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Orbis Romanus: Lucan and the Limits of the Roman World*

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SUMMARY: Lucan's *Bellum Civile* offers two different visions of the geography of the Roman world. In the proem and the praise of Nero, the poem locates Rome at the center of a soon-to-be-completed world empire. In contrast, after the battle of Pharsalus in book 7 the remaining books divide the world into eastern and western parts, locating Rome in the center of the western part of the world. A century after the great territorial expansion of the late Republic, Lucan replaces the apparently optimistic confidence in imminent Roman world conquest with a vision of a limited Roman world.

LUCAN'S *BELLUM CIVILE* IS AN INTENSELY GEOGRAPHICAL POEM.[1] ONE OF THE epic's most important themes from beginning to end is the question of Rome's place in the world. Has Rome achieved a total world empire? Are there limits to Roman power over the world and knowledge of it? What effect did the civil war have on Roman foreign relations, especially in the case of Parthia?

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[1] See esp. Bourgery 1928. Masters 1992: 150–78 makes good use of Bourgery's groundwork to argue that Lucan's geography demonstrates that the upheaval of civil war includes a destabilization of geography. More recently see Bexley 2009. There are also implicit elements of geographical reading in much scholarship on the poem, including Henderson 1998: 189 on Lucan's "geophysical poetics," Bartsch 1997: 13 on the importance of rivers as geographical boundaries, and Rossi 2000: 579 on Lucan's reversal of the *Aeneid*'s geographical movement from east to west.

These questions are not only important to a narrative of the civil war in the 40s B.C.E., but also important to Lucan's own Rome of the 60s C.E. During the century between the setting and the composition of the *Bellum Civile*, Roman geography underwent great changes as Romans struggled to revise their image of the world in the wake of the territorial expansion of the late Republic.[2] As Roman knowledge of and power over faraway places increased, Romans began to imagine their own location and relationships in new ways. The process of change in Roman geography was not a progressive approach toward objective geographical truth, but a subjective and historically contingent shift in the Roman imagination of the spatial relations between people.[3] Although Lucan's subject is the Republican past, the *Bellum Civile* participates in the changing geographical ideologies of the Neronian present. The *Bellum Civile* places limits on the expansion of the Roman empire, naming and defining a Roman world bounded by Parthian supremacy in the East. The limitation of the Roman world challenges not only the Virgilian *imperium sine fine* ("empire without end," *Aen.* 1.279), but also Nero's geographical ambitions. Neither Virgilian nor Neronian, Lucan's geographical challenge presents a new ideology of Rome's place in the world.

NERONIAN GEOGRAPHY IN THE PROEM

The *Bellum Civile* announces its concern with the place of Rome on the world stage in its first sentence: *canimus ... / certatum totis concussi viribus orbis* ("I sing a conflict fought out by all the forces of the world in turmoil," 1.2–5).[4] The assertion that the world was negatively affected by the Roman civil war sets up Rome as a world power with a presence in all parts of the world and an

[2] On the geographical revolution of the early Roman Empire, see esp. Nicolet 1991. For general analysis of the historical development of Roman geography, see also Romm 1992: 1–10, Whittaker 1994: 10–59, Clarke 1999: 1–76, Mattern 1999: 24–80, Ando 2000: 277–335, and Whittaker 2004: 63–87. On the use of geography in Roman poetry of the early Empire, see Lindheim 2010.

[3] On the subjective and historically contingent quality of geography, see esp. Pickles 2004. See also Lefebvre 1991, Harvey 2001, and Cosgrove 2008. Pickles, Lefebvre, Harvey, and Cosgrove focus on modern geography; for discussions of the historicity of ancient geography, see the references in n2 above.

[4] Getty 1979 ad loc. compares a speech Nero delivers on the civil wars in Seneca's *Octavia*: *suis / concussus orbis viribus* ("the world struck by its own forces," 517–18). Seneca's use of the reflexive implies that the forces of the world are Rome's. Lucan omits the reflexive, but adds *totis*, emphasizing the totality of the forces involved in the war. For quotations of Lucan I have used the text of Shackleton Bailey 1988. Unless otherwise noted, translations are my own, though I have frequently consulted S. H. Braund 1999.

ability to impact all peoples of the world. This assertion does not necessarily, however, imagine a uniformly Roman world divided against itself. There is rather a variety of relationships between Rome and the other peoples of the world, including subjects within Roman provincial territory, client states, allies, and enemies. Throughout the poem, the *Bellum Civile* lists in seemingly exhaustive fashion the peoples affected by the war, and it works out a variety of ways in which the war affects not only Romans, but all peoples of the world. Many peoples are simply named in catalogues, but some particularly important to Neronian Rome, especially the Parthians, receive lengthy treatment. The process of determining Rome's place in the world begins in the proem, which argues that the civil war delayed Rome's conquest of the world and, at least on the surface, optimistically projects that total world conquest will soon be complete under Nero. Beyond the explicit statements, the individual geographical references subtly encourage a reading sensitive to issues of the Neronian period. While the proem may initially be read as an optimistic prediction of the future of Nero's reign, I will ultimately argue that both the specific geographical references in the proem and the geographical material of the later books encourage a more pessimistic reading of the geographical content of the proem.

The geographical material of the proem begins with Parthia, a problematic foreign power for Rome. If it seemed possible to read the statement that the world was affected by the Roman civil war as an implicit claim that the whole world was under Roman domination, Lucan immediately dismisses the idea:

> cumque superba foret Babylon spolianda tropaeis
> Ausoniis umbraque erraret Crassus inulta
> bella geri placuit nullos habitura triumphos? (1.10–12)
>
> And when arrogant Babylon needed to be despoiled of the Ausonian trophies and the shade of Crassus wandered unavenged, was it pleasing to wage wars that would have no triumphs?

Lucan criticizes the participants in the civil war for fighting each other when there was at least one foreign war still to fight. In 49 B.C.E., at the beginning of the action of the poem, Lucan explains that Parthia was not only foreign to Rome, but also an enemy. More specifically, the Parthians were an enemy awaiting a Roman triumph.[5] If they are to be included in the world that was

[5] The use of the distinction between a Parthian war which would have earned the Roman victor a triumph and a war in which there would be no triumph is almost, but not quite, equivalent to making a distinction between civil and foreign war. Civil wars

struck by the Roman civil war, it seems that they were affected only in that the civil war delayed Rome from defeating them, and they were negatively affected only in that the delay of their defeat deprived them of the benefit of Roman rule.

Lucan's allusion to Parthia and the defeat at Carrhae is not a direct criticism of subsequent Roman-Parthian relations for at least two reasons.[6] First, the triumph awaiting Parthia was in fact celebrated for Ventidius's short-lived victory in 38 B.C.E. Plutarch (*Ant.* 34.3), Dio Cassius (49.21.2), Valerius Maximus (6.9.9), and Tacitus (*Germ.* 37.4) all describe the victory as vengeance for Carrhae.[7] Second, Augustus claimed that his negotiation of the return of the standards lost at Carrhae compelled the Parthians *supplices amicitiam populi*

