Engendering the Future: Divination and the Construction of Gender in the Late Roman Republic

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Chris Mowat (PGR)
School of History, Classics and Archaeology
Newcastle University

Abstract

This study brings together constructions of divination and gender in the Late Roman Republic, and argues how each influenced the performative nature of the other. Divination is usually understood as a standardised process of interpreting varying signs, through which a person can gain access to knowledge otherwise unattainable, often relating to the future. To construct divination as performative considers how the different elements of divinatory traditions, including, but not limited to, the identity of the divinatory actors, are the very factors that confirm the correctness of the interpretation and thus the reality of divination. This thesis argues how the performativity of gender informed, but was also informed by, the performativity of divination in the Roman world, in a reciprocal and inseparable relationship.

The first chapter focuses on Cicero's *De Diuinatione*, a mid-first century BC text that presents two sets of opposing views for and against divination. My reading shows how gender is axiomatic to – but never explicit in – these opposing viewpoints. Four chapters follow, each taking a specific divinatory tradition as a case study, and exploring constructions of gender across them: the Sibylline Books, as written prophetic guides for the State; the construction of the birth of an intersex child as a prodigy under the Republic, and the ritual response it garnered; the sacrificial specialism of individual diviners, specifically through the story of a woman named Martha; and, finally, the construction of prophetic dreaming in the Roman Republic.

Although the chapters in this thesis advance different arguments, taken as a whole they enhance the understanding of the relationship between gender and divination in the Roman world. Roman women – and men – succeeded in being able to construct a performative identity within a diverse body of divinatory traditions, enabling them to communicate with the supernatural and assert a distinctive relationship with it.

Acknowledgements

Towards the end of my time writing this thesis on divinatory traditions, a newspaper-style horoscope told me: "very few people achieve success single-handedly; even the most visionary, proactive and determined person needs some support from others along the way". Regardless of "belief" in such a tradition, it is certainly the case that never a truer word was spoken. This PhD has been a journey, some or all of which has been shared with so many people, from so many backgrounds, to whom I would like to extend my deepest gratitude.

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A Note on the Texts

For ease of reading, I have used the standard Anglicised versions of Roman, and particularly Greek names, so Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, not Titus Livius and Dionysios of Halikarnassos. Where relevant the titles of works are given in their standard Latin derivation, as they are given in the Oxford Classical Dictionary (with an English translation in brackets when necessary); similarly, abbreviations follow the Oxford Classical Dictionary. All Greek and Latin texts, unless otherwise stated, are derived from the Loeb Classical Library series editions. Finally, all translations, unless otherwise stated, are my own.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Engendering the Future

Cassandra. Pythia. Sibyl(s). Tiresias (and, by extension, Manto). When one thinks of individual diviners in the ancient world, there is a heavy Greek bent to the answers. Examples can be found in Rome's mythic past – Tanaquil, for one – but even these often have a foreign flavour to them: in Tanaquil's case she is explicitly portrayed as an Etruscan who comes to Rome.[1] One line of reasoning for this is that, as John North once noted, there appears to be a lack of named individuals in Roman divination: though the Romans had extensive and, to some extent, embedded divinatory traditions underpinning their political and religious systems, emphasis was placed on collegial positions and offices, rather than on any particular person.[2] But these traditions, positions and offices, as impersonal as they seem, had specific (though often implicit) identity-based rules signalling who was "allowed" to practise, and to be successful at, divination. It is these identity markers that make up the individuals we can and do find in Roman divination.

But with these diviners, what is also unusual for listing individuals (real or mythical) in the ancient world is that one also finds a bent towards women. This is not exclusive, and of course a number of men can be found in the surviving traditions: Calchas and Mopsus on the Greek side; Tages and even Romulus, as augur, on the Italic. But despite the fact that this is not (on the surface) a gender exclusive area – and indeed perhaps because of this fact – there are very specifically gendered rules that form divinatory traditions.

In this thesis, then, I am aiming to uncover those rules of gender, as they stood in the late Roman Republic. Who was *allowed* to divine? How did their gender role play into their presumed ability as well as the sanctioning of their practice? In what ways did gender play an implicit, if important part in the construction and performance of the divinatory traditions of the period?

Before we can start to answer some of these questions, there are a number of concepts that, though fluid, must be given at least a working definition at the outset of this thesis. The

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[1] Cf. e.g. Liv. 1.34.4-6 for her marriage to Lucumo, a fellow native of the Tarquinii, and her plan for them to migrate from their homeland.

[2] North 2000a, 93; cf. also Scheid 1993; 2013; Rüpke 2011. This is not to say that individuals cannot be found, but the political and religious systems hindered those individuals from acting completely in their own name: Davies 2004, 65-7; Belayche 2013; Rüpke 2013a; 2013b esp. 16. For the idea of embedded religion, see Kindt 2012.

following three sections will each develop the two areas that are the focus of this thesis, divination and gender, culminating in a discussion of the theory of performativity and its use for understanding the role of both these topics in the ancient world. The final two sections of the introduction will turn to the thesis proper and to the opening case study of Fabia, the Vestal Virgin, who will provide us with some initial thoughts on the interaction of gender and divinatory practice in the late Roman Republic, and become a touchstone for the other case studies throughout this thesis.

1.2 Divining Definitions

Both divination and gender are subject areas rife with the idea of binaries. These come out in various forms, from feminine/masculine and sex/gender to religion/magic and truth/deception.[3] These can be useful to understand the different ways people and actions were seen and the responses they garnered in the ancient world (as much as the modern). The problem with binaries, however, is that their imposition hides the fact that there is always a lot of grey in the middle, and things can often include elements of both sides – or be party to neither. In this introduction, I will be addressing some of the issues that surround these; I am not proposing that we do away with categorisation completely – that would only serve to create even more issues – but that we understand binaries as much more open. By this I mean understanding that, no matter how strongly set a binary may appear, either in contemporary understanding and scholarship or in the ancient sources themselves, there are always points between and outside of the apparent integers, and even (sometimes) fluid movement across them is possible. Definitions and categories are only useful as far as they define that which fits within them, with the understanding that things can and do go beyond.

The first, and perhaps most accessible fluid concept to approach is the temporal boundaries I have placed on this work. "The late Roman Republic" as a periodisation is deliberately vague: it is a time when most of our literature from the (still broadly defined) Republican period comes, and a time on which the study of intellectual history, and, by extension, religious history, is often focused, partly thanks to the extensive survival of Cicero's writing.[4] But the

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[3] Lyons 1997 has highlighted male/female and mortal/divine as being two of the most important distinctions, at least for the Greeks. See also Bremmer 1998, esp. 24-31, for a history of the opposition of "sacred" and "profane" in the history of religion.

[4] Cicero's centrality to the world of the late Republic, despite his atypicality, is, unfortunately, inescapable. As Elizabeth Rawson once wrote: "Above all, [the study of] intellectual life in the Ciceronian Age without Cicero himself must be Hamlet without the Prince" (1985, vii).

divisions become less stable when we consider the extent to which the developments of that age are informed by the earlier Republican period, and in turn, as Harriet Flower has demonstrated, the "late Republic" as a periodisation is defined and shaped by the preoccupations and biases of Imperial authors such as Livy and Appian looking at a political structure defined by the fact that it ended.[5] I focus on the period broadly comprising the latter half of the second century BCE to the first half of the first century BCE, understood as "the late Republic", then, but with the understanding that texts of and informed by both earlier and later periods are central to my arguments, and our understanding of this period.

As Greg Woolf has commented, the Republic (and particularly the late Republic) is also a central period for the study of ancient religion due to the way the centrality of the city has been the focus of scholarship on "*polis*-religion".[6] Although the city of Rome as an institution in and of itself does play a role in much of the divinatory traditions discussed through this thesis, it is important to remember that it is still possible to look beyond this framework, to see the diviners and other social actors affecting and affected by the divinatory traditions.

This leads us to the question of what precisely divination is. Cicero opens his treatise *De Diuinatione* ("*On Divination*", henceforth *Div.*) by defining the practice as "foreknowledge and the practice of discovering future events".[7] There is an echo of this in contemporary popular understanding, which focuses on the idea of divination being about revealing the future. Yet, whilst this is unquestionably an aspect of the subject, this is a very narrow classification that does not fully encompass divination in either Roman or comparative practices. Taking into account Cicero's definition, but also encompassing popular understandings, both ancient and contemporary (as will be seen throughout this thesis) my own working definition of divination is that, broadly put, it is *a standardised process of understanding signs and their interpretation, by which a person – or society – is or appears to be able to gain access to knowledge otherwise unattainable, concerning matters or events in the past, the present and/or the future*.[8] This definition deliberately sees divination as a human activity. The "signs" may be actively sought, such as in the practice of extispicy, or

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[5] Flower 2010, esp. 3-17.
[6] Woolf 2009, esp. 239-241. The *polis*-religion model was first outlined by Sourvinou-Inwood in 1990, reprinted as Sourvinou-Inwood 2000a; cf. also Sourvinou-Inwood 2000b. For criticisims of this model, in the study of both Greek and Roman religious practice, see Woolf 2003; Kindt 2009; Eidinow 2011.
[7] Cic. *Div.* 1.1: *praesensionem et scientiam rerum futurarum*. For a thorough discussion of this text and its author's place in the construction of divination in the late Roman Republic, see chapter **2: Marcus**.
[8] There have been many attempts to provide definitions and comparative models for both classical and contemporary divination: cf. e.g. Blacker and Loewe 1980, 1; Peek 1991, 2; Nissinen 2010, 341; Raphals 2013, 1; Trampedach 2015, 13; Volk 2017, 331-2; Ogden 2017, 1. For an in-depth definition, and discussion of the constituting elements of comparative divinatory traditions, see Rüpke 2013b.

they may passively come to a person, such as with prophetic dreams, but it still must be a human agent who follows the process of interpreting and understanding the sign and the knowledge it provides.[9] Thus, even with North's proviso that there was no place for individuals (or even objects as agents) in ancient accounts of Roman divination, personhood and identity must remain central to our understanding.

It is frequently noted, with another echo from Cicero, that almost all cultures, ancient and modern, practise some form of divination.[10] This is often placed on one side or the other of the binary of "religion" and "magic", a binary even more problematic than some of the others we will encounter.[11] The use of both of these terms within the historical context of the Greco-Roman world has come under fire recently, as well as the idea of there being a hard and fast dividing line between them.[12] Furthermore, one only has to look as far as economic projections and weather forecasts on a contemporary Western news programme to realise that "divination" does not have to come under either label.[13]

The parallel of a contemporary weather forecast is worth lingering on for a moment, as it can provide us with some food for thought, particularly in the areas of identity, authority and divinatory competition. The person that we see on a television programme commands our attention, and we generally assume what they say to be accurate (even if it does not always turn out to be correct). This assumption comes from the constructed identity of that person: we understand from the way they are presented and from the fact that the news corporation has hired them to provide the viewers with that information that they must be a qualified meteorologist (or at least the public face of a team of qualified meteorologists), someone who has learned the skill of interpreting weather patterns and predicting what will happen based on methods we as viewers do not necessarily understand. News programmes do not, however, have a monopoly on the future, and the weather highlights for us another angle in divinatory

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[9] Contra Hunt 2016, 199-223, who considers trees as active agents in arboreal prodigies. Whilst it is true that trees can, in this sense, be seen as actors, this argument ignores the role that, first and foremost, the Senate plays in dictating whether an event really counts as a prodigy or not. For more on prodigies and actors, see chapter **4: Callo/n**.

[10] Cic. *Div*. 1.2: "I know of no people, neither so humane and learned, nor so savage and barbarous, who do not hold that the future is indicated, and that those indications can be perceived and foretold by certain people (*gentem quidem nullam uideo neque tam humanam atque doctam neque immanem atque barbaram, quae non significari futura et a quibusdam intellegi praedicique posse censeat*). For modern renderings of this refrain, cf. e.g. Blacker and Loewe 1980, 1; Johnston 2008, 2; Rüpke 2014, 9.

[11] Cf. e.g. Graf 1999, 297; Johnston 2005, 7-8; 2008, 113.

[12] Smith 2004, 13-27 (who also includes "science" in the firing line); Gordon and Marco Simón 2011, 5-14; Nongbri 2008; 2013.

[13] A meteorologist may not consider themself a "diviner" *in sensu stricto*, but nevertheless uses a standardised process of interpreting weather patterns in order to know (or guess) the weather of the future; see Fine 2007 for a discussion of how meteorology as a "public science" that deals in futures.

practices: the place of superstition. In the UK, at least, there is an "old wives' tale" that cows lie down in the field before it rains.[14] No scientific basis, or even observational data corroborates it, yet it still captures imagination, and this old wives' tale has yet to be dispelled.[15] For example, when I was growing up, the kitchen window of my parents' house overlooked a farmer's field. If anyone noticed the cows in that field all suddenly lying down, a joke might be made, but a half-serious second thought would be given to any washing out on the line.[16] We might, on the surface, think that there is just one channel open to us for attempting to navigate the weather of the day ahead, but in fact a range of divinatory options present themselves to us as authorities in which we place our trust.

Returning to the late Roman Republic, though the weather does indeed still play a role, divination is more specifically seen as relating to the gods, and thus the whole process can be viewed as a form of communication.[17] This is either in the sense of an appeal to the gods to send a message confirming their approval or consent to an action, or the reception – and interpretation – of a symbol or message of divine origin that had importance for an individual or the state. In the first way, the communication could, for example take the form of inspection of entrails (extispicy) or the flight of birds (ornithomancy or augury), or the seeking of oracular messages. The second, spontaneous form of divination might be a vision experienced in a dream, or the witnessing of an unnatural portent, such as a bleeding statue or a talking cow.

Another way this subject is dichotomised, over which much scholarly ink has been spilled, is the practice of "technical" divination, as opposed to "natural" divination. Deriving from the Greek divisions of μαντικὴ τεχνική and μαντικὴ ἄτεχνος respectively, these have been variously translated into English as "technical", "inductive" or "artificial" for the former, and "natural", "intuitive" or "inspired" for the latter, with a host of similar synonyms in other modern languages.[18] Simply put, technical divination can be understood as following established and widely accepted methods of interpretation in order to reveal the message of a sign in a skilled way that can be taught; an example might be the interpretation of livers in

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[14] The phrase "old wives' tale", in both contemporary and Roman constructions, and the construction of superstition more generally, see chapter **2.6 Nothing but an Old Wives' Tale?**

[15] Even the Royal Meteorological Society, though doubtful, does not dismiss the theory wholesale: theWeather Club 2010, [https://theweatherclub.org.uk/node/150, accessed 30/06/17].

[16] My parents, of course, still give more credence to the meteorologist on the news program, and more still to the evidence of their own eyes turned towards the skies.

[17] Rüpke 2015, esp. 355-7. For religion as communication more broadly, see also Rüpke 2007a; 2007b, 2014, 118-119.

[18] For ease of reference, throughout this thesis I will consistently apply the terminology and translation of "technical" and "natural" respectively.

sacrificial divination.[19] This is contrasted with natural divination, whereby the sign comes to the diviner, often in an altered state such as a frenzy or sleep, which cannot necessarily be validated or understood by another person; by way of example we might think of prophetic dreaming.[20] This is a dichotomy that goes back as far as Plato, and his discussion of the concept of madness in the *Phaedrus*. Here, Plato distinguishes between the divination practices of the priestesses at Delphi and Dodona, who "whilst mad, have performed many splendid rites for Greece, both privately and publicly"[21] from the practice of ornithomancers, conducted by presumably rational actors. The former of these, he claims, is superior.[22] Of course, it must be remembered that this was a facet of Plato's broader endeavour to place the rational, reflective philosopher as superior to all others, in this case both the prophet, who is not in their own mind, and the ornithomancer, inferior too to their inspired counterpart.[23] This distinction, though not the judgement, is brought out explicitly by Cicero in *Div.*, or, more precisely, by the character of Quintus, who argues for divination. It is one of the few elements of Quintus' argument that can be said to have been straightaway accepted by his brother Marcus, the character arguing against divination in the dialogue.[24] From there, each brother uses this to structure the argument differently: Quintus frequently shifts his attention between the two, albeit placing a much heavier emphasis on natural divination, whereas Marcus neatly contests technical divination for the majority of his argument, before a short digression, and ending with a much briefer attack on the natural.

The distinction, however, is not necessarily as simple as that, and many divinatory activities do not simply fit into one category or the other. Michael A. Flower has commented that "we should rather think in terms of a spectrum or a range of activities".[25] But, even a spectrum, by its very nature, reasserts the opposition between the integers at either end. In fact, even these two seemingly opposite categories are not mutually exclusive. Let us take the example of Artemidorus, a professional dream-interpreter of the Second Sophistic period. His *Oneirocritica* ("*Interpretation of Dreams*") is an attempt to provide an encyclopaedia of tried and tested interpretations of the symbols in prophetic dreams. If you can learn the skill of

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[19] For a discussion of a sacrificial diviner, see chapter **5: Martha**.

[20] For a discussion of prophetic dreaming, see chapter **6: Calpurnia**.

[21] Plat. *Phdr.* 244a-b: ἥ τε γὰρ δὴ ἐν Δελφοῖς προφῆτις αἵ τ'ἐν Δωδώνῃ ἱέρειαι μανεῖσαι μὲν πολλὰ δὴ καὶ καλὰ ἰδίᾳ τε καὶ δημοσίᾳ τὴν Ἑλλάδα εἰργάσαντο...

[22] This distinction, and the superiority of madness, is drawn upon again in other aspects of Plato's works, for example: *Ti.* 71e-72b; *Resp.* IX 571c-572c. Cf. Dodds 1951, 64-101; Trampedach 2003, 59-60; Morgan 2010.

[23] Raphals 2013, 61.

[24] 1.11; 2.26; Wardle (2006, 126) is keen to trace this dichotomy to being a decidedly Greek concept. This text, and its ramifications for understanding Roman divinatory practice will be analysed in detail in chapter **2: Marcus**.

[25] 2008, 90.

dream-interpretation from such a book, surely it should be considered technical rather than, as it usually is considered, natural? This question is in fact what drives Artemidorus' intellectual project, regardless of how successful he actually is in facilitating a perspective shift: his work demonstrates that, whether it is a binary or a spectrum, a tradition does not necessarily have to occupy a single position.[26] Overall, then, these categories are perhaps useful as far as individual sources suggest and utilise them, but we should not devote too much time to finding their boundaries and placing each tradition into one side or the other.

It is important to remember, as Jörg Rüpke and Federico Santangelo point out, that "neither during the Republic nor during the imperial period did 'public priests' enjoy a monopoly on religious knowledge and innovation".[27] Like the contemporary weather forecasts, there was a broad range of options available to individuals in search of religious and particularly divinatory knowledge. The plurality of religious and divinatory options can also be understood through the theoretical structure usually referred to as the "marketplace" model.[28] Under this model, different divinatory traditions can be seen to be competing for an individual's custom, served by a range of cult, temple and freelance diviners. Writing in the second century CE, Artemidorus provides an intriguing list of diviners and their methods that could be found in the marketplace, such as physiognomists, dice-diviners and cheese-diviners.[29] As this model suggests, a person could choose which of these to visit, perhaps based on particular needs, recommendations or the diviner's skill at hawking their wares. Esther Eidinow has criticised this model's focus on competition, demonstrating how, in the Greek world at least, different sanctuaries and individual seers can be seen to support one another in mutually validating others' divinatory authority.[30] The model is also reductive in thinking about official, or public divination at Rome, where the system, though mutable over time, had set procedures and responses to signs. The augural college would not have seen themselves "in competition", or even in the same profession as Artemidorus' cheese-diviners.[31] Indeed, even Quintus Cicero, at the end of *Div.*, though he argues positively for

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[26] Artemidorus, his works and his intellectual project will be discussed in greater detail in chapter **6.2 Interpreting Structures**.

[27] 2017, 17.

[28] Its classic illustration is Bendlin 2000, esp. 134-135.

[29] 2.69.

[30] Eidinow 2014, esp. 77-89.

[31] Of course, whether they viewed themselves as in competition with the pontiffs, the haruspices and the (quin)decemuiri – i.e. the other collegial divinatory actors with whom the Senate consulted – is a different matter, but that keeps us within the narrow confines of a definition of "official divination".

divination, does not consider "*sortilegi,* those who prophesy for profit nor necromancers" to fall within his definition.[32]

But despite these criticisms, the marketplace model can be helpful in thinking about one particular aspect of divination and divinatory options that is particularly relevant to this thesis: the game of identity construction. As noted above, Eidinow has demonstrated how the Greek seers and sanctuaries were able to confirm and validate one another's divinatory authority. The identity of a diviner, in whatever direction their practice extends, plays a key role in the construction of that authority. Susanne William Rasmussen has written extensively on the difficulties of identifying and analysing identity construction, succinctly commenting that

> to examine the construction of identity is not to detect an essence or nature or mentality, but to explore the classification of various forms and processes of interaction and communication.[33]

Identity markers, including gender, give meaning and authority to these forms and processes, but equally the forms and processes validate the identity markers. This can also be understood more broadly in the parallel processes of "individualisation" – the idea of individual actors modifying and de-traditionalising norms from within a larger social context; and "individuation" – the actions of those individuals *becoming* the social norms.[34] With this in mind, this project falls into the methodological framework of Lived Ancient Religion, which seeks to understand "religion" from the starting point of individuals' everyday interactions with and experiences of it, rather than simply as systems and organisations.[35] John Scheid has recently argued against this framework, and against the concept of individual agency in religious interaction, because, for private as much as public religion, he claims it always occurs within the civic framework: "tout est dans l'institution".[36] But institutional frameworks are not incompatible with the agency of individuals; quite the opposite, institutions cannot exist without individuals upholding them. To speak of an individual actor is not to speak only of dissent, but rather to recognise that actor as choosing to conform to or reject any institutional framework in place. Thus, as Jörg Rüpke comments, "it is only through manifold individual appropriations that norms and traditions are reproduced, hence continued and modified at the same time".[37] Under this methodology, individual diviners (and even

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[32] Cic. *Div.* 1.132: *testabor non me sortilegos neque eos, qui quaestus causa hariolentur, ne psychomantia quidem* […] *agnoscere.*
[33] 2008, 259; cf. also 2013.
[34] Rüpke 2013a; 2016a.
[35] As outlined by Raja and Rüpke 2015. This methodology is itself based on the anthropological analysis of Lived Religion, for which see McGuire 2008.
[36] Scheid 2013, 92.
[37] Rüpke 2016a, 4. Cf. also Rüpke 2013c, esp. 262.

divinatory institutions) are working within the religious landscape, following traditional practices and customs, thus reinforcing norms whilst asserting their identities (and, potentially, innovations) as part of those norms.

As an example, let us turn to the haruspices. Haruspicy was a method of technical divination from Etruria that was based on the learnt interpretations of specific natural occurrences (such as thunderbolts) and *exta* (sacrificial entrails). The studied nature of haruspicy meant that presumably anyone could, in theory, learn the skill and further the tradition, regardless of gender, class or other identity markers. Indeed, Livy describes Tanaquil as "a woman skilled in interpreting the prodigies of the heavens, as were most Etruscans".[38] It stands to reason, then, that anyone could profess to make a living from haruspical interpretation, claiming skill in the methodological (as well as the literal) marketplace.[39] But these would not have been the people whom the Roman Senate approached in the interpretation of public portents and prodigies; instead, there was likely an official college, comprising male members of the Etruscan aristocracy.[40] Though their pronouncements are always provided as unanimous and anonymous, meaning we cannot identify individual members, they would certainly have been specific and identifiable by the Roman elite who utilised their services. Anyone beyond their select number, then, may have claimed to have learned the skill, and may have had their services well received by some members of the lower classes, but still provoked distrust and ridicule: in Plautus' *Miles Gloriosus* ("*The Vainglorious Soldier*"), the character of Periplectomenus includes the *haruspica* – the feminine of haruspex – in the list of people a naïve wife will want to pay for her (apparent) services;[41] similarly, the Elder Cato, repeated by Cicero, famously announced "I am amazed that a haruspex, when he sees another haruspex, does not laugh".[42] Being able to talk the talk, and even walk the walk, was not enough; one had to satisfy the specific identity criteria of the haruspical college in order to be taken seriously by the Roman Senate.

In the next section, we turn more specifically to questions of gender. We will then return to divinatory identity through the methodological grounding of performativity, the framework which shall be employed in the rest of this thesis.

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[38] Liv. 1.34.9: *perita, ut uulgo Etrusci, caelestium prodigiorum mulier.*
[39] See Traill 2004, 124 for a discussion of "lower-class" haruspices.
[40] The earliest evidence for a specific "order" (*ordo*) at Rome is *CIL* 6.32439, an inscription probably from the Augustan period. See Santangelo 2013, 95-96 for discussion. For more on the portents interpreted by the haruspices, see chapter **4: Callo/n**.
[41] Plaut. *Mil.* 693.
[42] Cic. *Div.* 2.51: *mirari se aiebat quod non rideret haruspex haruspicem cum uidisset.* Cf. also Bendlin 2011 for the distinction of "higher" and "lower" divination in elite rhetoric.

1.3 Sex, Bodies and Beyond

Before we can continue, we must first ask: what *is* gender? Initially, this may seem like a straightforward question with a straightforward answer, but the more you try to grasp a simple definition of this concept, the more it slips through your fingers. Indeed, the only way to find an agreed-upon definition is to merely put forward that it has a "generally accepted usage" without actually giving a clarification of what that usage is, as the UN Commission on the Status of Women did in 1996.[43]

Perhaps one way to begin to answer is to understand what gender is not. At the beginning of this project, I was asked by an Emeritus Professor what I was researching. When I told him what I was working on, his initial response was "why do people say 'gender', when they mean 'sex'?" On one level, as will be discussed in much more detail below, he was right, and the former is often used as a euphemism for the latter. But there is a huge semantic divide between gender and sex, in a debate for which the frontline is set along the human body itself. A commonly understood distinction between "gender" and "sex" is that the former is a cultural construction of learned behavioural patterns, whilst the latter is the biological materiality of the body.[44] In many respects, the decoupling of these terms comes from Simone de Beauvoir's seminal work, with the much-quoted phrase "on ne naît pas femme: on le devient",[45] an early formulation of the idea of gender being something learned, rather than an innate biological quality. From there, it was Gayle Rubin who, in 1975, coined the phrase "sex/gender system", as "the set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity, and in which these transformed sexual needs are satisfied".[46] Further radical and socialist feminism of the 1980s followed, building on de Beauvoir and Rubin to understand the importance and implications of the divide.[47]

Unfortunately, this does not simplify matters, nor does it provide a satisfactory answer for the Emeritus Professor's question: as much as we may speak of culturally constructed gender(s), we are always tied down and returned to the physicality of the body. Consider, for example, the line of this argument that Brooke Holmes takes in her recent monograph on ancient gender:

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[43] As discussed by Scott 2010, 8. Similarly, Butler 1993, 191-198, demonstrates how the term "woman" "does not describe a pre-existing constituency, but is, rather, part of the very production and formulation of that constituency, one that is perpetually renegotiated and rearticulated in relation to other signifiers within the political field" (195).
[44] Caplan 1987; Stone 2006 [1991]; Stryker 2006, 9.
[45] de Beauvoir 1949, 285.
[46] 1975, quotation from p. 159.
[47] Cf. e.g. Rubin 1984; Wittig 1985; Butler 1987; West and Zimmerman 1987; Riley 1988.

> For if gender isn't constrained by sex – that is, if male bodies don't necessarily express masculine qualities, nor female bodies feminine ones – the sexed body isn't a secure predictor of gender. Sometimes perversions of gender are obvious. But in other cases, transgression can be detected only via professional semiotic analysis.[48]

Here, Holmes clearly intends to divorce gender from its material prison; yet, the very language of 'perversion' and 'transgression' reinstates the construction of a potential transgressor as doing gender wrongly, a construction that itself rests in the fact that they are of a particular sex that is tied to a "correct" gender. The two may be separate, but gender, at least in Holmes' construction, is and will always be constrained by the *idea* of sex, if not sex itself.

But, by balance, this point also goes the other way. As Judith Butler has shown through discourse analysis, any materiality that is posited is always already denoted in language by that very positing, and thus is itself always a cultural construction, both opposed to and reinforced by gender.[49] Without an understood set of gender differences, there is no sexual difference that can be unquestionably reached; again, there is no clear divide.

Things are, of course, even less clear when we try to relate all this back to the ancient world, and in turn to the subject of "gender history". In an attempt to cut through this methodological minefield, the editors of a recent volume on the lives of ancient women stated in their introduction, in no uncertain terms, that

> At no point in this book is the matter of "woman" problematized. Women are human beings with two X chromosomes, or occasionally a human with a Y chromosome but resistant to testosterone. Both editors accept that biological sex exists, and that gender is a mutable social overlay associated, but not co-terminus, with biological sex. Anyone who has a problem with this should probably just put this book down right now.[50]

This approach is admirable, and indeed contains an important point that should be recognised: the academic problematisation of "woman" as a category risks sidestepping other, more pressing gender-related issues in the contemporary world. But the definition falls short, to my mind, not least because, limited osteoarchaeological evidence aside, we simply do not have the chromosomal data for the majority of women (nor indeed men) discussed in this thesis alone, never mind the rest of the ancient world. Further, this modern scientific pursuit of a

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[48] 2012, 115.
[49] 1993, 67-72. Cf. also Laquer 1990, esp. 11; Braidotti 1994, esp. 95-110; Milnor 2010; Scott 2010, 7; Sissa 2014, 274.
[50] Budin and Turfa 2016, 2.

definitive answer to biological sex is in itself something of a false lead, asking more questions than it answers.[51]

On a broader theoretical note, it must be asked how fruitful such a definitive and in some ways reductive categorisation is in respect of historical research. Any strict definition of what it means to be a woman, in any historical or contemporary setting, inevitably entails a process of exclusion contestable through real and genuine lives and experiences.[52] Theorising the body always unavoidably pushes the very materiality of the body into the background, in what Jay Prosser calls "our inevitable poststructuralist legacy".[53] Indeed, as Joan Wallach Scott has pointed out, part of the reason that gender has been and remains a useful category of historical research is precisely because of the instability of the term(s), and the way it can be taken "as an invitation to think critically about how the meanings of sexed bodies are produced in relation to one another, how these meanings are deployed and changed".[54]

Overall, then, there is no single answer to the Emeritus Professor's question: the inextricably related terms of gender and sex, though they cannot be said to mean the same thing, can also never be completely divorced from one another, to the point that when we speak of one we will always be at least implying the other, even if through explicit exclusion. There is no specific border to the definition of gender (or of sex), and this is precisely why we say gender when we mean, in fact, both.

1.4 The Performing Arts

I turn now to a more specific discussion of Judith Butler's theoretical framework of gender performativity, and how it will be utilised through the course of this thesis. To speak of gender as "performative" is to understand it not as a state of *being* so much a state of *doing*. Butler first outlined this methodology in an article for *Theatre Journal* entitled "Performative acts and gender constitution: An essay in phenomenology and feminist theory", although it is her monograph *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, first published 1990, that is seen as the launch of this framework within Gender Studies.[55] The theory

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[51] See, for example Fausto-Sterling 1993 and 2000, esp. 78-114, for a discussion of the (attempts at) biological division of the sexes. Cf. also Rosario 2009 for the need, on a molecular level, to shift discussion from "binary sex" to "quantum sex".
[52] See Haraway 1991, esp. 155-161, for the failings of attempting to group the category of "woman" into one single, shared experience. Cf. also Butler 1993, 1-23.
[53] 1998, 13.
[54] 2010, 10. Cf. also Scott 1986.
[55] Butler 1988; 1990.

ultimately derives from Speech Act Theory, outlined by J. L. Austin, which defines performative utterances as phrases which are neither true nor false, but actually perform an action in and of themselves.[56] It is from this that Butler derived the construction of gender as a "stylized repetition of acts", which through that repetition create the illusion of gender being there all along.[57] She later expanded on this definition by explaining

> [I stated that] gender is performative, by which I meant that no gender is "expressed" by actions, gestures, or speech, but that the performance of gender produces retroactively the illusion that there is an inner gender core. That is, the performance of gender retroactively produces the effect of some true or abiding feminine essence or disposition, so that one cannot use an expressive model for thinking about gender.[58]

This methodological outline has been developed as a way of understanding a number of intersectional embodied (though beyond-the-body) identities, offering, in Susan Stryker's words, "a non- or postreferential epistemological framework" in which to situate one's sense of self.[59]

Butler's interpretation of gender, along with Michel Foucault's work on the history of sexuality, is often taken as the starting point of Queer Theory, and studies of both gender and sexuality in historical and contemporary societies.[60] These twin pillars of identity, gender and sexuality, are without a doubt bound up in each other, but they should always be discussed separately, particularly in the context of an historical study. This is Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's second axiom of Queer Theory, which states that

> the question of gender and the question of sexuality, inextricable from one another though they are in that each can be expressed only in the terms of the other, are nonetheless not the same question, [and] in twentieth-century Western culture gender and sexuality represent two analytic axes that may productively be imagined as being as distinct from one another as, say, gender and class, or class and race.[61]

As such, though this thesis draws from queer theoretical models, my focus remains explicitly on gender identities rather than on sexuality and subjects of desire.[62] Performativity is a particularly fruitful method of understanding gender (or sex?) in the ancient world: we are

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[56] For the key texts outlining this theory, along with the creative force and ritual state of the performative, see Austin 1962; 1971.

[57] Butler 1988, 519.

[58] 1997a, 144.

[59] Stryker 2006, 10. This is not to say that Butler's work has been unanimously accepted – for a discussion of the shortcomings of performativity, and in particular Butler's renderings of the framework, in transgender critical theory, see Prosser 1998, 21-60.

[60] For Foucault's pioneering study into the history of sexuality, see Foucault 1976.

[61] 1990, 30. Indeed, the productively imagined difference between the two is just as important in first-century BCE Roman culture, if we can speak of such.

[62] For a recent discussion of Roman (homo)sexuality, see Williams 2010.

able to read the actions of ancient women, men and non-binary people, whether they conform to or oppose gendered expectations, as actions that incessantly work to provide those very expectations for the rhetoricians, historians, satirists, sculptors, painters, inscription writers and the myriad of other recorders from whose works we can reconstruct the lives, and indeed genders of the original actors and the societies in which they lived. Over the course of this thesis, we will meet a number of people for whom this framework will allow us to gain an understanding of the way in which gender affected the actions they took, and were allowed to or barred from taking.

Building on this, the application of performativity, from both its Speech Act Theory origins and its gendered afterlife, can also be meaningfully utilised in an understanding of divination. Divinatory traditions can be seen as performative in the sense that the elements of said tradition constitute the reality of the message given.[63] The importance of repeated performance to ritual practice has been aptly demonstrated in recent scholarship, with the most extreme conclusions being those of Frits Staal, who argued that ritual practice is meaningless, having no value beyond that which is intrinsic.[64] The repetition of the performance is the very action that creates any meaning or value that it might have. I would argue, however, that for a divinatory ritual, at least, whilst it may not have material meaning in the performance enacted, but the outcome of that ritual creates meaning that can and does have very real-world repercussions. In his essay "Signature event context", Jacques Derrida asked

> Could a performative utterance succeed if its formulation did not repeat a "coded" or iterable utterance, or in other words, if the formula I pronounce to open a meeting, launch a ship or a marriage were not identifiable as *conforming* with an iterable model, if it were not then identifiable in some way as a "citation"?[65]

The success of a divinatory practice comes, at least in part, from the recognisable repetition of the pre-established ritual.[66] Whatever message you are trying to elucidate, it must be based on a recognised pattern to have meaning. To simply kill a bull and inspect its liver would not satisfactorily elucidate any deity's message; the bull must be killed in the correct manner, in

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[63] Mowat 2016, 428-430.
[64] 1979. Cf. also Rüpke 2004; 2015, 355; Smith 2004a, esp. 146-148; North 2008; Woolf 2013a, esp. 147-149.
[65] 1988, 18.
[66] Again, in comparison to contemporary meteorology, Fine notes that "forecasters focus not on the present or the past, but claim that they can see the future. This future can only be known because of the establishment of what has gone before. The production of the future depends on the production of the past and present" (2007, 14).

the correct place and with the correct implements, at which point an interpretation of the message can be made.

Further to this, Scott Noegel, writing about the ancient Near East, has recently demonstrated the importance of the performative power of words, through Speech Act Theory, in the act of interpretation itself. A sign or omen can mean anything until it is successfully interpreted to mean one single thing: "seen in this way," he writes,

> the act of interpretation – like the act of naming – constitutes a performative act of power; hence the importance of well-trained professionals and of secrecy in the transmission of texts of ritual power.[67]

Within the context of republican Rome, this gives an explanation as to why, as we shall see throughout this thesis, all public divination must be ratified by the Senate.[68]

Overall, then, to speak of divination as performative is to understand its meaning or value – and thus its truth – to be created by the fulfilment of the expectations that are themselves the elements which inform the tradition. When the actions are correctly performed, and the criteria correctly fulfilled, the divinatory ritual as a whole can be seen to have been successful, and the message between the deity(/ies) and the diviner(s) successfully conveyed. What those criteria are, of course, differs between the traditions; however, as we will see throughout this thesis, identity always plays a large part in them.

Divination, we must remember, is at its barest human action. That human, then, must be "qualified" to successfully act out the ritual. This can be partly in terms of who has learned the technical necessity of carrying out the appropriate actions, but also more widely in terms of who was considered a ritually appropriate actor.[69] It is in this second part that the construction of gender comes to the fore (though, of course, gender is also a ghost in respect of access to learning the technical skills). As we will see in the chapters throughout this thesis, the performative gender of diviners – and, in the case of chapter 4, the performative gender of prodigies – plays an important role in either allowing or prohibiting their divinatory interpretations to be taken seriously.

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[67] 2010, 147; cf. also Noegel 2007.
[68] Cf. with Rasmussen 2013, 65: "In other words, the Senate and the priesthoods – effectively the Roman elite – were in a position to establish what was, or was not, in accordance with the acceptable norms, values, and behaviours of Roman society".
[69] Furthermore, ritual can be seen to help actually create and reflect those divisions: Rüpke 2014, 20.

1.5 Fabia

The chapters in this thesis delve into very different traditions, sometimes advancing arguments in quite varied directions. Due to the nature of Roman divination, these traditions seem almost contradictory, even though they are all within the same religious landscape. It will be helpful, then, to have a guide to help us navigate the traditions: that guide will be Fabia.

Fabia was one of the Vestal Virgins who was active in at least the first half of the last century BCE.[70] The Vestals were a college of six public priestesses, selected for duty between six and ten years old and required to serve a minimum of thirty years, whose duties included attending public festivals and tending to the hearth of the temple of Vesta in the very centre of the city of Rome.[71] During that time, they were expected to remain virgins, though they were afforded a matronal status in daily life – an interesting point in respect of the differentiation of sex, gender and class roles. As with a number of religious sodalities in Rome, most ancient writers only refer to individual Vestals by name when they have done wrong, such as going against their vows and duties. As such, we know of Fabia through the accusation of her having broken her vow of chastity with Catiline in 73 BCE.[72] Fabia can also be seen to be a key figure in late Republican religion and politics through her familial relations: her half-sister was none other than Terentia, the first wife of Marcus Tullius Cicero. As we will see below, this connection is particularly relevant in Fabia's own involvement in an instance of (public) divination.

For this case study, we turn to one particular public festival in the Roman calendar: the annual rites of the festival of Bona Dea, the Good Goddess, which were held at the house of a senior magistrate of that year. What is notable about these rites is that no male presence was allowed in the house, so the magistrate in question would have to find alternative accommodation for the night whilst the rites were presided over by his wife and overseen by the Vestal Virgins.[73] On 4th December 63 BCE, during his consulship, they were held at the house of Cicero, and thus were led by Terentia. Although she is not named, the familial connection makes it more

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[70] Rüpke 2008, no. 1577.

[71] As the only all-women college in the Roman religious system, the Vestals are of perennial interest. For a recent consideration of the various elements of this cult, with bibliography, see DiLuzio 2016, esp. 119-239.

[72] Asc. *In Toga Candida* 91; Cf. also Sall. *Cat.* 15.1; Cic. *Cat.* 3.9, although neither of these latter two sources name Fabia directly, perhaps because she was not convicted. Ramsey 2007, 98, doubts that the case ever went to trial.

[73] See Takács 2008, 109-111 for a reconstruction of the elements the festival was known to have, including animal sacrifice and unwatered wine.

than likely that Fabia was one of the Vestals present.[74] According to Plutarch, at the end of the rites, the altar, though it had been extinguished, rekindled itself, sending out a bright blaze, at which point,

> ὑφ᾽ ἧς αἱ μὲν ἄλλαι διεπτοήθησαν, αἱ δ᾽ ἱεραὶ παρθένοι τὴν τοῦ Κικέρωνος γυναῖκα Τερεντίαν ἐκέλευσαν ᾗ τάχος χωρεῖν πρὸς τὸν ἄνδρα καὶ κελεύειν οἷς ἔγνωκεν ἐγχειρεῖν ὑπὲρ τῆς πατρίδος, ὡς μέγα πρός τε σωτηρίαν καὶ δόξαν αὐτῷ τῆς θεοῦ φῶς διδούσης.

> Though many of the other women were startled by this, the Vestal Virgins commanded Terentia, the wife of Cicero, to go as quickly as possible to her husband and urge him to make his move on behalf of his fatherland, since the goddess was giving him a great light towards both safety and honour.[75]

Cicero does not mention the event in his fourth Catilinarian speech, given the following day before the Senate, in the session in which the decision to execute the conspirators was reached, but, as Meghan DiLuzio has commented, the wives of the senators would surely have related the event to their husbands and, officially or unofficially, it would likely have weighed on their minds during the debate.[76] It is probable that it is not explicitly mentioned by the orator to avoid a charge of relying on "womanly superstition" (an idea to which we will be returning throughout this thesis).[77] Yet, it is more than likely that the "manly" senatorial response to the portent was an important factor in their decision, which ultimately fell in Cicero's favour.

On the one hand, then, this is a relatively straightforward portent: a message from a deity (or deities) concerning human action in matters pertaining to the future of the Roman state. Yet this understanding immediately becomes more complex when we start to consider the matter of the identities of the key players: who was the "message" actually for? Who interpreted the message, in a sanctioned method? Although they were a female-only sphere, the Bona Dea festival falls very much within the category of public rites, performed *pro populo*, "on behalf of the city as a whole". Along with the fact that the Vestals, leading the charge in the story of the portent, were a public priesthood, and even the public nature of the actions the portent

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[74] It is likely that at least one, if not two Vestals would remain at the temple at all times, regardless of public rites, in order to tend to the hearth; or, as Brennan 2012, 356, succinctly writes: "one to watch the fire and the other to watch her colleague watch the fire". DiLuzio 2016, 190-191, suggests that there may have been (an) assistant(s) to watch the fire when Vestal presence was required elsewhere. However, given the centrality of this task to the Vestals' priestly role – and the fact that it was the Vestal on watch at the time who would be beaten if the fire were to go out – I find the possibility that they delegated the task unsustainable.
[75] Plut. *Cic*. 20.1. The portent is also mentioned in passing by Dio 37.35.
[76] DiLuzio 2016, 232-4 (with 233 n.41).
[77] See particularly chapters **2.6 Nothing but an Old Wives' Tale?** and **6.1 Calpurnia and the Disruption of the Roman State**.

pointed towards, we must understand this event as a public portent.[78] This episode, then, gets right into the heart of Republican divination and identity.

The rites of Bona Dea have garnered much scholarly attention for being an important event in respect of women's interaction with public religion; however, the rites that took place in the following year, in 62 BCE, often eclipse Fabia's flame portent. During these rites, Cicero's rival Publius Clodius Pulcher, disguised as a female musician, infiltrated the rites – this year at Julius Caesar's house under the guidance of his second wife Pompeia – and caused upheaval upon his discovery.[79] In the aftermath, the rites had to be reperformed and Caesar even divorced Pompeia, on basis that she should be above suspicion.[80] It was a transgression that Cicero would never let Clodius forget.[81]

There is, then, evidently an essential emphasis not just on femininity, but specifically on the absence of masculinity at these rites. Clodius' offence, and the uproar that followed, demonstrate that much. It follows, then, that the message, though it concerns actions in the public sphere relating to her husband's current predicament, must actually be primarily for Terentia. Indeed, Plutarch uses the incident as a mark of the woman's ambitions and desire to act alongside Cicero in the political sphere.[82] What we should infer from the portent, however, is the fact that Bona Dea is sanctioning, and even *urging* Terentia to take action in this matter. As much as we are told that women are barred from acting in the public sphere, as much as Plutarch criticises Terentia's desires, here is evidence of divine approval, and even guidance.

There is a further consideration to be made on the construction of gender in respect of this portent: the endorsement and interpretation of the message. Generally speaking, a public portent would be confirmed as such by the Senate, and then be interpreted either by the *(quin)decemuiri sacris faciundis*, who would consult the Sibylline Books, or the Etruscan haruspices.[83] Since the Senate, the *(quin)decemuiri* and the haruspices were all groups open only to men, and thus could not be part of the Bona Dea festival, the elements of prodigy process in this instance must have been taken up by Fabia and the other Vestals. The "sexual status" of the Vestal Virgins is often put into question by scholars, following Mary Beard's

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[78] Contra Rasmussen 2003, who does not list the episode in her table of public portents in Republican Rome.
[79] Staples 1998, 39-44 Wildfang 2006, 98-99; Takács 2008, 98-101; Mastrocinque 2014, 52; DiLuzio 2016, 187-188; Campanile 2017, 53-56.
[80] Plut. *Caes*. 10.6: "Πῶς οὖν ἀπεπέμψω τὴν γυναῖκα;" "Ὅτι," ἔφη, "τὴν ἐμὴν ἠξίουν μηδὲ ὑπονοηθῆναι."
[81] Even as late as Cic. *Mil*. 55, written in 52 BCE as a response to the murder of Clodius, Cicero describes his enemy as "a woman who had fallen among men" (*tamen mulier inciderat in uiros*). Cf. Campanile 2017, 56 for Cicero's repeated return to this incident.
[82] Plut. *Cic*. 20.2.
[83] For the role of the *(quin)decemuiri*, see chapter **3: Sibyl(s)**. For the prodigy process in general, see chapter **4.2 It's All Part of the Process**.

seminal article on the subject.[84] Beard's argument derives from the fact that the Vestals, on some occasions, seem able to act within realms usually relegated to men, suggesting that they had a liminal or fluid sexual status (a phrase which Beard herself later admits she chose "probably meaning gender"[85]). Building on Beard's construction, Anise K. Strong has recently related how their gender and sexual unavailability makes them "queer".[86] Whilst it is tempting to want to give readings of genderqueer identities in the ancient world, it is unfortunate that this reading must come at the expense of the sole female-only college within the Roman religious system, and be predicated on the assumption of the ritual and sacrificial incapacity of women.[87]

But the portent and its interpretation, despite their gynocentrism, are not put to question as being illegitimate or even suspicious. Though modern scholars have examined the veracity of the story, it was perfectly conceivable that, within the strict system of in Roman divinatory identities, this public portent could be viewed, interpreted and delivered fully within a female sphere.

Many of the points made here will be revisited over the course of this thesis, to demonstrate the ways in which gender intersects with divination in Roman religious practice. We will return to Fabia as a touchstone for the actions of, and reactions to, other women in the varying divinatory traditions of the late Roman Republic.

1.6 The Structure of This Thesis

The chapters that comprise the main body of this thesis, then, each take a case study based approach to consider the different divinatory traditions at play in the late Roman Republic.

Chapter 2 focuses on the text of Cicero's *De Diuinatione*, which we have already come across in this introduction. It is itself in the form of a theological dialogue, arguing either side of the debate for and against divination and its place in the Roman political sphere. This text has been heavily analysed in recent scholarship; however, this chapter takes a different approach by focussing on the presentation of women as diviners, and as receivers of divination, by the two brothers who are speaking within the text. While both brothers present radical

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[84] Beard 1980, to be read with Beard 1995.
[85] Beard 1995, 167.
[86] 2016, 22-23. For a discussion of gender and sexuality, and their differences under Queer Theory, see chapter **1.4 The Performing Arts**.
[87] For the arguments surrounding female sacrificial capacity specifically, see chapter **5.6 *Mulier Necans*.**

viewpoints, Quintus as believer and Marcus as critic, my reading shows how the gendered aspects of the varying traditions are axiomatic to those viewpoints. They are not, for example, questioning why the Pythia of the Delphic Oracle is female, but rather whether she has any place within the religious and indeed political spheres of Republican Rome. The very fact that they never focus on gender as a confirmation or denial of divinatory reality actually reiterates its central importance to this construction.

This is followed by a chapter on the Sibylline Books. These Books were central to the Roman religious and political systems, as prophetic texts that guided the Roman State in times of need. They were also written by a woman. Though mythical, the Sibyl was a powerful prophetess who appears across the Greek and Roman worlds in just the time and place she is needed. Sometimes she is just one woman, sometimes there are multiple Sibyls; however, they are never more than one in a given time and place. In this chapter, then, I focus on the Books themselves, as well as their mythical author. The first part is concerned with who we understand the author to be: if we consider the Sibyls as multiple, should we also consider the Sibyl of the Books to be a separately constructed and understood figure in her own right? I then turn to the Books as an institution, and how the Sibyl's characterisation and femininity was integral to her construction as a producer of knowledge otherwise unattainable, as well as how the Roman State used and controlled access to the Books, an object rather than a woman, in order to control that knowledge in turn.

In chapter 4, I turn more specifically to the expiation of prodigies, a tradition and practice partly governed by the Sibylline Books. A prodigy was an event that appeared to contradict the natural order of things, and was thus seen as a sign of the gods' displeasure. The prodigy was expiated according to details either from the Sibylline Books or the advice from Etruscan *haruspices*, diviners from Central Italy whom the Roman State occasionally consulted. This chapter is concerned with one particular event, considered to be a prodigy at least fourteen times during the Roman Republic: the birth of an intersex child. This was seen to irreconcilably contradict the gender (or sexual) binary, and as such was physically removed from the society by drowning. The usual understanding for interpreting these prodigies is through the concept of liminality, as proposed by Veit Rosenberger in *Gezähmte Götter*, whereby the prodigies, including the intersex child, were seen as such precisely because they crossed borders.[88] In this chapter, however, I argue that the intersex person, in the Roman construction of gender, did not cross the borders of sex so much as break them, creating an

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[88] Rosenberger 1998.

irresolvable issue. This in turn leads to a discussion of how and why the dissolving of sex and gender expectations was so dangerous to the Romans that it had to be expiated in accordance with the gods' wishes.

