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LUCAN'S EPIC *ARISTEIA* AND THE HERO OF THE *BELLUM CIVILE*[*]

Scelerique nefando nomen erit virtus ("Virtue will be the name given to unspeakable crime," 1.667-68). This rhetorically-charged *sententia* does more than illustrate Lucan's penchant for impassioned embellishment. It also reflects a sophisticated critical structure that resolves an apparent contradiction of momentous importance in Lucan's poem. On the one hand, Lucan chooses to write on the subject of the civil war between Caesar and Pompey, a war that is *scelus nefandum*: it is more painful, more damaging, and more atrocious than any other Roman battle because it requires the shedding of kindred blood and results in tyranny. On the other, he decides to present that material as epic poetry, which genre traditionally focuses on the praise of *virtus* (*arete*), the performance of heroic acts—often at great personal cost—for the sake of homeland, family, and gods. Obviously, civil war cannot produce a hero in the conventional sense of the word because it pollutes both parties: aggressive action is moral depravity, but defensive resistance is little better since it too involves violence against fellow countrymen and thus participation in their *crimen*.[1] *Periere nocentes,/sed cum iam soli possent superesse nocentes* ("The guilty died, but at a time when the only possible survivors are also guilty," 2.143-44). By choosing to express an account of civil war through the medium of epic poetry, Lucan mediates the extremes of *virtus* and *scelus*. He draws upon the literary tradition of epic, but ingeniously inverts that tradition by removing the individual heroes and concentrating instead on weapon and wound. As a result, he is able to establish that Caesar and Pompey have overturned *virtus* in favor of personal ambition and selfishness, and thus he condemns

[*] I want to offer my gratitude to the audiences at CAMWS and the University of Kansas who heard versions of this paper, and the following individuals who were instrumental in nourishing my interest in Lucan or in bettering this paper: Richard Lounsbury, James O'Donnell, Joseph Farrell, the anonymous referees of *Classical Journal*, and most particularly Robert Gorman.

[1] Note, for example, Pompey's speech before the battle of Pharsalus, especially 7.117-20. For civil war as suicide, see Bartsch 1997, 24-25; Masters 1992, 37-42.

civil war. In addition, along the way he leaves hints that the only virtue to be found in such a war is obtained by refusing either to participate or to persevere: the true hero will take his own life to avoid immoral action.

In denouncing the behavior of the participants in civil war, Lucan draws on the values of different kinds of virtue. We will begin the discussion with the virtue that is intrinsically nationalistic. For Romans, *virtus* was demonstrated in the process of winning personal *gloria* by committing great deeds in the service of the Roman state.[2] The Roman aristocrats performed in the political and religious spheres, but especially in the military realm did they win fame, not for individual exploits—for a Roman general rarely partook in the actual fighting—but for rousing their men into disciplined encounters with the enemy and leading the way to great victories. Such virtue demanded private goodness, but only that which was tied to public achievement and measured by comparison to the great individuals of the Roman past. A notable example of a virtuous man is L. Cornelius Scipio (cos. 259, cen. 258), who is described on his epitaph as the "best man" (*optimo viro*, *CIL* 1^2. 9; cf. Cic. *de Sen.* 61). This claim is then supported by a long list of his magistracies, military victories, and services to the gods. In a similar vein, L. Caecilius Metellus, who served twice as consul (251 and 241 BCE) and was also *magister equitum*, dictator, and *pontifex maximus*, was eulogized by his son with a collection of superlatives that demonstrated that he had served the Roman state as a general, senator, and priest of unparalleled distinction (Pliny *N H* 7.139). These two men characterize the moral atmosphere of propriety and obligation that pervaded the Roman Republic and, according to Livy (1.9.3), combined with the favor of the gods in order to establish Rome and its empire in the first place.

Entirely compatible with the Roman ideal of *virtus* is the epic convention which requires a focus upon, not the general tide of battle, but the success and failure of individual warriors.[3] The hero wins *kleos/gloria* by killing, and the greater the reputation of the man he kills, the greater becomes his own reputation. His glory will continue to mount until he is in turn slain by another and passes

[2] Earl 1967, 11-43, esp. 20-25 and 35. For the role of honor in the Roman army, see Lendon 1997, 237-66.

[3] Several scholars discuss Lucan's borrowings from epic, particularly Homer. See: Metger 1970; Lausberg 1985; Albrecht 1970. For a thorough survey of Lucanian scholarship through 1985, see Rutz 1985.

his accumulated reputation over to the new hero.[4] Because epic *kleos* is strictly personal, the naming of the conquered foes is one of the most important features of the *aristeia*. A Homeric example of this device occurs at *Iliad* 16.284-785, where Patroklos vanquishes twenty-seven named men and twenty-seven more unnamed before he is himself struck dead. Similarly, in Vergil,[5] Pallas kills six named men (10.525-70), and then a seventh, Halaesus, but not before that man has himself killed five men (10.571-92) so that those five add to the fame gained by Pallas in slaughtering their killer. Finally, Pallas surrenders his accumulated *gloria*, to Turnus along with his life (10.657-75), just as Turnus will eventually surrender his to Aeneas (12.1178-1271). In Homer's battles and in Vergil's, it is the *aristeia* that delineates the hero—the personification of martial *arete* or *virtus*. The greater the hero, the greater the *aristeia* he performs. Accordingly, the best of all heroes is, so to speak, the last man standing. It would offend our sensibilities if Homer had chosen to continue the *Iliad* to the death of Achilles, because that great warrior would suffer damage to his reputation by being killed by a playboy using a coward's weapon. Instead, we leave him at his prime, after he has slain the greatest of all opponents. We know that Achilles is mortal. We even know that he will soon die. But by avoiding his death scene, we leave his reputation intact as the Best of the Achaians.

In spite of the literary obligations that Lucan has taken upon himself as epic poet, he is also constrained by the events of history and the strictures of morality.[6] His literary and nationalistic traditions both demand heroes and heroic displays of martial and political virtue, but it is a common belief—both in antiquity and today—that the Republic failed because the ideal of *virtus* was abandoned.[7] Lucan cannot alter the historical outcome of the civil war. Caesar is the victor, but in this he is also the enemy, the man who overthrows the Republic and establishes the tyranny. In direct opposition to the rule of the last-man-standing, Lucan's poem serves as a long moral condemnation of Caesar. He sets the tone in Book 1, where the centurion Laelius makes a stirring speech, encouraging Caesar after the crossing of the Rubicon (1.356-86): if

[4] Hardie 1993; Toohey 1992, 10-14; Nagy 1979, 28-29.

[5] For Vergilian battle scenes, see especially: Heinze 1903; Horsfall 1987.

[6] Toohey (1992, 166) lists the main themes of the *Pharsalia* as the condemnation of Caesar, the degeneration of Rome from Republic to Empire, the lethal nature of imperial whimsy, and the commendation of *libertas* which is, in Lucan's day, lost.

[7] See: Earl 1967, 55-58; Galinsky 1996, 3-9.

Caesar desires it, Laelius will disown his fellow-citizens, kill brother, father, or wife, and plunder the temples of the gods. Later still, when another Caesarian soldier, Scaeva, is about to repel Pompey's army single-handedly, he is described as *pronus ad omne nefas et qui nesciret in armis/quam magnum virtus crimen civilibus esset* ("ready for every wickedness, and ignorant of how great a wrong is courage in civil war," 6.147-48). Lucan makes it all-too clear that, in civil war, acts of aggressive *virtus* can only be interpreted as *nefas*.[8] And, if he is unwilling to praise the victors, neither can Lucan conjure fictive deeds of battlefield glory for the vanquished. Pompey and Cato cannot earn virtus because even defensive action in a civil war is tainted, since it also causes Roman blood to flow.[9] So the words of Cato indicate, when he decides to abandon neutrality and join what will become the losing side: *crimen erit superis et me fecisse nocentem* ("It will be an accusation against the gods that they made even me guilty," 2.288).

