Iam Tum (nowthenalready): Latin Epic and the Posthistorical

Ika Willis

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LATIN EPIC AND THE POSTHISTORICAL

Ika Willis

INTRODUCTION: RECEPTION AND THE POLITICAL

The question of *reception and the political* requires us to think about the relationship between material, political, or state power on the one hand and, on the other, the interpretative devices and techniques that make certain meanings or modes of reading more readily available than others. How is political power related to the devices we have for making the world intelligible? Through what rhetorical and material strategies and resources is the reception of texts, the construction of meanings, made possible within (by or against) political power?

The question is sharpened in the early twenty-first century by (what feels like) the continuing intensification with which state power penetrates and seeks to control acts of reading and the circulation of information—the emergence of the Internet as a contested political site, and attempts to compel sites like Google and YouTube to release information to the police about information sent, viewed, or archived electronically. Much political conflict is now not over geographical space but over access to channels of information: the networked and somewhat dematerialized "space" of electronic communication is the contested ground of politics.[1]

Reading—reception—is, then, a site of political power and resistance. Indeed, practices of reception can be (and often are, especially in pop-culture or cultural studies) understood as practices of resistance to the ideology that saturates the texts of the mass media: John Fiske, for example, writing on Madonna, claims that "her image becomes . . . a site of semiotic struggle between the forces of patriarchal control and feminine resistance, of capitalism and the subordinate" (247). This, however, sets up a relationship between reception and the political where "the political," as ideology, stands for the attempt to fix

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meaning for and through power, while "reception," as the free play of interpretation and reinscription, becomes the very site of cultural and political resistance. Such celebrations of reception-as-resistance have rightly been criticized, for example by Susan Bordo, for "flattening . . . the terrain of power relations" (261). Hermeneutic and material power cannot be simply conflated—but neither, for the reasons sketched above, can they be simply separated.

In "Envois," the long and many-stranded "preface" to *The Post Card*, Derrida elaborates the figure of the *post* as a way of thinking about the ways in which the field of communication (transmission and reception) is stratified and organized in advance by technological, institutional, and conceptual factors that simultaneously enable *and* constrain reading, interpretation, meaning. "The question of Power, as they still say," he writes, "is first of all that of the post and telecommunications, as is well known" (103). These and other tantalizingly brief and allusive formulations throughout "Envois" begin to sketch out a model of power, of police, and of politics, where "the political" is precisely the space of address, and hence to remap the terms "reception" and "the political," as well as the relationship between them.

In the rest of this chapter, I seek to develop such a model of the politics of address through my readings of two Latin epics, Vergil's *Aeneid* and Lucan's *De Bello Civili*.

Both these epics frame *the political*, if not through reception, then through transmission.[2] Vergil's *Aeneid*, I will argue, constructs a "post-historical" space of Empire mapped and organized by Fate as a divine network of transmission. Lucan's *De Bello Civili*, eighty years later, removes the divine machinery that in Vergil's epic secures the relationship between Empire and Fate: instead, Lucan writes out the catastrophic consequences of founding political space/time on/as an apparatus of transmission. Placed in communication, the *Aeneid* and the *De Bello Civili* allow us to conceive of a postal model of the political.

THE *AENEID*

In the *Aeneid*, the Roman Empire is constituted as a network of telecommunications long before it receives a fixed territorial or geographical location. This geographical location itself is only the surface of

inscription for empire as a technology of information storage and transmission; the Roman Empire transforms the surface of the earth into a vast terminal, a transmitter-receiver, and even reaches into interstellar space.

The narrative of the *Aeneid* is driven by Aeneas's attempts to take up his position as the founder of (the state that will later become) Rome. In order to do this, he must conquer the Latins in battle and conduct a dynastic marriage with Lavinia, a princess of Latium: the narrative of the epic, however, does not proceed on the level of these marital/martial performances. Instead, Aeneas's distance from or proximity to his goal is measured narratively in networked space and via telecommunicative events.

From the outset, where Aeneas's shipwreck on an unknown coast is juxtaposed with a conversation between Jupiter and Venus summarizing the history of Rome, which is fated to emerge from Aeneas's journey to Italy, the narrative of the *Aeneid* operates by means of an interaction between Aeneas's involvements in events on the human or immediate level, and his inscription into an already finished, Fated narrative, which proceeds via telecommunicative events. We map Aeneas's narrative progress not in geographical space but in a kind of cyberspace; that is, according to his access to, or conformity with, information organized and transmitted by an apparatus whose major nodes are Fate, Jupiter, and Mercury. Aeneas becomes the founder of Rome not as military hero or successful quester but as the addressee of Fate; it is his position on the postal network of Fate by which we track his distance from or proximity to his narrative goal.

