

L U C A N
PHARSALIA

TRANSLATED AND WITH
AN INTRODUCTION BY

Jane Wilson Joyce

CORNELL UNIVERSITY PRESS

ITHACA AND LONDON

Book VII

INTRODUCTION

The narrative of the seventh book falls into three loose divisions—preliminaries to battle (vv. 1–384), the battle itself (vv. 385–646), and the aftermath (vv. 647–872). Much of the looseness of structure results from the fluidity of time and space in this book: Lucan shifts his focus rapidly from point to point in the past and switches back and forth between his own age and the past, and between the past and the future; likewise, he alternates between long-range and close-range perspectives, taking the part now of detached observer, now of passionate protester.

As with the opening of Book Three, Book Seven begins with a dream of Pompey (vv. 7ff.). Unlike the earlier dream, however, this one is not a nightmare, but a happy reliving of a day in his theater at Rome (built in 55 B. C. E.). Next morning, in rude contrast, the orator, philosopher, and former consul Cicero, speaking for the restless nobles, calls for action and charges Pompey with deliberately delaying the battle (vv. 68–85). In actual fact, Cicero was not present at the Battle of Pharsalus; and so, the interesting question arises, Why did Lucan *want* it to be Cicero who voiced the contentious opposition to Pompey's delaying tactic? Perhaps Lucan sees Cicero as somehow representative of what the old Republican values had come to, a spirit of fervent, almost fanatic devotion to an outmoded ideal, a spirit which carried the seeds of its own destruction.

After describing troops arming for battle, omens observed, and the Republican army's battle array, Lucan concludes the first (and longest) section of the seventh book with a pair of speeches, as the two generals address their armies. The intent here is clearly to draw our attention to the dissimilarities between Pompey and Caesar; recall Book One, where the two were first introduced and contrasted in the poetic images of old oak and lightning bolt.

The battle itself actually occupies very little of Book Seven. Rather, the central section of this book is largely devoted to abstract speculations about its effects. Having spent six books (the first half of the epic, perhaps) leading his audience up to this point, the poet now seems unwilling to narrate the course of the battle directly. At one point, in fact (vv. 552ff.), he indulges in one of the oldest storytelling tricks of all time—pretending that he will not, cannot go on. This evasiveness seems all the more remarkable when we compare other battle scenes in the *Pharsalia*—the Battle of Dyrrachium in the preceding book, say (6.1–332); for such a comparison makes it clear that, when he wishes to do so, Lucan is a masterful narrator of military action. As always, the most useful approach to discussion does not begin with “Lucan is wrong when he says . . . ,” but rather with “Why has the poet chosen to . . . ?”

As it began (and as the epic began), so Book Seven ends, with a pointed contrast between Pompey and Caesar (vv. 647–728). Pompey withdraws from the battlefield when he sees his side has disastrously lost, hoping thereby to end the battle and save some lives; Caesar, on the other hand, takes his breakfast next morning right on the battlefield where he can gloat over the carnage.

And this carnage now, in the last lines of the book (vv. 825ff.), receives the poet's attention, as Lucan describes a physical geography polluted by, indeed, consisting of, corpses and gore. The final lines of *Pharsalia* Seven evoke a famous passage from the end of Book One of Vergil's *Georgics* (v. 493ff.); in this passage, Vergil, having alluded to the battles of Pharsalus and Philippi, looks forward to a distant time when a farmer who turns up artifacts of the Roman civil war would not know their historical significance, when earth, nature, and time will have covered over the debris and the memory of such horror. In contrast, Lucan dwells upon the pollution of the landscape, the inability of earth and nature to absorb, of time to erase evidence of Roman bloodshed; and then, paradoxically, he laments the absolution of Pharsalus/Philippi whose individual pollution is engulfed in the guilt of all lands.

BOOK VII

Reluctant to rise from Ocean as ageless Laws required,
the sorrowing Sun urged his horses as never before
to resist the air, bucking Heaven's on-rolling rim;
wearily, he yearned for suffering, yearned for the pain of light
eclipsed; he drew clouds about him, not to stoke his fires,
but to stop his light from shining clear in Thessaly's sky.

But night—all the joy left for Magnus in his life—
beguiled his troubled sleep with a dim flicker of fancy:

he dreamed

he had taken his seat in Pompey's Theater
and was scanning the numberless faces
of a Roman crowd . . .

By their joyful voices

his own name was tossed
starward—

section vying with section, chanting and stamping . . .

The dream repeated a scene from long ago—
friendly

folk cheering him,

then a youth enjoying his first Triumph
(for defeat of tribes

the Ebro's current encircles and
of every guerilla force

Sertorius flung against him—
pacification of the West.)

He was acclaimed in his pure white

toga, as if it were conqueror's scarlet.

Senators stood clapping

14 *Triumph*: Pompey's triumph for his victory in Spain was his second.

when he, still a Knight, took his seat . . .

Perhaps, at good luck's
end, his apprehensive mind fled back to glad days; 20
perhaps, clairvoyant sleep, working its old ambiguities,
brought him, in guise of applause, omens of heavy grief-blows;
perhaps, this way, Fortune presented Rome to you, doomed
nevermore to see your ancestral home.

*Don't shatter his dreams,
night-watchmen! Let no bugle's call make his ears ring! 25
Tomorrow's sleep, grim and sad with scenes of today,
will show him only the battle, only the ranks of doomed men.
Where, then, for him, such commonplace dreams and a night so sweet?
How happy your Rome would be to see you even thus!
Oh that the Gods had granted your native land and you, 30
Magnus, a single day when each of you, sure of Fate,
could taste, one last time, the fruits of a love so deep!
You advance as though you will die in Ausonia's city;
the City, whose prayers for you have always been answered before,
never once suspects what crime is chained to her fate— 35
that she must lose even the grave of her darling, her Magnus.
You they would have mourned—a wailing chorus of young and old,
of children unprompted; throngs of women with hair unbound
would have clawed their breasts as they did for the death of Brutus.
Now, yes, though they quail at the harsh victor's weapons, 40
though Caesar himself proclaims your death, they will weep, but
meanwhile must fetch incense and laurel wreaths for the Thunderer.
Pitiful folk! they swallowed their grief, groan by groan,
forbidden to weep as once they clapped—thronging your Theater!*

Daybreak had conquered starlight. A mob of soldiers muttered 45
under its breath and, while the Fates dragged the world to its doom,
called for the signal to attack. Most of the miserable crowd
(*men who'll not live out the day!*) milled round their leader's
tent and complained. Grumbling flared into widespread tumult.
Though Death was close at hand, they hastened its hurrying hours. 50

33 *Ausonia's city*: Rome.

