

## LUCAN'S RECEPTION OF OVID'S *METAMORPHOSES*

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Ovidio è il terzo, e l'ultimo Lucano

Dante, *Inferno* 3.90

### I

Two new trends emerged in Latin literary studies at the close of the last millennium. One was the surge of interest in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as an Augustan-age alternative to Vergil's *Aeneid*; the other was the reevaluation of the post-Augustan epics written by Lucan, Statius, Valerius Flaccus, and Silius Italicus. Both trends helped lift the fortunes of these poets, which reached bottom as classicism and romanticism peaked in the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> It is consequently tempting—and partly correct—to ascribe the rehabilitation of the *Metamorphoses*, on the one hand, and Neronian and Flavian epic, on the other, to a set of common causes.<sup>2</sup> But more significant recently may have been the methodological tendency to dissociate Ovid from his followers in the epic genre.<sup>3</sup> It used to

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1 For a discussion of the causes of decline in Ovid's fortunes, see Wilkinson 1955.440–44 and Kraus 1958.129–30. On Lucan's fall in the nineteenth century, see Fraenkel 1964.234–37. The once eminent Statius joined Valerius and Silius in obscurity well before the nineteenth century, on which see Vessey 1973.2, 1982.558–61, Ahl 1986.2804–11, Dewar 1991.xlvii–xlviii.

2 Johnson 1987.2 posits a shift in taste that freed these authors from “the dungeons of High Classicism.” Cf. Boyle 1987.1–3.

3 Cf. Hinds 1987a.29, who wishes, after arguing that Ovid's practice of subversive panegyric is continued by Lucan, “to resist the temptation to use Ovid as a way to explain the whole century of poetry which follows him.”

be critical orthodoxy that the stylistic, structural, and thematic emphases of so-called Silver Age epic (variously characterized as mannerist, baroque, or counter-classical) owed more to Ovid than to Vergil, and that Ovid embodied the transition from Golden to Silver Age Latin.<sup>4</sup> This understanding of the symbiosis between Ovid and his epic successors, however, underwent change on two fronts. First, critics reclaimed the *Metamorphoses* as an unalloyed classic of Augustan poetry and culture, explicitly or implicitly divorcing it from later epic.<sup>5</sup> Second, advocates of Neronian and Flavian epic made the case that these works deserve greater attention not so much because they followed in the path of the *Metamorphoses*, but because they continued the *Aeneid*, responding creatively and critically to Vergil's epic vision.<sup>6</sup>

The newly evolved understanding of imperial Latin epic is perhaps nowhere more evident than in a recently celebrated exception to the rule. In his thought-provoking book, *Allusion and Intertext*, Stephen Hinds argues from the theoretical standpoint of Gian Biagio Conte that Statius deviates from the epic norm when he replaces Vergil's *Aeneid* with Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as his "code model" in the *Achilleid*.<sup>7</sup> Statius's fragmentary epic

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4 The most fully developed statement of this position is Williams 1978.52–53, 188–90, 195–97, 215, 246–61, 280; cf. Fuhrmann 1968b.41–45, 60, Burck 1971.20, Vessey 1973.10–12, 1982.498, Esposito 1994.102. For a new assessment of the impulse that Ovid gave to early imperial literature, see now Hardie 2002b.

5 See Galinsky 1989, who answers the question "Was Ovid a Silver Latin Poet?" in the negative; Tarrant 1989a likewise seeks to distinguish the gold of Ovid's text from the silver threads of later interpolations. One of the strategies for re-evaluating the *Metamorphoses* has been to read it within the elegiac (i.e., non-epic) traditions of Alexandrian, neoteric, and Augustan poetry, on which see the different approaches of Knox 1986 and Hinds 1987b. For Ovid as a representative of the Augustan age, see also Galinsky 1996.162–68.

6 Thus Hardie 1989, 1993, Martindale 1993.48–53; cf. Dewar 2002.393. However, to complicate the picture sketched here, Hardie 1990.225–26 argues that Ovid is the first poet to write an "anti-*Aeneid*" in the Theban cycle of *Metamorphoses* 3 and 4, which is a precursor of Lucan's *Bellum Civile* and Statius's *Thebaid*. Equally important, Ovid summarizes and supplements the *Aeneid* within the universal historical framework of the *Metamorphoses* (*Met.* 13.623–14.608). So Ovid is, in fact, the first of Vergil's continuators. In this vein, one of the most productive approaches to understanding the *Metamorphoses* has been to treat it as a critical response to Vergil; cf. most recently Döpp 1991 (with earlier bibliography), Tissol 1997.177–91, Hinds 1998.104–22. Admittedly, then, a focus on the reception of Vergil has been a unifying practice in the revaluation of early imperial epic as a whole, but the same focus has also reduced the visibility of the *Metamorphoses* in some recent influential discussions of Neronian and Flavian epic.

7 Hinds 1998.136–43. Hinds translates and borrows "code model" (1998.41–42 with n. 46) from Conte 1985.121–22 (in English, Conte 1986.31), who makes a distinction between

begins with Thetis's attempt to make Achilles sit out the Trojan war cross-dressed as a virgin on the island of Scyros. Hinds calls this poem, as it stands, "a markedly *Ovidian*, markedly *metamorphic* epic" (1998.136–37, author's emphasis); further, he defines the code and decorum of Ovidian epic in terms of its core subject matter, which he formulates as "young love in an unwarlike land secluded from the outside world; an uneasy mixture of courtship and rape; disguise, deception, cross-dressing, ambiguities of sex, gender and identity." Finally, he contrasts Ovidian epic with Vergilian epic, whose core subject matter he defines as "*res gestae regumque ducumque et tristia bella*" ("the exploits of kings and generals and bitter wars," Horace *A.P.* 73), which is Horace's description of Homeric epic. After staking new territory for Ovidian epic, Hinds seeks to explain why twentieth-century critics have been so slow to reach a consensus that the *Achilleid* is Ovidian in inspiration (1998.143).

[T]he truth is that the Roman epic code at large never in this sense fully assimilated the *Metamorphoses*; it remained an anomaly within the genre. It was Virgil, not Ovid, who provided the code model for the most influential epic poems written in the hundred years or so after his death . . . [T]he cumulative Virgiliocentric history of epic construction and reception . . . had already in Flavian times taken firm hold, and had declined to coopt the Ovidian experiment to the mainstream of the genre. In other words, if the history of Roman epic had developed in a more Ovidiocentric way, more twentieth-century readers might see more Ovid in the *Achilleid* than they do.<sup>8</sup>

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*modello-codice* and *modello-esemplare*. Code model refers to a source that a poet systematically imitates, i.e., Vergil systematically imitates Homer in the *Aeneid*, whereas *modello-esemplare* refers to a source model that the poet imitates in a specific passage.