The clash of history with morality and the dictates of poetic tradition strikes a spark that Lucan uses to illuminate the faults he means to criticize. For, though he presents no traditional *aristeia*, he nonetheless includes in the *Pharsalia* certain characteristic features of that tradition, but only after they have been modified and manipulated to make his critical point. As we noted above, from Homer onward the essential moment of the *aristeia* is the killing of a named warrior by another named warrior: the act of naming the participants—victim as well as victor—is integral to the poetic act of epic itself, for only in this way is the accumulated *arete* of the victim transferred gloriously to the victor and the *kleos* of both made immortal in the epic tradition. But Lucan nearly abandons the conceit of a preeminent epic hero with a battlefield *aristeia*. On most occasions, he pointedly obscures the identity of the combatants, concentrating instead upon the mass conflicts of battle line against battle line and fleet against fleet,[10] or replacing the hero

[8] For an excellent analysis of this relationship between *virtus, crimen,* and *mors,* see Rutz 1960.

[9] For a careful discussion of the ethical contradictions inherent in this work, see Roller 1996. For the idea of Pompey as the hero of the work, see Metger 1970, 437-38, and Johnson 1987, who says (85), "If the *Pharsalia* was to have had or could have had a hero, that hero, that unreal, useless, unthinkable hero, would have been Pompey."

[10] The best analysis of Lucan's battle scenes is unquestionably Metger 1957. He is primarily concerned with comparing and contrasting Lucan's historical material with Caesar's own account in his *Bellum Civile* and Lucan's epic technique with that of Homer, Ennius, Ovid, and at times even Statius. For comparisons to Vergil, see also: Thompson and Bruère 1968; Bruère 1950. For Lucan's use of lesser characters, see

with anonymous weapons and wounds. When he chooses to present the exploits of individuals, we must recognize that he does so deliberately, and that this decision reflects an intent to clarify the pollution inherent in civil war and condemn the moral failings of its principals.

Since Roman *virtus* and epic *aristeia* are inconsistent with the feats accomplished in civil war, one might fear that Lucan retained no honorable response for the truly virtuous man, but this apprehension would be ungrounded. Instead Lucan intimates that one ethical course of action remains, and he delineates it according to the virtue of the Stoic *sapiens*. According to Stoic teaching, virtue is the only true good, and it consists of living in accordance with the rational nature of the universe and accepting with perfect equanimity whatever may happen. The wise man—which is to say the virtuous man—will set aside his passions, and use perfect reasoning to select the best conduct in any given external circumstance. Among his choices, death is an "unpreferred indifferent": not something to be sought, but also not to be avoided if escape means choosing immoral behavior or a compromising situation.[11] Thus, the virtuous Roman who is faced with slaying fellow-citizens or living in a depraved world commanded by a tyrant will choose instead to die, and, in order to avoid polluting someone else with his blood, he will take his own life swiftly and without regret. This is the course of action advocated by Lucan and, in all probability, it would have stood as the culmination of his unfinished epic, the suicide of Cato at Utica.

Lucan's decision to invert the expectations of epic *aristeia* in order to demonstrate that civil war combatants are repudiating the requirements of Roman virtue is illustrated in his descriptions of the hostilities, beginning with the Battle of Pharsalus itself. A reader steeped in the traditions of epic might expect this determining battle of the civil war to be portrayed in terms of heroic exploits, individual glory, and nationalistic honor, but instead Lucan disappoints these expectations. At Lucan's Pharsalus, no virtue is proven, no glory won, because, generally speaking, Lucan refuses to name names (7.552-55):

Nehrkorn 1960. Of course, the preponderance of mass fighting is grounded in reality: Oakley 1985.

[11] Any introduction to Stoic philosophy will explore these issues. See, for example: Rist 1969; Sharples 1996, 70-78 and 100-112. Bartsch (1997, 42-44) argues that Lucan's treatment of Stoic ideas shows that he thought that Stoicism was not the answer, while Leigh (1997, 267-76 and 279-82) holds that Lucan subverts Stoicism.

hanc fuge, mens, partem belli tenebrisque relinque,
nullaque tantorum discat me vate malorum,
quam multum bellis liceat civilibus, aetas.
a potius pereant *lacrimae* pereantque *querellae*:
quidquid in hac acie gessisti, Roma, tacebo.

"Flee, mind, from this part of the war and leave it in shadows; let no age learn from my poetry how great a quantity of evil is permitted in civil wars. Rather let the tears perish, and let the complaints perish. I will pass over in silence whatever you accomplished in this battle, O Rome."

Here Lucan utilizes the ultimate sanction that is at the disposal of the epic poet: through his power as bard (*me vate*) he refuses to immortalize (*pereant*) the martial deeds (*in hac acie gessisti*) which, properly understood, provoke not praise but tears and complaints (*lacrimae, querellae*). Thus, it is on moral grounds that Lucan usually prefers to speak of *acies, cornua,* and *catervae* rather than to recall the names of men.

On the other hand, when he does single out an individual, he does so as an embodiment of the moral basis for the complaints and tears which fill his battle scenes. The first example is the soldier Crastinus (7.470-74), who is named only to be decried as the man who is so insane (*rabies*, 7.474) as to ignore the pious scruples which restrained his comrades (*percussa pietate*, 7.468) and to begin at last the unspeakable battle between brother and brother, father and son: *vultus ... videre parentum/frontibus adversis fraternaque comminus arma* ("They saw their fathers' faces coming against them and their brothers' weapons at close quarters," 7.462-65). By naming him, Lucan invokes the epic power which he otherwise avoids, but only to immortalize Crastinus' infamy and to fulfill, at least in part, the penalty he is begging of the gods: the shame of eternal condemnation.

The other focus of Lucan's *querellae*, Caesar himself, is equally vilified: *hic Caesar, rabies populis stimulusque furorum* ("Here is Caesar, madness for the people and a goad to rage," 7.557). As a general, Caesar does not raise his own hand and weapon against the enemy, but instead he urges his men on, stanches wounds, and points out targets. When he lifts a weapon, it is only to pass it to those who have broken theirs in the fighting, while he himself strikes no blows except against his own men, whom he thumps with the butt of his spear to spur them forward (7.574, 576-77). However, instead of inspiring his men to proud deeds of military prowess worthy of a Roman aristocrat or an epic hero, Lucan mentions

Caesar as the personifications of *rabies* and *furor*, the very annihilation of moral excellence: *hic furor, hic rabies, hic sunt tua crimina, Caesar* ("Here is the rage, here the madness, here are the charges against you, Caesar," 7.551).

After dealing with the *querelae* directed at the Caesarians, Lucan turns his attention to the *lacrimae* of the Pompeians. While the forces of Caesar perform *res gestae*, Pompey's troops suffer *fata*, and Lucan concentrates not on the individual but on the shared doom of the defenders of the Republic (7.597-99):

> hic patriae perit omne decus: iacet aggere magno
> patricium campis non mixta plebe cadaver.

"Here the entire flower of the nation perishes: the patrician corpses with no commoners interspersed, lies in a great heap on the plain."

