

The Technique of Prophecy in Lucan

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The epic canon requires a gradual disclosure of events and a skillful unraveling of the plot. As one of the simplest means of foreshadowing the climax, prophecy¹ has always been a favorite epic device to generate suspense in the narrative through sporadic clues about the resolution of the action and the fate of the characters. Verisimilitude further demands that prophecy be entrusted to qualified seers, since predictions made by mortals who are not prophetically endowed carry no validity.² In the *Aeneid* the hero cannot prophesy his own fate, but Jupiter (1.260 ff.), the shade of Hector (2.289 ff.), the Penates (3.147 ff.), Celaeno (3.250 ff.), and the Sibyl (6.86 ff.) can. To achieve the highest level of credibility, the epic prophecy should be delivered, if not by a deity or shade, then by a seer who is thoroughly conversant with his particular sphere of manticism.

In Lucan's *De bello civili*, however, there is no divine machinery, and therefore prophecies can be delivered only by the professional seer, the shade, or the poet himself as omniscient narrator. An analysis of the prophetic phenomena will show that the poet has availed himself of these devices. He will use prophets in conjunction with prodigies and magic; he will employ a shade as an *Orakeltraum*; he will also discard the narrator's *persona* and deliver prophecies of his own. Since Lucan frequently criticizes the usual means of predicting the future, it would seem that he is not using prophecy merely as a means of anticipation and foreshadowing, but for some ulterior reason. Our method, therefore, will be twofold: a study of prophecy as an epic device and an examination of any reflections which the poet might have on the modes of prediction.

¹ Throughout this paper prophecy is used in the broadest sense of "the foretelling of events." On this and related meanings cf. E. Fascher, ΠΡΟΦΗΤΗΣ (Giessen 1927) 51 ff.

² On this point cf. C. H. Moore, "Prophecy in the Ancient Epic," *HSCP* 32 (1921) 100.

I. PRODIGIES BEFORE CAESAR'S MARCH ON ROME

At the close of the first book Caesar had crossed the Rubicon and is on his way to Rome. The *scaena* logically divides itself into three main parts:

A. Introduction (1.522 f.).

Prodigies sent by the threatening gods to augment man's anxiety.

B. Prodigies (526–83).

1. Celestial signs (526–44).

2. Terrestrial signs (545–83).

C. Prophecies (584–695):

1. of Arruns (631–37),

2. of Nigidius Figulus (641–72),

3. of a matron (678–94).

Seers are brought in to interpret the prodigies. Arruns comes from Etruria, and being a *haruspex* concerns himself with the externals—portents, entrails, and thunderbolts—acting, in other words, in accordance with the Etruscan discipline.³ He gives no interpretation, but speaks abstrusely and prays that the entrails will prove false (637–38).

Arruns was probably the poet's own invention, a fictitious character.⁴ The next seer, Nigidius Figulus, was an actual historical personage, and an examination of his character reveals that he was preeminently qualified to be cast as prophet in the epic. Figulus had composed treatises on the gods, haruspication, dream interpretation, winds, animals, and the nature of man.⁵

³ On *monstra*, *exta*, and *fulgura* as the threefold division of the *Etrusca disciplina*, cf. Cic. *Div.* 1.12; 1.35; 1.72; 2.26; 2.28; 2.42; 2.109. For a general account of haruspication based on the ancient sources, cf. G. Blecher, *De extispicio capita tria* (Giessen 1905).

⁴ Perhaps the Etruscan name was suggested to Lucan by the early books of Livy, in which the name *Aruns* appears three times: 2.6 (son of Tarquin); 2.14 (son of Porsenna); 5.33 (a Clusian who guided the Gauls over the Alps). There is little connection between Lucan's Arruns and Vergil's (*Aen.* 11.759 ff.).