could have no triumphs, at least theoretically, but it may be worth noting that the war Lucan points out would have no triumph did actually have one. Caesar triumphed in 46 B.C.E. Officially the triumph was not in honor of the civil war, but rather for victories over Gaul, Egypt, Pontus, and Africa. It presented Caesar as a world conqueror who had extended the power of the empire on all three continents, as represented by the Egyptian prisoner Arsinoe, the Numidian Juba, and the Gaul Vercingetorix. While no mention was made of Pompey, images of Scipio, Petreius, and Cato were displayed, associating these Romans with foreign enemies in an attempt to make much of the civil war seem foreign, but in the process admitting that at least a part of the triumph was due to victories in civil war. For this triumph as a presentation of Caesar as a world conqueror, see Nicolet 1991: 39; for a general description of the triumph, see Adcock 1951: 689–90. And if civil wars could, in reality, have triumphs, Romans also saw some foreign enemies as so savage that they were not worth the effort of conquest and therefore not worthy of a triumph. Strabo and Seneca, for example, suggest that if Rome had trouble fighting in Britain or across the Rhine or the Danube, it was not because the peoples there were powerful, but because they were so savage. On Britain, see Strabo 4.5.3, and on Germany, see Strabo 7.1.4. Both passages are cited in Ando 2000: 324. For Seneca, see *Dial.* 1.4.14, quoted in Ando 2000: 325. Ando also discusses many other examples of the argument that after Augustus whoever remained unconquered was not worth conquering. Not in Ando but worth adding to the list as a pre-Augustan parallel is Caesar's geography of Germany in the *Bellum Gallicum*, discussed in Krebs 2006. When Florus calls the peoples beyond the empire *immunes imperii* (2.34.61, quoted in Ando 2000: 326), he does not mean that Rome could not defeat them militarily but rather that they are incapable of understanding civilized Roman rule. This view is also apparent in Statius, who points out that Domitian did not consider the Marcomanni and the Dacians worth a triumph (*Silv.* 3.3.170–71, cited in Ando 2000: 326n225). But the Parthians are not a savage people unworthy of a triumph. By pointing out that a triumph was awaiting the Parthians, Lucan asserts that they are both foreign and worthy enemies.

[6] Lerouge 2007 provides a complete overview of Roman-Parthian relations.

[7] Pelling 1988 on 34.3 argues that "the tradition was probably contemporary."

Romani petere ("to seek as suppliants the friendship of the Roman people," *RG* 29). This may seem like a weak basis for a claim of Roman mastery over the Parthians, but it was oddly effective. Not only does Strabo believe it, but a century later Florus still uses the return of the standards as evidence of Roman mastery over the Parthians and indeed the whole world.[8] To the extent that Lucan's readers believed that Ventidius's triumph had exacted vengeance for Carrhae or that the return of the standards constituted a Parthian surrender to Roman dominance, the reference to Parthia is an indictment of the civil war, but not necessarily an attack on subsequent Roman affairs.

Alongside the claims of Roman dominance over Parthia, however, there existed an alternate tradition according to which Parthia was an independent rival to Rome. Strabo records this tradition, and Pompeius Trogus makes the argument directly.[9] The argument that Parthia is an independent rival counters the claim that Rome had conquered the entire world, though perhaps not as definitively as it might seem. Part of the persuasive power of the Augustan claim of Roman world domination comes from the variety of different types of domination. Romans did not make a simple division of the peoples of the world into the two groups of citizens and subjects. The world also included savage peoples unworthy of Roman conquest as well as client states and foreign allies; and if Rome chose not to annex or occupy a place, that did not mean that it could not exploit it economically or exert its political and military dominance whenever it chose (Whittaker 1994: 16). In the mid-second century Polybius was already claiming that the Romans dominated nearly the whole world, and Plutarch reports that Tiberius Gracchus called the Romans "masters of the world."[10] It was surely clear to those making the argument and to those hearing or reading it that Rome had not conquered the world, but the claim was nevertheless rhetorically effective. One explanation for the adoption of the pretense in spite of evidence to the contrary is that by "world mastery" or "world conquest" the Romans did not actually mean that

[8] Strabo 11.9.2, 515 C; 17.3.24, 840 C, cited in Nicolet 1991: 51n26. Flor. 2.34.63–64, cited in Ando 2000: 329n242. On other sources treating the return of the standards as an Augustan victory over the Parthians, see Cooley 2009: 242–44.

[9] Just. *Epit.* 41.1.1, quoted in Nicolet 1991: 50n25.

[10] Polyb. 1.1.5, cited in Nicolet 1991: 30–31; Plut. *Ti. Gracch.* 9.5, cited in Nicolet 1991: 31. The phrase Plutarch's Gracchus uses is κύριοι τῆς οἰκουμένης εἶναι λεγόμενοι. Nicolet points out that this speech is generally regarded as authentic, even though Livy is skeptical about a similar reported pronouncement of Gracchus (Livy 38.60.5). Nicolet also mentions possible evidence for assertions of world conquest before Polybius and Gracchus, but casts doubt on their date and/or authenticity.

they were administering the affairs of the entire world, but that they had a presence in all parts of the world and no significant rivals for power (Nicolet 1991: 30–31). It seems that Roman claims of world domination meant that the world was available for military action rather than that the world had already been subdued by the army. Plutarch argues that Rome ruled not only the territories officially annexed, but also exerted control over foreign peoples by the threat of its power.[11] When Pompey intensified the rhetoric and iconography of world conquest following his return from the East, it was based not only on direct military conquest and annexation of territory, but also on diplomatic relations with foreign governments (Nicolet 1991: 29–39). Moreover, rhetorical and iconographic claims of world domination can be effective in spite of evidence to the contrary. So although rationally the argument that Parthia was an independent rival to Rome contradicts the claim of total world conquest, both claims could exist simultaneously as long as they were not subjected to rational analysis.

Furthermore, although it is tempting to see the ideology of the claim of Parthian independence only as a counter to the claim of Roman dominance over Parthia, there were also positive ideological reasons for asserting Parthian independence. First, Parthia could provide a unifying "other," just as Carthage had done before the second Punic War. Sallust, for example, laments the lack of a powerful foreign enemy as a cause of Rome's civil wars (*Cat.* 10, *Iug.* 14). Lucan points out that during his civil war there was still a foreign rival that could have served as an outlet for Roman aggression. Second, a worthy foreign enemy provided opportunities for triumphs, and as much as the popularity of Roman politicians depended on claims of world conquest, it also depended on triumphs. The existence of foreign peoples worth conquering was as ideologically important to Rome as the image of world domination. It was not the case that politicians publicly proclaimed world conquest and privately admitted to the armies that it was not true.[12] Every triumph was a proud public admission that the pacification of the world had not already been achieved. By noting that Pompey and Caesar fought a civil war when Crassus was still unavenged, the *Bellum Civile* might be undermining claims

[11] Plut. *De fort. Rom.* 317 B-C, cited in Ando 2000: 327n233.

[12] The contrast between an ideology of world conquest and private, practical acknowledgment of limits to the empire is a standard reading of the apparent contradiction between Augustus's claim of world conquest in the *Res Gestae* and his posthumous advice to Tiberius not to advance beyond the current limits of the empire. On the apparent contradiction between the *Res Gestae* and the advice to Tiberius, see esp. Ando 2000: 324–25, who recommends the bibliographies in Whittaker 1994 and Kennedy 1996.

that Rome had already conquered the world, but it is also setting up Parthia as a tool for promoting ideologies of Roman unity and victory. The proem's indictment of Caesar and Pompey attacks their inability or unwillingness to make use of the available Parthian other.