39 *Brutus*: one of the two first consuls c. 510.

42 *incense and laurel wreaths*: Caesar celebrated his victory over the Republican forces with four triumphs in 46.

A grim madness springs up: each man is eager to shove
 his fate and his nation's over the edge. "Reluctant," Pompey
 is called and "timid," "too quick to yield to his father-in-law . . .
 a man longing to rule the world . . . eager to keep all
 nations everywhere under his thumb . . . he dreads peace . . ." 55
 Eastern despots and peoples—they, too, complain that the war
 drags on too long and keeps them far from their native lands.

*(Does this please You, O Gods Above, when You plan
 universal doom, to compound our crimes with guilt?
 We race to our own ruin, demanding the blades that will slay us:
 in Pompey's camp, the army prays for Pharsalia!)* 60

Through all these voices, one struck home—Cicero's: master
 of Roman rhetoric he, as toga-clad Consul,
 had made savage Catiline quake before his peace-keeping
 Axes. Outraged by wars, longing for Rostra and Forum, 65
 he had, as befits a soldier, stood by in silence;
 but now, at last, his eloquence propped up a shaky case:

"In return for all her favors, Fortune begs this one thing
 of you, Magnus: that you have the will to use her!
 Officers and kings, prone at your feet with the suppliant world, 70
 we pray you will let your father-in-law be conquered!
 For all the human race's lengthy span, shall 'Caesar'
 signify 'war'? For Pompey to conquer slowly is
 rightly resented by nations he subdued at a swoop.
 Where has your energy gone, or faith in your destiny? 75
 Ingrate! Do you doubt the Gods? fear to entrust the Senate's
 cause to the Deities? Common soldiers will hoist your standards
 and charge. Shame! to have your victory thrust upon you!
 If you command by our decree, if war is waged
 on our behalf, then let each take the field where he will. 80
 Why lead the world's blades away from Caesar's blood?
 Hands brandish spears, the men fret at the faltering signal's
 delay: make haste, lest your trumpets leave you behind!
 The Senate wish to know, Magnus: are they your warriors
 or your courtiers?"

62 Cicero: not in fact present at the battle of Pharsalus.

The Ship of State's pilot groaned, seeing 85
the Gods' deceptions, aware the Fates opposed his plan:

"If this be the pleasure of all," (he said) "if crisis require
Magnus to march, not lead, I will hinder Fate no more:
let Fortune, with one sweep, topple the peoples of the world;
let this day's light be the last for most of humanity! 90
But, as Rome is my witness, Magnus had this day
of utter destruction forced upon him. The war effort
need not have cost you a scratch! I could—without slaughter—
hand over to Peace, bound and captive, the leader who ravished her.
You blind—! what is this craze of evil? Do men on the brink 95
of civil war dread a victory without bloodshed?
We have overrun continents, cut off our foes from all sea-lanes,
driven his starved battalions to strip unripe fields
of grain, goaded him into making this vow—that
he would prefer to be struck by my blades, to mingle 100
his dead with mine.

"Half the war is already won,
thanks to methods which free recruits from fear of battle,
if, spurred on by valor and hot with zeal, they demand
the call to arms. Men have been thrown into gravest peril
by the mere threat of approaching danger. The man prepared 105
to endure terror, able to wait when it crowds in close—
that man is bravest.

"They think to hand present advantage
over to Fortune, to trust the sword when the world is
at risk: they want their leader to fight rather than win!
Fortune, you gave me the Roman State to rule; receive it 110
now, greater than before, and protect it from blind Mars!
The war will be neither Pompey's guilt nor his glory!
Caesar, your unjust prayers to Gods Above prevail:
the fight is on.

"How much evil, how much hurt
today's light brings the people! How many kingdoms will fall! 115
How the River Enipeus will churn with Roman blood!
I would want the first lance of this lethal war to strike
my skull, could my head fall without alarming the nation
or harming our cause. Yet victory is no more to Magnus'
liking: once the blow has been dealt, 'Pompey' will this day 120

Pharsalia

become a name nations either hate or pity:
the loser will bear every woe caused by the State's final throes,
the winner, enact every wrong."

With these words, he allows
the allies to arm and gives them, mad with martial zeal,
free rein, like a sailor, hit by a gale-force norther, 125
who abandons his skill and leaves steering to the winds;
his ship—mere flotsam—scuds off course.

The camp is loud
with confusion, a nervous uproar. Fierce hearts knock against ribs,
and pulses jump; see there on many men's cheeks the pallor
of looming death and the very likeness of doom! 130

Clearly, with that battle had come a day which would settle
the fate of human affairs for all time, which would ask
What will Rome be? None are aware of their own peril,
thunderstruck by the greater fear: who sees his shores
washed away by the surf, who sees floodwaters rise 135
to the hilltops, sky sagging, and sun hurtling earthwards—
the world ending—and fears for himself? No one had time
to feel fright for himself—all fear was for Rome and for Magnus.

Still, men put no faith in blades unless their sharp
points had struck sparks from the whetstone; every spearhead 140
is honed; archers restrain their bows with stronger cords,
picking and choosing which arrows will fill their quivers;
the horseman sharpens his spurs, tightens bridle and girth.
If one may compare the works of men and of Gods Above,
it was no different when Phlegra raised her rabid Giants, 145
when the War-god's sword grew hot on Sicilian anvils,
and Neptune's tines glowed red in the flames a second time,
and Paean, now that Pytho was slain, reforged his shafts,
and Pallas fanned the Gorgon's tresses across her aegis,
and Jove had the Cyclops fashion bolts bound for Phlegra. 150

Still, Fortune did not hold back, but proclaimed the coming
crash through various signs; for, when the army marched

146 *Sicilian anvils*: Vulcan had his smithy beneath Mt. Etna.

147 *Neptune*: first used his trident in the Titanomachy.

150 *Cyclops*: Vulcan's assistant.

into Thessaly's fields, the whole sky opposed their advance: 153*
 it flung meteors in their faces, immense columns of fire, 155
 sheet-lightning mixed with waterspouts whirling waves aloft;
 it sealed their eyes shut with dazzling showers of lightning,
 struck the crests from off their helmets, flooded their scabbards
 with molten blades, dissolved the javelins torn from their grasp,
 and wreathed their razor-sharp steel with sulphurous vapors. 160
 And worse:

Covered with swarms of bees, the standards—grown
 strangely heavy—could scarce be dragged from the ground; dripping
 with tears, they drenched the standard-bearer's bowed head—
until Thessaly, were they not Rome's and the people's standards?
 A bull brought forth for the Gods Above kicked over the altar 165
 and fled, flinging itself headlong into Emathia's
 fields: no other victim was found for the doomed sacrifice.