The final two chapters take us to either end of the apparent binary between technical and natural, as we look at two divining individuals of the late Republic. Chapter 5 introduces us to a sacrificial diviner named Martha. Originally from Syria, she appears to have been an itinerant ritual specialist in Rome and at the northern frontiers of the empire. Martha is only named once in the ancient record, by Plutarch in his *Marius*, written two hundred years after she lived. Martha's appearance in the narrative at first seems relatively unremarkable; yet, this in itself is important. Though part of Plutarch's point in his discussion of Martha is a cynical suggestion of using divinatory acts to manipulate the superstitious masses, she is not dismissed from making those acts in the first place. This chapter analyses how gender plays a role in the construction of individual diviners, and their reception by clients and the literary and historical sources. But Martha herself has long been ignored as a real person in the religious and political world of the late Roman Republic, and part of this chapter is an attempt to restore the place of this impressive woman in that world.

In the final chapter, we delve into the world of prophetic dreaming. Taking as a case study a woman who is perhaps one of the highest profile dreamers in the ancient world, this chapter looks at the story of the dream of Calpurnia, and the assassination of her husband, Gaius Julius Caesar. Unlike the story of Martha, this episode is well recounted, and the purpose of this chapter is to pull together the way the story is told, and how we should understand the reactions of the other actors in it – as well as the writers – in respect of the dreamer's gender. I also use Calpurnia as a touchstone to consider a number of other dreams that occurred in the late Roman Republic and the responses they garnered, in order to build a picture of the tradition of prophetic dreaming. Overall, the argument of this chapter is that, despite the gendered invective used by some actors (and writers), we must not forget that it was not just possible, but plausible that Calpurnia, a woman, could and would have meaningful dreams.

The chapters in this thesis, then, can be said to advance different arguments; however, they come together to show the relationship between gender and divination. Though the different traditions had particularly varying rules, women – and men – were able to construct a performative relationship with those traditions that allowed them to communicate with the supernatural. Overall, it is clear that gender played a central role, but it did not hinder people from establishing, sustaining, and asserting that relationship.

Chapter Two: Marcus

2.1 Arguing with Oneself

I want to begin our discussion with what is perhaps the most revealing, and at the same time the most perplexing, text concerning divination in the late Roman Republic: Marcus Tullius Cicero's *de Diuinatione* (*Div.*). This 'dialogue-treatise', published in 44 BCE, takes the form of a fictional conversation between Marcus Cicero himself and his younger brother Quintus.[1] Following a short prologue to each, the brothers lay out their respective arguments in turn in a mostly uninterrupted book-length discourse: Quintus – in book I – makes the case for divination, from a strong Stoic standpoint, whilst Marcus – in book II – takes an Academic line of scepticism and criticises belief in divination. In the final words of the dialogue-treatise, Marcus asks Quintus if, rather than deciding a victor of the debate, he would agree to disagree, in a non-conclusion that Cicero as author uses to leave the ending open and allow the reader to make up their own mind on the matter. The question of the meaning of this ending, and indeed the meaning of the whole text, has been the dominant focus of research on *Div.* over the last three decades.[2]

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[1] For the use of the phrase 'dialogue-treatise' to refer to these works, see Schofield 2008, esp. 67-69. Following what is now standard practice in scholarship on this text, I distinguish the character 'Marcus' (along with the character 'Quintus') from the author 'Cicero': cf. e.g. Beard 1986.

[2] The ending, with its final criticisms of divination and superstition, is sometimes described as a moment at which Marcus' voice "blends with that of Cicero the author" (Santangelo 2013, 20), and that, as such, Cicero is offering a larger critique of divinatory traditions in Republican Rome. The picture, however, is made more complex when *Div.* is placed in the context of Cicero's other philosophical works, for example in the (admittedly much earlier) *de Legibus*, where another quasi-autobiographical character of Marcus accepts divination as a real and necessary part of the religio-political system of Rome (2.32-33). It is also important to take into account the cryptic opening comment of *de Natura Deorum*, a treatise explicitly linked to *Div.* (for which, see below), where Cicero as author warns that "those, however, who search for my personal feelings on these matters, are more curious than is necessary" (1.10: *Qui autem requirunt quid quaque de re ipsi sentiamus, curiosius id faciunt quam necesse est*). For the argument that Marcus is a mouthpiece for Cicero's own view, see Pease 1920; Linderski 1982; Timpanaro 1988, lxxiv-lxxvi; 1994, 241-264; Wardle 2006; Stok 2010, esp. 106; Santangelo 2012; 2013, 10-23; cf. also Volk 2017, who considers that, while the matter is not closed, Marcus' conclusion is strong enough to suggest Cicero's own view that divination should be disregarded. For the contrasting argument of an "integrated" reading, where both books should be given comparable if not equal weight in our readings thereof, see Denyer 1985; Beard 1986; Schofield 1986; 2008; Altman 2008; Schultz 2009; 2014; North 2013, esp. 68; ten Berge 2014; cf. also Setaioli 2013, esp. 461, who discusses Cicero's Academic approach of not asserting truth to any hypothesis. Alternative suggestions include: that Cicero's aim, as he himself explicitly states is not to deny the veracity of divination, but to bring down superstition (for which, see Goar 1968; Rüpke 2012, 192-204; the political control aspect of this suggestion is explored by Begemann 2014); that Cicero is concerned more with uncovering or distilling Roman civic and ethnic identity (Lehoux 2012, 24-30; Nongbri 2013, 50-53) or that the text is not about divination or religion per se, but rather about argument formation and ideology (Krostenko 2000; Fox 2007, esp. 230-240; to a lesser extent, Rasmussen 2000, 18; Moatti 2015, 180-187). Overall, I think we should be wary of treating Marcus' views as being the author's, even in the concluding lines, but the discussion in the present chapter is such that it is not diminished by either side of this argument.

How helpful can a singular text, problematic in its polemical stance(s) and written by someone who arguably does not fit the zeitgeist,[3] be in understanding the wider construction of divination in Republican Rome? Furthermore, is this simply yet another male-authored, male-centric text from which we cannot hope to sift a full understanding of ancient gender? In fact, it can be somewhat enlightening, even if it does not directly answer our questions, to consider the way that gender plays a role in the construction of each brother's argument. Both Cicerones may be presenting extreme viewpoints on divination, but the gendered aspects of the varying traditions are axiomatic to those viewpoints. They are not, for example, questioning why the Pythia of the Delphic Oracle is female, but rather whether she has any place within the religious and indeed political spheres of Republican Rome. The central focus of this chapter, then, will be considering how gender is understood in the *Div.* as a whole and in the traditions this dialogue-treatise presents.

Before we can do that, however, we must first understand the wider context within which this text is placed. Written in 45-44 BCE, probably partly before and partly after the assassination of Calpurnia's husband Julius Caesar, *Div.* forms the second instalment of Cicero's theological trilogy, which begins with *de Natura Deorum* ("*On the Nature of the Gods*", henceforth *ND*) and concludes with *de Fato* ("*On Fate*", *Fat.*).[4] The first text, also a dialogue-treatise, portrays a conversation on the nature of the gods between three historical figures, Gaius Velleius, Quintus Lucilius Balbus and Gaius Aurelius Cotta, who represent the Epicurean, Stoic and Academic philosophical schools of thought respectively. Marcus the character is also present throughout, but does not take part in the debate, merely judging that Balbus' Stoic argument was, in his opinion, the best argument.[5] *Fat.*, the final text of this trilogy, is unfortunately fragmentary, and so it is less clear. It seems to be the case that, although its prologue sets up a dialogue form, a conversation between Marcus and his consul-designate neighbour Aulus Hirtius, the main body of the text is instead a monologue questioning determinism and ultimately "reject[ing] the extreme Stoic position".[6] The three

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[3] Rawson 1985, esp. vii-ix, who tries to discuss intellectual life in the Roman republic *without* Cicero for this very reason.

[4] The extent to which the dialogue-treaties was written before and/or after Caesar's assassination is another unsolved debate, for which see Wardle 2006, 37-43. The assassination itself, and Calpurnia's divinatory dream of it, will be discussed in greater detail in chapter **5: Calpurnia**.

[5] The meaning of the ending of this text is also hotly debated. For a summary and discussion of the main suggestions, see Cole 2013, 149-163.

[6] Sharples, 1991, 4. Cicero the author himself explains the one-sided nature of this text at 1.1: "For this discussion on fate, a certain cause has prevented me from making it in the manner in which I made my other books, which were on the nature of the gods, and the same way for those I published on divination, whereby the whole argument is explained for both sides, so that an opinion may be reached more easily because it seems most probable to the reader" (*quod autem in aliis libris feci, qui sunt de natura deorum , itemque in iis, quos de*

texts are explicitly linked together by Cicero himself in the preface to the second book of *Div*. He claims that *ND* was begun with intention to cover all topics under its title, before adding *Div*. as an addendum, and *Fat*. as an addendum to that addendum, which will render this considerations on theology "abundantly enough" (*abunde satis*).[7] More specifically, too, the treatises are linked as following on thematically each from the next. The Stoic view of divination is laid out by Balbus in *ND* only as far as it relates to the gods' existence;[8] meanwhile, Quintus' theoretical model in *Div*. is explicitly based on an understanding of the existence and indeed the nature of the gods:

> *Ego enim sic existimo, si sint ea genera diuinandi uera, de quibus accepimus quaeque colimus, esse deos, uicissimque, si di sint, esse qui diuinent.*
>
> For my opinion is this: if those kinds of divination, which we have accepted and which we now cultivate, are true, there are gods; and conversely if there are gods, there are those who divine.[9]

Similarly, in turn, the Stoic theory of divination, as put forward by Quintus, is based heavily on determinism, the philosophical doctrine that views all things as being governed by preordained fate, yet this is barely touched upon in *Div*. Instead, this makes the foundation of *Fat*.[10]

Beyond the literary, too, Cicero's political context is important to the production of this text. *Div*., and his own career strongly reminds us the extent to which politics and divination were tied up.[11] Indeed, we have already seen how Fabia's flame portent was worked to his own political advantage twenty years prior, a fact that seems at odds with the same man now making his self-named character speak against the validity of divination.[12] But the 40s were a very different time from the 60s, and the winds of favour had changed. Jerzy Linderski has aptly shown Julius Caesar's increasing monopoly on political divination: Cicero, in a figurative state of self-imposed exile at this time, no longer had direct influence in the public sphere and the signs – political as well as divinatory – were all being worked in the Dictator's favour.[13] Even following his assassination, with his seemingly inevitable ascension, Caesar

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diuinatione edidi, ut in utramque partem perpetua explicaretur oratio, quo facilius id a quoque probaretur quod cuique maxime probabile uideretur, id in hac disputatione de fato casus quidam ne facerem impediuit).
[7] *Div*. 2.3. For the comedy of the addenda to addenda and the oxymoron of *abunde satis*, see Altman 2008, 106. Cf. also Schofield 1986, 48-49.
[8] 2.162-163. Its use in this argument is refuted by Cotta at 3.14-15.
[9] *Div*. 1.9. Cf. also 1.8, where Quintus starts the discussion upon his reading of *ND*.
[10] Cf. Sharples 1991, 4.
[11] Santangelo 2013, esp. 10-12.
[12] For Fabia's flame portent and its relationship to Cicero's political career, see chapter **1.5 Fabia**.
[13] 1982, 34-38. Cf. also Volk 2017, 333-334.

kept the upper hand.[14] Unable to react in the political sphere, the extremity of Marcus'
position can perhaps be seen as Cicero as author's attempt at a retaliation to the situation
(though this is not to say that we should read Marcus as Cicero's own viewpoint).

Div.'s context, then, is not simple. But, while it doesn't necessarily provide any answers, it at
least provides a standpoint from which we can see why Cicero as author might choose to
structure his treatise in this way. The rest of this chapter, then, focuses more specifically on
the construction of gender within this text. By doing this, as well as elucidating the role
gender plays in Cicero's own construction of divination, I intend to create a platform upon
which the rest of the thesis can be built, and from which we can begin to see the constructions
of both gender and divination beyond Cicero and *Div.*

The following two sections of this chapter will mark out the individual approaches of Quintus
and Marcus respectively, and how they, in general, treat diviners and especially women as
diviners. Within both of these sections, a case study of the treatment of dreams and dreamers
will be analysed to make a direct comparison between the two brothers' arguments. Two more
specific sections follow, dealing with Cassandra and the Pythia respectively. In each section
an analysis of how these women are constructed and understood by the two brothers, and how
their inclusion furthers the arguments. One more section, then, will consider the use of the
"old wives' tales" (*anilis superstitio*) stereotype by Marcus, and how he links 'superstition' to
the negative discrimination against old women in the *Div.* and in the late Roman Republic.

In this chapter, and indeed throughout this thesis, there is an explicit focus on women and
female diviners. This is not to say that men and masculinity are not an important part of the
picture in respect of understanding the gendered constructions of divination and religion;
however, much of the scholarship on Roman religion pushes women to the margins, if they
are considered at all. To quote one distinguished instance, John Scheid once declared that
"whenever a women took on a priestly role […] she was either subordinate to a man or was
no longer truly considered to be a woman".[15] Here, then, I present a number of women, both
in Cicero's *Div.* and beyond, who can and do enact various religious and divinatory practices
without needing to surrender their femininity.

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[14] For more on the circumstances, including divinatory circumstances around Caesar's death, see chapter **6:
Calpurnia**, and particularly **6.4 Putting Calpurnia Back in the Picture**.
[15] 1993, 57. Cf. also Scheid 1992.

2.2 Women as Diviners I: The World According to Quintus

Let us start, logically, with Book I. After Cicero's general introduction to the treatise, this book is Quintus' speech arguing that divination is a real, and useful, facility accessible to humans. Perhaps the most striking feature of the argument is Quintus' reliance on examples to make his point. As the text develops, the younger Cicero lays down case after case of divination taking place, often with minimal further analysis. He maintains his reasoning as

> *Cur fiat quidque, quaeris; recte omnino, sed non nunc id agitur: fiat necne fiat, id quaeritur. Ut, si magnetem lapidem esse dicam qui ferrum ad se adliciat et trahat, rationem cur id fiat adferre nequeam, fieri omnino neges.*
>
> You ask why everything happens; you are of course right, but that is not the question being pursued right now: does it happen or not, is what is being asked. For example, it is as if I were to say that the magnet is a stone that attracts and draws iron to itself, I would not be able to give you a reason as to why it happens, and so I suppose you would deny it to happen at all.[16]

Beyond this vague attempt at reasoning, Quintus' argument is often noted for lacking a chartable structure.[17] He opens the discussion by presenting the now familiar binary of technical and natural divination,[18] but then seems to select examples at random from both sides of this self-imposed structure, in what Katharina Volk describes as "a bumbling enumeration of anecdotes".[19] He frequently digresses, then either questions his own digression or simply announces a return to his "original" argument.[20]

Quintus' heavy use of examples does, however, provide us with a wide collection of people – both women and men – who have (successfully) practised divination. Although mythical examples are laid alongside (quasi-)historical ones, they still reveal much in respect of what was expected of people in order for the divining to be considered correct. Thus Cassandra, the Pythia and the Sibyl(s) stand side by side as exemplary cases of diviners, along with one mention of the priestesses of Dodona.[21]

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[16] Cic. *Div.* 1.86. Cf. also with 1.13-1.16, where Quintus gives other examples of things he cannot explain *why* they happen, only that they *do* happen.

[17] Cf. e.g. Schofield 1986, 52; Krostenko 2000, 370-373. For tables of headings outlining the structure of both brothers' arguments, see Schofield 1986, 64; Schultz 2014, xv.

[18] As discussed in chapter **1.2 Divining Definitions**.

[19] 2017, 334.

[20] Cf. e.g. 1.29, 1.55 for questioning own examples; see also 1.109: "but, as it digresses from this, let us return to the main discussion" (*sed, ut unde huc digressa est, eodem redeat oratio*), which presumably refers to the argument last seen at 1.85.

[21] Cassandra and the Pythia will be discussed in detail in chapters **2.4 Making an Example of Cassandra** and **2.5 Cicero and the Pythia – a Deceptive Construction** respectively. The Sibyl(s) and the Sibylline Books will be given a full treatment in chapter **3: Sibyl(s)**.

Interestingly, the bulk of Quintus' examples are dreamers: twenty-two instances taken from the history, literature and myths of both Greece and Italy in order to make his point. All but two of these are treated in one place at 1.39-1.65, creating a catalogue that is perhaps the clearest case study of Quintus' use of examples.[22] These dreamers seem to be selected at random, and he moves from the mother of Dionysius I of Syracuse, through Tarquinius Superbus and Hannibal to Socrates, culminating with Marcus/Cicero himself; but, when we read this catalogue from a gendered perspective it yields interesting results.

Four of the dreamers in this catalogue are women, one of whom is named and all of whom are pregnant. As noted above, the section starts with the (unnamed) mother of Dionysius, who dreamed her child was born a satyr (1.39). The Galeotae, a Greek family of seers, interpreted the dream to represent her son's future fame and fortune – an unexpectedly neutral rendering of his tyranny over Syracuse in the first half of the fourth century BCE. Next, Quintus moves his argument to the realm of myth and drama, and the subsequent two examples are extended poetic quotations from Ennius. He first quotes a speech of Ilia, the mother of Remus and Romulus (though leaving her as an unnamed Vestal), as she recounts the dream she had whilst being raped by Mars (1.40-41).[23] Hecuba of Troy quickly follows, having dreamt of a flaming torch whilst pregnant with Paris – a dream that is explicitly said to trouble her husband Priam (1.42). As with the mother of Dionysius, interpreters give meaning to the dream based on the future importance of the child, although this time the interpretation is wholly negative. Two male dreamers – Aeneas and Tarquinius Superbus – intersect before we reach the final female dreamer of this section, the unnamed mother of Phalaris (1.46). Phalaris of Acragas was the first important Sicilian tyrant in the mid-6th century BCE and a precursor to Dionysius, though we lack details of his reign. Evidently, his tyranny was well known, and though Quintus delves into the details of the dream, he did not need to elaborate on "the monstrous cruelty of the son".[24]

The overall presentation of these dreamers is enlightening in respect of the position of women in Quintus' understanding of oneiromancy, and indeed divination more broadly. The fact that they are all pregnant at the time of their respective dreams (or being impregnated, in Ilia's case) is an obvious but significant point. Wardle defines these explicitly as "a series of

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[22] The two dreamers not in this catalogue, Caecilia at 1.99 and Agariste at 1.121, will be treated separately below.

[23] The reader is left to realise for herself that this is Ilia, based on the story's familiar context. For a detailed account of this dream and its construction, see Krevans 1993.

[24] 1.46: *inmanis filii crudelitas*.

'pregnancy dreams'", uncomfortably interrupted by Aeneas and Tarquinius Superbus.[25] The fact that these are the only women recorded in Quintus' catalogue, surrounded by politically charged examples of important men, reinforces the performative role of women in Roman myth and society as merely wives and mothers.[26] If the fact that they are not even granted their own names reinforces this point, the fact that their own responses are not recorded belabours it: in respect of Ilia, the quotation does recount that she woke in terror, and that she tells the tale "crying, struck with terror by the dream",[27] but Quintus stops before we get any further interpretation or context of the dream. Even for Hecuba, named only because of the quotation, we are not told how she herself reacted, only that her husband was "disturbed" (*conturbatus*) by the message.[28] Pregnancy was (and is) an anxiety-ridden time for a number of reasons, not least because of potential medical complications that could have been fatal for mother and child alike, but also because the future was uncertain: as we see in all the "pregnancy dreams" except Ilia, the person the child will grow to become is unknown and unknowable, and thus ripe with potential for divinatory interpretation. First time expectants, furthermore, are themselves in a liminal period, as their performative status and role in society progresses into motherhood.

Quintus' transition between the dreams of Ilia and Hecuba is also revealing of his attitude towards pregnancy. He writes that

> *Haec etiamsi ficta sunt a poeta, non absunt tamen a consuetudine somniorum. Sit sane etiam illud commenticium…*

> Although this [i.e. the story of Ilia] is the fiction of a poet, it does not depart from the familiar custom of dreams. Let the next one also be said, though it too is fabricated…[29]

There is irony in the fact that Quintus himself has already criticised Antiphon for not using "loftier" (*grandioribus*) examples in his treatise on dream divination, presumably meaning more credible sources.[30] But this statement also leaves us wondering precisely what is "familiar" about Ilia's situation: (unwanted) sexual relations with a god, or being the mother of the founder of Rome? She was a Vestal Virgin prior to the founding of Rome and the religious colleges, a mythical fallacy to which Quintus' introduction of the dreamer solely by

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[25] 2006, 218.

[26] McAuley 2016, 26-27: "maternity, or at least a certain type of matronality, was *the* sanctioned role for women in Roman social amd moral discourse and also in 'masculine' literature such as epic".

[27] 1.40: *lacrimans, exterrita somno.*

[28] In the quotation itself, too, it is explicitly Hecuba who dreams but Priam who acts, and Priam who is warned of the son's fate.

[29] 1.42.

[30] Wardle 2006, 209.

her priestly role gently points. Regardless of the dream's content, it must be conceded that the whole point of Ilia's story is that her situation is anything but customary. Should this be seen as an instance of Cicero as author subtly undermining Quintus' methodology of enumerating real (or at least realistic) examples? Or is it merely the case that, from Quintus' point of view, pregnancy and motherhood are the only performative role as far as women are concerned, and thus the only factor needed for masculine familiarity with womanhood?

It is worth considering what Aeneas and Tarquinius Superbus are doing here, if the theme is pregnancy. Aeneas is briefly included as an anecdotal conclusion to "dreams from fiction", though Quintus claims to explicitly draw on the annalist Fabius Pictor.[31] Ironically, then, the following dream of Tarquinius is another dramatic quotation, this time from Accius' *Brutus*. But what is particularly notable here is Quintus' framing: he opens with "but let us look nearer to ourselves",[32] and concludes with "come now, let us return to foreign examples", moving on to the dream of Phalaris' mother.[33] Initially, we might be tempted to consider these as meaning time and place, though it is a stretch to see Quintus in the late Republic as considering himself particularly near to the last king of the Regal Period. Is it possible to see, instead or as well, Quintus' meaning as gender? A male author writes of two brothers for an expected male audience. Pregnancy may be a familiar concept to them, but only as far as it happens to other people (namely, women). Tarquinius' dream of sacrificing and its interpretation of being wary of the political manoeuvres of perceived underdogs would presumably be considered by the elite Roman man to be an example much nearer to himself in this respect.[34] The placement of Tarquinius begins to make more sense, too, when we stop thinking of our female dreamers simply in terms of their pregnancies. As the actual end to Quintus' dramatic dreams, Tarquinius serves as a powerful denouement to that series, whilst at the same time opening a string of rulers and tyrants (and their mothers). The dreams are not a series of pregnancy dreams, or even of women's dreams, but simply dreams: the anxieties and potentials around pregnancy give Quintus a lot of examples to choose from, whilst at the same time reinforcing motherhood's performative centrality to – what he understands as – the female experience. The key positioning of Tarquinius' dream, with its introductory phrasing, underscores his importance, but also his performative masculinity.

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[31] 1.43: *somnia fabularum*
[32] 1.43: *sed propiora uideamus*.
[33] 1.46: *age nunc ad externa redeamus*.
[34] There is also surely irony in Cicero having Quintus, in his unstructured and at times basic argument, relate a warning that one should take greater heed of "him whom you consider to be as stupid as a bull" (1.45: *quem tu esse hebetem deputes aeque ac pecus*)!

As a final comment on Quintus' catalogue of dreamers, and its construction of gender, it is interesting to note who is *not* included within it. Perhaps the most important dreamer mentioned in the dialogue-treatise, in respect of gender but also in respect of understanding dream interpretation in the late Republic, is Caecilia Metella. She is alluded to in Cicero's general introduction to the dialogue-treatise (1.4) and then described in Quintus' argument (1.99), and yet she does not appear in the above mentioned central catalogue of dreamers itself.[35] Quintus provides us with no details of the content of the dream itself, but briefly mentions that its outcome was the restoration of the temple of Juno Sospita. What makes this dream stand out, aside from its placement, is the fact that this is a woman who is acting in her own right: neither Cicero in the introduction nor Quintus in the argument defines Caecilia in relation to a husband or son.[36] There is no mention of pregnancy nor, though Cicero's introduction paints the action as being taken by the consul Lucius Julius Caesar, is this dream for or concerning an important man in Caecilia's life. It is, then, decidedly not in any "familiar custom" we are to have understood from Ilia's dream. Cicero as author at this point has a predicament: here is a dream, and in fact the only dream, that has had public influence within his lifetime[37] – if it were not included, it would leave a noticeable hole in Quintus' exemplary dreamers, yet for a Republican audience it is an almost tangible example that Marcus would have severe difficulty refuting. Although masculinity lends credibility to Quintus' "nearer" example of Tarquinius Superbus, the Regal Period is still just far enough away to leave the dream in questionable status.[38] Caecilia, in both time and gender, would remove these ambiguities, thus undermining the structure of the catalogue. Instead, Cicero has Quintus mention her out of place, in the category of public portents, minimising her significance within the argument. The significance of her dream means that she cannot be ignored, but the fact that she does not conform to Quintus' understanding of the roles prescribed to her gender means that she cannot be discussed, at least in the context of Quintus' catalogue of dreamers.

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[35] For a full discussion of this dreamer and her wider importance, see chapter **6.7 Comparing Calpurnia III: Cicero's Concession**. The present section intends only to be a discussion of Caecilia's placement in *Div.* specifically.

[36] Cf. Kragelund 2001, 62-3.

[37] As he himself notes, cf. 1.4.

[38] Cf. Wardle 2006, 217: "Quintus draws a secondary distinction between the mythical and the historical periods and the inherent credibility of their traditions, but leaves it open, by his question, what status he accords to events from the Regal Period."

The last dreamer mentioned in Quintus' argument comes within a series of indefinite clauses of a range of signs for which the meanings are known because history has proved them so, making a final burst of exemplary "proof" to end his argument on. He writes

> *Et si mulier leonem peperisse uisa esset, fore ut ab exteris gentibus uinceretur ea res publica in qua id contigisset.*

> And if a woman dreamt of giving birth to a lion, it is the case that that state in which it occurred would be overcome by foreign people.[39]

Though anonymised, this dream belongs to Agariste, the mother of Pericles. Herodotus records the story in more detail, explicitly telling us that she was, perhaps unsurprisingly, pregnant at the time of the dream.[40] That Quintus marks the potential dreamer simply as a woman, rather than explicitly a pregnant woman, reinforces the performative importance of the other women dreamers' pregnancies in the earlier catalogue. There are plenty of women dreamers in Herodotus that Quintus could have used, yet this one clearly best conformed and reinforced the role of the woman as mother.

From this catalogue of dreamers, then, we can see the wider notions of women as diviners according to Quintus' side of the argument. In his "believer" status, of divination's existence being proved by its occurrences, women do have a role in the traditions. That role, however, is contingent on them performatively conforming to their roles as wives and mothers of important men.

2.3 Women as Diviners II: The World According to Marcus

When we turn to Book II, the character of Marcus is, in many respects, the complete opposite of Quintus. There are many ways, both subtle and explicit, that Cicero as author achieves this opposition, but perhaps the most important aspect for the present study is that Marcus takes the people (of all genders) out of divination. As we saw above, in their opening conversation, Quintus lays out the foundation of his understanding of divination as "if those kinds of divination [...] are true, there are gods; and conversely if there are gods, there are those who divine",[41] which Marcus immediately repeats (though with one key difference): "if there is divination, there are gods and, if there are gods, there is *divination*".[42] Of course, Marcus is

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[39] 1.121.
[40] Hdt. 6.131. Cf. also Plut. *Per.* 3.3.
[41] 1.9, see chapter **2.1 Arguing with Oneself**.
[42] 1.10: *si diuinatio sit, di sint et, si di sint, sit diuinatio.*

being brief, using the repetition to point out the *a priori* flaw in the parallel statements. But, though minor, his second apodosis shifts the terms of the debate away from "those who divine", and thus subtly shifts our gaze away from the people of divination, regardless of gender.

Marcus' argument in Book II, then, is much more neatly organised, demonstrating a performance of rationality to his approach. He begins with an attack on the Stoic position in respect of divination and fate (2.8-26),[43] before discussing more specific arguments against technical and natural divination (2.26-99 and 2.100-147 respectively). The ambiguous conclusion that has been the focus of so much scholarly discourse ends the discussion at 2.148-150.[44]

This is not to say that Marcus provides no examples whatsoever in his speech: a number of "events" are brought up, only to be questioned for their validity. Interestingly these examples, when they do occur in the elder Cicero's argument, are much more overtly political than his brother's selection: Deiotarus (2.20; 2.79), Sulla (2.65, who is also the subject of Marcus' own dream discussed in 1.59/2.137) and Alexander the Great (2.135) are laid against numerous examples of Julius Caesar and his fellow triumvirs, to whom the discussion frequently returns.[45] Beyond these, however, Marcus' exemplary people are philosophers, Stoic and otherwise, who he utilises to highlight the flaws of a philosophical underpinning on divination.

In order to present a balanced comparison of the two brothers' arguments, it will be useful to take a closer look at Marcus' treatment of dreams and dreamers, as was done in the previous section with Quintus. Dreams are the final type of divination he discusses, given an in-depth handling at 2.119-2.147. Following a lengthy discussion of the theological problems that arise with dream interpretation, and a rebuttal of some of his brother's examples,[46] Marcus presents five dreamers who were not mentioned by Quintus. Only one is a woman, unnamed and described simply as "a certain *matrona* who wanted a child", who dreams her womb is sealed

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[43] It is interesting that, though Quintus is coming from the Stoic standpoint, he barely engages with the philosophical underpinnings laid out here; similarly, in this section Marcus barely engages directly with Quintus' argument.

[44] Again, for tables of headings outlining the structure of both brothers' arguments, see Schofield 1986, 64; Schultz 2014, xv.

[45] Caesar is mentioned alone three times, at 2.23; 2.36-7 and 2.53. Pompey twice at 2.22 and 2.53, and Crassus also twice at 2.22 and 2.84. The three men are then ironically mentioned together 2.89 as having been told by the Chaldaeans they would all die of old age.

[46] Namely, Quintus and Marcus' own dreams (2.137-138), with which Quintus ends his catalogue of dreamers (1.58-59), and the dream of Simonides (2.143, cf. Quintus at 1.56).

up.[47] She consults two interpreters on this imagery, who give her opposing answers: the first explained that, with a sealed womb, conception is impossible, whilst the second claimed she was already pregnant, since it is not customary to seal something that is empty. Sadly, Marcus does not deign to tell us the real-life outcome for this matrona (since that would, to some extent, undermine his point), so we will never know whether she was able to successfully conceive.

Like for the women of Quintus' catalogue, then, the matrona's dream is once again centred on pregnancy and the anxieties surrounding it. But surprisingly, rather than focused on the future life, and fate, of the child, this episode is solely focused on the matrona and her desires. This reinforces the "familiarity" of the women of Quintus' catalogue, demonstrating that the two brothers at least share the same opinion on the performative role of women, but there are again subtle shifts in Marcus' presentation. The fact that neither the matrona, nor her husband nor future (potential) child are named reduces any importance they could claim to have. Hecuba and Ilia, and their children, are of central importance within their respective myths and, though the latter is unnamed, we know her from her context; Marcus' matrona, on the other hand, remains consciously anonymous and untraceable, by us or by the original audience. Dreams and divination, Marcus is saying, like women, should not be given a central place in the political sphere.

2.4 Making an Example of Cassandra

Having discussed gender in the arguments in general of the two brothers, I now turn to two more specific examples and what we can learn from them about gender in Ciceronian divination. The first is Cassandra. Though the first poet never describes her as prophetic, she is in many ways the Homeric example of inspired prophecy, and frequently taken, by both ancient sources and modern scholarship, as paradigmatic of the (Greek) tradition.[48] Cassandra makes an appearance in each brother's argument, in a way that is typical of their respective approaches to divination and to women as diviners at large. As much as she is "the quintessential inspired prophet",[49] she is the quintessential example for both Cicerones, and so makes an informative case study for the purpose of this chapter.

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[47] 2.145: *parere quaedam matrona cupiens.*
[48] The earliest reference to Cassandra's prophetic abilities is in the *Cypria* of the Epic Cycle. It is perhaps most famously seen in Aesch. *Ag.* 1072-1177. Cf. Mazzoldi 2002.
[49] Schultz 2014, 140.

At 1.66-7, Quintus introduces us to Cassandra through another dramatic quotation, probably from Ennius' *Alexander*, of Hecuba witnessing her daughter in the throes of inspiration. He provides four separated quotations, which we can assume to have come from the same scene.[50] The quotations give a physical description of the prophetess, as well as an account of her fighting the inspiration and finally an excerpt of the prophecy itself. During this, Quintus pauses to comment on the unnecessary inclusion of these verses, although he sees them as "tender and characteristic, and even delicate".[51] He ends his discussion of Cassandra with a second moment of self-awareness, realising his reliance on tragedy and myth before moving on to discuss the episode of an anonymous Rhodian oarsman who prophesied the pillaging of Dyrrachium during the civil war between Caesar and Pompey – a more 'historical' (and masculine) example of inspired prophecy for which Quintus claims Marcus as his authority.[52] Marcus' rebuttal of the Cassandra quotations, at 2.112-2.113, is short and sweet: fiction, no matter how beautifully written, is still fiction, and thus has no place as an authority on theological and philosophical matters.

Quintus' interjection between his final two Cassandra quotations are indicative of his presentation of the prophetess, and of his understanding of inspired prophecy. Breaking from the speech, he is keen to tell his listener (and, as such, reader) that

> *Deus inclusus corpore humano iam, non Cassandra, loquitur.*

> The god, enclosed within the human body, not Cassandra, is the one speaking now.[53]

Cassandra may be the most famous prophet, but for Quintus the prophecy proper is Apollo's.[54] It could be said that he is being reductive, but the younger Cicero is trying to uphold its veracity on account of its divine origin. To deny this example, he is saying, is to deny the gods themselves. Furthermore, the linguistic construction of this passage, and the use of the word "*inclusus*", is worth commenting on. There is an echo of Quintus' introduction of Cassandra, and inspired prophecy, where he says

> *Inest igitur in animis praesagitio extrinsecus iniecta atque inclusa diuinitus.*

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[50] Wardle 2006, 272.

[51] 1.66: *O poema tenerum et moratum atque molle!*

[52] 1.68. A cynical viewpoint may see Quintus' self-awareness as Cicero signposting the flawed nature of the argument.

[53] 1.67.

[54] Cf. e.g. Mazzoldi 2002 for a discussion of how Cassandra's divination oscillates between ecstatic and rational, in both Apollo's voice and hers. The construction of prophetic voice, both mortal and divine, will be discussed in more detail in chapter **3.4 The 'I' in Sibyl**. See also below, in chapter **2.5 Cicero and the Pythia: a Deceptive Construction**.

Therefore it is within the human soul to be prophetic, by divine power applied from both without and *within*.[55]

Quintus is trying to have his cake and eat it. The divine ability of the soul can be attributed to external and/or internal forces, a fact he points out but makes no attempt to distinguish more specifically. In fact, this repetition actually strengthens the distortion: Cassandra and Apollo, at least how they are presented in *Div.*, should be an example of divine ability coming from outside the prophetess' soul, yet the "*inclusus*" recalls us to the latter, inner mode, thus blurring the lines of without and within. But there is a further evocation here that takes us back to the pregnancy dreams: in both instances, there is a person within a person, so to speak, from and about which the prophecy comes. Quintus, in making his example viable, must trace even the virgin prophetess to the performative femininity of pregnancy.

Quintus mentions Cassandra once more in his speech, within a list of famous Greek diviners that includes Calchas, Teiresias and Cassandra's twin brother Helenus (1.87-89). The identities of, as well as the relationship between, Cassandra and Helenus bear some discussion. He writes

> *Quid? Asiae rex Priamus nonne et Helenum filium et Cassandram filiam diuinantes habebat, alterum auguriis, alteram mentis incitatione et permotione diuina?*

> What? Surely King Priam of Asia had a son, Helenus, and a daughter, Cassandra, who were diviners – the former by means of augury whilst the latter by incitement of the mind and divine ecstacy?[56]

This depiction is neat, and nicely aligns the dichotomy of divination alongside the dichotomy of gender. But the relationship between the twins and their divinatory abilities, it must be said, is more complex than that. Unlike his sister, Helenus does prophesy in the *Iliad*, through a number of different ways. He is initially introduced as "the best of ornithomancers by far", upholding Quintus' description of him as an augur.[57] A later prophetic speech by him, however, in which he persuades his brother Hector to challenge the best of the Achaeans to single combat, ends with: "for thus I have heard the voice of the eternal gods".[58] This has been frequently taken to give Helenus a Homeric precedence of inspired, or at least natural, divination.[59] The later literary traditions certainly see him as such, and one of the common myths of the twins' reception of the abilities is that as children, whilst left overnight in a

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[55] 1.66. For the echo, see Wardle 2006, 273; Schultz 2014, 142.
[56] 1.89.
[57] Hom. *Il.* 6.76: οἰωνοπόλων ὄχ᾽ ἄριστος.
[58] 7.53: ὣς γὰρ ἐγὼ ὄπ᾽ ἄκουσα θεῶν αἰειγενετάων.
[59] Cf. e.g. Lange 2007, 470.

temple of Apollo, they *both* had their eyes and ears licked by snakes, which enabled them to see and hear the god.[60] Similarly in the *Aeneid*, when Aeneas briefly meets Helenus at Buthrotum, the diviner gives the hero a prophecy which leaves us in no doubt that it is inspired divination, as he promises his words to be meaningful "if Apollo fills my mind with truths".[61] Helenus may be skilled in augury, but, as much as his sister, he was an inspired prophet. It seems, then, that the main difference between the twins is that Helenus is always believed, whilst Cassandra is always disregarded.

Why does Quintus paint the twins as opposites in respect of their abilities, and further, does gender play a part in this construction? Wardle suggests that the identification was made by the Stoics, as "typical examples of [technical] and natural divination respectively".[62] Helenus' wide-ranging abilities in both areas, however, though perhaps discreet in Homer, were well known in the wider mythological tradition. Further, there are plenty of examples, Homeric and otherwise, of technical diviners that could have been employed as instances of the validity of the Stoic paradigm. The choice of Helenus, for Quintus at least, rests solely on his relationship to Cassandra, an example unparalleled in her own field. The gendered dichotomy the twins provide must have been, in this way, a factor steering the younger Cicero's choice: the contrast between the masculinity of Helenus and the femininity of Cassandra works to reinforce the binary of technical and natural – as well as the binary of belief and disregard – with the learned and methodological processes of the former are much more suited to the male twin than the wild and uncontrolled raving of the latter.

Marcus' treatment of Cassandra, on the other hand, is much briefer, as we have come to expect from the elder Cicero. His discussion comes after an attack on the composition of the Sibylline Books, which are skilfully composed and thus cannot be the work of a frenzied mind.[63] Once the logic underpinning inspired prophecy has been distilled, it is easy to dismiss Cassandra: after all, she is fictional. This allows him to reiterate his admonition to Quintus about arguments from authority. She is mythical, Greek and female, and thus wholly unsuitable for a discussion which, to Marcus, should remain focused on contemporary Roman politics.

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[60] As described by Anticlides, FGrH 140 F17.
[61] Verg. *Aen.* 3.434: *animus si ueris implet Apollo*. The full prophecy is at 3.374-462.
[62] 2006, 319.
[63] 2.110-112.

2.5 Cicero and the Pythia – a Deceptive Construction?

Like Quintus, we move from the mythic to the historical for our next case study on the construction of gender in the two books of *Div*. Often said to stand at the heart of the ancient religious landscape, the Delphic Oracle in central Greece had pronounced oracular responses long before Cicero's time, and would continue to do so long after.[64] Countless examples of the Greek *poleis* sending ambassadors – and gifts – to Delphi for guidance and direction in political and other matters, as well as personal accounts of quests for answers, litter the Greek historiographies from Herodotus onwards.[65] By contrast, the Roman state did not frequently send ambassadors to this oracular site, perhaps because, as H. W. Parke and D. E. W. Wormell commented in 1956, "with a local source of prediction [i.e. the Sibylline Books] and a rival foreign method [i.e. the haruspices] at hand the Romans had little occasion to go as far afield as Delphi to seek for prophecies".[66] The site, however, still held a prominent place in the divinatory traditions for individuals, and even Cicero himself is said to have visited it in his youth.[67]

Although the Delphic Oracle was an institution, the prophetic response proper came from the lips of an individual woman: the Pythia. A priestess of Apollo, she was said to be possessed by that deity, and utter oracular responses in frenzy, in much the same fashion as Cassandra did, as discussed above.[68] The importance of this site, as well as the long running status, meant it would have been impossible for Cicero to ignore it in *Div*. without an obvious gap. In fact, each brother is able to utilise the construction of the institution – and specifically the construction of the individual prophetess – in different ways in order to further his own argument. This section will look at these ways the Pythia is constructed within the *Div*.

Quintus mentions either the Pythia or the Delphic Oracle as an institution in three separate instances during his argument. He mainly discusses the institution at 1.37-8 – noting its ancient glory as proof enough of its veracity – but only discusses the Pythia as a method of divine communication, rather than as a diviner in her own right: "[…] that power of the earth, which rouses the mind of the Pythia with divine touch".[69] In this way, Quintus' understanding

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[64] For a history of the Delphic Oracle, particularly in the Greek world, see Bowden 2005. The word "oracle" has overlapping definitions, and so for simplicity I will be referring to 'oracular response' and 'oracular site' to distinguish words from space, and 'Delphic Oracle' to refer to the institution: see chapter **3.1 Lost in a Book** for a discussion of the language used.
[65] See Parke and Wormell 1956 for a collection of oracular texts from Delphi, and Fontenrose 1978 for a collection of Delphic responses.
[66] Parke and Wormell 1956, 266.
[67] For Cicero's visit, see Plut. *Cic*. 5, with Rasmussen 2013 for an enlightening contextualisation of this episode.
[68] For discussion of the role of the Pythia(s), see esp. Maurizio 1995; 2001.
[69] 1.38: [...] *uis illa terrae quae mentem Pythiae diuino afflatus concitabat.*

of the Pythia and her prophetic profession is very much in line with his understanding of Cassandra, despite the latter's position outside any such institution, as merely a vessel for a greater power within. The oracular site and its priestess are then cited twice more in Quintus' argument: one passing comment that again repeats the fact that the Pythia is inspired by the power of the earth, soon followed by an example of an oracular response from Delphi.[70] In a way, this last mention stands out from Quintus' previous discussion of the Delphic Oracle, as he attributes the oracular response directly to the Pythia, rather than to the institution or to the deity.

Marcus, on the other hand, takes an opposite approach to what we might otherwise expect: unlike Quintus, he actually gives a level of agency to the Pythia as the oracle giver. As we saw him do earlier with the "if there is divination…" quotation, he opens his discussion of this tradition by paraphrasing Quintus' argument back, but with a minor difference:

> *"euanuisse", aiunt, "uetustate uim loci eius, unde anhelitus ille terrae fierit, quo Pythia mente incitata oracla ederet."*
>
> "It evaporated a long time ago", they say, "the power of that place, from where those vapours of the earth come, *with which the Pythia, incited in her mind, pronounces oracles*."[71]

The switch is subtle, but distinct. The Pythia is no longer a part of Apollo's method, but the pronouncer herself, her "incited mind" no longer explicitly due to a "divine touch". This may seem, at first, to be completely at odds with his otherwise standard procedure of shifting the gaze *away* from mortal diviners, but his reason becomes apparent as he moves on to mention in an aside that, during Demosthenes' lifetime, the Pythia was bribed by Philip of Macedon: "thus we may suppose", he concludes, "there to have been other cases in which the Delphic oracles was less than sincere".[72] By furnishing the Pythia with agency, he also puts upon her the agency to be deceptive, corrupted and false.

These positions give an interesting angle on the question of whose prophecy is being spoken – a question to which we will return in Chapter 3 (in respect of the Sibyl and the Sibylline Books).[73] To keep the focus of this chapter on Cicero and his construction(s) of divination and diviners, the Pythia, seen from this angle, begins to show us a crack between the character of Marcus and the author and wider historical figure of Cicero: beyond this theological trilogy, Cicero's extant writings seem to point to an exclusive naming of (Pythian) Apollo as the sole

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[70] 1.79; 1.81.
[71] 2.117.
[72] 2.118: *quo licet existimare in aliis quoque oraculis Delphicis aliquid non sinceri fuisse.*
[73] See chapter **3.4 The 'I' in Sibyl**.

source of oracular responses at Delphi. This naming convention is found in his speeches, his letters and even his other didactic and philosophical works.[74] That Quintus refers to the Delphic Oracle in both ways, attributing the responses to both the deity and the woman, subtly reminds the reader of the standard view that the two are intertwined, and the prophecy cannot happen without both parties.[75] Marcus' lack of naming the institution, only the person, then, must be deliberate on the part of Cicero as author. The falsity of the oracles is attributed by Marcus solely to a human (and female) agent in an otherwise divine (and male) tradition.

In the wider view, this argument still fits into Marcus' removal of people, and specifically women, from the divinatory process. Regardless of the author's intentions with this text, it would have been impossible for Marcus as character to fully reject the institution that held such a high "socio-religious status", as Susanne William Rasmussen describes in her 2013 chapter from which this sub-section takes its title.[76] Marcus, despite the polemic against "superstition" (*superstitio*), is trying to uphold Roman identity and ancient tradition, as he (or Cicero as author) famously reiterates in the ambiguous conclusion.[77] By reducing the Delphic Oracle down to the Pythia, he is able to reveal the woman behind the curtain and, as such, cast doubt over a process, a method and a person without explicitly denying the institution, the tradition or its socio-religious embeddedness.

2.6 Nothing but an Old Wives' Tale?

But what, precisely, does Marcus mean by weeding out *superstitio*, whilst upholding religion proper?[78] Throughout his discussion, he has been lambasting divination, and particularly the Stoic view of the tradition, as being "too superstitious".[79] But what precisely is meant here? The Anglicisation "superstition" is not a straight translation culturally that we can apply without further consideration.

From at least Plautus onwards, *superstitio* was, generally speaking, a negative term in Latin, denoting a perversion of proper religious action.[80] Varro, in a passage of the *Antiquitates*

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[74] Cf. e.g. *Font.* 30; *Ad Brut.* 6 (1.2a); *Fin.* 5.44; *Leg.* 2.40; *Orat* 1.199; *Tusc.* 1.17.
[75] On this construction, see Maurizio 2001, esp. 46-50.
[76] Rasmussen 2013, 86.
[77] 2.148-149; cf. Krostenko 2000, 374-375. Interestingly, this does seem to be a view that aligns with Cicero's wider extant writings: cf. e.g. Rasmussen 2000.
[78] 2.148.
[79] Cf e.g. 2.100: "however of my own accord I had already judged the Stoic views on divination as too superstitious" (*tamen etiam mea sponte nimis superstitiosam de diuinatione Stoicorum sententiam iudicabam*).
[80] Rüpke 2016b, 8, following Martin 2004 and Gordon 2008. As Santangelo 2013, 38-41 notes, Cicero is our earliest surviving occurrence of the Latin form (in the *de Inuentione*).

rerum diuinarum ("*Divine Antiquities*") quoted in Augustine's *De Ciuitate Dei* ("*City of God*"), reflects that the superstitious person *fears* the gods, rather than respecting and venerating them.[81] In *ND*, Cicero has the Stoic Balbus provide an etymology claiming that the word originally came from *superstes* (literally "survivor"), meaning people who "prayed and sacrificed all day long so that their children might outlive them", before becoming more widely applicable as a term of disapproval.[82] Furthermore, it was often used to describe foreign religious behaviours the Romans could not rationalise into their own religious world view, or that were considered dangerous to the Roman state.[83] Richard Gordon takes the stance that

> in the Roman case, then, it makes most sense to view the notion of superstition as a strategy for delimiting an imagined community by claiming the existence of consensual frontiers between traditional/sanctioned/proper and non-traditional/unsanctioned/improper religious action.[84]

Superstition was, in short, the religion of the Other.[85]

Further, however, superstition is a trait Marcus (and Cicero) repeatedly and specifically attribute to old women, such as in the phrase *anilis superstitio* – perhaps best translated as "old wives' tales".[86] Given the already discussed instability of translation for "*superstitio*", this gendered (and age-based) qualification bears consideration. What is meant by this stereotype, and what is it saying about the relationship between gender, age and religion, for Cicero at least? The *anus* was a common figure of pejorative stereotype in Latin literature (and beyond), frequently mocked, despised and hated. Amy Richlin notes the exaggerated repulsion frequently evoked particularly in Latin satire: they are decrepit, alcoholic and sexually aggressive towards male speakers.[87] There is also a comparison to be made with the expressive studies of the "Drunk Old Woman" in Hellenistic sculpture, who with wrinkled skin and sagging rags clutches a Dionysian wine bottle, laughing at passers-by. R. R. R. Smith writes that

> Her body is ruined by age, emphasized by her exposed bony shoulder. Her dress has slipped, in drunkenness perhaps, but also as a mock-coquettish reference to her vanished sexual attraction. The figure is both a study of old age and a statement of

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[81] Fr. 47 (= Aug. *de Civ. D.* 6.9) This idea is found as early as Theophrastus (cf. *Char.* 16) and is similarly laid out by Seneca (in the now lost *de Superstitione*) and Plutarch (cf. *de Superst.*). For the development of this concept, see Rüpke 2016.

[82] 2.72: *Nam qui totos dies precabantur et immolabant ut sibi sui liberi superstites essent superstitiosi sunt appellati.*

[83] See Martin 2004, 130-135 for discussion of *superstitio* being a part of "anti-Roman" sentiment.

[84] 2008, 75. Cf. also Beard *et al.* 1998, 214-227; Nikolopoulos 2003, 58: "superstition is pietas deformed."

[85] For ease of reading, in this thesis I will be using "superstition" as a translation of *superstitio*.

[86] Found in this form or similar at 1.7, 2.19, 2.36, 2.125; cf. also its use in *ND* at 1.55, 1.94, 2.5, 2.70, 3.12, 3.92.

[87] 2014, esp. 71-73. Cf. also Rosivach 1994; Parkin 2004, 86-7.

Dionysos' powers. He can make an old hag laugh at her fate and at the passing viewer.[88]

Obviously, it was not necessarily the case that all old women were such blights to society – or even that they were considered as such, and it is important to remember that "old woman", despite our ancient satirists' simplifications, was not a single category of social standing.[89] As Vincent Rosivach notes, however, "individual members of a stereotyped class may tend to conform to the image society sets for them", and this becomes a cycle of depiction and reality constantly informing each other.[90]

To view this stereotype from another angle: the so-called *Laudatio Turiae* is a funerary inscription from the first century BCE of an unnamed woman written by her husband that praises her many virtues.[91] In a list of her domestic virtues, the husband draws attention to her "religious devotion free of superstition";[92] he then ends the list by commenting that "the qualities that I assert you have belong to you alone; very few other women have lived in times similar enough so as to endure such things and perform such deeds as Fortune has taken care to make rare for women".[93] Evidently, it is the case that a woman's "religious devotion" (however we are understanding that notion) is considered to be a form of superstition until proven otherwise. In much the same way that Tim Parkin comments that the rare examples of poetry "*in praise of* older women['s sexual attractiveness] highlights the very atypicality of such an approach", so too does the mention of this unnamed woman's "good" religious practice highlight the perceived rarity of such a situation.[94] Superstition, then, was already a woman's lot, and particularly an old woman's lot.

