

*Virtus, Clementia*, and Caesar's Left-Hand Man: Lucan's Lament of Republican  
Ethics

By

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## I. Introduction

*“The targeted killing program is a vision – a vision of how war could be and never has been. It is a war of individuals instead of armies. It is intelligence instead of brute force. It is a war of both technological precision and moral discrimination. It is war as an alternative to war: it saves many lives by ending one life. But when war stops being war, does it become something like murder?”*

– Tom Junod, “The Lethal Presidency of Barack Obama”

At first glance, the War on Terror bears little resemblance to the civil war between Caesar and Pompey. Although each represents a defining event of their respective time periods, the passing of centuries, technological development, and the evolution of politics and society separate the two conflicts. The above quote from Tom Junod’s essay on President Obama’s targeted killing program, however, bears a striking resemblance to Lucan’s portrayal of how Caesar wages war in the *Bellum Civile*. The war Caesar fought against Pompey and Cato was not simply for land, wealth, or ambition. Caesar sought to reshape the Roman Republic in his own image, a project requiring a new brand of warfare. While his men fought against enemies on the battlefield, Caesar himself damaged the soul of the Republic with his clemency. Rather than punishment, he conquered through forgiveness, all the while recalling imagery from Rome’s illustrious past to legitimize his actions. Caesar’s use of *virtus* and *clementia* masked the general’s true ambitions and attempt to hide the nature of his fight. Beneath this sublimation, however, Lucan recognized that Caesar’s war was actually an act of violence against the traditional notion of what it meant to be Roman. The War on Terror’s targeted killing program has changed traditional ideas about warfare, challenging American ideas about privacy, due process, and executive authority. Lucan, like Junod, seeks to warn his readers about the dangers posed by individual authority that seeks to alter traditional freedoms and values under the guise of representative government, no matter the seeming benevolence of methods or motives.

Though the history of political freedoms and equality under the Republic continued to define Roman identity, several poets and historians recognized the many faults of the system.<sup>1</sup> Once a proud institution populated by men of virtue and integrity, the Republic succumbed to the corrupting influences of wealth and empire. Sallust wrote, *qui labores, pericula, dubias atque asperas res facile toleraverant, iis otium divitiaeque optanda alias, oneri miseriaeque fuere* (“Those who had easily tolerated toils, dangers, doubtful and harsh circumstances, to them leisure and wealth, desired elsewhere, were burdens and miseries” [Sal. *Cat.* 10]). Lucan also recognized the decline of values and customs that left Republican society exposed to attack by the *avaritia* and *ambitio* (Sal. *Cat.* 10), of powerful and influential Romans.<sup>2</sup> While he laments this loss of virtue, however, it is the influence of the powerful men and their thirst for more power that troubles Lucan’s narrative. Lucan’s grounding in Stoic ethics and his relationship to Seneca, an advisor to Nero and prolific contributor to Stoic thought in Rome, provides a lens through which to view the author’s depiction of the Republic’s dissolution. This Stoic viewpoint shows a Republic forgetful of its virtue, but still free to act in such a way as to attain it again. Seneca, regarding virtue, notes, *nihil honestum est, quod ab invito, quod coactum fit* (“Nothing is honorable which is accomplished through unwillingness or is compelled” [Sen. *Ep.* 66.16]). Republicans may have forgotten their virtue, but they were free to recall it under their own volition. Once powerful men like Caesar dominate political and social discourse, however, virtue is no longer a choice, but a quality foisted upon men by the demands of empire.

Lucan’s story is not one of preservation, but of destruction. Caesar’s goal is to dismantle the Republic, using its history to frame a new imperial order. The force for such a change comes

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<sup>1</sup> See Gowing (2005), 2-4 on the importance of Republican memory to Roman identity.

<sup>2</sup> *BC*, 1.160-1: *namque u topes nimias mundo fortuna subacto intulit et rebus mores cessere secundis* (“For, as Fortune had brought too much wealth from the subdued world and custom had yielded to secondary concerns”).

not simply by way of steel and blood, but by a reconstruction of Roman moral vocabulary. Behr notes that in times of civil strife and discord, words and ideas become separated from their meaning.<sup>3</sup> In the *Bellum Civile* this shift occurs in the meaning behind *virtus* and in the political importance of *clementia*. The meaning of virtue and clemency relies on how the people in a society conceive of those terms. Society judges what is virtuous and what group of people the obligations of *virtus* encompass.<sup>4</sup> In Rome *virtus* was the essential attribute of any citizen, and, according to Cicero, exhibiting this *virtus* was a hallmark of good men.<sup>5</sup> As Matthew Roller posits, however, civil war was not a space that allowed for the demonstration of traditional *virtus* because it created a society that excluded some Romans from the obligations of community.<sup>6</sup> Combatants in civil war must view the other side as a foreign enemy rather than as fellow citizens in order to properly exhibit *virtus* in battle.<sup>7</sup>

One of the main vehicles of Caesarian *virtus* in Lucan's epic is Scaeva, a centurion who fought under the real Caesar's standards at Dyrrachium.<sup>8</sup> Lucan expounds on Caesar's brief description of the centurion's heroics, demonstrating Scaeva's function as a weapon of flesh and bone, with no other purpose than to serve Caesar. He epitomizes Caesarian *virtus*, and provides an example of what it means to be a Caesarian subject: only useful inasmuch as he can assist Caesar. Scaeva also provides the manifestation of Caesar's bloodlust, which the general

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<sup>3</sup> Behr (2007), 33. See also Sklenar (2003), 10-12 on the break down of moral vocabulary during times of war.

<sup>4</sup> See Pollman (2008), 357 and Roller (2001), 28 on the role society plays in constructing the meaning of *virtus*.

<sup>5</sup> Cic. *Leg.* 2.19: *ast olla, propter quae datur homini ascensus in caelum, Mentem, Virtutem, Pietatem, Fidem* ("And those things, on account of which ascent into heave is given to mankind, Mind, Virtue, Piety, Trust").

<sup>6</sup> Roller, 30.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Caes. Civ.* 3.53: *scutoque ad eum relato Scaevae centurionis inventa sunt in eo foramina cxx* ("And in the shield of the centurion Scaeva brought to him, 120 arrow punctures were found").

sublimates behind his acts of *clementia*. Cicero recognized the danger inherent in Caesar's clemency, referring to it as *insidiosa clementia* (Cic. *Att.* 8.16). Lucan's project is to illustrate the real destruction of clemency, which, while appearing magnanimous, actually subjugates Romans to the rule of one man.

This paper will discuss Lucan's portrait of Scaeva as Caesar's tool of empire. The first section will show Lucan's relationship to the Virgilian epic tradition and how the author sought to challenge the *Aeneid*'s positive take on empire making. The second section deals with the role *virtus* plays in Lucan's epic, and how Scaeva's perversion of traditional Roman *virtus* becomes a way for Caesar to associate the positive qualities of the past with his own construction of Roman identity. The third section will examine Scaeva's *aristeia* as a whole, exploring how Lucan's perversion of epic tradition and moral vocabulary puts Scaeva's virtuous deeds in a negative light. Finally, the fourth section will look at Caesar's use of clemency and how it causes a kind of benevolent violence even more destructive than Scaeva's slaughter.

Caesar, in his own account of the civil war, states, *se non maleficii causa ex provincia egressum* ("He did not come from the province with intent of evil deeds" [Caes. *Civ.* 1.22]). He describes his march on Rome as motivated by personal ambition and a desire to restore the dignity of the Republic and its institutions.<sup>9</sup> While Caesar's stated intentions may seem noble, Lucan's depiction of the general describes a man seeking to reorganize Roman society so that it functioned under the auspices of one leader. Junod's argument about President Obama's drone policy follows this same line of thought. While Junod may not look upon Obama with Lucanian

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<sup>9</sup> Caes. *Civ.* 1.22: *uti se a contumeliis inimicorum defenderet, ut tribunos plebis in ea re ex civitate expulsos in suam dignitatem restitueret, et se et populum Romanum factione paucorum oppressum in libertatem vindicaret* ("[He had come] so that he might defend himself against the abuses of his enemies, so that he might restore the tribunes of the plebs, expelled from the city against the dignity of their office, into their proper place, and so that he might free himself and the Roman people oppressed against their liberty by a small group of men").

derision, he notes how targeted killing has become a new method of warfare. Much like Caesar's *clementia*, drones provide a façade of protection, preserving life while relying on the violence distanced from the self. Allowing the executive unilateral power to make decisions about life and death actually endangers the freedoms of American citizens. As the definition of a threat to American security changes, it becomes a slippery slope when suspects previously found in a foreign country begin to appear on American shores as citizens. Lucan's voice throughout the *Bellum Civile* is a message for his readers about the dangers of complacency. If they accept the images of a virtuous Scaeva or a merciful Caesar as actions that merit praise, then they are buying into an imperial construction designed to relegate them into servitude. Lucan's warning that by ceding absolute responsibility to a single man, citizens surrender the freedom to dictate their own lives is as relevant today as it was two thousand years ago.

