Instruments of divine power

divine intervention through use of weather phenomena in representations and religious practice in the Roman empire

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Cover illustration: *The conversion of St. Paul,* by Michelangelo (frescoe in the Pauline Chapel at the Vatican). This painting appears to depict a bolt of lightning arising from Jesus' (god's?) right arm, directed at St. Paul. (from J. Bullock, 'Was Saint Paul struck blind and converted by lightning?', *History of ophthalmology* 39. 2. (1994) 151 – 160, 158.

Introduction

In Rome on the Piazza Colonna stands the famous victory column of Marcus Aurelius. On this column a lightning bolt can be seen to strike a siege tower. In another scene on that same column a rain-god can be seen providing solace to thirsty Roman soldiers. Marcus Aurelius' column is not the only source testifying of instances where the weather appears to be ascribed to divine intervention. What place did divine intervention through the use of weather phenomena have in ancient Roman religious society?

The main reason for studying this aspect of Roman religion is to contribute to a better understanding of the Roman world. Interest in the Roman empire is as high as ever. It has, however, become commonplace, at least recently, to leave the religious component, that I consider to be defining Roman society, out of histories. Bestseller books such as 'The Swerve'[1] and 'Battling the gods'[2] write religion out of Roman history. Conscious religious thought may have become so alien to large parts of modern western society, that any role for it, in any other society, be it Roman or any other, is in need of serious explanation. "That which we underestimate is the power of religion, (…)" complains an expert in Middle Eastern religion.[3] To show the power of religion in Roman society I will attempt to investigate the place of divine intervention through weather phenomena within the Roman Empire.

Taking a closer look at the subject at hand benefits the wider understanding of Roman religion in its entirety and will show the important role religion has within Roman society. Weather phenomena that are recognized as divine intervention are especially well suited as a subject of study to show what Romans believed in. Because intervention through use of the weather is a unique way not aimed at eliminating the role of the witness, but rather strengthening it, by focusing on his expressed beliefs. By providing detailed context to cases showing belief in divine intervention I aim to add to understanding why Roman religion is so important. Those natural events that are considered divine intervention provide a unique connection to our world in which the weather still plays an important role albeit a different role than in the Roman world. Several historical debates partly overlap with the subject at hand. However, I believe that this thesis fills a hiatus when it comes to approaching the experience of Roman religion. This thesis is not unique in the use of its source

[1] S. Greenblatt, *The swerve: how the renaissance began*. (London, 2011).; J. Monfasani., review of *The Swerve: How the Renaissance Began*, (review no. 1283). http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/1283 Date last accessed: 21 December, 2017.
[2] T. Whitmarsh. *Battling the gods: atheism in the ancient world.* (London, 2016, paperback edition).
[3] Maurits Berger: "En de betekenis van allerlei conflicten en je levensstijlen en allerlei maatschappelijke problemen [is dat zij] ook religieus ingekleed gaan worden."https://www.nporadio1.nl/gemist Date last accessed: 22 October 2017.

material but the view it takes towards the interpretation of it is. Exposing the religious attitude, that is represented in it and that is overlooked by some. Exhuming some historical an religious views on Roman religion, and applying it to Roman materiel that is usually nowadays viewed as art only, will provide a well needed counterbalance to accounts more readily fitting the revisionist agenda. The interconnectedness of several elements that are present within Roman society strengthen the picture of the fundamental nature of Roman religion in the Roman world.

The first three chapters are mainly concerned with one of three weather phenomena through which the supernatural intervene: lightning, storms, and hail. In chapter one, the case of the lightning and rain miracles on the column of Marcus Aurelius will be looked at in order to provide some answers to the main question. Roman ideas about the god usually responsible for wielding such an instrument are considered in chapter one as well because they provide a religious context for the column. The weather phenomenon storm features in chapter two. It includes the case of the epic storm in Ovid's *Tristia* that is based on the epic storm in Virgil's *Aeneid*. In chapter three apotropaic magic (often through the eyes of Roman Christianity) is looked at. Deviant attitudes and scepticism are discussed in the light of religious change. On the farm nothing is more important than protecting the crop. Appeals to the supernatural not to make it rain or hail are discussed. In the last chapter it is argued that the place of divine intervention within Roman society may well be the power that divine intervention is thought to represent.

The main question does not revolve around the interpretation of such weather phenomena – interpretation in the sense of a question on how to understand and how to respond to some observed phenomenon, which is the central element in divination. Weather phenomena need no interpretation at all, because they speak for themselves. Like the destruction of the catapult of the enemy by lightning mentioned above, or the invocation of weather phenomena within charms and on amulets. Representations and portrayals of Roman religion such as the depiction of the *mira* on the Aurelian column, the storms through which the supernatural intervene and the phylacteries averting disaster which are central in this thesis, are not considered here as signs that divination has to interpret, but as examples of immediate divine intervention.

Thus this paper is not about what the deities communicate, it is about what Romans communicate to each other about, or rather through, (representations of) divine action. What does this mean for a historical idea of Roman Religion? Answering the main question requires a preliminary idea of the world in which I want to establish the place of divine intervention. In order to help pinpoint the role of divine intervention within the Roman world, a very limited preliminary attempt to (re)construct such a world is made in this introduction. With the help of some provocative historiography I will give a characterisation of Roman religion. The small hermeneutic circle, from preconceptions on the nature of roman religious experience to divine intervention in chapters one

and two and back to Roman religion again in chapters three and four, will show us the place of divine intervention within Roman religion and its importance.

"The historian's task is to complicate, not to clarify" said Jonathan Smith.[4] To combat oversimplification one is to provide as much context as possible, as many sources, discussions, problems and solutions as possible and still allow for easy understanding by an informed reader. The idea of what Roman religion is, and what Roman religious experience means for understanding the culture of the Roman empire has been variously interpreted. These interpretations are carefully considered in the following part of the introduction to provide context for the main question treated in chapters one to four. The idea of atheism in antiquity that is put forward occasionally – and that might shake up conventional interpretations of religious experience in the Roman world – is one of the themes dominating the debate. Although time and space is far too limited for a complete historiographical discussion of ancient religion, leaving any of the forenamed debates out would result in problems. The importance of these debates should not be trivialized. Either the default position of people in the ancient world was atheism, or religious spells show embedded religion. Either religious spells are 'magic' or magic spells are religion. Each of these choices further confine the scope of answers that may become available to the main question during this investigation into Roman religious experience. In the following paragraphs these debates within the discours on Roman Religion are discussed.

A Roman system-of-belief?

A potential answer to the main question – what place has divine intervention through the use of weather phenomena in the religious life in the early Roman empire – touches upon different fields of enquiry within the history of Roman religion. Historiographical discussion on religion in antiquity has often focused around what religion is. If there is no generally agreed picture of roman religion, how can one ask after a very specific part of it, divine intervention? Maybe one can, but only by starting from a wider frame. Does Roman religion even remotely resemble modern ideas of religion? Whitmarsh[5], for one, supposes it does. Perhaps with good reason. By Looking at important written sources from antiquity, that give rise to countless ideas by historians on how to interpret ancient religion, the extent to which Roman religion may resemble a modern concept of religion becomes clear. One of the important sources on ancient religious practices is Pliny and sometimes he is sceptical towards some of the Roman religious' beliefs that he relates of.

[4] J. Z. Smith., *Map is not territory: studies in the history of religions*. (1987, Chicago).129.
[5] Whitmarsh. *Battling the gods.*

> "Our predecessors constantly believed such things, including the most difficult, that even thunderbolts can be called forth, as I showed in the appropriate place. (14) In the first book of his Annals, Lucius Piso records that King Tullus Hostilius was struck by a thunderbolt when he tried to call down Jupiter from heaven in accordance with Numa's books and using the same form of sacrifice that Numa had used, since he had done some things which were not sufficiently in accordance with the appropriate ritual. Many indeed have thought that the prophecies and portents of great events can be changed by words."[6]

"Miracles," said Whitmarsh, "by their very definition, test the limits of plausibility."[7] And look the ancient writers think so too he says with his book. The risk – in discussing religion (or atheism) in ancient history – is great. Whitmarsh bravely does so and tries to remain impartial by presenting the religion versus atheism debate as a debate in which (up until now, it is implied) both sides have been wrong.[8] He does this by positioning himself at the very extreme end of opinions on belief and disbelief, looking to cause a shake-up, and only succeeds in presenting discussions on ancient religion as a bitter war between two strictly opposed sides: those who allow for atheism and those who deny it; thereby disregarding the fact that much of historical debate consists of small contributions that do not lead to much movement on the larger issues. His argument that not often enough the totality of ancient disbelief is considered may seem convincing, as it clearly does to newspaper columnists all over the English speaking world, who call it an 'invigorating, urgent book';[9] but what about the totality of belief? Of course disbelief needs to be recounted (and it is)[10] as part of the Greco-Roman world but so too does the total pervasiveness of religion in Greco-Roman daily life.

From whitmarsh's book I take the following argument. Firstly scepticism within the ancient world has been vastly underrepresented in accounts relating of ancient religion. Secondly many prominent ancient world thinkers were vehemently opposed to religious elements. When recounting these categories Whitmarsh concludes that the historical view of the ancient world was wrong and that it had always been atheistic by default.

In general Whitmarsh is not wrong in his catalogue of disbelief, mainly expressed by various individuals who are sometimes aware of each other's writings that are expressing their intellectual philosophical views. It is rather that he underestimates the importance of all the other – sometimes hidden – expressions of belief. One can take issue too with his labelling of disbelievers as atheists.

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[6] Pliny, 'Naturalis Historia 28', in: E.H. Bispham and T.J. Cornell (eds.), *The Fragments of the Roman Historians: Introduction. Vol. 2* (Oxford, 2013) 311.

[7] Whitmarsh, *Battling the gods,* 10.

[8] Ibidem. 4 – 5.

[9] E. Wilson, 'Battling the Gods: Atheism in the Ancient World review – disbelief has been around for 2,500 years', *The Guardian's book section online*. Date last accessed: 9 March 2016.

[10] J.N. Bremmer, ''Religion', 'ritual' and the opposition 'sacred' vs. 'profane'', in: Graf, F., *Ansichten griechiser rituale* (Leipzig, 1998); See also: Pliny, *Naturalis Historia, 28*.

Since it is rightly argued that one needs a theism first, to allow for atheism.[11] What is even more surprising is that after Whitmarsh derides the use of embedded religion for generalizing held beliefs in the ancient world. Embeddedness may be defended as a concept showing the pervasiveness of religious practice.[12] All-in-all Whitmarsh's very well-written polemic that he himself describes as a 'representation of a kind of archaeology of religious skepticism'[13] (a catalogue of disbelief) 'opens up all kinds of issues'[14] or revives them, such as issues concerning atheism and disbelief, and scepticism and embedded religion. 'There was the realm of the sacred (the temple) and that of the profane (literally, what lies "before the temple"), but of a "secular" realm there was none. All was "religious."'[15]

But what was explaining the pervasiveness of Roman religious practices as embedded religion a solution for? The 'notion of embedded religion' "(…) highlights how ancient cultures differ from a modern, post-Enlightenment world that typically posits hard divides between religion and politics or religion and economics."[16] (Of course Whitmarsh rejects embeddedness for precisely this reason, since it 'highlights' the impossibility of matching a thoroughly modern concept: atheism, to a different cultural world.) From the time of Cicero a change in discourse[17] takes place that starts to

[11] D.B. Hart, 'Battling the gods: our atheism is different' *Commonweal Magazine* (2016) https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/battling-gods Date last accessed: 21 December 2017.

[12] Whitmarsh raises a few issues of importance. In the introduction to his attractive and well-written book, Whitmarsh brings up the recent fashion to always speak of embedded religion in the ancient world and he adds the suggestion that embedded religion denies individual disbelievers a place in history. In a source annotated for this suggestion by Whitmarsh (page 9, note 7), 'Dislodging "embedded" religion: a brief note on a scholarly trope', it is shown that descriptive and redescriptive accounts of history are used indiscriminately (switching sometimes 'in the middle of the argument')[12] and thereby covering up the use of non-Roman concepts to describe Roman practices.[12] The use of the terms descriptive and redescriptive are reminiscent of the anthropological terms emic and etic. These terms came into use in anthropology, and history too, to avoid endless philosophical discussion within works of history on objective and subjective statements. They describe the reflection of a scholar observing his subject using the frame of reference that he is culturally confined to (emic) and the way the subject itself (within its own cultural confines) expresses his own views (etic). The application of emic and etic is, of course, not always (fully) possible or useful. What is a Roman temple expressing? While there are doubtlessly many other limitations on the use of this terminology, further discussion lies outside of the scope of this thesis, but can be found in many publications e.g.: R.T. McCutcheon (ed.), *The insider/outsider problem in the study of religion* (London and New York, 1999) *50 – 63*; Whitmarsh, *Battling the gods*, 9 – 10.

[13] Whitmarsh. *Battling the gods.* 11.

[14] Mary Beard, in a promotional quote on the front of: Whitmarsh, *Battling the gods,* (London, 2017, paperback edition).

[15] Hart, 'our atheism is different', 27; Although Hart's cause and allegiance is clear and, I fear, being associated with his proselytizing reputation, I nonetheless wholeheartedly recommended reading his review of Whitmarsh's book. It is spot on, and sadly one of the only critical ones in a sea of biased and uninformed newspaper reviews that currently make up the popular discussion on this subject.

[16] B. Nongbri, 'Dislodging "embedded" religion: a brief note on a scholarly trope', *Numen. 55. 4.* (2008) 441 – 442.

[17] Cicero's time is the late republic.; "Beard, North and Price see religion emerging as a category in Roman culture in the late Republican period (on this point, see also: Beard, 1986) in a manner similar to the way in which Keith Hopkins describes the "structural differentiation" of the Roman army, education, and law (1978:74-98). While I think that Beard, North, and Price are surely correct that a new discourse about the gods

slowly open up the possibility of a Roman view on religion. The notion of embedded religion incorporates practices such as the Roman pre-Christian calendar festivals, the use of sorcery and ritual, the Roman system-of-belief, and all other religious things, a sheer infinite list, that show the importance of religion to the Romans and the fact that religion is very slowly but surely changing.

Another field that the subject of divine intervention in the early empire touches upon is the field of early Christian religion of which the idea of divine intervention is borrowed. This thesis aims to look past Christian religion towards a pre-Christian form of divine intervention, but where appropriate discusses Christian practices as part of the Roman religious' world. In that sense this is almost a comparative approach, except that the comparison is often implicit because the focus of this thesis is on insight in divine intervention within religious practice. A biblical flood of scholarship on Christian religion in the Roman world exists. Within the field of study of ancient religion discussion about the meaning of magic and religion continues to this day centring around the question whether magic constitutes a form of religion. Modern historiographical consensus has gradually convinced many historians – via works of anthropologists[18] – that magic and religion are no two easily separable different categories, and, that they operate in the same way.[19] There is a biblical flood of scholarly work on Christian religion in the Roman world. Within the field of study concerning ancient religion, discussion about the meaning of magic and religion, to this day, continues to centre around the question whether magic constitutes a form of religion. Modern historiographical consensus has gradually convinced many historians – in part through works of anthropologists – that magic and religion are no two easily separable different categories, and that they operate in the same way. There is a field of enquiry into how magical formulae work that shows how the power that is ascribed to the performance of certain formulae, as well as the rules that govern a correct performance, have remained unchanged. [20]

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emerges in writers like Cicero, Varro, and Publius Nigidius Figulus, I question the utility of calling this new discourse "religion"." Nongbri, 'Dislodging embedded religion', 447, note 19.

