

## University of Tasmania Open Access Repository

### Cover sheet

**Title**

Lucan's Bellum Ciuile and the Epic Genre

**Author**

Alexis, F

**Bibliographic citation**

Alexis, F (2011). Lucan's Bellum Ciuile and the Epic Genre. University Of Tasmania. Thesis.  
<https://doi.org/10.25959/23210102.v1>

Is published in:

**Copyright information**

This version of work is made accessible in the repository with the permission of the copyright holder/s under the following,

**Licence.**

Rights statement: Copyright 2011 the Author

If you believe that this work infringes copyright, please email details to: [oa.repository@utas.edu.au](mailto:oa.repository@utas.edu.au)

Downloaded from University of Tasmania Open Access Repository

Please do not remove this coversheet as it contains citation and copyright information.

University of Tasmania Open Access Repository

Library and Cultural Collections

University of Tasmania

Private Bag 3

Hobart, TAS 7005 Australia

E [oa.repository@utas.edu.au](mailto:oa.repository@utas.edu.au)

CRICOS Provider Code 00586B | ABN 30 764 374 782

[utas.edu.au](http://utas.edu.au)

# **Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile* and the Epic Genre**

Fran Alexis BA (Hons) MA

This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
School of History and Classics  
University of Tasmania  
2011

**Declaration of Originality**

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for a degree or diploma by the University or any other institution, except by way of background information and duly acknowledged in the thesis, and to the best of the my knowledge and belief no material previously published or written by another person except where due acknowledgement is made in the text of the thesis, nor does the thesis contain any material that infringes copyright.

Fran Alexis

**Authority of Access**

This thesis may be made available for loan and limited copying in accordance with the Copyright Act 1968.

Fran Alexis

## Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile* and the Epic Genre

### Abstract

This thesis demonstrates that Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile* takes epic to a new level, testing the generic paradigm, because Rome's civil war is a new subject for epic poetry. Lucan's epic presents civil war as the self-destruction of republican Rome, and close reading reveals the poem's intricate relationship with Homeric, Virgilian and Ovidian epic. We see that it changes and exaggerates characteristic tropes of the genre, by techniques such as delay, digression and frequent intervention by a complex narrator / persona, whose dramatic intrusions are like the speeches of characters in a tragedy. Such a politically risky subject, a type of impious war where Romans fight against and kill Romans, necessitates a long preamble and an insistent narrator's voice to justify poetic commemoration of such a crime.

Unlike earlier epic where civil war is rare or treated only as an unfortunate but necessary prelude to peace, Lucan's poem is wholly taken up with this type of internecine war, the civil war between Caesar and Pompey. It also includes the civil wars of Marius and Sulla, introduced as a *mise en abyme* to intensify this subject, which suggests the predictability of recurring civil war and ideas of persistent political instability. Lucan's poem offers a detailed portrayal of the sea-battle at Massilia, and paradoxically, this inventive battle is the most 'epic' of its civil war battles, because many conventions of epic land battles are applied to this conflict on ships. Lucan's sea-battle re-presents and revitalises epic *topoi* by their new location, the sea.

The episode concerning Hercules and Antaeus is also an example of a *mise en abyme*, reflecting the focus of Lucan's poem, the idea that civil war degrades both sides equally. It argues that the wrestling match between Hercules and Antaeus illustrates how participants in combat become similar and assume corresponding characteristics. This episode shows how the poem interacts with its own past battle narrative, relates to accounts of conflict in earlier epic, and reflects Roman gladiatorial spectacle. Lucan's paradoxical poem presents the battle at Pharsalus

more symbolically than a typical epic battle narrative. Rhetorical *praeteritio* of the unspeakable wounds, weapons and forms of death in civil war draws a parallel between the human body and the state of Rome.

Lucan's epic stretches the limits of the genre to overcome the difficulty of recounting Romans fighting against fellow Romans in civil war and demonstrates that there is more to this type of war than blood and guts and gruesome mutilation. Lucan's poem is evidence for how much has been and how much more can be articulated through the language and tropes of epic.

## **Acknowledgements**

My most grateful thanks go to my supervisor Peter Davis who has been a source of inspiration, guidance and support since the first lecture in Ancient Civilisations I attended in 1998. I thank him for his unstinting encouragement, and appreciate greatly the enthusiasm for the subject generated during the weekly ‘Reading Lucan’ sessions we had together with Rod Thomson, Jessica Dietrich, Jenna Mead and fellow post-grad David Nolan throughout 2007-08. I thank Jonathan Wallis and Graeme Miles, who took over as supervisors, for their advice and help. Special thanks go to fellow post-grad Michael Berry for his infectious passion for languages and invaluable support during the final stages of this thesis. I also acknowledge the friends I have made among the group of post-grad students and the assistance provided by the office staff. Heartfelt thanks and gratitude go to my family: to my husband, Peter Alexis, for his unfailing confidence and love throughout my years of study; and to our son Adam and daughter Ami, for their love, support and encouragement. I dedicate this thesis to the memory of our son, Rowan, who died 20 October 1999.

## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction: Lucan's <i>Bellum Ciuile</i> and the Epic Genre</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1. Chapter 1: Lucan's Book 1: Beginnings of Epic</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>2. Chapter 2: Lucan - The Intrusive Narrator</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>3. Chapter 3: Lucan's Book 2: Civil War and More</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>4. Chapter 4: Lucan's Book 3: Sea Battles</b>	<b>111</b>
<b>5. Chapter 5: Lucan's Book 4: Taking sides</b>	<b>148</b>
<b>6. Chapter 6: Lucan's Book 7: Wounds and Weapons</b>	<b>185</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>214</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>217</b>

## Introduction:

### Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile* and the Epic Genre

tot mihi pro bellis bellum ciuile dedisti.

BC 5.269

In place of so many wars, you have given civil war to me.<sup>1</sup>

The spokesman for Caesar's mutinous troops complains that instead of many wars against a foreign enemy he is asked to fight in a civil war. As readers of Lucan's poem, we might level a similar complaint: in place of the kind of war found in Homer's *Iliad*, the quintessential epic,<sup>2</sup> Lucan, as poet, gives us an epic about Rome's civil war, the war which changed Rome from republic to principate. In the line above, the poet accentuates his subject matter, war, by polyptoton and proximity (*bellis bellum*), and so glances back to the opening word of his poem where the first word (*bella*) indicates, through its allusion to the weighty subject of Homer's *Iliad* and Virgil's *Aeneid*, that these are the most significant epic texts with which it engages. Lucan's poem is about the events of a civil war, *bella ... plus quam ciuilia*, BC 1.1, 'wars ... more than civil', about battles 'more than' or different from those found in these earlier epics.<sup>3</sup> This phrase, however, remains unclear as to precise meaning, and on another level it illustrates how difficult it is for Lucan's poem to portray in epic manner Rome's civil war where the protagonists are more than just enemies, they are fellow Romans, and the events are from Rome's recent history more than from the battles of myth or legend. As a result of its subject, Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile* asks to be compared with martial epic, Homer's *Iliad* and Virgil's *Aeneid* while its many allusions not only point to these two epics but also to Homer's *Odyssey* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as poems within the epic genre. I examine Lucan's epic in conjunction with these works and

---

<sup>1</sup> This translation and all others in the thesis are my own.

<sup>2</sup> Baldick, 2008, 111, defines epic as a 'long narrative poem celebrating the great deeds of one or more legendary heroes, in a grand ceremonious style. The hero, usually protected or even descended from gods, performs superhuman exploits in battle or in marvellous voyages, often saving or founding a nation ...'

<sup>3</sup> Henderson, 1998, 186, writes: 'Lucan's difficult language is strange, foregrounded in reading above the tale it tells'. With Henderson, I see that the meaning or sense of the phrase, *bella ... plus quam ciuilia*, 'wars ... more than civil' is difficult to pin down with any great precision. Paradox and inconsistency in Lucan's epic often reflect back to this strange phrase and the type of wars it recounts.



explore the extent to which Lucan's poem displays new modes of expression for its subject, Rome's civil war.

This thesis argues that Lucan's choice of subject, Rome's civil war, is the critical factor which drives the changes to his battle narrative. The presumably knowing and self-inflicted choice of subject might be Lucan's response to poetic or literary concerns, as the poet succeeds in differentiating his epic from all earlier extant epics, especially that of Virgil, through his detailed engagement with the battles of Rome's civil war. The poet articulates an almost Ovidian measure of self-awareness and self-assurance about his place within the literary canon, as well as a certain level of political disquiet. Lucan's choice of subject might reflect the political or cultural anxiety of a young poet living under the rule of Nero, the legacy of Rome's civil war.<sup>4</sup> We know that earlier poets had written on aspects of Rome's civil war or referred to it directly and that in earlier epic some battles can be read as civil war (as shown in Chapter 3), but Lucan undertakes directly what might be seen as a concern of Latin Literature, that is, how to write about such a politically sensitive issue as Rome's civil war.<sup>5</sup>

Aspects of Rome's civil war as a subject that necessitate the remodelling of many of the poetic conventions of the epic genre are discussed in this thesis. Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile* speaks out about a topic almost taboo, a type of war considered to be a crime against humanity. The tensions aroused by the subject cause the poet to stretch the elasticity and adaptability of the genre, as the poem reflects the strain of exposing the self-destruction of Roman society in civil war. The poem displays Romans fighting against Romans and citizens killing fellow citizens and an author

---

<sup>4</sup> Bartsch, 1997, 3-7, looks closely at scholarship on Lucan, and identifies two schools of thought – one brings biography to aid interpretation – mostly before 1980, while the second engages with the medium of epic language and form, for example, the deconstructional analysis of Lucan's style as civil war by Johnson, Masters and Henderson. Leigh, 2000, 472, writes of Lucan's *Pharsalia*: 'It is perhaps the most overtly political and, indeed, rebellious work of its age and is unsparing in its condemnation of the corruption of Rome in the age of the emperors'.

<sup>5</sup> Braund, 1992, xix, comments on Lucan's subject and writes: 'the theme was far from confined to epic, but featured in history, declaration and iambus too. Augustan writers of epic, including Cornelius Severus, Albinovanus Pedo, Sextilius Ena and Rabirius seem to have chosen civil war or parts of it as their material; it is hard to deduce anything securely from the fragments which survive, but it looks as if a sparse, unelevated prosaic style was favoured for this topic'. See Roche, 2009, 3, who points out that Lucan's choice of subject matter has antecedents, and makes a list of earlier epic poems on civil wars which 'were either recited privately or treated themes amenable to Augustus' own version of events', 19-45.

intruding into his text to express condemnation of this, instead of epic heroes fighting gloriously in a war against a foreign enemy. While change is part of the epic genre, Lucan's poem, because it is about Rome's civil war, has changes which exceed those of earlier poets and takes epic to an unsustainable position, a place to which later epic poets cannot or will not follow.<sup>6</sup>

From the simplest definition of epic,<sup>7</sup> we see that the 'epic tradition' is a 'norm' based on the epics of Homer, a benchmark against which all later epic writing is measured.<sup>8</sup> Lucan's poem gestures toward and diverges from patterns of Homeric epic because Rome's civil war calls for reproach or censure rather than Homeric commemoration and glorification. In this thesis I will investigate, through close reading, the way Lucan's epic both connects with and veers away from earlier epic because his poem is about a relatively recent historical event, Rome's civil war.<sup>9</sup> Traditional features of epic must be modified or altered in such a way that the genre of the new poem is still recognisable since acceptance depends to a large extent on an authority conferred by earlier epic.<sup>10</sup> This thesis will consider Lucan's poem with respect to such conventions as epic catalogues, similes, and battle narrative. What it is that constitutes the essential attributes of the genre for Lucan and what 'civil war' and 'epic' meant to Lucan can be found within his poem, especially in his overt allusion to the epics mentioned above.

---

<sup>6</sup> Statius and Valerius Flaccus revert to the mythological themes of earlier epic and Silius Italicus writes about Rome's victory against a traditional foreign enemy, although all these later epic poets can be seen to allude to Lucan's exaggerated style to some degree.

<sup>7</sup> *OED*: 'epic, pertaining to that species of poetical composition represented typically by the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, which celebrates in the form of a continuous narrative the achievements of one or more heroic personages of history or tradition'.

<sup>8</sup> Literary conventions are built up from comparisons and allusions between works of earlier poets, comprising, for Lucan, many more examples than just the epics of Homer. We know from extant fragments that Virgil, Ovid and Lucan most likely had the rest of the Epic Cycle to draw on as well as the works of such poets as Callimachus, Naevius and Ennius. See Boyle, 1993, 1-6, for an investigation into tradition of epic poetry which preceded Virgil's *Aeneid*. He also writes: 'before Virgil there seems to have been no mythological historico-symbolic Roman - or Greek - epic,' and that Virgil's 'solution of the genre problem was ... to revivify the old [form] and to revivify it so successfully as to change the ground rules permanently for Roman epic', 80. Aicher, 1990, 218, writing about the work of Ennius sees that: 'With so much of Roman literature lost, this later literature gets cast in the unrealistic dichotomy of either looking to a Greek model or showing a creativity and sensibility which have no heritage'.

<sup>9</sup> I acknowledge that the classification or definition of epic poetry becomes even more problematic if we venture outside the Graeco-Roman context.

<sup>10</sup> *OED*: 'genre, b. *spec.* A particular style or category of works of art; esp. a type of literary work characterized by a particular form, style, or purpose'.

Lucan's poem narrates episodes of battle in a way different from battle narrative in earlier epic because they are impious civil war battles with no heroes or gods. His choice of subject is Rome's civil war, yet, paradoxically, it describes only some of the battles of that war and this select portrayal seems to emphasise discord and fragmentation on a geographical, natural and political level. Lucan's choice of battle sites could be simply the result of his historical (rather than fictional) subject, but the poem shows a bias toward civil war battle action in locations atypical of Homeric epic. Lucan's poem has extended the historical / mythological mix of Virgil's epic and has even stretched Ovid's change to the epic genre in order to gain attention and to claim its place within the genre.

Exaggeration in Lucan's battle narrative can be seen to reflect the extravagance of Nero's Rome and, with republican Rome as the main character, it is an overtly political epic with a partisan narrator who intervenes to tell us how the poem should be read.<sup>11</sup> With its allusions to earlier epic, Lucan's poem elevates the civil war to epic proportions equal to the Trojan War as if it is the start of a new epic cycle for Rome. Because his poem deals with major epic themes such as the nature of heroism, honour and glory gained from war, the death and wounds of war, and the downfall of a civilisation, it retains many of the conventions found in Homer's and Virgil's martial epic. In Lucan's poem, however, 'type scenes' of paired battle lines or named opponents are often overshadowed by detailed descriptions of the location, topography and natural forces such as flood and storm. Although there are opposed and named warriors in Lucan's poem, often these are not even well known Romans as we might expect, but minor or anonymous characters, rather than legendary epic heroes.

It becomes clear as I focus on the beginnings of epic, narratorial intrusion and the presentation of battles that Lucan's epic is further from the Homeric tradition than the epics of either Virgil or Ovid. Hyperbaton, hyperbole and *praeteritio* are rhetorical tools used by Lucan to arouse emotion in the reader as well as to

---

<sup>11</sup> In the poem *Bellum Ciuile* the reader is often drawn to conflate Lucan with his narrator *persona* but, at the same time, to remember that the poetic identity and views of the narrator must also be separate from the forever unknowable opinion of Lucan, a Roman poet who lived and wrote his epic while Nero was emperor of Rome. See Hinds, 1998, 47-48, on the 'ultimate unknowability of the author's intention'.

explore the moral dimensions of war.<sup>12</sup> Quasi-scientific language and terms familiar from prose writing are also extensively used. We find a more overt intervention by the narrator throughout the poem and the scope of digressions is greater in Lucan's poem than in earlier extant epics. There is no one hero in Lucan's epic: the description of the confrontation between historical characters, including their deeds and motivation in war with an emphasis on wounds and death, does not, for the most part, conform to epic conventions. In a radical departure from Homeric epic the gods as characters are not present: instead, personified Fate and Fortune are evoked throughout the poem and the gods are mentioned in a general way. Another overt change to the epic genre is the frequent intrusion of a moralising narrator throughout Lucan's poem, which takes the genre to a new level of intensity, because of its subject, Rome's civil war. Lucan's epic adopts the delaying tactics of colourful digressions to the narrative of war, and through its many allusions to earlier epic, shows both an engagement with and a change from what has gone before.<sup>13</sup>

Although other scholars have noted Lucan's changes to the epic genre, this thesis will point out that his distortions are more complex than previously recognised. Many scholars have written about the epic genre, and ideas about the subject matter suitable for epic have been discussed from ancient times.<sup>14</sup> Homeric epic treats the heroic deeds of warriors in a war against a foreign enemy, but Lucan chooses to write about Rome's civil war, the battles between fellow-citizens of Rome, a subject which suggests that this epic can be classified as historical epic. Historical subjects, for Roman epic at least, are not without precedent. We know, from the fragments available, that Ennius wrote a chronicle of the history of Rome as epic and that Naevius wrote a historical epic on the Punic wars, but neither of these include detail of the civil war between Pompey and Caesar.

Because the focus of this thesis is on Rome's civil war as the topic of Lucan's epic it adds to existing scholarship on Lucan's poem as it draws out nuances of

---

<sup>12</sup> The rhetorical figure *praeteritio*, by professing to pass over or omit something, actually draws attention to it. For Lucan's use of rhetorical figures, see Martindale, 1976, 45-54.

<sup>13</sup> Lucan both uses and exaggerates the delays and digressions which are a defining characteristic of Homer's *Odyssey*.

<sup>14</sup> Feeney, 1991, 45, sums up ancient thought on the subjects suitable for epic, the place of the gods in epic and the different approaches the ancient critics took toward epic.

meaning from the way this civil war is presented.<sup>15</sup> I look particularly at the current scholarship on Lucan but also glance back to some earlier works, especially the seminal work of Ahl, 1976, who reinstates Lucan to his rightful position in the canon, defending him against the largely negative opinions of earlier scholars such as Heitland, 1887, and Duff, 1928, translator for the Loeb edition of Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile*.<sup>16</sup> Recent scholarship ranges widely, but this thesis has concentrated on those scholars concerned with the introduction to the poem, civil war as subject matter, the intrusive narrator, and Lucan's variation of epic battle narrative.<sup>17</sup>

Masters, 1992, in his work suggests that the narrator is so prominent that he becomes a character in the poem.<sup>18</sup> Masters reads Lucan's emphasis on boundaries, barriers and fragmenting language as showing the destabilising effect of civil war. I agree that Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile* has a very overt and intrusive narrator, and this thesis will add to the work of Masters. In 1997, both Bartsch and Leigh noted the frequency of narratorial intrusion in the poem, and Leigh also looks at the opposition between spectacle and engagement to show that the poem can be read as the narrator's critique of empire. This thesis extends their arguments. These scholars, along with Bramble, 1982, Johnson 1987, and Most, 1992, see the subject matter of Lucan's epic as a political comment, a position I support throughout this thesis.<sup>19</sup>

Bramble is the first scholar to write that Lucan 'refuses to narrate' and this useful phrase encapsulates ideas of delay and reluctance which I and other scholars develop.<sup>20</sup> Johnson notes a challenge to leadership in Lucan's focus on crowds and power, while Most looks at Lucan's obsession with dismemberment, comparing him with Ovid and Seneca and linking this fascination with the savage

---

<sup>15</sup> Morford, 1967, 87, considers that Lucan's poem: 'is epic, but epic that has changed its terms'. For important scholarship on Lucan, see the works of: Ahl, 1976; Bramble, 1982; Johnson, 1987; Conte, 1988; Masters, 1992; Most, 1992; Hardie, 1993; Bartsch, 1997; Leigh, 1997; Henderson, 1998; Hershkowitz, 1998; Roller, 2001; Sklenář, 2003; Behr, 2007; and Roche, 2009.

<sup>16</sup> Heitland, 1887, Introduction to Haskins commentary, and Duff, 1977.

<sup>17</sup> In each of my following chapters I engage with the scholarship specific to the focus of that chapter. Here I offer a general overview.

<sup>18</sup> Masters, 1992, 90, writes: 'Lucan is the voice that comes back again and again, each time slightly different'.

<sup>19</sup> See recently Bexley, 2008, 459-75.

<sup>20</sup> Bramble, 1982, 540.

spectacles in the arenas of Neronian Rome. Henderson, 1998, in his excellent book about ‘works that put the civil wars into writing, and writings that address their result, a dramatic shift in cultural mentality, sociolinguistics, and political reality’, looks at both Caesar’s and Lucan’s *Bellum Ciuile*.<sup>21</sup> I take up, to some extent, these stimulating ideas. Roller, 2001, sees Lucan’s epic as one of the literary texts reflecting the changes in social and economic structures which accompanied the change from republic to principate and therefore as having political implications and I take a similar stance, but with more focus on the way relationships between the two sides in civil war are portrayed.<sup>22</sup>

I supplement this scholarship with a broad comparative study measuring Lucan’s engagement with conventions of epic set up in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of Homer, in Virgil’s *Aeneid*, and to a lesser extent in Apollonius Rhodius’ *Argonautica*, the *Annals* of Ennius and Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, but I focus specifically on his subject, Rome’s civil war, in order to generate new interest in this aspect of his poem. Reading Lucan’s epic in relation to these earlier epics is rewarding because of its density of allusion, both internal and intertextual, its overt narratorial intrusions and its varied battle narrative.

In Chapter 1, my focus is on the beginnings of epic. Beginnings are not only most important for recognition of the poem and poet, but are also programmatic for the rest of the poem. I compare the beginnings of epics to show how Lucan’s poem both changes and adheres to conventions of the epic genre because of the subject, Rome’s civil war. Outlined at the start, civil war is portrayed as the type of war which requires a long opening preamble by the narrator to explain and justify such politically risky subject matter. This leads me to concentrate, in Chapter 2 on narratorial intrusion in epic. I show that the subject of civil war influences how the poem is narrated; the moral dilemma of Roman fighting against Roman in civil war calls for an overt and reproachful narrator in this epic. Chapter 3 shows how the subject of Lucan’s epic, civil war, is highlighted by repetition: an earlier

---

<sup>21</sup> Henderson, 1998, 1. He goes on to write: ‘his [Lucan’s] writing shows in every line how the materialization of Rome in Latin language and thought had been pervasively saturated with Caesarism. The future would forever be an after-effect of the fighting for Rome’, 4.

<sup>22</sup> Roller, 2001, 6. On the same subject as Roller, see more recently Coffee, 2009, 3, who writes on ‘exchange and social order’. He writes, 117-84, about Lucan’s *Bellum Ciuile*, as well as Virgil’s *Aeneid*, and Statius’ *Thebaid*.

civil war is included in the main civil war narrative, and the inset story, told by an anonymous speaker, reflects the whole poem as a *mise en abyme*.<sup>23</sup>

My objective in Chapter 4 is to compare one of the poem's battle narratives, the sea-battle at Massilia, with other epic battles to point out the innovative and the absurd in Lucan's poem. I discuss how the sea-battle at Massilia is portrayed as the most epic battle in Lucan's poem, even though it is a civil war battle, while the Vulteius episode, another example of conflict on the sea, has very few of the markers of Homeric epic and shows civil war as a kind of suicide. Chapter 5 analyses the digression describing the contest between Hercules and Antaeus, and argues that this contest illustrates well how civil war reduces both parties in conflict to the same level of brutality and crime. This wrestling match illustrates the problems of allegiance and partisanship in civil war. Chapter 6 explores how Lucan presents the main battle at Pharsalus in the most paradoxical manner regarding the conventions of epic, because his poem narrates the wounds, weapons and death of this battle dense with allusion to Homeric battle narrative, while professing the pass over such atrocities. I conclude the thesis by summing up the argument that it is Lucan's choice of subject, civil war, which necessitates both changes to and engagement with conventions of the epic genre.

Because Lucan's epic is about Rome's civil war, an event of fairly recent history that caused a major upheaval in the political and social structures of Rome, it distorts conventions of the genre at its beginning, in its style of narratorial intrusion, and in its presentation of battles. Lucan's poem does this in order to claim its place in the literary canon but as well as this, and more significantly, his poem reflects the futile destruction of society brought about by civil war, as a warning or illumination for his contemporary audience.

---

<sup>23</sup> OED: '*mise en abyme*, Literary Theory. (A term denoting) self-reflection within the structure of a literary work; a work employing self-reflection'.

## Chapter 1:

### Beginnings of Epic: *BC* 1. 1-183

‘omina principiis’ inquit ‘inesse solent’.

Ovid *Fasti* 1.178

‘Omens’, he said, ‘are accustomed to be in beginnings.’

With Janus, the speaker of the above quote, I consider beginnings to be significant.<sup>1</sup> In ancient times the importance of the opening lines of a poem was acknowledged: the poet’s work was recognised and even referred to by the first few words.<sup>2</sup> From exile, Ovid writes an elegy in the form of a letter to Augustus (*Tristia* 2), and reminds his emperor of the works of other poets using their first words: Lucretius by *Aeneadum genetrix*, *Tr.* 2.261-62; and Virgil by *arma uirumque*, *Tr.* 2.533-34.<sup>3</sup> Martial also unambiguously refers to Virgil’s epic by the first three words at 8.55.19 and 14.185.2, so we can see that these first words are used to encapsulate or represent each complete poem. In the opening lines of a poem the audience or reader is usually made aware of the subject and genre of the poem and it is at the beginning that each poet claims his place in the creation of the work.<sup>4</sup> Because the aim of my thesis is to focus on how Lucan’s poem presents its subject, civil war, its poet as narrator and its place in the genre as both similar to and different from other epics, the beginning of epic is the best place to start. This chapter demonstrates that the politically precarious subject of civil war accounts for the long delaying proem to Lucan’s epic in contrast to the shorter, ostensibly more personal and distant voices opening the epics of Virgil and Ovid.

Survival of what can be seen as alternative beginnings to some ancient epics indicates that both meaning and acceptance of an opening depend on perceived traditional patterns deemed appropriate for the genre.<sup>5</sup> Although utterly dismissed,

---

<sup>1</sup> On poetic beginnings see: Roche, 2009, 90-97; Kenney, 1976, 46-53; Weber, 1987, 261-71; O’Hara, 2004 / 05, 149-61; Gildenhard, and Zissos, 2000, 67-79; and Conte, 1992, 147-60.

<sup>2</sup> Weber, 1987, 265, writes: ‘ancient literary canons prescribed that proems be written with the utmost care and technical skill ... [t]hus the particular care lavished on beginnings was also justified pragmatically, by their persistence in the reader’s mind’.

<sup>3</sup> See Weber, 1987, 263.

<sup>4</sup> See Genette, 1980, 28-29, for the well debated topic of poetic persona and narrator. I conflate the historical poet with the poet represented in the poem.

<sup>5</sup> Muellner, 1996, 96-97, writes: ‘there is even a variant prologue attested for the *Iliad* ... known to Aristoxenus, so its legitimacy cannot be simply dismissed. I do not maintain that it is



such substitute openings reinforce the idea that readers are apt to connect the opening lines with the rest of the poem, as well as with the poet and other examples of the genre. Commenting on four lines beginning, *ille ego ...*, ‘I am he ...’, Williams, 1972, writes that that they are: ‘quoted by Donatus and Servius as having been removed from the beginning of the *Aeneid* by Varius and Tucca, the posthumous editors of the poem’ and states that ‘it is certain that they should be omitted’.<sup>6</sup> Austin, 1968, discusses in detail the ancient evidence and shows that although some scholars defended the lines as a valid connection between this and Virgil’s previous works, in fact the lines are not in early manuscripts and he states that Virgil did not write these verses.<sup>7</sup> Conte, 1988,<sup>8</sup> considers the claims by some of the ancient commentators, that what we know as the beginning of Lucan’s *Bellum Ciuile* is spurious, that the poem should begin at line eight: *quis furor, o ciues, quae tanta licentia ferri*, BC 1.8 ‘What madness, oh citizens, why such great freedom of iron’, and that the first seven lines were added later. Very few scholars support this and all look to the purpose stated at the outset and a comparison with the proems of both Virgil and Homer. The fact that scholars have argued for and against other or alternative openings confirms that beginnings are important to our understanding of both the poems and their place within the genre.

In this chapter I will look at the accepted opening passages or proems of the epics of Virgil, Ovid and Lucan in relation to some of the acknowledged conventions of epic. I argue that it is at the beginning of Lucan’s epic that the author first makes us aware of a complicated relationship between his poem and earlier martial epic because it is here that we first encounter the subject of his epic. Prominence of Rome’s civil war has a profound impact on the way the epic is narrated and right from the beginning of the poem, in a long preamble, we hear an intrusive and

---

preferable to the standard one, only that traditional poems are by definition multiform, so that an appreciation of the expressive and poetic value in textual variants like this one can enhance our understanding of the nuance of received text and of the compositional process in general’.

<sup>6</sup> Williams, 1972, in his commentary, 156-57.

<sup>7</sup> Austin, 1968, 110, sees that the four lines beginning *ille ego* are out of character as: ‘The primary pattern for epic prooemia was set by Homer, in the openings to the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, with their invocations to the goddess-muse’. He goes on to say: ‘The *ille ego* lines, once they are seen in a context which is ritual both from a religious and from a literary point of view, have absolutely no place here: they are a vulgar intrusion’. See also Conte, 1986, 84-86.

<sup>8</sup> Conte, 1988, 12-23. Conte writes: ‘Non credo, infatti, possa restare a questo punto dubbio alcuno che tali versi siano originari e dal poeta posti esattamente all’inizio del poema’, 14.

disapproving narrator's voice emphasising the criminality of this civil war. Civil war is shown not only as political upheaval, with the destruction of republican Rome, but also as a personal crisis for the protagonists and a problem for the author because of the political nature of his choice of subject.<sup>9</sup> From the outset, we, as audience or readers, are intrigued as to how this epic will develop from a beginning that is both different from and indebted to earlier epic.

I turn first to the beginning of Virgil's *Aeneid* against which Lucan's poem is so often measured, because the many allusions to the *Aeneid* presented by *Bellum Ciuile* encourage comparison.<sup>10</sup> Virgil's *Aeneid* was, and is, the canonical Roman epic.<sup>11</sup> We cannot look at Virgil's work in isolation because he positions his work within the epic genre, and much has been written on Virgil's indebtedness to Homer as his (Virgil's) prime example of epic.<sup>12</sup> I will explore Virgil's opening lines and their engagement with the Homeric epic, below. But first, I want to stress again that beginnings, when seen in relation to the extant series of poetic works, have an added weight of significance, because some degree of familiarity is presented against which the audience can judge something new. Hardie, 1993, notes:

Imperial Latin epic takes to extreme the innate tendency of the genre to the expansive and the comprehensive; yet it does not escape from the contrary pulls towards continuation and repetition that deny to even the most arrogantly hyperbolical epic the possibility of making a final and all-inclusive statement.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Masters, 1994, 169, writes: 'On one level, the *Bellum Ciuile* is an appalling, dangerous and subversive poem. Its subject matter is basically taboo: we know of no other epic poem dealing with the civil war between Caesar and Pompey, and in historiography too there seems to have been some risk involved in treating any part of the civil war period'. Leigh, 2000, 474, has an excellent outline of the life and politics of the poet Lucan and writes: 'The ancient evidence for the life of Lucan is of huge significance for any account of his *Pharsalia*. It is difficult, however, to know how to handle it. To refuse to imagine a Lucan who is better than the worst of what we are told about him is to risk trivializing the political voice of the poem ...[y]et entirely to disregard the implications of the evidence for the poet's character and milieu may be the first step to inventing Lucan as the romantic republican dissident and herald of freedom which it would be most stirring to believe him to be'.

<sup>10</sup> Boyle, 1993, 79, writes: 'At the precise moment when the genre seemed to many outmoded and uncreative, Roman epic produced its paradigm, one which all later practitioners of the genre would acknowledge through allusion and response, as they worked at generating new kinds of epic in the wake of Virgil's achievement'.

<sup>11</sup> Boyle, 1993, 79, writes: 'Virgil's ambitious, radical, unfinished poem became an instant canonic text'.

<sup>12</sup> For example: Knauer, 1964, 390-412; and Knauer, 1979; Block, 1982; and Hershkowitz, 1998.

<sup>13</sup> Hardie, 1993, 11.

Barchiesi, 2001, writes about: ‘how self-reflective and derivative is Roman epic’ and that these attributes must be seen as positive because the authors themselves make them perceptible.<sup>14</sup> Conte, 1986, writes:

The opening of a work boasts a supreme position in composition because it is particularly memorable and *quotable* and is consequently an indispensable guide for both reader and philologist. But for the author, poetic memory implicit in the opening verses is redeemed by the way in which it invests the very substance of the work with a literary identity.<sup>15</sup>

The new work always imports some measure of authority from its alignment with established and well received works, as these scholars rightly point out. Boyle, 1993, argues that as well as following established generic patterns, Virgil also transformed the genre.<sup>16</sup> It is in the proem or beginning to his *Aeneid* that we first see that Virgil shows a willingness to go beyond the boundaries of Homeric epic, while still retaining the conventional limits from which his work can deviate.<sup>17</sup> Although we can say that change is (already) part of the epic genre, in later chapters I will explore how the magnitude and complexity of Lucan’s alterations to the genre compared to those found in earlier epic reflect the difficulty of treating Rome’s civil war as an epic subject.

I start with Virgil because he marks the opening to his poem with an appeal to conventional or Homeric epic. Eleven lines begin the *Aeneid*:

arma uirumque cano, Troiae qui primus ab oris  
 Italiam, fato profugus, Lauiniaque uenit  
 litora, multum ille et terris iactatus at alto  
 ui superum saeuae memorem Iunonis ob iram;  
 multa quoque et bello passus, dum conderet urbem,  
 inferretque deos Latio, genus unde Latinum,  
 Albanique patres, atque altae moenia Romae.  
 Musa, mihi causas memora, quo numine laeso  
 quidue dolens regina deum tot uoluere casus  
 insignem pietate uirum, tot adire labores  
 impulerit. tantaene animis caelestibus irae?

*Aen.* 1.1-11

I sing of arms and the man, who first from the coast of Troy came to Italy and to the Lavinian shores, an exile by fate, he was tossed about greatly both on land

---

<sup>14</sup> Barchiesi, 2001, 130. He also states: ‘epic proems tend to cite their models indirectly’, 129.

<sup>15</sup> Conte, 1986, 70. He goes on to write: ‘Poetic creation lies in a successful straining against convention over which, however, convention itself presides’, 95.

<sup>16</sup> Boyle, 1993, 79-107.

<sup>17</sup> On the epic tradition, see Albrecht, 1999, Boyle, 1993, and especially Hardie, 1993, 1-3, who writes: ‘the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* become the central cultural and educational documents of Hellenism...’ and who goes on to say of the epic genre ‘... the seeds are Homeric, but the full crop is reaped by Virgil and his successors’.

and on the deep by the force of the gods, on account of the remembering wrath of fierce Juno, and having suffered much also in war, until he could found the city and bring his gods to Latium, whence the Latin race and the Alban fathers and the walls of high Rome. Muse, relate for me the causes, for what aspect of her divinity having been harmed, or grieving at what, did the queen of the gods compel a man, distinguished by piety, to undergo so many misfortunes, to submit to so many labours? Can there be such great wrath in celestial hearts?

The subject matter is set out in these lines as it is in the epics of Homer, but Virgil's proem falls into three sentences: the first, of seven lines, summarises the trials of the hero and his achievement against the odds while the second and third sentences are an appeal to the Muse to aid his undertaking and his understanding.<sup>18</sup> It is well documented that the arrangement of Virgil's proem recalls Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*: the first section corresponds in length to the beginning of the *Iliad*, while the whole is only one line longer than that of the *Odyssey* and reflects more closely its content. This dual reference also hints at or even foreshadows the two-part structure of Virgil's poem.<sup>19</sup> Evocation of these earlier well-known epics positions Virgil's poem within the genre. Virgil, as poet, leans heavily on Homer in order to give authority and status to his text. We can see that the opening to Lucan's poem does this too: it has some elements of Homeric epic and also presents something new, as I will show below.

Establishing Virgil's *Aeneid* in the context of earlier models of epic, as the poet himself does in the proem, gives a firm basis from which to draw comparisons between poetic markers found in beginnings and to note contrasts of structure, subject and language of opening passages when looking at the later epics of Ovid and Lucan. Chronologically, Ovid and Lucan follow Virgil and both these poets continue to engage with Homer's epics. The epics of Homer can be seen as the model, as we have seen displayed in the proem to Virgil's *Aeneid*, or as the point of reference from which epic can deviate. The idea of Homer as 'model' becomes more complicated because Virgil's *Aeneid* also becomes a paradigm for Roman epic against which later epics, such as Lucan's *Bellum Civile*, can be measured.

---

<sup>18</sup> Austin, 1968, 112, sets out the similarities between the epics of Homer and Virgil. Boyle, 1993, 7, writes: 'Virgil's epic is neither an *Iliad* nor an *Odyssey*; it is both'.

<sup>19</sup> Williams, 1972, xx. See also Adler, 2003, 3, who writes: 'the *Aeneid* will show as one both the Iliadic warring hero and the Odyssean wandering hero. The unity of these two, and the superiority of this unity to Homer's duality, is shown by their common end, the foundation of Rome'.

As well, the version of Homer found in Virgil's epic becomes the 'Virgilian' Homer, apart from the Greek version, for later poets.

Greater changes than those found in Virgil's *Aeneid* are found in the opening of Ovid's epic. The proem to the *Metamorphoses* is very short, just four lines:

in noua fert animus mutatas dicere formas  
corpora; di, coeptis (nam uos mutastis et illa)  
aspirate meis primaque ab origine mundi  
ad mea perpetuum deducite tempora carmen. *Met.* 1.1-4

My mind is moved to tell of forms changed into new bodies. Gods, breathe on my beginnings (for you have changed them also) and from the first source of the world to my own times, draw down the song unbroken.

Ovid's opening is an overt but complex challenge to epic beginnings in its brevity. With Kenny and others, I read *illa* as the accepted correct reading which refers to *coeptis*, *Met.* 1.2, 'beginnings' rather than *formas*, *Met.* 1.1, 'forms'.<sup>20</sup> In structure it is both like and unlike most other epics. We can see a connection, through number of lines, to the four-line proem at the beginning of Apollonius of Rhodes' *Argonautica*.<sup>21</sup> A further similarity can be found in the way Apollonius' words, μνήσομαι, 'I will recall' (like Ovid's *dicere*) present the author as a poet conscious of his position as a narrator.<sup>22</sup> However, Ovid's whole epic is very different in length from that of Apollonius. The *Argonautica* is an epic of only four books, and although the individual books are long, the whole is no match in length for the extensive, fifteen-book *Metamorphoses*, which is introduced by this brief proem. Evocation of an epic poet less prestigious than either Homer or Virgil could signal from the outset that, as a poet, Ovid is spurning these well established Greek and Roman paradigms and instead, is aligning himself with a poet who can

---

<sup>20</sup> Kenny, 2002, 49, looks closely at Ovid's brief proem and convincingly argues that: 'the only reading that satisfies the demands of both sense and latinity is Lejay's "illa"'. He goes on to write that Ovid and Lucan write: '... poems ... in a modern or contemporary style of epic which might legitimately challenge comparison with Virgil, not on his own ground ... but on a new and independent footing', 58. See O'Hara, 2004 / 05, 149-61, for a good discussion of the controversial reading and for a complete list of scholars, 149. Ovid refers to his beginnings altered by the god at *Amores* 1.1.1-4 and again at *Amores* 2.1.11-18. See also *Remedia Amoris* 1-2, where the Cupid assumes the content of the poem from its title or beginning and is reassured by the poet.

<sup>21</sup> Harrison, 2002, 87.

<sup>22</sup> See Hunter, 1993, 101, who writes: 'No feature of Alexandrian poetry has attracted more attention in recent years than the self-conscious literariness of its presentation, the constant demand of poet-narrators to be recognised as the controlling force behind the words of the text. Here Apollonius has much in common with Callimachus, perhaps most obviously in his invocations to the Muse and his loudly pious silences (1.919-21, 4.247-50)'.

also be seen as rebelling against or challenging Homeric models of epic.<sup>23</sup> Paradoxically, his opening is ‘conventionally’ programmatic for his ‘epic’, since brevity is a hallmark of many of the short, light-hearted episodes which combine to make up his whole long poem. Ovid’s proem establishes that change is the subject of his epic and seems to indicate from the start that he intends to transform the epic genre into something new. I will look closely below at the ‘mutation’ of the genre evident in the words *mutatas ... formas* in Ovid’s opening line.

Lucan’s poem looks back to Homer and Virgil as antecedents in epic and builds on Ovid’s *noua ... corpora*, *Met.* 1.1-2, ‘new bodies’, with a new subject for epic; civil war and its role in the change from republic to principate in Rome. Although the first seven lines are usually regarded as proem to Lucan’s epic, I suggest that we should consider the proem to be the first twelve lines because of its similarity to Virgil’s *Aeneid*, and the way lines eight to twelve function to emphasise that the subject introduced at the beginning is civil war, not a war against a foreign enemy. The complexity of subject matter, Rome’s civil war, then expands the proem from twelve lines to a long preamble of almost all of one hundred and eighty-two lines.<sup>24</sup> Lucan’s choice of subject causes considerable delay to the beginning of the action, as if the poet leads his audience into such a politically risky subject by a slow and circuitous route. This delaying tactic is a characteristic of Lucan’s epic and makes the poem more unconventional than that of Ovid. Rather than compare this whole section as ‘proem’, I will concentrate, for now, on the first twelve lines of Lucan’s *Bellum Ciuile*.

---

<sup>23</sup> Hunter, 1993, 119, writes: ‘Like the *Iliad*, the *Argonautica* begins with Apollo. ... Apollonius imitates features of Homeric technique ... and from the first he directs our attention to the Homeric poems as the touchstone against which to measure his epic’. But see Levin, 1971, 12. Albis, 1996, 1, writes: ‘Recently, however, critics have recognized that the *Argonautica* is not a failed emulation of Homeric epic but, rather, a deliberate innovation on the epic tradition’.

<sup>24</sup> Conte, 1988, 13, sees that in Lucan’s first seven lines, the proem is similar in movement to Homer’s *Iliad*. Roche, 2009, 10-11, lists the proem as lines 1-7, the proem and invocation as lines 1-66 and the introduction as lines 1-182 in his clear synopsis of the first book of Lucan’s *Bellum Ciuile*. Leigh, 2000, 474, writes: ‘The proem to the *Pharsalia* is a thirty-two line lament for the civil wars, their corrosive impact on Roman ethics, and their destruction of a once-great imperial power’. Masters, 1992, 9, writes: ‘Lucan may be Caesarian in his ambition to recount, and thus recreate, the horrors of civil war, but none the less there *is* reluctance, there *is* ‘mora’, the narrative *does* make the gesture of tying itself in knots in order to obstruct the progress of its demonic protagonist. And in this weak, plaintive resistance to the evil of reenacting evil, we see ... another Lucan who has more in common with the figure of Pompey’.

Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile* begins:

bella per Emathios plus quam ciuilia campos  
 iusque datum sceleri canimus, populumque potentem  
 in sua uictrici conuersum uiscera dextra  
 cognatasque acies, et rupto foedere regni  
 certatum totis concussi uiribus orbis  
 in commune nefas, infestisque obuia signis  
 signa, pares aquilas et pila minantia pilis.  
 quis furor, o ciues, quae tanta licentia ferri?  
 gentibus inuisis Latium praebere cruorem  
 cumque superba foret Babylon spolianda tropaeis  
 Ausoniis umbraque erraret Crassus inulta  
 bella geri placuit nullos habitura triumphos?

BC 1.1-12

Wars through Emathian fields, wars more than civil, I sing and legality given to crime and a powerful people turning upon their own entrails with their victorious right hand and upon kindred battle-lines, and with the agreement of rule broken fighting it out with all the forces of a shattered world, unspeakable crime in common, and of standards aggressive against standards, eagles equal, and javelins threatening javelins. What madness, oh citizens, why such great freedom of iron? To offer the blood of Latium to hated races and, when proud Babylon was there to be plundered of Italian trophies and Crassus, an un-avenged shade was wandering, was it pleasing to wage wars that would have no triumphs?

The first word indicates the subject of the poem, with both subject and position customary for epic. Lucan's opening sentence is reminiscent of Virgil's first sentence as each is seven lines and each claims to 'sing' (*cano*, *canimus*) of war, (*arma*, *bella*) with exactly the same number of words (73) in the proems to both Virgil's *Aeneid* and Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile*, and there is an additional link to Homer's *Iliad* through both subject and structure.<sup>25</sup> The second sentence of five lines recalls Virgil's four-line address to the Muse, but in stark contrast, Lucan addresses his question to the citizens of Neronian Rome, the citizens who live with the legacy of the civil war. We see that Lucan's poem engages with and then deviates from Homeric or Virgilian opening patterns, especially with such an authorial apostrophe at the beginning. I will evaluate the opening to Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile* in conjunction with Homer's *Iliad*, Virgil's *Aeneid* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and will show how Lucan's poem reflects the influence of these epics and their poets on aspects of his beginning, such as the first words, inspiration, and narrative voice.

<sup>25</sup> See Roche, 2009, 19 who writes: '[t]he relationship of book one to the Homeric poems has until recently been underappreciated'. (See also his n. 33, for a summary of scholarship).

First words are important for recognition, as explained above, and are often suggestive of the whole poem. The first words of Virgil's *Aeneid* identify the subject, *arma uirumque*, *Aen.* 1.1, 'arms and the man': *arma*, evokes weapons and war, the subject of Homer's *Iliad*; '*uirum*', recalls the first word of the *Odyssey*, ἄνδρα, *Od.* 1.1, 'man'.<sup>26</sup> The unnamed *uir* of the *Aeneid* brings to mind the nameless man at the beginning of the *Odyssey* and there is also equivalence between the hero of the *Aeneid* who is looking for the place to establish a new home and Homer's hero who struggles to get his companions and himself home from Troy. The lack of appellation for the first character introduced in Virgil's *Aeneid* contrasts with the early introduction of named heroes in the *Iliad*, where the patronymics used incorporate ideas of origins, heredity and noble lineage, so important for a Homeric hero. The beginning of Virgil's *Aeneid* is more like one than the other of Homer's epics, and as we will see below, Lucan alludes to both of Homer's epics and to Virgil's *Aeneid* in his first words.

In Ovid's *Metamorphoses* the first words, *in noua*, 'into new' can be taken with the verb of motion in the words following, *fert animus* 'my mind is moved', as a complete sense unit, understood as either signalling something new, a work different from anything before it, or as indicative of a new direction for the poet himself. But in fact, these words are not the subject matter of the proem at all, although they are part of it. As we read the next word, *mutatas*, we realise that we need to disengage the connection just made, as the participle claims the prepositional construction *in noua*, and this is confirmed by the next word *dicere*, 'to tell', which provides the infinitive complement for *fert animus*.<sup>27</sup> Kenney, 1976 writes:

as we read on we discover that 'noua' after all does not stand alone but has a syntactical complement in 'corpora' at the beginning of v. 2; and we reinterpret the sentence. In doing so we do not discard our first interpretation; rather a new vista of meaning opens up.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> Weber, 1987, 271, writes: 'As unmistakably as the proem of the *Aeneid* recalls the proem to the *Odyssey* in content, in form and in versification, beginning with the first three words, its model is entirely the *Iliad*'. See also Nelis, 2004, 94-95, and Goldhill, 1991, 5.

<sup>27</sup> Wheeler, 1999, 11.

<sup>28</sup> Kenney, 1976, 46-53. See also Kenney, 2002, 27-28, where he suggests that the words *perpetuum carmen* signal unity and who sees Ovid's uniqueness in the words *in noua fert animus*.



So, *in noua ... mutatas ... formas / corpora*, *Met.* 1.1-2, ‘forms changed into new bodies’ becomes the proposed subject matter of the proem and the epic, but enclosed within the phrase is the poet’s stated purpose; ... *fert animus ... dicere* ... *Met.* 1.1 ‘my mind is moved to tell’ which makes the process of telling and the speaker inseparable from and as significant as the subject matter of the story.<sup>29</sup> Wheeler, 1999, explains well, how, through Ovid’s ‘deceptive sequence of words’, the reader is introduced ‘to the experience of metamorphic change at a semantic and syntactic level.’<sup>30</sup> Ovid’s use of the word ‘new’ prepares the reader for a new kind of epic, one that is different from Homeric and Virgilian epic. I have dwelt at length on Ovid’s first words because Lucan uses the very same words in the extension to his proem, as I will show below. Lucan signals the changes he makes by alluding to Ovid’s remarkable opening sequence.

Like Homer and Virgil, Lucan establishes the subject of his *Bellum Ciuile* in the first word, *bella*, *BC* 1.1 ‘wars’, which launches the proem. Repeated at the beginning of line 12, this term encloses an introductory passage replete with synonyms for war and military terminology: *acies*, *BC* 1.4; *certatum*, *BC* 1.5; *spolianda*, *BC* 1.10; *infestisque obuia signis / signa, pares aquilas et pila minantia pilis*, *BC* 1.6-7. Lucan’s first word sets out the topic, wars, but this subject is immediately modified: *bella ... plus quam ciuilia*, *BC* 1.1.<sup>31</sup> As I have already indicated, this puzzling phrase does not allow for one simple reading (so itself is programmatic of Lucan’s distinctive epic), but one of many alternatives is that it refers to the many civil war battles fought in different locations. The proem emphasises Rome’s civil war but also makes reference to Rome’s traditional foreign enemies, *BC* 1.10-11, which alerts the reader to the contrast between civil war and Homeric battle narrative based on a single war against a foreign enemy. Lucan’s choice of subject makes his epic different from Homer’s *Iliad*, where the

---

<sup>29</sup> Farrell, 1999, 127-41. Farrell points out how it is not ‘forms’ that change within the text but the human body that is changed into different shapes, 127.

<sup>30</sup> Wheeler, 1999, 9.

<sup>31</sup> Henderson, 1998, 169, makes Lucan’s ‘more than’ (*plus quam BC* 1.1) his focus, when he writes: ‘For the poem surges out way past its represented civil war, the events of 49-8, to offer, not “the civil war”, but “civil wars”, i.e. “the (Roman) civil wars” and “Civil War”. Like the voicing (*canimus*, “our song”, 1.1), the subject – given in the poem’s first word *Bella* – is conspicuously plural ... (All) war is “civil” - ... the figuring and disfiguring of civilization as an absurd process of unmaking’. See Roche, 2009, 100-03, who outlines the scholarship to date on this phrase.

two sides are clearly defined as opposite. Lucan's poem describes a civil war fought among people who are all Roman or allied with Rome.<sup>32</sup>

Reinforcing the internecine or mutually destructive aspect of Rome's civil war, emphasis in Lucan's proem is on one powerful race of people:

... populumque potentem  
in sua uictrici conuersum uiscera dextra  
cognatasque acies ...

BC 1.2-4

Elegance and symmetry in line 3, (*in*, then adjective b, adjective a, verb, noun B, noun A), are at odds with the atrocious meaning inherent in the words. The possessive adjective *sua*, BC 1.3 'their own' which, while agreeing metrically only with *uiscera*, BC 1.3 'entrails or guts', in terms of sense or meaning also suggests, to a silent reader, a connection with their own *uictrici* ... *dextra*, BC 1.3 'victorious right hands'. The imagery here is strongly suggestive of suicide and this is just one form of death about to be encountered in Lucan's epic civil war battles. Roche, 2009, writes: '[t]hat civil war as self-inflicted death is a theme that is explored early and often in the poem, and results in many of its most extreme (and perennially criticised) images'.<sup>33</sup> Liberal use of words with destructive connotations, such as *rupto foedere*, BC 1.4 'agreement broken'; *concussi*, BC 1.5 'shattered' and *infestis*, BC 1.6 'aggressive' also indicate the focus of Lucan's poem. Words with moral significance, such as *sceleris*, BC 1.2 'crime' and *nefas*, BC 1.6 'unspeakable crime' or 'wickedness' appear in the proem to specify another of the themes of the poem and the point of view of the poet. In Lucan's epic, the proem not only establishes the subject and many of the themes to be found, but also attempts to sway the opinion of the reader toward the view of the poet / narrator suggested by such moralistic terms right at the beginning. In the following chapters, I will show that the significance of the subject of civil war lies in how this type of battle necessitates both changes to and engagement with the epic genre.

---

<sup>32</sup> After Lucan, Statius writes an epic about civil war, with Thebans fighting against Thebans, but the story of his *Thebaid* is securely located in the legendary past.

<sup>33</sup> Roche, 2009, 104.

From these first words in epic I turn now to the use of the term *primus*, which is often used at the beginning of a story to indicate the first telling or the primary cause for the events about to be related. It is found in the opening passages of the epics of Virgil and Ovid but not in Lucan's epic. Concern with what happened first, is indicated by Virgil's use of the word *primus*, *Aen.* 1.1, right at the beginning of his poem. The first action of the man, *Troiae qui primus ab oris*, *Aen.* 1.1, recalls the actions of the hero of the *Odyssey*, who journeyed from Troy, but *primus* in this phrase also brings to mind τὰ πρῶτα, *Il.* 1.6, 'the first' conflict between Achilles and Agamemnon as Homer's starting point for the stage of the Trojan War about to be told in his *Iliad*.<sup>34</sup> Virgil incorporates into his proem people and places associated directly with and as a result of this man's first arrival from Troy, and when he writes: *unde genus Latinum, / Albanique patres, atque altae moenia Romae*, *Aen.* 1.6-7, 'whence the Latin race, the Alban fathers and the walls of high Rome' we see that the last item in this ascending tricolon could refer to either the city founded by Romulus and Remus or the city of Augustan Rome of Virgil's own time. I suggest that we can see the disputed first wall of Rome overlaid onto the ambitious building programme of Augustus in this last phrase. The poet can be seen to present himself and his era self-consciously here at the beginning of his epic as well as throughout his poem.<sup>35</sup>

Ovid's use of the word *primus* in his epic recalls the beginning of Virgil's *Aeneid* and Homer's *Iliad* but goes beyond them by referring to the very beginning of time.<sup>36</sup> The vast temporal span of his poem, *primaque ab origine mundi*, *Met.* 1.3, to *mea ... tempora*, *Met.* 1.4, is greater than that attempted by any earlier extant poet except Ennius. The end point *mea ... tempora*, *Met.* 1.4, could refer to the time in which the poet lived and could also function as a metapoetic reference to

---

<sup>34</sup> Redfield, 2001, 457, writes: 'the proem thus states in brief compass the whole of which it is the introductory part', (and see his n. 1 for scholarship). He goes on to analyse the first seven lines and points out the conventional metrical position of the term 'first' regarding the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon, 475.

<sup>35</sup> Williams, 1967, 21-22, writes: 'the Roman way of life, the march of Roman history, the concept of Roman world-destiny form a central theme of the poet against which other aspects of human behaviour and aspiration can be explored'.

<sup>36</sup> Wheeler, 1999, 24, suggests that Ovid's *primaque ab origine* refers not only to Virgil, *Aen.* 1.372-74, but through this to the *Annals* of Ennius, and writes that Ovid is: 'claiming to outdo the *Annals* in scope, by beginning from the creation of the universe, not from the foundation of Rome'.

his *Fasti*.<sup>37</sup> Through this reference to his earlier work Ovid could be seen to align his *Metamorphoses* with his own elegy in all its diversity and virtuosity, rather than with Homeric epic. However, Ovid's poem is hard to fit neatly into a genre, although it has more features in common with epic than with elegy.<sup>38</sup> It is a huge work, as far as number of lines, but it does not have the same 'huge' epic aesthetic as earlier epic poetry. I see that the proem introduces a poem both continuous and discontinuous, in the same way that Harrison, 2002, sees Ovid's proem to the *Metamorphoses*:

identifying itself (1.4) as both 'continuous' (*perpetuum*) and 'fine-spun' (as the object of the verb *deducite*). This points to the tension evident in the poem between traditional lengthy epic (its 15 books) and more polished, short and discontinuous Callimachean poetic practice (its 250 linked episodes).<sup>39</sup>

Change to genre, signalled in the first lines of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, turns out to be more complex and radical in ways different from the expected.

The word *deducite*, *Met.* 1.4, has most often been studied in conjunction with *perpetuum carmen* to draw out the stance, either divergent or assimilatory, that the poet seems to be taking with his epic.<sup>40</sup> Essentially, the term *deducite*, especially in a proem, is unmistakably literary and programmatic: it is a term of Callimachean allegiance, which includes Callimachus' elegiac *Aetia*, itself a

---

<sup>37</sup> The first word, *tempora*, could have been used as a title of Ovid's *Fasti* in the same way that *arma uirumque cano* was for Virgil's *Aeneid*. See Feeney, 1999, 13-30; Hinds, 1999, 48-67; and Wheeler, 1999, 25.

<sup>38</sup> See Feeney, 1999, 13-18, who sketches the chronographic models at Ovid's disposal, then says: 'Ovid ignores, refuses, renounces all such schemes and ideologies, or else subverts the canonical reference-points that no account of history could ignore.' Harrison, 2002, 87, writes: 'In terms of the generic ascent we have seen from *Amores* to *Fasti*, the *Metamorphoses*, though written alongside the *Fasti* chronologically, can be seen as the final stage ... this concern for self-location within the epic tradition continues throughout the poem'.

<sup>39</sup> Harrison, 2002, 87, also writes: 'The *Metamorphoses* negotiates its own complex position within the tradition of hexameter epic'.

<sup>40</sup> Ovid with his poetic use of the verb, *deducite*, *Met.* 1.4 'draw down', alludes to Callimachus, the Alexandrian poet who wrote smaller more concise poems than the epic verse of Homer and Hesiod, and refers to Hesiod's *Theogony*, in his verse, *Aet.* 1.1-25. The allusion is layered still further as Ovid recalls Virgil who has his advice come from Apollo, *Ecl.* 6.3-5. Hinds, 1987, 18, elaborates on Ovid's use of *deducere*, *Met.* 5.263-4 and writes: 'with a noun like *carmen* as object, *deducere* functions as a key term of Augustan poetics, descriptive of the kind of composition which adheres to ... Callimachus, *Aet.* fr. 1.23-4 .... [j]ust as a spinner spins a thin thread from the wool on the distaff, so the Callimachean poet forms something thin and fine from a mass of formless material'. I see that Ovid has it both ways at the beginning of *Metamorphoses* as the fine spun song is described as *perpetuum*, *Met.* 1.4 'unbroken', indicating that it is to be the opposite of a Callimachean 'thin, fine' song. See also Kenney, 1976, 49-52, where he writes: 'a poem cannot be both "deductum" and "perpetuum", both Callimachean and un-Callimachean; but that ... is the implication', 51. He goes on to say of Ovid's proem, 'it manages to get the best of both worlds', 52.

rather ‘long’ poem. As an instruction to the gods it has overtones of military language and recalls its use in *Amores* 3.8.27, where the poet, as excluded lover, tells himself to lead out first javelins rather than fine verse, to illustrate the opposition set up between ‘soldier’ and ‘lover’.<sup>41</sup> As well as this, the word retains the poetic implication of spinning fine song from its more domestic meaning and in literature, the word *deducite* is usually associated with subtle and polished writing, as in Virgil’s *Eclogues* 6.4-5, Horace’s *Epistles* 2.1.224-25, and Propertius’ 1.16.41-42. In Ovid’s proem the word retains all these layers of meaning.<sup>42</sup> Again we see a single word taking the art of allusion to the limit to confront the suggestion of genre usually found in beginnings.

In contrast to the poems of both Virgil and Ovid, the word *primus* does not appear at the beginning of Lucan’s epic. Lucan’s opening emphasises the place, *Emathios ... campos*, *BC* 1.1, ‘Emathian fields’, and the foreign place-name strikes an odd note juxtaposed with Rome’s civil war evoked by *bella ... plus quam ciuilia*, in the opening line. Lucan’s reference to place picks up Virgil’s use of the place-names associated with what happened first at the beginning of the *Aeneid*.<sup>43</sup> But his emphasis on: *certatum totis concussi uiribus orbis*, *BC* 1.5, draws out ideas about the magnitude of the war.<sup>44</sup> As I will show in later chapters on battle narrative in Lucan’s poem, epic action veers between four main areas around the sea, from Italy to Thessaly and on to Egypt and Libya. A geographical triangulation is found in the *Aeneid*, as Aeneas travels from Troy via Carthage to Italy. Lucan’s geographic spread is even wider, and includes Spain and Gaul in his references to those places whence Caesar’s troops are drawn, *BC* 1.394-446. Lucan’s proem evokes Rome, with his mention of the blood of Latin races, *BC* 1.9, and the east marked by Babylon, *BC* 1.10, and the place (Parthia) where Crassus met his fate,

---

<sup>41</sup> Ovid writes: *proque bono uersu primum deducite pilum*, *Am.* 3.8.27, ‘and rather than fine verse, lead out first javelins.’

<sup>42</sup> Gilbert, 1976, 111-112.

<sup>43</sup> Roche, 2009, 100, notes the shift from the Italy of Virgil’s *Aeneid* to places on the edges of the world.

<sup>44</sup> Henderson, 1998, 187, on the phrase *bella ... plus quam ciuilia*, writes: ‘the phrase dares you to name this excess, this *plus quam* - the code of (social) “kinship” with Caesar - Pompey as *socer* - *gener* (affinal relatives); the paradox of a *Roman* civil war fought out in *alien* Thessaly; the sheer scale of *world* civil war; or whatever’.

BC 1.11.<sup>45</sup> This geographical aspect to Lucan's proem highlights a paradox: the battles, of Rome's civil war between Caesar and Pompey, are fought everywhere except in Rome.

Epic beginnings not only establish the subject of the poem but also reveal the poet's inspiration to write. In a conventional epic opening, Virgil calls on a 'Muse' (*Musa*, *Aen.* 1.8) for his instruction, to relate the 'causes' (*causas*, *Aen.* 1.8) of Juno's 'anger' (*iram*, *Aen.* 1.4), an epic theme recalling the opening to Homer's *Iliad*. Use of the vocative always calls attention to the addressee but also reminds the reader of the presence of the poet. Usually associated with high emotion, the vocative shows a change of focus, a more intense engagement between the speaker and the listener, whether this duo is the poet / narrator and reader / listener external to the text or character and audience within. Ovid uses the vocative and the imperative to similar effect while calling on the gods, although the muses are conspicuously absent. This is another pointed departure from the usual stance of the epic storyteller, where often the muse is evoked to add authority or to explain actions unknown to the characters in the poem. Eventually, toward the end of his poem, *Met.* 15.622-23, Ovid calls on the muses in formulaic manner but, by ignoring the muse at the start, Ovid, as poet / narrator takes control and assumes responsibility for both the beginning and the content of the epic. The muses are found as characters within the poem, Urania, *Met.* 5.260, and Calliope, *Met.* 5.339, who contend with the daughters of Pierus as storytellers. Instead of invoking the Muse for inspiration, Ovid calls on the whole pantheon of the Olympian gods, ordering them to assist and accusing them of prior interference. In this Ovid looks to Apollonius Rhodius, who dispenses with the Muse of Homer and calls instead on the god, Apollo for assistance.<sup>46</sup> Also concealed in Ovid's reference to the gods is the poet's statement of the subject of his poem, the first third of which is taken up with the changes engendered by the amorous or vengeful activities of these same gods. Omission of the Muses from

---

<sup>45</sup> As Roche, 2009, 115, points out: '[Babylon] a city evocative of the scale of the imperial conquests of Alexander the Great, which will feature explicitly in the narrative at 233f. and esp. 10.20-52'.

<sup>46</sup> Albis, 1996, 17, writes: 'the *Argonautica* does not open with a request of the Muse, as do both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Rather, Apollonius begins with homage to Phoebus'.

the beginning of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* shows a transformation of what might be considered a conventional epic opening, found in the epics of Homer and Virgil.

The greatest change to the conventions of the genre is found at the beginning of Lucan's epic. There are no gods or Muses to be found in Lucan's poem about civil war; the subject seems to preclude any such appeal.<sup>47</sup> Although the poet refers many times to fate and fortune, often personifying them so they seem to have power over the events he is relating, the interfering gods of Homeric and Virgilian epic are absent. Although we cannot find either vocative, or imperative, or personal pronouns, the poet's voice is unmistakable through his apostrophe to citizens, *BC* 1.8, and it is from the people of Rome that this poet expects answers. Because Lucan's poem is different in this respect from Virgil's *Aeneid* some scholars have dubbed it anti-epic and / or anti-*Aeneid*.<sup>48</sup> Opposition to Virgil can be seen again in a later section of the opening passage to his *Bellum Ciuile* where Lucan presents himself as a poet who, in marked contrast to both Virgil and Ovid, denies needing the help of either muse or gods for this Roman song.

sed mihi iam numen; nec, si te pectore uates  
accipio, Cirrhaea uelim secreta mouentem  
sollicitare deum Bacchumque auertere Nysa:  
tu satis ad uires Romana in carmina dandas. *BC* 1.63-6

But now a god to me, nor, if I as poet accept you in my breast, would I wish to trouble the god controlling Cirrha's secrets or to turn Bacchus aside from Nysa: You are enough for giving strength to Roman songs.

There is no mistaking Lucan's inversion of Homeric epic in this passage. In contrast also to his own opening lines, he now uses the first person verb *accipio*, *BC* 1.63, 'I accept' to re-affirm his position as narrator.<sup>49</sup> The first-person verb coupled with reference to a 'Roman' song associates the narrator *persona* with the

---

<sup>47</sup> Feeney, 1991, 52-3, is most informative on the topic of the gods in epic.

<sup>48</sup> Bramble, 1982, 543, writes: 'with epic conventions the stock ingredients are either missing or accommodated to the themes of reversal of values and the breakdown of order'. Batinski, 1992, 20, sees that the grammatical subject of Lucan's catalogue, *BC* 1.392-465, reverses the epic device. Henderson, 1998, 166, writes: 'His hilarious poem traces a subversion of the system of values, linguistic, literary, ideological and cultural, which "should" be fixed in place, asserted and paraded by the epic tradition'. Johnson, 1987, 51-53, sees the snakes episode as outrageous, ridiculous, and subverting epic conventions. However, I incline more toward Leigh, 1997, 89, who writes: 'Lucan does not so much write an anti-*Aeneid* as draw out the troubling "further voice" audible in the prophesy of Anchises', and also toward Masters, 1992, 138, who writes: 'Lucan stands self-consciously past the end of the epic genre; in the *Bellum Ciuile* epic is resurrected and lives again, a weird, grotesque afterlife before it is allowed to die for good'.

<sup>49</sup> I look closer at Lucan's use of the first person singular and plural below, 27-8.

Roman poet Lucan in the mind of the reader. Reinforced by the word *uates*, with its layers of meaning ('poet' and 'priest', 'prophet' or 'seer'), the poet invokes the literary and religious power inherent in the word in order to emphasise his own strong position as the controlling voice in his epic.<sup>50</sup> The pronoun *mihi* also draws attention to the narrator as it does in Virgil's *Aeneid* 1.8; but while Virgil calls on the Muse to help him, as poet, remember the causes of the war, Lucan calls on a more contemporary and still only potential divinity.<sup>51</sup> The god evoked by the poet, although not named in these lines (*BC* 1.63-66), is Lucan's emperor, Nero, because the lines follow the much debated passage (encomiastic or ironic) which opens with a disclaimer to excuse the crime of civil war and closes with the fanciful idea that once Nero is a god in heaven (as he is destined to be) there will be no war, just love and peace throughout the whole world, *BC* 1.56-62.<sup>52</sup> Apollo, the god controlling Cirrha's secrets, and Bacchus, the two deities rejected here, are involved, however, in showing the reader the wider scope of the poem at the end of Book 1.<sup>53</sup> A matron reveals the words of Phoebus Apollo not Bacchus, but the unnamed woman is likened to a frenzied Bacchante, alluded to poetically: *Ogygio decurrit plena Lyaeo*, *BC* 1.675, 'she runs down filled with Theban Dionysus'.<sup>54</sup> She becomes a medium to voice dismay about the civil war between Caesar and Pompey, as well as about later confrontations: *bella ... plus quam ciuilia*, *BC* 1.1, which are the direct result of the civil war signalled at the opening of the poem.<sup>55</sup> Such oblique reference to the gods in Lucan's poem is in direct contrast to the conventions of Homeric epic where the gods play an important part

---

<sup>50</sup> The term *uates* is used 26 times in Lucan's *BC* – seven of these refer to poets (1.63, 448; 7.553; 9.360, 963, 980, 984) where the poet discourses on the role of poets to give immortality to deeds, people and themselves, reminiscent of Ovid's concluding lines in *Metamorphoses* 15.871-9. The remaining 19 times refer to priests, prophets or seers: Arruns - 1.585; 618; the Delphic Oracle - 5.85, 98, 115, 124, 165, 176, 208, 218; the Prophetess of Cumae - 1.564, 5.183, 8.824; Erichtho and the corpse - 6.628, 651, 813; Pompey's prophetic dream - 7.22; and Proteus - 10.510). Newman, 1967, 99-104, has written at length on the etymology of the word in ancient times, and tells us that the word was first used in the sense of 'poet' in Virgil's *Eclogues*.

<sup>51</sup> Virgil set the precedent of anticipating honours to come, in his *Georgics*. Virgil refers to Caesar Augustus, *G* 1.25, as a potential deity, and asks him to 'give the nod' to his beginnings, *G* 1.40. Ovid also writes that Caesar Germanicus, destined to be emperor and therefore a god, gives strength to Ovid's song: *dederis in carmina uires*, *Fast.* 1.17. This destiny however, remained unfulfilled.

<sup>52</sup> Ahl, 1976, 35-47; Dewar, 1994: 199-211; and Jenkinson, 1974: 8-9.

<sup>53</sup> See Braund, 1992, 224, who writes: 'Apollo; his shrine at Delphi is here referred to, Cirra being a nearby town'.

<sup>54</sup> OLD: '*Lyaeus*, 1. (masc. as sb.) "The one who sets free", a cult-title of Dionysus. b (poet., identified with wine; also with the vine or its foliage)'.

<sup>55</sup> See Hardie, 1993, 107-08.



in the epic narrative, intruding into the action among mortals to help or hinder those they favour or oppose. In Lucan's poem it is more often the forces of nature that help or hinder in civil war.<sup>56</sup> Poetic description of these forces and discussion of the role of destiny or fate make Lucan's epic very different from earlier models, yet at the same time its overt allusions show a constant awareness of earlier epic.

Virgil's *Aeneid* combines the two epics of Homer in its proem, but the poet takes command of the project, indicated by the first person *cano*, *Aen.* 1.1, 'I sing'. It is not until the eighth line that he requests that the Muse, *mihi causas memora*, *Aen.* 1.8 'recall the causes for me' of the gods' anger so he can tell the audience, and even here the personal pronoun, *mihi*, calls attention to the poet rather than the customary Muse. This is not so different from the request by the Greek poet that the goddess should sing of the anger of the gods in the proem to Homer's *Iliad*, after which the poet seems to disappear from the story. In Homer's *Odyssey*, the poet calls on the Muse: ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε, Μοῦσα, *Od.* 1.1, 'tell me Muse of the man' and suggests that the Muse should εἰπέ καὶ ἡμῖν, *Od.* 1.10, 'speak to us too', before effacing himself from the story.<sup>57</sup> Virgil builds on the Homeric convention of calling on goddess or Muse, by drawing attention to himself as speaker or singer (*cano*), at the beginning of his epic.<sup>58</sup> In Lucan's proem, however, the verb *canimus* is delayed until the second line, where both its position and plurality make the proem seem less personal than the proems of either Virgil or Ovid.

At the very beginning of the *Metamorphoses* we see Ovid as a self-conscious poet and narrator by the repeated use of possessive adjectives based on personal pronouns: *coeptis...meis*, *Met.* 1.2-3 'my beginnings', and *mea ... tempora*, *Met.* 1.4 'my times'. Although there is a faint echo of Virgil's earlier use of the personal pronoun (*mihi*, *Aen.* 1.8), Ovid does not follow Virgil's use of the first person verb *cano*. In the proem the poet of the *Metamorphoses* indicates that what he is about to tell is *carmen*, *Met.* 1.4 'song' in a line laden with conflicting poetic

<sup>56</sup> See for example: flood, *BC* 4.83-129; thirst, *BC* 4.292-336; dust, *BC* 4.765-68; famine, *BC* 4.402-14; and plague and famine, *BC* 6.80-117.

<sup>57</sup> See De Jong, 1987, 2004, 45-7, for an assessment of the scholarship on the connection between the muses and the narrator. See also Redfield, 2001, 458.

<sup>58</sup> Fantham, 1996, 7, writes that among poets in Rome: 'There was an inherited apparatus of consecration for poets, equipped with advice from Apollo or the muses, and poetic attributes like the pipes of Hesiod, the lute of Orpheus or Linus, and the pure spring of Hippocrene'.

allusion. The poet, Ovid, speaks self-consciously of his own poetry, and his use of the imperative forms, *aspirate*, *Met.* 1.3 ‘breathe on’, and *deducite*, *Met.* 1.4 ‘draw down’, can be seen to give prominence to the poet’s mind as the motivating force behind the gods’ inspiration for writing epic.<sup>59</sup> Both these imperative verbs arrest our attention, and are used to add force to the poet’s request.

The imperative *aspirate*, *Met.* 1.3, ‘breathe on’ or ‘blow upon’ as well as meaning to inspire or to stimulate the creative spirit, also conjures up the nautical image of a favourable breeze filling the sails to start a pleasant journey.<sup>60</sup> This word is programmatic of beginnings and this is borne out wherever it appears in poetry. It has epic connotations because in Virgil’s *Aeneid* Fortuna seems to favour Aeneas with momentary success during the fall of Troy, *Aen.* 2.385, and the start of the final part of the story is signalled by Virgil calling on Calliope, the Muse of epic, to inspire him, *Aen.* 9.525. From our recollection of its appearance in Tibullus’ poetry, 2.1.35, 2.3.71, and in a nautical simile in Catullus’ 68.64, we hear elegiac echoes.<sup>61</sup> The significance of the term lies in the fact that one word can conjure up so many layers of allusion while privileging none and this reflects on the complex status of Ovid’s poem as epic in the mind of the reader.

As we have seen, Virgil’s use of the first person singular verb *cano* as the third word of his proem, briefly fixes emphasis on himself as poet and Ovid as the story teller appears in the first line of his brief proem, signalled by his use of possessive adjective *meus*. But in Lucan’s opening sentence, *canimus*, ‘I sing’, read as a poetic plural, emphasises the voice of the poet and indicates the poet’s personal engagement with the subject of his song. Plural / singular instability persists throughout the poem and always gives pause for thought.<sup>62</sup> Read as plural, the

---

<sup>59</sup> The opening words, *fert animus ... dicere*, *Met.* 1.1 draw attention to the poet in the same way that Virgil’s *cano* does.

<sup>60</sup> The nautical image of a poem as ship is common. Ovid uses it to illustrate the completion of his work, his ship aiming for or reaching harbour: *A.A.* 1.772; *R.A.* 811-12 and *A.A.* 2.9-10.

<sup>61</sup> *OLD*: ‘*aspiro*, 7, to give assistance to, to favour, to aid, to inspire (with words)’. See, with this meaning predominant, Virgil’s *Aen.* 2.385; 9.525; Tib. 2.1.33-35; 2.3.71-72. See also Catullus 68.64-65.

