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| 1. Alain Blomart RR | 24. Katarina Petrovićová RE |
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| 10. Anna-Sophie Haake HG (Zoom) | 33. Alessandro Stavru HG/RE |
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| 13. Patricia A. Johnston (chair by Zoom) | 36. László Takács ?? (Zoom) |
| 14. Aleksandra Krauze-Kołodziej* CR | 37. Stev Talarman HG/RE |
| 15. Loredana Lancini (Zoom?) * LA/CR | 38. Giulia Tampalini CG |
| 16. Nicola Luciani LA | 39. Anna J. Tóth RE/HG |
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| 22. Krzysztof Nawotka HG | 45. Miron Wolny RR |
| 23. Giulia Pedrucci CR (Zoom) | 35 papers, 22 live and 13 by zoom |

Key:

AG = Archaic Greece AR = Archaic Rome CG = Classical Greece CR = Classical reception
 HG = Hellenistic Greece LA = Late Antiquity RR = Roman Republic RE = Rome Principate

Participants from Italy (12), USA (6), Belgium (2), Canada (2), China (2), Czech Republic (2),
 France (4), Germany (2), Greece and Cyprus (2) Hungary (2), Poland (4), Romania, Spain.

“Prophetical Divinities, Peripheral Location? The Case of Aesculapius and Faunus in Rome (Tiber Island)”

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Two gods – Aesculapius and Faunus – who had temples located on Tiber Island, i.e. outside the sacred centre of Rome (*pomerium*) – shared various traits that linked them and could explain their peripheral location in Republican Rome. Both were of non-Roman (Greek) origin and had an 'intermediate' personality (halfway between gods and humans in the case of Aesculapius, and halfway between humans and savagery in the case of Faunus). Moreover, they communicated in a similar way, namely through prophecy, be it *incubatio* and dreams in the case of Aesculapius' followers, or prediction in the case of Faunus.

It seems that this oracular mode of pre-rational communication –in addition to other primitive or ancient traits associated with these two divinities– would help to explain their topographical distance from Rome's city centre. The peripheral location could therefore be explained by an anthropological reason: the rational Roman identity would not allow irrational practices in the sacred centre of the Urbs.

We will also analyze whether or not this relationship between prophecy and the periphery, in the case of these two gods, can be generalized to other Roman divinities (Apollo, and why?), and whether it is specific to the Roman world or comes from the Greek world (Pan and Asclepios).

Sortes Virgilianae: A Cold Case Worth Reopening?

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Known only from the *Historia Augusta*, a notoriously ambiguous and mysterious source, the *sortes virgilianae* sounds well grounded: divination by *sortes* is a well-known mantic practice, and Virgil's authority as a prophet was well established in late antiquity. Since the 20th century, scholarly debate has focused on understanding if the anonymous author of the *Historia Augusta* made a reference to a real practice, or if it was part of a complex play of allusion, focusing on the philological aspect of the text in both cases. The absence of medieval witnesses leaves us in the dark, and no consensus has been reached.

Alas, the wall of plausible cannot be breached until this day, nor it can be easily defended. *Sortes virgilianae* occupies the uneasy situation of being perpetually an indemonstrable, but potentially true, prediction from the least trustworthy source we have at our disposal.

We ask is this a cold case worth re-opening? We will try to answer this question in two ways: building on recent studies on metanarrative languages in late antiquity literature, taking into consideration the more recent studies about private divination practices in antiquity and mostly how drawing lots practices and bibliomancy has been depicted in Greco-Roman sources.

The Prophecy of St. Severinus to Odoacer

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The *Life of Severinus* by Eugippius, composed around the first decade of the 6th century AD, despite its framing as a hagiographic work and the potentially dangerous ideological overlaps

between biographer and subject, provides valuable insights into the transformations of the lives of the inhabitants of Noricum towards the end of the 5th century. The territory had been subjected to attacks first by the Huns, then by the Rugii, the Alamanni, and the Thuringians. St. Severinus, the Apostle of Noricum, became a point of reference for the population. The fame of his miracles grew so much that some barbarians heading to Italy stopped by to meet him. Among them was Odoacer. The encounter between the saint and the future *rex Italiae* is carefully described by Eugippius. Odoacer, very tall in stature, had to bend down to avoid touching the roof of Severinus's cell with his head. He was informed by the *vir Dei* about his glorious future (*a viro Dei gloriosum se fore cognovit*). At the end of the conversation, the Saint would have dismissed him with these words: *Vade ad Italiam, vade, vilissimis nunc pellibus coopertus, sed multis cito plurima largiturus*. In this paper, I will examine the prophecy of St. Severinus to Odoacer, which had particular success in the ancient world: it was in fact taken up by the Anonymus Valesianus II and, with slight variations, also by Paul the Deacon, who commented that the truth of the prophecy would soon be proven. Indeed, a few years later, Odoacer *totius Italiae insuper et Urbis usus est potestate*.

The Prophetic Head of Orpheus - Tracing the Iconographic Evolution from Medieval to Modern Art

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The presentation will examine the iconographic representations of the prophetic head of Orpheus, spanning from medieval times to modern art. While rooted in ancient Greek mythology, the motif of Orpheus's prophetic head has captivated artists and audiences across centuries, inspiring diverse artistic interpretations.

Drawing upon both ancient written sources and iconographic representations of the motif and its significance which has already been thoroughly researched (especially Robert Cook, 1917; Deonna 1925; Schmidt 1972; Nagy 1990; Faraone 2004), this study explores the multifaceted journey of the prophetic theme associated with Orpheus's head into medieval and modern tradition. Referring to ancient written and iconographic sources, the presentation analyzes the passage of this motif and its significance in the art of subsequent centuries. Furthermore, it investigates the transmission of the Orphic prophecy motif into various art forms, including miniatures, sculpture and paintings, from the ancient to modern periods. It explores how artists have reinterpreted the mythological narrative, infusing it with their unique perspectives and cultural contexts.

By tracing the trajectory of the prophetic head of Orpheus across centuries, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the enduring power of prophecy in shaping cultural imagination. It highlights the significance of iconographic representations in conveying timeless themes and underscores the ongoing relevance of ancient motifs in modern artistic discourse.