⁵ Cf. W. Kroll, *RE* 17.1 (1936) 203 ff., s.v. "Nigidius Figulus." The *testimonia* and fragments can be found in *Grammaticae Romanae fragmenta* (ed. G. Funaioli [Leipzig 1907]) 158 ff.

His skill in clairvoyance was well-known; through astrology he supposedly prophesied the birth of Augustus (Suet. *Aug.* 94). From the political standpoint, his republicanism would also endear himself to the anti-Caesarian Lucan. A conscientious praetor and friend of Cicero, he was exiled in 46 B.C. for his support of Pompey in the Civil War (Cic. *ad Q. fr.* 1.2.16).

Figulus begins with a startling disjunction: either the universe is governed by no fixed law or else destiny is supreme (1.642-45), a foreshadowing of the poet's own concern with fate or chance as the controlling forces of the universe (2.9-13). After observing that the planet Mars is in the constellation Scorpion,⁶ Figulus issues a direct prophecy: only during the Civil War will Rome be free; peace will come with a tyrant (1.670), an apparent reference to Octavian's emergence after Actium.

In essence, Lucan has put his own feelings about religion and politics into the mouth of Figulus, whose opening query, whether or not there is teleology in the universe, is a presentiment of Lucan's own dilemma at the opening of Book 2. Lucan's sympathies were decidedly republican; thus Rome will be free (that is, it will be at least nominally a republic) during the period of internecine warfare until the commencement of the Empire in the person of Octavian. Rather than issue this prophecy directly, the poet has Figulus do so.

The final prophecy is delivered by a matron whom the scholiast (*Adnotationes super Lucanum* 1.676) identified as the *res publica* itself, an interpretation neatly complementing the prophecy of Figulus who addressed Rome, reminding her that only during the period of civil warfare will she be free.

The matron is clearly frenzied and under the influence of Apollo (1.677: *prodens urgentem pectora Phoebum*), the traditional god of prophecy.⁷ By an unusual type of symbolism, Lucan has embodied the condition of Rome of 49 B.C., one of great inner turbulence, in the person of a woman. It is actually the Roman state that is frenzied, and it is the Roman state who now speaks in the person of the *matrona*. Furthermore, the very fact that the matron or republic is under the sway of the god of oracular

⁶ For the astrology of this passage cf. Housman's ed. 325 f. and R. J. Getty, "The Astrology of P. Nigidius Figulus (Lucan 1, 649-65)," *CQ* 35 (1941) 17-22.

⁷ E. Rohde, *Psyche* (Engl. transl. by W. B. Hillis [London 1925]) 289 ff.

utterance renders her fit to prophesy, and what she foresees is of vital importance to the poem.⁸

First she beholds Pharsalus (1.679–80). The battle of Pharsalus is waged in Book 7. Next she envisions Egypt and a decapitated corpse on the bank of the Nile (685–86), a clear reference to Pompey's brutal murder (*Commenta Bernensia* 1.683; *Adnotationes super Lucanum* 1.686) which is described in Book 8. Thirdly, she sees the parched sands of Africa (686–88), an allusion to Thapsus and Cato's suicide (*Comm. Bern.* 1.686; *Adnot. sup. Luc.* 1.687). She then predicts Munda (688–90; *Comm. Bern.* 1.689; *Adnot. sup. Luc.* 1.689) where Caesar defeated Gnaeus Pompey, Caesar's assassination (690–91; *Comm. Bern.* 1.691; *Adnot. sup. Luc.* 1.691), and lastly the battle of Philippi (692–94; *Comm. Bern.* 1.692; *Adnot. sup. Luc.* 1.692).

