BOUNDARY VIOLATIONS:
A REFLECTION OF PESSIMISM
IN LUCAN’S *BELLUM CIVILE*

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by
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and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

______________________________________________________________________________
Professor Raymond Marks

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Professor Barbara Wallach

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Professor John Miles Foley
For my husband,
who is my constant companion,
for Gabe,
who is my Muse,
for Ryan,
and for my parents
and family.
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INTRODUCTION

The desecration of boundaries abounds in Lucan’s epic poem, *Bellum Civile*. The abundance of boundary violations serves as a literary tool through which Lucan conveys his attitude towards civil war. Lucan’s boundary violations reflect his pessimistic attitude toward civil war, which is itself a violation. Throughout Roman literature, instances of boundary transgressions do occur, but no other author seems to use violations in the same way or to the same degree that Lucan does in his epic. Lucan’s portrayal of boundary violations expresses his negative view on civil war and his dissatisfaction with his current political surroundings.

To understand fully how boundary violations contribute to Lucan’s pessimism, we must first determine the symbolic nature and significance of boundaries in general. Once the function of boundaries is established, this knowledge will then be applied to examples of boundary transgressions in Roman literature. These examples will provide a basic pattern for a violation and the consequences associated with the act. After boundaries and their desecration have been examined, I will then address the much-debated issue of whether Lucan is an optimist or a pessimist. I believe that Lucan’s epic is a pessimistic work and that his indignation can be seen through his use of boundary violations. Then, several examples of transgressions will be analyzed to determine how each portrays Lucan’s pessimism.
Throughout the *Bellum Civile*, the nature of boundaries is unique both in construction and deconstruction. It seems as though almost every instance of a boundary violation produces a negative result and never progresses towards a positive resolution. In the end, Lucan’s portrayal of boundary violations presents a world in utter chaos and on the verge of collapse. The deterioration of boundaries in the *Bellum Civile* reflects the detrimental effects of civil war and, therefore, indicates that Lucan is a pessimist.
Chapter 1: What is a Boundary?

The process of creating boundaries to categorize one’s surroundings is considered a “human cultural universal.”¹ To understand their surroundings, humans have created boundaries to classify and organize their world. It is assumed that every culture divides “the world into ‘its own’ internal space and ‘their’ external space.”² In this way, a culture creates its own identity of self and recognizes its surroundings in comparison to ‘other’ unknown cultures and foreign surroundings.

The function of a boundary is to limit an identified category or classification type. As a limiting agent, a boundary serves to separate one thing from another. In doing so, it creates a division between one or more categories, parts, or types, which help create a sense of order that enables humans to process their surroundings. Often each distinct category possesses its own identity, which contains its own unique characteristics differentiating it from another category. A boundary can also limit a defined space and inhibit movement beyond a border as well. On the one hand, a boundary seeks to contain its contents from moving outside of a defined area. On the other hand, a boundary obstructs the penetration of foreign matter into a contained space.

A. Intangible and Tangible

Boundaries exist in two different types. A boundary can be either tangible or intangible. Tangible boundaries are depicted as physical entities able to be seen or touched, such as a wall, boundary line, or river. Many tangible boundaries are natural barriers formed by the geography of a region, such as mountains, rivers, deserts, and

¹ Lotman 2001, p. 131.
² Lotman 2001, p. 131.
large bodies of water. Culturally, geographic boundaries often cause groups of people to remain secluded from interaction with outside groups. Other types of tangible boundaries can be man-made such as walls or fences. The main function of a man-made boundary is to distinguish between one thing and another and to inhibit interaction between them. Often boundaries such as walls and fences label the property of a defined territory. A man-made boundary may also obstruct movement across a border.

Unlike physical boundaries, intangible boundaries are not represented as physical structures. Intangible boundaries tend to be symbolic and exemplify the differences in contrasting ideas, such as justice and injustice or right and wrong. One unique characteristic of an intangible boundary is its ability to describe and even define the differences between contrasting ideas, such as when intangible boundaries differentiate between correct and incorrect behaviors. In this way, intangible boundaries are reflected in a society’s cultural norms and customs. If an intangible boundary is violated, there may also be sanctions or punishments enforced to correct or deter the behavior. The concept of an intangible boundary is a “man-made” idea that is imposed by humans onto their surroundings. As with tangible boundaries, some intangible boundaries are fixed; many intangible boundaries, however, tend to be more varied and malleable depending on differences between cultures, time periods, and specific situations.

B. Roman Boundaries

Ancient Romans applied tangible and intangible boundaries as a universal characteristic of human culture to their surrounding environment. For ancient Romans, intangible boundaries served to create order by establishing and regulating societal
norms. Within the hierarchy of Roman society, intangible boundaries were constructed in the form of laws and regulations to establish order. Intangible boundaries could distinguish among Roman citizens or separate them from non-citizens. Politically, intangible boundaries maintained a republic and prevented a tyranny, which was associated with slavery and oppression. Intangible boundaries, although invisible, were established to maintain order within Roman society.

On the other hand, tangible boundaries were visible markers that defined a territory. On a small scale, a boundary marked the limits of property ownership between one person and another. Thus, some type of visible marker such as a fence, stone *cippus*, or *limes* was needed. Even the territory of the *urbs* (city) was distinguished from the *ager* (surrounding rural area) by the *pomerium*. On a larger scale, physical boundaries established the territory of the Roman Empire and areas under Roman law. Whether demarcating one farm or territory from another, boundaries defined spaces.

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3 It is the intent of this investigation to focus on tangible boundaries, their construction, and their violation.  
5 Gargola 1995, p. 25.
Chapter 2: Instances of Boundary Violations

The importance of boundaries in Roman culture can be illustrated through literary evidence. Two ancient writers provide accounts of mythological or historical boundary violations. In each instance, a boundary has been defined that identifies one group from another, the boundary is then violated and rendered meaningless, and a new boundary is established.

A. Aeneid 12: Limes

The first account involving a boundary that I shall examine comes from Aeneid 12, where Vergil describes an ancient form of tangible boundary, the *limes*, or a stone boundary marker. In addition to its civic and legal significance, the boundary stone represents the god Terminus; moving a boundary stone is, therefore, an act of religious desecration. In addition, once the boundary stone is relocated, the original defining lines of the boundary stone shift and create new distinctions. The following section will investigate the significance of the *limes*, its violation, and the consequences for the violator.

During the battle between Aeneas and Turnus in Aeneid 12, the violation of a boundary marker proves fatal for Turnus. Although boundary markers are mentioned by Vergil’s epic predecessors, such as Homer, S. J. Huskey points out that Vergil devotes more lines to this description of a boundary stone than Homer does in three of the four

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6 For additional information on the god Terminus, see Piccaluga 1994.
instances in which he describes one. Vergil gives a description of the boundary marker as follows:

nec plura effatus saxum circumspicit ingens,  
saxum antiquum ingens, campo quod forte iacebat,  
limes agro positus litem ut discerneret arvis.  
vix illud lecti bis sex cervice subierent,  
qualia nunc hominum producit corpora tellus…

Vergil describes the *saxum*, stone, in great detail to convey not only its considerable mass and weight but also its age. Vergil refers to the *saxum ingens* in line 896 and immediately repeats a similar phrase in the following line. The repetition emphasizes not only the huge mass of the stone, but also its ancient existence, its being a *saxum antiquum ingens*. The adjective *ingens* intensifies the mass of the stone as well as the magnitude of its age. The great weight of the stone is further enhanced by lines 899-900 as Vergil presents a hypothetical situation of twelve men who could hardly have raised that stone, “such bodies of men the earth now produces.”

Vergil also acknowledges the stone’s importance as a *limes* that is “placed in a field to settle a dispute in the fields.” In this line, Vergil is referring to the specific function of this boundary stone that settles disputes between farmers over the ownership of land. In Roman society, especially in agrarian communities, boundary stones were set up to be tangible, visible markers that define the limits of one’s property. In the legal arena, boundary markers played an important role in solving disputes when an elaborate

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7 Huskey 1999, pp. 77-82.  
8 *Aeneid* 12.896-900.  
9 Huskey 1999, p. 78.  
10 *Aeneid* 12.900.  
11 *Aeneid* 12.898.
system of records was absent. By providing tangible evidence of ownership, boundary markers function to perpetuate civic stability and land ownership.

The primary reason the boundary stone exists and stands in this position is essentially to define property ownership. Yet the limes also serves several important symbolic functions in the epic. First, the limes represents the boundary between Turnus, the native Italian, and Aeneas, the Trojan foreigner. Most readers would regard Turnus, an Italian in his own homeland, as the hero for attempting to ward off the invader, but the situation is, in fact, reversed. For rather than being the hero, Turnus is portrayed as the enemy and antagonist motivated by violentia. W. Clausen observes that the noun, violentia, is a characteristic associated with Turnus, and Turnus alone. Violentia stands in direct contrast to pius and pietas, words that Vergil commonly associates with Aeneas. Two contrasting forces are thus represented by these two enemies. Just as Turnus should be viewed as the hero, Aeneas, as Trojan invader, should be viewed as the enemy. Yet the pius enemy becomes the hero.

B. The Violation

As the battle scene progresses, Turnus, at a loss for a weapon, discovers the saxum. He lifts the saxum ingens but loses all his strength as he tries to propel the over-sized missile at Aeneas. The stone falls to the ground in vain:

\[
genua labant, gelidus concrevit frigore sanguis. \\
tum lapis ipse viri vacuum per inane volutus, \\
nec spatium evasit totum neque pertulit ictum. 
\]

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12 Gargola 1995, p. 31.  
13 Nicolet 1991, p.149.  
15 Aeneid 12.905-907.
Although unsuccessful in his attempt, Turnus still violates the lawful significance of the boundary marker’s position when he moves it. Once Turnus picks up the boundary marker, it is no longer a symbol of civil order, but a weapon with which he inflicts harm. In this way the original boundary is violated, and Turnus commits a civil violation against established laws as well as a religious desecration against Terminus. For stability to be reestablished, Turnus, as the violator, must be punished and must atone for the desecrated boundary marker.

C. Punishment and Expiation

After Turnus casts the boundary stone at Aeneas to no avail, he is left without a weapon and is at the mercy of Aeneas. Aeneas holds his spear poised at Turnus. Then Aeneas lets his spear fly and strikes Turnus in his thigh:

…murali concita numquam
 tormento sic saxa fremunt nec fulmine tanti
dissultan crepitus. Volat atri turbinis instar
exitium dirum hasta feren, orasque recludit
loricae at elipei extrems septemplicis oribis;
per medium stridens transit femur. Incidit ictus
ingens ad terram duplicato poplite Turnus.¹⁶

Once he is stricken to earth by the spear, Turnus is no longer the vir or heros, but now, as Vergil refers to him, a supplex, suppliant.¹⁷ With his right hand stretched towards Aeneas, Turnus pleads not for mercy but for a proper burial:

Ille humilis supplex oculos dextramque precantem
pretendens ‘equidem merui, nec deprecor’ inquit;
‘utere sorte tua. Miseri te si qua parentis
tangere cura potest, oro (fuit et tibi talis
Anchises genitor), Dauni miserere senectae,
et me, seu corpus spoliatum lumine mauis,

¹⁶ Aeneid 12.921-927.
¹⁷ Aeneid 12.930.
In response to his plea, Aeneas hesitates (*cunctantem*, Aen. 12.940), but once he recognizes *inimicum insigne*, the spoils of Pallas, which Turnus is wearing, his anger is renewed, and Aeneas buries the sword into Turnus’ chest:

Hoc dicens ferrum adverso sub pectore condit
fervidus…

The interpretation of this final scene in the *Aeneid* has proved problematic. Throughout the poem, Aeneas has been the pious hero, but here his final action appears to be violent and unmerciful. Some scholars, however, contend that Aeneas is justified in killing Turnus for several reasons. It is observed, for example, that Vergil constructed this last scene after the Homeric model of *Iliad* 24 when Achilles kills Hector and that just as Achilles kills Hector in revenge for the death of Patroclus, so the murder of Pallas motivates Aeneas to seek revenge from Turnus. The killing of Turnus may be understood as an expiation necessary to “restore to integrity the moral order which was violated by the series of previous desecrations.”

Other scholars argue that Turnus represents the former Homeric ideal of personal glory whereas Aeneas instead represents a new ideal of glory for country. Another argument is that both heroes are governed by fate. Turnus has been an instrument of the gods, especially Juno, who uses him to inhibit the success of Aeneas and the Trojans. Yet it is ultimately Aeneas’ fate to establish a new nation for the Trojan people. Turnus may be read, then, as an obstacle that must be removed so that Aeneas may assume his new role in Italy. J. Dyson argues that Turnus is a sacrificial victim for the greater glory

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18 *Aeneid* 12.930-936.
19 *Aeneid* 12.950-951.
20 E.g., Petter 1994, pp. 76-84.
of Rome who “embodies the totality of external forces that Aeneas must overcome.”

Therefore, Turnus must be eliminated and Aeneas’ fate must prevail so that he may establish *imperium sine fine*. Huskey offers another interpretation for the necessity of Turnus’ death. He argues that a main factor contributing to the death of Turnus is the boundary stone he throws at Aeneas. Since the *limes* is a civil and religious symbol whose significance is desecrated by Turnus, his action manifests his blatant disregard for the gods as well as for the law. In the new world of law and order Aeneas is trying to found, there is no place for such an act of sacrilege, and, thus, Turnus no longer belongs to this world: he is both *sacer* and a condemned man.