[18] C. Geertz. '"From the native's point of view" on the nature of anthropological understanding.' ed. McCutcheon. R. T., *The insider/outsider problem in the study of religion: a reader*. (London and New York, 1999). *50 – 63.*

[19] H. Geertz. 'An anthropology of magic, I.' *The journal of interdisciplinary history. 6. 1.* 71 – 89. (1975).

[20] F.J.F. Nieto, 'A Visigothic Charm From Asturias And The Classical Tradition Of Phylacteries Against Hail', *Magical practice in the latin west* (Leiden and Boston, 2009) 570; c.f.: J.L. Austin, *How to do things with words* (Oxford, 1962); Nowadays, religious speech acts are still used in order to make something happen, as if magically. Modern day magical formulae have been analysed in 'How to do things with words', from which the following typology is quoted below:

"(A. I) There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, that procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances, and further,
(A. 2) the particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked.
(B. 1) The procedure must be executed by all participants both correctly and
(B. 2) completely.

Cotter's Sourcebook for the new testament rejects the equation of magical practices with religious practices and enlists Pliny's help to do so (in part by relying on the quote in the first few lines of this chapter).[21] Versnel, too, in Some reflections on the relationship between magic-religion does not equate them. He stresses that there are different categories and that distinctions are useful for a historical comparison.[22]

A Roman prayer for justice is not the same as a curse, although both are a religious practices in which supernatural act is needed and requested.[23] Without denying the value of distinguishing as best one can between different categories of magical practices, one has to be clear that the defining characteristic of the magical *and* the religious is their shared relation to the 'supernatural'. That is the one thing that overrides all the differences. Separating religion from magic usually serves to devalue the practices that are described as the latter in favour of a view of religion with an unintended Christian bias. There are real differences that warrant a distinction between magic and religion since:

> "'magic' is not a single category at all; but a term applied to a set of operations whose rules conflict with the prevailing rules of religion, science or logic of the society concerned. And so, for the historian, the interest of what we may choose to call 'magic' lies in how that conflict is defined, what particular practices are perceived as breaking the rules, and how that perception changes over time."[24]

(T. 1) Where, as often, the procedure is designed for use by persons having certain thoughts or feelings, or for the inauguration of certain consequential conduct on the part of any participant, then a person participating in and so invoking the procedure must in fact have those thoughts or feelings, and the participants must intend so to conduct themselves, and further
(T. 2) must actually so conduct themselves subsequently. Now, if we sin against any one (or more) of these six rules, our performative utterance will be (in one way or another) unhappy." J.L. Austin, *How to do things with words* (Oxford, 1962) 14 – 15; From Austin's book, it is clear to me that magic is still practiced today and that all the elements that Austin lists that are required to have the intended effect for a modern-day speech act (magical formula) are similarly required for an ancient speech act.

[21] W. Cotter., *Miracles in Greco-Roman antiquity: a sourcebook for the study of new testament miracle stories.* (1999). 175 – 178.

[22] H.S. Versnel, 'Some reflections on the relationship magic-religion', *Numen. 38*. (1991) 177 – 197.

[23] "I have baptized the latter, clearly deviant types of defixiones, 'judicial prayers' or 'prayers for justice'. Of course, there are also mixtures of both types, but my point is that the differences between the ideal type of the *defixio* proper and that of the judicial prayer appear to correspond strikingly with the distinctions that former generations used to associate with the opposition between magic and religion. So, for the time being I shall continue to call my *defixiones* magical acts (in which I follow the common practice even adopted by those who reject the conventional definitions of magic) and my judicial prayers religious acts, and I feel supported by the fact that here at least the ancient authors display an unequivocal and explicit awareness of the differences." Versnel, 'The relationship magic-religion', 192.

[24] "Definitions of 'magic' have always been debated. There have been many ambitious modern attempts to offer a definition that applies equally well across all cultures and all historical periods; (…) many of these attempted definitions miss the point. It is not just a question of different societies understanding magical practice in all kinds of different ways, offering different explanations and theories of how magic originated and developed, and disagreeing about what in their world is to count as 'magical', rather than (say) 'religious'. It is rather that (despite modern attempts to generalize across cultures and despite the claims of some self-styled 'magicians' to be deploying a universal skill) 'magic' is not a single category at all; but a term applied to a set of operations whose rules conflict with the prevailing rules of religion, science or logic of the society concerned. And so, for the historian, the interest of what we may choose to call 'magic' lies in how that conflict is defined,

This statement does run into problems, since what are those prevailing rules of religion? And how can one discover them if the starting point is a conflict between two things that are essentially about the same thing (their relation to the supernatural)? Of course it is not that easy, since depending on who you 'ask' in ancient Rome the one thing is magic and the other thing is religion, no-one person would say the same thing.[25] The important thing is that at some point in time in the Roman world it had become possible to discuss religion as a category. It also shows how extraordinarily complicated the terminology is for anyone attempting to discuss ancient religion:

> "In the actual situations in which living men contend with one another and, in contending, speak about such entities as "fairies," "witches," and "stars," and about such activities as "conjuring," "blessing," and "cursing," what can an outsider, an inquisitive scholar, mean by such concepts as "belief" and "skepticism" ?"[26]

It is impractical to circumvent the use of the term magic in its totality. Historical authors from Pliny to Versnel uses both the term magic as well as the term religion for all things relating to the supernatural. Therefore the concepts magic and religion are used in the same way that ancient sources used them and in the way that historical literature still uses them, as long as it remains clear that magical practices of any kind, all instances relating to the 'supernatural',[27] are considered to be equally religious (and of equal religious value). Naturally, what one believes differs from person to person, hence the split between magic and religion. Besides that, there are also shared beliefs and mores. All of it taken together constitutes the Roman system of belief. What Romans believe about the supernatural together with practices that pertain to the supernatural is Roman religion. Smith subdivided different systems of belief into categories around their central goals. Christian religion is soteriological; I take that to mean centred around the goal of providing salvation (of the soul). Pagan Roman religion is locative; I take that to mean centred around the goal of observing and interacting with the supernatural in the natural world around oneself.

> "The act of identifying (and thereby validating) a different value-system frees it to some extent from direct comparison with 'open' or 'soteriological' (as he calls them) systems such as Christianity: in other words, predominantly locative societies simply have different agendas. Another strategy, which avoids the thorny issue of truth values, is to treat any knowledge system as a social transaction: thus Kapferer, writing on sorcery, asserts that 'the logic of science and sorcery as systems of abstract explanation. . . is of far less significance than the fact they are both social practices."[28]

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what particular practices are perceived as breaking the rules, and how that perception changes over time." M. Beard, J. North, S. Price, *Religions of Rome: volume 1, a sourcebook* (Cambridge, 1998) 154.

[25] See: the discussion between Cicero and his brother in: Cicero, *De Divinatione*.

[26] H. Geertz, 'An anthropology of magic', 71.

[27] The term 'supernatural' is problematic too and should not be taken to mean: outside of the Roman world; ancient religion is very much with and also within nature.

[28] J.P. Davies, *Rome's Religious History: Livy, Tacitus and Ammianus on their Gods* (2004) 7.

The modern idea of (rules for) magic and the modern idea of (rules for) religion can both be viewed as belonging to social practices and can thus be used here in a descriptive history of Roman Religion.

Part of understanding Roman religion as a social practice requires not only knowledge thereof, but also what it means to partake in rituals expressing that social practice and what it may mean to share ideas expressed as part of that social practice. "What happens to Verstehen (understanding) when Einfühlen (intuition or empathy) disappears?"[29] Without an imagined idea of what it may feel like to be Roman one misses out on a rather large part of what it means to live life in the early Roman empire. One should not be content with the observation only of how a particular ritual is performed without providing maximum context to better approach understanding of 'their' unattainable views as well.

> "The trick is to figure out what the devil they think they are up to. In one sense, of course, no one knows this better than they do themselves; hence the passion to swim in the stream of their experience, and the illusion afterward that one somehow has."[30]

Two scholars famous for their understanding of the Greek world, and constantly reinterpreted, were Nietzsche and Heidegger. They are often referred to when it comes to understanding the nature of Greco-Roman religion.[31] Because of their positions on religion (Nietzsche) and ontology (Heidegger) [32] they feature in theological pieces often. Can theology help answer questions about intervening gods? In theology, from a Christian viewpoint, theologians sometimes try to approach ideas around God by speaking of that what happens in the Innerweltliche and outside of that. This distinction is borrowed from Heidegger[33] and is used to get closer to knowledge about the Christian God, who, it is argued[34] does not belong to the Innerweltliche.

> "Preul fragt in seiner einführende Problemskizze: 'Ist Gott überhaupt als handelnde Instanz vorstellbar oder verstehbar?' Er antwortet darauf, dass dies vom Verständnis des Handlungsbegriffs abhänge (5), den dieser Handlungsbegriff sei fest in 'das Kategoriensystem eingefügt, das bei einer Strukturanalyse der Selbst- und Welterfahrung des Menschen als innerweltlicher personaler Instanz in Anschlag zu bringen' (7) sei. Und Preul sieht den auch vorläufig keine Möglichkeit, einen anthropologisch

[29] C. Geertz, 'On the nature of anthropological understanding', 51.
[30] Ibidem, 52.
[31] e.g.: Hart, 'Our atheism is different'.
[32] M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Halle, 1931); In his philosophising about what Dasein means, Heidegger tries to stay as close as possible to a Greek world view by using Greek terminology. It should be noted, of course, that Heidegger's book is not a work about religion at all, and that the theologians concerned with God's nature were not promoting this distinction, merely using it to further their understanding on the nature of god(s).
[33] "Die aufgezeigte Fundierungszusammenhang der für das Welterkennen konstutiven Modi des In-der-Welt-seins macht deutlich: im Erkennen gewinnt das Dasein einen neuen Seinstand zu der im Dasein je schon entdeckte Welt." Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 62.
[34] W. Brändle, 'Überlegungen zur Rede vom Handeln Gottes', *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie 37. 1.* (1995) 96 – 117.

> geprägten Handlungsbegriff mit der 'nicht-innerweltlichen Instanz namens Gott' (8) – ohne Missverständnisse zu erzeugen – in Verbindung zu bringen."[35]

What is important here is that this distinction is one of the big differences between looking upon deities in the pre-Christian Roman world, and in Roman world where Christianity slowly starts playing a role. Deities in the Roman world, are very much part of the world – they can be seen everywhere, can be felt, when one steps into the river, a deity itself,[36] and feels its water flowing by – while the Christian post-Roman God is outside of this world and he keeps his distance from it. The ancient deities and the divine within the ancient world are observed in anything and everything but most of all in nature. Nature is innerweltlich, and close to the ancient believer.[37]

> "Natur ist selbst einen Seiendes, das innerhalb der Welt begegnet und auf verschiedenen Wegen und Stufen entdeckbar wird."[38]

These remarks may seem far removed from the safeguarding amulet worn by a Roman but they are necessary in order to show the cultural differences between worlds in time and belief-system:

> "For, as Hildred Geertz has argued, such practices [magical practices, such as the widespread wearing of amulets] make sense only "within the framework of a historically particular view of the nature of reality, a culturally unique image of the way in which the universe works ... a hidden conceptual foundation for all of the specific diagnoses, prescriptions and recipes."[4] Thus, she continues, the historian must recognize "the fact that a particular notion is set within a general pattern of cultural

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[35] Brändle, 'Überlegungen zur Rede vom Handeln Gottes', 100.

[36] G. E. Meyers., 'The divine river: ancient Roman identity and the image of Tiberinus', A. Scott and C. Kosso (eds.), *The nature and function of water, baths, bathing, and hygiene from antiquity through the Renaissance* (2002) 233 – 248; In the Iliad Book 21, Achilles steps into the river/god Scamander to fight him after he pollutes the river by throwing dead Trojans (Lycaon and Asteropaeus) into it, thereby denying them proper burial rites for which the river wants to repay him in kind by drowning him. Homer, *The Iliad,* transl. S. Butler; B. Holmes 'Situating Scamander: "Natureculture" in the Iliad', *Ramus. 44. 1-2* (2015) 29 – 51.

[37] M. Payne, 'The Natural World in Greek Literature and Philosophy', *Oxford Handbooks Online* (2014). "The natural world, in these Homeric scenes, is an alternative to—rather than a carrier of—human meanings. It is uncanny, sublime, terrifying, fantastic—anything but a quiet frame for human action or something with respect to which human beings have not yet experienced a sense of their own difference. In this regard, Sappho is Homer's antitype. (…) One might compare the consolation of Nature in these Sappho poems to Psalm 103: "As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more." In both, reflective lingering over the claim that human presence leaves no trace on the natural world is the source of consolation. Cultivating the feeling that one is not at home in the world in the way that flowers and grass are at home in it is a way of coping with the loss of those features of one's lived experience that make the world feel like home. (…)Pelops stands by the sea at night and calls upon his former lover Poseidon: "And he at once appeared right next to him" (*O*. 1.73–73). The immanence of the gods to a world that is theirs could hardly be given a more compelling narrative expression. Likewise, when Apollo sees Cyrene wrestling a lion in *Pythian* 9, it is the naturalness of her behavior that attracts him, as this manifests freedom from mortal constraints. He characterizes her inner life by negation: a fearless head, and a mind that is not weathered by fear. It is then that the natural world appears: "As a cutting of what stock does she cling to the hollows of these shadowy mountains?" (*P*. 9.33–34). Again, the brevity could hardly be surpassed: What belongs to the scene has no need of introduction, and the wonder is that what is apparently alien to it—a young and beautiful human woman —could be so at home in the very landscape in which centaurs have their homes and gods take their recreation ("Come out of your cave and take a look" is how Apollo calls Cheiron to witness).".

[38] Heidegger. *Sein und Zeit.* 63.

> concepts, a conventional cognitive map, in terms of which thinking and willing, being anxious and wishing, are carried out."[39]

This conventional and cognitive map is very different from that of someone in the modern west. Which is not surprising since "man has had his entire history in which to imagine deities and modes of interaction with them. But (…) western man, has had only the last few centuries in which to imagine religion.[1]"[40] Hard choices had to be made on what to include in an answer to the main question. Themes that do not explicitly feature in thesis include but are not limited to gender and various philosophical subcategories of the philosophical class such as Stoics, Epicureans, Neo-Platonists and Cynics. Distinctions between these philosophies do feature in Whitmarsh's 'battling the gods'.[41] There is no need at all to repeat the beautiful and thorough studies of Cook[42] and Gradel[43] of which I gladly and gratefully make extensive use.

Within this historiographic chapter religion and (dis)belief within the Greco-Roman world was discussed first. It was directly followed by a discussion on embedded religion in relation to ancient religion and atheism. The embeddedness of religion was argued for to counter an underestimation of the seriousness of religious life as a factor within history because of unfavourable comparisons to, and by, unintended Christian bias. The distinction between later Christian religion that is focused on saviour and earlier polytheistic Roman religion which is focused on the visible world around oneself, nature, may help further understanding.

[39] J.G. Gager, *Curse tablets and binding spells from the ancient world* (New York, 1992) 219; H. Geertz, 'An anthropology of magic', 71 – 89; c.f.: Nieto, 'A Visigothic Charm', 569: "Magic differs from religion not so much in its procedures or in the miraculous nature of its effects but in its incompatibility with the inherited system of religious ideas, because it tries to compel supernatural powers instead of offering them adoration and reverence, in an attempt to achieve what the individual desires and avoid what he or she fears.".
[40] J.Z. Smith, *Imagining religion: from Babylon to Jonestown* (1982) xi.
[41] Whitmarsh, *Battling the gods*; Monfasani, *How the Renaissance Began.*
[42] A.B. Cook, *Zeus: a study in ancient religion. volume ii, Zeus god of the dark sky (thunder and lightning)* (Cambridge, 1925); A.B. Cook, *Zeus a study in ancient Religion. volume iii, Zeus god of the dark sky (earthquakes, clouds, wind, dew, rain, meteorites)* (1940).
[43] I. Gradel, *Emperor worship and Roman religion* (Oxford, 2002).

