Meis parentibus sororibusque bellis
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<td>LSJ</td>
<td>Liddell and Scott, Greek-English Lexicon, 9th edn., rev. H Stuart Jones (1925-40); Suppl. by E. A. Barber and others (1968)</td>
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<td>Luc. BC</td>
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THE ANATOMY OF ROMAN EPIC: A STUDY OF POETIC VIOLENCE

By

James Moss Lohmar

August 2013

Chair: Jennifer A. Rea
Major: Classical Studies

The following study evaluates the intertextual function of dismemberment scenes in Latin epic poetry. Mimetic violence signals moments of violent allusion on the part of Roman epicists. As a thematic study on the aesthetics of represented violence, my approach situates limb-loss within the context of reception and intertextuality. Modern scholarship in the field of Classical Antiquity has preferred to connect such imagery to the historical circumstance of the amphitheater, philosophical notions of self, or rhetorical flourish. My approach rehabilitates the more gruesome areas of Roman epic as moments of pregnant allusion and discerns competing authorial prerogatives within the greater body of epic tradition.

The metaphor of the corpus is central to my study, insofar as it represents a site of violent contestation for Roman poets. The corpus stands in for the genre of epic poetry generally, and so dismemberment in one author’s work signals a violent allusion to previous epic tradition. Such macabre intertextuality stakes out a particular author’s narrative aesthetic and raises ethical questions of aesthetics and artistic appropriateness. My study highlights the germane episodes in the development of the ‘art horror’ genre, where stylized carnage provides a form of catharsis for artist and
audience. In the realm of art horror, one observes aesthetic virtue where formal control yokes the baroque to the macabre. The Roman authors, I suggest, are instrumental in the development of an aesthetic experience akin to that found in *American Psycho* or *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*.

My study moves in diachronic fashion through the works of Virgil, Ovid, Lucan, and Statius. I choose this format for two reasons: (1) as an examination of the history of aesthetics, chronology matters, since in the case of literary violence at Rome, one observes a steady increase in this subject matter from Virgil to Lucan; (2) as a study in reception, Virgil ever lurks in the epics of his successors, so it is more instructive to ask how his aesthetic preferences were adapted or even perverted by those after him. Virgil betrays reticence toward violence; Ovid revels in the elision of humor and violence; Lucan is instrumental in the grotesque realm of artistic endeavor; Statius imbues his epic with horrific and hellish tones.

Critics of Roman epic allusivity will recognize an approach grounded in intertextuality and appropriation studies. My work builds on Stephen Hinds’ work in *Allusion and Intertext* and expands his model with the help of Sagunta Chaudhuri’s *The Metaphysics of Text*. Critics of art horror will find a kindred palette in the passages I discuss, where amputated hands, quivering tongues, excavated eyes, and decapitated heads gain symbolic freight. This is the stuff of the modern horror genre, and the Roman epicists provide primal experiments in their artful depiction.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTORY: VIOLENCE AND THE BODY OF LITERATURE

Σῶμα, Corpus and Textual Violence

The following study evaluates the intertextual function of violent scenes in Roman epic poetry: mimetic carnage signals moments of violent allusion by epic poets. Modern discussion in the field of classical antiquity has preferred to connect violence in Latin epic to spectacle and viewership, rhetorical flourish, or philosophical anxieties of self. A literary-critical approach to epic violence expands the intertextual function of dismemberment scenes and discerns competing authorial prerogatives. This approach situates limb-loss within the context of aesthetics, poetic composition and reception. In this chapter I set the following goals:

1) To highlight the ancient metaphor of the corpus as a site of violent contestation for Roman epicists;

2) To align the ancient corpus with the modern theoretical metaphors body of discourse, body of texts, and body of signifiers;

3) To demonstrate, in light of the metaphoric corpus, that writing takes on violent dimensions depending on one’s aesthetic stance;

4) And to sketch out the symbolic power of dismemberment with regard to its primary emotional response, horror.

Like other critics of violent mimesis I base my theoretical framework on Derrida’s concept of différance, which constructs authorial particularity through an ever-reductive process of differentiation.¹ As a means of distinguishing one literary program from

¹ The Aristotelian mimesis describes any representational or imitative art (painting, statuary, drama, epic poetry); cf. LSJ s.v. μίμηζιν. See especially Poet. 1447а10-15 and 1448б5-10. For différance, see esp. Derrida (1981: 70-72). Particularity and différance operate in dialectic, the one defined by the other. Chaudhuri argues that individual texts, like verbal units, are defined by the ever-reductive process of différance. “The verbal unit does not merely differ/defer its meaning by stretching the gap between sign and meaning; it fills up that gap with endless new contributory elements, so that différance becomes a ceaselessly accretive, constructive process. It bears recall that the Tower of Babel was never finished”
another, *différance* depends on “the violence of the letter,” which indicates the disruptive process of individuating objects (or texts) from one another through imaginative means. Meaning, and thus interpretation, become acts of will—or exertions of force (*vis*)—on an inherently chaotic nature, which is in turn mediated through human discourse.

Embedded in this discourse lie texts, which interact with each other through allusive (or intertextual) dialogue. Authorial particularity—what one could term an author’s ‘narrative aesthetic’—defines one’s individual plot (*locus*) within the textual network relative to those around him. Thus, the violence (*vis*) of the letter serves to set one author *literally apart from* another.

If Lucretius or Ovid were to read Derrida, they might understand *différance* as ‘making one’s letters (*litterae*) different from another’s’. The opening of Ovid’s *Amores* thus highlights the literal schism necessary for particularity:

> arma graui numero uiolentaque bella parabam  
edere, materia conueniente modis.  
par erat inferior uersus; risisse Cupido  
dicitur atque unum surripuisse pedem. (*Am. 1.1.1-4*)

“I was preparing to publish Arms and violent war in weighty meter, with the content befitting the form. The second verse was equal [in measure]; but Cupid, it is said, laughed and stole away one foot.”

The first line borrows its prosody from Virgil’s *Aeneid*:

> arma uirumque cano, Troiae qui primus ab oris  
Italiam fato profugus Lauiniaque uenit  
litora … (*Aen. 1.1-3*)

“Of Arms and a Man I sing, who was the first to come from the shores of Troy to Italy and the Lavinian coast, driven by fate …”

(2010: 45-6). Zizek (2010), Gomel (2003), and Norris (2000) accept *différance* and “the violence of the letter” as useful critical tools when confronting representational violence.
As Ovid’s verse develops, it deviates from the Virgilian model in gradual, systematic fashion. His prosody up to the first caesura closely echoes that of Virgil: the sequence *ar-ma, -ui, -o* is consistent in both, while Ovid transposes Virgil’s *-r- and c-/g-* sounds.

After the first breath, the *Amores* mirror the *Aenid* in form (*graui numero*), content (*arma … violentaque bella*), tempo, and melody (*dactyl, dactyl, -ơ, caesura*). But a gap opens in Ovid’s second verse, where the rhythm (*modis*) metes out a different subject (*materia*). In fact, one cannot be sure of Ovid’s elegy until completion of the first hemiep (*edere materiā || ... *). Whereas little difference initially exists between the *Aenid* and *Amores*, nevertheless the gulf widens as the latter unfold. Within this narrow space Ovid stakes out (de-fines) his particularity from Virgil. Cupid’s metrical larceny enacts further demonstration of *différance*. Given that definition (de-*finis*) constitutes acts of inclusion and exclusion (addition and subtraction), Cupid’s syncopated pentameter sits literally one step (*unum pedem*) removed (*surripuisse*) from hexametric verse. Letter by letter, syllable by syllable, the *Aenid* morphs into the *Amores*. Here then Ovid offers a radical exposition of his particularity through a measured, step-by-step process of *différance*.

After the Virgilian misdirection in the hexameter, he clinches the elegiac meter at the pentameter’s caesura—that is, the cutoff.

At the heart of my study lies the metaphor of the *corpus*, which originated in antiquity and is not confined to modern theoretical vocabulary. Prior to Roman authors, Aristotle develops language for literary arrangement. He compares a unified composition to an animal body:

> ἔτι δ’ ἐπεὶ τὸ καλὸν καὶ ζῶον καὶ ἃπαν πράγμα ὁ συνέστηκεν ἐκ τινῶν οὐ μόνον ταῦτα τεταγμένα δεῖ ἔχειν ἄλλα καὶ μέγεθος ὑπάρχειν μη τὸ τυχόν· τὸ γὰρ καλὸν ἐν μεγέθει καὶ τάξει ἐστίν, διδ οὔτε πάμμικρον ἀν τι γένοιτο καλὸν ζῶον (συγχείται γὰρ ἡ θεωρία ἔγγυς τοῦ ἀνασθήτου χρόνου γινομένη) οὔτε
Again: to be beautiful, a living creature and every unified thing must not only present a certain order in its arrangement of parts, but also be of a certain definite magnitude. Beauty derives from size and order, and is therefore impossible either (1) in a very minute creature, since our perception becomes indistinct as it approaches instantaneity; or (2) in a creature of vast size—one, say, 1,000 miles long—as in that case, instead of the object being seen all at once, its unity and wholeness are lost to the beholder. Thus, just as beautiful bodies or living creatures must be of some size, but a size to be taken in by the eye, so a story or plot must be of some length, but of a length to be taken in by the memory.2

Aristotle elaborates on theoretical language first used by Plato.3 The λόγος-ας-σώμα similes underpin a study of poetic dismemberment. An acceptable composition (λόγος) adheres to the geometry of a well-proportioned animal (καλόν ζώον); a recognizable body (σώμα) and constituent limbs (κεφαλή, ποδές, κώλα). The technical vocabulary of Roman rhetoric also includes corporeal metaphors,4 and Cicero traduces the σώμα-text into Latin letters: [oratio] in membra quaedam, quae κώλα Graeci vocant (Brut. 162). Thus, Aristotle’s prescription for well-wrought composition begets at Rome a metaphorical corpus-as-opus.5

2 Adapted from W. Rhys Roberts’ (1908) translation, with minor changes.

3 Cf. Plato, Phaedr. 264c.1-5: ἀλλὰ τόδε γε οἷς σε φάναι ἃν, δεῖν πάντα λόγον ὡσπερ ζῷον συνεστάναι σώμα τι ἐχοντα αὐτὸν αὐτοῦ, ὡστε μὴ ἐκφθανον εἶναι μὴ ἄποιν, ἀλλὰ μέσα τέ ἄξειν καὶ ἀκρα, πρέπειτον ἀλλήλοιος καὶ τῷ ὀλίγῳ γεγραμμένα (“And here I think you would admit that every logos must be arranged like an animal with a certain body in proportion to itself, so that it is neither headless nor footless, but that it has a middle and extremities and features composed appropiate to one another and to the whole.”).


5 OLD s.v. ‘corpus’ 6, 11 & 16 = TLL IV s.v. ‘corpus’ 1020-21. OLD s.v. ‘opus’ 9. E. Marie Young collects modern comments on the Roman incorporation of Greek culture (2008: 2 with nn.).
This metaphor holds significance for a study of violence since Aristotle focuses on works that are proportionate and unified. Allusive processes fragment previous textual bodies and create new ones through différance. The mammoth and scintilla sōmata illustrate extreme examples of this process: the 1,000 mile-long creature outgrows and overwhelms a reader’s perspective, so that all distinction is erased (unbounded inclusion/addition); in the opposite direction, the too-small creature creates endless distinctions in its descent to instantaneity (unbounded exclusion/subtraction). The mammoth represents the complete absence of différance; the scintilla, its absolute infinity. I disregard the question of whether Roman authors arrange their corpora in adherence to Aristotelian anatomy. Aristotle’s prescription is purposely broad, and moreover, authorial subjectivity is contingent with a poet’s unique somaesthetic. The author’s prerogatives shape his corpus; the critic’s describe it. In the hands of Roman epicists, the corpus provides a conduit for tendentious allusion. Narrative dismemberments operate along this metapoetic pipeline, and they often conflate form with content.

The opus: a corpus distributed into workable membra. At the beginning of the Ars Poetica, Horace makes illegible exposition of the Aristotelian σῶμα:

humano capiti cervicem pictor equinam
iunge si velit, et varias inducere plumas
undique collatis membris, ut turpiter atrum
desinat in piscem mulier formosa superne,
spectatum admissi risum teneatis, amici? (AP 1-5)

If a painter should wish to join a horse’s neck to a human head, and to attach feathers all over to the assembled limbs, so that a shapely woman on top turned into an ugly black fish [at the bottom], would you, my friends, having been allowed to see it, stifle your laughter?

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6 See Shusterman (1999: 299-313) for this terminology and a recent discussion of somaesthetics.
The satirist gives lighter touch to Aristotle’s anatomy of composition. At the start (caput) of his epistle, he lays out the various limbs (membra) of a poetic corpus. In fact he gives a top-down catalogue of a work’s body-parts: capiti cervicem … collatis membris. Negative example mimes ill-arranged art, as Horace foists the experience of the ugly painting upon the reader. Risible effect derives from Horace’s Aristotelian inversion. Indeed his grammar violates syntactical decorum: one wonders how a human head attached to a feathered horse’s neck naturally results (ut) in a grotesque mermaid-like image. The text, the painting, contains a logical non sequitur. Disproportionate and inappropriate limbs in painting equate to illogical, malformed works of literature. Horace’s collusion of form and content yields a poorly constructed corpus: like the viewer of the ugly painting, the reader cannot be sure what the satirist paints in these lines.

An author’s textual corpus—contained within the volumen or codex—is subject to textual dismemberment by another writer. A semiotic approach to mimetic carnage inscribes limb-loss scenes within the greater body of Roman epic discourse. In this context, the ancient and modern corpus metaphors elide under a hermeneutic of overlapping penumbras. Corpus in modern usage is a metaphor for any body of signifiers, while ‘body of signifiers’ accords with the ancient corpus-as-opus. One observes a preference for somatic, and at times violent, metaphors in modern discussions of allusion and intertextuality. 

Grace M. Jantzen points out that violent imagery pervades modern parlance: culture wars, ideological battles, fights against cancer, weapons against illiteracy. Even philosophical engagement requires metaphors of violence: “positions are advanced, attacked, defended, embattled or shot down in flames” (2004: 14-15).
[T]he text relates simultaneously to several lines of discourse, interacting with various bodies of circulating texts and, in turn, disgorging itself into these vortices … Intertextuality becomes an infinitely complex, multiplanar process … Each text becomes a conduit for the traffic of all texts … The individual text thereby becomes a [sic.] sign of the total textual traffic … Each plane opens out onto a different intertextual sphere, relates to a different body of discourse (Chaudhuri 2010: 47-8, my emphasis).

Chaudhuri’s The Metaphysics of Text shares a methodological model with Hinds’ Allusion and Intertext.⁸ Amidst a grid of intersecting texts, a particular author’s narrative aesthetic comprises the cumulative thrust of his tendentious allusions.⁹ The poet’s stance toward his tradition becomes ‘a way of conceiving the character of an intellectual program, or a body of texts’ (Martindale 1993: 29, my emphasis). Derrida too speaks of the ‘head of discourse, or the body, the neck’ and the reader’s (in)ability to ‘delimit, to cut up, to dominate’ a text enmeshed among all others. Allusions take the form of narrative ‘interventions’ (Hinds) and ‘incisions’ (Barchiesi), where meaning redounds from the fissures. One may yoke the ancient corpus to the modern ‘body of text’: intertextual operations (or allusions) transpire within a grid of overlapping corpora (or bodies of texts); the interstices mark two or more texts’ dialogue with one another (the Contean ‘figure’). Violence in poetry signals moments of violent intertextuality; where one corpus intersects another; where one corpus dissects another.¹⁰ Violence in art can thus over-literализе the metaphoric corpus: the terms corpus, body of discourse, and

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⁸ When figuring an allusion, Hinds asks, “Which text, and whose appropriative emphasis in which text, is foregrounded? What about the moment-to-moment shifts in emphasis and balance which are part of any one writer’s or reader’s experience of getting a purchase on any intertextual nexus?” (1997: 142, my emphasis). Chauduri does not cite Hinds. He emphasizes the term ‘network’ and discusses the World Wide Web as a case-in-point of textual metaphysics and intertextual hyperlinking (2010: 111).

⁹ This model rephrases Hinds’ ‘do-it-yourself literary history’ (1997: 123).

¹⁰ Most (1992) alights on the metaphorical corpus as a site of violent contention but does not linger. Bartsch (1997) also treats this metaphor but shifts her focus to philosophical questions concerning the symbolic citizen body and body politic.
body of texts grow more freighted when one treats mimetic carnage. If real violence has its sights trained on the human body, then violent artifice assaults the semiotic body of literature. Violent *mimesis* implicates reader and writer in violent thought. How true rings C. Lewis Watkins' warning: 'remember first that words can bleed' (2004: ix).

Impossible seems the task of a dispassionate approach to traumatic subject matter. For this reason, mimetic carnage proves an unforgiving boilerplate for aesthetic response: a certain pulp appeal. Such imagery explores the threshold between meaning and non-meaning, order and chaos; indeed, mimetic carnage throws into high relief the dividing line between these terms. When limb-loss occurs, Kristeva's (1982) abject comes to bear: that which separates Me from Not Me, my *corpus* from another's; neither inside nor outside, neither subject nor object, but that which holds these categories in place. She highlights as abject whatever pours out from the human body: blood, viscera, mucus, or semen. When limb-loss occurs, abject matter (*abiectum*) destabilizes notions of a unified subject. *Mutatis mutandis*, the same holds for the distinctions between order and chaos, meaning and non-meaning. Human viscera expose fissures in the illusory screen of order. With every amputation, the symbolic realm is suffused with inchoate matter; chaos spills forth.\(^{11}\) Regaining purchase in that abyss requires meaning—in its gerund form.

Where the abject lurks between order and chaos, along the fissure stands allegory; put another way, allegory is the vanishing point towards which the activity of meaning is always oriented.\(^ {12}\) Literary criticism—discerning what literature 'means'—

\(^{11}\) Grosz (1990), Bibby (1993) and Bartsch (1997) expand the abject's role in violating the symbolic realm.

\(^{12}\) See Teskey (1996: 2-5) for this formulation of allegory. For meaning as an activity: “... the opening of a schism ... or rift, and the subsequent effort to repair it by imaginative means.”
becomes “a re-stating … [an] allegory … a saying-in-other-words,” which is “necessarily different from whatever is interpreted” (Martindale 1993: 37). Allegory and critical interpretation here merge: in their quest for meaning, both activities spiral towards a transcendental other, a never-attainable ‘truth’ or logos; both exert force on what is essentially chaos;¹³ “the subjection of what we cannot control to the violence of thought’ (Teskey 1996: 24). The Roman poets operate within this model: textual dismemberment and narrative incisions (intertextuality) describe forms of violent allusion that disrupt the integrity of epic tradition. When one author dissects another’s embodied text, figurative space opens for other narrative possibilities.

**Ennius’ *Annales* as Material Metaphor**

Ennius’ epic signals the *incipit* of Latin hexameters,¹⁴ and it offers a case study in textual violence. The Ennian *corpus* stands already dismembered, so that from a

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¹³ Zizek makes a similar point about the inherent lack of value found in a lump of gold. Human language instead attributes value and symbolism to this substance, over which wars are fought and indigenous peoples are exterminated (2010: 58).

¹⁴ Lucretius names Ennius the coroneted head of the Roman epic *corpus* (*DRN* 1.118). It is difficult to pinpoint when the *opus-as-corpus* motif first gains currency in Latin letters. McEwen states that Cicero’s *Epist. ad Quint.* 2.11.4 and *Epist. ad Fam.* 5.12.4 contain the first instances of *corpus* meaning ‘body of work’ (2003: 9). The twelve occurrences of *corpus* in the extant *Annales* yield no conclusive evidence for a sustained metaphor of the poetic body. A common scholarly maneuver involves looking to Hellenistic Alexandria for literary precedent and overlaying one’s findings onto the early Latin authors. Indeed, Callimachus employs somatic terms when introducing his *Aitia*: ἀοιδέ, τὸ μὲν θύος ὅηηι πάσιζηον | θπέται, ηὴν Μοῦζαν δ’ ὠγαθὲ λεπηαλέην (*Aitia* frs. 23-4 Pf.). If, in agreement with Skutsch (1985: 374 & 1967: 6-7) and Hinds (1997: 10-11), one reads *dicti studiosus* (*Ann.* fr. 209 Sk.) as a gloss on the Alexandrian buzzword φιλόλογος, then one assumes *a priori* Ennius’ familiarity with Callimachean poetic technique. Thus, the direction of influence traverses footholds in Athens and Alexandria before arriving at Rome; λόγος-as-σώμα turned *opus-as-corpus*. This picture describes what could be termed a ‘strong Hellenism’ in the earliest Latin authors. Following Momigliano (1975: 10-11), Sanders M. Goldberg argues that supposed Alexandrian conceits in Ennius reflect a more diluted ‘Latin Hellenism’ (1995: 57). Goldberg observes, “it is by no means certain that φιλόλογος was [sic.] an Alexandrian catch-word in Ennius’ day … or that Ennius means to associate himself here with Alexandrian literary canons” (1995: 91). In short, Ennius looks first to Homer as his literary model. Still, Goldberg overlooks a subtle fact: Ennius gains access to the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* through *textual* means. His reception of Homer is mediated through Hellenistic intellectualism (cf. Hinds [1997: 63]). Goldberg even highlights Ennius’ reading list: “He knew drama, … Euhemerus, … Pythagoras and Empedocles, … Archestratus and Epicharmus” (1995: 91). One could posit a Roman epicist steeped in the Hellenistic milieu. Ennius need not profess adherence to Alexandria when he deploys Alexandrian technique.
metacritical perspective, his epic’s current incarnation reflects the violence of (non-)
transmission and piecemeal attestation. The Ennian fragments preclude a firm typology
of poetic dismemberment. Instead they provide an inverted perspective on poetic
dismemberment, since their history of transmission is at the same time a history of
textual violence. Starting with eighteen libri, time and history have pared the Annales
down to just over 600 inchoate attestations. Bibliographical processes and
hermeneutics here converge into what Chaudhuri calls a ‘material metaphor’:


In the case of Ennius’ oeuvre, this final sentence holds true always, as well as its reverse (history of reception > history of transmission). Every quotation—that is, every transmission—of the Annales is in a sense a reception. Modern collocations of the fragments (such as Vahlen’s, Warmington’s, and Skutsch’s) conjoin and organize these disparate receptions into our ‘Annales’, a fragmentary text better described as the dissociated limbs of a once-great corpus. As a material metaphor, the Annales’ fragments fulfill Horace’s quip over dissected poets.

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15 One struggles to observe any sustained metaphor in Ennius’ work; his presumed knowledge of the Greek tradition yields only circumstantial evidence for his understanding the λόγος-ας-σώμα. Nor can one attach too much significance to Hinds’ observation that pedibus in fr. 1 Sk. puns on the metrical feet of Ennius’ hexameters: the Musae of the Annales dance on ‘feet’ never before used in Latin poetry (1997: 57 with n. 6).

16 This sort of violent exercise holds true for most literary criticism: transpose select units of text for argumentative ends. Take for instance the disparate passages that Hinds quotes in Chapter 1 of Allusion and Intertext (1997: 1-15): Milton, Lycidas 6; Keats, Ode to Psyche 2; Catullus 64.1-2; Ovid, Fast. 3.471-6; Catullus 64.130-5, 143-4; Ovid, Am. 2.6.1-2; Ovid, Met. 3.499-501; Virgil, Ecl. 3.78-9; Ovid, Met. 3.351-5; Catullus 62.39, 42-5, 49, 53-6; Lucan 1.685-6; Virgil, Aen. 2.557-8; Servius ad Aen. 2.557; Virgil, Aen. 6.179-82; Ennius, Ann. 175-9 Sk.; Ovid, Met. 14.812-16; Ennius, Ann. 54-5 Sk. Poetic appropriation and critical citation thus merge into comparable acts of textual violence. Remove necessary membra; discard the rest.
First mention of poetic dismemberment occurs in Horace’s *Sat.* 1.4, where he draws an *exemplum* from the Ennian *corpus*. In a passage disavowing the poetic import of his satire, Horace flouts epic conventions with a line and a half of the *Annales*. Though not a poet, Horace can still perform intertextual dissections:¹⁷

his, ego quae nunc,
olim quae scripsit Lucilius, eripias si
tempora certa modosque, et quod prius ordine verbum est
posterius facias, praeponens ultima primis,
non, ut si solvas “postquam Discordia taetra
Belli ferratos postis portasque refregit,”
invenias etiam disiecti membra poetae. (*Sat.* 1.5.56-62)

Should you tear from my verses, which I’m writing now and which Lucilius once wrote, the regular meter and measures, and should you place the first word last in order and the last word first, still you wouldn’t, as if you were loosing “after foul Discord broke open War’s iron gate posts,” find the limbs of a dismembered poet.

Horace’s argument meanders into metatextual exposition, for the satirist’s *disiecti membra poetae* adheres as much to the Ennian citation as to Horace’s exercise: the chiastic form (*prius* > *posterius* :: *ultima* > *primis*) reflects the content of its members; at the same time, the content of its members (*first* > *last* :: *last* > *first*) mirrors the visual display of the composition. Further, Horace brackets his self-reflexive statement with violent metaphors. To rend (*eripere*) the meter from his verses is not akin to decomposing Ennius. Even when dismembered (*disiecti membra poetae*), the *gravitas* of the *Annales*’ archaic diction remains in grotesque, sloppy fashion. Still, if this passage mangles Ennius into *sermo*, one observes textual dismemberment in an apposite

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¹⁷ See Oliensis (1998: 23) and Freudenburg (1993: 147-8) for the irony of Horace’s denial of poet status. For the present, I grant Horace that his satire is not poetry, a distinction he makes at *Sat.* 1.4.43-4 (*ingenium cui sit, cui mens divinior atque os | magna sonaturum, des nominis huius honorem*). Edmunds (2001: 140-3) argues that parody (or satire) is a fertile *locus* for intertextuality studies. He follows Hutcheon, who highlights parody’s “ironic signaling of difference at the very heart of similarity” (1988: 26). This statement is precisely at stake in *Sat.* 1.4.56-62.
direction; that is, one may observe another poet mangling Ennius into (new) poesis. The archaic poet’s diction remains when transplanted by orator and author alike. The satirist here performs an intertextual, or poetic, dismemberment: he extracts (eripere, solvere, disicere) nine Ennian feet from their originary position in epic discourse and sutures them into his Sermones.

It is significant that Horace makes this remark after accepting the invitation of a certain Crispinus to a poetic agon (Sat. 1.4.13-16). The satirist’s dismemberment of Ennius throws a sword-stroke of ingenium in this literary contest. Nor is the violence of this process lost on Oliensis, who also alights on the act of ‘textual dismemberment’:

[T]he disruption of the versified word order offers a kind of microcosm of civic upheaval, with the inversion of words representing, in miniature hyperbole, the confusion of social ordines. It is no accident that the Ennian verse Horace cites for its exemplary poetic value represents the outbreak of discordant war as a rupture of constructed boundaries. The man who accepts the invitation of Horace’s subjunctives implicates his imagination in an analogous act of violence (1998: 23-4).

Oliensis exposes the violence of Horace’s maneuver when she highlights the ‘upheaval … confusion … rupture of constructed boundaries … act of violence’. For Oliensis, the threat of such discord helps Horace preserve social and aesthetic distinctions; Horace’s satire operates in the political-literary struggle of social hierarchies. But I expand the metapoetic implications of Horace’s textual violence, for the muddling of aesthetic distinctions carries the burden of Horace’s parody here. When Horace transplants an Ennian verse into his fourth satire, the reader recognizes the dismembered Annales lurking beneath the satirist’s colloquial demeanor. Humor resides in the implied desecration of chopping up the master, injecting bathos into the Second Punic War, incorporating an old appendage into the new sermo. The outbreak of the Second Punic
War in the *Annales* initiates for Horace a form of metapoetic conflict: *Discordia* bombards the conversational register of the *Sermones*, which at the same time divorce *Discordia* from its vaunted place in Roman literary history. The outbreak of war energizes Horace’s *sermo* in the contest against Crispinus. In a battle of poetic *ingenium*, the most violent blows win.

Critics of intertextuality highlight ‘Alexandrian footnotes’ in Roman epic allusivity, whereby the poet ‘cites’ another’s words within his own work. In these cases, a text’s self-awareness comes to the fore as the author calls attention to his allusion. A case-in-point occurs with Ovid’s citation of Ennius’ Jupiter, who decrees the apotheosis of Romulus:

‘tu mihi concilio quondam praesente deorum
(nam memoro memorique animo pia verba notavi)
“unus erit quem tu tolles in caerula caeli”
dixisti: rata sit verborum summa tuorum!’
adnuit omnipotens … (*Met.* 14.812-16)\(^{18}\)

“Once upon a time, in the presence of the divine council, you told me (indeed I remember and recorded your dutiful words in my memory’s seat), “there will be one whom you will raise to heaven’s blue sky.” Let the height of your words be ratified!” All-powerful Jupiter nodded in assent.

In lament for the integrity of the *Annales*, would that Mars had recalled more of Ennius’ poem. As it is, he quotes one hexameter-long member. Hinds observes a ‘transumptive metaphor’ in Mars’ memory of the Ennian divine council (1997: 15): just as Ovid’s Mars authenticates Romulus’ apotheosis in Ennius, so does Ennius’ Jupiter underwrite the Ovidian prophecy.\(^{19}\) Although Ovid drops Ennius’ enjambed *templa* from the citation, yet

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\(^{18}\) Note *Met.* 14.814 = *Fasti* 2.487.

\(^{19}\) See Conte (1986: 57-9) for the ‘authenticating’ function of Mars’ (Ovid’s) citation. Hinds melds the literary-historical (Conte) and theological readings into a more reflexive formulation: “In the cosmos of
he appears well aware of the missing *verborum summa*. Previous to Ovid, Varro (*DLL* 7.6) supplies the enjambed *templa*, which fills out Skutsch’s frs. 54-5:

‘unus erit quem tu tolles in caerula caeli

templa’

Varro cites these lines first in his section on Latin vocabulary that owes to poets and poetry (*dicam in hoc libro de verbis quae a poetis sunt posita … incipiam hinc:* [fr. 54-5 Sk.]). *templum tribus modis dicitur … [DLL 7.5-6]*). Skutsch argues that Ovid excludes *templa* for metrical reasons (1985: 205), but following Hinds, the omission and gloss (*verborum summa tuorum*) fulfill a classic Ovidian pun: Ovid omits the capstone of Ennius’ (Jupiter’s) words—that is, the *summa* of his *verba*. Ovid’s citation continues a process of textual violence begun by Varro: the grammarian transplants 6¾ metrical feet of the *Annales* into the *DLL* for his *templum-exemplum*; Ovid then cuts away ¾ foot and incorporates the now-truncated verse into a new body of text.⁴⁰ Both quotations strip the Ennian line of its context and thereby render it yet another fallen *membrum* from his poetic *corpus*. If not for the Varro reference, Jupiter’s prophecy comprises only fr. 54 Sk. (*unus … caeli*); fr. 55 Sk. (*templa*) falls victim to the history of (non-) transmission.

**Linchpin: Eliding Real and Textual Violence**

The *Annales* are today fragmentary, dismembered, *disiecti membra poetae*. Yet, like the severed head of frs. 483-4 Sk. (*oscitat in campis caput a ceruice reuolsum*), the fragments still speak through later receptions. Before returning to Ennius’ remains, I

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Roman epic discourse, is the apotheosis of Romulus something guaranteed by Jupiter – or by Ennius? … [P]erhaps the richest answer is ‘by both’” (1997: 15-16). Cf. Skutsch (1985: 205): “Romulus was apparently not a god before Ennius made him one.”

⁴⁰ *Fast.* 2.487 cites Jupiter again. Ovid (Cupid) performs a similar amputation at *Amores* 1.1.3-4: *par erat inferior versus; risisse Cupido | dicitur atque unum surripuisse pedem.*
bring real and mimetic violence into sharper focus. Analysis of the macabre aesthetic can soon fall victim to Martindale’s ‘fetishization of the aesthetic’, for such discussion runs the risk of forever operating in the realm of thought experiment (1993: 64). Violent subject matter in art must receive sensitive critical treatment, for I, like Martindale, find something ‘seductive yet terrifying’ in Filippo Marinetti’s contemplation of war:

War is beautiful because it initiates the dreamt-of metallization of the human body. War is beautiful because it enriches a flowering meadow with the fiery orchards of machine guns. War is beautiful because it combines gunfire, the cannonades, the cease-fire, the scents, and the stench of putrefaction into symphony (cited in Martindale 2005: 129).

If Marinetti’s paragraph praises the reality of war, I do not share the sentiment. But if Marinetti’s paragraph contemplates the signifier ‘war’, it instead performs what Martindale, following Kant, calls a ‘judgment of taste’ or 'aesthetic response' (2005: 24). Marinetti translates war into words: he enacts verbal conflict on the page, juxtaposing the terms meadow and machine guns; amidst florid scenery, he orchestrates cacophony of gunfire and cannons, aftermath and decay; he screams War is Beautiful in ascending tricolon. Writing of the Iliad from Nazi-occupied France, Simone Weil marks a similar, semiotic distinction: “Whatever is not war, whatever war destroys or threatens, the Iliad wraps in poetry; the realities of war, never” (1940: 26). In the realm of real violence, language fails miserably: as Zizek points out, it is not poetry that is impossible after Auschwitz, but rather prose, for the traumatized witness gains credibility due to inconsistency and gaps in his narrative. Cold, linear description deflates the horrors of concentration camps into non-significance.21 Freud approaches from the opposite direction and points out that interpretation is akin to a ‘murder’, which ‘distorts’ and

21 Zizek (2010: 8).
fragments the text (1952: 52). Gomel further highlights ellipsis and lacuna as the features of violence narratives that contain the horror and trauma of violent experience. Traumatic events create gaps in meaning, and intellectual activity fails in these extreme moments. Within these fissures operates Teskey’s intellectual activity through imaginative means (above): the ‘violence of thought’ energizes the text as it ruptures it. Violent art and the macabre aesthetic cast this antinomy in high relief.

Real and mimetic violence unleash a deluge of symbolic energy. Once ruptured, the veneer of order cannot fully dam up the subliminal river of chaos. In Freudian terms, amputation instantiates a frisson in the textual subconscious—a moment of confrontation between the ego and id. Scenes of limb-loss, real or imagined, eject symbolic energy and matter on a visceral plane: each gut-wrenching response calls up all others, as meaning spurts in all directions. The Annales’ severed head attaches to sequential iterations and in turn increases in symbolic power:

Enn. Ann. frr. 483-84 Sk. oscitat in campis caput a ceruice reuolsum semianimesque micant oculi lucemque requirunt

Lucr. DRN 3.654-56 et caput abscisum calido viventeque trunco servat humi vultum vitalem oculosque patentis, donec reliquias animai reddidit omnis.


Ov. Met. 11.50-53 membra iacent diuersa locis; caput, Hebre, lyramque excipis, et (mirum!) medio dum labitur amne, flebile nescioquid queritur lyra, flebile lingua murmurat examinis, respondent flebile ripae.

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22 Oliensis discusses the ‘textual subconscious’ as a Freudian model for psychoanalytic readings of Latin poetry (see esp. 2009: 61-77). The confrontation between ego and id aligns with Kristeva’s subject-object seepage into the amputated abject.

23 Servius provides this passage, though he compares Virg. Aen. 10.396 (a twitching hand).
Luc. BC 8.672-75  tunc nervos venasque secat nodosaque frangit ossa diu: nondum artis erat caput ense rotare. at, postquam trunc cervix abscisa recessit, vindicat hoc Pharius, dextra gestare, satelles.

Statius Theb. 8.752-56  … ut [Tydeus] singultantia vidit ora trucesque oculos seseque agnovit in illo, imperat abscisum porgi, laevaque receptum spectat atrox hostile caput, gliscitque tepentis lumina torva videns et adhuc dubitantia figi.

The caput revolsum traces a long trajectory through Roman epic. Lucretius revives it to explain the dispersal of the anima; Virgil truncates Homer’s Priam; Ovid floats Orpheus’ head off to Lesbos; Lucan hacks at Pompey’s neck; Statius’ Tydeus swallows another’s gray matter. Herein lies a paradox, however: the jarring finality of decapitation energizes its later iterations—that is, its very finality kick-starts its repeatability. Within the nexus of prior decapitations, each severed head refracts previous ones, recalls their horror.

When figuring epic violence, epic poets pick the brains of the masters.

Horror is the predominant response to mimetic carnage. As far back as Aristotle, critics and poets enjoy the catharsis that results from horror shows. The representation of limb-loss, of chaos, reinforces the assumptions of embodiment, of order. Perhaps mimetic violence keeps readers and writers from turning into violent actors. Perhaps Stephen King is correct to say,

The mythic [horror story] has a dirty job to do. It deliberately appeals to all that is worst in us. It is morbidity unchained, our most base instincts let free, our nastiest fantasies realized … I like to see the most aggressive [horror stories]


25 Coleman (1990: 44-73) shows that the real violence of the amphitheater performs the same psychological work. The choreographed punishments in the ludi provide both entertainment and deterrence to the Roman public. She and Lintott (1999: 40-44) point out the ritual aspects of gladiatorial combats and their function in the release of violent urges on the part of the citizens (akin to the Greek pharmakon).
as lifting a trapdoor in the civilized forebrain and throwing a basket of raw meat to the hungry alligators swimming around in that subterranean river beneath. Why? … Because it keeps them from getting out … It keeps them down there and me up here (2010: 187).

