

# PETRARCH'S LUCAN AND THE AMBIGUITIES OF ANCIENT HEROISM

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According to a long-standing scholarly assumption, the *Bellum civile* was not among Petrarch's classical models, primarily or partly due to Lucan's supposed anti-Caesarism. Nohac mentions Lucan's hostility to Caesar, as well as his suicidal death and controversial personality, as ideologically problematic for Petrarch, and argues that the *Bellum civile* did not have any relevance for Petrarch's elaboration of his epic on the Second Punic war (*Africa*) and his later celebratory biography of Julius Caesar (*De gestis Cesaris*).<sup>1</sup> Fischli similarly posits that Lucan's anti-Caesar views and baroque style should have been at odds with Petrarch's sensibility.<sup>2</sup>

Later studies have, however, underscored Lucan's importance for Petrarch.<sup>3</sup> Bruère and Leigh have demonstrated that Lucan is a fundamental point of reference for Petrarch's narration and representation of Scipio in the *Africa*, while Martellotti and Crevatin have highlighted and discussed Lucan's presence in the *De gestis*.<sup>4</sup> Some light has been thrown also on Petrarchan-Lucanian intertextuality in the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, *Triumpho*, *De remediis*, and some of the *Familiares*.<sup>5</sup> Recent critical editions by

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. PIERRE DE NOLHAC, *Pétrarque et l'Humanisme*, Paris, Nouvelle édition remaniée et augmentée avec un portrait inédit de Pétrarque et des fac-similés de ses manuscrits, Champion, 1907 [= Torino, Bottega d'Erasmus, 1959; Paris, Champion, 1965; Genève, Slatkine, 2004], vol. I, pp. 194 f. Petrarch does mention Lucan's suicide and «arrogant» challenge to Virgil's primacy in *Fam.*, XXIV 11 and *Sen.*, V 2.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. WALTER FISCHLI, *Studien zum Fortleben der Pharsalia des M. Annæus Lucanus*, Luzern, Haag, s.d. [sed 1945], pp. 41 f.

<sup>3</sup> The *Bellum civile* is mentioned in Petrarch's inventory of his own books. Cf. LÉOPOLD DELISLE, *Notice sur un livre annoté par Pétrarque: Ms. Latin 2201 de la Bibliothèque nationale*, Paris, Klincksieck, MDCCCXCVI, p. 18; REMIGIO SABBADINI, *Il primo nucleo della biblioteca del Petrarca*, «Rendiconti del reale Istituto lombardo di Scienze e Lettere», XXXIX, 1906, pp. 369-388: 376; and BERTHOLD L. ULLMAN, *Petrarch's favorite books*, «Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association», LIV, 1923, pp. 21-38: 29. Indeed, ms. London, The British Library, *Harley 3754*, which belonged to Petrarch, includes Lucan's works at f<sup>ols</sup> 61v-101r. For the attribution see ALBINIA C. DE LA MARE, *A paleographer's odyssey*, in *Sight & insight: Essays on art and culture in honour of E[rmst] H. Gombrich at 85*, Edited by John Onians, London, Phaidon, 1994, pp. 89-107: 99 and 107, n. 20. The paternity of the *marginalia* is uncertain: cf. MAURIZIO FIORILLA, *Marginalia figurati nei codici di Petrarca*, Firenze, Olschki, 2005, pp. 28 f., n. 35 with bibl.; and MARCO PETOLETTI, «*Servius aliloqui retegens archana Maronis*»: *Le postille a Servio*, in FRANCESCO PETRARCA, *Le postille del Virgilio Ambrosiano*, A cura di Marco Baglio - Antonietta Nebuloni Testa - Marco Petoletti, Presentazione di Giuseppe Velli, Roma-Padova, Antenore, 2006, pp. 93-143: 121. On Lucan in Petrarch's annotated mss., see PIERRE DE NOLHAC, *De Patrum et Medii Ævii scriptorum codicibus in bibliotheca Petrarcae olim collectis*, Parisiis apud Æm. Bovillon, MDCCCLXXXII, pp. 30 and 40; L. DELISLE, *Notice sur un livre annoté par Pétrarque...*, *cit.*, p. 17; VINCENZO FERA, *Antichi editori e lettori dell'Africa*, Messina, C.S.U., s.d. [sed c1984], p. 25, n. 2; MATTHEW LEIGH, *Petrarch's Lucan and the Africa*, in *Classical constructions: Papers in memory of Don Fowler, classicist and Epicurean*, Edited by S[tephen] J. Heyworth, with P[eta] G. Fowler - S[tephen] J. Harrison, Oxford, Oxford University, 2007, pp. 242-257: 243, n. 2; and F. PETRARCA, *Le postille del Virgilio Ambrosiano*, *ed. cit.*, p. 1007.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. RICHARD T. BRUÈRE, *Lucan and Petrarch's Africa*, «*Classical Philology*», LVI, 1961, pp. 83-99; M. LEIGH, *Petrarch's Lucan and the Africa*, *cit.*; GUIDO MARTELOTTO, *Lucano come fonte del De gestis Cesaris del Petrarca*, «*Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa: Classe di Lettere e Filosofia*», IX, 1979, pp. 1463-1474 (see also GIUSEPPE VELLI, *Petrarca e Boccaccio: Tradizione, memoria, scrittura*, Padova, Antenore, [1979 and «Seconda ed. ampliata»: s.d., sed] 1995, pp. 95 f., n. 35); GIULIANA CREVATIN, *Il pathos nella scrittura storica del Petrarca*, «*Rinascimento*», s. II, XXXV, 1995, pp. 155-171: 167-170; EADEM, *L'empio dono*, in *Pompei exitus: Variazioni sul tema dall'Antichità alla Controriforma*, A cura di Giorgio Brugnoli - Fabio Stok, Pisa, E.T.S., 1996, pp. 161-180: 176-180; and EADEM, «*Stat magni nominis umbra*»: *La presenza di Lucano nel De gestis Cesaris di Petrarca*, in *Pervertere: Ästhetik der Verkehrung: Literatur und Kultur erneronischer Zeit und ihre Rezeption*, Herausgegeben von Luigi Castagna - Gregor Vogt-Spira, München, Saur, 2002, pp. 237-252.

<sup>5</sup> Some general hints can be found in B.L. ULLMAN, *Petrarch's favorite books*, *cit.*, pp. 29 and 33; and G. VELLI, *Petrarca e Boccaccio...*, *cit.*, pp. 95 f., n. 35. More specific observations are included in EDUARD FRAENKEL, *Lucan als Mittler des Antiken Pathos*, «*Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg*», IV, 1924-1925, pp. 229-257: 254-257; G. CREVATIN, *Il pathos...*, *cit.*, pp. 167 f.; EADEM, *L'empio dono*, *cit.*, pp. 166 f. and 175-177; and EADEM, «*Stat magni nominis umbra*»: *La presenza di Lucano...*, *cit.*, pp. 242-246. See also M. LEIGH, *Petrarch's Lucan and the Africa*, *cit.*, p. 249.

Dotti, Carraud, Crevatin, and others have allowed us to establish that Petrarch's *corpus* overall abounds with hundreds of Lucanian citations.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, the identification of this substantial number of quotations and allusions has not led to an overall re-assessment of Petrarch's reception of Lucan's political views. In fact, scholars have continued to project on to Petrarch a conception of the *Bellum civile* as a monolithically anti-Caesar work.<sup>7</sup>

It is not obvious, however, that the *Bellum civile* should be read as an unproblematically anti-Caesar or pro-republican text. Lucan's republican sentiments and anti-imperial stance have been frequently emphasized by romantic readers and nineteenth- to twentieth-century scholars.<sup>8</sup> Recent works on Lucan

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<sup>6</sup> Many references to Lucan are highlighted in the following editions (on which quotations in this article are based): FRANCESCO PETRARCA, *De viris illustribus*, Edizione critica per cura di Guido Martellotti, Firenze, Sansoni, s.d. [sed 1964] and IDEM, *De viris illustribus*, A cura di Silvano Ferrone, *ibidem*, Le Lettere, s.d. [sed 2006]; IDEM, *Secretum • Il mio segreto*, A cura di Enrico Fenzi, Milano, Mursia, s.d. [sed c1992]; IDEM, *Lettere disperse: Varie e miscellanee*, A cura di Alessandro Pancheri, s.l. [sed Milano], Fondazione Pietro Bembo & Parma, Guanda, s.d. [sed 1994]; IDEM, *Canzoniere*, Edizione commentata a cura di Marco Santagata, Milano, Mondadori, 1996 and IDEM, *Canzoniere • Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, A cura di Rosanna Bettarini, Torino, Einaudi, 2005; IDEM, *Trionfi • Rime estravaganti • Codice degli abbozzi*, A cura di Vinicio Pacca - Laura Paolino, Introduzione di Marco Santagata, Milano, Mondadori, 1996; IDEM, *De ignorantia • Della mia ignoranza e di quella di molti*, A cura di Enrico Fenzi, *ibidem*, Mursia, s.d. [sed 1999]; PÉTRARQUE, *La vie solitaire: 1346-1366*, Préface de Nicholas Mann, Introduction, traduction et notes de Christophe Carraud, Grenoble, Millon, s.d. [sed c1999] and FRANCESCO PETRARCA, *De vita solitaria: Buch I*, Kritische Textausgabe und ideengeschichtlicher Kommentar von K[arl] A.E. Enenkel, Leiden & New York, Brill, 1990; PÉTRARQUE, *De otio religioso • Le repos religieux: 1346-1357*, Préface de Jean-Luc Marion, Introduction, traduction et notes de Christophe Carraud, Grenoble, Millon, s.d. [sed c2000]; IDEM, *Bucolicum carmen*, Texte latin, traduction et commentaire par Marcel François - Paul Bachmann avec la collaboration de François Roudaut, Préface de Jean Meyers, Paris, Champion, 2001; IDEM, *L'Afrique: 1338-1374*, Préface de Henri Lamarque, Introduction, traduction et notes de Rebecca Lenoir, Grenoble, Millon, s.d. [sed 2002] and IDEM, *L'Afrique • Affrica*, Édition, traduction, introduction et notes de Pierre Laurens, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, t. I<sup>er</sup>: *Livres I-V*, 2006 - t. II: *Livres VI-IX*, 2018; IDEM, *Les remèdes aux deux fortunes • De remediis utriusque fortune: 1354-1366*, Préface de Giuseppe Tognon, Texte établi et traduit par Christophe Carraud, Grenoble, Millon, s.d. [sed 2002] and FRANCESCO PETRARCA, *I rimedi per l'una e l'altra sorte*, Traduzione e note a cura di Ugo Dotti, Torino, Aragno, 2013; PÉTRARQUE, *Sans titre • Liber sine nomine: 1342-1361*, Texte traduit, présenté et annoté par Rebecca Lenoir, Grenoble, Millon, s.d. [sed 2003] and FRANCESCO PETRARCA, *Libro senza titolo*, [Testo critico di Paul Piur rivisto da Laura Casarsa,] Traduzione e cura di Laura Casarsa, Introduzione di Ugo Dotti, Torino, Aragno, 2010; IDEM, *De gestis Cesaris*, A cura di Giuliana Crevatin, Pisa, Scuola Normale Superiore, 2003; IDEM, *In difesa dell'Italia (Contra eum qui maledixit Italie)*, A cura di Giuliana Crevatin, Venezia, Marsilio, 2004; IDEM, *Le familiari • Familiarium rerum libri*, [Testo critico di Vittorio Rossi - Umberto Bosco,] Traduzione e cura di Ugo Dotti, Collaborazione di Felicità Audisio, Torino, Aragno, vol. I: *Libri 1-5*, s.d. [sed 2004] & vol. II: *Libri 6-10*, 2007 & vol. III: *Libri 11-15*, 2007 & vol. IV: *Libri 16-20*, s.d. [sed 2008] & vol. V: *Libri 21-24 e Indici*, s.d. [sed 2009]; IDEM, *Le senili • Rerum senilium libri*, Testo critico di Elvira Nota, Traduzione e cura di Ugo Dotti, Collaborazione di Felicità Audisio, *ibidem*, vol. I: *Libri 1-6*, s.d. [sed 2004] & vol. II: *Libri 7-12*, s.d. [sed 2007] & vol. III: *Libri 13-18 e indici*, s.d. [sed 2010]; IDEM, *Invective contra medicum • Invectiva contra quendam magni status hominem sed nullius scientie aut virtutis*, A cura di Francesco Bausi, Firenze, Le Lettere, 2005; IDEM, *Rerum memorandarum libri*, A cura di Marco Petoletti, *ibidem*, 2014.

<sup>7</sup> E.g., PETRARCH's references to the *Bellum civile* in the *De gestis* are read as intrinsically polemical or antagonistic towards the Lucanian model (or hypotext) by G. CREVATIN, «Stat magni nominis umbra»: *La presenza di Lucano ...*, cit., pp. 245-252; and EADEM, *Tra Francia e impero: Il Cesare di Petrarca*, in *La lyre et la pourpre: Poésie latine et politique de l'Antiquité tardive à la Renaissance*, Sous la direction de Nathalie Catellani-Dufrêne - Michel J.-L. Perrin, Rennes, P.U.R., 2012, pp. 165-190: 165-167. In his study of Petrarch's politics, GIACOMO FERRAÙ (*Petrarca, la politica, la storia*, Messina, C.I.S.U., 2006, p. 198) similarly claims that the pro-Caesarean argument of the *De gestis* is developed using Lucanian materials and yet against Lucan's rigid republicanism (*stoicismo rigidamente filorepubblicano della Farsaglia*).

