

On First Looking into Brébeuf's Lucan

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“Poets have learned us their myths,
but just how did They take them?
That's a stumper.”
W.H. Auden, *Archaeology* (1973)

“It is I, LeClerc! I am disguised as an onion seller”
Allo', Allo' (1982 ss.)

1. Someone Looking at Something

When Bertie Wooster makes the acquaintance of Pauline Stoker, a girl of exquisite beauty, he is unable to express his feelings. Returning to his apartment he consults with Jeeves, his gentleman's personal gentleman, and asks: “Who was the fellow who on looking at something felt like somebody looking at something?” He used to read the passage at school, but now it escapes him. As always, Jeeves knows: “I fancy the individual you have in mind, sir, is the poet Keats, who compared his emotions on first reading Chapman's Homer to those of stout Cortez when with eagle eyes he stared at the Pacific” (Wodehouse 1999, 3). In this exchange Keats' attempt to express the sublimity of his encounter with George Chapman's translation, is mocked and somehow unmasked by its introduction in another literary universe. It is a deft example of Wodehousean comedy, using poetical clichés or stale quotes in inappropriate settings. The humor of such scenes is generated by the incongruity. Through Bertie's frequent lapses of memory when quoting the poets, Wodehouse also inverts the literature that is canonized as pillar of cultural memory through the dreary work of the schools. It triggers spe-

cific emotional responses in the reader — maybe she remembers her own time at school (incarnated in Jeeves' pedantry) and feels temporarily released as it were from her reverence for the canon. Yet its status is still guaranteed. Since the humor operates by way of incongruity, the joke can only work because in these warped citations subversion and containment go hand in hand (Säckel 2009, 151-2). When Keats wrote his famous sonnet in October 1816 he tried in earnest to capture the contrast of Chapman's version to Alexander Pope's polished 18th century translation which in the early 19th century was still the leading translation of Homer. For Keats the confrontation with the rougher earlier version was some sort of revelation of the true power of the work of the Greek poet (Hexter 2010, 26-7). This encounter revealed Homer to be a major new planet, that could change one's perception of the universe forever:

“Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken.”

In these lines Keats neatly used a conceit from Pope's introduction to the first volume of his translation of the *Iliad*, published in 1715 (on the genesis and intellectual context of Pope's translation, see Levine 1991, 181-217). He too, had compared Homer to a force of nature. The energy of his invention “was like a powerful star, which, in the violence of its course, drew all things within its vortex” (§ 22). Amidst this mighty violence Keats' new planet was born: “wanting yet an ampler sphere to expatiate in, he opened a new and boundless walk for his imagination, and created a world for himself in the invention of fable” (§ 23). Putting these images of sublime creative violence through Bertie's strainer creates a strange mélange, that might not be to everybody's taste.

In this contribution I will ask myself what thoughts might enter a reader's mind on first looking into another rather popular 17th century translation: Georges de Brébeuf's *La Pharsale*, composed in rhyming Alexandrines. Published in Paris by Antoine de Sommaville as a serial publication in 1654 and 1655, this work turned out to be the single most successful Lucan-translation of the whole century. It was widely distributed throughout Europe: I know of at least 12 different print editions within 30 years. Apparently it hit the right note at the right time.

Although it would be difficult to claim that Brébeuf's translation has had a similar effect on any reader of Lucan as Chapman's translation had on John Keats, the work most certainly merits attention on several accounts. We will situate the translation within its context and take a look at the translational norms used to produce the text. There are some points of topical and political interest to consider, too. Brébeuf's Lucan, however, is a compound creature much like Bertie's *mélange*. The French poet in addition composed a burlesque and self-deflating parody of Lucan's first book. Translation and travesty form a hybrid whole. Throughout we will consider how our encounter with Brébeuf's contradictory poet can help us to better grasp what kind of writer Lucan is.

2. Norms & Shapes

2.1 When Georges de Brébeuf published his version of Books 1 and 2 of the *Pharsalia* he did so with some hesitation. In fact, by publishing the work in series producing 5 installments of two books each, his publisher was testing the waters without committing himself too much. It would seem that publishing a translation by a virtually unknown poet of a work whose standing was far from established, amounted to taking a considerable financial gamble. Brébeuf's version, moreover, must be considered to be an active retranslation, that is: an alternative to an already existing one. In the year that the first installment of Brébeuf's *La Pharsale* was published, Michel de Marolles brought out a revision of his prose rendering, thus changing his mind about translating Lucan for the third time, having published earlier editions in 1623 and 1647. The reasons to opt for a retranslation in order to supersede an existing one (be they one's own, or those of other translators) lie with the entourage, the publishers, the reading public and the specific position of the translator within the cultural and political landscape (Pym 1998). When Marolles returned to the translation business in 1647, the field of literary translation had changed considerably. Translating poetry into prose, as Marolles did, had been supplanted by a vogue for poetical versions (Zuber 1969, 125-9; 138-9). Moreover, around the beginning of the 1650's the status of translations, which had been very high in the previous decades, was in steady decline (Zuber 1969, 140-9). In this regard it is telling that Brébeuf's publisher evidently felt he was taking a risk and that both of Lucan's translators were outsiders, players at the

margins of the Republic of Letters who were desperately trying to get in. Neither Michel de Marolles¹ nor Brébeuf would however manage to realize his ambitions. By 1654, the year he started publishing his Lucan translation, Brébeuf had gained himself a small reputation in the Salons for his playful, elegant and ironic poems written in the vein of the so-called *précieuses* movement (biography of Brébeuf in Harmand 1897). Most notorious of those was a virtuoso series of 150 epigrams on the same theme: a woman wearing too much make-up — at times brilliant, if somewhat tiring in the long run (Giraud 1977). Despite many attempts he would never succeed in securing a place of standing. He had entered the field of letters in 1650 with a travesty of the seventh book of Vergil's *Aeneid*. This work hadn't much impressed the reading public. In 1656 he would return to the genre of burlesque parody, now using Lucan's first book as source text. But once more this effort would prove to be a bit futile. His *Poésies diverses* from 1658 did receive a modicum of appreciation, as would do the *Éloges Poétiques* from 1661 and his *Entretiens Solitaires* of 1660 that were remarkable for their religious zeal. In the end Brébeuf left high society and retreated to Venoix (near Caen in Normandy, Northern France), where his younger brother was curate, without ever managing to obtain a position, let alone the much coveted pension from Mazarin he was hoping for.

2.2 Against this background it becomes the more remarkable that the translation of Lucan's *Pharsalia* did cause a stir and, as it happens, even turned out as something of an event (Guellouz 2004, 139). The success of the first installment was grudgingly registered by his rival translator Marolles: «on ne peut nier qu'il n'y ait de beaux vers qui conservent noblement le sens du Poète» (1654) even if the author did not produce a scrupulous transfer but had only a free imitation on offer — something which Brébeuf had stated himself in his preface. Indeed, the simple fact that Brébeuf had produced a Lucan translation in rhyming alexandrines gave the lie to the claim that Marolles had made in his earlier edition, published in 1647. He had thought that it was impossible to offer a

¹ Zuber's (1969, 138) qualification of his hopeless activity is devastating: «Attendant chaque fois du livre suivant la gloire que lui refusait le précédent, Marolles publia coup sur coup». In 1652 Du Ryer acknowledged the failure of his hastily finished Seneca-version with this quip (cited in Zuber 1969, 128): «Oui, j'ai cette vanité de croire que je pourrais être d'Ablancourt ou Vaugelas, et je suis devenu Marolles. O Fortune! Fortune!»

poetic version of Lucan without resorting to too much distortion (unless in the pedestrian *verso sciolto*). What had piqued Marolles most of all, however, was Brébeuf's complete neglect of his own previous efforts. This, he states, unmasks Brébeuf as an amateur:

«Mais ce qu'il auroit d'assez rare en cela, est que n'y l'un, ni l'autre n'eussent point vû les deux premiers editions de ma version, ni peut-estre mesme ouy parler qu'il y en eust eu aucune de Lucain en François, quoy que celles-cy se soient entierement debitées; car ce n'est pas trop la coustume de ne s'informer pas des gens qui ont travaillé sur les livres des Anciens, quand on en veut faire des versions ou quelque estude particulière» (Marolles 1654).

Throughout the preface it becomes clear that Marolles and Brébeuf hold to almost completely opposite translational norms. Marolles produces a prose version, aiming at what he calls precision (although it is a kind of precision that we would now rather consider free paraphrasing, see Ternaux 2000, 106-14) and clearly has scientific or philological aims. Indeed, his book contains preliminary material that is more at home in an edition than a translation. Brébeuf, on the other hand, strives to produce a text that can be read on its own, as an independent work that has power to appeal to the expectations of the general reading public, or «ceux qui n'entendent pas la langue de Lucain» as he formulates it (*Advertissement* 1, 1654). It is the general reader who will decide whether the author has succeeded or not:

«Le Sçauray Lecteur, par le bon où le mauvais accueil que trouveront auprès de vous ces deux livres que ie hazarde, l'opinion que i'en dois avoir, & s'il est à propos que ie passe plus avant, où s'il faut que ie m'arreste» (*Advertissement* 1, 1654).