The same apparent conflict between the ideology of world conquest and the utility of the Parthian other that existed in 49 B.C.E. was still in effect in Lucan's own time. Lucan's use of Parthia is pointed in light of Nero's Parthian war. Soon after his accession, Nero sent Corbulo to the East, and after a slow start to the campaign he succeeded in capturing Artaxata in 58.[13] The news was received in Rome with great celebration, which included saluting Nero as *imperator*, voting public monuments to the victory, and declaring several holidays. By 60, Corbulo had pacified all of Armenia and placed the friendly Tigranes on the throne. When Tigranes proceeded to invade Parthian territory in 61, Corbulo realized he would be overextended and sent for aid. Nero replied by sending Paetus, and by 62 he had suffered a humiliating defeat and lost all of Armenia to the Parthians, although he covered his failures by sending positive reports to Rome. It was in the spring of 63 that Parthian envoys to Rome revealed the extent of the defeat. Corbulo negotiated terms under which the Parthian prince Tiridates, brother to the Parthian ruler Volgases, would travel to Rome to receive Armenia from Nero along with a large sum of money, and the ceremony duly took place on Tiridates' arrival in Rome after much delay in 66. The senate again saluted Nero as *imperator* and the ceremony officially sealed a great victory, but ultimately the situation remained as it had before the campaign. Parthia was effectively independent and governed Armenia, but it did so by nominal Roman consent. The lack of clear evidence about the details of Lucan's political life and the composition of the *Bellum Civile* makes it impossible to coordinate precisely the progress of the *Bellum Civile* with the progress of the Parthian war.[14] Nevertheless, it is safe to say that the war was active as Lucan was composing his poem, and that the mention of Parthia was more likely to seem optimistic before 62 than after.

As the proem continues after the mention of Parthia, Lucan continues to explore the question of Roman expansion and world conquest, and his geographical references continue to allude to Neronian issues. Not only was

[13] For a brief overview of the campaign, see Isaac 1990: 29. For a more detailed narrative, see Anderson 1952: 759–73.

[14] On the dates of the composition and publication of the *Bellum Civile* along with the concurrent political developments, see Ahl 1976: 35–47, 333–53, Martindale 1984, Masters 1992: 216–59. For a specific effort to coordinate Lucan's political life with the Parthian war, see Sanford 1938: 261.

Parthia independent when Romans fought the civil war, but had those Romans directed their aggression outward, they would have conquered the entire world:

> heu, quantum terrae potuit pelagique parari
> hoc quem civiles hauserunt sanguine dextrae,
> unde venit Titan et Nox ubi sidera condit
> quaque dies medius flagrantibus aestuat oris
> et qua bruma rigens ac nescia vere remitti
> astringit Scythico glaciali frigore pontum!
> sub iuga iam Seres, iam barbarus isset Araxes
> et gens si qua iacet nascenti conscia Nilo.
> tum, si tantus amor belli tibi, Roma, nefandi,
> totum sub Latias leges cum miseris orbem,
> in te verte manus: nondum tibi defuit hostis. (1.13–23)
>
> Alas, how much of the earth and sea could have been bought with this blood which civil strife drained, the place whence the Titan sun comes, where Night puts away the stars, where midday burns in the fiery zone, and where midwinter, frozen and unable to be thawed by spring, binds the Black Sea with icy, Scythian cold! Already the Seres would have passed beneath the yoke, already the barbarous Aras, and the race, if there is one, that knows the source of the Nile. Then, Rome, if you have such love of unspeakable war, when you have put the whole world under Latin laws, turn your hand against yourself—you have never yet lacked an enemy.

The description of potential but not achieved conquest begins with a geographical layout of the world, listing the four points of the compass with astronomical phenomena emphasizing the geographical extremity of Roman domination, and it ends with *totum ... orbem* under Roman rule. Along the way the specific peoples who would have been conquered all have some contemporary significance for Lucan and Nero. The first item in the list is the Seres, or Chinese. Nero planned an expedition to the Caspian Gates, which was possibly a preliminary survey for a military mission or perhaps aimed at establishing a trade route between Rome and China.[15] Whether trade or conquest was the goal, Nero clearly did plan to open a northern route to the Far East.[16] The reference to the Seres, then, is a reference not only to a people outside of Roman control, but also to a planned but not completed expedi-

[15] Getty 1979 ad loc. argues that the expedition was to open a trade route to China, but Isaac 1990: 43 and Mattern 1999: 37 maintain that the purpose of the expedition was always aggressively military.

[16] Nicolet 1992: 86 cites Plin. *HN* 6.40.

tion of Nero. Rome had not yet conquered the world, but Nero was working, though ultimately unsuccessfully, toward that goal.

The Aras is even more important to Neronian Rome, as Artaxata is on this river. Corbulo captured Artaxata in 58, and Paetus lost it to the Parthians in 62. If, as seems likely, Lucan had completed and perhaps published the first three books between 58 and 62, for Lucan at this point Nero had conquered the Aras.[17] Rome is thus in the process of completing the world conquest that was delayed by the civil war. The reference to the Aras shows the progress of Nero's expansion of Roman power and supports the idea of world conquest as a continuous process rather than a *fait accompli*. Finally, Lucan lists among the potential conquests the people who know the source of the Nile. Nero sent a praetorian detachment under the command of a tribune on an exploratory and cartographical mission up the Nile in 61.[18] The mission ended in 63, having successfully mapped out the route between Syene and Meroë, an 870-mile stretch already traveled in the Augustan period, but having failed to discover the source of the Nile. So, although the civil war delayed the conquest Lucan describes in this passage, Nero might be understood as being in the process of correcting the problem and extending both power and knowledge. In fact, there was a hiatus of geographical expeditions between the death of Augustus and the accession of Nero, and Nero's expeditions to the East and up the Nile represent a renaissance in practical geography.[19] Geographical exploration and military expansion were priorities for Nero and the choices of the Aras, the Nile, and China as Lucan's examples of places Rome has yet to conquer argue that Roman world conquest was not complete, but that Nero was attempting to complete it.

Soon after expressing disappointment that Pompey and Caesar had given up foreign conquest in favor of civil war, the poem explicitly confirms the progress of Nero's world conquest by predicting its imminent completion:

> sed neque in Arctoo sedem tibi legeris orbe
> nec polus aversi calidus qua vergitur Austri,
> unde tuam videas obliquo sidere Romam.

[17] So assumes Getty 1979 ad loc., arguing that Lucan further ignores the fact that Armenia had already surrendered to Pompey at the time of the poem's action in order to be able to praise Nero as the conqueror of the Aras. On the possible publication of the first three books in advance of the remainder of the poem, see the literature cited in n14 above.

[18] Nicolet 1991: 86 cites Plin. *HN* 6.181, Sen., *Q Nat.* 6.8.3–4, and Dio Cass. 63.8.1.

[19] See the list of Roman geographical expeditions in Nicolet 1991: 85–94. Nicolet points out that "[t]he desire for prestige and the concern for the *imitatio Alexandri* are evident for some of these expeditions—especially those commissioned by Augustus and Nero" (85).

aetheris inmensi partem si presseris unam,
sentiet axis onus. librati pondera caeli
orbe tene medio; pars aetheris illa sereni
tota vacet nullaeque obstent a Caesare nubes.
tum genus humanum positis sibi consulat armis
inque vicem gens omnis amet; pax missa per orbem
ferrea belligeri compescat limina Iani. (1.53–62)

But please do not choose for yourself a seat in the Arctic zone, nor where the hot pole of the opposite South curves down, from where you would see your own Rome with a slanted star. If you press down on one side of the measureless sky, the axis will feel the weight. Hold the weights of the heavenly scale in the middle of the sphere; let that whole part of the tranquil sky be clear and let no clouds block the view of Caesar. Then let the human race look after itself with arms put aside and let every people love each other; let peace, sent throughout the world, block the iron gates of warlike Janus.

The praise of Nero includes a geographical description of world conquest. Nero will impose peace on the world and rule from where he chooses. Furthermore, Lucan's geography places Rome under the middle of the sphere of the heavens (*orbe ... medio*), since from elsewhere Nero would see Rome obliquely. The image of Nero's Rome is here a geographical vision of Rome at the center of a completed empire stretching from one end of the Earth to the other. There is no place in this vision for the unifying power of the Parthian other or the ideological benefit of triumphs. Nor is there any room for fine distinctions between provinces and client states. The whole world will be uniform and at peace under Nero's domination.

