

Patriae Trepidantis Imago: Rome in Lucan's Bellum Civile

This paper reveals the characterization of Roma in the *Bellum Civile*, through which it shows how Lucan uses Roma in his epic to make a political statement against the principate of the Julio-Claudians, their uses of Roma, and the Rome of his day. In an otherwise very thorough article on the goddess Roma, Ronald Mellor only mentions in passing that Roma appears in Lucan, and he does not elaborate at all as to her role, use, or function. This is the typical extent of the treatment of Roma in Lucan in modern scholarship. Generally, scholarship on the topic can be separated into two main categories: those who discuss Roma in relation to the Julio-Claudians, but not to Lucan (Galinsky 1996, Levick 2010, Weinstock 1971, Zanker 1988), and those who examine the political nuances of Lucan's epic but not in specific relation to Roma (Ahl 1976, Griffin 1984, Roche 2009, Rudich 1997, Sullivan 1985). Recent scholarship on Roma agrees in her great political significance, and scholars agree that Lucan was making a political statement with his epic; however, no work analyzes Roma as Lucan's means of carrying out his political agenda to any great extent. The only work that hints at this concept to any great extent is Sara Watkins' 2012 dissertation on Lucan and Ovid, which comes close to linking Roma and Lucan's politics. This, however, is not the focus of her work which is instead concerned with the cyclical nature of chaos and reform in the *Bellum Civile* in connection to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Watkins sees Roma as a demonstration of this cycle, but she does not delve deeply into Roma as a character in Lucan's epic. By focusing on Roma in the *Bellum Civile* I not only define her role and characterization in the epic, but also show that Lucan was making a political statement and that he was using Roma to do this.

Lucan's epic actually presents two versions of Roma: Roma set within the civil war and Roma in Lucan's time, under Nero: they are both very negative. Lucan presents the former, or

the republican Roma, as a dying figure through her association with three characters in the text: the *patria* at the Rubicon, the matron at the end of book 1, and Marcia in book 2. He makes her powerless and concurrently blames her for the Civil War: the historical event and his poem both. The latter, or the Roma of Lucan's time, appears even worse. Like her earlier counterpart, she is powerless but blamed for the civil war. Lucan, additionally, presents the Roma of his time as a servile, vulgar, entity that has been prostituted to the Julio-Claudians. This characterization is most clear in a prophetic aside Lucan provides during the battle scene in book 7 (458-9), where he says *Fulminibus manes radiisque ornabit et astris/Inque deum templis iurabit Roma per umbras*. Considering the deification of *principes* up to Lucan's time and Roma's association with them in cult (Latte 1960, Mellor 1981), the shadow and shades in Lucan's statement clearly refer to members of the Julio-Claudian dynasty. Lucan bewails Roma's complacency in this association and he is angry at her: a fact that clearly comes across in his characterization of both of his versions of her. Against the Julio-Claudians' praise of and camaraderie with Roma, Lucan spurns his character as a co-conspirator and traitor to herself. Lucan was using Roma in his anti-Caesarian epic to subvert the use of Roma by the Julio-Claudians—especially in their divine aspirations alongside the deity. In the process of the rise of Caesar, Roma is wounded, mangled and finally destroyed, to be reborn in servile guise and to be used by the emperors. In this precisely lies Lucan's point: for the empire to arise, Roma had to be destroyed.

Bibliography

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