The serial decapitations above glimpse this subterranean terror, while at the same time they remind reader and writer of the head on his shoulders. This ‘trapdoor effect’ opens a hole in meaning generated by the ‘civilized forebrain’, through which abject matter passes. Through grotesque negative example, decapitation says ‘what if’ and ‘but not’ simultaneously. When confronted with the gruesome areas of Roman epic—its cannibals, living dead, fratricide, lopped-off arms, quivering tongues, amputated feet, torn-out eyes—aesthetic virtue lies in the wit and manner of presentation. Worland, qua film critic, redeems art horror succinctly: “outrageous violence is on display, no mistake; but so is formal control” (2007: 220). Every Roman epicist exercises formal control when reinventing violence, and always with his predecessors in the crosshairs.

**Lessons in Limb-Loss: Lucretius and Horace**

Up to now I have explored ‘the violence of the letter’ as an imposition of meaning on the chaos of nature. To foist language on intrinsically meaningless matter constitutes the first violent act, whence sprout further generations of meaning. Ennius’ *caput reuolsum*, now torn from its original *corpus*, illustrates this process of disruption, reinterpretation and reincorporation. In subsequent iterations, the head requires dislodging from its previous station. Unfortunately, the fragments of Ennius’ epic preclude firm aesthetic judgements of the author’s violent imagery. Lucretius’ *DRN* thus provides the first sustained dismemberment scene in Latin hexameters. Taking up Ennius’ mantle, Lucretius appropriates the severed head for new rhetorical ends. From
caput reuolsum to caput abscisum, the severed head becomes one of a number of amputations:

- at quod scinditur et partis discedit in ullas,
- scilicet aeternam sibi naturam abnuit esse.
- falciferos memorant currus abscidere membra
- saepe ita de subito permixta caede calentis,
- ut tremere in terra videatur ab artubus id quod decidit abscisum, cum mens tamen atque hominis vis
- mobilitate mali nonquit sentire dolorem;
- et simul in pugnae studio quod dedita mens est,
- corpore reliquo pugnam caedesque petessit,
- nec tenet amissam laevam cum tegmine saepe
- inter equos abstraxe rotas falcesque rapaces,
- nec cecidisse alius dextram, cum scandit et instat.
- inde alius conatur adempto surgere crure,
- cum digitos agitat propter moribundus humi pes.
- et caput abscisum calido viventeque trunco
- servat humi voltum vitalem oculosque patentis,
- donec reliquias animai reddidit omnes. (DRN 3.640-56)

But the fact that [the soul] is cleaved and disperses into sundry parts obviously forbids that it is eternal. They recall that scythe-bearing chariots, hot with thick slaughter, sever limbs often so suddenly that, whatever has fallen off after being amputated from the [other] limbs is seen to quiver on the ground, while nevertheless the mind and spirit of the man cannot feel any pain due to the swiftness of the injury and because the mind is at the same time devoted to passion for fighting: with his remaining body he actively seeks fighting and slaughter, nor does he grasp that his left arm is lost with its shield, [nor that] the wheels and rapacious scythes have dragged it off amidst horses; nor does another grasp that his right arm has fallen, while he climbs and strives forward. Thence, another attempts to get up with his lower leg removed, while his dying foot wiggles its toes nearby on the ground. And a head, severed from its hot and living trunk, preserves on the ground its living face and open eyes, until it gives up all remainder of the anima.

In this initial treatment of violence in Latin hexameters, Lucretius offers a textbook case of epic violence. His systematic dismantling of the human form accounts for all the major appendages: both arms (laeva, dextra), feet (pes), and head (caput). The preceptor’s insistence on the liminal state of these severed appendages advances the
argument that the soul is material, and so mortal. Hands cling to shields, toes and feet
twitch on the ground, and faces remain animate for a short time after amputation. But
like a vase leaks water (DRN 3.555-56), the body is eventually drained of its soul.
Lucretius here appropriates martial epic for didactic ends. Gone are epic epithets,
hometowns, and dramatis personae; epic violence stripped of epic drama. Lucretius
puts such imagery under the microscope in a sort of laboratory experiment conducted to
confirm a hypothesis. Lucretius' footnote (memorant) indeed lends the argument a sort
of empirical veracity as he reappropriates Homeric-Ennian epic into an exposition on
Epicurean metaphysics.26 Lucretius’ semi-animate face (voltum vitalem) transmutes
Ennius’ murmuring head (oscitat caput) and argues for the materiality, and so mortality,
of the Epicurean soul. Death and rebirth, dispersal and reassembly: these are the
constants of the Lucretian universe. Like Ovid after him, Lucretius asserts that such
metamorphosis is violent, since it requires a certain death of the previous body: nam
quodcumque suis mutatum finibus exit, | continuo hoc mors est illius quod fuit ante
(DRN 3.519-20).27 Pace Ennius, who believes that animae wander the Underworld
(DRN 1.120-23), Lucretius’ elements make more enlightened use of Latin hexameters.

What irony that the first coherent scene of limb-loss, violence, and death in Latin
hexameters should occur in a didactic epic: Ennius’ boast to have incorporated Homer’s
spirit falls by the wayside of literary history. Perhaps, to take Lucretius at his word, Latin
still suffers from a patrii sermonis egestas (DRN 1.832 & 3.260), and wounding

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26 Leonard and Smith (1970 ad loc.) compare Quintus Curtius Rufus (Hist. Alex. 4.15.17): amputata
uirorum membra humi iacebant et, quia calidis adhuc ulneribus aberat dolor, trunci quoque et debiles
quidam arma non omittebant, donec multo sanguine effuse exanimate procumberent.

27 These verses become something of a philosophical maxim in the DRN: 3.519-20 = 1.670-71, 1.792-93,
and 2.753-54.
vocabulary has yet to develop. Yet he points out that Latin’s lexical poverty offers no impediment to his argumentation (*sed tamen ipsam rem facilest exponere verbis, DRN* 1.833), and the mere existence of his six books (all over 1,000 verses) renders these statements something of a rhetorical jest. Indeed, the *Annales*’ fragments already contain evidence of severed hamstrings and spears whizzing through chests, so one assumes the presence of extended violence before Lucretius. Indeed, *contra* Ennus, Lucretius disavows *animae* roaming the Underworld in literature and art (*DRN* 3.624-33). Yet, he disproves after-life *animae* with the same epic violence that sends them there in the first place (in Ennus or Homer).28 His ease of movement between didacti-argumenative and martial-narrative registers offers a wholistic picture of the epic genre. His scenes of wounding redirect the aesthetic energy of epic violence for teachable moments, where scenes like the one quoted above become poetic honey on the philosophical cup.

**From Metaphysics to Metapoetics: Lucretian Word Pictures**

Modern critics of the *DRN* stress the poem’s overt metapoetic experience.29 Martindale observes a strong sense of ‘the physicality of words, the sheer materiality of language’ (2005: 52); Volk expands this statement into, “if the letters are like atoms, then the poem is like the universe it describes … it is, then, no longer clear which system is the model for the other” (2002: 100-1). Furthermore, Hinds demonstrates that a tmesis like *seque gregari* sunders the verbal unit into semantic zero degree (1987: 450-53). His title, ‘Language at the Breaking Point’, reflects well the fissures in meaning

28 See my discussion regarding Virgil’s reinversion of the Lucretian conceit with his Deiphobus (below, Chapter 2).

29 In addition to the recent discussions of Martindale and Volk, see earlier Friedländer (1941) and Snyder (1980: 31-51).
discussed above. The DRN’s letters (litterae, elementa) behave like the matter (res, primordia rerum) that makes up the universe, and its poetical figures (figurae, schemata) grant artful exposition of the vicissitudes of physical matter. Thus, Lucretius’ poem partially collapses the distinction between signifier (text) and signified (nature), for at times he foists both upon the eyes:

nunc age dicta meo dulci quaesita labore
percipe, ne forte haec albis ex alba rearis
principiis esse, ante oculos quae candida cernis,
aut ea quae nigrant nigro de semine nata … (2.730-3)

Come now, learn these words sought by my sweet task, lest perhaps you believe that these white [areas] stem from white atoms, things you plainly see as white, nor [you think] the black [marks] spawn from black seeds.

This self-referential exemplum glimpses Martindale’s materiality of language: it demonstrates that black letters act like colorless atoms, while it says that colorless atoms make up black letters; form and content are no longer separate categories. Such exemplum creates a metatextual moment or ‘transumptive metaphor’: as the DRN dictates Epicurean physics, so do Epicurean physics dictate the DRN. The vicissitudes of letters and words map onto atomic motion in a one-to-one correspondence. As Volk writes, “[the poem’s] ‘elements’ behave like atoms” (2002: 104).

Microscopic atoms constitute macroscopic bodies. To reread the above thought experiment and push the atoms-letters-words-bodies analogy further, one here observes bifurcations in the poem’s verbal presentation. More specifically, the passage makes use of hyperbaton (trajection) and anastrophe to illustrate acts of limb-loss.\(^\text{30}\) The first amputation of membra (642-43) disjoins the subject-accusative so that

\(^{30}\) Cf. Gildersleeve’s definition of hyperbaton: “the violent displacement of words” (2000: 436, my emphasis).
Moreover, Lucretius creates a word picture of logical cause-and-effect: sword and chariot approach (falciferos currus), sever limbs (abscidere membra), and depart now covered in blood (subito permixta caede calentis). In what follows, anastrophe (tremere in terra videatur ... id), more hyperbaton (ab artubus ... quod | decidit abscisum), and enjambment render the confusion of limb-loss in grammatical and visual terms. One must search for a severed appendage (id), hidden as it is among other artus, which are themselves removed from their relative clause. An enjambed decidit abscisum, cut off from the previous verse, prolongs its sense break and creates off-kilter prosody; Kenney hears a 'breathless quality' in this sound play (1984: n. 642-6).

And further, a grammatical pun arises from nec tenet amissam laevam. In the first place, amissam || laevam spans the line’s caesura; the prosodic cutoff separates arm from adjective. Like Virgil after him, Lucretius creates an audible hiatus, or spoken lacuna, at the line’s breathing stop; form momentarily disrupts content. More than this: nec tenet introduces an apparent zeugma, wherein the reader first understands amissam laevam as direct object of the finite verb; not until the next verse does oratio obliqua appear, which takes amissam laevam as direct object of abstraxe. So, the initial sense of nec tenet is “He does not hold his left hand, now lost.” After completing the indirect statement, however, the sense is “He does not understand that chariots have taken his left hand.” The first line takes nec tenet in a physical sense: a man does not ‘have/hold’ an arm after amputation. The second takes nec tenet in a cognitive sense: a man does not ‘realize/grasp’ that his arm is lost. The second reading moves tenet closer
to the (metrically equivalent) *habet* and away from its generally tactile semantic range.\(^\text{32}\)

Trajected syntax evinces such grammatical play: *amissam laevam* first looks backward to *tenet*, before hyperbaton upsets the presumed flow of meaning. In fact, before reading *rotas falcesque rapaces*, the severed arm could govern *abstraxe* as a subject-accusative. Thus, *amissam laevam* undergoes grammatical metamorphosis: (1) direct object of *tenet*, (2) subject-accusative of *abstraxe*, (3) direct object of *abstraxe*. The object-subject-object progression guides the reader through opposites of syntax, which recalibrate the semantic value of *nec tenet*. Lucretius interweaves zeugma and hyperbaton to parallel effect: zeugma disrupts semantics; hyperbaton, pragmatics.

Flying limbs signal radical change in the elemental *clinamen*; the microscopic system plays out on the macroscopic level.\(^\text{33}\) A major point of contention from antiquity to the present, Lucretius demurs to offer protracted explanation of the Epicurean *clinamen*; he accepts its explanatory power *prima facie*.\(^\text{34}\) Walter Englert collects the major lines of argument concerning the swerve and synthesizes them thus: “It may be that all who have published on the swerve … are correct … Such a broadly inclusive account of the swerve might help to explain why different ancient accounts of the swerve in Lucretius, Cicero, Philodemus, Plutarch, Plotinus, and elsewhere describe the swerve in slightly different ways” (2003). To be sure, divergent explanations (ancient and modern) recreate the swerve by offering lines of argumentation parabolic of the

\(^\text{32\hspace{1em}OLD s.v. ‘teneo’ 23 & 24 (the last two definitions): “to grasp mentally, understand” & “to retain in the mind.”}\)

\(^\text{33\hspace{1em}Cf. Friedländer (2007: 354): “The invisible must be interpreted from the visible.”}\)

\(^\text{34\hspace{1em}On which see Fowler (2002). Critical attention aside, within the verbal economy of the poem, Lucretius does not explain the *clinamen* with the vigor he does other matters. He leaves further argument to others. In this way, the *clinamen* opens an ellipsis in the *DRN*’s logic, whence critical dialogue sprouts.}\)
DRN. Greenblatt takes an apposite perspective and highlights the accidents of history that brought the DRN down to modern readers (2011). His title, The Swerve, limns the happy irony that Lucretian metaphysics can explain the existence and preservation of his poem. Susan Mapstone reads the clinamen in light of modern physics vocabulary and notes that non-linear dynamics name the ‘bifurcation point’ as the moment when a vortex appears in laminar particle flows: “[T]he amplification of the initial bifurcation, or swerve, into a vortex shaped structure … is the necessary dynamic in the formation of compound bodies … [T]he bifurcation point is not perceivable or indeed measurable because of its minimal shift. It is only the amplified effects that verify the existence of the initial movement” (Mapstone 2007: 6-7, my emphasis). Neither Classicists nor Physicists (nor Republican poets) can observe, much less calculate, the initial bifurcation.\(^3\) Thus, Lucretius perhaps unwittingly creates an ellipsis in argument, where critical analysis after him falls victim to a certain reductio ad clinamen. This argumentative lacuna aligns with Gomel’s formulation that ellipsis (or lacuna) stands as the limit of one’s explanatory power (2003: 1-10). Indeed, in the special case of violence narratives, ellipsis is the figure of speech that can capture the horror of chaotic events. The possibility of complete non-meaning, of chaos, opens the terrifying possibility that intellectual activity falls short of its goal; that meaning-making cannot regain purchase in the abyss of chaos.\(^4\)

These ruptures in meaning leave one still with amputated limbs and violated bodies. Yet, Lucretius’ didaxis presents no moral conundrum regarding the scene’s

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\(^3\) Though physicists have made strides in this regard with the recent discovery of the Higgs Boson particle.

\(^4\) It is thus unsurprising that “The Axis of the Holocaust” in Berlin’s Jewish Museum culminates in a dead end called “The Voided Void” (Libeskind 2000).
violence. His thought experiment operates on (textual) human subjects, so that memorant signals his research and critical analysis of the textual human anatomy. After careful study, he says, the corpus exhibits temporary retention of the anima after sudden limb-loss; subjects consistently continue battle with complete disregard for lost arms and legs; some are known to maintain facial expressions some seconds after decapitation. Such clinical treatment reverses Zizek’s contention concerning prose and poetry after Auschwitz (above): Lucretius here offers cold, linear description in Latin hexameters; violence in a vacuum, so to speak. Now stripped of its horror, epic violence in the DRN sends no one to Hell. In the context of Lucretius’ grand argument—that one should not fear death—the poet offers what would in another poem (say, the iliad) spark reflection on mortality. In a neat correlation, Lucretian aesthetics deflate the pathos of a Hector or Patroclus and all the while denigrate the fear of death. For the purposes of this study, such clinical treatment provides a zero-degree of horrified response. Only in thought experiment can a writer divorce violence from morality—or mortality.

**Violence in Horatian Hexameter**

Horace’s hexametrical works offer a useful resource for Latin metapoetic terminology and mechanics. In the Satires and Epistles, his discussions of genre and literary prerogative operate within, and by means of, the systems they seek to explicate or criticize. For instance, at Sat. 2.1.10-11 Trebatius advises Horace:

aut si tantus amor scribendi te rapit, aude
Caesaris invicti res dicere …

Or if so much love for writing seizes you, dare to tell the exploits of unconquered Caesar.

A clever change of register secures for Horace trite parody of the epic genre. Trebatius’ exhortation to Horace—that the latter compose epic poems—comes appropriately
freighted with epic diction: Horace must dare (*audere*) to narrate the accomplishments of Augustus, the emperor worthy of an epic epithet (*invictus*). Horace’s interlocutor, then, temporarily dons a persona from the epic genre, and exhorts the satirist-warrior to strive for epic themes.

My methodology here is expository: I treat Horace’s *Satires* and *Epistles* not as prescriptive documents against which epic is measured, but rather as descriptive polemics that engage epic diction and imagery in order to lampoon the ‘higher’ genre. From his satirical vantage point, Horace can launch attacks on the hackneyed verse of contemporary epicists. Though he writes satire, Horace speaks in the same metaphorical terms as other Latin poets; he too writes hexameters, such as they are. His aphoristic style, double *entendre*, and jocularity exist within a poetic discourse common to all writers, and so his perspective—at times diametrically opposed to that of the epicists—offers a unique foothold from which to discuss metaphors of poetic violence.

Consider the following portraits of Lucilius and Horace toiling over their verses:

... sed ille,
si foret hoc nostrum fato delapsus in aevum,
detereret sibi multa, recideret omne quod ultra
perfectum traheretur, et in versu faciendo
saepe caput scaberet, vivos et roderet unguis. (Sat. 1.10.67-71)

But [Lucilius], if he were to fall fortuitously into our age, would file away much from himself; he would cut away everything which dragged out beyond completion, and in fashioning verse he would often scratch his head and gnaw the quick of his fingernails.

*multa quidem nobis facimus mala saepe poetae*
(ut vineta egomet caedam mea), *cum tibi librum*
*sollicito damus aut fesso; cum laedimur, unum*
*si quis amicorum est ausus reprehendere versum ...* (Epist. 2.1.219-22)
To be sure, we poets often do much harm to ourselves—like I myself chop down entire vineyards of my own—when we give a book to you, though you’re annoyed and tired [of us]; meanwhile, we’re wounded if any of our friends dares to find fault with a single verse.

In the first passage, Horace imagines Lucilius as a sculptor who chisels (*deterere*) and hews (*recidere*) a statue of himself (*sibi*). Lucilius’ (contrafactual) effort and precision in writing are reflected in his chaffed scalp and gnawed fingertips, which in turn call attention to the sometimes bloody, often laborious, task that is poetic composition. The shavings dropped from the Lucilius statue find an analogue in his chewed fingernails and scoured crown. The poet’s enterprise becomes at times an act of (self-)mutilation.

This theme returns in the second passage, where Horace deploys the image of slashing whole vineyards from his own work when he submits it to a critical eye. This aspect of the authorial process—seeking constructive criticism—has the potential to harm the poet (*laedere*), another reminder of the metaphorical danger involved in writing poetry.

The poet may also inflict harm on his subject. Horace says that Lucilius strove to flay the egregious characters of the city:

… est Lucilius ausus
primus in hunc operis componere carmina morem,
detrahere et pellem, nitidus qua quisque per ora
cederet … (*Sat.* 2.1.62-5)

Lucilius was the first to dare to compose songs after this [sc. satirical] custom, and to strip off the skin in which the conspicuous traveled before everyone’s eyes.

And Horace himself keeps a blade in reserve:

sed hic stilus haud petet ultro
quemquam animantem et me veluti custodiet ensis
vagina tectus; quem cur dstringere coner
tutus ab infestis latronibus? (*Sat.* 2.1.39-2)

But this pen will seek nobody alive any longer, and it will protect me like
a sword covered in its sheath; why should I try to draw it while safe from hostile criminals?

Just as Lucilius’ poetry ‘skinned’ the *nitidi* of his day, so Horace’s satire has incisive capabilities of its own. Yet, the *stilus*-as-*ensis* metaphor applies not just to satirists.

Take for instance Furius Bibaculus, the *turgids Alpinus* of *Sat*. 1.10:

*turgidus Alpinus iugulat dum Memnona dumque defingit Rheni luteum caput, haec ego ludo … (Sat. 1.10.36-7)*

While the swollen poet of the Alps slits Memnon’s throat, and while he muddles the Rhine’s head, I myself toy with these trifles …

What significance lies behind the third-person singulars *iugulat* and *defingit*? Of course, Furius cannot literally jugulate Memnon any more than he can personally taint the head of the Rhine; rather, just as incompetent Furius metaphorically butchers Memnon in his *Aethiopis*, so he degrades the grandeur of the Rhine in his Gallic War epic.37

Horace’s *Ars Poetica* closes with an extreme example of the danger attached to bad poetry (and its poets). He likens the bad poet (*poeta vesanus*) to a bear and a blood-sucking leech:

*certe furit, ac velut ursus,*  
*obiectos caveae valuit si frangere clatros,*  
*indoctum doctumque fugat recitator acerbus;*  
*quem vero arripuit, tenet occiditque legendo,*  
*non missura cutem, nisi plena cruoris, hirudo. (AP 472-6)*

Certainly he is mad; and just like a bear if it has managed to break the obstructing bars of his cage, the bitter reader puts to flight unlearned and learned alike; but the one he’s grabbed, he holds onto him and kills him by reading—a leech that won’t let go the skin unless it’s full of blood.

37 For the metaphor of poetry-as-river, cf. *Sat*. 1.4.11, 1.10.50 & 62; *Epist*. 2.1.159. Horace laments Lucilius’ muddy (*lutulentus*) river, but grants that the early satirist would sift much from his flow in order to conform to modern tastes (*Ep*. 2.1.159).
Through the (epic) simile of a loose bear, Horace casts the mad poet as a deadly force intent on its next target. The ablative of means *legendo* metaphorizes the poetaster’s weapon of choice: poetry. When the poet latches on to his victim-listener, he drains the blood of the unfortunate party. This poet is addicted to the sanguine aspects of recital; indeed, he finds gustatory pleasure in the macabre enterprise.

I linger on the mad poet’s cannibalism, since in this scene Horace melds the metaliterary conceits of *furor* and poetic transgression. Hershkowitz describes ‘meta-madness’ as a powerful source of poetic energy and creative inspiration. Thus, Turnus’ fractured state of mind at *Aen.* 12.650-2 is concretized in Saces’ mangled face; for Virgil, the *furor* of writing epic combat has an analogue in the atrocity of the Italian-Trojan conflict (1998: 86-93). So in the *AP*, Horace’s *poeta vesanus* works himself into such madness that he ingests the *cruor* of another; in the fit of anthropophagy the *poeta vesanus* sups on the *corpus* itself; no longer content to maim a Hector or butcher a Memnon, the mad poet must have the *corpus* and eat it too. The mad poet’s cannibalism results from his *furor*, so that this cause-and-effect relationship glimpses a satirical tableau of metapoetic life: under a hailstorm of madness, the poetic task sometimes compels the author to commit heinous acts against the literary milieu. He enters *in viscera*.

The Anatomy of Roman Epic

This introduction has focused on the violence of the letter as a necessary component to meaning-making and literary composition. As a metahistorical case of textual violence, Ennius’ *Annales* embody a material metaphor wherein meaning is disrupted and frustrated by the accidents of literary history. In a reception like Horace’s *Sat.* 1.4, the satirist rends *Discordia* from its originary *locus* and transplants it into a new
poetic context. Lucretius’ *DRN*—as the first coherent hexameter work at Rome—updates and invigorates the verbal range and aesthetic potential of Latin epic. His thought experiment becomes poetological didaxis of martial epic; a certain textbook case-in-point of epic violence. His metapoetic universe in the *DRN* evinces his argument that texts, like bodies, are mere contingent structures of temporary coherence. As another study in the mechanics of violent appropriation, Horace offers the modern critic generic terminology and exposition of violent intertextuality. His hexameters distinguish themselves from high epic in its own terms; in short, he uses epic conventions to abuse epic conventions. Authors after Horace (especially Ovid, Lucan, and Statius) read his precautions in the *AP* and make precise allusive gestures to pervert his aesthetic preferences.\(^{38}\) Still, the mechanics of their macabre appropriations make use of the same methods Horace employs. As the building blocks of Latin epic, *disiecti membra poetae* become raw material for poetic appropriation. Virgil, Ovid, Lucan, and Statius replace Lucretius’ didaxis and Horace’s humor with allusive maneuvers that raise ethical and aesthetic questions regarding poetic appropriation and appropriateness.

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\(^{38}\) One thinks especially of Horace’s prohibition against cannibalism (*AP* 184-88), which the preceptor breaks at the end of the same treatise. Ovid’s Erysichthon, Lucan’s Erictho, and Statius’ Tydeus subvert this prohibition in explicit terms.
CHAPTER 2

VIRGIL'S RETICENCE AND THE GAPS OF VIOLENCE NARRATIVES

This chapter broaches issues of epic violence that appear in Virgil's *Aeneid* and largely expand in writers after him. As a witness to the conflicts of the 50s-30s BCE, Virgil demonstrates an aversion or reticence towards writing violent scenery.¹ He does not refrain completely, but violated bodies do not become such points of meditation as they do in the poems of Ovid, Lucan, or Statius. I here point out exemplary violent scenes that post-Virgilian authors find attractive and inadequately treated in the *Aeneid*. I also offer here a short *recusatio* over the death of Turnus: many have discussed this scene,² but the political-ideological questions it raises are not central to my inquiry into the aesthetics of violent representation in Roman epic. I return to Turnus at this chapter's end, for his abrupt death uncorks a torrent of symbolic energy and questions of narrative closure that later authors raise in their epics.

¹ Virgil's reticence regarding violence narrative is reflected in Aeneas' reluctance to narrate the ordeal at Troy: *quamquam animus meminisse horret, luctuque refugit, incipiam* (*Aen.* 2.12-13). Feeney (1999: 179-83) highlights Virgil's consistent deferral of Iliadic violence in the *Aeneid*. Words that denote delay (*moror, mora*) dramatize the poet's and reader's tasks, where both entertain other narrative possibilities while the gods deliberate. This form of metanarrative puts off Homeric-style violence to the later books, where it is in any case 'aestheticized'.

² Tarrant (2012: 9-30) has the most recent collation of various views and bibliography; as a commentary, however, his synopsis does not offer a strong statement on the political-ideological implications of Turnus' death. Coffee (2009: 98-111) examines Turnus' death in the context of reciprocity and mercantile exchange. He concludes that Aeneas' normally reciprocal outlook grows frustrated at the sight of Pallas' baldric, which drives him to exact recompensation on behalf of Evander. Turnus' failure to dedicate the baldric after killing Pallas dooms him to death, but Aeneas' actions are not altogether balanced. Fratantuono's moralizing reading (2007: 395-96) sees the poem's ending as "the triumph of madness and the victory of wrath." Smith (2005: 180-82) sees the final sword-stroke as an assertion of the 'primacy of vision' in the poem: "[K]illing Turnus is the quintessential act of foundation for the city of Rome, the poem's telos, and it establishes the legacy of the visible empire that Augustus will inherit from his forebear. In short, the final appeal in the poem succumbs to vision." Quint (1993: 65-83) analyzes the scene's repetitions and reversals of Aeneas' participation in the *Iliad*. Burnell (1987: 186-200) distills the major lines of argument over the morality of Aeneas' action. Putnam (1985: 1-21) maps the Achilles-Patroclus relationship onto that of Aeneas-Pallas and reads the killing of Turnus as an explosion of repressed sexual energy that precludes formal closure. I would only add that, from a metapoetic perspective, Aeneas' sword-stroke severs Turnus' narrative thread and with it the Trojan-Italian conflict. For Virgil, for Augustus, and for their contemporary Romans, the rest is (future) history.
The previous chapter constructed a hermeneutic for reading violence as a metapoetic device in Roman epic. The textual corpus lies susceptible to violent rearrangement. After Ennius’ fragmentary Annales, Lucretius and Horace engage the corpus metaphor in distinct ways. The Lucretian corpus exists in a state of constant flux, now assembled, now dispersed. His clinical treatment of violence and bodily deformation reflects his didactic pose and the ordered universe that he describes. Horace’s didaxis points up poetry’s violent potential. Satire can skin its targets; lesser authors butcher great stories; modern poets dissect old ones. On the cusp of a nascent principate, Horace’s hexameters refocus the compositional metaphor in post-Republican, aesthetic terms. Far from butchering any Memnons, the Augustan vates puts his poetological abilities to skillful use: one may dismember Ennius, provided one does so in good taste. This chapter pushes the poetics of violence further into the realm of epic poetry in Augustan Rome. With Homer as his aesthetic model (Conte’s modello codice), Virgil challenges the Iliad and Odyssey on their own terms. His Aeneid incorporates the Greek epic tradition into Roman letters, and often through violent means. The violence of the Aeneid underpins the measure of Roman achievement, so that Hector, Priam, and Deiphobus offer Augustan Rome caveats of past conflict. This chapter discerns points of narrative rupture and lacunae in the Aeneid, where Virgil attempts to heal the wounds of the Roman civil wars. The pathetic appearances of

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3 See Newman (1967) for a discussion of the development of vates from Republican to Imperial literature. In short, where Lucretius disavows the dicta vatum (DRN 1.102-7), the Augustan poets rehabilitate the term to imbue their work with a more elevated, or divinely-inspired, patina. Horace and Virgil are instrumental in this movement.

4 See Tarrant (1997: 56-60) for an overview of Virgil’s immediate status as Homerus alterus. Cf. Quint (1993: 7-8). Note too that Virgil employs the very spears that the Trojans used against the Greeks at Troy: suggerere tela mihi, non ullum dextera frustra | torserit in Rutulos, steterunt quae in corpore Graium | Iliacis campis (Aen. 10.333-35). More on this allusion below.
Hector, Priam, and Deiphobus offer a range of perspectives on epic violence and its destructive effects on the body of literature. His poem represents the first attempt at an artistic catharsis, or purging, of previous strife. As will be shown, his is but one effort, and Ovid and Lucan reopen the wounds that Virgil adumbrates for new aesthetic ends.

**Violence Narratives and Virgilian Ellipsis**

The *Aeneid* is an appropriate starting point for intertextual study of epic violence at Rome, and not just due to its chronological position. Bare statistics are telling here: Virgil averages just over two lines per casualty, while Ovid hovers just below six and Lucan above eight. In the wake of the Roman civil wars, Virgil’s reverent, nigh-unwilling pose with respect to epic violence creates holes or gaps in his narrative, so that Aeneas (and reader) encounter violated bodies in after-the-fact states. For authors after him, Virgil’s reticence opens points of departure or loci for expansion; in the particular cases of Hector, Priam, and Deiphobus, Virgil omits certain traumatic events in the stories of their deaths. To be sure, a first-century reader versed in the Homeric epics was familiar with the Greek passages that treat these moments. When Lucan writes his death of Pompey, for example, he sees much narrative potential in Priam’s occluded beheading; when Virgil glosses over the moment of decapitation, he opens a narrative

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5 This discussion does not elevate a ‘pessimistic’ reading of the *Aeneid* over an ‘optimistic’ one. As I will show, Anchises’ lecture on metaphysics in *Aen.* 6 explains how the corpus becomes revivified. As the *Aeneid* makes clear, violence is indeed destructive and lamentable, but it can also be regenerative and necessary to a civilization’s growth.

6 See Most (1992: 398) for these numbers. Virgil’s lines-per-casualty matches Homer’s (2.2 and 2.1 respectively).

7 Cf. Cowles (1934: 364): “… the horror and despair are there, but mostly by suggestion rather than photographic insistence upon the details.” And further Tarrant (1997: 179): “… the poem is permeated by revulsion at a war that should never have happened.”
ellipsis in the Glorious Death motif. Here appears Chaudhuri’s intertextual ‘vortices’, within which Lucan ‘disgorges’ all the ire and vitriol of his *Bellum Civile*.

Recent study of trauma narrative and violent storytelling provides helpful framework for understanding the emotional and aesthetic power of Virgil’s narrative omissions. Elana Gomel highlights ellipsis as the rhetorical figure that describes the gaps in violence narratives. At a certain point, language does not cut it:

> Any reader familiar with what came to light during the Nuremberg Trials is capable of filling the gap with words: torture, starvation, brutality. But these are only words. Linde’s narrative, like Hoess’s, is interrupted not by squeamishness or shame but by its own impossibility. It stops at the point in which language fails to convey the experience of extreme violence. The shocking row of dots in [Linde’s] text is a typographical equivalent of the trope that marks—or mars—all self-narratives of killers. This trope is ellipsis … An ellipsis occurs when there is an event that we know must have happened, … but which is omitted from representation (Gomel 2003: xx).

Ellipsis opens a window on Stephen King’s subliminal river of chaos; it points to, or attempts to contain, the inexplicable; it helps one cope with traumatic experience. To my knowledge, trauma theory has not permeated Virgilian studies, but its emphasis on ellipsis creates fertile territory for discussion of violence in the *Aeneid*. Feeney has called attention to delay and deferral as metaliterary moments wherein the reader entertains alternate narrative possibilities; the violence is promised, but late in coming (1999: 179-83). In fact, Aeneas presents a potential lacuna before he begins his story to Dido: he shudders to recall that night and out of grief nearly flees from narrating (*animus meminisse horret, luctuque refugit, Aen. 2.12*). In similar fashion, I suggest, Virgil’s hesitation to narrate the more violent portions of his exemplary deaths (Hector, Priam, and Deiphobus) reflects the unwillingness—or inability even—of the traumatized witness. Priam’s death in particular, in the mouth of Aeneas and reflective of the
historical Pompey, aligns well with Gomel’s impossibility of narration; Aeneas ‘was there’ afterall. His occlusion of the decapitation act masks the horror of the event (horror, Aen. 2.559), so that Neoptolemus’ final sword-stroke is left to Dido’s (and the reader’s) imagination.

In a neat paradox, narrative ellipsis leaves out, but at the same time points to, traumatic images. The Aeneid participates in this antinomy, within which many critics have observed ‘tensions’ and ‘ambivalence’. Before Gomel, David Quint’s influential Epic and Empire highlights repetition as the aspect of narratives that fulfills the traumatized witness’ compulsion to return to the original, horrific event.\(^8\) Trauma narrative inhabits an uneasy middle ground, which simultaneously creates a return to, and a return of, prior violence; it attempts to recreate the event in question, but necessarily falls short of a satisfactory account:

The victim of an earlier trauma may neurotically reenact his victimization over and over again. Alternatively, he may replay the original traumatic situation in order to create a new version of it, a situation of which he is now master, rather than victim, thereby “undoing” the past and gaining some control of his psychic history … [N]arrative itself is intimately linked to such plots of psychic mastery and empowerment … [There is] an essential doubleness in repetition that potentially subverts mastery and unsettles any notion of narrative beginnings and ends (Quint 1993: 51).

For Quint, who reads the Aeneid as an “epic of the victors,” epic poetry correlates narrative to power. Virgil attempts to efface the “indeterminacy,” “confusion,” and “disorder” of internecine strife by displacing Cleopatra (and by extension, Antony) into the role of foreign other (1993: 45-46). Thus, Aeneas’ shield and Augustus’ embossed victory at Actium symbolize the triumph of reason and meaning, so that “the epic

\(^8\) For which he is indebted to Freud’s Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920) and Peter Brooks’ Reading for the Plot (1985).
narrative projects episodes of suspension and indirection in order that it may overcome them and demonstrate its ultimately teleological form” (1993: 46).

How to reconcile the seeming contradiction of ellipsis (erasure) and repetition (reminder)? Quint’s “episodes of suspension and indirection” can further create Gomel’s lacunae and ellipses of narrative, which admit the possibilities of chaos and disorder in order to reconcile and resolve them in the end; a certain ‘narrative imperialism’ is at work, insofar as the witness creates a ‘new version’ of the event, over which he gains mastery. This effort at control requires a certain amount of fabulist gymnastics and narrative decision-making in order to undo the past. One wishes to recreate the trauma in the interests of mastery, but some parts of that trauma may preclude narration due to their horror and impossibility. Like Deiphobus’ attempt to hide his wounds (Aen. 6.498-99), the Aeneid reminds the reader of past conflict as it tries simultaneously to facilitate Augustus’ rehabilitative procedure on the Roman state. The wounds are there, lurking beneath a tenuous cover-up, and everyone knows it.

**The Grim Brothers: Hector and Deiphobus**

Virgil mediates his reception of Homer through Ennius and Lucretius. (This is not to discount the impact of Attic tragedy and Hellenistic epic; Virgil’s violence derives most directly from the Homer-Ennius-Lucretius network of influence.) To be sure, Hinds constructs his exemplary ‘transumptive metaphor’ or ‘meta-metamorphic allusion’ around Virgil’s nod to Ennius’ tree-felling scene (which itself alludes to that of Il. 23.114-20), where the two-way figure pivots about Virgil’s/Aeneas’ ‘intervention’ into archaic Italy/Latin epic (1997:12-14). Such interventions imbue the Aeneid with a certain

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'ambivalence’ or ‘tension’, whence later responses to the poem reap creative energy (Thomas 1988: 261-73). This ambivalence appears in high relief in the poem’s violent movements, where Virgil impresses a reverent patina on epic combat. Wary of containing, much less explaining, the violence of a nascent principate, Virgil’s reverence relives the wounds of previous decades and offers expository admonition to generations to come.

