Lucan’s Wartime Freedoms

Translations are based on Matthew Fox (Penguin 2012). The text is Housman’s.

1

quibus adde Catonem

sub iuga Pompei, toto iam liber in orbe

solus Caesar erit. quod si pro legibus arma

ferre iuuat patriis libertatemque tueri…

(2.279-82).

Add Cato under Pompey’s yoke, and the only free man left in the world will be Caesar. But if you are pleased to take up arms to guard our the laws of our fathers and to preserve our liberty…

2

quod fugiens ciuile nefas redituraque numquam

libertas ultra Tigrim Rhenumque recessit

ac, totiens nobis iugulo quaesita, uagatur

Germanum Scythicumque bonum, nec respicit

ultra

Ausoniam, uellem populis incognita nostris (7.432-6).

Fleeing civil horrors, never to return, Liberty has withdrawn beyond the Rhine and Tigris, and though we’ve sought her often with our throats, she wanders, a blessing to Germans and Scythians, no longer looking back on Ausonia. How I wish our people never knew her!

plus est quam uita salusque

quod perit: in totum mundi prosternimur aeuum.

uincitur his gladiis omnis quae seruiet aetas.

proxima quid suboles aut quid meruere nepotes

in regnum nasci? (7.638-43).

What was lost was worth even more than health and life itself. To the end of time we are crushed. By these swords is conquered every age that will be enslaved. What did their children or their grandchildren do to deserve to be born into a kingdom?

sed par quod semper habemus,

libertas et Caesar, erit (7.695-6).

… but it will be the matched duel that we always have: Liberty versus Caesar.

3

non erat is populus quem pax tranquilla iuuaret,

quem sua libertas inmotis pasceret armis (1.171-2).

This was not a people whom tranquil peace could please, who could let arms lie, let their liberty feed them.

4

cultus gestare decoros

uix nuribus rapuere mares; fecunda uirorum

paupertas fugitur (1.164-6).

Males stole apparel scarcely fitting for young women to wear. Poverty, fecund of men, is avoided.

5

et superos quid prodest poscere finem?

cum domino pax ista uenit. duc, Roma, malorum

continuam seriem clademque in tempora multa

extrahe ciuili tantum iam libera bello (1.669-72).

What use to beg the gods for an end of it? That peace comes with a tyrant. Drag out, Rome, your chain of endless pains and loss for a long time—you’re free now only as long as there is civil war!

6

non mihi res agitur, sed, uos ut libera sitis

turba, precor gentes ut ius habeatis in omnes.

ipse ego priuatae cupidus me reddere uitae

plebeiaque toga modicum conponere ciuem,

omnia dum uobis liceant, nihil esse recuso.

inuidia regnate mea (7.264-9).

This struggle is not for me, but, in order that you might be a free people, I pray that you might hold power over all nations. For me, I long to return to private life, wear a toga of the people and be a modest citizen. So long as you are free to do all things, nothing do I refuse to be. You can be king! The hatred can be mine.

7

Iubes esse liberos, erimus (Pliny, *Paneg*. 66.4, from Wirszubski 1968, 168-9).

You order us to be free, we will be free.

8

 uictus totiens a Caesare salua

libertate perit: tum mille in uolnera laetus

labitur ac uenia gaudet caruisse secunda (7.602-4).

Beaten by Caesar so often, he dies with Liberty still alive. Rejoicing in his thousand wounds he sinks down, happy not to be pardoned a second time.

9

hic redimat sanguis populos, hac caede luatur

quidquid Romani meruerunt pendere mores (2.312-3).

May this blood redeem whole peoples, and by this slaughter may it be absolved, whatever debt Roman morals have merited to pay.

10

tum respicit omnis

in coetu motuque uiros; quorum unus aperta

mente fugae tali conpellat uoce regentem:

nos, Cato, da veniam, Pompei duxit in arma,

non belli civilis amor (9.224-8).

He looked around at all the men swarming and in commotion, and one of them whose plan to flee was clear accosted in the man in charge with words like these: Forgive us, Cato, love for Pompey, not civil war, drew us to take up arms.

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