categories, and their own desire to be judged positively according to them□was part of their acculturation, hence partially constituted their identity, as aristocrats within Roman society and as Romans with respect to non-Romans. Looked at another way, the ethical categories defined by the traditional Roman moral vocabulary collectively provide a template for the structure of the Roman community, for they mark out its boundaries, articulate its internal relations, and define degrees of distinction within it; in

other words, they define positions in society for people to occupy. Thus the use of these moral terms not only reflects social forms and structures, but also formalizes, confirms, and helps to reproduce those structures.

Another crucial feature of this ethical system is that moral value is social and external. The community as a whole, not its constituent individuals, is the basic unit of social organization, and moral value exists only with reference to the community as a whole. This communal, external frame of reference has three aspects. First, a person's moral value is determined entirely by the judgments of other members of the community, not by his own self-judgment. Second, moral value is allocated (i.e., praise and blame bestowed) on the basis of observed actions, not on the basis of any internal, privately accessible states of mind. Third, these actions are evaluated in terms of the effect they have on the community as a whole□that is, for the degree to which they further the community's agendas and reproduce its ideologies.

A consistent, coherent ethical discourse□praising and blaming, and deploying value terms with reference to the actions of others□therefore requires a notionally coherent, well-defined community to serve as the social basis for moral valuation. As an illustration, consider the semantics of the value terms *virtus, pietas,* and their opposites. *Virtus* means "behavior appropriate to a man"; most commonly it is attributed to a soldier who has displayed notable valor in battle, or to a magistrate for outstanding service□in each case, actions performed in the public eye for the benefit of the community. Meanwhile *pietas,* along with its opposite *impietas*, defines a category of action encompassing duty toward family, community, and the gods. Taken together, these two moral categories of action project a well-defined community, and articulate coherently certain aspects of that community's inter- and intramural relations: its members owe one another the various duties and obligations associated with *pietas*, but they must also display *virtus* by fighting bravely against non-members who threaten it from without. Indeed, in such a community these categories overlap, for one who fights well (demonstrating *virtus*) thereby also defends his family and community (demonstrating *pietas*).

Civil war, however, divides the community and turns it against itself, abolishing the social boundaries and bonds that make these moral categories consistent. Hence *pietas* and *virtus* become inconsistent, even contradictory: a soldier who demonstrates *virtus* by fighting the adversary effectively can also be judged *impius* for harming other members of his own community; likewise, if he refuses to fight (so as not to kill fellow-citizens), he fails his comrades-in-arms and may be accused of cowardice. For when the community has split into two warring factions, the view that one's opponents are *cives* (fellow-Romans, i.e., members of one's own community) and the view that they are *hostes* (foreign enemies, therefore not members of one's own community) are available simultaneously. These alternative conceptions of civil war□that it is or is not a conflict within a single community□authorize competing ethical discourses which in turn provide competing, often contradictory, value judgments on particular actions and therefore motivate sharply divergent actions in a given situation. And so it is in Lucan's *Bellum Civile*. In the sections below I examine representations of piety and valor (and the deployment of ethical terms generally) in Lucan, arguing that various voices in the

poem contradict not only one another, but also themselves. But I contend that there is a systematic logic to these contradictory value judgments: they arise from these alternative conceptions of the community in civil war, the competing views that one's opponent is a *civis* and a *hostis.*

II. The "Communitarian" Viewpoint

Of the two views of civil war articulated in Lucan, I first discuss what I call the *communitarian* view: the idea that the conflict at hand takes place within a single community that, despite this con-flict, remains fundamentally intact. The very term *bellum civile* privileges this view, implying as it does that the belligerents are all fellow-citizens, members of a single community. In the first eight lines of the poem the narrative voice describes the conflict from this viewpoint. It expresses the Ro-mans' behavior metaphorically as a person turning a sword against his own vitals (*populumque potentem/in sua victrici conversum viscera dextra*), it apostrophizes both factions collectively as *cives*, and it portrays them as identical and interchangeable ("kindred battle-lines," "standards opposed to hostile standards, equal eagles, and javelins threatening javelins"). On this view the conflict is inherently criminal, for slaughtering other members of one's community□massively violating the obligations and duties one owes one's fellow-citizens□is manifestly impious. Thus the narrative voice condemns the conflict as a crime, as sacrilege, and as madness (*scelus*, *nefas*, *furor*). Furthermore, on this view of the conflict there is no place for martial valor (*virtus*), for there is no foreign enemy against whom it can properly be displayed. The communitarian view of the conflict thus authorizes a particular pattern of action, and a corresponding ethical discourse: violence against the adversary is condemned; avoidance of violence is praised.

Throughout the poem, the communitarian view is most clearly articulated and enacted by Pompey himself, and to a lesser extent by his followers. This view, however, involves an unavoidable contradiction: if Pompey regards the Caesarians as members of the community, as people who have claims upon his *pietas,* how can he also advocate violence against them? This contradiction leaves its traces in many of Pompey's speeches. Consider his speech to his troops at 2.531-95, Pompey's first words in the poem. Here he represents his clash with Caesar primarily as a dispute within a single community. At 2.539-40 he denies that the conflict is a *proelium iustum* (which I take to be equivalent here to *bellum iustum*, a phrase specifically associated with warfare against a *hostis*) and insists rather that it is the "anger of a vengeful fatherland"□anger directed, implicitly, at a recalcitrant member of itself. Elaborating this claim, he goes on to compare Caesar to other Romans who took up arms against the state: Catiline, Lentulus, Cethegus, Cinna, Marius, Lepidus, Carbo, even Spartacus; significantly, he does not compare Caesar to a foreign foe such as Hannibal, a paradigm that others have already applied. Also, at the end of the speech he explicitly calls the conflict a *bellum civile*. In accordance with the communitarian view, throughout the speech he condemns Caesar's assault on his fatherland as criminal, sacrilegious, and mad: he associates with Caesar words such as *scelus*, *pollutus*, *nefas*, *rabies*, *furens*, *furor*, and *demens*. But embedded in this communitarian presentation of the conflict are jarring notes, traces of the inherent contradiction noted above. At 2.532-33, for example, he

calls his troops the "truly Roman band" (*o vere Romana manus*) whose war-making is authorized by the Senate, and contrasts this authorization with Caesar's "private arms." This portrayal seems to eliminate the Caesarians from the ranks of "Romans," rather than include them. Similarly, at 2.533 he urges his soldiers to "pray for a fight" (*votis deposcite pugnam*)—hardly consistent with the violence-averse communitarian view. These inconsistencies suggest that Pompey cannot in fact reconcile the communitarian view with advocating violence. Perhaps these inconsistencies also account for the speech's poor reception, for his men do not applaud, nor show enthusiasm for battle.

Pompey's actions, on the other hand, do accord generally with the communitarian view and its associated value system: for the most part he does try to avoid killing his opponents and hence to avoid the *impietas*—the violation of duties and obligations—that such action, on the communitarian view, entails. At 6.118-39, when Pompey first attempts to break out of the encirclement at Dyrrachium—the first time Pompey himself sends his troops into battle—his sudden onslaught scares the Caesarians *literally* to death: "That his victory might owe nothing to the sword, fear had finished off his stunned enemies. They lay dead in the place they ought to have stood—the only thing their *virtus* had the strength to do. Already there was nobody left to receive wounds, and the storm-cloud bringing so many weapons was squandered" (*ne quid victoria ferro/deberet, pavor attonitos confecerat hostes./ quod solum valuit virtus, iacuere perempti/debuerant quo stare loco. qui volnera ferrent/iam derant, et nimbus agens tot tela peribat*). The narrator implies that Pompey remains undefiled by civil bloodshed because his victory is technically non-violent: fear itself does the killing before Pompeian weapons can draw blood.

A second episode at Dyrrachium more clearly shows Pompey's communitarian behavior, but reveals a further contradiction inherent in this ethical stance. Pompey has surrounded a portion of Caesar's army and could end the war on the spot if he annihilates them—but he restrains his men's swords:

Totus mitti civilibus armis
usque vel in pacem potuit cruor: ipse furentes
dux tenuit gladios. felix ac libera regum,
Roma, fores iurisque tui, vicisset in illo
si tibi Sulla loco. dolet, heu, semperque dolebit,
quod scelerum, Caesar, prodest tibi summa tuorum,
cum genero pugnasse pio. pro tristia fata!

All the blood in civil conflict could have been shed,
even to the point of peace: but the leader himself
restrained the furious swords. You would have been
happy, free from kings and master of yourself, Rome,
had Sulla conquered for you in that place. It grieves
us, alas, and will always grieve us, that the pinnacle of
your crimes benefits you, Caesar: you have done
battle with a son-in-law who is *pius*. Oh, cruel fate!

Pompey is declared *pius*□a positive value judgment□because he restrains his men's swords (suppressing their *virtus*) and so preserves Caesar. In this respect he differs from Sulla and especially from Caesar himself, who commits a *scelus* in fighting his own son-in-law. Yet the adjective *pius* here is also ironic, as the exclamation *pro tristia fata*! signals: for thanks to Pompey's current *pietas*, the mutual communal slaughter will continue and the state will eventually be enslaved (*libera regum,/ Roma, fores iurisque tui* □). So Pompey's pious action not only comes at the expense of *virtus*, but also, on the communitarian view itself, begets further *impietas* in the long run□continued mutual slaughter within the community, then subjection to a *dominus*.

The ethical contradictions involved in the communitarian view are further elaborated early in Book 7. On the morning of the battle of Pharsalus, Pompey's troops, overcome by a "dire frenzy" and hence eager to join battle, accuse their leader of being "slow and cowardly" for pursuing a strategy of delay: *segnis pavidusque vocatur/ac nimium patiens soceri Pompeius* □. That is, they imply that his strategy betrays a lack of *virtus* and that he is overly concerned with matters of *pietas* (his duty toward his father-in-law). In reply Pompey concedes that battle can no longer be postponed, in part because the "prods of martial valor" are inciting his soldiers (*si modo virtutis stimulis iraeque calore/ signa petunt*). But he also labels his soldiers' desire to fight as "madness for criminality" and suggests that victory without bloodshed is desirable in civil war (*quis furor, o caeci, scelerum? civilia bella/ gesturi metuunt ne non cum sanguine vincant*. Since *scelus* here refers to killing one's kin and fellow-citizens, Pompey is implying that *pietas* justifies his strategy of delay and avoidance; thus he counters his soldiers' implied judgment that he lacks *virtus*. This passage once again demonstrates that using violence is ethically incompatible with maintaining a communitarian view of the conflict: the desire to be evaluated positively in the category of martial valor (*virtus*) urges battle, while consideration for community obligations (*pietas*) demands abstention from battle.

Nevertheless, Pompey does attempt to bridge this gap, and to render *virtus* and *pietas* consistent. Addressing his soldiers just before the battle, he seeks to motivate them to fight effectively by invoking images of fatherland, wives and children left behind:

"quem flagitat" inquit
"vestra diem virtus, finis civilibus armis,
quem quaesistis, adest. totas effundite vires:
extremum ferri duperest opus, unaque gentis
hora trahit. quisquis patriam carosque penates,
qui subolem ac thalamos desertaque
pignora quaerit,
ense petat: medio posuit deus omnia campo."

"The day your *virtus* demands," he says, "the end to civil conflict that you have sought, is at hand. Pour out all your strength: a final work of arms remains, and a single hour draws together all nations. Whoever longs for his fatherland and dear *penates,* whoever longs for his offspring and wife and relatives left behind, let

him seek them by the sword: god has set everything in the middle of the field."

Later he adduces still other images of the community in need, asking his men to imagine Roman matrons urging them to battle from the walls of the city, Roman senators abasing themselves before them, and the city itself making an appeal□that is, he appeals repeatedly to his soldiers' sense of duty to family and community, to their desire to be judged *pii*, in an effort to motivate them to fight with valor (*virtus*; *totas effundite vires*). He even refers to the Caesarians as *hostes*. Yet in the context of the upcoming battle, his rhetorical strategy is self-contradictory and doomed to fail: for what will his troops do when they see their own fathers, sons, and brothers on the other side? That is, how can they fight vigorously (demonstrating *virtus*) on the moral basis that Pompey has provided for them (that of acting piously), when the purported *hostes* facing them are the very people to whom they are bound by obligations of *pietas*? Again, Pompey cannot resolve the fundamental contradiction inherent in his communitarian view: for this view is consistent with a strategy of avoidance and delay in civil war, but not with violent conflict. Nor do his soldiers deal effectively with this contradiction. For although we are told that his speech kindles their desire to display *virtus*, it turns out (as we shall see in section IV) that their desire to be judged *pii*, upon which this desire for *virtus* is presumably founded, will indeed undermine their will to fight as soon as they recognize their friends and relatives on the other side.

