



Project
MUSE®

Scholarly journals online

FAUNS, PROPHETS, AND ENNIUS'S *ANNALES*

T. P. WISEMAN

I

The invention of Latin epic is attributed to Ennius by the grammarian Diomedes in the fourth century C.E.:¹

Epos dicitur Graece carmine hexametro diuinarum rerum et heroicarum humanarumque comprehensio . . . Latine paulo communius carmen auditur. epos Latinum primus digne scripsit is, qui res Romanorum decem et octo complexus est libris qui et annales <in>scribuntur, quod singulorum fere annorum actus contineant, sicut publici annales quos pontifices scribaeque conficiunt, uel Romais, quod Romanorum res gestas declarant.

Epos in Greek means the composition of the deeds of gods, heroes, and mortals in a hexameter poem . . . In Latin it is more often called *carmen*. The first Latin *epos* worthy of the name was written by the poet who encompassed the deeds of the Romans in eighteen books, which are entitled *Annales* because they contain the events of practically each year, like the public annals composed by the priests and scribes, or the *Romais* because they make manifest the achievements of the Romans.

1 Diomedes *GL* 1.483–84 Keil. I follow Skutsch 1985.46 in reading *Romais* for the *romanis* of the mss. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

Ennius himself expressed his primacy in a famous passage, one of the most frequently cited of all the surviving fragments of the *Annals* (206–07):

scripsere alii rem
uorsibus quos olim Faunei uatesque canebant.

Others have written of the matter [the first Punic War] in
the verses which of old the Fauns and prophets chanted.

The reference is to Gnaeus Naevius.² Although Ennius thinks of him as a fellow *writer*, it seems that Naevius doesn't count as a proper "literary author" because he used a meter appropriate to the pre-literary world.³

That, at least, is my reading of the lines. But it is important to remember how little we know about the culture and society of third-century Rome—despite the confident assumptions of some recent scholarship. In this volume, for instance, Enrica Sciarrino argues that the audience for early Roman epic was not the same as for drama, and that Livius Andronicus's *Odyssey* translation "opened the way to the encroachment of poets . . . on more exclusive sites of social interaction" (see above p. 458). Perhaps so: but Homeric bards like Demodocus performed for the games in the *agora* as well as for the "elite" at the palace;⁴ and Oliver Taplin has very plausibly argued (2000.23–32) that only a festival context can explain the length and complexity of the Homeric epics themselves. Can we really be sure that conditions were radically different in Rome? Why not imagine the *Ludi Romani*—or the *Ludi Plebeii*, for that matter—as the primary performance context of oral narrative poetry, and then of Naevius's and Ennius's epics?

As for the "elite" itself, the use of sociological models may be misleading if it implies that Roman society was necessarily as hierarchical in the third century B.C.E. as it was in the first. There was no differential seating at the *ludi* until 194 B.C.E., when privileged seats were provided for the senators, and the sources for that innovation (contradictory as they

2 Stated explicitly by Cicero (*Brut.* 75–76), and obvious anyway.

3 Cic. *Brut.* 71: "nec dicti studiosus quisquam erat ante hunc" ait [Ennius] ipse de se nec mentitur in gloriando" ("Nor was there any word-expert before him," says Ennius about himself, and his boast is no lie").

4 Hom. *Od.* 8.12, 16, 109, 254–65 (*agora*); 40–45, 62–70, 104–07 (palace).

are) show clearly how controversial and unpopular it was.⁵ Equally clearly, Pliny's account of the equestrian insignia implies a proliferation of hierarchical indicators from the Gracchan period onwards—but not before (*Nat.* 33.29–36).

I am much more in sympathy with Sander Goldberg's sense of how little is really known about the world of Naevius and Ennius. But here, too, I have a reservation. Is it really true, as he asserts (see above p. 446) that "whatever archaic tradition preceded [Ennius's poem] remains beyond recovery"? If it is, then there is no point trying to understand what Ennius meant when he called Naevius's meter "the verses which of old the Fauns and prophets chanted." I hope to show that it may be possible, after all, to say something useful about the "pre-literary" world of third-century Rome.

Glimpses into that world, from people close enough to it to be well informed, are hard to interpret but disproportionately precious. The most famous of them is the elder Cato's evocation of the custom, long obsolete in his own time, of guests at a banquet rising in turn to sing the praises of the men of old.⁶ Cato also knew of professional praise singers at banquets, and claimed that the *maiores* despised them.⁷ Then there is Fabius Pictor's

5 Asconius 69–70 Clark (citing Cicero's *pro Cornelio* and Valerius Antias frag. 37 Peter), Cic. *Har.* 24, Livy 34.44.5 and 54.4–8.

6 Cic. *Tusc.* 4.3: "grauissimus auctor in Originibus dixit Cato, morem apud maiores hunc epularum fuisse, ut deinceps qui accubarent canerent ad tibiam clarorum uirorum laudes atque uirtutes" ("Cato, an author of great authority, said in his *Origines* that, at banquets, it was the custom of our ancestors for those reclining to sing in turn to the pipe the fame and virtues of distinguished men"). Cic. *Brut.* 75: "atque utinam exstarent illa carmina, quae multis saeculis ante suam aetatem in epulis esse cantitata a singulis conuiujs de clarorum uirorum laudibus in Originibus scriptum reliquit Cato" ("And if only those songs survived of which Cato left a record in his *Origines* that used to be sung by individual guests at banquets many generations before his time about the fame of distinguished men"). Cf. also Cic. *Tusc.* 1.3, Hor. *Odes* 4.15.29–32, Val. Max. 2.1.10, Quint. 1.10.20. Varro has a different version, in which praises are sung by *pueri modesti* (*Vita Pop. Rom.* frag. 84 Riposati = Nonius 107–08 Lindsay). For the background, see Rösler 1990 and Zorzetti 1990; but also Horsfall 1994.70–73, a reminder that the Cato passage may be no more than a calque of Greek scholarship on the symposium (e.g., Dicaearchus frag. 88), and Goldberg p. 431 above.