D. *Limes*: A Boundary Redefined

In addition to the punishment and atonement for the boundary transgression, there are other consequences to moving the boundary stone. Once the *limes* is moved, its original function is meaningless. As a result, stability must be reestablished by redefining new boundaries. After Turnus violates the boundary marker, it may be assumed that the *saxum* is no longer able to distinguish Turnus the Italian from Aeneas the Trojan because each man now has a new identity. Sadly, for Turnus, no new distinction is given to him since his *vita indignata*, unworthy life, flies below into the shadows. Aeneas, on the other hand, is no longer an outsider or Trojan invader; he is

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22 Dyson 2001, p. 112.
23 *Aeneid* 1.279.
24 Huskey 1999, pp. 77-78.
26 Huskey 1999, pp. 79-80.
27 *Aeneid* 12.952.
now Aeneas the Latin, founder of a new race for his Trojan people. His adoption of this new identity follows the guidelines set forth by Juno:

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cum iam conubiis pacem felicibus, esto,
component, cum, iam leges et foedera iungent,
ne vetus indigenas nomen mutare Latinos
neu Troas fieri iubeas Teucrosque vocari,
aut vocem mutare viros aut vertere vestem. 28
```

Under the agreement between Juno and Jupiter the Trojans must merge with the Latins, accept their new name as Teucrians, and join their laws and treaties with the Latins. Thus, Aeneas represents a new order of hero who adheres to the laws of the gods, men, and eventually Rome.

II. Livy I: Muri

The second account I shall discuss, from Livy’s *Ab urbe condita* 1, recounts the violent foundation of Rome, which provides another example of a boundary violation. In this instance, a physical, man-made boundary as well as a moral boundary are violated for the sake of Rome’s establishment. In Book 1, Livy describes the conflict between Romulus and Remus and how it results in the establishment of Rome. This particular account depicts the violation of a tangible boundary and the consequences of its transgression.

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28 *Aeneid* 12.821-825.
A. The Foundation of Rome

According to Livy, Romulus and Remus, after regaining Alba Longa for their grandfather, wish to establish their own settlement in the same region in which they were brought up in. The twins agree to seek the favor of the gods by auguries in order to determine who should give his name to the city and who would govern it. Each brother positions himself on a different hill: Remus on the Aventine, Romulus on the Palatine. As Livy recounts, Remus is the first to see six birds followed by Romulus who sees twelve. Livy then gives two different accounts of the events that follow the auguries, both of which end in bloodshed.

Livy’s first account claims that after the auguries are observed, the followers of each side declare their leader as the victor for their own reasons: tempore illi praecepto, at hi numero avium. Each side persists in claiming victory, and a conflict ensues. In the beginning, Livy describes the conflict as a certamine irarum, a battle of anger, that is free from physical violence; the situation quickly deteriorates, however, as the conflict escalates ad caedem, to bloodshed. During the struggle, Remus is killed: ibi in turba ictus Remus cecidit.

According to this version of the story, Remus’ death is an accident; he is a causality of battle. No one is blamed for his death, and Romulus is able to take on absolute power without his innocence being questioned. Cynthia Bannon suggests that even the grammatical construction Livy uses to describe this event is written to downplay

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29 Although several accounts exist that relate the origins of Rome, for the sake of this argument, only the account of Titus Livius, Ab urbe condita libri, will be discussed. The specific passages under consideration are 1.6-1.7. For alternative versions on the foundations of Rome, please see the extensive record compiled in Wiseman 1995, pp. 160-168.
30 Livy 1.7.2.
31 Livy 1.7.2.
32 Livy 1.7.2.
the culpability of any one particular person. She proposes that Livy uses the perfect passive participle, *ictus*, to describe Remus and the verb, *cecidit*, to deflect blame.\(^{33}\)

Livy then proceeds to offer his audience an alternative version of Remus’ death. Livy claims that there is a *vulgatior fama*, a better known story:

Vulgatior fama est ludibrio fratris Remum novos transiluisse muros; inde ab irato Romulo, cum verbis quoque increpitans adiecesset “sic deinde, quicumque alius transiliet moenia mea,” interfectum.\(^{34}\)

Here, Livy describes Remus’ violation of an established boundary and his punishment for this transgression. Livy also identifies Romulus as the murderer of his own brother, such that Romulus transgresses a moral boundary of his own through fratricide. Bannon suggests that Livy still distances Romulus from the blame of fratricide even in this version, although he is responsible for Remus’ murder; she points out that the perfect passive verb, *interfectum*, puts more emphasis on Remus rather than on his killer.\(^{35}\) She adds that because the verb is found at the end of the sentence and is separated from its subject, Remus, by a subordinate clause, distance between Remus and *interfectum* “holds the reader in suspense.”\(^{36}\) Therefore, although Remus is punished for his crime, Romulus is left not only unpunished, but he is rewarded with sole *imperium* and a city named after himself.\(^{37}\)

\(^{33}\) Bannon 1997, p. 165.
\(^{34}\) Livy 1.7.2
\(^{35}\) Bannon 1997, p. 165.
\(^{36}\) Bannon 1997, p. 165.
\(^{37}\) Wiseman offers an alternative version that suggests Remus’ murderer was Celer, a workman for Romulus, but Livy does not mention this character at all. Wiseman discusses the possible implications about Celer’s role in Remus’ murder. See Wiseman 1995, pp. 9-11.
B. *Muri* and its Violation

Both Romulus and Remus had a rustic upbringing in the countryside where they were accustomed to farming and hunting as a means of subsistence:

Ita geniti itaque educati, cum primum adolevit aetas, nec in stabulis nec ad pecora segnes, venando peragrare saltus.  

Their lifestyles were not governed by civil laws. This particular way of life changes drastically once Romulus and Remus realize their true identities.

After Numitor regains the power of Alba Longa, the twins’ rustic lifestyle evolves into a more urbanized way of living. This evolution is shown by the twins’ desire to found a new city. To symbolize a new sense of urbanization and city structure, Romulus builds a barrier as a territorial boundary. Livy identifies this boundary as the *muros*, walls. In this instance, the *muri* are a tangible, man-made structure that functions to designate territory and to inhibit movement. It is unclear whether these *muri* outline the boundaries of Romulus and Remus’ territory, or Romulus’ alone.

To serve its purpose, a wall must have a solid foundation and be built through a series of systematic steps in order to maintain a stable structure. The area outside of the wall represents rural and uncivilized territory, whereas the area inside the wall, the city, represents law, order, and civilization. Therefore, if Romulus is the builder of the walls and stands on the inside, then he is also considered lawful and civilized. On the other hand, if Remus is outside of the walls, then he must represent the uncivilized countryside that is lacking in established law.

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38 Livy 1.4.8.
39 Although Romulus and Remus were not under the jurisdiction of civic law, they were not living in a state of lawlessness.
40 Livy 1.5.3.
The *muri*, as a boundary, also serve to represent symbolically the movement from rural lifestyle to an organized urban center. The building of the wall around the city enables a society to conceptualize its identity. Gary B. Miles argues that the rural countryside represents an egalitarian community, whereas the urban district creates a “locus of power focused on a single individual.”⁴¹ Both sides of this argument are represented in the twins’ lifestyle as they themselves move from rural to urban. While wandering the countryside, both twins are seen as relatively equal. Once their motivation is directed at founding a city, competition develops between the two. The “locus of power”, as Miles describes the city, cannot be focused on two but only on one individual. Therefore, one twin must be eliminated. Romulus emerges as the victor who is able to defend his city from outside invasion. The egalitarian idea of the countryside is replaced with a monarchy. Miles also suggests that Romulus’ self-sufficiency enables the city to identify with a source of strength⁴² and, thus, legitimizes his *imperium*.

The differences between the “civilized and uncivilized” twins become even more apparent when the *muri* are violated by Remus:

…*ludibrio fratris Remum novos transiluisse muros*;…⁴³

As the brothers stand on opposite sides of the wall, the twins represent opposing ideologies: order and chaos, law-enforcer and law-breaker. As Remus stands on the outside of the walls and taunts Romulus with *ludibrio*, he commits the first act of transgression by leaping over the walls. Once Remus jumps over the walls, he is a violator who does not respect the sanctity of the wall and rejects civil order. Consequently, the wall, once violated, serves as a meaningless boundary. If the wall has

⁴¹ Miles 1995, p. 168.
⁴³ Livy 1.7.2. Italics added for emphasis.
been traversed, then the wall has failed in its function to establish territorial boundaries and represent order.

C. Expiation

To maintain order in his territory, Romulus must reestablish the importance of the wall as a boundary. It is Romulus’ duty to act as a law-enforcer against the violator, Remus. Although he is a law-enforcer, Romulus must, ironically, break a boundary in order to reaffirm the function of the wall. Thus, Remus’ transgression is immediately countered by Romulus’. Romulus’ boundary, however, is not a physical but an intangible, moral boundary pertaining to kinship. As twins, Romulus and Remus have a familial relationship and the strong bond of brothers. The bond of brotherhood is destroyed when Romulus murders his own brother, Remus, for leaping over the wall. Hence, Romulus commits fratricide to reinforce his territorial wall as a boundary. Romulus utters a threat along with the murder to emphasize the severity of crossing his walls:

“sic deinde, quicumque alius transiliet moenia mea…”

This threat stands as a warning to other transgressors or invaders. The importance of Romulus’ wall as a boundary is greater than even the familial bond between twin brothers.

Livy also admits to his audience that although Romulus committed the treacherous act of fratricide, he remained unpunished and was, instead, rewarded with sole power of the city:

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44 Livy 1.7.2.
45 Wiseman 1995, p. 140.
Ita solus potitus imperio Romulus; condita urbs
conditoris nomine appellata.46

D. Muri: Redefined

Romulus, as the city’s founder, gives his established territory his own name, Rome. With murder and a threat to future transgressors, Romulus reaffirms the strength of the wall as a boundary. The city wall physically contains the city and deters foreign invasion. The wall, once reestablished, not only functions to distinguish Romulus’ territory, but now outlines Roman territory and defines the city as well. This boundary provides a tangible barrier to differentiate Roman and non-Roman. The citizens within the wall are now able to identify themselves as a collective group of Romans.

E. Implications of Rome’s Foundation

Livy portrays Rome’s foundation as a direct result of boundary violation: first, the violation of a territorial boundary, second, that of a moral boundary. It is the violation of the moral boundary, the act of fratricide, that allows for the foundation of Rome. As Romulus establishes Rome as a new city, the rural disorder must be eliminated for the city to function properly. This rural component is represented in the character of Remus, a violator of the wall, a territorial boundary. Ironically, Remus is eliminated through a violent, even barbaric act of internecine murder so that the city may be founded.

Thus, the foundation of Rome as a city, which should be the epitome of civil order and law, is derived from the moral sin of fratricide. The character of Rome, as Miles suggests, is embodied in Romulus. Therefore, it is possible to infer that Livy’s

46 Livy 1.7.3.
narrative engenders uncertainty about the nature of Rome. In addition, the problematic nature of Romulus’ actions calls into question the “very nature and value of urban civilization.” The conflict between Romulus and Remus represents more than just fratricide; it is Rome’s first civil war. Bannon articulates well the implications of fratricide on the civility of Rome’s foundation:

“Where Romulus and Remus were involved, fratricide expressed not just battlefield trauma but a more pervasive sense of loss, a loss of social cohesion and civic identity rooted in shared moral assumptions.”

An alternative interpretation is that the death of Remus could be viewed as a necessary step in the progression of Rome’s foundation. Wiseman asserts that, instead of Remus’ death standing as a threat and example to any future transgressors, Remus was the “first sacrificial victim, who consecrated with his blood the defenses of the new city.” Remus’ death must occur, in other words, to allow Romulus to establish Rome as a monarchy. A similar interpretation of Turnus’ death could be given: it allows Aeneas to make the transition from Trojan to Latin, just as Remus’ death allows Romulus to create the foundation of Rome.

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49 Bannon 1997, p. 159.
Chapter 3: Lucan’s Boundary Violations: Pessimistic Deconstruction

Lucan: The Optimist or Pessimist?

A much-debated issue in recent scholarship in Lucan’s *Bellum Civile* is whether Lucan should be perceived as an optimistic or pessimistic poet. Both sides of the debate have used biographical sources on Lucan and the text of the epic itself to understand his motivation behind the composition and how he wanted his epic to be perceived by his audience. Those who see Lucan as an optimistic poet argue that he is providing his audience with a narrative that justifies the darkness of past civil war because it eventually allowed for Nero’s rule.\(^{51}\) In other words, if the civil wars between Caesar and Pompey eventually brought forth Nero as the Emperor of Rome, then all past crimes and corruption can be justified by the end result.

Although throughout the epic Lucan paints a dismal picture of a world corrupted by civil war, some interpret his depiction as a form of idealism. The corrupt nature of war in the *Bellum Civile* depicts a stark contrast to an ideal world free from war. In this way, Lucan portrays to his audience what the ideal world should be by describing how it should not be.

Although she recognizes the destructive nature of the epic, Shadi Bartsch argues that Lucan does offer a redeeming light behind the darkness of war.\(^{52}\) The redeeming hope is that Lucan presents a situation, the civil war, in which there is the “possibility of making the good choice in life and acting upon it.”\(^{53}\) According to Bartsch, Lucan composed an epic representing his own political idealism,\(^{54}\) and, although the past and

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\(^{51}\) For this perspective, most proponents refer to Lucan 1.33-45.

\(^{52}\) Bartsch 1997.

\(^{53}\) Bartsch 1997, p. 3.

\(^{54}\) Bartsch 1997, p. 1.
current situations are bad, there is a desire to believe in the possibility of something better. Thus, Bartsch believes the author of the *Bellum Civile* is “a man who seems to believe that the criteria for making political decisions have become irrevocably tarnished...but who chooses to believe in them and to act nevertheless.”