<sup>62</sup> Poetic plural, ‘we’ for ‘I’ is not often used throughout Lucan’s poem. More common is the use of a singular (collective noun) governed by a verb in the singular instead of plural required by the meaning. See especially: *miles*, soldier (the soldiery), *BC* 1.236, 342; 2.561; 3.178, 496; 4.37, 151, 176, 181, 196, 213, 268, and *iuuentus*, young man (the young soldiery), 1.239; 2.46, 196; 3.301, 355, 446, 461, 499, 516; 4.276, 303, 323, 476, 499, 533, 695, 773.

verb *canimus*, ‘we [Romans] sing’ involves the poet Lucan with his audience and the subject of his epic. Lucan, as both poet and a Roman citizen, seems to implicate his Roman readers in the events about to unfold; both the poet and his readers are inheritors of the state arising from civil war. When Lucan later calls on Nero to give strength ‘for Roman songs’ (*Romana ... carmina*, *BC* 1.66), we see the poet’s emphasis on his poem, both for Roman people and from the Roman poet. Civil war spreads throughout the Roman world and the poet tells the story of all the Romans involved, sharing out the load of guilt for such a crime against the society.

Singular / plural fluctuation may also emphasise that there is no clear-cut distinction between the two sides in conflict, that civil war is within one group of people, citizens of Rome, who turn their own hands against themselves with abilities and weapons matched, in particularly Roman and gladiatorial terminology. The word *canimus* could also foreshadow this poet’s use of many speakers throughout the poem. As mostly anonymous individuals, while professing with the poet to be reluctant to voice such *nefas* as civil war, they still manage to reveal the events of civil war in all their gory detail. Plurality of singers, whether poetic or actual is contrary to the accepted conventions of the genre and here we can see Lucan taking those changes, evident at the beginning of Virgil’s and Ovid’s epics, to a new extreme.

Although we can see little from the proem to Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* in the first twelve lines of Lucan’s poem, Ovid’s epic is strongly evoked in what can be viewed as a second attempt by Lucan at beginning. Another beginning is called for by the complexity of the subject matter; a topic so emotionally charged that the poet as narrator continually delays the action, postponing the narration of such crimes and wickedness. The poet imports Ovid’s first words in an attempt to take control of his subject, to move on from preamble to the action of the epic, but that does not happen here either. Lucan writes:

fert animus causas tantarum expromere rerum,  
 immensumque aperitur opus, quid in arma furemtem  
 inpulerit populum, quid pacem excusserit orbi.

*BC* 1.67-9

My mind is moved to disclose the causes of such great things, and a measureless work is being opened: to explain what incited a frenzied people into arms, what drove peace from the world.

The position of the allusive words at the beginning of the line suggests that Lucan is re-writing Ovid, taking the ambiguity from Ovid's opening to make the reiteration of his own opening clear and emphatic. It looks back to the opening lines of the epic and casts the intervening lines in the role of digression from the subject, civil war. Lucan's earlier poetic plural *canimus*, *BC* 1.2, 'I sing', is reinforced here by Ovidian self-awareness, and in this particular passage, the poet emphasises that his purpose is 'to disclose', (*expromere*), the Virgilian 'causes,' (*causas*, *Aen.* 1.8) 'of such great things', (*tantarum ... rerum*), where the 'things', 'events', or 'affairs' are, of course the civil war (*bella ... plus quam ciuilia*, *BC* 1.1), of his opening lines. As well as this overt allusion to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* we can find a hint of Virgil's second proem, *Aen.* 7.37-45.<sup>63</sup>

In Lucan's poem, the expression *fert animus*, *BC* 1.67, 'my mind is moved, is a clear echo of the proem to Ovid's epic, *Met.* 1.1. Lucan's 'measureless work' *BC* 1.68, acknowledges Ovid's *perpetuum ... carmen*, *Met.* 1.4 'continuous song'.<sup>64</sup> The similarity of these two words *immensum* and *perpetuum* is striking as each suggests that what the poet writes is boundless or endless and that the full meaning of the poem will not be contained within the events it relates. In Lucan's return to an opening sequence, the use of the word *opus*, also recalls the 'proem in the middle' where Virgil begins the second 'Iliadic' half of his *Aeneid*.<sup>65</sup>

... maior rerum mihi nascitur ordo,  
maius opus moueo ... *Aen.* 7.44-5

... a greater order of things is being produced by me, a greater work I set in motion ...

Lucan shows an awareness of Virgil's second proem to his *maius opus*, where Virgil's use of polyptoton, *maior*, *maius*, and the use of the verb *nascor*, 'to be

---

<sup>63</sup> Roche, 2009, 2, summarises scholarship on Lucan's epic and writes: 'Lucan's self-conscious, creative imitation of the *Aeneid* was, in any case, an implicitly political act from its conception'.

<sup>64</sup> See also Tarrant, 2002, 22.

<sup>65</sup> Conte, 1992, 147-60, looks at what he calls "proems in the middle" of Virgil's *Eclogues* and *Georgics* as well as the *Aeneid* and writes: 'of an identical function performed by the proem placed in the middle of the work: that of offering a specific declaration of poetics', 152, and goes on to say, 'the proem in the middle, in short, permits the poet to declare himself, but with less conspicuousness', 157.

born or spring forth', with its connotations of beginnings and growth, can be found to be analogous to Lucan's reference to the beginning and scope of his poem, 'and a measureless work being opened' (*inmensumque aperitur opus*, *BC* 1.68). Further allusion to Virgil can be found in this passage as Lucan refers to the 'causes of things' (*causas ... rerum*, *BC* 1.67).<sup>66</sup> Lucan's proem asks questions, and picks up the 'causes' (*causas*, *Aen.* 1.8) and queries, (*quo ... quidue*, *Aen.* 1.8-9) in the *Aeneid* when Virgil as poet asks the Muse for the reasons behind Aeneas' story. Lucan's poem acknowledges the conventions of the epic genre through these allusions but also stretches their limits further than we have seen before.

In conventional epic, the gods figure prominently and Virgil's *Aeneid* shows this at the outset. Reference is made to the force of the gods and to Juno (*ui superum*, ... *Iunonis*, *Aen.* 1. 4) and this is followed by mention of the 'gods' (*deos*, *Aen.* 1.6) of Aeneas; and reference to 'divinity' (*numine*, *Aen.* 1.8); to 'queen of the gods' (*regina deum*, *Aen.* 1.9) and to 'gods' or 'celestials' (*caelestibus*, *Aen.* 1.11). In Ovid's epic, although the first third is devoted to the misbehaviour of gods and goddesses, the poet refers to them only once in his proem, although with the added force of the vocative. Throughout Lucan's poem the Olympian gods are absent and play no role as characters in Rome's civil war, and although they are appealed to the narrator only guesses their motivations. The very existence of the gods is called into question through the deification of mortals after civil war, *BC* 7.445-59. The Fates and Fortuna appear in Lucan's epic as the driving force behind the seemingly irrational events of civil war. Lucan's first reference to the gods is to compare Rome's civil war to the battle of the gods and giants. The poet suggests that the wickedness of civil war allowing one man supreme command in Rome is no greater than the price paid by the gods for Jupiter's supremacy in the heavens and in this way the poem equates mythical 'facts' with political events in

---

<sup>66</sup> We can also detect a reference to Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*, a work that influenced both Virgil and Ovid as well as Lucan. O'Hara, 2007, 140, writes: 'Lucretius' epic begins, like Lucan's, with a proem that takes a position quite different from that which will appear later in the epic: Lucretius' "Hymn to Venus" and Lucan's "Praise of Nero", for all their dissimilarities, play similar roles in their poems'. See also Adler, 2003, 6, and Gagliardi, 1976, 108.

Rome. In this Lucan reinforces the connection between Jupiter and Caesar established by Augustus.<sup>67</sup>

In his proem, Lucan, as poet, delays mention of the gods until he addresses them in general terms:

iam nihil, o superi, querimur; scelera ipsa nefasque  
hac mercede placent. BC 1.37-38

Now I complain of nothing oh gods, such crimes and wickedness are pleasing  
with this reward.

Pre-eminence of the gods is reduced by their association with rivalry and battles for power, and with political crimes and wickedness, couched in commercial terms.<sup>68</sup> The poet also acknowledges the gods at the beginning of Book 2 when he writes: *iamque irae patuere deum*, BC 2.1, ‘and now the wrath of the gods was revealed’. Lucan also addresses the gods in an impassioned passage condemning the decision made in Egypt to kill Pompey, BC 8.542-60. But from the outset, the poet has expressed scepticism about the gods, and we see this in his discussion on the beliefs of the Druids, BC 1.452-62, and on the origin of the gods, BC 8.458-59. However, gods take second place to the poet in Lucan’s epic. This self-conscious positioning of the poet’s *persona* in the proem of the epic and the minor part assigned to the gods in the poem reveals a trend toward transformation of the genre, because of the impiety of civil war.

Lucan’s proem is more extensive and complex than the opening passage of Virgil’s *Aeneid*, and in length differs considerably from the four-line opening of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. In this we can see that Lucan’s poem reflects Neronian extravagance compared with Augustan restraint.<sup>69</sup> In the first seven lines Lucan seeks to mark out his topic as so problematic and novel that it requires elaboration

---

<sup>67</sup> See Galinsky, 1996, 314, 318. See also Zanker, 1990, 93-4, fig. 76, 77, on imperial imagery showing the *corona ciuica*, appearing on coins and on a cameo. See also Ovid’s poems, especially *Fasti* 1.607-08; and those from exile, *Tr.* 1.1.72; 2.33-40; 3.1.35; *Pont.* 1.7.43-50; 2.8.53-62; and 3.1.113-18, (Augustus Caesar’s wife as Juno). .

<sup>68</sup> See Coffee, 2009, 3-4, the argument of whose book is: ‘that Vergil’s *Aeneid*, Lucan’s *Civil War* and Statius’ *Thebaid* represent complex and distinctive responses to the socioeconomic mores of each poet’s day’. See Roche, 2009, on *superi*, BC 1.37.

<sup>69</sup> See Shotter, 2005, 59, on Nero’s megalomania and Galinsky, 1996, 363-4, on the stability of the Augustan Age.

of the many and varied aspects of the subject, civil war, in a very long preamble to battle action. Following the poet's apostrophe to the citizens, the narrator condemns civil war and points out that Rome still has foreign enemies, implying that foreign wars are preferable to civil war, *BC* 1.13-32. When Lucan writes: *quod si non aliam uenturo fata Neroni / inuenere uiam*, *BC* 1.33, 'but if the fates have found no other way for the coming of Nero', we can see a certain ambiguity underling the epic poet's conventional epic appeal. The emperor Nero, *BC* 1.33-69, the god on whom the narrator calls, is an emperor descended from a long line of Caesars whose divine and dynastic power began with the civil war about to be re-told.<sup>70</sup>

Expansion of the proem and the concomitant delay to the introduction of the main characters, Caesar and Pompey, (they finally appear at *BC* 1.121-26) indicate that the subject and the problematic nature of opponents in civil war are too distasteful to be talked about in an epic poem. Rather than begin the action of war, the poet Lucan draws out his preamble by discussing the involved causes of Rome's civil war.<sup>71</sup> First in general terms, *BC* 1.67-97, he explains that the greatness of Rome, like the universe itself, is destined to fall. Lucan writes: *in se magna ruunt*, *BC* 1.81, 'mighty things go into ruin of themselves'. Then he suggests particular situations that were part of the cause, such as the death of Crassus and Caesar's daughter Julia, as well as the rivalry between the two main protagonists, Caesar and Pompey, *BC* 1.98-128. After a comparison between these two Roman generals, the poet returns to the most immediate and displeasing causes of the war, the greed and corruption of the times, *BC* 1.158-82. The complex voice of the poet is heard throughout, admonishing the citizens and Rome, and encouraging the reader to agree with the narrator's condemnation of the civil war. The contest for power between Caesar and Pompey, Rome's civil war, took place in the years 49-45 BCE, only just over a century before Lucan composed his epic, which was left unfinished at the time of his death, 65CE. The poet appears reluctant to describe the action of the war, and the delay is taken up with a form of scene-setting which

---

<sup>70</sup> Ahl, 1976, 332, writes: 'With the grimmest of black humour, Lucan dedicates this vision of disaster to Caesar, and takes Nero as his only muse'. See also Johnson, 1987, 121-23; and Holmes, 1999, 75-81.

<sup>71</sup> See Masters, 1992, 9, who sees in Lucan's poem a 'conflict between the will to tell the story and the horror which shies from telling it'.

directs the way the reader is expected to view the events, even though these same events are relatively recent history and therefore common knowledge. Lucan's long and subjective introduction is a significant change to Homeric epic openings.

In both of Homer's epics the narrator plunges into the story immediately after the proem. In the *Iliad* an abstract idea, μῆνις, *Il.* 1.1, 'wrath', is explained in the narrative and the rhetorical question is answered by the first event described in the epic.<sup>72</sup> We can see the same thing happen in the *Odyssey*, where the position of the unnamed man on his journey home is the first description following the proem. Virgil seems to follow a similar pattern, opening with an unnamed man, but then his epic takes as its focus the city rather than a named hero. Immediately following the proem, Virgil writes: *urbs antiqua fuit*, *Aen.* 1.12, 'there was an ancient city', and it turns out that this formula for story telling does not tell of the cities we are expecting from the opening lines, either the city in Italy founded by Aeneas, or Troy. It takes a moment or two to disconnect this 'city' from Aeneas' city and to link it with the main theme of the proem, Juno and her anger, introduced by reference to Juno's city, Carthage *Aen.* 1.13. Once this connection is made, the proem itself expands to include an explanation for Juno's anger, and ends with: *tantae molis erat Romanam condere gentem*, *Aen.* 1.33 'so great an effort it was to found the Roman race'.<sup>73</sup> Here the adjective *tantae* not only reminds the reader of its earlier appearance in the narrator's rhetorical question at the end of the first section of the proem, *Aen.* 1.11, but also draws attention to the narrator's voice again, through the value judgement inherent in this adjective. Virgil, for the most part, is not an overt narrator. Like the Homeric story teller, he is mainly behind the story, yet his voice can be heard in thematic passages such as this. The complex poetic *persona* of Lucan's epic revealed in his opening introduction, is very different from that found in Virgil's epic.

---

<sup>72</sup> Rutherford, 2001, 281, writes: 'But however passionate the anger of Achilles in Book 1, its pettiness becomes evident in retrospect, when it is replaced by the terrible agony and furious hatred that consumes Achilles when he learns of Patroclus' death'. See, Nagy, 1979; and Muellner, 1996, 96.

<sup>73</sup> Hardie, 1986, 229, sees the anger of Juno reflected in Virgil's storm imagery and that this anger is obvious at the beginning and end of the *Aeneid*.



The words of the Virgilian narrator: *tantae molis erat Romanam condere gentem*, as well as stating the subject of the poem, also serve to re-connect this section of the *Aeneid* with the earlier part of the proem and the city first promised, Aeneas' city, Rome: we see *Romae*, *Aen.* 1.7; *conderet*, *Aen.* 1.5, and *genus*, *Aen.* 1.6, repeated here in a form of ring composition.<sup>74</sup> Repetition not only seems to extend the proem to line 33 but also signals the status of these words with regard to the theme of the whole epic.<sup>75</sup> We see that Virgil's extension of his proem marks a modification of the opening structure of Homer's epics, so that while he is taking some authority from the Homeric epics, he is also emphasising the change he is making; that this is a Roman epic in both subject and structure, and that as overt narrator he will intrude more often than Homer into his story. Lucan builds on this Virgilian extension and intrusion in his poem.

Virgil's poem blends myth and history; it takes the aftermath of the legendary Trojan War and incorporates it into an explanation for the fable of the foundation story of Rome. The proem to Virgil's *Aeneid* tells us a lot about the principal character, Aeneas, even though he is not introduced by name until much later. Aeneas is first named as he laments his uncertain fate, wishing that he had died with the heroes at Troy, and in this we see Virgil positioning his poem within the genre. Virgil's epic beginning, *arma uirumque*, *Aen.* 1.1, where two words denoting war are found, *arma*, 1.1, and *bello*, 1.5, shows that this author is embarking on a conventional epic about war.

But more than that, the epic is about Rome's foundation on war, as is made clear in the first great speech of Jupiter, *Aen.* 1.257-96, which includes reference to both myth (the Romulus and Remus story, *Aen.* 1.273-77), and history (the rise of a Roman empire, *Aen.* 1.278-79; and the rule of Caesar, *Aen.* 1.286, at the end of civil war, *Aen.* 1.292-96).<sup>76</sup> Virgil lived through political unrest at the start of the Augustan principate, and his largely mythological epic shows his reluctance to

---

<sup>74</sup> See Adler, 2003, 6, who writes: 'The proem of the *Aeneid* proposes, then, a complex triadic theme: Rome, anger, Carthage'.

<sup>75</sup> Williams, 1972, 161, comments on *Aen.* 1.33.

<sup>76</sup> Knauer, 1964, in Harrison, 1990, 411, writes: 'Aeneas ... unites in his person, in the epic acting in the *present*, the awful Trojan *past* - represented for instance in the reliefs of the temple of Juno in Carthage - as well as the glorious Roman *future* reaching to Augustus'.

engage too closely or directly with actual historical events. For example, the battle of Actium, a major confrontation in Rome's civil war, is presented as an engraving on Aeneas' shield, whereas Lucan, living under long established one-man rule can tell (albeit reluctantly) of historical events like this from the past with more assurance.

Ovid's *Metamorphoses* starts with a portrayal of chaos and describes its transformation into a formed world, but one where the forms of things and people are continually changing. Jupiter is given the first and last speeches in his poem, excepting, of course, the poet's last self-conscious statement. Ovid's epic has no main heroes and is solely concerned with myth and legend, except for the last two books where his treatment of Roman history takes its cue from Virgil but appears to be an elaboration of myths and those parts of the story left untold by Virgil.<sup>77</sup> Ovid as poet is further away from the turbulent beginnings of the principate and his life under the 'Augustan peace' lends a certain insouciance to his account of Roman history.

Lucan's proem is different again; his proem and its extension into the longer prologue alert the reader to the changes he is making to the genre, such as his treatment of the emotive subject of Rome's civil war, and frequent narratorial intervention, but his opening also shows his dependence on themes and structures found in earlier epics. The proems to all three epics outline the scope of the work to follow. The beginning of Virgil's *Aeneid* tells of Aeneas and his struggles to found Rome against the anger of Juno. Ovid's opening proem is the most condensed of the three but still conveys the subject, 'forms changed to new bodies' and the actions of the gods as well as the range of his poem, 'from the first origin of the world to my own times'. The proem of Lucan's epic, or the first twelve lines at least, sets out a new theme, Rome's civil wars, and then extends the preamble for many lines before we come to battle action, unlike any other extant epic proem.

---

<sup>77</sup> See Conte, 1987, 351 on Ovid's "little Aeneid".

The tone of the opening to Virgil's epic is one of puzzlement at the gods' behaviour, especially in the narrator's interrogative *tantaene animis caelestibus irae?* *Aen.* 1.11, 'Can there be so much wrath in the hearts of the gods?' and sympathy with the plight of the man whose problems are greater than most, shown by the repeated use of *tot*, *Aen.* 1.9, 10, 'so many'. The opposition set up between gods and man prepares the reader for conflict, the conventional subject of martial epic. Ovid's proem is witty and light-hearted, more in keeping with his earlier elegiac poetry than with weighty epic. The tone of Lucan's opening is firmly disapproving but, for all the narratorial protests that the subject is *nefas*, *BC* 1.6, 'unspeakable wickedness', the poet speaks out reiterating the particular horror of civil wars, confirming the epic status of his poem through its epic subject matter, war, but distorting the conventions of epic openings to a greater extent than Virgil or Ovid by the length of his preamble.

The beginnings of these three epics are different from, yet similar to, each other. We are given a summary of the subject of each epic in the proem and can also hear the poets' voice clearly at the outset. Virgil as 'singer' appears in his use of the first person verb, *cano*, and also seems to voice a personal opinion about the effort required to found Rome, before he steps back into the story and allows the reader's suspension of disbelief to remain largely unchallenged by authorial intrusion throughout his poem. Ovid makes his voice heard in the proem and although his voiced opinion is largely absent throughout his long and diverse epic, he concludes with a very personal epilogue. Lucan as narrator intrudes most insistently and at length in his proem, an intervention which indicates a change to the epic genre, occasioned by the subject, Rome's civil war. In my next chapter I will explore further how the choice of civil war as subject increases narratorial intrusion in Lucan's epic.

## Chapter 2:

### Lucan - The Intrusive Narrator

quis furor, o ciues, quae tanta licentia ferri?  
gentibus inuisis Latium praebere cruorem ...

BC 1.8-9

What madness, oh citizens, why such great freedom of iron? To offer the blood  
of Latium to hated races ...

Right at the beginning Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile* presents a complicated narrator / persona, one who then intrudes throughout the whole poem. The voice of the narrator is heard in this apostrophe to the citizens of Rome, the first of many such interventions.<sup>1</sup> Frequent examples of apostrophe make the reader more aware of the poet in his role of speaker or narrator and encourage us to imagine the audience of the poem's first recital, the original audience of the Roman poet Lucan. While this thesis agrees with most scholars that Lucan is a self-conscious and intrusive narrator,<sup>2</sup> a more complex and intriguing way of looking at authorial intervention in Lucan's poem is that of Henderson, 1998, who writes: 'The narrator attacks his (traditionally omniscient) epic authority ... inventing a(n anonymously limited consciousness) voice which lives the drama of the narrative, in ignorance of its eventualities ...'<sup>3</sup> He rightly indicates that Lucan's poem has a poet / narrator who is in some places omniscient and in other places is not. I will show in this chapter that Lucan's poem continually invites the reader to conflate the Roman poet Lucan with the narrator, while at the same time it presents a degree of narratorial ambiguity through its frequent portrayal of a narrator as

<sup>1</sup> Roche, 2009, 110-11, writes: 'versions of this question are recast throughout the poem at moments of narratorial disbelief and heightened emotional intensity'. He goes on: 'Apostrophe plays off the circuit of communication between poet and reader; it dislocates the reader from the temporal sequence of the narrative, and replaces this with a present(ation of) reality in which the poet is writing or reciting (seminal Culler (1981) 149-71 esp 152, 168-71)', 112.

<sup>2</sup> Masters, 1992, 88, writes: 'we discover that, more than any other epicist before him, Lucan makes himself not only a knowing narrator but a subjective and enthusiastic spectator of war'. Bartsch, 1997, 9, sees that the poet: 'self-consciously steps into his text to remind us who is creating it'. Behr, 2007, 5, suggests that: '... the rhetorical luxuriance of narrative interventions reveals an author permanently preoccupied with the relationship between his words and the reader'. Although the narrator is not the main focus of any of these scholars, all of them, to some extent comment on Lucan as narrator, because narratorial intrusion is so prominent throughout the poem. Core scholarship on narratology: Genette, 1980, 27, for examples from contemporary and classical sources and explanation of terms; Prince, 1982; and Bal, 1985. De Jong, Nunlist, and Bowie, 2004, 12-59, point the way for a narratorial analysis of ancient texts. Goward, B. 1999, applies narrative theory to dramatic texts.

<sup>3</sup> Henderson, 1998, 187-88. He goes on to write: 'The poem doesn't wish to comprehend, but disowns its patrimony of power/knowledge', 188.

though present at the scene of Rome's civil war, a narrator who both recoils from the subject of the narrative and seems to revel in the gory details. Recurrent intervention by Lucan's multifaceted narrator / persona is called for by the poem's morally complex subject, Romans killing each other in civil war. I will also point out that, because the subject of Lucan's poem is socially devastating civil war, Lucan's narrator is like the character of tragedy, that his dramatic interventions add impetus to the narrative and colour our reception of it. It is this frequent and patent intervention by the narrator into the epic, occasioned by the subject civil war that marks Lucan's epic as different from earlier epic.

At the beginning, and throughout the *Bellum Civile*, we hear the voice of Lucan as poet clearly and often.<sup>4</sup> Apostrophe alerts us to the voice of this composite poet / narrator / persona, as well as to the addressee, who is often a character in the poem. It encourages us to read the poem to search for answers to the narrator's questions.<sup>5</sup> All through Lucan's epic we find many rhetorical figures such as: apostrophe and exclamations (*pro*, *o*, *en*, *ecce* or *heu*), the use of the first person and reference to credibility, rumour, fables and story that alert the reader to the voice and opinion of an intrusive narrator. These figures are found in varying degrees in all epic poetry. Looking at examples of these figures in the epics of Virgil and Ovid, I will show that while narratorial intervention is a feature of epic literature in general, Lucan's complex and frequent use of such figures exceeds any prior usage, and makes his epic both different from and similar to earlier epic poetry.

Apostrophe is usually associated with strong emotion and here at the beginning of Lucan's epic it is loaded with disapproval associated with the words *furor*, 'madness' and *inuisus*, 'hated'.<sup>6</sup> Although the apostrophe in Lucan's poem calls to mind a similar apostrophe in Virgil's *Aeneid*, its impact is very different as it draws attention to Lucan, rather than to the words of a character within the story.

---

<sup>4</sup> Roche, 2009, 60-61.

<sup>5</sup> See Block, 1982, 11, who writes: 'The invocation, a form of apostrophe that frequently includes a rhetorical question, appears to direct the attention of the audience toward the significance of what is about to happen, and to ask for help in describing momentous events'.

<sup>6</sup> Behr, 2007, 7, writes: 'Commenting too frequently on the action – and there are at least 197 instances of apostrophe in the *Bellum Civile* – the narrator directs the reader's attention toward his own presence'.

The Virgilian narrator is, for the most part, well hidden behind the characters in his poem. For example, Virgil as primary narrator is behind the character Aeneas, recounting the words of yet a third voice, the tertiary narrator, Laocoon.<sup>7</sup> Laocoon, at the sight of the horse outside the gates cries out: *o miseri, quae tanta insania, ciues? Aen.* 2.42, ‘oh wretched citizens, what great madness is this?’<sup>8</sup> But the poet Virgil intrudes in his own voice much less than the Lucanian narrator does in the *Bellum Ciuile*. The word *furor* in Lucan’s apostrophe reminds us of a similar instance in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* when the character, Pentheus, condemns his people for taking part in Bacchic rites: *quis furor, anguigenae, proles Mauortia, uestras / attonuit mentes?* *Met.* 3.532-33, ‘What frenzy, snake-descended offspring of Mars, has stunned your minds?’<sup>9</sup> Like Virgil, Ovid most often uses apostrophe in the words of secondary internal narrators. Through allusion to these characters in earlier epic, the narrator in Lucan’s poem takes on some of their dramatic characteristics, and at such moments of apostrophe he speaks like an impassioned ‘Laocoon’ or an indignant ‘Pentheus’. Apostrophe generates interest through its appeal to drama or pathos and the reader or audience eagerly awaits the reaction of the internal audience or narratee, as the disastrous events unfold.<sup>10</sup> It suggests a form of collusion between the poet as external narrator and his external audience, almost as if he is speaking over the heads of the internal audience.

---

<sup>7</sup> See de Jong, Nunlist and Bowie, 2004, 1-4, for an excellent and succinct explanation of narratorial terminology such as this.

<sup>8</sup> See also *Aen.* 5.670-71. Behr, 2005, 215, writes: ‘in the epic genre apostrophe can perform two rather different roles ... a rhetorical strategy to react to a unilateral endorsement of the plot ... [and] to provide further details that disrupt and complicate the narration and its intelligibility’. Narducci, 2002, 88, looks at the narrative voice in epic and argues, rightly, that Virgil is in opposition to Homeric detachment and that the subjectivity of his style was manifested in direct interventions, personal comments and apostrophe.

<sup>9</sup> Narducci, 2002, 89, comments on Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and suggests that in this work the apostrophe serves to cool the reader’s emotions, rather than set them off, to inhibit an excess of empathy and to create ironic distance. Fantham, 2004, 126, writes: ‘Ovid makes brilliant play with “unreliable” narrators, starting with Jupiter himself’.

<sup>10</sup> Although ‘narratee’ is a narratological term its meaning is self-evident. See de Jong, 2004, 35, who explains terms such as this in a schematic diagram outlining the presentation and reception of texts, and who again gives an excellent description of narratological terms in her ‘Glossary’, de Jong, Nunlist and Bowie, 2004, xv-xvii.

Apostrophe is the most important signifier of authorial presence.<sup>11</sup> When the narrator breaks into the narrative about the mutiny of Caesar's troops, his apostrophe, first to the gods then to Caesar, highlights the density and sophistication of the narratorial voice in Lucan's epic:<sup>12</sup>

sic eat, o superi: quando pietasque fidesque  
 destituunt moresque malos sperare relictum est,  
 finem ciuili faciat discordia bello.  
 quem non ille ducem potuit terrere tumultus?  
 fata sed in praeceps solitus demittere Caesar  
 fortunamque suam per summa pericula gaudens  
 exercere uenit; nec dum desaeuiat ira  
 expectat: medios properat temptare furores.  
 non illis urbem spoliandaque templa negasset  
 Tarpeiamque Iouis sedem matresque senatus  
 passurasque infanda nurus. uult omnia certe  
 a se saeua peti, uult praemia Martis amari;  
 militis indomiti tantum mens sana timetur.  
 non pudet, heu, Caesar, soli tibi bella placere  
 iam manibus damnata tuis? hos ante pigebit  
 sanguinis? his ferri graue ius erit, ipse per omne  
 fasque nefasque rues? lassare et disce sine armis  
 posse pati; liceat scelerum tibi ponere finem.  
 saeue, quid insequeris? quid iam nolentibus instas?  
 bellum te ciuile fugit.

BC 5.297-316

So may it go, oh gods, since piety and loyalty depart and it remains to hope for wicked ways, let discord make an end to civil war. What leader was that tumult not able to terrify?

But Caesar comes, accustomed to plunge headlong into fate, and rejoicing to employ his own fortune in the highest danger, nor does he wait until their anger ceases to rage, he hastens to test them mid frenzy. He would not have refused them the city and the temples to be plundered and the Tarpeian seat of Jove and the mothers and young women of the Senators to suffer the unspeakable. For sure, he wants all cruelty to be sought from him, he wants the prizes of war to be loved, only a sane mind of an ungovernable soldier makes him afraid.

Alas, Caesar, does it not shame you that wars please you alone, wars now condemned by your troops? Will they feel disgust at blood before you? Will rule of iron be a burden for them, while you yourself rush through every right and every wrong? Tire and learn that it is possible to endure without arms; you can place a limit on your crime. Cruel man, why do you proceed? Why do you threaten those now unwilling? Civil war flees from you.

This passage of Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile* highlights two modes of narrative evident throughout the poem: epic narrative, the portrayal of events, characters and

<sup>11</sup> Behr, 2005, 216, writes: 'Lucan will profit from this kind of apostrophe and he will use it as a vehicle of negative criticism, or rather as a tool to recover a space for independence and scepticism toward the tyranny of the epic plot and the ideological corollaries of the genre'. See Barratt, 1979, 97-103, for commentary.

<sup>12</sup> Braund, 1992, 269, writes: 'According to Suetonius, Caesar's troops never mutinied during his ten years' campaigns against the Gauls but more than once during the civil wars. This mutiny occurred at Palcentia in north Italy (mod. Piacenza)'.

sequences of action; and hermeneutic narrative, the representation of meaning, suggestion, and abstract commentary on action or events. The latter mode is more prominent in this passage where it is signalled by the poet's use of apostrophe. Epic narrative leading up to the passage portrays the speech of the rebellious soldier and its result. The soldiers, running through the camp 'demand the leader' (*ducem deposcere*, BC 5.296), but their action is interrupted by the narrator, who arrests narrative movement with an apostrophe to the gods, an invocation which not only accounts for the hiatus in the narrative but also calls for an end to civil war itself.<sup>13</sup> Because of earlier instances of narratorial intervention in Lucan's poem, the reader expects that the poet will make his disapproving view of the continuing war known, as he does in this apostrophe. The paradox, implicit in the narrator's assessment that discord could end war, picks up on the same idea posed in the speech of the soldier: *irato milite, Caesar, / pax erit*, BC 5.294-95. But more than that, the poet's use of the term *discordia*, in conjunction with the greatest discord of all, with civil war (*ciuili ... bello*, BC 5.299), draws attention to the fact that mutiny, in-fighting or conflict between the members and leader of one group, is itself a form of civil war.

The narrator is overt in this apostrophe, but then the poem seems to revert to epic narrative, BC 5.301-04, with a more covert narrator who describes the arrival of Caesar to confront his troops, how he hastens to test his men while they were still angry. However, Lucan's version of epic narrative is short lived; the narrator becomes overt as well as omniscient very quickly as the poet's use of the pluperfect subjunctive, *non ... negasset*, BC 5.305, suggests that the narrator has an insight into Caesar's state of mind, and knows what Caesar would not have denied his soldiers. Images of the usual pillage and rape due to the soldiers in a war against a foreign enemy are shocking when projected onto a civil war, where the *urbs*, BC 5.305, is Rome, and those who are to be raped, and to suffer the unspeakable (*passurasque infanda*, BC 5.307), are the very wives and daughters of the Roman senate, dramatically reminding the reader of the consequences of

---

<sup>13</sup> Fantham, 1985, 125, on this passage writes: 'as if Caesar, or Lucan, could now reverse history'. Lucan calls on the gods with the exclamation *o superi* more than any other poet. He uses the expression 11 times in his *Bellum Ciuile*: 1.37, 649; 2.260, 296; 5.297, 669; 7.58, 869; 8.542, 630, 739, whereas in Virgil it is found only once, *Aen.* 8.572. Ovid uses it twice: *Met.* 9.244; 14.729. See Marti, 1975, 86-88, on the narrator's assumed ignorance of the outcome of events related.



Rome's civil war. The all-knowing narrator then shows what Caesar wants of his soldiers, *BC* 5.305-08, and what Caesar fears in them: *militis indomiti tantum mens sana timetur*, *BC* 5.309 'only a sane mind of an ungovernable soldier makes him afraid'. Here again the poet inserts a paradox, a leader frightened of rationality in his rebellious soldiers.

When the narrator now addresses Caesar himself, *BC* 5.310-16, the apostrophe gives the impression that the narrator is right there, an eye-witness to the mutiny and to Caesar's reaction, in a position to admonish and to question Caesar: *saeue, quid insequeris? quid iam nolentibus instas? / bellum te ciuile fugit*, *BC* 5.315 'Cruel man, why do you proceed? Why do you threaten those now unwilling? Civil war flees from you'. The narrator shows that civil war is arrested by the sanity of mutiny, a paradoxical view given that mutiny is also an example of civil conflict. Following the narrator's intervention, the poem shows Caesar's response to the complaints of his soldiers in a speech which is another reminder of the poet Lucan, because it is couched in the oratorical language for which the historical Lucan was famous.<sup>14</sup> It picks up the complaints of the mutinous soldier and answers them point by point even though the poet makes it clear through Caesar's words that Caesar himself did not hear the grievances of the men, *BC* 5.319-20.<sup>15</sup> Historical content in the poem could be a catalyst for increased narratorial intervention, as the poet must justify his representation of these events.

Further instances of overt narratorial intrusion are evident in exclamations such as *heu*, *BC* 1.13, 'alas' which appeal directly to the reader. Lucan writes:

heu, quantum terrae potuit pelagique parari  
hoc quem ciuiles hauserunt sanguine dextrae ... *BC* 1.13-14

Alas, how much land and sea was it possible to gain with this blood that citizens'  
right hands have drunk ...

This exclamation sets the tone of dismay or pain as the poet laments the futility of blood lost in civil war. In Lucan's poem the expression of grief is caused by the battles and / or outcome of civil war, and there is an implicit and negative comparison between this 'civil' kind of war among citizens and the type of

<sup>14</sup> Braund, 1992, xvii-xviii, cites Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, 10.1.90.

<sup>15</sup> See Fantham, 1985, 123, on this encounter between Caesar and his men .

conflict epic poetry usually celebrates, war against a foreign and worthy adversary. The expression *heu* is most often associated with emotive or moralistic words combined with civil war: ‘Ah, the crime’, (*heu facinus*, *BC* 8.604; 10.518); ‘Ah, the shame’, (*heu pudor*, *BC* 2.708; 5.310; 2.517); ‘Ah, mad man’, (*heu demens*, *BC* 2.575; 5.228). We see it in the phrase: *heu miseri qui bella gerunt!* *BC* 4.382, ‘Alas, wretched are those who wage war!’ where again the narrator deplores civil war.<sup>16</sup> The Lucanian narrator often intensifies pathos when the exclamation *heu* is strengthened by the term *pro* (or *o*) accompanied by an apostrophe or address:

... dolet, heu, semperque dolebit  
quod scelerum, Caesar, prodest tibi summa tuorum,  
cum genero pugnasse pio. pro tristia fata! *BC* 6.303-05

It causes pain, alas, and always will cause pain because it benefits you that the highest of your crimes, Caesar, is to have fought with a pious son-in-law! Oh, sad fates!

The narrator appeals to the reader to agree with his condemnation of Caesar’s part in the civil war, evident in his exclamation ‘Oh, sad fates!’ Exclamations such as this indicate not only the voice of the narrator but also the feelings that narrator wishes to evoke in the reader.<sup>17</sup> There is no mistaking the voiced opinion of the Roman poet, Lucan, as narrator, or his partisan stance when we find expressions such as these in the poem.

In contrast, Virgil only occasionally intrudes into his poem as the Virgilian narrator, as I have shown in the previous chapter. In the middle of a simile in Book 12, he uses exclamation to evoke our sympathy for the farmer’s sight of an approaching storm, *miseris, heu, praescia longe / horrescunt corda agricolis*, *Aen.* 12.452-53 ‘and the hearts of wretched farmers, alas, know it from afar and shudder’.<sup>18</sup> Through the simile, the reader is encouraged to feel sympathy for the

<sup>16</sup> The expression is used 14 times in Lucan’s *Bellum Civile*, and it is always negative.

<sup>17</sup> This exclamation is found at *BC* 5.57 and 7.411, as well as here at 6.305. Exclamations or apostrophe by the interventionist narrator including *o* or *pro*: *BC* 1.8, 87, 510; 2.116; 3.73, 79, 241; 4.96, 110, 190, 319, 373, 385; 5.297, 527, 528; 7.29, 43, 58, 205, 474, 588; 8.542, 678, 836, 843; 9.980, 1046, 1058, 1108; 10.85, 146, 410; *o superi*: 1.37; 5.297; 7.58, 869, 8.542; *heu*: 1.13; 2.517, 708; 4.382; 5.228, 310; 6.303; 8.604; 10.518.

<sup>18</sup> See *Aen.* 8.537 for similar pathos, but this expression can be read also as lacking in force, more like ‘oh dear!’ or ‘oops!’: *Aen.* 2.738; 3.709, 711; 6.458; 12.486. However, it seems laden with pathos, when Dido uses the expression *Aen.* 4.13, 376, 541, 657, and when Anchises expresses his dismay, *Aen.* 6.828.

doomed army of Turnus as well as admiration for Aeneas as an unstoppable natural force. The intervention of the narrator as poet is perceptible as he exclaims about the dead warriors, Nisus and Euryalus, in Book 9 of the *Aeneid*:

fortunati ambo! si quid mea carmina possunt,  
nulla dies umquam memori uos eximet aevo,  
dum domus Aeneae Capitoli immobile saxum  
accolet imperiumque pater Romanus habebit. *Aen.* 9.446-49

Fortunate pair! If my songs have any power, no day will ever remove you from eternal memory, while-ever the house of Aeneas dwells on the Capitol's immovable rock and a Roman father will hold power.

Here is an example of narratorial intrusion which does not necessarily give a clear direction as to how the passage should be read, whether as showing sympathy with, endorsement of, or irony toward, the story being told. Because these two youths are addressed as 'fortunate pair!' (*fortunati ambo!* *Aen.* 9.446), we can see that the narrator is showing both sympathy and irony, and the vocative draws our attention to the moment, especially as the poet emphasises how the power of poetry can immortalise the doomed heroes.<sup>19</sup> Virgil's characterisation of the two impetuous youths evokes pathos for their untimely deaths.<sup>20</sup> But it is also an ironic look at the poet's role in the memorialisation of death in war, with irony residing in the use of the term *fortunati* of the dead youths. The eulogy calls into question the permanence of both poetry and the Roman Empire.<sup>21</sup>

A similar combination of pathos and irony can be found as the Virgilian poet laments the death of Pallas.

o dolor atque decus magnum rediture parenti,  
haec te prima dies bello dedit, haec eadem aufert,  
cum tamen ingentis Rutulorum linquis aceruos! *Aen.* 10.507-09

---

<sup>19</sup> See Gale, 2003, 345, who looks at this episode as one that: 'brings together the backward glance motif with the themes of poetry and the preservation of memory'.

<sup>20</sup> Conte, 1986, 177, writes: 'An analogous gesture of *sympatheia* is found when the poet comments on the death of Euryalus and Nissus and, at the same time, by an act of direct responsibility, guarantees them a glorious future: *Aen.* 9.446-49. An omniscient witness, the poet entrusts the value of those untimely deaths to the destiny of Rome (a nation whose indestructibility and perpetual might had been decided by Fate). By personally declaring Fate's favourable predisposition, Virgil reveals himself to be acting as the poem's objective awareness'. See also Bannon, 1997, 81-85, who looks at the Nisus / Euryalus and Pandarus / Bitias episodes, and writes: 'Vergil works variations that probe the complexities of fraternal *pietas* among soldiers'.

<sup>21</sup> We find similar narratorial intervention: *Aen.* 10.507-09, 791-93. See the commentary of Conington, 1963, 201-02, on the ambiguity of meaning in these lines. See Block, 1982, 18, who writes: 'The narrator expresses a direct judgement ... overtly acknowledging his presence (*mea*), [and] covertly reminds the audience of its own presence by emphasizing the existence of the future Rome'.

Oh you, about to return to your parent as grief and great glory, this first day gave you to war, this same day takes you away, yet with that, you leave behind huge heaps of Rutulians.

Virgil's use of *aufert*, a synonym of *adimo*, reminds us how pathos is aroused in a similar fashion by Catullus in his poem 101, when he uses the perfect passive participle *ademptus*, in the vocative, to engage the reader in the deep sentiment felt at death of a brother. However, in the exclamation to someone unnamed, someone treated as 'grief and great glory', we can see an epic poet paying lip-service to the heroic code; instead of valorisation, and the arrangement of terms indicates a depersonalisation of the dead youth. In death, Pallas is now shown only in relation to *dolor*, the grief of his father, and in connection with the dictates of epic commemoration, *decus magnum*, from the feat of arms resulting in piles of enemy dead. An ironic reading is suggested by the lines leading up to the eulogy:

Turno tempus erit magno cum optauerit emptum  
intactum Pallanta, et cum spolia ista diemque  
oderit.

*Aen.* 10.503-05

The time will come for Turnus when he will have wished Pallas untouched, bought at a great price and when he will have hated the spoils and the day itself.

Virgil foreshadows Turnus' death and offers a complicated 'if only' state of affairs concerning Turnus. Virgil's omniscient narrator suggested earlier that Turnus could have done things differently:

et si continuo uictorem ea cura subisset,  
rumpere claustra manu sociosque immittere portis,  
ultimus ille dies bello gentique fuisset.

*Aen.* 9.757-59

And if that thought had come to him [Turnus] following his victory, to break the bolts with his hand and to admit his comrades through the gates, that would have been the last day for war and the [Roman] race.

This intervention encourages a cynical look at the frenzy which drives warriors in battle and which allows for little strategy or planning. When Virgil writes about the potential actions of one of his characters, the use of the conditional portrays Turnus as reacting to immediate stimulus, and unaware of the bigger picture. It is ironic that if Turnus had done things differently, not only would that day have been the end for the war and for Rome and Virgil and his poem would not have existed.

In contrast, Lucan's statement: *si liceat superis hominum conferre labores*, *BC* 7.144, 'if it is allowed to compare the toil of men with that of the gods', shows a narrator aware of himself as a poet whose privileged position as an epic poet overrides any objection to his choice of subject. This interjection follows a description of soldiers preparing their weapons, *BC* 7.139-43, and, with no pause to evaluate the conditional, is followed by a comparison between this exercise in civil war (the toil of men) and the gods planning for the gigantomachy, made explicit with names of gods, their opponents and their weapons.<sup>22</sup> The poet's description of the place, Phlegra, home of the Giants, then the weapons, such as Neptune's trident, the sword of Mars re-forged, Apollo's arrows used earlier against Python, Pallas' Gorgon-adorned aegis, and Jove's thunderbolts re-made by Cyclops, *BC* 7.145-150, is a light-hearted gesture toward epic because of the humorous depiction of the gods, honing their weapons just like men.

When the poet Lucan breaks in like this we can see that he is altering the conventions of Homeric and Virgilian epic narrative and although he is gesturing toward Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and that poet's treatment of the gods, he is a more intrusive narrator than Ovid. As mentioned above, the Ovidian narrator is heard as the dominant voice mainly at the beginning and ending of the poem, allowing his story to be told by many and varied narrators. One of the effects of these assorted narrators is to sway the reader to be sceptical of all narrators.<sup>23</sup> Lucan builds on this difference by intruding into his poem in his own voice, in almost as many ways as Ovid's numerous internal narrators do, to relate his epic events. Lucan's style of narration is only one difference he makes to the epic genre, as I show in this thesis. No Latin epicist after him follows his lead either in choice of subject matter or frequency of narratorial intrusion.<sup>24</sup> Throughout his epic the intrusive

---

<sup>22</sup> In this passage I see a variation of traditional epic arming scenes (*Il.* 3.328-38; 11.15-55; 16.130-54; 19.364-424, see Armstrong, 1958, 341) but rather than individual warriors and emphasis on glorious armour, here we have a group scene with attention focused on the practical tasks required before battle. See Virgil's use of the same motif: *Aen.* 7.627-35.

<sup>23</sup> See Davis, 2008, 429-33, on the unreliability of non-Ovidian narrators in the *Metamorphoses*. Also Rosati, 2002, 271, who writes: 'It has been estimated that about a third of the length of the poem, including about 60 episodes (and in increasing proportion from the beginning to the end of the poem), is narrated not by the external narrator, but by about 40 internal narrators'. (See Rosati, n. 2, for scholarship).

<sup>24</sup> I do not include the poets of didactic epics in this statement. And, of course we do not know for sure whether Lucan's style was copied, it might have been, in ancient epic lost to us. Statius' *Thebaid*, treats a similar tragic theme of brothers in conflict in his Theban epic. See

narrative voice serves to arrest the flow of the narrative to such a point that Masters, 1992, writes: ‘The poem is a civil war’ and that ‘Lucan is at war with himself’.<sup>25</sup> My chapter so far has fleshed out these statements of Masters to show that the emotive subject matter of Lucan’s poem is the primary cause of narratorial intervention through apostrophe, and that allusion to Virgil and Ovid reinforces Lucan’s portrayal of the pathos of civil war. As well as apostrophe, first-person verbs also often indicate the presence of a concerned narrator in the poem.

In the *Bellum Ciuile*, Lucan as narrator speaks in the first person in this description of a storm:

non Euri cessasse minas, non imbribus atrum  
 Aeolii iacuisse Notum sub carcere saxi  
 crediderim; cunctos solita de parte ruentis  
 defendisse suas uiolento turbine terras,  
 sic pelagus mansisse loco.

BC 5.608-12

I could have believed that the threats of Eurus had not ceased, that Notus black with rain, had not lain under the prison of Aeolus’ rock, that all, rushing from accustomed parts, had defended their own lands from the violent whirlwind, so the sea had remained in place.

When the poet writes *crediderim*, BC 5.610, ‘I could have believed’, the verb adds emphasis to the epic topos of storm-winds. The poet describes the turmoil as if he could see the winds in action, but hyperbole couched in the negative makes his storm unbelievable.<sup>26</sup> In Virgil’s *Aeneid*, first person verbs are less often encountered except within direct speech of certain characters. The poet’s own voice expressing itself in the first person is found primarily in the proem and again in what seems to be a further proem to the second section of the poem, where, in nine lines toward the beginning of Book 7, the poet addresses a Muse by name and uses first person verbs:

---

McNelis, 2007, 3, who considers Statius’ *Thebaid* as civil war. Silius Italicus’ *Punica*, is about a war fought against a foreign enemy.

<sup>25</sup> Masters, 1992, 10 and 12.

<sup>26</sup> For Lucan and storms see Morford, 1967, 20-24, and Haskins, 1887, lxxiv, who writes in his rather dated commentary: ‘the storm in which Caesar is caught on the Adriatic is so described that at the end of about 60 lines we are heartily sick of it’. (See also Morford’s n. 19, where he compares Lucan’s storm to IX.391-47; *Aen.* 1.81-6; and *Od.* XII. 403-19). Hershkowitz, 1998, 227, writes: ‘The storm in book 5 reflects, on a universal scale, the political situation at Rome’. See also Malamud, 2009, 294; Masters, 1992, 64; and Pitcher, 2008, 243-49.

nunc age, qui reges, Erato, quae tempora, rerum  
 quis Latium antiquo fuerit status, aduena classem  
 cum primum Ausoniis exercitus appulit oris,  
 expediam, et primae reuocabo exordia pugnae.  
 tu uatem, tu, diua, mone. dicam horrida bella,  
 dicam acies actosque animis in funera reges,  
 Tyrrhenamque manum totamque sub arma coactam  
 Hesperiam. maior rerum mihi nascitur ordo,  
 maius opus moueo.

*Aen. 7.37-45*

Come now! Erato, I shall explain who the kings were, what the times were, what the status of things was in ancient Latium when first a foreign army beached their fleet on Ausonian shores, and I shall recall the cause of the first battle. You goddess, instruct your poet. I shall speak about rough wars; I shall speak about battle lines and kings driven into death by their own passions and about a Tyrrhenian band and the whole land of Hesperia forced under arms. A greater order of things is born from me, a greater work I begin.

This passage is important as it is here that Virgil identifies himself as *uates*, ‘poet’, and reinforces this with so many verbs of telling, speaking and recalling.<sup>27</sup> By appealing to shared experiences Virgil’s intrusive narrator uses first person verbs to draw the audience into the second part of Aeneas’ story. The cumulative effect of these verbs is to show a poet and a story teller reaching out to his audience, singing his own powers as a poet of epic through his mention of the magnitude of his task and his display of many epic themes.

The most striking passage where Lucan uses first person is in direct antithesis to Virgil’s second proem, cited above. Where Virgil sets out clearly the next events he will tell, Lucan, in six highly charged lines, tells what he will not tell.

hic furor, hic rabies, hic sunt tua crimina, Caesar.  
 hanc fuge, mens, partem belli tenebrisque relinque,  
 nullaue tantorum discat me uate malorum,  
 quam multum bellis liceat ciuilibus, aetas.  
 a potius pereant lacrimae pereantque querellae:  
 quidquid in hac acie gessisti, Roma, tacebo.

*BC 7.551-56*

Here is frenzy, here is madness, here are your crimes, Caesar. Mind, flee this part of the battle and leave it to darkness and with me as poet, let no age learn of such great misfortunes, of how much is allowed in civil war. But rather let these tears perish, and let these complaints perish; I will say nothing about whatever you have done in this battle, Rome.

It is significant that here Lucan refers to himself as *uates* ‘poet’ like Virgil, *Aen. 7. 41*, above, and although both passages focus on war and battle-lines, they are very

<sup>27</sup> Behr, 2005, 200, writes: ‘Virgil is not consistent with his use of the narrator’s voice’. See also Fraenkel, 1945, 253-56.

different. Virgil, through repetition of the verb, 'I shall tell' (*dicam*, *Aen.* 7. 41, 42), highlights his position as story-teller or poet, while Lucan begs to be excused. Although Virgil mentions the negative aspect of war, Lucan's use of words such as *tenebris*, 'darkness', *malorum*, 'misfortune', *lacrimae*, 'tears', *querelae*, 'complaints' and the repetition of the verb *pereant*, 'to perish, die' point to that poet's attempt to evoke a negative attitude in the reader.<sup>28</sup> The first person verb *tacebo*, in emphatic position at the end of the line and passage, is particularly striking and could be seen as programmatic of the whole poem and evidence of the poet's use rhetorical *praeterito*.

Compare this with Virgil's disclaimer that he could never be silent about a glorious death in battle:

ingemuit cari grauius genitoris amore,  
ut uidit, Lausus, lacrimaeque per ora uolutae.  
hic mortis durae casum tuaque optima facta,  
si qua fidem tanto est operi latura uetustas,  
non equidem nec te, iuuenis memorande, silebo. *Aen.* 10.789-93

As he saw him, Lausus groaned bitterly for his loved father, and with tears rolling down his face. Here the chance of harsh death and your best deeds, if age is about to bring credence to such great work, never will I be silent, not about you, celebrated warrior.

The contrast could not be greater or more pointed: Lucan's *tacebo*, surely looks back to Virgil's *silebo*, which is in the same position at the end of a line. Virgil's *non ... silebo* becomes Lucan's ironic *tacebo*. Virgil makes his silence emphatically negative by *non equidem nec* at the beginning of this last line of a convoluted sentence, in order to focus attention on what has gone before; his power as narrator, whose commemoration of Lausus' heroic deeds, he claims, will live on through the ages.<sup>29</sup>

Ovid makes a similar claim in his epilogue. Ovid's narrator speaks in the first person most clearly and persuasively at the end of his *Metamorphoses*:

---

<sup>28</sup> Lucan's most celebrated use of the term *uates*, is in his 'second proem' *BC* 1.63, where it is also accompanied by first person verbs. O'Higgins, 1988, writes on Lucan as *uates* 208-26; as does Leigh, 1997, 17, and n.15. On speech and silence in Lucan, see Malamud, 1995, 15-16.

<sup>29</sup> Williams, 1984, 373-74, comments on word order in these three lines, *Aen.* 10.791-93.



iamque opus exegi, quod nec Iouis ira nec ignis  
 nec poterit ferrum nec edax abolere uetustas.  
 cum uolet, illa dies, quae nil nisi corporis huius  
 ius habet, incerti spatium mihi finiat aevi:  
 parte tamen meliore mei super alta perennis  
 astra ferar, nomenque erit indelebile nostrum,  
 quaque patet domitis Romana potentia terris,  
 ore legar populi, perque omnia saecula fama,  
 siquid habent ueri uatum praesagia, uiuam.

*Met.* 15.871-79

And now I have completed a work which neither the anger of Jove, nor fire, nor sword, nor voracious old age can destroy. When it wishes, let that day, which has no jurisdiction except over this body, terminate the interval of uncertain age for me: yet with the better part of me, I shall be borne unceasingly above the stars on high and my name will be imperishable; and where Roman power extends over subdued lands, I shall be read on the lips of the people through all ages and in fame, if the prophecies of poets hold any truth, I shall live.

The last and most celebrated word of his poem, *uiuam*, *Met.* 15.879 ‘I shall live’ follows other first person verbs in this self-aware, almost self-engrossed account of his own renown as poet.

Lucan’s claim, *tacebo*, *BC* 7.556, is made loud by his overt allusion to Virgil and Ovid as intrusive and self-aware epic poets. Of course there is irony in a poet’s use of such a verb; for how can a poet be silent? Lucan, as poet, cannot abide by his word; he goes on for another three books ‘not speaking about’ the battle and its aftermath, and especially about the death of Pompey. It is not surprising that the narrator’s voice is heard most often in first-person verbs in Book 7, because this book deals with the battle of Pharsalus, the rout of Pompey and the success of Caesar. It is here that the poet deplores Rome’s civil war, complaining and wishing it away, highlighted by the use of first-person verbs.<sup>30</sup>

Lucan also makes a complex appeal to his external audience through the use of second person address, for example, when he breaks into his description of the abandonment of Rome at the rumour of Caesar’s arrival *BC* 1.466-522. No heroic impulse moves the people of Rome, only fear of the unknown, a fear which gains

<sup>30</sup> For example: *uellem* populis incognita nostris, *BC* 7.436; *de Brutis*, *Fortuna*, *queror*, 440; *utinam*, *Pharsalia*, *campis* / *sufficiat cruor iste tuis*, 535-36; *istis parce precor*, *BC* 540; *ingemuisse putem campos*, 768. See also: *iam nihil, o superi, querimur*, 1.37; *si te pectore uates / accipio*, *Cirrhaea uelim secreta mouentem* / *sollicitare deum Bacchumque auertere Nysa*, 63-65; *quid tibi, saeua, precer pro tanto crimine, tellus*, 8.827; *imperet hoc nobis utinam scelus et uelit uti / nostro Roma sinu*, 842-43; and *parua loquor*, *corpus sanie stillasse perustum / hoc et flamma potest; sed quis rogos abstulit ossa?* 9.783-84.

strength from the rumour of Caesar's imminent arrival and in turn gives more power to the rumour.<sup>31</sup> As the common people fear, so do the Senators, and everyone flees Rome. Rumour is an epic figure well established by Virgil and Ovid, and Lucan intrudes into his poem to explain the effect its exaggeration has on the minds of the citizens, with an appeal to the external audience:

... credas aut tecta nefandas  
corripuisse faces aut iam quatiente ruina  
nutantes pendere domos, sic turba per urbem  
praecipiti lymphata gradu ...

BC 1.493-96

You might believe that either impious torches had seized upon the roofs or now with ruin shaking, the nodding houses were hanging uncertainly, so the crowd [hastens] through the city, frantic, with headlong step ...<sup>32</sup>

The potential subjunctive, *credas* in this complex sentence points to the technique used by Virgil and Homer, and the picture of ruin recalls the destruction of Troy as described by Aeneas in Virgil's epic.<sup>33</sup> An epic sacking of the city or an earthquake could cause such frantic movement of people, but here it is rumour, and the destruction of the city is purely hypothetical. As the narrator adds a simile of shipwreck, BC 1.498-504, (which, after Virgil, becomes an epic trope) he further engages with ideas of the actual and the imaginary: the captain and sailors abandon the ship in fear of shipwreck, before the vessel is actually wrecked. These two images, the downfall of Rome and shipwreck, are examples of the narrator's use of the negative and antithesis to stress his role in the story. The shipwreck simile looks forward to the sea battle at Massilia, while the desertion of Rome by Pompey and his faction portends a war that will spread to Spain, Libya and finally to Pharsalus in Thessaly where the main battle for control of Rome will be fought.

Focus on the narrator in the text is signalled by the use of such second person verbs, especially when the 'you' is not a primary or secondary internal narratee,

<sup>31</sup> Rumour is personified in Virgil, *Aen.* 4.173-97 and in Ovid, *Met.* 9.136-40, 12.39-63. See Tissol, 2002, 305, and Hardie, 2009, 67-135.

<sup>32</sup> In this involved sentence, the main verb, *ruit*, BC 1.498, is delayed still further by a comparative clause.

<sup>33</sup> See Roche, 2009, 299-301, on the importance of this passage and its relationship to Virgil's *Aeneid* 2, in themes and imagery.

but the external reader.<sup>34</sup> In such phrases as ‘you would / would not have seen / thought / said’, about the action described, the narrator encourages the audience to be sympathetic to the opinions or feelings described, because ‘if you were there’ is implied in the phrase. Homer can be seen to use this technique to draw his audience into his story when he says: ἔνθ' οὐκ ἂν βρίζοντα ἴδοις Ἀγαμέμνονα δῖον, *Il.* 4.223, ‘then you would not have seen god-like Agamemnon asleep’, using the negative to emphasise the following description of Agamemnon’s eager advance into battle.<sup>35</sup> Virgil does the same when he writes: *migrantis cernas totaque ex urbe ruentis*, *Aen.* 4.401, ‘you could see them moving and hurrying from the whole city,’ as he invites the external audience to observe what Dido sees, and, coupled with the apostrophe to Dido *Aen.* 4.408, the intrusive narrator thus catches the attention of the audience, and evokes sympathy for the queen. We also see that Virgil’s use of the second person verb, *credas*, *Aen.* 8.691, makes his description of the battle action pictured on the shield of Aeneas seem more vivid and life-like. Ovid, as intrusive narrator, also speaks directly to the audience: *credas*, *Met.* 5.194, ‘you would believe’ and invites us to picture the effect that the Gorgon’s head is having on the boasting Nileus.<sup>36</sup> In a passage comparable to *Il.* 17.366-69, and the one above, *Il.* 4.223, Ovid again uses *credas*, *Met.* 11.517, to give emphasis to his story, suggesting that along with him, his audience will believe that the death of Julius Caesar caused chaos on land, sea and in the heavens.

Narratorial interventions in Lucan’s poem continually remind the audience that a particular version of the civil war is here presented. The intrusions are more noticeable because often they show off the poet’s quasi-scientific knowledge, the cause of the tides, *BC* 1.417-19, for example, and also because of the historical nature of events related. We have seen what techniques or rhetorical figures alert us to the intervention of the narrator in Lucan’s poem, but we need to go further to

<sup>34</sup> See de Jong, 2004, 29-40, and de Jong, Nunlist and Bowie, 2004, 1-4.

<sup>35</sup> See also *Il.* 4.429-31; 5.85-86; 15.697-98; and 17.366-69. See De Jong, 1987, 2004, 55, who writes: ‘the effect of these five passages is to turn him [the external narratee] into an eyewitness’. Behr, 2005, 193, on Homer, writes: ‘the Muse invocations constitute another distinct group of passages where the narrator tells us something about himself’.

<sup>36</sup> Ovid writes: *pars ultima uocis / in medio suppressa sono est, adapertaque uelle / ora loqui credas, nec sunt ea peruia uerbis*. *Met.* 5.192-94. He has the character Orpheus use a similar ploy inviting his audience to believe that Pygmalion’s statue is life-like, *Met.* 10.250.

ascertain if it is the historical subject of the poem which calls for these figures and this particular type of intrusive narrator. Because of the subject, civil war, Lucan's poem is frequently classified as historical epic, a form of historiographical narrative, since Rome's civil war is an actual event of fairly recent history for the poet.<sup>37</sup> This historical subject matter alters the way Lucan's epic is narrated and we can see elements of the prose vocabulary used by ancient history writers in his poetry.<sup>38</sup> So, to say that Lucan's poem is both history and epic is to suggest that these two aspects of the text influence the way the narrator intervenes. It will repay us to look at other examples of both epic poetry and historical prose to gauge this assertion.<sup>39</sup>

I propose to evaluate Lucan's epic against an example of prose writing, Caesar's *Bellum Ciuile* since both works share the same subject matter.<sup>40</sup> Caesar's text is written in prose, and is the earliest detailed account of this historical event, the civil war between Caesar and Pompey.<sup>41</sup> Caesar's *Bellum Ciuile* is usually assessed against other prose accounts and other historians' versions of the events.<sup>42</sup> Most scholars either see Caesar's account as a source for Lucan or concentrate on an assessment of the accuracy of each author's account of the events of this civil war. Masters, 1992, writes:

Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile* is a deliberate counterpoise to Caesar's commentary of the same name; that, in short, just as Lucan opposes and confronts Virgil in the

---

<sup>37</sup> See Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1451a.38 - 1451b.7, on the difference between the historian and the poet. Feeney, 1991, 250-301, is one scholar who discusses the problems of 'history' and 'myth' when looking at Lucan's historical epic. Johnson, 1987, 100-05, writing about *BC* 5.654-56, sees Lucan's poem as 'historical drama' portraying 'Caesar's cosmic, comic paranoia and egotism'.

<sup>38</sup> I point out Lucan's use of vocabulary commonly associated with prose and its significance in his text, below and in Ch 3, 106; Ch 4, 140; Ch 5, 154. See Braund, 1992, xlvi, who writes: '... his diction is prosaic. He uses straightforward everyday words rather than romantic or heroic poeticisms, and includes technical terms which other epic poets tend to avoid'.

<sup>39</sup> See Gowing, 2005, 1-27, on the problematic nature of 'history and memory'. See also Gabba, 1981, 58-61.

<sup>40</sup> See Kraus, 2005, 100. De Jong, 2004, 9, writing on the status of historiographical texts, says: 'All in all I am inclined to follow Quintilian, who considers ancient historiography as "close to poetry" and "in a sense a kind of prose poem, which is told to narrate, not to win a case".' (de Jong, n. 28, cites Quintilian *Institutio Oratoria* 10.1.31).

<sup>41</sup> There are other accounts of the period, but most give little detail. See Gowing, 2005, 34, who writes: 'two historical works that do survive from that period, the *Historia Romana* of Velleius Paterculus and the *Facta et dicta memorabilia* of Valerius Maximus, both of which view the Tiberian regime as an extension of the now-restored Republic'.

<sup>42</sup> See for instance, Laistner, 1966, 38-43. See also Kraus, 2005, 102.

domain of literary epic, so does he oppose and confront Caesar in the domain of history.<sup>43</sup>

Masters does not focus on the narrator except to illustrate, in his analysis of the two accounts of the battles of Massilia and Ilerda, that the effect of the subject on the narrative voice of Lucan is illustrated through the vocabulary of division. With Masters, I consider that the Lucanian narrator is more complex and intrudes more than Caesar appears to do as the narrator of the prose account of Rome's civil war.

It is worth while to look at how Caesar's *Bellum Ciuile* is narrated. Caesar writes in such a way as to distance himself as the author from the events related by a narrator.<sup>44</sup> Caesar's third person account is different from the histories of Livy or Sallust, who are both willing to acknowledge, using forms of "I", their respective roles as writers of history, Livy in his preface to *ab urbe condita*, and Sallust in the prologues to both *Catilinae Coniuratio*, and *Bellum Iugurthinum*. Caesar as author / narrator consistently refers to 'Caesar' in the third person. Batstone and Damon, 2006, write: 'Caesar uses the third person to turn a predominantly personal narrative into an apparently objective history.'<sup>45</sup> Caesar's narrative is only 'apparently objective' and these scholars see evidence of its bias toward the character 'Caesar' and against Pompey throughout.<sup>46</sup> Lucan can be seen to mock Caesar's style in the speeches he, as poet, gives to 'Caesar' in his *Bellum Ciuile*. Lucan's poem has 'Caesar' refer to himself in the third person in his first speech, *BC* 1.338, and again we see this mannerism used in the speech of Lucan's

---

<sup>43</sup> Masters, 1992, 17-19, suggests that 'Lucan need not have relied on Caesar for his facts' and goes on to write, '[u]ltimately, the whole question [of source] is complicated by the loss of the relevant books of Livy's history, ... [f]urthermore, and crucially, Lucan's poem deals with the very same period as Caesar's commentary, a period stretching from the crossing of the Rubicon (or, in Caesar's case, a few days earlier) to the beginning of the Alexandrian war. This coincidence of scope ... provides strong, positive evidence of the relevance of Caesar's work to Lucan's, and particularly of Lucan's wish to rival Caesar's account'. See also Roche, 2009, 43, who writes: 'Lucan's narrative is in many ways a conscious recasting of Caesar's account of the civil war'.

<sup>44</sup> See Carter, 1991, 23, on Caesar's apparent objectivity. But see Barrera, 2005, 190, who writes: 'In a book of history, under the discourse that describes the past another text is hidden, that which refers to the historian who constructed the narrative and who is inevitably present in the narrative'.

<sup>45</sup> Batstone and Damon, 2006, 145. See also Albrecht, 1989, 67, and Goldsworthy, 1998, 211, who writes: 'The *Bellum Ciuile* faced the more difficult task of trying to celebrate victories over Roman opponents. It is clear that Caesar took care to stress the foreignness of his enemies'.

<sup>46</sup> See Raditsa, 1973, especially 440. See also Batstone and Damon, 2006, 52, who write: 'Caesar's commentaries are not so much recording events so much as analyzing them and representing through them larger political issues. As, for example, in the formal parallelism of the contrasting phrases about Pompey, eager for the matter to be brought to war (*rem ad arma deduci*), and Caesar, hoping that the matter could be brought to peace (*res ad otium deduci*)'.

‘Caesar’ in reply to Metellus who is blocking access to the treasury in Rome, *BC* 3.136. Lucan is re-emotionalising (re-subjectifying) the ‘objectivity’ of Caesarian reportage.

But as well as this third-person narrative style, Caesar, as author, also frequently uses the possessive adjective *noster*, ‘our’ to refer to the signals, troops, or ships that ‘Caesar’ commands. This gives the impression that the author or narrator is synonymous with all aspects of Caesar’s army and even Rome itself.<sup>47</sup> Even though we see the narrator of Caesar’s *Bellum Ciuile* offering reasons for and comments about the actions described, there is no impression that he is breaking into his narrative in order to do this. This is the prime difference between Caesar’s ‘spare’<sup>48</sup> style and Lucan’s distinctively ‘intrusive’ narratorial style. However, as with the complex engagement with genre found in Lucan’s poem, so we can see that his poem’s involvement with Caesar’s *Bellum Ciuile* shows both divergence and likeness.

We can see similarities between the two accounts. One of the indicators of historiography which is common to both Caesar’s and Lucan’s account of the civil war is found in their use of proper names, which, for the most part, are recognisable as the names of actual and prominent members of Roman society. The protagonists in each account are similar; many of the characters are common to both narratives even though the way they are presented differs.<sup>49</sup> Caesar’s

---

<sup>47</sup> For examples: ‘our men’: Caes. *Ciu.* 1.40.7; 1.43.5; 1.44.3; 1.45.1, 6; 1.46.1, 3, 4; 1.47.2; 1.51.6; 1.52.3; 1.57.3; 1.58.1, 3; 1.69.1; 1.75.2; 2.6.3; 2.11.3; 2.13.2; 2.14.1, 3, 6; 2.16.3; 2.25.5; 2.31.4; 2.34.3, 6; 2.41.6, 7; 2.42.2; 3.23.1, 2; 3.24.4; 3.26.4; 3.27.2; 3.28.6; 3.37.5, 6; 3.38.4; 3.40.1; 3.44.4, 6; 3.45.3, 5; 3.46.2, 3, 6; 3.48.2; 3.50.2; 3.51.2, 3, 6; 3.52.2; 3.53.2; 3.63.2, 6, 7, 8; 3.65.1, 2; 3.67.5, 6; 3.69.1, 2; 3.70.1; 3.72.2; 3.93.1; 3.96.3; ‘our signals’: 1.18.2; ‘our cavalry’: 1.46.3; 1.64.1; 1.73.3; 1.80.3; 3.63.3; 3.68.4; 3.93.4; ‘our troops/cohorts/battle line’: 2.2.6; 2.16.2; 3.50.1; 3.64.1; 3.93.4; ‘our ships/ fleet’: 1.56.2, 4; 2.6.2; 2.22.4; 3.24.2; 3.27.1; 3.28.1; 3.39.2; 3.101.4; ‘our watchmen’: 1.22.1; ‘our fortifications’: 3.51.7; ‘our fugitives’: 3.110.4. Batstone and Damon, 2006, 35, draw attention to this: ‘Caesar’s army stands for Rome, a metonymy that becomes an important part of both Caesar’s appeal to Rome and his self-aggrandizement. As Caesar is identified with his army so his is identified with Rome’s might’. See also Carter, 1991, 21ff. Marincola, 1997, 287-88, writes on the Roman convention of ‘*nos*’ and ‘*nostri*’. See Raditsa, 1973, 451, who writes: ‘For Caesar, *dignitas* entailed *Populus Romanus*’.

<sup>48</sup> Batstone and Damon, 2006, 143, quote Cicero (*Brutus*, 262) on Caesar’s ‘spare’ style in the *Gallic War* and writing on Caesar’s *Ciuil War*, they outline the ‘features of Caesar’s style that facilitate his presentation’. (See 143, n. 1, for their summary of scholarship on the subject).

<sup>49</sup> Batstone and Damon, 2006, 89, write: ‘Characterization in a civil war narrative is more important, and more difficult, than it is in a colonial narrative, such as the *Gallic War*, of “us”

account casts ‘Caesar’ in the role of hero fighting for justice and the ideals of the republic as well as that of the omniscient narrator, especially in his first speech, *Caes. Ciu.* 1.7.<sup>50</sup> One striking similarity between Caesar’s description of Pompey and that of Lucan is that they both say that Pompey cannot tolerate anyone to be his equal.<sup>51</sup> Pompey, as ‘Caesar’s’ primary opponent in Rome’s civil war appears in both versions. This is as far as similarity goes.

In contrast to the author Caesar, Lucan, as poet, depicts a ‘Caesar’ responsible for the downfall of the republic, using a conventional epic simile to portray ‘Caesar’ as a mighty force, with almost superhuman qualities, *BC* 1.143-57.<sup>52</sup> Caesar depicts Pompey as the one eager for war, *Caes. Ciu.* 1.4.5, in contrast to Lucan who sees Pompey as hesitant, not wishing to wage war and fleeing from Rome with the senators before the approach of ‘Caesar’. Lucan appeals to his reader to pardon the fleeing senate for their fears, which are caused by Pompey’s flight, *BC* 1.519-22.<sup>53</sup> Caesar, as author is separate from the Caesarian narrator who shows ‘Caesar’ wishing for peace, *Caes. Ciu.* 1.5.5, but the ‘Caesar’ in Lucan’s poem is: *Caesar in arma furens*. *BC* 2.439, ‘Caesar mad for war’.<sup>54</sup> Another noticeable contrast is Lucan’s constant reference to the kinship ties between ‘Caesar’ and Pompey, (his substitution of *socer*, and *gener*, for the names of ‘Caesar’ as father-in-law and Pompey as son-in-law persists throughout his poem), while Caesar

---

against “them”. When the principal combatants are all Roman and all members of the governing elite, the difference between “us” and “them” needs careful delineation’.

<sup>50</sup> Batstone and Damon, 2006, 56-7, discuss Caesar’s first speech.

<sup>51</sup> Compare the similarity between ‘*par*’ a term used throughout Lucan’s work to suggest equality: *nec quemquam iam ferre potest Caesarue priorem / Pompeiusue parem*. *BC* 1.125-26, and ‘*exaequo*’ used by Caesar in the same sense: *ipse Pompeius ab inimicis Caesaris incitatus, et quod neminem dignitate secum exaequari uolebat*, *Caes. Ciu.* 1.4.4.

<sup>52</sup> See Ahl, 1976, 193, on ‘Caesar’ as a character in Lucan’s poem. He points out the difficulty of painting him in an unfavourable light. He suggests that Lucan’s Caesar is fighting for himself, ‘he is both leader and cause as Pompey and Cato are not’, 200.

<sup>53</sup> See Raditsa, 1973, 439, who writes: ‘Caesar expected the Senate to face up to his move and to come to its senses. Instead it fled Rome’. Fantham, 1999, 109-25, on Lucan’s portrayal of the senate.

<sup>54</sup> Caesar writes of Pompey that: *rem ad arma deduci studebat*, *Caes. Ciu.* 1.4.5, and of himself: *is eo tempore erat Rauennae expectabatque suis lenissimis postulatis responsa, siqua hominum aequitate res ad otium deduci posset*. *Caes. Ciu.* 1.5.5. See Narducci, 2002, 98, who suggests that Caesar’s acts justify Lucan treating him as the enemy: ‘Il fatto che Cesare prenda l’iniziativa di farsi aggressore della patria, e che ciò egli ammetta apertamente, comporta la sua *autoesclusione* della comunità dei cittadini, e perciò *giustifica* la scelta di trattarlo alla stregua di un nemico’, (Narducci’s emphasis).

makes only one reference to this particular family tie, *adfinitatis*, Caes. *Ciu.* 1.4.5.<sup>55</sup> I will come back to this important point below.