7 Gellius 11.2.5: "praeterea ex eodem libro Catonis haec etiam sparsim et inter cetera commemoramus: . . . 'poeticae artis honos non erat, si quis in ea re studebat aut sese ad conuiuia adplicabat grassator uocabatur'" ("Besides, I remember these things too from the same book of Cato, though scattered and discontinuous: . . . 'There was no esteem for the poetic art. If anyone devoted himself to it, or insinuated himself into banquets, he was called a mugger'"). For the background, see Peruzzi 1998.157–64 and Goldberg pp. 431–34 and his note 9, above.

account of the procession at the *Ludi Romani*, with its dancing choruses of Sileni in hairy tunics and satyrs in goatskin loincloths, mocking the serious participants in a manner that was literally satirical.⁸ Perhaps Ennius's line can give us a similar insight into this unfamiliar world?

II

"Vorsibus quos olim Faunei uatesque caneant" is quoted six times in our extant texts. Cicero (twice) uses it as evidence for progress in the literary arts, and Quintilian to prove that poetry existed before the laws of meter.⁹ But it is the other three citations that are more interesting for our purposes.

First, Varro, in his discussion of "words which have been put down by the poets."¹⁰ He quotes the line, and then offers his exposition (Varro *LL* 7.36):¹¹

Fauni dei Latinorum, ita ut Faunus et Fauna sit; hos uersibus quos uocant Saturnios in siluestribus locis traditum est solitos fari <futura, a> quo fando Faunos dictos. antiqui poetas uates appellabant a uersibus uiendis, ut <de> poematis cum scribam ostendam.

Fauni are gods of the Latins in this sense, that there are both Faunus and Fauna. It has been handed down that they are accustomed to speak the future in wooded places, using the verses known as "Saturnian," and called *Fauni* from that "speaking." The ancients called poets *uates* from "weaving verses," as I shall show when I write about poems.

8 Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Ant. Rom.* 7.72.10 (*FGrH* 809 F13, p. 867), cf. 7.71.1 on Q. Fabius: παλαιότατος γὰρ ἀνὴρ τῶν τὰ Ῥωμαϊκὰ συνταξαμένων, καὶ πίστιν οὐκ ἐξ ὧν ἤκουσε μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐξ ὧν αὐτὸς ἔγνω παρεχόμενος ("For he is the earliest of the historians of Rome and provides evidence not only from what he heard but also from what he knew himself"). For the background, see Szilágyi 1981.

9 Cic. *Brut.* 71 (cf. 75), *Orat.* 171; Quint. 9.4.115.

10 Varro *LL* 7.5: "dicam in hoc libro de uerbis quae a poetis sunt posita."

11 Repeated in Servius *Auctus* on *G.* 1.11, who alone has *futura* after *fari*; I follow R. G. Kent's Loeb text. See Aronen 1999 on "Saturnian verses," and Pasco-Pranger 2002.306–10 for an adventurous association of this passage with the story of Numa, Picus, and Faunus at Ovid *Fasti* 3.285–328.

Fauna was one of the names of the Bona Dea in the records of the *pontifices*; another was Fatua, also derived from *fari*, to speak.¹² She was thought of as a prophetess, just as Faunus was thought of as a prophet.¹³ Some said she was a Dryad, just as some said Faunus was Pan.¹⁴ Naturally, as divinities of the wild, they “spoke” in woods and groves.¹⁵

Prophecy is also the context of Cicero's quotation of the Ennius line in *de Divinatione*. Quintus is discussing the phenomenon of directly inspired divination, when a kind of *furor* in the soul enables certain individuals to prophesy the future (1.114–15):¹⁶

Eodem enim modo multa a uaticinantibus saepe praedicta sunt, neque solum uerbis sed etiam “uersibus quos olim Fauni uatesque canebant.” similiter Marcius et Publicius uates cecinisse dicuntur; quo de genere Apollinis operata prolata sunt.

For in that way, many things have been predicted by those who chant prophecies, not only in prose but also “in the verses which of old the Fauns and prophets chanted.” The prophets Marcius and Publicius are said to have chanted

12 Macrobius *Sat.* 1.12.21–22: “hanc [sc. Maïam] eandem Bonam Faunamque, et Opem et Fatuam pontificum libris indigitari: Bonam quod omnium nobis ad uictum bonorum causa est, Faunam quod omni usui animantium fauet, Opem quod ipsius auxilio uita constat, Fatuam a fando . . .” ([Cornelius Labeo states] “that this same goddess is invoked in the books of the *pontifices* as Bona and Fauna and Ops and Fatua: Bona because she is our source of all the good things for maintaining life, Fauna because she favours all the needs of living creatures, Ops because life depends on her assistance, Fatua from speaking . . .”).

13 Justin 43.1.8: “Fauno uxor fuit nomine Fatua, quae adsidue diuino spiritu inpleta ueluti per furorem futura praemonebat” (“Faunus’s wife was called Fatua, because she regularly gave advance warning of future events, filled with divine inspiration as if through madness”). Plut. *Mor.* 268D (*Quaestiones Romanae* 20, on the Bona Dea): ὥς οἱ μυθολογούντες ἱστοροῦσι, Φαύνου μὲν ἦν γυνὴ τοῦ μάντεως . . . (“As the mythographers report, she was the wife of Faunus the prophet . . .”).