Lucan even reflects his idealism in Cato as he chooses a side for which to fight since it is “better to pick a side, write its defense, choose an ideology, create your beliefs, than to disappear into the still maw of dissolving identities and self-consuming language.”

Marti also supports an overall optimistic view of the *Bellum Civile*. Although she admits that the epic portrays some “doubts and pessimistic views,” Marti claims that these are passing opinions and not characteristic of Lucan’s Stoic thought.

Marti also indicates that Lucan must have been an optimist because it is a trait distinctive of Stoics “when confronted with the actual experiences of life’s pains and hardships...they could not help sometimes giving expression to pessimistic thoughts.” Thus, Marti admits there are pessimistic themes and portrayals of characters, but the overall tone of the epic serves to depict humanity and the struggle towards the optimum state of Stoic wisdom and philosophy.

On the opposing side of the debate, the majority of scholars feel that Lucan is ultimately a pessimistic poet, though there are still some differences of opinion between them. The principal factor of differentiation is the severity or degree to which the poet is pessimistic. There are those who believe Lucan is merely a pessimist who has written a

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55 Bartsch 1997, pp. 103-104.
56 Bartsch 1997, p. 104.
57 Marti 1945, pp. 352-376.
58 Marti 1945, p. 356.
59 Marti 1945, pp. 356-357. Marti is directly quoting Davidson from The Stoic Creed (Edinburgh, 1907), pp. 212.
60 Marti 1945, p. 355.
poem about the destruction of civil war to convey his dissatisfaction. Most often Lucan’s pessimism is perceived as tearing down the epic, piece by piece to reflect the parallel effect civil war had on Rome. From the pessimistic perspective, civil war is the breakdown of the state and equivalent to the destruction of the universe. Beginning in *Bellum Civile* 1, Lucan depicts the destruction of Rome using a specific vocabulary normally reserved for describing the cosmic dissolution in Stoic doctrine.⁶¹ John Henderson understands Lucan to be a deconstructionist. For example, he remarks on how Lucan imitates the chaotic subject of civil war through word play and the epic’s poetic structure.⁶² Playing on words in his title, Henderson feels that even the “words” are “at war” and that instability leads to the world’s utter demise.

W. R. Johnson concludes that Lucan intended his pessimism to be humorous. Johnson argues that the *Bellum Civile* is a cynical product of Lucan’s anger against the politics of the time.⁶³ He claims that the *Bellum Civile* is purposefully difficult to understand because Lucan devotes his epic “to demolishing the structures it erects as fast as it erects them.”⁶⁴ The heroes do not even offer redeeming hope because it is their “chief function” to assist in the epic’s demolition.⁶⁵ Sklenář also considers Lucan a pessimist but focuses mainly on his nihilism. Sklenář adopts the view that nihilism is the “emptiness and triviality of human existence.”⁶⁶ Thus through the nihilistic representation of his epic, Lucan demolishes the Stoic machine and believes human

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⁶¹ Lapidge 1979, pp. 344-370. See specifically p. 360.
⁶² Henderson 1987, pp. 122-164. Henderson’s article is quite challenging. It appears that Henderson himself succeeds in imitating the chaos of Lucan in the writing of his article.
⁶⁴ Johnson 1987, p. x.
⁶⁵ Johnson 1987, p. x.
⁶⁶ Sklenář 2003, p. 3, who is citing Olson 1972, pp. 514-517.
existence is empty. It seems that each scholar supporting a pessimistic Lucan focuses on one or two particular aspects of the epic which they feel to be particularly destructive.

Although there may not be a definite end to the scholarly debate on this topic, it is the intent of this investigation to examine thoroughly one particular theme that is prevalent throughout the epic, namely, the nefarious nature of civil war. Even as this theme runs through the epic, Lucan also attempts to create a motif with an extensive number of boundary violations. After a careful analysis, it is my hope that the nature of boundary violations will show that Lucan should be construed as a pessimist.

In contrast to such literary predecessors as Vergil and Livy, Lucan describes a large number of boundary violations; in fact, even the content of the epic, civil war, is itself a boundary transgression. Within his epic, Lucan creates a world at war in which no boundary is sacred and no limit recognized. To understand how Lucan wanted to convey the nature of civil war, one must ask two questions concerning boundary transgressions. First, why does Lucan employ so many boundary violations, and, second, what is the meaning behind each instance?

In regard to the first question, Lucan employs an extensive number of boundary violations to express his pessimism about civil war and its destructive effects on people and civic institutions. Lucan’s employment of boundary violations extends throughout the entire epic and emphasizes the horrendous effects of civil war to the point of absurdity. In the opening lines of the epic, Lucan offers his insight on the severity of the crime of civil war; it entails the ultimate breakdown and failure of a society as people turn against themselves:

bella per Emathios plus quam civilia campos
iusque datum sceleri canimus, populumque potentem
in sua victrici conversum viscera dextra,
cognatasque acies, et rupto foedere regni
certatum totis concussi viribus orbis
in commune nefas, infestisque obvia signis
signa, pares aquilas et pila minantia pilis.\footnote{Lucan 1.1-7. The edition of Lucan’s text is Shackleton Bailey 1997.}

Within the first few lines, Lucan expresses how the wars are \textit{plus quam civilia}, “worse than civil,” because of the relationship of the opposing battle-lines. Not only are both sides Roman, but they are \textit{cognatas}, related by blood: fathers are against sons, and brothers against brothers. As the Romans fight against themselves, even the words of the poem stand against each other as in lines 6 and 7 when Lucan juxtaposes \textit{signis} with \textit{signa} and \textit{pila} with \textit{pilis}. Lucan even emphasizes the fact that in civil war both sides share \textit{in commune nefas}, “in joint crime;” neither side is innocent. In civil war there are no winners, and both sides are guilty. Thus, already in the opening lines of the epic Lucan expresses his pessimistic opinion about the nature of civil war.

If Lucan continually expresses a pessimistic attitude in the \textit{Bellum Civile}, what motivates his point of view? Ancient authors record several possible reasons for Lucan’s negative attitude, and chief among them is the political situation during which Lucan composed his epic. As various historical authors record, the relationship between Lucan and Nero was initially on good terms;\footnote{Suetonius, \textit{Vita Lucani} and Tacitus, \textit{Annals} 15.49.} supposedly, Lucan even belonged to Nero’s close group of friends and was honored with the quaestorship at a very young age.\footnote{Suetonius, \textit{Vita Lucani}. Seutonius’ account records the following: \textit{cohortique amicorum additus atque etiam quaestura honoratus}.} At some point, however, Nero’s attitude towards Lucan changed. As a result, Nero instituted a ban on the recitation of Lucan’s poetry and prohibited his involvement in the political arena.
The exact reason for Nero’s sudden change of opinion is uncertain. Suetonius’ and Tactius’ accounts conjecture that Nero offended Lucan during a performance of his poetry, possibly the first portion of the *Bellum Civile*, when he interrupted the performance by walking-out to call a Senate meeting.\(^{71}\) It is assumed that Nero’s insult motivated Lucan to ally himself with the Pisonian conspiracy. Suetonius offers no reason for the sudden interruption, but it is possible that Nero was either offended by the content of the *Bellum Civile* or merely jealous of Lucan’s poetic talents.\(^{72}\)

Some scholars propose that Lucan became involved in the conspiracy only for political reasons, to bring back the Republic. Some believe that Lucan was a strong supporter of the Republican cause and point to his portrayal of Cato and Pompey and the latter’s apotheosis in support of this claim. From this perspective, Lucan may have viewed the Republic as the ideal form of government. Masters, however, points out that Pompey, the embodiment of the Republic, is killed, whereas Caesar, the epitome of tyranny, lives.\(^{73}\) Therefore, instead of being motivated by the Republic, it is more reasonable to conclude that Lucan joined the Pisonian Conspiracy because of personal insult and out of spite for Nero.\(^{74}\) In fact, Tacitus, in his account of the Pisonian Conspiracy, concluded that its purpose was not to restore the Republic, but to replace Nero with another ruler, perhaps with Piso himself.\(^{75}\) That the conspirators wished for a change in leadership rather than the restoration of the Republic is supported by their refusal to allow Vestinus, an avid Republican supporter and consul, to join the plot.\(^{76}\) In

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72 For further discussion, see Rudich 1997, pp. 109-112.
74 Rudich, for example, feels that Lucan’s association with the conspiracy was “not political but personal,” (Rudich 1997, p. 111).
75 Tacitus, *Annals* 15.48-74, gives a thorough account of the conspiracy before and after its detection.
76 Tacitus, *Annals* 15.52.
any case, regardless of the reasons for his possible involvement in the conspiracy, Lucan did actively participate in it. When the conspiracy was discovered, Lucan’s participation was made public, and he was forced to commit suicide on April 30, A. D. 65, leaving his poem unfinished.77

Even though it is easy to observe the existence of boundary violations in the *Bellum Civile*, do the depictions of Lucan’s boundary transgressions differ from the instances depicted by other authors, such as the previous examples from Vergil and Livy? And, if the boundary violations are different, how do Lucan’s violations differ, and why is this consideration important? To understand truly Lucan’s hyperbolic use of boundaries and their destruction, one must, of course, read the *Bellum Civile* itself. It is only then that one may fully appreciate the extensive number of boundary violations. When compared to Vergil’s epic and Livy’s histories, the widespread use of violations becomes even more apparent. Although boundary violations occur in both the *Aeneid* and the *Ab urbe condita*, neither work employs violations to the degree that Lucan does.

It is important to realize, however, that Lucan’s boundary violations differ from those in Vergil and Livy not merely in number, but also in nature. The encompassing theme of civil war is always depicted as destructive in the *Bellum Civile*, and boundary violations exemplify the inherent, destructive nature of civil war. In the *Bellum Civile*, boundary violations are never portrayed in a positive manner. They never offer a progression towards a better situation; instead, boundary violations either create stasis or make the situation deteriorate. This destructive aspect contrasts with the violations that occur in the *Aeneid* and the *Ab urbe condita* of Livy. In the previously mentioned

77 There is much debate on the “unfinished” nature of the epic. Most scholars, however, do agree that Book 10 is unfinished as well as the epic. There have been various suggestions as to when Lucan intended to end his epic, but his actual intentions can never be known. For further reading, see Ahl 1976, pp. 326-332.
violations of the boundary stone and the *muri*, it is possible to discern typical patterns for boundaries and their violations.

In both instances, an established boundary is violated, which renders the boundary meaningless. In addition, the violator of the barrier is punished.\(^\text{78}\) For example, Turnus is killed by Aeneas out of revenge for Pallas, but also because Turnus is a boundary violator himself.\(^\text{79}\) Similarly, Remus is punished with death for leaping over Romulus’ newly built walls.\(^\text{80}\) In each instance, the punishment of the violator can be seen as a necessary sacrifice towards the progression of Rome. Hence, once Turnus is removed, Aeneas is able to assume his destined leadership role in Italy and make the transition from Trojan to Latin. Similarly, in Livy, the death of Remus is portrayed as a necessary occurrence to allow for the change of a rural to an urban society and from Alba Longa to the foundation of Rome. No matter the severity of the violation or its culprit, the transgression is justified as a constructive act in some way; for even though the original boundary is rendered meaningless, a new boundary is established to define new distinctions and reinstate order.

Lucan plays with his audience’s expectations about boundary violations and how they normally provide a necessary step towards the improvement of the Roman state. Instead of creating a positive solution to civil war, Lucan’s boundary violations dissolve any expectation or hope his audience may have concerning the outcome of the war and symbolize the meaninglessness and uselessness of civil war. Also, in contrast to Vergil’s and Livy’s boundary violations, Lucan’s transgressions are not always punished. Moreover, once a broken boundary is redefined and established, the subsequent outcome

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\(^{78}\) The exception is Romulus, who is not punished for the murder of his brother.

\(^{79}\) See Chapter 2, Section I for discussion.

\(^{80}\) See Chapter 2, Section II for discussion.
is always worse than the previous situation. The destructive nature of boundary violations in the *Bellum Civile* reflects the nature of civil war and the pessimistic opinion of its author. Lucanian boundary violations tear down every possible physical structure and subvert moral expectations.

In the following chapters, several boundary violations will be examined to determine how each functions and how each violation reflects the deconstructive aspect of Lucan’s pessimism. In each episode, the boundary in question will be identified with regard to its physical and symbolic status. The role of the violator and any possible punishments will then be analyzed. After presenting the occurrences of a violation, this investigation will identify the violation’s repercussions and any new boundaries that are defined. Finally, whether or not the boundary violation ultimately improves the conditions of the war will be discussed.
Chapter 4: Crossing the Rubicon

After depicting the nefarious nature of civil war and the chaotic effects it has on Rome as well as on the cosmos, Lucan ends his lengthy introduction and enters into the action of his epic. He begins at that moment when Caesar crosses the Rubicon, the criminal action against the Roman state that begins the civil war. Fittingly, as Caesar, the epic’s most infamous main character, is introduced, we witness a boundary violation, the first of many.

As Caesar and his army proceed on their expedition to Rome, their progress is delayed by a fluvial obstacle, the Rubicon. The presence of the river causes a momentary hesitation in Caesar; but, he quickly regains his composure, justifies to Roma his actions, and proceeds on his mission to Rome. While it is clear that Lucan sees Caesar’s reaction to the Rubicon as highly significant, less clear is why the crossing of the Rubicon should be considered a violation. This section will outline the significance of the Rubicon crossing. First, I shall address the historical and symbolic nature of the Rubicon as a geographical landmark and its violation. Second, I shall consider Caesar as the violator and the consequences of his act against the Roman state. Finally, I shall show how the violation of this boundary reflects Lucan’s pessimism.