III. The "Alienating" Viewpoint

Petreius, in the fraternization scene, is the one Pompeian who systematically rejects the communitarian viewpoint and so avoids the contradictions that plague Pompey. In a speech urging his men to kill the Caesarians who have entered the Pompeian camp, Petreius rhetorically excludes the Caesarians from the community. He calls them *hostes* and insists that the Pompeian troops owe loyalty only to their own side, which he identifies with the state as a whole: "heedless of your fatherland, forgetful of your own standards □" (*immemor o patriae, signorum oblite tuorum*). His value judgments support this construction of the community: he calls his men's fraternization "outrageous betrayal" (*proditio nefanda*) and implies that they have violated the trust placed in them (*fides*) in giving up the fight against the Caesarians. Petreius' ethical language contrasts sharply with the communitarian language of the narrator in his description of the fraternization: there, *nefas* is predicated of killing one's adversary and *fides* of preserving and cherishing him. Petreius' words are persuasive; his soldiers, reluctant at first, are finally induced to abandon the communitarian view and slaughter their Caesarian guests.

Petreius' viewpoint, which I call the *alienating* view, is not "perverse"□an adjective that scholars regularly apply to this line of thought□nor is it merely a travesty or inversion of communitarian values: it has a systematic logic of its own. It is the view that one's opponent is a *hostis,* a foreign enemy, whose behavior both excludes him from the community of Romans and threatens that community. Therefore making war on him is both pious and valorous. On this view, the conflict at hand is not a *bellum civile* at all, but rather a *bellum externum*; it is fundamentally no different from a war against (say)

the Parthians or a German tribe. The alienating view is well-represented throughout Lucan's poem, but it is much more commonly associated with the Caesarians than with the Pompeians.

This view is first articulated at the initial crisis point in the poem, Caesar's arrival at the Rubicon. As Caesar stands on the bank of the river, a vision of the Roman state itself, the *patria*, appears to him and says, "Where beyond are you aiming? Where are you carrying my standards, soldiers? If you come with legal sanction, and as citizens, this far only is permitted" (*quo tenditis ultra?/quo fertis mea signa, viri? si iure venitis,/si cives, huc usque licet*). This image of the nation itself embodies the values of the community as a whole, telling Caesar that he will be violating the proper Roman way of doing things (*ius*) and hence will be excluded from the body of *cives,* if he crosses the river with his army: he will, in other words, alienate himself. Caesar responds by forcefully asserting his membership in the community: he invokes the Trojan *penates* of his own house, the fire of Vesta, and Jupiter in two different forms□all symbols of the Roman community and his membership in it□asking them to favor his undertaking. In this way he affiliates his actions with the interests of the community; he implies that he is *pius*. Indeed, he explicitly denies that he is attacking the *patria* itself: "It is not you whom I am harrying with furious arms" (*non te furialibus armis/persequor*). He does concede the application of the tern *hostis* to himself, but insists that the blame for his behavior will ultimately fall upon his adversaries: "He, he will be guilty, who made me a *hostis* to you" (*ille erit, ille nocens, qui me tibi fecerit hostem*). The violation of *ius* and *pietas* will then be theirs, not his, and his own claim to membership in the community will be vindicated.

Caesar here resists being made the object of alienating discourse, though soon he will take up this discourse himself for use against the Pompeians. Initially, however, he makes no effort to exclude them from the community. Addressing his soldiers in Book 1, he justifies war by arguing that Pompey's extraordinary power must be abolished and by claiming that he is looking out for his soldiers' welfare. These arguments seem rather *ad hoc*; he fails to articulate a systematic moral basis for going to war□as he could do, for example, by tarring his opponents as *hostes*. For this reason his speech fails to persuade: "he finished speaking, but the crowd, doubtful, murmured to itself with indistinct mumbling. *Pietas* and their ancestral *penates* broke their resolve, despite being fierce with slaughter, and their inflamed spirits" (*dixerat; at dubium non claro murmure volgus/secum incerta fremit. pietas patriique penates/quamquam caeda feras mentes animosque tumentes/frangunt*). His men regard their opponents as members of the community, and thus considerations of *pietas* preclude the assault Caesar urges.

But among Caesar's centurions is one Laelius, who wears an oak wreath indicating that he once saved the life of a fellow-citizen in battle. The wreath signifies the community's collective judgment that he has displayed both *virtus* and *pietas* □since his heroic action falls into the ethical categories of both "martial valor" and "service to the community." As such he is an authoritative moral voice: it is he who provides a systematic moral basis for Caesar's war effort and thus resolves the soldiers' concerns about *pietas*. Specifically, he grants Caesar the authority to define the community of Roman citizens as he wishes, simply by indicating whom his soldiers should attack: "nor is anyone a

fellow-citizen of mine if I hear your trumpets against him, Caesar" (*nec civis meus est, in quem tua classica, Caesar,/audiero*). If the community so defined excludes the soldiers' blood-relations and spouses, so be it, says Laelius: "If you order me to bury my sword in my brother's breast or my father's throat or in the belly of my pregnant wife, even if my right hand is unwilling, I will nevertheless do it all" (*pectore si fratris gladium iuguloque parentis/ condere me iubeas plenaeque in viscera partu/ coniugis, invita peragam tamen omnia dextra*). He also declares himself willing to plunder and burn the temples of the gods, and even to destroy the city of Rome itself, if Caesar requests it. In these statements Laelius disavows each significant aspect of *pietas* as normally understood: he forswears his obligations to the gods, to the state and community at large, and to his family. Indeed, he obliquely acknowledges the normative force of this conception of *pietas* when he concedes that his own right hand may be unwilling: he implies that he must struggle to overcome an ingrained aversion to slaughtering kin. But this acknowledgment merely emphasizes the radical nature of the alienating view he articulates. The point is that, on this view, his kin are no longer members of the community, and *pietas* is not owed to them. For only those alongside whom one fights are fellow-citizens, and those against whom one fights are not. It is this view of the community that his ethical language is tailored to fit. To judge from the soldiers' reactions, Laelius' speech succeeds where Caesar's speech failed: now that Laelius has addressed their concerns about *pietas* by redefining the community, the soldiers pledge to follow Caesar into "any war to which he should summon them".

In the next few books Caesar and the Caesarians regularly assert, and act in accordance with, the alienating view of the conflict. In a description of Caesar's march south through Italy at 2.439-46, we are told that Caesar rejoices in shedding blood continuously, in taking the towns by force, and in devastating the fields; he regards the defenders as *hostes*. Furthermore, he is ashamed to go by an undefended route, lest he "appear to be a citizen" (*concessa pudet ire via civemque videri*). In his actions, in his characterizations of the belligerents, and in the moral judgments on the action embedded in his emotional reactions (*gaudet*, *iuvat*, and *pudet*), Caesar manifests the alienating view of the conflict: he and his opponents are foreign enemies in relation to one another; hence it is right, good, and a source of joy to destroy them violently.

Scaeva's behavior and ethical discourse (6.140-262) are also rooted in the alienating view. Rallying the defeated Caesarians after Pompey's attack at Dyrrachium, he speaks as follows: "'To what point,' he said, 'has impious fear, unknown to all the weapons of Caesar, driven you? □ with *pietas* gone, young men, will you not stand your ground out of anger, at least?'" ("*quo vos pavor" inquit "adegit/impius et cunctis ignotus Caesaris armis? non ira saltem, iuvenes, pietate remota/stabitis?"*). In accusing them of *pavor* (the opposite of *virtus*) and *impietas* □i.e., of failing to fight well against a foreign enemy and thereby neglecting their obligations to their community□he implicitly constructs a community consisting of Caesarians only and excluding the Pompeians. Indeed, he refers to the Pompeians as *hostes* at 6.156, and the narrator maintains this characterization of the Pompeians in the lines that follow (*hostes*, *hosti*, *hostem*)□that is, Scaeva can be seen as the focalizer of these words, and of the description of his actions generally as told by the narrator. Toward the end of his *aristeia*, however, Scaeva briefly adopts communitarian discourse and behavior to create a deception: his

virtus subsides (*virtute remota*) and he addresses the Pompeians as *cives*, asking them to spare him. When Aulus draws near, Scaeva stabs him in the throat, reigniting his *virtus* (*incaluit virtus*) and restoring the alienating pattern of action and valuation. His fellow-Caesarians share this view, and therefore, as representatives of his community and hence a judging audience for his spectacular public performance, they "praise him as the living image of outstanding Martial Valor" (*vivam magnae speciem virtutis adorant*). They also dedicate his weapons to Mars, presumably a mark of their *pietas*. But again, his actions are valorous, and theirs are pious, only on the alienating view, in which the Pompeians are regarded as *hostes* and therefore violence against them is right, appropriate, and divinely sanctioned.

The final strong statement of the alienating perspective occurs in Caesar's speech in Book 7, just before the battle of Pharsalus is joined. A crucial passage in this speech is the following:

vos tamen hoc oro, iuvenes, ne caedere quisquam
hostis terga velit: civis qui fugerit esto.
sed, dum tela micant, non vos pietatis imago
ulla nec adversa conspecti fronte parentes
commoveant; vultus gladio turbate verendos.

But this I ask you, young men, that no one wish to
strike the enemy in the back: consider anyone who
flees a fellow-citizen. But, while the weapons gleam,
let no vision of *pietas* move you, nor your parents if
you see them facing you: churn up with your sword
those faces demanding reverence.

Here Caesar progressively nuances the notion of "enemy" (*hostis*). First, opponents who flee are not enemies at all; on the contrary, he formally and explicitly defines those who flee as members of the community (*civis qui fugerit esto*). This definition provides a social, hence ethical, basis for sparing them: one should not seek to kill a member of one's community; to do so would be impious. Against those who stand and fight, however, Caesar urges his soldiers to fight vigorously. Even if they are your parents, he says, you must not let *pietas* move you; you must mangle their faces regardless. The claim that those who stand their ground do not warrant pious treatment, regardless even of kinship, implicitly excludes them from the community; it is this subset of the Pompeians who comprise the "real" *hostis* against whom martial valor must be displayed. Here Caesar takes up Laelius' earlier suggestion that the community (as the Caesarians see it) be defined in terms of whom Caesar chooses to attack. Also like Laelius, Caesar's language acknowledges the existence of the communitarian viewpoint: in speaking of parents as "demanding reverence" (*verendi*), he concedes that the duties of *pietas* would normally be owed to them. But here too, in his explicit rejection of the traditional social bases for morally judging peoples' actions, Caesar emphasizes the innovativeness of his alienating view.

IV. Discourses and Armies in Conflict

I have argued that the military and political competition between Caesar and Pompey also entails a competition between two different articulations of the Roman community and hence between two different ethical discourses regarding the con-flict. Another passage from Caesar's speech in Book 7 discusses the stakes of the latter competition in particular.

haec [*sc.* est illa dies] fato quae teste probet,
quis iustius arma
sumpserit; haec acies victum factura nocentem est.
si pro me patriam ferro flammisque petistis,
nunc pugnate truces gladioque exsolvite culpam:
nulla manus, belli mutato iudice, pura est.

This [sc. is the day] that certifies, with fate as witness,
who took up arms more justly; this battle is going to
make the loser guilty. If it is for me that you attacked
your fatherland with sword and fire, fight fiercely
now and clear your guilt by the sword: no hand is
pure, if the judge of the war is changed.

Caesar declares here that he is fighting Pompey for control of the content and application of the Roman ethical vocabulary. The victor, he says, will appropriate the (currently contested) term *ius* for his own cause and assign the term *nocens* to the vanquished. Therefore he urges his soldiers to fight fiercely (*nunc pugnate truces*), i.e., to display *virtus:* the blame incurred by their assault on the fatherland (*si patriam ferro flammisque petistis*), the impiety of attacking one's own community, will be cleared if and only if that attack is successful (*gladioque exsolvite culpam*). For the victor establishes himself as *iudex belli*, meaning that the allocation of value terms (such as *ius*, *nocens*, *culpa*, and *purus*, in this passage) will be entirely at his disposal. Only in victory, then, can Caesar enforce his own articulation of the community and thus make authoritative the ethical discourse based on that articulation. The definition of the community, and consequently the moral interpretation of history, belongs to the victor. In the meantime, however, the moral interpretation of events is up for grabs. Contestation over the assignment of value terms is in fact a major theme of the poem, as the first sentence of the poem declares (*iusque datum sceleri canimus* □). Indeed, in many ancient civil war narratives, control of the ethical vocabulary is at stake: it is a commonplace that civil war produces multiple moral perspectives, resulting in contestation over the allocation of moral terms.

We have seen, then, that in the communitarian view of the conflict□which Pompey repeatedly champions, despite its internal inconsistencies□there is no *hostis*, hence no social or ethical basis for displaying *virtus*. The obligations of *pietas* are owed to the Caesarians, as well as to everyone else. Therefore Pompey cannot provide a moral context in which his soldiers can fight the Caesarians effectively. On the other hand, Caesar's predominantly alienating view, which excludes from the community all who actively oppose him, creates an ethical space in which his soldiers can display *virtus* as

well as *pietas*. We now turn to the narrative of the battle of Pharsalus, to see how these differing social and ethical constructions of the conflict translate into action.