Again, the exceptions, the men named by the poet, are not singled out for their valor and glorious deeds, but for the futility of their position and the passivity of their response. In the first instance, they are the defeated and the dead (7.583-85):

> ... caedunt Lepidos caeduntque Metellos,
> Corvinosque simul Torquataque nomina, rerum
> saepe duces summosque hominum, ...

"They slay the Lepidi, they slay the Metelli, and at the same time the Corvini, and those who bear the name Torquatus, often the leaders of affairs and the greatest men, ..."

The great names (*nomina*) of Rome have become memories, attached only to lifeless bodies lying slaughtered on the Emathian plain. Among them, the poet singles out Domitius Ahenobarbus (7.599-616). Though Lucan mentions Domitius' pugnacity as a warrior (*pugnax*), his stubbornness in battle has brought him repeated defeat: *victus totiens a Caesare salua / libertate perit* ("Conquered so many times by Caesar, he perished with his freedom intact," 7.602-3). Domitius dies defiantly, scorning Caesar and pleased, no doubt, that he does not have to face Caesar's pardon a second time.[12]

[12] The first time was when he was pardoned at Corfinium, 2.507-15. Interestingly enough, no individual is credited with Domitius' death and he is the only confirmed casualty according to our other sources: App. *BC* 2.82; Caes. *BC* 3.99; Cic. *Phil.* 2.71. Cicero says that he was killed by M. Antonius while fleeing battle, while Caesar says it was cavalrymen. See the discussion at: Ahl 1976, 50-53; Makowski 1974, 9-13.

The remaining named actors are remarkable because they are neither dead not dying: instead they are about to run away. The first is the famous tyrannicide, Marcus Junius Brutus (7.586-90):

> illic plebeia contectus casside vultus
> ignotusque hosti quod ferrum, Brute, tenebas!
> o decus imperii, spes o suprema senatus,
> extremum tanti generis per saecula nomen,
> ne rue per medios nimium temerarius hostes.

"There, with your face hidden in a commoner's helmet and unrecognized by the enemy, what a sword you were holding, Brutus! O flower of the empire, O last hope of the senate, the last member of a family whose name was so great through the ages, do not rush too rashly into the midst of the enemy."

Though he bears a famous name (*extremum tanti generis nomen*), Brutus remains *ignotus* on the battlefield, unseen and anonymous. In a most anti-epic stance, Lucan actually admonishes Brutus to avoid the fight, in direct contravention to what a hero ought to be doing. Courage, the defining quality of the epic warrior, has become the fault of rashness (*nimium temerarius*).

The last man named is, appropriately, Pompey himself. Like Caesar, he is present on the battlefield as a non-participant. But while Caesar aids and encourages the bloodshed as far as he is able, Pompey watches in frustration as his men go down in slaughter (7.669-72):

> . . nec derat robur in enses
> ire duci iuguloque pati vel pectore letum
> sed timuit, strato miles ne corpore Magni
> non fugeret, supraque ducem procumberet orbis.

"Nor was the leader lacking the strength to run against the swords and suffer a fatal wound in his throat or chest. But he feared that the men would not flee once the body of Magnus was laid low, and that the entire world would collapse on top of the general."

Where Caesar is characterized by a bloodthirsty madness (*rabies*), Pompey wants to die and has the strength (*robur*) to face it; his only fear is for his men. He is afraid that if he takes sword in hand and rushes in to face his death, his men will, according to the highest obligation of the epic tradition, lose their lives in battling over his body. So, in Lucan's eyes, Pompey's most noble deed, his *aristeia*, if you will, is to stop the fighting by fleeing. Here again the epic battle scene has been turned on its head.

Throughout this battle, then, Lucan avoids the conventions of the epic melee, where mass battle is represented through a series of specific individual engagements whose principals are regularly named. Lucan seldom parts the fog of battle to allow individual faces to show through; at Pharsalus, he does it only to illustrate the un- or even anti-heroic behavior inherent in civil war. The naming of individual actors, individual causes of both *lacrimae* and *querellae*, must remain the exception. The poet must refuse to memorialize the names of men because he must mourn the death of the whole world (7.617-31):

> inpendisse pudet *lacrimas* in funere mundi
> mortibus innumeris, ac singula fata sequentem
> quaerere, letiferum per cuius viscera vulnus
> exierit, quis fusa solo vitalia calcet,
> ore quis adverso 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 venis
> inque hostis cadat arma sui, quis pectora fratris
> caedat et, ut notum possit spoliare cadaver,
> 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 vacamus.

"It is shameful, at the death of the world, to shed tears over countless deaths and following the individual fates, to ask: through whose guts has the death-dealing wound passed; who steps upon his own entrails when they were spilled on the ground; who, facing the enemy and dying, expelled with his breath the sword stuck in his throat; who falls to earth, stricken; who has stood while his limbs fall; which men pass weapons through their breasts; and whom has the javelin pinned to the ground; what blood has spurted through the air from burst veins and falls on the armor of its enemy; who strikes the breast of his brother and, in order that he may despoil the corpse he recognizes, cuts of the head and throws it far away; who rips up the face of his parent and convinces the spectators with his excessive anger that the man whose throat he cut is not his father. No death is worthy of its own complaint, and we are free to mourn no individuals."

It is noteworthy that Lucan conceives of the battlefield, not in terms of victor and victim, but in terms of weapon and wound. No one casts the spear or wields the sword, but each man dies, a bloody body part falling to an inanimate instrument of war.[13] In the careful detailing of the anonymous gore we are reminded of the care

[13] Metger (1957, esp. 25-26 and 33-48) touches on this point, but never develops it. For themes of dismemberment, see Most 1992.

displayed by Homer and Vergil in naming and describing their specific heroes engaged in *aristeia*, and must note the startling transformation of this convention. In order to fit the *crimina* of a civil war into an epic framework, Lucan must parallel the actions of his soldiers and efface the names of the opponents. Like the soldier who cuts of the head of his brother so that he can perform the epic act of robbing the body of its armor, Lucan removes the identifying features from his players. Just as the soldier must remove the evidence of his fratricide before he can proceed, Lucan must remove the individual identities so that he can narrate the civil war without being crushed under the horrifying pollution and sorrow of the individual accusations.

For Lucan the Battle of Pharsalus may have represented the most extreme horror of civil war, but other, less important battles also share in the taint of immorality. When he depicts these other battles, he again manipulates the epic motif of naming to emphasize this sinfulness. This stratagem can be seen clearly in Lucan's portrayal of the sea battle at Massilia, the first major engagement of the epic (3.509-762).[14] Here, at first glance, Lucan seems to depict traditional epic combat. Perhaps because, while still within the realm of civil war, Massilia does not pit brother against brother, but Roman against Greek, Lucan is able to resolve the mass battle into a series of individual contests.[15] However, here again he manipulates the technique of naming in order to make a moral point.

Lucan focuses on twelve participants. Catus, a Roman, is pierced in back and breast simultaneously (3.585-91). Telo receives a javelin in his breast (3.592-99). Gyareus is torn by a grappling hook (3.600-602). An unnamed twin receives multiple wounds: one hand and the other arm are hacked off and his chest is riddled with spears before he leaps onto the enemy ship and sinks it with his body weight (3.603-34).[16] Lycidas is torn in half by a hook (3.635-46). An unnamed man in the water is crushed between ramming ships (3.653-61). Another unnamed man is wrestled under water by Phoceus and drowned (3.696-702), but Phoceus hits his head on the bottom of a ship when he is surfacing and himself drowns (3.703-4). A second Roman, Tyrrhenus, is wounded by Lygdamus (3.709-21), but then he, in turn, strikes Argus a fatal blow (3.721-

[14] For the sea battle, see especially: Metger 1957, 21-76; Fuhrmann 1968; Hunink 1992; Masters 1992, 11-42.