Although Curio is another name common to both texts, as a minor character he is accorded a significant part of the action: Caes. *Ciu.* 2.38.2-42.4; and Lucan's *BC* 1.261-95, 4.583-89, 724-824. Caesar as authorial narrator describes the actions of his general in a positive way. Curio, even though he fails and falls in battle, is shown to remain loyal to his leader, Caes. *Ciu.* 2.42.4. Lucan's poem shows Curio as a complicated character described as 'bold or reckless'; having a 'purchasable tongue' *BC* 1.269; and as one who incites 'Caesar' to war:

... sic postquam fatus, et ipsi  
in bellum prono tantum tamen addidit irae  
accenditque ducem ... *BC* 1.291-93

Thus after he had spoken, he yet added anger to one already greatly inclined to war and inflamed his leader ...

Later in Lucan's epic, Curio's battle in Africa is shown to result in death and destruction for all, *BC* 4.583-798. Within a curious eulogy for Curio, *BC* 4.709-824, the Lucanian narrator draws attention to his own voice within the epic with an exclamation: *Libycas, en, nobile corpus, / pascit aues nullo contectus Curio busto*, *BC* 4.809-10, 'Look, a noble corpse, Curio, covered by no tomb, feeds Libyan birds'. Lucan repeats the phrase, *nobile corpus*, to describe Pompey's body, *BC* 8.756, and this prompts a comparison between Curio and Pompey, although they represent different sides in civil war, both are defeated and suffer dishonour in death.<sup>56</sup> Although this lament for a fallen hero reinforces the conventions of epic, alluding strongly to Homeric and Virgilian epic, the encouragement to 'look' shows a narrator more intrusive than is customary for epic and is in contrast to Caesar's objective account of Curio's death in battle.

---

<sup>55</sup> Lucan uses the term *socer* no less than 33 times in his poem to point out the relationship between Caesar and Pompey.

<sup>56</sup> See the Homeric narrator's horror of bodies as feasts for birds, *Il.* 1.4-5, and Aeneas' lament about the death of Palinurus: *nudus in ignota, Palinure, iacebis harena*, *Aen* 5.871.



Well-known characters, and even messengers, are named and given speeches in Caesar's narrative. In contrast, many narrators are anonymous in Lucan's epic.<sup>57</sup> Caesar's work includes and names one messenger from Pompey as 'Lucius Caesar', Caes. *Ciu.* 1.8.<sup>58</sup> The Caesarean narrator does nothing more than indicate the allegiance of 'Lucius Caesar's' father, concentrating instead on 'Caesar's' own reply to the messenger, words justifying the role of Caesar in the civil war, Caes. *Ciu.* 1.9. In fact, the name highlights family connections within Roman society, and this Lucius Caesar is an example of a son who fights on the opposite side to his father in civil war.<sup>59</sup> Although Lucan makes much of the idea that civil war finds family members on opposite sides, as I will show below, he does not name any recognisable brother / brother opposition, or any names that could be understood to show actual fathers and sons against each other.<sup>60</sup> Lucan's handling of names, often generic Greek or Roman 'type' names rather than specific or recognisable Romans, owes more to epic tradition than to history. From this comparison, we can see that it is not just the subject of civil war which encourages the narrator to intervene since both Lucan and Caesar write about the same subject. Caesar as author, intrudes into his work much less than Lucan; his writings are, in Henderson's words: 'monuments to narration-as-success'.<sup>61</sup> The Lucanian narrator breaks into his poem as often as he does to accentuate his own pessimistic view of war, and to show us the destruction to society caused by civil war.

We must look again at the subject matter of Lucan's poem to assess why Lucan's text is narrated by such an intrusive narrator. Civil war is concerned with strife or conflict within families: *cognatasque acies*, *BC* 1.4, 'kindred battle lines' are

---

<sup>57</sup> Speeches filled with passion and feeling are given to unnamed people: *BC* 1.248-57, 677-95; 2.38-42, 45-63, 68-232; 3.307-55; 4.593-660; 5.130-40, 194-96, 261-95, 682-99; 6.777-820; 8.110-27, 172-86; 9.227-51, 848-80, 979, 1014-32.

<sup>58</sup> *OCD*: 154, 'CAESAR (5) Lucius Julius, son of Caesar (3), as Pompey's follower and Caesar's relative, played an important part in the negotiations of 49B.C. between Caesar and Pompey. He repaired to Africa and in 46 was with Cato in Utica. Though pardoned, he was afterwards killed'.

<sup>59</sup> Batstone and Damon, 2006, 58, make no comment on the identity of this messenger, L. Caesar, and write that for Caesar the reply sent back is just: 'another opportunity to lay out his case'.

<sup>60</sup> See Syme, 1939, 64, who writes: 'The bond of personal allegiance may be compared to that of the family. It is even stronger. Whatever their class in society, men went with a leader or friend, though the cause were indifferent or even distasteful'.

<sup>61</sup> Henderson, 1998, 184.

mentioned right at the beginning of Lucan's epic. Civil war is waged between close relatives: *fraternaue comminus arma*, BC 7.465, 'and brothers' weapons close at hand'.<sup>62</sup> Lucan's poem refers to brothers fighting brothers and sons fighting fathers so many times that it becomes both a signifier of civil war and a cue for the narrator to express his negative opinion of such a war. As Beck, 2008, points out: '[w]ords indicating family relationships have expressive force'.<sup>63</sup> She uses the linguistic term 'expressivity' in a similar manner to the way narratologists use the terms 'subjectivity' and 'focalisation'.<sup>64</sup> In Lucan's poem, the terms for family relationships add deeper meaning and subjectivity to the narrative. Lucan's entire poem is concerned with conflict between the members of one society and even between members of individual families, and this type of conflict arouses deep emotion. Terms describing rifts in the family unit are often found in places of overt narratorial intrusion.

Let us take one very striking kinship connection, that between the two main protagonists, Caesar and Pompey. As mentioned above, Lucan refers to them often as father-in-law and son-in-law, rather than by name, in order to emphasise the close family ties between these two leaders.<sup>65</sup> The poet seems to stress the relationship between Caesar and Pompey so that the reader can see the bitter consequence of conflict in civil war, the inversion or breakdown of family bonds. But we wonder whether the bonds of this association were still as strong at the start of the civil war. We know from Suetonius that Caesar's own marriage (to the daughter of Piso at about the same time as Caesar's daughter was married to Pompey in 60 BCE) served to cement political alliances and that the backing of these powerful friends ensured that Caesar was given the province of his choice:

---

<sup>62</sup> Jal, 1963, 393, on the destructive effect of civil war on families writes: En n'hésitant pas, dans la fureur de leur vengeance et de leur cruauté, à chasser ou à massacrer les femmes et les enfants de leurs adversaires, les belligérants des guerres civiles créaient autour de la cellule familiale un climat d'horreur particulièrement malsain'. He goes on to write: 'La guerre civile parvient ainsi à briser l'union et l'affection normales entre parents', 394.

<sup>63</sup> Beck, 2008, 374.

<sup>64</sup> See Beck, 2008, 353, who writes: 'Expressivity is a somewhat slippery catch-all term covering the features of an utterance that make it the speech of a particular person with feelings about what he is saying. What distinguishes linguistically orientated discussions of expressive features from what a narratologist might say about focalization (for example) is primarily their focus on understanding the vehicles for conveying emotions and judgements rather than the specific emotions and judgements conveyed'.

<sup>65</sup> See Syme, 1939, 36-38, on the relationship between Pompey and Caesar. Bradley, 1991, 156, writes: 'marriage in Rome of the late Republic was intimately bound up with the world of politics'.

*socero igitur generoque suffragantibus*, Suet. *Jul.* 22.1.1, ‘with support therefore, from father-in-law and son-in-law’. These social obligations and political ties were severely weakened with the death of Julia in 54 BCE, and by 49 BCE Caesar and Pompey were on opposite sides in civil war.<sup>66</sup>

Lucan’s persistent reference to Caesar and Pompey as *socer* and *gener* is striking for the way it accentuates this past kinship bond. Such terminology does not rely on the actual family relationship between the two generals, but seems to follow the same kind of rhetorical pattern set up by Virgil, who treats the potential or future relationship as a fact. Anchises, *Aen.* 6.830, uses these epithets for Caesar and Pompey to express his horror of the future civil war.<sup>67</sup> Although Lucan is well aware that the relationship between Caesar and Pompey is no longer strong and binding since the death of Julia (he refers to Julia on two separate occasions, *BC* 1.111-20, and 10.77-78), he is clearly using the same patterning as Virgil for evoking the pathos of families split by civil war. We can see similar expressions applied to the ruling family of Italy when Latinus calls a council of war, *Aen.* 11.235ff. Turnus pledges his support for Latinus because of obligations inherent in this type of familial relationship:

uobis animam hanc soceroque Latino  
Turnus ego, haud ulli ueterum uirtute secundus,  
deuoui. *Aen.* 11.440-42

I, Turnus, second to none of my forefathers in valour, have vowed this life to you and to my father-in-law, Latinus.’

Turnus has no actual claim on Latinus as father-in-law as he is not yet married to Latinus’ daughter and knows full well that she has been promised instead to Aeneas. This impassioned address to Latinus as *socer*, however, stresses Turnus’ ready acceptance of anticipated kinship obligations.<sup>68</sup> Lavinia is often referred to

<sup>66</sup> Not so Gruen, 1974, 450-53.

<sup>67</sup> See Williams, 1972, 511, on Virgil’s *Aeneid* line 6.826. See also Cairns, 1989, 96-8.

<sup>68</sup> In Virgil’s *Aeneid*, the term *socer* is used 8 times. Only once does the word refer to an actual relationship: *Aen.* 2.457, Priam is the father-in-law of Andromache. The term is mostly used in its meaning of ‘intended’ father-in-law, (*OLD*: ‘*socer*, b: a prospective father-in-law’). It is repeated by Aeneas in his oath to king Latinus calling on him as a father-in-law, *Aen.* 12.192, 193 just like Turnus’ claim. Otherwise Virgil evokes family bonds about to be broken by war and death; *Aen.* 7.317; 10.79; and 11.105.

as *coniunx*, ‘bride’ or ‘intended bride’.<sup>69</sup> Amata, wife of Latinus, sees her daughter Lavinia as a suitable marriage partner for Turnus: *quem regia coniunx / adiungi generum miro properabat amore*, *Aen.* 7.56-7, ‘he whom the royal wife was eager to join as son-in law in wonderful love’. Lavinia’s feelings are signalled by her famous blush, *Aen.* 12.64-8, while the love of Turnus for her is more explicit: *illum turbat amor figitque in uirgine uultus*, *Aen.* 12.70 ‘love disturbs him and he fixes his expression on the maiden’.<sup>70</sup> The war which follows the arrival of Aeneas tears this family apart: Latinus goes into hiding, *Aen.* 7.618-19; Amata is driven mad, *Aen.* 7.373-405; Lavinia is proposed as reward for the victor, *Aen.* 12.80; then yielded up as the spoils of war, *Aen.* 12.937; and Turnus dies a suppliant at the frenzied hand of Aeneas, *Aen.* 12.951-52. While Virgil’s use of the term *socer* refers, for the most part, to an anticipated or prospective relationship, in Lucan’s epic the term conjures up a association which belongs to the past, yet both authors explore the effect of war on family connections.

Lucan’s first use of the term *socer* sets the style for all subsequent occasions. He steps into his text, in a portrayal filled with pathos, to suggest that if alive, the dead Julia, *tu sola*, *BC* 1.115, ‘you alone’, would mediate between Caesar and Pompey, *ut generos soceris mediae iunxere Sabinae*, *BC* 1.118, ‘as the Sabine women in the middle joined sons-in-law to fathers-in-law’. The narrator’s apostrophe to the ghost of Pompey’s first wife is used to arouse emotion and thoughts of severed relationships in death and in civil war. Here the terms *socer* and *gener* point to the problem of the actual relationship between the raped Sabine women and their ‘husbands’ and fathers. However, Lucan’s appeal to the legendary early history of Rome only raises a hint of doubt about the ‘marriage’ of the Sabine women and points more strongly to the cyclic nature of war and the dilemma of having family members on opposite sides in civil war. It is the destruction of the cordial relationships between the leading families of Rome in civil war which prompts the poet, Lucan, to intrude into his text and he borrows pathos from the legendary story of the Sabine women to show his condemnation of the break-up of families in civil war.

---

<sup>69</sup> OLD: ‘*coniunx* or *coniux*, 1. c: an intended wife’. Turnus has railed against the loss of his *coniunx*: *Aen.* 9.138; and proposes single combat to decide the issue: 12.17, 80. The term is also used in a more conventional way to refer to Amata as the wife of Latinus: 7.56.

<sup>70</sup> See Cairns, 1989, 151-63, on the models for Virgil’s portrayal of Lavinia.

The story has been told many times. Livy describes how Romulus reassured the girls by stressing the benefits of the new marital relationship, Liv. 1.9.14, and also tells how the new ‘wives’ terminated the war between ‘fathers-in-law and sons-in-law’ (*soceri generique*, Liv 1.13.2). Virgil’s representation of this incident pictured on the shield of Aeneas also highlights the war which results from rape, even though he does not use the terms for father-in-law and son-in-law. Gurval, 1995, writes:

... the seizure of the Sabine women is depicted as an act contrary to previous custom (*sine more*) and an impetus of a war (*nouum ... bellum*) waged between the sons of Romulus and the aged Tatius. The hostilities, however, conclude with the solemn rituals of peace and the conciliation of families.<sup>71</sup>

In his *Metamorphoses*, Ovid also stresses that the war between Romans and the Sabines is civil war through his use of the terms *socer* and *gener*. Romans who are ‘married’ to stolen Sabine girls must still regard themselves bound by kinship ties and obligations to the fathers of these girls.<sup>72</sup> War under these circumstances is no longer against a foreign enemy but is civil war: *generique cruorem / sanguine cum soceri permiscuit inpius ensis*, *Met.* 14.801-02, ‘and an impious sword mingled the gore of the son-in-law with the blood of the father-in-law’. The narrator’s pointed use of the adjective *inpius* shows that such a war between kinfolk is civil war and therefore considered to be wrong, so reference to the Sabines in Lucan’s poem has negative connotations through allusion to Ovid’s epic.<sup>73</sup> In Lucan’s text the terms *socer* and *gener* always stress the connection between the two generals even though they are opposed in this civil war.<sup>74</sup> When the term *socer* is used by the characters within Lucan’s poem it shows an awareness of the political implications of the alliance or the natural status and power inherent in such a relationship.<sup>75</sup> Intruding often, the narrator uses the terms to show his concern

---

<sup>71</sup> Gurval, 1995, 220. Gurval also writes: ‘[t]he phrase *noua bella* conveys suggestions not only of a new outbreak of hostilities but of something strange and seditious, such as the conflict between a father and his sons’, 220.

<sup>72</sup> Ovid tells this story: *A.A.* 1.102-34, and *Fasti* 2.431-34.

<sup>73</sup> Ovid uses the term *socer* 23 times in his *Metamorphoses*; often to point out kinship bonds broken, usually including violence and bloodshed. See *Met.* 1.144-50; 5.152, 228; 6.443, and 447.

<sup>74</sup> The term *socer* is used as a substitute for the name Caesar or Caesar’s army, *BC* 6.121, 316.

<sup>75</sup> See *BC* 1.287-90; 2.295; 4.802; 7.71, 352, 380; 8.316, 420, 440, 522, 629; *BC* 9.135, 210, 1094-95.

with the problem of family allegiance and the proximity of fathers, sons and brothers fighting on opposite sides in civil war.<sup>76</sup>

Family bonds are held sacrosanct in Roman society and the breakdown of these strong ties or the inversion or destruction of family relationships is what makes civil war a crime in the eyes of the narrator. This is made obvious when the narrator cuts into a general third person narrative of battle location to address Pompey:

hoc fortuna loco tantae duo nomina famae  
 composuit, miserieque fuit spes irrita mundi  
 posse duces parua campi statione diremptos  
 admotum damnare nefas; nam cernere uoltus  
 et uoces audire datur, multosque per annos  
 dilectus tibi, Magne, socer post pignora tanta,  
 sanguinis infausti subolem mortemque nepotum,  
 te nisi Niliaca propius non uidit harena.

BC 5.468-75

In this place Fortune matched two names of such great fame, and the hope of the wretched world was in vain, that the leaders, divided by a small place of the plain, were able to condemn crime brought close; for it is given to them to see the faces and to hear the voices, and the father-in-law, loved by you Magnus through many years, after such great bonds, offspring of unlucky blood and grand-children dead, did not see you closer except on Nile's sand.

This place, Dyrrachium, on the coast of Illyria, is introduced by its geographical features, its obscure rivers and their contrasting characteristics; slow-flowing Hapsus is on one side of the place and Genusus flows fast on the other, BC 5.461-67. Such a description underscores both the contrast between Italian and foreign soil, indicated by the foreign sounding names of the rivers, in order to globalise the implications of the battle and to emphasise the difference between two leaders. But then our expectations are thwarted as the narrator interrupts to show that the proximity of the two leaders in this place is more than spatial; not only can they hear and see each other but their familial closeness is also accentuated by the use of terms for kinship associations. The bond between the two great names is stressed through the use of the appellation *socer*, BC 5.473, 'father-in-law', for Caesar. The pair last met at Luca (56 BCE), two years before the death of Julia in childbirth (54 BCE) and her child to Pompey, Caesar's grandchild, a few days

---

<sup>76</sup> The narrator interjects with an address: BC 2.472-77; 4.802; 5.64; 7.334, 701; 8.795; 9.1038; 10.7, 348, 417.

later.<sup>77</sup> The poet writes that here again they are close enough to see and hear each other, *BC* 5.471-72, and refers to a loving family relationship between them, *BC* 5.472-74, using words laden with intimate, domestic and dynastic connotations, such as *pignus*, *sanguis*, *suboles* and *nepos*. Yet we hear grim irony in the narrator's reference to descendants of the two main protagonists, the dead offspring of Pompey and the dead grandchild of Caesar, as well as in the callous allusion to Caesar's final sight of Pompey's cut-off head in Egypt. There are many layers to this passage: not only is the narrator indulging in another 'what if' scenario on the course of the civil war to indicate that it could have been changed at this point, but Lucan also seems to be making oblique reference to the problems of the dynastic succession so important to the line of Caesars after victory in this civil war.<sup>78</sup> When we come to the narrative of Caesar's sight of Pompey's cut-off head, the narrator breaks in with an indignant apostrophe to Caesar, reminding him of the destruction of family relationships through Pompey's death in civil war: *nunc mixti foedera tangunt / te generis? nunc gnata iubet maerere neposque?*, *BC* 9.1048-49 'Do the bonds of intermingled kin touch you now? Now do your daughter and grandson order you to grieve?'

The poet frequently breaks into his poem to highlight the problems and ambiguous obligations of family relationships in a civil war. In his description of the battle field at Pharsalus he gives alternative reasons for Pompey's flight: either he did it so his soldiers would not continue to fight and die: *Caesaris aut oculis uoluit subducere mortem*, *BC* 7.674, 'or he wished to withdraw his death from Caesar's eyes'. The narrator interrupts his description again to give his opinion of the futility of Pompey's action, *nequiquam, infelix: socero spectare uolenti / praestandum est ubicumque caput*, *BC* 7.674-75, 'in vain, unlucky man: with the father-in-law wishing to look, your head must be presented, wherever it is',

---

<sup>77</sup> Plutarch, *Caes.* 21.5-6 and *Pomp.* 51.3, For the meeting between Caesar, Pompey and Crassus; for Julia's death in childbirth and the loss of the infant, also see Plutarch, *Caes.* 23.5-7 and *Pomp.* 53.3.

<sup>78</sup> The poet intrudes often into his poem to suggest that there could have been an alternative (clearly impossible) ending to the conflict, for example: *BC* 3.73-6; 4.110-120, 769-71, 181-88; 5.297-99, 301-16; 7.234-35. Narducci, 2002, 99-101, sees this as another voice, an unexpected one, a contemporary spectator of the poem's events, politically and ideologically orientated in identical manner to the 'omniscient narrator' and the 'Neronian narrator' who seeks to reverse the irrevocability of what has happened. He goes on to suggest that the most useful term of reference for the narratorial voice is the tragic chorus, formulating desires not to be fulfilled.

stressing the power of Caesar as victor as well as suggesting that the obligations of marriage relationships in Roman society exist even after death. The poet intervenes to foreshadow the severance of family ties between Caesar and Pompey, not only by war, but in the most obvious way, by Pompey's decapitation.

So far I have looked at only one form of family connection inducing intervention by the poet. Lucan uses many more indicators of kinship, of course, but all signify the importance of family and the dramatic reaction of family members to conflict and confrontation.<sup>79</sup> From Lucan's repeated reference to this bond created by marriage ties between two great families, we can see that he is using such terms not only to increase the emotional impact of his poem but also to direct our attention to tangled web of obligation which arises from both private and public affiliation in Roman society.<sup>80</sup> Although often only politically expedient, all such liaisons, even marriage bonds, are set to be destroyed by civil war.<sup>81</sup> Since family is the strongest and most revered bond in Roman society, the horror of discord among relatives provokes frequent and dramatic intervention by the narrator into the epic.<sup>82</sup> Ruin of family lineage and obliteration of noble houses by internecine killing calls for the impassioned outbursts (or "in-bursts") by the narrator. In this I see that Lucan is taking his cue from tragedy.

Many scholars have seen the connection between epic and tragedy, but I want to draw attention to conflict within families as a dominant theme in tragedy, as it is in civil war. It is not surprising that violation of family loyalties is a theme frequently found in tragedy because, according to Aristotle, tragedy produces more pleasure from the arousal of feelings of pity and fear, if the calamity involves close friends or better still members of one family.<sup>83</sup> As subject for

---

<sup>79</sup> Face-to-face encounters between brothers, fathers and sons are described often: *BC* 2.149-51; 3.326-29; 4.168-82; 6.2; 7.180-83, 320-25, and 460-69.

<sup>80</sup> Bradley, 1991, 168-69, analyses the many marriages of Pompey in detail to point out: 'Pompey was not an especially prolific husband, but the permutations of "family" resulting from his marriages become endless without in any way destroying the validity of the term. What emerges, in fact, is a sequence of nuclear formations (in a reproductive sense) that gradually led to familial links beyond the immediate household in an irregular and disjointed manner'.

<sup>81</sup> See Syme, 1939, 64.

<sup>82</sup> See Bannon, 1997, 4, who writes: 'Fraternal *pietas*, the idealized devotion of brothers, was a subset of the traditional Roman virtue *pietas*, the blend of affection and duty that structured kinship'.

<sup>83</sup> Aristotle *Poetics*, 1453b.10-20.



tragedy, the Argive and Theban royal families are treated again and again, their popularity signifying the ability of such family strife to arouse strong emotion. Great drama comes from the betrayal or destruction of relationships within these prominent families where feelings of love and hate are most intense. In Lucan's poem, Caesar and Pompey signify leading Roman families involved in civil war.

In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, the destruction of the principal character gains pathos from the fractured relationship between this Trojan hero and his wife, whose crime of homicide, avenging the sacrificial death of their daughter, engenders further kin-killing and its associated problem of guilt, explored in the other two plays in the trilogy, *Libation Bearers* and *Eumenides*. Revenge for Agamemnon's death as a subject recurs in later Greek tragedy: Sophocles has written about the same family in his *Electra*, as has Euripides in his *Electra* and *Orestes*. Seneca reiterates the stories of crimes among members of the same family in his *Agamemnon*, where the ghost of Thyestes relates his crime of incest which stains the family in this later generation. Recounting the legendary Theban story, Aeschylus, shows the working out of a family curse and brother killing brother in his *Seven Against Thebes*. Sophocles has three plays on the Theban royal family, each one drawing out the horror of patricide and fratricide. The *Phoenissae* of Euripides also presents the destruction of the family of Cadmus, founder of Thebes, and is retold by Seneca in his tragedy of the same name, with emphasis on the crime of fratricide. Seneca also has a version of *Oedipus*.<sup>84</sup> As well as these well known family tragedies, we also see other families doomed to self-destruction in tragedy. A father responsible for the death of a son is the gloomy subject of Euripides' *Hippolytus* and Seneca tells the same story in his *Phaedra*. Love turned to destructive hatred and anger is the basis for dramatic versions of Medea's story: both Euripides and Seneca write a *Medea* and in both tragedies the emphasis is on the destructive passion roused by the betrayal of familial obligations, with the horror intensified when Medea kills her own children.<sup>85</sup>

---

<sup>84</sup> De Jong, 1991, 174, writing about the *Phoenissae* of Euripides observes: 'the wordless signs emitted by the dying Eteocles are ... more easily described than enacted'. See also Narducci, 2002, 98, who sees the connection between Seneca's *Phoenissae*, at Sen. *Phoen.* 491f. and Lucan's *Pharsalia*.

<sup>85</sup> Ovid tells us, *Tr.* 2.553-54, that he wrote a tragedy. Tarrant, 2002, 17-18, writes: 'The *Medea* was apparently Ovid's only tragedy; one was enough to make the point. The work elicited even Quintilian's admiration, and it and Varius' *Thyestes* were conventionally regarded as pre-

The horror of killing children is also the basis of Seneca's *Thyestes*, a play concerned with ideas of rivalry for kingship, adultery and revenge for violation of family relationships.<sup>86</sup> Caesar and Pompey can be seen as equivalent in importance to these members of royal or elite families and their conflict is made more intense by the marriage alliance once joining them. Lucan portrays the fight for leadership being as intense as the dramatic rivalry for kingship between Thyestes and Atreus, especially as the outcome of the civil war is the establishment of a dynasty, a line of Caesars leading down to Nero, who are kings in all but name.

Lucan imports the techniques of tragedy into his epic: dramatic and emotional intervention of the narrator in Lucan's epic can be seen to parallel the great speeches of tragic actors.<sup>87</sup> Epic narratives about heroes such as Agamemnon, often supply themes for tragedy where there is greater focus on the cyclical nature of vengeance killing engendered by the sacrifice, shame, betrayal and slaughter of and by family members. These tragedies have opposed family members as a common theme, and as such it is easy to see that tragedy can supply this theme to Lucan's epic: opposed family members generate the underlying pathos to the conflict in Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile*. Conflict between families and the trope of families doomed to repeat self destruction are evident in both epic and tragedy.<sup>88</sup> In tragedy antipathy and violence not only tear apart families but often result in repeated deaths and cycles of vengeance killing in later generations. I see that a similar focus on such familial destruction in civil war could be a reason for

---

eminent specimens of Roman tragedy'. Ahl, 1976, 333, writes of 'an unfinished *Medea*,' among a list of Lucan's lost works.

<sup>86</sup> See Roche, 2009, 27-28, on Lucan and Senecan drama. Schiesaro, 2003, 7, on Seneca's *Thyestes* writes: 'The play pushes to breaking point a debate about the role and function of the poetic world which lies at the heart of such works as Ovid's *Metamorphoses* or Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile*.'

<sup>87</sup> Gagliardi, 1976, 112, points out the influence of Senecan drama on Lucan's epic and writes: 'La tensione fortissima ne risulta tende perciò a trasformare la stessa struttura epica in struttura drammatica, allorquando la tematica tragica prende il sopravvento (tutto il VII libro ne è documento probante) sulle esigenze più propriamente narrative'. See also Albrecht, 1999, 242, and Ahl, 1976, 152.

<sup>88</sup> Ovid treats the Theban cycle at length in his *Metamorphoses*, as well as the story of Medea, so well known from Apollonius' *Argonautica*, and Greek and Roman tragedy. Virgil's *Aeneid*, Book 4, has often been read as a tragedy and his portrayal of Troy's downfall both within the ecphrasis, *Aen.* 1.418-93 and Aeneas' story in Book 2, have elements of dramatic presentation. See Conte, 1986, 161, and Panoussi, 2009, 13.

Lucan's dramatic intervention. In tragedy, emotional stress is often concentrated by a glut of suffering and destruction wrought by kinfolk. Lucan's *Bellum Civile* is obsessed with excess; there is an over-abundance of violence, killing and death among Roman families which not only increases the intensity and pathos of the poem but is the very reason why Lucan's text is narrated by such a dramatically intrusive author.

The narrator explains that his poem is called for by the disaster of Pharsalus and by the subject of his epic, civil war:

... Pharsalia tanti  
causa mali. cedant feralia nomina Cannae  
et damnata diu Romanis Allia fastis.  
tempora signavit leuiorum Roma malorum,  
hunc uoluit nescire diem. pro tristia fata!

BC 7.407-11

The cause of such a great calamity is Pharsalia. The deadly names of Cannae and Allia, damned for so long in the Roman calendar must yield. Rome has marked the times of lighter evils, she wished not to know this day. Oh sad fates!

The poet uses dramatic narratorial intrusion to justify his poem as he tells us that other deadly battles have been celebrated and even given names and days in the Roman calendar, but that this civil war has been pointedly ignored.<sup>89</sup> The narrator of Lucan's epic indicates that although Rome's civil war (and the battle of Pharsalus in particular) is a crime, it overshadows earlier wars, and should be recorded.

Lucan, as poet and narrator, is overt in his condemnation of civil war, while the Virgilian narrator more subtly inserts his disapproval of the war between Aeneas and Turnus through his choice of adjective and the repetition of negative ideas:

ilicet infandum cuncti contra omina bellum,  
contra fata deum peruerso numine poscunt.

Aen. 7.583-84

At once they all demand this unspeakable war against the omens, against the fates by the perverse will of the gods.

---

<sup>89</sup> Gagliardi, 1976, 108, has discussed the problem of Lucan's choice of subject when he writes: 'Il soggetto, anzitutto. Le lotte sanguinose da cui nacque l'Impero, si sa, non erano state cantate *ex professo* da alcun poeta: avventurarsi su questo terreno significava davvero calcare, a voler ripetere la frase di Lucrezio, *loca nullius ante / trita solo*. Prima di Lucano s'erano avuti solo degli accenni in merito, mai una trattazione diffusa, ove fosse anche agevole attaccare il presente sotto il pretesto di raccontare il passato'. From our perspective Lucan does go, like Lucretius *DRN* 1.926-27, to the place where no one has ever trod before: there are no detailed poetic accounts of Rome's civil war, other than Lucan's poem, extant.

Virgil's narrator condemns the war demanded by the Latins, considering it unspeakably wicked, yet the second half of Virgil's poem is taken up with explicit descriptions of it. Virgil's epic epitaphs for fallen warriors on both sides also hint at narratorial and authorial condemnation of war.<sup>90</sup> The Virgilian narrator reveals that his view is that of a Roman of his own era, by reference to the places and people of Augustan Rome. Ovid, although less obvious as overt narrator, still intervenes into his narrative, especially when describing war. As the omniscient narrator, he appeals to the reader with exclamations such as, *ecce*, *Met.* 5.74, 'look' and the second person address to his character: *tu quoque*, *Lampetide*, *Met.* 5.111, 'you also, Lampetides'; and these techniques not only draw attention to the attitude of the poet toward war (the death of a singer is especially poignant; he dies just standing there: *plectrumque inbelle tenentem*, *Met.* 5.114, 'and holding his unwarlike plectrum'), but also serve to prevent the reader from being swept away by the narrative action. The suspension of disbelief produced by Ovid's epic battle descriptions is ruptured by such interventions while the many narrators involved in his epic also call attention to poetry and the art of story telling. Ovid, as poet and narrator does not overtly take sides in his epic as Lucan does, but there is a tendency to sympathy with the victim, especially if the victim is an artist of some sort.<sup>91</sup>

The poet Lucan increases the complexity of the portrayal of narrator in his poem when, in Book 9, he speaks of his duty as a poet. At this point, the narrator and the poet are one.<sup>92</sup> With authorial / narratorial intervention highlighted again by the use of apostrophe, Lucan, as poet, breaks into his description of Caesar wandering about the ruins of Troy, the most important epic 'location', to address poetry itself:<sup>93</sup>

---

<sup>90</sup> We see this at *Aen.* 10.790-93 and 12.542-47.

<sup>91</sup> Much has been written on the Ovidian narrator: for example, Hinds, 1987; Wheeler, 2000; Barchiesi, 2002; and Fantham, 2004.

<sup>92</sup> Henderson, 1998, 182-83, writes: 'And (as you shall see) "*Lucan*", whether text, classical author, narrator, actor in history, *ciuis*, courtier or conspirator, will march into eternity hand in hand with absolutist Caesarism: "posterity will read the pair of us" (9.985, *uenturi me teque legendi*)'.

<sup>93</sup> See on Caesar in the ruins of Troy: Ahl, 1976, 214-21, (with references); Zwierlein, 1986, 460-78; Masters, 1992, 158; Ormand, 1994, 38-55; Bartsch, 1997, 132; Rudich, 1997, 144-45, and nn. 92-94, for scholarship; Rossi, 2001, 313-26; and Spencer, 2005, 68.

o sacer et magnus uatum labor! omnia fato  
eripis et populis donas mortalibus aeuum.  
inuidia sacrae, Caesar, ne tangere famae;  
nam, siquid Latiis fas est promittere Musis,  
quantum Zmyrnaei durabunt uatis honores,  
uenturi me teque legent; Pharsalia nostra  
uiuēt, et a nullo tenebris damnabimur aeuo.

BC 9.980-86

Oh sacred and great labour of poets! You snatch everything from death and to mortal people you give eternity. Caesar, lest you be touched by envy of their sacred fame, for, if it is right to promise anything to Latin muses, as long as the honours of the Smyrnian poet will endure, those about to come will read me and you; our Pharsalia will live, and we will be condemned to darkness by no age.

Lucan's obligation as an epic poet is to memorialise war, in particular the actions of individual warriors and the honour and glory gained by them through war and the poet's telling.<sup>94</sup> The poet addresses all epic poets throughout history, before, as poet / narrator engaging strongly with the subject matter, he addresses Caesar.<sup>95</sup> Here the intrusive narrator claims a place for himself as epic poet and for his epic within the tradition of Homeric epic, despite his subject, a non-epic type of war, civil war.

Lucan's poem presents a poet / narrator intervening to show overt partisanship for Pompey also, with an apostrophe to him as one of the greatest men of Rome:

o summos hominum, quorum fortuna per orbem  
signa dedit, quorum fati caelum omne uacauit!  
haec et apud seras gentes populosque nepotum,  
siue sua tantum uenient in saecula fama  
siue aliquid magnis nostri quoque cura laboris  
nominibus prodesse potest, cum bella legentur,  
spesque metusque simul perituraque uota mouebunt,  
attonitique omnes ueluti uenientia fata,  
non transmissa, legent et adhuc tibi, Magne, fauebunt.

BC 7.205-13

Oh mightiest of men, the fortune of whom gave signs through the world, on the fate of whom all the sky was free to attend! These things, even among later races and the people of descendants, either they will come into the ages by their own fame or if my careful toil is able to be of benefit to great names when the wars

<sup>94</sup> See Rudich, 1997, 144, and n. 92, who writes: 'Placed in the context of the inverted episode in which Caesar visits the site of ancient Troy, and thereby carefully mindful of both Homer and Virgil, this is the poet's proud self-eulogy and one of the very few occasions when he identifies himself with his work'. See Johnson, 1987, 120, who writes: 'It is a brilliant parody of the vatic affirmation of the power of poetry and the immortality it confers, both on its *laudandus* and its *laudator*'.

<sup>95</sup> I see this differently from Ormand, 1994, 38-55, who writes on lines BC 9.980-81: 'the apostrophe here is intelligible only if we take it as addressed to the guide. Otherwise we must interpret the second-person verb forms as directed toward Lucan's narrator himself ... nowhere else in the epic does he address himself in the second person', 50. See also Rossi, 2001, 321-24.

are read, they will stir hope and fear at the same time and prayers about to fail, and stunned, will read all as if coming destinies and not yet passed over, and, Magnus, still they will favour you.

Lucan, as poet and narrator admonishes the reader to agree with his view and take the side of the defeated Republican. Throughout the poem, we, as readers are encouraged to favour Pompey more. Early on, Pompey is shown as more popular than Caesar: *pronior in Magnum populus*, BC 2.453, ‘the people favour Magnus more’. The narrator manages to suggest that the flight of Pompey from the battle at Pharsalus shows courage, and that *vincere peius erat*, BC 7.706, ‘to win was worse’. The narrator breaks into the narrative to show that he sides with Pompey; that even in defeat Pompey has ‘huge spirit’, BC 7.677-79. Even before Pompey dies, the poet / narrator intervenes with yet another apostrophe to the gods, *o superi*, BC 8.542, followed by an unusual appeal to civil wars, to the subject of the poem itself:

hanc certe servate fidem, ciuilia bella:  
cognatas praestate manus externaque monstra  
pellite, si meruit tam claro nomine Magnus  
Caesaris esse nefas.

BC 8.547-50

Civil wars, keep this trust at least: furnish kindred hands and drive out foreign monstrosities, if Magnus, by a name so famous, is worthy to be the crime of Caesar.

Address to civil wars is unprecedented and shows the poet / narrator juggling with incompatibilities: civil war uneasily paired with ‘trust’ or ‘fidelity’; kindred hands engaged in civil war juxtaposed with a foreign enemy in the form of Egyptian monstrosities; and Caesar in opposition to Pompey. The poet / narrator presents the reader with what seems to be a contradiction of his earlier stance that civil war is wrong, now it seems preferable that the crime of Magnus’ death should be attributed to Caesar’s hand. The irony in this passage is not only in its divergence from the attitude of the narrator in the rest of the poem but also in the way it foreshadows the actual violent and shocking event, when it is a ‘kindred hand’, the hand of Septimius, a Roman soldier, that cuts off the head of Pompey, BC 8.668. Pompey has two eulogies, filled with emotive language to evoke pity for his death; Cato with his poignant, *ciuis obit*, BC 9.190, ‘a citizen has died,’ and Caesar, who regrets that he was not given the opportunity to show clemency toward his defeated enemy, BC 9.1064-1104. The poet as narrator again appeals to the reader to sympathise with Pompey in an impassioned apostrophe to Caesar at

the sight of Pompey's head: *credis apud populos Pompei nomen amantis / hoc castris prodesse tuis?*, BC 9.1050, 'do you believe this benefits your camp among the people loving the name of Pompey?' The narrator's stance on Pompey's death indicates that the reader should see that this death outweighs all other deaths and is the most important reason for the poet to condemn civil war.

I conclude that the frequency and intensity of narratorial intrusiveness in Lucan's text is what sets his epic apart from earlier epic, and that the motivation for this intervention is to be found in the subject, civil war, with its emphasis on families and discord. Civil war as subject is uncommon in epic, yet Lucan's poem is all about civil war. While the poem presents civil war battles as somehow familiar through epic allusion it also makes changes to conventions of the epic genre. In this chapter, I have shown that the emotive subject of civil war dictates a particular intrusive narratorial style, and, as we shall see in my next chapter, a remarkable manner of recounting battle narrative.

### Chapter 3:

#### Lucan's Book 2: Civil War and More.

bella pares superis facient ciuilia diuos,  
fulminibus manes radiisque ornabit et astris  
inque deum templis iurabit Roma per umbras.

BC 7.457-59

Civil wars will make cult-gods equal to those above, Rome will decorate ghosts with lightning bolts and rays and stars and in the temples of the gods she will swear by shades.

From its appearance as first word of Lucan's poem, the repeated use of the term *bella*, 'wars' in combination with *ciuilia*, 'civil' keeps the reader focussed on the subject of this epic.<sup>1</sup> In the passage above, *bella* is again in a prominent position at the beginning of the line. The term 'wars' is modified by the adjective 'civil' to describe a particular type of war, civil war, defined as: 'civil war, strife, troubles, etc.: such as occur among fellow-citizens or within the limits of one community', and it accurately describes the battles fought between two Roman generals, Caesar and Pompey.<sup>2</sup> Lucan's subject is Rome's civil war, but not just the war between Caesar and Pompey, it also includes earlier episodes of civil war, those led by

<sup>1</sup> Lucan's use of the term *ciuilis*, 'civil', as a signifier for civilian Roman society found in the phrase, *ciuilis toga*, BC 8.814, 'the civil toga', denotes peace and stability, but the more frequent and striking use of the term *ciuilis*, 'civil', is when it is coupled with *bellum*, 'war', which alerts the reader not only to the pervasiveness of the subject in Lucan's epic but also to the way Lucan's choice of subject draws attention to the susceptibility of civil society to internal conflict. We find many examples of Lucan's use of *ciuilis*, 'civil', with *bellum*, 'war', in various configurations as to number and case: BC 1.1, 108, 366, 627; BC 2.53, 62, 66, 231, 277, 286, 325, 349, 595, 731, BC 3.34-35, 97, 323, 354-55; BC 4.120, 187, 221, 258, 350, 739-40, 804, BC 5.269, 299, 316, 479, 747; BC 6. 718; BC 7.95, 241, 274-75, 307, 407, 475, 501, 526, 542, 554, 663; BC 8.323, 419, 428, 547; BC 9.20, 27, 228, 235, 248, 561, 851, 863, 1018, 1067; BC 10.192, 340, 391, 410, 418. It is found with other terms denoting war such as *arma*: BC 1.44, 325; 2.224; 3.313; 5.285, 526, 752; 6.148, 299; 7.343; 8.102, 351, 559; 9.150, 1076; and *proelia*, BC 4.401. Negativity is reflected in the coupling of the term *ciuilis* 'civil' with morally weighted words: 'crime' *nefas*, BC 4.172; 7.432; *facinus*, BC 8.604; *crimen*, BC 7.398; and 'hate', *odium*, BC 7.490; as well as with terms less often associated with citizens: 'ghost', *umbra*, BC 8.505; 'fate or destiny', *fata*, BC 8.544, 823; 'blood', *sanguis*, BC 7.13; 'madness', *rabies*, BC 6.63; 'Fury', *Erinys*, BC 4.187; and 'camps', *ciuilia castra*, BC 7.831, 8.92. Conte, 1987, 444, on Lucan, writes: '[he] aims at bringing civil war before us in all its inescapable historical reality, presenting the consequences for later history'.

<sup>2</sup> *OED*: 'war, *n*, a. Hostile contention by means of armed forces, carried on between nations, states, or rulers, or between parties in the same nation or state; the employment of armed forces against a foreign power, or against an opposing party in the state. b. *transf.* and *fig.* Applied *poet.* or rhetorically to any kind of active hostility or contention between living beings, or of conflict between opposing forces or principles. *civil war*: such as occur among fellow-citizens or within the limits of one community.' The earliest quotation in English literature of this combination of terms refers to the very civil war that Lucan writes about: '1387 TREVISA Higden (Rolls) IV. 189 A batayle ciuile bygan bytwene Julius and Pompeus'.



Marius and Sulla. Much has been written about Lucan's epic, and many scholars, as well as this thesis, suggest it reflects well the destruction and horror of civil war.<sup>3</sup> Building on this scholarship, especially on the commentary of Fantham, 1992,<sup>4</sup> this chapter will suggest a threefold purpose behind Lucan's retrospective narrative of the civil war involving Marius and Sulla. One objective is to accentuate Lucan's distortion of the genre through his choice of subject matter; another is to exemplify the events to be expected in civil war, as many of the images, motifs and ideas within the old soldier's story are repeated in the rest of the poem; and the third aim is to emphasise the repetitive nature of this particular type of war, civil war by means of a *mise en abyme*, since the representations of death and destruction in one civil war are reflected in another. Lucan's poem, with Rome's civil war as a subject, shows the poet's interest in the operation of and the destabilisation of Roman society. Civil wars occur within one community and are more destructive to the social fabric than foreign wars. Lucan's poem accentuates this as it vividly presents an earlier civil war involving Marius and Sulla as an example of the destruction wrought on Romans by Romans, where the atrocities presented remain unsurpassed in the poem.

This chapter will show that in earlier epics, at least those examples which have survived, there are few references to civil war, and no detailed or overt instances, except for Lucan's poem. The examples I will point out below show that, for the most part, civil war is inserted for artistic purposes, or glossed over as a necessary evil outweighed by the resulting and contrasting peace. Lucan's poem, however, is entirely concerned with civil war. Lucan's choice of civil war as subject for his epic can be seen to have a double objective: from a literary perspective, to

---

<sup>3</sup> See Feeney, 1991, 276, who writes of Lucan: 'He is doing the opposite of what an epic poet must do; *his* Roman poetry (what *Romana carmina* have now become) involves narrating the destruction of a universe, not its creation', and cites Hardie, 1986, among others who see this aspect of Lucan's poem. Masters, 1992, xiii, writes on the important scholarship of Ahl, 1976, and Johnson, 1987. Conte, 1988, 22, writes on the subject of Lucan's poem: 'Non che si voglia affermare che tale "rivoluzione formale" sia l'elemento essenziale di differenziazione; che anzi la novità decisiva è il contenuto nuovo, il quale proviene dal mutamento della realtà storica'. See also Braund, 1992, xix-xx; and the work of Bramble, 1982; Johnson, 1987; Most, 1992; Bartsch, 1997; and Leigh, 1997. Roller, 2001, 29, writes: 'Lucan makes civil war a context in which he can participate in the ideological struggles of his own day, propounding, exploring and evaluating a particular vision of the principate'.

<sup>4</sup> See Fantham, 1992, 90-121, for an excellent commentary on the passage, *BC* 2.67-233. See also Conte, 1968, 224-53, for a good discussion on Lucan's treatment of the civil wars of Marius and Sulla, and Quint, 1993, 142-44.

differentiate his epic from earlier epics, and from a political / cultural standpoint, to comment on the state of the society of Rome as the poet Lucan sees it. When we look at Lucan's poem in relation to earlier epics, his subject, civil war, stands out as unconventional, yet we can see some traces or allusion to civil war in most epic.<sup>5</sup>

Civil wars cause the breakdown of some of the most important communal norms regarding care and nurture of family members, they invalidate such conventions by the horror of patricide and fratricide, forms of killing far removed from heroic despatch of a foreign enemy.<sup>6</sup> Since religious practice and social mores are conducted or ratified by the ruling power in ancient society, a civil war which destroys the hierarchy of authority changes the whole society.<sup>7</sup> Lucan's poem indicates that as a result of civil wars Rome will have to adjust some elements of its religion or ritual. Such an alteration is illustrated in the passage above if we read 'cult gods' (*diuos*) and 'ghosts' (*manes*) symbolising the deification of the Caesars after Rome's civil war.<sup>8</sup> The narrator suggests that after this type of war the victor can arrogantly elevate his status to that of the Olympian gods.

We see this when we look at this chapter's opening passage in full:

... cladis tamen huius habemus  
uindictam, quantam terris dare numina fas est:  
bella pares superis facient ciuilia diuos,  
fulminibus manes radiisque ornabit et astris  
inque deum templis iurabit Roma per umbras.

BC 7. 454-59

Yet we have vindication for this downfall, as much as it is right for the gods to give to the earth; civil wars will make cult-gods equal to those above, Rome will decorate ghosts with lightning bolts and rays and stars and in the temples of the gods she will swear by shades.

In the first part of the passage, the poet sets up a very dense, almost contradictory argument: on one hand, that we can expect the Olympian gods to allow, as much

---

<sup>5</sup> Outside the Graeco-Roman canon we can find an episode of civil war in the Finnish *Kalevala*, the translation of an epic poem after oral tradition by Elias Lönnrot, by Bosley, 1989, 31.1-77; and the *The Bhagavad-Gita*, opens with a civil war, Mascaró J. (tr) 1962, 1.1-47.

<sup>6</sup> Hardie, 1993, 88, writes: 'From its beginning the epic's central subject may be constructed as the continuity or discontinuity of social or political structures'.

<sup>7</sup> Herodotus, writing on the lead up to the battle at Artemisium and the question of supreme command, suggests that the Athenians gave way knowing that: στάσις γὰρ ἔμφυλος πολέμου ὁμοφρονέοντος τοσούτῳ κάκιόν ἐστι ὅσῳ πόλεμος εἰρήνης, Hdt. 8.3.5 'civil war is as much worse than united war as war is worse than peace', (tr. Godley, 1969).

<sup>8</sup> See the commentaries of Haskins, 1887, 251; Postgate, 1896, 63; and Gagliardi, 1975, 67.

as they think right, such changes to their rituals on earth as ‘vindication’ or ‘justification’ (*uindictam*) of the destruction of the world through civil war; but, on the other, that it is civil war itself and the establishment of rule by Caesar which will make new cult-gods, Caesar and his descendants, ‘equal’ (*pares*) to the gods above.<sup>9</sup> Lucan points out that a lack of piety or respect for divine laws results from the crime of civil war:<sup>10</sup>

... sunt nobis nulla profecto  
numina: cum caeco rapiantur saecula casu,  
mentimur regnare Iouem. BC 7.445-47

Truly there are no deities for us: we lie that Jove is ruling since generations are  
being swept along by blind chance.

Later the sentiment is repeated: *mortalia nulli / sunt curata deo*, BC 7. 454-55, ‘Human affairs are cared for by no god’. The passage reminds us of Virgil, when Aeneas’ recalls the downfall of Troy depicted on the temple doors in Carthage, and the effect of the death of Priam on men rather than gods, when he says: ‘human affairs touch the [human] heart’ (... *mentem mortalia tangunt*, *Aen.* 1.462). Pathos in Lucan’s poem, evoked by reference to the plight of mankind in a godless world, is accentuated by this reference to Virgil. The passage in Virgil stresses how the pains and sorrows of mortal men are more acutely understood by men than by gods, because, unlike the gods, men actually die.

Lucan brings to our awareness themes that permeate his poem, the notion of equal pairs in gladiatorial conflict by his use of the term *par*, and ideas of right and wrong signalled by the term *fas*. The poet has used a similar argument before when he justifies civil war by its outcome, a line of deified Caesars leading to Nero, and his place among the stars, BC 1.37-63. In earlier literature, lightning bolts, rays and stars are symbols of power associated with the Olympian gods, but

---

<sup>9</sup> See Feeney, 1991, 297-98, on this passage where he points out that: ‘Lucan reflects on the god’s unconcern for the destruction of liberty’. He explains: ‘*Par/pares* (“equal”) is one of the poem’s key words, and its civil war resonances work here also. Caesars and gods are “well-matched” gladiatorial pairs, so that this is a violent competition with the state’s gods; Caesars and gods are “mutually suited”, they deserve each other; Caesars are equal to the gods (“situated on a level” with those *above*?), indistinguishable from them, of the same essence, as bad as them, as callous and indifferent as they are.’ See also Henderson, 1998, 203-04, on *par*.

<sup>10</sup> Feeney, 1991, 292, writes: ‘If one movement in the poem shows religious forms sliding from public desuetude into the diverse privacies of Erictho and Cato, there is a corresponding current which carries along the religious system of the future: Caesarism’. See also Fantham, 2003, 230. See Seneca’s *Thyestes*, where conflict among family members requires the withdrawal of the gods, Sen, *Thy.* 842-43.

also often with leaders of men and their apotheosis.<sup>11</sup> In Virgil's epic, the picture on the shield of Aeneas reveals Augustus Caesar: *stans celsa in puppi, geminas cui tempora flammis / laeta uomunt patriumque aperitur uertice sidus*, *Aen.* 8.680-81, 'He was standing in the high stern, his happy temples poured forth twin flames and his father's star was apparent on his head,' where the star marks Augustus as a descendant of the deified Julius Caesar.<sup>12</sup> We can see that Ovid uses the same symbolism. Ovid's treatment of the apotheosis of Julius Caesar is complex. He writes: *Caesar in urbe sua deus est*, *Met.* 15.746. 'Caesar is a god in his own city' referring to the new cult.<sup>13</sup> But when Ovid writes, *in sidus uertere nouum stellamque comantem*, *Met.* 15.749, 'he was turned into a new star and a comet-star', he goes on to explain that it was not so much for Julius Caesar's achievements in battle that he was deified, but more because of the political advantage of his descendant (Augustus). Ovid condenses the accomplishments of Caesar, indeed whole of the civil war, into six lines, *Met.* 15.752-57. Because official recognition of Julius Caesar as a god did depend on the authority of his adopted heir, Augustus, we can read an ironic ambiguity in the lines, *Met.* 15.760-61. Neither Virgil nor Ovid reminds the reader that the subsequent deification of a series of Caesars is a result of the power vested in one man by success in Rome's bloody civil war.

But Lucan undercuts the dignity of the image of the new 'cult-gods' by his reference to *manes* and *umbras*, the remains of mortal men who are to be treated as gods. The term *umbra* retains its primary sense of 'shadow', the image of

---

<sup>11</sup> Zanker, 1990, 34-35, writes: 'it was none other than Octavian himself who inspired in people this belief in the star ... Soon the star appeared as a symbol of hope on coins, finger rings and seals. In 42 B.C. Octavian obtained the admission of the deified Julius Caesar into state cult and the worship of the new god in all Italian cities. From now on he could call himself *diui filius*, son of the deified Caesar'. Virgil uses similar imagery to convey kingly status: *Aen.* 12.161-64, 166-67. The deification of Aeneas is assured by Jupiter's promise to Venus, 1.259-60.

<sup>12</sup> See Williams, 1984, 272 and 340. See also Hardie, 1986, 354, who writes: 'On the shield, where historical reality is particularly exposed, the participation of the heavens or sky in Roman empire is developed chiefly through the theme of divine co-operation with the aims of the city'. See Putnam, 1998, 140, and Boyle, 1999, 153.

<sup>13</sup> Gurval, 1997, 45-61, (especially 58-60), quotes Pliny, *HN* 2.93, 39 and gives a good overview of comets as omens, and also looks at the presence of comets in literature, 62-71. See also Feeney, 1991, 201-11. On Virgil's *Eclogue* 9, Feeney writes: 'Caesar's star, signalling his apotheosis and the advent of a new golden age, promised to obviate the need for all previous farmers' almanacs', 136. See also Malamud, 2009, 294 and n.61. Note the imagery used by Ovid for deification: *Met.* 8.372-73; 9.271-73; 10.451; 14.608, 827-28, 846-48. In *Metamorphoses*, some victims are 'rescued' by being turned into stars, for example: *Met.* 2.505-07; and 8.177-79. See also Hardie, 1997, 193-95, on the question of succession.

insubstantiality, something that cannot be grasped by mortal men.<sup>14</sup> In Lucan's poem, the term *manes* is often associated with less than glorious characters: Hannibal, *BC* 1.39; 4.790; Sulla, *BC* 1.581; Catulus, *BC* 2.173; and the Ptolemies, *BC* 8.696. Carthaginian or Punic ghosts are evoked to emphasise the bloodshed and horror of war; the ghost of Sulla and that of Catulus, the one time ally of Marius, epitomise the carnage of civil war and proscriptions in Rome, while the Ptolemies' shades lie in great tombs even though they are examples of a disgraceful incestuous dynasty. Most commonly, Lucan uses the term *manes*, to refer to Pompey's ghost and the relationship between Pompey and the term *umbra*, *BC* 1.135, 'shade or shadow', is established in the first simile, *BC* 1.136-143; yet there is no cult established in Rome to his 'shade'.<sup>15</sup> From this passage, we can see a relationship set up between Roman society and the realms of the dead as a consequence of civil war. The gods produced by the horror of civil war are thus a perversion of the traditional epic gods of Homer, Virgil and Ovid.

Civil wars display a community in a process of self-destruction, where the strongest faction survives at the expense of part of the same community, and as such cannot be considered or portrayed in a positive light. Hardie, 1993, writes:

The civil wars of the dying Republic were frequently represented through the myth, no doubt all too often a reality, of strife within the family: the supreme example is the conflict between Caesar and Pompey, father-in-law and son-in-law, while a more generally available image is that of fratricide, with the particularly nasty variation of twin fratricide. In civil war the orderly succession of generations through father and son is cut off by mutual destruction within one generation.<sup>16</sup>

Lucan's battle descriptions can be read as the commemoration of a type of war condemned by all as destructive to society, as is evident in the range of scholarship on Lucan's depiction of civil war.<sup>17</sup> The poem can be read as overt

---

<sup>14</sup> Homer's Odysseus tries to clasp his dead mother in his arms but her ghost eludes him: *Od.* 11.207. Virgil alludes to Homer at *Aen.* 2.772, 792-94, and 6.700-02.

<sup>15</sup> We find the reference to Pompey's ghost many times: *BC* 8.762, 769, 834, 844, 857; 9.1, 7, 151, 976; 10.7, and 36. The corpse's address to Sextus Pompey suggests that Pompey's line is superior to the gods established by civil war, *BC* 6.807-09. See especially Feeney, 1986, 239-243, on the greatness of Pompey expressed in his name, and writes: 'we see that only as an "umbra" does Pompeius receive true "nomen", 242.

<sup>16</sup> Hardie, 1993, 93.

<sup>17</sup> See Sklenář, 2003, 1, writes: 'Recent scholarship influenced by literary theory has replaced the pro-Stoic, pro-Pompeian Lucan of an earlier day with a dark, sinister, at times grimly parodic poet for whom reality is chaotic, fragmentary and ultimately meaningless'. Henderson, 1998, 4, writes: 'his [Lucan's] writing shows in every line how the materialization of Rome in Latin

criticism of Lucan's political present through his exposition of past conflict among Romans, the civil wars between Caesar and Pompey, which comprise the bulk of the poem as well as an earlier attempt at dictatorship involving Marius and Sulla. Lucan's treatment of civil war is, however, in the form of epic poetry where the grand manner and amplitude of the genre are used to reinforce the idea that the conflicts of this civil war are equal to any war celebrated in earlier epic.<sup>18</sup> Paradoxically, his images of combat evoke heroic Homeric and Virgilian battles, while at the same time they draw attention to the contrast between the glory gained from epic war against a foreign enemy and the disgrace of civil war fought among members of one community. This is made especially clear by the narrator, *BC* 2.45-46, where an anonymous man wishes he was born in an earlier time with a foreign enemy to fight. Lucan's use of *tempora*, *BC* 2.45, is a comment on the speaker's present through reference to the past. Distortion of time mirrors the distortion of society caused by civil war.

War against a foreign enemy of almost equal prowess is the subject of Homer's *Iliad* and the celebration of the glory gained from fighting and dying is of paramount importance.<sup>19</sup> In the *aristeia* of the Homeric warrior, each has his moment of fame validated by a brief biography signalling lineage and allegiance. Focus is on the courage, strength and daring of all warriors while risking or suffering death, often with the help of a god or goddess, and is of great consequence to the narrative.<sup>20</sup> Death, however, is not enough; it is the renown gained from battle through the storyteller's art of dissemination of glorious deeds and death in war which underlies the ideology of Homeric epic, where the skill of the poet complements the strength of the hero.

---

language and thought had been pervasively saturated with Caesarism. The future would forever be an after-effect of the fighting for Rome'. Masters, 1992, 65, writes: 'It remains true that civil war has close parallels with cataclysm and chaos'. Saylor, 1990, 299, writes: 'Yet there is nothing attractive in civil war. Normal does not mean good, and the right choice is finally qualified, only relative'. Johnson, 1987, 19, suggests that Lucan sees omnipotent malevolence at the heart of the universe. On the absence of great men and heroes he writes: 'In Lucan's universe great men are momentary monsters'. See also Hardie, 1993, 53, who writes: 'Slaughter in Lucan's *Bellum Civile* is routinely sacrificial: words like *macto*, *iugulo* (*iugulum*) pepper the text, suggesting the perversion of civilization that is civil war'.

<sup>18</sup> Feeney, 1991, 250-64, is especially good on the problems arising from historical epic, and how the ancients defined poetry and history.

<sup>19</sup> See Rossi, 2004, Ch. 3, especially 75-81, for Homeric conventions showing the advance of armies and the death of warriors, in comparison with Virgilian scenes in the *Aeneid*.

<sup>20</sup> See especially, *Il.* 5.2-3. Fenik, 1968, in his work on the repetition of 'type-scenes' in the *Iliad*, starts with *Il.* 5 and Diomedes, 9-97. Also see Muellner, 1996, 12.

Homer's *Iliad* is not about civil war: the two sides, Greeks and Trojans, are clearly defined as different peoples. Achaeans (also known as Argives and Danaans) are pitted against the Trojans and their foreign allies, some of whom speak different languages.<sup>21</sup> Contrast between Achaeans and Trojans is implied, perhaps, by the simile comparing the latter with noisy birds, *Il.* 3.2-7, in opposition to the silence and cohesion of the Greek warriors, *Il.* 3.8-9.<sup>22</sup> Kinship between Greek warriors is accentuated through the depiction of the ancestors of each warrior and reference to the grief of mothers and fathers resulting from the death of sons in battle. Not only do we have the poignant scene where Priam begs Achilles for the body of his son, Hector, *Il.* 24.471-676, but also, in contrast, the wish for vengeance for that same son expressed by his mother, Hecuba, *Il.* 24.200-16.<sup>23</sup> Duty toward family members and friends during battle is stressed as brothers and comrades in arms protect and avenge each other. In the *Iliad*, Agamemnon shows concern for wounded Menelaus, *Il.* 4.155, and brothers can be found fighting brothers, *Il.* 16.317-25.

Guest-friendship, a form of obligation-laden relationship parallel to kinship, is enough to preclude conflict. The strength of a guest-host relationship is revealed when it is broken: in the *Odyssey*, the suitors' violation causes what can be seen as civil war. Vengeful punishment is the response to such abuse of trust by a host.<sup>24</sup> When Diomedes declares that Glaucus, the Trojan, is a ξείνος, *Il.* 6.215, 'guest-friend', it is enough to stop hostilities between these opposed fighters, and to prompt an exchange of armour, *Il.* 6.215-31. Attention is drawn to this event through an unusual evaluative intrusion of the narrator, who points out the inequality of the exchange, *Il.* 6.232-36. Ties of guest-friendship are strong between these two heroes, despite the fact that the actual connection is slight and extends back many generations. The bond assumes great importance from the way

---

<sup>21</sup> Reference to other languages in Homer's *Iliad*: *Il.* 2.803-04, and 2.867. See Mackie, 1996, 21, on this catalogue: 'The Trojans have only 62 lines of mustering, while the Achaeans have 292'.

<sup>22</sup> Herodotus writes of an experiment to find the oldest nation based on language, *Hdt.* 2.2; and his explanation, *Hdt.* 2.55-57. Hall, 1989, 4, writes: 'The priority of the linguistic criterion in the Greek's self-determination of their ethnicity is not surprising when one considers their geographical dispersal ... and the enormous variety in way of life, political allegiance and tradition amongst different communities'. See Mackie, 1996, 16.

<sup>23</sup> For the death of sons as grief to parents, see for example: *Il.* 5.155-58; 11.130-54, 240-45; 13.427-54, 643-59; and 14.493-505.

<sup>24</sup> In tragedy, for example, we see the horrible punishment of Polymestor, in Euripides' *Hecuba*, 1035-55.

the genealogies are presented in a customary set of speeches during the heat of battle, *Il.* 6.119-211.<sup>25</sup> Except for this deviation, battle narrative in the *Iliad* accentuates the long held hostility between Achaeans and Trojans by stressing the cohesion among the men forming each side.<sup>26</sup>

The only hint of civil war in the *Iliad* is the theomachy in Book 20, where the closely related gods fight against each other to support their favoured mortals.<sup>27</sup> At the last council of the gods, *Il.* 20.1-75, Zeus sends all the gods into the fight even though this means that they must then fight against each other. Zeus stays on Olympus. His reason is clear: it is for the pleasure he experiences while watching the fight *Il.* 20.23. The gods fight against each other to bring victory to their favoured mortals, ὥς οἱ μὲν θεοὶ ἅντα θεῶν ἴσαν, *Il.* 20.75, ‘thus gods went on to encounter gods’. These two sentiments, pleasure in watching a good fight and enjoyment in fighting among themselves, are the reasons given in the poem why the gods intervene in the fight among mortals but as Feeney, 1991, writes: ‘the intervention of the gods at moments of crisis and deadlock makes it possible for the poet to gear the human action up to a pitch of extraordinary tension’.<sup>28</sup> Since the gods cannot suffer any lasting hurt or die, their fight is without consequence, unlike the dire outcome of family or civil strife among mortals. In Homer’s *Iliad*, the theomachy has a resemblance to civil war, and is used to highlight the contrast between the gods and mortals.<sup>29</sup>

Homer’s *Odyssey*, however, shows the gods as less antagonistic toward each other; they do not seem to use heroes to score points against each other. In fact, Athena steps in to calm the belligerence of both sides in the final battle when Odysseus kills the suitors. Because of the abuse of the generosity of their host and violation of guest-friendship ties, the suitors are shown in a negative light

---

<sup>25</sup> See for instance the detailed genealogical description given by Aeneas before his confrontation with Achilles *Il.* 20.199-244.

<sup>26</sup> Mackie, 1996, 21, points out the difference between the Trojans and the Achaeans when she writes: ‘With their mixed languages, the Trojans cannot function as an articulate group’.

<sup>27</sup> *OED*: ‘Theomachy, 2, battle or strife among the gods: esp. in reference to that narrated in Homer’s *Iliad*.’ See Nagy, 1979, 61, who writes: ‘Since the battles of the heroes are matched by the battles of their divine patrons in the Homeric theme of theomakhíā, we may expect a thematic match between heroic and divine quarrels as well’.

<sup>28</sup> Feeney, 1991, 52-3.

<sup>29</sup> See Erp Taalman Kip, 2005, 385-402.



throughout and the anticipated penalty such wrongdoers must pay generates tension.<sup>30</sup> While the Homeric narrator presents this retribution as a just punishment, it can also be seen as incipient civil war.<sup>31</sup> Eurymachus draws attention to the relationship between Odysseus, as king of Ithaca, and these offenders, when he cries out to Odysseus: σὺ δὲ φείδεο λαῶν, *Od.* 22.54, ‘you, spare the people’ as the king is set to attack and kill the suitors, many of whom we are told, come from Ithaca, *Od.* 1.245-51.<sup>32</sup> This civil battle, *Od.* 22.170-95, breaks out in the private space of Odysseus’ dining hall, among the tables laden with food and drink and behind locked doors, although it ends near the orchard outside the house of Laertes.<sup>33</sup> Paradoxically, the battle is described in heroic epic detail with the suitors named and given their moment of prominence as they die, but it does not portray Odysseus as heroic; rather he is shown as engaged in remorseless slaughter usually attributed to barbarians or monsters.<sup>34</sup> From Odysseus’ point of view, his actions are justified: the suitors were doomed to die by the gods and their own actions, *Od.* 22.413-14, but such civil battle action calls forth vengeance from the dead suitors’ kinsmen.<sup>35</sup> Many scholars have written on the problematic cruelty and violence shown at the end of Homer’s *Odyssey*.<sup>36</sup> The

---

<sup>30</sup> The conduct of the suitors is condemned throughout the epic, for example: *Od.* 1.91-92, 113-16, 253-54, 265-66, 294-96; 2.48-49, 56-57; 3.212; 4.318-20, 698-701; 11.115-20; 13.374-85; 14.81-82, 90-95; 16.409-33, and 18.275-80.

<sup>31</sup> This is foreshadowed by Halitherses, an Ithacan elder, who with his prophetic powers, *Od.* 2.157-59, interprets the sign of eagles, sent by Zeus at Telemachus’ wish, tearing each other, as indicating a reversal of fortune for the suitors, 2.143-44; and by Telemachus, when numbering the Ithacans for the returned Odysseus, who expresses fear of revenge for the killing, 16.245-57; the prophecies of Theoclymenus, 20.350-57; and Odysseus’ success with the bow, 21.412-15.

<sup>32</sup> After the first death, the suitor, Eurymachus, begs Odysseus not to kill all the rest and promises reparation, *Od.* 22.45-59.

<sup>33</sup> Agamemnon’s story to Odysseus in the underworld, tells of his unheroic death at the hands of Aegisthus, cut down like a bullock, his companions slaughtered like pigs, for a wedding feast, *Od.* 11.409-15, and foreshadows this bloody banquet in the dining hall of Odysseus. There is also a curious parallel to be found to the battle of the suitors in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* where the two main episodes of epic battle narrative take place indoors among the tables at wedding feasts, *Met.* 5.1-249 and 12.210-535.

<sup>34</sup> Odysseus can be seen to condone slaughter: *Od.* 22.170-200, 310-29, 473-76, and 461-72.

<sup>35</sup> Eupithes suggests revenge, even though it could be seen as a civil war, *Od.* 24.426-29.

<sup>36</sup> Henderson, 1997, 112, writes in his inimitable style about the recognition scene between Odysseus and his father in the last book of Homer’s *Odyssey*. He is one scholar who reads the battle as a civil war, (although in parenthesis) when he writes, and I summarise: ‘Now Odysseus the beggar king ... adjourns to the anti-heroic margins of the farmstead to prepare for ... containment of (civil) war and acceptable truce (emplotted by Athene)’. Levy, 1963, 147, writes on the problem many critics have with the depiction of the violent slaughter of the suitors and the threat by those avenging the deaths at the end of the *Odyssey*. He suggests that it is understandable from the point of view of the folk tradition, the ‘little tradition’ transposed onto the epic framework. He writes: ‘I posit ... a folk tale in which the generous host is beset by guests who

difficulty arises because of the tension generated between what can be seen as justified punishment of wrongdoing and its consequence, the reciprocity of revenge killing, which in a small society has overtones of civil war. This is highlighted by the dramatic end to the epic, as the gods must step in to prevent further killing. Without the intervention of Athena, who prevents the continuous cycles of violence among the families on the small island of Ithaca, ‘civil war’ could wipe out the entire society.<sup>37</sup>

Unlike Homer’s veiled allusion to the threat of revenge by the families of the suitors as potential civil war, in Apollonius’ *Argonautica*, civil war can be seen in one instance to wipe out a whole tribe of related men. We see this as a consequence of the ferocious fight between the earth-born warriors, all brothers grown from the serpent’s teeth, A.R. *Arg.* 3.1333-98.<sup>38</sup> As well as this, now like Homer’s *Odyssey*, Apollonius mentions an ongoing and bitter civil war between Medea’s father and the people of his brother, Perses. Argus then Jason offer to help in return for the Golden Fleece. Here the war is not clearly designated a civil war, in fact the protagonists are named in such a way as to obscure that the kings are brothers. A.R. *Arg.* 3.352-53, and 3.391-95. Neither of these episodes is elaborated by Apollonius, but later poets have done so. For example, Ovid refers to earth-born brothers in his epic, *Metamorphoses*, and, as I show below, treats their fight as civil war.<sup>39</sup> Valerius Flaccus develops the fight between the king of Colchis and his brother, Perses, into a full scale epic battle description, complete with catalogue of troops and detailed descriptions of named opponents and how they kill and die, V.Fl. 6.75-426. His use of similes allows this battle to be read as civil war: first likened to gigantomachy V.Fl. 6.169-70, then to Roman civil war when each side has the same javelins, the same eagles, V.Fl. 6.402-09.<sup>40</sup>

---

abuse his hospitality ... by destroying his substance, they are in fact destroying him ... the gods intervene, and punish this symbolic homicide with death’, 150. See also Wender, 1978, 63-71.

<sup>37</sup> The problem of revenge killing is highlighted in Aeschylus’ *Oresteia*, where the cycle of kin-killing goes on and on until Athena casts the deciding vote, Aes. *Eu*, 734-35.

<sup>38</sup> Green, 1997, 264, on the *Argonautica*, writes of this battle: ‘The “bitter enemies” sound like the tradition of yet another family feud’.

<sup>39</sup> Ovid has treated the theme of the earth-born brothers in more than one place in this work: *Met.* 3.104-130; 7.139-42, but does not follow up the theme of civil war in either place. We know he wrote a tragedy, *Medea*, and he also gives a different perspective on Jason’s adventures in his *Heroides* 6, Hypsipyle to Jason and *Heroides* 12, Medea to Jason. Possibly because of these many versions, there is no sense of one complete narrative in Ovid’s work.

<sup>40</sup> The earth-born brothers are shown to fight against each other: V.Fl. 7.637-68.

Apollonius' *Argonautica* may be a comment on the often insignificant beginnings of civil wars (one rock thrown in the midst of the earth-born warriors incites them to kill each other in frenzy before the drug-enhanced Jason finishes them off), and also on the strong passions of anger and fury which fuel such wars. In these earlier epics, civil war is a literary trope, used to reflect on or contrast with certain events within the poems, but Lucan's poem is all civil war.

While Virgil includes the civil war in Rome in a digression (or climax) at the end of Book 1 of the *Georgics*,<sup>41</sup> there is a certain ambiguity about the type of war depicted in the second half of his *Aeneid*, an ambiguity which could be seen to parallel the uncertainty felt in Virgil's Rome about the wars leading up to the rule of Augustus.<sup>42</sup> The difference between the two sides in conflict in Virgil's *Aeneid* is problematic in two ways: (1) the two sides are shown to be of the same stock and thus related, and (2) at the end of the battle all will be united as one.

In spite of Virgil's emphasis on the foreign origin of the troops who follow Turnus, *Aen.* 7.648-817, and Juno's continued opposition to Aeneas as one of *reliquias Danaum*, *Aen.* 1.30, 'the remnants left by the Greeks', in Book 7, Virgil establishes the connection between the two opposed armies which allows the battle to be read as civil war. Aeneas leads his refugees from conquered Troy to Italy and meets King Latinus who greets them as 'sons of Dardanus' (*Dardanidae*, *Aen.* 7.195) and tells Aeneas that his fame has already reached Latium.<sup>43</sup> Aeneas is welcomed as more than a guest; his ties of kinship are stressed when King Latinus recalls that: *his ortus ut agris / Dardanus*, *Aen.* 7.206-07, 'Dardanus was born in these fields'. Aeneas also acknowledges that he is returning to the land of his forefathers, who left to settle in Troy and his repetition of the terms used by king Latinus: *hinc Dardanus ortus*, *Aen.* 7.240 'Dardanus was born from here' (the same words he used to Dido when recounting

---

<sup>41</sup> See Virgil's discourse on civil war: *G.* 1.489-92. We find many of the images of the *Georgics* re-used in Lucan's epic: *G.* 1.464-87 and *BC* 1.524-83; *G.* 1.498-502 and *BC* 1.195-200; especially the use of *iterum*, *G.* 1.490 and *BC* 2.66. See Conte, 1987, 274, on Virgil's *Georgics*, who writes: 'the civil wars and the plague of the animals echo one another and the horrors of history correspond to the disasters of nature'.

<sup>42</sup> Johnson, 1976, 138, and Harrison, 1990, 19.