1. Jupiter's divine instrument: lightning and the case of the miracle scenes on the column of Marcus Aurelius

In the Iliad and the Odyssey, the weather is perceived to have been manipulated very often indeed. "Apollo, Athena, Calypso, and Circe are all mentioned as sending favourable winds. Sometimes a god unnamed or the gods in general bestow fair winds. When Ulysses and his companions reach the island of Sirens, the winds cease and a dead calm ensues. A 'daimon' also stills the waves."[44] The manipulation of weather phenomena seems to be a general characteristic for deities: "(…) ja es ist die Macht über Wind und Wetter geradezu ein allgemeines Kennzeichen göttlichen Wesens, das sogar niederen Gottheiten, wie Kirke oder Kalypso, und in den Dichtungen, die einen Einfluss der Verstorbenen auf die Erde nicht grundsätzlich verwerfen, auch Heroenseelen zukommt….".[45] But this general characteristic, of weather manipulation, sometimes turns into very direct intervention, as in the scenes on Marcus Aurelius' column. On Marcus Aurelius' column two examples of weather miracles can be found. In contemporary Rome, the column stands in the piazza Colonna. On it are depicted two scenes showing Marcus Aurelius' troops being saved from destruction by intervention through two different weather events:

> "On two occasions during the Quadic wars the weather intervened in the course of a battle to save the troops of Marcus Aurelius from a difficult situation. (…) On both occasions the gods were believed by Marcus' soldiers to have brought a miracle by abruptly producing weather-conditions that helped them to turn a certain defeat into an impressive victory." [46]

Marcus Aurelius' column is not the only source testifying of instances where the weather has been perceived of changing events decisively, but it is the only one in the form of a stone victory column. What place, in ancient Roman religious life, did divine intervention through the use of weather phenomena – e.g. the scenes depicted on the victory column of Marcus Aurelius – have during the Roman empire in the Latin West?

[44] E. McCartney, 'Greek and Roman weather lore of the sea: Est et aquarium significatio: Pliny 18.359', *The Classical weekly. vol XXVII, 1.* (1933) 3 – 4.
[45] O. Gruppe, *Griechische Mythologie und Religionsgeschichte* (Munich, 1906) 834 - 835.
[46] H.Z. Rubin, 'Weather miracles under Marcus Aurelius', *Athenaeum 57* (1979) 357.

Fig. 1. Marcus Aurelius' Column on the Piazza Colonna in Rome.

[Fig. 1].

The column of Marcus Aurelius has been studied extensively.[47] For a time, it was thought that the column of Marcus Aurelius was actually the column of Antoninus Pius and, moreover, that this was merely a poor copy of the column of Trajan.[48] The column was erected at the end of the second century and completed after the death of Marcus Aurelius. Questions asked of it often include: what was the function of the column? Who was supposed to view it? How is one to read the scenes? Does the column represent scenes from the Marcomannic and Quadic wars accurately?[49] Those are questions that will, however, not be discussed here.

Instead, the focus is on the most important question for this thesis: what to make of the miracle scenes (scene XI depicting the lightning miracle [Figs. 2, 3, 4.] and scene XVI depicting the rain miracle [Fig. 5.)? And in support of that question: what is their purpose? What do the miracles represent? When inquiring about the miracle scenes, the object on which they are depicted, the column, is discussed in its entirety as well. The representations of divine intervention on the column of Marcus Aurelius point to the Roman Sky-god as the responsible deity. The column which has been

[47] P. Kovacs, *Marcus Aurelius' Rain miracle and the Marcomannic wars* (Leiden/Boston, 2009); M. Beckmann, *The column of Marcus Aurelius: the genesis and the meaning of a Roman imperial monument* (2011).
[48] Kovacs, *Marcus Aurelius' Rain miracle,* 155 – 157.
[49] Ibidem, 155 – 168.

unfavourably compared to the column of Trajan[50], may hide another story about the intricate way in which Roman religion and imperial power are intertwined by looking at Jupiter's attributes and the virtues of the emperor.

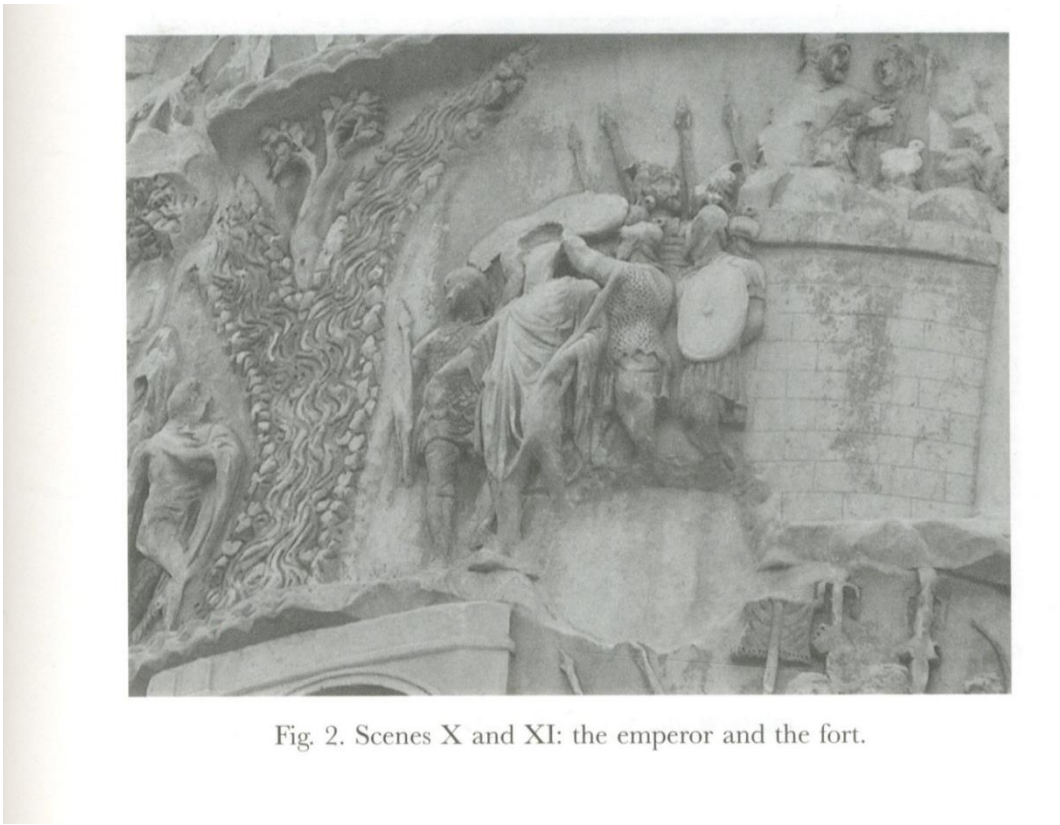

Fig. 2. Scenes X and XI: the emperor and the fort.

[Fig. 2].

When viewing the scenes depicting the weather miracles, they come across as markedly different from most other scenes on the column that depict war. In the left part of scene XI, the emperor Marcus Aurelius can be seen and his men that are defending the fort against an enemy siege tower can be seen looking back at him [Fig. 2]. The siege tower is set aflame and destroyed by a lightning bolt coming from the sky [Fig. 3]. In the right part of scene XI, the emperor Marcus Aurelius is depicted without weapons or armour and with Roman soldiers on the river bank closest to the viewer, while the barbarians with their round shields can be seen defending the opposite bank. According to Kovacs, "the second part of the same scene depicts a later event",[51] which can only be – according to the reading by Maffei to which Kovacs subscribes – the consecration of the place where the lightning hits as a *puteal*, and a cluster of place where lightning hits as a *bidental* [Fig. 4].[52] A

[50] Kovacs, *Marcus Aurelius' Rain miracle*, 155 – 157.
[51] Ibidem, 164.
[52] Ibidem, 164 – 165; *Brill's new Pauly,* Lemma: 'Bidental': "Name of a place struck by lightning which therefore became an object of procuratio prodigii. Ancient etymologists explain that bidental is based on the sacrifice of a two-year-old sheep, a bidens (Non. 53,22 M; Fest. p. 30; Ps.-Front. diff.; GL 7,523,30), or on places struck twice (bis) by lightning (Ps.-Acro and Porph. ad Hor. Ars P. 471) or double-forked lightning (schol. ad Pers. 2,27)." Date last accessed: 10 December 2017.

place where lightning hits was seen as place of interest to the gods and therefore deemed a *procuratio prodigii*(a predicting mostly positive sign that is to be designated protection), this place consequently needed consecration to make it a *puteal* this was done by a Flamen, a priest, which could be the emperor. A metal ring with open bottom and open top was placed over the place hit by lightning to mark it off as a place of divine interest. Possibly because Greco-Roman lightning was sometimes forked, lightning-struck places were clustered. After consecration, a *bidental* is overseen by an assigned guardian who makes sure yearly sacrifice takes place.

On the face of it, the column of Marcus Aurelius tells the story of the Quadic and Marcomannic wars by depicting several events from it. However, besides the lack of chronological order on the column as a whole as well as within most scenes, not all of the scenes seem to aim for the same message. The battle scenes on the column of Marcus Aurelius represent the battles as one sided – at times as a punitive expedition[53] – in which the Romans are represented as superior. For most of the images that depict the Romans fighting the losing barbarians, "(…) narrative coherence [in the imagery on the column] can be neglected in favour of representing the unambiguous message of unopposed Roman superiority."[54] However, the lightning miracle scene seems to paint a different picture by depicting Romans desperately defending the fort while looking back for help at their emperor. The lightning bolt that can be seen destroying the siege tower (Kovacs, fig. 3, above) can be viewed as a moment of divine intervention – possibly brought about, it is suggested, by personal intercession of the emperor – turning the battle around by the destruction of a particularly menacing threat, thereby saving the Romans and winning the battle. The rain miracle depicts the Romans in a dire position, suffering from lack of water, horses are dying while men suffer, but as with the lightning miracle, the suffering is there only to add to the greatness of the salvation that follows:

> "Ugualmente [il miracolo del fulmine] le numerosissime notizie sull'inaspettata salvezza dalla sete e della distruzione dell'escercito romano nella terra dei Quadi (scena XVI) accentuano il carattere soprannaturale dell'avvenimento e sottolineano il diretto intervento della divinità."[55]
> "Likewise [like the ligthning miracle], the tremendous news of the unexpected salvation of thirst and destruction of the Roman expedition in the land of the Quadi (scene XVI) accentuate the supernatural character of the event and underline the direct intervention of the deity."

[53] For instance, scene LII where three Roman cavalrymen can be seen attacking one barbarian; F. Pirson, 'Style and message on the column of Marcus Aurelius', *Papers of the British school at Rome* (1996).
[54] F. Pirson, 'Style and message on the column of Marcus Aurelius', 151; See also: "The serial repetition of clearly legible types of victorious Romans and defeated barbarians, together with some exceptional scenes of violence and humiliation, conveys the impression that Roman victory is a natural and inevitable event rather than the result of notable struggle. This idea is intrinsically linked with the perception of the enemy as intrinsically inferior, which becomes obvious in the representations of the barbarians: they usually do not know how to fight, and hence prefer submission to actual combat. Their low character is further apparent in their uncontrolled movements and facial expression, which make them appear completely distressed and therefore easy to defeat. No particular *labor* has to be summoned up against such an unworthy enemy." ibidem, 168.
[55] S. Maffei, 'La 'felicitas imperatoris' e il dominio sugli elementi', *Studi Classici e Orientali XL. 2* (1964) 329 – 330.

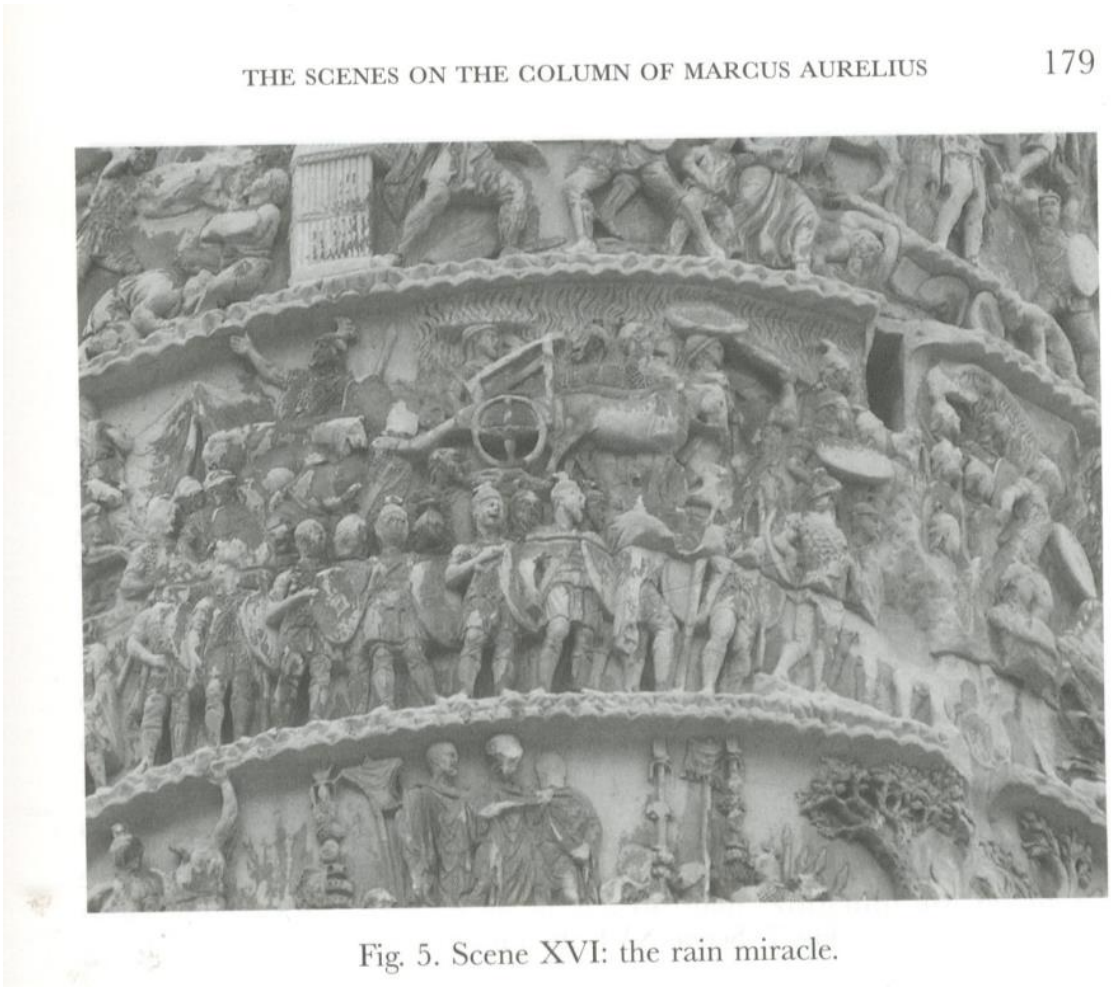

Fig. 5. Scene XVI: the rain miracle.

[Fig 5].

From the two miracles, the lightning miracle is the most straightforward. Exactly how the rain miracle saves the Romans from thirst and defeats the barbarians at the same time has been discussed since Dio's account and includes late Roman solutions to the problem of incorporating two miralces into one battle, such as adding lightning to the rain miracle story.[56] Although this is most likely a confusion of the two miracles, in the rain miracle scene the barbarians are drowning. In the lightning miracle a siege tower is destroyed.[57]

[56] Beckmann, *The column of Marcus Aurelius,* 139.
[57] Ibidem, 133 – 140; ibidem, 135: "The barbarians, represented by only three corpses and two horses, are washed away in a stream of water.".