At two critical junctures in the *Aeneid*, Virgil introduces the mangled, yet vatic, visages of Hector and Deiphobus (*Aen. 2.270-79 and 6.494-99*). Fuqua argues that these corpses “offer a striking compound of the ironies of the traditional heroic code and the need to transcend it … the mutilated figures offer [sic.] a fixed point of reference for evaluating heroic conduct, and Virgil employs the increasing brutality of their disfigurement to delineate the intensity of the past’s hold on Aeneas as he progresses into the future” (1982: 239). Fuqua’s argument is fine as it goes, but it seems to overlook Aeneas’ reception in Italy: he turns from the atrocities of the Homerica to the atrocities of the *maius opus* (*Aeneid 7-12*). If anything, the *Aeneid* grows more violent as the story progresses toward its final sword-stroke (note the Sibyl’s prophetic *bella, horrida bella* at 6.86). Given that the cadavers of Hector and Deiphobus direct the reader back to epic’s past in the Homeric and Cyclic epics, their appearance has more to offer the critic who asks, why do two mutilated characters give Aeneas such important news about his quest? I consider Hector and Deiphobus important, if grotesque, allusive conduits.10

Consider side-by-side the grim states of Hector and Deiphobus:

10 I treat Polydorus below, who is also dismembered, but does not appear in somatic fashion.
“in somnis, ecce, ante oculos maestissimus Hector
uisus adesse mihi largosque effundere fletus,
raptatus bigis ut quondam, aterque cruento
puluere perque pedes traictus lora tumentis
… … …
squalentem barbam et concretos sanguine crinis
uulneraque illa gerens, quae circum plurima muros
accepit patrios.” (Aen. 2.270-3; 277-9)

“Look! In my sleep most pitiable Hector appeared plainly to be in front of
me. And he poured forth great weeping, such as he was when once
captured by the chariot; he was black with bloody dust and his swollen
feet were marred by the reign … his beard was dirty and his hair matted
with blood, and he wore the many wounds he received about his father’s
walls.”

atque hic Priamiden laniatum corpore toto
Deiphobum videt et lacerum crudeliter ora,
ora manusque ambas, populataque tempora raptis
auribus et truncas inhonesto uulnere naris.
uix adeo agnovit pauitantem ac dira tegentem
supplicia … (Aen. 6.494-9)

And here [Aeneas] saw Deiphobus the son of Priam with his whole body
mangled, his terribly lacerated face, his face and both his hands too,
and his temples blooming with ears stolen, and his nose severed with
undignified wound. As such, barely did he recognize [Deiphobus] as the
latter cowered and tried to cover his dread punishments …

The Hector-imago appears to be just released from Achilles’ chariot (raptatus bigis ut
quondam), for his hair is blood-clotted, his face grisly, and his ankles punctured. In
similar fashion, Deiphobus—fresh from his bout with Menelaus and Ulysses—still lacks
the features that define him as Deiphobus (ora, manus, nares); thus Aeneas struggles
to recognize him (vix agnovit). Where Hector propels Aeneas into Virgil’s Iliou persis,
Deiphobus meets the hero at a crossroads in the Underworld, at midday, between the
fields of Greek and (future) Roman animae. If Hector represents Troy’s destruction, and
with it Virgil’s preliminary violence toward the Homeric corpus, Deiphobus represents
that corpus limbless and bare, the tabula rasa. Fratantuono also connects the pair of
mutilated brothers in books 2 and 6, and like Fuqua, he reasons that these cadavers’ appearances stand in for the Homerica’s brutality and primitive heroism (2007: 47).\textsuperscript{11} But more underlies Virgil’s ‘poetic license’ when he chooses to reconstitute Hector in this guise: Virgil elects to cast Hector as he was at the time of his mutilation, not dressed for his funeral pyre; Aeneas and reader see Hector after-the-fact, but before his final cleansing; the \textit{Iliad} supplies the narrative violence (\textit{Il.} 24.14-18), which Virgil only points to or implies here.\textsuperscript{12} Just as Hector’s disfigured appearance symbolizes Troy’s looming destruction, so does it represent Virgil’s bout with the \textit{Iliad}. Beside the Trojan hero, Virgil has measured Troy’s bloody circumference through a deep re-reading of the \textit{Iliad}. The poet here makes a pointed narrative incision: he transplants the Hector of \textit{Iliad} 24 into \textit{Aeneid} 2 in order to spur his \textit{Iliou persis}.\textsuperscript{13}

In the Hector scene, Virgil’s language recalls his Latin predecessor Ennius in direct terms: Austin compares Ennius \textit{Ann.} 6 Sk. (\textit{visus Homerus adesse poeta}) and Lucretius \textit{DRN} 1.124-26 (\textit{unde sibi exortam semper florentis Homeri | commemorat speciem lacrimas effundere salas | coepisse}) and concludes that Virgil intends explicit comparison with the \textit{Annales} and \textit{DRN}. Thus, in the Hector scene Virgil appropriates Homeric violence through the poet that embodied Homer at Rome (Ennius). In this regard, Hector’s mangled visage, which appears in the same terms as those in which Homer appears to Ennius, stands in for the poet of the \textit{Iliad} himself. After his Ennian

\begin{flushleft} 11 Fuqua (1982: 235-40). Clarke (1998: 832-41) reaches the same conclusion, but to my mind this does not teach very much: Aeneas must turn away from past horrors and face the journey to future empire. These conclusions fail to recognize the significance of the conduits through which this information is conveyed. Cf. also Hershkowitz (1998: 87 n. 45).

12 Virgil perhaps takes a liberal reading of \textit{Il.} 24.19-21 where Apollo protects Hector’s body from lacerations. One wonders where \textit{illa uulnera} came from in the \textit{Aeneid}.

\end{flushleft}
metempsychosis, Homer’s (Hector’s) corpus exists in a battered state, on some transcendental plane (in somnis), but ever available for poetic inspiration and appropriation.

Past and future generations congregate in Aeneid 6. In the middle of this book, at the intersection of epic past and future, Virgil pares away membra from the epic corpus until it is barely recognizable as such. Just as Hector compels Aeneas into the future at poem’s beginning, so does Deiphobus at its midpoint. Moreover, Deiphobus’ appearance and speech (6.494ff.) fill a narrative gap opened in book 2. There, when Aeneas wakes from his dream, he runs to the rooftop and spies Deiphobus’ ampla domus topple into ruins (2.310-11). The Trojan’s appearance and speech in book 6 fill out what transpires inside that house before it collapses. One could push this further and say that Deiphobus tells what happens while Aeneas dreams of Hector.

Where the disfigured Hector represents a moment of Virgilian incision, the mutilated Deiphobus represents Virgil’s full dismemberment of the epic corpus. Deiphobus’ temporal and spatial position in the Underworld lend his limblessness further significance: he and Aeneas stand at a crossroads in the Underworld (Aen. 6.540), after the latter has seen the shades of Dido, Tydeus, Parthenopaeus, Adrastus, the Greeks who fell at Troy, and other Iliadic heroes; Anchises will soon show Aeneas his future descendants, and so here, at this fork in the road—at the intersection of epic past and future—Virgil holds Deiphobus’ mutilated corpse before the reader’s eyes. In such a liminal space, the Trojan’s mangled body represents the poetic corpus after its dismemberment in the Homerica and before its revival in the Aeneid. For Virgil, the corpses of Hector and Deiphobus become a grotesque pair of allusive conduits.
Hector’s corpus activates the atrocity of Achilles, while Deiphobus’ corpus activates the treachery of Helen.\textsuperscript{14} In each case, Aeneas receives information from a mutilated figure, who has suffered mightily in the previous epic tradition.

Scholars note important changes in Roman visual culture with Augustus’ ascension.\textsuperscript{15} Alden Smith highlights the ‘primacy of vision’ in the \textit{Aeneid} and the importance of visual consumption for Aeneas (2005: 159-75). For Smith, Aeneas’ visual experience reflects that of a first-century Roman, who could not help but connect the scenery in, say, the fora of Caesar or Augustus to those men’s presumed mythological lineage. Hector’s and Deiphobus’ pathetic aspects convey as much, if not more, poetological symbolism as their words. It is significant that Deiphobus’ disfigurement almost disrupts the power of sight for Aeneas, who barely (\textit{vix}) recognizes his Trojan brother. With a sort of destabilized Alexandrian footnote (\textit{agnovit}), Virgil nearly (\textit{vix}) disrupts his allusion here. Always a point of contention for modern Classicists, today’s readers often argue whether the ‘ideal reader’ or a first-century Roman would understand and make the same connection we do. Virgil here seems aware of this problem: tendentious allusion has the potential to fail a reader not versed in the tradition before him.

Aeneas encounters Hector’s and Deiphobus’ wounds in after-the-fact states. Virgil leaves to the reader’s literary knowledge or imagination how those wounds came

\textsuperscript{14} Cf. \textit{Od.} 4.276 & 8.517ff. which narrate the treachery of Helen at the Fall of Troy—however obliquely. It is unclear if the Cyclic epics (the \textit{iliou persis} in particular) treated Deiphobus’ demise. \textit{Od.} 8.519 says that Odysseus went with Menelaus to the house of Deiphobus and endured ‘miserable war’ there.

\textsuperscript{15} See in particular Galinsky (1998: 140-224) and Zanker (1990).
to be. In these figures, then, two narrative ellipses arise and release poetic energy for later authors. Ovid, Lucan, and Statius take their cues from the occluded mutilations in Virgil and meditate on the poetic-aesthetic potential of narrative violence. Lucan’s Marius Gratidianus, for example, suffers the same punishments as Deiphobus (and more, plus quam) in a figurative damnatio memoriae that recalls the atrocity of the Civil War period. As a Roman Deiphobus, Lucan’s Gratidianus appears at the moment of his dismemberment, so that his presence in BC 2’s epyllion initiates Lucan’s dismemberment of the epic corpus. On the other hand, Virgil’s Deiphobus (now a Trojan Gratidianus perhaps), who reflects a defaced bust, gains pathos from a damnatio memoriae that should never have occurred. Virgil thus injects the violence of Roman visual culture into the Trojan disaster and so marks Deiphobus as an implicit casualty of the civil wars. Deiphobus’ horrific aspect appeals to a contemporary reader’s memory of previous strife and endows his character with contemporary, Roman symbolism. Conscious of it or not, Virgil creates room for an aesthetic turn at Rome: symbolic, or poetological, violence in epic narrative.

Neil Coffee observes an economy of suffering in Roman epic and measures the cost of human life in mercantile terms. Often violence erupts because of disrupted hospitium or gift exchanges. He notes that Deiphobus’ mangled appearance acts as a ‘spectral correlative to Trojan wrongdoing’, which points back to Paris’ original abduction.

16 Deiphobus narrates his final moments to Aeneas, but cuts his narrative short (quid moror? Aen. 6.528) when Odysseus and Menelaus burst into his bedroom. The closest he comes to narrating the removal of his features is to say that Odysseus exhorted Menelaus to scelerum (Aen. 6.528-29). “You can see for yourself what they did, I do not have to tell you,” he seems to say.

17 Varner (2004: 1-20) sketches out the tradition of damnatio memoriae in Roman portraiture, where the normal procedure involved cutting the nose, scouring the face, or slicing the head into quadrants. See further my comments in Chapter 4 below on Gratidianus’ defacement.
of Helen (2009: 51). As part of a ‘monstrous gift exchange’, Deiphobus’ defining features become currency in the transaction of Helen’s apology gesture to Menelaus. His self-censorship (quid moror? Aen. 6.528) and missing appendages open lacunae on his corpus, which must be filled by imaginative means. His stolen membria, then, are totems to Menelaus’ embarrassment. Reflected in Deiphobus’ membria-turned-money, epic composition employs an economy of poetic pain and suffering. One must be willing to do violence to tradition and shoulder the aesthetic burden (recall Horace’s disiecti membria poetae). Virgil’s reverent pose exalts the Homeric monuments as it partakes in the necessary res novae of epic composition after Actium.