Learned men, he adds, can always turn to the original. With this general reading public in mind, Brébeuf has hazarded some daring transpositions and tried his hand at many a radical change. In his own words «i'ay adjousté, i'ay retranché, i'ay changé beaucoup de choses, au lieu de m'assujettir à le suivre par tout, ie m'elloigne quelques fois volontairement de luy» (*Advertissement* 1, 1654). This is all in open opposition to the aims of Marolles whose self-proclaimed goal was «d'estre un

peu fidelle dans ma version, de n'user de la paraphrase que le moins qu'il m'est possible». The success of Brébeuf proved that despite the umbrage that some people took at his liberties, the general reader did indeed sanction the choices he had made. The most important objection of his critics, as Brébeuf notes himself in the preface to the second installment, also published in 1654, was «que ie promets Lucain, & que ie ne le donne pas, que ie me produits sous son nom, au lieu de le produire luy mesme». Once more he claims that the only judge he respects with regard to his work is the general reader: «Je vous laisse donc, LECTEUR, la liberté toute entière de iuger comme il vous plaira de cette Traduction» (*Advertissement* 2, 1654). In both of these prefaces Brébeuf plays down the importance of the literary specialist, the professional reader, and instead puts the power of judgement with the general reader, the public of laymen. As such he engages in important developments within the republic of letters: the establishment of a new audience of readers (a *public* in French), constituting a new field within the cultural status quo, viz. a group of people, operating in the public arena, previously unable to interfere in the cultural field with enough authority, but now empowered and entitled to hold to self-determined literary norms — an evolution famously sketched by Auerbach in his 1951 essay *La Cour et la Ville* (the discussion was nuanced and refocused by Joan DeJean 1997, 34-77; see also Viala 1985). In the 1650's this process was evidently going strong and Brébeuf uses it to demine the objections that the self-appointed priests of good cultural practices had voiced. But of course: in his world the court is still the true source of any authority, as becomes evident when he states that «les plus delicats & les plus intelligens de la Cour ont approuvé entièrement cette hardiesse innocente dont quelques autres veulent faire une temerité condamnable» (*Advertissement* 2, 1654).

2.3 Taking note of the remarkable freedom that de Brébeuf allows himself, and his constant reference to the taste and expectations of the general reader that is part of the other prefaces too, one might hold that the relationship between the source text, Lucan's epic, and the target text, the translation, is established by mapping present concerns on the script of the past and less by linguistic transposition. We cannot approach this translation as the product of mere interlinguistic transcoding (Giannossa 2012). It aims at producing a text that may stand in for the source text,

and that conveys meanings and information to the public that the Latin text could not or could no longer access (Neubert & Shreve 1992). Rather than being a mere transposition of the Latin text, the translation becomes a means to set up some sort of continuity between present and past (Mildonian 1995) by turning out an independent recreation. In the prefaces Brébeuf is quite explicit about applying a cultural filter necessitated by the differences in socio-cultural norms. He is producing an *overt version*, rather than a *translation* of the epic (on the difference see House 1997, esp. 72-8). Sometimes the application of this filter leads him to the supply of additional information but most of the time it results in leaving out many features of Lucan's text and accentuating specific elements. His strategy in doing this, however, is always motivated by his willingness to reach the particular audience he has in mind for this translation. Thus, although translating a classic, hallowed text he is constantly aware of the contemporary norms of expectation and accordingly, makes many adjustments. As modern readers of the translation we activate a wide spectrum of discourse-worlds, that all together create a multidimensional engagement with Lucan's epic (House 1997, 113). As a matter of fact the 21st century reader — the more so if she is a classicist — can access the text via four discourse-worlds, possibly all at once and certainly not easily kept apart. She becomes involved in the discourse worlds (1) of the original readership, (2) of Brébeuf's contemporary readership accessing the original text, (3) of those contemporary readers of the translation functioning in its own culture and finally (4) of the modern reader with her own frame and discourse world accessing the text through all three previous discourse worlds at the same time. It is a heady mixture that turns Brébeuf's translation into a catalyst promoting a particular reaction to Lucan's epic.

2.4 Brébeuf's Lucan-translation partook of the epic experiments and generic cross-breeding that characterized much of the mid-century epic poetry across Europe, by integrating elements from romance epic and the newly established genre of the novel. This turned his text into a rather interesting attempt at finding a contemporary solution to the difficulty of writing historical epic poetry (or mythical for that matter), something which the French regretted being unable to produce in a convincing way, despite many efforts to this effect (Goupillaud 2005; Méniel 2004). The integration of elements taken over from romance need

not cause too much wonder. In France the *poème héroïque* at this moment had two referents: one as designation of what we would call an epic poem, the other as definition of the massive, multivolume romance or novel, *le roman*. The most eminent author of this type of work was Madeleine De Scudéry, known above all for two ten volume bestsellers, *Artamène, ou le Grand Cyrus* (1649-53) and *Clélie, histoire romaine* (1654-60). The influence of this type of *poème héroïque* that at the time was exceedingly popular in the salons of the *précieuses*, accounts for the most extensive addition to Lucan's epic that Brébeuf produced: the insertion of a love-story into the witch-scene from book 6. The corpse that Erichtho revives, who is given the name Burrhus, turns out to be Sextus Pompey's rival for the attentions of the beautiful Octavie. As such the situation becomes even more painful for the revived corpse, who claims:

«C'est pour moi, répond il, une injuste contrainte
de servir d'un rival la bassesse et la crainte,
d'un rival inhumain qui ne me permet pas
de pouvoir en repos jouir de mon trépas
dont les projets honteux et la coupable envie
insultent à mon ombre aussi bien qu'à ma vie.»

But for Sextus it all is rather upsetting as well: the devastating prediction that he has asked for, is produced by a personal enemy. The whole situation becomes even more complicated when the girl appears on the scene. She is distressed in her turn because she detects her lover having a homely conversation with Sextus, whose advances she loaths. Moreover she is shocked at the behaviour of Burrhus, the revived corpse, because to her mind he is trying to leave her without notice. In the end, the lovers are reconciled, but of course Burrhus has to die again. Really: very sad. The scene is pathetic, and loaded with every sort of heightened emotion available. It could have held its own in any romanesque novel. The success of this major addition can be made out from the name under which Brébeuf's translation was known among *précieuses*: *La Thessalienne* (Harmand 1897, 175 n. 3).

This sort of addition is not the only element in Brébeuf's translational strategy aimed at producing a text that would find favour with the general reading public, rather than with the *public des scavans*. He leaves out quite a bit of Lucan's text too (while at the same time

expanding on what he does take over). Much of the more recondite erudition that Lucan displays is elided: geographical or astronomical as well as more antiquarian descriptions or the mentioning of religious and other practices. In such case he only takes over the general meaning, if necessary. Perhaps he thought that his public did not care for exotic sounding names and details they could in no way understand. To cite one among many examples, this is how Brébeuf translates *Phars.* 7, 389-96:

gentes Mars iste futuras
obruet et populos aeui uenientis in orbem
erepto natale feret. Tunc omne Latinum
fabula nomen erit; Gabios Veiosque Coramque
puluere uix tectae poterunt monstrare ruinae
Albanosque lares Laurentinosque penates,
rus uacuum, quod non habitet nisi nocte coacta
inuitus questusque Numam iussisse senator.

«Par ce cruel effort par cet assaut farouche
Cent illustres rameaux meurent dedans leur Souche
C'est pour cela qu' un jour la vertu des Romains
Ne sera qu' une Fable ou des phantômes vains
Que de la vieille Rome & l'honneur & le zele
Ne fera qu'un beau songe à la Rome nouvelle»

The paradox that future generations (*populos aeui uenientis*) are being robbed of their birthday (*erepto natale*) is replaced by the neat and effective image of branches dying in the stump of the tree felled in this battle. This brings the comparison of Pompey to a dying tree in book 1, 136-43 to mind — maybe a compensation for the freewheeling reduction noticeable in the rest of the translation. Gabii, Veii and Cora have all disappeared as have the *Lares Albani* and the *Penates* of Laurentum: all are replaced by generalities as “Roman virtue” and “the honour and vigour of Ancient Rome” that are more easily understood by the general reader than Lucan's specific details that she might well consider to be not *realia* but *arcana*. What gets lost on the way, however, is the evident connection between these verses and the description of the devastation of Italy in 1, 24-31. In addition the play with *nomen* and *fabula* is also no longer accessible for his readers, and with it disappears

the evocation of Anchises' prophecy in *Aeneid* 6,773-6 (Narducci 2002, 167-9). The once famous Latin cities cited (apart from Gabii) were from early on nothing but ruined sites, neigh impossible to find and used as ciphers for the transitory nature of all great things (Wick 2004, 405). In fact, the qualification of the *penates Laurentinos* as a future *rus uacuum* is supremely ironic in that no one knew where to find the fabled city of Laurentum (or if it had ever really existed). The Laurentines and their settlements had always been the stuff *fabulae* were made from, in their country conceived of as a genuine wilderness². It is a fitting ending to this elegant stroll through time along cities and settlements that all but one had been destroyed in the course of Rome's rise — long before the fight at Pharsalus. Their fame had ensured their continued existence through legend. In Brébeuf's translation the obliteration has become total: the legends have finally died too. Still, the passage as translated functions more or less like it did in the Latin text: the connection between books 7 and 1 is still intact, if watered down, and the general idea is kept on board.

2.4 The translational strategy of this small sample can be found throughout the translation (Harmand 1897, 153-211; Terneaux 2000, 114-9; Mildonian 1995, 46-51). Brébeuf approaches Lucan's text with a logic of his own. This is driven by his striving for sustained greatness and lofty thoughts, coupled with the dominance of the *aptum* and the *decorum* in his poetical thinking. These concepts articulate how to give the narrative its fitting form and corresponding stylistic elaboration. They are both ethical and aesthetical categories, caught in the idea of 'normality'. Hence his appeal to the general reader. We find Brébeuf working at both levels to adapt Lucan's epic to the demands of his times³. He enters the fabric of the text and contrives (or discovers) a thread through which he tries to connect the different parts of an episode. This leading idea is

² In agreement with the liminal and mythical aura that surrounds Vergil's king Latinus (Jenkyns 1998, 463-515), his city is never named in the *Aeneid*. This leaves its exact location in doubt and enables the narrator not to commit himself as to whether Lavinium is the same city or not — probably not. As Purcell (1998, 11) states: "It was important that the city of Latinus had no future, leaving the Romans homeless on both sides of their lineage. The Laurentine shore is the void out of which Rome came." His paper offers an excellent presentation of the complicated and paradoxical Roman conception of the Laurentine territory.