Fig. 3. Scene XI: the lightning miracle.

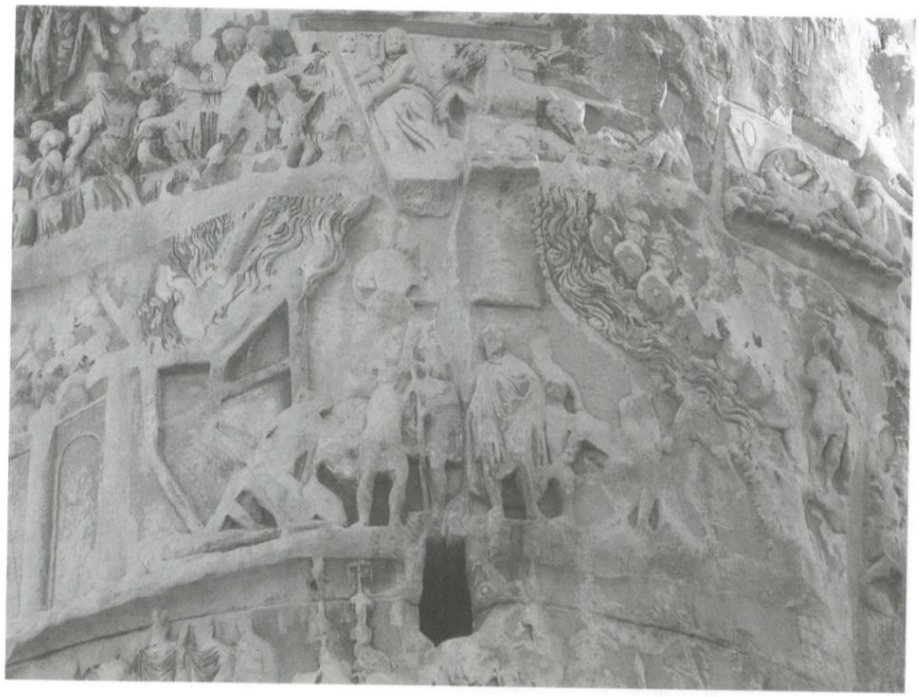

Fig. 4. Scene XI: the lightning miracle.

[Fig. 3 & 4].

What is the source for the miracles on the column? Kovacs gives a summary of all the sources attesting of the rain miracle, among them Dio and Tertullian. The stories of the miracles cannot be based on ego-documentation belonging to Marcus Aurelius because he was writing his *Meditationes*. According to Kovacs: "Marcus Aurelius (…) did not commemorate the events of his campaign, so they cannot have served as sources for his own commemorative column."[58] It does, however, seem highly likely that he, regularly or at least once after the campaign was over, informed the senate by letter of the most noteworthy events, not leaving out the rain or lightning miracles if Romans thought these to have happened. All of the literary sources are either based on the imagery in contemporary paintings, on the imagery seen on the column, or on a letter to the senate (that must have been there although no letter has been attested of). The construction of the scenes on the column itself is likely based on this supposed letter.[59] The column is not meant to represent history in a modern sense, it has other primary goals than informing a public on events during the Germanicwars.

Three parallels with the miracle stories of Marcus Aurelius are identified by Kovacs who says that they are clear imitations of the miracle stories on his victory column.[60] "If one treats these events together, it becomes clear that each of them [the new emperors] reiterates the miracle of Marcus Aurelius, (…) to underline his own divine favour." The biggest advantage to using Marcus Aurelius' miracle stories is that they are not attributed to any specific god, thereby leaving room for attributing them to one's own favourite deity.[61] Tertullian, for instance, writes in his famous letter to Scapula that the Almighty Jupiter who is thanked – and who is at that time thought to have been the miracle god according to Tertullian – is actually, unbeknownst to those thanking him, the Christian god.[62]

That Tertullian relates of Jupiter as the god that makes miracles happen[63] – the almighty god that according to Tertullian is thus confused with the Christian god – is not surprising since Jupiter has always been connected to the sky, rain, and especially lightning. He is not coincidentally deemed the most powerful god as well. Divine intervention through use of lightning in the Greco-Roman world always involved the *diosamía*, or Zeus-sign, which was the name of the sight of lightning,

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[58] Kovacs, *Marcus Aurelius' Rain miracle,* 137.
[59] Ibidem, 137 – 138.
[60] "In the decisive battle against Pescennius Niger at Issus, (…) [Pescennius Niger] tried to attribute it to their specific god." Ibid*.,* 146 – 147.
[61] "(…) Marcus' letter did not mention any god as the cause of the miracle and therefore worshippers of different religions all tried to attribute it to their specific god." Ibid., 147.
[62] "Moreover, Marcus Aurelius, while warring with the Germans, impetrated plentiful rain, in the great drought, through the supplications which the Christians of his host made unto God; and indeed at what time have not great droughts given way to our fastings and supplications? Then the multitude shouted together, giving thanks unto "the God of gods, who alone is mighty. And thus, by the appellation of Jupiter, did they bear witness unto our God." Tertullian, *Ad Scapulam,* transl. Dalrymple.
http://www.tertullian.org/articles/dalrymple_scapula.htm Date last accessed: 22 December 2017.
[63] Tertullian, *Ad Scapulam.*

suggesting the intrinsic link between the Sky-god Zeus and his standard attribute.[64] In Greek antiquity, *diosamía* often was an *echesamía*, a stop-sign, as well. In his famous work on Zeus, Cook explains this by giving examples of weather phenomena taken as a bad omen and interrupting or stopping public events. In Roman religion, *diosamía* were sometimes positive events and did not always stop public business.[65] Cook describes how the *Boule* of Athens was suspended by the first rain drop only to continue again when Zeus had stopped raining.

If the Roman soldiers on the column of Marcus Aurelius had interpreted either the rain or the lightning miracle as a bad omen, or an *echesamía*, they would have likely discontinued and lost their campaign in the Germanic wars. Thirsty as they were, the rain quenched their parched mouths – surely a positive intervention! As the Sky-god, attributing the rain and lightning miracles to Jupiter is subject to discussion, although Jupiter is the god that is logically responsible on the basis of other sources.[66] The fact that nowhere on the column the lightning miracle is attributed to any specific god, gave others, like Tertullian, a chance of copying the Aurelian miracle while adding their own miracle-performing deity.[67]

Divine intervention, it seems, is the best way to show off the power of the gods. Tertullian at least thinks so. Since, rather than denying the events of the Miracles of Marcus Aurelius, he argues that a god who is that powerful – so powerful that he can intervene by sending lightning or rain – must be the most powerful god of all, which in his book is the Christian god. The message of the column of Marcus Aurelius is one of power. Victory to Rome. The aim of the miracles on the column is to add to the invincibility and superiority of Rome by showing the strong support of the gods who decided to intervene twice, thereby saving the Romans.

The comparison between the column of Trajan and the column of Marcus Aurelius is often made as well. Many aspects of the column of Trajan are copied in that of Marcus Aurelius. Most of the similarities come down to techniques of structural importance. But some of the differences are quite telling. The scenes of battle paint a different picture on each column. On the column of Trajan they serve to show off an array of Roman virtues and values (e.g. manly (hand-to-hand) combat, perseverance and courage), while on the column of Marcus Aurelius, the focus of the scenes seems to be on the total annihilation of the barbarians (the chasing down of fleeing opponents, the burning

[64] Cook, *Thunder and lightning,* 4-10.
[65] Ibidem.
[66] "This bleakness is all the more striking given the association of Jupiter elsewhere with agricultural bounty. He got his start, after all, partly as a rain god. Though "Jupiter" and "iuuare" are not etymologically related, the Romans believed they were, and a passage of Ennius quoted by Varro (LL 5.65) emphasizes Jupiter's watery role in "helping" men, plants, and what Roland Kent (1938: 63) delightfully calls "beasties all." J. Hejduk, 'Jupiter's Aeneid: fama and imperium', *Classical Antiquity 28. 2* (2009) 286.
[67] See note 61.

of village huts, etc.).[68] One of the most interesting aspects is that Trajan's ashes are buried in his column. His column seems to be more of a celebration of his reign than the column of Marcus Aurelius was for his reign. Regardless of the fact that burial within the column was impossible for Marcus Aurelius,[69] he was also never meant to be buried in his column since it serves some very specific goals and does not symbolise or celebrate his reign as a whole. Rather, it symbolises Roman invincibility in fighting barbarians because of the power of the Romans, the emperor and the gods backing them.

Another element for which the imagery on the column of Marcus Aurelius is famous is its peculiar and innovative representation of figures called the Antonine *Stilwandel* because of the way in which the 'emotive figures' were represented. The figures are the centre of all attention because the landscape is either absent or it serves to highlight the figures. Because of that, the figures seem to be hovering relatively free from the landscape, in suspended perpetual motion.[70] A totally different picture of Marcus Aurelius is painted in his honorary relief, which depicts a sacrifice to Capitoline Jupiter [Fig. 6, below]. It, too, is an example of the Antonine *Stilwandel*, but it represents the benevolent and pious, dutiful side of the emperor, as opposed to the protective and vengeful imperial image that emerges from the column that is in the piazza Colonna.

One more thing that is notable when comparing the lightning and the rain miracle is that the emperor is explicitly involved in the scenes depicting the lightning miracle, but absent in the rain miracle. Because the rain miracle and the lightning miracles happened during different campaigns, it is reasoned that the emperor was not there when the rain miracle happened. The army that was saved from drought by rain was under the command of another, but when the lightning miracle happened, the emperor himself was present.[71] That Jupiter is not explicitly named as the intervening god may be because the army included soldiers favouring many different gods. Even then, identification with Jupiter Optimus Maximus was very likely still the most obvious choice.[72] The god depicted in the rain miracle resembles descriptions of Notus, the South Wind,[73] although

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[68] "However, Roman superiority is based not only on military supremacy, but also includes the whole catalogue of Roman virtues which pervade the narrative and occupy more space than the depictions of actual combat. Such a concept does not need barbarians who abstain from offering any resistance; quite the opposite, the celebration of Trajan's victories demanded an inferior, but nevertheless rebellious, enemy as scenery for the display of his virtues. (…) The devastation of barbarian villages, which on the Aurelian Column significantly contributes to the impression of a war of extermination, is in the iconography of Trajan's Column only of secondary importance." Pirson, 'Style and message on the column of Marcus Aurelius', 172 – 173.

[69] The most important one being that Marcus Aurelius died before the construction of the column was completed and he had already been buried elsewhere.

[70] Beckmann, *The column of Marcus Aurelius,* 12 – 14.

[71] Kovacs, *Marcus Aurelius' Rain miracle.*

[72] G. Fowden, 'Pagan versions of the rain miracle of A.D. 172', *Historia: Zeitschrift für alte Geschichte 36. 1* (1987).

[73] Cook, *Zeus: a study in ancient Religion. volume iii,* 324, 333; c.f.: G. Fowden, 'Pagan versions of the rain miracle', 86, note 15.

identification with absolute certainty cannot be made. The image of the divine being in the rain miracle scene on the column of Marcus Aurelius directly links the divine with the rest of the scene. Where is the divine in the lightning miracle? A reason for the presence of the deity in the rain miracle may be to represent divine favour for the expedition. In the lightning miracle, no deity is visible, but the emperor is present, his fortunate persona securing divine protection. When a Roman victory is represented in iconography or in a victory procession, the emperor is often associated with Jupiter.[74]

[Fig. 6].[75]

[74] M. Beard, *Roman triumph* (Cambridge, 2009) 226, 176 – 180 discussing 'The triumph of Marcus Aurelius': 'We would certainly never guess from this particular sculpture that the general's costume had been the crucial factor in launching certainly the most dramatic and probably the most influential theory in the whole of modern triumphal scholarship: namely, that the victorious commander impersonated the god Jupiter Optimus Maximus himself, and that for his triumph he became (or at least was dressed as) "god for a day." We have already noted the implications of divinity in the words whispered by the slave. Even clearer signs of super-human status have been detected in the general's outfit. The red-painted face, mentioned by Pliny, is supposed to have echoed the face of the terracotta cult statue of Jupiter in his Capitoline temple (which was periodically coated with red cinnabar). What is more, Livy on one occasion expressly states that the triumphing general ascended to the Capitol "adorned in the clothes of Jupiter Optimus Maximus.".

[75] The Triumph of Marcus Aurelius Photograph from Wikimedia commons. Location: Musei Capitolini Wikipedia. 03-10-2017: By User: MatthiasKabel (Own work) [GFDL (http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html), via Wikimedia Commons, original in the Musei Capitolini. Date last accessed: 22 December 2017.

In Greco-Roman iconography, identifying or distinguishing all different Greco-Roman aspects of gods from each other can be difficult as it is in the rain miracle. On the column of Marcus Aurelius, the deity in the rain miracle may be identified as Notus although in Tertullian's account, the deity was said to be Jupiter. The uncertainty as to whom was supposed to be depicted may have been deliberate. It did not have to pose an obvious problem to any Roman viewer. The emperor in the lightning miracle may have connections to the divine as well. Can Jupiter's role as all-powerful Roman god or his many manifestations add meaning to the miracle scenes and that what they represent: divine intervention?

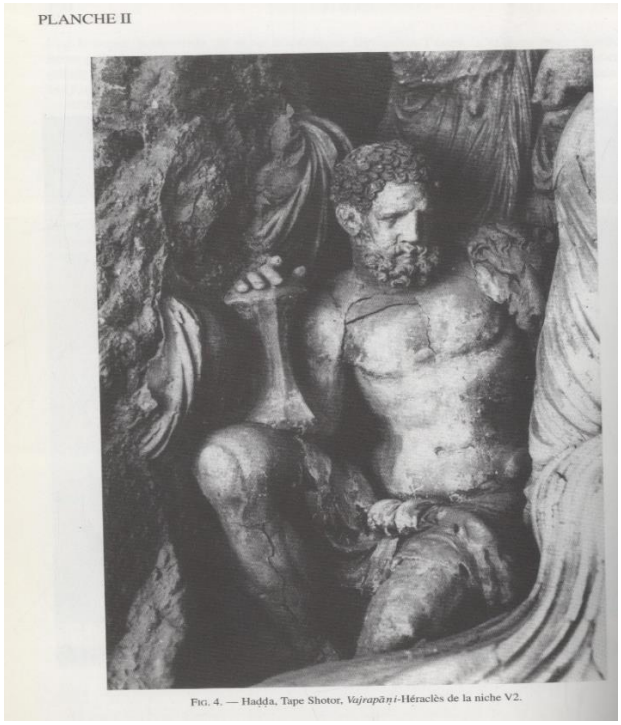
Jupiter-Dolichenus is one of the manifestations of Jupiter that best shows symbols of power. Attributes of gods, or defining elements of character, are often called *Numina* in Roman writings, which can be taken to mean attributes expressing power: "It came to mean "the product or expression of power" — not, be it noted, power itself."[76] From Roman and historical literature, it can be derived that the lightning bolt is the attribute carried by the gods that are seen as the most important. The archetypical strongman-turned-god Heracles can be seen carrying it in the Hellenistic world. There, one finds many other gods carrying lightning, the foremost of them being Zeus, but also Verethragna, Vajrapani, Jupiter-Dolichenos and more. In the Latin West, however, mostly one god carried the lightning bolt: Jupiter (and different manifestations of the same god). At least one god that evolved from Jupiter carried a lightning bolt as well, Pluto.[77] What kind of symbol is lightning sent by Jupiter? Is Jupiter the omnipotent god of the Roman world that he is made out to be, throwing lightning bolts and performing miracles?

