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QUIDQUID HOMO EST: MILITARY MANLINESS IN LUCAN'S CIVIL WAR

Hannah-Marie Chidwick

Abstract

This article will discuss the Roman poet Lucan's description, 'everything a man is' [*quidquid homo est*, Luc. 9.779], in his epic, *Civil War*.¹ I will read selections from the Latin literature and incorporate discussions of masculinity across the disciplines of Classics and military theory to explore the embodiment of masculinity in relation to the Roman soldierly body.

Lucan's unfinished and infamously violent narrative of Julius Caesar's clash against the Republic features both the words *homo* (man/human, from Greek) and *vir* (man/hero). Where the former word tallies more closely with our understanding of *homo sapiens*, the latter is more common in Latin and fundamentally signifies strength, heroism and Roman manliness, underpinning qualities crucial to masculinity in Rome's 'military state'.² The soldier's comportment 'stressed masculinity and a "tense" bodily stance resistant to weakening influences, a description which allows comparison with today's gender debates, specifically the dynamic productive relation between defence institutions and masculine ideals'.³

During a graphic encounter with poisonous snakes, Lucan states, 'the profane nature of the toxin lays bare everything a man is' (9.779), implying that a male body in *Bellum Civile* comprises merely parts, guts and gore. In contrast, the centurion Scaeva is lauded as an exemplary *vir* (6.144ff.) even when his wounds render him with no insides left to be struck. Analysis of selected instances of *vir* or *homo* in Lucan's poetry therefore helps to elucidate this conceptualisation of Roman 'manliness' as an em- or dis-embodied phenomenon.

Key words: Latin literature, masculinity, military, Roman history, soldier

Quidnam homo est?

Lucan's unfinished and notoriously violent poem, *Civil War*, is an archetypal contribution to the very masculine canon of Classical epic, a genre dominated by male-driven narratives and male authors.⁴ 'There is no denying that [myth] and epic poetry champion masculine, heroic values,' writes John Elia, specifically describing the reception of epic in modern sword-and-sandal films.⁵ Lucan's predecessor, Virgil, begins his *Aeneid* with *arma virumque cano* [I sing of arms and the man, 1.1], after all. Importantly, for this article and for *HARTS & Minds'* theme of 'embodied masculinities' in crisis, Greek and Roman epic not only concerned men's actions, but also men as perpetrators or victims of *violence*.

These stories, retold orally or textually, came to be viewed as expositions of paradigmatic masculinity, especially for the Romans.⁶ This concept has transcended the centuries, from early Latin writing (pre-100 BC) up until today, as attested by Elia's observation. In the collected volume, *Uomini e corpi* [*Men and bodies*], social historian, Lorenzo Benadusi, describes the adoption of the Roman soldier as a propaganda figure in 1930s-40s fascist Italy:

Era in particolare modo il legionario romano, perfetta sintesi tra forza fisica e forza di volontà, l'esempio da utilizzare come stereotipo del cittadino ideale. [The Roman legionary, in particular, was the perfect synthesis between physical force and force of will, the example to be used as the stereotype for the ideal citizen.]⁷

For these propagandists, the 'Roman legionary' was an effective physicalisation of the

exemplary male form. The notion of the soldier as a manly ‘stereotype’ can furthermore be construed as the ‘conventional perception’ of the soldier, particularly the ancient legionary, as an *ideal embodiment* of manliness. As Benadusi suggests, this perception stems from the soldier’s endurance of intense physical hardship and success in combat.⁸

Social anthropologist Kenneth MacLeish puts it bluntly: ‘The human body is arguably the most taken for granted and the most essential piece of equipment of the day-to-day labours of war making’, alluding to the centrality of the body in any aspect of warfare.⁹ Indeed, the few texts of Roman military strategy extant today portray an attitude to the wellbeing of late-Republican *milites* (soldiers) which suggests that this ‘taking for granted’ did not originate in twenty-first century professionalised slaughter.¹⁰ Given the existing dialogue that overlays Classical with modern conceptions of masculinity, and in the absence of extensive source material on the soldier’s subjectivity in ancient Rome, I will supplement my discussion throughout with recent theorists’ work on military manliness.

Lucan’s *Civil War* is not strictly a text of military science, but I contend that it is a particularly suitable specimen for the study of soldierly masculinity, as the poetic narrative focuses on the most transformative conflict in Roman history.¹¹ Through ten books of difficult Latin, Lucan the ‘rebel-poet’ describes the clash of Julius Caesar’s army against the defenders of the Republican system (49-45 BC).¹² The poem emerges from a literary heritage most flagrantly influenced by Virgil’s *Aeneid*, a foundation story venerating Rome and her emperor. However, where Lucan’s forerunners wrote to *make* Rome, *Civil War* thrives in *breaking* it apart and, likewise, the poet is quick to deprave and dismantle generic tropes.¹³ Lucan’s revolt against the institution of Latin literature situates any study of his epic in an interpretative quagmire from the outset.

The conventions of the epic genre allow Lucan to emphasise the horrors of warfare, but he does so in a manner ‘violent to a degree shared but not rivalled by other Roman writers of his time’, on and off the battleground.¹⁴ This often unobtrusive pugnacity prompts the reader to deliberate the necessity and glorification of bodily harm and moral debility in conflict. Whereas Virgil promised to sing of ‘arms and the man’, Lucan declares his epic one of *bella* [...] *plus quam civilia* [wars worse than civil, 1.1], and he brands every member of his audience a combatant guilty of incestuous war [What madness is this, o citizens? 1.8].¹⁵

Like the *Aeneid*, the action of *Civil War* concerns the political and military machinations of *men*, making it a conventionally male-orientated text.¹⁶ Predictably, the recurrent wielding of the *gladius* (a variety of sword which, alone, makes forty-five appearances in the Latin) permeates the text as a metaphor for the ‘insertive role’ so central to the configuration of masculinity.¹⁷ Add in the *ferrum* (sword), *pilum* (javelin), *telum* (spear), and Lucan’s battlefields play host to a plethora of penetrative projections.

Yet, despite the overtly masculine subject matter, the representation of masculinity in Lucan’s poem remains a relatively untouched topic in Classical scholarship.¹⁸ In this article, I aim to introduce an exploration of how maleness is embodied, if problematically, by *Civil War*’s legionaries. I dub this embodiment ‘problematic’, because so much of the poem is dedicated to the *dismantling* of the male body: an ‘obsession’ with dismemberment ‘not only generates single episodes in Lucan’s epic but even governs centrally its imaginative world’, writes Glenn Most.¹⁹ However, this physical state is fundamentally antagonistic to the ideals of being a man in ancient Rome, as I will discuss throughout. I will therefore read the epic’s carnage with a view to examining what *strain* of manliness is embodied by those physically violated, in comparison with both martial and masculine ideologies.

The provocative reading of *Civil War* in John Henderson’s *Fighting for Rome* alludes to this ‘problematic’ masculinity, in relation to how Lucan’s poem subverts the adulation of warfare:

It will tarnish the commemoration of ‘manliness’ – ἀνδρεία [*andreia*] or *virtus* – which it must enact. It will foul the ideology which seeks to construct and regulate the social self within military codes; this chauvinism starts from ‘maleness’ and goes on to assert as the indisputably real cosmology the commitment of the bodies of citizen ‘men’ in substantiation of the fictions of the state, through violence and injury to self and other.²⁰

This powerful portrayal illustrates how *Civil War* invites a reconsideration of masculinity not only in Roman epic, but in the context of warfare more generally. Lucan’s conflation of epic with history, and the civil with the martial, reflects the Roman canon within which he writes and arguably extends to his depiction of masculinity.²¹ The figure of the conventionally heroic *vir* of Virgilian epic is destabilised in Lucan’s manipulation of *virtus* [manliness], to which Henderson refers. This conceit is generally translated as ‘virtue, courage’, but it semantically implies ‘manliness’ or ‘behaviour appropriate to a man’.²²

Despite a complex disparity between Roman ideals of civilian and military manliness, in Latin, *virtus* is most commonly ‘attributed to a soldier who has displayed notable valour in battle’.²³ This usage colloquially confuses the distinction between qualities laudable in a Roman citizen, an epic hero, and/or a common legionary, and thereby disrupts the political and philosophical boundaries into which *virtus*-as-manliness is readily partitioned.²⁴

The complexity of the picture is expressed in Henderson’s description, whence emerges the critical notion that *Civil War*, rather than wholly contravening existing ideologies of manliness, exposes them. The readiness for patriotic (self-)destruction which Henderson conveys – the devastating ‘imperative to die, and (so) kill, for your country’ – has persisted from Roman culture to postmodern conceptions of masculinity.²⁵ As sociologist Kathleen Barry insists, physical injury effected and sustained is still perceived as ‘a way to prove manhood’ in twenty-first century thinking.²⁶ For, as Elia quips, epic is ‘supposed’ to glorify and perpetuate masculine ideals, but Lucan’s bellicose depiction of military action ‘fouls’ this conception in his relentless subordination and abhorrent deformation of the male body. His volatile universe not only upheaves moral and political ideals, but scratches out conventional understandings of subjectivity, by anonymising most of his characters and using the synecdochic word, *miles* [soldier/army], far more frequently than his poetic predecessors.