**A Corpus Without A Name**

Priam’s moment of death receives minimalist treatment from Virgil, yet it sets off myriad associations for later readers of the *Aeneid*. In nine dense verses Virgil despatches the king:

```latex
hoc dicens altaria ad ipsa trementem
traxit et in multo lapsanem sanguine nati,
implicuitque comam laeua, dextraque coruscum
extulit ac lateri capulo tenus abdidit ensem.
haec finis Priami fatorum, hic exitus illum
sorte tuliT roiam incensam et prolapsa uidentem
Pergama, tot quondam populis terrisque superbum
regnatorem Asiae. Iacet ingens litore truncus,
aaulsumque ueris caput et sine nomine corpus. (Aen. 2.550-8)
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Saying this, [Neoptolemus] dragged the trembling [Priam] to the very altar while he slipped in the copious blood of his son. And he entwined the hair in his left hand, and with his right he buried the sword in the failing king’s side up to the hilt. This was the end of Priam’s lifespan; this exit perchance took him as he gazed upon Troy ablaze and toppled Pergamum, which once upon a time was the haughty helmsman for so many people and places in Asia. He rests on the shoreline, at once a mighty trunk: a head ripped from its shoulders—and a corpse without a name.
When Neoptolemus executes Troy’s king, Virgil strips the Iliadic corpus of its titular appendage. Priam’s trunk lies on the shore without a name—Priam, Homer, or otherwise. Hinds, who follows Narducci and Servius, sees the ingens truncus on Ilium’s beach as an allusion to Pompey Magnus’ headless corpse on the sands of Egypt (1997: 9). Thus one may expand the metapoetic implications of Priam’s cadaver as follows: just as Pompey is the last representative of the Roman republic, so Priam is the last representative of the Troy-based poetic thread. Both beheadings usher in new narrative epochs; both expand their respective territories of Roman experience; both infuse their respective discourses with fresh signifiers. And within the poetic discourse, the Trojan remainder hereafter flee the city with their narrative strands (and epics). Virgil picks Aeneas’ thread for his subject, so it is only right that Priam’s trunk should lie a corpse sine nomine: for Virgil, for the Aeneid, when Priam dies the poetic space traversed by Aeneas still lacks signification (he has not yet left Troy). In the midst of Ilium’s destruction, among the fallen corpora of the Trojan cycle, Virgil’s corpus, that of the Aeneadae, lacks a name. In this liminal space, while the reader gazes at Priam’s trunk on the beach, the story is still the Iliou persis.

Just as the Homeric and Cyclic heroes hack one another to pieces in their epics, so Virgil lops off Homer’s membra in his poetic endeavor. The sad states of Hector and Deiphobus in the Aeneid are hardly surprising considering those characters’ participation in previous Greek epic. Priam’s corpse is unrecognizable (sine nomine), but paradoxically, his decapitation (like Pompey Magnus’) distinguishes him as Priam, the king who dies brutally with his city. The paradox recurs when Aeneas spies Deiphobus: vix adeo agnovit (Aen. 6.498). On the one hand, Aeneas is slow to
recognize Deiphobus because the latter lacks his defining features, while on the other hand the reader appreciates Deiphobus as *Deiphobus* because he lacks his defining features. Deiphobus gains signification and a place in epic memory with the removal of those appendages that define him as Deiphobus.\(^1\) To push this thought further, Priam’s *corpus* has no *nomen*, that is, no *nomen* is attached to this body whatsoever; the *Aeneid* then appends Virgil’s name to the body of literature. Likewise, Deiphobus’ *corpus* lacks its recognizable *membra*, and so his body represents a *tabula rasa* open to Virgilian arrangement. Both characters lose identity within the poem’s narrative confines, yet both characters earn permanence in epic memory through this non-recognition. In each case too, the violence that strips them of their identity is occluded. In these exemplary deaths, then, Virgil opens two ellipses, within which his epic successors find a store of poetic-symbolic energy to feed their projects.

**Picking Up the Pieces of Polydorus**

The foregoing observations point to a reticent violence on the part of Virgil. In his exemplary mutilations, Virgil deigns to narrate the bloody procedures outright. He is less reluctant when it comes to tree-felling. Body violation as an allusive device has an analogue in landscape violation. After Thomas, Hinds points out the ambivalence engendered by Aeneas’ ‘intervention’ in the archaic Italian landscape in *Aeneid* 6. Yet, three books previous Aeneas makes a similar intervention in Thrace. It was here, he tells Dido, that his fellow Dardanian Polydorus was sent by Priam to seek aid from king Polymestor. Upon hearing of Trojan misfortunes, Polymestor kills Polydorus (*Polydorum* \(^1\) Cf. also Lucan *BC* 2.181-85 where Sulla’s men take Gratidianus’ mutilated corpse to their *dux* so that Sulla may recognize and appreciate Gratidianus (*BC* 2.190-92).
obtruncat, 3.55) and dismembers him. Aeneas meets his Trojan kin in his new state as a mound of bramble, which bleeds when he breaks off its branches:

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nam quae prima solo ruptis radicibus arbos uellitur, huic atro liquuntur sanguine guttae et terram tabo maculant …
rrursus et alterius lentum conuellere uimen insequor et causas penitus temptare latentis; ater et alterius sequitur de cortice sanguis …
tertia sed postquam maiore hastilia nisu adgreder genibusque adversae obluctor harenae, (eloquar an sileam?) gemitus lacrimabilis imo auditur tumulo et uox reddita fertur ad auris … (3.27-29, 31-33, 37-40)
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“From the first branch which was torn from the ground with the roots broken, hither drops flow with black blood and they stain the earth with gore … and so again I repeat and tear the slender sprout of another and [hope] to essay the reasons for this hiding within; and again black blood follows from the bark … but after I attempt the third vine with greater effort, grappling on my knees against the difficult sand (should I speak or remain silent?), a tearful groan is heard deep inside the mound and a voice is brought forth, redounding to my ears.”

Aeneas’ clumsy actions here suggest an obtuseness toward sacred space and nature that resurfaces in Ovid’s Erysichthon scene.¹⁹ Yet, where Erysichthon’s disregard for sacred space marks him as an outright criminal, Aeneas at least has the excuse of preparations for religious ritual. Still, both Virgil and Ovid elide the metapoetic motifs of tree-felling and blood-letting into apposite allusive gestures. Polydorus’ remains, such as they are, lie scattered throughout a tangle of vines and branches (uirgulta et densis hastilibus horrida, 3.24) and initiate intertextual relationships both before and after Aeneas’ confrontation with him: his scattered membra recall the Trojan failure at Ilium and foreshadow Aeneas’ meeting with Deiphobus’ confused aspect in book 6. Whereas Deiphobus has lost his membra, yet Polydorus still ‘has’ his in changed form. In fact, it

¹⁹ Cf. also Thomas 1988: 264: “The story of Erysichthon … may be regarded as the literary and mythical exemplum … directed towards demonstrating the implications of tree violation.”
is Aeneas who commits the dismemberment here, though unaware at first. Thomas rather jibes Aeneas for his dense reaction and triple effort at breaking off pieces of Polydorus: “Aeneas is seized by terror, a natural reaction. But the same cannot be said of his next act, which indicates that he is totally uncomprehending of the nature of his action (1988: 266).” Aeneas’ triple desecration in Thrace in fact weaves together three allusive devices: he violates a sacred grove that contains a grave, which contains a corpse. As another victim of violated hospitium, Polydorus warns Aeneas and his Trojans away from Thrace and toward their proper destination in Italy. Thus, Aeneas’ misguided wanderings are reflected in Polydorus’ tangled (and now broken) remains, which, as they drip blood, tell Aeneas of the failed mission to Polymestor. Like Hector and Deiphobus, Aeneas’ encounter with another mutilated Trojan symbolizes the tragic mangling of the Trojan cycle in Virgil’s poem. Reflected in Aeneas’ misunderstanding of Polydorus’ bleeding branches, Virgil comments on his poetic task as at times a misguided, potentially violent exercise. The tangle of traditions and narrative threads presents a poetic labyrinth, replete with dead ends, switchbacks, and bloody encounters. However pure one’s intentions, the author cannot always be sure what damage he inflicts on hallowed poetic ground.

**Homer, Ennius, and Virgil’s Epic Imperialism**

I noted earlier that Virgil challenges Homeric and Ennian epic on its own terms and that the *Aeneid* participates in, and constructs, an epic of empire with Augustan Rome as its narrative *telos*. After numerous misdirections, delays, and deferrals, Virgil’s final three books grant the promised violence of martial epic. *Aeneid* 10 comprises the most sustained battlefield imagery of the poem, and its violent scenes engage Homeric, Ennian, and Lucretian modes of epic carnage in a bid for poetic permanence. Virgil
announces his rivalry with the *Iliad's* martial scenery when Aeneas demands the missiles brought from Troy:

“suggere tela mihi, non ullum dextera frustra
torserit in Rutulos, steterunt quae in corpore Graium
Iliacis campis.” (*Aen.* 10.333-35)

“Supply me the spears which stood in the Greek body on Ilium’s plain; my hand will cast none in vain against the Rutulians.”

The enjambed and punctuating *Iliacis campis* direct the reader back to Iliadic combat, and the singular *corpore* collapses the plural body count of the Greeks into a unified whole that here stands for the *corpus* of the Trojan War cycle. Aeneas (Virgil) dons the *tela* of Homer’s Trojans and launches them against new enemies in a new epic for new mythic-political ends. The perfect *steterunt* makes explicit that these spears have been extracted from the Greek body/ies and will soon stick in Italian ones (note the future-perfect *torserit in Rutulos*).\(^{20}\) Here arises Quint’s repetition as a return to (perfect *steterunt*) and a return of (future perfect *torserit*) previous trauma. More and more, the conflict in Italy resembles that at Ilium.

Soon after, Virgil alludes to Ennius through strong polyptoton:

\begin{quote}
anceps pugna diu, stant obnixa omnia contra:
haud aliter Troianae acies aciesque Latinae
concurrunt, haeret pede pes densusque uiro uir. (*Aen.* 10.359-61)
\end{quote}

The fight wavers at length; everything stands gridlocked on both sides: not otherwise [than raging winds] do the Trojan and Latin battlelines run together; foot steps on foot and man is packed against man.

Virgil’s repetition and polyptoton recall Ennius *Ann.* 584 Sk. (*pes premitur pede et armis arma teruntur*), and Harrison compares also Furius Bibaculus *Poet.* 10, Horace’s...

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\(^{20}\) Harrison names *torserit* “the future perfect of strong confidence or predicted result” (1991 ad loc.).
Alpinus turgidus discussed above (pressatur pede pes, mucro mucrone, viro vin).\(^{21}\)

When he deploys language in terms so close to Ennius, Virgil again invites comparison with his Republican model; and like his earlier allusion to the Annales’ tree-felling scene, his gesture raises ethical questions about Aeneas’ enterprise. To map out the meta-metamorphic allusion: Aeneas’ deadlock with the archaic Italians dramatizes Virgil’s bout with Ennius, while Virgil’s rivalry with Ennius takes the form of invader Aeneas’ war with the archaic Italians. Note that the polyptoton of the final line includes no adjectives or possessives, so that the reader is left to guess whose foot is ablative and whose nominative. This choice is not disjunctive, and in the chaos of battle such identification grows impossible. As Quint observes,

> [T]he war in Latium is one of like against like; the Trojans, in fact, enter into a preexisting conflict of Italians against Italians … What might have seemed a straightforward teleological plot of epic conquest, where a historically destined Rome creates narrative and history by defeating an external enemy who embodies a demonic, nonnarratable repetition—the never-say-die Turnus who is inspired by the infernal Fury Allecto—can now also be read as Rome wrestling with her own inner demons, the demons of a national repetition compulsion (1993: 80).

When Virgil sets his epic against Ennius in the same polyptoton employed by his predecessor, he muddles the distinctions between his project and the Annales. In the case of the Annales—with its catalogue-like synopsis of world history—epic narrative is instead a teleology of (Roman) power. The Aeneid also participates in this construction of history and must do so in the same arena where Ennius stands. Quint is right to argue that Aeneas and Turnus grow to mirror one another at the poem’s end,\(^{22}\) and through Ennian polyptoton, Virgil maps the Aeneas-Turnus struggle onto his own bout

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\(^{21}\) Harrison (1991 ad loc.); cf. Macrobius (Sat. 6.3.5) and Lucan BC 1.5-7.

\(^{22}\) Quint (1993: 68-74) highlights Aeneas’ and Turnus’ inversion of the former’s duels with Diomedes and Achilles in the Iliad, where Turnus becomes (defeated) Aeneas and Aeneas the conqueror.
with the author of the *Annales*. The echo is faint and localized, but taken with Virgil’s other allusions to Ennius, one senses a sort of rivalry forming between the Republican narrative and that of contemporary Augustan Rome.

30 lines later, Virgil mediates his reception of Ennian violence through Lucretius. He revives the quivering appendages found at *Ann*. 483-84 Sk. and *DRN* 3.653:

nam tibi, Thymbre, caput Euandrius abstulit ensis;
te decisa suum, Laride, dextera quaerit semianimesque micant digiti ferrumque retractant. (*Aen*. 10.394-96)

For Evander’s sword stole your head, Thymber, and your severed right hand sought after you, Larides, its master; and its semi-animate fingers twitch and try to reclaim their blade.

Virgil returns to Lucretius’ thought experiment and ultimately Ennius’ *Ann*. 483-84 Sk. (*oscitat in campis caput a cervice revulsum | semianimesque micant oculi lucemque requirunt.*) In addition to quivering appendages, Virgil directly echoes Ennius’ *semianimesque micant*; yet, he replaces Ennius’ *oculi* with the less intuitive *digi*. Like Ennius’ semianimate head, dying appendages inhabit a paradox: as moribund limbs, their animation wanes into lifelessness, yet their aesthetic potential kickstarts their repeatability. Virgil resparks the poetic energy left to these images in Ennius and Lucretius, and appropriates them as necessary losses in the story of Roman imperialism. In this context, whatever pathos a quivering foot loses in the *DRN* is reanimated in the Trojan-Italian conflict.

**Re(-)Membering the Corpus**

Virgil deploys a universalizing image of the metaphoric *corpus* in his Underworld. Anchises’ philosophy lesson to Aeneas explains a cyclical process of reanimating *corpora*, and his lecture offers a counterpoise to the Lucretian conception of *animae* and the Underworld. After seeing the deceased of epic past, Aeneas learns about his future
Roman descendants, who appear as *animae* at the foot of their lookout. He knows how deceased souls come to rest in Hades (like Deiphobus’ soul), so Anchises instructs on how bodies regain life:

“principio caelum ac terras camposque liquentis
lucentemque globum lunae Titaniaque astra
spiritus intus alit, totamque infusa per artus
mens agitat molem et magno se corpore miscet.” *(Aen. 6.724-7)*

“In the first place, Spirit hidden deep nourishes the sky and land and flowing fields and the bright orb of the moon and the Titan-stars, and Mind—poured through the limbs—stirs the whole mass and mixes itself throughout the great body.”

Here one sees the infusion of *mens* into *corpus* in visible fashion: the intellect installs itself inside its *magnum (se) corpus* in order to carry out the reconstitution process. Virgil’s use of *moles* carries metapoetic implications: the great mass of poetic material—comprising various limbs (*artus*)—gains renewed vigor when *mens* is introduced to its already inspirited *corpus*. The poet here constructs another transumptive metaphor: the operation of *mens* symbolizes Virgil’s animation of the poetic *corpus-moles*, while at the same time Virgil’s animation of the *corpus* reflects the operation of *mens* in the great world-body.

Considering the currency of Epicurean thought and literature in first-century Rome, and in light of Virgil’s connections to Philodemus and Maecenas, the cast of *animae* in the *Aeneid*’s Underworld—especially the disfigured Deiphobus—is striking when laid against another Epicurean meditation on the afterlife, *DRN* 3.24 In the lines

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23 See Fratantuono (2007: 187-89) for a distillation of the ‘great world-body’ in Anchises’ speech and the various philosophical influences it demonstrates.

immediately preceding his dismemberment thought experiment, Lucretius addresses disembodied \textit{animae} roaming Hades, but with a view to dispelling their existence there:

\begin{verbatim}
praeterea si immortalis natura animaist
et sentire potest secreta a corpore nostro,
quinqve, ut opinor, eam faciundum est sensibus auctam.
nec ratione alia nosmet proponere nobis
possimus infernas animas Acherunte vagari.
pictores itaque et scriptorum saecla priora
sic animas intro duxerunt sensibus auctas.
at neque sorsum oculi neque nares nec manus ipsa
esse potest animae neque sorsum lingua, neque aures;
haud igitur per se possunt sentire neque esse. (DRN 3.624-33)
\end{verbatim}

Moreover, if the nature of the soul is immortal and can have sense after it is removed from our body, as I see it, only must it also be constituted of sense perception. But by no means can we imagine that souls wander down below in Acheron. Thus painters and previous generations of writers have introduced souls so constituted of sense. But neither eyes (sight) nor nose (smell) nor hand itself (touch) can exist apart from the soul, nor tongue (taste/speech) nor ears (hearing). Thus [souls] can in no way have sense nor exist by themselves.

Against artists and authors, Lucretius disproves the existence of \textit{animae} in Acheron through \textit{a priori} reasoning: since the soul resides in the sense-organs (\textit{oculi, nares, manus, lingua} and \textit{aures}), the body’s loss of these appendages in death entails the decomposition of the \textit{anima}. Lucretius’ challenge to the \textit{pictores et scriptorum saecla priora} seems to spark Virgil’s interest: if the \textit{anima} cannot exist separate of eyes, nose, hands, tongue or ears, what is Deiphobus’ \textit{anima} doing in the Underworld without its nose, hands, ears or face (\textit{lacerum crudeliter ora} \textit{ora})? In the Deiphobus scene, then, Virgilian poetics transcend Epicurean metaphysics, since the \textit{corpus} (of Homer, Ennius, or Lucretius) can be reanimated again and again. The intertextual process operates in two stages: after the poet dissects and studies the body of epic, he reconstitutes it in his own \textit{opus}, replete with the \textit{membra} of his tradition. A reader familiar with \textit{DRN 3}
associates Lucretius’ thought experiment with his challenge to writers and painters. Virgil then reverses Lucretius’ argument and repaints epic violence in tragic tones. Where limb loss sends no animae to Hell in the DRN, the Aeneid returns this imagery to the tragic register of Homeric epic.

Forward-Looking Conclusions

If Donatus is to be believed, Virgil wished his unfinished epic to be burned upon his death. One wonders what he would have added to reach completion, but that is no matter, since poets after him found plenty of material available for revision, expansion, and correction. Indeed, Ovid’s Metamorphoses presents itself as a sustained response to the Aeneid (to say nothing of Lucan’s Bellum Civile), and Ovid in fact paraphrases the second half of the prior epic in six short verses:

perstat, habet deos pars utraque, quodque deorum est instar, habent animos; nec iam dotalia regna, nec sceptrum soceri, nec te, Lavinia virgo, sed vicesse petunt deponendique pudore bella gerunt, tandemque Venus victoria nati arma videt, Turnusque cadit. (Met. 14.568-73)

[The war] continues, and each side has their gods, and they had animosity, which is the equivalent of gods; and now neither the dowry of a kingdom, nor the scepter of a father-in-law, nor you, virgin Lavinia, do they seek, but only to have won; and they wage war for the shame of yielding, until finally Venus sees her son’s victorious arms and Turnus falls.

Ovid here collapses Virgil’s maius opus into a rather petty fight with simple victory as the goal (vicesse petunt); gone are the pious motivations of Virgil and his Aeneas. Ovid assimilates the gods to the contenders’ mutual animadversion (deorum instar = animos). His coda Turnusque cadit recreates Virgil’s closing scene and so deflates the teleological narrative of the Aeneid into a mere link in a chain of mythohistorical fabulae.

that culminate in Ovid’s own poetic immortality (*vivam*, *Met*. 15.879). Where Virgil can efface the growing pains of a nascent Principate, Ovid casts in high relief the tensions, gaps, and moral ambiguities raised in “Augustus’ *Aeneid*.”26 I take my cue here from Quint:

The divinely sanctioned historical plan of the *Aeneid* is meaningless [for Ovid], not only because both Trojans and Latins have gods on their side, but also because the gods … are interchangeable with the animosity of the warriors. The ostensible causes, just or unjust, that might distinguish the belligerents are swept aside as the war progresses and is fought solely for the sake of domination. One cannot construct a narrative out of naked violence, and Ovid does not even try (1993: 82-83).

Ovid reads the *Aeneid* as over-determined and complicit with the ‘naked violence’ of the Augustan restoration, and in so doing he implicates Virgil in the Augustan deletion-through-violence of recent memory; he appears at a loss as to how a poet could dramatize, or seemingly exalt, the violence of previous generations. To be sure, Aeneas’ killing of Turnus comes to resemble a state-sanctioned or “judicial” homicide for the purposes of the Augustan narrative (Quint 1993: 95). Like Lucan after him, Ovid focuses not on the ends (Principate) but rather the means (civil war, *bellum civile*), and he highlights the aesthetic-ethical issues that internecine conflict raises for the artist. Likewise for Lucan, when Virgil occludes Priam’s beheading, he does violence to a major symbolic and historical event, whence flows an overabundance of creative energy. The *BC* is at pains to remind Neronian Rome that certain niceties of the Augustan narrative are instead cover-ups and gaps in the historical record. Even so, Virgil composed the ‘epic of the victors’ and so defined the terms of argument for his epic successors.

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26 Ovid applies the possessive to Virgil’s poem at *Trist*. 2.533: *ille tuae felix Aeneidos auctor.*
CHAPTER 3
THE CORPUS IN FLUX: SNIPPETS OF THE METAMORPHOSES

The *Metamorphoses* plunges Ovid into a new body of work (*in nova fert animus corpora, Met. 1.1-2*), and among the poem’s tensions with the epic genre, its scenes of violence take on rather sardonic overtones.¹ Scholars note the poem’s somatic fascination.² Joseph Farrell observes a ‘metapoetic theme’ of the body in the *Metamorphoses*, wherein the poem evolves from perishable, embodied text to immortal, disembodied voice (1999: 127-41). Amy Richlin reads Ovid’s rape scenes as uneasy conflations of sex and violence; she notes a “delighted incongruity of clever style with gruesome subject matter” (1991: 164). This is not to trivialize Ovidian wit as mere ludic innovation. Rather, Ovid’s consistent equivocation provokes ambivalent responses to violent art: incongruities in form and content reflect on the aesthetic milieu of Augustan Rome. So-called ‘traditional’—that is, Homeric/Virgilian—epic becomes an inadequate medium in the increasingly stifled experience of the early principate. “Is this not epic *ars*?” Ovid asks. Where Richlin focuses on the women sawed in half,³ I consider Ovid’s broader poetic violence, which exhibits both inter- and intratextual directions of operation. This chapter does not treat scenes like Philomela’s ordeal, where gender

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3 Richlin’s metaphor of the magician sawing a woman in half (1991: 158 et passim.), whence she derives pantomimic readings of the *Metamorphoses*. Notably, Richlin focuses on female suffering in the Ovidian *corpus*. Ovidian violence expresses not just gender concerns, and I consider the treatment of a textual body, epic poetry.
concerns seem central to Ovid’s narrative. Instead, I take a broader scope and so shed light on Ovid’s aesthetic contributions to epic violence. My approach builds upon that of Richlin, insofar as it highlights features of Ovid’s violence across a larger data set. I trace out three themes of Ovidian violence:

1) Ovid’s violence increases the brutality of that found in Virgil and Homer, but not in the interests of sentimentality. He, like Lucan, has interest in the aesthetic power of humor and horror, a seemingly incompatible mixture. In this regard, he is instrumental in developing the ‘grotesque’ aesthetic experience, under which banner Lucan will operate after him.

2) In his post-Aeneid Rome, Ovid meditates on the literary-political and aesthetic anxieties of an Augustan corpus imperii. Ovid points up the plasticity and malleability of such a formulation, and his violent scenes reflect on the aggressive reinterpretation of Greco-Roman literature in the Augustan period. He reads the Aeneid as complicit in this re-writing of previous mythohistory, and the unified, teleological narrative of Virgil’s (and Augustus’) project is for Ovid too static and singular in scope.

3) Violent scenes often become metatextual moments, wherein Ovid demonstrates his dialogue with previous writers through metaphorical dismemberments of their work. His own work is not immune to textual violence, and his exilic writings submit his previous corpus to intratextual dismemberment, reflective of Augustus’ heavy-handed command to excise Ovid from contemporary Rome.

**Anatomy of an Exile**

Ovid’s ingenium composed the wrong poetry at the wrong time: carmen et error he insists throughout his stay in Tomis (Tr. 2.1.107, 3.5.52, 3.6.26). I begin with a

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4 See most recently Newlands’ forthcoming “Violence and resistance in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*” (2013), where she highlights Tereus tyrannical monstrosity. She notes a twofold anxiety felt in the Philomela ordeal: “the seductive power of language, the freedom of the word to resist physical and political violence and at the same time its responsibility in engendering it.”

5 I borrow corpus imperii from Trist. 2.232. This phrase lends somatic language to what scholars variously describe as “the Augustan cultural synthesis” (E. Marie Young 2008: 1), “Augustan ideology” (Miller 2009: 333), or “Augustan cultural thematics” (Galinsky 1999: 107): “… the typically Augustan tendency to draw on, meld, and combine all previous traditions and to creatively make them into a new whole” (Galinsky 1999: 107).

6 Other instances of his error: Tr. 1.2.99, 1.3.37, 2.1.109, 3.11.34, 4.1.23; Epist. ex Pont. 3.3.75.
scene from the exilic poetry, for it provides a point of entry to larger issues of violence in the Ovidian corpus. In Trist. 3.9 Ovid offers an extreme example of the dangers attached to writing poetry in the Augustan principate. Tomis' etymology, it is said (fertur), stems from Medea's dismemberment of her brother. And like unwitting Absyrtus, exiled Ovid feels himself torn to pieces and cast overboard:

protinus ignari nec quicquam tale timentis
innocuum rigido perforat ense latus,
atque ita diuellit diuulaque membra per agros
dissipat in multis inueniendia locis
neu pater ignoret, scopulo proponit in alto
pallentesque manus sanguineumque caput,
ut genitor luctuque novo tardetur et, artus
dum legit extinctos, triste moretur iter.
inde Tomis dictus locus hic, quia fertur in illo
membra soror fratris consecuisse sui. (Trist. 3.9.25-34)

Forthwith [Medea] stabbed [Absyrtus'] innocent flank with a sharp sword while he ignorantly feared nothing of the sort, and she thus tore him to shreds and cast the shredded limbs about the fields where they would be found in many places. And lest her father miss anything, and in order that he be held up from this fresh grief and delay his wretched journey while he gathered the dead limbs, she displayed his pallid hands and bloody head on a high cliff. Thus this place is called Tomis, since, it is said, a sister atomized her brother’s limbs here.

Though traveling in opposite directions, Absyrtus and Ovid convene at Tomis. This exemplum fills a narrative gap in the Metamorphoses: there, Absyrtus never appears, so his dismemberment is omitted; here, five couplets narrate his dismemberment. Ovid revisits a fable with violent potential in the Metamorphoses and carves out figurative space in the Tristia. Hinds‘ poetic of conspiracy’ sees Caesar Augustus (‘the cutter’, Caesar > caedere) lurking beneath Medea and Ovid beneath Absyrtus. Like Absyrtus’ unfortunate relocation from Colchis, Ovid’s exile from Rome ruptures his corpus (diuelli

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7 Chaudhuri (2010: 57, 68-69, 83-86) speaks of ‘textual space’. When Ovid rends Absyrtus' body, he increases the Tristia's textual depth.
This meditation expresses Ovid’s anxiety that exile submits his body of work to the Imperial knife, that bodily displacement entails literary dismemberment. Like Cicero, the great litterateur of the previous generation, Ovid’s exemplary dismemberment puts his poetic limbs on monitory display (proponit manus … caput). One can now read only his scattered, moribund appendages (artus legit extinctos). And Augustus, qua Medea, appears cold, plotting, and sinister. Moreover, this is not the first time Ovid has portrayed Medea. The Metamorphoses’ Medea, though she never appears dismembering her brother, occupies the main narrative register for the first half of book 7 (Met. 7.1-424). In that span, she performs a reverse procedure than that on Absyrtus, when she rejuvenates Aeson, whose ‘empty hollows are filled and his body rounded out, and his limbs spring back to life’ (adiectoque cauae supplentur corpore rugae, | membraque luxuriant, Met. 7.291-92). What irony that the poet who created this witch should die at her hands. In this way, then, Ovid casts himself as a victim of his previous heroine, who fragments his corpus through intratextual dismemberment.

What is self-directed, or intratexual, dismemberment in the Tristia has seeds in the Metamorphoses. Compared to Ovid’s exilic poetry, his epic deploys centrifugal violence, which radiates into myriad literary contexts; ‘an omnivorous poem’ remarks Stephen Wheeler (1999: 27). Like the Aeneid, the Metamorphoses attempts a teleological narrative of Greco-Roman myth and history; yet, unlike the Aeneid, the Metamorphoses advertises grander scope (Chaos … mea tempora) and a more

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8 Cf. Hinds (2010: 200): “Ovid’s body (corpora) is being weakened in exile; his limbs (artus, ossa, membra) are being threatened by disease, emaciation, and withering … [Trist. 3.9] figures Ovid’s fortuna as another body outside his skin, and as a corporeal spectacle which holds the poet’s gaze in a weird self-as-other surrogacy.”
individual telos (Ovid’s disembodied voice, vivam). Ovid thus offers a couterpoise to what he sees as a politically over-determined narrative constructed by the Aeneid. The Metamorphoses is by no means apolitical, but rather it deploys at times satirical permutations of the constructs and procedures conjured by Virgil a generation before. Ovid is not as vociferous in his critique of Caesarism as Lucan after him, but one can see points of rupture and personal disagreement with what the poet sees as farcical or plastic reinterpretations of previous mythohistory. After Barchiesi (1997), John Miller provides a good model for cautious interpretation of Ovid’s supposed ‘anti-Augustanism’. For Miller the poem’s interactions with the gods—especially Jupiter and Apollo—illustrate an ironic and multivalent perspective on models of power in Augustan Rome: “the Metamorphoses … participate in the construction as well as the deconstruction of Augustan ideology” (2009: 333).

In the Metamorphoses, divine interactions leading to violence can reflect on contemporary pillars of authority in unflattering ways. For instance, Marsyas appears only while Apollo flays him; there is no treatment of their musical contest. In a macabre refocusing of Apolline (Augustan) aesthetics, Marsyas’ internal organs become the only material pertinent to Ovid’s project.9 As a corollary, Elizabeth Marie Young highlights Orpheus’ pivotal position in the poem, bridging as he does the Greek and Roman stories (2008: 6-8).10 As the ‘best singer’ of his day, Orpheus’ sparagmos at the hands

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9 Apollo and Marsyas’ musical contest perhaps appears among the domus Augusta’s visual decoration (E. Simon, LIMC s.v. “Apollon/Apollo” no. 290). Cf. Miller (2009: 1). Carole Newlands (2013) points out that in an alternate version of the Marsyas myth, Marsyas somehow survives the ordeal with Apollo and escapes to Italy, where he becomes a culture hero of liberty. It seems his presence at the domus Augusta signifies his position as bringer of freedom to Italy.

10 Orpheus narrates the bulk of book 10 (the last of the ‘Greek’ books) and dies at the beginning of book 11 (the first of the ‘Roman’ books). Young also highlights Orpheus’ centrality in the transition from oral to written poetry (2008: 9-11).
of unhearing Maenads offers a vignette of Ovid’s poetological stance. The bard’s
dismemberment embodies the poetic violence of Ovid’s composition: like Philomela
(and Daphne), Orpheus’ metamorphosis is textual in nature; Philomela’s amputations
compel her to weave narrative art, while Orpheus’ dismemberment disrupts his singing;
mutilation creates and destroys art. For Ovid, epic’s translation from Greece to Rome
requires a certain amount of bloodshed for poet and prince. Orpheus’ sparagmos
becomes critically instructive for Ovid’s narrative violence:

Ovid’s vividly corporeal Orpheus gives flesh to a newfound Augustan
metaphor, the idea of Greco-Roman literature as an organic whole, an intact
body (or corpus) that incorporates the depths of Greek antiquity into the
Roman present … The violence [Orpheus’] body experiences exposes the
paradoxes riddling such formulations; writing consistently in this scene
surfaces as a wound; the marks that Ovid scrawls on Orpheus’ flesh expose
points of historical and conceptual rupture that must be effaced to achieve the
Augustan idea of synthesis (Young 2008: 1-2).

Inasmuch as Orpheus’ dismembered corpus ‘mars’ the poem’s surface, so Ovid’s
transformative project proves corrosive to an Augustan corporation. As a metamorphic
vates, Orpheus’ corpus carries metapoetic implications: like the Augustan
‘dismemberment’ of Hellenistic literature and art, Orpheus’ wounds open fissures in this
cultural synthesis, whence sprout other narrative possibilities, other ways of telling the
story. One may extend Young’s observations to other scenes of violence in the poem,
where body violation throws into high relief the often-risible assumptions of a Greco-

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11 Dyson (1999: 281-89) makes a parallel argument, but treats Ovid’s reworking of Lavinia’s blush as an
exposition of ‘Ovid’s abiding concern with the confrontation of innocence and passion in a world where
the boundaries of civilization are only the lost dream of an irreclaimable past.’ Cf. also Rhorer (1980: 82-
85). Segal (1972: 473-94) gives a good overview of Orpheus’ place in Augustan Rome, though he
overlooks Ovid’s mocking treatment of the bard and his self-serving music.

12 Rea (2007: 7-14), following Gowing (2005), discusses history and memory as contested fields, where
the poets attempt to ‘control how the past defines the present’. See also Heath (1996: 353-70) who draws
out Orpheus’ programmatic qualities and self-characterization as a failed Hercules
Roman cultural synthesis under Augustus. The *Metamorphoses*’ self-serving, seemingly impossible, narrative spectrum (from *Chaos* to Ovid’s *tempora*) points up the malleability of a Roman *corpus imperii*.\(^\text{13}\) When Virgil’s Anchises describes the world as a *corpus* distributed into *artus* (*Aen.* 6.724-27), the *Aeneid* constructs an overdetermined and over-unified picture of Roman predestination. Ovid flaunts this synthetic *corpus* in favor of grotesque poetic scenery; violence and suffering become ‘aestheticized’ in his poem of metamorphic bodies.\(^\text{14}\) In short, Ovid seeks to destabilize the static unity woven into Augustus’ *Aeneid*.

Hinds’ (2010) lucid discussion rehabilitates so-called ‘conspiratorial’ readings of Ovid’s poetry. Supposed ‘ultra-secretive’ passages become potential *loci* for subversive interpretation. In the face of an increasingly autocratic Prince, Ovid’s backhanded statements on ‘Augustan cultural thematics’ render his underhanded comments more seductive. Hinds adopts Grosrichard’s logistics of power for monarchs and their subjects, wherein the Prince is signifier of himself:

If:

1. When the Prince speaks, the subject listens;
2. When the Prince does not speak, the subject (still) listens;

Then:

1. The subject’s speech is uninvited;
2. The subject’s speech is subversive.

When the Prince wants an opinion, he asks for it. Moreover, since the Prince’s mere existence activates his signifier, speech in his presence (*per voces vel litteras*) is conditioned by/for his response. Miller observes parallel dynamics in the

\(^{13}\) Like Augustus, Ovid can put his ‘stamp’ (*sphragis*) on the chaos of previous myth and history, and after Hinds (2010), the coexistence of Ovid’s and Augustus’ seals opens possibilities for ‘subversive’ or ‘conspiratorial’ readings in the Ovidian *corpus*. See Wheeler (1999: 31-33) for the ‘malleability’ of the Augustan *corpus imperii*.

\(^{14}\) See Martindale (1993: 61-64), who follows Galinsky (1975), in labeling the Marsyas scene as ‘pain aestheticized’.
Metamorphoses, where the all-too-human Jupiter and Apollo reflect poorly on perhaps another divine numen, the Emperor. One recalls Jupiter’s dictatorial pronouncement on the apotheosis of Hercules (Met. 9.243-58); no argument there. Ovid constructs a parallel power structure within his poem: as opifex rerum of his epic, Ovid’s word is law; his gods carry out his bidding, if even for violent tasks. Ovid thus acts as master of his poetic universe in the same way Augustus presumes to lord over the Roman Empire. Yet, as Ovid comes to find out in 8 CE, Augustus’ political-aesthetic prerogatives take precedence, so that the Metamorphoses becomes a failed experiment in power negotiations with his Emperor-reader.\textsuperscript{15} Reflected in Marsyas’ hyperbolic punishment, Augustus’ reading room is where artistic autonomy goes to die. If asked how to treat the body of literature under Augustus, then, Ovid might retort, “Like the gods treat it.”

\textbf{New Beginnings: Metamorphoses 1 and The Violence of Creation}

Somatic language often appears in critical discussion of Ovid’s narrative technique, and his epic’s first sentence invites this sort of diction (\textit{in nova fert animus mutatas dicere formas} | corpora, Met. 1.1-2). Wheeler points out that the proem enacts a metamorphosis from Ovid’s elegiac corpus into a new hexametric one (1999: 16-20).\textsuperscript{16} In its grand scheme, Ovid’s now-epic corpus attempts to interweave all previous corpora...

\textsuperscript{15} Hendren (2013) has recently shown that the thrust of Ovid’s argument in the exilic poetry is that Augustus politicizes Ovid’s work, not Ovid; and as such, Augustus becomes a poor reader/interpreter of Ovid’s poetry.

\textsuperscript{16} Cf. also Keith (2002: 237-38): “[the gods transform] not only the changed forms which constitute the poem’s subject matter but also Ovid’s verse-form itself, since they have metamorphosed his poetry from elegiac couplets into dactylic hexameters … [the] self-referential commentary on the literary aims of the Metamorphoses is buttressed by Ovid’s use of forma and corpora, which in stylistic discussion can refer to literary “forms” and “works” respectively: the poet undertakes to transform the diverse literary forms of his sources into the hexameter body of his epic.”
from Greco-Roman literature.\textsuperscript{17} John Henderson and Joseph Farrell underscore the import of somatic metaphors not only in the poem but also in critical writing about it:

The poet’s role as singer is linked to the power of his mind, a power to choose his poetic material and to impose upon it particular bodily shapes. Mind belongs to the singer; bodies are the substance of his poem. Indeed, [Ovid suggests] that the poem itself is a substantial thing, a kind of body, something that grows and changes through the application of poetic intelligence to inert matter, like the mythic bodies that are its subject (Farrell 1999: 128).

Ovid in the \textit{Metamorphoses} [flaunts] his collapse of epic decorum into an \textit{ego}-trip for the artiste-narrator; [treats] world history as a ‘perpetual’ flow of poems pouring bodies into the path of his ‘self-perpetuating’ mind; [pronounces] his own fame as the bequest of his metamorphic writing (Henderson 1998: 166).

The poem’s opening lines evince these theoretical metaphors: Ovid’s \textit{animus} compels him to narrate the formation, dissolution, and reformation of past \textit{corpora}. He gains access to these stories and myths through textual means (his physical \textit{materia}), and he must traduce them into the \textit{Metamorphoses} through textual means; plural \textit{corpora} (his ‘models’) morph into a new unified, singular whole. The poet and his poem sift, reshape, and remake the various bodies of texts that house Greco-Roman mythohistory.\textsuperscript{18}

\textit{Metamorphoses} 1 creates, destroys, and recreates human bodies. Symbolized in the second-generation \textit{corpora} of Pyrrha and Deucalion, the pristine epic \textit{corpus} experiences a schism, or literal distinction, during Ovid’s cosmology—a distinction first from \textit{Chaos}, then from the primeval elements. Ovid douses the pre-Deucalion narrative in bloodshed as he probes the cosmologies of previous writers. The poem makes two

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{17} Cf. Keith (2002: 238-39), who highlights Ovid’s linguistic ties to Homer, Hesiod, Callimachus, Empedocles, Ennius, Lucretius, and Virgil: “By invoking not only Homer and Virgil but also Hesiod, Ennius, and Lucretius so prominently in his proem, Ovid signals that the \textit{Metamorphoses} will combine the traditions of heroic and didactic epos in a comprehensive culmination of the genre.”}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{18} Cf. Wheeler (1999: 27): “… [T]here is no single predecessor that one can point to as [the \textit{Metamorphoses’}] source. There is no predesignated place for it in the library. On the contrary, it is an omnivorous poem that digests and incorporates within itself a virtual library of Greek and Roman authors.” I borrow ‘mythohistory’ from Michaela Janan (2009).}
initial approaches to the epic corpus, and each attempt multiplies Ovid’s violence on the body of tradition.\textsuperscript{19} What was a singular body (unum corpus, Met. 1.18) becomes plural; from here bodies multiply exponentially. At the outset, Ovid highlights his poem’s corporeal nature (nova corpora), and after a period of Chaos, his first act of differentiation slices through the confused members of that chaos, epic tradition.\textsuperscript{20} Still amidst the incipient disorder, his poetic elements cannot take full shape:

\begin{quote}
nulli sua forma manebat
obstabantque aliis aliud, quia corpore in uno
frigida pugnabant calidis, umenta siccis,
mollia cum duris, sine pondere habentia pondus.
hanc deus et melior litem natura diremit.
nam caelo terras et terris abscedit undas
et liquidum spisso secreuit ab aere caelum; (Met. 1.17-23)
\end{quote}

Nothing retained its own shape, and one thing obscured another, since within a single body cold fought with hot, wet with dry, soft with hard, and the weighty with the weightless. But God or a better nature divided this strife. For he severed earth from sky and water from earth, and he distinguished the blue canopy from our dry atmosphere.

The inchoate elements, though members of a single corpus, preclude the formation of recognizable limbs (nec brachia, 1.13). Derrida’s ‘violence of the letter’ (or Teskey’s ‘violence of thought’) resurfaces here in its radical form,\textsuperscript{21} for Ovid attempts to distinguish one part of Chaos from another (how different is one half of chaos from the other?); the universe has one face (unus erat toto naturae uultus in orbe, Met. 1.6).

\textsuperscript{19} Galinsky also reads the proem and cosmogony ‘poetologically’: “[The proem and cosmogony] can be read poetologically as the announcement of his poetic programme and its immediate illustration” (1999: 108).

\textsuperscript{20} The Hesiodic Theogony provides Ovid’s model. See Anderson (1997: 1552-53) for a similar discussion of the proem: “Ovid’s focus rests on the development of form … Thus, the important feature of things at the start is that they were formless or incapable or maintaining a form.”

\textsuperscript{21} Chapter 1 discusses Teskey’s ‘violence of thought’ upon the chaos of nature: for Teskey, allegory, and so meaning, enact force (vis) on nature, which inherently lacks meaning. Meaning, in its gerund form, describes ‘the opening of a rift or schism and the subsequent effort to repair it through imaginative means’.
Division of these warring parts (pugnabant) requires violent language (diremit, abscidit), and the cosmological amputations proceed until unique members grow distinct:

sic ubi dispositam quisquis fuit ille deorum congeriem secuit sectamque in membra redegit ...(Met. 1.32-33)

Thus some god sliced the mass and compelled the slices into limbs …

Here Ovid’s corpus gains initial limbs (membra) through a process of segmentation (secuit sectamque). From this mass of limbs sprout the first human figures (rudis et sine imagine tellus | induit ignotas hominum conversa figuras, 1.87-88). With the advent of the Iron Age, men turn their weapons against Mother Earth (itum est in viscera terrae, 1.138), and eventually against one another (pugnat utroque … hospes ab hospite … socer a genero, 1.142-45). After such segmentation, terra can only grow saturated with blood (caede madentes, 1.149).

Yet, worse is still to come, for Ovid’s Gigantomachy stains primeval Earth beyond salvation.\(^{22}\) The sons of Terra make a bloody mess of the cosmos:

obruta mole sua cum corpora dira iacerent, perfusam mucho natorum sanguine Terram immaduisse ferunt calidumque animasse cruorem et, ne nulla suae stirpis monimenta manerent, in faciem vertisse hominum. sed et illa propago contemptrix superum saeuaeque avidissima caedis et violenta fuit; scires e sanguine natos. (Met. 1.156-62)

While their dread bodies were lying heaped in a mass, they say, Earth was soaked and dripped in the copious blood of her sons; [then] she reanimated this warm gore and, lest any reminders of her offspring remain, she turned them into human form. But even that progeny hated the Gods and was quite hungry for wicked slaughter and was indeed violent; one could tell they were born of blood.

Ovid’s Alexandrian footnote (ferunt) highlights his retrospection over previous epic Gigantomachia. Now downcast and bleeding, this mass of bodies comprises Ovid’s poetic materia; his incarnation grants this corpus a new veneer (uultus), but one still infected with violence and bloodshed (uiolenta fuit; scires e sanguine natos). Ovid’s coda could also be translated, “One could recognize the offspring from their blood(line),” in that humans retain impious leftovers (monimenta) from their Giant relatives and continue to manifest their wickedness (contemptrix superum saevaeque auidissima caedis). Fratantuono reads these cosmogonic birth pains as an allegorical replaying of the civil war period and the nascent stages of the Principate (2011: 6). Indeed, the controlled chaos of Lucan’s Bellum Civile seems to argue for a similar reading of Ovid’s poem, and the Metamorphoses’ singular body (unum corpus) and unified face (unus uultus) at war with itself may signal the historical circumstance of Romans killing Romans. Under this reading, a metapoetic understanding of Ovid’s cosmogony gains further political significance: the Roman civil war has universal consequences that taint any author writing in their wake, even (or especially) for Virgil and Ovid. The bloody mound of bodies, then, map onto the unfortunate losers of the civil war period. Though they were giants, they still could not topple the gods. Seen in this light, Ovid’s cosmogony stands as a programmatic treatment of the epic corpus: a stylized jaunt through world mythohistory that focuses not on stability (pace the imperialistic Aeneid) but on change, mutation, and the violent consequences of those processes.

I suggest that the Gigantomachy carries metapoetic symbolism. Represented by the mound of slain bodies, Ovid digs through the corpora of previous epic tradition as he constructs his own narrative of Greco-Roman mythology. After slaughtering the Giants,
Jupiter makes a programmatic statement for the *Metamorphoses*. One can hear Ovid distill the problem of composing poetry with such a large supply of *corpora* in existence, when Jupiter complains thus:

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nam quamquam ferus hostis erat, tamen illud ab uno
corpore et ex una pendebat origine bellum …
perdendum est mortale genus …
cuncta prius temptanda, sed immedicabile corpus
ense recidendum est, ne pars sincera trahatur. (Met. 1.185-86; 188; 190-91)
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For although that enemy [the Giants] was barbarous, at least that conflict stemmed from a single body and single source … The human race must be destroyed … Everything should be tried first, but the incurable body must be cut out with the knife, lest the healthy section be infected too.

One may read this passage as poetological commentary: when dealing with one *corpus*, one source of violence (*ex una origine bellum*), Jupiter (and Ovid) can maneuver easy enough. But when the violence of Man metastasizes and with it his epics, diseased bodies undergo exponential growth; too many *corpora* overwhelm both Jupiter and poet. Yet one senses irony in these lines, especially if ‘Ovid’ lurks beneath ‘Jupiter’. The father of gods and men may feel overwhelmed with such a number of *corpora* lying about, and perhaps the author does too, but the fact of this multitude still does not stop Ovid from moving the poem forward. The earliest parts of ancient myth are easily dispensed with, stemming as they do from *unum corpus* (the Hesiodic *corpus*, perhaps); yet, once Man enters the world (*natus homo est*, 1.78), his strife and violence grow epidemic.\(^{23}\) As his poem’s *opifex rerum*, Ovid must choose which *corpora* to include and

\(^{23}\) Hardie (1983: 311-13) discusses the proliferation of Gigantomachy imagery in the Hellenistic period, where the successors of Alexander adopted the imagery to legitimize and allegorize their conquest over barbarian enemies. Modern critics lament the loss of Gigantomachy epics from this time, which, if visual culture is any indication, were diffuse.
which to exclude, which to essay (temptanda) and which to cut out (recidendum). In this way, Ovid assimilates himself to Jupiter, but as ever, this correlation shifts, waxes, and wanes throughout the Metamorphoses. To be sure, if read as an allegory of the civil war period, Ovid’s cosmogony and Gigantomachy cast Augustus also into the role of Jupiter, the eventual victor of the New World Order. Within this doublet (Ovid/Augustus = Jupiter), then, Ovid becomes something of an Augustus in the narrative construction of his poem. He thus equates imperial power to power over epic narrative.

**Under the Knife: Marsyas’ Pain Aestheticized**

The violence of *Metamorphoses* treats on a topical level the necessary ruptures in the primeval corpus. Amidst these growing pains, the opifex rerum, demiurge, or artiste-narrator stakes his initial claim within the body of literature. After the birth of man, Ovid embarks on human affairs, and in his anthropomorphic stories, the violence his characters experience often becomes the ‘object of artistic vision’ (Martindale 1993: 64). Marsyas is programmatic in this regard. Some see a pseudo-scientific anatomy-lesson taking place. Almost as a footnote to the slaughter of the Niobids—that is, as a sidelight exemplum of men’s hubris—the demiurge narrates Marsyas’ flaying with only a one-word mention of his tibia contest against Apollo. He focalizes the scene first through the mouth and body of Marsyas:

‘quid me mihi detrahis?’ inquit;
‘a! piget, a! non est’ clamabat ‘tibia tanti.’
clamanti cutis est summos derepta per artus,
nec quidquam nisi uulnus erat; cruor undique manat
detectique patent nerui trepidaeque sine ulla
pelle micant uenae; salientia uiscera possis

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24 See Martindale (1993: 64) who follows Galinsky (1975) in this in this reading.

25 Anderson describes Marsyas’ inclusion as a ‘casual’ and ‘perfunctory’ story about blasphemy, one that in its brevity eases the poem’s narrative away from the theme of men’s hubris (1972: 201).
et perlucentes numerare in pectore fibras. (Met. 6.385-91)

‘Why are you stripping me from myself?’ he said; ‘Ow! It hurts, ow! The lute is not worth that much,’ he screamed. And while he screams his skin is torn off to the ends of his limbs, and he was nothing but a wound; everywhere blood flows and his now uncovered muscles lie open to view and his quivering veins writhe without any skin; one could see his guts leaping and one could tally the pellucid sinews in his chest.

After Galinsky, Martindale describes Marsyas’ suffering as ‘pain aestheticized … made the object of artistic vision’. He further asks if this is ‘what any artistic representation of pains is, and must be?’ Indeed it is, and Marsyas’ suffering provides the poem’s only window to his mythos; the exclusion of the musical contest grows all the more glaring. Yet Ovid’s metaliterary anxieties run deeper still: the Marsyas scene pits Apollo-vates against Marsyas-vates in a form of grotesque poetic surgery; vates-on-vates violence, as it were. Under the knife of a victorious poet-god, Ovid’s narration opens to view the poetic corpus and runs through a checklist of organs: cutis, artus, cruor, nerui, pellis, uenae, uiscera, pectus, fibrae. Newlands points out that nerui and fibrae carry further metapoetic implications, insofar as these terms refer to the strings of the lyre (2013). In this regard, Apollo strums not just his guitar, but the bared sinews of Marsyas’ anatomy. Such equation of music/poetry to human tissue becomes a point of meditation in the poem, and in this correlation Ovid is most influential in the development of the grotesque aesthetic experience. Pulsating uiscera in stylized fashion confound simple aesthetic response, since they attract and repel the audience at the same time.

In this scene Apollo seems a bit too meticulous in his dissection of the body, too cold in his fascination, and too un-concerned for Marsyas’ person. Ovid’s focus on Marysas’ innards precludes reflection on Apollo’s psychological state; to be sure, the passage’s velocity of movement through Marsyas’ uiscera elides Apollo’s and Ovid’s
glee at portraying such grotesquerie. Forebear challenging Apollo (Augustus), for this Emperor-God can skin whomever he wishes. The same might be said of the *Metamorphoses* generally, however: the poem makes precise narrative incisions and casts characters aside as quickly as it grabs hold of them. Augustus’ artificial reinterpretation of the Greco-Roman *corpus* grants Ovid leave to do the same. Like his Emperor-God, who appropriates the previous mythohistory for his own political ends, the Augustan-Apollonian *vates* is in the end an unapologetic flayer of other poets, an apathetic voyeur of their *uiscera*. Gentili points out that Titian, himself a close reader of the *Metamorphoses*, implicates himself in the violence of his *Punishment of Marsyas* when he includes his self-portrait as the contemplative Midas to the right of the upside-down Marsyas (1994: 47). Midas (Titian) looks on in calm study while a dog laps up Marsyas’ blood. Here then surfaces Martindale’s ‘object of artistic vision’, inasmuch as Ovid (and Titian after him) finds irony in the grotesque subject matter he writes. As a fellow artist, he finds Marsyas’ ordeal painful and extreme, but at the same time, as a fellow artist, he finds that to depict Marsyas sparks a wellspring of creative imagination. Marsyas thus serves as a crucible of the ambiguous nature of Ovidian *ars*: that to create the most imitative depiction of human pain and suffering, one must tap the most profound source of artistic talent.

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26 See Miller (2009: 1-4) for the “new signification of Apollo in Roman culture, as a symbol of the Princeps.” Miller also observes the potentially violent Apollo in Horace *Odes* 2.10: “The divinity’s propensity ... seems to be towards violence; his habitual attitude to mortals is implicitly wrath” (2009: 8, 288-97).

27 Barchiesi (2001: 29-31) offers ‘incisions’ to describe Ovid’s narrative technique (especially in the *Heroides*). In comparison with Callimachus’ treatment of Marsyas in the *Hymn to Demeter*, Ovid’s omission of the tibia contest and focus on the man’s anatomy are particularly striking; this is deliberate, some might say gratuitous, violence.
Ovid expands on the exposure of human *uiscera* in the first part of book 9, where Hercules receives the robe of Nessus (*Met.* 9.98-229). If Marsyas only cries out that it hurts to lose his skin (*al piget, a!*), Hercules waxes on about his suffering for thirty lines (*Met.* 9.174-204). Still, like Marsyas, Hercules dies by the removal of his epidermis. In fact, Ovid uses the same language to describe the flayings of Marsyas and Hercules:

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nec mora, letiferam conatur scindere uestem;
qua trahitur, trahit illa cutem, foedumque relatu,
aut haeret membris frustra temptata reuelli
aut laceros artus et grandia detegit ossa.
ipse cruer, gelido ceu quondam lammina candens
* tincta lacu, stridit coquiturque ardente ueneno.
nec modus est, sorbent auidae praecordia flammae
caeruleusque fluit toto de corpore sudor
ambustique sonant nerui, caecaque medullis
* tabe liquefactis tollens ad sidera palmas … (*Met.* 9.166-75)
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Without delay [Hercules] tries to strip off the death-dealing garment; but where it is pulled, it pulls off the skin, and—foul to tell—it either clings to his limbs when in vain it is tried to be torn away or it lays bare his torn appendages and immense bones. The blood itself hissed, like gleaming-hot metal once dipped in cold water, and it is cooked with the burning poison. Nor is there respite: the greedy flames engulf him and a bluish sweat flowed over his entire body and his roasted muscles crackle and with his marrow made liquid from the dark goo he lifts his hands to the stars …

As with Marsyas, so with Hercules, the skin is dragged off (*trahere*) and thus exposes each man’s internal anatomy. Yet, where Marsyas only appears as a victim of divine vengeance in its most physical manifestation, Hercules’ melted skin grants him leave to offer a précis of his famous labors:28 he rehearses Busiris (9.183), Antaeus (9.184), Geryon and Cerberus (9.185), the Cretan bull (9.186), the Stymphalian birds (9.187),

28 Hercules perhaps received no epic devoted to his career (as Jim Marks points out *per litteras*), and this omission may drive Ovid’s choice to gloss over his exploits in such fashion. On the other hand, Heath (1996: 357-58), following Norden (1957), H. Lloyd Jones (1967), Clark (1979), and Robertson (1980), argues that traces like Bacchylides 5.71, Aristophanes’ *Frogs*, and [Apollodorus] 2.5.12 may reflect the existence of Herculean epic alongside the other oral tradition of the Trojan War cycle.
the golden-horned deer of Diana (9.188), the golden apples (9.189-90), the Arcadian boar (9.191), the Hydra (9.192-93), the Thracian horses (9.194-95), the Nemean lion (9.197-98), and his visit to Atlas (9.198). And he offers his résumé while his skin melts off and his internal organs grow visible. Moreover, this condensed catalogue comprises the only treatment of Hercules’ twelve labors in the *Metamorphoses*. Ovid here concentrates the grand cycle of Herculean myth into a short list spouted out by a dying man. The narratological emphasis is telling: strip away Hercules’ grandiose labors, and one is left with the story of a tortured soul susceptible to atheistic notions (*qui credere possint* | *esse deos?* 9.203-4). Over and against Hercules’ lacerated skin, his exposed muscles and bones, his boiling blood, Ovid equates the hero’s visible sinews with his mythic exploits: these are the stuff of his *corpus*. Like Marsyas, the Herculean body and text here converge.

**Détente: Ovid’s Corrosive Aesthetics**

Up to this point I have traced issues of Ovidian violence that question or challenge the attempted unity of aesthetic experience in early Augustan Rome. As an Absyrtus, Jupiter, or Apollo, Ovid meditates on the artistic representation of violence, which seems to be a point of anxiety in the years immediately following the conflicts of the 50’s – 30’s BCE. Where Augustan cultural thematics attempt to efface the growing pains of a nascent Principate, Ovid offers reminders of the carnage that brought that regime into being. He maps this imagery onto his own literary operations, which he often views as a violent exercise: like the civil wars’ dismemberment of the *corpus Romanum* before him, Ovid dismembers the epic tradition (and eventually himself, in exile) as he creates new art. Symbolized in the humans sprung from the bloody Giant *corpora*, new generations (of epic and Empire) are born of blood (*e sanguine natos*).
Modern scholarship notes Ovid’s violent, yet precise, allusive technique: Alessandro Barchiesi describes the Ovidian allusion as a process of intertextual ‘incisions’ into the fabric of Greco-Roman myth (2001: 29-31). So in *Heroides* 3, he injects 154 verses into the moment of Briseis’ forced departure from Achilles in *Iliad* 1. In choosing such a pregnant moment in the Homeric narrative, Ovid makes a precise allusive gesture toward the *Iliad* scene. Having made this incision, he fills the gap with Briseis’ extended monologue. In the same way do Marsyas and Hercules appear in the *Metamorphoses*: the former’s tibia contest and latter’s labors provide mere background material to the main event of their flaying; both men enter as their respective *mythoi* turn to their loss of skin. Their flayings symbolize on the narrative level Ovid’s view of literary activity: he equates writing poetry to flaying a man. Within the visible innards of both characters, Ovid peels back layers of their fables to reveal what most interests him: human pain aestheticized. As I have noted, these images presage the grotesque palette that Lucan assumes in the Neronian period. As an aesthetic experience built around conflicting messages (humor and horror, fascination and revulsion) the grotesque proves abrasive to the autocratic cultural program of Augustanism; in short, *telos* and *metamorphosis* are incompatible notions and Ovid finds a prurient sort of interest in this dichotomy.²⁹ The following sections expand on these themes and limn Ovid’s further contributions to epic violence. Erysichthon and Hippolytus instantiate Ovidian violence in intra- and intratextual directions, respectively: Erysichthon enacts metatextual cannibalism wherein the sacrilege eats himself out of the narrative, while Hippolytus gains a place in Roman epic memory through his gruesome dismemberment in the Greek tradition.

²⁹ See Segal (1989: 81): “The line between the cynical, parodistic Ovid and the humanely sensitive Ovid will probably never be definitively drawn because both Ovid’s exist in the *Metamorphoses*."

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Moreover, the Perseus and Lapiths and Centaurs scenes display Ovid’s most unique aesthetic contributions to the repertoire of epic violence; here one observes violence (nearly) gone out of control, where Ovid betrays anxieties over mastery of tradition and the escalation of epic carnage.

**Cannibalism as Poetic Blemish: Erysichthon**

After the Calydonian boar hunt, Theseus returns to Athens, but not before meeting the river god Achelous—one of a number of metamorphic narrators in the poem. When Theseus meets him, the river has flooded the surrounding area, and so this bulky storyteller—able to morph into any form—already reflects his rather meandering mode of storytelling. Achelous’ narrative charge is spread across books 8 and 9 (8.547 to 9.94). At the close of book 8, his story of Erysichthon offers an intersection of two metapoetic axes: the king’s violation of a sacred *quercus* results in self-cannibalism of his *corpus*. Erysichthon’s *fames* and pursuant self-ingestion reify his appetite for destruction against Ceres’ grove; after consuming the aliments of *pontus, terra* and *aer*, Erysichthon eats himself out of the poem’s narrative.

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30 Cannibalism in Latin letters is unsurprisingly rare, but it does appear, and it appears at rather notable moments: the closing image of the *AP* (*hirudo*, 476); Erysichthon closes *Met.* 8; Erictho – Lucan’s sibyl – enjoys necrophagy (*BC*. 6.542-3); Tydeus closes *Theb.* 8 in a fit of cannibalism; Juvenal devotes an entire satire to the topic (*Sat.* 15). After Kristeva (1982), one could argue that the cannibal resides in the abyss of abjection: man-eaters consume the body; they swallow what separates Me from Not me; they violate food-taboos and the limits of my subject at the same time. Man-eaters are un-plottable on the grid of human experience, since they consume the vehicle of that experience. Erysichthon then, who increases his body by eating it, inhabits a fundamental paradox. Modern anthropology classifies Erysichthon’s case as ‘survival cannibalism’: survival anthropophagy describes extreme cases like the Donner Party and Uruguay Rugby team. Gustatory cannibalism (sometimes called Ritual cannibalism) applies to cases of willing anthropophagy. Freud’s *Totem and Taboo* (trans. 1950) offers a stimulating discussion of cannibalism and taboo. See Jahoda (1999) for an introduction to the history of man-eaters; Arens (1979) shows that most, if not all, historical accounts of cannibalism are fictional tools to denote the Other. He notes that the word cannibal itself is bound up in the process of denoting the Other, since according to Columbus via informers, the *Caribs* (> Sp. *Canibs*) ate men. Arens finds no eyewitness account of gustatory anthropophagy in the literature. His observations on the cannibal-as-Other accord with my thesis, since the cannibal-as-Other is also embedded in Latin discourse.
Erysichthon tallies simultaneous transgressions against the body of literature and literary landscape: he chops down not a mere _ingens quercus_, but rather a tree that is itself a grove (_una nemus_); his story thus begins on hallowed poetic ground. Erysichthon in fact fells two trunks: when a bystander intercedes on the tree’s behalf, the king—without missing a stroke—decapitates him (Thessalus inque virum convertit ab arbole ferrum | _detruncatque caput repetitaque rorbora caedit_, 968-9). Inside a chiastic, five-word line, Ovid commingles both beheadings and two metaphors: as Erysichthon truncates the intercessor, so he fells the sacred oak. In the aftermath of both decapitations, a bleeding tree-trunk and headless cadaver make an impious pair.

_Fames_, appropriately enough, inhabits desolate earth: _Famem lapidoso … in agro | unguibus et raras vellentem dentibus herbas_ (799-801). Her starved habitat—on the outskirts of the known world (_extremis Scythiae glacialis in oris_, 788)—finds an analogue in her emaciated body, so here one glimpses the barren recesses of poetic language. In this desiccated territory, want of sustenance—of inspiration—forces one to claw the sterile soil. To be sure, _Fames_’ appearance shrinks the _corpus_ down to its skeletal frame:

_hirtus erat crinis, caua lumina, pallor in ore, \labra incana situ, scabrae rubigne fauces, dura cutis, per quam spectari viscera possent; ossa sub incuruis exstabant arida lumbis, uentris erat pro uentre locus; pendere putares pectus et a spinae tantummodo crate teneri; auxerat articulos macies genuumque tumebat orbis et immodico prodibant tubere tali._ (Met. 8.801-8)

Her hair was unkempt, her eyes hollow, there was yellow in her face, her lips hoary with decay, her jaws crabbed with smut, tough was her skin through which her guts could be seen; her dry bones protruded under her curved hips, her belly was actually a place for a belly; one would think that her chest hung and was sustained just from the lattice
of her backbone; her frailty had puffed up her joints, and the balls of her knees swelled and bulged with such unnatural swelling.

This is a body in need of life-support. Fames' starved figure and pellucid skin indicate her body's *uiscera*. Her bones poke through, and her joints are swollen. Like Marsyas' surgical misfortune, her body flags a brutal poetic fact: at the end of the day, the *corpus* is a sack of guts—an *opus* subject to grotesque inspection. Through prolepsis, one could overlay her appearance onto Erysichthon after he succumbs to Famine, since Ovid is precise about how she infuses herself within his body: she wisps into his *fauces*, *pectus*, *ora* and *uacuae uenae* (819-20). Fames' body is one of the more meager in the epic *corpus*, and her effects on Erysichthon compel the import of victuals from every corner (*pontus*, *terra*, *aer*). The logic is clear: a jejune *corpus* foists desperation on its author. One can be lead to cannibalize his own material, for once he runs out of *materia* without, Erysichthon turns within:

uis tamen illa mali postquam consumpserat omnem materiam deerantque graui noua pabula morbo, ipse suos artus lacero diueller e morsu coepit et infelix minuendo corpus alebat. (*Met.* 8.875-8)

Nevertheless, after that curse's power had spent all resource, and the new fodder fell short of the grave disease, [Erysichthon] himself began to rend his own limbs with tearing bite, and the wretch nourished his body by lessening it.

Erysichthon is not polite: he tears at his limbs in feral manner (*lacero morsu*). The final line of the king's transformation evinces a strange paradox: how can one nourish his body by ingesting it (*minuendo corpus alebat*)? Ovid's syntax heightens the ambiguity: is *corpus* the direct object of *minuendo*, *alebat*, or both? *Corpus* consumes *corpus*, and the image collapses in on itself. This paradox, I suggest, opens a fissure or narrative hole in Ovid's *opus*, through which Erysichthon falls out of the poem; now too voracious
for even himself (for the poem), the profaner eats his way out of the story when he eats his own flesh. As a blemish on epic decorum, his grotesque meal urges a swift exit from the *Metamorphoses*.

The narrative fissure that swallows Erysichthon mars the poem’s surface. Having lost a horn (*cornu*) during a wrestling match with Hercules, Achelous’ scarred face signifies a textual deformity in the *Metamorphoses*’ narrative fabric. To be sure, the river-god truncates his account of Erysichthon *in order to* draw attention to his deformity. He concludes the tale thus:

‘quid moror externis? etiam mihi nempe nouandi est corporis, o iuuenis, numero finita potestas. nam modo qui nunc sum uideor, modo flector in anguem, armenti modo dux uires in cornua sumo — cornua, dum potui. nunc pars caret altera telo frontis, ut ipse uides.’ gemitus sunt uerba secuti. (*Met.* 8.879-84)

‘Why do I linger on others? For recently my ability to renew my body was limited in number. Indeed, as I am now, I seem so at one point, at another I am bent into a snake, at another I don the strength in horns of the cattle’s leader—strength in horns, that is, while I was able. Now one part of my forehead is without a point, as you yourself see.’ [and] groans followed his words.

In the space of three words, Achelous moves from a narrative about others (*externis*) to one about himself (*mihi*). The god’s groan spans the *tomus*-break of books 8 and 9: his lament closes book 8 and opens book 9 (*gemitus*, 9.1). Thus, just as the river-god’s interjection severs the narrative thread of Erysichthon (and with it book 8), so his lopped-off horn (*causa truncae frontis*) acts as the point of contact for the first tale of book 9 (his struggle with Hercules for Deianira). Erysichthon’s narrative puncture prompts the aetiology of Achelous’ scarred face. And as a metamorphic *vates* himself,

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31 Indeed, his *gemitus* in 884 picks up from the *caesura*, appropriately enough.
Achelous acts as a local stand-in for the *Metamorphoses* generally: he can shape-shift into any animal, but as a bull he lacks a horn; his marred forehead thus reflects the poem’s scarified surface after Erysichthon’s blemish on epic decorum. This is an appropriate metatextual maneuver, since Achelous’ broken horn instantiates the book break of *Met.* 8/9. Achelous, *qua* Ovid, separates these tomes (*temnō*), which, as the central chapters of the poem’s central pentad, effectively sever and restart the narrative continuity of the *Metamorphoses*. The hole opened by Erysichthon, mirrored by the hole in Achelous’ forehead, creates a midpoint *caesura* in the poem of continuous change.

**Ballroom Blitz: Pantomime in the Perseus Episode**

This and the following section explore Ovid’s longest meditations on epic violence: the Perseus and Lapiths scenes. It is noteworthy that both of these fights break out at wedding receptions, and it is in this domestic space that Ovid’s interest in pantomime comes to the fore. By infusing farce into these dinner brawls, Ovid further shows his interest in weaving together seemingly incompatible generic conventions: a celebration of nuptial love bespoiled and wrecked by epic violence. Symbolized in the shattered mixing bowl that fells Erytus (*Met.* 5.79-84 below), Ovid brings the destruction of epic combat home for dinner.

After slaying Medusa and despoiling her head, Perseus rescues Andromeda from a sea monster and wins her as his bride.\(^{32}\) At his and her celebratory banquet (*Met.* 5.1-250), the cuckolded Phineus seeks vengeance for losing Andromeda, and an *Odyssey* 22-like battle ensues throughout the dining hall. In this scene, Ovid engages

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*\(^{32}\) The Perseus saga is not well documented outside of Ovid. [Apollocdorus] 2.43-44 mentions briefly the rivalry of Phineus and his petrifaction. See Keith (2002: 105-22) for the Homeric and Virgilian models Ovid adapts in Perseus’ combat. Keith (2009: 259-72) discusses the gendered landscape over which Perseus gains mobile and visual mastery. Frantantuono (2011: 123-31) perhaps too neatly connects the Perseus-Andromeda-Phineus triangle to the *Aeneid*’s Aeneas-Lavinia-Turnus.*
two metaliterary currents: the violence played out on the corpora of Perseus’ enemies crystallizes their bodies into marble statues—that is, Phineus and his cronies become monuments (monimenta, 5.227) to the ‘ego-trip for the artiste narrator’. Reflective of the Dying Gaul or Ludovisi Group statues, Ovid, qua artifex, captures Perseus’ enemies in their moment of agony. Their faces and bodies grow rigid at the traumatized instant, so that pain and suffering become the telos of Ovid’s figurative stone-cutting. Like Pygmalion, who molds the life-like Galatea, Ovid can fashion lasting—and indeed life-like—images of pain and death.  

Alison Keith treats the battle of Perseus and Phineus as “a sustained meditation on the action of heroic epic” (2002: 241). She shies away from ‘parodic’ or ‘burlesque’ readings of the episode and instead states that Ovid “reinterprets the [epic] form, intensifying both the brutality of Homer and the sentimentality of Virgil by limiting his war narrative to 250 lines” (2002: 245). But it is in this Homeric-Virgilian alloy, I suggest, that Ovid’s aesthetic distinction from that dyad is most pronounced. His epyllion of epic battle narrative rather wades into the territory of the Roman pantomime, on which model Richlin grounds her suggestive reading of sexual violence. When Ovid intensifies Homer’s brutality and Virgil’s sentimentality, he throws into high relief the precarious compatibility of this mixture; the macabre and humorous here converge in a delicate balancing act; ‘burlesque’ is Horsfall’s descriptor (1979). To be sure, 250 lines devoted to the slaughter of Phineus and his cronies manifests a disproportionate emphasis on


34 Interestingly, Galatea turns from marble into flesh, whereas Phineus and his followers undergo the direct opposite metamorphosis; in both cases, Ovid’s stresses the life-like features of each marble incarnation. And note punctuation to Galatea’s metamorphosis: corpus erat! (Met. 10.289). Cf. Heath (1996).
bloodshed in the Perseus story. A thorough analysis of the Perseus and Lapiths episodes sheds light on Ovid’s aesthetic contributions to epic’s violent scenery.

Perseus’ ballroom blitz tallies the deaths of no less than thirty-four named characters (forty-three if one includes the men turned to stone). Every named death receives a patronymic, except for Astreus, whose father is apparently unknown.

Towards the scene’s end, the narrator gives a body count: 200 men survive and 200 turn to stone (bis centum restabant corpora pugnae | Gorgone bis centum riguerunt corpora visa, Met. 5.208-9). As the scene unfolds, it grows unclear on whose side certain men fight: for instance, Ovid never states why Clymenus kills Hodites or Hypseus kills Prothemoër; they simply kill. Perhaps the most absurd of these ‘pointless’ deaths is that of the singer Lampetides:

\begin{verbatim}
  tu quoque, Lampetide, non hos adhibendus ad usus,
  sed qui, pacis opus, citharam cum uoce moueres;
  iussus eras celebrare dapes festumque canendo.
  quem procul adstantem plectrumque imbelle tenentem
  Paetalus inridens ‘Stygis cane cetera’ dixit
  ‘manibus’ et laeuo mucronem tempore fixit;
  concidit et digitis morientibus ille retemptat
  fila lyrae, casuque ferit miserabile carmen. (Met. 5.111-18)
\end{verbatim}

Even you, Lampetides, invited not for this purpose, but the one who strums the guitar with vocal accompaniment, the labor of peace; you had been commanded to celebrate the feast and occasion by singing. But Paetalus, laughing at him while he stood apart and held his unwarlike instrument, said, ‘sing the rest to the Stygian shades’, and he planted his sword in the [singer’s] left temple. As he collapses, [Lampetides] strums the lyre-strings with dying fingers and beats out a lamentable song with his fall.

Paetalus’ sole motive here appears to be the mere presence of a singer who cultivates the peaceful life (pacis opus). In direct contrast to Odysseus’ sparing of Phemius (O. 22.330-60), Paetalus murders the entertainment because he is the entertainment. His
sharp address to Lampetides (Stygii cane cetera … manibus) echoes Pyrrhus’ retort to Priam just before he executes the Trojan king (Aen. 2.547-50). Ovid compounds Paetalus’ wickedness with stark punctuation: he speaks (dixit) and stabs (fixit) at consecutive line-ends. The rhyming prosody lends jingoistic tenor to an otherwise brutal murder. And finally, Lampetides plays accompaniment to his own death as he strums a miserabile carmen with dying fingers. Ovid’s ironizing is twofold here: is this dirge the result of accidental strumming by a dying man, or is Lampetides self-aware enough to accompany his own exit? Ovid offers classic equivocation, since retemptat hints at conscious composition on the part of Lampetides, while casu hints at accidental and dissonant melody as he falls to the floor. The ambiguity reflects the double-edged pose of the poem generally, insofar as Ovid deploys mixed and often conflicting messages concerning his characters’ motivations and actions. Like Marsyas’ exposed uiscera, Lampetides’ miserabile carmen raises the question posed at the beginning of this chapter: is this ars or not?

In any case, Lampetides’ death evinces a hard truth of Ovidian violence: singers struggle for survival in the intensified Homeric-Virgilian world of the Metamorphoses. This holds true for another non-combatant in the dinner hall, Emathion. The devout and pious old man (aequi cultor timidusque deorum, 5.100) cannot fight due to his years (prohibent anni bellare), so he must war with words (loquendo | pugnat, 5.101-2). As he condemns the fighters for their violence on this occasion (scelerataque devovet arma, 5.102), a certain Chromis decapitates him:

35 Cf. Heath (1996: 364) on Orpheus: “In the Metamorphoses it is usually the man of action who gains his objective—Perseus, Hercules, Aeneas, and Caesar, for example … But Orpheus is a musician, an artist, and members of these guilds do not fare so well in the epic.” Cf. also Leach (1972).
huic Chromis amplexo tremulis altaria palmis
decuit ense caput, quod protinus incidit arae
atque ibi semianimi uerba exsecrantia lingua
edidit et medios animam exspirauit in ignes. (Met. 5.103-6).

[Emathion] had embraced the altar with trembling hands when Chromis sheared away his head with a sword. Forthwith [the head] fell upon the altar, and there it issued forth condemning words with its half-dead tongue, and it eventually gave up the ghost amidst the flames.

If Paetalus speaks like Pyrrhus, Chromis kills like him. Reflective of the supplicating Priam, the aged Emathion clings to the *altaria* only to lose his *caput*. Again it remains unclear for whom or why Chromis kills the old man; presumably he acts on behalf of Phineus, but Ovid’s narrative implies that Chromis silences Emathion because he speaks out against violence. To be sure, his *semianimis lingua* continues to excoriate the brutes as flames engulf it. With the deaths of Emathion and Lampetides, then, Ovid seems to have some fun at the expense of Homer’s brutality and Virgil’s sentimentality: epic violence can temporarily erase the *pacis opus*.

A common feature of epic combats is what one may call the ‘catalogue of accusatives’. In such passages, the poet enumerates a rampaging hero’s kill-count with a list of names in the accusative case. Perseus, of course, must receive such credentials:

\[
\text{inde Semiramio Polydegmona sanguine cretum} \\
\text{Caucasiumque Abarin Sperchionidenque Lycetum} \\
\text{intonsumque comas Helicen Phlegyanque Clytumque} \\
\text{sternit et exstructos morientum calcat aceruos.} \quad (\text{Met. 5.85-89})
\]

Then, [Perseus] lays low Polydegmon, sprung from the blood of Semiramis, and Caucasian Abaris, and Sperchion’s son Lycetus, and long-haired Helices, and Phlegyas, and Clytus; and he tramples on the piled-up heap of dead.
Although Perseus slays six named characters here, Ovid hints at their anonymity when he juxtaposes the near-anagrams LYCETUM and CLYTUMquE at consecutive line-ends; Lycetus or Clytus, or whatever—it does not really matter who; what matters is that Perseus creates a heap of dead men (exstructos morientum … aceruos). In fact, Ovid’s hexameters construct an aceruus of sorts in this pile-up of accusatives: Polydeigma … cretum | Caucasiumque Abarin Sperchionidenque Lycetum | intonsumque comas Helicen Phlegyanque Clytum numbers eleven words in accusative case across three lines, all punctuated by an enjamed sternit and aceruos in final position. The heap of dead is quite visible. Amidst this accusative mouthful, Lycetus’ patronymic lends the catalogue an air of humorous bombast: Horace prohibits six-syllable words from the ars poetica (AP 97); still, he never dealt with the sesquipedalian Sperchionidae(que).

Panayotakis’ (1995) study of Roman pantomime highlights aspects of this dramatic form that set it apart from the ‘higher’ genres of tragedy and comedy. The modern critic struggles to draw a clear picture of what pantomime looked like, but testimonia exist that stress pantomime’s reliance on bodily motion (motus corporis) and everyday life.\textsuperscript{36} Herein lies Ovid’s addition to epic violence.\textsuperscript{37} Ovid peppers these violent movements with artifacts of home life. Pantomime’s propensity for everyday gesticulation informs Ovid’s choreography in both the Perseus scene and the Lapiths-Centaurs fight (see below). Granted, epic battle scenes require motus corporis on the part of its players; still, no Homeric or Virgilian battle scenes include death-by-mixing-bowl. Grand epic thus intrudes on dinner and drinks:

\textsuperscript{36} Panayotakis (1995: xiv with nn.).

\textsuperscript{37} See also Richlin (1991: 174-76) who highlights the special ambivalence sexual violence held in the context of the Roman pantomime, which were a fixture of Roman visual culture from the Republic through Imperial eras.
Perseus does not pursue with curved sword Erytus, who carried a two-pronged spear, but rather he lifts with both hands a giant mixing bowl of heavy weight, bedecked in deep relief, and he flung it at the man; [Erytus] spews forth red blood and falling backward strikes the ground with dying neck.

This unconventional weapon reappears in the Lapiths and Centaurs scene (*Met.* 12.235-40). In fact, the novelty of such weapons grows commonplace in the latter episode, where every piece of furniture becomes a killing tool. Here in book 5, apart from an *inges crater*, Perseus employs a flaming torch to disfigure Athis’ face (*Perseus stipite, qui media positus fumabat in ara, *perculit et fractis confudit in ossibus ora, *Met.* 5.56-58). Through the use of mundane, household items, the elevated register of Homeric-Virgilian battle narrative falls to ludic, almost bathetic, tenor. Not once does a character in Homer or Virgil take a decorative bowl to the mouth and cough up teeth and gray matter. Conspicuously aware of his *ars*, the artiste-narrator here highlights his flippant treatment of epic violence. Any device can become deadly in the hands of a master, even the kitchen sink.

**War Stories: The Lapiths and Centaurs**

*Metamorphoses* 12 stages a parodic treatment of epic combat that contains echoes of Perseus’ bout with Phineus and his partisans. Taken as a diptych of epyllia, the Perseus and Lapiths scenes offer prolonged study of the violated *corpus*. After the *opifex rerum* brings the narrative to Troy, he situates Achilles at table with the other Greek generals; at this point the leaders regale the Iliadic hero with stories of past
combat. In this section, Ovidian wit raises the question, "What does one talk to Achilles about, other than violence?" (quid enim loqueretur Achilles, | aut quid apud magnum potius loqueretur Achillem? Met. 12.162-63). As a case of poetological irony, these deliberatives reveal Ovid’s self-reflexive treatment of grandiose war epic. For answer, the long-winded (and nearly 400-year-old) Nestor recalls the fight between the Centaurs and Lapiths—for just over 420 lines.\(^{38}\) Significantly, the only quality Ovid’s Nestor shares with his counterpart in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* is a propensity for speaking. When the *Iliad*’s Nestor proposes embassy to Achilles, his proxy Phoenix offers a story of reconciliation and forgiveness; in the *Metamorphoses*, Nestor is more than happy to relate an example of irreconciliable conflict. In fact, Ovid’s Nestor rather reflects a senile war-codger who remembers rote casualty statistics, but laments not recalling all their wounds (*uulnera non memini, numerum nomenque notauI, Met. 12.461*). Even the language of cities toppled finds its way into his speech: *captaeque erat urbis imago* (*Met. 12.225*).\(^{39}\) Nestor’s narrative emphasis in the *Metamorphoses* inverts Nestor’s rhetorical emphasis in *Iliad* 9. In this metapoetic scene, then, a poetically aged narrator entertains a poetically seasoned soldier with a classic tale of violence. Put another way, *Metamorphoses* 12 stages a ludic epyllion after the Homeric-Virgilian fashion, in which

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\(^{38}\) The initial treatment is at *Il.* 1.247-84 It is unclear when the fight’s occurrence at the wedding of Pirithous and Hippodamia became canonical. Cf. Diodorus Siculus 4.70.304. See also Fratantuono (2011: 343-47 with nn.) for a cursory discussion of the significance of many characters’ names in this scene. Unlike his discussion of the Perseus scene, however, he does not hand down moral judgement on any of the actors. Rather he points out that such a violent scene can raise themes present throughout the *Metamorphoses*—especially nuptial love spoiled by drink and desire.

\(^{39}\) Musgrove points out that Ovid’s *Iliad* ‘flattens’ the narrative time of the Trojan War into a catalogue-like narrative. Thus Nestor’s digression grows all the more glaring. Ellsworth (1980: 25-26) explains the narratological purpose of the scene thus: “[the Centauromachy] makes the poem’s leap from [the Trojan War’s] beginning to the tenth year less jarring.”
the consummate Homeric storyteller (Nestor) entertains the consummate Homeric fighter (Achilles) with a description of violence and bloodshed.

Correspondences between the Perseus scene and the Lapiths and Centaurs scene appear early and often. Ovid recycles at least nine names from the Perseus episode: Celadon, Rhoetus, Melaneus, Phorbas, Chromis, Clanis, Dorylas, Ampyx and Hodites reappear as characters. Certain death scenes appear in both. For instance, Eurytus, Rhoetus and Charaxus echo a number of eponymous counterparts in the Perseus episode:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{forte fuit iuxta signis exstantibus asper} \\
\text{antiquus crater, quem uastum uastior ipse} \\
\text{sustulit Aegides aduersaque misit in ora;} \\
\text{sanguinis ille globos pariter cerebrumque merumque} \\
\text{uulnere et ore uomens madida resupinus harena} \\
\text{calcitrat. (Met. 12.235-40)}
\end{align*}
\]

There happened to be an old rough-hewn mixing bowl nearby with figures in high relief, which, though massive, more massive Theseus lifted by himself and cast into [Eurytus’] face opposite; he spits out chunks of blood and brain and wine equally from his mouth and kicked as he is laid out on the wet sand.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ecce rapit mediis flagrentem Rhoetus ab aris} \\
\text{pruniceum torrem dextraque a parte Charaxi} \\
\text{tempora perfringit fuluo protecta capillo.} \\
\text{correpti rapida, ueluti seges arida, flamma} \\
\text{arserunt crines, et uulnere sanguis inustus} \\
\text{terriblem stridore sonum dedit, ut dare ferrum} \\
\text{igne rubens plerumque solet, quod forci pe curua} \\
\text{cum faber eduxit lacubus demittit; at illud} \\
\text{stridet et in tepida submersum sibilat unda.} \\
\text{saucius hirsutis auidum de crinibus ignem} \\
\text{excitit inque uemos limen tellure reuulsum} \\
\text{tollit, onus plautri, quod ne permittat in hostem,} \\
\text{ipsa facit grauitas; …} \\
\text{semicremoque nouat repetitum stipite uulnus} \\
\text{terque quaterque grauii iuncturas uerticis ictu} \\
\text{rupit, et in liquido sederunt ossa cerebro. (Met. 12.271-81; 286-88)}
\end{align*}
\]

99
Look! Rhoetus grabbed a plumwood torch from the middle of the altar and bashed Charaxus on the right temple, which was protected by his blonde hair. His sullied locks blazed in the avid flame (just like dry grass) and in the wound unburnt blood gave a horrific sizzling sound, as red-hot iron customarily does after smelting when the smithy has removed it with his curved forceps and plunged it into a pool; still the metal hisses and squeals when dipped in tepid water. Now wounded, [Charaxus] brushes the hungry fire out of his hairy locks and rips up and lifts the threshold from the earth to his shoulders (a toil for the gym), the weight of which ought to prevent his enemy ... [Rhoetus laughing] renews and revisits the headwound with the half-burnt stick, thrice and four times, and he shatters the ligaments in the neck with heavy blow and the skull sank into the viscous brain.

With details such as these, one wonders what additional *uulnera* Nestor forgets at fight’s end (*Met.* 12.461 above). Eurytus the Centaur is nigh synonymous with Erytus in the Perseus scene (*Met.* 5.79-84 above), who, like Eurytus, vomits the contents of his skull: both their craters bear relief sculpture (*exstantem signis, exstantibus signis*); both bowls carry heavy mass (*multaeque in pondere massae, vastum*); both victims spit blood (*rutilum uomit cruorem, sanguinis globos uomens*); both twitch on the floor (*resupinus humum pulsat, resupinus harena | calcitrat*). Taken with Perseus’ mixing bowl (above), one may lament the loss of two perfectly fine craters, to say nothing of the shattered artifice. Eurytus shares further characteristics with the *Odyssey*’s Antinous, whose wine explodes over his face after taking an arrow in the throat (*O.* 22.8-20): both villains are ‘first deaths’; both deaths include decorative dishware and wine mixed with blood. Yet, whereas Antinous’ novel death befits his egregious station as the Suitors’ frontman, Eurytus’ exit initiates a series of crushed skulls that run throughout the scene. Antinous’ spilled wine stands out in the *Odyssey*; Eurytus’ is commonplace in the *Metamorphoses*. 
Charaxus’ singed *cerebrum* shares correspondences with Athis in book 5 (*Met.* 5.56-58, above): both youths receive detailed attention to their good looks, especially their hair (*gregius ... capillos, fuluo capillo ... crines ... hirsutis crinibus*); both youths receive flaming torches to the head which ruin their beauty (*fractis confudit in ossibus ora, iuncturas uerticis | rupit*). Like Eurytus and Erytus, Charaxus and Athis fall to crushing blows from unconventional weapons. Yet in the Lapiths scene, mixing bowls and torches grow banal compared to mounted antlers for eye-gouging (Exadius), a chandelier for face-smashing (Amycus), or an altar, orthostate, and pine tree for crushing (Gryneus, Rhoetus and Demoleon).

A statistical comparison of wounding in the *Metamorphoses* to the other major epics illustrates Ovid’s peculiar reception of martial narrative. Glenn Most’s “Rhetoric of Dismemberment” opens with Hippolytus’ *sparagmos* in Seneca, Euripides and Ovid, but his table of casualty statistics does not include Ovid in its data set. If one follows Most’s categorization, Ovid’s Perseus, Lapiths and Centaurs create a telling distribution (Table 3-1). Ovid’s variegated deaths open space for an addendum to Most’s categories: a number of unfortunates in the poem die from self-inflicted wounds or by sheer accident. Violent happenstance in fact comprises a notable proportion of Ovid’s *modus operandi*.

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cuts</th>
<th>Amputations</th>
<th>Punctures</th>
<th>Crushing Blows</th>
<th>Self-Inflicted or Nonspecific</th>
<th>Lines/Casualty</th>
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<td>30 (34%)</td>
<td>20 (23%)</td>
<td>32 (36%)</td>
<td>5.8</td>
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40 Most (1992: 398) with fn. 39. Statistics based on *Il.* 4-8, 10-12, 16, 20-22; *Aen.* 7, 9-12; *BC* 3, 6-9; *Pun.* 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 9, 12-15, 17; *Theb.* 2, 3, 7-11. I omit Most’s ‘miscellaneous’ category in favor of ‘self-inflicted or unspecific’ types of wounds. Martial epic contains on the whole wounds perpetrated by a human agent. Notably, Most finds no ‘miscellaneous’ wounds in Homer or Virgil, but 8 in Lucan. The great majority of Homeric-Virgilian wounds are minor or lethal; that is, if one does not perish from a wound, one can quickly ‘walk it off’ (as Jim Marks emphasizes *per voces*).
Take for instance Dictys, who stumbles off a cliff (*delapsus acumine montis*, *Met.* 12.337) and impales himself on a tree (*pondere corporis ornum | ingentem fregit suaque induit ilia fractae*, *Met.* 12.339-40). Characters such as Hippolytus, Actaeon, and Dictys find themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time, far from the epic battlefield, but just as much in harm’s way. Ovid’s lines/casualty ratio sits well within the group of other epics: Homer, 2.1; Virgil 2.2; Lucan, 8.4, Silius 3.1, and Statius 2.9. The nearly 400% increase between Virgil and Lucan seems less glaring in light of Ovid’s 5.8 lines/casualty. These figures could in fact reflect a larger data set, if not for Nestor’s faulty memory (*uulnera non memini*). This sort of negative Alexandrian footnote (Nestor forgets) highlights a transumptive metaphor for Ovidian composition: just as Nestor’s memory lapse symbolizes Ovid’s inability to contain the imagery of traditional battle epic, so does Ovid’s insufficient poetic reserve symbolize Nestor’s sudden amnesia. Perhaps all the *uulnera* are unimportant, Ovid seems to say; one gets the picture.

If, after Elana Gomel (2003: xv-xxi), narrative violence opens gaps of meaning and comprehension in storytelling, scrutiny of Nestor’s *uulnera non memini* reveals the violent recesses of a poetic mind at work. Modern criminology relies on narrative ellipses as indicators of the traumatized witness’ credibility; consistency of narrative renders witnesses or victims ‘too credible’ and so unbelievable. Nestor’s gleefully detailed scene-building would raise eyebrows in a modern interrogation room. But Nestor is not under criminal investigation. His presence at (and participation in) the brawl renders his eye-witness testimony credible on the surface, and he has empirical data to support his account. But his detailed imagery and rhetorical precision—as constructed by Ovidian narrative—undercut the notion that Nestor reports ‘what actually
happened'; one gets the feeling that this is neither the first nor last time Nestor has told this story. His inability to narrate stems not from fragmentary recollection of a traumatic experience; it stems from insufficient capacity to remember a multitude of mimetic *uulnera*. To be sure he seems apologetic for this shortcoming. As Margaret Musgrove points out, "Ovid uses … the extended flashback to call into question the reliability of epic narration and epic narrators and to suggest alternative perspectives on the canonical story of the Trojan War" (1998: 223). When the *Metamorphoses*’ Nestor inverts his rhetorical stance in the *Iliad*, he inverts the Homeric-Virgilian *modello codice*’s aesthetic preferences on mimetic violence. The traumatized reverence of the *Aeneid* in particular—and its attendant narrative gaps or ‘tensions’—creates for Ovid a poetic store too vast for a single storyteller’s *memoria*.

Crushing blows comprise over one-third of Ovidian wounding in the Perseus and Lapiths scenes. In the grand register of martial epic, the Centaurs’ *immania membra* (*Met.* 12.501) present a perfect analogue to the hyperbolic *uulnera* that crush skulls and disfigure faces. As the scene drags on and Nestor’s memory fails, Ovid piles wound upon wound (*uulnusque in uulnere fecit, Met.* 12.493). But when the Centaurs (and Ovid) meet with Caeneus’ impenetrable body (*imperfossus, Met.* 12.496), traditional *uulnera* have no effect. Thus Ovid introduces another metaliterary motif, tree-felling, to dispense with Caeneus’ invincible *corpus*:

```latex
forte trabem nactus ualidum coniecit in hostem
exemplumque fuit; paruoque in tempore nudus
arboris Othrys erat, nec habebat Pelion umbras.
obrutus immane cumulo sub pondere Caeneus
aestuat arboreo congestaque robora duris
fert umeris; sed enim postquam super ora caputque
creuit onus neque habet quas ducat spiritus auras,
deficit interdum, modo se super aera frustra
```
tollere conatur iactasque euoluere siluas … (Met. 12.511-19)

[Monychus] strove with might and cast a tree upon the able enemy – and that was the example; in a short while Othrys was bereft of her trees, and Pelion had no shade. Impeded by the huge pile Caeneus rages under the wooded weight and lifts the piled trunks with difficult arms; but in fact the mass grew on top of his face and head and he does not have air to lead breath, and in time he falters while he tries to lift himself in vain to the air above and unroll the forest strewn about …

Silua in Latin metaliterary language means ‘(poetic) material’. As the wounds and bloodshed between Lapiths and Centaurs compiles, Ovid congests the scene with harvested trees. Where chopped-down trees ignite memorial services in Ennius and Virgil (Ann. 175-79 Sk. & Aen. 6.179-82), in the Metamorphoses they become improvisational instruments of violence. The Aeneid harvests materia from archaic Roman epic (Ennius) for religious piety, while the Metamorphoses shear Pelion for new and violent aesthetic ends. Ovid’s trees-as-weapons elide two metapoetic devices: corpus and silua violation here merge into similar images of epic wounding (silua premat fauces, et erit pro uulnere pondus, Met. 12.509). Caeneus’ inviolate body cannot withstand the burdensome mass of battle narrative, a mass symbolized by wooden weight (pondus arboreum); likewise, the Centaurs’ appetite for destruction shears Pelion of its umbra.

The Perseus and Lapiths scenes demonstrate the stark incongruity of form and content observed by Richlin. Set within domestic, indoor spaces, these battles show Ovid’s attempt to contain the scenery of martial epic, but in the end such imagery outgrows the scope of the poet’s focus and spills beyond the reaches of his memory (uulnera non memini). The domestic settings also call up the milieu of Roman

41 OLD s.v. ‘silua’ 5b. See also Malamud (1995: 169-98) for Statius’ engagement with Lucan’s silua.
pantomime, where objects from everyday life gain added significance as instruments of death. The interweaving of opposed aesthetic spheres—the ‘lighter’ world of pantomime and the ‘heavier’ weight of martial epic—creates a reading experience that Horsfall names ‘burlesque’ (1979: 319-32). Reflected in the ornate mixing bowls crashing down on skulls, Ovid makes collide epic strife and amatory nuptials. One may object that the *Aeneid* does the same, but Aeneas and Turnus wage a declared war across an epic battlefield; Ovid’s Perseus, Lapiths, and Centaurs do not take their fight outside. The grand violence of martial epic thus seems out of place inside the home. In these hyperbolic and incongruous conflicts, then, Ovid showcases his aesthetic and poetic innovation regarding hexametric violence.\(^\text{42}\)

**Hippolytus’ Muscular Memory Loss**

The remainder of this chapter considers two deaths-by-chariot: Hippolytus and Mettius Fufetius. In these scenes, Ovid submits the epic corpus to horrific treatment, but for opposing ends: Hippolytus must be atomized for his Roman metempsychosis to take place, while Mettius represents Ovid’s attitude toward his physical displacement from Rome. Hippolytus, *qua* Virbius, appears nonchalant about his previous bodily destruction, while Mettius’ ordeal symbolizes a schism in Ovid’s poetic corpus after his exile. Hippolytus’ punishment is an intertextual dismemberment, Mettius’ intratextual. Both figures offer concluding looks at Ovid’s aesthetic and literary stance regarding epic composition in the Augustan period. Both scenes further explore the effaced violence that brought the Augustan Principate to life.

\(^{42}\) To take two to these scenes: Galinsky (1975: 126-28) says that gore is Ovid’s ‘main concern in the Lapiths and Centaurs scenes. Fraenkel (1945: 102) simply remarks that the Lapiths and Centaurs scenes “sounds more like Lucan than Ovid.” In insulting Ovid this way, Fraenkel makes a laconic version of the argument I offer here.
In the wake of Pythagoras’ sermon on metempsychosis, Hippolytus narrates his horrific metamorphosis into Virbius, the original *Rex Nemorensis*. Like the conspicuous omission of Marsyas’ and Apollo’s *tibia* contest, Ovid excludes any mention of the events leading up to Hippolytus’ carwreck; he instead treats the charioteer’s dismemberment and ‘atomizing dispersal’ (Most 1992: 392). Euripides’ *Hippolytus* provides the model for Ovid’s version of the wreck, but the *Metamorphoses*’ Hippolytus holds specifically Roman significance as the first priest of Diana at Nemi. Moreover, since Hippolytus, *qua* Virbius, relates his own dismemberment, the first-person mode replays the atrocity in highly self-reflexive terms; his systematic recounting of the crash stands in stark contrast to the violent reality of the event narrated:

```
excitior curru, lorisque tenentibus artus
uiscera uiua trahi, neruos in stipe teneri,
membra rapi partim partimque reprensa relinqui,
ossa grauem dare fracta sonum fessamque uideres
exhalari animam nullasque in corpore partes,
noscere quas partes: unumque erat omnia uulnus. (Met. 15.524-29)
```

I am thrown hard from the chariot, and you could see my living flesh being dragged by the reins which held my limbs, and my sinews held fast on a stake, and part of my limbs ripped away while part are caught and left behind, and my broken bones gave a heavy sound and my tired soul exhaled and there were no parts on my body which you could recognize as parts: for everything was a single wound.

Like his Marsyas, Ovid’s Hippolytus appears only at the moment of his dismemberment; yet unlike Marsyas, who vocalizes his pain in the face of his exposed *viscera (a! piget!*), Hippolytus’ calm narrative betrays no hint of suffering. Despite his metamorphosis into a single wound (*unum uulnus*), his recollection of the event does not affect his muscular memory. On the contrary, he appears more than willing to narrate his ordeal as a case-in-point of Pythagorean metempsychosis. His punishment in Greek tragedy propels him
– in the Roman corpus – to the forefront of Diana’s priesthood in Italy. Yet the violent means do not seem to justify Hippolytus’ optimistic end: “never mind that mishap; look at me now!” he seems to say. His self-exemplum of metempsychosis cannot fully efface the arduous path he took to Nemi; to be sure, in terms of Augustan mythological appropriation, Hippolytus must be dismembered in order to take up residence in Italy. Hippolytus-Virbius seems brainwashed of his prior trauma in Euripides. “Leave it to Augustus to erase atrocity in the interests of religious-political legitimation,” Ovid seems to say. Here then the Metamorphoses offers another vignette of the facile overhaul of Greco-Roman myth in Augustan Rome: Roman Diana receives her first priest from Attica, yes, but at the gruesome expense of a man’s bodily integrity; never mind that he appears detached from the violence which brought him to Italy.

**Reliving Mettius Fufetius**

In closing, I consider another scene from Ovid’s exile poetry: Mettius Fufetius’ sparagmos. Like Absyrtus’ sparagmos (above), Ovid’s Mettius redirects the Metamorphoses’ centrifugal violence back towards the poet. In Tomis, Ovidian violence exhibits intratextual, boomerang-like qualities. Ovid’s recollection of the night before his forced departure casts him as Mettius Fufetius, an exemplum of dread punishment. Like Hippolytus, Mettius dies behind a chariot; and like Hippolytus, Ovid begins in first person voice (cf. excutior, above):

\[
\text{dividor haud aliter, quam si mea membra relinquam,}
\text{et pars abrumpi corpore visa suo est.}
\text{sic doluit Mettus tum in contraria versos}
\text{ultores habuit proditionis equos. (Trist. 1.3.73-76)}
\]

I am separated, not otherwise than if I left my limbs behind and part of my body seemed to be ripped from itself. Thus Mettius suffered when he held the horses turned in opposite directions, the avengers of his treachery.
Hinds’ ‘self-as-other surrogacy’ appears here in explicit terms. At his embarkation, Ovid feels himself divided (dividor), as if leaving part of his body behind. Indeed, as Trist. 1.1 makes clear, a great part of Ovid's poetic body, his corpus, must remain in Rome.

Contrast with Hippolytus' incorporation at Nemi: Ovid (Mettius) is excised from Rome’s corpus imperii. His bodily and literary schism takes on violent overtones with the Mettius Fufetius exemplum, who, according to Livy, is the first and only person in Roman history to suffer drawing and quartering (Ab urb. 1.28). Apparently, such a spectacle was too gruesome for even the Roman army. Ovid’s self-identification with Mettius Fufetius implicitly aligns Augustus with King Tullus Hostilius, who, because of his brutal punishment of Mettius, gains the epithet ferox. Thus, as the unwitting Mettius or Absyrtus, Ovid and his corpus fall victim to exemplary punishment: his exile poetry, qua dismemberment, offers words of lamentation and warning.

Despite Ovid’s exile and insistence on the ‘corporeal spectacle’ of his displacement-as-dismemberment, he still feels somehow attached to his previous corpus, especially the Metamorphoses. In Trist. 1.7 he offers an apologia for the state of his epic, and with a rhetorical ploy similar to Virgil’s supposed dying wish, he admits that his poem of shape-shifting bodies (carmina mutatas hominum dicentia formas, 1.7.13) lacks the final touches and should have been burned before its release. In fact, he imagines the poem as a sacrifice of his own entrails:

haec ego discedens, sicut bene multa meorum,  
ipse mea posui maestus in igne manu …  
sic ego non meritos mecum peritura libellos  
imposui rapidis viscera nostra rogis … (Trist. 1.7.15-16, 19-20)

Upon leaving I myself with my own hand sadly placed this [poem] upon the fire, as if a great part of myself … thus I laid the undeserving books
upon the greedy pyre, my own entrails, destined to die with me …

Ovid’s literary auto-evisceration anticipates Lucan’s similar meditation in the *Bellum Civile*. Ovid expresses anxiety that exile truncated the editing of his epic: it lacks the *summa manus* (1.7.28). Even so, a few copies escaped out into the world (1.7.23-24), over which the poet has no control. Ovid’s attachment to the *Metamorphoses* compels him to append a brief disclaimer for the poem, wherein he apologizes for its rough state: *quidquid in his igitur vitii rude carmen habebit, | emendaturus, si licuisset, erat* (“whatever fault this rough poem herein contains, [the author] was going to edit it, if he had been allowed,” 1.7.39-40). Which *uitia* Ovid refers to spark the ‘ultra-secreotive’ imagination; the indefinite *quidquid* perhaps invites a co-conspiring reader. Taken at face value, this after-the-fact forward in elegiac couplets would create a metrical and temporal rift in the hexametric *Metamorphoses.* 43 The poem beginning with primordial chaos would now begin in the future *(habebit)—in Ovid’s time of relegation.*

**Forms Changed: Ovidian Apotheosis and Grotesque Aesthetics**

As the Tomitan ‘preface’ makes clear, Ovid wishes for a continued presence in the *Metamorphoses*. Coupled with his epic *corpus*, his exilic *corpus* points up the tragic irony of his literary career and ambitions. Ovid’s pronouncement in the *Metamorphoses* to transcend the bodily confines of his perishable text is destabilized in exile, where he betrays an anxiety that he will no longer have the final word. In the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid is in complete control of his art and narrative. In 8 CE, he learns the hard lesson that Augustus’ narrative reigns supreme. When in *Trist. 2* he avers that he angered Jupiter, Ovid ironizes still, since he has in a way fallen victim to the caprices of a Jupiter

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43 This supposed prologue also reverses the prologue’s argument for the *Amores*, where Ovid says the work has benefited from condensing into three books (*levior demptis poena duobus erit, Am. pr. 4*).
created by the *Metamorphoses*. Authorial autonomy may liberate Ovid at the end of his epic, but apparently his ‘divine’ Emperor dislikes this sort of self-asserted power. Ovid’s literary *Himmelfahrt* in his epic (*vivam*) comes crashing to the ground in Tomis, where he returns to the *Metamorphoses* in a sort of “What went wrong?” exercise. His self-alignment with Mettius and Absyrtus creates a textualized surrogacy, in which Ovid casts himself as a victim of the capricious gods he created in the *Metamorphoses*. On the shore of the Black Sea, his *uiuam* surely seemed doubtful; for modern readers, his *uiuam* is without doubt.

Ovid lives today in part because of the aesthetic experiment conducted in his *Metamorphoses*. He may have felt himself dead in exile, but his scene-building and panache resonate today in an era saturated with visual media. I have noted throughout this chapter that Ovid’s narrative aesthetic shades into the grotesque areas of human experience. The grotesque experience helps meld together the disparate responses to Ovidian *ars*. Rather than Richilin’s ‘incongruity of form and content’ in his violent scenes, Ovid presents a syzygy of the violent and the beautiful; the one sustains the other, and vice versa. Ovidian violence inhabits a feedback loop energized by paradox: Hercules’ and Marsyas’ exposed, yet artfully arranged, *uiscera* embody the ambivalent responses provoked by the poem. Ovid creates an aesthetic experience that sits comfortably between the poles of politically subversive and artistically disinterested. To be sure, this spectrum typifies modern receptions of the Ovidian *persona*. To map them onto the extremes of another perspective, Ovidian violence aligns with feminist readings thus: subversive/ironic violence makes him a feminist sympathizer, while disinterested/ludic violence makes him a patriarchic misogynist. If one reads Ovid as a
‘post-modern’ voice, his violence (towards women and men) betrays anxieties over power and representation. If one reads Ovid as a ‘pre-modern’ or ‘normative’ voice within C1 CE Rome, the poet appears as a literary munerarius, orchestrating a macabre, yet artistic, epic ludus. The aesthetic experience of a poem like the Metamorphoses accounts for both limits of the paradox at the same time. To forget about one undercuts at least half the symbolic power of the other. Granted many readers find Ovid ‘funny’, but one may ask why exactly they are laughing: is it the voyeuristic Schadenfreude of the amphitheater or the tongue-in-cheek wit of a political ironist? Ovid prefers not to make this choice disjunctive. Like Lampetides’ miserabile carmen, Ovid disrupts any assumptions about form and genre, for in a way, the Metamorphoses both is, and is not, epos; and perhaps this is one aspect of Ovid’s talent that Augustus found so troubling.
CHAPTER 4
TO WOUND THE TRADITION: LUCAN IN THE EPIC ARENA

This chapter traces out the metapoetic process of textual dismemberment in Lucan’s *Bellum Civile* (*BC*). His poem presents the most sustained meditation on violent poetic imagery in Roman epic, and to date a focused account of his hexametric carnage is lacking. His worse-than-Civil War (*Bella plus quam civilia*, 1.1) turns the epic corpus against itself (*in sua victrici conversum viscera dextra*, 1.3) in a form of authorial auto-evisceration. Modern readers agree that the *BC* flaunts its ‘ostentatious textuality’ in the face of epic decorum, whence it derives a certain grotesque appeal.¹ Responses to the poem cluster around Lucan’s *outré* interests: ‘nervous laughter’, ‘black humor’, and ‘comic-ugly’.² The *Wunderkind*’s macabre project writhes in paradoxical messages: revulsion and fascination; humor and horror; order and chaos. The poet dramatizes his struggle with literary tradition and proclaims his story of poetic suicide.³ Lucan’s assault on the epic corpus and his penchant for violence offer a stark contrast between Augustan and post-Augustan literary anxieties regarding violence and the epic tradition. As a post-Ovidian writer, his poem’s self-awareness announces a vitriolic and contrarian

¹ Martindale (1993: 68). Elsewhere Martindale highlights the *BC*’s ‘vaunted textuality’ and ‘paradoxical surface’ (1993: 48). He notes that the poem’s hyperbolic violence and tragedy reminds the reader that all texts are just texts. Bartsch (1997: 35-40 with nn.) argues for the *BC*’s inclusion in the realm of the grotesque. ‘Epic decorum’ is of course relative to aesthetic tastes: Morford (1967: xi-xiii) documents Lucan’s checkered past in the literary canon and highlights supposed rhetorical features that readers have found abrasive (see also 1-12). Cf. Ahl (1976: 58-61).

² Bartsch (1997), Martindale (1993), and Johnson (1987) respectively. Of the ‘Lucanian manner’ Masters writes (1992: 26): “interest in the eerie, the grotesque, the darkly supernatural coming from the wellsprings of inspiration.” I also speak in this milieu. Henderson (1998) coins ‘the Lucanesque’. I will refer to the poet’s ‘macabre aesthetic’.

³ See Martindale (1993: 48): “a poem which might well be read under the sign of self-slaughter, both individual and collective.” Cf. Masters (1992: 215): “... Lucan is at war with himself, torn between a tradition his *pietas* demands that he respect, and the requirement of innovation, whose price is the *netas* of parricide, of destroying what gave him birth.”
pose with respect to the aesthetic preferences of his literary milieu and the tradition before him.

The BC often conjures amphitheatrical imagery: as if viewing gladiatorial ludi, an internal audience watches the spectacle of civil war. Matthew Leigh’s Spectacle and Engagement (1997) documents amphitheatrical echoes throughout the poem and observes a strong dissonance between the voyeurism of the arena and the pathos of civil war. Such dissonance often gives rise to ‘nervous laughter’, for one feels insecure in the face of such tragedy-made-spectacle. These seemingly incompatible reader responses implicate the audience in marveling at the death of the Republic and so heighten the tragedy of Lucan’s project. I find Leigh’s thesis attractive and raise Lucan’s epic to the plane of a metapoetic amphitheater: within the epic arena, armed with only his carmen, Lucan must fight for his (poetic) life. From the outset, he aligns his poem sternly against the Ennian-Virgilian war epics; his syntax pits standard against standard (obvia signa | signis, 1.6-7), eagle against eagle (pares aquilas, 1.7), and spear against spear (pila minantia pilis, 1.7). His poem sets his standard, his eagle, and his spear against that of his fellow epicists; all for common ruin (in commune nefas, 1.6).

Bartsch’s influential study reads the BC’s violent movements as expressing a crisis of self and agency in the stifled experience of Neronian Rome. She situates Lucan’s macabre palette within the 60’s CE: various bodies—the senatorial body, the

4 Such internal audiences appear early and often: Sulla is the spectator sceleris in the civil war epyllion (2.208); Vulteius and his men perform their mass suicide in front of Pompeian onlookers (4.529); the Caesarians rush to witness Scaeva’s aristeia (6.167-69); Pompey’s wife and children watch his assassination in Egypt (8.591-92). Erasmo (2005a) observes heightened theatricality in Senecan tragedy, wherein actors require an internal audience within the play. Bartsch (1994) highlights theatricality in the everyday experience of Neronian Rome, where citizens become actors in their own right, who must perform for their actor-Emperor.

5 Cf. Ennius, Ann. 584 Sk. and my comments on Virgil’s polyptoton above (Chapter 2). Lucan clearly views his as a response not only to Virgilian/Augustan epic, but also Ennian/Republican epic.
citizen body, the military body—come under fire in Lucan’s bellicose universe; in a forfeiture of libertas, the autocratic Emperor impinges on the integrity and free will of the Stoic cívís.⁶ More than this, I suggest, Lucan’s violence expresses an assault on the aesthetics of his age, a detonation of the inherited Roman epic. Like Ovid, Lucan exposes the inadequacies of the imperialistic Aeneid. Where Ovid chips away at the veneer of the Augustan-Virgilian epic, Lucan’s ballistic approach widens those fissures and fills them with abject matter: human viscera and amputated limbs corrode the Augustan corporation promulgated in the Aeneid.⁷ My approach falls more in line with Henderson and Masters, who read metapoetic processes in the BC as vignettes of Lucan’s war with epic poets and their poetry:

Deforestation becomes a metaphor for the plundering of poetic material from another source, and inasmuch as [deforestation] is itself continually a topos that comes from another source, we see that it enacts on the plane of epic action what it represents on the plane of literary activity … we see that this desecration [of the sacred grove] is an analogue for Lucan’s treatment of his predecessors’ material in his own poem (Masters 1992: 27, my emphasis).

Lucan’s motives are clear: plunder, despoil and desecrate. The citizen corpus, the epic corpus—neither remain intact while the bulky-bodied Nero reigns (sentiet axis onus, 1.57). Like the fossor vinctus at BC 7.402, Lucan finds solace in song; he writes to

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⁶ Bartsch (1997: 12-47). Cf. also Most (1992: 405-6) who collates further Stoic ideas of self. Both readers point out the disturbing anxiety that a human being may be, in the end, a bucket of blood. Cf. Clive Barker’s “Everybody is a book of blood … Wherever we are opened, we are red.” (quoted in Gomel 2003: 1).

⁷ Cf. Martindale (1993: 70): “The ‘good taste’ of Virgil had served to glorify Caesar Augustus; perhaps the destruction of Rome and the loss of liberty required, not good taste, but rather deformation of taste and of the literary tradition.” See Chapter 4 and E. Marie Young (2008) for Ovid’s exposure of fissures in the Augustan corpus (especially in the Orpheus story). Lucan’s ‘opening of fissures’ aligns with Masters’ observation that Lucan expands images that Virgil condenses and condenses those that he expands (cf. pp. 118-28 on Phemenoe and the Sibyl).
mollify the horrors of a putrid Rome and tyrant prince.\textsuperscript{8} Philosophical concerns find voice in the poet’s aesthetic preferences: behind the destruction, blood-letting and amputations, Lucan finds self and agency in poetry. Here lies Lucan’s subject, his corpus: in the viscera of Rome (1.3).

**Senecan Sidelight**

Lucan’s uncle Seneca prompts Glenn Most’s coinage, ‘the rhetoric of dismemberment’, for in comparison with its predecessors, Senecan tragedy shows a marked increase in fascination with the macabre.\textsuperscript{9} Most opens his discussion with the vicissitudes of Hippolytus’ sparagmos, tracing it from Euripides to Ovid to Seneca:

\begin{quote}
σύμφυρτα δ’ ἦν ἅπαντα· σύριγγές τ’ ἀνω 
τροχύνν ἐπήδων ἁζόνων τ’ ἐννήλατα, 
αὐτὸς δ’ ὁ τλήμων ἡνίασιν ἐμπλακεῖς 
δεσμὸν δυσεξέλικτον ἐλκετα δεθεῖς, 
σποδούμενος μὲν πρὸς πέτραις φίλον κάρα 
θραύσων τε σάρκας … (Eur., *Hipp. 1234-39*)
\end{quote}

Then all was confused; axle-rods and linchpins leaping in the air, while he – the wretch – entangled in the reins, was dragged along having been trapped in the twisted bridle, and he was pounded on the head by the rocks and his flesh was torn apart …

\begin{quote}
executior curru, lorisque tenentibus artus 
uisceru uiui trahi, neruos in stipe teneri, 
membra rapi partim partimque reprensa relinqui, 
ossa grauem dare fracta sonum fessamque uideres 
exhalari animam nullasque in corpore partes, 
noscere quas partes: unumque erat omnia uulnus. (*Met. 15.524-29*)
\end{quote}

I am thrown hard from the chariot, and you could see my living flesh dragged along by the reins which held my limbs while my sinews were held fast on a stake, and in part my limbs are snatched away, in part

\textsuperscript{8} Ovid’s exilic poetry conjures the fossor vinctus twice: *Trist. 4.1.5-6* and *P. 1.6.31-2*. Note too that mollification through song is a conceit as old as the Homerica: *Il. 6.354-358*, *Od. 3.203-4* and *24.200-2*.

\textsuperscript{9} The ‘rhetoric of dismemberment’ describes the novel, often fantastic, scenes of violence in post-Augustan poetry, which Most connects to rhetorical *topoi* of declamations. Before Most, Segal (1984: 311-25) and Jakobi (1988: 83-89) connect these Hippolytus scenes in Ovid and Seneca.
they are caught and left behind, and my broken bones made a loud
oise and my tired soul was breathed out and no parts were left on my
body which you could recognize as parts: for everything was a single
wound.

Each Hippolytus incarnation begets a new opportunity for Hippolytus’ dismemberment.
Most admits that Euripides’ account is ‘poignantly brief and unspecific’, while Seneca’s
is ‘drawn out and circumstantial’ (1992: 393). Ovid’s scene—a closer model for Seneca
than Euripides—reduces Hippolytus to a single wound (unumque ... uulnus) and
foreshadows Seneca’s account when it renders Hippolytus an unrecognizable mass of
limbs (nullasque in corpore partes | noscere quas partes). Regarding Seneca’s
dismemberment of Hippolytus (Phaed. 1093-1114), Most remarks that the charioteer
undergoes ‘atomizing dispersal’ (1992: 392), and he goes on to set out three possible
spheres of influence for this spike in literary violence: the historical circumstance of the
amphitheater, Stoic notions of self and personhood, and rhetorical-declamatory training.
As will be shown, a rhetorical-poetological account of Lucan’s violence casts in high
relief his unique narrative aesthetic. So to read this Hippolytus nexus as metapoetic
commentary: when Euripides and Ovid finish off their Hippolytuses, his corpus is left
dismembered; Seneca then must piece him back together.

The literary corpus becomes a fertile site of violent meditation for Neronian
authors; and further, Seneca’s surgical poetry inspires Lucan’s transgressive modus
operandi. Uncle and nephew share certain aesthetic stances toward the body of
literature. Consider further Seneca’s second meditation on Hippolytus’ corpus. If
Seneca (after Euripides and Ovid) can dismember the Hippolytus mythos, he can also
make a clumsy reassembly:

THESEUS: Huc, huc, reliquias uelhite cari corporis
Here! Bring his body's sweet remains here, and give me his mass and limbs now piled out of order. Is this Hippolytus? … Now, father, distribute the dissected limbs of his shredded body into order and return the errant parts to their place: this is the spot for his right hand, and here his left should be placed, skilled at steering the reigns: I recognize the marks of your left shank. How great a part of you is still absent from my tears! Now, trembling hands, steady in your painful task; and parched cheeks, cease your large tears while a father tallies his son’s limbs and fashions his body. What is this ugly thing lacking shape and torn on every side with numerous wounds? I don’t know which part of you it is: but it is a part of you still: here, put it here, not in its proper spot, but an empty one.”

Seneca signals an intertextual relationship with Euripides and Ovid when Theseus ‘recognizes’ the unrecognizable Hippolytus-mass (agnosco notae). Tragic irony increases when one recalls that Ovid’s Hippolytus ends up with no parts recognizable as parts (nullasque in corpore partes | noscere quas partes). “Is this Hippolytus?” indeed. Considering the treatment of Hippolytus in Euripides and Ovid, little wonder that Theseus (Seneca) has trouble identifying the man’s corpus. In fact, Seneca (Theseus) must reshape that which lacks shape (forma carens); only traces, marks and limbs

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10 See Hinds (1993: 8-10) for agnosco as an intertextual signal in Lucan’s Pompey scene. Further, notae can mean ‘letters, signs, markings’ (see E. Marie Young [2008: 14-15]).
remain (*reliquiae, notae, membra*); parts are still missing, left behind in the bramble (*virgulta … ruscus corporis partem tulit*, 1102-3). Like Horace, the belated Seneca resurrects dismembered limbs: to treat this story is to sift through the story’s shapeless, scattered members (*disiecta membra laceri corporis*). His autopsy refashions a grotesque version of the Hippolytus story, for in the end, ‘tradition’ constitutes a bricolage of dissociated appendages. Nephew Lucan, then, also makes meat of literary tradition.

According to Most’s statistics for violence in epic poetry, the *BC* averages over eight lines per casualty.¹¹ No secret that Lucan dilutes more carnage across larger poetic space, but his macabre imagery is as calculated as it is caustic. His civil war epyllion introduces programmatic imagery for the *BC* (2.68-232), and here Marius Gratidianus, the poem’s first victim of piece-by-piece dismemberment, falls prey to the *Pax Sullana*. Like Seneca’s dismemberment and reassembly of the Hippolytus *mythos*, Lucan cleaves limbs from the poetic *corpus* in order to start anew:

   … *cum laceros artus aequataque vulnera membris* 
   *vidimus et toto quamvis in corpore caeso*
   *nil animae letale datum, moremque nefandae*
   *dirum saevitiae, pereuntis parcere morti.*
   *avulsae cecidere manus exactaque lingua*
   *palpitat et muto vacuum ferit aera motu.*
   *hic aures, alius spiramina naris aduncae*
   *amputat, ille cavis evolvit sedibus orbes*
   *ultimaque effodit spectatis lumina membris.* (2.177-85)

   “… When we saw [Gratidianus’] severed limbs and wounds for every appendage and no death permitted to his soul, though his entire body was lacerated; [and we saw] a dread custom of unspeakable savagery: they kept the dying man from dying. His hands were torn off and fell away, and his tongue was cut out and quivered and beat the air in mute motion. One amputates his ears, another the cavities of his hooked

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¹¹ See Most (1992: 398): Homer, 2.1; Virgil, 2.2; Lucan, 8.4; Silius Italicus, 3.1; Statius, 2.9.
nose, another rolls his eyes out of their empty sockets and digs out his final sight – his own limbs.”

Gratidianus’ attackers make him witness to his own dismemberment (spectatis membris)—only after they tear out his eyes (effodere). Like the poem’s unwilling spectator-narrator, no one can avert his gaze. This eye-gouging gives rise to a classic Lucanian paradox: when enacted on a person’s eyes, effodere normally leads to blindness (like Oedipus); in Gratidianus’ case, however, the removal of his eyes enables him to see the horror and atrophy of civil war. Moreover, the assailants take from Gratidianus all parts that define him as such (manus, lingua, aures, naris, lumina). Just after this passage Lucan ironically asks Sulla’s men if they confound their victim’s face in order that Sulla may recognize and enjoy it (confundere vultum … ut Sullae placeret | agnoscedus erat, 2.190-3). Like Virgil’s Deiphobus, Gratidianus acts as reminder and harbinger of past and future conflict; and like Deiphobus, who lacks his ora, manus and nares, Gratidianus gains epic recognition when stripped of his nose, eyes, hands and tongue. Both corpses wear badges of epic bella; both pare the epic corpus down to its tabula rasa; both evoke the cultural artifact of damnatio memoriae. Moreover, by linking his Gratidianus to Virgil’s Deiphobus, Lucan equates the cruelty of Odysseus and Menelaus to that of Sulla’s men (and by extension, their chief himself). Yet, where Deiphobus’ amputations appear after-the-fact, Gratidianus’ ordeal occurs in ‘real time’;

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12 See Leigh (1997) for the spectator-narrator and his gaze in Lucan’s narrative technique. Leigh also collates those discussions that compare Lucan’s Sulla to his counterparts in Sen., De Clem. 1.12.1-2 and Plut., Sull. 30.3, where Sulla holds a meeting of the Senate and asks his audience to ignore the screams of the 6,000 ‘political criminals’ being slaughtered next door in the Circus Flaminus (1997: 303).

13 The irony of recognition through unrecognizability reoccurs at the death of Pompey. Cf. Erasmo (2005: 344) and Mayer (1981: 67, n. 2). The scenes connection to damnatio memoriae also limns the inherent paradox of the procedure: is it a reminder to forget, or a forgetting of this man’s memory?

14 See Chapter 2 for the significance of Virgil’s Deiphobus vis-à-vis Aeneas’ epic past and future.
he and the reader watch the scene unfold side-by-side. Lucan has no shame in producing the event. As a Roman Deiphobus, therefore, Gratidianus’ dismemberment fills a narrative gap opened in *Aeneid* 6. Ever the anti-Virgil, however, Lucan exceeds the *Aeneid’s* body-count. The aftermath of Sulla’s reign discharges a flood of limbs and dead bodies:

vix caede peracta  
procumbunt, dubiaque labant cervice; sed illos  
magna premit strages peraguntque cadavera partem  
caedis: viva graves elidunt corpora trunci.  
intrepidus tanti sedit securus ab alto  
spectator sceleris: miseri tot milia vulgi  
non timuit iussisse mori. congesta recept  
omnia Tyrrenus Sullana cadavera gurges.  
in fluvium primi cecidere, in corpora summi.  
praecipites haesere rates, et strage cruenta  
interruptus aquam fluxit prior amnis in aequor,  
ad molem stetit unda sequens. iam sanguinis alti  
vis sibi fecit iter campumque effusa per omnem  
praecipitique ruens Tiberina in flumina rivo  
haerentis adiuvit aquas; nec iam alveus amnem  
nec retinet ripae, redditque cadavera campo. (2.203-18)

With the slaughter concluded, the [victors] hardly tumble forward, but teeter with tottering neck; the great carnage crushes them and the corpses drive out part of the grue: heavy headless trunks wipe out living bodies. Safe and fearless, [Sulla] the spectator of so much crime sits on high; he did not shy from ordering so many thousands of the masses to die. The Tyrrhenian swell, now blocked-up, took in all the cadavers. The first ones fell into the river itself, the rest on top fell upon other bodies. Boats heading downstream stopped and stuck, and where the river—cinched with bloodied waste—previously poured its water into the sea, the coming flow stopped at the mass [of bodies]. Then the force of the thick bloodshed made a path for itself and poured out all over the Campus, and the rush helped the clinging water into the Tiber’s flume with forward-moving water; neither the river bottom nor the banks held the water back, and it returned the cadavers to the Campus.

Body language redounds in this preliminary massacre. Alongside the *spectator sceleris*, the reader has a bird’s-eye view of the carnage from Sulla’s attempt at *bellum civile*. 
The BC’s remaining books offer microscopic looks at epic bloodshed. Note too that Lucan constipates one metaliterary trope (river-as-poetry) with another (poetry-as-body).\textsuperscript{15} Lucan comes late to this fight, for Sulla, who exists in a pre-Caesarian narrative stratum, has already clogged Rome’s dearest poetic vein. The pile-up of bodies and slaughter (\textit{caede} … \textit{cadavera} … \textit{caedis} … \textit{corpora trunci} … \textit{cadavera} … \textit{corpora} … \textit{strage cruenta} … \textit{sanguinis} … \textit{cadavera}) foreshadows the scenery of the coming war epic and in a way offers a vignette of the flying limbs and bodies that appear throughout the poem. Like any good civil war, corpses are the stuff of the BC. Reflective of Scaeva’s \textit{aristeia} at Dyrrhachium (6.169-259), the BC slashes through heaps of \textit{corpora}, dispatches them as quick as it grabs hold of them. The epic \textit{corpus} and its constituent \textit{membra} thus become ‘fodder’ for Lucan’s pen.\textsuperscript{16} In his epyllion then, Lucan rehashes the horrors of the \textit{Pax Sullana} and elevates them as programmatic themes for his narrative aesthetic. Symbolized in the mutilated Gratidianus and congested Tiber, the BC floods the epic narrative with slaughter and announces a new, macabre artistry.

\textbf{Corpora Mutata: Ovidian Tellus and Lucanian Fodere}

Lucan’s modes of desecration and plundering often appear with words that denote stabbing, digging, and scrutinizing (the \textit{fod-/foss-} and \textit{scut-} semantic fields). Their frequency of occurrence lends them thematic qualities in the same way that Masters observes metapoetic commentary in \textit{moles} and \textit{agger}.\textsuperscript{17} Immersed in Imperial

\textsuperscript{15} Rivers-as-poetry has a long history as far back as Callimachus (Wimmel 1960). See also Masters (1992: 68-70 & 169-72).

\textsuperscript{16} See Rich (2011) for “Lucan’s Ferrum Fodder.”

\textsuperscript{17} Masters (1992: 20-25). \textit{Fod-/foss-} occurs 23 times; \textit{scut-} occurs 9 times. By way of comparison, the \textit{Aeneid} has 20 occurrences of \textit{fod-/foss-} and none for \textit{scut-}. The \textit{Aeneid} is 1,836 lines longer than the \textit{Bellum Civile}, so that the frequency of these roots calculates to one every 495 lines for Virgil and one every 252 lines for Lucan.
self-fashioning, Lucan’s metapoetic bent owes much to Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. Ovid’s epic narrates all of world history from Lucretius’ chaotic and muddled *corpora* to *mea tempora*, where the Greco-Roman *mythos* comes to reside in the poet’s ‘self-perpetuating mind’ (Henderson 1998: 166). Like Ovid’s poetry, Lucan’s vaunts its textuality and foists the poet’s *ars* upon the reader. After the *Metamorphoses*, the *BC* reminds the reader that all texts are only texts, and that where previous epics construct a pattern of history, the *BC* deconstructs it along with its tropes, sequences and procedures (Martindale 1993: 48). Ovid’s *corpus imperii* (*Trist. 2.232*) shatters in the *BC*,\(^\text{18}\) where fragmentation well describes the body’s treatment. In fact, Ovid’s ‘metamorphic bodies’ offer Lucan a ripe point of entry for his poem.\(^\text{19}\) Ovid’s *Tellus*, herself something of an author (*tellus elementaque grandia traxit, Met. 1.29*) dons unfamiliar human figures and begets the Ages of Man.\(^\text{20}\) After a glance at Ovid’s Iron Age, one can see what piques Lucan’s interest:

```
Tertia post illam successit aenea proles,
saevior ingenis et ad horrida promptior arma,
non scelerata tamen; de duro est ultima ferro.
protinus inrupit venae peioris in aevum
omne nefas: fugere pudor verumque fidesque;
in quorum subiere locum fraudesque dolusque
insidiaque et vis et amor sceleratus habendi.
...
nece tantum segetes alimentaque debita dives
poscebatur humus, sed itum est in viscera terrae,
quasque recondiderat Stygiisque admoverat umbris,
Effodiuntur opes, inritamenta malorum.
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\(^\text{18}\) Cf. also Seneca *De Clem. 1.5.1*: *Nam si … tu animus rei publicae tuae es, illa corpus tuum, vides, ut puto, quam necessaria sit clementia* (“For if … you are the soul of your state, and the state your body, you see, I believe, how requisite is mercy.”)

\(^\text{19}\) Segal (1998) discusses Ovid’s metamorphic bodies.

\(^\text{20}\) *sic modo quae fuerat rudis et sine imagine tellus | induit ignotas hominum conversa figuras* (*Met. 1.87-8*).
The third after [silver] to come was the bronze progeny, more wild in nature and ready for terrible weapons—but not sinful in any case. The final age was from tough iron. Forthwith all nefas burst into the lesser-veined age; shame and truth and trust fled, and in their place came fraud and grief and threats and violence and the criminal love of having … Nor is corn and necessary sustenance demanded of the rich soil, but the earth’s innards are entered, and wealth, which she had hidden and removed to the Stygian shades, is dug out—wealth that instigator of evil. And now she had produced injurious iron, and gold more noxious even than iron; she produced war, which fights on either side and strikes clanging arms with bloody hand. One lives of off rapine. Guest is not safe from host, nor father- from son-in-law; also, kindness between brothers is rare. A husband threatens destruction for his wife, [and] she his; terrifying stepmothers mix green aconite; a son seeks his father’s [final] years prematurely; duty lies vanquished, and virginal Justice finally left the blood-soaked earth for the heavens.

When viewed from a distance, this passage sketches out a poetic program for the BC. Ovid introduces the ultima proles with a violent metaphor: it bursts into (inrupit) an age already constituted of inferior alloy and so initiates human transgression from hereon. Ovid’s vena metaphor cleverly points to the veins found in lesser metals (such as iron, ferrum), but it also foreshadows the violation of human tissue (veins in the anatomical sense) that accompanies the appearance of war (bellum). Ovid’s Iron Age starts to look proto-Lucanian: ad horrida promptior arma; omne nefas; itum est in viscera; nocens ferrum ferroque nocentius aurum; bellum sanguineaque manu crepitantia concutit arma. This vocabulary energizes the BC. In fact, a certain bellum civile takes place in Ovid’s
Iron Age: hospitality no longer obtains (*hospes ab hospite*); *fathers-in-law fight with sons-in-law* (*sacer a genero*); brothers do not act kindly towards one another; spouses plot each other’s *exitia*; sons are disloyal to fathers. Lucan employs this scenery in his Sullan excursus: slaves kill masters (2.148-9); children contend for their parents’ inheritance; sons kill fathers (2.149-50); brothers murder brothers (2.151). The Iron Age’s familial strife finds its way into Laelius’ speech at *BC* 1.359-86: his vow to murder his entire family (*frater, parentes, coniugis*) casts him—in typically Lucanian fashion—into the role of Ovid’s Iron Age man *par excellence*. Lucan also borrows Ovid’s logic of the Fall of Man—that violation of Mother Earth leads to greed and violence—when he cites *opes nimias* as the cause of Rome’s ill fortune (*opes* springs from *Tellus* at *Met.* 1.140). These resources, in Lucan’s formulation, flow in from the extension of Rome’s borders (*tum longos iungere fines agrorum, BC* 1.167). Where excavation, or evisceration, of *Tellus* in Ovid produces war (*itum est in viscera terrae … effodiuntur opes … prodit bellum*), there Lucan finds a nexus of imagery and language (*fodere*) with which to construct his *BC*; he only must dig it out.

*Fodere* and *scrutari* complement each other in Lucan’s violent language. Probing, digging, mining, scrutinizing, and stabbing indeed reflect Lucan’s treatment of the epic *corpus*. The *fod-/foss*- and *scrut-* signifiers prod the literary landscape (*terra, tellus*) as much as the poetic *corpus*, and each violation is an analogue for the other.

Take for instance Sulla’s surgery on the Roman state (2.140-3), where Bartsch remarks that the dictator’s procedure ‘cuts too deep’ (1997: 16). Indeed:

```latex
ille quod exiguum restabat sanguinis urbi hausit; dumque nimis iam putria membra recidit excessit medicina modum, nimiumque secuta est, qua morbi duxere, manus.
```
What little blood remained in the city [Sulla] drank; and while he cut away the limbs now too diseased, his treatment exceeded the mean, and his hand followed too far where the disease led.

Lucan applies medical language to Sulla’s violence on the city, casting him as a surgeon who, though meticulous, consciously harms the patient. Sulla’s Whipple-gone-wrong concentrates the language of excess—*plus quam*, *excedere modum*, *nimium*—on the *membra* of Rome. In this way, Sulla also reflects Ovidian Iron Age Man: Sulla eviscerates the *urbs* that bore him, while Iron Age Man eviscerates the *Tellus* that bore him. Thus, Lucan here ties together two strands of his metapoetic language: Sulla’s bloody operation on Roman soil collapses the vocabulary of digging-stabbing-probing into one event that violates body and landscape.

Disfigurement of *tellus/terra* is tangential this study, so I consider the poet’s deployment of the *fod/-foss*- root in scenes of corporeal violence. It is significant that *fod/-foss*- occurs in most of Lucan’s famously violent movements (Table 4-1).

