Lucan and the Sublime

This is the first comprehensive study of the sublime in Lucan. Drawing upon renewed literary-critical interest in the tradition of philosophical aesthetics, Henry Day argues that the category of the sublime offers a means of moving beyond readings of Lucan’s Bellum civile in terms of the poem’s political commitment or, alternatively, nihilism. Demonstrating in dialogue with theorists from Burke and Kant to Freud, Lyotard and Ankersmit the continuing vitality of Longinus’ foundational treatise On the Sublime, Day charts Lucan’s complex and instructive exploration of the relationship between sublimity and ethical discourses of freedom and oppression. Through the Bellum civile’s cataclysmic vision of civil war and metapoetic accounts of its own genesis, through its heated linguistic texture and proclaimed effects upon future readers, and, most powerfully of all, through its representation of its twin protagonists Caesar and Pompey, Lucan’s great epic emerges as a central text in the history of the sublime.

Henry Day has taught at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge and at Birkbeck, University of London, and has worked as a consultant on classical subjects for the London Review of Books and BBC television. He was called to the Bar of England and Wales in 2011 by Lincoln’s Inn and is now pursuing a career as a barrister.
LUCAN AND THE SUBLIME
Power, Representation and Aesthetic Experience

HENRY J. M. DAY
For Frederick – our new arrival – and for all my family
# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acknowledgements</th>
<th>page viii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 The experience of the sublime</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Presentation, the sublime and the <em>Bellum civile</em></td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 The Caesarian sublime</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 The Pompeian sublime</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epilogue</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Bibliography* 239
*Index locorum* 251
*Index rerum et nominum* 257
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book is a revised version of my doctoral dissertation, undertaken at Trinity College, Cambridge, between 2005 and 2009. I would like to thank my supervisors, William Fitzgerald and Emily Gowers, for their encouragement and for ensuring, despite my best efforts, that the project stayed on track. To Emily I owe a special debt for putting me up (and up with me) as I approached my submission deadline. I am immensely grateful to my examiners, Philip Hardie and Charles Martindale, for the time they took to read the dissertation so painstakingly, for their instructive criticism and for their post-viva advice and guidance. As detailed in my footnotes, their work marks this book throughout. Stephen Oakley and Richard Hunter recommended the dissertation for publication in the Cambridge Classical Studies series and offered valuable suggestions for its improvement; my thanks to them both and to all the CCS editors. Thanks also to Michael Sharp, Jo Breeze, Josephine Lane and Liz Hanlon at Cambridge University Press for shepherding the manuscript through the publication process with such care and patience, to Iveta Adams, my eagle-eyed copy-editor, for saving me from numerous errors of fact and infelicities of style, and to Siobhan Chomse for compiling the indexes so diligently and swiftly. Needless to say, all faults that remain are my own.

Professor Hardie and Professor Hunter gave time and expertise to help me organise and secure funding for a conference on ‘The Classical Sublime’ at Cambridge in March 2008. I am indebted to them for ensuring the success of the event and to all who attended and contributed to discussion, especially to those who delivered papers: Patrick Cheney, Andrew Laird, Charles Martindale, James Porter, Alessandro Schiesaro, Philip Shaw and Michael Silk. Particular thanks are due to Professor Schiesaro for sending me a copy of his book *The Passions in Play* and to Professor Cheney
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

and Professor Porter for kindly allowing me to read draft chapters of their respective studies of Marlowe and ancient aesthetics. The insights afforded by Professor Porter’s groundbreaking work first suggested to me how to go about reading Lucan in terms of the sublime, while correspondence with Professor Cheney helped give shape to my ideas. Drafts of parts of Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 were presented at conferences in Princeton and Swansea; my thanks to the organisers and audiences of both for making me think harder.

I was sustained in my research by the resources and generosity of several institutions. The Arts and Humanities Research Council provided the financial support that made my project possible in the first place. Supplementary funding was gratefully received from the Cambridge Classics Faculty, Trinity College Cambridge and the Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst. This assistance enabled me to spend time researching away from Cambridge and in so doing I accumulated further debts. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the help provided by the staff of the Institute of Classical Studies and the British Library in London; the Institut für Griechische und Lateinische Philologie at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich; and the Philologische Bibliothek at the Freie Universität in Berlin.

I am fortunate to have benefited over the years from a number of stellar Classics teachers, first as a pupil at Downside School and then as an undergraduate and postgraduate student at Merton College, Oxford. I would like to thank especially Austin Bennett, Martin Fisher, Dom. David Foster, John Eidinow, Nicholas Richardson and Matthew Leigh. The learning, dedication and intellectual enthusiasm of each have been a continuing source of inspiration.

Thanks and much more go lastly to my wife Verena, to my parents Alice and Nigel and to my sister Eleanor, all of whom have in different ways lived with the writing of this book. Words fail. Without their unstinting love and support I would never have reached the finish line.

I have used Housman’s edition of Lucan and have for the most part adopted the translations of S. H. Braund. Unless otherwise
stated, quotations and translations of Lucretius and Longinus are taken from the respective Loeb editions of W. H. D. Rouse (revised by M. F. Smith) and W. H. Fyfe (revised by D. Russell). Translations of other texts are identified where appropriate in the footnotes and bibliography. Abbreviations of ancient authors and texts mostly follow the conventions of the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* for Latin authors and of Liddell and Scott’s *Greek-English Lexicon* for Greek.