Anatomizing Civil War

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We saw in the preceding chapters how Lucan employs both corporeal imagery and language as well as abstract concepts such as *Fama* as part of his epic technique to bind together the body of his text. This chapter will focus on a further facet of Lucan’s writing style, this time on the level of syntax rather than metaphor. I shall examine how one particular characteristic of Lucan’s rhetoric, his *sententiae*, constitute a compositional feature that contributes to the thematic unity of his often seemingly fragmented epic.

Studies of Lucan’s *Bellum Civile* have firmly established the label “rhetorical epic.”¹ This slogan flags the notion of verbal virtuosity, while warning of the dangers of vain declamation and lack of substance. However, attempts to rescue Lucan from the clutches of those who stick with Quintilian’s often repeated statement that this author has rhetoric to offer other than poetry have led the way in rehabilitating some of Lucan’s artful rhetorical devices.² What has frequently been ignored is that Quintilian’s judgment—which if one reads it as part of a rhetorical treatise must be considered more compliment than rebuke—starts off on an even more positive note: “Lucan is ardent, passionate and particularly distinguished for his *sententiae*.³ This feature is confirmed by Morford’s *apologia*, which concludes: “And it is true that the excellence of

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¹ As eternalized in the subtitle of Morford 1967.
Lucan lies in his *sententiae.*” By Lucan’s day, however, the term *sententia* had developed from its first-century BC meaning, “precept,” “maxim,” or “generally accepted commonplace.” Already in the writings of Lucan’s grandfather Seneca the Elder it designates the format of both gnomic generalizations and penetrating epigrams. The function of *gnomai,* when defined as generalizing statements about particular human actions or the gods, is akin to that of modern-day proverbs. They “persuade the listener and move him to correct action by utterance of familiar, unassailable wisdom.” It comes as no surprise, then, that the contents of *gnomai* cover all of human experience, as can be seen from an edition of Menander’s *gnomai* that is not ordered alphabetically as in the manuscript tradition but instead grouped by themes such as “virtue,” “wedlock,” “old age,” “women,” “death,” “happiness,” and “modesty.” The same applies to the collection of alphabetically ordered *sententiae* from the mimes of Publilius Syrus, in which the reader can also make out recurrent topoi. Indeed, some of Publilius’s *sententiae* provide variation on the same theme. Below I provide a small selection focusing on avarice:

A14 *avarus ipse miseriae causa est suae* (The mean man is the cause of his own misery).

A21 *avarum facile capias, ubi non sis item* (You want to catch a mean man? Just be generous!)

A23 *Avarus nisi cum moritur, nihil recte facit* (The mean man only does well when he dies).

A25 *Avarus damno potius quam sapiens dolet* (Loss hurts the mean more than the wise).

A26 *Avaro quid mali optes nisi: vivat diu?* (You want to curse a mean man? Say: Long may you live!)

A35 *Avidum oportet esse neminem, minime senem* (No one ought to be mean, especially not the old).

A46 *Avaro acerba poena natura est sua* (cf. A14).

A47 *Avaro non est vita, sed mors longior* (The mean man does not live, but rather dies slowly).

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4. Morford 1967, 85, citing Dr. Johnson’s judgment of Lucan’s “pointed sentences, comprised in vigorous and animated lines” in support.


9. Cf. n. 44.
The gnomic form of the *sententia* subsequently retreats more and more in favor of rhetorical pointed expressions that are thought up to fit a particular context and thus do not display universal gnomic force. From the selection of Publilius above we may take A14 and A46, which both express the same thought in a different wording, as precursors of the rhetorical practice to create incidental or casual redefinitions of current values rather than complete gnomic statements. This prevailing rhetorical type of *sententia* coined in accordance with the needs of each specific occasion employs a large variety of stylistic features. These are, in the order Quintilian discusses them, surprise, allusion, transfer from one context into another, repetition, and finally contrast of opposites as well as comparison. In his discussion, which culminates in body imagery, Quintilian demonstrates how *sententiae* are incorporated and firmly attached to the body of the text. He construes *sententiae* as the most beautiful parts of the textual body and compares them to eyes: “Personally I think these highlights are in a sense the eyes of eloquence.” Quintilian also presents the notion that *sententiae* are extracts from an author’s mind and can even convey something of the author himself, according to an etymology he provides. Consequently *sententiae* not only stick out and attract the attention of the reader through their rhetorical beauty but might also provide access to the voice of the author in the text. This is not to imply that I will be retreating to naive biographism in search of the author as moralist when relating *sententiae* to thoughts of the author. Rather I would like to emphasize that whatever sceptical view we might take as modern literary critics on this matter, it is a perspective that derives from ancient literary criticism itself and thus represents a point of view, indeed an interpretative convention, with which the ancient audience might have been expected to be familiar.


11. Cf. *ex inopinato* (Quint. Inst. 8.5.15); *sunt et alio relata* (8.5.16); *et aliiunde petita, id est in alium locum ex alio tralata* (8.5.17); *geminatio* (8.5.17); *ex contrariis* (8.5.18); *cum aliqua comparatione clarescit* (8.5.19).

12. Cf. *ego vero haec lumina orationis velut oculos quosdam esse eloquentiae credo* (Quint. Inst. 8.5.34). On the beauty of the eyes cf. Russell 2001 *ad loc.* In the following sentence Quintilian carries this textual body imagery even further when arguing against an excess of *sententiae*: *Sed neque oculos esse toto corpore velim, ne cetera membra officium suum perdant* (But I don’t want there to be eyes all over the body, lest the other organs lose their function).

13. Cf. *sententiam veteres quod animo sensissent vocaverant. id cum est apud oratores frequentissimum, tum etiam in usu cotidiano quasdam reliquias habet* (The ancients used the word *sententia* to mean what they felt in their minds. This meaning is very common in the orators, and there are some vestiges of it in everyday usage, Quint. Inst. 8.5.1). Already Anaximenes *Ars Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* 11.1 defines *gnomai* as expressions of an author’s opinion. Cf. also Carey 1995, 96–99 on the highly personalized poetic voice of Pindar, which finds its expression in pronouncing *gnomai* as first-person statements—not unlike personal thoughts.
As we will see, Lucan has fully absorbed both the gnomic and the rhetorical form of *sententiae* into his epic, a feature much noted but little discussed. This results in a high frequency of paradox and hyperbole, figures that are fundamental to Lucan’s rhetorical style. This chapter will pursue this connection between style and content even further by examining what the label “rhetorical” in point of fact means. I will move away from talking about rhetorical epic in a generalizing fashion and ask how rhetoric pinned down to detailed verbal points functions when producing the world of this epic and the body of this text. I will do so by looking at one specific rhetorical device, Lucan’s *sententiae*, which appear throughout the epic in all shapes and sizes as an essential part of Lucan’s epic technique and help to connect the many episodes if his epic. In what follows, I examine how Lucan’s *sententiae* serve as carriers of his rhetoric and make themselves indispensable for inverting clichés and creating discourse across the entire epic. As we shall see, twisted and perverted proverbs play an important role in Lucan’s distorted cosmos, and subsequently also leave their mark on the reception of Lucan. I propose reading Lucan’s *sententiae* as the epic’s readers’ digest, the best of BC, essential Lucan—and, most particularly, as Lucan’s legacy to his text.

Readers of Lucan’s *Bellum Civile* experience an epic in which the authorial voice trumpets louder and more frequently than in any previous epic. Lucan becomes a constant presence by writing himself into his text. As a result of his campaign of self-memorialization, the *Bellum Civile* incorporates Lucan. In addition, with his *sententiae* Lucan also creates limbs of his epic body that writers on the hunt for pointed formulation can easily appropriate and incorporate into new textual bodies.

At the rhetoricians’ schools of imperial Rome “the poets were studied not only for examples of rhetorical techniques but especially for examples of epigram (*sententiae*).” For at the beginning of the standard rhetorical training stood exercises, “in which the students worked up an anecdote climaxing in a

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16. Rolim de Moura 2008 and 2010 suggests that the voices that deliver discourse/speeches in Lucan’s epic are making statements that respond to one another in a debate that spreads across the epic.
pithy saying, elaborated a proverb or apophthegm, and composed a fable and a simple narrative.”¹⁹ Epigrams from epic thus functioned as “cultural capital,” eagerly excerpted by the studious reader.²⁰ Lucan’s epic could be used as a gold mine for sententiae. This characteristic of the text secures Lucan’s afterlife in pieces—through excerptability, which allows for the reuse of his sententiae in new textual bodies.²¹ The Controversiae of Seneca the Elder show that passing on rhetorical pearls from one generation of orators to the next and to future generations is high on the agenda.²²

Seneca has turned to this subject at the request of his sons and offers them rhetorical specimens for examination and imitation (Sen. 1 Con. pr.1.6). Like so much else in Roman elite culture, sententiae run in families. So “close parallels between turns of phrase in the younger Seneca’s works and sententiae recorded in his father’s anthology” abound.²³ It can come as no surprise then that Lucan, too, shared in this family tradition.²⁴

For Seneca the Elder sententiae can even serve as the sole criterion for a claim to fame (Sen. Con. 10 pr.16). Seneca’s project is partly to preserve the memory (and sententiae—“copyright”) of those declaimers famous in his youth but then nearly forgotten, whose work his contemporaries copied without acknowledgment.²⁵ Some orators would even exercise the art of writing sententiae for days on end in order to build up a stock of material they and their successors could use as the writer’s stock-in-trade (Sen. Con. 1.pr.23 on Porcius Latro). Thus the idea of winning fame and an afterlife through one’s sententiae had already been firmly established when Lucan took to writing.