A. The Rubicon as Boundary

In this episode, Lucan transports his reader to the banks of the Rubicon where Caesar, after crossing the gelidas...Alpes, now stands on the Gallic bank of the Rubicon, poised to cross the river.\footnote{Lucan 1.183-185.} In what follows, Lucan gives his version of the infamous scene of Caesar’s crossing of what had been a long established landmark distinguishing
Italy from Gaul. Even though the Rubicon represents an important boundary, the initial physical description of the river portrays it as small:

…ut ventum est parvi Rubiconis ad undas,…\(^\text{82}\)

The first attribute of the river on which Lucan focuses is its diminutive size (parvi). The river’s name gives some indication of the color. The name, “Rubicon,” which seems to come from the adjective rubor, suggests its reddish color.

Several lines later, Lucan expands upon this detail by describing the river as puniceus, “red.” As the description continues, he emphasizes again the small size of the river:

\[
\text{fonte cadit modico parvisque inpellitur undis}
\]
\[
\text{puniceus Rubicon, cum fervida canduit aestas,}
\]
\[
\text{perque imas serpit valles…}\(\text{83}\)
\]

The description of the moderate spring (fonte…modico) reinforces the meagerness of the river. The passive voice of inpellere adds to this, conveying the idea that the Rubicon itself does not even strike but is pushed forward (inpellitur) by small waves (parvis…undis).\(^\text{84}\) Finally, the river’s flow is described as weak. The verb serpere suggests, strangely, that despite its inadequate nature, the river is important as a boundary.

Although Lucan offers a somewhat unimpressive portrayal of a small, creeping, reddish river resembling more a small creek or tributary, its significance as a boundary is not overlooked. Physically, the Rubicon was a geographical landmark designating the separation of Roman territory from Cisalpine Gaul. Lucan, in fact, identifies its function in these terms:

\(\text{82} \) Lucan 1.185.
\(\text{83} \) Lucan 1.213-215.
\(\text{84} \) Lucan 1.213.
…et Gallica certus
limes ab Ausoniis disterminat arva colonis.  

The significance of the Rubicon as a boundary is emphasized by the position of *certus* at the end of line 215 and *limes* at the beginning of the next, both occupying important places in their respective lines. In addition, the *certus limes*, as a definite geographical boundary, creates a barrier between these verses. Just as the Rubicon separates Gaul from Roman territory, so the word placement of *certus limes* divides *Gallica* from *Ausoniis: Gallica certus/limes ab Ausoniis*. Thus, regardless of how small the Rubicon may be, it is fully functional as a physical boundary that separates Gaul from Rome.

Lucan employs another device to reinforce the significance of the Rubicon as a boundary, the appearance of Rome personified, *Roma*. After introducing the *parvi Rubiconis* in line 185, Lucan turns, in the next line, to *ingens…patriae trepidantis imago*, whose size stands in direct contrast to the smallness of the river. After he describes *Roma* in vivid detail, Lucan has her address Caesar:

<verse>

ingens visa duci patriae trepidantis imago
clara per obscuram voltu maestissima noctem
turrigero canos effundens vertice crines
caesarie lacera nudisque adstare lacertis,
et gemitu permixta loqui: ‘quo tenditis ultra?
quo fertis mea signa, viri? si iure venitis,
si cives, huc usque licet.’
</verse>

Not only is *Roma’s* appearance a fear inspiring image, but her address also gives a fearful warning to Caesar. She questions his intentions in order to discourage his progress and to inform him that what he is about to do is not allowed by the state. Masters remarks that

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85 Lucan 1.215-216.
86 Lucan 1.186-192.
Roma’s presence “re-emphasizes the sanctity of the Rubicon as a limit which no army may legally transgress.”\(^{87}\) Therefore, if Caesar and his soldiers cross the river in arms, they are violating the legal boundaries of Roman territory as an enemy.

As with the other tangible boundaries previously discussed, the Rubicon also conveys certain symbolic relationships. The Rubicon is significant because it is a boundary that demarcates what is Roman from what is not Roman or is foreign, perhaps even hostile territory. There is then a contrasting relationship between Roman territory, on one side of the river, and everything that is foreign, on the other side. In addition, if the far side of the river is considered foreign territory, then it is outside the arena of Roman control. Just as Romulus’ wall symbolized the separation between urban laws and rural disorder, the Rubicon symbolically represents the limit of Roman law and order. Again, there is a symbolic relationship between order (Roman) and chaos (“the outsider”) to which the Rubicon, being the line of demarcation, calls attention.

B. Violation of Limes: Crossing the Rubicon

Just as Caesar is about to cross the Rubicon, Lucan again retards the action. Before casting Caesar as a criminal, Lucan gives him one last chance at redemption. Obviously, Lucan realizes that historically Caesar must cross the Rubicon, yet he stresses Caesar’s hesitation as he sees the apparition of Roma. Lucan describes Caesar’s initial horror of the vision:

\[
\ldots t\text{um percultit horror} \\
membra ducis, riguere comae gressumque coercens \\
languor in extrema tenuit vestigia ripa.^{88}\]

\(^{88}\) Lucan 1.192-194.
Caesar’s momentary hesitation causes him to stop and justify his actions to Roma, as well as to Lucan’s audience. When Caesar hesitates, the reader is even given the false hope that maybe history will be changed. This hope, however, is soon dashed as any remnant of horror and languor melts away in Caesar’s address to Roma:

\[
mox ait: \textit{\'o magnae qui moenia prospicis urbis Tarpeia de rupe Tonans Phrygiique penates gentis Iuleae et rapti secreta Quirini et residens celsa Latiaris Iuppiter Alba Vestales\textit{\'s} foci summique o numinis instar Roma, fave coeptis. non te furialibus armis persequor. en, adsum victor terraque marique, Caesar, ubique tuus (liceat modo nunc quoque) miles. ille erit ille nocens, qui me tibi fecerit hostem.}^{89}
\]

Caesar’s address attempts to soothe the ingens...imago, but his politeness soon gives way to hubris when he refers to himself as \textit{victor terraque marique}, “victor both by land and by sea.” Caesar then continues without any sense of guilt, offering only denial, which gives the impression that he has been compelled to act as he does by another who is guilty (\textit{ille erit ille nocens}); Caesar is trying to deflect blame from himself and onto the man, Pompey, who has made him an enemy (\textit{qui me tibi fecerit hostem}).

Nevertheless, Caesar’s hesitation gives way to outright indignation and disrespect for Roma, and Lucan himself yields to the historical fact that Caesar did cross the Rubicon. But why would Lucan feel the need to delay the crossing of the Rubicon and portray Caesar as hesitant? It seems that Lucan wants to emphasize the crossing because it is the first violation, the one that begins the civil war. Understood as such, Caesar’s action is highly significant; it changes the course of history. Lucan emphasizes the significance of the crossing by delaying the scene with essentially all of \textit{Bellum Civile} 1.

In addition, Lucan’s emphasis on Caesar’s hesitation and subsequent transgression

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89 Lucan 1.195-203.
illustrates that Caesar’s action against the state was intentional. Crossing the Rubicon was a conscious decision that he perversely justifies to Roma herself.

Finally, Caesar must overcome Lucan himself. Although he knows he can not ignore historical fact, Lucan is able to create delay within the narrative. Masters articulates this point of authorial delay and its function:

“Lucan’s account sets up a series of narrative devices that obstruct Caesar’s progress, that impose boundaries he must cross.”

Therefore, Caesar must cross not only geographical and historical boundaries, but also the obstacles created by Lucan’s delaying tactics. Ultimately, Lucan yields to Caesar when he describes the crossing of the river; this is the violation that marks the beginning of civil war:

indé moras solvit belli tumidumque per amnem signa tuli propere…

Ironically, the delay Lucan imposes is released when he “broke down” the moras. At this point, the scene reaches it climax as Caesar brings the signa across the river. Caesar commits a civil crime against the state by violating the sanctity of the Rubicon as a boundary. Caesar could be deterred neither by Roma nor by Lucan’s imposed narrative delay.

Just after Caesar brings the signa through the river, Lucan abruptly interrupts Caesar’s crossing; instead of dwelling on the scene, he turns our attention to a simile describing the attack of a Libyan lion. Lucan dedicates eight lines to this simile, compared to only a line and a half to Caesar’s crossing. The crossing, even after a

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90 Masters 1992, p. 3.
91 Lucan 1.204-205.
92 Lucan 1.205-212. The relevancy of this simile in connection to Caesar will be addressed later in the discussion of Lucan’s portrayal of Caesar.
lengthy suspenseful build-up to it, seems to be glossed over, and less significant than the vivid Libyan lion simile which overshadows it. Masters even goes so far as to deny that Lucan describes Caesar’s crossing of the river at this point:

“In spite of the ‘undoing of delay’, the perfect ‘tulit’ and the adverb ‘propere’, Caesar has not yet crossed the river yet or if he has, he must do it again.”

Nevertheless, Master’s denial of Caesar’s crossing at lines 204-205 is incorrect. Lucan clearly depicts the movement of Caesar with a finite, perfect verb, *tulit* as he moves “through the swollen river.” No matter how brief the description, the meaning of the verse is perfectly clear. The brevity of Caesar’s crossing can be explained by Lucan’s typical pattern of building up the suspense of a scene, only to provide a disappointing climax. After all, Lucan could have denied Caesar a significant record by passing over the event.

After the lion simile, Lucan returns to the Rubicon crossing, but his focus has since changed from Caesar to the crossing of the *sonipes*. The audience is now focused on the *sonipes* as it crosses the waters in a scene of several lines:

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primus in obliquum sonipes opponitur amnem
excepturus aquas, molli tum cetera rumpit
turma vado, faciles iam fracti fluminis undas.
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Lucan effectively portrays the movement of the army and their destruction of the river—the destruction of the Rubicon as a boundary. Several words particularly stand out and emphasize the soldiers’ actions. For example, the *turba* breaks through (*rumpit*), or even

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93 Masters 1992, p. 2. Masters notes that the double river-crossing is first proposed by Goerler 1976, who argues that the double crossing depicts two perspectives.

94 Masters (1992, p. 3) remarks that Caesar’s actual crossing “has been passed over.” It appears that Caesar did not think crossing the Rubicon was a significant landmark. He ignores the crossing and only addresses the crossing of the Alps in his own *Bellum Civile* 1.8-9.

95 Masters (1992, p. 3) addresses this point, claiming that one would expect Caesar to continue as the subject and his crossing to be more detailed, but Lucan directs the attention to the *sonipes* instead.

96 Lucan 1.220-222.
violates, the waters (undas) not only of the river (fluminis), but of the fractured river (fracti fluminis).

C. Lucan’s Portrayal: Caesar as Violator

Lucan portrays Caesar’s character in the first scene of the epic in a manner that sets a precedent for how he is depicted throughout the remainder of the poem. Caesar’s main characteristic is that of a violator. This characterization starts with Caesar’s crossing of the Rubicon, a boundary violation, and his role as a violator becomes a prominent motif throughout the poem. Whether crossing the Rubicon, trying to conquer a raging storm, or reveling in the survey of unburied bodies at Pharsalia, Caesar becomes a menacing figure who inherently defies authority and boundaries.

At the Rubicon, Lucan portrays Caesar as a boundary violator who disregards the warnings of Roma. Before Caesar dismisses her warnings, the image of Roma creates a captivating sense of fear in Caesar. With the mention of fear seizing Caesar’s limbs, Lucan makes his audience aware that “Caesar is not unmindful of the enormity of such an act.” Sklenář contends that at this specific moment Caesar has the ability to reject an impious act and embrace piety. Caesar, however, chooses to decline the warnings of Roma and, instead, goes on to justify his actions.

Caesar’s initial transgression is thus portrayed as deliberate and calculated. The decisiveness of his decision and his confidence in it are further understood at the closing

97 Lucan 1.186-194.
98 Sklenář 2003, p. 128.
99 Sklenář 2003, p. 128.
100 See discussion above in this chapter, section “Violation of Limes: Crossing the Rubicon.”
of the Rubicon scene, when Caesar gives a hubristic speech. Standing on the opposite
bank of the broken river, he daringly claims:

‘hic’ ait ‘hic pacem temerataque iura relinquo.
te, Fortuna, sequor. Procul hinc iam foedera sunto;
credimus fatis, utendum est iudice bello.’¹⁰¹

As Caesar utters these words, the possibility that he may be conscious of his guilt or
ignorant of the laws he is violating is removed. He openly admits that he is abandoning
peace (pacem) and the defiled laws (temerata…iura). Instead of observing Roman laws,
Caesar now follows Fortuna and depends on her as well as the war to be his judge.

Lucan uses Caesar’s own speech as a vehicle to portray his impiety. He uses
imagery and allusion to identify him as an impious boundary violator. For example,
when Caesar approaches the Rubicon, he is in the territory of Gaul, a detail that would
seem to suggest that Caesar himself is a foreigner, even anti-Roman, when he crosses the
Rubicon. In fact, Caesar by crossing becomes a foreign enemy in that he is now invading
Roman territory. Ahl observes that Lucan uses powerful imagery to designate Caesar as
an enemy of the state and, in the process, connects his character to other historical
enemies.¹⁰² There are two images within the Rubicon scene that align Caesar to one of
Rome’s greatest enemies, Hannibal. The first image occurs just before Caesar arrives at
the Rubicon when he crosses the Alps (Alpes): *iam gelidas Caesar cursu superaverat
Alpes,*...¹⁰³ With the mere mention of the Alps, Lucan is drawing an association between
Caesar and Hannibal, who also crossed the Alps during his invasion of Roman territory in
the Second Punic War.

¹⁰¹ Lucan 1.225-227.
¹⁰² See Ahl 1976, pp. 107-112, for his discussion on Caesar and Hannibal.
¹⁰³ Lucan 1.183.
The next image underlines Caesar’s “foreign” nature. Just after Caesar carries the standards across the Rubicon, Lucan diverts our attention by an extended simile about a fierce lion that attacks its hunter:

\[
sicut squalentibus arvis  
aestiferae Libyes viso leo comminus hoste  
subedit dubius, totam dum colligit iram;  
mox, ubi se saevae stimulavit verbere caudae  
erexitque iubam et vasto grave murmur hiatu  
haereat aut latum subeant venabula pectus,  
per ferrum tanti securus volneris exit.\]

At first glance, it would appear that the identification of Caesar with a lion should portray his brave character. But it is important not to overlook the force of Libyes; the word reinforces the idea of Caesar’s foreignness by equating him with a Libyan lion and, furthermore, carries with it the negative association with Carthage.