This is most visible in book 4 of the *Aeneid*, Aeneas's lengthiest and most famous detour from his destined trajectory. Here Aeneas has fallen in love with Dido, the queen of Carthage. Juno suggests to Venus that Aeneas should settle in Carthage with Dido, creating a new political community out of Dido's Carthaginians and Aeneas's Trojans. This would, of course, represent a major diversion from Fate's script.

Venus and Juno work together to strand Dido and Aeneas in a cave, where they enter into a romantic and sexual relationship. At this point (4.165) the narrative departs from the point of view of any of the participating characters and does not return to Dido's or Aeneas's perspective until line 279: instead, it follows the path of the transmission of information.

As soon as Dido speaks aloud about the relationship she has entered into with Aeneas (*coniugium vocat*, "she *called* it marriage," *Aen*. 4.172), it becomes a message to be conveyed. Vergil meticulously details the *cursus*[3] of its transmission:

> extemplo Libyae magnas it Fama per urbes . . .
> protinus ad regem cursus detorquet Iarban
> incenditque animum dictis atque aggerat iras (*Aen*. 4.173–74, 196–97)
>
> Immediately Fame went through the great cities of Libya. . . . Straightaway she turned her route [*cursus*] toward king Iarbas and fired his spirit with words and piled up his wrath.[4]

Iarbas then prays to Jupiter (206–18); when the information reaches him (219–20), Jupiter summons Mercury and tells him to tell Aeneas to sail for Italy (222–37). Mercury then goes to Carthage and delivers Jupiter's message to Aeneas (237–78). The whole of this section thus consists mainly of direct speech, with two lengthy descriptions, both of messengers: one of Fame (174–88) and one of Mercury's equipment and journey to Carthage (239–61). Vergil not only delivers to us the information that is transmitted but carefully details the media, the paths—what Derrida would call the *facteurs* (postmen/factors)—by which the information is conveyed.

The space through which Aeneas pursues his quest in the *Aeneid* is thus determined not by geography (whether realistic or symbolic) but by the access that each node on his journey has to the *cursus*, the postal network, on which the destiny of Rome is played out. Indeed, geographical space itself becomes the medium for the transmission of destiny, of Rome'n' history. When Aeneas arrives in Italy, he is given a tour of the future site of Rome by Evander (the man who, at this point, rules over the territory the two are traversing) in a passage of famous temporal complexity:

> . . . dehinc progressus monstrat et aram
> et Carmentalem Romani nomine portam
> quam memorant, Nymphae priscum Carmentis honorem,
> vatis fatidicae, cecinit quae prima futuros
> Aeneados magnos et nobile Pallanteum . . .
> hinc ad Tarpeiam sedem et Capitolia ducit
> aurea nunc, olim silvestribus horrida dumis.
> iam tum religio pavidos terrebat agrestis

> dira loci . . .
> . . . ad tecta subibant
> pauperis Euandri, passimque armenta videbant
> Romanoque foro et lautis mugire Carinis. (*Aen*. 8.337–41, 347–50, 359–61)
>
> Progressing from there, [Evander] also showed [Aeneas] the altar and the gate that the Romans commemorate by the name *Carmantal*, the ancient tribute to the Nymph Carmentis, the fate-speaking bard, who first sang the future greatness of Aeneas's sons and the noble Pallanteum. . . . From here he led him to the Tarpeian Rock and the Capitol, golden now, once rough with wild thistles. Now/then/already [*iam tum*] the aweful spirit [*religio*] of the place intimidated the country folk. . . . They went down to humble Evander's dwelling, and everywhere they saw cattle lowing in the Roman Forum and the chic Carinae district.

The geographical space is hyperlinked, saturated with history: its physical space is nothing more than the material support or substrate on which is inscribed a history that is made visible or audible to us as readers or listeners through Vergil's song, and to Evander and Aeneas through prophecy (the nymph Carmentis) and the divine dimension (*religio*).

This passage makes visible the structure that sustains the space and time of the *Aeneid*'s narrative and which we have just traced through books 1 and 4 of the epic. The historico-religious inscriptions on the Field of Evander are only legible from one specific position: that of Vergil, the epic bard in Aeneas's future whose singing (*arma virumque cano*) is the medium of transmission for the *Aeneid* itself.

