

CATO AND THE INTENDED SCOPE OF LUCAN'S *BELLUM CIVILE**

In Book 9 of Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile*, a Pompeian soldier asks Cato a question that addresses one of the most vexing issues in the study of the poem (9.232–3): *nam quis erit finis, si nec Pharsalia pugnae, / nec Pompeius erit?* Unfortunately, this question has remained open ever since Lucan had his character raise it. For there is overwhelming agreement that the nine plus books of the *Bellum Ciuile* represent an unfinished product, since Lucan's untimely death prevented him from completing the epic.¹ If this is the case – and I believe that it is – the question posed by Lucan's Pompeian soldier is one that we must still ask today: if not the Battle of Pharsalus or the death of Pompey, what point was to mark the *finis* of Lucan's narrative?

Although interest in this issue has waned somewhat in recent years, critics have asked this question many times and a variety of answers have been offered. The most common response has been that Lucan intended to end the *Bellum Ciuile* with the suicide of Cato at Utica after the Battle of Thapsus.² In what follows I seek to support

* The ideas presented in this paper took shape in a graduate seminar I taught at Florida State University in the spring of 2007. I would like to thank all the students who took that course, especially Charlie Harper and Sara Watkins. Their feedback was invaluable. An early version of this paper was presented at the annual meeting of the American Philological Association in Chicago (January 2008). The audience there, particularly Mark Thorne, provided many helpful suggestions. I would also like to thank the anonymous referee for *CQ*, whose comments improved the paper a great deal.

¹ However, this view has been challenged by J. Masters, *Poetry and Civil War in Lucan's Bellum Civile* (Cambridge, 1992), 216–59, who argues that the poem is in fact complete. Like most critics, I find this to be the least persuasive argument advanced by Masters in his otherwise thought-provoking and stimulating book (see for example the comments on this portion of Masters' work in the reviews by D. Fowler in *G&R* 40 [1993], 92, M. Leigh in *JRS* 83 [1993], 220, and J. O'Hara in *CJ* 89 [1993], 86). Although Masters offers a thorough discussion of the external evidence and shows that it offers little help for one trying to determine a possible endpoint for Lucan's epic (216–34), his central thesis that 'the best evidence for the intended ending of a poem is the place where it does, in fact, end' (216) is to my mind wholly unconvincing. Such an argument would carry little weight in, say, a discussion of Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*, which breaks off abruptly in the middle of a conversation between Jason and Medea, apparently because the author's death prevented him from completing the poem (Quintilian 10.1.90). And although Lucan's narrative does not break off as abruptly as Valerius', it nevertheless does break off rather abruptly. Thus I see no reason why Masters' general contention should be accorded any more credence with respect to Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile* than to any other text, especially since one of the few biographical facts we know for certain about Lucan is that he died very young, having been forced to commit suicide by Nero. Indeed, it is amazing that Lucan got as far as he did in the compositional process before his untimely demise.

² See for example R. Pichon, *Les Sources de Lucain* (Paris, 1912), 269–70; O. Schönberger, 'Zur Komposition des Lucan', *Hermes* 85 (1957), 251–4; G. Vögler, 'Das neunte Buch innerhalb der *Pharsalia* des Lucan und die Frage der Vollendung des Epos', *Philologus* 112 (1968), 222–68; E. Frank, 'The structure and scope of Lucan's *De bello civili*', *CB* 46 (1970), 59–61; F.M. Ahl, *Lucan. An Introduction* (Ithaca and London, 1976), 306–26; J.P. Sullivan, *Literature and Politics in the Age of Nero* (Ithaca and London, 1985), 150; W. Rutz, *Studien zur Kompositionskunst und zur epischen Technik Lucans* (Frankfurt, 1989), 58–61; V. Rudich, *Dissidence and Literature Under Nero* (London and New York, 1997), 182–3. However, other suggestions have been made: the death of Caesar, the Battle of Philippi and the Battle of Actium constitute the most popular alternatives. The death of Caesar: W.H. Alexander, 'Cato of Utica in the works of Seneca

this view by examining Lucan's presentation of Cato, focussing especially on his speech to Brutus in Book 2 (284–325), a passage that has been curiously neglected in this debate.³ I contend that the logic of Cato's rhetoric in this episode has important implications for the issue of the endpoint of the poem. Cato, in his oracular wisdom, seems to know for certain when the *bellum ciuile* will come to an end. The civil war will end only when the struggle between *libertas* and tyranny ends. This will come, Cato suggests, with his death, and his suggestion is corroborated by Lucan's subsequent depiction of events in Book 9, where we begin to see the nature of the conflict undergoing a transformation. In Book 9 Cato takes over the remnants of Pompey's army and the civil war suddenly becomes a very different kind of contest than it had been: it becomes, in fact, a struggle between Cato and Caesar, *libertas* and tyranny. Given that Lucan time and again stresses that the ultimate result of the *bellum ciuile* was the loss of freedom that came with the triumph of Caesarism,⁴ such a conflict could only end in one place: in Utica with the suicide of Cato, an event that by Lucan's day had come to represent for many the very moment that *libertas* was lost.⁵ It is to this *finis* that Cato alludes in Book 2 and to which we see the narrative inexorably heading in Book 9.