- 8 As Hinds 1998.137 n. 16 notes, the Ovidian reading of the *Achilleid* can be found already in Fantham 1979.457, Koster 1979, Hardie 1993.63 n. 8, Rosati 1994a and 1994b. To this list may be added Méheust (1971.xxvii–xxix), who makes this claim in his Budé edition, "Au fond, l'influence la plus précise sans doute été celle d'Ovide, et ce ne sont pas seulement des mots et des expressions isolées que l'*Achilleïde* a empruntés aux *Métamorphoses*, mais des épisodes, que Stace, un praticien virtuose de l'*agon*, s'est ingénié à enrichir," and one twenty-first-century reader, Dewar 2002.394–96, who nonetheless speculates that Statius would have transformed the Ovidian epic into a Homeric-Vergilian one, if he had finished it.

What is striking here is that Hinds's "cumulative Virgiliocentric history of epic construction and reception" all but silences the older, frequently iterated twentieth-century view that Ovid was responsible for paving the way, for better or for worse, to Silver epic.<sup>9</sup> Further, the claim that Roman epic "had already in Flavian times . . . declined to coopt the Ovidian experiment to the mainstream of the genre" radically discounts a mass of evidence that attests to Ovidian influence on epics other than Statius's *Achilleid*. Indeed, how does one explain that scholars used to think that Ovid was at least as important to poets such as Lucan as Vergil was, and that confirmed Vergilians such as Silius Italicus owed a considerable debt to Ovid?<sup>10</sup> In attempting to explain why the *Achilleid* has only recently been recognized as an Ovidian epic, Hinds appears unnecessarily to concede important ground already considered Ovid's in the formation of post-Augustan epic.

The contradiction between a "Virgiliocentric history of epic construction and reception" and the evidence of Ovid's reception in the epic tradition can perhaps be reconciled if one extrapolates from Hinds's Contean premises. That is, Vergil is the code model (*modello-codice*) for the discourse of post-Augustan epic (the *Achilleid* excepted), and Ovid is a source model (*modello-esemplare*) for a great number of specific passages. Such a description of the distribution of power in the epic genre would give Vergil pride of place in the mainstream and concede Ovid swimming room in the side currents. But the question is whether the Contean theory of generic discourse is worth retaining. One of its shortcomings is that it does not respond at a practical level to the diachronic development of the epic genre after Vergil, which results from the interventions of successive poets.<sup>11</sup> What

9 See note 4 above. Conversely, Hardie 1990.225–26, discussed in note 6 above, would lend some support to Hinds's reading of the "Virgiliocentric" epic tradition, in that it plots the Theban narrative of the *Metamorphoses* in relation to the *Aeneid*. However, elsewhere, Hinds (1998.106–07) suggests that Ovid reads the *Aeneid* as an epic precursor of the *Metamorphoses*, resisting the pull of "Virgiliocentrism."

10 Williams 1978.52; cf. Hosius 1893.380 and Anderson 1995b.xiv. I assume that Hinds's wording includes the earlier Neronian phase of epic represented by Lucan's *Bellum Civile*. Lucan's epic is, at any rate, critical to understanding Flavian epic, especially Statius's *Thebaid* and Silius Italicus's *Punica*. For Ovid's influence on the *Thebaid*, see Deipser 1881, Mozley 1933, Krumbholz 1955.108–14, Thomas 1959 passim, Aricò 1963, Vessey 1973 passim, Feeney 1991.337–64 passim, Lovatt 2001 passim, and now Keith in this volume; on the *Punica*, see Bruère 1958 and 1959 and Vessey 1982.559.

11 Conte's model of imitation is essentially synchronic in perspective (a commonly observed shortcoming of structuralism). For the risk of vagueness in the Contean method, see Hubbard 1998.9.

happens, for example, if a Neronian or Flavian epicist, whose code model is Vergil, refers to the *Metamorphoses* not simply as a source model but in a sustained and systematic way? Indeed, what happens if aspects of epic's code no longer appear Vergilian but Ovidian?

A further difficulty with the Contean concept of a code model is its applicability to the *Metamorphoses*, which, although identifiably epic in meter and extent, is famous for its mixing of generic modes.<sup>12</sup> Even if one grants with Conte that Vergil's code model in the *Aeneid* is Homer—or perhaps better, Homer read through the lenses of Attic tragedy, Callimachus, Apollonius Rhodius, and the philosophical and grammatical traditions of Homeric criticism—can one name a single dominant code model in the *Metamorphoses*? Conversely, can one conceive of the *Metamorphoses* as a code model in the same way that the *Iliad* or *Aeneid* are code models? This question becomes even more insistent when Hinds defines Ovidian epic by means of the core subject matter of courtship, rape, disguise, deception, and the ambiguities of gender and identity. For this definition reflects those aspects of the *Metamorphoses* that Statius tendentiously alludes to in the *Achilleid*; however, it leaves out other important aspects: for instance, the natural philosophical dimension of the *Metamorphoses*, its varieties of chaos, and its catalogues of physical suffering and bodily dismemberment—aspects of the poem that find ample reception before Statius in Lucan (to say nothing of Seneca).<sup>13</sup> There is no reason, of course, to question the findings of Ovidianism in the *Achilleid*. But one may doubt whether the *Achilleid* is, in fact, the first epic to co-opt the *Metamorphoses* into the mainstream of the epic tradition. Even if Hinds's argument were acceptable on its own terms, it would leave much unexplained about the reception of the *Metamorphoses* before Statius.

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12 Cf. Hinds 1987b.133 on the interplay of elegiac and epic elements in the account of Persephone's rape: "Much of the poetic energy of this part of the *Metamorphoses* comes from the play of definition and counter-definition, of qualification and requalification, involved in the endless deferral here of final generic classification." On the problems of generic definition posed in the proem, see Wheeler 1999.28–30. For recent discussions of generic variety in *Metamorphoses*, see Solodow 1988.17–25, Galinsky 1989.71–72, Farrell 1992.235–40.

13 On the reception of Ovidian natural philosophy in Lucan, see von Albrecht 1970.293–94; on Ovidian chaos, see Tarrant's contribution in this volume; on Ovidian spectacles of physical suffering, see Fuhrmann 1968b, esp. 41–42 and 66, Williams 1978.188–90, 254–61, Johnson 1987.58 n. 25, Most 1992.400–01.