The matron has clearly experienced the theater of war. If we interpret the astute explications of the scholiasts within a chronological framework, it is clear that she has predicted events from 48 B.C. (Pharsalus) to 42 B.C. (Philippi). Two of her prophecies (Pharsalus and Pompey's death) are fulfilled in the epic as we possess it. The poet doubtless intended to fulfill the remaining prophecies in subsequent books. Was Lucan, through the medium of the inspired matron, trying to define the scope of his epic? A theory has recently been suggested along this line.⁹ One can only conjecture about the envisioned scope of the poem, and several such hypotheses have been advanced.¹⁰ While the matron's prophecies certainly give definite indications of Lucan's awareness of his vast theme, they have a much more traditional function: the prophecies are employed as accoutrements of the epic poet's stock-in-trade to plant clues that would burgeon in the later books (Pharsalus in Book 7, Pompey's death in Book 8) and

⁸ In interpreting the matron's prophecies I have used the *Commenta Bernensia* (ed. H. Usener [Leipzig 1869]) and *Adnotationes super Lucanum* (ed. J. Endt [Leipzig 1909]); hence the abbreviations *Comm. Bern.* and *Adnot. sup. Luc.* The scholiasts are unusually sound on this point, and their interpretations are certainly the most orthodox ones.

⁹ R. T. Bruère, "The Scope of Lucan's Historical Epic," *CP* 45 (1950) 217–35, suggests 29 B.C. as *terminus ad quem* on the basis of the prophecies.

¹⁰ On Caesar's death as the proposed end, cf. Heitland's introduction to Haskins' edition (Cambridge 1887) xxxiv. On Cato's death as the "moral climax" of the epic and appearing in the hypothetical twelfth book as a parallel to the death of Turnus, cf. O. Schönberger, "Zur Komposition des Lucan," *Hermes* 85 (1957) 253. The eccentric view that the epic is complete as stands is held by H. Haffter, "'Dem schwanken Zünglein lauschend wachte Cäsar dort,'" *MH* 14 (1957) 118–26.

to suggest incidents which Lucan was thinking of incorporating later into his epic (Thapsus and Cato's suicide, the war in Spain, and Philippi). In a series of prophecies ranging from the obscurity of Arruns to the preciseness of the inspired matron, Lucan prepares the reader for the gradual evolution of the events he is to relate. These events, as the scholiasts suggested, would embrace the later Civil War and Philippi.

But the predictions do not cease with the matron. Prophesying has exhausted her (1.695: *lasso iacuit deserta furore*), so the poet himself enters the scene. The proem to Book 2 does not mark the beginning of a new chapter; it serves rather as a bridge between the matron's predictions and the actual commencement of the second book's action with the panic at Rome.

The poet asks why God has burdened man with prodigies. He then ponders further the ultimate government of the universe, asking whether fate (2.11: *fatorum inmoto . . . limite*) or chance (2.12: *fors incerta*) is the controlling factor—the same query Figulus posed at the beginning of his astrological investigation. Lucan himself does not have the answer, but asks only that whatever it is that God is preparing be sudden, so mankind may at least have hope (14–15).

Thus, taking the proem to Book 2 as a logical consequence of the matron's prophecies, the whole episode might better be outlined as:

- A. Prodigies requiring prophecies (1.526–83).
- B. Prophecies arranged in gradation from the vagueness of Arruns to the comparative lucidity of the matron, and delivered by people qualified to predict the future (584–695).
- C. The poet's own reflections (2.1–15).

II. PRODIGIES BEFORE PHARSALUS

The prodigies before Pharsalus are also arranged according to celestial (7.154–57) and terrestrial (7.158–80). To interpret the portents prior to the outbreak of warfare, Lucan utilized two professional seers and a frenzied matron. Accordingly before Pharsalus Lucan introduces an augur whom he does not mention

by name but who is clearly Cornelius, an actual historical personage who fell into a trance at Patavium and described all the circumstances of the Civil War (Plut. *Caes.* 47; Gell. *NA* 15.18). His prophecy, however, differs noticeably from the extended ones of Figulus and the matron in both brevity and directness. Cornelius predicts only that the decisive moment has come and that Pompey and Caesar will clash in sacrilegious warfare (195–96).