14 Plut. *Caes.* 9.3 (Dryad), Hor. *Odes* 1.17.1–2, Ovid *Fasti* 2.267–80, 2.424, etc. (Pan Lycaeus).

15 For instance, in the first year of the republic: Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Ant. Rom.* 5.16.2–3, explaining that the Romans attribute φωναὶ δαιμόνιοι to Faunus; cf. Serv. on *Aen.* 7.81 for Faunus named “ἀπὸ τοῦ φωνῆς quod uoce non signis ostendit futura” (“from *phōnē* [voice] because he shows the future with his voice, not by signs”). Calpurnius Siculus (*Ecl.* 1.8–32) offers a literary version of the idea, with Faunus’s prophecy inscribed on a beech tree in the grove.

16 Cf. *Div.* 1.4 on *furor*.

in the same way, and the secrets of Apollo were brought forth in that style too.

What matters here is the equivalence of *uerba* and *uersus*, speaking in prose and chanting in verse. Though Faunus is “the speaker,” his prophecies can equally be described as chanted *carmina*.¹⁷ So Ennius’s *Faunei . . . canebant* is in no way paradoxical.

But who, or what, were the Fauni? It is clear that Cicero did not share Varro’s interpretation of the plural as referring to two individual deities, Faunus and Fauna. A little earlier in the *de Diuinatione*, he makes Quintus point out that Fauni have often been heard in battles, clearly implying a particular category of divinity.¹⁸ These Fauni were “half-gods,” dwellers in the countryside, the companions of nymphs and satyrs;¹⁹ but they were still prophetic, both in their own right and as the inspirers of prophecy in mortals.²⁰

It is also clear that Cicero did not share Varro’s interpretation of *uates* as meaning poets. Nothing more is known of Publicius, dismissed as *nescio quis* by the sceptical Marcus in Book 2 of the dialogue;²¹ but Gnaeus Marcius was a well-known prophet, famous in Ennius’s time for having

17 E.g., Festus 432 Lindsay on Saturnians: “quibus Faunus fata *cecinnisse* hominibus uideatur” (“in which Faunus evidently chanted the fates for men”); Calpurnius Siculus *Ecl.* 1.29 and 34 (*canere*), 1.32, 35, 92 (*carmen*); cf. Ovid *Fasti* 3.323 on Faunus and Picus (*quae carmina dicant . . .*). The equivalence of *fari* and *canere* in prophecy is shown by Catullus 64.382–83 on the Fates: “*talia praefantes* quondam felicia Pelei / *carmina* diuino *cecinerunt* pectore Parcae” (“Such songs of old the Fates chanted with divine inspiration, foretelling happy outcomes for Peleus”). Cf. Habinek 2005.59–74, where, however, the “short lexicon of verbal performance” does not include *fari*.

18 Cic. *Div.* 1.101: “*saepe etiam et in proeliis Fauni auditi . . . esse dicuntur*.” So, too, in *ND* 2.6 (“*saepe Faunorum uoces exaudita*”), though the sceptic’s answer at 3.15 uses the singular.

19 *Semidei*: Ovid *Met.* 1.192–93. See, for instance, Lucretius 4.580–81; Virg. *Ecl.* 6.27, *G.* 1.10–11, *Aen.* 8.314; Hor. *Epist.* 1.19.4, *Ars* 244; Ovid *Met.* 6.392–93.

20 Nemesianus *Ecl.* 2.73 (*Fauni uates*), Fronto *de Eloquentia* 2.12 van den Hout (*Fauni uaticinantium incitatores*). Cf. Martianus Capella 2.167 on the “longaeuorum chori qui habitant siluas, nemora, lucos, lacus, fontes ac fluuios, appellanturque Panes, Fauni, Fones, Satyri, Siluani, Nymphae, Fatui Fatuaeque uel Fantuae uel etiam Fanae, a quibus fana dicta, quod soleant diuinare” (“the choruses of long-lived beings who inhabit forests, woods, groves, lakes, springs, and rivers, and are called Pans, Fauns, Fones, Satyrs, Silvani, Nymphs, Fatui and Fatuae or Fantuae or even Fanae, from whom shrines [*fana*] are named, because they are accustomed to prophesy”).

21 Cic. *Div.* 2.113. It may be relevant that C. Marcius and T. “Publius” (Publicius?) were among the first plebeian augurs, elected in 300 B.C.E.: Livy 10.9.2, with Wiseman 1998.103–04.

foretold the disaster at Cannae.²² Such prophets were active throughout the history of the republic, and we know from Livy and Horace that their oracular predictions were collected in volume form.²³

The final quotation of the Ennius line is in the anonymous *Origo Gentis Romanae*, a treatise probably of the fourth century C.E. but based on much earlier material. (None of the thirty or so authorities cited is demonstrably post-Augustan.) The author reports the successive reigns in Italy of Janus, Saturnus, and Picus, and then goes on (*Origo Gentis Romanae* 4.3–4):²⁴

Post Picum regnauit in Italia Faunus, quem a fando dictum uolunt, quod is solet futura praecinere uersibus quos Saturnios dicimus; quod genus metri in uaticinatione Saturniae primum proditum est. eius rei Ennius testis est, cum ait “uersibus quos olim Fauni uatesque canebant.”

After Picus, Faunus reigned in Italy. They derive his name from “speaking,” because he is accustomed to prophesy the future in the verses we call Saturnian, a type of meter first used in the prophecy of Saturnia [*or* in a prophecy at Saturnia]. Ennius is our witness for that, when he says “in the verses which of old the Fauns and prophets chanted.”

Saturnia was the stronghold on the Capitol founded by Saturnus,²⁵ and it is possible that there existed a supposed prophecy of its foundation. In this Euhemerised telling of the myth, exploited by Virgil in *Aeneid* 7, Faunus is part of a prehistoric dynasty of Latin monarchs; it was he who received Evander

22 Livy 25.12.1–8 (prophecy discovered in 212 B.C.E.); cf. Cic. *Div.* 1.89 (“Marcios quosdam fratres, nobile loco ortos”); Festus 162 Lindsay (“in carmine Cn. Marci uatis”).