Jupiter's attributes usually include the lightning bolt. Most Greco-Roman gods carry attributes that can be considered to signal more than just their power (although attributes of gods always add to power, they can be said to signal more than just power).[78] Consider, for instance, Ceres who is often depicted with a cornucopia, which is not a symbol as powerful as the lightning bolt – although a precise ranking cannot be made with any certainty – but which also signals plenty, its main meaning. For the most powerful god, one thing an attribute had to do, was to make him seem the most powerful. The widespread presence of Jupiter-Dolichenus is the manifestation of Jupiter that carries the most attributes linking him to power. Jupiter-Dolichenus can be seen carrying a double-sided axe as well and he is often depicted standing on a bull.[79]

Representations of Jupiter with the lightning bolt as an expression of power may help paint a

[76] "The literal meaning is simply 'a nod', or more accurately, for it is a passive formation, 'that which is produced by nodding', just as *flamen* is 'that which is produced by blowing', *i.e.*, a gust of wind. It came to mean 'the product or expression of power' — not, be it noted, power itself." H.J. Rose, *Primitive culture in Italy* (London, 1926) 44.
[77] J.T. Sibley, Divine thunderbolt: missile of the gods (2009) 113 – 125.
[78] Ibidem.
[79] A. H. Kan, *Jupiter Dolichenus: Sammlung der Inschriften und Bildwerke* (1943).

picture of divine intervention. A bronze figurine[Fig. 7.] of Jupiter-Dolichenus standing on a lion is compared to and linked with other representations of the Weather-god type in smiting posture.[80] Interestingly, representations of gods falling within this Smiting-god category are attested to have different names, cults, and origins, but share their pose: smiting their spear or lightning bolt, having their legs apart as if in movement and taking a stride while throwing the lightning bolt.



[Fig. 7.] Jupiter-Dolichenus of the Smiting-god type and the Lysippan Vajrapani-Herakles resembling Herakles of the *epitrapezos*-type, holding a lightning bolt in the right hand [Fig. 8.] at Tepe Shotor.[81]

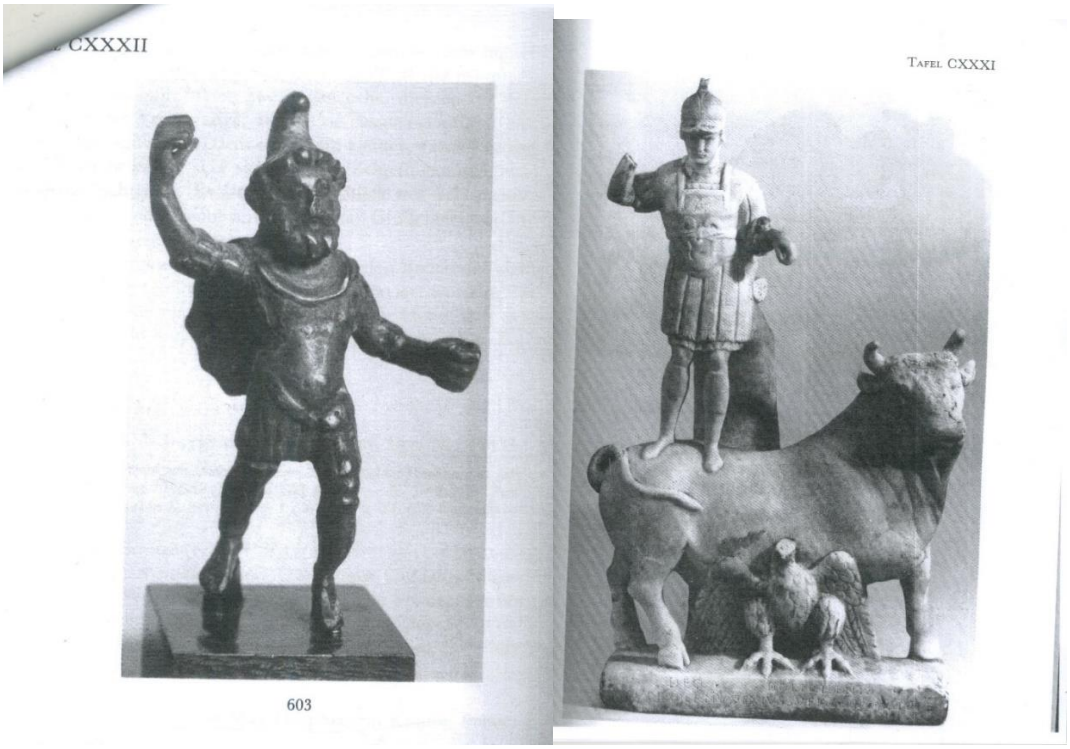
The pose of the Smiting-god suggests active intervention, making use of his weapon, the most powerful thunderbolt. The *epitrapezos*-type, or the weary-Herakles-type, suggests by its more relaxed pose, less aggressive intentions. The relaxed pose in which a figure is depicted may also signal power; the most powerful god of all need never use his power because everyone knows he is most powerful, it is implied. By showing reverence and *pietas* for the most powerful god, one can assure oneself of protection. And since Greco-Roman religion is fundamentally reciprocal, having a less aggressive all-powerful god in a benevolent pose may even signal the prosperity that comes with peace in addition to physical protection. Symbols of power and strength in the Greco-Roman world

[80] D. Collon, 'The smiting god: a study of a bronze in the Pommerance collection in New York', *The British school of archelogy in Jerusalem 4* (1972) 130 – 131; The Smiting-god type is considered to be of Egyptian origin and found throughout the Levant, ibidem, 111 – 134.

[81] The since-destroyed Herakles-Vajrapani in Tepe Shotor, Afghanistan: Z. Tarzi, 'Vajrapani-Héraclès de la niche V2 de Tape Shotor de Hadda (Afghanistan)', E Lévy and D. Beyer (eds.), *Ktema: civilisations de l'Orient, de la Grèce et de Rome antiques* (Strasbourg, 2000) 168; Jupiter-Dolichenus in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna: www.khm.at/de/object/85bcbc95ba/ Date last accessed: 5 June 2017.

include lion(skin), the club, lightning, the bull and, to a lesser degree, other symbols of war that are likely at least sometimes substitutions for the all-powerful thunderbolt, such as axes, fascia, shields, helms, spears. One can see several of them in the representation of the most popular icon from the Hellenistic period, Herakles, the 'syncretised' Vajrapani-Herakles above displaying the vajra-lightning bolt in his right hand, the lion skin draped over his shoulder.[82]

In the Latin West, Jupiter was the most powerful and should consequently be seen with attributes signalling his omnipotence. Jupiter-Dolichenus was often depicted together with Iuno-Dolichena who completes the Jupiter-Dolichenus cult in areas usually not associated with virile virtues. The most important animal associated with the Roman Jupiter-Dolichenus is also the Roman symbol of state: the eagle.



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The assertion that Jupiter is a watered-down version of Zeus is sometimes made: "the Roman Jupiter, however, seems to be a simplified, somewhat stripped-down version of Zeus",[84] or that Roman gods, Jupiter foremost, were not all that important or powerful:

> "The Roman cult, although it included one or two high gods (the ancient triad, Iuppiter, Mars and Quirinus, seem to exhaust the list for Rome), was essentially polydaimonism; the worship, that is, of a number of beings sharply defined and limited as to function, but who apart from their functions have practically no existence in cult or in imagination, They are not so much gods as particular

[82] Kan, *Jupiter Dolichenus.*
[83] M. Hörig, E. Schwertheim, *Corpus Cultus Iovis Dolicheni* (Leiden, New York, Kobenhavn and Köln, 1987).
[84] "The Roman Jupiter, however, seems to be a simplified, somewhat stripped-down version of Zeus, one who lacked the Grecian plethora of variations on the keraunos or other thunderweapon analogs." J.T. Sibley, *Divine thunderbolt: missile of the gods*, 123.

> manifestations of mana. (…) mana necessary to get thorn-bushes (spinae) out of people's fields (…) what stories could anyone tell about such phantasmal, uninteresting beings as these?"[85]

The argument to which the quote above belongs is one of gods evolving into other gods, the evolution of primitive religion into Roman religion. The functionalist story of religious evolution risks reducing Jupiter to the function that is ascribed to him.[86] Jupiter, however, is much more than that. Jupiter-Pluvius and Jupiter-Elicius were often invoked in prayers and ritual to send rain and Jupiter is the most potent protector of the empire in many other manifestations as well.

That Jupiter is a watered-down version of Zeus is mainly based on the same kind of arguments: the supposed lack of Jupiter-specific myths and the notion that Jupiter is often seen carrying less attributes than Zeus. There may be good reasons for Jupiter to lose some of the attributes Zeus has. A reason that is already suggested above could be that is serves to make Jupiter a more benevolent version. It is, however, important to establish that Zeus and Jupiter, or Jupiter-Dolichenus, are not all the same. Nor do Jupiter and Zeus have the exact same story and origin. Between different cultures, identifications of different gods can be made, they may be said to evolve or grow into one, forming syncretised deities; but the ultimate judgement is to the Roman viewer. A fact is that sometimes, and in some specific situations, a Roman (or a Greek) would identify Jupiter with Zeus and at other times, in other situations, a Roman would identify a god differently. A story of evolution in Roman religion incorporating religious syncretism may add to understanding of the functions of Roman religion, but it also obscures the Roman experience.

Numen was taken to mean: the attribute expressing power, quoted above from *Primitive culture in Italy*,[87] but in the Roman empire, it came to take on other meanings as is made clear by these lines from *Primitive culture* that directly followed the excerpt quoted above:

> "Properly speaking, the gods, and sometimes other powers more than human, or than ordinary humanity, have *numen*; but as their business is to just have *numen* and nothing more, they are themselves often called by that name, especially in the plural, *numina*."[88]

Agency, instruments and agents, power and gods are intangibly mixed in Jupiter's case. The aggressive side of warring Jupiter (hurling thunderbolt with his right hand) is featured often on coins:

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[85] Rose, *Primitive culture in Italy,* 44; P. Garnsey, C. Humfress, *The evolution of the late antique world* (2001) 132 – 169.

[86] "(…) As the theological thought at Rome advances (…)" Rose, *Primitive culture in Italy,* 44.

[87] "The literal meaning is simply 'a nod', or more accurately, for it is a passive formation, 'that which is produced by nodding', just as *flamen* is 'that which is produced by blowing', *i.e.*, a gust of wind. It came to mean 'the product or expression of power' — not, be it noted, power itself. Properly speaking, the gods, and sometimes other powers more than human, or than ordinary humanity, have numen; but as their business is to just have numen and nothing more, they are themselves often called by that name, especially in the plural, numina." *Rose. Primitive culture in Italy.* 44.

[88] Rose, *Primitive culture in Italy,* 44.

> "First in 144 B.C. was the monotonous typology of the denarius, Roma, Dioscuri and Luna, broken by a new reverse type, Jupiter in a quadriga holding sceptre and reins in his left hand and hurling thunderbolt with his right hand (Pl. II, 7). (…) Of the well over one hundred reverse types issued in the period, only a handful deal, in any sense, with peaceful themes. War and triumph are the almost exclusive concern of the numismatic symbolism."[89]

The benevolent side of Jupiter, that is manifested through Jupiter Optimus Maximus, Stator, Hospitalis, and Salutaris, was invoked by Cicero during the Catilinarian conspiracy.[90]

> " Hic quis potest esse tam aversus a vero, tam praeceps, tam mente captus qui neget haec omnia quae videmus praecipueque hanc urbem deorum immortalium nutu ac potestate administrari?"
> "Who here can be so blind to the truth, so impetuous, so deranged in his mind as to deny that, more than any other city in the whole world that we see about us, Rome is governed by the will and the power of the immortal gods?"[91]

Jupiter's benevolent side serves to keep the Romans safe. Cicero constantly refers to Jupiter in his speech against Catilina to the senate which is given in the Temple of Jupiter Stator. His aggressive all-powerful stance that is portrayed on all the coins contributes to his image, the lightning bolt at the ready, the weather instrument most feared by all.[92]

> "Throughout this great crisis of the state, Cicero portrays himself as the agent of Jupiter. The implication should not be borne that Cicero resisted the conspirators. Rome is governed by the power and authority of the gods; and only by their guidance did Cicero detect the plot. It was Jupiter himself who overthrew the Catiliniarians. It was Jupiter who determined that the Capitoline should be safe; he saved the temples, he saved the city, he saved the citizens: 'Ille, Ille Iuppiter restitit; Ille Capitolium, ille haec templa, ille cunctam urbem, ille vos omnis salvos esse voluit.'"[93]

Not all of this is self-evident. How is Jupiter at the same time aggressive and peaceful? In what aspects are Jupiter and Zeus the same? That Jupiter seems a watered-down version of Zeus is in a small way understandable since everything about the deity Zeus was balanced. Jupiter may have lacked uniquely Iovian myths, but one finds him everywhere else in abundance, on coins, in sculpture, in cults and temples – and all of it is full of symbols of power, most of all the lightning bolt, which Rome associates primarily with Jupiter. In fact, Jupiter is not the only character from antiquity

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[89] J. R. Fears, 'The cult of Jupiter and Roman imperial ideology', *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt ii 17. 1* (1981) 45.
[90] "We owe a heavy debt of gratitude to the immortal gods and not least to Jupiter Stator, the most venerable guardian of this city, in whose temple we are today, because so often in the past have we escaped this pestilence, (…)" Cicero, *In Catilinam, in: Loeb Classical Library, Vol. X, 324. Transl:. C. Macdonald*, 42 – 43.
[91] Cicero, *In Catilinam*, 120 – 121.
[92] "After filling out his account of lightning's marvelous effects (*mira … opera*, 2.31.1) in 2.52–53, and after completing his second technical/doxographical section in 2.54–58, Seneca is at last prompted by an imaginary interlocutor to offer "something beneficial" (*aliquid salutare*, 2.59.2)—a lesson that focuses not on how lightning occurs, but on dispelling our fear of its dangers (…)" G.D. Williams, *The cosmic viewpoint a study of Seneca's natural questions* (Oxford and New York, 2012) 332.
[93] Fears, 'The cult of Jupiter', 48; "It was Jupiter, the mighty Jupiter, who foiled them; it was Jupiter who secured the salvation of the Capitol, of these temples, of the whole city and of you all." Cicero, *In Catilinam,* 120 – 121.

who does not conform to a 'normal' balanced divine image. The semi-divine Herakles, whom we saw earlier in the guise of Herakles-Vajrapani, is depicted everywhere throughout the Hellenistic world, although Herakles is sometimes a god and sometimes a little bit less divine.[94] The same is true for the imagery on the column of Marcus Aurelius: "(…) narrative coherence can be neglected in favour of representing the unambiguous message of unopposed Roman superiority."[95] Doubt about which parts of the signs and signals of power Romans may have picked up on will always remain. But can the 'unambigious message of Roman superiority' not be read in another way?