<sup>8</sup> On nineteenth- to twentieth century views of Lucan as a committed republican, e.g. see P[ETER] H. SCHRIJVERS, *Crise poétique et poésie de crise: La réception de Lucain aux XIX<sup>e</sup> et XX<sup>e</sup> siècles: Suivi d'une interprétation de la scène «César à Troie»* (La Pharsale, 9, 950-999), Amsterdam & New York, K.N.A.W.: N.-H., 1990, pp. 13-17; PETER VON MOOS, *Lucain au Moyen Âge*, in IDEM, *Entre histoire et littérature: Communication et culture au Moyen Âge*, Firenze, S.I.S.M.E.L.-Edd. del Galluzzo, 2005, pp. 89-202: 89-93; and CHARLES MARTINDALE, *Latin poetry and the judgement of taste: An essay in aesthetics*, Oxford, Oxford University, 2005, pp. 224 f. On Lucan's anti-imperialism see BERTHE M. MARTI, *The meaning of the Pharsalia*, «American Journal of Philology», LXVI, 1945, pp. 352-376; MARK P.O. MORFORD, *The poet Lucan: Studies in rhetorical epic*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1967; FREDERICK M. AHL, *Lucan: An introduction*, Ithaca (N.Y.) & London, Cornell University, 1976, pp. 35 and 55; EMANUELE NARDUCCI, *La provvidenza crudele: Lucano e la distruzione dei miti augustei*,

have, however, complicated previous interpretations of the *Bellum civile*, pointing out that the poem is characterized by strong inner tensions and the intersection of an anti-Caesar and a pro-Caesar discourse. Already in 1964, Brisset suggested that Lucan's poem is not an expression of republican *nostalgia*, but that it describes, rather, the death throes of the Roman republic as a fatal and inevitable phenomenon, due to the internal weakness of republican institutions.<sup>9</sup> In his important book *Poetry and civil war in Lucan's Bellum civile*, Masters remarks that, in his view, «Lucan is a less passionately dedicated republican than is usually supposed». <sup>10</sup> He shows how Lucan's «fractured voice» deconstructs republicanism from within: the narration of the *Bellum civile* is simultaneously republican and anti-republican, contradicts itself, and enacts the civil war that it describes.<sup>11</sup> Bartsch's *Ideology in cold blood* focuses on Lucan's contradictory representation of Pompey, remarking that the professedly pro-republican narrator «alienates, rather than persuades, his readers».<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, and more fundamentally, scholars of Lucan's reception have called attention to the fact that late medieval commentators and literary authors already grasped the ambivalences of Lucan's poem and its pro-Caesar implications.<sup>13</sup> As Caesar's impetuous energy prompts and magnetizes Lucan's narration, in the late Middle Ages the fierce and victorious commander was often viewed as the true protagonist of the *Bellum civile* and an ideal role model for contemporary military-political leaders. Lucan's Caesar is recalled as an openly positive paragon in twelfth- to thirteenth-century pro-imperial epics such as the *Gesta Friderici*, Gunther of Pairis's *Ligurinus*, and Odo of Magdeburg's *Ernestus*.<sup>14</sup> In his *Alexandreis* (1180 ca.), Walter of Châtillon draws repeatedly upon the *Bellum civile* and reproduces the ambiguities of Lucan's Caesar in the «virtus» and «hybris» of his own epic hero, Alexander the

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Pisa, Giardini, 1979; and IDEM, *Lucano: Un'epica contro l'impero: Interpretazione della Pharsalia*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2002.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. JACQUELINE BRISSET, *Les idées politiques de Lucain*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1964, pp. 35-165 and 171-223. Along the same lines, see also WOLFGANG D. LEBEK, *Lucans Pharsalia: Dichtungsstruktur und Zeitbezug*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1976; and ROLAND MAYER, *On Lucan and Nero*, «Bulletin of the Institute of classical Studies», XXV, 1978, pp. 85-88. On the question, see CHARLES MARTINDALE, *The politician Lucan*, «Greece & Rome», XXXI, 1984, pp. 64-79.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. JAMIE MASTERS, *Poetry and civil war in Lucan's Bellum civile*, Cambridge, Cambridge University, 1992, p. 87.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, pp. 1-10 and 78-90. W[ALTER] R. JOHNSON (*Momentary monsters: Lucan and his heroes*, Ithaca [N.Y.] & London, Cornell University, 1987) similarly claims that the *Bellum civile* has no privileged ideological centre and displays the impossibility of heroism.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. SHADI BARTSCH, *Ideology in cold blood: A reading of Lucan's Civil war*, Cambridge (Mass.) & London, Harvard University, 1997, pp. 8 f. and 73-101. Bartsch aims to reconcile an «ideological» and a «deconstructionist» reading of the *Bellum civile*, showing how, in Lucan's poem, Pompey is both a greedy, would-be «tyrannus» and a Stoic «proficiens», and the narrator both erodes and enacts belief in him. On the problem of Lucan's Pompey see also MASSIMO CONSERVA, *L'eroe debole: L'evoluzione del personaggio di Pompeo nella Pharsalia*, Palermo, Broto, s.d. [sed 1998], with bibl.

<sup>13</sup> In addition to the following indications, on the varying historical reception(s) of Lucan's text and its political ambivalences, including pro-monarchist re-uses of the poem, see also CHARLES MARTINDALE, *Redeeming the text: Latin poetry and the hermeneutics of reception*, Cambridge & New York, Cambridge University, 1993, pp. 64-74; IDEM, *Latin poetry and the judgement of taste...*, *cit.*, pp. 217-236; and EDWARD PALEIT, *War, liberty, and Caesar: Responses to Lucan's Bellum civile, ca. 1580-1650*, Oxford, Oxford University, 2013.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. VIOLETTA DE ANGELIS, *Il testo di Lucano, Dante e Petrarca*, in *Seminario dantesco internazionale • International Dante seminar 1: Atti del primo Convegno tenutosi al Chauncey conference center: Princeton, 21-23 ottobre 1994*, A cura di Zygmunt G. Baranski, Firenze, Le Lettere, 1997, pp. 67-109: 76-81; EVA M. SANFORD, *Quotations from Lucan in medieval authors*, «American Journal of Philology», LV, 1934, pp. 1-19: 8; and EDOARDO D'ANGELO, *La Pharsalia nell'epica latina medievale*, in *Interpretare Lucano: Miscellanea di studî*, A cura di Paolo Esposito - Luciano Nicastrì, Napoli, Arte Tipografica, 1999, pp. 389-453: 411-415 and 428-431.

Great.<sup>15</sup> Openly pro-monarchist readings of the *Bellum civile* characterize works by the twelfth-century abbot Suger of St. Denis and the late-fourteenth-century humanist Coluccio Salutati.<sup>16</sup>

Petrarch is, in my opinion, similarly sensitive to the complexities of the *Bellum civile*. In this article, I argue that Petrarch does not regard Lucan as a strenuous republican, but rather as the poet of both Caesar and Pompey, an admirer of heroic «virtus» on any political side, and a narrator who is able to understand and embrace the opposing standpoints of his characters. In his works, Petrarch activates the ambiguities of Lucan's text to produce ambivalent representations of both Caesar and Pompey. Indeed, he draws from Lucan's polysemous text representations of Caesar that are as much positive as negative. Moreover, he redeploys Lucan's text to praise Pompey's «virtus» highly but also to display its relative limits as already hinted at in the *Bellum civile*. At the same time, Petrarch also substantially re-adapts ancient heroic ethics from a Christian perspective: he extols both Caesar and Pompey as *exempla* of fortitude, and yet in so doing shows the intrinsic inferiority of pagan heroism to Christian «virtus».

#### LUCAN THE BIPARTISAN

Literary evidence suggests that Petrarch reads the *Bellum civile* as simultaneously sympathetic towards, and critical of, both Caesar and Pompey. Petrarch's *Familiars*, II VII includes various examples of unexpected death, among which is the death Caesar risked due to a violent storm during his crossing of the Adriatic towards Brindisi – an episode recounted in the fifth book of the *Bellum civile*. Lucan, mentioned by Petrarch with the usual epithet of «poet», is said to show a profound understanding of Caesar's pain in such a situation, as his decision to report the great man's complaints may attest (*Fam.*, II VII 7):

Hinc est quod idem ille Iulius Cæsar fragili carina in ancipiti tempestate deprehensus, cum mortem timere cepisset, hoc unum videtur lamentari, quod ingentes abruperit actus festinata dies fatis. / Noverat poeta quid maxime tali viro aut molestum fuisset in eo statu aut esse debuisset, idque potissimum querelis inseruit.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> The topic of Lucan's presence in the *Alexandreis* is well-studied. While older works focused on WALTER's formal imitation of Lucan, more recent studies underline the deeper ideological implication of Walter's re-use of Lucan in connection with his very nuanced and ambivalent view of Alexander. E.g., see DENNIS M. KRATZ, *Mocking epic: Waltharius, Alexandreis and the problem of Christian heroism*, Madrid, s.T. [sed Turanzas], 1980; MAURA LAFFERTY, *Walter of Châtillon's Alexandreis: Epic and the problem of historical understanding*, Turnhout, Brepols, 1998; JEAN-YVES TILLIETTE, *L'Alexandride de Gautier de Châtillon: Énéide médiévale ou «Virgile travesti»?*, in *Alexandre le Grand dans les littératures occidentales et proche-orientales*, Actes du Colloque de Paris: 27-29 novembre 1999, Réunis par Laurence Harf-Lancner - Claire Kappler - François Suard, Nanterre, C.S.L.: Université Paris X-Nanterre, 1999, pp. 275-288; CHRISTINE RATKOWITSCH, *Troja-Jerusalem-Babylon-Rom, Allgemeingültiges und Zeitkritik in der Alexandreis Walters von Châtillon*, «Poetica», XXVIII, 1996, pp. 97-131; GLYNN METER, *Walter of Châtillon's Alexandreis book 10: A commentary*, Frankfurt-am-Main, Lang, 1991; CLAUDIA WIENER, «Proles vesana Philippi totius malleus orbis»: *Die Alexandreis des Walter von Chatillon und ihre Neudeutung von Lucans Pharsalia im Sinne des typologischen Geschichtsverständnisses*, München, Saur, 2001. A summary of the question can be found in P. VON MOOS, *Lucain au Moyen Âge*, cit., pp. 139-152 with bibl.

<sup>16</sup> On Lucan and Suger of St. Denis see JEREMY DUQUESNAY ADAMS, *The influence of Lucan on the political attitudes of Suger of Saint-Denis*, in *Proceedings of the Twelfth annual meeting of the Western society for French history*, Edited by John F. Sweets, Albuquerque, W.S.F.H., 1985, pp. 1-11. On Lucan and Coluccio Salutati see CHRISTOPHER BOND, *Lucan and the Christian monarchist: The anti-republicanism of the De tyranno and the De bello civili*, «Renaissance Studies», XX, 2006, pp. 478-493 – who suggests (at pp. 489 f.) that Petrarch's approach might anticipate Salutati's focus on Lucan's scepticism towards the republican cause. My «As Lucan says»: *Dante's re-use of the Bellum civile in the Monarchy and the political epistles*, «Mediævalia», forthcoming, deals with DANTE's philo-imperial appropriation of Lucan's poem in his Latin political texts.

<sup>17</sup> F. PETRARCA, *Le familiari • Familiarium rerum libri*, ed. cit., vol. I, cit., pp. 242-244 (cf. LUCAN, V 659-660) – Engl. tr. by Aldo S. Bernardo: *Letters on familiar matters*, vol. I: 1-8, New York, State University of New York, 1975, p. 93: «This is why Julius Caesar himself, overtaken by a dangerous storm in a fragile ship, when he had begun to fear death, seemed to complain about this alone, that “the hastening day of destiny cuts short great undertakings”. The poet knew what had been especially troublesome to such a man or what ought to have been, when he introduced that remark as the strongest of his complaints».

In Petrarch's eyes, far from expressing a vehemently anti-Caesar viewpoint, Lucan's text develops as an empathetic reconstruction of Caesar's state of mind and is informed by appreciation for the hero's high aspirations.

Confirmation of this point comes from the *Collatio laureationis*, which deals with the topic of poetic fame. Petrarch remarks that the immortality conferred by poetry is of two kinds, as it can concern either poets themselves or the subjects they deemed worthy of their celebration, and illustrates his thesis with famous programmatic passages by the four «magni auctores» (Virgil, Ovid, Statius, and Lucan). Lucan's simultaneous homage to Caesar and his own poem in book IX is cited by Petrarch as an attempt to achieve both types of «nominis immortalitas»:

De utraque simul loquitur in nono Lucanus:  
Venturi me teque legent; Pharsalia nostra  
vivet, et a nullo tenebris damnabitur evo.<sup>18</sup>

«Venturi me teque legent»: Petrarch's reception of the *Bellum civile* appears informed by the awareness that Lucan's name is inextricably linked to Caesar's. By quoting these famous lines of the *Bellum civile* in the context of his treatment of poetic fame, Petrarch proves that he reads Lucan's epic as at least partly devoted to the glorification of Caesar's deeds.<sup>19</sup>

This is further demonstrated by Petrarch's discussion of Lucan's poetic celebration of Caesar in the *De otio*. In the second book of his treatise, Petrarch inveighs against the ancient Roman custom of worshipping powerful leaders as gods. Among the factors determining this profane error is, to Petrarch's mind, the celebration of poets, as he says with references to Lucan and Virgil (among others):

Ecce et consecrare immortalitatem parere linguam ingenium quoque vatium audio; quid multa? [...] Que omnia si nonnisi per famam poeticamque facundiam fieri consentiunt, liquet haud dubie qualis esset illa divinitas, que doctissimos homines splendore nominum captos, scientes prudentesque sacrilegi erroris in foveam traxit. Iam illud Lucani de Cesaribus expositionem non requirit, ubi ait:

Bella pares superis facient civilia divos;  
fulminibus manes radiisque ornabit et astris  
inque deum templis iurabit Roma per umbras.<sup>20</sup>

Quod etiam iam extincta progenie Cesarum in illo nomine multis post seculis servatum scimus; idque de urbe Roma ac Cesare Augusto Virgilius agens ait in *Bucolicis*:

Hic illum vidi iuvenem Melibee quotannis  
bissenos cui nostra dies altaria fumant.  
Quem vir tantus deum vocare non erubuit [...].<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *Collatio laureationis*, X 8, in FRANCESCO PETRARCA, *Opere latine*, A cura di Antonietta Bufano, Con la collaborazione di Basile Aracri - Clara Kraus Reggiani, Introduzione di Manlio Pastore Stocchi, Torino, U.T.E.T., 1975, vol. II, pp. 1255-1283: 1272 – Engl. tr. by Ernest H. Wilkins in IDEM, *Studies in the life and works of Petrarch*, Cambridge (Mass.), The Medieval Academy of America, 1955, p. 308: «And of both kinds together Lucan speaks in his ninth book: “Posterity will read me and thee. Our *Pharsalia* will live, no generation will banish us to the shadows!”». Cf. LUCAN, IX 985-986 – Engl. tr. by Jane W. Joyce: *Pharsalia*, Ithaca (N.Y.) & London, Cornell University, s.d. [sed c1993], p. 264.

<sup>19</sup> Lucan's promise to Caesar in *Bellum civile*, IX 985-986 also informs Petrarch's *Sen.*, IV 1, a letter addressed to Luchino dal Verme and recalling the fortitude of the ancient «viri illustres», among whom Caesar especially stands out. Alongside the Romans, Petrarch also mentions the ancient Trojans who «owe much to their poets», as he writes with a reference to Lucan's narration of Caesar's visit to the tombs of the Trojan heroes celebrated by Homer (cf. *Sen.*, I IV 29, and LUCAN, IX 963). Juxtaposing Lucan's words on poetic immortality with his contextual praise of the figure of Caesar, Petrarch's text evokes the above-quoted continuation of the *Bellum civile*, where Lucan promises that, thanks to his poem, the Roman dictator will attain the same fame as his Trojan precursors.

<sup>20</sup> LUCAN, VII 457-459. Petrarch quotes this passage of the *Bellum civile* also in commenting on SERVIUS in *Æn.*, XII 139, again in connection with the divinization of ancient emperors (F. PETRARCA, *Le postille del Virgilio Ambrosiano*, ed. cit., vol. II, p. 959 n. 1818). The following quotation corresponds to VERG., *Ecl.*, I 42-43.

<sup>21</sup> PÉTRARQUE, *De otio religioso • Le repos religieux...*, ed. cit., II v 10-11, pp. 308-310 – Engl. tr. by Susan S. Schearer: *On religious leisure • De otio religioso*, Edited and translated by S.S.S., Introduction by Ronald G. Witt, New York, Italica, 2002,

In the context of the *Bellum civile* the passage quoted here by Petrarch constitutes a polemical reference to the divinization of deceased «imperatores» as humankind's supposed revenge for the gods' indifference at Pharsalus. Petrarch does not, apparently, acknowledge Lucan's sarcasm and refers to Lucan's poetry as a powerful agent of Caesar's sacrilegious elevation to a god-like status. Thus, according to Petrarch, Lucan aims at glorifying Caesar just as Virgil does with Augustus.