*(And you—what High Gods of crime, what Furies have you
 duly invoked, Caesar? what powers of the Stygian realm,
 infernal evil, what night-steeped Horrors have you
 hymned, you that will so savagely wage unholy war?)* 170

And then—though who knows whether belief sprang from the Gods'
 prodigies or man's panic?—it seemed to many that Pindus
 clashed with Olympus, Haemus subsided in jagged gorges,
 Pharsalia emitted, late at night, the din of battle, 175
 and torrents of blood rushed towards Ossa's Lake Boebeïs.
 Men marvelled, seeing their comrades' faces shrouded
 in shadows, daylight paling, and dark night leaning down
 on their helmets, dead fathers and shades of blood-kin flitting
 before their eyes . . .

This one thought consoles them: conscious of 180
 sharing an unspeakable prayer—each man secretly hoping
 to slit his father's throat, to pierce his brother's heart—
 the troops welcome these omens: they think the revolt
 of reason, their sudden frenzy, bodes well for crime.

*(Why marvel that nations whose last light is dawning shake 185
 with slaving panic? Have we not been given minds
 that forewarn us of danger? A man—whether a guest at his
 ease in Tyrian Cadiz or drinking Armenian waters,
 whatever sun, whatever heavenly star he's under—*

if Roman, he grieves and, not knowing why, chides his doleful heart, unaware what he'd lost on Emathian soil.)

In the Euganean Hills above Padua, an augur sat (if we credit the tale) where Aponos sends healing vapors up from the ground and Timavo's waters fork.

"Our gravest day has come, momentous deeds are done," he said. "Impious arms of Pompey and Caesar clash."

Perhaps he observed thunder and Jove's presaging weapons; perhaps he perceived all the sky and both poles combatting seditious sky; perhaps the sun's godhead, grieving high in the heavens, marked the battle with veiled pallor.

Nature reviewed her troops of days; Thessaly's was in no way like the others she revealed. Had they the wit to descry with skilled augury all Heaven's strange signs, people all over the world could have watched Pharsalia.

What eminent men! Fortune signalled their actions round the world and cleared the whole of Heaven for their fates! Even among the ripening tribes of our children's children—whether their own fame alone will secure immortality, or whether the care of my work can add a little to their great names—whenever accounts of these wars are read, they'll stir hope and fear alike, and useless prayers. Thunderstruck, readers will feel that these are fates yet to unfold, not known facts, and oh Magnus, men will again warm to you!

Magnus' soldiery, struck head-on by Phoebus' shafts, spilled down the hillsides, a glittering flood of light; loosed on the field, not wildly but in fixed ranks, the hapless troops took their stand: Lentulus, you had charge of the left wing with the First Legion (the one most fit for war) and also the Fourth. You, Domitius—feisty despite Heaven's ill-will—headed the ranks drawn up on the right, while men at the heart of the line gained strength from the most seasoned troops, forces brought up from Cilicia; these Scipio held (in this theater a soldier, commander-in-chief in Libya).

217 *Lentulus*: Lentulus Crus, consul in 49 (met at 5.16).

222 *Scipio*: Metellus Scipio, Cornelia's father.

223 *commander-in-chief in Libya*: after Pharsalus.

And, beside the flooding Enipeus' eddies and pools,
 a squad of Cappadocian mountaineers, hard-riding 225
 horsemen from the Black Sea coast. But the dry plains were, for
 the most part, occupied by tetrarchs, kings, and mighty
 tyrants—all the purple enslaved by Latin steel.
 There Libya sent her Numidians, Crete her Cydonians;
 from there rushed a stream of Ituraean arrows; 230
 from there, fierce Allobrogês, you assailed your familiar
 foe; and there Iberia brandished her feisty bucklers.

*Save mankind from this would-be king, spill the world's blood, Magnus,
 and at a stroke, remove the means for all future Triumphs!*

★ ★ ★

That day, as luck would have it, Caesar had struck camp, ready 235
 to send his troops to plunder the grain-fields, when suddenly
 he spied the enemy marching down to the level plains
 and perceived that what he had prayed for a thousand times was now
 offered—the chance to stake all on a final throw.
 Sick of delay, feverish with greedy longing for kingship, 240
 he had, in fact, begun to complain of civil war
 as a crime too slow in coming. But now, when he saw
 the decisive clash of rivals, the last battle advancing,
 and felt destruction's first lurching shift toward ruin,
 now his lunatic lust for the sword also—a little— 245
 swooned, and his heart, so reckless-ready to pledge a lucky
 throw, stopped in doubt: *his own fate admits no fear . . .*
Pompey's no hope . . .

He thrust his hesitation aside;
 his confidence leapt up, the better to rouse the crowd:

"Captors of the world! the fortune in these affairs of mine! 250
 Soldiers, the chance of battle so often prayed for is here.
 No need for prayers now! Whistle up fate with your blades!
 In your hands you hold the measure of Caesar's greatness.
 This is the day I was promised—remember?—near the rippling
 Rubicon, this is the day we hoped for when we started this

229 *Numidians*: noted riders. *Cydonian*: Cretans were noted archers.

231 *Allobrogês*: L. says simply "Galli," but Caesar details the desertion of this contingent from his camp to Pompey's (*Bellum Civile* 3. 59f.).

war, the day we said would lead to the Triumphs denied us.
This day must prove, with Fate as witness, who more justly
took up arms: this battle will make the loser guilty.

256
259

"If, for me, you have aimed your blades and flames at your homeland,
fight fiercely now, slash your way free from guilt with your swords.
No hand is clean if the judge comes from the other camp.

"My interests are not at stake: it's *you* I pray for—that
you gain control of the whole world and become free men.
Myself, I crave to return to private life, to don
an ordinary toga and play the plain citizen.
But, till *you* are in charge, there's no role I won't play—you
be king, I'll be the one they hate!

260

"A little bloodshed,
and the world you want is yours! What will you be up against?
Choice boys from Greek gymnasia, weaklings from wrestling class
struggling to wield their weapons; barbarians—a motley horde
gibbering, unable, once our armies engage, to endure
the bugles' blare or their own hullabaloo. Few hands will wage
civil war: most of the fighting will but rid the world
of such riff-raff, will but exterminate Roman enemies.