## II. Founding Violence

My discussion of virtue in the *Bellum Civile* will begin with a look at how Lucan's story fits within the literary and moral framework of the epic tradition dominated by Virgil. While maintaining structures and motifs familiar to an audience versed in the *Aeneid*, Lucan manipulates traditional epic language and action in a way that brings one to question the wisdom of Virgil's empire-making project.<sup>10</sup> The contrast that Lucan provides to Virgil's story of Rome's founding stresses the divisive and criminal aspects of civil war that led to the establishment of the Principate rather than the piety and unity that developed from Aeneas' struggles with the

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<sup>10</sup> Hardie (1993), 109: "Lucan takes control of his predecessors' material not as a respectful son entering into a father's inheritance, but as a rebel, yet unable to escape from the paradigms and values of his society." See also Quint (1993) on how Lucan's desire to create a new epic model kept the author within the "very epic continuity [he strove] to break" (8).

Italians. While Virgil's Aeneas acts as a unifying figure, an Augustan predecessor who is a symbol of reconciliation in a society divided after the recent cessation of civil violence, Lucan's Caesar symbolizes the devastating and lasting violence of civil war, a Neronian predecessor whose reformation of Roman society caused lasting harm to the Republican system. In their respective ways, both stories provide founding myths for imperial Rome, with Virgil tracing its source to the mythical story of Troy and Lucan locating it in the actions of a Roman general and citizen. By reading Lucan, the reader watches as the Principate, the organic end result of Aeneas' divinely inspired fate, becomes the artificial construction of a leader whose goal is not national unity, but his own social and political elevation.

The *Aeneid*'s founding moment occurs in the final lines of Book 12. After Juno cedes to Jupiter's insistence that fate has ordained Aeneas' victory and the only result of delay will be more bloodshed, the Trojan leader chases down Turnus and drives his sword through the Rutulian's defeated chest (*hoc dicens ferrum adverso sub pectore condit fervidus*).<sup>11</sup> Here, Virgil plays on the dual meaning of the word *condit*. Aeneas both "buries" his sword in Turnus' chest and in the same action "establishes" the Roman race. With this death, Aeneas does away with the last resistance to Trojan victory, and at the same time makes a sort of blood sacrifice, ensuring the successful foundation of the Roman people.<sup>12</sup> The use of foundational violence in Roman history was not a novel idea. Stories of Romulus, Lucretia, even Augustus' proscriptions, all represented crucial aspects of Roman identity.<sup>13</sup> Blood, especially fraternal blood, was a defining part of *Romanitas*, because it brought about law, which in turn established social identity.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> *Aen.* 12.950-1: "Saying this, frenzied, he buried his sword into the opposing chest."

<sup>12</sup> See Lowrie (2005-2006), 955 on the double function of Aeneas' sacrifice.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 969.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 960: "The question of cultural identity in Vergil is intimately tied up with the establishment of law."

Aeneas, invoking the spirit of Pallas, sacrifices (*immolat* 12.949) Turnus on the battlefield, providing the requisite bloodshed for establishing a society existing with one set of laws. These laws will be the unifying force under which people from different origins can coexist in harmony. As Hardie notes, sacrifice represented a substitution of future violence, meaning that there is no longer any need for battle following Turnus' death.<sup>15</sup> Although it causes pain, Virgil's violence is essential for the establishment of a unified people, and provides a moral authority for both Trojans and Italians in the person of Aeneas. By linking this moral authority to Augustus, Virgil demonstrates that the violence of civil war will find reconciliation and law under the rule of the man who follows in Aeneas' footsteps as the leader of Rome.

Lucan's Caesar differs from Aeneas in ambition and purpose, but also in action. While Aeneas is marked for his *pietas*, he also stands above his comrades in martial valor. Like the Homeric heroes of old, Aeneas fights with his men on the battlefield as an equal, where he singlehandedly cuts down countless enemies. Though he is first among Trojans, the highest moral authority and man closest to the gods, he remains within the realm of mortals where he can only drive fate forward, not change its course.<sup>16</sup> He is a tool of destiny, providing the *arma virumque* and physical bloodshed necessary for Rome's foundation. He cannot watch the fighting from afar, but must participate in the violence himself, the one man capable of both military victory and cultural unification.

The Caesar of the *Bellum Civile*, on the other hand, escapes from this founding paradigm. While Aeneas fights and lives within the mortal sphere, Caesar elevates himself above both allies

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<sup>15</sup> Hardie, 21.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *Aen.* 12.772-73, where Aeneas finds himself unable to remove his spear from the stump of a sacred tree: *hic hasta Aeneae stabat, huc impetus illam detulerat fixam et lenta in radice tenebat* ("Here the spear of Aeneas stood, the attack held it fixed here and it clung in the tenacious root").

and enemies by refraining from violence on and off the battlefield. Instead, Scaeva and other Caesarian soldiers provide the physical violence necessary for the empire's foundation, allowing Caesar to remain removed from mortal affairs. Rather than personally contributing to the battlefield violence, Caesar becomes the "divine" inspiration behind Scaeva's fighting, watching and encouraging the centurion's actions while remaining out of sight. Caesar, not fate or divine providence, is the driving force of empire in Lucan's epic. Unlike Aeneas, he does not look to be first among mortals on the battlefield, nor does he desire to be the highest moral authority among men. He instead seeks to take the place of the god under whom all men are subjects.

In her article on founding violence in Virgil, Michèle Lowrie discusses the importance of divine violence in the conclusion of the epic.<sup>17</sup> This discussion is important for understanding Caesar's role as founding divinity in the *Bellum Civile*. Lowrie points out that the foundation of Rome hinges not only on Aeneas' sacrifice of Turnus, but also on Juno's insistence that, though they may defeat the Italians, the Trojans fade away in both name and culture and assimilate with the Italians.<sup>18</sup> Aeneas may be victorious over Turnus on the battlefield, but Juno is victorious in shaping a Roman order to fit her will. The vestiges of what Aeneas' people were—where they came from, what they wore, how they spoke—will give way to the customs and mores of the Italians. Juno achieves the destruction of the Trojan people by extinguishing their culture, while leaving behind the physical bodies of the settlers and the mere memory of their origins. In this

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<sup>17</sup> Lowrie, 958.

<sup>18</sup> *Aen.* 12.823-5: *ne vetus indigenas nomen mutare Latinos neu Troas fieri iubeas Teucrosque vocari aut vocem mutare viros aut vertere vestem* ("Do not command that the native Latins change their old name nor that they become Trojans and that they are called Teucrians or that the men change their voice or their dress").

way, Juno gains power over the lives of the Trojans that is deeper and more lasting than merely shedding their blood on the fields of Latium.<sup>19</sup>

Caesar's founding violence is similar to Juno's, but the nature of Lucan's project indicates that the result of such violence will be detrimental to Roman society. In the *Aeneid*, the elimination of Trojan culture will, in the end, prove beneficial for Aeneas and his followers. While they may shed the physical signifiers that marked them as Trojan, they will maintain their memories of Troy. More importantly, their assimilation into Latin culture marks the beginning of a great race that will surpass any power and influence the Trojans had. In the *Aeneid* both Juno and Aeneas achieved a form of victory, the one preserving the essence of Italian culture and the other establishing a great race. Caesar's victory, on the other hand, is absolute. He creates the foundation for an empire while also destroying the essence of Roman Republicanism.

I contend that the *Bellum Civile* appropriates and reconfigures the Virgilian notion of foundational violence by placing Caesar, a mortal man, above the fray of war where he avoids physical violence and pardons political enemies. While Juno destroyed what made the Trojans appear Trojan, their memory and history, the essence of their culture, remained intact to inform their future society. Caesar, on the other hand, strikes at the very essence of Roman identity. His *clementia* preserves the institutions and the words associated with Republican virtue, redefines the freedoms of the Republic, the ideals of martial valor and piety, and allegiance to Patria. This preservation of the Republic's physical signifiers prompts people to believe that the political dynamic after Caesar's victory is simply an extension of their lives before the war. Comforted by the appearance of freedom, the Roman people will slowly lose their identity as Roman citizens, becoming simply subjects of the Principate. Lucan's Caesar wants people to buy into Virgil's

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<sup>19</sup> Lowrie, 962.

idea that the Principate is just another chapter in the progression of Roman society. Lucan's story wants its readers to recognize this fabrication.

### **III. *Virtus*: Martial Valor on Lucan's Epic Battlefield**

Scaeva provides the physical manifestation of Caesar's violence against the Republic, but his actions also represent the manipulation of traditional Roman values that allows Caesar to redefine Roman morality. The valor Scaeva demonstrates in battle hearkens back to the values of manliness and martial prowess exemplified by the early Roman heroes who dislodged the kings and established the Republic. Scaeva's heroics urge the reader to draw comparisons between the *virtus libertatis* that motivated men to sacrifice their lives for an end to tyranny, and the *virtus sub duce* that will cause the Republic to fall and represents a return to subservience for the Roman spirit. This comparison stands out all the more because Scaeva's actions constitute the only instance of individual battlefield glory in Lucan's epic. Gratuitous bloodshed and violence pervade the epic, and Lucan provides vivid descriptions of the many wounds inflicted and bodies felled, but highlights the deeds of only a few men. Instead, battle scenes degenerate into faceless slaughter deemphasizing the role of the individual in favor of the wounds each soldier receives and inflicts. Rather than names and personalities, swords and spears, flowing blood and dismembered limbs dominate Lucan's battlefield narrative.<sup>20</sup> Lucan's descriptions of battle as a teeming mass of limbs and weapons contrast with the prominence of individuality in stories about the Roman Republic's foundation. Historians and storytellers recalling the fall of the kings

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<sup>20</sup> Gorman (2001), 263.

focused their accounts around the valiant Roman heroes whose displays of mental and physical virtue exemplified what individual glory should mean for a Roman citizen.