23 Livy 25.1.12, 25.12.3 (*libri uaticini*, “prophetic books”); Hor. *Epist.* 2.1.26 (*annosa uolumina uatum*, “the prophets’ ancient volumes”). Prophets active: notes 43–44, below, discussion in Wiseman 1994.49–67.

24 I omit a sentence condemned as a gloss since Gruner’s edition in 1757. I think this passage disproves *e silentio* the attempt by Aronen 1999.63–69 to make Saturnus, as well as Faunus, an oracular deity.

25 Saturnia: *Origo Gentis Romanae* 3.1 and 3.7, citing Virg. *Aen.* 8.357–58; see also Ovid *Fasti* 6.31, Pliny *Nat.* 3.68, Festus 430 Lindsay. Placed in 1300–1200 B.C.E. (“Bronzo recente, fase prima”) by Carandini 1997.120.

and his Arcadian colonists.²⁶ But he is a prophet in this guise too, providing dream-oracles in his sacred grove to his son and successor Latinus.²⁷

III

Prophecy was primarily an oral mode; the words used of it were “song” and “singing,” *carmen* and *canere*.²⁸ The same words defined the Camenae, those “cultural signifiers of pre-poetic song” who inspired the oral poet’s performance.²⁹ But listening to a prophet was probably not like listening to a poet.

What did a prophet *sound* like? Ovid sets the scene, where he describes the inspiration of the prophetess whose name was formed from *carmen* (*Fasti* 6.537–40):³⁰

Parua mora est, caelum uates ac numina sumit
fitque sui toto pectore plena dei;
uix illam subito posses cognoscere, tanto
sanctior et tanto quam modo maior erat.

There was a moment’s pause. Then the prophetess assumes the powers of heaven, and is filled with her god to the depths of her heart. Suddenly you could hardly recognize her, so much holier she was, and so much taller than before.

26 Virg. *Aen.* 7.47–49, Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Ant. Rom.* 1.31.2, Justin 43.1.6, *Origo Gentis Romanae* 5.1–3.

27 Virg. *Aen.* 7.81–103, esp. 82 (*fatidici genitoris*, “his prophetic father”).

28 *Canere*: e.g., Livy 1.45.5, 1.55.6, 5.15.4; see note 17 above. *Carmina*: e.g., Livy 25.12.2–8, Festus 162 Lindsay (Cn. Marcius). Primarily oral: Cic. *Div.* 2.149 (*siue tu uatem . . . audieris*). For “song and memory” in general, see Horsfall 2003.11–17, 36–47; for the Salii, see now Habinek 2005.8–33, who concludes that “Salian song . . . becomes the model . . . of song’s ability to relate the here and now of vested interests and contingent arrangements to the timeless order of the Roman cosmos.”

29 Paulus Festus 38 Lindsay: “Camenae musae a carminibus sunt dictae, uel quod canunt antiquorum laudes . . .”; cf. Varro *LL* 7.26–27: *Casmenae*>*Carmenae*>*Camenae*, Serv. on *Ecl.* 3.59 (*a cantu*), Macrobius *Commentary on Somnium Scipionis* 2.3.4 (*a canendo*). “Cultural signifier”: Sciarrino p. 454 above.

30 Cf. also *Fasti* 1.503–06 (on Carmentis).

That was for a message of good news (*laeta canam*), but often the prophet's demeanor was fierce and threatening,³¹ a far cry from the song of the poet. (My use of the word "chant" to translate Ennius's *canebant* is a crude attempt to register the difference.)

Different sorts of *carmina* sounded different because they had different things to say. In the pre-literary world (to put it in a modern idiom), the manner and the message were inseparable. But once they were written down and collected in books, *carmina* from widely different sources lost their distinctiveness.

Such collections of *carmina antiqua* are attested by Varro, Festus, and Macrobius, who use them to cite (respectively) a description of a shepherds' festival,³² a quasi-Homeric narrative of dawn,³³ and a piece of father-to-son advice on agriculture.³⁴ A religious precept cited by Nigidius Figulus may be a fourth example.³⁵ The variety and unpredictability of these haphazardly surviving items are a salutary warning of how little we understand pre-literary culture.

31 Lucr. 1.102–03 (*uatum / terriloquis . . . dictis*, "by the terrifying sayings of the prophets"), 1.109 (*minis . . . uatum*, "by the threats of the prophets"); Ovid *Fasti* 1.504 (*torua*, "threatening").

32 Varro *Vita Pop. Rom.* frag. 23 Riposati (Nonius 31 Lindsay), Horsfall 2003.46: "etiam pellis bubulas oleo perfusas percurrebant ibique cernuabant. a quo ille uersus uetus est in *carminibus*: 'ibi pastores ludos faciunt coriis Consualia'" ("They even used to run through cowhides soaked in oil and turn somersaults there, from which there is that old verse in the *carmina*: 'There the shepherds hold the Consualia games with hides'").

33 Festus 214 Lindsay: "obstinere dicebant antiqui, quod nunc ostendit; ut in *ueteribus carminibus*: 'sed iam se caelo cedens Aurora obstinet suum patrem'" ("The ancients used to say *obstinere* for the modern *ostendit* [shows], as in the old *carmina*: 'But now, receding from the sky, Aurora shows her father'").

34 Macrobius *Sat.* 5.20.18 (on *G.* 1.101), Horsfall 2003.45: "*in libro enim uetustissimorum carminum*, qui ante omnia quae a Latinis scripta sunt compositus ferebatur, inuenitur hoc rusticum *uetus canticum*: 'hiberno puluere, uerno luto, grandia farra, camille, metes'" ("For in the book of very old *carmina*, which was said to have been composed before anything written by the Latins, is found this old rustic verse: 'In the dust of winter and in the mud of spring, boy, you will reap plentiful emmer-wheat'"). Also in Paulus Festus 82 Lindsay: "*in antiquo carmine*, cum pater filio de agricultura praeciperet" ("in the old *carmen*, when a father was instructing his son about agriculture").

