

## I am Simply Not There: Narrative Perspective in Lucan's *Bellum Civile* 9.964-79.

In this paper I attempt to elucidate an important component of the disruptive effect which Lucan's *Bellum Civile* causes for its readers. Such aspects of Lucan's epic have been explored most positively by W.R. Johnson (1987: 5, 10) who writes of Lucan's broken theology, while John Henderson (1987: 458) and Shadi Bartsch (1995: 45-46) analyze Lucan's disordered language. I contend that Lucan's narrative structure disrupts his reader's understanding of what is real and what is illusory in the *Bellum Civile*. Although this effect is widespread in Lucan's epic, my paper focuses on 9.964-79, in which Caesar visits the ruins of Troy as it is both a critical moment in the narrative and an *exemplum* of this disruptive effect.

By "real" and "illusory" I am referring strictly to the text of the *Bellum Civile*: I assess the difference between real and illusory as the difference between objective and subjective narration. In my analysis I use the term 'focalization' which Gérard Genette first applied to narrative perspective (1980: 185-194). I contend that the dichotomy between what is real and what is illusory is typically illustrated in the *Bellum Civile* through Lucan's employment of different focalizations: zero focalization contains an objective description of the narrative from a completely omniscient point of view, while internal focalization represents a subjective description of the narrative that is restricted to the perspective of one of the narrative's characters. Because Lucan often focalizes the point of view of the reader to a character's subjective perspective, he prompts the reader to evaluate this subjective vantage point against the objective vantage point. Ultimately, Lucan's manipulation of these different perspectives in this episode (9.964-979) challenges the reader's ability to perceive what is real and what is illusory in Lucan's representation of the ruins of Troy.

In Book 9, after Lucan's longest treatment of Cato and his disastrous march through Libya (9-950), Lucan presents Caesar's visit to the ruins of Troy. In this passage, Lucan offers the observations of the ruins of Troy from three different perspectives: Caesar's internally focalized narrative perspective (970-73), the external narration from Lucan's own perspective (964-69, 974-75) and, lastly, the introduction of a third perspective in the form of the Phrygian guide (976-79), who addresses Caesar in the second person. These different perspectives are all trained upon the same thing: the ruins of Troy. Lucan's narration sends Caesar in pursuit of the remnants of Apollo's wall and at verse 969 Lucan informs the reader that the ruins of Troy no longer exist: *etiam periere ruinae* (even the ruins have perished). This description challenges the reader's faith in Lucan's perspective as Caesar sees the ruins at 970: "aspicit Hesiones scopulos silvaque latentis/ Anchisae thalamos" (He sees crags of Hesione and the wedding chambers of Anchises concealed by woods, 970-71). In fact, from Caesar's perspective, the reader's perceives not only these ruins that should be gone but also the hidden chambers of Anchises. Lucan's syntactical arrangement, in which the direct object of "aspicit" is the noun "thalamos" modified by the descriptor "latentis" (hidden), draws attention to the difficulties of perception at Troy. How can Caesar and the reader see Anchises's chambers if they are hidden? Lucan then shifts back to external focalization and describes Caesar as "inscius" (unwitting) at 974 and "securus" (careless) at 975 as he crosses monuments that he is unable to see, casting further doubt on Caesar's perspective. Along with Caesar, who is still attempting to perceive the ruins of Troy, Lucan introduces a "Phryx incola" (Phrygian native, 976). This guide interjects: "'Herceas' monstrator ait 'non respicis aras?'" (the guide says, 'Do you not see the altars of Zeus Herceus?' 979). His question to Caesar prompts the reader into 'looking' again to see what he

has missed. Lucan's manipulation of these multiple perspectives in this passage disrupts the reader's expectations and preconceptions concerning what is real and what is illusory at Troy.

#### Works Cited

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