This article will aim to provide a preface for further studies of masculinity in *Civil War* by concentrating on the semantic differences between two Latin terms, *homo* [human/man] and *vir* [man/hero]. Reading *Civil War* in light of the Latin distinction between *homo* and *vir* opens up a new way of exploring the representation of Roman masculinity in Lucan’s poem. Ancient historian Myles McDonnell offers a Classical definition of both words in his discussion of *Roman Manliness*:

Vir is one of a number of words that denote a man. It usually carries positive connotations, and often refers to a politically active man, as opposed to *homo* which is frequently coupled with an adjective that denotes the status a man is born into (*nobilis*, *novus*, *Romanus*), or with a pejorative adjective.²⁷

Certain episodes in *Civil War* arguably demonstrate the implications of the differences to which McDonnell alludes. Selecting two passages from Lucan which feature these words, I will discuss how, at the point of their reception, their philological and ideological connotations can feed into analysis of military masculinity, both in Lucan’s epic and transhistorically.

Vir is a specifically *masculine* term, and is encumbered with ample subtext.²⁸ It is used a neat one-hundred and fifty times in Lucan’s poem, with its related attribute, *virtus*, making an

additional fifty-one appearances, rendering the narrative ‘manly’ merely in terms of linguistics. In contrast, *homo* generally appears in *Civil War* to denote the whole of mankind, ‘men’ as representative of unindividuated humanity: *Si liceat superis hominum conferre labores* [if one can compare the works of men to those of the gods, 7.144]; also, *O summos hominum* [O those greatest of men, 7.205]. In a military context, *homo* can mean ‘foot-soldier’, and of the twenty-four occurrences of *homo* in Lucan’s epic, most are during the climactic battle of Pharsalia in book 7. Both these above translations suit the setting of Pharsalia, in which great swathes of anonymised male soldiers fatally collide at the behest of their superiors’ egos. *Homo* is also often prefigured by *mens* [mind, 2.15], as though to situate the thoughts and emotions ‘of mankind’ within a somatic context.

It is this somatic context which dominates the first passage marked for discussion, in which Lucan recounts a particularly destructive attack against the body of a soldier, identified as *homo*. The violence is not the result of ordered combat, but rather the impact of a hostile environment on invading troops.²⁹ As the Republican army, under their reluctant general, Cato, traverse a Libyan desert, they encounter a pool teeming with snakes (9.619-838).³⁰ David Quint cites ‘the grotesque distortions of the bodies of Cato’s soldiers bitten by the poisonous snakes of Libya’ as prototypical for the grisly deaths of Lucan’s human beings.³¹ One such unfortunate victim of the serpents, Sabellus, is punctured by the fangs of a *seps* (9.762-86) and subsequently dissolves:

Nam plagae proxima circum
Fugit rupta cutis pallentiaque ossa rexit;
Iamque sinu laxo nudum sine corpore volnus.
Membra natant sanie, surae fluxere, sine ullo
Tegmine poples erat, femorum quoque musculus omnis
Liquitur, et nigra destillant inguina tabe.
Dissiluit stringens uterum membrana, fluuntque
Viscera; nec, quantus toto de corpore debet,
Effluit in terras, saevum sed membra venenum
Decoquit, in minimum mors contrahit omnia virus.
Quidquid homo est, aperit pestis natura profana:³²
Vincula nervorum et laterum textura cavumque
Pectus et abstrusum fibris vitalibus omne
Morte patet.

(9.767-80)

[For the broken skin close around
The wound fled and bared the pale bones;
Until, with the hollow so wide, there was only wound without body.
The limbs are swimming in blood, the calves fluid, the knees
Were without any covering, also all the muscle of the thighs
Become fluid, and the groin drips with black decay.
The membrane ceased holding the stomach, and the innards
Fall out; indeed, however much of the body remains,
It flows into the earth, the cruel venom boils away
Even the limbs, death contracts all to the smallest cell.
Whatever a man is, the profane nature of the toxin lays bare:
The bonds of the nerves and the texture of the flank, and
The concave breast, and everything concealed by the vital organs
Is exposed by death.]

Although only a minor character in terms of plot, Sabellus is, as Quint suggests, an archetypal combatant in *Civil War*. This perception is bolstered by the application of the generic *homo*. The sheer technicality of this passage reflects the literal meaning of *homo* in Roman law, that is, ‘to have a male body’ and the guts and gore that go with it.³³ I draw attention to the line, ‘whatever a man is, the profane nature of the toxin lays bare’, because these words encapsulate the idea that, in the act of stripping away layers of flesh and bone, every physical component of *homo Romanus* can be perceived. Lucan seemingly declares that there is no non-physical aspect to the *homo* constitution which cannot be revealed by the snake’s poison. *Homo*, in this context, refers to the soldier’s corporeal ‘status’ as merely a set of body parts, ready to destroy and be destroyed.

As my argument progresses, the passage above will provide a point of reference for the consideration of how Lucan’s ruthless depiction of this soldier’s body impacts on our understanding of the military male form.

Born to the Toga

To what extent was manliness actually ‘embodied’ in Roman society, and how can we make use of Lucan’s poem to think about how this embodiment is conveyed in contexts epic and military? In *Unmanly Men*, on masculinity in Christianity and Roman society, Brittany Wilson’s substantial research into the physicality and comportment of the Roman male leads her to this conclusion: ‘simply having the necessary anatomical features did not guarantee that a specifically sexed man would have been considered a true man in the ancient world’.³⁴ In other words, in ancient Rome, ‘a man’s manliness had to be corporeally cultivated and maintained’.³⁵ Wilson here conveys an interesting phenomenon: manliness was not wholly dependent on physicality, but it had to be ‘corporeally’ apparent. The study of physiognomy in the Roman world concerned how outward traits exhibited inner qualities, making masculinity both a somatic and performative attribute.³⁶

For the Roman citizen, the manufacturing of masculinity was initiated at birth, as Wilson describes, in the practice of physically ‘shaping’ Roman infants so that their maleness became embodied.³⁷ Once he had accrued between fourteen to seventeen years, at the feast of *Liberalia* (March 17th), he adopted the *toga virilis* [manly toga].³⁸ This symbolic marker of manhood rendered the Roman male then legally able to marry and become *paterfamilias* – the figurehead of masculinity in civilian society.³⁹ These ritualised transformative procedures of shaping and clothing demonstrate the extent to which Roman masculinity was a body-related construction.

McDonnell agrees, stating that ‘Roman manliness, although not associated with sexuality, was certainly dependent on a male anatomical characteristic’.⁴⁰ The characteristic in question is physical strength, which McDonnell asserts is underpinned by the training of young men in advance of their entry into military service, following the *Liberalia*. This is where the boundary line between civil and military masculinity becomes blurred: during the Republic, ‘a principal feature of Roman male education was preparing the young to fight and to display their manliness in battle’.⁴¹ The Roman adolescent’s conception of manliness would therefore have been inspired throughout his upbringing by knowledge of his male relatives’ military excursions.