The futurity of the epic singer is key to the narrative and temporal construction of the *Aeneid*, and, moreover, to the way in which Vergil contrives the poem so that the openness of the future *after* Vergil's own time—after the point at which the archive of the Fates, or history, is no longer known or knowable by the singer—does not leave a mark on the *Aeneid*.

What sutures this gap in the hermetic order of Fate is Caesar's sovereignty, constructed as a boundless space of transmission out of the intersection of *imperium* and *fama*. This suturing takes place first of all in Jupiter's prophecy in book 1, which gives us a summary of the main causal nodes leading from Aeneas's present situation to the present moment of the *Aeneid*'s enunciation by the bard who *sings* in a space of address organized by the Roman Empire.

> his ego nec metas rerum nec tempora pono:
> imperium sine fine dedi . . .
> nascetur pulchra Troianus origine Caesar,
> imperium Oceano, famam qui terminet astris,
> Iulius, a magno demissum nomen Iulo. (*Aen.* 1.278–79, 286–88)
>
> For them I set no boundaries in the physical universe, nor do I fix a temporal limit: I have granted them empire with no borders. . . . Caesar will be born, a Trojan, of lovely origin, who will bound his *imperium* [power to command] by Ocean and his *fama* [power to transmit] by the stars, Julius, a name transmitted from great Iulus.

This is empire as the end of history. The two narrative spaces that have organized the *Aeneid* (geographical space and the telecommunicative space of Fate) finally merge, like parallel lines meeting at infinity (in an in-finite space or one without limits, *sine fine*). The Roman Empire under Caesar's sovereignty is boundless in both space and time: the only boundary to *imperium*, the power to command, is Ocean, the limit of the terrestrial globe; *fama*, the power to transmit, breaks even this bound and transmits itself via satellites, through interstellar space. Empire takes place in the networked space of Fate, and the boundlessness of the future paradoxically puts an end to historical narrative.

The *Aeneid* is posthistorical: that is to say, its historical structure depends on a particular configuration of the *post* as the apparatus of sovereignty. What Aeneas founds, in Jupiter's prophecy, is not the bounded space of Rome: rather, he installs the space of Caesar's sovereignty—the intersection of his *imperium*, the power to command, and his *fama*, the power to transmit. This empire extends over and beyond the surface of the terrestrial globe via a meticulously detailed network of prophecy, dream, rumor, affect, and instruction that goes via the divine. This is the mode of sovereignty that Derrida begins to sketch in *The Post Card* as exceeding any theory of reception,[5] and its consequences for both politics and reception will be worked out by Lucan, eighty years after Vergil's death.

ON THE CIVIL WAR

The *Aeneid* seeks to construct a *post*historical position from which to read Rome'n' history. Lucan, the author of the *De Bello Civili*, the next

military/national epic to be written in Latin after the *Aeneid*, instead plots the epic bard's position in a specific place on a chronological line, subverting the *Aeneid*'s construction of Rome'n' history.

Like the *Aeneid*, *De Bello Civili* sees the sovereignty of Caesar as decisive for Rome'n' history. Yet Caesar for Lucan does not name the felicitous reception into posthistorical time and space of Aeneas's performance of Fate, as he does in Vergil ("Caesar . . . a name transmitted from great Iulus," *a magno demissum nomen Iulo*, *Aen*. 1.288): for Lucan, "Caesar" names the leader of *one* of the factions in a civil war, and his accession to sovereignty, as I shall argue, brings about a despotism that is catastrophic precisely because it is not just material but also hermeneutic/interpretative, power.[6]

Like the *Aeneid*, *De Bello Civili* is written from a position in the future relative to the events it narrates; unlike the *Aeneid*, it does not construct this futurity as posthistorical and boundless, determining the past, but as closed. For Lucan, the end of history is not the successful merger of Fate with Empire, as in the *Aeneid*. It is the end of the world—and it has already happened. Lucan writes, at the moment when the Battle of Pharsalia begins:

> hae facient dextrae, quidquid nona explicat aetas,
> ut vacet a ferro. gentes Mars iste futuras
> obruet et populos aevi venientis in orbem
> erepto natale feret. tunc omne Latinum
> fabula nomen erit . . .
> . . . crimen civile videmus
> tot vacuas urbes. (*DBC* 7.387–92, 398–99)

> These right hands will make it so that, whatever the ninth century [Lucan's own period] brings about, it will be empty of war. That conflict will annihilate future races and will carry off the people of the generation coming into the world, having borne off their birth time. Then the whole Latin name will be a myth . . . seeing so many empty cities, what we see is civil sin.