**Table 4-1. Distribution of *fodere* in the *Bellum Civile***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Gratidianus’ eyes dug out – Sullan excursus (<em>effodere</em>, 185).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Soldier’s chest pierced by two prows – Massilia (<em>perfodere</em>, 660).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Father slits his own throat over dying son – Massilia (<em>confodere</em>, 744).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Vulteius exhorts his men to slit each other’s throats (<em>fodere</em>, 511).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Scaeva’s chest cannot hold any more missiles (<em>perfodere</em>, 253).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Erictho buries men alive (<em>infodere</em>, 530).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Erictho digs men’s eyes out (<em>effodere</em>, 542).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Caesar vows suicide in the face of surrender – Pharsalus (<em>fodere</em>, 309).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Achillas stabs Pompey for the first time (<em>perfodere</em>, 619).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With the exception of Erictho’s live burial (BC 6.530), this table collates the instances in which *fodere* and its compounds assault human bodies.²¹ Erictho’s *infodere* is significant here because it occurs twelve lines before her eye excavation and in the same metrical position. Burial and excavation are opposite processes (*infodere* vs. *effodere*), and their proximity here lends the echo a programmatic tenor, especially when one recalls that Lucan refers to her as *vates*.²² She can fill the landscape with living limbs (*adhuc sua membra regentes* | *infodit busto*), just as she can dig eyes from their sockets (*effodisse orbes*). The similar prosody yokes the actions into apposite—and indeed opposite—assaults on the body of literature and literary landscape. Moreover, the removal of eyes in book 6 recalls Gratidianus’ perspecticide in book 2, which, as I noted earlier, rings programmatic for the poem as a whole. One may object that *fodere* is not a distinct mode of poetic violence in the *BC*, which is filled with myriad stabbings, amputations, and crushing blows, but it is important to note, like Masters does, that “Lucanian language inhabits a paranoiac universe … a pseudo-Stoic cosmos in which everything connects; a poetic, symbolic nexus in which every element … *conspires*. Everything signifies” (1992: 106-7). Lucan’s *fodere* imagery exists within this hall of mirrors; all his violent scenes echo one or another, and the frequency and persistence of *fodere* in these movements signals Lucan’s poetic violence within and against epic tradition. Vulteius’ exhortation to suicide (*fodere*) plays out in miniature the grander metanarrative of Lucan’s auto-evisceration in the *BC*. Scaeva’s chest, brimming

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²¹ The remaining instances assault the civil war landscape, and they often appear in conjunction with Masters’ massive edifices, which signal Lucan’s top-heavy narrative aesthetic (see especially 1992: 20-25), where he draws his initial conclusions about Lucan’s construction techniques.

with spear tips (*perfasso pectore*), contains the excess (*plus quam*) of Lucan’s project. Caesar’s vow of suicide (*fodere*) in the face of surrender opens the happy possibility that Caesarism could have never happened, and thus Lucan’s poem would have taken a very different shape. Achillas’ sword thrust (*perfodere*) into Pompey—sitting prominently in first position at BC 8.619—probes the (in)glorious death and reopens the narrative gap created in Virgil’s Priam scene. Taken together, and viewed as a whole, Lucanian *fodere* operates in the same way that Ovid’s Iron Age *fodere* does: the *opes* of tradition lie buried in *uiscera* of the epic *corpus*, and Lucan prefers a heavy-handed procedure to Ovid’s surgical delicacy.

**Aestheticized Violence: the *Naumachia* at Massilia**

As Masters notes, Lucan’s (and Caesar’s) Massilia passages ‘create mountains out of mole-hills’ (1992: 25), insofar as this sea battle holds relatively little significance in the larger civil war. In this scene, Lucan seems to jibe Caesar’s account of the civil war by making Massilia far more important than it really was, just like Caesar. Here too Lucan writes the most prolonged meditation on epic combat, and the novelty of his treatment resides in the sea battle’s connection to the historical circumstance of gladiatorial *naumachia*. Whereas Gratidianus experiences a five-line, checklist dismemberment, Massilia stages limb-loss opera. The condensed catalogue of Gratidianus’ limb-loss expands and multiplies at Massilia, where one finds aestheticized violence made the ‘object of artistic vision’. One nameless soldier, fighting alongside his twin brother, meets a brutal death among the ships:

Stant gemini fratres, fecundae gloria matris, quos eadem variis genuerunt *uiscera* fatis:

... quorum alter mixtis obliquo pectine remis ausus Romanae Graia de puppe carinae
There stand twin brothers, the fruit of their fertile mother, whom the same innards birthed, but for differing fates ... One of whom, amidst the tilted context of the crisscrossed oars, dared to cast his hand to a Roman bow from his Greek boat; but a heavy blow from above severs it off; it clung there anyway where it held due to its effort, and it grew rigid in death, still grasping with the sinews constricted. His courage grew in adversity: his noble trunk has more anger and strives on into the fray with a strong left hand and leans across the water to grab his right. This hand also is chopped off along with his entire arm. Now, without shield and spear, he is not protected in the hold of the ship, but he’s exposed and guarding his brother’s shield with his bare chest, and, with death well-earned, and though pierced with thick spears, he carries on and receives missiles that would have fallen to the death of many of his comrades. Then, under many a wound he gathers his faltering spirit into his wearied legs and casts his limbs altogether – those that remained – and he leapt in order to harm the enemy ship with bloodshed, with his bulk and defeated sinews, with his weight alone. The ship is full with the piled carnage of men and copious blood and takes thick strikes along its facing side and, after it drank the sea with its ruptured hull, it sinks into the waves filling up to its top gangways, rolling the nearby water with swirling eddy. The sea parts and opens for the submerged boat and it
falls into the ocean. That day offered many spectacles of different death to the sea.

Lucan’s *naumachia* indeed offers the reader many spectacles of death. Though linked through the same *viscera*, though offshoots of the same *corpus*, civil war severs this fraternal bond (*discrevit mors saeva viros*, 6.605). This brother in fact falls victim to Lucan’s hexametric anatomy lesson: he loses his left (*laeva*) and right (*dextra*) hands at consecutive line-ends (615-16). The chaotic scenery through formal control continues: his enjamed hand (*iniecatare manum*), clinging to the enemy ship, in the following line receives an enjamed amputation (*amputat*), which in turn chops that line’s prosody with a second-foot *caesura* (612).23 Such precise technique recalls Lucretius’ dismemberment thought experiment (*DRN* 3.640-56), where men continue battle despite lopped-off arms and legs. There too chaotic and violent content masks formal control; there too left and right hands fall in the same line position and punctuate their verses at the *caesurae* (*laevam … dextram*, *DRN* 3.649 & 651). Lucretius’ serial amputations—injuring no less than seven different men—concentrate on the body of Lucan’s lone soldier, who, no longer a *frater* or *miles*—nor even a *corpus*—now a *truncus*, takes the brunt of the BC’s punishment. Here arise Masters’ ponderous edifices, yet in this passage slaughter comprises the freight that sinks the ship (*strage virum cumulata … multoque cruore*). This echo of the Sullan massacre (above) foreshadows Scaeva’s wall of bodies (below), and reinforces the somatic fascination of Lucanian poetics.

23 The severed hand has a long history in the historiographic and declamatory tradition, where it first appears in Herodotus’ account of the battle of Marathon and the mural of the *Stoa Poikile* (see Herod. *Hist.* 6.107-117 with Reader [1996: 34-35]).
As an expansion of Gratidianus, who stands in for the limbless epic *corpus*, this soldier’s participation in the *BC* offers a hyperbolic view of poetic violence. Indeed, the scene’s echoes of gladiatorial *ludi* suggests insufficient trauma in the realities of the amphitheater or *naumachia*. Such verbal fireworks have garnered numerous hostile critics, who decry Lucan’s rhetoricizing and baroque, ‘Silver Age’ prerogatives, but a more fertile line of inquiry interrogates such scenery’s position within the broader epic tradition. In terms of line numbers devoted to sheer slaughter, Lucan’s poem stands at the zenith (or nadir, for his harsher critics) of violent art in Classical Latin epic. His violence betrays the workings of a lively, and perhaps irate, poetic imagination, which holds immediate appeal for modern readers immersed in horror films, violent video games, and unfortunate mass shootings. King’s subterranean river of alligators again holds significance, inasmuch as Lucan discharges so much mimetic carnage onto the page that one cannot but help observe an attempt at catharsis taking place. In light of the above scene and what follows, his need to banish from memory the violence at Pharsalus grows all the more ironic (*BC* 7.617ff.), since he displays no such shame in the Massilia scene or the more significant decapitation of Pompey.

From the above thirty-line spectacle, Lucan moves into a condensed casualty of civil war. A grappling hook sticks a certain Lycidas and he dangles out over the water:

```latex
mersus foret ille profundo,
  sed prohibent socii suspensaque crura retentant.
scinditur avulsus, nec, sicut vulnere, sanguis
  emicuit; lentus ruptis cadit undique venis,
discursusque animae diversa in membra meantis
  interceptus aquis. nullius vita perempti
  est tanta dimissa via. pars ultima trunci
  tradidit in letum vacuos vitalibus artus;
at tumidus qua pulmo iacet, qua viscera fervent,
  haesperunt ibi fata diu, luctataque multum
```
hac cum parte viri vix omnia membra tulerunt. (3.636-46)

He would have been drowned in the sea, but his allies keep him and hold onto his swinging legs. He is torn and ripped in half, and blood spat out but not as if from a traditional wound; it falls out slowly from the ruptured veins in all directions, and the stream of life wanders into his dissociated limbs and is taken by the water. The life of no one slain flowed out by so wide a path. The bottom part of his trunk handed his empty and lifeless limbs over to death; but where his puffy lungs lie, where his guts are warm, there his fate clung at length and, after struggling for a while with this part of the man, it took all his limbs with difficulty.

For Lycidas’ sake, would that his socii had let him be; in civil war, in the BC, everyone and everything are a threat. When Lucan cleaves the man’s body in two (scinditur avulsus), he opens a fissure in the man’s corpus that spills abject matter into the ocean. With some limbs dead and others living, his liminal state reflects the blurred distinctions between subject and object in the BC. His legs cease to be part of his person, his subject. His erupted viscera, dangling over the waves, are now abject. Never before has the epic corpus received such explosive treatment (nullius vita perempti | est tanta dimissa via). The narrator’s sententiousness shades into poetological commentary. Lucan’s pause and focus on Lycidas’ flapping innards recreates at the narrative level Lycidas’ liminal state and slow transition from life to death; would that he could stay like this forever, Lucan seems to wish. Like the BC generally, civil war offers a prolonged (diu) look at the viscera of Rome and her epics; like the corpus imperii and its body of literature, moribund appendages (vacuos vitalibus artus) slip away, and vital organs struggle on as best they can (tumidus pulmo … viscera … luctata multum … omnia membra). In the case of Lycidas, then, Lucan offers but one tableau of his treatment of

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24 See Bartsch (1997: 10-29) for the blurring of subject-object relations in this scene and others.
the epic *corpus*: a sudden and unclean rending in two; a violent schism that may well inspire nausea in the reader.

**I’ll Meet You Overboard: Vulteius and the ‘Ship of Fools’**

In *BC 4* Vulteius’ protest suicide stages a microcosm of Lucan’s literary auto-evisceration. Beset on all sides by Pompeian soldiers, Vulteius (like Scaeva) knows the value of an audience, especially when one dies for Caesar:

> ‘ecquis’ ait ‘iuvenum est cuius sit dextra cruore
digna meo certaque fide per vulnera nostra
testetur se velle mori?’ nec plura locuto
viscera non unus iam dudum transigit ensis.
collaudat cunctos, sed eum cui vulnera prima
debebat grato moriens interficit ictu.
concurrunt alii totumque in partibus unis
bellorum fecere nefas. sic semine Cadmi
emicuit Dircaea cohors ceciditque suorum
vulneribus, dirum Thebanis fratribus omen;
Phasidos et campis insomni dente create
terrigenae <im>missa magicis e cantibus ora
cognato tantos implerunt sanguine sulcos,
ipsaque inexpertis quod primum fecerat herbis
expavit Medea nefas. sic mutua pacti
fata cadunt iuvenes, minimumque in morte virorum
mors virtutis habet. pariter sternuntque caduntque
vulnera letali, nec quemquam dextra fefellit
cum feriat moriente manu. nec vulnus adactis
debetur gladiis: percussum est pectore ferrum
et iuguli pressere manum. cum sorte cruenta
fratibus incurrunt fratres natusque parenti,
haud trepidante tamen toto cum pondere dextra
exegere enses. pietas ferientibus una
non repetisse fuit. iam latis viscera lapsa
semanimes traxere foris multumque cruorem
infudere mari. despectam cernere lucem
victoresque suos vultu spectare superbo
et mortem sentire iuvat. iam strage cruenta
conspicitur cumulata ratis, bustisque remittunt
corpora victores, ducibus mirantibus ulli
esse ducem tanti. (*BC 4.542-73*)

"Are any of my soldiers' hands worthy of my blood, who could bear witness by my wounds that he wishes to die with sure proof?" [Vulteius]
spoke no more and not just one sword already stabbed his innards. He praises all of them, and while he dies he kills with thankful wound the man to whom was owed first blood. The rest charge together and they created the entire crime of war in a single pocket. So from Cadmus’ seed shot up the Dircaeian cohort and fell by one another’s wounds, a dread omen for the Theban brothers; thus in Phasis’ plains the Earth-Born men, created from the unsleeping tooth, filled trenches so vast with kindred blood in anger inspired by magic spells, and Medea herself trembled at the first crime committed by her untried herbs. Equally they fell and fall by death-dealing wound, and no one’s arm failed him while he strikes with dying hand. Nor is a wound owed to a driven sword: blade is struck by chest and throats attack hilt. While brothers charge brothers in bloody gamble and sons their fathers, still swords drove on not all with wavering hands, but with their entire force. For those dealing strikes in unison it was not their duty to strike a second time. Now, half-dead they dragged their slipping guts to the wide gangways and dumped the copious slaughter into the sea. As conquerors they are happy to gaze upon the hated sun and to see their own with haughty visage and to feel imminent death. Now the [Pompeians] see the raft heaped with bloody gore, and the conquerors release the bodies for the pyres, and the [Pompeian] generals are in awe that a leader is worth any such price.

Such esprit de corps does the ‘Crazy Gang’ demonstrate that they cut off Vulteius’ words mid-hexameter—at the caesura appropriately enough.\(^2^5\) As the site of totum bellorum nefas, Vulteius’ raft degenerates into a crucible of epic suicide. Subject-object relations are reversed, and abject matter spills overboard (latis viscera lapsa … foris):\(^2^6\) chests and necks assault swords and hands (percussum est pectore ferrum | et iuguli pressere manum). Epic similes heighten the absurdity of Vulteius’ position: like the Theban epigoni who chop one another down as soon as they sprout from the earth, Lucan’s simile underscores the pointlessness of self-sacrifice and seems to beg the question, “Why live in the first place?”\(^2^7\) Moreover this simile points back to Ovid’s

\(^{25}\) Leigh (1997: 191) calls the Caesarians the ‘Crazy Gang’.


\(^{27}\) In this regard, Lucan perhaps condemns the Stoic ‘cult of suicide’ that gains currency in the early Imperial period. See Rich (2011).
foundation of Thebes in *Met.* 3, where the *epigonoi* warn Cadmus not to interfere in their *bella civilia* (*Met.* 3.104-17). Cadmus’ *epigonoi* indeed carry a serpentine contagion, but five at least survive this civil war to propagate congenital disease in the Theban cycle. In Lucan’s *BC* no one gets out alive; Vulteius’ men carry a terminal illness. His second simile (Jason’s dragon-teeth upshots) gains a metapoetic dimension when the poet recalls that Medea’s *magicus cantus*, like Lucan’s, compels the Earth-born men to slaughter each other. (Note too that Medea turns fratricidal and dismembers her brother Absyrtus). The witch Medea sees the power of song, and fratricidal Thebes sows its murderous ancestors—neither bode well for the *corpus Romanum*. Lucan thus reads Ovid’s Cadmean ‘civil war’ as toxic to future generations by virtue of its violent *incipit*. In similar fashion, he suggests, the birth pains of Rome’s principate are underwritten by Rome gutting herself. Vulteius’ celebration of this suicide and its Theban shading endow the *nefas* of his act with mythological freight front-loaded by Ovid’s Cadmus.

**Some Virtue: Scaeva the Epic Gladiator**

Single combat is a staple of war epics, and in the epic war of words ‘Lucan’s gladiator’ Scaeva represents a surrogate of the *BC* itself. Like the poet, like his epic, Scaeva is prone to crime and unaware of how sinful is excellence in civil war (*pronus ad omne nefas et qui nesciret in armis | quam magnum virtus crimen civilibus esset*, 6.147-8). Amphitheatrical language arises soon in the Dyrrhachium scene: the Caesarians clamber up a hill to gain a better view of this man *versus* army (*bellum atque virum*, 6.191-2). Once on-stage, the hero finds himself up to his eyes in corpses:

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ille ruenti
aggere consistit, primumque cadavera plenis
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turribus evolvit subeuntisque obruit hostis
corporibus. (6.169-72)

[Scæva] made his stand on the tumbling ramp, and in the first place he
rolled the corpses out from the full towers, and then he assaulted the
advancing enemy with the bodies.

Scæva’s initial defence blocks the Pompeians by means of bodies (corporibus).

Moreover, two strands of Lucan’s metapoetic language surface here. Masters points out
that Lucan’s massive edifices (moles, aggeres) symbolize his poem’s heavy-handed,
topsy-turvy narrative aesthetic. Here, using every weapon at hand (robora, moles, se,
conto, ense, saxo, flamma), Scæva creates an agger made of corpora:

Ut primum cumulo crescente cadavera murum
admovere solo, non segnior extulit illum
saltus et in medias iecit super arma catervas
quam per summa rapit celerem venebula pardum. (6.180-83)

As soon as the cadavers—with the mound growing—made the soil level
with the wall, a leap no slower than carries the swift leopard above the
tips of hunting spears propels him up and casts him above the enemy
weapons and into the squadron’s midst.

Now behind a wall of bodies, Scæva demonstrates his athleticism with a single bound.

Ever respondent to the amphitheatrical context, Lucan recreates a miniature venatio
that focuses its energy not on the trackers but the target, the exotic leopard. The hunted
becomes the hunter. Such zeal fills Scæva that his sword grows blunt with slaughter:

iamque hebes et crasso non asper sanguine mucro
...
perdidit ensis opus, frangit sine vulnere membra. (6.186 & 188)²⁹

And now his sword-tip, blunt and dull with thick blood, has lost the
function of a blade, and he shatters limbs without a wound.

²⁹ Line 187, [percussum Scævae frangit, non vulnerat, hostem;], appears to be an unnecessary
interpolation. See D.R. Shackleton Bailey (1997: 140 ad loc.).
Scaeva’s sword cannot keep up with civil war, for there is too much killing to be done. If Scaeva gains historical recognition in Caesar’s *Bellum Civile*, he gains epic recognition in Lucan’s—but at the price of his left (*scaeva*) eye. Despite a complete metallization of his body (*perfusso in pectore*), Scaeva recovers in time to return to battle at Phocis (10.542-6). And finally, like the *BC*’s marred surface and violent stance toward the epic tradition, the cicatrizied Scaeva carries visual reminders of his distorted virtue in civil war. The exemplary hero, the poet, and his poem thus mar the *corpus* of tradition, but as complicit in that tradition, Lucan too cannot come away unscathed. Aware that he is yoked to his Caesar (Julius and Nero), Lucan, like Ovid, understands that he is a product of his age. For better or worse, the *BC* would not exist had the atrocities it describes never happened. By casting Scaeva as a scarified surrogate of the poem, Lucan implicates himself and his art in the horror of Neronian Rome. “Some virtue,” he seems to grumble.

**Pompey: Lucan’s Plaything**

Critics often stress the affinities between Virgil’s Priam and Lucan’s Pompey.\(^{30}\)

In the *Aeneid*, Priam’s headless corpse connects to the historical circumstance of Pompey’s assassination in Egypt; in the *BC*, Lucan attaches Pompey’s beheading to the mythical Priam, and in so doing creates a precise moment of poetic violence. His severed narrative—protracted across *BC* 7, 8, and 9, and interrupted by narratorial interjections and speeches—creates a metatextual image of Pompey’s cross-sectioned *corpus*.\(^{31}\) More than this, Lucan’s allusion to the *Aeneid* makes a narrative incision into

\(^{30}\) See for example Bowie (1990), Hinds (1997: 8-10), and Erasmo (2005b).

\(^{31}\) Cf. Erasmo (2005: 345-6): “Like the decapitation of Pompey, the narrative of the decapitation is, itself, divided into two parts: the actual decapitation (8.663-87) and the preservation of his head (8.688-91).”
Priam’s dissected corpse; when Virgil beheads Priam, he releases a store of poetic imagery and energy. As symbol of the toppled Troy, Priam’s headless trunk and truncated head spill chaotic matter into the epic narrative; the king, his corpus, and his kingdom are now in ruins. Lucan taps this inspirative font. Recall that Virgil does not include the act of decapitation in his Priam scene; Neoptolemus stabs the king, and four lines later he rests headless on the beach (iacet ingens litore truncus, | auulsumque umeris caput et sine nomine corpus, Aen. 2.557-8). Lucan returns to this image four times in the BC:

hunc ego, fluminea deformis truncus harena
qui iacet, agnosco. (BC 1.685-86)

I see him, who lies as a deformed trunk on the watery sand.

postquam trunco cervix abscisa recessit … (BC 8.674)

After the severed neck fell off the trunk …

… cano sed discolor aequore truncus
conspicitur. (BC 8.722-23)

… but the trunk, discolored by the sea, is spied.

pervolat ad truncum, qui fluctu paene relatus
litore pendebat. (BC 8.753-54)

[Cordus] flies to the trunk, which was hanging on the shore, nearly carried back by the swell.

Lucan’s four echoes of Virgil’s singular truncus fragment the already divided Priam across the breadth of the BC. The Virgilian scene holds such fascination for Lucan that he forces the reader to remind himself of the slaughtered king and his ignominious end (corpus sine nomine). More than this, Lucan’s Pompey scene dwells at length on the decapitation act itself. Within Priam’s occluded beheading, Lucan finds a narrative
fissure in *Aeneid* 2, and fills this presumed gap with twenty-eight lines of brutality. At this climactic moment, the reader finds Lucanian violence at its highest pitch:

at, Magni cum terga sonent et pectora ferro,
permansisse decus sacrae uenerabile formae
iratamque deis faciem, nil ultima mortis
ex habitu uoltuque uiri mutasse fatentur
qui lacerum uidere *caput*, nam saeuus in ipso
Septimius sceleris maius scelus inuenit actu,
ac retegit sacros scisso uelamine uoltus
semianimis Magni spirantiaque occupat ora
collaque in obliquo ponit languentia transtro.
tunc neruos uenasque secat nodosaque frangit
ossa diu: nondum artis erat *caput* ense rotare.
at, postquam trunco ceruix abscisa recessit,
uiindicat hoc Pharius, dextra gestare, satelles

... ipius ut Magnum nosset puer, illa uerenda
regibus hirta coma et generosa fronte decora
caesaries comprensa manu est, Pharioque ueruto,
dum uiuunt uoltus atque os in murmura pulsant
singuultus animae, dum lumina nuda rigescunt,
suffixum *caput* est

... nec satis infando fuit hoc uidisse tyranno:
uolt sceleris superesse fidem. tunc arte nefanda
summota est *capiti* tabes, raptoque cerebro
adsiccata cutis, putrisque effluxit ab alto
umor, et infuso facies solidata ueneno est. (8.663-75; 679-84; 687-91)

But those who saw the severed head maintain that, when Magnus’ neck and shoulders resounded from the sword, the revered beauty of his holy head persisted along with the face [angered at the gods]; and they hold that nothing changed from the man’s aspect and expression at his final hour. For savage Septimius found even greater crime in the very act of criminality, and he bared half-dead Pompey’s sacred face after cutting open his cloak and laid hold of his still-breathing visage and placed his failing neck on a transverse beam. Then he shattered the nerves and veins and sliced the knotted bones at length: not yet was it an art to send a head spinning with the sword. But after the severed head fell off the trunk, the Pharian minion revels in this: to bandy it about in hand … So that the impious boy could recognize Magnus, that shaggy crown, revered by kings, and his grandiose hair are taken in hand, and the head is fixed to a Pharian pike while the face still has life and the gasping breath beats the mouth into murmur—while even his open eyes
grow rigid … Nor was it satisfactory for the criminal tyrant just to see it: he wants proof of his crime to remain. So then, the gore is drained from the head through that unspeakable art, and the skin is dried there with the grey-matter stolen, and the sordid liquid flowed out from deep within, and the face was made permanent with venomous transfusion.

If the *Aeneid*’s Priam makes a precise deathblow to the epic *corpus*, the *BC*’s Pompey stumbles around in the bloody aftermath. After consistent reference to Pompey’s head throughout *BC* 8, and after the unclean beheading and embalming, Lucan mutilates his person even after death. Pompey becomes the poet’s plaything (*ludibrium*, 727). In a form of textual obliteration, the *BC* dilutes the Priam/Pompey murder constellation across 1,304 hexameters to Virgil’s nine. His death spans late into book 9 where Caesar orders the exhumation of his corpse for an *ossilegium* that never occurs (9.1089-95). In Mario Erasmo’s words, “Pompey’s corpse remains unassembled in the poem” (2005b: 357). Where Virgil demurs to display Priam’s decapitation, Lucan explodes the glorious death into a prolonged (*diu*) meditation on the dark underside of the conflicted epic canon. “But what about the *beheading*?” he seems to ask. And further, Lucan’s *sententia* about spinning heads is only half-true, for recall the single stroke (*ictus*, 3.611) required to sever a soldier’s arm at Massilia. The aphorism adheres more to Virgil’s Priam, whose beheading indeed lacks the signal *coup de grace*; it is not characteristic of Virgil’s art to send heads spinning with the sword. Placed side-by-side, these *exempla* glimpse what one could call respectively Virgilian and Lucanian aesthetics: a single (unseen) sword stroke for Virgil; awkward axe throws for Lucan.

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33 Cf. Erasmo (2005: 346): “The historical Pompey has become a rhetorical persona whose death can be manipulated to suit narrative purposes.” Cf. also Mayer (1981: 169, n. 2): “… as time passed, Pompey became less of a reality and more of a rhetorical *exemplum*, and Lucan has poured out his enthusiasm upon a *nominis umbra*.”
Leigh and Erasmo contextualize the Pompey scene within the cultural artifacts of the amphitheater and gladiatorial combats. Though he faces two killers, Pompey is on stage with one at a time; Achillas employs an exotic, if outdated, instrument of death. The gladiatorial context adds double-edged verve to the scene: the voyeuristic fascination of the amphitheater conflicts with the internal narrator’s pathetic outbursts.34 Hence Erasmo’s ironic “Mourning Pompey.” Amid the scene’s bloodlust, one almost forgets that Achillas and Septimius butcher Pompey Magnus, the caput mundi (2.136). In light of the Priam allusion, Lucan’s Pompey undercuts any reverence Virgil can conjure. Neoptolemus is a hack; Septimius at least takes his time with beheadings.

**Snakes on a Plain: Art Horror in the Libyan Excursus**

After Pompey’s death and semi-deification, Cato shoulders the remaining Republican cause in North Africa. In BC 9, Lucan unleashes seventeen species of snake upon the wearied Republican corps. For all its kitsch appeal, the Libyan excursus dares reader and poet into literature’s darker, more gruesome territory, wherein one finds a synopsis of Lucan’s macabre aesthetic taste. Far from mere fireworks, the scene exposes depraved literary prerogatives coupled with virtuoso technique. After Elana Gomel, one could say that the poem’s narrative aesthetic tends toward the ‘violent sublime’ (2003): opposed to the Kantian ‘beautiful’, where proportion, unity and clarity are determinative criteria of aesthetic virtue, the sublime exploits the potential aesthetic virtue of disorder, non-meaning and chaos: in the realm of art horror, one observes aesthetic virtue where limb-loss and bodily mutilation are artfully depicted, where formal control yokes the baroque to the macabre.

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34 Cf. Mayer (1981: 324, n. 2): “Lucan seeks to move us, but also to repel, distance, and entertain.”
Critics of art horror—like Carroll, Worland and Freeland—often find the germane observations on the genre in Aristotle’s prescription that drama, especially tragedy, elicits ‘pity and fear’ (pathos kai phobos) in the audience, and Lucan doubtless understands this precept. They then leap forward to Shelley’s Frankenstein with perhaps a nod toward Rome. Yet, horror is Latin, born at Rome some 300 years after Aristotle and 1800 years before Shelley. Ralph Johnson and Shadi Bartsch already note horrific elements in the BC: Johnson observes comic-ugly, and Bartsch grotesque, imagery. One can view Lucan's poem in light of modern art horror discussions, which provide useful language to explain how Seneca could close out his Phaedra with Theseus making clumsy reassembly of Hippolytus’ gored remains. Shelley’s reanimated creature thus stands as the successful outcome of a botched reconstructive surgery begun in Senecan tragedy.

Katherine Eldred highlights the metapoetic function of the Libyan snakes and reads these monsters as verbal weapons against epic tradition. Thus,

[H]is snakes recreate their own etymologies in the deaths they inflict. [H]is snakes, then, are “words,” but words with a very special metamorphic power that allows them to bring death reflective of their own names. In Lucan’s snake episode, language becomes a literal killing machine … These snakes are speech-acts, the very deeds that they effect; they are examples of speech-acts that, in “saying,” do what they “say” in the moment of their “saying.” … [T]he snake episode demonstrates on a physical level the danger of Lucan’s poem: that to read an act of nefas (the civil war) is to participate in that act of nefas. In this case, the snakes act as Lucan, as poets, writing the nefas of the poem on the bodies of their “readers,” Cato’s soldiers (2000: 70).

Eldred’s reading, after Masters and Henderson, sees Lucan assaulting, and so forever scarring, the body of epic tradition (2000: 73-4). My discussion limns further metapoetic tropes in the Libya scene and lingers on the poet’s aesthetic perversion of the epic
corpus. If Bartsch asks, “Why snakes?” and if Eldred asks, “Why these snakes?” I ask, “How do these snakes function in the metapoetic struggle over tradition?”

Lucan infuses Cato’s desert death-march with familiar metapoetic tropes. Even within the parched Civil War landscape, water sources represent poetic inspiration: he foregoes tapping the inviolate font of Jupiter Ammon (9.544-86); rather, he drinks from a meager, venom-laced oasis. To this tainted well, Lucan appends a diptych of aetiological material: the Perseus-Medusa (9.619-699) myth spills into a brief Theriaka-type exegesis (9.700-33):

… illa tamen sterilis tellus fecundaque nulli arva bono virus stillantis tabe Medusae concipiunt dirosque fero de sanguine rores, quos calor adiuvit putrique incoxit harenae. hic quae prima caput movit de pulvere tabes aspida somniferam tumida cervice levavit … (BC 9.696-701)

… still, [Libya’s] barren earth and good-for-nothing fields absorb the poison from Medusa’s dripping gore, a dread moisture of bestial blood, which the heat promotes and bakes into the sand. Here, the gow that first lifted a head from the sand gave rise to the swollen-necked asp, the bringer of sleep …

This narrative linchpin makes a seamless ligature between the caput Medusae and caput aspidis. Further, this passage continues the anatomical metamorphosis of severed heads in the BC. Pompey’s mummified facies solidata made caesa caput Gorgon; venenum pours into the one and out the other. Further, Lucan’s allusion to Ovid’s Perseus myth (Met. 4) taps into the metamorphic potential of Libya’s serpents.

35 See Masters (1992: 169-72) for Lucan’s metapoetic river imagery: “… the bewildering variety of river-types seems to evade any easy translation of symbol into theme: we have a pure small stream, … a muddy river, a bloody river, a violent river, a pure river, and river with no breezes …” O’Gorman coins Lucan’s Civil War landscape as the site of metapoetic conflict (1995: 117-31). The global position of Jupiter Ammon’s sanctuary is equidistant from all signs in the zodiac (9.539-43)—a momentary point of balance in an otherwise ‘top-heavy’ poem (cf. Masters [1992: 33-39]).

36 See Malamud’s (2003: 31-44) analysis of ‘Pompey’s head and Cato’s snakes’.
The poet’s poison pen, dipped in Medusa’s gray matter, infects the epic corpus with grotesque pestes.

Critics have observed the amphitheatrical ambience discussed above in the Libya episode. Bartsch points out that the contenders make gladiator-like entrances: standard-bearer Aules versus the parched Dipsas; the rabid Prester versus Nasidius, the Marsian tiller; great-hearted Tullus versus the mighty Haemorrohis. Over and against the impending atrocity, Lucan’s hyperbole of epithets colors the epic register in noire tones. Thus, where amphitheatrical fascination collides with abhorrent revulsion, Lucan stages seven deaths-by-snakebite.

Seven snakebites, seven corpora, seven bodily deformations. In outline, the engagement unfolds according to Table 4-1. In his Libyan (h)arena, Lucan returns to

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lines</th>
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<tr>
<td>737-60</td>
<td>Aules – Dipsas</td>
<td>Extreme thirst; drinks from his veins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>762-88</td>
<td>Sabellus – Seps</td>
<td>Corpse melts into pool of viscera and venom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>789-804</td>
<td>Nasidius – Prester</td>
<td>Corpus expands into unrecognizable mass.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>805-814</td>
<td>Tullus – Haemorrohis</td>
<td>Blood pours from every orifice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>822-27</td>
<td>Paulus – Iaculus</td>
<td>Shot through the temples.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>828-32</td>
<td>Murrus – Basiliscus</td>
<td>Self-amputates his dying arm.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

consistent modes of poetic violence. He desiccates the corpus,\(^{37}\) turns it inside-out,\(^{38}\) blows it out of proportion,\(^{39}\) douses it with blood,\(^{40}\) poisons its innards,\(^{41}\) severs

\(^{37}\) Cf. Sulla’s draught of Roman blood (2.140-43) and the droughts at Massilia (4.292-304) and Dyrrhachium (6.81-105).

\(^{38}\) Cf. Lycidas’ innards spilling into the sea at Massilia (3.636-46).

\(^{39}\) Cf. Nero’s bulky body (1.53-62).

\(^{40}\) Cf. Pax Sullana and the flood of slaughter (2.203-18, above).
moribund appendages. Desecration of the epic corpus grows more charged with the narrator’s sententiousness: “whatever makes a man” seeps into the dirt (quidquid homo est, 779); a corpus “exceeding human size” explodes Aristotelian anatomy (corporе maior | humanumque egressа modum super omnia membra, 793-4); the ballistic iaculus makes bullets and arrows seem slow (quae fundа rotat quam lenta volarent, 826).

Kostas Kapparis points out that the Dipsas, Seps, Prester, and Haemorrhois appear in the Greek medical writers as named diseases, and with such résumés supplied in the preceding Theriaka, it is unsurprising that these vipers transmit ultra-realistic symptoms to their victims. Indeed: etymology becomes a lethal procedure on the Libyan plain.

Bartsch’s ‘nervous laughter’ resurfaces here, for it grows difficult to maintain a sense of humor while corporа implode and explode, while men drink from their veins or bleed from the eyes.

**Horror Business: a Portrait of the Poet at Work**

Similar, venomous poetics are at work in book 6, where Lucan puts poisonous subject matter to prophetic work. The BC’s vatic zombie ties together a number of the poet’s aesthetic preferences regarding the poetic corpus. Erictho, Lucan’s singer-witch, sits with irreverent contentment while civil war demolishes the universe around her. As a ‘Lucan in disguise’, Erictho glimpses a tableau of the poet and his dirty work. From her position as vates, her words and deeds gather metapoetic dimensions: Masters points

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41 Cf. Arruns (1.613-14) and Erictho (6.548).

42 Cf. Sulla’s surgery (2.140-43) and the lifeless arm clinging to a ship at Massilia (3.612-13).

43 Newman (1967) treats the vates theme in Augustan poetry and concludes that the Augustan poets don the term to elevate their inspiration to divine status. O’Higgins (1988: 221) refers to the metapoetic potential of Erictho’s character without using such terminology: “... like Erictho, Lucan brings into being a lasting carmen which defies the transient images of imperial propaganda.” Masters (1992: 133 & 205-15)
out that with Erictho, ‘Lucan [sets] an exposition of the rules in historical fiction inside a historical fiction’ (1992: 209). Erictho (Lucan), qua vates, exsanguinates the epic corpus and reanimates a grotesque travesty. Her mangled, yet prophetic zombie is miles away from Virgil’s revered sibyl.

Sextus Pompey’s visit to Erictho occurs on the eve of Pharsalus, and the scene injects morbid necromancy into the annals of epic katabaseis.44 Virgil’s singer-sibyl, an attractive point of reference for readers of Erictho, foretells a brief Roman history founded upon bella horrida bella (Aen. 6.86); from its titular Bella (1.1), Lucan’s BC fulfills Virgil’s bleak prophecy. From her hundred-mouthed temple, Virgil’s Apollinian vates prophesies the future greatness of Rome; by means of a battered corpus, Lucan’s vates-witch relates the hell of civil war. Her first words to Sextus carry programmatic weight for Lucan’s project:

“sed pronum, cum tanta novae sit copia mortis, Emathiis unum campis attollere corpus.” (6.619-20)

“But it’s [facedown] easy, with such a supply of fresh death, to pluck one corpse from the Emathian plain.”

