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GAZE, MONSTROSITY,
AND THE POETICS OF HISTORY IN LUCAN

1. ROMAN BATTLEFIELDS

Lucan's scholarship has pointed out that the description of the battlefield after the fight is one of the major narrative patterns of the *Bellum Civile*¹. It is well known that bloody scenes appeared in Latin literature since Early Roman tragedy. Epic and historiography incorporated the stylistic devices of dramatic discourse. Indeed, from Republican literature onward the topos of the day after the battle mostly relates to the pathos of Hellenistic historical writing². To be sure, each Roman author used the motif in different ways. Sallust underlined its moral and psychological aspects within an archaeological reconstruction of the fallen soldiers' picture. Livy's *modus narrandi* rather highlighted some extraordinary events in the day after scenes, and their repercussions on its viewers³. As P. ESPOSITO reminds⁴, the Alexandrian pathos is also a crucial element of epic treatments of the topos in Rome. Despite its fragmentary condition, some of the extant verses of Ennius' *Annals* show an analogous tendency to stress the spectacular aftermath of battles⁵. In the Augustan age, Vergil's poem includes *aristeias* between individual soldiers of opposite armies. However, the mutilation scenes of the *Aeneid* openly points toward the exaltation of the victors in line with the Homeric inherited pattern⁶. In a sort of literary mixture of Sallust's and Livy's procedures, and within a poetic tradition that used to associate the slaughter descriptions with civil wars⁷, Lucan provided a new reading of that convention by focusing on its gruesome features. This new reading must be seen as a peculiar rewriting of the poet's historiographic and epic models. The underlining of hideous details is a powerful expression of civil struggle's anomaly and excess⁸. On the one

¹ Cfr. P. ESPOSITO, *Il racconto della strage. Le battaglie nella Pharsalia*, Napoli 1987, pp. 39-69; J. BARTOLOMÉ, *La narración de la batalla de Farsalia como derrota en Lucano*, in *Emerita* 74 (2006), pp. 259-288.

² ESPOSITO, *op. cit.*, pp. 51-64. See also A. LA PENNA, *Funzione e interpretazione del mito nella tragedia arcaica latina*, in *Fra teatro, poesia e politica romana*, Torino 1979, pp. 49-104. The close connection of historiography with epic and tragic poetry increased throughout the progression of the Annalistic tradition towards a monographic narrative. It gave rise to further interactions with dramatic discourse by focusing upon characters and specific events. Cfr. G. PUCCIONI, *Il problema della monografia storica latina*, Bologna 1981.

³ On this subject, cfr. A. PERUTELLI, *Dopo la battaglia: la poetica delle rovine in Lucano (con un'appendice su Tacito)*, in P. ESPOSITO-E.M. ARIEMMA (a cura di), *Lucano e la tradizione dell'epica latina*, Napoli 2004, pp. 86-89.

⁴ ESPOSITO, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

⁵ ENN. 264 Sk.; 266-267 Sk.; 483-484 Sk.; 485-486 Sk.

⁶ Cfr. J.-P. VERNANT, *L'individu, la mort, l'amour. Soi-même et l'autre en Grèce ancienne*, Paris 1989, pp. 41-79.

⁷ Cfr. VERG. G. 1, 489-497; 505 ff.

⁸ Cfr. G. PETRONE, *Metafora e tragedia. Immagini culturali e modelli tragici nel mondo romano*, Palermo 1996, pp. 17-19.

hand, internal strife relates to a subversion of usual warfare rules by facing Roman to Roman in the battleground; on the other hand, it also shows the excess of war, as the poet claims at the very beginning of his text (*bella plus quam ciuilia* B.C. 1, 1)⁹. Within such a reading horizon, the uncommon performance of both parties connects Lucan's narrative with the Roman idea of monstrosity¹⁰.