The notion that ‘men are made, not born’ is similarly attested to by twenty-first century sociologists, expressly those writing on the link between masculinity and the militia. According to Joshua Goldstein, in his influential book *War and Gender*, the necessity of a process to ‘become men’ is widespread and, importantly, influenced by military ideologies.⁴² As I have suggested, an analogous influence is easily recognised by the ubiquity of military service in Roman Republican society, given its necessity for citizen males who wished to take up political office.⁴³ Hence, traits associated with Roman manliness were intertwined

with those of military duty, as Sara Elise Phang notes in *Roman Military Service*: Roman martial discipline ‘stressed masculinity and a “tense” bodily stance resistant to weakening influences’.⁴⁴ Whether physical, familial or political, power and control were the coveted qualities of the Roman man, underpinned but not solely sustained by his biology.⁴⁵

How can this model of manliness inform, or be informed, by Lucan’s epic? The association of masculinity with ‘tension’ and dominance was conveyed in Roman *rhetoric*, particularly through the use of antithetical ‘feminine’ vocabulary. Wilson explains:

Both Greek and Roman authors were very concerned about proper masculine deportment and had a host of pejorative terms to denote effeminacy, such as “soft” (*mollis*; μαλακός), “passive” (*pathicus*; πάθος), “womanish” (*muliebriarius*; γυναικείος), and “halfman” (*semivir*).⁴⁶

Note the *physicality* of these ‘womanish’ words, ‘soft’ and ‘halfman’. They stand in direct contrast to ‘manly’ terms such as *fortitudo* (‘strength’) and *imperium* (‘power’).⁴⁷

In the Sabellus passage, we behold a hardy *homo*, whose treacherous journey across the Libyan desert results in utter bodily dissolution. Lucan’s language in this passage is replete with soft, liquid vocabulary; the long sentences spill out Sabellus’ injuries over fourteen lines. The verbs alone suggest his liquescent state: *fluxere* (‘to flow’), *natare* (‘to swim’), *effluere* (‘to stream’), *liquare* (‘to liquefy’). Most of these verbs are in the present tense, creating both a dramatic sense of immediacy and a desperate lack of conclusion to the suffering. The poet draws attention to specifically male aspects of the physical form, including body parts fundamental to the military profession, juxtaposed with their ‘softening’ fate. As the passage continues, *manant umeri fortesque lacerti | colla caputque fluunt* [his strong shoulders and arms drip away, his neck and head flow, 9.780-781]. Of particular note is the adjective, *fortis* (strong), ironically holding together his shoulders and arms with an adjoining *-que*, as the soldiers’ hardy features melt into the ground.

Although Sabellus’ fate cannot be read as standard for the experience of extra-textual Roman soldiers, his disintegration is certainly typical of the violence in *Civil War*.⁴⁸ Examples similar to the case of Sabellus include: the hideous torture of a victim stripped of his sense organs (2.174-85); a young soldier reduced to a pile of ‘breathing limbs’ (3.723-51); the reanimated corpse of a fallen Pompeian soldier (6.750-762), ‘unjustly unable to stay dead’ (6.724-725).⁴⁹ When the male (human) body fails to maintain its integrity throughout the epic, and bodies do not stay alive or dead, what does it mean, corporeally, to be *homo*?

Catharine Edwards compares Roman attitudes to death in ancient society and literature in *Death in Ancient Rome*, drawing attention to Lucan’s defiled bodies:

Books 3, 6, 7, and 9 in particular parade a succession of dramatically gruesome deaths. Limbs are lopped off, eyes gouged out. Trunkless heads are hurled through the air. The focus is not on the dying individual but on his body – a body dehumanised.⁵⁰

The key word in Edwards’ description is ‘dehumanised’. When Lucan states that the snake bite reveals *quidquid homo est*, the word *homo* is particularly important: this flesh and viscera constitutes a human being, but not specifically a *man*.

One interpretation could be that Sabellus is rendered ‘womanish’ by his injury.⁵¹ The presence of *fugio* (‘to flee’, 9.768) and the dispelling of his ‘groin’ might substantiate this reading. However, if anything, Lucan seems to be accentuating the snake’s power to utterly overcome a strong and stoic warrior; he writes, *has inter pestes duro Cato milite siccum | emetitur iter* [through these pests Cato travels a dry journey with his hardy army, 9.734-

735].⁵² The journey is ‘dry’ owing to the lack of water, but we could also deem this setting symbolic of the ‘dryness’, associated with the masculine body.⁵³

A discussion of the word, *homo*, framed by Lucan’s narrative of bloodshed, can therefore reflect on the technicality of brutality against male bodies in war. Again, Lucan’s description of the ‘hardy soldiers’ corresponds to discourse on the transhistorical ‘hardening of men’ in combat.⁵⁴ Yet, with body after body disrupted, the space of *Civil War* effects a restructuring of corporeal norms and, subsequently, of manliness. Sabellus and his comrades represent a kind of ‘liquidated’ masculinity, one different from that ‘hegemonic’ form attributed to Roman citizens.⁵⁵

In fact, when we expand our viewpoint to once again encompass Roman civilian values, this divergence does not seem entirely incongruous. Many of the physical praxes which determined Roman *citizens* manly were not undertaken by soldiers. Crucially, they could neither marry nor adopt the essential role of *paterfamilias*.⁵⁶ Soldiers did not wear the restrictive *toga*, the cumbersome garment which signifies a Roman man, yet requires the shield-hand (left) to support it. *Toga* is synonymous with ‘citizen’, ‘senator’ and ‘peace’ in Latin rhetoric, while soldiers were nicknamed *caligae*, after their marching boots.⁵⁷ Here, both the fields of literature and history illuminate problematic aspects of masculinity evident in each other.

It is for this reason that the corporeality of Lucan’s legionaries, the ‘boots on the ground’ of his epic (as opposed to the narrative’s god-like generals), dominate my discussion of military manliness as *embodied*. Importantly, in Roman society, bodily vulnerability was not associated with men.⁵⁸ It was outrageous for a free male to be corporeally punished for a crime, Amy Richlin tells us, as ‘by breaking the integrity of the citizen’s body, the killers were assimilating that body to others more vulnerable’, in other words, women, slaves and soldiers.⁵⁹ Wilson elaborates:

A physical injury or disability undermined a man’s manliness, for such men sank to the level of ‘deformed’ women, and men who embodied such disabilities were often ridiculed for their ‘deficiency’.⁶⁰

For instance, the more standard citizen punishment was exile, rather than beating, and yet beatings were commonly meted out by the court martial. The important attributes of *libertas* [freedom] and *potestas* [power] over men’s own bodies were, and still are, necessarily denied to soldiers, owing to the requisite professional altruism.⁶¹ The Greek historian Polybius provides a detailed description of life in the Roman military camp, in his *Histories*, of the Punic Wars (second century BC). The punishment of *fustuarium* [bludgeoning to death], according to Polybius, was carried out for nearly every ‘crime’ committed in deployment (*Hist.* 6.37).⁶² Although this word is never mentioned in *Civil War*, knowledge of the phenomenon does provide a background for our reading of the Roman soldierly body in Lucan’s epic, and the legionaries’ strict adherence to discipline.⁶³ ‘Technically, the citizen under arms appears to have had very similar rights to the civilian,’ Richard Alston describes, in his contribution to *When Men Were Men*, ‘but in fact the soldier was subject to a whole range of more severe penalties for misconduct, and his right of appeal, therefore his *libertas*, was limited’.⁶⁴

He concludes, ‘soldiers and gladiators did not conform to aristocratic ideals of virility’.⁶⁵ These ‘ideals of virility’, included not being subjected to another man’s command and, certainly, not readily exposing one’s body to injury:

In such a case, a compromising of the liberty of the individual through military service in order to ensure the freedom of the community was both reasonable

and to be expected.⁶⁶

Therefore, when we think in terms of bodily rights, the notion that the specifically male *vir*, rather than *homo*, signifies both ‘a man who is a husband and a soldier’ demands closer scrutiny.⁶⁷ As Richlin qualifies succinctly, ‘The penetrability of all these groups constituted for the Romans, sometimes explicitly, a diminution also in gender; if male, they were not quite fully male’.⁶⁸ Indeed, the prevailing attitude of the Roman citizenry was that ‘war is carried out by others’.⁶⁹ The *other*, in this case, being a non-man, non-citizen, a *soldier*.⁷⁰

In light of this cultural context, Roman masculinity as it appears in Lucan’s subversive epic is given new signification, as we see military service directly juxtaposed with the physical violation unavoidable in professional conflict. As such, the crude paradoxes inherent in corporeal conceptions of manliness become apparent. Another passage from *Civil War* provides a particularly gruesome antithesis to the notion of being both ‘a husband and a soldier’: a naval battle near the city of Massilia. Typical of *Civil War* carnage, this skirmish includes countless combatants being torn apart by their enemies and adverse environment, with most soldiers anonymous and indistinguishable. One in particular (a twin, no less) is totally truncated (3.603-626);⁷¹ technically a man, he would be physically unable to wear a toga and unlikely to become *paterfamilias*.