However, I do not wish to imply that either the Republican cause or the impulse to resist tyranny died with Cato. They did not. Indeed, Lucan's poem itself can be understood to have arisen at least partly in reaction to the tyranny imposed on the Roman state as a result of the triumph of Caesarism in the civil wars. The ideals which Cato stood for – adherence to collective institutions rather than to the overwhelming ambition of a single individual – transcended his death, such that Lucan can envision the struggle between *libertas* and Caesarism as still ongoing in his own day (see for example 7.693–6). It was precisely the enduring symbolic power of Cato's defiant suicide that marked his death as an important nodal point in the ongoing conflict between tyranny and freedom. This allowed Cato to be imagined as an *exemplum uirtutis* whose resistance to tyranny at all costs was seen by many as admirable and worthy of imitation. Cato himself died at Utica, but his example and his cause did not die with him. For Lucan as for others, the desire for *libertas* exemplified by the figure of Cato knows no limit, is ultimately never-ending. Lucan – in his own Catonian fashion – longs for freedom, refuses to be reconciled to the political situation produced by the civil war and offers open-ended resistance to the suffocating despotism of the Caesars. Be this as it may, Lucan must have intended to end his epic narrative somewhere. Cato's suicide would have provided a finale in which

Philosophus', *Proceedings and Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada* 40 (1946), 68–71; P. Grenade, 'Le myth de Pompée et les Pompéiens sous les Césars' *REA* 52 (1950), 49–50; B.M. Marti, 'La structure de la *Pharsale*', *Entretiens de la Fondation Hardt* 15 (1970), 3–38. The Battle of Philippi: O.S. Due, 'An essay on Lucan', *C&M* 23 (1962), 124–32. The Battle of Actium: R.T. Bruère, 'The scope of Lucan's historical epic', *CP* 45 (1950), 217–35; L. Thompson, 'Lucan's apotheosis of Nero', *CP* 59 (1964), 147–53. The thematic and structural problems involved in positing Caesar's death, Philippi, or Actium as possible endpoints for the poem have been discussed in detail by Ahl (n. 2), 307–19. For more bibliography on this issue see the very useful 'Bibliographisches Nachwort' by Andreas Schmitt in Rutz (n. 2), 193–214.

³ Partial exceptions are Vögler (n. 2), 258 and 263 and P.R. Hardie, *The Epic Successors of Virgil* (Cambridge, 1993), 31. Neither, however, offers detailed analysis of the implications of Cato's words for the question of the possible endpoint of the epic.

⁴ See for example 1.670–2, 5.385–6, 7.432–6, 444–5, 579–81, 640–46, the last with the perceptive comments of O. Zwierlein, 'Lucans Caesar in Troja', *Hermes* 114 (1986), 478.

⁵ See Sullivan (n. 2), 117–20 and R.J. Goar, *The Legend of Cato Uticensis from the First Century BC to the Fifth Century AD* (Brussels, 1987), 24–49.

Lucan could underscore the theme of tyranny's triumph while also stressing the need for Catonian resistance to this tyranny. One can imagine Lucan using Cato's final words as a kind of manifesto for continued defiance of Caesarism.⁶ This would have provided a powerful *finis* to his narrative while emphasizing that for him and his contemporaries there was still a great deal of unfinished business to attend to.

After a long digression on the horrors of the civil strife that dominated the 80s B.C. (2.67–233), Lucan introduces Brutus and Cato to his narrative. Brutus has come to Cato seeking advice concerning what he and Cato should do now that civil war has broken out anew between Caesar and Pompey (2.242–7). This episode is not only crucial for understanding Cato's importance to the thematic economy of Lucan's poem; it is also relevant to the question of the intended scope of Lucan's unfinished epic, as I hope to show. For although descriptions of Cato debating what to do at the outbreak of the war had become popular for rhetorical treatment in the schools,⁷ those who see in the episode nothing *more* than a school exercise with no tangible relations to the rest of the text are surely mistaken.⁸