The prodigies in Lucan are commensurate with the prophecies. The lengthy Book 1 prodigy-catalogue required three interpretations plus that of the poet himself. The brief catalogue in Book 7 needs only one professional soothsayer. But does Lucan himself have something to say in the matter?

After the augur's prophecy, Lucan himself enters the action as narrator, offering three reasons for the prediction: either Cornelius saw the bolts of Jupiter, or he interpreted the strife in heaven as a portent of warfare on earth, or else the dimness of the sun presaged the battle (197–200).

Following the Book 1 prodigies, the poet questioned the existence of a Providence that would burden mankind with knowledge of the future. So, too, after the Pharsalus prodigies, he muses that it is small wonder that men quake in the hour of crisis if there are prodigies to enhance their anxiety (185–87). Lucan would rather have no prodigies at all, but if disaster is imminent, "let it be sudden" so that the fearful can still hope.

The three possibilities which Lucan gave for Cornelius' prophecy can be reduced to two: did the augur see the thunderbolts (i.e. did he have recourse to the *Etrusca disciplina*?), or did he observe signs in the heavens (i.e. through astrology)? Lucan does not know, so he offers these alternatives. Here is a direct attempt to link the prophecy of Cornelius with the interpretations of Arruns and Figulus, and thus effect a juncture between the first book's description of pre-war Rome and the seventh's picture of Pharsalus. Arruns the *haruspex* concerned himself with the thunderbolts in addition to the entrails and monstrous offspring. Figulus studied the heavens. In inquiring whether Cornelius was versed in the interpretation of thunderbolts or astrology, Lucan seems to be trying to establish a bridge between the first and seventh books, between the introduction to his epic and its climax.

There is a great similarity between both of these passages where prodigies serve as a dramatic preface to prodigies:

Book 1

The *superi minaces* send the omens (524).

Celestial portents (526–44).

Terrestrial portents (545–80) culminating in the apparition of the *Sullani manes* and the ghost of Marius.

Arruns (585–638): obscure; Figulus (639–72): less obscure; Matron (674–95): defines through prophecy the theater of war.

The poet's own attitude (2.1–15): he vacillates between fate and fortune, complains of the prodigies, asking only that whatever God is preparing be sudden.

Book 7

Fortuna sends the omens (152).

Celestial portents (154–57).

Terrestrial portents (158–80) culminating in the apparitions of ghosts of parents and kinsfolk.

Simple and direct prophecy of the augur (195–96).

The poet shows his cynical attitude toward prodigies in a parenthesis (180–87); the augur's prophecy leads up to Lucan's own prophecy that future readers will favor Pompey (205–13).

It is no mere accident that the interrelation of prodigy and prophecy is found in the two most important books of the epic.

III. MAGIC

The rigid logic by which Lucan incorporates historical characters into episodes involving the preternatural is discernible in Book 6 when Sextus Pompey visits the witch Erichtho. To effect such a visit Lucan must alter historical fact and bring Sextus to Thessaly.¹¹ Since Book 6 is clearly modeled after the sixth *Aeneid*,¹² Pompey, who was keenly interested in the

¹¹ Sextus was sent to Lesbos with Cornelia: cf. App. 2.83; Dio Cass. 42.2.3 f.; Plut. *Pomp.* 66.3; M. Hadas, *Sextus Pompey* (Geneva, N. Y. 1930) 24 ff.

¹² Lucan's debt to Vergil can be clearly shown in 6.785 ff.; from the prophecy of Anchises (*Aen.* 6.756 ff.) Lucan has taken the Decii, Camillus, Cato, the Gracchi, and Scipio. Cf. further E. Norden, *Aeneis Buch VI*³ (Leipzig 1926) 330.

preternatural (Cic. *Div.* 2.53; Tac. *Ann.* 2.27), would have been the logical choice, but Lucan cannot alter history so radically as to bring Pompey to Erictho's abode. He can, however, have the renegade son visit the witch. Thessaly would be the ideal locale, since the land was always noted for magical practices (Hor. *C.* 1.27.21; Plin. *NH* 30.2.6). The poet's logic is unassailable: the son of a father who himself was interested in sorcery consults a witch in a country teeming with magical practices.