Yet, this character *is* accorded manliness (*virtus*), despite his body being physically unrecognisable from that of the citizen.⁷² Turning his fortunes around, he adopts the role of a human shield to defend his comrades, ardent to prove himself useful in combat: *crevit in adversis virtus: plus nobilis irae | truncus habet* [his manliness became clearer in adversity: truncated, he had even more noble wrath, 3.614-615]. The context of warfare renders his deformity actually symbolic of *virility*. In fact, the verb here, *cerno*, not only translates as ‘perceive’, but also ‘separate’ or ‘distinguish’. Reading the passage with this meaning in mind, it is as though the soldier’s *virtus* is ‘separated’ from his somatic vessel as his body breaks apart.

In contrast to Roman civilian values, this epic soldier’s manly identity is better realised through the dismemberment of his body; with every mutilation, his courage *qua* manliness becomes clearer. The violence at Massilia therefore demonstrates, rather aberrantly, how military manliness does not necessitate victory or bodily integrity. As Lucan states of those still fighting in the wreckage: *nec cessat naufraga virtus* [not even when wrecked is manliness lessened, 3.690].

When Lucan notes that Sabellus’ snake bite reveals *quidquid homo est*, the word, *homo*, is particularly important: his flesh and viscera scientifically constitute a human being, even a ‘foot-soldier’, but not a ‘man’ in Roman socio-political configurations. Sabellus does not share the same status as elite men, for whom soldiers surrendered their bodies to preserve the state but, curiously, Lucan ascribes to the deformed and nameless soldier-shield the coveted attribute of *virtus*.⁷³ In *Civil War*, at least, it seems that just as separate *laws* governed the Roman army, so too did separate conventions concerning the physical manifestation of masculinity.

Violence and *Virtus*

Further exploration of the appearances of *homo* and *vir*, and the latter’s derivative, *virtus*, can therefore inform how Lucan’s epic prompts us to rethink Roman military manliness. As the examples previously cited suggest, *vir* and *virtus* refer to attributes not specifically physical, nevertheless, *virtus* was more important to Roman masculine ideals than the all-encompassing *homo*, as Craig Williams describes:

Another crucial concept is that of *virtus*: etymologically nothing more than ‘manliness’, this word came to refer to broad notions of valour and ultimately ‘virtue’, but always in a strongly gendered sense. *Virtus* is the ideal of masculine behaviour that all men ought to embody, that some women have the good fortune of attaining, and that men derided as effeminate conspicuously fail to achieve.⁷⁴

The idea that *virtus* is ‘nothing more than manliness’ is a somewhat obscure assertion. Williams’ description evokes Benadusi’s reference to fascist propaganda but, in physical terms, the idea that ‘*virtus* is the ideal of masculine behaviour that all men ought to embody’ seems bizarre alongside the ‘manliness’ (dis-)embodied by the soldier-shield at Massilia.

Lucan’s Cato declaims that he marches his troops across the desert in pursuit of *virtus* (9.380-1), but what does this term mean in *Civil War*? Its broader ideological, social and philosophical (especially Stoic) connotations make it a convoluted concept to discuss. Even Lucan’s dreary exemplar, Cato, the real-life Stoic, cannot be considered archetypally *virtuous* owing to his participation in a morally questionable conflict.⁷⁵

This word’s usage in epic, a genre which ‘traditionally focuses on the praise of *virtus* (*arete*)’, is complicated in its reception by its broader associations with the army.⁷⁶ In military terms, ‘*virtus*, courage or prowess in combat, was the traditional measure of manliness’, writes Phang, referring to military service as the traditional vocation of Republican nobles, prior to political office.⁷⁷ However, she qualifies that martial *virtus* was recognisably distinct from *civilian* manliness, as ‘highly volatile, aggressive’, and dangerous to the Republican citizen and state. As such, it was to be kept in check ‘through masculine *habitus* [comportment], shown by separation from women, rough dress and grooming, an austere lifestyle, and a mental and physical disposition appropriate to the militia’.⁷⁸ As ever, the body must demonstrate the manliness within. It is as though the tour of duty ‘produced’ men fit for state *virtus* – if they survived.

Arguably, the idealised violence of the epic hero manifests itself differently in *Civil War* as more closely resembling the ‘highly volatile, aggressive’ manliness of the real-life soldier. This latter brand of *virtus* can be pitted in stark contrast to the conservative masculinity of the Roman citizen, who would likely have identified more readily with the *virtus* of poetic legionaries, than the experiences of actual Roman infantrymen, but Lucan’s epic upsets these expectations. As such, the latter half of this article will consider one exemplarily Lucanian *vir*, a ‘brave but typical centurion’: *Scaeva viro nomen* [Scaeva was the name of this man, 6.144].⁷⁹

The Caesarian Scaeva is marked out as a *species virtutis* [figure of manliness, 6.254], yet, unlike Cato, he makes no pretence of being a figure of Stoic decorum. Scaeva full-frontally embraces physical combat. Nevertheless, his compelling solo defence of Caesar’s fort against Pompeian invaders (6.118-262) has been labelled a deviant *aristeia*, the traditional feature of Greco-Roman epic which ‘delineates the hero – the personification of martial *arete* or *virtus*’.⁸⁰ If the terms, *vir* and *virtus*, plus the epic conceit of the *aristeia*, are all signifiers of Roman manliness, literary or otherwise, then Scaeva is certainly a worthy figure for a discussion of masculinity. He has long been recognised as Lucan’s *anti*-hero, his ferocity a malformation of *virtus* which melds military and epic manliness.⁸¹

From his introduction, we know that Scaeva is ‘a man’: the word, *ordo* (6.146), signals that he is not a foot-soldier, but a captain ‘promoted for shedding much blood’ (6.145-146), not for the blueness of his own. Even Lucan determines Scaeva’s *virtus* inappropriate: *nesciret in armis | quam magnum virtus crimen civilibus esset* [he knew not that manliness in civil wars was such a great crime, 6.147-148, also at 262].⁸² Despite the grumbling nature of his comment, Lucan nevertheless determines Scaeva’s escapade an instance of superlative

action, bravery and skill, whilst alluding to the complexity of reading Scaeva as an epic exemplar.⁸³ Writes Matthew Leigh, ‘*virtus* is a traditional Roman Republican military virtue and not one easily attributed to this particular character’, echoing Henderson’s comment that *virtus* is ‘fouled’ in *Civil War* by the contextualisation of ‘bravery’ in civil strife.⁸⁴

For the purpose of this article, the moral complications of Scaeva’s *virtus* are to be superseded by its embodiment. During his heroic escapade, fending off a Pompeian troop, Scaeva sustains significant injuries yet, like the soldier-shield, he continues to fight.⁸⁵ Lucan uses another poetic technique, apostrophe, to emphasise Scaeva’s fortitude: *Quid nunc, vaesani, iaculis levibusve sagittis | perditis haesuros numquam vitalibus ictus*, [Why now, fools, do you waste your javelins and light arrows, when the weapons will never hit his vitals? 6.197]. One interpretation of Lucan’s exclamation and the following lines would be that Scaeva is simply demonstrating exceptional military skill. However, it transpires that actually *pectora non tegit armis* [he doesn’t guard his breast with his armour, 6.202]:

et galeae fragmenta cavae compressa perurunt
tempora, nec quidquam nudis vitalibus obstat
iam praeter stantes in summis ossibus hastas.

(6.193-5)

[and the fragments of his hollow helmet rub against his compressed temples, and nothing stands before his bare vitals except the spears now sticking in the surface of his bones.]

Scaeva not only suffers bodily disruption, but embraces it, as William Fitzgerald gleefully comments: ‘His own behaviour (196-246) verges on the territory of *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (“What are you going to do, bleed on me?”)’.⁸⁶ To a certain extent, Scaeva is exemplaric of the qualities associated with *vir* and *virtus* in Roman thought, as detailed by McDonnell:

Virtus was a broad enough concept to include both the quality of endurance, that Romans were supposed to show when under attack or torture, and the aggressive bellicosity that was displayed by monomachists, and encouraged and valued in all soldiers.⁸⁷

Scaeva certainly fulfils these masculine criteria, which disturbingly resemble the enduring ideologies of manliness propagated by military institutions today.⁸⁸ Even when his body is near-fatally perforated with arrows, Scaeva still manages to utilise his collapse to crush an opponent (6.205-206).⁸⁹ Does this make Scaeva the archetypal soldier, as even with his ‘vitals bared’ he continues to fight courageously? His *potestas* is not impaired, which suggests that he is not rendered ‘vulnerable’ (in citizen terms, ‘unmanly’) by his bodily grievances. Moreover, as a singular man asserting his power over the enemy, Scaeva’s actions are demonstrative of his status as a centurion and, importantly, our understanding of Roman masculinity.