The world that has ended is Vergil's world, the Latin network capable of archiving and transmitting the commands of Fate and the history of Rome. Inverting the temporal operations of the Field of Evander, Lucan's Latin landscape is incapable of holding an impression: his time and place are empty (*vacet*, 389, *vacuas*, 399).

The *De Bello Civili* clearly identifies the rhetorical position that

makes possible the postal structure of the *Aeneid* as the futurity of the bard in relation to the events he narrates. What drives and structures the narrative progress of *De Bello Civili,* however, is not the movement of information on a Fate-anchored network, as in the *Aeneid*, but the work of narration—of the writing of history/epic—itself.[7]

Lucan repeatedly emphasizes the labor of bards, at greatest length in a passage in book 9 addressed to Caesar:

> O sacer et magnus vatum labor! omnia fato
> eripis et populis donas mortalibus aevum.
> invidia sacrae, Caesar, ne tangere famae;
> nam, si quid Latis fas est promittere Musis,
> quantum Zmyrnaei durabunt vatis honores,
> venturi me teque legent; Pharsalia nostra
> vivet, et a nullo tenebris damnabimur aevo. (*DBC* 9.980–86)
>
> O sacred and great labor of bards! You snatch everything away from fate and give temporal extension to mortal peoples. Do not be touched by envy, Caesar, of sacred fame; for, if it is right for the Latin Muses to promise anything, as long as the Smyrnan bard [Homer] is honored, men to come will read me and you; our Pharsalia will live, and we will be condemned to the shadows by no age.

Lucan deconstructs the Vergilian system of epic/imperial transmission by making visible the *work* (*magnus labor*) that an epic bard must do in order to produce the conditions of possibility of narration,[8] the *difficulty* of the labor of mediation and transmission through which the apparently immediate transmissions of the Fate-machine in the *Aeneid* are achieved.

In this passage, Fate stands not for the ineffaceably written (as in the *Aeneid*) but for oblivion (*omnia fato eripis*): Lucan emphasizes that it is not Fate but the labor of bards that inscribes events into history. And this inscription is not presented as a secondary representation of something that has already happened: in this passage, as throughout *De Bello Civili,* Lucan makes no distinction between the battle of Pharsalia as fought by Caesar and as narrated by the poet. What is read is "me and you," *me teque*, "our Pharsalia," *nostra Pharsalia*. The battle *happens* indistinguishably by being fought and by being written.

Through this fusion of the bard and the sovereign, Lucan reconfigures the workings of postal politics. For Lucan, political power is first and foremost archival: it consists in the material-military power

to define words. Throughout the epic, Lucan plays on the power of the sovereign to assign culpability, to define crime, sin, and virtue. One striking example comes in Caesar's speech to his soldiers on the eve of the battle of Pharsalia:

> haec est illa dies . . .
> . . . fato quae teste probet, quis iustius arma
> sumpserit; haec acies victum factura nocentem est. (*DBC* 7.254, 259–60)
>
> This is that day . . . that will prove, with Fate as witness, who took up arms more justly; this day will make the conquered side guilty.

Fate here does not determine events; it can only witness them. The outcome of the battle is in the soldiers' hands, Caesar reminds them (*nunc pugnate truces gladioque exsolvite culpam*, "now fight fiercely and expunge your guilt with the sword," 262); it will become fated retroactively.

This move exposes the postal structure of the *Aeneid* while critiquing it mercilessly. For Lucan as well as for Vergil, the political—the empire—is not a fixed or bounded territory but a giant cyber-spatial communications technology: it is Lucan, in fact, who literalizes and makes visible this giant telecom network that remains implicit in the *Aeneid*, for example in a passage on the real-time transmission of images and affects from the Battle of Pharsalia via a global network of telepathic transmission into which all Roman citizens are jacked:

> . . . Tyriis qui Gadibus hospes
> adiacet Armeniumque bibit Romanus Araxen,
> sub quocumque die, quocumque est sidere mundi,
> maeret et ignorat causas animumque dolentem
> corripit, Emathiis quid perdat nescius arvis. (*DBC* 7.187–91)
>
> . . . The Roman who is a guest beside Tyrian Gades, the Roman who drinks from the Armenian Araxes, in every time zone, in every location that can be mapped by global positioning technology, he grieves, and does not know the reasons for it, and chides his pained spirit, unaware of what he is losing in the Emathian fields.