270

275

"Onward against feeble nations and infamous kingdoms,
and with the first stroke of your swords, bring down the world—
make it plain that the tribes Pompey trailed into the City
at his chariot-wheels were not worth a single Triumph!
Do Armenians care which general wins supremacy
at Rome? is any barbarian willing to spill one drop
of his own blood, just to have Magnus rule Hesperia?
They loathe all Romans; but the ones they know—their masters—
these they hate worst.

280

"As for me, Fortune has put me
in the hands of my own men—hands whose prowess I watched
throughout the Gallic campaign. What soldier's sword will I not
recognize? And when a lance flashes, crossing the sky,
I'll not be fooled—I'll know whose muscles made it hum!

285

"Because your leader can read the signs that never deceive him—
your fierce expressions, glances full of menace—you
have already won! I seem to see rivers of blood,

290

a welter of kings trampled underfoot, the Senate's
body dismembered, and nations swimming in fathomless gore . . .

"But I delay my destiny, keeping you with this speech 295
when you rage for your arms. Forgive me—I hold up the war!

"I tremble with hope: never have I seen the Gods Above
so close to me, so ready to grant greatness! A mere
patch of earth separates us from what we want.
When the war is done, I'll be the one whose right
it is to dole out the spoils of kings and states! 300
What shift in the skies, what astral movement disrupted You,
Gods Above, that You send such greatness to Thessaly's shore?

"War's rewards or penalties—today brings one or the other.
Picture the crosses, picture the fetters for Caesar's men,
this head of mine displayed on the Rostra, these limbs strewn, 305
butchery in the 'Pens' and battles on a sealed-off Field—
for this is a Sullan general we meet in civil war!
Your safety concerns me; my lot causes me no concern,
for I shall die by my own hand: you'll see me skewer
my own guts if you turn tail before you beat the foe. 310

"Gods, whose gaze has been distracted from Heaven by Earth
and Roman suffering—grant victory to whichever man
sees no need to unsheathe his fierce steel against the conquered,
to the man who does not judge that, because fellow citizens 315
follow the flag opposing him, they perpetrate a crime!
When Pompey had you men cornered where your courage
could not move, how freely he soaked his steel with your blood!
Nonetheless, I make this request, men: let no one strike
his foe in the back—if a citizen flees, let him go. 320
But while weapons still glitter, let no pious notions
hamper you! Slash and ruin the faces you should revere!
Whether you run your ruthless steel into a kinsman's chest,
or break no tie of blood with your blade, your foe will still
count each throat you cut—known or unknown—a crime. 325

"Now tear down our wall and fill the trench with rubble,
so the line, unbroken, may sally forth in full formation!

Don't spare our camp—tonight you'll sleep behind that wall
from which doomed troops are moving out!"

Caesar had scarce done
speaking when each man's duty drew him, and each grabbed up 330
weapons and rations; they seized on his words as omens of war,
trampled the camp, and rushed out. They took their stand at random,
followed no officer's plan, but left all things to the Fates.
Had every man there been father-in-law to Magnus, had
every last one wanted this grim war to make him king 335
of Rome, their race to battle could not have been more headlong.

When Pompey saw enemy squadrons marching straight at him,
admitting of no delay in action, saw that this
was the day the Gods had chosen, his heart froze, and he stood
thunderstruck; for so great a leader to fear arms 340
was ominous. Then he crushed his dread and reviewed the troops,
astride his high-stepping stallion.

"The day" (he said)
"which your courage has burned for, that you sought as an end
to civil arms—that day is here. Pour out all your strength:
one final effort needs your steel, a single hour 345
compels the nations. Any man who longs for homeland
and cherished hearth, children, wife, and dear ones left behind—
let his sword strike! God has placed all these in the open field.

"Our better cause commands us to hope for Heaven's favor:
the very Gods will guide our weapons to Caesar's guts, 350
will want our Roman laws sanctified by this man's blood.
If They meant to give my father-in-law world sovereignty,
They could have pitched me down to my death, gray head first.
Deities angry with humankind and the City would not
preserve Pompey as leader. All that could help us win, 355
we have assembled: famous men have volunteered to face our
dangers; men of the old aristocracy serve in our ranks.
If the Fates would allow a Curius or a Camillus
to return to life—or the Decii sworn to fight to the death—
they would stand here. Countless Eastern tribes and cities 360
have gathered and called up troops in numbers never before
seen in battle. We have the whole world to use at once!
Every hamlet, South or North, in the belt defined

363 *the belt*: indicates inhabitant of the northern hemisphere.

by the Zodiac's arc sides with us, heeds our call to arms.
 Shall we not draw our wings together, enfold the foe, 365
 and drive him huddled into our midst? Victory requires
 few sword-hands—most squadrons will find they wage this war
 just by shouting. Caesar is insufficient for our host!

"Imagine that matrons, leaning out over Rome's
 parapets, hair streaming, exhort you to fight this battle. 370
 Imagine the Senate—revered grandsires with white hair, men
 forbidden by age to take up arms—imagine them
 grovelling, Rome herself before you, fearful of tyranny.
 People who are alive now and people yet to be
 join their voices in prayer: the one throng wants to be born 375
 free, the other to die so.

"If, on a roster so grand,
 there's room for Pompey, I, with my children and wife, kneeling—
 could I do so with martial dignity unimpaired—
 I'd crawl to your feet. Unless you win, Magnus is exiled,
 laughingstock of his father-in-law, your disgrace. I pray 380
 to escape the worst fate and years of shame at the last—
 let me not learn the slave's role in my old age!"

Gloomy words—
 but despite their leader, spirits caught fire, Roman valor
 grew firm, the men determined to die if his fears proved true.

So: from either side, the lines run forward, movements matched, 385
 and zeal: fear of tyranny spurs one troop, hope the other.

* * *

*These right hands will do what no succeeding era can
 undo nor the human race repair in all its years—
 though it lay the sword aside. Mars this day will strike
 future generations, snatch their birth-time, sweep away
 people of the age coming into the world.* 390

Every

*Latin name will be hearsay: Gabii, Veii, Cori,
 and the Alban hearths, the homes of old Laurentum—all
 so thickly shrouded with dust, their ruins will scarcely show;*

388 Housman deletes this line.

393 Alban hearths: See "Alba Longa."

empty land where no one will live except, on the night
prescribed, a grumpy senator grouching at Numa's command.
Not ravening Time has rooted them up, left our monuments
to rot: no, this is the work of civil war we see
in these empty cities.