We could therefore conclude that Scaeva’s corporeal form is a rather *unproblematic* embodiment of Roman manliness, at least, of the ‘aggressive’ martial variety. However, by the end of the passage, this *species virtutis* hardly ‘embodies’ anything at all. This suggests that his masculine power is not restricted to his muscular confines, just as the soldier-shield’s *virtus* is ‘separated’ from him. Sabellus, as *homo*, completely dissolves, but Scaeva’s *virtus* persists:

Subducto qui Marte ruis; nam sanguine fuso

vires pugna dabat. Labentem turba suorum
 excipit atque umeris defectum inponere gaudet
 ac velut inclusum perfosso in pectore numen
 et vivam magnae speciem Virtutis adorant

(6.250-254)

[And with the battle withdrawn, you collapse; for through spilled blood,
 the fight gave you strength. The multitude of his men take him as he falls,
 and they rejoice to raise his weakened (body) onto their shoulders.
 and just like the divinity in his pierced chest
 they adore even the living figure of great Manliness.]

At line 252, the word for ‘body’ is actually absent, instead, Scaeva is substantivised by the participle ‘weakened’: the Latin sentence seemingly reflects his corporeal disintegration. The idea of being without a body seems at odds with the sturdy, steadfast construction connoted by *vir*, and the necessity of its corporeal display. Like Sabellus, Scaeva here loses his control and his boundaries, but as the result of a ‘manly’ act. He is subsumed into the throng of fellow soldiers, who praise his *virtus*, as though only this quality endures, incorporeally.⁹⁰

Resultantly, Leigh determines Scaeva the ‘dis-embodiment’ of *virtus*, for Lucan here suggests that something subsists, if not something physically or recognisably human, as a ‘form of great Manliness’.⁹¹ The word, *species*, does not mean ‘body’ but ‘shape’, particularly, ‘outward appearance’. So, in physiognomic terms, Scaeva *appears* to be manly, even though his body is destroyed. The same attributes that determined Sabellus *homo* are overlaid with a spectacle of manliness which seems not to require fleshly ‘wholeness’ or ‘hardness’. Rather, it is this bodily destruction which determines Scaeva’s manliness, in a manner more closely concurrent with military discourse, past and present, than with Roman civilian values.

This notion is explored in Elaine Scarry’s seminal treatise on violence, *The Body in Pain*: ‘The wound thus becomes a way of articulating and “vivifying” (literally, investing with life) the idea of the strategic vulnerability of armed forces’.⁹² Lucan’s language specifically draws attention to this paradox, when he addresses his character directly, ‘for through spilled blood | the fight gave you strength’. The act of shedding so much of his own and others’ blood makes Scaeva more manly, even as it has thrown his male body into crisis.

The Disembodiment of Masculinity

Classical narratives, according to Elia, ‘complicate and test naive attitudes about violence’.⁹³ Lucan’s *Civil War* certainly destabilises the ‘conventional’ association of masculinity with the military: his frequent subjection of the masculine body to mutilations leaves even the most manly of characters missing some vital parts. Simultaneously, the poem can be read as exposing the disparity between Roman constructions of citizen manliness and the physical deformation bracketed as a courageous attribute (*virtus*) in real or poetic conflict.

The historians and sources which have informed this article show how the Roman city space, which dictated enlistment in order to progress to political office, prescribed a different genre of masculinity than that which was, and is, necessitated by combat. Contrary to the assertion that courage in combat was physically demonstrative of manliness, in *Civil War* the wounding of Sabellus, Scaeva, and others, instead demonstrates the corporeal repercussions of conscription. Keep fighting when you have no blood left to spill, and you will ‘become a man’.

‘By the first century BC,’ Alston describes, ‘the soldiers were becoming increasingly professionalised and the military increasingly separate from the rest of the population’.⁹⁴ This comment well reflects a recurrent theme in military theory, ancient and modern:

Nowhere is life more explicitly instrumentalised and more rapturously valorised than in the good machine of military institutions, in which service members are subjected to a disciplined un-freedom and empowered to forms of violence often completely contrary to the values of the civilian society they come from and defend.⁹⁵

Here, MacLeish describes the incongruity of ‘civilian’ and ‘defensive’ values, an antithesis which does not need to be confronted quite as immediately and somatically in today’s society as in Republican Rome. Metaphorically, these brutal incidents could be read as a physical encapsulation of the political and personal disruption engendered by (civil) warfare.

I contend that the extent to which epic soldiers can be read as ‘masculine’ warrants more detailed exploration, in relation to how this form of elite entertainment glorified the sustaining of physical injury in service of the state. My introductory exploration in this article will hopefully incite further rumination on the masculinity of soldiers in the Roman army, and their representation in Classical literature. Lucan’s *Civil War* does not praise, but problematises, as Edwards writes: ‘More often Lucan’s accounts of deaths on the battlefield focus not on glory but on violation and dismemberment’.⁹⁶ Whereas Lucan makes clear that *quidquid homo est* can be listed in several lines of poetry, it is far less apparent what physical or behavioural attributes affirm the constitution of a *vir*. Embodied by the soldier, this verbal signifier of manliness challengingly mixes the *potestas* and *libertas* of the citizen male, with the subordination and ‘liquidation’ of the combatant. In this way, Lucan’s poem forces us to reflect on the juxtaposition of masculine ideals with the corporeal hazards of military service, and to consider how our conception of societal constructions can be challenged at the intersection of life and literature.

Notes

¹ All of Lucan’s Latin is taken from A. E. Housman’s *Belli Ciuilis, Libri Decem*, (Oxonii: Blackwell, 1926). All translations my own.

² See Richard Alston, ‘Arms and the Man: Soldiers, Masculinity and Power in Republican and Imperial Rome’ in *When Men Were Men*, ed. by Foxhall and Salmon, pp. 205-223, (p.206): the concept of *vir* is ideologically related to power.

³ Sara Elise Phang, *Roman Military Service*, (New York: Cambridge University, 2008), (p.39). See also Paul Higate, ed. *Military Masculinities: Identity and the State* (U.S.A.: Greenwood, 2003).

⁴ See A. M. Keith, *Engendering Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.14: ‘the genre is pre-eminently concerned with “the man”’; also p.23.

⁵ John Elia, ‘Reverent and Irreverent Violence: in Defense of Spartacus, Conan, and Leonidas’ in *Of Muscles and Men*, ed. by Michael G. Cornelius, (Jefferson, U.S.A.: McFarland & Company, 2011), pp.75-86, (p.84). Elia continues: ‘Though contemporary violence is often different in means (for instance, modern technologies of warfare) and context (terrorism, for example, or the visual depictions of violence common to film, video games, and television) from the violence of the Greeks, ancient lessons about reverent and irreverent heroes are still appropriate to it.’

⁶ See Myles McDonnell, *Roman Manliness*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), (pp.44-50), on ‘manliness’ in epic, tragedy and history. McDonnell discusses a range of sources for the propagation of manliness in ancient Rome, from the tombs of the Corneli Scipiones (pp.34-40), to Julius Caesar’s commentaries on the civil war and his campaign in Gaul (p.66f.).

⁷ Lorenzo Benadusi, ‘Storia del corpo maschile’ [‘History of the masculine body’] in *Uomini e corpi: una riflessione sui rivestimenti della mascolinità* [*Men and bodies: a reflection on the veneer of masculinity*] ed. by Elisabetta Ruspini, (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2009), pp.31-62, (p. 42).

⁸ See Paul Erdkamp, ‘Army and Society’ in *A Companion to the Roman Republic*, ed. by Nathan Rosenstein and Robert Morstein-Marx, (Massachusetts, Oxford, Victoria: Blackwell, 2006), pp.278-96, (p.278): the Republican army was ‘first and foremost a fighting organisation. Its prime purpose was to defeat the enemy in battle’. Also, David Potter ‘The Roman Army and Navy’ in *The Cambridge Companion to the Roman Republic*, ed. by

Harriet I. Flower (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp.66-88, (p.74): 'When the Roman army entered battle, it did so with the intention of annihilating its foes.'

⁹ Kenneth T. MacLeish, 'Armor and Anaesthesia: Exposure, Feeling and the Soldier's Body', *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 26, 1, (2012), 49-68, (p.49).

