WEIGHTY WORDS, SUSPECT SPEECH: *FARI* IN ROMAN CULTURE*

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When he set out to recount the legend of Tarpeia—that ill-fated Roman maiden who, out of love for the Sabine Tatius, allowed Rome's enemies inside her gates—Propertius did not neglect to preface his poem with a solemn declaration of his intentions, as was customary for ancient poets. Tradition demanded that this preamble somehow advertise the subject of the poem; only on this occasion, Propertius's choice of words was rather particular (*Elegiae* 4.4.1–2):

> Tarpeium nemus et Tarpeiae turpe sepulchrum
> *fabor* et antiqui limina capta Iovis.
>
> The Tarpeian grove and Tarpeia's appalling tomb will I sing, and the captured threshold of ancient Jupiter.

Why did Propertius choose the strange term *fabor*? He could have said *referam* or *referemus* (as, in fact, he does in the case of the Temple of

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Palatine Apollo, which he also "sings": *Palatini referemus Apollinis aedem,* 4.6.11), or used a similar word such as *canam* or *dicam*. I suggest that, by choosing this precise expression, Propertius intended to describe himself as a poet-seer, a priest or *vates*, and thereby to claim the right to employ a mode of speech endowed with discernible qualities of sacredness and power in Roman culture. In this paper, then, I will attempt to characterize as fully as possible the mode of speech that the Romans classify with the verb *fari.* As I will demonstrate, *fari* represents a way of speaking that far surpasses other normal utterances in terms of its authority, efficacy, and credibility. However, it is for this very reason that *fari* also, rather paradoxically, always risks losing its trustworthiness and credibility. In the course of this study of *fari*, moreover, I will consider some key terms in Roman culture such as *facundia*, *fama*, and *fabula*, and the cultural models that these terms represent.

1. WORDS OF REVELATION AND WORDS OF POWER

Fari is an archaic word. Cicero considered the compound *effari* already obsolete by his own day (*de Oratore* 3.153). Furthermore, the simplex *fari* came to be used to describe the normal way of speaking only in highly stylized contexts, such as epic poetry (cf. Vergil *Aen.* 6.389: *fare age, quid venias?* "Come then, tell me: why do you come?"). This fact alone suggests that *fari* connotes a very specific way of speaking that is different from those implied by more common terms such as *loquor*, *aio,* and *dico*. This impression will be confirmed by more detailed analysis.

Already in archaic poetry, the verb *fari* describes the speech of soothsayers or a "voice" that reveals hidden secrets: thus we find Anchises, to whom the goddess Venus *fari donavit,* "gave the power to predict the future" (Ennius *Ann.* frags. 15–16 Skutsch); and Aeneas, who, in a dream, *ef-fatus,* "prophesied" (frag. 46 Skutsch) to his daughter the misfortunes she will have to endure. Likewise, ancient Roman religion knew of two divinities Fatuus and Fatua whose names undoubtedly derive from *fari* and whose province was prophetic speech.[1] This way of speaking was the char-

1 Varro *de Ling. Lat.* 6.52, 55; Servius in *Aen*. 6.775, 8.314; Justin 43.1.8; etc. Cf. Wissowa 1971.211. The connection is somewhat forced, but the Romans also derived the name of

acteristic mode of speech of the prophet, therefore, e.g., Seneca's Oedipus implores Tiresias to explain the meaning of Apollo's oracles, commanding the seer, "Resolve the oracle's meaning and reveal (*fare*) the name of that man whom we should punish!" (Seneca *Oed.* 291–92). Later, when Manto presses Tiresias to explain the terrible events unfolding before her eyes, he responds, "What could I possibly reveal (*fari*), wandering, ruined as I am, through this mental turmoil?" (328–29).

That *fari* means "to reveal" helps to explain its connection with *fateor,* "to confess," through the participle *fatus*:[2] "confession" is fundamentally a mode of "revelation," and it is quite natural for these two actions to be designated by terms derived from the same root. The link between the verb *fari* and prophetic expression is probably also reflected in the curious grammatical idiosyncrasy that *fari* never appears in the first person in the present indicative but only in the future indicative (Macrobius frag. 25 Keil). *Fabor*, rather than **for*, is the form that Roman authors employ: in other words, if a speaker wishes to perform an act of *fari*, he must project the moment of his utterance into the future.[3]

When Jupiter reveals to Venus the destiny that awaits the Trojans in Italy, previewing the entire mythical history of Aeneas in Latium, he declares, "fabor . . . longius et volvens fatorum arcana movebo," "I will speak . . . and will further unroll the arcane designs of fate and set them in motion" (Vergil *Aen.* 1.261–62). Spoken by the authoritative voice of Jupiter, the prophetic act of *fari* corresponds directly to the realization of the god's statement: *fari*, that is, implies a powerful way of speaking in the sense that it reveals events that are still unknown and directly brings about their realization. In this regard, Statius, alluding to the Vergilian text, is even more explicit than his model: speaking of Jupiter, he says, "His words are weighty and immutable; destiny (*fata*) follows upon his speech" (Statius *Theb.* 1.212ff.). *Fari*, then, is an absolute assertion that cannot be contradicted because it is not limited to the act of speaking: it simultaneously actualizes the utterance.

Faunus, an equally prophetic divinity, from *fari*: Varro *de Ling. Lat.* 7.36, Servius in *Buc*. 6.27, etc. A god "Fatuclus" is mentioned at Servius in *Aen*. 6.775, 7.47; cf. Bader 1978.

2 On the derivation of *fāteor* from *fātus*, compared to *fāri*, cf. Leumann 1979.555.

3 Besides the Vergilian example discussed here and the example of Propertius 4.4.2, cf., e.g., Seneca *Phaedra* 885, Valerius Flaccus *Argonautica* 4.578, 8.184, etc.

2. SPOKEN DESTINIES, WRITTEN DESTINIES

Jupiter's act of *fari* simultaneously declares and creates an event. In this light, we can understand why, in Roman culture, "fate" is described not simply in verbal terms but specifically in terms of *fari*. "Fate" (*fatum*) is "said," but being uttered by a divine voice and belonging to the sphere of *fari*, this utterance both expresses and establishes someone's destiny. *Fari* again appears to involve very effectual speech; once spoken, the utterance (*fatum*) binds a person and determines his or her lot in life.[4] Not accidentally, Servius understands Dido's words "et sic fata Iovis poscunt," "Thus stipulate the destinies (decisions) of Jupiter," to mean, "Thus stipulate the words (statements) of Jupiter." Servius remarks, "Here *fata* is a participle, not a substantive."[5] The grammarian's interpretation of *fata* as the perfect passive participle of the verb *fari* is almost too subtle, but he was not wrong of course: for how can one tell whether Jupiter's *fata* are "words" or "destinies?" Spoken by the father of gods and men, the two inextricably become one.

For Varro there was no question, however: the speaker, or rather the speakers, of determinative utterances producing *fata* were the Parcae: cf. Varro *de Ling. Lat.* 6.7.52: "ab hoc tempora quod tum pueris constituant Parcae fando, dictum fatum et res fatales," "Since the Parcae allot children their time on earth by 'speaking' (*fando*), we say 'fate' and 'fateful.'"[6] The speech (*fari*) of the Parcae apportions to a newborn its lifespan and automatically determines its *fatum*. Livius Andronicus expresses something similar in his translation of the *Odyssey,* writing with the archaic dignity that marks his poetry, "When that day shall arrive, which Fate (Morta) has solemnly predicted (*profata*)."[7] The goddess of destiny, bearing the curious

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4 On the meaning of *fatum*, see, in particular, Pötscher 1978.393ff.

5 Servius in *Aen*. 4.614: "fata Iovis poscunt: 'fata' dicta, id est Iovis voluntas: hic ergo participium est, non nomen"; cf. also 6.640.

6 Other passages are collected by Tels-De Jong 1960.86 n. 1.

7 Livius Andronicus *Odyssey* frag. 11 Morel. I do not think that *pro-*, prefixed to *fari* in the word *profata*, signifies the anteriority typical of divination ("to speak beforehand"). As we know, *fari* itself already possesses this sense of "to prophesy," while *pro-* in composition with verbs of speaking seems to signify above all "to speak in front of," "to speak solemnly": *proloquor*, *profiteor*, *pronuntio*, etc. On this meaning of *pro-* in compounds, cf. Kranz 1907.19ff. Even in Lucretius *DRN* 1.749 and Petronius *Satyricon* 89, where the act of *profari* does designate prophetic activity, *pro-* may emphasize the solemnity of the

name Morta in this tradition (cf. Mariotti 1980.20, 29 n.), simultaneously has "predicted" and "determined" the day of death: her act of *pro-fari* actually creates the "fate" of the person to whom her words are addressed.

At Rome, the three Parcae were named Nona, Decuma, and Parca. These names are quite different from those of the Moirai of Greek tradition—Lachesis, Clotho, and Atropos—and of mysterious meaning. Aulus Gellius, however, citing Varro, explains these names in the following way (Varro frag. 132 Funaioli = Aulus Gellius *NA* 3.16.9):

> antiquos . . . nomina Fatis tribus fecisse a pariendo et a nono atque decimo mense . . . "Nam Parca" inquit "inmutata una littera a partu nominata, item Nona et Decima a partus tempestivi tempore."
>
> The ancients . . . gave names to the three Fates, deriving them from the verb *pario*, "to give birth," and from the ninth and tenth months. "In fact," says Varro, "Parca comes from the noun *partus,* 'birth,' with the change of one letter; Nona and Decima come from the period of timely delivery."

The three Parcae, then, are associated closely with the moment of delivery and birth: the first two, Nona and Decuma, because a period of nine or ten months was considered the most natural length of time for bringing a pregnancy to conclusion; the third, Parca, because her very name contained the root of the verb *pario* ("to give birth").[8] Given that all three Parcae—the Tria Fata—bear names linked so closely with childbirth (in Tertullian *de Anima* 37.1, Varro's Parca is replaced by the even more transparent Partula), it seems likely that their statements are uttered precisely at that time. The newborn receives a verdict: "by speaking" (*fando*), the three goddesses determine the amount of time that a human being, pushed from his mother's womb, will go on to live.

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prophetic utterance. On the single remaining verse of the *Carmen Priami* (= Varro *de Ling. Lat.* 7.28 = p. 29 Morel): "veteres Casmenas, cascam rem volo profari," see below.

8 Varro's derivation is accepted by modern scholars as well: cf. Ernout and Meillet 1967 s.v. (*Parca* is **Parica*, from *pario*) and Wissowa 1971.266f.

In Roman religious representation, the Parcae "pronounce" (*fari*) the "destiny" (*fatum*) of a child at the moment of its birth. But how is this utterance of the Parcae brought to the attention of the child's parents and relatives? Only in the myth of Meleager's birth (and in fables of medieval Europe, when the Parcae have become the "Three Fates," the Roman Fata) do these supernatural beings appear at the bedside of the pregnant woman to reveal in detail what awaits her newborn child.[9] In reality, these *fata*, sanctioned by the Parcae or by divinity in general, took the form of divinatory messages or "signs."

In his biographies, Suetonius carefully reported the "events" that accompanied the births of the Caesars, and such events were considered capable of giving advance notice of the child's destiny. For example, speaking of Augustus, Suetonius writes, "non ab re fuerit subtexere, quae eius prius quam nasceretur et ipso natali die ac deinceps evenerint, quibus futura magnitudo eius . . . sperari animadvertique posset," "It will not be out of place here to add the events that occurred before he was born, on the day of his birth, and afterwards; from these occurrences, it was possible to presage and realize his future greatness" (Suetonius *Aug.* 94). The destiny of the *princeps* lay somewhere between the "events" (*quae . . . evenerint*) that happened before, during, and after his birth and the prophetic "meaning" that could be gleaned from these (*sperari animadvertique posset*). In other words, such events formed a complex of prophetic signs, whether received unexpectedly or deliberately sought, like a horoscope, through which the newborn's destiny could be mapped out.

The technical term for this in Latin was *genitura*,[10] and among the huge set of possible signs that could occur were strokes of lightning, unnatural portents, dreams, and involuntary outbursts of speech (*omina*), as well as specific behaviors on the part of the child (e.g., laughing at his parents) or those of the parents in respect to the infant.[11] For example, when Suetonius writes of Nero's *genitura,* he speaks of portents that occurred

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9 On the three divinities of fate who appear at the birth of Meleager, cf. Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1.8.2, Hyginus *Fabulae* 171.1–2; on the "fairy godmothers" of folkloric literature, cf. Thompson 1932.F 311.1, 312, 316, 361.1; A 463.1; M 301.12; Belmont 1971.175–80; see also Harf-Lancner 1984.

10 Suetonius *Augustus* 94, *Caligula* 57, *Vitellius* 3, *Vespasian* 25, *Titus* 9; Ammianus Marcellinus *Res Gestae* 29.1.5, 27; Eutropius *Breviarium* 7.20, etc. The term *genesis* has the same meaning (cf., e.g., Suetonius *Vespasian* 14).

11 Vergil *Eclogues* 4.60ff., Servius in *Buc*. 4.1e62.

both at the moment of the emperor's birth and on his *dies lustricus* (Suetonius *Nero* 6):

> de genitura eius statim multa et formidulosa multis coniectantibus praesagio fuit etiam Domitii patris vox, inter gratulationes amicorum negantis "quicquam ex se et Agrippina nisi detestabile et malo publico nasci potuisse." Eiusdem futurae infelicitatis signum evidens die lustrico extitit: nam C. Caesar, rogante sorore ut infanti quod vellet nomen daret, intuens Claudium patruum suum, a quo mox principe Nero adoptatus est, "eius se" dixit "dare," neque ipse serio sed per iocum et aspernante Agrippina, quod tum Claudius inter ludibria aulae erat.
>
> Since many people made many fearful predictions regarding his *genitura*, certain words spoken by his father Domitius were also taken as a portent: Domitius, while he was receiving his friends' congratulations, denied the possibility of "anything ever being produced by him and by Agrippina that was not detestable and destined to do public harm." There was another manifest sign of Nero's future unhappiness, as well, on his *dies lustricus*. In fact, Gaius Caesar, when his sister turned to him and encouraged him to give the child whatever name he wished, looked at Claudius, his paternal uncle, by whom Nero was later adopted when he became emperor, and said the following: "I want to give him *his* name." But he was only joking, and Agrippina rejected this idea because, at that time, Claudius was still considered a laughingstock in the imperial court.

As may be seen, the *fatum* decreed for the child through divine "speech" appeared in the form of spontaneously occurring signs occurring around the occasion of the child's birth—verbal *omina* in this case, *voces*. Particularly interesting from this point of view is the fact that such prophetic occurrences came to be used in choosing a baby's name. The connection between an individual's name and his destiny should not be underestimated: an individual's *nomen*, in the same way as the *fatum*, represents his or her personal identity. It is perhaps not coincidental, then, that these closely connected aspects of the individual were determined by analogous procedures.

The Romans were aware of a class of names assigned *ex casu nascentium,* "on the basis of circumstances surrounding birth."[12] The late antique poet Ausonius explained why his nephew was given the name Pastor ("Shepherd"): at the moment of the child's birth, the sound of a shepherd's flute was heard (Ausonius *Parentalia* 11: "nomen quod casus dederat, quia fistula primum / pastorale melos concinuit genito," "Chance gave him a name, since the song of a shepherd's flute attended his birth"). Unfortunately for the child, Ausonius goes on to say, this should have been taken as an ill omen ("sero intellectum vitae brevis argumentum," "Too late it was understood as the sign of a short life"), because when a flute is played, the *spiritus*—not only the musician's "breath," but also the breath of life—is expelled. This is still the realm of "chance occurrence" (*casus*); but for Ausonius and his culture, the verbal *omen* heard by chance offers a name for the baby as well as a sign predicting its destiny.

In Roman tradition, nine days passed in the case of boys and eight days in the case of girls before a newborn child was given a *praenomen*. The day set aside for this purpose was known as the *dies lustricus* ("the day of purification").[13] On this day, the presence of a group of mysteriously named divinities was invoked along with that of the goddess Nundina: the Fata Scribunda, literally, "Destinies to Be Written Down." In a passage dedicated to the (in his opinion) demonic rites with which the gentiles celebrate the birth of their children, Tertullian writes (Tertullian *de Anima* 39.2):

> ita omnes idololatria obstetrice nascuntur . . . dum in partu Lucinae et Dianae eiulatur, dum per totam hebdomadem Iunoni mensa proponitur, dum ultima die Fata Scribunda advocantur, dum prima etiam constitutio infantis super terram Statinae deae sacrum est.

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12 Quintilian 1.4.25: "scrutabitur ille praeceptor acer atque subtilis origines nominum: quae ex habitu corpori 'Rufos' 'Longos'que fecerunt . . . et ex casu nascentium (hic 'Agrippa' et 'Opiter' et 'Cordus' et 'Postumus' erunt)." Plutarch *Coriolanus* 11 speaks similarly of names assigned ἐπὶ συντυχίᾳ γενέσεως, "on the occasion of a birth."