35 Gellius 4.9.1: "Nigidius Figulus . . . in undecimo commentariorum grammaticorum uersum *ex antiquo carmine* refert memoria hercle dignum: 'religentem esse oportet, religiosus ne fuas'" ("Nigidius Figulus . . . in the eleventh book of his *Grammatical Commentaries*, quotes a truly remarkable line from an old *carmen*: 'It is best to be religious, lest you be superstitious'").

For instance, we have no idea where, when, or why the *carmina* of the Salii were written down.³⁶ Nor do we know how Dionysius of Halicarnassus found his information about “songs” in honor of Faunus, the twin founders, and Marcius “Coriolanus,”³⁷ or whether the narrative *Carmen Priami* and *Carmen Nelei* existed independently or could be cited only from a general collection.³⁸ But the fact that no authors are named may allow one inference, at least: these *carmina* were first composed in an oral culture and only later preserved in writing.³⁹ There is a clear contrast with Naevius’s poem: though often cited as the *Carmen Belli Punici*, it always has the author’s name attached.⁴⁰

These “old songs” may have been hymns or narratives sung to the lyre, or precepts to be given in a speaking voice. What the Fauns and prophets chanted (in a meter that Ennius thought an epic poet shouldn’t use) was something quite different, a phenomenon that persisted long into the fully literate society of the late republic and early empire. The next section explores its later manifestations, which turn out to be unexpectedly relevant to Ennius’s own poem.

IV

Among the omens and portents associated with the outbreak of civil war in 49 B.C.E., Dio reports that “certain oracles were chanted, purporting to be those of the Sibyl, and some people became inspired and

36 Plural in Varro *LL* 9.61; Paulus Festus 3 Lindsay; Festus 124 Lindsay; Macrobius *Sat.* 1.9.14 (“Saliorum quoque antiquissimis carminibus . . . canitur”), 1.15.14 (*Salii in carminibus canunt*). Singular (*carmen Saliorum* or *carmen Saliare*) in Varro *LL* 5.110, 7.26–27; Paulus Festus 109, 222, 224, 230, 231 Lindsay; Terentius Scaurus in *GL* 7.28 Keil.

37 Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Ant. Rom.* 1.31.2 on Faunus (καὶ αὐτὸν ὡς τῶν ἐπιχωρίων τινὰ Ῥωμαῖοι δαιμόνων θυσίαις καὶ ᾠδαῖς γεραίρουσιν, “And the Romans honour him as one of their native divinities with sacrifices and songs”), 1.79.10 on Romulus and Remus (ὡς ἐν τοῖς πατρίοις ὕμνοις ὑπὸ Ῥωμαίων ἔτι καὶ νῦν ᾄδεται, “As is still sung even nowadays by the Romans in their native hymns”), 8.62.3 on Coriolanus (ᾄδεται καὶ ὑμνεῖται πρὸς πάντων ὡς εὖσεβῆς καὶ δίκαιος ἀνὴρ, “He is sung and hymned by all as a pious and just man”).

38 Varro *LL* 7.28 (in *carmine Priami*); Festus 418, 482 Lindsay; Charisius in *GL* 1.84 Keil (in *Nelei carmine*).

39 As an analogy, cf. Varro *LL* 6.18 on the “togata praetexta data †eis† Apollinaribus ludis,” identified by the occasion, not the playwright.

40 Festus 306 Lindsay, Nonius 290 Lindsay, Priscian in *GL* 2.198, 234, 242, 351 Keil; cf. Gellius 17.21.45.

prophesied many things.”⁴¹ The prophecies Dio describes were no doubt like those delivered in earlier crises: in 87 B.C.E., for instance, the senate took note of the “inspired predictions” (*furibundae praedictiones*) of the prophet Cornelius Culleolus,⁴² and we happen to know of similar warnings in 78 and 63.⁴³

Attributing a particular oracle to the Sibyl was probably easier after 83 B.C.E., when the original *carmina Sibyllae* were destroyed with the temple of Capitoline Jupiter. In 76, an embassy was sent to Erythrae to replace them; it came back with about one thousand verses collected from individuals, and others were found from other sources. But it must have been easy for professional prophets to claim knowledge of items the embassy had missed.⁴⁴ The official collection had only limited authority, as Augustus showed when, as *pontifex maximus*, he purged it of unsuitable items.⁴⁵

What exactly the prophets foretold in 49 B.C.E. is not recorded, but it is unlikely that it was encouraging. For the Romans had defied the Sibyl's warning by restoring King Ptolemy six years earlier, and Dio records that the citizens were afraid of the anger of the gods.⁴⁶

In 19 C.E., at a time when the fear of civil war had returned,⁴⁷ a quasi-Sibylline oracle was chanted again, and this time Dio quotes it verbatim:

When thrice three hundred years have come and gone,
Then civil conflict shall destroy the Romans.

41 Dio Cassius 41.14.4: λόγια τίνα ὥς καὶ τῆς Σιβύλλης ὄντα ἤδετο, κάτοχοί τέ τινες γιγνόμενοι συχνὰ ἐθεάζον. The Loeb translation takes ἤδετο as from εἶδω/οἶδα (“some oracles . . . were made known”), but Dio's usage in similar passages elsewhere (notes 48–50 below) suggests that it was from ἔδω, perhaps reproducing *canebantur* in a Latin source.