Morford observes that Lucan employs sententiae most frequently in the per-

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²¹. Cf. Sanford 1934 and below on Veit Ludwig von Seckendorff.
²². Cf Sen. Con. 1.22: nec his argumenta subtexam, ne et modum excedam et propositum, cum vos sententias audire velit et quidquid ab illis abduxero molestum futurum sit (But I won’t add the arguments that went with them [sententiae]—that would be excessive and irrelevant, for it is the sententiae you want to hear, and any space I deprive them of will annoy you). Cf. further Sen. Con. 2.pr.5 and also Con. 7.pr.9. For a recent study of Seneca the Elder’s sententiae cf. Berti 2007, 155–82, “L’arte della sententia.”
²⁴. For Lucan cf. Sussman 1978, 159–60. Many of the contributions to Gualandri and Mazzoli 2003 examine the political and cultural role played by the Annaei family; Bonner 1966, 263–64 points to possible influences of Seneca the Elder on Lucan and sees the roots of some of Lucan’s sententiae in Seneca the Younger’s writings.
²⁵. Fairweather 1981, 29 on Con. 1pr.10–11 and Sinclair 1995, 122 account for the move of sententiae from common property to attributed quotation in a time when oratory under the principate lost much of its political importance and turned instead into a competition for the position of primus orator.
oratio (summing up) of a speech in his epic, so as to go out with a bang.\textsuperscript{26} Indeed, Quintilian compares the use of final sententiae to the concluding request for applause in the comedies and tragedies of old (plodite): the end of a speech is the place to use grand and ornate thoughts to move the audience (Quint. Inst. 6.1.52). If we apply this to a wider framework, we shall note that all books of Lucan’s epic, barring books 1, 3, and 6, end with an epigrammatic or sententious gesture.\textsuperscript{27} Nearly every section of Lucan’s epic, that bravura funeral speech on the Roman Republic, fades out with a nod toward rhetorical convention and a sententious thrill for the reader.

I have suggested that the increased frequency of sententiae springs from an author’s or orator’s concern with winning recognition and fame. In addition these textual limbs can be excerpted and incorporated into new literary bodies. Perceived as the highpoints of rhetorical art, sententiae are seen as lasting legacy. Moreover, we have seen how there is an ancient notion that sententiae convey an author’s own thoughts. If self-authored, their polished style profiles the author’s education, while if they are copied into a text, they display the author’s wide reading.\textsuperscript{28} Since the right question to ask about a sententia “is not whether it is true in any absolute sense, but whether it is convincing in its own particular context,”\textsuperscript{29} sententiae help to furnish a plausible ethical basis for the presentation of the author’s views. They oblige the reader to register events from a very particular and often partisan point of view.\textsuperscript{30} Hence sententiae partake in an author’s specific social ethos. By depicting values and commonly shared beliefs, they help to construct the world of the text for the reader. Consequently, sententiae place their user in a position of authority, which often finesses further justification. Correspondingly in one of his letters Seneca fervidly defends the use of sententiae as engines of practical ethics:

Moreover, who can deny that even the most inexperienced are effectively struck by the force of certain precepts? For example, by such brief but weighty saws as: “Nothing in excess,” “The greedy mind is satisfied by no gains,” “You must expect to be treated by others as you yourself have treated them.” We receive a sort of shock when we hear such sayings; no one ever thinks of doubting them or of asking “Why?” So strongly,

\textsuperscript{26} Morford 1967, 2.
\textsuperscript{27} Cf. Wick 2004 on BC 9.1108.
\textsuperscript{28} Accordingly Sinclair 1995, 122–32 reads Seneca’s Controversiae as a tool for the social advancement of the author’s family—displaying the father’s learnedness and equipping the sons to put theirs on display.
\textsuperscript{29} Sinclair 1995, 35.
\textsuperscript{30} Cf. Sinclair 1995, 6 and ch. 3 for a discussion of legalistic rhythms in sententiae and Tacitus’s role as nomothetic historian.
indeed, does mere truth, unaccompanied by reason, attract us. (Sen. ep. 94.43, trans. Gummere)\textsuperscript{31}

In short, employing \textit{sententiae} economizes on argumentation and makes sure that no reader is left unclear about the premises of the text.

Finally there is also a competitive element in employing \textit{sententiae}, for “from Aristophanes to Quintilian, we repeatedly come across images of combat and struggle in the description and use of [. . .] \textit{sententiae}.”\textsuperscript{32} This notion is most prominent in the writings of Seneca the Elder, who vividly describes clashes between declaimers whose acuity and pugnacity rival that of gladiatorial encounters.\textsuperscript{33} What is more, even the authorial self of Seneca the Elder is represented as staging gladiatorial bouts.\textsuperscript{34} When applying this imagery to the \textit{Bellum Civile}, that cosmos of staginess and spectacle, we will see how powerfully \textit{sententiae} assist Lucan in fighting his literary cause.

\textbf{Epigrammatic Force}

By writing a rhetorical epic on a historical subject Lucan combines the epigrammatic forces of three generic traditions, oratory, poetry, and historiography, all of which incorporate \textit{sententiae}. Seneca the Elder's literary output bears witness to the wealth of \textit{sententiae} declamations had to offer to both orator and epicist.\textsuperscript{35} Moreover, earlier poetry, especially epic, was commonly raided for \textit{sententiae}, and as a result we find numerous lines of Homer and Virgil employed wherever suitable. Much of what we have of Ennius we thus owe to Cicero's habit of garnishing his writings with the former's verses.\textsuperscript{36} Third, there is a tradition of

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\item Quis autem negabit feriri quibusdam praeceptis efficaciter etiam imperitissimos? Velut his brevissimis vocibus, sed multum habentibus ponderis: Nil nimis. Avarus animus nullo satiatur lucro. Ab alio exspectes, alteri quod faceris. Haec cum ictu quodam audimus, nec uli licet dubitare aut interrogare "quare?"; adeo etiam \textit{sine ratione} ipsa veritas ducit.
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The final \textit{sententia} has been identified as Publilius Frag 2. We can see here how Seneca himself excerpt. For Publius Syrus p. 90. For a discussion of Seneca \textit{Letters} 94 and 95 focused on \textit{sententia/praeceptum} cf. Sinclair 1995, 91–96.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Sinclair 1995, 41.
\item Sinclair 1995, 123–28 offers ample documentation.
\item On Lucan and the declamation schools cf. Bonner 1966.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
sententiae passed on within historiography. Herodotus, Thucydides, Polybius, Sallust, and Livy all feature examples, and the prominence of this rhetorical device in Tacitus has prompted three recent studies.\textsuperscript{37} Caesar’s commentarii, one of Lucan’s direct sources (although strictly speaking not historiography) tap into this tradition as well.\textsuperscript{38} In addition we find that the second-century AD account of the civil war in Florus’s epitome exploits the seed planted by Lucan’s many sententiae.\textsuperscript{39} However, Lucan’s predecessors employed gnomic sententiae and not yet the pointed expressions coined by the declaimers. Ovid acts here as mediator between Augustan and later literature. Seneca the Elder reports that Ovid took over many sententiae from his teacher Latro and rephrased them in his poetry.\textsuperscript{40} Ovid’s sententiae are programmatic only in that they display characteristic verbal playfulness rather than moralizing content. It falls to Lucan and thereafter Tacitus’s historiography to exploit sententiae to their full potential by employing both gnomai and pointed expressions side-by-side. As we shall see, Lucan succeeds in constructing a marked rhetorical discourse by forming a system with his sententiae that undergirds the ideology of his epic. The collapse of “traditional distinctions between oratory, history and epic poetry” in the Bellum Civile facilitates Lucan’s novel approach of giving weight and giving way to sententiae in his epic.\textsuperscript{41}

Not only does Lucan lend structure to his many speeches by placing a “terminal sententia” at the end point of a passage or even a book, but he also uses sententiae as an opportunity to assume the role of commentator in his own text.\textsuperscript{42} Following the notion that sententiae always contain something of the poet himself, crystallizing his line of thought, we can read Lucan’s sententiae as his very essence. His moralizing is thus not confined to his frequent apostrophes, but his sententiae, too, demonstrate and enhance the perturbed values of his epic world.

In what follows I propose a reading of Lucan through his sententiousness. For his sententiae have more than a purely formal or structural function and make an important contribution to the meaning and unity of the Bellum Ci-
vile. They connect different segments of the epic by patterning the text and by highlighting particular ethical arguments. In this way they help to map out the world of the epic. *Sententiae* also allow Lucan to transcend the immediacy of his poem. In a culture where a text’s excerptability was a matter of course, where audiences would eagerly scan texts and anticipate finding *sententiae* that could be added to their own collections, Lucan could even expect a condensed version of his epic consisting of excerpted *sententiae* only, along the lines of Seneca the Elder or the recycled mimes of Publilius Syrus. For fame and afterlife, that contemporary of Caesar now depends solely on a collection of *sententiae* extracted from his plays. Studied as a school text in antiquity and praised by the younger Seneca and Gellius, the collection was still popular in the nineteenth century as edifying reading.

Desbordes imagines Publilius’s *sententiae* recontextualized as lines of a play and points to the important function they will have fulfilled in the author’s mimes: “If the *sententiae* could figure in the mimes by way of solemn or mocking remarks in the action of the play, moreover, if they, when the opportunity presented itself, could play on the particular situation of the enunciation, this seems linked to the fact that the *sententia* marks a kind of rupture in the discourse in which it appears and that it makes a transition from the particular to the general.” Might “*sententiae* only, à la Publilius Syrus,” be a reading strategy usefully applied to Lucan’s oeuvre as well? Are Lucan’s *sententiae* meaningful outside their immediate context? What would we as readers gain by lining them up as a chain of reflections in an extended series?

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43. The criticism of Cicero’s early speeches in Tacitus’s *Dialogus* 22.3 embodies this idea: *nihil excepere, nihil referre possis, et velut in rudi aedificio, firmus sane paries et duraturus, sed non satis expolitus et splendens* (There is nothing you can extract, nothing you can take away with you: it is just as in rough-and-ready construction work, where the walls are strong, in all conscience and lasting, but lacking in polish and luster). Cf. also what Tacitus lets M. Aper report about the excerpting habits of students of rhetoric in *Dialogus* 20.4.