13 Cf. Macrobius *Sat.* 1.16.36: "est etiam Nundina Romanorum dea a nono die nascentium nuncupata, qui lustricus dicitur. est autem dies lustricus, quo infantes lustrantur et nomen accipiunt, sed is maribus nonus, octavus est feminis." Cf. also Plutarch *Quaestiones Romanae* 104, Festus *de Verborum Significatu* 107ff. Lindsay, Macrobius *Saturnalia* 1.16.36, Suetonius *Nero* 6; cf. Wissowa 1971.392 n. 3, Marquardt 1879.10ff., Dupont 1993.7ff. In Tertullian *de Idololatria* 16.1, the *dies lustricus* is called *Nominalia* ("the festival of names"): see Tels-De Jong 1960.119ff.

> Thus idolatry plays the midwife when everyone is born . . . since at the birth, they shout the names of Lucina and Diana; for an entire week, they organize banquets for Iuno and, on the day of purification, the Fata Scribunda are invoked; the first time that the baby is put on the earth represents an act sacred to the goddess Statina.[14]

Unfortunately, Tertullian is rather sparing in the details he gives about the Fata Scribunda. Linguistically speaking, they are enigmatic as well and have created many problems of interpretation for scholars.[15] In particular, the gerundive seems unsuited to the function expressed by their name. Perhaps they should be imagined as divinities that intervene as the active subjects of writing—Parcae that "write," not divinities that "are written"—but in that case, we should expect Fata Scribentia rather than Fata Scribunda.[16] Forcing the usual meaning of the gerundive to construe it in some novel way is simply avoiding the problem.[17]

What does it mean that these divinities—these Fata—are "to Be Written Down" or "Needing to Be Written Down"? It is significant that the Fata seem to be a kind of divinity, grouped as they are with Lucina, Diana, Iuno, and Statina. Evidently, they should be equated with the Parcae, whom Varro called the Tria Fata. Epigraphic sources also mention the Tria Fata, predecessors of the Fates who populate medieval and modern folklore.[18] Moreover, some "biographical" Roman sarcophagi depict scenes with the following *dramatis personae*: a mother and another woman (a nurse, probably) who lifts a baby from a bath as if wishing to present it to the mother and, standing behind them, three other women. One of these marks with her finger a point on a globe, another holds in her hands a *volumen*, and the third does not appear to have any particular attributes (in other similar

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14 Cf. Bettini 1998.117ff.

15 On the various possible interpretations of *scribunda,* see Tels-De Jong 1960.105ff. and, in particular, the discussion in Perfigli 2004.63ff.

16 Some scholars have attempted, in vain, to force the passive meaning of the gerundive ("*Fata* that write"): cf. Tels-De Jong 1960.107ff., Pötscher 1978; cf. Hofmann-Szantyr 1972.369ff.

17 On the problems posed by this passage of Tertullian, see, in particular, the comment of Waszink 1947.44–45 (on which many scholars have drawn, not always citing it).

18 Varro frag. 132 Funaioli, Aulus Gellius *NA* 3.16; *LIMC* 5.1.581–82. For the Fates of the medieval period, see the classic study of Harf-Lancner 1984.

scenes, one of the three holds a spindle in her hand: cf. *LIMC* 6.2.41 and 45). There can be no doubt that these three women represent the Moirai or the Parcae (see figures 1–5; cf. Small 1997.72ff.).

This brings us to the previously mentioned passage of Servius in which the commentator remarks (ad loc.) on the famous Vergilian phrase describing the future and fateful enmity between Carthage and Rome, and the equally fatal ruin that Rome will bear to the shores of Libya: *sic volvere Parcas,* "this the Fates unfold" (*Aen.* 1.22). The sense of the statement is clear: the destruction of Carthage by the descendants of the Trojans is something that the Parcae "decide." But what of the metaphor embodied in

Figure 1 (*LIMC* VI.2, FATUM 2: fresco: Rome, Via Appia, Catacombs of Vibia, Tomb of Vicentius). The three standing females are identified by the inscription as FATA DIVINA. They are veiled, lacking attributes, and painted grey-brown. The Fata attend the judgment of the deceased Vibia, who is accompanied by Alkestis.

Figure 2 (*LIMC* VI.2, MOIRAI 38: sarcophagus: Agrigento, Museo Regionale). From the Roman necropolis on the plain to the south of the hill where the temples stand in Agrigento; around the middle of the second century C.E. On the side of a young boy's sarcophagus, behind a scene depicting the presentation of the boy to his mother (who is seated on the right before the nurse who lifts the child), the three Moirai stand behind the bath. The first on the left indicates a point on a globe atop a column; the second is at the center of the relief with a *volumen* in hand; and the third, whose head only is visible, stands at the side of the globe.

the verb *volvere*? Modern commentators have frequently posed this question; however, in antiquity, Servius had already offered an answer: "volvere Parcas: aut a filo traxit 'volvere' aut a libro: una enim loquitur, altera scribit, alia fila deducit," "'the Parcae turned': He (sc. Vergil) took *volvere* either from the language of spinning or from the language of the book: in fact, (of the three Parcae) one speaks, one writes, and one spins."[19] In the Greek tradition, the Parcae are usually represented uniformly as spinners

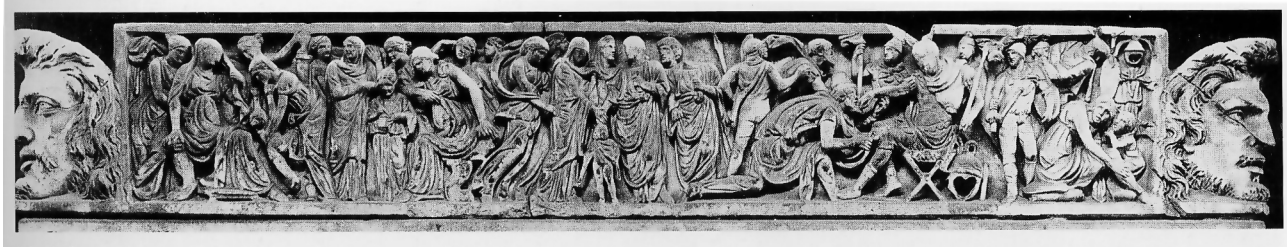
19 "*Volvere* may suggest the turning of the fates' spindles, or simply the 'unrolling' of their plans": Austin 1971 ad loc.

Moirai 39

Figure 3 (*LIMC* VI.2, MOIRAI 39: sarcophagus: Florence, Uffizi Gallery 82; until the eighteenth century, it belonged to the Villa Medici in Rome). On the left side: behind the scene of the presentation of the newborn to the mother are two Moirai, standing, clothed in long *chitons* drawn up high. The first on the left inscribes or indicates a point on a globe atop a pilaster; the second, on the right of the pilaster, extends a *volumen* in her left hand and leans her right hand against the globe.

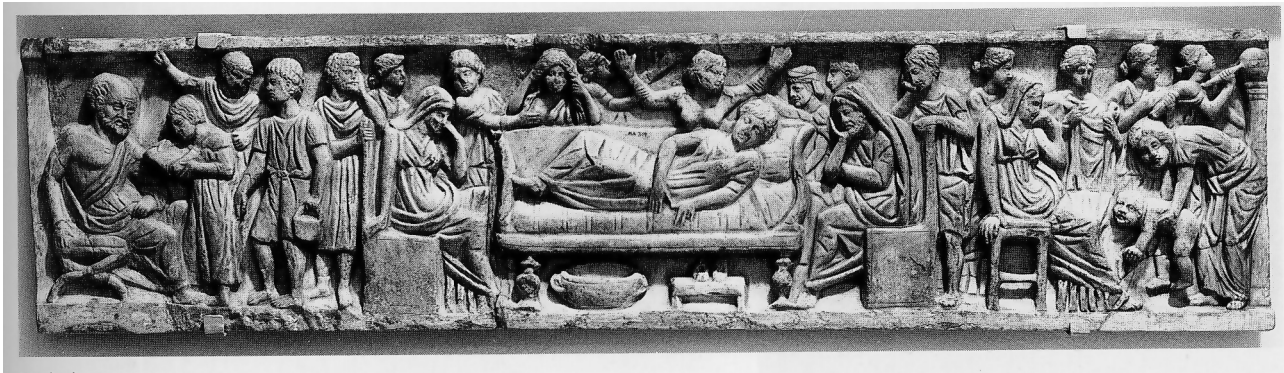
ON FACING PAGE: Figure 4 (*LIMC* VI.2, MOIRAI 42: sarcophagus lid: Rome, Museo Nazionale Rom. 112327). On the far left, behind the scene of infancy, a Moira, standing, signals or inscribes a point of a sundial on a pilaster.

Figure 5 (*LIMC* VI.2, MOIRAI 43: sarcophagus: Paris, Louvre MA 319; once in the Valle collection and then in the Borghese collection until 1803). On the far right, behind the scene of infancy, are two standing Moirai; the first, right, who indicates or inscribes with a stylus a point on a globe atop a pilaster; the second, behind the first, holds a *volumen* in her hands. A third Moira is perhaps recognizable, although lacking any attributes, in a female figure standing behind the mother.



Moirai 42

Figure 4



Moirai 43

Figure 5

(cf. Catullus 64.310ff.); Servius tells us that at Rome, on the other hand, they had different specializations: the first "speaks," uttering someone's destiny verbally, the second "writes" it, and the third "spins" it. It is likely that the commentator's explanation of *volvere* as a metaphor drawn from the language of the book (*a libro*) presupposes representations such as those I have described above, including the image of a Parca holding a *volumen* in her hand. What is missing in Servius is mention of the "astrological" Parca, who marks the baby's *genitura* on the globe: in lieu of this, he explicitly tells us that one of the three Parcae *scribit*, meaning obviously that she "writes" the *fata*, an act placed on the same level as their more regular one of "spinning."[20]

In what context should depictions of the intervention of the three Parcae on "biographical" sarcophagi be placed? As far as may be judged from such representations, the child is not a newborn baby, nor does the woman to whom the child is presented—presumably the mother—have the look of someone who has just given birth. Given that the child appears to be removed from a water basin, we are probably entitled to take these scenes as representations of the *lustratio* that occurred on the *dies lustricus*.[21] In the figures of the Parcae behind the child—and, in particular, in that of the one holding the *volumen* in her hand—are we presented with the Fata Scribunda, the "writing of the fates" that accompanied the ritual purification of the child and the attribution of its name on the *dies lustricus*? On that day, the Parca specialized in writing "writes" (*scribit*) on the *volumen*

20 Elsewhere in Roman poetry, destinies take on a "written" form. The most interesting example is certainly that of Ovid *Metamorphoses* 15.807ff. (the apotheosis of Caesar). Venus is terrified by the imminent murder of Caesar and wishes to protect him in the cloud in which, in his time, Paris was sheltered from Menelaus, but Jupiter admonishes her: "Do you wish to fight against fate alone? Go to the home of the three sisters, there you shall find the archive of the world (*rerum tabularia*), a huge construction, made of bronze and of solid iron, indestructible and eternal, which fears neither the thundering of heaven, nor lightning's anger, nor any other ruin"; and later, 813–15: "invenies illic incisa adamante perenni / fata tui generis. Legi ipse animoque notavi, / et referam," "You will find there the destiny of your race, inscribed in eternal adamant. I myself read it and noted it in my mind, and I shall tell it." The description of destiny is eminently Roman: heroically "bureaucratic," assuming the form of a state archive. Cf. also Claudian *de Bello Gildonico* 202ff. This time it is Jupiter who speaks while "voces adamante notabat / Atropos, et Lachesis iungebat stamina dictis" "Atropos noted down these words in adamant as Lachesis joined threads to the words."

21 The hypothesis that this scene represents the *dies lustricus* has already been advanced by Feinblatt 1952.

that she holds in her hand the "word" uttered by the Parca who "speaks" (*loquitur*), as Servius says.[22]

In the realm of mythology and iconography, it is not difficult to depict a Parca who "speaks" or "writes" in determining a newborn child's destiny. What then is the ritual (and therefore real) enactment of this religious representation? In other words, how do the Parcae (or how does just one Parca) "speak" on the *dies lustricus*? This process may have been realized through the *omina* uttered unconsciously by those in attendance and from which inspiration was drawn for the newborn's name. This consideration may actually provide a solution to the mystery of the Fata Scribunda. Speaking of his maternal uncle Aemilius Magnus Arborius, the poet Ausonius asserts, "me tibi, me patribus clarum decus esse professus, / dictasti Fatis verba notanda meis," "Declaring that my birth was a source of honor for you and for my ancestors, you dictated to my Fata words to take down" (Ausonius *Parentalia* 3.21ff.; cf. Tels-De Jong 1960.119ff.). Ausonius may be referring to an event that occurred on his own *dies lustricus*.[23] Whatever the case, the words of joy uttered by the maternal uncle to his young nephew—of the type "decus est puer mihi patribusque nostris!"—functioned as a favorable *omen*, and, in consequence of these words, Ausonius, with the success he achieved later in life, in actual fact became a source of pride (*clarum decus*) for his entire family. To express this notion, Ausonius employs an unusual expression: the words uttered by Arborius become *verba* and the Fates are invoked to mark them down, as if Arborius were "dictating" words that the Fata were supposed to transcribe in the manner of *librarii* (or, better, *carmentarii*).[24] In fact, this image of someone who unconsciously "dictates words" (*dictat verba*) that the Fata immediately mark down occurs elsewhere

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22 According to the basic meaning of the verb *loquor* (cf. Habinek 2005.59–65), *loquitur* indicates here "unmarked communication"—the act of "uttering words," in opposition to the act of "threading" and that of "writing."

23 Thus already Scaliger 1588.148; cf. Tels-De Jong 1960.120. Ausonius, however, does not concern himself with specifically locating this event in time. Consider what the poet says in the preceding distich (19–20): "tu, postquam primis placui tibi traditus annis / dixisti, nato me, satis esse tibi," "After I, given to you, proved pleasing in those first years, you said that this was enough for you—that I had been born." Arborius's well-wishing words, then, could have been pronounced even very far in advance of Ausonius's life.

24 Servius Auctus in *Aen*. 8.336: "nam antiqui vates carmentes dicebantur, unde etiam librarios qui eorum dicta perscriberent, carmentarios nuncupatos," "For of old, poems were called *carmentes*, for which reason also the scribes who wrote down their words were called *carmentarii*."

in Latin poetry: thus Jove, or Osiris, appears surrounded by Fata who likewise transcribe the prophetic words that the god "dictates."[25]

The Fata/Parcae, then, "mark down" the destiny verbally assigned to a newborn from the *omen* that someone utters unconsciously. The similarity between the expressions used by Ausonius (*Fatis notanda*) and Tertullian (*Fata Scribunda*) is so striking that it cannot be accidental. However, while in the case of Ausonius the expression is perfectly comprehensible (the Fata are called upon to "write down" the words of destiny), no plausible sense can be made of Tertullian's text (the Fata are invoked "to be written?"). It is tempting, therefore, to make a small emendation of Tertullian's text in order to align it more closely with that of Ausonius and finally render intelligible the expression used by the Christian apologist. In fact, it is easy to imagine that an over hasty copyist simply homologized the two terminations, writing *Fata scribunda advocantur* instead of *Fatis scribunda advocantur*. The latter would mean "words are invoked (or portended) to be written by the Fata" or "words that the Fates are called upon to transcribe."[26] The order of the words in the phrase, centered entirely on the repetition of divine names in the dative case, itself recommends Fatis rather than Fata—a fourth dative in agreement with Lucinae, Dianae, Iunoni, and Statinae. Thus:

> in partu Lucinae et Dianae eiulatur, dum per totam hebdomadem Iunoni mensa proponitur, dum ultima die Fatis scribunda advocantur, dum prima etiam constitutio infantis super terram Statinae deae sacrum est.

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25 Statius *Theb.* 11.617–19: "quisnam fuit ille deorum / qui stetit orantem iuxta praereptaque verba / dictavit Fatis"; Apuleius *Met.* 11.27: "visus est . . . de eius (sc. Osiridis) ore, quo singulorum fata dictat, audisse."

26 The text of the *de Anima* is represented by a single manuscript, the *codex Agobardinus* of the 9th c., and therefore we have no way of verifying the reading. According to the apparatus of Waszink 1954, we find that, in 1597, Junius had proposed—*dubitanter*—the following emendation: *fata scribundo*. A potential obstacle to the correction that we have proposed could come from the form of the gerundive: *scribunda* in place of *scribenda*. This termination could seem "archaic" enough that it could be better suited to the name of an ancient divinity than to normal prose usage. In reality, this difficulty does not exist: gerundives in *-undus* occur throughout the entire Latin literary tradition to the late age (see the interminable list of examples in Neue-Wagener 1982.331–40). Elsewhere, Tertullian himself uses gerunds and gerundives with this ending: cf., e.g., *finium regundorum* (*Adversus Marcionem* 1.15, *de Ieiuniis* 11), *faciundo* (*Adversus Marcionem* 4.26), *dicundo* (*Apologeticus* 22, *de Idololatria* 23).