Anaxagoras' Predictions

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Many Greco-Roman sources recount a prediction of a falling meteorite made by the philosopher Anaxagoras. According to Plutarch, the fall of a stone from the sky near Aegospotami (467/468 BC) showed an omen of the defeat suffered by the Athenians at the hands of Lysander, commander of the Spartan fleet, but Anaxagoras predicted such a phenomenon because of his

astronomical knowledge (Lys. 12). Diogenes Laertius (2.10) and Philostratus (VA 1.2) report other predictions attributed to the same philosopher, such as that of a thunderstorm and the collapse of a house. Pliny the Elder *HN* 2.59.149, also emphasizes Anaxagoras' extraordinary divinatory ability. Therefore, the focus of this paper is to investigate the perspective conveyed to us by the Greek literary tradition on the wisdom of Anaxagoras, who appears as a sage, an astronomer, and a prophet at the same time.

Dreams and portents in Cassius Dio's Roman History

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Zoom only

Cassius Dio wrote in Greek a Roman History in 80 books from the origins up to his own epoch, the Alexander Severus' reign. Faithful to the Roman tradition, he makes mention of the portents, omens and dreams which foretold important events for simple fellows, like himself, as well as for top men. Several typical examples, borrowed to the end of the Republic and to the imperial period, will be studied.

As Dio is stoic, he believes in the truthfulness of these signs but he has doubts about their possible warding off, as the traditional Roman religion required.

A Mid-Empire Night's Dream: Some Considerations on the Value of Dreams, Signs, and Prophecies in Imperial Succession

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Antonio Romano

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Prophecy in the Roman Empire had a very strong influence: Lucian of Samosata, in his work "Alexander the False Prophet," pilloried the entire process of the production and the diffusion of these oracles. The ones given to Marcus Sedatius Severianus, governor of Cappadocia, at the time of the Parthian Wars in the mid-second century, sum up the religiosity and the naivety of Roman people. This is not to say that the Romans did not take the issue seriously: Septimius Severus, learned the news of Pertinax's death, took care to create and spread stories and prophecies to prepare for his rise to power: at Apamea in Syria, Zeus Belos, by quoting Homer, promised the empire to him, while he was still a private citizen (Dio 79.8.5). In other words, his march was not only military, but religious and cultural: at the height of the civil wars, a veritable corpus, made up of dreams, signs and prophecies, accompanied the name of Severus throughout the provinces (Dio 75.3). Their meaning and references may reveal the image that the emperor wanted to give of himself even before he became emperor. Likely, they were mentioned in his *Autobiography* and, especially, by Cassius Dio in his work on Septimius Severus' dreams and signs (*βιβλίον τι περὶ τῶν ὄνειράτων καὶ τῶν σημείων*). This practice is certainly not limited to the Severans and seems to involve women who, through their dreams or as protagonists of male dreams, announced and prepared imperial successions. Take for instance Basilina's dream (Zon. 13.10.2-3) in which she seemed to bear Achilles. Finally, one can investigate the creation and dissemination by pretenders to the throne of these private stories, whether dreams or prophecies, and their reception by historians. So, one might question the prophecies that in Dio's narration often mark the *adventus* of the various emperors, their value for the Severan historian and their relation to the historian's time, in search of patterns and trends. Secondly, one might wonder about the *omina* and the dreams that in the imperial age prepared imperial successions, dwelling on the female element as author of the dream or element of the dream itself.

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Xenophon and Oracles

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History-making oracles occur frequently and prominently in Xenophon's works: e.g., in context of the selection of Agesilaus as Spartan king (Xen. *Hell.* 3.3.3), the Lydian Croesus discussing his communication with the Delphic oracle after having been conquered by Cyrus the Great (Xen. *Cyr.* 7.2.15), or Xenophon himself asking the Delphic Apollo for joining the campaign of Cyrus the Younger (Xen. *Anab.* 3.1.5–7). These and other oracles mentioned by our polymath have been mainly studied through the lens of religious practice of the (late) classical period and/or in relation to Xenophon's "Socratized" view of religion. Rarely, the question of the narrative function and systematic use within Xenophon's whole work has been addressed. In my paper, I shall show the degree to which Xenophon employs oracles as important and constitutive but not sufficient part of comprehensive leadership and discuss the extent to which they become utilized in his model of decision-making and historical development.

How the Dead Alexander Shaped Future History ... Some Considerations on Dreams as Instruments for the Political and Literary Communication of Decision-Making in Early Hellenistic Monarchy.

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In certain dreams of several Hellenistic diadochoi and rulers, a vision of Alexander the Great gives the dreamer more or less enigmatic instructions for upcoming decisions or predicts his future fate. Historiographical literature provides a whole series of accounts of such dream narratives: Alexander is said to have appeared to Eumenes (Plut. *Eum.* 6.8–12, 13.4–6), Demetrius I Poliorketes (Plut. *Dem.* 29.1), Pyrrhus (Plut. *Pyr.* 11.4), Antiochus I (Lucian, *Pro Lapsu inter Salutandum* 9.734) and Seleucus I (Diod. 19.90.4). In most cases, these visions preceded crucial events that had a particular influence on the course of history and on the struggle of Hellenistic rulers for supremacy in the former empire of Alexander.

What is the content, function and impact of these specific dream narratives? What significance do the narratives have, which are very similar in many respects and even appear to be topical, but, on the other hand, differ in a number of key aspects? How do the rulers react to these dreams, what influence do these dreams have on their decision-making and the subsequent reflection and evaluation of these decisions? What role does Alexander play as the protagonist of the dream and at the same time as a political reference for the dreamers in their struggle for supremacy?

The aim of my paper is, on the one hand, to evaluate these dream narratives in their socio-cultural and political context to better understand how are the Alexander dreams used to legitimize and delegitimize the kings' decisions and their consequences. On the other hand, they will also be evaluated in terms of their narrative and literary significance in order to see how they were used as literary instruments to present political developments to a later reading audience.