However, a more positive stereotype of old women was tellers of stories and folktales. In Apuleius' second-century CE picaresque novel *Metamorphoses* ("*The Golden Ass*"), for example, the centrepiece story of Cupid and Psyche is a tale told by an old woman.[95] Yet this

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[88] 1991, 137-8.
[89] Cf. Pratt 2000, writing of Greece, esp 43: "This is not to deny that negative stereotypes associated with old women were abundant in ancient Greece and that growing old was no doubt often difficult, particularly for women who were poor, sick, or alone. But that all women, regardless of their previous social status, experienced a significant drop in social value after menopause is not credible and is not supported by the evidence". As a contrast, Mustakallio 2011, 48, notes the importance of old women in historiographical sources such as Livy as "personification[s] of the magical power and knowledge of the past attributed to older people".
[90] 1994, 114.
[91] Early scholars working on the inscription thought the woman to be Turia, and her husband Lucretius, but this attestation is not stable. For a contextualisation of the woman's life, along with a text and translation of the *Laudatio*, see Osgood 2014.
[92] 1.30-31: *[religionis] sine superstitione* (text and translation from Osgood 2014).
[93] 1.34-36: *Propria sunt tua quae vindico ac [perpaucae in tempora] similia inciderunt, ut talia paterentur et praestarent, quae rara ut essent [mulierum] fortuna cauit* (Osgood 2014).
[94] Parkin 2004, 86-87.
[95] Apul. *Metam*. 4.27. Cf. Bremmer 1987, 201, for discussion and context.

too conforms to our idea of superstition: their tales, regardless of how well they are told, are to be dismissed as fiction. The distinction is blurred, even, in *ND*, when Cotta admonishes Balbus for offering "*fabellas aniles*" – a word we have already seen in respect of Quintus' reliance on fiction and myth – as explanations.[96]

Despite this generalised invective, however, it was around the same period as *Div.* that Cicero also wrote his *Cato Maior*, also known as *de Senectute* ("*On Old Age*"), in which he[97] praises the benefits of growing old. Unsurprisingly, there is no mention of old women or the benefits they might get from their age.[98] In Cicero's generalisations, however, it is possible to see how some of the stereotypes (and realities) of old age may have combined with the stereotypes of gender to create the intention behind the phrase *anilis superstitio*.

One of the main points made by Cato is that the criticisms of old age are really the criticism of character traits which are borne throughout life. Therefore

> *Moderati enim et nec difficiles nec inhumani senes tolerabilem senectutem agunt, importunitas autem et inhumanitas omni aetati molesta est*.
>
> In fact, old men of moderate temperament, and who are neither troublesome nor rude, lead a tolerable old age, while rudeness and ungraciousness are offensive in all periods of life.[99]

The stereotypes are being shifted from discriminations to mirrors, reflecting back on those who would criticise old men: if you dislike the elderly for their (perceived) rudeness, should you not first consider whether you yourself are being unnecessarily rude? Reading Cicero against himself, then, we perhaps first ought to remember that superstition is a trait found in women and men in all periods of life, rather than solely old age, as his use of the *anilis superstitio* stereotype would have us believe. But while in *de Senectute*, the reversal demonstrates and expounds the benefits of being an old man, there is in *Div.* a desire to be distanced from all aspects of the old woman. Questioning the mechanics of entrails being altered *during* sacrifice in order for them to be in accordance with divine will, Marcus exclaims "Now, believe me, even old women do not hold this as truth!"[100] This mirror, should

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[96] 3.12. cf. with the dreams of Aeneas as *somnia fabularum* (*Div.* 1.43), as discussed in **2.2 Women as Diviners I: The World According to Quintus**.

[97] The main body of the text is spoken by the character of Cato but, unlike in the theological trilogy, Cicero explicitly states that the views put forward by this character are in line with his own (S*en.* 3). The extent to which we should take this statement at face value, as with personal statements in all of Cicero's philosophical works, is debatable, but unfortunately beyond the remit of this thesis. See Cole 2013, esp. 149-150, for discussion.

[98] For an analysis of this text, along with discussion of who Cicero/Cato is and isn't concerned with, see Parkin 2004, 61-68.

[99] *Sen.* 3.

[100] 2.36: *Hoc iam, mihi crede, ne aniculae quidem existimant!*

the reader see themself reflected in it, displays all the negativity attached to old women, and to superstition.

Although Quintus, once again the opposite of his brother, does not use the *anilis superstitio* stereotype, a passage from his speech does provide an interesting angle for our discussion. In the middle of discussing the divine power of the soul, and its ability to presage the future in sleep or near death, the younger brother pauses to comment that

> *Sagire enim sentire acute est; ex quo sagae anus, quia multa scire uolunt, et sagaces dicti canes.*

> "sagire", then, means "to perceive acutely"; from which old women (*anus*) are called "sagae", *because they claim to know much*, and dogs are said to be "sagacious".[101]

The sub-clause highlighted in the passage above appears to have proved problematic in translations, based in part on our own modern preconceptions of old women and the wider use of *saga*. W. A. Falconer's Loeb series translation, following A. Pease's commentary, renders this as "because they are assumed to know a great deal"; whilst David Wardle chooses "because they want to know much".[102] Sebastiano Timpanaro, by contrast, chooses "perché *pretendono* di saper molto" ('because they *claim* to know much').[103] These three verbs give three very different, and even conflicting reasons, as well as different levels of agency to the *saga*. An obvious parallel to the passage is found in Festus, albeit with this key difference:

> *Unde et sagae anus dictae, quae multa sciunt, et sagaces canes…*

> From which, old women are called "*sagae*", who know much, and dogs "sagacious"…[104]

There is no more claiming, wanting or being assumed: these old women are knowledgeable. This time it is Quintus who is shifting the terms of the debate in order to lend doubt to a person's status. But knowledge is power, and the wider image of *sagae*, perhaps best translated as "witches", in Latin literature is enlightening for this shift: Columella's *de Re Rustica* ("*On Agriculture*") twice warns against the *uilicus* admitting onto the farm "haruspices and witches", who deceive weak minds with superstitions.[105] In poetry, too, these

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[101] *Div.* 1.65.

[102] Falconer 1923; Wardle 2006; cf. Pease 1920, 210.

[103] Timpanaro 1988 (my emphasis).

[104] Festus 303L, s.v. *Praesagitio.* (Text derived from Lindsay 1965).

[105] Columella, *Rust.* 1.8.6: "[the uilicus] must not admit haruspices and witches, two types of people who incite simple minds with empty superstitions to expenses and even to disgraceful deeds" (*haruspices sagasque, quae utraque genera uana superstitione rudes animos ad impensas ac deinceps ad flagitia compellunt, ne admiserit*); A passage from Cato's *de Agri Cultura* provides a parallel to this passage, but interestingly makes no mention of *sagae* or any female roles in the list of itinerant ritual experts – again, like Quintus, exercising caution in

witches are firmly in the realm of magic, a joke for the sensible, which Horace lists with dreams, miracles, ghosts and things that go bump in the night, and are granted powers of persuasion by Propertius (albeit not strong enough to dissuade him from his obsession).[106]

With this in mind, I think we must discard Wardle's "want to know much", as it takes us away from *superstitio* and knowledge and into the (related, but distinct) realm of gossip. Falconer's choice is also problematic as the passive form takes away the *saga*'s agency in persuading people of her knowledge that we see in the likes of Propertius. Timpanaro's translation, with the meaning of *uolunt* being "claim", in the sense of "want to be seen as", suits this situation best.[107] This interpretation also fits well into Cicero as author's wider invective against the older women of Rome: Quintus' depiction blurs *anus* and *sagae*, subtly involving all older women in the invective of "witch" simply for falling into that gender and age group; similarly the knowledge of old women is problematised as being false or superstitious knowledge.

Superstition, then, was above all a method of Othering divinatory and religious practices that were not officially sanctioned. But the broad range of the Other involved in superstitious practices weakened its effectiveness. The old woman was not just an easy target, she was specifically internal, herself Roman. She blurred the line between insider/outsider, and so as invective in the sense of "no old woman believes such…" it is particularly strong to a Roman audience because, regardless of age or gender, there is a constant danger of becoming such a person.

2.7 Women as Diviners III: The World According to Cicero

As a whole, the text of *Div.* is both enlightening and obscuring for our understanding of divination and divinatory practice in the late Roman Republic. Malcolm Schofield once described it as "a Chinese box [… which] does not have, and can never have had, a single meaning".[108] Yet, beyond its meaning(s), it reveals an axiomatic understanding of gender and the relationship it has with divination, at least as far as Cicero understood it. Throughout this chapter, I have explored the way in which the two speakers of this dialogue-treatise are made

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conceding to women knowledge or power: "[the *uilicus*] must not consult a haruspex, an augur, a *hariolus* nor a Chaldean" (5: *Haruspicem, augurem, hariolum, Chaldaeum nequem consuluisse uelit*).

[106] Hor. *Epist.* 2.2.209-210; Prop. 3.24.9-10.

[107] *OLD* s.v. 18; cf. e.g. Cic. *Brut.* 206. Many thanks go to Prof. Jaap Wisse for drawing my attention to this parallel.

[108] 1986, 63.

to treat female diviners, and the performative roles they understood from women. Quintus and Marcus, though they take opposing views of the validity and place of divination in the Roman political sphere, share a reductive view of women. This view does not say that women cannot be diviners (as much as divination exists), but rather relegates them to only being able to act within certain performative roles, such as inspired prophecy, which can be linked to (masculine) ideas of pregnancy.

Through the rest of this thesis, then, we will look beyond this view: in Sibyl and in Calpurnia, we will see women performing inspired prophecy and dreams, which go beyond the pregnancy paradigm and place us right in the heart of politics. Similarly, in Martha we find a woman practising technical divination, at the top of her game. Cicero's text may be fundamental in our understanding of divination in the late Roman Republic, but at the same time, he is constructing a very specific worldview for himself and for his audience. It is time to look beyond.

Chapter Three: Sibyl(s)

3.1 Lost in a Book

From Cicero's quandary about the place of divination in Roman politics, we move to the Sibylline Books, a divinatory tradition right at the very heart of the Roman Republic.[1] Hidden from the public in the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, they were only accessible to a select few; a college of no more than fifteen men who, when asked by the Senate to seek meaning from a prodigy, would return with the relevant extract with instruction for expiation.[2] These Books were understood to contain the words and prophecies of the enigmatic Sibyl(s) – a mysterious prophetess or prophetesses seemingly ubiquitously known throughout the ancient world. The Sibylline Books, and the construction of a consultation with them, are a relatively unique tradition of divination, that can be seen as a development from the Greek oracular tradition, particularly state-sought oracles such as those from Delphi, in that the cryptic riddles provided by person-based (but still randomised) traditions that allow the state to make decisions or justifications.[3] Importantly, although presented in a textual format, they are the word and prophecies of a woman.

As we saw in the introduction, Roman state religion was deindividualised, based on the politically elite colleges of (mostly male) priesthoods.[4] On one level the Books are a strong part of this system: when a prodigy was brought forward and accepted by the Senate, the interpretation and expiation thereof was based on the readings of a specific college of initially two men, called the *duouiri*. During the Republic their number was increased to ten (*decemuiri*) and finally fifteen men, who were ultimately called the *quindecemuiri sacris*

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[1] "Sibylline" can refer to a number of different, but interlinked, prophetic traditions across the ages and cultures of the ancient world and beyond. Through this chapter, the term "Sibylline Books" (or just "Books") will be used to refer exclusively to the tradition of the prophecies held in the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus – until the age of Augustus, at least – under the care of the (*quin*)*decemuiri* (see chapter **3.5 Whose Line Is It, Anyway?**). "Sibylline Oracles", by contrast, will refer exclusively to the twelve books that make up the extant collection of prophecy collected and compiled under Judeo-Christian pseudepigraphic editing, to use Potter's term (1990b, 471). Finally, "sibylline tradition" will be used to refer to both these and all aspects of prophecy bearing the Sibyl's name. There is a conscious choice to use the lower case in this last instance to emphasise the fact that there is no single unifying tradition, but rather aspects that relate to each other regarding the Sibyls and the wider context – in this respect it is an adjective, not a title.

[2] For discussion on the politicisation of the Sibylline Books, see Parke 1967, 132-3; Monaca 2005 esp. 31. On the other hand, Orlin 1997, 92, asserts that "most of the responses given by the Sibylline Books did not have political overtones".

[3] For oracles in the ancient world, cf. Curnow 2004.

[4] See chapter **1.1 Engendering the Future**.

faciundis.[5] In many respects, the construction of the (*quin*)*decemuiri* appears at odds with the mysterious woman whose prophecies they convey, and yet they are still very much a part of the sibylline paradigm of oracular and inspired prophecy.

Beyond the Books, and even beyond Rome, the figure of the Sibyl herself is shrouded in enigma, with scholarly ink spilled even over the question of whether she stands as one prophet or several.[6] Early references note a singular figure, and it is only in imperial sources and beyond that we see "Sibyls", in the plural.[7] When they were in the plural, they were typically numbered at ten, differentiated based on location (for example, the Sibyl *of Cumae* as opposed to the Sibyl *of Erythrae*) and they prophesied from these specific locations, but at the same time, Santiago Montero Herrero describes that they "recorrían libremente el mundo impartiendo sus profecías".[8] When they are discussed in the plural, they are never together, and no ancient source speaks of two Sibyls existing in the same time or place – an impressive feat for the length of time they each lived – but instead they are often even given a sequential order, one Sibyl existing after another. They remained a foreign identity in Rome, yet, as I mentioned, the Books that bear their name – and their traditions – were fundamental in the Republic. These Books themselves are traditionally linked with the Sibyl of Cumae, the third Sibyl according to Pausanias,[9] or the seventh according to Lactantius.[10] Yet I would argue that the Sibylline Books take on an identity of their own, beyond "Cumae" and, perhaps, beyond "Sibyl". The Books are a performative part of that singular identity, in addition to being a Roman recreation of *the* Sibyl. Within this fragmenting, then, they perform a unique identity of their own.

Much of the Sibylline tradition, and oracular divination more broadly, was an inheritance form the Greeks, but, as we will see through this chapter, a number of things were adapted to suit a Roman context; the gender of the Sibyl, however, was not, and explicitly so. The mythological construction was fluid, as is evident from many other sibylline aspects, and yet

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[5] The dates of the increases are unknown. Rasmussen 2003, 170, notes that Livy refers to the college as the *decemuiri* up until 98 BCE, and both Varro and Cicero speak of the *quindecemuiri* from 51 BCE onwards. It is often assumed that Sulla increased the number, in 81 BCE, cf. Parke 1988, 206. The college shall henceforth be referred to as the (*quin*)*decemuiri*. See chapter **3.5 Whose Line Is It, Anyway?**

[6] Cf. e.g. Crippa 1998, esp. 159-160; 2004, 99; Champeux 2004, 44. Guillermo 2013, 10, uses the phrase "an extremely small and yet very powerful group", but, whilst perhaps they were consciously working in tandem within the same framework, I feel that to define them as a group gives a structure that is not evident in the sources.

[7] For example, Heraclitus fr. 75 (Marcovich). Cf. Potter 1990b, 475-478; Buitenwerf 2003, 110-114. Lactantius claims his source for the multiple Sibyls to be Varro, but his accuracy in this instance is questionable: cf. Buitenwerf 2003, 110-111.

[8] 1994, 52.

[9] 10.12.8.

[10] *Div. Inst.* 1.6.10.

the figure of the Sibyl remains consciously feminine. To what extent, then, do the identities of the Sibyl, the Sibyls and the Sibylline Books, as well as the wider notions of oracular and inspired prophecy in Rome, hinge upon this femininity?

An initial hindrance to answering this question is the murky waters of definition. The word "oracle" seems to present different meanings to different authors, both ancient and modern, yet few seek explicitly to define it. Some scholars, such as Esther Eidinow, seek a meaning of "oracle" that is dependent on "sanctuaries and sites where you could directly consult a supernatural entity, be it a god or the dead."[11] Trevor Curnow defends this position, as it distinguishes oracles as places from prophets as people.[12] But "oracle" can also refer to the spoken message presented by the prophetess or prophet as being the words of or from the god.[13] Isidore of Seville, in his *Etymologiae* ("*Etymologies*"), suggested root of the Latin *oraculum* (from which the English word "oracle" derives) was linked to the second meaning, saying that oracles come *ab ore,* "from the mouth".[14] The sixth-century Bishop, however, included this definition in a chapter discussing sacred buildings, suggesting, regardless of root, an *oraculum* was primarily a place, at least in his eyes. On the other hand, Greek helpfully differentiates between "χρησμός", an oracular response, and "χρηστήριον", an oracular site.

Since the English word "oracle" itself can and does mean both, to avoid confusion in this thesis I am going to use the terms "oracular site" and "oracular response" to differentiate between space and words respectively, where possible.[15] Similarly, the person in connection with the oracle shall be defined as "oracle giver", or by their specific title (such as "Sibyl" or "Pythia").

The word *uates* also bears note. It is sometimes attributed to the Sibyl(s), as well as oracle givers more broadly. Interestingly, grammatically speaking, it is both masculine and feminine. Furthermore, especially in Augustan literature, it is also used to describe a poet, with a like that James O'Hara neatly defines: "the inspired poet-prophet who may have special

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[11] 2007, 32. Cf. also Curnow 2004; Raphals 2013.
[12] Curnow 2004, 1.
[13] Cf. Trampedach 2015, 14-15: "Während Orakel - griechischer und lateinischer Terminologie entsprechend - als sprachlich verfaßte Götterbotschaften verstanden werden, sind Zeichen symbolische (d.h. hier nicht-sprachliche) Manifestationen der Götter". See also Parke 1967, 9: "an oracle for the present purpose is a formal statement from a god, usually given in answer to an enquiry, or else the place where such an enquiry could be made". Guillermo 2013, 26 asserts that the term is also used to describe "the person through whom this advice is transmitted", although this is rarely the case in the ancient literature and not used in modern scholarship on the topic.
[14] 15.4.3. cf. also Stoneman 2011, 13.
[15] With the exception of the aforementioned Sibylline Oracles, named so for convention and for simplicity – cf. n.1, this chapter.

knowledge and insight into the truth about the world – or may be a charlatan deceiving with false dreams".[16] Though not a specific class of diviners, the attribution of this word to certain figures, particularly Sibyl(s) is significant, not least because of the fluidity of gender that exists within the word, but also the fluidity between attribution and self-attribution.[17] As such, I have retained the Latin, even in translations.

The Sibylline Books, as a written form of prophecy, are a unique construction of divination in the ancient world. A written form of the oracular tradition did exist in Greece, at least in the sense of χρησμολόγοι ("oracle-mongers") who would collect oracular responses and sell them on to others, divorced from their original context.[18] They were still seen to have value, it seems, even removed from their initial consultation, but this separation is the crucial difference between the collections of the χρησμολόγοι and the Sibylline Books of Rome. Rather than being recorded and reapplied prophecies, the contents of the Books were (at least constructed as being) always solely a written phenomenon, creating a textual site from the start for this Sibyl's oracular responses. Furthermore, in both the Roman world and beyond, χρησμολόγοι and other oracle-collectors would have prophecies and books that were (or claimed to be) sibylline. These are an important part of the background that surrounded the Sibylline Books of the state religion; however, though sibylline, they were very much apart from the institution that is the topic of this present study.

When a prodigy was recognised by the Senate, they asked the (quin)decemuiri to consult the Books, at which point they would locate the relevant prophecy in the text. Although they were kept in the temple of Jupiter,[19] they were not the words of that god, nor were they even the words of Apollo, the typical god of prophecy, who is closely aligned with the sibylline tradition.[20] Despite this unique construction, the language of consultation is still explicitly used, and Livy, for example, frequently describes the actions of the (quin)decemuiri using the verb *adeo* with the Books as its direct accusative.[21] The consultation was with the Books themselves, acting as agents.[22]

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[16] 1990, 177.

[17] Virgil refers to himself as *uates* in the Aeneid at 7.41, but also his Sibyl and Cassandra respectively at 6.259 and 5.636. Both these *uates* will be revisted through this chapter.

[18] This is precisely what the character of the Oracle-Monger tries to do in Aristophanes' *Aues* ("*Birds*"), 959-990, where he is called a "charlatan coming uninvited" (983: ἄκλητος ἰὼν ἄνθρωπος ἀλαζὼν) and is chased off by the main characters.

[19] Until 12 BCE, at least, when Augustus moved them to the Temple of Apollo on the Palatine.

[20] Parke 1988, 77-8, ironically notes that the mythic date of the Sibylline Books' origin actually predates the introduction of the Roman 'cult' of Apollo. For the history of the connection between Apollo and oracular divination, see Dietrich 1978.

[21] Cf. e.g. Liv. 21.62, 31.12, 34.55. Cf. also D.H. *Ant. Rom.* 4.62.5; Tac. *Ann.* 1.76.

[22] See chapter **Whose Line Is It, Anyway?**

For the purpose of this chapter, and indeed this thesis as a whole, I am deliberately not engaging with Object-Oriented Ontology, the metaphysical philosophy that rejects the privileging of human experience over that of objects.[23] The Books are, of course, themselves inanimate objects, and do seem to exhibit a level of agency, as will be seen throughout this chapter. This agency, however, is a product of the institution of the Sibylline Books, which includes the mythical characterisation of the human (or at least divine) Sibyl, and the (*quin*)*decemuiri* as the people who surround and engage with the Books. Agency can only be produced through interaction with others, and so the extent to which it is afforded the Books as institution is done so in a way that books as objects alone could never attain.

The identity of the Sibyl(s), then, is particularly obscured. In the first section of this chapter, I want to look at the factors of sibylline identity, including the frequently asked question of "one Sibyl or many?" By considering the fluidity of the Sibyls, and the multifarious ways in which they are constructed, I intend to set the ground to build my argument for considering the Books as a Sibylline identity in their own right. This argument will be elaborated on in the following two sections, which consider the creation myth of the Sibylline Books and the way in which the extant fragments of the texts are actually able to perform an identity. This will then be extended to consider the *quin*(*decemuiri*), and the performance of identity in the late Republic in the hands of others. As a final section, I will be turning to Virgil's *Aeneid* Book VI, where Aeneas visits the Sibyl of Cumae and she takes him on a journey to the Underworld. By ending in this section, I want to show how the elements discussed in this chapter are elements that Virgil used to create his characterisation of a Sibyl, and thus demonstrate that they were all within the construction of the Books, as the construction of a Sibyl in their own right. This will also be fruitful in demonstrating how much Virgil relies on the Books, and as such Roman divination, as opposed to the usual assumption that he looked abroad to other oracular sites such as Delphi.

3.2 Death of the Sibyl

Identity is never a stable concept, but with sibylline identities this is explicitly so. Each Sibyl, when they are differentiated, is at once distinguished from and blurred with each of the others.[24] Is it then possible to draw a distinction between a "Sibyl of the Books" and her

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[23] For a full introduction to the method and purpose of Object-Oriented Ontology, see Bogost 2012.
[24] See Skulsky 1987 esp. 68-72 for an example of how some of the Sibyls are blurred even in their separate identities, along with the epic figures Cassandra and Dido.

sisters, as one who is always within the confines of Roman politics, unique from (and yet always a part of) the rest of the ancient oracular tradition? I am not trying to argue for a complete decoupling of the Books from the human Sibyls – quite the opposite, since even distinguished they keep their inextricable link, playing into each other's perpetually rewritten mythologies in a reciprocal relationship.

"Sibyl" is variously described as a title as well as a name by the ancient sources. Lactantius asserts that "All female *uates* are named Sibyls by the ancients, either from the name of the Delphic one, or from the counsel expressed to them by the gods".[25] Such a sweeping statement, however, is not quite true: Cassandra, for example, is called a *uates*, though never a Sibyl.[26] Furthermore, Pausanias tells us that

> Φαεννὶς δὲ θυγάτηρ βασιλεύσαντος ἀνδρὸς ἐν Χάοσι καὶ αἱ Πέλειαι παρὰ Δωδωναίοις ἐμαντεύσαντο μὲν ἐκ θεοῦ καὶ αὗται, Σίβυλλαι δὲ ὑπο ἀνθρώπων οὐκ ἐκλήθησαν.

> Phaennis, daughter of the king of the Chaonians, and the *Peleiai* from Dodona prophesied under the inspiration of the god, too, but were not called "Sibyl" by people.[27]

Being a Sibyl, then, took more than femininity and prophetic ability. The notion of virginity is often considered important, but this is still relevant for the Pythia and (potentially) Cassandra.[28] Similarly, longevity is asserted as a sibylline aspect, but this is again an equally slippery concept that is difficult to apply to any of these figures. Otherwise, as David S. Potter notes, "there is no consistency in the way that they were pictured as behaving. Some, as at Delphi or Erythrae, sat on rocks, others, at Cumae, inhabited caves".[29]

Frederick Brenk dismissively comments that "as everyone knows, Sibyls in antiquity are a dime a dozen", which is perhaps taking Lactantius at his word.[30] The distinction of numerous Sibyls only exists in later sources, but this does not necessarily mean that the distinction of Sibyls did not exist in the popular mythology surrounding the tradition. Similarly, it is not impossible that such a distinction can have existed in parallel with the idea of a single Sibyl. Although the two are contradictory ideas, it is certainly possible to see a level of coexistence.

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[25] *Div. Inst.* 1.6.7: *quod omnes foeminae uates Sibyllae sint a ueteribus nuncupatae, uel ab unius Delphidis nomine, uel a consiliis deorum enuntiandis.* (Text derived from Bowen and Garnsey 2003).
[26] Cf. e.g. Virg. *Aen.* 5.636. Similarly, in Cicero's *Div.*, both brothers use the verb "*uaticinor*" to define Cassandra's prophetic actions: for a discussion of Cicero's treatment of Cassandra, see chapter **2.4 Making an Example of Cassandra**.
[27] 12.10.
[28] For discussion of this, see chapter **3.6 Sex and the Sibyl**.
[29] 1990a, 116.
[30] 1998, 488.

They, and oracular prophecy in general, contain within them the coming together of the past, present and future, a paradox in itself that represents the coming together of all Sibyls in the tradition of a singular figure.[31]

It seems this inconsistency, this fluidity, is precisely that which marks the Sibyls as Sibyls. They exist everywhere and nowhere, in specific places but in no one place. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, they are not tied to kinship or relational context beyond themselves, as Phaennis explicitly is. They are within stories, but always remain outside and not, like Cassandra, actors within the events themselves.

Let us take the (or a version of the) Sibyl of Cumae as our example. The thirteenth and fourteenth books of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* contain what is sometimes referred to as the "Little Aeneid".[32] In it, the poet charts the wanderings of Aeneas, in a somewhat abridged and humorous retelling of Virgil's epic. Here, as in Virgil, Aeneas encounters a Sibyl, living in Cumae, who (briefly) takes him down to the Underworld to visit his late father; however, more lines are spent by Ovid revealing the Sibyl's own sad metamorphosis.[33] Interestingly, this Sibyl is not given a name beyond the title, but merely referred to as "the long-lived Sibyl"[34] once and, as a contrast, "the Cumaean maiden"[35] when she was young. Her identity is centred entirely on Cumae, beyond even being a Sibyl; she provides (or is provided with) no other sense of identification. Yet, this is precisely what makes her a Sibyl.

Ovid (and, as we will see, Virgil) are very much working within a sibylline tradition that revolves around the Books rather than the other way around. Within this tradition, then, they are another aspect of this unified identity, but an individual aspect nonetheless. The Books, in many respects, *are* the Sibyl, or at least a physical and textual vestige of a singular "her". As we shall see through this chapter, the identity construction and performativity works in a reciprocal fashion between the Books as institution and the women as individuals.

There are a number of similarities that can be drawn from the literary theory developed by Roland Barthes in his essay entitled "the Death of the Author", first published in 1967.[36] Barthes argued for a displacement of the writer as the last word on a text (and its interpretation), overthrowing the "God" status of the Author (with a consciously capital "A").

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[31] Crippa 1998, 166; Maurizio 1998, 143-144.
[32] Ov. *Met*. 13.623-14.607.
[33] *Ibid*. 14.101-153. This event takes place across the entirety of Virgil's *Aeneid* 6, which will be discussed in greater detail in chapter **3.7 Aeneas' Adventures Underground**.
[34] *Met*. 14.104: *uiua[x] [...] Sibylla*.
[35] *Ibid*. 14.135: *uirgo Cumaea*.
[36] Reprinted in Barthes 1977, 142-148. All references to page numbers will be taken from this edition.

"Linguistically," he wrote, "the author is never more than the instance writing, just as *I* is nothing other than the instance saying *I*".[37] Instead, Barthes located the meaning of a text, its "origin", at the point of reading. The institution of the Sibylline Books at Rome, with its specific college of Readers (with a capital "R") controlling access to their knowledge and interpretations is certainly demonstrable of the latter half of this process, but where does this leave us in respect of the Sibyl as Author?

The theory has not been universally accepted, and Séan Burke, for example, has criticised Barthes for actually manipulating the construction of the "Author-God" to be "a king worthy of killing".[38] Shane Butler, more gently, has invited us to resuscitate the author (with a lowercase "a"), on "the conspicuous evidence that without their working, there would be no work".[39] The problem expands once more, however, when we return to the Sibylline Books, with an Author (or author) who is herself mythical, herself at the same time singular and plural, like the textual interpretation provided by a Reader. The performative mythology of the Sibyl(s) undoubtedly played a role in the position, understanding and even interpretation of the Books, but at the same time, as we will see, the Sibyl(s) as woman (/women) were held apart from that Roman institution. We should not consider the Books to be completely without Author, as Barthes would have us believe, but instead, I propose the figure of the Sibyl of the Books, an eleventh Sibyl, if we are to number them, who may have only existed on the self-authored page, kept locked away in the temple of Jupiter, but existed as a distinct figure nonetheless. Ironically, this suggestion implies a figurative death of the Sibyl of Cumae, at least in this textual context, but in truth they are never fully separate: the Roman expectations of the Books' contents are based on – and constantly re-performing – the identities of the Sibyl(s). This interlinking creates afterlives for the Books, the Sibyl of Cumae and the sibylline tradition as a whole. In this way, I am proposing the birth of a Sibyl of the Books, but not "at the cost of the death of the Author".[40]

3.3 The Creation of a Sibyl

The Books, however, are still books, and as such must still have at the very least an origin. They have a creation myth of sorts rooted in the regal period of Rome, a story that reveals

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[37] *Ibid.*, 145.
[38] 1988, 22-27. Quotation from p. 26. See also pp. 20-22 for a discussion of Barthes own authorial context in writing the "Death of the Author" essay.
[39] 2011, esp. 3-13. Quotation from p. 4.
[40] Barthes 1977, 148.

much about the identity and construction of the Books as well as their Author.[41] To give a brief summary, it is said that "a certain foreign woman"[42] came to one of the Tarquinii[43] with an offer of sale for nine books of oracles. When he refused the price, the woman burned three of the books and asked again for the same price. Naturally, the king did not see any reason to agree. Upon her burning another three of the books, and repeating the request, Tarquinius consulted with his augurs, who told him he should have taken the first offer and persuaded him to at least take her up on the final three books.[44]

Lactantius, our only Christian source, is the only writer to give the explicit identity of the bookseller as the Sibyl of Cumae. For Lactantius, this is in part about identifying the different Sibyls, separating them and their books as being the work of not one but many.[45] By doing this, Lactantius goes against the grain of usual Christian regard of the sibylline tradition, which tends to see the Sibyl as singular:[46] he, however, is locating each Sibyl and, as such, exerting a power of naming and thus knowing each woman and her prophecies. In this way his own knowledge, and therefore Christian doctrine, can be regarded as superior to the pagan Sibyls.[47] Lactantius similarly provides not one, but three names for this Cumaean Sibyl: Amalthea, Herophile or Demophile.[48] Naming again reinforces the woman's mortal capacity, and the multiple reinforces the confused (rather than fluid) nature, and thus the weak structure of sibylline tradition.

By contrast, in the classical (/non-Christian) representation of this story, the bookseller is explicitly identified as neither a Sibyl nor of Cumae. In fact, her apparent status as a Sibyl is identifiable only by her ownership of the prophetic books, which are explicitly named as being Sibylline.[49] From the outset, then, the Books provide identity for the prophetess, rather than the other way around. She is only a Sibyl inasmuch as she is providing the knowledge, and the prophecies, that constitute the Books.

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[41] This story is told in full in D.H. 4.62.1-4; Gell. *NA* 1.19; Lactant. *Div. Inst.* 1.6.10-11, and alluded to in Plin. *HN* 13.27.

[42] Cf. D.H. 4.62.2: γυνή τις […] οὐκ ἐπιχωρία.

[43] Lactantius says it was Tarquinius Priscus, whereas Dionysius, Pliny and Aulus Gellius all claim it to be Tarquinius Superbus.

[44] D.H. 4.62.3. Lactantius and Gellius interestingly do not mention the part of the augurs, instead attributing the eventual realisation to Tarquinius himself. Cf. also Santangelo 2017, 77, for the paradox of the Sibylline Books being priceless whilst bought for a specific price.

[45] 1.6.7: "Varro says that the Sibylline Books are not the work of one Sibyl; but they are addressed as one name – Sibylline – because all female *uates* are Sibyls" ([*Varro*] *Sibyllinos libros ait non fuisse unius Sibyllae; sed appellari uno nomine Sibyllinos quod omnes foeminae uates Sibyllae*).

[46] Cf. Buitenwerf 2003, 81-82.

[47] Cf. Potter 1990b, 474: "Lactantius would also like his readers to believe that sibylline oracles should be recognised in accordance with the principles he sets forth".

[48] 1.6.10.

[49] Cf. e.g. D.H. 4.62.2: "Nine books full of Sibylline prophecies" (βύβλους ἐννέα μεστὰς Σιβυλλείων χρησμῶν).

Again, aside from Lactantius, the bookseller's origin is not a feature of the story. She is only described as "foreign", with no further specification. Of course, the Regal Period itself is much earlier than any identification of plurality of Sibyls (at least in our extant sources), and so on some level we may expect her merely to be *the* Sibyl, but our sources for this story are all Imperial, when differentiating Sibyls is customary, even (and indeed only) when looking back. So, although authorship, when specified beyond this story, is begrudgingly placed with the Sibyl of Cumae, this lack of distinction creates a further distance between the texts and the Sibyl of Cumae as their author.

The presence of augurs, in some versions of the myth, and the induction of the Books during the Regal Period, sets a limit on the atemporal and omnipresent aspects often associated with the sibylline tradition.[50] It is an almost ironic element of the tale, as the Books are the most common source or reason for the introduction of a foreign cult to the Roman pantheon, yet they themselves must be introduced by the means of a pre-established divinatory tradition.[51] This reinforces the foreign aspect of the Books themselves, and thus of their Sibyl. But, furthermore, the augurs also remind us of the binary of technical and natural divination. The Sibyl's ravings are the very epitome of natural prophecy.[52] The augurs, on the other hand, represent technical divination at its finest, as a *collegium* of noble men, versed in the knowledge of how to interpret signs handed down through the generations. The institution of the Books, however, provides again a merging of these two aspects. The madness of inspired prophecy is reined in, written down and stabilised.[53] Rome, during the Middle and Late Republic, rarely consults Delphi as a state, although it remains, in many respects, a prophetic centre of the ancient world.[54] Oracular responses, and inspired prophecy of this type, are dangerous to the Roman state.[55] But the Sibylline Books, being oracular responses written down, provided a control over this: "a body of esoteric writing restricted to élite exegesis has clear advantages over a possessed woman who rants and raves as a means of communicating

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[50] For these aspects, cf. e.g. Maurizio 1998; Lightfoot 2007, 4.

[51] Cf. e.g. Liv. 29.10.4-7, in which the Sibylline Books command the introduction of the cult of the Magna Mater to Rome.

[52] Or at least, her prophecies are: cf. Trampedach 2015, 195: "In keiner antiken Quellen ist der „Wahnsinn" oder die „Raserei" der Sibylle in auffälligen Bewegungen sichtbar; vielmehr äußert sich ihre Besessenheit ausschließlich als sprachliches Phänomen: Der Mund ist „wahnsinnig", die Stimme schallt, wie Heraklit sagt, die Sibylle singt."

[53] In fact, this is precisely how Marcus criticised the Books in *Div.*: their written stability itself overthrows that which makes inspired prophecy inspired. See chapter **2.4 Making an Example of Cassandra**.

[54] As Parke notes, that is not to say that Romans as individuals did not make use of the oracular site (1967, 131). Cf. also. Montero Herrero 1994, 59-62.

[55] Tacáks 2008, 67-8; Gildenhard 2007, 91; Santangelo 2013, 231.

with the gods".[56] They are inspired prophecy, but under the power of the skilled interpretation of the (quin)decemuiri. A Sibyl, but recreated in the Roman image.

Aulus Gellius specifically described the bookseller as an *anus*, an old woman, and it cannot be understated that age plays into the construction of the Sibyls in many different ways.[57] We have already seen the polemic laid against old women in Latin literature and Roman society, particularly in Cicero's own use of the *anilis superstitio* ("old wives' tales") stereotype.[58] The superstition attributed to old women may account for the king's initial distrust of the old woman's mysterious books, but when he turns to his haruspices for advice, he is alone in his assumptions. Instead, the Sibyl's lifespan, in the wider tradition, is used to emphasize a level of agelessness, and of immortality.[59] Lisa Maurizio has recently argued for seeing this agelessness, reflected too in the Pythia, as an atemporality of the Sibyl's (or Sibyls') prophecies, a theft of the Promethean fire, humans discovering knowledge that they are not necessarily meant to know.[60] We have already seen how Ovid's representation of the Cumaean Sibyl, when she meets Aeneas, is *uiuax*.[61] She has lived seven hundred years already, she tells the reader, and will see three hundred more.[62] Another representation of the Sibyl of Cumae, this time from Petronius' *Satyricon*, is often used as a touchstone for her aged agelessness.[63] During his dinner party, Trimalchio claims to have seen the Sibyl of Cumae suspended in a bottle, who, when asked by boys what she wanted, replied that she wanted to die.[64] Petronius is clearly developing Ovid's "depressed Sibyl",[65] who does herself say "the time will be when the long days will shrink my body from this, and my limbs, devoured by age, will be reduced to a minimum weight".[66] But Petronius' story should be kept within its context – immediately prior, Trimalchio has said how he read about the twelve labours of Hercules in Homer. His learning is "defective and pretentious".[67] In many respects, Trimalchio is himself awaiting death, and imposing this parallel of old age and longing for death upon her.[68] The age (and agelessness) of the Sibyl(s), then, is an important and well-

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[56] Gildenhard 2007, 91.
[57] 1.19.2.
[58] See chapter **2.6 Nothing but an Old Wives' Tale**.
[59] Crippa 1998, 166.
[60] 1998, 143.
[61] Ov. *Met*. 14.104.
[62] *Ibid*. 14.144-146.
[63] Cf. e.g. Parke 1988, 41; Guillermo 2013, 105.
[64] 48: *Nam Sibyllam quidem Cumis ego ipse oculis meis uidi in ampulla pendere, et cum illi pueri dicerent:* Σίβυλλα, τί θέλεις; *respondebat illa*: ἀποθανεῖν θέλω.
[65] Lateiner 1996, 229.
[66] Ov. *Met*. 14.147-149: *tempus erit, cum de tanto me corpore paruam / longa dies faciet, consumptaque membra senecta / ad minimum redigentur onus.*
[67] Sullivan 1986, 191 n.27.
[68] As brought out by Cameron 1970.

known factor of tradition, which is highlighted by Petronius through the extension to his macabre longing. This latter part, however, is not seen in the rest of the tradition – in fact, the Sibyl of Erythrae's own poem, as recorded by Phlegon of Tralles, we find a (perhaps resigned) affirmation that she will continue to prophesy after her death.[69] For her, death is not the end.

Similarly, the bookseller's foreignness is also emphasised. Even if we do understand her to be from Cumae, during the Regal Period this place was outside Rome's control. In many respects, Roman religion took into itself, but consciously emphasised, the foreign. This can be seen in the introduction of foreign cults, such as the cult of Ceres, led specifically by a Greek priestess, and even their continued reliance on the Etruscan haruspices.[70] Along these lines, Sarolta Takács has suggested the germ of an Etruscan origin for the Sibylline Books and their creation myth.[71] She argues that the textual nature of the tradition, and the centrality of a woman to the story – two features heavily emphasised in Etruscan religion – contrast to the ritualistic focus of its Greco-Roman counterpart to present a binding of the two cultures. This is an intriguing theory, but in my opinion the feminine aspect of this does not hold as much weight as Takács claims. As we see throughout this thesis, women are frequently significant to Greek and Roman religion and divination. The preservation of the Roman state even explicitly rested on the shoulders of Fabia and her Vestal sisters.[72] The "fusing", as Takács describes it,[73] can be located as the Books themselves: Sibylline prophecy, in the Greek tradition, bonded with the written nature of the Etruscans – thus creating the uniquely Roman Sibyl of the Books.

Together, then, these qualities constitute an identity of "Other" for the bookseller: Old; Foreign; Female. None of these is a quality Rome particularly favours.[74] This identity, in turn, is transferred to the Sibylline Books themselves; although the Books are, as I said in the introduction to this chapter, a central crux of the Roman Republic, they remain as an Other to that State. John Scheid noted as a paradox – which he himself leaves unresolved – that

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[69] Phlegon *Macr.* 5.2 (text derived from Stramaglia 2011). This oracle-poem will be discussed in greater detail in chapter **3.4 The 'I' in Sibyl**. Cf. also Plut. *De Pyth. Orac.* 398c-d, in which he records that the "first Sibyl" claimed that not even death would stop her prophesying.

[70] For the cult of Ceres, see Isayev 2011. For the wider integration of foreignness in Roman religion, see Beard *et al.* 1998, 87-98; Orlin 2002; 2008.

[71] Cf. Takács 2008, 68-70. Cf. also Guittard 2004, esp. 30.

[72] See chapter **1.5 Fabia**.

[73] 2008, 70.

[74] Cf. Montero Herrero 1994, 62, who discusses the coldness of Republican Rome towards Delphi and its similarity to its coldness towards the Sibyl, as being woman, oracular and foreign.

> An indispensable motive force in Roman institutions and venerated as one of the city's talismans, these pronouncements seem, on first view, to show the intrusion of a prophetess, a priestess, and a foreigner into the heart of Roman public life.[75]

But rather than questioning how the words of an Other could find such importance, perhaps it is better to understand this, in part, as the acceptance of the State that it in fact needs the Other, and each of these Others, for its own survival. Women are, biologically, a necessity for the continuation of a state, and old age is a biological fact that happens to everyone (even the long-lived Sibyl).[76] In parallel is the fact that a state needs at the least communication with outside influences. The Books, then, hold within their own identity each of these qualities, but they also represent, through the (*quin*)*decemuiri*'s control over the Books, the Republic's control over the Other. The Books, as physical objects, are hidden away in the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, accessible only by the selected few. They contain within them imperative, though cryptic, instructions for the good of the state, but only a few men are allowed to read and understand them. The state needs these identity markers, but requires them to be controlled, contained and confined to their place.

This identity, then, is created and performatively acted as feminine by the bookseller of the origin myth, and then transferred to the Books themselves. The Books continue to re-perform that same identity, reflecting it back to the Sibyl(s) and the Roman stereotype thereof, laying emphasis on her gender. But similarly, in this way, the identity of the Sibyl of the Books is distinguished from that of her sisters, a performative process of individuation acted through the physicality of the Books themselves. It is an individuation, however, and an identity hinged upon those same sisters.

3.4 The 'I' in Sibyl

Although written, the Sibyl of the Books, like all Sibyls, still enacts a form of inspired prophecy. Inspired prophecy is often described as coming from an external – usually divine – origin.[77] The deity possesses their human vessel, whipping them into a frenzied state. From

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[75] 1993, 57.

[76] As Mairéad McAuley has wryly noted: "Maternity to date, remains a biological universal; every person is still, in some way or another, of woman born" (2016, 2-3).

[77] See chapter **2.4 Making an Example of Cassandra**.

this madness comes prophecy.[78] Who, then, in this situation, is speaking? The Pythia, for example, is often seen as a "mouthpiece of a male deity",[79] yet Plutarch asserts that

οὐ γὰρ ἔστι θεοῦ ἡ γῆρυς οὐδ'ὁ φθόγγος οὐδ'ἡ λέξις οὐδὲ τὸ μέτρον ἀλλὰ τῆς γυναικός· ἐκεῖνος δὲ μόνας τὰς φαντασίας παρίστησι καὶ φῶς ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ ποιεῖ πρὸς τὸ μέλλον

For it is not the god's voice, nor sound, nor words nor metre, but the woman's. He only places the portents in her mind and illuminates her spirit to the future.[80]

Beyond Plutarch, however, Lisa Maurizio has demonstrated from Delphic responses, first person references sometimes refer to Apollo, sometimes the Pythia, but mostly are ambiguous, referring to neither one nor the other but rather to both at the same time.[81] Deity and *uates* are equal authors (and Authors) of the prophecy.

But things are more complex when we turn to the Sibyl(s). There are two extant fragments that claim to be from the Sibylline Books, collected by a freedman of Emperor Hadrian named Phlegon of Tralles, and published in his treatise, which goes under the general title of Περὶ θαυμασίων ("*On Marvels*").[82] They are the only surviving piece of sibylline prophecy, and two of the few unedited prophetic texts of the ancient world. In this section, I will consider the structure of these fragments, both as typical inspired prophecy but also as unique texts, in order to begin to hear the performative voice of the Sibyl of the Books and question her status as Author.

Even within the examples peppered through literary and historical texts, Sibyls –particularly the Sibyl of the Books – occupy a unique position. What immediately sets her apart is that she seems to retain a level of self-identification within her prophecies, a factor not generally expected in inspired divination. To take the Pythia as an example once again: she is, of course, a central factor to the ritual at Delphi,[83] but her prophecy seems to come almost at the cost of her identity. It is not to say that individual Pythias are not named and presented in the ancient sources, but these exceptions seem to prove the rule that "eine ‚funktionierende'

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[78] Cf. e.g. Luc. *BC.* 1.695; Plut. *De Pyth. Orac.* 397A; Sen. *Ag.* 724. Champeux 2004, 49, writes that "C'est Virgil qui, en façonnant l'image saisissante d'une prophétesse apollinienne en proie à la fureur dionysiaque, a fixé à tout jamais le type de la prophétesse païenne.", but this idea was evidently present long before then.
[79] Pomeroy 1975, 33. See also Maurizio 2001.
[80] *De Pyth. Orac.* 397c.
[81] Maurizio 2017.
[82] Phlegon *Mir.* 10 (text derived from Stramaglia 2011). The more substantial oracle concerns the birth of an intersex child, which will be discussed in detail in chapter **4: Callo/n**.
[83] Maurizio 1995, esp. 72.

Pythia hat dementsprechend keine Individualität und keinen Namen".[84] As we saw with Fabia, unusual amongst Vestal Virgins for being named, Pythias are only individualised when they act out.[85] By comparison, the Sibyls are also often conflated, as we have seen already through this chapter, but they also each retain a level of individuality. Within the fragments of the Books themselves, this individuality manifests itself once more, as will be discussed below.

Apollo is the deity typically associated with inspired prophecy, and given a central position in constructions. For example, in Book 1 of Lucan's *De Bello Ciuile* ("*Civil War*") ends with an unnamed matron running through the streets of Rome prophesying what is to come.[86] The first six lines of her seventeen-line speech are questions, directed to Apollo himself: "Where have I been taken, O Paean? In what land do you place me, having been dragged across the sky?" she begins.[87] Next she describes aloud, heard by any willing listener (and as such, of course, intrigued reader) the places she sees, and that the reader will visit over the course of the epic. Finally, she ends on an imperative, again directed at Apollo, that she may see somewhere new, having already seen Philippi.[88] So although the prophecy is spoken aloud (or rather, written down) for anyone to hear and interpret for themselves, from start to finish it is explicitly directed only at Apollo. This construction is also found in other fictional possessions, such as Cassandra's in Seneca's *Agamemnon*.[89] Similarly, to ask a question at Delphi was to frame the question to Apollo, rather than to the Pythia.[90]

Yet the fragments of the Sibylline Books suggest a very different dynamic. At no point (in what we have) does the Sibyl speak to Apollo. Similarly, she does not ask any questions, or show sign of confusion, as other *uates* do. Instead she is the one who "says"[91] what the future will hold, and the one who "declares"[92] the expiation. More specifically, she declares the answer "to you".[93] The text creates a direct bond between author and reader: no longer are you simply party to an interaction between mortal and deity, but you are a part of it. This also puts a unique spin on the question I asked at the beginning of this section: who, in this

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[84] Trampedach 2015, 186.
[85] Raphals 2013, 107-8 notes how Herodotus, at least, rarely mentions specific Pythias, with the exceptions of Perialla (6.66) and Aristonike (7.140). For the Vestal Virgins, see chapter **1.5 Fabia**; for the Pythian agency to be deceptive or false, see chapter **2.5 Cicero and the Pythia – a Deceptive Construction?**
[86] 1.673-695.
[87] 1.678-679: *quo feror, o Paean? qua me super aethera raptam / constituis terra?*
[88] 1.693-694: *noua da mihi cernere litora Ponti / telluremque nouam: uidi iam, Phoebe, Philippos.*
[89] Esp. 720-774.
[90] Trampedach 2015, 186.
[91] Phlegon. Mir. 10: A3: φημί.
[92] *Ibid.* A6: ἐξαγορεύσω.
[93] *Ibid.* A6: τοι. Note the singular.

situation, is speaking, and whose prophecy is it? For the Pythia, Cassandra and the unnamed matron, it is clear that they are speaking, but it is Apollo's prophecy.[94] For the Sibyl – of the Books, at least – the prophecies are her own. There are numerous references to the use of a loom (ἰστός) in deriving the prophecy (a theme to which we will return in a moment),[95] but the role of any deity is invisible, if at all present.