³ «...j'ay crû estre obligé d'en user ainsi, pour m'accommoder au goust du Siecle» (*Advertissement* 3, 1655).

then often foregrounded by reordering the text and by pruning what is deemed to be irrelevant to the central theme. He either formulates this thought as a general concept at the beginning of a passage, or elaborates on it to bring a specific focus to the text. Not only is specialist knowledge left out, he also omits thoughts or facts that apparently shocked the 'good taste' of his audience⁴. Everything alienating is smoothed out. On the linguistic level we find that Lucan's striking admixture of prosaic, archaic and high-poetical language is turned into a more regular and even (high) poetical register⁵. Variety is used with more balance. The identification with the creative force behind the poem can perhaps explain the many passages in which Brébeuf inserts tirades that sound like Lucan, but as a matter of fact are not in the Latin text or where he foregrounds an idea that as such is not formulated in the source text⁶. All in all the translation offers a remarkably effective combination of reduction and expansion. By focusing on particular traits of Lucan's text and elaborating on them, Brébeuf manages at times even to heighten the hyperbolic effects of the original (Cogny 1977). On the other hand some of Brébeuf's omissions seem to be due to his inability to properly interpret or, occasionally, to understand the text. Moreover, his focus is mostly on particular episodes and smaller units, less on larger ones which leads him to neglect recurrent imaginary or other types of connection between different (sometimes adjacent) parts of the epic. Whatever his aims, he certainly alters the reader's experience of the epic text. We will illustrate this with a quick overview of his handling of the closing part of the first book.

⁴ «I'ay supprimé en beaucoup d'endroits ce qui m'a paru foible, où ce que i'y ay trouvé de choquant ou de superflu. Sur tout, ie n'ay pû me résoudre [...] à promener ennuyeusement vostre attention parmi les gibets & les voiries» (*Advertissement* 3, 1655).

⁵ «Lucain ne donne pas toujours un mesme essor à son imagination ny une mesme vigueur à ses pensées [...] du moins ie tasche en quelque façon de rehausser ceux qui tombent, & ce n'est pas faute de soin ny d'application, si ie ne suis quelques fois un peu plus fort que luy dans les endroits ou il est le plus foible» (*Advertissement* 1, 1654). In the fourth *Advertissement* (1655) he explicitly compares his — self declared lesser — efforts with the lofty ideal as incarnated by Corneille's *Mort de Pompée*. Key terms are height ('rehaussé', 'si haut') and forcefulness ('force', 'vigueur') both contributing to 'majesté'.

⁶ «...i'ay quelques fois mélé mes pensées avec les siennes, i'ay tâché assez souvent d'adjouter des beautez étrangères à ses beautez naturelles» (*Advertissement* 2, 1654). Yet «les endroits que ie supprime ne sont pas meilleurs que ceux que i'ajoute, & [...] ses vices ne valent pas mieux que mes vertus» (*Advertissement* 3, 1655).

2.5 After a sketch of the speedy evacuation of Rome (1, 466-522), which we will not discuss here, Lucan provides a succinct catalogue of the many prodigies (28 in total) that accompany the outbreak of war (1, 522-83). It is a list that is broken up by mythological similes or analogies which provide a specific color (that of tragedy), evincing a deeper and darker dimension to the events in Rome. All stories referred to function as paradigms for the murder of family members and are powerful symbols of internecine war: Thyestes, Polynices and Eteocles, Agave, Lycurgus and Hercules Furens. These myths, with the Theban stories much put to the fore, form a recurrent pattern throughout the epic and thus connect many emotion-charged moments of the civil war story (Ambühl 2005). They are also part of the dramatic build up that makes the powerful finale to the book so coherent. With the appearance of the Erinys (572-4) laying siege on Rome the mythic characters enter the stage of reality, thus eliding the boundary between what is happening in history and its analogy in mythology. It makes the scene truly eerie. The next section brings on the religious specialists and their leader, Arruns (1, 584-638) in an attempt at purification of the city. During a long procession (593-604), Arruns buries the thunderbolts (604-8) and next prepares to sacrifice the victim, the entrails of which he will read (608-38). At this point the Theban cycle is intertextually present, through the obvious link with the similar sacrifice made by Tiresias in Seneca's *Oedipus* (vv. 353-70; Narducci 1979, 149-52). The horror at what he sees is made almost palpable through the very precise description of the entrails and Arruns' shuddering reaction. Next in line is the astrologer Nigidius Figulus (639-72). His reading of the turmoil in the skies (maybe some resonance here of Seneca's *Thyestes* 789-883?) leads up to a more explicit interpretation of the future. Even more detailed is the final prophecy of the book, made by a maenadic *matrona* (673-95). This scene was clearly conceived as the climax to the episode of the prodigies and to the whole of book 1. The ecstatic vision, made out of disparate building blocks (Roche 2009, 375-6), is introduced once more by way of a simile. The *matrona* dons the trappings of a Thracian maenad, which connects her to both Agave and Lycurgus (*Edonis*). Her raving right through the stunned city (676) brings the Erinys to mind. Again mythic characters spill over into the real world. The combination of Dionysian furor and Apollonian inspiration returns us as well to 1, 64-5, while her opening words reach back to the very beginning of book 1. As a result the whole

scene is turned into a vatic rewriting of the prologue. After this rhapsodic hallucination, she faints.

Brébeuf's translation of the whole sequence reframes Lucan's text to a large extent. He leaves out all mythological analogies or similes, except the last one, where he adds details to make the image more striking («une Bacchante / Les yeux estincelans & la bouche écumante»). All of the others have disappeared. The Erinys (now dubbed «une Furie») consequently no longer makes the transition between the different levels of narrative, although the connection with the *matrona* («une Dame en fureur») can still be made. Other elements have been left out, most of them rather specific, cultural or ritual details. Probably due to their antiquarian nature, sometimes because they were deemed offensive. We find, for example, that the ritual aspect is omitted from the list of the minor priestly colleges (1, 596-604), which robs the catalogue of its variation and leaves us with a mere inventory. The number of prodigies has halved to 14, they are filled out and reordered. We no longer learn that Arruns has the deformed foetuses from sterile wombs burned (589-91). Dozens of verses have not made it into French. Yet, the text of Brébeuf is not noticeably shorter — on the contrary: 230 alexandrines for 173 hexameters. For a part this results from formulating more explicitly. Lucan leaves much understated, despite his love of hyperbole and exaggeration. His epic voice is a remarkable blend of different characteristics that create a loosely knit narrative fabric that at the same time is very dense. This necessitates a lot of work by the reader in order to arrive at a full understanding of the often sprawling and paratactic sentences, built with many terse expressions. He strives for drastic effect, but does so by often relatively sober means⁷. It is almost the negative image of Brébeuf's love of emphatic, expansive and balanced grandeur. No wonder that it takes three lines to translate Lucan's striking, multi-interpretable *sententia* in 1, 522 (*Pompeio fugiente timent*):

⁷ It is a concoction that has to be experienced, rather than explained. Good anatomies of Lucan's style can be found in e.g. Mayer 1981, 10-25; Fantham 1992, 34-43; Roche 2009, 51-60. Dingel 2005 offers an on-the-fly reading, illustrating the complex interplay of the different ingredients. The intermingling of archaisms, paronomasia and other tropes of emphasis, the intense use of *brevitas* in *sententiae* that sometime turns them into riddles, the frequency of hyperbole and paradox: they all contribute to Lucan's breaking the norm of the *aptum*, if we define the norm in terms of *perspicuitas*. Indeed, his is a striving for sublime *obscuritas* (on which see Fuhrmann 1966, esp. 55-9; 66-9).

«La fuite de Pompée autorise leur crainte,
Et dans l'étonnement du plus grand des Humains
Les Dieux marquent assez la chute des Romains.»

These verses, however, also illustrate his preference to stress the pathetic and emotional quality of a scene through unequivocal additions. Noticeably so in his version of the reaction of the participants: Arruns' despairing voice gets 14 lines in French, for 6, 5 Latin ones; Figulus speaks 54 alexandrines but only 31 hexameters; the final vision is almost doubled (17 verses become 32). The most striking addition to the finale, however, introduces a theme that is foreign to what Lucan effects. In the opening catalogue of prodigies the disappearance of the Vestal fire (a disturbing omen if ever there was one) is coupled with the bonfire of the *Feriae Latinae*, where the flame splits (1, 549-52). This imitation of Eteocles' and Polynices' pyre introduces the Theban theme in Lucan's text. All of this is left out by Brébeuf, who in its stead inserts these lines:

«Ces Demy-dieux, que Rome a placez sur les astres,
Ont senty nos travaux & pleuré nos désastres,
Les carreaux de la foudre en frappant les autels
Ont d'avec les Humains banny les Immortels.»

The text vents bitterness about the destruction of Roman beliefs in times of civil war and hints at the idea that Rome's gods are a sham. The thought is picked up at the end of the description of the religious procession, where the catalogue is rounded off by two lines that once more foreground the pathetic quality of the scene:

«Tous marchent en bel ordre & poussent vers les Dieux
Des vœux & des soupirs qui ne vont point aux cieux.»