As the battle-lines approach each other on the plain, the soldiers on both sides size up the opposition:

quo sua pila cadant aut quae sibi fata minentur
inde manus, spectant. vultus, quo noscere possent
facturi quae monstra forent, videre parentum
frontibus adversis fraternaque comminus arma,
nec libuit mutare locum. tamen omnia torpor
pectora constrinxit, gelidusque in viscera sanguis
percussa pietate coit. □ □

they look to see where their weapons will fall, or
what hands threaten doom against them from the other
side. That they might know what terrible deeds they
were about to do, they saw the faces of their parents
confronting them opposite and the weapons of their
brothers close at hand, and they did not see fit to shift
their ground. Nevertheless, a numbness froze all their
breasts, and their blood congealed cold in their vitals
because of the outrage to *pietas.* □

When they see their brothers and fathers opposing them, they realize the violence they are doing to *pietas* (*percussa pietate*): their breasts go numb, their blood runs cold, and the start of the battle is deferred. For the moment, the communitarian perspective dominates□despite the fact that Caesar urged his men away from that perspective and that Pompey's speech kindled his soldiers' desire to display *virtus*. But soon Crastinus hurls the first lance and the battle is on. The Pompeians quickly have difficulties: they are too crowded to wield their weapons effectively; they can only hide behind a wall of shields. Meanwhile, Caesar's troops attack furiously. An extremely one-sided battle ensues, in which the Caesarians do all the killing: "One battle-line endures civil war, the other wages it; from that side the sword stands cold, but from Caesar's every guilty blade is warm" (*civilia bella/una acies patitur, gerit altera; frigidus inde/stat gladius, calet omne nocens a Caesare ferrum*). This one-sidedness is emphasized again thirty lines later: "what followed was no battle, but war is waged on one side with throats, on the other with the sword; nor does this battle-line have as much strength to kill as that one has capacity to perish" (□ *nulla secutast/pugna, sed hinc iugulis, hinc ferro bella geruntur;/nec valet haec acies tantum prosternere quantum/inde perire potest*). Ultimately, then, the soldiers on each side act in accordance with the ethical frameworks that their commanders provided in advance. Pompey's soldiers seemingly do not fight at all; they do not commit the impiety of killing family members and countrymen. Meanwhile, Caesar's troops fight well, displaying *virtus* by killing those who, on Caesar's definition, are excluded from the community. There are hints, however, of a latent communitarian perspective among the Caesarians, for even as they kill kin and countrymen their reactions sometimes suggest that they feel qualms; they also have

nightmares afterward in which they perceive their actions as a "savage crime" (*saevum scelus*).

V. The Narrator

In my discussion of conflicting definitions and discourses, I have largely neglected the most authoritative voice in the poem, the narrative voice. Like all epic narrators, Lucan's is, at one level, omnipotent and omniscient: he can move the narrative instantly from one location to another, expand or compress time at will, and so on. But other narrators, particularly Homer and Virgil, generally do not put forward strong opinions: they tend to remain ethically and emotionally detached from the events they narrate and gain credibility precisely by virtue of their self-effacement. Lucan's narrator, on the other hand, as many scholars have remarked, is deeply engaged with the poem's action. He often takes obtrusive, partisan stances on the events he narrates and therefore seems scarcely less opinionated than the voices of Pompey, Caesar, and other characters. Accordingly, the ethical stances he takes, and the value judgments he passes, may seem no more (or less) credible and authoritative than those of the other characters.

This claim that Lucan is an active, partisan spectator of the events he narrates is unquestionably true in certain respects. However, an exclusive focus on overt interventions misses subtler, less obtrusive, but equally important ways in which the narrator can present and manipulate his own narrative. For instance, the narrator may be completely subsumed in someone else's viewpoint, adopting the ethical stance and conception of community of the character or group whose story he is narrating at the moment: that is, the character or group in question focalizes the narrator's description of its actions. One such passage is the narrative of Scaeva's deeds: here the narrator regularly refers to Scaeva's Pompeian foes as *hostes*, just as Scaeva does; also, the taunting address to the Pompeians, denying that ordinary weapons can stop him, could be seen as Scaeva's own boast.

At a more visible and self-assertive level, the narrator adopts an ethical stance at odds with that of the character or group whose actions he narrates□a situation I call "hostile narration." For example, he heaps condemnation upon the Caesarians as he relates their occupation and plundering of the Pompeian camp after Pharsalus; he emphasizes in particular the bonds of kinship and community that they have violated□though from the Caesarians' own (alienating) perspective they have seized an enemy camp, and on that view their actions are morally right. Here, then, the narrator adopts a communitarian ethical stance as he relates actions done in accordance with an alienating view.

At his most obtrusive□the narrative mode that scholars have repeatedly noted and studied□the narrator actually interrupts the narrative and gives a more or less extended evaluative commentary on the action *in propria voce*. A striking case is, where the narrator, in a direct address, tells Scaeva that his alienating view of the community is false. For while Scaeva calls the Pompeians *hostes*, vigorously fights them, and deploys ethical language accordingly (e.g., *pietas* is owed only to fellow-Caesarians), here the narrator insists that they are not a foreign enemy such as the Teutoni or Cantabri (evidently the "true" *hostes*); hence there can be no triumph and no proper dedication of

spoils to Iuppiter Tonans. Consequently his *virtus,* grotesquely misdirected, has gained him nothing but a *dominus*. A final example of this most assertive obtrusion of the narrative voice is his denunciation of the consequences of Pharsalus:

maius ab hac acie quam quod sua saecula ferrent
vulnus habent populi; plus est quam vita salusque
quod perit: in totum mundi prosternimur aevum.
vincitur his gladiis omnis quae serviet aetas.
proxima quid suboles aut quid meruere nepotes
in regnum nasci? pavide num gessimus arma
teximus aut iugulos? alieni poena timoris
in nostra cervice sedet. post proelia natis
si dominum, fortuna, dabas, et bella dedisses.

The peoples of the world have a wound from this
battle greater than their own age could bear; it is more
than life and safety that passes away: we are laid low
for the whole eternity of the universe. Every age is
conquered by these swords, and will be slaves. Why
did the next generation, or the one after that, deserve
to be born into tyranny? Did we ply our weapons in a
cowardly manner, or shield our throats? The penalty
for someone else's cowardice sits upon our necks.
Fortune, if you gave a master to those born after the
battle, you might also have given them a chance
to fight.

This passage indicts both parties: the Caesarians for seeking to impose a "master" (*dominus*) upon the state and thus to "enslave" everyone else (*serviet, in nostra cervice*); but also the Pompeians for their cowardice, their failure to fight that enabled the Caesarian victory. Thus the narrator rejects the inevitable consequences of the communitarian perspective: in condemning the Pompeians for *pavor* and *timor*—i.e., a lack of *virtus*—he adopts an alienating ethical discourse. Essentially, he implies that the Caesarians *are* a valid target for martial valor (hence they are *hostes* and are excluded from the community) and suggests that the Pompeians would have served the community better by taking such a view themselves.

These examples of the narrator's moral judgments on the actions he narrates were of course chosen with malice aforethought, for I wished to demonstrate his inconsistency, on several axes, in the face of competing views of the community and competing ethical discourses. First, as in the Scaeva episode, at one level the narrator may implicate his own viewpoint with that of a character (Scaeva focalizes the narrator's alienating discourse: see section III above), but at another level sharply distinguish his own viewpoint from the character's (explicitly rejecting Scaeva's view, and embracing a communitarian discourse instead: see the previous paragraph). Second, he can enthusiastically reject each faction's principal viewpoint: by lamenting the Pompeians' cowardice (quoted above), he indicts the communitarian view that underlay their

collapse; then, just one hundred lines later, he provides a hostile narration of the Caesarians' plundering of the Pompeian camp (i.e., he takes a communitarian ethical stance) and in so doing rejects the alienating perspective that justifies the Caesarians' actions. Finally, he can equally enthusiastically embrace each faction's principal viewpoint. In an apostrophe to Pompey after the battle, the narrator tells the defeated general "it was worse to win" (*vincere peius erat*)□presumably validating Pompey's communitarian perspective, according to which the killing in this conflict is criminal. And even Caesar's alienating perspective is praiseworthy, under the right circumstances: when Afranius surrenders the Pompeian army in Spain, Caesar sends these troops home unpunished and unconscripted. For on the alienating view, these men, being *hostes*, have committed no crime in fighting, nor do they owe any military duty to their conquerors.

The narrator, then, is inconsistent in that he does not systematically embrace one or the other competing conception of community and its corresponding ethical discourse. Rather, he moves back and forth between them, at one point or another judging the actions of each side by the moral standards of each ethical discourse. Masters, discussing the narrator's vacillation between the Pompeian and Caesarian causes, speaks of Lucan's "fractured voice" and suggests (rightly, I think) that its inconsistency necessarily follows from the poem's subject matter. The present discussion reveals a similar connection between subject and form, for we have seen that the cleft in the community□the defining contradiction of civil war□is reproduced first in a divided ethical discourse and second in the narrator's conflicting moral evaluations. Consequently, in failing to adopt one view over the other, the narrator not only narrates the civil war, but performs it as well: he allows the alternative ethical discourses and views of community to compete through his own voice just as they compete through the words and actions of the characters. This unresolved competition also shows that neither discourse, and neither conception of the community, by itself can adequately embrace the conflict that is the poem's subject. Indeed, the opening phrase of the poem, "war more than civil" (*bella plus quam civilia*), may also suggest in retrospect that both available ethical frameworks are inadequate to the subject. For we have seen that the phrase *bellum civile* sometimes conveys specifically the communitarian view on the conflict. Therefore, the phrase "more than civil" may imply that the communitarian view does not quite fit. However, this phrase may also imply "less than (or not exactly) external," in which case the alienating view is also inadequate. On this reading, the words *plus quam*, like the aporetic competition between ethical discourses, marks the lack of a comprehensive view and the need for a third way.

But despite these contradictions, the narrator is not without direction: through the poem as a whole he does seem to adopt (and praise) the communitarian view, and engage in its corresponding ethical discourse, more often than he embraces the alternative. Perhaps we should reflect this differential preference by labeling communitarian discourse "dominant" or "normative" in the poem and alienating discourse "oppositional" or "subversive." But the latter is not thereby swept under the rug: it remains a coherent, visible, persistent, and powerful discourse, emerging repeatedly in the statements and actions of many characters□Pompeians as well as Caesarians□and in the narrative voice. I also see little evolution: there is no move toward a reconciliation of these

discourses, nor does either one seem to become more favored or prominent, or less so, over the course of the poem. These discourses simply coexist, in somewhat unequal authorial favor, ever competing and conflicting with each other, inescapable artifacts of civil war itself.

A possible third way does appear in Book 9, where Cato is at the center of an entirely different mode of ethical discourse. Here Cato and *virtus* are closely associated—but this *virtus* seems to have little to do with martial valor, for there is no fighting in this section of the poem; nor is it ever in tension with *pietas*, as it often is elsewhere. Rather, it is linked repeatedly with endurance, toil, and overcoming difficulty. The Stoic connection is easy to make: it is a commonplace of imperial Stoicism that moral virtue, though of course independent of indifferent externals such as pain, suffering, and death, is best displayed—and may even be strengthened—by being exercised in their presence. In this and other respects, the ethical discourse centered on Cato is strongly Stoicizing.

But Stoic ethics differs radically from both alienating and communitarian ethical discourse. The latter two are fundamentally the same, being alternative versions of the traditional, external, community-based mode of evaluation. They operate identically with respect to the underlying conception of community and differ only insofar as that underlying conception differs. In Stoic ethics, however, moral value is internal and resides in states of mind that are accessible primarily to oneself. Things that are externally observable, such as the actual results of one's plans and actions, are regarded as beyond one's control and therefore without moral value. The community therefore has no role in moral evaluation. Thus, Cato's Stoicism potentially offers an escape from the competing, irreconcilable discourses discussed above: it provides a universal moral standard, invariant over all conditions of peace and war, unity and disunity, as the basis for a reconstituted, unitary ethical discourse. However, at 9.950 the narrator turns his attention back to Caesar; Cato and his Stoic ethics do not reappear in the poem. How Lucan might have developed this alternative system subsequently, and how it might have interacted with the poem's other ethical discourses, we will never know.

VI. Lucan and Early Imperial Aristocratic Ideology

Several times in the poem Caesar articulates an ideological reconstruction of the Roman community and its ethical discourse. This reconstruction, which he can impose if he wins, will establish his alienating view of the community as the normative basis for ethical valuation, thereby removing all moral opprobrium from himself and depositing it upon his adversaries. Yet within the poem itself no such reconstruction occurs. Lucan at no point allows Caesar's alienating view and its ethical discourse to dominate; also, voices that move toward Caesar's view in the last three books (after Pharsalus) are presented unsympathetically. Historically, however, Caesar did attempt such a reconstruction, and we can recover its general outlines. Once we have done so, we will be able to consider the ideological consequences of Lucan's disallowing that reconstruction and of his projecting the particular image of civil war that he does from the cultural context of Neronian Rome.