Lucan writes that Sextus was over-anxious to learn the future, but not through the usual means of oracles, extispicy, augury, fulguration, or astrology (6.425-29). This statement clearly refers to previous events. Sextus refused to seek out those versed in the Etruscan discipline. Arruns in Book 1 examined the entrails and gathered the thunderbolts. Sextus had no need of astrologers. Figulus investigated the stars in the first book. Lucan has simply restated the various devices of divination used in Book 1, and in so doing has established a nexus between the portents of Book 1 and the magical rituals of Book 6: in Book 1 Arruns and Figulus tried to interpret the future by the Etruscan discipline and astrology respectively; in Book 6 Sextus Pompey will try to learn the future through magic.¹³

Similarity of design is further evidence for a connection between the prodigies of Book 1 and the magic of Book 6. Lucan first narrates a series of prodigies popularly attributed to witchcraft and arranges them in his now familiar order of changes in the heavens (461-72) followed by changes on earth (472-91). After the Book 1 prodigies, Lucan questioned whether chance or fate governs the universe; so, too, after the macabre prodigies that result from witchcraft, Lucan questions whether necromancy can constrain the gods or whether witches are subject to the dictates of the deities. The poet does not have the answer, but again suggests alternative reasons (492-99).

Next Erictho revives a corpse in order to obtain a prophecy for Sextus. Again we have the poet exercising great care in a

¹³ Intermediate between these books is the fifth in which Appius Claudius consults the Delphic oracle; hence the reference to the *tripodas Deli* (6.425). I discuss this book in "The Role of the Oracle in Lucan's *De bello civili*" which is to appear in *Hermes*. It should be noted that Lucan uses the same technique: prefatory description of ecstatic prophecy, the Pythian's prophecy that Appius will play no part in the war, and lastly Lucan's own attack on the riddling oracle.

matter of ritual, for the revival of the dead was always performed by one endowed with magical powers.¹⁴ Thus the task is entrusted to Erictho.

The revived corpse predicts that death is imminent for both Sextus and his father (802-5). Furthermore, Pompey's ghost will appear to Sextus in Sicily,¹⁵ perhaps to prophesy Caesar's murder.¹⁶ Sextus is also told to fear Europe, Africa, and Asia (817). This statement is highly prophetic, for Pompey was murdered in Africa; Munda saw the decisive defeat of Gnaeus, and Agrippa's victory over Sextus at Mylae and his defeat by Octavian at Naulochus marked the end of his career.

These magically induced prophecies serve the same purpose as those of the inspired matron of Book 1. Through the aid of vaticination in the hands of qualified agents, Lucan continues to clarify the scope of the momentous conflict he had chosen for his theme, and at the same time to cast hints about the ultimate collapse of the house of Pompey—his death in 48 B.C., that of Gnaeus in 45, and Sextus' in 35.¹⁷

There is a further similarity between Books 1 and 6. The magical rites serve as a macabre overture to the predictions of the revived corpse; in this way they are similar to the portents of Book 1 and later Book 7 which mount up, crescendo-like, to the corresponding prophecies. Rather than have another series of prodigies and seers to interpret them, Lucan uses instead a detailed ritual for the revival of a corpse who issues the prophecy. Just as the prophecies of Book 1 herald the fall of the republic, so, too, those of Book 6 presage the fall of the house of Pompey.