Although foreign to Lucan's scene here, religious doubt or even desperation is a dimension that is important elsewhere and of general relevance to his epic. Particularly connected with Brébeuf's addition to this scene is the emotional outburst during the battle of Pharsalus (7, 387-459, esp. 445-59, with an echo in 9, 598-604). In his text Lucan regularly projects his discontentment with traditional beliefs, holding that the gods are either not concerned with human reality or do not exist. Often

the narrator voices an epicurean (or Lucretian) diffidence in the workings of regular religious practice and mythical explanations. In addition, different ways to become a god are explored within the text (Nero's, Caesar's, Cato's, for a part Pompey's too), which all have in common that they basically are of a political nature: human characters, acting on the political stage are the only source of anything that happens (Chaudhuri 2014, 156-194 explores the dynamics of what he calls disenchantment and remystification respectively). History is man-made within a universe, run — seemingly at random — by anonymous gods. By grasping the possibilities that open up for him, man becomes the equal of the gods. Consequently, by calling himself god, by acting out the role of a god, or by being called god, man becomes god. Brébeuf was seemingly much attuned to this religious element, and the disenchantment-theme in particular. He introduces it, or develops upon it, whenever he gets the opportunity. Looked at through the lens of his Christian devotion, an ancient author dismantling from within what he considers to be ancient superstition was especially attractive. This specific slant of the translation regularly unearths what can be considered to be an undercurrent in the *Pharsalia*, as it does here⁸. The sequence of Lucan is wholly in line with Roman religious practice (Beard et al. 1998, 35-8), as the different prophecy scenes (but the last) are clearly embedded in a convincing ritual context. The detailed account as a consequence anchors it compellingly in Roman reality and the world of his readers. The intertextual dimension and the comparisons endow it with a mythical aura and lift it out of the daily routines (Walde 2012, esp. § 11). The extispicy convinces through this combination of specificity and tragico-mythical undertones. Arruns' wish to be in the wrong becomes all the more pathetic. Likewise the extensive astrological observations of Figulus are probably more true to reality than used to be thought (Hannah 1996). Both seers stress the necessity of interpretation and hence the possibility of drawing erroneous conclusions (1, 634-7; 1, 642-50). This, again, is consistent with Roman conceptions of the *disci-*

⁸ For example, he also puts the religious element to the fore in his translation of the description of the Massilian wood (3, 399-425), see Cogny 1981, 280-3, turning Caesar's destruction of the wood almost into an act of enlightenment. In that regard Brébeuf's focus is in line with the interpretation of Leigh 1999. To a certain extent Brébeuf turns Lucan into a Christian author (Harmand 1897, 174-5): Fate and the gods become one, *natura* is often translated as «Dieu».

plina Etrusca as the outcome of a malleable tradition, created through discussion, adaptation and interpretation (Santangelo 2013, 83-114, esp. 102-7 on Cicero's emphasis on the interpretative need). Brébeuf's translation of the final section of book 1 omits the tragic myths used by Lucan to mythologize historical reality. As a result his translation foregrounds the historicity. The vatic closing scene at once is pronouncedly a spectacular finale. By having the narrator introduce the motif of religious doubt in the description of the ritual context, Brébeuf anticipates the diffidence of the seers. For his reader the possibility opens up that this whole sequence should be understood as an indictment of the powerless decay eating away at the heart of the republican institutions. She perceives the inadequacy or inability of the Romans to cope with the radical shifts in their world. This brings the pathetic aspect to the fore. Religious norms and laws are scrupulously honored, but to no avail. People have no clue as to how to react to the dramatic events that are breaking apart their Republic. They try to find some support in their religion. Yet, their wishes and sighs will not reach the heavens above. Reality cannot be evaded: they are pleading a lost cause. This idea will become even more prominent in the *Lucaïn travesty*, albeit in a very different way.

3. Reality in Disguise

3.1 Brébeuf's translation of Lucan's civil war epic appeared in the first year after the end of a tumultuous episode in France's history, the revolutionary era generally known as the *Fronde* (Ranum 1993). This unpleasant period of civil unrest and bloody internal war knew two major episodes: the *Fronde parlementaire* (1648-9), was followed by the *Fronde des Nobles* (1650-3). When the civil wars finally ended, the whole country, wearied of anarchy and disgusted with the princes, came to look to the king's party as the party of order and settled government. Thus the *Fronde* somehow prepared the way for the absolutism of Louis XIV. This period of disruption of necessity provided an important point of reference for any reader that bought Brébeuf's volume. In the preface to his fourth installment (1655), for example, Brébeuf characterizes Caesar in no uncertain terms as an extraordinarily talented man, who has gone astray:

«ce qui seroit la consolation de la Terre dans un esprit modéré, devient la malheur du Monde dans une ame revoltée. Il y a de grands crimes qui ne peuvent estre l'ouvrage que des grandes vertus, il y a des injustices dont les esprits bas ne sont point capables, & qui ne peuvent estre achevées que par la vigueur de l'imagination, par la solidité du iugement & par la fermeté du courage. Cependant vous ne pouvez pas demeurer d'accord que [...] les talens extraordinaires meritent nos adorations & nos encens quand l'application est funeste.»

The qualification of the Roman general could not but bring to the reader's mind the Prince of Condé, who during his remarkable career turned from the monarchy's military defender to an outlawed ally of the Spanish enemy (Béguin 1999 analyses the intricate social, political and economical network within which this multifaceted figure operated). We should be very wary in reading such indictments of Caesar as statements of a republican ideal — let alone an ideology. In fact, the *Fronde* is such a murky period and difficult to assess, because serious alternatives to dynastic monarchy were never really developed. The *Lucain travesty* which Georges de Brébeuf produced himself a year after the last installment of his translation had been published, will prove the point.

3.2 *Lucain travesty* is a travesty of Lucan's first book in the manner of Scarron (Ternaux 2000, 217-42; Leclerc 2010, 238-42, with a careful edition of the text on pages 243-338; Brunel 2013). With it Brébeuf came back to the genre when his first effort, published in 1650, had not gained him the reputation he had hoped for. The latter had been a direct challenge to Scarron's excellence in the field by taking on the seventh book of Vergil's *Aeneid*. Upon its failing he had taken to translating Lucan, with much happier results. In his own words, the return to the genre with his *Lucain travesty* in 1656, was due to the encouragement of «quelquesois personnes de grand mérite». This new burlesque poem is quite remarkable. By 1656 the genre of burlesque travesty, which had been practiced frenetically in the latter half of the 1640's, had lost much of its appeal (see Leclerc 2008, 27-122 for an overview). Brébeuf's *Lucain travesty* tries to give a new lease of life to a dying genre. It is, moreover, based on a text that the author had previously translated with serious intentions. This is a novelty and even the sole example of such

an operation (Brunel 2013, 55). This makes Brébeuf's *Lucaïn travesty* a paradoxical if not contradictory venture to an ever greater degree than other burlesque rewritings.

The work partakes in the general ludic desacralization which is the basic characteristic of the genre. Travesties typically trivialize the great and revered texts from antiquity by transforming them into ordinary stories, filled with vulgarities, with argot, with unsanctioned language and incompatible registers. This sets up an inverse relation between the content and the formal qualities used to express this content. Yet, these texts should not be read as setting out to destroy the classical heritage. In fact, by taking aim at the great classics, they confirm the standing and central importance of these texts. They can only function through collaboration and complicity of the public (Leclerc 2008, 125-227). What amuses in these texts is the interplay between the two textual worlds, since the original is not the object of complete annihilation (Brunel 2013, 65). In fact, for the travesty to work its effects, the classical model has to be kept present. These works still embrace the heroic and the sublime, while foregrounding the triviality of it all. Moreover, parody uses the same writing techniques that are discernible in Brébeuf's translation and those of his contemporaries, but does so in a discordant linguistic register. Although such an operation could be read as an act of aggression against classical, humanist ideals, both stylistic and ethical, it, more importantly, also generates a liberating dynamic, breaking the sterilizing hold of paralyzing admiration (Beugnot 1986, 91). Given that we are dealing with *carnavalesque bouffonneries* the dynamic is, of course, not straightforward (Nédélec 2004). In some instances authors opt for an easy, reductive approach, but it would be a reduction from our part to confine travesty to this aspect: these works can be ingenuous and relevant too (Nédélec 2002). The burlesque travesties are the product of what Dorothea Scholl calls a *Para-Ästhetik* (Scholl 2004). The dominant aesthetic position is provoked, turned inside out, played upon in such a way that its continued evolution is guaranteed (Leclerc 2008, 218-20). The para-aesthetical quality of the travesty is the emanation of the transitional nature of this period, during which classicist poetics gradually developed in France. In this context the transgression of the literary norms by creating aesthetically monstrosities was a viable alternative (Brunel 2013, 68). The parodic deformation of the classical texts through lowering and mixing incongruous elements, upsets the catego-

ries used to order the worlds of literature, of language, and of power (Scholl 2004, 47) and in doing so it opens up possibilities that are unavailable within the dominant paradigm. One of the most remarkable aspects of the French travesties is their extraordinary linguistic creativity. Always out to surprise their readers the burlesque poets revitalized the language through a dynamic of renewal and invention (Leclerc 2008, 250-5; Bar 1960). The genre is also bound up with the *Fronde*: the vogue of the burlesque came to its end together with this revolutionary period. A new cultural order was developing in tandem with the political, and the public now looked askance at the until recently so popular genre, deeming it childish and somewhat crude. The temporary mix up of high and low, meaningful and meaningless — that is both symptomatic of and instrumental to cultural change (Fuß 2001, 154-231) — gradually came to an end, thus preparing the way for a newly formed and developing sublime conscience (for this recurrent dynamic see Harpham 2006 (1982), 18-21; 73-4; an anatomy of the new taste in Chantalat 1992).

3.3 No wonder, then, that Brébeuf, contributing to the last wave of travesties, claims that his aim with the *Lucain travesty* is to purify the hybrid genre, by doing away with the more extreme vulgar expressions, reigning in the excesses and introducing a new heptasyllabic meter for the genre:

«J'ay changé jusqu'à la mesure dont il estoit depuis longtemps en possession, je l'ay purgé autant que j'ay pû des termes qui corrompent nostre Langue, & que l'usage ne souffre plus: j'ay tâché à mettre l'enjoüement dans la pensée beaucoup plus que dans les paroles, & à trouver une raillerie de bon sens, & non pas une raillerie bouffonne» (Leclerc 2010, 243-4 = Brébeuf 1656, iv).

It is evident that his project shares in the newly arising normalization both of the language and of the idea of the comical (analysis in Ternaux 2000, 228-33; Bar 1977). The *raillerie de bon sens* is connected with a specific function of the anachronisms that typically are used to bring the esteemed classical figures within the sphere of daily banality. In the *Lucain travesty* these contemporary transformations turn Lucan's epic into a social and political satire on the *Fronde* (Leclerc 2010, 240; Brunel 2013, 65-7; Ternaux 2000, 235-42; Bar 1977, 145 on how linguistic

anachronisms contribute to the satirical dynamic). The work not so much satirizes Lucan's epic in itself, but uses the satirical potential inherent in Lucan's text to produce a satire of its own times. Simultaneously the *Lucain travesty* offers an effort to emancipate the genre by endowing it with a more noble mien. The comical power is not to be based on linguistic vulgarities. Laughter in the *Lucain travesty* depends on the moral implications: the poet wants his public to ponder serious matters while making merry.