Thus far, Jupiter has been connected with lightning, rain and the miracles on the column, which contribute and signal Roman power and victory by depicting favourable divine intervention. According to Maffei, however, "the message of the images can be read on different levels"[96] The most interesting figure on the column of Marcus Aurelius is the emperor. In *La 'felicitas imperatoris' e il dominio sugli elementi* Maffei argues that the virtuous person[97] of the emperor is rewarded and reciprocated by signs of *felicitas*,[98] divine favour. That secures the divine protection of his soldiers as experienced in the Roman expeditions during the Germanic wars and depicted on the column. The virtues of the emperor are shown on the panels within the scenes around the lightning and rain miracle scenes. According to Maffei, these include *pietas, auctoritas,* two kinds of *clementia* and *providentia*.[99] The virtue of *providentia* can, for instance, be observed in the pose and gesture that Marcus Aurelius makes in see the several scenes [Fig. 9]. in the appendix. The *adlocutio* gesture signals *providentia*, which is proven, according to Maffei, by coins containing the *adlocutio* gesture and inscribed with *providentia.*[100]

The positioning of the scenes representing virtues surrounding the lightning miracle scene underlines the special connection between the emperors virtues and divine favour. The lightning miracle scene is directly above the emperor who is in another scene below, but:

> "(...) se struttuarlmente la figura Marco Aurelio appare subordinata alla scena del fulmine, su un piano concettuale è invece l'episodo miracoloso a venir riferito, 'in modo attributivo'[126] all

[94] H. A. Shapiro, '"Hêrôs Theos": The Death and Apotheosis of Herakles', *The Classical World 77. 1* (1983).
[95] F. Pirson, 'Style and message on the column of Marcus Aurelius', 151.
[96] "Ma il messagio della imagini è leggibile a vari livelli." Maffei, 'La 'felicitas imperatoris' e il dominio sugli elementi', 359.
[97] "È dunque dalle sue stesse parole che si diffonde la fama della *felicitas* di Cesare, il segno della protezione celeste che garantisce al suo comando la vittoria e il favore dei venti e del mare. Plutarco tra le fonti è colui che esalta con maggior enfasi il potere implicito in questa virtus di Cesare." "It is from his own words that the fame of Caesar's *felicitas* spreads, the sign of heavenly protection which guarantees the victory and the favour of the winds and the sea. Plutarch among the sources is the one who exalts with greater emphasis the implied power in this virtue of Caesar." Maffei, ''felicitas imperatoris'', 348.
[98] *Felicitas* expressing divine favour. "Pompeo è invece personalmente favorito dagli dèi e *felicitas* è l'espressione della sua straordinaria personalità." "Pompey is personally favored by gods and *felicitas* is the expression of his extraordinary personality." Ibidem, 346.
[99] Ibid., 355 – 361.
[100] Ibid, 360.

> imperatore." "But if structurally the figure of Marcus Aurelius appears subordinate to the lightning scene, on a conceptual plane it is instead the miraculous episode referred to that is, 'in attribution'[126] to the emperor."[101]

By showing off the virtue of the emperor, of which his *felicitas* attests, and via divine favour that is expressed in the attribution of the lightning (the attribute of all-powerful Jupiter) miracle to the emperor in specific, the column represents the benevolence of the emperor's rule.

> "(…) la formazione della figura ideale del comandante: *felicitas*, quella particolarissima qualità (…) che rende il generale personalmente favorito dagli dèi, e che innalza la sua particolarissima personalità al di là di ogni giudizio terreno, legittimando il suo potere con una sanzione divina."
> "(…)the formation of the ideal figure of the commander: *felicitas*, the very special quality (…) that makes the general personally favoured by the gods, and which raises his particular personality beyond any earthly judgment, legitimizing his power with a divine sanction."[102]

In this way, Roman society benefits from the protection and prosperity that follows from the felicitous character of Marcus Aurelius. Many modern historians looking at the column are impressed by the scenes on the column that show extreme cruelty, although this would certainly not have surprised any Roman.[103]

> "Considering the severe physical penalties which were inflicted upon *humiliores*, the treatment of the barbarians as shown on the Aurelian column would hardly have been regarded as excessive in the eyes of contemporaries. Quite the opposite, the public display of violence, either real or in visual imagery, served as a reminder to the imperial population that the emperor actually did his duty."[104]

Depicted on the column is the retaliation for the worst crime one could commit: going to war with the Roman empire and its ultimate protectors, the emperor (and Jupiter).[105] The retribution shown is the emperor's just duty. According to Roman penile custom, the punishment should fit the crime.[106] The possibility to climb the snailing staircase[107] for a fee, before entering the hollow inside of the column – must have rewarded the Roman climber when reaching the top, not only with a view of the

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[101] Ibid., 359.
[102] Ibid., 360.
[103] K.M. Coleman, 'Fatal charades: roman executions staged as mythological enactments', *The Journal of Roman Studies 80* (1990) 44 – 73.; 'Rome was a cruel society. Brutality was built into its culture, in private life as well as in public shows. (…) It is worth stressing that we are dealing here, not with individual sadistic psycho-pathology, but with a deep cultural difference.' Pirson, 'Style and message on the column of Marcus Aurelius'
[103] Pirson, 'Style and message on the column of Marcus Aurelius'.
[104] Pirson, 'Style and message on the column of Marcus Aurelius'. 175.
[105] "As one argument runs, the general oscillated between divine and human status through the course of the procession; he constituted both a living image of the god himself and, simultaneously, a negation of the divine presence (hence the slave's words)." Beard, *Roman triumph*, 227.
[106] Often quite literally, there were fatal re-enactments of mythological pieces related to the theme of the crime. c.f.: Coleman, 'Fatal charades: roman executions staged as mythological enactments'.
[107] *columna cochlis*; Beckmann, *The column of Marcus Aurelius,* 63.

spectacle down below, but also with a most powerful feeling. “Columnarum ratio, wrote Pliny, erat attolli super ceteros mortales: ‘The point of columns was that men be raised above other mortals.’”[108] Even higher is the emperor (his statue was placed on top of the column), and above him, is the Sky-god.

[108] Pliny as quoted in: Beckmann, *The column of Marcus Aurelius*, 66; Pliny, *Natural History,* 34. 12. 27.

2. Divine power in the epic storm

By the grace of the good fortune of the emperor – that is symbolically represented on the column of Marcus Aurelius already discussed in the previous chapter – the Romans knew themselves assured of divine protection. Good fortune, *felicitas*, and divine intervention both come together in a unique type of story, that of the storm. In this chapter, a typology of the archetypal storm will be used to look at storms in general – and specifically at Ovid's *Tristia*, the storms in which were based directly on those in Virgil's *Aeneid* – in order to approach the main question by answering what place deities have in storm stories. "Seestürme sind seit Homer ein beliebtes Motiv der antiken Dichtung."[109] In Roman times however, Virgil's Aeneid became the more important work. Homer can be said to be the first, and yes, Virgil copies his themes, but Virgil is a Roman poet living (70 BC – 19 BC)[110] at the start of the early empire. Virgil is widely regarded as the most important epic Roman poet. A point to which graffiti texts like "vade age, nate, voca {s}zep(h)yros (et labere pennis) point."[111] Graffiti like these are found everywhere throughout Pompeii. In the works of Virgil, the attribution of divine characteristics and instruments to different deities has become a quip of the author, a poetic invention to keep the reader's interest and attention. The attribution of different divine characteristics to different deities can be said to be standard practice. Finding out who to send a panicked prayer to in the middle of a storm must not have been easy. Among Roman writers, storms were a topic to be exploited for poetical and political reasons. These storms featured gods, often in battle, as the guiding forces behind the stormy weather: "In primitive belief, storms were caused by Sky-gods who controlled the weather."[112] Hesiod, for one, testifies to this:

> "And in the bitterness of his anger Zeus cast him [Typhoeus] into wide Tartarus. And from Typhoeus come boisterous winds [Anemoi] which blow damply, except Notus [South Wind] and Boreas [North Wind] and clear Zephyr [West Wind]. These are a god-sent kind, and a great blessing to men; but the others blow fitfully upon the sea. Some rush upon the misty sea and work great havoc among men with their evil, raging blasts; for varying with the season they blow, scattering ships and destroying sailors. And men who meet these upon the sea have no help against the mischief. Others again over

[109] A. Bettenworth, 'Der Sturm des Lebens: Unwetterbeschreibungen bei Ovid (Tristia 1, 2 und 1, 4) und Hildebert von Lavardin (Carmina minora 22)', *Das Mittelalter 16*. (2011) 32.
[110] W. Suerbaum, 'Lemma: Vergil', in: *Brill's New Pauly*.
[111] J.L. Franklin Jr., 'Virgil at Pompeii: a teacher's aid', *The classical journal. 92. 2* (1996-1997) 181; Della Corte, 49 (= CIL IV.87).
[112] F. J. F. Nieto, 'A Visigothic Charm From Asturias And The Classical Tradition Of Phylacteries Against Hail', *Magical practice in the latin west* (Leiden/Boston, 2009) 571; c.f.: A.B. Cook, *Zeus: a study in ancient religion (thunder and lightning).*

> the boundless, flowering earth spoil the fair fields of men who dwell below, filling them with dust and cruel uproar."[113]

Storms were not the prerogative of one specific deity, sometimes the Winds caused them, sometimes Jupiter, sometimes Poseidon or some other deity. Often, Fortune or Tyche are involved and survival depends on fortune or fate.

Bettenworth's study of storms gives a long list of *exempla* from antiquity.[114] Her typology is deduced from the archetypal epic storm that can be found in Virgil's *Aeneid*.

> "1. Die Götter erregen einen Sturm.
> 2. Dunkelheit breitet sich über dem Meer aus; der Seegang wird rauer.
> 3. Kampf der Winde (dargestellt unter Verwendung militärischer Metaphern).
> 4. Götter greifen ein (z.B. indem sie eine hohe Welle auftürmen).
> 5. Die Wellen erreichen den Himmel / Die Wellen gleichen Bergen.
> 6. Regen geht nieder.
> 7. Donner grollt, Blitze zucken.
> 8. Der Meeresboden wird in den Wellentälern sichtbar.
> 9. Hilflosigkeit des Steuermanns.
> 10. Furcht der Reisenden vor Untiefen und Felsen.
> 11. Rede des Protagonisten auf dem Höhepunkt des Sturms.
> 12. Sturmschäden an den Schiffen.
> 13. Die Götter greifen ein und retten die Protagonisten." [115]

In the *Sturm des Lebens*,[116] Anja Bettenworth argues that something is up with the two storms in Ovid's *Tristia*. Both storms are modelled upon the 'standard epic storm' that can be found within Virgil's *Aeneid*. In this chapter, the weather phenomenon storm as instrument of the gods is looked

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[113] Hesiod, *Theogony*, 869 – 880 ff., in: *Hesiod. The Homeric Hymns and Homerica with an English Translation by Hugh G. Evelyn-White* (Cambridge and London, 1914).

[114] Bettenworth, 'Der Sturm des Lebens', 32, see note 3; "Zu den wichtigsten Sturmschilderungen der antiken Epik zählen Hom. Od. 5, 282 –393 (Poseidon versucht, Odysseus vom Land der Phäaken abzuhalten); Hom. Od. 10, 46– 55 (die von den Gefährten des Odysseus befreiten Winde des Aiolos lösen einen Seesturm aus. In diesem Fall sind ausnahmsweise Menschen die Verursacher des Unwetters); Hom. Od. 13, 403 –417 (Zeus schickt einen Seesturm, um die Gefährten des Odysseus für die Schlachtung der Heliosrinder zu bestrafen); Apollonios Rhodios, Argonautika 2, 1098–1122 (Schiffbruch der Söhne des Phrixos), Verg. Aen. 1, 81–156 (Aeolus löst auf Iunos Befehl einen Sturm aus, der Aeneas vom Kurs abbringen soll); Lucan, Pharsalia 5, 504 – 702 (Caesar begibt sich in einen Seesturm); Silius Italicus, Punica 17, 218 –291 (Neptun erregt einen Seesturm gegen Hannibal); Statius, Thebais 5, 361 –430 (Iupiter schickt ein Unwetter gegen die Argonauten); Valerius Flaccus, Argonautica 1, 574 – 692 (Iupiter schickt ein Unwetter gegen die Argonauten), und ebd. 8, 318– 368 (Iuno erregt einen Seesturm gegen die Flotte der Kolcher); Iuvencus 2, 25– 42 (Jesus stillt den Sturm auf dem See); Sedulius, Carmen paschale 3, 46–69 (Jesus stillt den Sturm auf dem See). Zu epischen Unwettern allgemein s. Wolf-Hartmut Friedrich, Episches Unwetter. In: *Festschrift Bruno Snell. Zum 60. Geburtstag am 18. Juni 1956 von Freunden und Schülern überreicht.* (München ,1956) S. 77 – 87. und Sabine Mertens, Seesturm und Schiffbruch. Eine motivgeschichtliche Studie. Hamburg 1987. Zum Seesturm in der spätantiken Bibeldichtung s. Christian Gnilka, Der Seesturm beim echten und beim unechten Juvencus. Würzburger Jahrbücher für die Altertumswissenschaft 25 (2001), S. 213 – 227 und Christine Ratkowitsch, Vergils Seesturm bei Iuvencus und Sedulius. Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum 29 (1986), S. 40–58. Ein Beispiel für Seestürme im Drama behandelt Claudia Schindler, Dramatisches Unwetter: der Seesturm in Senecas Agamemnon (vv. 421 –578). In: Susanne Gödde u. Theodor Heinze (Hgg.), Skenika: Beiträge zum antiken Theater und seiner Rezeption. Festschrift zum 65. Geburtstag von Horst-Dieter Blume. Darmstadt 2000, S. 135 –149.".

[115] Bettenworth, 'Der Sturm des Lebens', 33.

[116] Bettenworth, 'Der Sturm des Lebens'.

at more closely. Following Bettenworth – who compares Ovid's *Tristia* with Hildebert's *Carmina* – the *Tristia* is looked at as an example of the archetypal storm story as a metaphor. Subject of the *Tristia* is Ovid's journey into exile, a plea for forgiveness, an accusation of the emperor and a lamentation at the same time. The structure of the *Tristia* is reconstructed in the standard Loeb translation as follows: 1. Prologue, 2. Storm at Sea, 3. Last night in Rome, 4. Storm at sea, 5. to a friend, 6. to his wife, 7. to a friend, 8. to a traitor, 8. to a friend, 9. 10. Ovid's route and 11. Epilogue.[117] Bettenworth asks: "Warum aber macht Ovid überhaupt die Mühe, in zwei fast unmittelbar aufeinanderfolgenden Gedichten dasselbe Thema zu behandeln, und warum wiederholt er gerade eine Seesturmbeschreibung, ohne dass dabei ein Fortschritt der Handlung zu erkennen ist?"[118]

This question leads one to believe that the repetition of the storm theme in the two chapters that are separated by Ovid's chapter 1.3 is somehow important. Bettenworth's discussion of Ovid's journey in the *Tristia* covers the metaphors and allusions to Ovid's political problems at Rome in *Tristia* 1.2 and 1.4. The loss of his companions at sea in *Tristia* 1.3[119] symbolises the loss of his place in Roman society, the loss of all his friends and leaves him to face the wrath of the gods alone. Bettenworth summarily concludes that books 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4 have to be taken together. That is the reason no "Fortschritt der Handlung" can be recognized between two storms because there is really only one storm.[120]

Bettenworth's essay supplies a typology that can be used to highlight the role of the gods in causing storm. Three main points can be taken from her typology, which also includes the unhappiness of characters enveloped in the storms recounted. Firstly, Virgil's *Aeneid* can be taken as an archetypal storm on account of its importance to the Roman world. Secondly, gods are involved in causing the epic storm and subduing it. And thirdly, that the storm is a divine punishment for the failures of the main character. The storm can be taken as a sign of divine displeasure but Ovid's paradoxical survival in the *Tristia* after his eventual surrender to Jupiter can be seen as a reconciliation with fate. In his desperate prayer, the gods are all united against him and persist in trying to provide fitting[121] punishment.

