

Lovers of War and Wisdom: Platonic Elements in Lucan's *Bellum Civile*

1. Lucan, <i>Bellum Civile</i> 10.176-92 (Latin text, Duff 1928; trans. Fox 2012)	
<p>O sacris devote senex, quodque arguit aetas, Non neglecte deis, Phariae primordia gentes Terrarumque situs volgique edissere mores Et ritus formasque deum; quodcumque vetustis Insculptum est adytis profer, noscique volentes 180 Prode deos. Si Cecropium sua sacra Platona Majores docuere tui, quis dignior umquam Hoc fuit auditu mundi que capacior hospes? Fama quidem generi Pharias me duxit ad urbes, Sed tamen et vestri; media inter proelia semper 185 Stellarum caelique plagis superisque vacavi, Nec meus Eudoxi vincetur fastibus annus. Sed, cum tanta meo vivat sub pectore virtus, Tantus amor veri, nihil est, quod noscere malim Quam fluvii causas per saecula tanta latentes 190 Ignotumque caput: spes sit mihi certa videndi Niliacos fontes, bellum civile relinquam.</p>	<p>“My dear old man, devotee of sacred things—and your age proves the gods do not neglect you—would you set forth the origins of the Pharian race, the lay of its lands, its people’s customs, the rites and forms of its gods? Explain the inscriptions on the ancient temples. Pass down those gods who are willing to be known. If your ancestors taught their sacred matters to Plato of Athens, was ever a guest here worthier to hear them, or more able to grasp the world? It’s true that the rumors of my son-in-law drew me to the city at Pharos, but your fame drew me, too. Even in the middle of battles I’ve always had free time for the powers above, their regions up in the sky among the stars. Nor will my year be beaten by the calendar Eudoxus made, but while such strength of virtue lives inside my breast, and such a love of truth, there’s nothing I’d rather discover than the causes of the river’s flood, hidden for so many ages, and its unknown source. Give me a certain hope of seeing the springs that lie at the head of the Nile, and I will quit this civil war.”</p>
2. <i>BC</i> 10.268-75	
<p>Quae tibi noscendi Nilum, Romane, cupido est, Et Phariis Persisque fuit Macetumque tyrannis, 270 Nullaque non aetas voluit conferre futuris Notitiam; sed vincit adhuc natura latendi. Summus Alexander regum, quem Memphis adorat, Invidit Nilo, misitque per ultima terrae Aethiopum lectos: illos rubicunda perusti Zona poli tenuit; Nilum videre calentem. 275</p>	<p>“This desire of yours to know the Nile, Roman, was felt by the rulers of Egypt, Persia, Macedon; no age has not wanted to bestow this knowledge on the future. But so far its hidden nature is winning. Greatest of kings, Alexander, looked with envy on the Nile, which Memphis worships, and sent picked men to the ends of the Ethiopians’ land. But that flushed-hot zone with its sky ablaze blocked them; the Nile they saw was heated.”</p>
3. Plato, <i>Timaieus</i> 22c-e (Greek text, Burnet 1903; trans. Zeyl 2000)	
<p>πολλὰ καὶ κατὰ πολλὰ φθοραὶ γέγονασιν ἀνθρώπων καὶ ἔσονται, πυρὶ μὲν καὶ ὕδατι μέγιστα, μυριοῖς δὲ ἄλλοις ἕτεροι βραχύτεροι ...</p> <p>ἡμῖν δὲ ὁ Νεῖλος εἰς τε τὰ ἄλλα σωτὴρ καὶ τότε ἐκ ταύτης τῆς ἀπορίας σώζει λυόμενος... ὅθεν καὶ δι’ αὐτῆς αἰτίας τὰνθάδε σωζόμενα λέγεται παλαιότατα.</p>	<p>“There have been, and there will continue to be, numerous disasters that have destroyed human life in many ways. The most serious of these involve fire and water, while the lesser ones have numerous other causes... Our Nile, always our savior, is released and at such times, too, saves us from this disaster... This, then, explains why the antiquities preserved here are said to be the most ancient.”</p>

4. *Tim.* 24e-25d

λέγει γὰρ τὰ γεγραμμένα, ὄσσην ἡ πόλις ὑμῶν ἔπαυσέν ποτε δύναμιν ὑβρεῖ πορευομένην ἅμα ἐπὶ πᾶσαν Εὐρώπην καὶ Ἀσίαν, ἔξωθεν ὀρηθεῖσαν ἐκ τοῦ Ἀτλαντικοῦ πελάγους ...