The Latin word *monstrum* is a central issue of the poem's reshaping of the collective past. By preserving the first meaning of an "extraordinary fact", *monstrum* denotes a "criminal person". Through a metonymic movement from the author to his action, the term also indicates a "criminal deed". Furthermore, a semantic shift links the word's primary sense to moral cruelty¹¹. The civil war in Rome was especially associated with these connotations because the engagement of the whole community in a sacrilegious killing was perceived as a *monstrum* on more than one level. Indeed, in the late first-century BC, a rhetorical and philosophical thought on monstrosity develops in a political context of violence¹². The *monstrum* category included climatic disturbances, deadly diseases, physical deformities or awful crimes¹³. Its polysemic status makes sense in the light of the complementary notions of "anomaly" and "disturbance"¹⁴. The former suggests a deviation from the usual course of nature; the latter refers to the dissolution of nature's organic harmony. Any mixture or confusion between independent fields enacted a violation of cultural norms¹⁵. What is more, the Roman idea of order exceeds the blurring of geographic boundaries or sacred spaces; it also concerns the political sphere as a result of a perturbation of socially accepted criteria. Accordingly, civil war implied a rupture of moral regulations, in line with a subversion of the enemy's role in a *bellum impium*¹⁶. The ensuing annulment of any distinction in the battlefield more widely complicates the Roman thought on Identity and Otherness¹⁷.

The battlefield scene after the confrontation between Pompeians and Caesarians in Book 7 (786-846) is a perfect example of Lucan's both literary and ideological dy-

⁹ For the transgression of religious norms in a civil strife and its association with pollution in the legendary bloodshed of Romulus and Remus, cfr. J.-P. BRISSON (éd.), *Problèmes de la guerre à Rome*, Paris 1969, p. 17.

¹⁰ As É. BENVENISTE, *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes*, Paris 1969, p. 257, pointed out: «*Monstrum* désigne en général une chose qui sort de l'ordinaire; parfois quelque chose de hideux, qui viole de façon repoussante l'ordre naturel des choses (...)».

¹¹ Cfr. C. MOUSSY, *Esquisse de l'histoire de monstrum*, in REL 55 (1977), pp. 363-366.

¹² Cfr. B. CUNY-LE CALLET, *Rome et ses monstres. Naissance d'un concept philosophique et rhétorique*, Grenoble 2005). Cicero uses this meaning throughout his oratory texts (*Catil.* 2, 1; *Cluent.* 188; *Sex. Rosc.* 63; *Verr.* 2, 79; 4, 47; 5, 145; *Cael.* 12). He often addresses his political foes as *monstra*. On this subject, cfr. C. LÉVY, *Rhétorique et philosophie: la monstruosité politique chez Cicéron*, in REL 76 (1998), pp. 139-157.

¹³ Cfr. MOUSSY, *art. cit.*

¹⁴ Cfr. CUNY-LE CALLET, *op. cit.*, pp. 54-62.

¹⁵ See FEST. 146, 32: *monstra dicuntur naturae modum egredientia ut serpens cum pedibus, auis cum quattuor alis, homo cum duobus capitibus*; De diff. 520, 23 (Keil, *Gram. Lat.* VII): *monstrum est contra naturam, ut est Minotaurus*.

¹⁶ On this subject, cfr. A. CASAMENTO, *Guerra giusta e guerra ingiusta nella Pharsalia di Lucano*, in *Hormos* 1 (2008-2009), pp. 179-188.

¹⁷ Cfr. S. BARTSCH, *Ideology in Cold Blood: A Reading of Lucan's Civil War*, Cambridge, Mass. & London 1997, pp. 25-29.

namic. From a stylistic and poetic approach I show that the interlocking of historiographic, epic and tragic codes, and the manipulation of some literary and cultural motifs function as a pivotal strategy of Lucan's version of internal fight. The counterpoint between the authorial voice and the recurrent motifs of the gaze and the civil *monstrum* can be read as a central feature of this Neronian poetry of *nefas*.