Rather than simply asking Cato's advice, Brutus begins to deliver a lecture, arguing that Cato ought to take no part in the war.⁹ Brutus suggests that Cato should adopt a position of 'Jovian neutrality' by rising above the fray as Olympus rises above the clouds (2.269–71). In response to Brutus' plea for non-involvement Cato delivers a powerful rebuttal and offers in turn his reasons for entering the war on the side of Pompey (2.286–323). It is not my intention to examine Cato's reply to Brutus in its entirety.¹⁰ Rather, I shall focus specifically on Cato's desire to offer himself up as a scapegoat by way of *deuotio* and the significance this rhetoric has for fixing the endpoint of Lucan's epic.¹¹

After arguing against Brutus that it would be unthinkable for anyone, himself included, to remain placidly uninvolved in a conflict of such cosmic proportions (289–305), Cato expresses the vain desire to offer up his life in order to save the rest of the world from impending doom (2.306–19):

O utinam caelique deis Erebiq̄ue liceret
hoc caput in cunctas damnatum exponere poenas!
Deuotum hostiles Decium pressere cateruae:
me geminae figant acies, me barbara telis

⁶ For various treatments of Cato's final moments, many of which present him as a martyr in the name of freedom, see V. Tandoi, 'Morituri verba Catonis', *Maia* 17 (1965), 315–39.

⁷ E. Fantham (ed.), *Lucan: De Bello Civili, Book 2* (Cambridge, 1992), 122.

⁸ Such is the view of J. Adatte, 'Caton ou l'engagement du sage dans la guerre civile', *Etudes de Lettres* 7 (1965), 232–40. Adatte was swiftly criticized by P. Grimal, 'Le poète et l'histoire', *Entretiens de la Fondation Hardt* 15 (1970), 98. D.B. George, 'Lucan's Cato and Stoic attitudes to the Republic', *CA* 10 (1991), 246–57 has amply demonstrated a number of ways in which the exchange between Brutus and Cato is thematically significant to the work as a whole.

⁹ W.R. Johnson, *Momentary Monsters. Lucan and His Heroes* (Ithaca and London, 1987), 38 aptly characterizes Brutus' speech to Cato as 'a kind of marveling *suasoria*'.

¹⁰ This passage has received considerable attention. See for example Adatte (n. 8); Grimal (n. 8), 91–105; Ahl (n. 2), 234–47; W.D. Lebek, *Lucans Pharsalia. Dichtungsstruktur und Zeitbezug* (Göttingen, 1976), 181–9; J.M. Croisille, 'Caton et Sénèque face au pouvoir: Lucain, *Pharsale*, II, 234–325, IX, 186–217' in id. and P.-M. Fauchère (edd.), *Neronia 1977* (Clermont-Ferrand, 1982), 75–82, at 75–8; E. Narducci, 'Ideologia e tecnica allusiva nella *Pharsalia*', *ANRW* 32.3 (1985), 1556–8; Goar (n. 5), 42–3; Johnson (n. 9), 38–42; George (n. 8), 246–57; Hardie (n. 3), 30–2; S. Bartsch, *Ideology in Cold Blood. A Reading of Lucan's Civil War* (Cambridge, MA and London, 1997), 114–23; Rudich (n. 2), 118–27; R. Sklenár, *The Taste for Nothingness. A Study of Virtus and Related Themes in Lucan's Bellum Civile* (Ann Arbor, 2003), 60–72.

¹¹ On the theme of *deuotio* in Lucan more generally see M. Leigh, *Lucan. Spectacle and Engagement* (Oxford, 1997), 128–43.

Rheni turba petat, cunctis ego peruius hastis
 excipiam medius totius uolnera belli.
 Hic redimat sanguis populos, hac caede luatur,
 quidquid Romani meruerunt pendere mores.
 Ad iuga cur faciles populi, cur saeua uolentes
 regna pati pereunt? Me solum inuadite ferro,
 me frustra leges et inania iura tuentem.
 Hic dabit, hic pacem iugulus finemque laborum¹²
 gentibus Hesperii: post me regnare uolenti
 non opus est bello.

O if only this head, condemned by heaven's gods
 and Erebus', could be exposed to every punishment!
 When Decius offered his life, enemy squadrons overwhelmed him:
 let me be pierced by twin battle-lines, let Rhine's barbarous
 horde aim its weapons at me, let me, exposed to all the spears,
 standing in the midst, receive the wounds of all the war.
 Let this my blood preserve the people, let this my death
 atone for all the penalties deserved by Roman morals.
 Why should peoples ready for the yoke and willing to endure
 cruel tyranny perish? With your sword attack me, me
 alone, in vain the guardian of laws and empty rights.
 This slaughter, this, will give the people of Hesperia peace
 and an end of troubles: when I am dead, the would-be tyrant
 has no need of war.¹³

