

## **After 69 CE – Writing Civil War in Flavian Rome**

# **Trends in Classics – Supplementary Volumes**

---

Edited by

Franco Montanari and Antonios Rengakos

Associate Editors

Evangelos Karakasis · Fausto Montana · Lara Pagani

Serena Perrone · Evina Sistakou · Christos Tsagalis

Scientific Committee

Alberto Bernabé · Margarethe Billerbeck

Claude Calame · Jonas Grethlein · Philip R. Hardie

Stephen J. Harrison · Richard Hunter · Christina Kraus

Giuseppe Mastromarco · Gregory Nagy

Theodore D. Papanghelis · Giusto Picone

Tim Whitmarsh · Bernhard Zimmermann

## **Volume 65**

# **After 69 CE – Writing Civil War in Flavian Rome**

---

Edited by  
Lauren Donovan Ginsberg and Darcy A. Krasne

**DE GRUYTER**

ISBN 978-3-11-058396-0  
e-ISBN (PDF) 978-3-11-058584-1  
e-ISBN (EPUB) 978-3-11-058474-5  
ISSN 1868-4785

**Library of Congress Control Number: 2018962690**

**Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek**

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie;  
detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

© 2018 Walter de Gruyter GmbH, Berlin/Boston  
Editorial Office: Alessia Ferreccio and Katerina Zianna  
Logo: Christopher Schneider, Laufen  
Printing and binding: CPI books GmbH, Leck

[www.degruyter.com](http://www.degruyter.com)

\_\_\_\_\_

John Penwill

D · M



# Contents

Acknowledgements — IX

Introduction — 1

## Part I: Lucanean Lenses

Marco Fucecchi

**Flavian Epic: Roman Ways of Metabolizing a Cultural Nightmare? — 25**

Raymond Marks

***Sparsis Mauors agitatus in oris*: Lucan and Civil War in *Punica* 14 — 51**

John Penwill †

**How It All Began: Civil War and Valerius's *Argonautica* — 69**

## Part II: Narrating *Nefas* in Statius's *Thebaid*

Federica Bessone

**Signs of Discord: Statius's Style and the Traditions on Civil War — 89**

Timothy Stover

**Civil War and the Argonautic Program of Statius's *Thebaid* — 109**

Marco van der Schuur

**Civil War on the Horizon:**

***Seneca's Thyestes* and *Phoenissae* in Statius's *Thebaid* 7 — 123**

## Part III: Leadership and Exemplarity

Alice König

**Reading Civil War in Frontinus's *Strategemata*:**

**A Case-Study for Flavian Literary Studies — 145**

Neil W. Bernstein

***Inuitas maculant cognato sanguine dextras*:**

**Civil War Themes in Silius's Saguntum Episode — 179**

Steve Mason

**Vespasian's Rise from Civil War in Josephus's *Bellum Judaicum* — 199**

Leo Landrey

**Embroidered Histories:**

**Lemnos and Rome in Valerius Flaccus's *Argonautica* — 227**

## **Part IV: Family, Society, and Self**

Claire Stocks

**Band of Brothers:**

**Fraternal Instability and Civil Strife in Silius Italicus's *Punica* — 253**

William J. Dominik

**Civil War, Parricide, and the Sword in Silius Italicus's *Punica* — 271**

Alison Keith

**Engendering Civil War in Flavian Epic — 295**

Jean-Michel Hulls

**A Last Act of Love? Suicide and Civil War as Tropes in Silius Italicus's *Punica* and Josephus's *Bellum Judaicum* — 321**

## **Part V: Ruination, Restoration, and Empire**

Eleni Hall Manolaraki

**Domesticating Egypt in Pliny's *Natural History* — 341**

Darcy A. Krasne

**Valerius Flaccus's Collapsible Universe: Patterns of Cosmic Disintegration in the *Argonautica* — 363**

Siobhan Chomse

**Instability and the Sublime in Martial's *Liber Spectaculorum* — 387**

**Bibliography — 411**

**Notes on Contributors — 443**

**Thematic Index — 447**

**Index of Passages — 463**



## Acknowledgments

This volume originates from an international conference, “Writing About Civil War in Flavian Rome,” held at the 8th Celtic Conference in Classics in Edinburgh, Scotland in the summer of 2014. The three days of the panel included 30 papers on Flavian literature’s diverse responses to civil war. As only a subset of these are included in the present volume, we would like to single out for thanks the remaining panelists from Edinburgh, whose contributions of scholarship and insight at the conference implicitly and explicitly informed the subsequent shape of the project: Paolo Asso, Antony Augoustakis, Pramit Chaudhuri, Daniela Galli, Randall Ganiban, Dustin Heinen, Martijn Icks, Nicholas Rupert, Carey Seal, Étienne Wolff, and Andrew Zissos. In addition to those that read papers, moreover, we also want to thank the participants who attended the sessions and contributed to the spirited dialogue and debate, whether on campus at the University of Edinburgh or up the road at the Abbey Bar, where conversation often continued into the night. As Anton Powell, founder of the CCC, once said, there is a special correlation between pub and publication, and the Abbey demonstrated the veracity of this idea. Indeed, Anton Powell himself deserves a special mention, not just for his continued commitment to the CCC and its unique format, but for his own enthusiastic participation in our panel and his encouragement to publish its papers; and we also thank Douglas Cairns, Anton Powell’s co-organizer of the CCC in 2014, for organizing the event and its logistics. Another to whom we owe a special debt of gratitude is Antony Augoustakis, who has provided much advice as this project developed. We also wish to thank the editorial team at De Gruyter and the *Trends in Classics* series, and the anonymous reviewers for their many suggestions that strengthened the volume in uncountable ways. Additionally, we are grateful to our supportive colleagues at Columbia University, the University of Cincinnati, and the University of Missouri-Columbia; and we consider ourselves particularly lucky that Darcy Krasne had Ray Marks, a fellow Flavianist, as a colleague at Mizzou throughout much of this project.

We were also fortunate to receive material and financial support for this project from a variety of sources. The librarians and staff at the John Miller Burnam Classics Library of the University of Cincinnati, the Arthur and Janet C. Ross Library of the American Academy of Rome, and the various libraries and reading rooms of the University of Missouri, Columbia University, and UCLA all helped us with access to important materials throughout the project’s development; Sally Krasne also helped with procuring materials from UCLA and travel logistics leading up to the conference. Key financial support came from the American Academy of Rome, the Louise Taft Semple Fund of the Department of Classics at the

University of Cincinnati, and the Tytus Scholars Program at the University of Cincinnati. Finally, we wish to thank the writing group through which we, the editors, first began to collaborate as graduate students; without the creation of that group and the support of its members, the interactions that brought about this volume might never have happened.

On a different note, it was with great sadness that we learned of John Penwill's passing as this project neared its conclusion. John was a characteristically enthusiastic participant in the original conference and a tireless supporter of the volume as it developed. We know that he was hard at work on changes to his essay that he had told us included additional bibliography that he was keen to engage with, such as Armitage's important new work, *Civil Wars: A History in Ideas* (2017). Unfortunately and understandably, he was not able to pass along these revisions before his death. We are grateful to Frances Mills for her communication with us during a difficult time and for her help in ascertaining the status of John's paper. In honor of his memory, we have printed the latest version of his essay that he had sent to us with minimal changes; and for his deep engagement with our CCC panel and this volume and for his myriad contributions to the wider field of Flavian literature, we dedicate this volume to John Penwill.

# Introduction

“Even those Romans who tried hardest not to speak of civil war found themselves reliving it in their writings.”

Armitage 2017a, 59

nec iam recentia saeuae pacis exempla sed repetita bellorum ciuiliū memoria captam to-  
tiens suis exercitibus urbem, uastitatem Italiae, direptiones prouinciarum, Pharsaliam Phi-  
lippos et Perusiam ac Mutinam, nota publicarum cladum nomina, loquebantur. prope euer-  
sum orbem etiam cum de principatu inter bonos certaretur, sed mansisse C. Iulio, mansisse  
Caesare Augusto uictore imperium; mansuram fuisse sub Pompeio Brutoque rem publicam:  
nunc pro Othone an pro Vitellio in templa ituros? utrasque impias preces, utraque de-  
testanda uota inter duos, quorum bello solum id scires, deteriorem fore qui uicisset. erant  
qui Vespasianum et arma Orientis augurarentur, et ut potior utroque Vespasianus, ita bel-  
lum aliud atque alias cladis horrebant.

Tac. *Hist.* 1.50.2–4

Their talk was no longer of the recent atrocities of a bloody peace, but resorting to the memory of civil wars, they spoke of a city repeatedly captured by its own armies, of the devastation of Italy, of the plundering of the provinces, of Pharsalia, Philippi, and Perusia, and Mutina, names notorious for public disaster. They said that the world had been nearly overturned even when the struggle for the principate was waged between honest men, but that the empire had remained when Gaius Julius won and had remained when Caesar Augustus won; that the Republic would have remained under Pompey and Brutus; but now—should they go to the temples to pray for Otho, or for Vitellius? Prayers for either would be impious and vows for either detestable when, in the struggle between the two, the only thing you could know for sure was that the worse man would win. There were some who were looking to Vespasian and the armies in the East, and yet although Vespasian was a better option than either of the other two, they shuddered at another war and another massacre.

## 1 Writing Civil War, Writing 69 CE

Although outside the chronological boundaries of this volume, Tacitus’s narrative of the civil wars that gave rise to the Flavian dynasty has largely shaped modern investigation into these events and their cultural impact on Flavian Rome.<sup>1</sup> It is Tacitus, for example, that seems to have led Paul Jal to conclude his landmark

---

<sup>1</sup> The best recent historical overviews of the era, Wellesley 2000 and Morgan 2006, both rely heavily on Tacitus despite the richness of the parallel tradition. Tacitus’s *Histories* have also been the subject of increasing interest with new commentaries (e.g., Damon 2003 and Ash 2007b) and a host of monographs (see especially Ash 1999; Joseph 2012; Master 2016).

study of Roman civil war with 69 CE on the grounds that the conflicts of that year inaugurated a fundamentally different kind of *bellum civile* that changed both the mechanisms and stakes for waging civil war, and others have followed suit.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the brief Tacitean vignette quoted at the outset of this chapter is a useful heuristic in its compressed illumination of several important truths concerning writing about civil war after the wars of 69 CE,<sup>3</sup> linking the wars of that year not just to Rome's wider history of discordant conflict but to its literary representations of that discord. Thus we, too, begin with Tacitus.

The first truth evident in Tacitus's account is the enduring legacy of the Republic's civil wars in the Roman cultural imagination, particularly the sense of *Discordia*'s cyclical, iterative nature. The political strife of Rome's past remained a key yardstick against which later cataclysms were measured and a key allusive matrix through which to view future events. The points of comparison evoked here bring together not only the wars themselves, but the civil warriors who wage them, the devastation those warriors leave in their wake, and the moral judgment that attends Roman discussions of civil war. *Bellum civile* is simultaneously a historically attested event from the final century of the Roman Republic and a wider conceptual framework through which Romans understood themselves. Each new instantiation, facsimile, and shadow of civil war bears traces of those that came before and adds to the sense of civil war as Rome's inescapable curse, constant and yet somehow worse with each generation. It is precisely through the act of remembering that the Romans of 69 CE recognize and name the devastation around them as *bellum civile*.

The second truth is that any attempt to write civil war becomes an intertextual project.<sup>4</sup> As Petronius's poet Eumolpus reminds his audience, any singer of *bella civilia* must be *plenus litteris* ("filled with literature," Petr. 118.6). This remains the case half a century later for Tacitus, as well; scholars have noted, for example, that as his anonymous Romans catalogue public disasters in order to highlight the era's most devastating conflicts, they simultaneously allude to the literary incarnations of these conflicts. For instance, the chronological displacement of *Perusia ac Mutinam* has been read by some as an allusion to Lucan's own catalogue of chaos (*Perusina fames Mutinaque labores*, Luc. 1.42).<sup>5</sup> Likewise,

---

2 Jal 1963, 14, 489ff.

3 For the programmatic status of this passage in Tacitus's *Histories*, see Ash 2010; Breed *et al.* 2010b, 11; Joseph 2012, 53–62. See also below on the dialectical difference between "writing about civil war" and "writing civil war."