2. CAESAR'S GAZE BETWEEN HISTORY AND LITERATURE

In Book 7 the poem presents the battle of Pharsalus (460 ff.) in four sections: the battle (460-646), the flight of Pompeius (647-727), the storm of his camp (728-786), and the battlefield after the fight (786-846). Those sections are framed by two interventions of the poet: his moans about the unfortunate events of Pharsalus (385-459), and a concluding apostrophe to the *infelix* land of Thessaly (847-872)¹⁸. Some relevant echoes between the poet's voice and the proper narrative show the poetic and generic implications of the episode within the whole text. The day after scene underscores the centrality of vision in Lucan's poem, as M. LEIGH has well shown¹⁹. The importance of watching becomes more complex in the battle of Pharsalus. As a cruel spectator of that landscape, Caesar strengthens the problematic status of the winning side in a brotherly killing, and the ambivalence of power in Lucan's world²⁰. Furthermore, the depiction of the battlefield arises from a sinister interweaving of the general's glances (B.C. 7, 786-799):

786 *Tamen omnia passo,*
postquam clara dies Pharsalica damna retexit,
*nulla loci facies reuocat **feralibus aruis***
***haerentes oculos. cernit** propulsa cruore*
790 *flumina et excelsos cumulis aequantia colles*
*corpora, sidentis in tabem **spectat** acervos*
*et Magni numerat populos, **epulisque paratur***
ille locus, uultus ex quo faciesque iacentum
***agnoscat. inuat** Emathiam **non cernere** terram*
795 *et **lustrare oculis** campos sub clade latentes.*
*fortunam superosque suos in sanguine **cernit.***
*ac, ne **laeta** furens **scelerum spectacula** perdat,*
***inuidet** igne rogi miseris, caeloque nocenti*
ingerit Emathiam. (...) ²¹

¹⁸ Authorial interventions increase in the first and second sections of the battle account (535-543; 617-646), and later in the episode after the news of Pompeius' flight (680-727). In relazione ai passi del settimo libro presi in esame nel corso di questo contributo si rinvia al recente commento di N. LANZARONE, *M. Annaei Lucani Belli civilis liber VII*, Firenze 2016.

¹⁹ M. LEIGH, *Lucan: Spectacle and Engagement*, Oxford 1997.

²⁰ On the victor's reaction in the battlefield after the fight, cfr. M. GIOSEFFI, *La deprecatio lucanea sui cadaveri insepoliti a Farsalo (b. civ. VII 825-46)*, in *BStudLat* 25 (1995), pp. 501-520.

²¹ "Though he endured all this, when the light of day revealed the destruction of Pharsalia, no aspect of the place drew his lingering gaze away from the murderous fields. He sees rivers running with gore and bodies heaped up as high as lofty hills; he looked at the piles as they rotted away and

Caesar's rage (*furens* 797) permeates the diegetic level of the narrative with an increasing progression of ferocity from the image of the corpses that equal in height the hills (790-791), to the accumulated corruption of dead bodies (791), and the feast in front of the dead (792-794)²². Moreover, it includes a pervasive visual vocabulary (*oculos* 789; *cernit* 789; *spectat* 791; *cernere* 794; *lustrare oculis* 795; *cernit* 796; *spectacula* 797; *inuidet* 798). The intertwining between Caesar's watching (*spectat* 791) and the excess of civil *nefas* culminates in his attempt of recognizing the faces of his defeated compatriots (*agnoscat*²³ 793). In such a crescendo of pathos, the only stylistic reversal of Caesar's gesture is paradoxically associated with two meaningful issues: the pleasure of *not* seeing the soil as a result of the amount of bodies (*non cernere* 794)²⁴, and the repetition of that gesture in order to enhance his satisfaction (*lustrare oculis* 795)²⁵. The denial of burial "to inflict the sight of Emathia on guilty heaven" (797) materializes with an alliterative closing *iunctura* the narrative interweaving between crime and gaze (*scelerum spectacula*)²⁶.