<sup>43</sup> King Latinus speaks to Aeneas, *Aen.* 7.195-97. This reminds us that Aeneas' fame had reached Carthage before him, and was depicted on the doors of a temple there, 1.446-93.

the prophecy he received: *hinc Dardanus ortus*, *Aen.* 3.167) adds emphasis to the bonds of kinship Aeneas feels he has with the place and people.<sup>44</sup>

To add to these ties of kinship, Juno arranges that the marriage, between king Latinus' daughter and Aeneas in fulfilment of a prophecy and joyfully proposed by the king, will bring on war.<sup>45</sup> She states, *hac gener atque socer coeant mercede suorum*, *Aen.* 7.317, 'let the father-in-law and the son-in-law come together at this cost to their own people', which suggests that the ensuing battle will be civil war.<sup>46</sup> The possessive adjective *suorum*, points to family and blood relatives who will pay with their lives in civil war from the proposed union.<sup>47</sup> Coming after Book 6, where the ghost of Anchises shows Aeneas the future, *Aen.* 6.826-36, the terms *gener* and *socer* always evoke Caesar and Pompey: the terms become synonymous with the civil war in Rome. The conflict that the proposed marriage of Aeneas and Lavinia will precipitate will be civil war, the kind of war that tears the family and the whole society apart.<sup>48</sup>

It will turn out that the difference between the two sides in this fight will be erased, afterward they will all be one people, and their conflict will be reclassified as a kind of 'after-the-event' civil war.<sup>49</sup> The outcome of the war is that the

---

<sup>44</sup> Aeneas' reply to king Latinus: *Aen.* 7.240-42. See also Aeneas' reference to Trojans: 3.94, 96, 167.

<sup>45</sup> Latinus sees Aeneas as the 'stranger' of the bee portent, *Aen.* 7.68, and of Faunus' prophecy, 7.98, so he offers friendship and his daughters hand to cement ties of kinship, 7.270, stated clearly by the conjunction of *externus* and *gener* and recognised by Juno. As prospective son-in-law at war with his father-in-law (even though Latinus abdicates from the fight) Aeneas is surely embroiled in a civil war.

<sup>46</sup> Coffee, 2009, 3, writes about the 'pejorative connotations' of commodity language, and in relation to this passage, 67.

<sup>47</sup> Lyne, 1987, 80, writes: 'Juno provokes a war that is tragic in its nature, agonizingly confused in its issues, more of a civil war than a clean imperial exercise'.

<sup>48</sup> Jal, 1963, 396, discussing the importance of family ties in civil war, writes: 'Mais c'est surtout chez Lucain qu'on mesure l'importance attachée par le poète aux liens de famille qui unissaient les deux chefs et, par suite, la gravité que représentait leur faute à ses yeux: Lucain n'emploie par moins de cinquante fois en effet les termes "gener" et "socer" pour désigner les deux adversaires'. See also Williams, 1964, 198, (in Harrison, 1990) who comments on the sixth book of the *Aeneid* to write about *Aen.* 6.621-24, and the vision of Tartarus granted to Aeneas: 'As well as the named sinners the Sibyl tells of groups of people defined by their particular sin ... by particular relevance to family and civil strife'. Williams does not focus on the *socer* / *gener* relationship, 203-04, but names the two leaders: 'Caesar and Pompey - leaders of civil war. The theme of Roman guilt is left on an unfinished line - *proice tela manu, sanguis meus!* - (*Aen.* 6.835) and we pass on to triumphs, this time the triumph of the Trojan-Romans over the Greek world which had so recently destroyed Troy'.

<sup>49</sup> Schiesaro, 2003, 35, writes: 'The merging of Trojans and Latins at the end of the poem retrospectively casts their conflict as civil war'.

invading Trojan army of Aeneas will be subsumed into the Latin race. When Jupiter forbids Juno to go further in her harassment of the Trojans, Juno's acquiescence is based on this idea of victory over the Trojans: *occidit, occideritque sinas cum nomine Troia*, *Aen.* 12.828, 'Troy has fallen, and let it have fallen along with the name of Troy'.<sup>50</sup> Jupiter accepts her condition when he says: *faciamque omnis uno ore Latinos*, *Aen.* 12.837, 'and I will make them all Latins with one speech', and this seems to reflect that the outcome, peace, is worth all the unpleasantness of war.<sup>51</sup> We can see a similarity between this resolution of 'civil war' and the intervention by Athena at the climax of the final battle in Homer's *Odyssey*. The last scene in Virgil's *Aeneid*, however, not only reminds us of the death of Hector in the *Iliad* but also leaves us to assume that, with the death of Turnus, all opposition to Aeneas will collapse and the pronouncements of the gods and the prophecy of Anchises in Book 6 will be made manifest as a result of Aeneas' final furious and bloody deed.<sup>52</sup>

Virgil's incorporation of contemporary Roman history into the legend of Aeneas, as the greatest survivor from Troy and the founder of Rome, is not simple. In the *Aeneid* we find three references to the history of Rome, and in each we can find allusion to civil war. In the first, Jupiter gives Venus a summary of the history of Rome from Aeneas' time to that of Caesar, *Aen.* 1.286-96, and thus not only foreshadows the story about to unfold, but extends the time-frame to Augustan Rome: *aspera tum positis mitescent saecula bellis*, *Aen.* 1.291, 'then bitter generations will grow mild with wars laid aside'. Virgil, through Jupiter, is alluding to but not describing the intervening civil wars.<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>50</sup> Edwards, 1996, 64, draws attention to other poets who engage with the idea that Troy must fall so Rome can replace it (Horace, *Carm.* 3.3.57-64 and Propertius 4.1.87), and she writes: 'Rome, as Troy's successor, displaces Troy, subsuming its gods and its glory. Yet this story could also serve to reinforce an anxiety among Romans that Rome might suffer a similar fate'. See Pöschl, V. 1966, 30, who writes: 'The war is a "civil war" because the Trojans and Italians, from the very beginning conceived as belonging together, are destined for peace through assimilation'.

<sup>51</sup> See Conte, 1987, 444.

<sup>52</sup> The final scene of the *Aeneid* has generated much scholarship, for example: Pöschl, 1966, 109-38 arguing against Heinze, 1957; and Anderson, 1957, 30. See also Lyne, 1983, 321-36, (in Harrison, 1990); Quinn, 1969, 251-76; Hardie, 1986, 147-54; Lyne, 1987, 132-37; and Conte, 1986, 185-88. Hardie, 1993, 21, writes: 'The killing of Turnus is the act on which Roman cultural order is founded; Virgil narrates a senseless vengeance-killing which is masked, in the words of the killer, as a sacrifice, but whose true nature many readers experience as quite other'.

<sup>53</sup> Pöschl, 1966, 19, discussing this passage and the picture Virgil draws of what is locked behind the gates of war, closed by Julius Caesar writes: 'This is the best example in the *Aeneid* of a symbol which condenses a historic event into a single image. This image, still trembling with the

When the ghost of Anchises lists the descendants of Aeneas, *Aen.* 6.826-36, and expresses horror at impending civil war, we are given another glimpse of Roman history. The poet not only deplores the war but also seems to add an element of uncertainty with the conditional *si* when he has Anchises say: *heu quantum inter se bellum, si lumina uitae / attigerint*, *Aen.* 6.828-29, ‘Alas, how great a war will be between them if they come in contact with the light of life’. There is little ambiguity in this passage except, perhaps, from the use of the terms *socer* and *gener* instead of the names of Caesar and Pompey and in the conditional, expressing the unfulfilled possibility that these two protagonists of civil war may not be born at all. But when Anchises warns these two unborn shades, in a forceful and alliterative line, *neu patriae ualidas in uiscera uertite uiris*, *Aen.* 6.833, ‘do not turn your vigorous force into the guts of the fatherland’, there is no mistaking the reference to civil war.

The third historical inclusion is the most detailed of all the pictures of political significance in Virgil’s *Aeneid*, where the future of Aeneas’ Rome is shown through ecphrasis on the miraculous shield presented to Aeneas. The centrepiece of this ecphrasis is the battle of Actium fought during the recent civil war in Rome.<sup>54</sup> It is significant that Virgil is writing his poem in the aftermath of this long and bloody series of civil wars, and is able to look beyond them to celebrate the Augustan peace which followed. Virgil presents this scene from the battle of Actium, *Aen.* 8.626-728, as foreign war with Rome pitted against a barbarian enemy by his emphasis on the exotic queen, the unnamed wife of Antony, and her strange gods and method of fighting. But the poet does not hide the famous Roman name, Antony, and, since the battle shows this Roman general fighting against other Roman generals, Augustus and Agrippa, the picture cannot fail to imply civil war. Actium calls forth celebratory poems in the literature of the day.<sup>55</sup>

---

bloody events of civil wars, climaxes and ends the speech of the god, thus channelling the wild motions of human life into the quiet order of the divine *fata*’. Lyne, 1987, 81, sees Jupiter’s prophecy, *Aen.* 1.279, as: ‘bland, facile, conveniently omitting to mention the vast amount of blood, sweat and tears the human recipients of his gift will have to expend’.

<sup>54</sup> I use the term ‘ecphrasis’ in the modern sense, as a description of a work of art: see Webb, 1999, and more recently Webb, 2009, for excellent studies of the subject.

<sup>55</sup> Gurval, 1995, 168, writes: ‘Actium and the consequences of this victory provoked an almost immediate response and manifest recognition of the changed circumstances in Rome among the poets in the circle of Maecenas’.

Horace writes *Odes* 1.37 and *Epod.* 9 stressing Caesar's triumph over the foreign queen, but he also creates poems such as *Epod.* 7 and 16 which condemn the civil war.<sup>56</sup> Propertius, as a poet of elegy, declines to write of Caesar's battles, Prop. 2.1.25-46, or about Actium, Prop. 2.1.34.<sup>57</sup> His elegy 3.11 makes no mention of Antony or the Roman soldiers under him but only of the *meretrix regina*, Prop. 3.11.39, 'harlot queen' and her foreign gods as a threat to Rome, but in 4.6 the tone is more ambiguous as he acknowledges the shame of Roman weapons in the control of a female, the Egyptian queen: *pilaque femineae turpiter apta manu*, Prop. 4.6.22, 'and Roman javelins, were fitted shamefully to the hand of a woman'. Actium is awarded a triumph, even though it is the final battle of a long and bloody civil war.<sup>58</sup> Gurval, 1995, in his book which 'examines the official celebration and public commemoration of the Actian victory in the contemporary period' points out the nuances of civil unrest in the images surrounding the central picture of the battle of Actium as well as the ambiguities within it.<sup>59</sup>

In the *Aeneid*, the wars fought by Aeneas (and his descendants) are hard to categorise having both hints of civil wars and allusion to foreign battles. Virgil's description of the battle of Actium, an actual event from Rome's civil war, lacks almost all the usual signifiers for civil war, such as opposed fathers and brothers, and any reference to Roman factions. This could stem from an anxiety about civil war, an event of recent history to Virgil and his audience.<sup>60</sup> Actium is described as

---

<sup>56</sup> Roche, 2009, 24, writes: 'Horace first assumed his status as a classical author worthy of study and imitation in the Neronian period.' (and see his n. 44 for scholarship in this). He writes: 'Of particular importance are *Epodes* 7 and 16, mediating some of Lucan's key civil war vocabulary (such as *scelus* and *furor* as well as the concept of *aemula uirtus*)', 24-5. Gurval, 1995, 137-65, looks at Horace and Actium and writes: 'Apart from a brief allusion to the flames and ships of the Actian battle in *Odes* 37, a conspicuous silence falls on Actium in the four books of Horace's *Odes*. No individual poem exalts the military success of Octavian in civil war, and no passage refers directly to the naval battle or Actian victory', 150-61.

<sup>57</sup> Gurval, 1995, 167-208, on Propertius and Actium, writes: 'The bombastic assemblage of epic-sounding panegyric, squeezed between verses that celebrate the beauty of Cynthia and the poet's steadfast devotion to this woman, does not achieve with resounding success its avowed and much assumed task in the poem, the exultation of Octavian', 168. See Actium in Propertius again at 2.15.41-46, 16.37-42, and 34.59-66.

<sup>58</sup> See Hardie, 2000, 414, on Propertius who writes: 'At the centre of the book (4.6) is a kind of hymn celebrating Augustus' Palatine Temple of Apollo and including an extended and mannered narrative of the battle of Actium, turned in Octavian's favour by Apollo'.

<sup>59</sup> Gurval, 1995, 209-47, looks closely at all aspects of Virgil's presentation of Roman history in the *Aeneid* and in the ecphrasis on the shield of Aeneas in particular.

<sup>60</sup> Quinn, 1969, 31, writes: 'The rights and wrongs of thirty years of political manoeuvring and two decades besmirched with repeated acts of bloodshed were so complicated that even a historian anxious to discuss them impartially must think of himself, as Horace warned Asinius

a work of art, and much has been written on this ecphrasis in Virgil's *Aeneid*.<sup>61</sup> Virgil's creative version of the battle appeals to the visual imagination of the reader but its pictures are incomprehensible to its recipient because they are of future events, and it is presented in such a way as to emphasise the ambivalence of the actual battle. These historical episodes in the *Aeneid* both allude to and brush over the civil war in Roman history, because, while the inglorious and bloody civil wars actually took place, Virgil can look beyond them to the outcome, the peace established by his emperor Augustus, in a way that Lucan cannot.

In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, we find another version of the history of Rome, but like Virgil, he also skirts around the issue of civil war.<sup>62</sup> Julius Caesar is praised more for being father to Augustus than for all the battles he won: *et multos meruisse, aliquos egisse triumphos*, *Met.* 15.757, 'to have brought forth some triumphs and to have deserved many'. By stressing the foreign names of these battles we read them as foreign wars, but some, although fought in a foreign country, were clearly civil wars which preclude a triumph. While the poem purports to be a history of the world from the beginning to Ovid's own time, *Met.* 1.4, the poet follows no linear or annalistic structure; the history Ovid tells is from legend and myth and it seems to be written as a summary of earlier literary versions of the event, rather than historical fact, indeed, when he writes about the

---

Pollio, as man picking his way across the scene of a recent conflagration, liable at every step to plunge through what looks like inert ash to the fire that still smoulders beneath (*Odes* 2.1.1-8)'.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>61</sup> See Putnam, 1998, 138-54, on the role of the shield maker, and the contrast between Vulcan's knowledge (*haud ... ignarus*, *Aen.* 8.627), and the ignorance of Aeneas, (*ignarus*, *Aen.* 8.730). See also Gurval, 1995, 12. Goldberg, 1995, 109, writing on Ennius' anachronistic simile in the Romulus story writes: 'Ennius' fusion of past and present prefigures the famous anachronisms and historical allusions in the *Aeneid*'. See also Pöschl, 1966, 170-72; Quinn, 1968, 190-98; and West, 1975-76, (in Harrison, 1990) who ably sums up earlier scholarship on the ecphrasis, 296-97, with notes, and shows the connectedness of the scenes and their appeal to the visual, 295-304.

<sup>62</sup> See Conte, 1987, 351, on Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and Feeney, 1991, 210-24, on Ovid's Augustan ideology. Hardie, 1990, 234, sees Ovid's Theban episode as an 'anti-*Aeneid*'. Fantham, 2004, 128, writes that Ovid: 'substitutes episodes taken from other genres for his alternative version of Virgil's *Aeneid*, 2-3'.



apotheosis of Romulus, he quotes Mars quoting Ennius.<sup>63</sup> It is only at the very end of the poem that the names of historical places and peoples appear.<sup>64</sup>

The gods are shown to intervene, not only to complete the apotheosis of Caesar but to explain away the violence of vengeance for his death conducted by Augustus in the name of peace, *Met.* 15.819-31, (but which can be read as allusion to civil war). We can see a picture emerging of civil war as an unspeakable version of war, a variety of warfare which is difficult to celebrate in detail in epic poetry. Only those civil wars set firmly in legendary or mythical times are referred to directly by Ovid. In his long and fractured account of the foundation of Thebes, *Met.* 3.1 - 4.603, Cadmus, who sowed of the seeds of civil war in the form of serpent's teeth, is warned off and left innocent of the resulting conflict.

‘ne cape!’ de populo, quem terra creauerat, unus  
exclamat ‘nec te ciuilibus insere bellis!’ *Met.* 3.116-17

‘Seize not [your weapons]’, one from the people which the earth had grown cries,  
‘nor put yourself into civil wars!’

The battle occurs spontaneously from the antagonistic nature of the earth-born brothers, and Cadmus founds the city of Thebes with the few who remain standing. The story of Cadmus continues in Book 4, but while Ovid does not develop the story of the foundation of Thebes as civil war, many of the intervening narratives have inter-family killing and strife at the core.<sup>65</sup> Thebes

---

<sup>63</sup> Conte, 1986, 58-59, writing on Ovid's use of allusion writes: ‘The reappearance of Ennius’ line in identical form within Ovid's context sets up a complex system of relations whose chief target lies outside Ovid's poetry. ... Ennius had already written it, so that it already possessed an independent “auctoritas” (authority)’. See Hardie, 1997, 192, who writes: ‘Ovid reveals the seamless continuity between the representations of imperial ideology - of all ideologies - and those of literary texts’. See also Harrison, 2002, 87.

<sup>64</sup> See Habinek, 2002, 54-55, who writes: ‘The transfer of empire to Rome is the topic of the final book of the *Metamorphoses* not only because that is as far as history has come but because this change has been authorized and validated by the heavens. ... In Ovid's version of universal history, the transfer of empire from one locale to the next is but an omen that finds its fulfilment in Rome’. Hardie, 1997, 182, (on *Met.* 15.182-98), is writing about: ‘the final topic of the book and the poem, the designation and legitimation of the current ruler of Rome’.

<sup>65</sup> Hardie, 1990, 225, sums up the Theban episode succinctly when he writes: ‘Cadmus’ founding begins with the transformation of a serpent into men; it ends with the transformation of the twice exiled Cadmus and his wife into snakes (4.576-603). This is the end of the story for Thebes’ founder, but not for the city: the *ciuilia bella* and fratricide (3.117-19) of the Sown Men will break out again in the time of the children of Oedipus, later still Thebes will become a byword for the great city annihilated, for example in Pythagoras’ discourse on mutability (15.429): *Oedipodioniae quid sunt, nisi nomina, Thebae?*’. His main argument, however, is: ‘that the tragic story of Cadmus and Thebes in *Metamorphoses* 3 and 4 is constructed with constant reference to the great epic of Rome, Virgil's *Aeneid*. It is in fact the first example of an ‘anti-*Aeneid*’, and so the precursor of Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile* and Statius' *Thebaid*’, 225-26. Miller, 1994, 483-86 and n.

becomes a by-word for civil war in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, as the prophecy of Themis reveals: *nam iam discordia Thebae / bella mouent*, *Met.* 9.403-04 'even now Thebans set in motion discordant wars', and the type of war is made clear when she goes on to say: *fientque pares in uulnere fratres*, *Met.* 9.405, 'and brothers will be made equal in their wounds', followed by: *ultusque parente parentem / natus erit facto pius et sceleratus eodem*, *Met.* 9.407-08, 'and the son shall avenge a parent for a parent, pious and wicked in the same deed'. In this condensed version of the well known story of the fight between the brothers, Polynices and Eteocles, and Alcmaeon's slaying of his mother for the death of his father, Ovid uses the opposition of family members as a common symbol of civil war and reinforces the ambivalence of feelings, *pius et sceleratus*, roused by this type of war.<sup>66</sup> In Lucan's poem, civil war is only ever considered as wicked. Ovid again emphasises brothers fighting brothers in his version of Jason and earthborn fighters, *Met.* 7.121-42.

It is intriguing that Ovid's most significant battle narratives in the *Metamorphoses* depict epic battles among civilians. Although they cannot be classified as 'civil war', we find that there are battles at the wedding of Perseus and Andromeda, *Met.* 4.757-64, where the guests fight to the death, *Met.* 5.1-241, while the wedding of Hippodame and Pirithous, *Met.* 12.210-539, is marred by an ugly yet 'epic' fight between the legendary Lapiths and the mythical Centaurs.<sup>67</sup> These battle scenes are brawls rather than civil wars but are described in the Homeric manner of battle narrative with named protagonists and detailed descriptions of their actions, weapons (although unconventional) and manner of death. Ovid's wedding battles also bring to mind the beginning of Homer's veiled depiction of 'civil war', the battle over the dinner tables between Odysseus and the suitors.<sup>68</sup>

---

16, writes on the question of the disputed lines about annihilated cities, *Met.* 15.426-30, and yet detects irony in the placement of the rise of Rome which follows immediately.

<sup>66</sup> The Theban theme is taken up by Statius in his *Thebaid*: see Hardie, 1993, 44-45, who writes: 'And in the Theban brothers the confusion and interchangeability of the two opponents naturally reaches its extreme. Statius also explores alienation at the moment when the father Oedipus emerges from the shadows to embrace the bodies of his sons on the battlefield (11.580-633). His anger now turns to a *pietas* that is close to pity'.

<sup>67</sup> The 'epic' quality of these fights rests on the convention of described individuals often named and with a brief biography as well as the types of wounds they suffer. The strong allusion to the end of the *Odyssey* also points to these battles being regarded as 'epic'.

<sup>68</sup> Anderson, 1996, 498-519, in his commentary, sees the battle between Perseus and Phineus and his followers as a parody of Virgil's *Aeneid*, where Phineus is likened to Turnus with his girl

The omniscient narrator interrupts Perseus, as he tells of his adventures up to the time of his wedding, with a description of the fight which breaks out and the unconventional weapons used. The story of the battle at the wedding of Pirithous is told by Nestor after the sacrifice and feast for Achillies' victory over the almost invincible son of Neptune, Cyncus, a part of Ovid's Trojan War story. Nestor's story stresses how the protagonists all have extraordinary strength, especially the man Caeneus, who is impervious to weapons, yet is killed by being smothered. The battle reaches its conclusion with the Centaurs killed or saved by flight or darkness, an end which undermines any reading of it as civil war, because of its evocation of Homeric epic.

Ovid also makes explicit reference to civil unrest in his first simile, *Met.* 1.200-05, when the reaction of Roman people to an attempted assassination of Augustus Caesar, is compared to the reaction of the lesser gods when Jove tells them of the impious actions of Lycaon and the punishment meted out.<sup>69</sup> In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, as in Homer, the war between the gods and the giants, *Met.* 1.127-50, which leads up to this simile, is depicted as a civil war since it is compared to the fourth age of man, the corrupt age of iron, where mankind is obsessed with greed, plunder and the violation of guest and kinship bonds: *uiuatur ex rapto: non hospes ab hospite tutus, / non socer a genero, fratrum quoque gratia rara est*, *Met.* 1.144-45, 'the living was from plunder; guest was not safe from host, nor a father-in-law from a son-in-law, also friendship of brothers was rare.'<sup>70</sup> The fact that the same word is used for both sides in this battle points to it being a civil war. The blood from the defeat and destruction of the giants who

---

snatched away and Cepheus, the father of the bride, is ineffectual and retires from the fight like King Latinus.

<sup>69</sup> Hill, 1985, 176, writes on this simile: 'In this pastiche of Virgil [*Aeneid* 1.148-56] (both similes are the first of their respective poems and both stress the role of 'piety'), the reference to Augustus is both explicit and grotesque.' He goes on to say, about *Met.* 1.201, 'Caesar's blood: i.e. the assassination of Julius Caesar is obvious from the immediate context and from the fact that the *Metamorphoses* ends with that assassination. There is no merit in the suggestion sometimes made that the reference is to one or other of the various attempts made on Augustus' life'. Anderson, 1996, argues convincingly against this position - he sees that the simile only works if the assassination attempt failed, as the plot against Jove failed, 172.

<sup>70</sup> Anderson, 1996, 165, comments on *Met.* 1.145, 'The troubled connection of *gener* and *socer*, which seems general, had a specific reference in Rome once Julius Caesar used his own daughter to solidify an alliance with Pompey by marriage. Allusions to the two as in-laws start in their own day with Catullus 29.24, then appear prominently in *Aen.* 6.826-31. An even worse stage of *impietas* is the mutual hatred of brothers. That is one of the most typical symbols of Civil War in Rome (cf. Catullus 64.399 and Lucan)'.

threatened the gods, gives rise to a further race of bloodthirsty men: *scires e sanguine natos*, *Met.* 1.162, ‘you might know that they were sons of blood’, a race which Jupiter needs to abolish for their impiety. In this we can see the cyclic nature of revenge and the reciprocal killing in civil war.<sup>71</sup> Anderson, 1996, writes: ‘This war, the Gigantomachy, in Ovid’s own lifetime, was said to parallel the ravages of the Civil War, and Jupiter’s triumph to anticipate the victory and peaceful rule of Augustus in a new Golden Age.’<sup>72</sup> I see that it is significant that both Ovid and Virgil can look past Rome’s civil war, that they can consider it something to be skimmed over or only given a cursory glance, because the outcome is a greater good, Augustan peace, whereas Lucan lives in the reign of Nero and writes to expose what has been treated superficially by these earlier writers.

Lucan’s depiction of civil war is clear and pervasive. Where Virgil, for the most part, stresses the foreign enemy, Lucan confuses the boundaries between opposed sides in almost every battle, as Ovid does in his account of gigantomachy, *Met.* 1.144-45.<sup>73</sup> Lucan condemns Caesar’s wars as civil wars, the worst of crimes, in contrast to Ovid’s retelling of Virgil’s Roman history without direct reference to Rome’s civil war.<sup>74</sup> Ovid’s poem ironically praises Julius Caesar because he was the father of his adopted ‘son’ Augustus. Civil war is depicted by Lucan not only as the self-destruction or suicide by the state, but also as an unfair fight, since the

---

<sup>71</sup> Lucan illustrates the futility of resistance to civil war with reference to war between earth and heaven, *BC* 2.315-20. See also *BC* 1.33-38. But a further reference to Phlegra at *BC* 7.144-50, is an epic set-piece; the troops of Pompey preparing for battle at Pharsalus (see Virgil’s *Aen.* 7.624-40) are likened to gods struggling against the giants in the fields of Phlegra. In Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* the battle, 1.151-55, is related as a legend, ‘they say’, *ferunt*, 1.152. Homer has the story told to Odysseus in the underworld, *Od.* 11.305-20; Hesiod has the fullest account of the battle, *Theog.* 389-96 and 629-735; Apollodorus tells the story, 1.6.1, but most references are as if the full story is common knowledge – Horace refers to Jove’s victory over the giants, *Odes.* 3.1.7-8, and the fight itself, *Odes.* 3.4.42-64. See also Virgil’s *G.* 1.278-83; Ovid’s *Fast.* 1.307; 3.441.

<sup>72</sup> Anderson, 1996, 166. See also Feeney, 1991, 297. However, Gigantomachy is not often seen as civil war; the emphasis is more often on the idea of bringing civilisation to disordered chaos. Hardie, 1983, 321, writing on Gigantomachy in Book 8 of the *Aeneid* writes: ‘the emphasis is not on the actual progress of the battle, but on the contrast between the two armies, the monstrous and undisciplined Giants and the Olympian representatives of controlled power’.

<sup>73</sup> The battle at Massilia is the one battle where the conflict is styled as a foreign ‘epic’ war between Greeks and Romans: the Greeks of Massilia on one hand and Caesar’s Roman soldiers on the other, but even here the division between the sides is not always clear.

<sup>74</sup> We see his condemnation of civil war right at the beginning, through his use of terms such as *scelus*, *BC* 1.2 and *nefas*, 1.6, which are repeated throughout the poem.

gods and Fortuna, *BC* 5.593, are on Caesar's side. As I have shown, before Lucan's doubled portrayal, civil war is found only briefly in Latin epic.

Allusion to civil war is often inserted for artistic purposes; to cast the light of contrast on other forms of battle, or to comment on a poet's own times of peace. Civil war does not seem to be a suitable subject for poetry for either Virgil or Ovid. Virgil writes in a pessimistic tone in his didactic poem *Georgics*, of the prodigies as tokens of doom after the death of Caesar, *G.* 1.463-514, and makes oblique reference to the aftermath of the civil war between Caesar and Pompey when he mentions Philippi, Roman armies clashing, and Emathia, *G.* 1.489-92, but there is no real comparison because this poem, although written in hexameters, is not narrative epic.<sup>75</sup> Ovid briefly treats Gigantomachy as an example of civil war in his *Metamorphoses* (see above), but war, including civil war, is, for the most part, rejected as a subject for his poetry.<sup>76</sup> At the time when both Virgil and Ovid were writing, the bloody events that made Augustus all-powerful were recent history, and uneasiness about that political upheaval made civil war a subject to be avoided in poetry.

Because of the generations separating him from the actuality of civil war, the consequences of civil unrest may have been clearer to Lucan. He recounts events from the vantage point of a distance of nearly one hundred years, a time frame that gives him freedom of immunity, and enables him not only to expose the hints and allusions to civil war in Virgil's *Aeneid* but also to portray Julius Caesar as a tyrant.<sup>77</sup> We can find a number of reasons why Lucan inserts the civil war of

---

<sup>75</sup> Virgil's account of the signs of disaster after the death of Caesar is strangely at odds with his previous section about how the sky and sun can help the farmer by predicting what is to come. Lucan describes many of the same indicators as portents before the civil war, *BC* 1.522-83. See Osgood, 2006, 97, who writes: 'it was only six years earlier that Greece had witnessed another battle between Pompeians and Caesarians. It is this aspect of Philippi that Vergil underscores in the horrifying ending of the first book of his *Georgics*. The nightmarish reduplications of civil war dominate Vergil's description'.

<sup>76</sup> This is pointed out in Ovid's elegies: *Am.* 1.1.1, and 2.1.11-16, because his subject is love, the antithesis of war.

<sup>77</sup> Whether Lucan's poem can be read as overt criticism of the Neronian regime or not has provided much fuel for scholarly debate. See, for example the work of Masters, 1992; Thompson and Bruère, 1968; Ahl, 1976; and Dewar, 1994. See Conte, 1968, 240, who writes: 'Ora, la funzione essenziale che le lunga scena della rievocazione delle stragi di Mario e Silla ha nel corpo del poema altra non è se non quella di indicare una volta per tutte che cosa sia la guerra civile, quale sia il suo vero volto immutabile: di indicare la colpevolezza totale, in parte piena, dell'uno e dell'altro contendente nei riguardi de popolo romano e della stessa *respublica* di Roma'. See also

Marius and Sulla into a poem filled with civil war battles, both within the passage about the earlier war and within poem itself.

As stated at the outset of this chapter, I see that Lucan could have three reasons for including the old soldier's recollection of an earlier time of civil unrest in his description of Rome's civil war between Caesar and Pompey. Firstly, I suggest that the inclusion may be to reinforce the novelty of his subject matter; secondly, that one war can be seen as example for another of the same type; and thirdly, that the description of two episodes of civil war in Rome points more clearly to the inevitability of repetition, to the cyclical nature of civil war. Little has been written specifically on this embedded civil war episode, so I will show how Lucan's poem illustrates the old theme of recurring violence which in mythology seems particularly associated with internecine conflict and killing, and elaborates on this theme as it encompasses the whole society. The long story of civil war in Rome under Marius and Sulla, told by an old soldier, suggests the inevitability of recurrent civil war.<sup>78</sup>

In what seems like a long digression (a protracted speech of 165 lines, *BC* 2.68-232), we are given details of events outside the time-frame of the epic. It functions like the stories told by bards in Homeric epic, and like Virgil's ecphrasis on the doors to the temple in Carthage, and is reminiscent of Aeneas' reiteration of the Trojan War in Book 2 of the *Aeneid*.<sup>79</sup> Retelling the destruction of Troy not only anticipates the battle to be re-enacted in Italy but also serves, like Lucan's second layer of civil war, to add emphasis; the flashback both predicts and reinforces the repetition of conflict.<sup>80</sup> Embedded narratives such as these should not be considered as empty digressions, since they either prepare us for what is to come or comment on what has gone before. In Virgil's epic, ecphrasis and Aeneas'

---

Roche, 2009, 15, who writes: 'The recollection of the civil war between Marius and Sulla (2.64-233) provides the densest and most explicit sequence of allusions to book one'.

<sup>78</sup> Many scholars consider this episode in brief: Dick, 1967, 236-38; Masters, 1992, 65; and Henderson, 1998, 174-81.

<sup>79</sup> Long stories told by old men are a common feature of epic. See: *Il.* 11.669-761; *Aen.* 8.184-280, and *Met.* 60-478.

<sup>80</sup> Walker, 1996, 80-3, sees Lucan's inset narrative of the earlier civil war as a response to Virgil's ecphrasis on the temple doors and Aeneas' account of the Trojan War, that Virgil's use of 'flashback' in Book 2 of his *Aeneid* is a model for Lucan.

story to Dido remind the reader of the events of this previous war, which is necessary background to his whole poem.

Lucan's speaker is anonymous, an ordinary person looking back to previous civil war, most likely one of the 'wretched parents' who have lived so long that they are now caught up in civil war again.<sup>81</sup>

... at miseros angit sua cura parentes,  
oderuntque grauis uiuacia fata senectae  
seruatosque iterum bellis ciuilibus annos.  
atque aliquis magno quaerens exempla timori  
'non alios' inquit 'motus tum fata parabant  
cum post Teutonicos uictor Libycosque triumphos  
exul limosa Marius caput abdidit ulua.

BC 2.64-70

But their own anxiety distresses wretched parents and they hate their long-lived fate of offensive old age and years saved for civil wars a second time. And someone seeking examples for this great fear, said: "not otherwise were the commotions then that the fates prepared, when, victorious after Teutonic and Libyan triumphs, Marius the exile hid his head in muddy sedge."

The adverb *iterum* stresses the repetition of civil wars. The soldier relates events that took place in Rome about forty years before the outbreak of hostilities between Caesar and Pompey, the civil wars of Marius and Sulla. It gains significance because it is the first battle narrative within a poem devoted to the major battles of Rome's civil war.

In the same way that the story told by Aeneas of the Trojan War is an example of both analepsis and prolepsis regarding the events of the whole poem, so the old soldier's story of an earlier civil war gives a broader perspective for Lucan's descriptions of the battles between Caesar and Pompey.<sup>82</sup> The passage about civil war in Rome under Marius and Sulla can also be seen as a rhetorical appeal to historical or mythological examples of civil war. The poet actually gives this reason for the old soldier's story when he writes: 'And someone seeking examples

<sup>81</sup> Anonymity usually confers a degree of impartiality to opinions expressed. See Fantham, 1992, 90-91. See also Conte, 1968, 245, who sees that Lucan's evocation of an unnamed speaker points up the epic form of the poem through its clear allusion to similar unnamed people in Homer's epic. Lucan's *aliquis*, BC 2.67 'someone' is like *Il.* 2.278; 4.85; and 17.420.

<sup>82</sup> See Conte, 1968, 241, who points out the difference between the background offered by digressions in earlier epics and the forward-looking digression of Lucan: '... in realtà quelle che è un procedimento formale di *Vorgeschichte* di antefatto cioè a funzione ritardante di tipo epico (vengono in mente i racconti di Odisseo ai Feacie di Enea a Didone) diventa qui un procedimento di anticipazione di fatti ancora a venire, di *Nachgeschichte*'.

for this great fear ...' (*atque aliquis magno quaerens exempla timori, ... BC 2.67*), so we expect that his reflections should predict some of the events to come in the civil war between Caesar and Pompey. The story is a layered discourse, confused and confusing as to speaker, chronology and subject matter, and circles back on itself, opening and closing with sorrow for past wars and anxiety over the one planned for the immediate future.<sup>83</sup> As the description of this civil war gains momentum we are reminded of the role of the storyteller as the speaker interrupts his own narrative using the first person for emphasis:

meque ipsum memini, caesi deformia fratris  
ora rogo cupidum uetitisque inponere flammis,  
omnia Sullanae lustrasse cadauera pacis  
perque omnis truncos, cum qua ceruice recisum  
conueniat, quaesisse, caput.

BC 2.169-73

And I remember how I myself, wishing to place the deformed face of my slaughtered brother on the forbidden funeral pyre and on the flame, how I scanned all the corpses of the peace of Sulla and searched throughout all the headless trunks for what neck his cut off head would fit.

We hear the voiced opinion of the 'common man' on the actions of the elite and powerful and his condemnation of the destruction of family ties through civil war and its aftermath, the 'peace' of Sulla.<sup>84</sup> War / peace polarity is indicated in this juxtaposition of the atrocities perpetrated by Sulla and his ironic 'peace' and reminds us of a similar opposition set up earlier in the interpretation of portents in Book 1. The poet suggests that *manifesta fides*, BC 1.524, 'clear proof', is given by portents and omens, but Arruns, the augur, obscures the negative result of *extispicium*: 'So the Tuscan was singing the turning omens, enfolding and hiding [himself] in much ambiguity' (*flexa sic omina Tuscus / inuoluens multaque tegens ambae canebat*. BC 1. 637-38). Also less than 'clear', are the unexplained forebodings of the prophet Figulus, BC 1.639-73, and the prophecy of the frenzied matron, BC 1.674-95, which is comprehensible only to people living after the events prophesied. Ambiguous portents play the role of warning and censure for

<sup>83</sup> There is a speech within the speech, BC 2. 81-84. It is not clear where this voice gives way to that of the intrusive poet rather than the old soldier who resumes the tale of Marius with *idem*, BC 2.88.

<sup>84</sup> Jal, 1963, 394, refers to this passage to show the negative effect of civil war on families: 'Un des vieillards que Lucain met en scène au début de son ouvrage évoque cette époque avec horreur; il rappelle que les parents recueillaient alors en cachette les restes des victimes et qu'il avait lui-même découvert le cadavre de son frère massacré'.



the external audience in the same way as the description of past events in the mouth of the old soldier warns the internal audience about the coming civil war.

This cautionary tale elicits no response from an internal audience; the focus stays on the content of the story, civil war, and the speaker:

... sic maesta senectus  
praeteritique memor flebat metuensque futuri. BC 2.232-33

Thus the old man was weeping for sad events, remembering the past and fearing the future.

In the last line of this sentence, a symmetrical line balancing recollection and prediction, the narrator directs the response of the external audience by stressing the sorrow, *maesta*, *flebat*, and fear, *metuens*, of the speaker.<sup>85</sup> In contrast, other speeches throughout the poem bring forth a response of sorts from an internal audience: the crowd only murmurs, *BC* 1.352-53, when Caesar's speech ends (although they are roused to a shout by Laelius, his centurion, *BC* 1.387-91), and Pompey's faction is also less than enthusiastic, *BC* 2.596-77, at the conclusion of his rousing speech. Speeches before battle are a convention of Homeric epic and work, like ecphrasis and embedded stories, to incorporate events outside the time-frame of the epic as well as to consolidate previous actions and events. But this speech by an unnamed soldier seems to be a parody of the speech of Homeric warriors and serves to reinforce the negativity of civil war in Lucan's poem.

This passage about the civil war of Marius and Sulla takes its colour from the end of Book 1 where the portrayal of monstrous portents, death and destruction herald the civil war about to break out between Caesar and Pompey. Book 2 opens:

iamque irae patuere deum manifestaue belli  
signa dedit mundus legesque et foedera rerum  
praescia monstriifero uertit natura tumultu  
indixitque nefas. BC 2.1-4

And now the angers of the gods were clear and the world gave manifest signs of war and the laws and agreement of things foreknowing nature turns over in monster-bearing tumult and declared crime.

---

<sup>85</sup> Fantham, 1992, 121.

Although the narrator begins with terms for clarity and openness of purpose, his comment still rests on ambiguity.<sup>86</sup> The ‘manifest signs’ which the world produces are the very uncertain portents given as *manifesta fides*, *BC* 1.524, ‘clear proof’, so obscurely interpreted in Book 1. Chaos in the natural world is described in skilful poetic style, with the words of the poet, *BC* 2.3, forming a ‘Golden Line’. The meaning of the words, however, disrupts the balance and harmony of the line and stresses the conflict of ideas contained within it. We see a similar polarisation in the final phrase: *indixitque nefas*, *BC* 2.4 ‘and declared crime’.<sup>87</sup> After the verb *indico* we might expect *bellum*, or something similar but instead we have *nefas*, ‘crime’. The proximity of *nefas*, to *bellum*, here, forces the term *nefas* to mean ‘civil war’.<sup>88</sup> The word *nefas* is actually a negative word, *ne* + *fas*, ‘not speakable’, and has a multitude of negative meanings.<sup>89</sup> It is used often by Lucan

---

<sup>86</sup> Feeney, 1991, 273, writes on the: ‘... finely judged anti-climax that opens the second book: *iamque irae patuere deum* (‘And now the anger of the gods is obvious to see’, 2.1). ‘Obvious’ is the last thing the anger of the gods is here’.

<sup>87</sup> OLD: ‘*indico*<sup>2</sup> 2, *bellum* (and sim. words) to declare war on’. Feeney, 1991, 276, writes: ‘At the beginning of the second book, convulsed nature ‘declares the unspeakable’ (*indixit nefas*, 2.4), a play on language of declaring war, where *nefas* stands precisely for *bellum*, and has become the impossible subject for the poem: how can you ‘declare’ something which is - and the pun is even more obvious in Latin - ‘unspeakable’?’.

<sup>88</sup> As Fantham, 1992, 80, writes: ‘the substitution of *nefas* for legitimate public action is a kind of oxymoron’ and she mentions Seneca’s (*Phoen.* 478), and his use of the term to condemn civil war.

<sup>89</sup> The term *nefas* is first used in the proem to Lucan’s *Bellum Civile* with the meaning of ‘guilt’ *BC* 1.6 (see also *BC* 8.550). It is often used by this poet in conjunction with terms for war, specifically to indicate the crime of civil war: *nefas belli*, *BC* 2.507; 4.549; 7.868. The phrase *civile nefas*, *BC* 4.172; 7.432, ‘civil crime’, is also a substitution since from the context we find that *nefas*, ‘the crime’ refers specifically to civil war: *BC* 2.147, 538; 4.205; 5.471; 7.699; 8.593. The term also refers to ‘the crime of killing’, *BC* 4.556; and 5.64; especially ‘killing Pompey’ *BC* 2.735; 8.620, 638; 9.127, 1088, 1107; 10.371; and ‘killing Caesar’, *BC* 8.610; 10.399; 10.428. The term can mean ‘wickedness’, *BC* 1.37; 2.98, 286; 4.243; 5.272; 6.527; 7.123; 10.453; or wrong or unlawful actions, *BC* 1.127; 3.437; 5.313; 6.147, 510, 569; 7.519; 8.410; 10.36; or ‘horror’ *BC* 1.626; 6.695; 7.170. In a less condemnatory fashion *nefas* is ‘crime’ *BC* 1.174; 4.792; 5.204; 6.79; 7.242, 306, 315. Lucan uses the term 53 times while Virgil uses it less (18 times in 12 Books) and with less vigour: to express ‘horror’ or ‘shame’ (often in parenthesis); *Aen.* 5.197; 7.73; 8.688; 10.673; to mean ‘sacrilege’ or ‘impieties’ *Aen.* 2.184, 658, 7.386; to indicate something ‘wrong or unlawful’: *Aen.* 2.719; 3.365; 6.391; 8.173; a ‘crime’: *Aen.* 4.306, 563; 6.624; 10.497; the ‘guilt’ of Helen, *Aen.* 2.585 and Turnus, 7.596; or to mean ‘sin’, *Aen.* 10.901. Since this character is styled as *contemptor diuum*, *Aen.* 7.648, ‘despiser of the gods’, his view of right or wrong could be compromised but he also expresses the customary view of morality in a foreign war, a convention of the heroic code. Ovid also uses the term *nefas*, in his *Metamorphoses* less than Lucan, only 22 times in 15 Books. His emphasis is on *nefas* ‘wrong’ as opposed to *fas* ‘right’: *Met.* 6.585; 9.551; or ‘crime’, *Met.* 2.505; 6.524, 613; 7.71, 427; 8.766; 9.372, 633; 10.307, 322, 352, 404. It is used to mean ‘impiety or sacrilege’, *Met.* 11.70, 15.111, 127; or ‘wickedness’, *Met.* 1.129; 13.952; and ‘guilt’, *Met.* 1.392. Like Lucan, Ovid uses the term to refer to ‘crime’ of Caesar’s death, evident from celestial portents: *Met.* 15.785. Seneca refers to Procne’s crime of infanticide as: *Thracium nefas*, Sen., *Thy.* 56 ‘the Thracian crime’.

to show that in his view civil war encompasses all its nuances of meaning, while here it stands alone as a substitute for civil war.

In the lines leading up to the episode, Lucan emphasises the importance of this earlier civil war through the introduction of themes and motifs which will persist throughout his poem. Intrusion by the narrator is signalled by an appeal to the gods followed by a philosophical argument weighing up the role of the gods.<sup>90</sup> However, as is usual in Lucan's epic, conclusions are left to the reader, in this case with the stipulation that foreknowledge should not be granted so the people can have hope. This statement sits oddly within a poem about past events, where the outcome of both episodes of civil war is so well known. It is as if Lucan is encouraging the suspension of disbelief in his audience in order to suggest that there was a time, in the early stages of Rome's civil war, when it was possible to hope for a different result.<sup>91</sup>

That the consequence of all civil war is negative is illustrated by the images drawn of Rome at the beginning of the war between Caesar and Pompey in Lucan's poem, as well as in his depiction of the civil war of Marius and Sulla. Impending disaster is shown to be like the *ferale*, *BC* 2.18 'funeral', of the state. Silence and the absence of the usual activity during the mourning period, *BC* 2.21-28 (magistrates in mourning do not wear purple), are compared to the onset of death in a private household, but there is no obvious transition from simile to the description of an actual mourning matron, *BC* 2.28-29.<sup>92</sup> Another shift follows: from the feelings and actions of a single mother to collective grief of *cateruae*, *BC* 2.29, 'squadrons' of mourners. Funeral motifs associated with the civil war between Caesar and Pompey are reflected in the description of the civil unrest prompted by Marius and Sulla, where the speaker describes a citizen driven to build his own funeral pyre as a bizarre form of suicide, *BC* 2.157-59. The themes

---

<sup>90</sup> From a Stoic point of view, there is a divinity, but one bound by fate. Epicureans hold that it is all random chance and that the gods are shadowy and do not care. The Stoic view gains more weight here, from greater number of lines, (5 lines, *BC* 2.7-11, as against 2 lines for the Epicurean, *BC* 2.12-13), but the importance of the Epicurean view is stressed by its position as the last statement in the argument. See Sellars, 2006, 91-95, who summarises the Stoic view on God and Nature, and on Fate and Providence, 99-104. See also Lapidge, 1979, 344-75

<sup>91</sup> Henderson, 1998, 185, writes: 'Lucan fights for Rome in striving heroically to stop the clock'.

<sup>92</sup> Compare Lucan's similar use of the funeral motif, *BC* 2.297-303.

of death and proper burial run through Lucan's poem, and we see them condensed as the old soldier describes his struggle to locate family members and to place them on a funeral pyre, *BC* 2.169-70. Mourning for the dead in civil war is problematic in more ways than one: not only from the types of wounds and mutilation of the dead, which make physical identification difficult; but also from the way the heroic status of the dead is uncertain in a civil war.<sup>93</sup>

At the beginning of the war between Caesar and Pompey, one mourning woman stirs others to complain against the gods through ritual laments in all the temples, and this can be construed as a complaint against authority. Her advice is to protest and weep now because when one man triumphs they will all have to rejoice no matter what their feelings are, *BC* 2.40-42.<sup>94</sup> Further complaint, voiced by an unnamed male speaker, is a wish for the old days and legitimate wars against a foreign enemy which draws attention to the difference between civil war and heroic epic warfare against an external foe. These complaints encourage the reader to make the judgment that cosmic destruction is better than civil war, *BC* 2.57-58.<sup>95</sup> They recall the prodigies of the previous book and lead into one man's detailed recollection of civil war in Rome under Marius and Sulla, and we can read the old soldiers account of this earlier war as the third item in an escalating reiteration of fear and complaint. It is the most detailed and vivid protest against civil war in this series, which culminates with the Brutus / Cato episode, *BC* 2.234-391, before the poet resumes the narrative action of the war between Caesar and Pompey.

---

<sup>93</sup> This is the main theme of Sophocles' *Antigone*, a tragedy that so clearly and poignantly shows the problems internecine strife must cause regarding the burial of the dead in civil war.

<sup>94</sup> As the opinion of the narrator couched in the words of a matron of Rome, this sentiment suggests a re-assessment of Lucan's encomium to Nero, *BC* 1.33-66, to be read as a politically correct statement but not necessarily the view of the poet.

<sup>95</sup> The speaker expresses the Stoic view of cosmic destruction. See Sellars, 2006, 97, who writes: 'the Stoics held that at certain moments the entire cosmos would be dissolved in fire. This is the moment of cosmic conflagration (*ekpurosis*). The Stoic account of the birth and destruction of the cosmos is complex. ... Diogenes Laertius reports that when the cosmos is born its substance is transformed from its initial state of fire into air then water and then earth (DL 7.142)'. He goes on: 'However other accounts of the conflagration suggest that at the moment of birth and destruction the cosmos is constituted solely by divine reason, that is, *pneuma*', 98. And further: 'After the conflagration the cosmos is reborn. It then passes through another life cycle, culminating in another life cycle. ... Rather than conceiving this as an endless series of cycles, one might instead conceive it as a single cycle, repeated endlessly', 99. Note the introduction to Seneca's *Thyestes*, 47-53, where the Furies call down cosmic dissolution at the continuing cycle of hatred and violence in the house of Tantalus.

Brutus is unafraid, in contrast with the previous anonymous speakers, but he is undecided, and needs Cato's advice. Brutus poses the central dilemma of civil war – what do good men do when the situation is so bad? In Cato's reply, we find further repetition of the earlier motifs: cosmic dissolution, *BC* 2.291-92; civil war as crime: *summum, Brute, nefas ciuilia bella fatemur*, *BC* 2.286, 'the greatest wickedness, I acknowledge, Brutus, is civil war'; and images of death and mourning, in the simile *BC* 2.297-303, where Cato must rush to hold the empty name of Liberty, like a mourning father who hurries to the pyre of a son.<sup>96</sup> There is a striking similarity between the ideas explored by Cato and Brutus and those expressed in the complaints of unnamed women and men which frame the old soldier's story of the civil war involving Marius and Sulla.<sup>97</sup> In this way the poet reminds us of the repetitive nature of civil strife, as we read that the reactions to the present civil war mirror those described in the story of Marius and Sulla.

The old soldier ends his story with the warning that this earlier example of civil war is likely to be followed by something worse: *neuter ciuilia bella moueret / contentus quo Sulla fuit. BC* 2.231-32, 'neither [Caesar nor Pompey] would rouse civil wars if content with what contented Sulla'. The old man's criticism of the past implies dissatisfaction with his present, now, when he is about to be embroiled in another civil war. What is present for the internal unnamed speaker, is past for both the writer and reader of Lucan's epic and this element of confusion adds emphasis to ideas about the far-reaching effects of civil war. The old soldier's censure reinforces the pessimistic tone established at the poem's beginning and can be read as a condensed version of the whole of Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile*.

Lucan's summary of these historical events can be seen as a *mise en abyme* on many levels: images, themes and ideas displayed here are reflected and repeated throughout his poem. The passage serves as a *mise en abyme* of both the structure and subject matter of the main narrative of civil war between Caesar and Pompey.

<sup>96</sup> Much has been written on this episode: Roche, 2009, 106; Stover, 2008, 575; Behr, 2007, 12; Sklenář, 2003, 60-72; Sklenář, 1999, 287-90; Johnson, 1987, 39; and Ahl, 1976, 175-262.

<sup>97</sup> Within Brutus' speech, the old soldier's lament is almost repeated, with reference to Marius, *BC* 2.191 and Sulla, *BC* 2.221, framing Brutus' version of the story.

We find that narratorial comment interrupts the speaker's story about the actions of Marius and Sulla in the same way that the narrator comments on battle action during the battles of the civil war between Caesar and Pompey throughout the poem.<sup>98</sup> Exclamation is used by a soldier to express a reaction to events as well as by narrator within later battle narratives. Dismay and horror of civil war is expressed in indirect speech as the speaker depicts the events in Rome involving Marius and Sulla as it is when the poet describes many of the battles between Caesar and Pompey.<sup>99</sup> Apostrophe, used to emphasise the gruesome details of the deaths of named individuals, Baebius, Antonius and Scaevola, is also used many times throughout the poem. Lucan structures the battle narrative in this earlier civil war in much the same way as each subsequent episode of conflict is described, with mass slaughter and individual deaths portrayed in conjunction with the poet's comments to indicate his negative opinion of civil war. As reported speech, the passage highlights the act of communication; not only between the old man and his internal audience but also between the poet and his external audience. In the final comment by the unnamed old man, it is easy to hear the ventriloquised opinion of the disapproving narrator on the wickedness of civil war and one of its consequences, the line of Caesars leading to his own emperor, Nero.

As a *mise en abyme* of subject matter, we find that the two characters discussed by the old man, Marius and Sulla, reflect the two main characters in the later civil war between Caesar and Pompey.<sup>100</sup> Marius, a kinsman of Caesar, is depicted as a favourite of fortune like him, while Pompey is depicted as a protégé of Sulla.<sup>101</sup> Lucan has Caesar himself pointing out the connection between Pompey and Sulla when he tells his men: *cum duce Sullano gerimus ciuilia bella*, *BC* 7.308, 'we

---

<sup>98</sup> Narratorial intrusion is a significant aspect of Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile*, as I have discussed in detail in my previous chapter.

<sup>99</sup> These stories are well known from Sallust and Livy. See Fantham, 1992, 91-93, for possible sources of and influences on Lucan's depiction of the stories surrounding Marius and Sulla. Rawson, 1987, 163-180, writes on Sallust as source for Lucan.

<sup>100</sup> For an alternative view, see Henderson, 1998, who writes: 'The difference between the Marius/Sulla and Caesar/Pompey civil wars will be ... *inexpressible* difference – *beyond* words = Lucan's *plus quam*', 181.

<sup>101</sup> Marius is fortunate, *BC* 2.72, 131-32, like Caesar, *BC* 1.123-24, 223-26, 392-95; 4.254-59; 5.301-02, 510. Marius is also shown to be *felix*, *BC* 2.74, an epithet usually applied to Sulla and Pompey. This serves to highlight similarity between the leaders evident at times between Caesar and Pompey, *BC* 1.12-26. (But see the poet's intrusion to comment sarcastically on, *felix Caesar*, 3.296. Lucan specifically aligns Pompey with Sulla: *BC* 1.326, 330.

wage civil wars with a Sullan general'.<sup>102</sup> Caesar's speech at Pharsalus, in which he voices fears of dismemberment, *BC* 7.304-07, ties the civil war that he is fighting to the earlier event: he recognises that it has its precedent in the civil wars led by Marius and Sulla.

The earlier instance of civil war in Rome provides the basis for the first battle narrative, *BC* 2.67-233, of Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile* and foreshadows the many battle descriptions to follow. In this narrative of the periods of dictatorship by Marius and Sulla, we read of violent crime and atrocity against family members, which echo ideas encapsulated in the proem and which also prefigure the principal subject of Rome's civil war and the major themes in battle narratives to follow. One civil war reflects the other in such a way as to imply a never-ending succession of images, the self-replicating views of a *mise en abyme*. Grotesque representations of mass slaughter, suicide, dismemberment and desecration of dead bodies recur throughout the poem.<sup>103</sup>

The crime of civil war under the Roman leaders Marius and Sulla is replicated in all the atrocities of the later civil war. The section on Marius contains the following lines:

ut primum fortuna redit, seruilia soluit  
agmina, conflato saeuas ergastula ferro  
exeruere manus. nulli gestanda dabantur  
signa ducis, nisi qui scelerum iam fecerat usum  
adtuleratque in castra nefas.

*BC* 2.94-98

As soon as his fortune returned, he released columns of slaves; the prisoners stretched forth fierce hands with iron having been melted down. None were given the standards of the leaders to carry, except someone who had already made a practice of crime and had brought wickedness into the camp.

Emphasis on 'fortune' as it affects the life and power of Marius is reflected throughout Lucan's epic where 'fortune' assumes the traditional role of the gods

<sup>102</sup> Fantham, 1992, 91, writes: 'Cicero's letters of 50 and 49 bear witness to contemporary fears that Pompey would imitate Sulla, under whose protection he had risen to power and had assassinated leaders like L. Iunius Brutus and Cn. Papirius Carbo (*Att.* 7.7; 9.7; 9.10 and 9.14). Pompey's slogan was said to be *Sulla potuit: ego non potero?* (*Att.* 9.10)'.

<sup>103</sup> Bakhtin, 1968, 33, writes: 'Vitruvius condemned the grotesque form from the classical standpoint as a gross violation of natural forms and proportions'. He concludes, 303, that: 'Exaggeration, hyperbolism, excessiveness are generally considered fundamental attributes of the grotesque style'. Gilbert, 2001, 166-20, discusses the meaning of 'grotesque' in classical literature.

in epic.<sup>104</sup> Inversion of the usual ‘reward for good deeds’ trope is evident when the speaker tells of promotion based on *scelus* and *nefas* in Marius’ army. These two terms sum up the similarity between episodes of civil war as well as point up the difference between civil war and the conventional epic war against a foreign enemy. The semantic density of the passage is striking. For example, the term for ‘prisoners’ is a prose word and comes from the name of a Greek prison, *ergastulum*, where runaway slaves were confined and worked in chains; so ideas of liberty and enslavement as well as cruel punishment are incorporated into this one term.<sup>105</sup> Lucan imports words into his epic which are not only the vocabulary of prose but are also shocking, words that are not usually found in poetry, especially in the somewhat restricted linguistic range of words considered appropriate for epic.<sup>106</sup> Hyperbaton in this sentence draws attention to the suggestion that the binding shackles, melted down, supplied the swords for these released prisoners, who then become bound to Marius.<sup>107</sup>

Hyperbaton is also evident in the convoluted description of Baebius torn limb from limb and the cut-off head of Antonius:

.... cui funera uolgi  
flere uacet? uix te sparsum per uiscera, Baebi,  
innumeras inter carpentis membra coronae  
discessisse manus, aut te, praesage malorum  
Antoni, cuius laceris pendentia canis  
ora ferens miles festae rorantia mensae  
inposuit.

BC 2.118-24

For whom is there freedom to weep for the deaths of the common man? Scarcely [is anyone able to tell that] you, Baebius, scattered gut by gut disappeared between the hands of the numberless encircling mob which seized your limbs, or you Antonius, prophetic of misfortune, whose head a soldier was carrying, hanging from its torn white hair and placed, dripping, on the festive table.

Language is mutilated to match the ideas expressed. The rhetorical question at the beginning not only directs our attention to the uncommon deaths described but

<sup>104</sup> Dick, 1967, 235-242. Ahl, 1976, 305, writes: ‘By resisting Fortune, Cato has replaced the gods as a measure of human conduct’. See also Braund, 1992, xxii -xxiii.

<sup>105</sup> See also BC 2.516-17. See Fantham, 1992, 98, for in-depth comment on lines 94-96.

<sup>106</sup> See Axelson, 1945 for unpoetic words in epic, mainly of Virgil and Ovid.

<sup>107</sup> We can also see an allusion to a more customary image of sickles melted down into swords in Virgil’s *Georgics*: *G.* 1.508. Boyle, 1979, 65, sees a pessimistic tone at the end of the first book of Virgil’s *Georgics* and writes that it is: ‘a despairing tirade against the fractured world of post-Caesarian/Julian Rome (1.466-514), in which the disintegration and chaos endemic to the agricultural context are depicted fully realised in the body-politic itself’.



also to the opinion of the poet. We are again aware of the speaker, and behind the speaker, the poet and the long tradition of epic storytelling. These images are not only evocative of earlier epic, they also foreshadow events to come in this poem: the youth torn apart at the battle of Massilia, *BC* 3.635-46; Caesar's description of the penalty he will pay should he lose the battle at Pharsalus, *BC* 7.304-08; the poet's lament after Pharsalus, *BC* 7.617-46; and Pompey's severed head, *BC* 8.667-75.<sup>108</sup> Lucan's epic depicts cycles of recurring violence, from one civil war to the next, as well as from one battle to the next episode of conflict within each war.

In the second and longer section of the passage, *BC* 2.134-222, attention is turned to the proscriptions of Sulla. The sacrifice of Marius Gratidianus, by torture and delayed death is an example of one of the horrific deeds of Sulla:

... quid sanguine manes  
placatos Catuli referam? cum uictima tristis  
inferias Marius forsan nolentibus umbris  
pendit inexploto non fanda piacula busto,  
cum laceros artus aequataque uolnera membris  
uidimus et toto quamuis in corpore caeso  
nil animae letale datum, moremque nefandae  
dirum saeuitiae, pereuntis parcere morti.  
auolsae cecidere manus exsectaque lingua  
palpitat et muto uacuum ferit aera motu.

*BC* 2.175-82

Why should I tell of ghosts of Catulus appeased by blood? When a Marius, a victim, perhaps with the shades unwilling, pays gloomy offerings, unspeakable atonements to an unsatisfied tomb, we saw his joints mangled and wounds equally distributed over his limbs, and although his whole body mutilated, no death was given to life, and the dire custom of unutterable cruelty, they spared death to the dying man. His torn hands fall, and his cut-out tongue writhes and strikes the air with mute movements.

The underlying subjects of death, dead bodies, and the desecration of corpses touched on in the passage concerning Marius are here elaborated in Sulla's civil war.<sup>109</sup> Such deeds of torture are considered *non fanda piacula*, 'unspeakable atonements' and customs 'of unutterable cruelty' (*nefandae ... saeuitiae*, *BC* 2.181-82). The old man presents these things as an eye-witness account, and describes in detail the wounding, mutilation and the slow, drawn-out dying process. Here is a paradox - the only way he can do this is to speak the

<sup>108</sup> For images of mutilation see also *Met.* 3.232-52; 5.100-06; 11.20-43; *Aen.* 2.554-58.

<sup>109</sup> See Fantham, 1992, 92, for the structural parallels between of the two unequal sections of the passage, the descriptions and narratorial comment of the returns of Marius and Sulla.

unspeakable.<sup>110</sup> The internal narrator uses the sophisticated rhetorical ploy of *praeteritio*, unusual in a common soldier, and all the more striking for that. The passage foreshadows the carnage of the battles of the civil war between Caesar and Pompey and also points toward the poet's response to the events of the battle of Pharsalus, *BC* 7.556, he will not speak of it, yet goes on to describe the sort of wounds he is ashamed to relate. Vivid language is used here by the speaker to describe the horror of torture and mutilation of a living victim by Sulla's faction, *BC* 2.177-85, and recalls the hyperbole used by Ovid to describe the rape and silencing of Philomela, *Met* 6.561, and its consequence; the series of dreadful acts of vengeance against and by family members.<sup>111</sup> There can be no mistaking hyperbole again, when Lucan has his speaker describe a scene of mass slaughter during Sulla's proscriptions:

... densi uix agmina uolgi  
inter et exangues inmissa morte cateruas  
uictores mouere manus; uix caede peracta  
procumbunt, dubiaque labant ceruice; sed illos  
magna premit strages peraguntque cadauera partem  
caedis: uiua graues elidunt corpora trunci.

*BC* 2.201-06

The victors scarcely moved their hands between the columns of close packed people and squadrons pale with death let loose; with slaughter complete they scarcely fall and they begin to sink forward with unsteady neck; but the great mass compresses them and corpses carry out part of the slaughter: the weights of headless trunks crush living bodies.

Terms familiar from epic battle narrative are present, *agmina*, *cateruas*, *caede*, and *cadauera*, but the crush of the victors and victims negates conventional epic action. Polyptoton of the term for slaughter, *caede*, *caedis*, exaggerates the situation to the highest degree and the shocking image of warriors crushed to death under the headless trunks of their fellows amplifies the difference between a civil war and a conventional epic battle scene. Lucan's later description of close packed troops of Curio perishing in Libya, *BC* 4.777-83, forced to crush each other by the press of Juba's cavalry, comes as no surprise.<sup>112</sup> We have been primed

<sup>110</sup> The phrase *non fanda*, is used only once before in this poem, *BC* 1.634. See also Virgil's Aeneas, whose grief, *infandum*, *Aen.* 2.3 'unspeakable', takes up all of Book 2.

<sup>111</sup> See Hardie, 2002, who links this passage of violence to: 'Lucan's lingering descriptions of the weird transfigurations by snake-bite of the Roman soldiers led through the African desert by Cato in book nine of the *Bellum Ciuile*.' 42.

<sup>112</sup> Double polyptoton adds emphasis to the last line of the passage: *non arma mouendi / iam locus est pressis, stipataque membra teruntur; / frangitur armatum conliso pectore pectus*, *BC* 4.781-83, 'now there is no place for the pressed [soldiers] to move weapons, and limbs are crushed and ground together, the armed breast is broken by conflicting breast'. This image almost becomes

to expect unconventional deaths in unusual battle situations by the inclusion of the events and atrocities of an earlier civil war. In almost every skirmish between the forces of Caesar and Pompey we are reminded that the precedent was set for these two leaders by Marius and Sulla.

Focus on the act of dying and the boundaries between the living and the dead in Lucan's epic is in contrast to heroic deaths in Homeric battle narrative. Torture, not only by mutilation of specific body parts but also by the prolongation of pain through delayed death, *BC* 2.179-80, seems to be unique to Sulla's proscriptions; the implication being that civil war condones extreme forms of cruelty. We find that Lucan uses rhetorical, high-flown epic language throughout, yet intervenes into his narrative in unconventional ways. His lament compares the complete destruction of Praeneste to the Sullan proscriptions: *tum flos Hesperiae, Latii iam sola iuuentus, / concidit et miserae maculauit ouilia Romae*. *BC* 2.196-97 'then the flower of Hesperia, now the only [remaining] soldiers of Latium fell, and stained the sheepfold of wretched Rome [with their blood].' It evokes pathos through epic allusions.<sup>113</sup> The lengthy description of dead bodies choking the Tibur which follows this image of slaughter in Rome during Sulla's reign elaborates an epic topos from Homer and locates the theme and actions of civil war of Lucan's poem within the epic genre.<sup>114</sup>

Lucan's epic, however, deviates from Homeric epic, almost as much as it conforms to it. We see in this first episode of civil war a leader who is detached, one who treats the war as a spectacle to be enjoyed.<sup>115</sup> Sulla looks on:

---

a topos for battle action in Lucan's poem; not only does it appear in the old soldier's reminiscence, but also in the description of crowded corpses at Massilia, *BC* 3.575; the close set camps at Ilerda, *BC* 4.169-81; and at Dyrrachium, where: *aestuat angusta rabies ciuilis harena*, *BC* 6.63, 'civil madness boils up in this narrow arena'.

<sup>113</sup> Epic is alluded to in this passage, especially in the term *flos*, which evokes Virgil's use of the epithet for young soldiers, *Aen.* 8.500; 7.162; and in his simile, 9.435-37, which looks back to Homer's famous simile for the death of Gorgythion *Il.* 8.306f. See also Ovid's transformations of young people or their blood into flowers: *Met.* 4.266-70; 10.162-219, and 724-39.

<sup>114</sup> The river Scamander (Xanthus) complains that his waters have been choked with dead bodies, *Il.* 21.218-20; the River Simois filled with armour and helmets, *Il.* 12.22. The river is referred to by Aeneas, in his wish that he could have died at Troy, *Aen.* 1.100. In Lucan's poem, Caesar seeks out the river Simois as a landmark in the ruins of Troy and finds the Xanthus reduced to a stream in dry dust, *BC* 9.961-79.

<sup>115</sup> Leigh, 1997, 306, who, with Ahl, 1976, looks at Lucan's epic within the political culture of the time and writes on civil war as spectacle, to be enjoyed, ignored or learned from.

intrepidus tanti sedit securus ab alto  
spectator sceleris: miseri tot milia uolgi  
non timuit iussisse mori.

BC 2.207-09

Unshaken he sat, carefree, and from the heights an observer of such great crime,  
not alarmed to have ordered so many thousands of wretched people to die.

Although this scene could remind us of Helen and the old king looking on from the walls of Troy, or the conventional long-distance view of battle afforded the gods in the epics of both Homer and Virgil, Lucan's emphasis is on one man and the feelings aroused in him by civil war.<sup>116</sup> The disparity between Sulla and other spectators in this respect is manifest in the dual adjectives for the one: *intrepidus*, and *securus*, and the poignancy of the one word epithet *miser* of the collective and less than flattering term *uolgi* for his enemy. A lack of empathy for the enemy seems to be a prerequisite for the successful accomplishment of civil war. We are reminded of Sulla when we come across the description of Caesar looking out over the battlefield at Pharsalus, BC 7.786-803, and can see that the attitudes and events of the first civil war are reflected in that fought between Caesar and Pompey.

The name Sulla stands for the crime of civil war and is incorporated into the ironic address at the end of the passage:

hisne salus rerum, felix his Sulla uocari,  
his meruit tumulum medio sibi tollere Campo?

BC 2.221-22

For these [deeds] was Sulla to be called 'Saviour of the State,' and 'lucky', for these did he deserve to raise a tomb for himself in the middle of the Campus?

It is in Lucan's description of Sulla's reign of terror where we first see customary relationships violated. Masters are killed by slaves; fathers are killed by sons; and brothers are killed by brothers. Further unnatural acts occur; living bodies hide in tombs for the dead and men also hide in the lairs of beasts, BC 2.148-53.<sup>117</sup> The speaker describes not only mass suicide, BC 2.154-59, but also torture and the

<sup>116</sup> See Mackie, 1996, 38, who sees the Trojan elders on the wall as 'spectators'; Eldred, 2002, 57-85, on the Vulteius episode; and Feldherr, 1995, 245-265, who points out persuasively how in Virgil's *Aeneid* 5 the ship race closely resembles a chariot race. There are many examples in the earlier epics of Homer, Ennius, Virgil and Ovid, of this detached view of events of battle by interested yet uninvolved observers: *Il.* 3.130-244; 20.23; 22.460-66; *Ann.* 16.418; *Aen.* 1.223-26; 10.1-5; while Ovid has even unwitting spectators punished: *Met.* 3.192-204, 437-505; and 5.180-235.

<sup>117</sup> The calamity of civil war is illustrated by these unnatural acts. It reminds us of Seneca's *Troades*, and Andromeda driven to hide her son in the tomb of his father: Sen. *Tro.* 498-521.

mutilation of live and dead bodies, *BC* 2.173-87. In this way the speaker prefigures the horror of the civil war battles between Caesar and Pompey.<sup>118</sup> At the end, following the custom of good storytellers in epic, the old soldier makes his story relevant to his audience by changing the focus from the earlier civil war back to the one about to begin. He reinforces the idea of repetition of civil wars, *BC* 2.223-24, but also alerts his listeners to expect *grauiora*, *BC* 2.225, ‘worse things’ based on a comparison between the leaders of the earlier civil war and the one about to unfold.<sup>119</sup> These expectations are not met and the atrocities of Marius and Sulla remain unsurpassed by any battle narrative to follow.

This chapter has shown that Lucan’s inclusion of an earlier civil war in Rome under Marius and Sulla within his poem on the civil war between Caesar and Pompey not only accentuates, through repetition, the horror and cyclical nature of the violence of civil war, but also engages with ideas of story telling for examples of behaviour. Lucan’s use of an anonymous old soldier, an eye-witness to the earlier war, as speaker reminds the reader of Nestor’s stories in Homer’s *Iliad*; so again we note that while Lucan makes changes to the conventions of Homeric epic he also follows them. In the next chapter I will explore how Lucan’s epic presents battle narrative, to point out a similar paradox.

---

<sup>118</sup> Contrast rather than similarity appears in Lucan’s emphasis on action in the city of Rome, *BC* 2.17; 61; 74; 99; 138; 140; the ‘forum’, 2.160-61; and the ‘sheepfold’ or ‘voting enclosures’, 2.197. During the civil war between Caesar and Pompey, Rome is not the scene of fighting: she is abandoned, *BC* 1.503-22. However, the civil wars of Marius and Sulla are evoked again by reference to these famous Roman locations when Caesar speaks before the battle of Pharsalus, *BC* 7.304-06.

<sup>119</sup> See Fantham, 1992, 120.

## Chapter 4:

### Sea-Battles: *BC* 3.509-762

... multaque ponto  
praebuit ille dies uarii miracula fati. *BC* 3.633-34

And that day showed many wonders of different death on the sea.

Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile* presents many different deaths, wounds and weapons in its depiction of Rome's civil war, especially in the way it tells of the naval battle at Massilia. Although Lucan's narrative of this battle has many features in common with earlier epic, it also displays changes to the epic topos of land battles because of the new setting for war; here it is fought on ships at sea and not on firm ground. Scholars have looked at Lucan's battles either singly or together and have also compared them to accounts in Caesar's *Bellum Ciuile*. Hunink, 1992, throughout his commentary compares Lucan's battles with what is considered Lucan's historical source, as does Masters, 1992, who makes a clear table of Lucan's and Caesar's battles; Rowland, 1969, writes about the links between Rome and the town of Massilia; Opelt, 1957, points out the originality of Lucan's sea-battle; and Leigh, 1997, writes on the spectacle of Lucan's sea-battles.<sup>1</sup> Rather than a focus on spectacle, this chapter emphasises the pathos through tragedy evident in this poetic description of the sea-battle at Massilia. It extends the scholarship as it shows that Lucan's epic is innovative in two respects: firstly because it is a detailed and precise account of the effects of a sea-battle on men and ships; and secondly because topoi of epic land battles are here applied to a battle which takes place 'on the sea' (*ponto*, *BC* 3.633).

In a metapoetic statement of programme, Lucan's poem presents the ships at Massilia in a doubly contradictory condition; as unusually stable and oddly similar to land:

at Romana ratis stabilem praebere carinam  
certior et terrae similem bellantibus usum. *BC* 3.556-57

But the Roman ship was surer in that it gave a stable keel and a use similar to  
land for those fighting.

---

<sup>1</sup> See Hunink, 1992; Masters, 1992, 20-21; Rowland, 1969, 204-08; Opelt, 1957, 435-45; and Leigh, 1997, 246-64.

In Lucan's sea-battle and throughout his poem we find many such intriguing incongruities; for example at the battle of Brundisium, Caesar builds towers on the sea, *BC* 2.677-79. Lucan's portrayal of 'type scenes' similar to the recurrent battle motifs of individual and mass combat-scenes with named warriors in Homer's *Iliad* paradoxically makes this inventive sea-battle the most 'epic' of his civil war battles.

In this chapter I look for parallels to Lucan's naval battle in epic, in Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the *Annals* of Ennius, Virgil's *Aeneid* and in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, to show how Lucan's sea-battle not only draws on Roman epic, but also on the conventions of Homeric epic. While reference to ships and the sea can be found in most epic (Homer's famous catalogue of ships, *Il.* 2.493-759, springs to mind, and his repetition of the formulaic κοίλησιν ... παρὰ νηυσὶ, *Il.* 1.26 'beside the hollow ships' and its variations), Lucan's epic re-presents epic land battles revitalised by their novel location, the sea. The account of naval warfare at Massilia is not only one of the longest uninterrupted battle narratives in Lucan's poem (254 lines) but is also the first example of a thoroughly detailed description of a naval battle in extant epic.<sup>2</sup> No sea-battle is described in either the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*, although Homer's scenes involving ships in the *Iliad* are thorough, with parts of ships named as rowers and sailors set them moving on the sea. We also find reference to equipment specific to ships, for example, the 'long pikes' (μακροῖσι ξυστοῖσι, *Il.* 15.387), used when the actual fighting comes close to the fall-back position of the ships, but the ships of the *Iliad* are drawn up onto the land, and not engaged in a battle at sea.<sup>3</sup> Skutsch, 1985, proposes many actual or historical naval battles as context for the fragments assigned to Book 14. He

---

<sup>2</sup> The battle at Dyrrachium and the Scaeva episode *BC* 6.1-299, although interrupted, is another long battle description (269 lines), all the rest are much shorter: the siege at Brundisium *BC* 2.650-714, (65 lines); the land battle at Massilia *BC* 3.454-508 (56 lines); the battle at Ilerda, scattered between *BC* 4.1 and 4.386 (142 lines); the fight off the coast of Illyria, *BC* 4.402-581 (180 lines); the fight between Hercules and Antaeus, although not part of the civil war, is still a portrayal of conflict *BC* 4.593-655 (63 lines) and introduces the conflict between Curio and the forces of Juba in Libya *BC* 4.661-787 (127 lines); and the battle at Pharsalus *BC* 7.460-616 (157 lines).