42 Cic. *Div.* 1.4; cf. Plut. *Marius* 42.4.

43 Sall. *Hist.* 1.67.3 Maurenbrecher (*uatum carmina*), Cic. *Cons.* 10.28–29 Courtney (“uates oracla furenti / pectore fundebant,” “From inspired hearts, prophets poured forth oracles”).

44 Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Ant. Rom.* 4.62.5–6 (from Varro), Lactantius *Diu. Inst.* 1.6.11 and 14 (citing Varro and Fenestella).

45 Suet. *Aug.* 31.1: “solos retinuit Sibyllinos [libros], hos quoque dilectu habito.”

46 Dio Cassius 39.15.1–16.2 (Sibyl's warning); 39.55.3, 56.4, 59.3, 60.4 (defiance); 39.61.1–4 (citizens' fear, 54 B.C.E.).

47 Tac. *Ann.* 1.4.2, 1.16.1, 1.31.1, 1.35.3–4 (14 C.E.), 2.39.1 (16 C.E.), 2.59.2–3, 2.78.1 (19 C.E.); Suet. *Tib.* 25.1–2 (14 C.E.); *SC de Pisone patre* 45–49 (19 C.E.).

Tiberius tried to calm the people's fears by insisting that the oracle was false, and he repeated Augustus's purging of all books of prophecy.⁴⁸ But that could not stop oral circulation, and the same oracle was remembered in 64 C.E., when the fire of Rome was taken as its fulfillment.⁴⁹ Nero assured the populace that these lines could not be found in any collection of oracles, but in vain: they simply chanted another, more specific, "Sibylline" prophecy instead.⁵⁰

What is interesting about these passages is not only the continued importance of oral prophecy for the Roman people as late as the first century C.E., but also the content of the Sibyl's alarming forecast. Why should the citizens have been afraid of the nine hundredth year of Rome? Surely they knew that 19 C.E. was *ab urbe condita* 771? All they had to do was go to Augustus's arch in the Forum and look at the list of consuls and triumphs; the AUC date was given for every triumph and for every tenth set of consuls.⁵¹ Why did the Roman people not believe so authoritative a source of information?

I think the point is this, that all *human* knowledge is fallible. Only the gods know the truth, and only the *uates*—prophet or poet—is divinely inspired to reveal it. That's not how we see it, or how Cicero and Tacitus saw it, but to most ordinary Romans it was probably self-evident.

48 Dio Cassius 57.18.4–5 (Xiphilinus): λόγιόν τέ τι ὡς καὶ Σιβύλλειον, ἄλλως μὲν οὐδὲν τῷ τῆς πόλεως χρόνῳ προσήκον, πρὸς δὲ τὰ παρόντα ἄδόμενον, οὐκ ἡσυχῇ σφας ἐκίνει· ἔλεγε γὰρ ὅτι· τρὶς δὲ τριηκοσίων περιτελλομένων ἐνιαυτῶν Ῥωμαίους ἔμφυλος ὀλεῖ στάσις ("And a certain oracle, supposedly Sibylline, which had no relevance to that period of the city's history but was chanted with reference to the present, disturbed them with no peace. For it said: 'When thrice 300 years have come round, civil strife will destroy the Romans'"). The Loeb translator loses the sense of ἄδόμενον ("applied to the situation then existing"); cf. note 41 above.

49 Dio Cassius 62.18.3 (Xiphilinus): καὶ μάλισθ' ὅτι αὐτοὺς ἡ μνήμη τοῦ λογίου τοῦ κατὰ τὸν Τιβερίον ποτε ἁσθέντος ἐθορύβε ("And what disturbed them most was the memory of the oracle that had once been chanted in the time of Tiberius"). Still unwilling to countenance chanting, the Loeb translator renders ἁσθέντος as "the oracle which . . . had been on everybody's lips."

50 Dio Cassius 62.18.4 (Xiphilinus): μεταβαλόντες ἕτερον λόγιον ὡς καὶ Σιβύλλειον ὄντως ὃν ᾗδον· ἔστι δὲ τοῦτο· ἔσχατος Αἰνεαδῶν μητροκτόνος ἡγεμονεύσει ("Changing tack, they chanted another oracle as being really Sibylline, namely, 'The last of the Aineadai will rule as a matricide'"). For ᾗδον, the Loeb translator has "preceded to repeat."

51 *CIL* I².1, pp. 1–50; *Inscriptiones Italiae* 13.1 (1947), pp. 1–87. Nineteen AUC dates survive on the *fasti consulares*, more than ninety on the *triumphales*.

Lines from the great poets could attain quasi-oracular status,⁵² and we can be sure that after 27 B.C.E. everyone knew at least one passage from Ennius, without necessarily knowing its context (*Ann.* 154–55):⁵³

Septingenti sunt, paulo plus aut minus, anni
augusto augurio postquam incluta condita Roma est.

Seven hundred years there are, a little more or less,
since glorious Rome was founded with august augury.

If it had become known, two centuries after Ennius, that the Sibyl had allocated Rome just 900 years, it's not surprising that the citizens were panicky.

The year 19 C.E. was ill-omened from the very first day, when a mysterious trumpet blast was heard at dawn.⁵⁴ When that happened in 88 B.C.E., the *haruspices* announced that the eighth Etruscan *saeculum* had come to an end.⁵⁵ The conclusion of the ninth *saeculum* was marked by the comet of 44 B.C.E.—or so the *haruspex* Vulcatius declared to the Roman people in the Forum, and fell dead as he finished his speech.⁵⁶ The tenth *saeculum* was the last: when would it end, and what would happen when it did?

If the Roman people had read their Varro, they would have learned that each Etruscan *saeculum* lasted over a hundred years, and that the eighth was still in progress when Varro was writing in the late republic.⁵⁷ However, most Roman citizens did not read books. They trusted what their prophets told them by direct inspiration from the gods, however terrifying

52 See for instance Cic. *Rep.* 5.1: “‘moribus antiquis res stat Romana uirisque’ [*Ann.* 156], quem quidem ille uersum uel breuitate uel ueritate tamquam ex oraculo mihi quodam esse effatus uidetur.”