***Aeneid* 4.622-26 Literary Prophecy as Janus Figure Chronology**

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On Dido's funeral pyre in *Aeneid* 4.622-26, from Carthage the dying queen curses the departed Aeneas and his eventually Roman descendants with a literary Janus figure that in a sense looks both ways into the future from a double past at the time of Virgil's writing:

*Tum vos, Tyrii, stirpem et genus omne futurum
exercete odiis, cinerique haec mittite nostro
munera. nullus amor populis nec foedera sunt.
exoriare, aliquis nostris ex ossibus ultor;
qui face Dardanio ferroque sequare colonos...*

"Then you Tyrians, persecute with hate his stock and all the race to come, and to my dust offer this tribute! Let no love or treaty unite the nations! Arise from my ashes, unknown avenger, to harass the Trojan settlers with fire and sword..."

While not all would agree with interpreting this passage as a Janus Figure, a figurative device that looks in two directions, Virgil places Dido in the distant past looking forward to the Punic Wars and Hannibal specifically ("unknown avenger to harass...with fire and sword" but from what is Dido's future and Virgil's present in the Augustan Age after Hannibal. Thus, Virgil has created a clever complicated chronological sequence in this passage looking in multiple temporal directions. Whether or not it is truly prophetic other than in a literary mode, it is certainly intended as a prophetic curse by Dido in Virgil's epic.

Signs, Portents, and Oracles that surrounding the Early Life of Alexander the Great

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The foreboding signs and portents, as well as oracles that surrounded Alexander's early life into his early twenties, when he began his campaign into Asia, presage his glorious future. The omens appear in the pages of Plutarch, Arrian, Curtius Rufus, and recur in Suetonius *Div. Aug.* Even before birth, Alexander's conception occurred amid wondrous signs and portents, which functioned as a kind of oracles. Philip dreamt he was imprinting his young bride's (Olympias-Myrtale) womb with a seal having the semblance of a lion. Supposedly, on the night Alexander was born, the temple of Artemis in Ephesus burned down. Eagles and snakes also marked as divine signs his birth. And Philip received news of three feats on the same night: his heir was born, his general Parmenio defeated the Illyrians (or Thracians), and his chariot team won at the Olympic games. All these early portents or *omina* functioned as markers of the extraordinary destiny of the newly born baby boy. In this light, the taming of Bucephalus (his battle stallion of his future wars of conquest) by the 12-year old Alexander was also seen as a portent of his future invincibility as a warrior and conqueror.

Numerous additional portents and signs accompanied the early stages of Alexander's expedition into Asia (roughly from Alexander's assuming the Macedonian royal power in the summer of the year 335 BC until the battle of Issus in November 333 BC), marking him apart as the warrior king whose destiny was to replace the dominion of the Persian "King of kings" and to become "King of the four corners of the world" instead of the Achaemenids. This study aims to unveil and unravel the web of Macedonian and Hellenistic- Roman propaganda that surrounded

Alexander's figure through the ages, as well as to understand a few essential features of the ancient Greek and Macedonian mythological-religious mentality.

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The Prophetic Head of Orpheus - Tracing the Iconographic Evolution from Medieval to Modern Art

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Sortes Virgilianae: A Cold Case Worth Reopening?

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See Lorenzo Boragno for the abstract

Rome's Classical heritage as a prophetic catalyst of civic identity and competition in the contest of Justinian's *renovatio imperii*

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Following Justinian's military conquest of Italy, different social groups employed prophecies related to Roman artefacts and sculptures often associated with the mythical past of the city in order to pursue different social and political agendas. The paper will primarily explore such theme through some well-known passages from Procopius' *Historíai*:

The first one reports how a castrated ox had climbed on top of the statue of a bronze bull attributed to Phidias in the Forum Pacis. This had prompted a passing Etruscan soothsayer to foretell the imminent conquest of Rome by a eunuch, implicitly identified by Procopius as the Byzantine general Narses.

The second passage deals instead with different accounts describing the legendary origin and the fate of the Palladium, each one popular with a different social and ethnic group. Despite the possible identification of a statue of Athena preserved in Rome as the Palladium by the Latin speaking population, the Greek community, on the basis of a Sibylline oracle, claimed Aeneas himself had been instructed to carry the idol back to Troy, which was possibly fulfilled when Constantine transported the statue to Constantinople as the last successor of Troy.

A third episode regards the consultation of the Sibylline books by Roman senators during the first Gothic siege of Rome in 537. The senators interpreted the oracle as predicting the lift of the siege by July 537 and the parallel rise of a new king in Rome but the account underlines the failure associated with this interpretation.

Statues and artefacts serve as important catalysts of civic identity among different groups, in order to reframe the mythical and political relationship between Byzantium and Rome, whether characterized as essential to the survival of the Empire through a link to Rome's Classical heritage

(as foretold by a Sibylline prophecy) or through a strong connection to Rome's population and specific local religious artefacts (such as the statue of Janus or Aeneas' ship, both in Procopius).

The Dream of Constantine, the Meeting with Pope Sylvester I, the End of Paganism and the Closing of the Capitoline Mithraeum in the Actus Sylvestri.

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One of the most famous premonitory dreams is that the emperor Constantine had before the battle of the Milvian Bridge, in which he saw the Greek inscription ἐν τούτῳ νίκα (lat. *In hoc signo vinces*) next to a cross. This dream predicted not only Constantine's victory over his rival Maxentius but also that of Christianity over Paganism according to the subsequent events. Less well known is another dream of Constantine centered on the same theme of the victory of Christianity over Paganism, which we believe conveys a reference to the end of the cult of Mithras and the closure of the Capitoline Mithraeum. The premonitory dream recurs in the legend of St. Sylvester (the oldest version dates back to the 4th century) the famous pope to whom the conversion of the Emperor is attributed. In this second dream, Constantine, sick with leprosy, is visited by Saints Peter and Paul who invite him to turn to Sylvester for healing. The Pope not only heals and converts him, but also performs a number of miracles in Rome such as resurrecting a bull killed by ungodly priests and locking a dragon that haunted the city in its lair.

