

## The Crossing of the Rubicon in Caesar and Lucan

This paper offers a systematic comparison of Caesar's rhetoric and literary efforts within the *Commentarii* and Lucan's response to Caesar's own words in the epic *Bellum Civile*. Following the work of Bachofen, Masters, Joseph and Ginsberg, who have analyzed Caesar's and Lucan's works side by side, I will discuss Caesar and Lucan's own distinct accounts of what has popularly been referred to as the crossing of the Rubicon as well as the speeches given by Caesar to his troops around the time of the crossing.

While Caesar makes no specific mention of the crossing in his own narrative, Lucan, on the other hand, extends this event to great dramatic effect. Caesar's failure to mention the crossing explicitly, however, does not mean that he does not reference the crossing or discuss the circumstances as he saw them at the time in which the crossing was purported to have occurred. Instead, Caesar uses deliberate omissions, curated additions, chronological distortions, and indirect speech (both his own and others) to fashion a version of this event that evades any questions concerning the illegality of his own actions in traveling with an army across the border from Cisalpine Gaul into the province of Italia.

The first part of this paper will look closely at Caesar's *Commentarii*, specifically Caesar BC 1.7-11, with an eye toward specific themes, pointed characterizations and the formation of a narrative that paints Caesar's cause in the most positive light. The second part of the chapter will involve a close reading of Lucan's account of Caesar's crossing, *Bellum Civile* 1.183-204. Lucan's choice of genre, epic, allows the author to shape the narrative of the civil war, and, in this particular instance, the crossing of the Rubicon and Caesar's entrance into the province of Italy, in ways that both illustrate and expand upon his overall theme that Caesar, in his pursuit of private *dignitas*, brought about a civil war that had far-ranging and violent implications for Rome and its people. Lucan employs three epic techniques in this endeavor, such as the appearance of the divine figure *patria*, the continued development of the character of Caesar through deliberate word choice and

speeches, and the inclusion of intertextual allusions to Caesar's commentaries and to his epic predecessor, Virgil. While Lucan and Caesar have been historically analyzed in their own siloes of genre, this paper's exploration of the intertextual relationship between Lucan's epic and the *Commentarii* concludes that each author's respective narratological choices effectively serve their purposes in crafting their versions of Caesar in the opening action of the civil war.

#### Selected Bibliography

- Bachofen, A. *Cäsars und Lucans Bellum Civile: Ein Inhaltsvergleich*. Zurich: Juris-Verlag, 1972.
- Batstone, William W. and Damon, Cynthia. *Caesar's Civil War*. Oxford University Press, 2006
- Carter, J. M. Julius Caesar, *The Civil War: Books I & II*. Oxbow Books, Oxford, 1991.
- Grillo, Luca. *The Art of Caesar's Bellum Civile: Literature, Ideology, and Community*. Cambridge University Press, 2012
- Hinds, Stephen. *Allusion and Intertext: Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman Poetry*. Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Joseph, Timothy A. "Caesar in Vergil and Lucan." In Grillo and Krebs, Eds. *The Cambridge Companion to the Writings of Julius Caesar*. Cambridge University Press, 2017, 289-303
- Masters, Jamie. *Poetry and Civil War in Lucan's Bellum Civile*. Cambridge, Cambridge Classical Studies, 1992
- Roche, P. A. *Reading Lucan's Civil War: A Critical Guide*. University of Oklahoma Press, 2021.
- Rondholz, Anke. "Crossing the Rubicon." *Mnemosyne*, Vol. 62, Fasc. 3, 2009, pp. 432-450
- Westall, Richard. *Caesar's Civil War: Historical Reality and Fabrication*. Leiden; Brill, 2018.