Cato here contrasts his position as the sole defender of the laws (*me solum... / me frustra leges et inania iura tuentem*) with the attitude adopted by everyone else in the war, who have already resigned themselves to a debased and humiliating slave mentality (*ad iuga cur faciles populi, cur saeua uolentes / regna pati pereunt?*). That is, whereas everyone else is simply fighting to determine which man, Caesar or Pompey, will establish a *regnum*, Cato alone is fighting to maintain the laws of the state. As such, Cato claims to be the only participant in the civil war interested in defending the laws that ensure a Roman citizen's *libertas* against either of the would-be dynasts.¹⁴ Cato is under no illusion about Pompey. In his view, if Pompey is victorious he will be as autocratic as Caesar (2.320–3): *nec, si fortuna fauebit, / hunc [sc. Pompeium] quoque totius sibi ius promittere mundi / non bene conpertum est: ideo me milite uincat, / ne sibi se uicisse putet* ('Of course, I know for sure that he too promises himself, if Fortune favours, control of the entire world: with me as his soldier let him conquer then, to stop him thinking that he conquers for himself'). Cato will join Pompey's side, but he enters the fight not in order to support Pompey's autocratic agenda, like all the others. Rather, he enters the fray in order to defend the ideal of *libertas* against anyone who would assault its foundations. Cato's decision to enter the war thus imparts a moral dimension to the conflict that would otherwise be wholly lacking.¹⁵ His involvement means that what is at stake in the civil war is more than simply a personal rivalry to determine which general will establish himself as tyrant.¹⁶ As long as Cato is in the

¹² I follow Fantham (n. 7), 137 in favouring the reading *laborum* over *malorum* here. Each has manuscript authority but, as Fantham notes, the phrase *finemque laborum* has the advantage of making a pointed allusion to *Aeneid* 1.241 (*quem das finem, rex magne, laborum*), on which more below.

¹³ Translations of Lucan are those of S.H. Braund (trans.), *Lucan: Civil War* (Oxford, 1999).

¹⁴ Cf. 2.302–3, where Cato says *tuumque / nomen, Libertas, et inanem prosequar umbram*.

¹⁵ Cf. George (n. 8), 246–54.

¹⁶ The intensely personal nature of the rivalry between Caesar and Pompey is emphasized by Lucan at 1.120–6.

mix, the civil war can be construed in much grander terms as a struggle between tyranny and freedom. It is worth pausing over this point for a moment, because this theme, introduced by Cato in Book 2, is picked up later in the narrative, a fact that corroborates Cato's perspective on the war.

Cato's association with *libertas* reappears prominently in Book 9. Following Pompey's defeat at Pharsalus and subsequent murder in Egypt (Books 7 and 8), Cato assumes leadership over the remnants of the Pompeian army. With Cato at the helm, the resistance to Caesar is presented explicitly as a contest between tyranny and freedom. Lucan's description of Cato's assumption of the command makes this perfectly clear (9.24–30):

...Patriam tutore carentem
excepit, populi trepidantia membra refouit,
ignavis manibus proiectos reddidit enses
nec regnum cupiens gessit ciuilia bella
nec seruire timens. Nil causa fecit in armis
ille sua: totae post Magni funera partes
libertatis erant.

He took into his care his fatherland
when it lacked a guardian, revived the people's trembling limbs,
restored the swords thrown down by coward hands,
he waged a civil war without desiring power
or fearing slavery. In warfare he did nothing
for himself: his party after Magnus' death was wholly
that of freedom.

The narrator's description of Cato's role as the defender of *libertas* against tyranny is echoed later in Book 9, in words spoken by Cato himself. In an address to some soldiers, who are on the verge of deserting the Pompeian army on the grounds that they were fighting only as partisans of Pompey, whose death has removed any reason for them to continue fighting (9.227–30), Cato says (9.258–65): ...*non in regna laboras / ...nunc causa periculi / digna uiris...nunc patriae iugulos ensesque negatis, / cum prope libertas?*¹⁷ These Pompeian soldiers wrongly interpret Pompey's death as the *finis*, since in their view his death has removed any reason for continued fighting. Cato, however, rightly sees Pompey's death not as the *finis* at all, but rather as a new beginning: the removal of Pompey has created the opportunity for the war to be about something grander than the dynastic ambitions of two powerful generals. And Cato's words hit their mark. The result of his exhortation to the fleeing troops is a renewal of their purpose. They no longer struggle to champion the claims of an individual (Pompey); rather they now join Cato in fighting for a good cause (*libertas*).¹⁸ This turn

¹⁷ Note that the soldiers' reason for fighting, namely in order to support the personal agenda of Pompey, as well as Cato's rebuke that they are thus only too willing to submit to tyranny (*quaerisque iugum cervice uacanti / et nescis sine rege pati*, 9.261–2) echo and corroborate the views expressed by Cato at 2.314–15: *ad iuga cur faciles populi, cur saeva uolentes / regna pati pereunt?*