<sup>3</sup> Homer has no descriptions of ships in the context of battle: but for ships entering or leaving harbour, see: *Il.* 1.432-36, 480-86; *Od.* 2.416-30; 4.780-84; 11.1-3, 636-40; 13.81-88; 9.470-72, 562-64; 12.145-47; 13.76-78. The fleet of Odysseus is not destroyed in naval warfare but by the forces of nature: *Od.* 5.291-332; 10.80-132; 12.403-25. See also Apollonius of Rhodes' *Argonautica* for a detailed description of the launch of the 'Argo': A.R. *Arg.* 1.367-401.

writes that the fragments could refer to a range of battles: ‘off Corycus in 191 BC (Livy, 36, 43) ... or the battle of Myonnesus in 190 (Livy 37, 30) ... or even (Merula) the crossing of the Hellespont by the Roman army .... [but that] Myonnesus seems to have the strongest claim’.<sup>4</sup> There can be no doubt that Ennius includes descriptions of ships for travel and transport of supplies and troops as well as of naval battles in his epic *Annals*, but without more of his text we cannot know if his reference to ships and sea-battles is any more specific than that found in the earlier epics of Homer, and this prevents us from seeing Ennius as a clear source for Lucan’s detailed description of a sea-battle. Lucan’s focus on the aspects of battle specific to its site among the natural forces of the sea and among the mechanical or technical characteristics of naval vessels is what makes his epic stand out from the earlier epics of Homer, Ennius, Virgil or Ovid.

Location, the position or setting for battle, is significant in Lucan’s poem as we see right from the beginning. The opening line includes both the subject of his poem and the site of battle in conventional epic terms: *bella per Emathios ... campos*, *BC* 1.1, ‘wars across Emathian plains’. But Lucan describes many more battles occurring: *certatum totis concussi uiribus orbis*, *BC* 1.5, ‘with all the forces of a shaken world fighting it out’, in locations all around the known world, with the battle at Massilia, on the way to Spain, at Brundisium in Italy, and at Curicta off Illyricum, all occurring at sea. Lucan’s poem includes a land battle at Massilia, as well as at Dyrrachium in Greece, Ilerda in Spain, and Utica in Africa and Pharsalus in Thessaly. Lucan’s complex narrative of the sea-battle at Massilia, with its mix of epic topoi and new naval setting for battle, is an indication of the poet’s versatile approach to epic, where Rome’s civil war as subject necessitates both distortion of and reliance on the conventions of the genre.<sup>5</sup>

Because this thesis is mainly concerned with epic, there is little scope for a detailed comparison of Lucan’s epic with the portrayal of naval battles by the Greek historians. In brief, I suggest that these prose accounts of battles at sea do

---

<sup>4</sup> Skutsch, 1985, 542-43.

<sup>5</sup> Gorman, 2001, 263, suggests that the best analysis of Lucan’s battle scenes is Metger, 1970, and goes on to say that Lucan ‘draws upon the tradition of epic, but ingeniously inverts that tradition by removing the individual heroes and concentrating instead on weapon and wound’.



not show the finer detail of individual ships and sailors that we find in Lucan's poem; the movement of whole fleets is described with lines and wings formed by ships advancing or encircling the enemy. In Greek tragedy, however, we find a closer look at the sea-battle action, as a messenger in Aeschylus' *Persians* describes the effect of the sea and the crush of ships on warriors, in the battle of Salamis.<sup>6</sup> I consider that Lucan's Massilia episode, a particularly vivid and dramatic presentation of a battle at sea, acquires pathos from allusion to tragedy.

Lucan's introduction to the sea-battle phase of his Massilian battle narrative alludes to, yet mixes up, the formulaic opening of an epic land battle with its reference to place, time of day and the strength and placement of the opposing sides.<sup>7</sup> Lucan stresses the geographical location of the sea-battle at Massilia in the shift from land (*telluris*, BC 3.509) onto the deep (*profundo*, BC 3.509), and his poem presents this contradiction: the ships are to make *stabilis naualibus area bellis*, BC 3.513, 'a stable site for battles at sea'. Paradox and inconsistency are further emphasised when Lucan writes, *pacemque tenentibus Austris / seruatum bello iacuit mare*, BC 3.523-24, 'and with the south winds holding peace, the sea lay quiet, kept for war', where we see the start of a violent battle made somehow fixed or static. Stability is a rare quality of the sea and this abnormality is mirrored in the divergent behaviour of other forces of nature in Lucan's poem. Wind and wave must perform in an atypical manner, warring with their own disposition in order to conform to human notions of peace or war. Frequent use of contradiction and irony in the poem invites the reader to see a similar inconsistency in the 'stability' of Rome brought about by the confusion of civil war, as well as an irregularity in the 'stability' of epic conventions as they are found in Lucan's poem. Immobility of the sea at the beginning of the sea-battle serves to highlight the dynamic dissolution of ships and bodies which follows, and can reflect the poet's view that republican stability is disrupted and destroyed by the confusion and horror of factional fighting in civil war.

---

<sup>6</sup> The messenger says: ὑπτιούτο δὲ / σκάφη νεῶν, θάλασσα δ' οὐκέτ' ἦν ἰδεῖν, / ναυαγίων πλήθουσα καὶ φόνου βροτῶν, / ἄκται δὲ νεκρῶν χοιράδες τ' ἐπλήθυον. *Pers.* 418-21. 'The hulls of our vessels rolled over, and the sea was no longer to be seen, it was full of wreckage and slaughtered men, and the shores and reefs were full of our corpses.'

<sup>7</sup> See *Il.* 11.1, for the time, dawn, followed by an arming scene then the positions of each army are described in relation to the topography, either a plain or the ditch. See also Virgil's *Aeneid* 9.459-60; 10.241, 244; 12.113-15, for the topos.

The oddity of Lucan's 'stable sea' is marked as the following overview turbulence as a stock epic feature demonstrates. A quiet sea is rarely found in Homeric epic where ships are more often depicted during storms and battling unstable seas. While Homer's most famous storm is found in the *Odyssey*, Book 5, he repeats the description and uses storm similes often enough for this variety of struggle to become an epic trope.<sup>8</sup> Virgil represents man at the mercy of nature in his epic storm, *Aen.* 1.81-123, but the simile at the end of this first storm, likening natural forces to human behaviour and Neptune to a dignified Roman, diminishes the effect, while at the same time it ties the turmoil of the storm to Aeneas' ongoing struggle against his ignorance of his fate as founder of Rome.<sup>9</sup> In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, 11.461-572, the description of the storm which kills Ceyx is most elaborate, foreshadowed by the fears of his wife Alcyone and rich with details of the effect of wind and wave on the ship. Lucan also has an epic storm, *BC* 5.560-677, with Caesar pitted against wind and wave in a tiny boat. In Lucan's epic the exaggeration of the forces of nature and the disruption of natural boundaries, clearly seen in his portrayal of the storm which buffets Cato's ships in the indeterminate sea / land of the Syrtes, *BC* 9.319-40, and his elaborate description of a Libyan dust storm, *BC* 9.445-97, are emblematic of the disturbance caused by civil war.<sup>10</sup> In all these epic storms, a ship or character is buffeted by the natural forces of wind and wave. In Lucan's epic, however, we also find an inversion of this epic trope, a description of ships becalmed, *BC* 5.430-457, in what can be considered an 'anti-storm', which might be foreshadowed by the poet's contradictory 'stable' sea before the sea-battle at Massilia.

---

<sup>8</sup> There are no storms in the *Iliad* but Homer likens battles to storms in similes: *Il.* 11.297-98, 305-08; 16.765-69. Homer's portrayal of the effect of the storm on Odysseus' ship, *Odyssey* 5.313-332 is repeated at *Od.* 12.403-25 and 14.301-15. Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*, despite its nautical theme, has no description of a storm at sea, although a tempest does blow the Argonauts into Syrtis, *A. R. Arg.* 4.1232-37. Virgil's repetition of the Odyssean storm scene further establishes the storm as an epic trope: *Aeneid* 1.83-123; 3.190-208; 5.8-41.

<sup>9</sup> Hardie, 1986, 229, for storms in Virgil's *Aeneid*.

<sup>10</sup> See Morford, 1967 on Lucan's storm, and Pitcher, 2008, 243-49, *BC* 5.504-702; Malamud, 2003, 31-44; and the commentary on Book 5 by Matthews, 2008.

Lucan's narrative of the sea-battle at Massilia is broadly epic yet innovative in its detail. Conventions of Homeric and Virgilian epic land battle narrative, where named warriors are opposed in battle, are found in Lucan's poem precisely because the battle at Massilia is conducted on ships at sea: a different setting and atypical weapons and wounds are thereby made familiar from these recognisable epic conventions. In this sea-battle, through the personification of a ship (analogous to the 'ship of state'), the nation or republican Rome replaces the hero of traditional epic.<sup>11</sup> Lucan alludes to both Homer and Virgil to add epic status to his descriptions of a civil war and to make this battle the most detailed confrontation between the forces of Caesar and Pompey in his poem, even though these principal protagonists are not present.

Lucan's sea-battle has drawn scholars to compare the sea-battle at Massilia with the land battle in the same location, and, as well, the Massilian sea-battle has been studied in relation to Lucan's other depictions of conflict at sea, the blockade at Brundisium, *BC* 2.650-703, and Vulteius' raft episode, *BC* 4.402-581.<sup>12</sup> The Vulteius episode Book 4 has captured the interest of scholars: Most, 1992, looks at the language of dismemberment in epic and drama and writes of: 'Lucan, in whom the fascination with dismemberment seems to have reached its most extreme form'.<sup>13</sup> He sees a connection with 'the notorious circus spectacles which provided audiences throughout the Roman empire with frequent opportunities to enjoy the sight of many varieties of human suffering'; Leigh, 1997, suggests that Lucan's poem is directed at an amphitheatre audience because it deals with concepts of the marvellous and the spectacle. Leigh writes of the Vulteius episode as the Theatre of Suicide and sees that Lucan parodies traditional Roman battle narrative; Saylor, 1990, examines the metaphorical meaning of light and darkness

---

<sup>11</sup> The notion of the 'ship of state' is well established by Lucan's time and goes back to the 5<sup>th</sup> C. BCE, and Plato's *Republic*, 389.D, 488.B-E, and *Euthydemus*, 291.D, with its reference to Aesch. *Seven Against Thebes*, 1-2. See also Horace, *Carm.* 1.14.1. After Lucan we find a description of a sea-battle in Silius Italicus' *Punica*, 14.316-561.

<sup>12</sup> Green, 1994, 203-233, writes about the destruction of the grove; Gorman, 2001, 263-290, looks at Lucan's main battles both on land and sea, in comparison with Homer and Virgil; Leigh, 246-64, 1997, looks at battle scenes with emphasis on 'scenes'; Bartsch, 1997, 26-9, looks at identity and environment and the representation of the mutilated individual in Lucan's battle scenes, including Massilia; and Quint, 1993, 35, writes: 'And behind Pompey's flight lies Cleopatra's. Lucan depicts Pharsalia as an earlier version of Virgil's Actium'.

<sup>13</sup> See Most, 1992, 397, and also writes: 'It is significant ... that scenes of carnage in epic and drama often betray the language of the gladiatorial shows'. 402.

and writes: 'Light and darkness are used in a way that conveys in depth the issue of suicide vs. the choices available to the Caesarians and the Pompeians in the conflict'.<sup>14</sup> I draw out the pathos in Lucan's poem as I look at the Vulteius episode below.<sup>15</sup>

Apart from possible episodes by Ennius, Virgil is the only other epic writer to describe a conflict between ships at sea. Because of its detailed description of sailors, rowers and the structure and movement of ships, Lucan's Massilia episode calls to mind Virgil's depiction of the ship race in Book 5 and the battle of Actium on the shield of Aeneas in Book 8 of his *Aeneid*.<sup>16</sup> Lucan's extensive treatment of the sea-battle at Massilia causes us to consider it in relation to both of these Virgilian examples of 'naval warfare' (as well as to the catalogue of ships in Book 10) and in this I agree with Masters, 1992, who devotes a chapter to Lucan's Massilia and makes a comparison between it and Virgil's Actium.<sup>17</sup>

Panoussi, 2003, also looks at Lucan's use of epic topoi and at the Massilia episode and sees therein a parallel with Virgil's Actium.<sup>18</sup> He writes:

The intertextual authority of Ennius and Virgil asserts Lucan's place in the epic tradition and invests the episode with greater importance than its role in the conflict between Caesar and Pompey warrants. Simultaneously, Lucan defies epic authority by exposing the Virgilian rewriting of history which casts the most decisive moment of civil conflict in Roman history as a struggle against a foreign enemy.<sup>19</sup>

With Panoussi, I see that Lucan alludes to Virgil's Actium to validate his poem as epic, and that Lucan's sea-battle draws attention to Virgil's poetic treatment of Actium as a war against a foreign enemy, not as the civil war it was. It is intriguing that Lucan's poem, which mostly highlights the internecine elements of

---

<sup>14</sup> Leigh, 1997, 234-91; Saylor, 1990, 120 and also Eldred, 2002, 67-73; Ahl, 1976, 119-20; Caviglia, 2008, 301, and Coleman, 1990, 44-73

<sup>15</sup> See below at 145.

<sup>16</sup> See Putnam, 1998, 138-52, for an excellent discussion on Virgil's use of ecphrasis and on the battle of Actium on the Shield of Aeneas in particular, including a summary of the large bibliography on the subject, 234, n 1. See also, West, 1975-76, in Harrison, 1990, 295-304.

<sup>17</sup> Masters, 1992, 12-24 who writes about Lucan's Massilia and Virgil's Actium and suggests probable sources for Lucan's sea-battle with a concise table of comparison between Lucan's and Caesar's account of the battle at Massilia, 13-24.

<sup>18</sup> Panoussi, 2003, 30, writes: Virgil's Actium, however, occupies such a crucial moment in the *Aeneid* that it rendered sea-battles an integral part of the epic fabric'.

<sup>19</sup> Panoussi, 2003, 232.

civil war, shows this one battle at Massilia to be more like a war against a foreign enemy than a civil war.

Lucan's sea-battle relates to Virgil's Actium on more levels than one: it is both similar to and different from the earlier epic. The shield, with its scenes of critical points in Roman history dominated by the depiction of the battle of Actium, is significant in Virgil's epic as it connects the world of Aeneas with the future history of Rome, and shows Virgil at his most ideological. Likewise, Lucan's Massilia is a victory for Caesar's forces and is depicted in Lucan's poem as an important step toward the final outcome of the civil war: Caesar having undivided power in Rome. Virgil's Actium endorses whatever means it takes to establish Augustan peace while Lucan's Massilia episode, for all its epic tropes, still exposes the horrific cost in Roman lives of civil war. Virgil stresses the difference between opposing sides throughout the *Aeneid*, with Aeneas on one side as a pious and civilising proto-Roman and Turnus the barbarian to be overcome. Of course it is not so clear and concise as that - the relationship between Aeneas and Turnus as aggressor and victim is much more complicated but for the purposes of my argument, at the beginning of Virgil's epic the two sides are portrayed as different and opposite, although the polarity becomes less distinct as the poem progresses. Victory at Actium is also shown as a triumph over a foreign enemy, even though the reader knows that Actium was the decisive battle of Rome's civil war.<sup>20</sup>

Lack of differentiation between the opposing sides is generally accentuated throughout Lucan's poem, and reinforces the theme of the problematic nature of 'sides' in civil war, but the Massilia episode portrays the opposed parties as traditional foreign foes, Romans and Greeks, although the reader knows that both sides were Roman. The colonists of Massilia, in spite of their Greek origin, were allied to Rome, and Lucan's poem even shows that they elected to stay neutral

---

<sup>20</sup> Quint, 1993, 3, writes: 'At Virgil's Actium the sides are sharply drawn between the forces of Augustus and Antony, although the historical battle was, in fact, the climax of a civil war, Roman against Roman, where distinctions between contending factions were liable to collapse'. It goes without saying that the difference between Aeneas and Turnus as well as between the Trojans and the Rutulians or Latins also breaks down when pressed.

during this civil war battle.<sup>21</sup> Lucan sets apart the people of Massilia from other Greeks, *BC* 3.302, and in his poem, they can be seen to identify themselves with Romans, *BC* 3.307-9, 339-42. But for Lucan's purpose of epic opposition, they must be Greek. Virgil's ideological battle of Actium is unlike the rest of the battle narratives throughout the *Aeneid*, it stands outside the conflict between Aeneas and Turnus or their allies as a depiction of the future, but it also repeats the motif of difference between opponents found throughout Virgil's battle narrative. It is ironic that both Virgil and Lucan portray a civil war battle as a foreign war but the effect achieved is different for each poem. Virgil glosses over the relationship between the Roman generals to focus on the foreign queen, in keeping with his depiction of different sides in the battle for Rome, while Lucan brushes over the names of the generals to concentrate attention on the invented nationality of the armies at Massilia, to make this depiction of a sea-battle in civil war more like an epic land battle. I will come back to this important point below.

But first, apart from the depiction of sea-battles, I acknowledge that ships and the sea are often present in epic, and I consider the understated yet important function of ships for the movement of troops and supplies in times of war. Both Greek and Roman epics reflect, to a certain extent, the influence of their maritime civilisation, where ships and the sea figure prominently in life, stories and poetry. Ships are essential and play a vital role in transport and trade between the countries around the Mediterranean. Such mundane practicalities are minimised for the most part in literature, but sea journeys, idealised as quests for adventure and prize, or homecoming voyages, are often found in epic. Ships are an important constituent in Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*, Ennius' *Annals*, and Virgil's *Aeneid*. In the *Iliad*, variations on Homer's formulaic 'beside the hollow ships' depict the ships drawn up onto the shore to form the base camp.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> Braund, 1992, 266, writes: 'Phocaea in Asia Minor, not Phocis in central Greece, was the mother city of the colony of Massilia'. Rowland, 1969, 204-08, suggests that by this error Lucan connects the people of Massilia with Pompey's cause.

<sup>22</sup> Although there is some modification to the formulaic phrase κοίτης ἐνὶ νηυσὶν, *Il.* 7.389, it is often used to indicate the secure position held by the Greeks. See for example: *Il.* 5.751; 12.90; 13.107; 15.743; 22.115.

The value and function of ships as transport is stressed in Homer's well known and lengthy catalogue of ships in Book 2. This catalogue gains significance from one of the few intrusions of the narrator into Homer's epic. The narrator appeals to the Muse, with whose help, he says: ἀρχοὺς αὖ νηῶν ἐρέω νῆάς τε προπάσας, *Il.* 2.493, 'I will tell of all the ships and the lords of the ships'. The catalogue then lists the origin and prowess of each of the Greek leaders, their troops and the number of ships each leader brings; the cumulative total indicating a vast fleet of ships *Il.* 2.494-759.<sup>23</sup> Apart from this muster, in the *Iliad*, the ships are shown not only as the position of the Greek line, but also as the symbol for withdrawal or method of homecoming.<sup>24</sup>

The catalogue is, of course, an epic trope, but in Lucan's poem the list of Pompey's troops is a curious blend of the historical and mythical, *BC* 3.169-295, with limited reference to ships.<sup>25</sup> Lucan uses myth for locating the many exotic and foreign places whence Pompey draws his allies.<sup>26</sup> In one such example, Lucan's poem refers to the voyage of the legendary Argo, using it as a geographical marker to describe the location of Iolcus, a place where Pompey obtained troops:

---

<sup>23</sup> The Trojans and their allies are listed with an emphasis on the land, soil and mountains of their countries of origin, *Il.* 2.815-77.

<sup>24</sup> As battle-line or fall-back position: *Il.* 1.26, 89, 305, 306, 344; 2.725; 4.513; 5.327, 791; 7.72, 294; 8.180, 183, 345, 380, 531, 609, 631; 10.1, 209, 410, 549; 11.14, 274, 400, 569, 824; 12.38, 90, 107; 13.57, 107, 123-24, 310, 423, 740-46; 14.4, 51; 15.248, 347, 367, 387-89, 414-15, 476, 653-56, 715-23; 16.1, 24, 112-24, 293-96, 395; 17.453, 736; 18.3, 14, 76, 104, 150, 259-60; 19.3; 20.1; 22.465; 23.2; 24.2, 141, and 443. Achilles will not give up his anger till his own ships are threatened by fire, *Il.* 16.62-63, but allows Patroclus to take his armour to draw the fighting and fire from the rest of the fleet, 16.80-82. The Greek ships are also defended by a fortified ditch and wall with gates as part of the battle line: *Il.* 12.126, 246-76, 335, 352, 397, 440-44, 469-71. Achilles threatens to take his ships and leave when denied the girl Briseis, *Il.* 1.170, and we find further reference to him taking his ships and going home: 9.356-61, 426, 682-85. See examples of the same threat by others: *Il.* 1.179; 2.140, 236, 454; 3.159; 4.181; 7.460; 9.27, 47; 11.14; 12.16; 14.75-80.

<sup>25</sup> The catalogue also draws a complicated similarity between the numbers and range of Pompey's troops on the one hand, and the huge armies of Cyrus and Xerxes and the mighty fleets of Agamemnon on the other, *BC* 3.284-90. Lucan draws on historical sources for comparison more often than either Virgil or Ovid. See reference to the quasi-historical battle prevented by the intervention of the Sabine women, *BC* 1.118; the war with Hannibal, *BC* 1.303-05; to Catiline, *BC* 2.541; and to Xerxes and his bridge of boats across the Hellespont, *BC* 2.672-75.

<sup>26</sup> Lucan writes that Athens can only send three ships as Salamis has claimed the rest, *BC* 3.181-83; Phoenician troops come directly to war using the star Cynosura to steer, *BC* 3.214-19; the Cilicians, now in lawful vessels, no longer pirates, join Pompey, *BC* 3.228.

inde lacessitum primo mare, cum rudis Argo  
 miscuit ignotas temerato litore gentes  
 primaque cum uentis pelagique furentibus undis  
 conposuit mortale genus, fatisque per illam  
 accessit mors una ratem.

BC 3.193-97

From there the sea was first challenged, when the unskilled Argo mixed unknown races with the shore scorned, and first matched human-kind with winds and the raging waves of the sea, and through that ship one more death was added to the fates.

In this aside within a catalogue, Lucan, as poet and narrator, not only alludes to the foreign place where Jason's well known ship was built but also stresses the belligerent connotation of the first ship, through the use of such words as *lacessitum*, 'challenged', and *conposuit*, 'matched (as fighters)', and the *mors una*, 'one [more] death' (drowning), specific to sea-faring, which foreshadows death by drowning in the naval battle to come. There are no named or famous ships in Homer's epics, no matter how vital they are to the transport or well-being of the heroes.

In Roman epic, we must start with Ennius' *Annals* for non-specific mention of ships.<sup>27</sup> Despite its fragmentary nature, we know that Ennius included many references to ships and the sea. The fragment, *urserat huc nauim compulsam fluctibus pontus*, 7.217, 'to here the sea urged the ship, compelled by the waves', seems to describe the action of the waves of the sea on a ship, probably a ship forced onto the land.<sup>28</sup> From another such passage, *labitur uncta carina, uolat super impetus undas*, 14.376, 'slipping with a well-greased keel, its rush flies over the waves', we deduce that the movement is that of a ship, probably a sailing ship from the use of the verb *uolat*, but not necessarily of a ship involved in a sea-battle.<sup>29</sup> Again, in the section: *uerrunt extemplo placidum mare: marmore flauo / caeruleum spumat sale conferta rate pulsum*, 14.377-78, 'straightaway they swept the tranquil sea: with marble yellow foamed the blue-green sea beaten by the

<sup>27</sup> This is not to overlook either Livius Andronicus, who wrote a Latin version of Homer's epic *Odyssey*, or Naevius, who make mention of ships and the sea. The former is considered the 'father of Latin literature' by Albrecht, 1999, 3, and the latter, Naevius, whose epic poem on the Punic War, was the 'first *national* or really Roman epic' according to Warmington, 1961, xvii.

<sup>28</sup> See Skutsch, 1985, 388, on the textual difficulties in this fragment. For reference in Ennius to ships as *nauis*: 504; 508. See also *ratis* as raft, boat or warship: 515-16.

<sup>29</sup> Since this fragment is quoted by Macrobius 6.1.51 (see Skutsch, 1985, 541) as the source for Virgil's *Aen* 8.91, stress falls on the speed of the ships, as Aeneas' ships move up river, spurred on by the changed current of the Tiber and the portent of the white sow.



crowded ship', it is easy to imagine many oars driving a ship along quickly. In the fragment, *quom procul aspiciunt hostes accedere uentis / nauibus ueliuolis*, 14.379-80, 'when they saw far off the enemy coming towards them with the breeze in the sail-fluttering ships', as far as we can tell the ships may be in battle array, since 'the enemy' (*hostes*), is coming in them, but again there are no more detail specific to a sea-battle. Allusion to earlier epic, however, adds a deeply layered background against which Lucan's epic is read.

Virgil writes both generally and specifically about ships. In the first six books of the *Aeneid*, we find an 'Odyssean' journey as Aeneas and his companions sail from place to place looking to found a home, and they even stop for funeral games which include a ship race. In the 'Iliadic' second half, Virgil makes changes to the Homeric image of the ships as base camp under threat of fire by the miraculous transformation of Aeneas' fleet into sea nymphs.<sup>30</sup> In Virgil's *Aeneid*, we find that ships are important enough to be named. The four ships involved in the race are named: *Pristis*, *Chimaera*, *Centaur* and *Scylla*, *Aen.* 5.114-23, and later, *Aen.* 10.209-10, two ships, 'Centaur', *Aen.* 10.195, and 'Triton', (from that part of Aeneas' fleet not transformed into nymphs), are singled out by their names, which not only describe the figure heads on each ship but also exaggerate their size and prowess through the mythological connotations of those names.<sup>31</sup> Ovid's version of this same story, the transformation of ships into dolphins, *Met.* 14.527-667, is one of the longer passages in his treatment of the wanderings of Aeneas.<sup>32</sup> Ovid includes ships and the sea in the stories which comprise his epic, but he describes no battles between opposing fleets at sea.<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> Homer's vivid description of the battle at the ships with its threat of fire begins at *Il.* 15.346, and, intensified by apostrophe to the Muse, *Il.* 16.112-13 is the incident which causes Achilles to rouse Patroclus and his Myrmidons to war, *Il.* 16.124-29. Virgil, in Book 7 has the fleet arrive in Italy with prophecies fulfilled but the ships themselves escape the threat of fire by means of another divine promise where they are changed first into dolphins then into sea nymphs, *Aen.* 9.77-122. Later, after a list of more ships and reinforcements, *Aen.* 10.163-214, reminiscent of Homer's catalogue of ships, *Il.* 2. 815-77, these nymphs reappear to encourage Aeneas, *Aen.* 10.215-59. See Ovid's version of this incident, *Met.* 14.527-65.

<sup>31</sup> See Williams, 1972, 406.

<sup>32</sup> *Met.* 13.623-84, 705-29; 14.75-90, 101-28, 154-57, 441-66, to which he adds the apotheosis of Aeneas, *Met.* 14.568-608.

<sup>33</sup> See: *Met.* 1.297-83; 3.581-691; 6.444-46, 6.511-20; 6.720; 7.1-5; 8.101-45; 11.410-572; 12.6-10, 35-37; 13.182; and 15.622-744.

As in these earlier epics, in Lucan's poem we also find ships implicit rather than overt, with reference to the movement of goods and supplies necessary for the people in Rome who are dependent on a regular external corn supply.<sup>34</sup> Ships are also necessary for the transport and provisioning of the armies of both Caesar and Pompey wherever they are stationed. We gain the impression from Lucan's poem that Pompey had greater experience at sea than Caesar through reference to Pompey's *piratica laurea*, *BC* 1.122, 'pirate laurels'. Although the events happened in Pompey's past, in Lucan's poem Pompey refers to his own naval superiority in his speech to his men before battle:

qui cum signa tuli toto fulgentia ponto,  
ante bis exactum quam Cynthia conderet orbem,  
omne fretum metuens pelagi pirata reliquit  
angustaque domum terrarum in sede poposcit. *BC* 2.576-79

When I lifted my standards, which were gleaming over the whole sea, before Cynthia the moon had twice driven out then completed her circle, the pirates [were] afraid of the sea [and] abandoned every strait, and demanded a home on a narrow seat of land.

Contrast between Pompey and Caesar often is centred on their respective successes in battle, with Pompey triumphant on the water and Caesar on land.<sup>35</sup> Past triumphs, however, do not make Pompey successful in civil war. Although Pompey's ships hold the sea when he flees Italy after the siege at Brundisium, the intrusive poet / narrator draws attention to the futility of resting on past glory:<sup>36</sup>

... pelagus iam, Magne, tenebas  
non ea fata ferens quae cum super aequora toto  
praedonem sequerere mari: lassata triumphis  
desciuit Fortuna tuis. *BC* 2.725-28

By now, Magnus, you held the sea, but not bearing the fates which you did when you followed the pirates over the waters of the whole sea: tired from your triumphs, Fortune has deserted you.

Pompey's reversal of fortune is even more striking when we consider that although he escapes from Pharsalus with his life by means of a ship, he is met by

---

<sup>34</sup> Lucan portrays Caesar as an astute leader who sends Curio to Sicily, presumably by ship, to bring corn from Sicily to feed the people in Rome, *BC* 3.55-56. Pompey sends his son from Brundisium to rouse troops in the East, *BC* 2.648-49.

<sup>35</sup> The narrator contrasts Pompey's pirate laurels with Caesar's Gallic victory, *BC* 1.122. Caesar's man, Laelius, boasts of the successes of Caesar's army, *BC* 1.369-71. Magnus, in a parody of this claim, suggests that Caesar's fighting spirit is weak, *BC* 2.570-73.

<sup>36</sup> Pompey's flight is presented more like a rout than a triumph, although the simile, comparing Pompey's fleet escaping with just a few of its ships missing, to the Argo whose stern post is snapped off by the clashing rocks, elevates Pompey's flight to epic proportions.

a group of delegates from the realm of Pharos which ‘orders him to go from the ‘poop-deck’ of his high ship into a small boat’ (*celsae de puppe carinae / in paruum iubet ire ratem*, *BC* 8.564-5). Then, he is ‘carried off in a Pharian boat’ (*Phariamque ablatus in alnum*, *BC* 8.611) and beheaded. Ships are significant in epic as background to the narrative, but in our current state of knowledge, Lucan’s detailed description of a sea-battle in epic is innovative.

The static tableau at the beginning of the battle of Massilia gives way to commotion as Lucan writes:

ut tantum medii fuerat maris, utraque classis  
quod semel excussis posset transcurrere tonsis,  
innumerae uasto miscentur in aethere uoces,  
remorumque sonus premitur clamore, nec ullae  
audiri potuere tubae. tum caerulea uerrunt  
atque in transtra cadunt et remis pectora pulsan. *BC* 3.538-43

When there was just so much of the sea in the middle that both fleets could cross it with oars stroked once, then numberless voices are mixed into the vast sky and the sound of oars is overcome by shouts nor can any horns be heard, then they sweep the dark blue sea and fall on the thwarts and beat their breasts with their oars.

Lucan’s poem shows fleets lined up on the sea, with all their movement of oars suspended or overcome by the noise of shouting; they are set and ready at the start of the battle.<sup>37</sup> Lucan tantalises us with echoes of one epic leading to and entangled with reminders of another by means of multilayered allusion. His use of the term *tonsa*, a synonym for ‘oar’ brings to mind the line from Ennius: *postea recumbite uestraque pectora pellite tonsis*, *Ann* 7.218.<sup>38</sup> In Ennius, the proximity of *tonsis* to the words *pectora pellite* leads us back again to Lucan and the last line of this passage, where the same image signals the change from stand-off to violent movement. The sailors are now in position to use their oars in the sea: *atque in*

<sup>37</sup> The set position of the opposing fleets is reminiscent of Homer’s *Iliad* and the distance, ὅσση δ’ αἰγανέης ῥιπῇ ταναοῖο τέτυκται, *Il.* 16.589-92, ‘as far as the cast of a slender javelin’, that the Trojans are forced back by the push of the Greek army.

<sup>38</sup> The word *tonsa*, is probably an Ennian word for an oar blade: see Virgil’s *Aen.* 7.28; 10.299; Lucr. *DRN* 2.554; used again by Lucan at *BC* 3.527; 5.448. Later in epic we find it in Statius *Theb.* 5.346; 11.521; Silius Italicus *Punica*, 6.363; 14.385, 388, 533; and Valerius Flaccus in his *Argonautica* uses the epic Ennian phrase, *V.Fl.* 1.369. See Ovid *Met.* 12.234, for the words *pectora pulsan* in the same position at the end of the line in epic where blows are struck to face and breast before the battle of the Lapiths and Centaurs. When Lucan uses the term *pulsant* again, *BC* 7.127-29, he can be seen to allude to Homer, *Il.* 7.216. The process of rowing involves drawing the oars to the breast no matter where the action takes place, battle, race or storm, but ‘beating’ the breasts indicates hard rowing. Ovid shows the ill-fated ship of Ceyx as it is rowed out of harbour: *Met.* 11.461-63.

*transtra cadunt et remis pectora pulsant*, *BC* 3.543 ‘and they fall on the thwarts and they beat their breasts with the oars’.<sup>39</sup> This line of Lucan’s poem now recalls Virgil, and the start of the ship race where the sailors are on the thwarts and everything is straining with suppressed movement until the moment of release into noise and action:

considunt transtris, intentaue brachia remis;  
 intenti exspectant signum, exsultantiaque haurit  
 corda pauor pulsans laudumque arrecta cupido.  
 inde ubi clara dedit sonitum tuba, finibus omnes,  
 haud mora, prosiluire suis; ferit aethera clamor  
 nauticus, adductis spumant freta uersa lacertis.  
 infidunt pariter sulcos, totumque dehiscit  
 conuulsum remis rostrisque tridentibus aequor.

*Aen.* 5.136-43

They settle on the thwarts and their arms are strained on the oars, straining they await the signal, and beating fear pumps their leaping hearts and the roused love of glory. Then, when the clear trumpet gave a sound, all from their own line, with no delay, leap forward; the shout of the sailors strikes the sky, the churned strait foams with drawn back arms. Equally they plough furrows, the whole sea tears open wrenched apart by oars and triple beaks.

We hear echoes in Lucan of the fighting spirit ‘beating’ (*pulsans*, *Aen.* 5.138) in the breasts or hearts of the people engaged in competition in Virgil’s epic ship race. The mix of sound and motion in Lucan’s epic alludes to Virgil’s ship race but also to the sea-battle depicted on the shield of Aeneas in Book 8. From Lucan’s use of the words *caerula uerrunt*, ‘they sweep the dark-blue sea’, we can see that his epic gains colour and movement from allusion to the epics of both Ennius and Virgil.<sup>40</sup> As mentioned before, Ennius writes: *uerrunt extemplo placidum mare: marmore flauo / caeruleum spumat sale conferta rate pulsum*, *Ann.* 14.377-78, and although *caerula* can be read as a simple synonym for the sea in this passage, it is the colour of the sea, in contrast with the colour of the foam that is accentuated, as well as the disruption through movement of the ‘tranquil sea’.<sup>41</sup> Colour is similarly stressed in Virgil’s image of the sea depicted between

<sup>39</sup> There is also a hint of mourning in Lucan’s *pectora, pulsant*: *BC* 3.543; 4.182; 7.608. In elegy, *pectus* is more often coupled with *plangor*, a phrase associated with mourning rituals, tearing the hair and beating the breast: Prop. 1.24b.52; Ovid *Amores* 2.6.3; *Her.* 11.91 and 15.112; *Met.* 2.584; 6.248; 13.491; the parody in *Fasti* 1.578, where Cacus beats the ground with his breast as he is dying, and 4.896, where Mezentius does the same; and see also Matial 2.11.5; 5.37.19.

<sup>40</sup> See West, 1975-76, 296-303. See also Hardie, 1986, 336-76, on the cosmic iconography of the shield.

<sup>41</sup> The term *caerula* is used of the ‘blue’ of the sky as well as the sea, but it always retains its colour as well as its expanse or depth. See *BC* 2.219-20, which points to Actium where the sea is first made red with slaughter, *Aen.* 8. 695. Bramble, 1982, 542, writes that Lucan uses few words for colour and that his style is explained by the ‘dark and negative theme and the spirit of revolt’.

the outside illustrations and the central sea-battle on Aeneas' shield, where what we expect to be motionless metal is full of movement and colour:<sup>42</sup>

haec inter tumidi late maris ibat imago  
aurea, sed fluctu spumabant caerulea cano,  
et circum argento clari delphines in orbem  
aequora uerberant caudis aestumque secabant. *Aen.* 8.671-74

Between these ran the image of the broad expanse of the swelling sea, golden, but dark blue seas foaming with white waves and around dolphins in a circle clear in silver were feathering the sea and cutting the surface with their tails.

We can see allusion to Ennius, in Virgil's *spumabant caerulea*, but the passage also owes much to the description of Achilles' shield in Homer's *Iliad*. Virgil's picture of the ocean is in contrast to Homer's conclusion to his lively portrayal of civic and bucolic activities shown on the shield of Achilles: ἐν δ' ἐτίθει ποταμοῖο μέγα σθένοϛ Ὠκεανοῖο / ἄντυγα παρ πυμάτην σάκεος πύκα ποιητοῖο, *Il.* 18.607-08, 'He put on it the great strength of the River Ocean alongside the outermost edge of the closely-made shield.' With emphasis on strength and solidarity, the outside rim of Achilles' shield contains little of the movement of the sea, just its function as an encircling boundary. Because Actium was a naval battle, the central image on Aeneas' shield is surrounded by sea.

Naval warfare, as depicted on the shield in Virgil's *Aeneid*, is carefully located, both in relation to the illustrations on the rest of the shield and to the physical setting for the battle:

in medio classis aeratas, Actia bella,  
cernere erat, totumque instructo Marte uideres  
feruere Leucaten auroque effulgere fluctus. *Aen.* 8.675-77

In the middle it was possible to see the bronze fleets, the Actian battle, and you might see the whole of Leucas seething with drawn up Mars and the waves gleaming with gold.

Movement is attributed to the physical location of the battle: the headland of Leucas is described in terms of boiling water; 'seething with war', while reference to the sea is by way of contrasting colour, the bronze of fleets on waves gleaming with gold. The action of the ships in the water is elaborated, however, when Virgil writes:

<sup>42</sup> See Putnam, 1998, 151-52, on movement on the metal shield.

una omnes ruere ac totum spumare reductis  
 conuulsum remis rostrisque tridentibus aequor. *Aen.* 8.689-90

As one they all rush on and the whole water foamed churned by their pulled back  
 oars and triple beaks.

The battle of Actium, which is described in terms of leaders rather than in detailed and nautical battle narrative, contains only this brief mention of ships and rowers. When we note that the second line in this sentence is identical to a line describing the action of ships in the earlier ship race, (*conuulsum remis rostrisque tridentibus aequor*, *Aen.* 5.143), we can see not only that the naval aspects of Actium can now be abbreviated because of this reference to the detailed nautical imagery already employed, but also that this battle asks to be conflated with the spectacle of the ship race.<sup>43</sup> A parallel set up between Actium and a ship race, however, belittles the seriousness of a major battle in Rome's civil war. It can also show that the image of a 'foreign' war is a sham, and that Actium is actually like the ship race where the contest is between fellow Romans and so more like a civil war than one against a foreign enemy.

At the start of his contest of ships, Virgil writes: *expectata dies aderat nonamque serena / Auroram Phaethontis equi iam luce uehebant*, *Aen.* 5.104-5, 'the long awaited day had come and now Phaethon's horses began carrying the ninth Dawn in a serene light'. Virgil's reference to the sun as Phaethon and allusion to Dawn creates an expectation of epic contest through allusion to Homer's *Iliad* and the funeral games for Patroclus, *Il.* 23.226-27.<sup>44</sup> At Massilia, the time of the sea-battle is signalled by reference to the Sun, Phoebus, rather than the personified Dawn of Homeric formula. However, we can see allusion to Virgil's ship race and through it to Homer's *Iliad*. Lucan writes:

---

<sup>43</sup> Feldherr, 1995, 246, points out how in Virgil's *Aeneid* 5 the ship race closely resembles a chariot race and says: 'the passage offers a bridge not only between the heroic past and the Augustan present, but between the literary tradition itself and other media of representation and communication in Roman civic life, in particular the spectacles of the circus'.

<sup>44</sup> In Homer, ἠώς, dawn, is a formulaic symbol for many things: the passing of time, *Il.* 1.493; 6.175; 21.80, or a momentous change of scene, such as the pause for burial, *Il.* 7.433, 451, 458, or the start of battle, *Il.* 8.66; 10.251; 11.84; 24.12. The start of the funeral games for Patroclus is associated with the dawn: *Il.* 23.226-27. Virgil also uses Dawn (*Aurora*) in similarly varied ways: not only for the ritual time for funerals, *Aen.* 5.65, 105, but also to designate the East, *Aen.* 8.686; 9.111, and the time for battle or momentous events, *Aen.* 3.521, 589; 4.7, 129, 568, 585; 6.535; 7.26; 9.460; 10.241; 11.1, 182; and 12.77.

ut matutinos spargens super aequora Phoebus  
fregit aquis radios et liber nubibus aether  
et posito Borea pacemque tenentibus Austris ...

BC 3.521-23

As Phoebus broke above the seas, scattering morning rays on the waters, and the sky was free from clouds, with Boreas laid aside, and with Auster holding peace

...

This elaborate description of dawn, with its clear skies and winds that are absent or still, illustrates optimal conditions for the launch of ships. Lucan's poem paradoxically links the time of day for the beginning of a bloody and violent sea-battle with peace, peace which usually comes after war. It reminds us that civil war is a different type of war because after civil war the resulting 'peace' means complete breakdown of the previous political system and rule by one man.

Time of day is not important for the battle of Actium on the shield of Aeneas as it is shown symbolically rather than as an actual battle. But phases of the battle are pictured, from the first confrontation, through the rout of the queen, her future death, and Augustus Caesar's much later triumph in Rome, indicating that the chronology of the battle is of less significance than the far reaching consequences engraved on the shield. In this ecphrasis, the battle of Actium serves as prolepsis, like the stories told by characters in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, to expand the temporal scope of the narrative. Lucan's poem also follows the conventions of epic poetry when it tells of ships and where they came from; their size and number of oars; their leaders and the tactics they employ. It names only one leader of the fleet, Brutus, Caesar's general, whose name begins, BC 3.514, and ends, BC 3.761, the battle narrative. At the battle of Massilia the successful outcome is disparaged by brevity. After the long and detailed battle description the outcome is summed up in one short sentence, BC 3.761-2. The opponent of Brutus is referred to in the abstract, generally as *Graia iuuentus*, BC 3.516, 'Greek young men' or 'Greek soldiery'.<sup>45</sup> Although there is no mention by name of Pompey's generals at Massilia, Lucan's opening opposition of fleets can be seen to be modelled on the battle of Actium, where three leaders are named, but it also owes much to Virgil's description of the four named ships and their captains lined up at the start of his ship race. Lucan aligns his epic with earlier epic to add impact to the changes he

<sup>45</sup> The term *iuuentus*, 'soldiery' indicates the youth of the recruits who are so often killed, and heightens the pathos of war. See also, *Aen.* 7.162; 8.500.

will make when describing in detail the effect of the sea and ships on warriors in a sea-battle. In this respect Lucan's poem is both like and unlike earlier epic.

Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile* is also both similar to and different from a prose version of the same event.<sup>46</sup> Caesar, as author of an account of the civil war, *Bellum Ciuile*, refers to ships and the sea when writing of the movement of troops and supplies.<sup>47</sup> In his version of the battle at Massilia and at Brundisium we can also find more specific descriptions of ships.<sup>48</sup> He writes of two battles at sea, both off Massilia, with emphasis on Caesar's general, Brutus, and his win over the superior numbers of Pompey's fleet.<sup>49</sup> In Caesar's prose, ships are referred to as *onerarias naues*, *Ciu.* 1.36.2, 'merchant ships', or 'load-bearing ships', and *naues longas*, *Ciu.* 1.56.1, 'longships' or 'warships', yet they are also seen as a collective or fleet. In Caesar's prose the possessive adjective, *noster*, adds emphasis and the impression of a partisan first-hand account.<sup>50</sup> Caesar writes about Pompey's fleet, *in quibus paucae erant aeratae Ciu.* 2.3.1, 'in which there were a few bronze (warships)', and the equipment found on his own ships, *hi manus ferreas atque harpagones parauerant*, *Ciu.* 1.57, 'these had prepared iron claws and grappling irons', using the utilitarian vocabulary of prose. We can hear echoes of Caesar's sea-battles at Massilia in Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile*, but the two battles are merged into one in Lucan's epic where Brutus' turret-bearing ship joins a hastily assembled fleet, *BC* 3.510-13, to fight against the 'Greeks' who bring back 'previously retired boats' (*emeritas ... alnos*, *BC* 3.520), to add to their strong fleet.<sup>51</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> According to Caesar in his account of the two sea-battles off Massilia, Pompey's general Domitius, previously pardoned by Caesar at Corfinium, brought a fleet to Massilia, *Caes. Ciu.* 1.36 and 1.56, and was joined there by another of Pompey's generals, Nasidius. *Caes. Ciu.* 2.3. Henderson, 1998, 42, writes about Caesar's *BC* to show how the civil war is a war of words. 'This work of euphemism and denigration is passed off as description, while Caesar creates a profile for his Caesar from negative ventriloquism of his opponents'.

<sup>47</sup> Caesar writes in general terms of ships: *Caes. Ciu.* 1.28-29, 30.1; 3.2.4, 3.1, 5.2, 8.3, 8.4, 18.1.

<sup>48</sup> Caesar, in his account of the Gallic War, also writes of his ships in conflict, with adds the detail that those of the Gauls were much bigger, *Caes. Gal.* 3.13, 14-15; 4.22.1, 25.1; and 5.1.

<sup>49</sup> The first battle: *Caes. Ciu.* 1.34-36; 1.56-58; is followed by a second encounter which results in victory for Caesar's force: *Caes. Ciu.* 2.3-7

<sup>50</sup> Caesar writes of Pompey's attack coming against his own ships: *sic omnibus rebus instructa classe magna fiducia ad nostras nauis procedunt*, *Caes. Ciu.* 1.56.4, 'in this way with the fleet fully equipped they advance with great confidence against our ships'.

<sup>51</sup> In this Lucan follows Caesar, who writes of twelve warships: *Caes. Ciu.* 1.36.5, and of the *uetures naues* *Caes. Ciu.* 2.4 1 'old boats' added by the men of Massilia for the second battle.



Lucan's poem has the two fleets matched like gladiatorial contestants: *paribusque lacertis*, BC 3.525, 'with equal arms'. Both fleets appear in one almost balanced line (there is one extra word for the 'Greeks') with attention drawn to this by repetition of *hinc*: *Caesaris hinc puppes, hinc Graio remige classis / tollitur*, BC 3.526-27, 'from here the ships of Caesar, from here the fleet with Greek oarsmen is raised'. Inequality between fleets is then stressed as the Roman fleet is described in great detail, with precision as to number of oars and rowers, increasing in power culminating with the greatest ship, *uerberibus senis agitur*, BC 3.536, 'driven by six-fold strokes', which holds the general Brutus, BC 3.535, while the 'Greek' ships supporting Pompey are not described and their generals are not named.<sup>52</sup> Lucan's poem is unlike the ship race in Virgil's *Aeneid*, 5.114-243, where each ship is described separately along with its crew and the fate of each is suited to the character of the leader, but we can see that Lucan's opposition of 'Greeks' and Romans at Massilia is similar to Virgil's Actium, where Antony and his 'shame', the unnamed Cleopatra, are described at length to stress the 'otherness' of a foreign opposition. Lucan's stress on 'Greeks' against Romans contributes to an 'epic' reading of this episode, as it recalls the Greek and Trojan opposition at Troy, but it rests incongruously within a poem about civil war and cannot be maintained.

Inconsistency proliferates in Lucan's Massilia episode; even his use of the phrase 'naval battle' is unusual, especially in poetry. Contradiction can be found in Lucan's use of the term when he writes that ships at Massilia form a stable site 'for naval battles' (*naualibus ... bellis*, 3.513), and it is ironic that the sword, usually associated with land battles, drives the most 'in a naval war' (*nauali ... bello*, 3.569).<sup>53</sup> The same words are used close together by Virgil, and although their proximity means that they are read together, they are not in grammatical agreement and this causes a reassessment of meaning as we read, but no real ambiguity. Virgil writes of Agrippa: *cui, belli insigne superbum, / tempora nauali fulgent rostrata corona*, *Aen.* 8.683-84, 'whose temples shine with beaked naval

<sup>52</sup> Lucan's poem lists a fleet of *triremes*, BC 3.529, which have three rows of oars; then one fleet, 'with a fourfold rank of oarsmen' (*quater ... remigis ordo*, BC 3.530); and also the fleet of the Liburnians, 'with twin banks of oars' (*gemino*, BC 3.534), joined by Brutus' giant ship.

<sup>53</sup> See Silius Italicus, 14.316-579, for a detailed description of a sea-battle that owes much to Lucan.

crown the proud symbol of war' but, although 'naval battle' is not used, there is a clear suggestion of sea-battles because the naval crown, set with golden models of ship's beaks, is only ever awarded for victory in a war at sea.<sup>54</sup> Ovid uses the phrase in elegy rather than epic: in his *Ars Amatoria*, he writes of places where young men and girls gather and of the popularity of the arena. When he writes: *quid, modo cum belli naualis imagine Caesar / Persidas induxit Cecropiasque rates?* *A.A.* 1.171-72, 'Why, wasn't it just now when Caesar led in Persian and Athenian ships for a likeness of a naval battle?', Ovid is referring to the mock sea-battle, *naumachia*, staged in Rome by Augustus Caesar, which brought the whole world into the city, *orbis in urbe fuit*, *A.A.* 1.174. In this passage Ovid is drawing attention to the celebrations on 12<sup>th</sup> May, 2BCE. The dedication of the temple of Mars Ultor was a major dynastic moment attached to the Augustan Forum. It is worth noting that Lucan had not only literary models for depicting ships at sea but also the actual events staged in Rome by the emperor Nero. According to Suetonius, mock battles on water are staged by all the emperors of Rome.<sup>55</sup>

But the battle of Massilia is not set up as a staged or mock fight in Lucan's poem; it is depicted in such a way as to bring out the pathos and tragedy of loss of life deaths in battle. In this I differ from the stance taken by Leigh, 1997, who argues that Lucan parodies traditional Roman battle narrative by setting his battles as contests watched by an amphitheatre audience.<sup>56</sup> While we can see some elements of the gladiatorial *naumachia* in Lucan's description, especially in the exaggerated images of death and wounding on ships at sea, his focus on the bodily suffering of the person accentuates the anguish of such injury and loss of life. His poem depicts a different type of battle narrative with the sea as both location of and participant in war. Yet Lucan follows the epic tradition of Virgil, whose narrative of land battle in the *Aeneid* is modelled on Homer's pattern of individual encounters, where the narrator describes the action of whole armies or groups of

<sup>54</sup> That Virgil makes clear reference to naval battles inherent in reference to the *nauali ... corona* 'naval crown'. See Putnam, 1998, 140, linking the image of Augustus Caesar and Agrippa on the shield, who writes: 'The brows of Agrippa, in his turn, gleam with more recent honour, the naval crown that he was awarded five years before the battle of Actium for his defeat of Sextus Pompeius at Naulochus'. Livy refers to naval battles: 32.21.27.1, and 33.3.3.2.

<sup>55</sup> Suet. *Jul.* 39.1.4; 44.1.5; *Tib.* 72.1.2; *Cl.* 21.6.5, 6.6; *Nero.* 12.1.9; 27.2.4; *Tit.* 7.3.7; *Dom.* 5.1.7. See also: Aug. *Res Gestae* 6.40, and Martial *Sp.* 28.12 and *Ep.* 1.5.1. For the use of spectacle by Roman emperors see Coleman, 1990, 44-73.

<sup>56</sup> Leigh, 1997, 234-91.

fighters followed by contests between individual warriors. Use of epic topoi from land battles is the means by which Lucan's poem not only furthers its allegiance to the epic genre but also marks its deviation from traditional epic battle narrative. In Homer's *Iliad*, we find battles between Trojans and Greeks fighting on land presented as 'type-scenes' with opposed pairs of named individuals as the usual form of Homeric combat. We see a fairly typical development of a land battle where the panorama of massed armies approaching each other narrows to focus on specific warriors. The first of these episodes, in Homer's *Iliad*, Book 3, establishes a contrast between the two armies, the noisy Trojans and the silent Greeks, through the use of similes. In this instance, however, we find no clash of whole armies as the focus quickly switches to individual warriors. Paris and Menelaus are opposed, but the indecisive outcome of their single combat, in the sight of both armies before the walls of Troy, is unable to conclude the war. Then both armies advance and clash, *Il.* 4.446-56, before the scene narrows again to describe a series of individual opponents fighting it out, *Il.* 4.457ff., in a pattern characteristic of Homeric battle narrative.<sup>57</sup> Virgil, in the second 'Iliadic' half of his poem, has descriptions of land battles, with named individuals fighting, and their ancestry, attributes and how they kill or die is detailed.<sup>58</sup> In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, battle narrative, especially in Book 5 and Book 12 where epic land battles are staged indoors at wedding feasts, is a parody. Yet even then, Ovid uses the epic convention of named opponents and individual encounters interrupted by descriptions of collective fighting.

Lucan's sea-battle narrative seems to follow the Homeric and Virgilian pattern with both sides introduced in turn, then a description of general fighting before the focus switches to paired individuals. His originality lies in applying conventional weapons, wounds and death of land-based warfare to a battle at sea.<sup>59</sup> We have

---

<sup>57</sup> See individual pairs in single combat: Armies prepare for and engage in general battle: *Il.* 8.53-77, followed by paired opponents, 8.78-333; 11.1-83, pairs, 11.84-590; 12.1-79, pairs, 12.379-405; 13.39-169, pairs 13.170-672; 14.361-401, pairs, 14.402-522; 15.306-27, pairs, 15.328-42; 16.275-83 pairs, 16.284-631, 684-867.

<sup>58</sup> See catalogues of troops: *Aen.* 9.641ff; 10.163-214; disposition of Rutilians, 9.123, and Trojans 9.168; General conflict of armies, 7.511-640, at Actium, 8.689-714; outside the walls of Latium, 11.597-611, 12.280-89; Individual encounters: 9.544-818; 10.310-35, 362-605; 11.612-915; 12.290-790, 887-952.

<sup>59</sup> Lucan follows Homeric patterns of mass fighting followed by individual pairs. In this battle we find collective fighting: *BC* 3.567-83, 661-96, 705-08, 752-61, interspersed with a series of

seen how Lucan's poem accentuates the difference and, at the same time, blurs the distinction between opponents at the start of the sea-battle at Massilia and this carries over to the collective battle scenes. In contrast to the marked and largely stable disparity between enemy lines in both Homer and Virgil, Lucan uses pronouns to generalise men and ships in order to emphasise the proximity and similarity of enemies. In Lucan's sea-battle close fighting between the armies resembles that found between cohorts in a land battle.<sup>60</sup> The poet draws attention to the novelty of this closeness in naval warfare by his description of ships stuck so close together, either captured from ramming or held with grappling irons, that: *tecto stetit aequore bellum*, BC 3.566, 'the war stood firm with the sea covered'. His starting point for close contact is in the paradox: *nauali plurima bello / ensis agit*, BC 3.569-70 'the sword drives the most in naval warfare' since hand to hand combat is expected from land battle, not a sea-battle, where the ships themselves are the weapons. From this general view of the battle we gain an impression of the narrator's horror of all war by the emphasis he places on the weapons, ships and the sea in this naval battle. Hyperbole accentuates his description of the result of mass fighting. He writes:

... cruor altus in unda  
spumat, et obducti concreto sanguine fluctus.  
et, quas inmissi traxerunt uincula ferri,  
has prohibent iungi conferta cadauera puppes. BC 3.572-75

Deep gore foamed in the water and the waves were covered with congealed blood, and these ships, which chains of thrown iron dragged, crowded corpses prevent from being drawn in.

Self-reference as well as allusion to earlier epic writers is found in Lucan's image of blood in the water, but Lucan's poem extends and exaggerates earlier models to make something new. Blood, both deep and thick, does not merely redden the sea but foams in it and covers it over. The picture of blood in the sea recalls Brundisium, the first naval battle of the civil war and the first blood in the sea: *hic primum rubuit ciuili sanguine Nereus*, 2.713, 'here first, Nereus turned red with

---

vignettes of individual warriors, some named: BC 3.583-602, 635-46, 696-704, 709-751, 761-62, and some anonymous: BC 3.603-26, 652-61, as well as the sinking of a ship: BC 3.627-34, and a general drowning scene, BC 3.647-52.

<sup>60</sup> But compare this with Virgil's Actium, where the battle is ironically a stand-off between Roman and Eastern gods.

citizens' blood'.<sup>61</sup> The verb *rubeo*, alludes to Virgil's Actium, where: *arua noua Neptunia caede rubescunt*, *Aen.* 8.695, 'Neptune's fields redden with fresh slaughter', and we see another connection through Lucan's *primum* and Virgil's *noua*: both terms stress the blood as a new outpouring. Lucan points out the novelty of citizen's blood being shed, and it is not hard to read this same connotation in Virgil's depiction of Actian blood as 'new' or 'fresh'. The location of the blood in the sea is different from yet similar to all that old epic blood and slaughter evoked by the verb, which looks back to Homer's ἐρυθθαίνετο δ' αἵματι γαῖα, *Il.* 10.484, 'earth reddened with blood'.<sup>62</sup> In this we can see evidence of Lucan's conformity to and distortion of the epic tradition.

Reference to fallen soldiers as *cadauera*, *BC* 3.575, underlines the loss of humanity in war, a theme which recurs throughout Lucan's epic in contrast to the glorification of fighters, both dead and living in earlier epic.<sup>63</sup> Hyperbaton in the strangely worded line about crowded corpses seems to show Lucan striving so hard for paradox that he makes it hard to visualise what is going on. But the crush of the dead at Massilia reminds us of Sulla's slaughter (*BC* 2.201-20), where the word 'corpses' (*cadauera*, *BC* 2.205), repeated a few lines later in the sentence, *congesta recepit / omnia Tyrrenus Sullana cadauera gurgis*, *BC* 2.209-210, 'the Tyrrhenian flood received all the accumulated Sullan corpses', locates the poem in the epic genre through the topos of a river choked with dead bodies and reference to corpses as carrion, so startling at the beginning of Homer's *Iliad*.<sup>64</sup> But focus on ships, grappling irons and warriors as dead bodies or carrion, changes Lucan's poem within the genre, as the technical and prosaic terms

<sup>61</sup> Nereus is the god of the ocean and here is used as the traditional epic metonym for the sea to add emphasis to Lucan's ambiguous use of the verb which incorporates the idea of the personified sea blushing in shame from deaths in civil war.

<sup>62</sup> Blood and war are frequently connected. For example: *Aen.* 7.541-42; *Aen.* 7.554. See Putnam, 1998, 236, writing on ecphrasis in Virgil's *Aeneid*, who writes: '*Caede noua* and perhaps *Neptunia* (cf. Hor. *Epode* 7.3 and, more obliquely, 9.7) may refer to the battle of Naulochus. The language of the whole is reminiscent of Vir. *Geo.* 1.489-92, where civil war is also the subject'.

<sup>63</sup> Lucan uses this prosaic word *cadauera*, 36 times in his poem.

<sup>64</sup> There is a strong association between Sulla and corpses: *BC* 2.171. Bodies as feasts for the dogs and birds at the beginning of Homer's *Iliad* sets up a startling contrast between heroic warriors and the corpses they will become, *Il.* 1.4. See also *Il.* 21.218-20; Virgil's *Aeneid* 1.100; 5.806-08; 12.35. There could be some allusion to Greek tragedy here also as we can see that ship's implements are used against men in such a way as to dehumanise them: τοὶ δ' ὥστε θύννους ἢ τιν' ἰχθύων βόλον / ἀγαῖσι κωπῶν θραύμασιν τ' ἐρειπίων / ἔπαιον, ἐρράχιζον, *Pers.* 424-26, 'But as if our men were tuna fish or some catch for the fish-market they kept striking and hacking at them with broken oars and fragments of the wreckage.'

weaken the lofty language expected of epic. Lucan's poem vacillates between similarity and difference; it is both like and unlike earlier epic, and reveals a poet acutely aware of the generic tradition and the position of civil war among the foreign wars of epic.

Some features of Lucan's naval battle description, such as the names given to individual warriors, come from a close and creative engagement with earlier epic.<sup>65</sup> The main contestants in Virgil's ship race are named and the names of three main leaders at Actium are famous in Virgil's Rome. The allegiance of Lucan's named soldiers is never clear; it is their placement, in relation to Greek or Roman ships or weapons which explains on whose side they fight. The first single fighter, named Catus, is a Roman since he is on a Roman ship, *BC* 3.583 and is opposed to a Greek ship *BC* 3.586, but he is unknown otherwise. This name and all others except for Brutus seem to be generic Greek or Roman names. In conventional Homeric epic battle scenes, a biography of each opponent is usually given, but Lucan's poem does not generally follow or stress this particular convention, except for two: Telo, *BC* 3.592-96, who was famous for his ability at the helm of a ship, and Phoceus, whose brief biography shows he is well known for his diving skills, *BC* 3.697-700. Telo must be Greek, as this skilled helmsman is killed by Roman weapons, *pila*, 'Roman javelins'.<sup>66</sup> His great skill is rendered useless, however, because he cannot keep on course to ram the enemy, a Roman ship, *BC* 3.599, but he steers away from it as he dies. Phoceus is presumably a Massilian, but this is only inferred from his name.<sup>67</sup> Because of his skill at diving, this soldier is able to drown the held-down enemy, but in an anti-climax, he strikes a ship on his way to the surface and is drowned himself. The expectation that his will be a heroic death, built up by his biography and his courageous actions, is not fulfilled and the narrator reminds us how war not only destroys men but also perverts their peacetime skills.

---

<sup>65</sup> Homeric 'type-scenes' are found in Lucan's poem. Named heroes, Lygdamus and Tyrrhenus, *BC* 3.709-722, begin what is an example of the Homeric 'chain-reaction' fight where one soldier aims at but fails to kill his opponent who then kills another. In Homeric fashion the fight passes now from the Roman, Tyrrhenus, to his unseen victim, Argus, *BC* 3.723-25, whose death is then instrumental in the death of his unnamed father, *BC* 3.726-762.

<sup>66</sup> This warrior, from the adjective *miseri*, seems to be on the 'Greek' side; he steers his ship *huc* 'to here' against the ship of Catus, *BC* 3.592, and had damaged Roman ships before, *BC* 3.597.

<sup>67</sup> See Hunink, 1992, for a comprehensive investigation of the origin of the name, 250-51.

There is an element of the absurd to be found in the non-heroic attributes of Lucan's individual warriors who remain obscure even when named, and often the pathos aroused by the manner of their deaths slips into bathos through the effect of ships, ships' implements and the sea on the human body.<sup>68</sup> We note that the manner of death is objectified in the ridiculous death of Catus. We are told that he is pierced by twin spears, and because of this, his blood is not sure which way to flow, *BC* 3.589-90.<sup>69</sup> As well, there is the grotesque death of Gyareus, who is nailed to the ship's side by a spear through his groin, *BC* 3.600-02. The most bizarre and Monty-Pythesque description of death is that of an unnamed twin, who grabs onto a Roman ship, *BC* 3.609-26. First his hand is chopped off and it stays clinging onto the ship. When he tries again to grasp the ship his other arm is cut off. Undaunted, he presents his body as a shield for his comrades. Finally he hurls his body onto the ship and the extra weight of his torso helps to sink the Roman vessel. Tyrrhenus is blinded as a bullet from a sling forces both his eyes to fall out, *BC* 3.709-22, but he then asks his comrades to point him in the right direction so he can continue to throw spears. All these deaths have a comic element and the decidedly black humour in Lucan's epic appeals to our visual imagination.

One man, Lycidas, is pierced by a grappling hook, a weapon specific to naval battles. His death is almost accidental as it seems to be caused by his friends who hold onto his legs while he is torn away by the hook.<sup>70</sup> It is a striking image, indicative of all that is problematic in civil war, where the lines between enemy and friend are blurred as Romans fight against Romans. Although this man has a name, he is not given any biography to suggest either personality or characteristics. It is easy to see him as a symbol; the 'body of state' torn apart by

---

<sup>68</sup> See especially Leigh, 1997, 243-306, whose focus is on the marvellous, the spectacle, as in the amphitheatre – but suggests that the poem can be read as either spectacle or something to turn from but the better way is to read it as a critique of empire.

<sup>69</sup> The blood becomes the agent: it starts off uncertain but then it *expulit*, *BC* 3.585, 'pushed', both the spears out. See also Ovid's use of a similar serio / comic image where the blood becomes the active agent in the bizarre death of Niobe's son, *Met.* 6.259-60; and also when Ajax kills himself it is only his blood that is able to push out the blade: *expulit ipse cruor*, *Met.* 13.394, 'the gore itself pushed it out.'

<sup>70</sup> Bartsch, 1997, is good on bodily dismemberment, 9-22.

rival factions.<sup>71</sup> We are forced to focus on the dying process by the specific details given of the mangled body, its blood and guts as we contemplate the boundary between life and death:

scinditur auolsus, nec, sicut uolnere, sanguis  
emicuit: lentus ruptis cadit undique uenis,  
discursusque animae diuersa in membra meantis  
interceptus aquis. nullius uita perempti  
est tanta dimissa uia.

BC 3.638-42

He was torn away, split apart, nor did blood spurt out as from a wound, slowly it falls everywhere from ruptured veins, and the dispersal of his spirit passing into his different limbs was intercepted by the water. The life of no one killed is sent away on so great a path.

This fighter is depersonalised, as here we see death struggling with parts of the body as life is emptied from the limbs. There is no one death-dealing wound but a gradual leaking away of blood and life force. Both sea and ships' implements deal out death in Lucan's epic. One extraordinary form of death befalls a swimmer, whose youth, anonymity and bad luck arouse our compassion.

... tunc unica diri  
conspecta est leti facies, cum forte natantem  
diuersae rostris iuuenem fixere carinae.

BC 3.652-54

Then a unique form of dire death was seen, when, by chance, the beaks of different ships pierced a young swimmer.

The young man is a victim destroyed 'by chance' (*forte*, BC 3.653) as two ships clash together. It is easy to see an analogy here; the defenceless body damaged by twin enemy ships is equivalent to the Roman republic destroyed by Caesar and Pompey. Sympathy for the youth, whose 'body' (*corpus*, BC 3.660) drops into the water as the ships withdraw, is roused by the image of water entering his wounds, BC 3.661. Wounds on his depersonalised body are washed and mourned by the sea in contrast to the usual manifestation of grief through tears in wounds made specific at the death of Pompey, BC 8.727.<sup>72</sup> In a naval battle there is a focus on

<sup>71</sup> Masters, 1992, 162, n. 38, notes: 'For Lucan's obsessive use of the dismemberment image, see Narducci 1973 p.323; for its precise application as a grotesque extension of the 'body politic' metaphor, see e.g. '*omnia rursus / membra loco redeunt*' (5.36-7); '*sparsumque senatus / corpus*' (7.293-84) where the context works to ensure that we do not know if Lucan means this literally - 'the dismembered bodies of the senators' (so Duff ad loc.) - or metaphorically - 'the scattered body of the senate'. See also Walker, 1996, 77-8, who writes of the 'corporeal imagery that pervades Lucan's poem, where violations to the individual body stand in for violations to the body politic'.

<sup>72</sup> Cordus, the companion of Pompey, finds the corpse of Pompey and grieves over it: BC 8.727-28. Mayer, 1981, 172, has a good discussion on how wounds are portrayed in poetry, making reference to Lucan's BC 8.727; *Il.* 18.351; and Ovid's *Her.* 11.125.



the bronze beaks of ships and the sea and how they encounter various parts of the body: chest, belly, entrails, mouth and wounds.<sup>73</sup> The human body is portrayed as insignificant, *BC* 3.655-66; when it is caught between two ships, it does not even deaden the sound of the crash.

The poem turns our attention away from the individual toward the collective of shipwrecked and swimming people: *pars maxima turbae*, *BC* 3.661, ‘the greater part of the crowd’. We find multiple deaths and mass fighting among undifferentiated opponents. Boundaries are broken as natural distinctions are blurred and opposites are jumbled together: live men and dead; humans and machines of war; humans and ships; Greeks and Romans, and all encounters stress the far-reaching effect of civil war as well as the specific problems of naval warfare. Swimmers are rejected when trying to board ‘onto allied ships’ (*puppis ... sociae*, *BC* 3.663), therefore the men on board are styled *impia turba*, *BC* 3.666, ‘an impious mob’, further belittling their humanity. Body parts rather than heroic fighters are highly visible in this battle; the image of a human hand and arm (*manus*, *BC* 3.611; *lacertus*, *BC* 3.617) hanging on the side of a ship is here repeated and multiplied, (*ulnis*, *BC* 3.664; *lacertos*, *BC* 3.666; *bracchia*, *BC* 3.667), and the soldiers ‘fall away from their own hands’ (*a manibus cecidere suis*, *BC* 3.668). No help now are *bracchia*, *BC* 3.651, used for swimming and the ‘mutilated bodies’ (*truncos*, *BC* 3.669) sink into the sea.

In contrast to depersonalised warriors sinking and drowning, Lucan personifies a ship as it sinks.<sup>74</sup> Among the details of the ship, *BC* 3.627-33, we find its cargo of dying soldiers described impersonally as *strage uirum*, *BC* 3.627, ‘a heap of men’, while the ship has human attributes: it has *latus*, *BC* 3.628, ‘flanks’ and ‘it drinks’

---

<sup>73</sup> Lucan has used the image and sound of the clashing beaks of ships before, *BC* 3.544-45. Caesar’s account of ships colliding, beak first, is centred more on the nimble escape of Brutus as two ships bear down on him. His ship slips past, but the others then crash, *Caes. Ciu.* 2.6.5.1.

<sup>74</sup> Ships not only sink but are broken up either to furnish weapons, *BC* 3.671-74; or to become weapons themselves, *BC* 3.579. When Lucan writes: *inuenit arma furor*, *BC* 3.671, ‘frenzy finds weapons’, he is alluding to conventional epic frenzied anger so fundamental to Homer’s *Iliad*. See also Virgil’s use of the Latin equivalent, *furor* and *ira* in his *Aeneid*: the incomprehensible wrath of the gods, *Aen.* 1.12, and especially the frenzied anger of Aeneas as he kills Turnus, *Aen.* 12.946-47.

(*hausit*, *BC* 3.629) the sea through its ruptured joints.<sup>75</sup> Aspects of humankind and agency are given to the ship but it has its own very specific nautical parts as well when it is described as ‘full to the topmost gangway’ (*ad summos repleta foros*, *BC* 3.630). The poet shows that this ship sinking is like the death of a man and equal to the warrior deaths already told which elevates the ship to heroic proportions.<sup>76</sup> Personification of the sinking ship heightens the analogy between the ship and the republic. Lucan seems to suggest that the ship of state, the ideal republic, is undermined and overcome by many blows and by the combined weight of many battles. The sinking of the ship is another form of epic death, and the sea is witness to the process: *multo ponto / praebuit ille dies uarii miracula fati*, *BC* 3.633-34. In this intervention by the narrator we see the poet evoking the epic tradition through his use of the portentous phrase *ille dies*, ‘that day’, and at the same time he points out the novelty of the event.<sup>77</sup> Lucan’s warriors are rarely drawn to evoke the personality of the man dying, but rather to show them as a spectacle worthy of detached or objective enquiry. In the description of these deaths at sea, Lucan chooses to emphasise one element of epic, lament, and in doing so offers a strong critique of the violence of war and its consequences as well as a more subtle comment on his change to Homeric epic and its glorification of war.

From human opponents dying horribly from unconventional and nautical weapons Lucan expands the protagonists in battle to include another of the four basic elements. Fire is the worst weapon, and is described as *lues ... ignis*, *BC* 3.681, ‘a plague of fire’. Fire is also personified and the ships provide ‘food’ (*alimenta*, *BC* 3.683) from wax and pitch of their structure. Fire attacks the soldiers, shown as unnamed and undifferentiated by the poet’s use of pronouns: *hic*, *BC* 3. 687, ‘this

---

<sup>75</sup> The use of the term *uir*, ‘man or hero’, with all its epic connotations, is undercut as the man is depersonalised by a word usually found in prose: *strages*, ‘heap or confused mass’, which often means specifically a heap of corpses: *Aen.* 6.504, and *Aen.* 11.384. Lucan uses the term *uir* on other occasions within this passage to evoke sympathy for the person: the twin ‘men’ separated by death, *BC* 3.605; the part of the ‘man’ that holds out against death, *BC* 3.646; and the unrecognizable ‘man’ or ‘husband’ embraced by weeping wife in the aftermath of battle, *BC* 3.759.

<sup>76</sup> A model could be seen in Homer’s personification of horses who not only mourn and weep, *Il.* 17.426-40, but those of Achilles also speak, *Il.* 19.404-17. Virgil personifies bushes, bleeding as they speak with the voice of dead Polydorus, *Aen.* 3.24-29; and ships as they become nymphs, *Aen.* 9.77-122; and the nymphs as they speed Aeneas on his way into battle, *Aen.* 10.215-59.

<sup>77</sup> The phrase *ille dies* is familiar from Ennius, *Ann.* 14.382-83; and Virgil, *Aen.* 4.169-70.

one', and *hi*, *BC* 3.688, 'these'. Death is dealt out to both ships and men by water or fire, as well as by water and fire impossibly combined. With this paradox, death is doubled by fire and water then multiplied into a thousand forms throughout the battle. But the poet / narrator intervenes again to show that from the point of view of the individual, the whole battle and all other deaths are not important: *mille modos inter leti mors una timori est / qua coepere mori*, *BC* 3.689-90, 'between the thousand ways of dying the one death that is feared, that in which they have begun to die'. As the focus of the poem narrows from the collective to the individual and then again to the here-and-now moment of death for each person, it shows that to those struggling on the point of death in battle, the war is irrelevant. The poem comments on the contrast between the 'big-picture' theoretical view of war and the intimate involvement of each person with their own tiny part of the battle and could reflect Lucan's own concern for his place as a poet and / or concerned citizen in the larger literary and political spheres of Neronian Rome.