44. Giancotti 1967, 318–38 suggests various origins for this collection in the first century AD: rhetorical school text, grammatical gradus, or introduction to ethics and philosophy. Publilius is mentioned by Cicero *Ep. ad fam.* 12.18.2 and *Ep. ad Att.* 14.2 and Seneca the Elder (Con. 7.3.8), who quotes several of his *sententiae*, as does Gellius *Noct. Att.* 17.14. Trimalchio (Petr. *Sat.* 55) offers 16 Ps.-Publilian *sententiae*. Macrobius *Sat.* 2.7 provides Publilius’s biography garnished with a wealth of *sententiae*.


46. “Si les sentences ont pu figurer dans des mimes à titre de commentaires sérieux ou malicieux de l’action théâtrale, si de plus, à l’occasion, elles ont pu jouer sur la situation particulière de l’énonciation, cela semble lié au fait que la sentence marque une sorte de rupture dans le discours où elle apparaît et qu’elle fait passer du particulier au général.” Desbordes 1979, 75.

tifies recurrent topics in Publilius’s output such as life and death, change of fortune, justice and injustice, wisdom and stupidity, freedom and slavery. Others, however, remark that “one would not expect a common ethical standard among maxims spoken by different characters in a mime. Some contradict others, as proverbs often do. [. . .] many advocate selfish pragmatism.”\textsuperscript{48} But evidently the epic format allows Lucan a wider discourse than mime does Publilius. Bonner points to recurrent vocabulary and themes in Lucan’s \textit{sententiae}, but he does not undertake a systematic survey.\textsuperscript{49} In contrast, the subsequent discussion will make use of Tucker’s collection of 502 \textit{sententiae} from Lucan’s \textit{Bellum Civile}.\textsuperscript{50}

When facing the material it will become apparent how versatile and wide the forms are that a \textit{sententia} can take. Lucan’s oeuvre offers a large variety, ranging from the gnomic and proverbial ones, which are of more general content, to highly rhetorical ones coined solely to shine for a brief moment in their individual context.

Morales has examined \textit{sententiae} in another large-scale text, Achilles Tatius’s novel \textit{Leucippe and Clitophon}.\textsuperscript{51} She follows Bennington’s notion that “[s]ententious formulations imply a value-judgement grounded in social norms; they transmit a cultural heritage and are inherently conservative.”\textsuperscript{52} Morales then poses the question, “What are the values and norms in the society of the novel and thus what sort of plausibility is relevant to Achilles Tatius?”\textsuperscript{53} This approach proves fruitful when looking, as Morales does, only at the generalizing and universalizing statements and descriptions in a text. However—and this will be of particular relevance to my study—Bennington takes such strategies a step further when he states: “Sententiousness becomes no longer so much a “type of sentence” as a force in texts [. . .]. This force is not some irrational or metaphysical entity assumed to be at work in texts, but a force of law. If the ‘overt’ forms of sententiousness lay down the law, the more concealed types [. . .] draw their force from a law laid down, or exploit that law surreptitiously.”\textsuperscript{54}

When applied to Lucan this will mean not only that \textit{sententiae} classified as \textit{gnomai} contribute to our understanding of the “laws” in a text, but that even those that are rhetorical and situational offer us insights into the workings of the epic world. Accordingly, the anthologies of \textit{sententiae} mentioned above,

\textsuperscript{48} Fantham and Duff 1996, 1276.
\textsuperscript{49} Bonner 1966, 264–67.
\textsuperscript{51} Morales 2004, 96–151.
\textsuperscript{52} Bennington 1985, 9.
\textsuperscript{53} Morales 2004, 108.
\textsuperscript{54} Bennington 1985, 62.
Publilius Syrus and Seneca the Elder’s excerpts, “are only spectacular surface manifestations” of sententiousness, as they are taken out of speeches or even out of an entire oeuvre of comedies, and not from one continuous story.⁵⁵ For what unites the eighteenth-century French novel *Leucippe and Clitophon* and Lucan’s epic, and indeed makes them comparable from the aspect of sententiousness, is their narrative trajectory, the fact that they create and put on display their own individual world with its system of values.⁵⁶ By looking only at the *sententiae* in any of these works we strip out the narrative and keep only the ideology. Lucan’s performance of a story about Caesar and Pompey is then reduced to its ideology, becomes purely ethos—and as a result we are confronted with its essence.

In a similar way my reading also takes temporality out of Lucan and breaks down the linearity of his epic. We suddenly gain a timeless and holistic vision of what is at stake in the *Bellum Civile*. Hunt in his discussion of the imagery of *Aeneid* 12 suggests an approach not dissimilar, for making “visible” the patterns of Virgil’s epic, whose overarching structure he imagines in the manner of a triptych: “The principal point, in any case, is that although the story must unfold in time its meaning emerges in a kind of spatial memory—i.e. its organic sense emerges only when the three parts [of the triptych] are held together in a simultaneous vision. If the disparate themes and images were unified into a mental complex grasped spatially as a whole, the pattern of related meanings would fuse in an instantaneous impact, a genuinely comprehensive view whose apprehension would give the true form of the poem.”⁵⁷

Lucan himself invites the reader to transcend the linearity of his story. He replants his epic about tyranny into the (safe) past of the Republic. However, here the past informs the present: in *Bellum Civile* 2 the wickedness of Sulla stands in for the horrors of the present civil war. Lucan thus leads the way for his audience to ask what the *Bellum Civile* conveyed to the Neronian reader and consequently has left many a critic wondering about possible pro- and anti-Neronian interpretations. By reading Lucan’s *sententiae* we are negotiating this question; we construe Lucan’s message while asking what this epic means to us today. My “moralizing” reading supplants the narrative in favor of its *sententiae* and degrades Lucan’s epic to a fable that illustrates a moral, a *sententia*, an *epimythion*—or indeed many of them, which in turn then lay down the laws for

⁵⁶. Cf. Bennington 1985, 62: “the text ‘in’ which sententiousness in found becomes dispersed in an intertext of which sententiousness is a significant trace,” while “sententiousness ‘itself’ is dispersed throughout narratives.”
the world of his epic. Just as the fable is supplemented by *sententiae*, “the maxim tends to *supplant* the fable, to stand in for it once the fiction has gone.”

In what follows I present a selection of thematically related *sententiae*, so that different nuances of near-synonyms and parallel statements become apparent. We will then be able to follow Lucan’s discourse of values and concepts in his epic world.

*Downfall and Apocalypse*

Adhering to the notion that sententiousness is a conservative force, we shall find that many of Lucan’s discourses are based on stock material of Roman culture. Through Lucan’s sententiousness this material is then presented in a way that makes the audience register it. Accordingly Lucan’s obsession with Rome’s downfall and apocalypse looks back to an etymological play inherent in the Greek transliteration of Rome into *Ῥώμη*. For the flattering identity of *Ῥώμη* and *ῥώμη* (= strength) in Greek almost cries out for puns and ideological exploitation. However, there is also a darker side to sound and wordplay: the third Sibylline Oracle equates *Ῥώμη* with *ῥύμη* (= ruin). That Roman poets were aware of such echoes is confirmed by the fact that both connotations of *Ῥώμη* are captured in Horace’s *Civil War* Epode in the words *suis et ipsa Roma viribus ruit* (and Rome through her own strength is tottering, Hor. *Ep*. 16.2).

Lucan introduces the first book of his epic with the very same core imagery: *Rome’s inability to bear herself and mighty structures collapse on themselves* become slogans of this epic’s campaign. In addition, these concepts are quickly translated into further images, that of shipwreck and apocalypse. In what follows I shall bring together *sententiae* that partake in the imagery of downfall in the order they appear in the epic. Throughout the image of downfall is evoked again and again and layered into the reader’s memory. To complete the picture Lucan makes clear that he is unwriting the *Aeneid: tanti periere labores* (yet all that toil was wasted, *BC* 6.54). This phrase is a hollow echo of Virgil’s invoca-

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59. On this and the following cf. Macleod 1979, 220–21.
60. Cf. *Or. Sib*. 3.363–64 (repeated at 8.165–66). Macleod 1979, 220–21 discusses various possible translations of *ῥύμη* (= ruin) and proposes that Horace *Ep*. 16.2 is an extension of sense from its usual meaning of “impetus, rush.”
61. *nec se Roma ferens* (*BC* 1.72); *in se magna ruunt* (*BC* 1.82).
62. Cf. *nausfragium sibi quisque facit* (and each creates shipwreck for himself, *BC* 1.503); *extremi multorum tempus in unum convenere dies* (at a single time the final days of many have converged, *BC* 1.650–51).
tion of the Muse in the opening lines of the *Aeneid* (1.8–11), where she is asked to remind us of Aeneas's countless labors that led to the foundation of Rome.63

The main protagonists are also part of this imagery. While Pompey merely evokes it in his address to Cornelia, Caesar partakes more actively.64 What is more, Pompey's son is well aware that he will soon name himself "either master of the world or heir to extinction so immense."65 The self-destructiveness of the Roman project is enhanced in a further rhetorical twist when the soldiers face self-defeating battle that expands into apocalypse.66 Finally two *gnomai* appear that ring true as much for Rome as Pompey: "So age too long and life surviving after power destroy heroic spirits" is followed directly by "Unless the final day coincides with the end of blessings, by speedy death forestalling sorrows, former fortune brings disgrace."67 Pompey dragging the world down in his fall marks the end of this discourse on ruin while an image of utter destruction provides closure: "Even the ruins have perished."68

Even when read in the order of their appearance, hardly contextualized, and through an orator's eyes on the search for *sententiae*, these examples convey something of the essence of the *Bellum Civile*. They allow us a glimpse into the world of this epic. Lucan comes back to the same issue—the downfall of Rome—again and again from various angles. Whenever the reader's attention is directed to this topic, every time we encounter it, Lucan asks us if we got his point, whether we have thought any more about it, and whether we engage with the world of civil war.