The sincerity of Lucan's praise of Nero has been questioned, as it seems to some that the praise is so effusive as to become a parody.[20] Whether the praise is sincere or ironic, however, the passage, along with its geographical implications, cannot be dismissed. The praise of Nero forms an integrated geographical vision with the introduction to the poem. First, the poem raises the issue of world conquest and Rome's place in the world order (1.5); then it states explicitly that in 49 B.C.E. world conquest had not yet been achieved and implicitly that it has not yet been achieved at the time of the composition of the poem (1.10–23); and finally it states, perhaps ironically, that Nero will complete the Roman world conquest (1.53–62). In the middle section, the

[20] On the debate over the sincerity of Lucan's praise of Nero, see Ahl 1976: 47–48, Johnson 1987: 121, Dewar 1994, Bartsch 1997: 61–62, Leigh 1997, 23–26, Narducci 2002: 22–28, Radicke 2004: 162.

poem refers to specific locations, namely Parthia, China, the Aras, and the Nile, which are the subject of Neronian expeditions. To audiences or readers in 61 and possibly 62, these references would seem to portray Nero positively, as he had successfully fought Parthia and conquered the Aras, and he was planning or had sent expeditions to China and the Nile. To readers in 63, these same references might seem to portray Nero negatively, as he had by then been defeated by the Parthians, lost the Aras, and failed to discover the source of the Nile. In 61, the suggestion that Nero would complete world conquest might have been believable, but in 63 it was unlikely. There are thus two ways to read the geographical material of the first book. For the vast majority of the poem's audience, reading or hearing the poem after 63, the geographical material undermines the praise of Nero, alluding to his exploratory and military failures. It is, however, possible that there existed an audience of the early books of the poem before 63, in which case the negative reading of the first book's geography might not have been available. Nevertheless, even if Lucan the poet as he was composing the first book did not intend to undercut the praise of Nero with his geographical allusions, the effect for post-63 readers (including the poet himself) remains the same.[21] The geography of the first book is ultimately one of unfulfilled promise rather than completed world empire.

In any case, the plausibility of the prediction of imminent world conquest is secondary to its rhetorical efficacy, and the tropes of victory and world peace are powerful aspects of Roman ideology regardless of their rationality. The geographical vision of the proem, at least on the surface, is one of victory leading to peace, postponed by the civil war but now resumed and soon to be completed. The fact that the geographical details of the first book subtly undercut the praise of Nero does not change the basic ideological framework

[21] It may be asked why, if Lucan had intended to praise Nero by alluding to his geographical expeditions, he did not revise the first book when those expeditions had failed. This question, however, is impossible to answer with any certainty. It is tempting to reconstruct a likely scenario, such as one in which Lucan, initially favorable towards Nero and hopeful for the success of his imperialist efforts, turned against the emperor and chose not to revise the geographical references that now emphasized Nero's failures. Or Lucan may have intended from the beginning to use geography to undermine his praise of Nero. Another possible answer is that Lucan may have already published or at least recited this portion of the poem by 63 and did not wish to revisit previously published material. Finally, it may be the case that Lucan intended to revise the first book but died before he could do so. Ultimately, while it may not be possible to determine what Lucan thought about Nero or to trace a shift in his opinion, it is possible and perhaps even more interesting to trace a shift in the geographical ideology of the poem.

of the geography. There are, in effect, two choices presented. Either Rome will conquer the world or not. The first book superficially claims that Rome will succeed, but subtly suggests that it will not. Either way, the claim fits well with a geographical ideology that places Rome at the center of the world attempting to expand its power to the distant edges of the world.

THE POST-PHARSALIAN WORLD

The geography of Lucan's post-Pharsalian world directly challenges the apparent optimism of the Neronian vision of the proem. Moreover, the geography of the poem after the battle in book 7 also challenges the basic ideological framework of the vision of world conquest in the first book. After the battle, the poem provides four new geographies, one in the narratorial voice, one focused on Pompey, one focused on Cato, and one focused on Caesar. Each of these new geographical visions in its own way problematizes the apparently progressive and optimistic geography of the proem. Immediately after the battle, the narrator argues that the civil war did not delay, but rather prevented the completion of Roman world conquest. Pompey and the senate in exile then emphasize the absolute otherness of Parthia and the East, excluding them from the Roman world. As Cato crosses Africa, the poem presents a third geography, one that combines Africa and Europe into a single western world and separates from it a larger eastern world under Parthian domination. Finally, as Caesar is trapped in Alexandria the poem makes a pointed comparison between the totality of Alexander's empire and the limitation of Caesar's Roman world, including geographical reference points more appropriate to Nero than to Caesar. The combined effect of these four post-Pharsalian geographies is not only to encourage a rereading of the proem—one that emphasizes the incompletion or failure of Nero's ambitions rather than the progress and imminent completion of his total world empire—but also to challenge Roman geographical ideology more fundamentally. In the first book Rome sits at the center of the world, but in the later books Rome is at the center of the western part of the world, while the eastern part of the world is dominated by Parthia. The natural and permanent division of the world into two parts places Rome at the center of a limited Roman world rather than a total world empire, effectively redefining the Romans' place in the world.

Immediately after the battle, Lucan brings back one of the key geographical ideas of the proem. In the proem, the civil war delayed the Roman world conquest that was still in progress under Nero. After the battle, the narrator points out how close the achievement was before Pharsalus:

quae latius orbem
possedit, citius per prospera fata cucurrit?
omne tibi bellum gentis dedit, omnibus annis
te geminum Titan procedere vidit in axem;
haud multum terrae spatium restabat Eoae
ut tibi nox, tibi tota dies, tibi curreret aether,
omniaque errantes stellae Romana viderent. (7.419–25)

What city has ruled the world more widely, more quickly raced through favorable fates? Every war gave you nations, in every year the Titan sun saw you advancing toward the two poles; so little space of the Eastern land was remaining that the night was yours, the whole day was yours, the sky turned for you, and everything the wandering stars saw was Roman.

This passage reveals an important aspect of the ideological workings of Roman claims of world conquest. On the one hand, it acknowledges that there is eastern land outside of Roman control, but on the other hand it uses astronomical imagery to emphasize the world-filling extent of Roman power. It is as though Rome was so close to world conquest that it was practically already done. The outside of the Roman empire was a future inside of the Roman empire, and all that was needed for the conversion was a unilateral Roman choice.

Unfortunately, Caesar and Pompey did not make that choice. Instead, they chose civil war, derailing the progress of world conquest:

sed retro tua fata tulit par omnibus annis
Emathiae funesta dies. hac luce cruenta
effectum, ut Latios non horreat India fasces,
nec vetitos errare Dahas in moenia ducat
Sarmaticumque premat succinctus consul aratrum,
quod semper seras debet tibi Parthia poenas,
quod fugiens civile nefas redituraque numquam
Libertas ultra Tigrim Rhenumque recessit
ac, totiens nobis iugulo quaesita, vagatur
Germanum Scythicumque bonum, nec respicit ultra
Ausoniam, vellem populis incognita nostris. (7.426–36)

But the fatal day of Emathia, a match for all the years, unraveled your fate. By that bloody day it was brought about that India does not shudder at the Latin fasces; that no consul, forbidding the Dahae from wandering, leads them into cities or, his clothes tucked up, pushes a Sarmatian plow; that Parthia always owes delayed penalties to you; and that Liberty, fleeing civil crime and never to return, has retreated across the Tigris and the Rhine and, having been sought

> so often at the prize of our blood, wanders as a German and Scythian boon and does not look back at Ausonia—I wish it were unknown to our people.