¹⁸ This change of focus, however, is not entirely true for Pompey's son Sextus. On the one hand, his resolve to join Cato is apparently strengthened by the words of his mother Cornelia, who tells Sextus that his father left these instructions for him (9.96–7): *uni parere decebit, / si faciet partes pro libertate, Catoni*. And *partes pro libertate* is precisely what Cato is trying to put together in Book 9, as we have seen (9.28–30, 264–5). On the other hand, it is not clear that a concern for *libertas* is what ultimately inspires Sextus. Of course, Sextus will continue to struggle against Caesar (and his successor) long after Cato is dead. But Lucan implies that his motivation in doing

of events is so momentous that it draws an unprecedented declaration from the narrator: the *bellum civile* is suddenly, shockingly, described as a 'just war' (9.292–3): *sic uoce Catonis / inculcata uiris iusti patientia Martis*. Before, when the war was configured as a contest between two would-be dynasts, Lucan was unable to determine which camp had justice on its side (1.126–7): *quis iustius induit arma, / scire nefas*. Clearly something has changed.¹⁹

With Pompey gone and Cato in charge, the war is construed as a struggle between *libertas*, championed by Cato, and Caesarism. Indeed, although this transformation in the nature of the conflict comes to fruition with the return of Cato to the narrative in Book 9, it begins to take shape the very moment Pompey is defeated at Pharsalus (7.693–6): *...sic et Thessalicae post te [sc. Pompeium] pars maxima pugnae / non iam Pompei nomen populare per orbem / nec studium belli, sed par quod semper habemus, libertas et Caesar erit* ('...so too, most of the Thessalian battle, after you, will be inspired no longer now by Pompey's name so popular throughout the world or eagerness for war, but by that pair of rivals always with us – liberty and Caesar'). If, as I contend, this struggle between freedom and tyranny is precisely what Lucan's poem comes to be about once Pompey has been defeated and killed, Cato's presence is absolutely crucial to the thematic economy of the poem. If Cato were removed from the picture, the very basis of Lucan's narrative would crumble. For in Book 9 Cato is clearly emerging as a galvanizing leader around whom the disparate remnants of Pompey's army are gathering in order to resist Caesar in the name of *libertas*.²⁰ The logic of Lucan's narrative is such that without the presence of Cato, the sole champion of *libertas* in the poem, the triumph of tyranny would already be complete and there would be no reason either to fight – or to write – the *bellum civile*.²¹ This is precisely the point that Cato makes in his reply to Brutus in Book 2 and I suggest that this Catonian perspective holds the key to identifying the intended scope of Lucan's poem.

The logic of Cato's response to Brutus is based on the premise that the civil war is unnecessary without his involvement. This is so, argues Cato, because he is the only participant who is not fighting to establish a tyrant. All the other combatants have, in essence, already submitted to helping establish the *regnum* of either Caesar or Pompey. As a result, they have already ceded their freedom and thus have no need to spill so much blood to determine which man they will be enslaved to (2.314–15): *ad iuga cur faciles populi, cur saeua uolentes / regna pati pereunt?* According to Cato's reasoning, if slavery is to be their lot regardless of the outcome of the war, then the combatants should simply throw down their weapons and assume this debased and humiliating position without bloodshed. It is Cato's involvement alone that gives the struggle a deeper meaning, since he is the sole defender of *libertas* against the tyranny

so arises more from a desire to avenge his father's death by harassing the Caesars than from a virtuous desire to uphold the claims of *libertas* against tyranny (9.87–96). Moreover, Lucan's description of Sextus in Book 6 makes it all but impossible to imagine that Lucan envisioned Sextus as a champion of freedom in the same vein as Cato: Sextus is destined to become nothing more than a pirate, precisely the type of enemy of Rome his father won so much glory for defeating (6.419–22). For Lucan, Sextus could not be construed as Cato's successor; and as a successor to Pompey he was a total disgrace. Cf. Ahl (n. 2), 309–10.

¹⁹ Cf. Marti (n. 2), 31: 'Avec l'entrée en scène de Caton ... tout est transformé. Le ton change ...' Cf. also A.W. Lintott, 'Lucan and the history of the civil war', *CQ* 21 (1971), 500.

²⁰ Cf. Ahl (n. 2), 254–7.