Comparing and emulating the deeds of virtuous men was commonplace in Roman society and education.<sup>21</sup> Unlike Greeks, whose moral education was formed through the memorization of abstract moral precepts, Roman students read historical accounts of *exempla virtutis*, stories of real Romans who spoke, fought, and died with honor and courage.<sup>22</sup> This meant that all Romans understood the precedents for valorous action, and were expected to act in accordance with the virtues they learned in school.<sup>23</sup> Such a conception of virtue also meant that there were no original acts of valor in Rome, only agglomerations of previous instances of *virtus*.<sup>24</sup> Once a new incident entered the corpus, it became another *exemplum* upon which other Romans could act. Valerius Maximus recounted such virtues in his *Factorum et Dictorum Memorabilium*, a compilation of exempla demonstrating the undaunted bravery and nobility of Roman character. Among accounts of battlefield bravery from the annals of Roman history, Valerius praises the exploits of the real-life Scaeva as examples of *terrestri laude* (Val. Max. 3.2.22a). As Gowing asserts, Valerius made little or no distinction between the Republic and the Principate, seeing continuity in Roman history despite the different social constructions under each type of government.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, even though Scaeva's presence in Valerius' work is brief, it places the warrior in the same continuum as other heroes from Roman history. It does not matter to Valerius that Scaeva's actions served a future tyrant; he is simply another *exemplum* in a long tradition of Roman bravery and a basis for future emulation.

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<sup>21</sup> Leigh (1997), 161.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>23</sup> See Gowing, 56 on how Romans used the past to inform their present situation.

<sup>24</sup> Leigh, 172.

<sup>25</sup> Gowing, 54-5. Also see Behr, 72 on the continuity of Roman history as a tool of the Republic.

Valerius' project, and therefore his understanding of Scaeva's heroics, demonstrates that he conceived of battlefield virtue in the traditional Roman sense, which regarded as paramount the physical representation of bravery and action and considered the intentions undergirding such actions as secondary.<sup>26</sup> If a soldier exhibited courage, wisdom, justice, or temperance on the battlefield, one might assume his mindset was of a similar disposition. Thus the author's description, *sine ullo regressu pedis pugnans* ("fighting without any retreat of his foot" [Val. Max. 3.2.22a]), focuses on Scaeva's physical refusal to relinquish his position against an onslaught of enemies. Declaring, *capite umero femine saucio, oculo eruto* ("[He was] wounded in the head, shoulder, and thigh, with his eye gouged out" [Val. Max. 3.2.22a]), Valerius also focuses on Scaeva's bruised and battered body as a mark of his courage. Despite this focus on action, Valerius also traces the source of Scaeva's fortitude to *disciplina*, a product of Caesar's ability to motivate his troops. According to Cicero, *disciplina* was an essential household virtue. In *De Senectute* 37 he couples *disciplina* with *mos patrius* as two elements that constituted an exemplary Roman family, focusing on how the fear of father and master fostered respect for the social structure and hierarchy of Roman society. Valerius' mention of *disciplina* as a factor motivating Scaeva's physical *virtus* indicates that the author believed that fear and respect can instill virtue both on the battlefield and in the household.

As Lucan's negative portrayal of Scaeva's deeds indicates, the author did not view the soldier's *disciplina* as a positive trait. *Disciplina* is the result of hard training, a fear of one's leader, and an expectation of reward for good service. It is an effective method for compelling soldiers to follow commands and endanger their lives for a larger cause, but, as Seneca noted, virtue cannot be forced upon an individual (Sen. *Ep.* 66.16-17). Livy demonstrates this problem

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<sup>26</sup> See Roller, 64-5 on the difference between Republican and Stoic views of *virtus*.

with *disciplina* in his description of Horatius Cocles, a soldier whose resilience and tenacity in the defense of the Republic call to mind Scaeva's heroics.<sup>27</sup> Just as in Valerius' account of Scaeva, numerous soldiers wield spears against Livy's Cocles (*clamore sublato undique in unum hostem tela coniciunt*).<sup>28</sup> Unlike Scaeva, however, Livy portrays Cocles taunting his enemies as *servitia regum superborum* ("slaves of haughty kings" [Livy, 2.10.8]), a form of *disciplina*, which has rendered them *suae libertatis immemores* ("forgetful of their own freedom" [Livy, 2.10.8]). *Disciplina* in the case of the Etruscan soldiers attacking Cocles as well as in the case of Scaeva is a negative attribute. It blinds these soldiers to their servitude under tyrants, compelling them to fight against their own interests.

Acting through *disciplina* means that a soldier's intentions for fighting are a product of the leader's orders, rather than the desire to pursue a noble cause. This has important implications in the *Bellum Civile*, where intention is critical for judging an action's moral worth. As Seneca warned, *vides autem divitiis, nobilitate, viribus quam multi male utantur* ("You moreover might see how many men use wealth, nobility, and strength badly" [Sen. *Ep.* 120.3]). Seneca posited that having all the advantages of life did not mean one would use those advantages for good. Skill on the battlefield is only virtuous if in the service of a noble cause. One must, therefore, as Matthew Roller posits, consider a soldier's state of mind before judging the worth of his actions.<sup>29</sup> Lucan would have viewed Cocles' chastisement of the Etruscan troops as a Stoic insight into their character. They may not have been cowards, but their bravery served a tyrant and opposed freedom. Cocles, however, both fought with fortitude and also used his skill

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<sup>27</sup> Leigh also compares the accounts of Scaeva and Cocles in Valerius (174-5). Val. Max. 3.2.1: *unusque duos acerrima pugna consertos exercitus, alterum repellendo, alterum propugnando, distraxit* ("And one man divided the entwined armies with the harshest fighting, by repelling the one side, and by fighting in front of the other.")

<sup>28</sup> Livy, 2.10.9: "From everywhere spears struck against one enemy with a loud noise."

<sup>29</sup> Roller, 93.

to defend Roman liberty. Seneca, in fact, used his story as an exemplum of virtue made manifest (Sen. *Ep.* 120.7). It is through this lens that Lucan portrays Scaeva's actions. Scaeva fights valiantly, but he serves a man fighting against the freedoms of the Roman Republic. Like the Etruscan soldiers, Scaeva battles for his own enslavement as well as that of his fellow Romans. Making this distinction between action and intention is crucial to understanding Scaeva's role in Caesar's reconstruction of Roman *virtus*.

In order to make this connection more explicit, I will examine the relationship between Lucan's Scaeva and accounts of Mucius Scaevola, a hero from the early Republic. The most obvious connection between Scaevola and Scaeva lies in the etymology of their names. *Scaeva* in Latin means both "left-handed" and "unlucky". Both men lose a body part from their left-hand side – Scaeva his eye and Scaevola his hand. These injuries come as a result of both men standing individually against an entire army. Livy describes how Scaevola sneaks into the enemy camp determined to kill the Etruscan king Porsenna. His deeds will relieve the Romans from the indignity of an Etruscan blockade slowly weakening a people who have won glorious victories in battle but now are forced to starve behind their walls (Livy 2.12.2). Mucius seeks to cause harm not only for his own gain, but also for that of his countrymen with *magno audacique aliquo facinore* ("With some great and brave deed" [Livy 2.12.3]). After he kills the wrong man, Scaevola's great deed takes another form entirely. Instead of an avenger of Rome, he becomes an *exemplum* of its virtue. When faced with fiery torture, Mucius thrusts his hand into the flames, declaring, *en tibi...ut sentias quam vile corpus sit iis qui magnam gloriam vident* ("Behold so that you might see how cheap a body is to those who see great glory" [Livy 2.12.13]). With this action and those words the soldier indicates his willingness to sacrifice his body for an ideal of liberty that will garner praise in a Roman society that lauds tyrannical defiance and grants *gloria*

to individuals who serve the state. For Lucan, his example would have been one of both mental and physical *virtus*. Mucius sacrifices his hand because a free society in Rome is more important than his own body.

Scaeva's actions, like those of Scaevola, are also prompted by a perceived indignity. He rouses his men by appealing to the sense of shame they should have that Pompey's men have chosen to attack them over all others.<sup>30</sup> Unlike Mucius, Scaeva does not seem to have concern for the well being of his fellow soldiers or for any countrymen he may be protecting. In fact, he urges, *confringite tela pectoris impulsu iugulisque retundite ferrum*.<sup>31</sup> Scaeva sees their function simply as a means of gaining victory, and he steps into the fray with only Caesar's victory in mind, eager to sacrifice his body to advance his general's standards. Scaeva does not strive to win *gloria* or recognition from a community, but from individuals. If Caesar will not be present to bear witness to his actions, then, *Pompeio laudante cadam* ("I will fall with Pompey praising" [BC, 6.160]); Scaeva will become a symbol of tenacity and violence to Pompey. Lucan's description of Scaeva, like that of Valerius Maximus, stresses the physical action and bravery Romans would have praised in the same breath as Scaevola's. Lucan, however, posits that the difference of intention creates the greatest rift between both examples of *virtus*. Mucius seeks to attack one person for the collective benefit of many, while Scaeva slaughters many for the benefit of one individual. While the physical sacrifice of each may seem virtuous, the intentions underlying the actions are inherently different.