4 And not just in the Roman world. See, e.g., Healy/Sawday 1990, esp. 3–4, on literature and England's civil war.

5 Paratore 1951, 354–55 n. 21, and Damon 2010, 378–79.

some have seen in Tacitus's marked omission of a conjunction between *Pharsaliam* and *Philippos* an allusion to the wider literary conflation of the two battle sites in Lucan's epic and earlier poetry.<sup>6</sup> Following Cynthia Damon, we might ask, "is Tacitus suggesting that these Romans of 69 CE have read their Lucan and realized that the grim story he told continued after his death?"<sup>7</sup> Perhaps so.

But though Lucan may indeed be a particular intertextual target for Tacitus, the historian also incorporates into his brief *synkrisis* elements which Jal first identified as constitutive of a wider narrative tradition of civil war at Rome, a tradition that both includes and transcends the influence of an individual poet like Lucan.<sup>8</sup> These include the language of savagery and impiety, the image of a world turned upside-down, the idea of geographic escalation such that a war within a single city can become a World War, and the idea of iterative cycles, to name just a few. And so it seems that Tacitus's Romans are not simply "remembering" the Republic's civil wars (which, of course, they had not been alive to see); rather, they are mediating that *repetita ... memoria* through Rome's literature of civil war, drawing on its recurring tropes and figures as well as its key texts.<sup>9</sup> In other words, even as Tacitus's anonymous Romans seek to understand 69 CE as a new instantiation of Rome's old problem, they shape their perception of these events according to a well-developed and recognized literary schema. To narrate the *ne-fas* of 69 CE requires not only a memory of the past, but a memory of the literature of that past.

A final point is that, even as they replayed the struggles of Rome's earlier history, the civil wars of 69 CE stood somewhat apart, not least because Empire and Rome's new dynastic system had changed the stakes. As Tacitus portrays it, the newest iteration of what used to be a war concerned with the stability of *imperium* or even the *res publica* was now seen simply as a battle between questionable men who hunted a throne; the inevitable result was that another general with another foreign army would bring about further destruction. The inherent distancing, both political and geographical, that this result of imperial expansion imposes on Rome's civil strife can be seen most clearly in the Roman people's ideological detachment from the struggle: as the *populus Romanus* contemplates the ways in which their present recalls their knowledge of the past, they also see in that repetition a significant degeneration.

---

<sup>6</sup> See Joseph 2012, 57–62. For the poetic *topos*, see Verg. *G.* 1.489–92; Ov. *Met.* 15.823–24; Man. 1.907–14; Luc. 1.680 and 695.

<sup>7</sup> Damon 2010, 378.

<sup>8</sup> Jal 1963, 60–69 and 231–488.

<sup>9</sup> See especially Joseph 2012, 62.

However, the Tacitean story is not the only story to be told. Rather, Flavian literature itself—a rich era of literary output sandwiched between Lucan’s iconoclastic *Bellum Ciuile* and Tacitus’s equally seductive *Histories* of *bella ciuilia*—offers a fertile field for investigating Rome’s literary response to the crisis of the year 69 CE.<sup>10</sup> And it is to this literature that we now turn.

## 2 The Flavian Moment

The Flavian era was populated not by those whose memories of civil strife had dimmed in the course of the extended internal peace of the Julio-Claudian era, nor by those under the apparently halcyon rule of Nerva and Trajan that came about without civil strife, but by those whose recollection was fresh and whose dominant experience of civil strife was as an imperial and recursive phenomenon. Each of the successive civil wars of 69 CE placed a new emperor on an increasingly destabilized and bloodied throne; the year’s series of *bella ciuilia* rivaled the trauma of the late Republic in subsequent cultural memory, and Romans even saw their own city disfigured towards the end of that infamous struggle, as Flavian and Vitellian forces vied for total domination. This final chapter culminated in the burning of the Capitoline, an act which would haunt Rome as “the most grievous and most disgusting crime” to have occurred since Romulus slew Remus.<sup>11</sup> The authors of Flavian Rome thus write for a contemporary audience of survivors, both those who survived the conspiracies and uprisings that brought an end to Julio-Claudian Rome and those who survived the civil wars that would follow. And they write in an era that must now acknowledge civil strife as an ineradicable part of Imperial Rome’s DNA.

It is, of course, unfortunate that nearly all Flavian historiography has been lost, leaving the modern reader with no contemporary prose history through which we might explore a particularly Flavian historical narrative of *bellum ciuile*.<sup>12</sup> And yet, as the papers in this volume testify, the idea of civil war suffuses

---

**10** Our use of the term “Flavian literature” in this volume consistently refers to all texts produced between 70 and 96 CE under the dynasty that the wars of 69 CE brought to power.

**11** *id facinus post conditam urbem luctuosissimum foedissimumque rei publicae populi Romani accidit* (Tac. *Hist.* 3.72.1). On the strategic symbolism of the Flavian occupation of the Capitoline and its subsequent cultural memory, see especially Heinemann 2015; see also Landrey in this volume.

**12** Our primary understanding of the major Flavian historians, Pliny the Elder, Cluvius Rufus, and Fabius Rusticus, again comes from Tacitus. On their influence, see Cizek 1972, 8–15; Griffin 1984, 15 and 235–37; Ripoll 1999; Champlin 2003, 39–44; Degl’Innocenti Pierini 2007, 146–55.

and shapes much more of Flavian literature than just its vanished historical narratives. While Jal stopped short of analyzing the wealth of literature produced in the wake of those events, recent commentaries on Flavian authors—especially the three major epics of the period—often draw attention to their allusions to the history and prior literature of civil war, and studies of individual genres and texts frequently explore these allusions in more detail.<sup>13</sup> But despite the acknowledged prevalence of this theme and despite the current renaissance in Flavian studies that has brought this era to the forefront of new work on Latin literature, no single study has brought together the generically diverse and heterogeneous perspectives of its authors on the topic of *bellum ciuile*.<sup>14</sup>

The Flavian contribution to Rome's civil war literature is also often overlooked in larger studies of civil war as a literary theme, from Jal onwards, despite ever increasing interest in both the historical phenomenon of civil war and its artistic representation throughout Rome's history.<sup>15</sup> To take but one example, an important inspiration for this volume and the conference from which it originated was a conference held at Amherst College in 2005, "See How I Rip Myself: Rome and Its Civil Wars," which subsequently became the volume *Citizens of Discord: Rome and its Civil Wars* (Breed *et al.* 2010a). That volume catalyzed new work on

---

**13** A bibliography for the subject would be too vast to be useful, but a peek inside the indices of recent companions to Silius Italicus (Augoustakis 2010b), Valerius Flaccus (Heerink/Manuwald 2014), and Statius (Dominik *et al.* 2015), as well as the indices of the many recent collected volumes of essays and commentaries on individual books of Flavian epic, demonstrates the prevalence of civil war as an important theme.

**14** Ahl 1984b and Henderson 1998 remain key predecessors both in the study of Roman literature's fascination with civil war as a theme and in their attention to Flavian Rome's particular contribution to this literary tradition.

**15** The civil wars of antiquity and the literary tradition which springs from them have increasingly become a hot topic over the past two decades. In terms of dedicated monographs or edited collections, see especially Price 2001; Nappa 2005; Batstone/Damon 2006; Osgood 2006; McNelis 2007; Breed *et al.* 2010a; Dinter 2012; Grillo 2012; Joseph 2012; Wienand 2012; Osgood 2014; Börm *et al.* 2016; Welch 2015; Lange 2016; Ginsberg 2017; Lange/Vervaeke *forthcoming*, Lowrie/Vinken *in progress*. In addition to these, the anticipated volumes that will emerge from three separate 2017 conferences will continue to refine our understanding of Roman civil war and its legacy: Lowrie and McCormick's "Civil War: Discord Within," at the University of Chicago; Haverener and Gotter's "A Culture of Civil War? *Bellum civile* in the Late Republic and Early Principate," at the University of Konstanz; and Hinge, Kemezis, Lange, Madsen, and Osgood's "Cassius Dio: The Impact of Violence, War, and Civil War," at Aalborg University. Moreover, although not focused on Rome exclusively, Armitage's recent groundbreaking cultural history of civil war (Armitage 2017a) devotes two of his six chapters to Rome's unique contribution to the phenomenon and its various discourses, and Rome plays an equally large role in his epilogue on literature's role in the process.

the topic with questions still at the core of studies of Roman civil war: why did Romans repeatedly subject themselves to civil war and how, in turn, did civil war insinuate itself into Rome's worldview and Rome's understanding of its identity? Though its focus was not on literature exclusively (unlike our present volume), it featured many groundbreaking pieces that explored literary reflections of civil war and the various textual strategies through which Romans commemorated their propensity for *discordia*. Nevertheless, within its admirably broad chronological boundaries and selection of authors lies an important gap. For when the volume turns to the Year of the Four Emperors, absent are any texts written in the decades immediately following the outbreak of civil war in 69 CE. It is our contention, however, and one shared by our volume's contributors, that Flavian literature represents an important chapter to writing civil war at Rome, one worthy of the focused attention which this volume brings.

Writing civil war—if not necessarily writing *about* civil war—was an inescapable project in Flavian Rome, whether as the subject of a head-on engagement or as a voice that can be heard in the erasures and unfilled spaces of a textual enterprise. Through linguistic, thematic, or historical engagement with Rome's civil war past, Flavian authors repeatedly—if not always explicitly—create a space for themselves as the next chapter of the wide-ranging and long-standing tradition of civil war literature at Rome. At the same time, we also see them forging an identity for themselves as authors of a new Flavian era, with its own rich diversity of approaches and perspectives, including literature that provides strategies of recuperation and healing as it seeks ways of moving beyond Rome's iterative curse of civil war.

The essays collected in this volume aim to shine a spotlight on these neglected Flavian voices within Rome's literary tradition of civil war. In doing so, we privilege an approach that confronts the multi-generic corpus of Flavian literature, over and against the still too common definition of "Flavian literature" primarily in terms of Flavian epic, one that brings together a heterogeneous collection of ancient authors and genres. The papers, which emerge from a multi-day panel held at the 8th Celtic Conference in Classics in 2014, also incorporate diverse approaches both to the literary strategies used to narrate civil war and to the significance of writing (about) civil war after its brutal reemergence in 69 CE. Moreover, as we examine the representation of civil war through a Flavian lens, we also probe what precisely might constitute that lens, as well as the degree to which the periodization advanced with the term "Flavian" remains meaningful



given the era's diverse literary output.<sup>16</sup> The result is a fresh overview of the theme of civil war in Flavian literature, which no two papers approach from the same angle or with the same preconceptions. In this way, we hope to push to the fore themes that are truly indicative of the contemporary cultural and literary climate, in addition to noting fissures that resist such a chronological schematization, the sorts of discordant or non-homogeneous note that such periodization often attempts to suppress.

### 3 Defining Civil War and Its Literature

Readers might at this point expect a degree of specificity in terms of what we (the editors and our various contributors) mean by “civil war,” especially in light of a host of new works on the subject.<sup>17</sup> Amid the broad swath of approaches and scholarly questions that has continually grown over the past two decades, the idea of defining, naming, and thereby framing what civil war is (and is not) has remained a consistent thread.<sup>18</sup> What is the difference, for example, between civil war, sedition, revolution, or another form of violent political strife? Is there a conceptual difference between *bellum ciuile* and *bellum internum*? What is the role of individual motivations and passions within a larger armed conflict? Is civil war an escalation from *seditio* or private *ira*, or is it a question of perspective, given that successful civil warriors often coopt the language of justified revolution upon victory? And how can we articulate the apparently inevitable slippage between categories?

It turns out that answering such questions and thereby defining discrete and limiting parameters for “civil war” is nearly impossible in practice. In his award-winning investigation into the mechanisms and logic that underpin violence in civil war, Kalyvas urges a more inclusive view.<sup>19</sup> He queries, for example, how one might differentiate between the macro-level (public, ideological, collective) political violence that underpins civil war and the micro-level violence between

---

**16** For an interrogation of what might constitute the “Flavian” aspect of Flavian literature, see König in this volume. On limits of periodization when it comes to Flavian Rome and its literature, see also Dominik *et al.* 2009, 1; Boyle/Dominik 2005, 1–3; Manuwald/Voigt 2013, 4–5; Wilson 2013.