Petrarch equally emphasizes Lucan's affection and esteem for Pompey. For instance, in dealing with the glory that poetry grants to human achievements, Petrarch observes that poets praise people they never actually met, as the author who addressed Pompey was not unaware. Petrarch's reference to Lucan is accompanied by a direct quotation of the sympathetic apostrophe by which the ancient poet promises immortal fame to Pompey before recounting the battle of Pharsalus:

Credibilia recenseo; quantum sane quamque accensum studium, quanta inter legentes audientesque de heroum rebus solet esse contentio, amante quolibet ac laudante non quem vidit sed quem fame credidit, ita ut illum milies sibi vidisse videantur! quod non ignorabat is qui ait:

Cum bella legentur  
Spesque metusque simul perituraque vota movebunt  
Attonitique omnes veluti venientia fata  
Non transmissa legent, et adhuc tibi, Magne, favebunt.<sup>22</sup>

Moreover, in *Contra medicum*, IV 176 Petrarch refers to Lucan's representation of Pompey as a demi-god.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, in Petrarch's view, Lucan recounts the stories of both Caesar and Pompey and aims at eternalizing the name of both commanders. More than a resolute opponent of Caesar, Petrarch considers Lucan an admirer of that «virtus ignea» which he identifies as characteristic of heroes.<sup>24</sup>

Petrarch's sophisticated reading of the complications of Lucan's ideological stance is further illuminated by reference to the exegesis of a puzzling Petrarchan passage by a fourteenth-century commentator, described as «admodum familiaris Petrarche».<sup>25</sup> In *Contra medicum*, III 156-159, Petrarch argues that poets are not envious and provides a list of ancient poets with their identifying qualities:

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p. 118 (adapted): «Listen! I hear the tongue and the genius of poets hallowing and giving birth to immortality! What more is there? [...] All these sources agree that such stories arise from fame and poetic eloquence. It is not at all clear what sort of god lured into such sacrilegious error those very learned, knowledgeable, and prudent men who had been captivated by the glory of those people's name. Lucan's words about the Caesars do not require explanation when he says, "Civil wars will make them divine and equal to the gods above. Rome will adorn their souls with lightning bolts, halos, and stars and will swear oaths through the shades in the temples of the gods". Even after the race of the Caesars had been extinguished, we know that their name was preserved for many centuries afterward. Vergil, talking about the city of Rome and Caesar Augustus, also wrote in his *Bucolics*: "Here every year, O Meliboeus, I saw him as a young man, the same man to whom our altars smoke for twelve days at a time". So great a man was not embarrassed to call Augustus a god [...]».

<sup>22</sup> *Fam.*, IX XI 6 (in F. PETRARCA, *Le familiari • Familiarium rerum libri*, ed. cit., vol. II, cit., p. 1272) – Engl. tr. cit., vol. II: 9-16, Baltimore (Md.), John Hopkins University, 1982, p. 31: «I am relating matters that are more credible. How great and lively is the interest, how intense usually the partisanship, between those who read and those who hear the tales of heroes! Because we so love and praise, not the person we saw, but the person we believed in through fame, we seem to have seen the hero a thousand times. That writer was not ignorant who said: "When wars shall be read of, [these deeds] will excite both hopes and fears, and wishes destined to be of no avail: and all, moved, shall read of your fate as though approaching and not concluded, and still, great Pompey, shall wish you success"». Cf. LUCAN, VII 210-213.

<sup>23</sup> Petrarch might be referring to LUCAN, VIII 793-872 (cf. FRANCESCO PETRARCA, *Invectiva contra medicum*, in IDEM, *Invective contra medicum • Invectiva contra quendam magni status hominem sed nullius scientie aut virtutis*, ed. cit., pp. 23-169: 154-156); see also LUCAN, IX 1-14.

<sup>24</sup> The phrase «virtus ignea», drawn from LUCAN, IX 7, is variously re-deployed by Petrarch with reference to Scipio (in *Fam.*, X IV 33), Niccolò Acciaiuoli (in *Fam.*, XII XV 2), and Charles IV (in *Fam.*, XV V 8); about this last he writes «profecto enim necessaria regnantibus virtus heroyca, quam Virgilius "ardentem", Lucanus "igneam" vocat» (F. PETRARCA, *Le familiari • Familiarium rerum libri*, ed. cit., vol. III, cit., p. 2084).

<sup>25</sup> Cf. CARLA M. MONTI, *Petrarca auctoritas nel commento ai classici: Il Preambulum a Lucano di Pietro da Parma*, «Studi petrarcheschi», n.s., XI, 1994, pp. 239-282: 239 with bibl. On Petrarch's influence on Pietro, see also *ibidem*, pp. 249-251.

Nusquam fere vel minus invidie, vel innocentie magis, vel amicitie tantundem. [...] Quanta Virgilio integritas! Quenam Statio urbanitas, que facie Nasonis, que fides Ennii, que Pacuvii gravitas, quis Varii candor, que Flacci discretio, que Persii pietas, que modestia Lucani, que libertas atque constantia Iuvenalis!<sup>26</sup>

Lucan's characterizing virtue is identified as modesty (*modestia*): this is a rather striking choice as in *Seniles*, V II Petrarch portrays Lucan as incredibly arrogant, for he dared to compete with Virgil. The passage has, indeed, baffled some contemporary scholars: Leuker explains it as a mistake, where Petrarch names Lucan but actually meant Statius.<sup>27</sup> It is also possible that Petrarch is here alluding to Lucan's acknowledgment of his poetic debt to predecessors other than Virgil, and particularly his tribute to Homer.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, the difference in rhetorical context could also have played a role in determining this apparent inconsistency in Petrarch's characterization of Lucan.

In his *Preambulum* on Lucan, however, Pietro da Parma says of the Cordoban poet:

Utri parti magis faverit dicendum quod utrique dat epiteta, id est adiectiva convenientia, utrique commendando et vel detrahendo nec quemque defraudat laude vel victuperio eis congruentibus, quidam tamen dicunt quod magis Cesari, quidam Pompeio. Sed dicit dominus Franciscus in quadam sua epistula: «modestia Lucani» per quod intelligo quod eque commendaverit utrumque cum oportuit et similiter vituperavit. Nam modestia dicitur quasi «modum tenens» vel «in modo stans», unde hec modestia, que est proprietas et qualitas servandi modum in rebus dicendis.<sup>29</sup>

According to Pietro, with the word «modestia» Petrarch is pointing to Lucan's capacity to maintain a 'middle way stance' (*modus*) between Caesar and Pompey and to find a balance between praise and blame of the two opposing leaders. Whether or not this is what Petrarch meant, Pietro da Parma's explanation of this controversial term reveals how Petrarch's idea of Lucan was received in his intellectual environment.

Therefore, Petrarch does not seem to view Lucan as single-mindedly anti-Caesar: rather, he appreciates Lucan's capacity to move between Caesar's and Pompey's contrasting viewpoints and understand their different personalities, as well as their virtues and flaws (as Pietro's reading suggest). The following analysis will further reveal how Petrarch appreciates Lucan's ambivalences towards his characters and builds on them to produce deeply equivocal descriptions of both Caesar and Pompey.

## CAESAR

Petrarch's view of Caesar has long been subject to scholarly debate. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, scholars have noticed that Petrarch exalts Caesar as the prototype of the skillful commander and bases his adoration of the Roman dictator on a sound historical basis, for he understands the problematic historical implications of the civil war recounted by Lucan.<sup>30</sup> Both Martellotti and Baron, however, have

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<sup>26</sup> F. PETRARCA, *Invectiva contra medicum*, ed. cit., p. 110 – Engl. tr. by David Marsh: *Invectives against a physician*, in IDEM, *Invectives*, Edited and translated by D.M., Cambridge (Mass.) & London, Harvard University, 2003, pp. 2-179: 109: «There is practically no other group that exhibits less envy, more innocence, or as much friendship. [...] Consider the magnitude of Virgil's integrity, Statius's urbanity, Ovid's wit, Ennius's honesty, Pacuvius's gravity, Varius's candor, Horace's discretion, Persius's piety, Lucan's modesty, and Juvenal's candor and constancy!».

<sup>27</sup> Cf. TOBIAS LEUKER, *Angelo Poliziano: Dichter, Redner, Stratege: Eine Analyse der Fabula di Orpheo und ausgewählter lateinischer Werke des Florentiner Humanisten*, Stuttgart, Teubner, 1997, p. 223, n. 221. Leuker does not consider the fact that Statius has already been mentioned in the passage.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. F. PETRARCA, *Fam.*, XXIV XII 20; and LUCAN, IX 984.

<sup>29</sup> PIETRO DA PARMA, *Preambulum*, 211-220, in C.M. MONTI, *Petrarca auctoritas nel commento ai classici...*, cit., p. 267 – my Engl. tr.: «As for the matter of which one of the two sides Lucan supports, it must be said that he uses epithets, i.e. suitable adjectives, with reference to both, approving and criticizing each alike, nor does he deprive either side of the appropriate praise or blame, although some people hold that he privileges Caesar and some Pompey. However, master Franciscus mentions “Lucan's modesty” in one of his epistles and based on this I infer that Lucan equally and appropriately praised and blamed both Caesar and Pompey. Indeed, “modesty” means, so to speak, “keeping a middle way” or “standing in the middle”, so that here “modesty” is meant as the property and quality of maintaining a middle way or stance in speaking».

<sup>30</sup> E.g., cf. FRIEDRICH GUNDOLF, *Caesar: Geschichte seines Ruhms*, Berlin, Bondi, 1924, pp. 106-122.

observed that no such cult of Caesar is apparent in Petrarch's earlier works, which are, rather, characterized by admiration for Scipio and the Roman republic. According to these scholars, Petrarch moves from an openly anti-Caesar position – especially noticeable in the *Africa* (1338-44 ca.), where Lucan's influence is very strong – to a re-evaluation of the figure of Caesar that starts only later, in the early 1350s, and is fully revealed by the *De gestis Cesaris* (1368-71 ca.).<sup>31</sup> This evolutionist explanation has become conventional and still informs recent studies of Petrarch's works in relation to Lucan, including Crevatin's reading of the *De gestis* as an anti-Lucanian work.<sup>32</sup>

In his study of Lucan in Petrarch's *Africa*, however, Leigh has thrown some doubt on Martellotti and Baron's interpretation, remarking that Lucan's Caesar is already the model for Petrarch's Scipio in the *Africa*. More than a paradigm of republican virtue, Petrarch's Scipio seems «a precedent for the historical Caesar and all the Caesars to come». <sup>33</sup> Fera's recent study of Petrarch's Scipio comes to similar conclusions.<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, Kallendorf, Witt, and Ascoli have also challenged Baron's argument from another angle, arguing that Petrarch's depiction of Caesar remains ambiguous throughout his life.<sup>35</sup>

A study of the re-deployments of Lucan's descriptions of Caesar in the Petrarchan *corpus* suggests that Petrarch's growing admiration for the Roman dictator coexists with the persistence of a strong ambivalence towards him at all stages of his writing activity. Revitalizing the ambiguities that he *already* finds in Lucan's text, Petrarch constantly praises Caesar's energetic «virtus», but his historical judgment on Caesar's illegal usurpation of power is generally negative, moving from reproach (in the *Africa*) to cautious suspension of judgment (in the *De gestis* and his later works).

It is true that the mature Petrarch seems deliberately to contradict Lucan on some specific points. This is especially evident in relation to the issue of Caesar's tears at the sight of Pompey's head. As is well-known, in his earlier works (*Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, XLIV 1-4 and CII 1-4; *Fam.*, VI III 4) Petrarch adheres to Lucan's denunciation of Caesar's hypocrisy, whereas in his later texts (*Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, CLV 1-4; *Rem.*, I CIV 10; *De gestis*, XXI 3) he opts for a different interpretation of Caesar's weeping, now regarded as «pious» and arising from the hero's sincere and noble compassion for his valorous enemy.<sup>36</sup> It is also true that, in Petrarch's later works, the *Bellum civile* is more often accompanied or replaced by other sources, generally more favourable to Caesar, such as Suetonius, Florus, and the *Commentaries* by Caesar himself. Nevertheless, Lucan is constantly present in Petrarch's

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<sup>31</sup> This supposed evolution in Petrarch's stance is attributed by GUIDO MARTELOTTI (*Petrarca e Cesare*, «Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa: Classe di Lettere e Filosofia», XIII-XVII, 1946-1948, pp. 149-158 – repr. in IDEM, *Scritti petrarcheschi*, A cura di Michele Feo - Silvia Rizzo, Padova, Antenore, 1983, pp. 77-89) to the humanist's reading of Suetonius, Cicero, and Caesar's own *Commentarii*, while HANS BARON (*The crisis of the early Italian Renaissance: Civic humanism and republican liberty in an Age of classicism and tyranny*, Princeton (N.J.), Princeton University, 1966, pp. 55-57 and 121-123) explains it with reference to Petrarch's support of the absolute «signorie» of the Visconti and Carrara after his disillusionment with Cola di Rienzo's republican project. See also MATTIA CAVAGNA, *La figure de Jules César chez Pétrarque dans les traditions italienne et française des Triomphes*, «Cahiers de Recherches médiévales et humanistes», XIV, 2007, pp. 73-83: 73-76; and MARTIN MCLAUGHLIN, *Empire, eloquence, and military genius: Renaissance Italy*, in *A companion to Julius Caesar*, Edited by Miriam Griffin, Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell, s.d. [sed 2009], pp. 335-355: 338 f. with bibl.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. G. CREVATIN, «*Stat magni nominis umbra*»: *La presenza di Lucano...*, cit.

<sup>33</sup> M. LEIGH, *Petrarch's Lucan and the Africa*, cit. Cf. UGO DOTTI, *Introduzione: Petrarca e il nuovo senso della storia*, in FRANCESCO PETRARCA, *Gli uomini illustri: Vita di Giulio Cesare*, Torino, Einaudi, 2007, pp. 363-390: 375-378.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. VINCENZO FERA (*Petrarca e Scipione*, in *Scipione l'Africano: Un eroe tra Rinascimento e Barocco*, Atti del Convegno di studi: Roma, Academia Belgica, 24-25 maggio 2012, A cura di Walter Geerts - Marilena Caciorgna - Charles Bossu, Testi di MARILENA CACIORGNA *et alii*, Milano, Jaca Book, 2014, pp. 131-154: 139-154) points out that, in Petrarch's view, the figures of Scipio and Caesar are never mutually exclusive.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. CRAIG KALLENORF, *The historical Petrarch*, «The American historical Review», CI, 1996, pp. 130-141: 132 ff.; RONALD G. WITT, *The rebirth of the Romans as models of character*, in *Petrarch: A critical guide to the complete works*, Edited by Victoria Kirkham - Armando Maggi, Chicago & London, The University of Chicago, 2009, pp. 103-112: 110 f.; and ALBERT R. ASCOLI, *Petrarch's private politics*, in IDEM, *A local habitation and a name: Imagining histories in the Italian Renaissance*, New York, Fordham University, 2011, pp. 118-158: 154 f. with bibl.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. G. CREVATIN, «*Stat magni nominis umbra*»: *La presenza di Lucano...*, cit., pp. 245-247 with bibl.

writings, both earlier and later, where the *Bellum civile* is re-used to produce contrasting representations of Caesar.