Nevertheless, Caesar's voracious fury reminds us of his more aesthetic than historical role in Lucan's rereading of Roman past²⁷. Indeed, some textual marks shift the interpretation of his behavior towards tragedy by equating him with a tragic tyrant²⁸. First, the phrase *epulis paratur* (792) within the character's rage evokes both Agamemnon's unfortunate return in the homonymous Senecan piece (*Ag.* 46-48; *Ag.* 875)²⁹, and the opening scene of *Thyestes* in which the Fury anticipates the final cannibal feast plotted by Atreus (*Thy.* 62-63; *Thy.* 759-760)³⁰. Throughout the implicit appropriation of the fraternal bloodshed imagery, the poem's allusions to two tragic forms of family sacrilege focuses on the *commune nefas* (*B.C.* 1, 6) of Lucan's civil war. In the light of this intertextual dynamic, the lines announcing Caesar's reaction

counts the peoples that followed Magnus; and a place was got ready for his feasting from which he might recognize the faces and features of the dead. He rejoices that he cannot see the soil of Emathia, and that the fields which his eyes pass over are hidden under the slaughter. In the blood he sees the favour of Fortune and the gods. And, lest he should lose in his madness the happy spectacle of his crimes, he denies the wretches a pyre and inflicts [the sight of] Emathia on guilty heaven". I follow the Latin edition of D.R.M. SHACKLETON BAILEY, *Annaei Lucani de Bello Civili*, Stuttgart 1988. The translations are taken from LEIGH's, *op. cit.*, with some changes of my own.

²² On the improbability of Caesar's historical feast at Pharsalus, cfr. PERUTELLI, *op. cit.*, p. 90. The only mention of a similar behavior appears in Appian (*B.C.* 2, 81). According to this author, Caesar took part in a feast that was got ready in the Pompeian camp.

²³ See also *B.C.* 3, 736; 4, 179; 194; 7, 287-288 for the use of the verb *agnosco* in Lucan's writing of brotherly strife.

²⁴ Although a semantic erosion approached the verbs *uidere* and *cernere*, the latter implies a more active or voluntary gesture of the viewer (CH. GUIRAUD, *Les verbes signifiant "voir" en latin. Étude d'aspect*, Paris 1964, p. 28).

²⁵ On the durative aspect of *lustrare* ("to scan"), cfr. GUIRAUD, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-47.

²⁶ For Caesar's excess in Italy, see *B.C.* 2, 443-445. A similar scene in SALL. *Cat.* 61.

²⁷ W.R. JOHNSON, *Momentary Monsters. Lucan and his Heroes*, Ithaca-London 1987, p. 101 ff. argues that Lucan's Caesar is a symbol of some inscrutable forces acting behind History. E. NARDUCCI, *Lucano. Un'epica contro l'impero*, Roma-Bari 2002, p. 91, points out that Lucan's reconstruction of this "black hero" of the *Bellum Civile* differs from the historical data.

²⁸ On the association of the concept of tyranny with tragedy in Rome, cfr. PETRONE, *op. cit.*, pp. 75-79.

²⁹ SEN. *Ag.* 46-48 (*ictu bipennis regium uideo caput; / iam scelera prope sunt; iam dolus, caedes, cruor: / parantur epulae*); SEN. *Ag.* 875 (*spectemus. epulae regia instructae domo*).