Throughout the travesty the main characters in the epic, Caesar and Pompey, are identified with major figures from the *Fronde*. The former with Louis, Prince de Condé and the latter with the *Fronde Parlementaire* in general. The work is an indictment of a surplus of ambition and the bloody consequences for the common populace of these factional wars, for which both the parliamentarians and the *Grands Nobles* are held responsible (so this text is neither 'caesarian' nor 'pompeian'). Brébeuf attempts to transform a collective experience into a poem that speaks more directly to the women and men of his own times than the translation. Yet, it also makes more explicit the possible implications of the serious translation. It becomes especially more self-evident that the radical devaluation of Caesar in the *Advertissement* to the fourth installment was meant to bring the *Fronde des Nobles* to minds. And specifically to blend Louis, *Grand de Condé* with Caesar: both from a noble house, both excellent generals and both at war with their own country, driven by boundless ambition. *La Pharsale* becomes an exploration of what such excess of ambition can lead to.

There is, however, a further and important dimension to Brébeuf's paradoxical travesty of his own translation. In the latter he had used different strategies to intensify the emotional and pathetic impact of the work in order to engage the reader even more strongly in the horrific and extreme world of the epic. Having inflated this balloon almost to bursting point, he now puts on the fool's cap, choses a sharp needle and lets it explode to the merriment of all and asunder:

«Je veux pendant que je suis
franc de chagrin & d'ennuis,
pendant que fureur divine
s'allume dans ma poitrine,
et qu'enflé comme un ballon,

je suis tout plein d'Apollon,
 vous chanter à la François
 la guerre plus que bourgeoise
 qui se fist au champs Gregeois
 entre deux riches Bourgeois.»

The tone of the *Lucaïn travesty* is immediately set. The burlesque version clearly trivializes the poetical inspiration (perhaps taken over from the *laus Neronis* or in anticipation of the closing prophecy⁹) and the heroes of the war are but two rich *bourgeois*. The narrator also opens up a dialogue with his public: he sets the scene for cooperation in the opening sentence: «je veux ... vous chanter». The epic elevation is brought down to the level of the ordinary reader, not looking for exaltation. It is the standard narrative pact between author of the burlesque and his readership (Leclerc 2010, 5)¹⁰. Brébeuf deflates what he himself had inflated yet he has chosen as a source text an epic that of itself always had been something of a poetical provocation. As such we might even hold that the travesty offers a reading of Lucan's first book that had been part of its DNA from the very first. It just makes it operative for its own times. The combination of translation and travesty provides the modern reader with an interesting prism, the trivialized sublime, through which to look at Lucan's epic. In the next paragraphs we will tentatively explore some of the colors in its spectrum.

3.4 The sacralization of everything ancient had fossilized the subversive power of Lucan's aesthetic position. His text might have been much discussed and even abrogated. Indeed, often his poem was considered to be the polar opposite of Vergil's both in poetical and in ideological

⁹ Indeed, the vatic scene is rendered through the same image: «Donc cette vieille damnée, / Ecumante et forcenée, / Pleine de son vieux demon, / Et ronde comme vn balon, / Où diable, s'écria-t'elle, / Où diable est-ce qu'on m'apelle?». Another intertext for readers well-versed in Lucan, is the description in book 9 of the death of hapless Nasidius (9, 789-804). Brébeuf had translated the passage with much relish en efficiency, ending with «ce corps si monstrueux, que par un nouveau Sort / il croist dans le trépas & s'enfle après la mort». Earlier he had described him as «un globe animé». Quite a few editions of the translation carried a frontispiece for book 9 featuring the grotesque deformations of Cato's soldiers under attack by the snakes. Nasidius, the human balloon features prominently.

¹⁰ Brébeuf keeps this pact between narrator and public operative through remarks such as «car a tout dire entre nous» (v. 73), «si ma pensée est la vostre» (1335) and «mais à vous parler sans fard» (2913).

terms¹¹. Yet, in the end, it remained just as good part of the high-brow, high-blown classical tradition. This made it as viable a subject for the game of travesty as any other. These parodic inventions cash in on the general reverence towards classical texts by engaging them in a ludic, irreverent manner. In Brébeuf's exercise the ludic element flows over from the poem itself into the accompanying foreword. In this preface the deconstructive intentions of the poet become more explicit. Next to his (serious?) claim that he will bring some order to the disorderly world of the travesty we are informed that the author will 'correct' Lucan's bias:

«je prens bien souvent une route toute contraire à la sienne; je contredis quelquefois ses sentimens au lieu de les traduire; j'abaisse ce qu'il élève; & avec les Historiens les mieux receus je découvre de la foiblesse où il n'a voulu voir que de la force & de la resolution» (Leclerc 2010, 244 = Brébeuf 1656, iv-v).

Instead of making gods out of ordinary men (as his contemporary Saint-Évremond put it, see Guellouz 2004, 151) he claims to have used the "best ancient sources" to remediate the historical distortions. Indeed, the theme of men being the equals of the gods is prominent in the travesty. In this carnival of literary genres it becomes hard to gauge anyone's intentions. When the clown is king anything goes. Even so, the statement, which is puzzling to say the least, opens up new possibilities for the reader. It creates an opening that can bring her to something that lies at the heart of Lucan's epic text. On a surface level Brébeuf's statement is a retort to Marolles' bitter critique as to his shortcomings as a serious scholar. In this burlesque introduction he puts on the air and the haughty looks of the respectable historian, who seems to be able to extract the Truth from the Ancient Texts, by comparing the different sources and judging them *sine ira et studio*. Philological rigor is carnivalized and used to legitimize an operation of downgrading: the end-result of all this thorough research is the transformation of Lucan's grandiose epic story to the level of a family quarrel, between two bourgeois, fought out in the streets. This, he claims, is bringing Lucan's aggrandizement back to

¹¹ This was due to the influence of Aristotelian poetics, especially as formulated by Tasso. See, also for further references: Méniel 2004, 57-64; Zeller 2009; Paleit 2013, 53-91; Maes 2013b, 407-9. In reaction to the dominant discourse about Lucan among English renaissance specialists, Paleit urges us to go light on the ideological angle.

more realistic dimensions. At the same time he had himself inflated the text to new emphatic and hyperbolic heights. His statement here offers a complete inversion of his aims as expounded in the first *Advertissement* (cited above in note 5). Although he is of course right to state that «dans la Pharsale enjouée, bien plus que dans la sérieuse, la coppie est souvent contraire à l'Original», his intentions with the travesty nevertheless are in accord with a fundamental aspect of the *Pharsalia*. For the epic partakes of an aesthetic position that can be defined as Neronian grotesque (Maes 2013a). The hallmarks of this aesthetic are seriousness that suddenly evokes hilarious laughter, the ridiculous that suddenly becomes threatening and horrific and vice versa. The laughing poet is caught out by mythologized heroism and scary realism. This fluctuating dynamic is used in an attempt to get a hold on meaningless reality. In order to be able to catch the double-sidedness of the epic within the constraints of his times and using the cultural tools that were available to him Brébeuf had to split up the translator's job between two *personae*: the high-flown poet with serious ambitions and his jesting double. I am not claiming that this was really a conscious operation on the French poet's part — in fact, his statement in the preface contradicts this. Brébeuf was very much in search of epic grandeur in his translation. Besides, he was obsessed with securing a place for himself in literary circles of his time and mostly wrote in function of the central and more influential members of the reading public: Mazarin for the *Travesty* (Harmand 1897, 220-1 taken up by Ternaux 2000, 233-42) and the circles of the likes of Mme de Scudéry for his translation. On the other hand, his natural wit might have attuned his ear to the satire, irony and comical elements that are a fundamental part of Lucan's aesthetic. Whatever his reasons, by using the resisting, 'writerly', reading strategy that is the basic attitude of the travesty-genre, he was able to free the bitter, grotesque laughter that the *Pharsalia* harbored next to its sublime exaltation.

3.5 Lucan's first book can be roughly divided in three parts: an extended prologue (1-182) is followed by Caesar's invasion of Italy and the first skirmishes (183-465) which runs over into a description of the overwrought and disastrously useless reactions of the senate in Rome (466-695). The travesty massively expands upon the original, as is the genre's wont. We find 3438 lines for Lucan's 695. Taking into account the se-

ven-syllable line used, this still amounts to a doubling. On a closer look we find that the travesty of the first 182 lines takes up over half of the book (1848 lines): a ratio of 5 to 1. Narration of the epic action proper thus takes a backseat to give room to a more freewheeling exploration of its consequences. The involvement of his public, coupled with the unmistakable will to use the travesty as an indictment of the recent events of the *Fronde*, turns the burlesque into something approaching the tone of satire. This is a poem of blame and indignation, venting bitter disappointment with the loss of heroic values, moral uprightness and political responsibility. It has been observed that in such circumstances satire can indeed be considered the nostalgic mirror image of epic (Debailly 1995). Indeed, the combination of disillusion with the perversion of heroic or moral values and the narration of events of contemporary relevance by an indignant voice provides the *Pharsalia* with a satirical undercurrent which runs deep and surfaces throughout the epic. The satirical tone is very noticeable in the third part of book 1. In an inversion of the heroic and pathetic last night in Troy from *Aeneid* 2 (Roche 2009, ad l.), senators flee the city at the first rumors of Caesar's approach, like captains abandoning ship at the mere darkening of the sky. Instead of taking action, the Romans feel that the mass of portents and frightening signs necessitates the consultation of specialists. As we saw, the description of the procession and the ritual of extispicy performed by Arruns were cast in mythical and tragic colors, offering the reading public a glimpse of the profound desperation in Rome. One cannot help but feel that this scene is also deeply satirical, certainly so when after all this pomp and circumstances the Tuscan seer can only speak in blunt riddles and is unable to reveal anything concrete (630-8). How will this troupe of clowns hold their own in the upheaval wrought by titanic and amoral Caesar? In the travesty Brébeuf foregrounds this inability of a powerless senate to properly interpret reality (vv. 3208-15):

«Sur tous le prophete Aruns,
qui n'étoit pas des communs,
qui dans une beste ouuerte
lisoit le gain ou la perte,
lisoit au cœur des taureaux,
des genisses et des veaux,
pourveu qu'il eust ses lunettes,

les choses les plus secretes.»