Raaflaub (1974), in his survey of the terms used by the Pompeians and Caesarians, shows that the historical Pompeians generally claimed to be defending the commonwealth (*res publica*) and that they called Caesar and his followers such things as "depraved men," "bandits," and "condemned criminals" (*perditi*, *latrones*, *damnati*); whether they called them *hostes* is unclear. Thus the Pompeians appear to have engaged in an alienating discourse, marginalizing Caesar within the community or even expelling him from it□though the evidence for their rhetoric is extremely sparse, coming almost exclusively from letters of Cicero (*et al.*) dating from B.C. 50-48. On the other hand, Caesar and the Caesarians generally labeled the conflict a "civil disagreement," "secession" (*civilis dissensio*, *secessio*), or the like, they labeled the Pompeians "personal enemies" or "opponents" (*inimici*, *adversarii*) rather than using the alienating term *hostes*. They seem, then, to have embraced a communitarian view, or at least avoided inflamma-tory, alienating language. The evidence for the Caesarian viewpoint is much more plentiful, coming from Caesar's *Commentarii*, Hirtius' *Bellum Gallicum VIII*, and portions of Cicero's Caesarian speeches (especially *Lig.*, *Marc.*, *Deiot.*). But these sources, in contrast to the Pompeian ones, postdate the bulk of the civil war and therefore must be seen, whatever their truth value, as representations of the conflict that serve Caesar's interests in the aftermath. Indeed, the advantages for Caesar of presenting his cause this way, for public consumption and for posterity, are manifest: by embracing a communitarian discourse, he can seek (or claim to seek) reconciliation with the vanquished, and to reintegrate them into the community of which they have always been a part. This, then, is Caesar's ideological reconstruction of the civil war, the history he as victor gets to write that allows him to mobilize support and consolidate power.

Another means of access to the historical Caesarians' re-presentation of their cause following their victory is through the symbolism of Caesar's triumphs. It is a commonplace, in Lucan and elsewhere, that a civil war cannot produce a triumph, and there are at least two reasons, inherent in the ceremony's form and symbolism, why this is so. First, the triumphal procession symbolically subjects the non-Roman to the Roman: it includes a display of spoils, pictures of towns captured, and a parade of notable prisoners led in chains before the *triumphator*'s chariot. Second, the triumph is inherently expansionist in its celebration of military conquest: Valerius Maximus states that a victory won in reconquering territory previously conquered but subsequently lost does not qualify for a triumph. A victory in civil war is incompatible with a triumph on both these counts, for neither are the vanquished non-Romans, nor does the victory expand the empire. Now, Caesar sent no word of his victory at Pharsalus to the senate□a necessary step, along with being proclaimed *imperator*, for a commander who hopes for a *supplicatio* or triumph. Indeed, says Dio, Caesar not only did not triumph, but did not wish to appear to take pleasure in this victory. His refusal to seek a triumph, then, also implies a communitarian viewpoint, and so coincides with the viewpoint taken in the literary sources□the view that Pharsalus was part of a civil war, a conflict within a single community.

This interpretation of Caesar's non-triumph for Pharsalus is confirmed by an analysis of the triumphs Caesar did celebrate. In his quadruple triumph of B.C. 46, celebrating victories in Gaul, at Zela, at Alexandria, and at Thapsus, Caesar mixed conflicts that were manifestly external (the first two) with those that were arguably civil□yet the very

act of celebrating triumphs was to portray all four alike as *bella externa*. The triumph for Thapsus involved a systematic manipulation of symbolism, as the sources point out: for although his principal military opponents in Africa were Cato and Metellus Scipio, his triumphal procession prominently displayed the younger Juba, son of the Numidian king who supported Cato and Sepia. Thus Caesar emphasized the foreignness of the force opposing him and so constructed Thapsus symbolically as a battle between Romans (his own troops) and non-Ro-mans. After his victory at Munda, however, Caesar went even further: according to Plutarch, he caused outrage by triumphing unambiguously over other Romans. For (says Plutarch) he had previously avoided seeking recognition for victories in civil war, and his fellow-countrymen were grieved that he now celebrated a triumph for destroying Pompey's family rather than for defeating foreigners. Caesar, then, used triumphal imagery to represent each conflict *after* Pharsalus as a *bellum externum*, and to exclude those opponents from the community. These representations may have persuaded no one (certainly not Plutarch). But the point is that Caesar made the attempt, and in the most public and visible way: we must regard these performances as part of his attempted ideological reconstruction.

Lucan, however, disallows this Caesarian ideological reconstruction in two ways. First, the poem portrays no systematic remobilization of discourse to Caesar's advantage, before or after Pharsalus: it insists on presenting an endlessly divided community, forever bollixed up in competing, irreconcilable discourses. In this respect Lucan differs from other Augustan and Julio-Claudian authors, who at least acknowledge that many ideological resources have been organized in support of the imperial regime. Second, and more strikingly, Lucan switches the modes of discourse that each faction embraced historically: it is Lucan's Pompeians, not his Caesarians, who generally regard their opponents as members of their own community, and his Caesarians who, in their rhetoric and actions, tend to exclude their opponents. This reversal enables Caesar's victory within the poem, but also precludes him from duplicating the historical Caesar's ideological reconstruction.

Lucan's resistance to Caesarian ideology must itself be ideologically important. What interests does Lucan's construction of civil war serve, given that its ethical structuring substantially contradicts that of the dominant (i.e., Caesarian) historical tradition? Also, what is the ideological significance, within the social and political context of Neronian Rome, of a Roman aristocrat's evincing so powerful an interest in fractured communities and competing, irreconcilable ethical discourses? I suggest that Lucan, along with other contemporary authors, perceives a divided community and competing ethical discourses in the Rome of his own day. For like Caesar himself, Caesar's heirs, the *principes*, have the power to organize novel discourses that serve their own interests. One example is the discourse of flattery, in which the traditional grounds for praise and blame are disregarded or transmuted so as to create a uniform front of praise. Flattery distorts and undermines the aristocracy's fundamental, received mode of valuation, and so threatens the social cohesion and group identity that traditional ethical discourse provides them.

Seneca's advocacy of Stoic ethics implicitly addresses this problem and provides the aristocracy with one possible solution. For, as noted in section V, an ethical discourse

systematically grounded on an internal standard (states of mind) elides all the problems that traditional discourse, being social and external, encounters in the face of a divided evaluative community. On this reading, Seneca's support for Stoic ethics is ideological in that it supports the interests of the aristocracy as a whole in its power struggle with the *princeps*. For by reconstituting a unitary evaluative community, Seneca's Stoic ethics negates an important aspect of the *princeps'* power□the power to organize ethical discourse to his own advantage.

Lucan, meanwhile, examines divided communities and competing discourses in the framework of the civil war, which is at once the origin of the principate and also a moment at which these issues are particularly prominent and sharpened. By refusing to allow his Caesar to mimic the historical Caesar's ideological reconstruction, Lucan resists the reorganizations of community and discourse to Caesar's (and the principate's) advantage. But at the same time he fails to reject Caesar's program decisively; he makes no systematic attempt to stamp out the irruption of Caesarism into aristocratic ethics. Thus he leaves competing articulations of the community and competing discourses forever in con-flict, with no resolution in sight. It is, I think, a dark view of the aristocracy's position: Caesar and the principate ensure a perpetual, irreparable fracturing of their community and destroy even the possibility of talking meaningfully (i.e., morally) about the regime itself or any other matter.

Source: Matthew B. Roller, "Ethical Contradiction and the Fractured Community in Lucan's *Bellum Civile*," in *Classical Antiquity,* Vol. 15, No. 2, October, 1996, pp. 319-47.

Critical Essay #4

The author, C.M.C. Green, portrays the necessity of the murder in Lucan's Book 3*.*

Lucan created the relationship between Pompey and Caesar, it has been argued, on the pattern of the relationship of Agamemnon and Achilles. Thus it is through an acknowledgment of his Greek literary ancestry that Lucan constructs the opening of his epic. The rivalry between the great leader and the young warrior provides the explosive, psychological beginnings (*hae ducibus causae* □) of the action of the *Bellum Civile,* shaping the conflict as one which, while between individuals, remains even less personal than that between Agamemnon and Achilles. Yet, though Achilles threatens, he does not in the end take his men home and abandon Agamemnon. Their personal quarrel is resolved, and thus subordinated to their obligations in the greater battle against the Trojans. Caesar, enraged with Pompey's arrogance, *does* take his troops home; the Iliadic pattern is violated, so that the Greek epic pattern will no longer serve the Roman epic poet. We must now consider what paradigm Lucan sets in its place.

The battles, purges, and proscriptions of the Civil Wars had left lasting scars on the Roman people. Those Roman writers□historians and poets alike□who survived the end of the Republic knew too well the wounds that lay beneath the polished surface of Augustan peace. In their attempts to reconcile who the Romans were with what they had done, several authors□Horace and Livy especially□had turned to a well-established Republican tradition that found in the myth of Romulus's murder of Remus the seeds of the later civil conflict. When Lucan in turn, not quite a century later, had to confront Caesar's armies on the march toward Rome, he could thus accept and adapt for his epic an already fully developed mythic connection.

He extended the mythic significance yet further, however, by exploiting the religious paradigm of combat and murder for kingship that had once been practiced by Latin communities, a paradigm exemplified by the *rex nemorensis*, the king of the wood. The *rex* and his cult were still extant in Lucan's time, and were not the only source for such a kingship ritual. It is the purpose of the present article to set out the evidence for Lucan's use of such a paradigm, and then, using this as a guide, to reassess Book 3 of the *Bellum Civile* in the terms that it dictates. The choice of Book 3 is logical: it is here that the themes of sacred place, sacred combat, and the necessary murder are most clearly presented. It is my further purpose to demonstrate that seeming inconsistencies in the nature of the gods in Lucan's epic can be at least partially resolved if we understand that the gods must remain aloof, outside the action, while the ritual takes place, even though they themselves have instituted the ritual of kingship murder, and will, when it is completed, receive the murderer as their ritually validated priest-king. I will conclude by suggesting ways in which this paradigm, if accepted, begins to clarify various puzzling choices Lucan has made elsewhere in the epic, as regards his narrative of events, his development of character, and the recurrent images of lightning, tree, and blood sacrifice owed to the gods.

I

The need to find not just an explanation for the Civil Wars, but an explanation of the Roman people, is given anguished voice in one of Horace's epodes:

Quo, quo scelesti ruitis? aut cur dexteris
aptantur enses conditi?
parumne campis atque Neptuno super
fusum est Latini sanguinis?

Where, villains, where are you rushing? Why are
once-sheathed swords at the ready in your right hands?
Has not enough Latin blood been shed on land and sea?

He demands an answer□*responsum date!*□and the response given is one that has been shaped to this very purpose by two centuries of Republican writers:

sic est: acerba fata Romanos agunt
scelusque fraternae necis,
ut immerentis fluxit in terram Remi
sacer nepotibus cruor.

So it is: harsh fates and the crime of a brother's murder
drive the Romans on, just as when the blood of
undeserving Remus flowed onto the earth, a curse
upon his descendants.

Fratricide and civil war were the private and public faces of the same crime; they had come to be seen as the inescapable legacy of Romulus's murder of Remus to protect his *regnum* over Rome. This is not just a poet's figurative language. For Livy, Romulus and Remus present the same lesson:

Intervenit deinde his cogitationibus avitum malum,
regni cupido, atque inde foedum certamen coortum a
satis miti principio.

These plans [for the foundation of Rome] were interrupted
by the wickedness that had marked their grandfather,
greed for kingship (*regni cupido*), and hence,
from a peaceful enough beginning, a loathsome
competition grew.

That the murder of Remus was the direct and fated result of the conflict between the brothers over *regnum* formed an essential part of the Republican tradition. It can be traced back to Ennius's account of Romulus and Remus□*curantes magna cum cura tum cupientes / regni dant operam simul auspicio augurioque* ("Having a great concern, indeed, a greed for kingship, they gave their attention at once to the auspices and the augury" and *sic expectabat populus atque ore timebat / rebus utri magni victoria sit data regni* ("Thus their followers were waiting, with fear in their faces for the state, to see to

which of the two men would victory of the great kingship be given,"). Lucretius, *DRN* 3.68-72, links civil war and fratricide. "Romulus' victory was only secured by a crime and that crime of fratricide continued to reassert itself throughout Roman history. The evils of the Civil Wars were seen as a legacy of Romulus' acts □."

It is hardly surprising that Lucan is, in turn, as powerfully affected by this view as were his predecessors. His *sententia* defining the cause of the Civil War as the competition between two men for the *regnum* of Rome□*nulla fides regni sociis, omnisque potestas / impatiens consortis erit* ("kingship has no loyalty to its allies, and every power / will be intolerant of a colleague"□is completed by the paradigm of that first murder:

□ nec gentibus ullis
credite, nec longe fatorum exempla petantur:
fraterno primi maduerunt sanguine muri.