**17** See above (n. 15).

**18** For attempts to differentiate terminologically between civil war and associated acts of internal violence at Rome, see Armitage 2017a, 64ff. and 222–23. See also Jal 1963, 7–14 and 20–34; Brunner *et al.* 1984, 667–70; Rosenberger 1992; Börm 2016, 16ff.; Osgood 2015, 1683.

**19** For his own definition of civil war (which he productively decouples from his study of the broader and more fluid phenomenon of civil war violence), see Kalyvas 2006, 17.

intimates (families, neighbors, friends), which may be divorced from the motivations driving wider civil conflict, but nonetheless remain part of its origin, impact and trauma.<sup>20</sup> In the end, civil war's fusing of public and private, personal and political, individual and collective problematizes our desire to name and frame.<sup>21</sup> Thus, within the wider conceptual category of "civil war," what appears to be a just revolution to some might seem to be illegal sedition or conspiracy to others; and when looked at retrospectively one's position might shift again due to hindsight, as we can see most famously in the Romans' own understanding of the demise of the Gracchi brothers in light of what came later.<sup>22</sup> In every case, moreover, micro-actions might consist mostly of individuals taking advantage of wider social chaos to pursue personal and even familial hatreds or rivalries absent of political or ideological motivations. And on the larger scale, civil wars often occur alongside of or give rise to wars between separate political entities; this is a truth already enshrined in myth, most notably in the legend of the sons of Oedipus. As David Armitage notes in his landmark monograph *Civil Wars: A History in Ideas*, "civil war" has been such a conceptually generative and fertile topic for exploration because "there has never been a time when [its] definition was settled to everyone's satisfaction or when it could be used without question or contention."<sup>23</sup> Thus while it may appear advantageous to avoid the notion that every instance of internal discord can be properly termed "civil war" and to define *bellum civile* through strict criteria such as the engagement of armies and the activity of the populace,<sup>24</sup> it is equally important to see how with every new experience of civil war, our understanding of what it means concomitantly evolves. For this reason, as Armitage notes, civil war has remained undertheorized and resistant to schematization.<sup>25</sup>

---

**20** Kalyvas 2006, 3–5, 16–19, 330–63, and *passim*.

**21** See also Armitage 2017a, 12–14. Osgood's 2014 study of the so-called *Laudatio Turiae* is an extended case study in how the desire to demarcate the limits of civil war with definitions that require pitched battles between citizens does not correspond to the experience of those who lived through them or to the way in which they were commemorated in art and literature.

**22** Armitage 2017a, 48. On these issues see also Börm 2016, 16ff. On the Gracchi specifically, see Wiseman 2010.

**23** Armitage 2017a, 12. Armitage's monograph will remain essential reading for any serious inquiry into civil war. See also, however, the varied responses to his monograph assembled in *Critical Analysis of Law* 4.2 (2017), especially Lange 2017 and Straumann 2017, as well as the reply by Armitage himself (Armitage 2017b).

**24** Börm 2016, 17, pursues this line of reasoning admirably, though even he acknowledges its limitations when it comes to the specific case studies of the volume (Börm *et al.* 2016).

**25** Armitage 2017a, 7.

Rome's literature of civil war well embodies and illustrates this conceptual richness and the difficulty inherent in attempting to define *bellum ciuile* or confine its resonances; and the discrete conceptual and representative strata extend across the verbal and the thematic as well as the historical and the cultural.<sup>26</sup> We find here a wealth of symbol systems, vocabulary, metaphors, and tropes, which cumulatively, over time, create a trans-generic literary tradition and paradigmatic mode of expression. Indeed, under the early empire, Roman literature had already established for itself a paradigmatic vocabulary—what Federica Bessone terms a *koiné*—of civil war.<sup>27</sup> Included in this linguistic code are terms like *nefas* and *scelus* which emphasize the unspeakable, twisted nature of internal discord; conversely, we see a large-scale problematization of value terminology within the context of *bellum ciuile* and a focus on linguistic paradox, as concepts like *fides* or *pietas* are redefined to celebrate kin-slaughter.

Individual pre-Flavian authors contribute phrases which transcend their status as intertexts to become themselves *topoi* for civil war; so, for example, echoes of Horace's seventh epode, especially its indignant opening (*quo, quo scelesti ruitis?*), reverberate across the subsequent literary tradition. Likewise, what began as a general lament for strife in Book 5 of Vergil's *Aeneid* (*quis furor iste nouus? quo nunc, quo tenditis ... heu, miserae ciues?*, A. 5.670–71)—itself perhaps indebted to Horace—would be ossified through its varied receptions into a rallying cry against civil war's frenzy (Tib. 1.10.33; Ov. *Met.* 3.531; Sen. *Phoen.* 557, *Thy.* 339; Petr. 108.14.1) and would become a veritable catch-phrase for Lucan (*quis furor, o ciues*, Luc. 1.8; cf. 1.681, 7.95)—and for his successors, in turn. In other words, we see not only individual and cumulative receptions of specific moments in Horace, Vergil, Ovid, Lucan, Seneca, and others, but also the simultaneous establishment of a Roman poetics of civil war.

The developed system analogizes between different types of discord, from suicide and fratricide on the micro-level to cosmic dissolution on the macro-level. Indeed, Michèle Lowrie has recently argued that this symbolic discourse, of and surrounding civil war, is one of Rome's original contributions to the history of concepts precisely because while, “as a political concept, *bellum ciuile* may be restricted to warfare among citizens, its consistent analogical extension from the soul to the cosmos commutes it into a figure of thought that fights internally against conceptual confinement.”<sup>28</sup> Thus, when we speak of Flavian literature's

---

<sup>26</sup> See especially Jal 1963, 15 and 60ff., on what would become the Flavian authors' literary and linguistic inheritance.

<sup>27</sup> Bessone, p. 90.

<sup>28</sup> Lowrie 2016, 352.

representation of civil war, we necessarily take a broad view both of the term *bellum ciuile* and of the ways in which the wider concept might manifest itself throughout the various genres, prosaic and poetic, that make up the era's surviving literary output.

## 4 Organization and Thematic Overview

We have organized the volume into five sections, each of which highlights a different approach, focus, theme, or trope. Our first two sections take us into the killing fields of Rome's two surviving epics of civil war, one Neronian, the other Flavian. The literature of the Flavian age marks an especially crucial stage in the reception of Rome's poetics of civil war through its rapid canonization of Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile*, a discordant and iconoclastic poem that Flavian authors seem to have seen as prophetic for the horrors of the *bella ciuilia* of 69 CE that the Neronian *uates* himself did not live to experience, as well as an ideal—or at least unavoidable—vehicle for capturing civil war's violence.<sup>29</sup> Accordingly, in recognition of the *Bellum Ciuile*'s signal impact on subsequent literature, our first section, "Lucanean Lenses," contains three papers on the Flavian response to Lucan and its echoes or refashionings of Lucanean themes, scenes, and language. While elements of this Flavian response to Lucanean poetics are hardly absent from the rest of the volume, these three papers cumulatively offer an overarching and multivocal investigation of how Flavian literature uses its intertextual dialogue with Lucan to produce a socio-historical commentary on Rome's most recent civil wars and the new era that followed.

Our second section, "Narrating *Nefas* in Statius's *Thebaid*," turns to Flavian literature's own most sustained engagement with the theme of civil strife and balances the previous section's broader approaches to Lucanean reception with its focus on the minutiae of Statius's poetics of civil war. The three papers investigate the poet's methods of intensifying the already-overt civil war that permeates his epic, probing his language and compositional practices from three distinct points of view: style, ecphrasis, and genre. Each also explores how Statius's allusive appropriations retroactively crystalize and heighten the *bellum ciuile* within the earlier texts on which he draws to craft his own linguistic systems, his own deconstructive intertextuality, and his own mode of generic interplay.

---

<sup>29</sup> See especially Stover 2012, 3: "Lucan's nightmarish visions of *bellum civile* had burst forth into the 'here and now' of historical reality, creating the impression that Lucan's challenge to epic and the civil war's challenge to empire were somehow related, were in some way symptoms of the same disease."

The remaining three sections each explore a trope of civil war literature that transcends individual works and their genres to become a dominant theme in Flavian Rome's literature of civil war. The first of these, "Leadership and Exemplarity," draws out and expands on this pair of intersecting themes through four papers on Frontinus's *Strategemata*, Silius's *Punica*, Josephus's *Bellum Judaicum*, and Valerius Flaccus's *Argonautica*. The question of leadership becomes a locus of tension in Flavian literature, whether we think in terms of the statesman who holds political power or of the general with an army at his back. Perhaps most interesting are the moments in which the one is pitted against the other, as civil warfare challenges the structures and hierarchies of a state at peace. What does it mean to be a leader in times of civil upheaval? Under what circumstances can would-be leaders undertake criminal action and still be viewed as a positive *exemplum*? Do different virtues of leadership appear in contexts of civil warfare as opposed to war against a foreign population? How do traditional virtues such as *pietas* and *fides* persist as exemplary in a society at war with itself? And, finally, what lasting value do *exempla* drawn from *bellum ciuile* have for a state at peace, especially if these *exempla* are animated by a fundamental confusion between virtue and vice? These four papers respond in diverse ways to the above set of questions as they take us from wars waged on the battlefields of history to struggles inside a discordant community.

This point brings us to our fourth section, "Family, Society, and Self," which tackles similar questions but with a focus on individuals and the bonds between them, familial and otherwise. The four papers included here investigate a set of prominent themes that are familiar as substitutive *loci* for or spurs to civil war: fraternity, inheritance, suicide, and gender. How do fraternal bonds and the question of inheritance replicate in miniature the tensions and fissures within wider civil war narratives? Or, indeed, the opposite: how can these sites of potential familial conflict offer strategies for ameliorating the passions that underlie *bellum ciuile*? What role do women play—as wives, mothers, daughters, or indeed, abstract personifications—in catalyzing and perpetuating social *discordia*, especially as Flavian literature confronts the Augustan inheritance of displacing the guilt of civil war onto the Republic's "women out of control"? Finally, how does society-wide mass suicide (whether actuated through literal suicide or through the killing of family members) literalize civil war's destructive properties while at the same time offering an alternative avenue for its progress?

The final section, "Ruin, Restoration, and Empire," expands outward from the individual, constituent parts of society to examine the grand structures of reality (the entirety of Rome, the entirety of the *orbis*, and even the entirety of the cosmos) and the ways in which they are constructed and dismantled within

the confines of a single text. The three papers, which treat Pliny the Elder, Valerius Flaccus, and Martial, each confront the interrelationship of *urbs* and *orbis* from a different angle, providing productively conflicting images of the relationship between reconciliation, restoration, and ruination. Threading among the chapters, we encounter questions of how a world consumed by war returns to peace, what the changing shape of Roman *imperium* (both geographical and ideological) means for Rome's future, and how the enormity of civil war's effects—and the enormity of the Roman *orbis*—can be contained within a single text. Does cohesion imply stability? Does enormity inevitably lead to collapse?

Such an arrangement of the volume into five parts is meant neither to imply a homogeneity to the interpretive strategies and arguments contained within each section nor to preclude essays within one section from being meaningfully in dialogue with those of another, but rather to emphasize that specific dimension of each individual paper in the context of a dialogue with the other chapters in its section. For this reason, we conclude our introduction with a synthetic and in-depth look at some of the core themes that cut across these categories.

## 4.1 Modes of Allusion

As we mentioned at the outset of our introduction, writing civil war is a fundamentally intertextual project in which previous texts (and previous civil wars) are woven together into new contexts. It thus comes as no surprise to see textual interaction as a primary concern that runs through our various papers, and certainly Lucan and Lucanean poetics cannot but loom large (as explored in our first section of papers). This does not, however, imply a uniformity to allusive readings, and we also see other models emerge which filter Flavian literature's negotiation of civil war's literary memory through other texts, including those of fellow Flavian authors. In addition, the Flavian intertextuality (and intratextuality) traced throughout this volume is polyvalent not just in its literary models, but in its modes of allusion: style, structure, and history itself each become a focus through which allusion produces meaning.