### Deconstructing Concepts

Lucan places *sententiae* in his epic to make statements but also to create discourse and sometimes even to undermine concepts and key words. Often the

63. Cf. Bruck 1993 on labor in the *Aeneid*.
64. Pompey: *properante ruina / summa cadunt* (with hurrying collapse the highest fall, BC 5.746–47). Caesar: *testatus numquam Latiae se desse ruinae* (bearing witness he left nothing undone in Latium's fall, BC 6.10).
66. *cladibus irruimus nocituraque poscimus arma* (we charge to disaster, demanding warfare, which will injure us, BC 7.60); *uret cum terris, uret cum gurgite ponti* ([this heap of bodies] will be consumed by fire together with the earth, together with the waters of the sea, BC 7.813). The latter *sententia* is marked by *geminatio*.
67. *sic longius aevum / destruit ingentis animos et vita superstes / imperio. nisi summa dies cum fine honorum / adfuit et celeri praeventit tristia leto dedecori est fortuna prior* (BC 8.27–31).
68. *quaerit / cum qua gente cadat* (he seeks a race to share his fall, BC 8.504–5); *etiam periere ruinae* (BC 9.969).
argument is developed by antithesis, as is the case with the theme of knowledge, where two sententiae draw into doubt the system and attribution of knowledge as we habitually conceive it.\(^69\) Moreover, as emerged from the examples on the theme of ruin above, there are several wider discourses that span the entire epic. As it is, the term pax is exploited in many a sententia. Some of them introduce a distorted notion of peace, making pax a fake euphemism for tyranny. The future pax Augusta (Augustan peace) to which civil war leads is thus deconstructed to a dominatio Augusta (Augustan tyranny). Even though these sententiae appear in different parts of the narrative, they nevertheless all negotiate similar thoughts, communicating with each other across intervals. Thus in Bellum Civile 1 “The peace we long for brings a master” sets the foundation on which the following sententiae elaborate.\(^70\) In what follows the notion of “Sulla’s peace” spells out this very concept, while further sententiae point out the flawed nature of peace in this epic.\(^71\) However, to our surprise peace is also offered as a real alternative to civil war.\(^72\) Indeed, peace is to be feared, as it would not only thwart the plans for world dominion of both Caesar and Pompey but also set an end to Lucan’s poetic project.\(^73\) We can but wonder if pax in Pompey’s obituary is to be read as the true or the tyrannical kind.\(^74\) In the end, however, we learn that in the world of civil war the only lasting peace that can be made is with death.\(^75\)

This brief discussion of the instances of the word pax in Lucan’s sententiae has brought to light that often the defining moments for a term are the highly rhetorical ones, those that catch the ear of the reader and attract attention.

\(^69\). solis nosse deos et caeli numina vobis / aut solis nescire datum (To you alone is granted total knowledge of the gods and heaven’s powers—or total ignorance, BC 1.452–53); miseroque liquebat / scire parum superos (it was clear to the unfortunate that the gods above know too little, BC 6.433–34).

\(^70\). cum domino pax ista venit (BC 1.670).

\(^71\). omnia Sullanæ lustrasse cadavera pæcis ([I] examined all the cadavers of Sulla’s peace BC 2.171); si bene libertas unquam pro pace daretur (if we ever were right to surrender Liberty for peace, BC 4.227). Peace is indeed degraded to a mere name and is never allowed to last. Cf. trañimur sub nomine pacis (we are dragged off into slavery in the name of peace, BC 4.222) and et multo disturbat sanguine pacem (and shatters the peace with abundant blood, BC 4.210).

\(^72\). licet omne deorum / obsequium speres, irato milite, Caesar, / pax erit (Caesar, though you hope for absolute compliance from the gods, if your troops are angered, there will be peace, BC 5.293–95).

\(^73\). Cf. pacemque timet (and that he feared peace, BC 7.55).

\(^74\). Cf. praetulit arma togae, sed pacem armatus amavit (He did prefer warfare to the garb of peace, but once in armor peace he loved, BC 9.199). Cf. also ille iacet quem paci praetulit orbis (The man the world preferred to peace lies dead, BC 9.229).

\(^75\). pax illis cum morte data est (Peace with death is given them, BC 9.898). Shackleton Bailey 1997 emends pax illa.
However, Lucan simultaneously uses these moments to direct the reader’s mind toward the ruptures and contradictions in his world of civil war.76 A further issue at stake in this world at war is the question of guilt. Civil war makes it considerably harder to hold any one party responsible. Accordingly Lucan examines and questions the notion of guilt and innocence, undermining any attempts at clear-cut recrimination. Looking back to past conflicts, he establishes the concept of Universalschuld (communal guilt).77 However, shortly afterward—we have seen this technique of seemingly corresponding sententiae before—Brutus questions this very concept. For in his opinion Cato’s approval alone could purify the war.78 Nevertheless, as becomes clear, Cato will become tainted with guilt if he participates.79 Everyone will rush to Cato to make him part of communal crime, in which bravery and valor do not earn any honor.80 Through this subversion of guilt and innocence, crime and virtue, we gain insights into the epic’s system of values. Indeed, expressions such as “they delight in their guilt” (iuvat esse nocentes, BC 4.253) undermine the moral authority of guilt. Moreover the concept of guilt is further relativized as the authority of judgment lies in the end with the winning party.81 What is more, even in civil war the mind of the soldiers is set on profit. Accordingly they demand the right to loot without guilt.82 This is why they rush to lay hands on Pompey’s camp after the battle: “They race to know the size of their wage of guilt.”83 Despite all the crimes we witness in the approach to Pharsalus and its aftermath, Lucan tells us

76. In a similar way the concept of safety is undermined as well: Bonner 1966, 266 notes two striking examples: dabitis poenas pro pace petita, / et nihil esse meo discetis tutius aevo / quam duce me bellum (you will suffer for your bid for peace and learn that in my day nothing is safer than war waged under my leadership, BC 3.370–72); o miseranda domus, toto nil orbe videbis / tutius Emathia (O pitiable house, in all the world you will see nothing safer than Emathia, BC 6.819–20).

77. periere nocentes, sed cum iam soli possent superesse nocentes (the guilty died, but at a time when the only survivors must be guilty, BC 2.143–44).

78. an placuit ducibus scelerum populique furentis / cladibus inmixtum civile absolvere bellum? (Or have you decided by involvement with the leaders of crime and the disasters of the frenzied people to make civil war innocent? BC 2.249–50).

79. accipient alios, facient te bella nocentem (wars that others will enter already guilty will make you guilty, BC 2.259).

80. quis nolet in isto / ense mori, quamvis alieno volnere labens, / et scelus esse tuum (who will not wish to die upon your sword, though sinking from another’s wound, and be your crime? BC 2.264–66); qui nesciret in armis / quam magnum virtus crimen civilibus esset (he did not know how great a crime is valor in civil war, BC 6.147–48).

81. haec acies victum factura nocentem est (this is a battle bound to make the loser guilty, BC 7.260).

82. imus in omne nefas manibus ferroque nocentes, / paupertate pii (We proceed to every crime, guilty in hand and sword, guiltless in our poverty, BC 5.272–73).

83. scire ruunt, quanta fuerint mercede nocentes (BC 7.751).
that this was only foreplay, for the future will bring worse. Ultimately civil war leads to an inversion of law and order, which also encompasses an inversion of fundamental moral concepts. As a result everybody can be judged guilty in some way or other: “Once the judge of war is changed, no hand is clean.”

Directly linked with Lucan’s discourse on guilt is his discussion of forgiveness. Lucan’s upside-down moral system makes the reader wonder who is to forgive whom. As clemency is one of the prime attributes of Caesar, we can expect to find him lenient toward those inferior in battle; His leniency, however, can also turn into a cruel weapon when Caesar’s enforced clemency counteracts heroism and martyrdom and produces shame, not relief. In a world where it is left unclear what is wrong and what is right, the act of forgiving itself is linked to a moral discourse. Usually the side that is forgiven has done wrong, and the forgiving side has been wronged. By rejecting forgiveness, however, Domitius Ahenobarbus resists this classification and opens the roles of good and evil for negotiation. Accordingly he rejoices when he is finally allowed to die in battle. Here Domitius can reconnect to his system of values and earns his share of glory by dying in action. Nevertheless we are far from finding any consistency here that could support generalization. Even this seemingly clear-cut example is tainted, as Lucan’s version of the death of Domitius does not bear historical scrutiny.

The general Afranius assesses many of the moral issues surrounding civil war in his speech of surrender (BC 4.344–362). As he fights in civil war, he is fighting against friends and equals, a fact he addresses at the very beginning of his speech. In the end there is really only one party in this war—that of Rome. Afranius begs Caesar to grant him pardon, in a gesture that acknowledges the

84. Hesperiae clades et flebilis unda Pachyni / et Mutina et Leucas puros fecere Philippos (The carnage of the west, Pachynus’s lamentable wave, and Mutina and Leucas have made Philippi innocent, BC 7.871–72).

85. ius et fas multos faciunt, Ptolemaee, nocentes (Law and justice, Ptolemy, make many guilty, BC 8.484).

86. nulla manus, belli mutato iudice, pura est (BC 7.263).

87. Cf. solacia fati / Carthago Mariusque tulit, pariterque iacentes / ignovere dei (Marius and Carthage had consolation for their fate: both equally prostrate, they forgave the gods, BC 2.91–93); et veniam meruere dei (and the gods earned forgiveness, BC 4.123).


89. Cf. scit Caesar poenamque peti veniamque timeri (Caesar knows he wants the final penalty and fears a pardon, BC 2.511); poenarum extremum civi, quod castra secutus / sit patriae Magnumque ducem totumque senatum, / ignosci (the citizen’s worst punishment for joining the army of his fatherland, his leader Magnus, all the Senate, is—to be forgiven, BC 2.519–21).