³⁰ SEN. *Thy.* 62-63 (*epulae instruantur - non noui sceleris tibi / conuina uenies*); SEN. *Thy.* 759-760 (*postquam hostiae placuere, securus uacat / iam fratris epulis*).

in Pharsalia clearly show their true meaning by framing “the real” vision of the massacre with an “oneiric” one during the previous night (B.C. 775-786):

- 775 *Hunc agitant totis **fraterna cadauera** sommis,
pectore in hoc pater est, omnes in Caesare manes.
haud alios nondum Scythica purgatus in ara
Eumenidum uidit uultus Pelopeus **Orestes**,
nec magis attonitos animi sensere tumultus,*
780 *cum fureret, **Pentheus** aut, cum desisset, **Agave**.
hunc omnes gladii, quos aut **Pharsalia uidit**
aut **ultrix uisura dies** stringente senatu,
illa nocte premunt, hunc **infera monstra** flagellant.
et quantum poenae misero mens conscia donat,*
785 *quod Styga, quod manes ingestaque Tartara somnis
Pompeio uiuente **uidet!**³¹*

The “fraternal corpses” (*fraterna cadauera* 775) that introduce Caesar’s vision combine Lucan’s epic code with the tragic world. It appears that the victorious general of a *bellum impium* is “besieged” in dreams by several mythological figures connected with violent family crimes³². The verb *uideo* links the past of myth (*uidit* 778) and historical war (*uidit* 781) with the general’s future destiny in Rome (*ultrix uisura dies* 782) and the present tense of his dream (*uidet* 785). The infernal monsters (*infera monstra* 783) that hound him become in this context the symbolic representation of fratricidal ‘hell’ and, particularly, of those *monstra* that Caesar himself will commit on the following morning. Indeed, his gesture evokes the disturbing gaze of both parties at the very beginning of the military operations (B.C. 7, 462-466³³):

- 463 *quo sua pila cadant aut quae sibi fata minentur,
462 inde manus **spectant**. penitus quo noscere possent
464 facturi quae **monstra** forent, **uidere parentes**
465 frontibus aduersis **fraternaue** comminus **arma**,
nec libuit mutare locum. (...) ³⁴*

The description of the soldiers’ guilty gazes (*parentes* 464; *fraternaue...arma* 465) openly relates the martial arrangements to the idea of *monstrum* (464). Moreover, the term *monstra* stands ‘enclosed’ between two forms of vision (*spectant* 462; *uidere* 464).

³¹ “One is disturbed all night by his brother’s corpse, another’s breast is weighed down by his father’s ghost, but all the ghosts attack Caesar. Even so Pelopean Orestes saw the faces of the Furies, before he was purified at the Scythian altar; nor did Pentheus in his madness, or Agave, when she had returned to her senses, feel more horror and disturbance of mind. All the swords that Pharsalia saw, and all that the day of vengeance was to see drawn by the Senate, were aimed at Caesar’s breast that night; and the monsters of Hell scourged him. And yet his guilt excused the wretch great part of his penalty; for when Caesar sees the Styx and its ghosts and all Hell let loose upon his sleep, Pompey was still alive”.

³² See VERG. *A.* 4, 469-473.

³³ Lines 463, 462, 464 y 465 present several problems in the manuscript tradition of the poem. For its semantic and stylistic implications, I follow SHACKLETON BAILEY’s edition (1988).

³⁴ “(...) they looked to see where their spears would fall or which hands from the other side threatened their destiny. To learn what monstrosities they were about to do, they saw their parents over against them and their brothers’ weapons close beside them; but they did not wish to change position”.

The Roman polysemic concept refers here to a break of strictly regulated war rules. The monstrosity of civil strife arises from the exceptional overlap between family members in the battleground, from the frenzied wish to remain in a sacrilegious situation involving vision (466). The battle narrative itself confronts Lucan's reader with the martial implications of *monstrum* when blurring the bodies of the soldiers with their weapons³⁵ (B.C. 7, 532-533):

*perdidit inde modum caedes, ac nulla secutast
pugna, sed hinc iugulis, hinc ferro bella geruntur*³⁶;

The visual motif highlights the excess and transgression underlying both the citizen's performance and Caesar's behavior the day after. What is more, the stylistic and poetic correlations between the different actors of the war also shape new understandings of the narrator's moans that frame the events of Pharsalia (385-459). As a spectator, he takes part in bewailing the effects this battle will have on the future of Rome. His long description of the desolation of cities and fields³⁷ certainly intertwines the viewing act and the civil crime (*crime civile uidemus* 398) in order to build an antithesis in Rome's destiny before and after the *nefas* of Pharsalus (B.C. 7, 415-427):