Later in *Bellum Civile* 1, Lucan depicts Caesar again as a foreign invader, this time using Hannibal’s own name. When Caesar is approaching Rome, the people are terrified by his advance. Ahl remarks that this last example provides the climax to Caesar’s transformation into a Hannibal figure. Ahl cites Caesar’s own observation:

\[
non secus ingenti bellorum Roma tumultu  
concitetur, quam si Poenus transcenderet Alpes  
Hannibal...\]

Lucan has been building the characterization of Caesar as a foreigner, much like Hannibal, who leads an attack against Rome. Here, Lucan gives no room for misunderstanding: Caesar is Hannibal. Ahl correctly points out:

“…the actual identification of Caesar with Hannibal, comes as the powerful climax, though Lucan carefully protects himself from adverse reaction in imperial circles by allowing that crucial

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104 Lucan 1.205-212.  
105 Lucan 1.296-351.  
106 Lucan 1.303-305. For discussion, see Ahl 1976, pp. 107-108.
identification to be made by Caesar himself, almost in jest.”

The mention of a simile equating Caesar to a Libyan lion would have strongly suggested, by itself, that Caesar is comparable to some of Rome’s greatest enemies, but Lucan seems to want to exercise this identification at other moments in *Bellum Civile* 1, all of which occur in close proximity to one another.

If Caesar is depicted as a violator, as I am suggesting, then why does he not receive any immediate punishment for his act of violation? The previous violators discussed, such as Turnus and Remus, were both punished by death: Turnus, in part, for violating the boundary stone and Remus for leaping over fortified walls. One might reasonably expect that Caesar would receive a similar punishment for disregarding the divine warnings of *Roma*, and more importantly for defiling Roman soil by crossing the Rubicon. As Sklenář points out, Caesar has started a chain reaction that should set in motion “the retributive machinery which, in a conventional work, would now grind him back down to size.” Lucan, however, is by no means a conventional poet; almost every traditional epic expectation is destroyed. So too in this case: even without divine sanction, Caesar goes unpunished for his violation. Sklenář’s explanation is that Caesar gets away with this transgression because Lucan “emphasizes the inversion of traditional theology.” Thus, Lucan will not follow traditional expectations that the violator will be punished. In contrast to Sklenář’s interpretation, however, Lucan does allude to a later punishment accounting for the sum of Caesar’s violations, his assassination. In fact, the

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107 Ahl 1976, p. 108.
109 See discussion in Chapter 2, “*Muri* and its Violation” and “Expiation.”
110 Sklenář 2003, p. 133.
Libyan lion simile foreshadows his future murder. Masters briefly mentions the simile’s ability to represent Caesar’s death:

“Lucan’s lion, in as much as he runs himself through by leaping at the hunter’s spears, is pointing to Caesar’s suicide…”

Through this simile, Lucan underlines Caesar’s destructive or, rather, self-destructive nature, as the lion collects his anger and passion to attack his enemy and in the process kills himself by driving the spear deeper. Thus, the Libyan lion simile foregrounds Caesar’s persistence, arrogance, and passion for power which propel him forward and cause him to disregard any concept of human boundaries. In Lucan’s opinion, Caesar’s eventual assassination is a form of suicide, just as the lion, which drives himself towards his own death.

D. A Boundary Redefined

The soldiers’ movement is described in much greater detail than Caesar’s hasty crossing. Lucan returns to Caesar at line 223, to remind the audience that Caesar has already crossed to the other bank and has conquered the river:

Caesar, ut adversam superato gurgite ripam attigit, Hesperias vetitis et constitit arvis,…

These lines not only identify Caesar’s location, which is on the other bank of the river, but also reiterate the criminal nature of his actions. Caesar stands on the Italian fields that became forbidden once he transgressed the boundary to the opposite shores of the Rubicon. At the moment of Caesar’s defilement, the lands (arvis) become forbidden to him, and once the Rubicon is crossed, it ceases to function as a boundary. The previously

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113 Lucan 1.223-224
designated categories on each side of the river are now rendered meaningless. No longer is the Rubicon able to separate Roman from non-Roman, the enemy from the ally; instead, Romans themselves are now the enemies. The previous function of the Rubicon, to provide a defining line that contained an area of Roman law, order, and peace, has failed. The Rubicon no longer represents a fortified barrier where Romans direct their actions outward to foreign lands; now the Romans are directing nefarious actions inward, toward Rome and each other.

Civil war has been declared, and new boundaries must be established. These new boundaries, however, exist where no boundary should be, between Romans. Symbolically, the transgression of the Rubicon creates two new categories of Romans. On the one side, there are Romans loyal to Caesar, on the other, Romans loyal to Pompey or, at least, to the preservation of the Republic. By crossing the Rubicon, Caesar destroys the foundations of the Republic and starts the initial steps towards the Roman Empire.

V. Conclusion: The Rubicon and Pessimism

Lucan seems to put a particular emphasis on the scene surrounding Caesar and his army crossing Rubicon. He focuses on the fractured aspect of the river itself, especially in lines 221-223:

excepturus aquas, molli tum cetera rumpit

Caesar, ut adversam superato gurgite ripam
attigit,…

Lucan devotes particular attention to the action taking place in the waters. There is the phrase excepturus aquas, when the soldiers are about to interrupt the waters, and then the

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114 Lucan 1.221-223. Italics added for emphasis.
soldiers are said to violate (*rumpit*) the waters (*undas*). As if that were not enough, the *undas* are said to be waters of a broken river (*fracti fluminis undas*). Finally, Lucan emphasizes Caesar’s contribution to the Rubicon’s now shattered state in the ablative phrase *superato gurgite*, “when the river had been conquered.”

But why depict this scene at all, when Caesar himself ignores the Rubicon’s crossing? The first reason is that Lucan wanted to begin the action of his epic at the same point civil war was declared by Caesar’s bold action. Thus, the crossing of the Rubicon initiates the breakdown of the state and the Republic. More importantly, Lucan focuses on Caesar’s crossing of the Rubicon to reflect his own pessimism, which stands out in two ways. First, Lucan reveals his negative opinion of Caesar by depicting him as a boundary violator and by identifying him with Hannibal. Also, Caesar shows complete disregard for *Roma*, civil and state boundaries, and peace. Second, Lucan reveals his pessimism in the crossing of the Rubicon and the broken state of its waters. The fractured Rubicon reflects the broken condition of the Roman state and in doing so takes us back to the theme first mentioned at the beginning of *Bellum Civile* 1. Romans are no longer directing their endeavors to those outside their borders, but they are now directing their forces on themselves: *in sua victrici conversum viscera dextra*. As Roman is now against Roman, neither side can truly be victorious since both sides are guilty of sinful crime.
Chapter 5: The Spanish Campaign: Violation and Reversal

In his account of Caesar’s Spanish campaign in *Bellum Civile* 4, Lucan provides not one, but two boundary violations. The first initially appears to contradict Lucan’s usual deconstructionist approach to boundaries, as it seems to be a constructive transgression that leads to peace. Immediately thereafter, however, a second boundary violation occurs that completely destroys the brief existence of tranquility. Lucan manipulates his reader’s expectation and perhaps hope of peace by quickly reversing the situation and returning the epic to its over-arching theme, the destructive nature of civil war. This chapter will take an in-depth look at this episode to determine how its boundary violations reflect Lucan’s pessimism.

I. The First Violation: A Return to Peace

A. *Vallum* as a Boundary

   In the books prior to *Bellum Civile* 4, Lucan recounts various battle scenes, but none involves combat between Romans. For example, Lucan’s first true battle scene pits Caesar’s forces against Greek forces in the city of Massilia. In *Bellum Civile* 4, however, Lucan finally recounts, for the first time in the epic, encounters between citizens, specifically, between Caesar’s forces and Pompey’s, led by Afranius and Petreius, near the town of Ilerda in Spain.

   As Caesar’s forces pursue Pompey’s, Caesar divides his troops to prevent the enemy from gaining an advantageous position. He leads one group ahead of the enemy and leaves the remaining troops to make camp near Pompey’s soldiers. Beginning at line
168, Lucan notes the proximity of those troops to the enemy camp. Only a tiny rampart separates the opposing sides:

Illic exiguo paulum distantia vallo
casta locant.\textsuperscript{115}

In these lines, Lucan identifies the boundary dividing the two Roman armies, a small barrier that stands as the only division between once unified Romans. The rampart metaphorically represents the current division between Romans because of civil war.

The rampart, as a boundary, is a man-made structure, constructed of piled dirt mounds and possibly crowned with sharpened stakes. The rampart is a tangible boundary that creates a separation between Caesar’s troops on one side and Pompey’s on the other. Yet its function is not only to distinguish between the two armies, but also to inhibit their interaction and, thus, prevent any progress towards a peaceful resolution.

Although there is this barrier between the armies, Lucan continues to highlight the fact that the camps are very close to one another:

…postquam spatio languentia nullo
mutua conspicuos habuerunt lumina vultus,
[hic fratres natosque suos videre patresque]
deprensum est civile nefas…\textsuperscript{116}

In fact, the army camps are so close that the view of their enemy is not even obstructed. Each side sees the others’ “faces in full view” (\textit{conspicuos…vultus}). In the end, this proximity allows the soldiers to realize the true nature of their civil crime. In this civil war, the Romans know their enemies because the enemies are, in fact, Romans. To a certain extent, then, the tiny rampart (\textit{exiguo…vallo}) symbolically represents the

\textsuperscript{115} Lucan 4.167-168.
\textsuperscript{116} Lucan 4.169-172.
minuscule differences between the two armies.\textsuperscript{117} The rampart stands as a small tangible boundary symbolizing the insignificant reasons for the civil war and makes the troops question their purposes for fighting.

B. Violation of \textit{Vallum}

With the first glimpses of their enemy, the armies on both sides of the rampart grow conscious of the heinous nature of civil war. Although each side begins to recognize its enemies’ faces, they refrain from any emotional display. Soon their fears diminish and a desire to fraternize with their enemy overtakes many of the soldiers:

\begin{quote}
\textit{\ldots tenuere parumper}
\textit{ora metu, tantum nutu motoque salutant}
\textit{ense suos}…\textsuperscript{118}
\end{quote}

Although the initial acknowledgement is slight, soon \textit{ardens amor}, “burning love,” acts as a catalyst to the violation of laws (\textit{leges}):

\begin{quote}
\textit{\ldots mox, ut stimulis maioribus ardens}
\textit{rupit amor leges}…\textsuperscript{119}
\end{quote}

Lucan’s use of \textit{leges} at this particular moment appears ironic. Is it truly a violation of \textit{leges} for Romans to communicate and acknowledge one another? Of course not, unless that communication occurs in the midst of civil conflict; then the soldiers are fraternizing with the enemy. After all, once civil war started, both sides became guilty accomplices to civil conflict by virtue of their participation in it. As soon as both sides try to mend their differences, however, the \textit{leges}, laws, are shattered. \textit{Leges} no longer refers to those laws

\textsuperscript{117} The image of the \textit{exiguo...vallum} resembles the earlier description of the Rubicon as \textit{parvi Rubiconis}. See in Chapter 4, section “The Rubicon as Boundary.”
\textsuperscript{118} Lucan 4.172-174.
\textsuperscript{119} Lucan 4.174-175.
that bind Romans together as citizens, but to the laws of war, which perpetuate the animosity between Romans.

C. Miles as Violator

When *ardens amor* acts as a catalyst to the violation of *leges*, Lucan names the audacious boundary violators as the *miles*,\(^{120}\) soldiers, from both sides who physically transgress the tangible boundary.\(^{121}\) Thus, as the soldiers leave behind their fear, the abandonment of their restraint parallels the transgression of the *vallum*. The emotions of all the soldiers pour forth, and all of their former restraint (*tenuere*, line 172) is abandoned. The soldiers reject, as it were, the *vallum* and its function to separate Romans. They are once again able to embrace one another as Romans. Some embrace kinsmen, while others recognize childhood friends. Lucan depicts this emotionally charged scene as follows:

\[\ldots\text{audet transcendere vallum miles, in amplexus effusas tendere palmas.}\]
\[\text{hospitis ille ciet nomen, vocat ille propinquum,}\]
\[\text{admonet hunc studiis consors puerilibus aetas;}\]
\[\text{nec Romanus erat, qui non agnoverat hostem.}\]
\[\text{Arma rigant lacrimis, singultibus oscula rumpunt,}\]
\[\text{et quamvis nullo maculatus sanguine miles quae potuit fecisse timet.}\(^{122}\)

Lucan furthers the emotional content of the scene by using words such as *amplexus*, *lacrimis*, *singultibus*, and *oscula*, to arouse empathy. In addition, Lucan seems to want to put particular emphasis on the relationship between the enemies. Line 179, in particular,

\(^{120}\) The use of *miles* here is actually the singular for the collective plural.
\(^{121}\) Leigh (1997, p. 51) contrasts Lucan’s account of the army’s fraternization with Caesar’s account. In Lucan’s version, both sides are involved in communicating with the enemy. This differs from Caesar’s account as he claims only the Pompeian side entered Caesarian camps.
\(^{122}\) Lucan 4.175-182.
conveys one of the most paradoxical aspects of civil war, that the combatants know each other well: “he was not Roman, who had not recognized an enemy.” It is important to notice that although the armies have abandoned the battle, Lucan still uses the noun *hostes* to refer to Romans, a detail that is perhaps meant to foreshadow the impending collapse of peace.

In this first violation in the episode, the soldiers are the violators, who, because they climb over the rampart, have violated *leges* and have corrupted the established barrier. The *miles* actively climb over the rampart to engage with the enemy, not in battle but in a peaceful encounter. As the *vallum* is no longer able to distinguish between opposing armies, the dividing line between them disappears; the Romans are re-united in an embrace (*in amplexus*). For a moment the war has been suspended. Also, I should point out that the soldiers are not punished. The absence of a penalty is similar to Caesar when he crossed the Rubicon; for he suffered no immediate punishment for that transgression. So too in this episode; the violators are not punished immediately. Even so, a penalty will not be avoided; each side will suffer for betraying their own sides on the occasion of a second boundary violation.