The purpose of this paper is to show that the first surviving epic after Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Lucan's *Bellum Civile*, not only draws heavily on the *Metamorphoses*, but also responds to it in a coherent and systematic way. I will assume that Lucan's imitation of the *Metamorphoses* is a form of reading and interpretation that reveals what he finds meaningful in that poem. This meaning is, of course, not necessarily the same as the meaning intended by the author Ovid, or by the text, or by the author's (or text's) best reader. Poets strive to make literary models their own by individual treatment and assimilation to a new place and purpose.<sup>14</sup> Literary reception in classical poetry thus always involves a change to the original model. Nonetheless, it is through such imitative transformation that we can arrive at a sense of what other poets made of Ovid.<sup>15</sup> If we ask what aspects of Ovid's epic Lucan selects, reformulates, and perpetuates in his own work, we discover quite a different picture of Ovidian epic from the one that Hinds describes in Statius's *Achilleid*. To this end, it will be helpful to give an overview of what is known about Lucan's reception of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, lest it still be a matter of doubt. Then I shall seek to put the discussion of this issue on a new footing with the thesis that Lucan constructs the *Metamorphoses* as a universal history into which he interpolates his own *Bellum Civile* and thereby undercuts the culmination of Ovid's epic in the deification of the Caesars.

## II

That Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is an important constituent of the form and meaning of *Bellum Civile* has been no secret in modern scholarship, even if it appears at times to have been a well-kept one.<sup>16</sup> The disserta-

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14 For this ancient view of imitation based mainly on the evidence of "Longinus," see Russell 1979.16.

15 Cf. the idea of poetic imitation as "rereading" in Martindale 1993.2–10 and 35–54, whose rhetorical question "What else indeed could (say) 'Virgil' be other than what readers have made of him over the centuries?" is obviously applicable to Ovid too.

16 A partial bibliography can be found in Esposito 1987.48–49 n. 2; cf. Esposito 1994.87 and n. 1, Esposito 1995.57–58. For convenience, I list a fuller updated bibliography organized chronologically by category and then by locus. Recent commentaries attentive to Ovidian influence include: Getty 1940, Willeumier and Le Bonniec 1962, Barratt 1979, Mayer 1981a, van Campen 1991, Fantham 1992a, Hunink 1992, Korenjak 1996, Raschle 2001. General discussions of poetic technique, diction, allusion, and genre: Heitland 1887.cxxvii, Hosius 1893.380–83, Rutz 1989.55 n. 45, 109 n. 116, 117–18, 141 n. 146, 179, Phillips

tion by O. C. Phillips (1962) and the studies of Paolo Esposito (1987, 1995) have gone the furthest to document the extensive evidence for Lucan's allusions to Ovid and, in particular, to the *Metamorphoses*. Other scholars have pointed out similarities of narrative technique (episodic structure, rhetorical speeches, vividly detailed descriptions, and catalogues); similarities of style (diction, editorializing persona, use of *sententiae*, paradox, and apostrophe); and similarities of themes (cosmology, physical suffering, tragic love, metamorphism). That said, most (if not all) investigations of the

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1962.58–62, 63–97, 132–40, von Albrecht 1970.293–97, Linn 1971.134–56, Otis 1976.25–26, Williams 1978.52, 190, 215, 237, 246–50, 254–58, Mayer 1981b, Narducci 1982, Cizek 1983.282, Esposito 1987.66–70, Johnson 1987.83–84, Lausberg 1990.181–82, Fantham 1992a.14–17, Esposito 1995.74–76. Allusions or parallels collected: Hosius 1907.13–14, 17–31, Pichon 1912.231–35, Thomas 1959 passim, Phillips 1962.63–97, 141–58, Phillips 1964, Linn 1971.156–69, Esposito 1987, Fletcher 1988, Esposito 1995, Siciliano 1998. Similes: Aymard 1951 passim, Phillips 1962.78–79. Caesarism: Feeney 1991.292–97. Catalogues: Gassner 1972.175–206. Geographical excursions: Eckardt 1936.37–48, Mendell 1941.16, 19–21. Monologues: Auhagen 1999.215–17. Universal history: Hardie 1993.108. Wounds and physical suffering: Phillips 1962.57–58, Fuhrmann 1968b.41–45, 50–57, 60, von Albrecht 1970.297 n. 1, Linn 1971.172–74, Williams 1978.254–59, Adams 1980 passim, Esposito 1987.61–62, Johnson 1987.58 n. 25, 60, Esposito 1994, Raschle 2001.94–99. Book 1: Saylor 1990.550–51. Panegyric of Nero (1.33–66): Thompson 1964.151–52, Lebek 1976.93, Hinds 1987a.26–29, Feeney 1991.298–301, Dewar 1994.211. Causes of civil war (1.67–182): Steele 1924.302–03, Schaaf 1975.224–25, Lebek 1976.48–49, Esposito 1987.49–51, Hinds 1987a.28–29. Caesar's prayer (1.195–200): Phillips 1962.66–67, Lebek 1976.118, Feeney 1991.292–94. Omens of civil war (1.522–83): Narducci 1974.97, Lausberg 1990.181. Apennine excursus (2.396–438): Auhagen 1997.92–93. Caesar and the Massilian grove (3.399–452): Rutz 1989.162–65, Phillips 1962.26–30, Phillips 1968, Lebek 1976.67 n. 101, Rosner-Siegel 1983.176 n. 28, Degl'Innocenti Pierini 1987.154–57, Leigh 1999.177–79, 184–85. Flood at Ilerda (4.48–129): Morford 1967.44–47, Linn 1971.12–59, Masters 1992.59–65. Mass suicide of Vulteius and his men (4.402–581): Aymard 1951.31–32, Rutz 1960.467–68, Phillips 1962.33–35, Linn 1971.174–75, Esposito 1987.58–60. Hercules and Antaeus (4.609–53): Steele 1924.303, Phillips 1962.35–37, von Albrecht 1970.293–94. Caesar's visit to Amyclas (5.504–39): Phillips 1962.39–40, Linn 1971.161, Narducci 1983.188–94. Caesar's Storm (5.560–677): Eckardt 1936.63, Syndikus 1958.21–22, Morford 1967.37–44, Linn 1971.60–132, Esposito 1987.64–66. Tragedy of Pompey and Cornelia (5.722–815, 8.40–108, 8.560–793, 9.51–116): Bruère 1951, Phillips 1962.10–26, Hübner 1984.232–35. Plague (6.84–102): Lausberg 1990.182. Erictho (6.413–830): Phillips 1962.44–53, Morford 1967.67, Vessey 1973.242–43, Korenjak 1996.22. Pompey's apotheosis (9.1–18): Williams 1978.96 n. 76, Johnson 1987.70. Medusa and Perseus (9.619–99): Steele 1924.303, Phillips 1962.53–55, Lausberg 1990.188–89, Fantham 1992b, de Nádai 2000.71–73, 83–84, Raschle 2001.77–78. Snake catalogue (9.700–733): Phillips 1962.55–56, Lausberg 1990.188–89, Raschle 2001.82. Lucan's claim of immortality (9.980–96): Hardie 1993.107. Caesar's inquiry about the Nile (10.172–331): Lausberg 1990.183. I have been unable to consult two dissertations that may cast further light on Lucan's relationship to Ovid: Rosner 1979 and Jacobsen 1982.