Even though he places the individual over the community, Scaeva wins glory because the community, his fellow soldiers, still understands the world through the values of the Republic

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<sup>30</sup> BC, 6.156-7: *e cunctis, per quos erumperet hostis, nos sumus electi* ["From many, through whom the enemy might break, we were chosen"].

<sup>31</sup> BC, 6.160-1: "Break their spears with the shock of your chest and break the sword with your throats."

that praised the deeds of Scaevola. After Scaeva collapses from exhaustion, the Caesarian soldiers convey him from the battlefield, praising his actions.<sup>32</sup> Though they are witnesses to the warrior's brave deeds, they remain blind to his ignoble intentions, a distinction, as Roller posits, that Stoics believed only enlightened thinkers could make.<sup>33</sup> Lucan's authorial voice, therefore, provides a counterbalance to Scaeva's physical display. As a learned guide for his readers, Lucan helps them see the folly undergirding Scaeva's actions. At the end of the episode, Lucan proclaims to Scaeva, *quanta dominum virtute parasti* ("With so much virtue you prepared a master" [BC, 6.262]). This comment forces the readers to reconsider the events about which they just read.<sup>34</sup> Throughout the fighting, Scaeva intended only to receive acknowledgement from Caesar alone, not caring for his companions, and his valor resulted in their collective servitude. As Henderson notes, Lucan's description, separated from his explicit moral judgment, is evocative enough to convince his readers of Scaeva's virtue.<sup>35</sup> Without Lucan's lament, his readers might praise Scaeva, like the soldiers, for his physical expression of *virtus*.

The soldiers, just as the reader, are also spectators steeped in traditional Republican thought and uninitiated in Stoic ethics. Lucan cannot reach out to the soldiers, but he can warn his readers about the danger of Scaeva's actions. Enlightening his readers about morally bad virtue sends a message to the people who live, as a result of Scaeva's brand of *virtus*, under the tyranny of the Principate. Through Scaeva, Lucan's Caesar was able to associate his leadership with the appearance of the Republican institution he sought to replace, maintaining public support while creating a new social hierarchy. Gowing notes that controlling the *historia* and

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<sup>32</sup> BC, 6.251-2: *labentem turba suorum excipit atque umeris defectum inponere gaudet* ("The crowd of his men took him up after he fell and rejoiced to place his body on their shoulders").

<sup>33</sup> Roller, 106.

<sup>34</sup> See Behr, 53 on Lucan's use of apostrophe to help readers understand the negative aspects of Scaeva's fight.

<sup>35</sup> Henderson (1998), 172.

*memoria* of a population is a “crucial component of political authority.”<sup>36</sup> Gowing views Lucan’s Caesar as a man trying to destroy and devalue memory in order to legitimize imperial rule.<sup>37</sup> Caesar’s use of Scaeva as an *exemplum* of historic deeds, however, indicates that he wants to appropriate Roman memory for his own use. Through this appropriation, the general is able to redefine Roman morality while using the imagery and language of the Republic. Lucan would have seen such use of Republican imagery played out in everyday Roman life under the Principate, and his comment on the morality of Scaeva’s actions serves as a warning against buying into the validity of such imagery.

In order to illustrate how Lucan’s audience would have interacted with Republican *exempla* on a day-to-day basis and how Lucan saw this interaction as a threat to the Roman perception of freedom, I will now briefly step away from his text. The transformation of Republican imagery into imperial propaganda occurred frequently within the arena, a major source of everyday Roman entertainment. At such events, slaves and criminals acquired the roles and garb of famous Romans from the past and acted out battles and popular stories in all their grisly detail. In his *Epigrammata* Martial twice describes a reenactment of the Scaevola episode in the arena (Mart. 8.30, 10.25). For the spectacle a criminal is forced to burn off his right hand, punishing him for some crime while also invoking a famous story of Roman bravery. Fitzgerald notes that onlookers must disregard the fact that, rather than an example of resistance to tyranny, this scene is one of imperial torture; it is in fact exactly the kind of punishment Porsenna originally intended for Scaevola to suffer.<sup>38</sup> The man who burns his hand does not do so for any reason other than the fact that he is a subject of the imperial criminal justice system. In fact,

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<sup>36</sup> Gowing, 2.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>38</sup> Fitzgerald (2007), 67.

Martial posits, *nam cum dicatur tunica praesente molesta 'ure manum', plus est dicere 'non facio'* (“For when it is ordered with the *tunica molesta* present ‘burn your hand’, it is better to say ‘I will not’” [Mart. 10.25.5-6]). By denying the emperor his spectacle, the criminal would do a better job of following Scaevola’s example. As the crowd revels in the image of Scaevola’s heroics, they become a party to the construction of Roman imperial identity, which uses examples of liberty to legitimize and perpetuate tyranny.

It might be easier to ignore the reality of the arena as a stage for punishment, but both Martial and the rest of the audience must be aware that the man standing with his right hand in the imperial brazier will receive none of the *gloria* attributed to the actual Scaevola. That glory will instead go to the man who sponsored the show, most likely the emperor. By simultaneously associating the Principate with Republican virtue and controlling it through spectacles in the arena, the emperor recasts Scaevola’s actions as part of the founding myth for the Empire. Fitzgerald asserts that, in addition to punishing the criminal, the scene in the arena demeans the actions of men like Scaevola because they become tools of tyranny, having lost their power as *exempla* of liberty.<sup>39</sup> The emperor removes Scaevola’s *virtus* from its original context and transplants it within his own, making the Republic simply an extension of, a precursor to, the Rome Caesar established after the civil war. Scaevola’s virtues become central aspects of present-day Roman society, but no Romans pursue them. Rather, they appear only on the stage, separated from the audience by the boundaries of the arena and the fear that emulating Scaevola’s example of opposing tyranny will result in a similar punishment. So, while the emperor displays imagery usually associated with freedom from tyranny, he does so in a context that makes such attempts at freedom seem ill advised. If a Roman citizen should attempt to

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 63.

emulate Scaevola, he might end up the one in the arena facing the flames. By publicizing this moment of Roman history, the emperor is able to employ the imagery as a warning rather than an example.

As one reads Lucan's description of Scaeva's exploits, there is a temptation to, just as the spectators in the arena, ignore the realities behind the warrior's seemingly valorous efforts. Because of the obvious similarities to the traditional epic *aristeia* and the clear associations with Roman virtue exemplified by men such as Scaevola, it is easy for the reader to look past the fact that Scaeva is not fighting for the Roman people, but for one Roman man. Scaeva's actions provide a double spectacle, one for his fellow soldiers and one for the reader. He is, in fact, not dissimilar to a gladiator in the arena, putting on a show of valor for the sake of his leader. Caesar, after all, is the one sponsoring the show. It is for his sake that any men are fighting at all, and any glory Scaeva might win as a result of his actions will go to Caesar.

Throughout Lucan's long formulation of Scaeva's deeds, he names only one spectator. Aulus, a Pompeian soldier, steps forward after Scaeva falls to the ground and pleads for mercy. Trusting in Scaeva's plea to spare him and bring him over as a deserter to Pompey's camp, Aulus lays down his sword in an attempt to help a countryman in need:

*credidit infelix simulatis vocibus Aulus  
nec vidit recto gladium mucrone tenentem,  
membraque captivi pariter laturus et arma  
fulmineum mediis excepit faucibus ensem.* (6. 236-9)

“Unlucky Aulus trusted the feigned pleas  
and he did not see him holding his sword with the point upright,  
and about to bear the limbs of the captive along with his weapons  
he thrust up his lightning-like sword into the middle of his throat.”

Lucan describes Aulus, like Scaeva in the closing lines of the episode, as *infelix* because both men lose their lives to Caesar. Aulus dies at the hands of Caesar's minion and Scaeva becomes a

slave to Caesar's cause. Like a spectator in the arena, Aulus has given in to the spectacle and pays the price. By believing in Scaeva's virtue and honor he becomes yet another victim of Caesar's tyranny. Through Lucan's description of Aulus, the author warns his readers that they must recognize images of Republican virtue in the arena and elsewhere in everyday life as nothing more than performances. As soon as they, like Aulus, approach Scaeva with trusting hearts and minds focused solely on Scaeva's physical representation of *virtus*, they too will become *infelix*.

This is the great danger Lucan sees in Caesar's conquest of Rome. As Behr notes, the general does not destroy the ideas, words, and symbols of Rome's illustrious past, but instead incorporates them into his new version of Rome, namely an empire built around one man but undergirded by a past that has been altered to support the new regime.<sup>40</sup> Once Caesar has accomplished this conquest of traditional Republican values and ideals, they are then subject to exploitation. Martial's depictions of Scaevola in the arena demonstrate the actualization of Lucan's fears that the public will become inured to bastardized depictions of Roman heroes if there is no voice to caution against them.