This self-identification is a trait seen in the wider sibylline tradition. Phlegon's other extant work, Περὶ μακροβίων ("*On Long-Lived Persons*"), records an oracle-poem of the Sibyl of Erythrae, in which she discusses her longevity, and how she will continue to prophesy even after death.[96] She describes how "Leto's son [ie. Apollo] is envious of [her] mantic skill",[97] but nevertheless retains control: when she dies, her soul will mingle with the air to send riddling omens to mortals ears, whilst it will be her physical body that will provide the prophetic capacity in the portents realised through extispicy and augury, by becoming the grass and the seeds eaten by the respective animals.[98] In Ovid's version of the Sibyl of Cumae, similar sentiments are shared, and in her final words of the poem, she defiantly claims: "but I shall be known by my voice, the voice the fates shall leave behind".[99] This is, in part, a nod towards the Sibylline Books – it is her voice, in written form still recognised by the Roman state in Ovid's day, regardless of Apollo's wishes. In this way, then, once again the Sibyls are differentiated, but ultimately conflated. They are individualised in their oracles, each naming herself through the first person, but at the same time they reflect the same self-presentation, a fluid identity contained within each.

To return to the loom, as promised: Sabina Crippa has suggested that the metaphor of weaving reinforces the idea of the acrostics and hexameters of the poem that make it almost impossible to insert a false line for one's own ends, as would the insertion of another thread into a woven piece.[100] But further to this, weaving and related activities are, at least in Greco-Roman society, specifically gendered as feminine activities. Loomweights, as well as needles and similar objects are often, though not exclusively, used to delineate female domestic

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[94] Cassandra does present a unique case in her own right, in that she is "speaking for herself" to some extent, however this is part of the disbelief her prophecies garner. Cf. Maurizio 2001, 51.

[95] *Ibid.* A2, A8, A20, B30. Cf. also B65: "by weaving shuttle" (ὑπο κερκίδος).

[96] As discussed in chapter **3.3 The Creation of a Sibyl**.

[97] Phlegon, *Macr.* 5.2.7-8: ...μοι φθονέσας Λητοῦς ἐρικυδέος υἱὸς / μαντοσύνης.

[98] *Ibid.* 5.2.11-13 (soul); 5.2.17-22 (body). Once again, there is a blurring of the binary between technical and natural, as she becomes the provider of both.

[99] *Met.* 14.153: *voce tamen noscar; vocem mihi fata relinquent.* The context of this episode is discussed in chapter **3.2 Death of the Sibyl**.

[100] 2004, 101.

spaces in archaeological excavations.[101] In a mythological context, too, there is a strong connection between women and weaving, particularly in the telling of truths beyond the gods' wishes – one only has to look to the stories of Arachne and of Philomela and Procne to see this parallel.[102] The further link of divination can be seen in the stories of the Etruscan Queen Tanaquil who, as well as being famed in divinatory skill, was also a particularly renowned spinner, credited with inventing the straight tunic.[103] John Scheid and Jesper Svenbro go as far as to suggest that Tanaquil is fulfilling the role of "the model of the Roman wife, the *domiseda*, spending her days spinning and weaving in the family home, near the conjugal bed".[104] Perhaps this relationship between weaving and divination represented by both Tanaquil and the Sibyl serves as another way that the Sibylline Books knit together Etruscan and Greek origins.[105] Either way, the Sibyl's use of the loom in her divinatory craft, and repeated reference to it in the Books, are performative reminders of her femininity, despite her textual break from her physical body.

3.5 Whose Line Is It, Anyway?

Regardless of what or how the Books were written, however, they are still a written text and, as such, must have a Reader. But access to the Books was restricted to two, ten and finally fifteen men: the (*quin*)*decemuiri sacris faciundis*. Occasionally, after the consultation was held, agreed and acted upon, the relevant passages could become publicly available and retroactively verifiable.[106] There is obviously good reason for secrecy: the interpretation is not based upon the knowledge of the (*quin*)*decemuiri*, but the knowledge contained in the Books. If the text was widely accessible, it could be exploited without the control of the (*quin*)*decemuiri* and as such the control of the Senate. Scott Noegel, in discussing Near Eastern prodigies, writes that

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[101] Allison 2007, 2015. Although the invariability of this has been contested by Thompson 1982, this is still the general principle used in excavations of Roman sites.

[102] Cf. e.g. Klindienst Joplin 2002; Sharrock 2002, esp. 100. Scheid and Svenbro 1996, whilst not explicitly discussing this connection, also frequently discuss "weaver women of strategic importance" to early Greek, Etruscan and Roman societies, since "[the Roman woman's] principle activity was working with wool" (90). See also chapter **4: Callo/n** for the story of Callo/n, an intersexual person who was raised as a girl but reassigned as a man in adulthood. This is represented as s/he "puts away her loom-shuttle" (τὰς ἐκ τῶν ἱστῶν κερκίδας) and other wool-working tools, substituting them for the garb and status of a man" (Diod. 32.11.4).

[103] Plin. *HN* 8.194. Paul the Deacon's *Epitome* of Festus also describes her as "*summa lanifica*" (s.v. "Gaia Caecilia"). This is a link that can also be seen in the story of Philomela, as mentioned above: see Klindienst Joplin 2002.

[104] Scheid and Svenbro 1996, 93.

[105] Cf. Takács 2008, 68-70, discussed above in chapter **3.3 The Creation of a Sibyl**.

[106] See Satterfield 2011 for a discussion of the publication of the intersex oracular response of 125 BCE.

until one deciphers them, omens represent unbridled forms of divine power. While their meanings and consequences are unknown they remain liminal and potentially dangerous. The act of interpreting a sign seeks to limit that power by restricting the parameters of a sign's interpretation. A divine sign cannot now mean *anything*, but only *one* thing. [107]

As discussed in the introduction, the interpretation of a sign, or in this case a prophecy, is an important part of constructing its performative truth.[108] This unbridled form of power is indeed dangerous, but it is only dangerous because it is meaningless, unable to perform by itself. In this way, then, the secrecy of the Sibylline Books represents the power of restriction. To represent this restriction, however, and indeed to have any power at all, the Books are reliant on the (*quin*)*decemuiri*. Does it follow then, that if the men are such an important part of the story – consulting, engendering and, in a Barthesian sense, *authoring the meaning* of the prophecy – do they themselves become, at least in part, a recreation of the Sibyl? *Can* they, as simultaneously multiple, identifiable and, importantly, performatively male, be Sibyl, in aspect or in full?

As discussed in the previous section, the Sibylline Books "speak" in the first person, and that speech performs the individual identity of the Sibyl of the Books. Yet, simultaneously and almost paradoxically, the Books can only perform this identity through consultation, when they are addressed, read and essentially enlivened by the (*quin*)*decemuiri*. This is not unlike Judith Butler's construction of subject formation, whereby any sense of self can only be formed in the aftermath of being identified, and as such "enlivened", by others.[109] The Books, however, since they are inanimate objects, cannot sustain their own sense of subject, once formed, without the (*quin*)*decemuiri*. But this is not the whole picture in respect of subject formation and reliance. The (*quin*)*decemuiri* may have the power of Readership on their side, but that power – and the very institution of the (*quin*)*decemuiri* – can only exist *because* there are those same Books. They may surround, contain and control the Books, but their own existence as a corporate body within the *res publica* is based on the Books and little more.

Furthermore, the restriction of access to the Books works as a form of censorship, which again builds on our notion of reciprocal subject formation. Butler defines censorship "broadly construed, as engaged in forming the subject of speech" and, though censoring incompletes a

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[107] 2010, 147.
[108] See chapter **1.4 The Performing Arts**.
[109] 2015, esp. 1-16.

text, it is equally true that an uncensored text is necessarily incomplete.[110] The Books, as a specific form of prophecy (itself a specific linguistic format) are, in a sense, realised and made real through the censorship of the (*quin*)*decemuiri*. A prophecy is not a prophecy until it is identified as one, and as such it must be explicitly sought, or at least censored. By way of comparison, let us think again to the unnamed matron of Lucan's *De Bello Ciuile*:[111] although she prophesies for any and all to hear, and the retrospective reader who knows the content of the epic poem understands the prophetic nature of her speech, the prophecy essentially comes to nought because it was not sought nor heard by anyone who could understand how to act upon it.[112] In this way, it fails as prophecy; can we say that, without censorship, it was never actually prophetic? The other parallel we have repeatedly returned to in this chapter is in the specifically physical oracular sites, and namely the Delphic oracle. There are various examples of spontaneous prophecies from the Pythia, for example the story of how Battus of Thera goes to Delphi to enquire about his speech impediment, and is told to found a new colony in Libya,[113] but there are still certain explicit restrictions on the prophesying from the oracular site. It was, for example, only allowed on certain days of the year, and, importantly, any prophecy from Delphi needed to be actively sought, a fact that reigns in the wild spontaneity, and thus again danger, of inspired prophecy. Even Battus was seeking oracular counsel, albeit on a different matter, when he received his "spontaneous" response. In this way the Pythia is also censored, though decidedly not in the notion that her responses were censured and doctored by male "interpreters" (προφῆται) before reaching the client.[114] But the Sibylline Books, as a written form of prophecy, cannot have this same level of restriction and thus censorship. To avoid becoming the unnamed matron of Lucan's epic, the Sibyl of the Books must have a wider, censoring aspect of herself. If she can be read by anyone, at any time, then anyone's reading, at any given time, becomes meaningless. The (*quin*)*decemuiri*, then, are an aspect of the Books in that they create the reality of their prophecies through this censorship.

Thinking about the practice of this college, the category of (*quin*)*decemuiri*, like the category of augurs, "blurs the binary distinction between priests and seers",[115] but their "seerhood" is dependent on the Sibyl. *She* is the seer in consultation, the identifier and expiator. Yet after

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[110] 1997b, 128-141, quotation from p. 140.
[111] See chapter **3.4 The 'I' in Sibyl**.
[112] Arguably, all divination in Lucan comes to nought: see Santangelo 2015.
[113] Hdt. 4.152.3.
[114] This notion is put forward by Parke and Wormell 1956, 33, and initially highlighted by Pomeroy 1975, 33 for the irony of the masculine control of this powerful female figure. Maurizio 1995, esp. 76-79 effectively took down the assumption of the male focus in this instance. Cf. also Flower 2008, 216-218; Stoneman 2011, 37-39.
[115] Belayche 2013, 116.

consultation, the ritual actions are carried out "on the response of the *decemuiri*": the men are still treated as (the) seers.[116] Federico Santangelo has recently questioned the extent to which their activity was actually prophetic.[117] Although the Senate could utilise their interpretations in politically motivated ways, as was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, they were in many ways restricted to "almost a diagnostic dimension" of their powers, confined explicitly and consciously to the Books themselves – and the woman behind them.[118]

Similar is the extent to which the college of the (*quin*)*decemuiri* was a priesthood. A passage in Livy is often used as an example, and also used to specifically link them to the priesthood of Apollo:

> *decemuiros sacris faciundis, carminum Sibyllae ac fatorum populi huius interpretes, antistites eosdem Apollinaris sacri caerimoniarumque aliarum plebeios uidemus.*
>
> We see that plebeians are decemuiros sacris faciundis, interpreters of the songs of the Sibyl and the fates of these people, and those same people are antistites of the sacred rites of Apollo and the ceremonies of other deities.[119]

This passage, however, is part of a wider, highly rhetorical speech concerning plebeians' access to the priesthoods, and Livy may well be overstating the case.[120] *Antistites* can mean "priest", but also more generally "overseer", and, given the inclusion of other, albeit unnamed deities alongside Apollo, it suggests that the role of the (*quin*)*decemuiri* may have been more to oversee the execution of specific and individual rites, rather than to serve as full-time priests. One could go as far as to suggest that the rites ordered in the Books themselves such as the sacrifices to Demeter and Persephone recorded in Phlegon's Sibylline oracular response are those for which the (*quin*)*decemuiri* were the overseers.[121] If this is the case, we see once again that their priestly role, and indeed their collegial existence, is performatively bound up with the Books. But the linking of the (*quin*)*decemuiri* specifically to the priesthood of Apollo bears further comment: the relationship we have seen between that deity and the Sibyl(s) is complex.[122] If we are to take Livy at his word in this passage, it may initially seem to be confirming an Apolline core to the tradition; yet, a closer look reveals that, even here, there is a definite and specific linguistic break between their role as Sibylline interpreters and the fact

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[116] Cf. Liv. 31.12: *ex decemuirorum responso*.
[117] 2013, 141-143. Mazurek 2004 also discusses the prophetic aspects of the decemviral responses to the Senate, however this is merely transferred prophecy from the Books themselves, and the *quin*(*decemuiri*) are still simply reporting the prophecy of the Books.
[118] Santangelo 2013, 143.
[119] 10.8.2.
[120] Cf. Santangelo 2013, 143.
[121] Phlegon, *Mir*. 10. A7-19.
[122] As mentioned in chapter **3.4 The 'I' in Sibyl**; this will be explored further in **3.6 Sex and the Sibyl**.

that "those same people" (*eosdem*) are also *antistites* to him and other deities. Sibylline prophecy does not come under the purview of Apollo.

Another physical way that the Sibylline Books, and with them the (*quin*)*decemuiri*, are distinguished from Apollo is their placement in the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the Capitoline (sometimes referred to as the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus), at least until the Augustan period.[123] This further confirms, as Eric Orlin rightly stresses, what we have already seen regarding the importance of the Books to state religion, but this comes at the cost of another connection to the apparently oracular deity.[124] In this way the (*quin*)*decemuiri*, would presumably be as closely related to the Capitoline triad and state religion as they were specifically to the one deity Apollo.

This physical placement leads us to a key moment in the history, and the story, of the Books. On the night of 6 July 83 BCE, the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus mysteriously burned down to the ground, thus completing the destructive punishment of the Bookseller when the Books were first bought by Tarquinius.[125] The Senate's jealous guarding of them, and the (*quin*)*decemuiri* restrictive power, became its downfall: there were no other copies of the Books – in Rome at least – and as such the destruction of the Temple "was, in a sense, the end of the past".[126] This event was seen as a prodigy, but although we might expect it to be of critical magnitude, it is in fact often simply recorded as one of many by the ancient authors preceding Sulla's march on Rome. Both Appian and Julius Obsequens, for example, record a woman in Etruria giving birth to a live snake at the same time, another sign of the coming hostilities, along with foaling mules and earthquakes in Appian, and ghostly battles in Obsequens. But what is interesting for our discussion is that most of the sources that mention this incident do not focus on the destruction of the Books. The burning of the temple itself is a prodigy, a message from the gods attributed to a number of different interpretations; or else it is an unsolved mystery of human intervention. So Plutarch, for example, records that the burning was a warning for Sulla that he should hasten,[127] whereas for Cicero, it was the more positive request for a grander temple.[128] By contrast, Tacitus seems convinced that it was "by

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[123] For the movement of the Books to the Augustan temple of Apollo on the Palatine, cf. e.g. Suet. *Aug.* 31.
[124] 1997, 78.
[125] This event is referred to in: App. *BC.* 1.83; Cic. *Verr.* 2.4.69; D.H. *Ant. Rom.* 4.62.6; Obseq. 57; Plut. *Publ.* 15, *Sull.* 27; Tac. *Ann.* 6.12, *Hist.* 6.72.
[126] Santangelo 2013, 135.
[127] Plut. *Sull.* 27: "if [Sulla] did not hurry, the capitol would burn" (εἰ δὲ μὴ σπεύσειεν, ἐμπεπρήσεσθαι τὸ Καπιτώλιον).
[128] Cic. *Verr.* 2.4.69: "[…] thus that flame seems to have been sent divinely, not to destroy the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, but to demand one more brilliant and magnificent" ([…] *ut illa flamma diuinitus exstitisse uideatur, non quae deleret Iouis Optimi Maximi templum, sed quae praeclarius magnificentiusque deposceret*).

an individual's crime".[129] But each time the loss of the Books is merely a side product of the message, an afterthought to the destruction of the temple itself.

The role of the (*quin*)*decemuiri* becomes interesting when we consider that following this event, although there were no Books, it was seven years before a commission to be sent to Erythrae (where we have already encountered a different Sibyl), but also the cities of Italy, Greece, Asia and even Africa, where they sifted through alleged prophetic books, discerning and retrieving the true Sibylline verses.[130] Indeed, the period was a busy time for Rome, and for her Dictator, and the time taken to restore the Books "may merely have been due to greater preoccupations",[131] but the question remaining is what the (*quin*)*decemuiri* actually did in this interim period. Who were they, with no physical copy of the Books, and thus no political or religious power? It is generally assumed that it was Sulla who increased their number from ten to fifteen, and that it occurred in this seven year period,[132] but what was their function beyond the Books? Perhaps there were other, failed attempts to recreate the texts without admitting the dependency on outside influence for the fate of their State, or perhaps they merely continued to oversee the sacred rites of Apollo and other deities, fading into the background of the surrounding upheaval. The question must be left open, since no source mentions their activity for the period that they are without the Books. Even in their absence, the existence of the (*quin*)*decemuiri* is inextricably tied to the Sibylline Books.

3.6 Sex and the Sibyl

By this point, I hope to have managed to demonstrate that, though inanimate objects, the Books are still able to construct and be constructed as a performative identity in their own right, as a Sibyl of the Books. This Sibyl, indeed like all Sibyls, is gendered as feminine, and decidedly so. But as we saw in the introduction, the dividing line between gender and sex is in a constant state of instability, and it is impossible to ever really separate the two concepts.[133] How do the Books, as inanimate objects, fit this paradigm (if at all)? In fact, the Sibyls as a whole seem to have a curious relationship to sex, both in the sense of biological sex and sexual intercourse.[134] More broadly, inspired prophecy is frequently linked to sexual

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[129] Tac. *Hist.* 3.72: *arserat* […] *fraude priuata.* Cf. also Obsequens 57.
[130] Tac. *Ann.* 6.12 tells us that they went to Samos, Ilium, Erythrae, Africa, Sicily and the Italian colonies. Cf. also D.H. *Ant. Rom.* 62.4.6, who only lists Erythrae, Asia and the Italian colonies.
[131] Parke 1988, 206.
[132] *Ibid.*; cf. also Rasmussen 2003, 170; Rüpke 2012, 242 n.29; Santangelo 2013, 135.
[133] See chapter **1.3 Sex, Bodies and Beyond**.
[134] Once again, the English language hinders rather than clarifies meaning: where necessary I will specify reference to the corporeal body and the physical act as "biological sex" and "sexual intercourse" respectively.

intercourse, and as such the Sibyls, Pythias and other prophetesses (much more than their male counterparts) join Fabia and her Vestal sisters in the scholarly ink spilled over questioning their "sexual status".[135] In this section, I am going to consider sex in both its aspects, how they relate to the sibylline tradition, and as such are reflected in the performative identity of the Sibyl of the Books.

David S. Potter, in his enlightening review article of H. W. Parke's posthumous book on sibylline prophecy, suggested that "there was no strict division between the [biological] sexes when it came to prophecy (the androgynous Tiresias is an extreme example)".[136] Whilst it is true that there is an abundance of both men and women (and sexually ambiguous figures) who prophesy in ancient myth and history, I would argue that there is in fact a strong division in the construction of the diviner based on their sexual construction and gender performance. The figure and myth of Tiresias is instead an extreme example not of there being "no strict division" but instead of the relationship between sex and prophecy. Dualities of nature are often seen as constructive of seerhood (for example, the archetype of the "blind seer"), and Tiresias' dual sexual nature is no exception,[137] but it is also a step further within this paradigm. Despite differing versions of the myth of how Tiresias lost (and gained) his sight, sex, in its own dual meanings of biological sex and intercourse, always plays an important part.[138] In Ovid's version, Tiresias is called as an arbiter for Jupiter and Juno's argument about which biological sex enjoys sexual intercourse more.[139] Ovid then takes a digression to explain the mortal's unique position: he has experienced both biological sexes (and, as such, sexual intercourse as both), having been miraculously transformed into a woman when he struck with his stick two copulating snakes.[140] When Tiresias sides with Jupiter, Juno takes his vision as a punishment, while her husband compensates this loss with the gift of Second Sight. The importance of biological sex to the story and characterisation of Tiresias is obvious, and has been much discussed,[141] but there is also an importance of sexual intercourse. It is the expertise of having been both a man and a woman that Tiresias is called to judge upon, but the intercourse of the snakes is also the original reason for which he can judge so clearly. The other version of Tiresias' myth is that he accidentally came upon Athena

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[135] Cf. e.g. Skulsky 1987; Sissa 1990; Maurizio 1995; Debnar 2010. For the Vestals, and the phrase "sexual status", see chapter **1.5: Fabia**.
[136] 1990b, 476.
[137] Carp 1983; Flower 2008, 37.
[138] The key study on the different "myths of Tiresias" is Brisson 1976.
[139] Ov. *Met*. 3.316-338.
[140] 3.324-331. His original sex is restored seven years later when he strikes the same two snakes.
[141] Cf. e.g. Brisson 1976; 2002; Carp 1983; Michalopoulos 2012.

whilst she was bathing naked.[142] She blinded him as a punishment for his visual transgression, but gave him divinatory powers when she realised it was an accidental transgression. Tiresias' divination, in all versions of the myth, comes as compensation for blindness – itself a punishment "for an involuntary fault".[143] But more than this, his transgressions are always the inadvertent gaining of knowledge otherwise unattainable – specifically his masculine awareness of the feminine. In the first version, it is knowledge of both masculine and feminine sexual pleasure, and particularly a man having knowledge of the latter; in the second, it is viewing Athena's naked body without her knowledge or consent. Rather than divination being unrelated to sex and gender - and specifically the female gender - it is precisely because of these, in Tiresias' case at least, that the man is able to divine unattainable knowledge.

I have already discussed how inspired prophecy is normally considered to be possession by a deity, akin to madness, and this deity is usually Apollo.[144] The language of possession is closely related to sexual intercourse – consultation with Pythia, for example, is sometimes constructed as her having sexual intercourse with that deity.[145] One could argue that this relation reinforces the construction of inspired prophecy as feminine, through the reductive binary of active and passive.[146] Brooke Holmes writes that "the male is defined again and again in our sources as the one who acts, not only on himself but also on others", and consequently in this way, the female is identified as the passive, the one acted upon.[147] But this dichotomy is simplified, particularly when it comes to interactions between mortals and deities. Branchus, the mythical figure of the origin story for the Oracle at Didyma, was seduced by Apollo and given divinatory gifts in return.[148] As mortal, Branchus is acted upon (sexually) by Apollo; he is in the passive role, but subordinating himself to a god does not come at the cost of his masculinity.

The Sibyl(s), too, complicate this binary. They are consistently seen to reject the advances of Apollo, refusing to be subordinated. Rejection is also a factor of Cassandra's prophetic construction: she is given her second sight as a courting gift, but cursed to be forever disbelieved when she refuses, or attempts to refuse, his advances.[149] But although there is

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[142] Call. *H.* 5.75-130.
[143] Brisson 2002, 121
[144] See chapter **3.4 The 'I' in Sibyl**.
[145] Skulsky 1987, 57; Sissa 1990, 53-70; Maurizio 1995, 71; 1998, 155; 2001, 46-50.
[146] For the problem of binaries, see chapter **1.2 Divining Definitions**.
[147] 2012, 79.
[148] Johnston 2008, 83; Stoneman 2011, 84.
[149] Cf. Serv. *Ad Aen.* 2.247. It is frequently ambiguous as to whether Apollo succeeds in his designs on Cassandra: see Skulsky 1987, 60; Debnar 2010, esp. 131-133 for the ambiguity of Aeschylus' Cassandra.

ambiguity in the conclusion of her story with Apollo, her prophecies are still presented in the form of the god taking her over, as can be seen in the quotations given by Quintus in *Div*.[150] We have already seen, however, how the Erythraean Sibyl divines in spite of Apollo, in her oracle-poem recorded by Phlegon.[151] The Ovidian Sibyl, too, is figured as refusing Apollo, but, surprisingly, her abilities are never linked to that deity – instead he only gave her longevity. She tells Aeneas that

> *Hos [annos] tamen ille mihi dabat aeternamque iuuentam,*
> *Si Uenerem paterer: contempt munere Phoebi*
> *Innuba permaneo.*
>
> Those years he gave me, and would have given me eternal youth, too,
> If I submitted to his love: I rejected Phoebus;
> Forever I retain my virginity.[152]

The separation between Sibylline prophecy and Apollo is subtle yet distinct. In all stories of the Sibyl(s), however, this rejection does not come at the cost of her femininity, as we might have expected. Instead, it reinforces her outsider status. The Sibyl(s) are outside of relations, kinship or sexual, with mortal or divine. This is from where her knowledge is derived, otherwise unattainable to man. I mean the last word in this sentence in both its general and its gendered senses. Like Tiresias, she must explicitly be across the gendered boundary, in order for her knowledge to be inaccessible but worthwhile to Aeneas or any other male seeker, such as the political elite of the Republic.

The Sibylline Books, then, as performatively female through their own Sibylline identity, allow the (*quin*)*decemuiri* to seek their knowledge. Politics in Rome is performatively a man's game; prophecy is required when the course of action is unknown, and so the performative femininity of the Books allows for the state to gain this otherwise unattainable knowledge through safely crossing the boundaries of gender.

3.7 Aeneas' Adventures Underground

Finally, I want to turn to what is perhaps the most famous representation of a Sibyl from Rome, found at the heart of Virgil's *Aeneid*. In Book 6, Aeneas and the wandering Trojans finally reach the shores of Italy, where their first action is to seek the mysterious Sibyl of Cumae, for her guidance. It is at this point, H. E. Butler once wrote, that we see a change in

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[150] Cic. *Div*. 1.66-67; see chapter **2.4 Making an Example of Cassandra**.
[151] Phlegon *Macr*. 5.2; see chapter **3.3 The Creation of a Sibyl**.
[152] Ov. *Met*. 14.140-142.

the atmosphere of the poem, and it truly becomes "the National Epic of Rome".[153] The Sibyl, whom Virgil peculiarly names Deiphobe, after giving a typical frenzied consultation, takes Aeneas on a journey to the Underworld, where past and future collide as the grandeur of Rome, and the lineage of Aeneas, are spelled out.

This Sibyl, and Aeneas' consultation, are often accepted as being modelled on the Pythia at Delphi.[154] It is true that there are many parallels that can be drawn between the two contexts, and also, more importantly, that Delphi provided a very real – and very famous in its own right – example of oracular consultation, that would have rung true to many Romans.[155] But that is not to say that, in Nicholas Horsfall's words, "there was no longer a Sibyl to observe."[156] Jacqueline Champeaux, too, has argued that Deiphobe provided the strongest image of a Sibyl for the later generations and beyond.[157] Her influence specifically on the likes of Ovid and the Judeo-Christian tradition is of course undoubtable, but that is not to say that she was the only representation of a Sibyl available at Rome and beyond. In fact, the Sibyl of the Books was very present within the political spheres of Rome, as I hope to have demonstrated thus far in this chapter. Further, despite the obvious differences, the Books, and this mysterious Sibyl behind them, provided a lot of inspiration for Virgil's presentation of the Sibyl of Cumae. With this next section, I intend to examine the elements we have seen in this chapter, of both the Sibyl of the Books and the sibylline tradition as a whole, and how they are performed by and exemplified in Deiphobe.

The majority of Book 6 takes place in an Underworld setting.[158] Unlike necromancy – bringing the dead to the living world for information – Deiphobe takes Aeneas down to the dead. This involves, in a very explicit way, the crossing of boundaries in order to gain otherwise unattainable knowledge.[159] The crossing of boundaries, both physical and constructed, reminds us of Tiresias and the gender boundaries s/he crossed in his discovery of knowledge. Deiphobe's biological sex, then, like the biological sex of the Sibyls before her, is still an important aspect of her divinatory abilities. Aeneas is male, in many ways a bastion of masculinity, and the object of his enquiry is directly his father, indirectly his paternal line and the constitution of the Roman state. And so, he must ask Deiphobe, not in her role as priestess

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[153] Butler 1920, 1-2.
[154] Cf. e.g. Mannetti 1998, 58; Deremetz 2004, 76; Stoneman 2011, 190.
[155] We have already seen how Cicero visited it in his youth, in chapter **2.5 Cicero and the Pythia – a Deceptive Construction?**
[156] 2013, 73. Cf. also Austin 1977, 56-7.
[157] 2004, 46.
[158] 6.264-901. This, of course, is a strong parallel to Hom. *Od.* 11.1-332., for which cf. Bremmer 2009, 183-184.
[159] The entrance to the Underworld is a *spelunca*, first detailed in 6.237. Deiphobe leads Aeneas into it in 6.262-263.

of Apollo or even of Hecate, but as a female *uates*, a Sibyl, to take him to the Underworld in pursuit of knowledge.[160] Much like the transmission of knowledge from Diotima to Socrates in Plato's *Symposium*, this knowledge must be mediated through the femininity of Deiphobe, crossing the sexual boundary as well as the physical boundary in order to cross the boundary of knowing.[161]

Biological sex takes us to the question of sexual intercourse (through that phrase of "sexual status"). Here we must consider the Pythia of Delphi: if it is the case that Virgil modelled his Sibylline consultation on the Delphic example, we would, I think, see Deiphobe figured as a lover of Apollo. Susan Skulsky certainly sees it this way, discussing how the Sibyl is raped, and "made to speak not [her] own words, but those of the god".[162] But Deiphobe is different. We are told that she is a priestess of Phoebus Apollo before we are told even her name, and she is frequently referred to as this throughout the *Aeneid*.[163] This is also exemplified in the use of transferred epithets, particularly when she is described as *Amphrysia uates* at 6.398. But does this transfer remind us that Deiphobe is inextricably bound up with Apollo, or rather that Apollo is inextricably bound up with the Sibyl(s)? At the moment of the god's arrival, she is explicitly referred to as *uirgo*, a reminder of her "sexual status" and any relationship she may have had with the deity. Furthermore, Deiphobe, like her Sibylline sisters before her, seems to resist any sexual advances the god may have made.

The lack of sexual interaction between Deiphobe and Apollo is also emphasised in the spoken construction of the prophecy(/ies) made in the book, which returns us to our earlier question of: "Whose prophecy?" When Aeneas begins his consultation, his supplication is in fact specifically directed at both the deity and the priestess, yet with very different aims: to Apollo, he merely asks for continued support from the gods in return for continued supplication;[164] to Deiphobe he turns and addresses separately, with an indirect request to know if his future is secure.[165] After this, deity and priestess are depicted as fighting for control of the physical body.[166] But whilst they fight, curiously, the oracular response that seems otherwise ambiguous – perhaps purposely so – is explicitly described as coming from the mouths that surround the cave's entrance.[167] These mouths, when Aeneas initially enters

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[160] 6.103-123.
[161] Plato's Diotima will be discussed in greater detail in chapter **5.2 Why is Martha a Woman?**
[162] 1987, 78-79.
[163] 6.35. cf. also 6.321, 6.628.
[164] 6.56-65.
[165] 6.65-76. This also contains an explicit allusion to the Sibylline Books, watched over by men in their own temple – note the distinguishing of the Books from Apollo, even in this instance.
[166] 6.77-79.
[167] 6.81-82.

the cave, are defined not as mouths of Apollo, but Deiphobe.[168] They are a part of her beyond the physical body, and beyond the reach of Apollo in his struggle.

Moreover, from this point on, the deity appears to fade further into the background – his role in the consultation is completed. It is when the madness has subsided, and Deiphobe is back in definite control,[169] that Aeneas asks for guidance into the Underworld, the place in which he will truly be able to gain the knowledge he desires. From here on, the words, and prophecies, are unquestionably Deiphobe's. R. G. Austin comments that at this point "the prophetess speaks solemnly and unambiguously: the *horrendae ambages* have gone, her part as inspired seer is over, and she begins to take on the character of guide".[170] But are these two roles mutually exclusive? On their journey through the Underworld, Deiphobe takes the lead at every turn, moving Aeneas on at the moments and in the directions she deems fit, and even answering the questions he asks, for example, of Palinurus, who himself cannot reply.[171] Horsfall describes the Sibyl at this point as "interlocutor",[172] but this is not quite accurate, in the same way that it is not accurate to describe the Sibylline Books as interlocution with Apollo. It is only when they reach Anchises that this Sibyl herself then fades into the background, as the deity did before her.[173] Anchises' words, and parade of famous future Romans, are prophecy in their own way, and like the Books they are direct speech, unencumbered this time by the Sibyl.[174] Suddenly, this is a physical representation of an oracular consultation, the likes of which we have seen above. The Sibyl is almost forgotten about, a background figure who does not speak herself, but merely provides the opportunity for interaction, as the Pythia provides at Delphi.[175] The very fact that this is the figuration of consultation with Anchises – Aeneas' end goal – signifies that the earlier consultation is not consultation with Apollo but Deiphobe herself.

Deiphobe's double role in these consultations leads us back to where we began this chapter, with the fluid identity of the Sibyls. I have so far refrained from commenting on the name Virgil provides for this *uates*. Deiphobe is not attested elsewhere as a name for any Sibyl,

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[168] 6.44.

[169] 6.102: "at last the frenzy subsided, and the ravings stilled" (*Ut primum cessit furor, et rabida ora quierunt*).

[170] 1977, 78.

[171] Aeneas questions Palinurus at 6.341-346, who replies at 6.347-371. But Palinurus' own question, and plead to Aeneas, is answered by Deiphobe (6.373-381), who provides him with a miniature prophecy of his own. See also Gowers 2005 for Deiphobe's controlling role as guide.

[172] 2013, 458.

[173] 6.679.

[174] 6.687-886.

[175] Cf. Skulsky 1987, 78-79, who points out how "a dramatic figure who dominates the opening scene [of Book 6] […] fades from view when Aeneas enters Elysium and turns towards the future. The brief reminder that she is still with Aeneas when he leaves the underworld (897) comes as a surprise, for we have by this point forgotten all about her – about the figure who loomed so large at the beginning of the book."

Cumaean or otherwise. As noted above, Lactantius calls the bookseller in the Sibylline Books' origin story by three possible names: Amalthea, Herophile or Demophile.[176] He otherwise only provides a name for the tenth and final of his list, Albunea of Tibur.[177] Of these names, only Herophile is attested elsewhere as a sibylline name, by Plutarch and Pausanias, who both attribute it to the Erythraean Sibyl.[178] Pausanias does go on to provide the name of Demo for Cumaean Sibyl, which sees a potential parallel in Lactantius' third Cumaean name. Deiphobe, however, provides a clean break from all these.[179] The male equivalent, Deiphobus, was a brother of Hector and Paris, and in fact is himself a pivotal character in Aeneas' Underworld journey. The conversation between Deiphobe and Deiphobus makes this juxtaposition hard to miss.[180] Skulsky, however, brings a further parallel that sheds some light on the name: Deiphobus, as a husband of Helen, calls to mind this name and, in turn, its own male counterpart of Helenus.[181] We have already seen how Helenus, though famed as an ornithomancer, was closely linked with his sister Cassandra and an inspired seer in his own right thanks to gifts from Apollo.[182] Furthermore, Helenus has previously appeared as a character in the poem, explicitly as a prophetic guide, who directs Aeneas to Cumae and Deiphobe.[183] This does provide a link between Deiphobe and Apollo, and another hint of sexual relations between the *uates* and the deity, but again this is background and as much a link between prophets regardless of divine contact. Helenus, as a childhood friend and prophetic guide to Aeneas, is a reminder of the hero's own past, but also his future; and the conflation between where he has come from and where he is going.

Deiphobe's identity, then, through this naming is perhaps tied to the male protagonist of the story in which she appears, but this is in many ways the fluidity that sibylline identity has displayed throughout this chapter. From Ovid's Sibyl providing a metamorphosis story of her own for the poet's theme, whilst Petronius' depressed Sibyl, longing for death, gave a parallel to his character's own morbid curiosities. The Sibyl of the Books, too, uniquely provided precisely what the Senate required in respect of their divinatory questioning, in a method they could remain in control over at the level they needed. By Virgil's time, the Sibyl of the Books was a fully performed identity, aspects of which the poet was able to utilise in creating his

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[176] *Div. Inst.* 1.6.10. See chapter **3.3 The Creation of a Sibyl**.
[177] 1.6.12.
[178] Paus. 10.12.7; Plut. *De Pyth. Or.* 401b.
[179] Horsfall 2013, 83 and 360-361 repeatedly highlights the lack of clarity in Virgil's choice of name, as well as its coincidental similarity to Deiphobus' name, but does not give an explanation of his own as to why.
[180] Blandford 2011, 204, describes it as "Virgil's proleptic version of Tweedledum and Tweedledee".
[181] 1987, 68-9. But cf. also Maurizio 2017, esp. 97, who comments that we should not overlook Helen herself as a prophetess, because she is a lamenter at Hom. *Od.* 15.173-4.
[182] See chapter **2.4 Making an Example of Cassandra**.
[183] 3.294-470.

own Sibyl, again working within but unique from the tradition. Deiphobe is not the Sibyl of the Books, but neither is she quite the same as any other Sibyl, of Cumae or elsewhere. These two are both individual Sibyls, adapted to the needs of the hero and the State, modelled at the hands of the poet and the Senate. But that is not to say that either is unable to perform her own identity – far from it: their individual identities – and individual identities as women – are necessary to allow access to the otherwise unattainable knowledge. Both these two, along with the other Sibyls of the tradition, retain and perform that individuality, in their prophecies distinct from Apollo, and their traditions that utilise, but are still unique to other oracular traditions, such as Delphi.

Deiphobe provides Aeneas just what he needs at that point in his narrative. She is inextricably linked to him and his plot line, in the same way that the Sibylline Books are inextricably linked to the Roman state. Virgil, then, used the traditions of the Books, and the identity of their Sibyl, as inspiration when creating Deiphobe, and that shines through in the elements we have seen above. But at the same time, Deiphobe is an original creation, a character just for the *Aeneid* and its hero.

3.8 What's in a Name?

Ileana Chirassi Colombo once described Sibylline prophecy as "un'enunciazione decentrata, discontinua, atemporale".[184] Indeed, the Sibyl(s), as dislocated, atemporal prophetesses, refused to be tied to a single understanding. Over the course of this chapter, we have seen again and again how the Sibyl of the Books can be construed as a distinct Sibyl in her own right, working within the sibylline tradition but simultaneously unique within that same paradigm. And that is, to an extent, the core of Sibylline identity: fluid yet distinct, present yet aloof. The Sibylline Books allowed the Roman Senate access to that identity, in a way that suited their need for control, and yet, though reduced to a material object, restricted to a Readership of a select group of men, and locked away, this Sibyl still manages to performatively realise, and be realised as, an identity of her own, constantly recreated at every consultation.

We have also seen the importance of femininity to the identity of both the Books and the Sibyl(s) more broadly. Their gender is central to their construction, and their ability to provide divinatory knowledge to those who request it. Furthermore, they do this beyond the control of

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[184] 1996, 431.

Apollo, a relatively unique construction within the traditions of oracular divination, and again, it is through their femininity that they are able to retain this independence. They are divorced from any particular site, such as a temple that would link them to Apollo, and yet they remain in control of their own context as a textual site of prophecy. Within the wider remit of this thesis, the Sibylline Books are an important example of the role gender, and particularly divinatory femininity, play in the construction of divinatory truth. In the performatively masculine sphere of Roman politics, the words of a woman sit front and centre, guiding the actions of the Republic.

The next chapter keeps us close to the Books, as we look more specifically at a prodigy for which they provide an expiation: the birth of an intersex child. We move away from divinatory actors, but this will be an important step in thinking about the construction of gender – and the problems it could cause – in the religious and divinatory sphere of the Roman Republic.

Chapter Four: Callo/n

4.1 A Tale of Two Sexes

In the fragments of the thirty-second book of Diodorus Siculus' *Bibliothēkē* ("*Library of History*"), you can find the story of an unnamed Italian, living close to Rome at the outset of the Social War (91-88 BCE) who is revealed by her husband to be not a woman, but an ἀνδρόγυνος.[1] On the advice of the haruspices, Diodorus tells us, the Senate ordered for the individual to be burned alive.

The placement of this story highlights a number of unusual features. Diodorus' main narrative, on the action of the Achaean League and the Hellenistic kings alongside the rise of Rome, is last seen at 32.10.2, where he pauses on the assassination of the Seleucid king Alexander I Balas at Abae, Arabia, in 145 BCE, to tell of "the strange event that took place before the death of Alexander, though, because of its paradoxical nature, perhaps it will not be believed".[2] Consulting an oracle of Apollo Sarpedonius in Cilicia, Alexander was told to beware the birthplace of "the two-formed one".[3] Diodorus takes us backwards in narrative time again to tell of the birth of a daughter to a Macedonian man and an Arabian woman in Abae. When she was at an appropriate age, the daughter, named Heraïs, was married to a man named Samiades. Soon after the marriage, Samiades left Abae for a long journey, and Heraïs fell ill with a severe tumour at the base of her abdomen. After seven days, the tumour ruptured and revealed "from the womanhood of Heraïs a male sexual organ, with testicles laying alongside it".[4] She continued to dress and live as a woman until her husband returned and, eventually, h/er[5] secret was revealed before an entire courtroom. It was legally decided that s/he would continue life as a man, and so he took his father's name, Diophantus, and enrolled in Alexander's cavalry, fighting for him and withdrawing with him to his fate at Abae.

Diodorus continues his digression with a second very similar story, occurring thirty years later (thus around the last decade of the second century BCE) in Epidaurus.[6] An orphan named

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[1] Diod. 32.12.1-2. The Latin transliteration of this word *androgynus*; for reasons that I hope will become obvious, I am temporarily leaving this term untranslated.

[2] 32.10.2: τὴν γενομέν περιπέτειαν πρὸ τῆς Ἀλεξάνδρου τελευτῆς, διὰ δὲ τὸ παραδόξον ἴσως ἀπιστηθησομένην.

[3] *Ibid*.: τὸν δίμορφον.

[4] 32.10.3: ἐκ τῶν τῆς Ἡραΐδος γυναικείων αἰδοῖον ἀνδρεῖον ἔχον διδύμους προσκειμένους.

[5] English suffers a lack of pronouns for genders other than male or female. For the sake of clarity, I refer to individuals whilst they are treated performatively as female with female pronouns and whilst they are treated performatively as male with male pronouns; for individuals treated as non-binary in the ancient world, either liminally or permanently, I have indicated by splitting the pronouns ('s/he', 'h/er' and 'h/erself'). Cf. Prosser 1998, 26-27: "s/he – the transgenderist, the third camp term whose crossing lays bare and disrupts the binaries that found identity".

[6] The full story is told 32.11.1-4.

Callo (a feminine name) was assumed to be a girl, although "she had no opening in the passage appointed to women by nature".[7] Nevertheless, like Heraïs, upon reaching the appropriate age, Callo married and lived with her spouse for two years, until she developed a tumour on her groin. Doctors were called, but no one could treat her pain until a certain apothecary cut into the tumour and revealed "a male sexual organ, complete with testicles and a shaft without an opening".[8] By adding an "n" to the end of h/er name, Callon became grammatically masculine, suiting what everyone now knew to be his biology all along. As a curious addendum to his story, Diodorus notes that Callon was later charged with impiety for having witnessed, as a priestess of Demeter, "things which are not to be seen by men",[9] confirming the viewpoint that, despite appearances, Callon was, and always had been, a man.

Diodorus' long digression, and mine, serve to underscore the response of the haruspices and the Republican Senate to the unnamed Italian, which follows immediately in the narrative. Our author is criticising the Romans for giving in to "superstitious fears"[10] for what is demonstrated by the descriptions of Diophantus and Callon, and the responses they received, a medical and legal problem. Indeed, a society's approach to intersexuality provides a really enlightening window into viewing that society's attitude towards sex and gender more broadly. In the UK today, when an intersexed child is born – whereby the child's physical biological characteristics do not conform to what is expected of one side of the sexual binary or the other – the parents are advised to raise them as one gender or the other, and in many cases infant genital surgery is performed in order to make that body appear to conform.[11]

Though, as we will see throughout this chapter, the specific fate of Diodorus' Italian is somewhat unique, the Roman Republic as a society still took something of a drastic approach to the discovery of an intersexed person, considering h/er to be a *prodigium* ("prodigy") and ritually killing h/er by drowning at sea. Prodigies, rather than foretelling future events, were a non-predictive form of divination in the Roman Republic, a signal that the *Pax Deorum* ("peace of the gods") needed to be regained.[12] A prodigy could be

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[7] 32.11.2: αὕτη τὸν ἐπὶ τῆς φύσεως ἀποδεδειγμένον ταῖς γυναιξὶ πόρον ἄτρητον εἶχεν.

[8] *Ibid.*: ἀνδρὸς αἰδοῖα, δίδυμοι καὶ καυλὸς ἄτρητος.

[9] 32.11.4: τὰ τοῖς ἄρρεσιν ἀόρατα.

[10] 32.12.1: δεισιδαιμονοῦσιν. For a discussion of the loaded category of "superstition" (ancient and modern), see chapter **2.6 Nothing but an Old Wives' Tale?**

[11] In fact, the parents are frequently not told of, nor consent to the surgery. For a discussion of infant genital surgery, see Fausto-Sterling 2000, 54-66; Butler 2004, 57-74; Morland 2012.

[12] For discussion of the construction of the *pax deorum* and its usage, cf. Santangelo 2011. Cf. also Corbeill 2015, 15.

any unusual event reported to the Senate and approved by that body as a *prodigium publicum*, an unfavourable portent that is usually relevant to society as a whole and requires ritual expiation.[13]

The Senate would then call upon the expiatory expertise of either the haruspices or the Sibylline Books. The type of event could range from a swarm of bees in the Forum Romanum to lightning striking temples.[14]

How, then, does the intersex person fit into this picture? We saw in the previous chapter a fragment of the Sibylline Books that prophesied the birth of an intersex child, and prescribed expiations for the event.[15] In fact, between 209 BCE and 92 BCE, Livy and Julius Obsequens record fourteen such births which are treated as prodigies by the state. The birth was always considered to be of public significance, relevant to society as a whole, rather than as a private affair – in fact the parents of intersex children are never mentioned by the sources.[16] The child was then, with only two exceptions, put in a box (*arca*) and cast out to sea.[17]

This chapter is a discussion of the Republic's treatment of intersex children as prodigies, and the way that the prodigy process was reinforced by gender construction. Intersexuality represents a different way in which gender, and correct performance of it, played an important role in the divinatory traditions, but also in which divinatory traditions played an important role in validating and reinforcing gender and gender performativity. The ritual expulsion of the body that did not conform to the Roman conception of gender worked to underline those very conceptions.

Because of the nature of the historiography, the identities, the lives and even the names of the "expiated" children have been irrevocably lost. This is not merely by chance, but a cruel reminder of the centrality that gender roles played in the Roman Republic and that, even though they would not have used the framework of performativity, it is evident that, when gender (or, in this case, sex) was mis-performed, the consequences were dire. Unlike the other chapters of this thesis, which are named directly for the case studies they discuss, I have called this chapter "Callo/n", a reminder that, contemporaneous to these expiations, as near as Epidaurus, intersex people could and did find an identity and a place in their society. We will

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[13] Rasmussen 2003, 35.
[14] For bees, cf. e.g. Liv. 24.10.11; for lightning cf. e.g. App. *BC*. 1.78.
[15] See chapter **3.4: The 'I' in Sibyl**.
[16] Corbeill 2015, 156.
[17] The typical Livian example is 27.37.5-7. The exceptions will both be discussed over the course of this chapter.

return to Callo/n's story, as well as Heraïs/Diophantus', throughout this chapter as touchstones for the lived experience of ancient intersexuality.[18]

The first section of this chapter will outline the prodigy process in the Roman Republic, and detail the procedure of what happened at the birth of an intersex child. This will then be followed by a close examination of the language used around the discovery of individual intersex people, particularly as described by Livy. The next section will consider the concept of liminality as it has been applied to prodigies in the Roman Republic, and the extent to which we should understand intersexuality as a form of gender liminality. The two sections that follow are discussions of two other instances of ritual murder in the Republic, namely those of unchaste Vestal Virgins and the ritual sacrifice of two Greeks and two Gauls, and the ways in which they are both parallel to and different from the intersex expiations. Finally I look at why the expiations seem to stop abruptly in 92 BCE, and we will return to the differing understandings of intersexuality in the ancient world.

Before we continue, I want to be explicit in the language I am using. Contemporary Anglophone scholarship in Classics and Ancient History almost unanimously uses the word "hermaphrodite" to describe those whose bodies do not conform to the sexual binary. But, as Elisabeth Reis has written, this word has since been laid to rest as "vague, demeaning, and sensationalistic [… and one that] conjures up images of mythical creatures, perhaps even monsters and freaks".[19] The word of course has a classical heritage, coming from the name of the mythical intersexed deity Hermaphroditus;[20] however, language and understanding changes over time, and we should not use that heritage as an excuse to continue to use a word that is now considered a slur for contemporary people. By contrast, "intersexuality" and its derivatives are the generally accepted terms within the contemporary intersex community itself, as well as being used by medical professionals along with "Disorders of Sex Development" (DSD).[21] Overall, I feel that the language of intersexuality, rather than the language of hermaphroditism, reminds us that this is a discussion of real people, not one of deities and monsters.

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[18] As with pronouns, discussed in n.5, this chapter, when referring to the respective points in these people's lives during which they were treated as women, I will use the feminine version of their name, and vice versa; when referring to them more generally, I will refer to them as both their names, to demonstrate the point.
[19] 2007, 536.
[20] Although, arguably, Hermaphroditus' own physicality is not as simple as "intersexed": see Nugent 1990, Holmes 2012, 76-79.
[21] See Reis 2007 for a discussion of contemporary intersex terminology. For a discussion of DSD and the medicalisation of terminology and identity, see Feder and Karkazis 2008.

4.2 It's All Part of the Process

Prodigies generally, though not predictive in themselves, were considered warnings about the current state of affairs. When a possible prodigy arose – which could be witnessed by anyone – it would be reported to the local magistrate who would pass it on to the Senate. The Senate would then, if they accepted the event as a prodigy, ask either the *quin*(*decemuiri*) or the haruspices for expiatory advice.[22] The process has been laid out in a simple table by Anthony Corbeill, reproduced below:

Stage of process	Potential rejection
A. Possible prodigy occurs.	
B. Reported to magistrate.	
C. Reported to **senate**.	>>> **Senate** rejects report. Process ends.
D. Confirmed by **senate** as a possible prodigy.	
E. Forwarded to priestly body (*pontifices*, *Xuiri / XVuiri sacris faciundis*, *haruspices*).	
F. Priestly body makes recommendation to **senate**.	>>> **Senate** rejects report. Process ends.
G. **Senate** decides upon means of expiation.	