Living in a Virgilian Prophecy”

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Virgil's *Eclogue 4* consists of a prophecy by the Cumaean Sibyl that forecasted what was truly happening during the consulate of C. Asinius Pollio, in 40 BC. Virgilian poetry instilled confidence in the readers that they were experiencing a life such as that described by the Sibyl. Virgil speaks of the Golden Age that will be inaugurated by the first man born in the new era, a divine baby. The audience was supposed to believe that things were changing and that a new generation was coming, thanks to the blessing of the cosmic god of order, Apollo. Virgil was the most popular and esteemed poet of the Augustan Age, and his work became the usual reading in every educational path during the centuries to come, up to the present time. Virgil himself was considered (especially by Christians) a reliable prophet. If his contemporaries believed in the content of the famous Sibylline prophecy, we could expect that artistic works recalled it. Agrippa built the *porticus Argonautarum*, and in front of Temple of Apollo Palatinus, many statues recalled the myth of Danaus becoming king of Argos thanks to Apollo. Agrippa was the new Jason and Octavian the new Danaus. The plastic arts depicted shepherds and bovines, sheep, and goats pasturing and resting peacefully. The glorious early story of the Greek world seemed to be reenacted in the contemporary Roman world, exactly as Virgil said. Poets were inspired and inspired others to recall the early story of Latium and Italy, and this was a means to interpret the present. Virgil said that a new historical cycle was beginning in which the ancient events would recur. I do not know how much and to what extent the prophetic verses were used to interpret the present, but some clues can be recognized, which suggest that this actually happened. Some later emperors exploited the same idea of *renovatio temporis, felicitas temporis*, and *aurea aetas* in order to legitimate their power and gain a broader approval.

Prophetic Characters in the *Ab Urbe Condita* or Prophecy as a Narrative Device

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While prophecies in the Greco-Roman world were first and foremost divine predictions, they also had a prominent place in ancient literature. Some very specific prophecies (such as that made to Croesus by the Pythia) became very famous. They found their way into the literary world, and were the subject of many more or less elaborate accounts. This seems to be the starting point for the narrative process of prophetic proclamation, in which a character more or less explicitly inspired by a divinity warns mankind of the misfortunes that are likely to befall them as a result of their actions (or, on the contrary, their inaction). The aim of this paper is to analyze the use of such a narrative device in Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita*, and to assess its scope and conditions of use.

Prophecies of Dying Virgins

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Philochorus (FGrH 328 F 105) — on his account about the war between Athens and Eleusis — attests that the Delphic oracle demanded that the city of Athens would be saved only if a virgin (and daughter of a king) sacrificed herself. Then, the heroine Aglauros — daughter of the autochthonous Athenian king Kekrops — jumped from the cliffs of the Acropolis, heroically sacrificing herself in order to save the city. As a reward for her brave act, she received cult on the Acropolis and was connected with the Athenian ephebes, who were taking their military oath at her sanctuary.

Similar to Philochorus' testimony, Euripides (Erechtheus F 370.63-70), attests that during the war between Athens and Eleusis, the Delphic oracle demanded that the city of Athens would be saved only if king Erechtheus and queen Praxithea sacrificed their own daughters. Similar to Aglauros, the daughters of Erechtheus self-sacrificed themselves for the salvation of the city, an act that resulted to the foundation of their sanctuary, known as the Hyakinthion.

In my paper, by employing a holistic approach — taking into consideration the literary, epigraphic, iconographic and topographic evidence, along with the historical and ideological context of the classical period, I will examine the context of the self-sacrifice of Aglauros and the Erechtheids. The ultimate goal of my research is to relate the act of self-suicide for the salvation of the city to Gender and Identity Studies, further extending the research scope to Anthropological and Sociological studies.

Finding the Sibyl in the Abbey: The Sibylla Fresco in Sant'Angelo in Formis

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Università della Campania Luigi Vanvitelli

This presentation will be given *in situ*. Nestled amidst the serene countryside of Italy lies the ancient Abbey of Sant'Angelo in Formis, a place steeped in history and mystery. Within its hallowed walls resides a relic of profound significance—the Sibyll fresco. Legend whispers tales of a Sibyll, an enigmatic prophetess, who once roamed the lands all over the world, foretelling the future with cryptic clarity. Her prophecies, revered and feared, found their way into the hands of the faithful, guiding kings and commoners alike through the ebb and flow of time. According to legend, one of these seers foretold the coming of Christ, thus intertwining polytheistic prophecy

with Christian theology. Within the tranquil confines of the abbey, her presence seems still palpable. For centuries, the Sibyll in the Abbey of Sant'Angelo in Formis has remained a beacon of mystery and enlightenment, her presence a reminder of the timeless quest for understanding in an ever-changing world.

Apollo of Didyma: Prophesizing for Kings and Emperors

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In the Hellenistic and Roman ages, Apollo's Oracle at Didyma fully belonged to the polis of Miletos. At that time Didyma gained an excellent reputation as an infallible oracle, together with Delphi and Klaros belonging to "the big three" of Apollonian prophecy. Ancient and Byzantine authors bring information on Didyma's oracles to Alexander the Great, Seleukos I, Nikomedes II, Diocletian and Licinius. Based on indirect evidence it can be argued that Didyma prophesized for Augustus, Trajan, and likely for Julian too. The most stunning was the oracle predicting accession of Trajan some twenty years ahead of the event. The Late Antique oracles belong in the period of ideological wars between pagans and Christians, the wars in which Didyma was deeply embroiled. Oracles for kings and Emperors correlate with periods of strong local activity attested by the epigraphic curve for Miletos. Sometimes, Apollo quite obviously acted on behalf of his city and shrine, proclaiming important monarchs the sons of gods or predicting their rise to power, well ahead of accession. We know of situations in which an oracle set off a chain of events leading to material and political gains for Miletos, although not always it was a simple exchange of god's words for profit to his city. We can be quite sure, nevertheless, that Didyma's prophesizing for kings and emperors contributed enormously

The Transformation of the Greek Pythia in Relation to Divination and Female Sexuality by Church Fathers