> At the birth, they shout the names of Lucina and Diana; for an entire week, they organize banquets for Juno and, on the day of purification, words are called out to be written by the Fata; the first time that the baby is put on the earth represents a ritual for the goddess Statina.

Just as there are "shouts" and "invocations" for Lucina and Diana, a banquet offering for Juno, and a sacred act for Statina when the baby is placed on the ground for the first time, so for the Fata there are "words to transcribe." As is known from the images carved on sarcophagi, the Tria Fata—the three Parcae—attend the purification of the baby and the attribution of its name on the *dies lustricus*; at least one of them (if not all three) stands ready to transfer the divine act of *fari*, revealed verbally or by means of the unconscious behavior of those who are in attendance, to writing.[27]

3. *FAS, FASTUS,* AND THE *TRIA VERBA*

At Rome, not all days were equal: there were *dies fasti*, on which it was permissible to undertake certain tasks, *dies nefasti*, on which those same undertakings were forbidden, and *dies intercisi*, when the temporal division between permissible and impermissible occurred within the space of a single day (Varro *de Ling. Lat.* 6.4.29ff; cf. 6.7.53). The distinction between *dies fasti* and *dies nefasti* will be dealt with shortly. First, however, we must consider the adjective *fastus* (of which *ne-fastus* is obviously the negative). Its origin is *fas,* a substantive meaning "what is just, permissible" and an important term in the Romans' institutional vocabulary: *fastus* therefore signifies something "having the characteristics of *fas*," and so what is "permissible, licit." A *dies fastus* is "a permissible day" appropriate for undertaking certain tasks.

Besides *fastus* and *nefastus*, forms like *nefas,* "a monstrous (almost unspeakable) act," and the adjective *nefarius,* "criminal, monstrous," derive from the same root. But to what does *fas* itself refer? Its external form (i.e., a monosyllable ending in -s) relates it to other words of the lexicon of Roman social life whose cultural significance is inversely proportional to their length: *fas, ius,* "law, right," and *mos,* "custom, habit," all belong

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27 Poccetti-Poli-Santini 2001.193ff. already suggest an intersection between the written and spoken word in the definition of "fatality" at Rome; cf. also Tels-De Jong 1960.86, 111.

to the same category. The root of the word, on the other hand, suggests that *fas* belongs to the realm of "determinative speech." The Latin formula *fas est* used with the infinitive commonly means "it is permissible to . . . ," although Emile Benveniste understands this formula as implying something more profound. According to Benveniste, *fas*, just like *fatum*, belongs to the sphere of *fari*: thus *fas est* means "what is willed by the gods."[28] If this hypothesis is correct, then in the case of *fas* as well, "speech" designated with the verb *fari* appears to be powerful and capable of "binding," defining nothing less than the boundaries between what is licit and illicit, what is permissible and what is forbidden.

The *dies fasti*, then, are days that are "permissible" in the sense that they conform to the divine word: a god has "spoken" these particular days, so to speak, he has affirmed them. Meanwhile, the *dies nefasti* are those on which the divine word has been expressed negatively.

Varro, on the other hand, explains the difference between *dies fasti* and *dies nefasti* in reference to the powers that the "speech" (*fari*) of the praetor could possess (*de Ling. Lat.* 6.4.29–30):

> dies fasti, per quos praetoribus omnia verba sine piaculo licet fari . . . contrarii horum vocantur dies nefasti, per quos dies nefas fari praetorem "do, dico, addico." Itaque non potest agi: necesse est aliquo eorum uti verbo, cum lege quid peragitur.
>
> Those days on which the praetors are authorized to pronounce any words without committing impieties are called *dies fasti*. The opposite of these are called *dies nefasti*, when the praetor is forbidden to pronounce (*fari*) the words "I allow, I affirm, I assent." So there is no possibility of conducting any business, since it is necessary to use one of these expressions when some question of the law is being dealt with.

What Varro apparently means is that the *dies fasti* are so called

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28 Benveniste 1973a.412. Ernout and Meillet 1967 give a different etymology. The ancients were not in doubt, though; they associated not only the substantive *fas* and its derivates *fastus* and *ne-fastus*, but also the word *fanum*, "temple," with the verb *fari* (cf. Maltby 1991.223ff.).

because it was on those days that the praetor had the opportunity to *fari* ("to pronounce") certain words. Varro's etymological interpretation of *fastus* is rather less persuasive than Benveniste's, however, this hardly diminishes its interest for us. According to Varro, the *verba* pronounced by the praetor are products of an act of *fari*, not an act of *dicere* or *loqui*.[29] The reason for this is clear: the words spoken by the magistrate are not any old words but a formal and powerful declaration that has the effect of law. In fact, Varro *de Lingua Latina* 6.7.53 defines the praetor's words as *certa verba legitima,* "sure words with legal force." Such words as *do*, *dico*, *addico* (those explicitly mentioned by Varro), then, are not examples of pure verbal utterance, a mode of speech like so many others:[30] instead, they represent determinative utterances, words that—to take the example given by Varro below—can actually change an individual's status from slave to free. Endowed with this power, the magistrate's words do not belong to the sphere of *dicere* or of *loqui* but to that of *fari*, and as such, the praetor's *certa verba legitima* have to be bound to the prescriptions of the religious calendar. Since it does not consist of just any old words (the Roman calendar hardly concerns itself with everyday chitchat), the praetors' mode of speech—*fari*—can be exercised on some days, while on certain other days it is expressly prohibited.

Proof of the power and efficacy of a praetor's act of *fari* is furnished by what follows in Varro's text. Varro explains what would happen if a praetor mistakenly pronounced the words *do, dico, addico* on a *dies nefastus* (Varro *de Ling. Lat.* 6.4.30):

> quod si tum imprudens id verbum emisit ac quem manumisit, ille nihilo minus est liber, sed vitio, ut magistratus vitio creatus nihilo setius magistratus. Praetor qui tum fatus est, si imprudens fecit, piaculari hostia facta piatur; si prudens dixit, Quintus Mucius aiebat eum expiari ut impium non posse.

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29 On the specific meaning of these terms of "speaking," see Habinek 2005.58–64.

30 These "words" could be uttered separately as well, depending on the legal situation in which the praetor found himself (cf., e.g., Plautus *Poenulus* 1361), but nevertheless they came to be considered a single formula, defined together by the expression *tria verba* ("the three words"): Ovid *Fasti* 1.47: "ille [dies] nefastus erit, per quem tria verba silentur"; Macrobius *Saturnalia* 1.16.14: "fasti sunt quibus licet fari praetori tria verba sollemnia, do dico addico."

> But if he pronounced one of these words without realizing it and has freed some slave, that slave is nonetheless free, despite the irregularity; likewise, a magistrate is also still a magistrate, even if his nomination was accompanied by a similar irregularity. The praetor who spoke (*fatus est*) on that day can purify himself by sacrificing an expiatory victim, provided that he made an honest mistake. If he deliberately misspoke, Quintus Mucius affirms that he cannot purify himself in any way, like someone who has committed an impious act.

Even if made on a day when binding pronouncements are forbidden by religious belief, the praetor's utterance is and remains effective: it nevertheless "works." Once the praetor has uttered (*fatus est*) the ritual word, the manumitted slave is free, even if the word was uttered on a day that was expressly forbidden for that kind of act. This prohibition is so strong that the magistrate who made the mistake had to perform a purifying sacrifice in order to expiate the offense, or, depending on the case, he could be condemned to remain forever stained by impiety.

4. *PRAEFARI, EFFARI:* DETERMINATIVE POWER AND THE CREATION OF SPACE

In *de Agri Cultura*, Cato describes how to perform the sacrifice of the *porca praecidanea*, the sow offered to Ceres before beginning the harvest (134.1): "thure, vino, Iano Iovi Iunoni praefato, prius quam porcum feminam immolabis," "First invoke Janus, Jupiter, and Juno, offering them incense and wine, before sacrificing the sow." Cato enumerates the individual formulas and acts that are to be addressed to the three divinities, warning that only at the end of this process can the sow finally be sacrificed, and only then will the sacrifice be truly and properly completed (134.3: *postea porcam praecidaneam immolato*). The procedure is very interesting. Although the sacrifice is addressed to Ceres, the principal action has to be prefaced by invocations to different divinities: Janus, Jupiter, and Juno. Apparently, this *praefatio*[31] was considered necessary to bring the sacrifice (directed to Ceres, the "real addressee" of the religious act) to a successful

31 Wissowa 1971.412, uses the terminology *praefatio sacrorum*.

conclusion.[32] The same model shapes the formulary for the *lustratio agri* performed at the festival of the Suovetaurilia. Here, too, is a religious action directed towards a specific god (Mars) that has to be introduced by invocations to Janus and Jupiter: Cato *de Agri Cultura* 141.2, "Ianum Iovemque vino praefamino, sic dicito: 'Mars pater, te precor quaesoque,'" "First invoke Janus and Jupiter with offerings of wine, and then say, 'Father Mars, I beg and beseech you.'"[33] (The famous invocation to Mars for warding off disease from the fields follows this preface.) Again, the religious act directed towards the real addressee has to be prefaced by invocations and offerings to other divinities, invocations and offerings that are described by the verb *praefari* and necessary for the main prayer to be effective.

An act of *praefari*—"saying before," or better, "saying something in a position of importance"—is something very different from a simple preamble or prelude;[34] in cases like these, the preface is an indispensable component of the propitiatory formula that must be uttered before proceeding. *Prae-fari*, then, possessed an extremely relevant determinative power. Cicero has his brother Quintus describe perfectly the value of *praefari* when he affirms, "maiores nostri . . . omnibus rebus agendis 'quod bonum, faustum, felix fortunatumque esset' praefabantur," "Our ancestors would preface all their initiatives with the formula 'that it be good, propitious, happy, and fortunate'" (Cicero *de Div.* 1.102). It is not a simple question of saying something before something else or simply preceding a certain action with certain words: in an act of *praefari*, the speaker identifies the precise moment in which is spoken a religious formula that will guarantee the successful outcome of an undertaking—"that it be good, propitious, happy, and fortunate." "The ancestors" prefaced (*praefabantur*) all of their initiatives

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32 Ibid., "der eigentlich Empfänger des Opfers."

33 See also Livy *AUC* 39.15 (the affair of Hispala Fecennia): "consules in rostra escenderunt, et contione advocata cum sollemne Carmen precationis, quod praefari, priusquam populum adloquantur, magistratus solent, peregisset consul, ita coepit," "The consuls mounted the rostra, and the gathering was called once the consul had completed the solemn song of prayer which magistrates are accustomed to utter (*praefari*) before they address the people, [he] thus began . . ."; Macrobius *Saturnalia* 1.16.25: "sed et Fabius Maximus Servilianus Pontifex . . . negat oportere atro die parentare, quia tunc quoque Ianum Iovemque praefari necesse est, quos nominari atro die non oportet," "But even Fabius Maximus Servilianus says that it is not enough to perform honorary sacrifices on a black day because, in that case too, it is necessary to utter (*praefari*) Janus and Jupiter, whose names should not be spoken on a black day."

34 According to Benveniste's famous interpretation of the prefix *prae-* (Benveniste 1949).

with this formula, and its omission meant that such initiatives would not be complete; in it may be recognized a mode speech that surpasses simple utterance. Like simple *fari*, *praefari* defines a powerful, effective way of speaking that brings about results.

An examination of *ef-fari* reveals much the same thing, namely that this manner of speaking far exceeds simple declarative utterance. Even if as a prose stylist Cicero considered *effari* obsolete and poetic, it is undeniable that the word held a position of absolute importance in religious language (*de Oratore* 3.153). In fact, the expression *effatus* formed part of a technical religious vocabulary indicating a place that had been "defined" with the "sure words" (*certa verba*) of ritual: a field in which *auguria* were going to be taken, a temple, the *pomerium* itself.[35] Varro, describing the way in which the augurs marked out spaces for observing celestial signs, says: "hinc effata dicuntur, qui augures finem auspiciorum caelestum extra urbem agri<s> sunt effati ut esset; hinc effari templa dicuntur: ab auguribus effantur qui in his fines sunt," "From this (i.e., from *fari*), comes the expression 'spoken things' (*effata*), referring to the formulas[36] with which[37] the augurs have marked out the boundaries of the fields outside the city for observing celestial omens. From this, areas marked out for augury are also said to be 'defined with a word' (*effari*), and the augurs declare (*effantur*) their boundaries" (*de Ling. Lat.* 6.53).

This is a striking assertion. In the augural ritual that Varro describes, the utterance defined as *effari* appears to be in continual play between two

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35 Varro *de Ling. Lat.* 6.53; Cicero *ad Att.* 13.42, *de Leg.* 2.8.20; Aulus Gellius *NA* 13.14; Servius in *Aen*. 1.446, 2.692, 6.197, etc. On the *certa verba* necessary for an act of *effari*, Cicero also gives us an interesting bit of evidence. As is well known, during the exile to which he was condemned by Clodius's machinations, his house had been razed and the ground on which it stood had been declared consecrated. But Cicero considered that this had been done not only unfairly, but also illegally: "quid mirum si iste furore istinctus, scelere praeceps, neque institutas caerimonias persequi neque verbum ullum sollemne potuit effari," "What wonder is there if he, inspired by anger and driven by crime, was unable to complete the established rituals or utter (*effari*) even a single solemn word?" (*de Domo Sua* 141). In this case, too, *effari* presupposes an utterance of solemn, ritual words, sanctioned by tradition and law.

36 Servius in *Aen*. 6.197 explains *effata* with *preces*: "proprie effata sunt augurum preces: unde ager post pomoeria, ubi captabantur auguria, dicebatur effatus," "Properly, *effata* are the prayers of the augurs. For this reason, a field outside the *pomerium* where *auguria* were taken was said to be *effatus* ('spoken')."

37 The *qui* of Varro's text is instrumental: cf. Norden 1995.32 n. 1.

spheres, that of "saying" and that of "delimiting, defining,"[38] and, in the event, it is not possible to distinguish between these two capacities. At the very moment the augur "says" the appropriate formulas, he also defines and creates the boundaries and margins of the space destined to be a *templum*. In other words, *effari* describes a mode of speaking so effective that, simply by uttering a word, the ritual officiant can produce physical effects on space, portioning out privileged sections and changing its very nature. In a passage dedicated to the features of the *templum*, the grammarian Festus describes a similar power, establishing a direct equivalence between a space's being *effatum* ("spoken") and its being *saeptum* ("closed off").[39] Thus *effari,* too, is a mode of speech that not only declares the sacred nature of a space but also directly creates that nature: once uttered, *effari* bounds, encloses, and circumscribes.

5. THE DOUBLE UTTERANCE OF *FARI*

Having reviewed *fari*'s function as a determinative mode of speech, we are now in a position to define in more precise detail the nature of this kind of utterance from the point of view of linguistic anthropology. To do so, we will consider the prophetic *carmen* that Livy attributes to the seer Marcius.[40] After advising the Romans to keep their distance from the river Canna to avoid being forced into battle by their enemies "on the plain of Diomedes" (*in campo Diomedis*) and enumerating the misfortunes that the army would meet there, the *vates* ends his prophecy with the assertion, "nam mihi ita Iuppiter fatus est," "for Jupiter said this to me" (*Carmina Marciana* 1.8 Morel). The prophet explicitly states that he is delivering a message for which he is not the principal authority: he is only the conveyor of the message. It is Jupiter who spoke (*fatus est*) even before Marcius had, in turn, begun his own act of *fari*.

When does the author represent Jupiter's own act of *fari* as having occurred? Did the prophet receive the divine revelation long ago in a separate encounter with the god? Or is Jupiter's revelation to Marcius

38 On the "delimited" feature of a place that is *effatus*, cf. *RE* 2.9.483ff., Norden 1995.32 n. 1.

39 Festus *de Verborum Significatu* 146 Lindsay: "itaque templum est locus ita effatus aut ita saeptus ut ex una parte pateat, angulosque adfixos habeat ad terram."

40 Morel 1975; for an analysis of the two texts attributed to Marcius, see below.

contemporaneous with Marcius's own utterance, according to the process of divine inspiration? In this second sense, recall Vergil's Sibyl, whose prophetic utterances directly coincide with the god's presence within her: she is the god's mouthpiece (cf. *Aen*. 6.50ff.: "nec mortale sonans adflata est numine quando / iam propiore dei," "Nor is her voice mortal anymore, when she is inspired with the god's now-present divinity"). The Sibyl's words are not "human words," and, as Vergil tells us later, the god has already taken possession of her "heart" and lives within her (*Aen*. 6.78, 101).