... You need look to no foreign peoples, nor seek
examples of these fates far away: the first walls were
soaked in a brother's blood.

The first walls of Rome, then, were stained with human blood in a fight for *regnum*. In *nulla fides regni sociis* ("kingship has no loyalty to its allies"), Lucan is very particularly naming the same type of rule as the one over which the *fides* of Pompey and Caesar□allies in the first Triumvirate□will fail. The point of this *sententia* is lost if we understand *regnum* here to mean no more than "tyranny" (as Duff has it), a Greek-derived and *polis*-based concept, rather than "kingship," which both reflects the sense of the Latin root and maintains crucial historical associations, including Lucan's reminder that kingship preceded and was a step toward the creation of Rome as a *civitas*. Not the abstract concept of "tyrannical power," not even the political reality of the "first Triumvirate," but rather *kingship itself* is unmistakably Lucan's meaning. This is further emphasized by his conscious echo of Ennius's line, *nulla sancta societas / nec fides regni est* ("There is no sacred alliance, no loyalty in kingship"), a line we know precisely because Cicero used it to illustrate the nature of Caesar's *regnum*. The belief (or fear) that Caesar actually wanted to make himself king in Rome was one of the principal justifications for his assassination.

Caesar and Pompey, then (not brothers, but father- and son-in-law), are striving for the same prize that Romulus and Remus sought. The whole structure of Lucan's epic emphasizes this, for everywhere the military conflict is subordinate to, and a violent reflection of, the personal struggle between two men. Murderous conflict, whether manifested in civil war or assassination, is an inseparable part of the kind of power for which Pompey and Caesar compete. This power is inseparable from place. *Regnum,* for Caesar and Pompey, is not sovereignty as an abstract notion, but kingship in Rome. Lucan concludes the paradigm of the conflict between Romulus and Remus with a comparison of Rome, the victor's prize, now and then:

nec pretium tanti tellus pontusque furoris
tunc erat: exiguum dominos commisit asylum.

□ and at that time, land and sea were not the prize for
such a great frenzy: a robbers' hideout brought the
leaders to battle.

This comparison serves to re-emphasize the parallel between Romulus's act and Caesar's, and to remind us that the pathology is the same, whether Rome is the capital of a great empire or a small clearing on the Capitol. Lucan chose the *asylum* to symbolize the earliest, and smallest, physical entity of Rome, and this reminds us that the asylum on the Capitoline hill was originally the haven of escaped slaves, criminals, and others excluded from, or hostile to, political order. Rome was not only founded by a murderer, but her first citizens were exiles, fugitive slaves, murderers, and every other kind of violator of civil and religious law: men like Romulus, and Caesar, and their followers. *In her end is her beginning.*

II

The asylum at Rome was not unique. Other Latin communities had similar sacred areas of refuge for exiles or escaped slaves. The most famous, partly because it was the longest lasting, and partly because Virgil's use of one element of the ritual associated with it guaranteed it a place in Servius's commentary on the *Aeneid,* was the grove of Diana above Aricia, the site of the cult of the *rex nemorensis*. While the cult of the king of the wood may have been peculiar to Aricia, there is evidence that a similar kind of rite was□at least for a time□practiced at Rome. More importantly for our present purposes, there is evidence that the cult of the *rex nemorensis* was thought, in Lucan's time, to be directly associated with rites that affected the succession to the imperial throne. Let us review, first, the cult itself, then the relationship of this cult to the Roman kings in the sixth century B.C., and, finally, the evidence for Lucan's knowledge of it and its significance for his narrative.

In the mountains above the city of Aricia there was a grove, sacred to Diana and ruled over by a priest-king. He was an escaped slave who had won his exalted position by slaying his predecessor. The priest-king's life was dedicated to protecting the goddess's sacred tree, and he had to be ready, night and day, to fend off challengers with his sword. We do not have a full description of the rite, but from Servius's account we know that any challenger to the reigning priest-king had also to be a fugitive, and to declare his challenge by cutting off the golden bough. If the challenger succeeded in this first test, there was then (though surely not immediately) a mortal combat fought between the two. One of them must die, and the survivor became the next priest-king. Thus the sacred grove is a refuge for fugitives, of whom the priest-king has been one. As priest he is the goddess's servant, and perhaps her husband. As king, he serves as her protector, and the protector of the sacred tree. His successor must challenge him by cutting off the golden bough which grows on her sacred tree. The cut bough requires the priest to meet the challenger in sacred, mortal combat The victor is the new priest-king.

To clarify Lucan's use of the rite, it is particularly important to emphasize several aspects of the ritual that may otherwise escape our notice. The assault on the tree is a

sacrilege committed against the goddess herself, and both the reigning king and the challenger must have committed this crime. The defeated one is the sacrificial victim, the victor is the anointed priest, and the combat is a test of the goddess's will, which can only be ascertained by the outcome of the combat. Most important of all, the entire ritual is instituted by the goddess herself□that is, the sacrilege, the murder, and the victor's ascension to priesthood are all equally part of the ritual and are all therefore equally sacred.

Possession of Diana's grove made Aricia enormously wealthy, a condition that prevailed without doubt well into the first century B.C., and quite possibly on into Lucan's own day. Indeed, in the time of the kings at Rome, Aricia was a greater power than Rome, and an equal to the most important cities in central Italy. She shared control with Alba Longa of the source of the Ferentine river (*caput aquae ferentinae*), the gathering place for the leaders (*proceres*) of the Latin tribes, where Turnus confronted Tarquinius, who, by his behavior to the rest of the Latin leaders, earned his sobriquet *Superbus*. During the fifth century B.C., Aricia, like the other Latin cities, was defeated by the Ro-mans□several times, in fact□but preparations for her permanent eclipse by Rome had been made, almost a century earlier, by Servius Tullius, who held the last legitimate Roman kingship, and who appropriated Aricia's cult of Diana as an assertion of Rome's claim to political, as well as religious, leadership of the Latin people:

> Saepe iterando eadem perpulit tandem, ut Romae fanum Dianae populi Latini cum populo Romano facerent. Ea erat confessio caput rerum Romam esse, de quo totiens armis certatum fuerat.
>
> Through constant effort, he (Servius) finally got his way, with the result that the Latins and the Romans together created a shrine to Diana at Rome. This was an admission that Rome was their common capital (*caput rerum*), a question over which they had so many times gone to war.

Livy concludes his account with the story of a magnificent heifer, a prodigy. Imperial power would belong to the state whose citizens sacrificed this heifer to Diana, according to the soothsayers (*ibi fore imperium*). Among the gods, while Jupiter certainly represents Rome's will to *imperium,* Diana, clearly, is the divinity who has the power to guarantee it. No wonder Servius was anxious to establish her cult in Rome.

Servius's sanctuary of Diana on the Aventine (there well may not have been a temple at first) imitated several important aspects of the cult at Aricia. First, the festal day was the same as that at Aricia□August 13. Slaves celebrated a holiday on this day: they could participate in the rite (not a common practice), and the cult was particularly sacred to them. Indeed, according to Festus, temple was a sanctuary for escaped slaves. Moreover, the *success* of Servius's appropriation of the cult was as important as the move itself, for it testified to divine authorization for Rome's expanding power, a very

forceful confirmation in the early period when belief was strong and rationalism and syncretism had not yet drained divinity of its present *numen*.

Though in Republican times the Aventine cult did not include the "ghastly priest," the priest may indeed have been part of Servius's foundation. There is evidence that Servius Tullius, as king, was himself Diana's priest. According to a tradition that could not be denied□despite the openly expressed dismay of historians such as Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus□Servius Tullius was born a slave. He succeeded Tarquinius Priscus upon that king's violent death, and accomplished this through the intercession of Tarquinius's queen. As an old man, Servius was himself physically attacked and removed from the throne by his son-in-law, Tarquinius Superbus.

There is a curious, and for this discussion revealing, chronological problem here. Tarquinius was supposed to be the son of Tarquinius Priscus, and was also young and vigorous enough to throw the elderly Servius downstairs, even though he had to be at least forty-four (the number of years Servius reigned, according to Livy) and□if he was married to Tullia when Servius became king□was probably a good deal older than that. The important fact□that a young successor made a physical attack on the aging king□confounds the chronology, and reminds us that not Tarquinius's claim to the throne, but the physical attack, was what was crucial to the story.

After the attack, Servius, the story goes, was murdered by Tarquinius's agents. The event is described in vivid and telling detail by Livy. Tullia, who is both sister and wife to Tarquinius, summons her husband out of the Curia and is the first to call him "king." Then she goes to the top of the Cyprian Way, where there was a shrine to Diana, and directs her carriage to turn right onto the Urbian Way. Servius is lying, dead, across the road. She orders the driver to drive over the body, spattering herself with the blood of her father, a crime so terrible that it has given the name to the street□the "Accursed Street." This horrible story is concluded by Livy thus: *ceterum id quoque ad gloriam accessit quod cum illo simul iusta ac legitima regna occiderunt* ("this, too, accrued to his glory, that with him just and lawful kingship disappeared," Livy).

If we ignore the anachronistic *color* of contemporary politics that Livy and Dionysius apply to make sense of this, we see that it is remarkably like a ritual such as the one practiced by the *rex nemorensis*. Indeed, the oddest "facts," which, however much they are explained, are never explained away□Servius the slave; Tullia the daughter, sister, wife; the mysterious shrine to Diana on the Esquiline; Servius's blood on Tullia; the tradition that Tarquinius Superbus was not only "the son" but was also "the young, vigorous man" capable of heaving another man down steps, despite the chronological impossibility; the strange vanishing of any helpers for the king as soon the young man proves his superior prowess□these are elements most appropriate, not to a political *coup*, but to a ritual combat for kingship.

It is not necessary to determine whether such a rite was ever actually practiced by Romans in Rome. It is enough that the tradition existed, was associated with a Roman king, Servius Tullius, and could be thus interpreted in Lucan's time. There is, fortunately, evidence suggesting that the rites of Diana were of more than a little interest to those

around Lucan. Crispus Passienus, step-father to Nero, orator, Stoic, and friend of Seneca, was much concerned with Diana's cult. Pliny reports that Passienus formed an attachment to a certain exceptional tree in a grove near Tusculum, a grove which "by the ancient religious practices from Latium was sacred to Diana." Passienus would embrace and kiss the tree, sleep under it, and pour wine over it.

But of far greater importance for Lucan's understanding of the rites of Diana, as they relate to the history of Rome, is Claudius's curious use of the rites at a significant point in the chronic crisis of imperial succession. Tacitus records that Claudius ordered "expiatory rites (*piacula*) to be celebrated by the priests in the grove of Diana," and these rites were to be conducted according to "ceremonies from the rules of King Tullius," when he was persuaded that Lucius Junius Silanus Torquatus, betrothed to his daughter Octavia, was guilty of incest with his (Silanus's) sister Junia Calvina. Tacitus also reports that this order caused considerable derision, as Claudius himself at that very time was proposing an incestuous marriage to his own niece, Agrippina. According to the life attributed to Vacca, Lucan was an augur. Such a priesthood attests Lucan's interest in, and access to, the religious traditions of the Romans, Etruscans, and□surely□the Latins.

Thus, the rite of Diana (and this purification of incest□if that is what it was□must relate to the part of the rite in which the Iphigenia-priestess "married" her "brother") has reappeared in precisely the context that supports our reading of Lucan's reference, and assures us that while the allusion may have been arcane, it did not require information unavailable to the audience for whom Lucan wrote. Tacitus's account of Claudius's efforts, at once learned and inept, to protect himself from a palace *coup* provides a connection that links Servius Tullius, the rite of Diana at Aricia, a purification ceremony conducted publicly at the grove (*lucum Dianae*), and the imperial household during Lucan's lifetime.

III

Now, when we turn to Book 3 of Lucan's epic, we can see, with much greater understanding, the metaphorical landscape Lucan paints for Caesar as he approaches Rome, foreseeing his destiny as Rome's master and, eventually, as a Roman deity. Caesar, descendant of Venus and King Iulus, looks down from Alba Longa, the seat of the first kings of Rome, his ancestors. He has crossed over high Anxur and marsh-ridden Pometia□cities whose defeat had increased the power of Rome in Latium, and the power of Capitoline Jupiter. He has also passed the grove of Diana and the sacred *regna* of her cult. He has traveled up the Via Triumphalis to the sanctuary of Jupiter Latiaris, the second most powerful Jupiter in Latium:

□ miratusque suae sic fatur moenia Romae:
"tene, deum sedes, non ullo Marte coacti
deseruere viri? pro qua pugnabitur urbe?
di melius, quod non Latias Eous in oras
nunc furor incubuit nec iuncto Sarmata velox
Pannonio Dacisque Getes admixtus: habenti

tam pavidum tibi, Roma, ducem Fortuna pepercit
quod bellum civile fuit."