Death in this naval battle is not only impersonal, bizarre and grotesque but also often doubtful; indeed, allusion to the formulaic death of Homeric epic is used twice by Lucan for warriors who are not dead at all. When Tyrrhenus is blinded: *stat lumine rapto / attonitus mortisque illas putat esse tenebras*, *BC* 3.713-14, 'he stands, stunned, with the light snatched, and thinks this to be the darkness of death', but then regains the strength of his limbs and goes on to kill an unseen opponent, Argus.<sup>78</sup> Similarly, the father of Argus is described in epic fashion as though dying: *nox subit atque oculos uastae obduxere tenebrae*, *BC* 3.735, 'night came over him and a great darkness covered his eyes', but he is not dead, just fainting at the sight of his fallen son.<sup>79</sup>

When Argus' father actually dies, his death is not like that of an epic hero, but instead it is suicide. He quickly kills himself twice over, by the sword and by drowning when he jumps off the ship while his son is yet alive. In this imagined

---

<sup>78</sup> There is irony in Lucan's use of the name Argus for the opponent of blind Tyrrhenus. Argus is also the name of a mythological monster with a hundred eyes, which were blinded by sleep then death by Hermes then set by Juno in the tail of her bird, the peacock, in Ovid's descriptive episode, *Met.* 1.624-719, 723; 2.533.

<sup>79</sup> Lucan alludes to Homer's *Iliad*, where fainting as akin to death describes the wounded Sarpedon *Il.* 5.696-98.

dramatic reaction of a father to the death of his son we see a trace of the state-based ideology of family and heredity and the standard Roman idea or public expectation that a father should precede the son in death.<sup>80</sup> As a father, he fulfils public expectations but not the private wishes of his dying son, who wordlessly begs his father to hold him as he dies:<sup>81</sup>

... tacito tantum petit oscula uoltu  
inuitatque patris claudenda ad lumina dextram. BC 3.739-40

... only with silent look he seeks kisses and invites the hand of his father to close his eyes.

The haste of the father seeking to die before the death of his son reinforces Lucan's theme of conflict between kin which runs throughout his poem. Lucan uses conventions of the elegiac lament to evoke sympathy for Argus, the son who is abandoned to die alone on the deck of the ship, but his poem does little to rouse admiration for the unnamed father, referred to as an 'old man' (*senex*, BC 3.741) or 'the unlucky father of Argus' (*infelix Argi genitor*, BC 3.739-40), or for his dramatic two-fold suicide. Confusion over what is right and what acceptable, comes about because this is a civil war where moral judgements, piety, and valour are always compromised because the two sides belong to the one nation. Contrast between the private plea of the dying Argus and the public response of his father reinforces Lucan's modification of the epic genre during the sea-battle phase of the civil war by the way it distorts positive father and son relationships usually found in epic.<sup>82</sup>

---

<sup>80</sup> In Virgil's *Aeneid*, Evander, in reaction to the death of his son Pallas says: *contra ego uiuendo uici mea fata, superstes / restarem ut genitor*, *Aen.* 11.160-61, 'conversely, I have outlived my fate, living on, so that a father was left surviving', the destiny of a father is to die before his son. See also Lucr. 1.202, on the fixed order of things. Lucan is aware that great grief can cause loss of consciousness and we see Cornelia's similar reaction to excessive grief at the sight of defeated Pompey, BC 8.58-61. Lucan seems to be equally perceptive of the effect of death on the parents of the anonymous twins, BC 3.603-08, where his suggestion that the living twin will always remind them of the missing one is actually very true and evokes pathos rather than black humour.

<sup>81</sup> Argus asks *tacito*, BC 3.739, 'silently', for the usual things a father should do for a dying son; he asks for kisses and for the hand of his father to close his eyes, BC 3.739-40. This could be seen as eroticising the youth in death, like the Euryalus and Nisus episode in Virgil's *Aeneid*, 9.431-49. I see this section as elegiac (in the earlier use of elegy as lament, rather than love song) from the pathos in the description of the face and features of the dying boy and in the father's denial of comfort and compassion in his need to do what is socially acceptable, i.e. to die before his son.

<sup>82</sup> Homeric heroes gain standing from the heroic deeds of their famous fathers, indeed they are often named as the son of their fathers; *Il.* 1.1, 7; 2.173; 5.1, for example. These fathers also expect to accrue glory from the heroic actions and death of a son: *Il.* 6.206-10. Virgil follows

In Lucan's epic, particular battles are related as parts of the whole defining event as they are in Homeric epic. In the same way that individual encounters between warriors at various stages of the fight in Homer's epic encapsulate the final downfall of Troy, so emphasis on the physicality of death and dying with focus on ugly wounds to individual parts of the body in Lucan's poem, illustrates the erosion of the Roman republic by the battles of civil war. As Homer's fight scenes are connected by protagonists and place, so Lucan's battles are linked thematically and some are connected by location. Lucan describes two other battles which take place at sea and in both the Brundisium episode and the battle off Illyria where Vulteius' raft is trapped there is a stress on the details of the destruction of individual bodies in an unfamiliar setting so we can see that Lucan's poem continues to waver between showing similarity to and difference from earlier epic.

There are more paradoxical deaths in the sea-battle at Massilia than there are in any of Lucan's other battle scenes, or in earlier epic. Maybe this is intended to reinforce the notion that human activity aboard ships on the sea is somehow unnatural, an idea evident in Latin poetry, although not in earlier epic. In Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*, the ship named Argo is almost a character in its (her) own right, especially since it (she) has the ability to speak but there is no suggestion either of her primacy or that sea voyages were in any way unnatural.<sup>83</sup> That idea seems to stem from Catullus 64.1-15, who refers to the 'Argo' as the first ship. In later poetry the 'Argo' becomes a literary symbol for more than just an epic journey: it is a marker for mankind's progress or fall, depending on whether the building and use of ships by land-dwelling humans is seen to be to their advancement or an example of audacious pride. Ovid writes:

uela dabant uentis nec adhuc bene nouerat illos  
nauita, quaeque prius steterant in montibus altis,  
fluctibus ignotis insultauere carinae ...

*Met.* 1.132-34

---

Homer in this: *Aen.* 2.707-10; 3.472-80, 539, 558-61; 6.679-899; Aeneas is a caring father to his son Ascanius *Aen.* 1.643-46.

<sup>83</sup> The ship speaks: A.R. *Arg.* 1.524-27; 4.578-83

Sails they gave to the winds, nor yet had the sailor come to know them well, and ships which earlier had stood on high mountains, leapt insolently over the unknown waves ...<sup>84</sup>

When Ovid refers to the grim age of iron, his poem portrays the first ship in a disapproving way. Lucan's poem takes the negativity associated with the first ship further to suggest that battle action on the sea is unnatural.<sup>85</sup> Pessimistic portrayal of the first ship carries over into Book 6 and the narrator's aetiology of Thessaly. Repetition of the word *primus* draws attention to mankind's warlike inventions associated with the place: the first war-horse, *BC* 6.396; the first bridle and bit, *BC* 6.398; the first ship taking land dwellers into an unnatural element *BC* 6.400; and the first ruler to make metal into money *BC* 6.402. Bizarre and impossible wounds and death on the sea found in the poem confirm the poet's view that civil war is somehow abnormal. We can see this idea of the strange and miraculous nature of activity at sea again, in the Vulteius episode, even though the sea plays little active part and the 'ship' is only a raft.

Caesar's troops, besieged and starving on the island of Curicta off the coast of Illyria under the leadership of Gaius Antonius, devise a way to join Basilus and Caesar's fleet on the opposite shore by means of *noua furta*, *BC* 4.416, 'new tricks'. Rather than build a ship 'according to custom' (*de more*, *BC* 4.417), they build a raft to be rowed from the inside:<sup>86</sup>

nec gerit expositum telis in fronte patenti  
remigium, sed, quod trabibus circumdedit aequor,  
hoc ferit et taciti praebet miracula cursus  
quod nec uela ferat nec apertas uerberet undas. *BC* 4.423-26

Nor does she bear her oarage exposed to weapons in an open front, but, because the water is enclosed with planks, she strikes this and presents a miracle of silent movement because she must bear no sail nor beat the waves openly.

---

<sup>84</sup> Ovid also mentions *prima ... carina*, *Met.* 6.721, 'the first ship', in relation to the journey of the Minyans, *Met.* 7.1-6, and names the Argo at *Met.* 15.337. See also Seneca's *Medea*, 329-79, where the chorus tells the story of the first ship and its legacy. Virgil does not mention the Argo but his digression in Book 9 of the *Aeneid*, the magical story about the origin and transformation into nymphs of Aeneas' ships, brings it to mind. *Aen.* 9.77-122.

<sup>85</sup> O'Hara, 2007, 6, writes: 'It may well be that ... writers saw poems with multiple voices and inconsistent attitudes and even variant versions in one text as the best way to represent the complexity of the world as they saw it'.

<sup>86</sup> This description is as detailed as that given previously for Caesar's siege-works and war engines used in the land battle at Massilia, *BC* 3.455-98.

Prominence is placed on the practicalities of building this strange ship and on its novel means of propulsion. The word *remigium*, BC 4.424 ‘oarage’, is another example of the poet’s use of the singular for plural (like *miles* and *iuuentus*) but here it also depersonalises by referring to human rowers in the abstract. Vulteius’ soldiers launch the raft with the falling tide, detailed with respect to wave and shore, BC 4.427-31, and the time of day, BC 4.446-47, in a futile attempt to escape. Lucan’s poem sets up this episode as a spectacle like a gladiatorial *naumachia*. The sea is merely a stage on which this innovative ship is set. Vulteius’ raft is caught and encircled by the watching enemy.

In this sea-battle, the Pompeian general Octavius is an opponent equal in guile to Caesar’s Antonius, and again we see Lucan’s poem stressing the ‘equality’ of opponents in a civil war. Pompey’s general is cast, by use of a simile, in the role of cunning hunter holding back his dogs so his quarry can enter the snare.<sup>87</sup> While this image shifts attention away from the sea, it also points us toward the theatrical aspect of this battle.<sup>88</sup> The names of the dogs (Molossian, Cretan and Spartan) in Lucan’s simile evoke Ovid’s epic, which lists Actaeon’s dogs, among them a Cretan and a Spartan, *Met.* 3.208, but the simile suggests more particularly Seneca’s *Phaedra*, which includes many of the same terms in the instructions for hunting given by Hippolytus to his followers.<sup>89</sup> The simile ends with the words: *nec mora*, BC 4.445, ‘no delay’, but the long simile and the extended description of raft building have already delayed battle action, which is postponed yet again by the description of Pompeian *fraudes*, BC 4.448, ‘tricks’, deployed in another section of the sea.

---

<sup>87</sup> Significance of the simile is signalled by its length (8 lines) and the delay of subject, *uenator*, BC 4.440. The simile calls to mind epic, especially Virgil, *Aen.* 12.749-51 and Ovid’s *Met.* 3.208.

<sup>88</sup> Saylor, 1990, 291-28, writes on the theatrical nature of the Vulteius episode, argues that the emphasis on contrast between light / dark; exposure / concealment; *nox* / *lucem*, BC 4.473, ‘night / day’, is reminiscent of theatre and lights up / down and on / off stage. See Eldred, 2002, 59-67, who sees this episode as a mini civil war, not suicide, a spectacle for absent Caesar but points out problems with the concept of honour and loyalty to the state when Caesar is the state.

<sup>89</sup> The same terms are found in both epic and tragedy: ‘Molossian’ (*Molossus*), BC 4.440, *Phaed.* 32-3; ‘dog’ (*canis*), BC 4.442, *Phaed.* 31; ‘leash’ (*lorum*), BC 4.444, *Phaed.* 33; ‘Cretan’ (*Creta*), BC 4.441, *Phaed.* 34; ‘Spartan’ (*Spartanus*), BC 4.441, *Phaed.* 36; ‘with pressed snout’ (*presso rostro*), BC 4.442, *Phaed.* 40-1; ‘barking’ (*latro*), BC 4.443, *Phaed.* 38; ‘feathers’ (*pinnae*), BC 4.438, *Phaed.* 46-7. See also Seneca’s *Hippolytus*, 31-54.

Presented in a hyper-literary fashion, the location for this skirmish is made as dismal as possible by the poet:

huc fractas Aquilone rates summersaque pontus  
 corpora saepe tulit caecisque abscondit in antris;  
 restituit raptus tectum mare, cumque cauernae  
 euomuere fretum contorti uerticis undae  
 Tauromenitanam uincunt feruore Charybdim. BC 4.457-61

To here the sea often bore ships broken by Aquilo and drowned bodies and hides them in blind caves; the hidden sea returns the plunder and when the caverns vomited out the water, the twisted whirlpool's waves surpass Tauromenian Charybdis in fervour.

Completed with a four-word hexameter, this passage reminds the audience of all the natural and legendary dangers associated with the sea, and presents the oceanic setting for this battle as forbidding and grimly perilous.<sup>90</sup> The Vulteius episode shows the poet pushing past the boundaries of the epic genre and into tragedy, to present the confusion felt by participants over roles and conduct appropriate for war, when that war is a civil war.

Although the long speech by Vulteius represents the encounter between Caesar's troops and those of Pompey as a typical confrontation, it is actually the direct opposite of a conventional epic battle in that the men on the raft do not wait for the 'enemy' but kill each other. It can be seen as a condensed civil war: *totumque in partibus unis / bellorum fecere nefas*, BC 4.548-49, 'and the whole crime of war was made on one side (party or faction)'. Emphasis on 'kindred blood' (*cognato ... sanguine*, BC 4.554) in this section of Lucan's poem looks back to the very beginning of the epic, the 'kindred battle-lines' (*cognatasque acies*, BC 1.4) of civil war, while its similes illustrate the innate urge for men to kill each other; those sprung from the seeds of Cadmus; those earthborn from the serpent's teeth sown by Medea.<sup>91</sup> Mythology is usually evoked to generalise an event and to allow an approach to taboo subjects, so in this way Lucan's poem shows that the unspeakable crime of killing comrades or close family members is acceptable as part of a literary heritage. References to the Theban cycle and the stories of the

<sup>90</sup> Ovid is the master of the four-word hexameter. *Met.* 1.14, 134, 140, 475, 690.

<sup>91</sup> The earthborn soldiers are the first kindred souls that Medea set against each other. This *nefas*, BC 4.556, 'crime', in the same position as a few lines earlier, BC 4.549, links the slaughter of Vulteius' men with civil war of mythology rather than suicide. We see the endlessness of civil strife as we remember that Medea goes on to incite more kindred deaths: Pelius is killed by his daughters and Medea eventually kills her own children.



Argonauts in the poem show how the Vulteius episode is to be read.<sup>92</sup> It shows that from the poet's perspective civil war is part of the poetic tradition and can be a suitable subject for epic.<sup>93</sup> Blood in the sea, a conventional epic image, is intensified in Lucan's poem as he concludes the Vulteius episode:

... iam latis uiscera lapsa  
semianimes traxere foris multumque cruorem  
infudere mari. BC 4.566-68

Now, half-dead, they drag their slipping guts to the wide gangways and poured  
much gore into the sea.

At the end of this episode, the raft and the sea regain prominence and the soldiers are reduced to *uiscera*, 'guts', and *cruorem*, 'gore'. The rafts are now easy to see, 'with a bloody heap' (*strage cruenta*, BC 4.570) of bodies gathered on them. The term *strage* picks up the image used of the insignificant men on a sinking ship at Massilia and connects the two battles: here the raft takes all the glory, there the ship was personified, but in both instances it is the naval trappings of death in battle which are accentuated.

Ships and the sea make Lucan's battle narrative different from earlier epic and at the same time we can find similarity in his emphasis on warriors, wounds and weapons familiar from land battles re-presented on ships at sea. I have shown that the sea-battle at Massilia is the major 'epic' battle in Lucan's poem because of its allusions to epic land battles, its length, and its stress on traditional Greek / Roman opposition. But Lucan's poem also presents individual ships and parts thereof as well as sailors or rowers transformed into soldiers and victims as they come together in naval warfare and this focus is new for epic. Although Lucan's depiction of a sea-battle evokes Virgil's *Aeneid* and his ship race in Book 5 as well as the reinforcements for Aeneas arriving by ship in Book 10, it causes us to think first of the depiction of a naval battle pictured on the shield of Aeneas, although the focal point of the battle of Actium is the triumph of Caesar, rather

---

<sup>92</sup> Allusion to earlier epics and the four main story groups or cycles, the Trojan and Theban cycles, the stories of the Argonauts and the tales of Hercules, positions Lucan's poem within the epic genre. Although the civil war in Rome is an historical event, Lucan portrays this series of battles as one defining moment, like the fall of Troy in the epic Trojan cycle. His poem, therefore, can be read as a part of a new epic cycle, a Roman cycle started by Virgil's epic *Aeneid* fusing history and mythology for the foundation of Rome.

<sup>93</sup> Allusion to mythology always evokes Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. See *Met.* 3.105ff., 7.120ff., 7.141 for mythological civil wars and his treatment of the Theban cycle.

than the sea and ships. Lucan's Massilia episode has no such ideological optimism, and presents an 'epic' battle that is destructive to ships, to individual warriors, and to Roman society.

I have argued that Lucan's naval battle not only introduces new and remarkable descriptions of wounds, weapons and deaths because the battle at Massilia is staged at sea, but also that the topoi of land battles are refreshed in this new setting. While on one hand the prominence of shocking and hideous deaths of individual named warriors follows epic conventions, Lucan's poem also depersonalises the individual through its concentration on body parts rather than the whole. The poet conforms to epic conventions through allusion to the land battles of Homer's *Iliad* and Virgil's *Aeneid* to show his poem's connection with the genre and its epic authority, but rejuvenates these conventions with innovative depictions of naval warfare. Lucan's poem exhibits not only literary awareness but also political concern, as one outcome of Caesar's victory at Massilia, Lucan's most 'epic' civil war battle, was the death of the Roman republic and the establishment of tyrannical rule reaching all the way to the poet's own Rome.

## Chapter 5:

### Taking Sides: *BC* 4.581-824

facinus quos inquinat aequat.

*BC* 5.290

Crime (civil war) makes equal those whom it defiles.

In this passage, the internal narrator, one of Caesar's mutinous troops, points out that in a foreign war there is a difference between the soldier and his general as they fight a worthy enemy, but that in a civil war against fellow Romans, the general is as debased in crime as the soldier.<sup>1</sup> The complaining soldier says: *Rheni mihi Caesar in undis / dux erat, hic socius*, *BC* 5.289-90, 'In the waters of the Rhine Caesar was leader to me, here an associate,' and voices the moral dilemma of civil war. Caesar's soldier speaks of the difficulty of knowing right from wrong in civil war. In a war against a foreign enemy mutiny would be a crime, with plunder and spoils forfeited, but the soldier is not so sure when it is a civil war, especially as he and the rest of the troops have been denied the spoliation of Rome, *BC* 5.270-71. From the very beginning of Lucan's epic, civil war is depicted in a negative manner because it occurs among members of one society. In the first line the subject of the epic is announced: *bella ... plus quam ciuilia*, *BC* 1.1,<sup>2</sup> and this phrase could suggest that throughout the poem readers are treated to many and varied episodes of conflict, to more than one battle. Each episode seems to stress not just the event itself and its place in the history and geography of the Roman world, but also the nature of conflict as a philosophical and moral problem for both the characters participating and the reader or audience. The Hercules / Antaeus episode towards the end of Lucan's Book 4, although not a battle in Rome's civil war, can be read as an example of a *mise en abyme*, a reflection of the concerns of the whole poem which makes clear the narrator's view that participation in war, especially civil war, makes both parties equal in crime.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Ahl, 1976, 203, who writes: 'His [Caesar's] soldiers feel that while Caesar was their legal commander in Gaul, he is their equal in Italy, since they are all present illegally'.

<sup>2</sup> This enigmatic phrase is open to many interpretations, as I indicate earlier in this thesis. See especially Henderson, 1998, 172-192.

<sup>3</sup> In literary studies, *mise en abyme* denotes a story within a story replicating the main narrative in miniature. In my chapter 3, I have shown that the civil war under Marius and Sulla, inserted into Book 2, can be read in a similar way.

Because the Hercules / Antaeus episode is based on myth rather than an historical event, and seems to be a digression within Lucan's poem about Rome's civil war, it has attracted the attention of scholars, who have endeavoured to explain why the poet adds such a digression to this epic.<sup>4</sup> Martindale, 1981, suggests that the passage is not padding or paradigm: 'What concerns Lucan more is the paradoxical and bizarre nature of the contest, a concern reflected in the style'.<sup>5</sup> Many more scholars have noted the allusion to Virgil's Hercules / Cacus episode in Book 8 of the *Aeneid*. Hardie, 1993, writes: 'in Lucan the Hercules and Antaeus episode in book 4 has functions analogous to those of Virgil's Hercules and Cacus, and Caesar and Cato represent active and contemplative versions of the Herculean hero'.<sup>6</sup> Ahl, 1972, also sees the Hercules / Antaeus episode in Lucan's poem as a 'bizarre parallel to Aeneas' arrival at the site of Rome in *Aeneid* 8.81-369'.<sup>7</sup> This thesis adds to such scholarship as its focus is on Lucan's approach to Virgilian norms. It agrees with Sklenář, 2003, who looks at the moral dimension to civil war where a perversion of the soldierly ideal is found in the comparison between soldiers and gladiators, and discusses Curio's arrival in Africa and his unstable troops in comparison with *Aen* 1.98-207.<sup>8</sup> But I draw out the connections between this episode and the rest of the poem, more so than Bramble, 1982, who sees the episode in contrast to Curio's battle, in which 'the negation antithesis is prominent'.<sup>9</sup>

Saylor, 1982, in his article specifically on the Hercules / Antaeus episode, writes that Lucan 'intended an equation between the mythical struggle of Hercules and Antaeus and the combat of Curio and Juba'. However, he goes on to write: 'the true form of the equation is that *both* Juba and Curio assume the role of Antaeus, but the former in a good, advantageous way and the latter in a negative, self-

---

<sup>4</sup> Haskins, 1887, is the only commentary on Book 4 of Lucan's *Bellum Civile*.

<sup>5</sup> Martindale, 1981, 72. He writes further on the style of Lucan's Hercules / Antaeus episode in the poem: 'the style emphasizes the abnormality of the contest rather than the *uirtus* of Hercules', 73. He argues: 'the digression is not irrelevant: it provides a tone for the whole passage', 74.

<sup>6</sup> Hardie, 1993, 67.

<sup>7</sup> Ahl, 1976, 91. The whole African episode of Lucan's epic is dealt with in Chapter 3, *Sangre y Arena*, 82-115, and Ahl finds some correlation between it and Virgil's Hercules / Cacus episode.

<sup>8</sup> Sklenář, 2003, 21-42.

<sup>9</sup> Bramble, 1982, 548, writes: 'The struggle of Hercules and Antaeus - of good against evil - is developed along orthodox lines. For Curio, on the other hand, Lucan invents a battle which breaks the literary rules ...'

destructive way'.<sup>10</sup> My focus differs from that of Saylor, as I believe that Lucan's poem presents no such clear equation. Further to this scholarship, I not only draw out further implications of the poem's reflection of episodes in earlier epic, of Roman spectacle, or of parallels between individuals, but, in addition, I contend that the Hercules / Antaeus episode in the narrative draws our attention to the internecine nature of conflict in civil war. I argue that the story shows how in any battle, and especially in civil war, the act of fighting makes both sides the same and the main protagonists almost indistinguishable.

The importance of the episode is curiously understated at the beginning of the section where the change of location (the third complete change of place and people in this book) occurs incongruously in the middle of a line. Book 4 begins: *at procul*, BC 4.1, 'but a long way off', in order to shift the reader's attention from the long and bloody sea battle at Massilia which ends Book 3 with victory to 'Caesar's arms' (*Caesaris ... armis*, BC 3.762), and continuity between books is maintained with the name, Caesar, and the subject, war, prominent in the first line. It is Caesar, BC 4.1, who 'drives war' (*Martem agit*, BC 4.2), in Spain, Ilerda, BC 4.13. Depiction of the battle at Ilerda takes up the first 400 lines of the book. When the next change of place occurs, the reader is swept across the sea to Illyria. The Vulteius episode, BC 4.402-581, is introduced in a regular fashion, as lines BC 4.402-03 mark a standard transition with reference to the *belli ... fortuna*, BC 4.402, 'fortune of war'.<sup>11</sup>

The third shift, and the one I am concerned with, is to the third corner of the world, Libya. The poet encourages the reader to make the connections in this enjambed short sentence: *non segnior illo / Marte fuit, qui tum Libycis exarsit aruis*. BC 4.581-2, 'No slower than that Mars it was, which then blazed up in Libyan fields', which even starts in mid line. There is a certain ambiguity in the first part of sentence as the line ends with the adjective *illo*, 'that'. We do not know immediately that it describes the 'war' (*Marte*) just fought in Illyria. The

---

<sup>10</sup> Saylor, 1982, 169, 170.

<sup>11</sup> In the second battle of Book 4, staged off the coast of Illyricum, the opponents are also depicted as equal in guile. When Caesar's troops under Antonius see Basilus, admiral of Caesar's fleet on the opposite shore, they devise a way to join the fleet by means of a *noua furta*, BC 4.416, 'new trick'. Octavius, the opposing Pompeian general, holds back to lure the rafts of Antonius further out to sea and also devises *fraudes*, BC 4.448, 'deceits' in the sea.

placement of the term *illo* suggests that it should agree with something we have just read, death or victims (not by gender of course, but by context), and it causes a hesitant start as we disengage the connection. Then the following pronoun, *qui*, which in this instance is the new war, also relates to *Marte*, and the temporal shift is indicated with *tum*, ‘then’, while the physical or geographical move is shown by the name, Libya. Opening with a negative emphasises not only the speed of this breakout, but also the element of madness or unpredictability in war. We can see that Lucan alludes to Virgil here as the same words are used in a similar position at the end of a line, to describe the actions of Amata as she runs like a spinning of a top, mad and out of control, *non cursu segnior illo*, *Aen.* 7.383, ‘no slower than this running’, in Virgil’s *Aeneid*. The mid-line position of the beginning of an African battle may underline the erratic nature of war, breaking out not only all over the world but also in unusual positions in Lucan’s poetry. Relocation of each sphere of conflict also involves a change of protagonists. While the first episode of the book involved one of the main characters, Caesar at Ilerda, *BC* 4.1-401,<sup>12</sup> the following two episodes involve Caesar’s generals, minor characters who are acting on his behalf: Vulteius, *BC* 4.465, in a battle off Illyria, *BC* 4.402-581; and then Curio, who is given the epithet *audax*, *BC* 4.583-84, ‘bold’, in this African episode, *BC* 4.581-824.<sup>13</sup>

Curio is mentioned once at the beginning of this section, *BC* 4.584, and then disappears from the text for the next seventy-seven lines, while the location, Africa, assumes greater importance than a Roman general. The site is historically significant as indicated by the words *stationis ... notae*, *BC* 4.586, ‘famous anchorage’, and the use of place names made famous from historical accounts of the Punic wars. Although Carthage is the site of a great Roman victory, the poet belittles both site and victory when he uses the word *semirutas*, *BC* 4.585, ‘half-ruined’ as the adjective describing *magnae Carthagini arces*, *BC* 4.585, ‘the

---

<sup>12</sup> See Henderson, 1998, 192, who suggests that Lucan’s Book 4 shows the whole world at war and notes that the physical elements of the world, the rivers and plains, are part of that conflict. On the battle at Ilerda he writes: ‘In the repetitions *gurgis / gurgite, campos / camposque* read the terrain of civil war, its “Emathian” *campos*, the multiplier-effect of chaos in cataclysm. Read *plus quam*, as elements (are) saturate(d), they divide / destroy, extend and compact, their domain,’ 190. He sums up Lucan’s Book 4: ‘Half a book awash with *non multa caede* (v. 2)’.

<sup>13</sup> Curio is described earlier in the work as *audax Curio*, *BC* 1.269, and his speech stirs Caesar to war, *BC* 1.268-95.

citadels of great Carthage'.<sup>14</sup> The word *semirutas* is uncommon in poetry.<sup>15</sup> Lucan, however, uses it at the very beginning of his epic when he describes the state of the towns throughout Italy, *semirutis ... tectis*, *BC* 1.24, 'with the houses half ruined'. The poet seems to connect Carthage and the ruinous legacy of the famous Punic wars with the destruction wrought by Rome's civil war throughout the landscape of Italy.

Geographical features point to the change of scene and the location is described by means of the physical landscape: *Libycis ... aruis*, *BC* 4.582, 'Libyan fields'; the *siccaae ... harenae*, *BC* 4.588, 'dry sands'; and *tumulos exesasque undique rupes*, *BC* 4.589, 'mounds and cliffs hollowed out on every side'. To these physical features the poet then adds a cultural quality to the location derived from the name given to it, 'the kingdom of Antaeus' (*Antaei ... regna*, *BC* 4.590).<sup>16</sup> Aetiology of the place-name follows in a digression which diverts the attention away from the expected continuation of Rome's civil war in Africa to a description of a wrestling contest on the sands of Libya between Hercules and Antaeus.<sup>17</sup>

The digression can be read either as another example of how Lucan delays battle narrative or as an epic trope, or both, as I show below. The episode is similar to an earlier instance of a delaying digression: in Book 2, the action of Pompey's flight is arrested by a brief aetiology of Brundisium, *BC* 2.610-27. In both, a character

---

<sup>14</sup> See Bexley, 2009, 459-71, on centres and peripheries. See also Spencer, 2005, 49, for an interesting appraisal of the theme of ruins in Lucan's *Civil War*. She writes: 'But Lucan's vision uses *ruinae* to map the Empire in a new way. His literary cartography triangulates Rome, Troy and Alexandria, redefining and obliterating Rome in the memories evoked by the other'.

<sup>15</sup> The word is more often used in prose works. Livy frequently uses the adjective to describe the city (Rome), *Liv.* 26.32.4, as well as other places 'half-ruined', *Liv.* 5.49.4; 10.4.7; 28.44.9; 31.24.3, 26.8; 32.17.10 and 36.24.6. See also Tacitus, *Annales* 1.61.9 and 4.25.2.

<sup>16</sup> See also Strabo, 17.3.8. Lucan has referred to Antaeus earlier, *BC* 2.162-65, where the poet relies on the reader's knowledge of the place where men were fed to horses and of the skulls hanging on the doors of Antaeus. For skulls on Cacus' doorposts, see Virgil's *Aeneid* 8.195-6. Galinsky, 1966, 35, sees this image as a link between Cacus and Turnus and writes: 'The heads dripping with blood nailed to the entrance of Cacus' cave (195) anticipate the ones of Turnus' enemies which he attaches to his chariot in the twelfth book (511-12)'.

<sup>17</sup> An aetiological explanation for the origin of places and things can be found in Homer's description of the sceptre of Agamemnon, *Il.* 2.100-05, and other aetiological digressions in epic could include: the place of war, *Il.* 2.811-15; and the city of the Phaiakians, *Od.* 6.3-10. Such aetiology is even more frequent in Apollonius of Rhodes, where most of the places visited by Jason and his crew are explained in this way, for example, Lemnos, *Arg.* 1.609-39; and the land of the Amazons, *Arg.* 2.966-1010; an island in the Ionian gulf, *Arg.* 4.982-91. In Latin epic we see aetiology of place in Virgil's Hercules / Cacus episode.

has just arrived in a new location, so the pause serves to stress the change of scene with a break before the next phase of action. In Brundisium, Pompey stops to summon more troops before being forced to flee, to leave the land of Italy altogether as *exul*, *BC* 2.730, ‘an exile’. Curio, Caesar’s general, has just arrived to carry on Caesar’s war on the foreign soil of Libya. Both these digressions interrupt the narrative action to indicate how the geography of a place can influence the course of war and the fortune of characters. The effect of the poem’s digressions is to reinforce the broad physical extent of Rome’s civil war.

That the episode suggests epic topoi is signalled by reference to the *gigantes*, *BC* 4.593, ‘giants’, *Typhon*, *BC* 4.595, and *Tityos*, *BC* 4.596. The story of the mighty clash, ‘gigantomachy’, between gods and giants serves as an example for epic battle narrative (Hesiod’s *Theogony* treats it at some length, while there are shorter versions in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*), and is referred to by both Propertius (2.1.19-20, and 39) and Ovid (*Am.* 2.1.11-20) as a typical epic subject, a topic not to be treated in elegy.<sup>18</sup> Antaeus is depicted as different from his brother giants because he was not born ‘in the Phlegraeian fields’ (*Phlegraeis ... aruis*, *BC* 4.597) where the gods fought the giants. Although Antaeus eats lions for dinner, *BC* 4.602, causes the death (*periere*, *BC* 4.605, *pereunt*, *BC* 4.606) of foreigners and the ‘locals’ (*coloni*, *BC* 4.605), and has super-human power derived from his mother, the Earth, *BC* 4.604-05, 607-09, he is not described by the poet as a giant or a monster.<sup>19</sup> His opponent, Hercules, *BC* 4.611, is the main connection to epic: he is the traditional hero and his labours are conventional epic adventures.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Propertius writes that he follows the lead of Callimachus, refusing to write on epic themes, and as a lover is forced to write love elegy, 2.1.39-46, while Ovid, in a complex reference to the difference between epic and elegy, remembers that he once dared to write epic about celestial wars and earth’s vengeance, *Am* 2.1.11-20.

<sup>19</sup> See Frazer, 1976, 223, on Apollodorus, 2.5.2 and n.2, who lists Pindar, *Isthm.* iv.52 (87); Diodorus Siculus, iv.17.4, among others and writes: ‘according to Pindar the truculent giant used to roof the temple of his sire Poseidon with the skulls of his victims. The fable of his regaining strength through contact with his mother Earth is dwelt on by Lucan with his usual tedious prolixity’. More recently see Berman 2003, 71, (translator of Calame 1996), on the foundation legend of Cyrene. See also Fantham, 1992, 98, whose commentary on Book 2 points out a connection between the Roman leader Marius, involved in an earlier civil war, *BC* 2.67-133, and Antaeus. She writes of Marius that: ‘*Libycae irae* [*BC* 2.93] ... suggests a parallel between Marius and the legendary Antaeus, who regained fighting strength from contact with Libyan ground’. See Nicholson, 2001, 31-60, on poetry and wrestling.

<sup>20</sup> Galinsky, 1972, 160, writes: ‘in his invocation to Nero in his *Pharsalia*, Lucan identifies the emperor with Herakles by imitating the Senecan account of Herakles’ apotheosis,’ and goes on to relegate the Hercules / Antaeus episode to a footnote, ‘a Herakles episode was almost mandatory in Roman epic’.



Hercules can be found in Virgil's epic at *Aen.* 8.184-305 and in the epic poetry of Ovid, who tells a series of stories about Hercules, including a wrestling match between Hercules and the river god Achelous, *Met.* 9.4-88, as well as the story of Nessus, Deianira, and Hercules' death, *Met.* 9.101-272. Hercules, as a character in epic, connects the works of Virgil, Ovid and Lucan. A close look at similarities and differences, first between Virgil and Lucan, then between Ovid and Lucan, will show how each epic poet employs the tradition to change the emphasis and focus of their 'Hercules story' to meet the needs of each individual poem. Lucan's Hercules / Antaeus episode most noticeably reminds us of Virgil's aetiological story of Hercules and Cacus told by Evander to Aeneas, *Aen.* 8.184-305, but these two episodes have more than the character Hercules in common.<sup>21</sup> By alluding so strongly to Virgil's Hercules episode, Lucan's Hercules / Antaeus story reflects the epic role of narration as well as a development of the epic genre.

Both stories are told to newcomers: in Virgil, the story is told to Aeneas when he arrives in Italy as an explanation for religious rites and in Lucan, the place-name is explained to Curio's men when they arrive in Africa and both stories precede an important battle. While Aeneas is a Trojan hero, fleeing the destruction of Troy, Curio is seeking to further Caesar's claims to power in Africa. Aeneas is at the end of his travels and about to claim a homeland, yet he is ignorant of the major battle to come. Curio, in contrast, anticipates a major battle but is also ignorant of the future like Aeneas: Curio does not know that he has ended his journey or that Africa will be the place of his death. In both stories landscape is an important part of the portrayal, not only of each opponent of Hercules, but also of the story teller and his audience, and the physical location sets the scene for the conflict to follow.

In Virgil's *Aeneid*, Evander begins his story with the site, 'the cave' (*spelunca*, *Aen.* 8.193), 'which the ominous form of half-human Cacus held' (*semihominis Caci facies quam dira tenebat*, *Aen.* 8.194). Antaeus also lives in a cave: *haec illi spelunca domus*, *BC* 4.601, 'this cave was home for him'. The terms 'ominous

---

<sup>21</sup> See the prose account in Livy 1.7.3-14, where the emphasis is on the trick of dragging the cattle backwards while the fight between Hercules and Cacus is only two short sentences, Liv. 1.7.7.

form' and 'half-human' are not flattering to Virgil's Cacus, who is styled explicitly as a 'monster' by Evander in terms reminiscent of an epic *aristeia* regarding the monster's lineage: *huic monstro Vulcanus erat pater*, *Aen.* 8.198, 'Vulcan was the father to this monster'.<sup>22</sup> The negative force of the term 'monster' is undercut somewhat by Evander describing Cacus through his kinship with the god Vulcan. The relationship could cast a more positive light on the term 'half human'. Due to his parentage, the half of Cacus that is not human can be seen as godlike rather than monstrous. If half-human half-divine, however, the attributes Cacus inherits from the god Vulcan, 'the black fires of him' (*illius atros / ... ignis*, *Aen.* 8.198-99), are dubious gifts.<sup>23</sup> The reader must strain to see Cacus in anything but a negative light, however, because of the terms used to describe him: his 'ominous form' (*dira facies*, *Aen.* 8.194), his 'great size' (*magna moles*, *Aen.* 8.199), a 'half-beast' (*semifer*, *Aen.* 8.266).

Lucan, on the other hand, encourages his reader to jump to the conclusion that Antaeus is a monster because he is shown pitted against Hercules, whose traditional task is to rid the world 'of monsters' (*monstris*, *BC* 4.610). It is 'rumour' (*fama*, *BC* 4.610), that depicts Antaeus as 'bloodstained evil' (*cruenti / ... mali*, *BC* 4.609-610). But the rumour shown here is unreliable, because it is spread among the people or 'made common' (*uulgata*, *BC* 4.609).<sup>24</sup> Lucan's Hercules story differs from that of Virgil in the importance of characters external to the story. Curio is a minor character, unlike Aeneas who is the hero of Virgil's epic, and Lucan's story teller has no real authority compared with the status of Virgil's King Evander.<sup>25</sup>

The story in Lucan's poem is attested by *non uana uetustas*, *BC* 4.590, 'not untrustworthy antiquity'.<sup>26</sup> The litotes *non uana*, serves to destabilise the reader's

<sup>22</sup> See Lyne, 1987, 27-35, on the Hercules / Cacus episode. See also Gransden, 1976, 106-9.

<sup>23</sup> Black fires are most often associated with the Furies, but also hint at funeral fires, see *Aen.* 4.384; 11.186; *BC* 3.98-100, or describe funeral torches, *BC* 2.299.

<sup>24</sup> Lucan's use of *fama* reflects both rumour and the goddess Rumour. See *uana Fama*, *BC* 1.469, 484-5. Rumour itself is personified as a monster, *Aen.* 4.181, in Virgil's famous passage, *Aen.* 4.173-188. Ovid has Rumour telling a tale about Hercules, *Met.* 9.134-140, and also describes the dwelling of untrustworthy Rumour, *Met.* 12.43-63.

<sup>25</sup> Ahl, 1972, 1002, has made this point.

<sup>26</sup> Lucan later uses the more common *uana uetustas*, *BC* 10.239 'untrustworthy antiquity' to show his opinion of the suggested sources of the Nile but this is followed by an appeal to *ueneranda uetustas*, *BC* 10.323, 'honourable tradition'. Virgil has used the term in a positive way, *Aen.* 10.792. Ovid has used often *uetustas*, 'antiquity' as authority for his stories but his use is

expectations. It is rare for Lucan's poem to be positive about antiquity, and even here it expresses the sentiment in the negative. The poem is usually ambivalent about the trustworthiness of antiquity: *siqua fidem meruit superos mirata uetustas*, *BC* 3.406: 'if antiquity, marvelling at the gods, deserves belief'; and again at the end of the Hercules / Antaeus episode, when hyperbole calls the reliability of ancient times into question: *hinc, aeui ueteris custos, famosa uetustas / miratrixque sui, signauit nomine terras*, *BC* 4.654-5, 'from here, celebrated antiquity, guardian of a former age, admirer of herself, signed the earth with [his] name'. We can see a metapoetic awareness in Lucan's poem of its place within the epic tradition in this hyperbolic comment about antiquity. In Virgil's epic, Evander defends the reliability of his story and subsequent rituals. He states that the rites are not just 'superstition, empty and in ignorance of the ancient gods' (*uana superstitio ueterumque ignara deorum*, *Aen.* 8.187). Evander says that they do these things not just because of superstition, but because his people were, in fact, saved from 'savage peril' (*saeuis ... periculis*, *Aen.* 8.188).

In contrast with the reputation of Evander, 'the best of the sons of Greece' (*optume Graiugenum*, *Aen.* 8.127), in Lucan's poem the status of the speaker is indeterminate as he remains unidentified except as: *rudis incola*, *BC* 4.592, 'a young local'. While Aeneas, the audience to Evander's story, is the main character in the *Aeneid*, the audience for the *rudis incola* seems to be just some inquisitive bystander, styled as 'one desiring to know' (*cupientem noscere*, *BC* 4.591). By depicting both storyteller and audience as unimportant Lucan undermines the importance of the story. From the narrative it is not actually clear whether the Hercules / Antaeus episode is for Curio's benefit or not, and we are not certain if it is even heard by him, whereas Aeneas is the willing listener to Evander's tale, which is told to him to encourage him to follow the example of Hercules and confront his enemy, Turnus.<sup>27</sup> In both poems, the story is also, necessarily, directed to an external audience, the reader of the poem. Both poets, by telling an episode from the mythical past, introduce a layer of temporal instability where the

---

often ironic: *Met.* 1.400; 14.695; 15.623. Ovid more often uses the term *uetustas*, for 'long time': see *Met.* 15.156, 234. Probably Ovid's most memorable usage: *Met.* 15.872.

<sup>27</sup> Ahl, 1976, 1002, seems to think that Curio is the one who asks for an explanation, but the words used do not make this clear. However, at the end of the episode Curio does react to the story and places his camp on the 'lucky' spot, *BC* 4.663.

‘now’ of the story is pushed further into the past by the reader as the reaction of the internal audience and the reason for the story are evaluated.<sup>28</sup>

We can see the Hercules / Cacus episode in the *Aeneid* as prefiguring the looming battles about to be undertaken by Aeneas, but the role of the wrestling match between Hercules and Antaeus in Lucan’s *Bellum Civile* is less obvious.<sup>29</sup> If the Antaeus episode is to be read as an analogy or a foreshadowing of what is to come, the reader must be able to align Curio with either Hercules or Antaeus. While the name of Curio frames this episode, *BC* 4.584, 661, it is impossible to draw any stable comparison between him and either of the wrestlers. Lucan’s Hercules is introduced in two and a half lines, *BC* 4.609-11, after the longer introduction of Antaeus (sixteen and a half lines, *BC* 4.593-609), and is shown as a civilising force, ‘relieving’ (*leuantem*, *BC* 4.610) the land and sea ‘of monsters’ (*monstris*, *BC* 4.610). The epithet for Hercules, *magnanimus*, *BC* 4.611, ‘great-hearted’, is striking, but in Lucan’s epic it cannot be linked securely with either the republican or Caesarian cause because it is used of Brutus, *BC* 2.234, Pompey, *BC* 9.133, and about one of Cato’s admirers, *BC* 9.807, on one side and of Caesar’s man in Illyria, the ‘great-hearted’ speech of Vulteius, *BC* 4.475, on the other. This is, of course a result of Lucan’s subject, civil war, where both sides are Romans and the close association of Pompey, Brutus and Cato with the republican cause is imposed with difficulty. Curio, Caesar’s general, is described as *audax*, *BC* 4.583, and, although we expect an analogy between the Hercules / Antaeus contest and the fight between Curio and his unnamed opponent, this is not obvious in the lead-up to the story.

Curio’s absence from the episode encourages the reader to draw an uncertain parallel between Hercules and Antaeus and the main protagonists of the epic, Pompey and Caesar. But this too cannot be maintained: Pompey cannot be the

---

<sup>28</sup> Gransden, 1976, 106, when discussing Virgil’s use of the word *nouamus*, *Aen.* 8.189, writes: ‘Whenever Virgil introduces aetiology it is to link present and past, to convey both the antiquity of a tradition (so that the ‘novelty’ of its supposed introduction will strike the Augustan reader with precisely the opposite force) and its continuity’.

<sup>29</sup> See Lyne, 1987, 32, who associates the ‘vomiting flame’ image of the monstrous Cacus with both Aeneas and Augustus. He writes: ‘In fact it imputes to both Aeneas and Augustus some of the monstrous force of Cacus’, and goes on to write: ‘force on the “right” side may not only be as passionate as the enemy’s, but monstrous like an enemy’s; and the linked motifs extend the application of that lesson beyond Aeneas down to Augustus himself’.

equivalent of the hero Hercules, despite the narrator showing Pompey more sympathy and admiration, nor is Caesar like Antaeus, and the opposite relationship is also untenable. The narrator stages the resistance of his readers / audience who keep trying to relate this story to what they know of the characters in Lucan's epic. It is far easier to see an analogy between Hercules and Aeneas in Virgil's *Aeneid*, where both Hercules and Aeneas are styled as heroes who arrive on a foreign shore and their opposites, Cacus and Turnus, are both shown as the local inhabitants who must yield their life and land.

I suggest that Lucan is being deliberately ambiguous, not in order to force the reader to decide between individual protagonists, but to draw attention to the idea of war as equaliser. The episode can also be viewed as a *mise en abyme*, a cipher or symbol for the whole poem. Virgil's story of Hercules and Cacus can be seen as a simple form of a *mise en abyme*, with the story of Hercules a reflection of Aeneas' story: Hercules and Cacus are parallel in some respects with Aeneas and Turnus. Lucan's Hercules / Antaeus episode is more ambiguous and can be read as an inversion of a *mise en abyme*, a negative expression of the main civil war story, an example of a pessimistic reflection of the subject on itself, where the digression concentrates the elements of conflict from the whole poem into a single wrestling match, and trivialises and calls into question both the motivation and the outcome of civil war.

Because civil war is the subject of his epic, Lucan emphasises the equality of Hercules and Antaeus to accentuate the similarity of the two sides in civil war, while many scholars see that Virgil stresses the difference between Hercules and Cacus, to illustrate Aeneas' superiority and civility over the barbarism of Turnus, and their conflict as more traditional involving strangers as enemies.<sup>30</sup> The conflict between Hercules and Antaeus is like the subject of Lucan's poem: it is a civil war in microcosm, with matched sides, momentary successes and with the

---

<sup>30</sup> Ahl, 1976, writes 'Hercules, in his defeat of the sub-human Cacus, had enabled the primitive settlement of Evander grow and live securely; Aeneas, in his wars against Turnus, will prepare the way for a much greater civilization.' 997. Other scholars have seen the contrast reflecting the greater political themes of Virgil's *Aeneid*: Boyle, 1999, 148-61; Galinsky, 1966, 18-51. But see Morgan, 1998, 181-86, for an account of the Hercules / Cacus episode where he stresses that the difference between the combatants is reduced in order to condone the necessary violence of civil war.

end seemingly unresolved. Unlike the unambiguous death and detailed description of the *informe cadaver*, *Aen.* 8.264, ‘shapeless corpse’, of Cacus, in the *Aeneid*, the death of Antaeus is not specifically described in Lucan’s poem, nor is the end of the civil war which continues after the death of Pompey. Conflict in the form of wrestling blurs the boundaries between protagonists and takes the struggle from the field of war into the realm of games or spectacle, such as the Dares / Entellus boxing match in *Aeneid* 5, where there is no really positive outcome; the winner only lives to fight another day.

Hercules and Antaeus are shown as similar, with similar accoutrements like brothers in arms.<sup>31</sup> Their fight starts abruptly with a pronoun instead of a name, *ille Cleonaei proiecit terga leonis*, *BC* 4.612, ‘that one threw down the skin of a Cleonaeon lion’ and the reader has to work out that *ille*, is Hercules. The pronoun reflects the name *Alciden*, *BC* 4.611, in the previous line and the type of lion skin thrown down also points to the hero. We expect a contrast as his opponent steps up but the description is condensed in such a way as to emphasise similarity, and the reader must supply the action and animal hide from the first part of the sentence: *Antaeus Libyci*, *BC* 4.613, ‘Antaeus, [threw down the skin] of a Libyan [lion]’. At this point there is no contrast between protagonists, only between the source of their lion-skin cloaks, and the similarity is reinforced when Antaeus is also referred to by the pronoun *ille*, *BC* 4.615.<sup>32</sup> In Virgil’s story, the protagonists are referred to by their usual names or epithets; Cacus by his name, *Aen.* 8.194, 205, 218, 222, 240, 259, and Hercules as *maximus ultor*, *Aen.* 8.201; *Alcides*, *Aen.* 8.203; *Amphitryoniades*, *Aen.* 8.214; and *Tirynthius*, *Aen.* 8.228; in order to emphasise the difference between the contestants.<sup>33</sup>

In Virgil’s Hercules / Cacus episode, the difference between protagonists is the dominant motif while similarities between them are just an unsettling

---

<sup>31</sup> It is tempting to see Hercules and Antaeus like brothers similar in build, garb and ability as Lucan’s poem brushes over their different origin and status. But Hercules is a hero, not a god, whereas Antaeus is one of the Giants, the son of Poseidon and Earth.

<sup>32</sup> Hercules tends to take on the characteristics of the wild places whose edges he polices. He is often pictured as a brutish hero.

<sup>33</sup> Virgil’s protagonists in the Hercules / Cacus episode have been seen as unlike or opposite and the episode as an example of Gigantomachy: Olympian Hercules against or opposed to a representative of the Titans; see Hardie, 1986.

undercurrent picked up through the images of fire and frenzy.<sup>34</sup> Throughout Lucan's long description of the wrestling match between Hercules and Antaeus, problems arise when their differences are stressed. Lucan's Hercules, vaguely referred to as *hospes*, BC 4.614, 'guest' or 'stranger', shows his Greek heritage when he prepares with 'liquid [oil]' (*liquore*, BC 4.613), in the way of the 'Olympic wrestling schools' (*Olympiacaе ... palaestrae*, BC 4.614). Disparity is set up between the fighters as Antaeus is shown to prepare his body with 'warm sands' (*calidas ... harenas*, BC 4.616). We see Hercules' body slippery with oil in opposition to Antaeus' limbs gripping easily with rough, dry sand. While the primary significance to Antaeus of this sand is the help he can derive from his mother, the Libyan earth which is all sand, for the Roman audience the word still evokes the sand of the arena.

Sand, *harena*, is often used to signify the Roman gladiatorial arena, indeed, the word 'arena' is derived from this. Contradiction is built into Lucan's evocation of the Roman arena. Although there was an increase in the brutality of shows in the theatre and amphitheatre under Nero, the Antaeus / Hercules episode is less bloody than any other fight in Lucan's poem. In contrast, Virgil's vivid Hercules / Cacus episode which finishes with the detailed description of the strangled Cacus, *Aen.* 8.260-65, is much more gruesome. This incongruity aside, we can see that Hercules symbolises the Greeks as civilised and civilising while Antaeus is cast in one of two roles: that of the foreign barbarian and child of the earth, or that of the Roman, more concerned with war or games than refined culture.<sup>35</sup> Such parallels could not have been accepted by a republican Roman, who distrusted the effeminate, though cultured Greeks and held Roman military prowess and citizenship in high esteem. The Roman reader / audience of Neronian Rome might

---

<sup>34</sup> Although they are most often seen as opposite, the polarity between Hercules and Cacus collapses at times as both are alike in *furor*, 'frenzy': Cacus, *Aen.* 8.205, Hercules, *Aen.* 8.219, 228. Cacus is also linked with characters associated with Hercules - Aeneas and Augustus. Cacus, described as *atros / ore uomens ignis*, *Aen.* 8.198-9, 'vomiting black fires from his mouth', foreshadows the fires which Augustus' temples vomit, as well as those which the helmet, *Aen.* 8.620, and the shield-boss of Aeneas vomit, *Aen.* 10.271. See Lyne, 1987, 27-35, and Morgan, 1998, 178-79; Gransden, 1976, 109, sees Hercules, Aeneas and Augustus against Cacus, Turnus and Antony, seeing the latter as 'anti-types'. Morgan, 1998, 155-174, makes the point that if these opposites are seen as 'anti-types' then they are equal at least as to 'type'.

<sup>35</sup> Anchises on the role of the Roman, *Aen.* 6.853. But for an alternative view of Romans, see Horace, *Ep.* 2.1.32-33. Haskins, 1887, 142, notes that Lucan's use of *Olympiacaе*, line 614, brings to mind the Olympic Games started by Hercules and cites Pindar, *Olymp.* III, 6.34, as authority for this.

be more likely to accept the analogy, as Nero admired Greek culture, but it is still troubling to identify Hercules as a Greek hero and Antaeus as Roman, especially when attempting to find a parallel between this episode and the characters in Lucan's *Bellum Civile*.

This unstable Roman / Greek polarity may be an allusion to Virgil's *Aeneid*. In Virgil's epic, the stable Trojan / Greek polarity of Homeric epic is not sustained as the two sides seem to switch in battle. Aeneas' Trojans are besieged in a new Troy by Turnus and the Rutulians who are equivalent to the Greeks, *Aen.* 9.138-39.<sup>36</sup> These Trojans are transformed into victorious Greeks besieging the King of Latium behind the walls of metaphorical Troy *Aen.* 10.25-31.<sup>37</sup> Opposition between Romans and Greeks is found throughout Lucan's poem even though he writes about a Roman civil war. Greeks, in Lucan's epic, are most often found fighting on Pompey's side, which briefly supports a parallel between Hercules and Pompey, while Caesar is often shown as unnaturally swift and ruthless, which would temporarily align him with the super-human monster, Antaeus. But Pompey, when he flees from Italy is also aligned with Antaeus through the loss of strength when separated from his homeland, while Caesar can be seen to parallel Hercules fighting and winning battles all over the world. Knowledge of the outcome of this civil war poses a problem for the reader: Caesar wins and Nero has inherited his 'civilising' ambition, while Pompey has more in common with the loser, Antaeus. Both Caesar and Pompey are suggested by the poem's presentation of Hercules and Antaeus, although not with any certainty, and we can see the conflict itself, between each set of protagonists, as the connecting motif.

In Lucan's *Bellum Civile*, Hercules and Antaeus are *pares*, *BC* 4.620, 'equals'. This gladiatorial term for 'matched' opponents fighting against each other in the Roman arena is used extensively by Lucan throughout the epic beginning in the proem, where Rome's civil war is shown in this light: *pares aquilas et pila*

---

<sup>36</sup> Williams, 1984, 288, in his commentary on *Aen.* 9.138, writes: '[Turnus] regards his loss of Lavinia to a Trojan as similar to the rape of Helen by the Trojan Paris, which caused Greece (Mycenae was its chief city) to sail to Troy in vengeance'.

<sup>37</sup> See Rossi, 2004, 66; and Nethercut, 1968, 88.



*minantia pilis*, *BC* 1.7.<sup>38</sup> But although the opponents in the Roman arena fought as equals, *par*, (the place was level or even, and each fighter had an equal chance of dying horribly), the actual weapons and armour of each fighter were mostly very different. Hercules and Antaeus are equally matched, but the two main protagonists of the civil war, Caesar and Pompey are often contrasted, and there is an insistence on their inequality at the beginning of the poem.<sup>39</sup> As protagonists, they wished to be unequal at the start: *nec quemquam iam ferre potest Caesarue priorem / Pompeiusue parem*, *BC* 1.125-6, ‘now Caesar was not able to bear anyone superior nor Pompey anyone equal’; *nec coiere pares*, 1.129, ‘nor would they meet as equals’. Yet later, when fighting against each other, both Caesar’s men and Pompey’s forces are matched, both sides drive their boats together *paribusque lacertis*, *BC* 3.525, ‘with equal strength of muscles’.<sup>40</sup> While Lucan depicts Caesar and Pompey as opposed and equal, it is instructive to see what one of these contenders made of the conflict. Caesar’s *Bellum Ciuile* is the main extant contemporary record of the events treated in Lucan’s epic, so it will be helpful to turn to it to see if Caesar himself records any degree of equality between the sides in conflict.<sup>41</sup>

Caesar as author emphasises parity between the two sides in war when, in his *Bellum Ciuile*, he gives the view held by the Massilians that the *partes duas* ‘two parties’ of Romans at war are to be treated as equal:

... intellegere se diuisum esse populum <Romanum> in partes duas. neque sui iudicii neque suarum esse uirium discernere, utra pars iustiore habere causam ... quare paribus eorum beneficiis parem se quoque uoluntatem tribuere debere, et neutrum eorum contra alterum iuuare aut urbe ac portibus recipere.      Caes.  
*Ciu* 1.35.3, 5.

<sup>38</sup> See also *BC* 4.636, but compare with *non aequis*, *BC* 4.665, as a description of the opposing sides in the subsequent battle between Curio and Varus. Lucan’s descriptions of battles can be read as spectacles similar to those shown in the Roman arena. See Leigh, 1997, 4; and Eldred, 2002, 59.

<sup>39</sup> Age difference is one contrast. The two leaders are contrasted in a long passage *BC* 1.129-157, where Pompey is compared to an old oak tree, Caesar to a lightning bolt.

<sup>40</sup> When Caesar takes the war to sea at Massilia, the muscle power driving the ships for both Caesar and Pompey is the same and in opposition, *BC* 3.524-28. The ships themselves are depicted as unequal: the Greeks added retired ships to their fleet, *BC* 3.520, and the Roman ships are described in detail with emphasis on variety through the number of oars, *BC* 3.529-37.

<sup>41</sup> Carter, 1991, 18-19, points out: ‘the letters of Cicero ... confirm the general accuracy of Caesar’s version’ and goes on to write: Pollio’s history and other first hand accounts, like that of Livy are lost and can be detected by only by the presence of a certain amount of non-Caesarian material in the biographies of Plutarch and the later histories written by Appian and Dio’.

We understand that the Roman people are divided into two parties. It is not of our judgement or of our power to distinguish which of the two parties has the more just cause ... therefore we ought to be willing to bestow equal benefits on them as their benefits to us are equal, and to support neither of them against each other, nor to receive either within our city or our ports.

However, earlier in his account, Caes. *Ciu* 1.4.4, Caesar writes of Pompey's wish that no one should match his standing, stressing that Pompey turned from the friendship and political equality established during the 'first triumvirate'.<sup>42</sup> Carter, 1991, points out that Caesar's writing is not as straightforward as it seems and suggests that we accept a bias toward Caesar and against Pompey in Caesar's presentation.<sup>43</sup> Nonetheless, we can still see Caesar emphasising the equality of the two sides at those times when he shows himself making an attempt to negotiate peace, such as before the battle of Dyrrachium:

hoc unum esse tempus de pace agendi, dum sibi uterque confideret et pares ambo uiderentur; si uero alteri paulum modo tribuisset fortuna, non esse usurum condicionibus pacis eum, qui superior uideretur, neque fore aequa parte contentum, qui se omnia habiturum confideret. Caes. *Ciu*. 3.10.7.

This was the one time for driving peace, while each has confidence in himself and both seem equal; but if, in truth, fortune had shown but a little measure to one of the two, he who should seem superior would not have adopted terms of peace, and nor would he who was sure that he would have everything, be contented with an equal part.

In this complex proposal to Pompey, passed on by Vibullius, the combination of *pares*, 3.10.7.2, with *aequa parte*, 3.10.7.5, 'equal part', stresses equality. The passage shows, however, just how subjective such equality is in civil war. We can see a correlation between Lucan's passage, *nec quemquam iam ferre potest Caesarue priorem / Pompeiusue parem*, BC 1.125-26, and these words of Caesar. Lucan uses the names of the leaders to clarify the ambiguity of Caesar's words which show that during conflict both sides are equal.

In Lucan's epic, correlation between matched opponents in gladiatorial games and the conflict between the forces of the two rival generals persists throughout the poem. In this, Lucan's poem and his Hercules / Antaeus episode in particular, differs markedly from Virgil's Hercules / Cacus episode owes much to the traditional description of conflict between two heroes in an epic battle and

<sup>42</sup> See Carter, 1991, 158. See also chapter 2, 57 in this thesis.

<sup>43</sup> See Carter, 1991, 186.

contains little allusion to gladiatorial games.<sup>44</sup> Virgil uses the term *par* for matched opponents much later when Evander, lamenting the death of his son Pallas, suggests that the outcome would have been different if Pallas and Turnus had been matched in age and in strength of years, *Aen.* 11.173-75.<sup>45</sup>

Games and contests are common topoi in epic, especially funeral games for a dead hero, but Lucan's reference to the arena through the depiction of a wrestling bout is unusual, although as an Olympic competition and as a training exercise for youth, wrestling is a common form of contest.<sup>46</sup> Games in epic are friendly and are often a way of consolidating loyalty and of rebuilding fighting spirit in a force depleted by death and both winners and losers are rewarded. Virgil devotes Book 5 of his *Aeneid* to a description of competition and games to celebrate the death of Aeneas' father, Anchises, following the example of the funeral games for dead Patroclus in Homer's *Iliad*, 23.257-897. We can see similarities between the wrestling match between Odysseus and Ajax, *Il.* 23.700-33, and Virgil's boxing match between Dares and Entellus, *Aen.* 5.362-484, where reference is made to an earlier boxing match between Hercules and Eryx, *Aen.* 5.425-60. The wrestling bout between Hercules and Antaeus in Lucan's epic takes some colour from the funeral games of Homer and Virgil, as well as from actual Roman games in the gladiatorial arena.<sup>47</sup>

Lucan's emphasis on the physical action of a wrestling match contrasts, for the most part, with Virgil's story about Hercules and Cacus, *Aen.* 8.190-258, where the bulk of the description is taken up with the portrayal of the abode and

---

<sup>44</sup> Ahl, 1976, 86, writes: 'The early *munera* were fought in the Forum Boarium, the legendary site of the fight between Hercules and Cacus. Hence the Hercules-Cacus fight may well have been very closely associated with the idea of a gladiatorial *munus*'. See Barton, 1989, 2, who writes: 'The combat between gladiators was, in its origin, a *munus mortis*, an offering or duty paid to the *manes* or shades of dead Roman chieftains'. See Morgan, 1998, 187-88, who writes: 'But there is one more form of institutionalized violence which I think is of particular relevance to the *Hercules and Cacus* episode, and that is gladiatorial combat ... [and] ... as far as the audiences were concerned these bloodthirsty displays were (like sacrifice) an acceptable, necessary form of killing'.

<sup>45</sup> See Virgil's use of the term *pares*: *Aen.* 5.114-15, 580.

<sup>46</sup> Lovatt, 2005, explores the Roman concept of games, 4-12, and looks at 'Statius' wrestling match ... [and its] ... clear allusion to wrestling matches in Ovid and Lucan and through them back to a tradition which includes Virgil, Apollonius and Homer', 193.

<sup>47</sup> Note also Apollonius' *Argonautica* 2.1-96. Note also that this contest is not part of funeral games but another example of how Hercules is accustomed to use his club or his bare hands to solve a problem.

activities of Cacus, the reasons for Hercules' anger and his efforts to locate Cacus. Hercules is styled an avenger, called in to destroy man-eating Cacus, whose crime against Hercules is to steal some of his cattle. Hercules tracks down the thieving Cacus, exposes the monster's den, and finally kills him in a frenzy of anger. Lucan's Hercules is summoned by rumour of Antaeus to Libya where Antaeus seems to be just another monster he must eliminate, *BC* 4.609-11, and the narrative is a commentary on how they wrestle together, with first one gaining the upper hand then the other, till Hercules finally wins. Virgil's Hercules also kills Cacus in hand-to-hand combat: *in nodum complexus, et angit inhaerens / elisos oculos et siccam sanguine guttur*, *Aen.* 8.260-61, 'embracing him in a knot, and clinging, he squeezes his throat dry of blood, forcing out his eyes'. Right at the end of Virgil's Hercules / Cacus story, we find allusion to wrestling and the gladiatorial games, as Hercules strangles Cacus with his bare hands, and Virgil's reference to the 'knot' may have been taken up by Lucan when he describes the *Herculeosque ... nodos*, *BC* 4.632, 'Herculean knots' which Antaeus breaks during his wrestling bout with Hercules.

A closer literary example of a wrestling match can be found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, where the river god, Achelous, recounts his contest with Hercules for the hand of Deianara.<sup>48</sup> Hercules as protagonist is one connection, and the form of contest, wrestling, is another. Into his epic on transformations, Ovid inserts a fight between Hercules and Achelous, which combines elements of both boxing and wrestling. The specific term for a wrestling grip, *nexus*, is used by both Ovid and Lucan. Ovid has Achelous say: ... *uix solui duros a corpore nexus*, *Met.* 9.58, 'I scarcely loosened his hard grip on my body', whereas Lucan's *rudis incola*, *BC* 4.592, observes: *conseruere manus et multo brachia nexu*, *BC* 4.617, 'they joined hands and arms with many a grip'. In Ovid's epic, Achelous describes his boxing stance, *tenuique a pectore uaras / in statione manus et pugnae membra parauit*, *Met.* 9.33-34, 'and I held my hands away from my breast, apart at the ready, and prepared my limbs for the fight'. He then adds a portrayal of wrestling, *eratque / cum pede pes iunctus, totoque pectore pronus / et digitos digitis et frontem fronte premebam*, *Met.* 9.43-45, 'and foot was joined with foot,

---

<sup>48</sup> It is also a digression of sorts as the greater part of Ovid's *Met.* 9.88-272 is devoted to the labours, death and deification of Hercules.

and, leaning at him with my whole breast, I was pressing fingers to fingers and brow to brow'. Ovid's use of polyptoton in his wrestling passage above, beginning with the typical *pede, pes*, *Met.* 9.43, 'foot to foot', is common in epic and often describes military engagement.<sup>49</sup> It is striking that Ovid has Achelous, a shape-changer, concentrate on the specifics of the human form and use a simile describing bulls joined in battle like this. The irony is that he is defeated no matter what form he takes, be it a legless snake, or a bull, overcome when his horn is wrenched 'from his forehead' (*fronte*, *Met.* 9.86). Lucan has concentrated on wrestling holds rather than this combination of foot, breast, hand and forehead, even though in Neronian Rome boxing and wrestling were combined in the Roman arena in the form of the deadly pankration.<sup>50</sup>

Lucan's use of the term *palaestrae*, *BC* 4.614, 'wrestling schools', prepares us for opponents entwined or joined 'with many a grip' (*multo ... nexu*, *BC* 4.617).<sup>51</sup> Wrestling engages the bodies of the contestants in very specific ways. Body parts of each wrestler are undifferentiated: the 'hands' (*manus*, *BC* 4.617); 'arms' (*bracchia*, *BC* 4.617, *lacertis*, *BC* 4.618); 'necks' (*colla*, *BC* 4.618); 'head' (*caput*, *BC* 4.619); and 'forehead' (*fronte*, *BC* 4.619) belong to both fighters and both of Lucan's wrestlers 'are amazed' (*mirantur*, 4.620) to find themselves 'equal' (*parem*, *BC* 4.620). Hercules, named *Alcides*, *BC* 4.621, joins with his unnamed opponent, 'the man' (*uirum*, *BC* 4.622), and tires him out. Antaeus' exhaustion is shown by *creber anhelitus*, *BC* 4.621, 'frequent panting', and *gelidus fesso de corpore sudor*, *BC* 4.622, 'cold sweat from his tired body'.<sup>52</sup> It is significant that boundaries between bodies are blurred, stressed by Lucan's use of polyptoton in the phrase: *pectore, pectus*, *BC* 4.623, 'breast against breast', as the

<sup>49</sup> So in Virgil: *Aen.* 10.360-61. See Harrison, 1991, 166, who writes: 'such double polyptoton describing a military close encounter has a long ancestry', and cites Homer, *Il.* 13.131; 16.215. See also Ennius: *Ann.* 584 (see Skutsch, 1985, 584, for a useful comparison of passages and later imitations, 724-5).

<sup>50</sup> Pankration was a traditional Greek sport: *παγκράτιον*, 'all-in [contest in boxing and wrestling]', Xenoph. 2.5, Pi. N. 5.52. Philostratus, Major Soph., *Imagines*, 2.6, describes the moves of this 'all-in' contest, as pictured in a work of art. See also his description of Hercules and Antaeus, 2.21. Although this work is considerably later than Lucan's poem, there is a possibility that they drew on similar images and ideas.

<sup>51</sup> See also two of Niobe's sons transfixed with one arrow while at the exercise of wrestling, *Met.* 6.241, *arto ... nexu* *Met.* 6.242, 'with close grips'.

<sup>52</sup> These symptoms of exhaustion can be seen to mirror the dying process which is a major theme throughout Lucan's poem. Ovid has used the same symptoms as Achelous is overcome by Hercules: *sudore fluentia multo / bracchia*, *Met.* 9.57, 'my arms, streaming with much sweat', and *anhelanti*, *Met.* 9.59, 'panting'.

whole passage underlines the lack of differentiation between opponents, here and in civil war.<sup>53</sup> The reader of Lucan is unsure whose *crura*, BC 4.626, ‘legs’, *manu*, BC 4.626, ‘hand’, *medium*, BC 4.627, ‘middle’, *ilibus*, BC 4.627, ‘entrails’, and *inguinaque*, BC 4.628, ‘thighs’, are meant. Ovid also stresses the engagement of individual parts of the body rather than protagonists as a whole when he writes: *et modo ceruicem, modo crura, modo ilia captat*, *Met.* 9.37, ‘and now he caught my neck, now my legs, now my entrails’.<sup>54</sup>

The opponents described by both Ovid and Lucan are often unnamed. The reader of Lucan must supply the subject and assume that the *uictor*, BC 4.626, is Hercules, who ‘binds’ (*alligat*, BC 4.627) the back ‘of the man’ (*uiri*, BC 4.626) and ‘lays out the whole man through his limbs’ (*omnem / explicuit per membra uirum*, BC 4.628-9). The man must be Antaeus.<sup>55</sup> Ovid also keeps his reader guessing as the character relating the story is one of the protagonists, Achelous, referring to himself in the first person, *ego*, *Met.* 9.16, 44, and to his opponent, Hercules, as *ille*, *Met.* 9.14, 17, 35, 82, ‘that one’.

As Antaeus hits the ground he is transformed. Antaeus’ sweat, associated with extreme stress to his body, *rapit arida tellus*, BC 4.329, ‘the dry earth snatches’ and his veins are filled ‘with hot blood’ (*calido ... sanguine*, BC 4.630), ‘his muscles swell and [the earth] hardened all his limbs’ (*intumescere tori, totosque induruit artus*, BC 4.631). This sentence is completed with a chiasmic line, which balances adjectives and nouns, a b, Verb, B A: *Herculeosque nouo laxauit corpore nodos*, BC 4.632, ‘and with a new body he loosens Herculean knots’. There is more than a faint echo of Ovid’s epic transformations to be found in this description of a ‘new body’, which recalls the *noua ... / corpora*, *Met.* 1.1-2,

---

<sup>53</sup> But see Livy’s use of polyptoton: *corpora corporibus ... armaque armis*, 23.27.7; *pes ... pede*, 28.2.6. While Livy owes a debt to epic for his battle descriptions, Lucan seems to have been influenced by prose as well as traditional epic poetry.

<sup>54</sup> Shackleton Bailey, 1981, 333, supports the *modo ilia* reading. Even without matching *ilia*, *Met.* 9.37; *ilibus*, BC 4.627, ‘entrails’, the correspondence between ‘neck’ and ‘legs’ of Ovid and Lucan is sufficient to make the point.

<sup>55</sup> Antaeus is referred to as the ‘man’ again at BC 4.626, 629, and 644. However, the same word is used of Hercules BC 4.639, with the meaning of ‘man’ or ‘hero’. It is uncommon to have such opponents made equal like this. Hercules, although he is a man and eventually made a god, is a hero by reputation and Antaeus is a monster or Giant, and has nothing of the ‘hero’ or ‘man’ about him.

referred to at the beginning of the *Metamorphoses*.<sup>56</sup> We can see that the poet, like Ovid before him, is concerned with describing the moment of change on the body, to expose the political and societal change caused by Rome's civil war.

In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Book 9, change itself is what Hercules must wrestle with when he struggles against Achelous, who has the ability to alter his physical form.<sup>57</sup> Achelous' first change of shape is to that of a snake. Achelous explains how Hercules *risit*, *Met.* 9.66, 'laughed' and why, giving Hercules' explanation to him as reported speech. Hercules boasts of his famous labours, the first of which, performed in his cradle, was 'to overcome snakes' (*angues superare*, *Met.* 9.67), and the greatest of which was to overcome the Hydra, *Met.* 9.68-78. Hercules' story of the conquered Hydra, coupled with his tight grip, impresses Achelous who concedes defeat and changes again. In an odd simile, Lucan shows how Antaeus' new strength amazes Hercules more than the Hydra growing new heads surprised him when he was young. As Hercules compares his present self with his memory of himself when he was *rudis*, *BC* 4.634, 'young', the poet seems to be toying with ideas of comparison, story-telling and memory since the term *rudis*, here reminds us of the *rudis incola*, *BC* 4.592, who relates this whole episode.

To stress the similarity of combatants, in another involved simile, Lucan has us imagine again the difference between an earlier Hercules and the one now involved in this wrestling match. We are asked to compare *artus / ceruicemque uiri*, *BC* 4.637-38, 'the neck and body of the man', now 'weakened with sweat' (*exhaustos sudoribus*, *BC* 4.637), with the same parts once *siccam*, *BC* 4.639, 'dry', when Hercules held the whole world for Atlas.<sup>58</sup> Alliteration of the 's' sound in *exhaustos sudoribus*, *BC* 4.638, and *siccam*, *BC* 4.639, and repetition of words used previously of the weakened Antaeus (*exhausit*, *uirum*, *BC* 4.622,

---

<sup>56</sup> Lucan's alliteration between *nouo* and *nodos* highlights the latter term which reproduces the intertwining of opponents in wrestling. The word *nodos* refers to the famous Herculean knot: *OLD*, 1, b, 'a difficult type of knot with no ends to be seen.' See also Plin. *Nat.* 28.63; Sen. *Ep.* 87.38.

<sup>57</sup> Hill, 1999, 133, writes of the Achelous and Hercules episode: 'the earliest extant account is Sophocles *Trachiniae* 9-23, although the story is much older'.

<sup>58</sup> Lucan seems to allude to Ovid, who completes his description of Hercules' apotheosis with: *sensit Atlas pondus*, *Met.* 9.273, 'Atlas felt his weight'.

*sudor*, BC 4.623, and *ceruix*, BC 4.624), undermine any suggestion of Hercules' superior strength and reinforce ideas of equality between Hercules and Antaeus.