In fact, it does not appear to be relevant here whether Jupiter spoke to Marcius at some moment apart or he is speaking directly through the prophet's mouth. What is important is that, in the linguistic act of *fari*, the prophet shares with the god the role of transmitter (although he places himself in a position of lesser significance: it is the god who "spoke" to Marcius). In other words, from a linguistic-anthropological point of view, *fari* is represented as a speech act in which the immediate speaker of the utterance (prophet, seer, priest) is not the only—or, indeed, the true—source of the linguistic act (what speech act theorists might call the "animator"; Goffman 1979). Co-present with the animator's voice in the utterance is that of the principal—a god, a supernatural force, some higher power—from whom the utterance's authority derives and on whom its efficacy depends.[41]

The notion of "agency" in linguistic anthropology (Ahearn 2001.18ff.), meaning the capacity to perform social actions or to control how they are conducted, may help clarify the situation in which a speaker of *fari* finds himself. In the sphere of *fari*—i.e., the mode of speech in which a prophet reveals hidden truths; a praetor makes legally binding utterances; a priest recites effective ritual formulas; or an augur creates, with his words, a sacred space—it is clear that there is not one agency alone at work (as normally occurs in utterances) but two: that of the "animator" (the immediate speaker) who actually utters the message and that of the "principal" who guarantees both its authenticity and efficacy.

To describe the reciprocal function that the two speakers have in this type of communication, we may recall the classic position of the Greek προφήτης who "speaks in place of" (προ-φήτης) someone else, namely, a god: e.g., Tiresias, defined as "the prophet of Zeus," or Glaucus, who is called "the prophet of Nereus." The prophet's "voice" (-φήτης) is repre-

41 According to the terminology of Dubois 1986, cited by Leavitt 2001.281ff.

sented explicitly as a surrogate, substitute (προ-) for another, a simple vocal instrument through which reverberates the speech of a god.[42] To suggest a less prosaic parallel, there is another context—in many respects similar to the prophetic or religious one—in which a single utterance results from the collaboration of a supernatural and a human source: the motif of poetic inspiration in the archaic Greek tradition, where the author "partners" with the Muse or Muses, who represent the true origin and authority of the utterance.[43] Again we find an "animator," an immediate speaker—the poet—and a "principal"—the Muse—who cooperate in the creation of a single utterance. It must be stressed that, in the Greek world, a correspondence existed between these two discursive processes—that of the prophet and that of the poet—that was much closer than we might at first suspect. It is enough to recall that in Pindar and Bacchylides, the poet is explicitly defined as a "prophet" of the Muse. In fact, as Socrates affirms in Plato's *Ion,* "The god employs them (poets) as his ministers, just as he does seers and prophets, so that, when we listen to them, we understand that it is not they who speak such marvelous things . . . but that it is the god himself who speaks to us through them." In other words, the poet is simply an interpreter or, better, a "translator" (ἑρμηνεύς) for the gods.[44]

In this light, we can reconsider the grammatical phenomenon mentioned earlier: the fact that when a subject makes an utterance in terms of *fari*, it is impossible to do so in the first person of the present indicative (i.e., **for* does not exist). Instead, this act can occur only in the first person of the future indicative (*fabor*). In other words, while an utterance in the form of *dicere*, *loqui*, or *orare* can be expressed in the first person of the present indicative, when an utterance is realized through an act of *fari*, the speaker must displace this act into a moment *subsequent* to the present; it can never be "I say that . . . ," but "I am about to say that, I will say that . . ."

Why this requirement to impose temporal distance between the

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42 Cf. Pindar *Nemean* 1.160; Euripides *Orestes* 354, *Rhesus* 972: cf. Nagy 1990.56–64, Luck 1985.5ff.; on the other functions and meanings of προφήτης in Greek culture, see Nagy 1990; for a comparative approach to the phenomenon of prophecy, see Overholt 1986, Cooper 1990.32ff., and Leavitt 2001.

43 On the relationship between the Muse and the singer in Greek archaic poetry, and the role of the singer simply as the "active collaborator" with the divinity, cf. Brillante 1993.

44 Pindar *Paeans* 6.6, Bacchylides *Epinicians* 8.3 (cf. Nagy 1990.61), Plato *Ion* 533d, 534e (cf. Katz and Volk 2000, in particular, on the traditional character of these "prophetic" representations of poetic practice).

announcement of an utterance and the utterance itself? The anthropological principle that governs this type of speech—the fact that someone speaking in the manner of *fari* is not alone and not solely responsible for what he is going to say—provides the answer. There are, in effect, two speakers: an act of *fari* presupposes the existence of a principal speaker who is the authentic source of the utterance. In other words, we may presume that the animator says *fabor* and not **for* because, in doing so, he, in a sense, prepares his audience for the involvement of the principal. It is as if he were warning, "Pay attention! In a moment you will hear an utterance of a very special nature . . ."

Returning to the parallel of the epic poet who cooperates, as animator, with the principal, the Muse: what relationship obtains between these two "speakers?" The poet always begins his song with an invocation to the Muse or Muses: "Tell me, o goddess, of the ruinous anger of Achilles, son of Peleus"; "Tell me, o goddess, of that man of many wiles"; "Hail, daughters of Zeus, grant me lovely song and celebrate the race of immortals"; "Muses of Pieria, sing of your father."[45] As may be seen, the poet makes this address and expresses a request for divine assistance in the form of an imperative. At the same time, he announces the theme of the composition for which he requires the divinity's intervention. Thereby, the poet simultaneously declares and brings about the involvement of the principal, which will, in fact, occur soon after (imagining this process as an oral performance) when the poet effectively begins his own poetic utterance. In the *Aeneid*, Vergil presents himself to the Muse with an imperative (*Musa, mihi causas memora* . . .) that she "remind him" of the events that provoked Juno's anger against Aeneas; then he begins his own song, telling the story of Carthage and the extraordinary love that Juno felt for that city (*Aen.* 1.8ff.).

In epic poetry, the relationship between the animator and the principal is represented in the form of a temporal *décalage* that is realized linguistically with an address, an exhortation directed towards the deity, followed by the utterance. In short, the relationship between the poet and the Muse takes the form of a kind of "interlude" that the epic poet triggers by explicitly calling upon the principal. I suggest that a similar temporal *décalage* is basic to the use of *fabor* in place of the present tense **for*; in this case,

45 Homer *Il.* 1.1ff., *Od.* 1.1ff.; Hesiod *Theogony* 104ff., *WD* 1ff.

too, the relationship between the animator and the principal takes the form of an interlude that ends only when the utterance itself begins. In this case, however, the interlude that prepares the audience for the involvement of the second speaker is manifested not in syntactic but in morphological form—a simple change of the verb from the present to the future tense—rather than the inclusion of an address, exhortation, or theme.

The Latin literary tradition preserves an interesting example of this mechanism (*fari* used of the context in which both the animator's utterance, expressed in the future tense, and the invocation to the principal are realized in the text) in the *Carmen Priami*, a text presumably of great antiquity, at least to judge by its exterior form: "veteres Casmenas, cascam rem volo profari," "Oh ancient Camenae, I want to sing an affair of ancient times," or, "I want the ancient Camenae to sing an affair of ancient times" (Varro *de Ling. Lat.* 7.28 = p. 29 Morel).[46] Like Propertius in the opening to his poem on Tarpeia ("Tarpeium nemus et Tarpeiae turpe sepulchrum / fabor," *Elegiae* 4.4.1–2; cf. above), the anonymous author of the *Carmen Priami* also dons a mantle of sanctity, characterizing himself as a *vates* and the poetic composition, which deals with facts remote in time (*casca res*), as a divinatory revelation of events that would otherwise be destined to remain obscure (on this see Bettini 2003). And like Propertius, the author of the *Carmen Priami* also projects his own act of *fari* into the future: *fabor* appears here periphrastically as *volo pro-fari*, its "futurity" expressed not in the form of the verb itself but through an auxiliary. Nevertheless, the situation is the same: the prophetic-religious utterance of the animator is projected forward

46 The text is problematic and suspected, perhaps correctly, of being more archaizing than actually archaic: cf. Timpanaro 1978.99ff. and Courtney 1993.44. We mention the two possible translations of the fragment, according to Timpanaro's explanation ("Casmenas" as vocative or accusative); Courtney 1993.44 prefers to take Casmenas as the accusative plural. From the point of view of our own interests, the difference between the two interpretations is slight (in both cases, the Casmenae are responsibile for the song rather than the poet). Timpanaro 1978.101ff. discusses the meaning of *profari* in particular, insisting on its "not sacred" quality in this context (against which, cf. Waszink 1956.143, according to whom *profari* is the same as Greek προφητεύειν). In response, Timpanaro cites other archaic evidence (Pacuvius frag. 145 Ribbeck, Ennius frag. 576 Skutsch), in which *profari* seems to have a "non sacred" quality. Nevertheless, these are cases in which the statement's "solemnity" is at play: in Pacuvius, *profari* seems to have the rather specific sense of "to reveal," while in Ennius ("contra carinantes verba atque obscena profatus," "having uttered words and obscenities against those abusing"), the context of the reaction to *carinare* or *probra obiectare* ("to hurl insults") could be of a ritual nature.

in time, only here the principal, whose involvement is expected to realize the poet's expressed intention, is invoked explicitly. The Casmenae will have to intervene to fill the *décalage* created by the statement *volo profari*. In other words, according to how an act of *fari* apparently must occur, the animator lays out his plan ("Oh ancient Casmenae, I want to sing an affair of ancient times") and then must wait for the goddesses to grant his wish, to intervene with the principal voice that both poet and public expect from them—and this principal utterance, expressed through the mouth of the animator (the poet), naturally forms the content of the poem.

This *décalage* intrinsic to the linguistic act of *fari* could provide a starting point, in fact, for exploring other instances in which the *time* of the utterance is determined to some extent by the manner of its enunciation. In the case of dreams, Paul Valéry (1960.728) observed, "Le rêve est le phénomène que nous n'observons que pendant son absence. Le verbe rêver n'a presque pas de 'présent'. 'Je rêve', 'tu rêves',—ce sont figures de rhétorique, car c'est un éveillé qui parle ou un candidat au réveil." Speaking of dreams, it is only possible to say, "I dreamed." If someone does say, "I'm dreaming," it is either because they are employing a rhetorical figure or about to awaken. The verb "to dream" does not have a present tense for very nearly the same reason that *fari* does not: dreaming must necessarily be spoken of in the past tense, just as the voice of the *vates*, with its double articulation, demands the future tense. In the linguistic act of *fari*, the speaker cannot be the elocutor but only—to use Valéry's image—a "candidat à la parole": he can only aspire to speak.

6. THE SPEECH OF INFANTS

Concerning the infant who has not yet learned to speak, Varro remarks: "fatur is qui primum homo significabilem ore mittit vocem. ab eo, ante quam ita faciant, pueri dicuntur infantes; cum id faciunt, iam fari," "When a human being first emits a meaningful utterance from his mouth, he 'speaks' (*fatur*). From this word, before they are able to do this, children are called *infantes*; when they do, they are said 'to now speak' (*iam fari*)" (*de Ling. Lat.* 6.52). Given that *fari* so far has seemed to define a mode of speech that the Romans considered effectual and powerful—one of revelation, of religious and determinative speech—Varro's characterization of a baby's first utterance also as an act of *fari* may be surprising. But such surprise is unwarranted. Even a superficial consideration demonstrates that the moment when a baby is said "to now speak" (*iam fari*) is an important

event in its development: this expression sanctions the child's departure from *in-fantia* (a sort of pre-human state of existence) and arrival into the world of those who "speak."

The first word that a baby uttered, in fact, constituted not some vaguely meaningful babble but a sign that linguistic capacity had finally emerged. Considered from this perspective, the attraction of infant speech into the solemn realm of *fari* seems somewhat less unusual. Even more important to consider, however, is the fundamental anthropological reality that, at Rome, the speech of infants was taken very seriously—not only when a baby first uttered a "meaningful word" (*significabilem vocem,* an act that the Romans defined in terms of *fari*), but also when it made its absolute first sound, its first *vagitus*.

Lucretius described the birth of a child in unforgettable images (*DRN* 5.222–27):

> tum porro puer, ut saevis proiectus ab undis
> navita, nudus humi iacet infans, indigus omni
> vitali auxilio, cum primum in luminis oras
> nixibus ex alvo matris natura profudit,
> vagituque locum lugubri complet, ut aequumst
> cui tantum in vita restet transire malorum.
>
> Then the child, like a sailor tossed to shore by the cruel waves, lies naked upon the ground, unable to speak (*infans*), lacking all aids to life, when first into the realm of light nature has tossed him from his mother's womb with labor pains. He fills the place with his heartrending cry (*vagitus*); and rightly, too, since life holds in store for him so much hardship.

Overlooking the pessimism (and a certain "baroqueism" *ante litteram*) that pervades these famous lines and succeeds in transforming the first *vagitus* uttered by a child into a funeral lament, the fact remains that it constitutes the most representative event and the most effective "sign" produced at the moment of birth. The child cries out and therefore lives—even if he lives only to die, Lucretius means to say. But the child is there and, from that moment on, will be a part of the world.

The baby's first *vagitus* struck not only Lucretius's poetic fancy but also the Roman people's religious imagination. In the most archaic period

of this culture, the most important stages of existence (and, in general, the different spheres of human life) were administered by individual, compartmentalized divinities who had names so transparent that their spheres of influence are immediately apparent.[47] This was true even of infancy: e.g., the goddess Rumina presided over breastfeeding, Cunina presided over bowel movements, and Statilinus over standing upright. A god also presided over the baby's first post-partum *vagitus* (cf. Perfigli 2004). Augustine, rather contemptuously speculating whether "among the huge mob of gods that they endowed with cult" the Romans believed there was a deity who had enlarged and defended their empire, writes, "neque enim in hoc tam praeclaro opere et tantae plenissimo dignitatis audent aliquas partes . . . tribuere . . . Vaticano, qui infantum vagitibus praesidet," "For such a glorious job, endowed with such prestige, they dare to give a part . . . to Vaticanus, who presides over the wailings of infants" (*de Civitate Dei* 4.8; cf. 11.21). Aulus Gellius, apparently drawing on the work of Varro, and with somewhat more respect for ancient religion than Augustine, provides more precise details about this god (Varro frag. 144 Funaioli = Aulus Gellius *NA* 16.17):

> et agrum Vaticanum et eiusdem agri deum praesidem appellatum acceperamus a vaticiniis, quae vi atque instinctu eius dei in eo agro fieri solita essent. Sed praeter hanc causam M. Varro in libris Divinarum aliam esse tradit istius nominis rationem: "nam sicut Aius," inquit, "deus appellatus araque ei statuta est, quae est infima nova via, quod eo in loco divinitus vox edita erat, ita Vaticanus deus nominatus, penes quem essent vocis humanae initia, quoniam pueri, simul atque parti sunt, eam primam vocem edunt, quae prima in Vaticano syllabast idcircoque 'vagire' dicitur exprimente verbo sonum vocis recentis."
>
> We have heard that the *ager Vaticanus* and the god that presides over it take their name from the *vaticinia* ("divinations") that are received there through that god's power and inspiration. But in addition to that reason, Marcus

47 On these partial divinities—who are wrongly called *indigitamenta*, as if the Romans had defined them in this way—cf. the comprehensive study of Perfigli 2004.

> Varro, in his book on *Ancient Divinities*, says that another etymology of the name was in circulation: "In fact, just as that god, in whose honor the altar at the end of the *Via Nova* was set up, is named Aius, because a divine voice was once heard in that place, so, too, the god Vaticanus took this name because he presides over the first sounds of the human voice. Once they are born, in fact, babies utter precisely the initial syllable of the word 'Vaticanus' as their first sound. And for this reason they are said to 'wail' (*vagire*), using a word that represents the sound of the first word babies produce."