[15] Opelt (1957) sees Lucan's portrayal of Massilia as a chain of combat rather than individual scenes of *aristeia*.

[16] See Metger 1970 for a detailed look at the episode of the twins.

25). Finally, Argus' father, wishing to precede his son in death, takes his own life first by stabbing himself and then by jumping off into the water (3.726-51).

Of these twelve men, ten are shown at the moment of their death, the passive recipients of wounds, but at no point does the glory of the victim pass to the victor because, with only one exception, a named man is not killed by a named man. Four named and two unnamed men are slain by inanimate weapons, while another nameless man commits suicide. One named man, Phoceus, is at least momentarily victorious, but not only is his opponent unnamed but his victory is short-lived, the means to his own bizarre death. Furthermore, the theme of anonymous fighting and death is reinforced by the eight names which Lucan chooses for his fighters. None of them are known historical figures. Phoceus, Tyrrhenus, and Argus are ethnics, as may also be Gyareus (from Gyaros, an island in the Cyclades used as a prison, cf. Cic. *Att.* 5.12.1). Telo(n), and Lygdamus are fairly common Greek names, but Lycidas less so. Catus is a *cognomen*.[17] Thus, even the named fighting has been rendered obscure by the lack of specific referents with personal reputations.

The idea that Lucan is consciously manipulating the features associated with the epic *aristeia* is reinforced by the one exceptional episode—one of only two instances in the entire work in which he gives the names of the participants on both sides (see Table I). Lygdamus shoots a bullet from his sling which hits Tyrrhenus in the temple and bursts both of his eyeballs. In a great show of selflessness, Tyrrhenus begs his companions to arm him and point him at the enemy so he may continue the battle (3.716-21):

> Vos, ait, o socii, sicut tormenta soletis,
> me quoque mittendis rectum componite telis.
> egere, quod superest animae, Tyrrhene, per omnes
> bellorum casus. ingentem militis usum
> hoc habet ex magna defunctum parte cadaver:
> viventis feriere loco.

"O allies, he says, station me in the right position to hurl darts, just as you are accustomed to do with engines of war. Tyrrhenus, you must spend what remains of your life in all the hazards of war. Your corpse, although it is nearly dead, holds a huge benefit for the soldier: you will be struck in the place of a living man."

[17] The name is associated with the Aelii, Egnatii, Firmii, Iulii, and Valerii: *RE* 3.1798 (1899) *s.v.* Catus (2). A Catus also serves as a soldier in the writings of Silius Italicus (4.139).

Table I

ATTACKER	ORIGIN OF NAME	ATTACKEE	ORIGIN OF NAME	MEANS	RESULT	PLACE	CITATION
Unnamed	None	Catus	Greek? Cognomen	Pierced in back and breast	Killed	Massilia	3.585-91
Unnamed	None	Telo	Greek?	Javelin in breast	Killed	Massilia	3.592-99
Unnamed	None	Gyareus	Ethnic [from Gyaros?]	Grappling hook	Killed	Massilia	3.600-602
Unnamed	None	Unnamed Twin	None	Multiple wounds	Killed	Massilia	3.603-34
Unnamed	None	Lycidas	Greek?	Torn in half by hook	Killed	Massilia	3.635-46
None	None	Ship's crew	None	Tipped under own weight	Drowned	Massilia	3.647-52
Ramming Ships	None	Unnamed	None	Crushed in water	Killed	Massilia	3.653-61
Phoceus	Ethnic	Unnamed	None	Wrestled under water	Drowned	Massilia	3.696-702
None	None	Phoceus	Ethnic	Hit head on ship	Drowned	Massilia	3.703-4
Lygdamus	Greek?	Tyrrhenus	Ethnic	Bullet to eye	Blinded	Massilia	3.709-21
Tyrrhenus (blind)	Ethnic	Argus	Ethnic	Blind throw; javelin in belly	Killed	Massilia	3.721-25
Father of Argus	None	Self	None	Multiple wounds	Killed	Massilia	3.726-51
Own men / Vulteius	None	Selves/own men	None	Multiple wounds	Killed	Illyricum	4.544-74
None	None	Curio	Historical	None	Killed	Libya	4.793-98
Scaeva	Historical	Unnamed	None	Buried under corpses	Killed	Minicius	6.169-72
Scaeva	Historical	Unnamed	None	Miscellaneous weapons	Killed	Minicius	6. 172-79
Scaeva	Historical	Unnamed	None	Swords	Killed	Minicius	6.180-85

Table I (cont.)

ATTACKER	ORIGIN OF NAME	ATTACKEE	ORIGIN OF NAME	MEANS	RESULT	PLACE	CITATION
Unnamed	None	Scaeva	Historical	Multiple wounds	Survived	Minicius	6.186-212
Cretan archer	None	Scaeva	Historical	Arrow to eye	Blinded	Minicius	6.213-16
Scaeva (blind)	Historical	Aulus	Praenomen	Tricked; stabbed in throat	Killed	Minicius	6.228-39
Unnamed	None	Lepidi	Historical	Seen as corpses	Killed	Pharsalus	7.581-85
Unnamed	None	Metelli	Historical	Seen as corpses	Killed	Pharsalus	7.581-85
Unnamed	None	Corvini	Historical	Seen as corpses	Killed	Pharsalus	7.581-85
Unnamed	None	Torquati	Historical	Seen as corpses	Killed	Pharsalus	7.581-85
Unnamed	None	Domitius	Historical	One thousand wounds	Killed	Pharsalus	7.597-616
Achillas+Septimius	Historical+ Nomen	Pompey	Historical	Stabbed; beheaded	Assassinated	Egypt	8.536-678
Dipsas	Snake	Aulus	Praenomen	Poison as flame	Killed	Libya	9.737-60
Seps	Snake	Sabellus	Ethnic	Poison melted flesh	Killed	Libya	9.761-88
Prester	Snake	Nasidius	Historical	Poison swelled body	Killed	Libya	9.789-804
Haemorrhois	Snake	Tullus	Praenomen	Poison; sweated blood	Killed	Libya	9.805-14
Nile Serpent	Snake	Laevus	Cognomen?	Poison stopped heart	Killed	Libya	9.815-21
Iaculus	Snake	Paulus	Cognomen	Pierced head	Killed	Libya	9.822-28
Basilisk	Snake	Murrus	?	Cut off own hand to save life	Maimed	Libya	9.829-38
Caesar (ordered)	Historical	Pothinus	Historical	"Died the death of Magnus"	Executed	Alexandria	10.515-19
Arsinoe (ordered)	Historical	Achillas	Historical	Sword	Executed	Alexandria	10.520-25

In spite of Tyrrhenus' undoubted bravery, he equates himself with an engine of war (*tormentum*) and a nearly-dead cadaver. Blindly he throws a weapon that pierces the belly of Argus. It is important to note that Lucan seems to be describing a traditional epic scene of military accomplishment, but in fact he has transformed the attacker from a man into an inanimate thing. Lucan is reestablishing here in one and the same person the theme of weapon and wound. Furthermore, in killing Argus, Tyrrhenus acts completely blindly. His physical blindness must be seen as symbolic of the moral blindness of civil war[18] that, in turn, perpetuates itself in another blindness, that of grief suffered by the father of Argus after his son is struck (3.735-36):

> nox subit atque oculos vastae obduxere tenebrae,
> et miserum cernens agnoscere desinit Argum.