For Marco Fucocchi (ch. 2), Flavian Rome's reception of Lucan must be read in terms of Lucan's own expansion of civil war as a theme from his predecessors. Fucocchi traces an "antiphrastic" mode of intertextuality through which Lucan, Vergil, and other poetic predecessors are pitted agonistically against one another and against themselves; the end result is a response to the *Aeneid* built out of a Lucanean critique of Vergil's oblique and reticent treatment of *bellum civile*, but a response that simultaneously questions Lucan's nightmarish presentation of a

civil war without end. Marco van der Schuur (ch. 7), by contrast, reads Statius's *Thebaid* as a continuation of Seneca's *Phoenissae* (an intertextual relationship also highlighted to different ends in Federica Bessone's chapter, ch. 5) that brings to fruition that play's expected but unachieved fraternal strife by drawing on the "cosmic framework" of another Senecan text, the *Thyestes*, which successfully achieved an open-ended cycle of familial bloodshed and revenge. Both contributors see the Flavian poets as "moving beyond" the texts that are their models (an image also employed by Alison Keith, ch. 14), such that they imbue their model texts with new Flavian meanings. But where van der Schuur locates the successful development of deferred civil war within the borders of Statius's text, Tim Stover (ch. 6) demonstrates how the *Thebaid* can instead retroject an enhanced discourse of civil war back onto a slightly earlier Flavian epic, Valerius's *Argonautica*. Focusing on a single passage of the *Thebaid*, the ecphrastic description of the long-ago creation of Harmonia's necklace, Stover sees Statius as extracting from the *Argonautica* a rarified quintessence of civil war and thereby eliminating any of the earlier epic's ambiguity. Neil Bernstein (ch. 9), meanwhile, proposes not just a reception, but a progressive and developing interaction between Flavian texts that likewise serves to heighten and evoke civil war, adducing a parallel between Silius's Saguntum episode and the duel between Polynices and Eteocles in Statius's *Thebaid* that is most likely a case of "bidirectional" influence between texts that are being composed more or less simultaneously.

In addition to this diversity of models for intertextual reception, we also see a multitude of allusive modes. Bessone (ch. 5), for example, moves us beyond the macro-level of textual interaction to the micro-level of style as she examines how Statius receives a pre-existing symbol-system of tropes, linguistic keywords, and stylistic markers from a wide array of predecessors and adapts them to his own increasingly destabilized and "perverse" poetics of civil war. Alice König (ch. 8) looks at how Frontinus may use the very structure of his exemplary catalogue in allusive ways, allowing his complex system of reference, citation, excerpting, and juxtaposition to evoke for his reader additional historical narratives to the micro- and macro-tales he chooses to tell; and she argues for the availability of such additional narratives for a Flavian audience (just as for a modern critical ear) regardless of authorial intention. And Leo Landrey (ch. 11) demonstrates one way in which history itself can serve as an intertext, showing how Thoas's innovative escape from Lemnos in Valerius's *Argonautica* would recall for its Flavian audience Domitian's similar path as he escaped the burning of the Capitoline during the conflict between Flavian and Vitellian forces; this moment of historical intertextuality then opens up a wider meditation on the traditional role of the Capitoline as guarantor of poetic immortality.

## 4.2 Traumas of Civil War

The question of whether civil war remains equally problematic for the authors of the Flavian period as it did for those who witnessed the fall of the Republic looms large, as does the perennial question of whether civil war—or any aspect of it—can be viewed as healing and restorative. König (ch. 8) introduces the possibility that, for Frontinus at least, civil war may have been a less conspicuous and troubling part of cultural discourse than modern scholarship assumes; and Fucecchi (ch. 2) argues that even while civil war itself is a negative event, the Flavian epics variously suggest that its repetitive occurrence results in a stronger Rome that can better withstand future outbreaks. Ray Marks (ch. 3), meanwhile, proposes that Silius shows those who have successfully made it through their own civil strife helping to halt the unchecked spread of civil war abroad. In both of these latter two cases, the experience of civil war is not itself positive but nevertheless helps to mitigate its own future negativity. On the flip side, John Penwill (ch. 4) argues that the continued existence of autocratic and power-hungry individuals ensures the ongoing recurrence of civil war, and that Valerius sees the newly-instantiated Flavian regime as just one temporary break from such perennial strife in a historical trajectory composed of vicissitudes. Darcy Krasne (ch. 17), much like Penwill, sees Valerius as embedding ongoing Roman civil war into Jupiter's Book 1 *Weltenplan* (V. Fl. 1.531–60), and both draw strongly on Lucanean intertexts to facilitate their readings; but where Penwill argues for visible Flavian analogues with Valerius's characters and circumstances, Krasne argues more globally for the poet's construction of an entire cosmos to which such self-directed aggression, inward collapse, and kin-strife are endemic.

## 4.3 Fragmentation and Restoration

Fragmentation seems to be an inevitable result of civil war's disintegrative impact, but in Flavian literature it likewise butts up against an interest in construction and restoration. Several chapters look both at this process and at the further dialogues that are produced by the resulting juxtaposition of fragments. To begin on the most literal level, two contributors explore Flavian literature's concern with the topographic scars on Rome's landscape and the Flavian program of urban restoration. Landrey (ch. 11) sees in the *Argonautica's* praise of Hypsipyle a lament for the Capitoline's destruction, a "ghost beneath the text that pulls on its



readers' minds"<sup>30</sup> and anticipates yet further need for the restoration and amelioration of civil war's topographic traumas. In a similar vein, Siobhan Chomse (ch. 18) turns our attention to Flavian Rome's most famous topographic landmark: the Colosseum. In her eyes, Martial's commemoration of this structure looks to the ruination of Nero and his Rome and to the *bellum Neronis* which brought the Flavians to power, while simultaneously prefiguring the fragility of the Colosseum as a site of permanence, order, and imperial power.

We also see such concern for fragmentation and restoration on a more metaphorical level within the structures of individual works of literature. Chomse further argues that as Martial engages with the Flavians' stone *monumentum*, he simultaneously constructs his own literary *monumentum* of epigrammatic bricks that in turn range from the (micro)cosmic, containing worlds and multitudes, to the fragmentary, slivers of text torn from Lucan in particular. König (ch. 8) points out the potential for seeing traces of civil war not just within Frontinus's individual *exempla* but also between them, as the organization of his stratagems—each torn individually from the anchoring context of their own narratives—builds up grander structures that replay Rome's history of civil war in piecemeal and unpredictable fashion. Stover (ch. 6) sees Statius as breaking apart Valerius's *Argonautica* to provide individual ingredients for his “witch's brew”<sup>31</sup> of *nefas* (simultaneously Harmonia's necklace and the entire *Thebaid*). Krasne (ch. 17) picks out long-term and permanent loci of civil war and cosmic instability that exist within Jupiter's seemingly stable cosmos, in Valerius's *Argonautica*, arguing that the teleological thrust of humankind within the epic is a cyclical, seemingly inescapable, and ever-expanding progression of civil war that echoes throughout Rome's own *imperium sine fine*. Eleni Manolaraki (ch. 16) argues that Pliny's discussion, in his *Natural History*, of Egyptian flora and fauna and beliefs endeavors to integrate the Roman empire's formerly-diverse parts into a unified and synthesized whole, working against depictions of the empire as a patchwork fabric of dubiously-reconciled adversaries.

## 4.4 Rome Abroad

Manolaraki sees in Pliny's universalizing approach a goal of reducing the otherness of Egypt, traditionally a site for the externalization of Roman civil war<sup>32</sup> but now the site of Vespasian's assumption of *imperium*; and similar Flavian

---

<sup>30</sup> Landrey, p. 236.

<sup>31</sup> Stover, p. 110, quoting Chinn 2011, 81.

<sup>32</sup> See, e.g., Lowrie 2015.

tendencies to diminish differences between Italy and the rest of the world are likewise explored by other contributors. In Fucecchi's view (ch. 2), the epic poets use universalizing strategies to downplay the uniqueness of civil war as a strictly Roman phenomenon, while in König's reading (ch. 8), such universalizing is the result (perhaps intended, perhaps not) of Frontinus's imbrication in his *Strategemata* of *exempla* drawn indiscriminately from domestic, foreign, and civil wars, from all periods and all places.

König's reading, in turn, directs us to a noticeable blurring between foreign and domestic spheres, over and above a more general tendency to Romanize non-Roman characters through behavior, name, or circumstance. In particular, as though in anticipation of debates over the parameters of "civil war" such as we have surveyed above, Flavian literature problematizes how *bellum ciuile* can even be coherently defined in the wake of 69 CE, when the categories of domestic and foreign, *bellum ciuile* and *bellum externum*, had been disturbed by the year-long war among provincial legions and ethnically diverse auxiliaries culminating with an accession made outside Italy.<sup>33</sup> Accordingly, many of the studies in this volume find slippage or even outright conflation between *bellum internum* and *externum*, as well as complex interrogations of ethnicity. In addition to Frontinus, we have already seen how, in Manolaraki's argument, Pliny the Elder downplays the ethnic Otherness of Egypt while simultaneously refiguring Egypt from a site of *bellum ciuile* in its Republican past to a site of fertile integration with the rest of the Flavian empire. On the other hand, Steve Mason's reading of Josephus (ch. 10) sees the Jewish author as building his people and nation into what we might see as the Flavian era's equivalent of Augustan Egypt—a great and old foreign power that mirrors and matches Rome and also serves as a safe exterior locus onto which to displace war, but that is, at the same time, itself prone to internal conflict. Chomse (ch. 18) explores how Martial's epigrams turn the Colosseum into a staging-ground for Flavian imperialism and world wars, replicating foreign diversity within this bounded Roman space; but these wars, as she shows, also look provocatively to Lucan's text, to civil war, and, in so doing, might recall for their audience the most recent fighting that took place in Rome.

The same discourse of domestic and foreign, Roman and Other, also animates this volume's readings of the *Punica*, which together identify an array of Silian approaches to the familiar strategy of situating anxieties externally, a strategy which William Dominik (ch. 13) labels "geographical distancing."<sup>34</sup> Marks (ch. 3) examines how Silius models his sea-battle between Romans and Syracusans, in

<sup>33</sup> This phrase was borrowed from an early draft of Eleni Manolaraki's chapter.

<sup>34</sup> Dominik, p. 273.

*Punica* 14, on Lucan's episode of foreign conflict within civil war, the sea-battle between Caesar and the Massilians. But Marks finds no one-to-one correspondence between the two sets of Romans and their foreign opponents; rather, Silius capitalizes on Lucan's embedded *bellum externum* to create tensions within ethnic and intertextual identities by modelling his own Romans on Lucan's Massilians, his Syracusans on the troops of Lucan's Caesar. Bernstein (ch. 9) likewise demonstrates that the idea of foreignness can be problematic, showing that distancing strategies can also be externally motivated: as he argues, although the Spanish Saguntum boasts a plethora of ties through kinship and treaty with Rome, it "choose[s] to die in a state of deracination"<sup>35</sup> by symbolically severing its ties with Rome before committing mass suicide, in a contradiction of the dominant discourse between the opponents whose war has occupied it and who see it as one of Rome's many "alter-egos"<sup>36</sup> in the poem. As discussed further below, both Jean-Michel Huls (ch. 15) and Alison Keith (ch. 14) identify pervasive and complex intersections of gender and ethnicity, inherited from but developed beyond that established in Augustan literature, that serve to displace the Roman experience of civil war onto a series of Others while also complicating Rome's own identity. And moving from the war's fields of battle to its commanders, Claire Stocks (ch. 12) examines how Silius displaces the concept of brotherhood as a site of instability and discord onto the Carthaginian Other, arguing that Silius devotes special attention to Hannibal's relationships with his brothers Mago and Hasdrubal, over and above the more famous fraternal bonds of the Scipios, to articulate domestic, Roman anxieties about brotherly contests, especially between brothers who hold (or aspire to hold) political power.

## 4.5 Discourses of Gender

This tension and slippage between Roman and Other likewise brings us to a consideration of gendered discourses. As Keith demonstrates (ch. 14), Roman literature since the time of Horace and Vergil was engaged in a complex mapping of civil war onto a gendered system that sought to displace the guilt for discord's recurrence onto the women of Roman society. Moreover, the concomitant rise in public prominence of imperial women and their not-infrequent scandalous ends invited that very gendered system to be negotiated and renegotiated in the literature that would follow. Keith's essay takes us through many core examples of

---

<sup>35</sup> Bernstein, p. 182.