415 *hi possint **explere** uiri, quos undique traxit
in miseram Fortuna necem, dum munera longi
explicat eripiens aevi populosque ducesque
constituit campis, per quos tibi, Roma, ruenti
ostendat quam magna cadas. quae latius orbem
420 **possedit**, citius **per prospera fata** cucurrit?
omne tibi bellum gentis dedit, **omnibus** annis
te geminum Titan procedere **uidit** in axem;
haud multum terrae spatium restabat Eoae
ut tibi nox, tibi **tota** dies, tibi curreret aether,
425 **omniaque** errantes stellae Romana **uiderent**.
sed retro tua fata tulit par omnibus annis
Emathiae funesta dies. (...) ³⁸*

³⁵ On the relation of this Lucanian feature with the traditional epic code, cfr. ESPOSITO, *op. cit.*, p. 65; R. SKLENÁŘ, *The Taste for Nothingness: A Study of Virtus and Related Themes in Lucan's Bellum Civile*, Ann Arbor 2003.

³⁶ "The slaughter lost its limits: no battle followed, but the fight occurs with throats on one side, with steel on the other".

³⁷ See also B.C. 7 (*rus uacuum* 395; *uacuas urbes* 399; *nec muros implere uiris nec possumus agros* 401).

³⁸ "(...) these men could have filled up [all these], whom Fortune has drawn from every side to wretched death, snatching away the gifts of long ages even while she displayed them, and setting peoples and generals on the field; by them she may show you, Rome, in collapse how great you are as you fall. What city ever possessed a wider expanse of the globe, or ran faster from one success to another? Every war gave you nations; every year the Sun saw you move further towards the North and the South; a small part of the Eastern land remained before all of night and day, all the sky should run for you and the wandering stars should see nothing that was not Roman. But the fatal day of Emathia, a match for all the years, turned back your destiny".

The poet focuses upon the paradoxical Roman greatness and collapse by means of recurrent visual verbs (*ostendat* 419; *uidit* 422; *uiderent* 425). The hyperbolic and ‘totalizing’ celebration of Rome’s power (*latius* 7, 419; *citius* 420; *omme...bellum* 421; *omnibus annis* 421; *tota dies* 424; *omniaque...Romana* 425) is broken by the strong opposition (*sed* 426) that points out the end of gifts after internal strife. The whole expression of that break (*retro tua fata tulit* 426)³⁹ again associates Lucan’s narrative with tragedy through a double close echo of Seneca’s *Agamemnon*. First, with the opening complaint of Thyestes’ shade about his family’s monstrous perversion, since he has mixed together things that should stay detached according to the norms of nature (*Ag.* 34)⁴⁰. Second, with Cassandra’s prophetic words when narrating Agamemnon’s death and claiming that the decrees of fate seem to be turning backwards (*Ag.* 757)⁴¹. Indeed, the interplay between the ideas of ‘emptiness’ and ‘filling’ throughout the narrator’s intervention⁴² relates to another major motif of Seneca’s tragedies as openly shows the scene of Thyestes’ eating of his children (*Thy.* 890-891; *Thy.* 979-980)⁴³. The temporal and symbolic perturbations of Seneca’s tragedies⁴⁴ become in Lucan’s episode the reversal of Rome’s own destiny. From a self-reflexive viewpoint, those perturbations refers to the ‘undoing’ of the heroic code. The ensuing reference of the *Bellum Civile* to the foundation of the city from the unfortunate gesture of Romulus confirms the crucial implications of mythological and tragic material in this version of Roman history (*ut primum laeua fundata uolatu / Romulus infami compleuit moenia luco* B.C. 7, 437-438). In the light of the textual connections with Seneca’s tragic world, the apostrophe on the aftermath of Pharsalia serves as a tragic Chorus that multiplies the dramatic pathos of this battle narrative. The poet turns into one of the characters of his own storytelling. Furthermore, he interrupts his factual account to include a tragic *indignatio* in his epic discourse⁴⁵.