Within the *Africa*, Caesar is explicitly mentioned in the context of Scipio Africanus's dream, where Scipio's father foretells the future developments in Roman history. The portrayal of Caesar is here markedly negative, as the Roman commander is blamed for his lack of restraint, for fighting against his homeland, establishing absolutism, and plundering the treasury (*Africa*, II 228-237):

O felix si forte *modum* sciat addere ferro!  
Nesciet heu! noletque miser; sed turbine mentis  
Victrices per cuncta manus in publica vertet  
Viscera, civili fedans externa cruore  
Prelia et emeritos indigno Marte triumphos;  
Me tamen infami tam multa decora furore  
Commaculare pudet. Quam turpiter *omnia* calcat  
Ambitus, ut *totum imperium* sibi vindicet unus,  
Primus et exemplum reliquis, spolietque superbus  
Erarium miserosque novo legat ordine patres!<sup>37</sup>

The source (or hypotext) of this passage is the *Bellum civile*. Already in Lucan's poem Caesar is opposed to Cato for his lack of «modus», is accused of turning his victorious right hand against the bowels (*viscera*) of Rome, striving for absolute and limitless power, despoiling the «ærarium», and overturning republican institutions.<sup>38</sup> Another interesting parallel is given by Walter of Châtillon's emphatic apostrophe to Alexander (*Alex.*, X 191-196), which already displays Lucanian materials and concepts:

Quo tendit tua, Magne, fames? quis finis habendi,  
Querendi quis erit *modus* aut que meta laborum?  
Nil agis, o demens. licet *omnia* clausuris uno  
Regna sub imperio *totumque* subegeris orbem,  
Semper egenus eris. animum nullius egentem  
Non res efficiunt, sed sufficientia [...].<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> PÉTRARQUE, *L'Afrique: 1338-1374*, ed. cit., p. 90 (my italics) – Engl. tr. by Thomas G. Bergin - Alice S. Wilson: *Petrarch's Africa*, New Haven & London, Yale University, 1977, pp. 30 f. (modified): «Ah happy conqueror could he but learn to set due limits on his flashing blade. For this the wretched man lacks wit and will; he lays in madness his victorious hands upon the state, and laurels won abroad with blood of fellow Romans he defiles, in strife unseemly sullyng deserved triumphs. Ah, shame to mar such high renown with folly infamous! How brazenly the lust for office sweeps all else aside so that the power may lie with one alone! He for the first, and giving sad example, will loot the Treasury with rapacious hands and select miserable Senators with a new order!».

<sup>38</sup> See LUCAN, I 146-150 (cf. II 380-384); I 2-3 (where the expression *populumque potentem / in sua victrici conversum viscera dextra* includes Caesar and his army); III 103 ff., and III 114 ff. See R.T. BRUÈRE, *Lucan and Petrarch's Africa*, cit., p. 87; and G. MARTELOTTI, *Petrarca e Cesare*, cit., pp. 81-82.

<sup>39</sup> *Galteri de Castellione Alexandreis*, Edidit Marvin L. Colker, Patavii, in *Æd. Antenoreis*, MCMLXXVIII, p. 261 (my italics) – Engl. tr. by David Townsend: *The Alexandreis of Walter of Châtillon: A twelfth-century epic: A verse translation*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania, 1996, p. 203: «Great One, where will your hunger lead? What end will come of grasping? Pray, what bounds are set unto your search? Where stands your labours' goal? Madman, your works are naught. Though you enclose all kingdoms in one empire and subdue the entire world, a pauper you remain forever – for the soul is made a pauper not by a dearth of wealth, but of contentment». As Colker notices, «subegeris orbem» at X 194 is a Lucanian «clausula» (cf. LUCAN, I 285). For Alexander's lack of «modus» (in contrast with Lucan's Cato), see M. LAFFERTY, *Walter of Châtillon's Alexandreis...*, cit., p. 148. On Petrarch's knowledge of the *Alexandreis*, see e.g. GIUSEPPE VELLI, *Petrarca e la grande poesia latina del XII secolo*, «Italia medioevale e umanistica», XXVIII, 1985, pp. 295-310; IDEM, *Petrarca, Boccaccio e la grande poesia latina del XII secolo*, in *Retorica e poetica tra i secoli XII e XIV*, Atti del secondo Convegno internazionale di studi dell'Associazione per il Medioevo e l'Umanesimo latini (A.M.U.L.), in onore e memoria di Ezio Franceschini: Trento e Rovereto, 3-5 ottobre 1985, A cura di Claudio Leonardi - Enrico Menestò, Perugia, Regione dell'Umbria & Firenze, La nuova Italia, 1988, pp. 238-256; and DAVID TOWNSEND, *Introduction*, in *The Alexandreis of Walter of Châtillon...*, Engl. tr. cit., pp. XI-XXV: XI f. MARTELOTTI (in F. PETRARCA, *De viris illustribus*, ed. Martellotti cit., pp. 69 f.) points out an allusion to *Alexandreis*, X 165-182 in *De vir. ill.*, XV 320-321.

As a comparison with the passage from the *Alexandreis* helps to reveal, even in the presumed anti-Caesarean *Africa* the tone of Petrarch's discourse is more sorrowful than condemnatory, combining regret for Caesar's lack of «modus» with obvious admiration for his remarkable skills.<sup>40</sup> According to the Petrarch of the *Africa*, Caesar is culpable for staining the splendour of his great triumphs (*multa decora [...] commaculare*) with infamous fury (*infami [...] furore*). In the *Africa*, Caesar is in fact introduced as the «bravest of all Rome's sons, whose name henceforth shall be forever sung throughout the earth» (*Fortissimus ille nepotum / Unus erit magno semper cantandus in orbe*)<sup>41</sup> and is extolled for his military conquests in Gaul and Germany.<sup>42</sup> McLaughlin has noticed that in the relatively early canzone *Italia mia* (1345) Petrarch «praises Iulius as slaughterer of the Barbarians» and Crevatin makes similar remarks about the late *De gestis Cesaris*;<sup>43</sup> however, a similar encomium is already present in the *Africa*, and is echoed in other Petrarchan texts dating from the same period.<sup>44</sup>

Moreover, as Bruère and Leigh have observed, Petrarch's delineation of Scipio's heroism in the *Africa* is reminiscent of Lucan's Caesar. Like the character of the *Bellum civile*, Petrarch's hero «reckons he has not achieved anything while something remains to be done» – as is said twice in the *Africa* with a Lucanian echo.<sup>45</sup> Petrarch's description of Scipio as fierce (*indomitus*), and endowed with restless «virtus» and spiritual strength (*constantia mentis*) finds a parallel in Lucan's characterization of Caesar.<sup>46</sup> As Bruère remarks, Petrarch recuperates the implicitly positive connotation that Caesar's energy acquires in Lucan's text and transfers this trait to a morally impeccable hero, because, unlike Caesar, Scipio has a sense of limits and proper respect for deity.<sup>47</sup>

In his various works, Petrarch repeatedly praises Caesar's «virtus» by reworking elements already present in the *Bellum civile*. E.g., in *Familiare*, XII xv (written around 1352) he encourages Niccolò Acciaiuoli to imitate Caesar and to be as eloquent as he is valiant.<sup>48</sup> The phrase by which Petrarch refers

<sup>40</sup> On Publius Cornelius Scipio's partly negative description of Caesar in this passage of the *Africa*, V. FERA (*Petrarca e Scipione, cit.*, p. 142) observes: «Il punto di vista anticesariano è calibrato in funzione della *persona loquens*».

<sup>41</sup> PÉTRARQUE, *L'Afrique: 1338-1374, ed. cit.*, II 219-220, p. 90 – Engl. tr. *cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. IDEM, *L'Afrique: 1338-1374, ed. cit.*, II 219-227, p. 90: «Fortissimus ille nepotum / Unus erit magno semper cantandus in orbe, / Gallica qui vario complebit rura pavore / Et fluvios atris violabit sanguinis unda. / Inde procul celo et terra pelagoque repostos / Auricomos rapido calcabit Marte Britannos, / Stringet et indomito luctantem gurgite Rhenum / Pontibus, hostilesque tenens cum milite fines / Tristia ceruleis Germanis bella movebit» – Engl. tr. *cit.*, p. 30: «One will come, bravest of all Rome's sons, whose name henceforth shall be forever sung throughout the earth. He will bring terror to the land of Gaul and foul its rivers with dark streams of blood and overcome the tribesmen, golden-haired, of Britain's isle, a land remote and veiled under strange skies, beyond a distant sea. The hostile Rhine, unvanquished hitherto, with bridges he will span, o'er which his hosts will march into the foeman's land and bring the waste of war to blue-eyed German stock».

<sup>43</sup> Cf. M. MCLAUGHLIN, *Empire, eloquence, and military genius: Renaissance Italy, cit.*, p. 339 (see PETR., *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, CXXVIII 49-51); and GIULIANA CREVATIN, *Il Petrarca e i barbari • I: Cesare*, «Humanistica», X (n.s. IV), 2015, pp. 37-48.

<sup>44</sup> M. LEIGH (*Petrarch's Lucan and the Africa, cit.*, p. 249, n. 20) notices that Petrarch's portrait of Caesar is not entirely negative even in *Variæ*, XLVIII, to Cola di Rienzo. Also in the *Rerum memorandarum libri*, II XVIII (1343-45), Caesar is presented in highly positive terms: see *infra*, section on the Placentia mutiny.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. PETRARCH, *Africa*, III 38 and IV 123-126; and LUCAN, II 657.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. PETRARCH, *Africa*, I 133-135, and LUCAN, I 144-146; IDEM, *Africa*, IV 142, and LUCAN, X 490; and see R.T. BRUÈRE, *Lucan and Petrarch's Africa, cit.*, pp. 84 and 90. BRUÈRE identifies many other parallels (e.g., *Africa*, VIII 395 and LUCAN, VI 32) and other examples are provided by M. LEIGH, *Petrarch's Lucan and the Africa, cit.*, pp. 252-257. Not only is the figure of Scipio modeled upon Lucan's dark hero, but Petrarch's descriptions of Scipio's enemies (i.e. Hannibal and the Carthaginians) present many points of contact with Lucan's passages on Pompey and his supporters (R.T. BRUÈRE, *Lucan and Petrarch's Africa, cit.*, pp. 93-98; cf. M. LEIGH, *Petrarch's Lucan and the Africa, cit.*, p. 253). Pompey and Hannibal are implicitly assimilated by Petrarch also in *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, CIII and *Fam.*, III III – two texts simultaneously sent to Stefano da Colonna il Giovane in 1333: cf. G. CREVATIN, *L'empio dono, cit.*, p. 179. In *Fam.*, XIX IX 15 Petrarch explicitly associates Caesar and Scipio.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. R.T. BRUÈRE, *Lucan and Petrarch's Africa, cit.*, pp. 88 f.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. F. PETRARCA, *Le familiari • Familiarium rerum libri, ed. cit.*, vol. III, *cit.*, XII xv 4, p. 1744: «[...] utriusque Cesaree laudis ornamenta mereberis, ut sicut animi robore præstantissimum te novimus, sic non modo militariter facundum sed etiam artificiosius eloquentem, insuper et privata loqui indocilem agnoscamus» – Engl. tr. *cit.*, vol. II, *cit.*, p. 164: «[...] you will

to Caesar's oratorical skills (*indocilis privata loqui*) is drawn from Lucan's narration of Caesar's encounter with Amyclas,<sup>49</sup> an episode utilized by Petrarch as a proof of Caesar's eloquence also in *Familiare*, III XXII 2.<sup>50</sup>

At times Petrarch seems to stretch Lucan's text in order to prove his own point. Caesar's suppression of the Placentia mutiny, as narrated in Lucan's fifth book, is evoked by Petrarch in *Rerum memorandarum*, II XVIII 6, *De remediis*, I XCVII 12, and the *Speculum principis* of *Familiare*, XII II as an example of Caesar's oratorical ability, boldness, and magnanimity. Petrarch's enthusiasm is seemingly at odds with Lucan's scathing apostrophe to Caesar as a cruel and bloodthirsty commander.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, Petrarch's discourse capitalizes on the nuances of *Bellum civile*, as his citational strategy demonstrates. In the *De remediis* we read:

Ad Placentiam fuit motus ille terribilis, quando adversus Iuliam Cesarem suus exercitus insurrexit, de quo dictum est: Quem non ille ducem potuit terrere tumultus? Cesar autem illa incredibili sua constantia ac virtute motum omnem compressit et punitis auctoribus quietavit exercitum atque ad obsequium reduxit.<sup>52</sup>

The line here quoted by Petrarch is excerpted from a passage of Lucan's account which tells how the fearless Caesar resolutely faces his soldiers' uprising at its peak, whereas any other commander would have been filled with terror.<sup>53</sup> While blaming Caesar's ruthlessness, Lucan's narration also highlights his courage, as well as the soldiers' pusillanimity.<sup>54</sup> Therefore, Petrarch's presentation of the Roman dictator is rooted in a selective re-reading and pro-Caesar interpretation of Lucan's text.

In the *De gestis Cesaris*, Petrarch again quotes Lucan's line on Caesar's promptness already cited in the *Africa*, this time with the purpose of directly commending the unstoppable energy of the Roman commander (*De gestis*, XXV 1):

Quomodo autem triumpharet, aut qua ratione quiesceret de quo scriptum sit: «Nil actum credens, cum quid superesset agendum», cum adhuc et laborum et bellorum materia superesset?<sup>55</sup>

Petrarch's praise of the Roman hero is built not only with Lucanian materials, but also in line with the partly sympathetic view of the Roman dictator possibly emerging from the *Bellum civile*, or with what Petrarch could deem to be the view of "the poet of Caesar and Pompey".

On the other hand, Petrarch also follows Lucan in underlining the iniquity of Caesar's political conduct, not only in his earlier, but also in his later works. Caesar's offensive against Rome's «viscera»

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deserve the double honor enjoyed by Caesar. Just as we know you to be most distinguished in strength of spirit, so may we recognize you to be not only militarily inspired but artfully eloquent, incapable of dealing with insignificant matters». Also in *Fam.*, XV II 3 (in *Le familiari • Familiarium rerum libri*, ed. cit., vol. III, cit., p. 1632) Petrarch exhorts Niccolò Acciaiuoli with what seems to me a clear allusion to LUCAN, II 657: «nichil est actum, siquid Cesarei moris habes, cum et multa supersint».

<sup>49</sup> Cf. LUCAN, V 539. In Petrarch's letter, Lucan's words are corroborated by the evidence of SUETONIUS, *Cæs.*, 55-56.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. LUCAN, V 519 ff.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, V 295-315.