The narrator's point here is similar to the point made in the proem that Romans fought a civil war when they should have been fighting a foreign one, but the language is much stronger. The list of unconquered peoples begins with India, the Dahae, and the Sarmatians. The case of India is especially striking, as Romans of the early Empire seem generally to have regarded India as subject to them.[22] But economic exploitation and the confidence that Romans could exert dominance over India if they wished are not good enough here.[23] Without military conquest, Lucan refuses to count India as a part of the empire. Moreover, Lucan may include India in the list of unconquered peoples in part because Nero did not send an expedition there. Seneca had written a (now lost) geography of India, perhaps in an effort to recommend a Neronian expedition that never came about.[24] In contrast to the proem, which used the subjects of Neronian expeditions to allude to the progress or failure of world conquest, this passage begins with three locations that are specifically not the subject of Neronian expeditions, and in the case of India this was perhaps in spite of explicit hopes of Seneca.

After India, the Dahae, and Sarmatia, the lament for lost conquest continues with Parthia. As in the proem, this passage specifically points out that Rome owes Parthia retribution for Carrhae, but unlike the proem, this passage does not restrict its scope to the time of the civil war. It is not only the case that Parthia owed penalties to Rome in 49 B.C.E., but now in spite of Ventidius's triumph and the return of the standards, the civil war has ensured that Parthia perpetually (*semper*) owes penalties to Rome. The passage continues to empha-

[22] For a complete overview of Roman India, see Parker 2008. On the Roman view of India as subject territory, see esp. Whittaker 2004: 144–47. Virgil, for example, portrays the conquest of India in the *Georgics* (3.26–27) as well as the *Aeneid* (8.705). Virgil's view is not unique, as the *Geographi Latini minores*, likely basing their work on the geographical work of Caesar and Agrippa, include India in the lists of Roman provinces (cf. Whittaker 1994: 14). Seneca's lost geography of India and its implicit recommendation of an expedition may also belong to this tradition. While it may seem odd to recommend an expedition to a subject territory, the dual meaning of the Latin *provincia* as both subject territory and sphere of action suggests that, paradoxically, it was India's subject status that made it available for invasion.

[23] On Roman economic exploitation of India, see Whittaker 2004: 163–80.

[24] For Seneca's lost geography, Schmitthener 1979: 102 cites Serv. on *Aen.* 9.30 and Plin. *HN* 6.21. On the importance of the project, see Parker 2008: 70. See Whittaker 2004: 147 for the argument that the work was possibly an effort to encourage an Indian expedition.

size the permanence of the deferral of conquest in its assertion that freedom has fled across the Rhine and the Tigris, now symbolic borders of the empire, and it will never (*numquam*) look back. There is no sense here that Rome will chase freedom beyond the symbolic river frontiers.[25] The proem overtly and explicitly predicted the imminent completion of world conquest, even if it subtly undermined that prediction with specific geographical references, but now after the battle at Pharsalus the overt tone shifts dramatically. The civil war did not simply delay conquest, but in fact prevented it. The outside of Rome is no longer a future inside of Rome, but permanently beyond reach.

The use of the Rhine as a northern border of the empire has a precedent in the pre-Pharsalian books of the *Bellum Civile* as well. In the catalogue of Caesar's troops, Lucan includes the troops that stand guard against the Germans at the Rhine:

> et vos, crinigeros Belgis arcere Caycos
> oppositi, petitis Romam Rhenique feroces
> deseritis ripas et apertum gentibus orbem. (1.463–65)
>
> And you, posted to fend off the long-haired Belgians and Cayci, seek Rome and desert the fierce banks of the Rhine and the world exposed to the nations.

The Cayci, the last people named in the catalogue, are not part of Caesar's army, but rather the foreign enemy Caesar abandons in favor of civil war.[26] Lucan emphasizes the symbolic border of the Rhine by closing the catalogue with the word *orbem*, taking advantage of the ability of the word to signify both the whole world and a portion of the world.

Before the Augustan period, the standard expression for the world was *orbis terrae* or *orbis terrarum*, roughly equivalent to the Greek οἰκουμένη, signifying not the spherical planet but the disc-shaped or oblong portion of

[25] The use of rivers as symbolic frontiers is an interesting issue, as rivers offered quick transportation and limited protection. The case of the Euphrates is particularly problematic, as its middle course served as a symbolic boundary between Rome and Parthia, but its lower course was an avenue for invasion. On the problematic nature of river frontiers in Rome, see esp. D. Braund 1996.

[26] Krebs 2006 argues that Caesar's decision to conquer Gaul up to the Rhine but refrain from invading Germany across the Rhine depended on a radically new geographical imagination. By redefining Gaul as bounded by the Rhine and Germany as the unbounded space beyond the Rhine, Caesar's *Bellum Gallicum* justifies his choice of endpoints for the campaign, in the process totally redefining the term "Gaul" and imagining a new geography of northern Europe.

the planet on which there was land and people.[27] The large size of the planet in comparison with the οἰκουμένη led Crates of Mallos in about 168 B.C.E. to hypothesize the existence of three other inhabitable regions of the globe—the antipodes.[28] But whether these existed at all, and if they did, whether they were accessible was always a matter of debate, and so *orbis terrae* or *orbis terrarum* and οἰκουμένη effectively meant the whole inhabitable world. In the Augustan period, two new usages of *orbis* appear. The first is *orbis* by itself, without *terrae* or *terrarum*, but with the same meaning as *orbis terrae* or *orbis terrarum*.[29] The second new Augustan usage is *orbis* to indicate a region or area of the world, not only meaning the elliptical land mass of Africa, Europe, and Asia combined, but also referring to various regions or zones of the planet.[30] Lucan makes use of both new Augustan meanings of *orbis* regularly throughout the poem. Of the 32 times Lucan uses the word *orbis*, 19 are directly geographical.[31] Of these 19 geographical uses, one is *orbis terrae* (6.482), eight signify the entire οἰκουμένη without *terrae* or *terrarum* (1.22, 1.285, 4.191, 4.389, 7.390, 7.541, 8.532, 8.603), and ten refer to a part of the world (2.734, 3.276, 5.238, 5.343, 6.579, 7.6, 8.211, 8.441, 8.511, 10.456).

Orbem at the end of the catalogue of Caesar's forces is clearly an instance of the use of the word to mean a portion or region of the world rather than the entire world, but the ability of the same word to signify both a region and the entire world allows Lucan to exploit the ambiguity. The desertion of the Rhine leaves the "world" open to invasion, but this world is only the part of the world Rome rules. By placing the word emphatically not only at the end of a line but also at the end of the catalogue, Lucan draws attention to its ambiguity, pointing out that when Romans say that they rule the *orbis*, they apply the name of the world to the portion they control. In the catalogue of Caesar's forces and in the lament for lost conquest after the battle of Pharsalus, Lucan's use of the Rhine as a symbolic border draws a line between a Roman world and a foreign one.

[27] Bohnenkamp 1978: 914.67–920.20.

[28] On the history of Greek and Roman knowledge and theories of the shape of the planet, see Nicolet 1991: 57–84, and on Crates of Mallos and the antipodes, see Nicolet 1991: 63.

[29] Nicolet 1991: 31. See also *OLD* s.v. *orbis* 12b, Bohnenkamp 1978: 917.32–69.

[30] Ando 2000: 327. See also *OLD* s.v. *orbis* 13a–b, Bohnenkamp 1978: 917.70–918.14.

[31] Of the remaining uses, one refers to the world of the dead (1.457), two are astronomical with some geographical relevance (1.58, 9.532), one refers to the moon (1.538), two refer to the sun (3.41, 5.544), and the remaining seven refer to round objects or formations (2.184, 2.451, 4.777, 5.715, 6.216, 9.502, 10.145). On the astronomical uses of *orbis*, see Le Bœuffle 1987 s.v.