The difference between the young Hercules and the present fighting Hercules is more pronounced than that between Hercules and his opponent, Antaeus, because we are reminded that they fight as *pares*, 4.636, 'equals'. In the description of the next round of the wrestling match, we see Lucan overworking the pronoun again to blur the distinction between adversaries: *Telluris uiribus ille / ille suis*, BC 4.636-37, 'with the strength of Earth that one, that one with his own'. Structurally, the sentence shows an inversion of the lines introducing the protagonists at the beginning of the conflict when Hercules has the lion's share of the sentence and his opponent has two words. Here the reader knows who the first *ille* is from his attributes: Antaeus is the one who regains strength from the earth. As at the beginning of the episode, we have to carry over a word, *uiribus*, from the first phrase to make sense of the second truncated phrase, where the reflexive adjective *suis* has to reflect right back to the subject of the previous sentence, Hercules. Both the language used and the wrestling action entangle the protagonists. The poet then deepens the ambiguity as he involves the reader in decoding a text that is as closely entangled as the two wrestlers are bound up with each other.

Ambiguity extends to the earth itself, which can be either the land of Libya or Earth, styled in this episode as a traditional epic goddess with power to influence the outcome of events. Despite editorial capitalisation, each appearance of the term in this episode can be read as the land and / or the goddess and mother of Antaeus. It seems then, that the supernatural or the gods do enter Lucan's epic, but in unconventional ways, either within a retold story as the goddess 'Earth' does here, as unreliable sources for prophetic knowledge (such as the oracle of Delphi, Book 5 and the dark goddess Erictho in Book 6), or as a general exclamation, *o superi*, by the narrator. Myth takes the place of the gods in Lucan's epic, so we look for a relationship between this mythical story and the battle scenes to follow. I suggest that we can find a connection between the wrestling match of Hercules and Antaeus and the tactics and outcome of Curio's ill-fated engagement with his opponents on the Libyan earth.



The correlation between these two sessions of conflict is not stable in Lucan's *Bellum Civile*, whereas Virgil's Hercules / Cacus episode has relatively clearer parallels with the later battles between Aeneas and Turnus.<sup>59</sup> It is difficult to relate Ovid's Hercules / Achelous episode either to the longer Hercules story in *Metamorphoses* Book 9 or to the whole poem because Ovid's epic is completely episodic in structure. We can, however see allusion to Virgil's Hercules episode through Ovid's depiction of Hercules wrestling with Achelous. The story is told as a transition between stories concerned with Theseus or told to him (*Met.* 7.425 - 9.96) and the further stories of the hero, Hercules, (*Met.* 9.97-315).<sup>60</sup> The earlier stories all concern the gods in one way or another and culminate in the more personal affront suffered by the river god at the hands of Hercules, and this then forms an ironic introduction to Ovid's description of the death and deification of Hercules. A further reference to Virgil can be seen as Ovid's poem treats, in a light-hearted manner, Hercules' deification, which underpins Virgil's long passage of prayers and praises to the god Hercules at the conclusion of his Hercules / Cacus episode. In Ovid's poem, when it is the mutilated victim of the conflict who recounts the fight immediately prior to a description of the horrible death of the victor, we can see the poem presenting ideas of matched opponents, prefiguring the focus on equality in Lucan's Hercules / Antaeus story.

In Ovid's wrestling match the reader expects the protagonists to be tightly bound together and so they are, but with less ambiguity or equality than is found in Lucan's text. Ovid writes:

ter sine profectu uoluit nitentia contra  
reicere Alcides a se mea pectora; quarto  
excutit amplexus, adductaque bracchia soluit,  
impulsumque manu—certum est mihi uera fateri—  
protinus auertit, tergoque onerosus inhaesit.

*Met.* 9.50-54

Thrice, without success, Alcides, wanted to push my shining breast away from him; on the fourth time he shook off my hold and loosened my tightened arms, and struck by his hand, - I am determined to speak the truth - straightaway he turned me around and clung heavily on my back.

<sup>59</sup> The parallel in Virgil's *Aeneid* between the Hercules / Cacus combat and the Aeneas / Turnus battles also has a degree of instability. Many and stronger differences appear when the comparison is pressed.

<sup>60</sup> Anderson, 1972, 289, discusses in his commentary the stories related to or about Theseus, and writes: 'In freeing the coast of monsters, from Epidaurus to Athens, Theseus rivalled the Labours of Hercules'. See Plu. *Thes.* VI-XI, where we find that Theseus journeys to Athens slaying evildoers in imitation of Hercules.

It is easier to distinguish the protagonists as the subject is clearly named, *Alcides*, and the personal pronouns, coupled with the aside by the speaker, make it clear what is happening. Although the conflict between Lucan's protagonists appears to be similar to this passage of the *Metamorphoses*, with successive attempts to overpower an opponent and emphasis on parts of the body and the intermingling of limbs, his wrestling match seems to maintain equality between the opponents while Ovid's Achelous is repeatedly and finally vanquished.

Lucan's Antaeus bounces back from each defeat stronger than before, whereas Achelous gets progressively weaker. First he says; *et harenas ore momordi*, *Met.* 9.61, 'and with my mouth I bit the sand'; next; *pollicibusque meas pugnabam euellere fauces*, *Met.* 9.79, 'and from under his thumbs I was fighting to pull out my throat'; and finally, in a typical wrestling move, Achelous is forced to the ground; *depressaue dura / cornua figit humo, meque alta sternit harena*, *Met.* 9.83-4, 'and my hard horn, being pressed down, he fixes in the soil and stretches me out on the deep sand'. Repetition of the word *harena*, 'sand', and the use of the specific gladiatorial term for defeat, *et harenas ore momordi*, 'and with my mouth I bit the sand', in Ovid's epic shows his poem's allusion to the Roman arena.<sup>61</sup> Lucan's poem also has the same term to emphasise the similarity of protagonists. In the arena of Lucan's Rome, the combatants are equal, in view of the fact that they are all performers, often Roman slaves or prisoners, even if they are dressed differently as Greeks, Gauls or Africans and have dissimilar weapons.

Lucan's vanquished Antaeus paradoxically 'will fall in battle' by not falling, because he is held above the ground. Hercules addresses him and says:

haerebis pressis intra mea pectora membris:  
huc, Antae, cades.'

BC 4.648-49

You will cling with limbs compressed within my breast: here, Antaeus, you will fall.

Although the combatants are clearly different at the point of conquest (Antaeus is named and Hercules, as *Alcides*, is also named at the beginning of this little

---

<sup>61</sup> Hill, 1999, 137, in his commentary writes that the expression is: 'an echo of Virgil's *humum ... ore momordit* (*Aen.* 11.418) itself an echo of Hom. *Il.* 2.418. Ovid borrows an epic formula for violent death (English 'bit the dust') for this more trivial sense and this far from epic context'.

speech), the two bodies are still entwined and this makes for a very uncommon form of death when compared to earlier epic. Virgil has the *cadaver*, *Aen.* 8.264, ‘corpse’, of Cacus dragged out for all to see, and the dead body is described by means of its parts:

... nequeunt expleri corda tuendo  
 terribilis oculos, uultum uillosaque saetis  
 pectora semiferi atque extinctos faucibus ignis. *Aen.* 8.265-67

They are unable to satisfy their hearts with looking on the terrible eyes, face and chest hairy with bristles of this half-beast and on the fires now extinguished from his throat.

The body of Virgil’s monster is clearly separate and different from the hero, Hercules, and this is reinforced by the following description of the rites held in honour of Hercules the avenger, whereas Lucan leaves his story of Antaeus and Hercules inconclusive. Virgil not only connects his Hercules story with Aeneas’ future, but also with Augustan Rome, reflected in Evander’s reference to the altar as the ‘greatest’ (*maxima*, *Aen.* 8.271-72), but Lucan diminishes the conflict between Hercules and Antaeus, overshadowing Antaeus’ fame as eponymous to the region by mention of Scipio’s ‘greater name’ (*maiora ... cognomina*, *BC* 4.656).<sup>62</sup>

Hercules wins the battle, yet the earth is signed with the name of Antaeus (and the poet undermines the veracity of ‘antiquity’ by over-exaggeration of its attributes, *BC* 4.654-55). An historical reason for a *maiora ... cognomina*, *BC* 4.656, ‘greater name’, is added by the *rudis incola*, who tells us that Scipio, 4.658, gave his name to the place.<sup>63</sup> This outcome contrasts with the result gained from the victory of Virgil’s Hercules. In the *Aeneid*, Evander goes to great lengths to explain, not only the rites and ceremonies associated with Hercules’ win, but also takes

---

<sup>62</sup> In contrast to Lucan’s customary play on *nomen*, which he usually associates with Pompey. Feeney, 1986, writes: ‘Lucan transforms the values by which he [Pompey] is to be assessed and reveals to us a process by which Pompeius does not live up to his name’ 240.

<sup>63</sup> The *rudis incola* is a remarkably able story-teller and is also well versed in Roman history. Scipio’s importance is indicated by the poet with the placement of the name at the beginning of the line, 4.658. The discourse, however, has many layers. The historical person, Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus received the name ‘Africanus’ from his victory in Africa and the geographical place is named Castra Cornelianiana after him. See Anderson, 1928, 7-58, who shows how literature treats Scipio as a successor of Heracles and / or Alexander (31-37) and cites Ennius’ *Scipio*, Horace, *C.* 4.8.15, Livy, 26.19.3ff., and Silius Italicus, 4.475-76; 15.69ff., as examples.

Aeneas on a tour through the landscape, describing how the physical features around them illustrate the civilising ages of man. Lucan, on the other hand, undermines the historical significance of the peasant's explanation of Scipio's victory in a short sentence beginning with exhortation: *en ueteris cernis uestigia ualli*, BC 4.659, 'Look! You can see traces of an ancient rampart'. These traces foreshadow the *uestigia*, BC 9.965, 'traces' of the walls of Troy, visited by Caesar while following the, *uestigia*, BC 9.952, 'traces', of Pompey's flight, those *uestigia*, BC 8.4 'traces', which Pompey tried to hide. Scipio's story is becoming legendary, like the Hercules / Antaeus story, as only the *uestigia*, BC 4.659, 'traces', of Scipio's *Romana ... uictoria*, BC 4.660, 'Roman victory', on foreign soil are left to be seen.<sup>64</sup>

Lucan's poem blurs the boundary between myth and history, showing that with the passing of time history becomes the stuff of fable. Lucan presents Rome's civil war as part of the same continuum set to become legendary because it is commemorated in epic. The poet also seems to undercut Roman history by affording more space to the legendary wrestling bout between Hercules and Antaeus than to Scipio's part in the naming of the place. However, the two explanations are connected through reference to the possession of land: Scipio is said to have named the area *nam sedes Libyca tellure potito / haec fuit*, BC 4.658-59, 'for this was his seat when he possessed Libyan land'. Lucan shows the mutability of story, memory and monument in this short historical explanation.

Although there is a change to the terms and place of war at the end of the Hercules / Antaeus episode, it continues to colour the reader's interpretation of the following events just as the Hercules / Cacus story in Virgil's *Aeneid* prepares the reader to view Aeneas' destruction of Turnus as a similar civilising action and Ovid's Hercules / Achelous story builds on the dire consequences to be expected by those who affront the gods. In Lucan's epic, a connection is made between Earth as mother of Antaeus and the physical landform of Africa. Following the fatal wrestling bout, civil war is shown to flourish in the Africa of Antaeus and Hercules. Once Curio re-enters the story, the focus seems to shift from a

---

<sup>64</sup> See Spencer, 2005, 46-69, for discussion of how the ruins of Troy, BC 9.950-99, and Alexandria, BC 10.9-331, are linked in Lucan's poem with the fall of Republican Rome.

gladiatorial show or legendary wrestling bout to regular battles. Continuing to interweave his words, the poet connects the conflict between Hercules and Antaeus with age-old enmity involving Rome and Africa. When he writes, *omnis Romanis quae cesserat Africa signis*, BC 4.666, the word *Romanis*, with *Africa*, in the same line, and the patterned arrangement of nouns and adjectives reinforces the Africa / Rome connection.

All Africa which had yielded to *Romanis ... signis*, 'Roman standards', is now Roman under the *iure*, BC 4.667, 'jurisdiction', of Varus; so as a Roman province it takes part in Rome's civil war, although Varus' portion of the war is minimised. Definition of civil war is stretched when Varus does not trust 'in Latin strength' (*robore ... / Latio*, BC 4.667-68), and calls on Juba, King of Numidia, a foreign king and former enemy of Rome who owes his throne to Pompey. The opponents are shown as on opposing sides: Curio is fighting on behalf of Caesar, and Varus and Juba for Pompey.<sup>65</sup> In a marked change from matched opponents of Hercules and Antaeus, Curio and his first opponent, Varus, are fighting 'with not equal strength', (*non aequis uiribus*, BC 4.665).

Because the Hercules / Antaeus story alludes strongly to Virgil's Hercules / Cacus episode, we are tempted to look for a similar parallel to that which links those enemies of the distant past, Hercules and Cacus in Virgil's *Aeneid*, with those in Aeneas' time, Mezentius and Turnus, and further on to the various enemies of Augustus depicted on the shield of Aeneas.<sup>66</sup> An analogy between the wrestling bout of Hercules and Antaeus and the conflict of Juba, king of Numidia, with Curio cannot be made so securely. Juba is connected with Hercules through victory, but the tricks and association with the land of Africa link him also with Antaeus. Curio, although he routs Varus, is overcome by Juba and so has more in common with Antaeus than Hercules. Curio and Juba are unequal opponents in contrast with either Hercules and Antaeus, or Caesar and Pompey. Even though Curio and Juba are confused within the text, with position and potency changing

---

<sup>65</sup> Juba's reasons for entering the war on Pompey's side are complex and Lucan takes the time to show the opportunistic personal motives of King Juba, BC 4.687-93.

<sup>66</sup> See Gransden, 1976, 14-15, on typology and the structure of the *Aeneid*. See Morgan, 1998, 192, who writes: 'Vulcan's fire is destructive, "negative"; but that very same fire creates the shield, a very obvious parallel to the creation of Rome which is itself analogous to Hercules annihilation of Cacus'.

throughout the battle in the same way as the strengths and weaknesses of Hercules and Antaeus are combined in their wrestling match, they remain as uneven opponents. Virgil's Hercules / Cacus story resonates through the rest of the poem as well as throughout Book 8, where we find Venus' struggle to bend Vulcan to her will, *Aen.* 8.370-406, which incorporates Vulcan's fire and entwining bodies as connecting motifs, while the battles depicted on Aeneas' shield, *Aen.* 8.626-728, also gain depth from the story.<sup>67</sup> It is through the battles in Books 9-12 that the Hercules / Cacus story is reflected in the clashes between Aeneas and his enemies.

Antaeus and Hercules, although 'matched', have specific and different strengths, like the gladiators in the Roman arena. Hercules uses his intelligence as 'at length' (*tandem*, *BC* 4.645) he sees the trick of Antaeus. The unique advantage of Antaeus is that he is able to regain his strength by falling to the ground. Hercules, using his own strength and intellect, reduces the inequality caused by Antaeus' terrestrial gain by holding Antaeus up away from the earth. Antaeus' death is not described in epic style; he and his story are both left suspended in the arms of Hercules, *BC* 4.653. With this reversal of an epic death scene, Lucan is providing yet another form of death. The poet cannot have Antaeus fall in death, since his life is regained from the soil, so an epic death, signalled by a fall to earth, must be altered. In this way Lucan's story distorts the tradition, adhered to by Virgil's dispassionate manner of recounting the final moment of Cacus. Ovid's Hercules / Achelous story culminates with mutilation, not death, a change which continues to mar the forehead of the river god even when he is no longer in the form of a bull.<sup>68</sup>

Lucan's depiction of Antaeus alludes to Virgil's Cacus in ultimate defeat, but the two monsters are portrayed very differently in death: Cacus as a worthy but horribly dangerous foe, while Antaeus' death arouses some degree of pity. Antaeus, at the end of his life, is seen as a 'young man' (*iuvēnem*, *BC* 4.650) by his Earth mother and so the poet aligns him with soldiers generally, not only with

<sup>67</sup> See Lyne, 1987, 35-44, who discusses the Venus / Vulcan scene but does not link it with the preceding Hercules / Cacus scene.

<sup>68</sup> Anderson, 1972, 423, in his commentary writes: 'Hercules tore the horn from the brow and so rendered it *trunca*. The phrase, echoing the phrasing of the question in 1-2, closes the story'.

the Greek youth of Massilia fighting for Pompey's side in a previous battle, but also with Curio's young soldiers, *iuuentus*, BC 4.695. The narrator blames fortune for the untimely death for Curio's army: *fortuna ... tradiderat fatis iuuenem*, BC 4.737-38, 'fortune had handed over the young men to fate', and seems to show sympathy for the doomed soldiers as young men, whatever their allegiance.

Abruptly switching back to 'Curio', BC 4.661, after both the Hercules / Antaeus episode and the story of Scipio, the narrator now recounts Curio 'placing unlucky tents in an auspicious place' (*felici non fausta loco tentoria ponens*, BC 4.663). The negative expression, *non fausta*, is contrasted with *felici*, describing the *locus*, presumably auspicious from Scipio's success in the area, and the hills are now about to be changed by Curio's sad fate. Good omens from the landform must also relate to the victory of Hercules' civilising force over monstrous Antaeus. Earth is the major element in the conflict between Hercules and Antaeus and in a similar fashion emphasis on the physical attributes of the land and the placement of troops either on the hills or the plains, stresses that the landscape or the earth often plays a part the outcome of battle.<sup>69</sup>

Juba's reasons for joining the war, given by an omniscient narrator, allow a return to the theme of a soldier's motivation for war. The poet revisits the causes of war proposed in the prologue to his poem, and shows that the primary impetus for war lies in the opportunities to be found in war, such as to avoid debt, to banish hunger, and to settle old scores.<sup>70</sup> Juba is roused to war not only from 'public spirited' (*studiis ciuilibus*, BC 4.687) reasons, similar to Hercules' motive (to rid the world of monsters, BC 4.610), for killing Antaeus, but also from 'private anger' (*priuatae ... irae*, BC 4.688). Cause for Juba's anger is given in an aside from the narrator, signalled at the beginning by the moralistic tone of words such as 'polluted' (*polluit*, BC 4.689), and at the end, by apostrophe to 'you, Rome' (*te, Roma*, 4.692). Ambiguity in the last phrase: *dum regnum te, Roma, facit*, BC

<sup>69</sup> Natural elements seem to have an important role in civil war in this epic: we have seen soldiers fight the sea, famine, and drought as well as each other. Caesar's forces tear up trees and turn nature to their own ends and Pompey's troops are overcome by natural disasters of flood and famine. In the battle between Curio and Juba, the terrain, dust and the heat all influence the outcome.

<sup>70</sup> See passage BC 1.158-83 where *belli / semina*, BC 1.158-59, 'the seeds of war', are elaborated.

4.692, ‘while he makes you, Rome a kingdom’, shows that the poet sees Rome as now ruled by a king, either because Rome rules Libya or because Curio, by taking a bribe, allowed Caesar to rule as a dictator in Rome. The latter is probably most likely, supported by the strength of the poet’s condemnation of Curio as one who *superos humanaque polluit*, BC 4.689, ‘polluted both gods and human affairs’.<sup>71</sup> An added difficulty is found in the poet’s use of the pronoun *ille*, BC 4.692, ‘that man’ which reflects a long way back to Juba, who is the subject under discussion before the aside by the narrator. It is an effort for the reader to join the private anger of Juba with his wish ‘of regaining the sceptre’ (*sceptri ...retenti*, BC 4.693).

The switch between Juba and Curio as subject, twice in the space of seven lines, again points to the levelling effect of war, and reminds us of the intertwining of the wrestlers, Hercules and Antaeus. Juba and Curio are taking part in war for their own ends; both are grasping the opportunity as it is presented.<sup>72</sup> Curio’s troops are not veterans; they are styled as *iuuentus*, BC 4.695, ‘young men’, and *numquam deuota ... nimis*, BC 4.695-96, ‘never too much devoted’, to the camp of Caesar.<sup>73</sup> These troops are not loyal, as they are Pompey’s troops who switched sides and surrendered themselves and their general Domitius to Caesar in Corfinium, BC 2.507-08.<sup>74</sup>

The poet delays what seems like a move back into the action with a philosophical aside about the deceptive nature of fortune:

... sic fatus apertis  
instruxit campis acies; quem blanda futuris  
deceptura malis belli fortuna recepit. BC 4.710-12

Having spoken thus, he marshalled his battle line on the open plain; he whom the  
flattering fortune of war, about to deceive with future woes, welcomes.

---

<sup>71</sup>Curio has been described as *uenali ... lingua*, BC 1.269, ‘a tongue for sale’, and the poet’s last words on the subject and in this book are *emere omnes, hic uendidit urbem*, BC 4.824, ‘they all bought, he sold the city’.

<sup>72</sup> Compare these leaders with another opportunistic and angry king, King Iarbas, *Aen.* 4.203-18, and the threat he and others posed to Dido’s city *Aen.* 4.35-44.

<sup>73</sup> Lucan undermines the powerful force of the term *deuota*, BC 4.695 which has been used in the stronger sense of ‘fanatic’ of Caesar’s troops BC 4.533 or ‘suicidal’ of Pompey’s soldiers, BC 4.272.

<sup>74</sup> This is supported by Caesar’s historical account of Curio’s wavering troops: *Caes. Ciu.* 2.23-42.



The epithet *blanda*, BC 4.711, ‘charming’ or ‘flattering’, can only be negative when coupled with the ‘fortune of war’ (*belli fortuna*, BC 4.712). The sentence is crammed with contradictory words. The future tense *deceptura*, BC 4.712, ‘about to deceive’, reinforced by the words *futuris* / ... *malis*, BC 4.711-12, ‘future woes’, conflicts with the perfect *recepit*, BC 4.712, ‘welcomed’, as this verb itself has connotations of something about to happen, rather than that which is already set in place. Throughout Lucan’s epic we find recurring contrast and / or conflation between Fate (fixed) and Fortune (about to happen).<sup>75</sup>

Curio’s rout of Varus is dealt with in two lines, but is not shown as a great victory because the enemy turned their *terga*, BC 4.714, ‘backs’, ‘in disgraceful flight’ (*foeda* / *fuga*, BC 4.713-14).<sup>76</sup> When Juba joins the battle, however, we are alerted to the difference between Curio’s opponents in the very dense first sentence:

tristia sed postquam superati proelia Vari  
sunt audita Iubae, laetus quod gloria belli  
sit rebus seruata suis, rapit agmina furtim,  
obscuratque suam per iussa silentia famam  
hoc solum metuens incauto ex hoste, timeri.

BC 4.715-19

But after the sad battles of captured Varus were heard by Juba, happy because the glory of war was kept for his own affairs, secretly he hurries his column and hides rumour [of his movement] through ordered silence, fearing this alone from his careless enemy, that he be feared.

The phrase, *tristia ... superati proelia Vari*, BC 4.715, ‘the sad battles of conquered Varus’ contrasts with Juba’s reaction, ‘happy because the glory of war’ (*laetus quod gloria belli*, BC 4.716) was saved for him. Juba is shown as one who acts secretly, as one who hides himself through silencing rumours. The emphatic position of the words ‘secretly’ (*furtim*, BC 4.417) and ‘rumour’ (*famam*, BC 4.418), at the end of the line shows their importance in this passage. Structure and word order of the passage are complicated and just as tricky as the tactics about to unfold. By using hyperbaton in this way, the poet seems to draw a parallel between the tactics of battle (and wrestling) and the skill of writing and this equivalence is especially evident in the extraordinary simile to explain these tactics.

<sup>75</sup> Fate and Fortune: the *locus classicus* is BC 7.210-13.

<sup>76</sup> Caesar’s account shows victory with Varus’ soldiers running away, Caes. *Ciu.* 2.34.

Juba's battle tactics are compared with the way the ichneumon (an African version of the mongoose) deceives a snake with its tail.<sup>77</sup> The animal is not referred to by name but as the *sollertior hostis*, BC 4.724, 'cleverer enemy'. With this elaborate simile, the poet describes how the ichneumon gets the snake to strike 'sideways' (*obliquus*, BC 4.726), and then grabs it by the throat and squeezes it so the snake's venom is wasted. We can see a correlation with the Hercules / Antaeus episode in this conflict with its emphasis on squeezing (*conprendit*, BC 4.727; *conpressis*, BC 4.627). There is also a correlation between the head of the snake 'spread' (*effusae*, BC 4.727) and Curio's 'spread out battle line' (*effusam ... aciem*, BC 4.743). Juba uses the tactic of the ichneumon, using a small force under Sabbura to deceive Curio into thinking he was about to attack the main army. The simile works at a narrative level in the context of the epic and also on a hermeneutic level and draws attention to the poet as a 'cleverer' writer, since the precise explanation of the tactics of the ichneumon signals the military, scientific and literary knowledge of the poet. Drawing his reader into the text, the poet both delights and frustrates, since the simile cannot be securely assimilated to the following battle. Except in the broadest sense, since Juba wins and Curio dies, the tactics of the mongoose (sideways attack and neutralising of poison) which are conjured up by the simile are not followed. Instead, we find ourselves thinking of the tactics of the snake itself, crushing its victim in its coils, when we read how Juba's forces surround and squeeze Curio's army to death.<sup>78</sup>

Curio and Juba, unlike Hercules and Antaeus, are not equal opponents. Curio is reckless, leaving the high ground *non exploratis occulti uiribus hostis*, BC 4.731, 'with the strength of the hidden enemy not explored'. Juba is shown as cautious and devious, organising a trick to catch Curio out. Curio is careless and ignores the troops who beg him to remember Libyan deceit: *infectaque semper / Punica*

---

<sup>77</sup> The *Herpestis ichneumon*, related to the Indian mongoose (*Herpestis griseus*), is found in Egypt where it was formerly held sacred on account of its devouring crocodiles' eggs. For the simile to work, this animal and its tricks must have been well known, either from the arena or through the works of Cicero, *N.D.* 1.101; Vitruvius, 8.2.7 (see also Pliny, *Nat.* 8.87; 37.138, and later again, Martial, 7.87.5).

<sup>78</sup> It is extraordinary to find a successful enemy of the snake described in detail. Hercules is one such enemy who strangles snakes in his cradle and overcomes the Hydra, mightiest of all serpents, so we can see the simile reflecting back to the Hercules / Antaeus episode. Snakes in literature are always shown in a negative light and are usually invincible. Correlation between a person and a snake is rare so while this simile could be just a perversion of the epic norm it could also foreshadow later events with Cato and the snakes in Libya, BC 9.608-949.

*bella dolis*, BC 4.736-37, 'Punic wars always stained by fraud'. Reference to the dishonourable methods of Punic wars is evident in the moralistic tone of the terms *infecta*, 'infected' or 'stained', and *dolis*, 'fraud'. African deceit, (like Cretan lies, considered to be 'known facts' by Roman society), is reinforced by repetition of words with this meaning: *fraudes*, BC 4.736; *dolis*, BC 4.737; *fraude*, BC 4.742; *simulatae*, BC 4.744; and *doli*, BC 4.746. However, the idea of tricks and deceit is never straightforward.<sup>79</sup> Difficulty arises when we try to apply to either side in this civil war a secure polarity between honourable warfare on one hand and deceitful warfare on the other, because both sides engage in deceit.

The ongoing problem of 'sides' in civil war and its levelling effect is highlighted in the lines: *leti fortuna propinqui / tradiderat fati iuuenem, bellumque trahebat / auctorem ciuile suum*, BC 4.737-39, 'the fortune of nearby death had handed over young men to fate and civil war was dragging down its own author'.<sup>80</sup> It is significant that in Lucan's poem about civil war, where it is difficult to tell who among Romans is friend or foe, imprecision of subject is reminiscent of the confusion set up between Hercules and Antaeus. But the Numidians are named as 'they enclose' (*clausurunt*, BC 4.747) Curio and his troops, who remain indistinct, referred to as *dux*, BC 4.748, 'the leader', and his *turba*, BC 4.748, 'mob'. The enemy is distinct while Curio's army is now viewed as an amorphous mass:

non timidi petiere fugam, non proelia fortes,  
 quippe ubi non sonipes motus clangore tubarum  
 saxa quatit pulsu rigidos uexantia frenos  
 ora terens spargitque iubas et subrigit aures  
 incertoque pedum pugnat non stare tumultu ...

BC 4.749-53

Those fearing did not seek flight, nor the brave battle, since there the war-horse, not moved by the sound of the trumpets, does not shake the rocks with a blow, rubbing his mouth which chafes the hard bit, nor shake out his mane nor prick his ears, does not fight to stand still with rebellious shifting of feet ...

Curio's massed soldiers consist of *timidi*, 'those fearing', and *fortes*, 'the brave'. Curio's army neither fled nor fought. In Homeric epic, the individual soldier is

<sup>79</sup> We have seen Pompey's secret flight *furtiuae ... fugae*, BC 2.688, but two ships are caught by the trap set up by Caesar's men at Brundisium. We also remember *furta*, BC 4.415, the 'secret' raft of Vulteius, which is caught by *fraudes*, BC 4.448, 'a trick' of Pompey's Cilicians, whose *fraudes*, BC 4.465, Vulteius senses too late.

<sup>80</sup> The author of 'civil war' could be either Curio or Caesar. Another reading could implicate the poet himself, Lucan denouncing his own creation, the *Romana ... carmina*, BC 1.66, 'Roman song'. See Henderson, 1998, 168.

picked out as an example, but here the reader is surprised by sudden change of focus from men or soldiers to one war-horse as a metonym for Curio's cavalry, where *sonipes*, BC 4.750, 'sounding foot', is used for a single horse.<sup>81</sup> Following the negatives connected with the soldiers' lack of choice in previous line, the poet, using few negatives, (*non*, BC 4.750, 753), lists the usual attributes of a war-horse that are here absent. The horse in Curio's army is not: moved by the trumpet; pawing the ground; straining at the bit; shaking his mane; pricking his ears, nor so anxious to engage in the battle that he is unable to keep his feet still, BC 4.750-53, and so is the antithesis of the eager Virgilian war-horse. The reader has to remember to apply the first negative to all but the last, in the list of war-horse qualities as they are presented.

The language in this passage of Lucan's poem is difficult, with the horse in the battle, BC 4.753-58, depicted as having the direct opposite of the customary attitude of a war-horse, and the reader must work hard to extract a coherent picture. The original subject, *sonipes*, BC 4.750, 'war-horse' is now viewed by its parts. These portions of the horse's body: the *ceruix*, BC 4.754, 'neck'; *ilia*, BC 4.757, 'entrails'; and *artus*, BC 4.754, 'limbs'; along with its attributes: the 'frequent panting' (*creber anhelitus*, BC 4.756); how it streams 'with sweat' (*sudoribus*, BC 4.754); and is 'weary' (*fessa*, BC 4.754), all bring to mind the body of Antaeus in the earlier Hercules / Antaeus episode.<sup>82</sup> Remembering the fate of Antaeus at the hands of the hero prepares the reader for Curio's disaster.

From the close-up view of one horse, the reader is now forced to see a bigger picture and many horses, 'horses driven by wounds' (*uolneribus coguntur equi*,

<sup>81</sup> In Lucan's poem the word has been used as singular for plural, for cavalry or troop of war-horses, fording the Rubicon, 1.220, and at the start of battle, 2.501. Virgil also uses the term and an account of an eager war-horse, *Aen.* 11.600. (See also Dido's resplendent war-horse, *Aen.* 4.135). Lucan subverts the role of the horse in epic. We see the horse as a victim of war just like the soldiers. In earlier epic, the individual horse is rare: Achilles speaks with his horse and hears his own death prophesied, *Il.* 19.400-24; Mezentius speaks to his horse, *Aen.* 10.861-66, but it crushes him, *Aen.* 10.891-5, after it is speared by Aeneas.

<sup>82</sup> Body parts feature prominently in the description of the effect of the fight on Antaeus' body: on his *ceruix*, BC 4.624, *artus*, BC 4.631, *creber anhelitus*, BC 4.622, *ilibus*, BC 4.627, and his body's attributes: *sudor*, BC 4.623, *fesso*, BC 4.623, and on the body of Hercules, BC 4.638-40. Duplication of terms invites the reader to compare horses with men and the description of the weary horse resembles the description of the physical symptoms of plague recounted in Virgil's *Georgics* 3.500-16. Curio's war-horse, BC 4.755, is also like the description of Pompey's thirsty men, kept from water by Caesar, BC 4.325. Lucan shows the deleterious effect of war on the bodies of both men and horses, irrespective of their allegiance.

*BC* 4.761). The horses do not charge or attack, *BC* 4.762, and remind the reader of the troops, unable to flee or fight, *BC* 4.749. Lack of choice for action, by either horses or men, is shown in the use of the passive *perfertur*, *BC* 4.763. Violent movement of the enemy horses, however, raises a cloud of dust, as great as a *Bistonio ... turbine*, *BC* 4.757, 'Bistonian whirlwind'. Use of the name 'Bistonian' brings to mind the flesh-eating mares of the Bistonian tyrant, Diomedes, also subdued by Hercules.<sup>83</sup> This link with the Hercules / Antaeus episode encourages the reader to try for analogy again. Confusion remains as to which side is which as Juba's whirlwind and dust recall Antaeus, but Juba is the victor who surrounds and crushes Curio's troops making Juba also the equivalent to Hercules, but his part in the outcome of the battle is different to that of either Antaeus or Hercules since it seems he could not even see Curio's destruction, *BC* 4.784-87.

Pressed by Juba's troops, Curio's men cannot move without damage to themselves by their own weapons, *BC* 4.779, and breast is crushed on breast, *BC* 4.783. An inadvertent civil war in microcosm, this episode compares with Vulteius' men who kill each other while trapped on their raft.<sup>84</sup> As the narrator intrudes with exclamation *uero*, *BC* 4.769, 'truly', he emphasises lack of choice and stresses that in civil war the soldiers cannot change the outcome, and the only certainty is that death is everywhere, *BC* 4.769-72. The detailed description of the effect of the crush of war on the soldiers' bodies recalls breast crushed by breast of Hercules and Antaeus and there is a similar difficulty telling which protagonist is most damaged.<sup>85</sup> War as a gladiatorial game is emphasised by the words *laeta ... spectacula*, *BC* 4.784, 'happy spectacle', but here the show cannot be seen because of the dust and the crush of *cadaver*, *BC* 4.787, 'corpses'.<sup>86</sup>

The whole battle is analogous to the wrestling bout between Hercules and Antaeus, with Curio's men and horses pressed together by Juba's troops until their

---

<sup>83</sup> Lucan has coupled the image of Diomedes' flesh-eating horses with the doorposts of Antaeus as examples of dreadful crime, *BC* 2.163-64

<sup>84</sup> See Eldred, 2002, 58, who writes: 'Vulteius appears to urge suicide, but his men kill each other, not themselves, and so re-enact the very civil war they have been fighting with the Pompeians'. Another similarity between the Vulteius' episode, *BC* 4.417-581, and Curio's troops, lies in the use of the word 'young men' or 'soldiery' *iuventus*, *BC* 4.449, 476.

<sup>85</sup> Compare *BC* 4.783 with *BC* 4.624.

<sup>86</sup> The use of the word *cadaver* in this passage recalls *BC* 2.195-206 and *Aen.* 8.264.

life is squeezed out. The proximity of bodies recalls the crush of bodies caused by Sulla's proscriptions, *BC* 2.195-206, where the number of dead was so great that the bodies could not fall to earth. In an aside the narrator makes heavy handed reference to Carthage and the ghosts of the Punic wars, not unexpected because of the location, but reference to Pompey and the senate shows the ambivalence of the narrator to the outcome of this civil war in Libya, *BC* 4.789-92. With so much emphasis on blood and slaughter the words *dira piacula*, *BC* 4.790, 'dread atonement', conjure up ideas of sacrifice.<sup>87</sup> The narrator seems to express dismay that Juba overcame Curio for Rome and Pompey, instead of for his own land or as the traditional enemy of Rome, *BC* 4.763.

Lucan's striking opposition of blood and dust draws a parallel between the wrestling Hercules and Antaeus through the use of the word *compressus*, *BC* 4.795, 'suppressed', and the negative result. When there is so much blood that it compresses the dust, Curio is able to see the mass slaughter and he loses heart and dies.<sup>88</sup> Curio has no choice: like his soldiers before him, he cannot fight or flee, and falls among his men, *inpiger ad letum et fortis uirtute coacta*, *BC* 4.798, 'not slow for death and brave in forced valour'. These words suggest suicide as the only choice left, which Curio takes quickly and bravely, although it is forced on him by circumstances. The narrator follows this non-epic death of Curio with an encomium, almost conventional at the beginning, which ends as a condemnation of one who *uendit urbem*, *BC* 4.824, 'sold the city'.

Through a series of conflicts at the end of Book 4, Lucan has illustrated that involvement in war makes both sides equal. Hercules and Antaeus remain locked together; Juba's army surrounds Curio in death. Lucan shows the reader many ways of dying: beginning with the Hercules / Antaeus story we read of the death of a monster which colours the subsequent description of the death of snakes, horses, men and leaders. Alluding to Ovid and Virgil, Lucan uses Hercules as a figure to illustrate that when engaged in conflict even the hero Hercules is reduced

---

<sup>87</sup> The idea of atonement or sacrifice can be found at: *BC* 2.89-93, 176. Cato also uses the word to emphasise the cost of civil war, *BC* 2.304-05. See especially Hardie, 1993, on sacrifice in epic, 19-35.

<sup>88</sup> Curio fights on to the death, loyal to Caesar to the end in Caesar's version of the battle, Caes, *Ciu.* 2.42.

to the same level as his monstrous or divine opponents. Virgil's Hercules exhibits the same rage and anger as Cacus when he finally kills him, as Aeneas does when he kills Turnus. Ovid's Hercules, although victorious over the ever-changing Achelous, suffers and dies in a less than heroic manner. All are equal in death and the difference between winners and losers in the midst of fighting is diminished. Participation in a fight makes both sides equal: whether it is just two opponents wrestling together or one army against another in civil war, the protagonists are equally stained by the violence of the encounter.

The problems faced by opponents in civil war are well illustrated by the Hercules / Antaeus story and the battle narrative describing Curio's defeat in Africa in Lucan's poem. What could have been depicted as an epic style of battle with Romans against a foreign enemy in Africa is changed since Curio in Lucan's poem represents Caesar in an uncharacteristic defeat, while Juba fights for Pompey to gain an uncommon victory. Civil war levels out differences between the opposing factions and taints all combatants with the dishonour of killing both kin and allies. From Africa I now turn to Thessaly and the poet's paradoxical narrative of the battle of Pharsalus.

## Chapter 6:

### Wounds and Weapons: *BC* 7.617-46

‘uenit summa dies, geritur res maxima,’ dixit  
 ‘impia concurrunt Pompei et Caesaris arma’.

*BC* 7.195-96

‘The final day has come, the greatest matter is fought,’ he said, ‘the impious armies of Pompey and Caesar run together’.

According to the augur, the battle of Pharsalus is the main battle of the civil war because it marks the final confrontation between Caesar and Pompey. While the augur sees this as the last day as well as the principal contest in the civil war, Lucan’s *Bellum Civile* extends the account to include Pompey’s flight and subsequent death, Cato in Libya and then leaves Caesar besieged in Egypt. Paradoxically, Lucan’s poem presents the ‘greatest’ battle at Pharsalus with the least battle narrative. Described ideologically for the most part, as it includes much of the intrusive narrator’s examination of cause and effect, this civil war event is expressed in a way that alters the conventions of Homeric battle narrative yet it also draws on the same details of wounds and weapons found in earlier epic. In Lucan’s Pharsalus, we again see the poet stretching the limits of the genre to show the difficulty of recounting such a profane civil war, a battle between fellow Romans, in a positive light.<sup>1</sup>

Lucan, as narrator, justifies his reluctance to relate the events of the battle of Pharsalus with the disclaimer that he is ashamed to tell of the wounds, weapons and deaths of civil war. Within this expressed reluctance to write, the poet gives gruesome details of the very wounds and deaths suffered by Romans in the civil war which destroyed the Roman republic. Such detail reinforces a parallel drawn between the human body and the state of Rome that is set up at the beginning of the poem and again at the start of this battle. Rome as body, both body of state (the body politic) and human body, is emphasised at the beginning of and throughout Lucan’s poem.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Johnson, 1987, 53, sees Lucan’s poem ‘subverting epic conventions’.

<sup>2</sup> See Pl. *R.* 435e, for the ancient idea that the State derives its qualities from the individual.



Not only is Rome depicted as a 'powerful people' in the process of self-destruction, *BC* 1.2-4, but also in the appearance to Caesar of personified Rome at the crossing of the Rubicon, *BC* 1.186. Lucan's frequent use of disease imagery also supports this, see especially, *BC* 2.140-43, as does his use of *uiscus* as a metaphorical term related to the body politic. The poet intervenes to suggest that when Caesar tells his troops to attack the senators first at Pharsalus, rather than the common soldiers, it is because: *scit cruor imperii qui sit, quae uiscera rerum*, *BC* 7.579, 'he knows which is the empire's blood; what are the guts of the state'. Emphasis on the blood and guts of the Roman Empire clearly portrays Rome as equivalent to a human body, suffering as civil war tears it apart.

Frequent allusion to Homer's heroic deaths and the epics of Virgil and Ovid shows that Lucan's poem not only acknowledges but alters what can be seen as conventions of the genre, because of the difficulty of presenting Rome's civil war battles in epic fashion. The poem's lack of attention to named individuals in this battle can be seen to indicate a poet leaning toward a system of government embodied in republican ideals, with its stress on the group rather than on the individual, a system which he, as a poet writing under Nero's rule, might consider to have been destroyed through civil war. Ruin of the republic might also account for the poet's constant depiction of civil war as a crime and wickedness, alongside considerations of unethical activity embodied in Romans killing fellow Romans and the desecration of family ties through fathers cutting down sons and brothers fighting against brothers in civil war.

In this chapter, I focus on one passage, *BC* 7.617-31, where Lucan as an overt narrator lists in a small catalogue wounds and weapons familiar from Homeric and Virgilian epic.<sup>3</sup> The poet alludes to all the usual wounds and death suffered in war, styled as a series of rhetorical questions too shameful to ask. So he precedes the list with a disclaimer that he intends to pass over such dishonourable things. By this rhetorical *praeteritio*, Lucan's poem presents both the death of a single

---

<sup>3</sup> All Lucan's catalogues are rather bizarre - his list of Caesar's troops is actually a list of the places in Gaul whence they came, *BC* 1.396-465; the list of Pompey's troops stresses the foreign nature of the participants, *BC* 3.169-297; Lucan also lists rivers in Italy, *BC* 2.399-427; and trees in a sacred grove, *BC* 3.440-45.

soldier and the mass of troops killed at Pharsalus as unworthy subjects to relate when compared to the destruction of whole world. He writes:

inpendisse pudet lacrimas in funere mundi  
 mortibus innumeris, ac singula fata sequentem  
 quaerere letiferum per cuius uiscera uolnus  
 exierit, quis fusa solo uitalia calcet,  
 ore quis aduerso demissum faucibus ensem  
 expulerit moriens anima, quis corruat ictus,  
 quis steterit dum membra cadunt, qui pectore tela  
 transmittant aut quos campis adfixerit hasta,  
 quis cruor emissis perruperit aera uenis  
 inque hostis cadat arma sui, quis pectora fratris  
 caedat et, ut notum possit spoliare cadauer,  
 abscisum longe mittat caput, ora parentis  
 quis laceret nimiaque probet spectantibus ira  
 quem iugulat non esse patrem. mors nulla querella  
 digna sua est, nullosque hominum lugere uacamus. BC 7.617-31

It is shameful, in the destruction of the world, to have spent tears on countless deaths and following a single fate to ask: through whose guts did the death-bearing wound go; who trod on his vital parts, poured onto the ground; who, with face turned, dying, expelled with his breath the sword sent into his throat; who falls down when struck; who stood while his limbs fall; who sent weapons into the breast or whom did the spear fix into the plains; whose gore from ruptured vein broke through the air fell onto the armour of his own enemy; who cuts down the breast of his brother and, so that he is able to plunder a known corpse, sends far away the cut off the head; who mangles the face of a parent and in his great rage shows those watching that he cuts the throat of one who is not his father. No death is worth its own complaint, and we are free to mourn no one man.

After so many battle descriptions, culminating in the battle at Pharsalus, Lucan baulks at describing its individual deaths.<sup>4</sup> The word *pudet*, ‘it is shameful’ is emotionally charged and, when coupled with the infinitive *quaerere*, ‘to ask’, followed by a series of rhetorical questions and the final phrase, *nullosque hominum lugere uacamus*, ‘we are free to mourn no one man’, it indicates the poet’s particular pessimistic point of view. Of course, the rhetorical question is a stylistic technique used by orators and poets both ancient and modern in order to appeal to the audience directly and encourages the audience to consider what might be a response.<sup>5</sup> Lucan uses rhetorical questions often, from the very

---

<sup>4</sup> Gorman, 2001, 267-72.

<sup>5</sup> Many scholars suggest that Lucan’s use of rhetorical figures detracts from his poetry: see Heitland, 1887; also Duff, 1977, who, in his introduction to the Loeb translation, xiii, quotes Quintillian on Lucan, Quint. *Inst. Or.* X. 1.90. As this thesis shows, I support the opposite point of view of scholars such as Morford, 1967, Conte, 1986, and Martindale, 1981. For ancient appraisal of rhetorical figures see: Cicero, *de Orat.* 3.203.5, 208.5. Quintilian, uses the same words as Cicero: *Inst.* 9.1.29.1. See also [Cicero] *ad Herennium*, 4.24.1. Also Demetrius, *De elocutione*, 4.297.1-3, 298.1.

beginning of the epic where he asks: *quis furor, o ciues, quae tanta licentia ferri?*, *BC* 1.6, ‘what madness, oh citizens, why such freedom of iron?’, and is well aware of the power of such questions to draw the reader into the narrative.<sup>6</sup> But the questions in this passage are different, and may be more like general statements than questions as such. The narrator in Lucan’s epic presents them as questions that, from shame, he cannot ask, given the events of the battle just fought, yet the presentation of these questions indicates not only a self-conscious narrator but also a negative view of the shocking deaths and wounding suffered by individuals in civil war.

Lucan’s list of questions is an explicit appeal to the topos of an epic catalogue. He neatly gathers together many typical battle wounds and weapons, rendering them literary and epic rather than specific to the battle of Pharsalus. It is contrary to what might be expected, since the passage follows immediately upon the brief description of what should be the greatest battle of the poem, which culminates in a conventional epic death. In a delay or digression, the narrator’s voice draws the reader away from the sequence of historical events, and invites the audience to pause to evaluate the diverse forms of death listed, measuring them against what is remembered from previous epic battles. Terms for death occur many times in this passage, as do verbs for falling or being cut down in death. Many conjunctions of weapons, wounds and body parts are named, sword and spear, guts, throat, breast and head, which are recognisable from Homeric and Virgilian epic battle narrative, but in Lucan’s poem they are included in questions passed over by the narrator as too shameful to ask. When the poet evokes earlier epic in this way, he not only shows his poem’s interaction with the genre but also indicates that the civil war battle at Pharsalus is an obstacle to epic battle narration and can only appear in this pessimistic and negative manner.

---

<sup>6</sup> Lucan’s rhetorical question recalls the beginning of Virgil’s *Aeneid*, 1.8-11. The rhetorical question is also used to arrest the flow of events indicating that there is too much to tell. See Virgil’s *Aen.* 12.500-01, which looks back to *Aen.* 9.528, and both recall Ennius *Ann.* 6.164 (Skutsch). See Skutsch, 1985, 330, for conjectured sources for Ennius. Apollonius in his *Argonautica* is also reluctant to tell all about Medea’s sacrifice to Hecate, *Arg.* 4.248-50. Ovid has Nestor unable to remember the wounds of the fallen, *Met.* 12.461. In later epic we can also find similar questions about the telling of events: Stat. *Theb.* 10.273-74; V. Fl. *Arg.* 6.515-16; Sil. 12.387-89.

Each item in the catalogue is dense with allusion. In the first instance the poet declines to ask: *letiferum per cuius uiscera uolnus / exierit*, *BC* 7.619-20, ‘through whose guts did the death bearing wound go?’. Self-reference is obvious in the term *uiscera*, a word used right at the beginning of this epic, in the third line of the proem, where it arrests the attention of the reader.<sup>7</sup> There it shocks as it warns that the poem is about the violence of civil war: *populumque potentem / in sua uictrici conuersum uiscera dextra*, *BC* 1.2-3, ‘and a powerful people turning their victorious right hand into their own guts’, where alliteration of the ‘p’ and the consonantal ‘u’ sounds, makes the passage striking. The term *uiscera* is often found in violent contexts. It is a key word in Lucan’s text and the first syllable can be seen to allude especially to *uis*, the term for excessive force or violence. With this allusion we are reminded that Lucan has, from the beginning, portrayed Rome and its ‘powerful people’ (*populum potentem*), as a single living organism, a body politic, with the ability to self-destruct. Lucan continually draws attention to his view that the violent destruction of Romans brought about by fellow Romans in civil war is a wicked crime.<sup>8</sup>

Horror of the same civil war has been expressed earlier by Virgil in Book 6 of the *Aeneid* when Anchises in the underworld points out Caesar and Pompey to Aeneas as his blood relations, *Aen.* 6.831-35. Virgil also uses alliteration of the consonantal ‘u’ to accentuate violence and the intensity of feeling as Anchises addresses a warning to the future generals of Rome: *neu patriae ualidas in uiscera uertite uiris*, *Aen.* 6.833, ‘do not turn your vigorous force into the guts of the fatherland’. What is styled as prophecy in Virgil is turned into history in Lucan’s poem. Virgil has already given the answer to Lucan’s indirect question; we already know that it is the *uiscera* of Rome, the fatherland, through which the wound goes.

I suggest that Lucan does not tell of individual deaths or wounds because, in civil war, no matter who is hurt or killed, all deaths involve the one body or state:

---

<sup>7</sup> OLD: 1. ‘Physical strength exerted on an object (esp. in order to constrain) force, violence’.

<sup>8</sup> See Ahl, 1976; Bramble, 1982; Johnson, 1987; Conte, 1988; Masters, 1992; Most, 1992; Hardie, 1993; Bartsch, 1997; Leigh, 1997; Henderson, 1998; Hershkowitz, 1998; Roller, 2001; Sklenář, 2003; Behr, 2007; and Roche, 2009.

Rome the fatherland.<sup>9</sup> Rome and / or the citizens of Rome provide the answer for every question in the list. As a key word in Lucan's poem for the site on the body for fatal wounds in epic death, *uiscera* calls to mind the battle of Massilia described in Book 3, where the poet comes closest to the epic 'type scenes' of named Greek and Roman warriors pitted against each other and dealing out death and wounds similar to those found in the land battles in the epics of Homer and Virgil. But even so, Lucan's description of this battle at sea alters the conventions, as it is unnamed fighters who, in order to obtain weapons, pull javelins from their own bodies to hurl back at the enemy, holding their guts in with one hand, *BC* 3.676-79.<sup>10</sup>

The term *uiscera*, 'guts' or 'belly', must also allude to the form of death chosen by Vulteius on his raft where his own men, when he urges them on to suicide rather than capture, *BC* 4.511, drive more than one sword into his guts, *BC* 4.545, and they all die with guts and blood flowing into the sea, *BC* 4.566-68.<sup>11</sup> The most striking use of the term occurs immediately prior to this catalogue in a description of Caesar rousing his troops to fight at Pharsalus, as mentioned above. Caesar urges them to kill senators rather than the plebs because, as the poet intervenes to point out, Caesar knows what makes up the core or 'guts of the state' (*uiscera rerum*, *BC* 7.579). In Lucan's poem the repeated use of the term *uiscera* makes it clear that Rome and Roman society are vulnerable through the death or evisceration of the key men, the senators of Rome.<sup>12</sup> The poem's emphasis on the political connections of its characters and correspondence between the human body and Rome is totally un-Homeric, but because the term *uiscera* is also used so often in earlier epic, as I show below, its use by Lucan indicates the sure position of his poem within body of epic which exemplify the genre.

---

<sup>9</sup> The idea of Rome as one body is echoed toward the end of his poem when Lucan laments the role of the gods in the destruction of Rome: *Latium sic scindere corpus / dis placitum*, *BC* 10.416-17, 'thus to split apart the body of Latium was pleasing to the gods'

<sup>10</sup> One other use of the term indicates honourable death rather than defeat: *BC* 7.309. Ovid, *Met.* 5.95-96, could serve as a model for Lucan.

<sup>11</sup> Lucan writes: *cum calido fodiemus uiscera ferro*, *BC* 4.115; *nec plura locuto / uiscera non unus iam dudum transigit ensis*, *BC* 4.544-45; *iam latis uiscera lapsa / semianimes traxere foris multumque cruorem / infudere mari*. *BC* 4.566-68.

<sup>12</sup> The word *uiscera* is used 39 times in Lucan's epic. Occasionally it is an innocuous term for the entrails used for prophecy, *BC* 1.619, 624. But more often the narrator expresses horror of civil war using imagery of a sword into the guts: 1.377; 2.148; 7.467, 491, 579, 843; 8.566; 10.528. The term *uiscera* also symbolises one's very core, one's essence and has a strong connection with suicide, as the site of the death wound when falling on one's sword.

Wounds involving the belly or guts are common in epic. Homer has Idomeneus kill Oenomaus, *Il.* 13.506-11, with a spear thrust ‘to the belly’ (γαστέρα *Il.* 13.506), which lets all the ‘entrails’ (ἔντερα *Il.* 13.507) pour out.<sup>13</sup> Virgil has the warrior Antiphates suffer a javelin ‘to the stomach’ (*stomacho*, *Aen.* 9.699), and an unnamed soldier takes a spear ‘to the belly’ (*aluo*, *Aen.* 12.273). Allusion to the vulnerable central part of the body expresses the poet’s horror of such deadly wounds in war, and his pathos for the victims. Another epic belly wound is vividly described in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* where Nestor tells of the battle of the Centaurs and Lapiths, *Met.* 12.210-535. This battle is a parody of an epic battle: the location at a wedding; the legendary Lapiths and monstrous Centaurs as protagonists; and the weapons such as wine cups, flasks, lamp stands, table legs and deer’s antlers, are unusual to say the least, yet the wounds themselves are familiar from battle wounds found in Homeric epic.<sup>14</sup> Peleus strikes the middle ‘of the belly’ (*aluum*, *Met.* 12.389) of Dorylas, the Centaur, who then dragged his ‘guts’ (*uiscera*, *Met.* 12.390) on the earth:

prosiluit terraque ferox sua uiscera traxit  
tractaque calcauit calcataque rupit et illis  
crura quoque inpediit et inani concidit aluo. *Met.* 12.390-92

Fierce, he jumped forward, and dragged his own entrails on the earth, and  
dragging them, he trod on them, and treading them he burst them and he tangled  
his legs in them and he fell with an empty belly.

The double polyptoton of dragging and treading makes this picture not only vivid but also humorous especially when we think of the quantity of entrails and hooves that a Centaur has for trampling. Ovid may have been referring to an epic death found in Homer’s *Iliad*, where guts, although not trodden, pour out from their accustomed place. A spear through the back comes out through the middle of the belly, or ‘navel’ (ὀμφαλὸν, *Il.* 20.416), and causes the victim, Polydorus, to fall to

<sup>13</sup> See also ‘entrails’, ἔντερα *Il.* 14.518; 17.314; 20.486, as well as different terms for the same body parts: ‘bowels’, χολάδες, *Il.* 4.526, and ‘stomach’, γαστέρα, *Il.* 4.530; 13.370, 398; 16.465; 17.518; 21.180. See Saunders, 1999, 346-47, for the problems posed by Homer’s descriptions of wounds and the impossibility of entrails pouring out from a spear thrust.

<sup>14</sup> The location is also familiar from epic: a fight during a banquet is almost an epic trope: see *Od.* 4.524-40 and the story of Aegisthus killing Agamemnon at a feast, like an ox at the manger, *Od.* 535 which foreshadows Odysseus’ slaughter of the suitors as they feast, *Od.* 22.8-8: see especially *Od.* 22.14-21, 22.84-88. Lucan uses the same motif when he describes the abrupt and bloody end to fraternisation between the soldiers of Caesar and Pompey when the *concordes* ... *mensas* *BC* 4.197, give way to slaughter, *BC* 4.245-46.

his knees, holding his ‘entrails in his hands’ (ἔντερά χειρσὶ, *Il.* 20.418).<sup>15</sup> In Homer, the vivid image arouses pathos, while Ovid’s description of spilled entrails produces bathos or black humour.<sup>16</sup>

Lucan’s poem alludes to belly wounds as the second item in the catalogue: *quis fusa solo uitalia calcet*, *BC* 7.620, picks up the Ovidian excess of treading on entrails. Because Lucan is writing of civil war, rather than conventional epic battles to which he alludes, the answer to this unasked question can be ‘Rome’ again. Lucan combines images of gut wounds from Homer and Ovid, and subtly varies them using the term *uitalia* rather than *uiscera* and so accentuates the grief and suffering caused by such wounds.<sup>17</sup> The term *uitalia* includes the entrails, as well as those organs of the body such as the lungs and heart which are indispensable for life. Lucan uses the term often, not only as a descriptive term for the ‘entrails’ of the sacrificial bull revealed during *extispicium* by Arruns, but also to engage with ideas about where in the body the vital spark of life resides and the transition or boundary between life and death.<sup>18</sup> This concern is evident when a body is torn in two during the battle of Massilia and the lower limbs are described thus: *pars ultima trunci / tradidit in letum uacuos uitalibus artus*, *BC* 3.643, ‘the last part of his trunk handed over to death limbs empty of vital organs’. The *uitalia*, *BC* 6.197, ‘vital parts’, of another hero, Scaeva, are protected, paradoxically, by the number of spears sticking into him:

nec quicquam nudis uitalibus obstat  
iam praeter stantis in summis ossibus hastas. *BC* 6.194-95

Nor does anything stand before his naked vitals now beyond spears standing in the surface bones.

---

<sup>15</sup> See Saunders, 1999, 346-48, who writes that Homer’s description of gut wounds allowing the guts to pour out (*Il.* 13.506-11) ‘is not believable’ and offers other possibilities.

<sup>16</sup> Peek, 2001, 128-51.

<sup>17</sup> *OLD*: 4 ‘*uitalis*, indispensable to life, vital; parts of the body indispensable to life, vital parts’. In order for them to pour onto the ground the term here must be synonymous with entrails. In most cases, this is how Lucan uses the term in his poem.

<sup>18</sup> Lucan uses the term only once in its simplest meaning (*OLD*: 2. ‘that sustains life, life-giving’) when he tells that Libya lacks the climate for ‘life’ *uitalia*, *BC* 9.435. Virgil uses the term once only in his *Aeneid* to refer to life itself, *Aen.* 1.388, while Ovid does not use it at all in his *Metamorphoses*. Lucan uses the term *uitalia* more often to mean ‘indispensable to life’, see for example, *BC* 3.643, *BC* 9.743, 779.

This bizarre image stretches the ‘one against many’ scene found in Homeric epic.<sup>19</sup> Here one hero is wounded by so many spears that no more spears or arrows can make their way through to his vital organs, he is ‘bearing in his breast a dense forest’ (*densamque ferens in pectore siluam*, *BC* 6.205). Lucan parodies Virgil’s image of a forest of Mezentius’ spears fixed in Aeneas’ shield (*ter secum Troius heros / immanem aerato circumfert tegmine siluam*, *Aen.* 10.886-87, ‘thrice the Trojan hero bears round with him an immense forest on his bronze shield’), through the use of *siluam*, and through his use of the simile of Scaeva as a bear (*ursa*, *BC* 6.220) biting at her wound: *et secum fugientem circumit hastam* *BC* 6.223, ‘and she goes round, the spear fleeing with her’, where *circumit* picks up Virgil’s *circumfert*.

Rather than the peculiar idea of vitals protected by spears, the pathos of Homer’s image of a warrior cradling his entrails in his hands as he dies, or the absurdity of Ovid’s dying Centaur treading on his trailing guts, the reference to vital organs poured onto the ground draws attention to how Lucan’s poem presents death in civil war as the wasting or draining away of vitality and life from the society. In this particular item of the catalogue, self-reference is most obvious and highlights the poet’s concern not only with the physical change to various parts of the body as it passes from life to death, but also with the change and disintegration of society brought about by civil war. We see that Lucan’s alterations to the conventions of the genre stress his position as a politically aware narrator intruding into his text to equate the human body with the body of state, to lament the wounding and death inflicted on the republic by civil war.

The catalogue is striking for its vivid images of wounding, which not only allude to earlier epic wounds but are also to a large degree innovative. When the poet cannot ask: *ore quis aduerso demissum faucibus ensem / expulerit moriens anima*, *BC* 7.621-22, we can see a typical epic formula: the weapon, *ensem*, ‘sword’; site of wound, *faucibus*, ‘throat’; and end result, *moriens*, ‘dying’ but these elements are arranged in a new way to show variation to Homeric epic battle narrative. A

---

<sup>19</sup> See especially Hardie, 1993, 3-11. Also Henderson, 1998, 172. Homer’s individual Greek heroes are pitted against many: Odysseus, *Il.* 5.676, 11.411; Antiochus, *Il.* 13.551; Ajax, *Il.* 16.102; and the two called Ajax, *Il.* 17.725-47, in relation to Lucan’s *BC* 6.191-92.



sword (or spear) to the neck or throat is common in the *Iliad* of Homer.<sup>20</sup> Ajax kills Cleoboulus, hewing his αὐχένα, ‘neck’, with a ‘sword’ (ξίφει, *Il.* 16.332). Achilles draws his ξίφος ὀξύ, ‘sharp sword’, and strikes the ‘neck’ (αὐχένα, *Il.* 21.117) of Lycaon, into which the ‘two-edged sword’ (ξίφος ἄμφοτερος, *Il.* 21.118) plunges.<sup>21</sup> Virgil also follows this Homeric model of an enemy cut down with a sword as Turnus, snatching the ‘sword’ (*mucronem*, *Aen.* 12.357), from his victim’s hand, ‘stains’ (*tingit*, *Aen.* 12.358) it ‘in the throat’ (*iugulo*, *Aen.* 12.358) of dying Eumedes.<sup>22</sup> Here again the juxtaposition of the soft vulnerable human body parts with hard, sharp and heavy metal or wood evokes pathos. Achilles’ killing spree, *Il.* 21.17-26, is evoked when Virgil describes the death dealt out in the enemy camp by Nisus and Euryalus. Nisus uses his *ensem*, *Aen.* 9.324, ‘sword’, and ‘cuts’ (*secat*, *Aen.* 9.332) the ‘hanging necks’ (*pendentia colla*, *Aen.* 9.332) of the men, then he cuts the head off Remus and ‘leaves him sobbing out blood’ (*relinquit / sanguine singultantem*, *Aen.* 9.332-33).<sup>23</sup> Blood as a synonym for life is a common idea and when *sanguis* is coupled with the verb *singulto*, together they signify the last dying gasp of Remus, arousing a degree of pity for this warrior killed in the night.<sup>24</sup>

Ovid makes a stronger connection between the sound of gasping breath and loss of life when he uses the term in conjunction with *anima*, even though Dorylas has been speared in the groin rather than the throat:

---

<sup>20</sup> In the *Iliad*, Tlepolemus, *Il.* 5.657-58; Aisus, *Il.* 13.388; Aphareus, *Il.* 13.542; Euphorbus, *Il.* 17.45-49, all take a spear to the neck and on one occasion a spear precedes a sword stroke: *Il.* 20.455. Cutting of throats reminds us of sacrificial rites, and in Homer’s epic we have Patroclus’ dogs killed, *Il.* 23.174, and twelve of the enemy (captured *Il.* 21.27), likewise cut down, *Il.* 23.176. In Virgil’s *Aeneid*, Almo gets an arrow ‘through the throat’ (*guttore*, *Aen.* 7.533), and in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* Aphidas gets an iron tipped ash (which recalls Achilles’ spear) in the neck, *Met.* 12.323-26. See also *Met.* 12.362; and 299.

<sup>21</sup> This death is exceptional from the victor’s less than heroic treatment of the living suppliant Lycaon and his dead body. Achilles not only strikes the neck of a man begging for his life but hurls Lycaon’s body into the river and taunts his dead enemy savagely, saying that not only will his mother have no body to mourn but the fish will lick his wounds and will feed on his ‘shining fat’ (ἀργέτα δημόν, *Il.* 21.128).

<sup>22</sup> The two passages are closely connected by the brutality of words hurled at the dying victim: Achilles against Lycaon and Turnus against Eumedes.

<sup>23</sup> This scene of bloody carnage ends with the death of both Nisus and Euryalus. Volcens rages against them, *Aen.* 9.422-23, where we see Virgil imitating a line from Ennius, *Ann.* 1.95.

<sup>24</sup> The term *singulto* does not always denote dying, but does refer to sounds from the throat through the convulsion of sobbing, or dying. *OLD*: ‘1. to catch the breath, to gasp, *Aen.* 9.333; 2. to gasp out (one’s life); to utter with sobs, *Met.* 5.134.’ See also the later poets, Statius, *Theb.* 5.261, and Valerius Flaccus, 2.211.

... quem postquam uulneris auctor  
singultantem animam et uersantem lumina uidit  
Bactrius Halcyoneus ...

*Met.* 5.133-35

After the author of his wound, Bactrian Halcyoneus, saw him gasping out his life and his eyes rolling ...

Ovid makes it quite clear that both *anima* and *sanguis* are vital to life when he shows that Halcyoneus, having seen the result of his handiwork, gloated over the body, ‘and left a bloodless corpse’ (*corpusque exsangue reliquit. Met.* 5.136).

The term *singultantem* is an unusual word (in which I can hear gulping of air in the sound of the ‘gult’ syllable), but it has its cacophonous equivalent, in the perfect participle, κεκαφηότα, ‘gasping’, in Homer:

πνοιή Βορέας  
ζώγρει ἐπιπνείουσα κακῶς κεκαφηότα θυμόν.

*Il.* 5.697-98

The blast of Boreas blowing was rousing him as he was badly gasping out his life.

Although Sarpedon is not wounded in the throat, the guttural alliteration in the whole phrase, κακῶς κεκαφηότα θυμόν, suggests that he was almost on the point of death as he faints when the spear is removed from his thigh, but then his life is restored by the North Wind.<sup>25</sup> Both κεκαφηότα and *singultantem*, are participles which convey the sounds of gasping and the gulps of sobbing, made throaty or liquid by trauma, tears or blood. Pathos and horror are added to the description of the death of Pompey using this term: ‘while the features are alive and sobs of breath impel the mouth to murmur’ (*dum uiuunt uoltus atque os in murmura pulsant / singultus animae, BC* 8.683).<sup>26</sup>

Often a more straight-forward description is used for the last breath of life. Virgil describes Acron ‘breathing out his life’ (*expirans, Aen.* 10.731) and Orodes (*expirans, Aen.* 10.739), but combines the verb with *anima* for emphasis when he writes that the Latins, as they retreated into the city ‘breathe out their life spirit’

<sup>25</sup> It is fitting that Sarpedon, a Trojan, should be so noisy as he faints when we remember the description of the Trojan side as it enters battle ‘with the clamour of cranes’ (κλαγγή γεράνων, *Il.* 3.3).

<sup>26</sup> Ovid uses the term to add pathos to his description of the sound of his faithful friend’s gulping sobs in their tearful embrace at the time of his relegation, a departure which is like death, yet leaves the poet alive to write elegy from his place of exile at the edge of the world, *Tr.* 3.5.16.

(*expirant animas*, *Aen.* 11.883). Ovid, changing the word to *exhalo*, yet keeping the sense the same, writes of Lycabas weeping at seeing Athis ‘breathing out his life beneath his bitter wound’ (*exhalantem sub acerbo uulnere uitam*, *Met.* 5.62). The victim in an epic death scene is pictured *expirans*, the *anima*, at the moment of dying. Homer refers to the hero ‘breathing out’ (ἀποπνείων, *Il.* 4.524) his ‘life’, ‘spirit’ or ‘soul’ (θυμὸν, *Il.* 4.524) just before death.<sup>27</sup> Homer’s use of another term for life, ψυχή, seen in the phrase ‘there his life and strength were scattered’ (τοῦ δ’ αὖθι λύθη ψυχή τε μένος τε, *Il.* 5.296; 8.123 and 315) is emphasised by the repetition of this formulaic line. This term is also found in the identical descriptions for the death scene of Patroclus *Il.* 16.855-57 and Hector *Il.* 22.361-63, which further underscores its importance.

Ὡς ἄρα μιν εἰπόντα τέλος θανάτοιο κάλυψε,  
 ψυχή δ’ ἐκ ρεθέων παμένη Ἄϊδος δὲ βεβήκει  
 ὄν πότμον γοόωσα λιποῦσ’ ἀνδροτῆτα καὶ ἥβην. *Il.* 16.855-57 and  
 22.361-63

So the end of death covered him as he spoke and his soul, flying from his limbs,  
 went to Hades mourning its fate and leaving behind manhood and youth.

The Greek terms θυμός and ψυχή seem to be used almost interchangeably when describing life lost through wounding and death, and in similar fashion, Latin has *uitalia* and *animus*. As well as these terms, the verb *exspiro*, when used alone, is often taken to mean the loss or end of life, rather than the more usual ‘to breathe out’.<sup>28</sup>

Although unwilling through shame to ask: *quis corruat ictus*, *BC* 7.622, here Lucan evokes Homer’s dying heroes. Homer uses the expression, ‘he fell thunderously’ (δούπησεν δὲ πεσών) nineteen times in his *Iliad* and thus it becomes an epic trope.<sup>29</sup> In contrast to this simple notation of death, Lucan follows up with another reluctant question: *quis steterit dum membra cadunt*, *BC* 7.623, and further engages with ideas of the form death takes as well as with the

<sup>27</sup> See also ‘breathing out life’, ἀποπνείων θυμὸν, *Il.* 13.654; 20.403 and ‘life’, θυμός, coupled with a verb of stripping, taking or losing: *Il.* 5.852; 6.17; 17.236; 20.290, 436; 21.112, 296; 22.68.

<sup>28</sup> OLD: 3. ‘(intr) to breath one’s last, expire, die’. See Muellner, 1996, 34, on the absolute value of ψυχή, or ‘life’s breath’, illustrated by Achilles words at *Il.* 406-09.

<sup>29</sup> See: *Iliad* 4.524; 5.540, 617; 11.449; 13.187, 373, 442; 15.421, 524, 578; 16.325, 401, 599, 822; 17.50, 311, 580; 20.388. Macrobius compares Virgil’s *Aen.* 10.488 with Ennius, *Ann.* 16.411, and Homer, *Il.* 4.504. Skutsch, 1985, 576-77.

boundaries between life and death. In this question, we can see Lucan acknowledging the epic tradition of limbs cut off in battle. Homer writes of a blow to Hypsenor's 'shoulder' (ὤμων, *Il.* 5.80) and the cut off 'arm' (χεῖρ, *Il.* 5.82) falling; Hippolochus, attacked by Agamemnon who cuts his 'arms' (χεῖρας, *Il.* 11.146) away from his 'neck' (αὐχένα, *Il.* 11.146); also of Maris who receives a blow to his 'shoulder' (ὤμων, *Il.* 16.323) and his 'arm' (βραχίονα, *Il.* 16.323) is torn 'away from the muscle and bone' (ἄπὸ μύωνων, ἄπὸ δ' ὀστέον, *Il.* 16.324). In Homer's *Iliad* the loss of a body part is equivalent to death.

Virgil alters the image slightly when he writes that Aeneas' spear went through the shoulder of Alcanor: *dexteraque ex umero neruis moribunda pependit*, *Aen.* 10.341, 'and the dying hand hung by tendons from the shoulder', and develops the image further when he has Pallas address one of twin brothers: *te decisa suum, Laride, dextera quaerit / semianimesque micant digiti ferrumque retractant*, *Aen.* 10.395-96, 'as your hand, being severed, seeks its own, Larides, and the fingers, half alive, tremble and take in hand again the sword'. We can see a progression from the bleeding arm of Homer's Hypsenor, through Virgil's portrayal of the dying arm of Alcanor, to his bizarre image of Larides' severed hand still trying to fight although severed from the body.<sup>30</sup> Virgil may have used these images of severed body parts to underscore the great effort Aeneas has to make to fulfil his destiny, how he suffers the loss of wife, father and comrades on his way to found Rome. The idea of severed body parts still alive and able to function is present in Homer. He describes the death of Dolon: φθεγγομένου δ' ἄρα τοῦ γε κάρη κονίησιν ἐμίχθη, *Il.* 10.457, 'the head of him still speaking, mingled in the dust', so adding pathos to the death of this spying Trojan, who could not talk his way out of death, even after Odysseus had encouraged him to betray the Trojan position.<sup>31</sup> Homer seems to use the image of Dolon's cut-off head still speaking to stress the futility of Trojan speech opposed to the famous eloquence of Odysseus.

<sup>30</sup> Skutsch, 1985, 647-49, writes about Servius on *Aen.* 10.395-96: 'the idea is Ennius' thus - *oscitat in campis caput a ceruice reuolsum / semianimesque micant oculi lucemque requirunt*, *Ann.* 483-84, 'On the plain his head gapes, torn off from his neck and his half-alive eyes tremble and seek again the light'; also Lactantius on Statius *Theb.* 11.56, 'so Ennius', *quomque caput caderet carmen tuba sola peregit / et pereunte uiro raucum sonus aere cucurrit*, *Ann.* 485-86, 'and when his head was falling the trumpet alone drove on the song and with the hero perishing, a raucous sound rushed from the brass'.

<sup>31</sup> For parts of the body able to function or act while dying see also, *Il.* 4.75, *Il.* 11.749, *Il.* 2.418 and *Il.* 22.14.

Ovid acknowledges the importance of speech in his *Metamorphoses* with its series of story-tellers. His description of the death of Lampetides is laden with pathos and made more emphatic by the use of apostrophe. Lampetides is described as a singer, a bystander: *plectrumque inbelle tenentem*, *Met.* 5.114, 'holding an unwarlike plectrum', who is killed with a sword. The description verges on the absurd, however, by the way he is shown in death: *concidit et digitis morientibus ille retemptat / fila lyrae, casuque ferit miserabile carmen*, *Met.* 5.117-18, 'he fell and with his dying fingers he tried again the strings of his lyre and in his fall he struck a pitiable song'.<sup>32</sup> Black humour in this passage draws attention to the poet's interest in the moment of change. Here the metamorphosis is from living artist of the lyre to one whose skill deserts him in death. Throughout the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid places great emphasis on the moment of change from human to another less human but still living form, a tree, stream, animal or bird, but here the end is death.<sup>33</sup> When the change is from human to an inanimate object such as a stone, this thing frequently retains some resemblance to the living human: it may, for example, seem to weep. For the most part, Ovid seems to avoid death as the final transformation and often hubris can be seen as an underlying cause when he does relate such conclusive change.<sup>34</sup> Interest in what constitutes human life or spirit is spread throughout ancient literature.