²¹ On the Lucanian trope whereby the fighting and the writing of the civil war are closely linked, see Masters (n. 1), 1–10.

that both Caesar and Pompey are seeking to establish. In fact, Cato's decision to enter the fray does more than give the war a noble purpose; it is the only thing that makes fighting (and writing) the civil war necessary at all (2.318–19): *post me* [sc. Catonem] *regnare uolenti / non opus est bello*. The only thing that keeps this war (and poem) from being totally and utterly senseless is Cato's participation. Hence, he must enter the contest, despite his concession that civil war is the worst crime of all (*summum ... nefas ciuilia bella fatemur*, 2.286). Cato detests the civil war, yet in his mind it is a meaningful venture only as long as he is alive and fighting in it. Cato's solution to this paradoxical situation is to die immediately by offering himself up as a scapegoat, thereby removing any reason for the fighting to continue (2.315–17): *me solum inuadite ferro, / me frustra leges et inania iura tuentem. / Hic dabit, hic pacem iugulus finemque laborum*.²² Cato's death is explicitly configured as the *finis laborum*, the point at which the *bellum ciuile* will cease to be necessary. Consequently, Cato wishes to bring about the *finis* as quickly as possible by bringing about his own death.

Of course, this is a vain desire. The facts of history did not allow for Cato to die in Book 2 (i.e. in 49 B.C.); rather the record of events required that he perish later, after the loss at Thapsus (in 46 B.C.). Even still, the logic of Cato's rhetoric is undeniably tantalizing for anyone considering the possible endpoint of Lucan's poem. His death, whenever it occurs, will mark the *finis laborum*, a most evocative phrase. While on the surface the phrase means 'an end of hardships', it also admits of another, more subtle meta-poetic interpretation. The term *labor*, of course, frequently bears the meaning 'poetic task', especially in the poets. Lucan's usage is no exception. He twice employs the word *labor* in reference to his composition of the *Bellum Ciuile* (7.209 and 9.980). If we allow for this secondary meaning of *labor* in Cato's use of the phrase *finis laborum*, his words suggest not only that his death will coincide with the end of the opposition to tyranny, but also with the end of Lucan's poem about this very opposition. The *finis* of Lucan's poetic task will coincide with the *finis* of Cato's life, an episode that by Lucan's day had come to represent a serious – though not irreversible – defeat of *libertas* by the forces of tyranny.²³

²² Cato envisions his death as the act that will bring *pax* to the world, since his death will coincide with the death of *libertas*, ushering in a peace bought at the expense of freedom. This formulation recalls the words of the seer Nigidius Figulus earlier in the narrative, whose vision of the *finis* is strikingly similar to Cato's (1.669–70): *et superos quid prodest poscere finem? / Cum domino pax ista venit*. Cato's point is that his death can precipitate this *finis* by hastening the arrival of this 'peace under a tyrant'. It is worth noting that Figulus himself was a staunch opponent of Caesar and remained so until his death in exile, as Leigh (n. 11), 26 has observed. This fact again reminds us that, historically, the cause against Caesar did not die with Cato in Utica, as I noted earlier. My point is simply that according to the logic of Lucan's Cato *bellum ciuile* is only a viable course of action if someone involved in it is fighting as the champion of *libertas*, a position occupied in Lucan's poem by Cato alone.

²³ It is worth noting that Lucan's Cato is rather closely tied to ends in general. At the beginning of the so-called *laudatio Catonis* (2.380–91), Lucan praises Cato's moral rectitude (380–1): *hi mores, haec duri inmota Catonis / secta fuit, seruare modum finemque tenere*. On the surface, the phrase *seruare modum finemque tenere* clearly refers to Cato's Stoic ethics; he observed *temperantia* in all things (*seruare modum*) and he lived his life with a view to achieving the goal of the Stoic *sapiens* (*finem tenere*), as Fantham (n. 7), 150 has noted. However, given Lucan's emphasis on Cato's death as the *finis laborum*, his words here also underscore Cato's intimate association with ends more generally. The end of Cato's life, the moment at which he completed his virtuous journey to the goal (*modus, finis*), is the most appropriate endpoint for Lucan's epic: the day *libertas*' champion perished, setting the stage for the triumph of tyranny. Moreover, the potential for Lucan's phraseology here to evoke the end of his poem is aided by a verbal echo of Virgil's *Aeneid*. As S.J. Harrison (ed.), *Vergil: Aeneid, Book 10* (Oxford, 1991), 200 has noted,

