**Lucan’s Acrostics and the Irony of Art**

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| 1 | auolsae cecidere manus exsectaque lingua  palpitat et muto uacuum ferit aera motu.  hic aures, alius spiramina naris aduncae  amputat, ille cauis euoluit sedibus orbes  ultimaque effodit spectatis lumina membris.  uix erit ulla fides tam saeui criminis, unum  tot poenas cepisse **caput**. sic *mole ruinae*  fracta sub ingenti miscentur pondere membra,  nec magis informes ueniunt ad litora **trunci**  qui medio periere freto. quid perdere fructum  iuuit et, ut uilem, Marii **confundere uoltum**?  ut scelus hoc Sullae caedesque ostensa placeret  **Agnoscendus erat**. uidit Fortuna colonos  **P**raenestina suos cunctos simul ense recepto  **U**nius populum pereuntem tempore mortis.  **T**um flos Hesperiae, Latii iam sola iuuentus,  **C**oncidit et miserae maculauit ouilia Romae.  (*BC* 2.181-97) | | His hands, torn off, fell, and his tongue, cut out,  palpitates and strikes the empty air with mute motion.  One chops off his ears, another the nostrils of the curved  nose, another rolls out the eyeballs from their hollow sockets  and digs out the lights whose final act was watching his limbs.  It was hard to give credence to such a savage crime—that one  **head** could hold so many punishments. So by the *mass of a fallen*  *building* are shattered limbs mingled beneath the huge weight,  and no more disfigured do **headless trunks** come to shore  that have perished in the middle of the sea. Why was it pleasing to lose  the reward, and **obliterate** Marius’s **face** as if it were worthless?  For this crime and slaughter to be shown off and made pleasing to Sulla,  **it had to be recognizable**. Fortune of Praeneste saw,  when the sword was taken up, her inhabitants all together—  a whole people—perishing in the time of a single man’s death.  Then did the flower of Italy, now the sole youth of Latium,  fall together, and stain the sheepfold [voting enclosures] of wretched Rome. | | |
| 2 | ‘quone poli motu, quo caeli sidere uerso  **T**hessalicae tantum, superi, permittitis **oraE**?  **A**ut merces hodie bellorum aut poena parat**A**.  **Caesareas spectate cruces**, **spectate catenaS**,  **E**t **caput hoc** positum rostris effusaque **membRA**  **Saeptorum**que nefas et **clausi** proelia Campi.  cum duce Sullano gerimus ciuilia bella.’  (*BC* 7.301-7) | | “Through what movement of the sky, through what circling stars of heaven  do you entrust so much, o gods above, to the Thessalian **shore**?  Today has been prepared either the reward for wars or the punishment.  **Look at the Caesarean crosses, look at the chains**,  and **this head** placed on the Rostra, and the **limbs** spilled all over,  and the crime of the **Enclosures** and the battles of the **closed-off** Campus.  We are waging civil wars with a Sullan leader.’ | | | |
| 3 | capiunt praesagia belli **C**alcatisque ruunt castris; stant **ordine** **nullo**, **Arte** **ducis** **nulla**, permittuntque omnia fatis. **S**i totidem Magni soceros totidemque petentis **U**rbis regna suae funesto in Marte locasses, non tam **praecipiti** **ruerent** in proelia cursu.  (*BC* 7.331-36) | | | They accept the omen of war  and rush from their trampled camp; they stand **in no order**,  **with no art** **of their leader**, and entrust everything to Fate.  If you had placed there as many fathers-in-law of Pompey  and as many seeking kingship of their city in lethal war,  not with such a **precipitous** run would they **rush** into battle. |
| 4 | inuidus, annoso qui famam derogat aeuo, qui uates ad **uera** uocat. fuit aurea silua diuitiisque graues et fuluo germine rami ***V****irgineusque chorus*, nitidi custodia luci, **E**t numquam somno damnatus lumina serpens **R**obora conplexus rutilo curuata metallo. **A**bstulit arboribus pretium nemorique laborem Alcides... (*BC* 9.359-366) | | Invidious, he who robs the fame from ancient time,  who calls poets to **true things**. There was a golden forest,  and branches heavy with riches, and with tawny bud,  and a *virginal chorus*, guardian of the gleaming grove,  and a serpent who never lost his eyes to sleep,  embracing the wood bent down beneath its ruddy metal.  Hercules took away this prize from the trees, and the task  from the grove... | | |
| 5 | Femina procedit densissima crinibus emptis,  Proque suis alios efficit aere suos.  Nec rubor est emisse; palam venire videmus  Herculis ante oculos *virgineumque chorum*.  (*Ars Amatoria* 3.165-68) | Many a woman sallies forth with purchased [tresses],  and instead of her own, makes others her own through cash.  Nor is there a blush for having bought them; we see them on sale, publicly,  before the eyes of Hercules and the *virginal chorus*. | | |

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