#### **IV. Scaeva's *Aristeia***

The nature of Scaeva's *virtus* renders him indispensable to Caesar's cause. This section will directly examine Lucan's portrayal of Scaeva's fight in Book 6 of the *Bellum Civile* and analyze what factors make him such an important symbol for Caesar's goals. Extended descriptions of individual action are scarce in the *Bellum Civile*, usually reserved for Caesar,

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<sup>40</sup> Behr, 34.

Pompey, or Cato. Lucan rarely provides names, faces, or personalities for the men fighting battles, instead focusing his attention on their bodies and the wounds they receive.<sup>41</sup> Bartsch describes how this focus manifests itself through inversion of subject-object relationships, whereby the bodies of soldiers become the objects upon which weapons act.<sup>42</sup> Rather than reciting family histories and lineages, Lucan objectifies the participants of civil war as chattel, sacrificed for the Caesarian or Pompeian cause, mere “weapon and wound.”<sup>43</sup> Scaeva’s appearance on the ramparts of Dyrrachium in Book 6, therefore, is notable. Not only does Lucan mention the warrior by name, but Scaeva’s actions also constitute the only example of individual battlefield prowess in the entire epic. Such individuality, epitomized in the *aristeia*, was a significant aspect of traditional epic storytelling. *Aristeiai* occur frequently in both Homer and Virgil when important characters, endowed with divinely inspired bravery and courage, carve their way across the battlefield, overpowering any who think to oppose them. Lucan’s description of Scaeva’s deeds indicates that this scene is the author’s one invocation of such an important epic motif. Scaeva, like many other epic heroes, takes up weapons and stands his ground against the enemy before persevering through a grievous wound and routing the opposing soldiers.<sup>44</sup> Just as Lucan indicates the sinister character underlying Scaeva’s demonstration of *virtus*, however, he also portrays Scaeva’s actions as a perversion of a traditional *aristeia* and established ideas about battlefield bravery.

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<sup>41</sup> Gorman, 271–2.

<sup>42</sup> Bartsch (1997), 23–29.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 263. See also Henderson, 194 on Lucan’s soldiers as mere extensions of their weapons.

<sup>44</sup> Edwards (1987) describes this as the basic outline for an epic *aristeia*. Though specific details will vary from scene to scene and author to author, all heroes of *aristeiai* will follow this pattern (79).

Scaeva's arming scene lacks the pomp and circumstance one might find in other epics. He does not wear shining armor, nor does he wield well-forged spears. Instead he employs what the destruction of war has left lying around him:

*primumque cadavera plenis  
turribus evoluit subeuntisque obruit hostis  
corporibus, totaeque viro dant tela ruinae,  
roboraque et moles hosti seque ipse minatur* (6.170-3).

“And first of all he rolled corpses from the full towers and he hid the enemy with falling bodies, and all the debris gave weapons to the man, and he threatened the enemy with wood and stone and his own body.”

None of these objects Lucan describes are tools of war, but victims of it. Scaeva takes the walls and bodies that the civil war has destroyed and recycles them so that they continue to feed the destruction of which they are a part. This use of corpses recalls the actions of Tyrrhenus at the Battle of Massilia in Book 3. Blinded in battle and unable to fight, the soldier seeks to use his body as a javelin, a weapon other soldiers can hurl after Tyrrhenus has lost the ability to wield his own. Both Scaeva and Tyrrhenus demonstrate how the human body in Lucan's war is nothing more than a tool of conquest for the leaders. Lucan, describing Tyrrhenus' mindset, notes, *non perdere letum maxima cura fuit* (“The greatest care was not to waste a death” [BC, 3.705-6]). Though his body may be broken, bruised, and bleeding, a man's usefulness to his leader does not end at his death.

Though he kills many men with both sword and corpse, Scaeva, like Tyrrhenus, also turns his own body into a tool of war. He receives hundreds of wounds that would fell other men, but continues fighting without paying heed to injury or pain. This distinguishes Scaeva among other epic heroes who normally appear untouchable during their *aristeiai*. Lucan describes the only force holding Scaeva's body intact as the countless spears fixed in his bones: *nec quidquam*

*nudis vitalibus obstat iam praeter stantes in summis ossibus hastas.*<sup>45</sup> Although the Pompeian soldiers find their mark with every thrust and throw of their weapons (*nulla fuit non certa manus, non lancea felix*), helping, as Henderson posits, Scaeva live up to his name (*scaeva*, “unlucky”), they fail to accomplish their ultimate goal of killing the soldier.<sup>46</sup> Skill with a weapon is not enough to win a civil war, when one man is willing to sacrifice his bones and blood for the cause. Even when Scaeva does fall, he uses his body as a weight with which to crush an enemy soldier.<sup>47</sup>

Scaeva also suffers a debilitating wound that strikes at both his physical and psychological faculties:

*Dictaea procul ecce manu Gortynis harundo  
tenditur in Scaevam, quae voto certior omni  
in caput atque oculi laevom descendit in orbem.  
ille moras ferri nervorum et vincula rumpit  
adfixam vellens oculo pendente sagittam  
intrepidus, telumque suo cum lumine calcat.*

“Behold! From far off a Gortynian shaft is hurled by a Dictaeon hand against Scaeva, which, more sure than any prayer, descends into the head and his left eyeball. Scaeva breaks the delays of the steel and the chains of the nerves tearing the arrow attached to the hanging eye undaunted, and he treads on the weapon along with his own eye” (6.214-9).

Unlike the incidental wounds that momentarily divert other epic heroes, this injury only causes Scaeva to pause for a moment to remove the arrow with his eyeball in tow and tread on both with disdain. Rather than lament his loss of sight and the pain of such a wound, Scaeva relishes in his blindness. As Franzen posits, eyesight provides an essential form of connection between human

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<sup>45</sup> *BC*, 6.194-5: “Nothing now blocked his bared innards except for the spears standing deep in his bones.”

<sup>46</sup> Henderson, 177. *BC*, 6.190: “No hand was not sure, no lance unlucky.”

<sup>47</sup> *BC*, 6.205: *iam gradibus fessis, in quem cadat, eligit hostem* (“Now with weary step, he chooses an enemy on whom to fall”).

beings.<sup>48</sup> When one loses an eye, one also loses the connection that fosters “allegiance to or recognition of friends, family, and political allies.”<sup>49</sup> Eyesight is also the vehicle through which people can understand the horrors of civil war. The description of Marius Gratidianus’ torture in Book 2 ( 2.174-190) is all the more perverse because his captors forced Marius to gaze upon his own disintegration: *ille cavis evolvit sedibus orbis, ultimaque effodit spectatis lumina membris.*<sup>50</sup> It is a fate worse than death to watch one’s body reduced to a mass of gore and severed limbs, a template for the horrors of civil war. For Scaeva, however, the essential tools of human connection are mere “delays” (*moras*) and “chains” (*vincula*) that hinder him from fighting. It is much easier to commit atrocities when one cannot witness the results. When he tears out his eyeball, Scaeva willfully impairs his ability to tell friend from foe and enables himself to more easily participate in the horrors of civil war. This kind of injury is unique for heroes of *aristeiai*. In fact, heroes in the *Iliad* might find their vision unclouded so that they are able to distinguish mortal from immortal on the battlefield.<sup>51</sup> As Saylor notes, however, Scaeva’s blindness leads to no such enlightenment; rather than transcending the mortal sphere, he loses his ability to perceive his body and those of others as human.<sup>52</sup> The empty socket and the blood flowing from it immerse Scaeva’s vision in gore to match the bloodshed on his mind. His whole purpose is violence, and his moral and physical blindness reflect this.

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<sup>48</sup> Franzen (2001), 69.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>50</sup> *BC*, 2.184-5: “That one rolled the eyes from their hollow sockets, and dug out the eyes last after watching the limbs.”

<sup>51</sup> Kirk (1990), 69.

<sup>52</sup> Saylor (1978), 251.

The driving force behind this bloodshed is not loyalty, justice, or a sense of right, but *ira* (6.155).<sup>53</sup> Madness, anger, and rage all compel Scaeva to continue fighting even after receiving so many wounds. Lucan remarks that it is *rabies*, not arrows or swords, which deforms the soldier's features (*perdiderat voltum rabies*).<sup>54</sup> When Scaeva wishes to feign defeat, he suppresses his *furor*, quelling the force that incites him on the battlefield (6.228). This instance recalls the matron from Book 1 who, roused to prophesy Rome's impending doom, wilts from exhaustion after her frenzy has died (*haec ait, et lasso iacuit deserta furore*).<sup>55</sup> In fact, *furor* is a defining feature of Lucan's civil war. In Book 1, the poet states, *scelerique nefando nomen erit virtus, multosque exhibit in annos hic furor* ("Virtue will be the name given to unspeakable crime, and madness will rush about here for many years" [1.667-9]). He uses *furor* here as a synonym for the war while equating *virtus* with this very madness. If civil war is defined as *furor*, then it must also be the realm of *virtus*.<sup>56</sup> Lucan plots this out during Scaeva's fight, equating *suppressum ... furorem* (6.227) with *virtute remota* (6.228). Later, when Scaeva has killed Aulus and regains his fighting ardor, Lucan describes the force behind the invigoration: *incaluit virtus* ("His *virtus* rekindled" [6.240]). Scaeva's most formidable weapon, therefore, is not sword or spear or corpse, but his own madness and bloodlust, which allow him to rage unchecked, one against an entire army.