<sup>36</sup> Dominik, p. 274.

this Flavian expansion in gendering civil war, from the central role of the Furies in all three epic poems to the focus on episodes of discord that threaten the masculine structures of the state. A similar interest in such gendered discourse underpins many of the papers in this volume. Fucecchi (ch. 2) sees Flavian epic's wider focus on feminized violence as part of a Lucanean reception that turns, for example, Argia's traditional female virtue into "a negative pattern originating from the darkest side of the Neronian *Pharsalia*,"<sup>37</sup> (e.g., Erictho). Stover (ch. 6), in his focus on Harmonia's disastrous necklace, points to the role of marriage as a site of and catalyst for discord in the epics of Statius and his predecessor Valerius Flaccus (an observation also made by Keith); using the ecphrasis of the necklace's creation as a starting point, Stover then analyzes how these two epic poets create a "palpable sense of dread at the horrific kin-killing that will be unleashed by the marriage"<sup>38</sup> of Medea, Harmonia, and Argia, in turn. Finally, as Hulls (ch. 15) tackles instances of mass-suicide in two Flavian authors, he notes a gendering of violence and survival. In Silius's *Saguntum*, the protagonists who catalyze violence are all female (Fides, Tisiphone, Tiburna), but it is almost exclusively men who perpetrate the act of kin-killing; the Saguntine women, moreover, take on masculine attributes as they direct violence against their own bodies. In Josephus's text, suicide and the drive to it is considered the height of *andreia* while survival is depicted as unmanly; but as a woman leads the survivors of the mass-violence to safety, Josephus points to her masculine qualities. Mason (ch. 10) also dwells briefly on Josephus's dialectic of gender in his parallel account of the Roman and Judaeen civil wars, which portrays the Flavians as repeatedly overcoming opponents who exhibit a negative femininity and excessive lust for power, luxury, and plunder—although it is notable that whereas such traits are straightforward in their Roman opponents (Vitellius and his men), they are deceptive in the Judaeans (the army of John of Gischala), who combine effeminate lust with a masculine approach to slaughter.

## 4.6 Origins and Endings

The question of gendered agency in instigating and perpetuating civil war points us to a wider question at the heart of many papers: what are the origins of civil war, and how does it proceed to infect both Romans and others? The fraught question of its endpoint, by contrast, is less frequently confronted head-on (or it

---

<sup>37</sup> Fucecchi, p. 48.

<sup>38</sup> Stover, p. 114.

is seen as unceasing), attention instead being turned, in several chapters, to Flavian authors' different strategies of mitigating the trauma of civil war's ongoing recurrence. Penwill (ch. 4) sees the origin not of civil war itself, but its international spread, as attendant on the voyage of the Argo and her opening of the seas, as evidenced by Jupiter's apostrophe to the goddess Bellona proclaiming a path made for her through the waves (V. Fl. 1.545–46); and through the marital union of the geographically-opposed Thessaly and Colchis, foreign war irrevocably becomes civil war.<sup>39</sup> Krasne (ch. 17), however, in addressing the same poem, reads civil war as innate to both the cosmos itself and the human race that inhabits it. Dominik (ch. 13) argues that Silius situates multiple points of Roman civil war's genesis throughout the events of the Second Punic War, from the defeat at Cannae to the eventual defeat of Hannibal, while also painting the portrait of a *populus Romanus* that already possessed the necessary character to descend into—and welcome—civil strife. Bernstein (ch. 9), Bessone (ch. 5), Keith (ch. 14), Landrey (ch. 11), and van der Schuur (ch. 7) note various instances of the direct divine instigation of civil strife on a more localized level, in a pervasive resurrection and reimagining of Juno and Allecto's instigation of war in the *Aeneid*; among them are Fides and Tisiphone instigating mass suicide at Saguntum in Silius's *Punica*; Fama announcing Polynices' Argive marriage at Thebes in Statius's *Thebaid*; Tisiphone provoking civil war at Thebes in stages throughout *Thebaid* 7; and the efforts of Venus and Fama on Lemnos in Valerius's *Argonautica* (or Venus and the human Polyxo in Statius's recounting of the same events).

Marks (ch. 3) connects a city's internal equilibrium to its ability to triumph (or fail) in foreign war, but also to its leaders' ability to stem civil strife elsewhere: just as civil war spreads from one society to another like a sickness (an image also profitably used by Fucecchi, ch. 2, and parallel to the interpersonal contagion of civil strife explored by Keith, ch. 14),<sup>40</sup> so too can its successful abatement have a ripple-effect. The end of the actual text, in connection with the civil war it contains, also receives some scrutiny: as discussed above, van der Schuur (ch. 7) argues that Statius produces civil war within his text in a fashion that completes the open-ended text of Seneca's *Phoenissae*, while heightening the apparent potential for multiple outcomes within his own text (including the successful aversion of war); and Penwill (ch. 4) situates the potential for endless civil war in the

---

<sup>39</sup> Stover, too, sees the marriage of Jason and Medea as an inceptive moment of “original sin” (p. 115), at least in the refining hands of Statius.

<sup>40</sup> One might be tempted to see a metaphorical parallel for such a spread of civil war in König's suggestion that Frontinus's sporadic groupings of civil war *exempla* result from a sort of mental contagion, as “one civil war story made him think of another” (p. 165).

(seemingly?) endless text of Valerius's *Argonautica*, which is, for him, itself constructed as a recollection of the endless *Bellum Civile*.

Attention is also paid to the specific origin of the civil wars of 69 CE, or at least to the *bellum civile* waged by Vespasian. Complicating the image of Josephus as a Flavian mouthpiece, Mason (ch. 10) shows how the historian draws unexpected attention to Vespasian's agency and strategy in initiating a new civil war against Vitellius, one which he suggests was driven by personal animosity and ὄργη (a convenient synonym for our well-known *furor*?); at the same time, Josephus offers a counter-narrative to the Flavian foundation-myth of spontaneous acclamation in Alexandria which becomes, in the historian's narrative, another example of shrewd Vespasianic stage-direction. Mason's chapter thus allows us to interrogate the myths of origin promoted by the Flavian dynasty and their attempts to control how the "end" of the civil wars of 69 CE would be remembered.

## 4.7 The Imperial Family

So, too, several papers tackle Flavian literature's engagement with the imperial family whom these civil wars brought to power. On Mason's reading, Josephus gives us a character-portrait of a Vespasian who is wily, dogged, and distrustful, at times appearing as a foil to Josephus himself. Penwill (ch. 4) views the *Argonautica*'s opening encomium to Vespasian as bringing Rome's new *princeps* into a productive tension with Jason, a man whose quest is driven by an initial drive to avoid civil war and yet who finds himself continually in a Lucanean narrative. Dominik (ch. 13) sees Silius as hinting at the apotheosized Vespasian in his closing divinization of Scipio, with the result that Silius's earlier destabilizations of the positivity of apotheosis, particularly the apotheosis of the "key figure and symbol of civil war,"<sup>41</sup> Julius Caesar, also color the poet's generally-positive images of Vespasian and his dynasty. Moving from Vespasian to his sons, Stocks (ch. 12) views the *Punica*'s focus on brothers-in-arms as responding to a wider imperial iconography of fraternal harmony that was championed by Augustus and rejuvenated by Vespasian in an attempt to solidify power, as well as, more generally, "the complications involved in the combination of family and state";<sup>42</sup> and Keith (ch. 14), too, sees the widespread "displacement of responsibility" for internecine strife in the Flavian epics as reflective of "the Vespasianic family

---

<sup>41</sup> Dominik, p. 292.

<sup>42</sup> Stocks, p. 255.

narrative”<sup>43</sup> that promoted masculinity and the stern *mos maiorum* through legislation and rhetoric. Landrey (ch. 11), meanwhile, as mentioned above, reads into Valerius’s Lemnian slaughter a sustained allusion to Domitian’s escape from the burning Capitoline, weaving memories of the young Flavian prince into his overtly mythological narrative. But the Flavian *gens* and the civil wars that brought it to power can also be conspicuously ignored, as König (ch. 8) argues of Frontinus’s near-total (but not absolute) erasure of contemporary *exempla* from his collection of military stratagems. Indeed, such a resounding silence makes the few exceptions speak all the more loudly, and through their placement and content, they seem to prompt readers to “reflect a little more closely on what it means to be a successful Roman *imperator* ... in the Flavian present,”<sup>44</sup> with all the unexpressed but looming potential of civil war that such a role, by now, inevitably calls to mind.

What emerges from these intersecting but divergent readings is a polyphonic corpus of literature that betrays a pervasive concern for Rome’s Flavian future and the civil wars of its recent past. No collection such as the one we offer here could be the final word on the subject of civil war in Flavian literature nor be exhaustive in its coverage; indeed, we anticipate that this volume will raise as many questions as it set out to answer. Through these 17 papers, we aim to foster dialogue and debate while setting the stage for reintegrating the Flavian era into wider discussions of Rome’s literature of civil war and for articulating Flavian Rome’s particular contribution to that literature.

Lauren Donovan Ginsberg / Darcy A. Krasne

---

<sup>43</sup> Keith, p. 320.

<sup>44</sup> König, p. 174.





---

## Part I: **Lucanean Lenses**



Marco Fucecchi

## Flavian Epic: Roman Ways of Metabolizing a Cultural Nightmare?

The nightmare alluded to in the title is obviously civil war: the original sin, the curse, the ancestral crime (*scelus*) of the Roman people, as it is represented by some of the most important voices of Augustan literature.<sup>1</sup> In fact, when recalling the horrors and tragedies of the recent past, Horace and Vergil mostly display gratitude towards the Princesps who restored peace and morality. Some decades later, under Nero, Lucan's *Pharsalia* brings again to the fore the internecine strife that sanctioned the end of the Republican age, thus reopening deep wounds that the *Aeneid* had left unhealed. Moreover, after the so-called "year of the four Emperors" (69 CE), civil war still proves to be a crucial and topical issue: the Flavian epic revival highlights the pervasiveness of such an archetypal theme of the Roman culture, but it also tries to settle accounts with it.

Vergil's *Aeneid* starts well before Rome's foundation myth (i.e., Romulus's fratricide) and traces the nightmare back to the time of the Trojans and Latins. The notion of civil war is deeply rooted in the conflict between these two seeds from which the Romans will spring (Books 7–12). However it also has a broader reach, such that it even affects the poem's first half. During Troy's final night, Aeneas and his comrades take the shields of their Greek victims and, soon after, become the target of the Trojan defenders: *hic primum ex alto delubri culmine telis | nostrorum obruimur oriturque miserrima caedes | armorum facie et Graiarum errore iubarum* ("Now's the first time we are crushed by our own side's volleys of missiles launched from the shrine's high roof. It's the start of a pitiful slaughter caused by the misjudged look of our arms, by our helmets with Greek crests,"

---

This article develops and enhances some ideas in the paper I delivered at the conference *Lecture e lettori di Lucano* (University of Salerno, 27–29 March 2012), now published as Fucecchi 2015. Together with the analysis of new passages, I intend to give a more balanced as well as nuanced assessment of complex issues which my current research focuses on.

---

<sup>1</sup> For the notion of Rome's original *scelus* in Augustan poetry, see, e.g., Hor. *Epod.* 7.18, *Carm.* 1.2.29; Verg. *Ecl.* 4.13, *G.* 1.406. See Bessone 2011, 59–60, as well as, in this volume, Bessone (pp. 91, 102–3, 105) and, more specifically on gender relations, Keith (pp. 297–300). By contrast with this Augustan theme, the Republican sources recollected by Wiseman 2010 (Varro, Lucretius, Sallust, and Cicero) display a perception of civil war as a "recent and anomalous phenomenon" (25) that can be traced back no earlier than to the age of the Gracchi.

Verg. A. 2.410–12).<sup>2</sup> The same pathetic phrase (*miserrima caedes*) occurs only once again in the poem, during the account of the war in Latium when, after Camilla's death, the Italic cavalry is forced to withdraw hastily (Verg. A. 11.879–86):

qui cursu portas primi inrupere patentis,  
 hos inimica super mixto premit agmine turba, 880  
 nec miseram effugiunt mortem, sed limine in ipso  
 moenibus in patriis atque inter tuta domorum  
 confixi exspirant animas. pars claudere portas,  
 nec sociis aperire uiam nec moenibus audent  
 accipere orantis, oriturque *miserrima caedes* 885  
 defendentum armis aditus inque arma ruentum.