Apparently he had forgotten his spectacles, because after «mille simagrées» and «cent postures figurées», he exclaims (vv. 3248-51):

«Messieurs, dit le vieux grison,
je ne vous dis rien sinon
que je n'ay rien à vous dire,
mais je n'y voy dequoy rire.»

Lucan lets the satire abate after this moment and has the epic narrator create an imposing finale. The whole sequence shows how the sublime in Lucan always operates in tandem with the satirical or even the ridiculous and laughable. The admixture of the elements shifts throughout the epic, but its narrative is in an almost permanent state of oscillation. The awe-inspiring, lofty and pathetic aspects of the narrative are the defining elements in Brébeuf's translation. The satirical potential of the passage, on the other hand, is well caught by his travesty. In Lucan's text both are simultaneously present to give it its peculiar effect. If we analyse the strategy that Brébeuf uses to parody the epic diction we find that it basically operates by filling out Lucan's general or short statements with concrete images. This again is typical of the genre of travesty in general. The elaboration of 1, 559-63 (some paradoxical *adynata*, part of the catalogue of prodigies) runs like this (vv. 3188-204):

«le levrier s'enfuit du lièvre,
on vit un petit asnon
bachelier en droit canon,
l'oison passoit pour un cygne,
le sureau faisoit la vigne,
la gregue le cotillon,
la citrouille le melon,
souvent les bestes parlerent,
femmes grosses accoucherent
qui d'une huître, qui d'un chat,
qui d'un fagot, qui d'un rat,
qui d'une anguille menüe,
qui d'une beste cornüe,
qui d'une longe de veau,

accouchement bien nouveau,
 et dans cette étrange affaire
 l'enfant fait peur à sa mere.»

In such instances we see how in the travesty words tumble and turn in series driven by the intoxicating pleasure in language itself and by language games based on association, assonance or alliteration. Words and expressions proliferate breaking up the linearity of the narrative. In a certain respect the linguistic mushrooming of Brébeuf's travesty is a transposition of his translational strategies in the serious poem. We find the same pleasure at developing a thought or following through an image in its intricacies. The tendency of letting language generate itself, in concatenation or in series of synonyms, aligns the parody with other manifestations of grotesque language use. Other elements like neologisms, technical vocabulary, vulgar expressions, or jargon further focus attention on the hypertrophied form (body), less on the referential function (mind), which is atrophied, sometimes by making the text almost impossible to understand (Fuß 2001, 275)¹². The final verse, however, translates Lucan's text (*matremque suus conterruit infans*) to the letter. Lucan's lines are kept intact quite often in the travesty. They surface as remains or reminders of the tragic and serious amidst the jocular fracas and thus create some jarring juxtapositions (Brunel 2013, 58), as in the beginning of the famous simile comparing Pompey to a tree (1, 136-43). It starts out in serious mode (vv. 1455-64):

«Comme un arbre sec et blême
 qui n'a plus rien de soy-même
 que la moitié de son corps,
 pourry dedans et dehors,

¹² Fuß 2001, 339-45 connects these strategies with what he calls "das Monströse". Ong 1982, 39-41 understands such tendencies at unfettered amplification as remains of the oral and thus acoustical origins of the literary language. Bakhtin 1968, 145-95 for his part sees a connection with the cries of the street vendors in Paris and the language of the market place. The use of different sociolects for a part fights the sterilization of the language, for another it is symptomatic of how in these works the apparent dismantling of what Burke 2009 has famously termed the great tradition by elements from the little tradition, in fact is an act of appropriation of the latter by the former and as such confirms the superiority of the dominant culture — Burke 2009 (1994), 55: "the elite participated in the little tradition, but the common people did not participate in the great tradition". In the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the upper-classes gradually withdrew from participation in the little tradition.

qui n'a plus ny bras ny manches,
 plus de feüilles ny de branches,
 mais que depuis beaucoup d'ans
 mille braves capitans
 ont habillé de trophées,
 d'armures bien étoffées,»¹³

After which the motor starts running again (vv. 1465-70):

«de salades, de couteaux,
 de frondes et de marteaux,
 de corcelets, de rondaches,
 de flamberges et de haches ;
 ce pauvre arbre tout chënu,
 de soy tout hâve et tout nû.»

Lucan's language is in itself an assemblage of elements from different registers. Inventiveness and a striving for drastic effect are the hallmarks of his style (Fantham 1992, 32). In his translation Brébeuf very often replaces it with more uniformly lofty grandeur. Concomitantly he prefers to stress the horrible, the spectacular and in particular the pathetic. The exuberant language of the travesty with its montage of disparate and discordant registers brings something of Lucan's shifts back¹⁴. Of course the strategy of the travesty aligns the *Pharsalia* even more with those other products of Neronian literature, the *Apocolocyntosis* and *Satyricon* which in their linguistic variety and incongruity are much akin to the general idea of travesty. Although Brébeuf's language in the travesty is more moderate than that of many of his colleagues, its exuberance and unruliness is in stark opposition to the canons of the literary language and its ideal standards. The use of often discordant registers turns the diction of the *Lucan travesty* into the perfect vehicle to unmask all false

¹³ A bareboned, spartan but in essence true rendition of: *qualis frugifero quercus sublimis in agro / exuuias ueteris populi sacrataque gestans / dona ducum nec iam ualidis radicibus haerens / pondere fixa suo est, nudosque per aera ramos / effundens trunco, non frondibus, efficit umbram, / et quamuis primo nutet casura sub Euro, / tot circum siluae firmo se robore tollant, / sola tamen colitur.*

¹⁴ Lucan's text too sometimes feels as being created by his pleasure in language itself. The inventory of the snakes in 9, 700-33 is such an instance, where content and order are generated from the words, through etymology or sound games. See e.g. Barbara 2008.

pretensions. With the linguistic highhandedness of epic poetry, its heroic aspirations are tripped up and are redefined at a workaday level. At times Lucan seems to hint a such a reading of his own epic.

3.6 A famous episode spells out Lucan's idea of the vatic *labor* taken on by the poets: Caesar's visit to the ruins of Troy in book 9, 961-99¹⁵. Lucan's readers are only just recovering from the hyperbolic horror and witty word games in the attack of the gruesome snakes, when they disturbingly meet up with Caesar again in this profoundly funny scene. In it the narrator is once more moving into satirizing, parodic mode. The Roman general cannot find his bearings on the site. Caesar stumbles his way around a heap of dust and stones and the while crosses a negligible runlet in the barren landscape (9, 774). Yet, this was the Xanthus (*qui Xanthus erat* [9, 775]) as the poet dryly notes — the name used among divinities for what humans call the Skamandros (Hom. *Il.* 20, 74). He crosses a springy turf, and apparently is desecrating Hector's grave or so a "local yokel" (Johnson 1987, 119) popping up from nowhere informs him. Some scattered stones do a very bad impersonation of the Hercean Altar where Priam was killed. The scenery with its ruined ruins is an evocation of the sad withering of a once mighty state. The sorry degeneration that inevitably awaits all material remains. At this moment Lucan famously sings the praise of the poet's might (9, 980-6). The scene becomes an evocation of the power of poetry to commemorate great deeds and men long after all material traces have disappeared. The *uates* offers never-ending time and eternal life (*aeuum*) to ephemeral mortals (*populis mortalibus*). Lucan and Homer are poets of destruction. They sing the death of a great city and state. By singing of destruction they both also create the lasting image of the greatness of its downfall.

Brébeuf's remark in his preface and his travestying strategy suggest yet another way of reading this scene. Throughout Lucan stresses the insignificance of the Trojan remains. Caesar can only see trees, bushes and roots. He is utterly unable to recognize anything because everything is so negligible. The poet is pointing out what is not there (Ormand 1994, 52). Nothing here to explore, except a name (*nomen memorabile*). Anyone who has visited some of the 'lesser' ancients sites around the Medi-

¹⁵ The visit is much discussed. Zwierlein 1986 still is an excellent starting point, with Wick 2004. Also Ahl 1976, 212-22.

terranean knows the feeling. Compared to the Homeric and other poetic projections and conceptions of it, reality can only disappoint. What if those crumbled remains were never very imposing to start with? Maybe the Xanthus has always been tiny and unremarkable, the grave of Hector quite unimpressive (Narducci 2002, 182 n. 35). Maybe it was only the power of the *uates* that made a mighty river out of this rivulet¹⁶. After all, the *Chanson de Roland* has also transformed some rearguard skirmishes with local Basques into an all-out war involving a saracen army of a hundred-thousand. Lucan and Homer differ from the *incola* in that they do not so much conserve the names and the places as create and fill them in. Space becomes meaningful through the words of the poet (Tesoriero 2005, 210-1). In this scene Lucan lays bare the mechanisms of his trade bare. The contrast between mythical representation and reality is an important theme running through the *Pharsalia* from its very beginning. Earlier in book 9 the poet had put it in focus when Cato's republican troops arrived in another mythological landscape that failed to live up to its poetical status: the garden of the Hesperides¹⁷. The mythological dimension of this landscape close to a *torpentem paludem* is abundantly stressed. Three times within 11 lines *fama* is used (9, 348; 356; 359). The last occurrence explicitly connects *uates* and fabulation (359-64):

inuidus, annoso qui famam derogat aeuo,
qui uates ad uera uocat. fuit aurea silua
diuitisque graues et fuluo germine rami
uirgineusque chorus, nitidi custodia luci,
et numquam somno damnatus lumina serpens
robora complexus rutilo curuata metallo.