Sklenar, discussing the role of *furor* in Lucan's epic, notes that it is an integral attribute of the epic Roman warrior.<sup>57</sup> He finds the precedent for this madness in Book 2 of the *Aeneid*,

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<sup>53</sup> Behr, 46: "Now *ira* should move them to do what *pietas* could not. He puts *pietas* on the same level as anger."

<sup>54</sup> *BC*, 6.228: "Madness deformed his face."

<sup>55</sup> *BC*, 1.695: "She spoke, and fell with a frenzy wearied and gone."

<sup>56</sup> See Sklenar, 20-1 on Lucan's coupling of *ira* and *virtus*.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 29-30.

when Aeneas is roused with anger to fight against the invading Greeks (*Aen.* 2.314-7).<sup>58</sup> Aeneas describes *furor*, not his weapons, as the force that drives him to battle: *furor iraque mentem praecipitant* (“Madness and anger drive headlong my mind” [2.316-7]). Sklenar seems to view this episode in a positive light, connecting Aeneas’ *furor* with his ability to incite his men toward great deeds. What he ignores, however, is that Aeneas acts against the decree of fate. Earlier, the ghost of Hector, appearing as the Greeks began to pillage Troy, urged Aeneas to flee and preserve the vestiges of Troy (*heu fuge, nate dea, teque his, ait, eripe flammis*).<sup>59</sup> The *furor* that inspires Aeneas to fight compels him to violate this decree, placing him and the preservation of Trojan culture in danger. In the same way, the *furor* that inspires Scaeva blinds him to the fact that he is fighting for the destruction of Roman *virtus*, not its preservation.

In Book 2 Brutus, confiding in Cato, remarks that *furor* compels neither the men in the Pompeian camp nor the Caesarian camp to fight (*nullum furor egit in arma: castra petunt magna victi mercede*).<sup>60</sup> The men fight for personal and financial reasons, not for any loyalty or love of combat. The man Lucan does, however, describe as the embodiment of *furor* and the great destructive force of the civil war is Caesar.<sup>61</sup> During the Battle of Pharsalia, Lucan in the span of eight lines, twice links Caesar to the destructive madness of the fighting. Before his refusal to continue writing about the battle, Lucan describes the bloodiest part of the conflict: *hic furor, hic rabies, hic sunt tua crimina, Caesar* (“Here is your madness, here your bloodlust, here your crimes, Caesar” [7.551]). Later, he tells the reader, *hic Caesar, rabies populis stimulusque furorum* (“Here is Caesar, bloodlust for the people, goad of madness” [BC, 7.557]). Caesar here

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<sup>58</sup> Sklenar, 30.

<sup>59</sup> *Aen.*, 2.289: “[Hector] said, ‘Alas flee, son of the goddess, and snatch yourself from the flames.’”

<sup>60</sup> *BC*, 2.254-5: “Madness drives nobody into arms: the conquered seek the camps with a great price.”

<sup>61</sup> See Behr, 42 for her discussion on *furor* and Caesar’s connection to it.

is the source of madness for his troops, urging them on amidst the horrors of war. Caesar is the driving force of civil war, the man who impels others to sacrifice their bodies for his cause. Their *virtus* is really the *furor* with which he furnishes them. So too is Caesar the driving force behind Scaeva's actions, allowing the soldier to demonstrate the kind of martial *virtus* that sheds blood while showing no regard for one's own body. As the epitome of *virtus*, therefore, Scaeva is also the epitome of Caesarian *furor*. In this way, Scaeva is not simply a soldier in Caesar's ranks, but a physical manifestation of the general's will, accomplishing Caesar's desires without the general's presence or prompting (*testem hunc fortuna negavit*), and not allowing piety to restrain his actions (*pietate remota*).<sup>62</sup>

Scaeva's fortitude and ability to shed blood prompt his fellow soldiers to worship the centurion (*adorant*, 6.254) as the divine representation of *Virtus* itself.<sup>63</sup> This apotheosis bears significant weight in an epic bereft of divinities. In fact, the only other god appearing in Lucan's epic is *Patria*, the divine representation of the Roman homeland. She confronts Caesar just as the general is about to cross the Rubicon, defying the senate and loosing war on the people of Rome. *Patria* urges Caesar to halt his progress if he wishes to obey the laws of the land: *si iure venitis, si cives, huc usque licet* ("If you come by law, if as citizens, it is allowable [to go] up to this point" [1.191-2]). As a *civis*, Caesar is subject to the laws of *Patria*, but by crossing the Rubicon he violates those laws, placing himself beyond *Patria*'s authority. Johnson asserts that Roman gods are "no stronger than the city that reveres them."<sup>64</sup> Once Caesar defies *Patria*, the goddess loses all power because her authority stems solely from the *cives Romani*. In a similar way, Scaeva's

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<sup>62</sup> *BC*, 6.159: "Fortune denies this man [Caesar] as a witness"; *BC*, 6.155: "With piety removed."

<sup>63</sup> Hardie, 69: "As reward for his superhuman feats Scaeva's companions worship his disfigured form as if there was a *numen* enclosed in his breast; his mortal *virtus* is elevated to the divine status of the goddess *Virtus*. But his courage is fueled by anger."

<sup>64</sup> Johnson (1987), 110.

divinization turns Caesar into the master of *Virtus* without necessitating the general's personal participation in the battle. The spoils of his victory will not adorn the *Tonantis templa* (6.260-1), but will lie at Caesar's feet.

## V. *Clementia*: A New Virtue for A New Order

Because Caesar has taken a position as master of traditional Roman *virtus*, he does not, as so many other epic heroes, need to pursue such virtue in order to validate his leadership. Instead, Caesar promotes his own personal virtues as those that should take precedence in civil war. In Book 1, Lucan compares Caesar to a lightning bolt, swift and destructive in his desire to rule Rome (*BC*, 1.151-7). He is eager to fight and desires to make his way by violence whenever possible (*gaudens viam fecisse ruina*).<sup>65</sup> Unlike Homeric or Virgilian heroes, however, Caesar does not personally participate in the fighting on the battlefield. On the one hand, this is a product of the historical reality that kept Roman generals separated from the fray, winning glory through their ability to incite men to victory.<sup>66</sup> On the other, Lucan's Caesar explicitly avoids killing anyone in the epic. Under Caesar, the mark of a valiant Roman is no longer his ability to kill, but his capacity to forgive.

*Clementia* held an important place within Roman morality prior to Caesar, but it represented a personal virtue dispensed to inferiors, not to citizens equal under the law.<sup>67</sup> Cicero, in *De Inventione*, describes *clementia* as one of the constitutive elements of temperance: *clementia, per quam animi temere in odium alicuius inferioris concitati comitate retinentur*

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<sup>65</sup> *BC*, 1.150: "Rejoicing to make a path with destruction."

<sup>66</sup> See Gorman, 264 on the role of Roman generals in battle.

<sup>67</sup> Dowling (2006), 17-18.

(“Clemency, through which spirits by chance roused into hatred of someone inferior are held back by gentleness” [Cic. Inv. 2.164]). Caesar’s use of clemency matches this description in several ways. He employed his own personal qualities of “gentleness” (*comitate*) against political enemies and opposing soldiers whose fight against Caesar should have aroused hatred (*odium*). Cicero also recognized the power dynamic whereby only an inferior can receive clemency. It is the context of Cicero’s description, however, that differentiates his notion of clemency from Caesar’s. To Cicero, granting mercy to a criminal or foreign enemy, someone already socially inferior to a Roman citizen, was only virtuous in that it showed an individual’s temperance and his ability to treat those of lesser standing with lenience. When applied to fellow citizens, however, clemency creates a power hierarchy among men formerly equal in standing, placing them on the same political footing as those foreigners and criminals.<sup>68</sup> Receiving clemency, though it resulted in forgiveness, was demeaning, especially to a Roman upper class used to sharing power.<sup>69</sup> Seneca described the relationship as that of a father and son or teacher and student.<sup>70</sup> It also gave the one granting mercy a special kind of power over men’s lives. Seneca, taking on Nero’s persona in *De Clementia*, notes, *occidere contra legem nemo non potest, servare nemo praeter me* (“Anyone can kill against the law, nobody can preserve [life] other than me” [Clem. 5.4]). Only the person in control of law and custom can grant life to individuals whom the law might otherwise put to death. This is where Caesar’s use of *clementia* differs most from Cicero’s description. By showing mercy to Roman citizens, Caesar reorganizes the established social hierarchy of Rome, placing himself as the ultimate authority over the lives

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<sup>68</sup> Dowling, 21.

<sup>69</sup> Braund (2009), 35.