Lucan shows a similar concern with the moment of death, evident in his descriptions of bodies in battle, especially when the body is dismembered. We remember the soldiers during the sea-battle torn apart and dismembered in Lucan's *Bellum Civile*.<sup>35</sup> A soldier at Massilia has his arms and hands cut off, *BC* 3.615-17, left clinging to the boat, *BC* 3.666-69; and Scaeva cuts off hands of soldiers clinging to the ramparts, *BC* 6.176. In all but the last, attention is drawn to the limb or part once it has been separated from the body. But the strangest dismemberment of all occurs during the soldiers' encounter with snakes in Libya,

<sup>32</sup> See also Ovid's gruesome description of Philomela's cut-off tongue trying to talk, *Met.* 6.560, which evokes a mixture of pity, revulsion and humour, like Lucan's account of Marius' mutilated head, *BC* 2.181-82.

<sup>33</sup> For example: Trees, *Met.* 1.452ff., *Met.* 8.618ff.; Stream: *Met.* 5.572ff.; Animal: *Met.* 1.232ff., *Met.* 3.198ff.; Bird: *Met.* 11.411ff., *Met.* 5.300ff; Stone: *Met.* 6.305.

<sup>34</sup> It is overweening pride which sparks the conflict at both weddings, Book 5 and Book 12. See also *Met.* 2.311-24, *Met.* 8.195ff.

<sup>35</sup> See Masters, 1992, 45. Most, 1992, 400-05.

when Murrus cuts off his poisoned hand at the shoulder and watches it die: *exemplarque sui spectans miserabile leti / stat tutus pereunte manu*, *BC* 9.832-33, ‘and gazing at the wretched example of his own death, he stands safe as his hand dies’. This example of self-harm also combines the pathetic with farce and can be seen as grotesque.<sup>36</sup> We find that in earlier epic loss of a limb usually ends in death and no extant earlier writers of epic seem to engage as closely with the question of how the body dies as Lucan does in this poem.

In the catalogue of wounds, the next question the narrator does not want to ask is: *qui pectore tela / transmittant aut quos campis adfixerit hasta?* *BC* 7.623-24, and again I suggest that the question highlights the role of weapons and wounds in war and causes another rush of images from earlier epic. The breast, as a site for fatal wounding, is very common in epic and generally denotes a good heroic death in contrast to the un-heroic wound to the back of a fleeing soldier. Wounds to the breast are generally fatal and, although the breast is mostly protected by armour, epic writers take pains to show that the breast is penetrated by an arrow or a spear or a sword in spite of, or around, such armour.<sup>37</sup> In Lucan’s *Bellum Civile*, the traditional glorious chest wound is rendered ridiculous as his poem tells of two spears pushed out of the body by blood, *BC* 3.590, and when a quivering javelin stuck in the breast of Telo, *BC* 3.598, his dying hand turned his ship away from the enemy. To be fixed on the plains with a spear is another formulaic way of describing death in battle but the term *adfixerit*, brings to mind weapons either stuck in wounds or fixed in unlikely parts of the body. The vivid image of a spear stuck fast and pulsing to the beat of the dying heart of Alcathous is well known from Homer, *Il.* 13.441-44.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> See Bartsch, 1997, 19, on the ‘abject’. Gilbert, 2001, 170-72, stresses that: ‘the grotesque can be understood as a mode of description that depends on various types of incongruity to achieve its unique aesthetic effect’. He goes on to state Bakhtin’s view that: ‘the grotesque body is not a closed, completed unit - stress is laid on those parts of the body that are open to the outside world. In epic terms, the grotesque body is the wounded body, the dismembered body, the body discharging blood, brains, guts’.

<sup>37</sup> We find many breast wounds: *Il.* 11.143-44; 13.186; 15.420; 15.420, 523; 16.312, 400, 598; *Aen.* 9.347-50, 700; 10.336-37, 485, 558, 586, 601; 11.666-67, 799-803; 12.959; *Met.* 5.69; 12.117, 254-57, 377, 452.

<sup>38</sup> See Fenik, 1968, 133, who writes: ‘this is clearly a perversion of *Il* 612 and *P* 528, where a spear stands quivering in the ground’. See also Saunders, 1999, 349, who writes in an account of this particular wounding: ‘This is the best example of a wound thought to be unrealistic but in fact quite explicable’.

Virgil has no such image, the only similarity can be found in his more conventional use of the term as Nisus prays to the goddess, reminding her how he has fixed his hunting trophies in her temples, *Aen.* 9.407-08. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Nestor uses the term to describe Pelates, whose 'right hand was fixed' (*dextera fixa est*, *Met.* 5.124) to a doorpost, as well as a lance entering the ribs of Petraeus, which *fixit*, 'fixed', his *pectora*, 'breast', to hard oak, *Met.* 12.330-31. Ovid intensifies the image when Hodites is killed: *Mopso iaculante biformis / occubuit frustra que loqui temptavit Hodites / ad mentum lingua mentoque ad guttura fixo.* *Met.* 12.456-58, 'With Mopsus throwing a javelin, the two-formed Hodites was laid low and attempted to speak, in vain, with his tongue pinned to his chin and his chin to his throat.' Polyptoton, (*mentum*, *mento*) and exaggeration, appropriate for Nestor's tall tale of the battle between the Centaurs and the Lapiths, is used here by Ovid to parody Homeric epic.

Lucan changes further the epic topos of falling to the dust in battle, or being pinned on the plain, when he stages his most epic battle on water. With ships taking the place of land or the plains of war, *BC* 3.557, there is a gesture toward earlier epic in the image of a soldier, struck by a spear and 'nailed to the ship' (*adfixusque rati*, *BC* 3.601-02) instead of the plain. Evoked by the question of whose breast was pierced, this image places Homeric and Virgilian epic battle descriptions under scrutiny. We can read Lucan's emphasis on the extraordinary by way of the customary as a form of political comment, with a soldier's body corresponding to the republic and the weapons of both parties are equally implicated in its destruction through civil war.

New images are aroused by the next item in the catalogue. When the poet suggests that he is ashamed to ask about: *quis cruor emissis perruperit aera uenis / inque hostis cadat arma sui*, *BC* 7.625-26, we see a reluctance to describe such close proximity of opponents in the battle at Pharsalus that the blood of one unnamed soldier can fall onto his enemy.<sup>39</sup> We can see in Lucan's poem an allusion to and an alteration of Virgil's more conventional image of Mezentius' blood staining his

---

<sup>39</sup> With Gagliardi, 1975, I see that *quis* = *quibus*.

own armour: *haec loquitur, iuguloque haud inscius accipit ensem / undantique animam diffundit in arma cruore*, *Aen.* 10.907-08, ‘he said these things, and takes the sword in the throat, not unaware, and he pours out his life’s breath, with blood flowing on his armour’. Visible *cruor*, ‘blood’ or ‘gore’, and *arma*, ‘armour’, are the dominant images of an epic poem. Glory and fame are based on how much enemy blood can be spilt and armour is central to the measure of heroic honour and glory.<sup>40</sup> Possession of wonderful armour, with its gleaming brightness, potent symbols and protective strength, plays a crucial role in epic battles. The loss of prized armour to the enemy is the ultimate disgrace, and in Homeric battle narrative there are many scenes where warriors defend the τεύχεα, ‘armour’ of their comrades or snatch the armour of their enemies and these events are used to arouse sympathy for the fallen or admiration for the successful combatant.<sup>41</sup> Blood on a warrior’s armour is less significant in Homer’s epic than the dust which degrades it or the sound it makes as the warrior falls in death. Repetition creates a formula for the death of individual warriors in battle: δούπησεν δὲ πεσών, ὀράβησε δὲ τεύχε' ἐπ' αὐτῷ *Il.* 4.504 ‘he fell thunderously and his armour clattered about him’.<sup>42</sup>

The metonym of armour for soldiers or the defeated army found in the *Iliad* adds pathos, as does exaggeration when we read that the arms and the sands were wet with tears after the death of Patroclus, *Il.* 23.15.<sup>43</sup> Virgil clearly alludes to Homer when his epic depicts Aeneas’ arms, especially the shield, and when it has the armour of Pallas worn by Turnus in the role of catalyst for Aeneas’ anger in the

<sup>40</sup> Neal, 2006, 179, writes: ‘To be blood-spattered is, for a mortal, not such a bad thing, but for a warrior to be stained with other men’s blood, and more particularly, his own, demonstrates heroic prowess’.

<sup>41</sup> Not only are arming scenes important to Homer’s *Iliad*: 3.328-38; 6.340, 504; 7.103, 120-60, 191, 207-07; 11.15-55; 13.241; 16.130-54; 19.364-424; (see Armstrong, 1958, 337-54). Armour is a significant factor in the death and capture of opponents: *Il.* 4.466, 532; 5.435, 618, 621; 7.78, 82; 13.202, 509; 15.428, 583; 16.560; 17.70, and to have the armour stripped is shameful, *Il.* 16.500. Armour is protection: *Il.* 22.322; and reward, 23.803, 809. Achaeans seem to strip armour successfully more times than Trojans: *Il.* 11.110, 247; 13.619; 21.183, yet it is Hector’s act of taking and putting on the armour snatched from Patroclus which drives part of the battle: *Il.* 17.125, 130, 191, 194, 202, 208, and 472. Achilles has new armour: *Il.* 18.137, 144, 192, 466, 617; 19.10, yet he laments the loss of his own armour and his own weakness in allowing Patroclus to wear it to his death: *Il.* 18.82, 451, and promises Hector’s head and armour for the funeral pyre of Patroclus, *Il.* 18.335.

<sup>42</sup> See also *Il.* 5.42, 540; 13.187; 17.50, 311 for repetition of the whole formula as well as the shortened form: ὀράβησε δὲ τεύχε' ἐπ' αὐτῷ *Il.* 5.58 ‘and his armour clattered about him’ repeated at *Il.* 5.294; 8.260; and with a slight variation at *Il.* 12.396.

<sup>43</sup> As metonym for army see *Il.* 17.760; 21.301.



concluding scene, *Aen.* 12.941-43.<sup>44</sup> Virgil also alludes to Homer's formula for death in battle when he writes of Bitias, *Aen.* 9.709, and Pallas, 10.487-88, felled by Turnus. Ovid omits any mention of armour, but then his 'epic' battles occur at wedding feasts, so location and lack of armour neatly subvert epic conventions. The effect of this lack of armour is not only to make his *Metamorphoses* different from Homeric and especially Virgilian epic, but, more importantly, to accentuate that his poem is all about mutation and change. Lucan's poem amplifies both Ovid's distortions and Virgil's preservation of epic tropes and we can see this in the portrayal of armour at the battle of Pharsalus.

Arms traditional for epic are found in Lucan's *Bellum Civile*: swords, spears, arrows, shields and helmets and all play a part in the carnage of bloody killing. But much more emphasis is placed on war engines, earthworks, fortifications and troop movements, than on the individual soldier's armour.<sup>45</sup> Lucan shifts the focus away from individual heroes and their accoutrements toward descriptions of opposing armies, probably because in a poem about civil war it is hard to grant hero status to any one warrior because one side in a civil war battle is indistinguishable from the other, since all are Romans. Lucan's poem generalises about armour, but in conventional epic terms recalling Homer through Virgil when it tells of the sounds of the battle of Pharsalus: *et pondere lapsi / pectoris arma sonant confractique ensibus enses*, 'and arms clatter with the weight of falling breasts and swords broken on swords', *BC* 7.572-73. Alliteration of 'p' and 's' sounds in conjunction with the polyptoton *ensibus enses*, in Lucan's poem draws attention to the description.

All the questions so far have evoked diverse epic poets and their descriptions of wounds, weapons and death in battle, and have also called to mind Lucan's own battle descriptions. Negation voiced at the beginning points up a change to conventional battle narrative. In effect, Lucan is questioning the propriety of writing about the wounds and weapons of the civil war battle at Pharsalus in the traditional way. So although the individual forms of death in his catalogue (and

---

<sup>44</sup> Virgil describes the reaction of Aeneas to the sight, *Aen.* 12.945-47.

<sup>45</sup> See especially Lucan's detailed descriptions of the building of siege-works for land battle at Massilia, *BC* 3.455-508 and Caesar's earthworks at Dyrrachium, *BC* 6.29-54.

the catalogue itself) evoke the epic tradition, the allusions foreground his own alterations to the genre. Lucan looks back to Homer through Ovid and Virgil, but he makes the images of death suit the subject and focus of his own poem, the destruction of the republic through civil war.

Because the list is so strongly reminiscent of conventional epic wounds and death, while at the same time it is couched in the negative, the reader can see the narrator's deviation from the traditions of the genre. The poem shows up the very wounds that the narrator refuses to tell, emphasising them by this rhetorical *praeteritio*. In this way, the poet indicates that there is more to his epic than can be found in the traditional form of the genre. Items at the end of the catalogue reinforce this deviation from the norm. The last elements of the list to be passed over out of shame evoke atrocities rather than heroic wounds conventional for epic and are specific to a different style of battle narrative. Lucan's alterations to the genre come about because Rome's civil war as subject necessitates a changed style of narration, an inter-relation between allusion to and modification of the formulas of Homeric epic. For Lucan, the un-heroic acts of carnage are appropriate because he is writing about a civil war, not a war against a foreign foe where honour and glory come from killing an accepted enemy. Civil war itself can be seen to disrupt not only the society but also the standards and traditions of poetry. Lucan seems to allude to earlier epic poets in order to modify or alter earlier representations of battle because of his subject. Rather than the separate ancestry of individual warriors essential to the honour and glory gained by the victor against a recognisable enemy, Lucan has the similarity between the protagonists as a theme running through his poem. We can see that Lucan frequently draws attention to the problem of securely identifying the active protagonist in civil war. I have shown how the Antaeus / Hercules episode in Book 4 points up this correspondence and here I see the focal point is also the likeness and even kinship between opponents. Although the two opposing forces are led by named generals, Caesar and Pompey, both are Romans and both inflict damage on Rome in their battle for leadership.<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> Although Lucan tries to portray Caesar as the aggressor and Pompey as defender of the republic this cannot be firmly maintained as Pompey is shown to have ambitions for leadership

When the poet says he cannot ask: *quis pectora fratris / caedat, et, ut notum possit spoliare cadauer, / abscisum longe mittat caput*, *BC* 7.626-8, he accentuates the aberration of brothers taking up arms to kill each other, stressing the difference between brothers opposed to each other, fighting on opposite sides in war, when the epic convention is to emphasise the heroic value of brothers fighting and dying side by side. The sadness and loss to family of brothers cut down in war, or the tragedy of a soldier killed while trying to avenge the death of his brother can be found often in earlier epics. Homer often uses the term *κασίγνητος*, ‘brother’, and shows that this special relationship has wider ramifications because the death or wounding of brothers in war brings greater grief to their parents.<sup>47</sup> Family ties also increase the need for vengeance and the duty of support during battle as brothers often come under attack together in the *Iliad*. Homer has one pair of brothers, Antilochus and Thrasymedes, kill another pair of brothers, Atymnius and Maris, and the narrator follows the description of the deaths with an anecdote about the victims’ father, Amisodarus, in order to increase even further the unhappy outcome, *Il.* 16.317-25. Homer always shows brothers fighting on the same side, even when opposing another set of paired brothers and in this way underscores the familial obligations and kinship bonds so important to the heroic code.

Virgil also has conventional paired brothers suffering death and picks up on Homer’s images of brothers fighting or being killed while fighting on the same side. We see seven brothers against Aeneas: *septem numero, septenaque tela / coniciunt Aen.* 10.329-30, ‘seven in number and they throw seven weapons’, and later nine brothers fight, but this time for Aeneas: *ut forte nouem pulcherrima fratrum / corpora constiterant contra, Aen.* 12.270-71, ‘as per chance most handsome bodies of nine brothers had stood together against [them]’.<sup>48</sup> In this

---

himself, acknowledged by Cato, *BC* 2.320-23. Also discussed by Behr, 2007, 9; Coffee, 2009, 118; Green, 1994, 233; Sklenář, 2003, 101-36; Walde, 2006, 47-49; and Walker, 1996, 84.

<sup>47</sup> In Homer’s *Iliad*, the term ‘brother’, *κασίγνητος*, is used often: *Il.* 6.421, 430; 7.48; 11.257; 12.371; 15.436, 466; 16.456, 674; 20.419; 24.47, 739, and the term for a closer family relationship, ‘full-brother’, *αὐτοκασίγνητος*, *Il.* 2.706; 11.427; 13.534; 14.156; 16.718, as well as the plural form *Il.* 3.333; 5.357, 474; 6.239; 8.330; 9.567, 632; 11.350; 14.483; 15.545; 16.320, 326; 19.293; 21.469. Brothers are also indicated as being two sons of one father, *Il.* 5.148, 152; 11.122; 20.460; or ‘twin sons’, *διδυμάονε παῖδε*, *Il.* 5.548, for extra pathos. Another common pattern is a brother who tries to avenge his slain brother and is killed in the attempt: *Il.* 11.246-63, 426-48; 14.476-88; 20.419-40.

<sup>48</sup> Virgil’s portrayal of brothers; *Aen.* 5.495, 514; 9.736; 10.403, 576; 12.509.

way, Virgil seems to add to descriptions of individual opposed warriors by depicting many members of the one family, so now closer ties are found among the troops of first one side then the other. It can be seen as a transition stage between Homer's depiction of single or paired fighters and Lucan's squadrons of unnamed soldiers in battle.

The relationship between paired brothers is intensified when they are twins. Virgil, Ovid and Lucan all make much of the separate and different deaths suffered by twin brothers, as if the severance through death of the closer bonds of a shared birth, amplifies the grief felt by parents.<sup>49</sup> Virgil, however, refers to the pair of twin brothers, Romulus and Remus, famously opposed to each other at the foundation of Rome, *Aen.* 1.292, and has the Sibyl show Aeneas the final place of torment, Tartarus: 'for those who hated their brothers' (*quibus inuisi fratres*, *Aen.* 6.608). In these two examples, we can see that Virgil deviates slightly from the conventions of epic. As a self-conscious narrator he evaluates the story of Aeneas against historical and contemporary Roman society and also makes oblique reference to civil war, the kind of war where brothers are called on to fight against each other.

Ovid's *Metamorphoses* avoids the traditional bonds between brothers in battle. It does, however, show the winds as brothers at war with each other: *tanta est discordia fratrum*, *Met.* 1.60, 'so great is the discord of the brothers.'<sup>50</sup> Ovid's poem also engages with ideas of internecine or mutually destructive conflict when it presents the mythical battle among 'earthborn brothers' (*terrigenis ... fratribus*, *Met.* 3.118) sown by Cadmus at the foundation of Thebes.<sup>51</sup> It is worth noting that

---

<sup>49</sup> Virgil writes of identical twin brothers, Larides and Thymber, who are made dissimilar by their different means of death, *Aen.* 10.392. See Ovid, *Met.* 5.107, for the death of *gemini fratres*, 'twin brothers', and again twin warriors, *Met.* 5.140-41. Virgil also has *gemini fratres*, *Aen.* 7.670, 'twin brothers', Corus and Catillus, listed in his catalogue of Italian troops who reappear, *Aen.* 11.465, 604. Lucan stretches the topos of twins falling in death to accentuate the sorrow caused to the parents, not only from the death of one, but from the silent reminder of that death in the life of the other twin, *BC* 3.603-08.

<sup>50</sup> See also a description of the type of war waged by the winds, *Met.* 6.693-96, and how they stir up a storm, *Met.* 14.545.

<sup>51</sup> This style of battle is repeated during Ovid's story of Jason's labours to win the Golden Fleece, *Met.* 7.141-42. He also writes of the winds as fighting brothers, *Met.* 1.60; 6.693 and 14.545, as well as the earth, sky and sea gods as brothers, *Met.* 1.275; 2.291, 293; 7.367, and how in the Age of Iron, there was no love between brothers, *Met.* 1.145. See also a similar image, *Met.* 7.141-42.

when Lucan is setting the scene for the final battle at Pharsalus in Book 6, the poet digresses to describe Thessaly drawing on myth and legend; stories which often portray family strife of one kind or another and perversion of family relationships, *BC* 6.333-412.<sup>52</sup> Conflict between brothers is always shown in a negative light and is in direct contrast to the Homeric image of brothers supporting each other, fighting on the same side against a common enemy. Brothers fighting against each other are a symbol of civil war.

While Virgil's epic hints at the problem of brothers fighting against each other and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* describes such a fight between brothers as civil war, the theme of civil war permeates Lucan's epic because this is his subject, this is the type of conflict, characterised as Romans fighting against Romans, which signalled the end of the Roman republic. Escalation of emphasis on the subject of brothers in conflict is indicative of the way Lucan's poem works against the limitations of the genre. Lucan mentions that the foundations of Rome are stained with brothers' blood *BC* 1.95, and tells us that brothers killed and murdered each other in Rome under the leadership of Sulla and Marius, *BC* 2.98-233, as I have shown above, in chapter 3.<sup>53</sup> Conflict between members of the one family, brothers and fathers, becomes the poet's way to focus on the main difference between foreign and civil warfare. As well, emphasis is placed on the bodies of these family members, the breasts of brothers, the throats of fathers, *BC* 1.376, 7.183, making civil war an unspeakable crime. The overt point of view of the narrator reiterates that strife among family members is a great wrong.<sup>54</sup>

Both recognition and non-recognition of family members adds pathos to the description of the reprehensible conflict of civil war. To illustrate that the soldier in civil war must resort to barbarous acts, Lucan writes: *et, ut notum possit spoliare cadauer / abscisum longe mittat caput*, *BC* 7.627-28. In this section of

---

<sup>52</sup> Ovid introduces his story of Meleager with famous 'twin brothers' Castor and Pollux. He emphasises family relationships, *Met.* 8.372-520. Inversion of family relationships is also explored, *Met.* 9.454-665.

<sup>53</sup> There are three main parallels between the wounds not described here, *BC* 7.626-30, and atrocities described in the story of the death and destruction to Romans under Marius and Sulla, *BC* 2.98-233: brothers killing brothers, the mutilation of faces and the problem of recognising the dead for decent burial.

<sup>54</sup> See especially the fraternisation scene during the battle of Ilerda, *BC* 4.169-72.

the passage we can isolate three separate ideas: the spoils of war, the body as corpse and the defacement of the defeated enemy. The first idea is roused by the term *spoliare* and forms a conventional image of the honourable acquisition of spoils of war. I have spoken above about the role of armour in epic battles: as protection, means of identification, reward, status symbol and its sound when falling as a signifier of death. Arms and armour are important symbols of status or heroism and we think of the magnificent shields of Achilles and Aeneas in the epics of Homer and Virgil.<sup>55</sup> Heroic warriors, accustomed also to take valuable armour as booty from the fallen, are also driven to avenge its loss. In civil war, this becomes understandably problematic since the dead might be close kin, whose armour would come by right to sons and brothers after a death in battle. To strip the arms from the enemy when the enemy in civil war turns out to be family members creates shame and pity, rather than merited glory. This is why the narrator is ashamed to relate such a perversion of the conventions of Homeric epic battle narrative.

The second and third ideas, an opponent depersonalised as ‘the corpse’, (*cadaver*), and the removal of the most recognisable part of the body, ‘the head’, (*caput*), are atrocities pertaining to civil war rather than the traditional epic battle encounter. Reference to the defeated soldier as *cadaver*, undercuts the worth of the antagonist and in this way reduces or negates entirely any honour gained from the battle. Evident from the uneasy juxtaposition of the neuter noun *cadaver*, ‘corpse’ or ‘carcass’, and its adjective *notum*, ‘known’, the reader can sense the deliberate effort needed in civil war to render the opponent as ‘enemy’. Separation of the head from the body further intensifies the objectification of the opponent, making it out to be indistinguishable remains instead of a worthy adversary.

Removal of identification, however, is the very aim of beheading in Lucan’s *Bellum Civile*, and is essential for the guiltless plunder of spoils. Here we see Lucan again inverting the usual elements of epic to suit the subject matter of his poem. His reference to the mutilation and defilement of an opponent in war,

---

<sup>55</sup> Arms and armour are valuable items, handed down through families and used to cement bonds of friendship. See *Il.* 6.232-36; 7.147-47. See Clausen, 2002, 174-184, who suggests a parallel between Achilles and Aeneas, that both heroes are just not interested in the ecphrasis on their respective shields, but value them only for their strength.

however, could be seen to look back to Homer's *Iliad*, where Achilles drags the body behind his chariot: Hector's head and hair are dragged in the dust, *Il.* 22.398-401. Although Achilles does not cut off Hector's head, he expresses the outrageous wish: ὄμ' ἀποταμνόμενον κρέα ἔδμεναι, *Il.* 22.347, 'to cut off your flesh to eat it raw'. When he tells Hector he will allow dogs and birds to desecrate his corpse, *Il.* 22.354, the shame of these unseemly actions is justified as appropriate vengeance for the death of Achilles' comrade, Patroclus.<sup>56</sup> While the beheading of a suppliant carries negative connotations, and we are made aware of this through the pitiable image of Dolon's head, still pleading for his life when cut off by Diomedes, *Il.* 10.454-57, Homer describes the removal of heads in battle, for the most part in perfunctory terms.<sup>57</sup>

Virgil also describes decapitation during the heat of battle in an offhand almost mechanical way.<sup>58</sup> But in contrast, as Aeneas tells Dido of the death of Priam, the emotive language used renders this particular beheading in very negative terms: *uidi Hecubam centumque nurus Priamumque per aras / sanguine foedantem quos ipse sacrauerat ignis*, *Aen.* 2.501-03, 'I saw Hecuba and a hundred daughters-in-law and Priam around the altars, polluting with his blood the fires which he himself had sanctified'. It concludes with an unforgettable image of the dead leader: *iacet ingens litore truncus, / auulsumque umeris caput et sine nomine corpus*, *Aen.* 2.557-58, 'his huge trunk lay on the shore, and his head torn from his shoulders, and a body without a name', and is a clear allusion to Pompey, recently beheaded when Virgil's poem was written.<sup>59</sup>

Probably as a result of Ovid's concentration on the transformation of whole bodies and the plight of the human spirit trapped within a changing body, death by beheading is uncommon in his epic. He inserts one horrific instance of this kind of death when he relates the death of Orpheus, *Met.* 11.1-53, whose head and lyre were tossed into the river where the tongue continues to murmur, adding bathos to

<sup>56</sup> That these actions are unseemly is made clear when Hector's body is retrieved, *Il.* 22.404.

<sup>57</sup> See: *Il.* 11.257-61; 13.201-05; 14.465-68; 20.481-83. But Segal, 1971, 21, writing on the formulaic language of *Il.* 17.125-27 suggests: 'the formulas do their work of creating an atmosphere of endless accumulation of horror and all-encompassing cruelty'.

<sup>58</sup> See Virgil's description of Turnus in battle, *Aen.* 12.382. Turnus also kills the brothers, Amycus and Dioreas, *Aen.* 12.511-12, but Aeneas is also shown as an epic killer, *Aen.* 10.554-56.

<sup>59</sup> See Hinds, 1998, 8-10.

an otherwise poignant vignette. Through allusion to Virgil and Homer, Ovid both alludes to and changes the conventions of the epic genre, but Lucan makes greater changes, not in light-hearted parody, but, on the contrary, through serious condemnation of the horror of civil war.

As well as suggesting earlier epic in order to change it, Lucan seems to be engaging in a political critique, equating the body with the Roman republic because in this poem, beheading always points to the death and beheading of Pompey who is linked with the republican cause (although Lucan's poem has Cato join Pompey's cause to prevent Pompey thinking that he conquers for himself, *BC* 2.320-23). At the beginning of Lucan's poem, Pompey's grisly end is prophesied by a frenzied matron who cries: *hunc ego, fluminea deformis truncus harena / qui iacet, agnosco*, *BC* 1.685-86, 'him I recognise, who lies on the river sands, a disfigured trunk'.<sup>60</sup> Thus the reader knows from the outset the manner of Pompey's death, so reference throughout the poem to a body with head removed, or to a *truncus*, be it oak tree or man, can signal Pompey and / or his death.

When the search for family members or comrades is frustrated by the absence of a recognisable head it rouses pity in the reader. Pathos is undercut to become grotesque absurdity, however, when Lucan describes fathers searching for necks to match the heads of sons during the aftermath of Sulla's proscriptions, *BC* 2.169-73. He again appeals to the reader's appreciation of the ludicrous when he remarks: *nullaque manente figura / una nota est Magno capitis iactura reuolsi*, *BC* 8.710-11, 'and with no shape remaining, the one identification for Magnus is the absence of the cut-off head.' Here Lucan reinforces his own use of the negative to illustrate the positive, a device he has used many times before in order to add contrast and emphasis. Pompey can be named by what is not there; by the absence of those very features so necessary for identification.<sup>61</sup>

---

<sup>60</sup> The Roman matron recognises Pompey and her comment functions as an 'Alexandrian footnote' (Hinds, 1998, 1-5), allowing the astute reader to recognise both Homer's and Virgil's Priam and, through Virgil's Priam, the Pompey of Lucan's civil war.

<sup>61</sup> We hear echoes in Lucan of the end of Seneca's *Phaedra* and the picture of Hippolytus' scattered body parts which is darkly humorous yet still evokes pathos through the tragedy of cruel death.



Concluding his list of epic wounds and civil war atrocities, Lucan takes the problem of identification and family relationships further when he says that he is ashamed to ask: *ora parentis / quis laceret nimiaque probet spectantibus ira / quem iugulat non esse patrem*, *BC* 7.628-630, stressing again the problem posed by kinship in civil war. Lucan shows a concern for the break-down of family ties in this passage, especially traditional father / son relationships by the inversion of time-honoured customs of piety and honour due to a father. Highlighted by the way the terms *parentis* and *patrem* are used synonymously towards the beginning and at the end of the passage, the narrator now identifies a parent, in contrast with the impersonal ‘corpse’ of the passage before. A shocking image of a father’s face mangled or torn to pieces in death underscores Lucan’s engagement with the horrors perpetrated by family members fighting on opposing sides during civil war.

Emphasis on familial bonds is set up very early in the poem, evident in the terms *gener* and *socer* used to describe Caesar and Pompey. I have shown in chapter 3 that these terms become a symbol of civil war. Use of such terms seems to be another way Lucan distorts epic conventions. Instead of named warriors, he resorts to generalisations which, however, focus on one aspect of the character, the relationship through marriage of the protagonists. Because of this, the terms are often found within two lines or less. Curio, urging a hesitating Caesar to war, at the end of his speech stresses the reversal of usual kinship obligations by omitting names: *socerum depellere regno / decretum genero est*, *BC* 1.289-90, ‘to remove his father-in-law from supremacy has been decreed by the son-in-law’. In Curio’s eyes, it is this violation by the son-in-law, Pompey, which must be avenged by Caesar. Often the binary, *socer* / *gener*, is composed of a name coupled with the relational term. Cordus, the loyal companion of Pompey who does his best to provide proper funeral rites for his dead leader, *BC* 8.712-93, convinces himself that he has done the right thing and that: *condita laudabit Magni socer impius ossa*, *BC* 8.783, ‘the impious father-in-law will praise that bones of Magnus have been buried’. Lucan’s substitution of these terms for the most important pair of adversaries not only alters Homeric and Virgilian epic conventions, but also reinforces the notion that both sides are equal in civil war;

that both men share not only the bond of marriage but also responsibility for this civil war.

Reversing the usual obligations of kinship in this passage, Lucan combines ideas of mutilation, anger, and the public display of hostility. Lucan's use of term *lacero*, is shockingly applied to the face of a parent, mangled to prevent recognition, not to humiliate a worthy adversary as in Virgilian epic. In the *Aeneid*, Turnus, in anger, begs for strength to disgrace Aeneas: *da sternere corpus / loricamque manu ualida lacerare reuulsam / semiuiri Phrygis*, *Aen.* 12.97-99, 'grant it to me to spread out the body and with a strong hand, to mangle and pluck off the breastplate of the Phrygian half-man'.<sup>62</sup> Turnus wishes not only to mess up the armour of Aeneas, but to drag his hair in the dust, *Aen.* 12.97-99. Through Virgil to Homer, where the corpse of Hector is dragged in the dust by Achilles, these two allusions show that in an epic battle it is acceptable to dishonour one's enemy. In Lucan's poem the object of mutilation is a horrifying style of vengeance as an impediment to recognition.<sup>63</sup>

Anger, rage, and battle frenzy are conventional in epic. Homer has many of his warriors, both Greeks and Trojans, driven by this strong emotion. Virgil also shows his heroes in the grip of battle frenzy or rage and also shows that the gods are motivated by anger. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, it could be said that lust and fear outweigh anger as the dominant emotions while Lucan plays down anger as a motivating force. He even reverses the emotion during the fraternisation episode at Ilerda, *BC* 4.196-210, where the two armies mingle and share food and embraces. The soldiers do not turn to anger when reminded of the cause by Petreius who spoke, *et omnis / concussit mentes scelerumque reduxit amorem*, *BC* 4. 235-36, 'and shattered the minds of all and brought back their love of wickedness'. Battle frenzy in these soldiers is replaced by impiety. Throughout

---

<sup>62</sup> The term is also used by the ghost of Polydorus, *Aen.* 3.41. The term is often used as a symbol to acknowledge ritual acts of grief; people, mainly women, tear their hair, face and clothing in mourning. See Ovid, *Met.* 11.726. Lucan uses the term *lacero* many times, often to indicate the torn hair of grief, *BC* 1.189; 2.31, 37; 7.38; 9.57; 10.84. But there are many more instances of the term used either to describe broken bodies, 2.122, 124, 165, 177; 3.617; 5.669; 6.319; 8.629, 667, 737; 9.123; 10.45.

<sup>63</sup> In Homer's epic, the mangled corpse of Hector is preserved from further damage by the gods, which shows that the gods certainly feel that Achilles goes too far, *Il.* 22.184-91.

Lucan's poem, civil war is shown to be a crime and soldiers on both sides can be seen trying to outdo each other in depravity for the benefit of their leaders.

The narrator, in writing about and condemning civil war, shows that battle encounters in civil war are not driven by epic codes of honourable behaviour; indeed many actions are against those same codes. Soldiers are seen to fight for gain of material goods, plunder or pay, not honour, as we see in the extraordinary speech of Caesar's centurion, Laelius, *BC* 1.359-86, who condones victory in civil war and swears to commit any atrocity for his leader. Driven by external forces of greed or popularity many actions are a display comparable to the spectacle of a gladiatorial show put on for their leader, or their fellow soldiers.<sup>64</sup> It is this aspect of the final passage in Lucan's list of wounds and atrocities which highlights the mutilation of the epic genre since in conventional Homeric or Virgilian epic the fight is driven by the heroic code, for honour and glory after the battle, not for the benefit of the bystanders. Lucan concentrates on how individual soldiers act when conscious that their deeds are perceived by others, like players on a stage.<sup>65</sup> The action of mutilating a face of a parent is horrific enough, but is made even more disgraceful when it is shown to be done in cold blood, for the approval of other soldiers or the revered leader.

I believe we can read in this list of wounds and weapons the author's concern to emphasise the subject of his poem, civil war, in order to show how it rends the fabric of society and splits it apart into opposing factions and breaks up the family unit. The action of mutilating face and body can be seen as a parallel to the destructive effect of civil war on the Roman society as we read the 'body' as a counterpart to the 'State' depicted by the poet as a cohesive and harmonious entity under the Roman republic. Whether the republic ever was unified is a matter for conjecture, but Lucan proffers the view that the dissolution of the republic at the battle of Pharsalus is a cause for shame and sorrow, *BC* 7.617-18. Lucan clearly indicates that the battle he describes is different from the usual epic battles or

---

<sup>64</sup> See Leigh, 1997, 234-91, for an erudite treatment of this theme, and Picone, 2008, 1301-21, on Caesar as spectator after the battle at Pharsalus.

<sup>65</sup> This seems particularly significant and very 'Neronian'. Suetonius writes of Nero's desire for applause for his acting and singing, Suet. *Nero*, 20-21.

other foreign wars: *non istas habuit pugnae Pharsalia partes / quas aliae clades*, BC 7.632-33, 'Pharsalia did not have those elements of battle which other calamities had'. Comparing the battle at Pharsalus with earlier battles or battle narratives he writes: *illic per fata uirorum, / per populos hic Roma perit; quod militis illic, / mors hic gentis erat*, BC 7.633-35, 'in them [the earlier battles], through the deaths of men, here, through the communities, Rome perished; what was there the death of a soldier, here was the death of a race.' Lucan is indicating his dissatisfaction with the political situation in Rome by suggesting that after civil war the Imperial Rome of Nero is only a mutilated or truncated body / State clinging to life but with none of the virtues of the republic. It is Lucan's subject, Rome's civil war, which allows such a reading.

I have shown that we can read Lucan's refusal to tell of individual encounters in the battle of Pharsalus, except in this truncated list of questions he is ashamed to ask, in two different ways. The poet is stressing the changes he makes to the epic genre through allusion to conventional epic wounds, and is also placing emphasis on the aberrant behaviour of warriors occasioned by civil war, the type of war which accrues none of the honour and glory usually associated with epic battles. The fifteen line passage is dense with allusion to earlier epic which shows Lucan as an epic poet with a difference, but one who cleverly takes what is well known and stretches it to new limits with rhetorical flourish.

Close reading of this passage shows that Lucan is a politically aware poet, one who, as an intrusive narrator, not only tells the story of civil war, but puts forth a particular view of civil war as criminal, commenting on the action and wishing for what might have been. Lucan's list concentrates on the effect of various wounds on the human body, the body which can be read as analogous to the city or state of Rome wounded through its civil war. At the end of the list, atrocities specific to this type of war also underscore change to the genre and the poet's concern with historical and political implications of civil war as a crime against the state. Lucan's choice of epic subject matter, Rome's civil war, encourages exploration of the whole concept of war and the problematic nature of opposition when the war is a fight between factions of one society.

## Conclusion:

### Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile* and the Epic Genre

Change to the genre seems marked as we read Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile*, yet this thesis has found, through investigation into the beginning of Lucan's epic, its intrusive narrator and its battle narrative, that, it is both different from and similar to earlier examples of epic, such as Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Virgil's *Aeneid* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. It is Lucan's choice of subject, Rome's civil war, which demands both changes to and conformity with conventions of the epic genre established by these earlier epics. Lucan uses allusion to them in order to make his treatment of Rome's civil war recognisable as epic with all the authority and legitimacy that the genre confers. Yet the subject also requires some alteration to the parameters of the genre to highlight the atrocity of the internecine conflict of civil war, where Roman families and factions fight with and kill each other. Lucan's poem dispenses with many of the conventions of Homeric and Virgilian epic, such as divine intervention and individual heroes, and adds such changes as frequent delay, lengthy digression and an intrusive, apostrophising narrator, as it equates the mutilated body of the soldier in civil war with the body politic of Rome, and shows the citizens and allies of Rome both causing and suffering her destruction.

At the beginning of Lucan's poem, the difficulty of introducing Rome's civil war as a topic for epic is reflected in the lengthy extension to the proem, way beyond that found in any earlier epic. The subject matter necessitates this long elaboration and justification of a war that is considered a crime, yet the opening twelve lines allude strongly to earlier epic in order for the poem to claim a place within the genre. Because the subject of Lucan's poem is civil war, which rouses emotions different from the high praise usual for victory in a war against a foreign enemy, it requires the overt intrusion of a complex narrator / persona. The narrator of Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile* is sometimes seen as the Roman poet, Lucan, and at other times as eye-witness to the events related, an unconcealed narrator who intrudes into the narrative to offer advice or condemnation to the characters and to the external audience. The thesis has shown that Lucan's poem is wholly about civil war, unlike earlier epic where the topic is treated briefly or alluded to as necessary

to secure peace. The importance of Rome's civil war as subject for Lucan's poem is intensified by the narration of an earlier example of this type of war involving Marius and Sulla, a *mise en abyme* which highlights the recurring nature of internecine strife.

Lucan's epic presents episodes of battle in the civil war in unusual locations and in ways that exhibit the pathos of individual deaths in battle and the tragedy of families caught up in and sometimes on opposite sides of a civil war. Because it is staged at sea, the battle at Massilia is the most detailed and descriptive account of a sea-battle in extant epic and is innovative in the way it uses the tropes of epic land battles found in Homer's epics, Virgil's *Aeneid* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and re-presents them in a nautical setting. It is the most epic of Lucan's battle narratives, with Homeric 'type scenes' and the depiction of opposing sides as Greeks against Romans when, in fact, the battle is fought between factions of Roman citizens and their allies. In contrast to this battle, Lucan introduces the location for the battle between Curio and the forces of Varus and Juba in Libya with an aetiological explanation of the place-name, where the story of Hercules and Antaeus also illustrates the problem of 'sides' in Rome's civil war where Romans are fighting and killing Romans. This thesis demonstrates that Lucan inverts and extends Virgilian and Ovidian images of wrestling opponents and amplifies the violence inherent in such struggles for supremacy. Hercules and Antaeus are portrayed as so well matched that they are hard to tell apart, and that neither can be securely aligned with any of the protagonists of Rome's civil war. The Hercules / Antaeus episode also serves as *mise en abyme* reflecting all the battles of civil war to emphasise the moral dilemma of participation in civil war because during the fighting both sides are equally impious.

The narrative of the battle at Pharsalus, where Pompey is routed by Caesar, in Lucan's poem is the most ideological, and narrated with the least battle description. In the series of programmatic battle descriptors, *BC* 7.617-31, the poet passes over the wounds and weapons of this significant battle and so doing draws attention to them, because each element of 'untold' battle action evokes strongly the descriptions of death in earlier epic and at the same time alters Homeric epic conventions to describe atrocities specific to civil war.

Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile* is both similar to and different from earlier examples of epic. In some places it breaks new ground and in others it re-presents epic topoi, because of its subject, Rome's bloody and impious civil war, in order to claim its place within the epic genre and to lay bare the political and social ramifications of civil war.

## Bibliography

- Adler, E. 2003, *Vergil's Empire, Political Thought in the Aeneid*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Ahl, F.M. 1976, *Lucan: An Introduction*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Ahl, F.M. 1993, 'Form Empowered: Lucan's *Pharsalia*' in *Roman Epic*, A.J. Boyle (ed), London: Routledge, 125-142.
- Aicher, P.J. 1990, 'Ennian Artistry: Annals 175-179 and 78-83 (Sk.),' *Classical Journal*, 85.3, 218-224.
- Albis, R.V. 1996, *Poet and Audience in the Argonautica of Apollonius*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Albrecht, M. von. 1989, *Masters of Roman Prose*, N. Adkin (tr), Leeds: Francis Cairns.
- Albrecht, M. von. 1999, *Roman Epic An Interpretative Introduction*, Leiden: Brill.
- Anderson, A.R. 1928, 'Heracles and his Successors: A Study of a Heroic Ideal and the recurrence of a Heroic Type', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 39, 7-58
- Anderson, W.S. 1957, 'Vergil's Second Iliad', *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 88, 17-30.
- Anderson, W.S. 1972, *Ovid's Metamorphoses, Books 6-10*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Anderson, W.S. 1996, *Ovid's Metamorphoses, Books 1-5*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Armstrong, J.I. 1958, 'The Arming Motif in the *Iliad*', *The American Journal of Philology*, 79.4, 337-354.
- Austin, R.G. 1968, 'Ille ego qui quondam ...', *The Classical Quarterly*, 18, 107-115.
- Axelsson, B. 1945, *Unpoetische Wörter*, Lund.
- Bakhtin, M. 1968, *Rabelais and his World*, H. Iswolsky (tr), Cambridge, Mass: M.I.T. Press.
- Bal, M. 1985, *Narratology Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, C. van Boheemen (tr), Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Baldick, C. 2008, *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bandera, C. 1981, 'Sacrificial Levels in Virgil's *Aeneid*', *Arethusa*, 14, 217-39.



- Bannon, C.J. 1997, *The Brothers of Romulus, Fraternal pietas in Roman Law, Literature, and Society*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Barchiesi, A. 2001, *Speaking Volumes: Narrative and Intertext in Ovid and other Latin Poets*, M. Fox and S. Marchesi (trs), London: Duckworth.
- Barchiesi, A. 2002, 'Narrative technique and narratology in the *Metamorphoses*', in *The Cambridge Companion to Ovid*, P. Hardie, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 180-99.
- Barratt, P. 1979, *M. Annaei Lucani Belli Ciuilis Book V*, Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert.
- Barrenechea, F. 2004, 'The Star Signs at Brundisium: Astral Symbolism in Lucan 2.691-2', *The Classical Quarterly*, 54.1, 312-16.
- Barrera, J.C.B. 2005, 'On History Considered as Epic Poetry', *History and Theory*, 44.2, 182-94.
- Barton, C.A. 1989, 'The Scandal in the Arena', *Representations*, 27, 1-36.
- Bartsch, S. 1997, *Ideology in Cold Blood*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Batinski, E.E. 1992, 'Lucan's Catalogue of Caesar's Troops: Paradox and Convention', *The Classical Journal*, 88, 19-24.
- Batstone, W. and Damon, C. 2006, *Caesar's Civil War*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Beck, D. 2008, 'Narratology and Linguistics: An interdisciplinary Perspective on Homeric Speech Representation', *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 138, 351-78.
- Behr, F. D'Alessandro, 2005, 'The Narrator's Voice: A Narratological Reappraisal of Apostrophe in Virgil's *Aeneid*', *Arethusa* 38, 189-221.
- Behr, F. D'Alessandro, 2007, *Feeling History: Lucan, Stoicism and the Politics of Passion*, Columbia: The Ohio State University Press.
- Berman, D.W. (tr) 2003, *Myth and History in Ancient Greece: the symbolic creation of a colony*, by Claude Calame, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Bexley, E.M. 2008, 'Replacing Rome: Geographic and Political Centrality in Lucan's *Pharsalia*', *Classical Philology*, 104, 459-75.
- Block, E. 1982, 'The Narrator Speaks: Apostrophe in Homer and Virgil', *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 112, 7-22.

- Bosley, K. 1989, *The Kalevala, an Epic Poem after Oral Tradition by Elias Lönnrot*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Boyle, A.J. 1993, 'The Canonic Text: Virgil's *Aeneid*', in *Roman Epic*, A.J. Boyle (ed), London: Routledge.
- Boyle, A.J. 1999, '*Aeneid* 8, Images of Rome', in *Reading Vergil's Aeneid, an Interpretive Guide*, C. Perkell (ed), Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Bradley, K.R. 1991, *Discovering the Roman Family*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bramble, J.C. 1982, 'Lucan', in *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature 2: Latin Literature*, E.J. Kenney and W.V. Clausen (eds), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 533-57.
- Braund, S.H. 1992, *Lucan: Civil War*, London: Oxford University Press.
- Brooks, C. 1977, 'The Heroic Impulse in the "Odyssey"', *The Classical World*, 70, 455-56.
- Brown, R.D. 1999, 'Two Caesarian Battle -Descriptions: A Study in Contrast', *The Classical Journal*, 94.4, 329-57.
- Cairns, F. 1989, *Virgil's Augustan Epic*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Carter, J.M. 1991, *Julius Caesar: The Civil War Books I & II*, Warminster: Aris & Phillips.
- Caviglia, F. 2008, 'Figure di Cesare nel IV libro della *Pharsalia*', in *Amicitiae templa serena*, a cura di L. Castagna e C. Riboldi, Vol I, Milano: Vita e Pensiero - Largo A. Gemelli, 289-310.
- Clausen, W. 2002, *Virgil's Aeneid: Decorum, Allusion and Ideology*, Leipzig: K.G. Saur München.
- Coffee, N. 2009, *The Commerce of War*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Coleman, K.M. 1990, 'Fatal Charades: Roman Executions Stages as Mythological Enactments', *Journal of Roman Studies*, 80, 44-73.
- Connington, J. and Nettleship, H. 1963, *The Works of Virgil II*, Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung.
- Connington, J. and Nettleship, H. 1963, *The Works of Virgil III*, Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung.
- Conte, G.B. 1968, 'la civile nella rievocazione del popolo: lucano II.67-233', *Maia*, 20, 224-53.
- Conte, G.B. 1986, *The Rhetoric of Imitation*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

- Conte, G.B. 1987, *Latin Literature, A History*, J.B. Solodow (tr), Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Conte, G.B. 1988, 'il proemio della *Pharsalia*', la 'guerra civile' di Lucano, Quattro Venti Snc, Cas. Post. 156, Urbino, 12-23.
- Conte, G.B. 1992, 'Proems in the Middle', in *Beginnings in Classical Literature, Volume XXIX*, F.M. Dunn, T. Cole (eds), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 147-60.
- Davis, P.J. 2008, 'Narrative Authority in Ovid's *Iliad*', in *Amicitiae templa serena*, a cura di L. Castagna e C. Riboldi, Vol I, Milano: Vita e Pensiero - Largo A. Gemelli, 429-43.
- De Jong, I.J.F. 1987 (second edition, 2004), *Narrators and Focalizers: The Presentation of the Story in the Iliad*, London: Bristol Classical Press.
- De Jong, I.J.F. 1991, *Narrative in Drama, the art of the Euripidean speech*, Leiden: E.J. Brill.
- De Jong, I.J.F., Nunlist, R., Bowie, A., (eds), 2004, *Narrators, Narratees and Narrative in Ancient Greek Literature*, Leiden/Boston: Brill.
- Dewar, M. 1994, 'Laying it on with a Trowel: The Proem to Lucan and Related Texts', *The Classical Quarterly*, 44, 199-211.
- Dick, B.F. 1967, '*Fatum* and *Fortuna* in Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile*', *Classical Philology*, 62.4, 235-42.
- Dilke, O.A.W. 1978, *Lucan: de bello ciuili VII*, Bristol: Bristol Classical Press.
- Duff, J.D. 1977, *Lucan: The Civil War*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Edwards, C. 1996, *Writing Rome: Textual Approaches to the City*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Eldred, K.O. 2002, 'This Ship of Fools: Epic Vision in Lucan's Vulteius Episode', in *The Roman Gaze: Vision, Power and the Body*, D. Fredrick (ed), Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Erp Taalman Kip, A. Maria van. 2005, 'The gods of the *Iliad* and the Fate of Troy', *Mnemosyne*, 53.4, 385-402.
- Fairbanks, A. 1979, *Philostratus, Imagines, Callistratus, Descriptions*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Fantham, E. 1985, 'Caesar and the Mutiny: Lucan's Reshaping of the Historical Tradition in De bello ciuili 5.237-373', *Classical Philology*, 80, 119-31.

- Fantham, E. 1992, *Lucan: De Bello Ciuili Book II*, London: Cambridge University Press.
- Fantham, E. 1996, *Roman Literary Culture*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Fantham, E. 1999, 'Lucan and the Republican Senate: Ideology, Historical Record and Prosopography', *Interpretare Lucano Miscellanea di Studi*, Napoli, 109-25.
- Fantham, E. 2003, 'The angry poet and the angry gods: problems of theodicy in Lucan's epic of defeat', in *Yale Classical Studies Volume XXXII, Ancient Anger, Perspectives from Homer to Galen*, S. Braund and G. Most (eds), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fantham, E. 2004, *Ovid's Metamorphoses*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Farrell, J. 1999, 'The Ovidian *Corpus*: Poetic Body and Poetic Text', in *Ovidian Transformations Essays on Ovid's Metamorphoses and its Reception*, P. Hardie, A. Barchiesi and S. Hinds (eds), Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, 127-41.
- Feeney, D.C. 1986, "'Stat magni nominis umbra.' Lucan on the Greatness of Pompeius Magnus', *The Classical Quarterly*, 36, 239-43.
- Feeney, D.C. 1991, *The Gods in Epic*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Feeney, D.C. 1999, '*mea tempora*: Patterning of Time in the *Metamorphoses*' in *Ovidian Transformations*, P. Hardie, A. Barchiesi and S. Hinds (eds), Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, 13-30.
- Feldherr, A. 1995, 'Ships of State: "Aeneid" 5 and Augustan Circus Spectacle', *Classical Antiquity*, 14.2, 245-65.
- Fenik, B. 1968, *Typical Battle Scenes in the Iliad*, Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner.
- Fraenkel, E. 1945, 'Some Aspects of the Structure of *Aeneid* 7', in *The Cambridge Companion to Ovid*, P. Hardie (ed), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 253-76.
- Frazer, J. 1976, *Apollodorus*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Frazer, J. 1996, *Ovid: Fasti*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Friedrich, W-H. 2003, *Wounding and Death in the Iliad*, G Wright and P Jones (tr), London: Duckworth.
- Fyfe, W.H. 1965, *Aristotle: Poetics and 'Longinus' on the Sublime*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

- Gabba, E. 1981, 'True History and False History in Classical Antiquity', *The Journal of Roman Studies*, 71, 50-62.
- Gagliardi, D. 1975, *M. Annaei Lucani, Belli Ciuilis, Liber Septimus*, Firenze: La Nuova Italia.
- Gagliardi, D. 1976, *Lucano Poeta della Libertà*, Napoli, Società Editrice Napoletana.
- Gale, M. 2003, 'Poetry and the Backward Glance in Virgil's *Georgics* and *Aeneid*', *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 133, 323-52.
- Gale, M. (ed), 2004, *Latin Epic and Didactic Poetry*, Swansea: The Classical Press of Wales.
- Galinsky G.K. 1966, 'The Hercules - Cacus Episode in *Aeneid* VIII', *American Journal of Philology*, 87.1, 18-51.
- Galinsky, G.K. 1972, *The Herakles Theme*, New Jersey, Rowman and Littlefield.
- Galinsky, K. 1996, *Augustan Culture: an Interpretive Introduction*, Princeton, N J: Princeton University Press.
- Genette, G. 1980, *Narrative Discourse*, J.E. Lewin (tr), Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Genette, G. 1997, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, J.E. Lewin (tr), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gilbert, C.D. 1976, 'Ovid *Met.* 1.4', *The Classical Quarterly*, 26, 111-12.
- Gilbert, G.E. 2001, *The Aesthetics of Slaughter: A Study in the Battle-Descriptions of Latin Epic*, unpublished PhD Thesis, University of London.
- Gildenhard, I. and Zissos, A. 2000, 'Inspirational Fictions: Autobiography and Generic Reflexivity in Ovid's Proems', *Greece & Rome*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ser., 47.1, 67-79.
- Godley, A.D. 1969, *Herodotus: Vol IV*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Goldberg, S. 1995, *Epic in Republican Rome*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Goldhill, S. 1991, *The Poet's Voice*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Goldsworthy, A. 1998, '"Instinctive Genius": The Depiction of Caesar the General', in *Julius Caesar as Artful Reporter*, K. Welch and A. Powell (eds), London: Duckworth, 193-219.
- Gorman, V. B. 2001, 'Lucan's Epic "Aristeia" and the Hero of the "Bellum Ciuile"', *The Classical Journal*, 96, 263-90.
- Goward, B. 1999, *Telling Tragedy, Narrative Technique in Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides*, London: Duckworth.
- Gowing, A.M. 2005, *Empire and Memory, the representation of the Roman Republic in imperial culture*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Gransden, K.W. 1976, *Virgil: Aeneid Book VIII*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gransden, K.W. 1984, *Virgil's Iliad, An essay on epic narrative*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Green, C.M.C. 1994, “‘The necessary Murder’: Myth, Ritual, and Civil War in Lucan, Book 3’, *Classical Antiquity*, 13.2, 203-33.
- Green, P. 1997, *The Argonautika by Apollonius Rhodios*, Berkley: University of California Press.
- Gruen, E. 1974, *The Last Generation of the Roman Republic*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Gurval R.A. 1995, *Actium and Augustus*, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- Gurval R.A. 1997, ‘Caesar’s Comet: the Politics and Poetics of an Augustan Myth’, *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome*, 42, 39-71.
- Habinek, T. 2002, ‘Ovid and Empire’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Ovid*, P. Hardie (ed), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 46-61.
- Hall, E. 1989, *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-definition Through Tragedy*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Hardie, P. 1983, ‘Some Themes from Gigantomachy in the *Aeneid*’, *Hermes*, 111.3, 311-26.
- Hardie, P. 1986, *Virgil's Aeneid: Cosmos and Imperium*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Hardie, P. 1990. ‘Ovid’s Theban History: The First “Anti-Aeneid”?’ , *Classical Quarterly*, 40.1, 224-35.
- Hardie, P. 1993, *The Epic Successors of Virgil*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hardie, P. 1997, ‘Questions of Authority’, in *The Roman Cultural Revolution*, T. Habinek and A Schiesaro (eds), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hardie, P. 2000, ‘Coming to terms with the Empire’, in *Literature in the Greek and Roman Worlds*, O. Taplin (ed), Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hardie, P. 2002, ‘Ovid and early imperial literature’, *The Cambridge Companion to Ovid*, P. Hardie (ed), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 34-45.
- Hardie, P. 2009, *Lucretian Receptions*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Harrison, S.J. (ed), 1990, *Oxford Readings in Vergil's Aeneid*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Harrison, S. J. 1991, *Vergil, Aeneid 10: with Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press.
- Harrison, S.J. 2002, 'Ovid and Genre: Evolution of an Elegist', in *The Cambridge Companion to Ovid*, P. Hardie (ed), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 79-94.
- Haskins, C.E. 1887, *M. Annaei Lucani Pharsalia*, London: George Bell and Sons.
- Heinze, R. 1993, *Virgil's epic technique*, H. & D. Harvey and F. Robertson (trs), London: Bristol Classical Press.
- Heitland, W.E. 1887, Introduction to *M. Annaei Lucani Pharsalia*, Haskins, C.E. London: George Bell and Sons.
- Henderson, J. 1997, 'The Name of the Tree: Recounting Odyssey XXIV 340-2', *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 117, 87-116.
- Henderson, J. 1998, *Fighting for Rome: Poets and Caesars, History and Civil War*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Henderson, J. 2007, 'Everything to do with Dionysus' in *Visualizing the Tragic*, C. Kraus, S. Goldhill, H. Foley and J. Elsner (eds), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 288-305.
- Hershkowitz, D. 1998, *The Madness of Epic: Reading Insanity from Homer to Statius*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Hill, D.E. 1985, *Ovid: Metamorphoses I-IV*, Warminster: Aris & Phillips.
- Hill, D.E. 1999, *Ovid: Metamorphoses IX-XII*, Warminster, England: Aris & Phillips.
- Hill, D.E. 2000, *Ovid: Metamorphoses XIII-XV*, Warminster: Aris & Phillips.
- Hinds, S. 1987, *The Metamorphosis of Persephone*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hinds, S. 1998, *Allusion and Intertext*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hinds, S. 1999, 'After Exile: Time and Teleology from *Metamorphoses* to *Ibis*', in *Ovidian Transformations*, P. Hardie, A. Barchiesi and S. Hinds (eds), Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, 48-67.
- Hoelscher, U. 1978, 'The Transformation from Folk-Tale to Epic', in *Homer: Tradition and Invention*, B.C. Fenik (ed), Leiden: E.J. Brill, 51-67.
- Holmes, N. 1999, 'Nero and Caesar: Lucan 1.33-66', *Classical Philology*, 94, 75-81.
- Housman, A. E. (ed), 1927, *M. Annaei Lucani Belli Civilis Libri Decem*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Hunink, V. M. 1992, *Annaei Lucani Bellum Ciuile Book III*, Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben.

- Hunter, R. 1993, *Apollonius of Rhodes, Jason and the Golden Fleece (The Argonautica)*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Hunter, R. 1993, *The Argonautica of Apollonius: Literary Studies*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jal, P. 1963, *La guerre civile à Rome: étude littéraire et morale*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Jenkinson, J.R. 1974, 'Sarcasm in Lucan 1.33-66', *The Classical Review*, 24, 8-9.
- Johnson, W.R. 1976, *Darkness Visible: A Study of Vergil's Aeneid*, Berkley: University of California Press.
- Johnson, W.R. 1987, *Momentary Monsters: Lucan and his Heroes*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Kenney, E.J. 1976, 'Ovidius Prooemians', *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*, 202, 46-53.
- Kenney, E.J. 2002, 'Ovid's Language and Style' in *Brill's Companion to Ovid*, B. Weiden Boyd (ed), Leiden: Brill, 27-89.
- Knauer, G.N. 1964, 'Virgil's *Aeneid* and Homer', in *Oxford Readings in Vergil's Aeneid*, S.J. Harrison (ed), 1990, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 390-412.
- Knauer, G.N. 1979, *Die Aeneis und Homer*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Kraus, C. 2005, 'Hair, Hegemony and Historiography: Caesar's Style and its Earliest Critics', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 129, 97-115.
- Kraus, C. 2007, 'Caesar's Account of the Battle of Massilia (BC 1.34-2.22): Some Historiographical and Narratological Approaches', in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography Vol 1*, J. Marincola (ed), Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 371-78.
- Kraus, C. Goldhill, S. Foley H. and Elsner, J. (eds), 2007, *Visualizing the Tragic*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Laistner, M.W.L. 1966, *The Greater Roman Historians*, Berkeley: the University of California Press.
- Lapidge, M. 1979, 'Lucan's Imagery of Cosmic Dissolution', *Hermes* 107, 344-75.
- Leigh, M. 1997, *Lucan: Spectacle and Engagement*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Leigh, M. 2000, 'Oblique Politics: Epic of the Imperial Period', in *Visualizing the Tragic*, C. Kraus, S. Goldhill, H. Foley and J. Elsner (eds), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 184-207.



- Levin, D.N. 1971, *Apollonius' Argonautica Re-examined*, Lugduni Batavorum E.J. Brill.
- Levy, H.L. 1963, 'The Odyssean Suitors and the Host-Guest Relationship', *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 94, 145-53.
- Lovatt, H. 2005, *Statius and Epic Games: Sport, Politics, and Poetics in the Thebaid*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lyne, R.O.A.M. 1983, 'Vergil and the Politics of War', in *Oxford Readings in Vergil's Aeneid*, S.J. Harrison (ed), 1990, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 316-38.
- Lyne, R.O.A.M. 1987, *Further Voices in Vergil's Aeneid*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Mackie, H. 1996, *Talking Trojan*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Malamud, M. 1995, 'Happy Birthday Dead Lucan: (P)raising the Dead in *Silvae* 2.7.', *Ramus* 24, 1-30.
- Malamud, M. 2003, 'Pompey's Head and Cato's Snakes', *Classical Philology*, 98, 31-44.
- Malamud, M. 2009, 'Chapter Twelve, Primitive Politics: Lucan and Petronius', in *Writing Politics in Imperial Rome*, W. Dominik, J. Garthwaite and M. Malamud (eds), Leiden: Brill, 273-306.
- Marincola, J. 1997, *Authority and Tradition in Ancient Historiography*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Marti, B. M. 1945, 'The Meaning of the *Pharsalia*', *The American Journal of Philology*, 66. 4, 352-76.
- Marti, B. M. 1975, 'Lucan's Narrative Technique', *Parola del Passato*, 30, 74-90.
- Martindale, C. 1976, 'Paradox, Hyperbole and Literary Novelty in Lucan's *De Bello Ciuili*', *University of London Institute of Classical Studies Bulletin*, 23, 45-54.
- Martindale, C. 1981, 'Lucan's Hercules: Padding or Paradigm? A Note on *de Bello Ciuili* 4.589-660', *Symbolae Osloenses*, 56, 71-80.
- Martindale, C. 1984, 'The Politician Lucan', *Greece & Rome*, 31.1, 64-79.
- Mascaró, J. 1962, *The Bhagavad-Gita*, London: Penguin Books.
- Masters, J. 1992, *Poetry and Civil War in Lucan's Bellum Ciuile*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Masters, J. 1994, 'Deceiving the Reader: the Political Mission of Lucan in *Bellum Ciuile* 7', in *Reflections of Nero: Culture, History and Representation*, J. Elsner and J. Masters (eds), Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Matthews, M. 2008, *Caesar and the Storm: a Commentary on Lucan, De Bello Civili*, book 5, lines 476-721, Oxford: Peter Lang.
- Mayer, R. 1978, 'On Lucan and Nero', *University of London Institute of Classical Studies Bulletin*, 25, 85-8.
- Mayer, R. 1981, *Lucan: Civil War VIII*, Warminster: Aris & Phillips.
- McNelis, C. 2007, *Statius' Thebaid and the Poetics of Civil War*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Metger, W. 1970, 'Kampf und Tod in Lucans *Pharsalia*', in *Lucan*. W. Rutz (ed), Series: *Wege der Forschung* 235, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchges.
- Miller, J. 1994, 'Memories of Ovid's Pythagoras', *Mnemosyne*, 47.4, 473-87.
- Morford, M.P.O. 1967, *The Poet Lucan*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Morgan, L. 1998, 'Assimilation and Civil War: Hercules and Cacus' in *Virgil's Aeneid: Augustan Epic and Political Content*, H-P. Stahl (ed), London: Duckworth, 155-74.
- Morrison, J.V. 1992, 'Alternatives to the Epic Tradition: Homer's challenges in the *Iliad*', *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 122, 61-71.
- Most G.W. 1992, '*disiecti membra poetae*: The Rhetoric of Dismemberment in Neronian Poetry', *Innovations in Antiquity*, R. Hexter and D. Selden (eds), London: Routledge, 391-419.
- Muellner, L. 1996, *The Anger of Achilles*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.
- Nagy, G. 1979, *The Best of the Achaeans*, Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press.
- Narducci, E. 1973, 'Il tronco di Pompeo (Troia e Roma nella *Pharsalia*)', *Maia* 25, 317-25.
- Narducci, E. 2002, *Lucano Un'epica contro l'impero*, Roma: GLF editori Laterza.
- Neal, T. 2006, *The Wounded Hero: Non-Fatal Injury in Homer's Iliad*, Bern: Peter Lang.
- Nelis, D. 2004, 'From Didactic to Epic: *Georgics* 2.458-3.48', in *Latin Epic and Didactic Poetry*, M. Gale (ed), Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 73-108.
- Nethercut, W.R. 1968, 'Invasion in the *Aeneid*', *Greece & Rome*, 15.1, 82-95.

- Newman, J.K., 1967, *The Concept of Vates in Augustan Poets*, Bruxelles: Latomus revue d'etudes latines.
- Nicholson, N. 2001, 'Pindar *Nemean* 4.57-58 and the Arts of Poets, Trainers and Wrestlers', *Arethusa* 34.1, 31-60.
- O'Hara, J.J. 2004/05, "'Some God ... or his Own Heart": Two Kinds of Epic Motivation in the Proem to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*', *The Classical Journal*, 100.2, 149-61.
- O'Hara, J.J. 2007, *Inconsistency in Roman Epic*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- O'Higgins, D. 1988, 'Lucan as *uates*', *Classical Antiquity*, 7.2, 208-26.
- Opelt, I. 1957, 'Die Seeschlacht vor Massilia bei Lucan', *Hermes*, 85.4, 435-45.
- Ormand, K. 1994, 'Lucan's *Auctor vix Fidelis*', *Classical Antiquity*, 13.1, 38-55.
- Osgood, J. 2006, *Caesar's Legacy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Panoussi, V. 2003, 'Virgil and the Epic Topoi in Lucan's Massilia', in *Being There Together*, P. Thibodeau and H. Haskell (eds), Afton Minnesota: Afton Historical Society Press, 222-38.
- Panoussi, V. 2009, *Greek Tragedy in Vergil's Aeneid: Ritual, Empire and Intertext*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Paton, W.R. 1975, *Polybius: The Histories*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Peek, P.S. 2001, 'Black Humour in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*', *Ramus*, 30.2, 128-51.
- Perrin, B. 1967, *Plutarch's Lives I, Theseus and Romulus*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Peskett, A.G. 1914, *Caesar: Civil Wars*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Picone, G. 2008, 'Cesare a banchetto', in *Amicitiae templa serena*, a cura di L. Castagna e C. Riboldi, Vol II, Milano: Vita e Pensiero - Largo A. Gemelli, 1301-21.
- Pitcher, L.V. 2008, 'A Perfect Storm? Caesar and his audiences at Lucan 5.504-702', *Classical Quarterly*, 58.1, 243-49.
- Pöschl, V. 1966, *The Art of Vergil*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Postgate, J.P. 1986, *M. Annaei Lucani de bello ciuili Liber VII*, The University of Cambridge Press, Cambridge.
- Potter, D.S. 1999, *Literary Texts and the Roman Historian*, London: Routledge.

- Prince, G. 1982, *Narratology: The Form and Functioning of Narrative*, Berlin: Mouton Publishers.
- Putnam, M.C.J. 1998, *Virgil's Epic Design*, New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Quinn, K. 1969, *Virgil's 'Aeneid': A Critical Description*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Quint, D. 1993, *Epic and Empire*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Rackham, H. 1960, *Cicero: de Oratore* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Raditsa, L. 1973, 'Julius Caesar and his Writings', *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*, 1.3, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 417-56.
- Rawson, E. 1987, 'Sallust on the Eighties?' *The Classical Quarterly*, 37.1, 163-80.
- Redfield, J. 2001, 'The Proem of the *Iliad*: Homer's Art', in *Oxford Readings in Homer's Iliad*, D. Cairns (ed), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 456-77.
- Rhys Roberts, W. 1965, *Demetrius: On Style*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Roche, P. 2009, *Lucan De Bello Ciuili Book I*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rolfe V.C. 1959, *Suetonius I*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Rolfe V.C. 1979, *Suetonius II*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Roller, M.B. 2001, *Constructing Autocracy: Aristocrats and Emperors in Julio-Claudian Rome*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Rosati, G. 2002, 'Narrative Techniques and Narrative Structures in the *Metamorphoses*', in *Brill's Companion to Ovid*, B.W. Boyd (ed), Leiden: Brill, 271-304.
- Rosenbloom, D. 2006, *Aeschylus: Persians*, London: Duckworth.
- Rossi, A. 2000, 'The Journey of Pompey in Lucan's *Pharsalia*', *The American Journal of Philology*, 121.4, 571-91.
- Rossi, A. 2001, 'Remapping the Past: Caesar's Tale of Troy (Lucan "BC" 9.964-999)' *Phoenix*, 55, 313-26.
- Rossi, A. 2004, *Contexts of War*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Rouse, W.H.D. 1966, *Lucretius: De Rerum Natura*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Rowe, G.O. 1967, 'Dramatic structures in Caesar's *Bellum Civile*', *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 98, 399-414.
- Rowland, R. J. 1969, 'The Significance of Massilia in Lucan', *Hermes*, 97, 204-08.

- Rudich, V. 1997, *Dissidence and Literature under Nero: the Price of Rhetoricization*, London, Routledge.
- Rutherford, R.B. 2001, 'Tragic Form and Feeling in the *Iliad*', in *Oxford Readings in Homer's Iliad*, D. Cairns (ed), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 260-93.
- Saunders, K.B. 1999, 'Wounds in the *Iliad* 13-16', *The Classical Quarterly*, New Series, 49.2, 345-63.
- Saylor, C. 1982, 'Curio and Antaeus: The African Episode of Lucan *Pharsalia* IV', *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 112, 169-77.
- Saylor, C. 1990, 'Lux Extrema: Lucan, *Pharsalia* 4.402-581', *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 120, 291-300.
- Saylor, C. 1999, 'Lucan and Models of the Introduction', *Mnemosyne* 52, 545-53.
- Schiesaro, A. 2003, *The Passions in Play: Thyestes and the Dynamics of Senecan Drama*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Seaton, R.C. 1988, *Apollonius Rhodius: Argonautica*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Segal, C. 1971, *The Theme of the Mutilation of the Corpse in the Iliad*, Leiden: Brill.
- Sellars, J. 2006, *Stoicism*, Chesham: Acumen.
- Shackleton Bailey, D.R. (ed), 1988, *M. Annaei Lucani de Bello Ciuili Libri X*, Stuttgart: Teubner.
- Sklenář, R. 1999, 'Nihilistic Cosmology and Catonian Ethics in Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile*', *American Journal of Philology*, 120.2, 281-96.
- Sklenář, R. 2003, *A Taste for Nothingness*, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- Skutsch, O. 1985, *The Annals of Q Ennius*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Smyth, H W. 1971, *Aeschylus*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Spencer, D. 2005, 'Lucan's Follies: Memory and Ruin in a Civil-War Landscape', *Greece & Rome*, 52, 46-69.
- Stover, T. 2008, 'Cato and the Intended Scope of Lucan's *Bellum Civile*', *Classical Quarterly*, 58.2, 571-80.
- Stucchi, S. 2008, 'Le parole del potere: ragion di stato ed eica dei governanti in Sen. *Thyest.* 204 sgg.e Luc. *Phars.* 8.482sgg.', in *Amicitiae templa serena*, a cura di L. Castagna e C. Riboldi, Milano: Vita e Pensiero - Largo A. Gemelli, 1523-43.
- Syme, R. 1939, *The Roman Revolution*, Oxford: the Clarendon Press.

- Taplin, O. (ed), 2000, *Literature in the Greek and Roman Worlds*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Tarrant, R.J. 2002, 'Chaos in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and its Neronian Influence', *Arethusa*, 35, 349-60.
- Thompson, L. and Bruère, R.T. 1968, 'Lucan's Use of Virgilian Reminiscence', *Classical Philology*, 63.1, 1-21.
- Thompson, L. and Bruère, R.T. 1970, 'The Virgillian Background of Lucan's Fourth Book', *Classical Philology*, 65.3, 152-72.
- Tissol, G. 2002, 'The House of Fame: Roman History and Augustan Politics in *Metamorphoses* 11-15', in *Brill's Companion to Ovid*, B.W. Boyd (ed), Leiden: Brill, 305ff.
- Walde, C. 2006, 'Caesar, Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile*, and their Reception', in *Julius Caesar in Western Culture*, M. Wyke (ed), Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Walker, A.D. 1996, 'Lucan's Legends of the Fall', *Ramus*, 25, 65-87.
- Warmington, E.H. 1961, *Remains of Old Latin, Ennius and Caecilius*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Warmington, E.H. 1961, *Remains of Old Latin, Liuius, Naeuius, Pacuuius and Accius*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Webb R. 1999, 'Ekphrasis ancient and modern: the invention of a genre', *World & Image*, 15.1, 7-18.
- Webb R. 2009, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice*, Farnham: Ashgate.
- Weber, C. 1987, 'Metrical Imitatio in the proem to the *Aeneid*', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 19, 261-71.
- Wender, D. 1978, *The Last Scenes of the Odyssey*, Lugduni Batavorum: E.J.Brill.
- West, D. 1975-6, 'Cernere erat: The Shield of Aeneas', in *Oxford Readings in Vergil's Aeneid*, S.J. Harrison (ed), 1990, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 295-304.
- Wheeler, S. 1999, *A Discourse of Wonders*, Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Wheeler, S. 2000, *Narrative Dynamics in Ovid's Metamorphoses*, Tübingen: Narr, (Classica Monacensia; Bd. 20).
- Williams, R.D. 1964, 'The Sixth Book of the *Aeneid*', in *Oxford Readings in Vergil's Aeneid*, S.J. Harrison (ed), 1990, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 191-207.

- Williams, R.D. 1967, 'The Purpose of the *Aeneid*', in *Oxford Readings in Vergil's Aeneid*, S.J. Harrison (ed), 1990, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 21-36.
- Williams, R.D. 1972, *The Aeneid of Virgil, Books 1-6*, London: Macmillan.
- Williams, R.D. 1984, *The Aeneid of Virgil, Books 7-12*, London: Macmillan.
- Wyke, M. (ed), 2006, *Julius Caesar in Western Culture*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Yoau, R. 2006, 'Mise en abyme and Tragic Signification in the *Odyssey*', *Mnemosyne*, 59, 208-25.
- Zanker, P. 1990, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, A. Shapiro (tr), Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Zwierlein, O. 1986, 'Lucans Caesar in Troja', *Hermes*, 114, 460-78.