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Non Fatis: The Supernatural and Sublime in Lucan

1. What is the supernatural in classical literature?
   a. The extraordinary and impossible
      i. Greek literature (Medea, Euripides’ Helen)
      ii. Gods of magic
   b. Gods in epic
   c. Supernatural events in Latin literature
      i. Magic in love elegy (Tibullus, Propertius, Ovid)
         1. Closely represented magic practiced in real life (Rosner 1979, 20)
         2. Frustration of the author
      ii. Seneca’s Medea
      iii. Pliny the Elder’s Natural Histories 30

2. The Sublime: supernatural events as a rhetorical device
   a. ὑψός; Longinus’ De Sublimitate 1st century CE
      i. A special effect, not a rhetorical style (Day 2013, 37)
      ii. Transports you outside yourself (Day 2013, 37)
      iii. Creates an experience beyond words
   b. The sublime in Lucan
      i. cum conpage soluta
         saecula tot mundi suprema coegerit hora
         antiquum repetens iterum chaos, ignea pontum
         astra petent...
         (When the final hour, after the frame is dissolved,
         Will have gathered so many ages of the world
         Seeking ancient chaos again, fiery stars will fall
         Into the sea…) 1.72-76
      ii. Pharsalia as a sublime work
1. Rhetorical figures (paradox, hyperbole, etc.)

2. “In each case, language manages to achieve a unique substantiality, to assert its presence as language, and thereby, paradoxically, to transcend its status as mere ‘words on a page.’” (Day 2013, 86)

3. Supernatural events in Lucan
   a. lucus horridus (Pharsalia 3)
      i. Foreign and feared by gods and men
         1. omnisque humanis lustrata cruoribus arbor
            (… And every tree having been cleansed with human gore) 3.405
         2. As a representation of civil war
            i. Caesar as the thunderer and apotheosis
               1. Caesar above the gods (Day 2013, 138)
               2. Lack of active gods
      b. The Thessalian witch
         i. Dark powers that are unnatural
            1. Another representation of civil war
            2. Twists nature and the role of the gods
         ii. Erictho as Lucan himself
            1. Erictho as vates
            2. She has powers over time itself;
               suo ventura potes devertere cursu
               (You are able to divert what is going to come from its own path) 6.591

4. Conclusions
   a. Supernatural forces as a representation of the civil war
      i. Unnatural and horrible
      ii. Imagery of the abundance of corpses
   b. The absence of the gods
      i. Peripherally mentioned
ii. Powerless to interfere with events
   a. Fate and Fortune are left

**Bibliography**