□ he marveled at the walls of his Rome and spoke
thus: "Have men, not compelled by warfare, deserted
you, the abode of the gods? For what city *will* there be
war? The gods have willed the better end, that the
frenzied East has not fallen on Latin shores, nor the
swift Sarmatians with their Pannonian allies, nor the
Getes and the Dacians combined. When you have so
timorous a leader, Rome, Fortune has spared you,
because the war has been civil."

Caesar speaks directly to issues which we have raised: Rome is the abode of the gods□not least of Jupiter and the appropriated Diana□whom he will soon join as Iuppiter Iulius or as Divus Iulius; the walls which Romulus and Remus fought over for *regnum* are there before him; his fight with Pompey over these same walls awaits him□but Pompey has not stayed to fight. The central lines turn our attention to the peripheries of the Roman world, to the nightmare of barbarians descending on an undefended city, not only in order to heighten Rome's vulnerability□with or without Pompey she was at risk□but even more to prepare for the irony of the final clause. The barbarians are not a threat, because this is a civil war□a war between citizens (no barbarians allowed) and (thus far) an unpretentious, unfought war, since one of its two principal combatants (*tam pavidum ducem*□so timorous a leader) has left town, retreating with unseemly haste. Thus the barbarian threat is bracketed, contained, and then *diffused*, by the civil conflict over Rome. Our attention is focused directly on City and leaders, the irreducible ingredients of the Civil War.

The war will be fought, despite Pompey's desertion. Central to this conflict is the shedding of human blood. Lucan signals very clearly and early that blood shed in the war is a human sacrifice owed to the gods, for Cato□the voice of morality, if not the hero of the epic□tells Brutus that *because the gods demand it*, the war will not end until the full measure of blood is shed:

sic eat: immites Romana piacula divi
plena ferant, nullo fraudemus sanguine bellum.

Let it be so. May the merciless gods accept Roman
expiations in full measure; let us not defraud the war
of a single drop of blood.

Thus the war constitutes the expiations (*piacula*) that these merciless gods (*immites divi*) require. It is surely no accident that we have here a distinct echo of Horace's Epode 7 (*sic est: acerba fata Romanos agunt* □) quoted above. The bloodshed of war, the human sacrifice of *Pharsalia*, form a tragic, but essential, part of the mortal combat for *regnum*□ritualized in the cult of the *rex nemorensis*, mythologized in Romulus and

Remus, incorporated in one way or another in the Roman city by the Latin king Servius Tullius, and realized once again in Caesar and Pompey.

So Caesar, on the Alban Mount, looks down on the walls of Rome, walls that were built, according to tradition, by Servius Tullius. Pompey has fled. Fortune has spared Rome, with her timorous leader, *because* this is a civil war, just as Lucan says. Like Servius Tullius, Pompey is weakening daily, because this is the kind of war it is, a combat for kingship. With right on his side, with Cato's support, with all the Senate in his train, he is nevertheless still the leader who is being displaced. The comparison of Caesar, the vigorous, violent, enraged young fighter, with Pompey, the older, wearier, frightened leader, is of course a recurrent theme throughout the epic; but now it has a new, and brilliantly *Roman*, resonance, as befits a Roman epic.

IV

Thus, with Caesar poised above the fatal walls, let us consider now what significance the allusion to the rite of the *rex nemorensis* might have for our understanding of Lucan's deeper poetic purpose within the often perplexing conjunction of events in Book 3. The narrative is as follows: Caesar approaches Rome (which Pompey has chosen not to defend) and there loots the temple of Saturn. The catalogue of Pompey's forces□regal, massive, and from every corner of the earth□follows. The scene shifts to Roman Gaul, specifically the territory of Massilia. When Massilia refuses to take sides in the war, Caesar begins a ruthless siege. In Lucan's account, the siege-works Caesar has devised in order to mount his attack against the city are of major importance. In order to get enough wood to build the works, a sacred grove must be cut down. The soldiers are afraid to commit such a sacrilege; Caesar is not, delivering the axe-blow to an oak even as he declares, proudly, "Be confident that I have committed the sacrilege!" The Massiliotes, indeed, are confident Caesar will be punished for his assault on the gods. Instead, Caesar, unharmed, departs for Spain, and the scene shifts, without explanation, from a siege to a naval battle. This *naumachia*, gory and utterly Lucanian, concludes the book. The victory of the naval battle goes to the (Caesarian) Romans rather than the (Greek) Massiliotes, but no mention is made of the fall of Massilia itself.

The challenger to the *rex nemorensis* must first cut down the bough from the sacred tree in the sacred grove. The Arician grove was, even in historic times, very dense and dark despite the fact that a substantial complex of temples had grown up around it□physical evidence for the continuation of thriving religious business at Aricia□and the hillsides were studded with suburban villas. The tree and the priest were linked in an extraordinary union, no doubt reflecting a very early period of Italic religion in which the tree *was* an aspect of the goddess, and the priest both her protector and consort. The priest's duty was to defend the tree from injury; yet the man who would be king of the wood was compelled to do just that□he had to commit sacrilege in order to gain his sacred status in service to the goddess. Nevertheless, the sacrilege can only occur if it is divinely approved, for, as the Sibyl tells Aeneas, the bough may be cut only if the fates summon the challenger to this task. The fated injury to the tree commits the reigning priest-king to mortal combat.

In this light we must rethink what exactly is represented in Book 3 by Caesar's decision to level the sacred grove, and indeed by the grove itself:

Lucus erat longo numquam violatus ab aevo
obscurum cingens conexis aera ramis
et gelidas alte summotis solibus umbras.
hunc non ruricolae Panes nemorumque potentes
Silvani Nymphaeque tenent, sed barbara ritu
sacra deum. structae diris altaribus arae
omnisque humanis lustrata cruoribus arbor.

There was a grove, from the earliest time undefiled,
encircling with interlaced boughs a murky space and
shadows chilled because the sunlight from above was
warded off. The rural Pans, the Silvani, rulers of the
forest, and the Wood-Nymphs do not hold sway in
this grove, but sacred ceremonies of the gods, barbarous
in their observance. Shrines with dreadful altars
have been erected and every tree has been ritually
purified with human blood.

The words should bring us back to the passage in which Lucan's first allusion to Scythian Diana appears:

□ et quibus immitis placatur sanguine diro
Teutates horrensque feris altaribus Esus
et Taranis Scythicae non mitior ara Dianae.

[At the departure of Caesar's troops, those Gauls also
rejoiced] who satisfy the merciless Teutates with
dreadful blood, and Esus, horrific with his savage
altars, and Taranis, whose altar is no more merciful
than the altar of Scythian Diana.

In Gaul, the Druids have their *barbaricos ritus moremque sinistrum / sacrorum* ("barbarian rites and baleful tradition of religious ceremonies" and *nemora alta remotis / incolitis lucis* ("you [who practice these rites] inhabit high forests and remote groves"). The groves in Gaul and Massilia are hauntingly alike. But we mistake the likeness if we do not perceive the shadow of Diana and her grove at Nemi following all these allusions. "Scythian" is a common epithet for Diana of Aricia and reflects the barbarism of the goddess, shared in the shrines at Aricia where the *rex nemorensis* is killed, in Gaul where the altars and trees drip with human blood, in Aulis where, as Artemis, she demanded the sacrifice of Iphigenia and thus precipitated events leading to the Trojan War, and in Scythia where her demand for human sacrifice is central to the *Iphigenia Taurica*. The patron deity of Massilia was Artemis; the Romans knew□and were quite proud of□the close connection between their cult statue of Diana on the Aventine (brought in, as we have seen, from Aricia by Servius Tullius, according to Livy the last

legitimate king at Rome) and the cult of Artemis among the Massiliotes. Thus this grove outside Massilia stands in much the same relation to the great cult of Artemis, established by the Phocaean settlers, as does the cult of Diana of Aricia to the cult of Diana on the Aventine. Indeed, the Massiliotes, like the Romans, were in the habit of using their cult as a tool of cultural imperialism, for Strabo notes that not only did they establish in their colonies cults of Artemis identical to their own, but also they taught the Iberians the ancestral rites of Ephesian Artemis, so that they sacrificed according to Greek ritual. So Artemis/Diana□together with the intimate connection of cult imperialism, cult imitation, and cult syncretism□draws together Rome, Aricia, Massilia, and this nameless grove beyond the walls.

When Caesar approaches the grove to cut down a tree, then, he is not approaching just any act of sacrilege, but an acting out of the specific sacrilege required of the challenger to the *rex nemorensis*. That he may complete the sacrilege without retribution is a sign that his challenge is acceptable to the goddess. In Book 1, he declared himself Rome's own soldier, able to protect her everywhere on earth:

non te furialibus armis
persequor: en, adsum victor terraque marique
Caesar, ubique tuus (liceat modo, nunc
quoque) miles.
Ille erit ille nocens, qui me tibi fecerit hostem.

I do not attack you with frenzied warfare; behold
me, victor on land and sea, Caesar, everywhere
were it allowed, even now your soldier. He will
be the one, he will do the harm, who makes me
your enemy.

His first command, that the wood must fall by the stroke of the blade (*ferrum* is equally the blade of a sword and of the axe) recalls, quite deliberately, the language of battle. The soldiers quail, unwilling to test the unknown gods within the grove. Caesar

□ primus raptam librare bipennem
ausus et aeriam ferro proscindere quercum
effatur merso violata in robora telo:
"iam ne quis vestrum dubitet subvertere silvam,
credite me fecisse nefas."

□ he was the first who dared to seize and wield the
two-headed axe and to slash the lofty oak with his
steel; as his weapon sank into the profaned wood he
said: "Let none of you now hesitate to topple the
grove; be confident that *I* have committed the sacrilege."

As is well recognized by now, the axe in the oak "is doubtlessly intended by the poet as an allusion to the initial comparisons of Pompey to an old oak at 1.136 and of Caesar to

lightning at 1.151-57." Yet Lucan is after something far more important than just a bit of poetic craft. Of course the oak is Pompey. The priest-king and his tree are one. The cutting of the tree is not only the act of challenge to which there is no answer save mortal combat, but also symbolizes the fate of the loser. Caesar's great cry, *be confident that I have committed the sacrilege*, thus becomes more than just another random act of excess by one prepared to defy the gods as well as man. When he takes the axe to the oak, Caesar proclaims that he *is* the challenger; he is the soldier (*tuus miles*) of the city and the gods of Rome. He must take responsibility for his crime, because it is *only* through that crime that he can attain his *regnum*.

Lightning, the divine weapon against a tree, symbolizes the power and the will of both Caesar and Jupiter. Jupiter is represented, embodied, celebrated, in both lightning, which strikes the oak, and the oak that is struck. It is through the rite of the *rex nemorensis* that we can understand how Lucan dares to use the symbols of Jupiter for both combatants. This rite is a procession of paradoxes, which both begins and ends with a crime: the cutting of the tree, the killing of the priest. Once the essential rite has begun, the challenger is as *sacer* as the priest, and will become no less so for the crimes he must commit. Caesar and Pompey are both *sacer*, and their acts□the cutting of the tree, the shedding of blood (both in murdering and in dying), the winning of *regnum*□are also *sacer*.

The two similes of oak and lightning for the protagonists introduce the Roman pattern and the imagery of the ancient Latin rite into Lucan's epic. To identify Pompey as an oak is to identify him as a sacred tree:

□stat magni nominis umbra,
qualis frugifero quercus sublimis in agro
exuvias veteris populi sacrataque gestans
dona ducum nec iam validis radicibus haerens
pondere fixa suo est, nudosque per aera ramos
effundens trunco, non frondibus, efficit umbram,
et quamvis primo nutet casura sub Euro,
tot circum silvae firmo se robore tollant,
sola tamen colitur.

□ he stands, the shadow of a great name, like a lofty
oak in an overgrown clearing, bedecked with the
ancient armorial spoils of the people and the consecrated
offerings of generals; holding on now not with
vigorous roots, it stands fixed by its own weight, and
sending forth denuded branches through the air, it
casts a shadow, not with leaves, but with its trunk; and
though it sways, about to fall beneath the first East
wind, and round about so many trees with sound
timber rise up, even so it alone is worshipped.

But it is also essential to realize that the violation of the tree, the strike of lightning, the murder of Pompey, are equally sacred—and necessary—acts.

Lightning is as sacred as the oak. Its swiftness, its violence, the destructiveness of its power, form part of its message from Jupiter to mortals. For lightning to strike the oak is to injure the oak: thus, the lightning inflicts *sacra vulnera*. The thing injured, the instrument of the injury, and the injuries themselves are all sacred. Pompey's death is the death of the protector of the oak—the oak which, as the terrible combat begins, is a shade of itself, ready to fall, but not fallen. The vulnerability of the oak reflects Pompey's role in the ritual of the war; his character and the moral value of his position are extraneous. The strike of lightning is the divine and fatal wound, which does not deny, but reaffirms, the oak's sacredness. Thus Pompey's death, if not at Caesar's hands, at least to fulfill Caesar's destiny, is a *necessary* murder—necessary to their sacred obligations as the sacrificial victim and the sacrific-ing priest.