Table 1: *The life of a prodigy (adapted from Corbeill 2010b, 84).*

Expiations were varied, generally taking the form of supplications for a prescribed length of time (for example: one day, as in Livy 27.23.4) or sacrifices, with the correct recipient(s) identified by the pontiffs (Livy 30.2.13).[23]

Many of the specifics of the system have been lost, left unrecorded due to their standard nature; for example, it is unclear why the *quin*(*decemuiri*) and the Sibylline Books were consulted on some occasions, whilst the haruspices were approached on others. But the intersex prodigies and their expiations stand out as the only time we see these two divinatory bodies working together on a single response. In 207 BCE, the first intersex prodigy to be singled out with such a drastic response, Livy writes that the Etruscan haruspices ordered the child to be drowned at sea whilst the pontiffs decreed a hymn to be sung throughout the city

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[22] For the role and construction of the *quin*(*decemuiri*) as a college, see chapter **3.5 Whose Line Is It, Anyway?**
[23] A list of prodigies and their expiations can be found in MacBain 1982; Rasmussen 2003.

by thrice nine maidens.[24] Seven years later, when another was born in Sabine land (alongside one of twelve years old being discovered in the same place), the repetition of the drowning implies the involvement of the haruspices, but this time, and separate from that drowning, the Sibylline Books were also consulted, and the expiatory rituals are based on their advice.[25] These combined elements appear to become the standard response to intersexuality, and, as Bruce MacBain notes, "from this point on notices of androgyne [sic] expiations in our sources become increasingly abbreviated and frequently only note the drowning of the *monstrum*".[26]

As discussed in the previous chapter, the only surviving fragment of the Sibylline Books details the expiatory rituals for an intersex prodigy. As Susan Satterfield has aptly demonstrated, its survival, due to an unusual choice to publish the words of the Sibyl, is in part thanks to the standardisation of the response.[27] We see the hymn of the thrice nine maidens[28] – originally proposed by the pontiffs (according to Livy), which suggests either further standardisation or perhaps Livy confusing his colleges – but there is no mention of the drowning, or indeed any action to be taken at all regarding the intersex child h/erself. Clearly that remains entirely in the purview of the haruspices, which again emphasises the borders between these colleges.

4.3 One Is Not Born a Woman

A key aspect of the prodigy process, and of divination in general, is witnesses: if a swarm of bees manifests itself in an empty space, and there is no one around to see it, does it count as a prodigy?[29] But at what point is an intersex person "witnessed" as intersexed, and thus as a prodigy?

By way of a brief interlude, fruitful comparative material can be found in the nineteenth-century CE memoirs of Herculine Barbin.[30] Born in 1838, throughout h/er childhood Barbin is treated (and treats h/erself) as female. After a scandal in 1860, whilst teaching at an the all-girls school, h/er "secret" is revealed: s/he is legally reassigned as a man, renamed Abel

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[24] Liv. 27.37.5-7.
[25] Liv. 31.12.6-9.
[26] 1982, 129.
[27] Satterfield 2011.
[28] Phlegon, *Mir*. 10. A13.
[29] This is not unlike the prophecy of the unnamed matron in the first book of Lucan's *de Bello Ciuile*, as discussed in chapter **3.5 Whose Line Is It, Anyway?**
[30] The English edition of these memoirs is Barbin [1980], in which Michel Foucault wrote an introduction to Barbin's life, and asked the theoretical question "do we *truly* need a *true* sex?" (Foucault 1980, vii). Cf. also Butler 1990, 119-141.

Barbin, and moves to Paris; at this point in h/er narrative, too, s/he uses masculine adjective endings to describe h/erself.[31] Sadly, it seems s/he never adjusted to h/er new life (or h/er "true sex") and, shortly after completing h/er memoirs, Herculine Barbin committed suicide.[32]

There are a number of parallels to Heraïs/Diophantus and Callo/n, particularly in the idea that all three are brought up and socialised as women, until the revelation and reassignment (at least in the eyes of the law). But the stories all demonstrate that this "coming out", like all coming outs, is not a singular event but a process or a series of revelations. Barbin writes that s/he was seventeen when s/he h/erself realised that "[h/er] condition, although it did not present any anxieties, was no longer natural".[33] Later, s/he must "reveal" h/erself to various people, from h/er cohort at the école normale to h/er lover's mother, Madame P., and finally to a priest, who advises the process that leads to h/er legal reassignment.[34] Similar, too, we saw that Heraïs/Diophantus, even after h/er illness and self-discovery, continued to dress and act as appropriate for a woman until the public revelation.

Returning to the prodigies of the late Republic, the sources all present a rather swift picture: the fragment of the Sibylline Books locates the sign itself as being "a woman will give birth", and it is assumed that the baby and message, once delivered, are dealt with immediately.[35] But upon closer reading, it is explicitly not always as simple as that. In fact, Livy (and, following him, Obsequens) use two different words in the intersex prodigy records: *natus* ("born") and *inuentus* ("discovered"). Those who are *inuenti* are also frequently (although not unfailingly) given an age. This allows us a peek behind the curtain, at the construction of intersexuality as a prodigy in the Republic.

Table 2, below, demonstrates the frequency of and distinction between the usage of the two descriptors in all instances of intersex births in the author and his epitomiser:

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[31] The editors of the English edition chose to represent this distinction by italicising the feminine nouns and adjectives with which s/he referred to h/erself: Foucault 1980, xiii-xiv n.1.

[32] Foucault seemed to see a beauty in Herculine's story, writing that: "one has the impression, at least if one gives credence to Alexina's [ie. Herculine's] story, that everything took place in a world of feelings - enthusiasm, pleasure, sorrow, warmth, sweetness, bitterness - where the identity of the partners and above all the enigmatic character around whom everything centred, had no importance. It was a world in which the grins hung about without the cat" (1980, xiii). Herculine's final pages, however, seem to me at least to present a very different world view, and an anger at the world for the gaps through which s/he fell and the designation that made h/er a creature of fantasy. Rather than identity having no importance, it was the denial of identity, and the inability to align with her legal (or gender) identity, that led to h/er suicide; as such, I have chosen to refer to Barbin with the split pronouns "s/he, h/er" throughout h/er life.

[33] [1980], 19.

[34] *Ibid.*, 31-2, 69 and 76-8 respectively.

[35] Phlegon, *Mir.* 10. A3-4: γυναῖκα [...] τέξεσθαι.

Year (BCE)	Place	*natus/inuentus*	Age (if *inuentus*)	Reference
209	Sinuessa	*natus*	n/a	Liv 27.11.4-6
207	Frusino	*natus*	n/a	Liv. 27.37.3-5
200	Sabini	*natus* and *inuentus*	both n/a	Liv. 31.12.6-9
186	Umbria	*inuentus*	12	Liv. 39.22.5; Obseq. 3
142	Luna	*natus*	n/a	Obseq. 22
133	Ferentinus	*natus*	n/a	Obseq. 27a
122	Vessanum	*natus*	n/a	Obseq. 32
119	'in Roman territory'	*inuentus*	8	Obseq. 34
117	Saturnia	*inuentus*	10	Obseq. 36
98	unknown	n/a	unknown	Obseq. 47
97	Rome ("*urbs*")	*inuentus*	unknown	Obseq. 48
95	Urbinum	*natus*	n/a	Obseq. 50
92	Arretium	two *inuenti*	both unknown	Obseq. 53

Table 2: *intersex prodigies recorded by Livy and Julius Obsequens.*

As can be seen from the table, this distinction is made in all but one case (Obseq. 47). Out of the five instances in Livy, three are *nati* but two are *inuenti*, with the same word used by Obsequens' report of the latter discovery. In the later author, the spread is almost reversed, with four uses of "*natus*" and six of "*inuentus*", aside from the one instance where the distinction is not recorded.

Intersexuality is not just one condition, or a reduction of a person to "ambiguous genitalia".[36] This point does bring us to another difficulty in discussing intersexuality in the historical record: frequency and demographics. A question of this nature is difficult enough for the contemporary world, even when a status or subject is stably defined. The problem is that no one can agree, even in contemporary situations, as to where the line should be drawn between the sexes.[37] InterACT suggest that

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[36] InterACT: Advocates for Intersex Youth (InterACT) note that there are over 30 differences of sex development that come under the modern classification of intersexuality: https://interactadvocates.org/intersex-definitions/ [last accessed 17/08/2017].
[37] Or even "how many" biological sexes ought to be considered. Cf. Fausto-Sterling 1993 (to be read with the author's own later reflection in Fausto-Sterling 2000, 78-114) provocatively proposed we replace our two-sex system with a five-sex one.

An estimated one in 2,000 babies is born with reproductive or sexual anatomy and/or a chromosome pattern that doesn't seem to fit typical binary definitions of male or female.[38]

But there are also a number of variations that don't show up until later in life, such as during puberty: consider, for example, Barbin's self-discovery at seventeen, as discussed above. Other figures place numbers at 1 in 5000 births.[39] To further complicate matters, statistics, especially in this area, are "always culture specific".[40] What we could (and should) count as intersexed in the ancient world is undoubtedly different from what they themselves considered to be so, and further distances us from the concept and from the lived aspect. It is curious, then, that for all the *inuenti* for whom we are provided with an age, that age is younger than (or at least very early for) the typical age of puberty, at 8, 10 and 12 years old.

Furthermore, the very language of "discovery" immediately creates a narrative, and prompts the question "by whom?" There is, it is implied, a new outside gaze on the intersexed body, beyond h/er first early years. Unlike Livy or Obsequens, Diodorus gives us slightly more context in his story of the unnamed Italian with whom I opened this chapter. This person's intersexuality is announced by h/er husband. The context of marriage and newly-weddedness is similarly found in Heraïs/Diophantus' and Callo/n's stories, but the unnamed Italian is not explicitly described as a wife or even a woman h/erself (though the former category at the very least is obvious from the context). In this respect, then, the new gaze is that of the husband, possibly the first person outside the immediate family (or the midwives at birth) to view h/er body. The age of this unnamed intersex Italian, then, rests on the age of newlyweds. Susan Treggiari notes that it has been demonstrated based on epigraphic data that "an age in the late teens" is to be expected for the first marriage of a girl, at least in the Western Empire; however, these data fail to take into account those too poor or just unwilling to make epigraphic records.[41] Justinian's *Digesta* ("*Digest*"), marks an age of seven as the minimum.[42] Although this cannot directly tell us about the much earlier Republican practice, it gives an indication that marriage would not have been out of the question for the ages of our "discovered" intersex people. But the complete lack of information from Livy (and Obsequens) means we will never know who these people were before "discovery", or even who "discovered" them, beyond the construction of this singular narrative.

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[38] InterACT, https://interactadvocates.org/faq/ [last accessed 17/08/2017].
[39] Graumann 2013, 182.
[40] Dreger 1998, 42.
[41] Treggiari 1991, 400.
[42] *Dig*. 23.1.14. See also Treggiari 1991, 153; Hersch 2010, 39.

When we consider the dating, the first *inuentus* intersex seems to occur in isolation, fourteen years after the previous, *natus* intersex child and forty-four years before the next. It is interesting, then, that h/er age puts h/er birth in close proximity to that first birth, even though it is much later that the expiation is carried out. It is also of note that s/he is the eldest intersex person recorded in the expiation accounts. The next two in 119 BCE and 117 BCE, both occur closely following an intersex *natus*, three years earlier. Finally the penultimate and last occurrence of *inuenti* both happen in the same decade, alongside two cases of intersexed *nati*. Veit Rosenberger has observed that an anomalous event, once it is accepted as a prodigy, is frequently followed by another occurrence of that type of event within a few years.[43] As news spreads of an intersexed birth, and of the seriousness with which it was considered by the Senate, it is likely that people had a heightened sensitivity to perceived anomalies in others and in reporting cases to that central system, as opposed to any localised responses, at least for a few years until it was put to the back of people's minds, and life went on as normal.

4.4 Gender Troubles

But, whoever the discoverer may be, it seems the intersexed body was particularly troubling to the Roman Republic. In his argument for taking prodigies seriously in *Div.*, Quintus lists a number of examples, but pauses specifically to describe the birth of an intersex child as an "ill-fated omen" above all others.[44]

In modern discussions of ancient prodigies, too, the birth of an intersex child is frequently highlighted as the classic example of the phenomena considered as such.[45] But this traps the intersex prodigy between yet another – paradoxical – binary, whereby it is standard as a prodigy precisely because it is an unusual and to some extent unknown event. Scholarship generally categorises this event, along with specific others such as animals born with faces of men to a wolf inside the city walls and stones raining from the sky, as the crossing of borders, creating a liminal status from which society's anxiety arises.[46] An element of liminality can

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[43] 2007, 294.

[44] Cic. *Div.* 1.98: *fatale monstrum*. Cf. also Liv. 31.12.8, discussed below. For a discussion of Quintus' argument and style, see chapter **2.2 Women as Diviners I: The World According to Quintus**.

[45] Cf. e.g. Haack 2003, 38-39; Corbeill 2010a, 145. This is in part because non-binary bodies and identities are still seen as "other" in our own society, as neither one nor the other and thus neither. Bo Laurent, writing as Cheryl Chase, upon first learning of her own intersexuality (discovering, as an adult, her hidden medical record), describes feeling that "I was no longer a woman in my own eyes but rather a monstrous and mythical creature" (Chase 1998, 194); cf. also Grosz 1991; Braidotti 1994; Butler 2004, esp. 57-74.

[46] The concept of liminality was first applied by Rosenberger 1998, cf. esp.174, and has since been generally accepted by more recent work. Cf. e.g. Long 2006, 16; Rosenberger 2012, 856; Lennon 2013, 8; Corbeill 2015, 151-2. For an introduction to the concept of liminality, see Horvath *et al.* 2015.

certainly be seen within some of these events; however, a blanket application of this anthropological concept is not helpful, and even reductive in thinking about the Roman construction of intersexuality. The intersexed body – at least within the Republican prodigies – is not presented as feminine aspects in a male context or vice versa, but something taking aspects of both sexes into one single body, being "at once male and female".[47] It was not a "third gender" body,[48] nor is it an unsexed body, a construction of neither. It is instead simultaneously both sexes.

Furthermore, an important feature of liminality as an anthropological concept is its temporariness: it is a necessary feature of society, but only because it is moment and not a constant. Its original construction, by Arnold van Gennep, was that it was a middle stage in a rite of passage, representing a person moving from one status to another.[49] The body goes through processes of transformation, both natural and induced – creating temporary liminal beings – but it may only do so because it is not a permanent state.[50] To take the story of Callo/n as our touchstone once again, in h/er case Diodorus stresses that the situation is simply a medical problem, specifically one that affects some *men*. He describes the problem initially as a "tumour" (literally, "inflammation")[51] for which doctors and a pharmacist are called. The pharmacist's expectation of a payment reinforces the solution being a medical one. On top of this, Diodorus concludes the stories of Heraïs/Diophantus and Callo/n by stating

> […] οὐκ ἄρρενος καὶ θηλείας φύσεως εἰς δίμορφον τύπον δημιουργηθείσης, ἀδύνατον γὰρ τοῦτο, ἀλλὰ τῆς φύσεως διὰ τῶν τοῦ σώματος μερῶν ψευδογραφούσης εἰς ἔκπληξιν καὶ ἀπάτην τῶν ἀνθρώπων.

> [it is not the case that] the masculine and the feminine have been crafted into a dimorphic form – for that is impossible – but nature, through falsely drawing body parts leads people to terror and deception.[52]

Callo is treated as a woman in every respect until her "illness", which it is possible to read as a liminal state: s/he progresses from female through a temporary – and thus liminal – form of

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[47] Long 2006, 8.

[48] Pliny the Elder, discussing testicles in different species, cryptically comments that "In the human, [the testicles] may be crushed by a great injury or natural disease, and this forms a third gender of *semiuir*, distinct from intersex people and eunuchs" (*HN* 11.263: *homini tantum iniuria aut sponte naturae franguntur, idque tertium ab hermaphroditis et spadonibus semiuiri genus habent*). For further discussion on Pliny's cryptic comments on (imperial) intersexuality, see chapter **4.7 One Hundred Years of Intersexuality**.

[49] For the history and use of liminality as an anthropological category, including its use by van Gennep and development by Turner, see Thomassen 2015.

[50] Cf e.g. Schildkrout 2004, esp. 319-322, for a review of the anthropological literature on the practice of body augmentations in social cohesion.

[51] Diod. Sic. 32.11.2: φλεγμονῆς.

[52] *Ibid*., 32.12.1.

intersexuality to male, or at least to a performative state of masculinity. For the intersex child of the Roman Republic, however, there is no idea of transitionality: s/he was instead a static form, unable to demonstrate where s/he had been and where s/he was going. For those "discovered" to be intersexed post-infancy, there is no indication of the previously assigned gender, nor, unsurprisingly, any attempt at placing them in a "correct" gender.[53] Rather than being a "liminal being", as Jack Lennon contends,[54] the intersexed body simply does not fit within the Roman natural order of things.

After a particularly distressing list of mostly animal-based prodigies (though, interestingly, including two intersex humans),[55] Livy comments that

> *foeda omnia et deformia errantisque in alienos fetus naturae uisa; ante omnia abominati semimares iussique in mare extemplo deportari.*

> It seemed all these foul and deformed births had gone astray from their nature; but above all others the intersex births were abhorred, and immediately ordered to be carried out to sea.[56]

Other prodigies, too, can be fitted into the idea of going astray from their nature: a rain of stones is unnatural because stones should be on the ground, a wolf in the city walls is going against the natural division of wild and urban. This is not dissimilar to the concept of liminality, but with a key difference: there is no sense of temporariness, nor of a movement towards a new, whole status. In this respect, then, we can begin to see why the intersexed body had such an effect within the public sphere. When viewed as a prodigy, this was no longer a private individual's medical situation, but a microcosmic example of the breakdown of nature: the inversions of the body became a metaphor for the current predicament and the future of the State. Suddenly, it is easy to see why it provoked such a negative understanding: there was no foreseeable end-product of this state. Swift expiation was the only option.[57]

The intersex body also can also be seen as troubling to the Roman Republic in considering gender roles more broadly. Callo, for example, weaves with her loom shuttle, which Callon must metaphorically and physically put down.[58] But such a development demonstrates the fragility of gender, and of gender roles. Callon, as noted above, is charged with impiety for

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[53] For the construction of "discovery", see chapter **4.3 One Is Not Born a Woman**.
[54] Lennon 2013, 8.
[55] Cf. Long 2006, 15.
[56] Liv. 32.12.8.
[57] Cf. also Giesen 2015, 64: "another embodiment of inbetweenness and ambivalence is the monster […] we feel compelled to reconstruct the boundary behind which we could ban the monstrous phenomena or, this endeavour failing, try to escape".
[58] Diod. Sic. 32.11.4. For the loom shuttle as a metaphor for feminine gender, see chapter **3: Sibyl(s)**.

witnessing the acts of a Priestess of Demeter (who was, in fact, Callo/n h/erself), but, prior to h/er "illness", was perfectly capable and acceptable in performing that role. The accusation, like the medical procedure, rests on the understanding that s/he was a man all along, even if specifics were previously obscured. But this also highlights the constructed nature of gender roles: Callo/n was perfectly able to weave and to act as a priestess, despite these being feminine roles. For Callon's fellow Epidaurans, clearly, the only problematic mistake was the impiety and pollution caused by his ritual incapacity to perform, otherwise he simply needed to be reassigned his position in the community. This is where the Roman Republic differs: the intersex person could not be rationalised into a "correct" gender role.

The (Roman) desire for clear-cut gender roles is equally stark in the literary construction of the *cinaedus* and his sexual identity.[59] As Brooke Holmes has succinctly laid out,

> if we look at the Greeks and Romans more specifically, we find that what matters to your identity is not whether you're having sex with men or women but whether you're on top.[60]

From this viewpoint, male homosexual activity requires one partner to take a "passive" role, normally attributed to women, and thus cross the gender binary. The speaker of Juvenal's second Satire, Laronia, lists increasingly bawdy acts of gender and sexual inversion, which culminate in a marriage contract between two men, or at least in Laronia's view, between a man and a *cinaedus*. The latter suddenly begins to be described with female adjectives, having surrendered any masculinity s/he had to h/er husband, in order to become his "bride".[61] But interestingly for our discussion, at this point the speaker asks

> o proceres, censore opus est an haruspice nobis?
> scilicet horreres maioraque monstra putares,
> si mulier uitulum uel si bos ederet agnum?
>
> O nobles, do we need a censor or a haruspex?
> Would you be more horrified, consider it more a monster
> If a woman begot a calf, or a cow a lamb?[62]

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[59] Often translated as "(male) passive homosexual", although it is another term that requires a cultural as well as a linguistic translation. For this reason, I am again leaving it untranslated for the purposes of this thesis. Cf. Williams 2010, 230-239.

[60] 2012, 80. The construction of ancient homosexuality is a topic that has been intensely, and in many senses passionately debated, and one that I do not intend to get into here. For an overview of the main positions and their debaters, see Karras 2000; Flemming 2010, 798-799.

[61] Cf. Richlin 1993, esp. 552-554. Cf. also Walters 1997, who discusses how penetration can lead to a loss of status, and even of gender, for a male citizen.

[62] Juv. 2.121-123.

The *cinaedus*, through h/er actions has gone astray from h/er natural gender role, and as such caused a breakdown of the natural order. Like with a cow birthing a lamb, this should be treated as a prodigy, at least in Laronia's view, and a haruspex is needed for advice on how to regain the *pax deorum*. The misalignment of act and identity has caused h/er to transgress the boundaries of gender, but in doing so, s/he has not fully become female – nor remained male – and so *becomes* the prodigious intersex person.[63]

Importantly, however, Laronia's hyperbolic comparison also highlights one important way that the *cinaedus* differs from the intersex person, and that is through the concept of liminality. Craig A. Williams has put forward a construction of Roman homosexuality whereby

> men called *cinaedi* are imagined to cross a line and to do it often, but not irrevocably: they are still capable of masculine behaviour and, as we have seen, might be imagined to have sexual relations with women. In short, using the terminology proposed by an anthropologist of Polynesian societies we might describe the *cinaedus* as a "gender liminal figure".[64]

This depiction of gender liminality describes it in a very different way to the "liminality" proposed for intersexuality and the prodigy system. The intersex person cannot "cross a line" between genders: s/he is considered incapable of masculine – or feminine – behaviour, instead remaining distinct from either side. As with Diodorus' unnamed Italian, s/he contrasts with Heraïs/Diophantus and Callo/n in the way that s/he is never given the chance to be reassigned a gender post-"discovery", there is no line crossed, but instead the categories are broken down irreversibly. The *cinaedus* and the intersex person certainly share characteristics in the Roman world, and can both be seen as antagonists of the stability of sex and gender roles, but where one is merely a transgressor, the other is a full-time resident outside the clear definitions imposed.

As a final point to this section, I want to return to (Quintus) Cicero's choice of phrase to describe the intersex prodigy: *fatale monstrum*. The phrase is also used by Horace to describe another gender-liminal figure of the late Republic: Queen Cleopatra of Egypt. In his thirty-seventh Ode, he writes that Octavian, after Actium, pursued the Egyptian Queen "so that he might put that *fatale monstrum* in chains".[65] The poem is further filled with allusions to

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[63] See also Swancutt 2007, esp. 51-2, for a discussion of how the *tribades* (roughly "female homosexual") are equally seen as surrendering any gender identity, becoming almost a "faux-male" in their sexual activities.
[64] 2010, 232-233.
[65] Hor. *Od.* 1.37.20-21: *daret ut catenis / fatale monstrum*. This parallel is rarely pointed out. Pease 1920, *ad loc.*, highlights its connection in *Div.*, but offers no comment. Meanwhile discussion on Horace focuses more on its in-text construction, such as the parallel construction of Cleopatra as a hare: cf. West 1995, 187.

gender inversions of both the Queen and her followers. [66] While arguing for a deeper meaning in the phrase, J. V. Luce took it as a given that it "reflects the average Roman's superstitious horror of Cleopatra".[67] But it is particularly evocative of this "superstitious horror" because of the gendered aspect of the construction of Cleopatra in Latin literature.[68] As Joyce Tyldesley describes, she became

> the most frightening of Roman stereotypes: an unnatural female. A woman who worshipped crude gods, dominated men, slept with her brothers and gave birth to bastards. A woman foolish enough to think that she might one day rule Rome, and devious enough to lure a decent man away from his hearth and home.[69]

Like Juvenal's *cinaedus* above, Cleopatra had stepped beyond her gender role. The instability of gender – and specifically the instability of masculinity – threatens the natural order of things. There is an irreconcilable schism between the queen's feminine gender and her masculine actions that has turned her into this prodigious being.

The placement of the phrase in the wider poem also bears note in respect to thinking of Cleopatra's gender liminality. It is often discussed how the poem almost presents two different Cleopatras, one a drunken madwoman, the other a pensive Stoic.[70] The moment of the phrase *fatale monstrum* comes at the very moment of that change, and it is, in Michael Hendry's words "the precise point at which Cleopatra recovers her humanity, her *gender*, her nobility".[71] Immediately following that is the feminine pronoun "*quae*", the first time that the Queen is addressed in the poem in the nominative, and as a rational person. From another point of view, then, it could be argued that the *fatale monstrum* is the final culmination of her dehumanisation (in Hendry's terms), the final point of no return. At this point, she may be a "liminal" figure in the sense that she crosses back to reason, through her Stoic construction, but there is no chance of redemption. She may have the last laugh over Octavian by denying him capture, but her only path to that is through suicide. Like the intersex prodigy, the *fatale monstrum*, she is not a gender liminal figure, but a gender monster for whom the only reaction is eradication.

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[66] For example, her harem of sexually perverse "husbands" (ll. 9-10), for discussion of which see Hendry 1993, 141-143.

[67] 1963, 257.

[68] For a discussion of "superstition" and "superstitious horror", ancient and modern, see chapter **2.6 Nothing but an Old Wives' Tale?**

[69] 2008, 206. Hubbard and Nisbet 1970 have also pointed out that, due to the Egyptian and Ptolemaic practice of brother-sister marriages, and the fact that Cleopatra VII was almost certainly herself the daughter of such a marriage, this would also make her something of a *monstrum* in Roman eyes. They wryly comment "one is only surprised that if this was the case it is not point out somewhere more explicitly" (417).

[70] See DeForest 1989 for a charting of Cleopatra's move from drunkard to philosopher.

[71] 1993, 143 (my emphasis).

4.5 *Crimen* **Punishment**

The second occurrence of an intersex birth in Livy, noted on the table above, was the first instance of the intricate expiation ritual. The haruspices were called in, who recommended that the child be not just removed from Roman territory, but from all contact with the earth, and drowned.[72] This response has sometimes been seen at odds with the abhorrence towards and the emphasis on the foreignness of human sacrifice.[73] Celia E. Schultz has usefully demonstrated that, although this was still ritual murder, it was not sacrifice, because "sacrifice, whether liquid, vegetable, animal or human, has a recipient: it must be offered to, or directed at, someone".[74] Further, the intersex child is never referred to as a *victima* or *hostia*, but only as *prodigium*, reinforcing the status not as sacrificial offering, but as divine message.[75] Anthony Corbeill goes as far as to suggest that the nature of the ritual – specifically putting the child into a box and taking it out to sea – creates the feeling that the intersex child "seems never to have been directly put to death";[76] however, this does not seem to hold with close scrutiny of the sources themselves. For example, in the last extant case of an intersex birth in Livy, the historian abbreviates the ritual to "they ordered h/er *to be killed* like the first".[77] Clearly, Livy at least had no reservation in seeing this as (ritual) murder.

But the murder was not just any murder: it was a very specific series of rituals that had to be followed to correctly eliminate and expiate the prodigy. It is possible to see this expiation in respect of purification following the pollution of the prodigy or of the death: removing the child from any contact with the Roman territories and, by putting h/er alive in the box, from any contact with the sea, either.[78]

Why was it so crucial to remove the intersex child in this way? Corbeill writes that "far from being destructive, the hermaphrodite provides a means by which divine anger can be appeased."[79] There may have been an element of appeasement in the ritual murder, but the request to resecure the *pax deorum* is also clearly and separately demarcated by Livy and others, in the hymns of the thrice nine maidens and the sacrificial offerings to Juno,

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[72] Liv. 27.37.6-7: *id uero haruspices ex Etruria adciti foedum ac torpe prodigium dicere: ex torrem agro Romano, procul terrae contactu, alto mergendum. uiuum in arcam condidere prouectumque in mare proiecerunt.*
[73] Cf. Schultz 2010, esp. 520-522.
[74] *Ibid.,* 518. See also Schultz 2012.
[75] *Ibid.,* 530.
[76] Corbeill 2015, 156.
[77] Liv. 39.22.5: *id prodigium abominantes arceri Romano agro* necarique *quam primum iusserunt.*
[78] Lennon 2013, 8. Cf. also Richardson 2011, 100 n.45 who makes the comparison with the fate of Marcus Atilius, who revealed part of the Sibylline Books, and was thrown out to sea in a sewn up sack, so that his death would not pollute the sea (D.H. 4.62.4).
[79] 2015, 152.

Proserpina and Ceres.[80] If we are to follow Schultz in not considering the murder of the intersex as a sacrifice, it cannot be considered part of the expiation.

A frequently made parallel to the fate of the intersex child is the fate of the Vestal Virgin accused of breaking her vows of chastity. The virginity of the Vestals was considered to be of paramount importance and, as mentioned in our discussion of Fabia, this is perhaps the most discussed feature of the Vestal priesthood in modern scholarship.[81] When a Vestal was believed to have been unchaste, she (or they) would be tried by the pontifical college, and if they found her guilty, she would be carried on a litter through the streets of Rome – dressed in funereal attire, according to Dionysius – to the Colline Gate, where a cave had been carved out.[82] She would climb down a ladder herself, whilst the priests averted their eyes, and the tomb would be sealed. Plutarch adds that the priestess would be buried with a lighted lamp containing some oil, a loaf of bread, a small amount of milk and water.

It has been asked many times, with strong arguments on both sides, as to whether the unchaste Vestal was considered a prodigy or not, with parallels drawn between her punishment and the ritual murder of the intersex person.[83] Her prodigial status was first put forward by Georg Wissowa in 1923, and there have since been numerous arguments on either side of the debate.[84] The main argument in favour of considering her as a prodigy is the fact that she was "a contradiction in terms, a penetrated virgin, the impure pure, and so a *miasma*".[85] Whilst this is useful for comparative discussion of the intersex expiations, it unfortunately comes dangerously close to relying on the concept of liminality to delineate the prodigy and, in this respect, is not necessarily a fruitful comparison.[86] Similarly, she is often described as a prodigy in terms of being a scapegoat for the ritual protection of the city. As Silvia Baschirotto argues: "on the occasions the city was in grave danger, [the Vestals] could be sacrificed in the name of salvation of the city and the re-establishment of the *pax deorum*".[87] This interpretation, however, is also problematic, primarily because there is no specific record of the grave danger the city faced for many instances of the Vestal's *incestum* (that we know

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[80] As seen in Phlegon, *Mir*. 10.

[81] Indeed, it is only from an accusation of unchastity that we know of Fabia as a Vestal at all. See chapter **1.5 Fabia**.

[82] The main sources for this event are Dionysius of Halicarnassus (2.67.3-5) and Plutarch (*Num*. 10.4-7 and *Quaest, Rom.* 83; 96). The conviction and punishment of the Vestal Minucia in this fashion can be found in Liv. 8.15.7-8.

[83] Cf. E.g. Lennon 2013, 71-2; Corbeill 2015, 156.

[84] Wissowa 1923-4. For a detailed review of the main arguments, see Richardson 2011.

[85] Parker 2004, 584.

[86] For the problems with the concept of liminality, see chapter **4.4 Gender Troubles**. Parker in fact goes on to say: "Like a hermaphrodite, [the unchaste Vestal] crossed boundaries that must not be crossed, and so she must be removed and destroyed" (2004, 584).

[87] 2012, 178.

of), but also because the Roman state had plenty of ways to negotiate with the gods and ensure safety that did not involve the murder of an otherwise valued priestess.[88] On the other side of the coin, the determining of an unchaste Vestal did not follow the usual prodigy sanctioning process: there was no involvement of the Sibylline Books or the haruspices, but rather it took the form of a judicial procedure before the pontifex maximus and the pontifical college.[89] Furthermore, the event itself was preceded by prodigies highlighting an offence had been committed.[90] As Meghan DiLuzio succinctly summarises, "she was not a prodigy, but rather the author of a serious ritual error that had prompted the gods to send prodigies as an expression of their anger".[91]

A frequently overlooked fact in this consideration is the chance of redemption. Although rare, it was not an impossibility for the accused Vestal to prove her innocence, or indeed have it proved on her behalf. Fabia, our Vestal guide for this thesis, was herself accused of *incestum* with Catiline; however, as I discussed in the introduction, that case likely never even went to trial and Fabia continued to serve as a Vestal.[92] Indeed, around 230 BCE, too, when the Vestal Tuccia was accused of that crime, she asked for support of her innocence from Vesta herself, and proved it by carrying water in a sieve from the river Tiber to the Forum.[93] Although the "symbolic logic" of this event is more a model than a true event, it is nevertheless indicative of the idea that a Vestal *could* be innocent, and thus that the *crimen incesti* was a deliberate human action.[94]

The ideas of deliberateness, in Roman eyes at least, is also informative in considering the *crimen incesti*: the Vestal Virgin had taken a vow of chastity alongside her vow of service to

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[88] For the (lack of) connections between external danger to the city and the murder of the unchaste Vestal, see Wildfang 2006, 79-86. As mentioned above, Schultz 2012 has successfully shown that the Romans did not consider human sacrifice (in the traditional sense) to be a valuable method of negotiation.

[89] Cornell 1981, 35-37; Wildfang 2006, 56-7. Richardson 2011. For the prodigy process, see chapter **4.2 It's All Part of the Process**.

[90] Cf. e.g. Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 83: "For it is said that a certain maiden named Helvia, who was riding a horse was struck by a thunderbolt. While her horse was found lying without its trappings, she was also found stripped as though her chiton had been purposefully lifted up inappropriately, whilst her sandals, rings and headdress were scattered elsewhere across the ground, and her mouth let her tongue stick out. The haruspices declared there to have been a great dishonour on the part of the Vestal Virgins, and that the gossip would spread […] (λέγεται γὰρ Ἐλβίαν τινὰ παρθένον ὀχουμένην ἐφ᾽ ἵππου βληθῆναι κεραυνῷ, καὶ γυμνὸν μὲν εὑρεθῆναι κείμενον τὸν ἵππον, γυμνὴν δ᾽ αὐτὴν ὡς ἐπίτηδες ἀνηγμένου τοῦ χιτῶνος ἀπὸ τῶν ἀπορρήτων, ὑποδημάτων δὲ καὶ δακτυλίων καὶ κεκρυφάλου διερριμμένων χωρὶς ἄλλων ἀλλαχόθι, τοῦ δὲ στόματος ἔξω προβεβληκότος τὴν γλῶσσαν. ἀποφηναμένων δὲ τῶν μάντεων δεινὴν μὲν αἰσχύνην ταῖς ἱεραῖς παρθένοις εἶναι καὶ γενήσεσθαι περιβόητον […]).

[91] 2016, 150.

[92] See chapter **1.5 Fabia**.

[93] Liv. *Per.* 20; Dion. Hal. 2.69; Val. Max. 8.1 absol.5; Plin. *HN* 28.12; Tert. *Apol.* 22.12; Aug. *Civ.* 10.16. See Rüpke 2008, no. 3285.

[94] Richlin 2014, 232: "It seems to me that this story of a holy woman sets up the model for all Roman women; they are permeable yet must be impermeable, they must carry water in a sieve." See Wildfang 2006, 83-86 for examples of other Vestals charged but proven innocent of *incesta*.

Vesta for 30 years, and it was considered her fault if she broke that vow.[95] This can be viewed through a performativity lens, in the sense that the unchaste Vestal had failed to correctly perform the identity marker(s) that constitute her role within the society, and as such she can no longer be understood to be part of that identity, or even that society.[96] This, then, is her crime. She must be punished and removed, not just from her office, but from the very society in which she now can have no place. Her status was not liminal, but nor was it part of a divine message; her entire identity was forfeited, lost as a result of her actions. This also goes some way to suggest why the Romans had, as with the intersex person, no qualms with this particular ritual murder – it was a religious punishment for an inexpiable misdeed. The *crimen incesti*, then, should be treated as just that: a religious offense, a vow deliberately broken, a misperformed identity that cannot be allowed to continue.

Though not a prodigy herself, then, the unchaste Vestal can still provide a fruitful comparison to the intersex prodigy. Although the Vestal's *crimen incesti* is a deliberate religious offence, the burial of the guilty party must be considered as more than simply a punishment. It is not a death penalty, but again, due to its unusual and strict nature, it is a ritual murder.[97] Although they came to occupy their respective positions outside of society in different ways, both the intersex and the unchaste Vestal had to be not just killed, but fully removed from society. The differences between the removals are telling for the differences between the two situations: the former of the two is taken out to sea whilst the latter is buried within the city limits.

The food and liquid left with the Vestal were noted by Plutarch to be for the purpose of minimising the community's part in her death.[98] This argument is often taken at face value by modern scholarship, in the sense of reducing the pollution that would be garnered by killing a priestess.[99] Similarly, although less frequently, this idea is also put forward as a reason for the specifics of the ritual murder of the intersex person.[100] Schultz goes as far as to compare Cicero's account of the capital punishment for a parricide – to be sewn up in a sack and thrown into the river – which he also explicitly states as being for the reduction of pollution.[101] But, in this case, why do the intersex and the parricide not receive food or liquid

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[95] Cornell 1981, 35: "Moreover, the crime of an unchaste Vestal was by definition wilful and deliberate. This in itself was unusual. The offenses of priests which led to *instaurationes* and piacular sacrifices, to fines and forced abdications, were, by contrast, sins of omission, neglect and carelessness, and presumably involuntary. In Roman religious law a distinction was always made between a deliberate infringement and an unconscious error."
[96] See chapter **1.4 The Performing Arts**.
[97] Demonstrated by Schultz 2010; 2012.
[98] *Quaest. Rom.* 96: "she therefore engineers the death for herself" (αὐτὴν οὖν ἀποθανεῖν μηχανώμενοι δι' αὐτῆς).
[99] Cf. E.g. Baschirotto 2012, 165-6.
[100] Cf. E.g. Corbeill 2015, 156.
[101] Cic. *Rosc. Am.* 70-2. Cf. Schultz 2012, 131-2.

in their respective encasements? Robin Lorsch Wildfang suggests a number of possibilities for the items left for the Vestal, the most convincing of which is that, if we take the milk to be donkey's milk specifically, the substances are each important to the cult of Vesta in their own way.[102] Fire (along with the oil to replenish it) is visibly central to the Vestals' duties, as the tenders to the hearth of the city, but water too played an essential role in their daily life, as a purificatory element.[103] The bread represents the Vestals' function as Rome's symbolic storeroom keepers, and their role in the preparation of the *mola salsa*.[104] Finally, then, the milk represents the donkey who played a mysterious role in the festival of the *Vestalia* and the wider cult.[105] If this interpretation is correct, the idea of minimising society's part in the death of the unchaste Vestal seems more of an embellishment on Plutarch's part in order to explain Rome's tolerance of the ritual murder of a priestess. Similarly, then, we should not see this as a reason for the ritual surrounding the murder of the intersex child, as another (though non-intentional) misperformer of Roman identity.

Why, then, was drowning at sea such a standardised procedure for the ritual murder of the intersex person? After all, interment seems to have otherwise been the preferred form of ritual murder.[106] Where explicit, all but two of the intersex children are murdered in the same way. The first deviation was in Ferentinum, in 133 BCE, when the child was cast into a river rather than the sea.[107] Though only a small point, this is suggestive again that ritual expulsion to beyond the territories was not as important an element as it is sometimes made to be. The second deviation, though perhaps more allegorical, sheds some light on the construction of intersexuality and the ritual murder process as a whole: Diodorus' unnamed Italian with whom this chapter began. That author tells us that s/he was ordered "to be burned alive".[108] This ritual murder stands out as a stark opposite to all the other recorded examples, but can perhaps tell us something about the traditional method of ritual killing. Of course, it could be the case that Diodorus is inventing some or all of this specific incident, but the specific inclusion of the process based on haruspical and senatorial response is suggestive that it still fits within the centralised system. The fire of this alternative murder, then, whether real or imagined, emphasises the water of all the other examples.

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[102] Wildfang 2006, 59-61.

[103] For water's use by the Vestals, see Ov. *Fast.* 3.11-14; Plut. *Num.* 13.4. For discussion, see Staples 1998, 149-150; Wildfang 2006, 10-11.

[104] Wildfang 2006, 16-18.

[105] *Ibid.,* 60.

[106] The third type of ritual murder, as outlined in Schultz 2010 is the live interment of a pair of Greeks and a pair of Gauls, as will be discussed in the following section.

[107] Obseq 27a: *In agro Ferentino androgynus natus est in flumen deiectus.*

[108] 32.12.2: ζῶντα […] καῦσαι. For contextualisation of this episode, see chapter **4.1 A Tale of Two Sexes**.

Water and fire – along with cold and hot, wet and dry – were not just polar opposites, and another set of binaries, in ancient thought, but necessary complements of life: Varro explained how too much of one or the other causes death or, at best, barrenness.[109] But this point is taken further, and water and fire could be seen to represent two other necessary opposites: femininity and masculinity respectively.[110] The intersex person, as has been demonstrated throughout this chapter, was considered by the Romans to be an incompleteness of gender – and a gendered problem could be solved by a gendered solution. Death by means of water – emphasised by the one incidence by means of fire – is also representative of this imbalance of polar opposites. Water did of course have other ritual functions, and its importance in purification has already been discussed, but its absence from the killing of Diodorus' Italian, for example, suggests it was not key. Instead, these murders were undertaken through the excess of one of the two opposites essential for life; the fact that this binary was paralleled with the gender binary, already transgressed by the intersex person, is no accident.

This is where the unchaste Vestal and the intersex child once again differ: although gender obviously plays a role in the identity of the Vestal,[111] it is her failure to abide by her religious identity rather than her gender identity that is at the centre of her crime. As noted above, the unchaste Vestal was buried alongside fire and water as important signs of the cult; the gendered aspects of the elements must surely have played a role in the cult itself,[112] but they do not play that same role in her murder. The intersex person, on the other hand, is a gendered construction that had no place in the Roman society. H/er crime, if we can call it such, is a bodily failure to perform a gender identity, and as such, h/er ritual murder goes some way to reinforce this performative construction.

4.6 How to Get Away with Murder

Aside from the intersex expiations and the Vestal punishments, there is one other occurrence of ritual murder, which happened three times through the Roman Republic: the live interment of two Greeks, a woman and a man, and two Gauls, a woman and a man.[113] This ritual, and its

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[109] Varr. *LL.* 5.61: *Inde omne corpus, ubi nimius ardor aut humor, aut interit aut, si manet, sterile.*
[110] Ov. *Fast.* 4.787-792; Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 1. This is often used as a justification for their use in the wedding ceremony: Hersch 2010, 183-4. For two examples of myths of Hercules and Bona Dea that use these constructions of fire and water, see Staples 1998, 17-30.
[111] Cf. e.g. Beard 1980, with Beard 1995, for in-depth discussion of the "sexual status" of the Vestal Virgins.
[112] Staples 1998, 149-150, to be read with criticisms in Wildfang 2006, 10.
[113] The dates are 228, 216 and 114/3 BCE.

repetitions, are perhaps one of the most puzzling in Rome's religious history, to both ancient authors and modern scholars.[114]

The dates of these incidents, along with the method of killing, align them in many respects with the punishments of the Vestals, and as such the two types of ritual murder are often discussed together.[115] Strangely, despite the comparisons discussed here and in the previous section, it is rare that the live interment of the Greeks and Gauls is discussed in comparison with the intersex expiations. Both these situations, however, have at their centre expiatory murder with a gendered relevance. But this ritual is certainly a unique one, and as such deserves to be treated within its own context, in order to shed some light on the problem. There is no contemporary source for any of the occurrences of this event; however, a close look at the four main accounts, from Livy, Plutarch, Cassius Dio (and his epitomiser Zonaras) and Orosius will be useful in considering the key facts of and the response to the ritual, before comparing it to the intersex prodigy.

The fullest, and perhaps most frequently discussed, account is in Livy, for the 216 BCE repetition.[116] The city, he tells us, was gripped by terror, in part because of the threat of Gallic invasion (as well as the unfolding Hannibalic War) and because two Vestals were found to have broken their vows of chastity. The *decemuiri*, then, were asked to consult the Sibylline Books, which in turn ordered the unusual sacrifices (*sacrificia*) of the two Greeks and the two Gauls. Livy pauses at this point to describe this as "the most un-Roman of rites",[117] highlighting the shocking nature of the action. As Jason P. Davies makes clear, the rest of Livy's account of this episode is shaped around his evaluation that this rite was inappropriate, and therefore bound to be unsuccessful.[118] The problem, however, is neatly solved by the concurrent dispatch of Quintus Fabius Pictor to the Delphic Oracle, from which a more suitable solution to the Romans' predicament is offered.

Plutarch, whilst not focussing on the inappropriateness or wrongness of this ritual, certainly emphasises its alien, and in fact in his view barbaric nature. He discusses two different occurrences of the ritual: the 228 enactment, in the *Marcellus*, and the 114/113 enactment in the *Quaestiones Romanae* ("*Roman Questions*").[119] Interestingly, the former of these accounts attributes the reason exclusively to the threat of invasion, with no mention of Vestal virginity,

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[114] As will be discussed in detail below, Livy stresses the un-Roman quality of the sacrifice. Similarly, Schultz notes that "no satisfactory explanation of the choice of Gauls and Greeks has yet been proposed" (2010, 532).
[115] The connection between these two events was first proposed by Cichorius 1922, 7-21.
[116] 22.57.2-6.
[117] 22.57.6: *minime Romano sacro.*
[118] 2004, 68-9.
[119] *Marc.* 3.4 and *Quaest. Rom.* 83 respectively.

whilst the latter explicitly places the episode as being a result of the simultaneous *incesta* of the Vestals Aemilia, Licinia and Marcia.

A fragment of Cassius Dio, expanded upon by his epitomiser Zonaras, provides a more neutral description of the first instance, in 228. Like Plutarch's account, it is again not linked to Vestal *incestum*, but to "an oracle of the Sibyl", warning of Gallic threat interpreted from a thunderbolt hitting a site near the Temple of Apollo on the Capitol.[120] Zonaras expands on this, explaining:

> λογίου δέ ποτε τοῖς Ῥωμαίοις ἐλθόντος καὶ Ἕλληνας καὶ Γαλάτας τὸ ἄστυ καταλήψεσθαι, Γαλάται δύο καὶ Ἕλληνες ἕτεροι ἔκ τε του ἄρρενος καὶ τοῦ θήλεος γένους ζῶντες ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ κατωρύγησαν, ἵν'οὕτως ἐπιτελὲς τὸ πεπρωμένον γενέσθαι δοκῇ, καί τι κατέχειν τῆς πόλεως κατορωρυγμένοι νομίζωνται.

> When an oracle came to the Romans that both Greeks and Gauls would possess the city, two Gauls and two Greeks, a man and a woman of each, were buried alive in the market-place, in order that thus destiny should appear to have been accomplished, so that, by being buried there, certain Greeks and Gauls might be considered as occupying part of the city.[121]

This retelling provides, in many respects, a different version of some of the key points. Instead of the outbreak of the war being divine retribution or atonement for this ritual, it is the reason the ritual is enacted in the first place. This was alluded to in Livy's account, but only as a background to the events surrounding the ritual.

Our final source is Orosius, who again emphasises the inappropriateness of human sacrifice as a ritual response when discussing the first occurrence. The fifth-century Christian writer briefly details the event in his *Historiae Aduersus Paganos* ("*History Against the Pagans*"), though curiously he writes that only three people were murdered, leaving the Greek man of all other accounts unmentioned.[122] The wrongness of the ritual, which he explicitly attributes to the *decemuiri*, did not go overlooked by Orosius' Christian God, and the Romans "atoned with the terrible slaughtering of their own people",[123] with the Celtic invasion for which their fear (according to Zonaras) had brought about the ritual in the first place.

Scholarly approach to this ritual is divided, and frequently focussed around either denying or reinforcing the importance of the Vestal *incesta* in understanding this sacrifice. The

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[120] Cass. Dio frag. 50: χρησμός τις τῆς Σιβύλλης. Várhelyi 2007 looks to an external origin of this oracle, suggesting "Dio went significantly beyond the generic claims found in other writers" (286). This, however, is Dio's consistent way of referring to the Sibylline Books, and thus is in line with the other accounts, cf. e.g. Cass. Dio 39.55.3-4.

[121] Zonaras 8.19.

[122] Oros. 4.13.3-4.

[123] 4.13.4: *foedissimis suorum caedibus expiauerunt.*

accusation against the Vestal Tuccia, who we met in the previous section, was in close context to the first enactment in 228, and as seen in Plutarch's account the accusations of Aemilia, Licinia and Marcia can be placed in conjunction with the third enactment in 114/113.[124] Similarly, there are two famous cases of Vestal *incesta* in 216, of Opimia and Floronia.[125] There are, however, a number of flaws to this argument. The main one concerns the link between the first enactment and Tuccia. Arthur M. Eckstein has recently argued that there was at the very least a year and a half between her accusation and the ritual, suggesting there is no direct correlation.[126] It is also a key point, though often overlooked, that Tuccia proved herself innocent through carrying water in a sieve and so, as with our Fabia, there was no actual conviction or murder. Though this is a particularly famous accusation of *incestum*, part of the fame is that the Vestal was innocent, and so there is no actual crime to link the sacrifice of the Greeks and the Gauls. Finally, it should be noted that there are other instances of Vestal *incesta* which are not paralleled to this sacrifice.[127]

Further, whilst it is difficult to disregard entirely the Vestal Virgins in the enigma of the last sacrifice (114/113), it must certainly be emphasised that they are different situations. Regardless of the impetus, we are explicitly told that the live interment of the Greeks and Gauls was sanctioned by the Sibylline Books. This point is made by every ancient source. In the previous section, I argued that the *crimen incesti* was a deliberate human action on the part of the Vestal(s). This offence, and the wider situation around the offence – such as other prodigies and anxiety over the Gallic threat – may well have led to the consultation with the Books that produced the order for the sacrifice, and in this way the Vestal's actions are is *indirectly* the cause of the sacrifice, but it is a one-way trajectory: the live interment of the Greeks and Gauls is not an expiation of the Vestal *incestum*.

The focus on the Sibylline Books is sometimes used to highlight the un-Romanness associated with the sacrifice.[128] But, as Davies rightly emphasises, this is the only occasion – in Livy at least – when the Books are not treated as "beyond reproach".[129] The construction of the Sibyls and Sibylline Books as foreign, as noted in the previous chapter, is important for the legitimisation of their power, but only in as far as it is mediated by the Roman

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[124] For Tuccia, see chapter **4.5: *Crimen* Punishment**.
[125] See Wildfang 2006, 80-1 for discussion.
[126] 2006, 131-138; 2012. For direct rebuttal, see Erdkamp 2009, esp. 498, where he notes that chronology is, at best, uncertain for both events.
[127] Cf. e.g. Sextilia, accused in 278 BCE, for which see Liv. *Per*. 14.
[128] Cf. Schultz 2010, esp. 532-534 for the language used by Livy to stress the un-Romanness of the sacrifice. Várhelyi 2007, 285, constructs the Books as "foreign wisdom", and discusses the importance to this sacrifice.
[129] 2004, 68.

