Greece & Rome, 62.2 177–188 © The Classical Association (2015)
doi:10.1017/S0017383515000054

TESTING BOUNDARIES: DIVINATION AND PROPHECY IN LUCAN*

Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile* dates from the Neronian period and is strongly rooted in that historical context, but, as is well known, it offers plenty of food for thought to the student of late Republican religion and intellectual culture. The reading of the Civil War that it puts forward has major implications for our understanding of the ancient interpretations of that period. This is fully in keeping with the ambitions of Lucan himself, who set out to impose his work as a pervasive master-narrative of the late Republican age.[1] The aim of this article is to pursue a narrow but important and often under-explored angle, and to assess the role of divination, especially of the prophetic kind, in the poem.

In doing so, it will also discuss how Lucan's position ties in with wider ancient debates on the validity of divination and on the prediction and control of the future, which were especially intense between the late Republican period and the early Principate.[2] Moreover, the

* I would like to thank John Moles, Rob Shorrock, David Wardle, and an anonymous referee for their comments on drafts of this article. All translations are my own.

[1] C. Walde, 'Lucan's *Bellum Civile*: A Specimen of a "Roman Literature of Trauma"', in P. Asso (ed.), *Brill's Companion to Lucan* (Leiden and Boston, MA, 2011), 302. See also the well-known comment of Servius, *Aen.* 1.382: *Lucanus namque ideo in numero poetarum esse non meruit, quia uidetur historiam composuisse, non poema* ('Lucan therefore did not deserve to be numbered among the poets, because he appears to have composed a history, not a poem'), on which see B. Bureau, '*Lucanus…videtur historiam composuisse, non poema*: Lucain, l'histoire et la mémoire poétique', in O. Devilliers and S. Franchet d'Esperey (eds.), *Lucain en débat. Rhétorique, poétique et histoire* (Bordeaux, 2010), 77–87, and M. L. Delvigo, '*Per transitum tangit historiam*: Intersecting Developments of Roman Identity in Virgil', in J. Farrell and D. P. Nelis (eds.), *Augustan Poetry and the Roman Republic* (Oxford, 2013), 25–8. A. W. Lintott, 'Lucan and the History of the Civil War', *CQ* 21 (1971), 488–505, esp. 488–98, remains useful on the value of Lucan's work as historical evidence. On Lucan and historiography, see also B. Gibson, 'Historical Causation in Post-Augustan Epic', in J. F. Miller and A. J. Woodman (eds.), *Latin Historiography and Poetry in the Early Empire. Generic Interactions* (Leiden and Boston, MA, 2010), 33–4.

[2] For invaluable pointers in this direction, see D. C. Feeney, *The Gods in Epic. Poets and Critics of the Classical Tradition* (Oxford, 1991), 271 ('The extraordinary series of portents that introduces the climax of the first book has roots in traditions of both history and poetry'); also S. Bartsch, *Ideology in Cold Blood. A Reading of Lucan's Civil War* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 1997), 149. It is worth noting that Lucan was a member of the augural college: *Vita Lucani* 335.16

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383515000054 Published online by Cambridge University Press

use that Lucan makes of themes such as the role of fate in human affairs and the standing of the *uates* ('diviners'), and his references to divinatory utterances require attention for what they may reveal about wider developments in Roman religious and intellectual history. However, the highly original character of Lucan's poetry and the complexity of its intellectual and (broadly speaking) political agenda make it even harder to read the poem as a useful indicator of wider attitudes to divination than is the case with other epic poems.[3]

Lucan's use of the word *uates* is an instructive starting point, especially because of the diversity of the meanings that the term conjures up.[4] It is used to refer to the Etruscan haruspices who are consulted to interpret some of the prodigies that occur in the first book (1.584–5: *haec propter placuit Tuscos de more uetusto/acciri uates*, 'hence it was decided, in accordance with old custom, to send for diviners from Etruria'). The intervention of the haruspex Arruns, however, does not lead to a clear response.[5] The seer is reluctant to provide a firm interpretation of the disturbing sight offered by the entrails that he has inspected: the signs of the future are intelligible, but the

Hosius, with J. Rüpke, *Fasti Sacerdotum*, ii (Stuttgart, 2005), 756, no. 598. Intriguingly, augury and augural lore hardly feature at all in the poem: the augurs take part in the *amburbium* before Pharsalus (1.601–4), on which see S. Montero, 'I *sodales Titii*: tradizione e innovazione', in G. Urso (ed.), *Sacerdos. Figure del sacro nella società romana* (Pisa, 2014), 194–5. See also E. Fantham, 'Lucan and the Republican Senate: Ideology, Historical Record and Prosopography', in P. Esposito and L. Nicastri (eds.), *Interpretare Lucano. Miscellanea di studi* (Naples, 1999), 109–25, and M. Ducos, 'Le Sénat dans l'épopée de Lucain', in Devilliers and Franchet d'Esperey (n. 1), 137–48, on Lucan's creative engagement with the political, ideological, and constitutional debate of the late Republican period.

[3] For valuable overviews of the prophecies in Lucan's poem, see B. F. Dick, 'The Technique of Prophecy in Lucan', *TAPhA* 94 (1963), 37–49; O. Schrempp, *Prophezeiung und Rückschau in Lucans 'Bellum civile'* (Winterthur, 1964), 6–78. See also J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, *Continuity and Change in Roman Religion* (Oxford, 1979) 150–2; P. Roche (ed.), *Lucan. De bello civili, Book I* (Oxford, 2009), 33–5; C. O. Tommasi Moreschini, 'Lucan's Attitude towards Religion: Stoicism vs. Provincial Cults', in C. Walde (ed.), *Lucan im 21. Jahrhundert* (Munich and Leipzig, 2005), 136–40, 147–54.

[4] See D. O'Higgins, 'Lucan as "Vates"', *CA* 7 (1988), 208–26, where the emphasis is, however, on Books 5 and 6, and E. Pillinger, '"And the Gods Dread to Hear Another Poem": The Repetitive Poetics of Witchcraft from Virgil to Lucan', *MD* 68 (2012), 128.

[5] Luc. 1.584–638. As M. Rambaud, 'L'aruspice Arruns chez Lucain, au livre I de la *Pharsale* (vv. 584–638)', *Latomus* 44 (1985), 289–94, notes, the intervention of Arruns takes place within the framework of Roman public religion; his argument that Lucan is deliberately taking up an aspect of Claudius' policy towards priesthoods in implicit polemic against Nero is, however, rather far-fetched. See also M. Rambaud, 'Présages et *procuratio* au livre I de la *Pharsale* (vv. 522–638)', in D. Porte and J.-P. Néraudau (eds.), *Hommages à Henri Le Bonniec. Res sacrae* (Brussels 1988), 380–4. On the prodigies listed at 1.522–84, see ibid., 373–80.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383515000054 Published online by Cambridge University Press

response that he derives from them is unspeakable.[6] In fact, Arruns even evokes for a moment the possibility that his divinatory lore may be worthless. The picture of the future conveyed by the entrails is so appalling that he is led to wish that Tages – the mythical founder of haruspicy, who was said to have sprung out from the ground in the fields near Tarquinii and to have taught the tenets of the art to the whole of Etruria – made the whole craft up. It is tempting to see here a reaction to the critique of haruspicy that Cicero put forward in the second book of the *De diuinatione*, where Marcus, the character that makes the case against prophetic divination, singles out the myth of Tages as the single factor that invalidates haruspical lore as a whole. What we are offered here is a different solution to the one that Marcus had suggested: Arruns does not question the epiphany of Tages but the validity of what he said. However, the similarity of approach with Cicero's discussion of the merits of haruspicy is noteworthy.[7] As we shall see, this is not the only instance in which a degree of engagement with the *De diuinatione* might be seen at work in Lucan's poem.

The failure of the Etruscan *disciplina* leads to the subsequent intervention of P. Nigidius Figulus, a notable political figure (he was praetor in 58 BC), antiquarian, and expert in things occult, who sets out to read the prodigies by resorting to astrology and produces a gloomy prophecy of the advent of an age dominated by arms (1.639–72).[8] The choice of Nigidius as a character is very significant. He had been a central figure in the intellectual life of his time, and had played a major role in the late

[6] See Roche (n. 3), 341–60; H. Lovatt, *The Epic Gaze. Vision, Gender and Narrative in Ancient Epic* (Cambridge, 2013), 142–3. Arruns does not appear to correspond to a specific historical figure. He has a 'recognizably Etruscan *praenomen*' (Roche [n. 3], 342), and it is worth noting that the addressee of the teachings of the nymph Vegoia was called Arruns Veltumns: see B. J. Campbell, *The Writings of the Roman Land Surveyors* (London, 2000), 256.33–258.10 (Rambaud, 'L'aruspice' [n. 5], 288–9, discusses other occurrences of the name, but overlooks that instance). It is not unlikely that Lucan was aware of that tradition. Cf. J. N. Adams, *Bilingualism and the Latin Language* (Cambridge, 2003), 179–82, for the attractive view that the prophecy of Vegoia dates to the Imperial period and is not based on an Etruscan original. Lucan's knowledge of haruspicy is apparently sound: see e.g. A. Bouché-Leclerq, *Histoire de la divination dans l'antiquité*, iv (Paris, 1882), 68, n. 181; Rambaud 'L'aruspice' (n. 5); C. Guittard, 'L'*Etrusca disciplina* chez Lucain', in D. Briquel and C. Guittard, *Les écrivains et l'Etrusca Disciplina de Claude à Trajan*, *Caesarodunum* supp. 64 (Tours, 1995), 94–104.

[7] G. O. Hutchinson, *Latin Literature from Seneca to Juvenal. A Critical Study* (Oxford, 1993), 88.

[8] See A. Luisi, 'Lucano e la profezia di Nigidio Figulo', in M. Sordi (ed.), *La profezia nel mondo antico* (Milan, 1993), 239–44; Bartsch (n. 2), 112–13; Roche (n. 3), 359–75; J. Dangel, 'Les femmes et la violence dans le *Bellum Civile* de Lucain: écriture symbolique des deviances de l'histoire', in Devilliers and Franchet d'Esperey (n. 1), 99–101; L. Fratantuono, *Madness Triumphant. A Reading of Lucan's Pharsalia* (Lanham, MD, 2012), 39–42, 52–3; P. Domenicucci, *Il cielo di Lucano* (Pisa, 2013), 29–46.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383515000054 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Republican debates on divination (public and private) and prediction. Unlike us, Lucan's contemporary readers would still have had access to Nigidius' diverse, learned, and influential production. One may even speculate that Nigidius' response could have been read against the background of the literary works of the historical Nigidius.[9]

Nigidius foretells the advent of a tyrant (*dominus*) who will bring an age of peace through the abolition of freedom (1.670–2).[10] It is tempting to see an allusion to Augustus, rather than to Caesar, and to construct this passage as a pointed reflection of the tradition concerning the prophecy of Octavian's world rule that Nigidius allegedly pronounced soon after his birth.[11] A few lines below, at the end of Book 1, the prophecy of a matron possessed by Apollo, who predicts the future of Rome in a mad frenzy (1.673–95), completes the picture of a state of disruption and perversion, where a link between civil war and universal disaster is forcefully asserted.[12]

The prophecy of Nigidius has convincingly been read as a response to the prophecy of Jupiter in the first book of the *Aeneid*, and there are other moments in the *Bellum Ciuile* that may be read as attempts to engage with other sections of Virgil's poem.[13] In Book 5, the visit of

[9] Nigidius' fragments are collected in A. Swoboda, *P. Nigidii Figuli Operum Reliquiae* (Prague, Vienna, and Leipzig, 1889); see E. Rawson, *Intellectual Life in the Late Roman Republic* (London, 1985), 94–5, 290–3.

[10] See E. Narducci, *La provvidenza crudele. Lucano e la distruzione dei miti augustei* (Pisa, 1979), 42–3; V. Neri, 'Dei, Fato e divinazione nella letteratura Latina del I sec. d.C.', in *ANRW* 2.16.3 (Berlin and New York, 1986), 1998–9 (bibliography at n. 135); E. Narducci, *Lucano. Un'epica contro l'impero. Interpretazione della 'Pharsalia'* (Rome and Bari, 2002), 110–11. It is doubtful that the prophecy can be used as evidence for any of Nigidius' prophecies, not least because there are some obvious astrological inaccuracies, especially in the order in which planets are listed, that can be explained with literary needs. The fact that Lucan used a Julian calendar, unlike Nigidius, may be a further complication: there is a careful survey of the problem in R. Hannah, 'Lucan *Bellum Civile* 1.649–65: The Astrology of P. Nigidius Figulus Revisited', in F. Cairns and M. Heath (eds.), *Papers of the Leeds International Latin Seminar 9. Roman Poetry and Prose, Greek Poetry, Etymology, Historiography* (Leeds, 1996), 175–90; see also Roche (n. 3), 362–3, and Domenicucci (n. 8), 44–6.

[11] Suet. *Aug.* 94.5, on which see F. Santangelo, *Divination, Prediction and the End of the Roman Republic* (Cambridge, 2013), 233 and D. Wardle, *Suetonius*. Life of Augustus (Oxford, 2014) 517–19.

[12] On this episode, see Schrempp (n. 3), 19–22; J. Connolly, 'Mapping the Boundary of the Known and Unknown', in A. Barchiesi, J. Rüpke, and S. Stephens (eds.), *Rituals in Ink. A Conference on Religion and Literary Production in Ancient Rome* (Stuttgart, 2004), 167–8; Roche (n. 3), 375–90; H. J. M. Day, *Lucan and the Sublime. Power, Representation and Aesthetic Experience* (Cambridge, 2013), 93–8. See also Hutchinson (n. 7), 67, on the structural coherence of Book 1 and its wider significance within the poem.

[13] See Narducci, *Provvidenza* (n. 10), 41–2; Narducci, *Lucano* (n. 10), 107–11; S. Casali, 'The *Bellum Civile* as an Anti-*Aeneid*', in Asso (n. 1), 92–5. On Lucan's depiction of the underworld, see D. C. Feeney, 'History and Revelation in Vergil's Underworld', *PCPhS* 32 (1986), 16–19; Casali (this note), 104–9; T. Sklenář, 'Lucan the Formalist', in Asso (n. 1), 322–5.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383515000054 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the Pompeian Appius Claudius Pulcher to the oracle of Delphi (5.64–236), for example, is strongly reminiscent of Aeneas' encounter with the Sibyl.[14] Unlike the historical Delphic priestess, the Pythia, Phemonoe, speaks in a frenzy (5.150: *furor*); Lucan calls her, too, a *uates* (5.124).[15] Like the Virgilian Sibyl, she appears to be overwhelmed by the prophetic force that is bestowed and imposed upon her by the god.[16] Moreover, in a twist that may remind readers of some of the prophecies in the *Aeneid*, her utterance is literally correct but ultimately misleading: she predicts to Appius that he will find peace in a valley in Euboea, where he will in fact die (5.194–7). Piquantly, Appius was a member of the augural college, and one who was committed to the view that augury had a predictive power and was therefore a form of *diuinatio*; Cicero's *De diuinatione*, where Appius' argument is evoked and criticized, may again be gleaned in the background.[17] There is a further level of irony: Phemonoe initially tries to shy away from uttering a prophecy by misleadingly claiming that the oracle is no longer able to utter responses, because no one has the necessary standing to access its knowledge; she then produces a false response. Only Appius' insistence compels her to deliver an accurate, if far from straightforward, prediction.[18]

In Lucan's poem, prophecies are received by a number of different characters, strongly suggesting that the knowledge of the future is bound to be fragmented and – once put to the test – inadequate.[19] Moreover, all the characters who seek information through divinatory

[14] Narducci, *Provvidenza* (n. 10), 62–6; Narducci *Lucano* (n. 10), 137–40; J. Masters, *Poetry and Civil War in Lucan's Bellum Civile* (Cambridge, 1992), 118–33; J.-M. Croisille, 'Lucain et l'oracle de Delphes', in Y. Perrin (ed.), *Neronia VII. Rome, l'Italie et la Grèce. Hellénisme et philhellénisme au premier siècle après J.-C.* (Brussels, 2007), 257–61 (stressing the differences between the two episodes); Casali (n. 13), 101–4; Fratantuono (n. 8), 182–8, 217; Pillinger (n. 4), 128; Day (n. 12), 98–101.

[15] Masters (n. 14), 128–9; Croisille (n. 14), 258 ('traits fantaisistes et outrés', 'whimsical and extravagant traits').

[16] O'Higgins (n. 4), 211–14. On the vulnerability of Virgil's Sibyl, see Verg. *Aen.* 6.77–80, 98–101.

[17] Cic. *Div.* 1.105, 2.75. See F. M. Ahl, *Lucan. An Introduction* (Ithaca, NY, and London, 1976), 124–5; Feeney (n. 2), 289.

[18] Luc. 5.130–40, 146–69. See A. Casamento, 'Quando gli oracoli passano di moda: l'episodio di Appio e Femonoe nel quinto libro della *Pharsalia* di Lucano', in T. Baier (ed.), *Götter und menschliche Willensfreiheit. Von Lucan bis Silius Italicus* (Munich, 2012), 151–3.

[19] On the fragmentation of prophetic knowledge in the *Bellum Ciuile*, see Masters (n. 14), 141–9; P. Hardie, *The Epic Successors of Virgil. A Study in the Dynamics of a Tradition* (Cambridge, 1993), 107–8; Croisille (n. 14), 259. On prophecies in the *Aeneid*, see the recent discussions in J. J. O'Hara, *Inconsistency in Roman Epic. Studies in Catullus, Lucretius, Vergil, Ovid and Lucan* (Cambridge, 2006), 78–82, and Santangelo (n. 11), 220–34.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383515000054 Published online by Cambridge University Press

means fight on the losing side: they are all associates of Pompey.[20] Sextus Pompeius is in that number, as he seeks the advice of the witch Erictho, who gives him a prophecy on the outcome of the Civil War by performing a necromantic ritual on the corpse of a Pompeian soldier (6.413–830). This episode has attracted wide critical attention for its extraordinary stylistic features, its significant role within the narrative and ideological structure of the poem, and the detailed depiction that it provides of a necromantic ritual, which is not matched elsewhere in Latin literature. Many aspects remain elusive, and I shall draw attention only to a few points that are directly relevant to the present discussion.[21] Lucan depicts a scathing portrait of the witch, who is characterized as an evil and criminal creature. Erictho is labelled as *Thessala uates* (6.651), an epithet that is clearly intended to draw attention to the fact that her craft is coterminous with that of diviners. Moreover, she speaks through *carmina* ('songs', 6.528 and 578), like seers also do. Prophecy, however, is merely one of the attributes of Erictho, who is first and foremost busy issuing curses.[22]

As Daniel Ogden has shown, the Erictho episode engages with a tradition that had associated Pompey and his son with necromancy

[20] Narducci, *Provvidenza* (n. 10), 64–5; Narducci, *Lucano* (n. 10), 141; M. Fucecchi, 'Partisans in Civil War', in Asso (n. 1), 253–4. Dick (n. 3), 49, notes an important difference between the prophecies of the *Aeneid* and those of the *Bellum Ciuile*: the latter are always concerned with death. Cf. Cic. *Div*. 2.53 on Pompey's tendency to rely on divinatory signs and responses. As the encounter with the Egyptian priest Acoreus shows (Luc. 10.172–331), even Caesar may face impervious challenges in accessing religious knowledge, albeit not in divinatory contexts. See the recent readings of F. Barrenechea, 'Didactic Aggressions in the Nile Excursus of Lucan's *Bellum Civile*', *AJPh* 131 (2010), 259–84 (who stresses the vatic attributes of Acoreus), and J. Tracy, *Lucan's Egyptian Civil War* (Cambridge, 2014), 144–80.

[21] R. M. Danese, 'L'anticosmo di Eritto e il capovolgimento dell'Inferno virgiliano (Lucano, Phars. 6, 333 sgg.)', in *Atti della Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche*, 9.3 (1992), 197–244, provides an excellent treatment; Pillinger (n. 4), 127–37, is also essential reading. The bibliography is extensive: see the overview in D. Ogden, 'Lucan's Sextus Pompeius Episode: Its Necromantic, Political and Literary Background', in A. Powell and K. Welch (eds.), *Sextus Pompeius* (London and Swansea, 2002), 262, n. 1. See also A. Gowing, 'Pirates, Witches and Slaves : The Imperial Afterlife of Sextus Pompeius', in Powell and Welch (this note), 193–9; C. Tesoriero, '*Magno proles indigna parente*: The Role of Sextus Pompeius in Lucan's *Bellum Civile*', in Powell and Welch (this note), 229–47; N. W. Bernstein, 'The Dead and Their Ghosts in the *Bellum Civile*: Lucan's Visions of History', in Asso (n. 1), 263–5; K. Welch, *Magnus Pius. Sextus Pompeius and the Transformation of the Roman Republic* (Swansea, 2012) 98–9 (with a critique of Gowing); Day (n. 12), 102–4; Fratantuono (n. 8), 238–67; Tracy (n. 20), 169–71. See also the fitting epigrammatic statement of R. Gordon, 'Lucan's Erictho', in M. Whitby, P. Hardie, and M. Whitby (eds.), *Homo viator. Classical Essays for John Bramble* (Bristol and Oak Park, IL, 1987), 231: 'the figure of Erictho refuses to be exorcised'.

[22] Pillinger (n. 4), 134. On witchcraft and prediction in Lucan, see also Liebeschuetz (n. 3), 151; on Lucan's depiction of Thessalian magic and its influence on the gods, see Danese (n. 21), 204–11.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383515000054 Published online by Cambridge University Press

since the late Republic. During a debate before the censors, in 55 BC, Pompey the Great sarcastically referred to Helvius Mancia, the accuser of his associate L. Scribonius Libo, as someone sent 'from the underworld' (*ab inferis*). Mancia replied that the underworld was indeed full of the ghosts of people murdered by Pompey.[23] A stronger association with necromancy is shown by the story of the prophecy uttered by the dying Gabienus, an associate of Octavian killed by Sextus during the Sicilian War. In the version of the episode given by Pliny the Elder, Gabienus' throat was slit and he was left to die on the shore. However, before drawing his last breath he gave some associates of Sextus the false prophecy that the gods favoured their side and that victory was at hand.[24] In Lucan's poem the prophecy elicited by Erictho is accurate, as it predicts Caesar's victory, but there are similarities with the episode of the Sicilian War, most notably the image of the dying soldier who utters a misleading prophecy from his slit throat.

The practice of necromancy in the late Republic had of course no place in the public domain, although prophecies from the dead could have political implications: the stories of the Syrian commander Bouplagos and of the Roman commander Publius that emerged in some Greek quarters in the early second century BC during the war between Rome and Antiochus III are instructive examples.[25] It is a safe guess that necromancy retained an exotic feel for Roman audiences, derived from and mediated through Greek sources, even if one of the most renowned centres of necromancy was in fact at Lake Avernus in Campania, where a time-honoured tradition located Odysseus' visit to the oracle of the dead (*nekuomanteion*).[26] It was, however, quite straightforward to construct necromancy as a perverse and dangerous practice for a Roman audience, and to use it to build the most serious allegations. In a passage of the *In Vatinium* (delivered in 56 BC), Cicero accuses his opponent, who claimed to be a follower of Pythagoras, of being 'accustomed to make sacrifices to the ghosts of

[23] Val. Max. 6.2.8. See D. Ogden, *Greek and Roman Necromancy* (Princeton, NJ, and Oxford, 2001), 151; H.-F. Mueller, *Roman Religion in Valerius Maximus* (London and New York, 2002), 165–6. On the political and rhetorical setting in which the exchange belongs, see C. Steel, 'Pompeius, Helvius Mancia, and the Politics of Public Debate', in C. Steel and H. van der Blom (eds.), *Community and Communication. Oratory and Politics in Republican Rome* (Oxford, 2013), 151–9.

[24] Plin. *HN* 7.178–9. See Gordon (n. 21), 232–3, and Ogden (n. 21), 250–1 (and ibid., 251–4, for other less safe associations between the Pompeii and necromancy).

[25] Phlegon, *Mir.* 3.

[26] Strabo 5.4.5.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383515000054 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the dead with the entrails of boys'.[27] Whatever view one may take on the accuracy of that allegation, it seems clear that a link was established in some quarters between necromancy and Pythagoreanism. It is the case with Vatinius, and it is also possibly the case with Nigidius Figulus, although the evidence for his interest in, or use of, necromancy is even shakier than in Vatinius' case.[28]

Lucan resorted to this hostile tradition on necromancy to give further depth to his negative portrayal of Sextus.[29] Consulting Erictho was a desperate and deeply flawed choice, which revealed how misguided Sextus' whole strategy was. It is also tempting to follow Ogden in arguing that the traditional link between necromancy and the severing of the neck was a pointer to the fate met by Sextus' father.[30] An allusion to Nero, to whom an interest in necromantic practices was attributed by some sources, may also be possible.[31] Sextus may be the son of the man who fought against Caesar, but he is also the unworthy opponent of the tyrannical regime that is taking shape, and he is virtually impossible to distinguish from the tyrant himself. He may be embodying the future, the next generation of the opposition to the regime of the Caesars, but that does not make him less flawed.[32] His resorting to magical arts is a reversal of the traditional canons of Roman piety and an implicit acceptance of the fact that the world has lost its proper order, natural and political alike.

There is a further level that adds complexity to Lucan's depiction. Erictho may be a *Thessala uates*, but she is sharply differentiated from the Thessalian women who are involved in magical practices.[33] She is not the sort of witch who is depicted in other aspects of the literary tradition and who is devoted to practices such as erotic magic or storm-raising. She has no interaction whatsoever with society and in fact

[27] Cic. *Vat.* 14: *cum puerorum extis deos manis mactare soleas* ('since you are used to appease the Manes with the entrails of murdered boys'). On this passage, see Ogden (n. 23), 149–51. Cf. the reference to child murder in the portrait of Erictho: Luc. 6.554–60.

[28] Apul. *Apol.* 42.7–8. There is some informed speculation in Ogden (n. 21), 253. Nigidius certainly did not introduce necromancy to Rome (Ogden [n. 23], 150).

[29] See the list of divinatory practices that are contrasted with necromancy in 6.423–34, on which see Domenicucci (n. 8), 47–58.

[30] Lucan had a competent knowledge of magic: Gordon (n. 21), 235; Ogden (n. 23), 257–62.

[31] Evidence and discussion in Gordon (n. 21), 241, and Ogden (n. 23), 256–7.

[32] Tesoriero (n. 21), 231–9.

[33] See Danese (n. 21), 217–19 ,and Gordon (n. 21), 237–41, discussing the contrasting representations of magic in 6.438–506 and 6.507–88. The discourse on magic was remarkably diverse and fragmented in the Roman world: for a recent assessment, see R. Gordon, 'Magic as a topos in Augustan Poetry: Discourse, Reality and Distance', *ARG* 11 (2009), 209–28.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383515000054 Published online by Cambridge University Press

plots against social coexistence; she lives at night and inhabits nightmares. She is a bearer of disorder and instability; her cannibalism is the denial of sacrifice, which plays such a central role in the order set by the emperors.[34] In a poem that is centred on the theme of the rise of tyranny from the ashes of the Republic, the geometric opposite of the emperor, the nocturnal witch Erictho, meets equal condemnation. There is the further irony of Sextus Pompeius, the possible foil of Nero, consulting a witch who denies everything that the empire is supposed to secure. Lucan makes an even more bitter allusion to the hollowness of seeking the comfort of divination in an abrasive reference to Pompey. The corpse questioned by Erictho prophesies that, now that he is dead, Pompey will be a more reliable prophet (*certior uates*) than him, but even he will not be able to offer his son any meaningful guidance. Sextus should simply refrain from asking for advice (6.812–14).[35] To compound the sense of a general lack of orientation, Pompey's prophecy does not appear anywhere in the poem.[36]

Only one figure in the Pompeian camp appears to know better. When he is given the opportunity of consulting the oracle of Ammon, Cato emphatically refuses to do so, as he is persuaded that destiny is already decided and that death is going to be the only possible outcome of his efforts.[37] As has rightly been noticed, the last prophecy of the poem (at least in the form in which its text has come to us) is closed by the rejection and resounding condemnation of any form of divinatory prediction.[38] Cato's refusal to consult the oracle is not a

[34] R. Gordon, 'Religion in the Roman Empire: The Civic Compromise and Its Limits', in M. Beard and J. North (eds.), *Pagan Priests* (London, 1990), 254–5.

[35] See Narducci, *Provvidenza* (n. 10), 60–1; Narducci, *Lucano* (n. 10), 135–7; Pillinger (n. 4), 137.

[36] Ahl (n. 17), 146–7, and Pillinger (n. 4), 137, n. 1: whether the absence of Pompey's prophecy is intentional or not hinges, of course, on whether the poem was brought to completion.