¹⁴ Suet. *Nero* 34; Dio Cass. 17.15; Tac. *Ann.* 2.28; cf. further W. Headlam, "Ghost-Raising, Magic, and the Underworld," *CR* 16 (1902) 55. On Erictho's rites, cf. L. Fahz, *De poetarum Romanorum doctrina magica* (Giessen 1904) 147 ff.; H. J. Rose, "The Witch Scene in Lucan (*Pharsalia*, vi, 419 sqq.)," *TAPA* 44 (1913) 1-11; A. Bourguery, "Lucain et la magie," *REL* 6 (1928) 299-313.

¹⁵ The apparition does not appear in the epic, but Lucan certainly would not have bypassed the opportunity for such a meeting between Sextus and his father's ghost.

¹⁶ So suggests B. M. Marti, "The Meaning of the *Pharsalia*," *AJP* 66 (1945) 375.

¹⁷ If Bruère's thesis (above, note 9) be correct, namely, that the poet intended to bring his epic down to 29 B.C., the death of Sextus certainly could have been included. Even if Philippi be considered as the hypothetical *terminus ad quem*, one can argue that Lucan would not be obliged to include the death of so minor a figure as Sextus; perhaps the poet intended to have Pompey's ghost prophesy the death of Sextus in Sicily.

IV. THE PROPHETIC DREAM

Shortly after Pompey set sail from Brundisium he is visited by the shade of his fourth wife, Julia (3.12-34), in the guise of a fury.¹⁸ Julia tells Pompey that while he was married to her, he was at the peak of his success, but with her death and his remarriage to Cornelia his star began to wane.¹⁹ The ultimate purpose of the vision, however, is more prophetic than historical, for Julia clearly predicts Pompey's death (33-34):

bellum
te faciet civile meum.

Pompey, however, is not frightened by the shade, and expresses his attitude syllogistically (38-40): if sensation terminates with death, the apparition is delusive; if sensation remains after death, then death is not to be feared. In either case, the vision cannot intimidate him.

Lucan is clearly using Pompey as the mouthpiece for his own sentiments in much the same way as he used Figulus to express his own dilemma about the government of the universe. Again alternatives are given, for the poet cannot commit himself to any one explanation. Lucan is not content simply to employ an epic technique like the *Orakeltraum*; he must divorce it from its literary context and subject the very concept of a shade endowed with prophetic powers to a withering analysis, thereby exploding one of the most venerable of the epic devices.

V. THE POET'S OWN PROPHECIES

A historical epic poet who has eliminated the divine apparatus is still working within a literary form in which vaticination paves the way for the fate of the characters and the resolution of the

¹⁸ Three reasons have been suggested for the Julia episode: R. T. Bruère, "Lucan's Cornelia," *CP* 46 (1951) 222, conjectures that the vision may have been suggested by the apparition of Morpheus in the form of Ceyx to Alcyone (*Ov. Met.* 11.650 ff.); R. Pichon, *Les sources de Lucain* (Paris 1912) 226, sees an imitation of the appearance of the shade of Creusa to Aeneas; H. Macl. Currie, "Lucan III 8 ff. and Silius Italicus XVII 158 ff.," *Mnemosyne* 11 (Ser. 4) (1958) 50, sees just another indication of Lucan's interest in the macabre.

¹⁹ Julia's words correspond to historical fact. With her death in 54 B.C., a growing estrangement resulted between Caesar and Pompey; cf. Sen. *Dial.* 6 (*Ad Marc.* 14.3); Flor. 2.13.

action. Lucan realized the importance of prophecy as a suspense-generating device and thus entrusted vital prophecies to qualified agents. However, he could not usher in a *vates* whenever the situation became critical enough to require a prediction. Such multiplication of prophets would only make the poem episodic. Consequently, it is not surprising that Lucan will occasionally intersperse the action with prophecies of his own, all of which are designed primarily to predict the fates of Caesar, Pompey, and Cato, and secondly to suggest events which he would later incorporate into the epic.

By the midpoint of the epic, Lucan's prophesying becomes quite patent. The intended scope of the work had begun to ferment in his mind, and the poet begins to clarify his design for the reader.