relationship between Lucan and Ovid are less interested in the question how Lucan receives the *Metamorphoses* than they are in the question how Lucan outdoes Ovid or recasts Ovidian material to reflect his own views of politics, myth, philosophy, and poetry.<sup>17</sup> Such an approach is, of course, consonant with the ancient view that *imitatio* is inseparable from *aemulatio*, as the imitator seeks to surpass his model by demonstrating originality in treatment of the same stuff (Russell 1979.10). The relationship between Lucan and Ovid, however, can be viewed from a different angle. Instead of asking how Lucan distinguishes himself from Ovid, we may inquire what parts of the *Metamorphoses* Lucan responds to and whether a particular pattern emerges. The guiding assumption would be that Lucan reformulates and perpetuates a version of the *Metamorphoses* within *Bellum Civile* that reflects his own intellectual commitments.

A brief survey of the most important points of Lucan's reception of Ovidian epic should suffice here. To begin with, Lucan is interested in the episodes that form the cosmological framework of the *Metamorphoses* (chaos, flood, Phaethon, and the speech of Pythagoras).<sup>18</sup> He also responds to Ovid's bizarre battle scenes (the banquet of Cepheus and the wedding of Pirithous) and spectacles of grotesque wounds and bodily suffering (the flaying of Marsyas, the wounding of the Niobids, the plague on Aegina, the fatal agony of Hercules, and the dismemberment of Hippolytus).<sup>19</sup> At the level of plot, the Lucanian love tragedy of Pompey and Cornelia looks back to that of Ceyx and Alcyone.<sup>20</sup> Presiding over the (presumed) center of *Bellum Civile* is the witch Erichtho, whose closest counterpart in the epic tradition is Ovid's Medea.<sup>21</sup> Finally, in Book 9, Lucan rivals Ovid's Medusa and reprises the repertoire of snake imagery in the *Metamorphoses*.<sup>22</sup> If one were to sum up the *Metamorphoses* on the basis of this diverse core subject matter, it would be a poem about physical, human, and moral nature in extremis, a poem in which the bonds of cosmological, political, social, and

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17 For discussions of differences between Lucan and Ovid, see Phillips 1962.135–36, von Albrecht 1970.296–97, Linn 1971 passim, Schaaf 1975.224–25, Esposito 1987.67–71.

18 Phillips 1962.132–34.

19 Phillips 1962.57–58, 133–34, Fuhrmann 1968b.50–57, 60, von Albrecht 1970.297 n. 1, Linn 1971.172–74, Williams 1978.254–59, Esposito 1987.61–62, Johnson 1987.58 n. 25, 60, Esposito 1994.

20 Bruère 1951, Phillips 1962.10–26

21 Phillips 1962.44–53, Morford 1967.67, Vessey 1973.242–43, Korenjak 1996.22.

22 Fantham 1992b. On the serpent leitmotif in the *Metamorphoses*, see Genovese 1983.



familial order dissolve.<sup>23</sup> Clearly, Lucan's selection of material from the *Metamorphoses* represents a reading of Ovidian epic that is quite distinct from that of Statius in the *Achilleid*. But can one claim that it is any less representative or, indeed, any less metamorphic?<sup>24</sup> If anything, Lucan's selections from the *Metamorphoses* are more broadly based than Statius's, in that they embrace a wider range of episodes and themes.

At this point it may be objected that Lucan uses the *Metamorphoses* essentially as a source model, and that to list the passages he imitates does not amount to a reading of the poem as a whole. One way to counter such an objection is to examine how Lucan receives Ovid's epic at the beginning of *Bellum Civile*. Poetic beginnings are, as everyone knows, important because they tend to be programmatic, which is to say that they introduce the poem's subject matter, genre, and literary affiliations. Allusions to the *Metamorphoses* at the start of *Bellum Civile* may therefore reveal in what way Lucan positions his epic in relation to Ovid's.

### III

There are quite a few passages at the start of *Bellum Civile* that link it to the *Metamorphoses*. In his commentary on the very first line of the poem, "Bella per *Emathios plus quam civilia campos*" (*B.C.* 1.1: "Wars more than civil across the plains of Emathia"), R. J. Getty (1940 ad loc.) lists two parallels with the *Metamorphoses*: "*Emathiis ad Paeonas usque nivosos / cedamus campis*" (*Met.* 5.313–14: "Or let us depart from the plains of Emathia as far as the people of snowy Paeonia") and "exercet memores *plus quam civiliter iras*" (*Met.* 12.583: "Neptune acted out his obsessive fury more than was civil").<sup>25</sup> Most frequently discussed, however, are the allusions to the *Metamorphoses* in the panegyric of Nero (*B.C.* 1.33–66), the causes of the civil war (67–182), and the first dramatic appearance of Julius Caesar (183–203). To begin with, Lucan suggests that the deified Nero may drive the sun-chariot and that the earth will have nothing to fear (48–50), thereby marking a contrast with the figure of Phaethon in Ovid's

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23 Cf. Tarrant in this volume.

24 On Lucan's adaptations of Ovidian metamorphosis, see von Albrecht 1970.294–97.

25 For Lucan, the text I use is Shackleton Bailey 1997, and for the *Metamorphoses*, Anderson 1993. All translations are my own.

*Metamorphoses*.<sup>26</sup> Next, Lucan marks a new beginning in his epic with the line “*fert animus causas tantarum expromere rerum*” (67: “My mind moves me to reveal the causes of such great matters”), which echoes the opening of the *Metamorphoses*: “In noua *fert animus* mutatas dicere formas / corpora” (*Met.* 1.1–2: “My mind moves me to tell of forms changed into new bodies”).<sup>27</sup> Shortly thereafter, Lucan compares the inevitability of the fall of Rome (70) to the final hour of the universe seeking primeval chaos again, “*antiquum repetens iterum chaos*” (74), which echoes the alarm of the Ovidian Tellus over the fire caused by Phaethon: “in *chaos antiquum* confundimur” (*Met.* 2.299: “We are being thrown into primeval chaos”).<sup>28</sup> A little later, Lucan refers to the triumvirate of Caesar, Pompey, and Crassus as *concordia discors* (98), which is an ironic repetition of the *discors concordia* achieved after the flood in *Metamorphoses* 1.433.<sup>29</sup> Among the causes of the civil war is the guilt of the Roman people (158–82), which, in addition to recalling the moralizing of the Roman historians, harks back to the conditions of Ovid’s iron age before the flood (*Met.* 1.127–50).<sup>30</sup> So it should cause little surprise that Caesar enters the *Bellum Civile* conceiving great rebellion and future war in his heart (“*ingentisque animo motus bellumque futurum / ceperat*,” 183–84), just as Jupiter enters the *Metamorphoses* conceiving great wrath in his heart: “*ingentes animo et dignas Iove*

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26 For discussion of this passage, see Hinds 1987a.28–29, Feeney 1991.299–300, Dewar 1994.211.