90. tunc mille in vulnera laetus / labitur ac venia gaudet caruisse secunda (now happily he falls beneath a thousand wounds, rejoicing not to have a second pardon, BC 7.603–4).

parity of the two opposing armies. He thus makes a virtue of necessity by de-
constructing the enemy. Accordingly Afranius stresses that his actions were
not driven by party enthusiasm but instead represent a continuation of his ser-
vices to Rome’s community (BC 4.348–351). The subsequent sententia contains
Afranius’s argument in a nutshell. Pardon also features prominently when
Caesar and Pompey’s head finally come face to face. Here, however, Caesar’s
clementia degenerates to a farce. The concluding sententia of this thematic
complex allows a glimpse of Caesar’s system of values. As we have seen from
the examples cited, my reading strategy of “sententiae only” unearths the many
paradoxes of civil war and provides a condensed version of Lucan’s wider dis-
cussion of guilt and forgiving.

Fuga

A further key theme in Lucan’s epic that is easily traced and contextualized in
Rome’s literary output prior to the Bellum Civile is that of flight. In his civil war
epode Horace tries not so much to find a remedy for civil war as to seek an
escape. His entire poem thus echoes with flight: Horaces wishes the Romans
to head for the islands of the blessed and ends the epode with the image of se-
cunda fuga (happy escape). However, the very Phocaeans whom Horace cites
as a success story of escape will end up caught again in a story of war. After
traveling west they will found Massilia, a city whose bloody defeat by Caesar’s
troops Lucan depicts (Epod. 16.17–20 and BC 3.298–762). In addition the epic
tradition, too, provides prominent examples of war fugitives. Aeneas himself
is blatantly introduced in the Aeneid’s proem as “exiled by fate” (fato profugus,
Virg. Aen. 1.2). We shall flee into founding Rome. His flight provides the start

92. Cf. hoc hostibus unum, / quod vincas, ignosce tuis (pardon your enemies for this alone—that
you are victorious, BC 4.355–56). This is precisely what Cato enacts without even being asked. Cf.
poenaeque de victis sola est vicisse Catonem (the only penalty exacted from the conquered was that
Cato conquered them, BC 9.299).
93. Cf. sciat hac pro caede tyrannus / nil venia plus posse dari (Let the tyrant know that for this
slaughter nothing more than pardon can be given, BC 9.1088–89).
94. Cf. tunc pace fidelis / fecissem ut victus posses ignoscere divis, / fecisses ut Roma mihi
(Then in lasting peace I could have helped you in defeat forgive the gods; you could have helped Rome
forgive me, BC 9.1102–4).
95. Cf. Hor. Epod. 16.41–42; aere dehinc ferro duravit saecula; quorum / piis secunda vate me
datur fuga (with bronze and then with iron did he harden the ages, from which a happy escape is
offered to the righteous, if my prophecy is heeded, Epod. 16.65–66). Mankin 1995 ad loc. points to
the uniqueness of the junction of secunda and fuga.
96. Austin 1971 ad loc. states “Profugus is regularly used of Aeneas and the Trojan migration”
and provides a wealth of examples.
for another narrative and connects to a recurrent form of human experience: after flight there will be some re-formation of community. In contrast, Lucan’s epic journey inverts Aeneas’s project: we do not flee into founding Rome but rather from founding Rome. In a world of civil war Lucan caps the logic of running away by inverting the flight. In contrast to the Aeneid, this time there will be no escape; accordingly the reader is constantly pricked by *sententiae* that question the rationale of *fuga* (flight).

The very first *sententia* nurtured by this discourse *sic urbe relicta / in bel- lum fugitur* (so deserting the city they flee into war, *BC* 1.503–4) thus makes clear in what direction the epic is moving, not constructively toward Rome but destructively away from it, and that both physically and ideologically. What is more, Lucan takes delight in spelling out subversion and lack of direction. Those who flee civil war are respected. Those who win it are put to flight. Moreover, what one *Magnus* calls flight, the other perceives as triumph. This, however, is not the only food for the reader’s thought. Lucan also exercises a “perversely aestheticized etiquette” in regard to killing on the battlefield. The concept of honorable death in action is lost in flight when those fleeing are killed as if they were fighting heroically. In addition, the traditional structure “who flees whom” of conventional narrative is frequently troubled and put at risk when not the living but the dead flee death, all Pompey’s troops flee one man, and war flees Caesar. Furthermore, those who are branded deserters are not those we would expect. Uniquely, Cornelia provides her husband with a place to flee to, a rarity in this epic of aimless flight (*BC* 5.759).

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97. Lucan, too, incorporates ktistic stories in the *Bellum Civile*. In addition to the tale of Massilia he tells us that Brundisium was founded by Dictaean (= from Mt. Dicte) settlers who were fugitives from Crete. Cf. *BC* 2.610–12. Moreover, we also encounter Celts, fugitives from an ancient race of Gauls, who are reported to have merged with the Iberians (*BC* 4.9–10).

98. Accordingly the poet writes flight even into the heavens: *nubes . . . nimbos rapuere fuga* (the clouds swept along the rainstorm in their flight, *BC* 4.68–70). Flight also subverts norms; thus tombs are full of fugitives (*busta repleta fuga*, *BC* 2.152) and sacrificial victims flee the altars (*BC* 7.165–66).


100. Cf. *victore fugato* (the conqueror is put to rout, *BC* 7.824).

101. Cf. *heu demens, non te fugiunt, me cuncta secuntur* (What delusion! It is not you they flee but me they follow, *BC* 2.575).


103. Cf. *excipient recto fugientes pectore ferrum* (as they run away let them receive the weapons full in the breast, *BC* 4.166).

104. Cf. *fugere cadavera letum* (corpses have escaped from death, *BC* 6.532); *ne solum totae fugerent te, Scaeva, catervae* (from you alone, Scaeva, fled all his squadrons, *BC* 6.249); *bellum te civile fugit* (civil war is deserting you, *BC* 5.316).

Bellum Civile 9 in particular features many attempts to come to terms with the flight from the battlefield of Pharsalus. Here sententiae communicate with each other and develop the same set of thoughts throughout the sequence. From the book’s very beginning onward, the march through the desert is construed as an aristeia, and this allows the fugitive soldiers to win back their lost honor. Accordingly, already at the book’s opening they appear like a victorious fleet.106 What is more, Cato in his rebuke makes clear that what is to come is more than simply flight.107 Indeed the Libyan desert turns out to be a greater challenge, a trauma far worse than the battle of Pharsalus.108 Hence Cato’s soldiers wish themselves back to Thessaly; in addition they yearn to be pursued by Caesar’s troops in their flight. His soldiers, too, will suffer the very hardships they are enduring themselves.109 However, we can also interpret all this negatively and see these challenges as punishment for flight: the Libyan desert constitutes the soldier’s penalty and Ptolemy Pompey’s.110 Last, the epic ends where the flight ends—but there is no escape from civil war.111

As we have seen from my discussion, Lucan creates a discourse on escape and flight in civil war through his sententiae. In each of them he thematizes and questions this topic and its complex ramifications and paradoxes in a world at war. In what follows I shall examine three smaller thematic units, which are represented in Lucan’s sententiousness.

No Winners

At all costs Lucan must hammer home that there can be no winners in civil war, only losers, an antithesis the poet frequently exploits in his sententiae. One of the markers of this discourse is the revaluation (and devaluation) of Roman triumph. Already at the epic’s very outset Lucan takes pains to insist that there

106. Cf. quis ratibus tantis fugientia crederet ire / aegmina, quis pelagus victas artasse carinas? (Who would think that on so many vessels traveled troops in flight? Or that for conquered ships the sea was too narrow? BC 9.34–35).
107. Cf. ignavum scelus est tantum fuga (a coward’s crime is mere flight, BC 9.283).
108. Cf. sola potest Libye turba praestare malorum / ut deceat fugisse viros (Libya alone with its brood of evils can show that it is honorable for warriors to have fled, BC 9.405–6).
109. Cf. reddite, di, clamant miseris quae fugimus arma, / reddite Thessaliam (they shout: Gods, give back to us in our distress the battle that we fled, give back Thessaly, BC 9.848–49); solacia fati / haec petimus: veniant hostes, Caesare sequatur / qua fugimus (This comfort in our doom we ask for: let our enemy come here, let Caesar follow where we flee, BC 9.879–80).
110. Cf. poena fugae Ptolemaeus erat (the penalty of rout was Ptolemy, BC 9.1087).
111. Cf. via nulla salutis, / non fuga, non virtus; vix spes quoque mortis honestae (no path of safety is there, not flight, not heroism; hardly can he even hope for honorable death, BC 10.538–39).
are no triumphs to be won in this war. Accordingly a series of corresponding *sententiae* communicates that neither Pompey nor Caesar will achieve a triumph. Pompey attempts to build on his earlier triumphs, but in vain. Cesar’s campaign in Gaul, however, would merit a triumph, but he forfeits this privilege by marching on Rome. Moreover, in this war it is not always the conqueror who draws the better lot. What is more, victory is not always perceived as positive, for punishment awaits the winner. The impossibility of achieving success in this conflict makes us wonder yet again for whose good this war is actually waged.

**Fear**

In Lucan’s epic things always become worse than we could ever fear. In a war from which there is no escape route, fear is an omnipresent constant. Indeed Lucan reminds us forcefully in his *sententiae* that the two concepts fear and flight are intertwined and interdependent. As so often, the leaders function

112. Cf. *bella geri placuit nullos habituros triumphos* (did you choose to wage wars that would bring no triumphs, BC 1.12). Indeed triumph appears as an institution that has lost its justification (7.233–34).

113. Cf. *omnes redeant in castra triumphi* (let all my triumphs return to my camp, BC 2.644). This contrasts with *lassata triumphis / descivit Fortuna tuis* (exhausted by your triumphs, Fortune has deserted you, BC 2.727–28).