395

How much the human race
is reduced! All of us alive in the world today
are not enough to fill the walled towns and farmland:
Rome alone contains us all. The shackled slave tills
Hesperia's grainfields; the grange with its ancient roofbeams
rotting will soon collapse—on no one! And not one Roman
in the city crowds—no, she's clogged with the world's dregs! Mighty
she may be, but we've brought her so near the brink that now
she cannot wage a civil war.

400

405

Pharsalia caused
this great evil.

Let the funereal names yield—Cannae
and Allia, days long marked black on the Roman calendar.
Rome has observed anniversaries of evils less great:
this day she's determined to forget.

410

Wretched destinies!
disease-laden air to breathe, and rampant fevers,
maddening famine, cities consumed by fire, earthquakes
shaking crowded towns till they tumble—all these could get
their fill of dead from men whom Fortune dragged here
from every side to a sad end, snatching away the bounties
of a distant age even as she parades them, marshalling
nations and generals there on the field to show you, Rome, as you
totter, how mighty you are in your fall.

415

What city has
ruled more widely, more swiftly raced from success to success?
Your every war has given you nations, every year
the Sun observed you advancing towards either pole;
so little land remained to the Eastern realm that the night
was yours, the whole day was yours, the wheeling sky was
yours, and all that the straying stars could see was Roman.

420

425

But Emathia's fatal day, a match for all your years,
swept your destiny downstream: deeds done on that bloody day
ensured that India does not quail at the Latin Rods,
that no Consul can halt the Dahae's wandering and lead them

within walls or tuck up his toga and plow Sarmatia; 430
 that Parthia still owes Rome a savage retribution;
 that Liberty, fleeing civil crime, has withdrawn—never
 to return—beyond the far banks of Tigris and Rhine, and,
 whenever we risk our throats to win her, she slips away,
 a blessing to German and Scythian, never looking back at 435
 Ausonia. How I wish our people had never known her!
 Ever since the vulture's ominous flight, when Romulus
 filled his town with men from the infamous grove—from then till
 the disaster in Thessaly, Rome, you should have been enslaved!
 Fortune, I lodge a complaint against Brutus: why have we 440
 lived through an Age of Law, years that took their names from consuls?
 Blessed are the Arabs, the Medes, and the Eastern realm:
 the Fates have oppressed these men with continuous tyranny!
 Of the nations which suffer monarchy, our lot is worst—
 we're shamed by our enslavement.

For us, truly, there are no 445
 divinities: since blind Luck drags the ages onward,
 we lie when we say Jove rules. Will He from high heaven,
 thunderbolts in hand, idly gaze at Thessalian slaughter?
 Will He hurl His fires at Pholoë, hurl them at Oeta,
 blameless Rhodopë's groves, the pine-woods of Mimas, leaving 450
 Cassius to strike at Caesar's head? He brought the stars down
 around Thyestes and flung abrupt nightfall at Argos:
 Will He beam at Thessaly bristling with brothers' and fathers'
 blades—so many and so alike? Mortal affairs have never
 been God's care.

And yet, for this disaster, we have 455
 all the revenge that Gods can rightly grant to Earth:
 civil wars will make deified men equal to deities;
 with thunderbolts, haloes, and stars, Rome will bedizen her dead
 and, in the Gods' own temples, swear her oaths by their shades!

* * *

When their swift running had eaten up the space delaying 460
 Fate's finalities, the men, parted by a strip of earth,
 picked out where their javelins might fall, whose hand over there 463*

430 In ancient times, one of a consul's duties was to mark the sacred boundary of a new colony
 with a plow, as Ovid describes in the *Fasti* (819ff.).

threatened them with death. The faces they saw forced them
to acknowledge what atrocities they intended—fathers
with hostile scowls, brothers' swords close enough to touch.
But there was no urge to shift ground.

And yet, numbness
squeezed every chest; blood congealed in their guts, chilled
at the shock to their natural affections; and for a long time
whole cohorts, their muscles tensed, just held javelins ready.

May the Gods grant you, Crastinus, not death—a punishment
prepared for all—but, to your corpse, senses intact after death:
for by your hand was hurled the lance that launched the war
and that first stained Thessaly red with Roman blood.
Headlong insanity! when Caesar laid hold of his weapons,
what hand was found more ready?

Listen! clarions' blast
on the screaming air and bugles blaring battle-signals!
Listen! trumpets make bold reply. Listen! the din
reaches the ether, shattering the dome of remote Olympus
where clouds keep their distance, where thunder never rumbles.
From echoing gorges, Mount Haemus takes up the clamor
and flings it at Pelion's caverns to double again;
Pindus roars, the crags of Pangaeus resound, and
Oeta's mountaintops bellow: men pale at the noise,
their own frenzy reverberating from all over earth.

A volley of countless missiles and, with them, diverse prayers:
some want wounds, others to have their darts punch into the earth,
keeping their hands clean. Chance hurries all things along,
and wayward Fortune makes what man she will guilty.
Then Ituraeans, Medes, and loose-robed Arabs join in—
a dangerous mob of archers aiming their arrows at no mark:
only the sky, lowering over the plains, is their target.
From it, death drops. That they should have stained their foreign barbs
is no heinous crime: all sacrilege clusters round and
clings to the Roman javelin. The sky clouds over with steel,
a night woven of weapons hangs over the field.

*(But oh, how little slaughter the spears and flying steel
exacted! For civil war hatreds, only the sword
sufficed, guiding their hands to strike Roman guts.)*

Pompey's army, solid with tight-packed fighting units,
 had linked shields, rim lapped to boss all down the line,
 and, scarcely able to give sword-hands and spears free play,
 had taken their stand so pressed together they feared their own blades. 495
 In a headlong rush, Caesar's demented companies charge.
 Even where a man's corselet, laced with heavy rings,
 interposes and, under its cover, his breast lies hid,
 even here, they find a path to the guts—past all armor 500
 lies the goal at which each man strikes.

One side suffers
 civil war, the other wages it; there, the blade stays
 cool; here, on Caesar's side, each guilty sword is hot.