Vaticanus, then, occupies himself specifically with a newborn's first *vagitus*, and the dramatic moment of the child's passage from the inarticulate sounds of "va! va!" to the first *vox significabilis* appears to be suffused with religious feeling. The stage of linguistic development that follows the child's first *vagitus* demonstrates a similar atmosphere of religiosity. In particular, augural predictions and supernatural events may be associated with the child's first act of speech. For example, Suetonius recounts that, as a baby, Octavian, the future Augustus, "cum primum fari coepisset, in avito suburbano obstrepentis forte ranas silere iussit, atque ex eo negantur ibi ranae coaxare," "When he began to speak for the first time (*cum primum fari coepisset*), he commanded the frogs that were croaking outside his family's suburban villa to be quiet; and in those parts, they say that, for this very reason, the frogs don't croak anymore" (Suetonius *Aug.* 94).[48] As may

48 The episode abounds in the motifs of ancient folklore that appear in stories created to explain "why," in certain places, certain animals are mute. According to Aelianus *de Nat. Animal.* 3.37, the croaking of the frogs at Seriphos disturbed Perseus's sleep so much that he asked Zeus to make them silent forever; from then on, frogs were mute at Seriphos. A similar story circulated in regard to the cicadas around Locri and Regium: Heracles, disturbed by their incessant chirping, asked Zeus to make them silent (Diodorus Siculus *Bibliotheca* 4.22, Solinus *Rerum Memor.* 2.40), and from then on in that region the cicadas did not sing anymore: cf. Brillante 1991.132. In Ambrose *de Virg.* 3.14, the sound of frogs bothers a group of the faithful during a prayer, and the priest orders the frogs to fall silent and to have some respect for the sacred *oratio*. In this passage of Ambrose, an allegorical framework according to which the frogs are assimilated to pagans, heretics, and infidels, their croaking is equated to the opposition of non-Christians to Christian Truth and the *Logos*, is superimposed upon the traditional perception of croaking as a bothersome sound. Cf. Borca 1997.

be seen, the first word uttered by the child is quite a powerful word. Moreover, Macrobius tells us that, at the moment of birth, a child's "capacity for speech" (*fari*) is guaranteed by the intervention of another divinity, Fatua, whose name clearly derives from the root of *fari*.[49] Even more interesting, however, is that this moment of the emergence of the human voice on the infant's lips (described by Varro as *iam fari*) was celebrated with a sacrifice directed toward a divinity whose name has been transmitted as either Fabulinus or Farinus.[50] In both cases, he is clearly a "god of *fari*." Even at the moment in which a baby is said "to now speak" (*iam fari*), therefore, the "word" that comes to his lips is somehow divinely inspired, as with the prophet or seer. In other words, the agency of the animator (the baby) is again joined to the agency of a principal (the god Fabulinus or Farinus), who supernaturally merges his own voice with that of the speaker.

7. WHEN LANGUAGE "SPEAKS INSIDE"

In the seventh book of his *Annales*, Ennius describes at some length the character and nature of a mysterious individual to whom Servilius Geminus was in the habit of revealing his most intimate confidences (Ennius *Ann.* 268ff. Skutsch). The picture that emerges from these verses is of the perfect friend or the best advisor—or in any case, someone knowledgeable about others' lives and customs, expert in antiquarian matters, prudent, and capable of speaking or remaining silent when needed. Servilius's mysterious friend, however (and some said that Ennius was arrogantly talking about himself),[51] was not only *doctus*, *fidelis*, *suavis*, *suo contentus*, *beatus*, and *scitus*, but also *facundus*. To what characteristic does this term refer? Someone who

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49 Macrobius *Saturnalia* 1.12.19–22, according to whom *Fatua* was one of the epithets of Earth, something that would accord with the well-known Roman tradition by which babies were deposited on the ground immediately after birth: "Fatuam a fando quod . . . infantes partu editi non prius vocem edunt quam attigerint terram." Cf. also 1.12.20.

50 In one of his *Logistorici*, Varro again tells us: "cum primo fari incipiebant, sacrificabant divo Fabulino," "When they first began to speak (*fari*), they used to sacrifice to Fabulinus," Varro *de Liberis Educandis* frag. 13 Bolisani. Tertullian *ad Nat.* 2.11.7: "et ab effatu Farinus et A[l]ius a loquendo <Locutius>," "from *effatus* comes Farinus and from *loqui* comes Aius Locutius." The order given by Tertullian in his enumeration of these minor gods is: Fluvionia, Vitumnus, Sentinus, Diespiter, Candelifera, Postverta, Prosa, Farinus, Locutius, Cunina. Coming immediately after two gods of birth, it seems that Farinus was considered a god who had something to do with the sphere of "infancy."

51 Thus Aelius Stilo frag. 51 Funaioli = Aulus Gellius *NA* 12.4.4.

is *facundus* is competent in the act of *fari*. With the addition of the suffix *-cundus*, the root *fa-* becomes a verbal adjective with the active meaning of "who speaks" or "speaking" (in the manner of *fari*, obviously). Does Ennius mean to say, then, that Servilius's unidentified companion, besides all the other numerous virtues he possesses, also knows how to predict the future? Certainly there are many examples in which *facundus*, like *fari*, refers directly to the sphere of prediction.[52] This is not likely what Ennius had in mind; on the other hand, the poet surely does not mean to say only that Servilius's friend "knows how to speak."

The adjective *facundus* is an archaic word and is never used by authors such as Cicero, Catullus, Lucretius, Caesar, and Vergil.[53] In fact, use of the adjective *facundus* seems to follow the same arc as *fari*, considered obsolete by Cicero. Speaking of the derivates of *fari*, Varro explains, "ab hac eadem voce qui facile fantur facundi dicti," "From this same word, those who speak (*fantur*) fluently are called *facundi*" (*de Ling. Lat.* 6.52; cf. Isidore *Orig.* 10.95). Words come easily, then, to whomever is *facundus*. Recall the Plautine slave Stalagmus wrangling with his master Hegio in an uncomfortable exchange. Many years before, Stalagmus had fled Hegio's house and had kidnapped one of his sons, whom he later sold back to him. The master threatens Stalagmus, but the slave knows how to respond (Plautus *Captivi* 963–65):

STAL. eia, credo ego imperito plagas minitaris mihi!
tandem ista<ec> aufer, dic quid fers, ut feras
hinc quod petis.
HEG. satis facundu's. sed iam fieri dicta compendi
volo.

STAL. Hey, don't think you're threatening someone who
hasn't felt your blows before. So just lay off and
make me an offer, so you can get what you want.
HEG. You're certainly ready with words! But I prefer
to save my breath.

52 Cf. Calpurnius Siculus *Eclogae* 1.91: "sed bona facundi veneremur numina Fauni"; 4.87–88: "me quoque facundo comitatus Apolline Caesar / respiciat."

53 Cf. *TLL* 6.1.160, Ernout and Meillet 1967 s.v. *for*.

The translation hardly does justice to Stalagmus's *facundia*: the slave utters a phrase that is practically a play on words and as ambiguous and elegant as a riddle. His statements are strongly marked by anaphora (*au-fer . . . fers . . . feras*) that succeeds in expressing three different meanings with the same verb—"Lay off . . . make me an offer . . . get what you want." No doubt, Stalagmus's linguistic ability far exceeds his master's, and for this reason, Hegio tells his slave that he is *satis facundus*.

The adjective *facundus*, then, applies to whomever has "a way with words," so to speak, either in his own language or another. If a Roman speaks Greek well, he is said to be "satis decorus etiam Graeca facundia," "fluent enough in speaking Greek, as well."[54] But the facility of speech that characterizes someone who is *facundus* is not the garrulity of a blabbermouth. In fact, between these two dimensions of speech—speaking fluently and speaking profusely—there is a radical difference, well defined by the Romans themselves. Sallust characterizes Marcus Lollius Palicanus, a humble citizen of Picenum, as *loquax magis quam facundus,* "chatty more than eloquent (*facundus*)."[55] Similarly, in the fifth book of his *Metamorphoses*, Ovid narrates at some length the history of the Pierides, who believed they had such skill in poetry and song that they could challenge the Muses themselves. As punishment for their arrogance, they were transformed into *picae* ("magpies"), birds with an unpleasant voice that try to imitate human language (*Met*. 5.294ff.).[56] The metamorphosis is almost complete when the poet declares, "nunc quoque in alitibus facundia prisca remansit / raucaque garrulitas studiumque inmane loquendi," "Still in these birds remained their old *facundia*, a terrible garrulity, and an enormous desire to chatter" (5.678–79). Transformed into magpies, the Pierides retain something of the extraordinary linguistic capacity that had rendered them dangerous in the eyes of the Muses, but just as their arms have changed, now covered with feathers, and their noses turned into ugly beaks, their old *facundia* has become an unpleasant *garrulitas* and an immoderate desire to talk. As Thomas Habinek (2005.60) puts it, the Pierides now show "a great, even grotesque or monstrous, eagerness to participate in the characteristic human

54 Tacitus *Historiae* 2.80.2; cf. Sallust *Iug.* 63.3, Aulus Gellius *NA* 9.2.1, 9.12.7, etc.

55 Sallust *Historiae* frag. 43 Maurenbrecher; cf. Aulus Gellius *NA* 1.15.13, Quintilian 4.2.2.

56 Cf. the curious reflections of Pliny the Elder *NH* 10.118.

form of communication, speech."[57] Ovid's account of the Pierides represents a mythic paradigm establishing the relationship between *facundia,* on one side, and *garrulitas/loquacitas,* on the other: between these two dimensions of language is the same difference that separates the marvellous speech of the refined young poetesses and the squawking of a flock of magpies.

It is one thing to be *loquax*, inclined to "speaking" (*loqui*); it is entirely something else to be *facundus*, endowed with "a way with words." To be counted among the *facundi* means not to speak to excess (this numbers one among the *loquaces*, *garruli*, or, as Aulus Gellius *NA* 1.15.20 has it, *blaterones*, *locutuleii*, and *linguaces*), but to possess a capacity for easy expression. This ease of expression, however, does not imply simplicity of thought. In fact, for the Romans, *facundia* also involves intellectual profundity. Aulus Gellius, following Homer, asserts that Odysseus, endowed with *sapiens facundia* ("knowledgeable fluency of speech"), produced his voice from his heart (*pectus*) not from his mouth. Gellius goes on to state that Homer attributed such importance to the *pectus* because Odysseus's speech derived its force from "profundity of thought, conceived deep inside" (*sententiarum penitus conceptarum altitudinem*), not simply from "vocal utterance" (*sonum . . . habitumque vocis*).[58] An initial definition of Roman *facundia* might then be speaking easily, but not insipidly, speaking fluently, but also profoundly[59] and, ideally at least, with *virtus*. As one of Plautus's characters says, "facile sibi facunditatem virtus argutam invenit; / sine virtute argutum civem mihi habeam pro praefica, / quae alios conlaudare, eapse se<se> vero non potest," "Virtue easily finds right and witty words (*facunditas*); but I consider a witty man without virtue nothing more than a mourner-for-hire: he knows how to praise others but not himself" (Plautus *Truculentus* 494–96). True *facundia* (or *facunditas* as Plautus calls it) emerges spontaneously from the soul: it is a possession of good citizens, not smart-alecks and wits.

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57 Habinek 2005.58–64 analyzes in detail the meaning of different Latin words for "to say"—*dico, aio, loquor*—in respect to *cano*, *canto*, *carmen,* and so forth. The analysis is very interesting, even if Habinek does not address the question of *fari.*

58 Aulus Gellius *NA* 1.15.3; cf. Homer *Il.* 3.221. Odysseus is often defined as *facundus* in Latin texts; cf., e.g., Ovid *Heroides* 3.129, *Metamorphoses* 13.92; Quintilian 10.54.6; etc.

59 If *facundia* does not demonstrate these qualities, it is stigmatized immediately: Tacitus *Historiae* 4.68.5 attributes to Julius Valentinus a *vaecors facundia,* "crazed eloquence."

Suetonius, describing the zeal with which the emperor Caligula devoted himself to the verbal arts, remarks, "eloquentiae quam plurimum attendit, quantumvis facundus et promptus," "He dedicated himself with all his might to the study of eloquence, to the extent that he was *facundus* and ready of wit."[60] There is a great difference between being *facundus* and dedicating oneself to the study of eloquence, and, apparently, Suetonius means to say that Caligula, though already possessing some skill in speaking, already having some way with words, nevertheless wished to augment these gifts by devoting himself to the study of *eloquentia*. *Facundia*, then, is a gift that spontaneously arises, as indeed Varro described it. In fact, Quintilian 12.3.9 defines this capacity as a *virtus*, a natural quality, and it is on top of this spontaneous and pre-existing foundation that the "scientific" discipline of *eloquentia* may then be built.

In the preface to *Institutio Oratoria,* Quintilian explains that he will not limit himself to teaching the "canonical lessons" of the *scientia* and *ars* of rhetoric already familiar to everyone (Quintilian 1.pr.23). His own *ratio docendi* will be much broader and will seek to "alere facundiam et vires eloquentiae augere" ("foster *facundia* and develop strength in eloquence"). Here, too, there seems to be a division between *facundia* and *eloquentia*: on one side stands "a way with words," a skill that only needs to be fostered; on the other side stands a true and proper science—*eloquentia* as *scientia* and *ars*—that must be developed through study. In other words, *facundia* is a natural disposition, a spontaneous gift, while *eloquentia* is the result of teaching. In this regard, it is interesting to note that, for Quintilian, *facundia* is something to "foster," almost as if it were a living being. This is a naturalistic vision of *facundia* that the teacher of rhetoric displays on at least one other occasion: "alitur enim atque enitescit velut pabulo laetiore facundia," "*Facundia* is fostered and it begins to gleam from rich nourishment" (10.5.14). In short, *facundia* is fed, "pastured," as a living thing. This demonstrates that *facundia* was considered a spontaneous, impulsive resource, almost a natural phenomenon, while *eloquentia* belonged to culture.

Facundia, the gift of the *facundus*, was opposed, on the one hand, to *loquacitas*, a pure and simple abundance of words. *Facundia* required

60 Suetonius *Cal.* 53; cf. Seneca *Ep.* 79.9: "habebit unusquisque ex iis proprias dotes: alius erit affabilior, alius expeditior, alius promptior in eloquendo, alius facundior," "Of these, each will have his own gifts: one will be more amenable, one more free; one more ready in speaking, and one more fluent."

spiritual gifts and profundity of thought, not vulgar blathering. On the other hand, it was opposed to *eloquentia* as a purely natural gift that wants the discipline of *ars*. It was a great blessing to possess *facundia*, even if the professional rhetoricians insisted that this gift was not sufficient in itself: to know truly how to speak, one had to study *eloquentia* in addition to possessing *facundia*. Thus Aulus Gellius and his friends, finding themselves at the home of the rhetorician Castricius, had only just begun to read an old oration of Gaius Gracchus when everyone was suddenly overcome by the "sound of the well-rounded and flowing periodic sentences" (Aulus Gellius *NA* 11.13). Castricius, however, immediately and without mercy emended the text that everyone so admired to demonstrate that Gracchus's oration was not a masterpiece after all. It was not that he wanted to criticize Gaius Gracchus, he explained; he had done it only, "ne vos facile praestringeret modulatus aliqui currentis facundiae sonitus," "to keep the melodious sounds of graceful *facundia* from entrancing you" (Aulus Gellius *NA* 11.13.10). Gaius Gracchus naturally possessed such a way with words that he could grab his audience's attention immediately, but true eloquence was another thing, as Castricius had shown by poking holes in Gracchus's style.

This feature of natural, unbridled spontaneity that seems to characterize *facundia* and that belongs to the *facundus* is particularly interesting in light of the class of adjectives to which *facundus* itself belongs. Adjectives ending in *-cundus* are very rare; in fact, there are only five in all:[61] *fe-cundus* ("fruitful, inclined to produce"; cf. *fe-tus* and *fe-mina*), *ira-cundus* ("inclined to anger"), *iu-cundus* ("inclined to joy"; cf. *iuv-are*), *vere-cundus* ("bashful, inclined to shame"; cf. *vereor*), and *rubi-cundus* ("ruddy, inclined to blush"; cf. *rubeo*). Considered together, there is something quite striking about the meanings of these terms: three of them, at least—*ira-cundus*, *iucundus*, and *verecundus*—denote feelings or the manifestation of a feeling that occurs spontaneously; and upon closer examination, the other two adjectives—*rubicundus* and *fecundus*—seem to share the same characteristic. Being "fruitful," whether for a field or a woman, is a natural characteristic; likewise, "blushing" is a physical characteristic that just happens. Some people are naturally *rubicundi*, just as others are naturally *pallentes* ("pale").

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61 Leumann 1979.332ff. A hypothesis on the origin of the suffix *-cundus* (with particular reference to *fecundus*) is given by Benveniste 1973b.141.

Also from a morphological point of view, then, *facundus*/*facundia* is strongly marked by the qualities of naturalness and spontaneity, by the presence of some internal force that produces its effect without the involvement either of the subject or of circumstance. It is therefore not unreasonable to conclude that *fari* manifests itself in someone that is *facundus* in the same manner that anger, joy, and shame manifest themselves, and in the same way that a blush of the skin or "reproductiveness" is produced. Again, the way of speaking defined by the word *fari* appears endowed with a very specific, independent, and almost impersonal nature. It is as if *facundia* represented a manner of speech that blossomed on its own accord, possessed autonomous agency, and occurred in the privileged few who had received this gift—like prophets who had received the gift of predicting the future. *Fari* is not learned, it is had, and it "speaks inside," like an emotion.