114. Cf. *perdidit o qualem vincendo plura triumphum!* (what a triumph he lost by conquering more! BC 3.79).

115. Cf. *hoc petimus, victos ne tecum vincere cogas* (this we seek—that you do not compel the conquered to conquer with you, BC 4.362); *omne malum victi, quod sors feret ultima rerum, / omne nefas victoris erit* (the conquered will have every hardship brought by final destiny, the conqueror will have every crime, BC 7.122–23); cf. also *victrix causa deis placuit, sed victa Catoni* (the conquering had the gods on their side, the conquered Cato, BC 1.128).

116. Indeed the epic raises this problem at the very outset: *usque adeo miserum est civili vincere bello?* (Is victory in civil war so very terrible? BC 1.366). Cf. *vincere peius erat* (to win was worse, BC 7.706); *paratque / poenam victori* (and prepares punishment for the winner, BC 6.801–2); *nunc neque Pompei Brutum neque Caesaris hostem / post bellum victoris habet* (you have a Brutus now enemy not of Pompey nor of Caesar, but of the victor when the war is over, BC 2.283–84).

117. Caesar runs the war for himself: *iam certe mihi bella geram* (now for myself, assuredly, I will wage war, BC 5.357). Pompey has Cato checking on him: *ideo me milite vincat, ne sibi se vicisse putet* (with me his soldier let him conquer then, to stop him thinking that he conquers for himself, BC 2.322–23).

118. Cf. *non fanda timemus; sed venient maiora metu* (unutterable are the things we fear, but soon our fears will be exceeded, BC 1.634–35).

119. Fear is written into the epic world. Cf. *extimuit natura chaos* (nature dreaded chaos, BC 5.634). It extends to the most basic human interrelations. Cf. *matremque suus conterruit infans* (the mother was terrified by her own baby, BC 1.563).

120. As ever Lucan does his best to undermine these terms: *non timidi petiere fugam, non proelia fortis* (the fearful did not seek escape nor the brave battle, BC 4.749).
as examples in Lucan’s discourse: Caesar for his part relishes his fear-inspiring role.\textsuperscript{121} He depends, however, entirely on his soldiers to maintain it.\textsuperscript{122} Pompey’s fall on the other hand is at least partly caused by his own fear, and he fulfills his own gloomy prediction.\textsuperscript{123} Since fearlessness counts as a necessary precondition for a successful tyrant, Caesar is rightfully angry at his fear.\textsuperscript{124} In this epic it is the fearless we need to fear most.\textsuperscript{125} The only thing Caesar has to fear is peace or mutiny.\textsuperscript{126} The soldiers for their part heap their hopes and fears onto their leaders; this keeps them from worrying about themselves.\textsuperscript{127} Fear of death, however, is, as Lucan reminds us, omnipresent, always individual but nonetheless universal.\textsuperscript{128}

Mors

The *Bellum Civile* is packed with death. Lucan makes us believe that *mors* (death) waits in every corner of the Roman Empire for each and every one. Any page and any line can contain another grisly example. However, the poet also takes this as an opportunity to philosophize about death. Among all the bloodshed, the authorial voice solicits us not to fear death and to see philosophy as the death of fear. Lucan provides us with philosophical stock material, inserting

\textsuperscript{121} Cf. *gaudeat tamen esse timori / tam magno populis et se non mallet amari* (Yet he rejoices to be so dreaded by the people and would not prefer to have their love, *BC* 3.82–83).

\textsuperscript{122} Cf. *usque adeone times quem tu facis ipse timendum?* (So much do you fear the man whom you yourself make fear-inspiring? *BC* 4.185). Moreover Caesar’s soldiers grant him freedom from fear: *tradimus Hesperias gentes, aperimus Eoas, / securumque orbis patimur post terga reliqui* (We hand to you the western races, we open up those of the east, and we allow you freedom from fear about the sphere left behind your back, *BC* 4.352–53).

\textsuperscript{123} Cf. *tantoque duci sic arma timere / omen erat* (and for a general so great to dread the fight like that was ominous, *BC* 7.340–41) and Pompey’s prediction: *multos in summa pericula misit / venturi timor ipse mali* (simply fear of future evil has sent many into utmost danger, *BC* 7.104–5).

\textsuperscript{124} Cf. *virtus et summa potestas / non coeunt; semper metuet quem saeva pudebunt* (Virtue and the highest power are not compatible. The man ashamed of cruelty is always fearful, *BC* 8.493–94); *et timet incursus indignaturque timere* (He fears attack; is angry at his fear, *BC* 10.444).

\textsuperscript{125} Cf. *meruitque timeri / non metuens* (and his fearlessness deserved to be feared, *BC* 5.317–18). Apart from that, the hungry and greedy do not know fear. Cf. *nescit plebes ieiuna timere* (a starving people knows not terror, *BC* 3.58). *usque adeo solus ferrum mortemque timere / auri nescit amor* (to this extent the love of gold alone knows no fear of sword or death, *BC* 3.118–19).

\textsuperscript{126} Cf. *pacemque timeret* (and that he feared peace, *BC* 7.55); *militis indomiti tantum mens sana timetur* (Only the sanity of his unbridled troops makes him afraid, *BC* 5.309).

\textsuperscript{127} Cf. *metus hos regni, spes excitat illos* (fear of tyranny arouses these, those *hope* *BC* 7.386); *non vacat ullos / pro se ferre metus: urbi Magnoque timetur* (There is no time to feel terror for themselves: they fear for Rome and Magnus, *BC* 7.137–38).

\textsuperscript{128} Cf. *mille modos inter leti mors una timori est / qua coeperere mori* (Among a thousand ways to die the only one men fear is the way they have begun to die, *BC* 3.689–90).
a substratum of *sententiae*, which he administers to his audience. We cannot help but register it, contemplating our own (and Lucan’s) mortality while reading. As the poet does his best to take fear out of death, although he does not present a coherent philosophical system, we are confronted with a barrage of therapeutic dicta on death. Death can count as the middle of life, a blessing, or simply nothing at all.\(^{129}\) In addition, death is the only certainty in life.\(^{130}\) It comes as no surprise, then, that we frequently encounter *sententiae* that hail the value of suicide.\(^{131}\) How to die is all we need to know.\(^{132}\) It seems therefore that a good death is the only way to display virtue and the only honor to be gained in this war.\(^{133}\) Death thus constitutes a reward, not to say a delight, and only those dead already are fortunate.\(^{134}\)

At the end of my brief survey of Lucan’s sententiousness we have arrived at a reading of his pointed formulations that insists on their importance as part of discourses on key themes of his epic. Lucan’s *sententiae*, far from being mere rhetorical stucco, lay down the law and inscribe the ethics of civil war. The force of these one-liners cannot be demonstrated better than by pointing to Lucan’s cluster of *sententiae* that sets off the speech of Pothinus. Here the poet exults in rhetoric but is also determined to make clear whose standards rule Egypt. The whole passage encapsulates Lucan’s sententious project of laying down the law within its few verses.

\(^{129}\) Cf. *longae, canitis si cognita, vitae mors media est* (if what you sing is known for fact, then death is the mid-point in prolonged life, BC 1.457–58); *felix esse mori* (that death is a blessing, BC 4.520); *aut nihil est sensus animis a morte relictum / aut mors ipsa nihil* (either no feeling is left to the mind by death or death itself is nothing, BC 3.39–40).

\(^{130}\) Cf. *quisquamne secundis / tradere se fatis audet nisi morte parata?* (Is there anyone who dare entrust himself to favorable Fates except with death available? BC 8.31–32); *mutantur prospera vita, / non fit morte miser* (in life prosperity is changed, death does not make a man unhappy, BC 8.631); *me non oracula certum / sed mors certa facit* (No oracle makes me certain, certain death does, BC 9.582–83).

\(^{131}\) Cf. *vita brevis nulli superest qui tempus in illa / quauerendae sibi mortis habet* (Life that remains is short for no one who finds in it the time to seek death for himself, BC 4.478).

\(^{132}\) Cf. *scire mori sors prima uiris, set proxima cogi* (To know how to die is the warrior’s best lot, the next to be compelled to die, BC 9.211); *disce ferire / disce mori* (learn how to strike, learn how to die, BC 5.363–64).

\(^{133}\) Cf. *mors, utinam pavidos vitae subducere nolles, / sed virtus te sola daret* (Death, I wish that you would not remove the fearful from life but that you could be bestowed by valor alone, BC 4.580–81).

\(^{134}\) Cf. *et mortem sentire iuvat* (they delight to feel death, BC 4.570); *numinis aut poena est mors immatura recepti / aut pretium* (early death is the penalty for taking in the deity, or the reward, BC 5.117–18); *vanam sper moris honestae / concipis: haud, inquit, iugulo se polluet isto / nostras, Metelle, manus* (empty are the hopes of honorable death that you conceive: my hand will not pollute itself with your slaughter, Metellus BC 3.134–36); *o fortunati, fugiens quos barbarus hostis / fontibus immixto stravit per rura veneno* (O how blessed are those laid low through the fields by the barbarian enemy who in flight mixed poison in the springs, BC 4.319–20).
8.484 *ius et fas multos faciunt, Ptolemaee, nocentes.* (Law and justice, Ptolemy, make many guilty.)

8.485–6 *dat poenas laudata fides, cum sustinet inquit / quos fortuna premit.* (Loyalty, though praised he said, pays the penalty when it supports the people Fortune crushes.)

8.486–7 *fatis accede deisque, / et cole felices, miseros fugite.* (Side with the Fates and gods, and court the fortunate, avoid the failures.)

8.487–8 *sidera terra / ut distant et flamma mari, sic utile recto.* (As stars are different from earth and flame from sea, so profit is from right.)

8.489–90 *sceptrorum vis tota perit, si pendere iusta/ incipit.* (All the might of scepters disappears if it begins to weigh justice.)