¹⁰ See Stefan Chrissanthos, 'Aeneas in Iraq' in *Experiencing War*, ed. by Michael B. Cosmopoulos, (Chicago: Ares, 2007), pp.225-57, for an in-depth transhistorical analysis of Roman warfare. Phang's *Roman Military Service* is an excellent survey of Roman disciplinary praxes. See also Juvenal, *Satire* 16; Erdkamp, p.292. Vegetius' *On Military Matters* (late fourth century AD) is our only comprehensive source for ancient Roman military science, although its lateness renders its relevance to the period discussed in this article (first century BC to first century AD) somewhat equivocal. Despite strict discipline in the army, good diet and exercise were considered paramount to ensure a healthy army, and late-Republican legionaries probably enjoyed a better way of life than if they had stayed in serfdom, evidenced by their frequent re-enlistment. On the connection between diet and soldierly physicality, see Phang, p.266-7.

¹¹ Although it is unlikely that Lucan served in the military himself, he would have been aware of military praxes given his position in Roman politics (he was recalled from studying in Athens by Nero in 59 AD to take up an early quaestorship, and organised gladiatorial conquests), and the centrality of warfare in Roman life. See Charles Martindale, 'The Politician Lucan', *Greece & Rome* (2nd series), 31, 1 (1984), 64-79, (p.64ff.).

¹² On Lucan's difficulty, see Braund, Susanna. *A Lucan Reader*, (Illinois: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, 2009), (p.vii): in which 'the articulation of his ideas sometimes seems downright perverse'. We, the readers, know that Caesar is victorious (ascending to sole rulership in 45 BC), but the resultant change from the Republican system to an Imperial one is not related in Lucan's text. The 'rebel poet': Maria Wyke, (2008) *Caesar: A Life in Western Culture*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), (p.56). This epithet partly refers to Lucan's turbulent 'friendship' with the Emperor Nero, who eventually ordered Lucan to commit suicide, following his involvement in the Pisonian assassination conspiracy. See also Braund, p.ix.

¹³ See Emanuele Narducci's *Lucano: Un'epica contro l'impero*, (Bari: GLF Editori Laterza, 2002), (pp.75-87); later, Sergio Casali's 'The *Bellum Civile* as an Anti-Aeneid' in *Brill's Companion to Lucan*, ed. by Paolo Asso, (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp.81-110.

¹⁴ Shadi Bartsch, *Ideology in Cold Blood*, (Massachusetts, London: Harvard University Press, 1998), (p.12). This led to fluctuations in the epic's popularity during the two millennia since Lucan's suicide in 65 AD (meaning that the narrative breaks off mid-way through the final book). In this way, Lucan conforms to the 'taste' of post-Augustan Latin writers. See Catharine Edwards, 'The Suffering Body: Philosophy and Pain in Seneca's *Letters*' in *Constructions of the Classical Body*, ed. by James I. Porter, (U.S.A.: University of Michigan Press, 2005), pp. 252-68 (p.253): Lucan would also have been influenced by his uncle, the Stoic philosopher, Seneca the Younger, whose tragedies and letters 'contain a substantial number of gruesomely vivid descriptions of the body in pain, ranging from the spilled entrails of the torture victim to the more mundane but fully catalogued symptoms of Seneca's own illnesses.'

¹⁵ See Matthew B. Roller, 'Ethical Contradiction and the Fractured Community in Lucan's "Bellum Civile"', *Classical Antiquity*, 15, 2, (1996), 319-47, (p.322ff.), on fellow citizens as opponents.

¹⁶ See Brittany E. Wilson, *Unmanly Men: Refigurations of Masculinity in Luke-Acts*, (Oxford Scholarship Online, 2015), p.3: 'To be a "manly" man was not to be a woman, and in order to maintain that manliness, men had to avoid traits that were typically associated with women.' Lucan's narrative features hardly any female characters, whose participation is restricted to short episodes. The most notable are: Marcia, wife of Cato (2.326-391); Cornelia, wife of Pompey (8.40-108); Phemonoe, a Delphic priestess possessed by Apollo (5.102-197).

¹⁷ See Cornelius, p.2: 'Swords, of course, are martial objects; they are distinctly masculine and often representative of the phallus.' On the 'insertive role' see Craig A. Williams, *Roman Homosexuality: Ideologies of Masculinity in Classical Antiquity*, (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), (p. 18): 'Priapus' popularity in the Roman world is suggestive', states Williams, referring to the Roman god whose defining characteristic is a large, erect penis. See also Phang, p.93: 'a male became a man by practicing the active sexual role'.

¹⁸ More focus is directed towards the greatness of Caesar's character, the figure of Pompeius Magnus as stalwart defender of the Republic, and the Stoicism of Cato. See, for example, Francesca D'Alessandro Behr's *Feeling History: Lucan's Stoicism and the Poetics of Passion*, (Columbus, Ohio State University Press, 2007). Works concerned with gender in Roman epic which do mention Lucan, nevertheless preference femininity in *Civil War* over masculinity: see Keith, p.17-18; Lisa Sannicandro, *I personaggi femminili del <Bellum Civile> di Lucano [The female characters of Lucan's 'Bellum Civile']*, (Rahden/Westf. Leidorf, 2010).

¹⁹ Glenn W. Most, 'The Rhetoric of Dismemberment in Neronian Poetry' in *Innovations of Antiquity*, ed. by Ralph Hexter and Daniel Selden, (U.K.: Routledge, 1992), pp.391-419, (p.397).

²⁰ John Henderson, *Fighting for Rome*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), (p.166). The Greek term, ἀνδρεία, translates as 'bravery' or 'valour' in English, connecting it closely in meaning with the Latin *virtus*.

²¹ On history as epic material, see Joseph D. Reed, 'The *Bellum Civile* as a Roman Epic' in *Brill's Companion to Lucan*, ed. by Asso, pp.21-31, (p.21).

²² Roller, p.321.

²³ Roller, p.321. On *vir* and *virtus* in Roman culture, see Alston, also Matthew Leigh, *Lucan: Spectacle and Engagement*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), (p.158), and later in this article.

²⁴ Here, I refer to extensive discussion in Lucanian scholarship of *virtus*' subversion in *Civil War*, to which I will later return. See especially Robert Sklenář, *The Taste for Nothingness*, (U.S.A.: University of Michigan Press, 2003) (p.2): for Lucan, '*virtus* is a paradigm of disorder'. For *virtus* in Stoicism, see Behr, p.34ff.; also Elaine Fantham, 'The ambiguity of *virtus* in Lucan's *Civil War* and Statius' *Thebaid*', *Arachnion*, 1, 3, (1995): 'Lucan, as we have seen, can use the concept of *virtus* in its Stoic sense of total moral *arete*, but chiefly follows the model of the epic tradition in applying it to acts of military daring.' Lucan's education is likely to have been heavily imbued by Stoic philosophy (see Suetonius' *Life of Persius*, 11-17). Nevertheless, I will not engage at length with a 'Stoic' interpretation of his poem here; see W. R. Johnson, *Momentary Monsters*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1987), (pp.70-85): 'For Lucan, good Stoicism and good history were not available.'

²⁵ See John Hopton, 'The State and Military Masculinity' in *Military Masculinities*, ed. by Higate, pp.111-124, (pp.111-112): 'military policies have traditionally played a major role in promoting and reinforcing ideologies that shape popular conceptions of what it means to be masculine and manipulate such ideologies to gain support for the use of violence by the state.' As I will discuss later, early Republican vocabulary for manliness (*virtus*) often connoted 'martial prowess or courage', in McDonnell, p.5. Horace's *Ode*, 3.2 (*Dulce et decorum est*) famously conveys the Roman patriotism of 'dying for your country'; also C. Nicolet, *The World of the Citizen in Republican Rome*, trans. by P. S. Falla, (U.K.: University of California Press, 1980), (p.90), on Republican 'blind devotion to one's land'.

²⁶ Kathleen Barry, *Unmaking War, Remaking Men*, (U.S.A.: Phoenix Rising Press, 2011), (p.16). McDonnell, p.11, relates how, during the Republic, serving the state was the only way Roman men could be seen as manly.

²⁷ McDonnell, p. 2; also pp. 12-13. Examples of status include *novus homo*, which refers to a member of the Roman government not from an aristocratic family (see Cicero, *Orations in Defence of L. Murena*, 7.16). *Homo* can be masculine or feminine, but is more commonly used in the former; it should not be confused with *mas*, the Latin word simply meaning the male sex, the opposite of female, which is less frequently used.

²⁸ See McDonnell p.2: 'The Latin word for manliness is *virtus* from *vir* meaning man, and *virtus* designates the activity and quality associated with the noun from which it is derived; *virtus* characterises the ideal behaviour of a man.' McDonnell discuss at length (see p.3): '*virtus* is a notoriously difficult word to translate'.