D. A Boundary Redefined: *Pax*

Once the soldiers abandon their fear and climb the rampart, the *vallum* no longer divides Roman armies. What this entails is the establishment of a new boundary and a redefinition of the old. Instead of a *vallum* dividing Caesarian and Pompeian forces,

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123 Lucan 4.179.
124 The absence of a penalty for the violator contrasts with the previously discussed violators Turnus and Remus as well.
there is a new boundary, *pax*, which marks the end or *finis* (boundary) of civil war. This re-established peace is described in line 196:

\[
pax \text{ erat, et castris miles permixtus utrisque errabat;…}
\]

Therefore, not only is there peace, but also the intermingling of soldiers from both sides. Any identification a soldier may have with either Caesar’s or Pompey’s cause disappears. As a result, the newly created peace redefines the categories formerly designated by the *vallum*. There has been a reversal of the categories first created when Caesar crossed the Rubicon. When Caesar transgressed the symbolic nature of the river, he declared civil war and marked out the warring factions belonging to him and those belonging to Pompey. For the moment, however, the transgression of the *vallum* at Ilerda reverses the tide of civil war. Now there is the possibility of abandoning civil strife and embracing peace. With the establishment of peace, Romans can again distinguish themselves from non-Romans.

In the midst of this serene tranquility, however, Lucan raises the possibility that peace will not remain. Lucan maintains peace and delays the progression of the narrative to arouse more pathos for the soldiers. To that end, Lucan himself enters the narrative to address the Roman soldiers, at line 183:

\[
\ldots\text{quid pectora pulsas? quid, vaesane, gemis? fletus quid fundis inanes nec te sponte tua sceleri parere fateris? usque adeone times quem tu facis ipse timendum?}^{126}
\]

This apostrophe offers the reader a short digression by which he may fully appreciate the significance of the event. It is as if Lucan were attempting to hold onto this moment of

\[\text{125 Lucan 4.196-197.}\]
\[\text{126 Lucan 4.183-185.}\]
peace and delay, and even to prevent the next sequence of events. As Matthew Leigh puts it, Lucan is unable to “watch his civil war without a partisan prayer.” When the soldiers violate the vallum, they possess the power to terminate the war once and for all. Lucan addresses several rhetorical questions to the soldiers so that they themselves may question their own actions and motivations in the war. Through a series of imperative verbs, Lucan tells them that they have the power to refuse (neglege) and cease (cessa) fighting.

Leigh offers an alternative purpose for Lucan’s apostrophe. He suggests that this scene holds special significance for Lucan because “it offers the chance to reverse history and in the process promises to reconcile his two irreconcilable desires: it will defeat Caesar, and it will do so without shedding blood.” It is in this very scene that the entire war could have been terminated and further suffering avoided. Nevertheless, Lucan must adhere to the facts of history and tear down pax.

II. The Second Violation: Reversal of Peace

A. Violation of Pax

In contrast to most of Lucan’s boundary violations which are destructive, the first violation at Ilerda appears to be a positive transgression: the soldiers violate a boundary that allows for progress to be made in ending the civil war. It seems as though Lucan is abandoning his normal destructive pattern by allowing the conflict to be solved without blood shed. Lucan, however, does not view this peace, even in its brief existence, as an optimistic endeavor. Instead, the suspension of civil conflict only functions to set in

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128 Leigh 1997, p. 49.
bolder relief the severity of later crimes by providing an awareness about the nature of
civil war. In the following lines, for example, it becomes clear that peace creates more
guilt for the soldiers:

\[ \text{…atque omne futurum} \]
\[ \text{crevit amore nefas…} \]^{129}

Lucan’s overarching pessimism occludes the possibility of a peaceful resolution by
immediately reversing the existing truce.

The blissful reunions and harmony between the Roman armies lasts only a brief
moment, and Lucan alludes to the impending destruction of that peace. Leigh notices
that Lucan’s employment of \textit{erat}, the imperfect tense of \textit{esse}, foreshadows the instability
of peace:^{130}

\[ \text{pax \textit{erat}, et castris miles permixtus utrisque} \]
\[ \text{errabat;…} \]^{131}

Leigh observes that the imperfect tense drains the “exhilaration of immediacy” and “the
ground has been laid for disaster to come.”^{132} In other words, as soon as Lucan revels in
the soldiers’ violation of the \textit{vallum} and the attainment of peace, he immediately reveals
that he has given a false sense of hope and anticipates its destruction.

While describing the tranquility of the mingled camps, Lucan interrupts the scene
and introduces Petreius, one of Pompey’s generals. Just as Lucan abruptly breaks in and
directs the reader’s attention to Petreius, so the current peace is also interrupted. In the
second half of line 205, Lucan reveals that Petreius has become aware of the \textit{foedera}
\textit{pacis}, the pacts of peace:

\[ \]

\[129 \text{ Lucan 4.204-205.} \]
\[130 \text{ Leigh 1997, p. 50.} \]
\[131 \text{ Lucan 4.196-197. Italics added for emphasis.} \]
\[132 \text{ Leigh 1997, p. 50.} \]
Instead of rejoicing in the dissolution of war, Petreius, who has a perverse understanding of the situation, feels that this peace is a betrayal of Pompey and the Republican cause. Petreius’ concept of morality, however, is completely misconstrued. For Petreius’ own actions are actually a betrayal of his kinsmen and the Roman state. He calls for his armed slaves to assist him in ejecting the enemy from the camp. It is here that we encounter the second boundary violation in the Ilerda episode. The boundary violation occurs when the soldiers’ embraces are separated and Petreius shatters the peace with bloodshed:

\[ ...iunctosque amplexibus ense separat et multo disturbat sanguine pacem. \]

By this act, the recently established boundary of peace between the armies is destroyed. The wickedness of civil war returns with a vengeance.

Even after he recounts the boundary violation in line 210, Lucan continues to call attention to the consequences of the violation through a series of vile actions on Petreius’ part. For example, Petreius is said to be directly responsible for transgressing the sanctity of peace and for drawing his troops back into civil combat. Petreius alone addresses his troops with the purpose of exciting them to return to fighting. Through his speech, Petreius reminds the soldiers of their ultimate goal in this war, to defeat Caesar and to return as victors to the senate. More emphatically, Petreius claims it is not their goal to live or to establish peace, especially if that peace is attained through betrayal:

\[ ...numquam nostra salus pretium mercesque nefandae proditionis erit: non hoc civilia bella, \]

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133 Lucan 4.205-207.
Petreius’ logic seems distorted as he views war as freedom and peace as slavery. It only makes sense in so far as his words appeal to the soldiers’ sense of duty to the Republican and the Pompeian cause. In the process of his speech Petreius turns the soldiers back to the love of wickedness:

\[\text{...sic fatur et omnis}\]
\[\text{concus sit mentes scelerumque reduxit amorem.}\]

To describe the physical reaction the soldiers undergo as they return to civil *nfas*, Lucan inserts into the narrative of the epic a simile that illustrates the mental state of the soldiers as their emotions change from a state of peace to the state of civil war.\(^\text{138}\) The comparison is with the resurgence of violence among tamed wild beasts:

\[
\text{sic, ubi desuetae silvis in carcere clauso}
\]
\[
\text{mansuevere ferae et vultus posuere minaces}
\]
\[
\text{atque hominem didicere pati, si torrida parvus}
\]
\[
\text{venit in ora cruor, redeunt rabiesque furorque}
\]
\[
\text{admonitaeque tument gustato sanguine fauces;}
\]
\[
\text{fervet et a trepido vix abstinet ira magistro.}
\]
\[
\text{itur in omne nefas, et, quae Fortuna deorum}
\]
\[
\text{invidia caeca bellorum in nocte tulisset,}
\]
\[
\text{fecit monstra fides.}\]

In this comparison, Lucan equates the soldiers to wild beasts. But these beasts (*ferae*) are *desuetae silvis*, “unaccustomed to the woods,” because they have been locked-up in a cage (*in carcere clauso*) and, as a result of their captivity, have become tame. That is, the soldiers have become tame and unaccustomed to battle through their reconciliation with the enemy. Lucan also echoes the idea from line 222 that the soldiers are dragged away

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\(^{136}\) Lucan 4.220-222.
\(^{137}\) Lucan 4.235-236.
\(^{138}\) Similarly, Lucan used the lion simile in *Bellum Civile* 1 to depict Caesar’s aggression following his boundary violation. Here, Lucan uses a simile of wild animals to represent the soldiers return to their nefarious actions.
\(^{139}\) Lucan 4.237-245.
(trahimur) into slavery under the guise of peace (sub nomine pacis). The wild beasts have been held in captivity by their cages, while the soldiers are hindered from their ultimate goal of defeating Caesar if they allow peace to inhibit their actions. If the soldiers remain in this state of truce, then they will suffer from the hominem, Caesar.\footnote{Lucan 4.239.} In other words, if they are to attain their goal of avoiding slavery, Petreius must turn their minds again to nefas and blood (gustato sanguine). Lucan’s simile vividly portrays the return of Petreius’ troops to a desire for bloodshed as the soldiers’ ambition for violence is equated to bestial nature.

Lucan leaves no room for the possibility of peace. There has been a complete reversal from peace to war as soldiers slay those whom they just embraced:

\begin{quote}
\textit{…inter mensasque torosque quae modo complexu fo reverunt pectora caedunt; et quamvis primo ferrum strinxere gementes, ut dextrae iusti gladius dis suasor adhaesit, dum feriunt, odere suos, animosque labantis confirmant ictu. fervent iam castra tumultu, ac, velut occultum pereat scelus, omnia monstra in facie possuere ducum; iuvat esse nocentis.} \footnote{Lucan 4.245-253.}
\end{quote}

The soldiers’ initial hesitation gives way to confidence and even delight in slaughtering their friends. Line 249 sufficiently captures the reversal, the clash between the recent fraternization and the current blood shed; the soldiers hate their own friends (odere suos). In the end, the soldiers are pleased by their own guilt.

B. Petreius as Violator

Lucan depicts Petreius as a polarizing character. Throughout the entire Ilerda episode, Petreius’ sense of morality is completely inverted as he views the soldiers’
fraternization as a betrayal. On the one hand, Petreius is a Pompeian military leader who symbolizes the Republican cause; on the other hand, he is directly responsible for driving his soldiers back to civil war.

Concerning Lucan’s two-sided portrayal of Petreius, Sklenář argues that as a leader on the Pompeian side of the conflict, Petreius is the “supposed representative of the old order and its attendant civic virtue.” Yet by attempting to put an end to the soldiers’ fraternization, he abandons civil virtue. Not only does Petreius violate the boundary of peace, but he also persuades the soldiers to rejoin the battle. He addresses his troops with the purpose of provoking civil strife: *addidit ira ferox moturas proelia voces.* Petreius is the violator of *pax* and “renders inevitable the resumption of civic strife.”

Previously in *Bellum Civile* 1, Lucan makes Caesar the sole boundary violator who instigates civil war. Now and similarly, it is Petreius, from the Pompeian faction, who reinitiates civil war by spilling civil blood.

C. Violation Reversal: Re-emergence of Civil Nefas

There are consequences to Petreius’ actions as the violator and instigator of further violence. As a result of his actions, the *foedera pacis,* “pacts of peace,” have been corrupted, and the boundaries of peace no longer exist. Since peace is unable to be maintained, the destructive nature of civil war consumes the epic once again. Now, instead of peace establishing boundaries, there is a re-establishment of civil *nefas.* The brief existence of a unified Roman army soon gives way to *nefas,* which divides Romans

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142 Sklenář 2003, p. 25.
143 Lucan 4.211.
144 Sklenář 2003, p. 25.
again. Civil nefas, therefore, becomes once again the boundary that distinguishes Caesarian from Pompeian.

Lucan claims that these events at Ilerda increase the degree of guilt for all the battles to come in the war.\textsuperscript{145} By embracing their enemies as friends, the soldiers multiply the severity of their crime because they soon find themselves killing their friends as enemies. Both sides become fully aware of the wickedness of civil war and have the opportunity to achieve reconciliation at Ilerda, but they abandon this pursuit. Thus, Petreius as the violator and the soldiers as followers become more corrupt by the close of the scene than they were at its beginning because they possess an awareness of civil war’s criminality, yet choose to defile the boundary of peace nevertheless.

The boundary violations at Ilerda indicate the destructive nature of civil war and Lucan’s pessimism about it. Although the first violation appears not to transgress any moral boundary since the soldiers on both sides of the vallum cross the boundary and reaffirm peace, Lucan quickly reveals his pessimism that his peaceful utopia is unattainable. Soon all the foundations of peace are destroyed with a second violation when Petreius reinstates civil war.

Instead of focusing on and celebrating the brief existence of peace, Lucan uses Ilerda and its coupled transgressions to depict the “moral inversion” of civil war.\textsuperscript{146} In Lucan’s view, peace is impossible, so much so that even when it is achieved at Ilerda, it is likened to slavery, as the words of Petreius and the wild beast simile clearly show. Lucan’s focus on the moral dimension of civil war allows him to explore and comment on the loss of morality and the existence of the perverse in a world corrupted by nefas.

\textsuperscript{145} Lucan 4.204-205.
\textsuperscript{146} Sklenář (2003, p. 26) discusses how the Ilerda episode serves as the foundation for subsequent understanding of virtus and the pattern of moral inversions.
Chapter 6: Scaeva—Unnatural Boundaries

The final boundary violation to be examined occurs in *Bellum Civile 6*. This episode involves a double violation and the merging of two boundaries into one. We shall see that Lucan uses the two original boundaries to represent two co-existing themes found throughout the epic. Each of these boundaries and the themes associated with them will be analyzed to show how Lucan uses a battle scene at the opening of *Bellum Civile 6* and, specifically, how the assimilation of the two boundaries attests to Lucan’s pessimism.

As at Ilerda, Caesar’s and Pompey’s forces are separated by a man-made structure, a rampart, at Dyrrachium. This rampart may be the first recognizable boundary in *Bellum Civile 6*, but it represents a broader theme that exists throughout the epic, that of walls, especially in *Bellum Civile 6.1-332*. In addition to and in connection with the theme of walls, there is another theme prevalent in *Bellum Civile 6* and throughout the epic. Bartsch identifies the human body as a theme, which is subjected to constant violation. In *Bellum Civile 6*, the theme of the human body as a boundary is particularly evident in the character, Scaeva. In the end, Lucan combines these two themes by merging the rampart with the human body to impress upon his readers the perverse nature of civil war, that it is itself a form of unnatural violation.