<sup>52</sup> *Rem.*, I XCVII 12, in PETRARQUE, *Les remèdes aux deux fortunes • De remediis utriusque fortune: 1354-1366*, ed. cit., vol. I, p. 432 (cf. LUCAN, V 300) – Engl. tr. by Conrad H. Rawski: *Petrarch's Remedies for fortune fair and foul: A modern English translation of De remediis utriusque fortune, with a commentary*, Bloomington, Indiana University, 1991, vol. I, p. 266: «When Julius Caesar's army mutinied at Placentia, there occurred a terrible commotion, of which has been said: "Such an uproar might have terrified any general". But Caesar, with unbelievable courage and forthrightness, suppressed the insurrection, calmed it down by punishing the instigators, and restored order in the ranks».

<sup>53</sup> Cf. LUCAN, V 300-304.

<sup>54</sup> See also LUCAN, V 364-370. On the rhetorical techniques by means of which «Lucan has deepened the significance of his drama of the mutiny», see ELAINE FANTHAM, *Caesar and the mutiny: Lucan's reshaping of the historical tradition in De bello civili* 5. 237-373, «Classical Philology», LXXX, 1985, pp. 119-131.

<sup>55</sup> F. PETRARCA, *De gestis Cesaris*, ed. cit., p. 291 (cf. LUCAN, II 657) – my Engl. tr.: «How could he exult or rest, while occasions were still available for labours and battles, he of whom it is written that "he deemed nothing was achieved, while something remained to be done"?». *Ibidem*, XIX 1, Caesar is defined as «nunquam otiosus».

is mentioned also in *Familiares*, VII II, which is likely to be a fictive letter, added late to the collection.<sup>56</sup> Still in *Seniles*, XII II (written in 1370), a quotation from the *Bellum civile* is used to recall how Caesar was seemingly ashamed of employing legitimate means.<sup>57</sup> These passages, where Caesar is mentioned only tangentially, evince Petrarch's ability to re-adapt Lucan's text in the light of different literary contexts and rhetorical purposes, such as the praise of Christian over pagan faith (in *Fam.*, VII II) or the humorous rebuke of a friend (in *Sen.*, XII II). At the same time, however, these texts show how Petrarch constantly replicates Lucan's criticism of Caesar's political conduct and of his attack on his homeland in particular, as is confirmed by some other examples.<sup>58</sup>

The second book of the late *De vita solitaria* (1346-66) contains a digression on the muslim seizure of Egypt and the Holy land. Petrarch's contention is that, if Caesar were to be resurrected and become aware of Christ's message, he who once conquered Egypt would not allow the «Egyptian thief» and the «the multitude so effeminate of Pelusian Canopus» to maintain their domains.<sup>59</sup> «Et Pelusiaci tam mollis turba Canopi» is Lucan's derogatory definition of the Egyptian murderers of Pompey, who allegedly outraged Roman greatness since, according to the poet, Pompey would have better died by Caesar's hand.<sup>60</sup> The *Bellum civile* is here re-used by Petrarch in a passage which, exploiting the philo-Roman implications of Lucan's text, exalts Caesar as the resolute leader who would be able to resolve the present political predicament. In the continuation of his treatise, Petrarch nevertheless specifies that he does not intend to judge the legitimacy of Caesar's actions, but merely admires the commander's tenacity and fortitude, which he wishes were more common in his own times.<sup>61</sup> By openly praising Caesar's readiness and yet insinuating that he could have acted unfairly, Petrarch's re-writing maintains and amplifies the contradictions of the Lucanian hypotext.

In the *De gestis Cesaris*, Petrarch passionately lauds and defends Caesar's actions, but also re-uses Lucan's text to outline a still ambivalent portrait of the Roman dictator. Chapter XX of the *De gestis* deals with the causes of the civil war. Here Petrarch embraces a tendentially pro-Caesar position, which is, however, still characterized by a cautious suspension of judgment. The narrator states that he does not mean either to justify Caesar's excessive highhandedness, or to listen to the accusations of his enemies, who were moved by the same cupidity and, further, by envy and rancor (*De gestis*, XX 1-9). Petrarch's chapter capitalizes again on Lucan's implicit criticism of the weakness of republican institutions.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Cf. *Fam.*, VII II 14 (see *infra*, n. 123): the formulation is very similar to *Africa*, II 219-237. For the dating of the letter, see UGO DOTTI in *Le familiari • Familiarium rerum libri*, ed. cit., vol. II, cit., p. 905.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. *Sen.*, XII II 60 (F. PETRARCA, *Le senili • Rerum senilium libri*, ed. cit., vol. II, cit., p. 1578); and LUCAN, II 446.

<sup>58</sup> In addition to the passages discussed below, for further examples of Caesar's ambiguous characterization in Petrarch's later works (not necessarily based on Lucan), see also RONALD G. WITT, *The De tyranno and Coluccio Salutati's view of politics and Roman history*, «Nuova Rivista storica», LIII, 1969, pp. 434-474: 445; C. KALLENDORF, *The historical Petrarch*, cit., pp. 132 ff.; and A.R. ASCOLI, *Petrarch's private politics*, cit., p. 155, n. 65.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. *De vita solitaria*, II IX 14 (in PÉTRARQUE, *La vie solitaire: 1346-1366*, ed. cit., p. 278) – Engl. tr. by Jacob Zeitlin: *The life of solitude by Francis Petrarch*, Translated with Introduction and notes by J.Z., s.l. [*sed Urbana* (Ill.)], The University of Illinois, 1924, p. 246. The exhortation to a new crusade is frequent in Petrarch's writings: e.g., see *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, XXVII, and XXVIII; *Fam.*, XIV v 14, and XV VII 15; and *Tr. Famæ*, II 142-144, about which VINICIO PACCA (*Triumpho*, in F. PETRARCA, *Trionfi • Rime estravaganti • Codice degli abbozzi*, ed. cit., pp. 3-626: 426) recalls LUCAN, I 8-20, where Romans are exhorted to suspend civil wars and turn against their Eastern enemies. As in *De vita solitaria*, II IX 14, this latter passage assumes continuity between ancient Roman culture and later Western Christianity as opposed to the «Eastern threat».

<sup>60</sup> Cf. LUCAN, VIII 542-550. Cf. also *ibidem*, VIII 627-629 (echoed by Petrarch in *Rem.*, II CXXI 14).

<sup>61</sup> Cf. *De vita solitaria*, II IX 14 (in PÉTRARQUE, *La vie solitaire: 1346-1366*, ed. cit., p. 280): «Non quero, quam id iuste egerit, sed animi vim et acrimoniam illam miror ac necessariam temporibus nostris dico» – Engl. tr. cit., p. 246: «I do not inquire into the justice of the performance, but I admire his force and energy of spirit and declare it necessary to our own time».

<sup>62</sup> In *De gestis*, XX 15, Petrarch mentions the terror provoked by Caesar's approach to Rome after his crossing of the Rubicon and deprecates the hypocrisy of the anti-Caesareans, as ready to abandon their most beautiful and magnificent city as they had been prompt to enviously defame their enemy. The hypotext of this passage is Lucan's narration of the hurried flight of the senators at the news of Caesar's coming (in *Bellum civ.*, I 466 ff.) and particularly Lucan's mournful apostrophe to Rome

Nevertheless, the passage opens with the violent image of Caesar «sinfully» turning against Rome's «bowels», described with the same Lucanian expression (*in viscera patrie [...] conversa*) already utilized in the *Africa* and in *Familiars*, VII II. In commenting on Caesar's attack on Rome, Petrarch explicitly remarks that this action cannot be justified by any excuse:

Deinceps eadem arma impia et iniusta et in viscera patrie miserabili alternatione conversa. Quamvis enim et hic magna non desit excusatio, vere tamen nulla sufficiens causa est contra patriam arma moventibus.<sup>63</sup>

Moreover, the chapter appears ideologically problematic, as Petrarch seems to regard the contest between Caesar and Pompey not as a collision between republican institutions and absolutism, but rather as a simple conflict of factions.<sup>64</sup>

The above survey has shown how Lucan's text is re-utilized by Petrarch throughout his career to convey a subtly ambiguous image of the historical Caesar. Overall, Petrarch's writings exalt Caesar's extraordinary energy and valor, revitalizing the subtext of the *Bellum civile*, but at the same time leave room for reservations about the possible unfairness of Caesar's conduct, so vigorously denounced by Lucan.

Petrarch repeatedly recalls Lucan's Caesar also as a political role model for contemporary leaders. In his letters to Benedict XII, Petrarch imagines the pope's encounter with the personified Rome, in a narrative sequence which appears to be patterned after Lucan's depiction of Caesar's vision on the banks of the Rubicon.<sup>65</sup> The same city personification appears in *Familiars*, XI, addressed to the emperor Charles IV in 1351:<sup>66</sup> here, Petrarch also uses Curio's exhortation from Lucan, I 281 to prompt Charles to hasten his arrival in Italy and expressly compares the emperor to Julius Caesar, as he does in various other letters from the *Familiars*.<sup>67</sup>

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(*ibidem*, I 519-520: cf. G. CREVATIN in F. PETRARCA, *De gestis Cesaris*, ed. cit., p. 213). Already in Lucan's text the senators are defined as «ignavi» and the cowardice of the Pompeians is implicitly opposed to Caesar's relentless tenacity. Also in *Contra eum qui maledixit Italie*, 11, Petrarch states that Caesar entered Rome unarmed; the source of this passage is again Lucan, whose account of the subject in *Bellum civile*, III 71-72 is followed by a bitter remark on the senators' fear and willingness to serve a private citizen (*ibidem*, III 100-110). Likewise, in *Fam.*, XX i 23 (dating from 1355), Petrarch reads Metellus's opposition to Caesar as a sign of the tremendous power of gold, thus following LUCAN, III 114-121.

<sup>63</sup> F. PETRARCA, *De gestis Cesaris*, ed. cit., XX 1, p. 198 (cf. G. CREVATIN, *ibidem*; and LUCAN, I 3) – my Engl. tr.: «Then, with a wrongful and deplorable change of heart, he sinfully turned these same weapons against the bowels of his homeland. Although even on this occasion he had good reason for his actions, there is however, no sufficient excuse for those who move arms against their homeland». C. BOND (*Lucan and the Christian monarchist...*, cit., p. 489) notes that the phrase «arma impia» is reminiscent of LUCAN, VII 196.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. ENRICO FENZI, *Grandi infelici: Alessandro e Cesare*, in IDEM, *Saggi petrarcheschi*, Firenze, Cadmo, 2003, pp. 469-492: 484 ff. The existence of a deep contradiction (*contraddizione insanabile*) in the *De gestis* is admitted even by G. CREVATIN (*Il pathos...*, cit., p. 170), who observes that Petrarch never fully endorses Caesar: cf. EADEM, *L'empio dono*, cit., p. 178: «manca una dichiarazione totalitaria a favore di Cesare».

<sup>65</sup> Cf. *Epyst. metr.*, I II 5-23 and I V 1-17 (in FRANCESCO PETRARCA, *Epistula metrica • Briefe in Versen*, Herausgegeben, übersetzt und erläutert von Otto und Eva Schönberger, Würzburg, Königshausen & Neumann, s.d. [sed c2004], pp. 36 and 64); see also *ibidem*, II V to pope Clement VI, and cf. LUCAN, I 185-190. Other possible sources for this image include Dante and Claudian: cf. ALEXANDER LEE, *Humanism and empire: The imperial ideal in fourteenth-century Italy*, Oxford, Oxford University, 2018, pp. 107-111 and 137.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. *Fam.*, XI 14.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, XI 6 (*pelle moras*), and LUCAN, I 281. See G. CREVATIN, *Tra Francia e impero*, cit., pp. 165 f. with bibl. It should be noticed that LUCAN, I 281 is a line very frequently quoted by medieval authors, who often re-use it as an exhortation to political-military leaders (cf. E.M. SANFORD, *Quotations from Lucan in medieval authors*, cit., p. 5; and VIOLETTA DE ANGELIS, «... e l'ultimo Lucano», in *Dante e la «bella scola» della poesia: Autorità e sfida poetica*, A cura di Amilcare A. Iannucci, Ravenna, Longo, s.d. [sed 1993], pp. 145-202: 147, n. 7). Cf. *Fam.*, XI 11-12 (in F. PETRARCA, *Le familiari • Familiarium rerum libri*, ed. cit., vol. II, cit., p. 1352): «Propera igitur [...] Scio tibi actus placere cesareos, nec immerito: Cesar es» – Engl. tr. cit., vol. II, cit., p. 51: «Make haste therefore [...] I realize that you find pleasure in actions worthy of Caesars, nor can I blame you since you are Caesar». On Petrarch's comparison of Charles IV to Caesar in this and other letters from the *Familiars*, see also G. CREVATIN, *Tra Francia e impero*, cit., pp. 169 f.; and A.R. ASCOLI, *Petrarch's private politics*, cit., pp. 133 ff.

Far from moving from “republicanism” to “pro-Caesarism”, Petrarch’s political ideal always revolves around the empowerment of a strong leader, able to confer political centrality on Rome and Italy.<sup>68</sup> The dream of Rome’s renewed supremacy underlies Petrarch’s cult of Scipio, his appeals to Charles IV, as well as his several requests that popes Benedict XII, Clement VI, and Urban V move the papal seat back to Italy (1334-68), and the above-mentioned deprecation of the muslim presence in the Holy land: a set of causes that Petrarch supports by re-using the “pro-Caesar” subtext of the *Bellum civile*.<sup>69</sup> In his very last years, Petrarch transfers this “Caesarist” model onto more local affairs: Caesar is pointed to as an exemplary ruler in Petrarch’s *Seniles*, XIV I, a *Speculum principis* written in 1373 and addressed to Francesco da Carrara, lord of Padua.<sup>70</sup>

Petrarch’s comparison of contemporary leaders to Lucan’s Caesar is a panegyric move but also bears some problematic implications. Ascoli has highlighted the fact that the “Caesarean” figure of Charles IV as described in book XIX of the *Familiare*s appears intrinsically complicit in civic violence.<sup>71</sup> *Familiare*s, XX II, dating from July 1355, also speaks of the emperor’s inescapable involvement in civic strife and internecine conflicts. In this letter, Petrarch expresses his disappointment with the agreement concluded between the pope and Charles IV, the latter of whom had left Rome immediately after his coronation. For Petrarch the present situation is all the more worrying given that «every authority is impatient with partnerships» (*et scio quod «omnis potestas» est «consortis impatiens»*).<sup>72</sup> While Petrarch blames Charles’s excessive meekness, the Lucanian quotation implies that the rivalry between the two supreme powers could bring Italy to a state of ruin comparable to that provoked by the ancient civil war between Caesar and Pompey.<sup>73</sup>

Continuity can also be traced in Petrarch’s re-deployment of the “republican” Lucan in his advocacy of «Romanitas».<sup>74</sup> In *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, LIII, presumably composed in 1337-38 and dedicated to Bosone da Gubbio, Petrarch addresses the new senator with an expression (*tu marito, tu padre*) which closely resembles Lucan’s words on Cato.<sup>75</sup> He similarly honors Cola as «the new Brutus» in *Variæ*, XLVIII, where he also recalls Lentulus’s sentence that Rome was traditionally subject to a Roman citizen but had no kings.<sup>76</sup> The same citation appears in the later *Familiare*s, XI XVI 10 (1351), where Petrarch complains about the appointment of a foreigner as senator in Rome. Also in commenting on the killing of the Roman senator Bertoldo Orsini in the turmoil of 1353, when the plebs revolted against a shortage of wheat, Petrarch quotes Lucan’s invective against the powerful, which in the *Bellum civile* accompanies

<sup>68</sup> Cf. G. FERRAÚ, *Petrarca, la politica, la storia, cit.*, pp. 43, 52, 56 f., 59, 66, and 188; UGO DOTTI, *Petrarca civile: Alle origini dell’ intellettuale moderno*, Roma, Donzelli, s.d. [sed 2001], pp. 127-157, 179-214, and 222-235; GUIDO CAPPELLI, «Italia est tota plena tyrannis»: *Petrarca e l’impero*, in *Petrarca politico*, A cura di Francesco Furlan - Stefano Pittaluga, s.l. [sed Genova], D.A.Fi.St.: Sez. D.Ar.Fi.Cl.eT., 2016, pp. 9-25: 9, 11, and 14 f.; and A. LEE, *Humanism and empire...*, cit., pp. 131-137.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. *Epyst. metr.*, I II, I V, and II V (see *supra*, n. 65); *Sen.*, IX I 42 (see LUCAN, II 509-525, and VII 599-604); and *De vita solitaria*, II IX 14 (see *supra*, n. 59).

