

## Lucan's Wartime Freedoms

*Libertas*, the main casualty of Rome's civil wars, takes pride of place among Lucan's concerns in the *Pharsalia*. But is it used consistently? Liberty is said to be gone forever, not even looking back (7.432ff); yet Volteius and Domitius achieve freedom by dying well in battle (4.579, 7.602-3), and Brutus rather opaquely considers Caesar and Cato the only free men in the Roman world (2.280-1). Caesar may be free, but according to the narrator Caesar and Liberty are opposites and mortal enemies (7.695-6).

A close examination of these shifting definitions of *libertas* reveals a consistent picture: on the one side there is the former political liberty of the Roman people, and on the other, the fracturing (to use Roller's term) of that liberty, under the pressure of civil war, into the freedom of the tyrant and the freedom of resistance. Thus Caesar is free as the tyrant; Cato, despite political slavery, is free as a Stoic sage and an opponent of tyranny. Pompey represents what is left of Rome's old political liberty, but cannot make up his mind not to be a tyrant until the end, when by his stellar death he combines the different types of resistance freedom.

This analysis builds upon Johnson's character portraits, Quint's theory of the discourses of winners and losers, and Bartsch's meditations on Pompey as both tyrant and symbol of freedom. This basis of scholarship allows me to start with the Lucanian patterns of inversion and fracturing, grant that liberty has several shifting definitions, and see how the complicated pattern they form comments richly on this major theme: liberty in civil war.

The main divide that Lucan posits in wartime liberty is between political and personal freedom. It is clear that political liberty is gone: Rome is "civili tantum iam libera bello" ("free now only in civil war," 1.672). Tyranny is the certain outcome of the civil war, though the uncertainty of civil war allows a space for individuals who resist Caesar to achieve personal

freedom. But neither Cato nor Volteius nor Domitius, characters called free, can transfer his personal liberty to the state. Cato wishes he could die as an expiatory sacrifice for Rome: he wants his death to be politically efficacious, not personally gratifying, and so compromises his personal Stoic freedom by joining his lot with the would-be tyrant, Pompey. Neither Stoic freedom nor a virtuous death manages to escape the tyrant's power. Personal liberty fails to translate into political.

Pompey, the greatest anti-Caesarian, comes the closest to an effective freedom of resistance. By losing the battle and being murdered by the lackeys of Ptolemy, he achieves the freedom of death without pardon, the freedom of a brave Stoic death, and the quasi-political freedom of becoming the symbolic representative of the cause of liberty. He has almost managed to do what Cato dreams of: becoming an expiatory sacrifice for the entire people. But his side does not know what to do with freedom: his soldiers say to their very tyrannical new general, "nos, Cato da veniam, Pompeii duxit in arma/non belli civilis amor" ("give us pardon, Cato: the love of Pompey, not of civil war, led us to arms," 9.227-8). So Pompey the symbol of freedom has become Pompey the replacement for freedom, and it has died with him. Once Caesar wins at Pharsalus, even Rome's resistance freedom is, in this poem, gone, for nobody knows how to live except under a tyrant.

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