<sup>70</sup> Sen. *Clem.* 16.3: *none pessimus pater videbitur qui adsiduis plagis liberos etiam ex levissimis causis compescet* (“Does not a father seem the worst who holds in check his sons with continual beatings from the lightests of causes?”).

of other citizens. Instead of simply an element of *temperantia*, clemency under Caesar took on more importance, eventually becoming a critical source of the Principate's power and legitimacy. In this way, Lucan recognizes that Caesar's clemency is less gruesome than Scaeva's demonstration of martial *virtus*, but much more devastating to the soul of the Republic.<sup>71</sup>

Caesar's policy of clemency was a novel one in Roman civil war.<sup>72</sup> At the outset of the epic, Lucan lays out the unprecedented nature of Caesar's political forgiveness. In Book 2 the fresh memory of proscriptions and civilian blood hangs over the city as a Roman recalls the fighting of Marius and Sulla in an attempt to predict what Caesar and Pompey will accomplish.<sup>73</sup> He describes the blood flowing through Roman alleyways and temples (*stat cruor in templis, multaue rubentia caede lubrica saxa madent*) and law and custom falling to the primal violence of Roman citizens (*tunc data libertas odiis, resolutaque legum frenis ira ruit*).<sup>74</sup> The account begins with Marius, an exile from Rome, much like Caesar after the senate's ultimatum to disband his legions in Gaul, making his way across foreign lands in search of an army to retake the city.<sup>75</sup> In Africa he gathers together slaves and has them carry his standards, prepared to shed their blood for his cause.<sup>76</sup> Caesar also leads an army of enslaved men in his march against their homeland. While Marius allows only the guilty to bear his standards (*nulli gestanda dabantur*

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<sup>71</sup> Behr, 67: "*Clementia*, while it preserves one's physical body, destroys identity, one's deeper beliefs."

<sup>72</sup> Konstan (2007), 340: "Julius Caesar seems, at all events, to have been the first Roman to elevate restraint or clemency to the status of a policy."

<sup>73</sup> *BC*, 2.65-6: *oderunt gravis vivacia fata senectae servatosque iterum bellis civilibus annos* ("They hate the long-lived fates of heavy old age and years kept again in civil war").

<sup>74</sup> *BC*, 2.103-5: "Gore stood in the temples and the slippery red stones grew wet with much bloodshed"; *BC*, 2.145-6: "Then freedom was given to hatred, and anger rushed about unhinged from the reigns of law."

<sup>75</sup> The senate decreed that Caesar would disband his army or be charged with treason (*uti ante certam diem Caesar exercitum dimittat; si non faciat, eum adversus rem publicam facturum videri* [Caes. Civ. 1.2]).

<sup>76</sup> *BC* 2.94-6: *servilia solvit agmina, conflato saevas ergastula ferro exeruere manus* ("He freed servile ranks, prisons offered savage hands with melted iron").

*signa ducis, nisi qui scelorum iam fecerat usum adtuleratque in castra nefas*), Caesar needs to make no such distinction; all of his soldiers are guilty, committing a *crimen* against a fatherland they treat as an enemy state.<sup>77</sup> These similarities would lead Romans to think Caesar will institute the same kind of violence as Marius, the kind that makes no distinction of age (*nulli sua profuit aetas*, 2.104) or status (*nobilitas cum plebe perit*, 2.101), but sent all Romans, innocent or guilty, to death.

Marius' precedent will not, however, foretell Caesar's actions. Caesar enters Rome leading his men unarmed, following the proper custom of Roman military leaders.<sup>78</sup> Fear alights on the people as they plan for the worst, but Caesar will not follow in Marius' footsteps or those of Sulla, who killed countless other Romans after Marius' death. The man recalling the story describes Marius' fate: *omnia passo quae peior fortuna potest, atque omnibus uso quae melior, mensoque hominis quid fata paterent* ("Having suffered everything which worse fortune was capable of, and having used everything which better fortune was capable of, and having measured out what the fates lay bare for mankind" [2.133-4]). Caesar, however, will settle for only the good. He does not want his influence to diminish after his death like Marius', nor does he want to allow the Republic to regain a semblance of its formal self as it did after Sulla's retirement. He desires power both in the present and the future. Caesar represents the power and ambition of both men, but he will transcend their examples of victory, not through repeated bloodshed, but through a transformation of the Roman value system.<sup>79</sup> At the beginning of Book

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<sup>77</sup> *BC*, 2.96-8: "The standards of the general were given to nobody to bear, unless he who made use of crime and brought unspeakable deeds into the camps."

<sup>78</sup> *BC*, 3.71-3: *tunc agmina victor non armata trahens sed pacis habentia voltum, tecta petit patriae* ("Then the victor not conveying armed ranks but having the appearance of peace, sought the homes of his fatherland").

<sup>79</sup> See Behr, 61 on how the Principate's moral vocabulary, derived from Caesar's actions, constructed a new Roman identity.

2, Lucan beseeches the gods to let mankind remain ignorant of its fate (*sit caeca futuri mens hominum fati; liceat sperare timenti*).<sup>80</sup> The upheavals of nature indicate to Romans that some disaster is at hand, but they mistake it for Sullan and Marian violence. By upsetting these predictions, Caesar paves the way for a method of conquest more destructive and lasting.

Marius and Sulla waged *bellum civile*, but Caesar's war is *plus quam civilia* (1.1).<sup>81</sup> His battle is beyond civil because Caesar's goal is to redefine what it means to be a Roman citizen. Lucan expresses the general's ultimate goal when he describes Caesar's arrival in Rome. With the senate and people at his mercy, *omnia Caesar erat* (3.108).<sup>82</sup> Marius once held this position, allowing only those who bowed to his service to live.<sup>83</sup> By feigning decorum (*simulare togam*, 3.143) and dispensing clemency, however, Caesar avoids the need to be a Sulla or a Marius.<sup>84</sup> Instead of forcing the Roman people to bow to Caesar at the insistence of a sword blade, the general employs mercy, allowing his enemies to believe they are able to continue their lives as before without realizing Caesar has placed them within his new imperial hierarchy.

To Caesar, the opportunity to grant clemency offers the ultimate boon of civil war: *unica belli praemia civilis, victis donare salutem*.<sup>85</sup> This is not, however, because it lessens the bloodshed among brothers and fathers or allows Caesar to make peace in a conflict he recognizes as harmful to the state; rather, clemency grants Caesar the opportunity to place himself in a

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<sup>80</sup> *BC*, 2.14-5: "May the mind of mankind be blind to future fate; may it be allowable for fearing ones to hope."

<sup>81</sup> Henderson, 177: "Sulla, then, figures as (a) Caesar *avant la lettre*. He represents *bellum civile* to Caesar's *Bella...plus quam civilia*."

<sup>82</sup> See Henderson, 199 on Caesar's desire to become the focal point of Roman politics and vocabulary.

<sup>83</sup> *BC*, 2.113-4: *spes una salutis oscula pollutae fixisse tremantia dextrae* ("The one hope of salvation was to fix a trembling kiss on his polluted hand").

<sup>84</sup> Konstan notes that the main difference between Caesar and Sulla was Caesar's use of *clementia* (339-40).

<sup>85</sup> *BC*, 9.1066-7: "The only boon of civil war, to grant safety to the conquered."

position of social superiority over his defeated enemies. For this reason, the tears Caesar sheds when seeing Pompey's decapitated head stem not from the loss of a friend, but to his inability to grant his enemy a final humiliation.<sup>86</sup> As Behr notes, Caesar cannot turn Pompey into an example of the general's mercy, nor can he take away the man's freedom; nobody can be a witness to Caesar pardoning his greatest foe.<sup>87</sup> Achilles, the man who presents Pompey's head to Caesar, insists that the Egyptians have done the general a favor by placing Pompey's blood on their hands, allowing Caesar's to remain untainted: *si scelus est, plus te nobis debere fateris, quod scelus hoc non ipse facis* ("If it is a crime, you will admit to owe more to us, because you yourself did not do this crime" [9.1031-2]). Like Scaeva, Achilles has taken Caesar's place behind the sword, cutting down the enemy leader for the benefit of the *unus homo*. In this case, however, Achilles' actions do not merit praise because they have prevented Caesar from reaping *clementia*'s rewards. Achilles' actions, and through him those of Ptolemy, are self-serving and done for the preservation of the Egyptian pharaoh, not for the success of Caesar.<sup>88</sup> This makes Pompey's death all the more unbearable for Caesar because it was not done at his command. Even if Caesar desired Pompey's death, he would have wanted it done on his orders. Only one man will come out of the civil war as the master of the entire world, and Caesar will not suffer any other leader to decide the fate of men under Caesar's dominion.

The one man who recognizes the danger Caesar's *clementia* poses to the established Roman order is Domitius, a senator charged by Pompey to defend Corfinium, who finds himself

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<sup>86</sup> *BC*, 9.1059-62: *quam magna remisit crimina Romano tristis fortuna pudori, quod te non passa est misereri, perfide, Magni viventis* ("How great a crime sad Fortune sent back to Roman modesty, because she did not suffer you to pity a living Magnus, treacherous one").