53 From Varro *de Re Rustica* 3.1.2: “nam in hoc nunc denique est ut dici possit, non cum Ennius scripsit: ‘septingenti sunt paulo plus aut minus anni Augusto augurio postquam incluta condita Roma est.’” Applied to Augustus: Suet. *Aug.* 7.2.

54 Dio Cassius 57.18.3, explained as the consul L. Norbanus practising.

55 Plut. *Sulla* 7.3–5; *Suda* s.v. Σύλλας (attributing it to Livy and Diodorus). Cf. Servius on *Aen.* 8.526: “Varro de saeculis auditum sonum tubae de caelo dicit” (“Varro ‘On Saecula’ says that the sound of a trumpet was heard from the sky”).

56 Augustus *de Vita Sua* frag. 5 Peter (Servius *auctus* on *Ecl.* 9.46), specifying an *oratio in contione*.

57 Censorinus *de Die Natali* 17.5–6: “ut Varro testatur . . . octauum tum demum agi.”

the message might be.⁵⁸ And if that was true in the sophisticated Rome of the first century C.E., it was true *a fortiori* in the time of Ennius.

V

Why did Ennius call his epic *Annales*? Diomedes, in the passage with which we began, says it was because it contained “the events of practically each year, like the public annals composed by the priests and scribes” (see p. 513 above). But that cannot be the whole story. Even if the chronicle of the *pontifices* did indeed go back to the fifth century B.C.E., as Tim Cornell and Stephen Oakley believe,⁵⁹ it could have provided a year-by-year framework only from the fourth book of the *Annales* onwards. The narrative from Aeneas to Tarquin could not have been written in that way, and even for the early republic there is no evidence that anyone used the annalistic form, consular year by consular year, before L. Piso Frugi in the 120s B.C.E.⁶⁰

But that was not the only way of measuring years. The latest work on chronography in Ennius’s time was by Eratosthenes of Cyrene, who was interested in the origins of Rome. He believed Romulus was the son of Ascanius, and since he put the fall of Troy in 1184/3 B.C.E., that implies a date in the region of 1140–1120 for the foundation of the city.⁶¹ Ennius, too, has Romulus as Aeneas’s grandson; but he gained some chronological leeway by making him the son of Aeneas’s younger daughter, who was born in Italy, rather than of the son who fled with Aeneas from Troy.⁶² So if, as is likely, the famous lines about the 700 years belong in a speech of Camillus after the sack of Rome by the Gauls, he may have had a somewhat later foundation date in mind.⁶³

58 Cf. Lucr. 1.102–03 (note 31, above).

59 Cornell 1995.13–15, Oakley 1997.24–27; see Wiseman 2002.354–57 for a skeptical view.

60 For Piso as the innovative annalist, see Forsyth 1994.42; cf. Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Ant. Rom.* 4.7.5, 4.15.5, 12.9.3 (Πείσων δὲ ὁ τιμητικὸς ἐν ταῖς ἐνιαυσίοις ἀναγραφαῖς, “Piso, the ex-censor, in his yearly annals”).

61 Eratosthenes *FGrH* 241 F1 (Troy date), F45 (Romulus); respectively Clement of Alexandria *Stromateis* 1.138.1–3 and Servius *auctus* on *Aen.* 1.273.

62 Ennius *Ann.* 36: Ilia’s speech to her half-sister, “Eurydica prognata, pater quam noster amauit” (“daughter of Eurydice, whom our father loved”). Cf. Pausanias 10.26.1 for Eurydice = Creusa.

63 Ennius *Ann.* 154–55 (note 53, above). According to Skutsch 1968.12, “Without a doubt, both Eratosthenes and Ennius assumed that Rome was founded about 1100 BC”; but that ignores the difference between the two accounts.

The date of the sack of Rome was known pretty accurately: Polybius's "387/6 B.C.E." is probably from Timaeus, and the detailed chronology in his account of Rome's subsequent wars with the Gauls no doubt represents what Fabius Pictor knew.⁶⁴ So one might guess that Ennius's chronological era was constructed backwards from the triumph of M. Fulvius Nobilior in 187 B.C.E. A thousand years before that was close enough to Eratosthenes' date for the fall of Troy; the foundation of Rome by the son of the daughter of Aeneas's old age could be put a hundred years later, in 1087,⁶⁵ and narrative landmarks could be put at century intervals thereafter; hence the seven hundred years in 387 B.C.E.

Nobody knows how Ennius imagined the regal period, or when he thought the republic began. But once the list of seven kings became canonical,⁶⁶ and the first consuls were firmly placed in the twenty-eighth year before Xerxes' invasion of Greece,⁶⁷ his system was no longer viable. By that point, the foundation was agreed to be much later than Ennius had it—for instance in 747 B.C.E. (Fabius Pictor), or 728 (Cincius Alimentus), or 751 (Cato)⁶⁸—and a dynasty of Alban kings had been created to reach back to Aeneas.⁶⁹

New patterns had to be found for the passing of time. In Virgil, Jupiter prophesies three years for Aeneas, thirty for Ascanius, 300 for the Alban kings.⁷⁰ In Livy, Camillus dates the sack of Rome to *ab urbe condita* 365, the magical number representing a "year of years."⁷¹

64 Polyb. 1.6.1–2, 2.18.6–19.7; Walbank 1957.46–48, 185–87.

65 Cf. Syme 1958.772–74, inferring a tradition that Rome had been founded in 1084 B.C.E., 1200 years before Trajan's death in 117 C.E.