8. FROM "HEARD TELL" TO *FAMA*: THE SOCIAL POWER OF THE DOUBLE UTTERANCE

The idiomatic expression *ne fando quidem* and the word *fama*, both related to *fari*, are terms that do not at first seem to fit within the definition of *fari* that we have sketched so far. However, upon closer examination, these terms appear not only to refer to a powerful, effective, independent type of speech, but also to identify a new sphere of activity for speech classified as *fari*: that of "social power," so to speak. In fact, these two spheres of *fari*—divine power and social power—actually overlap in certain respects.

Fando, a unique impersonal form of the verb *fari,* defines a kind of scattered discourse referring to stories that circulate: hearsay, in other words.[62] For example, standing before the Trojans, Vergil's Sinon says to Priam, "If the name of Palamedes, descendant of Belus, has ever reached your ears by hearsay (*fando*)" (*Aen.* 2.81ff.). The sphere of *fando*—the sphere of what is "heard tell"—corresponds, then, to what might today be defined very generally as "communication." In a culture that was predominantly oral (or, at any rate, one still lacking not only modern forms of media but also printing), it was primarily through "speaking" that the circulation of stories and bits of news that constituted the store of shared knowledge naturally occurred.

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62 See, in particular, Cicero *de Nat. Deor.* 1.82, with the rich note of Pease 1955.413–14.

More important from the perspective of this study is the negative expression *ne fando quidem (auditum)*. Speaking of Egyptian attitudes towards animals, e.g., Velleius states in Cicero's *de Natura Deorum*, "You have probably never heard tell (*ne fando quidem auditum*) that an Egyptian did violence to an ibis, a crocodile, or a cat" (1.82). The idiomatic *ne fando quidem* (*auditum*) ("never heard tell") is, in a sense, the contrary of "hearsay." However, the expression does not refer simply to the "unknown" or "new" nature of a certain bit of news, but also its lack of credibility ("The like of which you have probably never heard tell"). If there was "never heard tell" of a certain thing, this refers to its impossibility or, better yet, its unacceptability. When in Plautus's *Amphitruo,* the "doubled" Sosia tells his master that he, Sosia, is either there with him or at home, Amphitruo responds, "You're saying things that cannot possibly happen, the likes of which no one has ever heard tell (*neque fando umquam accepit quisquam*)" (587ff.). "Hearsay" (*fando*), then, determines not only the process of circulation for an item of news but also rules of its credibility.

Other, similar formulas corroborate this impression. In fact, the meanings of the expressions *fandus,* on the one hand, and *infandus* and *nefandus,* on the other, belong even more to the realm of sanction and judgment. They refer to what is "just" or "correct" and what is "unjust" or "morally unacceptable." Thus what is "just" is that which is "said" or that of which people have "heard tell" (*fandus*); what is "unjust," arousing horror and shame, is simultaneously that which is "unspeakable" and "the like of which you have never heard tell" (*infandus*, *nefandus*). We should recognize that in an oral culture such as Rome was, systems of belief and cultural representation are constructed primarily on the basis of verbal communication—in other words, hearsay. But "hearsay" is not simply gossip; rather, it is a source of knowledge for the formulation of shared rules. "Hearsay" defines what is *fandus*, that which is at the same time both "sayable" and "just."

Even in the form of "talk," therefore, *fari* describes a powerful, determinative manner of speech that defines and arbitrates social behaviors and the system of shared beliefs. It is worth reiterating that the Latin verbs *aio*, *dico*, *loquor*, and other words of "saying" do not designate this "function" of speech. *Fari* alone has the capacity to define the boundaries between the possible and the impossible, the just and the unjust. If "hearsay" (*fando*) defines what is acceptable (*fandus*), then "the like of which you have never heard tell," the "unheard of" (*ne fando quidem*) provokes disapproval and suspicion (*infandus*, *nefandus*). Again, the act of *fari* is a

mode of speaking that, by exercising power of a social nature, appears to be more powerful than any other.

The substantive *fama*, a term of great significance in Roman culture, likewise demonstrates this social dimension of *fari*. Festus had no doubts on this score: "fama a fando dicta, sic apud Graecos φήμη ἀπό τῆς φάσεως," "*Fama* comes from *fando*, as among the Greeks, φήμη comes from φάσις."[63] The Vergilian and Ovidian mythological (allegorical) representations of gossip or rumor are well known. Vergil characterizes the goddess Fama as an "evil than which there is nothing faster; her might is in her movement and she gains strength with each step; timidly, she starts off small, but suddenly she is lifted on the wind, walks upon the earth, and hides her head among the clouds . . . a terrible, outrageous monster, with innumerable feathers upon her body, and under each of these (miraculous to say!), a wakeful eye, and so many tongues, so many sounding mouths, so many pricked-up ears" (*Aen.* 4.173–77, 181–83). Her house rises "on a summit's top. It has innumerable passages, and a thousand openings, and no door locks the threshold: it remains wide open night and day, made of resounding bronze, groaning, and echoing every voice it hears" (Ovid *Met.* 12.43–47). Hesiod famously had warned of her unmeasurable power, remarking, "φήμη (the Greek twin of Latin *fama*) is also a goddess" (Hesiod *WD* 760ff.). No doubt, then, that Fama is a fearsome creature, and when word gets around, it has powerful consequences.

If the ancients agree upon one thing about *fama*, it is about the speed with which it spreads. As moderns habituated to the dissemination of news in "real time," on the Web, on the radio, and on television, we hardly blink an eye at this; but a rumor that can spread over hundreds of kilometers (or *stades*?) in an instant, announcing some occurrence on the very same day that it happened, is a cause for wonder and astonishment in the ancient world. Moreover, although news that has arrived with such miraculous speed can frequently be ignored or forgotten because it cannot be verified by any reliable source, sometimes an official messenger arrives unexpectedly to confirm it; in this way, a "rumor" can appear to be an ominous, determinative portent,[64] capable of producing an event that previously had seemed

63 Festus 76 Lindsay. On the derivation of *fa-ma* from the *fa-* of *fari*, cf. Leumann 1979.34, 319.

64 In the sense of Bayet 1971.45ff.

without foundation. As Plutarch says, "φήμη surpasses everything else in divine nature and in fortune" (*Aem. Paul.* 24.4).

For example, when Aemilius Paulus defeated the king Perseus of Macedon at Pydna, the citizens in Rome were attending a horse race. Suddenly word went around that Aemilius, fresh from his victory over the Macedonian king, was already busy subjecting the entire kingdom to Roman domination. Plutarch says that upon hearing this news, the people of Rome fell into a reckless and unrestrained fit of joy that lasted all day amidst shouting, singing, and dancing. Later, however, when the rumor could not be traced to a specific source, the effects of the news began to wear off and finally dissipate entirely. Nevertheless, after a few days, when everything that had happened was finally known, everyone marvelled how the rumor, circulated so far in advance, had actually "contained the truth within a fiction."[65]

How does *fama* spread so quickly? In *de Garrulitate*, Plutarch again provides, if not an explanation, at least a very good representation of the speed with which rumor may spread. Exhorting his readers to discretion, he writes, "A word said in confidence tends to produce offspring (ἐπιγονὴν λαμβάνει) and to multiply on account of people's intemperate garrulity. A word is only really secret if it remains inside a single person; if it passes to another, it assumes the position of public knowledge (φήμη). The poet (sc. Homer) speaks of 'winged words'; and just as it is not an easy task to catch a bird that slips out of your hand, it is not possible to grab and control a word once it has passed your lips: it hurls itself upwards, 'moving its swift wings in circles'[66] and flits from person to person" (10.506f.). For Plutarch, then, φήμη spreads through a kind of filiation or reproduction. The image of speech passing from one mouth to the other suggests fertility, as if at each step the indiscreet word were procreating countless other word-children, endlessly multiplying the swarm of voices.

Even more extraordinary explanations of *fama*'s speed were given in antiquity, however. Speaking again of Aemilius Paulus's victory at Pydna, and to the inexplicable swiftness with which word of this victory reached Rome, Cicero writes (*de Nat. Deor.* 2.6):

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65 Ibid.; cf. Cicero *de Nat. Deor.* 2.6, Livy *AUC* 45.1.1ff., Valerius Maximus 1.8.1.
66 This may be a citation of Archilochus frag. 170 Lasserre.

> P. enim Vatinius . . . cum e praefectura Reatina Romam venienti noctu duo iuvenes cum equis albis dixissent regem Persem illo die captum, [cum] senatui nuntiavisset, primo quasi temere de re publica locutus in carcerem coniectus est, post a Paulo litteris allatis, cum idem dies constitisset, et agro a senatu et vacatione donatus est.
>
> One night, while Publius Vatinius was returning to Rome from his prefecture in Rieti, two young men atop white horses told him that, on that very day, King Perseus had been captured. Vatinius went to announce this to the senate, and, at first, he was thrown in jail, charged with having spoken thoughtlessly about affairs of national security; but later, when letters from Paulus himself reached Rome and the days did indeed seem to coincide, the senate bestowed upon Vatinius the gift of a field and some time off.

How did the news of Aemilius's victory manage to reach Rome from Macedonia so quickly? According to Cicero, the Dioskouroi, two beautiful youths mounted on white horses, carried the news. Thus *fama*, even when not represented as a goddess, still travels on the lips of gods. Alternatively, *fama* can be transmitted in the manner of a sign, produced and guided by divine will. This possibility is illustrated by yet another variant of the story of Aemilius Paulus's victory. Livy narrates that, after the initial euphoria, when it became clear that the news could not be traced back to a creditable source, it nevertheless remained in the hearts of the Romans in the form of an *omen*, i.e., a prophecy, a happy portent that made them hope for a similar conclusion. Thus when the three official messengers—Quintus Fabius, Lucius Lentulus, and Quintus Metellus—finally reached the city (only to discover that the news that they carried was already known), they declared after a moment of astonishment that this mysterious circumstance was an *augurium*, a "sign" sent by the gods that confirmed their favor for the Roman people and for their exploits in Macedonia (Livy *AUC* 45.1.1ff.).

Plutarch, as has been seen, recounted that when the rumor of Aemilius's victory at Pydna turned out actually to be true, the Roman people marvelled not only at the speed with which the news had reached the city, but also at the fact that it "contained the truth within a fiction." This highlights another principal feature of the social perception of *fama* in the ancient world: it can be unreliable, but also truthful, empty chatter, but also

powerful speech that is capable of anticipating events in the form of an *omen* or an *augurium*. In this regard, Quintilian says of rumor (5.3):

> famam atque rumores pars altera consensum civitatis et velut publicum testimonium vocat, altera sermonem sine ullo certo auctore dispersum, cui malignitas initium dederit incrementum credulitas . . . Exempla utrimque non deerunt.
>
> There are those who consider *fama* and rumors as a form of consensus among the citizens and as public testimony. Others, however, consider it a discourse without any reliable source, which ill-will provokes, and which gullibility increases. And there are no lack of examples of these two interpretations.

The nature of *fama,* then, is ambiguous. On the one hand, the fact that it is shared and public by nature guarantees *fama*'s reliability ("If everyone thinks that . . ."). On the other hand, the absence of a source who can personally assume responsibility for it renders *fama* unbelievable and discredited. The problem of hearsay, rumor, and gossip is thus always the same: identifying a credible source (an *auctor*, as the Romans would say, or an ἀρχή, as the Greeks would say). Frequently, the opposite occurs: at the conclusion of the investigation, it is discovered that "speech makes its escape, running from one to the other and finally, as if diving into the sea of people, vanishes, having no sure source."[67] Despite this, however, it is extraordinary how much "truth" *fama* is able to contain "within a fiction"; as Vergil says, *fama* is "tam ficti pravique tenax, quam nuntia veri," "As much clinging to what is false and wrong, as the herald of truth" (*Aen.* 4.188).

Fama is undeniably a powerful, effective type of speech from the point of view of social life: like *fando*, *fandus*, *ne . . . fando*, and *infandus*, *fama* is capable of expressing a *consensus* on a certain question, the public version of a specific piece of news or belief. This type of speech is effective

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67 Plutarch *Aem. Paul.* 25.6, regarding another "incredible" coincidence between the expected diffusion of news and the "truthful" nature of gossip: the victory of Domitian's army over the troops of Lucius Antonius Saturninus, legate of Upper Germany, in 88 C.E. On the inconsistency of the *auditum*, see also Plautus *Trinummus* 217ff.

enough to shape a community's judgment of specific events and, in fact, to determine the course of their development. Quintilian, explaining how to put his lessons on the *prohoemium* into practice, reminds his students to pay attention to *fama*: "hoc adicio, ut dicturus intueatur cui, apud quem, pro quo, contra quem, quo tempore, quo loco, quo rerum statu, qua vulgi fama dicendum sit," "I add this piece of advice, as well: when preparing to give a speech, consider well to whom, before whom, in favor of whom, in what circumstance, in what place, in what environment, in what atmosphere of popular *fama* the speech is to be given" (Quintilian 4.1.5).[68] Current opinion among the *vulgus*—that is, whatever *fama* happens to be credible to the community involved in the trial—constitutes a fundamental element in shaping the orator's rhetoric, just as important as the circumstances of the case, the identity of the people sitting in the audience, the *reus* being defended, and so forth.

From an anthropological point of view, it is revealing that, in Latin, *rumor* is attracted into the same linguistic sphere as a prophet's revelations or destiny itself: the sphere of *fari*. It is tempting to assume that the circulation of *fama* also presupposes the intervention not only of a visibile and immediate speaker (the animator) but also of a principal. Notably, this same phenomenon of linguistic attraction occurs in Greek culture: φήμη, φῆμις, and φάτις, terms corresponding linguistically to Latin *fama*, mean "public speech" as well as "oracle" or divine speech.[69] In short, for the Greeks as well as for the Romans, the "social" and "divine" powers of speech overlap. It is almost impossible not to think of the famous medieval saying *vox populi, vox dei* in this light.[70] However, this comparison may be deceptive if analyzed too hastily. The "voice of the people" is not "the voice of god" only in the sense that it expresses divine will in the form of an *omen* or an *augurium*:[71] the relationship between the public and the divine in *fari* is, in fact, much more subtle.

The *vox populi* is the *vox dei* because, originating from a god, it is imposed. Like *fatum*, *fas*, and prophetic *fari*, *fama* ("public discourse")

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68 On the importance of *fama* in legal contexts, cf. Justinian *Digesta* 22.5.2 and the Codex Theodosianus 12.1.75.

69 Chantraine 1968 s.v. φήμη, προφήτης; Benveniste 1973a.

70 First in Alcuin *Capitulare Admonitionis ad Carolum* 9.1.376 Baluzio; but Seneca the Elder *Contr*. 1.1 had said substantially the same thing (*sacra lingua populi est*): cf. Tosi 1991.3 n. 1.

71 See above on Ausonius's *praenomen* at birth and Aemilius's victory at Pydna.

has a character of inevitability, capable of determining specific events as well as behavior in general. If the Fama of epic has the power to "set everything in motion and to make cities shudder with her tongue" (Valerius Flaccus *Argonautica* 2.122), even Terence's most quotidian *fama* has the same determinative power. When Cremes offers his daughter to Simon to be his son's bride, throwing in a generous dowry to boot, his "motivation" is his reputation (*fama impulsus*): "Everyone," explains Simon, "was unanimous in their congratulations and praised my good fortune, because I had a son of such extraordinary character" (Terence *Andria* 94ff.). Once more, it is on *fama* that are founded the most venerable rules of social behavior, such as the convention that provincial governors are responsible for "those who are subordinate to their authority being as happy as possible." Cicero's brother Quintus learned this as governor in Asia "constanti fama atque omnium sermone," "by constant public discourse and everyone's talk" (Cicero *ad Quint.* 1.1.24).

It is possible to find examples of the power with which public discourse is endowed in Greek culture as well: Odysseus, for example, speaking of the departure of the Greeks to Troy, says, "But when high-thundering Zeus devised the hateful journey that would loosen the knees of many heroes, at that time they ordered me and glorious Idomeneus to guide the ships in the direction of Ilium, and there was no refusing: the pitiless voice of the people (χαλεπὴ . . . δήμου φῆμις) compelled us" (Homer *Od.* 14.235–39). If it is Zeus who "devises" the plan for the war, it is the "voice of the people" that brings about its realization. Similarly, Plato explains why certain acts, such as incest, are unanimously considered shameful and impious: this is because everyone speaks of them that way, and each of us, from the moment that we are born, hears them spoken of in the same way. It is precisely the fact that "everyone speaks" about certain behaviors—the public and unanimous voice—that determines society's perception and judgment of them, and thus also the community's behavior. "Public opinion (φήμη)," continues Plato, "possesses an amazing power (θαυμαστήν τινα δύναμιν), if it is true that no one would ever dare even to breathe in a way contrary to the prescriptions of law" (Plato *Leg.* 838c–d).[72]

Φήμη, then, determines social behavior by reason of its incredible power: public speech is capable of imposing itself on, and nullifying, other

72 Detienne 2002.70ff. Cf. also Aeschylus *Agamemnon* 938–39: to Cassandra's affirmation: "Don't have regard for what the people murmur about," Agamemnon responds: "The people's voice (φήμη) has great power."

potential types of speech. This is why ancient cultures marked it as similar to divine speech. It is, so to speak, the social power of public discourse—its acting as the standard of credibility and acceptability, as the *consensus* of the community—that allows it to assume the characteristics of a religious power. If, as Hesiod said, "rumor (φήμη) is also a goddess," this is because it expresses itself, as the gods do, through words imbued with irresistable (social) force.