These wounds—the lighting or the axe striking the tree, the death of Pompey, the civil war that engulfs Rome—are all sacred wounds. They are all part of the Roman expiations that must, as Cato has said, be completed before the unmerciful gods are satisfied.

Once we see this, the speech of the Massiliotes assumes its proper significance in the poem. The Massiliotes try to reason their way out of involvement in this terrible rite. First they acknowledge their ancient ties to Rome; next they promise their aid in any external war. Then they address the heart of the matter:

at, si funestas acies, si dira paratis
proelia discordes, lacrimas civilibus armis
secretumque damus. tractentur vulnera nulla
sacra manu.

— but, if you [Pompey and Caesar], at odds between
yourselves, are preparing fatal battle-lines, dreadful
battles, we offer tears for civil warfare and stand
aside. The sacred wounds may not be touched by
any hand.

They will stand aside, for the sacred wounds—the blood sacrifice of civil war—must not be touched by any hand. The combat is between Caesar and Pompey, between their followers and their armies. These two (men, sides, armies) must fight to the death; outsiders may not interfere. The odd and perplexing phrase *secretum damus* (lit: we grant seclusion)—which the scholiast is surely right to gloss as *secernimus nos a vobis* (we separate ourselves from you)—may well have actually been part of the rite, an utterance made at the moment the combatants engaged, and the bystanders had to withdraw until one or the other was dead. In ritual combat, it is obvious, neither party could under any circumstances receive outside help. What the Massiliotes have not understood is that in every respect, whether as combatants or not, they still share a common destiny—*communia fata*—with the Romans: Rome is the *caput mundi*, the head

of the world, and her fate is the fate of the civilized world, the *imperium Romanum*. The Massiliotes may not hold themselves apart from the war. Thus, Lucan neglects entirely to assign any cause to Caesar's assault on Massilia beyond the fundamental cause: the Civil War itself. Massilia, who shared a copy of her statue of Artemis with the Romans, is the first to demonstrate the universal nature of the Roman Civil War.

The metaphor of the sacred wound, as the Massiliotes' speech would lead us to suspect, is paramount to the meaning of Book 3. The sacred wounds are the wounds to the divine tree, the murder of Pompey, the wounds suffered by all those who fight, and the wounds to the body politic. They are sacred in the most fundamental way, for the violator, no less than the violated, is set apart: both are *sacer*, both are part of a sacred rite. They form the metaphor with which Lucan shapes his epic view of the events of the Civil Wars. Though sacrilegious in the extreme, these wars were nevertheless necessary to the divine order (which had already made Rome mistress of the known world) and, therefore, sacred in their very horror.

Now we can approach the naval battle, which, again, Lucan has created out of very meager historical material. After the act of sacrilege, after the sacred wounding, there is a struggle. The remarkable *naumachia* of Book 3 has a specific function: it is the inevitable consequence of sacrilege, but, as Caesar departs for Spain before it takes place, it is a substitute for the real struggle, a metaphor which foreshadows that struggle and conveys further just what Lucan, and the Massiliotes, mean when they speak of "sacred wounds." Within the *naumachia*, Lucan explores the meaning of the sacred wounds on three levels. First, there is the wounded and soon-to-be-wrecked ship of state, metaphorically implicit in the naval battle. Then there is the wounding of the body politic, sustained through the descriptions of the wounded bodies of men. Finally, the blood and wounds themselves become agents in the destruction. The *sacra vulnera* are the purest aspect of the bloody expiations of civil war. The half-dead fall into the sea and drown drinking their own blood. Javelins thrown haphazardly find bodies to wound in the water. Consider "daring Catus":

 terga simul pariter missis et pectora telis
transigitur: medio concurrit corpore ferrum,
et stetit incertus, flueret quo vulnere, sanguis,
donec utrasque simul largus cruor expulit hastas
divisitque animam sparsitque in vulnera letum.

 he is pierced, through the back and the chest at the
same time, by weapons launched together; the steel
points meet in the middle of his body and the blood
stops, unsure from which wound should it flow?
until the bloody flood drives out both spears at once,
and splits his soul and drenches his wounds with death.

The blood of the double wound itself becomes almost a divine agent, overpowering the two weapons and dividing his soul in its drive to spread death on the gaping double wounds. One of two twin brothers, after losing first his right and then his left hand, dies

protecting his twin—the whole is split and the pair (hands, twins) is sundered. Lycidas is rent in two, the upper half from the lower. And so forth.

The concluding metaphors sum up the nature of the struggle (which, up to then, has been *anceps*, "of double meaning" as well as "undecided"). There is a victory, but the victors and the vanquished cannot be distinguished, either through their ships, or through the bodies of the dead themselves:

 Graiae pars maxima classis
mergitur, ast aliae mutato remige puppes
victores vexere suos; navalia paucae
praecipiti tenuere fuga. quis in urbe parentum
fletus erat! quanti matrum per litora planctus!
coniunx saepe sui confusis vultibus unda
credidit ora viri Romanum amplexa cadaver,
accensisque rogis miseri de corpore trunco
certavere patres. the most part of the Greek fleet is sunk, but some
ships with changed oarsmen carried their own conquerors;
a few in headlong flight made it to the docks.
What weeping of parents there was in the city! How
many lamentations of mothers along the shores! Often
a wife believed the Roman corpse she embraced was
her own husband with the features disfigured by the
sea; and wretched fathers fought over headless bodies
on funeral pyres already aflame.

The metaphor of the damaged ship of state—one that in victory has the "wrong" crew in charge—is then transferred to the wounding of the body politic; the bodies are unrecognizable, and (defeated but living) Massiliote wives often embrace Romans (victorious but dead) by mistake. Worse, the wounds have severed the heads of the fighters from their bodies, and a further war is incited between fathers for possession of these headless corpses on burning pyres. Rome, in the throes of civil war, is a foundering ship. She is a body without a head, a body fought over by Senatorial fathers (*Patres Conscripti*), in blind desperation, unable to identify their sons among the slaughtered of both sides, while the funeral pyres for the Republic are already aflame.

And it will be the dead body of Pompey, headless on another shore, abandoned by all, that will complete the first series of murders and make Caesar master of Rome, Rome, the *caput mundi*.

Surely, now, we can see that, far from being an unexpected anticlimax, the concluding line and a half of Book 3 resonates with meaning: *at Brutus in aequore victor/primus Caesareis pelagi decus addidit armis* ("but Brutus, victorious at sea, was the first to confer the honor of a sea-battle to Caesar's arms"). Lucan thus names Decimus Brutus, the commander of the Roman navy. It was Decimus Brutus who, on the Ides of March, urged Caesar not to disappoint the meeting that had for some time been waiting for him and thus assured that the plot could go forward. Decimus Brutus and his brother Marcus

were two of the assassins who inflicted the twenty-three stab wounds. But more than the particular man, it is the name that matters, for the name itself carries a monumental metaphorical burden. One Brutus drove out the kings from Rome: two more Bruti will in their turn add honor to this ancient struggle, by taking on their responsibility for yet another sacred wound when they kill Caesar. By preparing the way for Octavian, these new Bruti bring back the kings□as the Caesars.

Through all this, the inability to see, to identify, to know for certain, is at the core of the dilemma, not just of the Massiliotes, but of the Romans, of all human beings. Thus the Massiliotes defend their refusal to choose sides; men would not dare even to aid Jupiter in the battle of the gods, they say, because humans cannot know what is meant to happen□which means they cannot know which side it is right to join:

non tamen auderet pietas humana vel armis
vel votis prodesse Iovi, sortisque deorum
ignarum mortale genus per fulmina tantum
sciret adhuc caelo solum regnare Tonantem.

The piety of men would not, even so, dare to aid
Jupiter either by arms or by prayers, and only by the
lightning bolts would the human race, ignorant of the
destinies of the gods, be aware that the Thunderer
alone still reigned in heaven.

Lucan first implicitly compared the Civil War with the battles of Gods and Giants in his proem, and he there equated the coming of Nero with the triumph of Jupiter in that battle. Since then Caesar has regularly been identified with the lightning that the Massiliotes claim will tell them Jupiter has won. Caesar is the lightning and makes his first petition to Rome's gods beginning with Jupiter Tonans; Augustus founded the temple to Jupiter Tonans; Nero is equated with Jupiter Tonans. When Lucan again describes the Civil War in terms of this conflict, we should pay attention to the connection between the two. If the Civil War resembles the battle of the Gods, and Nero's reign (described with□to us□repulsive flattery) is the result of the Civil War, then his reign must be equated to Jupiter's□a triumphant, but at the time unknowable, consequence of the upheaval and violation of the divine order. Lucan may have changed his mind, and at the end he may have seen Nero as one more in the series of sacrilegious *Caesariani;* but his support for Piso does not in the least argue a romantic desire for a return to the ways of the Republic. If any trust at all is to be placed in Tacitus, then the conspiracy was designed to produce, not a refashioning of the failed Republic, but a *princeps* preferable to Nero: one who would justify the *scelera* and *nefas* that had so devastated Rome for a century or more. There is an undeniable emotive power that lies always with the defense of the Republic as exemplified by Cato; that is not sufficient reason to ignore the patent factual-ity (if one is going to believe in the gods at all) of the first half of that famous line: *the victorious cause pleased the gods, the vanquished, Cato*. The Republic□Rome defeated□was pleasing to Cato, but Rome herself□greater, always, than the man or men who ruled her□is the *victrix causa*. If Augustus was to found the New Rome, then the Old Rome must pass away.

V

We return thus to the sacred grove, the lightning, and the tree, noting Lucan's insistence that the divinities of the sacred grove at Massilia are all the more terrifying because they are unrecognizable and unknown:

□ simulacraque maesta deorum
arte carent caesisque extant informia truncis.
ipse situs putrique facit iam robore pallor
attonitos; non vulgatis sacrata figuris
numina sic timeant: tantum terroribus addit,
quos metuunt, non nosse, deos.

the grim images of the gods are crudely rendered and
they stand there as shapeless blocks formed from the
felled trees. The very neglect and the grayness of their
rotting wood is what terrifies; men would not thus fear
sacred powers rendered in familiar shapes: so much it
adds to their terror, not to know the gods they fear.

Similarly, the gods of his epic are unrecognizable, lacking *vulgatae figurae*□familiar shapes. Since Feeney's recent study, it can no longer be argued that the gods are absent in Lucan's epic. It is the traditional characterization of them, the literary equivalent of anthropomorphic representation, that Lucan avoids, as Feeney so persuasively demonstrates. Here, at 3.413-17, Lucan has presented his justification for this□not that people no longer believed in the gods, nor that gods were inappropriate for a "historical" epic, but that he understood, as a poet, how the events of the Civil War became all the more terrifying because the victims could neither escape the slaughter, nor ascertain which side would own the *victrix causa*. There was no interpretation to be made, no omen or augury or prophecy which could guide humans through these horrifying disasters. Such disorder must seem contrary to divine order until the outcome demonstrates the new order: as the Massiliotes say, they must wait for signs (the thunderbolts) to know who won: "only by the lightning bolts would the human race, ignorant of the destinies of the gods, be aware that the Thunderer alone still reigned in heaven." The fact that Lucan's own designs for divine matters remain, apparently, even more impenetrable is, surely, due to the incompleteness of the poem: he has not been obscure in the work as we have it. He has already spoken clearly in Book 1: if there was no other way to bring about Nero's reign (and his eventual godhead: "nature will allow you to be whatever god you desire", then not just civil war, but all its consequences, including the devastation of Italy, were not too high a price to pay□*scelera ipsa nefasque / hac mercede placent* ("these very crimes and sacrilege are welcome at this price").

Still, we do not have the outcome, and therefore lack a decisive statement of the poet's intentions. This offers ironic, if accidental, confirmation of everything Lucan says: until we know how it is supposed to end, the purpose of it all remains desperately confusing.

As in the battle of the Gods, however, so in the rite of the *rex nemorensis:* humans are left ignorant of the outcome of the struggle instituted by Diana, whether that is the sacrifice of Iphigenia, or the battle between the *rex nemorensis* and his challenger. The goddess cannot signal her preferences, nor interfere in the struggle between challenger and priest; that the priest defends her, while the challenger commits a deep sacrilege against her, remains irrelevant to her divinity, which had itself created the rite of sacrilege, struggle, and murder. Only the outcome, not the nature, of the struggle determines who is Diana's true defender; thus, in several ways and at several levels, Lucan is telling us that the outcome, not the nature, of the struggle will determine who is to be Rome's true leader.