<sup>70</sup> Petrarch cites the *Bellum civile* to remind his lord that poor and hungry masses do not know fear and can ruin their masters (in *Sen.*, XIV I 58 and 61; cf. LUCAN, III 58, and III 152).

<sup>71</sup> Cf. A.R. ASCOLI, *Petrarch’s private politics, cit.*, esp. pp. 154-156.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. *Fam.*, XX II 5 (in F. PETRARCA, *Le familiari • Familiarium rerum libri, ed. cit.*, vol. IV, cit., p. 2800; Engl. tr. cit., vol. III: 17-24, Baltimore (Md.), John Hopkins University, 1985, p. 129); LUCAN, I 92-93. In quoting the *Bellum civile*, Petrarch states that he can predict the future based on the past (*ex preteritis ventura conicio*).

<sup>73</sup> The primacy of imperial power over the pope’s temporal claims is re-stated also in PETRARCH’S *De remediis*, again by means of a Lucanian quotation (cf. *Rem.*, I CVII 18; and LUCAN, IX 1077-1078).

<sup>74</sup> In this account, G. FERRAÚ (*Petrarca, la politica, la storia, cit.*, p. 156) notices that some republican elements remain in PETRARCH’S *De gestis*.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, LIII 82 (in *Canzoniere, ed. cit.*, pp. 273 f.); and GIUSEPPE MAZZOTTA, *The worlds of Petrarch*, Durham (N.C.) & London, Duke University, 1993, p. 136. A similar expression is also present in PETRARCH’S poetic letter to pope Benedict XII (*Epyst. metr.*, I V 101-103); cf. E. FRAENKEL, *Lucan als Mittler des Antiken Pathos, cit.*, pp. 256 f.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. FRANCESCO PETRARCA, *Variæ*, XLVIII, in IDEM, *Lettere disperse: Varie e miscellanee, ed. cit.*, pp. 39-77 (= *Disp.*, 8): 46 103-106; LUCAN, VIII 354-356.

the account of Curio's death.<sup>77</sup> Petrarch's fourth letter of exhortation to Charles IV, written in 1361, similarly contains a quotation of Cato's words on the inevitability of death.<sup>78</sup> In the late *De remediis* (1354-66), Reason cites Nigidius Figulus's words on the pointlessness of waiting for a peace that will bring a tyrant, and concludes that belligerent freedom (*bellicosa libertas*) is better than peaceful servitude (*pacifica servitus*).<sup>79</sup> Therefore, while re-employing the *Bellum civile* to continuously vindicate the importance of strong, centralized political leadership, Petrarch also quotes Lucan to express his concerns about the possible degenerations of autocracy.

Petrarch's intertextual strategy shows the strong political charge he attributes to Lucan's "civic" poetry, which he re-uses to articulate the dramatic contradictions of history.<sup>80</sup> His rewriting of the *Bellum civile* participates in the late medieval and humanist trend of approaching Lucan's poem as a narration about Caesar's triumphs and, hence, as a powerful means to negotiate opinions about the benefits and risks of absolutism. At the same time, he is also sensitive to another narrative inside the poem: the story of Pompey's tragic downfall, which other late medieval writers, including Boccaccio,<sup>81</sup> regard as the main subject of the *Bellum civile*.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Cf. *Fam.*, XVI VIII 4; and LUCAN, IV 805-806. In the continuation of the letter, Petrarch states that Roman senators have not profited from Caesar's maxim that political change comes from need and a hungry plebs has no fear (cf. LUCAN, III 55-56 and 58); moreover, he evokes the figures of the ancient Roman «matronæ», among whom is Marcia (cf. *Fam.*, XVI VIII 4 and 9).

<sup>78</sup> Cf. *Fam.*, XXIII II 12; and LUCAN, VI 806-807, and IX 582-584.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. *Rem.*, I CV 18 (PETRARQUE, *Les remèdes aux deux fortunes • De remediis utriusque fortune: 1354-1366, ed. cit.*, p. 460); LUCAN, I 669-670.

<sup>80</sup> He looks back to Lucan also to re-articulate other, "minor" conflicts of his time. He alludes to the Roman civil war in describing situations of contemporary political strife and civic unrest, such as tensions in Naples (cf. *Fam.*, V III 20, and LUCAN, XIII XVII 1; *Fam.*, V VI 1, and LUCAN, IX 934-937 and IX 723; *Fam.*, XV VIII 12, and LUCAN, VIII 452-453; *Fam.*, XXIII XVII 1, and LUCAN, X 95-96); revolts against the Visconti (cf. *Fam.*, XVIII XI 2, and LUCAN, III 145-146); squabbles in Avignon (cf. *Fam.*, XXI IX 21, and LUCAN, IX 921; cf. also PETRARCH's vituperation of Avignon-Babylon in *Sine nomine*, X 2, and LUCAN, X 276-282; *Sine nomine*, XV 2, and LUCAN, VII 571); murders in Tuscany, battles and conspiracies between Genoa and Venice (cf. *Fam.*, VIII X 11, and LUCAN, VI 145; *Fam.*, XVII III 24, and LUCAN, V 250-251; *Fam.*, XIX IX 15, and LUCAN, VII 259-260).

<sup>81</sup> In BOCCACCIO's *Amorosa visione* (A cura di Vittore Branca, in *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, A cura di Vittore Branca, Milano, Mondadori, vol. III: *Amorosa visione • Ninfale fiesolano • Trattatello in laude di Dante*, 1974, pp. 1-272: 37), V 19-24 (red. A) Lucan is represented as tearful because of Pompey's defeat, while in *Buccolicum carmen* (A cura di Giorgio Bernardi Perini, *ibidem*, vol. V, t. II: *Elegia di madonna fiammetta • Corbaccio • Consolatoria a Pino De Rossi • Buccolicum carmen • Allegoria mitologica*, 1994, pp. 689-1090: 844), XII 197-198 Lucan is referred to as «Pompey's shepherd» (*pastor Opheltis*). In his various works, BOCCACCIO repeatedly deals with the topic of Pompey's ruin based on Lucan: e.g., cf. *Amorosa visione, ed. cit.*, X 49-54, and XXXVI 36-88; *De casibus virorum illustrium* (A cura di Pier Giorgio Ricci - Vittorio Zaccaria, in *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio, cit.*, vol. IX, 1983, pp. 476-478, 514-528), VI 1 e 9-10; *Elegia di Madonna Fiammetta*, A cura di Carlo Delcorno (*ibidem*, vol. V, t. II, *cit.*, pp. 1-412: 180), VIII 12; *Epistole e lettere* (A cura di Ginetta Auzzas, Con un contributo di Augusto Campana, *ibidem*, vol. V, t. I: *Rime • Carmina • Epistole e lettere • Vite • De Canaria*, 1992, pp. 493-856: 728-730), XXIV 24-25. All this suggests that he reads the *Bellum civile* as recounting the ruin of the once successful Pompey; in fact, he owned TREVET's Commentary on SENECA's tragedies: cf. ANTONIA MAZZA, *L'inventario della «parva libraria» di Santo Spirito e la Biblioteca di Boccaccio*, «Italia medioevale e umanistica», IX, 1966, pp. 1-74: 55 f.; TERESA DE ROBERTIS, *L'inventario della parva libraria di Santo Spirito*, in *Boccaccio autore e copista*, [Catalogo della mostra: Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, 10 ott. 2013-11 genn. 2014,] A cura di Teresa De Robertis et alii, s.l. [sed Firenze], Mandragora, s.d. [sed 2013], pp. 403-409: 408; and MICHAEL PAPIO, *On Seneca, Mussato, Trevet and the Boethian «tragedies» of the De casibus*, «Heliotropia», X, 2013, pp. 47-63: 53-56. In his *Expositio Senecae*, TREVET defines the *Bellum civile* as «materia tragica», since it deals with the fall of illustrious men: cf. *Il commento di Nicola Trevet al Tieste di Seneca*, A cura di Ezio Franceschini, Milano, Vita e Pensiero, 1938, VI 30-VII 4.

<sup>82</sup> Some of Petrarch's most poignant borrowings from the *Bellum civile* relate to the figure of Pompey. Lucan's story of Pompey and Cornelia informs PETRARCH's narration of the similarly ill-starred relationship between Sophonisba and Masinissa in book V of the *Africa* (cf. R.T. BRUÈRE, *Lucan and Petrarch's Africa, cit.*, p. 91) and is re-articulated to express PETRARCH's concept of «amicitia» in the *Familiars*: cf. *Fam.*, III XXI 1 (to Lælius); *Fam.*, VII XI 23 (to Giovanni dell'Incisa); *Fam.*, IX IX 2 (to Socrates); XII VII 1 (to Barbato da Sulmona); XII IX 6 (to Nelli); see also *Variæ*, XXXII 302-307.

## POMPEY

Building on Lucan's text, Petrarch singles out Pompey as the emblem of fortune's instability; while emphasizing the Roman general's glory, he also highlights its inherent limits. The short description of the character as «l gran Pompeo, che mal vide Thesaglia» in the first version of the *Triumph of Fame* underlines greatness and misfortune as Pompey's most characteristic traits.<sup>83</sup> Likewise, in introducing the report of Pompey's death in the *De gestis*, the narrator interprets the story as a demonstration of the inherent precariousness of human affairs:

Sed Pompeii fugam prosequor. Pulsus ergo Pompeius per Thesalicas silvas uno equo, per Egeum pelagus una navi fugiebat, Romani imperii pudor ingens, quod ille nutu rexerat. Sed sic est. Res hominum non stant, et quo maior est altitudo, eo gravior ruina.<sup>84</sup>

Petrarch's phrase «quo maior est altitudo, eo gravior ruina» recalls some proverbial medieval expressions,<sup>85</sup> and also resonates with ancient and medieval ideas of «tragedy» as concerning the ruin of great men and prosperous kingdoms due to the vagaries of fortune.<sup>86</sup> The specific naming of Pompey as an *exemplum* of the grave twists of fate finds some precedents in Valerius Maximus and Seneca.<sup>87</sup> The importance of Lucan in Petrarch's reception and re-elaboration of this tradition is underscored by the continuation of the passage from the *De gestis*.<sup>88</sup> After recounting Pompey's murder in close adherence to the Lucanian intertext,<sup>89</sup> Petrarch exclaims:

O fortuna hominum, et rerum exitus prosperarum! Sub filii atque uxoris et amicorum oculis crudeliter interfectus est gladio Achille, sevissimi hominis, atque Septimii, viri immanissimi, olim sui tunc regis militis, sui autem desertoris. Pudor inexpressibilis, Romanum civem ad Romanum principem trucidandum sic Egiptii et obsceni regis imperio paruisse! O quanto erat honestior casus, nisi Romana manus intervenisset! Sed hanc malorum seriem fortuna texuerat, necubi civilis deesset insania: si ad Indos pergeret Romano, ut reor, gladio pereundum erat.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> *Triumphus Fame*, Ia 30, in F. PETRARCA, *Trionfi • Rime estravaganti • Codice degli abbozzi*, ed. cit., p. 558 – my Engl. tr.: «And the great Pompey, to whom the view of Thessaly was ill-fated». For more about this Petrarchan phrase, which evokes multiple classical sources, including Lucan (*Bellum civ.*, VI 819-20, VII 649-653, and III 1-4), see GIULIANA CREVATIN, *In margine a Petrarca, Triumphus Fame Ia 30: Il «mal vedere» di Pompeo*, in *Le varie fila: Studi di letteratura italiana in onore di Emilio Bigi*, A cura di Fabio Danelon - Hermann Grosser - Cristina Zampese, Milano, Principato, 1997, pp. 68-73.

<sup>84</sup> F. PETRARCA, *De gestis Cesaris*, ed. cit., XXI 34-35, pp. 244 f. – my Engl. tr.: «But let us follow the fleeing Pompey. After galloping on a single horse through the Thessalian forests, he secretly sets sail on a ship on the Aegean sea: what a shame for the Roman dominion he once ruled with a mere nod of the head! Nevertheless, this is how things go. Human matters never remain still and, the higher one rises, the more heavily one falls».

<sup>85</sup> Cf. *Proverbia sententiaeque Latinitatis Medii Aevi • Lateinische Sprichwörter und Sentenzen des Mittelalters in alphabetischer Anordnung*, Gesammelt und herausgegeben von Hans Walther, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, vol. I: A-E, 1963, p. 105, n° 900 & vol. IV: *Q-Sil*, 1966, p. 424, n° 25645.

<sup>86</sup> E.g., see ps.-SEN., *Octavia*, 377-387; and BOETH., *Cons. Philos.*, II II 12. Other examples are discussed in HENRY A. KELLY, *Tragedy and comedy from Dante to pseudo-Dante*, Berkeley & Los Angeles, University of California, s.d. [sed 1989], pp. 127 f., 130 f., and 137 f.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. G. CREVATIN, *L'empio dono*, cit., pp. 173-178.

<sup>88</sup> See *supra*, n. 81, on BOCCACCIO's re-elaboration of this tradition based also on Lucan, most likely through the mediation of Trevet.

<sup>89</sup> In F. PETRARCA, *De gestis Cesaris*, ed. cit., XXI 35-36. Cf. G. CREVATIN, *L'empio dono*, cit., pp. 169-171.

<sup>90</sup> F. PETRARCA, *De gestis Cesaris*, ed. cit., XXI 37, p. 246 – my Engl. tr.: «Oh, how terrible is human fortune and the end of prosperity! Pompey is killed in front of his son, wife, and friends by the sword of Achilles, a very cruel man, and that of the very brutal Septimius, who was once his centurion, but then deserted from his army. What an irredeemable shame that a Roman citizen should thus have obeyed the order of the Egyptians and their vile king, and murdered a Roman general! Oh, how much better it were, if no Roman hand had been involved! But fortune had so interwoven this series of misfortunes that the folly of civil wars would not be incomplete in any respect: had Pompey gone to India, I believe he would have died in the same way, by a Roman sword».

