

Homeric Formulae and Bilingual Intertextuality in Lucan's *Pharsalia*

Scholars have occasionally noted that Lucan employs bilingual Greek and Latin wordplay in his *Pharsalia*. Among other passages in the epic, a prominent example is found in Book 9, where many of the effects of snakebites upon Cato's soldiers reflect the Greek etymologies of the snakes' names (Eldred, 2000; cf. Henderson, 1988). In this paper, I discuss three previously unnoticed bilingual puns, including a passage in which Lucan adapts a Homeric noun-epithet formula, and how this allusive wordplay sheds light on Lucan's intertextual engagement with Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

To illustrate Lucan's bilingual wordplay briefly, I first present an unnoticed *nomen-omen* connection in vv. 10.95-96, in which Lucan writes of the courtier Pothinus' control over the emotions of the Egyptian king Ptolemy: *sed habet sub iure Pothini/adfectus ensesque suos* ("But [Ptolemy's] **emotions** and his swords are subject to **Pothinus's** sway," trans. after Braund, 1992). Pothinus' name is derived from πο&οj, a word whose range of meaning includes "longing," "love," and "desire" (*LSJ* s.v. I., II.). The Latin word *adfectus*, which can by turns signify "eager desire" and "feelings of attachment or affection, devotion, love" (*OLD* s.v. 6., 7), alludes to the etymology of Pothinus' name.

I then turn to discuss Lucan's allusive re-use of Homeric language. One of the participants in the execution of Pompey is named Achilles. Lucan models Achilles' role in the *Pharsalia* on that of Achilles in the *Iliad* both because of his name and his involvement in the death of Pompey, whom Lucan models in part upon Hector (Lausberg, 1985; Seng, 2000; cf. Bowie, 1990). Lucan characterizes Achilles as *non lentus Achilles* ("Achilles not slow") at the end of line 10.398. One frequently recurring formula that Homer uses to refer to Achilles is

πο&daj w)ku_j)Axilleu/j (“Achilles fleet of foot”), which occurs at line-end thirty times in the *Iliad* (e.g. 1.58, 1.84). Beginning after the caesura in the fourth foot, *non lentus Achillas* occupies a metrical position equivalent to that of πο&daj w)ku_j)Axilleu/j and conveys the same meaning. I propose that in adapting this Homeric line-ending, Lucan activates an intertext to suggest that his swift-acting Achillas plays the role of fleet-footed Achilles within the *Pharsalia*; wider literary implications of this association will be explored in the paper.

In similar fashion, when Lucan narrates the presentation of Pompey’s veiled head to Caesar at 9.1012, he adapts a famous scene from the *Odyssey*: *colla gerit Magni Phario uelamine tecta* (“he brings the head of Pompey, wrapped in Pharian cloth,” trans. Braund, 1992). The Pharian cloth conceals Pompey’s severed head until it is unveiled for Caesar’s viewing and identification (9.1032-1033). Lucan frequently uses the adjective *Pharius*, “relating to Pharos (Fa&roj),” the location of the Alexandrian lighthouse, as a synonym for “Egyptian” (e.g. 9.134, 9.141). However, the juxtaposition of the words *Phario uelamine* suggests a play on the Greek word fa~roj, which means “a large piece of cloth,” “commonly, a wide cloak or mantle” (*LSJ* s.v. I., II.). *Phario uelamine* therefore activates a bilingual pun in the Neoteric style: “a clothly cloth.” Why? I propose that with this pun on *Pharius* and fa~roj Lucan alludes to Odysseus’ famous recognition scene in Phaeacia. In Book 8 of the *Odyssey*, Odysseus wraps his head in his cloak (fa~roj, 8.84, 8.88) to hide his tears while Demodocus sings of the Trojan War (8.83-96). Alcinous notices Odysseus’ weeping (*Od.* 8.93-96, 8.521ff.), which in turn leads to the revelation of his identity (*Od.* 9.19). Just as Odysseus’ head is wrapped in a fa~roj in order to obscure his identity, Pompey’s severed head is wrapped in a Pharian cloth (*Phario uelamine*). But Odysseus literally and figuratively keeps his head in Alcinous’ court by concealing and revealing his identity at the proper times. In sharp contrast, Pompey’s identity as the loser of the

Battle of Pharsalus results in his decapitation when he seeks safety in the court of Ptolemy. The Homeric allusion thus amplifies the pathos of Pompey's death, an amplification which may bear larger ramifications for the interpretation of the poem as a whole.

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