8.490 *euertitque arces respectus honesti.* (Regard for what is honorable overthrows citadels.)

8.490–91 *libertas scelerum est quae regna inuisa tuetur / sublatusque modus gladiis.* (Unrestricted wickedness is the defense of hated tyrannies and limit removed from sword).

8.491–2 *facere omnia saeve/non inpune licet, nisi cum facis.* (You cannot act brutally without penalty unless you always do.)

8.492–3 *exeat aula/ qui volt esse pius.* (Let him who wishes to be good leave the court.)

8.493–4 *virtus et summa potestas/ non coeunt* (Virtue and the highest power are not compatible.)

8.494–5 *semper metuet quem saeva pudebunt.* (The man ashamed of cruelty is always fearful.)

Pothinus employs *sententiae* at the beginning of his speech to build up authority so that young King Ptolemy may follow his subsequent suggestion to murder Pompey. All his statements sound true in their own right and need no further justification. In this way Pothinus projects the desired response to his plan, a strategy that succeeds. All advisors nod off the crime, and the boy king commands murder. What is more, these *sententiae* also serve to characterize Pothinus, the word is the man, and illustrate the working ethics of the Egyptian court if not even the entire civil war in a nutshell.

**Antiproverb**

Previously we have discussed how *sententiae* can be used to serve as all-convincing argument and construct authority for the speaker; and the same is, of course, true of proverbs, from which gnomic *sententiae* stem. It is hard
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to argue against the universal appeal of a proverb. A striking example can be found in Plautus, *Mercator* (374–75), where the son—naturally in a weaker position than his father—throws back one of the latter's proverbs, so as to produce a disarming excuse and escape further paternal attention.

\[saepe ex te audivi pater: \quad rei mandatae omnis sapientis primum praevorti decet.\]

[But, Father, I have often heard you say yourself: all sensible men should give a commission their very first attention.]

As we have seen in the speech of Pothinus, Lucan employs a similar technique to construct a position of authority. In addition he also makes use of it whenever he brings himself into his text, since most of his statements consist of or culminate in a *sententia*, a term that in his time embraces both *gnomai* and their rhetoricized offspring. Many of these, however, employ linguistic structures akin to those of proverbs. In what follows I shall examine Lucan's poetic technique in creating his *sententiae*, turning first to folklore theory.

To provide analytical tools for research into proverbs Dundes posits a "finite number of proverb compositional or architectural formulas."$^{135}$ He divides them into "equatorial proverbs," which serve identificational ends, and "oppositional proverbs" with contrastive features. The former follow formulas such as "$A = B\), "He who is $A$ is $B\)" and "Where there's an $A$, there's a $B\)." The latter consist of statements such as "$A \neq B\), "$A$ is less than $B\) or "$A$ is greater than $B\), and "better $A$ than $B\).$^{136}$ Lucan's *sententiae* are characterized by the fact that they seem to follow one of these structures, which is then somehow perverted.$^{137}$ Ahl hits the nail on the head when he wonders about the meaning of *felix se nescit amari* (*BC* 7.727): "Is it just some kind of proverb: 'A happy man does not know that he is loved'? I must admit that I am unable to detect the existence of any such proverb."$^{138}$ Even though *felix se nescit amari* pretends to follow the

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$^{135}$ Cf. Dundes 1981, 46.


$^{137}$ Rosenthal 1897, 23–24 examines the structure of Horace's *sententiae* and identifies key words such as *omnis* (all), *nemo* (nobody), *nihil* (nothing), *numquam* (never), *semper* (always) and *raro* (rarely). On Lucan's style Bartsch's observes his "odd use of 'and' where we would read 'and not'," which fits well into his program of converted conventions. Cf. Bartsch 1997, 124.

$^{138}$ Cf. Ahl 1976, 174. He is not the only one who feels the need for some explanation: Arnulf of Orleans *apud* Marti 1958, comments *ad loc.: Felix quia quandiu aliquid est in prosperitate nescit quis diligit eum ex animo et quis non, quia omnes pari vultu* ("Happy" because, as long as someone is in good fortune, he does not know who loves him from the heart and who does not: for all keep the same face).
simple scheme of $A = B$ (felix = se amari), the verb *nescit* runs counter to the reader’s expectation. While we would happily nod at felix se scit amari, Lucan leaves us with the shell of a proverb and by the slightest of alterations contrives to baffle. One medieval scholiast rose to the bait; he responded to what he read by setting the proverb right: *Felix se nescit amari quoniam iuxta felices adulatio est, iuxta miseros amor* (A happy man does not know that he is loved because flattery stays close to the successful, but love close to the unlucky).\(^{139}\)

I suggest that Lucan deliberately *verfremdet* (alters into alien forms) the proverbial code in his *sententiae*.\(^{140}\) He uses the structural basis of the proverb to create *antiproverbs*, which display the characteristics of those in the tradition but are doctored to suit the demands of Lucan’s poetic world.\(^{141}\) Mieder, who has published extensive collections of German and English antiproverbs, defines their function: “Just as well known proverbs continue to comment about our daily life, so do new anti-proverbs by using alienating and shocking linguistic strategies.”\(^{142}\)

One frequently employed proverbial formula is “Where there’s an A, there’s a B.” It is easy to show that this structure is common in Latin proverbs.\(^{143}\) However, while these examples all pair up two positive items, and indeed two negative terms would work just as well, Lucan undermines the format and employs an identificational structure for what ought to be a contrastive proverb. He equates plus with minus, *fas* (right) with *merces* (pay) in the line *ibi fas ubi proxima merces* (there lies right—where pay is nearest, BC 10.408). Readers not only find their proverbial preconceptions overthrown, but also the very concept of *fas* put in jeopardy.

A further proverbial structure is exploited in *quidquid multis peccatur inultum est* (The offense of many goes unavenged, BC 5.260). Plenty of examples demonstrate that *quidquid* is a word common at the beginning of a moral axiom of the form $A = B$.\(^{144}\) Again Lucan here adapts an identificational structure to forge an opposition. We would expect to find *quidquid peccatur = ultum est* instead of *quidquid peccatur = inultum est*. Minimal alteration inverts proverbial into antiproverbial.

In a similar manner Lucan will provide all the vocabulary needed to create

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140. For a similar technique in Brecht’s literary output cf. Woods 1968.
141. Sherzer 1976 demonstrates how Beckett makes creative use of the “gnomic code” in *Molloy* by modeling newly created proverbs according to the code’s conventions.
143. *Ibi semper est victoria, ubi concordia est* (There is always victory, where there is concord, Pub. Syr. 59); cf. also Pub. Syr. 61, Sen. *de vita beata* 8.6 and Plaut. *Aul.* 197.
a conventional proverb, so that swapping two words would put things right. *Servat multos fortuna nocentis / et tantum miseris irasci numina possunt* (Often their good fortune guards the guilty, and the deities can only be enraged with the unlucky, *BC* 3.448–9) in a world without civil war should read (unmetrically) *servat multos fortuna miseris / et tantum nocentibus irasci numina possunt* (Often fortune guards the miserable, and the gods can only be enraged with the guilty). This antiproverb thus plays with our expectations by providing all the terminology one would expect but switching terms within the rhetorical structure.

Why is Lucan so keen on turning identificational structures into contrasting ones? Clearly enough, the cult of rhetorical paradox extends even to the inversion of the gnomic code. Lucan exposes our expectation of finding a coherent moral system in his epic by poisoning and corrupting the gnomic tradition, and means us to understand and appreciate the strategy. His constant identification of contrasts and “equation of opposites”¹⁴⁵ point us toward provocative discourse on his epic world’s founding terms, death, fear, and so forth, in a rhetorical campaign to stump and stun the reader. “The means of producing oppositions in proverbs is strikingly similar to the means of producing oppositions in riddles. However, whereas the oppositions in riddles are resolved by the answer, the oppositional proverb is itself the answer to a proverb- evoking situation, and the opposition is posed, not resolved. In this sense, proverbs only state problems in contrast to riddles, which solve them.”¹⁴⁶ Lucan’s antiproverbs then help to furnish the unreconcilable oppositions of his world at war, for which he cannot provide a solution.

### Veit Ludwig von Seckendorff

My emphasis on Lucan’s *sententiae* finds further confirmation in an early modern reading of the *Bellum Civile*. In 1695 unknown friends of Veit Ludwig von Seckendorff (1626–1692) published, posthumously, his translation of the *Bellum Civile*, the first ever into German, prefaced by a collection of and commentary on 300 edifying *sententiae* (“lehrreiche Sprüche”) culled from Lucan’s epic.¹⁴⁷ Seckendorff is praised as one of the most influential and educated men in seventeenth-century Germany.¹⁴⁸ The list of his publications ranges from an “owner’s manual” for small principalities, instructions for a Christian life, and

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¹⁴⁷. Seckendorff 1695.
examples of his orations, to one of the most celebrated defenses of Lutheran-
ism.\textsuperscript{149} Seckendorff’s view of antiquity is shaped by his attitude that literature, even though perceived as entertainment, ought to fulfill a morally edifying function.\textsuperscript{150} Furthermore, Seckendorff’s approach to the state is clearly a inte-
grated and organic one, “where the state is an organism and its common weal
can only be understood in its totality [\textit{Ganzheit},]” an attitude that closely shares
Lucan’s vision of Rome as a body in pain.\textsuperscript{151} Lucan’s subject matter was acutely
pertinent to Seckendorff, who lived through the Thirty Years’ War, which left
Germany depopulated and in ruins, and resulted in the loss of his father’s life
and the uprooting of his family.\textsuperscript{152} It worked to Lucan’s advantage that his epic
is free from “immoral” vocabulary. In Seckendorff’s reading, however, even
though Lucan is “not tainted by disgraceful words” he nevertheless contains
“a secret poison of pagan philosophy,” which needs to be eliminated through
explanation and instruction.\textsuperscript{153} For this very reason Seckendorff chose to pre-
face his translation of Lucan with 300 political and moral discourses on select
\textit{sententiae} from the epic.\textsuperscript{154} These provide the opportunity for Seckendorff to
“correct” any of Lucan’s thoughts he disapproves of, and to spin out and back
up those that fit his mind-set of seventeenth-century Christian stoicism.\textsuperscript{155} In a
preface Seckendorff repeatedly stresses the didactic benefit of his literary proj-
ect, in terms of both moral edification and general education. He means to
provide access to Lucan for those whose Latin has become rusty; in addition,
the layout of his political and moral discourse opens the epic up to the orator in
search for a \textit{sententia} to garnish his own speech. Not only are Latin verses and
German translations provided together with individual discussions of varying
length for each entry, but there are also side-glosses and brief classifications for
those skimming, as well as a register of topics at the end.\textsuperscript{156} One might reason-

\textsuperscript{149} Cf. \textit{Teutscher Fürsten Stat} (1656), \textit{Christenstaat} (1685), \textit{Teutsche Reden} (1686), \textit{Comment-
tarius historicus et apologeticus de Lutheransimo} (1688).