Gates have been opened. The first wave of fugitives bursts within, sprinting, pressed by a raging mob of the foe, mixed in with their own lines. Failing to flee a pathetic death on their very own thresholds: on their homeland's walls or in safe rooms within their own houses. Skewered by spear-thrusts, they gasp out their souls. Some rash individuals slam the gates shut. They don't dare keep escape within city defences open to comrades who plead for admittance. A hideous slaughter follows. The swords that the fugitives rush on are swords of defenders blocking their access.

In both cases, amid the blinding frenzy of war, the defenders of a besieged city are led to desperately engage in battle with their own comrades and, unconsciously, end up helping their enemies: the Trojans wrongly believe that they are fighting against a platoon of the Greek invaders, while the citizens of Laurentum deliberately prevent their own troops from entering the gates of the city, striking them as if they and their pursuers were one and the same thing.

Obviously, Vergil also engages in the *Aeneid* with the implications of the civil war theme for his own time. The *ecphrasis* of the battle of Actium on Aeneas's shield (A. 8.675–728), being the most conspicuous foray into the future of the whole poem, finds itself at odds with the two previous examples. Thanks to the ostentatious appropriation of a leitmotif in Augustan propaganda, the interne-cine struggle for power between Mark Antony and Octavian becomes the final act of a *bellum externum*: next to Romans dressed like Egyptians (Verg. A. 8.685), true foreign enemies like Cleopatra now begin to appear, as well as monstrous divinities like Anubis, who fight against the Olympian gods (Verg. A. 8.698–708).

---

<sup>2</sup> *miserrima caedes*, “*quia inter ciues*,” as Servius *ad loc.* explains. *Error* (confusion, mistake) here stands out as a word-theme: at first, an *error* causes the Greek soldiers to be overpowered by the Trojans; soon after, instead, Aeneas and his comrades become victims of the *error* of their fellow citizens. Translations of the *Aeneid* are from Ahl 2007.

The above passages are representative of the *Aeneid*'s different ways of indirectly approaching and foreshadowing a delicate issue such as civil war, an issue that it almost never tackles explicitly but that constantly flows under its surface.<sup>3</sup> In fact, the way such implications sporadically emerge within the text reveals a twofold strategy. On the one hand, the poet's attempt to exorcize this nightmare seeks to reassure readers, leading them to appreciate the world peace finally achieved by Augustus. At the same time, however, mostly when representing characters as being unaware of the consequences of their actions, Vergil hints at the risk that any war might restlessly shimmer into a civil conflict, leading to a sudden, undesirable setback in the difficult recovery from the disease contracted by Roman society. Intentional or not, the final effect of these suggestions could be considered an ancient acknowledgment of the return of the repressed.<sup>4</sup>

By contrast, Lucan is anything but reticent and indirect. He rewinds the tape and the nightmare happens again in all its cruel reality: his empathic narrative technique erases any epic distance. Making readers relive the "collective suicide," i.e., the collapse of the Roman Republic, is a paradoxical way to problematize the topicality of civil war, which is controversially presented as the hard but necessary premise of political change and the inevitable step towards the instauration of monarchy. Civil war led to the birth of the Empire, just as Jupiter's power was the result of his victory over the Giants.<sup>5</sup> But what do these words imply? Perhaps a poem at war with itself. The traumatic process of constructing an empire inevitably contrasts with the final result, which, despite its magnificence, cannot completely obliterate its origin: the perception of this result will be inevitably influenced by the process itself.

Moreover, Lucan's *Pharsalia* also seems to display a prophetic quality, as an involuntary anticipation of the events of 69 CE: in this sense, it represents a modern, provocative interlocutor for the Flavian epic poems, which constantly deal with this topic at various levels. In fact, Valerius Flaccus, Statius, and Silius draw largely upon this new classic of the epic genre (along with Ovid's *Metamorphoses*) in order to mark their own position within the canon and forestall the reductive

3 On the civil war theme (and its ambiguities) in the *Aeneid*, see Giusti 2016, 37–55.

4 Hardie 2016, 14, notes that "repression is a recurrent response in Augustan poetry to the problem of the irrational, but the repressed has a way of returning."

5 *quod si non aliam uenturo fata Neroni | inuenere uiam magnoque aeterna parantur | regna deis caelumque suo seruire Tonanti | non nisi saeuorum potuit post bella gigantum, | iam nihil, o superi, querimur; scelera ipsa nefasque | hac mercede placent* ("But if the Fates could find, to bring forth Nero, no other way, and eternal kingdoms cost gods dearly, nor heaven be slave to its Thunderer unless the savage Giants had lost the wars—by god, we don't complain; those crimes, the guilt, are pleasing at this price," Luc. 1.33–38). Translations of Lucan's *Pharsalia* are from Fox 2012.

label of Vergilian imitators. Unlike Lucan, however, they prefer to look at civil war from a relatively more distant viewpoint, i.e., through the filter of myth or ancient Roman history (earlier than the 1st c. BCE),<sup>6</sup> and tend to embed civil war within a larger context. Such a twofold strategy, which I suggest ultimately aims to neutralize (or even exorcize) the negative force originating from the *Pharsalia* and its explicit provocation, enables these post-Vergilian epicists to position themselves as post-Lucanean voices as well.

In Flavian epic poetry, civil war is still represented as a tragic phenomenon constantly affecting human societies in different ages and contexts, an almost inevitable step in the process of their socio-political growth.<sup>7</sup> However, it always looks framed, almost relativized, by other events; it is, in effect, finally overcome so as to prevent readers from thinking that it is a definitive and inescapable end, after which there is no tomorrow. This seems to apply to the *Thebaid* in particular, where—after eleven books dominated by the forces of evil (with only rare, though illuminating, examples of humanity and virtue)—the epilogue stages Theseus's restoration of moral order (*pietas*, *fides*, etc.) in Thebes, dramatizing the final victory of epic over tragedy. But the same could be probably said of Silius's and Valerius's epic narratives, where civil war is not expected to have a programmatic function. Scipio's final triumph in the *Punica* sanctions Carthage's defeat as well as the (only temporary) end of the internal discord that is already emerging in Rome. The seed of future internecine strife, displayed by the rivalry between the consuls, has also caused the disaster of Cannae, i.e., the worst defeat suffered by Rome during the Second Punic War. However, this tragic event, situated at the very center of Silius's poem, is endowed with the underlying meaning of a collective *deuotio*, a sacrifice that paves the way to the final victory.

For his part, Valerius Flaccus's Jason, a young apprentice-leader, chooses not to stir up an internal revolt against his uncle Pelias and instead accepts the mission imposed by the Thessalian tyrant. Once arrived in Colchis, he is involved in a fratricidal contest between the king Aeetes and his brother Perses. Without actually affecting the traditional plot,<sup>8</sup> this unprecedented war provides a new setting for Medea's falling in love with the Greek hero. The latter accomplishes his task (the conquest of the Golden Fleece) by taking advantage of the gods' support, as is usually the case in epic poetry. Nonetheless, Jason also relies upon his

---

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., Marks 2010b and Dominik in this volume.

<sup>7</sup> See, in particular, the chapters by Keith and Dominik in this volume.

<sup>8</sup> The king of Colchis will not keep his promise to give Jason the Golden Fleece, and in Book 7, the Greek hero will still have to deal with Aeetes' monsters, just as in Apollonius's poem.

own human qualities: strength and heroic prowess, but also firmness, self-sacrifice, sagacity, and diplomatic wisdom.

To sum up: after Lucan (and after the crisis of 69 CE leading to the advent of the Flavian dynasty), civil war positions itself as a constant presence in epic poetry, which is also symptomatic of the need to “metabolize,” in my terminology, this nightmare of Roman history and culture.

Even so, Flavian epic’s revival is not characterized by nostalgia, nor is it only interested in rediscovering the “better past.” The act itself of distancing civil war from the immediate present does not imply neutralizing the apocalyptic consequences of the *Pharsalia* nor envisaging a totally unproblematic future. On the contrary, the Flavian epicists take into due account Lucan’s delegitimization of the Augustan myths as well as his way of giving voice to doubts and obsessions that undermine the ideology of the *Aeneid*. In fact, these “belated” poets often warn of the risk of relapsing into that notorious nightmare, foregrounding at the same time the cohesive role played by moral values (and exemplified by the behavior of paradigmatic leaders) as a deterrent to the collapse of society.

In this chapter, I illustrate some aspects of the earliest reception of the *Pharsalia* to show how the epic poems of the late 1st c. CE—while paying homage to Vergil’s authority—actually seem to go well beyond him (and, to some extent, beyond Augustus as well) by responding to some issues raised by Lucan.<sup>9</sup> The way in which the Flavian epicists look at Lucan as the new counterclassical model of the Neronian age shows to what extent they aim to both assert their own primacy in the genre as well as indirectly celebrate the advent of a new age and a new ruling dynasty. For this purpose, instead of surveying the presence of (Lucanean-style) civil war in Flavian epic, it will be even more useful to see how Silius, Valerius, and Statius respectively react to the numerous tangential allusions to their own subject matter that are scattered throughout their Neronian model. The manifold ways in which they incorporate and even “correct” Lucan’s references to the Second Punic War and to the Argonautic and Theban myths represent important indirect responses to the *Pharsalia* and its irredeemable darkness. Once exploited in order to contest the primacy of the (more reticent) *Aeneid*, the corrosive potential of civil war as an epic theme looks as though it has been finally absorbed and even framed into new constructions aimed at inverting Lucan’s negative polarity. After surviving the last civil war of 69 CE, the Flavian epicists may perhaps feel authorized in approaching the *Pharsalia* from this inclusive and corrective viewpoint.

---

<sup>9</sup> Like Ovid (to quote the words used by Barchiesi 2001), Lucan too proves to be a “mighty source of alternative energy” for the Flavian epicists, a source whose potential they can exploit to (partially) redeem themselves from their own belatedness (see also Herschkowitz 1998b).

# 1 Silius and Lucan: Cannae (and Pharsalus)

In Silius's *Punica*, the interaction between Vergilian and Lucanean models brings about the coexistence of Republican nostalgia, in particular the longing for the ancient virtues that made Rome stronger and bigger, together with an awareness of the difficult evolution of the state, characterized by an alternating sequence of light and dark: the traumatic age of civil war ended by Augustus's advent and the consequent period of peace; the crisis of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, with its autocratic developments modelled upon Oriental-style despotism; and finally, the ascent of the Flavian emperors with the restoration of peace, morality and order. Neronian epic, in particular, appears to be most directly responsible for Silius's peculiar interest in the theme of internecine strife, which retroactively affects the treatment of the second war against Carthage, providing the narrative with a "threatening subplot."<sup>10</sup>

The Cannae episode represents perhaps the most relevant example or, even better, the structural hub of this strategy. The account of the tragic Roman defeat occupies the core of the poem's architecture, i.e., Books 8 to 10. This stands in sharp contrast with the distribution of narrative material in Livy's third decade, where the year 216 BCE, culminating in the battle of Cannae, covers the second half of Book 22. In situating the Cannae episode halfway through his *Punica*, Silius is probably alluding to Ennius's *Annales*,<sup>11</sup> in which that battle also lies at the center of the poem's structure. From a slightly different viewpoint, however, the Flavian author may also be responding to the "provocative" centrality that Lucan attributes to the battle of Pharsalus: a centrality through which the Neronian poem—with its antagonistic emulative gesture—may have challenged the architecture of Ennius's historical epic itself.

In fact, Silius's triad of books devoted to Cannae features a large number of allusions which embrace the whole complex of Lucan's *Pharsalia*.<sup>12</sup> However,

---

<sup>10</sup> See Dominik in this volume.

<sup>11</sup> Ennius seems to have included the account of Cannae in his Book 8, i.e., at the core of the central triad (Books 7–9) devoted to the Second Punic war in the poem's first edition of fifteen books. See Skutsch 1985, 366; Fucecchi 2006b, 313 n. 12.