3. ARMA FRATERNAL AND LITERARY MIXTURES

The interweaving of literary and cultural topoi shifts the reader’s expectations of martial epic in Book 7. The sacrilegious gaze and the civil *monstrum* motifs in the *descriptio* of the day after the fight build a horrid landscape underlining a confusion of symbolic, textual, and generic levels. On the one hand, the hyperbolic represen-

³⁹ *Retro* often appears in Senecan tragedy within contexts of cosmic and social subversions (*Her.* F. 941; *Phaed.* 676; *Ag.*, 488; 714; *Thy.* 459; 776; *Med.* 747; *Oed.* 349; 367; 576; 870).

⁴⁰ SEN. *Ag.* 34 (*Versa natura est retro*).

⁴¹ SEN. *Ag.* 757 (*Spectate, miseri: fata se uertunt retro*).

⁴² See B.C. 7 (*uacuum* 395; *uacuas* 399; *implere* 401; *explere* 415).

⁴³ See SEN. *Thy.* 890-891 (*Sed cur satis est? Pergam et implebo patrem / funere suorum*); 979-980 (*totumque turba iam sua implebo patrem / Satiaberis, ne metue*). See also *Oed.* 1012 (*uacuosque uultus*); *Ag.* 702-703 (*regia... / uacua*); *Thy.* 53 (*imple Tantalos totam domum*); 65 (*ieiunia exple*); 152 (*uacuo gutture*); 253-254 (*impleri inuat / maiore monstro*); *Her.F.* 500 (*explebo nefas*).

⁴⁴ Cfr. A.J. BOYLE, *Hic epulis locus: the Tragic Worlds of Seneca’s Agamemnon and Thyestes*, in *Ramus* 12 (1983), pp. 199-228; A. SCHIESARO, *The Passions in Play. Thyestes and the Dynamics of Senecan Drama*, Cambridge 2003.

⁴⁵ Cfr. LEIGH, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-76, on the idea of “narrator as character”. NARDUCCI, *op. cit.*, pp. 88 ff., examines Lucan’s device of *narrator in fabula*.

tation of Caesar's frenzied reaction after the battle switches the historical status of Lucan's episode into a literary refashioning. From a narrative viewpoint, the degradation of the victorious general relates to a "pathetic story" that "shows the war closely"⁴⁶. On the other hand, throughout the connections with Senecan tragedy Lucan's epic writing simultaneously explores the Roman cultural topos of *arma fraterna* and the family subversions in mythological tragic drama. The paradoxical overlap between the victors and the vanquished, the temporal disruptions, and the reversal of family bonds in Seneca's *Agamemnon* and *Thyestes* allow Lucan's war narrative to underscore the transgression of social boundaries and the dramatic implications of a *bellum impium*. Moreover, it appears that the *Bellum Civile* recalls Seneca's thoughts on anger. According to the Neronian philosopher (SEN. *De ira*, 2, 3-5), the historical narrations and the dramatic plays provoke similar emotional responses on both readers and spectators:

(...) *Hic subit etiam inter ludicra scaenae spectacula et lectiones rerum uetustarum. Saepe Clodio Ciceronem expellenti et Antonio occidenti uidemur irasci. Quis non contra Marii arma, contra Sullae proscriptionem concitatur? Quis non Theodoto et Achillae et ipsi puero non puerile auso facinus infestus est? Cantus nos nonnumquam et citata modulatio instigat Martiusque ille tubarum sonus; mouet mentes et atrox pictura et iustissimorum suppliciorum tristis aspectus; inde est quod adridemus ridentibus et contristat nos turba maerentium et efferuescimus ad aliena certamina. Quae non sunt irae, non magis quam tristitia est quae ad conspectum mimici naufragii contrahit frontem, non magis quam timor qui Hannibale post Cannas moenia circumsidente lectorum percurrit animos (...)*⁴⁷.