The narrator's despair in the immediate aftermath of the battle suggests that the lament for the lost possibility of total world empire may be exaggerated. The remainder of the poem, however, backs up the narrator's position by offering three geographies of a limited Roman world in place of a limitless empire. The first of these three geographies belongs to Pompey. After the battle, now an exile, Pompey sends his client king Deiotarus to seek an alliance with Parthia:

> terrarum dominos et sceptra Eoa tenentis
> exul habet comites. iubet ire in devia mundi
> Deiotarum, qui sparsa ducis vestigia legit.
> "quando" ait "Emathiis amissus cladibus orbis,
> qua Romanus erat, superest, fidissime regum,
> Eoam temptare fidem populosque bibentis
> Euphraten et adhuc securum a Caesare Tigrim." (8.208–14)
>
> The exile has as companions the lords of the lands and the ones holding Eastern scepters. He orders Deiotarus, who follows the scattered tracks of his leader, to go into remote parts of the world. He says, "Since the world, to the extent that it was Roman, was lost in the Emathian disaster, it remains, most faithful of kings, to try the loyalty of the East and the people who drink the Euphrates and the Tigris, still safe from Caesar."

Pompey's seemingly innocuous qualification that the world was lost only insofar as it was Roman represents a subtle but profound shift in the Roman geographical imagination. Before the battle, the narrator had argued that the fate of the entire world was at stake at Pharsalus:

> acciperet felix ne non semel omnia Caesar,
> vincendum pariter Pharsalia praestitit orbem. (3.296–97)[32]
>
> To ensure that lucky Caesar would receive all things at one stroke, Pharsalia presented him the world to conquer all at once.

In this passage the narrator laments that Caesar will conquer the entire world at Pharsalus, and in a way Pompey concurs, pointing out after the battle that

[32] The narrator is not the only one to make this claim. Curio makes it (1.284–91), as well as Caesar (7.264–65). Pompey's question *quod socero bellum praeter civile reliqui?* ("What war have I left my father-in-law but a civil one?" 2.583–95) also implies that the whole world will belong to the victor in the civil war. On the civil war as a world war and the idea that the whole world is at stake at Pharsalus, see esp. Henderson 1998: 189 and Masters 1992: 146–47.

he has lost the world. Pompey, however, argues that it was not the entire world that was lost, but only the Roman world. The claim is a radical one. In fact, this passage is the first time in extant Latin literature that the adjective *Romanus* modifies the noun *orbis*.[33] Moreover, in all of extant classical Latin literature the phrase *orbis Romanus* appears subsequently only twice, and both occurrences are later in the *Bellum Civile* (8.451 and 10.456). While Lucan uses *orbis* to mean both the entire world and parts of the world throughout the poem, it is only beginning with Pompey's speech that he modifies *orbis* with *Romanus*. Pompey, now an exile standing outside of the Roman world, can name it and define it.

Beyond and against the Roman world, Pompey names a different world across the Tigris and Euphrates. His instructions to Deiotarus include crossing into an entirely different world:

> ne pigeat Magno quaerentem fata remotas
> Medorum penetrare domos Scythicosque recessus
> et totum mutare diem, vocesque superbo
> Arsacidae perferre meas. (8.215–18)
>
> When you are seeking success for Magnus, do not be ashamed to go into the remote homes of the Medes and the Scythian retreats, to change your clime entirely, and to carry my message to the arrogant Arsacid.

The Scythians and the Parthians are beyond the Roman world. Moreover, Pompey uses astronomical imagery similar to that the narrator used in his post-Pharsalian lament, but instead of employing it to demonstrate the extent of Roman power, Pompey uses his astronomical imagery to show its limit. The Arsacid ruler of Parthia lives in a totally different "day." Pompey's new geography separates the Roman world from an astronomically different Eastern one (Mayer 1981: 191–92). Pompey intensifies the astronomical emphasis on the otherness of Parthia and the East when he addresses the council at Syhedra:

> quare agite Eoum, comites, properemus in orbem.
> dividit Euphrates ingentem gurgite mundum
> Caspiaque immensos seducunt claustra recessus,
> et polus Assyrias alter noctesque diesque
> vertit, et abruptum est nostro mare discolor unda
> Oceanusque suus. (8.289–94)

[33] Bohnenkamp 1978: 917.57–69. See also Vogt 1960: 167, Nicolet 1991: 51n28, Ando 2000: 327. Nicolet notes Greek equivalents in Dio and Plutarch. Ando argues that Lucan is the second poet to use the phrase *orbis Romanus* after Manilius, but he does not include specific references, and I have been unable to find the phrase in Manilius.

> Therefore get up, companions, let us go into the Eastern world. The Euphrates separates a huge world with its current, the Caspian Gates close off measureless retreats, a different pole turns Assyrian nights and days, the sea, with differently colored water, is cut off from ours, and it has its own Ocean.

Pompey's insistence on the totally alien nature of the East is striking. The Augustan usage of *orbis* to mean a part of the world rather than the whole world means that the description of other places as other "worlds" is not unprecedented.[34] But Pompey's geography goes beyond simply calling the East a different world. The Euphrates appears here as a cosmological barrier separating the Roman world from the Eastern world. Pompey even points out that the dominant power in this other world is virtually equivalent to Rome in its destiny of conquest: *fatis nimis aemula nostris / fata movent Medos* ("fates too much like our own fates drive the Medes," 8.307–08). And although this view may seem to be a restatement of Trogus's position that Rome and Parthia share the world, Pompey's naming of the "Roman world" represents a deep shift in the geographical imagination. Previously, Latin had expressed the extent of Rome's military power with the phrase *imperium Romanum* (Nicolet 1991: 51n28; Ando 2000: 327), but by replacing *imperium* with *orbis*, Pompey disrupts the smooth extension of Roman power with a geographical limit. His emphasis on the astronomical and natural otherness of Parthia imagines the East not only as an empire beyond Roman control, but as an entire world outside the Roman sphere.

A detail in Pompey's geography of the East emphasizes the lack of change between Pompey's time and that of Nero. In his message to Parthia, Pompey not only makes reference to an expedition to the Caspian Gates (8.222), which might refer both to Pompey's eastern campaign and Nero's planned expedition, but also mentions a battle with the Alani (8.223), who are a people Pompey

[34] Phrases describing foreign peoples as inhabiting other worlds are not unheard of in Latin literature, and scholars have sometimes taken Lucan's geography of Parthia to be a standard instance of this trope. Mayer 1981, for example, follows Housman in this view. He cites as precedents Manilius (4.585 and 696) and Plautus (*Rud.* 8–10), who both describe the different constellations identified by different cultures as "other stars" (192). He also points out that Ovid refers to Medea's foreign marriage as *Thalamos alieni ... orbis* ("a marriage of another world," *Met.* 7.22) and that a fragment of Albinovanus Pedo in Seneca (*Suas.* 1.15) describes Germany as an *alium . . . orbem* ("another world") possessing *aliena . . . aequora* ("different seas"). Mayer stresses, however, that Lucan's extended emphasis on the geographical otherness of a foreign place is unprecedented. Nowhere else do we find such an insistence on absolute separation.

never encountered, but were a new enemy of Rome in the Neronian period.[35] Even if the proem could be read before 63 to express hope that Corbulo's eastern campaign would eventually complete the conquest of Parthia and the Caspian Gates that Pharsalus had delayed, for most of Lucan's readers (after 63) Paetus had been defeated and Corbulo had likely already negotiated the treaty with Tiridates and Volgases that restored the same balance of power that had been in effect before the campaign. The inclusion of the Alani in the eastern campaigns of Pompey, when in fact they belonged to the eastern campaigns of Corbulo, stresses that nothing significant has changed in the East since Pompey's time.