"Night fell and enormous shadows covered his eyes, and, perceiving wretched Argus, he ceases to recognize him."

With these words Lucan reintroduces another theme already familiar from our discussion of Brutus and of the corpses at Pharsalus: nonrecognition. The importance of this theme is emphasized with the verses that conclude his depiction of the Battle of Massilia (3.758-61):

> coniunx saepe sui confusis vultibus unda
> credidit ora viri Romanum amplexa cadaver,
> accensisque rogis miseri de corpore trunco
> certavere patres.

"Often a woman, embracing a Roman corpse whose features were obscured by the sea, imagined the face to be that of her own husband, and next to the flaming funeral pyres wretched fathers contested with each other over a headless body."

Like the dead at Pharsalus, the victims of Massilia have had their features effaced. As we have seen, this physical erasure of identity has poetic significance. Lucan is fashioning for himself an anomalous role as epic poet. Instead of immortalizing the names of heroes, his aim is the suppression of individual identities. For moral reasons, Lucan moves to center stage the spilling of blood, emphasizing civil war as a source of vast communal pollution. By subtracting the individual human element, he does not detract from

[18] For literal and moral blindness in the character of Aeneas, see Putnam 1990, esp. 31-39.

the seriousness of the universal devastation either by allowing the evil forces of Caesar to win glory or by forcing the morally stronger forces of Pompey to be polluted in the conflict.

Thus, by forgoing the identification of the victims and agents of death at Massilia and at Pharsalus, Lucan avoids both glory and pollution. On one occasion, however, he decides to personalize the guilt by bestowing it on a follower of Caesar, but he has to accomplish this without also bestowing glory. Paradoxically, the pollution is bestowed and the glory withheld through the one true *aristeia* in the whole work, the *aristeia* of Scaeva (6.140-262).[19]

In this passage, Lucan at first seems to have taken a quite traditional epic stance. He will not relate the deeds of some unknown or generically characterized figure, but of a well-known Caesarean soldier, Cassius Scaeva.[20] Lucan begins the episode: *Scaeva viro nomen* ("Scaeva was the name of the man," 6.144). These words announce what seems to be a traditional *aristeia*, recording the reputation (*nomen*) that he elsewhere refrains from recognizing. In this passage, Pompey's men are storming the citadel of Minicius with great success until Caesar's centurion, Scaeva, is given the seemingly impossible role of defending the fortress alone. Instead of receiving their assault, he attacks first, but his original weapon is not a sword or spear, but the pile of allied corpses lying in front of him. He pushes them off the tower and buries unnamed assailants under them (6.169-72). There follows a desperate series of struggles on the wall (6.172-79):

> ... totaeque viro dant tela ruinae,
> roboraque et moles hosti seque ipse minatur.
> nunc sude, nunc duro contraria pectora conto
> detrudit muris, et valli summa tenentes
> amputat ense manus; caput obterit ossaque saxo
> ac male defensum fragili conpage cerebrum
> dissipat; alterius flamma crinesque genasque
> succendit; strident oculis ardentibus ignes.

"All of the ruins supply the man with weapons, and he threatens his enemy with wooden beams, blocks of stone, and his own body. Now with a stake, now with a hard pike, he pushes the chests of the enemy away from the walls,

[19] Many scholars discuss this passage, but some of the more interesting treatments, though widely divergent, are: Metger 1957, 62 and 165-77; Marti 1966. See also: Conte 1988; Leigh 1997, 158-90.

[20] Caes. *BC* 3.53; Cic. *Att.* 13.23.3. Hardie (1993, 8-11 and 35) believes that Scaeva's entire purpose here is as a stand-in for Caesar. He says (68-69), "The *Bellum Civile* is not an epic of individual *aristeiai*; the one exception is the heroic defense of a Caesarian position in book 6 by the centurion Scaeva, the surrogate for the absent master, embodying the same range of features of beast, man and god."

and with his sword he cuts off the hands that are grabbing the highest part of the palisade. He crushes the head and bones of one man with a rock, and spatters brains that were badly defended by such a fragile structure. The hair and beard of another man he sets afire, and the flames crackle in the burning eyes."

If this is not enough, Scaeva's display is not limited to the action on the wall. He next springs over it into the midst of the enemy soldiers, wielding his sword until it is dull with congealed blood (6.180-88). Thereupon, Scaeva is himself attacked and struck by every weapon from every nameless hand, but even then he does not look to his own defense. He uses his left arm, not to hold a shield, but to attack further (6.189-212). He is wounded: a Cretan archer pierces Scaeva's left eye, but he plucks out the arrow, together with his eyeball, and stomps on them in disdain (6.213-16).

Thus Scaeva deliberately surrounds himself with the enemy and suffers more wounds than any mortal could receive and still survive, including the wound to the eye that obscures his features. This episode is actually an epic remembrance of a historical story in which Scaeva's shield was pierced by 120 weapons,[21] but Lucan has taken that story—as unlikely at it may be in itself—and transformed it into the absurd.[22] His Scaeva quickly abandons his shield, and those myriad weapons strike his body and stick in his bones and vitals (6.195, 205, etc.). Thus, in this *aristeia* Lucan is not glorifying Caesarean valor, but mocking it with hyperbolic irony.

Irony, of course, is notoriously hard to establish, but this interpretation is supported by the final incident recounted among Scaeva's deeds. Up to this point, Scaeva's opponents have been the body parts of nameless men, stricken by an amazing assortment of weapons. But his last opponent is given a name: Aulus. After he has been wounded in the eye, Scaeva resorts to trickery and begs for mercy. But when Aulus comes forward to help him from the field, Scaeva treacherously stabs him in the throat (6.228-39).[23] In this,

[21] Caes. *BC* 3.53. Appian (*BC* 2.60) says this was Minucius' shield and that Minucius was wounded six times whereas Scaeva merely lost his eye. Poetic license easily allows for the conflation of the two figures into one.

[22] Johnson 1987, 59: "Scaeva's virtue ... is presented here, a caricature of Caesar's account of Scaeva, in mocking hyperbole that echoes the conventions of Roman and epic virtue only in order to subvert them." Compare Lucan's hyperbolic transformation of Vergil's twins (*Aen.* 10.540-49) at Massilia (3.603-34). For Lucan as a political ironist, see Bartsch 1997, 102-108.

[23] This is consistent with Appian's account, except that the trickery belongs to Minucius and the result is the death of not one, but two enemy soldiers, both nameless. At this moment, Scaeva is saved by the arrival of Caesar's forces and, when

the second and last instance in the *Pharsalia* of a named man killing another named man on the battlefield, the slaughter is accomplished through deceit and not straightforward military prowess. Just as Diomedes would hardly have spent the remainder of his life bragging that he killed Dolon, so also this killing could not have offered real heroic fame to Scaeva. Furthermore, Lucan conspicuously disapproves of Scaeva's action and he demonstrates his disapprobation by blinding Scaeva first and then describing him immediately before his attack on Aulus: *perdiderat vultum rabies, stetit imbre cruento / informis facies* ("Madness had obscured his features, and his face was deformed with a stream of blood," 6.224-25). Once more Lucan presents us with the familiar image of literal and moral blindness and effacement. The connotations of this image are clear from passages examined above: Scaeva's face is obscured, just as his madness deprives him of his claim to individual glory.[24]

One other scene in Lucan's work, the contest with the snakes from Book 9, resembles the heroic *aristeia* of the epic tradition, but it does not meet the proper requirements to produce a hero, whether great or small. Cato leads his shipwrecked men through the African desert and is fallen upon by a series, not of enemy soldiers, but of highly toxic snakes. Johnson is correct in pointing out the fantastic nature of this entire scene in which fighting is not only hopeless for the men, but ridiculous as well. Yet, both man and snake are named, and the snake is always "elaborately portrayed in terms of its special *arete*, its particular bite and venom."[25] Ahl calls this an attempt at an *aristeia*,[26] but if an *aristeia* is a demonstration of individual prowess on the battlefield, then the contest against the snakes can only render fame to the snakes, for they are the victors. They kill man after man with various horrible deaths, and so they obtain the greater glory, but the men they conquer are obscure,

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Pompey's men withdraw, he collapses but miraculously does not die (6.246-62). He appears again at Alexandria, in the closing lines of the epic (10.542-46).