[37] Luc. 9.511–86, with Ahl (n. 17), 262–8, who insists on Cato's own oracular nature (264); also B. Tipping, 'Terrible Manliness? Lucan's Cato', in Asso (n. 1), 231. See also A. Long, 'Lucan and Moral Luck', *CQ* 57 (2007), 189–90, on the place that the tension between fortune and virtue has in the questions that Cato refrains from asking the oracle.

[38] Luc. 9.579–84. See Narducci, *Provvidenza* (n. 10), 65–6; Narducci, *Lucano* (n. 10), 141–2; Neri (n. 10), 1992–4; P. Chaudhuri, *The War with God. Theomachy in Roman Imperial Poetry* (Oxford, 2013), 189–91. On Cato's character in the poem, his Republicanism, and his debt to Stoic wisdom, see D. B. George, 'Lucan's Cato and Stoic Attitudes to the Republic', *ClAnt* 10 (1991), 237–58, with exhaustive bibliography (see esp. 251–2 on Cato's foresight); Bartsch (n. 2), 114–23; J. M. Seo, 'Lucan's Cato and the Poetics of Exemplarity', in Asso (n. 1), 199–221; Tipping (n. 37), 223–36. Feeney (n. 2), 283–4, remains essential reading on the extent of Lucan's debt to and radical independence from Stoicism; for a very different view see Liebeschuetz (n. 3), 151–2, who establishes a link between Lucan's Stoic allegiance and his take on divination.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383515000054 Published online by Cambridge University Press

rejection of divine authority: far from that, it is an assertion of the inadequacy and irrelevance of the mediation offered by oracles and divinatory institutions. The decision to do away with that mediation, however, does not lead to the undermining of the oracle. Cato chooses not to consult it and to spare it the embarrassment of a mistaken prophecy, but he does not denounce it as unreliable: he leaves the oracle for the people to consult as they have done in the past (9.586: *non exploratum populis Hammona relinquens*, 'leaving Hammon to the peoples, uninvestigated'). The time-honoured principle whereby divination should be upheld and practised for the sake of the masses, regardless of what views one may personally have about its validity, finds further illustration here. That approach had found authoritative supporters in the late Republican period: Cicero, for instance, endorses it in Marcus' discussion of haruspicy.[39]

Cato's critique of the oracle is in keeping with the approach that is pursued throughout the poem, where several sources of divination are denounced and exposed for their serious limits, or even worthlessness: haruspicy, necromancy, oracles. Even the astrological prediction of Nigidius fails to make any real impact: it is a summary of what will happen, which cannot suggest any means to shape and influence the future. It has often been argued that Lucan systematically removes the gods from epic: he may not be an atheist, but he regards the gods as inscrutable, and possibly irrelevant.[40] In this respect (as in many others), the opposition with Virgil could not be starker. A recent discussion by Elaine Fantham has advocated a more nuanced reading, and Pramit Chaudhuri has proposed looking at the instances of theomachy throughout the poem and their wider political implications, not least concerning the emergence of the imperial cult.[41] In Lucan the gods are absent from the battlefield, but their action is otherwise apparent

[39] Cic. *Div*. 2.28. See Santangelo (n. 11), 29–31, on this passage and its links to late Republican theological debates.

[40] See e.g. P. Jal, 'Les dieux et les guerres civiles', *REL* 40 (1962), 178–88; Dick (n. 3), 37–8. Luc. 7.445–7 is the most radical statement (esp. 747: *mentimur regnare Iouem* ['We falsely say that Jupiter reigns]'), but its emotional charge should warn against drawing general implications from it: see Hutchinson (n. 7), 253–4, and Chaudhuri (n. 38), 173–4, 306; a different approach can be found in K. Nickau, '*Inque deum templis iurabit Roma per umbras*: der Erzähler und die Götter bei Lucan', *Hermes* 131 (2003), 489–91.

[41] See E. Fantham, 'The Angry Poet and the Angry Gods: Problems of Theodicy in Lucan's Epic of Defeat', in S. Braund and G. W. Most (eds.), *Ancient Anger. Perspectives from Homer to Galen* (Cambridge, 2003), 229–49 (= E. Fantham, *Roman Readings. Roman Responses to Greek Literature from Plautus to Statius and Quintilian* [Berlin and New York, 2011], 535–58); Chaudhuri (n. 38), 156–92.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383515000054 Published online by Cambridge University Press

throughout the rest of the poem. There are references to divine wrath, especially directed at Rome, as well as to the divine favour enjoyed by Caesar. Anger is a dominant theme, and cuts both ways: Lucan's wrath towards the gods and his appeals to *Fortuna* shape the whole second part of the poem.[42] The involvement of the gods in the poem, however, is chiefly an opportunity to test the limits of human knowledge – that of the characters as much as that of the narrator.[43]

This brief overview aims to convey the significance of divinatory and prophetic practices in the *Bellum Ciuile*, and to show that Lucan's reflection on the history of the late Republic is productively tied into the reflection on the limits and scope of prediction that unfolded in that very period. The relevance of this area is unsurprising in the epic genre, and finds striking illustrations in the poets of the generation following Lucan. The *uates* theme did not lose any of its complexity and appeal. Statius, for instance, exploited the motif throughout his work: there are a number of characters of the *Thebaid* who play that role, such as Amphiaraus and Melampus in Book 3, and Tiresias in Book 10; the *Siluae* are concerned with a competitive engagement of Statius with the tradition of the poets-prophets of the previous generations, and embarks on a critical reflection on the public role of poetry.[44] Valerius Flaccus was equally preoccupied with these issues, although his solution was of a negative kind: in the *Argonautica* the lines of communication between gods and men are usually feeble, and at times non-existent; the few prophecies that we encounter are obscure and problematic.[45] The poignancy of Lucan's engagement with the

[42] On *fortuna* and *fatum* in the *Bellum Ciuile*, see W. H. Friedrich, 'Cato, Caesar und Fortuna bei Lucan', *Hermes* 73 (1938), 405–21; B. F. Dick, '*Fatum* and *Fortuna* in Lucan's *Bellum Civile*', *CPh* 52 (1967), 235–42; Ahl (n. 17), 297–305; Long (n. 37), 183–97; U. Eigler, '*Fama*, *fatum* und *fortuna*: innere und äussere Motivation in der epischen Erzählung', in Baier (n. 18), 50–3; C. Walde, 'Fortuna bei Lucan: Vor- und Nachgedanken', in Baier (n. 18), 70–3.

[43] Feeney (n. 2), 278–9, 294–5; Bartsch (n. 2), 112–14.

[44] See E. Fantham, 'The Perils of Prophecy: Statius' Amphiaraus and His Literary Antecedents', in R. R. Nauta, H.-J. Van Dam, and J. J. L. Smolenaars (eds.), *Flavian Poetry* (Leiden, 2006), 147–62, esp. 157–58 (= E. Fantham, *Roman Readings* [n. 41], 607–23); R. T. Ganiban, *Statius and Virgil. The Thebaid and the Representation of the Aeneid* (Cambridge, 2007), 44–69; H. Lovatt, 'Statius, Orpheus, and the Post-Augustan *vates*', *Arethusa* 40 (2007), 145–63; Chaudhuri (n. 38), 277–80. On the *Thebaid*, see also W. Hübner, *Dirae in römischen Epos. Über das Verhältnis von Vogeldämonen und Prodigien* (Hildesheim and New York, 1970), 77–100; Neri (n. 10), 2006–26, who stresses the bond between divination and providence in the poem; A.-M. Taisne, 'Stace et l'*Etrusca disciplina*', in Briquel and Guittard (n. 6), 115–27.

[45] See esp. Val. Flacc. *Arg.* 1.531–560: the distance between this prophecy of Jupiter and its model in the *Aeneid* could hardly be clearer. See Neri (n. 10), 1999–2006; G. Manuwald, 'What Do Humans Get to Know about the Gods and Their Plans? On Prophecies and Their

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383515000054 Published online by Cambridge University Press

problem, however, arguably remains unequalled, and not just because of the might of his poetic craft. The clear awareness of, and vigorous engagement with, the role that divination and prophecy played in late Republican history and intellectual discourse give his treatment a further, striking level of relevance and urgency.

That divination holds an important place in Lucan's project should cause no surprise. As Shadi Bartsch has persuasively argued, the poet of the *Bellum Ciuile* is obsessed with boundaries and their violation.[46] Divinatory practice and discourse, in Rome and elsewhere, strongly impinge on liminality, and constantly test the viability and the meaningfulness of boundaries.[47] Lucan saw what a worthwhile viewpoint they could afford on his period of choosing, and what a valuable repository of images and ideas they could offer.

FEDERICO SANTANGELO
federico.santangelo@ncl.ac.uk

Deficiencies in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*', *Mnemosyne* 62 (2009), 586–608; T. Stover, *Epic and Empire in Vespasianic Rome. A New Reading of Valerius Flaccus' Argonautica* (Oxford, 2012), 151–79 (stressing the differences in outlook between Lucan and Valerius). Like Lucan, Valerius Flaccus was directly involved with public divination, as he probably was a *quindecimuir s.f.*: see P. Boyancé, 'La science d'un quindécemvir au 1er siècle après J.-C.', *REA* 42 (1964), 334–46 (= P. Boyancé, *Études sur la religion romaine* [Rome, 1972], 347–58), and Rüpke (n. 2), 1349, no. 3398.

[46] Bartsch (n. 2), 13–47. See also J. J. Lennon, *Pollution and Religion in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge, 2014), 37, 45, 108–9, for valuable remarks on the link between boundaries and purity in Lucan's work.

[47] See V. Rosenberger, *Gezähmte Götter. Das Prodigienwesen der römischen Republik* (Stuttgart, 1998), 107–26; Santangelo (n. 11), 89–90.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383515000054 Published online by Cambridge University Press