Lentulus's argument against Pompey's proposal of an alliance with Parthia also describes Parthia as an entirely different world. Like Pompey, Lentulus emphasizes the separation of the Roman world from the East:

> quid? transfuga mundi,
> terrarum totos tractus caelumque perosus,
> aversosque polos alienaque sidera quaeris,
> Chaldaeos culture focos et barbara sacra,
> Parthorum famulus? (8.335–39)
>
> What? Deserter of the world, detesting whole regions of the earth and the sky, do you seek reversed poles and alien stars? Are you, as a servant of the Parthians, about to worship Chaldaean fires and barbarous rites?

Not only does Lentulus argue that Pompey's proposal involves leaving the world, but he uses astronomical terms to suggest that the East is antipodal, in effect outside the *orbis terrarum*. Moreover, he also uses the phrase *orbis Romanus*, striking for its novelty and rarity, to emphasize his point: *quin respicis orbem / Romanum?* ("Why do you not turn back to the Roman world?" 8.441–42). Finally, Lentulus uses Carrhae as evidence that Rome should never make an alliance with Parthia:

> nam quod apud populos crimen socerique tuumque
> maius erit, quam quod vobis miscentibus arma
> Crassorum vindicta perit? incurrere cuncti
> debuerant in Bactra duces et, ne qua vacarent
> arma, vel Arctoum Dacis Rhenique catervis
> imperii nudare latus, dum perfida Susa

[35] Mayer 1981 ad loc. See, however, Isaac 1990: 43, who argues that the Alani were a factor in Roman-Parthian relations in the reign of Tiberius, even if there were no direct engagements between the Romans and Alani until the reign of Nero.

> in tumulos prolapsa ducum Babylonque iaceret.
> Assyriae paci finem, Fortuna, precamur;
> et, si Thessalia bellum civile peractum est,
> ad Parthos qui vicit eat. gens unica mundi est
> de qua Caesareis possim gaudere triumphis. (8.420–30)
>
> For what, among the people, will be a greater indictment of you and your father-in-law than that the vengeance of the Crassi perished while you were fighting? All generals should have rushed to Bactra and, lest any weapons be idle, should have left the northern flank of the empire exposed to the Dacians and the hordes of the Rhine, until treacherous Susa and Babylon lay low, collapsed as the tombs of our generals. Fortune, we pray for an end to Assyrian peace; and, if Thessaly completed civil war, let whoever has won march against the Parthians. That is the one people in the world I would be able to rejoice to see in Caesarian triumphs.

Lentulus emphatically brings back the point Lucan made in the proem. It was wrong to fight a civil war when Crassus remained unavenged. Moreover, Lentulus also brings back the issue of the triumph. Pompey pointed out that he never included Parthia in a triumph (8.230), and now Lentulus argues that there is still at least one triumph left to be celebrated. The difference between Lentulus's argument and that of the proem is that the mention of Carrhae in the proem was accompanied by assurances that Rome would in fact defeat Parthia. Here there is only the disappointing knowledge that Caesar never did triumph over Parthia.

Pompey's and Lentulus's emphasis on the symbolic border of the Euphrates as a cosmological divide between the Roman world and the Parthian East does not in itself mean that the Euphrates is a permanent border limiting the Roman empire. In fact, both Pompey and Lentulus recommend invasions across the Euphrates, though in opposite directions. The ideological otherness of the East promotes aggression and conquest rather than stability and separation.[36] The otherness of the Parthians, however, somehow failed to channel Roman aggression outward, and instead it turned in upon itself. Pompey is proud to tell the Parthians that he never took vengeance for Carrhae (8.232–35), and Lentulus's bitter claim that he would be happy to see even Caesar triumph over the Parthians serves as a reminder that he did not. Pompey's references to Zeugma (8.235–37), where Corbulo failed to cross the Euphrates, to the Caspian Gates (8.222, 291), which Corbulo failed to conquer, and especially

[36] The classic analysis of Orientalism in general is Said 1978. For analyses specific to imperial Rome, see esp. Quint 1993: 21–25, 151–57 and Whittaker 2004: 144–80.

to the Alani (8.223), who were new enemies of Rome during Corbulo's campaign, all extend Lentulus's anger and disappointment at Rome's failures with Parthia into the Neronian present. The positions have become solidified, and the division between east and west in Lucan's time is virtually the same as it was a century earlier.

As Cato crosses Africa in book 9, the poem offers another new geographical vision of the world, and this one also uses symbolic river boundaries to separate the East from the West. Moreover, in the geography of Cato's journey, Asia is larger than Europe and Africa put together:

> tertia pars rerum Libye, si credere famae
> cuncta velis; at, si ventos caelumque sequaris,
> pars erit Europae. nec enim plus litora Nili
> quam Scythicus Tanais primis a Gadibus absunt,
> unde Europa fugit Libyen et litora flexu
> Oceano fecere locum; sed maior in unam
> orbis abit Asiam. nam, cum communiter istae
> effundant Zeffyrum, Boreae latus illa sinistrum
> contingens dextrumque Noti discedit in ortus
> Eurum sola tenens. (9.411–20)
>
> Libya is the third part of the world, if you are willing to believe everything you hear; but, if you pay attention to the winds and the sky, it will be a part of Europe. For the banks of the Nile are no further than the Scythian Don from farthest Cadiz, from which point Europe leaves Libya and the shores give way to the Ocean with a turn; but the greater world goes to unified Asia. For, while Europe and Libya together pour forth the West Wind, Asia, touching the left flank of the North Wind and the right of the South Wind, goes off to the sunrise holding the East Wind alone.

Instead of the usual tripartite division of the world into the continents of Europe, Asia, and Africa, Lucan proposes that Africa is really a part of Europe, dividing the world into two instead of three parts.[37] Such an organization is not unprecedented. Sallust, for example, includes it as a less popular alternative in his geography of Africa (*Iug.* 17). Strabo marks the Don and the Nile as the borders between Asia and Europe and Africa, but he does not combine Europe and Africa into one continent.[38] The significance here of the combination of Europe and Africa into one continent is that it facilitates the polar

[37] This reorganization has an interesting political equivalent in the elimination of Lepidus from the triumvirate, leaving Octavian in charge of the West and Antony the East.

[38] Strabo 2.5.26, cited in Mattern 1999: 44.

opposition between East and West, reinforcing the otherness that Pompey and Lentulus emphasize. Moreover, in this geography Asia is larger than Europe and Africa together, in effect giving more of the world to the Parthian empire than to the Roman one. Finally, the use of the winds as evidence naturalizes the division of the world into two parts rather than three. For Lucan, this is not a reimagining but a rejection of a mistaken view for the correct one. It is natural, and therefore correct to see the world as a binary opposition of East and West. Instead of imagining Rome at the center of the world, as the vision of Nero's empire in the proem does, Rome is now at the center of the western half of the world, and that half is the smaller one.