[24] Cf. Caesar's *rabies*, discussed above. Along the same line, before Scaeva pleads with the Pompeians for pity, he deliberately softens his features, hiding his *furor* and removing *virtus* from his face (6.228-29), but when he attacks Aulus, *incaluit virtus* (6.240).

[25] Johnson 1987, 53; cf. Batinski 1992.

[26] Ahl 1976, 74. Johnson (1987, 46-57) says it is an *aristeia*, not of Cato's men, but of Cato himself, a means of showing that "Cato's virtue is, as Lucan imagines it here, as implausible and fantastic as the snakes that destroy his soldiers" (55). Thus, Johnson concludes, Lucan is disenchanted with Stoicism and is demonstrating it by making Cato into a "cruel cartoon of the Stoic saint" (45), a tragic victim and hero at the same time. Cf. Narducci 1985.

mostly fictional characters invented entirely in order to die here.[27] As for Cato, he never even draws his sword. One might think Lucan were mocking us with this scene: "By associating the epic convention that most closely defines the splendors of heroic individuality with mere faces in the inglorious, anonymous crowd Lucan here subverts the conventions of epic as he everywhere subverts them."[28]

Thus, Lucan is demonstrating throughout his work that battle scenes in civil war cannot yield epic glory. Victory is pollution and even the act of dying serves to infect the killer with an unholy virtue. Inaction is explicitly rejected by Cato as impossible (2.286-325), presumably because it condones the winner by not opposing him and leaves the vanquished living in wickedness after the death of the Republic. There remains, however, one path that a soldier in civil war may take to righteous behavior, one course of action in which a man may draw his sword and yet avoid the pollution of kindred blood entirely. This path leads directly to the pinnacle of Stoic virtue which Lucan would well approve. In civil war, a truly virtuous man will take his own life.[29]

The only battle scene remaining to be discussed in all of Lucan's extant epic is the mass suicide of Vulteius and his men (4.402-581). Vulteius is a Caesarian, otherwise unknown,[30] who commands a raft that is caught by the enemy's traps. Realizing that he and his men are surrounded and have no chance of survival left to them, he urges his men to suicide (4.474-520) with promises of glory (4.479-80). *Indomitos sciat esse viros* ("Let him know that men are not conquered," 4.505), he says, even when tempted with treaties and the offer to spare his life (4.507-8), because, most of all, they will be remembered as monuments to virtue (*magna virtute merendum est*, 4.512). When the speech is successful, after continuing their resis-

[27] The names include a common Roman *praenomen* (Aulus), a *nomen* or *cognomen* (Tullus), two *cognomina* (Laevus and Paulus), an ethnic (Sabellus), a Greek name (Murrus), and one historical figure (Nasidius). Silius Italicus (1.377-420) has a character named Murrus who is given a small *aristeia* of his own. The explanation for his name is that he is Rutulian on his mother's side and Greek on his father's. Caesar (*BC* 2.3-4; *B. Afr.* 64) says that Nasidius was a Pompeian supporter who led a small fleet to aid Domitius at Massilia. Cf. Caes. *Att.* 11.17.3; App. *BC* 5.139.

[28] Johnson 1987, 53.

[29] For Roman views on suicide in general, see: van Hooff 1990; Grisé 1982; Bayet 1951. For Lucan's Stoicism, see Due 1970. For the best treatment of the theme of self-death and *amor mortis* in Lucan, see Makowski 1974.

[30] Cicero (*Verr.* 3.66.155) discusses a L. Volteius or Vulteius who is praetor of Sicily in 69 BCE, and very influential with L. Metellus. There is no indication whether or not he should be identified with the character here.

tance a little longer, Vulteius' men all die, stabbing each other to death (4.558-60, 565-56).[31]

Here at last it might seem that epic and moral virtue are reconciled on the field of battle, for in this scene Lucan uses his own poetic voice and that of the character Vulteius to sound remarks that would prick the attention of a reader familiar with the most severe moral teachings of the Stoic school. First, Vulteius could be taken for a dedicated Stoic when he reminds the men: *vita brevis nulli superest, qui tempus in illa/quaerendae sibi mortis habet* ("No man's existence is short who lives long enough to seek his own death," 4.478-79). Then Lucan himself, in his role as guardian of epic fame, rounds off the entire scene with a stirring portrayal of suicide as a means to freedom (4.573-81):

> ...nullam maiore locuta est
> ore ratem totum discurrens Fama per orbem.
> non tamen ignavae post haec exempla virorum
> percipient gentes quam sit non ardua virtus
> servitium fugisse manu, sed regna timentur
> ob ferrum et saevis libertas uritur armis,
> ignorantque datos, ne quisquam serviat, enses.
> mors, utinam pavidos vitae subducere nolles,
> sed virtus te sola daret.

"Rushing throughout the whole earth, Fame has never spoken more loudly about any raft. Nevertheless, after the examples of these men, cowardly nations will not comprehend how easy a virtue it is to escape servitude through suicide. But despots are feared because of their steel and freedom is vexed by savage arms. People do not understand that they have swords so that no one need be slaves. O death, would that you were unwilling to free cowards from life, but rather that you were the gift of virtue alone."

This passage may stand beside the strong Stoic defenses of suicide as a means to avoid immoral or shameful acts, and is especially in tune with the view presented by Seneca that suicide is the ultimate assertion of freedom (see the discussion below). Thus, it seems, we finally have heroes in our story, men with the courage to take their own lives and men who will stand as a monument to virtue.

But even here, Lucan sabotages the first reading of the episode by returning to the same themes that he has used to discredit the other battle scenes in this work: non-recognition, weapon and wound, and the pollution of kindred blood. Though the fame of this act of resistance is said to be unsurpassed of its kind, the model of

[31] For a detailed treatment of this scene, see Leigh 1997, 217-19 and 259-64.

epic glory which the poet offers through this episode will prove quick to fade. The force of this *exemplum* will escape the observation (*non percipient*) of a timorous world. In a parallel fashion, Lucan insinuates into the details of the suicide a similar effacement of the participants. Vulteius holds out to his men the idea of suicide as a way to glory, a way to avoid losing their identities. He praises suicide as a way to avoid the obscurity of dying in combat (*perit obruta virtus*, 4.491) in the dark haze of battle (*in caeca bellorum nube*, 4.488). Instead, he promises his men that the memory of their action will remain as a *magnum et memorabile exemplum* (4.496-97) and they will become monuments of faith and piety (*fides* and *pietas*, 4.498-99). In spite of all this, not a single man of Vulteius' corps is given a name, an action, or any sense of individual identity. If they are to stand as a monument, it can only commemorate the faceless, nameless dead.[32]

Since the identities of the combatants are obscured, the mass suicide is, like every other battle scene, reduced to weapon and wound, the hand which strikes the blow and the chest which receives it. The slaughter extends from 4.540 to 573, and in the space of those thirty-four lines, Lucan pounds the same note. The carnage (*strages*, 570) is accomplished by a blow (*ictus*, 547) delivered by a sword (*ensis*, *gladius*, or *ferrum*, 545, 561 bis, 565) or a right hand (*dextra* and/or *manus*, 542, 559, 560, 562). The weapons create bloody wounds (*cruor/cruentus*, 567, 570; *vulnera*, 543, 546, 551, 559, 560) in the guts (*viscera*, 545, 566), chest (*pectus*, 561), and throat (*iugulum*, 562). In all, there are twenty-one occurrences of weapons and wounds, but only the one named individual, Vulteius himself.