27 Steele 1924.302–03, Getty 1940 ad loc., Phillips 1962.66, Schaaf 1975.224, Lebek 1976.48–49, Esposito 1987.49–50, Hinds 1987a.29.

28 Phillips 1962.143, Esposito 1987.50–51, Hinds 1987a.29, Tarrant in this volume. Dewar 1994.211 doubts the allusion, but the combination of *antiquum* and *chaos* appears only in these two passages and once elsewhere in extant Latin literature when Ovid alludes to the cosmological and universal historical framework of the *Metamorphoses*: “denique ab antiquo divi veteresque novique / in nostrum cuncti tempus adeste *chao*” (*Ibis* 83–84: “Finally, you gods ancient and new from primordial chaos to our own time, all of you help me”). The cumulative evidence of allusions to the *Metamorphoses* at the beginning of *Bellum Civile* suggests that Lucan is pointedly alluding to Ovid and not simply drawing on common phraseology for Stoic ideas. Lucan alludes to *Met.* 2.299 again at *B.C.* 6.696: “et *Chaos* innumeros avidum confundere mundos” (“Chaos eager to overthrow countless worlds”).

29 Schaaf 1975.224, who also notes the original source in Horace *Epist.* 1.12.19.

30 Schaaf 1975.224. One might add that the heading to this section suggests that the civil war is itself a flood that punishes the Roman people: “suberant sed publica belli / semina quae populos semper *mersere* potentis” (158–59: “But there were underlying seeds of war in the public, which always have submerged powerful peoples”).

*concipit iras*," *Met.* 1.166.<sup>31</sup> Finally, when Caesar meets the personification of Patria at the Rubicon, he anachronistically invokes the same Augustan gods (195–200) that Ovid prays to on behalf of Augustus at the end of the *Metamorphoses* (15.861–67).<sup>32</sup>

These are some of the commonly recognized allusions that Lucan makes to Ovid's epic at the beginning of *Bellum Civile*. What conclusions can one draw from them? At the most basic level, they invite a comparison of *Bellum Civile* with the *Metamorphoses*, particularly the beginning and end of both epics. Some scholars have accepted the invitation and infer that Lucan's purpose is to pursue a program that is opposed to Ovid's.<sup>33</sup> Alternatively, one may view Lucan's allusive engagement with Ovid as an act of continuation whereby *Bellum Civile* develops themes explored in the *Metamorphoses*. The latter approach is taken by D. C. Feeney (1991.292–301), who argues that Lucan follows Ovid by revealing the origins of the imperial religious system of Augustus and the Julio-Claudian house introduced at the end of the *Metamorphoses*.<sup>34</sup>

Feeney's discussion of the *thematic* continuity between *Bellum Civile* and the *Metamorphoses* may be expanded to embrace the *narrative* continuity between the two epics. That is, *Bellum Civile* not only anticipates the ending of the *Metamorphoses*, it sets itself up as a narrative continuation. A typical strategy of continuation in ancient literature is to begin by alluding to the end of the work that is to be continued.<sup>35</sup> Ovid ends his epic with (a) a list of Roman civil wars successfully completed that brought Augustus to power (*Met.* 15.822–28), (b) the achievement of world peace (*pace data*, 832), (c) the future apotheosis of Augustus (839), and (d) a prayer that Augustus's departure from earth may be delayed ("tarda sit illa dies et nostro senior aevo," 868). Lucan utilizes the same elements in his panegyric of Nero (*B.C.* 1.33–66). He presents (a) a list of the civil wars that were necessary to bring Nero to power (38–42). He expresses (d) the hope for a

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31 Pichon 1912.233, Phillips 1962.64, Feeney 1991.296.

32 Phillips 1962.66–67, Lebek 1976.118, Feeney 1991.292–94.

33 See von Albrecht 1970.296–97, Schaaf 1975.224–25, Esposito 1987.66.

34 To quote Feeney, "Lucan's poem is the beginning of the process whose perfection is marked by Ovid" (1991.293). Further, although Lucan's narrative anticipates Ovid's, it also brings to fulfillment what Ovid began in the subversive treatment of Caesar's religious practice (298). Cf. Hinds 1987a.24, 29.

35 On narrative continuation in epic, see Hardie 1993.11–13 and Fowler 1997b.20.

delayed deification (*astra petes serus*, 46). He predicts (c) Nero's apotheosis (45–49) and (b) the arrival of world peace (*pax missa per orbem*, 61).<sup>36</sup> The beginning of Lucan's epic thus continues the ending of the *Metamorphoses*: Nero succeeds Augustus as the next emperor in the sky.<sup>37</sup>

That Lucan is in the business of continuing the *Metamorphoses* becomes even clearer in his treatment of the cosmological causes of the civil war (67–83), where he adopts a universal historical perspective that recalls the *Metamorphoses* as a whole. We have already seen that the section begins with a citation of Ovid's inaugural *fert animus* (67), encouraging the reader to measure the two poems against each other. Lucan's first cause of the civil war, *invida fatorum series* (70: "the chain of envious fates"), may therefore be placed in context with the *seriem . . . fati* (*Met.* 15.152, "the chain of fate") that the Ovidian Pythagoras expounds in his grand speech marking the end of the *Metamorphoses* (15.75–478).<sup>38</sup> Toward the close of this lecture, the philosopher illustrates the lesson of universal flux with the rise and fall of powerful cities (*Met.* 15.418–52); in particular, he predicts the

36 Commentators usually read Lucan's panegyric of Nero (*B.C.* 1.33–66) in light of Vergil's prayer to Octavian at the beginning of *Georgics* 1.24–42, but, in fact, the structure of the panegyric as a whole has more in common with the panegyric of Augustus at the end of the *Metamorphoses*. The *Georgics* passage is mainly relevant to *B.C.* 1.42–49, and even there it is updated in light of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, on which see Hinds 1987a.28–29.