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If we take into account the 'traditional' representation of the Pythia, she gives oracles in a frenzied and confused state. Yet we have several ancient Greek sources that offer quite different images of her behavior and oracular expertise. The idea that the Pythia, while prophesying, acted like a 'hysterical' woman, more or less like a shaman or a possessed person, comes from the relevant Roman and Christian sources. In particular, Origen and John Chrysostom claimed that she behaves as an epileptic or as a woman with uterus afflictions because she was possessed by a demonic spirit. However, they represented Judeo-Christian divination as clear and calm because, in their view, it comes directly from God. On the one hand, the way that the Pythia screams is clearly sexually connotative, while on the other hand, she is supposed to be virginal (and hysteria has often been considered as the typical disease affecting women who do not have sex). The crucial aspect that this chapter will investigate is the association between divination and gynecology, attempting to illuminate and enlighten biases and distortions associated with female sexuality in the ancient world. **Zoom only**

... Doceas Iter et Sacra Ostia Pandas : The Open Mouth of Literary Prophecy

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The paper aims to explore forms and possibilities of divination and prediction as a literary device in epic and narrative, based on Anchises' revelation of the future of Aeneas' descendants, during Aeneas' trip the underworld, *Aen.* 6.752-887. What is particularly noteworthy about Virgil's prediction is that it is not a factual prediction, but an *ex eventu* prediction (i.e. "false"), at a point when the event outcome is already obvious and given. Thus, this prediction cannot have the power to change history, but it gains the power – and makes full use of it – to confirm the idea of the influence of the gods on history in order to fulfill the goals of the history of Rome, i.e. to confirm also the prosperous development of the plot of the epic.

In sharp contrast to Virgil's foretelling of Rome's future political importance, Lucan depicts a magical practice that is supposed to predict the fate of Pompey and his army, but which brings the disillusionment of a forced prophecy: a condemnation of a civil war that transcended all limits and extended even into the underworld. Instead of the promise of *imperium sine fine* of *Aen.* 1.279, the questioner faces the reality of *discordia* and *impia arma*, *Luc. Phars.* 6.780 ff. All the circumstances of the depraved oracle foreshadow its content: the description of the hopeless place, the characterization of the Thessalian witch Erichtho, and the impiety of the necromantic ritual. Lucan's approach is also innovative in combining epic and philosophical "prediction" (presented as a mythic description), using a corpse from the battlefield in a clear allusion to the conclusion of Plato's *Republic* 10.614b-621d. Linking the contrast of Virgil's myth of the great future of the great nation to the contrast to Plato's philosophical exhortation of a just life rewarded by harmony with the cosmic order, the prediction of irreconcilable civil conflict takes on the dimension of philosophical chaos.

This raises also the possibilities of using the combination of epic and philosophical predictions in narrative.

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A Mid-Empire Night's Dream: Some Considerations on the Value of Dreams, Signs, and Prophecies in Imperial Succession

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From Panic to Victory: Marcius Vates and Roman Destiny

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In the aftermath of the defeat at Cannae, panic spread throughout Rome. Magicians and seers began offering spells, talismans, and prophesying about the future of Rome. Therefore, the praetor *urbanus et peregrinus* ordered the surrender of all prediction and sacrifice texts held by private people and banned the celebration of non-traditional rituals. Among the confiscated texts, two *carmina* written by a member of the gens Marcia were found: one predicted the battle of Cannae and foretold its unfortunate outcome, and the other ordered the celebration of sacred games

in honor of Apollo. To confirm, the Senate ordered the consultation of the Sibylline books regarding the opportunity to celebrate the games; upon receiving the positive opinion of the *decemviri sacris faciundis*, the Senate decreed to do what the *carmen* of Marcius *vates* prescribed. This was an isolated episode: Rome had no state oracle, and prophetic possession had no positive connotation. Yet, the *carmen* of Marcius Vates was decisive in favoring victory in the Second Punic War and contributed to changing the course of history.

The 'Wooden Wall' Prophecy: Morphology and Critique

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One of the most well-known but also controversial oracles in Greek history is the so-called "wooden wall" prophecy. In Herodotus' account, facing the impending invasion led by Xerxes, Athenians consulted the Oracle of Delphi, whose enigmatic response was that Athens would find safety behind "wooden walls." While many initially interpreted "wooden walls" as referring to the city's physical fortifications, Themistocles proposed a different interpretation. He believed that the wooden walls symbolized the Athenian navy, suggesting that Athens should seek refuge behind their powerful fleet rather than rely solely on their physical walls. Themistocles convinced his fellow Athenians to abandon the city and instead rely on their naval strength to confront the Persian threat head-on. His foresight proved invaluable. At the Battle of Salamis in 480 BCE, the Persian fleet, led by Xerxes, faced off against the smaller yet more maneuverable Greek ships. Themistocles' interpretation of the Wooden Wall Prophecy not only saved Athens but also ensured the survival of Greek civilization. Nevertheless, the story presents many obscure points and controversial aspects, particularly concerning the form and length of the prophecy, and the year in which it was uttered. By examining our sources, we will try to contribute to the topic of the authenticity of this famous history-changing prophecy.

The Heyday of the Oracle of Glykon Neos Asklepios, or Making History with Oracles

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The Antonine Era (AD 98-192) witnessed an astonishing revival of oracular activity in the Roman Empire. After a lengthy period of decline and diminishing political significance, great and ancient oracles such as such as Didyma and Klaros in Asia Minor experienced a revitalization, offering renewed and expanded functions that once again brought oracular divination and its centers into widespread prominence. This era also witnessed the rise of entirely new oracular establishments, such as the Oracle of Glykon, the New Asklepios, located in the town of Abonouteichos in Paphlagonia. The Oracle of Glykon, which was instituted following the epiphany of the god there during the middle of the second century, reached its high-water mark during the decades that followed, having an unquestionable impact on the Roman world at that time. This paper examines the Oracle of Glykon at the height of its power, focusing on its history-making pronouncements that influenced Roman public life and the affairs of the Roman state. It explores the scope of Glykon's oracle and the power of its prophecies during its golden age in the late second century. By making clear the Oracle of Glykon's historical relevance and its role as a flourishing new oracular center in the Roman Empire, this paper sheds light on a pivotal period in the history of ancient Greek and Roman divination

Gyges, Croesus, Cyrus, and Three Oracles about the End of the Mermnadai

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Croesus famously consulted oracles to determine whether to make war on Persia in 547/46 BCE. But Herodotus tells us he misunderstood the oracular response, due to a mix of hubris and fate. And yet, was this the oracle that brought doom to the Lydian Empire? The defeat of Croesus is not just the affirmation of the divine knowledge of the Delphic oracle because the king does not interpret the oracle correctly. Rather, his defeat is the affirmation of the divine knowledge of the oracle over the course of the history of his dynasty. From the opposite perspective, we can ask not only why Croesus lost, but why Cyrus won. His victory is based, according to other sources, on a different divine oracle that has nothing to do with Croesus or dynasty of the Mermnadai. The goal of all these oracles and prophecies will be the return and rise of the legitimate rulers of the world; these oracles not only predict the future over long spans of time but are the overarching cause for the history that unfolds.