A. *Vallum* as Boundary

At the opening of *Bellum Civile 6*, Pompey’s forces occupy the naturally fortified town of Dyrrachium and its surrounding area. To enclose Pompey’s forces and to

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147 Saylor 1978, pp. 243-257. Saylor understands the walls to constitute a main theme in *Bellum Civile 6*. I offer that the body also comprises a main focus for this book. In addition, the violations of both themes seem to establish an over-arching connection with the entire epic.
prevent them from escaping, Caesar orders an extensive rampart to be constructed. In response, Pompey decides that his troops must breech the rampart at an advantageous point to gain access to the surrounding areas. Pompey’s well-constructed plans do not sufficiently provide for Scaeva.

Just as at Ilerda, Lucan constructs a boundary that is a barrier for military purposes, the *vallum*, which divides Caesar’s forces from Pompey’s. The rampart’s main function is to surround Pompey and his army and prevent their flight. In addition, Lucan wants his audience to know the identity of the architect of this *vallum*, whom he identifies as follows:

hic avidam belli rapuit spes inproba mentem
Caesaris, ut vastis diffusum collibus hostem
cingeret ignarum ducto procul aggere valli.\(^{149}\)

It is indeed ironic that even though Caesar is almost always depicted as a boundary violator who tears down walls, Lucan makes him the one responsible for erecting this boundary.

Saylor explains why Lucan presents Caesar as a builder instead of a destroyer of boundaries in this case. In his view, it is because the very existence of the rampart is a violation on the land and as such emphasizes Caesar’s impiety.\(^{150}\) Nevertheless, the profane nature of the rampart only becomes evident during its construction and the description of the natural topography of the place. For example, when Lucan describes the materials used for the rampart’s construction, he says:

metatur terras oculis, nec caespitate tantum
contentus fragili subitos attollere muros

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\(^{148}\) Lucan 6.118-122.

\(^{149}\) Lucan 6.29-31.

\(^{150}\) Saylor 1978, p. 246.
Even though ramparts are usually constructed using mounded soil, Caesar is not content (contentus) with the crumbling sod (caespite...fragili). Instead, he seeks out other materials to reinforce the structure, namely, huge, sharp rocks (ingentes cautes) and boulders (saxa). These rocks, however, have not been quarried; they have been taken from structures of civic importance: homes (domos) and city walls (moenia). Therefore, to construct the vallum, Caesar tears down civic foundations and destroys the original structures. In effect, Caesar constructs his wall with stolen materials, and the vallum itself possesses an unfavorable origin because it was built from civic structures.

As Lucan continues to describe the construction of the vallum and other changes made to the natural topography, it becomes clear that Caesar is not only imposing a militaristic structure upon the landscape, but is also altering it. It is as if he were attacking the land itself:

franguntur montes, planumque per ardua Caesar
ducit opus; pandit fossas turritaque summis
disponit castella iugis magnoque recessu
amplexus fines saltus nemorosaque tescua
et siluas uastaque feras indagine claudit.  

Caesar mutilates the land by shattering (franguntur) mountains (montes) and opening deep trenches (pandit fossas). Furthermore, the rampart encloses not only Pompey’s army, but forests (silvas) and wild animals (feras) as well. Caesar is conducting a war against nature.

Lucan also characterizes the Caesarian forces as unnatural beings, who impose man-made boundaries on a natural landscape. The army’s actions oppress the land and

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151 Lucan 6.32-35.
152 Lucan 6.38-42.
its wild life. Caesar, especially, is presented in a most unfavorable light: the wall symbolizes his impiety. As Saylor remarks:

“The inordinate size, compass, and strength of the wall thus stand as an exhibition of a characteristic impiousness towards nature, a refusal to respect the boundaries or limits of things,…[and] indeed is outstanding among Caesar’s other violations in this respect.”

Therefore, Lucan’s portrayal of how the wall was built and where it was located reflects his unfavorable opinion of Caesar. Caesar becomes the epitome of impiety on one side of the vallum, a fact which causes Pompey to be viewed in a favorable light as he stands on the other side of the rampart. The vallum thus creates an antithesis between Lucan’s two main characters.

While the vallum, as a physical boundary, serves to separate Caesar’s and Pompey’s troops, it also symbolizes the character of each of the opposing forces because the description of the activities occurring simultaneously on each side of the vallum reflects the categories separated by the boundary. Pompey’s forces, enclosed in the vallum, are depicted as possessing a relatively symbiotic relationship with the land, whereas Caesar and his forces seem to be at war with it.

Since Caesar has built the rampart, Pompey orders his forces to scatter about the land to extend Caesar’s blockade of troops, but his decision soon leads to crisis; there is not enough sustenance for the Pompeians’ horses. As a result, many horses die, and a plague spreads throughout the camps scattered about the hills. As Saylor points out,

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153 Lucan 6.38-42. See above p. 58 for Latin text.
155 Saylor 1978, p. 246. Saylor remarks that the impious nature of Caesar “amplifies good associations to Pompey.”
156 Lucan 6.64-72, 80-105.
Pompey’s forces suffer as a direct result of Caesar’s *vallum*\(^{157}\). The plague continues to afflict the soldiers, though the majority is able to maintain their strength. Although Lucan describes the unburied victims of the plague, the survivors suffer through these hardships:

\[
\text{…tamen hos minuere labores} \\
a tergo pelagus pulsusque Aquilonibus aer} \\
litoraquae et plenae peregrina messe carinae.\(^{158}\)
\]

The army’s hardships (*labores*) are lessened by the winds that refresh the air and by the arrival of grain shipments.

Although, initially, the Pompeians suffer greatly and the *vallum* seems to be effective, the situation in Caesar’s army is, in fact, worse:

\[
at liber terrae spatiosis collibus hostis} \\
aere non pigro nec inertibus angitur undis,} \\
sed patitur saevam, veluti circumdatus arta obsidione, famem.\(^{159}\)
\]

Ironically, those who are besieged are better off than the besiegers. Although Caesar’s army, called *hostis*, roams free (*liber*) on the hills, there is not enough food for the troops, and the besiegers, consequently, suffer famine (*famem*). The plight of the soldiers increases because of their immense hunger, and they resort to eating many things typically foreign to human consumption (*plurimaque humanis...incognita mensis*):

\[
\text{…nondum turgentibus altam} \\
in segetem culmis cernit miserabile vulgus} \\
in pecudem cecidisse cibos et carpere dumos} \\
et foliis spoliare nemus letumue minantis} \\
vellere ab ignotis dubias radicibus herbas.} \\
quae mollire queunt flamma, quae frangere morsu,} \\
quaque per abrasas utero demittere fauces,} \\
plurimaque humanis ante hoc incognita mensis
\]

\(^{157}\) Saylor 1978, p. 248.  
\(^{158}\) Lucan 6.103-105.  
\(^{159}\) Lucan 6.106-109.
Caesar’s forces, though the makers of the wall and the besiegers, are suffering as the besieged should, a paradox that Lucan emphasizes as follows: “The soldiers tearing (themselves) to pieces besiege a sated enemy.”

B. Scaeva as a Boundary

After both sides suffer immense toils, Pompey decides to break through the vallum by advancing his forces to an advantageous position. Pompey plans to shatter (confringere) completely the towers (turres) once he breaks through the rampart (impluso...vallo).

Pompey’s forces approach the rampart undetected because he chose a path covered by dense trees (densis/ arboribus) so that they might not be betrayed by dust (pulvere nullo).

At first, it appears that Pompey will be successful and break through the ramparts, yet once the army reaches the lofty height of the rampart, they encounter a force that not even Fortuna could overcome:

Iam Pompeianae celsi super ardua valli
exierant aquilae, iam mundi iura patebant:
quam non mille simul turnis nec Caesare toto
auferret Fortuna locum victoribus unus
eripuit vetuitque capi, seque arma tenente
ac nondum strato Magnum vicisse negavit.

First, Lucan identifies this unstoppable force only as unus, one man, who will deny Pompey victory. This man is Cassius Scaeva:

Scaeva viro nomen: castrorum in plebe merebat

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161 Lucan 6.117
162 Lucan 6.123. Lucan describes Pompey’s intentions in lines 6.118-137.
163 Lucan 6. 126-127.
164 Lucan 6.137.
165 Lucan 6.138-143.
ante feras Rhodani gentes; ibi sanguine multo
promotus Latium longo gerit ordine vitem,
pronus ad omne nefas et qui nesciret in armis
quam magnum virtus crimen civilibus esset.\textsuperscript{166}

Lucan briefly recounts that past valor of this hero (\textit{viro}), who bears the Latin vine-staff for his bravery against foreign foes.

In these lines Lucan introduces the second boundary found at the battle of Dyrrachium, Scaeva, who becomes an obstacle that prevents Pompey’s army from conquering Caesar’s \textit{vallum}, and as the battle progresses, alone holds back the Pompeian forces. In addition, Scaeva also acts as a model for another theme in the \textit{Bellum Civile}, the body as a boundary. In a physical sense, the human body is contained within the confines of its epidermal covering. The skin functions to contain the biological mechanics and the life force of a living being; in the process, the contained unit of the body is separated from its environment. On a psychological level, the body represents human nature and the identity of self. A living body distinguishes itself from its surroundings by identifying its own limits. In addition, the body implies the differentiation of living, animate beings from inanimate. What is contained within the body falls under the category of animate, whereas the non-living elements outside of the body constitute the category of inanimate.

Bartsch, in particular, focuses on the human body as a boundary. She suggests that in the \textit{Bellum Civile} the human body becomes a metaphor for stability and social coherence.\textsuperscript{167} Thus, if the body is a safe and contained unit, it can reflect the stability of the surrounding environment. On the other hand, if the surroundings are in a state of chaotic disorder, these circumstances can be reflected in the human body as well. The

\textsuperscript{166} Lucan 6. 144-148.
\textsuperscript{167} Bartsch 1997, p. 12.
body as a boundary is cast into the state of crisis where “the boundary that separates men from what is pointedly not-man, from the inanimate and the environment,” becomes blurred. In a state of crisis, the body loses its stability and identity. Bartsch argues that the entire epic depicts the crisis situation of the body as a boundary to symbolize the loss of political identity as a result of civil war.

C. Merging of Boundaries: An Unnatural Violation

In *Bellum Civile* 6, the *vallum* and the human body are boundaries that reflect the instability of civil war. After Lucan identifies the rampart as a boundary, he proceeds to describe how that *vallum* is violated. Then the violation of the body as a boundary emerges with renewed force in the character of Scaeva. The episode, therefore, offers two boundaries that are violated, yet as a consequence of this double violation, a new boundary, unique to this episode, is created. Lucan merges the inanimate *vallum* with the human body to construct a new boundary that is utterly unnatural.

As the *vallum* crumbles, Scaeva, the one-man army against Pompey’s forces, becomes a model for violations of the human body, and is the main figure of the battle as Lucan offers the epic’s only instance of an *aristeia*. Lucan describes Scaeva’s actions in detail as he stands at a falling section of the rampart. Scaeva faces the Pompeian forces to prevent their advancement over the rampart. Lucan describes how Scaeva cuts down his enemy with such savage strength that the corpses pile up before him:

\[
\text{...ille ruenti aggere consistit, primumque cadavera plenis}
\text{turribus evoluit subeuntisque obruit hostis corporibus, totaeque viro dant tela ruinae,}
\]

169 The complications of an *aristeia* in civil war will be discussed below in “Scaeva as Violator.”
roboraque et moles hosti seque ipse minatur. 
nunc sude nunc duro contraria pectora conto 
detrudit muris, et valli summa tenentis 
amputat ense manus; caput obterit ossaeque saxo 
ac male defensum fragili compage cerebrum 
dissipat; alterius flamma crinesque genasque 
succendit, strident oculis ardentibus ignes. 
ut primum cumulo crescente cadavera murum 
admove re solo, non segnior extulit illum 
saltus et in medias iecit super arma catervas, 
quam per summa rapit celerem venabula pardum. 
tunc densos inter cuneos compressus et omni 
vallatus bello vincit, quem respicit, hostem. 
iamque hebes et crasso non asper sanguine macro 
percussum Scaevae frangit, non vulnerat, hostem; 
perdidit ensis opus, frangit sine vulnere membr. 
ilum tota premit moles, illum omnia tela, 
nulla fuit non certa manus, non lancea felix; 
parque novum Fortuna videt concurrere, bellum 
atque virum.  

In these lines we see Scaeva defeating his enemies from every angle, using his combat 
skills. The mutilated bodies pile-up and are buried by the multitude of corpses. Because 
Scaeva’s sword becomes dulled by its constant use and clotted blood, he resorts to 
anything he can get his hands on to conquer his opponents (\textit{totaeque viro dant tela 
ruinae}). Soon, however, the situation begins to change as the Pompeian forces direct all 
their weapons (\textit{tela}) on Scaeva and focus the war entirely upon him. \textit{Fortuna} alters the 
success of the battle as Scaeva’s body becomes utterly mutilated by weapons. Spears and 
other implements penetrate his body so that the weapons themselves protect him as they 
cover his body:

\begin{quote}
\textit{tempora, nec quidquam nudis vitalibus obstat 
iam praeter stantis in summis ossibus hastas.}\footnote{Lucan 6.194-195.}
\end{quote}
a. Violation of the Body

As Scaeva defends the foundation of the *vallum* by a stream of weapons and spears, his body is disfigured by the projectiles breaking through his flesh, and his human body is violated. Lucan’s description of this boundary violation is so obscene as to be almost comical:

…fortis crebris sonat ictibus umbo,
et galeae fragmenta cavae compressa perurunt tempora, nec quicquam nudis vitalibus obstat
iam praeter stantis in summis ossibus hastas.
quid nunc, vaesani, iaculis levibusve sagittis
perditis haesuros numquam vitalibus ictus?
hunc aut tortilibus vibrata falarica nervis
obruat aut vasti muralia pondera saxi,
hunc aries ferro ballistaque limine torta
promoveat. stat non fragilis pro Caesare murus
Pompeiumque tenet. iam pectora non tegit armis,
ac veritus credi clipeo laevaque vacasse
aut culpa vixisse sua tot vulnera belli
solus obit densamque ferens in pectore silvam
iam gradibus fessis, in quem cadat, eligit hostem.  

The degree of disfigurement is so severe that Scaeva no longer appears human. Scaeva is no longer in need of a weapon to swing in his defense; his body has become a weapon, able to inflict harm upon his enemy as he seeks an enemy to fall upon (*in quem cadit, eligit hostem*). Even the enemies’ efforts to inflict more pain are in vain because Scaeva’s entire body is penetrated by spears. There is no room left for another wound as even his chest bears a dense forest of spears (*densamque ferens in pectore silvam*).