In addition to putting in question the epic status of the deed by diminishing its *gloria/kleos*, Lucan also undercuts the moral position which he seems to have granted by echoing Stoic teachings. Vulteius' men do not kill themselves, wielding their weapons against their own throats, but instead they die by staging a miniature civil war. Twice Lucan calls it *nefas* (4.549, 556), and he emphasizes the shedding of kindred blood: *cum sorte cruenta/fratribus incurrunt fratres natusque parenti* ("When, driven by bloody fate, brothers rush against brothers and son against father," 4.562-63; cf. 4.550-51). Also, the reader must not forget that these men do not approach death innocent and unpolluted. They only turn to suicide when the battle around them has become a lost cause. They are pressed on all sides, not by *hostes* but by *cives* (4.486), and the sword

[32] Eldred 1996.

which they turn against themselves is not cold, but rather warm with the poison of Roman blood: *cum calido fodiemus viscera ferro* ("When we pierce our guts with the hot iron," 4.511). Weapon, wound, and kindred blood are united into one.

Lucan confronts us with the contradiction: he approves the suicide in strong terms, complaining that more people do not see the force of its example, but at the same time he uses the techniques familiar from his other battle scenes to belie the heroism of the participants. It is important for our purposes to understand the basis of Lucan's ambivalence, for in spite of its inner tensions and doublesidedness, this passage points the way to the one true combination of martial and moral virtue that the *Pharsalia* was to portray. Lucan's attitude toward the actions of the Vulteians follows closely the Stoic doctrine on suicide, especially as presented in the works of his uncle, Seneca. Lucan's comments at 4.575-81 can be read as approbation of the act in general, but we have already seen that he thoroughly undermines this particular instance. There is no contradiction. Stoics viewed suicide as an acceptable and even necessary alternative under certain conditions, but those requirements are not met here.

According to Stoic doctrine, suicide may be employed when the gods give a *causa iusta*, such as action on the behalf of friends or country, in avoidance of intolerable pain or incurable disease (D. L. 7.130), or in avoidance of immoral or shameful acts.[33] Seneca adds to these circumstances when he defines suicide as the ultimate act of *libertas*, which is in itself the guarantor of the preservation of *dignitas* (*Ep.* 77.14), the freedom from the fear vicissitudes of this life (*Ep.* 12.10; 19.21; *Marc.* 19-20).[34] At first glance, the reasoning behind the mass suicide in the Vulteius scene would seem to fit the requirements of Stoicism: the men are taking their own lives to avoid imminent defeat and/or surrender.[35] But one must remember that they are already thoroughly polluted, and the swords they use are already warm with kindred blood, and so they are mistaken in their understanding of the circumstances confronting them. Surrender would free them from the necessity of further participation in Caesar's great criminal enterprise. But, instead of avoiding immoral behavior, they intend to die in a kind of arrogant exhibitionism, to demonstrate their passion for Caesar and his cause (4.496-502).

[33] *SVF* 3.768; Rist 1969, 239; Englert 1994, 72; Griffin 1986, 73.
[34] *Ep.* 51.9; Englert 1994, 78-81.
[35] Griffin (1986a, 194) stipulates that this is a motivation acceptable to Stoics.

Just as, from the Stoic point of view, Vulteius and his men suffer from a misapprehension of the moral dimensions of their external situation, so their internal approach and attitude toward suicide is incorrect as well. "The act itself, like all other acts in the Stoic world, is unimportant; what matters is the intention. The intention must be rational."[36] This theme of calm rationality recurs numerous times in Seneca's writings. In particular, he says that it is wrong to approach death with madness (*rabies* and *dementia*), sudden anger (*repentina indignatio*), in a fit of rage (*iratus*), thoughtlessly (*inprudentia, temere,* and *inconsulta animi inclinatio*), with weakness (*affectus*), hastily (*cum procursu*), or with a lust for death (*libido mortis*). Instead, we must meet death cheerfully (*hilarus*) and tranquilly (*quietus*), with the calm that results from fixed judgment (*haec ex iudicio certo tranquillitas est*), long since composed for death (*qui se ad illam diu composuerat*).[37]

Vulteius' men approach suicide in exactly the headlong madness that Seneca deplores. Instead of reason, they are filled with *ardor* (4.520) and *versus ab hoste furor* (4.540; cf. *ferox*, 4.534). Their madness is brought on by the speech of Vulteius, which, for all its magnanimous contempt for fortune (4.475), rouses them with distinctly anti-Stoic sentiments: *timeatque furentes/et morti faciles animos* ("Let [the enemy] dread the minds that are raging and welcome death," 4.505-6). *Proieci vitam, comites, totusque futurae/mortis agor stimulis: furor est* ("I have cast away my life, companions, and I am entirely goaded by my coming death: it is a rage," 4.516-17).[38]

It seems that Lucan feels genuine approval for the course of action depicted here, but he also believes that suicide must be undertaken for the right reasons and with the right state of mind in order to be rewarded with a morally justified gloria. Thus Vulteius and his men fail to win undiluted epic glory. Nor do any further battle scenes survive from Lucan's epic. We are left in a quandary. Is there nothing good, nothing noble, nothing truly righteous that can be done in the appalling circumstances of the Civil War between Caesar and Pompey? Is there no act of *virtus* which can be wholeheartedly glorified by the epic poet? In fact there is, and the Vulteius scene gives us the clue, for, in his praise of suicide (4.473-81), Lucan is anticipating the one truly heroic moment of his epic,

[36] Rist 1969, 239.

[37] *Ep.* 24.22-26; cf. 30.12; Englert 1994, 81-86.

[38] The theme of *amor mortis* in this scene is discussed in: Rutz 1960, 466-68; Makowski 1974, 25-35.

the scene that was never written but is always remembered, the suicide of Cato.[39] Of course, anything I say in this context must be regarded as pure speculation, but it stands to reason that the events at Utica were to have stood as the climax of the *Bellum Civile*:[40] the scene of Cato's death would have given Lucan the opportunity as nowhere else in the poem to harmonize the language of traditional martial virtue with that of philosophically approved moral excellence.[41]

Cato's moral status is unassailable and, throughout Lucan's work, Cato is the paradigmatic Stoic *sapiens*.[42] At our introduction to him in Book 2, he is the one pure man, the hero who offers his own life as a sacrifice for the Roman people as a whole (2.309-16). When he reappears in the contest with the snakes in Book 9, Cato cannot stop the slaughter, just as he cannot stop the carnage of Civil War, but he plays an important role, helping the men who have been bitten to die bravely (9.884-89):[43]

> ... quocumque vocatus
> advolat atque ingens meritum maiusque salute
> contulit, in letum vires; puduitque gementem
> illo teste mori. quod ius habuisset in ipsum
> ulla lues? casus alieno in pectore vincit
> spectatorque docet magnos nil posse dolores.