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Daimonion in Xenophon: on Gods, Daemons, and Socrates' "Daemonic Being"

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In Xenophon's works, the *daimonion* is clearly distinct from the divine (*theos/theion*). It appears that *daimonion* has a single and distinctive sense which encompasses both the seemingly special Socratic phenomenon and the other cases in which the word appears. Both in Socrates and in non-Socratic cases, the *daimonion* is an authoritative voice characteristic of Socrates but not unique to him. In fact, no one is "dearer to the gods" (*theophiles*) than Socrates, and this inherently implies two things:

- 1) no one can rely on the leadership of the *daimonion* more than Socrates
- 2) others also have a relationship with the *daimonion*, albeit not as close as Socrates'.

Aristodemus and Euthydemus think it visited them, and others do also (if just once), such as Agesilaus, Lycomedes, and the Spartan Assembly. The *daimonion* is a divine agency responsible for a sudden change of course occurring in a specific action or development. In most cases, such a change concerns a specific individual: it is the divine which in key moments intrudes into human life, changing it for good. It should be noted that the *daimonion* not only provides counsel, but also intervenes to stop a specific action – sometimes in the interest of the person who experiences it (Socrates), sometimes to their detriment (Lycomedes). Such intrusion does not depend on the will of humans, since it cannot be induced by ritual practices. It is not foreseeable, but unexpected; unlike that what happens in prophecy and divination, where the signs of the god(s) appear as the consequence of specific mantic practices. While interaction with the god(s) is possible through specific actions (divination *et al.*), interaction with the *daimonion* does not depend on such actions, for the *daimonion* intervenes in human affairs unexpectedly, without being prompted by humans.

It appears that in the works of Xenophon the *daimonion* is not the divine *per se*; rather, it is a daemonic entity through which god(s) manifest themselves to humans, intervening in their thoughts and actions. Distinguishing the “gods” from the “daemonic being” and identifying their specific authoritative functions, as well as the relationship that links them together, is necessary to understand Xenophon’s view on religious matters.

The Oracle of Delphi and the Transfer of Orestes’ Relics

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Herodotus recounts the episode of the transfer of the relics of Orestes from Tegea to Sparta during his digression on the history of Sparta. He dates it from the middle of the 6th century, when Sparta was trying to subdue the neighboring region of Arcadia and encountered effective resistance from the city of Tegea. Indeed, the Tegeates had just captured a large number of Spartan warriors after an important victory over Sparta. The Spartans reacted as every Greek city did in such a situation: they sent ambassadors to Delphi to ask the god how they could defeat the Tegeates. Apollo had ordered them to obtain the bones of Orestes so that he could be an “assistant” against Tegea. Directions on how to find the hero’s bones were given in the form of a riddle. A Spartan went to Tegea, solved the riddle and secretly dug up these bones of gigantic size. Then he transferred them to Sparta where they were buried in the agora. Through the legendary figure of Orestes, Sparta found a place in the heroic past of Greece, sung by Homer. But through the heroic cult of Orestes, Sparta justified its position at the head of the Peloponnese, since it was Orestes who inherited the unified kingdom of Agamemnon and Menelaus. The transfer of the bones of Orestes from Tegea after a Delphic oracle was the result of political implications which represented Sparta, despite its Dorian identity, as the legitimate heir of the Predorian and Achaean past of Laconia, so as to ensure the goodwill of non-Dorian peoples of the Peloponnese (in particular, the Arcadians). It is interesting to mention that the evolution of Orestes’ cult in Sparta led Pindar to characterize him as a “Laconian hero by birth.”

Someday, You Too Shall Taste Power: Prophecies and False Prophecies Presaging Roman Emperors (Augustus to Trajan Decius, 63 BC to AD 250)

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Almost all of the first dozen Roman emperors observed or supposedly were the subject of omens, portents, horoscopes, sooth, or prophecies predicting their future power and status as an emperor, which often weighed heavily in their decisions to make a bid for power and “guaranteed” their destiny to rule. In a world where people were superstitious, many contenders harboring regal aspirations deliberately copied great predecessors as far back as the Roman kings and Alexander the Great to display their divine right to rule Rome. Other claimants to the throne deviated from preset patterns with innovative *omina* and prophecies, some of which proved successful. Historians suspect that many of the reports of omens and prophecies employed by successful emperors as proof of divine sanction were invented after the fact to justify the rise to power and provide legitimacy. Whether true or false, certain patterns emerge when all of these *omina* are considered together, and in many cases the precedent and line of descent of a prophecy

can be established. The *omina* that accompanied the bids for power of many of the pretenders are lost from the sometimes scanty records, but we can easily believe they followed pre-established patters and often repeated more successful precedents of the past, in some cases, the distant past.

Aspects of the Oracular in Plutarch's Thought

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This paper will examine aspects of the oracular in Plutarch's philosophical thought and trace them in his portrayal of events in the Lives and elsewhere in the *Moralia*. I show that Plutarch's attitudes towards the role of fate and divination, while theoretically grounded in his Platonism, give due deference to the limits of logical inquiry while acknowledging that the fantastical and astonishing can form the starting point for philosophical examinations. The paper hopes to extend previous research on this topic by evaluating further cases from Plutarch's writings. For example, Philip Stadter has offered a compelling case-study of Plutarch's ambivalence and restraint on evaluating the role of τύχη in Plutarch's *Marius* and *Sulla*. Elsa Simonetti has elaborated on this apparent ambivalence, stressing the Pythia as a "neither rational nor completely irrational" locus in which both μῦθος and ἱστορία ideally merge (assuming the oracular consultation is undertaken at the proper time, or καιρός), which proves to be a useful, though ultimately imperfect source of knowledge for mortals. Taking these and related approaches as a starting point, I hope to enrich the picture of Plutarch's original, fascinating and often ambivalent stance toward the oracular.