And Fortune lost no time overturning the massive weight
 of affairs, sweeping its huge wreckage away on floods of doom. 505
 Pompey's cavalry deployed, left wing and right the whole
 width of the plain apart, spreading beyond the battle's
 edges, while light-armed troops, interspersed among outlying
 infantry, flung horde after savage horde at the foe.
 In this fight, each nation wielded its native weapon; 510
 Roman blood was the aim of all. Here, a volley of arrows;
 there, of stones and firebrands; pellets whizz from slings
 so fast they melt and fuse into globules of red-hot lead. 513*
 Fearing his front line would fall before this onslaught, Caesar— 521
 who held troops in reserve, ranged aslant, behind his standards
 and off to the side of the fighting—suddenly, while the wings
 held steady, hurled this force where the foe moved in confusion.

Oblivious of the battle, unashamed of fear, 525
 men in headlong flight made it plain that civil war
 is never wisely entrusted to troops of barbarians.
 When the first charger, stabbed in the chest with a pike,
 threw its rider head-foremost and trampled his body,
 all the cavalry quit the field—hauled on the reins and raced, 530
 a dense stormcloud, galloping headlong, straight at their own ranks.
 Thereafter, restraint fell victim to mayhem: what followed was
 no fight but war waged by an army of swords on one of throats;
 men on one side could not cut down all those the other
 sent to the slaughter.

Pharsalia! how I wish your plains 535
need only be soaked with the gore that pours out of barbarian
hearts, that no other blood should stain your clear-running springs,

that they in their thousands should cloak all your fields with bones!
Or else, if you must drink your fill of Roman blood,
spare these men, I pray—let Galatians live and Syrians, 540
Cappadocians and Gauls and—from the world's end—Iberians,
Armenians, Cilicians; for, after the civil war,
these will be the people of Rome.

Panic, once risen,
struck them all, and Caesar's destiny raced unchecked.

They had reached Magnus' main force and his central squadrons. 545
The fight, which had ranged at random and swirled across all
the field, stopped here, and Caesar's fortune pulled up short.
Here the troops were not men culled from kings' auxiliaries,
nor had the hands that wielded these swords been begged and borrowed:
now they must face their brothers, now face their fathers. 550
Here's frenzy, here madness, here your crimes are, Caesar!

*Shun this page of the war, Poet, leave it in shadow!
I would not have my song of monstrous evils teach
any age what license there is in time of civil war!
Ah, better my tears should dry, my sobs die away! 555
Whatever you did in this battle, Rome, I'll keep silent . . .*

Here Caesar—the nations' madness, the goad of their frenzy—
roams up and down the lines, stoking the fires in their burning
hearts lest, anywhere in his ranks, blood-lust should wane.
He inspects their blades to see which ones stream to the hilt with gore, 560
which ones glitter with only the tip of the point bloodied,
whose hand shakes as it thrusts the sword home, whose bow is slack
and whose is strung taut, who attacks only on command,
who relishes combat, whose cheeks blanch when a citizen
is killed. He visits the bodies that litter the wide plains; 565
many a wound that would have drained a man of his life's-blood
he staunches with his own hand. And, wherever he roves—
like Bellona brandishing bloody scourges, or like
Mars rousing the wild men of Bistonia, lashing his team
with his savage whip if it shies at Pallas' aegis—there 570
a monstrous night of evil falls: the death toll climbs,
and groans as from one huge voice, armor clangs with the weight

569 Bistonia: See "Bistonês."

of bodies crashing, and blade shatters against blade. Caesar,
 with his own hand, gives them fresh weapons or furnishes spears;
 he bids his men chop at enemy faces with their steel. 575
 He urges his front line forward, shoving his men
 in the back, spurring laggards with jabs of his lance-butt.
 Banning attacks on the ranks, he points out bands of senators;
 he knows where the empire's lifeblood runs, where its guts lie,
 where to strike at Rome, the precise point where Liberty— 580
 the last in the world—must be stabbed. Nobility mixed
 with lesser knights and venerable men are pressed hard
 by their steel—they cut down Lepidi, cut down Metelli,
 Corvini and those of Torquatus' stock, frequent leaders
 of state and the best of men—apart, Magnus, from you. 585

It was then, with face masked by a common soldier's helmet,
 disguised from the foe, that you, Brutus, took up your sword!
 O glory of our nation! O Senate's hope supreme!
 last of your line, of the name renowned for centuries! Do not
 rush over-boldly into your enemy's midst! You will 590
 die in a Thessaly all your own. You gain nothing here,
 bent on Caesar's throat: not yet has he reached the heights
 and mounted the pinnacle of rightful human power;
 not yet has he earned a death so noble! Let him live 595
 and, that he may fall as Brutus' victim, let him reign!

Here all the nation's glory is lost; patrician corpses—
 no plebeians among them—lie on the field in a great heap.
 In the carnage of famous men, one death still stood out—
 that of feisty Domitius: the Fates led him to disaster 600
 again and again. Magnus' fortune never dipped
 but he was there. So often defeated by Caesar, he died
 a free man; he sank under a dozen wounds, jubilant,
 rejoicing because he thus escaped a second pardon.
 Caesar had spied him, his limbs writhing in a welter of blood, 605
 and, taunting him, said:

"Leaving Magnus' army already,
 Governor-elect Domitius? Without you, already

584 *Torquatus*: ancestor of the T. met at 6.285.

591 *a Thessaly all your own*: i.e., at Philippi.

the war goes on."

But the breath, still fluttering in the other's breast, allowed him to speak; he parted his dying lips:

"I look at you, Caesar, and seem to see, not a man empowered by his deadly traffic in crime, but one uncertain of fate, inferior to his son-in-law. I go to Stygian shades a soldier of Magnus, a free man with no worries. Dying, I have reason to hope savage Mars will break you, make you pay the heavy price you owe Pompey and me."

No more:
life fled away; down on his eyes the dense shadows pressed.

★ ★ ★

How petty to measure out one's tears for countless deaths when the world is dying and, tracing individual fates, to ask:

Who suffered a death-dealing wound clean through his gut? Who stepped on his own intestines, spilled on the ground? Whose dying breath, as he faced the foe, expelled the sword thrust deep down his throat? Who sank to his knees when struck, who stood erect while his limbs dropped? Which men sustained lances run right through their chests? which did a spear pin to the field? Whose blood spurted high in the air from severed veins, then rained down on his enemy's armor? Who slashed his brother's abdomen open and, that he might strip a kindred cadaver, chopped off the head and pitched it away? Who slit his father's throat and tried, with angry zeal, to show those looking on that the man hacked at was not his parent?

No one death deserves its own lament; no one man have we time to mourn.