<sup>12</sup> The debt of Silius's Cannae episode towards Lucan's *Pharsalia* starts from the outset of the latter: e.g., the whole prophetic section containing the negative omens as well as the words of the soldier announcing Rome's defeat (Sil. 8.622–76) joins together the series of prodigies in Luc. 1.522–83 and the prophecy of the frenzied *matrona* (Luc. 1.673–95) to finally reach the eve of the battle at Pharsalus (7.151–84): see Marks 2010a, 135. More generally, about the problematic relationship between Lucan's civil war and some episodes of Silius's *Punica* (respectively the fall



there is a particularly strong relationship with Lucan's account of Pharsalus in Book 7, both in terms of the overall episode as well as in terms of numerous affinities between the main characters. The "Roman Hannibal"<sup>13</sup> and Caesar share the same outrageous confidence in victory, which serves to stir up the warlike fury of their soldiers. Compare, for example, Caesar's exhortation to his troops (*uos tamen hoc oro, iuuenes, ne caedere quisquam | hostis terga uelit: ciuis qui fugerit esto. | sed, dum tela micant, non uos pietatis imago ulla nec aduersa conspecti fronte parentes | commoueant*, "But I implore you, men, don't cut down any enemy in the back! Whoever flees, count him your fellow citizen. But as long as weapons flash, don't let any shadow of piety move you, not even if you see your father in the enemy's front ranks," Luc. 7.318–22) with Hannibal's to his allies (*dextram Ausonia si caede cruentam | attolles, hinc iam ciuis Carthaginis esto*, "if any of you lift up a hand red with Roman blood, he shall be henceforth a citizen of Carthage," Sil. 9.210–11).<sup>14</sup> Then, after the battle, the leaders both walk across the battlefield looking proudly at the spectacle of the carnage (*iuuat Emathiam non cernere terram | et lustrare oculis campos sub clade latentes*, "[Caesar] likes that he can't see Emathia's ground and that his eyes take stock of fields hidden beneath a massacre," Luc. 7.794–95; cf. *lustrabat campos et saevae tristia dextrae | facta recensebat pertractans uulnera uisu*, "[Hannibal] was riding over the battlefield, reviewing his dreadful handiwork and feasting his eyes upon wounds," Sil. 10.450–51). Another important affinity ties the Roman consuls at Cannae, Paulus and Varro, to the strange couple formed by Pompey and Cicero. In both cases the resigned voice of good sense (that of Pompey and Paulus, respectively) is inevitably condemned to be overpowered by demagogic folly, while readers begin to understand the ruinous consequences of internecine contest.<sup>15</sup>

However, what does the overlap of the two tragic episodes actually mean for Silius? Are we to believe that the battle of Cannae is implicitly to be considered a

---

of Saguntum and the conquest of Syracuse by Marcellus), see Bernstein, Marks, and Dominik in this volume.

**13** The title of Claire Stocks's recent monograph (Stocks 2014) enables me both to point to the "Caesarian" (i.e., Lucanean) character of Silius's Hannibal (this is mostly true until his victory at Cannae at least, but see also Sil. 17.605–15) and to refer to the "Hannibalic" trait Lucan injects into his Caesar so as to present him as the perfect heir to Rome's worst enemy.

**14** Translations of Silius's *Punica* are from Duff 1934.

**15** See especially Cicero's words (Luc. 7.62–85) and Varro's reported speech (Sil. 9.1–7; cf. also Liv. 22.43–44). Furthermore, we should not forget the chain of internecine murders between father and sons in the episode of Satricus, Solymus, and Mancinus that immediately precedes the battle (Sil. 9.66–177 with Fucecchi 1999). In general, for the interrelation between Lucan and Silius, see Meyer 1924, Brouwers 1982, and Marks 2010a.

proleptic announcement of the crisis leading to Pharsalus (and Philippi)? This is probably true, but—in my view at least—it is only one side of the issue. The fact that such a tragic event suggests and effectively introduces the seeds of civil strife—resulting in the dispute between the two consuls—does not reflect its full meaning. The Roman defeat at Cannae also has to provide the example of a paradigmatic sacrifice, a kind of collective *deuotio*, which—while sanctioning the symbolic martyrdom of the heroic Paulus—ends up absolving Varro himself and his irrational conduct. In fact, the painful episode culminates in a celebration of the recovered harmony within the social body: when coming back to Rome—like a helmsman who survived a shipwreck, while the crew perished (Sil. 10.608–12)—Varro receives solidarity from the Senate, led by Fabius Maximus *Cunctator*, and the Roman people, and he is restored to his place within the community. Thus, Cannae’s defeat proves to have produced (almost immediately) the necessary “antibodies” that will lead Rome to the final victory against the Carthaginians and enable her to face the difficult trials of both the near and distant future.<sup>16</sup>

Roman culture had long since begun the “sanctification” of that terrible carnage: from Polybius (6.58) to Cicero (*Off.* 3.47) to the resigned voice of Horace’s Hannibal (*Carm.* 4.4.61–76). Silius goes even a step further: such an extreme sacrifice, as a κτῆμα ἐς αἰεί, will sanction Rome’s dignity to gain world primacy in the future. This concept emerges for the first time in Jupiter’s words to Venus (Sil. 3.584–90), where the name of Paulus features with those of Marcellus and Fabius in the series of heroes who are to make Rome “more glorious for her calamities” (*nobilior ... malis*, Sil. 3.584). These heroes, “by their defeats (*per uulnera*), will gain for Latium an empire so great, that their descendants will be unable to overthrow it, for all their luxury and degenerate hearts” (*hi tantum parient Latio per uulnera regnum, | quod luxu et multum mutata mente nepotes | non tamen euertisse queant*, Sil. 3.588–90).<sup>17</sup>

Thereafter, the same motif will resonate twice at Cannae. At the core of the event (Sil. 9.346ff.), the narrator invites Rome to “bless those wounds” (*adora uulnera*, Sil. 9.350) which will forever bring her glory: “For never shalt thou be greater than then” (*nam tempore, Roma, | nullo maior eris*, Sil. 9.351–52).<sup>18</sup> Then, at the end of the central triad of books, he comments on the first signs of Rome’s

<sup>16</sup> For an opposing view, see Dominik in this volume.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Verg. A. 12.435–36 (Aeneas to Ascanius): *disce, puer, uirtutem ex me uerumque laborem, | fortunam ex aliis* (“learn from me, lad, what courage involves and the meaning of effort. Others can teach you of Fortune”). Troy’s destruction is the prerequisite for a great future (Aeneas is a “patient” hero, the hero of grief).

<sup>18</sup> “Later victories”—the voice continues—“shall sap thy strength, till naught but the story of thy defeats (*sola cladum ... fama*) shall preserve thy fame” (Sil. 9.353).

rebirth: troops made up of child soldiers and deserters condemned to undergo forced military service in Sicily (*haec tum Roma fuit. post te cui uertere mores | si stabat fatis, potius, Carthago, maneres*, “such was Rome in those days; and, if it was fated that the Roman character should change when Carthage fell, would that Carthage were still standing!” Sil. 10.657–58). This is both a challenging and celebratory claim. In fact, Carthage will definitively fall, and the victorious Rome, too, will understand the unpleasant meaning of moral decline. However, the tragic experience of Cannae has taught the Romans how to suffer and learn from their mistakes so as to raise their heads again: this is also a way of showing to what extent the *Punica* highlights the worst Roman defeat ever, both as the principal reason for the victory over Carthage and as the fundamental premise of a great future. The heroic expiatory sacrifice performed by a single leader (Paulus) stands out as a paradigm for both the troops and the generations to follow. Grief and pain are the necessary preconditions for apotheosis: this is true for the Second Punic War as well as the remainder of Roman history, afflicted by the disease of civil war.

At the same time, such an encomiastic paradox, which invites us to look at Cannae’s tragic carnage as the first step of Rome’s resurrection, is a typically Flavian way of reacting to Lucan’s provocative rereading of this military disaster in merely consolatory terms. At the beginning of *Pharsalia* Book 2, while marching to the theater of civil war between Marius and Sulla, the respective troops address their just complaint to the cruel gods: *o miserae sortis, quod non in Punica nati | tempora Cannarum fuimus Trebiaequae iuuentus* (“What a pitiful lot to not be born in the times of the Punic Wars, to fight at Cannae and Trebia!” Luc. 2.45–46). Drawing upon Aeneas’s *makarismos* of the fallen at Troy in Vergil,<sup>19</sup> the Roman soldiers lament being condemned to fight in a war where glory has no place and death itself is meaningless. It would be better to satiate the ghost of Hannibal and its thirst for posthumous vengeance, as the narrator will explicitly say when commenting on Curio’s defeat in Africa.<sup>20</sup> Accordingly, from Lucan’s perspective,

<sup>19</sup> *o terque quaterque beati, | quis ante ora patrum Troiae sub moenibus altis | contigit oppetere!* (“Greater by three, even four times, the blessing chance gave those with the fortune to die beneath Troy’s mighty ramparts under their fathers’ gaze!” Verg. A. 1.94–96). It is worth noticing that Aeneas pronounces these words during “the archetypal episode of an outbreak of *furor* suppressed,” as Hardie 2016, 4–5, defines the storm scene which opens the *Aeneid*.

<sup>20</sup> *excitet inuisas dirae Carthaginis umbras | inferiis fortuna nouis, ferat ista cruentus | Hannibal et Poeni tam dira piacula manes. | Romanam, superi, Libyca tellure ruinam | Pompeo prodesse nefas uotisque senatus. | Africa nos potius uincat sibi* (“Fortune, wake the spiteful ghosts of fallen Carthage for these grim new sacrifices! May they appease cruel Hannibal and the Punic shades!

even the tragic Roman defeat at Cannae is a relatively positive counterpart to the slaughter of civil war, as it represents a better way to die: a noble, even glorious sacrifice whose meaning, however, is confined to the narrow, sterile sphere of lament. If Cannae can no longer be conceived of as the nadir of Roman history, it is only because the following tragedy of civil war—whose climactic point is represented by the battle of Pharsalus—shows that there is much worse.

For Silius, too, Cannae is a synonym of civic tragedy: the rivalry between the two consuls, Paulus and Varro, provides a first eloquent example of the consequences of internal discord. Yet the unlucky battle is neither the beginning of the end for Rome nor only to be evoked as a (paradoxical) consolatory term of reference. As a collective *deuotio*, Cannae will open up the road to the *Urbs*'s rejuvenation. By making Rome's worst defeat both the perturbing signal of the imminent crisis and the greatest victory of the Roman spirit of self-sacrifice, the *Punica* invites readers to look more confidently at the future. As the first manifestation of the dangerous disease which will nearly destroy the body of the state, Cannae undoubtedly anticipates Pharsalus (together with the succession fights of 69 CE). However, after tracing the nightmare of civil war back to the more glorious period of Republican history (and thus expanding the "negative" influence of the Neronian *Pharsalia*), the *Punica* also shows that it still is possible to rise up again. Thanks to this Flavian resemiotization, Cannae's defeat provides the antidote which will allow Rome to survive the civil wars of the future, even those that Lucan could not forecast.

## 2 Geographical Explorations and Political Expansion: the Argonautic Alternative to Civil War

Valerius Flaccus's *Argonautica*, probably the earliest among the Flavian epic poems,<sup>21</sup> takes us from Republican history to the most ancient Greek myth and once again raises the problem of its later reception and interpretation. The primacy of the Apollonian version of the Argonautic saga was contested in Rome by the time of Catullus 64, if not earlier.<sup>22</sup> In the early Imperial Age, Valerius Flaccus's poem

---

Gods above, what a sin to make Libyan soil the site of a Roman ruin, for Pompey, to serve the Senate's will. Instead, let Africa conquer us for herself," Luc. 4.788–93).

21 Stover 2012.

22 Before Catullus (64.11), the Argo seems to have been already presented as the "first ship" in the *Argonautica* of Varro Atacinus (Ov. *Am.* 1.15.21–22).

plays an important role in that contest: not only because it shares with Catullus the emphasis given to the Argo as the first ship (which is typical of the Roman poetic tradition), but also because it grants unusually ample space to war, and civil war in particular. At the outset of the heroic age, fratricidal strife for power already appears as an endemic phenomenon, encompassing the whole world (which is still a non-Roman world): from Thessaly, the western starting point of this myth, to Colchis in the far east. The voyage of the Argo links these two extreme poles, where civil war is constantly about to happen (e.g., in Greece, where Jason decides, however, not to settle accounts with Pelias immediately) or is actually taking place (when Jason lands in Colchis, Perses has already launched his attack on Aeetes' kingdom). Thus the Flavian poet almost provides a mythical background for Lucan's claustrophobic image of the future world invaded and torn by (Roman) civil war.