... ἐν δὲ δὴ τῇ Ἀτλαντίδι νήσῳ ταύτῃ μεγάλη συνέστη καὶ θαυμαστὴ δύναμις βασιλέων, κρατοῦσα μὲν ἀπάσης τῆς νήσου, πολλῶν δὲ ἄλλων νήσων καὶ μερῶν τῆς ἡπείρου· πρὸς δὲ τούτοις ἔτι τῶν ἐντὸς τῆδε Λιβύης μὲν ἦρχον μέχρι πρὸς Αἴγυπτον, τῆς δὲ Εὐρώπης μέχρι Τυρρηνίας.

αὕτη δὴ πᾶσα συναθροισθεῖσα εἰς ἓν ἡ δύναμις τὸν τε παρ' ὑμῖν καὶ τὸν παρ' ἡμῖν καὶ τὸν ἐντὸς τοῦ στόματος πάντα τόπον μιᾷ ποτ' ἐπεχείρησεν ὀρμῇ δουλοῦσθαι. τότε οὖν ὑμῶν, ὦ Σόλων, τῆς πόλεως ἡ δύναμις εἰς ἅπαντας ἀνθρώπους διαφανῆς ἀρετῆ τε καὶ ῥώμῃ ἐγένετο· πάντων γὰρ προστάσα εὐψυχία καὶ τέχναις ὄσαι κατὰ πόλεμον, τὰ μὲν τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἠγουμένη, τὰ δ' αὐτῇ μονωθεῖσα ἐξ ἀνάγκης τῶν ἄλλων ἀποστάντων, ἐπὶ τοὺς ἐσχάτους ἀφικομένη κινδύνους, κρατήσασα μὲν τῶν ἐπιόντων τρόπαιον ἔστησε, τοὺς δὲ μήπω δεδουλωμένους διεκώλυσε δουλωθῆναι, τοὺς δ' ἄλλους, ὅσοι κατοικοῦμεν ἐντὸς ὄρων Ἡρακλείων, ἀφθόνως ἅπαντας ἠλευθέρωσεν. ὑστέρῳ δὲ χρόνῳ σεισμῶν ἐξαισιῶν καὶ κατακλυσμῶν γενομένων, μιᾷς ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτὸς χαλεπῆς ἐλθούσης, τότε παρ' ὑμῶν μάχιμον πᾶν ἀθρόον ἔδω κατὰ γῆς, ἣ τε Ἀτλαντὶς νῆσος ὡσαύτως κατὰ τῆς θαλάττης δῦσα ἠφανίσθη·

“The records speak of a vast power that your city once brought to a halt in its insolent march against the whole of Europe and Asia at once—a power that sprang forth from beyond, from the Atlantic Ocean ... Now on this Isle of Atlantis a great and marvelous royal power established itself and ruled not only the whole island, but many of the other islands and parts of the continent as well. What’s more, its rule extended even inside the strait, over Libya as far as Egypt and over Europe as far as Tyrrhenia.

Now one day this power gathered all of itself together and set out to enslave all the territory inside the strait, including your region and ours, in one fell swoop. Then it was, Solon, that your city’s might shone bright with excellence and strength for all humankind to see. Preeminent among all others in the nobility of her spirit and in her use of all the arts of war, she first rose to the leadership of the Greek cause. Later, forced to stand alone, deserted by her allies, she reached a point of extreme peril. Nevertheless she overcame the invaders and erected her monument of victory. She prevented the enslavement of those not yet enslaved and generously freed all the rest of us who lived within the boundaries of Heracles. Sometime later, excessively violent earthquakes and floods occurred, and after the onset of an unbearable day and a night, your entire warrior force sank below the earth all at once, and the Isle of Atlantis likewise sank below the sea and disappeared.”

Works Cited

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