The part Pharsalia played in battle differed from all other disasters: in those, Rome suffered the loss of men, in this the loss of nations; there, death was tallied by soldier, here by tribe. Here flowed the blood of Achaea, Pontus, Assyria; all these streams of gore the Roman

607 *Governor-elect Domitius*: the Senate had chosen Domitius to succeed Caesar as proconsul (governor) in Gaul.

torrent prevented from settling in clotted pools on the plain.
 The wound the nations received at this front was too severe
 to heal in one generation; more than life and safety
 was lost: throughout the world and for all time, we are ruined. 640
 These blades conquer all who will be slaves hereafter.
 Why did these soldiers' offspring, why did their children's children
 deserve to be born into a monarchy? Did we fight so
 feebly or shield our throats? The cowardice of others drops
 a yoke on our necks. You gave those born after the battle 645
 a master: to us, too, Fortune, you should have given a war!

* * *

For some time, Magnus had sensed that Gods and Rome's destiny
 had changed sides; he, though unlucky, was scarcely induced
 even by total disaster to curse his luck. A stone's throw
 from the plain, he stood on a knoll and gazed at what the battle 650
 had blocked from view—slaughter spread across Thessaly's fields.
 He saw his death being sought by all these weapons, saw
 the bodies spilled and himself drowning in deep blood . . .
 But he had no wish—as men in their misery often do—
 to drag all else under, to clutch men to him as he fell. 655
 He maintained his belief, even now, that the Heaven-dwellers
 deserved his prayers, and he prayed, as solace in downfall,
 that most of Latium's folk should live on after him:

"Pity them, Gods Above, and do not raze all nations!
 Though the world stands and Rome survives, Magnus can still 660
 be made miserable! Should you want to wound me more, I have
 a wife, I have sons: all these are Fortune's hostages.
 Isn't it enough for civil war to overthrow
 me and mine? Is our death too trifling without the world's?
 Why wreak havoc on all, why work for total destruction? 665
 Fortune, I have nothing left as it is."

He spoke, then strode
 among the weapons and standards; the squadrons now besieged
 on all sides, men rushing to hasty death he called back,
 saying he was not worth so much. Stout-hearted, he met
 swords head-on, not flinching from death aimed at throat or breast. 670
 But he was afraid that, if Magnus were laid low, his men
 would *not* flee, and the slain world would fall on their leader's body;

or else he wished his death would elude Caesar's eyes.
*(Vain hope, luckless man! as your father-in-law wished to see it—
 'Bring me his head, wherever I am!')*

You too, his wife,
 were reason for flight, your dear face—and Fate's decree that
 he should not die apart from you.

He whipped up his stallion,
 which bore him off the field with drumming hooves. He feared no
 weapons behind him but went with boundless courage to meet
 his final doom. Not a groan, not a tear escaped you, Magnus,
 for yours is a grief full of dignity—just the bearing
 Rome in her troubles required. With no change in expression,
 you gaze at Emathia: good fortune in war has never
 seen you swagger, nor will adversity see you broken.
 Fickle Fortune falls as far short of you now, in this woe,
 as she did when you revelled in three Triumphs! The load of fate
 laid aside, you depart, relieved. Now there is time to review
 seasons of joy; hope, never to be fulfilled, has faded;
now you can learn what once you were. Flee this fatal combat,
 call the Gods to witness that none who go on battling now
 die for you, Magnus. As with Africa weeping her loss,
 deadly Monda, slaughter beside the Pharian stream,
 so with Thessaly: little fighting will be on your behalf,
 for Pompey, the name all nations adore; nor will it be for
 love of war; no, it will be the match we always have—
 Liberty pitted against a Caesar. Once you have left
 the field, the Senate, dying, shows it fought for itself.

Does it not please you to have left this battle defeated, not
 to have seen that horror through to the end? Look back at the troops
 lathered with blood, rivers churning with in-rushing gore,
 then pity your father-in-law: with what pangs will he
 enter Rome, the winner, his luck improved by such battles?
 Whatever you suffer in lands unknown, a lonely exile,
 whatever trials at the hands of the Pharian tyrant,
 trust the Gods, trust the long-lasting favor of Fate:
to win was worse! Allow no sound of lamentation,
 forbid the people to weep, forgo tears and grief!
 Let the world hail Pompey's woes as they hailed his prosperity!
 Survey, serene and with no pleading looks, the kings;

survey states in your power and kingdoms presented to you— 710
Egypt and Libya; then select the land of your death.

First to witness your ruin, Larissa now saw your
noble head unbowed by Fate: she sent her whole army
with all her people streaming out through the gates to greet you
like a hero: tears in their eyes, they promised offerings, 715
opened temples, homes, vowed to stand by you in defeat.

*(Truly, much of your measureless name survives, and you—
inferior only to yourself—can send whole nations
hurrying to arms once more, rushing once more to their doom.)*

But:

“What need has a conquered man of troops or towns?” *(His words!)*
“Pledge your allegiance to the conqueror!”

*(You, Caesar, amid
high heaps of dead, just when your son-in-law makes you a present
of nations, strut through your country's guts.)*

Hoofbeats drum
as Pompey gallops away. Groans and tears pursue him, 725
and the people's loud reproaches hurled at savage Gods.
Here, Magnus, was proof of the favor you yearned for, and a taste
of its fruits!

(The successful man is never sure of love.)

When Caesar had looked his fill at fields swamped with Hesperian
blood, he reckoned the time had come to check his soldiers'
steel and force. As their lives were worthless, their deaths useless, 730
he spared Magnus' legions. But, in case their camp should
rally the routed and a night's rest should dispel their terror,
he decided to march right up to the enemy's rampart
while Fortune is hot, while widespread panic prevails. He had
no qualms that his men might find this order irksome, 735
weary and chafed by Mars' yoke though they were: a general
need not urge his soldiers to loot. He said:

“Victory is ours
in full, men: all that remains is reward for bloodshed—
this I duly point out: for I will not say I bestow
what each will award himself. Look! filled with precious metals, 740
the camp stands open. There lies the gold embezzled

from Hesperian tribes, tents bulging with Eastern treasures.
All the fortune of kings and of Magnus, heaped up together,
awaits its masters—soldiers, make haste to outstrip
those you have routed! Riches Pharsalia made yours are
pillaged by men you defeated.”

745*

What fosse, what mound
could keep them from seeking the prize of war and of crime?
They race to discover how much the reward for their guilt is.

749

750

They did indeed find many things from a plundered world,
a war-chest well stocked with stacks of ponderous ingots.
But minds of all-encompassing greed will not be fobbed off
with what gold the Iberian digs, what the Tajo spits out,
what rich Arimaspians skim off the top of their sands:
they could seize all this and still reckon their crime underpaid.
A man who has promised himself Tarpeia's Rock if he wins,
who has staked his all on the hope of Roman booty feels
cheated, shown a mere camp to loot!

