

Masculinity, Nonverbal Behavior, and Pompey's Death in Lucan's *Bellum Civile*

Pompey's decapitation comes as no surprise to a reader of Lucan's *Bellum Civile*. It is explicitly predicted by a raving matron (1.685–686) and forms the climax to a series of decapitations such as those of the Sullan proscriptions recalled in book 2 by the old men of Rome. Deaths are often bizarre and grotesque in Lucan's epic (see e.g. Henderson 3.9, Bartsch 10–47), and Pompey's death is no exception. However, Lucan's treatment of Pompey's death is more than this: it serves as a capstone to a process begun in book 1, when the narrator asserts that “rivalry in courage/masculinity (*virtus*) spurred them on” (120), foregrounding masculinity as part of the struggle between Pompey and Caesar (for *virtus*, see McDonnell and Sklenár). A few lines later, Lucan characterizes the two generals with his famous simile comparing Pompey to an old, rootless oak and Caesar to a lightning bolt (135–157; Rosner–Siegel). This is the first instance of the technique he uses to cast doubt on Pompey's ability to successfully perform masculinity, while highlighting Caesar's problematic over-performance. In his depiction of Pompey's nonverbal behavior, Lucan at times portrays him as the epitome of traditional Roman elite masculinity (e.g. after his defeat at Pharsalus, 7.680–686), yet ultimately undermines him. In the end, the poet subverts Pompey's *virtus* definitively by stripping him of power over his own body in the extremity of death.

In this paper I examine Lucan's crafting of Pompey's death in book 8, and argue that the poet shows him not merely as a defeated general, but as one losing the main prerequisite for masculinity: *ius sui* (612), power over himself. His men fear that Pompey will unman himself (594–595), but at first he seems to be meeting his death as an elite man should: he covers his face (proleptically recalling Caesar's dying gesture), closes his eyes, and holds his breath (to keep himself from crying out or weeping), and having been stabbed, he holds his body motionless and makes no sound (613–620; again, in the same way as sources tell us

Caesar kept silence after his address to Brutus). But now the poet unravels Pompey's masculinity by revealing his thoughts. He exhorts himself to "think of fame" (624) in this final test of his ability to endure adversity, begging his pain to suppress moans with more endurance (633–634). To the internal audience, unaware of the general's thoughts, he dies well, controlling his breathing, affect displays (autonomic responses of the nervous system such as weeping), paralinguistics (moans), and facial expression. The external audience, on the other hand, exposed to his thoughts, receives conflicting messages about Pompey's masculinity (Ormand). Pompey's internal monologue implies that brave self-control isn't something natural to him through a lifetime of practice in the 'forest of eyes' that was Republican Rome. The narrator's insistence of Pompey's command of himself is belied by Pompey's thoughts, and will be definitively belied by the behavior of his decapitated head. The narrator claims that Pompey's features were unaffected by his dying, but they do not remain so. Septimius, a Roman soldier, next grabs his head, uncovers his face, cuts off his head, and attaches it to a spear. Now Pompey displays nonverbal behavior he had suppressed before: his features live while his mouth murmurs with sobs of breath (682–683); after decapitation he loses self-control (unlike e.g. Ovid's Emathion, *Met.* 5.117–118). The narrator chooses not to share Pompey's thoughts with us as his hardening eyes herald his death (683; Most 400). Lucan follows this shocking description with a reminder of how far Pompey had fallen: 'this (head) swayed the laws, Campus, and rostra' (685).

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