Information in the *De Bello Civili* travels on different channels, is relayed via different media, wires or nodes, than in the *Aeneid*. Lucan takes Jupiter, Mercury, and Fate out of the circuit and substitutes a *citizen* network (as in the passage above, and also in the poem's first

major intertext with the *Aeneid*, an invocation of Roman citizens in the place where the *Aeneid* invokes the Muse: at *Aen*. 1.8 Vergil writes *Musa, mihi causas memora*, "Muse, inscribe in my memory the causes"; at *DBC* 1.8 Lucan writes *quis furor, o cives*? "What was this madness, citizens?"). As in the *Aeneid*, the empire becomes a giant network of transmission, but by removing Jupiter from the loop, Lucan removes the ontotheological legitimacy that would anchor signification: meaning and definitions become slippery.

One might be tempted to think of this slipperiness of definition as hopeful, as the site of resistance, perhaps, to the teleological-imperial fixity of the *Aeneid*. For Lucan, however, it is not hopeful; this slipperiness exposes language to sovereignty. It is precisely where power *happens*, as in the speech of Caesar quoted above.

The most troubling and powerful effect of civil war in *De Bello Civili* is the suspension of reference. While the sovereign is in doubt, right and wrong, crime and virtue cannot be stably distinguished from one another, for there is no point outside the sovereign network from which to read or judge. Lucan plays out all the possible permutations of this state of affairs in the paired speeches of Brutus and Cato in book 2,[9] from which I quote only briefly here, by way of example:

> [Brutus to Cato]
> virtutis iam sola fides . . . tu . . .
> . . . pacemne tueris
> inconcussa tenens dubio vestigia mundo?
> an placuit ducibus scelerum populique furentis
> cladibus inmixtum civile absolvere bellum? . . .
> [but if you fight] hoc solum longae pretium virtutis habebis:
> accepient alios, facient te bella nocentem . . .
> . . . nam praelata suis [i.e., Caesar's] numquam diversa dolebit
> castra ducis Magni; nimium placet ipse Catoni,
> si bellum civile placet . . . (*DBC* 2.242–44, 247–50, 258–59, 275–77)

> You, the only pledge of Virtue. . . . Do you guard peace, holding to your path unswayed by the shaking of the world? Or has it seemed good to you to mix yourself in with the leaders of wickedness and the slaughter of an insane people and thus to absolve the civil war of guilt? . . . [But if you fight], you will have only this reward for long virtue: the war, which finds other men already so, will *make* you guilty. . . . For [Caesar] will never grieve if you prefer the enemy camps of General Magnus to his own; if civil war seems good to Cato, then you already approve Caesar too much.

Brutus's speech hops from position to position: first he fixes absolute virtue in Cato, so that Cato's involvement in civil war must prove that civil war can be virtuous; then he fixes absolute crime in civil war, so that involvement in civil war strips Cato of virtue; then he fixes absolute crime in Caesar, saying that the crime in civil war is that of submission to Caesar (even fighting him legitimizes his attack on Rome too much). Cato's response works similarly, drawing in yet more possible fixed moral points (here, the gods) to the chain of signification unleashed and made mobile, slippery, by civil war:

> summum, Brute, nefas civilia bella fatemur;
> sed quo fata trahunt, virtus secura sequetur.
> crimen erit superis et me fecisse nocentem . . .
> . . . gentesne furorem
> Hesperium ignotae Romanaque bella sequentur
> diducti fretis alio sub sidere reges,
> otia solus agam? procul hunc arcete furorem,
> o superi . . . (*DBC* 2.286–88, 292–96)

> I admit, Brutus, that civil war is the worst evil; but whither the Fates drive, let Virtue follow without wobbling. It will be the gods' [*superis*] crime to have made me guilty too . . . if unknown races join in the Italian insanity [*furorem*] and kings who reign in lands under a different star join in the Roman wars, shall I be the only man to remain a civilian? Gods [*superi*], keep this insanity [*furorem*] far from here.

The gods appear in this short passage both as morally culpable and as the guardians of morality; the word *furor* appears twice (lines 292 and 295), its repetition highlighted by the fact that both times it appears in the same case and in the emphatic final foot of the hexameter line, but in the course of the three lines that separate its appearances its meaning has inverted: in 292 it refers to civil war, in 295 to abstention from civil war.