This is gleeful commentary on the BC’s macabre aesthetic tastes. O’Higgins points out that Lucan never explains how the novae copia mortis came to be in Thessaly (no fighting has taken place there yet). Rather, in a poem that has already shown the reader Vultureius, Curio, Scaeva, Massilia and Ilerda (the novae copia mortis), it is hard not to take Erictho’s words too seriously. In such close proximity, the metaliterary terms copia and corpus throw into high relief Lucan’s self-referential moment. Nor is his pronum pun
calls the witch ‘Lucan in disguise’. Both agree that Erictho represents one aspect of the vates-theme in the BC; they also agree that Erictho is the more able vates of the lot.

gratuitous: retrieval of battlefield corpses is an especially ‘facedown easy’ task. A master of her craft, the witch has a penchant for the dark humor that pervades the poem. Choose a corpus, any corpus; Erictho can give it voice.⁴⁵

Amid the poem’s nervous laughter, Lucan’s ersatz vates performs grotesque surgery on the epic corpus. Erictho’s delight in body violation reflects Lucan’s proclivity for poetic violence. If the task requires blood, both dirty their hands (nec cessant a caede manus, si sanguine vivo | est opus, 6.554-5). Her (his) chant, their song (cantus, carmen, 6.693 & 728), has penetrative force as it shrieks into Hell. She inhabits tumuli (6.510); buries men alive (busto infodit, 6.530); relieves trunks of their heads (truncavitque caput, 6.566); digs eyes out of their sockets (orbes effodisse, 6.542); feasts on omnis artus to the fingernail (6.542-3); scopes cadavers (scrutari, 6.542) and removes the virus coactum (6.548). In this last activity, she links back to Arruns’ tainted victima at the end of BC 1; note the ominous innards he finds there:

nec cruor emicuit solitus, sed vulnere laxo
diffusum rutilo nigrum pro sanguine virus. (1.613-14)

Nor did the customary gore spurt forth, but in place of red blood, black brine seeped out from the open wound.

Such poisoned infusion permeates the BC: recall Pompey’s embalmed head, suffused with venenum; or the snake-bitten Catonians in Libya (virus, venenum, sanies).

Erictho’s gustatory cannibalism recalls Sulla’s draught of Roman blood. She recasts Gratidianus’ excavated eyes, and commits Pompey-like decapitations. Every mode of

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death is in her employ (*hominum mors omnis in usu est*, 6.561). When she invigorates a corpse through song, Lucan lingers on the zombie’s animation:

> Protinus astrictus caluit calor atraque fovit  
vulnera et in venas extremaque membra cucurrit.  
percusseae gelido trepidant sub pectore fibrae,  
et nova desuetis subrepsens vita medullis  
miscetur morti. tunc omnis palpitat artus,  
tenduntur nervi; nec se tellure cadaver  
paulatim per membra levat, terraque repulsam est  
erectum semel. distento lumina rictu  
nudantur. nondum facies viventis in illo,  
iam morientis erat: remanet pallorque  
rigorque, et stupet illatus mundo. (6.750-57)

Suddenly a tense heat grew warm and heated the black wounds and ran through the veins and outside limbs. The lungs are struck and quiver under his tepid chest, and new life creeps under the unaccustomed bones and mixes with death. Then every limb quivers, the muscles pull tight; and the corpse does not lift itself from the earth little by little, limb by limb, but it is thrown from the ground and stands erect all at once. Its eyes are open with a strict stare. Not yet does it have the face of one living, but still the face of a dead person was upon it: the paleness and distortion remains, and it marvels at being brought into the world.

Like Lucan’s poem, Erictho’s surgery reopens old wounds (*calor atraque fovit | vulnera*). Her (his) transfusion affects every limb of the *corpus*: *extrema membra, fibrae, medullae, omnis artus, nervi, facies*. Imbued with distended grin (*rictus*), the creature’s face reflects the poem’s grotesque surface, yet it stands there all the same, amazed at its own existence. As a symbol of Lucan’s poem, Erictho’s zombie is particularly frightened: in a text where all are dying, this war-torn *corpus* stands straight up and sings his heart out. Here then Lucan offers a surrogate for the *BC* itself: a half-dead Roman soldier chanting on about the horror and toxicity of civil war.

**Poetic Suicide and the Metahistorical Moment**

This chapter has traced Lucan’s methods of poetic violence. His meditation on the violation and fragmentation of the epic *corpus* operates in centrifugal and centripetal
directions. As Vulteius’ suicide announces the poet’s auto-evisceration, so does Pompey’s unclean beheading attempt a coup de grace of the Aeneid. In each case, and in those discussed above, Lucan demonstrates a heavy-handed, high-decibal, narrative aesthetic. In the case of Erictho, Lucan still maintains his dry sense of humor, but one that carries an air of irreverence and sneering panache.

I conclude by considering three responses to the poem that capture the received biography of a poet caught up in a personal civil war with his contemporary Rome. My comments here are suggestive, and they follow James Ker’s methodology in The Deaths of Seneca (2009). Ker examines the Nachleben of Seneca’s suicide and demonstrates that this moment in the biography becomes central for later readers of the Senecan corpus. In the same way (and perhaps moreso), I suggest, Lucan’s poetic suicide shades responses to the poem and often informs modern assumptions about the author’s ‘intentions’ in writing as he did. The BC can induce scholars to impressionistic pronouncements, since Lucan’s unconventional palette challenges conventional critical writing. Martindale’s Redeeming the Text concludes its discussion of the BC with the following meditation on the Wunderkind and his song of nefas:

We can end with the lacerated body of a 25-year-old poet, the marvelous boy. And the corpse of a truncated poem which ought never to have been written, the poem of the unspeakable, of nefas. It breaks off without closure, without telos. For there was nowhere to go. And poetry cannot save us; indeed, if we try so to use it, it may corrupt us—and we it. These fragments have I shored against my ruins. Why, this is Hell, nor am I out of it. The rest is silence. Gott ist ein lauter Nichts … (Martindale 1993: 72)

One may ask whether this paragraph says more about critic or poet. Or one could describe it as metacritical, in that Martindale’s voice merges with Lucan’s, continues his fight to the death. For Martindale it seems inevitable that Lucan’s ‘lacerated body’
should accompany his ‘corpse of a truncated poem’. One may rewrite ‘it breaks off without closure, without telos’ as ‘He breaks off without closure, without telos’. Note Martindale’s first person and punctuating lacuna. ‘The poet becomes his poem’, remarks Erasmo (2005b: 360). More than this, Henderson’s influential “The Word at War” virtually erases the line between art and criticism and makes of Lucan a historical method-actor-author who wages a war of words against the Imperial regime. Similar to Martindale, Henderson strives to complete the BC, to insert the suicidal poet into his macabre drama:

Read Lucan. You must read Lucan. His extraordinary poem break rules, inflicts pain and suffering. Don’t bother to reclaim this classic in the name of a ‘literature’: this tyrannical text—wild, accusing, ranting—screams a curse on its readers and upon itself: it challenges. If you can grit your teeth and decide to see things Lucan’s way, it will be all too easy to recognize your co-implication with the mindset he denounces. It takes one to know one. (Henderson 1998: 168)

Taken together, Martindale and Henderson offer an intriguing reception of the poet’s biography: Lucan wrote the epic that killed him. His personal civil war with Neronian Rome gains expression in his Bellum Civile, and his implication in the Pisonian conspiracy counts him another casualty in that civil strife. These comments are grounded in Tacitus’ description of Lucan’s suicide, where the historian effectively concludes the Marvelous Boy’s poem for him. For Tacitus, Lucan self-stages the Stoic suicide that the BC’s Cato should have carried out at Utica.46

Exim Annaei Lucani caedem imperat. is profluente sanguine ubi frigescere pedes manusque et paulatim ab extremis cedere spiritum fervido adhuc et compote mentis pectore intellegit, recordatus carmen a

46 Contra Masters (1992: 216-59), a majority of critics agree that Lucan would have carried the BC out to Cato’s suicide at Utica. Cf. Ahl (1976: 306-26 with nn.). This drives to the heart of the ‘authorial intent’ question, of course, but I feel safe saying that Lucan reached a completion point at some point in the composition; then editing took priority. Twelve books seems an attractive rival to the Aeneid, but at times I think Lucan would have written 135 books if he could.
se compositum, quo vulneratum militem per eius modi mortis imaginem obisse tradiderat, versus ipsos rettulit, eaque illi suprema vox fuit. (Ann. 15.70.1)

Next, [Nero] ordered the death of Annaeus Lucanus. And he meanwhile, with the blood flowing forth, felt his feet and hands grow cold and his life leave his limbs little by little, though his chest was still warm and his mind intact; he recited a song he had composed, the very lines themselves, in which he wrote that a wounded soldier had died in a similar fashion as he, and those were his final words.

Tacitus also inserts the poet into the drama of his poem. Scholars agree that Tacitus reads the Neronian period as especially self-conscious, or theatrical, in its day-to-day experience.⁴⁷ Seneca carries out the suicide of the Stoic sapiens (Ann. 15.63-4) and Petronius that of the mod arbiter elegantiae (Ann. 16.19). Lucan too ‘rhetorizes his own death by assuming a fictional identity as a response to his forced suicide’ (Erasmo 2005b: 359). Thus Tacitus creates an intertextual relationship between the historiographic Lucan and his poem. Lucan’s alignment with the contrarian Pisonians mirrors his poem’s rebellious orientation with respect to the Roman epic corpus. To be sure, the BC’s macabre veneer—executed under an autocratic, death-dealing Nero—presages a story recalled by Zizek:

According to a well-known anecdote, a German officer visited Picasso in his Paris studio during the Second World War. There he saw Guernica and, shocked at the modernist “chaos” of the painting, asked Picasso: “Did you do this?” Picasso calmly replied: “No, you did this!” (2010: 11)

As Lucan states at the poem’s beginning, Nero is the appropriate, nay the only, inspiration needed for the BC (tu satis ad vires Romana in carmina dandas, 1.66). His sardonic praise for Nero rather congratulates the Emperor as the hoped-for conclusion

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⁴⁷ ‘Theatricality’ in the Neronian age denotes reality’s imitation of art through an individual’s self-conscious gesture toward literary representations (mimeseis) in their real-world actions. In this regard, Nero too becomes a method actor, for he ordered the death of his mother Agrippina shortly before playing the matricide Orestes on stage. Cf. Coleman (1990), Bartsch (1994) and Erasmo (2005a).
to years of violence and war: “Sure, crime and sin are pleasing at this price” (*scelera ipsa nefasque | hac mercede placent*, 1.37-8). Like Scaeva’s and Vulteius’ hard-line death-wishes (*mortis amor, velle mori*), or like *Roma* herself, turned against her own innards, the Lucan as we have him writes on a kamikaze mission. As a nihilist or political ironist, Lucan finds self and agency in poetry. His vociferous lament at the death of the Republic and his scene of suicide couple together into a prolonged assertion of his agency, however futile. His ‘wild, accusing, ranting’ poem and forced suicide mar the the epic tradition before and after him, and his violent poetics have come to stand for the Marvelous Boy who waged a war of words.

**Conclusions: Violent Poetics and the Lucanesque**

This chapter has examined Lucan’s most famously violent movements—scenes which for many scholars taint the poem as exempla of its pernicious rhetoricism. When viewed as metaleterary discussion, however, Lucan’s violent choreography aligns well with the *BC*’s grander argument against autocratic tyranny legitimized by twisted language and over-determined, imperious narratives (like those constructed by the *Aeneid*). Like Ovid, Lucan finds the aesthetic experience and narrative teleology of Virgil’s project too static and predestined. Yet, unlike Ovid’s more dynamic and morphological counterpoise in the *Metamorphoses*, Lucan pushes the teleology of the *Aeneid*’s Caesarism *ad extremum (plus quam)*, so that a Caesarian *telos* ever looms over his poem in an ‘always already’ fashion. In short, Lucan rewrites the Imperial aetiology of the *Aeneid* in starker, darker lines.

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48 Sklenar (2003: 1-12) makes the case for Lucan-as-nihilist. Bartsch (1997: 137-49) makes the case for Lucan-as-political ironist, the philosopher-poet who bandies the empty hope of freedom before the reader yet knows it is all for naught; even so, the logic of Pascal’s wager forces him to march on.
Lucan achieves this Virgilian revision through calculated allusive gestures to the *Aeneid*, and especially in his scenes of body violation. His Sullan digression in book 2 recasts Aeneas’ digression in *Aeneid* 2 as the story of Rome-qua-Troy, besieged by herself and her Sulla, dumping her cadavers into her Tiber; unlike Aeneas, no one gets out alive. Vulteius and Scaeva recall the historical circumstance of amphitheatrical combats, and so turn civil war into a spectacle of voyeuristic *jouissance*.\(^{49}\) The amphitheatrical context adds the further anxiety of what sort of aesthetic experience the *BC* provides the reader. Scholars have recently begun to consider what psychological processes underwrite amphitheatrical appeal in the Roman imaginary, yet I remain unconvinced that every ancient reader was as blood-thirsty as the (Christian) sources would have us believe.\(^{50}\) Certainly Seneca raises ethical questions regarding attendance at the *ludi* (*Epist.* 7). It seems that Lucan too wishes the reader to perform introspection on this count. When Suetonius relates that an unfortunate Icarus fell from the *machina* and splattered the Emperor with blood (*Nero* 12), he gives this anecdote as a negative example of Nero’s perverted aesthetic tastes (and thus moral bankruptcy). In electing to raise the Roman civil war to the plane of amphitheatrical entertainment, Lucan problematizes the morality of both contexts: this tragedy takes center stage, as it were, for the consumption of a depraved Emperor and his subjects; “It takes one to know one,” Henderson reminds us. Vulteius especially destabilizes the aesthetic

\(^{49}\) Barthes (1973) provides good overview of *plaisir* and *jouissance*, the former a non-challenging reading experience, the latter reaching into the realm of the sublime.

\(^{50}\) Lintott (1999) and Coleman (1990) discuss of the deterrent aspects of public executions. Kastor (2001) discusses how modern readers should understand the emotional state of *fastidium* (disgust). Edwards (2007: 46-77) has the most recent and comprehensive account of the emotional experience of the amphitheater. She further notes an oscillation between ethical and libidinal instability in the Vulteius episode, which becomes ‘the ultimate extravagant gesture’ (2007: 43-44).
experience of amphitheatrical *ludi*, when he requires not witnesses to a virtuous *devotio*, but an audience in the arena (Edwards 2007: 45). Vulteius thus creates a perverted version of the amphitheater: “What happens when the contestants turn their swords on themselves?” Lucan asks.

Lucan’s dialogue with the *Aeneid* is epitomized in the Erictho and Pompey scenes. In place of a *katabasis*, Lucan reanimates a zombie that relates the state of affairs in Hades. There too the cosmic order is disturbed, so much so that Catiline has reason to smile once again. *BC 6* thus subverts *Aeneid 6*, which offers Aeneas a triumphant view of his future Roman ancestors. Moreover, Pompey’s botched decapitation explodes Virgil’s restraint and hesitance in the Priam scene, and Lucan’s aphorism about spinning heads makes a macabre joke at the expense of the *Aeneid’s* reverence. Lucan probes (*perfodere*) the narrative lacuna opened by Virgil’s omission of the *coup de grace* and creates a transumptive, or meta-metamorphic, allusion: as Pompey’s decapitation explodes Priam’s decapitation, so the *BC* dissects the *Aeneid*.

The Libyan excursus announces Lucan’s most innovative poetic operations. His engagement with *Theriaka* literature and Ovid’s Perseus fable inject the civil war saga with mythic and quasi-scientific lore, which creates a monstrous situation for Cato and the Republican remainder. The ultra-realistic symptoms displayed by the victims enact venomous etymology on the epic *corpus*, wherein the unity of the Aristotelian *soma*-text is distorted into a grotesque reincarnation. Such verbal gymnastics map the Ovidian grotesque onto Cato’s historical trip to Africa and so create a reading experience at once terrifying and compelling. Reflected in Cato’s order to look away from Aules as he
drinks from his veins, Lucan’s poem seeks to repel and entertain at the same time. In Libya, Lucan is at his most Lucanesque.

Lucan’s biography, much like Seneca’s, shades responses to his poem, so that a certain ‘Lucan myth’ has grown up around the poet and his poem. The coincidence of a truncated poem and suicide-recital mirror one another in a tragic irony surely not lost on Lucan as he ended his life. Bartsch’s cover illustration for Ideology in Cold Blood—an anonymous woodcut for a 1706 edition of the poem—portrays Lucan with veins open spouting blood and poetry. Just such an elision, historical or not, aestheticizes the poet’s death in the same way he aestheticizes the death of the Roman Republic. His violent poetics thus find a neat analogue in the received biography, which in turn creates a compelling, energetic tradition of Lucanian criticism.
CHAPTER 5
EPILOGUE: STATIUS’ TYDEUS AS NARRATIVE CANNIBAL

This chapter ties together the foregoing observations and examines an
intersection of violence, body, and text in Statius’ *Thebaid*. Statius’ Tydeus echoes and
responds to scenes in Horace’s *Ars Poetica, Aeneid* 10, *Metamorphoses* 8, and *Bellum
Civile* 8. When he eats Melanippus’ gray matter, Tydeus ingests significant portions of
the epic tradition stemming back to *Odyssey* 19. Moreover, as a victim of poetic *furor*,
Tydeus’ cannibalism mars the *Thebaid’s* narrative surface so that, like Ovid’s
Erysichthon, the hero eats himself out of the poem. Statius’ interaction with such a
range of models concentrates an over-abundance of poetic imagery on Tydeus, who
buckles under the weight of his literary inheritance and so must excise himself from epic
discourse. This self-deletion befits Tydeus’ station as cannibalistic Other, so that his
horrific anthropophagy gives rise to a feeling of alienation in the audience (reflected in
Minerva’s need to turn away and cleanse her eyes). With the help of cognitive film
theory, I suggest, such alienating poetics presage the macabre palette found in the
modern horror film and other violent media. Through careful oscillation between ‘affect’
and ‘meaning’ in this and other scenes, Statius disrupts the audience’s viewing
experience of the *Thebaid*, which recalibrates over and over again the aesthetic
experience of the scene from one of fascinated voyeur to alienated witness.

Recognizing Tydeus, Statius’ *Saetiger Sus*

Statius signals Tydeus’ relation to the epic tradition through sustained allusions to
boar imagery, so that the boar becomes Tydeus’ distinctive animal. Just before Tydeus’
entrance, Apollo’s oracle prophesies that a *saetigerumque suem* approaches Adrastus’
palace at Argos (*Theb.* 1.397). His physique reflects that of a low weight-class wrestler,
a stature he inherits from *Il.* 5.800-1. His squat frame—prompting Shackleton Bailey’s
‘mythical James Cagney’ monicker—situates him close to the ground, like his identifying
animal. And finally, Tydeus sports a boar-hide mantle throughout the poem:

\[
\text{terribiles contra saetis ac dente recurvo} \\
\text{Tydea per latos umeros ambiere laborant} \\
\text{exuviae, Calydonis honos (Theb. 1.488-90)}
\]

Opposite [Polyxenes] the honorable spoils of Calydon work to span Tydeus’ wide
shoulders, terrible with bristles and backward-curving tusk.

Statius’ *exuviae Calydonis honos* echoes Ovid’s description of the Calydonian boar’s
hide: \textit{exuvias rigidis horrentia saevis | terga ... et magnis insignia dentibus ora (Met.}
8.428-29). Statius thus dresses Tydeus in the pelt given Atalanta by Meleager in the
*Metamorphoses*. Statius later indicates that Tydeus wears the mantle as a Hercules
figure would, pulled over his head, so that only his face peers out of the open, tusked
mouth (*tergoque et vertice tegmina nota | saeptus, Theb. 2.2833-84*). Further
correspondence with the Calydonian boar appears when Tydeus rushes from the
Theban court in *Thebaid 2*:

\[
\text{Oeneae vindex sic ille Dianae} \\
\text{erectus saetis et aduncae fulmine malae,} \\
\text{cum premeret Pelopea phalanx, saxa obvia volvens} \\
\text{fractaque perfossis arbusta Acheloia ripis,} \\
\text{iam Telamona solo, iam stratum Ixiona linquens} \\
\text{te, Meleagre, subit: ibi demum cuspidate lata} \\
\text{haesit et obnixo ferrum laxavit in armo.} \\
\text{talis adhuc trepidum linquit Calydonius heros} \\
\text{concilium infrendens ... (Theb. 2.469-77)}
\]

Just as that avenger of Oenean Diana, rigid with spikes and the bolt of his
terrible jaw, when the Peloponnesian phalanx pressed upon him, rolling rocks
that were in the way and broken trees from Achelous’ irrigated shores. Now
Telemone is on the ground, now leaving behind Ixion, [the boar] was laid low
when he came up against you, Meleager. There at last he ceases at the spear
thrust and relaxes the iron in his resolute shoulder. So the Calydonian hero left
the still-frightened council gnashing his teeth ...
This simile resembles Ovid’s introduction of the Calydonian boar and streamlines his story into eight verses.¹ In place of replaying the Calydonian boar hunt, Statius adopts the scene’s framework for Tydeus’ fight with the Theban Fifty and his eventual death at Thebes. Statius reminds the reader of Tydeus’ boar-hide mantle before the encounter (Theb. 2.541), so the initial image of a cadre of hunters sent into the countryside to exterminate a boar—or boar-like figure—echoes the circumstances of Ovid’s Calydonian boar hunt.

Ovid’s Calydonian boar hunt in Metamorphoses 8 underpins the structure of Tydeus’ participation in the Thebaid. Statius builds a dense allusive network upon this framework that looks back to Aeneid 10 and ultimately Odyssey 19. The final moments of Tydeus’ aristeia in book 8 recall Virgil’s Mezentius, who is in fact compared to a penned boar on mount Vesulus (Aen. 10.707-10). Statius thus re-elevates the ‘burlesque’ aspects of Ovid’s hunt to the Homeric/Virgilian register of ‘traditional’ epic. I return to the Odyssey’s boar hunt below, for its allusive relationship to Tydeus not so much structures his place in the poem as it underwrites his particularity within Roman epic discourse. I here note that Tydeus’ porcine qualities radiate out into boar imagery found in Ovid, Virgil, and Homer.

Das Auge Isst Mit: Tydeus’ Narrative Cannibalism

Tydeus’ final moments are among the more horrific in Latin epic. Cannibalism aside, Statius here conjures a thick allusive network, all the more complicated by

¹ Note the verbal parallels with the boar’s appearance in Ovid: Oenios ultorem … riget horrida cervix, | et saetae similes rigidis hastilibus horrent: | fervida cum rauco latos stridore per armos | spuma fluit, dentes aequantur dentibus Indis, | fulmen ab ore venit, frondes afflatibus ardent (Met. 8.281-89). Ovid’s boar, like that in Aen. 10 (Mezentius), stems originally from the Homeric boars at Il. 11.414-20, 13.470-75, and Od. 19.439.
Tydeus’ reflection in the eyes of his killer. In this scene, I suggest, Statius offers a number of spectators (Tydeus, Tisiphone, and Minerva) through whom the poem’s audience might view Tydeus’ cannibalism, yet each in their own way destabilize what Neil Bernstein calls an ‘authorizing’ perspective (2004: 62). The coexistence of three conflicting and problematic gazes confounds the reader’s ability to create a unified aesthetic response, which thus adds to the horror of Tydeus’ last meal. After taking a spear in the groin and returning fire, Tydeus accepts the severed head of Melanippus:

erigitur Tydeus vultuque occurrit et amens
laetitiaque iaque, ut singultantia uidit
ora trahique oculos seseque agnovit in illo,
imperat abscisum porgi, laevaque receptum
spectat atrox hostile caput, gliscitque tepentis
lumina torua uidens et adhuc dubitantia figi.
inflex contentus erat … (Theb. 751-7)

Tydeus is set upright and meets [Melanippus] with his face. And meanwhile, now out of his mind in anger and happiness, he sees his face and eyes languishing, and he recognizes himself in the other, and he orders the severed head to be given him, and he glares at it savagely, holding it in his left hand, and he grows warm while gazing upon the not-so-warm man’s dread eyes even still hesitating to grow fixed. Though unfortunate he was content.

Tydeus sees himself in the eyes of Melanippus: *ut singultantia vidit / ora trucesque oculos seseque agnovit in illo*. Tydeus sees his reflection, but the audience sees two Tydeuses. This image is reinforced by the repetitive prosody of *seseque*, a substitute for *se*, which intensifies the reader’s double vision. The English, “he recognized himself in the other,” is as layered as the Latin *seseque agnovit in illo*, for it raises the question of what Tydeus recognizes in Melanippus. At face value, this phrase means that Tydeus sees his own reflection in the eyes of the severed head. Under this reading, one then considers what Tydeus sees in Melanippus’ eyes. In fact, Statius describes exactly what
Tydeus looks like earlier in his *aristeia: iam cror in galea, iam saucia proluit ater /
pectora permixtus sudore et sanguine torrens* ("already there is blood in his helmet;
already a black torrent mixed with sweat and blood washes over his wounded chest,"
*Theb.* 8.711-12). Tydeus, covered in blood and sweat, appears as he does at the close
of his encounter with the Theban fifty:

... *gelidus cadit imber anhelo
pectore, tum crines ardentiaque ora cruentis
roribus et taetra morientum aspergine manant* (*Theb.* 2.672-74)

A cold shower falls from his panting chest, then his hair and burning face drip
with bloody dew and the black spray of the dying.

Tydeus sees himself not only as he appears in book 8, but also as he appeared in book
2; instead of weary and victorious, however, Tydeus is here wounded and dying. It is
significant that Tydeus sees himself without his boar-skin mantle: the *Calydonis honos*
that protects him against the Theban Fifty slips from his shoulders when he reaches the
point of no return in book 8. Now stripped of his marked cloak, Tydeus sees himself as
a human in the eyes of another human, a reflection of himself. Yet, this mirror’s frame
disrupts any notion of humanity, since Melanippus’ dying eyes rest within a severed
head. Such forced contemplation of a dying head recalls Pompey’s head in *BC 8*
(above). Statius’ *lumina torua uidens et adhuc dubitantia figi* glosses Lucan’s *dum
lumina nuda rigescunt* and so makes Melanippus’ decapitation reflect Pompey’s
exemplary beheading in the *BC*. Yet, whereas Pompey’s head is drained of its gray
matter and mummified, Melanippus’ *cerebrum* finds a much more gruesome end.
Statius out-desecrates Pompey’s severed head with Tydeus’ desecration of dietary

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2 Statius flags the loss of Tydeus’ mantle just before he receives the spear from Melanippus: *tergoque
fatiscit | atque umeris gentilis aper* (*Theb.* 8.705-6).
custom. When Tydeus shucks Melanippus’ *cerebrum*, then, Statius elides two metaliterary currents: dismemberment of the *corpus* leads to sacreligious feasting on the body of tradition.

Yet, Tydeus sees more than just himself in the eyes of Melanippus. When Capaneus retrieves the Theban’s body, Statius compares the effort to Hercules’ victory over the Tirynthian boar:

> ... laevaque super cervice reportat, terga cruentantem concussi vulneris unda: qualis ab Arcadio redit Tirynthius antro captivumque suem clamantium intulit Argis (Theb. 8.747-50)

And upon his left shoulder [Capaneus] brings [Melanippus] back, staining his back with a gush of blood from the traumatized wound: just as when Tirynthian [Hercules] returned from the Arcadian cave and brought in the captive to an applauding Argos.

Though his mantle is lost, Tydeus cannot shed his boar-like appearance. His *sesseque agnovit* now signifies that he recognizes the bestial, boar-like madness that pursues him through the poem. Statius here reflects the entirety of Tydeus’ participation in the *Thebaid* back at the hero through the eyes of Melanippus. The *saetigerumque suem* of book 1 turns *captivumque suem* in book 8. In this light, when Tydeus consumes Melanippus’ gray matter (*vivo scelerantem sanguine fauces*, Theb. 8.761), he consumes himself; that is, he eats his portion of the *Thebaid*’s narrative fabric. Here his participation in the narrative comes to a halt, so that like Ovid’s Erysichthon, Tydeus severs his own narrative thread, and with it the narrative of book 8.

Like the ending of Horace’s *AP* and *Metamorphoses* 8, *Thebaid* 8 closes with an image of cannibalistic madness. Recall that Horace prohibits such imagery from poetic art only to break this precept at the discussion’s end. The *poeta vesanus* reflects a bear
loose from its cage, while Tydeus reflects a cornered boar. Tydeus’ cannibalism, I suggest, as a blight on epic decorum, scarifies the narrative surface of the Thebaid and announces Statius’ authorial particularity and narrative aesthetic. I noted above that Statius’ boar-hunt imagery stems back to Homeric models, and in Odysseus’ boar hunt Statius adopts the paradigm of recognition-through-scarring. When Eurykleia spies Odysseus’ scar, the recognition prompts an inset narrative that relates Odysseus’ trip to Autolycus and pursuant boar hunt. In the same way, when Tydeus recognizes himself in, and consumes, the head of Melanippus, he signals Statius’ retrospection over previous epic tradition. Tydeus’ cannibalism scars the Thebaid and makes it all the more recognizeable, just as Odysseus’ scar elicits Eurykleia’s recognition of his peculiarity. In the case of Tydeus, his self-recognition proves too horrific to bear, and he excises himself from epic discourse. Now Other to his comrades, to Minerva, to the reader, and finally to himself, epic narrative can contain him no longer.

Kyle Gervais demonstrates the validity of cognitive film theory’s place in viewing Tydeus viewing himself in Melanippus’ failing eyes. Following Murray Smith’s notion of ‘character engagement’ and Paul Gormley’s division of ‘affect’ and ‘meaning’, Gervais argues that the Thebaid consistently equivocates on placing the reader either within or above the fantasy of the text: “There is a fundamental conflict between the processes of θανηαζία—which allows the audience to imagine itself as part of the fiction—and allusion—which casts the author and his audience as entities above the fiction, opening and closing textual gaps” (2013: 10). In the former instance, Statius creates a phantasia that draws the audience in as fellow spectators to his Theban horror show (affect); in the latter, Statius’ dense allusive network reminds the reader of his position as reader,
and so responsible for identifying the poem’s intertextual relationships with previous literary tradition (meaning). In the Tydeus scene, I suggest, a similar wavering between affect and meaning is at work: the reader can at once both view Melanippus’ fantastic head through Tydeus’ eyes, and/or the reader can fill with figurative meaning the allusive space opened by *seseque agnovit in illo*. Note that even Tydeus sits both apart from (*a-mens*) and within (*con-tentus*) himself. The internal audience responses are telling here: Tisiphone looks on unphased, while Minerva turns away and must cleanse her eyes. The coexistence of these aesthetic responses casts the reader into a paradoxical position, at the same time voyeur to the horror of Tydeus’ cannibalism (Tisiphone), and/or alienated witness, appalled at Statius’ gustatory cannibalism of epic tradition (Minerva).

Gervais discusses the *Thebaid* in relation to Tarantino’s *Reservoir Dogs*, where the articulation between first- and third-person camera shots in the ear-amputation scene disrupts the audience’s station with respect to the film, whether it be within (voyeuristic pleasure) or without (repulsed alienation) the dramatic action. A similar, problematizing articulation takes place in the dinner scene in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974), where the audience’s viewpoint oscillates between that of Sally (Marilyn Burns) and that of Leatherface’s (Gunnar Hansen) cannibal family. Such switchbacks recalibrate the audience’s place from horrified meal (Sally) to horrific man-eaters (Leatherface and family). In similar fashion, Statius destabilizes his audience’s presumed relationship with Tydeus’ cannibalism, insofar as he constructs an ever-reductive mirroring between the eyes of Melanippus and Tydeus: *seseque agnovit in illo*. Whence should the reader ‘watch’ this already gruesome scene?
It is also significant that Gervais alights on ‘textual gaps’ (the Conteian figures) as the spaces opened and closed when the audience recognizes an allusion. When Tydeus recognizes himself and the beast he has become (*saetiger sus, captivus sus*), the audience recognizes Tydeus’ intertextual relationship with previous epic boars. The spaces between the *Thebaid* and those *loci* in the *Odyssey*, *Aeneid*, and *Metamorphoses* are filled by imaginative-intellectual activity on the part of *Thebaid* readers. Thus arises Teskey’s meaning as ‘the opening of a schism … or rift, and the subsequent effort to repair it by imaginative means’ (1996: 2-5). Tydeus’ final appearance, refracted through the eyes of a severed head, creates a schism in his textual body, which he attempts to efface by consuming what lies on the other side of that rift. Yet, like Ovid’s attempt at dividing *Chaos* in half, the audience confronts a crisis of semiotics, wherein both halves of this schism look alike. Again, like Erysichthon, *corpus* consumes *corpus* and the image collapses in on itself. The textual gaps opened by Tydeus’ and the audience’s recognitions become reified in the hero’s cannibalism: beyond just swallowing Melanippus’ *cerebrum*, Tydeus opens a semiotic fissure that in fact swallows Tydeus.

**Hunting Zombies**

On 18 April 2012, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that American Marines had photographed themselves with the maimed limbs of Afghan insurgents. In one picture, a soldier smiles with a severed arm draped over his shoulder; in another, two soldiers grin and give a thumbs-up between a pair of detached legs. How dare they?

Such ‘trophy pictures’ are nothing new: the previous February produced video of Americans urinating on enemy corpses—to say nothing of the 2004 Abu Ghraib abuses. Perhaps the 82nd Airborne’s call sign is instructive here: the Zombie Hunters. Jeffrey
Jerome Cohen points out that the modern zombie occupies a psychological space into which modern (especially American) society can pour its hatred of the Other: never individualized and always dangerous, the zombie now contains and exposes the fears and anxieties of a culture immersed in violent media (ICFA 33, March 2012). Mass slaughter of zombies never presents a moral conundrum; they are the diseased embodiment of pure appetite; they eat our brains. If We do not destroy Them, They will surely consume Us.

The Zombie Hunters of the 82nd Airborne posed not with human limbs, but those of the Walking Dead. For them, the enemy was non-human, zombiefied, and in a sense dead already. This helps explain why they could treat human limbs as prized deer. One must remember this before asking, “How could our boys do this?” The paratroopers in these photographs are not desensitized to violence; on the contrary, they are hypersensitive to it. They have tasted the Real through unmediated, alingual, and violent interaction with the Other, and so transcended themselves. For them, the zombie film is made flesh. It is in this light that one can further capture the aesthetic experience of Tydeus’ brain-eating. The furor of epic combat and mastery of tradition outgrows the hero, so that his ultra-violent experience in the poem recalibrates his worldview to one where cannibalism is non-threatening and sanctioned. If Tisiphone and Minerva were to visit the Zombie Hunters of the 82nd Airborne, the former would snap photographs; the latter would email the LA Times.

Tisiphone’s and Minerva’s reactions cast in high relief the dichotomous aesthetic responses to violent art. Like the Zombie Hunters, Tisiphone and her local surrogate Tydeus require more violence to satiate their aesthetic needs (plus exigit ultrix |
Tisiphone, Theb. 8.757-58); Minerva’s aesthetic response is one of avoidance. Tydeus’ grotesque meal makes an attempt at internalizing the insane (amens) violence of epic narrative, but his collapse into the Other only perpetuates and makes him accomplice to that violence. In the same way, the Zombie Hunters experienced real violence unmediated by language, so that they aestheticized Kristeva’s abject in its purest form; maimed limbs become props in a grotesque, Facebook-like photo-album. Within the bounds of wartime Afghanistan, their actions perform the psychological work found in Stephen King’s subliminal river of alligators. From a stateside perspective, they become the Other with which they were photographed.

A House of Horrors

The Roman interest in the macabre, grotesque, and violent informs modern reception of this imagery. In the hands of the Roman epicists, represented violence comprises communicative opportunities beyond mere shock value. In their artful slaughter, the poets announce their particularity and aesthetic preferences. Their allusive gestures take the form of textual dismemberments, which raise ethical-aesthetic questions and prompt reflection on unity of tradition, poetic innovation, and artistic decorum. Horace’s prohibiton of cannibalism from ars poetica proves too enticing to pass up, for in this prescriptive lacuna, authors find spark for creative imagination. There are myriad pathways of violent song. The ‘anxiety of influence’ is at work here, inasmuch as poets grapple with deference to tradition and the necessity of innovation. Each poet’s aesthetic preferences (especially in the case of violent representation) are inscribed in the aesthetic preferences of his day, so that Glenn Danzig’s challenge rings true throughout the literary history of violence narratives: “Let’s test your threshold of pain, and let’s see how long you last.”
Today’s artists and critics exist in a Heideggerian House of Language that includes Dante next to Poe and Warhol’s beside Caravaggio’s. This study’s examination of violence in Roman epic teaches as much about literary violence two millennia ago as it is informed by the modern horror film, pulp fictions, and debates over gun-control and violent media. *Salon* recently posed the question of whether American visual media has reached a saturation point in its representation of violence, yet this is neither the first nor the last time the question has or will be raised. Certainly Lucan seems to reach a saturation point in the epics I consider, but as with any aesthetic preference, violence such as his waxes and wanes. The foregoing study demonstrates that mimetic violence and the anxieties it raises are unique neither to the Romans nor modern popular culture. Ancient and modern horror of this kind draws the audience in to a complicit relationship with violent art: like King’s river of alligators, a certain cathartic fantasy takes place over contemplation of the macabre.
WORKS CITED

Primary Texts


**Secondary Texts**


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH