The Articulation of Roman Religion in the Latin Historians Livy, Tacitus and Ammianus Marcellinus

Dissertation submitted for PhD, University College London 1998
Jason P. Davies
This work is dedicated to the memory of the late Ian Best and all
he stood for; and to my son Ryan.
Abstract

This thesis examines religion in the Latin historians Livy, Tacitus and Ammianus Marcellinus. It differs from the majority of its predecessors in that it is primarily focussed on distinguishing religion as a system of knowledge rather than an issue of simple 'belief' or 'rejection'. To this end, different sections examine the presentation of the religious material and endeavour to integrate the style and language of each historian into an understanding of religion as an interpretative knowledge-system. This examination provides insight into the details and proprieties of religious statements both within the texts of authors concerned and (to a lesser extent) into their societies.

It is argued that each historian constructs paganism in such a way as to provide a meaningful model of religious practice specifically for the political and social climate to which he belonged: rather than attempting to present an 'objective' and 'accurate' representation of religion (with which the historian then either agrees or disagrees), he is designing and reifying a model which is more or less traditional: the religious systems in these authors are intended to instruct the reader. As such, issues of 'belief' or 'scepticism' prove to be rather redundant and anachronistic. Instead a more nuanced analysis of various levels of discrimination emerges: it is argued, for instance, that the existence of prodigies as harbingers of doom and the gods' ill-will is never questioned (as has often been asserted) but what is at stake is whether specific items belong in that category or not. It emerges that to make any statement about religious matters is to appropriate a high degree of authority: thus aspects of propriety and authorial persona must be considered in comparing the three very different accounts. Religion was a complex interpretative system and a central facet of historiography. Ironically the historians examined here, far from being strong dissenters, were possibly the strongest literary allies of the civic religion of Rome.
Acknowledgements

This thesis is a testament to the generosity of colleagues, family and friends (not exclusive categories). I must first thank Professor John North, my primary supervisor, who shaped and steered my thoughts from the very beginning to a greater extent than I would prefer to admit; Dr. Charles Stewart was as quick to appreciate as to criticise and expanded substantially the coherence of the anthropological aspects. Professor C. Robert Phillips III of LeHigh University was particularly generous in reading the entire draft and offering many helpful comments, as was Dr Rebecca Flemming of the Wellcome Institute, a reliable ally throughout. Dr Rhiannon Ash of UCL was another who was generous in her encouragement and assistance on the whole draft. Dr Chris Kraus gave much-needed help and advice for a large part of the project, and Dr Jane Chaplin, while she was attached to UCL, also provided expertise on Livy that would otherwise have been lacking. Many others have provided patient expertise for which I am grateful. The only aspect for which I can claim sole responsibility are the errors.

Andy Graham, little though he knew it, provided profound inspiration: I must acknowledge David Loxley and Dianne Penny on the same count. Susan Palmer-Jones kindly gave me the benefit of her expertise in proof-reading, as did Russell Shone of the Hellenic Society. The staff of the Library of the Institute of Classical Studies exceeded any reasonable expectations of helpfulness, patience and indulgence. I am also grateful to my family for continued interest and financial support, especially my mother and step-father. The British Academy provided the majority of funds.

Without the unstinting encouragement of the late co-dedicatee Ian Best this thesis would never have been begun; it is to my great sorrow that he did not see the results of his support. But finally I must thank Ryan for missing his dad while it took shape.
Contents

Abstract 3

Abbreviations and Texts: 7

I: Roman Religion and Latin Historiography 8
   1) Introduction 8
   2) The fall and rise of Roman religion 10
   3) Latin historiography 19
   4) Religion in historiography 24

II: Livy and the Invention of Roman Religion 27
   1) Methodology and introductory comments 27
      (i) Religious material in Livy 27
      (ii) Livy in general 30
      (iii) Religion and exempla 33
   2) Facticity of phenomena 36
      (i) Discrimination 36
      (ii) Oratio obliqua 47
      (iii) The reporting of prodigies 54
      (iv) Unambiguous reticence 64
   3) Interpretation 71
      (i) The historian as interpreter 71
      (ii) The authority of the priests 74
      (iii) The senate 87
   4) Choice 93
      (i) Introductory comments 93
      (ii) Aspects of selection 95
      (iii) Foreign rites 97
      (iv) Superstitio 100
      (v) Captive minds 105

III: Gods and Men in Livy 109
   Introduction 109
   5) Explanation 110
      (i) Causal over-determination 110
      (ii) Multiple over-determination 112
   6) The Agency of the Gods 123
      (i) Introductory comments 123
      (ii) Nature and the gods 124
      (iii) The gods and men 128
      (iv) Fors, fortuna & fatum 139
         (a) Fatum 140
         (b) Fors 154
         (c) Fortuna 159
   7) Interpretation and Power 172
      (i) Introductory comments 172
      (ii) The authoritative individual 173
      (iii) Naming the gods 180
      (iv) Acknowledgement of the gods 185
   8) Conclusions 190

IV: Tacitus and the Restoration of Rome 191
   1) Tacitus, historiography and religion: a changed climate? 191
   2) Establishing traditional categories: a man of distinctions 198
      (i) Introduction 198
(ii) Prodigies and omens 199
(iii) Distribution and frequency of prodigy notices 207
   (a) The historical 207
   (b) The genuine 210
   (c) Errors of judgement: for 213
(iv) The Boundaries of Roman religion 215
   (a) Superstitio abroad 216
   (b) Superstitio at home 217
3) The politics of interpretation 220
   (i) Introduction 220
   (ii) Fatum 222
   (iii) Emperors and gods 227
      (a) Imperial cult 227
      (b) Imperial rule 229
      (c) The senate 229
4) Religious structure of Tacitus' accounts 235
5) Conclusions 241

V: Ammianus and a Final Settlement 242
1) Introduction 292
   (i) Religion in the Res Gestae 242
   (ii) The later empire 242
2) A religion for Rome 250
   (i) Hallowed practices 250
   (ii) Christianity 253
   (iii) Foreign religions 254
   (iv) Undesirable practices 256
3) The construction of Roman religion 259
   (i) Traditional features 259
   (ii) Knowledge and interpretation 260
   (iii) Philosophy in the Res Gestae 262
   (iv) Ammianus peritus omnium 267
4) The fundamentals of Ammianus' Roman religion 273
   (i) Numen 273
   (ii) Fortuna 277
   (iii) Fatum 279
   (iv) Fatum and Justice 283
5) Ammianus and the Roman tradition 289

VI: Conclusions 292

Bibliography 294
Abbreviations

The majority of references use the Harvard system: certain frequently cited works are referred to as follows:

BNP – Beard, North & Price (1998)
Kajanto – Kajanto (1957)
Levene – Levene (1993)
Marincola – Marincola (1997)
Miles – Miles (1995)
Oakley – Oakley (1997)
Rike – Rike (1987)

Internal references are given by page number.

The authors are cited by conventional book and chapter numbers within their relevant chapters and additionally by name outside their specific chapters. Other primary sources are cited by conventional or perspicuous abbreviations. Journals are usually cited by the abbreviations of L’Année Philologique.

Texts

Since the editions offered no consistency, spelling has been standardised (i.e. ‘u’ for ‘v’ and ‘V’ for ‘U’). Lower case for the first letter of a sentence has also been applied throughout, notwithstanding the editions used.

For Livy the following texts have been used:
1-10 Oxford Classical Texts
   (1-5 Ogilvie (1974); 6-10 Walters & Conway (1919))
21-45 Teubner
   (21-22 Dorey (1971); 23-25 Dorey (1976); 26-27 Walsh (1982); 29-30 Walsh (1986); 31-40 Briscoe (1991: 2 vols.); 41-45 Briscoe (1986) except 31, which is the OCT)

For Tacitus:
Teubner (both edited by Heubner: Annals 1983, Histories 1978)

For Ammianus:
Teubner (Seyfarth: 2 vols, 1978)
I: Roman Religion and Latin Historiography

1) Introduction

This thesis examines religion in three Latin historians. These historians were chosen for a number of reasons: it is hoped that they can shed light on what religion was at three points in Roman history when social and political life was being transformed: firstly from Republic to Empire, with Livy; secondly when imperial rule had established its inter-dynastic survival, with Tacitus; and finally when the traditional hegemony of paganism was rapidly being usurped, with Ammianus. These historiographical ‘snapshots’ of Roman life were also chosen because they provide enough suitable material for detailed discussion. The intention is to gain a series of glimpses of religious thinking over an extended period of time in one city, albeit the unique example of Rome.

Its prime focus is intended to be on religion rather than on historiography; it is also written on the hypothesis that there can never have been a single unchangeable entity that we can call ‘Roman religion’, easily recognisable in any context.¹ It will become obvious that the context exercised a powerful effect on the way that religion was represented. Studying religion specifically in historians is thus one way of reducing some of the variables that so often obstruct a diachronic analysis. That is not to say that the genre of historiography is unproblematically assumed as a fixed perspective; but these comparisons over time are more manageable than a comparison of, say, Virgil, Petronius and Eusebius. The context of historiography inevitably requires detailed investigation

¹ A banal version of the hypothesis of ‘brain-balkanisation’ put forward by Veyne (1988): his work represents a watershed in the study of both historiographical and religious (in his case, mythical) material in Greek historians. Many of his arguments can be applied to Roman historians, though his hypothesis of ‘brain-balkanisation’ has often (paradoxically, and certainly wrongly) been used to ‘demonstrate’ ‘irrationality’ in ancient authors. It was not Veyne’s intention to ‘prove’ irrationality once and for all: rather the opposite. Veyne’s arguments rely on the observation that moderns are just as ‘balkanised’ as ancients and that this is an inevitable, even useful, function of cognition. The latter point is often elided.
but it is hoped that the benefits of this analysis will be mutual for both religion and ancient historiography. The results will, I maintain, demonstrate that a study of religion in historians is an inevitable and probably long-overdue consequence of much recent work on both aspects.

The difficulties of a study such as this are not understated by Feeney:2

I thought that the main challenge would be to argue persuasively for taking the religious aspects of the culture seriously. The process of writing...has made me realise that the main challenge is actually to find ways to counter the unspoken prejudices against taking the literary aspects of the culture seriously.

The statement is possibly the most dramatic that one could make about classics: if any aspect of ancient culture has received uninterrupted attention since the Renaissance, it is surely the *textual*. Yet it cannot be denied that Feeney argues his corner persuasively; the time is ripe to rethink our strategy both on texts and on Roman religion.

---

2) The Fall and Rise of Roman Religion

For many years the task has been to establish that it is religion that has not received fair treatment; entire careers might fairly be said to have been spent on this project, to good effect. It is still customary to outline the ‘death of the old and birth of the new’ models, though perhaps we are now reaching the point where the ‘new’ model, usually known as ‘civic paganism’, is due for some dismantling. It has been asserted that we should not allow an approach that stresses civic identity to obscure the plethora of possible religious identities available to a Roman with his or her familial, professional, local and political ties; none of these excludes the others. The ‘old’ model asserted the decline and subsequent poverty, even vacuity, of Roman religion in any historical period; any ‘genuine’ religion was deferred backwards (conveniently) into the past (just) before any useful documentation was begun. All subsequent religious phenomena were therefore spinning hopelessly further and further away from their origin, the only place where they had any meaning. Later religious ‘revivals’ (such as the so-called ‘Augustan

---

3 The results of applying ‘civic paganism’ to the material can be seen in Beard, North & Price (1998) (hereafter ‘BNP’) each of whom have written extensively to build up the ‘civic model’. Apart from the innumerable articles we might also note general works incorporating some version of a civic model, such as Liebeschuetz (1979) & Lane-Fox (1986) (the latter surely exaggerating the differences between pagan and Christian personalities). Rives (1995a) usefully takes the analysis to its logical conclusion by treating Carthage over the centuries; Rogers (1990) looks at Ephesos from a similar angle. For an application to the Greek polis, see Zaidman & Pantel (1996).

4 For criticism, see Woolf (1997) & Bendlin (1997). I am grateful to the latter author for a copy of his unpublished paper (listed as Bendlin (1998)). Much of the criticism has not yet appeared in a systematic form.

5 Consider for instance the Bacchic ‘society’ preserved on the Torre Nova inscription, which is senatorial in its connections (Scheid (1986); compare the kind of people supposed to have been involved in the ‘Bacchanalia’ of 186 B.C.. For a discussion of the episode see (selectively) the Senatus Consultum de Bacchanalibus (ILS 18); Frank (1927); Tierney (1947); North (1979) 90-92; Pailler (1986) & (1988). Most recently; Gruen (1990) 35-78; BNP 91-96.

6 Though there was room for manoeuvre within this model; see e.g. Geffcken (1978; originally 1920) 9-14 on the vitality of paganism in late antiquity: “when, and by what means, was this passionate experience of religious experience curbed and hindered?” Wissowa (1912) is the fullest exposition of this approach.

7 Many of these criticisms are of little relevance to another school of thought founded by, and largely represented, by Dumézil, for which see Bélier (1991); Dumézil (1969) & (1970).

8 A trend probably introduced into Rome by Varro and gratefully preserved by Augustine (City of God 4.31= Varro fr. 13 (56) and 18 (59) Cardauns). Feeney (1991) 47-48 notes it for earlier (Greek) thought. On the inadequacies of the idea of decline see (amongst others) North (1976); Scheid (1987a); most recently BNP 10-11. The alternative to a chronological displacement of ‘real’ religion is the tradition of ‘simple rustic piety’ disposed of by North (1995). There is also the assumption that ‘private’ religion was somehow more authentic than ‘state’ religion, but the evidence (see e.g. Bakker (1994); Dorcey (1992)) still requires nuanced analysis and is not so different from that for religion at a civic level.
restoration’) were therefore doomed from the start,9 if there was some grudging admiration for the sheer effort of the upper classes of Rome. In Phillips’ formulation we recounted to ourselves their “mindless cult acts for the elites and superstitious mumblings for the lower orders.”10

This interpretation has been rightly shown not only to misrepresent grossly the texts in question11 but also to derive almost exclusively from Christianising tendencies.12 Perhaps the greatest handicap to any sympathetic understanding of Roman religion was the insistence that it should behave according to Christian principles: ‘belief’ was seen as the cornerstone of religion, and ‘belief’ could hardly be accorded to these rites by anyone respectable. The opposite pole from this unacceptable ‘belief’ was ‘scepticism’ – the ‘rational’ objection to such superstitious “mumbo-jumbo”.13 Romans, like Christians, had a choice: they could believe or they could reject the ‘canons’ of their religion. There was no acceptable (or recognised) position between these two.14 Thus most formulations, searching in vain for some intense personal experience in ancient religion, located ‘true spirituality’ in mystery cults and derided state cult, with its complex rituals of divination and propitiation as utterly ‘arid’.15

Little thought was given to the implications of this formulation. Before any attempt is

9 See e.g. Warde Fowler’s analysis, dating from 1911 (428-429).
11 For detailed examples see North (1990a) 58-60, on Cato De Agricultura 7.4; Beard (1986) on Cicero.
12 Discussed by Phillips (1986); there are many examples; see e.g. Feeney (1998) esp. 14, 22-25; Price (1984) 247: “A Christianising theory of religion which assumes that religion is essentially designed to provide guidance through the personal crises of life and to grant salvation into life everlasting imposes on the imperial cult a distinction between religion and politics. But a broader perspective suggests that religions need not provide answers to those particular questions”. The idea that religion is a framework of ideas to which one assents or objects, as one usually does nowadays, is probably irrelevant even to the Christian church of early antiquity: note the comments of Smith (1979) 77: “contrary to modern impressions, the classical creeds of the Church include no propositional statements.”
13 Elliott (1983) 209 refers thus to magic.
14 Though we might read of Tacitus’ ‘profound religiosity’ that acknowledged no gods, better described as a state of confusion than a position. Some examples of these arguments are given in chapter IV.
15 Toynbee’s description, dismantled by North (1976) 9-10. On mystery cults as the supposed ‘true spiritualism’ and precursor to Christianity, see Cumont (1911). Most recently on these cults, and somewhat polemically, Burkert (1987): he has been criticised by North (1992) 183, who deals with religious groups in antiquity, on which see also Weinfeld (1986). Particular studies on these cults include Mylonas (1961); Gordon (1980); Cole (1984); Sfameni Gasparro (1985). For a (Jungian) psychological study of ritual see Shorter (1996).
made to question whether this is an accurate assessment of the evidence, we should consider whether the tools of analysis are likely to contribute to our understanding. The utility of statements such as “though ancient rites were still performed...the observance of established rituals must have meant little to many worshippers”\(^\text{16}\) is severely limited. Can the significance of one substantial area of public life really be just ‘little’? Does ‘little’ describe an ‘average’ or a ‘uniform’ level of significance? How heterogenous were these worshippers? This interpretation is more an end to questions than the fulfillment of questioning. The image of one class perpetuating, even promoting, a religion which had long since lost any assent is altogether dubious and unprecedented.\(^\text{17}\)

If scepticism seems inherently unlikely, ‘belief’ is even more problematic: it may be that the paradoxical concept of belief is one peculiar to the Christianised West.\(^\text{18}\) Moreover, to reject religion in the present age, quite apart from being fashionable, is easy. There are rival claims, predominantly that of science which has established its own orthodoxy. But this was not the case in the ancient world: in the absence of any comprehensive alternative formulation,\(^\text{19}\) the rejection of religion was altogether more difficult to accomplish and would actually have represented an absurd position, more like abandoning ‘science’ in the present day than ‘religion’. In fact it is a virtually impossible proposition: ‘ancient religious scepticism’ is an illusion whose chief function is to preserve a supposed similarity between the ancient past and the present.\(^\text{20}\)

Perhaps this is an overstated position; it is certainly the kind of generalisation that

---


\(^{17}\) Cf. the findings of Febvre (1982), who concluded that atheism was impossible in sixteenth century France, given the fabric and limits of the collective mentality of the time: “today we make a choice to be a Christian or not. There was no choice in the sixteenth century” (14). For the way that interpretative systems are transformed rather than abandoned (now an anthropological commonplace) see (e.g.) Festinger et al. (1956): the seminal work is Kuhn (1962).

\(^{18}\) Needham (1972) is the fullest discussion of this: see also Pouillon (1982). For a discussion more centred on classical sources, see Price (1984) 10-11 and especially Phillips (1986) 2697-2710; for some of the consequences of these arguments, BNP 42-43. Smith (1979) is a very different and highly sympathetic book (in contrast to many more recent works) which asserts the value and universality of belief and faith; his conclusions may not however be easily applied to ancient cultures. But they are a useful corrective to anachronism; see esp. chs. 5 (‘Credo’) & 6 (‘Believe’).

\(^{19}\) Phillips (1986) 2697-2710. See further below (pp. 262-267) for a starting point for clarifying the relative roles of philosophy and religion in antiquity.

\(^{20}\) See North (1983) 216-218 for the same sentiment.
scholars normally do well to avoid. But given a choice between one insecurely founded assumption and another, we will perhaps benefit more from beginning with an overly generous acceptance of the overwhelmingly positive evidence. What occasional evidence there is for scepticism is steadily decreasing; almost every area of ancient religion is being reinterpreted along more subtle lines. The process of our reassessment has been under way for three decades\(^\text{21}\) on various fronts,\(^\text{22}\) and for the most part has been based on internal evidence\(^\text{23}\) but has also drawn on wider comparative initiatives.\(^\text{24}\) Indeed a survey of comparative work provides a rude awakening: the formulations of anthropologists on religion bear little resemblance to the traditional formulations of classicists.\(^\text{25}\) Uncritical comparisons would be inappropriate here since the dialectic continues in that field, but a brief survey of some of the major issues and players will place this predominantly localised discussion in a broader context.

It may well be that the very idea of religion as a category is in itself misinformed and simply a further legacy of Christianity. Not all cultures even recognise it as a distinct phenomenon.\(^\text{26}\) Nor, if we do construct such a category, do religions necessarily obey our expectations, largely formed as these are from Christianity. Many aspects of anthropological discussions are directly relevant to ancient religions: consider for instance Eliade’s observations that many religions look back to a sacred past, forever recreated in ritual,\(^\text{27}\) which go a long way to answering complaints about a ‘lack of spirituality’; Smith coined the term ‘locative’ to indicate a society that places a higher value on its

\(^{21}\) Feeney (1998) 3 dates the beginning of the process to Jocelyn (1966). Others (e.g. Liebeschuetz (1979) Acknowledgements and passim) often refers to North (1968).
\(^{22}\) Greek material has received distinct treatment for the most part; the work of Vernant, Détienne and Calame has been particularly influential as is visible in (e.g.) Zaidman & Pantel (1996). For the differences (often prejudices) between the treatments of Greek and Roman religious affairs, see Beard (1993); Feeney (1998) 6-11, 22-31, 47-64, 77-78.
\(^{23}\) To North and Beard (n.11), we might add Phillips (1992) and Feeney (1998) on poetry; Feeney (1991) on epic; Harrison (1995) on Herodotus. But recent dedicated studies are relatively rare.
\(^{24}\) E.g. Price (1984); Beard has also drawn on works such as Douglas (1966). Feeney (1998) and BNP draw on a number of comparative efforts.
\(^{25}\) For instance, Détienne’s studies of Dionysos (Détienne (1979) & (1989)) heavily influenced by French anthropology, are virtually ignored at times (they are certainly absent from bibliographies where one would expect to find them). The irony is that one (Détienne (1979)) opens with a detailed response to classicists who had criticised his anthropological work on empirical grounds.
\(^{27}\) Eliade (1957).
present integrity and well-being than on eschatology: he distinguished a profoundly different constellation of values and desiderata in such a society. The act of identifying (and thereby validating) a different value-system frees it to some extent from direct comparison with ‘open’ or ‘soteriological’ (as he calls them) systems such as Christianity. Another strategy, which avoids the thorny issue of truth values, is to treat any knowledge system as a social transaction: thus Kapferer, writing on sorcery, asserts that “the logic of science and sorcery as systems of abstract explanation...is of far less significance than the fact they are both social practices.” The same could be said for religious knowledge in antiquity, and the social value placed on religious knowledge of all kinds will emerge as a severely underplayed aspect of the religious aspects of our narratives. Moreover this will apply both to the agents in the narratives and also to the historians themselves.

Many of these frames of reference have been eagerly adopted in recent years: one result of this reformulation is that the theme of interpretation has become central to religion. Furthermore, there is an increasing awareness of the specific workings of genre in religious dialectic: it has become a legitimate concern not just what is said, but who spoke, and in which idiom, a process probably ‘begun’ in Rome by Varro when he followed the Greek habit in schematising the trifold idiom of ‘mythical, physical and civil’, relevant to poets, philosophers and political society. If we assume the existence of religious ‘knowledges’ the various sources on religion go from ‘deviating from’ or ‘representing’ some unified central position to being a constellation of varied positions; Roman religious meaning becomes the whole of that constellation with all its

---

30 It is not always social anthropology that is drawn upon: other accounts are centred on biology, most famously (for classicists) Burkert on Greek religion, (Burkert (1985) and especially in Burkert (1997)). On some of these issues see Phillips (1998).
31 Frr. 7-10, in Augustine The City of God 6.5. For discussions of idiomatic religion, see (e.g.) Feeney (1991); Beard (1986). More generally Lamberton (1986)’s discussion of philosophical exegesis of Homer is excellent; most of their interest is abstract and what we would call ‘religious’. One wonders what Varro would have made of Mithraism with its astrological significations (Beck (1988)).
32 I borrow the term from Worsley (1997) whose use is broader than in this study, but nonetheless relevant.
readjustments, dichotomies, contradictions and ultimate unity. The whole transformation of the field is reflected in the delicate change of title between Warde Fowler’s *The Religious Experience of the Roman People* and Beard, North & Price’s *Religions of Rome*; the plural reflects an appreciation of diversity, and ‘experience’ has moved to the background.

This new approach is not without its difficulties: in some ways we might look back enviously on the days when things were almost literally black and white – belief or scepticism – because to explore rather than simply classify does not make for easy analysis. Consider Feeney’s example of the (modern) Shintoist cult of Amaterasu: her temple is regularly demolished and rebuilt a few yards away. A senior priest, on being asked why this ritual was performed replied “I’m not really sure...there are many theories...but we are not sure which of them are true.” Analysed along lines of ‘belief’ or ‘scepticism’ it is not hard to see how this instance would be taken: it would almost certainly ‘prove’ that some section of the movement was consciously and deliberately engaged in a huge deception. What indeed should we make of Feeney’s closure with his assent to Dr Johnson’s “Why, Sir, we know very little about the Romans.”? Does this invalidate all his arguments? The background to any informed position may well be not a central canon to be reproduced exactly but a melting pot of possibilities, out of which individual voices arise. We should beware of overly privileging any of these voices: a ‘true’ orthodoxy, or even a normative position, is not to be found in a single

---

33 Liminality has become a key interpretative issue, often providing useful analysis of situations formerly thought of as confused or confusing; see e.g. Beard (1980) & (1995). It seems ironic that prodigies have not received a similar treatment until now: Rosenberger (1998), which unfortunately appeared too late for detailed incorporation, has a section on this. Essentially he argues cogently that prodigies represent a violation of ‘order’ and that expiation was a means restoring this order. In addition he stresses that all classes of society were included in the expiation. Cf. the conclusions on Tacitus and the refounding of the Capitoline Temple (below, pp. 237-239).
35 If this example seems absurd (as it must do to an investigator in search of ‘core belief’), it may not be the final word: compare the reply of the Chief Druid of the Druid Order, when asked on Talk Radio at the summer solstice in 1995, “what do Druids believe?” The reply came that “We encourage our members to believe as little as possible.” Yet the same group publish booklets, give speeches at their public ceremonies and do not avoid offering religious positions. The interviewer was evidently rather startled by this reply and that particular interview lasted only two or three minutes, in contrast to those preceding and succeeding which were usually about ten minutes.
account, even that of an expert. What we have is an ongoing process of self-creation which precludes the existence of a central canon. Though we should expect certain features to command a general consensus, details will vary. Our criteria are no longer centred on the search for some ‘original’ ‘authentic’ Roman religion, but the urge to understand the creation of identity by and within a society. So Ovid, for instance, is no longer ‘confused’ about religion: rather his Fasti make a statement about religious behaviour and organisation. Cicero is no longer simply ‘sceptical’ but engaged in a complex inter-cultural negotiation. Roman religion is a woven pattern of positions in a particular relationship to the gods and all the other religious positions represented within Roman society: to select which ones are to be excluded in favour of others is to miss the point. This kind of approach is the one that is now generally taken in connection with religious phenomena of all types, and it has proven most fruitful.

But there are still gaps: whatever the progress in widening our understanding of religious motifs in (e.g.) poetry, certain debates that we might expect in Roman religious dialogue are simply absent. If identity can be shown to be a concern in actuality, we are not surprised that we can detect it as an organising principle in texts and rituals. By the same logic, we would expect to find commentary on another fundamental issue for Roman religion as it was practised, namely its ability to deliver practical results. Yet such questions do not loom large in our new understanding of Roman religion., except in the

---

37 Compare the difficulties encountered (even in antiquity) of defining 'good' and 'bad' magic (Phillips (1991)).
38 For Phillips (1992) Ovid is defying the Augustan reformulation of the calendar. See also Scheid (1992); Feeney (1992); Parker (1993). On the Fasti more generally, see Newlands (1992a & b) and (a more pro-Augustan reading) Herbert-Brown (1994).
39 Beard (1986); cf. Schofield (1986) (“A Chinese box like this does not have, and can never have had, a single meaning” (63)).
40 As is one that demands static meanings for (e.g.) festivals: for reinterpretation of a festival over time, see Beard (1987).
41 E.g. Claudius’ organisation of the haruspices was motivated partly by the hope of preserving what was, and what was not, proper Roman practice (Tacitus Annals 11.15; see further Briquel (1995)).
42 So North (1976) 1: “For the Romans of any generation, the real validation of their religion lay in the fact that it had worked...for the Romans of the last generation of the Republic, it was a fact that their ancestors had won more battles and eaten better dinners than anybody else.”
arcanee and peripheral forum of philosophy. 43 Furthermore, it is an aspect that the comparative material also urges us to consider: Horton suggests a perspective from which

[R]eligion is seen as growing, persisting and declining under the influence of two completely independent strivings: on the one hand, the striving to achieve an adequate level of explanation, prediction and control of the world; and on the other, the striving to achieve certain communion relationships not permitted in the purely human context.44

Horton’s position has not been received with universal favour; his collected articles bear witness to the ongoing debate.45 But his argument, however criticised, still carries weight46 and bears a striking resemblance to certain aspects of Roman religion, with its emphasis on prediction and response.

Given their central role in religious practice, we would expect to find deliberations on these themes pervading Roman culture just as much as identity, yet they are largely

---

43 Nor should we consider philosophy as a branch of religion as is often done: it is a mistake to conflate philosophical curiosity about natural mechanisms with any attempt to suggest any (teleological) meaning. This is dealt with specifically in connection with Ammianus, (below, p. 263). For a survey of philosophical treatments of traditional cult, see Attridge (1978). He finds that, almost without exception, philosophers supported traditional cult.

44 Horton (1993a) 372: his allusion to “achieving communion relationships not permitted in the purely human context” seems to be a concession to the mainstream of anthropological discussion. To this reader, this line of argument seems as insulting as the argument (proposed by Tambiah (1990) 91 et al.) that Horton is taking a line that insults “non-scientific” societies. For our purposes, note how easily applicable his position is to antiquity: see e.g. Woolf (1997) 74’s formulation (with no reference to Horton): “All religions are primarily means of making sense of the world of mankind of each individual’s place in it, devices that offer a consistent account of the origins and workings of the cosmos and some explanations of and remedies for common misfortunes.”

45 There have been many responses, many of which he addresses in Horton (1993; his collected articles). See especially Penner (1971-2) & (1989); Tambiah (1990), esp. 90-92, 131-132; rejected by (e.g.) Kapferer (1997) 25, 225. In a classical context Lloyd (1996) argues against any universalist position (see esp. 137-139); for a (virtually univeralist) critique of anti-relativism see Penner (1989) 72-79. For a (not unfairly) more sympathetic overview of Horton’s work see Segal (1993). Horton emphatically distances himself from Frazer but claims a heritage from Tylor via Durkheim.

46 Many criticisms depend on stressing the aspect of communion, which critics claim Horton has ignored (e.g. Tambiah (1990), amongst other objections), which Horton does in fact appreciate, as the quote indicates. A common criticism is that his observations are too obvious (Boyer (1993b) 16) which does no harm to their use here.
absent from our new account of Roman paganism. Though we read of poetry or ritual defining foreign and native gods, we hear less often of literary negotiation that concerned itself specifically with the details of how Rome should marshal divine support. Is this our oversight or theirs?
If religion-baiting has taken the form of seeing scepticism and decline behind both innovation and conservatism, historians have also suffered from the application of anachronistic criteria. An edition of Livy's book 40, published in the course of this dissertation, suggests that the reader compare Livy with the much tidier Cambridge Ancient History: time and time again we hear that Tacitus is 'biased' or 'pessimistic'; Matthews, in the midst of his admiration for Ammianus, cannot resist a dig at his subject’s digressions. It seems that ancient historians only deserve the title of historian because it was they who bequeathed the word (if not the genre) to its ‘true heirs’; they are ‘unscientific’ (and therefore unhistorical) in the extreme. The desire for ‘objectivity’ and ‘proper organisation’ (i.e. for a historiography like ours), if appropriate to the criticism of modern studies, can become little more than a stick with which to beat ancient historians.

As with religion, more sympathetic treatments are available; often this is little more than the willingness to consider that ancient historians might be working along different criteria from the (supposedly) transparent modern ideal. It is impossible to explore fully the possibilities here for a reappraisal of historiography: consider Feeney (1991) 260-1’s comments on historiography: quoting Servius on Aen 1.235 (historia est quicquid secundum naturam dicitur, siue factum siue non factum) he throws open a controversial and promising door:

Historical narrative aims to convince and persuade by keeping to what can be accepted as probable or likely – and here ‘probable’ and ‘likely’ must be understood...as one pole of an antithesis, with

---

48 However tempting this position looks, it is only possible if we discredit his religious position: it is usually based on his apparent contempt for society and the gods.
49 Matthews (1989) ix. This is despite the fact that digressions were the established prerogative of the historian (most recently, Woodman (1985) 12). Compare Elliott (1983)’s rather dogmatic and anachronistic discussion of bias in Ammianus.
‘mythic’, ‘unnatural’, and ‘fabulous’ at the other. In other words, the ‘likely’ is what is left over when you have disqualified the ‘fabulous’ and is therefore a considerably more comprehensive category than we would allow under such a label.

Servius’ *secundum naturam...siue factum siue non factum* will provide more than one key to our understanding of religious material in these historians; it alludes to an ethos that permeates the accounts, a genre-specific preference, and we will find our authors scrupulously acknowledging a preferred manner of reporting.

With the sort of formulation provided by Feeney and others, it becomes possible to explore authorial identity more fully.\(^{50}\) This is part of a wider tendency to see deliberate sophistication where once we saw poor execution of an assumed historiographical norm. Whereas previous analyses were prone to treating historians as modern undergraduates with weak mastery of their genre, there has been a growing tendency to allow them more scope and give them more credit.

Where the attempt is made, there are interesting results: Moles (1993) shows intricate and sophisticated complexity in Livy’s preface, for instance: Jaeger (1997) shows how our ‘confusion’ is often Livy’s subtlety. The collaboration of Kraus & Woodman (1997), for all its brevity, shows the rigorous application (and contains many benefits) of a less anachronistic approach for a range of Latin\(^{51}\) historians. Woodman’s various other

---

\(^{50}\) Compare the acknowledged complexity of authorial *personae* in Latin poetry: I note virtually at random Harries (1989); Newlands (1992a and b); Phillips (1992) & Myers (1994) on Ovid; Lowrie (1997) on Horace. What would a generous combination of approaches such as that of Détienne (1967) do for (some might say ‘to’) historiography? There are differences of course; but how far does Livy intend to elide the gap with his ‘mock invocation’ of the gods *ut poetis* (Pr. 13)? While poets are generally thought to ‘enrapture’ their audience, historians usually (merely) provide ‘entertainment’. The difference made to our reception by our choice of terms to describe an (arguably very similar) aspect is worth exploring. Relatively few forays resembling these ambitious accounts for sophistication exist in connection to historians to my knowledge; a notable exception being perhaps Henderson (1987) on Tacitus and that is simplified to some extent in the version in Henderson (1998a). Woodman is essential to such readings, but see Fowler’s comment on his being ‘bludgeoned’ “back into line after some suspicious signs of imminent desertion to the good guys in recent years” (in *G & R* 40 (1993 227); Kraus’ work (e.g. Kraus (1994a) & (1997)) also discusses the role of the Livian *persona* in a way that leaves an empirical approach looking redundant; Jaeger (1997) is equally sophisticated, and sympathetic, in her discussions. See now also Feldherr (1998) esp. 51-63 on Livy who reaches some similar conclusions as those presented here from a different angle; his discussion of religious material has much to commend it.

\(^{51}\) Given the complexities of authorial identity, I follow their lead in preferring the epithet ‘Latin’ to ‘Roman’; the issue of identity is discussed for each author.
publications, especially his *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography*, have contributed to the habit of reading historians as fundamentally rhetorical. This has made it possible to examine organisational themes, issues of identity and exemplification in more detail than was previously admitted. The fact that an historian’s material was ‘factual’ did not prevent them from moulding an account that resonated powerfully with contemporary concerns. Indeed we might question whether it is possible not to:

The notion that sequences of real events possess the formal attributes of the stories we tell about imaginary events could only have its origin in wishes, daydreams, reveries. Does the world really present itself to perception in the form of well-made stories, with central subjects, proper beginnings, middles and ends, and a coherence that permits us to see ‘the end’ in every beginning? and does the world, even the social world, ever really come to us as already narrativized, already ‘speaking itself’ from beyond the horizon of our capacity to make scientific sense of it? Or is the fiction of such a world, capable of speaking itself and of displaying itself as a form of story, necessary for the establishment of that moral authority without which the notion of a specifically social reality would be unthinkable? could we ever narrativize without moralising?

Those who prefer to argue for the desirability (one might even say ‘existence’) of an ‘objective’ narrative might also consider the following sentiment:

Views about facts never stand alone. They are always shaped by

---

52 I have only identified occasional and arbitrary points here: items with a direct bearing on individual authors or passages are included in the relevant chapters. See also Luce (1989); Rich (1996); for studies dealing with *seritas* as the absence of bias see Woodman (1988); Wheeldon (1989); Bländsfeld (1992); Percival (1992); Marincola (1997) (hereafter ‘Marincola’) ch. 3.4 (“Impartiality”) 158-174; on *inuentio* generally, Woodman (1988) 87-89, Marincola 160-162; in Livy, Oakley (1997) (hereafter ‘Oakley’) 4-12; on truth and fiction more generally in antiquity, Gill & Wiseman (1993).

53 White (1987) 25. Cf. the formulation of van Seters (1997) “The notion of a people or nation rendering account to itself has a dual connotation that will be quite useful in this discussion. On the one hand, to render account has a forensic sense of assessing responsibility for, and passing judgement upon, a nation’s past actions and their consequences for the present state of affairs...[A] national history expresses what a nation is and what principles it stands for...[T]he national history is the presentation of the people’s essential character or constitution followed by praise or condemnation (implicit or explicit) of its subsequent corporate actions” (2). Such conclusions run counter to the implicit assumptions usually made of history. Veyne (1984) is a useful deconstruction of what history is usually thought to be.
The author is speaking not about history but science, the supposed repository of "objectivity". On these readings, an account where history is simply a record of facts, recorded with more or less skill in judgement, becomes more and more problematic: Woodman and Kraus come to a similar conclusion, and state their preference for an analysis whereby it can be "taken for granted that since these ancient texts are as much literary as historical, a literary approach, in which one reads for structure, style and theme, can offer new insights." Like them, we are interested in the interpretation that shapes the 'record of facts'.

In accordance with such cross-disciplinary arguments, interest in Latin historians has shifted its focus and desire, to the gain of the historians:

The catalogue of [Livy's] deficiencies is familiar: ignorance of geography and warfare, confusion on legal and constitutional matters, willingness to sacrifice accuracy to clarity etc. His greatness as a historian evidently does not lie in searching critical investigation of the past. It lies rather in his own imaginative reconstruction of the past and his representation, or rather evocation, of it to the reader...Livy's main engagement is not so much with the records of the Roman past as with the mind of his reader.

---

56 Thus this study takes each historian as they come, and presumes deliberate (re-)casting and selection from (rather than pathetic subjugation to) their sources. Oakley 13-100 establishes this for Livy; it is assumed in recent studies of Tacitus and asserted here for Ammianus (as lonely as ever with his omission from Kraus & Woodman (1997)). On the annalistic tradition and the different positions taken by scholars on evidence for early periods, Oakley 21-109: on the annales maximi Frier (1979), Bucher (1987). For the argument that the term annales can refer specifically to a history of Rome see Verbrugghe (1989).
57 Solodow (1979) 258-259.
Tacitus has similarly received attention on his own terms, and the results are equally striking.\textsuperscript{58} For Ammianus, perhaps doomed forever to isolation, and certainly not subjected to any fundamental reappraisal in recent years, a similar paradigmatic and epideictic approach is adopted. Issues of both composition and reception are explored here, though I shamelessly sidestep the deeper issues of reception brought to our attention by the suitably ill-defined post-modernist phenomenon, not because it brings a hopeless relativism (a common charge) but because it generates more possible meanings than can be dealt with, or even registered: for our purposes we will ascribe ‘intentions’ to our historians and texts, and posit a desired response. True, many readers would have taken away something completely different, and some variant responses to the role of the gods are charted here. But the wider spectrum of plausible responses is left largely untouched; we will stay as close as possible to the authors and their times, with the occasional glance at our own reception, lest we mistake it for theirs. Thus the unregulatable reception is assumed to have a centre of gravity, an ‘intended audience’, in antiquity. In this way it is possible to treat a text as a historical moment in the life of a particular society. In the following discussions, these ‘dramatic’ approaches are used more specifically, and preferred to more traditional assessments. I maintain that the results justify the benefit of the doubt.

\textsuperscript{58} I refer principally to Sinclair (1991a & b) & (1995) and Plass (1988) in addition to the detailed and various studies of Woodman.
4) Religion in Historiography

If both religion and historiography are still undergoing substantial reinvention, the same cannot necessarily be said of religion in historiography. Individual examples are cited for each author, but lest it be assumed that the ‘unpublished’ position has shifted to greater sympathy, we should note the very recent comment in a review of Levene (1993):59

[I]t emerges that Livy really does not have the reins firmly in hand, nor an overall conception clear in his mind from the prologue on of the importance of the religious element in Rome’s history or in his history of Rome...do great historians have to know what they are doing?

Even if we grant that the reviewer is offering mitigation for Livy’s failure, he is not particularly impressed. The suggestion that an author capable of producing a work of the sophistication (or even just length) of the Ab Vrbe Condita could not get past his prologue without becoming ‘confused’ is formulated with an ease that should make us stop and consider how seriously we can take such statements. Would he say something similar of Momigliano? Or Mommsen? If so, on the basis of his being confused by them as a reader, then I take no issue with this statement, since, in theory, no-one would be exempt from such a criticism. But it is tempting to think not or that he would at least be rather more sparing in his criticism. More to the point, this is the kind of statement that we have, unfortunately, become accustomed to when dealing with religion in texts.60

Not long ago, virtually every writer of Rome was ‘confused’ or ‘contradictory’ on this enormously complex issue. Almost uniquely, religion is still supposed to be deficient either for or in historians (or both) whether they were ‘confused’, ‘unpredictable’, ‘sceptical’ or (even more elusively) ‘secular’ (or each in turns).61 The kind of debates

59 Horsfall (1998). I am not sure that even his initial point is justified by Levene’s evidence and argument; I certainly contest it on Livy’s. Levene’s argument is unfairly represented by this reading.
60 I have yet to see a comment ascribing ‘confusion’ to the designer of a monument with religious motifs; perhaps architects thought more clearly than writers in the Roman world.
61 References are given in each chapter.
that permeated almost every other aspect of ancient life apparently passed by the unique breed that wrote history. Thus in the peculiar nexus of religion in historians we encounter the hegemony of both traditional schools of thought, even if these are in decline in other areas. We have not found coherence, but our confessing a failure of imagination does not amount to proof. The historians still cannot answer the question 'credisne in deos?', no longer put to most poets, because they could not have understood it, or rather could not reduce their understanding to such a banal proposition. The logic of the situation would be that the deficit on the religious front may coincide rather well with the retention of less than helpful analysis of historiography.

Thus from a general position we have two questions: where is the debate about explanations in ancient literature, a key concern for religion? And why are historians uniquely considered 'sceptical', when the culture all around them is burgeoning with issues that fall short of such absolute positions but work rather with fine distinctions of identity? The need, even niche, for this thesis is self-explanatory in this context. Having inferred the need for re-examination, the work is, however, deductive rather than inductive, aiming to build from a close analysis of language and deployment of religious material to discover the purpose of the historian in question. If it can be seen to tally with our more general need, then so much the better, but the following argument does not depend on the perception of that need.

Finally, a consideration already mentioned in passing: if this discussion is to be of any use, then we must include in its working principles the issue of which Roman religion would be represented by an historian: on whose behalf did he speak, and to whom? One limiting aspect of the old debate was the insistence that 'belief' was a 'personal' issue, that documents represented a relationship with religion that somehow represented a view that would be espoused in any context. Issues of propriety and genre62 have not entered

---

62 For an analysis of the way that a genre retained its stability while reflecting innovation, see Conté (1994).
into any appreciation of presentation, except occasionally to reinforce an illusion that the practice of historiography demanded scepticism or secularism. But in our analysis of the material that follows, it is necessary to remember that what Livy, Tacitus, or Ammianus wrote as historians, while it will be inextricably linked to them as individuals, will not even claim to represent a personal position.63 Rather we should be thinking of the norms and genre-specific methods available to an historian – whatever it was to be an historian.

In the context of this admittedly rather unsystematic survey of historiography, the argument is built ‘from the ground up’, with a careful reappraisal of Livy’s approach to a number of issues hitherto linked to scepticism (chapter II); there then follows some discussion of the model gained from this analysis (chapter III). These two aspects ('decipherment' and discussion) are then brought to bear on Tacitus (chapter IV) and Ammianus (chapter V) in slightly less detail, with reference to arguments used to elucidate Livy’s material: there seems little point rehearsing general studies about such aspects as fortuna beyond noting deviation from our (arbitrary) Livian norm. Though this thesis serves better as a beginning than a closure,64 it is hoped that issues such as ‘scepticism’ and ‘secularism’ will be shown to be worse than redundant; they are positively misleading and tear a rich fabric of expertise and subtlety into useless rags.

---

63 Cf. Kraus (1997) 70-74’s general distinction between Livy and ‘Livy’.
64 Very few passages receive the kind of close attention that they might within the overall argument; the possibilities of closer studies are almost literally endless. Feldherr (1998) has some cogent points to make about various passages in Livy.
II: Livy and the Invention of Roman Religion

1) Methodology and Introductory Comments

(i) Religious material in Livy

Judgements of Livy have varied over the years: despite the pilgrimage in antiquity of a man who simply wanted to meet him,65 his standing in recent years has not been high: Kraus sums up the general position well in her review of Levene (1995):

This book is a surprise, in more ways than one. First, it is that rara avis, a book on Livy that respects, even admires, its subject. No apologies are offered, and indeed none is wanted, for Levene’s decision to work on an author who, despite his increasing popularity, still finds himself featuring with depressing regularity in sentences that begin ‘Even Livy...’66

It is not surprising that our recent reviewer, mentioned in the introduction, thought so little of Livy’s religious material: the historian is simply assumed to be incompetent. There is no recourse made to such strategies in the following discussion: it is assumed that Livy has provided a sophisticated account, and that we have shouldered the task of

65 Pliny Ep. 2.3.8 (‘Numquamne legisti, Gaditanum quendam Titi Liui nomine gloriaque commotum ad uisendum eum ab ultimo terrarum?’).
66 Kraus (1994b) 507. Even scholars who are favourable towards Livy seem determined not to grant him a proper status: e.g. Lancel (1988) warns that “the brilliance of the style, the success of the dramatic effects and the beauty of the rhetorical elaboration must not make us forget that Livy’s account is often unconfirmed; the text must be decoded in the light of the Paduan historian’s pro-Roman bias” (26): no comparable ‘bias’ is discerned in Polybius although Lancel thinks it perfectly likely that the two had common sources (27). Oakley is more complimentary than most of his predecessors, especially regarding Livy’s general style (111-151).
explaining to ourselves what he expected his contemporary audience to understand. This does not rule out any possible strategy which would prefer to insist that what I dub ‘sophistication’ is in fact ‘confusion’ but at least we shall have a choice.

Livy is of course familiar to students of religion: without him our knowledge of Republican religion would be infinitely poorer.67 The historian is generally treated as a store of material that can be taken, by and large, as it comes: little discussion of Livy’s specifically religious methodology is thought to be necessary.68 But there is also a tradition of scholarship examining Livy’s ‘belief’ as an object of study in itself. For this school, religion has been a puzzling and contradictory phenomenon, and no real consensus has been reached: the latest – and probably the fullest – attempt to examine the material is the work of Levene in his Religion in Livy (hereafter simply ‘Levene’), which therefore merits some attention. Levene makes central to his argument the issue that had previously confounded most attempts to understand the presentation of the religious material – namely that the author appears to contradict himself at various points on religious matters: Levene endeavours to retain this tension rather than favour one side to the detriment of the other. Essentially his argument is that Livy is deliberately forging an account within which there are two possible readings: one (‘believing’) incorporates the religious material as integral to the record and explanation of past events, while the other (‘sceptical’) includes it only as ‘traditional ornamentation’ to be discarded by the educated élite. The reader must decide for himself (assuming a male audience in antiquity) whether to believe the ‘religious’ account or not.69

67 As a glance at the general list of prodigies in MacBain (1982; hereafter ‘MacBain’) 83-105 or Cohee (1993)’s list of repeated rites will easily demonstrate: Liebeschuetz (1979) grew out of undergraduate courses on Livy according to the Preface.
68 For instance the recent sustained monograph that uses Livy extensively (Orlin (1997)) does not mention Livy’s methodology, least of all when faced with uneven reporting of religious features. North (1979) is unusual in discussing the text so fully, if only with regard to specific passages.
69 Liebeschuetz (1967) 45 suggests a comparable position, though (to simplify it somewhat) he assumes that the educated and rational Roman readership would not be so foolish as to believe the ‘religious’ version, which was for the unenlightened masses: “I shall argue that thorough-going rationalism and earnest advocacy of religion are closely associated”: it is not, however, always clear what he means by ‘rationalism’ since this term is usually synonymous with ‘scepticism about religion’ per se. For the most part, he seems to mean ‘discriminating’ rather than ‘absolutely sceptical’. For Levene, the two positions are distinct and equal.
Levene's indispensable contribution is his demonstration that, at almost any given moment, religious factors are eminently relevant in Livy's historical narrative: Roman success is consistently linked with their piety and good relations with the gods. Impiety on the other hand leads to (temporary) setbacks, inevitably followed, in Rome's case, by religious and military recovery (in that order). This also applies to other agents in the narrative: Hannibal, for instance, attributes his successes and final downfall to the intervention of the gods. Livy's method is not just explicit mention of the mood of the gods at any given moment but also the significant juxtaposition of religious material to other events, often those on the battlefield: Roman piety consistently leads to success and impiety to failure. It is perfectly understandable that in a culture which, by and large, accepted that the gods played a very active role in the world of men, significant juxtaposition should be sufficient to leave the reader in no doubt as to the sort of intervention that was to follow. Levene shows that Livy "is unlikely to be inventing such material outright, but...he is prepared to expand it, shorten it, change the order of events within it, alter its position within its year, and even occasionally place it in the wrong year altogether": in other words the organisation of his narrative is an interpretation that demonstrates the power of the gods.

However the suggestion that Livy is also simultaneously offering an account that 'denies' religious causation is more problematic. The 'believing' account is perfectly coherent as it stands, and Livy does not actually offer a full parallel and secular version as an alternative; rather, even if we were to accept Levene's analysis of the moments of apparent scepticism, it could only be said that Livy casts some doubt on his one coherent account. The use of oratio obliqua and deferred authority, combined with the explicit questioning of specific religious notices, it is alleged, are to be understood by the reader as representative of a more general scepticism. Ignoring the 'discredited' material is supposed to leave behind a fully-formed 'rational' account.

70 30.30.4 (speaking of himself, 'Hannibalem, cui tot de Romanis ducibus victoriam di dedisset); 30.30.30 (he succeeded 'quoad ipsi inuidere di'): on this speech see further below, p. 169. The most recent of the many general discussions of Hannibal is Lancel (1988).
71 Levene 242.
There are reasons to object to this methodology: one of the problems is that all the religious material thereby becomes polarised - it is either categorised as absolutely sceptical or absolutely credulous. To ask the question in these terms deprives Livy of any opportunity to express reservations (rather than scorn), explicitly weigh up evidence or introduce subtle distinctions. All of these he clearly does, however ‘bad’ an historian he is assumed (rather than argued) to be. In addition it is misleading to assume that all these varying techniques should necessarily be taken to indicate the same methodological position of scepticism. In fact, we shall see that an examination of these instances does not seem to require that they even be taken as part of one monolithic strategy: it will be argued that it is misleading to deploy ‘scepticism’ as a methodological position at all. If we are to understand the religious position of Livy’s work, we must seek a different methodology, and one which belongs within a better general understanding of the historian’s purpose as a whole.

(ii) Livy in General

Livy, like all historians, is competing for an audience, for credibility, for conviction;72 his Rome must prevail over that of his competitors. His choice of strategy is totalising: the whole of Roman history. This gives him a particular perspective, and a particular impact on his reader:

Annalistic history, even more than history generally, is not only an account of individual events, but of events that are formally similar or even identical. The Roman annalist offers his readers the regular repetition of constitutional processes. Each triumph may have unique features, of course, as may each election, each allotment of provinces and troops, and so on. But in the end, there remains an impression of

72 On which see now especially Marincola ch. 2.
uniformity, of a pattern. The reader is invited to contemplate the annalistic framework, not only each stirring speech or each outstanding individual. The yearly pattern - which is the Republican constitution in its continuing operation - is meant by Livy to be seen as subsuming the vicissitudes of men and events to itself. A decision to write annalistic history is more than a matter of style or tradition; it is the choice of an interpretation of history as well.73

Phillips highlights one of the key tensions in our reading of historiography: any organisation of data is necessarily interpretative.74 Miles’ recent conclusions are also based on an interpretation of Livy whereby ‘historical facts’ are integrated into a strategy that owes more to identity than facticity: he encourages us to see Livy not as a misplaced modern empiricist but as an élite practitioner of politics, in its broadest sense – Livy the historian is, in some senses, another in a series of founders and refounders of Rome’s history.75

In his narrative Roman identity derives less from a substratum of ‘facts’ or events than from the collective memory of the Roman people. Inasmuch as Roman memory is itself not the result of uncritical accumulation but rather reflects an ongoing process of deliberate elaboration and revision, it is a dynamic creation. Livy locates himself and his narrative within the tradition of elaboration and revision from which Roman memory and identity emerge. Thus his role as historian is analogous to that of the founders and other heroes whom his narrative celebrates.

The ‘elaboration and revision’ is a fundamental part of Livy’s narrative, but we might single out one specific aspect which will have particular relevance for us, namely the historiographical use of exempla: consider the prologue to the Ab Vrbe Condita:

73 Phillips (1974) 273. Cf. the formulation of Hickson (1993) in connection with prayer formulae: “Together they reminded Livy’s contemporary audience that the Roman state, with its political and religious machinery, had been and continued to be a stable and enduring entity” (145).

74 See above, pp. 21-22).

My concern is that each reader should pay keen attention to these things: what kind of life, what kind of character the Romans had, through what kind of men and by what means power was both acquired and expanded at home and abroad; then, as discipline tottered a little, let him follow that character in his mind as it began to fall apart, so to speak, then as it collapsed more and more, then began to rush headlong, until we have come to these times in which we can endure neither our faults nor their remedies. This in fact is an especially healthy and fruitful element of the study of history, that you contemplate object-lessons of every type of model set up in a perspicuous monument: thence for yourself and your state (tibi tuaeque rei publicae) you can choose what to imitate, thence what to avoid, if it is loathsome in its beginning, loathsome in its outcome.

Kraus comments, "tibi tuaeque rei publicae is a striking phrase, which suggests that Livy is thinking about his potential reader not simply as an individual, but as a citizen. By looking carefully at the monument (i.e. by reading Livy’s history attentively), by understanding its representations (distinguishing good and bad), and then by implementing that understanding, you make history work. In turn, if you get it right, this imitation and avoidance will provide a cure for the current evils of your state."76

The link between individual and res publica is a subtle one in Livy’s account. In many ways, the unfolding of Roman history is the story of individuals, whether glorious, average or ignominious. But the res publica amounts to more than any individual in Livy; that, above all else, is its central characteristic. The succession of years – all variations on a theme with their magistracies, triumphs, disasters, prodigies and other perennials – becomes impersonal, rising above individual issues and personalities, to the point of being an almost timeless and eternal process. Yet it is this mighty entity that has ‘tottered’ and must be restored with the use of history. Livy’s epideictic and remedial programme influences the level at which he must explicitly design and represent his

Republic; he suggests that his readers need reminding of better ways and better times. He will bring to the forefront *exempla*, both good and bad, to be followed or avoided\(^{77}\) and he proceeds on the basis that his readers will expect this.

(iii) Religion and *Exempla*

This exemplificatory agenda has been accepted as part of Livy’s presentation of Romans as generals and statesmen. Yet it has not been applied to religious conduct as thoroughly as it has been seen in political and military behaviour: this has meant that a great deal of religious comment has been misunderstood. The deliberate and exemplificatory level of explicitness influences both Livy’s choice of religious phenomena and his mode of presenting them. Obviously the availability of material is relevant in a broad sense but this cannot be considered to be overly important: it seems almost certain that the Bacchist affair of 186 is subject to detailed expansion,\(^{78}\) whatever Livy’s sources were, while other opportunities for elaboration (for instance in the prodigy lists)\(^{79}\) are not exploited: in fact the vast majority of religious entries are brief to the point of obfuscation. Livy, in evoking and recreating Rome in its beginnings, heyday and decline, is not intending to be exhaustive: he selects from, or builds on, the available material according to his overall objectives of ‘creating’ Rome (and with it, Roman religion in its various aspects). Many comments that have been understood as general principles of fact or theoretical analysis are, on closer analysis, more usefully taken to advise the reader on religious practices. Thus Livy’s religious material is governed by his overall agenda; it is intended not so much to ‘establish the facts’, but to reaffirm what he presents as traditional religious practice through his portrayal of behaviour and its consequences.

\(^{77}\) For exemplarity in Livy’s work see Chaplin (1993); Miles 249f, Kraus (1997) 53-56.

\(^{78}\) North (1979).

\(^{79}\) For the historical sources of the prodigy lists see North (1986) 255, commenting on MacBain and Rawson (1971).
This assertion is the Ariadne's thread through the diverse material of the following chapters. The argument will begin with an analysis of instances where a critical Livy has been understood to be concerned with issues of fact (section 2 – Facticity of phenomena). This section demonstrates that when the historian makes critical comments he is attempting not to express scepticism, but to discriminate between accurate and mistaken categorisations. Thus, in respect of prodigies, the question is not whether prodigies, specific ‘supernatural events’, indicate the gods’ will; nor do these comments usually seek to establish whether the particular phenomenon actually occurred. What Livy is concerned with is the question of whether a particular event, if it happened, should be accepted as a prodigy or not. Section 3 – Interpretation – builds on this foundation to highlight the process of deliberation that we find in Livy’s own voice and those of his agents. Once the question of whether an event was to be linked to the gods or not has been decided, there is a further process of deciding which divinely-orchestrated events are relevant to the res publica. Section 4 – Choice – continues this discussion at a different angle: having made the decision that they should attend to a particular situation, the Romans then considered which particular response of a number of options should be adopted. Once again criticism is not ontological (does this, or indeed anything, concern the gods if they exist?) but discriminatory (given the existence of the gods and their anger at this moment, how should this be propitiated?) The following chapter, section 5 – Explanation – assumes that the critical comments examined so far are to be understood to be discriminatory and exemplary: in other words, we now have a sense of what religious procedures should be used in Rome. The discussion moves on to analyse this Livian model of religion: what emerges is that the explanatory strategies can be understood to be explanatory and practical, residing fully within an interpretative structure that assumed without question that the gods existed. What is meant when the gods are said to have intervened is discussed in section 6 – The Agency of the Gods – and this allows for an assessment of the categories of Fors Fortuna and Fatum. The final section (7) – Interpretation and Power – discusses aspects of the mastery of religious knowledge by individuals, with Livy, as ever, recommending and
warning his readers as to the correct interpretations and actions to be taken when the gods are invoked.

We are left, not with an account framed in a dialectic of belief or scepticism, but rather a nuanced series of preferences centred on identity, ‘practicality’ and propriety. The hallowed practices of ancient Rome are integrated into a history that cannot be divorced from the current state of Rome. Indeed, it is argued that the *Ab Vrbe Condita* has little value as a nostalgic record: it is written with the present in mind. At the forefront of the account is the recommended ‘norm’, privileged by its repetition and brought into sharp relief by error, which is nonetheless subdued in its frequency in order that its shadow should not intrude on the showpiece of Rome at peace (or not so far from it) with its gods. With Livy as her guide, a tottering Rome could relearn her ‘true’ identity from her past: and religion was central to Livy’s Rome. With the *Ab Vrbe Condita* in mind, Rome *could* begin to leave her recent errors behind and provide material for a future historian or another guardian of the ‘real’ Rome.
2) Facticity of Phenomena

Before any attempt is made to analyse the significance that Livy (or his agents) ascribe to ‘supernatural’ events, there is the issue of whether he accepts that they occur in actuality. Most scholars have thought otherwise. We therefore begin with Livy’s own documentation of prodigial or supernatural phenomena. The argument distinguishes a series of different aspects, all or any of which might be relevant to any given example. These various aspects are deliberately treated separately, despite the modern tendency to conflate them; the argument presented here seeks rather to demonstrate that they are in fact distinct issues, each with a different bearing on the evidence.

(i) Discrimination

The modern attitude to ancient religion is probably nowhere better revealed than in the decision in the Penguin translation of Livy to omit some of the lengthier prodigy lists. Even during antiquity, on the other hand, these lists were virtually all that remained of some of Livy’s books, in the Periochae\(^{80}\) and the collection of Obsequens. Furthermore, Levene has now convincingly demonstrated that prodigies form an integral part of the sequential narrative. They also prove to be one of the most controversial aspects of Livy’s religious narrative, attracting what seems to be severe criticism from the historian, and most commentators underpin their discussion of ‘scepticism’ by reference to comments on prodigy lists.

Before any discussion of particular passages is undertaken it is worth distinguishing two

---

\(^{80}\) Though it seems that the Periochae preserve prodigies reported by Livy, the general selection of material seems erratic to us and deductions about it sources must be cautious. See further Begbie (1967); Brunt (1980) 487-488.
different aspects of scepticism. Livy could assert or imply that, though bizarre events do occur in reality (such as rains of blood), the gods have nothing to do with them, and that these events do not indicate a rupture in the *pax deum*; they are meaningless in themselves. Such a position would place Livy very close to a modern, materialistic scientific interpretation, an option discarded above.\(^8\) He could alternatively argue that unnatural events, although they might be indicative of the *ira deum*, did not actually take place, that is, that alleged cases are imagined, mistakenly believed or, despite appearances, perfectly natural. Both interpretations are found, often rather indiscriminately, in analyses that argue for ‘scepticism’, but only the first position would constitute genuine scepticism; the second leaves open the possibility of prodigies in the traditional sense, but asserts their rarity: thus, the *ira deum* would be a rare, but real eventuality.\(^8\)

The first of our propositions – that the gods are not involved in the ‘bizarre’ events listed by Livy – is supposedly found at 27.23.2:

\[ \textit{Cumis - adeo minimis etiam rebus praua religio inserit deos - mures in aede Iovis aurum rosisse.} \]

Levene, taking a largely traditional line, comments that “the ‘etiam’ qualifying ‘minimis rebus’ suggests that those who see the divine in larger events, also, are similarly affected by ‘praua religio’. In short the passage is clearly implying that any connection between

---

\(^8\) Above, p. 12.
\(^8\) It could be said that a sustained criticism of individual portents might be considered to amount to a sceptical, as opposed to a critical, position, but this clearly does not happen: critical comments are relatively rare.
\(^8\) It may be that the notice immediately following is also scorned (*Casini examen apium ingens in foro consedisse*), joined as it is asyndetically to the notice. *Minimae res* cannot just refer to the size of the animals involved though: bees are part of a valid list at 21.46.2 & 24.10.11, and mice at 40.59.8. It is striking that Plutarch *Marcellus* 28.3 not only includes what seems to be the same portent as valid, but links it specifically to the approaching death of Marcellus. The difference between the two accounts is a useful index of how the same material can be handled in different genres. Fate is also invoked in Plutarch’s account with his quoting Pindar on the inevitability of *to pepromenon* (fr. 232 Snell).
prodigies and the gods is quite spurious” (17). However, as he himself points out (25), “the single clearest statement of divine causation in Livy comes at 27.23.4, with the deaths of the consuls Marcellus and Crispinus, which he foreshadows with their inability to expiate the same set of prodigies”:

per dies aliquot hostiae maiores sine litatione caesae diuque non
impetrata pax deum. in capita consulum re publica incolumi exitiabilis
prodigiorum euentus uertit.

A number of objections can be made to this analysis: to begin with, there seems no reason to agree that the first passage implies the folly of those who see the divine in ‘larger’ things. It seems much more likely that Livy is saying the opposite of this: in large (or whatever we would oppose to minimus) affairs the hand of the gods appears, but that their names should not be invoked in connection with trivia. Furthermore, it was a divine disapproval that proved very real for the consuls in question, according to Livy. It is from this, and other instances, that Levene adopts his ‘twin approach’ to Livy’s religious material; but here, as elsewhere, it is not that there are two parallel versions, one requiring, and the other ignoring, divine action within the narrative. In fact it is clear from the context that to treat this episode as evidence of a widespread and fundamental scepticism about prodigies is unsustainable. The passage in its entirety reads as follows:

praetores in prouincias profecti: consules religio tenebat quod prodigiis
aliquot nuntiatis non facile litabant. et ex Campania nuntiata erant
Capuae duas aedes Fortunae et Martis et sepulcra aliquot de caelo
tacta, Cumis- adeo minimis etiam rebus praua religio inserit deos-
mures in aede louis aurum rosisse, Casini examen apium ingens in foro
In such a sustained list it seems churlish to pick one passing comment as indicative of an overarching scepticism: in fact the query looks far more like an isolated example, the exception that proves the rule. It is surely simpler to accept the reading that his criticism here is a specific one and relevant only to one prodigy. By implication the remaining portents are judged to be perfectly acceptable indicators of the displeasure of the gods; this would be the more likely meaning even if Livy had not explicitly offered the diagnosis that it is the consuls who suffered the effects of the *ira deum*, rather than, as one would have initially expected, the *res publica*.\(^84\) Livy, far from undermining the entire narrative, is exhibiting his skill in discerning genuine prodigies from mistaken ones. He is only required to give us extra material sufficient to explain what ‘we’ (as a Roman audience) would not have known, such as that repeated efforts (*per dies*) at expiation had failed. His analysis assumes the ‘knowledge’ that one would expect prodigies to indicate disaster for the *res publica*; and so Livy informs us that the *uitium* affected the consuls instead, thus demonstrating his ability to interpret the religious situation. The issues of absolute credulity and scepticism are simply not present; far more pressing are issues of explanation, expertise and interpretation within the traditional framework.

\(^{84}\) Such would seem to be the implication of *uertit*. Levene’s seems consider *prauna* to be a gloss on *religio*, that is, he takes Livy to mean that all *religio* is necessarily *prauna*. However we should probably understand *prauna religio* as referring to one (degenerate) type of religious practice rather than all religion. The phrase occurs twice elsewhere in the extant Livy: it is used of Tullus just before he is annihilated by Jupiter for his botched secret rites (1.31.8); and it is used of the Bacchists by the consul before the people (39.16.6).
An examination of the way that the tale unfolds makes the hypothesis that scepticism is involved seem even more remote; it also gives an opportunity to note the process of deciding how much explanation is needed for a Roman audience. Marcellus runs into further difficulties when he fails to dedicate the hastily constructed temples vowed to Honos and Virtus (27.25.9) before going to war; his relationship with the gods is thus severely problematised. Shortly before the fateful sortie that will lead to his death and his colleague’s fatal wounding, the sacrificial signs are poor:

\[
\text{immolasse eo die quidam prodidere memoriae consulem Marcellum, et} \\
\text{prima hostia caesa iocur sine capite inuentum, in secunda omnia} \\
\text{comparuisse quae adsolent, auctum etiam uisum in capite; nec id sane} \\
\text{haruspici placuisse quod secundum trunca et turpia exta nimis laeta} \\
\text{apparuiissent} \quad (27.26.13-14). \]

The other consul Quinctius Crispinus dies from his wounds at 27.33.6 and the episode is closed with Livy’s comment that, despite the Roman setbacks and vulnerability,

\[
\text{ceterum deos immortales miseritos nominis Romani pepercisse inoxiis} \\
\text{exercitibus, temeritatem consulum ipsorum capitibus damnasse.} \quad (27.33.11) \]

Far from forming a part of a ‘parallel’ account that can be discarded without affecting the historical record, the religious material is an integral part of a unified narrative here: in addition, this is a useful example of a situation in which the historian gives a relatively detailed exegesis for the simple reason that what occurred was not quite what was
expected. But he never questions that the gods intervened in affairs, just as the prodigies portended.

Diagnoses of scepticism are also often made in connection with the comments at 21.62.1:85

\[\text{Romae aut circa urbem multa ea hieme prodigia facta aut, quod euenire solet motis semel in religionem animis, multa nuntiata et temere credita sunt.}\]

We find similar comments at 27.37.2 (\textit{sub unius prodigii, ut fit, mentionem alia quoque nuntiata}) and 24.10.6 (\textit{prodigia eo anno multa nuntiata sunt, quae quo magis credebant simplices ac religiosi homines, eo plura nuntiabantur}). The motif of alarmed credulity is also present at 24.44.7-9:

\[\text{priusquam ab urbe mouerent, prodigia procurarunt, quae nuntiata erant. murus ac porta Caietae et Ariciae etiam louis aedes de caelo tacta fuerat. et alia ludibria oculorum auriumque credita pro ueris; nautium longarum species in flumine Tarracinae, quae nulla<e> era<n>t uisae et in louis Vicilini templo, quod in Compsano agro est, arma concrepuisse, et flumen Amiterni cruentum fluxisse. his procuratis ex decreto pontificum...}\]

Finally we might also compare 3.5.14 (\textit{portentaque...aut obuersata oculis aut uanas exterritis ostentauere species.})

\(^{85}\) E.g. Levene 17.
All of these examples are frequently adduced to support the idea that Livy is sceptical about prodigies per se but they are chiefly concerned with the reporting, rather than the theoretical possibility, of prodigies. They do not imply an absolute scepticism but an attitude whereby ‘this’ might not be prodigial but ‘that’ is.

None of these comments is sufficiently strong to warrant the conclusion that Livy is dismissing prodigies per se. Rather they represent a number of distinct criticisms which can be examined separately. At 21.62.1, Livy is responding to the anticipated objection of the reader that the list is excessively long; if we ignore for now the first aut clause that proposes that the number of prodigies genuinely was unusually high, the two distinct points of criticism are the assertions that it is common to find that, when people are stirred up (motis...in religionem animis), prodigies are reported more frequently and then accepted by the senate without sufficient thought (temere). The latter point is not difficult to deal with; at all times Livy is concerned to see that proper procedures are followed conscientiously: thus the insinuation that there was not a proper rigour in ascertaining the veracity of the prodigies has no bearing on any postulated scepticism. Rather, the allegation of haste implies that there were legitimate practices for the reception and scrutiny of prodigies that Livy implies may not have been followed. Nor is the suggestion that at times of stress people were more likely to report prodigies indicative of any generalised scepticism. The comments about the effect of fear on the number of reports, or the ‘deluge’ effect of one report anticipating many at 27.37.2 (sub unius prodigii, ut fit, mentionem alia quoque nuntiata) and 24.10.6 (prodigia eo anno multa nuntiata sunt, quae quo magis credebant simplices ac religiosi homines, eo plura nuntiabantur) can be considered together. There is a great number of possible nuances here and it seems simplistic to assimilate these comments to an overarching, implicit and absolute denial of the whole category of prodigies, as Levene (17-18) does in connection with these reports. Despite his endeavour to give credit to Livy for his understanding of, and acquiescence in, contemporary ideology and beliefs, Levene is still reliant on the two opposite poles of belief/scepticism. Nothing, however, could be more anachronistic than
the assumption that ancient Romans chose between a predominantly materialistic and self-declared ‘scientific’ cosmology and a religiosity that is taken to be rationally indefensible (if liberally permissible) for those feeble-minded enough to require it. That perhaps is somewhat polemically put, but this assumption does represent the framework for analysing ancient religion in most scholars’ work.

In fact the introduction of the rather extreme ‘sceptical’ argument has only been possible because of its supposedly self-evident claim to consideration. Yet no such school of thought existed in the ancient world; even the Sceptics did not represent a godless alternative; they simply refused to acknowledge proof of any perceived world. Transplanted to the modern world, an ancient sceptic would have decried the certainty of modern science just as he refused to accept the orthodoxies of antiquity. It is most unlikely that Livy and his peers had found the intellectual courage to discard the gods in their cosmologies and it is arrogant of us to assume that they had done so. If our author did wish to take the drastic step of erasing the phenomenological category of portents and prodigies, he would surely be more straightforward and better marshalled than to rely on the use of occasional criticisms. Only within a sceptical modern agenda does the assertion that prodigy reports were increased by external conditions sound like a tacit admission that all reports were fake. But if we were to adopt a more positive assumption, such as one that included the divine and supernatural as an absolutely fundamental and unshakeable feature of contemporary cosmology, our authors would gain substantial freedom, even license, to criticise aspects of that cosmology without running the risk of undermining it completely. If we were, for sake of the argument, to assume that prodigies were an undeniable reality for the Roman audience of Livy, then their responses to the comments listed above would be vastly different from those hitherto suggested. Essentially we have an instance of what is now called ‘moral panic’.86 Consider a modern example: when such organisations as the Samaritans

---

86 A term discussed by La Fontaine (1998) 20 thus: “To refer to a moral panic does not mean that there was no factual reason for public concern. The approach merely emphasises the social construction of certain events as a danger that is out of proportion to the actual threat offered.” My use of the term is
announce that phone calls to their volunteers rise over Christmas we are not justified in
presuming that (e.g.) single people in their twenties are becoming more depressed as a
general trend, nor that these people’s circumstances have actually changed at Christmas.
If we were to suggest that it was a change in circumstances that was to blame for the rise
in depression, a critic might rightly say ‘no, no, people always get depressed at
Christmas’ without intending to imply that people were not depressed. The statement
does not deal with any assessment of whether people are or are not depressed; it is
addressed only to the issue of numbers and frequency. Such are the ‘worldly wise’
comments made occasionally by Livy about reports of prodigies. ‘People always report,
and then uncritically accept as true, prodigies when someone else has done it first/ when
everyone is already over-excited.’ In the event of unexpected numbers of reports, we
might reasonably assume, just as Livy does, either that there were many (genuine)
prodigies or that the process of verifying prodigies had been applied more laxly than
should have been the case. Thus we have Livy’s position at 21.62.1 without any doubt
cast on the ontological category of prodigies, though perhaps we have had a glimpse into
the ‘ordinariness’ of documenting the extraordinary. At 27.37.2 this seems
unproblematic as an analysis: at 21.62.1, furthermore, such a contingency is only listed
as one possible reason for the number of prodigies; it is not even as if the idea is asserted
strongly; the comment on numbers was obviously already a commonplace and the idea of
error is present in that Livy suggests that there may have been a lack of rigour.87 In the
light of this the more elaborate notice at 24.10.6 seems to be more a learned and witty
variation on a well-known theme than an uncomplicated statement of scepticism.

These tendencies of the reporting process occur in conjunction with another theme, that
of hallucination:

somewhat milder than her example (allegations of satanic abuse) but still refers to the kind of perspective
that is enshrined in the term’s more general use.
87 Livy does not seem to actually concern himself too closely with whether there were simply a great
number of prodigies or not at this point: he declines to be drawn definitively, but simply adds his learned,
and somewhat cynical, gloss to his record. See further below, p. 49.
impleuerat ea res superstitionum \(^{88}\) animos, pronique et ad nuntianda et ad credenda prodigia erant. eo plura volgabantur: duos soles uisos et nocte interluxisse, et facem Setiae ab ortu solis ad occidentem porrigi uisam; Tarracinae portam, Anagniae et portam et multis locis murum de caelo tactum; in aede Iunonis Sospitae Lanuui cum horrendo fragore strepitum editum. eorum procurandorum causa diem unum supplicatio fuit, et nouendiale sacrum quod de caelo lapidatum esset factum. (29.14.2-4)

Another favourite reference of the sceptic is that found at 24.44.7-8 (*prodigia procurarunt quae nuntiata erant et alia ludibria oculorum auriumque credita pro ueris*): the theme of hallucination also occurs at 3.5.14 (*caelum uisum est ardere plurimo igni; portentaque alia aut obuersata oculis aut uanas exterritis ostentauere species*). Yet once again the effort to draw a generalising inference from a passing comment proves unsustainable: we cannot translate *alia ludibria oculorum auriumque* as ‘other visual and auditory hallucinations’ (i.e. implying that the phenomena immediately previous are also *ludibria*) because the full listing at 24.44.8-9 includes lightning striking the temple of Jupiter, an eminently physical event, and verifiable at the time from the damage that one would expect. We know that there was verification: at 1.31.2, for instance, people are sent to examine (*missis ad id uisendum*) the stones that had rained from the sky. Even if there were no physical evidence of lightning, why should such a common occurrence be ontologically questioned? *Alia* must then be in apposition with *ludibria*; ‘other things, hallucinations, were also accepted as prodigies.’ Despite the strong temptation to see scepticism in this assertion, we would be better advised to observe simply that Livy has classified the prodigies into two different groups. It may well be that an hallucination

---

\(^{88}\) *Superstitio* in Livy is treated in detail below, (pp. 100-104).
was a perfectly acceptable prodigy.\textsuperscript{89} Livy is once again indicating his knowledge, this times in terms of categorisation; everybody knows that the appearance of two suns is impossible in reality, but what was noteworthy was that enough people saw it happen for the senate to take it seriously.

If we remain within a methodology that demands that all statements be assessed as credulous or sceptical, such refinements become relatively meaningless; the entire entry, whether it be given in reported speech, or as a possible phantom, must be considered dismissive. A methodology that instead allows for distinctions between different types of prodigies and different types of assent allows for a greater sense of sophistication. The use of such classification and assessment is characteristic of skill in using a complex system of interpretation.\textsuperscript{90} Livy’s display of discernment has the added advantage for us that distinguishing between prodigies affords a glimpse of some of the criteria for deciding whether to accept them and broadly affirms his acceptance of those that are not criticised. Thus, the occasional specific disagreement on the part of the historian does not undermine his material and agents, but rather indicates that the Rome of former days was, at least in its distinction and classification of prodigies, maintaining an extremely laudable standard of accuracy: the exceptions prove the rule.

Redefining Livy as a sophisticated interpeter has further consequences since the case for scepticism relies on the accumulation of a series of particular factors. Our dismantling of the supposedly emphatic notices of scepticism not only weakens the argument by removing some of its key supports, but also acts as an invitation to reassess the remaining material in the pro-sceptical arsenal.

\textsuperscript{89} It will be argued below (pp. 64-70) that visible evidence is a key factor in diagnosing the intervention of the gods.
\textsuperscript{90} Further aspects of this are discussed below (pp. 71-93).
Traditionally Livy’s use of *oratio obliqua* has been cited as evidence of his disinclination to accept the supernatural:

> Time and again, when [Livy] reports stories of the supernatural, he qualifies them with words like *dicitur, fama est, traditur* or *nuntiatum est*, thus including the stories, but avoiding vouching for them himself.\(^{91}\)

Reported speech was a standard feature of the historian in antiquity; the usual explanation for its appearance is a desire on the part of the author to introduce material which is not necessarily being accepted but deserves mention for some reason.\(^{92}\) Thus it is taken to be concerned with questions of veracity and historicity. There is no denying that Livy is concerned with these issues as his occasional discussion of his sources indicates.\(^{93}\) But the inference that *oratio obliqua* universally indicates ‘factual’ doubt is highly questionable.

Extending the assertion that Livy is avoiding vouching for the occurrence of prodigies by his use of *oratio obliqua*, Levene suggests (20, n. 107) that we might deduce “the boundaries that were drawn between the natural and the supernatural in his day...[C]ertain phenomena are relatively likely to be placed in direct narration, even

\(^{91}\) Levene 19, citing also Borneque *Titus-Live* (Paris, 1953) 61-62; Kajanto (1957) (hereafter ‘Kajanto’) 32-34 and Walsh (1961) 47-48. A glance at Liebeschuetz (1967) illustrates how entrenched is the assumption, e.g. 47 (“in the account of the deuotio Livy first reveals his rationalism by dissociating himself from the account of a vision seen by each of the consuls with a *dicitur*”). See also his n. 24.

\(^{92}\) This is how it is usually treated: e.g. see Levene 19-20. See Horsfall (1990) for a more complex analysis of expressions such as *fama est* in Virgil.

\(^{93}\) E.g. 26.49.3 *scorpiones maiores minoresque ad sexaginta captos scripserim, si auctorem Graecum sequar Silenum; si Valerium Antiatem, maiorum scorpionum sex milia, minorum tredecim milia; adeo nullus mentiendi modus est*. See also Oakley 13-100.
when other events around them are in *oratio obliqua*; it would seem reasonable to deduce that these were seen as part of the natural world capable, at least in principle, of being explained scientifically." He then suggests that rains of stones are to be treated as a 'natural' phenomenon. But he is in haste to point out that the practice of distinguishing between 'genuine' and 'false' supernatural events in this way is not followed as a strict rule. However tempting it is to see a clear ontological demarcation between items found in direct speech and those that appear in *oratio obliqua*, the distinction simply fails to stand up in any detail: if this were the case then surely we would not find instances such as the shift from indirect to direct report in connection with the same prodigy at 21.62.8:

*Romae aut circa urbem multa ea hieme prodigia facta aut, quod
euenire solet motis semel in religionem animis, multa nuntiata et temere
credita sunt, in quis ingenuum infantem semestrem in foro olitorio
triumphum clamasse, et <in> foro boario bouem in tertiam
contignationem sua sponte escendisse atque inde tumultu habitatorum
territum se deiecisse, et nautium speciem de caelo adfulsisse, et aedem
Spei, quae est in foro olitorio, fulmine ictam, et Lanuui hastam se
commouisse et coruum in aedem Iunonis deuolasse atque in ipso
puluinari consedisse, et in agro Amitermino multis locis hominum specie
procul candida ueste uisos nec cum ullo congressos, et in Piceno
lapidibus pluuisse, et Caere sortes extenuatas, et in Gallia lupum uigili
gladium ex uagina raptum abstulisse. ob cetera prodigia libros adire
decemuirii iussi; quod autem lapidibus pluisset in Piceno, nouendiale
sacrum editum, et subinde aliis procurandis prope tota ciuitas operata
fuit. iam primum omnium urbs lustrata est hostiaeque maiores quibus
editum est dis caesae, et donum ex auri pondo quadraginta Lanuuium
[et] Iunoni portatum est, et signum aeneum matronae Iunoni in
Auentino dedicauerunt, et lectisternium Caere, ubi sortes attenuatae
If Livy were at pains to distinguish different types of prodigies by the use of indirect speech, such a change of tone would be at best careless. But, notwithstanding the fact that modern attempts to distinguish genuine prodigies from false ones are likely to be extremely clumsy, it seems reasonable to assume that reports of easily verifiable phenomena would be acceptable to Livy's scrutinising eye. Yet such 'natural' occurrences such as lightning damage to buildings – surely highly verifiable at the time – are also found in oratio obliqua, for instance at 26.23.5. Even Levene's 'natural' rains of stones seem happy to appear in either format: he lists a number of times that they are in oratio recta (20, n.107) but there are examples where the same prodigy appears as a report (e.g. 26.23.5 nuntiatum est...Ereti lapidibus pluuisse). At best then, if we are to consider that Livy is discriminating in some way by his use of oratio obliqua between credible or genuine prodigies and false ones, he is being grossly inconsistent. That is not necessarily a conclusion that runs counter to the received opinion of our historian, but we should question whether there is a coherent reason for his use of oratio obliqua in connection with the supernatural. It is at this point that we encounter a particular difficulty in examining reported speech in connection with prodigies – namely that we find many of them difficult to believe; for every believable one there is another that stretches our credulity. It might be useful therefore to put prodigies aside temporarily to explore oratio obliqua in other, less controversial, contexts.

There are good reasons to think that, far from undermining a report's validity, oratio obliqua can do the exact opposite. The entry at 38.13.1, for instance, on the oracle of Apollo at Hiera Come receives an indirect gloss. Livy reports that the verses of the priests are reputed to be graceful (haud inconditae).

94 et Anagniae et Fregellis nuntiatum est murum portasque de caelo tacta.
fanum ibi augustum Apollinis et oraculum; sortes uersibus haud
inconditis dare uates dicuntur. (38.13.1)

It would seem rather strange to introduce such a report only to cast doubt on it, as must be happening if we consider *dicuntur* to be distancing the author from the validity of his account. Rather it performs a number of narratorial functions: pure *variatio*, and a means of introducing a detail on an item otherwise presented in direct narration; even a method of highlighting, rather than diminishing, the importance of the report – the effect of *dicuntur* is to validate the report as true. In addition to these considerations *oratio obliqua* has a function that owes little to the historians’ doubt about veracity: it preserves the physical and temporal distance of the writer who is (for the purposes of the text) in (or near) Rome of what we call the Late Republic. “They” inform him because he is not there himself. This is of course true of the entire account if one should decide to be pedantic but the occasional shift away from direct narration of events that Livy considers verifiable or reliable acts as a reminder of the specific status and perspective of the narrator. It is possible that Livy’s statement is not true, or is so no longer: but this is not necessarily important.

If Livy’s purpose in using *oratio obliqua* is interpreted along these lines, it may even be that the disruption to *oratio recta* is sometimes indicative, not of criticism but reinforcement. Consider the episode at 25.16.1-4, where Gracchus is interrupted three times while performing a sacrifice by two snakes that appear and devour the sacrificed animal’s liver. The first occasion is described by Livy in direct narration, but the two

---

95 Compare (e.g.) the notice at 24.43.7 (*ludos scenicos per quatriduum eo anno primum factos ab curulisibus aedilibus memoriae proditur*) where *oratio obliqua* constructs his temporal perspective.
96 I make no claims here about *oratio obliqua* in contexts or examples not dealt with directly; but in the light of our study, it does seem that ‘deferral of authority’ can only be one possible interpretation in other contexts.
subsequent repetitions are put into reported speech: *iterum ac tertium tradunt <adlapsos>* libatoque iocinere intactos angues abisse. Levene suggests that “once is possible, but it seems as if two and three times are unlikely enough to make Livy reluctant to vouch for them.” (20). This conclusion is, however, belied by the narrative: Gracchus is warned by the *haruspex* to beware plots; despite this warning, he is tricked by the Lucanian Flavus and trapped by Hannibal.\(^9\) Livy comments *nulla tamen prouidentia fatum imminens moueri potuit.* In other words, the warning from ritual was genuine but insufficient.\(^8\) To treat the portents as questioned seriously undermines the narrative sequence.

The modern sense that the likelihood of the unexpected decreases exponentially with repetition was not necessarily shared in ancient times where the extraordinary had a very different significance. Whereas modern understanding endeavours to retain coherence by automatically doubting any meaningful coherence in the unplanned or uncontrollable, ancient cosmology positively embraced such instances. The strange ‘accident’ of the first stolen liver offends our expectation while remaining within the bounds of believability, albeit barely. The repetition takes the episode beyond any reasonable boundaries and warrants dismissal: this, then, is the reaction that most commentators propose for Livy. But what we consider bizarre did not belong ‘outside’ the Roman conceptions of reality; rather it constituted a distinct category of experience in its own right. Of course these events are unlikely and such an event presumably would have met with initial incredulity then, as now, when reported;\(^9\) but the difference in interpretative strategies would have brought forth very different responses. In a dramatic narrative such as Livy is writing the assertion that the tradition recorded a second and third portent would have served not to lead to dismissal, as it would in a modern setting, but rather to *emphasise* the doom

---

\(^9\) Livy actually gives three different stories, each with certain details unverified, but the trap is the one given in the greatest detail: the others (given as reports) have Gracchus killed while bathing or attempting to expiate the omens away from the camp.

\(^8\) The dynamics of *fatum* and the warnings of the *haruspex* are discussed below, p. 148.

\(^9\) See e.g. 5.15.1 where we are told that *prodigia interim multa nuntiari, quorum pleraque et quia singuli auctores erant parum creditae spretaque,* or the reason given for sending men to check a shower of stones *quod...credi uixposset* at 1.31.2. At 41.15.1, Cn. Cornelius initially refused to believe that the liver of his sacrificial victim had melted away until he saw the evidence himself.
portended by the extraordinary events at the sacrifice.\textsuperscript{100}

For these two examples of reported speech, historicity is still an issue, though the traditional interpretation of \textit{oratio obliqua} has been inverted. But it is also possible, as Miles has recently demonstrated, that there may be issues other than historicity shaping the various uses of reported speech. He concludes that:

\[T\]he reader finds it easier and more satisfying to assess the thematic and ideological value of the stories than their historical reliability. The message of this orientation is that ideological relevance and consistency rather than factual reliability serve as the essential criteria by which the narrative has been organised and should be judged (67)...Ultimately, it is the problem not of constructing an accurate, 'truthful' record of past events but rather of revealing the character of the historical tradition itself, the collective memory of the Roman people, and so, their identity, that becomes the persistent focus of Livy's narrative (19).

Miles' thesis is that when Livy chooses to distance himself from aspects of his narrative the choice may be ideological and moral rather than historical: for instance, on Tullia's murder of her father at 1.48.7, Miles comments that:

[B]y refusing to report Tullia's alleged crimes against her father in his own voice, on his own authority, Livy implies that they are less creditable than the other aspects of the story...this judgement...is readily intelligible as an assessment of psychological plausibility and as a way of expressing the narrator's moral evaluation of Tullia's reported behavior...Livy's implicit incredulity, his reluctance to report Tullia's violation of her father on his own authority...constitute a moral

\textsuperscript{100} The ancient reader did not even require the prediction by the priests to understand that a terrible outcome was being predicted: they only appear in the narrative to specify that Gracchus himself will suffer rather than his entire army. On the need to validate a "marvel or wonder" in historiography see Marincola 82-83.
To say that it is difficult to believe that anyone could act as Tullia did is to offer a measure of how extremely unacceptable her behavior is. (64)

Thus, we may no longer assume that the primary issue at stake when we encounter indirect discourse in Livy is facticity.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Miles' first chapter deals with this issue in detail.
(iii) The Reporting of Prodigies

Having undermined the orthodox views on *oratio obliqua* sufficiently to require a re-examination of the material, we are in a position to re-examine reported speech in connection with prodigies, which account for the bulk of 'supernatural' events in Livy's text.

At 1.31.1, we are told that reports came to Tullus and the senate of a rain of stones:

*nuntiatum regi patribusque est in monte Albano lapidibus pluuisse.*

There seems little point in considering this to be *oratio obliqua* in any interpretative mode: it is the report of a report and in fact the vast majority of prodigy notices are framed in this fashion.102 The fact that *nuntiare* frequently appears more than once in the same list to introduce reports from different places reinforces this: it seems that when Livy tells us that a report came in, he is evoking the 'flavour of the times'. While it offends modern sensibilities that these things were accepted as factual, we should not be too hasty in dismissing Livy’s ancient Romans as irrational, for they, like us, were incredulous at first and tried to verify the stories; Tullus’ response is to send men to check the report:

*nuntiatum regi patribusque est in monte Albano lapidibus pluuisse. quod cum credi uix posset, missis ad id uisendum prodigium in*

---

102 Some form of *nuntiare* – overwhelmingly the most common word used by Livy to introduce prodigies in *oratio obliqua* – is used at 1.31.1; 4.21.5; 5.15.1; 10.31.8; 21.62.1; 22.1.8; 22.9.8; 22.36.7; 24.10.6; 24.44.7; 26.23.4 & 5; 27.4.11; 27.23.2; 27.37.2; 27.37.5; 28.11.1, 2 & 6; 29.14.2; 30.2.9; 30.38.8; 31.12.5 & 6; 32.9.1 & 3; 34.45.6; 34.55.1 & 4; 35.9.4; 35.21.3; 36.37.3; 37.3.3; 39.22.5; 39.56.6; 40.2.4; 40.19.2 (twice); 41.9.5 & 6; 41.16.6; 41.28.2; 42.20.5 & 43.13.3.
In fact it is rare not to have the word in a list though 25.7.7-9 is in *oratio recta.*
Nor is that the only time that there is verification: we gain a glimpse of the procedures at 22.1.14:

\[
\textit{his, sicut erant nuntiata, expositis auctoribusque in curiam introductis}
\textit{consul de religione patres consuluit.}
\]

The process of verification was distinct from the making of reports: at times, reports were rejected, as when M. Caedicius heard a prophetic voice in the Via Nova:

\[
\textit{eodem anno M. Caedicius de plebe nuntiauit tribunis se in Noua uia,}
\textit{ubi nunc sacellum est supra aedem Vestae, uocem noctis silentio}
\textit{audisse clariorem humana, quae magistratibus dici iuberet Gallos}
\textit{aduentare. id ut fit propter auctoris humilitatem spretum et quod}
\textit{longinquae eoque ignotior gens erat. (5.32.6-7)}
\]

It is not that the Romans cannot believe such a thing could happen: they were only too quick to admit their mistake afterwards, and dedicated a temple to Aius Locutius (5.50.5). Informants’ reliability was carefully considered: the listing at the opening of book 32 (1-12) is unusually precise, mentioning legati and individual magistrates writing to inform the senate; one such moment is picked out apparently incidentally (inter cetera).

---

103 Initial astonishment is evident at 1.31.1 with the first shower of stones. After this verification, there was, it seems, a precedent; it is referred to as the uetus prodigium at 7.28.7.
For an assessment of the number of witnesses, there is 5.15.1, where portents reported by single individuals were not considered to be reliable.\textsuperscript{104} There is also the speaking ox at 3.10.6, a phenomenon that was not accepted the previous year.\textsuperscript{105} Perhaps more witnesses came forward this time. Finally, Livy mentions \textit{quidam auctores}\textsuperscript{106} at 27.11.3.\textsuperscript{107} Though often a long list follows a simple \textit{nuntiata [sunt]}, Livy occasionally presents the material in such a way as to distinguish between those prodigies reported within, and those outside, Rome as he does at 34.45.6-8:

\begin{quote}
\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{verbatim}
prodigia quoque alia uisa eo anno Romae sunt, alia nuntiata. in foro et comitio et Capitolio sanguinis guttae uisae sunt; et terra aliquotiens pluuit et caput Volcani arsit. nuntiatum est Nare amni lac fluxisse, pueros ingenuos Arimini sine oculis ac naso, et in Piceno agro non pedes non manus habentem natum. ea prodigia ex pontificum decreto procurata. et sacrificium nouemdale factum est, quod Hadriani nuntiauerant in agro suo lapidibus pluuisse.
\end{verbatim}
\end{footnotesize}
\end{quote}

The sequence that Livy evokes is that events are seen,\textsuperscript{108} reported and then, after

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{104} Though the refusal to deal with these is also because of the lack of \textit{haruspices} at the time, owing to the hostility of the Etruscans. It seems that even without verification the Romans might have considered expiating on the basis of these unsubstantiated reports.

\textsuperscript{105} This brief mention of the interpretative process is a mixed blessing: on the one hand it seems to allude to assessment before accepting prodigy reports. However it also presents problems for the question of the transmission of prodigy reports. We might expect rejected prodigies to disappear from the reports, especially so far back. The likeliest scenario is that Livy has compressed some discussion in his sources which explained why the second occurrence should count while the previous one does not. What seems most unlikely is that there was a complete change of attitudes so quickly on the significance of speaking oxen.

\textsuperscript{106} Which may refer to only one author; see Walsh (1961) 142.

\textsuperscript{107} Tacitus also makes the process explicit when discussing the omen of the bird that appeared at the moment of Otho’s suicide at \textit{Histories} 2.50: \textit{Vt conquirere fabulosa et fictis oblectare legentium animos procul gravitate coepti operis crediderim, ita uulgatis traditisque demere fidem non ausim...incolae memorant.}... For the general importance of autopsy in historians, see Marincola 63-86, and s.v. 'autopsy'.

\textsuperscript{108} To add to the above example: \textit{et facem Setiae ab ortu solis ad occidentem porrigi uisam} (29.14.3); \textit{ab Antio nuntiatum est cruertas spicas metentibus uisas esse} (28.11.2); \textit{prodigia multa foeda et Romae eo anno uisa et nuntiata peregre} (40.19.1); \textit{& eodem anno prodigia aliquot uisa nuntiataque sunt} (26.23.4).
\end{footnotesize}
verification, accepted (credere). Thus when Livy says that prodigies were hastily accepted as genuine (credita) at 21.62.1, he suspects that the procedures of verification were not properly applied. Since so many of the prodigy lists allude to some aspect of these procedures, we might even begin to wonder why any of the lists appear in oratio recta. The answer often seems to be little more than a question of variation. Oratio recta and obliqua often interweave, apparently without any particular programmatic distinction, which is perfectly in keeping with other features of Livy's presentation: though the prodigy lists are substantially similar there is often the attempt to make minor variations in the introduction and reported responses. The alternation of indirect and direct narration is essentially the only variation that Livy will commonly permit in the lists.

Fortunately for us, Livy provides enough material for us to speculate about the functioning of this religious system. If his account included only the briefest notices of unspecified prodigies collectively expiated then the study of Republican religion would be a great deal less detailed than it is. His inclusion of procedural details as discussed above affords us a glimpse (but no more) of a developed process that was presumably familiar to an educated audience. But we should remember that the style of narrative owes nothing to the desire to inform ignorant foreigners such as us of Roman procedures: rather his interest is in identity and his intended audience is domestic. The allusions to familiar and time-hallowed practices are part of Livy's creation of Rome and the display of easy familiarity with senatorial mores. The occasional criticisms and explanations of detail also serve to mildly police the image of appropriate conduct. Livy's Rome should 'ring true' to his audience and the occasional criticism in his

---

109 So 3.10.6; 5.15.1; 21.62.1; 24.44.8; 29.14.2; 30.2.10; 39.56.6. Suscipio is used at 43.13.2 and (distinctly) at 43.13.6. We might be better off translating it as 'accept' rather than 'believe'. (See for instance what effect this would have on Feeley (1998) 45's examples). Consider Smith (1979) on the meaning of credo for the early Christians (ch. 5), esp. his formulation on 118: "there was a time when 'I believe' (credo) as a ceremonial declaration of faith meant, and was heard as, meaning: 'Given the reality of God as a fact of the universe, I hereby proclaim that I align my life accordingly."

\[^{110}\] Most commentaries use the word (and translate credere thus) in his rendition of the modern sense: "A statement about a person's believing has not come to mean, rather, something of this sort: 'Given the uncertainty of God, as a fact of modern life, so-and-so reports that the idea of God, is part of the furniture of his mind.'"

10 For instance cf. 26.23.4 prodigia aliquot uisa nuntiataque sunt or 34.45.6 (prodigia quoque alia uisa eo anno Romanae sunt, alia nuntiata), the initiation of the list with the response at 39.22.3 (nouemdiale deinde sacrum tenuit, quod in Piceno per triduum lapidibus pluerat) etc.
narrative only serves to reinforce the general sense of integrity. This display of mastery also serves to validate Livy’s appropriation of authority and this authority is deployed to a particular end: his image of Rome is supposed to remind its Roman readers of how far they have fallen from the high, dignified standards of the past – tastefully. A diatribe against the present might alienate Livy’s educated readership; he cannot, after all, claim to be central to the senatorial court as a number of his successors could.\textsuperscript{111} Livy’s level of reporting thus simultaneously validates his account as properly informed and acts as a discreet nudge to a forgetful present.

All these considerations can be detected in what is probably the most often quoted religious passage in Livy, his comments on prodigies at 43.13.1-2:

\begin{quote}
Non sum nescius ab eadem neglectentia qua\textsuperscript{112} nihil deos portendere
uellgo nunc credant, neque nuntiari admodumulla prodigia in
publicum neque in annales referri. ceterum et mihi uetustas res
scribenti nescio quo pacto antiquus fiet animus et quaedam religio tenet,
quae illi prudentissimi uiri publice susciendra censuerint, ea pro
indignis habere, quae in meos annales referam.
\end{quote}

This passage presents the modern reader with not a few difficulties:\textsuperscript{113} firstly, there are problems with taking the statement at face value in its precise setting within the text. It is not as if Livy’s own supply of prodigies began to run short: although this notice is placed towards the end of the extant text, the \textit{Periocha} and Obsequens, both heavily dependent on Livy’s record, indicate that prodigies continued to be reported and expiated long after

\textsuperscript{111} For the self-construction of historians in antiquity see Marincola 128-175.
\textsuperscript{112} Quia. Madvig’s emendation of \textit{qua} has been widely adopted: see Levene 22 n.114. He adopts this and then goes on to say in his footnote that “it is striking that Livy does not go on to counter those who have neglected prodigies by suggesting that they are genuine signs from the gods”. But if we restore \textit{qua} then he has implied his severe disapproval of the failure to accept prodigies as divinely instigated.
\textsuperscript{113} Levene 23 has a useful survey of what people have made of it over the years.
this date, albeit in diminishing numbers. Since the historical record seems reasonably complete until we approach his time of composition, it seems that Livy is talking about the present rather than the period in which the comment is set. Secondly, he alleges that people no longer generally believe that portents herald future events, something that would seem to be denied a century later by the account given by Tacitus, which includes not just prodigies (admittedly in comparatively reduced numbers), but also omens: consider the detailed deductions reported by the consular historian at the death of Augustus, not long after the completion of Livy’s work, at Annals 1.31. Even in Livy’s present, ascribing significance to prodigies was apparently far from dead. Thirdly, despite the historian’s apparent hesitation in accepting prodigies, there is no other indication in the text that Livy is uncertain about prodigies as a category, rather the opposite. This leads to the final problem: there is an abrupt change in tone when moving from the first sentence to the second: *neglegentia* is a strong and confident condemnation of the attitude under discussion, but in the latter sentence Livy seems to adopt a much more uncertain stance.

All these considerations – timing, the question of credence, Livy’s erratic hesitancy – can be dealt with. Levene finds that “the decline during the Third Macedonian War (which is the context for this comment) is only the symptom of a larger decline” (116) which helps to explain the location of this complaint within the chronological narrative: Livy is highlighting the beginning of a process that has reached its sorry depths in the present. But this still leaves the questions of the apparently mistaken idea that prodigies (and presumably omens) are not taken to indicate the future, and of Livy’s rather strange hesitation.

Linderski sees a subtle agenda at work in this passage, namely a muted criticism of the Augustan practice of interpreting supernatural events in favour of a charismatic leader.

---

114 On the sources of the *Periochae*, see Begbie (1967): on continuing prodigies, i.e. from 169 B.C.: MacBain’s table of prodigies continues to list Livy, Obsequens and the *Periochae* until 17 B.C., and other authors regularly until the end of the Republic. However there is a marked decrease in frequency during the last century of the Republic.
when a more traditional interpretation would have diagnosed disfavour. To give one example: according to Cassius Dio, the overflowing of the Tiber (which occurred just after Octavian adopted the name Augustus) was interpreted to indicate the greatness of the emperor’s rule. However such floods, if treated as religious matters, had traditionally been interpreted as prodigial, that is, heralding disaster.115 Linderski, commenting on Dio, continues: “no republican haruspex, pontiff, quindecimuir or augur would subscribe to this interpretation. Did Livy? When he complained that prodigies are not reported, not recorded, not heeded, he did not think of the era of Cicero but of his own time, the time of the Augustan restoration.”116

Linderski’s position might be considered to be broadly supported by Miles’ analysis of 4.20.5-11, (41f) where Augustus’ assertion that Cossus was consul, rather than military tribune, is treated in such a way to “allow the author to challenge his social and political superiors with a degree of safety” (53).117 Miles discusses the difficulties of authority in the historical tradition and comments that:

[B]y exposing the weakness of his narrative on important matters of fact, by himself submitting, conspicuously, to the limitations of the evidence, Livy deprives Augustus of the power to impose his authority on history more effectively than if Livy had attempted to present himself as an authority — an act that would tacitly have conceded that factual certainty was attainable...[T]he combination of his argument against factual certainty and his own exemplification of its consequences is not unique to this immediate situation” (47).

115 A religious issue at 30.38.10 (aquarum insolita magnitudo in religionem uersa) and 35.9.3 (part of a list of prodigies) but not at 24.9.6, 35.21.6 or 38.28.4. See also 7.3.2.
116 Linderski (1993) 64. He cites the overflowing of the Tiber, interpreted to indicate the greatness of the emperor’s rule (Cassius Dio 53.20.1), after his adoption of the new title of Augustus: cf. Suet. Caesar 32, 77; Plut. Caesar 47. Rosenberger (1998) 245 examines the same question, arguing that the prodigy/expiation divinatory structure was held in place principally by the republican system of government and thus lost its meaning with the appearance of monarchy.
117 This is a bare summary of Miles’ salient conclusions; see his excellent discussion of the various permutations of the episode at 40-47.
In other words, Livy is deliberately underplaying his hand, and losing a battle, in order to redefine the rules about authority, thereby winning the historical war; he reduces all authorities to a relativity that deprives Augustus of the certainty that the princeps hoped to establish. The warning that ideology is often present in Livy's comments, disguised as strategic tact, should alert us to the fact that our passage may not speak plainly. For Linderski then, Livy is politely complaining about the new, 'optimistic' style of interpretation. His suggestion can be explored in more detail. Livy's presentation of the situation owes a lot to the kind of subterfuge detected by Miles: it does not seem that the 'new', favourable, interpretations included a blatant refusal to believe that the gods indicated future events, rather that daring interpretation could somehow avert or transform the prognosticated outcome. However, either Livy is not, as Linderski suggests, referring to this new habit of interpretation or, as seems more likely, he is equating the process of reinterpretation with a cynicism whereby the proponents of the new interpretation, by denying the traditional interpretations and asserting new and favourable ones instead, are as good as saying that the gods foretell nothing. In other words, despite the apparent understatement, the issue is presented by Livy in polemic fashion: either one adopts the traditional, pessimistic, interpretations of prodigies and portents or one is simply neglecting the gods; playing with interpretations is simply nonsense – there is no middle ground.

This hypothesis is attractive for a number of circumstantial reasons: firstly, Livy elsewhere indicates his displeasure at the sort of 'clever' interpretation that was practised in connection with vows, which is usually linked to the late Republic:118 we might compare this sort of legalistic trickery with the 'new' interpretations of prodigies referred to by Linderski. Alternatively or quite possibly in tandem with this, the sense that the

---

118 See e.g. 22.58.8 where a Roman, held hostage by the Carthaginians, attempts to cheat his vow to return to Hannibal's camp by leaving his party shortly after departure and returning as if he had forgotten something; Livy describes him as 'unroman' (minime Romani ingenii homo) and the senate is none too impressed when he attempts to remain in Rome while the others return – he is arrested and sent back to Hannibal's camp (22.61.4): see also the alternative version on the same theme, where the punishment of all the errant hostages is delayed until the census. Liebeschuetz (1979) 25-26 discusses this kind of legalistic interpretation in the late Republic.
accusation is somewhat off-target is a superb strategy for avoiding offence. To mention that ‘people in general’ thought that adverse prodigies could be interpreted *favourably* would be an ill-concealed criticism indeed: the charge is too specific for offence to be avoided. But by knocking down a straw man Livy creates an opportunity to reassert traditional interpretations, thus he can offend no-one and correct anyone. This is surely his intention: it is certainly in keeping with the presentation of religious material throughout his account. Additionally, if Livy *is* criticising imperial policy, to direct the accusation of *neglegentia* at ‘everyone’ (i.e. no-one in particular) is in keeping with his method of deflecting criticism by an assumed modesty and apparent hesitancy that pervades his work. Livy is marvellously vague and wrong: and he simultaneously issues a spectacular criticism and correction. He could not be explicit as he is with regard to Cossus because he wishes to introduce the idea of neglect, a far more serious charge than the allegation that there is a problem with the sources on a particular point (even with the implication that Augustus is falsifying the tradition); the accusation must be deflected further off target to be palatable – thus the virtually anonymous *uulgo*. Livy has managed to criticise imperial religious policy without leaving any scope for counter-accusation against him.

The latter part of the passage, in assimilating a ‘cured’ Livy to the Romans of the past, is reminiscent of his ‘mission statement’ in the Prologue, where morality (*mores*) was said to have declined. It is tasteful and polite to suggest that the ‘process of decline’ had affected the historian as much as his contemporaries: even with the new-found *Pax Augusta*, the question of the decline of traditional Roman *uirtus* still troubled the subjects

---

119 Miles 48f has a good discussion on what is known about the historian's background; his birthplace, Patavium was on the “margins of Roman political life”. As Miles says “he appears...to have been one of the few Romans outside of Rome’s active political aristocracy to have written history at all...as one who had never held political office, he was open to criticism that he was incompetent to write history” (49). Kraus (1997) 72 speaks of a habitual “kind of arrogant deference”. Moles (1993) 159 speaks of Livy's “ambiguous, disingenuous, but formally striking, modesty”. See also Marincola 141 & 153.  
120 For Livy’s personal relationship with Augustus see Woodman (1988) 136-40.
of the newly emerging monarch.\textsuperscript{121} Roman \textit{uirtus} was to be (re)found in \textit{exempla}, and the study of history allowed one to rediscover lost virtue:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Hoc illud est praecipue in cognitione rerum salubre ac frugiferum, omnis te exempli documenta in illustri posita monumento intueri; inde tibi tuaeque rei publicae quod imitere capias, inde foedum inceptu foedum exitu quod uites. (Praef. 10-11)}
\end{quote}

In the light of this, the implication of the passage discussing the inclusion of prodigies is that Livy himself is also taking part in this process of learning from \textit{exempla}. It may be that \textit{nec uitia nostra nec remedia pati possumus}, but Livy is apparently confessing to making the attempt to cure himself, and is reporting on the patient’s progress at 43.13.1-2.\textsuperscript{122} The success of the treatment invites others, perhaps not even aware of their malady, to join him. The uncertainty of the second sentence is disingenuous: the clumsy, misinformed, and slightly bewildered apology is surely a political wolf in sheep’s clothing, as Linderski has suggested.

\textsuperscript{121} Moles (1993) argues that the preface was written after Actium; Woodman (1988) 128-134 prefers an earlier date.

\textsuperscript{122} On the intricacies of the preface see Moles (1993).
Unambiguous Reticence

The final aspect of Livy's reporting of supernatural phenomena is the use of 'distance' often through *oratio obliqua*, or words such as *uideri*. Essentially, it has been generally assumed that any indication of dissonance between the historian and his religious diagnoses indicates an unbreachable gap and therefore scepticism. It is quite true that Livy frequently talks about how things 'appeared', and in such cases, as with *oratio obliqua*, the modern temptation is to assume an opposition between appearances and 'reality'. Consider an example: when Valerius attacks the Aequi, we are told that the consul deduced that the gods seemed to be acting on behalf of the enemy:

*prohibuit foeda tempestas cum grandine ac tonitribus caelo dejecta.*
*admirationem deinde auxit signo receptui dato adeo tranquilla*
*serenitas reddita ut uelut numine aliquo defensa castra oppugnare*
*iterum religio fuerit.* (2.62.1-2)

The modern temptation is to single out *uelut* and assert that it implies doubt, and doubt ('of course') constitutes scepticism. But it is more profitable to assume the categories of understanding established in connection with prodigies: was the storm to be attributed to the gods or not? Valerius would seem to answer positively, which leaves us wondering why there is *any* indication of 'distance' (*uelut*). Is Livy undermining Valerius or is there more to this? The answer, as with prodigies, is related not to phenomenology, but conduct and interpretation: in the unnecessary statement that the storm and hail were *caelo*, Livy is not informing his readers of the sober realities of storms; he is evoking the sense of the grandeur of the storm that seemed to the consul to be more than an ordinary phenomenon: *uelut* therefore represents the act of assessing the visible evidence. In his
style of reporting, Livy would seem to be *commending* the consul for his circumspection.

This use of *uelut* is mirrored in a context where it seems unlikely that outright scepticism is a factor: in the rare notices of the announcement of an augural diagnosis, the presentation often includes some aspect of ‘distance’.

*consulti augures uitiosum uideri dictatorem pronuntiauerunt.*

(8.23.14)\(^{123}\)

The augurs’ use of *uideri* does not indicate their fundamental doubt about their conclusions: it reflects their careful expertise. Evidence is sought and marshalled in accordance with interpretative principles, and deductions made from ‘what is evident’ (not ‘what seems’, i.e. ‘deceives’). Nor is this process random and unsystematic in the sense that the Livy’s agent receives all unusual phenomena in some undifferentiated way: there is a highly complex process of assessment of the relative weight of phenomena that are ‘known’ to indicate a particular explanation. It would have been sufficient for the Roman reader to be presented with the relevant material from which to form, what were for him, obvious deductions. This is essentially Levene’s methodological position regarding prodigies and acts of impiety: they indicate the status of the gods with regard to the Romans at any particular point. There are times when to draw an explicit conclusion is nothing less than crass, and probably insulting to the educated reader.\(^{124}\) Livy can inform his reader of his interpretation of events *purely* by his presentation of evidence if he so chooses. He might, on the other hand, present more explicit evidence, especially if

---

\(^{123}\) See also 8.15.6 (*religio inde iniecta de dictatore et, cum augures uitio creatum uideri dixissent, dictator magisterque equitum se magistratu abdicarunt*) & 23.31.13 (*uocati augures uitio creatum uideri pronuntiauerunt*.)

\(^{124}\) The level of a narrative will vary enormously according to the perceived audience: Livy is assuming no little knowledge on the part of his.
he is touching on controversy, as he does when he reports the flooding that prevented the 
*Ludi Scaenici*, of which the historian disapproves, from going ahead:

> *cum medios forte ludos circus Tiberi superfuso inrigatus impedisset, id uero, velut auersis iam dis aspernantibusque placamina irae, terrorem ingentem fecit.* (7.3.2)\(^{125}\)

One further example will underline the point: when Appius offers a temple to Bellona, 
Livy speaks of the situation being 'as if' the goddess were taking a hand:

> *dicitur Appius in medio pugnae discrimine, ita ut inter prima signa manibus ad caelum sublatis conspiceretur, ita precatus esse: ‘Bellona, si hodie nobis victoriam duis, ast ego tibi templum uoueo.’ haec precatus velut instigante dea et ipse collegae et exercitus uirtutem aequauit ducis.* (10.19.17-18)

The rapidly ensuing success of the Roman force is not to be taken lightly in a narrative 
that relies for its coherence on the significant juxtaposition of piety and success. *Velut* 
preserves the necessary distance between evidence and deduction. It does not make the 
religious notices superfluous, or indicate that we should ignore them.

Livy is not unique in antiquity in this respect: we might at this point compare Gould’s 
conclusions on Herodotus’ reporting of religious phenomena:

---

\(^{125}\) See below (p. 105) for a discussion of the gods’ role in this and Livy’s dislike, matched by the gods, 
for the superstitious innovation.
Of course, he is cautious in admitting such causation and still more so in identifying its source and rationale. But such caution, which at times may even involve the admission of authorial uncertainty and a verdict of 'non liquet', cannot be taken as evidence of a peculiar methodological scepticism in the face of the apparent activity of supernatural powers, still less of religious disbelief. It is due, as I have argued elsewhere, to the built-in 'uncertainty principle' which is a necessary part of any phenomenological religion; in such a religious system, the action of divinity is not revealed; it can only be inferred from the outward signs of that activity and these signs are almost never so unambiguous as to allow the inference to be certain. It is a further aspect of the same 'uncertainty principle' that the identity of the divine power at work and the motivation for divine action are still further removed from the possibility of certainty.

Thus I would argue that Herodotus' expressions of hesitation and uncertainty in questions of divine action in human experience are no more than the expression of a universal (and among ancient Greeks universally accepted) implicit acknowledgement of the limitations of human knowledge in such matters.\textsuperscript{126}

Livy's religious narrative is, like that of Herodotus, subject to an inherent doubt. We have already seen that, at moments of alleged scepticism, there are issues other than facticity at stake, such as a preferred style of reporting: but there are instances where we would expect some divine aid and the only specified route for this aid is mentioned with 'distancing'.

Apart from the endemic use of prodigies or failed sacrifices to indicate approaching danger, we might pick out one example where the explicit is skilfully avoided: the fragmentation of authority has a variety of subtle purposes, none of which involve genuine 'doubt'. When the Bastarnae begin their approach to Rome at the instigation of Philip of Macedon, they are struck down by a storm on Mount Donuca while attacking the Thracians who had withdrawn there:

\textsuperscript{126} Gould (1994) 94. The 'elsewhere' was Gould (1985).
...quo <cum> subire Bastarnae uellent, quali tempestate Gallos spoliantes Delphos fana est peremptos esse, talis tum Bastarnas nequiquam ad iuga montium adpropinquantes oppressit. neque enim imbre tantum effuso, dein creberrima grandine obruti sunt, cum ingenti fragore caeli tonitribusque et fulgoribus praestrin gentibus aciem oculorum, sed fulmina etiam sic undique micabant ut peti uiderentur corpora, nec solum milites sed etiam principes icti caderent...ipsi deos auctores fugae esse caelumque in se ruere aiebant. dissipati procella cum tamquam ex naufragio plerique semermes in castra unde profecti erant redissent, consultari quid agerent coeptum. (40.58.3-7)

The deferred attribution of the disaster to the gods (ipsi deos auctores...aiebant) might be considered ambiguous and as giving an example of superstition on the part of the tribesmen, except that the last mention of the Romans in the narrative was the dedication and inscription of thanks on the new temple of the Lares Permarini (40.52.2-6), vowed eleven years previously for the sea victory over Antiochus. The narrative structure makes the vivid comparison of the situation to a shipwreck (tamquam ex naufragio) unambiguous. Livy has not explicitly stated that the new divine residents of Rome are looking after their own, but he has left little room for doubt: the Bastarnae, compared to the Gauls sacking Delphi, are impious (presumably because of their anti-Roman intentions, since there was no revered shrine on Mt. Donuca). The leaders are convinced that the gods are at work, and the mention of a shipwreck is not only dramatically satisfying, but in view of the sequence of events, extremely telling. Given the general failure of foreigners to understand religious matters properly,127 the tribesmen’s diagnosis of divine agency indicates not doubt, but greater certainty: even the primitive and unsophisticated tribesmen could see the divine in these events. Livy revels in the

127 See e.g. 2.44.12; 10.11.2.
divine support without being reduced to a gross and bald statement. Such ‘unambiguous reticence’ is frequent in the text of Livy, though it is rare to find an example with such unmistakable features. We should not be thinking in terms of Livy’s failure to draw explicit conclusions but rather understanding how the presentation of events leads unmistakably to an acknowledgement of the gods’ aid in a climate that disliked strongly the sort of simple ‘factual’ statement that scholars have sought in vain.

All this is not to say that Livy does not explicitly acknowledge the gods: but he is concerned to remain within appropriate habits that we are only beginning to outline here – his language reflects the process of deduction. Thus at 10.36.11-12 we encounter a situation where the intervention of the gods was obvious after the dedication of a temple to Jupiter Stator. Livy includes both evidence and diagnosis:

\[\begin{align*}
\text{inter haec consul manus ad caelum attollens uoce clara, ita ut} \\
\text{exaudiretur, templum Ioui Statori uovet, si consttitisset a fuga Romana} \\
\text{acies redintegratoque proelio cecidisset uicissetque legiones Samnitium.} \\
\text{omnes undique adnisi ad restituendam pugnam, duces, miliies, peditum} \\
\text{equitumque uis. numen etiam deorum respexisse nomen Romanum} \\
\text{uisum; adeo facile inclinata res repulsique a castris hostes, mox etiam} \\
\text{redacti...}
\end{align*}\]

What the historian wants us to understand is that the gods’ aid was made particularly evident by the ease of victory. Livy is confirming, not denying, that the gods took a hand by indicating how straightforward the evidence was.

Rather than representing a monolithic scepticism, the four issues discussed here (discrimination between genuine and false prodigies; his evocative reporting of reports;
oratio obliqua; and 'distancing') emerge as distinct aspects of Livy's reporting: what was treated as an impassable gulf between the historian and his religious material is often far more complex and the complexity reflects a number of different considerations, 'religious' as well as 'historiographical'. Livy is not simultaneously undermining religious phenomena on a number of fronts, as has so often been thought: he is sifting and sorting, distinguishing between the genuine and the erroneous, constantly aware of the need for and processes of validation. There is a 'distance' but it is one that Livy appropriately notes but does not over-reify; the vast majority of religious phenomena are validated rather than undermined. A whole array of checks and balances is evident in Livy's narrative, both as a display of skill and as allusion to proper procedure. He was just as sensible as any other educated Roman.
3) Interpretation

Thus far it has become evident that there is a premium on correctly understanding whether the gods have ‘really’ intervened. Where Livy is critical in connection with prodigies, he is criticising interpretations: mice nibbling gold should not have been taken as a prodigy; people panic at times of stress and mistakenly report phenomena that might well not have been prodigies. This is perfectly consistent with his exemplary purpose: just as a consul might be criticised for rashness, so too can people be censured for their religious mistakes. We should, however, also note the rarity of such criticisms. Livy is not intending to insult his educated readers with a tedious list of minor quibbles but rather to work with them: there are considerations in the way he writes beyond some tedious and pedantic desire to sift belatedly through prodigy notices. His is one of many interpretative voices in the text and the position he makes for himself has a direct bearing on how we should understand his presentation of the polyphony that is Roman religious interpretation. It is a selection of those voices that are now examined: opinions are being weighed as well as counted in the Ab Urbe Condita.

(i) The Historian as Interpreter

If Livy is to write an exemplary history, he must first establish his right to do so: his non-senatorial origins – and therefore weak credentials – have already been mentioned. Throughout the narrative he takes care both to espouse modesty and hesitancy, and also to establish the authority that he needs to make explicit criticism. This difficult combination demands that he select his criticisms with a sense of measure: it would be out of keeping with his strategic display of insecurity to flaunt his ability to discern correctly the hand of the gods in events. Incessant intervention to question prodigy
reports would be crude and in all likelihood spoil the desired effect – to indicate to the audience that Livy is perfectly capable and knowledgeable in religious matters. Thus his criticisms are much reduced in frequency and the level of authorial intervention is governed by this factor, probably more than any other. In his selection and presentation of material, Livy is as much constructing his own position as designing the Republic, and expert knowledge coupled with polite restraint are his trademarks. Indeed we might go further: it is not so much that Livy is opposing his own assessment to that of the maiores as that he is following their lead in exercising his judgement. Thus he partakes of the proper Roman activity of distinguishing genuine from false prodigies: but he does not press the point. Even his distinctions between ‘objective’ prodigies (i.e. those that physically happened) and hallucinatory ones bears the hallmark of the expert at work, classifying the material with ease and skill. Anyone can spot a prodigy, but it is the mark of an expert that not only are such patterns detected, but that they are noted merely in passing.

Tastefully presented in this way, Livy’s subdued omniscience translates directly into power. The question is therefore, to what end does he deploy it? For the most part the differential in authority is invisible as Livy merges his perspective with that of the venerable res publica for which he has such respect; the leading men soberly practise their art in the clear and uninterrupted gaze of the historian who keeps himself approvingly in the background. Thus there is often a sense of consensus – at times, we might even forget the existence of the historian but for his attempts to vary the reporting of the latest prodigy reports. But this seamless coherency between auctor and actor is only applied to certain processes and then with differing levels of assent. There are moments where Livy exercises his right to discriminate between proper and improper conduct and we have a whole range of levels of his consensus or disagreement with the agent(s). This arrogation of absolute authority should not go unstressed: an epideictic historian requires nothing less in his task of restoring a tottering Rome. Livy’s specific

128 Chaplin (1993) demonstrates this in a variety of contexts.
gambit of underplaying his hand, given his lowly origins and low political status, should not deceive us; there is no surrender to the authority of the tradition or his sources and he will readily criticise where he feels it is necessary.

None of this should surprise us: just because an aristocrat has been made a consul, there is no reason to think that he will make a good, or exemplary, magistrate and general. Livy is very happy to criticise individuals who, he considers, have not performed well enough. What is less well explored is the extent of his selectivity in validating different officials. This is most notable between those concerned with what we might, with caution, call ‘political’ and ‘religious’ spheres of action. There is a temptation, based on modern parallels, to assume that priests had a monopoly on religious matters. In fact, it is more complicated than that: there are different centres of gravity with respect to religious interpretation in Livy’s Roman society, different voices granted different weight and jurisdiction; of these it is the priests to which we turn first.

129 As well as the obvious explicit methods of criticism, there is the more nuanced presentation of speeches, for which see Chaplin (1993) esp. 120-124.
130 Central to this thesis, and to a great deal of current and recent work on Roman religion, is the tenet that religious and political activity should not, and cannot, be divorced. It was the acting magistrate, for instance, who recited the prayer formula dictated by the priest: nonetheless the fact remains that certain men were functioning as priests, and others as annual magistrates, and their authority was distinct and peculiar to the position they held. See especially the introduction to Beard & North (1990); North (1986) 257-258 on Scheid (1985a); for the status of priests Scheid (1978); Szempler (1986); on priesthood and families North (1990b).
In considering the role of the priests, we should perhaps first note what is not present in Livy’s narrative. The potential for conflict between historian and priest is extremely limited in a modern context since each is specialised to the extent that they would appropriate the authority to speak of each others’ specialised areas only very rarely, if at all. But in a society where religious interpretations were at a premium, and positively sought, the potential for rivalry between the two is enormous. This would be true even if the historian restricted himself to ‘human’ matters but, as we have seen, Livy is keen to have his say on religious matters also. In the context of the possible disagreements the failure of rivalry to appear, and the almost seamless continuity between historian and priest are hardly accidental. This should not be glossed over too quickly: a close analysis shows that this is deliberate, and consistent: Livy is careful to give the priests their proper place in his interpretative Rome.

The deliberations of the various priestly colleges are either, as with haruspices, inserted into the narrative at the relevant moment, or more often included after implicit or explicit reference by the senate. The colleges of the decemuiiri sacris faciundis and pontifices, and the ordo of the haruspices functioned rather like ‘committees’ of the senate which would call upon them for their expert opinion. Thus we can see immediately that the collegiate priests are removed from the most direct interpretative

---

131 I.e. when warnings are given, often before battle.
132 For a study of the meaning of the word pontifex see Fugier (1963); 161-172; Hallett (1970).
133 MacBain suggests that the haruspices began to function as a distinct organised body in 278 B.C. (49) while Rawson (1978) prefers to place this as late as the Augustan period. For our purposes it is clear that haruspices were summoned from Etruria by the senate, that is, in a consultative role early on in Livy’s account. This is specifically assumed in their second appearance, at 5.15.1, while at 1.31.4 they are mentioned briefly as issuing advice. The latest (published) opinion prefers an imperial date (BNP 101). For the different extiscipal rites see Schilling (1979b) 83-90; North (1990a) 55.
134 Beard (1990) 17-48, especially 31. North (1990a) 53 is less certain: “our texts themselves sometimes seem confused over who had the final authority”. Beard is also criticised by Brennan et al (1990). Most recently, Orlin (1997) 88-90 who stresses that “the Senate reserved discretionary power over exactly when to consult the Books.” None of these particularly explores the Livian persona although Livy is often the principal source.
venture, of discerning whether the gods were involved or not. Either we are simply given their remedies or we are told that they were consulted. In both scenarios the decision as to whether Rome was genuinely faced with the *ira deum* has already been taken. In the case of the *decemuiroi* we are expressly told that summoning them required some persuasion that the situation was extreme: Fabius ‘managed’ to get a decree passed that the Sibylline books be consulted. As Livy would have it, the senate was happy to avail itself simultaneously of their various talents if it felt so inclined. Thus both initiation of priestly discussion and the final decision on remedies resides with the senate in Livy’s account. Whatever the undoubted expertise of the various priests, it is not they but the senate which makes final decisions regarding action and consultation thus any overlap between the various priestly groups is a senatorial issue; it is the *patres* who decide which *collegium* to consult. Nor do the priests comment on whether a particular item is, or is not, a prodigy: they assume that the correct diagnosis has been made of whether the gods are involved or not. Thus their roles are strictly delimited: they are experts in their own domains.

Livy’s treatment of priesthood is distinct from his treatment of, for instance, magistracy.

135 The only clarification between the human and divine realms explicitly assigned to any priests is the declaration of the *pontifices* that expense is not an issue with regard to the Great Games for Jupiter at 39.5.9, and that is a technical matter, as befits the college. The other priesthoods, the *Flamines*, the *Salii* and the Vestals are concerned with the performance of rituals and do not appear in connection with interpretation.

136 It seems most likely that this was the normal procedure and that notice of it was suppressed for reasons of *uariatio* rather than the *collegia* having any right to be consulted; certainly the language of ‘reporting back’, which is the normal style, strongly implies their consultative role. For the difference between *decreta* and *responsa* see Cohee (1994) 18-27, who also has a useful table indicating the variety of Livy’s expressions. We know of only one occasion when the advice of the priests was not heeded (Front. de Aqua. 7).

137 *peruicit ut...decemuiroi libros Sibyllinos adire iuberentur* (22.9.8-9). Cf. the statement of Dionysius to similar effect (4.62.5).

138 There appears to be a whole complex of expertise on offer at 27.37 (though it should be stressed how unusual the density of religious action was): the *pontifices* deal with prodigies; *haruspices* are called in to deal with a precocious hermaphrodite; the *pontifices* resume their activities with a ceremony including a hymn by Livius Andronicus; during rehearsals a lightning strike requires interpretation by the *haruspices* once again; finally the *decemuiroi* appear without formal introduction to prescribe a further ceremony. See further below, n. 164.

139 Their precise domains are not always entirely clear: in some respects they do seem to overlap. Each has its own peculiar *modus operandi*, as noted in each section but it is not immediately clear to us why any one in particular, especially of the *haruspices* and the *pontifices*, should be consulted at any given moment. MacBain discusses (somewhat inconclusively) the evidence for specialisation of the *haruspices* in his Appendix D: *Patterns of Haruspical Activity* (118-126).
There are indications that he considers Roman priesthoods to be ennobling in themselves, at least in one well-known example: on being appointed unwillingly to the flaminate of Jupiter (27.8.4), C. Valerius Flaccus reforms his disreputable ways to such an extent that he could successfully plead for the restoration of the ancient, and virtually forgotten, right of the Flamen Dialis to attend the senate. Nor is this the only sign of respect for the venerable priesthoods.

There is a curious pattern in the naming of priests, or priestesses in the case of Vestals. The decemuiiri, haruspices, augures and pontifices (with the notable exception of the Pontifex Maximus, who is consistently named in a ritual context) are consistently referred to in the anonymous plural when they are practising their duties. They are however, with the exception of the haruspices (who were not an official collegium), named at their inauguration or death. This observation can be extended in the case of the other priesthoods in a consistent pattern, whereby a fall from grace involves the naming of a Vestal or a minor flamen in connection with their failure. Of the Vestals, we know of Opimia and Floronia (found guilty of impropriety at 22.57.2); Postumia was acquitted at 4.44.11 but told to improve on her manners even though her morals were considered above reproach. However there is also the ritual error

140 For discussion of the ritual and symbolic role of Vestals see Beard (1980) & (1995); BNP 51-54; for their relationship with the Pontifex Maximus, BNP 57-59.
141 He is also right in cases of conflict: at 37.51.1f between P. Licinius, the Pontifex Maximus, and the Flamen Quirinalis, Q. Fabius Pictor, due to take up his praetorship. Livy notes that there had been a similar dispute many years previously between L. Metellus and Postumius Albinus. Metellus was Pontifex Maximus at the time, and Albinus the newly elected consul. In both cases the Pontifex carried the day, with Livy's approval according to Bleicken (1957b). Compare the provisions made for the Flamen Dialis at 31.50.7f.
142 The Old Man of Veii is distinctive in this respect, in that he appears as an individual, but we still do not have his name. For the historical issues concerning the identity of haruspices see Rawson (1978). North (1990a) notes that anonymity of haruspices was a Roman habit, and comments that “we scarcely know the names of any haruspices” (67). This may be largely due to Livy’s habit of only naming collegiate priests (usually at inauguration and/or death). Szemler (1972) collects the evidence that we have for priests.
143 Though the listing is frequent, it is far from full. See Szemler (1972); Palmer (1997) Appendix 1 (107-115).
144 Minucia, condemned at 8.15.7, combines elements of both stories: Opimia and Floronia are guilty; Postumia is accused because of her dress and behaviour but acquitted; Minucia is suspected for similar reasons and these lead to her conviction after investigation. Presumably the discovery of an identifiable act of human negligence in the case of our anonymous Vestal (note below) was considered sufficient explanation, and the inquiry ceased at that point, although we are told that quamquam nihil portenditibus dis, ceterum hostis maioribus procurai et supplicationem ad Vestae haberi placuit. For the punishment of Vestals see also Plut. Numa 10; Roman Questions 96; Dion. Hal. 2.67.4, Cornell (1981).
committed by an anonymous Vestal at 28.11.6 which was attributed to human error, and the anonymity does not seem to be random. The Vestal, who apparently continued in her duties, was not ‘named and shamed’: presumably ritual error, however undesirable, was not taken to be such a threat as moral failure in a priestess. This principle applies equally to the Flamines: the only minor flamen named in the text is Floronia’s partner in disgrace, L. Cantilius, at 22.57.3. However the underlying tone is of reverence for the Vestals: they are praised at 5.40.7, along with the nameless Flamen Quirinalis, for their selfless care for the sacra of the res publica. Like the anonymous Vestal, they are not named while their care for their duties is being performed. By keeping them anonymous, Livy places the minor flamines, Vestals and collegiate priests beyond criticism. Only when they descend from propriety do they become individuals again.

The anonymity of the priests in action merges them with the ‘eternal’ image of Rome; even more than other (annual) processes, they form part of the very substance of the city over time, impersonal ever-present servants of the ephemeral. The perspective portrayed is senatocentric: just as they did not hear individual priests debating interpretations, nor do we. Thus is their integrity also placed beyond reproach: we cannot take issue with particular points of discussion, we must accept or reject their diagnosis as it comes, which stands in sharp contrast with the frequent debates in the senate.

---

145 This does not seem to be the case at the beginning of book 41, where there is a lacuna of about eight chapters (Luce (1977) 121). Periochae 41.1 records that ignis in aede Vestae extinctus est: this was apparently taken as a prodigy. See also Obsequens 8: incendio circa forum cum plurima essent deusta, aedes Veneris sineullo vestigio cremata. Vestae penetratis ignis extinctus. uirgo iussu M. Aemilii pontificis maximi flagro caesa negauit ulterius interitum. supplicationibus habitibus in Hispania et Histria bella prospere administrata. Levene 104 suggests that "possibly the mere mention of the prodigy by the Periochae suggests its importance to Livy’s narrative".

146 It could plausibly be argued of course that Livy found omissions in the record and that his account merely reflects this. However, given the consistency in connection with other priesthoods, it does not seem unreasonable to maximise the argument. If it does reflect the way that records were kept, then the argument that it was inappropriate to name a Vestal who had not committed moral errors would simply apply more generally.

147 The major flamines are often named in a political context, e.g. on their being appointed to a magistracy, but they are not named in a ritual context except in the case of C. Claudius, the Flamen of Jupiter, who resigned his office in a most exemplary manner at 26.23.8 after committing a ritual error.
The three priesthoods which appear the most frequently are the *haruspices* and the *duumuiri sacris faciundis* (later the *decemuiri* (Livy 6.37.12 & 6.42.20: hereafter, simply *decemuiri* although in the earlier period they did only number two) and the *pontifices*.¹⁴⁸

Though they have different jurisdictions, their presentation shares certain common features.

The *decemuiri*, as Livy himself informs us, were consulted when ordinary expiation was not considered to be sufficient:

[Quintus Fabius Maximus] peruicit ut, quod non ferme decernitur nisi cum taetra prodigia nuntiata sunt, decemuiri libros Sibyllinos adire iubentur. (22.9.8)

The task of the *decemuiri* is to consult the Sibylline Books of Fate¹⁴⁹ and prescribe suitable expiation.¹⁵⁰ Notices of their appearance, as we also found with Livy’s delivery of prodigy lists, is varied¹⁵¹ but the procedure alluded to is consistent. They are summoned in their official role by the senate,¹⁵² they report back, and the senate follows

---

¹⁴⁸ For details of these priestly groups see Dumézil (1970) 594-610. BNP 18-30 is a good overview with full references to older bibliography. Particular (recent) studies: MacBain 43-59 on the *haruspices*; Linderski (1986) on *augures*; Vaanggard (1988) on *flamines*. The *decemuiri* became the *quindecemuiri* under Sulla according to Servius (*Aen.* 6.73) and are first attested in a Caelius’ letter to Cicero (*Fam.* 8.4.1) dating from 51 B.C.. See now also Scheid (1998b) on the records and practices of the *decemuiri*; North (1998) on the *pontifices*; Giovanni (1998) on the *augures* & Beard (1998) on religious archival process in general.

¹⁴⁹ The story of the old woman who sold the three remaining books to Tarquin after burning six of the original nine is not found in Livy’s extant text, though it is possible that he alluded to it in his full work: it is recorded by Gell. 1.19; Lact *Inst.* 1.6.10-13; Serv. *Aen.* 6.72; Dion Hal. 4.62; Zonaras 7.11.1; Tzetzes, *On Lycophron* 1279. See further Gagé (1955) 24-38, 196-204, 432-61, 542-55, 677-82; Parke (1988) 190-215. Phlegon of Tralles claims to record part of such an oracle (*FGrH* 257 F36 X).

¹⁵⁰ “The responses of the Sibylline books recorded in Livy consist almost entirely of ritual prescriptions” (North (1990a) 54).

¹⁵¹ E.g. *pestilentia ciuitatem adorta coegit senatum imperare decemuiris ut libros Sibyllinos inspicerent* (7.27.1); or *ob cetera prodigia libros adire decemuiri iussi* (21.62.6); *cum decemuiri libros inspexissent* (22.1.16); *eorum prodigiorum causa libros Sibyllinos ex senatus consulto decemuiri cum adissent, renuntiauerunt* (36.37.4); etc.

¹⁵² Orlin (1997) 86’s analysis and conclusions that “consultation of the Sibylline books [only] followed the announcement of prodigies” is too simplistic, as his own discussion shows; he is too rigid in requiring the Roman state to need prodigy reports as a “pretext”. For a discussion of the evidence for these procedures in Cicero and Dion. Hal., see Scheid (1998b) 13-17; for the accidental destruction of the
their advice – at least they do in Livy’s account. As has been said, we do not hear of the deliberations of the *decemuiiri*; we simply hear of their instructions in a consistently terse manner and varying degrees of factual detail (such as specific instructions for different prodigies). With one exception, it should be emphasised that Livy treats the solutions provided by the Sacred Books as beyond reproach. The procedures of this Roman priesthood thus underpin the ongoing greatness of the city.

Only once does Livy cast any doubt on the prescriptions of the *decemuiiri*. At 22.57.2-7, the historian implies an error in judgement when certain prodigies are responded to:

```
territi etiam super tantas clades cum ceteris prodigii...hoc nefas (the sexual violation of a Vestal), *cum inter tot, ut fit, clades in prodigium uersum esset, decemuiiri libros adire iussi sunt, et Q. Fabius Pictor Delphos ad oraculum missus est sciscitatum, quibus precibus supplicisisque deos possent placare et quaecumquam futura finis tantis cladibus forer. interim ex fatalibus libris sacrificia aliquot extraordinaria facta: inter quae Gallus et Galla, Graecus et Graeca in foro bouario sub terram uiui demissi sunt in locum saxo consaemptum, iam ante hostis humanis, minime Romano sacro, imbutum. placatis satis, ut rebantur, deis...
```

A number of items alert the reader, by now accustomed to a sense of release at the intervention of the *decemuiiri*, to the fact that this is an unusual situation; the mention of *sacrificia aliquot extraordinaria* suggests some surprise on the part of the author; furthermore, the sacrifice is described as *minime Romano sacro*, but most damning is

---

153 Either with respect to the shedding of blood or the sacrifice as a whole: Fabre (1940) argues that it is the shedding of blood - *imbutum* - that qualifies *minime Romano sacro* but Levene (50 n.38) suggests
the effect of the aside *ut rebantur* which can only imply that in fact the gods are far from *placati*.

In addition, before Pictor can return from Delphi, Pacuvius brings Capua over to Hannibal; this especially underlines the Romans' ill-fortune, for Livy begins that narrative with the comment at 22.61.10 that *quanto autem maior ea clades superioribus cladibus fuerit, uel [de] ea res indicio <est quod fides sociorum, quae ad eam diem firma steterat, tum labare coepit, nulla proiecto alia de re, quam quod <de>sperauerant de imperio*. Clearly the religious procedures have proven insufficient.

It is not until the return of Pictor from Delphi at 23.11.1 that Roman fortunes begin to change; the oracle, in uncharacteristically unambiguous mood, promises victory if certain conditions are met, which they duly are. The entire atmosphere of the narrative begins to change: though the Roman failures and losses are detailed with the arrival of Mago back in Carthage with evidence of substantial booty, in the middle of the celebrations, Hanno wisely speaks up to warn Carthage that at best they have a good opportunity to make peace; he is, of course, unwisely ignored. The other aspects of the narrative also leaves us with the sense that the *decemuiiri* have not been sufficient to meet the situation, but Delphi has.

It is worth taking the opportunity to speculate about Livy's reasoning. His shaping of the narrative itself to imply divine disapproval presumably follows his diagnosis that the *decemuiiri* had not propitiated the gods. But what prompted this conclusion? It might be that the answers received from Delphi were inconsistent with those of the priests. At a previous consultation, Delphi concurred with the Old Man of Veii.

---

154 Cf. 27.38.1 *dis rite placati*....
155 5.16.8 *sortem oraculi adferentes congruentem responsu captivui uatis.*
however, more likely that Livy found his answer in the untraditional rite. Whatever the reason for Livy's complaint that the rite was not Roman, that seems to be the point at which he decides that the rite was not appropriate – nor successful – and shapes the rest of his account to fit this conclusion.

For our purposes, what is interesting is that in this presentation Livy has noted the error with the least possible damage done to Roman republican religion; a mistake is acknowledged by the historian\textsuperscript{156} but the correct response is obtained by the embassy to Delphi. The priests are not condemned for their error, for this is a very particular quibble: it is not an \textit{exemplum} to be followed or avoided – there is no scope for doing so. In this one institutional error, Rome slips but catches itself. The failure of one department does not mean that the \textit{res publica} fails. As with our misdiagnosed prodigy, we can consider this error to be the exception that proves the rule and that, for Livy, the institutions of Roman religion as a whole are equal to the task before them.

Livy's notice of the error notwithstanding, he retains a deferential attitude towards the priests: whereas at 27.23.2 he was confident in his ability to identify a genuine prodigy in competition with anyone else, here he \textit{deduces} the error. The sacrifice may well have been a glaring anomaly in the tradition by the time of the late Republic, \textit{requiring} comment from one who is claiming to be familiar with the workings of Roman religion. The effect on his appropriation of authority is significant, however: he has indicated that the customary smooth assimilation with the priests is subject to his consent. Thus we should infer his full agreement in other instances; their other remedies are presented as successful.

The effect of placing priests beyond the scope of unprompted criticism sets a boundary to the reader's response. \textit{Exempla} will be constructed with the prescriptions of the priests

\textsuperscript{156} We might consider his style of reporting muted: he does not use more emotive words such as \textit{superstitio} in recording the rite.
as a given. The foolhardy ignore the warnings that the diviners offer; the wise embrace them and work with the situation as they are advised. What neither can do in Livy’s text is to dispute details and offer alternatives.

It is not just the decemuiiri who are generally trusted. The haruspices, too, receive a comparable treatment in that there is no outright contest between the historian, the man of hindsight, and the interpreter, the man of foresight. Though they are not incorporated into the res publica in a formal sense, they figure frequently in Livy’s narrative as if they were a recognised part of the Roman religious system. Their exact role is not easily specified in Livy’s narrative: they are often called on to interpret prodigies but also to interpret the omens evident in entrails at sacrifices. In contrast to the reliably pessimistic deductions of the decemuiiri they “introduced to the Romans the concept that a prodigy...may portend something favourable – a prediction never met with in Sibylline oracles.” Most of their comments are not, however, positive: at 8.6.12 they confirm, typically in the anonymous plural, the suspicions of the two consuls who have had a night-time vision; later on (8.9.1) a haruspex indicates that Decius’ sacrifice is ill-omened. Here, as elsewhere, Livy’s haruspices share the impersonal and unquestioned authority of his decemuiiri; their response appears without any refinement beyond the needs of the narrative. The successes of the haruspices are many: the prediction of Seppius Loesius’ rule over Capua (26.6.14); the warning delivered to Fabius of a trap set by Hannibal (27.16.15); their concern for Marcellus at 27.26.13-4; and their promise of victory in the impending war with Philip of Macedon (31.5.7). The way in which Livy reports their announcements is minimal, restrained and precise. Despite his brevity, Livy’s specificity unmistakably indicates their competence; at 23.36.10, for instance, Fabius Maximus is warned that he will expiate a string of prodigies haud facile. Thus

157 North (1990a) 51 distinguishes between haruspices as (Etruscan) interpreters of prodigies and (apparently Roman) haruspices who practised extispicy (the examination of entrails).
158 MacBain 126 calls this “their most substantial contribution”: the decemuiiri seem to have always drawn a pessimistic conclusion about signs and portends (Bloch (1963) 49f).
159 Our one haruspical response, as preserved by Cicero in the De Haruspicum Responsis is multi-layered and complex, unlike the responses included by Livy, who usually limits his report to one (straightforward and practical) response.
160 For further positive prediction see also 36.1.3, 42.20.4, 42.30.9 etc
their expertise is both precise and limited; there is a possibility that Fabius can ignore at
his peril or explore with effort. In fact he quietly persists until we hear at 23.39.5 that he
has succeeded tandem in obtaining favourable signs.

As with the decemuiiri, if we look for criticism, we search in vain for more than one
example, and even that is not a failure of the priests, although their skills are not
sufficient to prevent the death of a consul. In book 25, in an example already discussed
for its use of oratio obliqua, Gracchus was warned by the haruspices after three vitiated
sacrifices that he should be on his guard against ambushes and plots. Livy, however,
adds his own conclusion that nulla tamen prouidentia fatum imminens moueri potuit. In
the variants given for the story of Gracchus’ death, plots are, as predicted, a consistent
feature, whether he was killed after the plot of Flavus, while washing, or trying to make
expiation. What Livy feels it necessary to add to the priests’ diagnosis is the inevitability
of Gracchus’ death. Though we know from Fabius’ successful ritual after a haruspical
warning at 27.16.15 that there was scope for avoiding prognosticated events, this did not
apparently apply to all instances. No fault is attached to the haruspices here: no-one
explicitly criticises them; it seems that they have done their job. Had his death not been
fated, perhaps Gracchus’ expiation would have gone as planned; indeed, Livy’s
confident ascription of causes to fate clears them of blame – to expect an interpreter to
alter fate would be idiocy.

The decemuiiri and the haruspices represent the priests most intimately concerned with
interpretation but there are also moments in Livy’s text when another college of priests
become active, namely the pontifices. Like the decemuiiri and the haruspices, these

161 ad imperatorem id pertinere prodigium praemonuissent et ab occultis cauendum hominibus
consultisque, 25.16.4.
162 This applies also to the variant at 25.17.3, whereby the haruspices indicate a suitable place for
Gracchus to expiate the omens, where he is killed by Numidians: sunt qui haruspicum monitu quingentos
passus a castris progressum, uti loco puro ea quae ante dicta prodigia sunt procuraret, ab insidentibus
forte locum duabus turmis Numidarum circumuentum scribant. Again there seems a fine line between
failure and limitation; the haruspices warned him that he ought to expiate, and found a place that was
suitable (whatever we decide to make of loco puro).
priests might be consulted with regard to the expiation of prodigies but for the most part, as is said at their creation (1.20.5-6), they were concerned with regulatory issues. In one respect the anonymity of the other priesthoods is abandoned; the Pontifex Maximus reliably appears by name. Although these three colleges appear to overlap in that they might each or all be asked to comment on prodigial affairs there is never any hint of rivalry between them. As with the other important priests their authority is never questioned: the pontifices are grave and competent men in their execution of their professional duties.

The last group of men required to provide expertise are the augures who appear in their traditional role of taking auspices, which included the right to veto elections on religious grounds. The augures are the only group of Roman priests to receive criticism from characters in the text: though elections are cancelled on their advice without comment at 4.7.3, 8.15.6 and 23.31.13, there is the suggestion that their veto is politically motivated at 8.23.16: the accusation, certainly one familiar to Livy’s peers, is thoroughly discredited by the context and the speakers. At 8.23.14-7 it is rowdy tribunes who attribute patrician envy to the priests. Their speech betrays them as disrespectful and almost certainly mistaken:

\[\text{\textquoteleft nec tamen ab dictatore comitia sunt habita, quia uitione creatus esset in disquisitionem uenit. consulti augures uitiosum uideri dictatorem pronuntiauerunt. eam rem tribuni suspectam infamemque criminando fecerunt: nam neque facile fuisse id uitium nosci, cum consul oriens de}\]

---

163 E.g. 41.16.6. See also MacBain’s Appendix A 82-106.
164 It has been alleged that the episode at 27.37, where the decemuiiri, pontifices and haruspices all feature at various times, indicates religious rivalry or contradictory purposes, but this is rightly dismissed by Champeaux (1996). We might add to her arguments that the haruspices, at least, are specifically summoned to play their part (ex Etruria acciti): they do not take the initiative. Boyce (1937) stresses the incorporation of rites both for and following this series of ceremonies. Compare 42.20.2, where both the haruspices and the decemuiiri are consulted; the latter probably because of the appearance of lightning, a typical haruspical province according to MacBain 119.
165 E.g. at 24.44.9, 37.3.2.
nocte silentio diceret dictatorem, neque ab consule cuquam publice
priuatimue de ea re scriptum esse nec quemquam mortalium extare qui
se uidisse aut audisse quid dicat quod auspicium dirimeret, neque
augures diuinare Romae sedentes potuisse quid in castris consuli uittii
obuenisset; cui non apparere, quod plebeius dictator sit, id uitiim
auguribus uisum? haec aliaque ab tribunis nequiquam iactata.'

We know from elsewhere that specific questions could be put to the gods by augury: Numa asked specific questions in deciding on ritual procedures at 1.20.7. The dignified silence of the *augures* in response to these criticisms in Livy's narrative allows the speakers to condemn themselves: any contradiction of the opponents' discreditable interpretations would be superfluous. We might add that the critics of the *augures* tend not to keep good company; a similar accusation is made at 22.34.3 by Q. Baebius Herennius, another tribune and a relative of Terentius Varro (opponent of the hero Fabius Maximus and the plebeian consul who was destined to lead Rome with memorable incompetence into the disaster at Cannae). He is outrageous in his criticism, attacking not only the *augures* but also the senate. The pairing of the priests in conjunction with the august senate does much to suggest that such accusers are not to be heeded; to underline the point, Baebius' success on behalf of his relative is a disaster for Rome. The *augures* gave a warning when they were the ones to declare the election of the *dictator* L. Veturius Philo invalid (23.31.13): this effectively blocked the elections in which Baebius was so sure that Varro would have succeeded. It does not seem beyond the pale to presume that Livy's readers would have seen a connection between this religious scruple and the subsequent disaster of Varro's election.

This example would seem to confirm the reading that Livy expects his readers to know only too well that accusations of corruption against *augures*, official priests of Rome, are better taken as a judgement on the accuser rather than the accused. In their professional
anonymity and the manner of their presentation, the authority of the augures is placed beyond dispute.

Livy’s presentation of priests is carefully weighed: while he scrutinises their record, he assumes – unless he cannot ignore an error – that they are competent in their duties. He does not attempt to advise the priests of the collegia through examples: he treats functioning priests of all types with respect, declining to use them – or even make them available – as exempla. Their competence in their various duties as priests is not his jurisdiction: he is far more interested in the senate.

167 I.e., as with the other priests, not enough for the audience to quibble the workings of the decision. There clearly was a great store of augural lore, some of which must have been relatively common knowledge: the fullest discussion is Linderski (1986).
(iii) The Senate

When it came to discerning the hand of the gods in events, as we have already seen it is the senate, not the priests in their colleges, who make a final decision (above, n. 134). Livy never tells us that the senate was acting on informal advice of those members who were priests (though it seems highly likely that this would have occurred in reality): the senate acts as a responsible body in its own right. It is therefore to the deliberations of the senate that we must turn if we are to explore the boundaries of the divine and human (or ‘natural’) realms.

Livy’s depiction of the senate, like his depiction of the priests, bears hallmarks of his exemplary programme. Some of the material has already been introduced in the discussion concerning Livy’s attitude to prodigies, where he was seen to be criticising procedure and public credulity, but it would be a mistake to overemphasise this disparity between historian and textual agents. For the most part, the senate is not questioned. When Livy does note error, we should not ignore the implication that the senate is perfectly correct most of the time: his carefully orchestrated account of procedures reflects ideal practice, and the annalistic account designs a role for the senate. How far Livy’s account reflects historical practice of the Middle and Early Republic is not particularly our concern here: our enquiry relates to what he makes of the material that he had.

The first interpreters of any reported prodigy must have been those making the report itself. As already discussed, the lines of communication for prodigies were not fixed but some initial assessment of whether unusual climatic or animal phenomena should be reported to Rome would be required: obviously precedent and a culturally specific sense of the supernatural would have been applied. Livy is not atypical in being superior in his

---

168 For example, a local and ‘ad hoc’ assessment seems to be made at 42.20.1 – *ea res prodigii loco habita ad senatum relata est.*
dismissals of mistaken reports\textsuperscript{169} so ridicule might well have been a disincentive for those tempted to make a report.\textsuperscript{170} No doubt there were those who would have tried their hand at predicting the expiatory procedures as well; it is hard not to imagine self-appointed rival experts, given that prodigy reports were in the public domain and were obviously a matter of great interest. But none of this is reported in Livy’s narrative beyond the vaguest indication of the panic that arose so often in connection with purported prodigies. Clearly the opinions of the rabble made as much difference as do modern conversations about the tactics in the latest England World Cup disaster or the pub discussion of whether Prince Charles should marry Camilla. These amateurish efforts are largely suppressed in our text; the \textit{patres} had no need of such prompts or advice and to give them credence, or present their deliberations as something to be taken seriously, would mar the splendid sight of the august senate at work. These are the experts, who do not panic, but simply take appropriate action after making their decisions on the various reports. It is their criteria that we are interested in.

Like Livy, the \textit{patres} evidently felt quite capable of rejecting prodigies on various grounds at different times. These are sometimes what \textit{we} might call ‘jurisdictional’ (for example) rather than ‘religious’; at 43.13.6 two prodigies are rejected on the grounds of their irrelevance to the Roman senate – one of the two was considered to be private, the other foreign.\textsuperscript{171} These examples do not help us understand why a phenomenon would not be classified as prodigial, though they do alert us to a wider range of issues. We must look elsewhere for ‘religious criteria’ but any examination of this question must remain exploratory and highly circumspect.\textsuperscript{172} The various distinguishing features that

\textsuperscript{169} Tacitus is far more dismissive: see the examples below, pp. 199-207.
\textsuperscript{170} The politeness that MacBain 30 shrewdly ascribes to the senate in the case of Figulus (43.13.6) would not have been extended to the plebs.
\textsuperscript{171} See MacBain ‘s discussion on 29f: he is surely right that many considerations that we would not call religious are present here: he suggests that Livy is impressed with the punctilious \textit{religio} although he treats it as an isolated example.
\textsuperscript{172} It is difficult to avoid seeming facetious when illustrating how homogeneous the prodigy lists are: examples do rather underline the difference between those days and these. But we might note in passing the absence of interest in unexpected colours (green cows?, blue pigs?). It is not unthinkable that a society might choose to focus on unusual features such as these: compare the elusive ‘white heather’ in Scotland, or, from another angle, the four-leafed clover. The absence of other plausible documented phenomena that might sit well in the lists, such as humans with six fingers, might go some way to illustrating that if the lists are bizarre for modern tastes, they do nonetheless seem to know limits which
we do have are extremely problematic: it is difficult, for instance, to see exactly why Livy
should dismiss the prodigious status of mice nibbling gold when we find that mice nibbling
a golden crown at Antium (30.2.10) or crows building a nest in a temple (24.10.6) seem
to pass whatever tests are being applied. We should not even rule out the possibility that
Livy may be discriminating with a sense of proportion; there may be other questionable
prodigies in his lists that he refrains from highlighting. We cannot do more than begin to
experiment with the criteria that seem to be repeatedly or explicitly deployed.

Once a report had been factually verified, the next question would seem to have been
whether the gods were involved or not:173 when the flame of Vesta went out, it would
seem that there was an announcement specifying the cause: human error.174 That would
seem to be enough explanation: more subtle criteria would not have been invoked. In
cases where the issue of prodigiality was answered affirmatively, we can also detect
reoccurring criteria in the patterns of our brief reports. The majority of prodigies tend to
be characterised by their unpredictability and unusual nature. Sometimes there are even
additional local peculiarities: Reate is known for its malformed mules, for example.
Particular phenomena also repeat themselves and the reader of Livy becomes accustomed
to rains of stones, blood and flesh, not to mention androgynes.175 It stands to reason –
and this is on the whole supported by the evidence – that patterns of reporting and
acceptance would emerge whereby certain repeated events would be accepted as prodigal
without much ado.176 Verification was still required: a report of a speaking ox,
previously rejected, was accepted the following year (3.10.6).

we can only grope towards. Of course a Roman might have responded to a six fingered child with total
disinterest, saying it is just unusual but certainly not prodigious.
173 This distinction is reliable enough to be used as a metaphor at 23.45.9 by a Hannibal who cannot
quite believe the sloth of his troops: 'ferrum nunc hebet? an dextrae torpent? an quid prodigii est aliud?'
174 As discussed above, p. 77 (28.11.6).
175 One interesting feature of these is that they all appear between the years 209 & 92 B.C.: for a full
list from all sources, see MacBain's Appendix E (The Androgyne Expiations) 127-135.
176 One thinks of lightning striking temples or rains of stones (the uetus prodigium, 7.28.7) amongst
many possible examples.
There are also examples where it is not the phenomenon itself but its particular orientation that would seem to be the critical criterion. This might be the specificity of the target, as seems to be the case with the storm at 40.2.1-3 which was considered a prodigy (*uersa in prodigium*) after it knocked down statues and damaged temples; similarly, lightning strikes on particular temples are taken to be indicative of that deity’s displeasure.\(^\text{177}\) In addition to the ‘violation of the natural order’,\(^\text{178}\) prodigies might be located in the human realm. An interesting phrase occurs occasionally in the prodigy lists whereby an event or cluster of events is said to be taken as *loco prodigii*: these appear, from the few examples furnished by Livy, to be events that might not appear at first sight to be prodigial, but in fact it turns out (with the help of experts) that they are: thus when the column erected by Marcus Aemilius, colleague of Servius Fulvius, is struck by lightning, we are notified that this was accepted *loco prodigii* (42.20.1), possibly because it portended the victory of the Punic War, and was therefore considered to be important and symbolic, or perhaps because of the total (*tota ad imum*) destruction, which would have been unexpected. A similar decision also occurs, after consideration, when a cluster of men of all ranks die at the same time (*postremo prodigii loco ea clades haber coepta est*, 40.37.1): the poisonings perpetrated by a vast number of matrons at 8.18.11 are considered to be due to divine influence (*prodigii ea res loco habita*). There is also the story of the oversized heifer that is sacrificed by cunning after the prediction that whoever should sacrifice it to Diana would earn for his country the destiny of empire. Not only does Livy testify to the existence of the creature, asserting that its horns were still visible much later at the temple of Diana, but also affirms that it could correctly be taken to be a prodigy (*habita, ut erat, res prodigii loco est*). The evidence given for its being portentous is that it was *miranda magnitudine ac specie*; presumably this means that it went *well* beyond the bounds of natural size and appearance (1.45.4). There is surely a similar process going on with the floodings of the Tiber, prodigial at 30.38.10 (*inter quae etiam aquarum insolita

\(^\text{177}\) Thus the *pontifices* do not allow Marcellus to dedicate a joint temple to *Honos* and *Virtus* (27.25.8) because they would not know to which deity propitiation would be made in the case of a lightning strike.\(^\text{178}\) So the formulation of Rosenberger (1998) 103-126, 242-243. He notes that prodigies are usually a disruption of a constructed cultural or social boundary: “Endlich sind alle Prodigien in einer anderen Form als die Überschreitung einer Grenze zu verstehen” (examples follow) 243. Expiation is therefore the restoration of that order.
magnitudo in religionem uersa)\textsuperscript{179} and 35.9.3 (part of a list of prodigies) but not at 24.9.6, 35.21.6 or 38.28.4. Pestilence could also be either treated as a religious issue, or not.\textsuperscript{180} The common factor in these examples is scale.\textsuperscript{181}

The little we have to work with implies that there are different types of prodigies, not in any strictly formalised sense, but rather whereby the senate became accustomed to using precedents and forming the habit of recognising particular prodigies. From certain criteria they deduced, presumably after discussion, the hand of the gods in events. This was a process that deserves the description ‘rational’ even if we dislike their premises. In addition, scale seems to a manifestation of a sense that the natural order has been violated in some way, a way that is inexplicable or insoluble by ordinary means. For the Romans there was decipherable meaning in such disruptions of natural expectation. However cautious we must remain about reconstructing specific lines of enquiry, it is clear that the senate was employing a set of criteria that made sense to them, and apparently with some care for procedure. Understanding the constituent elements of the gods’ intervention and distinguishing them from natural phenomena was part and parcel of an élite Roman lifestyle, and expertise in this no doubt translated into political and social power.\textsuperscript{182}

\textsuperscript{179} The phrase \textit{uertere in prodigium} is also customary for declaring something to be prodigial; cf. 40.2.3 \textit{in prodigium uersa ea tempestas}; 40.59.8 \textit{oleas quoque praegustasse mures in prodigium uersum est}. It would seem that neither the phrase \textit{loco prodigii} nor the parts of the verb \textit{uertere} undermine the designation as has often been maintained: rather they appear to be formalised terminology like \textit{credere} (on which see above, n. 109).

\textsuperscript{180} Not designated prodigial, e.g. 2.34.5, 3.32.2; interpreted as religious by Rome’s allies at 3.6.5 (probably wrongly; see 3.7.1): Livy follows the notice of their entreaties to the gods at 3.8.1 with \textit{seu pace deum impetrata seu graviore tempore anni iam circumacto}. Natural causes are cited at 5.31.5. At 4.9.3, Livy informs us that pestilence is one of a series of calamities that are ‘ascried to the wrath of the gods as the last evil which a \textit{res publica} can suffer’. At 7.3.3-4 the practice of driving in a nail to expiate plague is revived and at 7.27.1 the \textit{decemuiri} are consulted. 40.19.3 sees a plague included with portents as reason for once again consulting the \textit{decemuiri} and at 41.21.10 a plague goes on so long that consultation of the same priests is made (\textit{cum pestilentiae finis non fieret, senatus decreuit, uti decemuiri libros Sibyllinos adirent}).

\textsuperscript{181} \textit{Contra} Orlin (1997) 88: “the severity of the plague, however, appears not to have been a factor in consulting the Sibylline Books” (original emphasis) on the grounds that the timing of the introduction of the \textit{decemuiri} varies in each example. But the lack of automaticity would surely suggest that there was some assessment of the situation and severity (or at least persistence) seems a very strong candidate for the decision to designate the plague prodigial.

\textsuperscript{182} See further below, pp. 173-180.
There is a variety of religious voices in Livy’s text: his own, the admittedly muted voice of the people as a whole, the senate and the priests. With the notable exception of the last group Livy assesses these voices and presents them accordingly. For his Rome, the senate is required and expected to understand whether the gods are active or not in a particular event: he will censure them for error, ultimately relies on them to do their job. Despite this clearly demarcated area of expertise, it seems to be the case that where prodigies were concerned, interpretations were ten-a-penny and competition rife. Livy’s strategy is to dissipate or ignore the rival voices, and in so doing he firmly plants the senate at the centre of these debates, and affirms their success.
(i) Introductory Comments

Thus far material has been presented to illustrate that, for Livy, the key task of religious governance would have been to distinguish between those actions that were due to the intervention of the gods and those that were not: then for the senate to take appropriate action, sometimes on the advice of the priests. We have also seen that the Romans did not feel compelled to take responsibility for all acts that could be ascribed to the influence of the divine; they had to be relevant to the res publica. The gods’ disfavour or favour with a Manlius was the affair of a Manlius. This example, however, merely points the way; praua religio is more than simply a failure to properly address the question ‘are the gods involved?’ It also prompts the question of ‘which gods?’ and ‘how does one address them?’

The consul of 186 B.C. makes some striking distinctions in his speech about the Bacchist cult:

'nulli umquam contioni, Quirites, tam non solum apta sed etiam necessaria haec sollemnis deorum comprecatio fuit, quae uos admoneret hos esse deos quos colere uenerari precarique maiores uestri instituissem, non illos qui prauis et externis religionibus captas mentes

183 MacBain 30 is surely right to detect ‘political’ motives in this episode and I am not intending to prove that senatorial thinking was not subject to all kinds of deviation from the ideal in these interpretations: Livy chastises them for what he suggests is haste and a failure to apply proper procedures at 21.62.1, as we have seen, so he is clearly aware of the difficulties inherent in retaining high standards. Perhaps a virtually obsolete regulation was invoked in the knowledge that a technicality was being exploited: but consider a modern analogy, such as insisting on a fire regulation that had been ignored for years, and would continue to be ignored after its temporary resurrection. None of this has any bearing on a belief in fire regulations.
Here we encounter *prauna religio* not as mistaken attribution to the gods, but in association with foreign rites and foreign gods, who are most potent in degrading their worshippers.\(^{184}\) This is evidently different from the error of the Cumaeans who *inser[unt]...deos minimis rebus*. Here, the Romans are dealing with a different error, an alternative. In suppressing a cult of (purportedly) foreign origin,\(^{185}\) Rome was policing a different boundary from mistaken or accurate assessment of divine activity. Roman religion was not merely a question of discriminating between genuine communications from the gods and natural occurrences, or foreign and domestic jurisdiction (the question *'whose prodigy?'*): there is also specialisation within the realm of events influenced by the gods.

The Bacchist affair is a useful one for us, since it highlights a number of key points. Firstly, we might note the difference made between one set of gods and another (*hos...illos*): in addition, it seems that *prauna religio* can be a form of religious practice distinct from the traditional Roman as well as a tendency to see the intervention of the gods when it is not there. Finally there is mention of *superstitio*, which deserves further exploration. These themes will be taken up in sequence.\(^{186}\)

\(^{184}\) Witness the (historical) care taken not to offend the god: the cult is virtually suppressed, though the Romans are careful not to attempt to completely remove the god’s shrines. For further bibliography see above, n. 5.

\(^{185}\) The cult had undergone some organisational changes since its introduction by a Greek *ignobilis...sacrificulus ac uates* (39.8.3): see North (1979) 88-89.

\(^{186}\) The argument presented here is broadly similar to that of Liebeschuetz (1967) 49, though we differ on points of detail.
(ii) Aspects of Selection

At only one other point in Livy’s extant text do we hear of foreign gods: at 4.30.9-11, when the City is filled with people performing foreign rites, care is taken that henceforth, only Roman gods are worshipped, and in Roman ways – *ne qui nisi Romani di neu quo alio more quam patrio coherentur*. This distinction between gods is remarkable.¹⁸⁷ Livy’s normal operating principle is that the gods are equally available to all: we encounter *interpretatio Romana* at 38.41.4 (*praeter Apollonis Zerynthium quem uocant incolae templum*) and the *templum Dianae, quam Tauropolon uocant* (*44.44.4*). Livy can speak of the exceptional *sanctitas* of (non-Roman) Delos at 44.29.1 (*sanctitas templi insulaeque iniolatos praestabat omnes*); and Delphi is also mentioned with the greatest of respect – when Rome seeks the advice of the Pythia, her authority is fully validated in the text.¹⁸⁸ When, on the other hand, Q. Fulvius Flaccus goes to Bruttium and strips the temple of Juno Lacinia of its roof at 42.3.1f, Livy calls it a *sacrilegium* (42.3.3) and there is the rhetorical protest in the senate that the censor acted *tamquam non iidem ubique di immortales sint*.¹⁸⁹ The designation of a god as foreign or non-Roman has no bearing on its existence or power: the consul does not doubt the power of Bacchus to ‘drive people to crime and lust’ (39.15.3), nor does the senate take the risk of destroying all the shrines, which would have incurred the wrath of the god(s).¹⁹⁰ Presumably, if pressed, Livy would indicate his knowledge of other gods whose worship and gifts were

---

¹⁸⁷ It is only extantly found in Livy here and in connection with the Bacchist cult.
¹⁸⁸ Brutus’ fateful visit to Delphi begins at 1.56.9; at 5.16.9 the prediction of the old man of Veii is supported by the oracle; Q. Fabius Pictor brings home instructions that are a turning point at 23.11.1; at 29.10.6 victory is promised by Delphi etc.
¹⁸⁹ 42.3.9. If further proof is required that Livy implies divine retribution, we might refer to Levene 108-109, who says “all of this foreshadows the theme of Roman ill-treatment of allies...(and) the prodigy lists...cast the shadow of divine retribution for such actions over the book.” Flaccus’ death, recorded at 42.28.12, has a nexus of reports on his insanity and Livy notes the popular opinion that this was due to the goddess’ wrath (*erat opinio post censuram minus compotem fuisse sui; volgo Iunonis Laciniae iram ob spoliatum templum alienasse mentem ferebant*).
¹⁹⁰ The historical question of the survival of the cult is vexed but it seems that the provisions, although severe, did theoretically allow for the continuation of a somewhat restrained cult: but see North (1979) 90-91.
considered unsuitable for some reason. But the majority of the gods are considered at least potentially appropriate for the res publica, and even those with somewhat unsavoury characteristics could be represented in the most Roman way. Thus foreign gods are generally introduced to Rome in Livy’s text – through appropriate channels – without any apparent difficulty. Where Livy differentiates people in religious terms, it is predominantly not with respect to deities but rites.

---

191 Compare Virgil’s Alecto, not a particularly desirable deity (Aeneid 7.324-7). But cf. Cicero’s comments on the Furies in De Natura Deorum 3.46: deae sunt, speculatrices credo et uindices facinorum et sceleris: even ‘bad’ gods have their reasons and their place.

192 Aesculapius is said to be required by the decemuii at 10.47.7 and the god is said to have been already obtained from Epidauros at 29.11.1. Cybele, of course, is often cited as a most unroman god, that is until she was a Roman god, at which point, for Livy at least, she has impeccable credentials in contrast with other historians, e.g. Dion. Hal. 2.19.4. Livy reports her Games most matter-of-factly at 36.36.4, but he is aware of the unorthodox behaviour of the priesthood: at 38.18.9 he mentions their fanaticum carmen. There is a discussion of the introduction of Aesculapius in BNP 68-70. Orlin (1997) 106-107, citing Scheid (1985a) 97-98 stresses political aspects in the decision. See further Musial (1990). For the introduction of Cybele see below, n. 217.
(iii) Foreign Rites

The protection of Rome from foreign rites is far more prominent as a religious priority than the exclusion of foreign gods. Numa foresaw the need to remind the people of proper Roman rites when he set up the college of pontiffs *ne quid diuini iuris neglegendo patrios ritus peregrinosque adsciscendo turbaretur* (1.20.6). The virtual synonymity of the introduction of foreign, and the neglect of traditional, rites is reinforced in the polarities used by the consul in the Bacchanalian affair also.

>'quotiens hoc patrum auorumque aetate magistratibus negotium est
datum, uti sacra externa fieri uetarent, sacrificulos uatesque foro circo
urbe prohiberent, uaticinos libros conquererent comburerentque,
omnia disciplinam sacrificandi praeterquam more Romano abolerent?
iudicabant enim prudentissimi uiri omnis diuini humanique iuris nihil
aeque dissoluendae religionis esse quam ubi non patrio sed externo ritu
sacrificaretur'. (39.16.9)

Such statements are typically ascribed to a preference for ‘tradition’ in a sense that is more sentimental than anything, but that is essentially the only possible explanation if one assumes the vanity of religious practice. If we are to posit a profoundly embedded religiosity instead, it becomes impossible to make such a reductionist analysis; in a world where the gods exist, one cannot be purely ‘sentimental’ in the modern sense – too much is at stake. What Livy’s consul is at pains to establish is not the efficacy or meaning of religion, but that the rites practised by the Bacchists were alien to Rome. But if this is not a case of ‘pure sentimentality’ then it is worth enquiring what was at stake.
Both Numa and the anonymous, prudentissimi uiri of the consul’s speech are known for their expertise and knowledge: Numa was, after all, selected as king for these skills (1.18.1). In Numa’s creation of the post of Pontifex Maximus the desirability of segregating Roman from foreign rites is implicit (1.20.5-7). Our consul, however, gives his reason as the fear of dissolutio religionis, an almost untranslatable phrase which may well owe its formulation partly to the pun of ‘dissolving something tied’\textsuperscript{193}: but even the term religio on its own is problematic. It has a host of resonances that cannot be preserved in any translation, referring predominantly not to the practices of religion but to a religious sense.\textsuperscript{194} Put most succinctly, the consul is warning that the practice of foreign rites is destructive of a proper religious sense. Indeed the whole point of the speech, with its manifold reversals of social distinctions and its evocation of appropriate identity\textsuperscript{195} and coniurationes of ‘alternative Romes’ is that a Rome without her traditional rites is not Rome.

We cannot say that Livy universally despies foreign rites: at 40.6.1-2 he describes, apparently without distaste, a Macedonian procedure for lustrating the army; but indifference or curiosity would presumably not have been his reaction if a Roman general had attempted to copy it. The gods of foreign cultures are potent, and Livy’s narrative is sensitive enough to credit foreigners with religious success at times;\textsuperscript{196} but Roman religion is more successful. The assumption that Roman religion is in some way better than its rivals is part of a more general superiority complex: so the inability of the Macedonian seers to provide the naturalistic interpretation of an eclipse which the Romans were privy to is not something we should be surprised at.\textsuperscript{197} We know that in a

\textsuperscript{193} The play on religio and religare is common: see Maltby’s Lexicon of Ancient Latin Etymologies (Leeds 1991) 523.

\textsuperscript{194} For contemporary definitions, Aulus Gellius 4.9; cf. Cicero De Natura Deorum 2.28. Michels (1976) notes that religio is predominantly a word used in prose. There is a brief but useful survey at BNP 216-217, where the point is made that religio and superstition should be studied together.

\textsuperscript{195} North (1993) 93.

\textsuperscript{196} The Aequi seem to be enjoying divine support at 2.62.1-2 (see above, p. 64) and Livy is prepared to credit the Gauls besieging Rome with enough reverence for the gods to explain the success of C. Fabius Dorsuo in passing through their ranks to perform sacrifice (seu attonitis Gallis miraculo audaciae seu religione etiam motis cuius haudquaquam neglegens gens est, 5.46.3).

\textsuperscript{197} At 26.11.4 Livy tells us that the strange behaviour of the weather was treated as a religious matter by the Carthaginians but it is difficult to know whether he is expecting us to know otherwise or indicating
political context, foreigners are also incapable of learning from *exempla* properly.\(^{198}\) Nonetheless there is the occasional moment where Livy's indulgence descends to scorn. For instance the bizarre (to him) rites practised by the Samnites against the Romans are described as *superstitiones*: to add insult to injury, they fail to work against the greater piety of the Romans.\(^{199}\) But the Samnites are condemned chiefly for their incompetence; Papirius' analysis of their rite seems to indicate a number of errors: the mixing of human with animal blood; the use of one oath to enforce the breaking of another (i.e. a treaty); and the compulsion of the Samnite army, (10.39.14-17) all demonstrate the basic inability of the Samnites to devise a decent *deuotio*-style rite. *Superstitio* represents failed application of the basic principles of religion whether it refers to an inappropriately excessive emotional reaction or mistaken techniques.

---

\(^{198}\) Chaplin (1993) 101f.

\(^{199}\) See Levene's comments (238-239). The ambivalent traditions about the religious practices of the Sabines and the Samnites are discussed in more detail by Dench (1995) 155-174. Feldherr (1998) 51-64 also has a useful discussion of this episode.
The description of the Samnite rites as *superstitio*\(^{200}\) is the only time that the word is not used in connection with Rome or Romans by Livy. The consul is concerned lest it affect the *populus* who see the shrines being dismantled *ne qua superstitio agitaret animos* (39.16.10); Scipio was not the only prominent Roman *capti quadam superstitione animi* (26.19.4);\(^{201}\) Tullus, we are told, went from neglecting rites to filling the city with ‘superstitious’ observances;\(^{202}\) a similar pairing of excessive religiosity and *superstitio* appears in book 29 in connection with the reporting of prodigies\(^{203}\) and in book 6 where it is the leading citizens who are afflicted: *in ciuitate plena religionum, tunc etiam ab recenti clade superstitiosis*\(^{204}\) *principibus, ut renouarentur auspicia res ad interregnum redit* (6.5.6). In connection with Scipio, Levene suggested that “Livy leaves open the possibility that Scipio himself believed in these visions, but is quite unequivocal in rejecting their reality...even if he did believe in the visions, he was deluded.”\(^{205}\) But it is unsatisfactory to consider delusion (and therefore scepticism) as the point of Livy’s use of *superstitio*. At 39.16.10 *superstitio* seems to refer to an irrational religious fear; the consul continues, explaining that the gods themselves support the actions of the *res publica*: ‘*omnia diis propitiis uolentibusque [ea] faciemus*’ (39.16.11): there is actually nothing to worry about. Such also seems to be the tone of the word as it is used at 6.5.6:

\(^{200}\) On which term see also Belardi (1976); Scheid (1985b), Grodzynski (1974). Most recently, and cogently, BNP 214-244. Cicero defines *superstitio* as *timor inanis deorum* at *De Nat. Deor.* 1.117 and gives an etymology at 2.72.

\(^{201}\) Cf. 4.30.9 where the widespread adoption of foreign rites in Rome is described as being due to their *capti superstitione animi*.

\(^{202}\) *repente omnibus magnis paruisque superstitionibus obnoxius degeret religionibusque etiam populum impleret* (1.31.6).

\(^{203}\) *impleuerat ea res superstitionum animos, pronique et ad nuntianda et ad credenda prodigia erant* (29.14.2)

\(^{204}\) The only appearance of the adjective in Livy. Kraus (1994c) 117 takes a traditional line on *superstitio* and *religio* here, commenting that ‘the adj. regularly has the sense of ‘credulous’ (OLD 2) and may both suggest that the leaders are normally unaffected by the *religio* that binds the plebs and cast doubt on the reasonableness of that *religio.*’

\(^{205}\) Levene 19: but this contradicts his discussion of *superstitio* on 9 where he defines the term as referring either to excessive adherence to one’s own religious system, or to the religion of another nation.
Rome needs not worry about the wrath of the gods at this point of victory.\textsuperscript{206} The aside at 29.14.2 should not lead us to believe that every prodigy in the list that follows is not genuine: it seems most likely that the prodigy list is, as usual, functioning to warn the reader that a recent impiety had aroused the wrath of the gods, despite the optimistic context of the imminent arrival of the Mater Magna.\textsuperscript{207} Superstitio refers to the excessive reaction of panic and a excessive tendency to see the gods at work: it is in contrast with proper Roman dignity, which drew on the ‘knowledge’ that Roman religion was sufficient to deal with the situation.

In the example of Scipio, the mention of superstitio is set in a wider context: it seems inappropriate to interpret Livy’s comments on Scipio as indicating such mistaken fear or concern as was exhibited by the people of Rome. The full entry reads:

\begin{verbatim}
pleraque apud multitudinem aut per nocturnas uisa species aut uelut
diuinitus mente monita agens, siue et ipse capti quadam superstitione
animi, siue ut imperia consiliaque uelut sorte oraculi missa sine
cunctatione exsequentur. (26.19.3-4)
\end{verbatim}

Traditionally, Livy shows his dislike of Scipio’s religiosity here and therefore is a ‘rational sceptic’. But the brief passage is more complex than this interpretation allows. There are two options in each (unequal) half of the sentence (dividing it between agens and the first siue). In the second half, there are two possible options as to why he should claim unusual knowledge: Scipio is either ‘superstitious’, i.e. he believes that he has divine inspiration, or he is deliberately pretending to have divine inspiration in order to

\textsuperscript{206} Levene suggests that “the juxtaposition of hints of patrician religious excess and accusations of patrician oppression may be significant, especially in view of the fact that... these themes are linked later in the book” (206).
\textsuperscript{207} 29.14.5-14. Pleminius had just ransacked the temple of Proserpina at Locri, which Livy compares to Pyrrhus’ sacrilege in pillaging the same temple. Attention is drawn to the divine punishment that followed (29.8-9). See further Scheid (1985a) 24-26.
have his orders taken seriously and obeyed without delay. According to the first half, if Scipio does 'believe' in his mysterious guidance, then it takes one of two forms, either dreams, or some other less specific form. Both of these are presumably subject to the charge of being either superstitio or political manipulation.

The dreams are consistent with the claims made by the general himself in Livy’s account\(^{208}\) and the daytime (if aut is taken to be exclusive)\(^{209}\) inspiration is presumably linked to Scipio’s notorious daily consultations with Jupiter Capitolinus (26.19.5). Clearly superstitio implies some kind of disapproval, and it is tempting to see criticism in the allegation that Scipio’s motives were linked to personal authority. But the details of the criticism are not as obvious as they might appear.

To begin with, the criticism is relevant whatever the source or meaning of the inspiration, as both possibilities given with siue can apply equally to diurnal or nocturnal activity; for the time being the options governed by aut...aut are less important to us. But it cannot be that Livy wishes us to know that he personally is not willing to accept the existence of prophetic dreams, for the text elsewhere acquiesces in their power to predict. After the outrageous blasphemy of L. Annius, and the declaration of war against the rebellious colonies in book 8, the Roman army made its way to Capua:

\[
\begin{align*}
ibi & \text{ in quiete utrique consuli eadem dicitur uisa species uiri maioris} \\
quam & \text{ pro humano habitu augustiorisque, dicentis ex una acie} \\
imperatorem, & \text{ex altera exercitum Deis Manibus Matrique Terrae deberi;} \\
\text{utrior exercitus imperator legiones hostium superque eas se deuouisset,} \\
\text{eius populi partisque victoriam fore. hos ubi nocturnos uisus inter se} \\
\text{consules contulerunt, placuit auerruncandae deum irae uictim as caedi;} \\
\end{align*}
\]

\(^{208}\) The general mentions his dreams to his assembled soldiers – idem di auguriis auspiciisque et per nocturnos etiam uisus omnia laeta ac prospera portendunt (26.41.18).

\(^{209}\) The force of aut...aut here need not be utterly exclusive; it would seem that at any given point one or the other source was effective. Second opinions have been inconclusive on this point.
A close reading of the text reveals a number of surprises: one might expect the
duplication of the dream to convince the consuls yet they make sacrifices to submit the
terrifying dream to examination. The consensus of the traditional rites then confirms the
veracity of the vision. What is important for Livy is not whether dreams are credible or
reliable but how one is to respond to such phenomena. The irruption into the text of
the vision is tamed and incorporated as the consuls refuse to be bowed by surprise or
haste: they deploy proper Roman traditional procedures, the only appropriate response.
Scipio on the other hand promotes dreams to a status equal with auspices and auguries,
albeit with an *etiam* to separate them (26.41.18). There is certainly no indication that he
subjected his visions to the sort of stringent checking that Decius and Torquatus
observed. This then would be an example of *superstitio*: inappropriate management of
possibly genuine religious phenomena.

Livy offers as an alternative the suggestion that Scipio acts as if under the inspiration of a
divinity as an alternative *superstitio*: this would not have pleased the educated Roman
either. The tradition did however, tend to cast the great general as ‘sincere’ in his
beliefs, which brings us to wonder why we are uniquely given a ‘political’ alternative
here, namely that Scipio wished to have his orders obeyed and advice heeded. There are
a number of underlying difficulties with the latter alternative, to be explored below in
more detail (pp. 175-179). For now we need only note that Livy is refusing to give his
mandate to the tradition. He acknowledges the tradition that had Scipio operate in an
unorthodox religious fashion but fragments its power by offering a ‘political’ alternative

---

210 For the reliability and unreliability of dreams as a means of divination see e.g. Suet. *Augustus* 91.
Dreams were, of course, notoriously unreliable in literature, beginning with Homer (*II*. 2.6: cf. *Aeneid*
211 So Seguin (1974), who contrasts Livy’s account with that of Polybius.
which, if it characterises the general as a rogue, at least reduces the impact of Scipio as a religious exemplum. Any attempt to imitate his charismatic behaviour would now be met with suspicion of political motives for religious claims: better to have a slightly unscrupulous hero than a dangerous precedent. In view of the remarkable career that every Roman reader would have been expecting, it is an appropriation of the ultimate authority that allows Livy to cut such a hero down to size at such an early moment. Even Scipio is required to adhere to proper Roman practice: no man is greater than the Republic and that applies to religion as much as other aspects of statehood. But the mention of superstitio owes nothing to scepticism: it is far more subtle.

212 Of course 'political manipulation' is not necessarily a criticism: Numa is subjected to a similar treatment in his meeting with Egeria (1.21.4); on both see most recently Feldherr (1998) 69-72. But Livy does imply that Scipio did not act on the basis of any charismatic religious abilities.

213 This is a conclusion rather than a hypothesis on the strength of the discussion below, pp. 173-180.

214 Though he had been (irregularly) elected curule aedile at 25.2.6, Africanus has not yet made much impact on Roman politics.
(v) Captive Minds

There is more in this summation of Scipio's religiosity. Specifically the words capti animi are interesting, suggestive as they are of some kind of domination of Scipio's sensibilities:²¹⁵ this phrase appears elsewhere: when there is a mass poisoning perpetrated by the matrons of Rome, the women are said to be captisque magis mentibus quam consceleratis (8.18.11): the only action taken is religious – the revival of the ceremony of the 'nail driven in by the Dictator'. The same expression used of Scipio reappears at 4.30.9 when the people, capti superstitione animi, adopt foreign rites. Similar phrasing appears at 7.2.3, when scenic games are introduced to Rome for the first time – which does not meet with Livy's approval: they are introduced at a point when people are not clear in their religious thinking (uictis superstitione animis). To underline the point, a prodigial flood occurs almost immediately in the narrative to prevent the Games taking place and Livy emphasises his diagnosis of the cause – uelut auersis iam dis aspernantisbusque placamina irae.

Both religio and superstition indicate not just a type or assessment of a rite, but also the mental propensity associated with correct performance. To be 'overcome' in some way, and to be less than the master of one's mind, is most undesirable: recourse should always be to traditionally sanctioned responses without panic or impulsive haste. This is surely what underlies the caustic comments about panic in the reporting of prodigies: there really is no need to panic, as the res publica has ways and means of dealing with these things.²¹⁶ Typically, Livy's criticism is corrective not sceptical: people really should know better.

Thus, with regard to the ritual response, there are aspects of selection beyond the simple

²¹⁵ Capio may be a 'medical' term: when Hannibal loses an eye capitur is the term used (22.2.11). I am grateful to Dr Ash for pointing this out to me.
²¹⁶ As Champeaux (1996) 70 puts it "A Rome, même dans les pires moments, on ne cède pas à la panique; on s'organise, et on fait face."
one of deciding whether the gods were involved or not. Apart from rare instances where one could approach the wrong sort of gods, the manner and style of approaching the gods needed also to be suitable and this is far more likely to be the point of a judgement or intrusion into the text.

It is possible to make a further analysis of the aspects of suitability. Apart from the aspect of identity, there are also signs that inappropriate elements simply fail to work, or backfire; we noted Livy’s disapproval of the foreign scenic games at 7.2.3; we have also already discussed the failure (without penalty beyond the failure to secure the *pax deum*) of a rite of which one aspect was dubbed *minime Romano sacro*. More dramatically there is the farcical death of the king Tullus in book one when he botches an attempt to propitiate Jupiter and is killed by lightning: his incompetence is described as *prauna religio*:

\[
\textit{sed non rite initum aut curatum id sacrum esse... sed ira Iouis sollicitati} \\
\textit{prauna religione fulmine ictum cum domo conflagrasse.} \quad \text{(1.31.8)}
\]

The enumeration of examples does not necessarily give us any real sense of the texture or depth of experience inherent in Livy’s, and others’, reactions to rites that were visibly not Roman. The sense of violation is conveyed in the consuls’ speech to a Rome pervaded by the Bacchic rites as a series of ruptures in social as well as religious terms. A rite could not necessarily be transplanted to Rome and expected to work; even if it did it might violate other expectations beyond what was tolerable. There was a profoundly complex sense of what was suitable, as was historically the case with the cult of the Magna Mater, whose cult was, to use a rather appropriate metaphor, virtually castrated once it had arrived in Rome.\textsuperscript{217} Livy continues this neutering effect in his treatment of

\textsuperscript{217} For the regulations placed on participation in the cult see Cicero \textit{On Old Age} 45; Aulus Gellius 2.24.2; Dion. Hal. 2.19. There is a discussion by Versnel (1980) 108-111. For more general
the goddess in Rome, though he is perfectly aware of unroman activities of her priests.218 Opinions on these matters would presumably have varied: some would have had the tolerance to experiment a little; others would have simply dismissed the idea that imported rites could properly obtain the *pax deum.*

Much of the material which has been adduced in relation to the issue of belief or scepticism can thus be more usefully contextualised in terms of the response to, rather than the diagnosis of, divine agency: Livy’s use of *superstitio* in particular can now be seen to represent not a state of ‘disbelief’, occupying and exclusively appropriating the same conceptual space in an individual as ‘belief’, but a policing of the appropriate boundaries of an entirely different category that depends on ‘belief’.

Nonetheless we are left with evidence that strongly suggests the presence and relevance of a question along the lines of ‘are the gods involved in this particular event or not?’ It is hard not to see this as a consideration when Livy caustically corrects those who saw the divine at work at Cumae. This observation might appear at first sight to authorise the traditional scholarly dichotomy between ‘the divine’ and ‘the non-divine’, a fundamental tenet of our current understanding of the ancient world:220 the distinction between men and gods, represented so vividly in the ancient world both textually and ritually,221 is not one that should be simply discarded. The similarity between the ancient and modern dilemmas is nonetheless illusory, for the distinction being made in Livy’s Rome was not an autonomously objective one, provided by the external world as a factual ontological

---

218 He refers to *galli* with their *fanaticum carmen* at 38.18.9.
219 For a reversal of general policy with regard to the openness of the senate regarding foreign elements in general (including religion), see North (1993).
220 Thus imperial cult has been understood in terms of an attempt to incorporate the unprecedented power of the emperor within this dichotomy: “The emperor stood at the focal point *between* human and divine” (Price (1984) 233; my emphasis). This dichotomy is challenged in Gradel’s (1995) which argues that the line between men and god was far more flexible than has been appreciated, thus solving many of our difficulties about imperial cult at a stroke but raising others about the ‘traditional’ gods, and particularly the source of their perceived power.
221 There is extensive discussion of this in relation to Greek material, and the conclusion made there seem transferable to a Roman context: the seminal work is Vernant (1981b).
detail; it was a subjective human designation, made for their particular purposes and in
full awareness that this was the case, as we shall see.
III: Gods and Men in Livy

Introduction

The discussion thus far has focussed on re-examining Livy’s presentation and has argued for a more nuanced approach in reading his religious material. At this point analysis of the fruits of this new approach can begin. Much of this material will lend itself with ease to the kinds of issues raised in the introduction. As a working principle, coherence and intelligibility is maximised, not least as a corrective to previous discussions. This is not to imply that incoherence is absent, or should be explained away; all cultural systems are notoriously contradictory in manifold respects. But the very observation of incoherence relies upon the assumption of a meaningful structure of concepts that have a relationship to one another: much of this system may not be explicit at any given moment. The following account therefore represents what is fundamentally an experimental analysis of the religious system deployed by Livy: no other authors are taken into account. Apart from occasional references to outside material, it is not comparative. This can be treated either as a strength or a weakness; no essay could attempt to incorporate all sources on these topics in more than a few authors at best, and those which did would run the risk of failing to appreciate the various contexts of material. This analysis of Livy’s Roman religion endeavours to be limited, and thereby all the more precise. It is structured along lines that are familiar to the scholar of Roman religion in literature, though it might be said that the end result is a subversion of that structure. In that it is intended to be a reasonably full answer to many of the criticisms of typically problematic areas, it is more usefully considered a starting point than a final result in itself. Livy is essentially a test case for an argument that might prove useful elsewhere and, in his fullness, seems a good a start as any.

222 Though perhaps the term ‘contradiction’ is itself misleading, especially if one takes no account of the context in which a statement or action is made. See Veyne (1988).
5) Explanation

We are now perhaps in a position to begin considering the second of the anomalies highlighted in the introduction: where is an articulation of *explanation* in Roman literature? Thus far some simple points have been made about Livy's narrative: the gods do intervene, there are ways of deciding when this happens, and, where relevant, it is possible to make a practical (i.e. ritual) response. Yet this is too monolithic in its simplicity and is hardly convincing as an end to inquiry. If we posit the answer 'yes' to the question 'did the Romans think that the gods intervened in human affairs?' we have gained little insight from the days when we answered 'no'. The answer, in its present state, is as barren as ever. Identity was never treated so simplistically. In fact it is possible to discern no little subtlety and debate in Livy's 'religious' explanations, and in surprisingly familiar territory.

(i) Causal Over-Determination

From Homer on, various ancient writers are prone to treat events simultaneously in divine and human terms, with either separately sufficient to explain what happens. To us, it might appear that one or other factor is superfluous; but they seem to have perceived no such contradictions: the divine explanation supplements the human rather than cancelling it out.\(^223\)

The Greeks were just capable of thinking two contradictory things at once.\(^224\)

Why can't we just say that the Romans were irrational?\(^225\)

---

\(^{223}\) Levene 27, defining 'causal over-determination', or 'double motivation'.


It is tempting for the modernist to think that if the Romans believed in their gods, then the only saving grace is that they (or their Greek counterparts) could at least see that some things should not be ascribed to the gods. However, this concession to 'the obvious' is completely spoiled by 'causal over-determination', whereby the gods and men are both considered responsible for a particular outcome. This is found frequently in ancient literature, and Livy and his agents are no exception. Consider, as one example amongst many, the vowing of a temple to Fortuna Equestris226 and games to Jupiter Optimus Maximus by Fulvius Flaccus after the victory of the Roman cavalry at 40.40.10 over the Celtiberi. To us, the description of the battle is perfectly sufficient in human terms; yet Flaccus made his vow after the rout; it was not a case of do ut des, but do quod dedistis. We might also note the way that Livy himself assesses responsibility as shared rather than necessarily distinct: for instance, at 5.49.1 he says sed dique et homines prohibuere redemptos uiuere Romanos. A variety of approaches have evolved to deal with this apparently nonsensical situation. Causal over-determination is sometimes considered a 'literary' technique, that is, it does not apply to 'real' life but is merely a stylistic or dramatic strategy. The usefulness of such a distinction is itself questionable227 and any utility disappears when one is faced with an account of history that employs it, or encounters it in connection with the characters in the text. Nor is the decision that the ancients were 'irrational' in some way particularly helpful228 even if it can be 'proven'. If we are to represent this phenomenon of shared responsibility accessibly to ourselves then our discussion of 'causality' must begin afresh.

Ironically it may be that the phenomenon of 'causal over-determination', already perceived to be overly sophisticated, is actually a simplification of an even more complex dialogue of which parts have been overlooked. Restoring the issue to its greater complexity might actually clarify in the longer term, although it will initially appear to

226 On which goddess see further Champeaux (1982-7) 131-153.
228 See Lloyd (1990) for a powerful argument against the idea that different cultures have fundamentally different mentalities; many of the essays in Smith (1978a) also deal with these issues.
increase the absurdity.

(ii) Multiple Over Determination.

Though the analysis is usually of a diagnosis of divine and human forces simultaneously at play, what we in fact encounter are multiple levels of explanation: the human and several distinct categories of the divine. These several categories constitute the divine realm when taken together, and the divide between them is not as sharply defined as that between the human and the divine. The distinctions do however seem to exist.

In an example already discussed, Livy ruled out the possibility that the consul Gracchus might have been able to avoid his fate after warnings from the haruspices (nulla tamen providentia fatum imminens moueripotuit, 25.16.1-4). There events are constructed in a makeshift three-fold categorisation of: human; predictable but changeable (assumed by the warnings and attempts at propitiation); and predictable and unchangeable (fatum). That is not to say that there was necessarily any formalised and schematic categorisation into three rigid categories. For our purposes it is sufficient to say that, in Livy’s narrative at least, there was a sense of scale involved within the divine realm.

This sense of scale can be further refined: the middle category (‘predictable but changeable’) can itself be subdivided as we see in the application of solutions to problems. There are a number of occasions when a religious answer to a situation fails to resolve that situation. At 22.57, the prescriptions of the decemuiiri are deemed to be ineffective but the answer of the Pythia, given at 23.11.1-3, appears to be somehow more potent. Perhaps the most lavish religious procedures of the entire text are those at 22.9-10 after the defeat at Trasumeneae: there are vows of not only a Sacred Spring, but

229 See above, pp. 79-81
also temples and Great Games. In addition a large-scale supplication and a *lectisternium* are held. If these large-scale rites were successful in propitiating the gods, then, we might ask flippantly, why not perform them each time that a religious problem arises?\textsuperscript{230} Presumably the population would refuse to perform regularly a Sacred Spring (the sacrifice of all the offspring of their cattle and flocks) but there are also less expensive rites that seem nonetheless to be more of a concerted effort to restore the *pax deum* than others, such as the complex of rites described at 27.37, which are prescribed by all the major interpretative priesthoods. Yet such large scale rites are not used every time that there is a breach of the *pax deum*; often the expiations performed seem to be relatively minor. Clearly there is some process of assessment of what is appropriate: expiatory rites are designed to be (merely) *sufficient*. Excess would be wasteful and underestimation would simply lead to failure. Assessment of this kind is implied in the notice that Q. Fabius Maximus ‘managed’ (*peruicit ut*) to persuade the senate to consult the *decemuiri* at 22.9.8, something which happened only when the most extreme religious problems were encountered.\textsuperscript{231} The senate was responsible for assessing when experts were required, and which ones were most appropriate. These responses might range from virtual automaticity (as is seen with showers of stones)\textsuperscript{232} to the most careful consideration, as when the senate spent an entire day interpreting the prophetic poetry of Marcius (25.12.11) before also consulting the *decemuiri*. Despite the importance laid on such assessment, there is clear evidence that there were times when the experts did not hit the nail on the head at the first attempt, at least in Livy’s estimation, which implies that there was a whole range of possible responses.

\textsuperscript{230} In fact, the Sacred Spring *is* repeated shortly afterwards (33.44.1), which is astonishing given the lengths to which they had gone to avoid the possibility of error in forming the vow (given in full at 22.10.2-6). On the Sacred Spring, see further Heurgon (1957).

\textsuperscript{231} *quod non ferme decernitur nisi cum taetra prodigia nuntiata sunt*. There are a number of oddities about this episode: strictly speaking Fabius must have persuaded the senate that the present situation was prodigial or analogous to a portent in some way, possibly along lines of argument noted earlier in connection with prodigies where a situation or event could *haberi prodigii loco* (above, n. 179). This would explain why it was an unusual case and therefore why Fabius had to argue for his proposal, whereas usually we are simply informed that the decemuiiri were consulted in formulaic terms. Fabius must have argued that the recent military failures indicated (or perhaps simply ‘were’) the *ira deum*.

\textsuperscript{232} At 35.9.4-5 & 36.37.3-4 showers of stones are expiated amongst other prodigies on the recommendations of the *decemuiri*: Olin (1997 89) suggests that the consultation was linked just to the showers of stones; but the repetition suggests that it was the other prodigies, or possibly the conjunction of the others, that prompted the consultation. Rains of stones are normally unproblematic (see below, n. 240).
The observation that the Romans were drawing distinctions in the divine realm has repercussions for the distinction between the divine and human levels, especially in the light of Horton’s suggestion, noted in chapter one, that there are parallels between the way that religious concepts and cosmology are employed as explanatory devices and the way that scientific models are used for the same end. If one were to experiment with Horton’s model of religion, we would note that it is common for religious concepts to be used as part of an explanatory system, an ‘abstract’ (i.e. intangible, invisible etc) mode of thought. Essential to this model is the existence of different ‘levels’ of analysis. This difference in levels appears in conjunction with explanations of different questions which might range from those requiring only fairly ‘low-level’ answers (why does salt dissolve in water when granite does not?) to those dealing with ‘deeper’ levels of analysis (why does pure water not conduct electricity, while a solution of salt conducts extremely well?) Each level will have appropriate methods: so, to force granite to dissolve, one must theorise, and develop solutions, on a molecular level. To explain (or affect) conductivity of electricity, however, one must theories and have an affect at an atomic level. The second major point advanced by Horton is that this hierarchy of levels is ‘ascended’ by trial and error; that is, one starts at the lowest point thought appropriate and proceeds to ‘higher’ levels until the methods appropriate to the current level solve the problem.\footnote{Horton (1993a) esp. 208-210.} Failure is met not with despair and the outright rejection of the interpretative system, but with renewed efforts to discover the appropriate level of response.

Though there are obviously enormous difficulties in using such a diffused and large-scale comparison, it does serve to provide a framework of understanding that might allow us to examine the evidence without coming to the conclusion that the Romans were somehow defective or deranged, or possessed of a totally different rationality from our own. Horton’s cautious comparisons with models of science allows us to consider that the different responses to what seem to be different levels of the \textit{ira deum} are not
necessarily mutually exclusive, although one may be more appropriate to a particular situation than another. This distinction between the scale of different religious responses has not particularly engaged the attention of classical scholars, who are generally more interested in the ‘divide’ between human and divine agency. But the extension of Horton’s model has a direct bearing on this vexed question. There is a distinction made between what Horton calls ‘primary’ level analysis, which is based on the senses and everyday experience, and ‘secondary’ level analysis (which can be subdivided): this is where theoretical, as opposed to tangible, models are used. The further distinctions between secondary models are not so great as this initial difference. But the use of a theoretical model does not preclude the sensory model: these models are subject to profound overlap yet theoretical integrity. A table can be described either in sensory terms or molecular; or even sub-atomic. Although these descriptions will each have theoretical integrity, they appear utterly different, indeed apparently incompatible: the practical solutions based on these models will be equally dissimilar. Each is sufficient to explain the relevant properties or phenomena of a substance in its own right, though a ‘deeper’ analysis might be possible from another vantage point. Thus, one might say, somewhat irresponsibly, that at a certain level of analysis, matter does not exist, or that the table is made up of more space than substance, which is a reasonable assessment of the model of a table at a sub-atomic level. The violent clash between these statements and those based on sensory perception does nothing to undermine the various different levels of theory.

While the different levels of analysis remain intact, their very existence is based on a search for greater control over the phenomenon or substance in question. There are points where the primary level, or the ‘lower’ secondary models are insufficient. No matter what energy is expended at a level lower than what is required, a solution will not be found: there is greater power perceived only at a higher theoretical model. Sometimes it makes no difference how hard one hits the television; it is time for a technician. This is what is going on when the Romans invoke the decemuiruiri, or send to Delphi: they are
seeking analysis at a ‘higher’ level than is possible within normal resources. These ‘higher’ models do not exclude the ‘lower’ ones but they are likely to more effective. In a sense none of these levels ‘exist’ in reality; they are abstractions drawn from ‘real’ life and these models only have any meaning (or even reality) in their application. They are invoked only when necessary and one ‘drops back’ to a lower level of explanation and response at the first opportunity.

There is evidence that this comparison might well be a useful one for indicating the respective scope of the realms of gods and men. Horton suggests that where possible, ‘primary’ responses will be applied. Consider three different reports of locust infestation: at Capua in 203 a huge crowd of the insects covered the entire district (circa Capuam omnem agrum locustarum uis ingens, ita ut unde aduenissent parum constaret, compleuit, 30.2.10); thirty one years later there was a similar occurrence at the Pomptine marsh, which was also entirely covered (Pomptinum omne uelut nubibus lucustarum coopertum 42.2.5). These two are both included in a more general list and subsequent expiation. We might venture that it is the scale of the infestation that defines both these as prodigial; the repetition of omnis and the mention in the former example that no-one could decide where they had come from seem to underline the sense of the violation of the natural order: the senate accordingly accepted that the gods’ anger was indicated.

There is an interesting opportunity for comparison: shortly after the infestation of the Pomptine marsh, we hear of another cloud (nubes again) of them appearing in Apulia, blown in from the sea: lucustarum tantae nubes a mari repente in Apuliam inlatae sunt, ut examinibus suis agros late operirent (42.10.7). At first sight we might think that the suddenness (and therefore unpredictability) and scale (we lack the simplicity of omnis, but they are still spread late) would indicate the hand of the gods but this time there is no mention of any association with the divine; rather we are told of a tedious but very human solution: ad quam pestem frugum tollendam Cn. Sicinius, praetor designatus, cum imperio <in> Apuliam missus, ingenti agmine hominum ad colligendas eas coacto aliquantum temporis absumpsit (42.10.8). It follows so shortly after the case of the
Pomptine marsh that it seems difficult to believe that there had been a general change of interpretation; but there is no indication that anyone thought that the gods were involved. It is tempting to explore the three instances: if there is relatively little difference in reporting, then it may be that in the slight difference is all the interpretation we could ask for. While the prodigal visitations are both ‘total’, covering the entire district according to the report, Apulia is ‘merely’ heavily infested. Whereas the earlier invasion at Capua had no clear origin (and this seems to have been a factor in its being considered prodigal), the swarms at Apulia came from the sea. However it seems very difficult to assess with any conviction, since origin is not an issue for the Pomptine marsh. It is, however, tempting to compare this example with our negligent Vestal (above, n. 144); while there we encountered a human error, here we have a human solution available. The locusts are within physical reach, even though the scale of the attack means that a huge crowd of men is required to deal with it. This seems to be the likeliest factor in deciding the response; the locust swarm is literally within reach in this case whereas before it was not.

A second contingency we should expect is some kind of ‘trial and error’ ascent of the levels, where the initial response was found to be insufficient. When a chasm appeared in the Forum, the initial attempts to sort out the problem were practical and ‘primary’ (that is, physical). The Romans soon abandoned this and turned to the gods.

\[\text{eodem anno, seu motu terrae seu qua ui alia, forum medium ferme} \]
\[\text{specu uasto conlapsum in immensam altitudinem dicitur; neque eam} \]
\[\text{uoraginem coniectu terrae, cum pro se quisque gereret, exleri potuisse,}\]

\[234\text{ It is possible that Livy wishes us to assume that this is a sign of the } \text{ira deum,}\text{ since it is part of a series of domestic notices that follow the cruel punishment exacted on the Ligurians by Popillius: Levene 110 detects condemnation of Roman actions in the sequences following this episode. But this would be a break with his normal style of reporting; not only is there no mention of any reporting procedure, there is no expiation.}\]
\[235\text{ Such is true within the reporting of the account by Livy but of course the prodigial swarms landed at some point just as the Apulian insects took to the air.}\]
The result is the famous self-sacrifice of Curtius who declares that the strength of Rome is her youth before hurling himself into the chasm on horseback.\footnote{For a comparative study of this and other acts of self-sacrifice in antiquity, see Versnel (1981b); he points out that the horse is a repeated feature in Roman sources (146-152).} The apparent inability to prescribe correctly on the part of the seers (uates) is not critical: rather, the story is framed in such a way to emphasise the precocious genius (in understanding the riddle) and courage of the young man.\footnote{We need not even assume priestly ignorance: the priests’ silence might well be linked to embarrassment or tact; after all the declaration that a Roman aristocratic youth must sacrifice himself would create a very different narrative.} The failure of the ‘human’ solution to a chasm does not preclude a ‘natural’ cause (motus terrae) as a vehicle of the gods’ agency. Livy implies that the problem was solved (post tanti prodigii procurationem…) although we do not hear that the hole miraculously closed up, as we do in other sources.\footnote{E.g. Varro L. L. 5.148 = Pocilius fr. 1P; Dionysius 14.11.5; Valerius Maximus 5.6.2; Zonaras 7.25. For these authors, the point of the story is precisely that the hole was filled as a result of Curtius’ action. See Levene’s comparison of other sources 214.} The level of ‘nature’ (physical, tangible, human) was ‘lower’ than that of the divine.\footnote{A similar ‘ascent’ of explanatory levels seems evident elsewhere, e.g. at 5.16.8, just before the arrival of the embassy to Delphi: iamque Romani desperata ope humana fata et deos spectabant.} The further distinction noted between the inevitable decrees of fatum and the negotiable mood of the gods, tentatively suggested above (p. 112) seems validated by such moments as the aftermath of Decius’ and Manlius’ night-time apparition (quoted above, pp. 102-103): this warned that one of them should perform a deuotio: they decided to attempt expiation (auerruncandae deum irae) and si extis eadem quae somnio uisa fuerant portenderentur, alter uter consulum fata impleret (8.6.11). Failed propitiation of the gods ‘proved’ that the situation was indeed one that concerned the inevitable. Presumably faced with just these results in the sacrifice the consuls would have persisted in sacrificing to obtain the pax deum but in the circumstances this would have been rather unrealistic.
The positing of differentiated ‘levels’ of analysis within what we would call ‘religious’ understanding leads us to expect certain features. Firstly one would expect a repeated situation to be met with a predictable, almost automatic, response, as was the case with showers of stones for example. Other situations would require a great deal more thought and experimentation before success was achieved. There might even be outright failures, such as seem to be indicated when Livy says of the plague at 7.2.3 that no help was forthcoming from god or man (uis morbi nec humanis consiliis nec ope diuina leuaretur): this led to the institution of the ludi scaenici – a mistake, according to Livy. This does not suggest that the gods are insufficient or that their existence is questioned: Livy is not necessarily even implying that the competence of the priests who recommended the games is particularly unreliable, just that the situation was extreme; perhaps extreme measures were called for, even experimental ones. In the broadest possible way we might compare the way that criticism, blame or responsibility is assigned to doctors or scientists: it is accepted that there are limits to their expertise, and that at times there is nothing that they can do for a particular situation, however pressing the need or novel the experiment.

Secondly, according to Horton’s model, the division between the human and the divine realms should not be a ‘hard’ distinction but a ‘soft’ one, of aptness rather than fact. Whatever conceptual framework is being used and however it is expressed, we would expect it to represent the same situation from a different perspective: invoking higher levels of theory with a view to finding a solution would be a question of the type of problem being faced. This can easily be made explicit in the text at times: consider a possible translation of our gold-nibbling rodents (Cumis - adeo minimis etiam rebus

240 Which always prompt a nouemdiale sacrum in Livy. Cf. the comments of Champeaux (1996) 67: “Quand un rite a été, une fois, efficace, on le répète à l’identique, chaque fois que se reproduit le même prodige: le nouemdiale sacrum pour les pluies de pierres, par exemple, ou, quand est signalé un androgyne, la procession de vingt-sept filles dansant et chantant le carmen, dont le premier fut composé, pour la cérémonie de 207, par Livius Andronicus.”

241 We should note that although the episode has the ring of formal procedures, no agent is mentioned, not even the senate. Thus the criticism is somewhat diffused.
prauna religio inserit deos - mures in aede Iovis aurum rosisse); 'At Cumae, to such an extent does incompetent religiosity introduce the gods into even small matters, there was the report that mice had chewed the gold in the temple of Jupiter.' Livy’s incompetents are trying to use a sledgehammer to crack a nut. Only the expert can reliably look beyond the ordinary and mundane to see beyond the ken of ordinary mortals. But it is a question of appropriateness, not of fact. Thus though there was a clear distinction between ‘human’ resources and ‘divine’ remedies, at the same time these realms were not utterly separate from one another. As a unified whole they represented a spectrum – a metaphor that can only represent one cross sectional view of a system that might be more appropriately represented as three dimensional, with specialisation increasing along with scale. In other words, a serious, 'high-level' problem might well have been tackled by any of the relevant priesthods – the pontifices or the haruspices, or the decemuiiri: the deciding factor might have been precedent in one case, or perhaps some more formal jurisdiction; or a more complex (even arbitrary) set of considerations. A premium would therefore have been placed on the ability to operate correctly this whole array of interpretative techniques, appreciating not just scale but also the appropriate areas of expertise. This interpretation was predominantly the responsibility of the senate who would then delegate each situation to the relevant priesthood: we have no idea of how a typical session would have actually gone, since the religious issues are so rarely handled by individuals. The naming of Fabius Maximus as the driving force behind the reference to the decemuiiri in book 22 is a rare case: it was this hero who saw the importance of a situation that, as it turned out, was beyond the resources even of Rome’s most technical experts. But we have little sense of how the deeper realities of the Roman religious thought worlds were constructed, or even of the terms used. At best we can hope to identify features that seem to be persistently common and hope that there are not more criteria linking together our examples that a Roman would have thought so obvious that it would not have been worth articulating them.

This elucidation of the interpretative processes forces the reassessment of certain
conclusions drawn about Roman religion: in the light of the amount of consideration (whether virtually automatic or protracted and detailed) that went on, the conclusion that religion was focused on 'rite' to the exclusion of 'theory' cannot avoid being a value judgement. It might be that it was possible to have a sophisticated discussion using signifiers drawn from ritual practice, or precedent. 'Is this the sort of situation that calls for a lectisterium? Perhaps we should think in terms of a novemdiale sacrum.' Would we call that 'rite' or 'theory'? For all we know, the enumeration of prodigies might well function as a profoundly meaningful theoretical 'code' that is wasted on us: to the educated Roman, Livy's prodigy lists would say something far more specific than some general sense that the gods were placati or irati. On the other hand they might be as cumulatively meaningful as a list of technical faults on a car: some would be serious enough to merit serious outlay on their own, others would only come to light or matter at all in connection with other faults. Perhaps they paint a coherent picture with characteristic consequences of one particular fault; perhaps they are simply a list of details irrelevant to one another. It therefore seems likely that the res publica could tolerate a minor disruption to the pax deum as the smooth operation of any machinery or organism can tolerate minor misfunctions, which explains Rome's survival of the occasional moments where prodigies are not noted or expiated. Such suggestions can only be speculative but the experimental effort to gauge the emotional impact of prodigies and other events where the gods were deemed to be relevant is surely valuable, at least to highlight the range of possible options and to disturb the cosy assessments and presumptions that are more usefully associated with Christianity than paganism. All models of comparison remain utterly crude in the absence of detailed evidence and personal testimony, neither of which are much available and both of which would probably give us very different results from those we might expect. But in the light of their painstaking effort to assess any number of situations and ascertain the appropriate response, to say that 'all that mattered was the correct performance of rite' is true in one sense: but we might say that this observation is as inadequate as observing that the

242 As happens at 5.15.1, where of course the situation is ultimately resolved fato when the Albine lake is drained.
successful launch of a satellite depends on someone pushing the launch button at the right
time: ritual is, in some senses, the thin end of the wedge. The real work is the
interpretative labour.
A gratifying sense of subtlety is now discernible in Livy's explanatory process: the discussion now at least has a little colour, or at least some shades of grey. The distinction between 'human' and 'divine' levels is not so rigid as has been thought. It is a designated rather than a fixed category. So, for instance, one category which we are traditionally told by commentators is 'human' and therefore held up for praise or blame is *uir tus*: but at 38.48.7, Manlius informs L. Scipio that he prayed successfully to the gods not only for the latter's *felicitas* but also his *uir tus*. Apparently we cannot simply assign praise and blame purely to men even for their human qualities. Diagnosing divine agency therefore becomes all the more difficult, since it is clear that we are dealing with a question of different perspectives rather than different categories. This should warn us that we need to clarify exactly which level we are dealing with at any given point: if there is 'overlap', then the realms are still constructed and described along different lines, each with their own theoretical and practical integrity. Some attempt should be made to distinguish the distinctive way that the gods were deemed to operate in the human world.

There are two principal areas in which the hand of the gods was diagnosed: in nature (that is prodigies and unexpected events taken as omens); and in human activity (i.e. the explicit help of the gods, and the unfolding of events, especially battle). Since the latter category is complicated by human action, which is often difficult for us to distinguish from the exertions of the gods, some initial points are best made in connection with the former category of prodigies and the like.

---

243 Cf. Decius' prayer for the same at 10.24.16 on behalf of his colleague and himself.
(ii) Nature and the Gods

Prodigies are usually defined as violations of natural law of some kind.\footnote{244 That is, the Romans seemed to have made the distinction in these terms: Rosenberger (1998) 103-126 examines the theme of liminality and the disruption of 'order' ('der Verlust der Ordnung') along the kind of lines pioneered by Douglas (1966).} As such they might appear to offer a useful door into Roman constructions of nature and cosmology. Unfortunately for us, it is a general feature of our various sources that there is little attempt to ascertain why a particular prodigy should have appeared: Roman practice, as we hear of it in Livy, is corrective of interpretation or action rather than investigatory of causes. Perhaps a Roman would have replied to this point to the effect that religious life was full of the consequences of minor errors: prodigies occur in the same way as weeds grow in gardens and it is less important to find out how they occurred than to act before things get any worse. However useful such investigations would be for us, we do not have the benefit of them, even if they were undertaken, let alone recorded. But we do find reasoning in a number of cases that these events did not appear at random. Although a great number of prodigial events do not seem to us to have an explicable link with what was portended (why, for instance, should the draining of the Albine lake have led to the capture of Veii?) MacBain points out that often the details of the prodigies seem to function as a warning of a particular outcome expressed metaphorically.\footnote{245 MacBain 122-124 (the majority of his examples include details taken from authors other than Livy). Cf. Tacitus \textit{Annals} 15.47.1-3: \textit{et in agro Placentino uiam propter natus uitulus cui caput in crure esset; secutaeque haruspicum interpretatio, parari rerum humanarum aliud caput, sed non fore validum neque occultum, quia in utero repressum aut iter iuxta editum sit.} Especially interesting is the comment at \textit{Annals} 15.7.2 that \textit{pila militum arsere, magis insigni prodigio quia Parthus hostis missilibus telis decertat.} Suetonius seems to be explicit on the interpretative process at \textit{Vitellius} 9. With reference to \textit{Annals} 15.47.1-3 see Woodman (1997) 96 & Ash (1997) for discussion of the more general symbolism of 'heads'.} Where reasonings are given they often make the prodigy intelligible to us in this way: we are therefore justified in assuming that a link between the details of a prodigy, or omen, and its predicted outcome was evident to those trained in Roman religion, even if we are not told of these details and are not always in a position to follow their logic. Perhaps some portents were not particularly exposed to scrutiny, but it does not seem beyond the pale...
to posit that an interpretation was at least considered possible. This is preferable to the alternative, that some portents ‘made sense’ to the Romans while others were simply not categorised or analysed. If this line of reasoning holds, then the particulars of disruptions of the naturalis ordo are not arbitrary, they reflect a ‘deliberate’ outcome. This does not necessarily mean that the particular outcome need be anticipated however. If a particular disruption of the pax deum, left uncorrected, would tend towards a particular outcome, expiation was a restoration of the proper order, through ritual. The closest modern analogy would seem to be that if my computer is consistently crashing, reinstalling the aberrant software will probably put the error right: why identify and ascertain how a minor but essential file became corrupted? If the problems seemed particularly persistent or hopeless, I might erase the hard disk and reinstall from scratch, ‘recreating’ the proper order of things. Livy’s Rome could ‘collect’ prodigies almost indiscriminately and decide on the scale of reparation needed without too much concern for how these problems arose. Thus when prodigies have been expiated, Livy often moves on to the next topic with some notice to the effect that the gods had been placated: the ‘normal’ functioning of the cosmos is a reflection of the pax deum. In all the cults associated with fertility, for instance, we find the working assumption that the gods operate ‘through’ nature.

Furthermore, we should begin a discussion that will continue in the next section: in

---

246 Perhaps the best ritual for this (admittedly crude) analogy would be the Sacred Spring, with its virtual abandonment of normal ritual detail (22.10).
247 A great number of expiations take place in one go: but it seems also that there was often an immediate response to a particularly dangerous situation (as would seem to be the case at 27.37). It should be stressed that we are discussing Livy’s Rome here rather than the historical city: our one haruspical response, partially represented by Cicero in the De Haruspicium Responso, indicates a definite historical interest in analysis of where the Roman state had gone wrong (chs. 9, 21, 34, 36, 37) as well as in speculation about the specific outcomes if there is no reparation (chs. 40, 55, 56, 60), but there is no sign of this kind of expertise in Livy; which suggests that he leaves that particular issue to the priests.
248 The ira deum does not only concern what we would think of as nature: it is also concerned with areas that we might distinguish from ‘nature’: thus we find widespread disease associated with the disruption of the natural order at 6.20.16: pestilentia etiam breui consecuta nullis occurrentibus tantae clade causis ex Manliiano supplicio magnae parti uideri orta: violatum Capitolium esse sanguine servatoris nec dis cordi fuisse poenam eius oblatam prope oculis suis, a quo sua templa erepta e manibus hostium essent. There is no expiation, naturally, for this state-inflicted penalty, but the interpretation is still noted.
dealing with the gods (and therefore nature), there is no ‘neutral state’. The evidence that we have might lead one to think that nature is an independent witness to the anger of the gods, but we should note the corollary of the classification of certain phenomena as prodigial, i.e. that an undisturbed nature should not be taken for granted. The gods ‘inform’ all states of nature: the naturalis ordo is called the pax deum at a higher level of analysis. The alternative to pax is ira, and vice versa. and if one requires a religious interpretation, even pax can be emphasised as meaningful and causative.

This makes a difference to the way that we receive particular episodes affecting natural forces: for instance, it gives a different slant on one notorious episode which is often cited as ‘rationalistic’: the famous prediction of C. Sulpicius Gallus of an eclipse before the crucial battle of Pydna. The military tribune gave the specific prediction that:

\[
ab \text{ hora secunda usque ad quartam horam noctis lunam defecturam esse. id quia naturali ordine statis temporibus fiat, et sciri ante et praedici posse. itaque quem ad modum, quia certi solis lunaeeq et ortus et occasus sint...fulgere lunam non mirarentur, ita ne obscurari quidem cum condatur umbra terrae, trahere in prodigium debere'}
\]

(44.37.6-7)

Levene (119-120) notes a range of alternative versions and claims that there was a preference for “rationalistic interpretations”, i.e. those that denied the involvement of the

---

249 Natura itself can of course be taken to be a divine force, and not just by ‘full-blooded’ philosophers: Pliny, for instance, taking a line only partially influenced by Stoicism treats it as a divine force (Beagon (1992)); the discussion here is inadequate to the complexity of the issues.
250 For the conclusion that all cosmological paradigms (including science) presuppose ‘friendliness’ or ‘hostility’ (but never neutrality) see Midgley (1992), esp. 107-115.
251 Especially Cicero and Valerius Maximus: rem enim magnam erat adsecutus, quod hominibus perturbatis inanem religionem timoremque deiecerat (Cicero Rep. 1.24); itaque inclutae illi Paulianae victoriae liberales artes Galli aditum dederunt, quia, nisi ille metum nostrorum mili tum uicisset, imperator uincere hostes non potuisset. (Valerius Maximus 8.11.1). His others are Quintilian (1.10.47); Pliny (N. H. 2.53); Frontinus (Strategems 1.12.8); Polybius (29.16.1-2); Plut. (Aemilius 17.7-10); Justinus (33.1.7) and Zonaras (9.23).
gods. But the search for 'rationality' is misleading: what Gallus has in fact done is not to anticipate Newtonian physics, but to expand the understanding of the workings of the *naturalis ordo*, the reliable state of the cosmos under the benign influence of the gods at peace. By moving the boundary of the 'natural' back to include the eclipse, he has reassured the Romans that they should not take the eclipse to mean that they have lost the support of the gods.²⁵²

The next logical inference is that all events were ‘deliberate’ in this sense, including the blessings of *pax*. We should see this principle at work also in the realm of human activity.

²⁵² Interestingly, Livy keeps religious awe in the frame: Gallus himself becomes the object of such a response instead of the eclipse: *Romanis milites Galli sapientia prope diuina uideri*, 44.37.8. The astronomer's knowledge was almost as inaccessible and remote as the event of the eclipse, and presumably only 'almost' because he was visibly mortal. The usual interpretation of an eclipse would be the fall of a king, which can only apply to Perseus. Finally, of course, Perseus' power is broken in the battle that ensues.
(iii) The Gods and Men

The vast majority of notices concerning the gods and men make both responsible, which makes it difficult for us to be specific about any differences. We have already seen in discussing ‘levels’ that the choice between diagnosis of divine or human is more a question of emphasis than strictly demarcated relevance. However much the two are intertwined in practice, it is possible to distinguish different areas of responsibility.

To begin at the most general level of analysis, we can reasonably speculate that the gods were thought to be fundamentally benign: of the two possible states of the natural order, there are good reasons to think that if either state was considered ‘normative’, it was pax. The *benignitas deum* is alluded to not infrequently;253 Zeuxis, appealing for generous terms of peace, calls on the Romans to ‘lay aside contention with all men and be like the gods, the protectors and fosterers of the whole human race’ (37.45.9); and they might indulge in mercy, albeit in a limited way, when their wrath is manifested or a human mistake is made.254 Indeed, the very existence of the whole apparatus of religion implies that the gods are reasonable beings. When their *ira* has been manifested, there is a ‘clean slate’: we hear no more of the wrath that cost the consuls their lives at 27.33.11 for instance.

The gods might even be said to promote proper Roman behaviour towards them: during the Bacchist affair, the consul assures the assembly that:

\[
\textit{dis...qui quia suum numen sceleribus libidinibusque contaminari}
\]

253 I note 5.20.3, 7.13.5, 8.4.6, 8.5.3, 8.13.11, 24.38.2, 26.41.6, 26.41.14, 28.11.8, 28.25.7, 29.15.1, 31.31.20, 37.54.10, 39.9.4, 41.24.8 & 45.23.1.

254 In the episode of the deaths of Marcellus and Crispinus, (27.33.11) discussed above (p. 38), Livy ends with the notice that *ceterum deos immortales, miseritos nominis Romani, pepercisse innoxii exercitibus, tementitatem consulum ipsorum capitibus damnasse*. 

The consul is not speaking at odds with Livy’s account, whereby the cult is brought to the attention of the senate by Aebutia, the aunt of the would-be initiand Aebutius. The particular mechanism of the cult’s ‘discovery’ is relatively unimportant to the diagnosis of divine agency: presumably it would have somehow come to the senate’s attention anyway. The gods simply used a convenient vehicle for the inherent tendency to restore pax.

The intentionality of the gods is intrinsic to their nature, as they are constructed in Livy’s account: for the historian evoking cult practice, they are a will that permeates all human existence, and their will has a ‘plan’ in so far as specific events are willed, often under the explicit aegis of fatum. Many other activities are more negotiable and good relations must be maintained at all times. Their ‘actions’ are not on an equal level to those of humans, who arrange physical resources or manage mental and emotional states; rather the ‘actions’ of the gods are the fulfilment of their will as the forces that underlie those resources or states. As they were thought to produce results consistent with their will in nature, so too they produce results in the human realm according to their mood. Livy puts it most succinctly at 1.39.4, when he speaks of the adoption of Servius Tullius by Tanaquil and Lucumo:

\[ \text{inde puerum liberum loco coeptum haberis erudire et artibus quibus} \]
\[ \text{ingenia ad magnae fortunae cultum excitantur. euenit facile quod dis} \]

---

255 39.11f.
256 For analysis of the legends about Tullius see Capdeville (1995) 7-40.
The example is useful for us in that it does more than indicate the assumption that the situation had an 'inherent tendency', recognised as the will of the gods: it also serves to represent the human responsibilities of that situation, the provision of the means whereby the will of the gods might be fulfilled. There is another (rather vague) division of duty made at 2.46.6-7: after the fall of Q. Fabius, M. Fabius, the consul, accosts the retreating soldiers and reminds them of their vows, only to be told by Caeso Fabius:

\[
\text{\textit{\textquote{uerbisne istis, frater, ut pugnent, te impetraturum credis? di}}}
\]
\[
\text{\textit{impetrabunt per quos iurauere; et nos, ut decet proceres, ut Fabio}}
\]
\[
\text{\textit{nomine est dignum, pugnando potius quam adhortando accendamus}}
\]
\[
\text{\textit{militum animos}}. \ (2.46.6-7)
\]

Whatever the gods do for men, there is scope and responsibility for those men also: at 3.11.6 we hear of Caeso Quinctius:

\[
\text{\textit{Caeso erat Quinctius, ferox iuuenis qua nobilitate gentis, qua corporis}}
\]
\[
\text{\textit{magnitudine et uiribus. ad ea munera data a dis et ipse addiderat multa}}
\]
\[
\text{\textit{belli decora facundiamque in foro <exhibuerat>, ut nemo, non lingua,}}
\]
\[
\text{\textit{non manu promptior in ciuitate haberetur.}}
\]

Caeso's gifts are the dispensation of the gods, since he had no part to play in his
receiving them: but his development of his potential is ascribed to his credit. What the gods gave was a particular orientation of human resources. Hannibal can similarly speak of the gods’ endowing Romans and Carthaginians with a particular (warlike) temperament and can himself be told that ‘non omnia nimirum eidem di dedere. uincere scis, Hannibal; victoria uti nescis’ (22.51.4). Though knowing how to use victory is designated a gift from the gods, in the criticism is the assumption that Hannibal could act on this deficiency.

This argument runs counter to the normal line on the contrasting roles of gods and men: the usual conclusions drawn are that the role of the gods is maximised by writers to mitigate defeat and minimised to allow for the glorification of valorous Romans, as if religious interpretation could be so easily manipulated and still retain credibility. Yet it cannot be taken so simplistically, as is also true in connection with fortuna (below, pp. 159-172). There is always scope for men to excel in the face of scarce gifts from the gods, to maximise already full assets (so Caeso) or squander their gifts (so Hannibal): this is inherent in the representation of responsibility. At times, the gods are ‘blamed’ for a defeat: but this implies a criticism of the human failure to procure the pax deum (as much a responsibility of a magistrate as his command of the army). Elsewhere, a bad general is named as such; there is no blanket policy to whitewash what Livy considers to be error.

Religious analysis was not primarily an attempt to produce an academic or abstract analysis: the articulation of any position is stimulated by the desire to provide exempla. In his conference with Zeuxis, Scipio asserts the appropriate Roman response to the

---

257 Cf, amongst many other examples, Perseus’ description of Macedonian resources as omnia quae deorum indulgentia, quae regia cura praeparanda fuerint at 42.52.13.
258 This could be added or (presumably) squandered by pious or impious activity: when Q. Marcius Philippus is encouraging his troops before engaging Perseus, he reinforces that appropriate behaviour leads to an accumulation of divine favours: ‘ea omnia quam diis quoque inuisa essent sensurum in exitu rerum suarum; fauere enim pietati fideique deos, per quae populus Romanus ad tantum fastigii uenerit,’ (44.1.10-11).
259 optimum quidem fuerat eam patribus nostris mentem datam ab dis esse, ut et uos Italiae et nos Africae imperio contenti essemus (30.30.6).
favour of the gods:

Romani ex iis, quae in deum immortalium potestate erant ea habemus
quae dii dederunt; animos, qui nostrae mentis sunt, eosdem in omni
fortuna gessimus gerimusque, neque eos secundae res extulerunt nec
adversae minuerunt. (37.45.11-12).

Scipio’s position marks out both the Romans and himself as prudent operators, and
apparently leaves his audience with clearly defined responsibility. It does not, however,
claim to be an exhaustive deduction on the respective roles of gods and men, for there are
instances where the loss of perspective is itself specifically assigned to the agency of the
gods. After the murder of Theoxena and Poris, who cursed the king before their death,
Perseus was driven mad enough to plot the murder of his brother Demetrius:

uolgo ipsum liberosque exsecrarentur; quae dirae, breui ab omnibus
diis exauditae, ut saeuiret ipse in suum sanguinem, effecerunt, (40.5.1).

Perseus suffers similarly later: when he might have crushed the Roman army, Philippus’
prediction seems borne out:

supererat nihil aliud in temere commisso quam in Macedoniam ad
Dium per medios euadere hostes: quod, nisi di26⁰ mentem regi
ademissent, <et> ipsum ingentis difficultatis erat,(44.6.14).

26⁰ Since the king is not Roman, the question of which, or rather whose gods is not broached.
The fact that it was thought possible for the gods to deprive the impious or erroneous of their wits would initially seem to run counter to Scipio's clear demarcation of responsibility, but this is not the case. Though Postumius says at 9.9.10 that *nihil ad Caudium, patres conscripti, humanis consiliis gestum est; di immortales et uestris et hostium imperatoribus mentem ademerunt,* Scipio's advice still applied. In this case the time for prudence was not in the midst of battle, when the men and their generals were afflicted with an ominous stupor (9.2.10-15), but on the news of the defeat: the response of the senate is "slanted as a whole so as to emphasise the Romans' acting freely to resolve their religious difficulties."²⁶¹ The defeat was the retribution for Roman impiety, as detailed by the Samnite Pontius in 9.1 (to which Livy adds *haec non laeta magis quam uera uaticinatus,* 9.2.1): but the renewal of the auspices under new consuls and the negotiation of the religious difficulties²⁶² is exactly the kind of conduct that Scipio was referring to. He is not separating 'attitude' (*animus*) from the influence of the gods, but exalting Roman institutions and *mores* that led them to address incidences of the *ira deum,* and his advice includes the propitiation of the gods in order that the Roman *animus* be free of adverse effects. In a practical sense it both influences and is influenced by the gods' mood, though in different ways. Though the gods affect *animus,* rites, whose instigation and proper performance depend on *animus,* affect gods. The modern desire for a cut-and-dried assignation of roles does not fare well with such subtly exemplificatory material: at every turn, we encounter parallel accounts and diagnoses that offer men opportunities to maximise the possibilities of the situation in which they are in.

In extremely rare circumstances, the gods are deemed to have intervened somewhat more specifically than usual: when Corvus is assisted by a crow in single combat against a formidable Gaul, Livy tells us that *minus insigne certamen humanum numine interposito deorum factum* (7.26.2), but even then the Roman must finish off the job. The gods

²⁶¹ Levene 228.
²⁶² 9.9.1-9.10.3.
must have an ‘intermediary’ to have their effect, whether it be natural forces (e.g. the storm that scuppered the Bastarnae, (above, p. 68), animal\textsuperscript{263} or human. But such moments are rare and it is an error to rely solely on the gods, even when their favour is evident. In their prosecution of L. Verginius and Manius Sergius, the tribunes of the plebs assert:

[minime conuenire quibus iratos quisque deos precatus sit, in iis sua potestate, cum liceat et oporteat, non uti. nunquam deos ipsos admueire nocentibus manus; satis esse, si occasione ulciscendi laesos arment.’ (5.11.16)

Manlius, in his revolutionary rage, exhorts the plebs to support him, and warns them that he will be killed unless they intervene:

[bene facitis quod abominamini. “di prohibebunt haec”; sed numquam propter me de caelo descendent; uobis dent mentem oportet ut prohibeatis.’ (6.18.9)

Livy’s gods are not those of Homer; they do not fight alongside the human combatants. But they do play a most active role, visible in the behaviour of the people concerned. Statements such as those of Manlius did not present a paradox or ‘mere rhetoric’, as they are instinctively received by modern readers. The vast majority of references to the gods do seem to intertwine the two realms and the ideal formula for success is voiced by King Tullus:

\textsuperscript{263} Corvus’ crow is unique as an assistant but a range of animals, from bees (e.g. 24.10.11) to wolves (e.g. 32.29.2) appear in prodigy lists acting strangely.
Romani, si unquam ante alias ullo in bello fuit quod primum dis immortalibus gratias ageretis, deinde uestrae ipsorum uirtuti, hesternum id proelium fuit.’ (1.28.4) 264

Even such a dramatic and far-reaching ritual action such as the deuotio265 of the elder Decius is not considered to be the single cause of the ensuing victory: Torquatus’ generalship was such that facile conuenerit inter Romanos Latinosque, qui eius pugnae memoriam posteris tradiderunt, utrius partis T. Manlius dux fuisset, eius futuram haud dubie fuisse victoriam (8.10.8.). Torquatus still had to navigate the various difficulties presented to him after the death of his colleague, and Livy’s account does not attempt to distinguish between the authors of the exact details of the various elements of victory; but one wonders whether the army would have performed as it did without Decius’ devotion of the enemy. At Torquatus’ order,

triarii consurrexerunt integri refugentibus armis, nova ex improuiso exorta acies, receptis in interualla ordinum antepilanis, clamore sublato principia Latinorum perturbant hastisque ora fodientes primo robore uiorum caeso per alios manipulos uelut inermes prope intacti euasere tantaque caede perrupere cuneos ut uix quartam partem relinquerent hostium. (8.10.5-6)

264 Cf. the words of Romulus: ‘urbes quoque, ut cetera, ex infimo nasci; dein, quas sua uirtus ac di iuuent, magnas opes sibi magnumque nomen facere; satis scire, origini Romanae et deos adfuisse et non defuturam uirtutem’ (1.9.3-4).
265 8.9.1-10; for the younger Decius see 10.28.12-29.7; also Cicero On the Ends of Good and Evils 2.61; Tusculan Disputations 1.89; Cassius Dio 10 in Zonaras 8.5. Analyses of Livy 8.9-11.1 are given by Versnel (1976) & (1981b). On deuotio in Livy see also Feldherr (1998) 82-111. On the rite more generally, Versnel (1976).
As the account stands, it is hard to be specific about the gods’ agency. The fact is that Livy is not preoccupied with demonstrating precisely how the gods intervened: he assumes a familiarity with the conjunction of human efforts towards the fulfilment of the gods’ will and only very rarely will he specify where and how they intervened. The distinction was probably one that he would not have understood the need for, since it was ‘obvious’ both that the gods were in support of Rome, and that Manlius had performed excellently. To distinguish the two is an act not of empirical investigation but to look at the same event at a different angle. If we are to find evidence of the distinction between roles we must look elsewhere.

A practical distinction is drawn at 30.31.10, when the conference between Hannibal and Scipio breaks down: to the gods is granted jurisdiction over the outcome rather than the means:

frustra uerba peracta renuntiant: armis decernendum esse

habendamque eam fortunam quam di dedissent.

The specific aid sought might be inferred from the speech of the exemplary Aemilius Paulus to his unruly troops:

'militem haec tria curare debere, corpus ut quam ualidissimum et pernicissimum habeat, arma apta, cibum paratum ad subita imperia; cetera scire de se dis immortalibus et imperatori suo curae esse...se, quod sit officium imperatoris, prouisurum, ut bene gerendae rei occasionem iis praebat’ (44.34.3-5)\(^{266}\)

\(^{266}\) The speech gains a very favourable, and effective response: *ab his praeeptis contionem dimisit, uolgo etiam ueteranis fatentibus se illo primum die, tamquam tirones, quid agendum esset in re militari*
The area left untouched by Aemilius' definitions of responsibility is the uncertain aspect of the outcome. It was not sufficient to fight, even with courage: one required the blessing of the gods to orchestrate events. A similar claim is made when Marcus Servilius argues for a triumph on behalf of Aemilius Paulus:

\[
pars non minima triumphi est uictima praecedentes ut appareat dis grates agentem imperatorem ob rem publicam bene gestam redire.
\]

(45.39.12)

That the Romans thanked the gods for the results of battle, while noting the efforts of their men as a means, is well known. But if one considers such issues as the courage shown by the troops or an individual as a result in itself, then that evokes an analysis that involves the gods: thus Scipio's virtus could be sought in prayer as an end in itself, but would be something to praise him for when it was exhibited. This is no different from the way that the gods produced specific and meaningful results in nature when they sent prodigies: 'higher-level' explanations can provide very specific results.

Time and time again we are told both by Livy and by his agents that success is due both to the favour of the gods and the efforts of men. Only rarely do we see the historian specify particular jurisdictions in the unfolding of the will of the gods. We might well postulate that, in accordance with the anthropological common-place, this is because religious answers tend to be a response to the question 'why?' while an answer offering human reasons is the reply to the question 'how?' While the distinction of 'why?' and 'how?' is undoubtedly of interest to us, in practice it is not at the forefront of the account.

didicisse. non sermonibus tantum his cum quanto adsensu audissent uerba consulis, ostenderunt, sed rerum praesens effectus erat (44.34.7).

267 To add to the sustained argument on this point presented throughout these chapters, we might add the notice that Mars communis et incertus belli eventus esset (37.45.13).
because Livy is not writing an academic inquiry. However plausibly we might discern this distinction and highlight it, Livy himself is more intuitive and his (and his agents') assignation normally does not make the distinction clear. Rather what is stressed is the joining of resources, the perfect co-operation (for the most part) of the realms of gods and men in fulfilling the destiny of Rome.
Though Livy’s account has generally been seen as a forum for ‘proving’ or ‘disproving’ the value of Roman religion, we can now say that this agenda is simply not present. Livy is not even considering such questions. For him, mastery of Roman religion was correct diagnosis of the varying factors in a given situation in order to produce an efficient and effective solution. There is little sign in Livy of any love of study of religious phenomena much beyond this need, little in the way of proactive theoretical debate or anticipation of future difficulties that might require solution: rather there is the reactive process of learning from experience and adding to the store of already existent knowledge. In this interpretative system were a number of categories not yet examined – the inter-related terms fors, fortuna and fatum. For the most part, scholarly discussion of these has usually assumed a complete dichotomy between fors (and often also fortuna) and the intervention of the gods, an overlap between fortuna (in another of its guises) and divine aid and a superiority of fatum over the gods’ power to act. Obviously if rigid differentiation of divine and human agency and responsibility is denied, then there are profound consequences for these conclusions.

Discussions of these terms, and particularly fortuna, typically open with an acknowledgement of philosophical tyche and the ‘influence’ of Greek philosophy on Roman ideas. The widespread and multi-textual discussion of the impact of Greek ideas on Roman categories can barely be rehearsed here but it is worth considering to what extent the issue has been framed as an ‘invasion’ of Greek ideas, against which the

---

268 A fourth term, felicitas, is often considered in connection with these three. The understanding of this term in this chapter is consistent with that of Erkell (1952) 43-128, who establishes that felicitas is the continuing favour of the gods towards a particular individual; it is linked to moral rectitude and is used as a good prognosis of success (e.g. Cicero On the Command of Pompey 47). See below, n. 347; also Weinstock (1971) 112-114; Champeaux (1982-7) II 216-218.

269 Consider the practical lore given concerning deuotio at 8.10.11-11.1: see also Linderski (1985); North (1990a) 66. The difference between this type of material and the antiquarian works of the late Republic is discussed by BNP 153. For the records of the pontifices see North (1998).

270 See e.g. Kajanto on 6.41.4f and 7.6.9: “It is obvious that Livy...stressed the fact that the consul’s destruction was an accident, due to chance” (i.e. forte): on fortuna, see his 84, and fatum 53-63. Levene has two sections on fate and fortune 13-15 & 30-33.
Romans had little defence, save a resultant incompetence in using clear-cut categories. This analysis forces the scholar to enumerate a variety of categories within each of these terms – usually a mish-mash of ‘older Roman ideas’ and ‘new Greek ideas’. One of the outcomes of denying the Roman ideas any substantial consistency leads to banal conclusions such as “Livy thinks good luck was an important contributing factor to the success of a person or a people”\textsuperscript{271} or “\textit{fortuna} could become...a force hardly distinguishable from \textit{fatum}.”\textsuperscript{272} It might be more useful, and almost certainly more historical, to speak of the Roman \textit{appropriation} of these categories and a consequential sophistication of the range of implications.\textsuperscript{273} This has the advantage of allowing for the possibility of a synthetic understanding of these concepts - a synthesis that can properly be called ‘Roman’. Our task therefore is to consider whether they have any useful continuity of meaning and what place they have in a sophisticated system of analysis. A fresh discussion is also required in the light of the foregoing argument about the contingency of the roles of gods and men. \textit{Fatum} must be located within an interpretative system, and the idea of a contrast between the agency of the gods and \textit{fortuna} and \textit{fors} must be re-examined.

(a) \textit{Fatum}

In considering \textit{fatum}, the concept of some kind of unalterable destiny does not present us with problems; the difficulty is that, in a modern setting, that particular category has a fundamentally different meaning, and one which we, with our own peculiar interpretations, find suspicious; but we have no qualms about saying that the end of the

\textsuperscript{271} Kajanto 75.
\textsuperscript{272} Levene 13.
\textsuperscript{273} Feeney (1998) 26-27, 28-31, 50-52 makes the same point with regard to religious rites and goes on to demonstrate the coherence of Roman practice, with a conspicuous incorporation of Greek-style rites to supplement Roman traditional rites. See also Scheid (1995). We might also note the integration of the Etruscan \textit{haruspices} into Roman public ceremony and diagnosis (BNP 20): Livy occasionally indicates their foreign origins (e.g. at 27.37.6).
world is inevitable and that all our knowledge of physics and biology cannot prevent it. What we find difficult is the idea that a destiny can be predicted in such detail for an individual or a city-state. The difference is the modern suspicion of teleology or intention in such things.

In terms of Livy’s position viz-à-viz ancient categories, *fatum* has often been central in arguments about Livy’s ‘Stoicism’: for Walsh, there is a number of passages that imply a Stoic position;\(^{274}\) for Kajanto, Liebeschuetz and Levene, this is overridden by the observation that the majority of the 40 uses of the word *fatum*\(^{275}\) and *fortuna* in Livy’s extant text do not indicate peculiarly Stoic ideas and are “more conventional”.\(^{276}\) The usual strategy regarding those instances that do imply teleological outcomes is that Livy, by his use of *fatum* and *fortuna*, can steer a path through the twin, but partially contradictory, aims of demonstrating that “Rome is bound to succeed, and Livy wishes to show this; but he also wishes to show that her success is due to the behaviour of her citizens. Consequently, scope has to be left for individuals to exhibit their virtues, and for the rise of Rome to be presented as the result of those virtues” (Levene 33). Aspects of this will undoubtedly appear, but in the way that it is presented by Levene, and to a lesser extent Liebeschuetz, Livy appears somewhat cynical about his designations and quite willing to subvert the categories in order to make a political point. The implication that there is some impropriety in Livy’s account is unfair and in fact unsustainable: as we shall see, the invocation of *fatum* does not diminish other areas of responsibility for Livy. In fact it is *almost never* exonerative. The conventional conclusions about *fatum* do not differentiate between situations that appear to be unavoidable despite the best efforts of those concerned and those where specific errors can be identified as a vehicle for the workings of fate.

The term *fatum* itself, as Kajanto shows, admits of a variety of appropriate translations

---

\(^{274}\) Walsh (1958) 53-55.

\(^{275}\) The figure is that of Kajanto 63.

\(^{276}\) The description is Levene’s 31, who has a summary of the important bibliography. See also Erkell (1952) 162-173.
(he offers “a prediction”, “a person’s lot, his (often predicted) fate” and “even” a synonym for *mors*, 54) but this does not mean that the Latin term was necessarily fragmented. These translations share the implication of inevitability, beyond even the reach of the gods.  Fatum is distinguished from the agency of the gods in a number of instances, as forming a force too potent to counteract. We have already met the example of Gracchus, who dies despite his best (religious) efforts to expiate a prodigy:

\[
\begin{align*}
cum \text{ haruspices ad imperatorem id pertinentem prodigium praemoniissent} \\
et \text{ ab occultis caeendum hominibus consultisque, nulla tamen} \\
prudentia fatum imminens moueri potuit. \quad (25.16.4)
\end{align*}
\]

The veterans of Cannae deploy the category of fate as distinct from the gods when pleading for indulgence:

\[
\begin{align*}
si \text{ non deum ira nec fato. cuius lege immobilitis rerum humanarum ordo} \\
seritur, sed culpa periimus ad Cannas, cuius tandem ea culpa fuit? \\
militum an imperatorum? \quad (25.6.6)
\end{align*}
\]

We know that the veterans are wrong (*urgente fato* 22.43.9) but they are arguing within the proper boundaries of Roman cosmology. In both examples there is a contrast between not just the works of men, but also apparently, the reach of the gods: it is in cases like this that scholars invoke Stoic ideas of *heimarmene*. But there is no need to go ‘outside’ Roman concepts to understand the term here. The mention of ‘the gods’ in these examples assumes the opportunity of affecting other outcomes, since the gods are approachable. Fatum designates those areas that cannot be addressed through the

---

277 Kajanto 60 n. 1 cites 9.4.16 (*subeatur ergo ista, quantacumque est, indignitas et pareatur necessitati, quam ne di quidem superant*), where *necessitas* equals *fatum*. 
traditional (or any other) means. But this is not a negation of the power of the gods. Fatum represents an outermost point of interpretation, the ‘highest’ level of analysis, since it admits of no solution: it functions as a residual category for all the situations that could not be solved, and where errors could not be found: it just is so. But it is important to recognise that it derives its meaning from this context of a fuller system, rather than being formulated specifically to highlight victories and heroic efforts. Fatum acts to preserve the integrity of the entire system rather than to glorify or excuse individuals: consider the story of Alexander of Epirus in book 8, which Livy sees fit to record since the wars he waged in Italy entitle him to a place in history even though Fortune kept him from hostilities with Rome (8.24.18.) This is an almost Herodotean tale of the attempt to avoid a prediction (by Dodonean Jupiter in this case) that led to its fulfilment: though the oracle told him caueret Acherusiam aquam Pandosiamque urbem: ibi fatis eius terminum dari (8.24.2), he got the wrong Acherusia and Pandosia: despite trying to avoid his fate he seemed to have run straight into it (ceterum ut ferme fugiendo in media fata ruetur, 8.24.4). There is, however, no attempt to avoid responsibility; the king receives a favourable reception as a war-leader from Livy and dies by treachery rather than any honest failure. We cannot say that mentioning fate absolves Alexander from praise or blame. Indeed, to have the option of assigning events to fate is not ultimately relevant to rescuing human reputations: rather it allows for the failure of the religious system to procure divine support in terms of explanations. It is actually the gods who are off the hook rather than the men. Thus when the cavalryman speaks for the survivors of Cannae, he acknowledges that it was possible for a disaster to occur after the neglect of the gods, by fate or by human error: these are the categories by which they are assigning responsibility. If it is human error, as they suggest, then that leader should be blamed; if the wrath of the gods, then equally it is a human responsibility for inappropriate practices, or neglect. If, however, it is a question of fatum, then no agency can be blamed: in any case the veterans should not be held responsible. Similarly, Gracchus dies after the snakes had attacked his victim three times, but through no fault of his own. Fatum is the end of questions and analysis, the acknowledgement of the limits
of any system of solutions, much as the atom was in physics earlier in this century: its properties were not negotiable nor explicable. At an atomic level the investigation reached a dead end. The use of *fatum* does not, however, preclude any further analysis of responsibility, as a number of examples indicate: the delegation of the three sons of M. Fabius Ambustus, who were instrumental in provoking the Gauls to attack Rome, was described as ‘more like Gauls than Romans’ (*praeferores legatos Gallisique magis quam Romanis similes, 5.36.1*). Their bad tempers in the face of Gallic provocation is attributed to the pressing fate of Rome (*ibi iam urgentibus Romanam urbem fatis legati contra ius gentium arma capiant, 5.36.6*.) Their behaviour remained reprehensible, but for Livy forms part of a complex of causes. Nothing could be worse than the farcical defeat of the Romans at the Allia; it was more like pre-emptive surrender than a battle. It is difficult to see how Livy is avoiding criticism when, for example (and there are plenty from which to choose), he informs us that, amongst other vivid details of the astonishing Roman incompetence, Rome was far from ready for the rapidly approaching Gauls:

\[
\begin{align*}
ibi\ tribuni\ militum\ non\ loco\ castris\ ante\ capto,\ non\ praemunito\ uallo \\
quo\ receptus\ esset,\ non\ deorum\ saltem\ si\ non\ hominum\ memores,\ nec \\
auspicato\ nec\ litato,\ instruant\ aciem,\ diductam\ in\ cornua\ ne \\
circumueniri\ multitudine\ hostium\ possent.\ (5.38.1)
\end{align*}
\]

The criticism that even the gods were neglected is especially striking when the ensuing narrative demonstrates how it was Roman piety that reversed the run of fortune. There is a similar analysis of Cannae: the allocation of blame is so vivid that Levene finds

---

278 Rosenberger (1998) 245 is thus overstating the potency claimed for expiation when he speaks of the lack of ‘fate’ in the Republic (“das Fehlen eines unverrückbaren Schicksals”). It is however true that fate is invoked far less frequently in Livy than in Tacitus and Ammianus; whether this reflects the understanding of the society at large, however, is beyond our scope here.

279 See further on this passage Luce (1971) esp. 269.

280 Levene 184, 193-201 explores the various links with Camillus and the progress of the final fulfilment of Roman piety during the war with the Gauls.

281 Levene 194f; Luce (1971) 275, 277.
that "Varro's factionalism and recklessness lead to defeat, but they do so in a purely human way, and there is little indication of the influence of the divine...Cannae is seen essentially in human terms" (48). However, it would seem that Livy disagrees: at 22.43.9 he speaks of *urgente fato*. Levene is right to note the extreme censure of Varro's foolishness but misses the role of *fatum*. In the light of these examples (two crucial moments in Rome's history) the suggestion that the introduction of fate serves to avoid blame cannot be seen as a useful interpretative approach.

*Fatum* is therefore used of an outcome that *was* not and *could not* be avoided. But ontological and exemplary requirements were not contingent: Roman conduct should be proper at all times. So *fatum* is not used to avoid assessment of the subjects' conduct. In fact, almost the opposite is true: some meet their fate despite every resource available to them, while others succumb to the difficulties that they face. When dealing with *fatum*, the text does not permit of questions such as 'what would have happened if...?' as it sometimes does, at least by implication, when specific error is cited. Essentially Livy's position can be put without excessive simplification as 'even if it might be *fatum*, try anyway.' The diagnosis of fate should only be made when all other options have been exhausted.

*Fatum* is thus a paradox: in one sense, it represents a higher power than the gods as an explanatory and manipulative strategy, yet it is also the *refusal* to explain, the appeal to an underlying reality *beyond* analysis, whether because of the inadequacies of the tools of analysis or the lack of will to use those that exist.\(^\text{282}\) However easily it can be theorised,

\(^{282}\) Two examples will indicate this tactic, both in speeches: L. Cornelius Maluginensis speaks of 'some fate' ("quonam fato incidisset mirari se dictitans ut decemuiratis qui decemuiratum petissent - aut soli ii aut maxime - oppugnarent", 3.40.9). Earlier, L. Quinctius Cincinnatus harangued the people with the assertion that 'by some strange fate' the gods supported Rome better during war than in peace ("nescio quo fato magis bellantes quam pacati propitios habemus deos", 3.19.12). Kajanto's comments on this latter example seem almost bizarre: he says "This is hardly more than a rhetorical device to give the idea more prominence" (62) but one wonders how someone was to make a serious diagnosis without making it prominent. Likewise, his comments on Scipio's evocation of *fatum* seem illogical: "This passage cannot be taken to mean that Livy thinks Rome's survival from all misfortunes was due to a kind of fate. Scipio's purpose in the speech is to make his troops confident of ultimate victory" (62). By the same line of argument, if Scipio had pointed out that the Roman army was a hundred times greater than that of the enemy, we should assume that he was 'merely' trying to encourage his troops but that he did not really believe in his mathematics.
as Cicero presumably did in his *De Fato*, it is not a fixed theoretical category – it is an explanatory strategy. It simultaneously represents both that sphere within which the gods function and a mundane reality: it *simply happens*. There is little more to say than that: thus the cavalryman refers to *fatum* as the *immobilis rerum humanarum ordo* (25.6.6). To assign events to fate does not excuse or explain in any useful sense; there is plenty of scope for action and exemplification, for blame or praise, as events unfold against the backdrop of hindsight. *Fatum* – whether it be the death of an individual, the fall of a city (and one presumes, its subsequent revival) or even one’s lot in life – is an interpretation within which all possible responses can be made, but only the details can be affected: thus Gracchus is offered a variety of deaths, but no escape. At times, such as its casual use in connection with a death, *fatum* represents a mundane reality which no human activity can alter, whereas in the prediction of the capture of Veii, specific action – the draining of the Albine lake – is required for the Romans to conquer.

In this example victory is repeatedly referred to as fated, whether it is the predictions that are so termed or the force that compelled the Old Man to prophesy the means by which that victory would be obtained. The victory is also given by fate (*fatis uictoriam datam*, 5.16.10) despite the recent ritual errors analysed after the response is obtained from Delphi. Why exactly Veii was to be granted to Rome is not available for analysis: it is simply so. Yet the Old Man offers a version of events that seems to attribute responsibility for his prediction to the gods:

_respondit profecto iratos deos Veienti populo illo fuisse die quo sibi_

_eam mentem obiecissent ut excidium patriae fatale proderet._  (5.15.9)

---

283 *propior interpres fatis oblatus senior quidam Veiens, qui...uaticinantis in modum cecinit priusquam ex lacu Albano aqua emissa foret nunquam potiturum Veii Romanum* (5.15.4).
284 Perhaps this explains Livy’s ambivalence about the story of the soldiers’ hearing, while still in the tunnel, the announcement of the *haruspex* who reported that whoever should cut out the sacrificial parts of the victim just immolated would gain victory (5.21.8) since this potentially ran counter to the inevitability of the Roman victory (*contra* Levene 184). Alternatively we should wonder whether he is expressing caution about some of the Augustan ‘reinterpretations’ (on which see above, pp. 59-63, esp. n. 118).
For once we can consider the results of variable outcomes, since the Old Man was not believed by either side, and the Romans took no action on the basis of his pronouncements: rather they followed the advice of the Delphic oracle when it arrived, advice they had requested before the Old Man spoke. It seems likely that the gods’ aid to the Romans in the form of the prophet stands in accordance with, and in addition to, the decrees of fate, though nothing came of it. Presumably the fates, as an irresistible tendency inherent in the situation, exploited whatever means were available. If we should venture to wonder whether the Romans actually needed the help of the Old Man, it appears that the answer is no. In fact, according to the Veientine prophet, the Romans did not even need to send to Delphi: all the information was in the *libri fatales* (5.15.11). Furthermore the fates did not simply hand over the city: it still required the expert generalship of Camillus, the ruse of the tunnel and the supplication to the gods for Rome to succeed. Fate could never replace human activities and responsibilities: life was still played out in the material sphere, and any situation, however fated, was still subject, if only in its details, to normal rules of behaviour, cause and effect. Thus in the fall of Veii we have the co-existence of divine disfavour because of the fault in the Roman elections, the human efforts in the siege and the decrees of fate all operating in their own proper spheres, and even, at times, apparently at odds with one another.285

*Fatum* represents those fixed certainties within which one lives, negotiates outcomes and ultimately dies. It is beyond negotiation itself and is known by that distinctive characteristic. So when Scipio Africanus typically has the confidence to divine the workings of not just the gods but also *fatum*, he is telling his men that it is Roman

285 Livy’s final words on the fall of Veii acknowledge the human difficulties and struggle in the face of destiny: *hic Veiorum occasus fuit, urbis opulentissimae Etrusci nominis, magnitudinem suam uel ultima clade indicantis, quod decem aestates hiemesque continuas circumsessa cum plus aliquanto cladium intulisset quam accepisset, postremo iam fato quoque urgente, operibus tamen, non ui expugnata est* (5.22.8). For echoes of Troy here see Kraus (1994a) 267-289. The senators are said to be keen to fulfil the precepts of fate as soon as possible at 29.10.8, which suggests that the exertions of the Veientines were not entirely worthless, at least until the machinery of fate was brought into play. On a ‘level playing-field’ the Veientines were doing rather well.
destiny to suffer defeat before victory in all great wars (*ea fato quodam data nobis sors est, ut magnis omnibus bellis uicti uicerimus*, 26.41.9) he is not just expertly reassuring them: he is refusing to be drawn on the causes of this pattern, and acquiescing in it, as is P. Decius when he follows his father’s example and devotes himself in order to gain Roman victory (*‘quid ultra moror’ inquit ‘familiare fatum? datum hoc nostro generi est ut luendis periculis publicis piacula simus’*, 10.28.12-13).²⁸⁶

So when Livy refers to *fatum* before the Allia (5.36.6) and Cannae (22.43.9) he concurs with his Scipio:²⁸⁷ there is no other explanation than that this pattern of failure followed by success seems to be typical of Roman fortunes, despite the efforts of commanders both at the altar and in the field. Religion offered no other explanatory strategy for this turn of events since mention of the gods always includes the possibility of propitiation. Scipio is perfectly suited to act as a mouthpiece: unafraid of the excess of such a drastic and far-reaching conclusion, he commands respect for his success, whatever hesitations Livy has about his manner. It is significant that not one of Livy’s priests takes it upon himself to conclude that fate was adverse to the Romans. Generals other than Scipio make particular deductions about fate on a relatively small scale, as Decius did, but the priests only invoke fate where there is a positive outcome for Rome. Little wonder, seeing that their credibility and their function depended on their abilities to avert forewarned disaster: they have the proper authority to speak of Rome’s fate, but to do so in a negative context would not be to their credit. In the face of any difficulties they must always attempt propitiation. If they were to consider that the hand of fate was present in setbacks it would be tantamount to resignation.²⁸⁸

The sheer inevitability of certain events, whether they were desirable or preferably to be avoided, is the consistent factor in the uses of *fatum* or *fatalis* in Livy’s text. He is not

²⁸⁶ Cf. 31.48.12 or Livy’s verdict on the Claudii at 9.33.3: *cum ex ea familia, +quae uelut fatales cum tribunis ac plebe erat, + certamen oritur.*
²⁸⁷ For the close relationship of Scipio with the narrator at this point, see Feldherr (1998) 71-72.
²⁸⁸ The appropriate domain of the *decemuiiri* is fate, given that they consulted the *libri fatales*: but the old man of Veii, alone of the various *haruspices* through Livy’s extant ages, also spoke of the *fata* (5.16.10).
concerned to demonstrate, in Stoic fashion, that everything happens by fate, but he does deploy it as a category where, for a variety of reasons, it has been accepted that the order of things has, or will have, manifested itself in a particular way. It is not simply that fatum is not a possible diagnosis in a situation where it is not introduced, but that, in a way not dissimilar to the tendency to adopt the ‘lowest’ possible explanation on a scale of interpretations, it does not always need to be introduced. If Livy ‘believed’ that to each was allotted a particular span and type of life, he does not bother to make it especially prominent. Death is the final and most self-evident unchangeable reality of human existence, and thus deserves the designation of fatum: but its reliability in some senses liberates Livy from mentioning it at every turn. It follows that, in keeping with the principles adopted for the discussion of the workings of the gods, there will be moments where explicit mention of fatum is more appropriate than others.

Consider the abundance of religious errors in connection with the death of Petilius. When he dies at Letum, Livy adduces a number of explanations from different sources: firstly we learn that his vow to capture Letum that day provided an ominous pun (se eo die Letum capturum esse) he was granted his wish, meeting death (letum). He had also failed to obtain favourable omens for Salus at 41.15.4, and his colleague Cnaeus Cornelius, who also died in office, had reported a strange problem with a disappearing liver after sacrificing the sescenaris ox (41.15.1). We can add that Petilius proceeded to battle despite unfavourable omens from the sacred chickens (41.18.14). This was revealed later, as was the mistake in the ritual for drawing lots between himself and his new colleague Valerius (41.18.8). Petilius is also described as careless (incautius, 41.18.11), which seems to suggest human error, at the moment of his death. Even if we discount the sign offered by the chickens as simply a warning that all was not well (which we knew anyway), we are left with three religious ‘causes’: the ira of Salus, stepping outside the templum and the prediction of letum capiendum. Yet Livy does not, despite the multitude of errors and the ill-omen of the intransigence of Salus, invoke fatum. However, Marcellus died both because of the ira deum and fatum, as we shall
see. It is therefore worthwhile speculating as to whether there are specific features characterising episodes designated to be the outcome of *fatum* rather than any other agency.

One possible reason for the *absence of fatum* in the case of Petilius is that specific agency is available. The clear identification of *Salus* as the ‘cause’ in the matter ends the search for explanation: there is no need to involve any ‘higher’ explanation. If pressed, perhaps Livy would have offered that it was Petilius’ fate to die at this point; certainly, an individual’s death elsewhere is linked with *fatum*. Gracchus is the example already introduced, and though he was forewarned, he was unable to prevent his death. In Gracchus’ case alone is fate depicted as so potent that there is no contingent explanation. One difference is that the others’ errors could be attributed to a specific cause, while Gracchus seems to have committed none: rather he adopted the proper course of action, the repeated effort to propitiate the gods. The statement *nulla tamen providentia fatum imminens moueri potuit* (25.16.4) indicates the poverty of all the resources available to him and Livy does not question further: these things happen.

Gracchus was warned by the gods of his impending death: but the case of Marcellus is more complex. Apart from the range of divine and human factors invoked to explain his death, his fall is also linked with *fatum*. When there is the change of provinces that sent Marcellus to Sicily to meet Hannibal for the last time, Livy speaks of his *rapiens fatum*:

> inter ipsos consules permutatio prouinciarum, rapiente fato Marcellum

> ad Hannibalem, facta est, ut ex quo primus post <aduersa omnia haud> aduersae pugnae gloriam ceperat, in eius laudem postremus Romanorum imperatorum prosperis tum maxime bellicis rebus caderet.

> (26.29.9-10)
The most obvious similarity between this episode and the 'destined' role of Rome to reverse initial setbacks as diagnosed by Scipio is the discernment of a pattern in events on such a scale as to render individual details as just that – mere details. Livy does not use fatum elsewhere of the consul’s lot, though there are always plenty of causative principles at play. Here then, in particular, is the pathos of such an innocent decision to evoke pity for the brave consul. There is a further dimension however: Hannibal’s fearsome reputation is itself already linked with fatum. During a dream, the Carthaginian general disobeyed the instruction not to look behind him:

\begin{quote}
\textit{tum uidisse post sese serpentina mira magnitudine cum ingenti arborum}
\textit{ac uirgulantorum strage ferri, ac post insequi cum fragore caeli nimbum.}
\textit{tum, quae moles ea quidue prodigi esset, quaerentem, audisse,}
\textit{vaastitatem Italiae esse: pergeret porro ire nec ultra inquireret sineretque}
\textit{fata in occulto esse.} (21.22.8-9)\textsuperscript{289}
\end{quote}

The outcome of the Punic War is, in a broad sense, destined: there is more than the simple motif of piety/success, impiety/failure and Marcellus is caught up in these inexorable events by the allocation of provinces. The evocation of fatum is not intended to replace the religious explanations for his difficulties, which are sufficient at their own level. Fatum rather represents a change of perspective from the particular to the broadest possible viewpoint. This is sanctioned by the discernment of a pattern in Roman affairs that seems to repeat itself despite the best efforts of those concerned, twinned with the fact of a prediction (fatum). By the repeated use of fatum, the historian reveals his knowledge, provided by hindsight, and links the approaching fall of Marcellus to Hannibal’s dream. He does this by making explicit what the dream prescribed as secret, that is, the true pattern of Hannibal’s fate: to gain a reputation as distinguished as could

\textsuperscript{289} On the differences between Livy’s and Coelius’ version (fr. 11 P) of this episode see Pelling (1997) 202-204.
be hoped for, short of that of the conqueror of Rome. This is made as complete as ever by his victory over all, including the man who first turned the tide by defeating him. Only the *fatalis dux*,²⁹⁰ Scipio, could stand against him and he was almost superhuman in his own right.

As ever, while this is an explanation in one sense, in another it is the acknowledgement of an impenetrable, and ultimately unchangeable, situation. Perhaps Marcellus had avoidably blundered into a pattern prescribed by fate; perhaps even if Hannibal himself had been less ambitious and remained in Africa, neither would have found their lives entwined by the prescriptions of destiny: but once caught up, they could only play out the almost anonymous roles allotted to them. Thus, the instances where fate is invoked, during the Punic War at least, owe this to their relevance to the grand scheme – for Rome to prosper, despite early setbacks. We might say that references to fate will tend to accumulate, since once a run of events has been linked with destiny, any aspect of those events is potentially meaningful to that scheme. Thus *fatum* is used repeatedly in connection with the Punic War, the war with the Gauls and the campaign against Veii, of which the first two are linked to Scipio’s scheme of initial defeat and final victory, and the last to the fulfilment of an ancient prophecy.²⁹¹ Otherwise it is employed rarely, especially in connection with war. Though it might have been possible, if it had been necessary, to incorporate other events into the scheme of destiny, *fatum* is usually too ponderous an explanation to be required. The death of Petilius, compared above with that of Marcellus and Gracchus, does not belong within such a grand scheme in any meaningful sense, and thus does not merit the *explicit* assignation to fate. It would not be wrong but neither would it be appropriate or necessary.

---

²⁹⁰ The only other general to earn this title is another Roman, who also intervened in a ‘fateful’ war of initial reversal, this time against the Gauls: Camillus, after the draining of the Albine Lake, and therefore on the eve of the destined defeat of Veii, is so described at 5.19.2.
²⁹¹ According to the Old Man, both the *libri fatales* and the *scientia* of the Etruscans say that victory for the Romans was guaranteed by the draining of the lake, 5.15.11; Delphi concurs. The lack of room for manoeuvre combines with the aspect of prediction to make *fatum* an unavoidable diagnosis.
Such is Livy's strategy in mentioning *fatum*. The rhetorical power of destiny, which stems from its potency and relation to other diagnoses, should not be underestimated, but it should not be concluded, as Kajanto and Levene so often do, that it only has a 'literary' function, for this depends for its meaning on a sharp division between 'real life' and the realm of 'the aesthetic'. To explain, to give an interpretation, is a rhetorical and agonistic venture but it is the evocative process of convincing that is the competitive aspect: any poverty of meaning or superabundance of diagnosis in dealing with words like *fatum* would reveal Livy to be a charlatan. His characters are as loathe to use *fatum* as he himself is: many of these examples Kajanto dismisses as a 'synonym for *mors*' (54) but a closer examination than he offers reveals other aspects to the judicious appeal to fate.

At 3.50.8, Verginius, who had just murdered his daughter to prevent her seizure by Appius, contrasts the death (*fatum*) of his wife with his daughter’s honourable death:

*(inquit)...uxorem sibi fato ereptam, filiam, quia non ultra pudica*

*uictura fuerit, miseram sed honestam mortem occubuisse.*

Verginius is drawing a powerful contrast between the inevitable death (*fatum*) of his wife, which is not described or dated (she is spoken of in the pluperfect at 3.44.3), and the *unnecessary* death of his daughter: he could not save her life, but he did protect her honour. To see *fatum* as a ‘simple alternative’ to *mors* entirely misses the point of the passage. Decius’ death, called *fatum* by the *Pontifex Maximus* Livius is equally more potent than *mors* would have been at 10.29.3, since it evokes the sense of destiny: just as the consul has ‘given away’ his life, so too will the Romans conquer the equally doomed Gauls and Samnites. Loesius, last leader of Capua, speaks of *fatum* as death at 26.13.17, but this is because he has asked for those of his colleagues who have chosen to accept death to join him: the word has the chill acquiescence in the inevitable, as it does
at 5.40.3. The death of Philip of Macedon is twice referred to as *fatum* (42.11.5; 52.7, and both times with *oppressum*). Each time it is by his son Perseus, and each time it resonates with the reader who remembers Livy’s own version at 40.54.1, where he says that Philip was *senio et maerore consumptus post mortem filii [Demetrii].* Demetrius’ death was of course engineered by Perseus, whose use of *fatum* in Livy’s account underlines his hypocrisy: his brother’s (and therefore his father’s) death was far from natural.

(b) *Fors*

If *fatum* is at one end of the scale of predetermination, then *fors* is normally taken to be at the opposite end. It is too common to be ignored: though *fors* as a nominative agent appears relatively rarely (Kajanto offers a count of 16), the ablative *forte* occurs at least 197 times.\(^{292}\) The usual assumption adopted (excepting Champeaux) is that *fors* indicates a random event *in contrast* to divinely ordered or humanly anticipated events. In modern analysis it corresponds roughly to an intervention that owes nothing to the situation on which it intrudes, yet such a scenario is difficult to reconcile with the image thus far deduced about ancient thinking. For the Romans, a situation was subject to an irresistible propensity towards a particular outcome. As such, we might expect that a ‘chance’ (i.e. unexpected) event would be drawn ineluctably into that propensity. In a world where results were attributed to the *pax* or the *ira deum*, there seems little scope for randomness. A ‘chance’ event might therefore affect the means by which a situation was brought to its fruition, but the opportunities for it to ‘direct’ an outcome seem at best limited.

Furthermore, there is no theoretical reason why a notion of randomness should not co-

\(^{292}\) Kajanto 76; *forte* – Champeaux (1967) 363’s figure.
exist with a complex theory of causation. Indeed the very existence of such a category implies that other aspects were predictable: for instance a broad economic theory might ‘explain’ why a number of people lost their homes after a rise in the basic rate of interest, but would not define the precise details of each individual case. Or, in a scientific paradigm, the certainty that a particular chemical reaction would take place at a particular rate with a particular result would not dictate which particular molecules would react with which and when, even though the time for the whole reaction would be fairly easy to predict. Nonetheless the overall results would be predictable by the theoretical models. In fact, the category of ‘chance’ is a necessary dismissal of the details: the theory would be unworkable if it attempted to take into consideration events on a smaller scale. Details might remain perfectly explicable, given the attempt to adopt a closer focus; but a different set of theories and observations will be part of an answer to these more particular questions. From this perspective, we might expect to encounter not the assertion that an event was utterly random, but that ‘chance’ events fall beneath the explanatory scope of broader assumptions. If we are to take any assumptions into our discussion of the occurrence of fors, it should be these, rather than a modern expectation that fors represents a rival causative agent to the agency of the gods.

Armed with these considerations, it is possible to examine representative examples, beginning with Champeaux’s organisation of the occurrences of forte into five categories.293 Her essential argument is that, for the most part, forte represents the workings of the natural order in the dispensation not of random events but rather of ‘le sort’, one’s lot: however she suggests that at five specific instances forte represents the workings of divine providence.294 She is concerned to show that, rather than

293 She does not deal with the nominative fors, although a survey easily incorporates it into her conclusions. Fors is included below along with forte.
294 “Forte, ablatif adverbial de fors, n’exprime pas l’action du hasard, principe d’anarchie, mais celle du sort au sens le plus large. Il peut évoquer l’involontaire (ce qui se produit ‘du fait du sort’) ou, le plus souvent, les situations de fait (‘il se trouve que’) et les coïncidences (‘justement’, ‘précisément’), dues à des causes naturelles et qui constituent la trame de l’histoire. Dans quelques cas exceptionnels, forte (‘par bonheur’) évoque une chance providentielle ménagée par les dieux et la Fortune, dont l’action – loin de la bouleverser – se superpose à la causalité naturelle et s’exerce par son intermédiaire” (363).
constituting a category that negates any understandable sequence of events, 

*forte* is primarily an ontologically neutral notice that ‘something happened’. This runs through the different groupings, which are far from hard and fast: they are organised along relatively arbitrary, if sensible, divisions that Livy would have recognised as indicative of a different emphasis rather than of rigidly different meanings. Her categories are as follows: (i) ‘by chance’ (‘par hasard’) or ‘expressing the unexpected’;295 (ii) fortuitous or ‘involontaire’ (i.e. going against plans);296 (iii) a representative of the unexpected, the improbable, or what happens (‘il se trouve que…’);297 (iv) a specialisation of type (iii) indicating a greater degree of surprise or emphasis, i.e. ‘at a certain point’;298 and (v) representing providence.299 Champeaux is at pains to stress that ‘randomness’ is not an option; she refers frequently to ‘le sort’ as opposed to ‘la chance’ for instance where she detects divine providence in the workings of *fors*, her category (v).

The first of these is the first instance of *forte* in Livy: when Amulius orders the drowning of the infants Romulus and Remus,

*forte quadam diuinitus super ripas Tiberis effusus lenibus stagnis nec adiri usquam ad iusti cursum poterat amnis.* (1.4.4)

In due course the waters retreat and the boys are left to be found by the she-wolf and Faustulus. The divine intervention is strengthened by Livy’s introduction to the story of their conception and birth:

295 “Il ne s’agit pas du hasard, mais seulement de l’incertitude de l’avenir qui représente une inconnue”, (368), citing 40.12.16.
296 “fors...s’agit, non du principe universel du hasard, mais du hasard particulier, d’un événement fortuit” (372), e.g. 1.9.11.
297 “forte évoque alors des données de fait d’un intérêt épisodique; il peut aussi mettre l’accent sur le caractère distinctif et durable d’une période” (373), e.g. *forte annus pestilens erat* (3.6.2).
298 So especially of the phrase *tum forte* (11 occurrences) which “évoque des coïncidences notables et fécondes” (380), e.g. 1.22.3; 38.58.9.
299 “Forte présage le rétablissement imprévu d’une situation que tout présentait comme désespérée…L’ événement est aussi heureux qu’inexplicable et c’est bien à ce principe irrationnel qu’il faut se référer, si l’on veut tenter d’en rendre compte” (382): examples follow.
The somewhat evasive *forte quadam* reappears, equally unambiguously, at 5.49.1, when the remaining Romans are about to capitulate to the Gauls and ransom the city:

*sed dique et homines prohibuere redemptos uiuere Romanos, nam forte quadam priusquam infanda merces perficeretur, per altercationem nondum omni auro adpenso, dictator interuenit.*

Thus our tentative assumptions seem confirmed: it is perfectly possible to have the overlap of divine and ‘chance’ events. In these two examples both the will of the gods and details ascribed to *forte* coexist. Thus we can at least say what *fors* is *not*, i.e. an absolute randomness that *excludes* divine agency. We might however also consider that the translation ‘providence’ is over-stated. These things may have happened by the intervention of the gods but this claim is not enshrined in *forte*; it is located elsewhere in the text.

It remains to establish the broader category of *fors* and *forte*, and in this Champeaux’s schema is useful: ultimately her first four categories all revolve around the conjunction of particular details in the narrative. The schema represents ascending degrees of unlikelihood or improbability: so *forte* might be little more than an acknowledgement of a

---

300 The importance of the timing, indicated by *forte*, should not be understated: it marks the difference between Rome at war and Rome defeated; see Feldherr (1998) 78-81.
detail that might easily have worked out another way, as in two speeches where we find
the phrasing ‘(iniurias) si quae forte fuerunt’.301 Something that happens forte might be
of tremendous consequence, as it is when, after Camillus has urged the Senate not to
move the population to Veii, a centurion and his troops happen (forte) to arrive in the
Comitium with the words ‘Halt, standard-bearer! Plant the standard; it will be best for us
to stop here’ (5.55.1-2): forte might indicate a possible (future) contingency, as when the
senate refers the issue of war with the Gauls to the people, ne penes ipsos culpa esset
cladis forte (5.36.10). Alternatively it might be an detail incidental in itself (but
momentous in its consequences ) as when Tarpeia, aquam forte ea tum sacris extra
moenia petitum ierat (1.11.6). is bribed to admit Tatius into Rome.

It actually makes no difference to the category of fors whether events are designated as
unfolding according to a divine plan, or simply those coincidences that occur without any
given reason: it always indicates a particular detail, more or less unexpected, that is part
of a chain of events. Ultimately it is a way of drawing the readers’ attention to a specific
event, of structuring the narrative to indicate an unexpected or new factor. It denotes the
human perspective of the unfolding of events and is only relevant to the workings of the
divine in so far as the category represents those details that are left to decide themselves,
given that greater forces are at play which will decide outcomes in broad terms. In short,
there is no polarity between fors and the gods, no claim to divine agency (though that
might be elsewhere) and certainly no denial of the gods’ interest.

301 Archo, addressing the Athenians, implores them that ‘tanta priorum Macedoniae regum merita erga
nos fuisse ut Philippi unius iniurias, si quae forte fuerunt, utique post mortem <...> (41.24.12): Appius
Claudius addresses the Romans thus: ‘an est quisquam qui dubitet nullis iniuriis uestris, si quae forte
aliuando fuerunt, unquam aequo quam munere patrum in plebem, cum aera militiibus constituta sunt,
tribunos plebis offensos ac concitatos esse?’ (5.3.4).
Fortuna, linguistically an extension of fors, is a comparable but distinct entity from its parent. Like its cognate it is linked to events on a human level but, unlike fors, is also the name of a prominent deity, or rather a variety of deities.\textsuperscript{302} Whereas fors designates the unexpected juncture of specific (usually two) events and does not particularly attempt to analyse the causes of those events, fortuna is constructed as a more wilful entity ‘governing’ events in a more general way. Fors specifies the coincidence of individual details: fortuna is an agent in a more nebulous and more circumscribed manner. Nonetheless they share the aspect of a related perspective: both predominantly seek not to explain the workings of heaven but rather to evoke the human perspective. Just as fors could easily overlap with the workings of fate or the more negotiable will of the gods, so fortuna can also represent these workings without claiming a distinct jurisdiction. The number of occurrences of fortuna (Kajanto 64 counts 493, excluding mentions of actual recipients of cult) necessitates some general discussion of these frequent examples in Livy’s text in some schematised fashion.

Levene offers the conclusion that “we may accept Kajanto’s account: that Livy uses it to mean ‘luck’ or ‘chance’ when he wishes to draw attention to the incalculable, the unpredictable element, especially in battles, over which humans have no control; in this way he can explain mistakes, or else can emphasise Roman uirtus by showing that it was superior to fortuna...but such an idea...would have the unwanted effect of diminishing Roman victories. Hence Livy uses it also to mean something like ‘providence’, and here it is used above all to emphasise the divine protection of the city.”\textsuperscript{303} There are problems, both methodologically and textually, with such a position. Firstly, the ‘unpredictable element’ of battle and other endeavours is precisely that area over which the gods are conceived to have jurisdiction: thus the implications of the modern categories

\textsuperscript{302} With the problematic exception of the joint temple Fors Fortuna, founded at 10.46.14.
\textsuperscript{303} Levene 33, citing Kajanto 82-84 & 90-91.
of ‘luck’ or ‘chance’ are at best misleading. Secondly, if the intrusion of *fortuna* as a causal agent in the narrative runs the risk of diminishing Roman *uirtus* in success, what are we to make of the dedications of temples to *Fortuna* in or after battle? We have already noted Fulvius Flaccus’ vow to build a temple to *Fortuna Equestris* (40.40.10) and Sempronius’ vow to *Fortuna Primigeneia* (29.36.8): if we are to follow Levene and Kajanto then the Romans themselves were happy to abandon any claim to praise that might have been forthcoming for their victories. Such modesty would be most uncharacteristic and also leaves Kajanto’s hypothesis without any support from Livy’s agents. Nor does Livy himself shrink from naming *fortuna* as an agent in a Roman victory: to say that it is deployed to maximise credit to Roman virtue simply does not correspond with the text. Thirdly, the conjunction of the ever-successful *fortuna populi Roman* ē304 with the suggestion that Roman *uirtus* is to be praised over the ‘whims of fortune’ is also paradoxical, if not downright contradictory. If we accept the hypothesis of Levene and Kajanto, Livy is having his cake and dropping it.

The confusion arises partly from Kajanto’s avowed intention to emphasise scepticism in Livy: thus, while he cannot deny that *fortuna* does repeatedly appear providentially in the narrative (64-76), he asserts that at times its meaning is ‘reduced’ to ‘good luck’ and concludes his section so named with “because of the casualness of the remarks, *fortuna* has no importance as an historical factor here.” ē305 His conclusions, however, seem to owe more to his methodology than any convincing interpretation of his examples which include such notices as *tertia illa pugna eo anno fuit. eadem fortuna uictoriam dedit* (3.8.11): ē306 the ‘casualness’ of such notices is supposedly self-evident. The idea that *fortuna* is pregnant with associations so commonly perceived as to make clarification superfluous does not seem to have occurred to Kajanto.

---

304 Kajanto 65-67.
305 Kajanto 76.
306 His others include: *fortuna quoque industriorem plebeium consulum fecit* (when the patrician consul L. Cornelius Scipio falls ill) (7.23.2); *sic eques, sic pedes, ut praeceperat (scil. dux), pugnant; nec dux legiones nec fortuna fefellit ducem* (6.12.11). In the latter example, *fortuna* is a reference to the support of the gods.
Unless we are to conclude that Livy is indeed hopelessly contradictory in his use of *fortuna*, it is necessary to bring a different methodology to the examples cited by those who assert that *fortuna* as a category is irremediably fragmented in the *Ab Urbe Condita*. This is only possible in the context of an analysis of the role of *fortuna* relative to the jurisdiction of the gods.

*Fortuna* and the Gods.

That *fortuna* is linked with the divine is evident from a number of angles: firstly, because she *is* a goddess.\(^{307}\) There are reasons to think that she could be construed as a deity in action: in one case, *fortuna* is said have saved the city immediately following the dedication of a temple to her as *Fortuna Muliebris*: when the Volsci and the Aequi join forces and invade Roman territory, they fall out over leadership and end up fighting one another (*atrox proelium ortum*). Livy offers that

\[\text{ibi fortuna populi Romani duos hostium exercitus haud minus pernicioso quam pertinaci certamine confecit. (2.40.13)}\]

Furthermore, *Fortuna* receives ritual attention, appropriately enough, after the shrinking of the lots at Caere (21.62.8). Furthermore, we find that, as is consistent with the juxtaposition of the respective realms of gods and men, human values are placed in

\(^{307}\) At 2.40.12 a temple is dedicated to *Fortuna Muliebris*; we also hear of the temple of *Fors Fortuna*, dedicated by Servius Tullius, at 10.46.14; there is a *supplicatio* to *Fortuna* on Algidus at 21.62.8; Sempronius vows a temple to *Fortuna Primigenia* at 29.36.8; a temple of Fortuna without epithet is mentioned at 33.27.4; Fulvius Flaccus offers a temple to *Fortuna Equestris* at 40.40.10. Of course, *fortuna* appears frequently: on the broader problems of capitalising abstract deities (see Feeney (1998) 88: "thinking about the difference between *Pax* and *pax* is not easy, but it would appear to be a good deal easier than thinking about the difference between *PAX* and *PAX*").
In the absence of proper human resources, the *fortuna populi Romani* is sometimes sufficient to protect Rome, as above, at 2.40.13. At another point any distinction between *fortuna* and the gods is blurred: when a plague leaves Rome undefended,

\[
\text{deserta omnia, sine capite, sine uiribus, di praesides ac fortuna urbis}
\]
\[
tutata est, quae Volscis Aequisque praedonum potius mentem quam
\]
\[
hostium dedit. (3.7.1)
\]

It even seems that *fortuna* and the *di praesides* are contingent: the singular verb is not conclusive but the feminine *quae*, if we can make anything of a fairly normal grammatical construction, designates *fortuna* as the dominant grammatical subject.\(^{309}\) There are further examples where *fortuna* seems to represent the enactment of the gods’ will: the Gauls, having fatefully taken Rome so easily, send troops to Ardea, where they will meet true Roman courage in the form of the exiled Camillus:

\[
\text{proficiscentes Gallos ab urbe ad Romanam experiendam uirtutem}
\]
\[
fortuna ipsa Ardeam ubi Camillus exsulabat duxit. (5.43.6)
\]

This would seem to be in keeping with the workings of *fatum*, whereby Rome, in the

---

\(^{308}\) E.g. especially with *uirtus*; *in eo bello et uirtus et fortuna enituit Tulli* (1.42.3); Fabius Maximus is said to have left the Roman army *minus iam tandem aut uirtutis aut fortunae paenitere suae* (22.12.10). Cf. also 7.30.8, 7.34.6, 9.17.3 (where the *ingenium imperatorum* is also mentioned), 23.42.4, 25.24.13, 26.41.9; at 35.42.8 we find *ingenium* in place of *uirtus*.

\(^{309}\) Cf. the situation in a war against the Gauls, where under the pretext of religious restrictions, the Gauls launch an ambush but *fortuna* defends the Romans from the breach of trust: *successisset fraudi ni pro iure gentium, cuius uiolandi consilium initum erat, stetisset fortuna* (38.25.8).
event of a major war, would reverse initial setbacks. But the gulf between modern and ancient interpretations is obvious in the way that fortuna was thought to be at least relatively predictable from its recent record: Philip of Macedon decided to go with Hannibal’s cause on these grounds (23.33.4). All the evidence seemed to suggest that the gods were with him; they happened not to be with Philip in the same way.

Fortuna is not, however, always favourable: at 23.24.6 Livy introduces news of the loss of Postumius and his legions:

\[
\textit{cum eae res maxime agerentur, noua clades nuntiata, aliam super aliam cumulante in eum annum fortuna.}
\]

Indeed, one of fortuna’s traditional characteristics was the unexpected reversal, spectacularly in the cases of Camillus (uere uir unicus in omni fortuna, 7.1.9) and Aemilius Paullus, whose success in war was matched by his misfortune at home. He specifically attributes the loss of his two sons to the workings of an envious fortuna.

‘neque erat, quod ultra precarer, illud optaui, ut, cum ex summo retro uolui fortuna consuesset, mutationem eius domus mea potius quam res publica sentiret. itaque defunctam esse fortunam publicam mea tam insigni calamitate spero...sed hanc cladem domus meae uestra felicitas et secunda fortuna publica consolatur.’ (45.41.8-12)

\[\text{\textsuperscript{310}} 5.37.1-3 – the prelude to the disaster of the Allia – seems to be in the same mould but it is fortuna who manifests the gods’ will: cum tanta moles mali instaret- adeo occaecat animos fortuna, ubi uim suam ingruentem refringi non uolt- ...nihil extraordinarii imperii aut auxiliis quaeisuit.\]
Aemilius would have us believe (and he was in good company in antiquity) that inherent in fortuna’s gifts is the dispensation of failure or loss after a run of success. He was wise enough to foresee this, and hoped that fortuna would divert the outcome from the public stage of his successes to his private life. Again, this does not separate the approachable gods from fortuna, for when Hannibal shrewdly advises Scipio to beware his good fortune, and not to despise the Carthaginian’s offer of peace, he attributes his own reversal at one time to fortuna and at another to the jealousy of the gods. In terms of interpretative structure the jealousy of the gods and the mutability of fortuna seem to occupy the same category.

What characterises fortuna perhaps more than anything else is its unpredictability: the phrase uaria fortuna, indicating gains for both sides at different times, occurs at least nine times and often fortuna is characterised as capricious or at least unpredictable. However it does not represent some idea that life is totally unpredictable; trends can be discerned, at least broadly. Fortuna operates in the same sphere as the gods and in a similar fashion, influencing the various factors that govern the outcome either for or against the protagonists. In a radical sense it indicates ‘the situation that occurs’ (where fors will tend to mean ‘the thing that occurs’), a particularly colourless phrase in English but one loaded with implications in a Roman setting: there is no modern correlative for fortuna in the sense that it is impossible to convey its fuller implications. Like fors and fatum, it draws attention to events, assigning them to a distinct category: fors refers to the particular, fatum to the inevitable and fortuna to the situation as immediately presented, with all its inherent tendencies. Given the importance of divine factors fortuna will necessarily reflect the will of the gods but, as was seen with fors, does not itself make a

311 Compare the way that the gods diverted the consequences of ritual error to Marcellus and Crispinus, 27.33.11.
312 30.30.5, and 4 & 26 respectively. He also attributes the outcome of war to fatum (30.30.3). The entire speech is an illustration of the way that fortuna will be mentioned to underline the uncertainty of future events, fatum to indicate the unchangeable and that it is the gods who dispense the course of events. See also below, p. 169.
313 I note 2.60.4, 6.25.4, 21.1.2, 22.29.7, 28.12.3, 29.29.5, 29.29.9, 33.37.1 & 40.40.1. There is also the combination of fortuna with uario at 9.18.11, 10.29.7, 23.5.9 and 23.13.4; the phrase aduersa fortuna is used at 3.58.4, 9.18.12 and 33.4.4. Another variation of the wording is found at 2.6.10 (ibi uaria uictoria et uelut aequo Marte pugnatum est).
claim, however easy it is to infer a claim from other evidence. Essentially, fortuna's emphasis is on the human perspective. Thus fortuna can refer to the workings of divine favour or displeasure, but what is conveyed by its use would seem to be that a situation 'as is' is represented as 'caused' by fortuna.

One extended example will illustrate this: when the Roman army is cut off by the Samnites, P. Decius offers to take control of an overhang with the words nos deinde aut fortuna populi Romani aut nostra uirtus expediet, (example (i)), (7.34.6). Having done so he is said to have 'seized the advantage for action' (fortunam gerendae rei eripuerant, (ii) (7.34.10). When they are surrounded he tells his troops that the Samnites have missed the opportunity to destroy the army as a whole (delendi omnis exercitus fortuna...usus non sit (iii), (7.35.5). He plans their escape and exhorts them with the words nihil uobis fortuna reliqui fecerit fameque et siti moriendum sit (iv) (7.35.8). Shortly afterwards he ends with the appeal me modo sequimini, quem secuti estis; ego eandem quae duxit hue sequar fortunam (v) (7.35.12). On his successful return to camp, Decius is praised highly and proceeds to sacrifice an ox to Mars (7.37.3).

Fortuna cannot be represented consistently in English in this episode: we must render it '(tutelary) fortuna' (i), 'tide of circumstance' (ii), 'opportunity' (iii), 'circumstances' (iv) and, for the final example, (v), almost any of these translations. What cannot be properly represented is the pregnancy of the usages, except perhaps in Decius' invocation of the fortuna populi Romani, which is suggested with caution, as is appropriate for such a junior official.314 Decius is treating each new situation as a result or outcome, though as a new one emerges, the previous situation (fortuna) becomes part of the means by which he reached that new situation. All this is characteristic of a 'higher-level' analysis, and reminds the reader of accounts of the gods' agency whose domain fortuna structurally represents. Each new situation offers different opportunities and tendencies, and it is these that are most of all alluded to in the use of fortuna, not those implications.

314 Cf Corvus, below (p. 182): on the politics of Decius' (not) making diagnoses, see p. 187.
that are foregrounded by our (limited) translations.

It is repeated, yet distinct, usages such as these that lead Kajanto to schematise his different types of *fortuna*. But there is a greater unity than he allows: at each point that he speaks of *fortuna*, Decius describes the whole of the present situation, and judges its inherent tendencies: when he promises to ‘follow the same fortune that brought us here’ he is seeing the run of ‘luck’ that would normally be taken to indicate the support of the gods, which of course he acknowledges in his sacrifice. Yet it is to Mars, god of war, that he sacrifices, not *Fortuna*. That would seem appropriate enough in a military context, but it begs the question, in what capacity was *fortuna* actually functioning as a goddess? The answer would seem to be in the *fulfilment* of divine support: ‘the way things turned out/are turning out’ is the most emphatic proof of the gods’ will towards Rome. In describing *fortuna* as *uardia*, the Romans were therefore acknowledging an observable phenomenon: victory is far from assured – it is in the hands of the gods. *Fortuna* reflects the unexpected loss of the *pax deum* as well as the delivery of favour’s outcome. This accounts for the references to *uardia fortuna* at least: a loss of favour, usually due to impiety, is responsible for defeats, as we have repeatedly seen.

There may be a similar understanding of the structural contingency between *fortuna* and the gods when Livy reports that, after a shower of stones, a voice was heard on the Alba Mons ordering the Albans:

\[
\begin{align*}
\textit{ut patrio ritu sacra Albani facerent, quae uelut dis quoque simul cum patria relictis obliuioni dederant, et aut Romana sacra susceperant aut fortunae, ut fit, obirati cultum reliquerant deum. (1.31.3)}
\end{align*}
\]

*Fortuna* is unequivocally linked to the dispensations of the gods, which raises the
question: if the twists and turns of *fortuna* are so interlinked with the goodwill of the gods in general, why was it needed as a distinct term? Livy is perfectly happy at other times to say that the gods themselves acted a certain way, or to juxtapose piety with failure. Why then does he also use *fortuna* so often?

The answer would seem to lie in the particular jurisdiction of *fortuna*, the *manifestation* and fulfilment of the gods’ will. *Fortuna* represents the experience at human level of the gods’ will: this would be implicit in the one instance where *Fortuna* is propitiated as a god, after the prodigial shrinking of the *sortes* at Caere. *Sors* cannot mean a senseless dispensation of ‘chance’, or the oracle would be redundant: it must indicate the workings of the gods in human life, one’s lot. Such is the jurisdiction of *fortuna*, the way that things will, or have, turn(ed) out for a specified agent. It represents a somewhat different perspective from the invocation of ‘the gods’, either by name or as a whole, and the wisdom about *fortuna* encapsulated all the knowledge and uncertainties of the complex workings of the gods. At the same time, to speak of *fortuna* did not require the kind of expertise that characterised the negotiation with the gods undertaken by the *res publica* through the senate and priests. The difficulties of exact interpretation are sidestepped by the invocation of *fortuna*, which was not intrinsically interpretative: the gods seem to be in support (or not) and lending support to one or the other side or to be dispensing a particular situation to men, in whatever way. The man who speaks of *fortuna* does not claim to know these details, or does not wish to bother with them. Yet the gods are thought, or rather, known to be at work, as can be seen by the use of *fortuna* to reflect the appearance of favour. Indeed assessment of the run of *fortuna* is deliberately sought: battle after battle, endeavour after endeavour, has interim reports on the run of fortune. Livy might even evoke fortune when there is no clear advantage otherwise: in evenly matched battle against the Hernici, the cavalry rouse themselves to win and Livy reports:
neque, tam uires pares quae superauerit res facile dictu est, nisi quod perpetua fortuna utriusque populi et extollere animos et minuere potuit

(7.8.4)

Fortuna is perpetua, that is, it always has a hand in events, and each nation (or even an individual) can claim its own, just as each nation calls on its gods for protection. It just happens that those of Rome are greater: of all the uses of fortuna in Livy’s text, only the fortuna populi Romani is constant in its favours.315 This reliability, of course, can only be spoken of after the event.

Given that fortuna is generally unpredictable it comes as no surprise that there is a common preference not to rely on it. One never knows just how far the gods will lend their favour, given the technical difficulties of obtaining it, the ease with which it can be lost, or even the uncertainties of simple jealousy, as encountered so bitterly by Hannibal and Aemilius. There is also the difficulty of knowing exactly how the gods’ wishes will be manifested, in detail. So fortune can take an unexpected turn without indicating a major breach of the pax deum, as it does when the patrician consul falls ill and the plebeian takes full charge:

M. Popilius Laenas a plebe consul, a patribus L. Cornelius Scipio
datus. fortuna quoque instriorem plebium consulem fecit; nam cum ingentem Gallorum exercitum in agro Latino castra posuisse nuntiatum esset, Scipione graui morbo implicito Gallicum bellum Popilio extra ordinem datum. (7.23.2)316

315 Kajanto 67 interestingly points out that Cicero prefers to refer to the fortuna rei publicae: it may be that Livy is polemically emphasising the people as the recipients of the gods’ favour.
316 Cf. e.g. 1.23.10: res Tullo quamquam cum indole anini tum spe victoriae ferocior erat, quaerentibus utrimque ratio initur cui et fortuna ipsa praebuit materiam.
We find the general who does not leave results to *fortuna* is praised:

\[ \text{nihil enim Marcellus ita } \text{gerat ut aut fortuna aut temere hosti commissum dici posset.} \ (23.43.7) \]

In a similar vein, Fabius Maximus chastises his *magister equitum*, M. Minucius Rufus, and asserts his right to authority over his rash colleague:

\[ '\text{si penes se summa imperii consiliique sit, prope diem effecturum ut sciant homines bono imperatore haud magni fortunam momenti esse, mentem rationemque dominari.' (22.25.14) \]

Fabius is not speaking empirically, but practically: it is not that *fortuna* has little impact, it is that the good general does not rely on it in his planning. He should circumscribe the dangers of an uncertain future by making the best use of whatever *fortuna* has offered to date, as Hannibal has learned:

\[ '\text{maximae cuique fortunae minime credendum est...melior tutiorque est certa pax quam sperata victoria; haec in tua, illa in deorum manu est. ne tot annorum felicitatem in unius horae dederis discrimen. cum tuas uires tum uim fortunae Martemque belli communem propone animo; utrimque ferrum, utrimque corpora humana erunt; nusquam minus} \]
It is no disrespect to the gods to say that one should make the most of the fortuna that they send: rather it is an acknowledgement of their power over the affairs of men. However much it can be explained as being the result of the gods’ wishes, to speak of fortuna does not seek to explain what is obvious. To deploy fortuna is rather to evoke a human reality, a lived experience of the vicissitudes of the best-laid plans. While it relies on the certainty that the gods are active in one way or another it is not particularly an attempt to analyse this. It leaves men to do what they can do, given the opportunities, advantages and setbacks of the way that things turn out. The diagnosis that fortuna has favoured a people, as it did the Romans, was the evidence that the gods had provided their favour, itself a testament to their piety.

So when Livy asserts that Alexander the Great would not, despite the claims of Greek historians, have conquered Rome, he states that both Roman uirtus and Roman fortuna have been consistently upheld:
Livy goes on to indicate the repeated courage of Roman generals and distinguishes *fortuna* from *uirtus*:

> paginas in annalibus magistratuumque fastis percurrere licet consulum
dictatorumque quorum nec uirtutis nec fortunae ullo die populum
Romanum paenituit. (9.18.12)

*Fortuna* represents the favour of the gods, but it is results, not just efforts, that Livy is speaking of.\(^\text{317}\) To have not only gained the rewards of the *pax deum* but even to have circumvented their jealousy is a testament to Roman piety and character.\(^\text{318}\)

---

\(^{\text{317}}\) Kajanto’s conclusion that “though fortune is admitted to have a great influence, there is no doubt that he attaches more importance to the human factor, for whereas fortune may favour both sides alike, the Romans were superior in respect of *ingenia imperatorum* and *militum uirtus*’’ seems unduly favourable to one of the two factors put forward.

\(^{\text{318}}\) Q. Marcius Philippus seems to be claiming that one route to this is through a nation’s conduct at 44.1.10-12 (*ea omni [sc. scelera] quam diis quoque invisa essent, sensurum. [Persea] in exitu rerum suarum: fauere enim pietati deos, per quae populus Romanus ad tantum fastigii uenerit*).
7) Interpretation and Power

(i) Introductory Comments

The complexity of deductive principles means that, for the Romans, any statement about religion is interpretative rather than empirical. Religious deductions are practical in the sense that they are intended to give rise to a particular course of action: they are far from being dry and academic conclusions. By being forced by circumstance to formulate a religious (or non-religious) position, Livy and his agents are defining and redefining the traditional categories of interpretation. Throughout the text, institutions and individuals make distinctions between 'religious' and 'non-religious' situations, assess the depth of a religious crisis and suggest solutions. As such, religion forms a system of knowledge, and it stands to reason that religious diagnoses were received in the same competitive atmosphere as 'non-religious' debate in the senate of Rome: to have one’s assessment accepted would no doubt have required persuasion of equally opinionated rivals.319 We should expect religious knowledge to be affected by the factors that always constrain and define social power.

Though we should assume their broad familiarity with religious lore, it is doubtful that Roman aristocrats would have freely offered their opinion on religious matters on all occasions: a proper gentleman would, despite his understanding, never presume to tell the pontifices or augures their job or to contradict them on their lore. The foregoing sections have elaborated various aspects of the interpretative principles that underlie religious opinion in ancient Rome. This section deals more with the reception of those formulations: the interpretative endeavour did not end with a 'correct' formulation – there were manifold considerations, both social and religious, with regard to the propriety

319 As Fabius Maximus found when he persuaded the senate to consult the Sibylline Books at 22.9.8-9.
involved in making religious claims.

(ii) The Authoritative Individual

That an individual aristocrat might be required to make a religious assessment is obvious: general after general makes some kind of religious statement to his troops. Nor is this the only context in which such interpretation is found: at another juncture, judgement of a single praetor is taken to be sufficient authority for the 'books of Numa' to be burned: he had decided that they were dangerous to religio. The consul who informed the plebs that the Bacchist cult was a danger to the state was equally sure of his opinion (39.15, 16): these latter two were presumably backed to some extent by precedent, their undoubted acquaintance with pontifical law and the debates that would have gone on in the high political circles in which they moved. They may even have been priests, but they are not represented as such by Livy. Functionally they are magistrates and for him that is sufficient guarantee.

In noteworthy contrast to their matter-of-fact confidence, two of Livy's most expert religious commentators imply that there is a difficulty inherent in making religious statements – Aemilius Paulus refused to be drawn into certainty at 44.22.3:

'Deos quoque huic fauisse sorti spero eosdemque in rebus gerendis
ad futuros esse. haec partim ominari, partim sperare possum'

320 Kajanto 37 lists examples where a Roman general explains that the breaking of a treaty by the enemy is said to guarantee Roman victory (3.2.4; 6.29.2; 8.7.5, 10.39.15).
321 praetor se iusiurandum dare paratum esse aiebat, libros eos legi servariique non oportere. senatus censuit satis habendum quod praetor iusiurandum polliceretur (40.29.12).
322 animum aduertisset pleraque dissoluendarum religionum esse 40.29.11. Cf. the phrase dissoluendae religions in connection with the Bacchist cult, 39.16.9.
323 Certainly the historian makes no effort to authenticate their religious authority and does not indicate any surprise that magistrates qua magistrates should make such judgements.
Note also the combination of caution and confidence in the speech of Papirius before battle against the Samnites: he details his reasons for thinking that the gods will support the Roman cause, though he does note the difficulty of knowing the gods’ will for certain. He inserts a caveat when he predicts that the gods will oppose the Samnites (‘tum si qua coniectura mentis divinae sit’, 10.39.16). Both men are generally represented as exemplary: Papirius in particular shows his religious acumen when he explains that the pullarius who wrongly announced that the omens were favourable has incurred the wrath of the gods through his actions: his analysis is borne out by the death of the keeper of the chickens in the battle (10.40.4-5; 10.40.11-13), though it still requires his somewhat unambitious vow of a cup of sweetened wine to induce the gods to change the omens into favourable ones: id uotum dis cordi fuit et auspicia in bonum uerterunt. For a man so evidently skilled in interpretation the caution expressed in his aside that one cannot know the mind of the gods seems noteworthy. Yet it is not that the expression of doubt indicates a level of expertise inferior to more confident diagnoses: his predictions, detailed diagnoses and solutions are shown to be accurate. What these two men have in common is that they visibly operate within the deductive principles of traditional practice, as do the generals who assure their troops that the gods are on their side. Working within an interpretative system, they are not only concerned to acknowledge the limits of their knowledge, and the limits of any system of knowledge, but also they respect the fact that they are speaking to an educated audience who would not relish being lectured in the basics of religious understanding.

324 10.42.7. Here, presumably, is Livy’s answer to the situation of the late Republic where there was exploitation of the need for a formal announcement of omens or the mistaken announcement of favourable omens (Liebeschuetz (1979) 15-17, 20-21, 24-5). Cf. the comments on ‘cheating’ oaths by fulfilling the letter rather than the spirit and intended meaning in connection with the Roman hostages sent to Rome by Hannibal at 22.58.8, discussed above (p. 118). On this episode see also Linderski (1993) 60-61 and Orlin (1997) 52, who seems to argue that the erroneous announcement was impious in itself and it was this that brought on the death of the pullarius. It seems more likely that it was the danger indicated by the sign that cost him his life; his action merely shifted the responsibility to himself. 325 He is also cautious about his suggestion that it is the lot of his family to defeat the Samnites at 10.39.14, adding forstian to his deduction.
326 See Gould’s comments on Herodotus’ reporting and the discussion of Livy’s ‘unambiguous reticence’ (p. 66-69).
Their modesty is exemplary: they assert their opinions while avoiding the pitfall of charisma and excessive confidence.\textsuperscript{327} What they do not do is to doubt the efficacy of the principles by which they are working.\textsuperscript{328}

If any one man threatened to destroy the integrity of this protocol, it was Scipio Africanus. Far from respecting the expertise of others around him, or the limits of the system of knowledge, he spoke as if he were inspired by a deity:

\begin{quote}
\textit{fuit enim Scipio non ueris tantum uirtutibus mirabilis, sed arte quoque quadam ab iuuenta in ostentationem earum compositus, pleraque apud multitudinem aut per nocturnas uisa species aut uelut diuinitus mente monita agens, siue et ipse capti quadam superstitione animi, siue ut imperia consiliaque uelut sorte oraculi missa sine cunctatione exsequentur.} (26.19.3-4)
\end{quote}

This passage has already been discussed extensively (above p. 101-104) where it was asserted that the verdict of \textit{superstitio} indicated Livy’s disapproval of Scipio’s religious techniques. The final clause (\textit{siue ut imperia...exsequentur}), however, can only be understood in the context of the proprieties of religious announcements. It is assumed that the ‘proper’ behaviour implied by Livy would be \textit{not} to use religious reasons or

\textsuperscript{327} Thus when Aemilius says that events \textit{seemed} to indicate the help of the gods, we should not deduce, as some have done, that there is any element of scepticism present: \textit{rex ipse tradentibus prope ipsis dis in templo Samothracum cum liberis est captus} (45.41.6). The reticence reflects his desire to avoid boasting that the gods supported him even though he clearly states that he sacrificed to Apollo before engaging Perseus.

\textsuperscript{328} This is also true of generals who assert that the gods are in support of their cause: they might omit Papirius’ most elegant disclaimers but they do unfailingly rely on general principles such as the general assertion that punishment might come later than expected but come it would in its own time, as is said at 3.56.7: \textit{pro se quisque deos tandem esse et non neglegere humana fremunt et superbiae crudelitaitque etsi seras, non leues tamen uenire poenas}. Cf. the statements that the gods will avenge the breaking of treaties by, amongst others, Papirius (10.39.15); for similar statements see also 3.2.4, 6.29.2, 8.7.5. The crucial difference from Scipio in the following examples is that these men are deducing from general principles rather than attempting to make a prediction about a specific instance. It was self-evident that the gods would avenge wrongs committed against them, such as the breaking of a sworn treaty, but that was not the same as an absolute guarantee that they would provide victory at a \textit{particular} juncture.
authorities. But Scipio’s error is not specifically that he made authoritative religious pronouncements, for he was not the first, nor the last, general or senator to invoke religious reasons in his imperia consiliaque. Livy’s complaint is the way in which he made them: Scipio is excessive in the authority that he arrogates, but not wrong to make any diagnosis at all.

Livy’s warning seems to apply to two specific instances in the text. The first is Scipio’s naming of Neptune as an assisting god in his assault on New Carthage. Scipio ascertains from some fisherman that the harbour can be crossed on foot at low tide. The intrepid general turns this situation to his advantage, but not without first claiming divine assistance:329

ad e nudauerat uada ut alibi umbilico tenus aqua esset, alibi genua uix superaret. hoc cura ac ratione compertum in prodigium ac deos uertens Scipio qui ad transitum Romanis mare uerterent et stagna auferrent uiasque ante nunquam initas humano uestigio aperirent, Neptunum iubebat ducem itineris sequi ac medio stagno euadere ad moenia. (26.45.8-9)

What is puzzling about this passage is that Scipio’s claim of such specific divine help is extremely unusual, and possibly more importantly, unnecessary. His men could no doubt have seen the advantages of an unexpected attack on the walls: he would not have had to convince them to act. The incident is normally (of course) taken to indicate Livy’s

329 We should remember that Livy introduced Scipio with the comment that some of the supernatural stories about the general are true – alia uera, alia adsimulata (26.19.9). The reader is, however, expected to draw his own conclusions as to which are which. For the accretion of these stories see Walbank (1967) & Scullard, (1970) 18-23. For the characterisation of Scipio and the treatment of his death(s) (in perfect accord with the conclusions reached here and below) Kraus (1998) 279: “over and over the historian shows how hard it is to evaluate Africanus: was he a charismatic manipulator, or the best of all Romans? a crook, or a great servant of the state?” Jaeger (1997)’s discussion of the trial and death of Scipio (her chapter 5, 132-176) is also excellent and relevant.
preference for a rational explanation over a divine one, but there is more at stake than rationalism or a rationalising exploitation of religion. Livy did not ‘see through’ the deception, rather he decided to curtail the power of the charismatic leader of the historical tradition. Livy is exploiting the power of suggestion to incorporate Scipio into a more traditional Roman mould: interrogating the locals and discovering a weakness is the sort of thing a Roman general should do, although the audience will have heard of the legends of Scipio’s exploits and charismatic religious mores which are therefore duly acknowledged but rendered tautologous.

A similar reflex seems to be operative in the second instance of Scipio’s most charismatic self-presentation when he claims the support of the gods at 26.41.18-20: the general is emphatic that the gods have supported his election and successes. After stating that Scipio said ‘idem auguriis auspiciisque et per nocturnos etiam uisus omnia laeta ac prospera portendunt. animus quoque meus, maximus mihi ad hoc tempus uates, praesagii nostram Hispaniam esse’, Livy has him add that ‘quod mens sua sponte diuinat idem subicit ratio haud fallax’. Thus the historian undermines the exemplum that would have Scipio rely completely on his charismatic religious attitude, juxtaposing a more traditional, and more suitable, process of deduction. Any Roman who chose to follow Scipio’s example could spend as much time as they wished in the temple of Jupiter Capitoline – just as long as they interrogated locals on campaign and added their reasoning to whatever they gleaned from dreams or visitations.

It is possible to be more specific: the particular difficulty that Livy seems to be circumventing is that Scipio’s pronouncements claimed to have the authority of an oracle.

---

330 None of this is to say that Livy would like to deny absolutely that the gods had a hand in events. One apparently minor detail that the wind assisted the retreat of the tide is not explicitly assigned to the familiarity of the fishermen with the habits of the local area, but appears as an unexpected extra assistance: medium ferme diei erat, et ad id quod sua sponte cedente in mare aestu trahebatur aqua, acer etiam septentrio ortus inclinatum stagnum eodem quo aestus ferebat, et adeo nudauerat uada ut alibi umbilico tenus aqua esset, alibi genua uix superaret (etc. as above) (26.45.8). Such ‘minor’ details are often assigned to the help of the gods by a significant juxtaposition: the mention of the action of the wind would seem rather superfluous otherwise. To deny the involvement of the gods, even without this detail, would be extremely unusual: Scipio did, after all, achieve a notable success here.
To assess this claim from the point of view of rationalism or belief is unproductive: it obviously depends on the predictive power of oracles, not any question of the existence of the gods. Most importantly, the most contentious issue in the ancient world around prediction was not whether or not it could be done, but by whom it was done: prediction was a matter of the appropriation of authority and one’s relation to the gods, not the theoretical possibility of telling the future. To operate like an oracle was to move beyond the limitations of mortal knowledge, something which was only acceptably available to specific agencies, such as Delphi, or the most skilled of interpreters, such as the *haruspices*. Roman generals, unlike oracles, were expected to use their reason and knowledge rather than their personal, unrepeatabale, faculties of divination.

Herein surely lies an essential attribute of Livy’s chief objection to Scipio’s conduct: the general does not acknowledge the limits of knowledge, still present despite an immensely sophisticated ‘technology’ to inform decisions. Even the Roman priests might misunderstand those phenomena despite their training and experience: Aemilius and Papirius are therefore, entirely appropriately, mortals exercising skill in a difficult art. Furthermore, they are relying on phenomena, visible indications that require interpretation, whereas Scipio is depending on a non-phenomenological source of knowledge in trusting dreams – an action more inappropriate or dangerous than utterly misled. Indeed, such is their expertise that we might postulate that to realise the limits of prediction from signs is the very height of understanding: human skill is always human, and therefore inherently flawed. Scipio has attempted to circumvent these difficulties by his own charismatic and personal link with the divine. Given that the process of

---

331 For the construction of diviners and prophets in a Roman context see Potter (1994), especially chs. 1 & 2: for an analysis of a more charismatic Greek seer (Teiresias) see Buxton (1980). On Greek poets and prophets see Détienne (1967) and on the authority of priests as sources Marincola 90 n. 127; 108-109.

332 The authority enshrined in oracular utterances is indicated not only by the accuracy of the various predictions made by Delphi, but also where they are used metaphorically, as at 3.34.1. The Old Man of Veii is exceptionally insightful when he anticipates the Delphic response (5.15.1), and the *haruspices* as a body make a prediction at 42.20.4 where they predict a great victory from portents, in contrast to the expiatory responses ordered by the *decemuiiri*. It is worth noting that though Livy notes the notorious difficulties of understanding oracular responses at 9.3.8 (*uelut ex ancipiti oraculo responsa*), the Delphic response at 23.11.1 is not only not ambiguous, it is actually so similar to Roman practice that it acts more as a corrective to the incorrect prescriptions of the *decemuiiri* at 22.57.6 than as a visibly foreign element.
interpretation was one carefully enshrined in appropriate protocol and specialisation, Scipio’s pretensions to divine inspiration represent a serious threat to the established structure of the republican response to divine issues. The absence of an appropriate sense of his limitations is a threat to tried and tested Roman practice, and one which Livy at once acknowledges, diffuses and refuses to endorse – whatever its success. After his treatment of Scipio, Livy might reasonably assume that it would be virtually impossible for a leader of a Roman army to be able to arrogate such charisma to himself without his subordinates in some way understanding that individual through Livy’s example, thereby cutting their leader down to size, whatever his claims might be.333

333 It is quite possible that Livy is casting an eye towards the incipient power of Augustus in composing these books, and the ‘special relationship’ with Apollo, (for which see Gagé (1955) 479-522; but it is equally possible that he is reacting somewhat more generally and espousing what he constructs to be traditional Roman values in response to the possibility of such a leader emerging in the future. That such factors were important to the contemporary audience seems to be indicated by the care that Augustus took in stressing his ‘restoration’ of the traditional ways.
(iii) Naming the Gods

There is a further aspect to Scipio’s impropriety as a general: in Livy’s extant text he is almost unique in assigning the assistance he is claiming to one, and only one, specific god without a simultaneous vow of games or a temple. Scipio’s specificity is most uncharacteristic of Roman generals: normally gods are only picked out in connection with ritual but Scipio makes no dedication. Rather it is ‘the gods’ in a generic and virtually anonymous plural who are thanked and acknowledged for their support. There would appear to be factors inhibiting the naming of a specific deity by non-priests.

When Scipio names Neptune, his reasoning seems transparent: it was the sea, the domain of Neptune, that appeared to be offering assistance. This would seem to be a common principle where individual gods are named: the Locrians are quite explicit about the domain of Proserpina in connection with her temple (29.18.1-20) and we find repeatedly that where a particular temple is concerned, the deity is easily specified. But proper understanding is more complex than this: in calling for proper remedies to be applied in response to the complaints of the Locrians, Fabius Maximus refers to the pontifices for analysis:

'sacrum piaculare fieri ita ut prius ad collegium pontificum referretur,

quod sacri thesauri moti aperti uiolati essent, quae piacula, quibus dis,'
Livy typically does not give us any details of this province of the experts, and only brings the scruple to our attention as part of his casting Fabius Maximus as an exemplum, in some kind of meticulous opposition to the unrestrained Scipio or sacrilegious Pleminius. The care that he urges would seem to indicate that expiation is more complex than simply restoring the property of Proserpina, whose temple it was: there was also the question of addressing the proper jurisdiction of other deities.337

There is a similar exemplary care in diagnosis when the gods intervene to assist Corvus in single combat with a Gaul. Livy informs us that the gods took an unexpected hand when a crow appeared unexpectedly and settled on the Roman’s helmet, whereupon Corvus delightedly accepted the omen and prayed for the help of whichever god it is that had sent the omen:

minus insigne certamen humanum numine interposito deorum factum;
namque conserenti iam manum Romano coruus repente in galea consedit, in hostem uersus. quod primo ut augurium caelo missum laetus accepit tribunus, precatus deinde, si dius, si diua esset qui sibi praepetem misisset, ulens propitius adesset. dictu mirabile, tenuit non solum ales captam semel sedem sed, quotienscumque certamen initum est, leuans se alis os oculosque hostis rostro et unguibus appetit, donec territum prodigii talis uisu oculisque simul ac mente turbatum Valerius obtruncat; coruus ex conspectu elatus orientem petit. (7.26.3-5)

337 Professor John Scheid gave a paper in November 1996 at the Institute of Classical Studies in London postulating precisely this process in the annual or singular vows of the Arval Brethren, whereby deities were propitiated according to a structure and specific roles: thus on the departure of an emperor to war, gods of departure, victory and return would feature prominently, along with proper respect to the deities of the temples in which the vows were offered. This discussion does not seem to have been published as yet. Thus jurisdiction could overlap even in a space nominated to a particular deity.
The indefinite formula used in Corvus’ careful negotiation of the possible specific identity of the god sending him aid is a well-known phenomenon\textsuperscript{338} and the formula is often taken to represent hesitancy in the face of possible error.\textsuperscript{339} However, as we shall see, there may be other factors at play.

At the other extreme of prudence come a number of agents who are all too ready to name deities: apart from Scipio, the younger T. Manlius is confident that Jupiter will attend the Roman cause (8.7.5-7) but since the incident is symptomatic of his \textit{ferox animus} (8.7.8), it would seem that his outspokenness is misjudged.\textsuperscript{340} He follows his father’s \textit{exemplum} wrongly here as well as in other respects.\textsuperscript{341} His father was also disposed to call on Jupiter by name: when T. Manlius Torquatus sees Annius, the leader of the Latins, lying unconscious after falling on the steps of the temple of Jupiter, he declares without hesitation that Jupiter is present and has shown his ill-will:

\begin{quote}
\textit{bene habet; di pium mouere bellum. est caeleste numen; es, magne \\
Lupiter; haud frustra te patrem deum hominum hac sede sacrauimus.} \\
\end{quote}

(8.6.5-6)

This follows his outburst earlier, in indignation at Annius’ threats:

\textsuperscript{338} For further examples, see Alvar (1985); Livy 22.10.
\textsuperscript{339} Contributing here to this is the fact that, as far as we know, crows were not necessarily associated with any particular deity but this may not be the only factor at play: here it might as well be a god of victory as any patron of crows.
\textsuperscript{340} We might even go so far as to say that to be so bold as to specify a god’s role so precisely is the prerogative of the virtual amateur, or the most enlightened expert, but not a more average serious contender for respectable reputation. Of course Jupiter was in support of Rome, but to \textit{say so} was crass.
\textsuperscript{341} Kraus (1998) 270; Feldherr (1998) 105-111.
'audi, Iuppiter, haec scelera' inquit; 'audite, lus Fasque. peregrinos consules et peregrinum senatum in tuo, Iuppiter, augurato templo captus atque ipse oppressus uisurus es?'

(8.5.8-10)

Torquatus’ confident diagnosis that Jupiter has taken a hand in events is not simply based on the visible evidence of Annius’ incapacitation: he sees the fulfilment of his appeal, an appeal which was based on proper practice – the protection of a treaty by the patron deity of Rome. The reader will not be particularly surprised: before his departure for the city, Annius announced a challenge almost to Jupiter himself:

'en ego ipse audiente non populo Romano modo senatuque sed Ioue ipso, qui Capitolium incolit, profiteor me dicturum, ut, si nos in foedere ac societate esse uelint, consulem alterum ab nobis senatusque partem accipient.'

(8.4.11)

Torquatus relies for his diagnosis not just on Jupiter’s jurisdiction in respect of treaties but also on his own direct appeal, made just before, and presumably also on the location of Annius’ accident. Livy also seems to be adding material in support of the Roman when he mentions Annius’ apparently insolent warning to Jupiter in his speech to the Latins. Torquatus was correct in his diagnosis but Livy has hinted that he was far from tactful; even if the historian finds that the consul’s outspoken specificity and confidence was acceptable, his manner was not necessarily to be emulated. It should not be forgotten how unconventional – yet ultimately acceptable – was Torquatus in most of his dealings: apart from being par ferociae to Annius (8.5.7), the tribune who wished to prosecute his father Lucius for his disgraceful treatment of his son found himself threatened by that very son and forced to break off the prosecution. His father had cut
him off from public life because his son lacked any eloquence (*lingua impromptus*, 7.4.6) and was dull-witted (*tarditatem ingenii*, 7.4.7). Thus, in addressing Jupiter so, he was characteristically devoid of tact and propriety in his mode of presentation, yet retained an essential ‘rightness’. When Scipio, in a similar manner, assigns his easy access to an undefended New Carthage to Neptune, he may be interpretatively ‘accurate’, but his boldness is not necessarily appropriate.

This emphasis on caution is not to say that only the priests had any *opinions* as to the identity of a god engaged in active intervention: even if Torquatus’ outburst was sanctioned as an exception then we should be wary of deciding that a failure to name a deity reflects any general *inability* to discern the respective realms of the gods. Rather we should be aware of a nexus of considerations that are embedded in an avoidance of competition and a demarcation of proper authority. Discussion and assignation of roles to gods was the stuff of experts and demanded serious and dignified consideration. To appropriate the authority of a priest, to represent oneself as distinctive with regard to religion is a dangerous, unrepublican venture. The vast majority of instances where the divine is mentioned refer to the gods in the plural. Even when a particular deity is thought to be relevant, the other gods might be mentioned. This is not just an avoidance of error but also an act of political tact.

---

342 The action against the tribune (7.5.1f), like Torquatus’ execution of his son (8.7.20-8.8.1), is approved by Livy despite its extreme nature.
343 Livy claims that such a zeal was the driving force behind Flaccus’ despoliation of the temple of Juno Laciniae: *enixo studio, ne ullum Romae amplius aut magnificentius templum esset* (42.3.1).
344 Q. Fabius Maximus in speaking of the breaking of a treaty (i.e. the province of Jupiter), still takes care to acknowledge the other gods (26.8.5).
(iv) Acknowledgement of the Gods

Caution was not, however, an unproblematic solution to the difficulties of interpretation. Any religious statement was subject to manifold considerations: speaker and audience alike placed religious matters in a complex web; a veritable array of checks and balances came into play, and the educated Roman would have been expected to master this. However men were not the only audiences: the gods were listening too, and far from indifferently.

We know that failure to acknowledge the gods is traditionally a dangerous error: triumphs, for instance, are repeatedly introduced in Livy’s text as both a thanksgiving to the gods and a glorification of the commander concerned. Acknowledgement was not, however, limited to the context of rite: C. Claudius’ triumph, held for his success over the Ligurians at 41.13.6-14.1 is unusual for the failure to mention thanksgiving to the gods. This is normally carefully placed, if not over-emphasised, in the documentation of the requests for, and granting of, triumphs. It is therefore telling that the Ligurians, not realising why the Romans have left, immediately organise an uprising. Livy makes little of this explicitly, but since we have become accustomed to the significant juxtaposition of events, we can reasonably assume that he is making a point. The senate orders Claudius to return to the province after overseeing the elections: Livy pointedly includes in their instructions to return as allies the Histrians whom he had brought from their province for the triumph so that they did not copy the example of the Ligurians (41.14.6). The uprising is swiftly crushed, only for Claudius to repeat the same mistake:

---

345 Note that Manlius admits this as a plausible scenario: ‘si graue ac superbum existimarem uirtute gloriari...’ and goes on to emphasise that the triumph is intended to honour the gods (38.48.14-15). See also the speech of Marcus Servilius which culminates rhetorically (and unfortunately, also fragmentally) ‘quidem+ illae epulae senatus...utrum hominum uoluptatis causa an deorum+ honorumque?’ (45.39.13): whatever the original text he seems to be placing the gods in the centre. Versnel (1970) is a thorough study of the practices and probable origins of the triumph.

346 Phillips (1974) includes useful tables on the reporting of triumphs in Livy, but she is unfortunately too brief about this particular aspect to go further with this point: she does however demonstrate that Livy is sufficiently consistent to make any omission look deliberate.
he writes in characteristic haste to the senate, not only giving an account of the situation,
but also boasting that by his valour and good fortune, there was no enemy on this side of
the Alps:

litteraeque Romam extemplo scriptae quibus non modo rem exponeret,

sed etiam gloriatetur sua uirtute ac felicitate neminem iam cis Alpes esse

hostem populi Romani. (41.16.8)

The implication of *gloriatetur* seems to be that the gods were given insufficient mention
in the letter.347 The next uprising is more damaging to the Romans, and costs Petilius *his*
life, after his mistake in ritual rather than the sort of error of judgement that Claudius
made. The arrogance, and the consequences of it, are underlined by the successful
subjugation, probably with divine aid (Livy mentions a *miraculum* at 41.11.4), of the
Histrians and the *supplicatio* accordingly decreed by the senate (41.12.4): proper
religious protocol was applied at that point, and the Histrians, unlike the Ligurians,
remained quiet.348 It is well known that neglect of the gods leads to the loss of their

---

347 Though *felicitas* is used of a ‘run of luck’ which implied the special favour of the gods (Erkell (1952)
53f), it is a word that, even more than others, is subject to political correctness: essentially it is not a
word that one uses of oneself. So, e.g., Hannibal speaks humbly of Scipio’s *felicitas* at 30.30.11,
though the mention of his adversary’s *adolescentia* implies that one day’s *felicitas* is the next’s *fortuna*;
Cn. Manlius offers that to speak of his own *felicitas* is arrogant (above, n. 345); Aemilius Paullus is one
of only two Romans to speak of his own *felicitas*, but he is contrasting his successful administration of
the *res publica* (qua *felicitate rem publicam administrauerim*, 45.41.1) with his private losses. Later in
the same speech he refers to *uestra felicitas* (i.e. of the *populus Romanus*) 45.41.12. Manlius is also
cautious in assimilating his own *felicitas* with that of the Roman people (*experimini modo et uestram
felicitatem et me, ut spero, feliciter expertum*, 6.18.13). The combination with *uirtus* has a particular
potency, being highly honorific or critical: thus Sophonisba honours and appeals to Masinissa with such
a phrase (30.12.12) and Livy uses it judiciously of Camillus (*consilio et uirtute in Volisco bello,
felicitate in Tusculana expeditione*, 6.27.1); L. Aemilius Regillus is thus honoured in a dedication to the
Lares Permarini (*auspicio imperio felicitate ductuque*, 40.52.5). Decius prays to Jupiter Optimus
Maximus for it for both himself and colleague (10.24.16) and Scipio (typically hyperbolically) speaks of
his troops’ *uirtus tanta et felicitas perdomita* (28.32.11). Hannibal is hasty, acting as if the war is over
and waits *ut suae in uicem simul felicitati et uirtuti cedatur* (22.58.4). Most emphatically, Hannibal, in
wiser mood, speaks to Scipio of the *paucis felicitatis uirtutisque exempla* (30.30.23), invoking the
exemplum of M. Atilius to underline the dangers of arrogance. Claudius would therefore seem to have
rather exaggerated his position in the scheme of things.

348 It seems worthwhile to speculate that in fact the reasoning behind Livy’s account is that the
Ligurians continued to fight despite the triumph, thus implying some error that squandered divine
support; his suggestion that Claudius did not properly recommend the assistance of the gods to the senate
might well be his explanation for this. It is worth noting also that the allies were disgruntled at the
support, but Claudius’ neglect was in speech and interpretation rather than in rite.

The care with which the Roman priests propitiated individual deities, and the unusual circumstances that surround most instances where a particular god is named makes it most plausible that, even when there is the clearest of evidence that one particular god is active in a given situation, there may be other gods working for the benefit of the Romans, and that the better men of the senate will be careful to allow for this. The dissatisfaction of just one god would seem to be dangerous: all the gods but Salus were in support of Petilius and Cn. Cornelius.\(^\text{349}\)

For the most part ‘the gods’ are constructed as a unified entity in co-operation with one another, though it stands to reason that there were times when it would be staggeringly obvious to the expert that the aid of a particular god had been crucial: at such a moment, that it would be as inappropriate to fail to acknowledge it as it was to fail to acknowledge the gods at all. However, it would be highly inappropriate for a relatively raw aristocrat, even if his knowledge was sufficient, to name a deity. Such a scenario is probably intended to be understood in the case of the inexperienced Corvus, who was a mere military tribune when he received the exceptional assistance from the crow. In the circumstances, his phrasing (\textit{si diuus, si dea}, 7.26.5) was entirely appropriate and negotiated the opposite dangers of neglect and arrogance. In the case of Torquatus’ appeal to Jupiter, it may have been inappropriate to be so outspoken as to call on Jupiter alone, but not necessarily incorrect for a man of such standing: that is, \textit{if} one was going to be so explicit, then he picked the right deity for the situation. This is presumably what happens when a general decides to dedicate a temple.

\[^{349}\] Above, p. 149.
Set in opposition to the complex of reasons for caution is the vowing and dedication of temples, usually (but not always), in the midst of battles,\textsuperscript{350} where we find not a careful phrasing to include any god who might have taken a hand, but the focalisation of acknowledgement on one, or perhaps two\textsuperscript{351} gods in particular. Though the usual format is of a vow in order to gain favour in advance, when Fulvius Flaccus promises a temple to *Fortuna Equestris* it is after victory seems sure (40.40.10).\textsuperscript{352} Livy’s passing comment at 10.46.7 about the dedication of a temple to *Quirinus* in the heat of battle (*in ipsadimicatione*) is, however, more typical: most vows are taken before the outcome is certain and dedicators of temples do tend to be victorious.\textsuperscript{353} If we consider the reasons for the choice of a particular deity the material is far from transparent. While, for instance, the decisive action of Flaccus’ cavalry charge surely influenced his choice of *Fortuna Equestris* as the recipient of his thanks (he also dedicates games to *Jupiter Optimus Maximus*), it is not clear to us why *Quirinus*, for instance, should receive a temple (10.46.7), or *Fortuna Primigeneia* (29.36.8). The limits of our knowledge of appropriate specified domains should not deter us from proceeding on the understanding that the dedicating consuls were acting within some interpretative system when they elected to approach a particular deity for aid. Where we can understand the processes at work, there seems to be an explicable process of selection. Yet surely the ‘practical’ danger of specifying a particular god (and therefore the risk of offence) remains, with the contingent aspect of the implicit claim to expertise. Once again the varying scale of certainties and the exigencies of acknowledgement must predominate over these considerations. To nominate a chosen god as particularly effective must assume the aid of the ‘less’ decisive (in that instance) of other gods nonetheless, for whom the usual

\textsuperscript{350} Orlin (1997) 18-34.

\textsuperscript{351} Marcellus vowed a temple to *Honos* and *Virtus* combined but the pontifices objected, (27.25.7). It may be pertinent that Livy does not mention the vow in its context but only introduces it later.

\textsuperscript{352} Champeaux (1987) 138 maintains that this emphasises the human aspect of victory but acknowledging a deity would seem to be a good way of doing the opposite. Cf. Postumius’ dedication of a temple to Castor after the tide of battle had turned (2.20.12): Dionysius on the other hand has a variant where the horsemen appear to provide victory. In Livy’s version diagnosis is therefore more insightful.

\textsuperscript{353} See e.g. 29.36.8, where the notice of Sempronius’ vow serves to succinctly indicate the course of battle (*consul principio pugnae aedem Fortunae Primigeniae uouit si eo die hostes fudisset; composque eius uoti fuit.*)
rites are sufficient. Thus to dedicate a temple is a measure of weight rather than an exclusive statement of sole action. One suspects that if one deity in particular had rendered assistance above and beyond the normal expectations enshrined in the understanding of the *pax deum*, then only some exceptional thanks was adequate to meet the need: a temple or Games would seem to be good candidates for such exceptional thanks.

354 Or perhaps for whom there were already temples in Rome, where cult practice would already be provided.
355 It seems most unlikely that other factors were not important; for instance, reduplication of temples is rare. We do not see the process of decision-making in Livy, but presumably the vowing general would have been familiar with the Roman pantheon. Whether they took the opportunity to vow a temple that was perceived to be required more generally we cannot say, though it seems likely; but Livy implies by his presentation that the decision was spontaneous and relevant only to the situation at hand.
8) Conclusions

Religion has emerged as considerably more complex in Livy than has hitherto been thought, as indeed has Livy. Religious interpretation has gone from being a bipolar argument to a nuanced discussion, which in itself is more historically plausible. It has also become possible to speak of a religious interpretative system, though how far we have seen 'through' Livy's account to the 'historically' true version is anyone's guess: essentially we have an account that must have a claim to verisimilitude but, at the same time, should be treated as visionary in the sense that the selection and presentation of material reflects an exemplary model rather than an 'historical' one. What we can say is that, by using traditional elements, Livy has designed a religion for Rome. Perhaps a Roman of the early and Middle Republic would have nodded his head throughout Livy's account; perhaps they would have been startled at the changes. The dichotomy between 'historical fact' and 'literary representation' cannot be dispensed with, for we have no 'objective' version of events, nor could we ever. Any exegesis of religion, at any point, would remain representational; the best that we can hope to achieve is a comparison of similarly subjective paradigms at different points in Rome's history.
IV: Tacitus and the Restoration of Rome

1) Historiography and Religion: A Changed Climate?

I HAVE ALL THE FACTS
THE DEAD HAVE ALL THE FACTS
YOU TOO WILL HAVE ALL THE FACTS
YOUR HUNGER WILL BE SATISFIED

But I am not here to tell you facts
Only to exaggerate
Long live exaggeration

It brings you somewhere near the actual horror.

(Don’t Exaggerate, Howard Barker).

Just as the analysis of Livy’s religious material required some awareness of his broader aims and methods, so too with Tacitus it is essential to acknowledge the way in which he undertook his project and what that was. Of course society had changed profoundly with the transition to empire and we should not expect that the eminently political act of writing history had not also adapted: nonetheless we shall see that if circumstances and methods had changed, many similarities are evident.

Posterity has perhaps been kinder to him than to Livy. While the latter has commonly been described by variations on ‘mediocre’, his imperial successor has generally met with critical acclaim, if some suspicion. By the time that Tacitus wrote, the principate, which had barely begun in the times of Livy, had become the established political choice of the city of Rome: it had survived assassinations, the end of two hereditary

356 Woodman (1985) applauds Martin (1981) 10’s description of Tacitus as “the greatest Roman historian”.
357 See above, n. 66.
358 Livy would have dealt with the increasing stability of the Principate as he wrote: for the ‘race’ to complete his (and others’) works, see Henderson (1998b) 303-309.
dynasties and civil war on a scale that saw the institution remain intact despite a rapid turnover of personnel. The solution to these crises saw a new phenomenon in that the new emperor came from outside Rome. As Tacitus himself says, the realities of imperial politics bore little resemblance to the lore of Republican senators where once it was the people, now it was the emperor who had to be understood. The essentially exemplary nature of historiography therefore adapted to new circumstances while retaining its claims to guidance. Moreover Tacitus wrote two histories, and the Annals and Histories would seem to indicate different influences. What the two authors had in common, however, was that they both wrote annalistic history; it will be argued that amongst the differences lies a rich vein of continuity.

The continuing interest in Tacitus' works is amply demonstrated by the number of entries in Benario's bibliographies. Although many are historical in their focus, no few of these centre on 'deciphering' Tacitus. The difficulties of reading this ingenious author are well illustrated by the way that Luce's discussion of 'historical change' finds its summation in the issue of "the difficulties of discovering the historian's opinions". In the final analysis, we might take heed of Henderson's warning that "we will not catch Tacitus with his rhetorical trousers down." The plethora of publications on issues of

359 i.4.2. References to the Histories are given with Roman numerals and to the Annals in Arabic.
360 As Tacitus himself says, few were left who had even seen the Republic by the time Augustus died (1.3.7).
361 4.33.1-2
362 Most recently Aubrion (1991): note Sinclair's (1995) expansion of the theme: "in fact, the most valuable lesson a Roman historian provides when it comes to 'models of explanation and behaviour for what was felt to be transient in society' is furnished by his own example in explicating the causes and motives for events" (38). Plass (1988) 103 also stresses the way that political issues are still treated "in terms of moral incoherence" (my emphasis). For explicit mention of an exemplary programme, see i.3.1, iii.51.2, 4.33.2; for the use of exempla in public life within the account, see (selectively) 3.31.3-4, 3.50.2, 3.66.1-2, 6.32.4, 11.6.1, 11.23.22-3, 11.24 (esp. 11.24.7), 12.20.2, 13.4.1, 15.20.3, 15.23.2, 15.44.5, i.50.2, ii.91.3, iv.8.1, iv.42.6. For the difficulties of using exempla in changed times, see (e.g.) iv.58.2, Ginsburg (1993); Luce (1986); McCulloch (1984) 189. For further debate see also Luce (1991), esp 2907-2914 and Woodman (1997) 109 which seem to argue against exemplarity, unconvincingly to my mind.
363 Opinions on the debt to Sallust and Cicero in the Annals and the Histories respectively have varied: see below, n. 487.
364 The most recent, CW 89.2 (1995), contains 672 entries.
365 Luce (1986) makes useful comments about the difficulties of 'discovering the historian's opinions', discounting as he goes a traditional technique of removing 'troublesome' (e.g. sarcastic) elements to 'uncover' Tacitus 'true' ideas.
366 Henderson (1987) 68 n.4. This appears (regrettably) not to have found its way into the newer version (Henderson (1998a)).
detail has not always led to any broader consensus, and least of all in connection with religion.\textsuperscript{367}

Though the interpretative situation occasionally resembles ‘\textit{tot editores, tot Taciti}’,\textsuperscript{368} there are some relatively consistent themes to be found in scholars’ descriptions of our author; pessimism and savagery, bias, reasonable historicity, and, rather confusingly, indecisiveness. The religious material has had a similarly mixed reception: only one monograph (and that dealing purely with the \textit{Histories}) argues that Tacitus was traditional in his ‘beliefs’.\textsuperscript{369} It is more common to find that the apparent contradictions hold sway, forcing an interpretation that has Tacitus sceptical about traditional Roman religion but still ‘religious’ in a broad sense, usually fatalistically.\textsuperscript{370} While it is true that fate occupies a more prominent role in the narrative, and is apparently more easily invoked by Tacitus in comparison with Livy, this does not simply reflect some ‘personal’ preference, as we shall see. Another strategy, found in earlier writers of this century, argues that Tacitus became gradually more depressed and pessimistic as he wrote, changing his opinions as he plumbed the depths of the Julio-Claudians in his writing of the \textit{Annals}.

\textsuperscript{367} This chapter claims only to be representative; exhaustive cross-referencing is no longer a realistic possibility. The most recent and/or significant items on a particular issue are included, not least to provide fuller relevant bibliography.

\textsuperscript{368} A number of publications in recent years have enthusiastically promoted ideas that would not be considered suitable for any other author; it is hard to imagine a monograph dedicated to indicating that any other Latin author was a severely repressed homosexual (not least because of the way that he describes night), according to whom Britannicus was ‘really’ better off dead than violated by Nero (Lucas (1974) 192-210, 94-103, 148-159 resp.). I also enjoyed the argument of D’Ambrosio (1980) who, by a rather roundabout route, argues that Tacitus hated a favourable Domitian because he dreamed of ruling the empire himself (240). In the light of such recent studies, arguments that attempt to date Tacitus’ conversion to ‘astral fatalism’ at a particular point (105 A.D.) seem relatively sensible (Brakman (1928)).

\textsuperscript{369} Scott (1968). A number of briefer articles imply this, but do not deal with the difficulties that have led other authors to conclude that Tacitus is untraditional. Liebeschuetz (1979) 194 is closest to the position argued here when he concludes ‘(Tacitus’ rationalism) is... that of a man who believes in the science in which he is an expert’ but I take issue with his comment that “the gods did communicate with the Roman state through portents, but the signals should not be taken to be more than vague warnings” (\textit{ibid.} 197) and that “Tacitus would not have been troubled by problems of free will and predestination if he had not lived in an age dominated by Stoic ideas” (199); the latter statement seems to be putting the cart before the horse. Tacitus has no particular love of philosophers \textit{per se}: see his ridicule of the Stoic Musonius Rufus at iii.81.1

\textsuperscript{370} “In general, Tacitus seems to regard portents, if genuine, as signs of an immutable will which proceeds to its destined end whether the signs are observed by men or not... but Tacitus’ belief in prophecy and portent was never more than hesitant and spasmodic” Walker (1952) 246: “it is at least arguable that he never indicates more than the normal human disposition to see, when depressed, omens everywhere” (Miller (1977) 14); Syme (1958a), like many others, seems to consider that religious material features only insofar as the annalistic genre demanded it, and then in a rather erratic and spasmodic way: but he does offer a disclaimer — “Tacitus does not have to worry about consistency” (522). He also refers to “the scepticism appropriate to that governing order” (523).
We even have a suggested date for his ‘conversion’ to ‘astral fatalism’. Adoption of the principles applied to Livy’s narrative yields a very different picture. In particular we will find that sustained criticism and irony is not necessarily tantamount to scepticism, pessimism, bias or indecision.

The first difficulty that the reader of Tacitus encounters is his style. Commentaries include a compulsory notice of the difficulties of his diction, and it is this as much as anything that has made the commentator’s task so difficult: time and again, students with good Latin earnestly ask to know ‘what he really meant’. Nor does ‘decipherment’ of a complex text lead to enlightenment as to his opinions: the majority of comments castigate without appearing to offer any alternative. There are, however, reasons to think that ‘style’ is not just the ‘wrapping’ of an account that can be unveiled with perseverance; rather it is integral to the work and its purpose. “Irrationality...comes out with special clarity in the form of the narrative”: the frequent violation of expectation in Tacitus’ historical works underpins the political chaos and dissimulatio of the principate. Such considerations begin to address enormous questions such as the difference between the two exemplificatory accounts: Livy, with his ‘full-scale working model’ of Rome is set against Tacitus, who seems more interested in cataloguing errors than explicitly offering any alternative.

In recent years, analysis of Tacitus’ historical material has begun to take more reflective account of the specific context in which he wrote; whereas earlier commentators were aware that one might not speak freely under the Principate, use of this observation tended to be used to dismiss ‘openly sycophantic’ comments, while negative comments were largely accepted virtually at face value, as if the ex-consul, cursing his forgetfulness,

---

371 Brakman (1928) 73-74.
372 On syntax see Furneaux (1896) 38-74; for variatio see especially Plass (1992); Woodcock (1939) 11-14; Woodman (1997) 111; Syme (1958a) 342-243.
hastily inserted occasional blandishments for fear of offending the contemporary régime.
In the post-Foucauldian age however, the depth to which ‘politics’ shaped ‘literature’ and
self-expression in general has been analysed in greater detail by a number of writers.
Our understanding of Tacitus has deepened considerably as a result. However none has
particularly dealt with religious material, and/or has continued to work along lines of
authorial scepticism in this area.

A great deal of the frustration usually encountered in understanding Tacitus’ position is
not just mirrored, but also explained, to some extent, by Sinclair:

Whereas the modern mind prides itself on its canny suspicion of, and
hostility towards, any attempt to gloss over the uniqueness of the
individual, in a rhetorical culture like Rome’s the ability to categorise,
typologise, and formulate generalisations on human behaviour with
concision and force was highly valued and admired, and could translate
directly into power. (Sinclair (1995) 3)

Tacitus sets the highest premium on displaying his personal mastery
over his material: he constantly varies his technique, adjusts his diction,
and shifts his points of reference - at all costs he must remain the one
person in his narrative who cannot be categorised. (ibid. 8)

Sinclair’s penetrating analysis of the way that “narrative in the Annales often proceeds
through palpable silences” (ibid. 164) does not, however, permit us to attempt to fill in
the gaps by inference. The silences do more than protect Tacitus’ ‘real opinions’ from
possible criticism:

One aim of irony is to precisely to leave uncertain what is ironic…the
effect of such writing on a large scale is to create an atmosphere of dry
wit and ruthless penetration into a political and moral reality that is often irrational if not idiotic. The tone is at once amusing and dismaying. Both those who make history and those who write it are caught up in pervasive cynicism, though one of quite different sorts—the former an alarming moral cynicism that suggests disorder in high places, the latter an intellectual cynicism gratifying because it exposes the former. (Plass (1988) 4-5).

Under the principate, a carefully placed silence became more than just protective: it became a tool for political comment. The dangers of speech, probably more than any other factor, led to a sophistication in the use of language. We should be wary of ‘deciphering’ Tacitus, lest we lose the ‘real’ message: it is the dissonance in the text that speaks volumes. Conté’s masterpiece on literature has warned us that literature is not so much factual as experiential: traditional materials found in a new guise are the poet’s medium for generating experience in the reader, and this is no less true of Tacitus than any other writer. The violation of the traditional Roman way of life is reflected in the violation of genre, language and historical record: this is perhaps most evocatively represented by Henderson’s deliberately chaotic “World in Pieces”.

374 See also Baldwin (1977) who amply demonstrates the farcical nature of book 14, though he does not place the humour in any broader context.
375 Ovid’s Tristia is surely the prime example of the failure of the poetic persona to adequately distance auctor from actor.
378 For use of poetic motifs and the similarities of historiography and poetry, see Feeney (1991) 42-45, 250-264; Martin (1992); Kenney (1983) 14 calls him “the arch-poet of ancient historians”; Aubrion (1991) stresses the epic and tragic overtones of the Histories; Lossau (1992) finds the “contamination” of an epic and tragic model: Henry (1991) suggests that a “sense of tragic doom, together with the assertion of a positive national identity that the sense of doom contradicts, that is the most truly Virgilian element in Tacitus” (1992); for other Virgilian overtones see also Segal (1973); Boyle (1984); Miller (1986), Henry (1991).
381 Where Tacitus can be compared with inscriptions, the results are interesting: while recording a great number of similarities, it is apparent that Tacitus has skilfully placed a different interpretation on the fact: Woodman (1997) 99-100 (on the Tabula Siarensis and the decree on the elder Piso); McCulloch (1991) (on Claudius’ speech) 2941-2944. Williams (1989) argues for Tacitus’ desire to indicate faithfully the complexities of the historical context. Shotter (1988) argues that Tacitus follows the historical record closely while endeavouring to accommodate the enigma that was the emperor Tiberius. Others are more critical of Tacitus’ use of sources, e.g. Develin (1983).
The newer readings of Tacitus have far-reaching consequences for our reception of the religious material that has appeared contradictory for so long. An initial survey establishes Tacitus in a tradition of historiography inherited from, and transformed since, Livy. Though the categories of interpretation and classification show a large degree of consistency, it is the overall tenor of the religious system that shows change in response to different needs. It is after all *application* that shapes such interpretative systems. Thus, though we find prodigies, expiation, omens, *fortuna* and *fatum* in recognisable relationship with one another, we find our author deploying them for new purposes. The discussion begins by confirming sufficient continuity to allow comparison; this in turn permits a closer analysis of the Roman religion of Tacitus’ ‘world-turned-upside-down’. With Henderson’s warning duly noted, it remains that for a world to be so upended, we must assume certain points of reference; violation of norms necessarily implies those norms. It is those points with which we shall work, and they are not so radically changed that Livy would not have recognised them. By drawing on the religious frames of reference as well as other recent general interpretations, it is possible to question the suggestions that Tacitus is so thoroughly pessimistic and atraditional, and to assert rather that he is radically conservative in his politics and religion.
2) Establishing Traditional Categories: A Man of Distinctions

(i) Introduction

Unlike Livy, who could make no official claim to religious or political expertise, Tacitus could not have been better qualified to write history: his political career did not just include the consulship and proconsulship of Asia, but he was also a quindecemuir, as he himself tells us. Modesty of the type espoused by Livy was not just unnecessary but would probably have rung rather hollow. We should not then be so surprised that he is given to making caustic comments about religious interpretations, even before considering the changed climate in which he wrote. He appears to be most confident in his scathing remarks (examples follow); unfortunately, taken at face value, these confident remarks appear to us to undermine traditional practices. In addition his habitual silence often leaves us emphatically clear as to where an error was made, but does little to advise on a better course of action. The traditional interpretative categories of 'belief' or 'scepticism' limit commentators to conclude that we are usually encountering the latter. More complex are those moments where Tacitus appears to be hesitant or contradictory; the conclusion is usually indecision or, where 'contradiction' is noted, a change of heart. In contrast, the following analysis assumes that Tacitus is the master of his material at all times; as the Foucauldian scholarly analyses accumulate, the coherency of his account and programme is increasingly hard to avoid. The competitive arena is, as with Livy, that of interpretation and propriety rather than scepticism and belief.

We cannot, however, simply transpose the interpretative tools honed on Livy’s account: the material, while recognisable in many ways, can also be markedly different. This may

383 Above, n. 119.
384 11.11.1.
represent a deliberate violation of tradition reflected in the text; it might, on the other hand, owe more to the changed political and social context – in other words, to happen to conform to current expectations: to begin with, the traditional categories must be located within the text.

(ii) Prodigies and Omens

Although the reduced frequency of prodigies and omens will be of prime concern to us,\textsuperscript{385} this initial examination seeks to establish the category \textit{ab nihilo}, for, as with Livy, it is often comments attached to prodigy notices that have caused so much trouble. The vast majority of commentators are unwilling to take these phenomena as meaningful ‘in reality’. Consider the position of Walker, on the appearance of the phoenix at 6.28 (though this is not strictly a prodigy): “an obvious hiatus in this part of the book has been avoided by an interesting but quite irrelevant chapter on the history of the phoenix”;\textsuperscript{386} McCulloch is clearly more sympathetic in general but still prefers to limit himself to textual relevance, implicitly avoiding any discussion of receptions: “the issue is not whether Tacitus did or did not believe that such prodigies had an influence on the operation of the natural world. Instead, \textit{within his narrative} they have a portendous (sic) significance”.\textsuperscript{387} Elsewhere he reasserts Tacitus’ scepticism: “I must confess that the only clarification of metaphysical principles possible is one that remains somewhat unsettling...at one point or another, he marvels at certain fascinating possibilities, then reverts almost instantaneously back to his normal scepticism.” He then further distances himself from controversy in a footnote: “Tacitus employs the concepts of \textit{deum ira} and \textit{hominum rabies} as a psychological rather than a metaphysical metaphor.”\textsuperscript{388}

\textsuperscript{385}Below, pp. 207-210.
\textsuperscript{386}Walker (1952) 83.
\textsuperscript{387}McCulloch (1984) 208 (my emphasis).
\textsuperscript{388}McCulloch (1991) 2938, 2941.
making a traditionalist of Tacitus: “portents...can be taken seriously as a historiographical category without being taken literally as a religious or historical category.” 389 Most of these commentators are highly sensitive to the aestheticised text, but they betray a lack of sympathy for religious phenomena as events based in reality and depend on a false dichotomy (as opposed to a useful dichotomy) between literature and reality. Thus, at least judging from discussion in print, it seems that some establishment of the category of prodigies (and by implication, other ‘supernatural’ events) is necessary before any discussion of details can be pursued. 390

If Tacitus were assuming without question that prodigies indicated the wrath of the gods, then he would not need to say so; after all, “for all Tacitus’s domineering, opinionated sententiousness, there are few Latin authors who make greater demands on the reader’s ability to understand what is not said.” 391 But occasionally Tacitus is compelled to spell out the obvious: consider his comments on the Jews and their folly during the war in Judaea. Among their errors are religious mistakes on a scale that only foreigners could make.

\[ euenerant prodigia, quae neque hostiis neque uotis piare fas habet \]
\[ gens superstitioni obnoxia, religionibus aduersa. \] (v.13.1).

389 Plass (1988) 71-78; quote from 76. The list could be extended (e.g. Segal (1973) 110f) and the trend continues; Ash (1996) 244 also combines stimulating discussion of the power of the omens in the Histories with a reluctance to look beyond the ‘textual’ ("Tacitus is not interested in omens and prodigies for their own sake, but as a way of exploring Vespasian’s personality in terms of the relationships he has with those around him.") Martin & Woodman (1989) 84 approve Goodyear’s comments on 1.39: religious references are "nothing more than devices of style, calculated to enhance his presentation of particular scenes and serving as convenient ways of expressing pathos and indignation". Grimal (1989) & (1989-90) seems more willing to accept a genuine ‘belief’ in such things, suggesting that Tacitus is rejecting superstition not prodigies and omens per se.

390 Much of the following discussion implicitly draws on the framework established in connection with Livy, viz. the assumption that the readership would accept the intervention of the gods and that to explain it would be superfluous and possibly insulting except where details of interpretation (i.e. possible controversy) were concerned. Issues such as oratio obliqua are also susceptible to a similar analysis, though it is less of an issue, and certainly less common.

The implication is that the Jews should have known better and expiated the (very Romansounding) prodigies that follow. Away from the need to parody and exemplify debased practices at home, Tacitus is in the unusual position of implying the obvious more accessibly than elsewhere. Where Livy was never put in the position of needing to point out the utility of prodigy expiation, the Jews in their incompetence offer the opportunity for profound scorn from the imperial historian: they can be measured against the fundamental assumptions of 'proper' religious practice, whereas elsewhere Tacitus is dealing with more subtle refinements. The whole passage from which the quotation is taken is a series of errors, both institutional and interpretative, that virtually guarantee the failure of their rebellion. The range of comments that assume the traditional meaning of prodigies as harbingers of doom are further evidence that there has been no major change in the understanding of signs taken to be adverse: 12.64.1 is just one example (mutationem rerum in deterius portendi cognitum est crebris prodigiis).392

The majority of the remaining problematic references is easily susceptible to the kind of analysis pursued in connection with Livy's account: there is a premium on interpretation, of the distinction between genuine prodigies and mistaken ones. In other words our imperial historian is still working with the kind of discrimination that was seen in Livy. Tacitus has a preference for a more down-to-earth explanation than divine wrath of the legend dealing with the destruction of what seem to be Sodom and Gomorrah at v.7: but this is a genre-specific preference for a discerning interpretation which should always begin with a 'natural' explanation.393 When there is a sign while Otho commits suicide, it is weight of numbers that convinces him to include the story.394 Twice in the Histories we are told of a particular variation of moral panic, whereby apud imperitos prodigii loco

392 Further examples of traditional interpretation are to be found at 15.47.1 (prodigia imminentium malorum), and in the opening to the Histories (prodigia et fulminum monitus et futurorum praesagia, i.3.2). Similarly, Paetus suffers when he proceeds into Armenia spretis ominibus (15.8.1), on which see Meulder (1993).
393 That the gods can be involved in the destruction of cities, but via human means, is evident from the omen and the interpretation put on it during the siege of Artaxata: adicitur miraculum uelut numine oblatum: nam cuncta [extra tectis] hactenus sole industria fuere; repente quod moenibus cingebatur ita atra nube coopertum fulgoribusque disc return est, ut quasi infensantibus deis exitio tradi crederetur (13.41.3).
394 ut conquirere fabulosa et fictis oblectare legentium animos procul grauitate coepti operis crediderim, ita uolgatis traditisque demere Jidem non ausim (ii.50.2).
When lightning struck a table at which Nero was dining shortly after the appearance of a comet *de quo vulgi opinio est tamquam mutationem regis portendat*, it strengthened the belief that Nero’s days were numbered: but both deductions were errors.\(^{396}\) The priestly interpretation of the birth of a calf by the roadside with its head attached to its leg that *parari rerum humanarum aliud caput, sed non fore ualidum neque occultum, quia in utero repressum aut iter iuxta editum sit* (15.47.2) just underlines the stupidity of those who immediately (in the text) begin plotting to overthrow Nero.\(^{397}\)

Two prodigy notices, one in the *Annals* and the other in the *Histories* do, however, require more analysis: in the chaotic opening to the *Histories*, Tacitus sums up his account of the dislocation of Roman life with the note that:

> praeter multiplices rerum humanarum casus caelo terraque prodigia et
> fulminum monitus et futurorum praesagia, laeta tristia, ambigua
> manifesta; nec enim um quam atrocioribus populi Romani cladibus
> magisque iustis indicis adprobatum est non esse curae deis securitatem
> nostram, esse ultionem. (i.3.2)

Syme commented on this (amongst others), labelling it “a striking and ominous phrase, but no confession of a creed”;\(^{398}\) but Tacitus is not so vague. He exploits the ambiguity of the present infinitive *esse* to leave the reader with two possible readings: firstly that, at

---

\(^{395}\) There is also the note at i.86.3 that *a fortuitis uel naturalibus causis in prodigium et omen imminentium cladium uertebatur.*

\(^{396}\) *pari vanitate...interpretatio* (14.22.2).

\(^{397}\) As Ash (1996) 22 points out, “these details fit rather neatly with the abortive Pisonian conspiracy as it unfolds in Tacitus’ narrative”.

\(^{398}\) Syme (1958a) 521. For all Syme’s Tacitean and persuasive prose, exactly what a ‘creed’ might have looked like to him is not clear.
that point, Rome’s gods nursed nothing but malice – such a statement is entirely orthodox. Secondly, however, the text also admits of the understanding that this is not a particular, but a general state of affairs: this more polemical reading is in stark contrast to the benignitas deum that we found in Livy. Tacitus is hardly immune to the possibilities of language; we should respond to both possible meanings. It is the latter sense that has been exploited by those who would have a disenchanted Tacitus ‘losing his faith’; yet a literal reading of one possible interpretation distorts the deliberate violation of expectation that seeks to convey the horror of an imperial civil war. Tacitus is anticipating Barker (see opening quote) in exaggerating to say that the gods were malicious towards Rome is, in Plass’s terms, a joke.

A similar analysis can be made of a comment in the Annals, of prodigies that occurred under Nero: after the voting of various thanksgivings to celebrate the emperor’s ‘escape’ from the machinations of his mother, and the exit of Thrasea Paetus from the senate, we hear that:

prodigia quoque crebra et inrita intercessere: anguem enixa mulier et alia in concubitu mariti fulmine exanimata; iam sol repente obscuratus et tactae de caelo quattuordecim urbis regiones. quae adeo sine cura deum eueniabat ut multis post<ea> annos Nero imperium et scelera continuauerit. (14.12.2)

The passage has received much attention and the phrase sine cura deum is extremely

399 Above, p. 128.
400 Compare the way that he generalises from particulars in a way that does not seem to be supportable: Baldwin (1974); Walker (1952) 33-66 & 82-157 is a good survey of the material. There is also a tradition of commenting on his use of innuendo: most recently and fully, Develin (1983); also Miller (1969); Shatzman (1974); Sullivan (1975); Whitehead (1979).
401 E.g. “[this] suggests that the gods were intervening, as a tribune might, to protest against injustice, but in an ineffective fashion which seems to accord them only limited powers” Walker (1952) 250; Liebeschuetz suggests that Tacitus is being ironic and contrasts the explicit complaints of Lucan
problematic. The juxtaposition of multa and inrita makes for powerful drama.402 Firstly, we should try to decide whether deum is an objective or a subjective genitive: are we dealing with the proper actions of, or towards, the gods? Comparison in Tacitus' language does not necessarily prove anything, but may advise us: the phrase sine cura occurs elsewhere in his works objectively three times.403

The phrase cura deum (or deorum) is a hapaxlegomenon for Tacitus but does occur elsewhere. Precedents permit either an objective or a subjective genitive.404 It is difficult, and probably irresponsible, to exclude either reading, especially in the light of the ambiguity of the problematic notice in the Histories. But the implications are worth exploring, even if their intended effect is to shock rather than produce sober sense. Firstly, for a Roman audience, prodigies could be inrita because they were either ‘empty’ for not fulfilling some promise of disaster, or pointless because they were not heeded and propitiated. Additionally, though the distinction between the two possible readings might initially seem to be important, both somewhat paradoxically lead to similar inferences: if we should take deum to be subjective, then we have two options: either the presumably horrifying option of total divine indifference, the breakdown of all order in the cosmos which can only be taken as deliberately overstated in the context; or we have something very similar to the comment in the opening of the Histories, since the absence of cura implies ira: we have a Rome where all hell has broken loose. This would mean that the city had failed to establish proper relations with its gods. An objective genitive would then also level the same perennial charge – of negligence. Since the result of the negligence is that Nero’s reign and crimes continued for many years, one is initially

402 The phrase multa prodigia occurs in Livy to indicate the acuteness of a crisis: whenever he uses it, special expiations are required 5.15.1 (where they are not heeded but Rome ends up sending to Delphi), 10.23.1, 21.62.1 (where the numbers lead Livy to question whether the checking procedures had been heeded), 24.10.6, 27.4.11, 28.11.1, & 40.19.1.
403 2.14.3 (sine cura ducum; objective), i.79.1 (without a genitive; but apparently objectively). sine cura also used of total indifference at 11.8.1 (objective).
404 Objective: Quintilian Decl. Min. 274.12; Martial 1.111; Silius Italicus 7.75; Livy 24.8.10. Subjective: Ovid Meta. 8.724; Lucan 5.340; Statius Siluae 4.2.15; Ovid Ars Amat. 3.405; Statius Thebaid 5.456. Ovid Meta. equates the cura of the gods with wrath (4.574). For further examples see TLL vol 4 col 1465 line 65-74.
tempted to conclude that Tacitus would rather Nero be actively stopped. But it is not that simple.

If either route leads to the familiar accusation of neglect, they do not call for the same kind of action. If deum is objective then the Romans should have performed expiation (none is noted; and it is unlikely that the signs would have been officially acknowledged in the circumstances). The ‘result’ of failure to expiate is the continuation of Nero’s reign and crimes. This carries the implication that the solution to the ira deum was the end, somehow, of the moral collapse; or that ritual expiation would have put an end to it. Thus the massacres and political chaos are equated with the continuing wrath of the gods. Later on, Tacitus will inform us that the ira numinum was directed in res Romanas (16.16.2), which clarifies for us that it is Rome in general which is offensive to the gods, not merely the emperor.405

There are further ‘jokes’ in this compressed sententious statement: Tacitus never elsewhere calls for the replacement of an emperor.406 It will be further argued below (pp. 229-231) that the wrath of the gods does not extend to the removal of an emperor; rather the state of pax deum reflects circumstances under an emperor appointed by fate. Within this construction, Nero would be accountable for his actions, but accountability was not necessarily tantamount to endorsing his removal from power. Thus, when Tacitus combines imperium with scelera as a hendiadys, his charge is that Nero is beyond redemption by this point.

However, this distinction between the power of the gods and the assumption that Nero rules by decree of fate does not permit us to make of this a dogmatic formulation whereby the gods are impotent: to assert that prodigies are not linked to the wrath of the gods, or that the gods are not powerful, is a pure violation of expectation akin to that in

405 Betensky (1978) 432 sees a similarly specific focus (not concerned with religion): “the drama Tacitus sees has Rome, not Nero, as its centre. He sees the figures of Greek tragedy lurking behind the Roman characters and Nero’s court as a tragedy for Rome.”
406 Walker (1952) 181.
the opening to the *Histories*. If, on the other hand, *deum* is subjective then the gods 'should' have removed Nero, or stopped him. The 'subjective' reading then represents the more violent 'witty' option, comparable to taking *esse* to refer to a general rather than chronologically defined time in i.3. This cannot be taken literally: the gods should have stopped Nero just as the managing director should personally come down and adjust the new receptionist’s tie. Yet in the absurd hyperbole is some sense of the horror, frustration and fear. Understanding the genitive *deum* objectively, the alternative ‘more sensible’ overtones of the passage charge Rome with neglect of the gods, and the loss of proper *mores*: that is why Nero continues his crimes – Rome ‘deserves’ them. Nero in his depravity represents the punishment of Rome by the gods407 but that does not mean that Rome should mistake the symptom for the disease: the dynamics of divine punishment actually level the finger of blame at Rome as a whole,408 not just the emperor.

All this is not to say that we have discovered the historian’s ‘opinions’: the statement is horrific in its implications and unique for its extreme hyperbole; it is another ‘joke’. But the various implications do not include the idea that Roman religion is inherently nonsensical; rather it depends on the existence of the traditional categories in the reader’s mind for the ‘joke’ to have any impact. The emperor has murdered his mother, the senate has endorsed and celebrated his deed: only the gods are in their right minds, even if no-one will listen to them: and the horror can only be conveyed through the threat of the utter destruction of that last resort of sanity. There is still (just) something to measure Nero and his Rome against.

---

407 Compare the moment in the *Histories* where Vitellius’ incompetence is so marked that he ‘is’ a sign, *praecipuum ipse Vitellius ostentum erat* (iii.56). Vitellius is often depicted dramatically to underscore his undesirability (Keitel (1992)).

408 Below, pp. 229-235.
(iii) Distribution and Frequency of Prodigy Notices

Although prodigies are recognisable as indications of the gods’ wrath and of impending
disaster, their numbers are diminished in comparison with Livy’s extant account, and
their context and meaning has changed in emphasis: Livy’s complaint about prodigies
was not that they did not occur, but that they were not reported. Aspects of prodigy
reporting such as the existence of historical record and the politics of making reports,
relatively neglected in our discussion of Livy, must be considered with more care in
connection with Tacitus, since they touch on fundamental issues of interpretation in a
changed arena.

(a) The Historical

If we consider that prodigies, notoriously reported in far greater numbers at times of
stress represented a means for communities to indicate their concerns to Rome, then
the historical question of the drop in reports can be answered relatively simply by
reference to the change in politics. Livy’s Roman Republic was dependent on its
ability to solve religious crises for its credibility: it had a range of priesthoods equipped to
deal with religious difficulties. At times of the pax deum they were relatively redundant.
As was outlined above (pp. 59-63) the advent of empire led to an increasing focus on the

---

409 Tacitus’ slant on this would appear to be the notice that prodigies that were once reported in times of
peace and war are now only noted at times of stress, (plura alia rudibus saeculis etiam in pace obseruata,
quae nunc tantum in metu audiiuntur, i.86.1).
410 For Livy, above, pp. 41-44: Tacitus i.86.1, iv.26.2
411 Or Romans themselves; MacBain 35-42. Compare the way that Tacitus juxtaposes a prodigy report
with other attempts by the plebs to indicate their displeasure to Claudius, multa eo anno prodigia
euenere...frugum quoque egestas et orta ex eo fames...in prodigium accipiebatur. nec occulti tantum
questus, sed iura reddentem Claudium circumuasere clamoribus turbidis, pulsumque in extremam fori
partem ui urgebant (12.43.1): a similar process may be occurring at 4.64.1. when Tiberius put a stop to
discussion of omens by distributing relief funds. Needless to say, this angle on prodigy reporting could
do with a fuller analysis.
412 Rosenberger (1998) 244 comes to the same conclusion.
emperor as eminently and continuously pious, and in permanent favour with the gods.\textsuperscript{413} The corollary was a gradual change of emphasis in interpreting any signs that were taken to be adverse: whereas the imperative in the Republic would have been to \textit{obtain} religious favour,\textsuperscript{414} the rule of thumb in the Empire was to \textit{retain} it. Additionally there was a tendency to see the acquisition of empire as a matter of destiny rather than character.\textsuperscript{415} One effect of this particular orientation is that adverse signs would be accordingly interpreted as indicative of the workings of fate rather than a ‘routine’ (and expiable) disruption of the \textit{pax deum}. As we move through the first century, this process becomes gradually more established: every emperor in the \textit{Histories}, for instance, receives indications of his future rule or failure by means of religious notices that would probably have been considered less than terminal under the Republic.\textsuperscript{416} Yet one wonders if one of Livy’s consuls would have been so alarmed: it would have been more typical to simply begin a ceremony again, or attempt expiation. The vast majority of potentially prodigial or ominous material was now interpreted in connection with a change of ruler: for Suetonius there is little distinction to be made between prodigies and omens. “All Suetonius’ lists of signs revolve around two issues, and two only: the rise to imperial power and the fall from it.”\textsuperscript{417} Thus the context for reporting had changed dramatically: whereas republican Rome had, according to Livy, been actively interested in prodigies, no-one in their right mind would report one to an imperial senate. We should be

\textsuperscript{413} See also Gordon (1990c). There are signs of dissonance in the \textit{Annals}, when Nero is alone in taking as auspicious the collapse a theatre after it had been evacuated (15.34.1).
\textsuperscript{414} Even if multiple repetitions were required; e.g. Fabius succeeded in obtaining good omens \textit{tandem} (Livy 23.39.5).
\textsuperscript{415} I anticipate my own discussion on this issue, below pp. 227-229. Though the emperors of the \textit{Annals} are not so systematically validated as those of the \textit{Histories}, there are signs that Tiberius’ lineage enjoys special favour (4.64): Nero is thought to be marked out for empire by his receiving greater applause than Britannicus (11.11).
\textsuperscript{416} Galba’s failure to understand the traditional problems with storms at a \textit{contio} are linked to his approaching end by Tacitus (as a possibility, i.18.1) and Otho (with more confidence, i.38.1); his vitiated sacrifice indicates a plot (i.27.1), which Otho interprets as favourable to himself; Fabius Valens receives a positive omen when marching for Vitellius (i.62.3); it is \textit{acceptum funesti ominis} that Vitellius, \textit{omnis humani divinique iuris expers}, issues a proclamation about public ceremonies on the 18th of July, the anniversary of the defeats at Cremona and Allia (ii.91.1); there is also the inauspicious omen for the same emperor at iii.56.1 and the escape and unusual \textit{(nec ut...mos est)} sacrifice of a bull. There are a string of ‘traditional’ signs and errors before Otho’s departure from Rome to face Vitellius (i.86) and dismay at his failure to wait for the ritual of the \textit{Salii} (i.89.3). Note also that Vespasian labours for \textit{empire meliore fato} (iii.1.1), having been marked out to escape a crisis \textit{maiore fato} (16.5.3), a distinction between \textit{fata} that I have been unable to find elsewhere.
\textsuperscript{417} Wallace-Hadrill (1983) 191. See e.g. \textit{Otho} 8, which includes (rather indiscriminately) mistakes in following lore, poor auspices and signs.
surprised that there were any prodigy reports at all. Additionally we might consider that Tacitus’ insistence on expiation, for all its similarity with Livy, is bucking a trend and reasserting a tradition that was beginning to lose its exalted status in literature.

Those that we do have seem to owe their presence in the historical record to the fact that they were either local and/or unavoidably well-known: thus the reports that are available to us are almost exclusively from Rome. These would appear to be difficult to ignore: the interpretation of a lightning strike on specific buildings would be too established to redefine (e.g. as expiated by Nero at 13.24.2) as would the death of men of each magistracy within a few months (12.64.1); reports of events on a large scale (such as lightning striking all fourteen districts of Rome, (14.12.2) or a comet (14.22.1) also appear. Where notices appear from outside Rome, they are dramatic and usually what we would call a ‘natural’ disaster on an extraordinary scale – unmistakable prodigial material in other words: a massive earthquake in Campania destroyed a large part of Pompeii (15.22.2); the same area later suffered a divinely-sent hurricane which almost reached Rome: in the same year the city did not, however, escape from the mysterious plague that swept through the entire population (non sexus, non aetas periculo uacua, 16.13.2). A specific adverse sign is noted during Britannicus’ funeral. Ignoring these events would have been extremely difficult, not least because confirmation would have been abundant. Prodigies are also noted when the soldiers in Britain are sufficiently frightened to note them (14.31-2). The Histories are not dissimilar: when we get what sound rather more like old-fashioned reports, Tacitus himself notes that the time was one of exceptional worry: prolocutum in Etruria bouem, insolitos animalium partus, et plura alia rudibus saeculis etiam in pace observata, quae nunc tantum in metu audiuntur

418 Note also the wording at 15.47.1, where Tacitus indicates how public the signs were – bicipites hominum a liorumue animalium partus abiecti in publicum aut in sacrificiis, quibus grauidas hostias immolare mos est, reperti.
419 foedum annum...di...insigniuer 16.13.1: foedum is a word that elsewhere betrays religious overtones: it does at 4.68.1 (foedum anni principium) according to Corrigan (1993). The word may therefore imply a profound failure of morality when used of the sight of the senate and knights cringing before Sejanus (4.74.4).
420 According to some, specifically because of the violation of the feast where he died (13.17.2).
Whereas many of Livy’s notices betrayed an interest, even diligence, in making reports, it appears that in imperial Rome and its environs signs were noted only when they could not be ignored.

(b) The Genuine

There is a further problem with the prodigies in the Annals, and that is of their distribution and frequency. No prodigies occur in the Tiberian books: there are two for Claudius in our text (12.43.1, 12.64.1), and Nero encounters no less than seven.\textsuperscript{422} The early books of the Histories see a range of omens and prodigies (i.3.2, i.18.1, i.86 & 3.56.1). In the latter work prodigies usually indicate the impending death of the emperor, but this is hardly true of Nero, whose reign is full of them: the first (which is expiated) comes in 56, twelve years before his death. The rise in prodigy reports has led some commentators to propose that Tacitus gradually succumbed to a pessimistic fatalism. But the discrepancy can be addressed differently: McCulloch, after indicating that the stages in Tiberius’ reign are highlighted against the consular year, goes on to suggest that “in the Neronian books Tacitus chose to use omens and prodigies, rather than the consular year at the opening of books, to mark the stages of Nero’s life - and, implicitly, to foreshadow the approaching civil war of AD 69.”\textsuperscript{423} He later adds “I can only suggest that the absence of such notices in the Tiberian books reflects Tiberius’ disdain for superstition (sic), while their appearance in the Neronian books reflects

\textsuperscript{421} The report is not dismissed by the comparison with times that were rudis: Tacitus typically uses this word in two ways: firstly of specific characters – the naive or the inexperienced; many young adults, with responsibility thrust upon them too young, are called rudis. Agrippa Postumus is rudem sane bonarum artium (1.3.4); Drusus is rudis dicendi (1.29.1) Secondly, he uses it of groups of people who are simple-minded: this might be the gullible (6.3.2), country folk who are duly corrupted by the decadent city dwellers (1.31.4) or the sort of people who did not require laws before the gradual encroachment of the need for legislation in the face of a decadent and immoral society (3.26.3; for the beginning of the decline of Rome with the introduction of laws see Scott (1968) 64). To be rudi animo is not a particularly useful state in the maelstrom of Roman politics, where shrewdness and wit was required to navigate the complexities of cruelty and obsequiousness; nonetheless it was not necessarily an undesirable faculty in itself. At worst it implies error in interpretation.

\textsuperscript{422} If we count 15.44.1 (in response to the fire, which prompts expiation under the supervision of the quindecemviri); see also 13.24.1-2, 13.58.1, 14.12.3, 15.22.3-4, 15.47.1-3 & 16.13.1.

Nero’s tolerance of, and, indeed, fascination for, prodigies” (196). The ingenious suggestion about the reign of Tiberius may hold true more for history than historiography, based as it is on Tiberius’ refusal to consult the Sibyline Books when the Tiber flooded (1.76.1):424 a comparison with Suetonius suggests that there were not much in the way of material, and this may be linked to a tendency of Tiberius to reject reported prodigies.425 The one religious phenomenon that was (presumably) widely reported, the sighting of the phoenix, duly makes an appearance.426 The absence of prodigies should not lead us to think that the gods were not angry with Rome, a charge that Tacitus makes explicitly at 4.1.2 in connection with the rise of Sejanus, but it might suggest that, in addition to the obstacles already noted to reporting prodigies in imperial Rome and Tiberius’ reluctance to accept reports, there was not a general perception of crisis at the time. Whatever the difficulties of the historical tradition, we should assume that Tacitus will use the religious material trenchantly: not just to ‘exploit’, but also to ‘explain’. Indications of the wrath of the gods do ‘make sense’ but it is up to the historian or other interpreter to understand the connection between human behaviour and the divine response. Thus McCulloch is probably right to understand both the appearance of the phoenix and the temporary withering of the ficus Ruminalis (13.58) as related to the end of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, even if these harbingers of doom precede the reality by years, or decades.427 The prodigies of the Neronian years also often seem to be placed in connection with particular acts – as McCulloch suggests, the prodigies indicate the degeneration of Nero’s character: the withering of the ficus Ruminalis (13.58) is immediately followed by the news, at the beginning of book 14 that diu meditatum scelus non ultra Nero distulit. His mother Agrippina is duly murdered

424 On Tiberius’ reputed aversion to traditional religious diagnoses and his preference for the apparently more fatalistic astrology, see also Syme (1958a) 523 who notes Suet. Tiberius 69; Pliny NH 15.135; 16.194; 28.23. The only sign reported by Suetonius during his reign is, however, taken personally (Tiberius 72).
425 Tiberius’ distribution of relief after a fire at 4.64.1 puts an end to gossip about omens: but we should not fail to notice that he has met a situation that some thought required a religious solution with a human response, which is a perfectly acceptable response.
426 6.28; Dio records the appearance for 36, two years later (McCulloch (1984) 205).
427 McCulloch(1980); (1984) 206-208; for further discussion of this episode see Dickson & Plympton (1977) and Segal (1973) who demonstrates (contra Syme (1958a) 269) that the prodigy is highly significant: “the order of events which he adopts...throws into sharp relief the contrast between the corruption and depravity at the centre of the empire and the strenuous exertions and dangers at its western and eastern extremes” 114).
shortly afterwards and the next report follows the scramble to offer thanks to the gods for
the emperor’s ‘deliverance’ (14.12.1-2); in 63, amongst other prodigies, lightning struck
a gymnasium, melting Nero’s bronze statue (15.22.2). The specificity of the target
surely cannot be ignored. Though the only adverse comment Tacitus has for the year is
about the erection of arches and trophies for the spurious victory over Parthia, it may be
that the signs are linked to the kind of degeneracy that saw Thrasea Paetus excluded from
the celebrations for the birth of Augusta, Nero’s daughter; most of the coverage of
domestic news from 63 consisted of the Stoic’s patriotic and exemplary speech about
government of the provinces. The religious procedures undertaken for the fire of Rome
failed to allay suspicions that arson was the cause (15.44.2) and further prodigies follow
the looting of temples all over Italy, a *sacrilegium* that Seneca refused to endorse
(15.45.1-3). By the time we reach 16.13.1, the last extant prodigy list, the year was *tot
facinoribus foedum* that it is difficult to specify one particular crime to which the gods
might be responding. But it is not just Nero who is bringing divine wrath on the city: it
is also – even especially – Rome as a whole.428

The prodigies in the *Histories* also seem to be a response to human behaviour and
warnings of divine anger: Otho expiates prodigies at i.86429 by lustrating the city: but he
and his troops are marked as impious by the way that Tacitus constructs the murder of
Galba.430 Finally, as we have seen, the Jews in their ignorance did not respond to their
prodigies, which presumably were intended to warn them of their imminent catastrophic
failure (v.13.1). It would seem that regarding prodigies, Tacitus’ position is more
traditional than has generally been thought.

428 Below, pp. 210-212.
429 Which were presumably reported because of the impending threat of Vitellius’ approach towards
Rome.
430 Scott (1968) 60-64.
A number of interpretations contrast ‘chance’ or ‘nature’ with genuine religious phenomena and in this Tacitus is more caustic and discerning than Livy: apart from the comments at i.86.1 and iv.26.2 that correct the interpretation of ‘prodigial’ with ‘natural’ or ‘chance’, there is Tiberius’ mistaken belief that the birth of Drusus’ twins should be attributed to the favour of the gods, nam cuncta, etiam fortuita, ad gloriam uertebat (2.84): from these instances arises the temptation to consider whether the boundaries of the categories had changed since Livy’s day. It seems likely that Tacitus’ reasoning is based more on the fact that both were to die without issue or impact\(^{431}\) than on any fundamental change in categorisation. Other examples also forestall this possibility: at 4.27.1 belli semina fors oppressit...because uelut munere deum, three biremes put in at Brindisi.\(^{432}\) Certainly it is possible to designate events as due to chance rather than the gods: Galba makes the wrong choice at i.18.1\(^{433}\) and Tacitus does not miss the opportunity to highlight the aged emperor’s ignorance; the common opinion is wrong, as usual, to mistake a chance event for a prodigial one (4.64.1).

\(\textit{Fors}\) continues to designate the conjunction of details without intention,\(^{434}\) often defying expectation.\(^{435}\) Thus events that were genuinely prodigial presumed intention and

---

\(^{431}\) One dies soon after (4.15.1) and the other, Tiberius Gemellus died at the hands of his co-heir Caligula (Suet. Gaius 23) as Tiberius had predicted (6.46.4).

\(^{432}\) \textit{uelut} is susceptible to the same analysis as in Livy (pp. 64-66), though it seems likely that he would have reversed the order: the revolt would have been crushed by the help of the gods after the ships arrived by chance.

\(^{433}\) Given below, p. 230: Galba typically makes his own misfortune whether generous or greedy (Morgan (1992)). For the aspect of \textit{capax imperii}, see Pigón (1990) 370-374; Nawotka (1993) deals more with \textit{nisi imperasset}. For a fuller discussion and further biography see Ash (1996) & Murison (1993). For the reception of Vitellius’ career and resignation see (somewhat ambiguously) Levene (1997); Ash (1996) 229-232 who both anticipate pity. Despite the sophistication of the relevant arguments, it seems rather out of character for Tacitus to pity one who has so spectacularly failed to live up to the expectation of competence; it may be that Vitellius’ utter failure even \textit{not} to rule is beyond contempt in the eyes of the historian.

\(^{434}\) E.g. \textit{seu dolo seu forte} ii.42.1; \textit{forte an dolo principis incertum}, 15.38.1; cf. also iii.21.2.

\(^{435}\) E.g. \textit{fors cuncta turbare et ignauorum saepe telis fortissimi cadere}, iv.29.2. Kajanto (1981) 544-546 deals with \textit{fors} and \textit{fortuita} in Tacitus and has similar findings. He also suggests that \textit{fortuna} is a synonym for \textit{fors} with a few notable exceptions (ii.1.1; iii.59.2; iii.82.3 \textit{et al}); this is perfectly consistent with the discussion above (pp. 159-172) on Livy’s use of the term, although Kajanto misses any distinction between the coincidence of individual details (\textit{fors}) and a broader sweep of events (\textit{fortuna}).
meaningfulness, as seems to happen when the *haruspices* interpret the misformed calf that predicts Piso’s conspiracy (15.47.2).\(^ {436} \) If the distinction is more often used than was found in Livy and with a more heightened sense of contrast, that is either a measure of a more confident Tacitus against Livy, or a change in the interpretative climate, where chance had assumed a greater importance in the discrimination of genuine prodigies. Both explanations seem perfectly plausible but the co-existence of the categories of ‘chance’ and ‘divine’ should not surprise us: as before, they do not exclude one another. Drusus’ twins were just part of a normal pattern of human existence; as a detail, they did not mark out any special divine favour even if the family ruled by divine mandate. If they had featured more impressively in Roman politics, then perhaps the hand of the gods would have been a more accurate diagnosis.

---

\(^ {436} \) Intelligibility of signs (however obscure many of the prodigies are to us) was tentatively argued for earlier (pp. 124-125), and would also seem to be important in the understanding of the omen at 15.7.2 that *pila militum arsere, magis insigni prodigio quia Parthus hostis missilibus telis decertat*. For the appearance of *haruspices* in the texts, see Briquel (1995), for whom they are uniformly correct and appropriate, with the caution that Briquel is mistaken to connect the description *superstitio* with them at ii.78.1 (*[Vespasianus]*...*responsa uatum et siderum motum referre. nec erat intactus tali superstitione*...): Tacitus is surely referring to astrology. The deviation in the pattern of naming priests with Umbricius at i.27.1 would appear to be explained by his title *haruspex Caesarum* (P. Wuilleumier *Bulletin de la Société des Antiquaires de France* 1929, 172-179). His case would therefore seem analogous to that of the *Pontifex Maximus* in that he had an exalted status.
Religious agents in Tacitus' narratives are characterised most frequently by their incompetence and the consular historian takes no hostages on this point. McCulloch complains that "what, in fact, makes Tacitus so exasperating for many of his readers is that he himself is not concerned about his failure to account for all historical phenomena in the same way [as those he scorns, such as astrologers]" (McCulloch (1991) 2939). But this is missing the point; Tacitus' criticisms of others' interpretations is almost entirely power-play. His display of expertise would be far less effective if he were to record corrections painstakingly, something that would smack of a novice's desire to impress rather than a distinguished statesman fluently exercising his skill. Just as was found with Livy, the only explanations that Tacitus is willing to give us are skilful refinements. Misdiagnosis of prodigies is not the only error that can be made; there are plenty of other, more serious, errors available to those who wish to do away with tradition and practice foreign rites and customs.
Livy was not averse to dismissing the rites of Rome’s enemies but reserved most of his criticism for Rome and Romans: Tacitus, however, is more likely to emphasise the foreign nature of religious practices with reference to *superstitio*, which is liberally applied to a whole range of foreign religions: his Claudius warns that *externae superstitiones ualescant* (11.15.1); the Jews are thoroughly dismissed and the Druids reveal their incompetence at every opportunity. The Germans are given to religious error in their considering women divine (iv.61.2) and the altars on which Roman officers were sacrificed after the defeat of Varus were, rather inevitably, *barbarae* (1.61.3). The Egyptians are generally unstable and uncivilised, not least for their *superstitio* (i.11.1) and their rites, along with those of the Jews, are again described as *superstitio* when those ‘infected’ by them are expelled from Rome (2.85.4). When Nero instigated a persecution of the Christians with their *superstitio*, it was not their lack of guilt that made people pity them, but his motives (15.44.5). That is not to say that all foreign practices are flawed; Tacitus is ultimately operating within the same framework as Livy, since a number of foreign sites and practices receive a dignified exposition, especially those that advised Vespasian and Titus of their destiny to empire.

---

437 Above, p. 100.
438 The term is not necessarily pejorative: when a number of cities were questioned by the senate regarding the abuse of sanctuary rights, they relied on *uetustis superstitionibus aut mentis in populum Romanum* to argue their case (3.60.2). From this it might seem that Tacitus was dismissive of the various claims that follow which are mostly mythical; but such scorn for apparently well-authenticated claims would be extremely unusual. It may be that the term is not so pejorative in itself, but that a hostile context will emphasise the assumption that most foreign religions are inferior to the Roman: Tacitus elsewhere has Ptolemy ask Timotheus which god he had dreamt of and what his rites (*superstitio*), were (iv.83.2). The term cannot represent a paraphrase of the Pharaoh’s words if there is a pejorative sense. Finally, the worship of Serapis is described as *superstitiones* (below, n. 443) but in a context that validates Vespasian’s ‘miraculous’ healings. Se further below, n. 443.
439 Tacitus speaks of their *peruciaciam superstitionis* at ii.4.3: v.2-13 is an extended condemnation, e.g. *profana illic omnia quae apud nos sacra, rursum concessa apud illos quae nobis incesta*, v.2.1; their religion is called *superstitio* again at v.8.2 & 3.
440 Mistaken interpretation of the burning of the Capitol, iv.54.2; their rites are *saevae superstitiones* at 14.30.3 *nam cruore captiue adolere aras et hominum fibris consulere deos fas habebant*.
441 Civilis exacts an oath that, although traditional, is also barbarous (iv.15).
442 Williams (1989) argues that the expulsion was more a matter of law and order than religion.
443 ii.2.2-ii.4 sees Titus visit the shrine of Paphian Venus, and earns the shrine a history with full credentials; he receives a positive prediction from the goddess. Vespasian is also promised success at Carmel, ii.78.3; when the emperor heals a cripple and a blind man in Alexandria, it is at the instigation of the god *monitu Serapidis dei, quem dedita superstitionibus gens ante alios colit* (iv.81.1): there follows a lengthy excursus on the origin of the god’s cult, which legitimises it on several counts: firstly the dream that bade Ptolemy fetch the god is interpreted not by the (presumably unreliable) Egyptian
Third Legion salute the rising sun, *ut mos*, they are not castigated for it, though it amusingly leads to a rumour that Mucianus had arrived at the battle-scene and the two armies had greeted one another (iii.2.4-5). But Tacitus does not only credit foreign cults for which there was a political imperative: a few learned, and uncritical, notices appear elsewhere on foreign customs.\footnote{444}{

(b) **Superstitio at home: credulity, astrology and dreams**

Romans are just as susceptible as others to erroneous ways: the mutinous soldiers in Pannonia were frightened by an eclipse and lost their nerve: *sunt mobiles ad superstitionem perculsae semel mentes* (1.28.2).\footnote{445}{
This made them more malleable to Drusus' shrewd exploitation of their fear *dum superstitione urgeat* (1.29.3). Vitellius was frightened, and superstitious, enough (*Caesarem se dici voluit...superstitione nominis*) to think that being called Caesar would make a difference to his situation (iii.58.3). But *superstitio* is not simply foreign or credulous: it is also used of magical practices (*magicas superstitiones*, 12.59.1). The problem with magic was not that it was ineffective, but that it was unregulated.\footnote{446}{
Thus magicians were expelled from Italy in 16 (2.32.3) and again in 69 (ii.62.2). Tacitus does not explicitly condemn the art, though priests, but by the next best thing to a Roman, the Athenian Timotheus, and his conclusions are based on good investigative work rather than any disreputable charismatic inspiration. The story includes a whole array of proofs, such as the repeated dreams of the god both by Ptolemy and the king of the territory where Serapis was currently housed, Scyrothemis of Sinope. Serapis himself is then linked with Aesculapius, Osiris, Jupiter and (probably preferably) Pluto (iv.83-4.). The similarities between the two consultations (ii.2-4 & ii.78) are not lost on Ash (250-251), but it may not be as significant as she suggests—the (highly relevant) naming of the respective priests and description of the shrine are not untypical historiographical habits.

\footnote{444}{The origins of the Iberians and Albanians who claim descent from Phrixus includes the note that they do not sacrifice rams, without any caustic asides, 6.34; when Gotarzes offers prayers to Hercules on Mt Sunbulah, there is information, again without comment, about the way that the gods instructs his priests, 12.13.}

\footnote{445}{Cf. the stories told by men who had been shipwrecked: they reported many strange things *uisa siue ex metu credita* (2.24.4).}

\footnote{446}{Or unregulatable: see Phillips (1991) on the difficulties of deciding which was 'good' and which was 'bad', as well as the difficulties of enforcement of this distinction. Of the numerous discussions of the definition of magic see especially J. Z. Smith (1995). Note in Tacitus the frequent conjunction of the charges of magic and adultery or even incest: 3.22.1 (Aemilia Lepida, wife of Quirinius); 4.52.1 (Claudia Pulchra); 6.29.3-4 (Scaurus) & 16.8.2 (Junia Lepida, wife of Cassius, accused of incest).}
his depiction of the death-scene of Germanicus vividly creates an atmosphere of dread (2.69.3): his audience hardly needed to be told.447

Often associated with magic is astrology: astrologers were expelled along with magicians in 16 and again in 52 by a senatus consultum atrox et inritum (12.52.3). A major obstacle to ridding Italy of astrology would have been the fact that it was often the emperor who employed their services, or even, in the case of Tiberius, practised the art (6.20.2).448 Astrology is a superstitio (ii.78.1) and there would appear to be censure in the notice that Vespasian kept one ‘openly’ (palam) at court: in short, mathematici are a genus hominum potentibus infidum, sperantibus fallax449 (i.22.1). We shall see, however, that despite his assertion that astrologers make errors, his account actually includes not single example: rather it provides multiple proofs of the surprising accuracy of various astrologers.450

When detailing the entrapment of Libo, the first to die for charges concerning magic and predictions (2.27f), Tacitus tells us that he was facilis inanibus and it was all the easier to

447 "The use of the term superstitio seems to have widened over the first century A.D....the most striking development, however, was that the concept of magic emerged as the ultimate superstitio” BNP 218.
448 His prediction in Greek to the effect that 'et tu, Galba, quandoque degustabis imperium' owes its presence to a number of factors: it comes amid a series of executions and probably alludes to the workings of fate in Galba’s survival. There is a similarly forward-looking story about Vespasian’s survival fato (16.5.3) an incident presented to emphasise the workings of destiny (Bartsch (1994) 6-7, 30-31). But the irony of a consul being told that he will later have imperium, after a consultation about state affairs should not be missed.
449 An unsubstantiated charge, at least in his own accounts, as the following note demonstrates. For the argument that Vespasian has gone too far in resembling his soldiers, see Ash (1996) 241-245: however she does not differentiate between the superstitio of the common soldiery (displayed for instance at 1.28.2) and astrology, the imperial superstitio, which is only practised by (foolish) aristocrats and emperors in Tacitus’ works.
450 At 4.58.2-3, predictions made from the movements of the planets show how difficult accurate prediction is: when Tiberius leaves Rome, the popular interpretation of the predictions that he would never return was that his death was imminent: patuit breue confinium artis et falsi ueraque quam obscuris tegerentur. nam in urbe non regressurum haud forte dictum. But these prediction are widespread and anonymous (multis...coniectantibus uulgantibusque) rather than attributed to ‘professional’ astrologers. Tiberius makes his prediction about Galba’s future rule by scientia Chaldaeorum artis, 6.20.2; Thrasylus convinces Tiberius of his ability by predicting (and thereby averting) his own impending doom, 6.21; Agrippina was told by Chaldaei that Nero would rule but would slaughter his mother, 14.9.3; she waited for the tempus...prosperum ex monitis Chaldaeorum before revealing the death of Claudius, 12.68.3 (which would seem to have worked, since the succession went ahead as planned); Ptolemaeus, who ‘misled’ Otho, had earlier predicted Otho’s survival of Nero (i.22.2); in the circumstances (Poppaea being Otho’s wife, before she became Nero’s consort) this was rather impressive. Libo’s trial revealed questions that were ridiculous (2.30.1-2) but the responses are not recorded.
press upon him astrology, magic and interpretation of dreams. We have already seen that, for Livy, reliance on dreams was as disreputable as any other superstitio (pp. 102-103), not because they were always misleading, but because they were unreliable and therefore an inappropriate means of divination. The generally exemplary\textsuperscript{451} Germanicus is more proper, keeping his auspicious dream in its place by double-checking with the auspices and preserving a sense of perspective: when he addresses his men he restricts himself to saying only what was relevant and appropriate\textsuperscript{452} (\textit{qua sapientia prouisa aptaque inminenti pugnae disserit}, 2.14.1). An exception to the rule is the sending of dreams by Hercules to his priests in an organised ritual format (12.13.3): just to underline the point, one Caesellius Bassus, \textit{mente turbida}, was foolish enough to trust a dream about buried treasure (\textit{nocturnae quietis imaginem ad spem haud dubiae re\textless;i\textgreater; traxit}, 16.1.1) and Nero was foolish enough in turn to believe him. Caecina’s terrifying dream of the ghost of Varus appears to have no predictive power either, though it was understandable in the circumstances (1.65.2).

\textsuperscript{451} Formerly considered to be a Tacitean hero, Germanicus’ reputation has suffered in recent years: Rutland (1987); McCulloch (1984) 177f; Pelling (1993).

\textsuperscript{452} Cf. above on Livy’s efforts with Scipio (pp. 101-104).
3) The Politics of Interpretation

(i) Introduction

The standard against which Tacitus is measuring all the religious behaviour and practices in both the Histories and the Annals is propriety not effectiveness: but whereas in Livy’s Rome exceptions only served to prove the rule, religious propriety in Tacitus is almost as rare as a three-legged mule from Reate. For the most part Tacitus is forthright in his condemnation of the distortion of traditional mores: one symptom of the chaos of the civil war is that pollutae caerimoniae (sc. sunt, i.2.2). He distrusts the kind of excessive honours voted for Germanicus and Drusus after their deaths:

(of the extensive honours voted) pleraque manent: quaedam statim
omissa sunt aut uetustas oblitterauit. (2.83.4).

memoriae Drusi eadem quae in Germanicum decernuntur, plerisque
additis, ut ferme amat posterior adulatio. (4.8.2).

After the execution of Octavia, that destroyer of empires, Tacitus does not spare the spineless senate:

dona ob haec templis decreta que<m> ad finem memorabimus?
quicumque casus temporum illorum nobis uel aliis auctoribus noscent,
praesumptum habeant, quotiens fugas et caedes iussit princeps, totiens
In a world turned upside down, to assert the norms would be a time-consuming process, and to admit that Rome needed them to be spelt out would almost be to admit defeat. Tacitus has not yet reached this point: there is still hope that his Romans do, despite appearances, know what is right. Furthermore to lecture them explicitly on propriety would foreground sanity, which is not his intention – it would detract from the horror.

453 Cf. the celebrations after the deaths of Agrippina (14.12.1), whose birthday is declared nefastus. Such elements were present from the very start of the imperial executions of ‘enemies’: the day on which Libo killed himself was declared a dies festus (2.32.2). The agglomeration of festivals, including days that earned their status from the emperors’ various ‘deliverances’, reached a level where a limit was proposed to circumvent the political restrictions (13.41.4). For the epidemic of sycophancy and servility see 1.7.1 (At Romae ruere in servitium consules patres eques. quanto quis industrior, tanto magis falsi ac festinantes uultuque composito, ne laeti excessu principis neu tristior<es> primordio, lacrimas gaudium, questus adulatione<m> miscabant), 2.32.2 (quorum auctoritates adulationesque rettuli, ut sciretur uetus id in re publica malum), 3.65.2 (ceterum tempora illa adeo infecta et adulatione sordida fuere...). See also the comments of Segal (1973) 119. Sejanus enjoys the debasement of the aristocracy (4.74.4), but Tiberius did not (3.65.3; for such epigrammatic contempt, see further Sinclair (1992)). Obsequium was the appropriate relationship (McCulloch (1984) 181; M. Pani ‘Ancora su principato e società. I. Sulla nozione di ‘obsequium’ in Tacito e Plinio il Giovane’, in Epigrafia e territorio, Politica e società. Temi di antichità romane II (Bari 1987); Morford (1991).
(ii) Fatum

It is striking that while Livy’s relatively vast extant text has the word *fatum* only 36 times (*fatalis* 20 times, though 8 of those are in the phrase *libri fatales*, i.e. the Sibylline Books), it occurs as many as 31 times (*fatalis* or *fataliter* 9 times) in the *Annals* and *Histories*. These figures could be explained away by the observation that *fatum* is simply far more likely to mean ‘death’ in Tacitus’ account, but we can be more subtle. A death that was both natural and worth recording was unusual in those days, as Tacitus pithily remarks at 6.10.3. When Scipio is asked by Claudius, *adeo ignaro* of Messalina’s machinations in forcing the suicide of his wife Poppaea, why he is dining without her, he replies that she had died *fato* (11.2.2); the compounding of disingenuous sarcasm and political tact is far from neutral. *Fatum* as a natural death is contrasted with suicide (*finem uitae sponte an fato impleuit*, 2.42.3) Cestius Gallus is even said to have died *fato aut taedio* (v.10.1). It is still possible for Tacitus to exploit *fatum* to condemn murder as Livy did in highlighting Perseus’ hypocrisy: even a simple notice of death *fato* carries the implication that the person in question escaped the purges.

In dealing with aspects other than the timing and manner of death, there is an irony in Tacitus’ dealing with *fatum*: he is never so diffident as when discussing the inevitable. His excursuses on fate are characterised by what appears to be uncertainty: one such notice appears in conjunction with an assessment of the senator Marcus Lepidus:

```
hunc ego Lepidum temporibus illis grauem et sapientem uirum fuisse
comperior: nam pleraque ab saeuis adulationibus aliorum in melius
flexit. neque tamen temperamenti egebat, cum aequabili auctoritate et
```

---

454 E.g. 1.3.3, 1.55.3, 6.10.3, 14.124, 14.14.4 et al.
455 Above, p. 154.
456 This grim image is grotesquely articulated at 16.13.2 during a severe plague (*interitus quamuis promisci minus flebiles erant, tamquam communi mortalitate saeuitam principis praeuenirent*).
457 According to Hellegouarc’h (1991), Tacitus is normally given to ‘dogmatic assertions’ in comparison with Caesar, Sallust and Livy.
gratia apud Tiberium uiguerit. unde dubitare cogor, fato et sorte
nascendi, ut cetera, ita principum inclinatio in hos, offensio in illos, an
sit aliquid in nostris consiliis liceatque inter abruptam contumaciam et
deforme obsequium pergere iter ambitione ac periculis uacuum.

(4.20.2-4)

There is another excursus at 6.22.1-3 after the story of the predictions of Thrasyllus,
Tiberius' court astrologer:

Sed mihi haec ac talia audienti in incerto iudicium est, fatone res
mortalium et necessitate immutabili an forte uoluantur. quippe
sapientissimos ueterum quique sectam eorum aemulantur diversos
reperies, ac multis insitam opinionem non initia nostri, non finem, non
deriores esse. contra alii fatum quidem congruere rebus putant, sed
non e uagis stellis, uerum apud principia et nexus naturalium
causarum; ac tamen electionem uiae nobis relinquunt, quam ubi
elegeris, certum imminentium ordinem. neque mala uel bona quae
uulgus putet: multos qui conflictari aduersis uideantur, beatos, at
plerosque, quamquam magnas per opes, miserrimos, si illi grauem
fortunam constanter tolerent, hi prospera inconsulte utantur. ceterum
plurimis mortalium non eximitur, quin primo cuiusque ortu uentura
destinentur, sed quaedam secus quam dicta sint cadere fallaciis ignara
dicentium: ita corrumpi fidem artis, cuius clara documenta et antiqua
aetas et nostra tulerit.
The references have caused problems for commentators: they have customarily spoken of Tacitus' indecision or agnosticism. But there are better reasons for Tacitus' hesitation: Martin & Woodman are in no doubt as to the true relevance of 4.20—"Tacitus is no more seriously concerned with fate and astrological determinism here than at 6.22.1-3, but uses these concepts as a convenient foil for the characteristic point that posse etiam sub malis principibus magnos uiros esse (AGr. 42.2)." Sinclair (1995), in discussing 6.22, further offers that "at first sight it may appear that Tacitus generalises on the human condition, but in both cases his attention is actually very narrowly focussed upon the question of the political survival of members of the senatorial class" (54-5). He continues "the glib tone enables Tacitus to be firm and uncompromising, without alienating his reader. He incorporates the reader along with himself into an intellectual elite capable of surveying or offending his readers' personal beliefs — proof of his studied urbanity as a Roman senatorial historian" (56).

We might go further, and reappropriate this material into Tacitus' particular religious stand. One could not discuss fate without raising the question of imperial destiny. Though Tacitus appears to admit the difficulties of interpreting predictions of fate, this is not straightforward 'intellectual doubt': to experiment with the dictates of fate in imperial Rome was not only improper but extremely dangerous. By studiously failing to endorse any particular interpretative standpoint Tacitus declares his disinterest in the decrees of destiny — just about the only sensible position left to an aristocrat on the subject. Knowledge was power, and absolute knowledge was to be left to those with absolute power already. Thus when Tacitus mildly notes in the opening to the Histories that 'we' only believed the signs connected with Vespasian after the event', he is not

---

458 E.g. "Often 'fate' is mentioned simply to underline the impression made by events whose real cause, as the history itself has made clear, lies in human character" (Walker (1952) 46, rather confusingly: at 239, she diagnoses that Tacitus is "non-committal" on fate); Potter (1994) 255 n.1 says "It is difficult to know his own views on this subject, but the variation in their expression with the rhetorical necessity of a given passage suggests that he tended towards the agnostic." Syme (1958a) 527 offers that "the notions of 'fatum' and 'fortuna' continue to be discussed...not much emerges. The words belong to literature rather than dogma." He refers the reader to Walker for "sensible remarks").

459 I do not, however, accept his assertion that "Tacitus both proceeds to distance his own thinking from these particular doctrines, and urges his reader to accept that, common as such beliefs about metaphysical forces may be in educated discussion, they have no place in a historical work" (56).

460 I.e. the senatorial order; see Sinclair (1995) 50-58.
(primarily) exercising a cynicism that these signs were ‘really’ meaningless or fabricated: he is exploiting the ambiguities of interpretation to excuse and mildly chastise those who picked the wrong side(s), an ambiguity which he consistently highlights in dealing with the material of destiny. Thus the exigencies of interpretation lead to an emphasis on an aspect of interpretation that was already present within a traditional framework.

Given the fascination for signs that inevitably developed in imperial Rome, and the speculation that could mark out a man against his will and best interests, we would expect the expert statesman to be doing more than just avoiding committing himself. It is in fact Vespasian (solusque omnium ante se principum in melius mutatus est, i.50.4) who embodies Tacitus' exemplary procedure for dealing with omens. Though he kept an astrologer at court, his attitude to fate is generally modest: the prophecies made about him as a young man, which he only remembered when prompted (recursabant animo uetera omnia) he had considered fulfilled by his eminence under Nero (sed primo triumphalia et consulatus et Judaicae victoriae decus implesse fidem ominis uidebatur (ii.78.2). When asked to heal the sick, he is reluctant to act, and takes professional advice on seeing Basilides in the temple of Serapis in Alexandria, he performs his own extensive inquiries into the location of the man before accepting his appearance as an omen on the strength of his friend’s name (iv.82.1-2). Finally, even with the indications of divine support,

---

461 Occulta fati et ostentis ac responsis destinatum Vespasiano liberisque eius imperium post fortunam credidimus, i.10.3. For credere as an official term for accepting signs, see above, n. 109. Tacitus is also evoking the chaotic uncertainty of the times, lest the reader fail to appreciate the twists and turns of the civil war. It would seem that Vespasian too did not associate them with empire: A. Barzanò ('Note per una reinterpretazione di Tac. 'Hist'. 2.78', Aevum 62 (1988) 102-105) dates the prophecy at Carmel to 66-67.

462 See above, n. 450 on the way his own evidence counters the allegation of mistakes made by astrologers.

463 The Annals and Histories contain warnings of failed ‘destinies’: Rubellius Plautus, for instance, was promoted as a rival to Nero after the appearance of a comet (14.22.1). The interpretation was flawed. Otho was ‘fooled’ into believing he would rule: [Ptolemaeus]...fore ut in imperium adsisceretur. sed Otho tamquam peritia et monitu fatorum praedicta accipiebat, i.22.2-3. The passage is rather confusing: astrologers are severely maligned and their accuracy undermined, but strictly speaking the prediction, based also on numerology, was true. One possible reading is that Tacitus is undermining Otho’s claim to have been emperor at all, since he snatched power in the midst of uninterrupted civil war, and failed to retain it against his first opponent. As such, he ‘never ruled’. For Tacitus’ linking Otho with Sallust’s Catiline, see Keitel (1987); further diagnosis of negative portrayal, Perkins (1993).

464 P. Frassinetti ‘I resoconti dei miracoli di Vespasiano’, in La struttura della fabulazione antica (Genoa 1979) 115-127 argues that this detail is part of a systematic attempt to incorporate Vespasian into a traditional mould: he considers that the conference with doctors is fictional.
Tacitus emphasises that Vespasian’s decision to attempt usurpation is a choice that the founder of the Flavian dynasty makes after proper consideration (ii.74.2).\textsuperscript{465} He takes full responsibility for his course of action, irrespective of omens, unlike Otho, who is swept away by the assurances of his supporters when they urge astrological predictions on him (i.22).\textsuperscript{466} Would-be emperors would do well to remember how \textit{uera...obscuris tegerentur} (4.58.3) – not just an intellectual position, but an eminently traditional, and practical one.

\textsuperscript{465} As we have it, Vespasian’s choice is only sensible in the situation: Tacitus has just informed us that his card is already marked by Vitellius, ii.73.

\textsuperscript{466} \textit{Contra} Ash (1996) (for whom Tacitus is sceptical about astrology and omens) who sees Vespasian and Otho as equally misled (“The echo of 1.22.1 at 2.78 suggests continuity: Otho and Vespasian were equally susceptible to such manipulation, but the former happened to lose and the latter happened to win”, 244).
(iii) Emperors and Gods

(a) Imperial Cult

Possibly no other aspect of Roman religion has caused so many problems for a modern age as imperial cult. More recent formulations of the phenomenon have done much to overcome the gulf in religious categories between the ancient and the present day by focussing on an interpretation that allows for a meaningful interpretation of the deification of some of the Roman emperors; this formulation is usually aimed at indicating how imperial cult was distinct from other types of cult, and that it represented an articulation of the otherwise almost unthinkable power of the principes.

The difficulties, and assumptions, of the general debate over imperial cult are inevitably echoed in Tacitean studies. What can be said is that Tacitus never directly undercuts the institution of imperial cult – which does not necessarily give us his position: the deification of the deceased daughter of Nero and Poppaea, for instance, passes without comment (15.23.3), but we cannot mistake silence for acquiescence. If he does ‘disapprove’, then he would expect his readers to understand this. But it would be a bold step to assert that he is sceptical of the practice.

One concern about imperial cult appears in connection with the comments made about

467 A common tactic in scholarship before the 1970s was to exploit the hegemony of the model of "declining belief"; e.g. Momigliano (1986) 95, after introducing some of the issues, frankly admits: "I am not sure that I know the answer to these questions. But in the following pages I shall try to argue a partial answer on the presupposition that people were finding it easy to call exceptionally powerful men gods because they were losing faith in the existence, or at least in the effectiveness, of their traditional gods."

468 Price (1984) has dominated discussion since publication – "the emperor stood at the focal point between human and divine", (233). See also Price (1987) & BNP 360-361; for a different approach, see Gradel (1995), who argues that deification of mortals was entirely traditional. Gradel’s theory is attractive in that it incorporates imperial cult, but there are problematic implications of this argument for the construction of the traditional gods. For documentary studies, see also Fishwick (1978) & (1987).

469 E.g. Walker (1952) 252 claims that Tacitus criticises the practice of deification at Germ. 8: "they never deify mortals". But he is not discounting the practice in toto: he is criticising the deification of the prophetess Veleda (purely) for her charismatic abilities.
Augustus: two different schools of thought are summarised in connection with the dead princeps, and the latter, which is usually taken to be close to Tacitus’ ‘opinions’ includes the statement that Augustus had appropriated the worship of the gods to himself:

\[
nihil\ deorum\ honoribus\ relictum\ cum\ se\ templis\ et\ effigie\ numinum\ per
\]
\[
flamines\ et\ sacerdotes\ coli\ uellet\ (1.10.6)
\]

There is also a sting in the tail when temples are dedicated to Augustus:

\[
ceterum\ sepultura\ more\ perfecta\ templum\ et\ caelestes\ religiones\ decernuntur.\ Versae\ inde\ ad\ Tiberium\ preces\ (1.10.8-11.1)
\]

In fact it is worth remembering that only two of the emperors with whom Tacitus deals were extantly deified: Claudius is the other and again the report of the deification is overshadowed by other concerns:

\[
caelestesque\ honores\ Claudio\ decernuntur\ et\ funeris\ sollemne\ perinde
\]
\[
ac\ diuo\ Augusto\ celebratur,\ aemulante\ Agrippina\ proauiae\ Liuiae\ magnificentiam.\ (12.69.3)
\]

This does not amount to belittlement, or opposition: if anything, Tacitus goes out of his way to avoid criticising ‘proper’ imperial cult. The comments made about Augustus

\[470\] Miller (1969): according to Ceausescu (1974) Tacitus’ is the only negative assessment of Augustus in antiquity.
(whether they represent Tacitus’ ‘opinions’ or not) refer to the emperor’s lifetime, not his death; and even if they are to be accepted as a position that Tacitus endorses, they represent appropriate criticism within the practice of the deification of dead emperors – and scepticism is not the only reading available. What seems more likely is that the objection implies neglect of the traditional gods – a question of emphasis rather than content. The highlighting of error in respect to imperial cult leaves the essential phenomenon untouched: Tacitus, like his contemporaries, does not have our problem with deified emperors.

(b) Imperial Rule

Nor does he have an intrinsic problem with the institution of empire itself: Rome had declined morally to the point where imperial rule was a necessity. Tacitus accepts this and focusses on what was appropriate behaviour for an emperor. But there is an inherent difficulty in this: if an emperor proved to be disastrous, then how could he be said to enjoy the support of the gods or fate? The answer would seem to be that the account is not framed in such way as to pose, or answer, this question. Rule as emperor is a matter of fate, which overrides considerations such as the normal propitiation of the gods, and fatum for Tacitus is fulfilled irrespective of human efforts, just as was found in Livy. None of the emperors ‘earn’ empire by their conduct, at least in the way that

471 There is much bibliography on the issue; the usual interpretation is that Tacitus accepts the empire but is deeply interested in having the political system work, whatever its shortcomings, e.g. Scott (1968)’s formulation of the issue, which stresses Tacitus’ grasp of a variety of different historical constitutions and deeper interest in morality than any political system, is still a good corrective to the usual bipolar approach (“monarchist or republican labels are not particularly relevant to him” (50 n. 15)): see also André (1982) 41-43 who argues that, for Tacitus, there is no realistic alternative to monarchy; Shotter (1978) & (1991a) argues that he is more interested in having the co-operation of senate and emperor than any constitutional change as do) Wistrand (1979), Percival (1980) & Sage (1991); Classen (1988) allows for a change in behaviour and ideals since the Republic; Havas (1991) argues for a “conception biologique” of the state in the historian’s thinking. If he accepts empire, however, Tacitus does not necessarily spare individual emperors; see e.g. Boesche (1987) for the destruction of the social and political fabric by the hypocrisy and isolation of the emperor. Cogitore (1991) 2 sees the use of different terms for power as an implicit attack on the institution but the terms could equally be complaints about the use of power in individual cases. Cf. Béranger (1990) and Benario (1992).

472 Above, pp. 140-154. The only candidate for exception is the portent during Otho’s noble suicide (ii.50.2). It is impossible to tell whether Otho ‘earns’ this for his conduct or it marks his (completed) imperial destiny. Of course, even if it was ‘earned’, it heralds nothing in the circumstances.
Tacitus’ account is weighted:⁴⁷₃ the predictions of their destiny are made long before the achievement. The designation of the empire as due to fate places imperium beyond discussion. Thus when Galba ignores adverse signs, an error in traditional terms, Tacitus speculates as to whether this oversight was due to the workings of fate:

*Quartum idus Ianuarias, foedum imribus diem, tonitra et fulgura et caelestes minae ultra solitum turbauerunt. obseruatum id antiquitus comitiis dirimendis non terruit Galbam, quo minus in castra pergeret, contemptorem talium ut fortuitorum, seu quae fato manent, quamuis significata, non uitantur.* (i.18.1)

The tone is not that Galba can be excused, or was 'blinded' by fate: as the exemplary Vespasian illustrates, Romans are accountable for their (religious) behaviour.⁴⁷⁴ Tacitus is placing events in two explanatory contexts: one dealing with the negotiable wrath of the gods, and the other, appropriately in one's dealings with an emperor, linked to the theme of destiny. He therefore has a full array of interpretative options; perhaps Galba could have avoided that disaster by cancelling his assembly; but in the case of an emperor, fate is never far away. Nevertheless, for practical purposes, fate should be ignored as a consideration, and appropriate practices maintained, even if they are doomed to fail: one can but try. Since fatum is beyond the normal reckoning even of the gods, it is quite possible for an emperor to suffer their wrath without any threat being mounted to his rule itself, as Nero discovered when he bathed in the source of the Marcian aqueduct.⁴⁷⁵ In the eyes of the gods, the emperor was as responsible for his behaviour as any other Roman.

---

⁴⁷³ Not even Vespasian: he of course was the first emperor to change for the better after his accession (i.50.4).
⁴⁷⁴ I.e. whatever his speculations about fate, he should have noted the omen. The diagnosis of fate only becomes a possibility after the event, and even then, even for an emperor, it remains only a possibility.
⁴⁷⁵ *uidebaturque potus sacros et caerimoniam loci corpore loto polluisse. secutaque anceps ualetudo iram deum adfirmauit* (14.22.4).
Tacitus’s senate could not be more different from Livy’s. The generally high standards depicted in the Republic are a dim memory under Tacitus’ principate when obsequiousness and servility were the norm. It is assessments of the senate that often lead commentators to allege that Tacitus is a pessimist: an old favourite is the complaint that when Thrasea Paetus walked out of a senate that was celebrating the murder of Agrippina:

Thrasea Paetus silentio uel breui adsensu priores adulationes
transmittere solitus ex<i>it tum senatu, ac sibi causam periculi fecit,
ceteris libertatis initium non praebuit. (14.12.1)

But we go too far if we understand that all efforts at protest will meet with complaint. Tacitus is not maliciously looking to undermine the Stoic’s sincerity: in the trial of Antistius Sosianus, who had satirised the emperor, Paetus earns unstinting praise: *libertas Thraseae servitium aliorum rupit* (14.49.1). Similarly, in the comments about fate, prompted by the assessment of Marcus Lepidus, it would appear that, although Tacitus has a narrow view of what would promote *libertas*, it was still possible to find a route through the political difficulties of the principate. “What disgusted Tacitus was not so much the subordination of their role to the dictates of the emperor, but their failure

---

476 If it is a complaint at all: according to Benario (1995: item 509), K. Heldmann ‘Libertas Thraseae servitium aliorum rupit: Überlegungen zur Geschichtsauffassung im Spätwerk des Tacitus’, *Gymnasium* 998 (1991) 207-231 suggests that it is the senate who are being criticised not Thrasea, who is following an appropriate ‘middle’ path.

477 Which is central to his political viewpoint (Shotter (1978); Roberts (1988); Morford (1990) & (1991); Sinclair (1995) esp. 163-169.
to take an initiative in participating actively in the new order. This psychological enervation (1.7.1), representing the failure of the nobility to seek means for expressing their own *aequalitas*, was to Tacitus as much a source of despotism as the bad emperors themselves”.

Thrasea’s action after the death of Agrippina was too extreme, either for Tacitus or for the senate: either way it failed to lead to anything except danger. The Stoic needed the subtlety of Lepidus if he was going to make any practical difference, albeit that the scope for alleviation might be limited.

In general terms, Tacitus is a long way from isolating emperors as the cause of Rome’s worries, and this applies to the senate’s religious responsibility as much, if not more than, the emperor’s.

Tacitus’ tendency to polarise, exemplify and categorise makes assessment of behaviour difficult. So many senators and knights collaborate in the moral chaos of the first century that it is almost impossible to pinpoint specific cases. Nonetheless, just as Livy would identify particularly blatant and outrageous actions (e.g. Pleminius (29.8-9) or Fulvius Flaccus (42.3.1), so too will Tacitus isolate particular individuals where their actions are beyond the pale: thus Nero’s bout of divine wrath after his sacrilegious swim is emphasised for its being explicit and specific. Where specificity does appear, the dynamics of divine wrath are complex and often implicit: but a number of strategies are familiar. Tacitus notably assigns the rise of Sejanus to the wrath of the gods at 4.1.2:

```
  mox [Seianus] Tiberium uariis artibus deuinxit adeo ut obscurn
  aduersum alios sibi uni incautum intectumque efficeret, non tam
  sollertia (quippe isdem artibus uictus est) quam deum ira in rem
  Romanam, cius pari exitio uiguit ceciditque.
```

---

Compare the pontifex Piso, of whom Tacitus says *nullius servilis sententiae sponte auctor et quotiens necessitas ingrueret sapienter moderans* (6.10.3). For Tacitus’ interest in *virtus*, see von Albrecht (1987).
For the use of obituaries in general to frame the account and make historical and political points (in this case, the end of *libertas*), see Gingras (1991-2).
The tradition seems to have asserted that Sejanus outwitted Tiberius but Tacitus offers otherwise in the light of Tiberius’ manifest intelligence; the emperor was fooled, but because of the ira deum. Tacitus is accounting for an anomaly by invoking a ‘higher level’ of analysis, as was discussed at greater length in Livy. He is similarly impelled to invoke a ‘higher’ level of explanation to ward off the reaction he expects when recounting a number of ignoble deaths in *Annals* 16:

\[
\textit{at nunc patientia seruilib tantumque sanguinis domi perditum fatigant}
\]
\[
\textit{animum et maestitia restringunt. neque aliam defensionem ab iis,}
\]
\[
\textit{quibus ista noscentur, exegerim, quam ne oderim tam segniter}
\]
\[
\textit{pereuntes. ira illa numinum in res Romanas fuit. (16.16.1-2)}
\]

Tacitus’ link of the political disasters with the wrath of the gods has not received the attention that perhaps it deserves. By explicitly relating the two, he highlights just how serious are Rome’s problems (beyond mere human resources) and implies that only a religious solution will be sufficient to restore the *res publica*. In addition, responsibility is implicitly linked to the whole of the society; they, after all, were as responsible for the neglect of the gods as the emperor was.