(*quin*)*decemuiri*.[130] To suggest the un-Romanness of the ritual comes from the Books would be to suggest a foreignness concerning not just the Books, but the whole decemviral system that surrounded them.

The ethnic identities of the victims themselves must similarly be taken into account when attempting to interpret the sacrifice. The focus of external threat – and specifically threat of Gauls – is frequently emphasised by scholarship.[131] This interpretation, however, is hindered by the presence of the Greeks: as Veit Rosenberger noted, "if we still explain the burial of the Greeks and Gauls as proof of the extraordinary fear of the Gauls, we must also postulate an extraordinary fear of the Greeks, which never existed".[132] One convincing explanation of this is that the rite, as an inheritance from the Etruscans, takes the identities of the inhabitants to the north and the south of the Italic peninsula and thus, whilst not contemporary threats, are the parameters of Roman (and Italic) existence.[133] It is on this basis that Zsuzsanna Várhelyi argues for their interpretation, not as present or future enemies, but as enemies from a mythical past.[134] Of course, this argument of mythical enemies does not take into account Rome's greatest traditional enemy, Carthage; however, as a city of North Africa, Carthage never delineated the borders of Rome's power on the mainland in the same way as the Greeks and Gauls.

Yet, if the focus of this ritual was merely military, concerned with conquering enemies past or present, what is the importance of the inclusion of the Greek and Gallic women? J. H. C. Williams suggests that:

> As for immolation of members of both sexes, this may perhaps be interpreted as a sort of ritual damnation or nullification of the reproductive fertility of the Gauls that gave rise to the immense size of their populations, a theme that crops up again and again in Greek and Roman historical narratives.[135]

Whilst this theory can be seen as having a relatively solid grounding, it is reductive both in the sense that the explanation once again rests on ignoring the inclusion of the Greeks in the

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[130] See chapter **3.5 Whose Line Is It, Anyway?**
[131] Cf. e.g. Várhelyi 2007, 278-281; Eckstein 2012.
[132] 2003, 369-370.
[133] Fraschetti 1981, esp. 109-115; cf. also Rosenberger 2003, 369. For the Roman construction of their neighbours, and Roman identity within that, cf. McCoskey 2012, 69-75.
[134] 2007, esp 291-294: although she is unconvinced by the Etruscan origins, due to the "bloodless" nature of the burial.
[135] 2001, 175.

immolation, and also in that the *a priori* understanding that the inclusion of women can and must relate to an explanation based on fertility.[136]

Perhaps, as an inverse parallel to the intersex prodigy, the inclusion of both the feminine and the masculine can be said to be representative of the greater whole.[137] The Gauls are not simply 'the Gallic threat' or 'Gallic fertility', but Gallic identity as a whole. Similarly the Greek woman and man represent the Greeks in their entirety. The idea of binary opposites can also be seen to be represented by the two races. To the Romans, as well as being the inhabitants to the north and south of the Italic peninsula respectively, the Gauls and the Greeks represented the edges of Roman culture in each direction: the stereotypes of northern or western peoples as strong and courageous, yet fickle and "barbaric" stood in stark contrast to the stereotypes of the southern or eastern peoples as "cultured" and intelligent yet soft and decadent, allowing Rome to stand as a superior middle ground.[138] Together, then, these four people represent a pair of binaries which in turn delimit the edges of Roman identity. By sacrificing the Greek woman, the Greek man, the Gallic woman and the Gallic man, and specifically by committing them to Roman soil, they were reaffirming Roman identity at its very core, subsuming these edges in all directions. When Roman identity was threatened by invasion, or even by disintegration from within (in the case of a Vestal's *incestum*), the human sacrifice of two Greeks and two Gauls essentially allowed Rome to reassert its strength over its borders.

To bring this back to the discussion of the intersex expiations: in many respects the construction of the identities of the Greeks and Gauls is a direct opposite to that of the identity of the intersex person. Whilst they are the borders of Roman identity, intersexuality is outside of those borders. The Greeks and Gauls must be buried within the city, as a reassertion of control over what they represent, whilst the intersex person must be expelled, as someone who cannot have a place within the society. Although the foci of these rituals all are "outsiders", in either an ethnic or a gendered sense, Rome is very clear on *which* outsiders are permitted within the Roman sphere of personhood.

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[136] This proposal, however, makes more sense than Varhelyi's suggestion that the inclusion of both genders creates associations with "magical rituals" (2007, 296-7).

[137] For discussion of the feminine and the masculine as binary opposites representing the whole, see chapter **4.5 *Crimen* Punishment**.

[138] Cf. e.g. Isaac 2004, 426: "We cannot avoid the conclusion, however, that the "eastern" or "southern" stereotypes aroused more emotional hostility than the "western" or "northern" forms, while the latter are sometimes described with disdain". For the (Greco-)Roman view of the north-western Gauls, cf. e.g. Isaac 2004, 412-426; Cunliffe 1997, 2-10; for the (Greco-)Roman view of the south-eastern, with respect of how, to the Romans at least, this included the contemporary Greeks, cf. e.g. Isaac 2004, 381-389; McCoskey 2012, esp. 75.

4.7 One Hundred Years of Intersexuality

97 BCE, though there is no record of any Greeks or Gauls being ritually murdered that year, is marked as the end of human sacrifice. A *senatus consultum* was passed, banning the practice.[139] Zsuzsanna Várhelyi sees it as the development of "Hellenized Romans [who] had grown uncomfortable with the involvement of human victims as part of a legitimate religious ritual by the early first century BCE".[140] And yet, interestingly, the last recorded intersex expiation was 92 BCE, five years after this *senatus consultum*. At this point, we must accept Celia E. Schultz' thesis that the murder of intersexes was not seen as sacrifice.[141]

Perceptions, however, were not stable. As mentioned above, Pliny the Elder, in his *Naturalis Historia* ("*Natural History*") cryptically remarks that

> *Gignuntur et utriusque sexus quos Hermaphroditos uocamus, olim androgynos uocatos et in prodigiis habitos, nunc uero in deliciis.*
>
> People are also born of both sexes combined, which we call *hermaphroditi*, who were formerly called *androgyni* and considered as portents, but now as entertainments.[142]

The final word, "*deliciae*" (here translated as "entertainments") has something of a sexual connotation to it, alluding to a new status for intersexuality in the Empire.[143] But this is hard to reconstruct since, as is frequently noted by modern scholarship, intersex people seem to disappear from explicit references, at least in the extant literature of the period.[144] Statues of idealised intersexuality, ranging from classical Greece to Imperial copies, at least seem to confirm Pliny's ascription of entertainments.[145]

The intersex person's prodigial status in the Republic, then, is unusual. Ultimately, no record remains of what criteria were relevant, liminality or otherwise, in deciding whether or not an

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[139] Plin. *HN*. 30.12: "in the 657th year of the city [ie. 97 BCE], in the consulship of Gnaeus Cornelius Lentulus and Publius Licinius Crassus, a *senatus consultum* was passed that no human may be immolated, and so before that time the unnatural rite was practised" (*DCLVII demum anno urbis Cn. Cornelio Lentulo P. Licinio Crasso cos. senatusconsultum factum est ne homo immolaretur, palamque in tempus illut sacra prodigiosa celebrata*).
[140] 2007, 284; cf. also Várhelyi 2011 for the *senatus consultum*'s political context as a response to murders such as those of the Gracchi.
[141] 2010, as discussed in chapter **4.5 *Crimen* Punishment**.
[142] Plin. *HN*. 7.34.
[143] For the use of *deliciae* in Latin vocabulary, see Adams 1982, 196-198. Non-binary bodies, from intersex people to eunuchs, have always aroused sexual interest as well as fear and anxiety in both women and men, although this is rarely studied. For the sexual interest in castrati in Georgian England, cf. e.g. Berry 2011, esp. 67-89.
[144] Cf. e.g. Brisson 2002, 38; Corbeill 2015, 167-8. For the discussion, however, of intersexuality's varied and multiple statuses in the Imperial period, see Swancutt 2007, esp. 24-5.
[145] Ajootian 1997. For a discussion of the reception, and the focus on the sexual nature of the intersexed statues, see Orrells 2015, 168-177.

event was a prodigy.[146] One reason for this could, in fact, be simply that there were no specific criteria applied; Veit Rosenberger has commented that

> Some types of prodigies occurred only in relatively short periods […] once a strange event had been accepted by the Senate as a *prodigium*, it was likely that another sign of the same kind would soon be related. At the same time, such signs seemed to lose their divinatory quality after some years.[147]

What made something a prodigy was whether it looked, or sounded, like a prodigy, and whether it was similar to a recent event that had been declared as such. Rather than the idea of losing their divinatory quality, however, I would argue that it was more a case of the unfamiliarity losing its appeal as troubling, and the anxiety the event caused dulling. As strange events became understood as things that could and did happen, the need for expiation lessened.[148] Perhaps it is also possible to say that, as interaction with the Greek East became more and more the norm, stories of the lives of people like Callon, an ordinary man in every respect except his childhood, helped to normalise intersexuality in Roman culture.

From this stance, it is easier to see that, before the first century BCE, the birth of a child whose biological sex is not obvious would have been marked as unusual, and even troubling. Even in today's world, despite the statistics,[149] it is still something largely unheard of or discussed. What is not easy to see is why this was brought forward in the first place. For this, we should turn to the first mention of an intersex prodigy in Livy.

Livy records that it was in the year 209 BCE, in the town of Sinuessa, that the first intersex child was considered a prodigial event.[150] I follow Bruce MacBain, who notes that it is very unlikely there were any in the earlier missing books, as the author pauses to comment on the terminology, and also refers back to this "initial" occurrence at the second.[151] Sinuessa, at that time, was a small but potentially important town in Campania. In 209, it was under Roman control, but the whole area was politically unstable, especially since Hannibal's advances and the Capuan revolt just a few years earlier.[152] A prodigial occurrence here allowed Rome to

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[146] Davies 2004, 29-30.

[147] 2007, 294.

[148] It is perhaps reductive to go as far as MacBain, who wrote that "Romans were alarmed by untoward events in the natural order and found psychic relief in making ritualised responses to them" (1982, 41), but there is some merit in this generalisation.

[149] See chapter **4.3 One Is Not Born a Woman**.

[150] 27.11.4-6, see Table 2, chapter **4.3 One Is Not Born a Woman**.

[151] Liv. 27.37.5-6: "At Frusino a child was born at the size of a four year old, but s/he was not so much marvelled at for h/er size as because it was uncertain, like with the birth at Sinuessa two years prior, whether s/he was male or female" (*Frusinone natum infantem esse quadrimo parem, nec magnitudine tam mirandum quam quod is quoque, ut Sinuessae biennio ante, incertus mas an femina esset natus erat*). See MacBain 1982, 68.

[152] For a discussion of the Capuan revolt, and its implications for the surrounding towns (including Sinuessa) see Fronda 2007.

step in and take control by means of religious matters – and at the same time take control *of* religious matters. In this same way, Schultz has demonstrated that it is possible to read the addition of the rites of Juno Regina to the intersex expiation rites in 207, during unrest in Etruria, and the addition of the rites of Ceres and Proserpina in 125, during the Sicilian uprisings, as a political move in an attempt to re-exert control over her borders.[153]

From this point of view, one could go as far as to argue that the precise nature of the prodigy in this instance was not as important as the general existence of a prodigy – to some extent, any unusual event would do. There is certainly an element of this, I think, although it does not by itself explain the fear and suspicion that surrounded the intersexed body on a local level, even if they were never reported or expiated prior to 209. This must be seen through the lens of the intersex child's inability to be understood within the Roman (and Italic) view of gender.

4.8 Bodies That Matter?

Gender, then, troubled the Roman Republic. The intersexed body, and the response it garnered, demonstrate the importance of gender roles – by not fitting the existing binary, the intersexed body was unable to satisfy either side. We have seen this ritual murder in comparison to other ritual murders carried out in the Roman Republic, which each have their own gendered aspects. Ultimately, the intersex children were murdered because their place within the Roman society could not be rationalised, precisely because of their (lack of a) gender identity. H/er status as a prodigy was not based on liminality, but rather on its failure to be liminal. H/er role as a prodigy, however, allowed a reassertion of the norms of both the body and the State.

So far in this thesis, we have seen the role of gender within official, state-controlled divinatory practices, namely through Cicero's *Div.* and through the Sibylline Books and the prodigy system. For the next two chapters, now, I want to look beyond the official, and turn to two case studies of individual diviners, and how their gender played a role in the construction of their identity and their divinatory practice. Martha, an active practitioner of sacrifices, a technical divination, will be contrasted with Calpurnia, a woman whose dream(s) potentially possessed a natural divinatory quality. Together, they demonstrate two very different, but

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[153] Schultz 2006a, 35-37: in each case, these deities have close links with the area of unrest and, as such, allow a reassertion of links between Rome and these areas. For the political importance of Juno Sospita, see chapter **6.7 Comparing Calpurnia III: Cicero's Concession**.

parallel outlooks on the construction of gender in the divinatory traditions of the late Roman Republic.

Chapter Five: Martha

5.1 Beyond Official Priesthoods

In 104 BCE, Marius was elected to his second consulship, and at this time he took command of the military operation against "barbarian" invaders in Transalpine Gaul. Part of his plan was to hold camp and wait the enemy out instead of leading a direct attack, but some of his soldiers felt his delay was due to hesitation over their skill. Plutarch pauses at this point in his biography of the statesman to give a digression of Marius' use of oracular and sacrificial divination at this time, conceptualised through the brief introduction of the figure of Martha, a Syrian diviner, in his retinue. It is worth reproducing Plutarch's description of Martha in full:

> Ταῦτ' ἀκούων ὁ Μάριος ἥδετο, καὶ κατεπράϋνεν αὐτοὺς ὡς οὐκ ἐκείνοις ἀπιστῶν, ἀλλ' ἔκ τινων λογίων τὸν τῆς νίκης ἅμα καιρὸν καὶ τόπον ἐκδεχόμενος. καὶ γάρ τινα Σύραν γυναῖκα, Μάρθαν ὄνομα, μαντεύεσθαι λεγομένην ἐν φορείῳ κατακειμένην σεμνῶς περιήγετο, καὶ θυσίας ἔθυεν ἐκείνης κελευούσης. ἣν πρότερον μὲν ἀπήλασεν ἡ σύγκλητος ἐντυχεῖν ὑπὲρ τούτων βουλομένην καὶ τὰ μέλλοντα προθεσπίζουσαν, ἐπεὶ δὲ πρὸς τὰς γυναῖκας εἰσιοῦσα διάπειραν ἐδίδου καὶ μάλιστα τῇ Μαρίου παρακαθίζουσα παρὰ τοὺς πόδας τῶν μονομάχων ἐπιτυχῶς προηγόρευε τὸν μέλλοντα νικᾶν, ἀναπεμφθεῖσα πρὸς Μάριον ὑπ' ἐκείνης ἐθαυμάζετο. καὶ τὰ πολλὰ μὲν ἐν φορείῳ παρεκομίζετο, πρὸς δὲ τὰς θυσίας κατῄει φοινικίδα διπλῆν ἐμπεπορπημένη καὶ λόγχην ἀναδεδεμένην ταινίαις καὶ στεφανώμασι φέρουσα. τοῦτο μὲν οὖν τὸ δρᾶμα πολλοῖς ἀμφισβήτησιν παρεῖχεν, εἴτε πεπεισμένος ὡς ἀληθῶς εἴτε πλαττόμενος καὶ συνυποκρινόμενος ἐπιδείκνυται τὴν ἄνθρωπον.

> Hearing this [ie. disgruntled soldiers complaining at being kept from battle], Marius was delighted, and he appeased them by saying it was not the case that he distrusted them, but rather, on account of certain oracles, he was awaiting the proper time and place for victory. In fact, he even kept a certain Syrian woman named Martha near, carried around ceremoniously lying in a litter, who was said to prophesy, and he made sacrifices at her command. Previously, the Senate had barred her when she wanted to obtain an audience and deliver oracles for them about their future; so then she came before the women [of the Roman elite], giving them proof of her skill and, sitting especially at the feet of Marius' wife, she successfully foretold which gladiator was going to win at the games. She was sent up to Marius, having impressed his wife. Usually, she was carried in a litter, but during sacrifices she came down in a crimson double garment buckled by a brooch and carried a spear garlanded with ribbons and wreaths. This dramatic flair caused many people to doubt whether Marius actually believed this or whether he pretended and accommodated in order to exhibit the woman [sc. in a display of power].[1]

Martha is not mentioned again in the *Marius,* nor is she named in any other extant text. This could lead to the question of whether she existed at all; however, a curious reference to her

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[1] Plut. *Mar*. 17.1-3.

appears briefly in the book of exemplary strategems by Sextus Julius Frontinus, a commander and senator of the first century CE.[2] Though highly compressed – the passage does not even mention Martha by name – this author tells us Marius pretended to learn the outcomes of battles from "a certain Syrian *saga*", a description with a strong similarity to Plutarch's Martha.[3] Thus, though the extent of her characterisation in both authors is debatable, we can accept at least the basis of a Martha-like woman in Marius' retinue.

Frontinus' brevity, however, means that we must still question the extent to which Plutarch may be manipulating Martha's characterisation for his own ends. As such, in the course of this chapter I will be speaking of the "literary construction" as well as the "real construction" of Martha. We must keep in mind the fact that Plutarch as author is choosing to include this digression in his biography of Marius. A key feature in all his *Vitae Parallelae* (*"Parallel Lives"*, henceforth *Lives*) is the use of asides and digressions which, although often explicitly researched, are always included and framed so as to build the picture of the main character.[4] But it is important to note that what she is doing, at a surface level, is not disputed by Plutarch, Frontinus or others. Regardless of how characterised she may have been for literary purposes, she is real enough for our purpose of understanding the importance of the construction of gender in respect of the divinatory traditions of the late Roman Republic. Even with so brief a description, it is possible to understand Martha as both a literary construction *and* a real-life figure.

Another potential route for understanding the real construction of Martha was once seen at la Chapelle des Trémaïé des Baux, a church in the south of France. Here, a Roman relief depicts three figures alongside a badly preserved inscription, upon which the name Caldus may be read. Local legend thinks of these figures as three (female) Christian saints – the Trois Maries, or three Marys – but in the nineteenth century the scholar I. Gilles proposed the figures to be Marius, Julia and Martha, based on the Roman style and the similarity of the names Marie and Marius.[5] Although Julia does play a role in Martha's story, as will be discussed below, she sends the prophetess to her husband whilst explicitly remaining in Rome herself, and so these three are notably never all together in the narrative.[6] Similarly, though a certain Coelius

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[2] Frontin. *Str.* 1.11.12. This passage and its implications will be explored fully in chapter **5.5 You Can't Handle the Truth**.

[3] *Ibid.*: *sagam quandam ex Syria.*

[4] For a discussion of the use of ethnographic digressions in Plutarch, see Almagor 2013.

[5] Gilles 1870, 67. See also pp. 141-146 for "the history and the legend" of the Martha(s).

[6] For Julia's role in Martha's story, see chapter **5.3 Free Movement of Peoples.**

Caldus was a tribune with Marian links,[7] this seems too much of a stretch for suggesting this to be Martha and her sponsors, however desirable it would be to have more evidence.[8]

Part of the reason Martha seems so unusual to us, and why we as modern readers may question her existence is the fact that she seems to have existed outside of the official priesthood system we have so far seen throughout this thesis as dominating the construction of divinatory practice in the Roman Republic. Although, as has already been demonstrated, women could and did still play a role in this system, as far as the sources tell us Martha is hired as explicitly external to it – in fact when she went to the senate to offer them her services she was refused an audience.[9] We have already seen how the "marketplace" model accounts for the varying religious and divinatory specialisms available to the individual;[10] the complexity in this situation is whether we see Martha as acting in a public or private context – and, as usual, whether it is as simple as dividing the context to one side or the other of this binary. Unfortunately, although we know that there seems to have been a difference between the "higher", more official divinatory traditions and the "lower", personal practices, almost all the direct evidence for this second category comes in the form of criticism from the senatorial elite, such as in Cicero's *Div*. As such, much of who Martha was, and the world in which she was working, is lost.

Through this chapter, then, I aim to look at Martha from different aspects, in order to build up a picture of this woman diviner and the cultural milieu from which she comes. The first section will focus on the literary construction aspect of her character, and the way in which Plutarch uses her to build his construction of the titular character of his biography. This is an important angle to understand so that we can begin to see past it, and glimpse the "real" Martha in her own right. As such, this section is followed by a discussion of the literary construction of Martha in respect of how it creates her as a woman and a diviner, with particular emphasis on her backstory as provided by the biographer. Moving beyond the construction of femininity, I will then turn to Martha's ethnicity, and the role that plays in her divinatory construction. In the next section I will consider the aspects of pretending and falsehood, to which both Plutarch and Frontinus allude, and discuss the balance between truth

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[7] As put forward by Brennan 2012, 362.

[8] Another recent reading has put forward that this is a funerary relief, the outside figures being the parents of the epitaph's subject, the girl in the centre: see Barruol and Dautier, 2009, 160.

[9] The relevance of this part of Martha's backstory will be analysed in the chapter **5.3 Free Movement of Peoples**.

[10] See chapter **1.2 Defining Definitions**.

and theatricality. Finally, I will consider more broadly the position of women in Roman sacrifice, and the issues scholarship raises around this debate.

As a whole, one of the main aims of this chapter is an attempt at locating in history this female Syrian diviner, and placing her back in the ancient world. Martha may be beyond the official priesthoods, and beyond any further direct evidence; but, hopefully, she is not beyond our ability to rediscover her.

5.2 Why Is Martha a Woman?

In order to consider Martha to the best effect, we must first digress and think about the construction of another similarly hidden woman: Diotima. The final chapter of David Halperin's 1990 collection of essays, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*, is simply titled "Why is Diotima a woman?"[11] Halperin here questions the significance of the only woman in Plato's *Symposium* and the way her construction furthers the Socratic constructions of love and sexuality. Diotima, like Martha, is a woman diviner, perhaps of a good standing in her society,[12] yet our only record of her is a conversation Socrates relates he once had with her – she is not herself present in this all-male dialogue (nor any other). Halperin sets out to positively assess Diotima's femininity and discuss the reasons Plato may have chosen to represent the character as a woman, beyond "those age-old traditions in Western culture that define every 'subject' as male and that tend to construe women as a mere absence of male presence".[13] This is, of course, a meaningful and important stance to take, but Halperin, in his conclusion, reveals the flaws in his own question: his discussion – and, in fact, all discussions – of Diotima are centred very little on the woman herself, and even when the question of her womanhood is brought up, it is used merely to further the discussion of men and manhood in Greek society. He concludes that, ultimately, his own chapter "[has] had relatively little to say about women but quite a lot to say about men".[14] Perhaps that was inevitable, especially for a chapter of a book that has otherwise focussed almost exclusively on male homosexual and homosocial relations, and a chapter that draws on a text written by a man describing those same relations.

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[11] Halperin 1990, 113-151. Diotima herself appears in Plat. *Symp*. 201d-212b.
[12] Plato credits her with advising the Athenians on sacrifices that delayed a plague by ten years (*Symp*. 201d).
[13] Halperin 1990, 116.
[14] *Ibid*., 149.

Over a quarter of a century later, it may seem equally, if not more, reductive for me to ask a parallel question of a different woman, found only in an equally male-authored, male-centric text. Indeed, there is much to be said about Martha's construction *as it relates* to the construction and development of Marius' character within the setting of Plutarch's biography. Though this may at first seem a reductive way to understand the characterisation of this woman, as long as we acknowledge it for what it is, it can become a useful platform to understanding Martha beyond merely being a foil for Marius. By making the relationship between male author, male protagonist and female supporting character visible, we can look beyond it, and catch a glimpse of the woman and the role she played as a diviner not for Marius' sake, but for her own.

Though his description of Martha is brief, there are a number of elements in Plutarch's story that subtly contribute to a relationship based on authority. Unexpectedly, however, it is Martha who has the upper hand within that relationship: Marius, it seems, has made an error of judgement and allowed his actions to be governed by a woman, and a foreign woman no less. Over the next few pages, I will analyse the separate parts of this construction, then put it together to understand the way Plutarch uses it to develop both the characters of the story.

Plutarch specifically notes that Marius required Martha's presence so that he could "[make] sacrifices at her command".[15] This is a very specific, but clearly quite important role, and one which will be discussed further below, but for the purpose of the present discussion, I want to focus on the final word of the sentence: κελευούσης. In my English translation, "command" is clearly indicative of an authoritative relationship between Martha and Marius, but a brief survey shows that the original Greek term is very commonly used in Plutarch's *Lives* alone, with broad meanings. Although it can be used in military and authoritative connotations,[16] it is also used later in the *Marius*, for example, as a slave "commanding" better wine from an innkeeper.[17] Despite this, when it is used by Plutarch for people of different stations, it does have connotations of exercising a power not normally expected of that situation: for example, the Spartan king Cleomenes is "commanded" by the Argive people to fight or else yield his leadership.[18] We have already seen, too, how in Plutarch's account of the flame portent in 63

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[15] Plut. *Mar.* 17.1: θυσίας ἔθυεν ἐκείνης κελευούσης.
[16] Cf. e.g. Plut. *Num.* 2.3; *Pyrrh.* 27.1.
[17] *Mar.* 44.1: "With the slave tasting more carefully and *ordering* better quality wine, the innkeeper asked why he wasn't buying the new and standard wine, as usual […]" (διαγευομένου δὲ ἐπιμελέστερον καὶ βελτίονα [οἶνον] μετρῆσαι κελεύοντος ἠρώτησεν ὁ κάπηλος ὅ τι παθὼν οὐχὶ τὸν νέον ὥσπερ εἴωθεν, ὠνεῖται καὶ δημοτικόν […]).
[18] *Cleom.* 25.5: "The Argives, distressed, thronged before the door of the King and clamoured, *commanding* him to fight or else abdicate his leadership in favour of someone stronger" (οἱ μὲν Ἀργεῖοι δυσανασχετοῦντες ἐπὶ τὰς

BCE, Fabia and the Vestal Virgins "*commanded* (ἐκέλευσαν) Terentia, the wife of Cicero, to go as quickly as possible to her husband and *urge* (κελεύειν) him to make his move".[19] The doubled use of this verb clearly serves to highlight the authoritative nature of the sign, but also Terentia's ambition to act alongside her husband in the political sphere, something for which Plutarch criticises her.[20]

Further, a more direct parallel to Martha, in respect of religion, gender and intention is found in Plutarch's *Sertorius*. The military commander, whilst creating a breakaway Roman state in Spain, tamed a white fawn and kept it near, claiming it was a gift of Diana. Further, when he received word of enemy movements, he "pretended the fawn spoke to him through dreams, *commanding* (κελεύουσαν) him to have his forces at the ready".[21] Plutarch makes it clear here that Sertorius is falsely constructing the story of the fawn's religious connotation in order to play to the superstition of the barbarians.[22] The parallels here are clear: both generals use a religious and feminine construction in order to emphasise the commands of the gods, but the author's descriptions of both stories suggests that each utilised the construction without really believing it themselves. Overall, then, the use of this one word connotes a subtle hierarchy between Martha and Marius. We perhaps should not place too much emphasis on this usage in and of itself; however, when it is combined with the other elements of authority discussed below, we can see the establishing of this authoritative relationship, with the suggestion of a reversal of the norms of who is commanding whom.

The first visual depiction Plutarch draws of Martha is of her being carried in a litter. It is also explicitly commented upon a second time when the author tells us that Martha would leave it when she had to perform (for) the sacrifices. The litter was a costly method of transportation, sometimes criticised as a mark of extravagance, but always recognised as a mark of exclusivity. It was also a very gendered method of transport. Its use was granted to the elite *matronae* of Rome in 390 BCE after they, as a group, donated no small amount of jewellery to a cash-strapped senate, according to Livy, and was a privilege of perennial interest to them ever since.[23] Although men could (and did) ride them – for example, Calpurnia's husband

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θύρας συνεστρέφοντο τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ κατεβόων, μάχεσθαι κελεύοντες ἢ τοῖς κρείττοσιν ἐξίστασθαι τῆς ἡγεμονίας).

[19] Plut. *Cic*. 20.1: γυναῖκα Τερεντίαν ἐκέλευσαν ᾗ τάχος χωρεῖν πρὸς τὸν ἄνδρα καὶ κελεύειν οἷς ἔγνωκεν ἐγχειρεῖν.

[20] For contextualisation of this passage, and of Terentia's ambition, see chapter **1.5 Fabia**.

[21] *Sert*. 11.4: προσεποιεῖτο τὴν ἔλαφον αὐτῷ κατὰ τοὺς ὕπνους διειλέχθαι, κελεύουσαν ἐν ἑτοίμῳ τὰς δυνάμεις ἔχειν. The full story is recounted in 11.2-4.

[22] *Sert*. 11.3.

[23] Liv. 5.25.8-9. For a contextualisation of this passage, see Hudson 2016, 232-234. Cf. also McGinn 1998, 246-7.

Julius Caesar rode one to the senate house in Plutarch's account of his assassination (from Brutus' perspective) – their literary construction is frequently used to invoke ideas of authority or extravagance.[24] Of course, these criticisms can be directed at male litter-riders (indeed, both play a role in Plutarch's construction of Caesar in the *Brutus*), but they are gendered in that, in Jared Hudson's words,

> women in *carpenta* are either too dominant and threatening: too unlike women; or too soft and luxurious: too much themselves. Or else, often, they are somehow both of these things at once.[25]

Evidently, it is the former criticism in focus for Martha, building this picture of an authoritative woman. But the construction can also be taken further from a class perspective. As an elite, and costly, method of transport, it could be invoked as criticism towards non-elite women attempting to cross class divide: the touchstone example of this is Cicero's criticism of Volumnia, a freedwoman actress who was carried around in a litter as part of Mark Antony's retinue – a misuse of the transportation that Cicero uses to reflect on Antony's transgressions against Romanness.[26] Martha, like Volumnia, was not of elite standing – and furthermore she was explicitly not Roman – so her placement in a litter stands out as an overstepping of boundaries. But, interestingly, the negativity does not fall on Martha herself; instead, it was Marius who allowed this woman a litter, and Marius who allowed her to wield an authority above her station, even over and above himself.

Moving on, when performing the sacrifices, Martha wears a crimson double garment and carries a garlanded spear. The role these elements play in the comparative construction of the ritual practice of the Cimbric invaders will be analysed below,[27] but these elements again also contribute to placing Martha in a position of command and authority. Colours, and particularly coloured clothing, always had strongly associated meanings in both Martha's time and Plutarch's, and purple and red hues were especially enmeshed with implication.[28] The precise colours as described by ancient authors are sometimes difficult to pin to a specific modern counterpart, but the colour of the φοινικὶς ("crimson double garment") Martha wears is understood as a shade between dark red and deep purple, and a colour which had strong

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[24] Plut. *Brut.* 16.1: "Now Caesar was arriving, being carried on a litter. For having become spiritless due to unfavourable omens, he had decided not to sanction anything of importance at that time, but to pass over everything, excusing himself on behalf of sickliness" (Ἤδη δὲ Καῖσαρ ἀπηγγέλλετο προσιὼν ἐν φορείῳ κομιζόμενος. ἐγνώκει γὰρ ἐπὶ τοῖς ἱεροῖς ἀθυμῶν μηδὲν ἐπικυροῦν τότε τῶν μειζόνων, ἀλλ᾽ ὑπερβάλλεσθαι σκηψάμενος ἀσθένειαν).

[25] 2016, 218.

[26] Cic. *Phil.* 2.24.

[27] See chapter **5.4 Acceptably Foreign.**

[28] For an overview of the ancient codification of purple(s), see Reinhold 1970; Elliot 2008.

associations with light, royalty and command.[29] In Plutarch's other biographies, the φοινικὶς has very specific connotations of military authority and of command. The eponymous protagonist of the *Crassus*, during the Parthian campaign, attempts to lead the soldiers in a black robe, rather than the φοινικὶς, a misstep that symbolically works against him.[30] By contrast, the φοινικὶς was used to good effect by Mark Antony: when Brutus committed suicide following military defeat, Antony ordered that his body be wrapped in Antony's own φοινικὶς, as a mark of respect for his former friend.[31] Later on, he dons a new φοινικὶς to address his soldiers on campaign against the Parthians.[32]

Marius, by contrast, is not described as wearing a φοινικὶς at any point in his biography. Instead, there are two instances of him wearing the similarly shaded purple-bordered toga ("περιπόρφυρον") in order to exemplify his military – and particularly consular – command. In the first instance, it is noted because Marius sought to shirk tradition by combining his triumphal procession (and its related clothing) with his investiture to his second consulship; however, sensing senatorial disapproval, he quickly changed into the correctly coloured attire.[33] The second mention is an almost opposite case: after a victory whilst on campaign in Massalia, he gathered the enemy's arms in order to burn them in sacrifice, again wearing his purple-bordered toga. Mid-performance, messengers arrive to bring Marius news that he had attained the consulship for the fifth time.[34] Plutarch is keen to note this second time that Marius was attired "as was customary"[35] for the procedure, thus mirroring the previous instance. These two, when taken together, are not just times that Marius attained the consulship, but times that he attained the consulship in non-customary circumstances: the former being the first time he breached the rule of the ten year interval otherwise necessary between consulships, the latter being achieved *in absentia*, as well as disregarding the interval again. Meyer Reinhold links the imagery of purple clothing in the second and first centuries BCE to derogatory associations to the Hellenistic kings, and "the threat of one-man rule" at Rome.[36] This was an association that Marius's legacy – and his non-customary consulships – also attracted, and Plutarch's use of the purple clothing is surely a subtle nod to this. To bring this back to Martha and her crimson φοινικὶς: the fact that, during her very public and very

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[29] Gage 1993, 25-6.

[30] *Crass.* 23.1. This is also to be read against a background of a series of missteps and bad omens that follow the protagonist on this campaign.

[31] *Ant.* 22.4; *Brut.* 53.4.

[32] *Ant*. 44.2.

[33] *Mar.* 12.5.

[34] 22.1-3.

[35] 22.2: ὥσπερ ἔθος ἐστίν.

[36] Reinhold 1970, 42.

visible interactions with Marius, she is the one to don such meaning-laden colours, and not the consul, is significant. Martha is literally wearing authority.

The carrying of the spear conjures up a similar association; however, it is a much more specifically gendered image. Weaponry was a physical representation of masculinity, both in the Roman Republic and in Plutarch's work, and as such the idea of a woman carrying arms was an encroachment into the male sphere. Lien Foubert has commented on the literary construction in Roman historiography of the *dux femina* ("woman leader"), often a wife or similarly elite woman who, through travelling to and with military campaigns, sought to usurp the power – and perhaps even the masculinity – of the commanders.[37] She writes that

> The stereotype [of the *dux femina*] always contains a reference to the military sphere, either through the appearance or dress of the woman in question, her deeds or behaviour, of the vocabulary used.[38]

The carrying of arms is also a clear manifestation of this stereotype. Martha's spear, along with her crimson garments, the way she is carried in the litter, the "commands" that she gives to Marius and the language used by Plutarch throughout this episode, all contribute to this image of a woman of authority, and particularly military authority. Yet, as has been mentioned above, unlike the stereotype of the *dux femina*, the depiction of Martha does not seem to be used to criticise her per se. Instead, Plutarch draws attention to the description of this foreign woman diviner in order to demonstrate how Marius allowed such a person to have so much military power. The elements listed above are not criticisms directed at Martha for being power-hungry, but at Marius for the importance *he* attributes to her. Karin Blomqvist has outlined two main characterisations of Plutarchan women in politics: those who are "dominant" and those who are "supportive".[39] If we are to extend this idea beyond politics to military, religious and more generally traditional masculine spheres, Julia's action of sending Martha to her husband places the wife within the latter category, "act[ing] in politics, rendering support to the men of their families or to their peoples".[40] Martha, on the other hand, does not fit quite so easily into this positive category, nor the former, more negative one. Though she is placed in a position of authority over Marius, she is not shown as

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[37] 2011, esp. 350-355. She gives perhaps the clearest literary constructions of a *dux femina* as Mark Antony's Fulvia, whom Plutarch described as "a woman who had no time for wool-working nor housekeeping, and did not consider it worthy to hold power over men in the private sphere, but rather wished to rule a ruler and command a commander" ("οὐ ταλασίαν οὐδὲ οἰκουρίαν φρονοῦν γύναιον, οὐδὲ ἀνδρὸς ἰδιώτου κρατεῖν ἀξιοῦν, ἀλλ᾽ ἄρχοντος ἄρχειν καὶ στρατηγοῦντος στρατηγεῖν βουλόμενον." *Ant.* 10.3); cf. also Cic. *Phil.* 5.22; Cass. D. 45.12-13.
[38] Foubert 2011, 354.
[39] Blomqvist 1997.
[40] *Ibid.*, 82.

scheming, plotting or generally attempting to control the consul for her own ends. Indeed, there is not even a suggestion of what her own ends might be. Despite this position, she is seemingly just a tool for Marius in constructing his dramatic flair, and a tool for Plutarch to criticise the male subject of his work.

Women taking control in the masculine sphere of military action is a theme to which Plutarch returns in this biography, although only in the actions of the "barbarians", and again the theme is used to criticise the (failed) masculinity in the comparative actions of their men. Shortly after the mention of Martha, while the army was on the move, Plutarch tells us that Marius ordered his men to make camp at a "fortified place, but one not well supplied by water".[41] Thus the camp-servants antagonise a nearby settlement of the Ambrones by a river, escalating into full battle. The Roman forces, backing up their servants, quickly gain the upper hand, and the Ambrones begin to flee. But at this point, Plutarch writes,

> ἐνταῦθα δὲ αἱ γυναῖκες ἀπαντῶσαι μετὰ ξιφῶν καὶ πελέκεων δεινὸν τετριγυῖαι καὶ περίθυμον ἠμύνοντο τοὺς φεύγοντας ὁμοίως καὶ τοὺς διώκοντας, τοὺς μὲν ὡς προδότας, τοὺς δὲ ὡς πολεμίους, ἀναπεφυρμέναι μαχομένοις καὶ χερσὶ γυμναῖς τούς τε θυρεοὺς τῶν Ῥωμαίων ἀποσπῶσαι καὶ τῶν ξιφῶν ἐπιλαμβανόμεναι, καὶ τραύματα καὶ διακοπὰς σωμάτων ὑπομένουσαι, μέχρι τελευτῆς ἀήττητοι τοῖς θυμοῖς.

> Here the women [of the Ambrones] came out to meet them in battle, with swords and axes, shrieking terribly and wrathfully as they fell upon the pursued and pursuers alike, the former as betrayers, the latter enemies. Joining the fray they tore at the shields of the Romans and seized their swords with their bare hands, enduring the wounds and lacerations on their bodies, their spirits unconquered to the very end.[42]

Again, the force of the comment is on the weakness of the men, fleeing from battle, highlighted by the women's unconquerable spirits. The military prowess of the women appears transgressive, but it is not Plutarch's focus; instead he is reinforcing the differences between Roman and barbarian men.

Later on, during Quintus Lutatius Catulus' campaign against the Cimbri, Roman success again drove the enemy back to their fortifications. Plutarch depicts a gruesome sight awaiting the Romans as they crossed into the settlement: the women have killed their male relatives and children, and proceed to cut their own throats.[43] Again this brave act of the women serves to highlight the fleeing men, and to highlight Roman prowess at taking sixty thousand prisoners of war, despite this act of female bravery/brutality.[44]

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[41] *Mar*. 18.3: "τόπον ἰσχυρὸν μέν, ὕδωρ δὲ ἄφθονον οὐκ ἔχοντα".
[42] *Mar*. 19.7.
[43] *Mar*. 27.1-3.
[44] *Mar*. 27.3.

In the wider context of the biography, then, Martha's place in a military setting is perhaps not all that unexpected. Martha's position of authority in the Roman military is what is unexpected, if not damning to Marius. These other examples, in this biography alone, reinforce the performative construction of military women as "Other": it is a barbarian practice that has no place in the Greek or Roman social order.[45] Throughout the *Marius*, Plutarch lambasts and even villainises his protagonist, in part for his rejection of Greek culture.[46] Martha's presence – and particularly her commanding presence – is yet another subtle reminder of Marius' own barbarity.

This reading, however, has ultimately sprung Halperin's trap: the question of why Martha is a woman is answered by pointing to the way her gender is used to criticise Marius and his choice to place such a woman in a position of authority. Martha may be making commands in the masculine sphere, but it is the man who allowed her to be there that is in the wrong in this situation; Plutarch does not place the blame on Martha for her own actions.

If we want to view Martha through a more positive lens, we must try to get away from viewing her as a foil for Marius. But is this possible in a text that focuses so heavily on its protagonist? Halperin concluded his chapter on the Greek diviner by saying: "and so to ask why Diotima is a woman is to pose a question that ultimately has no answer".[47] That is not the case for our Syrian diviner – I have demonstrated a very specific construction of her femininity here; however, the question is still flawed in such a way that it can only centre on the intentions of a man writing about men and male culture. Ultimately, it must be conceded, the question posed has no answer illuminating this woman or other women in the late Roman Republic. That does not, however, make this discussion as a whole flawed. By asking "why", we have been able to see the ways in which Plutarch explicitly uses gender to make his point about Marius, but in highlighting these ways we can now see past this aspect and look at the construction of a woman carving out a career as a diviner in the late Roman Republic. Now that we have asked and addressed the methodologically flawed "why", we can ask: *how* is Martha a woman?

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[45] Cf. Barrett 2005, 304: "the notion of a female military commander was considered exotic and barbarian, something perhaps expected of a Cleopatra or a Boudicca but alien to the Roman experience."
[46] Perhaps the clearest example is in his introduction, where we are told Marius never studied Greek literature, "because it was [in his view] ridiculous to learn a language for which the teachers are from a culture subjugated to another" (2.2: ὡς γελοῖον γράμματα μαντάνειν ὧν οἱ διδάσκαλοι δουλεύοιεν ἑτέροις). Cf. Buszard 2008, 205-6.
[47] Halperin 1990, 151.

5.3 Free Movement of Peoples

So, how is Martha a woman? In what ways does her gender affect her story and the identity she takes on? Femininity in fact plays a significant role in Martha's backstory. Although Plutarch does not provide very much at all, what he does say is particularly striking in a number of ways. Over the course of this next section, I will discuss the various elements of that construction and the ways in which it presents Martha as a woman and as a diviner in her own right.

When we break down Martha's story into stages, in their chronological order, we notice that our author tells us nothing of where she actually comes from: although she is described as Syrian, her earliest narrative point in Plutarch's story is that she was denied an audience in the senate. Like the Sibyl of the Books, who she was and where she came from prior to that moment is a mystery.[48] T. Corey Brennan describes this moment as "a remarkable instance of chutzpah on her part to have started by approaching this body";[49] however, I would argue that this is a moment we must be aware of our author's choice in presenting this backstory. We cannot say that this was where she started, only that this is as far back as Plutarch thought necessary to introduce her. In thinking about the rejection itself, Ernesto Valgiglio attributed it mainly to her Syrian status, on account of ethnic stereotypes, without mention of her gendered status.[50] Yet this moment in many ways sets up the importance of women (of any ethnicity) within and outside of the Roman religious system as regulated by the senate. In a reverse way, it works in favour of the construction of her character and authority: like Cassandra, she is not believed by those she tries to help, but Julia's (and Marius') later realisation of her worth confirms this to be the mistake of the senate. Finally, the fact that Plutarch chose to begin at the point of her rejection is relevant in constructing Martha's identity as a private diviner: her practice cannot have a place within the religious and political system of Rome, but the active denial of that place confirms her identity outside that system.

This brings us to the next stage of Martha's backstory, when she goes to the elite women, most importantly Julia, and "proves" her ability. This sets an immediately gendered picture for us: the senate – the elite men – do not even grant Martha an audience, whilst their female counterparts are convinced. Beyond this, too, there is a gendered dichotomy in the placement

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[48] See chapter **3.3 The Creation of a Sibyl**.
[49] 2012, 362.
[50] 1956, 85. The racial construction of Martha shall be analysed in greater detail in the chapter **5.4 Acceptably Foreign**.

of these meetings. The men reject the Syrian prophetess from the official capacity of the senate, in the active, political, professional sphere; the women give her a chance at the gladiator games they are watching in the context of a festival. Although this setting is explicitly what allows Martha to demonstrate her skill, the oppositional relationship of the masculine and feminine spheres of influence, represented by location, cannot be overlooked.

Furthermore, we have already discussed the gendered invective bound up in the notion of superstition,[51] and on one level this could be a reinforcing of that trope; indeed, it prefigures the later suspicions of theatricality Martha receives. But this is less clear cut when we consider the appearance of Julia. Marius' wife is only mentioned one other time in Plutarch's biography: when he marries her.[52] At this point, all Plutarch tells us is that she was of an aristocratic family – the Caesars, in fact – and thus was a good political match for his protagonist, and helped further his career.[53] It is unfortunate, but perhaps unsurprising, that the only other mention of Julia in the wider ancient sources is her funeral oration, famously given by her nephew – Calpurnia's husband Julius Caesar – again used to further his own political importance and career.[54] Overall, then, Julia's position within Martha's story, and the fact that she actively sent Martha to Marius, is all the more notable for the fact that it is her only moment of agency which history has recorded. In many ways, Julia conforms to the ideal of the Republican elite wife: she endows her husband with political currency without getting involved with that masculine world herself. Her one act of selecting and promoting Martha, stays very much within Karin Blomqvist's "Supportive" women stereotype, if we are to consider it a political move.[55] In this respect, then, Julia's propriety lends credence to Martha's ability; she may be a woman, but she is trustworthy on important matters, and we are not told of any hesitation on her husband's part to accept her judgement.

Overall, we must consider the importance of the fact that Martha has a backstory at all. When we consider other individual (male) diviners in Plutarch's *Lives*, it is rare that we are told where they come from, or indeed given their credentials. By way of a comparison, let us consider Stilbides, a male diviner whom Plutarch tells us was part of Nicias' retinue. Like Martha, Stilbides is only mentioned once in the biography of the Athenian politician, although in his case it is narratively placed after his death.[56] Nicias was on a military campaign against

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[51] See chapter **2.6 Nothing but an Old Wives' Tale?**
[52] Plut. *Mar.* 6.2.
[53] For a discussion of the political significance of the marriage, see Santangelo 2016a, 24.
[54] Plut. *Caes*. 5.1-2; Suetonius *Jul.* 6.1-2. Cf. Osgood 2014, 109.
[55] Blomqvist 1997, 82. For a discussion of Plutarch's women, see chapter **5.1 Why Is Martha a Woman?**
[56] Plut. *Nic*. 23.5.

Syracuse, when an eclipse was seen. Plutarch pauses his narrative to give a digression on both the scientific and portentous understandings of the moon and its eclipses, suggesting that, although there was a rational explanation, it was not easy to comprehend and it is perfectly understandable that people considered (and still consider) it to be a divine message.[57] This protagonist's mistake, however, was not superstition, but rather due to the fact that he did *not* take professional mantic advice on the matter: it is at this point Stilbides is posthumously introduced, and because of his death Nicias was without a diviner. In this case, rather than waiting three days, as Plutarch tells us was usual for these sort of portents, he waited, sacrificing and praying, for twenty-eight, at which point the enemy came upon them and gained the upper hand.[58] The point of Stilbides – and in fact Martha – was not to lead their respective commanders down a path of superstition, but rather by suggesting the right portents stop them from making superstitious choices.[59]

Yet Stilbides, despite this similarity, does not receive a backstory of his own, confirming his place in Nicias' retinue, in the same way that Martha does. He does not need credentials, does not need to have been denied by the Athenian governing body or to have been selected by an elite woman with an otherwise unquestionable status. More importantly, despite Frederick E. Brenk's assertion that Plutarch shows "a reluctance to treat such prodigies as important",[60] Stilbides' place in Nicias' retinue does not cause people to wonder if the commander was being truthful or just making a display of power. For Stilbides, it is enough to say that he was such a figure, and, whether Plutarch believed – and expected his reader to believe – in his craft or not, his position is not at question, even with a scientific digression on eclipses. For Martha, on the other hand, her place in Marius' retinue must be qualified by explaining how she convinced Marius, and more importantly his wife, of her skill. Clearly, in respect of performative identity, there is in fact no difference between a male or a female diviner, but in practice the latter is more unexpected and thus must work harder to "prove" herself, not only to a potential employer (and his army) but also to Plutarch's readers and beyond.

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[57] *Ibid.* 23.1-4.
[58] *Ibid*. 23.6.
[59] This is, in fact, in line with Plutarch's general thesis on the problem of erring on the side of superstition or atheism, as discussed in the *Peri Deisidaimonias*: cf. Rüpke 2016b, 45-64.
[60] 1977, 191.

5.4 Acceptably Foreign

That Martha was a woman, then, was clearly an important part of her construction. But, both in Plutarch's literary characterisation and the wider identity she represents, it must be said that her ethnicity – Syrian – also played an important part.

Unfortunately, we cannot be certain what is meant by this description: Σύριοι was used to refer either to the people of that area who spoke Syriac and followed Syrian customs, or the people descended from Greek colonisers to the area who, still called Syrian, lived, spoke and acted Greek.[61] As I have already mentioned, Martha's background prior to her arrival at the senate is a mystery, and so we cannot know which of these may have been meant by her ethnic identifier. J. Bert Lott has suggested a link with the Syrian goddess, and so the idea that Martha was working within an "Eastern" (by which I mean external to the Greco-Roman norm) ritual framework in order to create a performative competency.[62] It is equally plausible, however, that we are meant to understand her as Greek Syrian and, if we are to spring Halperin's trap once more, Marius' rejection of Greek literature and learning (discussed above) is subtly undermined by his dependence on Greek ritual practice.