Thus, the interlocking of generic codes in the poem's narrative *climax* allows the poet-historian to shape a new form of engagement with his genre and his collective subject.

⁴⁶ J. KAEMPFER, *Poétique du récit de guerre*, Paris 1998, p. 156.

⁴⁷ "This steals upon us even from the sight of plays upon the stage and from reading of happenings of long ago. How often we seem to grow angry with Clodius for banishing Cicero, with Antony for killing him! Who is not aroused against the arms which Marius took up, against the proscription which Sulla used? Who is not incensed against Theodotus and Achillas, and the child himself who dared an unchildish crime? Singing sometimes stirs us, and quickened rhythm, and the well-known blare of the War-god's trumpets; our minds are perturbed by a shocking picture and by the melancholy sight of punishment even when it is entirely just; in the same way we smile when others smile, we are saddened by a throng of mourners, and are thrown into a ferment by the struggles of others. Such sensations, however, are no more anger than that is sorrow which furrows the brow at sight of a mimic shipwreck, no more anger than that is fear which thrills our minds when we read how Hannibal after Cannae beset the walls of Rome (...)". T.E. PAGE-E. CAPPS-W.H.D. ROUSE, *Seneca. Moral Essays I*, London 1928.

ABSTRACT

The battlefield scene in Book 7 of Lucan's *Bellum Civile* clearly shows a redefinition of the traditional topos of the day after the battle. Although bloody scenes appeared in Latin literature since Early Roman tragedy, Lucan's Neronian epic provided a new interpretation of that literary convention by focusing on its gruesome aspects. The underlining of hideous details is a powerful expression of civil struggle's anomaly and excess. On the one hand, internal strife relates to a subversion of usual warfare rules by facing Roman to Roman in the battleground; on the other hand, it also shows the excess of war, as the poet claims at the very beginning of his text. Within such a reading horizon, the uncommon performance of both parties connects Lucan's narrative with the Roman idea of monstrosity. The description of bloody scenes in Book 7 is even more complex because they involve Caesar himself. Moreover, as a cruel spectator of that landscape, Caesar strengthens the problematic status of the winning side in a brotherly killing, and the ambivalence of power in Lucan's world. I show that the intersection of historiographic, epic and tragic codes and the manipulation of some literary and cultural motifs function as a pivotal feature of Lucan's poetics of Roman history.

Nel libro 7 del *Bellum Civile* Lucano riscrive il topos tradizionale del giorno dopo la battaglia. Sebbene la rappresentazione di scene di sangue fosse una convenzione letteraria riscontrabile nella letteratura latina sin dal teatro arcaico, l'epica lucanea ne fornisce un nuovo orientamento. Il macabro diventa in Lucano uno schema descrittivo essenziale per la narrazione dell'anomalia e degli eccessi della guerra civile, risultanti entrambi dalla contrapposizione di cittadini romani sul campo di battaglia. In quest'orizzonte di senso, la condotta inattesa ed insolita dei due eserciti collega la narrativa lucanea con l'idea romana di mostruosità. La descrizione del massacro dopo lo scontro decisivo di Farsàlo è particolarmente ricca di significato perché coinvolge lo stesso Cesare. Crudele spettatore di quel paesaggio, Cesare accentua lo status problematico dei vincitori in una lotta intestina e l'equivoco del potere nell'intero poema. Mostriamo che l'intersezione fra epica, storiografia e tragedia e la manipolazione di alcuni topoi letterari e culturali in quell'episodio costituiscono un aspetto centrale della poetica lucanea della storia di Roma.

KEYWORDS: Lucan; Battlefield; Poetics; History.

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