37 For this method of continuing the *Metamorphoses*, Lucan had a model in Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis*. The minor god Diespiter proposes in a *concilium deorum* that the emperor Claudius be made a god: "censeo uti divus Claudius ex hac die deus sit ita uti ante eum quis optimo iure factus sit, eamque rem ad Metamorphosis Ovidi adiciendam" (9.5: "I move that the deified Claudius from this day be a god in the same way as anyone before him became a god with the best justification, and that this matter should be added to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*"). As Eden 1984 ad loc. notes, Seneca's reading of the *Metamorphoses* implies that it is a kind of historical chronicle. Ovid himself provides a different kind of precedent for the continuation of the *Metamorphoses* in *Tristia* 1.1.119–22, when, as a poet exiled from Rome, he wishes that the transformation of his fortune be added to the *Metamorphoses*, on which see Hinds 1985.20–21, 26–27.

38 Lucan's phrase *fatorum series*, could, of course, derive from Seneca (cf. *N.Q.* 2.32.4), but the Senecan formulation would nonetheless help to define Lucan's reading of Ovid's universal history (both parallels are noted by Hosius 1907.22, Getty 1940 ad loc., Willeumier and Le Bonniec 1962 ad loc.). Hardie 1993.108 with n. 35 observes that *fatorum series* can be read as a version of the Ovidian *perpetuum carmen*, and compares two other Ovidian models of universal history in *Bellum Civile*: the knowledge of the Pythia (5.179–81): "tanta patet rerum series . . . non prima dies, non ultima mundi" (sc. *deerant*); and of Erichtho (6.611–12): "a prima descendit origine mundi / causarum series." In each case, Lucan alludes to *Met.* 1.3–4: "primaque ab origine mundi / ad mea perpetuum deducite tempora carmen."

rise of Rome as *inmensi caput orbis* (435: "capital of the boundless earth").<sup>39</sup> Although his doctrine of flux would imply Rome's eventual fall from world dominance, a conclusion that many modern readers have drawn, Pythagoras leaves the question of Rome's imperial future open. As if to fill the gap in the Ovidian text, Lucan states, by contrast, that one of the causes for the civil war is the fall of Rome (*nec se Roma ferens*, 72). This, in turn, is a harbinger of the universe's dissolution and return to *antiquum . . . chaos* (74), the primordial beginnings of the *Metamorphoses*. Indeed, Lucan's simile comparing the fall of Rome to the end of the world (72–77) explicitly reverses the cosmogony in the *Metamorphoses* (1.5–88).<sup>40</sup> In sum, Lucan's view of fate in 1.67–72 not only alludes to the cosmological framework that defines the *Metamorphoses* as a universal history from chaos to imperial Rome, but it also implies the eventual reversal and return of that history to chaotic beginnings.<sup>41</sup> Lucan's apocalyptic rewriting of the end of the *Metamorphoses*, it should be further noted, also contradicts his panegyric of Nero, in which he advertises a continuum of Ovid's universal history through a new deification.

So far I have considered the ways in which Lucan sets up *Bellum Civile* as a continuation of Ovid's *carmen perpetuum*. But where and how does Lucan's subject of the civil war between Caesar and Pompey fit into the Ovidian historical scheme? The answer lies in the transitional passage between the arrival of Aesculapius in Rome and the deification of Julius Caesar in which Ovid asks his audience to consider which is greater: Caesar's deeds as a leader or his act of "begetting" Augustus (*Met.* 15.752–58):

scilicet aequoreos plus est domuisse Britannos  
perque papyriferi septemflua flumina Nili  
victrices egisse rates Numidasque rebelles  
Cinyphiumque Iubam Mithridateisque tumentem  
nominibus Pontum populo adiecisse Quirini  
et multos meruisse, aliquos egisse triumphos,  
quam tantum genuisse virum?

39 For Pythagoras's view of Rome, see Wheeler 2000.122–27 (with further bibliography).

40 Cf. Shaaf 1975.224 and Tarrant in this volume.

41 For the *Metamorphoses* as universal history, see Wheeler 2001 (with further bibliography).

Is it obviously a greater accomplishment to have conquered the sea-girt Britanni, to have led victorious ships through the seven-streaming rivers of the papyrus-bearing Nile, to have added to the Roman people the rebellious Numidians, Cinyphian Juba, and Pontus swelling with the name of Mithridates, and to have deserved many triumphs, but celebrated only some, than to have begotten such a great man?

Here the summary of Caesar's military triumphs is ostensibly a foil to the even greater accomplishment of having produced Augustus.<sup>42</sup> In line 757, Ovid heightens this contrast with the statement that Caesar deserved *many* triumphs, but only celebrated *some* ("et multos meruisse, aliquos egisse triumphos"). Franz Bömer (1969–86) comments ad loc. that this is a form of *exaggeratio* typical of the hymnic style: Caesar could scarcely have celebrated more triumphs. More plausible and better supported is Tony Woodman's reading that Ovid attributes to Caesar the imperial virtue of *moderatio*: Caesar deserved many triumphs, but was content with some.<sup>43</sup>

The praise of Caesar's moderation raises the question, when did he forego a triumph? If one re-examines the Ovidian summation of Caesar's military career, a significant gap emerges. In line 752, Caesar allegedly conquers the Britanni, a metonymy for the successful Gallic campaign in the years 58–51 B.C.E., which included less than successful campaigns in Britain during 55 and 54. In line 753, Caesar's next victory is over Egypt in the Alexandrian war, which began in the autumn of 47. The following three lines mention the victories over Juba and Pharnaces in 46 and 47, *hysteron proteron*. Given this list, one can see that there is a chronological gap of four years between lines 752 and 753, during which time Caesar invaded Italy and eventually defeated the senatorial opposition led by Pompey in Greece

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42 On the potential subversiveness of Ovid's panegyric, see Lundström 1980.92–96 and Hinds 1987a.24–55. However, in my view, Lucan reads Ovid's panegyric as straight praise for the Caesars.

43 See Woodman 1977.213 ad Vell. 2.122.1 "septem triumphos meruerit, tribus contentus fuit" and the preceding discussion of *singularis moderatio Ti. Caesaris*. Tony Woodman also points out (*per litteras*) that Lucan imitates *Met.* 15.757 in this sense at 8.814–15 (cf. Mayer 1981a ad loc.) "ter curribus actis / contentum multos patriae donasse triumphos," in which he praises Pompey for being content with three triumphs and having waived the right of many triumphs.

at the battle of Pharsalus in 48.<sup>44</sup> Ovid's omission of Pharsalus is fully comprehensible. He lists only Caesar's triumphs *ex Gallia*, *ex Aegyp̄tia*, *ex Asia*, and *ex Africa* celebrated in 46. (cf. Livy *Per.* 115).<sup>45</sup> The victory at Pharsalus could not be celebrated as a triumph because there was no foreign enemy.