In 360 the poet's protestation is followed by *fuit*, emphatically fronted, as if to stress that yes, there once was a golden forest, with girls in it and a sleepless dragon to boot. Once Hercules had done his duty, they ap-

¹⁶ Pomponius Mela, writing in the previous generation, thought so: *huc ab Idaeo monte demissus Scamander exit et Simois, fama quam natura maiora flumina* (*De chorographia* 1, 93).

¹⁷ See Esposito 1986, 288-93; Wick 2004, 404-5; Moretti 1999, 244; the more typical way of reading this and other similar scenes seems to be to treat them as part of a strategy of foregrounding reality as a more sublime subject than mythological stories — in line with e.g. Lucretius' use of mythological stories. For the Lucretian sublime in Lucan, see now Day 2013; cf. Baier in this volume.

parently all disappeared. Again the contrast between what is called reality and the dreams of poets and artists is highlighted. Reality is dreary, messy and sadly ridiculous, poets give our mundane surroundings their lustre. With the stories, the glory disappears much like Veii, Gabii, and Laurentum have gone of the radar in Brébeuf's translation because the legends connected with these places had become arcane knowledge.

Confronted with the insubstantial almost indiscernible character of Troy's ruins Caesar decides to fill in the barren emptiness with his personal mythology, expounded in his prayer (9, 987-99). He transcends the wreckage of time and manages to give Troy not only a past and a present but a future too. Out of destruction and annihilation he creates something new. In this poem he truly is the only creative force — next to the narrator that is (see Masters 1992 on the Caesarian narrator). For he too tries to cut across the disenchantment and blankness that dominates his world. The reader finds both already working in tandem at the opening of the epic action proper (1, 183-227). There Lucan pulls off the magician's trick that turns a diminutive rivulet, the Rubico¹⁸, into a swirling maelstrom¹⁹. Like the golden apples and the sleepless dragon, this mighty Rubicon and the battles and horrors of cosmic dimensions that lie beyond it only exist in a poem, Lucan's. The hyperbolic narrative is the poetical manifestation of the historical import as the poet felt it, and of his longing for a grandeur that appears to be irredeemably lost. The landscape is shaped to agree with Caesar's and the poet's ambitions, and as a consequence it is transformed into imposing greatness (compare Walde 2007 on Lucan's rivers). This important characteristic of Lucan's is not lost on his translator, as Paola Mildonian (1995, 48) demonstrates in her discussion of Brébeuf's version of the description of the Apennines (2, 395-461) which is, like the other descriptions of the landscape, “*esemplare nelle grandi scie d'insieme e nella descrizione dei grandi sfondi paesistici in cui la favola delle attrazioni, le meravigliose allegorie in cui si traducono i sinistri paesaggi di Lucano, sono già destinate a*

¹⁸ 1, 185: *parui Rubiconis ad undas*; 1, 213: *fonte... modico paruis... undis*. I do not know if you have ever seen the Rubico. It is easy to miss, driving down the ancient Via Aemilia (currently the A14) near Savignano. Even granting that through time the river has been drained somewhat, it still would have been fairly unimpressive in Caesar's days.

¹⁹ 1, 204: *tumidum... amnem*; 1, 217: *auxerat undas*; 1, 220: *amnem* again; and finally 1, 223: *superato gurgite* — with hindsight a reader might very easily understand this junctura as a fleeting echo of an epic fight, with *superato* meaning not only ‘overcome a physical obstacle’ (OLD 1) but also ‘prevail over’ (OLD 4). A new Achilles has fought his own Scamander/Xanthus.

illuminare la favola degli individui". But, Brébeuf suggests, this operation should not detract us from the pettiness underlying the megalomania of characters and poet alike²⁰. Caesar and the poet are both Lucan's creations (9, 985: *me teque legent*). Reality does not come into it. When everything is gone and has fallen apart, the only thing that remains is the imaginative recreation of what has never been (compare Bartsch 1997, minus the Rortyan irony, here 131-7). A poetic projection of what it feels like to contemplate Rome's political disaster. By the same token Lucan can turn the thriving Italy of his own time into a desolate landscape filled with empty houses and barren fields (1, 24-32). Introduced by *at nunc* and with steady use of present verbs, the vignette clearly anchors the text in the reader's and writer's shared present. Of course we can point out the complicated layering of «temps du discours», «temps du récit» and «temps de l'écriture» (as Nadaï 2000 does) but the fact remains that the dazzling array of deictic shifts at the beginning of the epic leaves the reader, at the very least, with the surface impression that Italy's ruin is indeed a present reality. Since the opening hyperboles are patently untrue, there is nothing to keep us from taking the whole enterprise as an attempt at creating a truly contemporary myth. A myth of the destruction of greatness, caught in suitably grand images. Perhaps also a universe of emptiness, like Borges' *Universal History of Iniquity*: "under all the storm and lightning, there is nothing. It is all just appearance, a surface of images—which is why readers may, perhaps, enjoy it" (Borges 1999, 4-5: *Preface* to the 1954 edition).

There is more: Lucan's lofty bedazzlement is not the sole object of the travesty's strategy of deconstruction. Through the parody of his own translation Brébeuf involves his own ambitions and hopes in the process of demystification (Brunel 2013, 68). He, Lucan and their shared public are all lead astray by this longing for (moral, heroic, historical) greatness and sublimity. Moreover, the travesty's voice indicts the poets (the ancient one and his modern shadow) for vanity. Their poetical strategy is a way to gain social recognition. This ambition complicates Lucan's enterprise (and that of his own translation) even further. Brébeuf's travesty

²⁰ As always, Johnson 1987, 101-24 is enlightening. Caesar's megalomania is featured in every part of the epic, but perhaps nowhere more so than in the storm-scene in book 5, 476-721. The commentary of Matthews 2008 is excellent at capturing how Lucan mingles epic grandeur, poetical parody, scientific claims and mythological comparisons, in a scene where Caesar's striving for greatness is unmasked as a delusion and confirmed at the same time.

of the final lines of Lucan's *laus Neronis* (1, 63-6) uses this angle, implicating public, parodist and epic poet (vv. 733-48). Laughing at the classics, or at the *Grands Nobles* and their ambitions is safe: we can keep aloof. Alas, this joke is on everyone (who is your Nero?):

«Et nous autres Courtisans
de la Fortune & des Grands,
quand les Princes nous regardent
nous caressent, nous mignardent,
quand ils nous font les doux yeux,
nous nous passons bien des Dieux.
Pourvue que Neron me jette
quelque influence secrète,
et m'échauffe le caquet,
je dis mieux qu'un perroquet:
sans que Phebus & ses Belles,
ses sçavantes Demoiselles,
me debitent leurs rebus,
j'ose bien parler Phebus,
j'ose au son de ma guiterre,
chanter Rome & cette guerre,
dont les mouvemens divers
mirent le monde à l'envers.»

In Lucan's *Pharsalia*, the narrator is from the first marked as an expert *fabulator*. The epic presents itself as the elaboration of a nostalgic feeling of loss, told with moral indignation worthy of satire. The poet longs for greatness that seems to be out of reach yet can be attained through the description of its demise. Brébeuf intimates that the travesty should be read as a correction of the poetical strategy by which ordinary persons, sites and sights are turned into godlike presences of mythic proportions. It 'reveals' that Caesar and Pompey were ordinary people indeed. The poets are also affected. The awe-inspiring greatness and vastness, the cosmic proportions of these men and their deeds, it all results from their dangerous dreams and ambitions. And we too, as readers, are complicit in the conspiracy. In the end, everything comes down to being «gonflé comme un ballon», says Brébeuf, and now: "Ka-boom!". This strategy lays bare the flip-side of the sublime and hyperbolic rhetoric: grotesque deformation. By offering both a serious

translation and a burlesque travesty Brébeuf focuses the attention of Lucan's readers not so much on the commemorative project and power of poetry as on the contrast between sublime form and prosaic reality. Like Auden he knew: "what they call History, is nothing to vaunt of, being made, as it is, by the criminal in us".

4. Epilogue: Poetical Warfare

4.1 The genre of travesty, engages important developments within the literary field of its age. Its linguistic strategy highlights the artificiality of the poetical creation. This offers an important challenge to the growing 'normalization' and monopolization of the language that is taking place. The genre's relationship with the models offered by the classics is complicated. Travesties do not parody with the aim of annihilating. In fact, the genre can only function within a context in which references to the classics and knowledge of antiquity remain at the base of a culture common to all cultured men and women. For these authors, the travesties of the Greek and Latin models are a means better to communicate about their own socio-cultural situation. Both Brébeuf's travesty and his Lucan-translation are thus part of an important aesthetic evolution and discussion that during the latter half of the seventeenth century lead to an increasingly conventionalized classicism. By choosing Lucan as his model for his travesty after opting for the *Pharsalia* to try his hand at literary translation, Brébeuf was certain to provoke. In fact, it was enough for this text to enter a discussion that had been going on since the Renaissance, but in France became very much acute during the *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes* (Fumaroli 2001, offers an idiosyncratic synthesis; Dejean 1997). Two contemporary voices on Brébeuf's Lucan give us some idea of the aesthetic response that this translation evoked. Guillaume Du Hamel, brother of the dedicatee of the *Lucain travesty*, published his *Dissertation sur La Pharsale* in 1664 shortly before the debates among ancients and moderns really started to heat up (Ternaux 2000, 114-7). The diplomat François de Callières wrote his *Histoire poétique de la guerre nouvellement déclarée entre les anciens et les modernes* in 1688, in the midst of the literary feud (Nédélec 2011; Tournon 2006).

