

Lucan 9.950-1001: Caesar's trip to Troy

“When Caesar had taken his fill of the slaughter and left Pharsalia, he cast off the burden of all other cares and turned his attention wholly to his son-in-law. In vain he followed Pompey's scattered traces over the land, and then report guided him to the sea. He sailed along the Thracian straits and the waters made famous by the lovers, and past Hero's turrets on the melancholy shore where Helle, daughter of Nephele, robbed a sea of its name. Nowhere does a smaller stretch of water sever Asia from Europe, although the channel is narrow by which the Euxine divides Byzantium from the oyster-beds of Chalcedon, and the opening is small by which the Propontis carries in its course the waters of the Euxine. Emulous of ancient glory, Caesar visited the sands of Sigeum and the stream of Simois, Rhoeteum famous for the Grecian's grave, and the dead who owe so much to the poet's verse. He walked round the burnt city of Troy, now only a famous name, and searched for the mighty remains of the wall that Apollo raised. Now barren woods and rotting tree-trunks grow over the palace of Assaracus, and their worn-out roots clutch the temples of the gods, and Pergama is covered over with thorn-brakes: the very ruins have been destroyed. He sees Hesione's rock and the secret marriage-chamber of Anchises in the wood; the cave in which Paris sat as umpire, and the spot from which the boy was carried off to the sky; he sees the peak on which the Naiad Oenone lamented. A legend clings to every stone. The stream trickling through the dry dust, which he crossed without knowing it, was the Xanthus. When he stepped carelessly over the rank grass, the native bade him not to walk over the body of Hector. When scattered stones, preserving no appearance of sanctity, lay before them, the guide asked: “Do you mean to pass over the altar of Zeus Herceos?”

How mighty, how sacred is the poet's task! He snatches all things from destruction and gives to mortal men immortality. Be not jealous, Caesar, of those whom fame has consecrated; for, if it is permissible for the Latin Muses to promise aught, then, as long as the fame of Smyrna's bard endures, posterity shall read my verse and your deeds; our Pharsalia shall live on, and no age will ever doom us to oblivion.

When Caesar had satisfied his eyes with venerable antiquity, he reared in haste an altar of piled-up sods, and uttered prayers and vows over the incense-burning flame; and both were fulfilled. “All ye spirits of the dead, who inhabit the ruins of Troy; and ye household gods of my ancestor Aeneas, who now dwell safe in Lavinium and Alba, and upon their altar still shines fire from Troy; and thou, Pallas, famous pledge of security, whom no male eye may behold in thy secret shrine—lo! I, most renowned descendant of the race of Iulus, here place incense due upon your altars, and solemnly invoke you in your ancient abode. Grant me prosperity to the end, and I will restore your people: with grateful return the Italians shall rebuild the walls of the Phrygians, and a Roman Troy shall rise.” When he had spoken thus, Caesar went back to his ships and spread full sails to favouring winds.”

- Lucan and Vergil's *Aeneid*: nb Pompey/Aeneas (stable oak *Aen.* 4); Pompey flees East, away from Rome (contrast Aeneas); Rome/Troy parallels (Book 9 Caesar walks through ruins of Troy)