Human Sacrifices Prescribed by Seers before Battles in Euripides' 'Sacrificial' Dramas and in Plutarch's *Themistocles*

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The term σφάγια, according to a traditional categorization of the different types of animal sacrifices, designates a ritual killing not followed by a banquet: unlike the Olympian θυσίαι, the victims weren't to be eaten but their blood and the fumes from their bodies were put to use. In relation to a military context, this kind of ritual homicide was perpetrated by a commander before battles to obtain good omens. In Greek literature and particularly in some of the extant euripidean dramas that deal with the request of a blood sacrifice in a situation of crisis – whether it's related to the martial world (Heracleidae, Iphigenia in Aulis) or an aim to revert to a status quo ante (Phoenissae) – the ritual killing of human beings is prescribed by mantic figures capable of conveying the divine will. The 'common thread' that kind of connects the above-mentioned tragedies is the pattern followed by the sacrificial narrative: the crisis turns into a divine demand and consequently a young man or a virgin, that happens to have the same characteristic mentioned in the oracle, offer themselves voluntarily to solve the στάσις. On the other hand, the singularity of the only 'historical' sacrifice that apparently happened in the fifth century (reported in Plutarch's Life of Themistocles) lies in its ambiguous nature. In the killing of three Persian captives at the hands of the homonymous Greek commander before the battle of Salamis the 'pattern' is indeed enriched with new elements and perverted: the characteristics of the victims are the same as in Euripides (royal blood, beautiful appearance...), but, apart from the absence of an expression of free will, there's an abnormal substitution between an animal σφάγιον and human ritual killing (the

exact opposite of what happens in Iphigenia's myth). In fact, two portents – the surge of the fire and a sneeze from a participant – lead the μόντις to ask for a measure that left Themistocles horrified and that, at the time, was often marked as a 'barbarous' act. Therefore, this oracle, regardless of its historical reliability, together with Themistocles' reaction and the surrounding context seem to emphasize Greek unfamiliarity with ritual slaughter of human beings.

Speaking Statues as Instruments of Politics

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According to Eusebius' account a certain Theotecnus, curator of Antioch during the reign of Maximinus Daia (AD 310-13), created a statue of Zeus that gave prophecies inciting hostility against Christians. It is almost certain that this statue was able to speak in some way. The techniques employed in creating such statues were integral parts of the Neoplatonic theurgy, and the belief in them persisted long after the prohibition of pagan cults. While statues capable of conveying divine will through signs (weeping, moving, bleeding etc.) have been known in Greek and Roman religions since ancient times, statues that actually spoke were unknown. Sources from the imperial age, however, give accounts of statues behaving more actively with increasing frequency, and this trend culminated in statues that spoke in a human voice. This change reveals a shift in the "common sense" of this age: hearing a speaking statue, neither the crowd, nor the intellectual elite suspected deception anymore; the debate was about the divine or demonic nature of the phenomenon. In my paper, I will examine the traditions upon which Theotecnus could have relied in creating his statue and explore the influences behind the transformation of thinking about statues in late antiquity.

Mapping the Spread of Artemis Ephesia's Worship in the Ancient Mediterranean World

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The cities in the ancient Mediterranean world often adopted the worship of a new god or goddess based on a prophecy or an oracle. For instance, Cybele was introduced to Rome through an oracle, and the worship of Dionysus was brought to Athens by Pegasus of Eleuthera, thanks to a prophecy. In Sparta, the veneration of Eileithyia was initiated after being instructed to do so by Pythia of Delphi. Two oracles are known to have helped spread the cult of Artemis Ephesia. Aristarche received a message from the goddess in dream, telling her to copy her sacred objects and join the Phocaeans, journey with them, and build a temple for the goddess in their new city. Xenophon, following a prophecy, built a copy of the Artemision along the river Selinus in Skillous. According to Pausanias, Artemis of Ephesus was the most revered goddess in every city, but it is unclear what the author means by this widespread honor. Did this reverence exist in all cities of the Roman Empire or just the polis of the Aegean? How did the cult of Artemis Ephesia spread and what role did oracles play in it? Generally, how can we assess the prevalence of an ancient cult, and from what sources? In my paper, I try to answer these questions.

Immo vates intellegitur: The Tiber as Prophet in Roman Mythistory

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Pliny the Elder *NH* 3.55 closes his lengthy account of the river Tiber, its properties and tributaries with a statement that has puzzled modern scholars: “But in truth it is looked upon as a prophet of warning, its rise being always construed rather as a call to religion than as a threat of disaster.” All of the major episodes of Roman history and mythology (hence “mythistory”, up to the principate of Tiberius) involving the Tiber can be seen as prophetic. The most frequent fluvial phenomenon that was interpreted as an omen by religious specialists and common people alike was flooding. Minor floods of the Tiber occurred regularly in the ancient period; major floods every 15 or 20 years and required interpretation (See G.S. Aldrete, *Floods of the Tiber in Ancient Rome*, 2007). Livy mentions an early Tiber inundation in the foundation myth of Rome when father Tiberinus carries the basket with Romulus and Remus in it safely to the she-wolf at the Lupercal. In Ennius, Aeneas appears to his daughter Ilia, the twins’ mother, to tell her that her fortune will rise from the river, a very ambiguous prophecy, since he drowned in another river, Numicus. Another important episode arises when Cicero writes of Caesar’s ambitious plans to divert the Tiber around the Vatican hill in order to spare the city from flooding and to open the Campus Martius to new construction projects. Notably, Cicero sarcastically compares Caesar to a giant, referring both to his hubris and to the tradition that the name of the river changed from Albula (female) to Tiberis (male) because a violent giant died in it. Again, in January of 27 BC, on the very night when the Young Caesar assumes the name, Augustus, the augurs pronounce that the rise of the Tiber portends the future greatness of the *princeps*. Finally, a huge flood coincides with the accession of Tiberius, who refuses to let the senators consult the Sibylline books for an interpretation. Tiberius thus denies the traditional role of the Tiber as a prophet, while exploiting the similarity between his own name and that of the river.