Petrarch's mention of Septimius's cruelty, his deprecation of Roman complicity in Pompey's murder, and his apostrophe to fortune closely remind us of Lucan's passage on the pitiful end of «Magnus» (Lucan, VIII 595-608).<sup>91</sup>

That Petrarch's "tragic" portrait of Pompey derives ultimately from Lucan is not a matter of scholarly debate; but in my view scholars have failed to adequately emphasize the point that, in Petrarch as *already* in Lucan, Pompey's heroism is described as intrinsically limited and defective. Questioning Crevatin's thesis that Petrarch's «unheroic» representation of Pompey contrasts with Lucan's «glorious» portrait of the Roman commander,<sup>92</sup> I contend that, in depicting Pompey, Petrarch once again grasps the inner tensions of the *Bellum civile*, where the narrator ostensibly supports Caesar's rival and yet implicitly underscores his flaws.

While commenting on the outcome of the battle of Pharsalus in his *De gestis*, Petrarch states that Pompey's glory was ruined and defiled by the excessive length of his life:

Hic Thesalice pugne finis fuit. Fuisset utinam et Pompeii, ne in suum dedecus paucos vite dies ageret longamque gloriam brevi spatio dehonestaret atque pollueret. Sed sic eunt res humane: nil tam altum quod non possit deprimi, nil tam clarum quod non valeat obscurari.<sup>93</sup>

A similar allegation can be found in Petrarch's *Collatio inter Scipionem, Alexandrum, Hanibalem et Pyrrum*, where Pompey and Marius are named as heroes who lived too long and had their brilliant fame adulterated by fortune's reversals in the course of their old age; indeed, Petrarch argues, long life debilitates even the greatest souls (*Collatio*, 22-23):

quid Gaio Mario violentius, quid Magno Pompeio clarius mundus habuit? Sed expecta paululum [...] monstrabo Marium, quem «fortune depositum»<sup>94</sup> vocant, post tantas hostium strages, palustri limo latebras captantem, et longi carceris squalore obsitum mucidi panis frusta mendicantem; detegam Pompei miserabile cadaver, proiectum post triumphos in pulvere niliaco, capite tanti viri inulto etiam Romanis ad ludibrium reservato. Comunes sunt eminentis tales exitus fortune; nemo mirari debet, hec audiens, cum quid taliter acciderit; stupendum est quando non suis moribus utitur. Longa etas magnos animos debilitat; vivendo senescunt omnia; et siquis fuerit tantus vigor animorum ut resistatur senio, at ipsa certe felicitas humana caduca et fugacissima rerum evique brevissimi est.<sup>95</sup>

Crevatin points to Florus as Petrarch's main point of reference for the idea of Pompey's excessively long life as a source of shame (*dedecus*),<sup>96</sup> but the concept is first and foremost Lucanian. The passage from the *Collatio* closely reproduces Lucan's depiction of the ruin of the once powerful Marius, an event

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<sup>91</sup> Cf. G. CREVATIN, *L'empio dono*, cit., pp. 171 and 173.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, p. 167.

<sup>93</sup> F. PETRARCA, *De gestis Caesaris*, ed. cit., XXI 30, p. 242 – my Engl. tr.: «This was the end of the Thessalian battle. Oh, if only it had also been the end of Pompey, so that he did not have to live a few more days to his own shame, disfiguring and defiling his long-achieved glory in a short span of time. But this is how human matters go: there is nothing so high that it cannot be brought low, nor anything so splendid that it cannot be tarnished».

<sup>94</sup> Cf. LUCAN, II 72.

<sup>95</sup> FRANCESCO PETRARCA, *Collatio inter Scipionem, Alexandrum, Hanibalem et Pyrrum*, A cura di Guido Martellotti, in G. MARTELLOTTI, *Scritti petrarcheschi*, cit., pp. 333-346: 339 f. – my Engl. tr.: «Did the world see anything more violent than Marius or more splendid than Pompey? But wait a moment [...] I will show you Marius, whom they call "fortune's pledge": after slaughtering so many enemies, he went in search of a refuge amid muddy swamps and, marked by the squalid experience of a long stay in prison, begged in vain some stale bread; I will show you Pompey's miserable corpse, thrown on the Egyptian sand after so many triumphs, and his severed head, not only unavenged, but even destined to the Romans' mockery. The outcomes of renowned people's destiny are very similar: no-one should be surprised to hear how these events went; on the contrary, it would be surprising if fortune changed her habits. A long existence debilitates even great souls and everything gets old by living; even if humans have some spiritual vigor that resists ageing, their happiness is fleeting, transient, and extremely short-lived». Marius and Pompey are indicated as examples of great men afflicted by fortune also in PETRARCA'S *De remediis* (in *Les remèdes aux deux fortunes • De remediis utriusque fortune: 1354-1366*, ed. cit., *Préf.* 14, p. 18) and in BOCCACCIO'S *De casibus*, VI I.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. G. CREVATIN, *L'empio dono*, cit., pp. 164 f. and 172; and EADEM, *In margine a Petrarca*, *Triumphus Fame Ia 30...*, cit., n. 12, pp. 71 f.

which in the context of the *Bellum civile* is evoked as a precedent for the great fear caused by the civil war:

Atque aliquis magno quærens exempla timori  
«Non alios» inquit «motus tunc fata parabant,  
cum *post* Teutonicos victor Libycosque triumphos  
exul *limosa* Marius caput abdidit ulva.  
Stagna avidi texere soli laxæque *paludes*  
*depositum*, *Fortuna*, tuum; mox vincula ferri  
exedere senem longusque in *carcere* pædor:  
consul et eversa felix moriturus in Vrbe  
pœnas ante dabat scelerum».<sup>97</sup>

Moreover, both Petrarch's *De gestis* and his *Collatio* reproduce the gnomic tone and the specific terms and concepts of Lucan's remark on Pompey's shameful death:

[...] Sic *longius* ævum  
destruit ingentis *animos* et vita superstes  
imperio; nisi summa dies cum fine bonorum  
adfuit et celeri prævertit tristia leto,  
*dedecori* est fortuna prior [...].<sup>98</sup>

A validation of Lucan's centrality for Petrarch's reflection on this topic comes from *De ignorantia*, III 44, where Lucan is explicitly cited as the source of the maxim quoted by Petrarch:

Senescunt homines, senescunt fortune, senescunt fame hominum, senescunt denique humana omnia; [...] verumque fit illud Cordubensis: «Longius evum destruit ingentes animos».<sup>99</sup>

Pompey's glory is presented by Petrarch as precarious and defective, but this is not out of line with the *Bellum civile*. This is true with respect to Petrarch's references to the excessive length of Pompey's life,<sup>100</sup> but also to the commander's indecisiveness and inability to take advantage of his military victories.<sup>101</sup> On the other hand, Petrarch follows Lucan also in repeatedly highlighting Pompey's dignity, undiminished by death.<sup>102</sup> Overall, Petrarch is in line with Lucan (or *his* Lucan) in representing Pompey as the great and yet imperfect hero doomed by misfortune.

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<sup>97</sup> LUCAN, II 68-75 (in LUCAIN, *La guerre civile [La Pharsale]*, Texte établi et traduit par A[bel] Bourgery - Max Ponchont, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, t. I: *Livres I-V*, 1926, p. 35; distinction between *v* and *u*, quotation marks, and italics are mine) – Engl. tr. *cit.*, p. 32: «Someone, rummaging in his memory for like terrors, spoke up now: “No different, the troubles the Fates prepared that time Marius, the exiled victor – after his German and Libyan Triumphs – hid his head in the slimy sedge. Bogs of sucking mud and spongy swamp concealed the pledge you put there, fortune; soon, chains of iron chafed the old man – and a stretch in prison filth. Consul and millionaire, he would die in a humbled city: he paid for his crimes in advance”».

<sup>98</sup> LUCAN, VIII 27-31 (in LUCAIN, *La guerre civile [La Pharsale]*, ed. *cit.*, t. II: *Livres VI-X*, 1929, p. 87; italics mine – Engl. tr. *cit.*, pp. 198 f.: «Thus exceptional souls are undone by too long a life, by a span of years outlasting power. Unless the final day arrives at good luck's termination and outruns grief with a swift demise, former fortune is heartbreak». As MARTELOTTI (in *Collatio inter Scipionem...*, ed. *cit.*, p. 340) notices, Petrarch's description of Marius in the *Collatio* is also reminiscent of JUV., X 276-277, and XII 128: «mucida [...] panis [...] frustra».

<sup>99</sup> F. PETRARCA, *De ignorantia • Della mia ignoranza e di quella di molti*, ed. *cit.*, p. 204 – Engl. tr. by David Marsh: *On his own ignorance and that of many others*, in IDEM, *Invectives*, *cit.*, pp. 222-363: 253: «People grow old, fortunes grow old, and reputations grow old [...] the words of the Cordovan poet prove true: “A long age destroys even the great souls”». See also PACCA's commentary on *Triumphus Fame*, I 94 (*ma 'l peggio è viver troppo!*), in F. PETRARCA, *Trionfi • Rime estravaganti • Codice degli abbozzi*, ed. *cit.*, pp. 376-378.

<sup>100</sup> See *Triumphus Fame*, I 90-92; and *Fam.*, II X 11. In *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, CCCXXXI 45 the motif is re-configured, as Petrarch states that, had he died before, the best part of him would have survived.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. *Fam.*, III III 8 (and LUCAN, VI 299-303). Cf. also V. FERA, *Petrarca e Scipione*, *cit.*, pp. 143 f.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. *Fam.*, III X 6 (and LUCAN, VIII 395-396); *Rem.*, II DXXIII 16 (and LUCAN, VII 706); *Rem.*, II DXXIII 20 (and LUCAN, VII 217-218). See also *infra*, n. 106, on Petrarch's representation of Pompey as an exemplary character.

The above analysis has demonstrated that, in approaching the historical figures of Caesar and Pompey, Petrarch exploits the tensions of Lucan's text to produce very nuanced portrayals of the two great Roman «viri». Petrarch's reuse of the *Bellum civile* is, however, governed by a set of diverse intellectual and rewriting practices, which display his versatility as a thinker and a literary author. Just as Petrarch re-functionalizes Lucan's poem in the context of his penetrative analysis of ancient and contemporary political history, so in other passages, as mentioned previously, he re-reads the *Bellum civile* from a Christian moralizing perspective.<sup>103</sup> Petrarch's citations of, and allusion to, the *Bellum civile* in some moral-philosophical passages of his works show how his ambivalences and reservations about the «virtus» of Lucan's heroes are also of a moral-religious nature.

On the one hand, Petrarch clearly acknowledges the profoundly philosophical nature of Lucan's poetry;<sup>104</sup> in keeping with a common medieval practice, he extrapolates from the *Bellum civile* some specific elements which are particularly prone to be endowed with high moral significance and paradigmatic force.<sup>105</sup> In Petrarch's texts, Lucan's characters become exemplary figures representing their distinctive qualities. Just as Lucan's Caesar is often adduced as a paragon of political and military virtue, so his Pompey personifies temperance,<sup>106</sup> and his Cato is cited as an *exemplum* of perseverance, altruism, and noble self-denial.<sup>107</sup>

The tenacity of Caesar, Pompey, and Cato is frequently recalled by Petrarch to dissuade his interlocutors from deplorable self-pity and underscore the formative and ennobling function of difficulties for the human spirit. For instance, in *Familiares*, XIII IV 15 Petrarch mentions the hardships endured by Cato, Pompey, and Caesar to prove that true glory cannot be achieved without effort.<sup>108</sup> In another letter, Petrarch similarly warns his addressee against complaining about ordinary issues by recalling the labours faced by Caesar's and Pompey's armies.<sup>109</sup> These and other examples suggest that the value of fortitude is, overall, one of the major moral lessons that Petrarch draws from the *Bellum civile*;<sup>110</sup> this way of regarding Lucan's poem finds an echo in Benevenuto da Imola's Commentary on Dante's *Comedy*.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>103</sup> Cf. *supra*, nn. 21 and 56 (and related text).

<sup>104</sup> In *Contra medicum*, III 95 (*ed. cit.*, p. 102), Petrarch states: «Philosophia “suas” illas Musas, et earum meritum “suum” dixit Euripidem, Lucanum quoque “familiarem suum” non erubuit confiteri» (cf. BOETH., *Cons. Philos.*, IV VI 33) – Engl. tr. *cit.*, p. 97: «Philosophy called the Muses “her own” [...] Thanks to the merits of the Muses, she also called Euripides her own, and did not blush to acknowledge Lucan as her intimate». In *Contra quendam*, 96 (in F. PETRARCA, *Invective contra medicum • Invectiva contra quendam magni status hominem sed nullius scientie aut virtutis*, *ed. cit.*, pp. 175-209: 188), he observes that Virgil admitted fortune's omnipotence, whereas «another poet, inferior but speaking with greater depth and truth» (*veriusque illud et gravius alter, licet inferior, vates ait*) maintained that fortune surrenders to virtue. This statement, followed by a direct quotation of LUCAN, IV 569-570, constitutes both an assertion of Lucan's poetic inferiority to Virgil but, at the same time, an acknowledgement of the deep philosophical «verity» of his poetry.

<sup>105</sup> On Lucan in medieval *exemplum* literature, see MARGARET JENNINGS, *Lucan's medieval popularity: The exemplum tradition*, «Rivista di Cultura classica e medievale», XVI, 1974, pp. 215-233.

<sup>106</sup> E.g., in *Rem.*, II xxxviii 2 (cf. LUCAN, IX 195); and *Sen.*, IV I 34 and 37.

<sup>107</sup> In *Fam.*, XX x 3, and XXII xii 1 (cf. LUCAN, II 239-241).

<sup>108</sup> Petrarch here evokes LUCAN, IX 368 ff., I 121-144, and VII 694.

<sup>109</sup> *Fam.*, II VIII 4 (cf. LUCAN, V 436 ff., and IX 464-465).

<sup>110</sup> Also in *Fam.*, III x 5-6 Petrarch cites Cato's opinion that difficulties are good for the strong man and Pompey's declaration that death must not be feared (cf. LUCAN, IX 402-403, and VIII 395-396), while in *Rem.*, I xdviii 6 Reason quotes Caesar's famous aphorism «disce ferire, disce mori» (cf. LUCAN, V 363-364). Similarly, Petrarch includes the elderly father of the Phocæan Argus and Cornelia among the «fortia exempla» of *Variae*, XXXII 291-296 and 302-307 (cf. LUCAN, III 723-751, and IX 108).