<sup>87</sup> Behr notes, "What Caesar cannot stand is not Pompey's death but the silence that surrounds it. This is a death that he cannot claim, that he cannot use for any of his propagandistic goals, because he was unable to transform Pompey's defeat into a spectacle of his mercy" (64).

<sup>88</sup> Caesar notes that if he had lost, the same party that met Pompey in Egypt would have taken his head instead (*BC*, 9.1082-3: *nobis quoque tale paratum litoris hospitium*).

betrayed by his own men and placed at the mercy of Caesar in Book 2. In the eyes of the law both men are equals, and Caesar is nothing more than a fellow citizen drunk with power (*civisque superbi*, 2.508). Instead of killing Domitius, Caesar sets his captive free, laying no restraints or conditions on his clemency:

*“vive, licet nolis, et nostro munere” dixit  
“cerne diem. Victis iam spes bona partibus esto  
exemplumque mei. Vel, si libet, arma retempta,  
et nihil hac venia, si viceris, ipse paciscor.”* (2.512-5).

“‘Live, although you do not wish to, by my gift’ he said  
‘see the day. Be a hope for conquered parties  
and an example for me. Or, if it is agreeable, again take up arms,  
and I will bargain not at all on this pardon, if you conquer.’”

These words define the essence of Caesar’s *clementia*. They appear generous and forgiving, placing no blame on Domitius’ intentions if he takes up his sword against Caesar again. While he might hope that Domitius will switch sides, this is a secondary concern for Caesar. It is more important that the senator becomes an example of Caesar’s clemency and superiority. While battles may be won by the *exemplum virtutis* of Scaeva, the war will be won by the *exemplum mei* of Caesar. He will win over the other side with his own personal virtue. Although the action may seem selfless, Caesar’s words stress the power hierarchy clemency creates. Caesar attaches no strings, but Domitius’ life becomes a *munus*, patronage from a man supposed to be an equal. The use of the imperative (*vive, cerne*) also stresses how Caesar’s position allows him to command Domitius, forcing him to exist against his will. Seneca posits that receiving clemency is the same as losing one’s life: *perdidit enim vitam qui debet* (“Indeed he loses his life who owes it” [Sen. *Clem.* 1.21.2]). Instead of becoming a memory and story of defiant defeat at Caesar’s hands, Domitius becomes a living example of Caesar’s power. He no longer lives his life for himself, but rather for Caesar, as a means of advancing the reputation of the general.

Lucan's depiction of Domitius as a brave defender of Republican ethics and freedom is notable because of how it differs from historic accounts of the senator's actions. In Caesar's account of Corfinium, Domitius held the town against Pompey's orders, and was betrayed by his own troops only after he attempted to secretly escape and abandon his troops (Caes. *Civ.* 1.19-20). As one of Nero's ancestors, Domitius could have provided an example for Lucan of imperial faults. Instead, the author takes historical liberties to praise a man with connections to the Principate. As Ahl points out, however, Domitius was the only notable man who lost his life at Pharsalus, necessitating Lucan's heroic treatment.<sup>89</sup> Though his readers may have attached Domitius' name to Nero, Lucan explicitly links him to the Republic through his defiant stance against Caesar's clemency.

Domitius' response provides an example for Lucan's readers of how to react to imperial clemency, in a time when the virtue was regaining importance. After the proscriptions of Augustus and the reigns of terror under Tiberius, Caligula, and Claudius, the emergence of Nero sparked hope for a new era of clemency and peace.<sup>90</sup> After coming to power without bloodshed, Nero was able to distinguish himself from his predecessors who had used their power to publicly kill political enemies.<sup>91</sup> Though Lucan may have initially rejoiced in the *princeps innocentius*, as evidenced by the praise of his proem, Nero's swift spiral into violence and instability demonstrated how the power to grant clemency was not always used for mercy. The power to rule with benevolence is the same power that allows a man to rule with cruelty. Faced with the power of clemency, Domitius recognizes the shame inherent in pardon (*heu quanto melius vel caede peracta parcere Romano potuit fortuna pudori!*) as well as the disturbing prospect of a

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<sup>89</sup> See Ahl (1976), 47-54 for his discussion on Lucan's positive use of Domitius.

<sup>90</sup> Braund, 11-12.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

single Roman having such power.<sup>92</sup> Caesar's *venia* has also deprived Domitius of the possibility of following the example of his Republican forbears by preventing him from sacrificing his body for a cause greater than his own life. Caesar distances Domitius from men like Scaevola who sacrificed their bodies for Rome, allowing only his own men, like Scaeva, to associate with this virtue of the Republic. With this in mind, Domitius vows to loose himself from Caesar's bonds and make himself a martyr for the Republic:

“*in medios belli non ire furores  
iam dudum moriture paras? rue certus et omnes  
lucis rumpe moras et Caesaris effuge munus*” (2.523-5).

““Will you not prepare to go into the middle of the terrors of war shortly about to die? Rush certainly and break all delays of light and flee the gift of Caesar.””

He may not be able to defeat Caesar, but Domitius can still become an *exemplum* of Roman virtue by losing his life on the battlefield. When he appears again, dying on the fields of Pharsalia, he is free from the shackles of clemency (*libertate perit*, 7.603). His death becomes the only way for him to oppose Caesar's tyranny. For a Roman reading the *Bellum Civile*, this is a grim message, but it demonstrates clemency's lasting power. Because clemency prevents it, death becomes the only way to escape the bonds of servitude and defy the power of the tyrant.

## VI. Conclusion

Despite Lucan's portrayal of Caesar's dominance and systematic reconfiguration of Roman society, Lucan's epic ends with the general surrounded on land and sea by Egyptian soldiers, helpless and fearful for the first time in the epic (*dubiusque timeret optaretne mori*

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<sup>92</sup> *BC*, 2.517-8: “Alas it is better, driven through with so much gore Fortune is able to spare Roman shame.”

(“Unclear whether he should fear or hope for death” [BC, 10.542-3]). Not only does this moment show Caesar in an uncharacteristic state of weakness, it also represents a possible turning point in the Republic’s fate: *potuit discrimine summo Caesaris una dies in famam et saecula mitti*.<sup>93</sup> If Caesar dies, so too will his imperial plans. Out of options, the general looks back on the soldiers gathered behind him (*respexit agmine denso*), and his gaze lights upon the most unexpected of sights: Scaeva.<sup>94</sup> The result of this hero’s heroics in Book 6 should have been his death, yet he appears again at the moment of Caesar’s greatest need. Though zombies are nothing foreign to Lucan, Scaeva’s appearance in Caesar’s ranks most likely does not indicate his physical presence.<sup>95</sup> Masters argues that this moment is one of reflection for Caesar.<sup>96</sup> He surveys his men, but also looks back (*respexit*) on the memory of Scaeva and the power and tenacity of his *virtus* while facing death at Dyrrachium. Earlier in the passage, Lucan, describing Caesar’s position, remarks, *via nulla salutis, non fuga, non virtus* (“There was no path to safety, neither by flight, nor by virtue” [BC, 10.538-9]). It is true that the man who embodied divine *virtus* cannot help Caesar again on the battlefield. The memory of his actions and the Caesarian *furor* that supported them, however, indicate that Caesar will escape defeat once again.

Among the chaos and violence of civil war, Lucan describes Caesar as an architect of power, carefully constructing a new Roman society out of the ashes of the Republic. His project is full of contradictions that disguise his true motives. Virtue is a crime, clemency is death; the idea that the Republic lives is a fabrication, a false dream for those who managed to survive the bloodshed. In his own commentary on the civil war, Caesar noted that he would submit to anything in order to preserve the Republic (*sed tamen ad omnia se descendere paratum atque*

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<sup>93</sup> BC, 532-3: “With the greatest danger of Caesar one day could be sent into fame and history.”

<sup>94</sup> BC, 10.543: “He looked back on the packed battle line.”

<sup>95</sup> Cf. BC, 6.719-830 on Erictho’s reanimation of a soldier’s corpse.

<sup>96</sup> Masters (1992), 255-6.

*omnia pati rei publicae causa*).<sup>97</sup> While this may seem like an honest commitment to the freedoms Romans had enjoyed for centuries, the *Bellum Civile* sees it as a façade disguising Caesar’s true intentions. The preservation of the Republic, in the mind of Lucan’s Caesar, is nothing more than the preservation of an image masking the empire and loss of freedom that will replace it.

While the problems that plagued Lucan’s Rome were much different than those facing the world today, his message still remains pointed. Today’s politicians evoke imagery and rhetoric from the founding of the United States to promote policies many of the Founders would have found abhorrent. Patriotism is invoked to support warrantless information gathering and extrajudicial killing, actions that in reality impinge on the very freedoms they propose to protect. This is not to say that present-day America faces the growing threat of some authoritarian regime. Reading about how Lucan portrays Caesar’s use of Republican imagery and personal virtue, however, offers a reminder that one must carefully examine the rhetoric undergirding political decisions before placing trust into those decisions. This not only prevents the rise of Caesars, it also prevents people and institutions from straying from their original ideals and losing trust in the political process that supports their freedom.

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<sup>97</sup> *Caes. Civ.* 1.9.5: “But nevertheless [he was] prepared to lower himself to everything and to endure everything for the cause of the Republic.”

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