It is a small but important point that, in our consideration of Martha's origins, we must also remember that she does not necessarily have to have travelled from Syria herself. Travel in the ancient world was neither easy nor to be undertaken lightly, and it seems unlikely that a lone woman would have crossed the Mediterranean on the potential of building a ritual career within the Roman system (a career, too, for which she is initially rejected within that system).[63] Two other possibilities are open. It may be simply the case that Martha came from a Syrian (or Greek) family, but was herself raised in Rome or Italy, retaining her family's identity. Alternatively, it is entirely possible that she was not in fact Syrian at all, but used this identity marker in order to performatively construct a ritual authority within Lott's framework above. Indeed, as Heidi Wendt points out, a foreign institutional claim amounted to a level of "self-authorisation", due to the complexity that would be involved in verification.[64]

But regardless of its "truth", and of its specific designation, it is possible, as with her gender, to see some elements of literary characterisation in Martha's ethnic identity. Again, Plutarch can be seen to be using these stereotypes to comment on the wider situation of both Marius as

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[61] Isaac 2004, 335-337.
[62] 2017, 209.
[63] For a discussion of mobility, migration and connectivity in the ancient Mediterranean, see Bruun 2016; Woolf 2016.
[64] Wendt 2016, 12-13. See also Mowat 2016, esp. 428-430 for a discussion about creating a divinatory identity that is not necessarily based on a prior "truth".

well as the Germanic barbarians he fought. As an "Other" – but a very specifically constructed Other – the Germans captured Greco-Roman imagination, and certain features were frequently commented upon by ancient writers and ethnographers.[65] The distinctions between the different Germanic tribes in Greek and Roman literature is often blurred as to the precise definition and boundaries of the ethnic definition – and, in fact, it was a definition applied from the outside, and "the so-called 'Gauls' and 'Germans' in antiquity generally identified themselves in terms of smaller groups or tribes".[66] As such, although Plutarch and other sources are able to be quite specific about Marius' campaigns being against the Teutones, the Ambrones and the Cimbri, there is little actual distinction or even understanding about where the borders to each of these lie. The focus was not on specificity, but, as Erich S. Gruen notes, on "the traits that would appeal to readers interested in the striking rather than the subtle".[67]

Greg Woolf has cautioned against speaking of an ethnography of religion in antiquity, primarily because "ethnography was not a discipline, and there was no ancient concept of religion".[68] However, it can be said that discussion of religious practice was used to construct this Otherness, as well as comparability in the idea of the *Interpretatio Romana*. Consider, for example, this fragment of Posidonius, preserved in Strabo, discussing gendered ritual practice of the Cimbri:

> ἔθος δέ τι τῶν Κίμβρων διηγοῦνται τοιοῦτον, ὅτι ταῖς γυναιξὶν αὐτῶν συστρατευούσαις παρηκολούθουν προμάντεις ἱέρειαι πολιότριχες, λευχείμονες, καρπασίνας ἐφαπτίδας ἐπιπεπορπημέναι, ζῶσμα χαλκοῦν ἔχουσαι, γυμνόποδες. τοῖς οὖν αἰχμαλώτοις διὰ τοῦ στρατοπέδου συνήντων ξιφήρεις, καταστέψασαι δ᾽ αὐτοὺς ἦγον ἐπὶ κρατῆρα χαλκοῦν ὅσον ἀμφορέων εἴκοσι. εἶχον δὲ ἀναβάθραν, ἣν ἀναβᾶσα ὑπερπετὴς τοῦ λέβητος ἐλαιμοτόμει ἕκαστον μετεωρισθέντα· ἐκ δὲ τοῦ προχεομένου αἵματος εἰς τὸν κρατῆρα μαντείαν τινὰ ἐποιοῦντο. ἄλλαι δὲ διασχίσασαι ἐσπλάγχνευον ἀναφθεγγόμεναι νίκην τοῖς οἰκείοις. ἐν δὲ τοῖς ἀγῶσιν ἔτυπτον τὰς βύρσας τὰς περιτεταμένας τοῖς γέρροις τῶν ἁρμαμαξῶν, ὥστ᾽ ἀποτελεῖσθαι ψόφον ἐξαίσιον.

> They relate a certain habit of the Cimbri thus, that their women followed them, joining with them on their expeditions as grey-haired priestly prophetesses, dressed in white flaxen garments fastened by a brooch, with a bronze belt and barefoot. Thus, sword in hand, throughout the camp they would meet war captives and, decking them with garlands, they led them to a bronze mixing vessel, as big as twenty amphora. One would carry a ladder, which she climbed and, stretching over the cauldron, she would cut the captives' throats while they each hung suspended: from the blood, pouring into the vessel, the priestesses would make their prophecies. Other women, meanwhile,

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[65] For a discussion of the place of the Germans in the Greco-Roman literature, see Isaac 2004, 428-439.
[66] McCoskey 2012, 76.
[67] Cf. Gruen 2011, 141.
[68] Woolf 2013b. Quotation from p. 133.

having cut open and inspected the entrails, would announce the victory of their countrymen. At gatherings, they beat drums made of the skin stretched across the frame of their wagons, as to play out the victim's swansong.[69]

This extract comes at the end of a fragment recorded in Strabo, discussing the origin and migration of the Cimbri. I. G. Kidd has argued that the general plural διηγοῦνται suggests that this is not specifically attributable to Posidonius, but rather it is "exactly the kind of anecdote which would be common currency in Rome".[70] Whilst it is true that generalisations of "barbarian" social and ritual practices – and particularly human sacrifice – were commonplace in Roman constructions,[71] the specific and vivid imagery of both the prophetesses and their actions is suggestive of a more singular source which Strabo is putting forward as reflective of that construction. Furthermore, aside from Tacitus' comment on the prophetic quality of women according to the Germans,[72] as Marco Martin notes, "la tradizione celtica non offre esempi di druidesse, né di esse parlano le fonti classiche".[73] Common as anecdotes may have been, in respect of gender this particular passage is certainly individual and even unique amongst them. Given that a number of fragments of Posidonius appear to make up an ethnography of the Cimbri,[74] along with this paragraph's placement alongside a secure fragment of Posidonius speaking of that same tribe, it seems most likely that this description is Posidonian in character.[75]

There is a striking resemblance, then, between the imagery of the Cimbrian prophetesses and of Martha: both are of women acting in the military sphere, singled out as wearing vivid colours, buckled with a brooch, carrying weaponry and performing sacrificial divination on behalf of the male warriors.[76] Though subtle, this parallel is certainly significant, and it is more than plausible that the biographer had this precise quotation in mind when he was constructing his literary Martha. Ken Dowden stresses that the word Posidonius uses for the women being dressed with brooches, ἐπιπεπορπημέναι, is extremely rare, and "conjures up alien dress, which depends entirely on the buckle for its fastening";[77] interestingly, then, it is very similar to Plutarch's own use of ἐμπεπορπημένη for Martha's wearing of a brooch, the

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[69] BNJ 87 F 31a (2.3) = Strab. 7.2.3 (text derived from BNJ).
[70] 1988, 932.
[71] Cf. Rives 1995, esp. 67-70.
[72] *Germ*. 8.2. This will be discussed further below.
[73] 2011, 441 n.7. He also compares this fragment, and particularly the white clothing of the priestesses, to the (male) priests noted by Pliny in *HN*. 16.95.
[74] As stated by Dowden *ad. Loc*. BNJ 87 F 31a.
[75] Cf. also Malitz 1983, 223, who asserts that, while this is not necessarily a direct quotation of Posidonius, it is nevertheless from his work.
[76] For the elements of Martha that relate to her construction as a woman in relation to Marius' construction as a man, see chapter **5.1 Why Is Martha a Woman?**
[77] Dowden *ad. Loc*. BNJ 87 F 31a.

only difference being the (comparable) prepositional prefixes.[78] Plutarch was certainly familiar with Posidonius' works in general and specifically on the Cimbri: he names him as his source at two points in the *Marius* alone.[79] Further, although Posidonius is not explicitly named during Plutarch's discussion of the Cimbric migration at *Mar.* 11.4-11.12, it is close enough to fragment 31a (2.1-2.2) – incidentally, the discussion preceding the quotation above – that it should be considered a fragment of Posidonius in its own right.[80]

It is unlikely that Plutarch expected his readers to be so familiar with Posidonius' extensive oeuvre that they would get the reference, but it is certainly plausible that he was using this passage as a mirror to consider religious practices from across the "barbarian" North, the "superstitious" East and, at the centre of it all, Rome. Two key points can be noted, particularly in respect of the Cimbri: the position of women and the practice of sacrifice. Despite the fact that, as this thesis alone demonstrates, some women were treated as being able to perform religious and divinatory acts, the institutional acceptance of women was still a marker of foreignness to Greco-Roman writers, and is part of the "striking" that Gruen sees as appealing to readers.[81] Similarly, the practice of human sacrifice is a negative signifier of foreign religion, often used to point out the line between "barbaric" and "civilised".[82]

Overall, then, there is a focus on Otherness in the Posidonian picture of the Cimbric priestesses, which can be paralleled with the Otherness created by Martha's own foreignness, from the opposite end of the Roman world. Elena Isayev has interrogated the way in which "priestly foreignness" was in some cases an important and even required element of construction in some religious roles, such as the Greek priestess of Ceres at Rome.[83] It was this priestly foreignness that constructed (and was constructed by) the borders of Roman and "foreign" religion.[84] Yet, despite questions of theatricality as will be discussed in the next section, Martha's actions at face value are considered to be Roman/acceptably foreign practice. When we look more closely at this parallel, we see that her actions – and thus Marius' – are not all that different from the "barbarians" they are opposing. By Plutarch's

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[78] Indeed, if Plutarch was writing from memory rather than directly copying, which is certainly likely especially given that this is not a direct quotation, the difference in the prefixes is negligible.
[79] *Mar.* 1.2 and 45.4.
[80] Dowden includes it as BNJ 87 F 31b (11.4-11.12).
[81] Cf. e.g. Tac. *Germ.* 8.2: "Furthermore, [the Germans] even consider that there is something sacred and prescient about women, neither rejecting their counsel nor slighting their responses" (*inesse quin etiam sanctum aliquid et prouidum putant, nec aut consilia earum aspernantur aut responsa neglegunt*).
[82] See Rives 1995, esp. 77-80. Although, as with women in institutional religion, there is an irony in this approach to human sacrifice as "Other", which has been explored in chapter **4.6 How to Get Away With Murder**.
[83] Isayev 2011.
[84] This can also be seen in the construction of the haruspices and Etruscan identity, for which see Turfa 2006.

own time, Syria had been part of the Roman Empire for a long time, but to Marius, Martha would still have been from beyond the Republic's borders. This, along with the above-noted ambiguity as to her potential "Greekness", gives her a negotiable position as both insider and outsider to Roman religion. Benjamin Isaac has commented that:

> The Gauls [and Germans] aroused far less emotional hostility than the Greeks and various peoples of the Near East, whether Hellenized or not. […] In terms of Roman value judgements they are regarded as the opposite of Asiatics and Syrians. However as an object of proto-racist thinking and ethnic prejudice they are their equals.[85]

Martha, regardless of whether she was Greek or non-Greek Syrian, brings these opposites to the foreground, but also emphasises the fact that they were perhaps not as different as authors like Posidonius, with his focus on the Otherness of these Germanic tribes, would have us believe. Through this Syrian prophetess, Plutarch is able to demonstrate that clash of internal and external, of Same and Otherness. Perhaps this can also be noticed in the fact that Posidonius of Apameia was actually himself a Greek Syrian, though he spent most of his life in Rhodes.

But, overall, for Plutarch's subtle point here to make sense, the tradition in which Martha is working has to be a recognisably Roman one – or at least acceptably foreign – both in respect of her gender and her race. As noted above, we are left in no doubt that Martha, or at least a Martha-like figure, would have been perfectly acceptable for Plutarch's readers, and so the performatively correct Roman tradition of sacrifice, this technical divinatory practice, was certainly open to women and foreigners as a practice.

5.5 You Can't Handle the Truth

As shown throughout this chapter, it is possible to take the discussion of Martha, even the literary Martha, beyond Plutarch. The eleventh chapter of Frontinus' first book of *Strategemata* ("*Strategems*"), a study on strategies and tactics prior to battle, is focussed on "how to motivate an army before battle".[86] The chapter is a series of short examples of the actions of both Greek and Roman generals with regard to this focus, with sections 11.8-16 being examples of using religious matters as motivation. In the middle of these comes our passage on Martha:

> *C. Marius sagam quandam ex Syria habuit, a qua se dimicationum euentus praediscere simulabat.*

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[85] 2004, 439.
[86] Frontin. *Strat*. 1.11: *Quemadmodum Incitandus Sit ad Proelium Exercitus*.

> Gaius Marius had a certain *saga* from Syria, from whom he used to pretend to learn the outcome of battles beforehand.[87]

Frontinus gives no further contextualisation for this *saga*,[88] neglecting to mention even how she might (pretend to) show the consul those outcomes. Though brief, there are a number of parallels we might draw in the presentation of Martha by both Frontinus and Plutarch, namely on the constructions of truth and theatricality. I will first contextualise the earlier author's passage, before discussing this construction between the two descriptions.

There is a lot to be said about Frontinus' placement of the passage, both in the wider work and within this chapter. The *Strategems* were not a literary or rhetorical handbook, in the way we might consider similar works such as Polyaenus' *Strategika* ("*Strategems*"), but strictly a tool for learning military tactics.[89] The first three books are divided into the categories of before battle, during battle and after battle and sieges; obviously, the chapter on rousing the army falls into the first category. As noted above, within that chapter there is a series of examples that focus on religious matters, of which Martha falls squarely in the middle. The four preceding examples describe the commanders manipulating the public image of them visibly entreating, and being answered by the gods, who promise victory. In the passage immediately preceding that of Martha, Frontinus describes how Sulla also spoke of being foretold victory by the gods, and immediately before battle would pray to a small Delphic token, explicitly "in full view of the army".[90] Of course, the number of oppositions – as well as parallels – between these two passages are clearly in part a construction of the opposition between Sulla and Marius, but it is notable that Martha, or at least the Syrian *saga*, is the first mention of a human agent as mediator in the religious activities of the commanders. Sections 11.8-9, for instance, are both examples of the commanders – the Roman Aulus Postumius and the Spartan Archidamus respectively – making it appear to their armies that Castor and Pollux physically ride with them into battle. Even Sulla is himself praying and communicating directly with the gods, at least as far as Frontinus tells us. The three examples that follow Martha also resort to human – or at least mortal – agency to demonstrate the foretelling of victory.[91] It is interesting that only the last of these actually names the authority figure, the

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[87] 1.11.12.

[88] For discussion of the word (and translations of) *saga*, see chapter **2.6 Nothing but an Old Wives' Tale?**

[89] As has recently been argued by Malloch 2015, esp. 79-83. Contra cf. Campbell 1987, 14-15, who describes Frontinus' manual as a "glamourizing but amateur approach".

[90] 1.11.11: *in conspectu exercitus.*

[91] The first of these is the story of Sertorius and the white deer (1.11.13), as retold again by Plutarch (*Sert.* 11.2-4). For discussion of this episode, see chapter **5.2 Why Is Martha a Woman?**

(male) haruspex Sudines.[92] Frontinus' final religious method of motivating one's army before battle returns to the activity of the commander himself, this time Epiminonidas the Theban, who actively manipulated events by removing all weapons from the temple to show his army the gods have taken up their arms to fight alongside them.[93]

Given the chapter's focus, it is unsurprising that we find the construction of manipulation running throughout: the exemplars are linked by their ability to direct the emotions of the army (and indeed the enemy), and the understanding of how people will respond to certain stimuli. The religious ones, however, take this a step further, as they all have in common the idea of deception headed by the commander himself. The implication with these is that the generals themselves do not believe Castor and Pollux actively ride into battle with them, for example, but choose to play on the idea for the army's sake.

The case of Martha is, of course, explicit in this regard, and we are told that Marius "pretended" (*simulabat*) to learn from her, but she is by no means an outlier in this respect. In fact, the same word is used of Sulla, when he "pretended (*simulauit*) the future was foretold to him by the gods".[94] Even Sudines is not above falsehood: we are told he did the same as Alexander the Great's unnamed haruspex, who used sleight of hand techniques to impress messages on the entrails of the sacrifice.[95] The falsehood, in Frontinus' collection at least, does not have a gendered differentiation; yet Martha still stands out within this crowd of deceivers. In all other cases where the commander is working with a male religious expert, both men are explicitly complicit in the deception. As well as passing over the details of her methods, our author leaves open the question of whether Martha was agent or object in the deception. Did she believe in what she was doing, manipulated by a Marius simply using her without including her in the misdirection, or did she, like Sudines and Alexander's unnamed haruspex, actively direct the outcome of her own practice to suit the needs of the consul? Our author remains mute.

Though short, this passage very clearly resonates with the last sentence of Plutarch's depiction of Martha and Marius. The biographer also touches on the extent to which Marius himself "believed" these prophecies or whether he was just pretending for appearances;

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[92] 1.11.15.

[93] 1.11.16.

[94] 1.11.11: *praedici sibi a diis futura simulauit.*

[95] 1.11.14: "Alexander of Macedon, when he was about to make a sacrifice, inscribed with dye upon the hand of the haruspex who would handle the entrails. The letters signified that victory would be given to Alexander" (*Alexander Macedo sacrificaturus inscripsit medicamento haruspicis manum, quam ille extis erat suppositurus. Litterae significabant victoriam Alexandro dari*).

however, he keeps a distance on the matter, attributing the doubt to others (albeit "many" others) and thus not explicitly passing judgement himself.[96]

It is notable that Plutarch explains the basis of the doubt in theatrical terminology. Martha's appearance and actions are described directly as τοῦτο […] τὸ δρᾶμα ("this drama" or even "this dramatic flair"). There are a number of other instances in which he makes this link between the dramatic and the superstitious.[97] In his *Lysander*, for example, the eponymous Spartan used certain collections of oracles in an attempt to persuade his fellow citizens by first distracting them with "a fear of the gods and superstition".[98] Our author explicitly depicts this move in the terminology of the theatre, likening the oracular collections to stage machinery.[99] For Marius, as with the other instances, this recurrent metaphor has the effect of reinforcing the idea of pretending, and of actively using religious expectations to manipulate the masses, much like the construction put forward by Frontinus. Unfortunately, there is obscurity yet again in respect of Martha's position in the dramatic metaphor. Plutarch here, as with his other examples, focuses only on the protagonist's use of theatrics, neglecting to elucidate the on the role of the Syrian prophetess. He does, however, take it further than Frontinus in this respect: the use of ἐπιδείκνυται ('he exhibits'), with Martha as the direct object, reduces her to being merely a piece of machinery in Marius' play, rather than an actor in her own right.

But it is, again, possible to move away from Plutarch's casting of Martha as merely a facet of Marius, and consider these elements as her own performative construction as a diviner.[100] As well as casting doubt, the "dramatic flair" questioned by Plutarch is at the same time the very element that gave a level of authenticity to Martha's divination: how do you otherwise recognise a diviner? This brings us back to Cato's adage of the two haruspices meeting each other in the street.[101] Both know that, for the most part, their clothing, actions and, to some extent, identity do not actually change the outcome of the divinatory ritual or interpretation, except in a performative sense, in the way that they create and confer that divinatory authority., There is, however, a fine line between demonstrating one's ability and taking matters too far, both in respect of performance and superstition. The demarcation of this line, evidenced by Plutarch's response to Martha, is particularly evident under the sign of gender.

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[96] Plut. *Mar*. 17.3.
[97] As noted by Duff 1999, 126.
[98] Plut. *Lys*. 25.2: φόβῳ θεοῦ τινι καὶ δεισιδαιμονίᾳ.
[99] *Ibid*. 25.1: "Like machinery in tragedy lifting upto the citizens, he pulled together and arranged words and oracular responses to the Pythian Apollo"(ὥσπερ ἐν τραγῳδίᾳ μηχανὴν αἴρων ἐπὶ τοὺς πολίτας λόγια πυθόχρηστα καὶ χρησμοὺς συνετίθει καὶ κατεσκεύαζεν). Other instances can be found, for example, in *Num*. 8.10; *Them*. 10.1; *Sert*. 11.2.
[100] See chapter **1.4 The Performing Arts**.
[101] Cf. Cic. *Div*. 2.51. For discussion, see chapter **1.2 Divining Defintions**.

Plutarch mentions a number of diviners by name throughout the *Lives*, advising the protagonists in religious matters. We have already discussed, for example, Nicias' diviner Stilbides.[102] Similarly, Lampon is noted as correctly predicting Pericles' greatness, an anecdote for which Brenk concedes "Plutarch is willing to give the seer Lampon his day".[103] Yet the performative truth of these male diviners is not questioned to the same degree that Martha receives. We are not told what Stilbides wore whilst he guided Nicias, nor whether Lampon preferred being transported in a litter or not; undoubtedly related, we are not told the extent to which doubt was conferred upon their methods. That Martha is there at all demonstrates fully that gender did not actually impede on a diviner's technical ability, but it still impeded on audiences (contemporary and later readers) and their assumptions of authority and ability.

5.6 *Mulier Necans*

That Martha could do what she did, then, is not at question. But the question that has remained in the background so far through this chapter is what it is that she was actually doing. Martha's choice of divinatory practice, sacrifice, is at once both standard and unusual, for a number of reasons. Sacrifice has had a central role in scholarship on Greek and Roman religious practice since the 19th century, with a plethora of meanings and angles analysed, from the act of killing to the importance of eating.[104] Yet the relationship between sacrifice and divination often takes a backseat in these theoretical models: indeed, neither of the two most recent edited volumes on ancient sacrifice even have "divination" as a subject in the indices, focusing instead on the more violent (and explicitly non-violent) aspects.[105] All religious action, on some level, can be conceptualised as being communication, and, in the case of ancient Mediterranean religion, being communication with the gods. Under this conceptualisation, the medium of sacrifice must be understood, at its core, as divinatory

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[102] See chapter **5.3 Free Movement of Peoples.**

[103] 1977, 191; for Lampon, see Plut. *Peric.* 6.2-3..

[104] The development of these analyses in early and recent scholarship has also been much discussed: the articles in Faraone and Naiden (edd.) 2012 offer a wide review of the literature and the theoretical models of ancient Mediterranean animal sacrifice, focussing on the form and function of the sacrifice itself, but with little attention on the human actors involved. See also Knust and Várhelyi 2011b, esp. 4-18, for a review of the literature with a specific focus on the way "pagan" sacrifice has been set against early Christianity by both ancient writers and modern scholars. The importance of the act of killing comes from Burkert's influential monograph *Homo Necans* (1972), whilst food took the centre stage following the articles published in Détienne and Vernant (edd) 1979.

[105] Knust and Várhelyi (edd.) 2011a; Faraone and Naiden (edd.) 2012.

within the broad understanding of a system of signs by which the gods' will may be unknown, as was discussed in the introduction.[106]

But further to this, even, Plutarch's framing of Martha is that she deals specifically in knowledge of the future: Marius uses her for "certain oracles" (τινων λογίων) that tell him the time and place of his victories; similarly, Martha had impressed Julia by correctly predicting the victors in gladiator games. It is perhaps too much a stretch to imagine our Syrian diviner performing blood sacrifices whilst sat at the feet of the elite women in the audience of the amphitheatre, but a freelance ritual expert such as Martha would have been understood to be able to practise a range of activities depending on the situation.[107] The choice of this method, sacrifice, for Marius, again plays into the theatricality of Martha's role, as discussed in the previous section, through her selection of her most appropriate skill for the consul's needs.

It has recently been heavily debated as to whether women were considered capable, in a ritual sense, of sacrifice in both the Greek and Roman worlds. It was originally held that sacrifice, like politics and public religion, was a man's world, and thus barred to women.[108] Any exceptions, such as the female-only Bona Dea, proved the rule, as being liminal or a deliberate reversal of norms, or, in the case of the Vestal Virgins, due to their "male aspect" once put forward by Mary Beard.[109] This argument has since been heavily refuted, led by Celia Schultz, Rebecca Flemming and Emily Hemelrijk, with a range of ancient evidence demonstrating feminine "sacrificial capacity" without resorting to liminality or norm-reversal.[110] As James Rives has pointed out, whilst direct evidence for female sacrificants may be scanty, the direct evidence for male sacrificants is actually equally so, and the assumption of women being sacrificially incapable is drawn from our own preconceptions of the Roman attitude towards gender and religious practice (the dislodging of which, I hope, this thesis has contributed towards, in its own way).[111]

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[106] Cf. Rüpke 2015.For the discussion of divination specifically, but religion in general, as communication, see chapter **1.2 Defining Definitions**.

[107] As Sarah Illes Johnston has written, for the Greek world at least: "the religious expert, especially the freelance religious expert, could wear a lot of different hats as occasion demanded" (2008, 137).

[108] The main arguments for the Roman side are put forward by de Cazanove 1987; Scheid 1992; 1993. See also North 2000b, 19, who suggests that women "seem to have had no active role in the traditional cultic life of the Romans".

[109] Cf. e.g. Versnel 1992; Scheid 1993, esp. 56-7. See also Flemming 2007 for the problem of conceptualising women performing unexpected religious actions as "liminal" or "crossing into the masculine sphere". The "sexual status" of the Vestal Virgins is found in Beard 1980, with the important criticisms in Beard 1995; see chapter **1.5 Fabia**.

[110] Schultz 2006a, 131-137; Flemming 2007; Hemelrijk 2009. For an overview of the scholarship for and against female sacrificial capacity, see DiLuzio 2016, 2-5. Similarly, for a positive rendering of women and sacrifice in the Greek world, see Osbourne 1993.

[111] Rives 2013; cf. also Várhelyi 2016, 325-326.

Initially, we might be tempted to see Martha as contributing to that direct evidence of women as sacrificants in the Roman Republic; however, when we look closer there is another level of what she is actually doing: Plutarch describes that Marius was actually the one to make the sacrifices, under Martha's command.[112] We might be tempted to think this is due to her "sacrificial incapability", but it would be reductive to try and hold this point, as well as be doing an injustice to Martha: you do not get to be a sacrificial expert, hired by the most important man in Roman politics, if you cannot perform a sacrifice yourself. Instead, we should perhaps understand this phrasing in the sense that, regardless of gender, Marius is the highest ranking official, has a right to be leading the public rites, even if his actions are directed by another. The construction is not whether Martha's gender inhibited her practice, but rather whether we should consider the sacrifices to be public or private, and whether we should see meaningful distinction in this binary. Marius, as consul and commander of the army, is acting very much in the public sphere; as such, the advice he takes from any divinatory responses is directing him on public actions. Regardless of her position outside of the official public priesthoods, Martha is still able to occupy that position in Marius' retinue.

5.7 Well, That's Just (Stereo)typical

In a recent article on women and sacrifice, Zsuzsanna Várhelyi asked

> can we change our questions from "did women participate" to "how did these models shape women's participation in religious ritual especially in the wider context of gender in the empire"?[113]

Martha clearly had an important religious role in Marius' retinue, regardless of her precise level of participation. Plutarch may be criticising Marius for giving an unorthodox level of authority to a diviner of Martha's gender and ethnicity. But it is important to see that this criticism, rather than taking away from Martha's capability, in fact demonstrates that it was perfectly acceptable for her to be working within that paradigm. Marius may be playing to stereotypes in order to manipulate the masses, but for that to even be a possibility, those stereotypes need to themselves be in a custom recognisable in Martha and her identity. Her gender, her ethnicity, her backstory and her sacrificial skill, all of which have been analysed

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[112] Plut. *Mar*. 17.1: θυσίας ἔθυεν ἐκείνης κελευούσης. The authoritative relationship implied by the final word has already been discussed in chapter **5.2 Why Is Martha a Woman?**
[113] 2016, 327.

in detail through this chapter, must have formed a standard model of divination and women's participation thereof in the Roman Republic.

But, in all of this, what is Martha's view? Does she herself practise what she preaches, or is she a self-constructed performance, using performative expectations of sacrificial divination to help Marius influence the emotions of his soldiers? It is a question neither Frontinus nor Plutarch feel is important enough to answer.

Chapter Six: Calpurnia

6.1 Calpurnia and the Disruption of the Roman State

With the final chapter of this thesis, we turn to a much more personal method of divination, and a much more personal case study: Calpurnia, who dreamed that her husband would die. Unlike Martha, we have many tellings and retellings, in both Greek and Latin, of her dream, and the wider story of its realisation; but like Martha, its authenticity is often doubted.[1]

There are two main versions of Calpurnia's dream. In one version, she saw their house's gable, which had been erected under a *Senatus Consultum*, fall to the ground, emphasizing the fall of the man.[2] The other version tells that, more directly, she dreamed she was holding his body, blood streaming from it, in her arms.[3] We will return to the different constructions, and their implications, throughout this chapter, but a detail they share is that Calpurnia awoke with the knowledge that the message meant her husband's death was imminent. She tried to warn him, to persuade him to remain at home that day, and again some versions of the story claim she was almost successful, until he was convinced that he needed to go to the senate, where he was murdered by his fellow senators. Part of the narrative importance of the dream is that it is realised, despite the dreamer's attempts to stop it.

The assassination of Calpurnia's husband, Gaius Julius Caesar, is perhaps one of the best known and most retold events of ancient Rome. Many ancient writers comment upon it, followed by its immortalisation as drama by William Shakespeare. For Shakespeare, Calpurnia is only present in two scenes, the second of which (Act II, scene 2) is heavily focussed on this very dream as Caesar deliberates whether to go to the senate that day. In a play so heavily centred on manliness and masculinity, in which there is only one other female character, Portia,[4] who also appears in just two scenes, Calpurnia and her dream still play a small but integral role.

It is interesting for the purpose of this thesis that Caesar's assassination is always described as being foretold by portents but, more specifically, although the precise portents listed often

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[1] The episode is told in App. *BC.* 2.115; Dio 44.17.1; Nic. Dam. *Bios Kaisaros* 83-84; Obseq. 67; Plut. *Caes*. 63; Suet. *Jul*. 81.3*;* Val. Max. 1.7.2; Vel. Pat. 2.57.

[2] Cf. e.g. Obseq. 67. The gable's erection is alluded to in Cic. *Phil.* 2.110-111; for its religious connotations, linked to the fact that Calpurnia's husband was Pontifex Maximus and so their house, the Regia, was itself a religious building of sorts, see Weinstock 1971, esp. 280-281*,* Pelling 2011, 472.

[3] Cf. e.g. App. *BC.* 2.115.

[4] Porcia, in the original Latin.

vary, almost every account includes the dream of Calpurnia. Though not necessarily central, it is seemingly essential for the story of the Dictator's death, but also for the deified mortal's rise to join the gods: in many respects this latter development is made possible by the very confirmation provided by the dream (and other portents) foretelling it.

Again, as with Martha, there is the potential to treat this dream as fiction, created later to add a dramatic flair. William Harris declared it "obvious" that Calpurnia's dream is an invention, though he offered no real basis for this conclusion.[5] Juliette Harrisson, by contrast, considers the "bare bones of the story" – the fact that Calpurnia had a nightmare and, on that basis, did not want her husband to attend the Senate that day – to be believable, with the details of its significance being emphasised in light of the other events:[6] as Paul Dutton has noted in his study of political dreams in the Carolingian Empire,

> What matters, given the historian's interest in living actors, is not the authenticity of the dream itself, but its meaning to the wide-awake world, and what matters most in the historical record is the meaning attached to dreams by their recorders and readers.[7]

It is needless to say that we can never know if Calpurnia really dreamed of the assassination on that fateful night. Dreams are an intensely private occurrence, which can only be truly experienced by one individual at a time and then related second hand to others (and, in this case, *by* others).[8] Indeed, the earliest written source that explicitly mentions Calpurnia's dream is Nicolaus of Damascus' *Bios Kaisaros* ("*Life of Augustus*"), likely datable to the period after 20 BCE,[9] who had a heavily pro-Augustan slant: the foretelling and thus legitimisation of the events, including the dream, has a knock-on effect in the legitimisation of the Principate and the current events. From then, it is picked up by those who retell the story of the assassination again and again, becoming, as we have seen, an integral feature of the narrative. This dream, and dreams in general, clearly have significance – and even importance – to the waking world of the narrative as well as the worlds of the later writers. Whether or not the dream actually occurred, whether or not the dreamer or her husband really believed it to be meaningful or predictive, are of secondary importance to the fact that they were seen that they *could* be so. A fact that must not be forgotten through the course of this chapter is that, despite the husband's (eventual) dismissal, no ancient account considers it implausible

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[5] 2009, 92. He later develops a system of deciding whether ancient dream reports should be considered true or "suspect", based on elements such as "it lacks dream-like qualities, such as 'bizarreness'", and also discounts a dream if "it in any way predicts an event which subsequently occurred" (105-106).
[6] Harrisson 2013, 109.
[7] 1994, 26.
[8] Cf. Scioli 2015, 219, who succinctly parallels the ideas that: "it is impossible to experience a dream unless one has dreamed it, just as it is impossible to see a work of art unless one looks at it with one's own eyes".
[9] Toher 1985; 2017, 22-28.

for Calpurnia to have received a predictive dream, and, further, though different ancient sources include different prodigies, the dream of Calpurnia is nearly always present in the narratives.[10]

But Calpurnia is not believed by the story's internal actors. The narrative element of her dream is driven by dichotomies and irreconcilable differences between personal and public, external and internal. Her husband is, at this point, consul and *Dictator Perpetuo* of Rome: his actions and decisions are always in the public sphere, and the future of this man is the future of the Roman state. A portent about him cannot be a private affair; yet, it seems, a dream cannot be a public affair. Within these binary opposites comes the binary of gender, too, and Calpurnia's femininity cannot be ignored in respect of the story and its implication to our understanding of the tradition of prophetic dreaming in late Republican Rome. The cruelty of the story, in respect of Calpurnia, is that she is not believed, but it must be noted that she is not believed *on account of* the fact that she is a woman. Nicolaus of Damascus, for example, has Decimus Junius Brutus – the man who finally convinces Caesar to ignore his wife's pleas – ask

> καὶ σὺ ὁ τηλικόσδε, γυναικὸς ἐνυπνίοις καὶ ἀνδρῶν ματαίων κληδόσι προσσχὼν ὑβριεῖς τήν σε τιμήσασαν σύγκλητον, ἣν αὐτὸς συνεκάλεσας, οὐκ ἐξιών;

> And you, great as you are, would take heed of the dreams of a woman, and the chance utterances of foolish men, so that you insult the very senate that honoured you, the very senate you yourself convened, by not leaving your house?[11]

Brutus here spurns "some rumours based on the flights of birds"[12] by an attack on Caesar's male allies and advisors – they are "foolish" in their interpretation. But for Calpurnia, it is the mere fact of her womanhood that precludes her dreams from being of any importance. It is true, to a certain extent, that the husband's attitude and response is in part due to his gender and social status, as can be seen from Brutus' criticism,[13] but it is important to note that the variations of the story do not present a single attitude: according to Nicolaus, he was initially hesitant – until Brutus' above speech reminded him of his status. Conversely, Valerius Maximus presents a husband who is dismissive of Calpurnia's dream without the need of conspiratorial appeals to his masculinity; however, he still dismisses it on the basis of "the dream of a woman".[14] We should at least understand, then, that it was Caesar's sex and social

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[10] Cf. Woolf 2007, 47 for a discussion of the varying portents, especially between Plutarch and Suetonius.
[11] Nic. Dam., *Bios Kaisaros* 84 (text derived from Toher 2017). Cf. also, Val. Max. 1.7.2
[12] *Ibid.*: τινας φήμας οιωνιζόμενοι.
[13] Montero Herrero 1998, 383.
[14] Val. Max. 1.2: *ne muliebri somnio motus id fecisse existimaretur.*

status that ultimately were the reason he had to disregard his wife's warnings. There is, of course, a parallel here to the *anilis superstitio* invective used by Cicero to define certain divinatory practices – including dream interpretation – as being improper for Roman (elite) men.[15] Superstitions, linked with ideas of 'worry', were not part of the masculine ideal.[16]

Dreaming is, of course, a deeply varied experience, with many ways to think about what dreams actually are and what they can be. For the purpose of this chapter I am only discussing the constructions of prophetic dreaming and its relation to the wider divinatory world of the late Republic. This is not to say that all dreams were considered predictive by even the hardiest of dream interpreters, but that at least *some* dreams were understood to have *some* prophetic value.[17] The idea of hidden messages in dreams, sent by outside agents (such as gods or supernatural beings) is a long and lasting one; it even formed the basis of Freud's understanding of dreams, as being messages from an internal (though still Other) source.[18] The construction of prophetic dreaming offers a unique perspective on divination and divinatory traditions, and particularly the gendered dichotomies that are presented and enforced. The crux of this chapter is to consider why Calpurnia was disbelieved on account of the argument of "the dreams of a woman", when it is categorically demonstrable that the senate had acted on women's dreams before. In order to do this, the structures and classifications of dreams in ancient oneiromancy and philosophy, as well as modern scholarship, must first be considered. I am then going to discuss more specifically the place of predictive dreaming within the Republican religious system, and whether it is possible to consider them under the prodigy and expiation system, as discussed in Chapter 4. This will be followed by a more specific return to Calpurnia, with two aims: first I will consider her absence from Cicero's *Div.* – an important circumstance in the light of the prominence of her husband in that text. I will then directly compare Calpurnia to other Republican dreamers, both men and women, to consider the responses that dreams received and the ways they were understood, before returning to consider Calpurnia in her own right once more, and consider the meanings of "the dream of a woman".

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[15] See chapter **2.6 Nothing but an Old Wives' Tale?**
[16] For further discussion on this link, see chapter **6.5 Comparing Calpurnia I: Lucan's Tragical Dreamers**.
[17] See Pelling 1997 for discussion of "from without or within?"
[18] See Freud 1914, 16-32, for his preliminary discussion of dream-stimuli and dream-sources, including: external (objective) sensory stimuli; internal (subjective) sensory excitation; internal (organic) bodily stimuli; and purely psychic stimuli.

6.2 Interpreting Structures

As we have already seen, Quintus (and through him Cicero) places dreams within the categorisation of divination more broadly as a natural art rather than a technical skill.[19] This follows common sense: dreaming was considered, by its very nature, a passive occurrence, which, with the exception of petitionary dreams, comes to the dreamer uninvited.[20] In many respects, the Roman public system of divination leans in favour of technical traditions, as practices that can be explained and, importantly, repeated. But, as has been seen throughout this thesis already, the binary of technical and natural is not a rigid opposition, and most things do not fit neatly on one side or the other. How, then, should we interpret dream interpretation?

It is persistently customary, it seems, in contemporary studies to locate the discussion of categorisation around that sole oneiromantic writer whose work comes to us in full from the ancient world: Artemidorus of Daldis.[21] Written in the second century CE, his five-volume *Oneirocritica* sets out to explain the profession of dream-interpretation, as a theory-light encyclopaedia of examples he has come across during his life in the profession. He notes five "categories" of dreams: φάντασμα, ἐνύπνιον, ὅραμα, χρηματισμός, and ὄνειρος.[22] From this, Artemidorus (together with Macrobius) is often seen as the culmination of ancient dream theory, in an overarching development that stretches from Homer, through Plato and even Cicero.[23] Thus Artemidorus is used as a basis for understanding dream interpretation beyond his own culture, for example in the ancient Near East, and even Freud saw him as "die größte Autorität in der Traumdeutung […] im späteren Altertum".[24] Yet, in reality, Artemidorus cannot be seen to be that far-reaching. On closer inspection, his categorisation, though drawing on similarities to others at play in the ancient world, do not show as close a correlation as we might expect from an overarching culmination.[25] John J. Winkler has also

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[19] See chapter **1.2 Divining Definitions**.

[20] See Boter and Flinterman 2007 for a discussion of petitionary dreams within the context of predictive and non-predictive dreams.

[21] On Artemidorus' sole surviving status, cf. e.g. Kessels 1969, 392; del Corno 1982, 60; Price 1986, 31. For a full introduction to the man and his work, see Harris-McCoy 2012.

[22] Precise English translations of these are slippery. They are sometimes seen as equivalents to Macrobius' fifth century Latin categories of *uisum, insomnium, uisio, oraculum* and *somnium* respectively, which he describes and explains in his commentary on Cicero's *Dream of Scipio* (3.1-11). It should be noted that, between Artemidorus and Macrobius, these are not direct translations, and the two authors provide differently nuanced meanings to the categories. See Stahl 1952, 87-8 n.1; Miller 1994, 91-98.

[23] Cf. e.g. Kessels 1969, 391-394; Lewis 1976, 20.

[24] Freud 1914, 3; cf. Price 1986, 5-6. For Artemidorus and the ancient Near East, cf. e.g. Oppenheim 1956, 206; Noegel 2007, 6.

[25] Price 1986, 11-12; Harrisson 2013, 63. Cf. also Prada 2015 for a recent comparison of Artemidorus with the demotic dream-books excavated in Egypt, for which no notable correlation is demonstrable.

problematised the universality of Artemidorus on account of his "androcentric focus", noting that women's dreams are occasionally considered as examples, but they are heavily side-lined.[26] Winkler considered that there might have been different clientele bases for different interpreters, and a female interpreter "such as the Isis devotee" would interpret the dreams of a woman with different focus.[27] Artemidorus prioritises individuality and experience as factors of central importance to interpretation: one story of a painter who dreams he buries his master but dies himself is an unusual interpretation because of the painter's own skill in oneiromancy. We are told instead that "these things to another observer would have foretold the master's death".[28] The gender roles and their constructions in the ancient world (as much as the contemporary) mean that women, men and non-binary people by those very constructions have very different experiences of the waking and the dreaming worlds. S. R. F. Price compares Artemidorus' concern of the dreamer's status with the varying apodoses of the palmomantic handbook *P.Ryl.* 28.[29] But this text, which details divinatory interpretations for the spontaneous twitching of different body parts, haphazardly applies different interpretations based upon the gender of the twitcher, for example "If the glans or prepuce twitches, [for a man] it shows joy, for the woman it shows profit with flaw".[30] Other palmomantic texts, though more fragmentary, demonstrate a more rigidly upheld distinction between the genders, for example *P.Flor.* 391.[31] Artemidorus, like the writer of *P.Ryl.* 28, occasionally defines by gender, but not consistently, and thus by his own mandate cannot be a universalising writer encapsulating the dreams of everyone. In the divinatory marketplace of Republican Rome, there would have been no end to interpreters, male and female, available to Calpurnia should she have wished – or had time – to seek advice.[32] It cannot be said, however, that there would have been a universal agreement in their answers, and certainly not one that Artemidorus could or would incorporate two centuries later.

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[26] 1990, 39.

[27] *Ibid.*

[28] Artem. 4.praef: αὐτὰ γὰρ ταῦτα ἄλλῳ ἰδόντι τοῦ δεσπότου ὄλεθρον προεμαντεύετο. On the idea of experience in Artemidorus, see Downie 2014, esp. 104-105: "To the extent that he rejects conjecture and prioritizes experience (*peira*) as the touchstone of his enquiry, when he is faced with the limitless proliferation of possible dream narratives, a totalizing account remains inevitably out of reach. The gap between dream and experience is a hermeneutic problem that underlies the intellectual project of the *Oneirocritic*[*a*]".

[29] 1986, 15.

[30] Ll. 46-49: βάλανος ἢ ἐπιδερμὶς ἐάν ἄλληται, εὐφρασίαν δηλοῖ, γυναικὶ δὲ κέρδος μετὰ ψόγου δηλοῖ. (Text derived from Mowat 2016).

[31] For an introduction to palmomancy and a collection of the papyrological and medieval manuscripts, see Costanza 2009. For a discussion on the problematic irregularity displayed by *P.Ryl.* 28, see Mowat 2016.

[32] Of course, it would also have been improper for the wife of the Pontifex Maximus to seek that advice. For a discussion of the marketplace model of divinatory options, see chapter **1.2 Divining Definitions**.

Is it, then, possible for us as modern scholars to categorise ancient (prophetic) dreams in a way that is fruitful for discussion? The most common answer is to differentiate "message" dreams from "symbolic" dreams.[33] In a message dream, or "episode dream" in William V. Harris' terminology, a person of authority visits the dreamer and announces a message, usually about what is about to happen.[34] This type of dream is seen from as early as Homer, and is common in many literary genres, from tragedy to historiography.[35] To an extent, interpretation is not necessary for message dreams, as the messenger will usually (though not always) speak directly to the dreamer concerning what is to pass and what they must do. Throughout this chapter, we will visit a number of examples of message dreams.

In a symbolic dream, by modern definition, the dreamer sees the prophecy or future events by means of a seemingly unconnected image or set of images that needs interpreting to reveal its meaning. These dreams are ubiquitous across antiquity, and can in many ways be the ones to which modern readers tend to relate, due to their inherent absurdity. These are the dreams on which Artemidorus focuses, since they are the dreams that require interpretation.

The first version of Calpurnia's dream I described, in which she saw the fall of the house pediment, fits neatly into this latter category; it is, however, not as simple as this. Although this version of the dream is indeed symbolic, there is no need for interpretation: Calpurnia immediately understands its meaning and the implications. Symbolic dreams cannot be shared first-hand with another person, but they can be, and often are, discussed an interpreted by an outside interlocutor. That is Artemidorus' *raison d'être*; it is also a point of contention of dream interpretation for Marcus Cicero, for example with the competing interpretations given to the *matrona* who wanted a child.[36] Emma Scioli, in her recent monograph on the use of dreams in Latin elegy, focuses on the dreamer as narrator, rather than just the interpretation of symbolic dreams, to understand their use by poets (and, more broadly, storytellers) as a means of description and communication.[37] But that communication must always come from the fact of multiple potential interpretations. For Calpurnia and her dream, there is no confusion, no

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[33] Harrisson 2013, 57-60. Cf. also Dodds 1951, 105; Kessels 1978, 3; Krevans 1993, 260; Harris 2009, 23-24. This has often been discussed in parallel to dream theory in the wider ancient world, for example in the ancient Near East, cf. e.g. Oppenheim 1956, 184. S. A. L. Butler (1998, esp. 15-20) prefers to classify the latter category as "symbolic-message", "because these dreams are really a sub-category of message dreams" (18), and includes a third category of "dream omens", which were "sent by the gods, but needed interpretation" (19).

[34] Harris 2009, 23. Cf., confusingly, Macrobius' *oraculum* dream, in which "a parent or other revered or dignified person or priest, or even a deity shows what will or will not come to pass, and commands what is to be done or avoided" (*parens uel alia sancta grauisue persona seu sacerdos uel etiam deus aperte euenturum quid aut non euenturum, faciendum uitandumve denuntiat*) (3.8).

[35] For example in *Od.* 6.15-40, in which Athena visits Nausicaa. See Dodds 1951, 104-107; Kessels 1978.

[36] See chapter **2.3 Women as Diviners II: The World According to Marcus.**

[37] 2015, see esp. 7-12.

discussion. Even Brutus, in the narratives where he must verbally persuade her husband to go to the Senate house, does not try to offer a rival meaning as we might expect. This may be a symbolic dream, but it does not fit the paradigm of symbolic interpretation.

There is equal complication when we consider the second version of Calpurnia's dream, whereby she simply saw the body of her husband, streaming with blood. It is a non-verbal message, in that the dream, through imagery, tells Calpurnia what will happen, yet this is not done through the medium of an authoritative figure. Juliette Harrisson designates the dream as "a symbolic dream (bordering on a literal prophecy)", though it neither symbolises nor speaks the future.[38] The imagery is not *representing* the event so much as *presenting* it.

Both versions of Calpurnia's dream, then, must be considered unique amongst dream-accounts of the ancient world. They do not fit the categories, either of the ancient oneiromancers or modern scholars. This is not to say that these categories and terms are not useful in understanding the presentation of these dreams or ancient dreams at large, but that they should not be seen as rigidly set ways to construct a structure around a concept that ultimately remains on the natural side of divination. Dreams are, by their very nature, nonsensical.

6.3 Dreams as Prodigies

Regardless of this, dreams could and upon extreme occasion did direct political decision-making in the Roman Republic. Calpurnia, though her attempts were ultimately futile, was not unique in believing that a dream, regardless of its dreamer's status, could have relevance in the public sphere. Anthony Corbeill has recently put forward the view that this should be understood through the prodigy reporting and expiation process.[39] In this section, I am going to look at this argument in more detail, and consider its shortcomings, but also how it might still be useful for thinking about Calpurnia and the reason she was ultimately ignored.

To make his argument, Corbeill makes a case study of another famous dreamer, this time from the early Republican period: a plebeian called Titus Latinius.[40] In 491 BCE, the area for the Great Games had been desecrated by a misperformance of the procession that polluted the

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[38] 2013, 110; for the categories she presents, see pp. 246-8.
[39] 2010b.
[40] This story is recounted in full by Dionysius of Halicarnassus (7.68.3-7.69.2), Livy (2.36) and Plutarch (*Cor.* 24.1-25 – who calls the dreamer "Latinus"). As we saw above, Cicero has Quintus tell the story in *Div.* 1.55, although his account is somewhat vaguer and he does not name the dreamer.

whole Games. Latinius, who was no more than a *rusticus*, received a nocturnal visit from Jupiter, professing his displeasure. The sources disagree on how willing Latinius was to fulfil the deity's request – in Dionysius' version, he does not initially believe the dream to be anything more than that, whereas Livy explains his hesitation as due to fear of derision from the Senate – but, whatever his reasons, he did not act on the dream. It was only following recurring dreams, the death of his son and his own crippling illness that Latinius was carried to the Senate house by his kinsmen, where he related the dream and, miraculously, was able to walk home unaided. The Senate, convinced by the miracle, issued a decree to repeat the Games.

There are, of course, a number of factors to this story that both compare and contrast with Calpurnia, and we will return to these later in this section. But what is interesting for our purposes is the way in which Corbeill structures this story within the framework of the Republican prodigy process. As has been reproduced above, he creates a table laying out the prodigy process, with the aim of showing that the Senate's response to this dream is demonstrably parallel to the way in which they might deal with, for example, the report of a birth of an intersex child.[41] Namely, the potential occurrence, the reporting of the occurrence to the Senate and their confirmation of its status, and the Senate's decision on the means of expiation.[42] Unfortunately, as Corbeill's table also demonstrates, there is just as much of the process missing from the story, either in Cicero's version or any of the others. There is no mention of a priestly body being involved (steps **E** and **F** on Corbeill's table) in confirming the dream or the expiation. Of course, the absence of details in a clearly popular story that has been frequently retold should not be counted as evidence, but the gap is still notable. Whilst, the Senate had the final say on matters, it must be remembered that the consultation with the haruspices or the (*quin*)*decemuiri* was an integral part of understanding a prodigy. In fact, Dionysius tells us that it was the Senators who discussed the possible meanings, and spotted the mistake at the games.[43] Plutarch, too, adds a further complication to this absence: once the pollution of the beaten slave was realised, "then, with the agreement of the priests (ἱερέων), the slave's master was duly punished, and the procession and the ceremony were performed for the god a second time".[44] Though ἱερεύς is a vague word, and its translation as "priest" is

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[41] See Table 1, reproduced in chapter **4.2 It's All Part of the Process**.
[42] 2010b, 88.
[43] D. H. 7.69.1.
[44] *Cor.* 25.1: συμφωνησάντων οὖν τῶν ἱερέων ὅ τε δεσπότης δίκην ἔδωκε, καὶ τῷ θεῷ τὴν πομπὴν καὶ τὰς θέας αὖθις ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἐπετέλουν.

not without its flaws,[45] we can be fairly certain that Plutarch did not mean either the haruspices, to whom he routinely refers as μάντεις,[46] or the (quin)decemuiri, to whom he does not refer to directly and instead locates any agreement or command from "them" to within the Books themselves.[47] Surely the "priests" in question, then, are the *pontifex maximus*, as punisher of religious crimes, and the *flamines*, as organisers of the procession and ceremony. There was no need for consultation concerning further expiation, since the dream was not a prodigy.