4.2 In Du Hamel's dissertation we find many of the standard objections

to the *Pharsalia* and arguments in defense of Lucan's epic as they were formulated in poetical treatises from the end of the sixteenth century onwards (Zeller 2009). The text evidences that the challenge offered by Lucan's epic was still operative, even more than a century after Tasso's influential poetical creed was published. The main problem being that Lucan ignores the basic rules of the genre, first by taking on a historical subject and then developing it without recourse to the gods and other elements from the marvelous (Du Hamel 1664, 11-20). Du Hamel for his part vehemently argues that all these rules and norms, all these classifications and categorizations are nothing but a means by which lesser minds try to find their way in the world. These mean minds cannot grasp Lucan's greatness and therefore consider him to be a lowly producer of nonsense (Du Hamel 1664, 22). These people base their judgment on handbooks as a compensation for their complete lack of imagination. As a consequence, they are unable to properly appreciate an author, who is out of the ordinary (Du Hamel 1664, 22-3). If you are not willing to let Lucan enter and fill your mind with awe and thus to abduct you, you will not get anything out of him at all. Brébeuf's consistently lofty tone in his translation is therefore a successful rendition of Lucan's aims. This sort of argument introduces a novel element in the discussion of Lucan: the relationship that Du Hamel posits between Lucan's manner and the sublime, something Boileau however would strongly object to in the next decade. This is a leading idea in the short treatise, never really analyzed (Ternaux 2000, 116) but expressed in a terminology of vastness and greatness, and through metaphors of transportation and enlargement²¹. However, this kind of thinking could not rescue the poet from the disdain of the legislators of classicist poetics.

4.3 In France the poetical discussion came to a head in the latter half of the century during the *Querelle des anciens et modernes*. The opening night of this conflict, that had been building up during the 1670's and even earlier, was the legendary session of the *Académie Française* on January 22, 1687 (Levine 1991, 124-6). During what had promised to be

²¹ A few examples: «transport & emportement» (p. 8); «force, transport & entousiasme» (p. 9); «l'action ... est grande ... & nous remplit l'esprit d'une magnifique idée» (p. 16); «matières vastes» (p. 21); Lucan is like the torrents that befell Ulysses (p. 22); Lucan is like the sun (p. 23). In Du Hamel's booklet these metaphors are also used to express what rhetoricians called *evidentia* and *hypotyposis*.

a fairly run of the mill session all hell broke loose when Charles Perrault began to recite his poem *Le siècle de Louis le Grand* in which he not only sang the praise of the great modern empire lead by Louis XIV but also extolled the achievements of the modern times and the inevitable superiority of contemporary literary production over that of the ancients. Throughout the recital, Nicolas Boileau, the latter-day Horace, had been muttering and in the end he had shouted so loudly that shortly thereafter he lost his voice. The fight at the *Académie* was the beginning of a flurry of writings and pamphlets in which both sides of the camp tried to argue their case (collected in Lecoq 2001). Almost at once the quarrel attracted a mock historian, François de Callières (see Waquet 2005 for a portrait of this fascinating figure). His *Histoire poétique* was a satire in the tradition of the battle of books, in which authors used their works or famous scenes from those works and their stylistic peculiarities as weapons to fight the opposition in an open war for the heights of Parnassus (cf. inter alia works by Boccacini, Caporali & Cervantes; see Hölter 1995). The work also engages a seventeenth century French tradition of allegorical descriptions of literary feuds (Tournon 2006). The open fight among the authors themselves, in order to secure their position on the Parnassus, represents the new autonomy of authors who can have a public debate on literary matters, using self-determined criteria (Tournon 2006, 49). The heroes of this battle are the writers themselves, not the critics or philosophers who lay down the law. Within Callières' booklet Lucan and Brébeuf feature prominently – like Brébeuf's translation, this allegory is intended for the sophisticated general reading public (Tournon 2006, 58-9). The judgment of Callières on Brébeuf's Lucan is balanced or at least ambiguous (the *Histoire poétique* as a whole is characterized by measured and reasonable moderation, see Nédélec 2011). In book 2 the ancients offer Lucan a place as Vergil's lieutenant which he defiantly refuses. As ever in poetical treatises, Lucan hardly stands a chance when compared to Vergil²². He is the super-sub of epic poetry. But in Callières' storybook, Lucan's position is more complicated than that. In book 3 we find ourselves in the camp of the moderns. They are at a loss, because they have no epic poet who can reasonably be opposed to Vergil. Chapelain and Scudéry are head to head, others join in and it

²² The ancient poets «connoissoient parfaitement la distance qu'il a entre lui & Virgile, & lui dirent que sa prétention ne se pouvoit soutenir que devant les modernes» (Callières 1688, 33).

all turns into an ear-deafening din. At that moment Brébeuf intervenes: Lucan offers his help to the moderns. Of course, it is true that he doesn't speak French but, Brébeuf continues, «me regardant comme un autre lui», he is willing to settle for him (Callières 1688, 48). Everybody understands that the situation has become hazardous, but the choice for a translator as a leader would ridicule French poetry forever. As a compromise Brébeuf proposes Corneille (Callières 1688, 49). After some skirmishes with Ronsard the matter is settled. In this passage, dramatic poetry supplants epic as the master-genre and Corneille (Lucanist *hors catégorie*) beats the army of Vergil's admirers (Goupillaud 2005, 257). The association of epic and tragedy in Lucan's epic was already part of Heinsius' appreciation of the poet in his *De tragoediae constitutione* (1611/43) — a work of great importance for French poetical theory (Heinsius 1611/43 [2001]). The idea will prove to be of lasting significance, especially among French theorists. It survives well into the 18th century and will find its most eloquent exposition in the poetical theory of Marmontel (Zeller 2009, 268-71). Choosing Corneille is a reflection of a widespread conception among French theoreticians: the glory of French poetry was its theatrical tradition, its secret dream the creation of a genuine and convincing epic poem — which never truly materialized (Goupillaud, 2005; Méniel 2004). The fact that Brébeuf's translation can be considered a serious candidate, however qualified, is high praise indeed for his achievement. Lucan returns in book 5, sitting idle on the heights of Parnassus from where he observes two moderns approaching, Boileau and Racine, who seemingly are planning to join the ranks of the ancients. When Lucan attacks Boileau's well ordered army with his ten books, he is easily beaten (Callières 1688, 108):

«mais le Poète Moderne comme un nouvel Hercule défit en un instant tous ces monstres imaginaires de Lucain, par la seule comparaison qu'il en fit aux Spectres, qui se présentent quelquefois à un homme malade d'une frenesie ou d'une fièvre chaude, plutôt qu'à l'imagination d'un Poète bien sensé.»

This defeat thoroughly upsets Lucan. He searches for a shelter among the cliffs and sends an eagle to Brébeuf informing him about the two moderns who try to join the ancients. Shortly afterwards the translator foolhardily assaults the *Odysee* and is beaten without any difficulty

(Callières 1688, 114-5). In the end, Callières' judgment is defined by Boileau's *doxa*.

4.4 Even with its nostalgic idealization of classicist elegance Callières' *Histoire poétique* elucidates the strange power of Lucan's poem. Not in accord with the canons of Aristotelian poetics, indeed those fitted modern classicists better, it could not be completely appropriated by the moderns either. He is outside looking in. The comparison of Lucan's monsters with the dreams of the sick is an obvious reference to the opening of Horace's *Ars Poetica* (7-8). The trope had also been the staple in discussions of the grotesque since the sixteenth century (Scholl 2004, 129-80). For those who defended the innovatory character of the grotesque, this metaphor connoted the liberating force of imagination freed from its chains, for those who frowned upon the formless monstrosities, it was symptomatic of a deep running pathological condition. By opting for an author that failed the canons of the dominant poetical discourse, and using him as a source for both a translation and a burlesque travesty, Brébeuf took a gamble — that came off. He created a double-sided Lucan. Callières very well expresses the exact nature of Brébeuf's translation: he had produced a poem that held to modern standards to such an extent that it could almost be considered an independent creation, along the lines of Corneille's tragedies. Lucan wrote the epic that the French could not produce (Ternaux 2000, 117). Although composed with fitting grandeur and cast in a contemporary mold, the translation also followed the lead of a defective model, written in «vers sentencieux & ampoulés» (Callières 1688, 32). Consequently the end result could not claim a position of the first rank among classicist readers: Lucan's disease infected his translator too²³. With the parodic version Brébeuf undercut the sublime aspirations, his own and those of Lucan. He used a dying genre to elicit a mix of moral, political and poetical reflection through inversion. Brébeuf's Lucan, the blend of translation and travesty, emerges as the perfect example of what in renaissance thinking was analyzed as gro-

²³ Compare the remarks of an anonymous *Discours sur la traduction de Lucain par Brébeuf*, part of the manuscripts of Valentin Conrart (founding father of the *Académie Française*): «C'est une étrange maladie que de choquer l'art et la raison pour faire paroître son esprit. [...] Tant de pompe, tant de fard, tant d'ornements éblouissent d'abord la vue, mais on retire bientôt les yeux de dessus un objet dont on ne peut supporter l'éclat» (Ms Conrart 3151 [bibl. de l'Arsenal] 1, 47°, 333, cited in Guellouz 2004, 153).

tesque. True art was considered to offer edifying lessons which result from the truthful, balanced and easily readable imitation of Nature. Lucan's is an intellectual's art, flaunting its own resources — like Borges' baroque (1999, 4-5). In the *Pharsalia* the grandeur of mythologized reality is crossed with the horrific and pathetic by a bitter satirist, always out for a laugh. Therefore the unbalanced and unbalancing epic of Lucan could only be categorized as a grotesque hallucination. Indeed, in his strictures Callières' Boileau seems to echo Scaliger who echoes (however unintentionally) Gabriele Paleotti who echoes so many other thinkers when he writes that grotesques are "lying, inept, idle, imperfect, improbable, out of all proportion, obscure, and outlandish".²⁴ Looking into Brébeuf's efforts allows a modern reader better to confront the grotesque aspects of Lucan's epic. A new planet it might not be, but an interesting country it most certainly is.

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²⁴ "Bugiarde, inette, vane, imperfette, inverisimili, sproporzionate, oscure e stravaganti", cited in Scholl 2004, 192.

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