

LUCAN'S USE OF CAESAR'S *COMMENTARII*: SOME REMARKS  
ON LUCAN. V 461–475 AND CAES. *BCiv.* III 18–19

by

MARIUSZ PLAGO

**ABSTRACT:** In scholarship on Lucan, more and more emphasis is being placed on the connection of his poem with Caesar's *Commentarii de bello civili*. It is argued that the *Civil War* remains in constant interaction with Caesar's text. This article aims to analyse one example of such interaction by undertaking a juxtaposition and a close reading of Lucan. V 461–475, the narrative about the two armies encamped on the river Apsus in Epirus, and Caes. *BCiv.* III 18–19. These two sections are firmly connected by common motifs that do not appear together elsewhere, a similar order of narrative episodes, and the strong commitment of the narrator. The first part of the article focuses on how Lucan debunks Caesar's propaganda and at the same time creates another one, expressed by his narrator. In the second part, an attempt is made to show that Lucan's text is more complex and that it includes other voices, which also undermine the epic narrator's fervent utterances.

In a dissertation from 1874, G. BAIER stated that Livy's lost books (*Per.* 109–112) were Lucan's only source as far as historical events are concerned<sup>1</sup>. Also J.P. POSTGATE, in his commentary to Book VII from 1896, considered *Ab urbe condita* as Lucan's sole source and did not see any evidence in the book he commented for the poet's having made use of Asinius Pollio or Caesar<sup>2</sup>. The opinion put forward by BAIER and POSTGATE was developed by R. PICHON in his book from 1912 which was entirely devoted to the problem of the poem's sources<sup>3</sup>. The thesis was recently revisited by J. RADICKE in his extensive monograph on Lucan's poetic technique<sup>4</sup>. Contrary to BAIER's opinion, however, Lucan could have used

---

<sup>1</sup> BAIER 1874: *passim* (conclusions: p. 46).

<sup>2</sup> POSTGATE 1896: XII f. He repeated it in the commentary to Book VIII: POSTGATE 1917: XI f.

<sup>3</sup> PICHON 1912: *passim*.

<sup>4</sup> RADICKE 2004: esp. pp. 34–39. The scholar, adopting the view (shared by BAIER 1874: 5) that Cassius Dio also largely relied on the *Ab urbe condita*, compares appropriate passages from the *Civil War* to those from Dio's *History of Rome*. However, the Severan historian did not have to rely on Livy after all – for example, Cremutius Cordus is identified as his source in the narrative about the conflict between Caesar and Pompey (e.g. WESTALL 2016: 148 f.); Dio, of course, could have used various texts simultaneously (see the remarks of PELLING 1982 and KEMEZIS 2016: 243 f.). RADICKE (2004: 38) also explains the parallels between the poem and Caesar by referring to the character of Lucan's source – Livy.