Finally, perhaps the most important point to consider is that the dreams themselves are confirmed by external signs. All the sources are explicit on the fact that Latinius, though he was carried to the Senate a sick man, walked out in full health after having related the message to its recipients; it is, in fact, this miraculous recovery which convinces the senators of the dream's validity. Similarly, the death of Caesar is, in every version, also told by a number of other portents beyond Calpurnia's dream, perhaps most famously the warnings of the haruspex Spurinna.[48] Like the Vestal *incestum*, discussed above,[49] this is not something that itself is a prodigy, but rather is confirmed by them.

Latinius' dream, however, still has an importance in the public sphere. If it is not to be treated as a prodigy itself, how should we instead understand its treatment? Similarly, can we understand Calpurnia's dream, though it is dismissed, in the same framework? An important fact for considering Latinius' dream is the fact that it is a message dream. Though there is a riddle that requires careful consideration, it does not require symbolic interpretation. Further, both the sender and recipient(s) of the message are clearly identified: although this is Latinius' dream, it is from Jupiter and to the Senate. As we will see with the other examples, this is key in the use of a publicly meaningful dream. What this discussion highlights is the fact that the Senate, in order to accept a dream, did feel the need to follow a framework of interpretation for dreams of public importance, even if that framework was not solidly set for each occurrence. It is not necessarily the case that only message dreams could be accepted,

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[45] See Henrichs 2008 for a discussion of the Greek terminology, esp. 5-6 for its relationship to divinatory terminology.

[46] Cf. e.g. *Sul.* 7.6: "While the Senate devotes itself to the haruspices, concerning these [prodigies], seated in the temple of Bellona […]" (τῆς δὲ συγκλήτου τοῖς μάντεσι περὶ τούτων σχολαζούσης καὶ καθημένης ἐν τῷ ναῷ τῆς Ἐνυοῦς […]).

[47] Cf. e.g. *Marcellus* 3.4: "When war broke out, they were compelled to yield to the oracular words of the Sibylline Books" (τότε τοῦ πολέμου συμπεσόντος ἠναγκάσθησαν εἶξαι λογίοις τισὶν ἐκ τῶν Σιβυλλείων).

[48] For Spurinna, see e.g. Suet. *Jul.* 81.2. Dio and Plutarch also have Caesar make a personal morning sacrifice to confirm the importance of the dream: see Horsfall 1974, 198.

[49] See chapter **4.5 *Crimen* Punishment**.

and in fact the framework is almost rewritten anew each time, but the idea of that framework exists in principle. This is a fact we will return to throughout this chapter.

6.4 Putting Calpurnia Back in the Picture

Between these structures, models and processes, where can we find Calpurnia? Indeed, she seems to have slipped uncategorised, and even uncategorisable, like a half-remembered dream herself.

In many respects, that is the nature of dreams and dream-reports. Each is unique to its context. This helps us understand two things: firstly, why the Senate had no singular framework of interpretation and expiation of dreams; secondly, why, though we have already encountered an explicit example to the contrary, there remained the general belief that dreams did not, and could not be accepted under public divination. This second point is, of course, in part why Calpurnia was not believed, along with the fact of her gender. But how does Calpurnia fit into the broader category of prophetic dreaming in the Roman Republic? In this next section, we will return to Cicero's discussion(s) of dreams in the *De Diuinatione*, and consider how Calpurnia might fit – and why she is not mentioned.[50] The following three sections will then compare our dreamer with other Republican dreamers, to see what is similar, and what is unique, to each, and to see how gender can and does play a role in the differing contexts of these dream reports.

It seems, at first, strange that Calpurnia is missing from Cicero's *Div.* After all, it was completed shortly after Calpurnia's dream, and, given there are mentions of the other prodigies leading to her husband's death, we can infer that stories – truth as well as rumour – must have already been circulating.[51] To the sceptic, this helps confirm the suggestion that the dream was a later invention, added by authors to give the story a touch of the dramatic; however, it is worth considering the other reasons why Cicero may have chosen to leave this influential dream of a woman out of the picture.

Jerzy Linderski has acutely demonstrated the centrality of Calpurnia's husband in *Div.* in the sense that divination was not just a means of communication with the gods, but also a

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[50] For a discussion of the dreams and their construction in the *Div.*, see chapters **2.2 Women as Diviners I: The World According to Quintus** and **2.3 Women as Diviners II: The World According to Marcus**.
[51] Cf. e.g. *Div.* 1.119; 2.35-37. I am convinced that 2.23 should be read with a level of irony in respect of Caesar being foretold of my portents of his death.

political tool for control *of* the gods.[52] Interpretation became a game that Cicero found himself losing, and even in death Caesar was triumphant: the host of stories, true and false, about the gods foretelling the assassination and even Caesar's deification gave retroactive and performative legitimacy to his authority and power in Rome.[53] As noted above, the dream of Calpurnia can be seen as, not just foreshadowing her husband's death, but also his later rise.[54] In this respect, even if he had known of it, it would have been a poor move for Cicero as author to mention Calpurnia and her dream, in the voice of either Quintus or Marcus.

From a more gendered perspective, too, Calpurnia undermines the picture Cicero is painting of divination, and particularly dreams. As I have argued above, the dreamers in the arguments of both brothers conform to and perpetuate a model of women being important only as mothers. Despite the amorous reputation of her husband, which once led Sir Ronald Syme to search for bastard sons,[55] Calpurnia herself remains childless. Like Caecilia, she breaks the trend that would otherwise form a rule in Cicero's construction of dreams; but unlike Caecilia, the fact that Calpurnia's waking world actions came to naught meant that she could be ignored without raising questions.[56]

As a famous dreamer, attached to a famous event of the ancient world, modern scholarship has frequently placed Calpurnia in apposition with a number of other dreamers of the Greco-Roman world, rarely based on the above structures and categories. In the next sections, I shall interrogate some of these comparisons, of both male and female dreamers, to consider how beneficial they are for further understanding of Calpurnia and particularly the gendered constructions that allowed her dream to be meaningful whilst denying its ability to change the events.

6.5 Comparing Calpurnia I: Lucan's Tragical Dreamers

Santiago Montero Herrero, in *Diosas y adivinas*, considered there to be a parallel between Calpurnia's dream of Caesar's assassination and Cornelia Metella's dreams in Lucan's *De*

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[52] 1982, esp. 34-38.
[53] For the idea of the portents being invented by later retellings, in order to add importance to Caesar's death, see Ripat 2006, 169. For Caesar's deification, see Weinstock 1971, 356-363.
[54] See chapter **6.1 Calpurnia and the Disruption of the Roman State**.
[55] Syme 1980.
[56] For Caecilia's position in the *Div.*, see chapter **2.2 Women as Diviners I: The World According to Quintus**. Caecilia and Calpurnia will be compared in more detail below, in **2.7 Comparing Calpurnia: Cicero's Concession**.

Bello Ciuile.[57] As her husband, Pompey, fled the battle of Pharsalus, to meet her on Lesbos, the poet tells us that:

> […] *Tristes praesagia curas*
> *Exagitant, trepida quatitur formidine somnus,*
> *Thessaliam nox omnis habet.*
>
> Anxious forebodings torment [Cornelia], her sleep is shaken by restless fear, and every night holds Thessaly before her.[58]

There are of course a number of similarities between these two dreamers and their situations – not least in their concern for their respective husbands' precarious positions – but this should not be a basis of similarity, and there are a number of differences that can be seen. Perhaps most importantly, this passage and the comparison reminds us we must consider further how the construction of prophetic or meaningful dreams is delineated. Lucan does describe Cornelia's dreams as *praesagia* ("forebodings"), a word which carries a sense of future prediction; however, rather than giving a specific message or symbol to the dreamer, they are presented more as private concerns, as she is apprehensive about the outcome of the current events. The other words describing her dreams – *curae* ("worries") and *formido* ("fear") – bring to the fore her anxiety over any predictive qualities they may have had. Further, the role they play in the narrative of the poem is to demonstrate the devotion she has for her husband, as opposed to an indication, as for Calpurnia, of what is to pass, giving her a chance to influence the events. In this respect, Cornelia's dreams are perhaps better seen as anxiety dreams, derived from fear rather than driven by fate.[59]

Although it is certainly possible to see anxieties as a strong part of Calpurnia's story, and specifically anxieties over her husband's current political situation, it is unhelpful, I would argue, to reduce that story down to an example of her devotion to that man. Christopher Pelling, in his article "Tragical Dreamer", demonstrates that dreams in the historiographic tradition can break down the binary between coming simply from "within" and "without", and that they can often be seen as, to an extent, both.[60] So, the Calpurnia of the waking world may be presented as fearful, but this does not take away from the fact that the depictions of her dream are always focussed on its prophetic nature. The comparison with Cornelia, then, relegates Calpurnia, as a woman and as a dreamer, to the side-lines of prophetic dreaming,

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[57] Montero Herrero 1994, 112-116.
[58] 8.43-45.
[59] Following Harrisson's (rather than Freud's) definition of an anxiety dream: "a character or historical figure may be said to have dreamed quite simply and literally about […] whatever is bothering them (usually warfare)" (2013, 66).
[60] Pelling 1997.

reinforcing "worry" as the major element of the dream and as the main performative aspect of femininity for both herself and Cornelia. As Coppélia Kahn has shown, "worry" is an important part of the feminine construction of Calpurnia and her dream in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*,[61] but it should not be the main feature we take away from the ancient versions.

Cornelia is not the only dreamer of the *De Bello Ciuile*. As has already been discussed in this thesis, Lucan includes many forms of divination in his epic,[62] and prophetic dreams certainly have their place within this matrix. Caesar and Pompey, two of the poem's three main characters (and the husbands of Calpurnia and Cornelia respectively) each have two dreams, or at least night visitations.[63] One of these for each is very specifically a message dream, as they are visited by spirits of the dead: as Pompey leaves Rome at the start of Book III, his late wife (and Caesar's own daughter) Julia appears and criticises his actions that have led to civil war, and his betrayal of her memory;[64] for Caesar, meanwhile, in Book VII's denouement, following the battle of Pharsalia itself, an army of spirits "throngs around him in his sleep".[65] These two dreams, then, both neatly fit into the structure of message dream, and provide a nice parallel for each other. But the commanders each have one other dream in the poem, and each, in its own way, shows fruitful realisations when compared with their wives' dreams, inside and beyond the poem.

In Pompey's second dream, during the night before that same battle, he sees Rome in all its glory, with the crowds shouting his name in triumphal cheers.[66] For this dream, though explicitly false,[67] Lucan entertains the suggestion that "Fortune sent him Rome in this way".[68] Overall, then, perhaps this dream is best paralleled with those of his wife discussed above: though an element of meaningfulness, or divine origin, these dreams are grounded in worry over the dreamer's knowledge of the waking world's current situation – in this case, a brief refuge from the anxieties of what is coming.[69] This is an important reminder that the

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[61] Kahn 1997, esp. 99. The dream, and Calpurnia's fears, are presented in the play at 2.2.973-1033.

[62] Cf e.g. the discussion of the unnamed matron, whose prophecies close the first book, in chapter **2.4 The "I" in Sibyl**.

[63] The poem's third main character is Cato who, though initially a Stoic, nevertheless distances himself from divine reliability, as a "self-sufficient *sapiens*, [who] rejects and supplants the gods, affording the clear-sighted and secure approach to civil war that their angry silence denies" (Tipping 2011, 227).

[64] 3.9-35.

[65] 7.785: "*ingesta [...] somnis*". The dreams of Caesar and his troops are recounted 7.760-786.

[66] 7.7-19.

[67] 7.7-8: "but night misled his deceptive dreams with empty images" (*at nox [...] / sollicitos uana decepit imagine somnos*).

[68] 7.24: *sic Romam Fortuna dedit*.

[69] 7.19-20: "Perhaps, at the end of good things, worried over what was to come to pass, the dream gave refuge in happier times" (*seu fine bonorum / anxia uenturis ad tempora laeta refugit*).

constructions of worry and of anxiety dreams are not and should not be considered as gendered feminine.

Perhaps the best parallel for Calpurnia's dream, if we are to parallel it at all from Lucan, is the vision her husband has just before crossing the Rubicon. As he reaches the river's edge, in the night the personification of Rome, Patria, comes to him in distress, begging him to change his course of action.[70] It is questionable as to whether this is even a dream – indeed, the other three occurrences are explicitly signalled by Lucan as *somnium*, a word that is absent from this whole episode.[71] There is still, however, reason to treat this vision as a dream. Firstly, we are explicitly told that it happened at night.[72] Whilst there are other supernatural occurrences that can and do happen at night – we only need to look as far as Erichtho, the "Queen of Witches in ancient literature",[73] later in this same poem – dreams are perhaps the most common, certainly as unrequested visitations. It is also important that this vision is seen by Caesar alone: Patria appears only "to the leader", and fear at her words strikes him alone.[74] As we have seen time and again over this chapter, dreams are an individual experience, which can only be shared in retelling.[75] So, although her speech addresses the soldiers as a whole, this is clearly a message for Caesar and Caesar alone. More widely, the idea of a divine portent at the moment of crossing the Rubicon is not exclusive to Lucan, but it is presented in a number of different forms. Plutarch portrays it as specifically a symbolic dream, in which Caesar dreamt he was having sex with his own mother.[76] Suetonius, by contrast, records the story that a beautiful but unknown (male) figure appeared to all the soldiers on the banks.[77] As they watched, he stole a trumpet from one of the signallers and crossed the river, sounding the trumpet's call. Naturally, Caesar took this as a positive sign and led his army across. These three versions are, of course, very distinct, and to an extent they conform to the genre in which they are told. But the fact that in Suetonius' version, where it is certainly not a dream, the vision is seen by and even interacts with the other soldiers on the riverbank. Lucan's Patria, like the idea of a unified country is at this point nothing but a dream for Caesar.

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[70] 1.185-192.

[71] Indeed, Harrisson 2013 does not list it in her catalogue of dreams in Latin literature (see p.262).

[72] 1.187: *per obscuram [...] noctem.*

[73] Braund 1992, xxix; see also Santangelo 2015, 182-185 for a recent discussion of this character and her construction.

[74] 1.186: *duci.* His fear is depicted at 1.192-4.

[75] Although, for explicit exceptions to this, see below in chapter **6.6: Comparing Calpurnia II: The Many and the Few**.

[76] Plut. *Caes.* 32.6.

[77] Suet. *Iul.* 32.

Is it, then, possible to benefit from a comparison between this dream and Calpurnia's? Of course, in terms of content and structure, they are very different things. We have already discussed how the two versions of Calpurnia's dream mean it is either a symbolic or at least a visual prophecy; Caesar's by contrast is unquestionably another message, or epiphany. Both, however, are essentially warnings of the chaos that is destined to come to pass, and both, though he pauses each time, are ultimately ignored by the same man.[78] Of course, this reading could lead us to fall once again into David Halperin's "Diotima" trap of seeing the story of a woman as only furthering that of the relevant man in her life.[79] But perhaps Caesar's dream in Lucan gives us the opportunity to restore a level of agency to Calpurnia in her story. A divine message that attempts to persuade the man from his course is sent to that same man; therefore, a dream sent to a woman is a message for *her*, regardless of her husband's role in the surrounding events.

Epic and historiography are, of course, two very different genres, and that is to say nothing of the different styles and contexts in which the Greek and Latin renderings of Calpurnia's dream fall.[80] But the ways in which prophetic dreams and visions are presented across the different genres is still elucidating in seeing how dreams, and particularly female and male dreamers, could be understood. When we compare the story of Calpurnia to the dreamers in Lucan, it becomes clear what we understand as being important about her dream. If we are to compare her with Cornelia, as discussed above, it highlights the aspect of "worry" in both the cases, which must of course be seen as a factor, but it relegates our understanding of women's dreams to be no more than symptoms of worry. By contrast, when we compare her to her own husband as he crosses the Rubicon, we emphasise the role of that man in both the dreams, and to an extent his importance, but also reminds us that Calpurnia is more than just a dreamer; she is someone with her own importance in the story. This is more than just the "dream of a woman".

6.6 Comparing Calpurnia II: The Many and the Few

As has been stressed throughout this chapter, dreams are an intensely private occurrence, which can only be experienced unaccompanied. You can tell another person of your dream,

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[78] Cf. Pelling 2010, 325: "on each occasion he could still draw back; on each, he plunges on, the first to victory, the second to his death".

[79] For Halperin's discussion of Diotima, and the androcentric trap he poses, see Halperin 1990, as discussed in chapter **5.2: Why Is Martha a Woman?**

[80] However, see Lintott 1971 for how Lucan's style "is clearly not that of a historian, but nevertheless shows respect for the facts of history" (493); cf. also Santangelo 2015.

but they can never truly be said to have encountered it for themselves. The limits of this construction, however, are pushed by the idea of shared dreaming, something that is recorded to have happened at least twice in Republican history. Through a close reading of these two case studies, in order to understand this construction more fully and the ways in which these dreams were presented as "truthful", it will be possible to consider the similarities and differences with Calpurnia's dream, and the divinatory and gendered constructions of truth and invention. The idea of shared dreaming will also be useful in thinking more directly about Calpurnia's dream itself, as it is occasionally noted that Caesar too dreamed that night. Is it then possible to consider this wife and husband to experience a shared dream? If so, what does that do for our understanding of the story?

The first shared dream to consider is that of the consuls Publius Decius Mus and Titus Manlius Torquatus, which occurred whilst they were both on campaign at the outset of the Second Latin War, 340 BCE.[81] According to Livy, whilst in their camp near Capua, both consuls saw the same dream on the same night: a larger than life figure who told them that in order to win the war, one of them must be offered up (*deberi*) to the Di Manes and to Mother Earth, along with the army of the other.[82] Upon awaking, they compared stories, performed an extispicial sacrifice to confirm the dream's validity, and chose to heed its instruction. Decius gave himself up in *deuotio*, and the battle was won.

This dream, then, aside from the unusual nature of having multiple viewers, seems to fit rather neatly into the message dream paradigm. A god, or at least a godlike figure – given his relative size – appears to each dreamer with a command.[83] The consuls seemingly consider the dream as potentially meaningful on account of its unique repetition, and thus they perform sacrifices to check. This last part is important: it was not until the dream was confirmed by another, more controlled and more acceptable divinatory tradition that it could be considered a genuine point of action. This compares with the dream of Latinius, which, as we saw above, was confirmed before the Senate by the miracle of his cure.[84] This is, of course, a point of distinction from Calpurnia's dream, which, although a number of other portents signalled the same outcome, is not specifically tested or confirmed by any of them. It is possible to understand this difference from the perspective of gender and identity: For Decius Mus and Manlius Torquatus, both consuls and thus the most important political position achievable by

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[81] The dream is told in Liv. 8.6.9-11; it is also briefly alluded to by Quintus in Cic. *Div.* 1.51, though there is no detail.
[82] Liv. 8.6.10: *ex una acie imperatorem, ex altera exercitum Deis Manibus Matrique Terrae deberi.*
[83] Oakley 1998, 432.
[84] See chapter **6.3 Dreams as Prodigies**.

men (barring, of course, Dictatorship), the expectation that their dream(s) will be as important as they are is not at question; though not enough to go on the dream alone, their statuses mean it is promising enough to validate by other means. Calpurnia, by contrast, has no such chance. She may be the wife of the Pontifex Maximus, the most important religious position a woman can gain, *as well as* the wife of the Dictator, a position that again gives her an elite status in her own right, but her dreams at a base level, regardless of her pleading, are not permissible to even be validated or disproven by extispicy or any other means. Her status as a dreamer in the waking world is entirely contingent on her gender.

However, there is one other story of multiple dreamers during the Roman Republic, found in a fragment of the second century CE author Granius Licinianus. According to his account, in 105 BCE a number of matronae dreamt the same dream on the same night; because of this, they took charge in giving sacred offerings and performing sacred rites, including a chorus of boys chanting.[85] Licinianus unfortunately provides no detail of what was in the dream, or what rites were performed. It is not mentioned elsewhere; however, Corbeill has suggested a link to the offerings and chorus that Julius Obsequens lists as occurring a year later, during Marius' second consulship (and Martha's own rise).[86] But part of Corbeill's argument for linking these two records as one event rests on his argument of dreams conforming to the prodigy process: according to Obsequens, the sacred rites, at least, were performed based "on the response of the haruspices", a priestly body who otherwise confirm prodigies.[87] This seems to me, however, to be overstating the evidence. It is certainly plausible that Obsequens merely recorded the wrong (or even just a different) year to Licinianus, but there are no comparative examples of the Senate referring any dream specifically to the haruspices for interpretation.[88] The rites and sacrifices recorded by Obsequens, too, are by no means unusual or specific to this sort of religious activity; we have already seen similar actions in response to the birth of an intersex child.[89] Given that the other prodigies that Licinianus lists – namely the toppling of a statue of Mars in a Sabine temple and the appearance of black snakes at an altar during a flute performance – are corroborated by Obsequens in the same year, 105 BCE,

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[85] Gran. Licin. 33.22-23.
[86] Corbeill 2010b, 96-97.
[87] Obseq. 43: *aruspicum responso*.
[88] Or indeed any priestly body, though this is not to say that no priestly body was consulted. A close parallel could perhaps be read in the extispicy used by Decius Mus and Manlius Torquatus; however, they used personal sacrifices for the confirmation, and it was only for confirmation rather than interpretation.
[89] Cf. e.g. Obseq. 53: "[following a list of prodigies, including the discoveries of two intersex children] the people gave offerings to Ceres and Proserpina. Twenty-seven maidents purified the city by chanting hymns." (*Populus Cereri et Proserpinae stipem tulit. Uirgines uiginti septem carmen canentes urbem lustrauerunt*).

it is more likely that Livy (followed by Obsequens) omitted the matronal dream and its resolution completely.

It is unfortunate that our only source gives no indication of the structure or contents of the dream(s), only that the women were warned by it.[90] It is, then, impossible to say whether this would have taken the form of a message like the consuls or a symbolic warning like Calpurnia. But there is still much that we can draw from the episode. There is no clue as to how many matrons were involved in this event, but their sheer number is evidently meant to imply a level of confirmation. There is no mention of any further testing, such as the extispicy performed by Manlius Torquatus and Decius Mus, but given the brevity of the account, we should not read too much into this omission. Further, by comparison, there would not have been the sense of urgency that dissuaded Calpurnia's husband from putting her dream to the test.

This dream does stand out on account of its gendered construction, though in many ways it should still be set apart from the dream of Calpurnia. In thinking through the construction of this dream episode, it is important to consider the outcome: on account of this dream, the women took it upon themselves (*praestiterunt*)[91] concerning the sacred offerings. These were still public rites, but it was specifically and solely the women themselves who followed up on the dream's warning.[92] This is a point to which we will return in the next section, concerning the dream of Caecilia Metella, but for the sake of this argument it is enough to understand that the women in this episode are taking heed of the dream, and using it to further their own religious engagement; Calpurnia, on the other hand, can be seen as stepping outside the bounds of what is acceptable by attempting to see her dream as meaningful beyond herself, in attempting to influence the actions of another person.

As a final case study to our discussion of shared dreams, we turn back to Calpurnia's own dream, and ask whether it is possible to see it in this paradigm. In the versions of the episode presented by Suetonius and Cassius Dio, they write that Caesar also dreamt symbolic dreams before his death. Both these authors record the same dream for the man, whereby he saw himself raised above the clouds, holding the hand of Jupiter.[93] It is interesting, incidentally, that these two authors both also present a very similar version of Calpurnia's dream, which combines the symbolism of the falling house pediment and the direct imagery of holding

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[90] Gran. Licin. 33.22: *matronae eodem somno monitae* (text derived from Criniti 1981).
[91] Upholding Criniti's reading.
[92] Cf. Schultz 2006a, 28-33, for a discussion of both gender-inclusive and all-female *supplicationes*.
[93] Suet. *Jul.* 81.3; Dio 44.17.1-2.

Caesar's body. Is it possible to consider, in these versions at least, Calpurnia and her husband to have shared a dream, in the manner of the episodes discussed above? It is perhaps obvious to note that Caesar's dream does have a very different content from that of Calpurnia, but that does not necessarily rule out this suggestion: it would be something of a paradox for Caesar to see himself holding his own dead body, and as such the dream is specific to Calpurnia. Their comparative *meanings*, however, are very much the same. There is, of course, a religious overtone alluding to Caesar's deification in his dream – an overtone which Stefan Weinstock uses to write off the dream as a later invention[94] – but, as I have already mentioned, that is a dimension not entirely foreign to Calpurnia's dream and its reception.[95] Both dreams can be considered, rather than a warning of the man's imminent death, a message of preparation for his fate. Neither wife nor husband is able to change the future, but their respective dreams tell them of what is to pass for them. Calpurnia must remain in the material world, with her husband's body, whilst he must move on to above the clouds, to the world of the gods. The contents of their dreams are different because their paths are different, but those paths are set upon by the same incident, and the message of the two dreams is, fundamentally, a message of that incident.

6.7 Comparing Calpurnia III: Cicero's Concession

As discussed above, in Cicero's *De Diuinatione* we come across a very unique dreamer: Caecilia Metella.[96] It is worth looking more closely at this episode, and this dreamer, and considering the position she holds in the history of dreaming in the Roman Republic. Like with Martha, although she is in a very different social position, much of her story is missing, and we must look behind the fragmentary gaps to attempt to build a picture of who she was and what she did, before turning to a closer comparison with Calpurnia to understand the two women's very different, yet similar, situations.

Aside from Cicero's dialogue, Caecilia's dream is only otherwise recorded in Julius Obsequens. He writes that during the consulship of L. Julius Caesar and Publius Rutilius (90 BCE):

> *Metella Caecilia somnio Iunonem Sospitam profugientem, quod immunde sua templa foedarentur, cum suis precibus aegre revocatam diceret, aedem matronarum sordidis*

> *obscenisque corporis coinquinatam ministeriis, in qua etiam sub simulacro deae cubile canis cum fetu erat, commundatam supplicationibus habitis pristino splendore restituit.*

> Caecilia Metella declared she had a dream in which Juno Sospita was fleeing, because her temple had been defiled, though she was able to call her to reluctantly return through prayers. Caecilia cleansed the temple, which had been polluted by the sordid and repulsive physical activities of matrons, so that even under the statue of the goddess a dog had made a lair for her litter, and with *supplicationes* it was restored to its former splendour.[97]

An important contrast in Cicero's version is that he tells us that, though it was on account of this dream, the temple was in fact restored by the consul L. Julius Caesar.[98] In this way, Caecilia's part is diminished to being merely the instigator of the restoration, rather than taking an active role in the matters. Celia E. Schultz has posited that in this way Cicero presents the event to be "more politically significant than it appears in Obsequens' version";[99] however, this is unlikely, since, as has been demonstrated in Chapter 2, Cicero goes to great lengths to avoid presenting the dream as significant in any way. Further, I would argue that what Cicero is doing is specifically reducing the political significance of Caecilia as an individual in the episode, for reasons for which I shall return.

This dream report is of course far removed from its original dreamer, and, due to the scanty nature of the evidence, there are many facts left to reconstruction and assumption for this dream. In the course of this next section, I will first look closely at the dream itself, comparing it to the structures and the other dreams we have seen in this chapter. Then I shall consider more specifically the identity of the dreamer herself, Caecilia, and the role her gender plays in the waking world response to the dream.

On the surface, then, this is another message dream: a deity visited the mortal in her sleep to warn her she was abandoning Rome. But, even with Obsequens' brief summary, there are a number of elements that do not fit the paradigm quite so neatly. First and foremost, Juno is not presented as coming to Caecilia with the message, but rather she is directly described as "fleeing" (*profugientem*). Similarly, she does not tell Caecilia what to do; it is the mortal's own actions of prayers, along with the later restoration of the temple, which recall the deity. In respect of how the message dream was defined above, if we want to include this dream we would need to vastly broaden the definition.[100] Yet, in the same way, the dream does not

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[97] Obseq. 55.
[98] Cic. *Div*. 1.4; mention of the dream is also repeated at 1.99.
[99] Schultz 2006a, 27. Cf also Schultz 2006b.
[100] See chapter **6.2: Interpreting Structures**.

easily fit in the category of symbolic dreaming; there is no imagery from which a hidden meaning must be interpreted. Despite this, Marja-Leena Hänninen has used Artemidorus to interpret Caecilia's dream, with thought-provoking results:

> Artemidorus would have interpreted Juno Sospita fleeing from her temples as a bad omen, because he considered a god in motion an unfavourable sign in comparison to a stable god (2.35). Generally speaking, desecration of a temple in dreams was always an extremely bad sign (2.33). With regard to the presence of dogs in the dream of Caecilia Metella, it is interesting to note that, according to Artemidorus, strange dogs in odd places signified indecent and shameless people and bad deeds done by men or women.[101]

At first glance, this appears to lend a level of credibility to Artemidorus, and the idea of a universal meaning behind dream interpretation to a greater or lesser extent. Unfortunately, this is a flawed parallel. For one thing, there is no "generally speaking" in Artemidorus: taking Hänninen's interpretation of "a god in motion", Artemidorus does state that a motionless god is preferable, but immediately mitigates this, adding that movement is not necessarily bad, and, if the deity is inclined to move at all, moving towards the east is still a good sign.[102] The brevity of our reconstructed account of this dream should also give us pause for consideration in this matter, as Artemidorus himself tells his reader, the would be interpreter, to "interpret only those which have been remembered fully, which the dreamer has accurately in their grasp and recalls precisely".[103] In many respects, the use of a document like Artemidorus' *Oneirocritica* to a working audience is the ability to take inspiration and mould answers based on what you have – and that is precisely the point of our didactic oneirocritic's descriptions – thus, the multiplicity of answers leaves little merit for us in understanding dreams and their interpretation in the wider ancient world.

The influential nature of Caecilia's dream on its wider political context cannot and should not be understated. One reason for the response it received is because of the current political situation of Rome and Italy. This was during the Social War (91-88 BCE), and tensions between Rome and her Italian allies were rising. Schultz argues that at this time, as at other times of political tensions, there is a higher recording of prodigies and expiations, which goes some way to explain the seriousness with which the dream was met.[104] It is also for this reason that it is generally accepted that the temple of which Juno is complaining is her temple

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[101] 1999, 35.
[102] 2.35. It should be noted that this interpretation of movement is not related to any god, but specifically to Zeus/Jupiter, or Hera/Juno for women.
[103] Artem. 4.3: κρῖνε δὲ τὰ ἐξ ὁλοκλήρου μνημονευόμενα καὶ ὧν ἀκριβῆ κατάληψιν ὁ ἰδὼν ἔχει καὶ ὧν ἀκριβῶς μέμηνται.
[104] 2006a, 27-8.

at Lanuvium, to the south east of Rome.[105] The acceptance of dreams as meaningful to the public sphere, akin to prodigies, is somewhat complicated by the non-prodigial status of the dream,[106] yet its unusual circumstances, combined with the need to reinforce connections across Italy, may well have contributed to its acceptance, alongside the identity of the dreamer herself.[107]

Who, then, is Caecilia Metella? Obsequens gives no biographical information on her, whilst Cicero only names her as the daughter of Balearicus (consul 123 BCE). This has led to a number of theoretical Caeciliae Metellae who may or may not fit the criteria and thus be our dreamer. There is another extant reference to a daughter of Balearicus, also from Cicero's works: this time it comes from his *Pro Sexto Roscio Amerino* ("*On Behalf of Sextus Roscius*"), given in 80 BCE, as a benefactress of Sextus Roscius, taking him into her house during his persecution.[108] He praises her as a most honourable woman, with illustrious father, brother and uncles, as well as displaying *uirtus* herself.[109] It will be significant that Cicero mentions no husband or children for this Caecilia, against his usual convention.[110] Ultimately, we are left in the dark as to whether these two mentions – one in a legal speech at the beginning of Cicero's career, the other in a theological treatise at the end – refer to the same woman or two sisters. Two options will be explored further below based on what we can reconstruct.

The first potential Caecilia who could be identified as our dreamer is the wife of Appius Claudius and mother of Cicero's political enemies Clodia and Clodius. It is probable that she was the (or a) daughter of Balearicus, though not a certainty.[111] If this is the case, it is unlikely that she is the same Caecilia as the one who housed Roscius, due to the lack of naming any husband or children, especially since this is before the development of animosity between Cicero and the Clodii. This is not equally the case for *Div.*, however, as he may have deliberately not named Appius Claudius nor his children in order to avoid giving prominence

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[105] This can also be confirmed by the iconographic link between the Caecilian family and the Lanuvium temple of Juno Sospita: Schultz 2006b, esp. 223-227. Cf. also Hänninen 1999, 36; Kragelund 2001, 64-69.

[106] As discussed in chapter **6.3 Dreams as Prodigies**.

[107] Cf. Kragelund 2001, 57. We should be careful, however, of the circular argument whereby the unusual nature of dreams being treated as meaningful led to it being taken seriously, though dreams are rarely brought forward to the Senate precisely because they are rarely taken seriously.

[108] *Rosc. Am.* 27; 147.

[109] *Ibid.* 147: there is a deliberate contrast in the attribution of "*mulier,* uir*tute perfecit*" ("a woman who has achieved *uirtus* [literally: manly virtue]").

[110] Kragelund 2001, 62: "Cicero rarely fails to mention the husband, sons or in-laws of a prominent woman. As a rule it is only when there are no such links he falls back on the roles of daughter, sister or niece."

[111] Cf. Wiseman 1971, 181; Rawson 1973, 223; Skinner 2011, 55. In his Metellan family tree, T. P. Wiseman (1974, 182-3) chooses to place her instead as the daughter of Balearicus' brother L. Metellus Diadematus, though this is equally conjectural.

in his treatise to those who were now his lifelong enemies. Indeed, the other female dreamers of Quintus' arguments are all specifically mothers, with important sons. As noted above, Cicero's placement of the dream as a whole reduces its importance in the argument of the treatise, in a position that allows Quintus to ignore this Caecilia's children, with those who were more familiar with the story would implicitly remember this Caecilia as a mother and so mentally consider her within that framework, whilst giving Marcus a shortcut to not refute it specifically.[112]

The second way to understand Caecilia is as the same, unmarried Caecilia in the *Pro Roscio*. Patrick Kragelund sees this as the most likely option, choosing to define her as "a spinster".[113] He sees her unmarried status as counting in her favour in respect of having her dream believed as meaningful, but provides no particular evidence as to why this is so. One way it might be possible to see this would be if she were a former Vestal Virgin. The priesthood had a minimum service requirement of thirty years, after which the women were theoretically free to re-join ordinary society. There is no direct evidence anyone ever opted for this, but that does not mean that it never happened.[114] There is no mention of this status in either of our sources, but their brevity means that is little concern: if she were retired from that position it is no longer her status to record, but it may well have influenced the Senate, and L. Julius Caesar, to take her, an unmarried woman, seriously in politico-religious matters. Jérôme Carcopino, in 1931, considered the solution to explaining the status and "celibacy" of the Caecilia of the *Pro Roscio* to be due to her piety, attributing to her a "priestly gravitas", although he does not provide any further specifics to this.[115] The status of former Vestal would also explain how she is able to own a sizeable property, in which to protect Roscius, without mention of a husband, *tutor* or children.[116] This argument is perhaps problematised by the familial ties she is provided with in both accounts, namely her placement in relation to Balearicus. A Vestal Virgin was meant to be separated, legally and otherwise, from her family.[117] In theory, this meant that she would have no connection or ties to any particular family, which would thus give religious or political power to that family; in practice, however, this appears to have not been maintained so rigorously. The Vestal Licinia was accused of *incestum* with her cousin, Marcus Licinius Crassus, who was trying to persuade

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[112] See chapter **2.2 Women as Diviners I: The World According to Quintus**.
[113] 2001, 63.
[114] For a discussion of the priesthood and its requirements, see chapter **1.5 Fabia**.
[115] Carcopino 1931, 181-5: he also judges that Caecilia to be the same one who received the dream from Juno Sospita, adding that this would have been in her favour before the jury judging Roscius.
[116] Cic. *Rosc. Am.* 27: *ea Sex. Roscium inopem […] receipt domum.*
[117] Cf. Wildfang 2006, esp. 64-67.

her to sell him her villa at a low price (though, like our Fabia, she is ultimately acquitted).[118] Whilst Plutarch includes this episode to highlight his protagonist's greed, it is also an indication not only of a Vestal owning and making property deals, but of a Vestal being expected to make a particularly good deal on account of her not-so-previous familial relations. This point is also particularly evident when we think back to our case study of Fabia and the flame portent: She is known to us explicitly as Terentia's half-sister, which in turn provides background to the Vestal involvement in her husband's politics.[119] Vestals, then, it seems were decidedly not as cut off from their biological families as they are sometimes presented, and it is not out of the way to understand that Cicero is defining a *former* Vestal Virgin by her parentage, especially if she had remained unmarried. This explanation can take us far in thinking about the dream of 90 BCE and its outcome: the fact of her previous priesthood would be enough to provide conviction of the meaningfulness of the dream – compared, for example, with Titus Latinius above, who needed further dreams and the miracle recovery to "prove" its importance – and, if we are to follow Obsequens in the fact that she took the lead in rebuilding the temple, the fact of her previous priesthood would give her the religio-political shrewdness, and the financial independence, to take on such a project.

Of course, it is impossible to reconstruct with certainty the details of Caecilia's identity or status without more than the brief mentions we find in the extant sources. But this is not to say that she is completely beyond our grasp, or that she is not useful when we think about the identities of Republican dreamers. Quite the opposite: given the length Obsequens spends on the dream, we can imagine that Livy dedicated much to the recording of this dream, and the dreamer's identity.[120] Either that identity was that she was part of the Clodian branch of the family, it gives a tidy solution to her placement in the *Div.*, and Cicero's reluctance to give such a prominent place to the mother of his archenemies. Alternatively, she is a former Vestal Virgin, which would be an enlightening revelation, since we do not otherwise have any direct evidence for this ever happening. Her childlessness, in this case, would also explain the problem she causes for Cicero as author's argument in *Div*.

But more importantly, what we stably learn about Caecilia's identity – regardless of whether she was a mother, a former Vestal or simply Kragelund's "spinster" – is that this identity was not deemed an important factor in the condensed recordings extant. Arguably, this dream offered the Senate a tangible response to the political tensions of the time and a visible

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[118] Plut. *Crass.* 1.2.
[119] For a contexualisation and discussion of Fabia and the flame portent, see chapter **1.5 Fabia**.
[120] Hänninen 1999, 30.

reinstating of the *pax deorum*, reminding the Roman people that the gods were on their side. At this point, it did not matter where the dream came from, only that it gave specific instruction beyond customary sacrifices. Caecilia's identity, and particularly her gender, only become retroactively important to the performative truth of prophetic dreams, precisely because it was not important. Various people, normally mentioned in the passive voice, are receivers of portents and take action in Obsequens' account, although Caecilia arguably receives much more detail than any other actor.[121] Together with Calpurnia, however, they are the only two dreamers the epitomiser records, which is particularly interesting because we know that there were more dreamers through the Republic. It says a lot, then, that they are both female dreamers. Perhaps this comes from Livy giving them a higher level of treatment, feeling the need of an explanation on account of their gender and the unusual nature of the dreams of a woman having public significance, but this suddenly creates an opposite effect, whereby the performative nature of prophetic dreaming is retroactively attributed to being a valid aspect of femininity.

But there is more than simply gender that we must consider in comparing Calpurnia and Caecilia. They are both women, they are both named by Obsequens, and they are both – either through connection to important men or through their own merit – distinguished women. Unfortunately, this is where their similarities end. Perhaps most importantly, there is a vast difference in the response the waking world gives to each dream. Calpurnia is cast aside as superstitious; Caecilia receives consular help in her mission to restore Juno's temple. This could be in part to the structure of the dreams in question, whereby Calpurnia's dream is dismissible due to its symbolic nature, but it is still impossible to fit Caecilia's into the message dream paradigm, in the same way that the dreams of Decius Mus and Latinius are. Perhaps the biggest difference between these two women and their dreams is the waking world's political context: a reconnection with Lanuvium and wider Italy was needed, and Caecilia was able to provide that for the Senate; Calpurnia begged Caesar not to go to the Senate, but that went against what he considered to be a politically viable move.

Above all, what makes Caecilia stand out the most, in comparison to all these dreamers, is the level of agency offered to her in the world of the dream as well as the waking world: Calpurnia can only watch – in both worlds – whilst Decius Mus and Latinius can only listen, but Caecilia actually acts within the dream. Juno does not give an order in the dream, but rather tells the mortal she is leaving; it is through Caecilia's prayers in the dream – and

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[121] Contra. Hänninen 1999, 34, who names Caecilia as Obsequens' "only informant mentioned by name".

through her initiative to clean out the temple in the waking world – that the deity is persuaded to return.

6.8 The Personal Is Political

With these dreamers in mind, I want to return the focus to Calpurnia herself, and the questions with which this chapter began: why was Calpurnia not believed, and to what extent does gender play a role in the response it received? I noted above that the main criticism levelled against her is that, as a woman, her dreams can be nothing more than "womanish superstition", and yet only a generation earlier Caecilia, whoever she may have been, brought her prophetic dream to the Senate. But a closer examination of Calpurnia, and her dream, in light of the discussions and the other dreamers we have met through this chapter, will in fact show that it is possible to see broader themes and links throughout the tradition of prophetic dreaming in the Roman Republic.

First we must restore the apparent contradiction of the fact that, though no characters in the story believe her, Calpurnia's dream is accepted as truth by all the later writers who record the story.[122] The writers, of course, have the benefit of hindsight: they know the outcome of her husband's journey to the senate house on that day. But, importantly for our discussion here, Calpurnia's dream is not doubted by any of the sources because her gender alone does not forbid her from having prophetic dreams; conversely, anyone can dream, and have meaningful dreams in the Roman Republic.

Calpurnia is not disbelieved (within the story) because of her status as dreamer; she is disbelieved because of her status as actor in the waking world. By reinforcing her performative role as a woman, Brutus and her other critics are reminding Caesar (and subsequently the readers) of her place – and the place of dreams – in the private and public spheres. Prophetic dreaming, as we have seen throughout this chapter, challenges the divide between these two opposites: a dream is the most private, most intimate context someone can be in – it can be explained, recounted and discussed with another individual, but never can it truly be shared. The dreams of Decius Mus and Manlius Torquatus, and of the unnamed matrons, may, on the surface, counteract this principle, but each dreamed her or his own dream, independent of the other(s), only later actually "sharing" the dream(s) through their

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[122] See chapter **6.1: Calpurnia and the Disruption of the Roman State** for a discussion of the relationship between the story(/ies), the characters and the writers.

retelling.[123] On the other hand, the dreams discussed throughout this chapter have all been recorded for directly influencing – or trying to influence – the public, and in many respects the political, through their expiation and retelling. Under this lens, it is possible to understand the idea that anyone can dream, and dream prophetically, but only certain people can act upon their dreams in the public and public spheres.

In Plutarch's account, Brutus asks Caesar whether he thinks the Senate "should convene again when Calpurnia has better dreams",[124] a rebuttal that, as well as marginalising the place of dreams, involves an implicit attack on Calpurnia for attempting to control part of the decision making process. Brutus, of course, has a very specific agenda for wanting her husband to go to the senate house that day, but his position is still a valid one, arguing that through the medium of a dream, real or otherwise, this woman is trying to influence the actions of a man whose actions directly correlate to the future of the state. The dream is a private matter, but Caesar's decisions never will be.

The meaningfulness of dreams, then, lies in their usefulness to influencing and making decisions in the waking world, whether they speak of the future, past or present. Caesar's dream in Lucan allowed him to decide on his path, like the dreams of Manlius Torquatus and Decius Mus. The dream of Caecilia allowed her (and, more importantly, the consuls and the Roman senate) to reaffirm relationships with the gods and with the local communities. The issue for Calpurnia, then, is not the question of her dream being prophetic, but rather of her dream being *meaningful*: and the only way for it to be meaningful is if she, as a woman and a wife, were to have a hand in influencing her husband's political decisions.

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[123] See chapter **6.6: Comparing Calpurnia II: The Many and the Few**.
[124] Plut. *Caes*. 64: παρεῖναι δὲ αὖθις ὅταν ἐντύχῃ βελτίοσιν ὀνείροις Καλπουρνία.

Chapter Seven: Fabia, or: a conclusion

Caecilia. Martha. Fabia. Throughout this thesis we have seen in action a number of people who practiced very different divinatory traditions in the late Roman Republic. But what they all had in common was the way in which gender affected their perceived divinatory ability, both for better and for worse.

I opened this thesis with the case study of Fabia the Vestal Virgin. She and the other Vestals interpreted the rekindling of the flame at the Bona Dea festival in 63 BCE as a sign for Terentia to take to her husband concerning his political conduct. What all these chapters have shown, in their own ways, is that neither politics nor religion were simply a man's world, from which women were barred. Quite the opposite, in fact: we have seen women at all levels of religious activity, from the Sibyl at the centre to Martha on the borders of public life. Nevertheless, Plutarch follows his account of the Bona Dea portent with a criticism:

> ἡ δὲ Τερεντία (καὶ γὰρ οὐδ᾽ ἄλλως ἦν πραεῖά τις οὐδ᾽ ἄτολμος τὴν φύσιν, ἀλλὰ φιλότιμος γυνὴ καὶ μᾶλλον, ὡς αὐτός φησιν ὁ Κικέρων, τῶν πολιτικῶν μεταλαμβάνουσα παρ᾽ ἐκείνου φροντίδων ἢ μεταδιδοῦσα τῶν οἰκιακῶν ἐκείνῳ) ταῦτά τε πρὸς αὐτὸν ἔφρασε καὶ παρώξυνεν ἐπὶ τοὺς ἄνδρας

> Terentia (for, in fact, she was not in other respects mild nor cowardly in spirit, but was an ambitious woman and, as Cicero himself says, she preferred to have a share in political sphere with him rather than take her share in the household duties) took this to him and urged him to act against the conspirators.[1]

Our author is reinforcing those divisions between the household and the political, between female and male and even between mildness and ambition. But in doing so, he actually reminds us that these things are not as clear-cut as he would have us believe. Terentia's actions, though reprehensible, are not political missteps on her (or Cicero's) part. Furthermore, they are justifiable specifically as a woman's actions, directed by a female deity at a women-only festival. Her husband, as we saw in chapter 2, might want to separate the political and the divinatory when the going gets tough, but Terentia shows herself as a shrewd navigator of the religious.

And what of Fabia? She – or whichever Vestal(s) presented the interpretation of the portent – was able to do so without incurring Plutarch's criticism. Throughout this thesis, we have seen again and again people – and especially women – being called out and criticised when they do

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[1] Plut. *Cic*. 20.2.

not align themselves with the expectations that are placed on them. Calpurnia was not believed because she was trying to step beyond convention. We only know of Fabia's name at all because she was accused of stepping outside the boundaries allowed by her Vestal role. But on the night of the Bona Dea festival, her actions were not beyond those boundaries, or even the boundaries of (elite) women in the Roman Republic. As we saw with Martha, with the Sibyl of the Books and even with Caecilia, Fabia was perfectly capable of being a divinatory actor, elucidating and even directing real world political messages, without being hindered by her gender. All these women acted in different ways, within different divinatory traditions and with different outcomes and responses; their genders certainly played a role in their constructions, but to say that femininity simply either allowed or barred them from certain practices is, I hope to have demonstrated in each of these chapters, a reductive response.

The (fluidly-defined) late Roman Republic has provided a useful centring of period and location for this thesis. The arguments and theoretical models made here have wider application that can be made across the ancient world, and indeed beyond. Focusing on a specific period, and particularly one so rich in sources and examples, has provided the opportunity to show the ways in which these constructions and traditions, though they at times appear to contradict one another, are all working in tandem, within the same religious and political landscape. The fact that this landscape has also been given frequent commentary for the dominant narrative of the transition of Republic to Empire, by both ancient and modern observers, means that it has been well analysed; therefore, it becomes fertile ground for looking between the gaps to find the people that become lost or get overlooked for not fitting into that narrative.

That narrative, too, relies on an adherence to and an enforcing of binaries in the subjects of both gender and divination, which, as I have demonstrated throughout this thesis, flattens our understanding of the period and its actors. In chapter 2, we saw the binary of belief and rejection of divination, in the arguments of the Cicero brothers, even though overall neither side is quite right. Meanwhile the power of Sibyl of the Books, as I argued in chapter 3, is derived precisely from the way in which she seems to encompass both sides of a number of binaries: external and internal, spontaneous and written, secret and revealed. In chapter 4, we turned to the dark underbelly of the gender binary, and the Roman response to bodies that could not be seen to conform to either the masculine or feminine. By contrasting the subject matters of chapters 5 and 6 together, I demonstrated the problems of understanding Roman divination as simply divided into technical and natural, as we saw a case study from what

would traditionally be on either side of this binary, and delved into the ways in which they were treated in the Republic. When these chapters are brought together, they demonstrate that, whilst we may use binaries to better understand identities, as well as actions and interactions, in the ancient world, it is important to remember that they are only useful as long as we accept their inherent constructedness.

Throughout this thesis, I have applied the theoretical framework of performativity to both gender and divination. The traditions and constructions of both these areas, as I have argued, were not solidly set, but rather were in a constant process of reiterating (and hence rethinking) the conventions that were understood to construct their respective realities. In the Introduction, I stated that divination as ritual is performative in the sense that its reality is created by compliance with those accepted conventions. In this sense, as has been demonstrated by the chapters presented here, divination rests on continued interpretation. Cicero, or at least Marcus, may have quipped that "the best diviner, I declare, is the one who guesses best",[2] but, in many respects, it is actually the one who presents the best interpretation through, in part, the strongest positioning of their own identity(/ies). Thus, as discussed, part of Cicero's reason behind writing the *de Diuinatione* is because interpretation was a game he found himself losing to Calpurnia's husband, who showed himself to be astute at manipulating interpretations in the varying divinatory traditions to his own advantage; meanwhile, Calpurnia fails to convince that same man of her dream's significance because, ultimately, she cannot convince him of its performative reality.

The performativity of gender has also been important to the understanding of the performativity of divination. In much the same way as we saw for divination, the traditions that may seem strictly defined in respect of gender in fact become malleable in response to the interpretation of pre-existing conventions. This is not to say that fitting within the boundaries of your gender was not important – in fact through the case studies of Callo/n and the intersex children of the Republic we saw the problems that arose if sexual (and thus gender) identity could not be easily established – but what it meant (and what it continues to mean) is that gender was a constantly shifting ground, which could be worked to your own advantage. Similarly, it played into the response those actors received, both from their immediate interlocutors and from writers and audiences recounting their stories. Those responses formed part of a constant negotiation of what it meant and continues to mean to be a woman, a man or

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[2] Cic. *Div*. 2.12: *bene qui coniciet, uatem hunc perhibebo optumum.*

a non-binary person, and, importantly, one that could be greatly reinterpreted at different times. Like divination itself, gender is ultimately an art of interpretation.

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