That the disruption experienced by Rome is a manifestation of divine wrath is implicit throughout the account: civil war and strife was traditionally a matter of neglect. Nor

---

480 For instance, after the collapse of a cave where Tiberius was dining, Sejanus is listened to *cum fide* (4.59.2).
481 Above, pp. 112-122.
482 A corporate sense of responsibility (rather than cynicism) is probably behind the polemical assertion at 16.33.1 of the ‘indifference of the gods towards good and bad deeds’ (*aequitate deum erga bona malaque documenta*). It is not enough to call on the gods when men are standing by watching (cf. Manlius’ appeal to the plebs at 6.18.9 (p. 134)). We should probably infer a ‘naive’ attitude that someone can be responsible for his own behaviour and expect to escape the wider consequences of a more chronic moral failure (many of Tacitus’ victims, especially those that curse their enemies, are innocent). Tacitus knows better: in pagan Rome, it rained on the just and the unjust alike.
does Tacitus fail to account for the events in his narrative – there is a religious structure within which the two accounts are set; it is not normally invoked to explain details, though it could be, and it is framed with the usual markers: omens and signs.
4) The Religious Structure of Tacitus’ Accounts

There are good reasons to think that Tacitus’ vision of Rome was not so pessimistic as might appear: he writes of dark times, and is not sparing in his criticism, but the question is of the context in which we understand those dark times to have existed. The statement that Tacitus is writing in happier days appears in the *Agricola* (1.2-3) and is not the only evidence for this: in discussing historiography, Tacitus implies that contemporary writing does not suffer the distorting effects of an emperor who could not resist the temptation to interfere with literature, unlike that of the first century of the principate where *ueritas pluribus modis infracta* (i.1.1):

\[
\text{principatum diui Neruae et imperium Traiani, uberiorem securioremque materiam, senectuti seposui, rara temporum felicitate, ubi sentire quae uelis et quae sentias dicere licet} \quad (i.1.4)
\]

With reference to the claim that he is writing under ‘better times’, there is also the tendency to argue what amounts to ‘well, he would say that, wouldn’t he?’ Yet we should not dismiss ‘positive’ aspects so easily, only to proceed to discussing ‘pessimism’: his historical works are exemplary, even exhortatary, which implies room for manoeuvre. Even if we could prove a dissonance between contemporary reality and Tacitus’ descriptions, there is no reason to proceed to the conclusion of hypocrisy: consider Thrasea’s praise of Rome and Nero, and severe castigation of Antistius, at 14.48. He inspires the senate and forces Nero to comply with Thrasea’s blatantly untrue

---

483 Most recently, and sophisticatedly, Woodman (1997) 92. Tacitus’ ‘sincerity’ is often questioned, particularly in connection with his claim to write *sine ira et studio* (1.1.3) or that *neque amore...et sine odio dicendus est* (i.1.4). It would not be a gross exaggeration to say that commentators feel obliged to comment on this theme. Most scholars find his claim unfounded (e.g. Cizek (1979); Whitehead (1979)). Further discussion in Miller (1969); Luce (1986). Assessment by more appropriate criteria tends to exonerate him from hypocrisy: see Segal (1973); Woodman (1988).
depiction of a merciful and mature Rome in agreeing to a comparatively lenient sentence of exile. Even if Tacitus’ audience were not living in an ideal climate, they might take the hint. The facts of the future might be shaped by the lead of those willing to take on the challenge of his recommendations, and any gap between his theory and the practice of real life is thereby politely occluded. Objections to Tacitus’ ‘optimism’ do not change the fact that his accounts of the period do frame events within a context of decline, abysmal nadir and recovery. Rome, after a prolonged decay, hits rock bottom with Nero and civil war. The improvement under Vespasian would seem to have been partial and impermanent (given that Domitian marked a downturn in Rome’s fortunes) but it did pave the way for a more stable recovery under Nerva and Trajan. Thus, though the general picture is of decline to the point where Rome requires the principate, within that is the strong possibility of a vigorous and appropriate, if reinvented, Rome. In addition, though the Histories and the Annals are noticeably different in style from one another, the two formed a diachronic unity. This permits the postulation of a scheme of decline and recovery. On a religious level, there is continuity, decline and renewal: we have already noted McCulloch’s suggestion that the appearance of the phoenix and the withering of the fig tree Ruminalis refer forwards to the end of the Julio-Claudian dynasty. On a similar note, Ash (1995) (245 n. 503) suggests that the choice of the cypress tree as the key omen that promises greatness for Vespasian is deliberately chosen.

-----

484 Though Tacitus implies throughout the Annals that Tiberius and Nero are waging civil war against their own people (Keitel (1984)), ‘real’ civil war was not diminished in its horror by this.
485 The only emperor to change for the better (i.50.4) is matched by the improvement in personal habits, at least in regard to luxury, with the influx of provincials of higher moral standards (3.55). Provincials also show their worth when they fail to respond to, or to understand, the politics of attending, Nero’s games at 16.5.1. See Goodyear (1970) for the unconventionality of Tacitus’ rather erratic optimism.
486 Agricola 1.2-3. Woodman (1997) 92-93 appears unwilling to commit himself either way: “Tacitus’ repeated retreat from his own age carries the suggestion (which may of course be as false as it is intentional) that the reigns of Nerva and Trajan did not justify [the claim made]...for free speech and thought.”
487 As suggested by McCulloch (1984) 173-175 (“modern editors...have divided what Tacitus may very well have intended to be one long work”). On this basis we might speculate that the stylistic differences could be seen as subordinate to the historical agenda; Annals 4-16 are more Sallustian (Woodman (1988) 160-169 & (1992b)) because this is intended to highlight the corruption of Rome; the Histories would then be more Ciceronian (Woodman (1985) & (1988) 160-196) because they deal with the restoration of traditional values; for the similarities between Tacitus’ and Sallust’s material and concerns see Ducroix (1978), with further bibliography.
488 The Annals alone could not be said to end optimistically: Nero’s death would not have been sufficient to reverse the moral decline.
489 McCulloch (1980) & (1984) 206-208. Also Dickson & Plympton (1977); Segal (1973). However, as we shall see, on the latter event it seems more likely that what would renew was Rome; the association is to the founding of Rome rather than any particular emperor.
for its multiple allusions: apart from the fact that the cypress is associated with death, it is likely that there is a deliberate allusion to the withering of the same tree under Domitian, recorded by Suetonius (Domitian 15.2). Vitellius and Otho share omens linked to birds, which Morgan (1993) argues links them to Rome’s destiny – to be torn apart by rivals: while the two omens form a localised closure of the two decadent usurpers, they also allude to a larger cycle of fate. Their success, and the war’s brevity, are thereby explained and civil strife leads to unity. Thus the entire civil war is framed within an explanation of fate. This does not, however, exclude the scope or need for human responses; just as the defeat at Cannae was both fated and explicable by the failure of Rome to prepare appropriately, so too is the recovery from the civil war constructed in terms of the (negotiable) wrath of the gods. The proper response to the *ira deum* was not the discovery of what had gone wrong but the restoration of *pax*. The fact that this occurs within the *Histories* does not mean that it does not refer also to recovery from the period enshrined in the *Annals*.

Rome reaches its lowest point at the moment that the Capitoline temple is burned down while Rome is besieged by its own inhabitants. Tacitus records the disaster with a poignant appeal:

```
Id facinus post conditam urbem luctuosissimum foedissimumque rei
publicae populi Romani accidit, nullo externo hoste, propitiis, si per
mores nostros liceret, deis, sedem Louis Optimi Maximi auspicato a
maioribus pignus imperii conditam...furore principum excindi. (iii.72.1)
```

490 *Velut ad perdendum imperium fataliter electos*, i.50.1. It may be the same preoccupation that leads people to accept the poisoning of Britannicus (13.17.1) on the grounds that brothers cannot share power easily.

491 Note that although they receive various omens of their success, they do not receive the kind of spontaneous religious validation that Vespasian does.

492 For the destruction of the Capitol as the ‘decapitation of Rome’ and the symbolism of decapitation in general, see Ash (1997); Woodman (1997) 96.
The most fundamental religious betrayal is balanced by the uniquely explicit formulation of normality. The burning of the Capitol is a uitium against which no implicit propriety is sufficient; it destroys the very fabric against which all else is measured and understood. While the temple stands, there is the possibility of renewal and restoration of the unstated normality that proves that first century Rome is a world gone mad: it is the symbol of the ‘true’ Rome. Thus Tacitus must articulate a ‘plainly spoken’ plea, to fill the vacuum as it were. The plural mores covers a multitude of sins, but the specification of nostros makes responsibility shared, and probably refers to the senate above all.493

The religious fulfilment of the renewal of Rome is the rebuilding of the temple at iv.53:

Curam restituenti Capitolii in Lucium Vestinum confert, equestris
ordinis uirum, sed auctoritate famaque inter proceres. ab eo contracti
haruspices monuere ut reliquiae prioris delubri in paludes aueherentur,
templum isdem uestigiis sisteretur: nolle deos mutari ueterem formam.
Xl kalendas Iulias serena luce spatiun omne, quod templo dicabatur,
euinctum uittis coronisque; ingressi milites, quis fausta nomina,
felicibus ramis; dein uirgines Vestales cum puercis puellisque patrimis
matrimisque aqua e fontibus amnibusque hausta perluere. tum
Heluidius Priscus praetor, praeeunte Plaut<io Aeliano pontifice,
lustrata suouetaurilibus area et super caespitem redditis extis, louem,
Iunonem, Minerum praesidesque imperii deos precatus. uti coepta
prosperarent sedisque suas pietate hominum inchoatas diuina ope
attollerent, uittas, quis ligatus lapis innexique funes erant, contigit;
simul ceteri magistratus et sacerdotes et senatus et eques et magna pars
populi, studio laetitiaque conixi, saxum ingens traxere. passimque

The record is more than a factual account: it is a celebration of unity and religious propriety. At no other point in Tacitus’ account do the people of Rome function as one coherent entity. The language is, untypically, evocative of Livy: technical terms abound and Tacitus’ traditional savagery is absent. Amidst the chaos is the promise of better times. The rebuilding of the temple comes at a point where Vespasian has won and has begun to restore Rome’s political fortunes. The victory of Vespasian alone is not the starting point for immediate recovery: *interfecto Vitellio bellum magis desierat quam pax coeperat* (iv.1): it takes a religious solution to turn Rome’s fortunes round.

The scene of the restoration is a microcosm of Rome: the emperor is present in his *auctoritas*, but absent in person: a suitable metaphor for a Rome that basks in the security of a *princeps* but functions in such a way that all its *ordines* assume their proper place. Responsibility for the fortunes of Rome rests not with one partisan section, but the city as a whole.

Thus Tacitus constructs his account with responsibility clearly delineated: in addition the politico-religious centre of gravity is not the emperor but the whole population and he would have presumably expected the senate to feature prominently, in partnership with the emperor. He has framed events and allocated responsibility in such a way as to retain

---

494 For an analysis of Tacitus’ model of a working (i.e. unified) *res publica* see Aubrion (1990).
495 The mutiny at Novaesium and the ensuing débacle (iv.58.6 & 62), attributable to Roman impiety, (Keitel (1991-2)) probably occur before the restoration of the Capitoline. At iv.78.2 the Romans win a battle *nec sine ope divina*, presumably after the Temple had been rebuilt, though exact chronological details are impossible to ascertain.
a central role for the aristocracy in a changed environment. Ultimately Tacitus is the revolutionarily normative voice of the Roman senate in better days licking its wounds in times when the restoration of decent *mores* once again wedded the Romans happily with their gods.
5) Conclusions

We have come a long way from Tacitus’ ‘scepticism’ or ‘secularity’. In fact, religion has gone from being a very minor aspect of the narrative to a playing a fundamental role in Tacitus’ historical account. Rome’s nadir is religious as much as political or social and the solutions are primarily ‘religious’. It is frustrating that this hypothesis cannot be tested against the lost portions of the *Histories* especially: we leave Rome at a turning point with the refoundation of the Capitoline. How the reigns of Vespasian, Titus and Domitian were treated is virtually unknown to us. But there is enough material to establish that religion was a complex knowledge system and that Tacitus, like Livy, deployed the key aspects of religious interpretation to shape his account. Differences in emphasis (e.g. the use of *fatum*) and material (such as prodigies) mask a fundamental similarity in materials and purpose. Where Livy ‘designed’ a religion for Rome, presenting ‘tradition’ afresh, Tacitus adopts an opposite ploy, almost ceaselessly expecting his readers to provide their own model from their cultural knowledge. In a sense, the savage consul trusts his audience more than Livy to know better. It is tempting to attribute many of the changes to the times and indeed this must be part of our explanation. But it may also be the man: one wonders what Tacitus would have made of the Republic had he not grown up in the Empire. Little more than a century divides the two authors and we should not be surprised at the continuities. Any surprise that the two share what is essentially a comparable viewpoint is minimised by the similarities of both with the much later account of Ammianus Marcellinus.
V: Ammianus and a final settlement

1) Introduction

(i) Religion in the Res Gestae

In many ways it would have been tempting to have begun this dissertation at the end, with Ammianus: time and again points of interpretation discerned as implicit in the account of Livy and Tacitus receive clear attention in Ammianus' altogether more explicit history. This temptation was resisted, for apart from the need to preserve chronological integrity in a diachronic study, these developments and differences are worthy of discussion in themselves. As with Livy and Tacitus, the balance of explicit statements and implicit assumptions is a most telling factor in our understanding the dynamics of religious interpretation in his society and time. Ammianus wrote in a markedly changed political, social and religious climate and quite possibly for a different audience; moreover we should be even more wary of calling him 'Roman' than his provincial predecessors, since he was a Greek writing in Latin. Finally, even Ammianus, whose account is so replete with apparently bald statements of religious causality, has not escaped the charge of being 'secular', though he does at least escape the charge of scepticism. The task of establishing that he had a religious position that was not sceptical is not so demanding as with Livy and Tacitus, since there are fewer reinterpretations required of particular passages and much of the work has been done,496 but permission to discuss the material as relevant must be earned.

Ammianus has undergone some of the most dramatic conversions in religious literary

496 I refer principally, but not exclusively, to Rike (1987) (hereafter 'Rike') and also to Harrison (1998).
history: once credited with Christianity, he turned to Neoplatonism embraced paganism to the point of evangelising, only to renounce the divine, at least in public, when he returned to a neutral stance, that of ‘classicising historian in a tradition of secular historiography.’ But throughout he is ‘confused’ – virtually a requirement of paganism according to scholars. It hardly needs stating that this discussion will attempt to secure his further apostasy back to that of pagan apologist, most convincingly argued for by Rike, whose own fate seems to have been obscurity.

For Rike, Ammianus is a ‘militant pagan apologist’:

I believe that in Rome, ultimately, we find a militant pagan who was striving to rescue the pieces of her heroic religion out of the shattering crash of Julian. Despite the existence of an enthusiastic defence of paganism in his apologetic work, the Res Gestae yet retains its balanced character. Ammianus was deliberately attempting to lay a bridge between the cultus deorum and Theodosius I, who for a brief period between 388 and 391, opened himself to reconciliation with Rome’s pagan senators. (Rike 7)

Broadly accepting his argument, to which there will be copious reference throughout this

---

497 Rike 2 mentions this discussions, which usually depended on his praise of provincial bishops. Henri de Valois disagreed in his 1681 edition of the Res Gestae. Rike also refers to J. Gimizaine Ammien Marcellin, sa vie et son oeuvre (Toulouse, 1889).
500 Irrespective of whether he is a ‘vague fatalist’ or ‘vague monotheist’ These two usually go together, e.g. Momigliano (1977) 148; Liebeschuetz (1979) 302. See also Blockley (1975) 168-169; Camus (1967) 133-134, 140, 143-144, 199, 267-268. Herodotus is also thus described – wrongly, according to Harrison (1995) 110-143.
501 Most writers: choice quotes include Blockley (1975) 175-176 (“at times he failed to think out fully the implications of what he wrote...he was not a philosophic but a pragmatic historian, who...did not seek to fit all his material into a carefully worked out system...many of his fellow pagan...were confused over the question of free will, determinism or fickle fortune.”) Some similar comments collected by Rike 3-5 with excellent (and entertaining) criticism.
502 He is not mentioned, for instance, in Matthews (1989).
chapter, there is no need to rehearse earlier debates. But if we are to have permission to bother at all with the religious material we must first deal with the objections of Matthews:

Ammianus was not writing a religious history...The ‘high places’ where true history was accustomed to run (26.1.1) were of a secular, not a religious nature...but it will often be difficult to show that a god or a goddess (Mars, say, or Bellona), or an allusion to fate or Fortune, is more than a technical device useful, for example, in transition from one subject to another or to convey the enormity, or unexpectedness, of the events by which the Romans were confronted, but not implying any significant theological or philosophical reflection...In the great majority of cases, fate, Fortune and the gods function in Ammianus as part of the normal equipment of a historian writing in the classical manner...[they] are part of the machinery: what would Classical history and poetry...have done without Fortune and the gods? (Matthews (1989) 425-8)

The last sentence of the quotation requires no refutation: what does stand in our way is that ‘the classical manner’ is, for Matthews, necessarily sceptical, or secular. Many of the particulars of this debate are tackled by Harrison (1998, forthcoming) to whom this discussion will be explicitly indebted, but the chief issue that Harrison, appropriately

---

503 Rike 2-7 has an eloquent summary of the previous religious argumentation.
504 This is a phrase that is as common as it is puzzling: its use seems to imply that a trope is emptier for the frequency of its appearance, by assimilation to the supposed ‘emptiness’ of words like ‘hello’ and ‘yours sincerely’, which is itself questionable. But the frequency of a term might easily indicate a high degree of consent amongst the audience: if a scientist never bothers to explain ‘gravity’ yet uses it freely, this is not usually taken to indicate the poverty of the term. Compare Feeney (1991) 2’s comments on the use of the phrase “literary device”: “criticising the gods in epic as a literary device is like criticising the carburettors or pistons in a car as an engineering device.”
505 Harrison rightly, and persuasively, takes Matthews to task for his assumption that Ammianus’ refusal to include trivia at 26.1.1 includes religion; other aspects of his discussion are dealt with here directly.
for an article, declines to tackle is that of the ‘tradition of secular historiography’: this seems easy enough to deal with, since it is the central theme of this dissertation. If the argument of the foregoing chapters has been accepted, then the ‘tradition of secular historiography’, far from including religious material but reducing its status to that of an ornament, is actually no more than a tendency to provide ‘human’ explanations unless a religious one is appropriate. Rather than implying any distaste for religion, this is a genre-specific preference – in contrast to the poetic idiom in particular, which disposed itself to more overtly religious themes: unlike poetry, it also reflects the interpretative processes employed in real life. In addition, if the foregoing argument has been accepted, then the ‘tradition’ has lost its two staunchest allies: their defection means that we can no longer justifiably talk of a tradition at all. In addition, there are good signs that those few historians cited as loyal to secularity will soon abandon the cause.

The approach that bases itself on religious material being ‘only’ a ‘technical device’ is harder to refute, since it is proof against all detailed argument: all religious material can be safely dismissed under Matthews’ rubric. For him, religious material is, by definition, not to be taken seriously. Its very repetition is taken to indicate its poverty of meaning and the ‘enormity’ of religious matters is likewise reduced to meaninglessness. Invocation of the hypothesis of ‘higher levels’ of explanation does not necessarily help us: that requires that any event that was unexpected or ‘enormous’ in importance should be explained by reference to the divine, but we would be in danger of a circular argument on this point since this was a key aspect of distinguishing the phenomenon in the first place. Matthews’ reply would be, one might suspect, that his objection applied to the very examples used to construct the argument in the first place.

We should not forget the kind of reasoning used to dismiss Tacitus’ references to the gods by Walker (1952):

506 For instance, the supposedly ‘rational’ Caesar: see Marincola 209 (“what takes the place of the gods in Caesar is fortuna”) and Feeney (1998) 19-20.
The evidence for Tacitus' fatalism...is considerably weakened when one realises that the hand of Fate is not once invoked to explain any action of Tacitus' most important single character, Tiberius...(11)...Often 'fate' is mentioned simply to underline the impression made by events whose real cause, as the history itself has made clear, lies in human character...there are no 'divine interventions' in Tacitus; his world has been abandoned by the immortals (46)...Usually the action attributed to 'Fate' are of an unimportant, even trivial, kind; indeed, the emergence of Sejanus is the only event of real significance, in the extant parts of the history, which is attributed to any supernatural agency (245).

As Matthews dismisses religious material because it 'only' deals with important events, so Walker does so because it 'only' relates to 'trivia'. The supporters of the 'sceptical' or 'technical device' approach to religion in historians would appear to be sharply divided on their criteria. If Matthews wished to invoke a 'tradition' in his argument about the introduction of fate, fortune or the gods into the narrative, it would appear that he is again on weaker ground than he supposed. The irreconcilable differences in approaches used to establish the 'tradition of secular historiography' might lead a reader to suspect that the best ally of those who wish to dismiss religious material in historians as meaningful is dogmatic opportunism. It is tempting to conclude that avowals of ancient secularism by modern scholars are formulaic and rhetorical – part of the 'machinery' of modern historiography – and that they owe their presence more to the desire to establish oneself in a tradition of scepticism than any intention to be taken at face value.

Since it does not seem that we can dismantle such sweeping dismissals for their very generality, their refutation can only really be attempted through the articulation of an argument whereby religion plays a central part in historiography, both for purposes of
explanation and as part of the historian’s recommendatory programme to halt the decline of Rome: but our central and recurring question in examining the text must be ‘whose Roman religion?’ A parochial Greek’s? A soldier’s? A lunatic or a patriot?
The Roman world had undergone so many changes since the times of Tacitus and Livy that, in the words of Ammianus himself, ‘if anyone should desire to know all these instances, varied and constantly occurring as they are, he will be mad enough to think of searching out the number of the sands and the weight of the mountains.’

Even listing those features with which this discussion must deal is no mean task, and the criterion of relevance will be strictly enforced. There are few constants and we cannot even number Rome itself amongst them, since the effective capital of the empire was now the emperor’s court, wherever it might be. The geographical and political decentralisation of the old Roman world was mirrored, of course, in religion: the entire extant text of the Res Gestae covers a period where, to all intents and purposes, Rome had a Christian emperor. Thus, two principal points of reference for the preceding chapters are, if not lost, then drastically modified: the historian has not only lost his geographical (and therefore religious) fixed centre, but with it a society that, if fragmented, plausibly shared enough religious assumptions for him to spell them out briefly (if at all), and then within relatively homogeneous points of reference. Livy and Tacitus wrote for Rome, and (especially in the case of the latter), the senate. If Ammianus wrote for the senate, he did not write only for them. Moreover, with regard to religious issues and recommendations Livy and Tacitus wrote to the people of Rome about the history and

507 14.11.34, speaking of the reversals of fortune.
509 More eloquently put by Ammianus himself at 14.6.5.
510 No claim is made here of continuity between the modern phenomenon and its ancient homonym, nor is any attempt made to explore the enormous, if obscured, differences, some of which are detailed in Smith (1979) and Goodman (1994).
511 There has been debate about the exact nature of Ammianus’ audience and associates (not necessarily the same group); e.g. for Sabbah (1978) 508-510, the Res Gestae are aimed at Rome itself but his material could just as easily be taken as acknowledgement of Rome’s special status in the Empire. See also Cameron (1964) for the argument that we should not conflate Ammianus’ position with that of senatorial circles; more generally on the construction of an audience, Sabbah (1978) 507-540. Ammianus himself speculates on whether he will have one at all (31.5.10; cf. 14.6.2). We should remember that his senatorial associations have a wholly transformed significance since they were no longer so obviously the ‘second-in-command.’ For our present purposes it is enough to note that it is now the emperors’ courts rather than the senate which are the centre of power (14.6.4-5).
conduct of the people of Rome and their empire. It will be argued here that Ammianus sets his sights wider, and that he intended to have relevance for the wider ‘Roman’ community. Thus, for instance, Livy’s beloved *fortuna populi Romani* is usurped by the *fortuna orbis Romanae* (25.9.7). If he is going to find a new or redesigned paradigm for religion, it will have to take account of a virtually unprecedented phenomenon; that of religious choice.\textsuperscript{512} It may be that his criteria rather than his results are what enable us to consider him ‘pagan’.

Nor is this the only major new consideration. Ammianus, albeit writing in Latin, is also heir to the Greek tradition of historiography,\textsuperscript{513} and there are good reasons to take note of this, quite apart from his provincial aristocratic background: to some extent this will assist the understanding of certain specific features and details, such as the presence of excursuses or the rehabilitation of Egyptian religion: in particular reference will be made to Herodotus’ deployment of religious material in general.\textsuperscript{514} This will have repercussions for his interpretations and the boundaries that he sets for religious propriety. Nonetheless, the argument will demonstrate a concerted effort on Ammianus’ part to align himself with the Latin traditions. In Ammianus, a vast number of historiographical themes are deliberately united: “He intended his *Res Gestae* to sum up the whole of Greco-Roman historiography”\textsuperscript{515} and historiography includes models of religion.

\textsuperscript{512} For this issue in the late republic and earlier empire see North (1992); for an overview of the later empire see BNP 278-312.

\textsuperscript{513} Most recently Marincola 102 n.199, 255; Matthews (1989) esp. 461-468.

\textsuperscript{514} Not just because of the existence of Harrison’s thesis, though this certainly furthers the discussion enormously; as will become clear, there are good reasons to believe that Ammianus exploits specific precedents set by the Father of History.

2) A Religion for Rome

(i) Hallowed Practices

Ammianus must, if he is indeed a pagan apologist, construct a religion for Rome within the vastly increased and polarised options realistically available to the denizens of the empire.\footnote{Tacitus of course knows of Christianity (Annals 15.44) but the thought of Rome adopting officially it was surely as far from his conception as the computers on which this thesis was written.} By now we are accustomed to the recommendatory embodiment of religious habits and protocols; the historian shapes our knowledge both of what works, and what is appropriate. What we will find is that the hallowed pagan practices of Rome are consistently defended – the material is so profuse that only representative or striking examples are cited. If Ammianus is truly heir to the tradition bequeathed by Livy and Tacitus,\footnote{On the suggestion that Ammianus deliberately followed Tacitus, the consensus is that there is no significant debt: see e.g. Blockley (1973) & (1975) 17, Matthews (1989) 456. Most recently, and pertinently, Marincola 240, 254-255 (with further bibliography): on the coincidence of Tacitus’ ending, and Ammianus’ starting, point he says “this did not mean that his history need be similar to that of his predecessor: it meant that he wished to be seen as the practitioner of a serious history that had been practised long ago, and had…fallen into desuetude.”} one of his chief concerns will be the construction of a state cult for Rome and her empire.

Certainly there are signs that paganism is equal to the essential religious task of securing divine support: a pagan response to a crisis is effective when Tertullus appeals to Castor and Pollux to end a storm that is causing a grain shortage in Rome – the weather duly abates (19.10.4); a tomb of Mopsus is known for its healing properties (14.8.3);\footnote{Surely a response to the claims made of martyr’s shrines: manes eius heroici dolorum uarietati medentur plerumque sospitales. Note the disclaimer for failures (plerumque).} Julian, incertus de militum fide, successfully propitiates Bellona (placata riti secretiore Bellona, 21.5.1). Traditional methods of divination still worked: the failure of Julian’s campaign against Persia hardly lacks warnings – Ammianus goes to great lengths to establish the misgivings of the haruspices and other experts (discounting the
philosophers who misled the emperor). Prodigies still warn of the future:

eoque uiso harum rerum interpretes arcessiti interrogatique etiam id uetare procinctum fidentius adfirmabant, fulmen consiliarium esse monstrantes: ita enim appellantur, quae dissuadent aliquid fieri uel suadent.

The typologising of prodigies is reminiscent of Livy’s discrimination between physical and hallucinatory portents (above, pp. 44-46) but as before we should not assume a dogma: just how hard and fast are Ammianus’ sub-categories of prodigies is hard to tell, but they clearly have some relevance for his readership or his display of expertise would be in vain. Other prodigies seem also to function as warnings with a more obvious symbolic association (brooms which sprout indicate the political rise of lower ranks at 28.1.42), though at times we are expected to diagnose the details. Some of the signs at 25.10.1-3 are obviously symbolic; the two-headed, double-toothed and eyed child at 19.12.19 would seem to indicate an imperfect doubling of rulers, namely Constantius and Julian; an ass mounting the tribunal and braying loudly precedes the story of Terentius, a baker who became governor (27.3.1-2): Ammianus expects us to make the connection. For those who wish to know the future on demand, there is also the excursus validating augury, haruspicy and divine inspiration (21.1.7-14).

Effectiveness was of course not the end of the selection process; more important is the

519 Haruspices are the object of special focus in Liebeschuetz (1988). See also below, pp. 260-267, on priests and philosophers.
520 23.5.13. Cf. portenta...indicantia rerum variarum euentus, 19.12.20; it is unknown even by experts what an unprecedented prodigy (or type of prodigy, noua portenti species) heralds at 27.3.1, but it heralds something (nulloque coniectante uentura postea quod portendebatur, euenit) and the examples following. Shortly before the ‘forced’ declaration of Julian as Augustus, a misshapen child with two heads, two sets of teeth and four eyes is born in Antioch and Ammianus offers that partus ita distortus praemonebat rem publicam in statum uerti deformem (19.12.19).
521 The balls of flame that prevent the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem presumably belong to a different category from that of ‘warning’, since they are effective in themselves (23.1.1f). For a broader discussion of this prodigy see Phillips (1979).
distinguishing of an _appropriate_ constellation of practices within the empire-wide series of possibilities, and its chief rival would of course be Christianity. Deferring the debate about the nature of the frequently used and supposedly ‘vague’ word _numen_ for now, a survey of material touching on Christianity uniformly indicates that it is unsuitable as a candidate for a state religion.\footnote{Much of the following discussion is heavily indebted to Rike: it is hard to add to his exposition.}
(ii) Christianity

Opinions on the Christian content of the *Res Gestae* have moved from according it priority\(^5\) to surprise that it appears at all.\(^4\) It is not that Ammianus would do away with Christianity altogether; his preference for imperial religious toleration has often been noted,\(^5\) as has his praise for those provincial bishops who live wholly blameless lives.\(^6\) But Christianity is conspicuous for its failure to provide security within and without the empire: while Christians on the borders of the empire are conciliatory, they are violent and seditious in the cities.\(^7\) The praise of the courage of martyrs at 22.11.10 is far from being exclusive to Christians: philosophers make many similar shows of courage in the face of deadly cruelty.\(^8\) Rike 106-7 also dispenses with the interpretation that the description *religio absoluta et simplex* at 21.16.18 is one of praise: *absoluta* is hardly a commendation in a context of diversity and *simplex* hardly fits with the evidently desirable sophistication praised elsewhere; in addition, as Rike points out, the tendency to describe Christianity as a *lex*\(^9\) contrasts with a preference elsewhere for less rigid *prudentia* or *mathematica*. There is no reason to disagree with his conclusion that “Christianity, if to Ammianus a *religio licita* and plainly superior to other barbarian cults, was no serious competitor for virtue with the great civilised religions. Rather these

---

\(^5\) Rike 2; Blockley (1975) 123, for further references.

\(^4\) Hunt (1985); Matthews (1989) 435-451; Rike 100-111; see also de la Beaumelle (1974); Neri (1985); for Ammianus’ exclusion of Christian terminology Cameron and Cameron (1964). Blockley (1975) 131-132 shows that Ammianus is, at times, “non-classical” in his use of Christian terminology. These arguments usually stress the ‘secular’ nature of historiography, and (often rightly) the interest in *virtus* over religious choices and the hazards of imperial prescriptions on religion.

\(^5\) See e.g. the praise of Valentinian for his toleration, 30.9.5. Scholars have formulated Ammianus’ position with a slightly different emphasis, e.g. from a philosophically based toleration, e.g. Ensslin (above, n. 498) 99-101, to a more pragmatic patience, e.g. Rike 106 n.96 (“toleration, yes, but preparatory to tipping, peaceably, the flow of conversion back...that is – reconversion”).

\(^6\) 27.3.15: but it is an *exemplum* in response to the outrageous schisms that left a hundred and thirty-seven dead in rioting over rival candidates for the bishopric.

\(^7\) Rike 104-105, citing the failed embassy of the bishop of Bezabde to the vicious and treacherous Sapor (20.7.8), notwithstanding his dismissal of the charge of treachery (20.7.9: for similar charges elsewhere see de la Beaumelle (1974) 19-23); there is also the farcical ease with which Rando and his Alamanni could enter an unguarded Mainz during a Christian festival (27.10.1-2); the notorious failure of Constantius abroad and his unreasonable ability to stir up sedition within the empire (unreferenced but invoked by Rike): see e.g. 20.11.32 for his failures against the Persians and 15.1.2 for his success in killing off internal rivals; 21.16.18 for his excellence in promoting religious schisms. There are other references to this effect (e.g. 14.10.16; 14.11.8).

\(^8\) Rike 106; Blockley (1975) 127; see e.g. 14.9.5-6; 19.12.12; 29.1.38-9.

\(^9\) 15.7.7; 15.7.8; 20.7.7; 25.10.15.
would have to show it how to occupy a socially productive place among the *diversitates religionum.*” Nonetheless, even the possibility of toleration marks a sea-change; as a principle it is almost entirely alien to Livy, and even more so to Tacitus.

(iii) **Foreign Religions**

One area where Ammianus clearly diverges from his predecessors is on the question of foreign religions. Livy, we should remember, used the term *superstitio* almost exclusively of practices undertaken in Rome but Tacitus was more ready to condemn foreigners even on their home territory, especially the Jews, Egyptians and Druids. With the decentralisation of the Roman empire from Rome comes a difficulty in defining boundaries, especially for Ammianus who had grown up outside the immediate influence of Rome as a fixed point of reference. Though the Jews are still despised, quite possibly for their connection with Christianity, the reputation of Egyptian and Druidic traditions have been strikingly rehabilitated: Egypt is honoured as the ancestral home of religion, and the Druids are famous for their knowledge. A number of other foreign religious traditions receive a generally favourable reception, most notably that of the Magi. This is not, however a rule: the religious traditions of the Huns and the Quadi are not treated so favourably, though there is always the possibility of civilisation: the temples of the Taurians in some of their cities at least, are free from human victims (22.8.36) although they continue human sacrifice elsewhere (22.8.34).

530 Rike 101.
531 Once again, this discussion can do little but summarise Rike’s excellent findings and argument, though he makes little comparison with earlier sources.
532 See above, p. 100.
533 See above, p. 216.
534 Livy did little more than reach adulthood before beginning his history (Henderson (1998b)).
535 The Jews are *fetentes et tumultuantes* at 22.5.5.
536 Egypt: 22.16.19f; Rike 96-100. Druids 15.9.8; Rike 93.
537 See Rike 93-95 on the decline of Persian religion. Den Boeft (1998) demonstrates that Ammianus avoids linking the Magi with less reputable practices. I am grateful to the latter author for providing a draft of his article.
538 Rike 87-89.
But overall there is a far more tolerant flavour to Ammianus' account. One might, somewhat simplistically, say that foreign cultures are demonised and stereotyped far less than previously: Ammianus goes further to distinguish different foreigners than his predecessor – indeed he includes many more. This gives a fuller range of assessments: the Burgundians for instance are probably the best of a barbarian lot. The term *superstitio* thus gains all the greater impact in its rare usages: of the five occurrences, it is used once of Christian schism (21.16.18), and also of Manichaeism and its like (15.13.2); Sapor may have consulted *superstitiones omnes* before an attack on the Romans (18.4.1), while Julian, like Hadrian, was *superstitiosus magis quam sacrorum legitimus observator* (25.4.17) and a poor judge of signs (e.g. 24.4.1, where Ammianus distances himself from Julian's assessment): the Huns are at the opposite extreme, being restrained *nullius religionis uel superstitionis reuerentia* (31.2.11).

---

539 Not least because of their Roman origins (28.5.11); see further Rike 92; Wiedemann (1986) finds that Ammianus is likely to assess Roman behaviour in terms traditionally reserved for barbarians which can further elide the previously rather stereotyped distinctions between Roman and foreign cultures.

540 Seyfarth adopts *superstitiones*, the emendation of Heraeus, who collaborated with Clark: the manuscripts have a variety of words reliably beginning with *pr(a)est-*, which makes the reading rather weak evidence.

541 Though these rare usages are entirely traditional, it is worth considering whether the historian avoided the term because of the growing tendency of Christians during the fourth century to refer to paganism as (a) *superstitio* (Salzman (1987)).
Undesirable Practices

The relative redundancy of the designation *superstitio* does not, however, deprive Ammianus of the means to indicate clearly his preferences for religious conduct. Certain practices are clearly undesirable — Ammianus can scarcely conceal his contempt for Sabinianus’ predilection for spending time at the shrines of martyrs (18.7.7). Elsewhere, there are clear signs of continuity: dreams, while they can reveal the future, are, as was argued for the earlier period, more dubious material for divination than birds, entrails or divine inspiration (21.1.7-14): other detestable rites are still marked out for censure — magic for instance. At 26.10.5, Marcellus’ sole praiseworthy deed was that he killed Serenianus, useful to Procopius only because of his *doctrinarum diritas* — these presumably the same *doctrinae* that allowed him to imbue a cap with magical powers (14.7.7); Apronius is praised for hunting down *uenefici*, feared for their *artes nefariae* (26.3.2). At 28.1.14, one Marinus was accused of having tried *artibus prauis* to gain a certain Hispanilla as his wife; the identity of Valens’ successor was sought *detestandis praesagiis* (29.1.6). Astrology fares slightly better than these purveyors of rather ill-defined and certainly ill-received arts: though Alexandrian experts in the art seem to be acknowledged warmly at 22.16.17 (*recalet apud quosdam adhuc licet raros consideratio mundani motus et siderum*), most of our references deal with trivialised uses of the art. Thus Ammianus’ position is not so far from that of Tacitus: astrology is efficacious but not necessarily desirable.

Like his predecessors, Ammianus does not merely apply his discrimination to practices but also the way in which they are used: even traditional pagan measures can be abused,

---

542 On which see further Matthews (1989) (indexed frequently); Rike 37-39 and via index; Blockley 104-123. Ammianus refers to such *artes* variously as *nefandae* (14.1.2), *noxiae* (28.1.26), *praue* (28.1.14) & *secretae* (unlikely to be a recommendation and in apposition with *uenena*, 23.6.78).

543 Most amusingly, those who will not appear in public, wash or dine without consulting the stars (28.4.24) but we should also note those who use astrology in legal cases, who are subject to severe censure (28.4.26); Heliodorus is an astrologer and *tartareus*... *malorum omnium*, though the two do not necessarily go together (29.2.6). The reference at 30.4.11, where it is said that astrologers and interpreters of the Sibylline Books adopt a serious bearing is most probably satirical of astrologers.
most spectacularly by Julian, *superstitiosus magis quam sacrorum legitimus
oservator.* The only pagan emperor of the extant *Res Gestae* presented Ammianus
with serious problems for his project: since a crucial strategy in Ammianus’ religious
presentation is the vindication of paganism as being an effective candidate for state cult,
Julian’s spectacular failure in Persia provided possibly the most damaging objection to
any rehabilitation of paganism. Ammianus’ strategy is to establish unreservedly that
Julian was no ideal adherent of the *cultus deorum:* “while the *cultus deorum* is made
responsible for what was best in Julian’s character, his failings are yet portrayed as
unrepresentative, personal deviations from what it properly enjoined.” While in Gaul,
Julian’s rites are eminently successful and proper, though secret. The secrecy
indicates that Constantius’ tyranny rather than an overt religious break was the cause of
the civil war that left Julian as sole Augustus: Julian does not ‘come out’ in the *Res
Gestae.* But later he was to exhibit signs of his excessive religiosity (superstitio): while
his activities in Gaul were characterised by his being *haruspicinae augurísisque intentus et
ceteris, quae deorum semper fecere cultores* (21.2.4), by the time he is in Antioch, the
strict adherence to tradition has begun to wane. The ostentatious and inappropriate
assumption of what should have been priestly regalia is criticised by Ammianus
(*ostentationis gratia uehens licenter pro sacerdotibus sacra*, 22.14.3): neither does the
entourage of women, also for the sake of appearances, sound traditional. His
suppression of his temper allows for an apparently successful propitiation of Jupiter, if
the immediately subsequent discovery of the Apis bull is anything to go by (22.14.4, 6).
But his *curiosus* search for a *noua consilii uia* (22.12.8) in approaching Apollo, which

---

544 25.4.17. The bibliographical material on Julian probably outstrips that on the *Res Gestae* as a
whole: for the latest appraisal and bibliography of the charismatic emperor see R. Smith (1995). The
account here is strictly limited and summarised.
545 The Christian writers did not fail to exploit the opportunity: see especially Gregory Nazianzen Or.
546 Rike 39, whose two chapters on Julian (2 & 3) are excellent for the documentation of the stages of
degeneration in Julian’s religious behaviour, especially for the comparison with Libanius’ account.
547 Rike 40-42 amply demonstrates that though secrecy in religious rites is undesirable throughout
 antiquity, Julian is compelled by Christianity to hide his worship: in Ammianus (and elsewhere) it is
 normally associated with black magic (26.3.3; 26.3.4; 29.1.29 & 30.5.11). Theodoret noticed the
 For such charges of such things see also Wiedemann (1986) and (more generally) Rives (1995b); BNP
 233-234.
apparently forms part of a list of criticisms\(^\text{548}\) seems to be connected to the ominous destruction by fire of the temple of Apollo (22.13.1). Julian's failure to note the ample, almost pleonastic, warnings of the various diviners on his Persian campaign clearly put the responsibility for error on the emperor: where he had received all manner of propitious omens and signs early in his imperial career,\(^\text{549}\) so too do ominous warnings appear in profusion as his death approaches.\(^\text{550}\) There is no scope for a criticism of paganism here; the blame for failure is laid firmly at Julian's feet.

\(^{548}\) The catalogue is sustained, including excessive (\textit{nimia}) sacrificial victims and ceremonial rites (\textit{immodice}), as well as a superfluity of diviners of all types, some expert and some not (22.12.7).

\(^{549}\) Or help (15.2.8); he sets off \textit{secundis auspiciis} 17.8.2; the \textit{Genius Publicus} appears at 20.5.10, promising him support; he reinterprets what seems to others a bad omen (21.2.1-2); he is hailed Augustus by the people of Sirmium (21.10.2) and is \textit{euentu laetus et omine}; though this particular sign seems to genuinely be in his favour, we should not forget that his interpretation and judgement are at times flawed; see e.g. 22.1.1. Rike 45 lists omens from other sources.

\(^{550}\) The rot seems to set in at Antioch, which Julian enters at the same time as the ritual mourning for Adonis, also cut down in his prime (\textit{in adulto flore sectarum est}, 22.9.15); – this \textit{uisum est triste}; the people read the abbreviation \textit{Felix Julianus Augustus} at a funeral and about the same time the death of a senior priest indicates the approaching death of Julian, although this is not transparent at the time (23.1.5-6); those skilled in signs diagnosed that an earthquake in Constantinople boded badly for a campaign against another's territory and the Sibylline books warned in no uncertain terms to postpone the campaign against Persia (23.1.7); a colonnade collapses at Hierapolis, killing fifty soldiers and wounding many more (23.2.6); there is a similar disaster at Batnae (23.2.7); on the night of the fire that destroyed the temple of Apollo in Rome, Julian has troublesome dreams in Carrhae, the site of the slaughter of Crassus' troops (23.3.3) – he had supposedly handed his imperial robes to his cousin Procopius there; Julian ignores the Sallustius' pleas for delay despite his warning of \textit{inrevocabile...exitium} without successful propitiation of the gods (23.5.4); the corpse of an unjustly executed man is an \textit{omen inlaetabile} (23.5.6); a captured lion is taken to be adverse by the \textit{Etruci haruspices} but they are not heeded (23.5.10); their advice on the death by lightning of Jovian is also ignored 23.5.12-14. A sacrifice to Mars goes wrong, prompting Julian to swear that he would not sacrifice to the war god again (24.6.17) (hardly a wise promise for a Roman emperor abroad on campaign); his death shortly afterwards meant that he upheld his vow; the signs are bad at 24.8.4. A final cluster of signs at 25.2.3-8 include the departure of the \textit{Genius Publicus} and the star of Mars; once again the \textit{haruspices} are ignored.
(i) Traditional features

The aspects of religious conduct that Ammianus is urging on his audience are as reminiscent of earlier models as his uitanda: as if haruspicy is not vindicated by the events of the Persian campaign, then we have an explicit validation of this ancient craft along with augury and divine inspiration (21.1.7-14) as well as an impressive moment of skill when Marcus, a haruspex, divines in Rome that the state has no emperor until the appointment of Valentinian (26.1.5); portents, prodigies and omens are likewise to be ignored at one’s peril.\footnote{Ammianus’ terminology is somewhat different from his predecessors: for the most part he reports the sign without saying it was prodigious or portentous. He uses prodigium only once (30.5.15) in its strict sense; the word is used in a phrase meaning ‘skilled in interpretation of prodigies’ several times (18.3.1; 23.5.10; 25.10.1; 27.3.1 (prodigialium rerum)) and metaphorically at 31.2.2 (prodigiose) and possibly at 29.1.10 (prodigiosa feritas) unless Valens’ rage is being designated a religious issue. Livy’s Hannibal was already using the word metaphorically (23.45.9) and Tacitus described Vitellius as an ostentum (Histories 3.56). Portentum appears four times (19.12.20; 23.2.7; 27.3.1; 31.1.1 (where he seems to be differentiating between praesagium and portentum)); praesagium and its derivatives, most frequently used of actual signs or the act of divination (14.7.7; 21.1.6; 23.3.3; 26.1.7; 25.4.17; 28.1.7; 31.1.1) is often used with uelut to offer conjecture on the source of human reasoning or an assured manner: (e.g. [ea] ueluti e praesagiis adfirmabant, 15.3.7; 15.5.34; 20.2.4; 20.8.20). It generally retains ‘religious’ overtones, as at 30.1.5 when Papa, king of the Armenians, foresees with ‘human’ rationality his own death at the hands of Terentius. Characters do not foresee (praesagio: verbal) less ponderous outcomes. \footnote{E.g. 25.3.9, 31.1.1-5, 31.14.8-9.}} Oracles and predictions are generally reliable\footnote{Those men that take THEO to indicate Theodorus instead of Theodosius might so easily have avoided their costly mistake by continuing their ritual (29.1.32). The idiocy of the uulgo, previously towards the excessive designation of events as prodigial, is now caricatured at the opposite extreme; Ammianus castigates their scepticism about predictions (21.1.13), though this does not justify any hypotheses about a change in popular beliefs. The historians will always find a target.} though there is no guarantee that there will not be idiots interpreting them.\footnote{Sacrifice, which is discussed in more detail below (pp. 281-282), is successful if undertaken properly (e.g. Julian’s gaining of the support of Bellona, 21.5.1).}

Sacrifice, which is discussed in more detail below (pp. 281-282), is successful if undertaken properly (e.g. Julian’s gaining of the support of Bellona, 21.5.1).
(ii) Knowledge and Interpretation

Most emphatically, it is interpretation once again that is the cornerstone of the *cultus deorum*. As usual we meet both good and bad interpreters, as was true of even the undesirable arts like astrology: of the innumerable examples we might note the appearance of experts in particular disciplines: at 18.3.1 we meet *gnari prodigiorum*; at 22.1.1 Aprunculus Gallus is *inspectu iecoris...praedoctus* and *haruspicinæ peritus*; after an earthquake at 23.1.7, *horum periti* warn Julian about his Persian campaign and we hear of *gnari rerum prodigalium* at 25.10.1. Not all who claimed such skills are credited; many *ignari* came out of the woodwork under Julian along with genuine experts (*iuxta imperitus et doculis*), arousing the historian’s indignation (22.12.7). There is a eloquent refutation of those who reject prophecy at 21.1.13-4, with Cicero invoked as an extra authority:554

```
sufficit dici, quod et grammaticus locutus interdum est barbare, et
absurde cecinit musicus, et ignoravit remedium medicus: set non ideo
nec grammatica nec musica nec medicina subsistit. unde praeclare hoc
quoque ut alia Tullius: ‘signa ostenduntur’ ait ‘a dis rerum futurarum.
in his siqui errauerit, non deorum natura, sed hominum coniectura
peccavit.’
```

The treatment of respectable priests and experts indicates much consistency: as was found with Livy and Tacitus, they are rarely named.555 Rike’s synthesis might equally

554 De Nat. Deor. 2.4.12 (Lucilius speaking).
555 There are two possible exceptions: Aprunculus Gallus, *haruspicinæ peritus*, is named (22.1.2); Marcus, who divined that there was no emperor before the appointment of Valentinian, is the other exception (26.1.5): Rike, probably correctly, acknowledges neither as exceptions (or possibly as priests). Cf. above, pp. 76-77.
apply to any of the three authors: “the faceless preservers of the *doctrinae genus leue* can scarcely be distinguished from their books of ritual. Quietly they wait to be consulted; rooted to their shrines and secretive, they hold unchanged those divine *res gestae* embodied in ceremony that lay at the source of history and religion” (Rike 71). Their authority is largely presumed rather than established (though they are criticised once): when the *haruspices* are forced by Julian’s obstinacy to reveal the contents of their books (23.5.10 & again at 25.2.7) it underlines the emperor’s foolishness in the face of such a mighty authority; their honesty and integrity are beyond question. We have seen that Ammianus is dubious about Julian’s assumption of the role of the priests in carrying the *sacra* in Antioch (22.14.3): the emperor’s religious charisma at the expense of priests is never to Ammianus’ liking – the historians’ position may be comparable to that adopted towards Scipio by Livy: his activities are constantly measured against what was appropriate for one of his position. But the greatest usurpation of authority proper to the priests in Ammianus’ account came from the philosophers.

---

556 The priests of republican Rome were irresponsible with the calendar (26.1.12).
557 Since Julian is the only really prominent pagan figure in the *Res Gestae* it is not always easy to be so precise about the role of charismatic individuals. Julian is sometimes right (for instance, Aprunculus’ diagnosis of divine favour is validated by a sign, and the emperor yields, *iamque uaticinis credens* (22.1.2)); but he is also wrong (he sees victory portended when his horse Babylonius is shot from under him at 23.3.6). On balance, the impeccability of respectable priests implies that they should be heeded over a non-priestly individual’s personal interpretation.
(iii) Philosophy in the Res Gestae

Broadly speaking, there are three philosophical narrators or agents in Ammianus’ text: Ammianus himself ventures to offer us various syntheses; then there are individual men, whether they are agents in the text or men known through their writings; and finally the philosophers who accompanied and advised Julian. The last group were repeatedly and blatantly wrong for offering advice on religious matters. As we shall see, priestly knowledge is reliably promoted above that of philosophy. But if he reserves the role of religious interpretation for the priests, Ammianus does not leave philosophers with no role whatsoever: a more suitable model is exemplified by characters such as Demetrius Cythras who had propitiated the god Besa at Abydus without any ulterior motive for many years (propitiandi causa numinis, 19.12.12). Several philosophers are exempla for facing death at the hands of a tyrant but they are not restricted to laughing at torture and burning. Philosophers are experts in their own domains as the numerous citations of Plato indicate. But their knowledge of ‘natural science’ (for want of a better

---

558 Which have not been favourably received: e.g. Matthews (1989) 428-431, who is typical in trying to mix and match Neoplatonic and Stoic ideas; Camus (1967) 197; even Harrison (1998) speaks of “half-digested or inconsistent” ideas. Rike 3-4 has the last word (and fuller references): “how did Ammianus rank as a Plotinus, Porphyry, or Iamblichus?...[being] unable to stand such comparison – unless some day the Enneads should be tested for its historiographical quality – Ammianus was marked as “no philosopher.”

559 Ammianus is notoriously explicit about this: e.g. at 23.5.11, where the advice of the haruspices is rejected in favour of the philosophers quorum reuerenda tunc erat auctoritas, errantium subinde, et in parum cognitis perseuerantium diu.

560 Rike 73, n. 20, comments that in the (extant) Res Gestae, only one philosopher makes a prediction, when Maximus predicted death for those inquiring into the name of Valens’ successor at 29.1.42: but his comment that “it must be significant that of all the philosophers mentioned by Ammianus, only Maximus gives an oracle” is overstated, despite Ammianus’ use of praedico. Maximus, a man of doubtless learning (uir ingenti nomine doctrinarum, 29.1.42) hardly had his work cut out in making such a prediction. He was issuing a warning and a refusal to be involved, not an oracle. For another example of ‘prophecy’ (praesagio) by ‘human’ foresight see 30.1.5.

561 E.g. the young Simonides who kept the secret of the successor of Valens (29.1.37-38).

562 Rike 69-86 has an extensive discussion of the appropriate role of the philosopher, drawing more fully on Ammianus and also many other relevant texts that inform the historian’s discussion. The discussion here is limited to aspects of knowledge and interpretation. For a broader analysis of the role of philosophers at this period see Brown (1992) esp. 58-70.

563 16.5.10, 22.16.22, 25.4.2, 30.4.3, 30.4.5; cited with the epithet opinium insignium amplissimum, 23.6.32,); we also find cited, amongst others, Epicurus (30.4.3); Heraclitus (21.16.14); Anaximander (17.7.12); Aristotle (17.7.11, 18.3.7, 21.1.12, 27.4.8 et al).

564 The quotes represent doubts about the habitual tendency of modern scholars to juxtapose ‘science’ exclusively against ‘religion’ rather than any superiority complex regarding ancient science (if there was such a thing) or philosophy.
phrase) is strictly subordinated in authority to the traditional lore of the priests. Though he uses their material, the historian does not enter into any discussion of one type of knowledge over the other, or question the religious in the light of the ‘scientific’. In dealing with earthquakes, Ammianus underscores the difficulties of establishing the identity of the god responsible before embarking on an excursus, predominantly informed by philosophy, about the process by which they occur, and this example can serve as a template for the relative location of different knowledge-systems in the Res Gestae.

After noting the difficulties of accounting for earthquakes, which had left most philosophers in *aporia*, the priests’ evidence is adduced to underline that there are no easy answers – a contrast of interpretative authority which will become increasingly familiar. The pontifical books do not name a specific deity in connection with earthquakes, in case ritual error should occur in following their stipulations.\(^5^6^5\) Indeed, Ammianus ends with the conclusion, borrowed from Anaximander, that water is a key factor: thus poets and theologians called Neptune *Ennosigaios* and *Sisichthonos*.\(^5^6^6\) By the enclosure of the philosophical material with different religious interpretations, religious understanding is privileged and unquestioned; even the great Anaximander is, at best, catching up with the religious tradition. In addition, we should note the easy co-existence of the different levels of explanation: the ‘natural science’ is effectively a description of ‘how’ earthquakes happen while the references to the priests and the *poetae ueteres et theologi* underscore the utility of religious responses (dealing with the question ‘why?’)\(^5^6^7\)

---

\(^5^6^5\) *observantibus sacerdotiis caute, ne alio deo pro alio nominato, cum qui eorum terram concutiat, sit in abstruso, piacula committatur*, 17.7.10: cf. above., pp. 180-185, esp. n. 335. Rike 36, n. 114 rightly criticises Wardman (1982) 160 for his assertion that “the older pagan books were no better than the new; one could not have much confidence in the lore of the pontifical books when they declined to say anything about earthquakes for fear of naming the wrong god”.

\(^5^6^6\) 17.7.12: possibly referring to Juvenal 10.182 & Gell. 2.28.1.

\(^5^6^7\) A similar pattern should be assumed for other such excursuses, even where the divine is not mentioned; e.g. the discussion of plague at Amida at 19.4.1-8; the explanation for shooting stars (unless comets are being described) does not preclude the religious meaning of the sign at 25.2.5. Comets are treated as both religious in significance and susceptible to ‘rational’ inquiry in natural terms at 25.10.1-3, judging from the fact that the excursus comes at the end of a prodigy list. ‘Scientific’ explanations never overlap with or exclude divine interpretation; Ammianus is quite capable of criticism, though it is usually of the failure to see divine agency, e.g. at 21.1.13.
It might be objected that Ammianus is claiming, through the authority of Anaximander, to know what the pontifical priests did not, but that is by no means the only interpretation available. Function is a crucial consideration here: without diminishing the importance of a philosopher’s reputation, Anaximander’s mistakes would not have such a profound impact as any mistake made by the pontifices: they too were undeniably privy to the knowledge of the poetae ueteres et theologi but respected the dangers of prescribing uniformly for such a vexatious scenario. Decisions were better taken at the time, taking into account other evidence. Their reticence does not indicate ignorance, but laudable caution. In addition, the now-familiar anonymity of priests and the respect for their lore is in marked contrast with the knowledge of specific and named philosophers, who must each prove their worth. Despite availing himself of every possible source of information, Ammianus’ consistently prioritises ritual knowledge for practical (including ritual) purposes.

Lest this discussion should appear to create a rigid demarcation between priestly and philosophical knowledge, we must remember that Cicero was quoted above as an expert on interpretation (p. 260); no example better underscores the danger of making too firm a distinction between ‘philosophers’ and others, since he is also cited as a critic of philosophers (22.7.3-4). In addition, we should note that Pythagoras gained his insights from the (authoritatively anonymous) Egyptian priests (22.16.19f). The philosopher Maximus was famed for his understanding of religious procedures, though we do not know it from Ammianus. But if the teachings of philosophers are of value, theirs is a tradition that will inevitably be erratic: even if Anaxagoras predicted a rain of stones and an earthquake (22.16.22) his charismatic abilities could not be reproduced; and a tradition that dies with its founder has no future use for Rome’s religion. The founders of the

568 Having said that, the usual priests to deal with earthquakes in Livy are the duumviri or decemviri (3.10.6, 4.21.5; 34.55.1 (after the failure of the expiations presumably prescribed by the pontifices, and there we find that a general supplication was ordered)). The instauration of the Roman Games after an earthquake (amongst other prodigies) at 40.59.8 was, however, probably due to the advice of the pontifices.
569 So too Rike 72-75.
570 Though he is praised for his learning at 29.1.42, it is Eunapius, not Ammianus, who indicates that he excelled in religious interpretation (Vitae Sophistarum 477-478, 480, 501).
more durable religious *doctrinae*, like Tages (21.1.10) contributed far more than any philosopher. "A threshold exists beyond which even philosophers will become *perseverantes in parum cognitis*. For Ammianus, it is the function of the priest to conserve ritual...while the philosopher is to absorb learning from every source." (Rike 75). Whatever their education, philosophers should know their limits.571

The complex of religious knowledge and individuals is not limited to anonymous seers and philosophers: there is a third group, the poets. Ammianus names not only Virgil and Homer, but also, rather surprisingly, the likes of Menander, and on issues of the most fundamental religious import: the comic poet is an authority for the existence of the *genius* attached to each individual at birth. Homer is understood to have spoken on the same topic when he portrayed gods fighting alongside men (21.14.5) and we have already noted that the *ueteres poetae* called Neptune *Ennosigaios et Sisicthon* (17.7.12).572 In short, the historian recognises that the poets spoke in a particular idiom.573 The recognition of a different order of knowledge and expression does not permit us to dismiss these moments as meaningless ornament: like the teachings of philosophy, they have their place in the constellation of religious knowledges.

Distinct in function, if not necessarily in person, from the poets and philosophers are the anonymous *theologi*;574 though the term appears only five times, their evidence is as sure as that of the priests. At 14.11.25, the *theologi ueteres*, critically to the coherence of Ammianus' excursus, regard575 Adrasteia/Nemesis as the daughter of Justice; at 16.5.5,  

571 See Rike 85-86 for elaboration on this in the political arena.
572 The poet Philoxenus provides a surprisingly philosophical-style *exemplum* in the face of the threats from Dionysius, upset that the poet alone refused to praise the tyrant's verses (15.5.37).
573 Of Homer, Ammianus says *fabulatur inflatius* 22.16.10; cf. 23.6.53 *ut Homerus fabulosius canit.*
574 The phrase *ueteres poetae et theologae* occurs at 17.7.12, implying a distinction. But it may be *hendiadys*; poets are *theologi*. On the other hand, much of what the *theologi* have to say sounds equally philosophical. Bearing in mind Ammianus' genre-conscious use of poets elsewhere for information, the answer is likely to be that his information is derived at least in part from philosophical commentaries on poetry (on which see Lamberton (1986)); either way, a functional distinction is the only one available to us.
575 *Fingentes*: ‘fashion’? ‘designate’? ‘construct’? ‘tell a Platonic muthos’?
the theologicae doctrinae record\textsuperscript{576} that Mercury is the mundi uelociorem sensum esse motum mentium suscitantem. At 17.7.12, as we have seen, the ueteres poetae and the theologi join forces in linking Neptune with earthquakes; at 21.1.8 Themis is said\textsuperscript{577} to be in charge (praeesse) of prophecies; the theologi ueteres ‘give her a share’ (collocarunt) in the bed and throne of Jupiter, the uigor uiuificus. Finally the theologi are in agreement with Menander and Homer at 21.14.3 in saying (ferunt) that each man is allotted a genius at birth.

The key authority on religion in Ammianus is, consistently with our previous subjects, the author himself. Not only is he highly selective in using what must have been a vast amount of potentially relevant literature, he frequently offers his own conclusions without the requirement for any secondary authority; thus he simply informs us that the fates blind those whose death is approaching\textsuperscript{578} and in his own person he frequently makes a diagnosis that depends on the divine where it might just as easily have been omitted.\textsuperscript{579} The excursuses typically cite his various authorities to establish Ammianus’ position; they are subject to him.\textsuperscript{580} We might recall that, rather like Livy, Ammianus has one single criticism for his otherwise exemplary priests (pp. 79-81) – the historian’s authority is thus established by a method either borrowed or duplicated for the same reasons: tasteful hegemony. It is the same in his approach to knowledge in general.

\textsuperscript{576} Prodidere: ‘transmits’? ‘asserts’? ‘teaches’? ‘informs’?
\textsuperscript{577} Dicitur, an anonymous passive.
\textsuperscript{578} utque solent manum iniectantibus fatis hebetari sensus hominum et obtundi, 14.11.12.
\textsuperscript{579} E.g. uigilauit utrubique superni numinis aequitas (14.11.24); many of Jovian’s troops survive fauore superi numinis (25.8.3) et al.
\textsuperscript{580} As we find at 14.11.25 in the excursus on justice; see below, p. 266.
There is one aspect of Ammianus’ presentation – and this most emphatically applies to the religious – that we must problematise, somewhat reluctantly after the difficulties encountered with Livy and Tacitus, and that is the apparent transparency of much of the religious material. Indeed religious knowledge and interpretation are so markedly foregrounded that the temptation to begin with him was not immoderate. A number of such instances have already been mentioned: the explicit isolation of error in interpretation, and, with even greater serendipity, by reference to Cicero, who predates all three of our historians. The explicit difficulties of the pontifices regarding the naming of specific deities for ritual purposes might have been a useful opening gambit in a lengthy discussion that, in the event, relied on complex reconstruction of authorial intention. The list continues: ‘higher levels’ of reasoning are far more transparent in such excursuses as the one dealing with divination: nowhere in Livy or Tacitus do we read anything resembling the clear statement that birds do not foretell the future because of any knowledge on their part but because the god (deus) directs their flight in such a way as to reveal futura; the same logic presumably applies to entrails and other similar disciplines that follow (21.1.8-14). The inference that the divine realm was seen as fundamentally benign, so speculative and deductive from the religion of Livy (p. 128) is a bald statement in Ammianus – the fundamental benevolence of the divine is suggested as a foundation for the science of divination, unless it is the divine response to the piety of men (i.e. the opposite end of the same stick) at 21.1.9.581 The ill-omened ‘star of Mars’ at 25.2.4, whose religious import can scarcely be ignored after Julian’s avowed refusal to sacrifice to Mars again after the fiasco at 24.6.16, is similar to Gallus’ prediction of an eclipse (discussed above, pp. 126-127), in that the religious significance of neither is undermined by the appearance of a scientific explanation for how they occurred. Despite these similarities, we should remember that religious knowledge in its various forms and

581 amat enim benignitas numinis, seu quod merentur homines, seu quod tangitur cirum affectione, his quoque aribus prodere quae impendent.
import was constantly redeployed: to compare achronologically would be to assume a static ‘canon’. The abundance, even superfluity, of explicit religious dialectic in our later author should not be thoughtlessly plundered to ‘prove’ arguments located primarily in earlier periods. Rather the foregrounding of what was previously implicit should be problematised. As a feature, it is central to Ammianus’ programme: in Livy and Tacitus, the deployment and exemplification of knowledge and expertise formed part of their broader exemplary programme. Livy’s ‘there you go’ ‘milky fullness’582 was as deliberate as Tacitus’ ‘you should know better’ pithiness. Neither, however, went to the lengths that their successor did to explain religious matters and this merits some comment.

One highly plausible factor in the degree of explicit explanation of religious material is linked to the times in which Ammianus wrote: the literary dialectic of Christianity with paganism was now an established facet of educated writing. Is Ammianus then taking the opportunity to answer Christian critics in such moments as his validation of pagan prophetic practices? While this cannot be ignored, neither can it be the single basis of our answer. It is not just religious interpretation that has moved to the forefront: the previously subtle processes of exemplification have likewise become explicit, to the extent that Blockley (1975), failing perhaps to appreciate the care with which the earlier historians wove their exempla into their accounts, can say “the only surviving historian who makes large-scale use of exempla is Ammianus” (163). The difference is not particularly increased use of exempla; on the readings outlined here it would be impossible to exclude any individual from a list. But in the Res Gestae, the appeals to imitate and avoid are repeated and specific statements, not occasionally generalised comments and ubiquitous assumptions. From another angle we can see a similar change: in contrast to the rarity of Livy’s or Tacitus’ naming of another historian (and then usually to criticise or compare) Ammianus will refer, almost needlessly, to a predecessor such as the auctor amplissimus Thucydides (23.6.75; he is also mentioned at 19.4.4).

582 Quintilian’s phrase: X.i.32 speaks of Livy’s lactea ubertas.
So when religious material is foregrounded, it is not so much that the later age is more superstitious, as is often said, since foregrounding of all kinds of previously interwoven material is now almost a rule; we are dealing with a broader shift in the writer's relationship with traditions of all types. Where his predecessors avoided tastelessly informing the audience of what they surely knew, much of Ammianus' information is virtually superfluous: though we might reasonably speculate that some of it was less well-known, much of the information in the forefront was surely familiar to his audience: it is doubtful whether such asides as *Apollo qui sol aestimatur* (19.4.3) were part of a dialectic — it was surely common knowledge, even beyond an educated audience. We should consider that the extensive information is part of Ammianus' proof of his worth: a minor Greek aristocrat and soldier had even more of an uphill struggle to validate his position than Livy. In addition, it is doubtful whether, in a society that was far more fragmented geographically and religiously, even a local born-and-bred Roman could have relied on the depth of consensus on religion that our earlier historians assumed without question.

One obvious source for this change of style is Ammianus' dual tradition. The presentation of information has much in common with Herodotus, though Ammianus has also synthesised two Latin historiographical genres, namely the chronological approach of annalistic history and biographical assessment. But to consider this 'the answer' would be to accuse our historian of a decadence which would be unfair: Ammianus is not simply jumping through academic hoops to please the *litterati*, although it does demonstrate his worthiness to join the historical tradition. Just as Livy and Tacitus had purpose in their particular version of historiographical traditions, so too did Ammianus. Traditions of the genre were not preserved for empty reasons: the particular

---

583 For instance, the details of Aristotle's safeguards for interpretation of dreams at 21.1.12 or Anaximander's theories about earthquakes and water (17.7.12): perhaps despite our expectations they were well-known but it seems reasonable to assume that some of the extensive information, whether philosophical, geographical or historical, was more or less obscure while much of it was part of everyday knowledge. The same dilemma is noted by Blockley (1975) 164 n.50.
584 Above, n.513.
pattern of deployment serves a further purpose.

It has often been remarked that Ammianus was a ‘snob’;\textsuperscript{586} that is, he showed a marked preference for those with a traditional education.\textsuperscript{587} Though anyone exhibiting such a distinct preference in this day and age could rightly be called a snob, we should be more hesitant about judging Ammianus by the same criteria. Education was more than a gloss: it underpinned the fabric of contemporary society: “education...provided the basis for dealing with a grimmer aspect of late Roman politics – with the increased impingement of official violence, directed against members of the upper class. The ideals associated with \textit{paideia} were invoked, with great urgency, to check such violence...Formalized speech was held to be, in itself, a form of self-control...It was a fragile speck of order in a violent and discordant world.”\textsuperscript{588} Ammianus’ criticisms of a lack of education are typically linked to, at best, incompetence and, at worst, cruelty:\textsuperscript{589} Valens was ignorant, while Julian was not; the former held numerous iniquitous trials, the latter was merely censured for the occasional lapse. Ammianus’ lament at 29.2.18 clearly indicates the power of education, where he wishes that Valens might have known better:

\begin{quote}
\textit{O praeclara informatio doctrinarum munere caelesti indulta felicibus,}
\textit{quae uel uitiosas naturas saepe excoluisti! quanta in illa caligine temporum correxisses, si Valenti scire per te licuisset nihil aliud esse imperium, ut sapientes definiunt, nisi curam salutis aliena, bonique esse moderatoris restringere potestatem, resistere cupiditati omnium rerum et implacabilibus iracundiis nosseque, ut Caesar dictator aiebat, miserum}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{586} Alfödi (1952) 101-102, 121f.
\textsuperscript{587} E.g. 21.10.8; 29.1.11; 30.4.2; 31.14.8: Julian is frequently praised for his education (15.8.10 (by Constantius); 16.5.6-7; 25.2.3; 29.1.42); Jovian on the other hand and for example is \textit{mediocriter eruditus} (25.10.15) though Ammianus does also acknowledge that he is \textit{magisque beniuolus et perpensis}.
\textsuperscript{588} Brown (1992) 48: see his chapter 2 \textit{passim}. Though he draws most heavily on Libanius and sparingly on Ammianus, the overall picture fits very well with our historian. Compare the formulation of Kaster (1988) 27 (in a broader context): “\textit{doctrina presumed mores}”.
\textsuperscript{589} Blockley 158-159, with the neat quote “it is quite surprising how many Imperial and other crimes are sins of ignorance” from T. R. Glover \textit{Life and Letters in the Fourth Century}, Cambridge 1901.
esse instrumentum senectuti recordationem crudelitatis...nec praecipiti
studio, ubi irreuocabile factum est, agitari.