The Oracles of Themistocles and Cato.

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The prophecies presented to the Athenians by the Delphic Oracle in 480 BC and to the Romans by Cato in 56 BC changed the course of history. The Battle of Salamis led to the Athenian Empire and the restoration of Ptolemy Auletes led to the Roman conquest of Egypt. Historians have often seen these prophecies as tricks used by Themistocles and Cato to promote their own policies (Parke 1939, Fontenrose 1978 (Themistocles); Siani-Davies 1997, Osgood 2019 on Cato). Cicero also thought Cato’s Sibylline oracle was a religious trick (*religionis calumnia*). These politicians were, however, citizens of countries that believed deeply in oracles and they had to respect the beliefs and expectations of their people (Maurizio 1997).

The Delphic oracle declared that Athens would be protected by an invulnerable wooden wall. Older people thought it meant building a wooden wall on the Acropolis, Themistocles argued that it meant fighting in wooden ships at Salamis, but the oracle-experts believed it warned of a naval defeat there. The only valid interpretation was the one adopted by the believing citizens, and luckily they followed the explanation of Themistocles.

The Romans were more careful in handling oracles. Access to the Sibylline Books was strictly controlled by the Senate, and a prophecy was revealed to the general public only when it pleased the Senate (Diels 1890, Satterfield 2011). Cato violated this principle by publicizing an oracle to block the restoration of Ptolemy Auletes. His plan backfired when the king was later

restored by Gabinius. The Roman People, however, genuinely believed in the oracle and saw the flood of 54 BC as a sign that the gods were angry with Gabinius and with Rome.

Whether access to oracles was open or restricted, they could not be completely controlled by political leaders, because their power was based on the belief of ordinary people, who ultimately decided what counted as a real oracle.

Prophecy, Power, and Resistance in the Hellenistic World

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Scholarly literature on resistance and revolt against imperial hegemony and its concomitant ideologies, and against what might be called ‘state authority’ in antiquity continues to grow. Prophecy served as a form of resistance, both violent and non-violent, to imperial and ‘state’ authority in several disparate contexts. First, I will examine how and why Chaldean priests in Babylon employed prophecy on several occasions, albeit unsuccessfully, to resist the encroachment of Macedonian power in Babylonia in the Fourth and Third Centuries BCE. I will then go on to analyze the role of prophecy as a lightning rod for resistance to oppressive slave owners in the Sicilian Servile Wars (135-132 BCE and 105-102 BCE). Finally, I will undertake a close reading of prophecy in the New Testament and other early Christian literature as a form of non-violent resistance employed by the early Christian movements against often violent persecution at the hands of both synagogue authorities and the Roman imperial state. It is my hypothesis, apropos of James Scott’s landmark study, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (1985), that recourse to prophecy and oracles was a common form of popular resistance and local insurrection employed by the weak and marginalized when confronted by overwhelming disparities in coercive power. It is also my contention that, whether successful or not, such resistance might not have occurred at all were it not for the assurances, solidarity, and sense of purpose that prophetic utterances provided.

A Misleading Oracle in Claudian *De bello Getico* 544-57: The Announcement to Alaric of his Victory over Rome

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Despite Plutarch, oracles did not disappear in Late Antiquity, and some are still in the tradition of deceptive oracles. Such is the case, in the Latin poet Claudian's *De Bello Getico* (402), a historical epic celebrating the Roman victory of Pollentia over Alaric's Goths in AD 402, of the oracle that announces to King Alaric that he will penetrate Italy as far as the City. This oracle is misleading insofar as *Urbs* does not refer to the city of Rome, as Alaric believes, but to a river of the same name, today the Orba, near which, it is said, the Roman chieftain Stilicho will defeat him. We will take a closer look at this oracle, asking in particular whether it is Claudian’s invention, and examining how it is presented and the significance it may have.

***Ater Serpens* – Symbolism of Hannibal’s Prophetic Vision in Silius Italicus’ *Pun.* 3.185-213.**

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Hannibal's dream from 218 BC, described in Livy 21 and Silius Italicus' *Punica* at the start of the Carthaginian expedition to Italy, features a terrifying serpent (*ater serpens*) of great size that brings destruction, trailing the Carthaginian army. When an unexpected noise caused Hannibal to turn back, he saw the scene of destruction (the consequences of war) unfolding behind him. The *ater serpens* opened its jaws and, raising its head, was level with the rainy mountains, accompanied by the shrill noise of the sky being torn apart, bringing rain and hail. Terrible phenomena end the apocalyptic vision. This unearthly dream has precedents and parallels in many other ancient texts: Cicero De Div. 1.49; Val. Max. 1.7 ext 1; Liv. 21.22.8; Flor. 1.22.9; Zon. 8.22. The author of this paper will try to juxtapose the symbol of the monstrous serpent (*ater serpens*) contained in Silius Italicus with the broader context of the symbolism of the serpent in ancient literature, and at the same time try to connect this revelation with Hannibal's violation of divine prohibition. In his paper, the author will argue that Silius Italicus used a wildcard symbol to indicate the special significance of this part of Second Punic War, and in particular to emphasize the importance of the vision for Hannibal's later fate. The prophetic revelation that Hannibal experienced, however, was possible because the commander broke the ban of the gods (he looked back even though he was forbidden to do so – like Orpheus). In this illicit act lies the exposition of his ὕβρις. According to a Homeric interpretation, the offense based on pride (ὕβρις) must be stigmatized. Moreover, the fact that Hannibal fails to respect the gods may be an indication that the Carthaginian commander considered himself an equal to them. Ultimately, therefore, the ambiguous symbol of the serpent described in the *Punica* is a premise that should be considered together with the data on euhemerism and other elements that form the religious basis of Hannibal's image.