



Pharsalia (Masters of Latin Literature)

Lucan

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Lucan's great poem, *Pharsalia*, recounts events surrounding the decisive battle fought near Pharsalus in 48 B.C. during the civil war between the forces of Pompey and Julius Caesar. Though the subject of this unfinished masterpiece is historical, many of its features are characteristic of epic poetry: Rousing battle scenes; tales of witches, monsters, and miracle; detailed catalogues; intricate similes; and speeches with a high degree of rhetorical elegance. However, Lucan's deft mix of humor and horror, of political satire, literary parody, history, and epic is entirely his own. Jane Wilson Joyce's superb translation conveys the drama and poetry of the original. Her use of natural English rhythms in a loose six-beat line comes close to matching the original Latin hexameters, while her language preserves Lucan's sequence of images. An enlightening introduction, notes, and a full glossary augment the translation.

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