> "Di maris et caeli—quid enim nisi vota supersunt?— solvere quassatae parcite membra ratis, neve, precor, magni subscribite Caesaris irae! saepe premente deo fert deus alter opem. Mulciber in Troiam, pro Troia stabat Apollo; aequa Venus Teucris, Pallas iniqua fuit. oderat Aenean propior Saturnia Turno;

[117] Ovid, *Tristia. Ex Ponto.* Transl.: A.L. Wheeler, revised by G.P. Goold, *Loeb Classical Library* (Cambridge MA, 1924) 262.
[118] Bettenworth, 'Der Sturm des Lebens' 32.
[119] S.J. Huskey, 'Ovid at the Fall of Troy', *Vergilius 48* (2002) 88 – 104.
[120] Bettenworth, 'Der Sturm des Lebens', (2011) 31-42, see especially: 40.
[121] Roman penal culture demanded that a punishment fit the crime; see: Coleman, 'Fatal Charades: Roman executions staged as mythological enactments', *The Journal of Roman Studies 80* (1990) 44 – 73..

> ille tamen Veneris numine tutus erat. saepe ferox cautum petiit Neptunus Ulixem; eripuit patruo saepe Minerva suo. et nobis aliquod, quamvis distamus ab illis, quis vetat irato numen adesse deo?"[122]

Ancient Roman literature is full of storms. The storms in *Tristia* by Ovid and a comparison with the storm experienced by Hildebert have already been commented upon. Ovid's storms were based on the archetypical epic storm from the *Aeneid*, this appears to be the case too for the storms in the poems of Lucan. His poem that is based on Caesar's *De Bello Civili* describes a storm that Caesar faces on his way from Dyrrachium to mainland Italy to rally troops for war against Pompey.[123] Matthews gives us a list of points of comparison from Lucan's storm with 'other storms in the epic tradition'[124]:

> "In a number of ways, Lucan sought to imitate adapt and outdo earlier storm descriptions:
> a) at 560-7, the first signs of storm, Lucan uses verbal reminiscences of Homeric phrases (*niger horror*, 564; *terga maris*, 565) to acknowledge his debt to the traditional epic storm. To this, however, is added a detail probably derived from descriptions of the universal destruction of Stoic belief: the collapse of the sky (561-4)."[125]

The list goes on (a. to h.) to describe other elements of which a few are of particular interest in relation to how gods intervene using weather phenomena. Matthews says that the storm both "arises and dies away naturally" (point b.)[126] neither allowing the gods to be actively involved – as they would have been in an epic storm in Homer[127] – nor denying the importance of the gods. Lucan does not deny the importance of the gods by referring to a story about Jupiter and Neptune and a mythological flood halfway through the storm.[128] Does Lucan's Caesar not need divine favour? Just as in Ovid's storm in *Tristia* 1.2, military terminology is used to describe the elements of storm.[129] Thereby also 'sceptically' describing a battle between the winds Corus and Boreas. Points g. and h. on Matthews list are the "mentioning of traditional ideas in order to exaggerate or contradict them" and the "introduction of variations on existing *topoi*."[130] Some of the examples Matthews gives here – for instance that of the darkness likened to the underworld – are not uniquely exaggerated in Lucan but similar to Ovid's storms description in *Tristia* 1.2. The same can be said for "variations on existing

[122] "O gods of sea and sky—for what but prayer is left?—break not the frame of our shattered bark and second not, I implore, the wrath of mighty Caesar! Oft when a god presses hard another god brings succour. Mulciber was opposed to Troy, but in Troy's defence stood Apollo; Venus favoured the Teucrians, Pallas favoured them not. There was hate for Aeneas on the part of Saturnia who stood closely by Turnus; yet that hero was safe through Venus' power. Ofttimes unruly Neptune assailed the wily Ulysses; ofttimes Minerva saved him from her own uncle. And different though I am from them, who forbids a divine power from being of some avail to me against the angry god?" Ovid, *Tristia, 1.2*, 1 – 12.
[123] M. Matthews, *Caesar and the storm: a commentary on Lucan's De Bello Civili, book 5 lines 476-721* (Bern, 2008) 13 – 25.
[124] Matthews, *Caesar and the storm*, 23.
[125] Ibidem.
[126] Ibid., 24.
[127] e.g. Homer, *Odyssey*, 13, 403 – 417.
[128] Matthews, *Caesar and the storm*, 24.
[129] c.f.: Ovid, *Tristia*, 1.2; Bettenworth, 'Der Sturm des Lebens'.
[130] Matthews, *Caesar and the storm*, 24 – 25.

topoi" where Matthews brings up the example of "the-wave-as-high-as-mountains image" which is in *Tristia* 1.2 as well. A battle between winds can be found in the *Aeneid* and, too, in Lucan.[131] It may be contended that the observations that Matthews list contains are so general that they can be found in any archetypal storm. On the other hand, the storm story theme does keep to several of these conventions every time.

Using military terminology to describe stormy weather is as old as the Iliad. Therein the reverse is true as well. Military strife is described metaphorically through comparisons with violent weather:

> As when from gloomy clouds a whirlwind springs,
> That bears Jove's thunder on its dreadful wings,
> Wide o'er the blasted fields the tempest sweeps;
> Then, gather'd, settles on the hoary deeps;
> The afflicted deeps tumultuous mix and roar;
> The waves behind impel the waves before,
> Wide rolling, foaming high, and tumbling to the shore:
> Thus rank on rank, the thick battalions throng,
> Chief urged on chief, and man drove man along.[132]

Both in Ovid and Lucan, the storms do not seem to be caused by the gods directly.[133] About the storm in Lucan's poem, Matthews had remarked that it "arose naturally."[134] A most interesting remark in a footnote by Bettenworth is made about one of the storms from Homer, too:

> "Hom. Od. 10, 46– 55 (die von den Gefährten des Odysseus befreiten Winde des Aiolos lösen einen Seesturm aus. In diesem Fall sind ausnahmsweise Menschen die Verursacher des Unwetters)."[135]

Surprising is the assertion that humans ('by exception') have caused a Storm. From Hildebert's Christian-era storm story, Bettenworth takes all the lingual and stylistic comparisons with Ovid in order to connect both their political banishments and their unhappiness. But the question remains who has the power to cause these storms?

The question remains partly because unlike the thunderbolt wielder (and a few other all-powerful candidates) there does not really seems to be a designated storm god. Who has power over

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[131] Bettenworth, 'Der Sturm des Lebens'; Matthews, *Caesar and the storm*, 23 – 25.
[132] Homer, *Iliad*, *transl:. Alexander Pope, in: The Iliad of Homer,* (England, 1715 – 1720). 251.
[133] The Greek epic storm may be different in aspects from a Roman storm at sea in that a Greek sea storm did not always have lightning. "Das fünfte Buch der Odyssee, das sonst auf das erste Aeneisbuch deutlich genug einwirkt (Virgil weist selbst auf das Vorbild hin, wenn er seinem Helden den Stoßseufzer des Odysseus in den Mund legt), wurde vom zwölften durch die Mitwirkung des Donnerkeils überboten, und nur die Griechen, auf dem Wasser ganz anders zu Hause als die Römer, mochten sich Seestürme auch ohne Gewitter noch vorstellen." Wolf-Hartmut Friedrich, 'Episches Unwetter', in: *Festschrift Bruno Snell. Zum 60. Geburtstag am 18. Juni 1956 von Freunden und Schülern überreicht* (München ,1956) 79.
[134] Matthews, *Caesar and the storm*, 24 – 25.
[135] Bettenworth, 'Der Sturm des Lebens' 32.

this weather phenomenon? Although Hildebert's God "ist selbst Garant für den Einklang aller Dinge (V. 89 *ille potens, mitis tenor et concordia rerum),*"[136] he does not cause the storm, fortune does. Hildebert (in contrast to Ovid) survives the storm not because the storm calms, but rather because the ship is "thrown onto land" and his God saves him from the unfortunate storm.[137] The above seems to suggests a difference between the way Christian-era god(s) and Roman gods are thought to intervene. In Ovid's account of his journey into exile, the godlike Augustus wishes him punished for his insults and thus the stormy waves role over his mouth.[138] The emperor is in favour with the gods and Ovid, having offended the emperor, is not.

The emperor resurfaces as a focal point in *Tristia*, as he did in the previous chapter, where the emperor formed the connection between the representations of divine intervention on the column of Marcus Aurelius and Roman benevolence. The divine wrath Ovid suffers is the result of the emperors ire. At this point, as before, an attempt should be made to provide an answer to the main question – what place did divine intervention through the use of weather phenomena have within religious life in the early Roman Empire – by looking at the power relations that surface within storms. In political science, the main discussion on a definition of power leads to the question: "how do the powerful secure the willing compliance of those they dominate?"[139] One answer to this question could be the coercion, real or imagined, that the emperor could bring to bear on any subject by unleashing his army. Another answer is that he had the power of the gods behind him. Much of this invisible (soft) coercion can be seen in monuments like the column of Marcus Aurelius on the piazza Colonna or in other iconography. The relationship between Roman Gods and Romans is a reciprocal relationship. Testament to this reciprocal relationship are many votive inscriptions from Roman times. The relationship between gods and man is expressed in the Roman principle: *do ut des* (I give, so you give). The gods can do as they wish and have power over all but they have to deliver.

Illustrative of the close relation between the gods and the emperor, is the emperor cult. The question of divine power is especially well-served by taking a quick look at the process that may lead to the deification of an emperor, simply because therein lies the divide between gods and man. The potential deification of an emperor (or, later, an imperial family member) was usually subject to

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[136] Bettenworth, 'Der Sturm des Lebens', 45.
[137] Ibidem, 44 – 46.
[138] "(…)Sturm, in den der Sprecher durch den Zorn des Augustus geraten ist, (…)" Ibid., 36; Roman penal culture demanded that a punishment fit the crime. The waves rolling over Ovid's mouth is no mere accident but a punishment fit for one who misspoke and insulted the emperor. See: Coleman, 'Fatal Charades', 44 – 73; e.g.: "(…)We are surely lost, there is no hope of safety, and as I speak, the waters overwhelm my face. The billows will crush this life of mine, and with lips that pray in vain I shall drink in the destroying water." Ovid, *Tristia*, 1.2, 29 – 35.
[139] I. Mennen, *Power and Status in the Roman Empire, AD 193-284* (Leiden and Boston, 2011) 4 – 5.; citing: S. Lukes, *Power: a radical view* (1974).

senatorial politics in the wake of the death of the head of state.[140] But there is a certain hierarchy involved. At the top of the hierarchy, the emperor sits above the most powerful senators, the senate, the *equites* and the rest. More powerful, however, than the emperor are the gods. It seems inevitable, then, that at some point an emperor, in order to advance, had to become a god.

"How you get to heaven is one of the most challenging (and silliest) religious questions of all", Beard and Henderson warn. It means entering *"the politics of representation*."[141] The iconography portraying the emperor's diverse relations with the Roman people (bringing victory, justice, protection, welfare) and the gods (sacrifice, piety, restraint) is highly political; what it was supposed to convey can never be determined with absolute certainty. The first time an emperor became a god was in a power struggle over the legacy of Caesar. Marc Antony and Octavian both intended to be seen as the heir to Caesar. The only honour Caesar had not received, was one that had to be invented for him, and so he was deified.[142] Then, more emperors and imperial family members became honoured in this way. Out of love, for political reasons or for some other reason. Modern historians have struggled to see how one could be perceived to become a god by senatorial decree and ritual. Beard and Henderson specifically suggest one reason: that imperial family members were perhaps deified in order for them to join the emperor after death.[143]

The politics of representation is part of all Roman monuments. The journey of the emperor's soul to the gods is only the most challenging story to represent.

> "(…) the visual representation of apotheosis will always demand that some metaphor of metaphor, some translation of translation, be enlisted to show the impossible-miraculous passage from 'here' to the 'beyond'. (…) we may appreciate the strategies for the display of sanctification as a vital part of the very power it celebrates."[144]

The carrying over of the emperor, from the realm of man (by eagle in the case of the deification of Augustus) to wherever gods reside, is literally the metaphor, which is Greek for 'carrying-over' and, in turn, translates into Latin as a *translatio*, which is exactly what Beard and Henderson mean when expressing the difficulty of grasping the fleeting soul of the emperor. In general, apotheosis, the emperor cults ensuing – and the religious ritual panoply accompanying the deification of imperial family members – can be seen as a major propaganda success of a (new) power tool, deification, within the early empire. But 'tool' is far too great a derogative term for such an elaborate system,

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[140] M. Beard, J. Henderson, 'The emperor's new body', M. Wyke (ed.), *Parchments of gender; deciphering the bodies of antiquity* (1998) 191 – 218.
[141] Beard, 'The emperor's new body', 194.
[142] "The entire populace of Rome played a role in the fabrication of a tradition for imperial exequies, and the apparatus of coinage, temple dedication and its attendant statuary, together with the proliferation of cult-rites and priesthood, radiated the event across the Roman world. *Divus Augustus* was permanently stamped on the Roman empire." Beard, 'The emperor's new body', 197.
[143] Gradel, *Emperor worship*; Beard, 'The emperor's new body'.
[144] Beard, 'The emperor's new body', 194.

part of roman religion, that contributed to the success of the imperial rule during the Principate.

If one was not the emperor but a regular Roman, your soul departed your body, escaping via the mouth and traveling by boat over the Styx to Hades. "Eng mit dem Komplex der Jenseitsvorstellung verbunden ist der bildhafte Vergleich einer Schiffsreise mit dem Verlauf des menschlichen Lebens. Die *navigatio vitae* ist als feststehender Begriff in die Literatur und Kunst eingegangen. In der *Anthologia Graeca* gehört der Vergleich von Schiffs und Lebensreise zu den immer wiederkehrenden Topoi:

> Leben ist Fahrt auf dem Meer. Rings lauern Gefahren und oftmals schlägt uns ein Stürmwind in ihm schlimmer als Schiffbruch zur See.
> Herrisch am Steuer des Lebens sitzt Tyche, die Göttin; wir aber segeln ins Blaue hinein wie auf den Wogen des Meeres.
> Mancher fährt glücklich, den anderen verschlägt's, doch laufen wir alle unter der Erde zuletzt ein in den nämlichen Port."[145]

According to Mertens' *motivgeschichtliche Studie*, the two main motives of the ship or the sailing in a storm are either the metaphor of the ship of state, connecting sate or polis politics with the steering of a ship, or the journey by ship as a metaphor for the journey of life.[146] Ovid's journey in the *Tristia*, could, if pressed, fit into the latter category of the journey of life, his life losing direction completely mid storm.

> "navita confessus gelidum pallore timorem, iam sequitur victus, non regit arte ratem."
> "The sailor, confessing by his pale face a chilling fear now in defeat humours the craft, no longer skilfully guiding her."[147]

'Hilflosigkeit des Steuermanns' was one of the most important markers from the typology that is central in the storm stories.

> "That ship, which, with his friend Orontes, bore the Lycian mariners, a great, plunging wave struck straight astern, before Aeneas' eyes. Forward the steersman rolled and o'er the side fell headlong, while three times the circling flood spun the light bark through swift engulfing seas. Look, how the lonely swimmers breast the wave! And on the waste of waters wide are seen weapons of war, spars, planks, and treasures rare, once Ilium's boast, all mingled with the storm."[148]

The helmsman, the only one in charge of direction, is in trouble. This signals the highpoint of the storms, the loss of all reasonability with the gods. At this point in the story, the passengers are destined to die, surely? The one god in charge of destiny is the Roman goddess Fortuna, depicted below as helmsman. Fortune is one of the most important gods in literature. In tragedies by

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[145] S. Mertens, '*Seesturm und Schiffbruch: ein motivgeschichtliche Studie*', Ellmers, Hoheisel (eds.), *Schriften des Deutschen Schiffahrtmuseums 16* (Hamburg, 1987) 26 – 27.
[146] Mertens, *Seesturm und Schiffbruch.*
[147] Ovid, *Tristia*, 1.4, 11 – 12.
[148] Vergil, *Aeneid*, 1.113 – 1.124, transl.: T. C. Williams (Boston, 1910).