<sup>111</sup> In his Commentary on DANTE, *Inf.*, IV 88-90, BENVENUTO DA IMOLA reports a widespread opinion according to which Homer, Horace, Ovid, and Lucan represent the four cardinal virtues, and Lucan stands for fortitude, since his poem deals with heroic deeds (*per Lucanum fortitudinem, qui describit gesta fortium virorum*): cf. *Benvenuti de Rambaldis de Imola Comentum super Dantis Aldigherij Comœdiam*, Nunc primum integre in lucem editum, Curante Jacobo Philippo Lacaita,

Nevertheless, Petrarch's citational strategy aims at transposing the characters, images, and values of the *Bellum civile* onto a Christian metaphysical level.<sup>112</sup> In so doing, Petrarch emphasizes how Christian virtue subsumes and transcends pagan heroism.<sup>113</sup> In a letter to his brother Gerardo, Petrarch recalls the devotion of Cato's and Caesar's soldiers towards their commanders as a figure of the Christian ascetic's reverence for Christ (*Fam.*, X III 46-47):

Audisti ex historiis Marci Catonis milites illo presente et sitim et pulverem et estum et serpentum morsum tolerare solitos et sub illo teste sine gemitu ac lamentis occumbere.<sup>114</sup> Audisti Scevam, illum fortem potius quam iustum virum, sub oculis sui ducis non modo pugnare sed mori etiam exoptantem.<sup>115</sup> Quodsi mortalis domini veneratio prestare potuit, quid Cristi presentia posse debet? Is equidem non expectandus ut veniat, sicut Cesarem suum infelix ille bellator expectat, sed suscipiendus colendusque; omnibus locis omnibusque temporibus presens est, videt actus nostros, cogitationes introspicit, ingens calcar animo nisi funeste consuetudinis torpor obsistat.<sup>116</sup>

Unlike Scaeva, the Christian soldier is, or is expected to be, «iustus» as well as «fortis»; unlike Caesar, Christ does not have to be waited for, as he is omnipresent and omniscient. Petrarch stresses that Christian monastic asceticism is the true and ultimate fulfillment of classical pagan virtue and ethics.<sup>117</sup>

In his *Supplementum Romualdinum*, Petrarch compares St. Romuald's alacrity to Caesar's and yet underlines the difference between the inspiration of the Christian hermit and the Roman dictator (*De vita solitaria*, II VIII 6):

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Florentiae, Barbèra, 1887, vol. I, p. 153. See also *La Commedia di Dante Alighieri col Commento inedito di Stefano Talice da Ricaldone*, Pubblicato per cura di Vincenzo Promis - Carlo Negroni, Torino, Bona, 1886, p. 29; on the various versions of BENVENUTO's Commentary, see PAOLO PASQUINO, *Benvenuto Rambaldi da Imola*, in *Censimento dei Commenti danteschi*, Roma, Salerno Ed., vol. I: *I commenti di tradizione manoscritta (fino al 1480)*, A cura di Enrico Malato - Andrea Mazzucchi, 2011, pp. 86-120: 102-108. Although Benvenuto does not personally support this thesis, his words reflect a common late medieval interpretive trend, which is also witnessed by the «glosse posteriori» of the *Codex cassinense*: cf. *Il codice cassinense della Divina commedia*, Per la prima volta letteralmente messo a stampa e comparato con le principali edizioni e testi a penna, per cura e studio dei monaci benedettini della badia di Monte Cassino, Montecassino, Tip. di Monte Cassino, 1865, p. 37: «per Lucanum fortitudinem quia describit gesta armorum».

<sup>112</sup> In *Tr. Pud.*, 73-75, e.g., Laura is said to fight against love more fiercely than Caesar against Pompey in Thessaly. Also in *Rerum vulgariarum fragmenta*, CCLXVIII 72, the description of Laura's smile after her death recalls Lucan's lines on Pompey's afterlife: cf. LUCAN, IX 11-14; see also *Africa*, I 336-340. In *Rem.*, II DXXV 2, the inner conflict of the soul at war with itself is defined as «plus quam civile bellum», with an allusion to LUCAN, I 1. In *Fam.*, XVI IV 10 the «blood pact» between Caesar and the king of Egypt following Pompey's assassination (cf. LUCAN, IX 1021) is reconfigured by Petrarch into Christ's self-sacrifice for humankind, a pact ratified by God through the blood of his Son.

<sup>113</sup> As has been mentioned, in book II of the *De otio* Petrarch criticizes Lucan and the ancient poets for contributing to the divinization of their heroes (cf. *supra*, n. 21). In various other passages he points out the limits of Lucan's paganism and attempts to unmask the falsehood of his dark esotericism with the light of the Christian faith: cf. *Fam.*, XVIII XII 2; *De ot.*, II X 10; and *Rerum memorandarum*, III DXXXII 2-3.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. LUCAN, IX 379-406, 498-510, and 585 ff. – about the soldiers' shame at crying in front of Cato, see in particular lines 886-887, which are also referred to by Petrarch in *De vita solitaria*, I v 15.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. LUCAN, VI 140-262. Scaeva is mentioned by Petrarch also in *Tr. Fam.*, I 106; *Fam.*, XVII III 40, and XXII XIV 25; *Rem.*, II DXXVII; and *Sen.*, IV I 28: cf. U. DOTTI in *Le familiari • Familiarium rerum libri*, ed. cit., vol. II, cit., p. 1397, n. 57.

<sup>116</sup> F. PETRARCA, *Le familiari • Familiarium rerum libri*, ed. cit., vol. II, cit., pp. 1394-1396 – Engl. tr. cit., vol. II, cit., pp. 65 f.: «In histories you have read that the soldiers of Marcus Cato endured in his presence thirst, dust, heat, serpent bite, and died in his presence without a groan or lament. You have heard that Scaeva, a man more powerful than just, wished not only to fight but to die under his leader's eyes. But if reverence for a moral lord could have such influence, what ought the presence of Christ inspire? Indeed one must not wait for his coming, as did the unfortunate warrior for the coming of his Caesar, He must instead be welcomed and venerated. He is present in all places and in all ages, He sees our every act and listens to our thoughts, He is a tremendous strength to our minds if the sluggishness of evil habit does not interfere».

<sup>117</sup> See also *Fam.*, XVI VIII 9, where Petrarch compares the ancient Roman «matronæ» (among whom is Cato's Marcia) to Roman Christian virgins and women martyrs.

ea demum solitudine tam iugi tamque anxia et usque ad ultimum indefessa, ut more cesareo sed intentione alia, nil actum credens dum quid superesset agendum, his sacris edificiis ad exitum vix perductis, semper incipiens ac festinans nova iaceret fundamenta, prorsus quasi totum orbem unam heremum, omnes homines monachos facere decrevisset.<sup>118</sup>

To the best of my knowledge, scholars have not noticed that «nil actum credens dum quid superesset agendum» is a reference to the already-mentioned description of Caesar's restlessness in the *Bellum civile*.<sup>119</sup> Lucan's line is re-used by Petrarch to characterize his Christian hero, although the humanist clarifies that Romuald's action is driven by another spirit and aim (*intentio*) than Caesar's.

The Christianization of Lucan's epic models in Petrarch's works is of relevance to the wider problem of Petrarch's Christian classicism,<sup>120</sup> and particularly to the highly-debated issue of the divergence between or integration of «monasticism» and «humanism» in Petrarch's writings.<sup>121</sup> Scholars such as Leclercq, Mazzotta, and Maggi have attempted to overcome the supposed dichotomy between monastic spirituality and humanistic culture within Petrarch's later works, and to emphasize instead the «dialogue» and «interrelation» between these two basic impulses within texts such as the *De vita solitaria*.<sup>122</sup> Petrarch's above-mentioned comparisons between Christian monks and Lucan's ancient heroes partly support this conclusion. In Petrarch's view, Christian monasticism and classical ethics do appear profoundly interconnected: monastic spirituality proves to be nourished by the ancient, secular ideal of heroic virtue which faith enlightens and brings to its peak. Nonetheless, Petrarch's cultural translation and spiritual re-fashioning of his classical models also disclose the substantial divide between ancient pagan and Christian ethics.

In this account, in various Petrarchan passages the «virtus» of the pagan leaders who fought against each other in the Roman civil war is represented as intrinsically flawed and, as such, incomparably inferior to Christ's humble glory and to the true spiritual freedom of the Christian faithful. *Familiare*, VII II 12-14 contrasts the humility of God's adepts (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) with the earthly glory of powerful men such as Pompey and Caesar:

Quodsi gloria temporalis coram Deo clarior foret quam humilitas, quis dubitet quam in partem iste tantus Dei favor multo propensior futurus esset? Confer enim cum his tribus senibus tam famosis cumque omnibus illorum gregibus atque coniugibus tres immensis exercitibus subnixos Romanorum duces, Scipionen Africanum Hanibalis cornua confringentem et tributario iugo imperiose Carthaginis colla subdentem, magnum Pompeium in Septentrione atque Asia tonantem et non lacte sed auro repleta patria captisque non ovium sed regum gregibus, a mari Rubro ad Meotidas paludes Ripheosque montes universa calcantem, Iulium Cesarem in Galliis ac Germania fulminantem perdomitisque hostibus ad postremum in viscera patrie victricis pila vertentem ipsamque tunc gentibus imperantem Romam et in ea terrarum orbem unico thesalico prelio vincentem.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> PÉTRARQUE, *La vie solitaire: 1346-1366, ed. cit.*, p. 250 – Engl. tr. *cit.*, p. 229 (adapted): «And with this solicitude, moreover, so continuous, so anxious, so indefatigable to the last, that like Caesar, but with a different ambition, thinking nothing done as long as something remained to be done, he had scarcely brought to completion these holy edifices than he was beginning in haste to lay new foundations, as if he had quite decided to convert the whole world into a hermitage, and all men to monks».

<sup>119</sup> Cf. LUCAN, II 657. In PÉTRARQUE, *La vie solitaire: 1346-1366, ed. cit.*, p. 421, n. 547, CARRAUD points to Suetonius's *Life of Caesar*, 7, which, however, seems a more distant point of reference.

<sup>120</sup> Petrarch's Christian classicism has been the object of several studies; for a comprehensive overview of the topic, see, e.g., PIETRO P. GEROSA, *Umanesimo cristiano del Petrarca: Influenza agostiniana: Attinenze medievali*, Torino, Bottega d'Erasmus, 1966.

<sup>121</sup> On the relation between monasticism and humanism in Petrarch, a good bibliographical survey may be found in ANNA M. VOICI, *Petrarch e la vita religiosa: Il mito umanista della vita eremitica*, Roma, I.S.I.E.M.C., 1983, pp. 94 f. See also JEAN LECLERCQ, *Temi monastici nell'opera del Petrarca*, «Lettere Italiane», XLIII, 1991, pp. 42-54: 42 f.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. J. LECLERCQ, *Temi monastici nell'opera del Petrarca, cit.*, p. 45; GIUSEPPE MAZZOTTA, *Humanism and monastic spirituality in Petrarch*, «Stanford Literature Review», V, 1988, pp. 57-74: 57 f., 63, and 72 f. in part.; and ARMANDO MAGGI, *You will be my solitude*, in *Petrarch: A critical guide to the complete works*, Edited by Victoria Kirkham - Armando Maggi, Chicago & London, University of Chicago, 2009, pp. 179-195: 179 f. and 187 f. (on the *De vita solitaria*).

<sup>123</sup> F. PETRARCA, *Le familiari • Familiarium rerum libri, ed. cit.*, vol. II, *cit.*, p. 910 – Engl. tr. *cit.*, vol. I, *cit.*, p. 336: «But if temporal glory were personally superior in God's eye to humility, who would doubt in what direction that great love of God would have been much more inclined? Compare with these three aged men, who were so famous, together with all their flocks

In retracing Caesar's and Pompey's triumphs, Petrarch utilizes typically Lucanian *iuncturae* and references. Pompey's fame in the region of the Maeotian swamp is pointed out in the *Bellum civile*, as Dotti notices;<sup>124</sup> moreover, as mentioned above, Petrarch's reference to the attack brought by the victorious Caesar against the «bowels» of Rome (*in viscera patrie victricia pila vertentem*) again recalls Lucan, I 3,<sup>125</sup> while the battle of Pharsalus is, of course, the main subject of Lucan's poem. In all their worldly power, the Lucanian characters of Caesar and Pompey are said *not* to be God's chosen ones.

Along the same lines, both *Secretum*, II 118 and *Contra quendam magni status hominem*, 167 deal with Caesar's maxim «the human race exists for the sake of the few»,<sup>126</sup> the paradoxical character of which Petrarch underlines. While affirming that the multitude serves a small number of masters, Caesar would not have been aware of his own spiritual slavery, consisting in his subjugation to worldly concerns and duties and his constant fear of his subjects.

Analogously, in *Contra medicum*, IV 142-145 Petrarch stresses that, in his search for freedom and peace of the soul (*tranquillitas mentis ac libertas*) he would venture to the sources of the Nile, which Alexander the Great and Cambyses were not able to reach.<sup>127</sup> The account of Alexander's and Cambyses's failed expeditions is drawn from Lucan, X 272-282.<sup>128</sup> In the context of the *Bellum civile*, Alexander's unlimited curiosity and thirst for power prefigure Caesar's. In his re-writing, Petrarch pictures himself as «the new Alexander», endowed with a task spiritually superior to that of the ancient conqueror(s) and thus able to achieve new horizons, overcoming the intrinsic limits of pagan ethics and heroism.

In Petrarch's re-adaptations of the *Bellum civile*, the Christian believer is called to a similar and yet more profound and fundamental mission than the heroes of Lucan's poem: attaining true spiritual enlightenment and freedom. Petrarch's re-writing strategy aims at recovering Lucan's pagan epic and transposing it into a new, Christian framework in which ancient models of ethical and literary excellence are absorbed and displaced.

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and wives, the three Roman leaders who were supported by immense armies: Scipio Africanus, who destroyed the strength of Hannibal and subjected powerful Carthage to the tributary yoke; Pompey the Great, who raised thunder in the North and in Asia and who filled his homeland not with milk but with gold, and who captured flocks, not of sheep but of kings, as he proceeded from the Red Sea to the Maeotic Marshes and the Rhiphean mountains; Julius Caesar, who drove like lightning into Gaul and into Germany, and once having subdued the enemy finally turned his victorious spear against the organs of his homeland, and in a single battle in Thessaly defeated Rome herself, who then ruled over the gentiles and who contained within her the entire world».

<sup>124</sup> Cf. LUCAN, VIII 318; and U. DOTTI in *Le familiari • Familiarium rerum libri*, ed. cit., vol. II, cit., p. 911, n. 24.

<sup>125</sup> Petrarch's description of Caesar as a thunderstorm also seems reminiscent of LUCAN, I 151, as well as of FLORUS, *Epit.*, II 13, and DANTE, *Par.*, VI 55-72.

<sup>126</sup> Cf. LUCAN, V 343: «Humanum paucis vivit genus»; F. PETRARCA, *Secretum • Il mio segreto*, ed. cit., p. 188 – Engl. tr. by J.G. Nichols, *My secret book*, Foreword by Germaine Greer, London, Hesperus, s.d. [sed c2002], p. 49; and IDEM, *Contra quendam*, ed. cit., p. 200. In *Contra eum qui maledixit Italie*, 32 Petrarch explains what, in his view, this line properly means in the context of the *Bellum civile*.

<sup>127</sup> Cf. F. PETRARCA, *Invectiva contra medicum*, ed. cit., p. 152.

<sup>128</sup> Alexander's and Cambyses's attempts are evoked also in PETRARCH's *Collatio inter Scipionem, Alexandrum, Hanibalem et Pyrrum*, 11 and *Sine nomine*, X 2.