But given that it is Cato himself who expresses the vain desire to hasten his death and thus forestall the continuation of the *bellum ciuile* in Book 2, one may legitimately ask why we should believe Cato's rhetoric concerning the importance of his life and death to the continuation and ending of the civil war. Is there any reason to place such great weight on this Catonian perspective? When Cato asserts *hic dabit, hic pacem iugulus finemque laborum* (2.317), is this vision of the future credible, and if so, why? I suggest that it is, largely because Lucan portrays Cato as an oracular character, as many critics have noted.²⁴ Lucan emphasizes Cato's mantic qualities right from the moment he enters the narrative. His reply to Brutus is characterized thus (2.285): *arcano sacras reddit Cato pectore uoces*. Not only are *sacrae uoces* normally uttered by the gods,²⁵ but Cato speaks these 'holy words' from an *arcanum pectus*, which we may gloss as 'a heart that possesses secret knowledge of the future'. This reading is justified by the fact that the term *arcanus* in Lucan's epic is overwhelmingly associated with prophetic utterances by which knowledge of the future is revealed.²⁶ The adjective appears ten other times in the *Bellum Ciuile*; seven of these are in explicitly oracular contexts (5.137, 5.198, 6.431, 6.440, 6.514, 6.568 and 9.554).²⁷ As such, Cato occupies a privileged position *vis-à-vis* knowledge of the future. He is so prophetic, in fact, that he will later eschew consulting the famous oracle of Jupiter Ammon in Egypt, choosing to deliver his own prophecy instead (9.564–85).²⁸

Moreover, Cato also occupies a privileged position relative to the truth. His heart is not only full of secret knowledge of the future (*arcano ... pectore*); it is also full of the truth, as Lucan tells us in Book 9 (188–9): *Catonis l uerba ... a pleno uenientia pectore ueri*. This emphasis on Cato as a speaker of the truth is unique among the major characters in Lucan's poem, and it further aligns him with other prophetic figures in the *Bellum Ciuile*, particularly Apollo. Appius Claudius consults the Delphic oracle out of a 'desire to learn the truth' (*spes ... ueri*, 5.130) about the future from the 'master of the truth' himself, Apollo (*potens ueri Paeon*, 5.199). Once Apollo's possession of the Pythia has ended, we are told that the 'truth departs from her chest' (*pectore uerum l fugit*, 5.222–3). This last passage is especially interesting in regard to the oracular nature of the truth-telling Cato. The description of Cato as one who speaks words from 'a heart full of the truth' (*a pleno ... pectore ueri*, 9.189) echoes Lucan's description of the truth that leaves the recently inspired heart of the Pythia

Lucan's *seruare modum* alludes to *Aen.* 10.501–2 (*nescia mens hominum fati sortisque futurae l et seruare modum, rebus sublata secundis*). Now Virgil's words, like Lucan's, clearly sound a philosophical note; but they also look forward to the end of Virgil's poem with the death of Turnus. Just as Turnus' death is the final episode of Virgil's *Aeneid*, I suggest that in his *laudatio* of Cato Lucan hints subtly that Cato's death will mark the *finis* of his epic.

²⁴ See for example B.M. Marti, 'The meaning of the *Pharsalia*', *AJP* 66 (1945), 361; Goar (n. 5), 42; George (n. 8), 248–51; Fantham (n. 7), 132. Interestingly, Cato's oracular nature is a prominent theme in Plutarch's biography of him as well (*Cat. Min.* 35.5, 42.4, 43.2, 51.5 and 52.1–2).

²⁵ Fantham (n. 7), 132.

²⁶ Lucan appropriated this sense of *arcanus* from Virgil (*Aen.* 1.262, 6.72 and 7.123).

²⁷ The three occasions where *arcanus* is not associated with prophecy are 8.279, 9.864 and 10.295.

²⁸ On Cato's visit to the oracle of Jupiter Ammon, see Pichon (n. 2), 197–200; B.F. Dick, 'The role of the oracle in Lucan's *De Bello Ciuili*', *Hermes* 93 (1965), 466; id., '*Fatum and Fortuna* in Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile*', *CP* 62 (1967), 239–40; M.P.O. Morford, *The Poet Lucan* (New York, 1967), 73–4; id., 'The purpose of Lucan's ninth book', *Latomus* 26 (1967), 124; W. Rutz, 'Lucan und die Rhetorik', *Entretiens de la Fondation Hardt* 15 (1970), 243–7; Ahl (n. 2), 262–8; Johnson (n. 9), 60–3; Leigh (n. 11), 265–6; Sklenár (n. 10), 91–6.

once she is abandoned by Apollo (*pectore uerum / fugit*, 5.222–3). The difference is that Cato does not need divine inspiration in order to reveal the truth about the future. He does not need to consult the oracle of Jupiter Ammon, because for him the truth about the future is not buried in the sands of Egypt (...*mersitque hoc puluere uerum?*, 9.577). Rather, true knowledge of the future is buried within him, for he is always already 'possessed' by a god who has placed the truth about the future in his heart (*Ille* [sc. Cato] *deo plenus, tacita quem mente gerebat, / effudit dignas adytis e pectore uoces*, 9.564–5).²⁹