66 The reign of Tullus Hostilius may have originated with the emergence of the senatorial Hostilii (praetors in 209 and 207 B.C.E.). For the eight bronze statues on the Capitol, supposedly the seven kings plus L. Brutus (Asconius 29 Clark; Pliny *Nat.* 33.9, 33.24; Dio Cassius 43.45.3–4; Appian *BC* 1.16.70), see Coarelli 1999.

67 Polyb. 3.22.2 (from Fabius?).

68 Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Ant. Rom.* 1.74.1–2.

69 Diod. 7.5.6–12 (from the Armenian version of Eusebius's *Chronicle*); Livy 1.3.6–10; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Ant. Rom.* 1.71; Ovid *Met.* 14.609–21, *Fasti* 4.39–54; *Origo Gentis Romanae* 17.4–19.1. The new system was already in being in the third century B.C.E.: see Forsythe 1994.113–23.

70 Virg. *Aen.* 1.265–74. Servius (on *Aen.* 1.272) was puzzled: "quomodo trecentos annos dicit, cum eam [i.e., gentem Hectoream] quadringentis regnasse constet sub Albanis regibus?" ("How can he say 300 years, when it is agreed that [the dynasty] reigned 400 under the Alban kings?").

71 Livy 5.54.5; see Hubaux 1958.13–88. Magical: *Papyri Graecae Magicae* 12.139; cf. (e.g.) Pliny *Nat.* 19.12, 34.33; Quintus Curtius 3.3.10; Heliodorus *Aethiopica* 9.226; Augustine *de Ciuitate Dei* 18.53.

It is tantalizing not to know on what grounds the learned senator Manilius in 97 B.C.E. calculated the “great year” marked by the life cycle of the phoenix: evidently the current era had begun in 312 B.C.E. (Ap. Claudius’s revolutionary censorship), and the previous one in 852 B.C.E.⁷² The latter date looks like a century before the foundation; is it completely a coincidence that Jerome, who had access to otherwise unknown traditions on early Rome, put the first “centenary games” in 452 B.C.E.⁷³ Whatever arcane systems were devised, the simple hundred-year *saeculum* always retained its power.

The annalist Piso Frugi marked the opening of Rome’s seventh *saeculum* in 158 B.C.E.;⁷⁴ other historians noted significant events in *ab urbe condita* 400 (a patrician “backlash”) and 700 (a disastrous fire);⁷⁵ and Claudius Caesar held Secular Games, and displayed a fake phoenix, in the eight hundredth year of the city.⁷⁶ But as we have seen already, not everyone believed the chronology of historians and emperors. If the prophets were chanting that thrice 300 years had come and gone, that was enough to cause panic among the people (see, above, notes 48 and 49).

A late-republican expert on prophecy told Varro that, provided the historians’ narrative about Romulus’s augury was true, the gods had promised that the Roman people would last 1200 years, one century for each vulture.⁷⁷ What is interesting is the reservation. Historians were notoriously capable of lying,⁷⁸ whereas prophets could claim that their knowledge came straight from the gods. Poets were liars, too, and yet privileged to see the

72 Pliny *Nat.* 10.4–5: the 215th year of a 540-year era (if the numerals in Pliny’s text are reliable).

73 Jerome *Chron. a. a.* 1563 (“Romae . . . agon centenarius primum actus”); cf. *a.a.* 1263 for the unique version of Remus’s death (“a Fabio Romuli duce occisus”). On the rival sequences of *Ludi Saeculares*, see Wiseman 1998.165–67.

74 Piso frag. 36 Peter (Censorinus *de Die Natali* 17.13).

75 Livy 7.18.1 (perhaps from Licinius Macer); Orosius 6.14.5, 7.2.11 (from Livy).

76 Tac. *Ann.* 11.11.1, Pliny *Nat.* 10.5.

77 Varro *Antiq. Hum.* Book 18 (frag. 4 Mirsch), cited in Censorinus *de Die Natali* 17.15: “ait fuisse Vettium Romae in augurio non ignobilem ingenio magno, cuius docto in disceptando parem; eum se audisse dicentem, *si ita esset ut traderent historici* de Romuli urbis condendae auguriis ac XII vulturis, quoniam CXX annos incolumis preterisset populus Romanus, ad mille et ducentos peruenturum.”

78 Evidence and discussion in Gill and Wiseman 1993.122–46.

gods;⁷⁹ the Muses themselves taught Hesiod that they could tell both lies and truth alike (*Theogony* 22–28).

Ennius was inspired by the Muses of Olympus, who were also the Latin Camenae.⁸⁰ He used the meter of Homer rather than that of the Fauns and prophets, and no doubt his sweet-voiced Egeria sounded quite different from the terrifying threats of the Lucretian *uates*.⁸¹ Nevertheless, the title of his great work suggests that he saw the world in much the same way that they did. It is appropriate that later readers could treat his lines as the oracles of a prophet.⁸²

Of course, Ennius is rightly celebrated as a pioneering innovator, the founder of a great tradition, a poet who deserves his place in Raphael's *Parnassus* next to Homer, Dante, and Virgil. But he is no less interesting as a witness of his own time, when the conditions of pre-literary Rome were still familiar.

University of Exeter

79 Ovid *Fasti* 6.23 (“*ius tibi fecisti numen caeleste uidendi*,” says Juno, “You have made for yourself the right of seeing a heavenly power.”), but also 6.253 (“*non equidem uidi—ualeant mendacia uatum!*” “I didn’t see her myself—away with the lies of poets!”).

80 Ennius *Ann.* 1 and 487; note 29, above.

81 Ennius *Ann.* 113: “*olli respondit suauis sonus Egeriai*.” Threats: note 31, above.

82 Cic. *Rep.* 5.1 (note 52, above); cf. Cole pp. 532–33 in this volume.