9. *RUMORES* AND GOSSIP'S "RUMINATION"

Before returning conclusively to *fari*, it will be worth exploring a term that Quintilian associates with *fama* when he explains the ambivalent nature—both discredited and authoritative at the same time—of "gossip": *rumor*. One of Pseudo-Quintilian's declamations defines *rumor* as "res sine teste, sine indice, res ex incertis improbissima, maligna, fallax," "Something that has no one to vouch for it and nothing to pinpoint it; it is the worst of uncertainties, evil, and false" (*Declam. Maior*. 18.6). Cicero, on the other hand, defined this type of public (and untrustworthy) speech as *sine capite, sine auctore,* "headless, authorless" (*ad Fam.* 12.10.2). News that arrives by way of *rumor* is "without a head"; that is, it is impossibe to determine who is "at its head." In this light, it is interesting to recall Vergil's allegorical description of Fama, the horrible monster that "walks on the earth and hides its head among the clouds." A creature that holds its head among the clouds or is endowed with an invisible head is not only a monster of immense proportions; in the language of allegory, it is rumor "without a head."

As with *fama*, the unreliability of *rumor* depends on the fact that it has no sure *auctor*—or that it has too many, which amounts to the same thing. It is precisely this "multiplicity" of *auctores* or, better, the continual accumulation of "new" *auctores* that makes *rumor* untrustworthy. The *Disticha Catonis* advise, "rumores fuge, neu studeas novus auctor haberi," "Avoid *rumores* and do not wish to be a new *auctor*" (*Disticha Catonis* 1.12). Ovid, describing Fama's house, says, "mixtaque cum veris passim commenta vagantur / milia rumorum . . . auditis aliquid novus adicit auctor," "A thousand false *rumores* mix with the true . . . and a new author is always adding something new to those already heard" (*Met.* 12.54–58). Like Vergil's Fama, *rumor* "gains strength as it goes": its *auctores* multiply and it grows uncontrollably. (Plutarch would say that it "reproduces" over and over again.)

Although *rumor* and *fama* correspond in many respects, they differ

in one important aspect: their linguistic origin. According to the Romans, *rumor* was linked to the rare word *rumen* ("esophagus, stomach"), referring in particular to the stomach of "ruminants."[73] Festus writes, "rumen est pars colli, qua esca devoratur, unde rumare dicebatur quod nunc ruminare," "The *rumen* is that part of the neck through which food is swallowed; because of this, they used to say *rumare* instead of *ruminare*" (332.1 Lindsay; Paulus 33.8 Linsday), and Nonius Marcellus, "rumen dicitur locus in ventre quo cibus sumitur et unde redditur: unde et ruminare dicitur," "That part of the stomach into which food is first placed and from which it is then brought back up is called the *rumen*: because of this, we say *ruminare*" (*de Comp. Doctr.* 18.11 Lindsay). *Rumen* therefore designates the first of the three sections into which the stomach of a ruminant is divided, the cavity into which food is first deposited after it is swallowed.

Interestingly, grammarians always establish some connection between the act of "ruminating" and the term *rumen,* on one side, and the production of *rumores* on the other. Paul the Deacon's redaction of Festus states, "adrumavit, rumorem fecit, sive commurmuratus est, quod verbum a rumine, id est parte gutturis, putant deduci," "*Adrumavit* means 'he has produced a *rumor*,' or 'he has murmured': they say that this word comes from *rumen*, which is a part of the throat" (Paulus 9.7 Lindsay). *Ad-rumare* contains the verb *rumare,* which was considered an archaic equivalent of *ruminare*. According to Festus, *ad-rumare* can mean either "to produce a *rumor*" or "to murmur." *Rumor*, then, could be represented as having to do with "ruminating" and with "murmuring," one of most characteristic ways in which the uncontrolled dissemination of information occurs: i.e., *rumores* precisely.[74]

Elsewhere, Paul the Deacon's *Epitome* states, "rumitant, rumigerantur. Naevius 'simul alius aliunde rumitant inter se,'" "*Rumitant* means to 'spread information.' Naevius says, 'at the same time they spread information

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73 Cf. Ernout and Meillet 1967 s.v., who prefer to connect the term with another root that means "to shout."

74 It is enough to cite Livy *AUC* 45.1.2 (regarding the uncontrolled diffusion of the news at Rome that Aemilius Paulus had won the battle at Pydna): "quarto post die, quam cum rege est pugnatum, cum in circo ludi fierent, murmur repente populi tota spectacula pervasit pugnatum in Macedonia et devictum regem esse; dein fremitus increvit," "On the fourth day after the battle with the king, when games were taking place in the Circus, suddenly the report made its way through the entire event that there had been a battle in Macedonia and that the king had been defeated; thereafter the rumor increased."

from one to the other'" (Festus 333.2 Lindsay = Naevius *The Punic War* 52 Morel). The fragment of Naevius suggests a situation similar to that which occurred at Rome when the defeat at Lake Trasimenus was announced. According to Livy, "alius ab alio impleti rumoribus domos referent," "[The citizens] filled themselves up with *rumores*, one from the other, and carried them home" (*AUC* 22.7.8). The verb Naevius uses, *rumito*, is a frequentative of *rumo*, which was given as a synonym of *rumino*. It appears here with *rumigeror*, a term that is connected with *rumor* and that means "to spread *rumores*, news," like *rumifero*. Once again, the act of producing *rumores* and that of ruminating appear to be associated. In fact, in the fragment from Naevius, there are many analogies with the process of producing *rumores*: in Naevius, gossip is produced as it goes "from one to the other," circulating *inter se*, inside a group of speakers, exactly as Ovid described ("A new author is always adding something new to those *rumores* already heard"). As is now known, it is an essential feature of the production of *rumores* that its *auctores* multiply, that speech circulates within a group and repeatedly "reproduces."

From the point of view of its linguistic origin, then, the term *rumor* is represented as a slow rumination, a chewing again of what has already been processed. Not surprisingly, perhaps, this repetitive "chewing" of speech also seems to have something in common with the act of murmuring and has a collective dimension. In fact, the connection between gossip, on the one hand, and rumination, on the other, established through the metaphor of "chewed speech," has powerful connotations: through the image of the sounds produced by ruminating animals, hearsay/*rumor* can be connected to other kinds of "sound" used to describe the circulation of public speech: e.g., *fremitus,* "noise, rumor, murmur."[75] Nevertheless, if *rumor* is a product of rumination, the difference between this word and *fama* is clear. *Fama* is considered the product of a powerful voice that surpasses others because of the presence of a second speaker (namely, society and the collective);

75 Cf., e.g., Livy *AUC* 45.1.2, note 74 above. It is interesting to compare this with Cicero *ad Att.* 2.12.2: "de ruminatione cotidiana, de cogitatione Publii." Publius's formulation of plans was accompanied by a daily *ruminatio*, an uncontrolled boiling-over of rumor. This image of gossip as a product of the stomach may have an analogy in the figure of the ἐνγαστρίμυθος or ἐνγαστρόμαντις in Greek culture, a type of prophet who "spoke with the stomach"; on this see the interesting observations of Katz and Volk 2000 (in a work of great learning, even if the attempt to interpret Hesiod *Theogony* 27–28 on the basis of this practice is hardly persuasive).

rumor seems to be the product of a slow process of accumulation, a process no less insidious because of its sluggishness. *Rumor* is constructed collectively, passed "from one to the other," as Naevius says, as the same information is continuously chewed and re-chewed.

10. CAN *FARI* BE TRUSTED?

In view of the model used above in speaking of *fari*'s prophetic and religious significance—that of *fari*'s two co-present speakers (the immediate speaker or animator and the principal); or two different agencies, of which the second, that of the principal, constitutes the fundamental authority and efficacy for the utterance—it should be clear that the situation is similar for *fama*. Public speech also features the co-existence of an animator who transmits the information in question and a principal who expresses its *consensus* through *fama* (in this case, the community). It is again the second "agency" that acts as the foundation for the authority of the animator and that guarantees the statement's efficacy. It is this second, social agency that produces *fama*'s (divine) power.

This relationship between *fari* and *fama* invites further reflection. As has been seen, hearsay is as unreliable and as untrustworthy as it is powerful. In fact, the absence of an *auctor* who can verify the truth of a statement and claim responsibility for it tells against the value of publically circulated speech. Does such ambivalence surround divine speech as well? The verb used to designate it—*fari*—is the same. Furthermore, who is the speaker in an act of prophetic *fari*? Who is the *auctor* in a speech act of this type?

Only in literary works such as the *Aeneid* is it possible to witness the precise moment in which a god (Jupiter) produces divine speech. In non-literary or non-fictional acts of *fari*, on the other hand, the speaker is always a prophet, a seer, a *hariolus*—in short, someone who plays the role of mediator between a god and the audience. In these cases, the prophet claims the ability to speak in the name of the god. As with *fama*, the prophet or seer's act of *fari* is represented as a type of speech involving a hidden *auctor*: there is a prophet who speaks and says, "The *auctor* of my speech is a god." The *vates* Marcius insisted, "nam mihi ita Iuppiter fatus est," "because Jupiter said (revealed) this to me." But can sensible people trust what prophets and seers say—just as they wonder whether *fama* can be trusted? This is the question that Cicero poses to his brother Quintus in *de Divinatione* ("quid vero habeat auctoritatem furor iste, quem divinum

vocatis?" "What *auctoritas* can this madness, which you call divine, have?" 2.110). It is a question of *auctoritas*; what is at stake is precisely the existence of an *auctor* capable of guaranteeing (or not) the prophet's linguistic act. The credibility of prophetic speech is called into question when it is impossible to accept that behind it stands the agency of some higher entity. Speaking of "false" prophets, Jeremiah 23:16 says, "They speak visions from their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord."[76]

Cicero was not the only person at Rome who did not trust prophets and seers, *vates* and *harioli*, however. At least in the historical period, the authority of their prophetic discourse was considered a subject for debate. In a fragment of Ennius's *Telamo* quoted by Cicero in *de Divinatione*, this class is defined rather dramatically as "superstitious fortune-tellers and shameless diviners" (*superstitiosi vates impudentesque harioli*), who "have no idea where they are headed, but want to show others how to get there" ("qui sibi semitam non sapiunt, alteri monstrant viam," *de Div.* 1.132). Most interesting from our point of view is that the contempt shown to seers and prophets seems to be fully shared by Quintus Cicero, the defender of divinatory practices: he likens *vates* and *harioli* to the *Marsus augur*, to the *vicani haruspices*, and the *interpretes somniorum*—all figures that Quintus "solemnly declares" not to "trust."[77] On the other hand, it is well known how much care the Roman state devoted to controlling the "spontaneous" appearance of prophecy and oracles that might disturb the public peace. To such independent sources of divine insight, the state opposed the centrally controlled divinatory activities of the various priestly *collegia*.[78] And just as *vates* and *harioli* inspired such skepticism, the verbs that derived from their names, *vaticinari* and *hariolari*, mean either "to prophesy" or "to speak nonsense." Can it be accidental that next to Fatuus, the ancient divinity of prophecy, we have the adjective *fatuus* ("nonsensical"), and that

76 Cicero did not attribute any authority at all to the prophecies of the *Marcii vates* or Apollo's riddles. In fact, he considered them "partim ficta aperte, partim effutita temere" (Cicero *de Div*. 2.110, 113; on the concept of "authority," cf. Lincoln 1994.1–14, 79–87; Bettini 2000. On Jeremiah 23, cf. Cooper 1990.34ff.

77 Ennius *Telamo* frag. 319–23 Vahlen^2 = frag. 266ff. Jocelyn; Cicero *de Div*. 1.132. Jocelyn 1969.397ff. unpersuasively attributes the words *superstitiosi . . . harioli* to Cicero rather than to Ennius, based on historical-linguistic considersations. On these Ennian lines, see above all Timpanaro 1999.327ff.

78 Cf., e.g., Livy *AUC* 25.1.4ff., 39.16.8; Tacitus *Ann*. 6, 12; Wissowa 1971.536ff. Already Dumézil 1966.123ff. had noted that the Romans had been early freed from the *vates*, the poet-priests, soothsayers, and so on; cf. also Montanari 1976.244ff.

fatuari, besides signifying a divinely inspired speech act, also means "to behave like a fool"?[79]

This ambivalence concerning the credibility or authority of a speaker in an act of *fari* is the same as that involving *fama*, which, according to Quintilian, could be understood either as the community's authoritative *consensus* or as malicious gossip. It was possible to believe in prophecies, if a god was stated to be their *auctor*. It was also possible to refute this claim, arguing that the discourse of *harioli* had no divine authority.[80] Thus the seer and the prophet are speakers very much like those who relay *fama*: they transmit a "voice" that is not their own, that reaches them from outside, but of which they are not themselves the *auctores*. Both *fama* and the seer's act of *fari* constitute powerful types of speech precisely because they are anonymous and indirect, not simply human and personal.[81] If one believes in the claim of the animator, then words such as "I speak not in my own name, not for myself, who am present, but in the name of a god, or in the name of the people" are extremely authoritative words. On the other hand, they will be extremely untrustworthy if one does not believe the animator's claim and if one denies the existence of some principal capable of guaranteeing the speaker's words.

11. THE AMBIGUITIES OF *FABULA*

Before concluding, it will be useful to consider one of *fari*'s derivatives: *fabula*. As is readily apparent, this substantive is built from the root *fa-* of *fari* with the addition of the suffix *-bula*. The same suffix recurs in *su-bula* ("awl," an instrument used by cobblers, from *su-ere,* "to stitch"), *fi*(*g*)*-bula* ("fastener," from *fig-ere,* "to fasten"), *mandi-bula* ("mandible," literally, "instrument for chewing," from *mand-ere,* "to chew"), and *tri-bula* or *tri-bulum* ("harrow," a tool for beating grain, from *tri-* of *ter-o,* "to beat, trample, wear down"). From this, it is possible to deduce that, in Latin, the suffix *-bula* designates the "instrument" that serves to complete the action

79 Plautus *Asinaria* 579, *Rudens* 347; Cicero *ad Fam*. 2.16, *pro Sextio* 10, 23; Seneca *Apoc.* 7.1. On *hariolus* in bad sense, denoting a "quack" as opposed to the members of a recognized priestly college, see Pease 1955.52 n. 1.

80 In this sense, it is interesting to refer to the notion of a "program of truth" elaborated by Veyne 1988.59ff.: the context is always that of "belief."

81 Benveniste 1973a.384–89 has rightly insisted on this aspect of *fari* (its impersonal character).

indicated by the verb (Leumann 1967.312ff.). Accordingly, *fabula* likely indicates the instrument by which an act of *fari* is realized: in other words, its most direct derivative. But there is more. Upon closer examination, it appears that the suffix *-bula* occurs in words that indicate instruments with the ability to work deeply upon some material, gouging it with "points" (*subula, fibula*) or "teeth" (*mandibula, tribula*). The suffix thus functions as what linguists call a "submorphemic differential"—that is, as a phonemic unit that suggests a *semantic* affinity between words precisely because it is shared by them all (Jakobson and Waugh 1979.198–99).[82] An awl, a fastener, a mandible, and a harrow—all substantives that end in *–bula* in Latin—are all instruments that have "points" or "teeth" and that are used for forcefully incising some object. *Fabula*, then—the Roman "fable"—appears also to be an "instrument" that works deeply upon the material of an act of *fari* and that is capable of profoundly modifying its object. *Fabula* appears to be a kind of essential manifestation of *fari*, the product par excellence of this linguistic act: it is precisely the word or the discourse of someone who speaks in the manner of *fari*.

What kind of speech does the term *fabula* refer to? At least upon first examination, the kind of speech defined by *fabula* appears to lie more on the side of what is incredible or *un*-credible than what is considered authoritative. In fact, for the Romans, *fabula* is the equivalent of μῦθος, which for the Greeks signifies mythological or fictional narration: the mythical accounts of Hyginus, for example, are *fabulae*, just as Cicero's Balbus considers Greek mythological stories—stories from which the philosopher must steer clear—also *fabulae* (*de Nat. Deor.* 2.28.70; see Bettini 2006).