Cato's words to Brutus should be accorded all the weight and credibility of a truthful vatic utterance. Cato's vision of the future, in fact, his *sacrae uoces* (2.285), fulfill a function that in another poem might have been carried out by a god.³⁰ In this regard one thinks especially of Jupiter, whose role as a prophetic figure is explicitly usurped by Cato in Book 9, as we have seen. For not only are there Jovian elements detectable in Cato's exchange with Brutus;³¹ Cato's words also recall the famous exchange between Venus and Jupiter in Book 1 of Virgil's *Aeneid*. As I noted above, Cato's phraseology (*finemque laborum*, 2.317) echoes Venus' question to Jupiter (*quem das finem, rex magne, laborum* (*Aen.* 1.241), thus bringing to mind the prophecy he subsequently delivers, which, among other things, directly addresses the question of the *finis* of Virgil's narrative (*Aen.* 1.257–64). In the godless world of Lucan's *Bellum Civile*, it is useless to ask the gods for (or about) the *finis* (1.669): *et superos quid prodest poscere finem?*³² Rather, it is the godlike Cato who will provide the end (and who provides information about it): the end will come not through any divine intervention, but only with Cato's death.³³ Cato knows what the endpoint will be. Thus the Pompeian soldier could not have chosen a more appropriate person than

²⁹ Cf. Dick (n. 29), 466. Cato's privileged relation to the truth about the future also associates him with another prophetic figure, the witch Erichtho. Sextus asks Erichtho to 'press the truth from the shades' (*manibus exprime uerum*, 6.599). Sextus has come to the right place, for Erichtho claims that the paths to the truth about the future are easy (6.615–17). Erichtho orders the reanimated corpse to reveal future truths (6.762–5) and asserts that her art reveals the truth more clearly than any oracle could (6.770–3). Before leaving Erichtho and her prophecy behind, a word on her statement at 6.813–16 is in order. Erichtho tells Sextus that he will be visited by his father in Sicily, at which point Pompey will deliver yet another prophecy for his son. A number of critics have seen in this passage evidence that Lucan intended to take his narrative down at least to Sextus' naval activities against Octavian in the early 30s B.C. (for example Bruère (n. 2), 228–9; Due (n. 2), 127; Thompson (n. 2), 147). Obviously, I disagree. Such a plan would have resulted in a poem of unparalleled size, as Ahl (n. 2), 308 has observed. Moreover, Erichtho's words need not be regarded as indicative of a future episode at all. Rather, as Masters (n. 1), 237 has pointed out, epic poetry is full of proleptic utterances that allude to events beyond the scope of a given narrative, a practice that functions 'as often as not [to] *forestall* the need for later, fuller treatment'. Rather than indicating a future episode to be included in the narrative, Erichtho's address to Sextus briefly but effectively foreshadows the final defeat of the Pompeian cause in Sicily in 36 B.C. Erichtho's words thus adumbrate a future phase in the civil war, a phase in which the enmity between Caesar and Pompey will be inherited by their sons: at Naulochus as at Pharsalus, a Caesar will triumph over a Pompey.

³⁰ Of course, the gods do not act as characters in Lucan's epic, on which see D.C. Feeney, *The Gods in Epic* (Oxford, 1991), 250–85.

³¹ Cf. Ahl (n. 2), 239–40.

³² Cf. 5.198–203. Although the Pythia, when possessed by Apollo, has knowledge of all things past, present and future (5.181–2), her prophecy to Appius is very limited, encompassing only his individual fate (194–6), since Apollo does not allow any more to be revealed (197). On the 'exquisite irrelevance' of the Pythia's oracular response to Appius, see Masters (n. 1), 141–7.

³³ Lucan does, in fact, famously contrast Cato with the gods (1.128): *uictrix causa deis placuit, sed uicta Catoni*.

Cato to address his pressing question to, when he asks him (9.222–3): *nam quis erit finis, si nec Pharsalia pugnae, / nec Pompeius erit?* Cato's answer recalls his words to Brutus in Book 2. The *finis* will come when there is no longer anyone willing to fight and die for *libertas* (9.264–5), an end that Cato implies the fleeing soldiers can precipitate by killing him immediately and taking his head to Caesar (9.279–83).

Lucan's Cato may not have known exactly when he was to die, but we know (and Lucan knew) that this took place after the defeat at Thapsus.³⁴ Within the thematic economy of Lucan's narrative this is the point at which *libertas*, championed by Cato alone, is imagined to have perished. I submit that this is the powerful finale to which Lucan's epic of national suicide, cosmic catastrophe, and the triumph of tyranny has been building. For Lucan, Cato's defiant suicide marked the *finis laborum*, a momentous ending in the struggle against autocracy and the end of his poetic endeavour to trace the process by which freedom died.

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³⁴ Both Caesar's victory at Thapsus and Cato's subsequent suicide there are frequently mentioned in the poem (e.g. 1.686–8, 6.305–7, 6.310–11, 7.691, 9.409–10; and possibly 9.211–4).