Nevertheless, Scaeva persists and endures. In fact, he does not even give any indication that his body has grown weary; he continues to inflict harm upon the enemy anyway he is able. In doing so, Scaeva transcends the limits of human pain and suffering and, as a result, blurs the line between life and death. An ordinary man would have

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172 Lucan 6.192-206.
perished from half the injuries, yet Scaeva presses on. He is consumed by his desire to
conquer the enemy and obtain *kleos*.

Even when Scaeva is close to succumbing to his injuries, he devises one last ruse
to kill the enemy. He convinces his soldiers to lower him down among the Pompeian
forces, feigning a last minute desertion:

‘…tollite et in Magni viventem ponite castris.
hoc vestro praestate duci: sit Scaeva relictus
Caesaris exemplum potius quam mortis honestae.’
credidit infelix simulatis vocibus Aunus
nec vidit tecto gladium mucrone prementem,
membraque captivi pariter laturus et arma
fulmineum mediis exceptit faucibus ense.
incaluit virtus, atque una caede refectus…’

His plan is successful as he kills the unsuspecting Aulus, a final success that gives
Scaeva’s mutilated corpse renewed strength and energy (*una caede refectus*).

The other Caesarian soldiers are inspired by Scaeva’s example and successfully
drive back the enemy. Once the battle concludes, the soldiers bear Scaeva’s body back to
their camp, praising him in victory:

…labentem turba suorum
excipit atque umeris defectum imponere gaudet,
ac velut inclusum perfosso in pectore numen
et vivam magnae speciem Virtutis adorant;’

As his mutilated body is carried, even the soldiers recognize Scaeva’s ability to test the
limits of the human body. Scaeva has defied the boundaries of life and death through his
endurance. At this point there is some confusion as to whether Scaeva dies from his
wounds or survives. Although Lucan never states that he actually dies, the soldiers praise
him as a man who has become a deity (*numen*). Lucan describes Scaeva as a deity

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174 Lucan 6.251-254.
confined in a stabbed chest (*inclusum perfosso in pectore numen*). Clearly Lucan is leaving his death ambiguous. In fact, when Scaeva reappears before Caesar at the end of *Bellum Civile* 10, it is still unclear whether Caesar actually sees Scaeva or merely a figment of his ghost.\(^{175}\)

While it is obvious that the boundaries of Scaeva’s body are violated, what does this violation symbolize? Scaeva’s physical body is violated by the penetration of weapons, resulting in the deterioration of his biological functions. Moreover, if the physical body can represent personal identity, then Scaeva’s identity is destroyed as a result of the defilement of his body as well. Moreover, the violation causes the body and its environment to be mixed in an unnatural way. Bartsch points out that this type of body violation from an external force is highly symbolic.\(^{176}\) Since Bartsch understands the body to represent social stability, the mutilation of a soldier’s body in combat signifies the resistance and breakdown of political and hierarchical structures and “demonstrates so graphically the bloody outcome of ideological clashes played out on the battlefield.”\(^{177}\) Consistent with this interpretation, the violation of Scaeva’s body becomes a metaphor for the instability of the Roman state.

Scaeva is so compelled to inflict harm upon other Romans that he is not even concerned about his own well-being. His persistence becomes suicidal as his desire for *kleos* drives him to his (assumed) death. Moreover, by attacking other Romans, Scaeva is also attacking his own countrymen. Scaeva’s actions reflect the baseness of civil war,

\(^{175}\) Lucan 10.540-546.
\(^{176}\) Bartsch 1997, p. 11.
\(^{177}\) Bartsch 1997, p. 11.
which alludes to the introduction from *Bellum Civile* 1, as the citizens turn against their countrymen.\(^{178}\)

b. Wall and Man: Convergence

The next boundary violation entails the convergence of animate and inanimate entities. The two previously identified themes, walls and the human body, come together to create one unified boundary, but the merging of these boundaries itself constitutes a boundary violation. The final result is unlike any other boundary violation found in Lucan, as it is composed of human and non-human parts. The resulting boundary is a metaphor for the inhumane way civil war is conducted by humans.

Scaeva, as the raging hero of Dyrrachium, emerges from the ranks of the army to motivate his fellow soldiers to fight to the death for their leader, Caesar. His rousing speech to his comrades causes them either to take up arms beside him or to remain in battle to observe him in action. While the soldiers watch, Scaeva approaches the crumbling rampart and takes up his position at its breech:

\[
\text{…ille ruenti}
aggere consistit, primumque cadavera plenis
   turribus evolvit subeuntisque obruit hostis
corporibus; totaeque viro dant tela ruinae,
   roboraque et moles hosti sequi ipse minatur.
nunc sude nunc duro contraria pectora conto
detrudit muris, et valli summa tenentis
   amputat ense manus.}\(^{179}\)

As Scaeva interposes himself within the rampart, he strengthens its foundation. He cuts down the enemy from the towers and deters any further approach with a mass of piled bodies. It is imperative to notice how Lucan describes this phenomenon. The precise

\(^{178}\) Lucan 1.3.
\(^{179}\) Lucan 6.169-176.
words create a clear image of Scaeva placing himself in the breaking rampart (ille ruenti/aggiere consistit). In the process, Scaeva becomes a part of the rampart; his human body stands in for the weakened section of the vallum. Thus, the vallum and human boundary merge into one. Marti and Saylor have discussed how Scaeva becomes the wall. Marti notes that Lucan uses several words, normally associated with walls, to describe Scaeva.\footnote{Marti 1966, pp. 239-257. Specifically refer to pages 247-248.} Saylor expands on this discussion and claims that the purposes of the rampart’s existence become embodied in the actions of Scaeva. For example, Scaeva, in Saylor’s view, dramatizes the confining nature of Caesar’s vallum “by interposing himself as a miniature wall” and thus reinforcing the breeched structure.\footnote{Saylor 1978, p. 250.}

There is further evidence that Scaeva and the rampart become one. Scaeva uses the wall as a weapon by taking materials from it to use as missiles and uses stakes and sharpened poles from the structure to defend against the enemy. At the same time, Scaeva, as a warrior, becomes a weapon defending the rampart. He protects the foundation of the rampart just as if it was an extension of his own body. A symbiotic relationship develops as the two boundaries merge, each receiving beneficial protection from the other.

Later in the battle, Lucan emphasizes the convergence of Scaeva with the vallum. Again, even though Scaeva’s body is so mutilated by the penetration of numerous weapons that there is no room left for additional injuries, he still perseveres and seems indestructible. Since Scaeva’s body is so distorted, Lucan questions his attackers:

Quid nunc, vaesani, iaculis levibusve sagittis perditis haesuros numquam vitalibus ictus? hunc aut tortilibus vibrata falarica nervis obruat aut vasti muralia pondera saxi,
hunc aries ferro ballistaque limine torta
promoveat. stat non fragilis pro Caesare murus
Pompeiumque tenet.\textsuperscript{182}

Obviously, any attempt to add injury to Scaeva would be wasted; missiles would have nowhere to fall. Thus, Lucan advises his attackers to abandon arrows and javelins and, instead, to assail Scaeva by methods used for destroying walls and other structures. Since arrows are unsuccessful, hurling a \textit{falarica} would better achieve their goal. Lucan even suggests using a \textit{muralia pondera}, a mechanism employed for pulling down walls. This particular suggestion reinforces Lucan’s assimilation of Scaeva with the \textit{vallum}. Finally, Lucan offers another tactic to the soldiers: a battering ram (\textit{aries ferro}) or a \textit{ballista}.

Again, battering rams and \textit{ballistae} are military devices normally reserved for demolishing walls, but are here recommended to conquer Scaeva.

D. Scaeva as Violator

In this boundary violation, Scaeva is also guilty of a transgression by placing himself amid the \textit{vallum}, that is, by intermingling his own animate being with an inanimate object. First, Scaeva violates the human boundary by defying the limits of human suffering and death. Second, his desire for defeating his enemy goes beyond the acceptable bounds of warfare. His desire for \textit{kleos} in battle drives him to the point of insanity. Scaeva’s actions are suicidal as he refuses to stop. He causes his own body to be completely disfigured and, as a result, loses the identity of his person. In addition, Scaeva is a violator of both the \textit{vallum} and his body because he makes himself stand as the diminishing section of the rampart. Thus, it is Scaeva who is responsible for dehumanizing his own identity and assuming the traits of the \textit{vallum}.

\textsuperscript{182} Lucan 6.196-202.
Lucan, however, makes allegations against Scaeva that are even more serious. Scaeva offers the epic’s only example of an *aristeia*, though Lucan manipulates the traditional *aristeia*. Instead of portraying Scaeva as a hero, Lucan depicts him as a criminal. Lucan’s disgust at Scaeva is evident when he yearns for valorous recognition in the ensuing battle:

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pronus ad omne nefas et qui nesciret in armis
quam magnum virtus crimen civilibus esset.\(^{183}\)
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No matter how outstandingly the soldier may perform in battle, it is criminal if he does so in civil war. Any successful defeat against the enemy only offers more guilt and criminal action against one’s own country.

These two lines have sparked much debate among scholars about the appropriateness of an *aristeia* in an epic on civil war. After all, Scaeva represents a deviant, corrupted form of *virtus*. Skelnář, who focuses extensively on the problem of *virtus* in the epic, claims that Scaeva is Lucan’s primary example of corrupted *virtus* since it is portrayed in civil strife.\(^ {184}\) To this end, Skelnář compares battle scenes in the *Iliad* with Scaeva’s actions.\(^ {185}\) The similarities between the epics are numerous, but the differences between them are striking too, in particular, how the setting of the action determines whether the action is heroic or criminal.

Ahl also addresses the question of Scaeva’s *virtus*. Building on Marti’s study, Ahl suggests that Scaeva is nothing more than an antithesis of *virtus*.\(^ {186}\) Scaeva’s actions are no doubt fantastic feats of bravery, but because he is involved in a civil conflict, they only set in bolder relief his guilt. Ahl asserts, correctly, in my opinion, that Scaeva’s

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\(^{183}\) Lucan 6.147-148.
\(^{184}\) Skelnář 2003, p. 49.
\(^{185}\) See Skelnář 2003, pp. 45-58
\(^{186}\) Ahl 1976, pp. 117-121.
virtus would have been heroic if it had been directed against a foreign foe. Lucan thus gives us only the fading, defiled mirage of an epic aristeia and a perverse criminal who is ignorant (nesciret) of his guilt.

E. An Unnatural Violation: A Redefined Boundary

How does the merging of the vallum and Scaeva into one boundary constitute a boundary violation and thereby reflect Lucan’s persistent pessimism? As mentioned above, Scaeva is a violator who possesses a perverse sense of virtus. By merely desiring to achieve valor in civil war, Scaeva is guilty of crimes against his own countrymen. In addition, Scaeva is a violator the moment he merges himself within the vallum. Scaeva becomes the convergence point between the vallum and himself. He violates both the vallum and his own body by redefining a new boundary that erases the distinctions between living and non-living categories.

The end result of the dual violation is the creation of an unnatural boundary that is both animate and inanimate. Scaeva violates the human body by blending its identity with a non-human structure. He crosses the defined limits of human existence. Saylor observes that Scaeva transgresses “human nature by transforming himself into a wall” and creating a loss of human identity. Saylor adds that as his mutilated body is continually inflicted with injuries, it becomes “more difficult to recognize (him) as a human being but measures his spiritual regression away from being human until he ends as a wall, a completely unfeeling, inhuman entity.” As Scaeva becomes identified more with the rampart than himself, the vallum too begins to lose its original identity and

187 Ahl 1976, p. 119.
188 Saylor 1978, p. 251.
assume some of the characteristics of Scaeva. The *vallum* is now better capable to defend itself, as Scaeva’s actions become an extension of its defense. Moreover, the *vallum* assumes the human aspect of flexibility and the ability to adapt to the changing stages of battle. Consequently, Lucan creates two boundaries and merges them into one unified structure. The redefined boundary is a deviant, unnatural coexistence of a *vallum* that is alive and a human body that is lifeless.

The unnatural state of this redefined boundary is again a reflection of Lucan’s pessimism in that it reflects the perverse nature of civil war itself. This unnatural boundary of a man and a rampart strips away personal identity, just as civil war dehumanizes those who are involved in it. The *vallum* itself represents the state of civil war. The fractured structure of the rampart is a metaphor for the corrupted civil state. The unnatural depiction of a lifeless human becoming an inanimate structure reflects Lucan’s pessimistic view of civil war, how it destroys civic institutions and dehumanizes its participants.
CONCLUSION

The desecration of boundaries abounds in the *Bellum Civile* to emphasize the ultimate boundary violation of civil war. Lucan portrays civil war as a destructive force that drives the collapse of Rome and its citizens and, to this end, uses various methods to express his dissonance towards the costs of civil strife. Boundary violations are used, in other words, as a literary device to delineate Lucan’s own pessimistic attitude towards his subject.

Although boundary violations are described in other instances of Roman literature, there is normally some sort of justification or positive consequence for the transgression. Throughout the epic, Lucan plays with this very expectation, that a boundary violation will signal a boundary change that leads to a beneficial outcome. In fact, when he leads us to expect a boundary violation, he even alludes to the possibility that a resolution is near. In the end, however, Lucan builds up this expectation merely to deconstruct the motif and to eliminate any possibility of resolution to this conflict. Lucan’s violations, therefore, offer either no progression towards peace or create circumstances that are worse than before. It is in this portrayal of transgressions that Lucan expresses his pessimism.

Although some scholars ardently argue that the *Bellum Civile* offers an optimistic perspective, Lucan’s boundary violations show that he is a devout pessimist, for they consistently reflect his view that civil war destroys the foundations of the Roman state and its people. From this perspective, there is nothing positive that can be gained from civil conflict. Both sides are guilty and there can not be true victory.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