755

Vile plebeians
nap in patrician sod-huts, despicable troopers sprawl
on couches spread for kings, and on fathers' cots,
on the cots of brothers, guilty men stretch out their limbs.
Demented dreams keep them twitching, and raving nightmares
make their wretched brains reel with scenes of Thessalian battle.
Savage guilt lies awake in them all; sword-fights agitate
every mind; hands with no hilt to grip slash the air.

760

765

I could believe that the field groaned, that guilty earth
breathed forth apparitions, that everywhere in the upper world
air was tainted with ghosts, night with Stygian gloom.

770

Victory rightly exacts from these men a grim penalty.
Sleep attacks them with hissings and flames, the shade of a slain
citizen appears. Each is prey to his own form of terror:
one sees old men's faces, another a young lad's limbs;
this man is haunted in dream after dream by his brother's corpse,
this one sees only his father.

775

Caesar sees them all.
Faces just like these appeared to Pelopid Orestes—

758 *Tarpeia's Rock*. all Rome.

Furies' faces!—before he was purged at Scythia's shrine;
 Pentheus insane, Agavê all too sane—neither was more
 keenly aware what bolts of violence had struck their minds. 780
 All the blades that Pharsalia saw, all that the day
 of vengeance will see drawn by the Senate—him
 they assailed that night, him the demon phantoms flogged.
 And yet, how much punishment the wretch's conscience spared him!
 Despite seeing the Styx, seeing shades, despite Tartarus 785
 breaking his sleep, Pompey still lived!

He suffered, yes—but,
 when daylight lifted the veil from Pharsalia's shambles
 and no natural landmark caught his eye, he was riveted
 by fields of death. He fixes his gaze on rivers racing
 with blood, bodies in piles high as the tops of the highest 790
 hills; he watches battalions settle into red ooze
 and tallies Magnus' nations.

Here a place is prepared
 for his feasting that he may scan the faces and features
 of the dead. Pleased he can see no inch of Emathia's soil,
 that the plains his eye surveys are obscured with carnage, 795
 he sees proof in this blood that Luck and Gods Above are his.
 And, lest he spoil the thrilling display of his crimes, the madman
 begrudges poor wretches fire for cremation, thrusting
 Emathia at guilty Heaven. Not the Libyan
 who entombed a consul, not Cannae kindled by Punic 800
 torches compel this man to grant his foe decent burial;
 instead, his fury, not yet glutted with slaughter, gloats,
 for they are his fellow Romans!

*We seek no single pyres,
 no individual biers; give the nations one fire,
 let the bodies burn in one continuous blaze! 805
 Would you punish your son-in-law? Stack the timber of Pindus,
 pile up jumbled logs from Oeta's stands of oak,
 let Pompey from his ship's deck see Thessalian flame!*

*Your rage gains naught: what difference whether these bodies burn
 or rot? Nature welcomes all creatures back to her calm 810
 and capacious lap; all flesh finds its finish in itself.*

799 the Libyan: Hannibal, who gave his fallen opponent, the Roman consul and general Aemilius Paullus, honorable burial after Cannae.

*If, Caesar, fire does not burn these nations now,
it will burn them with Earth, burn them with Ocean's swirling depths.
A communal pyre awaits the world, ready to blend bones
with stars. Wherever Fortune summons your soul, there shall
these be also: you will mount no higher in air,
will lie on no grander bed deep in Stygian night.
Death is free from Fortune: all those she bore, Earth
gathers in: Heaven covers those who have no urn.*

815

*You buried the world's hopes of a funeral: now they are punished.
Why flee this carnage? why quit these stinking fields?
Drink the water, Caesar! breathe the air—if you can!
Decomposing nations snatch Pharsalian lands
from you; they hold the field—the victor has turned and fled!*

820

*Not only Bistonian wolves came to the feast of death
after the battle of Haemus, but lions, too: scenting
corruption, the stench of rotting flesh, they left Pholoë.
Then she-bears abandoned their lairs, disgusting dogs
slunk from kennel and town—every kind of keen-nosed beast
that snuffed the air, now sickly-sweet and loud with carrion.*

825

830

*Birds that had for a long time followed the camps of civil war
came flocking. Cranes, whose custom it is to migrate each year
from wintry Thrace to the Nile, left for the mild Southern climes
later than usual. Never had more vultures obscured
the sky, or more pinions pressed their way through the air.
Every woodland sent its birds; every wing was soon
soaked with blood; every tree then dripped crimson dew.
Often, from skies above, gouts of blood or rotten flesh
rained down on the victor's upturned face and impious standards,
as birds, their weary talons strengthless, let some limb drop.*

835

840

*Even so, not all of that host had its bones picked clean,
not all vanished by gobbets; beasts disdained the deep-seated
guts; they had no taste for sucking the bone marrow out,
but merely nibbled at limbs. Most of the Latin force
lay untasted; sun and rain and day succeeding
long day dissolved and mixed them into Emathia's soil.*

845

★ ★ ★

Thessaly, unlucky land! what wickedness of yours
 so offended Gods Above that They should burden
 you alone with all these deaths, all these fatal crimes?
 How much time must elapse before posterity no longer
 remembers this war and can grant you forgiveness? 850

How long before crops grow green, no stain on their leaves?
 When will your plowshare cease to disturb ghosts of Roman dead?
 Not before fresh troops arrive while, on the fields you offer
 for a second crime, this blood will not yet have dried.

Suppose we overturn all our ancestors' tombs— 855
 both sepulchers yet standing and those, with their stones split,
 overcome by some gnarled root, which have spilled their urns:
 still our ashes are turned by the plow in Haemonia's furrows,
 still the countryman's iron-toothed tools strike our bones.

No sailor would have moored his craft along Emathia's 860
 coastline, nor would any plowman have stirred her soil;
 Romans would shun this mass grave, settlers these fields
 of spirits; her thickets would shelter no herds of cattle,
 and not one shepherd would be so bold as to let

his sheep graze where the grass grows over our bones; 865
 like a land where no human can dwell for the belt of ice
 or blistering sun, you would lie, a desert unknown,
 had you borne, not war's first, but its only horror.

O Gods Above, let us have guilty lands to hate!
 Why incriminate all the world, then all absolve? 870
 Hesperia's dead, and the sea of tears off Pachynos,
 and Modena, and Lefkas have purified Philippi.