In 6.29 ff. Caesar decides to construct an elaborate line of entrenchments to surround Dyrrachium and Pompey's forces. Lucan gives a detailed description of the works and terminates the episode with the observation that the theater of battle has been defined and within its compass will be Pharsalus and Thapsus (6.60-63):

. . . coit area belli:
hic alitur sanguis terras fluxurus in omnis,
hic et Thessalicae clades Libycaeque tenentur;
aestuat angusta rabies civilis harena.

Pharsalus will comprise the next book, and Thapsus would follow later.

At another point (6.306-11) the omniscient poet observes that had Pompey unleashed his troops against the Caesarians, tyranny would never have triumphed, and the general's murder in Egypt, the disasters at Thapsus and Munda, and Cato's suicide would never have occurred. In this brief prophecy delivered in the form of a dramatic aside, the poet links in sharp juxtaposition the forthcoming disasters for the republic, thereby preparing the reader for the climactic battle and its subsequent catastrophes: Pompey's murder, Thapsus and Cato's suicide, and the war in Spain.

Other references to the deaths of Pompey and Cato appear soon after. Pompey's forthcoming decapitation is suggested in the next book when Lucan ironically remarks that if Caesar ever wished to see Pompey's head, it would indeed be on display

(7.674–75). Cato's death is predicted again in Book 9, his *aristeia*, when the poet observes that Africa will see his last days (9.409–10).

Predictions of Caesar's death are not lacking. In Book 7, Lucan's detestation of Caesar becomes so intense that he alters historical fact and bring Brutus to Pharsalus as an assassin. Brutus was at the battle (Plut. *Brut.* 4), but Lucan invents a tale that he disguised himself as a common soldier, sword in hand, looking for an opportunity to kill Caesar (586–87). Suddenly the poet enters the narration and warns Brutus not to murder Caesar, for the tyrant must live for a while and then fall victim to Brutus' dagger (592–95):

. . . nil proficis istic
Caesaris intentus iugulo: nondum attingit arcem,
iuris et humani columen, quo cuncta premuntur
egressus meruit fatis tam nobile letum.

But note that Lucan not only prophesies Caesar's assassination but also Brutus' own death at Philippi (590–92):

ne rue per medios nimium temerarius hostis,
nec tibi fatales admoveris ante Philippos,
Thessalia periture tua.

Brutus should not act too rashly now; death is awaiting "the last hope of the senate" at Philippi. Here again we find a forceful juxtaposition of deaths: those of Caesar and Brutus, of assassinated and assassin, both of which would be depicted in the later books.

In Book 10 there are two attempts to murder Caesar in Egypt, and both times (341–44 and 431–33) Lucan enters the action like a flashing deity and warns that Caesar must not be murdered in Egypt, but his death must wait until Brutus can perpetrate the deed.

VI. CONCLUSION

In the absence of the divine apparatus, Lucan entrusts prophecy to those qualified to predict the future: Arruns, Nigidius Figulus, the shade of Julia, Erictho, and the Patavian augur. Furthermore, to diversify the epic the mantic function is not entrusted to one type of seer but rather to a variety of prophets. These

characters appear at a crucial point in the plot. The situation builds up to their prophecies; they deliver them and are heard of no more. They are, then, like protatic characters introduced to fulfill the poet's purpose and then dismissed. Further, Lucan will often enter the action and allude to incidents which would be incorporated later.

In each instance, Lucan gives his own attitude toward any means of predicting the future. Unlike the prophecies in the *Aeneid*, those in the *De bello civili* are all concerned with death and underscore the poet's thesis that knowledge of the future annihilates hope. Prodigies burden mankind, magically induced prophecies portend death, and dreams presage annihilation for the dreamer. The poet's narrative predictions are concerned only with death and continued warfare. In Lucan's hands, prophecy becomes an epic device used for the ulterior motive of showing its futility.