If we turn back to *Bellum Civile*, Lucan takes as his theme the civil war between Caesar and Pompey, which Vergil briefly alludes to in *Aeneid* 6.826–35 (cf. *Georg.* 1.489–92). From the start, Lucan defines this war as one that could win *no* triumphs (1.13: “bella geri placuit *nullos* habitura *triumphos*?”)—precisely the kind of war that Ovid omits from his catalogue of Caesar's triumphs at the end of the *Metamorphoses* (“*multos* meruisse, *aliquos* egisse *triumphos*”). *Bellum Civile* therefore narrates the history that Ovid passes over in silence. But it does more than this. It fills the chronological gap in Ovid's narrative between *Metamorphoses* 15.752 and 753 with a supplement of roughly 8,000 verses and ten books—from Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon to the Alexandrian war. The narrative of *Bellum Civile* ends, in fact, exactly where *Metamorphoses* 15.753 resumes. Lucan's epic, in short, can be read as a massive interpolation between two lines of Ovid's.

What other evidence may support the claim that Lucan supplements the *Metamorphoses* this way? Similar techniques of continuation can be found on a smaller scale elsewhere in *Bellum Civile*. In the Medusa excursus and catalogue of poisonous snakes (9.619–733), for example, Lucan retells Ovid's “Perseid” (*Met.* 4.610–803) and pointedly develops a brief passage on the origin of snakes (9.697–733; cf. *Met.* 4.617–20).<sup>46</sup> Ovid

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44 Ovid does mention Pharsalus later, in Jupiter's speech to Venus at 15.823–24: “*Pharsalia sentiet illum, / Emathiaque iterum madefient caede Philippi*.” Here, Octavian's victory at Philippi is imagined with poetic license to be a geographical repetition of Caesar's victory at Pharsalus, as in Verg. *Georg.* 1.489–92.

45 Ovid omits mention of Caesar's fifth triumph *ex Hispania* in 45 (cf. Liv. *Per.* 116), a point noted by Bömer 1969–86 ad loc. and Lundström 1980.92.

46 For analysis of Lucan's imitation of Ovid, see Phillips 1962.53–58, Lausberg 1990.188–89, Fantham 1992b.100, 111–13, Raschle 2001.77–78, 81, 82, 220. As Roland Mayer points out to me, the technique of expanding on a germ of Ovid is itself Ovidian. Ovid supplements Vergil this way, for example, when he retells the *Aeneid* in the *Metamorphoses*; on such Ovidian interpolations in the Vergilian narrative, see, e.g., Döpp 1991.332 and Hinds 1998.107–11. Lucan's Ovidian technique of supplementing the *Metamorphoses* is picked up and continued by Statius in the *Thebaid*, on which see Feeney 1991.344 n. 106 and Keith in this volume.

remarks in passing that, as Perseus flew over Libya with Medusa's freshly severed head, drops of blood fell to earth and were transformed into serpents of various kinds (*varios . . . angues*, *Met.* 4.619). Lucan not only rewrites this metamorphosis in Ovidian terms, he also expands it with a catalogue of the different species of serpents born from Medusa's blood (700–33), giving names and describing lethal characteristics.<sup>47</sup> On the one hand, the catalogue supplements Ovid's narrative; on the other, it forms a transition to the later history of the snakes. That is, Lucan brings the Ovidian myth down to the Roman civil war, in which the same snakes, catalogued as if they were an army (Fantham 1992.108), attack Cato's legion during its march across the Libyan desert. At the climax of the bizarre battle, Cato's soldiers complain: "pro Caesare pugnant / dipsades et peragunt civilia bella cerastae" (850–51: "The vipers fight in place of Caesar, and the adders finish off the civil war"). Whereas the serpents born from the blood of Medusa merely infest Libya in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Lucan tells the rest of the story: how they finally achieve their full potential as Caesarians in the civil war.<sup>48</sup>

If *Bellum Civile* sets itself up as a continuation of the *Metamorphoses*, what does it say about Ovid's epic? My reading of Lucan reading Ovid, put in the most general terms, is that Lucan tendentiously constructs the *Metamorphoses* as a universal history that reaches its fulfillment not in the apotheosis of Julius Caesar and Augustus but in the civil war that Caesar wages against Pompey and later Cato. Furthermore, Lucan interprets Ovid's universal historical narrative as a poem about civil war. We have already seen that the mythological narrative of Medusa's beheading leads to a serpentine assault against Cato's cause, but a few other examples may help to strengthen the case. In the story of the foundation of Thebes, Ovid does something that no other poet did before; he lets one of the men born from the serpent teeth sown by Cadmus call their strife "civil war": "nec te civilibus insere bellis" (*Met.* 3.117: "Do not mix yourself in our civil war"; cf. Bömer 1969–86 ad loc.). Ovid repeats this conceit in the Medea episode of Book 7,

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47 For further details on Lucan's sources in the catalogue of snakes, see Lausberg 1990.173–74 and Raschle 2001.60–68.

48 Lucan's model for this particular continuation of Ovid is, of course, the death of Mopsus in Apollonius's *Argonautica* (4.1502–36). The seer is bitten by a snake as the Argonauts cross the Libyan desert, and Apollonius, in a brief excursus, traces the origin of poisonous snakes back to the blood that dripped from Medusa's head (1513–17). This Apollonian *action* appears to be Ovid's model at *Met.* 4.617–20 and so likewise a text that Lucan supplements.



when Jason, in Colchis, converts the battle fury of the sown soldiers into civil war (139–42):

ille gravem medios silicem iaculatus in hostes  
a se depulsum Martem convertit in ipsos:  
terrigenae pereunt per mutua vulnera fratres  
civilique cadunt acie.<sup>49</sup>

He threw a heavy flint-stone into the midst of the enemies  
and deflected the war from himself and turned it against  
them. The earthborn brothers died through mutual blows  
and fell in civil war.