There is one last section of Book 3, the cata-logue of Pompey's troops, that now falls into place, not merely as a generic epic convention, but as a further realization of Lucan's specifically Roman epic. Now the apparently contradictory character of Pompey is resolved. His lack of vigor represents not Lucan's comment on the man's character, nor his judgment of the validity of the Republican cause, but his understanding of Pompey's position as the ruler about to be deposed by the vigorous young challenger. Pompey is the dying oak, the only one honored among the surrounding vigorous forest, bearing the honors of the people, and ready to be toppled. Like Servius Tullius, *prope exsanguis* ("almost white from fear") after he had been thrown out of the Curia by Tarquinius Superbus, Pompey is timorous□*pavidus* (6)□after Caesar threatens to make war on him. Like Servius, *semianimis regio comitatu domum se reciperet* ("only half conscious, with his royal escort he was retreating homeward"), Pompey flees and in the east gathers his "royal escort". Lucan is at pains, in Book 3, to maintain Pompey as leader of an army of kings ("never did so many kings obey a single leader"). But he will have lost the great royal company following him when he flees to Egypt. There, like Servius, Pompey will indeed die alone, with his head covered□at once priest and victim, a Roman sacrifice made to the merciless gods.

Conclusion: "The Necessary Murder"

Lucan created the relationship between Pompey and Caesar on the pattern of the relationship of Agamemnon and Achilles. Onto this powerful inherited epic form he grafted the paradigm which held a place of mythological honor for Romans as the story of Romulus and Remus, who fight to the death over the walls of Rome. For both poets and historians in the generations preceding Lucan, this myth of murderous combat initiated the historical process which they believed led Rome into the Civil Wars. Behind that myth was a Latin ritual whose traces could be discerned in the accepted histories of Rome's kings, and which was formalized and preserved from the earliest days as a religious rite in which the *rex nemorensis*, the priest of the goddess Diana in the grove near Aricia, fought to the death any challenger who could first cut off a bough of the sacred tree.

In Book 3, Caesar crosses through the heart of Latium, and passes and masters (*superare*), among three other cults, the *regna* of Diana at Aricia. The rites of Arician Diana□the sacrilege of wounding the tree, the armed battle to the death, and the murder of the priest-king by his challenger□are Lucan's reminder to his readers of a

religious and historical paradigm, rooted in Latin tradition and Roman culture, through which he is assimilating the Civil War to a rite that was undeniably *Latin* and *Roman*. It provided a pattern for a *necessary* sacrilege against the gods, a *necessary* struggle and a *necessary* murder, all leading to a conclusion in which the transgressor, the murderer, becomes the divinely appointed priest-king *precisely because he was successful* in his sacrilege and murder. The monstrous events of the Civil War, both the individual deaths and the destruction of the Republic, become□like the story of Romulus and Remus□a part of the destiny of Rome.

Beyond that, the paradigm of the *rex* offers Lucan a perspective that is necessary for his epic: it becomes possible for him to cast the struggle between Pompey and Caesar as a struggle between individuals□not factions, not parties, not families; yet, even though it is acted out between individuals, it surpasses the limited nature of a merely personal political feud. Rendering the conflict in these terms permits Lucan to keep the specific, historical, and unpoetic causes of the war to one side (though it cannot be doubted that he understood them) and concentrate rather on the tragic processes through which history, as he saw it, worked. Caesar and Pompey thus retain their epic character, and are not contaminated by the limiting, trivializing nature of factional politics. The challenge, the fight, the murder and the triumph are all sacred acts, terrible, barbarous and violent though they may be. Their sum makes up the divinely appointed expiations owed to a dire goddess; it is through a crime that the victorious *rex nemorensis* obtains, as Orestes had done before him, purification for his crime.

In particular, it is through the paradigm of the *rex nemorensis* that the relationship of the specific events of Book 3 can now be understood to make a related, dramatic, whole. Pompey's abandonment of Rome, which has ended Book 2, opens the way for Caesar's triumphal advance through Latium to Rome. In turn, because he is retreating, because he is in eclipse, because he is the dying oak, Pompey loses strength, conviction, and power as he goes. The royal panoply of kings and armies who are catalogued in forces supporting Pompey simultaneously calls attention to his diminishing personal powers, as the surrounding vigorous forest calls attention to the leafless oak, and, by contrast, cast him ever more vividly as a king, and a leader among kings; for this is his role□Pompey is Rome's dying priest-king, bedecked with the ancient honors of his people. He is the oak, Caesar is the lightning; both lightning and oak are symbols of the power of Jupiter□and of Rome□and it is the very nature of that power to destroy and renew itself. All this is the preparation for Caesar's great act of sacrilege, when he cuts down an oak in the sacred grove outside Massilia. He claims the crime, for it is only through the crime that he can approach and challenge the reigning priest□Pompey.

In their speech to Caesar, the Massiliotes introduce the parallel of the battle of Gods and Giants, and argue that, as mere mortals, they cannot discern which side in the war is the right (religiously right, rather than morally right) side to join. They beg Caesar to allow them to stay neutral, for as outsiders they cannot choose between Caesar and Pompey, and may not touch the sacred wounds. Caesar's sacrilege is sacred; his purification is conditional upon the fulfillment of the sacrifice of the reigning priest, which is a sacred wounding. The imagery of the sacred wound overwhelms the end of Book 3. Caesar has cut the sacred tree; Pompey is weakening; blood must be shed. The

Massiliotes discover that when Rome is convulsed in a civil war, the whole civilized world is drawn in; they are not outsiders after all. At that moment in the ritual when the combatants would first engage, Lucan brings Book 3 to a close with a sea-battle, wherein he works out all the terrible metaphors of civil war: man(kind) is torn in two; the ship (of state) is battered and no one knows which side has won command; the body (politic) is headless, and the fathers (of the country) are fighting over the dismembered and unrecognizable remnant. The gods are implacable and bloody, and the expiation they demand is a human sacrifice□those who will die in the war.

Despite this, however, the fact of the Civil War and what it meant remains unchanged. Neither the failures that lead to Pompey's defeat nor Caesar's guilt in transgressing the laws of the Republic and murdering his fellow citizens is altered one whit by Lucan. It is a cold, unsentimental and even, seemingly, amoral view. It is perhaps the view of an artist who has himself been scarred by the lethal combat for *regnum* in the palace of the Caesars; one who has learned the devastations of the war and the horrors of those who dare not, who *may* not choose the "right" side, from his own grandfather's account of the war, and from the consciousness that his family had survived only because they were adept at trimming their sails to the prevailing Roman storm. It may be cynical, or it may be a young man's attempt to frame a justification for his own as well as for the imperial family□but it is not an unreligious (or irreligious) view. The gods of the Romans□particularly "Scythian" Diana□may be cruel and incomprehensible, but they *are* gods. Rome and her people are still the rulers on earth. This is part of the paradox of Lucan's creation: the war that seems to prove the gods' withdrawal is in fact the terrifying convulsion that renews the greatness of Rome. That this civil conflict is unbearably murderous, immoral, and against divine law, *yet required by it*, is a paradox that lies at the root of Lucan's view of the war and its leaders. The murder, the slaughter, the blood, are all necessary. Cato has spoken the truth. The war constitutes the expiations that the gods, without mercy, require.

It may perhaps be helpful to turn, finally, to a poet in our own time, writing about another civil war:

Today the inevitable increase in the chances
of death;
The conscious acceptance of guilt in the
necessary murder;
Today the expending of powers
On the flat ephemeral pamphlet and the
boring meeting.
.....
The stars are dead; the animals will not look:
We are left alone with our day, and the time
is short and
History to the defeated
May say Alas but cannot help or pardon.

Lucan□one of the young poets "exploding like bombs"□has created in his epic the "conscious acceptance of guilt in the necessary murder." When we consider his deep emotional attraction to Pompey, Cato, their cause, and the great Roman Republic, we must not mistake this for political partisanship. *Rome herself* commanded Lucan's deepest loyalty. When all is done, to Pompey and Cato, to Brutus and the Republic, Lucan□as a poet of history□"to the defeated / May say Alas but cannot help or pardon."
Source: C.M.C. Green, "'The Necessary Murder': Myth, Ritual, and Civil War in Lucan Book 3," in *Classical Antiquity,* Vol. 13, No. 2, October, 1994, pp. 203-233.

Topics for Further Study

Compare the rise and personalities of American Populist politicians in the first half of the twentieth century to the *Populares* of the late Roman Republic.

Lucan's circumstances have been repeated more than once in the twentieth century. Compare his experiences with those of writers working under twentieth century dictatorships.

In Book X, Lucan has one of his characters discuss the source of the Nile. Research the search for the source of the Nile up to its discovery in the nineteenth century.

Lucan has both his narrator and Julius Caesar himself mention his reform of the calendar. Research the development of the modern calendar. Look in particular for its importance for the development of mathematics and astronomy.

In Book III, Caesar sends troops to invade Sicily and Sardinia to control the supply of grain. Grain from these two islands and later from Egypt would have a profound effect on Roman history. Research the effects of the introduction of this cheap wheat on Italy or the effects on Europe of a similar introduction of cheap wheat from North America in the later nineteenth century.

Robert Graves called Lucan the "father of the costume film." Compare Lucan's use of atmospheric landscape, the supernatural, or the representation of brutality to their use in films.

Lucan's portrait of Erichtho and her magic is one of the foundation texts in the development of the western ideas of the witchcraft. Look at historical witch hunts and trials and compare the beliefs and accusations to material in Lucan's text.

Compare and Contrast

Roman Empire: The Roman Empire, at its height, stretches from modern Iraq to Scotland. The concept of such a superstate has never lost its hold of the western imagination; the modern European union could be described as a subconscious attempt to recreate a lost ideal.

Modern Day: Latin imperial culture changed the linguistic and cultural face of Europe, providing a bedrock for the development of western culture, whatever way individual societies built on it. Today, former colonial peoples in Africa and the Indian sub-continent have embraced much of the literary and cultural heritage of the former imperial powers and have adapted and transmuted it even as Europeans earlier treated the culture bequeathed them by the Roman empire.

Roman World: Lucan's world is dominated by the figure of an absolute ruler, whose actions can be curbed only by his own moral sense or assassination. In the twentieth century, nations as diverse as Haiti, Germany, and Cambodia have experienced the same terrifying situation.

Modern Day: Lucan placed one of the most frightening speeches ever written in the mouth of Caesar's senior centurion. In it, he pledges that he will forget all ties of affection and even common humanity to follow Caesar's orders. There is a chillingly prophetic quality to Lucan's lines. They catch the attitude that made the most vicious regimes of the last century possible.

What Do I Read Next?

Virgil's *Aeneid*, written between 27-17 B.C., is the essential Latin epic. Like Lucan's *Pharsalia*, it was unfinished at its author's death. It quickly became a school text. Lucan would have studied the poem in great detail. His own epic has been compared, usually unfavorably, to Virgil's since his own lifetime.

Caesar's own *De bello civili* offers his view of the Roman civil war. Like his account of his campaigns in Gaul (modern day France and the Rhineland), it is written in the third person, and while understandably self-serving, is disarmingly direct and matter-of-fact.

Tacitus's *Annals*, written early in the second century A.D., is the history of the Roman emperors from the death of Augustus to Nero. Tacitus's natural sympathies were republican, but he still believed that good men could and should serve their countrymen even under a tyrant.

Cicero's *Pro Marcello* (In Defence of Marcellus), *Pro Ligario* (In Defence of Ligarius), and *Pro Rege Deiotaro* (In defence of King Deiotarius) are the so-called Caesarian speeches, given before Caesar in the aftermath of his triumphant return to Rome. Cicero attempts to save his clients from the wreckage of the republican defeat and to influence Caesar's attitude and actions in his new position of master of Rome and her empire.

Cicero's *Epistulae ad Atticum* (Letters to Atticus) are the very private and often shockingly witty letters of a republican senator to his closest friend. Many of the letters were written during the period of the civil war. The great characters of the *Pharsalia* are reduced to an even more fallible human scale by a brilliant prose writer, himself exasperating and charming by turns.

Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* takes up the story of the Roman civil wars, covering Caesar's assassination and the deaths of the leaders of the final conspiracy, Brutus and Cassius. Shakespeare's treatment balances itself between two heroes, Caesar and Brutus.

Further Study

Ahl, Frederick, "Form Empowered: Lucan's *Pharsalia*," in *Roman Epic*, Routledge, 1993, pp. 125-142.

Perhaps the best short critical analysis of the *Pharsalia* available. Ahl ends with a powerful overview of Lucan's place as the poet of *libertas.*

Boyle, A. J., *Roman Epic*, Routledge, 1993.

An-up-to-date survey of the Latin epic from its beginning to the Latin epics of the Renaissance. A specialist in a particular author or period writes each chapter. The articles are scholarly without being either dry or difficult.

Gotoff, Harold C., *Cicero's Caesarian Speeches: A Stylistic Commentary*, University of North Carolina Press, 1993.

The introduction to the Latin texts of the speeches is useful even to those who are not familiar with Latin. It investigates the nuances of discourse and the interplay of events and personalities during the civil war and Caesar's subsequent return to Rome.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Epics for Students (EfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, EfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of EfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of EfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in EfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by EfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

EfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Epics for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the EfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the EfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

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□Night.□ Epics for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

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Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

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