²⁹ Soldiers were frequently out of action due to disease or wounds, so this scene is still demonstrative of a commitment to bodily peril by enlistment. However, the inability of the soldiers to defend themselves against the snakes is notable and sets this scene apart.

³⁰ The snakes, Lucan tells us, fell from the severed head of the Gorgon, Medusa, as Perseus flew over Libya on his return to Seriphos (9.624-99). For discussion of this allusion, see Martha Malamud, 'Pompey's Head and Cato's Snakes,' *Classical Philology*, 38, 1, (2003), 31-44: 'the confrontation between the stagy Stoic and the over-the-top serpents'. Copious scholarship exists on this scene as Stoic, and the character of Cato as a figurehead of Stoic manliness (*virtus*). However, I follow Leigh's reading, in *Lucan: Spectacle and Engagement*, p.279: 'The devastating effect of the collusion between narrator and snakes is to present an amphitheatre unburdened with Stoic elevation, as just a source of spectacle, a theatre of blood' (p.279). Besides, Narducci, p.416, refers to interpretations of this passage which render Cato arrogant and impotent, as his Stoic *virtus* cannot save his legionaries (also Malamud, p.42).

³¹ David Quint, *Epic and Empire*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), (p.144). He also lists: the torture of Marius Gratidianus (2.177-93), mutilations at the battle of Massilia (3.652f.), the feat of Scaeva (6.138f.), the battle of Pharsalia (7.626-30), the vultures feeding on the battleground in its aftermath (7.825f.), and the death of Pompey (8.671-73) – 'not a clean death' by any stretch. See Vanessa B. Gorman, 'Lucan's Epic *Aristeia* and the Hero of the *Bellum Civile*', *The Classical Journal* 96, 3, (2001), 263-90, (pp.279-80), on Sabellus as one of the 'mostly fictional characters invented entirely to die here'.

³² It should be noted that Housman's text here (p.287) differs from C. E. Haskins' *Pharsalia*, (London: George Bell and Sons, 1887), (p.347), who has the line at 9.779, with a change of punctuation: *omne | quidquid homo est, aperit pestis. Natura profana | morte patet* (9.778-80). The meaning is similar. See also Claudia Wick's commentary, *Bellum civile, Liber IX: Kommentar*, (Germany: K.G. 2002), (p.332).

³³ Jane F. Gardner, in 'Sexing a Roman: Imperfect Men in Roman Law' in *When Men Were Men*, ed. by Lin Foxhall and John Salmon, (London, New York: Routledge, 2010), pp.136-52, (p.137), discusses the processes, visual and gonadal, for determining a 'man' in Roman law: 'Once a man, always a man'. Consider also the

status of slaves, as McDonnell, p.159, describes: ‘The biological status of a Roman male slave could be designated by the word *homo*, but a male slave was not a man in the sense that the Latin word *vir* designates.’ Furthermore, Leigh, in *Lucan: Spectacle and Engagement*, p.276-9, notes that these lines reveal Lucan’s ‘gleeful fascination [as a] pseudo-scientist’, *laying bare* the contents of human biology.

³⁴ Wilson, pp.3-4.

³⁵ Wilson, p.52.

³⁶ Wilson, p.53. See also p.10: ‘the human body itself was portrayed as hierarchal and normatively male’.

³⁷ See Galen, *Hygiene*, 1-3; Soranus, *Gynaecology*, 2.16.32-34. Also Wilson, p.53.

³⁸ *Liber* translates as ‘free’, ‘not a slave’, in other words, a ‘citizen’. See Gardner, pp.141-142. See also McDonnell, pp.177, 183. During the Republic, this ceremony happened when the youth was deemed mature enough for military service.

³⁹ See C. E. Brand, *Roman Military Law*, (Austin: University of Texas Printing, 1968), (pp. 33-34), on ‘the absolute power of coercion [...] that was vested in the *paterfamilias* [...] This drastic paternal or patriarchal authority, known as the *patria potestas*, had its origin as a sociological institution before the foundation of the state as a political entity.’ See also Wilson (pp.60-61).

⁴⁰ McDonnell, p.181.

⁴¹ McDonnell, p.181. For a contemporary perspective, see Cicero, *On Duties*, 1.74: ‘Most people think that military achievements are more important than those of civilian life.’ Translated in Michael Sage, *The Republican Roman Army: A Sourcebook*, (New York: Routledge, 2008), (p.273).

⁴² Joshua S. Goldstein, *War and Gender*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), (p.264). See also McDonnell, p.10: ‘Anthropological and sociological studies have shown that despite differences of content and definition, in most cultures manhood is regarded not as a status gained merely by coming of age, but as something that must be demonstrated or won, a concept that is precious, elusive, and exclusionary.’

⁴³ See McDonnell, pp.242-243; although, by the early Principate (first century AD), the strict obligation to serve had lapsed.

⁴⁴ Phang, p.39. Consider: in Julius Caesar’s commentary on his civil war campaigns, the tribune Curio suggests that physical wounds should be kept hidden, so as not to encourage the enemy (*Civil War*, 2.31).

⁴⁵ See Gardner, p.141: ‘only biological males can have *potestas* [power]’. See also Wilson, p.59: ‘In the Greco-Roman world, masculinity and power go hand in hand, with a manly man exercising power over others in terms of sexual, paternal, political, and military power, and exercising power—or self-control—over himself in terms of controlling his own body and emotions.’

⁴⁶ Wilson, p.4: ‘To be a “manly” man was not to be a woman, and in order to maintain that manliness, men had to avoid traits that were typically associated with women.’

⁴⁷ See Williams, p.127.

⁴⁸ Lucan even compares another serpent to an arrow or spear (9.826-827), deeming the snake faster as it is able to pass straight through the head of its victim in flight.

⁴⁹ See Quint, p.144, in particular, for discussion of these, and further, examples of Lucan’s violence.

⁵⁰ Catharine Edwards, *Death in Ancient Rome*, (London: Yale University Press, 2007), (p.34).

⁵¹ For discussions concerning whether or not it is more ‘manly’ to *die* by the sword, or beast, or poison, I refer you to Williams’ *Roman Homosexuality*, or Nicole Loraux’s *Tragic Ways of Killing a Woman* (Massachusetts, London: Harvard University Press, 1991).

⁵² Also: *calido non ocuis Austro / nix resoluta cadit nec solem cera sequitur* [snow does not melt and fall faster in the hot south wind, nor wax yield to the sun, 9.781-782], than the snakes annihilate their victims. See Keith, p.20, on Virgil’s use of *durus* in *Aeneid* 9.603, as affirmatively masculine in antithesis to effeminate *mollitus*. For Cato’s masculinity, see Ben Tipping’s ‘Terrible Manliness? Lucan’s Cato’ in *Brill’s Companion to Lucan*, ed. by Asso, pp.224-36, (p.224): ‘deconstruction in the context of Lucanian civil war renders Cato at best an advocate of ideological self-fashioning but at worst an exemplar of *virtus* as insane as Caesar’s [madness].’

⁵³ For a more detailed discussion of the landscape in this scene, see Matthew Leigh’s ‘Lucan and the Libyan Tale,’ *The Journal of Roman Studies*, 90, (2000), pp.95-109: ‘a landscape offering nothing but heat, dust, thirst, and a profusion of magical, homicidal serpents’ (p.95).

⁵⁴ See Goldstein, pp.266-269; Barry, p.15.

⁵⁵ See McDonnell, p.166: ‘Studies of ancient Roman masculinity have tended to present a single type, hegemonic by implication, which is explicated by comparison with various kinds of behaviour that deviate from and perhaps challenge it.’

⁵⁶ Marriage and sexual relations were discouraged (officially, after Emperor Augustus implemented a marriage ban for soldiers in 13 BC). However, centurions were permitted to marry and their wives resided with them in the camp. During the civil war of Lucan’s poem, many soldiers serving in the Roman army would have been non-elite and either Italian or from an allied state, rather than strictly ‘Roman’. See Phang, p.92-93.

⁵⁷ For *toga* as ‘peace’, see Cicero, *On Oratory*, 3.42; for *caliga* as ‘military’ see Pliny, *Natural Histories*, 7. It is interesting to note that both *toga* and *caliga* are feminine nouns, but I do not have the space in this article to grapple extensively with philology. See Williams, p.134.

⁵⁸ See Amy Richlin ‘Cicero’s Head’ in *Constructions of the Classical Body*, ed. by Porter, pp.190-211, (p. 195). This article centres around the decapitation of Cicero in 43 BC.