In both the Theban and Colchian examples, Lucan has a mythological precedent for wars more than civil (*bella . . . plus quam civilia*, *B.C.* 1.1), which are fought between members of the same family (*cognatasque acies*, 4).<sup>50</sup> That these two Ovidian episodes are important for Lucan's poetic purposes cannot be gainsaid. In Book 4, Vulteius and his men, who have been prevented from escaping Illyria on a raft by the Pompeians, kill themselves rather than die at the hands of their foes. At the climax of the episode, Lucan makes explicit his reformulation of the *Metamorphoses* through a simile (4.549–58) in which he compares Vulteius's soldiers to the earthborn soldiers of Thebes and Colchis.<sup>51</sup>

Lucan's interest in Ovid's Theban history in the *Metamorphoses* goes deeper. He characterizes Rome's civil war as an act of suicidal self-wounding: "nulli penitus descendere ferro / contigit" (*B.C.* 1.31–32: "No one else had the fortune to drive the sword down to the hilt"). This image of wounding recalls the moment when Cadmus drives his spear into the serpent that guards the site of Thebes: "totum descendit in ilia ferrum" (*Met.* 3.67: "The length of the iron is driven into its bowels"). The act of killing the serpent is the violent sacrilege upon which Thebes is founded, and which

49 Cf. Ovid *Her.* 6.35: "terrigenas populos civili Marte peremptos."

50 Important here is also Seneca *Oed.* 738: *agmina campos cognata tenent*, where the chorus recounts the story of Thebes's foundation through civil war. Cf. Getty 1940 ad *B.C.* 1.4, Jakobi 1988.118 n. 236.

51 Cf. Aymard 1951.31–32, Rutz 1960.467–68, Phillips 1962.33–35, Linn 1971.174–75, Esposito 1987.58–60.

explains the origin of that city's tragic history and downfall through fratricide and civil war. Lucan's association of Rome's suicide with the founding of Thebes picks up on an analogy between Rome and Thebes that Ovid sustains throughout the *Metamorphoses* (cf. 13.681–99).<sup>52</sup> On one level, Lucan reverses the analogy so that he illustrates Roman history with Theban exempla; on another, he continues and caps Ovid's Theban history with its Roman fulfillment.<sup>53</sup>

#### IV

It is time to draw some conclusions. The new paradigm of separating the *Metamorphoses* from Neronian and Flavian epic has been an important step in breaking the stranglehold of prejudice that all of these poets met in earlier criticism. It has also contributed much to the understanding of the reception of Vergil. However, the same approach has led to a diminishment of Ovid's role in the development of early imperial epic. A more balanced history of the reception of the *Metamorphoses* in the epic genre is, therefore, a desideratum.<sup>54</sup> The findings of this study show that *Bellum Civile* is an important site for the reception of the *Metamorphoses* in the tradition of imperial epic. The presence of Ovid in Lucan's work, while not overshadowing that of Vergil, appears systematic and certainly adds up to more than a collection of fragmented source models.<sup>55</sup> Perhaps most prominently, Lucan responds to and perpetuates the natural philosophical framework of the *Metamorphoses*.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, although Lucan banishes the epic gods as a

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52 See Hardie 1990.224–26 and 230, who explores the Ovidian analogy between Thebes and Rome, and notes its continuation in Lucan's *Bellum Civile* and Statius's *Thebaid*.

53 There are two other allusions to Ovid's Theban history at the beginning of *Bellum Civile*. When Lucan addresses the Roman citizenry, *quis furor, o cives* (1.8), one may hear an echo of Pentheus's speech to the Thebans, *quis furor, anguigenae* (*Met.* 3.531). Later, when Lucan observes that the highest things are not allowed to stand for long (1.70–71: "summisque negatum / stare diu") he again echoes Pentheus, who concedes that Thebes will not stand for long (*Met.* 3.548–49: "si fata vetabant / stare diu Thebas").

54 Esposito 1995.75: "Non esiste però, a tutt'oggi, uno studio complessivo e sistematico di questo aspetto della sua fortuna."

55 On the systematic embedding of the *Metamorphoses* in *Bellum Civile* as a strategy for readability and literary survival, see Esposito 1987.51, 67. On the unresolved question of the relative importance of Vergil and Ovid in *Bellum Civile*, see Otis 1976.25–26, Mayer 1981b, Narducci 1982, Esposito 1995.74–75.

56 Cf. von Albrecht 1970.293–94, 296.

source of motivation in his poem, he frequently avails himself of myth in excursuses and in comparisons and so constantly draws on the *Metamorphoses* as a frame of reference for his own poem. Lucan's epic selections from the *Metamorphoses* are obviously to be contrasted with the elegiac selection of Statius in the *Achilleid*. Lucan finds in Ovidian epic cosmological and mythological paradigms of chaos, civil war, and horror that anticipate his own worldview. Statius, on the other hand, reprocesses the erotic tales that Lucan leaves largely untouched.<sup>57</sup> Neither poet reads the *Metamorphoses* more or less accurately than the other. Each poet's reading is partial and tendentious but no less valuable as evidence for the reception of the *Metamorphoses* in the epic tradition.

The fact that Lucan includes Ovid's *carmen perpetuum* within his own epic project suggests that the epic genre is not a monolithic, synchronic system perfected by Vergil and handed down unchanged from generation to generation. Quite the contrary, each successive instantiation of the epic *langue* responds to and assimilates new political, cultural, and literary impulses, and thereby evolves through time. Lucan himself bears witness to the succession of epic from Vergil to Ovid by inscribing the *Metamorphoses* into *Bellum Civile* and *Bellum Civile* into the *Metamorphoses*, and so guarantees his own inclusion in the epic tradition as Ovid's successor.<sup>58</sup> But Lucan is not simply interested in succession. He rewrites the end of the epic *carmen perpetuum* perfected by Ovid. We have seen that *Bellum Civile* begins by replacing Augustus with Nero as the telos of universal history. Secondly, and more importantly, the Lucanian narrative of civil war is a massive interpolation between two lines of Ovid's abbreviated account of Caesar's military honors. The latter form of continuation calls into question the former. To be sure, Lucan alleges that the civil war was a necessary evil to enable the rule of Nero: "multum Roma tamen debet civilibus armis, / quod tibi res acta est" (1.44–45: "Rome nevertheless owes much to civil war because the matter was carried out for you"). But this optimistic rationale for civil war is undercut by Lucan's pessimistic vision of a godless universe in which Julius Caesar subjects Rome to tyranny.<sup>59</sup> As Lucan belies his

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57 Lucan does not avoid Ovidian eroticism altogether: Caesar's love for Cleopatra recalls that of Pygmalion for his ivory statue (cf. 10.71–72 and *Met.* 10.252).

58 Cf. Esposito 1987.67.

59 On Lucan's nihilistic cosmology and its implications, see Sklenář 1999. For the contradiction between Lucan's panegyric of Nero and the hostility toward the Caesars in the rest of the poem, see, e.g., Ahl 1976.47–54.

panegyric of Nero, he likewise undermines the climactic panegyric finale of the *Metamorphoses*. The civil war fought at Pharsalus, which was tantamount to the fall of Rome and the return of chaos, repeats the pattern of cyclical destruction figured in the early books of the *Metamorphoses* with the episodes of flood, fire, and the tragedies of Thebes. In Lucan's revision of Ovidian universal history, one never reaches the divine Caesars, much less the divine Nero.<sup>60</sup>

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