"... Wherever he has been summoned, he speeds, and he brought a huge benefit, greater than life itself: the courage to die. A soldier is ashamed to die groaning with a witness such as this man. What claim could any disease have on him? He conquers the misfortune that lay in the hearts of others and, as an observer, he teaches that great pains are completely powerless."

In this passage, Lucan contrasts in the strongest terms the moral virtue of Cato with the battlefield prowess of Caesar.[44] Caesar has also been shown tending to his wounded men at the Battle of

[39] Sullivan (1985, 151) champions Cato as the moral hero, a view with which Ahl (1976, 68 and 278) seems to concur, saying that Lucan took refuge in issues of morality as the only way in which he could damn the winner and glorify the loser. Cf. Toohey 1992, 167; George 1991.

[40] I believe that Lucan must have included Cato's death within the scope of the *Pharsalia*. For other opinions on this topic, see: Bruère 1950; Masters 1992, 216-59; Marti 1970.

[41] Makowski 1974, 69-70.

[42] Goar 1987, 43-49; Pecchiura 1965; Makowski 1974, 45-70.

[43] Goar 1987, 47. For this scene as a demonstration of Cato's *virtus* as a Stoic *sapiens*, see: Ahl 1976, 259-61; Leigh 1997, 265-82; Morford 1967; Marti 1964.

[44] Ahl (1976, 191 and 254-62) correctly describes Caesar and Cato as ideological opposites: "Lucan treats both Caesar and Cato as ideas rather than people" (244). Johnson (1987, 37-38 and 103-4) sees both men as caricatures.

Pharsalus, but unlike Cato, Caesar has no concern for the souls of the wounded. Cato, by his mere presence, brings his men moral victory over the fear of death. Caesar, his hands stained with blood, treats his men as mere bodies to be mended and weapons to be aimed (7.565-71):

> ...obit latis proiecta cadavera campis;
> vulnera multorum totum fusura cruorem
> opposita premit ipse manu. quacumque vagatur,
> ... nox ingens scelerum est.

"[Caesar] goes to the corpses that lay strewn on the wide field. Holding them with his own hand, he presses the wounds of many men that would pour out all their gore. Wherever he wanders, ... the night is great with crime.

The different realms of the virtues of these two men are clear, and there is no doubt which one Lucan considers superior. He goes so far as to liken Cato to the gods, and the deities come out worse in the comparison: *victrix causa deis placuit, sed victa Catoni* ("The gods preferred the winning side, while Cato favored the losers," 1.128; cf. 2.284-88; 9.596-604).

When all hope for victory has been lost, Cato's last action is marked by a moral virtue equally godlike. The traditional narratives of Cato's suicide at Utica emphasize that the deed fulfilled all of the requirements set forth by Stoic rigor.[45] The outward circumstances provide him with a *causa iusta*, since he faces the prospect of living an immoral and dishonorable life under the rule of a despot.[46] Therefore he chooses to die in order to maintain his moral freedom: *Cato qua exeat habet; una manu latam libertati viam faciet* ("Cato has a way out; he will make a wide path to liberty with one hand," Sen. *De prov.* 2.10) Unlike Vulteius' suicide, Cato's action is well-considered (*diu meditatum opus*, Sen. *De prov.* 2.10), and his mind is cold and rational (*aequo animo*, Sen. *Ep.* 71.12), without any trace of *furor*. After eating dinner, he sends away his friends and reflects in private on the words of the *Phaedo*. Then Cato draws his sword for the first and last time, only to use it against himself.

While the moral excellence of Cato's suicide is a widely-recognized *topos*, I wish to suggest that this scene was very well suited for the use of traditional martial imagery. Thus, if epic battle is

[45] The major accounts of the death scene of Cato are: App. *BC* 2.98-99; Plut. *Cat. Min.* 68-70; Cass. Dio 43.10.1-12.1; Caes. *B. Afr.* 87-88.

[46] Caesar intended to pardon Cato: App. *BC* 2.99; Plut. *Cat. Min.* 72.2, *Caes.* 54; Cass. Dio 43.10.3, 12.1.

the place where *virtus* is demonstrated and *gloria* won, Cato's death in the privacy of his own bedroom may well have been the only truly noble *aristeia* in the entire *Pharsalia*. Seneca's discussion of the suicide at Utica is instructive. In the *De providentia*, the suicide is described as a combat performed as a *spectaculum* for the gods themselves (Sen. *De prov.* 2.7-9):

ego vero non miror, si aliquando impetum capiunt spectandi magnos viros conluctantis cum aliqua calamitate... ecce spectaculum dignum ad quod respiciat intentus operi suo deus, ... non video, inquam, quid habeat in terris Iuppiter pulchrius, ... quam ut spectet Catonem iam partibus non semel fractis stantem nihilo minus inter ruinas publicas rectum.

"Yet I am not amazed if sometimes the gods are seized by the impulse to watch great men struggling with some calamity... Behold a display worthy of the attention of god intent upon his own work, ... I say that I do not see what Iuppiter has on earth that is more beautiful ... than to watch Cato, after his side had already been beaten more than once, standing upright nonetheless amidst the ruins of the Republic."

In this battle, Cato faces no mere mortal enemy, but Fortune itself, which, like a Homeric hero, scorns battle against the weak and unknown in order to seek glory against the strongest and most famous foe. So Seneca, in describing a gladiatorial contest (Sen. *De prov.* 3.3):

... Fortuna ... quasi dicat: quid ego istum mihi adversarium adsumam? statim arma submittet; non opus est in illum tota potentia mea, levi comminatione pelletur, non potest sustinere vultum meum. alius circumspiciatur cum quo conferre possimus manum; pudet congredi cum homine vinci parato.

"As if Fortune should say, why should I take up this man as my adversary? He will immediately throw his arms away. I have no need for all my power against him. He will be repelled with a little scare; he is not able to withstand my face. Let another man be found with whom I can join combat. It is shameful to battle against a man who is already prepared to be defeated."

Thus, in similar fashion, Lucan could have brought about the intersection of the two planes of *virtus*. Controlled by strict reason, Cato draws his sword, kept *purum et innoxium*[47] through the course of the war, and, striking a blow against Fortune, plunges it into his own side. Surrounded and disarmed by his friends, just as someone on the battlefield would be surrounded and disarmed by his enemies, Cato does not give up the fight, but with his bare hands rips

[47] Sen. *De prov.* 2.10; cf. *Ep.* 67.13. Also *Ep.* 24.7: *et stricto gladio, quem usque in illum diem ab omni caede purum servaverat* ("And with drawn sword, which until this day he had kept clean from all the slaughter").

off the dressing and delivers his soul to freedom. Cato, not Caesar, unites both epic and moral *virtus*.

Thus Lucan inverts the battlefield *aristeia* in order to condemn the combatants on both sides of the civil war. He uses the themes of anonymity and nonrecognition, weapon and wound, and the pollution of kindred blood to demonstrate his disapproval of a war waged by a civic body upon itself. Instead, persuaded by the ethical demands of Stoic doctrine, Lucan employs the conventions of epic to show that the only morally correct path to follow is the one trod by Cato: it is far better to take one's own life than to live under a tyrant and be implicated in his evil by cooperation in his rule.

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