Likewise, Livy classifies tales that are historically suspect as *fabulae*; for example, the tale of the she-wolf that suckles the twins (*AUC* 1.4.7: "inde locum fabulae ac miraculo datum"), or that of the Roman soldiers who dig a tunnel under Veii and burst forth just as the *haruspex* utters his prophecy—"He who shall consume the innards of this victim shall be victorious"—in order to take possession of the *exta* and carry them to Camillus (*AUC* 5.21.8: *inseritur huic loco fabula*), a story that Plutarch, *Camillus* 5, defines as a μύθευμα. Livy describes the story of Tarpeia as a *fabula*,[83] and

82 On the semantic spectrum of *fabula* in Roman language and culture, see Ferro 2005.

83 The story about Juno's statue at Veii is also a *fabula*. This statue, when asked by a certain man if it wanted to be taken to Rome or not, not only nodded in agreement, but also responded "I want" (5.22.6: *inde fabulae adiectum est* . . .). For the story of Tarpeia

the "Aesopic" fables, in which animals and other objects are endowed with speech, are called *fabulae*, just as in Greek they are called μῦθοι.[84] Theatrical compositions are also *fabulae* (Varro *de Ling. Lat.* 7.55), since they are not "true" stories, however much they are represented as such. Moreover, the word *fabula* comes to describe narratives in general, especially when they are meant to entertain, as well as simple conversation in which anecdote and gossip are intermixed with everyday chitchat.[85] Frequently, *fabula* is paralleled with *fama* because it can also designate speech that circulates uncontrolled:[86] a city can be "filled" with *fabulae* when there is much talk of something or someone, and an individual can even become a *fabula* to his own fellow citizens, an object of rumor and gossip.[87]

There is no question of the ficticious and incredible character of *fabulae*. Livy, as has been said, uses this term when he wishes to mark certain stories as untrustworthy by historical standards; Macrobius, meanwhile, peremptorily declares that the noun *fabula* itself signifies *falsi professio* ("a false statement").[88] Isidore, maintaining that "fabulas poetae a fando nominaverunt, quia non sunt res factae, sed tantum loquendo fictae," "Poets define *fabulae* with the verb *fari* because they are not true events but creations of fiction realized only in speech" (*Orig.* 1.40.1),[89] reaffirms the imaginary, fictitious nature of what is defined as a *fabula*. To call a story a *fabula*, then, means that the speaker does not put much faith in it; a *fabula* is a narrative that others may believe, but which the speaker who defines it as such does not trust.

(1.11.5–9), cf. Ogilvie 1965.675 on 5.21.8; on the myth of Tarpeia, see Beltrami 1989; on Livy's attitudes towards traditional stories, see, e.g., Liou-Gille 1998. Sempronius Asellio's assertion about the *Annales*—"id fabulas pueris est narrare, non historias scribere," "that is to repeat stories to boys, not to write history"—is also interesting: cf. Beck-Walter 2004.87ff.

84 See, e.g., Priscian (*Rhetores Latini Minores* 1.1): "fabula est oratio ficta verisimili dispositione imaginem exhibens veritatis . . . nominantur fabularum aliae Cypriae, aliae Libycae, aliae Sybariticae, omnes autem Aesopiae," "A fable is a fictional story that projects the appearance of truth by means of its probable structure . . . Some fables are called Cyprian, others Libyan, and still others Sybaritic—but all are called Aesopic."

85 Statius *Theb.* 8.236, Tacitus *Ann.* 6.5, Apuleius *Met.* 1.26, Prophyrion in Hor. *Sat.* 1.7.2–3.

86 Cf., e.g., Plautus *Miles* 239, Terence *Phormio* 877, Catullus 69.5, etc.

87 Horace *Epodes* 11.8, Pliny the Younger *Ep.* 8.18.11, etc.

88 Macrobius in *Somnium Scipionis* 1.2.7.

89 On the Ciceronian theory that *fabula* denotes "neither true nor likely things" and its Greek precedents, see Bettini 2002a.93ff.

How to account for the fact that *fabula*, directly related to *fari*, represents discredited, untrustworthy, or, at any rate, unreliable speech? *Fabula* and *fari* seem to stand at two ends of the spectrum of discourse, *fabula* designating fictitious and un-credible speech, *fari* designating authoritative speech that cannot be ignored. To explain this paradox, we might conjecture that in some remote period of Roman culture or in certain contexts, *fabula* had, in fact, marked authoritative discourse like that which "reveals" the secrets of fate. If this were the case, *fabula* could only have marked the solemn speech of the *vates* and *harioli*, yet this type of speech was not considered authoritative. The kind of speech defined as *fabula*, then, could have been discredited at the same time as its speakers, the *vates* and *harioli*, were themselves discredited. Denying the presence of a principal speaker—the supernatural entity that guarantees the authority of their speech/*fabula*—could do nothing but reduce the authority of *fabula* to that of "chatter" or "gossiping."[90]

There is a less hypothetical explanation for this paradox, however. As has been seen, *fabula* covers much the same territory as *fama*, designating also rumor and uncontrollable gossip. *Fabula* is therefore also a type of speech that is untrustworthy because it lacks a specific *auctor*, but that nevertheless draws its own (social) power from the collective (because "everyone is saying it"). In this light, it is perhaps not surprising that *fabula*, like *fama*, is a derivate of the solemn and authoritative *fari*. Like *fama*, in fact, *fabula*/rumor oscillates between untrustworthy speech (that pronounced by the animator, whoever he may be)—and the principal (the *consensus* of the community).

Fabula, as has been seen in part, frequently designates a particular type of story. For the Romans, in fact, it is not just Greek μῦθοι that are *fabulae*, but also those stories that form part of the distinctively Roman mythic tradition: paradigmatic events from the past and simple local anecdotes that function as *exempla*. In addition to the Livian examples mentioned above, when Ovid, narrating the deeds of Fabius Maximus Cunctator in the *Fasti*, tells the story of the transformation of the crow, the serpent, and the chalice into constellations (respectively Corvus, Serpens, and Crater), he knows that he is telling *fabulae* (2.248: "non faciet longas fabula nostra moras"). Likewise, Horace, in the midst of his reflections on the "golden

90 I have already proposed this interpretation in Bettini 2002a.

mean," is aware that he is beginning a *fabula* when he recounts the anecdote of Ummidius (*Satirae* 1.1.95: *non longa est fabula*). Even clearer is the case of Seneca, who lists the deeds of Rutilius, Metellus Numidicus, and Mucius Scaevola as examples of laughing in the face of a painful death, calling them "well-known *fabulae*" (Seneca *Ep.* 24.5–6: *decantatae . . . fabulae*). In other words, stories that come from tradition are also *fabulae.* ("Old wives' tales" and stories of popular folklore in which can be recognized the predecessors of what we call "fables" even today are probably comparable to these traditional accounts.)[91]

The same pattern seen for *fari*—the coexistence of an animator and of a far more authoritative principal—holds in these cases, too. In fact, it is not difficult to see a parallel with *fama* (or with *fabula* itself) used in the sense of "public speech": if the role of the principal is played by the community or the *consensus* of citizens in the case of *fama*, it is played by the presence of a specific tradition in the case of *fabula*/narrative, a tradition that provides a guarantee of authority for a type of speech that in all other respects may be untrustworthy. The stories of the *lupa*, Tarpeia, Mucius Scaevola, and so forth are "fabulous," uncertain tales. However, they have always been told and therefore can be represented as authoritative speech. Originating outside the speaker who narrates them in the role of "animator," these stories can claim the weight of the past and of tradition as the "principal" guaranteeing their authority.

Judgment can only be ambivalent in regard to the *fabula* of tradition, just as it was with *fama*. Everything depends on the value given to the tradition or on the animator's claim that behind him stands a "principal" voice (tradition) that ensures the credibility of his speech. An individual's reaction to a *fabula* depends, I suspect, on how much he or she values the tradition that it represents, and this evaluation is independent of any assessment of the story's historicity or verisimilitude. From this point of view, Livy is an interesting case. Speaking of Rome's mythic past, he declares that nothing can be "affirmed" (*adfirmare*) or "refuted" (*refellere*) about the foundation of the city or earlier events since everything is wrapped up in poetic *fabulae* (*AUC* pr. 6). The historian takes no position on these questions. He does not deny the stories, but neither does he accept them. For Livy, Rome's legendary past may be encased in *fabulae*, but the city's

91 Tibullus *Elegiae* 1.3, Apuleius *Met.* 27, etc.

culture is based upon these "fabulous" tales: how could they possibily be "refuted"? The attachment that citizens feel towards their traditions, their immediate political circumstances, the innumerable connections that these *fabulae* have with the city's places, cults, and institutions, all comprise a "principal speaker" that deserves the utmost respect.

12. WHEN PROPERTIUS FELT LIKE A *VATES*

Having analyzed the ambiguities of *fabula*, it is now possible to reconsider Propertius's elegy and the poet's singular declaration (*Elegiae* 4.4.1–2):

> Tarpeium nemus et Tarpeiae turpe sepulchrum
> *fabor* et antiqui limina capta Iovis.
>
> The Tarpeian grove and Tarpeia's appalling tomb will I sing, and the captured threshold of ancient Jupiter.

We asked why Propertius used such a formal verb as *fabor* instead of a more regular expression such as *referam*, *dicam*, or *canam*. It is now possible to read the poet's opening affirmation in a new light. As an act of *fari*, Propertius's account of Tarpeia's escapades takes on the characteristics of a prophetic revelation. The poet represents himself as a *vates*, a poet-prophet who communicates some secret knowledge inaccessible to others. In this way, he bolsters his account with great authority—which, as we shall see, it probably needed, given its theme.

Propertius's revelation necessarily looks to the past and not to what will come, as would normally be the case. The mythic account capable of "revealing" the meaning of those ancient spots in Rome (the Tarpeian grove, the tomb of Tarpeia, and the temple of Capitoline Jupiter), is oriented towards the city's origins, not towards the future. This situation represents the reverse of Jupiter's *fabor* in the first book of the *Aeneid*, which introduces an account of events that have not yet happened (the history of the Trojans in Latium; cf. above). This reversal of prospective—a *vates* who reveals the past—does not, however, hinder Propertius's strategy; in fact, it renders it even more consistent with the model of the poet-prophet that Propertius wishes to represent, since the practice of divination at Rome (as in ancient Greece) dealt not only in revealing the future but also in bringing to light events clouded by the shadows of history.

In the *Fasti*, Ovid speaks of an ancient goddess of prophecy named Carmentis and her two companions (1.631–36):[92]

> siquis amas veteres ritus, adsiste precanti:
> nomina percipies non tibi nota prius.
> Porrima placatur Postvertaque, sive sorores
> sive fugae comites, Maenali diva, tuae:
> altera, quod porro fuerat, cecinisse putatur,
> altera venturum postmodo quidquid erat.
>
> If you love ancient ritual, join the prayer: you will learn some names that you did not know before. Porrima and Postverta are appeased, whether they are your sisters or your companions in flight, goddess of Maenalus: the first (Porrima) is thought to have sung what came before (*porro*), the second (Postverta) what would come in the future (*post*).

Beside the goddess Postverta, who makes "normal" predictions of the future, stands another goddess, Porrima, making predictions about the past. Servius gives us the same detail: "alii huius [Carmentis] comites Porrimam et Postvertam tradunt, quia vatibus et praeterita et futura sunt nota," "Others say that Porrima and Postverta accompany Carmentis, because both the past and the future are known to *vates*."[93] Moreover, Servius tells us that Carmentis was not only the name of a prophetic divinity, but also a synonym for the more common *vates*.[94] Thus it was with the help of Porrima that *vates* and *carmentes* "revealed" what had been obscured by the fog of time, not simply what would happen in the future. For the poet-*vates*

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92 Cf. Wissowa 1971.221, Radke 1965.81ff. (with rather vain considerations), and Bettini 1991.154ff. For the Greek world, it is enough to recall the Homeric Calchas who knows τά τ' ἐόντα τά τ' ἐσσόμενα πρό τ' ἐόντα (Homer *Il.* 1.70).

93 Servius Auctus in *Aen*. 8.336. Cf. Macrobius *Saturnalia* 1.7.20: "[Ianus] creditur geminam faciem praetulisse, ut, quae ante quaeque post tergum essent, intueretur: quod procul dubio ad prudentiam regis sollertiamque referendum est, qui et praeterita nosset et futura prospiceret. Sicut Antevorta et Postvorta, divinitatis scilicet aptissimae comites, apud Romanos coluntur" (cf. also 1.9.4: "quidam ideo eum dici bifrontem putant, quod et praeterita sciverit et futura providerit"). On the relationship between these goddesses and the goddess *Carmentis*, see Habinek 2005.239ff.

94 See note 24.

Propertius preparing to reveal the "myth" of Tarpeia, the secrets of her grove and her *turpe sepulchrum*, his tale had its roots in Rome's mythic past, and it was Porrima who inspired him.

Returning to Propertius's poetic strategy (using *fabor* to represent himself as a *vates*), it is interesting to note that when the poet again undertakes to sing another sacred "place" in Rome—this time, the temple of Palatine Apollo—he declares simply that he will "recount" it: "Musa Palatini referemus Apollinis aedem: / res est, Calliope, digna favore tuo," "Muse, I will recount the temple of Palatine Apollo: it is a thing worthy of your favor, Calliope" (*Elegiae* 4.6.11–12). This is because he had already prefaced this "neutral" declaration of speech (*referemus*) with a distich explicitly describing what kind of function he would play as poet: "sacra facit vates: sint ora faventia sacris / et cadat ante meos icta iuvenca focos," "The poet (*vates*) celebrates a sacrifice: let there be silence for the ritual, and let a heifer fall, struck, before the fire of my altar" (4.6.1–2).[95] Propertius represents himself as a priest, a *vates*, completing a religious act.[96]

In both 4.4 and 4.6, the initial declaration is the same: Propertius is a *vates*. In 4.6, however, the sacred aspect of the poet's song is expressed in two distinct moments ("sacra facit vates . . . referemus Apollinis aedem"). In the elegy on Tarpeia, meanwhile, this double action is condensed into a single expression: in order to represent himself as a *vates*, Propertius need only employ the verb *fabor*. Without needing to invoke the Muse or any other divinity of song, the audience is already given notice that the poet sees himself here as the animator, as the secondary speaker, and that an "agency" far more powerful than his own is soon going to take control of his poetry and become its *auctor*.

When Livy narrates the story of Tarpeia, he, too, explicitly defines it as a *fabula*.[97] As has been shown, for Livy, a *fabula* is a narrative that others might believe but not the person describing it as such. Defining the legend of Tarpeia as a *fabula*, the historian automatically relegates it to the

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95 On Propertius as *vates*, see the discussion of Newman 1997.481ff.

96 Also in the first elegy of the third book, Propertius represents himself as a *sacerdos* who has touched the "pure fountain" of poetry (3.1.2ff.). And he did not shrink from making a "prophecy" regarding his posthumous fame (*auguror*: 36).

97 "additur fabulae . . . [Sabinos] pepigisse eam, quod in sinistris manibus haberent" (Livy *AUC* 1.11.5–9). Tarpeia intended that the Sabines' promise should refer to the bracelets that they wore on their left wrists, while, in fact, we are dealing with the "shields" under the weight of which she was buried by her enemies.

category of traditional stories that are worth "neither affirming nor refuting" (*nec adfirmare nec refellere*).[98] At the same time, these stories cannot be entirely ignored since their "traditional" character endows them with authority.

In the voice of the poet and that of the historian, the legend of Tarpeia demonstrates the polarity and, indeed, the tension that most typically characterizes *fari*. On one side, *fari* represents the sacred speech of a *vates* (Propertius's *fabor*), and, on the other, the discredited tale that cannot be trusted (Livy's *fabula*). And it is precisely according to the measure of this scale that Propertius's attitude towards the "myth" of Tarpeia must be evaluated. It is as if he wished to recuperate the credibility of Rome's *fabulae* by placing them under the rubric of the prophet's powerful discourse. There were no "historical" foundations for these stories (Livy *AUC* pr. 6 would lament the dearth of *incorrupta rerum gestarum monumenta,* "genuine historical memories," establishing their credibility), and, therefore, they belonged to the category of *fabulae*. However, this stood out against the "inspired" speech of *fari* with its guarantee that an absolute, supernatural *auctor* provided its agency, transforming it into divine revelation. These are the contradictions of myth: while historians mistrust them, poets love them and seek to revitalize that ancient "voice" of the poet-prophet—if only in the fictional space of literature.

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98 From this point of view, it is interesting to note the fact that, in regard to the story about the words of the Veian *haruspex* and the action of the Roman soldiers, Livy explicitly joins a very similar phrase to that which, in the Preface, accompanied his mention of the *poeticae fabulae* that narrate events before the city's foundation ("ea nec adfirmare nec refellere in animo est," "I have in mind neither to confirm or refute them," pr. 6): "sed in rebus tam antiquis . . . haec, ad ostentationem scenae gaudentis miraculis aptiora quam ad fidem, neque affirmare neque refellere est operae pretium," "In cases of such antiquity . . . it is not worth either confirming or denying these things which are more suited to the showiness of a theater delighting in miracles than belief" (5.21.9).

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