Civil war—the suspension of sovereignty—opens up a gap in signification, dividing signs from their referents. Yet the effect of this, in *De Bello Civili*, is to model the power of the sovereign as power *over signification*. This is the other side of the fusion of bard and sovereign that we saw earlier, in Lucan's *me teque legent* (they will read me'n'you): we cannot read Lucan without reading Caesar. It is impossible, Lucan tells us, to write, to communicate, to commemorate, to post to the future, without going through sovereign channels: even in

the face-to-face space of direct address between Cato and Brutus, we see the archival force of sovereignty as the apparatus that, through the material and military deployment of bodies in war or through the decision on the legality or illegality of actions, instantiates a postal apparatus—an apparatus of transmission and reception—as the reality of the political itself.

CONCLUSION

In his important essay on the aesthetics of reception, "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory," Hans Robert Jauss argues that "in contrast to a political event, a literary event has no unavoidable consequences subsisting on their own that no succeeding generation can ever escape. A literary event can continue to have an effect only if those who come after it still or once again respond to it" (22). If, however, as I have argued in my readings of Vergil and Lucan, the political itself consists in a material apparatus of transmission and reception—if sovereign power is (also) power over signification—this distinction between the political and the literary in terms of their consequences and the possibilities for responding to them must be rethought.

This has implications both for the way we understand reception and the way we understand the political. We cannot simply celebrate acts of reception as pure acts of political resistance, since reception is itself enabled and constrained by the archival apparatus of sovereignty; but by the same token, we cannot see the power of reception as entirely disjunct from the material-political power of the *imperium*. A new model for the relationship between reception and the political must be found: I suggest that Derrida's work on the *post* and the *archive*, with its explicit attention to the mutual implication of "the question of power" and "telecommunications" or the transmission/reception of information through space and time, would be a good place to begin developing such a model. The post and the archive enable us to attend in detail to the "and" that links "reception" to "the political"—to explore, finally, how and to what extent reception is the political itself.

Notes

1. "With the progress of the post," Derrida writes, "the State police has always gained ground" (37).

2. The original version of this paper, given at a colloquium in Michigan in 2005, mapped out Derrida's nightmare of "a State in which identity cards were post cards. No more possible resistance" (37). This version bears the imprint of Elizabeth Wingrove's generous and intelligent response to the original paper, in particular her provoking me to think more carefully through the question of what is at stake in the shift from *reception* to *transmission*. The question is still a live one for me, and any inadequacy in my response to Wingrove's provocations is entirely my own responsibility.

3. *Cursus,* the term Vergil uses for Fame's route, has a range of meanings including *route* and *course*. The term can also be used for a postal route: Augustus, the implied addressee of the *Aeneid,* set up an empire-wide governmental communications network called the *cursus publicus*.

4. This and all subsequent translations from the Latin are my own.

5. In a section of "Envois" reading Voltaire's essay "Post" and dealing with the inextricability of the post from sovereign power ("Each time that it is a question of *courrier,* in one guise or another, there is police, royal police—and a basilica, a royal house, an edifice or edification of the law. . . . All of it, if possible, in the service of the king who disposes of the *courrier,* the seals, of the emissaries as well as of the addressees, his subjects"), Derrida writes that "no rigorous theory of 'reception,' however necessary it might be, will get to the end of that literature (71).

6. On this, see Henderson, 141–42: "*Caesar* will have ceased to be a regular kind of name, a mere gentilician property tracing the dynastic patrimony of one branch of a primeval *familia Troiana*. It becomes a 'transcendental' name, spells *kratos,* the name which all Western names would love to be: a name which means power, the power to name 'Power' for itself, the appropriation of significance, the denotation which enforces its own power to assign meaning . . . *Caesar* will be the signifier which projects into the totality of the Empire the assurance that all discourse will orbit around the imperial signifier." Read Henderson. You must read Henderson.

7. The *De Bello Civili*'s narration can be seen as following, not so much the events that the poem describes, as "the gladiatorial struggle which [the] text fights to the death . . . against the mercurial felicity of . . . Caesar" (Henderson, 133). This has also been described as Lucan's refusal to narrate.

8. Vergil's *cano,* introducing the poem as an artifact produced by a continuing act of singing, both gestures toward and, in its conventionality, effaces this labor.

9. For an excellent discussion of the speeches of Brutus and Cato, see Shadi Bartsch, 115ff.

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