If great emphasis is laid upon the opening of the seas as the primeval factor of war's diffusion throughout the world according to Jupiter's plan (*uia facta per undas | perque hiemes, Bellona, tibi*, "for you, Bellona, has a path been fashioned through the billows and through storms," V. Fl. 1.545–46),<sup>23</sup> we need to say that Valerius's remarkable interest in this topic does not fundamentally destabilize the traditional Argonautic plot, at least so far as we can tell from the state of tradition.<sup>24</sup> The narrative representation of the Colchian war in Book 6 is probably the most impressive result of the poet's engagement in reshaping the saga, and (as in Silius's *Punica*) it may be considered a tribute to Lucan's poem, which challenges the "inclusive" ambitions of the new Flavian epics. Within such a context, Jason has more opportunities to display his heroic stature, which is undeniably enhanced in comparison with his Apollonian *alter ego*.<sup>25</sup> However, the Colchian (fratricidal) war does no more than cause a delay and produces only indirect, though not negligible, consequences.<sup>26</sup> Medea enters the narrative as a pivotal character who will again play a decisive role. Such an element ends up reducing the distance between the old and the new Jason: thus, as is the case for the

<sup>23</sup> Translations of Valerius's *Argonautica* are from Mozley 1934.

<sup>24</sup> For a good assessment of the unfinished (rather than incomplete) state of Valerius's *Argonautica*, see Hershkovitz 1998b, 1–35.

<sup>25</sup> Hershkovitz 1998b; Stover 2012. Cf. Hunter 1993a and Clauss 1993 on Apollonius's Jason.

<sup>26</sup> At 6.427–54 Juno's intervention sanctions the inefficacy of war as way of resolving the impasse and leaves room for a fundamental change: Medea's involvement in the action. More specifically on civil war in Valerius's *Argonautica* (as well as its ensuing engagement with Lucan's poem), see Buckley 2010 and the chapters by Keith, Krasne, Landrey, Penwill, and Stover in this volume.

Hellenistic model, the Flavian *Argonautica* will also have to deal with the task of defining the character of the epic hero and his set of qualities.

Apollonius's poem was more centered on the opposition between two types of leadership, respectively embodied by Heracles, the champion of archaic, individual, and old-fashioned heroism, and Jason, portrayed as a modern exemplary hero. The Flavian remake of the Greek myth still presupposes such a difference, but it rather stages a dialectic negotiation between these two patterns. The result of this negotiation is inevitably influenced by the distinctive set of Roman or, rather, quintessentially Flavian values. From the outset, Valerius's Jason is credited with a great reputation for his virtue, which is a major source of concern for his uncle Pelias.<sup>27</sup> The young son of Aeson stands as the first exponent of a new generation of post-Herculean (rather than merely anti-Herculean) heroes who exploit their human qualities to the limits, without relying upon superhuman powers or miraculous devices of divine origin.<sup>28</sup> More explicitly than in Apollonius, this Flavian Jason expects to be involved in warfare (i.e., a war in an unknown land, against a foreign enemy), and eventually he will be, like the Vergilian Aeneas, although in an unpredictable way. As a consequence, the protagonist of Valerius's *Argonautica* represents the example of a "collective" leader who slightly differs from his Greek counterpart: he rather recalls the traditional figure of the *dux*, with whom Roman readers were quite familiar. The new hero displays both individual and public virtues, such as prowess, on the one hand, and diligent, assiduous activity (*industria*), firmness and self-sacrifice (*constantia*), and practical understanding and sagacity (*prudentia*) on the other.

Valerius's Jason has to face delicate situations and choices which call for a high sense of responsibility, great strength, diplomatic wisdom, and even the ability to deal with danger verging on recklessness. Such a difficult path starts

---

27 *sed non ulla quies animo fratrisque pauenti | progeniem diuumque minas. hunc nam fore regi | exitio uatesque canunt pecudumque per aras | terrifici monitus iterant; super ipsius ingens | instat fama uiri uirtusque haud laeta tyranno* ("yet had his mind no rest, through dread of his brother's offspring and the threats of heaven; for the soothsayers foretold that through him destruction should come upon the king, and the victims at the altar repeated their fearful warnings: moreover, above all the great renown of the hero himself weighed upon his mind, and prowess never welcome to a tyrant," V. Fl. 1.26–30).

28 Such a fundamental concept is already mirrored by Jason's first reaction when Pelias orders him to undertake the voyage: *nunc aerii plantaria uellet | Perseos aut currus et quos frenasse dracones | creditus, ignaras Cereris qui uomere terras | imbuit et flaua quercum damnauit arista* ("had he but Perseus' winged sandals now or the car and the fabled teams of dragons of him who first set the mark of the ploughshares upon lands that knew not Ceres, and preferred the golden ear to the acorn," V. Fl. 1.67–70).

the moment he receives Pelias's order. Before venturing into the unknown sea, the Flavian hero, unlike his Apollonian counterpart, already shows how to live under a tyrant. While perfectly understanding Pelias's rage and his dissimulated intention (V. Fl. 1.64–66),<sup>29</sup> Jason is said to immediately reject the idea of stirring up a revolt against his uncle and, displaying confidence in divine support, decides to face the challenge imposed (*heu quid agat? populumne leuem ueterique tyranno | infensum atque olim miserantes Aesona patres | aduocet*, “alas! what is he to do? shall he summon to his aid a fickle populace, already girding at their aged lord, and the elders that long since have pitied Aeson?” V. Fl. 1.71–73; cf. *tandem animi incertum confusaque pectora firmat | religio*, “at last, his trust in heaven gives strength to his doubting, troubled heart,” V. Fl. 79–80).<sup>30</sup>

By undertaking the sea voyage, Jason rejects the idea of rebelling against the tyrant in order to defend his own rights. Thus he accepts the mantle of his heroic duties, which includes the leadership of a dangerous, collective enterprise. This does not only mean giving up his personal political ambitions for the moment. When leaving his homeland, Jason abandons his beloved parents to the tyrant's rage: in so doing, he also leaves the moral responsibility for internecine hatred and slaughter entirely to his uncle Pelias, as suggested by the words the ghost of Cretheus addresses to Aeson (*sed tibi triste nefas fraternaue turbidus arma | rex parat et saeuae irarum concipit ignes*, “but against thee the violent king prepared a deadly crime and arms, brother against brother, and is nursing the fierce fires of his passion,” V. Fl. 1.747–48).

Jason's instinctive enthusiasm for glory (V. Fl. 1.76ff.) tempers the bitterness of Pelias's order and actually contributes to relativizing risks and consequences of embarking upon the adventure over the seas.<sup>31</sup> At the start, none other than Hercules can be Jason's term of reference with regard to heroism, in that the younger character aims to follow in the footsteps of his greater model, displaying strength and self-sacrifice.<sup>32</sup> After leaving aside the prospect of civil strife, the

<sup>29</sup> See Hershkowitz 1998b, 246–47.

<sup>30</sup> See Ripoll 1998, 203–4, and Zissos 2008, 123 *ad* 1.71–73.

<sup>31</sup> In fact, Jason never fails to display his concerns, which will lead him to plan his revenge against Pelias: to take his son, Acastus, aboard the Argo and make him participate in that dangerous expedition (see V. Fl. 1.150ff.). See also Jason's worried invocation to the sea gods, which aims to avert their rage from his enterprise (V. Fl. 1.194–202).

<sup>32</sup> After all, Jason's (apparently awkward) way of thinking about his parents' safety when it is too late and they are abandoned to Pelias's mercy (V. Fl. 1.693ff.) may be construed, to some extent, as a “Herculean” feature: in fact, as Seneca's *Hercules Furens* shows, when Hercules sets out to accomplish the last of his labors, he leaves his wife Megara with their sons and his father





through honorable (though improbable) comparisons with heroes of a “superior” category, like Telamon or the Dioscuri (V. Fl. 1.164–67):

... non degeneres, ut reris, Acaste,  
uenimus ad questus: socium te iungere coeptis  
est animus neque enim Telamon aut Canthus et Idas  
Tyndareusque puer mihi uellere dignior Helles.

‘Nay, Acastus,’ says the leader, ‘I am not come, as thou deemest, to utter ignoble plaints; I am minded to make thee partner of our enterprise; I hold not Telamon nor Canthus nor Idas nor Tyndareus’ son more worthy than thou art to seek the fleece of Helle’.

Such a malicious approach, by means of Jason's invitation to Acastus to share burdens and honors with him (*socium te iungere coeptis*), finds a sort of natural complement in the last part of Jason's speech, in which the hero anticipates the glorious return of the Argo and puts before Acastus's eyes the image of himself feeling regret for not taking part in the enterprise (V. Fl. 1.170–73):

nunc forsā graue reris opus, sed laeta recurret  
cum ratis et caram cum iam mihi reddet Iolcon,  
quis pudor heu nostros tibi tunc audire labores,  
quae referam uisas tua per suspiria gentes!

At this time perchance thou thinkest the labor too heavy: yet when the vessel shall speed joyfully home, and give me back my loved Iolcos, ah! how shalt thou sigh as I tell of all the nations we have seen!

The two-verse exclamation at 1.172–73, situated at the very close of the speech in sharp relief, represents the climactic point of Jason's previous exhortation (V. Fl. 1.168–69):

o quantum terrae, quantum cognoscere caeli  
 permissum est, pelagus quantos aperimus in usus!

Lo! what mighty tracts of land, what vast expanse of sky it is granted us to know! To what great ends are we opening the paths of the sea!

The voyage of the *Argo* will literally open up a world: this is the most important goal attained by Jason and his companions alongside the conquest of the Golden Fleece, which represents the official aim of the expedition ordered by Pelias. The boastful tenor of Jason's words is prompted by a tendentiously persuasive strategy: while trying to gain his interlocutor's trust, Jason aims first to obtain a "safe-

conduct” as well as a first revenge on Pelias.<sup>36</sup> However, the leader of the Argonauts also seems to be aware (perhaps to a higher degree than Pelias himself) of the potential implications of his undertaking: Jason’s attitude looks like a form of progressivism in a broader cultural sense (i.e., enhancement of geo-ethnographical knowledge), but also proves to be tinged with political imperialism. Such a behavior certainly aims at stirring up Acastus’s thirst for glory, but it also reflects Jason’s own expectations. As I have been arguing, this image conveniently adheres to heroic ethics as well as to the plan Jupiter will soon enunciate; moreover, it sounds like an indirect confirmation of Jason’s wise, as well as diplomatic, choice not to pursue immediate vengeance through civil war.

Some years ago, Andrew Zissos<sup>37</sup> convincingly showed that such a display of self-confidence echoes a typically imperial propaganda motif, which was already employed by Lucan at the beginning of the *Pharsalia*: *heu, quantum terrae potuit pelagique parari | hoc quem ciuiles hauserunt sanguine dextrae* (“Oh, how much of earth and sea might have been gained with all the blood our citizens’ hands have drained,” Luc. 1.13–14). In fact, Jason does not explicitly speak of conquering lands and seas but euphemistically alludes to the opening of vast horizons for human knowledge, as is well demonstrated by the presence of *cognoscere* instead of *parari*, together with the addition of *quantum caeli*. Yet, it is difficult to resist the idea that this Flavian Latin heir of the ancient Greek hero—who is rejecting the option of civil strife to embark upon a dangerous heroic adventure—is giving voice, for the first time and from the mythical past, to the imperialistic alternative of expansion and conquest, which the disenchanted narrator of Lucan’s poem bitterly pointed out as a neglected target in the final years of the Roman Republic.

Zissos rightly remarks that the Lucanean echo throws a dark shadow over Jason’s proud boast: when undergoing Pelias’s orders, the commander of the Argo still does not know that, once in Colchis, he will be involved in civil strife. Yet I am not comfortable with the idea that Jason’s words should be entirely destabilized by irony, nor would I read Valerius’s allusion as an implicit endorsement of the pessimism displayed by the narrating voice of the *Pharsalia*. Rather, I would take a step further and consider the possibility that, although his principal aim is to take the tyrant’s son with him on board the first ship, the young commander of the Argonauts, as a new (pre-Roman) model of a “collective” leader, is also sharing his own dream with Acastus. Admittedly, Valerius depicts

<sup>36</sup> See also Jason’s “triumphant” satisfaction when Acastus appears right before the Argo leaves the shore (*ductor ouans laetusque dolis agnoscit Acastum*, V. Fl. 1.485).

<sup>37</sup> Zissos 2004a, who follows in the footsteps of Pollini 1984.