Even a *uitiosa natura* might be improved by the *praeclara informatio doctrinarum*. Constantius, who failed to grasp his education, was at least *doctrinarum diligens affect* (21.16.4) and this is linked to a policy of greater clemency.\(^{590}\) Education was, for Ammianus, a vital part of society and civilisation in a world where court cases could depend on the nod of a single man.\(^{591}\) If that man was educated by *sapientes*, which apparently includes Julius Caesar, and now of course Ammianus himself, the court and the empire might be a safer place. Ammianus' 'snobbery' is therefore part and parcel of an urgent appeal on which lives might well depend; his account exemplifies and contributes to the creation of the ideal Greco-Roman aristocrat, learned, even steeped, in the literary tradition that had worked so hard for so long to define civilisation. Thus while it is true that he is working to gain the acceptance of the learned men of his audience, his means is to *be* one of them and, in this, his credentials are impeccable.\(^{592}\)

There is more. Despite his Latin, the fact that he did read his works in Rome (probably to the imperial court rather than the natives)\(^{593}\) and his characteristically Roman use of the first person plural for the army,\(^{594}\) he is not merging his identity with the Roman aristocracy. Since he often writes as a Greek,\(^{595}\) his identity is a compromise. More

\(^{590}\) E.g. Valentinian says of Gratian that, once educated he *librabit suffragiis puris merita recte secusue factorum* (27.6.9). Of course Ammianus interpreted his material in the light of this assumption; it was hardly something that he had 'discovered' from his researches. Elliott (1983) indicts the historian of bias (i.e. he demonstrates that his criteria do not fit with ours) against Gallus and Constantius.

\(^{591}\) As the wise Simonides realised (29.1.37).

\(^{592}\) His readings in Rome in 391 were well received according to Libanius *Ep.* 1063: see Matthews (1989) 8-9, with his n.1 (478) on authorship and dating. The very fact that we know of this from a letter that went from Antioch to Rome indicates the impossibility of closure on Ammianus' audience. Cf. the conclusion of Marincola 257: "as a Greek, he is appealing to the tradition of inquiry and learning that distinguishes his work from its competitors, and (more importantly) that places him as a direct line with history's founders and best practitioners, to whom his work, like that of all the great historians, may be seen as both homage and challenge."

\(^{593}\) Libanius' epistolary mention coincides with the time that Theodosius' court was in or near Rome (Matthews (1989) 8-9).

\(^{594}\) Marincola 289-290.

\(^{595}\) Ammianus often uses the first person plural (e.g. *dicimus* 22.9.7) to introduce a Greek term: Marincola 147 cites Ammianus' description of himself as *miles quondam et Graecus* and *ingenuus*
specifically it is, like his material, his historiography and his empire, cosmopolitan. The ‘modest’ statement that he might have no audience at all is tantamount to a refusal to limit his audience (31.5.10); the similar statement directed specifically at his having a foreign (peregrini, 14.6.2) audience equally refuses to bar other cultures than Greek and Roman from his audience.\(^5\)\(^9\)\(^6\) There is the possibility of civilisation emerging from barbarity and Ammianus’ designated medium for this process is education, works such as his own that not only cap the Greco-Roman literary traditions but synthesise and preserve it. We should seriously consider the possibility that the ambition of the *Res Gestae* in its civilising mission knew no bounds: the compromise was there for other ‘sub-cultures’ to imitate as a template for a unified Roman empire. The explicit religious dialogue may owe much to this intent.

Nonetheless the *Res Gestae* are not simply an unwieldy collection of literary gems: even in his learned discourse Ammianus remains true, in his religion, to the tradition whereby the unstated requirements are of interpretation and practical usage. We will find him, like his predecessors, most selectively concerned with responsibility. In addition, the cosmopolitan nature of the *Res Gestae* also helps to make a great deal of sense of the religious material not yet scrutinised: the place in the overall religious scheme of the *numen*; the deployment of *fortuna* and *fatum*; and his particular concern with Justice.

\(^{(31.16.9, 19.8.6)}\) on which see also Sabbah (1978) 510 n.9, 532-535; Matthews (1989) 462-464 & Blockley (1975) 16-17.

\(^{596}\) Although the word does often refer to foreign residents of Rome (Sabbah (1978) 508 n.6) rather than abroad, this ‘modesty’ surely amounts to a refusal to limit his audience. Some cultures have failed to civilise, e.g. the Quadi, and it is hard to imagine the Huns reading Ammianus’ history and changing their ways. But while the historian cannot guarantee his reception, he considers that his method is the best way forward.
4) The Fundamentals of Ammianus' Roman Religion

(i) *Numen*

Ammianus uses *numen* 56 times in the extant *Res Gestae*, 31 times in the singular: though it can mean 'a (particular) god' (e.g. Aesculapius, 22.14.7), or in the plural 'the gods' in the traditional sense,597 more often it is used in a sense that has led to discussions of 'neutral monotheism'. The *numen* is *supernum*,598 *sumnum*,599 *sempiternum*,600 *caeleste*,601 *superum*,602 *diuinum*,603 *perpetuum*604 and *magnum*.605 We also meet an anonymous *deus* at 21.1.9 & 24.1.1 and the *caelestis deus* at 24.1.12 & 25.75 (*aetemum dei caelestis numen*). We should, however, consider whether the reports of Ammianus' 'monotheism' have been exaggerated. As Harrison remarks, "Ammianus' manner of switching from speaking of a vague, depersonalised divinity or numen to a polytheistic world of more clearly individuated deities is something that, far from revealing him as a closet monotheist, he has in common with any number of ancient writers, Roman and Greek, and indeed with polytheists from other societies, for example the Dinka of Godfrey Lienhardt."606 It has been suggested that the use of *numen* is one way of avoiding conflict with Christianity, an ongoing concern for many writers,607 but

---

597 E.g. *cultus numinum* 22.5.1, 25.4.20; cf the *pax numinum* at 23.5.4.
598 14.11.24, 15.2.8, 16.12.62.
600 17.13.28, 23.5.19, 31.10.18.
602 16.12.18 (in the speech of a standard-bearer), 25.8.3.
604 27.3.15, 29.2.20 (but probably of *Iustitia* in this example).
605 29.5.40.
606 Harrison (1998), citing Feeney (1998) 91, G. Lienhardt, *Divinity and Experience. The Religion of the Dinka* (Oxford, 1961). For Rike, laudably retaining a focus on cult practice rather than 'theory', "if someone had asked the historian where specifically he should go to worship *Numen*, Ammianus would most probably have responded by pointing to a temple of Jupiter or Zeus...his terms *numen* and *deus* will subsequently stand best as innocuous synonyms courteously offered before a mixed audience of pagans and Christians." This has certainly been the interpretation given in other instances of 'studied neutrality' and has a lot to commend it. The Christian god is certainly referred to as *numen* (21.2.5). It should be noted that the argument henceforth goes beyond the discussion of Rike, who broadly assimilates Ammianus to a more traditional model.
607 E.g. Liebeschuetz (1981) 396-398 on panegyric and Symmachus' 'neutral monotheism'.
we cannot ignore the fact that the phenomenon appears from the very beginnings of ancient historiography: Herodotus’ use of *ho theos* and *to theion* has also led to his being described as a monotheist, long before there were Christians to offend. Of course, Herodotus’ terminology may simply have been adapted gratefully for a contingency he would almost certainly never have envisaged and irrespective of *his* intentions. Yet once again we are in danger of floundering among partial answers: Ammianus is demonstrably so much more than the sum of his numerous parts. He does not avoid offence when he exhibits cutting sarcasm or utter astonishment in connection with the failure of Christian rites to protect the empire. A satisfactory answer would seem to be in a constellation of considerations, a whole flock of birds killed with one stone.

One issue that emerges from the diachronic comparison is that Ammianus lacks a particularly useful method of indicating the mood of the gods towards Rome; where Livy typically deployed prodigies and their expiation (or not), temple dedications and other acts of piety, Ammianus cannot: how many temples were dedicated or supplications held under a Christian emperor? Tacitus also used prodigies and religious signs, but relied for the most part on the reader’s interpretation – though he was forced to offer divine explanations for the rise of Sejanus (*Annals* 4.1.2), and reassured the reader of divine aid in the *Histories* (*after* the restoration of the temple: *nec sine ope diuina*, 4.78.2). Both wrote for what was a narrow audience in comparison with that of Ammianus; for the most part they looked in towards Rome and reinforced rather than introduced specific modes of religious thought and analysis. Besides, Tacitus wrote chiefly of the wrath of the gods, while Ammianus’ Rome knows more successes. Ammianus, with a far wider and decentralised scope, lacks the vehicles of regular expiation to indicate the *pax deum*. Though he still finds abundant opportunity for

---

608 See Harrison (1995) 92-142 on this, and issues pertinent to the following argument.
609 Ammianus might just as well have been respecting the distinctive local names of gods (so Hunt (1985) 191).
610 On Sabinianus, and his predilection for martyr shrines see 18.7.7; I cannot agree with Hunt (1985) 195 that Ammianus is objecting to Sabinianus’ succession to the post held by Ursinicus; the objection is specifically religious.
611 The dedication of a temple to the *Lares Permarini* and the ensuing ‘shipwreck’ of the Bastarnae in Thrace is pertinent (above, p. 68); for failure in expiation as an indication of the *ira deum* see p. 79.
warnings of divine wrath, he is also regularly at pains, as we have seen, to give us a fuller explanation than his predecessors would have found tasteful. Thus we are frequently told of divine intervention – where once we would have been expected to understand this from other signifiers – by reference to the numen: 16.12.52 aderatque propitiati numinis arbitrium clemens; 16.12.62 quibus ita fauore superni numinis terminatis (both for Julian); at 19.1.4 the caeleste numen misled Sapor, to Rome's advantage; at 19.10.4, the prayers of Tertullus to Castor and Pollux at Ostia are answered diuini arbitrio numinis; Jovian's troops, including Ammianus, are saved by the aeternum dei caelestis numen at 25.7.5 and by the fauor superi numinis at 25.8.3; Valentinian is elected numinis aspiratone caelestis at 26.1.5; 26.1.14 sees the calendar fixed as bisextile adiumento numinis diuini; 29.6.7 the daughter of Constantius was saved by the fauor propitii numinis in the form of the Messalla's intervention. Gratian conquers the Lentensian Alamanni sempiterni numinis nutu (31.10.18). If such references were absent from the text, would we still talk so easily of Ammianus' monotheism? If numen, like ho theos in Herodotus, is simply a term for 'the divine', we should be more wary. Indeed we should not automatically assume that numen, even when described as supernum or summum, is any one specific god at all, whether Jupiter or a Neoplatonic One: often numen simply indicates 'the power of the divine realm', as in the phrase aeternum dei caelestis numen. If the appeal of Tertullus to Castor and Pollux invoked the arbitrium diuinus numinis, should we not consider that numen owes its presence to the desire on Ammianus' part to avoid saying that these specific gods acted, while still asserting that the abrupt change in weather was due to divine intervention – a feature typical of historiographical proprieties? In other words, Ammianus is as loath as his predecessors had been to stating baldly that a particular god had acted. Where he does, it is, as before, based on extraordinary evidence and hedged with doubts and proofs.

---

612 It is hard to imagine either author recording the haruspices pointing to their books in public exasperation as Ammianus' do twice (23.5.10, 25.2.7) or going to such explicit lengths to validate divination.
614 For instance, when Mars is thought to have fought for the Romans (24.4.24). It has to be admitted that this is an epiphany on a scale hitherto unprecedented in our historians. Ammianus is somewhat nervous of the claim himself (he adds si misceri hominius numina maiestatis iura permittunt).
Though he has gone further than Livy or Tacitus ever did in explicitly noting divine orchestration, he has not entirely abandoned their caution against naming gods. Even when he adds an epithet, it may be purely descriptive of the divine realm in its exalted status vis-à-vis the human realm: caelestis, diuinus (both of which are somewhat pleonastic and hardly distinctive of any specific deity), sempiternus, summus – none of these words need necessarily distinguish one god from any others. Rather they characterise, and diagnose, the power of the divine realm. To say that the numen acted after an appeal to Castor and Pollux may simply be Ammianus’ way of saying what Livy would simply have indicated by juxtaposition: if Ammianus had specified the gods as acting by name, he would have been writing epic not history. It may be that Ammianus’ ‘monotheism’ is purely a manner of speaking that is more familiar than we thought. The fact that it ‘allowed for’ Christianity might be more of a bonus than a formative influence. If so, it simply prompted pagans to find a slightly modified term where once ‘the gods’ sufficed, and even then they were drawing on their own traditions.615

615 I see no reason to agree with Matthews (1989) 429’s aside that ‘deus’ is “more abstract” than Cicero’s ‘gods’. For the treatment of ‘the gods’ as a unified realm, see above, pp. 112-122.
(ii) Fortuna

With over 100 appearances, *fortuna* is as regular a visitor to the pages of Ammianus as it was in Livy and Tacitus, and for the most part it retains the privileges and jurisdictions that were found there. It still represents ‘the way things turned out’, and outcomes are still the domain of the gods: *fortuna* is still the *executor* of the will of the gods, without any claim implied by her name to the expert knowledge of which god in particular was responsible for a situation.616 Thus we find, for instance, that the Alamanni speak of the Romans, *quorum fortunam sempiterna fides caelo contiguam fecit* (28.2.7); Gallus, *assumptus...in amplissimum fortunae fastigium, uersabilis eius motus expertus est* (14.11.29), left Antioch *numine laeuo ductante* (14.11.12); his death was attributed to *fata* (*ibid.*; also 14.11.19), which in turn were almost certainly linked to his crimes.617 Gallus suffered a traditional reversal of fortune, which is characterised emphatically as unpredictable.618 Livy noted that perhaps the Albans *fortunae, ut fit, obirati cultum reliquerant deum* (1.31.3). A similar effect is occasionally found in Ammianus: Procopius, faced with capture, *ut in arduis necessitatibus solet, cum Fortuna expostulabat luctuosa et graui* (26.9.9). The reader expected something like this: *ultra homines sese...efferens, et ignorans quod quiuis beatus, uersa rota Fortunae, ante uesperum potest esse miserrimus*, he had forgotten that the *uersa rota Fortunae* could ruin anything when he ransacked the house of Arbitrio (26.8.13); when the Limigantes are defeated by Constantius, *mussantesque audiebantur interdum, fortunae non meriti fuisse*

---

616 Similarly, Rike 16, n.25 points out that Sallustius (9) “particularly favours the worship of Tyche in cities inasmuch as these required some common focus of ritual for their highly diverse populations.”

617 Eusebius, *ita euisceratus ut cruciatibus membra deessent* called on the gods for justice (*inplorans caelo iustitiam*, 14.9.6); given Ammianus’ preoccupation with justice (below, pp. 283-289) and her remorseless reprisals against wrong-doers, the connection seems irrefutable. Perhaps Gallus’ well-publicised cruelty made any omens of his death superfluous; none are recorded.

618 Fortuna receives a full retinue of descriptions to this effect: in discussing the number of instances of its reversals, Ammianus says that it would be mad to attempt to count them (14.11.34, quoted in translation in my opening); more specifically, it is *mutabilis et inconstans* (14.11.30); *uersabilis* (23.5.19); *ambigua* (21.5.13); we hear of *caeco quodam iudicio fortunae* (25.5.8). We should also note: *Romani reflante Fortuna fallacis lusi* (of Cannae) (31.13.19); *eventus variante fortuna* (21.16.14); *fortunae strunt volubiles casus* (22.1.1); *uersa rota Fortunae* (26.8.13); *Fortunae volucris rota* (31.1.1); *fortunarum uersables casus* (31.10.7); fortuna can also be also *inclemens* (20.4.13). It is not always adverse: note *laetioris fortunae* (17.12.4); *fortuna sequior* (18.6.6) *celsiore fortuna* (20.10.1)). At 15.5.1 *fortuna* is the saving *fortuna moderatrix humanorum casuum.*
*quod euenit* (17.13.11) – their treacherous negotiations seem to indicate otherwise (17.13.5 & 7); and Ammianus himself indulges in blaming fortune when he complains of the choice of Jovian as successor to Julian (25.9.7) though his rule was already indicated by omens (21.16.21). There is a repeated claim that the help of the gods turns *fortuna* into *felicitas*; Cicero is quoted to this effect (*felicitas est fortuna adiutrix consiliorum bonorum*, 21.16.13).619

We might detect, at a superficial level, a greater tendency to attribute reversals to *fortuna*: the number of references to a positive turn of *fortuna* are severely limited, whereas both Livy and Tacitus might well have exploited the effect of an unknowable change of circumstances to convey surprise (or the ignorance of enemies).620 But we should resist the temptation to consider that there is a greater fixity about the reversals of *fortuna*. Whereas Livy especially would often juxtapose clear favour of the gods (e.g. through successful expiation) with subsequent favourable *fortuna*, Ammianus, lacking many of the traditional techniques of indicating the gods’ favour, often abbreviates this structural procedure with a simple statement that the *numen* aided the Romans as we have seen.621 This has the effect of displacing adverse events to *fortuna*, the traditional vehicle for reminding men of their limited knowledge of the gods’ will. There is no fundamental theological change: *fortuna* is the will of the gods in action, unpredictable in its course and with a tendency to reversal; thus any success has to be achieved with her aid.622

The difficulties of *fortuna* do not, as we found also earlier, prevent people from forming opinions based on a man’s past record: Constantius’ men are privately relieved when he

619 Cf. Valentinian’s formulation *ut spero, fortuna consiliorum adiutrix bonorum* (26.2.9).
620 *Histories* 2 opens with *struebat iam fortuna* as the focus of the narrative shifts from a divided Rome to Vespasian.
621 Not that the *numen* is always favourable by any means: at 31.4.9 the Goths are brought into the Empire *quasi laeuo quodam numine*, where *quasi* acts much as *uelut* in the Livian examples of deduction from visible or verifiable evidence (see above, pp. 64-66).
622 The traditional assertion or assumption that *fortuna* aided the Romans along with their *virtus* is found in the form of a ‘pact’ between *fortuna* and *virtus* at 14.6.3; which is extremely similar to the formulation of Livy when discussing Alexander (see above, pp. 170), and is ultimately only a statement of the obvious. The new ways of reporting do, however, tend to focus on its negative aspects; this, like so many other aspects of Ammianus’ narrative, may owe as much to his Greek tradition as anything. Herodotus is of course famed for his stories of the reversals of fortune.
makes peace with the Alamanni, since fortunam eius in malis tantum ciuilibus uigilasse; cum autem bella mouerentur externa, accidisse plerunque luctuosa (14.10.16; see also 14.11.8). Valentinian’s dream of his dishevelled wife represented his Fortuna (30.5.18). But for the most part, when Ammianus deals with an individual’s relationship with the divine, the term in question is fatum.

(iii) Fatum

Fatum continues to represent the inevitable: that is, one designates an event as fatalis or happening fato to indicate that it was unavoidable. Thus we read of the fixa fatali lege decreta (21.1.8); or of the fatalis necessitas (29.1.32); or that Constantius continued his preparations for war although the fates were making their own preparations for his death (21.15.2). Fatum, or frequently the sors fatorum, is greater than any human resource – nulla uis humana uel uirtus meruisse unquam potuit, ut quod praescrpsit fatalis ordo non fiat (23.5.5). By virtue of this, predictions of fate can be made (e.g. 21.1.8), and errors in this field are, of course, due to human failings; oracles themselves do not help this by their ambiguity (23.5.9). Though it often deals with death (e.g. 17.9.4, 17.11.5) and still emphatically natural death (27.5.10, 28.4.22) as well as the issue of emperors and the succession, fatum can also be linked to lower political office (29.2.22). But its role is not always deadly; Valens, uitae terminis a primigenio ortu adscriptis, is saved by fatum, determined to grant him his proper lot of life (29.1.16). Almost anything can conceivably be preordained: Constantius’ strange record of success

---

623 Reputable experts and methods are obviously preferred (22.16.17), though it can equally be done through detestanda praesagia (29.1.6).
624 The deaths of emperors are reliably foreshadowed by omens and mentions of fate: for Valentinian, diu conpositum ad quietem principis fatum sortem denuntiabat ei supremam prodigiis ingeriis multis (30.5.15); Constantius’ impending death is linked to an omen at 21.15.2; Julian’s lot is part of the fatalis ordo 23.5.5 and he knew he was fated to die at Phrygia (25.3.9) by a sword (25.3.19); Jovian’s reign, fated to be ‘shadowy’ (et cassum et umbratile, 21.16.21) sees the sad sign of the crying of his own son during his designation as heir as an omen (id quod mox accidit portendebat...praescriptus uitae finiendae dies, 25.10.11-12).
within the empire and failure outside it is linked to quasi fatale constellatione ita regente diuersos euentus – presumably a learned circumlocution for a fate that could be predicted from the stars (20.11.32); Gratian’s instabilis uirtus was undermined by fata proximique (27.6.15). Fate continues to indicate the end of analysis, at once a recognition that further interpretation is pointless, or not worth the effort: this is probably the case at 19.12.9 when Simplicius escapes prosecution quod arcent fato: it simply wasn’t his day to die.

Fatum lends its exalted status to expressing the temporal power of the emperor: after the surrender of the Sarmatians to Constantius, Ammianus comments that they gained incredibile quantum prosperitas from the situation; he then adds that uerum illud aestimaretur quod opinantur quidam, fatum uinci principis potestate, uel fieri (17.12.17). In context, it is apparent that there are limits to this: the Sarmatians in question had been overcome by their slaves and forced to choose between the protection of Constantius and serving those slaves. The emperor’s granting of their freedom and a king restored their dignity and loyalty (17.12.18-21). The statement refers to the great power of a princeps over circumstance; that is, he can make or reverse ruin: there is no indication that he can prevent it. We might have expected fortuna with some qualifying epithet, but that would have done no justice to the extreme reversal of the situation. But there is another instance where we read fatum where fortuna or felicitas might have been expected: again the context is of hyperbole. Constantius’s courtiers praise his fatum as uigens semper et praesens at 19.12.16: we know that a predilection for flattery was one of his deplorable weaknesses. Perhaps we are to understand from the context that felicitas would have been more appropriate but with the profound connection of fatum with emperors, the courtiers are not being so innovative. The tendency to link an emperor with fate is only mildly more emphasised in comparison with Tacitus.

---

625 See e.g. 15.5.37. Ammianus’ dislike for flattery is clear: the Persians’ flattery of their leader’s felicitas, overheard by the tunnelling soldiers at 24.4.23, is heavily ironic.
However reliable the category of fate seems analysed from these angles, its place in the interpretative structure cannot be said to remain unchanged from the models of Livy and Tacitus. In the former, ‘fate’ was a diagnosis of the last resort, after the failure of the negotiation of the pax deum. Tacitus politely sidestepped issues of the inevitable to urge propriety.\(^{626}\) In both cases what mattered more was the proper cultus deorum: Roman setbacks were reversed after the proper supplication of the gods in Livy, while the refounding of the temple under Vespasian seems to have indicated at least temporary relief from the chaos of the ira deum. Yet despite Ammianus’ clear paganism and tendency to the explicit, the phrase pax deum/deorum/numinum appears only once in the entire extant account, where Julian was warned that nondum pace numinum exorata he faced inreuvocable...exitium (23.5.4). Incredibly, there are no expiations of prodigies in the Res Gestae.\(^{627}\) Words linked to expiare are used predominantly metaphorically to express enormity or irreversability\(^{628}\) or of foreign rites.\(^{629}\) For all the validation of traditional methods of divination, Ammianus has nothing to say for expiation, unless it is his lament at 19.12.20 after a good old-fashioned prodigy appears in Antioch, but this bears the stamp of acquiescence more than protest: nascentur huiusmodi saepe portenta, indicantia rerum uariarum euentus, quae, quoniam non expiantur ut apud ueteres publice, inaudita praetereneunt et incognita. Julian’s ignoring a massed legion of adverse signs positively cries out for a comment that expiation might have been possible, but none comes: or (to pick a random example), the efforts to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem are abandoned because of divine signs and interference.\(^{630}\) Why were experts not consulted and expiation performed? The tendency to take adverse signs as indicating fatality for the

\(^{626}\) Tacitus’ advice was not heeded for long if at all: in Ammianus’ text, knowledge of the future is worth dying for (at least some thought so; see 29.1.7).

\(^{627}\) Expiation meaning specifically remedial action through sacrifice: sacrifice is still effective in obtaining the pax deum (e.g. 19.10.4) but with its removal from the fulcrum of negotiation with the gods, it has to be said that it has been emphatically decentralised.

\(^{628}\) Domitian memoriam nominis sui inexpiabili detestatione perfudit (18.4.5); Nigrinus is presented by the residents of Aquileia as the chief instigator of war so that the city might be ‘expiated’ from its treachery at 21.12.19; Valens indiscriminate punishments are inexpiabile (29.1.18) – e.g. the inexpiabile scelus of 29.6.7.

\(^{629}\) The death of the son of the Persian ally Grumbates is expiated by the burning of Amida at 19.2.1. It is not clear whether this is considered metaphorical (i.e. avenged) or religious (i.e. the ghost was expected to cause trouble).

\(^{630}\) 23.1.2-3: Ammianus gives no explicit explanation of the strange events, unlike the Christians of the time. For the importance bestowed on this episode by Christians, pagans and Jews see Phillips (1979); for his “competitive Judaism” see also Goodman (1994), esp. chs. 6-8.
emperor, only strengthened by the passing years, served to undermine the role of expiation and negotiation. The warning that the *pax numinum nondum exorata* [est] does not function as a prompt for pleading the cause of expiation; in function, it is merely another omen. In a similar vein, the Sibylline books, once the repository of *solutions* to extreme religious problems, are reduced in effect to a divinatory role, to be consulted like some specialist *haruspex*. 631 This process was not necessarily that surprising: with the decentralisation of Rome, expiation of the gods would have more readily raised the question ‘which gods?’ The traditional gods in new locations would probably not have been the answer, since their status had declined over the centuries. 632 With the loss of localised expiation, the relationship of men towards the gods had shifted dramatically. 633 Traditional rites retain their power of prediction but no longer act as any initiative to repeated sacrifices as once they did. When the army (including Ammianus) consults the *haruspices* as to their best option for escape, both available possibilities are ruled out yet there is no further sacrifice in the hope of obtaining the *pax deum*; they simply set out and manage as best they can (24.8.4-5). In effect, it seems that all prognosticated difficulties are inevitable. But Ammianus is not dooming his empire to foreknowledge of the future without any means of negotiation: on a structural level, there are signs that the mood of the gods, and possibly even *fatum*, are to some limited extent negotiable, chiefly through the medium of justice.

---

631 *Romae super hoc bello libros Subyllae consultos, ut iusserat, imperatorem eo anno discedere a limitibus suis, aperto prohibuisse responso* (23.1.7) Of course it is quite possible that they might have given such a response in Livy’s, or Tacitus’ day; but as the texts – and therefore the models of religion – stand, this abject failure is unprecedented; the single instance of their inadequacy was mitigated by the prudence of an embassy to Delphi, which provided expiation (Livy 23.1.11: above, p. 79).
632 They had virtually disappeared from the coinage by the time of the Tetrarchy (Liebeschuetz (1981) 395, esp. n.5).
633 This issue is shamelessly abbreviated here; it merits far greater study, even within Ammianus.
To the reader of Ammianus’ account, the ubiquity of *ius
titia* and *aequitas* do not need to be established: they are a central yardstick of his moral assessments of emperors.
The *sapientes* offered that there are four principal virtues: *temperantia, prudentia, iustitia, fortitudo* but the only one which receives a religious excursus in the extant *Res Gestae* is *iustitia*, which, according to Julian, is the *excellentissima uirtus omnium* and only one explicitly linked to the divine. The excursus is prompted by the death of Gallus and those who treacherously brought him to Constantius:

*Haec et huiusmodi quaedam innumerabilia ultrix facinorum impiorum,*
*bonorumque praemiatrix, aliquotiens operatur Adrastia – atque utinam*
*semper! –: quam vocabulo duplici etiam Nemesim appellamus, ius*
*quoddam sublimé numinis efficacis humanarum mentium opinione*
*lunari circulo superpositum, uel, ut definiunt alii, substantialis tutela*
*generalis potestas partilibus praesidens fatis, quam theologi ueteres*
*fingentes iustitiae filiam, ex abdita quadam aeternitate, tradunt omnia*
*despectare terrena.*

---

634 The two are frequently linked: Julian appeals to Constantius’ *ius
titia*, which will permit him to act with *aequitas* (20.8.11). Constantius says of Gallus that he *a iustitia...defecisset* (21.13.11) and then speaks of Julian as operating *aequitate calcata* (21.13.13). A *graus quidam aequitatis spectator...iustius incusabit* men who acted as rashly as did those who elected Jovian (25.5.7).
635 Constantius *iustumque in eiusmodi titulis capitali odio oderat, cum maxime id ageret, ut iustus*
aestimaretur et *clemens* (21.16.11); Julian is praised on this count at 25.4.8; the catalogue of Valentinian’s cruelty consists chiefly of the execution of the innocent; though Ammianus does not actually label this as *iniustum*, elsewhere such acts are the height of injustice; Valens was *provinciarum aequissimus tutor* (31.14.2) and acted *cum magna iustorum iniustorumque distinctione* in matters of lapsed estates (31.14.3) but was *iniuriosa alia* (31.14.6). *Iustitia* wept at the death of Ursulus (22.3.7); but for this and similar cases she would have returned to earth during the reign of Julian, which she had long since abandoned because of the *uitia hominum* (22.10.6; virtually repeated at 25.4.19).
636 It is *iustitia* that will permit Constantius to meet his requests with *aequitas* (20.8.11); he in turn defines equity, supposedly *calcata* in Julian’s case as the *parens nutrixque orbis Romani* (21.13.13) before claiming that *iustitia* will aid his cause (21.13.15); link with the *numen, 29.2.2 (numen ratione...iustissima.*)
haec ut regina causarum, et arbitra rerum ac discipatrix uram
sortium temperat accidentium uices alternans uoluntatumque nostrarum
exorsa interdum alio quam, quo contendebant, exitu terminans,
multiplices actus permutando conuoluit. eademque necessitatis
insolubili retinaculo mortalitatis uinciens fastus, tumentis incassum, et
incrementorum detrimentorumque momenta uersans, ut nouit, nunc
erectas tumentium cervices opprimit et eneruat, nunc bonos ab imo
suscitans ad bene uiuendum extollit. pinnas autem ideo illi fabulosa
uetustas aptauit, ut adesse uelocitate uolucri cunctis existimetur, et
praetendere gubernaculum dedit eique subdidit rotam, ut uniuersitatem
regere per elementa discurrens, omnia non ignoretur. (14.11.25-6)

This is the only explicit appearance of Nemesis in Ammianus’ text: Adrastia appears once more in the text as the humanorum spectatrix who saw to the death of Eusebius, Constantius’ chamberlain (22.3.12). Whatever the knowledge status of the statement that Adrastia/Nemesis was the daughter of Iustitia, the link is undeniable.\(^6\)\(^3\)\(^7\) For our purposes, there are important ramifications for the total religious system of Ammianus, as it is presented. We should not forget that the key to his selection of material is linked to responsibility rather than ‘pure’ theology. Justice proves to be a fulcrum between men and gods; it is a prime locus of negotiation, and in Ammianus’ paradigm, it partially fulfils the role of the collective gods in the systems of Livy and Tacitus. Justice is expected, for instance, to aid the designs of men: the inhabitants of Nisibis expected iustitia to help them defend their homes ut experti sunt saepe (25.9.2); Tripolis was non

\(^6\)\(^3\)\(^7\) Clearly this excursus is extremely rich: the theologi are said to fingere this idea – a poetic idiom. They were fashioning a way of representing something and though their testimony is here, as elsewhere, given a high status, we should not forget the plethora of knowledges in Ammianus’ text: he does not ‘agree’ with them, but juxtaposes himself close to them. For a historian the appropriate expression is ius quoddam sublime numinis efficacis (‘some sublime law of the gods that does not hesitate to take action’). We should also note the refusal to make absolute claims: Adrastia/Nemesis sometimes (aliquotiens) performs such actions, sometimes (interdum) reverses human plans; thus the proprieties of interpretation are observed. The overlap of imagery with fortuna is striking (compare the descriptions of Fortuna given by Champeaux (1987) 44-47) but that does not mean that fortuna ‘is’ Adrastia. Further discussion of the relative status of the construction (fingere) is possible but not here.
indefensa, quia uigilauit Iustitiae oculus sempiternus, ultimaeque legatorum et praesidis dirae (28.6.25); Julian also claims that aequitati semper solere iungi iuiciam (23.5.23); and it was justice who revealed the treacherous plan of the Goths (31.15.7).

Justice forever watches men,638 and impious or cruel executions in particular are punished.639 Most controversially, fatum is said to ‘depend’ somehow on Adrastia/Nemesis (above, 14.11.24, praesidens fatis): yet this does not mean that Adrastia can extend or diminish the length of a man’s life. Rather it indicates that her intentions, once she is provoked, cannot be thwarted. The co-ordination of fatum with gods is not restricted to Adrastia: Valens’ death is also linked to the Furies and Bellona, who are the vehicles and means of his destruction by war by the Goths: caesorum ultimae dirae, perpetuum numen ratione querellarum iustissima commouentes, Bellonae accenderant faces, ut fides oraculi640 firmaretur, quod nihil inpune praedixerat perpetrari (29.2.20). Yet we were told earlier that he was saved from an assassination attempt by fate: ferrumque ad iugulum eius prope adactum a militaribus, fato reflectente depulsum since uitae terminis a primigenio ortu adscriptis (29.1.15-16) and therefore cannot simply speak of Valens’ ‘deserving’ his fate without taking into account other factors; in some sense we might be able to speak of his cruelty also being ‘preordained’.

Over-strict interpretations at this point confuse the issue: Ammianus has offered different formulations of how the divine operates from different angles. The exact nature of Valens’ death (by fire) was prognosticated by omens of speech (31.1.2-3) and seems particularly apt after his similar execution of the young philosopher Simonides at

---

638 To add to the examples already given, there is 29.2.20 inconiuus Iustitiae oculus, arbiter et uindex perpetuos rerum, uigilauit adente.
639 Eusebius did not call on caelo iustitiam in vain (14.9.6), since uigilauit utrubique superni numinis aequitas (14.11.24): not only Gallus but even those who treacherously brought him to Constantine are dealt with by iustitia. According to Julian, the shade of Gordianus is avenged ueluti librante iustitia when his murderers cruciabilibus interiere supplicis (23.5.17); the curses of Maximinus’s victims saw fulfilment later (28.1.57); we hear that the inconiuus Iustitiae oculus, arbiter et uindex perpetuos rerum, uigilauit adente at 29.2.20; impending injustice is represented as the advent of the Furies at 29.2.21, as was the case with Gallus; the manes indutos etiam tum et errantes are avenged by the sempiternus...iustitiae uigor, aliquotiens serus, sed scrupulosus quaesitor gestorum recte uel secus (30.2.9); the ghosts of the victims of Valens’ cruelty appear to him before his death (31.1.3).
640 Presumably the prediction of Hilarius at 29.1.33.
29.1.38. Might a just Valens have died heroically in battle? The question is ultimately redundant: it was a munus caeleste to have education bestowed (or withheld) (29.2.18). We are not in a position to understand Ammianus' religious stance if we attempt to 'organise' it into a fixed set of designations: is education a god? It is bestowed by the gods, apparently. This is not, however, a 'fact', it is a construction. Education is linked to the divine by the nature of its blessings. Just as the emperor was constructed as a god in an attempt to articulate his power,641 so too the praecella informatio doctrinarum is associated with the divine for its power and beneficence. Ammianus designates it a prerogative of the divine to convey this. He had no 'opinion' on the matter. So too with iustitia and fatum; he accounts for a pre-existent reality by linking it to a web of events and working assumptions. Perhaps more conspicuously than with Livy and Tacitus (who were, after all, predominantly attempting to reify a consensus), Ammianus is creating religious standpoints. To abstract his religious excursuses and methods from the reality that they explained and exemplified is to cut them off from their lifeblood. In an attempt to interpret the events of the period, Ammianus judiciously uses cultural knowledge about how 'life' works; working at one point from the exemplary question of justice, at another to explain the reasons behind events, he selects, prioritises and emphasises by turns. The description of Adrastia/Nemesis might almost have been about fortuna (and would not be entirely 'wrong' if it was) but there is one particular aspect of the divine that he wishes to emphasise here. The warning and appeal to his readers is that justice as a cosmic force does not sanction impious acts – even where a wrong might appear justified, as the treachery to bring Gallus to Constantius would have done to many onlookers. Fatum is one's lot; the gods are just. The peculiar impact of the two in conjunction is no more awkward than the co-incidence of death by simultaneous electric shock and heart attack, the loss of one's home by the synchronous loss of employment and a sharp rise in interest rates. Did Hitler invade France 'because' of a policy of appeasement or because he was always going to? Valens was spared because the divine allocated him a greater span of life: this is an easy deduction; he also died by fate, and his

---

death was additionally just, as were the death of so many who had perpetrated cruelty. The 'fit' with his burning of Simonides is not made explicitly but was perhaps a deduction to be drawn with ease. Ammianus does not speculate about details because there is little need to: fatum still represents ('simply') what happened. It is a category of events, not an event — a reliable outcome in the maelstrom of human activity: outcomes per se are still the domain of the gods, whether formulated as unpredictable fortuna, anonymous numen or decipherable iustitia/Adrasteia/Nemesis. Valens suffered from all three.

By his emphasis on iustitia and aequitas, Ammianus is not expounding a 'personal' ideology: rather, in historiographical fashion, he is creating a context for political action: Tacitus politely (and in vain, as it turned out) warned against cultivating an interest in fata; Livy used it sparingly in interpretation, and then with the authority of hindsight. Both were careful to retain the aspect of responsibility (above, pp. 143-154 & 225-226). Thus when Ammianus informs us that fata blind or stupefy the object of their plans, we might note that neither of his predecessors emphasise this; it might have made much sense of the disaster of Cannae in Livy’s account (for instance) but to give it such prominence in his account would be to create a dangerous precedent for a Rome that was to attend to its duties, irrespective of any opportunities for excuses. Ammianus, on the other hand, is in a position to do so because he has located the key responsibility earlier in the chain of events, at the point where a man must decide whether he is to be cruel or just. The blinding effect of fate, which would have undermined responsibility in the narratives of Livy or Tacitus, serves here to reinforce the need for appropriate action if one wishes to avoid the inevitable consequences: it was not only Gallus who fell foul

642 See Blockley (1975) 173-174 for the 'suitability' of punishments in the fourth century.
643 31.1.1 has the Fortunae volucris rota, Bellona, the Furies and omens of his fated death, already attributed to fatum at 29.1.15-16; at 29.2.20 we hear that the curses of his victims moved the perpetuum numen ratione querellarum iustissima.
644 Said of Gallus, going naively to his death at 14.11.12f. One might reasonably posit that Ammianus is also accounting for the Caesar’s uncharacteristically meek – even naïve – capitulation to Constantius’ scheming.
645 But Livy does assert that Fortuna can have a similar effect, as the agent of fatum at 5.37.1-3 (the prelude to the disaster of the Allia): cum tanta moles mali instare – adeo occaecat animos fortuna, ubi uim suam ingruentem refringi non volt – … nihil extraordinarii imperii aut auxilii quae sit. See above, p. 144.
of *Adrastia*, but also those who broke their oaths to deliver him to custody. In the absence of expiation, *iustitia* emerges as a key factor in men's dealings with the gods: every act is a potential negotiation with the divine, the *spectatrix humanorum*. 
5) Ammianus and the Roman Tradition

These conclusions clearly require some location within the traditions that have been outlined in this thesis. It should be stressed that we have been dealing with emphasis not rigorous theology. How possible would it have been to construct Ammianus’ particular model in earlier times? Herodotus presents “a complete moral system [in his religious material]: unjust actions meet without fail with a just, proportional response”, and we may therefore have a deliberate synthesis of Greek and Latin traditions; but this is no slavish imitation, rather it is a typically complex appropriation of traditional material to forge a new religious position. And it may be a question of emphasis: Tacitus recognises the interpretation of the ‘just’ orchestration of events by the divine, but discards it. His agents sometimes offer the kind of curses that, for Ammianus, would make the ears of Justice prick up; no explicit link is offered with the fate of the relevant emperors, but that does not mean that we should ignore the issue completely – the consular historian was interested in highlighting the impiety of their prosecutors. We cannot finally say whether he intended us to understand that justice would take a hand in events. But the issue was studiously avoided: for Tacitus, what mattered was the general restoration of proper mores. This was approached with a religious focus and achieved by a religious act, the refounding of the Capitoline temple. For Livy we have a similar pattern in miniature: the perennial likelihood of offending the gods and the consequent need for vigilance in interpretation and expiation. Tacitus’ warning to avoid investigation of fate may well have been a dead letter even by the time he wrote it: Ammianus is not at pains to repeat his advice – while the frequent deaths of those who dared to explore such issues are obviously a disincentive, they function chiefly to indicate the injustice of the judges and emperor. Furthermore it should not be forgotten that some of Ammianus’ positions are articulated through classical authors: according to Ammianus, it was Cicero who

---

646 Harrison (1997) 107; consider also his comment at 115: “human justice is not an alternative to divine justice, but works alongside it”.
647 aequitate deum erga bona malaque documenta (Annals 16.33); above, n. 482).
648 The quotation is not attested elsewhere.
taught that felicitas was a combination of fortuna with 'good' acts: 'neque enim quidquam aliud est felicitas' inquit ' nisi honestarum rerum prosperitas. uel ut alio modo definiam: felicitas est fortuna adiutrix consiliorum bonorum, quibus qui non utitur, felix esse nullo pacto potest' (21.16.13). But it is doubtful nonetheless whether Cicero would have espoused such a model as Ammianus does: the absence of supplication and expiation is startling.

In a world dominated by the emperor, the emphasis on fate is somewhat inevitable: Tacitus' circumlocution of it is subtle and ingenious, and he was writing in an age of broad consensus. Ammianus' back is much closer to the proverbial wall and if paganism was to survive in any form, it had to find a modus operandi that did not depend on sacrifice, however effective that was when applied. Another avenue to the gods was required, that did not require even a temple. Here our attempts to understand paganism through rite ironically force us to consider whether we can classify Ammianus with his predecessors. But to refuse him entry into the canon of pagan historians would not only be an error but would also be most inappropriate: it was, after all, his religious tradition to reformulate.

However striking the cost of Ammianus' compromise, it must be acknowledged that it was potentially very successful: the categories of fatum and fortuna remained intact and events could be assigned to the numen and or justice, that is, to a pagan reference. After Ammianus, to speak of the justice of the divine was not a peculiarly Christian act. In this, his model was immune from criticism from what was a hostile context; indeed it would be hard to avoid using his points of reference in any discussion of politics in the ancient world. Every invocation of justice was potentially a pagan act.

Given a free hand to restore paganism, we should not doubt that Ammianus would have opened the temples to appropriate sacrifice, tastefully supplicated the gods and left the Christians and philosophers to their quiet contemplative lives. But at the end of the fourth
century, this would not seem to be a realistic option and, rather than ally himself with what he must have seen was a lost cause,\textsuperscript{649} instead the lonely historian spoke with a voice that could grant paganism credibility. For the last extant time, Rome formulated a pagan religion for itself that might regulate its rulers and subjects and find a route to the gods. The fact that the chosen avenue looks to us in some ways more Christian than pagan reflects not the failure of Ammianus' project but the flexibility of a disappearing religious system. Like Julian's \textit{haruspices}, he could do no more than offer the synthesis of his knowledge to a hostile, ignorant or indifferent world, and hope that they would listen.

\textsuperscript{649} Exact dates for the composition of the \textit{Res Gestae} vary: it is usually taken to be either around 391, or later in the same decade (most recently: Matthews (1989) 17-27). Sacrifice was banned in 391 (BNP 374) but it might well have been prohibited by Constantine much earlier, temporarily in the event: see Barnes (1984) \& Errington (1988). It may be that Ammianus' strategy deliberately responds to, or anticipates, this extreme blow to the traditional forms of the \textit{cultus deorum}. 
Conclusions

Religion is a powerful theme in the three authors scrutinised here: indeed it might be said to be the backbone both of the historical record and the transaction of Roman identity. Virtually every major battle and a great many other events are explained with reference to the gods. Historiography, in its role of explanation and characterisation, appropriated a particular role to itself in its synthesis of the competing religious knowledges: these self-appointed spokesman for Rome’s religious tradition were not directly ‘informing the public’ of a central canon, thrashed out at some mysterious policy-making thinktank. These accounts are each individual yet deliberately placed at the centre of religious authority: this was, self-evidently to the audience, a construction. These historical accounts created and negotiated a normative position and aimed at procuring enough general assent to facilitate any excursions into expert or controversial areas. Ironically then, the supposedly sceptical historians might be the closest thing we have to the voice of the ‘state religion’, at least in terms of text; not a specific formulation (e.g. as Feeney argues for Horace’s _Carmen Saeculare_), but a general framework of practice and interpretation.650

No other genre represents a sustained attempt to produce this kind of formulation: its very persistence over time would seem to bear witness to the way that religious formulation was considered a central aspect of historiography. Indeed it is hard to identify another forum where these kinds of issues were explored in literature: where else is a full working religious system represented? Individual details could be represented in poetry or art but an overview of religion seems to be the peculiar prerogative of historiography. Three important authors are arguably enough for us to speak of a ‘tradition’, though the likes of Sallust have not entered into our discussion; and we

650 Once again these findings are implicitly anticipated by Feeney (1998); his formulation of the rare religious notice in Caesar’s historical narrative (_B. Civ. 3.105.3-6_) is that “the traditional state apparatus of the res publica is being superseded by the manifestation of divine favour for the spectacular charismatic individual.” (20)
should not think in terms of a linear progression. We have three individuals writing in very different times and we can only begin to speculate about what each would have made of the others' periods or what their contemporaries might have had to say. Scipio's *Res Gestae* (perhaps it would have been called *de felicitate mea*) would have made interesting reading: the differences between Tacitus' account and that of his neighbour might have been greater than those between Livy and Ammianus. Nonetheless, if we should be wary of assuming that their contemporaries would have placed emphasis on the same themes, we can reasonably assume that they would have couched their accounts in terms of negotiation with the gods and proper religious conduct.

Historiography has not suffered: for all those who might regret the intrusion of the 'irrational' into what were more or less 'sensible' accounts, there will be those who can appreciate just how sophisticated each of these authors can be. The texture of their accounts is all the richer for this exegesis. Virtually all of the aspects addressed easily merit further detailed study but that should be pursued in the context outlined here. The consequences for historiography of taking religion seriously should not be underestimated.

The consequences for our understanding of Roman religion are similarly wide-reaching. The last stronghold of scepticism cannot stand. Furthermore, previous discussions have not just been augmented: it might be said that a new angle has emerged. Rome was highly capable of articulating its past and its present in religious terms, of accounting for phenomena outside of the hallowed debates of the priests without descending into the banality of 'yes/no' answers. One might even muse that should a Roman have wished to offer advice on religion as a useful system, his chosen means would have been to write history. We should not push this observation too far: to do so would be to cut religion from its lifeblood, the daily life of the people of Rome as they accumulated their centuries of experience and reflection on Roman *mores* and their consequences.
Bibliography


Alfödi A. (1952) *A Conflict of Ideas in the Late Roman Empire* (tr. H. Mattingly: Oxford)


Aubrion E. (1985) *Rhétorique et histoire chex Tacite* (Metz)


Beard M. & Crawford M. (1985) *Rome in the Late Republic* (London)


Bleicken J. (1957a) ‘Oberpontifex und Pontifikalkollegium Eine Studie zur römischen Sakralverfassung’, *Hermes* 85, 345-66

Bleicken J. (1957b) ‘Kollisionen zwischen Sacrum und Publicum’, *Hermes* 85, 446-80


Bloch R. (1964) ‘Liberté et déterminisme dans la divination romaine’, *Hommages à Jean Bayet* (Collection Latomus 70: Brussels) 89-100


Blockley R. C. (1975) *Ammianus Marcellinus: A Study of his Historiography and Political Thought* (Collections *Latomus* 141: Brussels)


Bonfante L. W. (1964) ‘Emperor, God and Man in the Fourth Century: Julian the Apostle and Ammianus Marcellinus’, *PdP* 19, 401


Brakman C. (1928) ‘Tacitus quae de astrologia iudicaverit’, *Mnemosyne* 56, 70-78


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Briquel D.</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>'Tacite et l'haruspicine', in <em>Les écrivains et l'étruscan disciplina de Claude à Trajan</em> (Caesarodunum Suppl. 64), 27-37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown P.</td>
<td>1971</td>
<td><em>The World of Late Antiquity: from Marcus Aurelius to Muhammed</em> (London)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown P.</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td><em>The Making of Late Antiquity</em> (Cambridge Mass.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown P.</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td><em>Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity: Towards a Christian Empire</em> (Madison, Wisc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Browning R.</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td><em>The Emperor Julian</em> (London)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brunt P. A.</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>'On Historical Fragments and Epitomes', <em>CQ</em> 30, 487-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bucher G.</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>'The Annales Maximi in the Light of Roman Methods of Keeping Records', <em>AJAH</em> 12, 2-61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burkert W.</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td><em>Creation of the Sacred: Tracks of Biology in Early Religions</em> (Cambridge Mass.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buxton R.</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>'Blindness and Limits: Sophokles and the Logic of Myth', <em>JHS</em> 100, 22-37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameron A.</td>
<td>1964</td>
<td>'The Roman Friends of Ammianus', <em>JRS</em> 54, 15-28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameron A. D. E. &amp; A. M.</td>
<td>1964</td>
<td>'Christianity and Tradition in the Historiography of the Later Empire,' <em>CQ</em> n.s. 14, 316-328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capdeville G.</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td><em>Volcanus: recherches comparatistes sur les origines du culte de Vulcan</em> (BEFAR 288: Rome)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceausescu P.</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>'L'image d'Augusts chezTacite', <em>Klio</em> 56, 183-199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Champeaux J.</td>
<td>1967</td>
<td>'Forte' chez Tite-Live', <em>REL</em> 45, 363-89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Champeaux J.</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>'Religion romain et religion latine', <em>REL</em> 60, 71-104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Champeaux J.</td>
<td>1982-7</td>
<td><em>Recherches sur le culte de la Fortuna à Rome et dans le monde romain: des origines à la morte de César</em> (2 vols: Collection de l'Ecole française de Rome 44: Paris)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Champeaux J.</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>'Pontifes, haruspices et decemvirs. L'expiation des prodiges de 207', <em>REL</em> 74, 67-92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaplin J. D.</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td><em>Livy's Use of Exempla and the Lessons of the Past</em> (PhD, Princeton New Jersey)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chilver G. E. F.</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td><em>A Historical Commentary on Tacitus’ Histories I and II</em> (Oxford)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chilver G. E. F.</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td><em>A Historical Commentary on Tacitus’ Histories IV and V</em> (completed and revised by G. B. Townend, Oxford)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chuvin P.</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td><em>A Chronicle of the Last Pagans</em> (Cambridge Mass.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cizek E.</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>‘Sine ira et studio et l’image de l’homme chez Tacite’, <em>StudClas</em> 18, 103-113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cizek E.</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>‘La poétique de l’histoire chez Tacite’, <em>REL</em> 69, 136-46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohee P.</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>‘Instauratio Sacrorum’, <em>Hermes</em> 122.4, 451-468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohen A.</td>
<td>1986 (ed.)</td>
<td><em>Symbolising Boundaries: Identity and Diversity in British Cultures</em> (Manchester)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohn N.</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td><em>The Pursuit of the Millenium</em> (London)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cousin J.</td>
<td>1942</td>
<td>‘La crise religieuse de 207 av. J.-C.’, <em>RHR</em> 26, 15-41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cramer F. H.</td>
<td>1951</td>
<td>‘Expulsion of astrologers from ancient Rome’, <em>Class. &amp; Med</em>, 12, 9-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croke B. &amp; Harries J.</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td><em>Religious Conflict in Fourth Century Rome: A Documentary Study</em> (Sydney)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumont F.</td>
<td>1911</td>
<td><em>The Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism</em> (Chicago)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De Ste Croix G.E.M</td>
<td>1963</td>
<td>‘Why Were the Early Christians Persecuted?’, <em>Past and Present</em> 26, 6-38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Denyer N. (1985)  'The Case against Divination: An Examination of Cicero's *De Divinatione*', *PCPS* 31, 1-10


Develin R. (1983)  'Tacitus and Techniques of Insidious Suggestion', *Antichthon* 17, 64-95

Dickson S. K. & Plympton M. (1977)  'The Prodigy of The Fig-Tree: Tacitus' *Annales* 13.58', *RSC* 25, 183-86


Ducroix S. (1978)  'Histoire d'un portrait, portraits d'historiens: Tacite lecteur de Salluste', *MEFRA* 90 (1978), 293-315


Elliott T. G. (1983)  *Ammianus Marcellinus and Fourth Century History* (Sarasota Fla.)


Erkell H. (1952)  *Augustus, Felicitas, Fortuna: Lateinische Wortstudien* (Göteborg)

Fabre P. (1940)  'Minime Romano Sacro', *REA* 42, 419-424
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feeney D. C. (1992)</td>
<td>'Si licet et fas est: Ovid's Fasti and the Problem of Free Speech under the Principate', in A. Powell (ed.) Roman Poetry and Propaganda in the Age of Augustus (Bristol), 1-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feldherr A. M. (1998)</td>
<td>Spectacle and Society in Livy's History (Berkeley)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferguson J. (1970)</td>
<td>The Religions of the Roman Empire (London)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Festinger L., Riecken H. W. &amp; Schachter S. (1956)</td>
<td>When Prophecy Fails (Minneapolis)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishwick D. (1978)</td>
<td>'The Development of Provincial Ruler Worship in the Western Roman Empire', ANRW II 16.2, 1201-1253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fowler W.-F. (1911)</td>
<td>The Religious Experience of the Roman people from the Earliest Times to the Age of Augustus (The Gifford Lectures for 1909-1910; delivered at Edinburgh University: London)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank T. (1927)</td>
<td>'The Bacchanalian Cult of 186 B.C.', CQ 21, 128-132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fugier H. (1963)</td>
<td>Recherches sur l'expression du sacré dans la langue latine (Paris)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gagé J. (1955)</td>
<td>Apollo romain (Paris)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geertz C.</td>
<td>1966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gill C. &amp; Wiseman T. P.</td>
<td>1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gingras M. T.</td>
<td>1991-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ginsburg J.</td>
<td>1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodyear F. R. D.</td>
<td>1970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gordon R.</td>
<td>1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gordon R.</td>
<td>1980</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Grodzynski D. (1974) 'Superstitio', REA 76, 36-60
Hallett J. (1970) "'Over Troubled Waters": the Meaning of the Title Pontifex', TAPA 101, 219-227
Harries B. (1989) 'Causation and the Authority of the Poet in Ovid's Fasti', CQ 38, 164-185
Hellegouarc'h J. (1991) 'Le style de Tacite: bilan et perspectives', ANRW II 33.4, 2454-2538
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Henry E.</td>
<td>‘Virgilian Elements in Tacitus’ Historical Imagination’</td>
<td>1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herbert-Brown G.</td>
<td>Ovid and the Fasti: An Historical Study (Oxford)</td>
<td>1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heurgon J.</td>
<td>Trois études sur le ‘ver sacrum’ (Collection Latomus 26: Brussels)</td>
<td>1957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hickson F. V.</td>
<td>Roman Prayer Language: Livy and the Aeneid of Vergil (Stuttgart)</td>
<td>1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hornblower S. (ed.)</td>
<td>Greek Historiography (Oxford)</td>
<td>1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horsfall N.</td>
<td>‘Virgil and the Illusory Footnote’, PapLatLeedsSem 6, 49-64</td>
<td>1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horsfall N.</td>
<td>‘Mythological Invention and Poetic licentia’, in Graf (1993), 131-141</td>
<td>1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horton R. &amp; Finnegan R. (ed.)</td>
<td>Modes of Thought: Essays on Thinking in Western and Non-Western Societies (London)</td>
<td>1973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horton R.</td>
<td>Patterns of Thought in Africa and the West: Essays on Magic, Religion and Science (Cambridge)</td>
<td>1993a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunt E. D.</td>
<td>‘Christians and Christianity in Ammianus Marcellinus’, CQ 35, 186-200</td>
<td>1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunt L. (ed.)</td>
<td>The New Cultural History (Berkely, LA)</td>
<td>1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaeger M. K.</td>
<td>Livy’s Written Rome (Ann Arbor)</td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jameson F.</td>
<td>The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act (London)</td>
<td>1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janssen L. F.</td>
<td>‘‘Superstitio” and the persecution of the Christians’, Vigiliae Christianae 33, 131-159</td>
<td>1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kajanto I.</td>
<td>God and Fate in Livy (Turku)</td>
<td>1957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kajanto I.</td>
<td>‘Fortuna’ in ANRW II 17.1, 502-558</td>
<td>1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kapferer B.</td>
<td>The Feast of the Sorcerer (Chicago)</td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaster R. A.</td>
<td>Guardians of Language: the Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity (Berkeley &amp; London)</td>
<td>1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katz S.</td>
<td>The Epistemic Music of Rhetorica: Toward the Temporal Dimension of Affect in Reader Response and Writing (Carbondale &amp; Edwardsville)</td>
<td>1998</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Kenney E. J. (1983) 'The Key and the Cabinet: Ends and Means in Classical Literature', PCA 80, 7-18
Kraus C. S. (1994c) Livy Ab Urbe Condita Book VI (Cambridge)
Krauss F. B. (1930) An Interpretation of the Omens, Portents and Prodigies recorded by Livy, Tacitus & Suetonius (PhD, Philadelphia)
Krill R.M. (1978) 'Roman Paganism under the Antonines and Severans', ANRW II 16.1, 27-44
Kuhn T. (1962) The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (Chicago)
Lambrechts P. (1951) 'Cybèle; divinité étrangère ou nationale?' Bull. Soc. belge d'Anthrop. et de Préhist. 62, 44-60
Lambrechts P. (1952) 'Les fêtes phrygienne de Cybèle et d'Attis', BIBR 27, 141-170
Lane E. N. (1996) (ed.) Cybele, Attis and Related Cults: Essays in Memory of M. J. Vermaseren (Religions in the Greco-Roman World 131: Leiden)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Title and Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linderski J. (1985)</td>
<td>'The <em>Libri Reconditi’</em>, <em>HSCP</em> 89, 207-34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Author(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Luce T. J.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Luce T. J.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Luce T. J.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Luce T. J.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Luce T. J.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Luce T. J.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>MacBain B.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Macmullen R.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Macmullen R.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1877</td>
<td>Madvig J. N.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Maier H. O.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Marincola J.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Markus R. A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Martin R. H.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Martin R. H.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Martin R. H.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Martin W.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martindale C.</td>
<td>1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maslakov G.</td>
<td>1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthews J. F.</td>
<td>1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthews J. F.</td>
<td>1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCulloch H. Y.</td>
<td>1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McDonald M. F.</td>
<td>1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meulder M.</td>
<td>1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michel A.</td>
<td>1966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miles G. B.</td>
<td>1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miller J. F.</td>
<td>1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miller N. P.</td>
<td>1986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moles J.</td>
<td>1993</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Moxon I. S., Smart J. D. & Woodman A. J. (eds.) (1986)  Past Perspectives: Studies in Greek and Roman Historical Writing (Cambridge)


Myers K. S. (1994)  Ovid’s Causes: Cosmogony and Aetiology in the Metamorphoses (Michigan)


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Needham R.</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td><em>Belief, Language and Experience</em> (Oxford)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neri V.</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td><em>Ammiano e il cristianesimo</em> (Studi di storia Antica 11: Bologna)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newlands C.</td>
<td>1992a</td>
<td><em>Playing with Time: Ovid and the Fasti</em> (Ithaca &amp; NY)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newlands C.</td>
<td>1992b</td>
<td>‘Ovid’s Narrator in the Fasti’, <em>Arethusa</em> 25, 33-54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nock A. D.</td>
<td>1925</td>
<td>‘Studies in the Graeco-Roman Beliefs of the Empire’, <em>JHS</em> 45, 84-101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nock A. D.</td>
<td>1933</td>
<td><em>Conversion</em> (Oxford)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North J. A.</td>
<td>1968</td>
<td><em>The Interrelation of State Religion and Politics in Roman Public Life from the End of the Second Punic War to the Time of Sulla</em> (D. Phil, Oxford)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North J. A.</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>‘Praesens Divus’, (review of S. Weinstock Divus Julius), <em>JRS</em> 64, 171-177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North J. A.</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>‘Conservatism and Religious Change in Roman Religion’, <em>PBSR</em> 44, 1-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North J. A.</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>‘Religious Toleration in Republican Rome’, <em>PCPS</em> 25, 85-103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North J. A.</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>‘Novelty and Choice in Roman Religion’, <em>JRS</em> 70, 186-191 (review article)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North J. A.</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>‘Religion and Politics; from Republic to Principate’, <em>JRS</em> 76, 251-9 (review article)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North J. A.</td>
<td>1990a</td>
<td>‘Diviners and Divination at Rome’, in Beard &amp; North (1990), 49-71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North J. A.</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>‘Roman Reactions to Empire’, <em>Scripta Classica Israelica</em> 12, 127-138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ogilvie R. M.</td>
<td>1969</td>
<td><em>The Romans and their Gods in the Age of Augustus</em> (London)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ogilvie R. M.</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td><em>Roman Literature and Roman Society</em> (London)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Pigón J. (1990) ‘The Emperor Galba and the Four Virtues: A Note on Tac. *Hist. 1.49.3-4*, *RhM* 133, 370-74
Plass P. (1988)  
*Wit and the Writing of History: The Rhetoric of Historiography in Imperial Rome* (Madison)

Plass P. (1992)  

Pohlsander H.A. (1986)  
‘The Religious Policy of Decius’, *ANRW II* 16.3, 1826-1842

‘Les enterrements expiatoires à Rome’, *RPh* 58, 233-43

*Les donneurs de sacré: Le prêtre à Rome* (Paris, Belles Lettres)

Potter D. S. (1994)  
*Prophets and Emperors: Human and Divine Authority from Augustus to Theodosius* (Cambridge Mass.)

Pouillon J. (1982)  
‘Remarks on the Verb “To Believe”’, in Izard & Smith (1982), 1-8

Powell C. A. (1972)  
‘*Deum ira, hominum rabies*’, *Latomus* 31, 833-855

*Rituals & Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge)


Rawson E. (1971)  

Rawson E. (1978)  
‘Caesar, Etruria and the *Disciplina Etrusca*’, *JRS* 68, 132-152

‘Structuring Roman History: the Consular Year and the Roman Historical Tradition’, *Histos* 1


Riposati B. (1974)  

Rives J. B. (1995a)  
*Religion and Authority in Roman Carthage from Augustus to Constantine* (Oxford)

Rives J. B. (1995b)  
‘Human Sacrifice among Pagans and Christians’, *JRS* 85, 65-85

Roberts M. (1988)  
‘The Revolt of Boudicca (Tacitus *Annals* 14.29-39) and the Assertion of *Libertas* in Neronian Rome’, *AJP* 109, 118-32

Rogers G. (1990)  
*The Sacred Identity Of Ephesos: Foundation Myths of a Roman City* (London)

Rosenberger V. (1998)  
*Gezaehmte Goetter: Das Prodigienwesen in der römischen Republik* (Stuttgart)

Rosenstein N. S. (1990)  
*Imperatores Victi: Military Defeat and Aristocratic Competition in the Middle and Late Republic* (Berkeley)

Rossbach O. (1910)  
*T. Livi Periochae Omnium Librorum, Fragmenta Oxyrhynci Reperta, Iulii Obsequentis Prodigiorum Liber* (Leipzig)


Sauvage S. (1945) ‘Remotum A Notitia Vulgari’, *TAPA* 76, 157-165


Scheid J. (1987a) ‘Polytheism impossible; or, the empty gods: reasons behind a void in the history of Roman Religion’, *History and Anthropology* 3, 303-25
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scheid J.</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>‘Myth, cult and reality in Ovid’s Fasti’, <em>PCPS</em> n.s. 38, 118-131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheid J.</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>‘Graeco ritu. A typically Roman way of honouring the gods’, <em>HSCP</em> 97, 15-31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schilling R.</td>
<td>1979a</td>
<td><em>Rites, cultes, dieux de Rome</em> (Paris)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schofield M.</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>‘Cicero for and against Divination’, <em>JRS</em> 76, 47-65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott R. T.</td>
<td>1968</td>
<td><em>Religion and Philosophy in the Histories of Tacitus</em> (Rome)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seager R.</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td><em>Ammianus Marcellinus: Seven Studies in his Language and Thought</em> (Columbia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seguin R.</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>‘La religion de Scipion l’Africain’, <em>Latomus</em> 33, 3-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sfameni Gasparro G.</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td><em>Soteriology and Mystic Aspects in the Cult of Cybele and Attis</em> (EPRO 103: Leiden)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shatzman I.</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>‘Tacitean rumours’, <em>Latomus</em> 33, 549-78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shorter B.</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td><em>Susceptible to the Sacred: The Psychological Experience of Ritual</em> (London &amp; NY)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shotter D. C. A.</td>
<td>1968</td>
<td>‘Tacitus, Tiberius and Germanicus’, <em>Historia</em> 17, 194-214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Title/Reference</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinclair P. (1991a)</td>
<td>“These are my Temples in your Hearts” (Tac. Ann. 4.38.2), CP 86, 333-35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinclair P. (1992)</td>
<td>‘Deorum inurias dis curae (Tac. Ann. 1.73.4)’, Latomus 51, 397-403</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinclair P. (1995)</td>
<td>Tacitus the Sententious Historian: A Sociology of Rhetoric in Annals 1-6 (University Park, Penn.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith J. Z. (1978b)</td>
<td>Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown (Collected Essays: Chicago)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith W. C. (1979)</td>
<td>Faith and Belief (Princeton NJ)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solmsen F. (1979)</td>
<td>Isis among the Greeks and Romans (Cambridge Mass.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sperber D. (1975)</td>
<td>Rethinking Symbolism (Cambridge)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Storoni Mazzaloni L. (1976) *Empire without End* (New York)

Sullivan D. (1975) "Innuendo and the "weighted alternative", in Tacitus’, *CJ* 71, 312-26


Tierney J. J. (1947) ‘The Senatus Consultum de Bacchanalibus’, *PRIA* 51, 95-10


Torelli M. (1975) *Elogia Tarquiniensia* (Florence)


Versnel H. S. (1990-3) Inconsistencies in Greek and Roman Religion (2 vol.: Studies in Greek and Roman Religion 6: Leiden)


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walker B.</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td><em>The Annals of Tacitus: A Study in the Writing of History</em> (Manchester)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallace-Hadrill A.</td>
<td>1982a</td>
<td>‘Civilis Princeps: Between Citizen and King’, <em>JRS</em> 72, 32-48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallace-Hadrill A.</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td><em>Suetonius, The Scholar and his Caesars</em> (London)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walsh P. G.</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>‘Livy and Stoicism’, <em>AJP</em> 79, 355-75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walsh P. G.</td>
<td>1961</td>
<td><em>Livy: His Historical Aims and Methods</em> (Cambridge)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walsh P. G.</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td><em>Livy</em> (G &amp; R New Surveys in the Classics 8: Oxford)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walsh P. G.</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>‘Livy and the Aims of ‘historia’: An Analysis of the Third Decade’, <em>ANRW</em> II 30.2, 1058-74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wardman A.</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td><em>Religion and Statecraft among the Romans</em> (London)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Weinfeld M.             | 1986 | *The Organizational Pattern and the Penal Code of the Qumran Sect: A Comparison with Hu
dls and Religious Associations of the Hellenistic and Roman Age* (Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus 2: Fritzburg & Göttingen) |
| Weinstock S.            | 1971 | *Divus Julius* (Oxford)                                                                |
| West D. & Woodman A. J. | 1979 | (eds.) *Creative Imitation and Latin Literature* (Cambridge)                           |
| White H.                | 1987 | *The Content of the Form* (Baltimore/London)                                            |
| Whitehead D.            | 1979 | ‘Tacitus and the loaded alternative’, *Latomus* 38, 474-95                               |
| Wiedemann T. E. J.      | 1986 | ‘Between Men and Beasts: Barbarians in Ammianus Marcellinus’, in Moxon et al. (1986), 189-201 |
| Williams B.             | 1989 | ‘Reading Tacitus’ Tiberian Annals’, *Ramus* 18, 140-66                                    |
| Williams B.             | 1990 | ‘Setting out the Rules. Tacitus Annals 1 as programme’, *Classicum* 16, 3-10             |
| Williams M. H.          | 1989 | ‘The Expulsion of the Jews from Rome in AD 19’, *Latomus* 48, 765-8                       |
| Wiseman T. P.           | 1969 | *Clio's Cosmetics: Three Studies in Graeco-Roman Literature* (Leicester)                  |
| Wiseman T. P.           | 1987a| *Roman Studies. Literary and Historical* (Liverpool)                                    |
Woodcock E. C. (1939) Tacitus’ Annals XIV (London)
Ziolkowski A. (1992) The Temples of Mid-Republican Rome and Their Historical and Topographical Context (Rome)