\textsuperscript{150} Seckendorff 1695, Vorrede a7. Cf. also Hor. \textit{ars} 343–44.

\textsuperscript{151} Reinert 2005, 226; cf. also 228 on Seckendorff’s view of the state as \textit{corpus politicum}.

\textsuperscript{152} For Seckendorff’s biographical background cf. Fischli 1943, 69–70, Reinert 2005, 221–22,
and Strauch 2005, 21–36 and 57–58.

\textsuperscript{153} Cf. “\textit{nicht mit schandbaren Worten beleckt; ein heimlich gifft der heydnischen Philosophie}”
(Seckendorff 1695, “kurzer Bericht vom Lucano” 6).

\textsuperscript{154} "\textit{Politische und Moralsche Discurse über M. Annew Lucani dreyhundert auserlesene lehr-
reiche Sprüche}; Gundolf 1930, 11 condemns Seckendorff’s output as anachronistic and awkward;
Fischli 1943, 76–77 on the other hand sees Seckendorff’s language as meriting more detailed sty-
listic examination and praises its “surprising force and brevity,” which comes close to the original
pathos of Lucani’s Latin. For the intellectual context of Seckendorff’s project cf. Zeller 2011.

\textsuperscript{155} Fischli 1943, 71.

\textsuperscript{156} Side glosses and classifications at times come close to proverbs themselves. Cf. 4.275 \textit{Wider
verzweifelte ist gefährlich zu fechten} (to fight against the desperate is dangerous); 4.535 \textit{Ein recht
getrostet herz wird von keiner Unruhe verwirret} (a steady heart remains unperturbed).
ably suspect that this collection originated at the time of Seckendorff’s position as librarian at the court of Saxony-Coburg, back at the beginning of his distinguished career, when he had had to excerpt and then report on books to his ever-so-busy master Herzog Ernst. Some *sententiae* fit Seckendorff’s Lutheran project better than others: his combined comment on *BC* 4.373–77 and 4.381 amounts to six pages of rant against the luxuries of food and drink, whereas he usually confines himself to about one page of commentary for each *sententia*. Seckendorff takes *satis est populis fluviusque Ceresque* (The river and Ceres are enough for the people, *BC* 4.381) as proof of Roman parsimony, and comments: “These and the following words that have been excellently written by pagans against luxury and in praise of parsimony in food and drink should put to shame all Christians.”

This Christianisation of Lucan exemplifies Seckendorff’s Lutheran approach to Lucanian Stoic morality as detailed in his preface: “My aim is that the gift of God, which is perceivable through nature and sheds its light even onto pagans, can be noticed and honored even in this profound and instructive author Lucan, but simultaneously it should be acknowledged how much better and more thoroughly Christian morals can be learned from the word of God.” Accordingly, traces of “light” are already to be found in Lucan, but they need to be unearthed and explained by Seckendorff to his Christian readers.

However, Seckendorff also shows himself well aware of the original context of the Latin quotations he employs before he ventures into more general fields with his interpretations. His comment on *variam semper dant otia mentem* (leisure always breeds fickleness, *BC* 4.704) is a prime example: “Even though here actually the mood of the soldiers is meant and one is well advised not to allow them too much spare time if one could employ them to greater deeds lest they lose their courage, escape, plot treason, and similar things, nevertheless it is also apt and useful to remark that idleness (as well as other vices) is cause and reason of fickleness and capriciousness.”

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158. Diese und folgende Worte welche von heyden wider die verschwendung und zu lobe der genügsamkeit in essen und trinken fürtrefflich geschrieben solten billig alle christen beschämen.
159. [Doch habe ich] besonders aber dahin gezielte daß man die gabe Gottes in der natur oder deren licht welches auch die heyden gehabt zwar aus diesem sinn- und lehreichen autore, Lucano, anmercken und nicht geringe halten aber zugleich in obacht nehmen möchte wie viel höher und gründlicher die christliche sitten-lehre aus Gottes wort zu schöpfen und zu treiben [ist]. Seckendorff 1695, Vorrede a6.
160. Obwohl hier eigentlich von dem humor der soldaten geredet und daher geraten wird man solle ihnen wenn man sie zu einer wichtigen action gebrauchen könne nicht viel müßige zeit ver- stattten dieweil sie dadurch den muth sincken lassen und auf ausreissen verrühren und dergleichen gedencken; so ist es es doch eine gemeine und nützliche anmerckung dass der müßiggang wie andere
the moral values inherent in Lucan’s epic. A further technique of Seckendorff is to transfer a Lucanian *sententia* into a German proverb. Thus on *in turbam missi feralia foedera regni* (tyranny’s ill-omened pact shared among a crowd, BC 1.86) Seckendorff starts off with pondering the vagaries of democracy, which is fated to fail because of the human condition:

161 “The most profound reason is human malice, namely envy, resentment, self-interest, *amour-propre*, selfishness.”

162 Shared power would only have a chance when given to peerless people. However, “because fear of God and virtue are very rare among the people, even the upper classes, and even those of high office and power have great shortcomings and faults, the proverb will indeed remain true that **many dogs gnawing on the same bone do not stay peaceful**, for they are all hungry and envious.”

163 Clearly, what Lucan has to tell to the German reader is readily translatable into low-register imagery that makes it ever more accessible.

Seckendorff’s comments on *vincere peius erat* (to win was worse, BC 7.706) tell us that he, too, noted the chains of *sententiae* on similar topics; they also shed light on his political reading of the *Bellum Civile*: “Lucan speaks enthusiastically against the evil regime of Nero, driven by the anachronistic and vain vision of reviving the ancient freedom of the Roman nobility.”

164 Moreover, they show how Seckendorff engages with Lucan’s Stoicism: “It has to be accepted as the truth that poverty, exile, and even death if suffered with a clear conscience are better than the greatest riches, power, and luxury gained through injustice. A pagan with a natural and secular mind could not recognize the deeper meaning of this, even though Stoic philosophy gave this issue great prominence, for they held as a precept (among others) that a wise and virtuous man in great poverty or even subjected to torture and execution is happier than a tyrant in all his glory. There is something in this philosophical precept, but it is more...”
imagination than reality." He then proceeds to discuss the shortcomings of the Stoic concept of *virtus*, which, unaware of the Fall of Man and deprived of the revelation of the Holy Scriptures, fails to tackle mankind’s tendencies toward all evil. He concludes that the consolations of Stoicism compare to what Christianity has to offer like “a painted or carved image to the real beautiful body itself or like dirty dust and soil to finest gold.”

This survey of Seckendorff’s techniques for explaining and Christianizing his selection of *sententiae* demonstrates that a reading of the *Bellum Civile* attuned to sententiousness is rewarding, precisely because it unearths Lucan’s system of values. Rather than being a “modern” imposition, this reading brings out the strength of the poem’s energetic formulation of its key themes. Seckendorff confronts us with a strategy that goes with the grain of this textuality and reminds us that one of the reasons for the epic’s extraordinary popularity has always been its excerptability. Lucan’s sententiousness constitutes a strategy apparent to readers through various stages of reception. Paying attention to the poet’s striking formulations of the ideological stakes of this epic provides a strong reading of the *Bellum Civile* in tune with the rhetorical culture in which Lucan operated.

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166. Dieses mag man aber für grund und wahrheit annehmen daß armuth, verjagung und der tod selbst wo man gutes gewissen behält besser sey als das grösste reichthum, herrschaft und wollüstiges leben mit unrecht erworben. Dieses hat ein Heyde als ein natürlich und weltlich gesinneter Mensch nicht gründlich zu erkennen vermocht wiewohl nach der Stoischen Philosophie viel dergleichen ruhms gemacht worden, indem sie unter andern für eine regul [sic] hielten, ein weiser und tugendhafter mann wäre glückerlicher in der größten armuth oder gar auf der folter und unter dem henckerschwerdt als ein tyrann in seiner größten herrlichkeit. [. . . ] Etwas ist an dieser Philosophischen lehre, aber mehr einbildung als nachdruck.

167. [. . . ] denn sie wussten nichts von dem Abfall unserer ersten Eltern; daher verstanden sie auch nicht die unausprechliche verderbung nemlich die verfinsterung des verstandes und die verkehrung des willens zu allen bösen neigungen und thaten.

168. [. . . ] ein gemahlt oder geschnitztes bild gegen einen schönen cörper selbst oder unsauberer staub und erde gegen dem feinstem golde.

169. Arnulf of Orleans provides us with an earlier didactic reading of the *Bellum Civile* (Murgatroyd 2009). In his opinion it serves to deter people from fighting a similar war (*Intencio sua est tractare de hac historia, tum ut populo Romano placeat et senatui, tum ut ceteros a consimili bello deterreat*) (Marti 1958, 3 accessus l. 15).