The geographies that accompany Pompey's retreat to Syhedra and Cato's journey across Africa put weighted symbolic boundaries between Rome and the East, but neither one explicitly confirms the narrator's post-Pharsalian lament for the loss of world conquest. It is not until we follow Caesar to Alexandria that we find it again. The city named after Alexander prompts the narrator to lament the contrast between Alexander's ability to conquer the East and Rome's repeated failures to do so:

> isset in occasus mundi devexa secutus
> ambissetque polos Nilumque a fonte bibisset:
> occurrit suprema dies, naturaque solum
> hunc potuit finem vaesano ponere regi;
> qui secum invidia, quo totum ceperat orbem,
> abstulit imperium, nulloque herede relicto
> totius fati lacerandas praebuit urbes.
> sed cecidit Babylone sua Parthoque verendus.
> pro pudor, Eoi propius timuere sarisas
> quam nunc pila timent populi. licet usque sub Arcton
> regnemus Zephyrique domos terrasque premamus
> flagrantis post terga Noti, cedemus in ortus
> Arsacidum domino. non felix Parthia Crassis
> exiguae secura fuit provincia Pellae. (10.39–52)

> He would have gone into the sunset, following the downward slopes of the world, and he would have gone around the poles and drunk the Nile from the source: his final day rushed to meet him, and nature was able to impose this limit alone on the mad king, who in envy stole away with himself the empire with which he seized the whole world, and with no heir of the whole lot, he offered the cities to be sliced apart. But he fell with Babylon his own and revered by Parthia. For shame! Eastern people feared sarissas more than they now fear javelins. Although we rule as far as the homes under the Great Bear and those of the West Wind, and we press the lands at the back of the burning South

> Wind, we yield in the East to the lord of the Arsacids. Parthia, unfortunate for the Crassi, was once the secure province of tiny Pella.

Lucan uses the astronomical imagery of the poles and the sun to emphasize the lack of any geographical limit to Alexander's empire. He would even have discovered the source of the Nile, which Nero failed to do. Alexander's empire encompassed the whole world (*totum ... orbem*), and lacking a limit in space the only limit (*finem*) nature could impose on it was a limit of time. Even so, Alexander's temporally limited empire was more impressive than Rome's spatially limited one, because he succeeded in conquering the East, and Rome has not.[39] Lucan knew well, of course, that Alexander had not conquered Italy or the West, but ancient claims of world conquest were ideological rather than rational. Rome imagined Alexander as a world conqueror, just as Romans had imagined themselves as world rulers in spite of logical evidence to the contrary. This lack of a need for actual world conquest to back up the claim makes it all the more significant that Lucan denies Roman world conquest. Moreover, Lucan uses the present tense and emphasizes it with the word "now" (*nunc*), pointing out that it was not only Caesar who failed to conquer Parthia, but Nero as well. This means that Lucan is directly contradicting those who believe that Ventidius's triumph and the return of the standards constituted vengeance for Carrhae and Roman supremacy. Nero, too, must acknowledge Parthian rule in the East.

Another geographical passage further makes a connection between Caesar's failure to conquer the world and Nero's. As Pompey had done, now the narrator introduces the Alani as an example of an exotic people:

> quem non violasset Alanus,
> non Scytha, non fixo qui ludit in hospite Maurus,
> hic, cui Romani spatium non sufficit orbis,
> parvaque regna putet Tyriis cum Gadibus Indos,

[39] As shameful as it is for Rome to give up the dream of conquering the East when Alexander had been more successful, it is difficult to see Lucan's Alexander as a model to follow. And the contrast between Rome and Alexander is not just one of success or failure in the conquest of the East. There is a further contrast in that Alexander's conquest was successful but shameful because of his monarchy, while Rome, in accepting a monarchy, is giving up the possibility of Eastern conquest. By this logic, Rome is right to give up on conquest of the East and total world empire. If Rome is lost and Caesar is all that is left, then Caesar may be better off not measuring up to Alexander anyway. On Alexander as a negative model in this passage, see esp. Ahl 1976: 273–74. See, however, Spencer 2002: 112, who argues that there is a certain "mad, bad, and dangerous to know" appeal (what she calls a "Byron-factor") to Alexander in this passage.

> ceu puer imbellis vel captis femina muris,
> quaerit tuta domus. (10.454–59)
>
> The Alani would not attack him, nor the Scythians, nor the Moors who take pleasure in a speared guest, this man, for whom the space of the Roman world did not suffice and who would think India together with Tyrian Cadiz a small kingdom, this man, like a cowardly child or a woman in a captured city, seeks the safety of a house.

While it is technically right that the Alani would not attack Caesar, this was only because there was not yet any contact between them and Rome. And although Lucan's final usage of the phrase *orbis Romanus* may seem to equate the Roman world with the land stretching from Cadiz to India and thus revive the image of Nero's imminent total world empire, one might just as easily read a contrast between the Roman world and the space between Cadiz and India. The Roman world was not in fact enough for Caesar, and he would have considered even the whole world small. The earlier contrast between Alexander's limitless empire and Rome's empire limited by Parthian supremacy in the East supports the reading of a contrast in this passage between the whole world and a limited Roman world. Moreover, the reference to the Alani suggests that the contrast is still in effect in the Neronian period.

CONCLUSION

The geography of the *Bellum Civile* after the climactic battle of book 7 differs significantly from the geography of the proem. The proem presented an apparently progressive vision of Roman conquest leading to a total world empire with Nero at the center. Not only did the praise of Nero make this explicit, but the peoples not yet conquered were all the subject of Neronian expeditions. The geography of the later books encourages a reassessment of the possibility of world conquest and suggests a new image of Rome's place in the world. The poem's post-Pharsalian world is divided in two by river borders between Europe and Asia. Rome sits at the center of the now named and defined "Roman world," while Parthia dominates the larger eastern part of the world. This state is encouraged by the natural, even cosmological river boundaries and the natural quality of the division between the two continents. Instead of imagining Rome at the center of a total world empire, whether achievable or failed, the later books imagine Rome at the center of the smaller, western part of the world. The geographical shift between the proem and the post-Pharsalian books may be related to changes in the historical context of the poem. When Lucan likely wrote the proem around 60 C.E., the expeditions to which he alludes had the potential to succeed. When he likely wrote

the later books in or after 63 C.E., all of them had failed. Nevertheless, it is far from certain when exactly Lucan composed which parts of the poem, and he may have had the opportunity to revise portions of the poem before his death. Given the poem as we have it and in light of the changed historical circumstances and the new geography of the post-Pharsalian world, it is more attractive to read the geography of the proem as a narrative of the incompletion and failure of world conquest rather than its progress and imminent completion, undermining rather than supporting the praise of Nero. Blaming the civil war for Rome's failure to achieve world conquest may exonerate Nero for his failures to some extent, but even if his failures were inevitable, they are still, for Lucan, lamentable.

Although the geography of the *Bellum Civile* undermines the Neronian idea of Rome's place in the world, it is not precisely a Republican geography either. The anachronistic attribution of the phrase *orbis Romanus* to Pompey and Lentulus (not to mention the narrator describing Caesar) along with the inclusion of the Alani and the emphasis on locations important to Neronian Rome disguise as retrospection what is actually innovation. The vision of world conquest combined with continuous triumph that was so important in the civil wars is no longer tenable in the new Rome those wars created. Although Lucan presents his vision of the Roman world in a narrative looking back, the post-Pharsalian geography of the *Bellum Civile* is also concerned with the present.[40] Refuting both the total and the progressive world conquest that he presented (perhaps ironically) in the proem and the praise of Nero, Lucan maintains the image of a Roman world empire by naming and defining a limited Roman world. If Augustus and Nero founded their images of world conquest on the inclusion of a diplomatically subdued Parthia within a limitless empire, Lucan founds his image of world conquest on the exclusion of Parthia from the world. Rome could not conquer *the* world, but it could rule *a* world. Although deeply pessimistic, the antipodal representation of Parthia as outside the Roman world allows Lucan to salvage a fundamental aspect of Roman identity in an era increasingly distant from the great conquests of the first century B.C.E.

[40] Gowing 2005: 67–101 argues that the *Bellum Civile* is the exception that proves the rule of the forward-looking spirit of the Neronian age. My argument suggests that Lucan belongs to Gowing's spirit of the age, if in a pessimistic way. Although Lucan's narrator claims to be a Republican, my argument fits better with Rudich 1997: 126–27, who argues that Lucan's opposition to tyranny is not actually Republican, than it does with Sullivan 1985: 143–44, who maintains the opposite.

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