⁵⁹ Richlin, p.196: ‘Others who could legitimately be beaten included actors – legally *infames* [disreputable] – and soldiers, whose vulnerability in itself constitutes an oddity in Roman culture.’

⁶⁰ Wilson, p.51. See also Alston, p.208: ‘Beating, especially public beating, was a dramatic demonstration of the subjugation of the person to the power of another and an important symbol of the servility of the victim and his community.’

⁶¹ On the suppression of individuality in the army, see in particular Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), (p.70): ‘one’s own army become a single gigantic weapon’. For more discussion of ‘altruism’ in the military, see A. Alvarez’ *The Savage God*, and Emile Durkheim’s *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*.

⁶² These crimes included: thievery, lying, immorality, leaving one’s guard post, failing to turn in one’s watchword tablet after the night watch and, of course, desertion in battle (Polybius, *Hist.* 6.37-8). Although, Brand, p. 44, qualifies that there exists extant no ‘official’ set of military laws. See also Nicolet, p.106.

⁶³ The most notable instance of corporal discipline occurs in book 5, during a mutiny of Caesar’s legions, where several of the mutineers are executed (5.364-373). This incident is demonstrative of *decimatio*, wherein, if a large number transgressed, soldiers were drawn by lot for execution. See also Polybius, *Hist.* 6.38; Nicolet, pp.106-108; Phang, p.1.

⁶⁴ Alston, p.209. See also Nicolet, pp.105-109.

⁶⁵ Alston, p.219.

⁶⁶ Alston, p.210.

⁶⁷ Erik Gunderson, *Staging Masculinity: The Rhetoric of Performance in the Roman World*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), (p.7): ‘In Latin, *vir* is an adult male. But the same word also signifies a man who is a husband and a soldier.’ See Brand, p.43f., on the disparity between social and army laws; he quotes Cicero *On Laws*, 3.3: ‘There shall be no appeal from the commander of any army in the field. The orders of the commanding general shall be accepted as unquestioned law.’

⁶⁸ Richlin, p.196.

⁶⁹ Alston, p.214.

⁷⁰ This uncomfortable paradox is still present in modern warfare; Barry, p.19, contends that the expendability of the man in service is kept hidden from recruits prior to enlistment: ‘The devaluation of their lives is shown to them as a heroic, manly sacrifice’.

⁷¹ See Gorman, pp. 272-6, on the twelve individual deaths recounted in this battle, and the lack of glory attained because of their peculiarity and the soldiers’ oft anonymity.

⁷² See Gorman’s discussion of this episode, p.265ff.; also Matthew Leigh, ‘Wounding and Popular Rhetoric at Rome’, *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*, 40, 1, (1995), 195-215, on frontal scarring as a signifier of bravery.

⁷³ This elite would also have constituted the audience for Lucan’s poem. See Keith, p.18ff., and McDonnell, p.388. However, as Keith points out, ‘Lucan’s *Bellum Ciuile*, while immensely popular throughout the imperial period, [was] never accorded a central place in the ancient curriculum’ (p.32). *Civil War* was not received during Lucan’s lifetime, owing to Nero’s ban on the public recitation of his poetry.

⁷⁴ Williams, p.127.

⁷⁵ See Tipping, pp.231-2: ‘Cato responds to an underestimation of his mettle with anger that is strangely at odds with Stoicism, even as he reasserts his *virtus*.’ Consider also Leigh, *Lucan: Spectacle and Engagement*, p.267: ‘it is possible so determinedly to seek virtuous action with a virtuous message as to strip Lucan of the unsavoury iconoclasm which makes him worth reading.’

⁷⁶ Gorman, p.263: ‘By choosing to express an account of civil war through the medium of epic poetry, Lucan mediates the extremes *virtus* and *scelus* [crime].’ For military examples, see Sallust, *Catiline’s Conspiracy*, 58.21, Catiline urges his soldiers, ‘it is all the more necessary that you attack with reckless courage, remembering the manly virtue you have displayed before’, trans. by Batstone, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), (p.45). *Virtus* can also refer to women’s actions as well, if they demonstrate particular restraint and piety. See Williams, p.133.

⁷⁷ Phang, p.17.

⁷⁸ Both Phang, p.92. On masculine ‘asexuality and discipline’ in the modern military, see Hannah Partis-Jennings, ‘Military Masculinity and the Act of Killing in Hamlet and Afghanistan’, *Men and Masculinities*, 20, 3, (2017): 1-19, (p.12).

⁷⁹ Chrissanthos, p.232.

- ⁸⁰ Gorman, p.265-66, also comments that Lucan ‘presents no traditional *aristeia*’. See Leigh, *Lucan: Spectacle and Engagement*, p.174; Gorman, p.279.
- ⁸¹ Sklenář, p.54: ‘he represents the assimilation of *virtus* to *nefas* and *crimen*’. See also Henderson, p.172ff.; Martin Dinter, *Anatomising Civil War*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2012), (p.24); Braund, p.xxvii: ‘Lucan makes Scaeva an illustration of how heroism can be perverted into a sinister super-human force’.
- ⁸² See Gorman, p.279.
- ⁸³ The historical Scaeva appears in Caesar’s *Civil War*, 3.53.
- ⁸⁴ Leigh, *Lucan: Spectacle and Engagement*, p.158. Henderson, p.166.
- ⁸⁵ Caesar, in *Civil War*, 3.53.4, reports that Scaeva’s recovered shield bore one-hundred and twenty holes. See Gorman, p.278, on Scaeva’s injuries, ‘more wounds than any mortal could receive and still survive’.
- ⁸⁶ William Fitzgerald, *How to Read a Latin Poem* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) p.193.
- ⁸⁷ McDonnell, p. 71. In terms of ‘endurance’, during the desert scene, Cato promises to lead by example in enduring thirst, for these hardships will accord his men *virtus* (9.394-404). See Tipping, p.230.
- ⁸⁸ See also Joanna Bourke, ‘War’s carnage: wounds and weapons’, *The Lancet*, 387, 10028, (2013), pp 1610-1611, (p.49), on memoirs from the World Wars: ‘The ability not only to bear pain, but to be seen to bear it, was explicitly coded adult-male.’ See Goldstein, p.226: ‘Being a warrior is a central component of manhood’, and on the ‘truncation’ of emotional response (p.269). See also Kenneth MacLeish, ‘The Ethnography of Good Machines’, *Critical Military Studies*, 1, 1, (2014), pp.11-22.
- ⁸⁹ Edwards, *Death in Ancient Rome*, p.36: ‘Rome might be in chaos but at least Romans still know how to die.’
- ⁹⁰ He was not even recognisable: *perdiderat voltum rabies* [rage had ruined his face, 6.224]. Lucan describes him as ‘living’, but it is debatable whether Scaeva actually survives this scene, despite a historical report of his rewards in Caesar’s *Civil War*, 3.53. See also Dinter, p.87: ‘Caesar ought to die but does not, and the same is true for his alter ego, Scaeva. In Lucan’s epic world, death as a closural device rarely offers a simple solution.’
- ⁹¹ Leigh, *Lucan: Spectacle and Engagement*, p.158.
- ⁹² Scarry, p.71.
- ⁹³ Elia, p.78. Consider also Edwards, *Death in Ancient Rome*, p.21: ‘For the Homeric warrior it is a heroic death in battle that offers the best guarantee of undying glory (*Iliad* 9.497-504).’
- ⁹⁴ Alston, p.210. He continues, ‘This gradual redefinition of masculinity would progressively exclude the ordinary soldiers from the status of paragons of masculinity’ (p.11). See also Phang, p.90: the *Liberalia* ceremony which transformed an adolescent into a man can be paralleled with the military ceremonies which ‘ritually separated Roman soldiers (*milites*) from civilians (*Quirites*) and purged them of the blood-guilt of enemy deaths.’ In fact, *Quirites* is a term which specifically refers to ‘non-soldiers’, rather than just ‘citizens’.
- ⁹⁵ Kenneth T. MacLeish, ‘The Ethnography of Good Machines’, *Critical Military Studies*, 1, 1, (2015), 11-22 (p.15). On the Roman military, see Pierre Cagniard, ‘The Late Republican Army (146-30 BC)’ in *A Guide to the Roman Army*, ed. by Paul Erdkamp (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007), pp.80-95 (p.85): ‘The men who fought for Caesar had become dissociated from civil society. They found in their comrades in the [camp], the century, the cohort, and the legion, a new world, a new way of life, the life of professional soldiers.’
- ⁹⁶ Edwards, *Death in Ancient Rome*, p.34.

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Biography

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