Euripides, the Greek goddess of destiny Tyche, who is generally equated with Fortuna, is counted on average a thousand times per tragedy.[149] The deities of destiny are often feared for the cruel fate they can bestow on anyone. Tyche however is the more capricious of the two, Fortuna knows herself subject of an ode by Horatio and many temples in Roman Italy that show there is another side to her.[150]

74 Fortuna mit Steuerruder und Füllhorn. Kaiserzeitliche Bronzestatuette

59

Besides the points that are in all literary storms that Bettenworth lists (see page 34 above) there is the more general journey-of-life theme that Mertens relates of in her book. According to Mertens, the Greek world already harboured the two main categories (ship-of-state, journey-of-life) that storm

[149] E. Simon, *Die Götter der Römer* (München, 1990) 59.
[150] Simon, *Die Götter der Römer*, 59 – 61, 61: "Das griechische Tychebild war im 6. Jahrhundert v. Chr. noch gar nicht entwickelt, konnte nicht auf Rom einwirken, und die frühe römische Fortuna war eine Göttin ganz anderer Art.".

stories still fall into. Taken together, the *Aeneid* and the *Tristia* paint the same picture in many respects:

> "In fact, Ovid's use of epic parallels is more extensive in the first book of the Tristia, for in this book he consciously uses the Aeneid as a constant reference point in order to characterize his internal sufferings, his storm, his storm tossed journey, his inner anxiety, and the opposition of a hostile god."[151]

The type of god that can be seen in *Tristia* does have some troubling aspects. In *Tristia* 1.4, the storm seems to calm after Ovid prays to the gods that the emperor Augustus wished him to suffer in exile, alive.

> "O ye gods above and ye of the green flood, who rule the waters,—stay ye now, both hosts of you, your threats. The life that Caesar's merciful wrath has granted, let me carry, unhappy man that I am, to the appointed place. If ye wish me to pay the penalty which I have deserved, my fault even in my judge's eyes merits not death. If ere now Caesar had wished to send me to the waters of the Styx, he had not needed your aid in this."[152]

This peculiar prayer makes it out as if the all-powerful party is really the emperor and not Jupiter who is almost drowning out Ovid, but who seems to resign his anger upon Ovid's reminder that his sentence was exile, not drowning. The god in *Tristia* is hostile to Ovid like Jupiter is in parts of the *Aeneid*. This is because *Tristia* is very political in nature, Ovid's side of the story of his banishment. In the *Tristia*, Jupiter is on Augustus' side, he sometimes *is* Augustus even. But in the *Aeneid* and in other representations, Jupiter also often seems reasonable, benevolent even.[153]

> "(…)this fundamental tension between the two conceptions of Jupiter [the benevolent conception and the tribal conception] deepens the tragedies of the victims in the *Aeneid*: their prayers and *pietas* prove futile, not because of their moral failings, but because they realize too late that the god from whom they sought justice or sympathy is interested only in Roman sovereignty."[154]

The goals of Jupiter in the *Aeneid* are *fama* and *imperium*. While Jupiter's character in the *Aeneid* is complex — he sometimes seems positively disposed towards mankind and at other times disinterested at best — he is powerful. Aspects of Virgil's *Aeneid* showcase Jupiter's all-encompassing power.[155] But while the Aeneid is full of gods actively engaged in plotting, using the weather and actively controlling it, the *Tristia* chooses to present a flat characterization of the gods. *Tristia* only needs an irate Jupiter to represent an invidious Caesar with a limitless power but an uncontrollable

[151] M.S. Bate, 'Tempestuous poetry: storms in Ovid's Metamorphoses, Heroides and Tristia', *Mnemosyne 57 3 (2004)* 307.
[152] Ovid, *Tristia,* 1.4.
[153] Hejduk, 'Fama and Imperium'; Bate, 'Tempestuous poetry'.
[154] Hejduk, 'Fama and Imperium', 281.
[155] Ibidem, 279 – 281.

rage. What a contrast with the *Aeneid* – different gods all get their unique moment. Like "Neptune calming the sea like a Roman statesman."

> "He [Neptune] spoke, and swiftlier than his word subdued
> the swelling of the floods; dispersed afar
> th' assembled clouds, and brought back light to heaven.
> Cymothoe then and Triton, with huge toil,
> thrust down the vessels from the sharp-edged reef;
> while, with the trident, the great god's own hand
> assists the task; then, from the sand-strewn shore
> out-ebbing far, he calms the whole wide sea,
> and glides light-wheeled along the crested foam."[156]

The Aeneid knows many moments of negative divine intervention as well as the above positive intervention by Neptune, calming the storm. A total analysis of every moment of interest in the *Aeneid* is not only impossible but also unnecessary here, because it already exist in plentiful form.[157] From that which has been said in relation to the place of the divinely controlled storm in this chapter, several observations can be made. The *Aeneid* is full of intervening gods, many of whom have roles in causing storms. But there is only one lightning hurler that is the omnipotent Jupiter. That being said, even here strange counter examples can be found that will have to be explained as poetic liberty.[158] "Die Missachtung der Kompetenzen zeigt, wie selbstverständlich dem Römischen Epos das Zubehör (wohl nicht erst dem Virgil) geworden war."[159]

It is precisely for that reason, that Jupiter is the omnipotent god interested in *fama* and *imperium*, that Ovid chooses to lift the unreasonable episodes of Jupiter from the *Aeneid* and copy these in the *Tristia*. Ovid mourns the unfairness of the omnipotent judge he found pitted against him. There, in the *Tristia*, Jupiter and Augustus melt together into a single irate power abuser that tosses the hapless Ovid around on the waves.

The most important observation, however, is that storm stories are not storms. The main character in the *Aeneid* is Aeneas, in the *Tristia* likewise, it is Ovid. Whether Romans really perceived Neptune to calm the sea, or Jupiter to direct the lightning one cannot take from epic poetry directly. Nevertheless, a general picture does seem to emerge. There is a hierarchy of gods as there is hierarchy in Roman society. According to their imperium, they have more control over the weather

[156] Vergil, Aeneid, 1.142 – 1.153.
[157] e.g.: Friedrich, 'Episches Unwetter'; c.f.: Hejduk, 'Fama and Imperium'.
[158] Friedrich, 'Episches Unwetter', 78 – 79; "Strenggenomen Verstößt Virgil also gegen seine eigenen Voraussetzungen, wenn er im ersten Buch von Donner und Blitz redet. Denn dieser sturm wird nicht allein gegen den Plan Juppiters, sondern auch ohne Wissen Neptuns erregt, zwar im Auftrage Junos, aber doch von einem so untergeordneten Dämon wie Äolus.".
[159] Friedrich, 'Episches Unwetter', 79.

and despite artistic confusion, most have their own prerogative, the Winds blow, Neptune rides the waves and Jupiter thunders.

> "(…)the proper ordering of the universe (*cosmos*) entails the exercise of power (*imperium*), whether by men or by gods. It is our human weakness that leads us to expect things like compassion and fairness from the enforcer of order and Fate. And yet, the collision of that weakness with the implacable strength of destiny is part of what gives the *Aeneid*—and the *Iliad*, and Greek tragedy, and all tragic literature—its grip on the human imagination. Moreover, Jupiter is far from transcendence even within the fiction of the poem; it is hard to see his rape of Juturna or his applause for Aeneas' battle atrocities as the impersonal enforcement of Fate."[160]

So, because Jupiter is opposed to chaos and the most powerful, he causes storms when he needs to. At other times, when other gods are not looking or elsewhere busy, Fortuna is responsible for what happens. It is for that reason too that her image is the one behind the steering rudder.

[160] Hejduk, 'Fama and Imperium', 281.

3. Warding of clouds, invoking divine help against bad weather

How did you get gods to intervene on your behalf? By praying and through coercion via magic. These two ways will briefly be discussed here to show the place of divine intervention in Roman society. One could pray. Or one could try and force deities to effect a favourable outcome of a situation. In relation to praying to the gods for intervention, McCartney dismisses professor Morgan's scepticism about the employment of prayer in antiquity.

> "Prayer has always been so obvious a means of seeking relief from drought that it would be strange if peoples ever failed to resort to it, but the following conclusions were reached by Professor M. H. Morgan:
>
> From these summaries, it seems obvious that rain-prayers and rain-charms were (to use no stronger term) unusual in the best period of Greek and Roman culture, that is to say, in the fifth and early part of the fourth centuries B.C. in Greece, and during the fifty years which lie on each side of the beginning of the Christian era in the history of Rome. We ought not to be surprised at reaching this conclusion, for these were periods in which early beliefs and primitive explanations of natural phenomena found little favor..."[161]

"(…) it seems to me foreign to reason to suppose that (…) Greeks and Italians seldom prayed for rain",[162] McCartney concludes. And it is easy to see why. According to Cronin, in Herodotus, one can read about the wonder of the Egyptians at the foolish reliance of the Greeks on water sent from the sky by Zeus.

> "A passage of Herodotus well illustrates the distinction we ought to draw between a people who are largely independent of the weather and grow their crops by irrigation, e.g., the Egyptians, and people who are dependent upon rainfall for the growth of their crops, e.g., the Greeks (2.13):
>
> 'For, on learning that the whole land of the Greeks is watered by rain and not by rivers, as their own is, they (i.e. the Egyptians) said that someday the Greeks would be disappointed of a great hope and would suffer the evil of starvation. By these words, they meant to say that, should the god will to send them no rain but to afflict them with drought, the Greeks would be destroyed by famine, since they have no source of water to protect them, only that which comes from Zeus.'"[163]

Even though there is nothing harder to prove than the fact that people uttered words to achieve some magical effect, several examples present themselves to McCartney.[164] There is Lucretius, of course, who in *De Rerum Natura* – in typical Epicurean fashion – accuses people of being uncritical in

[161] E. McCartney, 'Greek and Roman weather lore of two destructive weather elements, hail land drought', *The classical weekly. xxvii. 4 (1934) 25 – 34,* 25; c.f.: M.H. Morgan, 'Greek and Roman rain-gods and rain-charms', *Transactions and proceedings of the American philological association 32* (1901) 83 – 109.
[162] McCartney, 'Greek and Roman weather lore of hail land drought', 25.
[163] P. Cronin, *Greek popular meteorology from antiquity to the present: the folk-interpretation of Celestial Signs* (New York, 2010) 2.
[164] McCartney, 'Greek and Roman weather lore of hail land drought', 25 – 34.

their beliefs and thereby forsaking their duty to make most of life. He rhymes about someone praying:

> "Is thy true piety in this: with head
> Under the veil, still to be seen to turn
> Fronting a stone, and ever to approach
> Unto all altars; nor so prone on earth
> Forward to fall, to spread upturned palms
> Before the shrines of gods"[165]

Lucretius, of course, was an Epicurean and though epicureanism was popular for a long time, most Romans would not have been able or willing to support the message that is in this work, radical as it is. The rain-causing, lightning-hurling god to which prayers were often sent, Zeus, has been thoroughly researched by Cook. His characterisation of the Sky-god is complete and confirms the roles of Zeus and Jupiter as the *première* Weather-gods.

> "Zeus, then, was primarily god of the bright sky. But the sky is not always bright. As the rustic Korydon remarks in an idyll of Theokritos:
>
> 'Ay, Zeus is sometimes fair and sometimes foul'.
>
> Hence the Greeks naturally extended the notion of Zeus as god of the bright sky to cover that of Zeus as weather-god in general. The poets from Homer downwards used such expressions as 'Zeus lightens,' 'Zeus thunders,' 'Zeus rains,' 'Zeus snows,' ''Zeus sends the hail,'"[166]

The seriousness that is attached to persistent belief in things like these is exemplified by a most famous example, a dialogue, from *Clouds* by Aristophanes, that is used by Cook and is also used by Whitmarsh. Cook uses it to show how the common man would stick to what he knows and what his father knew before him. Whitmarsh sees it as proof that the possibility of disbelief should have allowed for the widespread existence of atheism.

"Strepsidiades:	What! d'you mean that Zeus is not god, Zeus in heaven, on whom we call?
Socrates:	Zeus, d'you say? now don't talk drivel; Zeus does not exist at all.
Strepsidiades:	What! who makes the rain then? tell me that, and I shall be content.
Socrates:	Why the clouds: I'll prove it to you by convincing argument.
	Have you ever seen rain falling, when the clouds weren't passing by?
	If it's Zeus who rains, he ought to do it from a cloudless sky.
Strepsidiades:	That's a clever point, I grant you, neatly used to back your case.
	Yet I thought once Zeus passed water through a sieve, when rain took place.
	But who is it then who thunders, when I cower and hide my face?
Socrates:	Why, the rolling clouds make thunder.
Strepsidiades:	What'd you mean? that's blasphemy.

[165] Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, transl.: W.E Leonard, E.P. Dutton, (1916) 1194-1240.
[166] Cook, *Zeus god of the dark sky (thunder and lightning),* 1.

Socrates: When they're teeming full of water and are forced across the sky,
Big with rain and bulging downwards, moving at a fearful rate,
Charging each against the next, they burst and crash with all their weight.
Strepsidiades: But who is it drives them onwards? do you think Zeus, or not?
Socrates: No, the atmospheric vortex.
Strepsidiades: Vortex! yes, I quite forgot:
Zeus does not exist, but Vortex rules instead of him to-day."[167]

Aristophanes' Strepsidiades, as a creation of the upper or middle class, is incredibly stupid, so much so that he is not able to think for himself. He is stupid, in this fragment, and he believed Zeus rained "and continued to believe in it just because his father and his grandfather and his great-grandfather had done the same before him."[168] One should keep in mind that this was a very good reason when considering Roman mores: the tradition of authority and adherence to the great examples set by forebears. This is not to say that the upper class in Greco-Roman times was irreligious. The non-writing class however did keep to simpler observations than Aristophanes' Socrates:

"Somebody in the Atthis of Alexis describes:

How just at first Zeus quietly clouds over,
then more and more so.

Somebody else in a fragment by Menandros says:

I watch Zeus
Pelting with rain."[169]

Whitmarsh, too, uses comedies. The following is from a conversation between two slaves in Aristophanes' knights, as quoted by Whitmarsh:

"Do you really believe in the gods?
Second slave: Of course.
First slave: What's your proof?
Second slave: The fact that I'm cursed by them. Won't that do?
First slave: Well it's good enough for me.
it's a nice joke: being godforsaken is offered as evidence that the gods must exist. But it is more than a joke; it is also a comment on intellectual fashions."[170]

As a comment on intellectual fashions, comedy serves to highlight the divide between people sharing in intellectual delight and people not able to share in it. A divide much more complex in Rome than in ancient Athens. Ancient comedy, one is obliged to add as a warning, is in some respects the ancient

[167] Cook, *Zeus god of the dark sky (thunder and lightning),* 2; Aristophanes, *Clouds*, transl.: W.J. Hickie, in: the Comedies of Aristophanes (London, 1853).
[168] Cook, *Zeus god of the dark sky (thunder and lightning),* 2.
[169] Ibidem, 3.
[170] Whitmarsh, *Battling the gods*, 101.

equivalent of the modern bar joke: a priest and a Rabbi walk into a bar… It does play a role. And it is funny. But is it really of decisive influence in determining whether people believed that the clouds rained of themselves instead of Jupiter?

The rural farmer who relied on good weather for his fortunes does not know a lot, knows no turbulent life, but when hail strikes, strikes his livelihood, he is in trouble. The following romantic interpretation of the rural unfazed life is from Claudius.

> "Of an old Man of Verona who never left his home.
>
> Happy he who has passed his whole life mid his own fields, he of whose birth and old age the same house is witness; he whose stick supports his tottering steps o'er the very ground whereon he crawled as a baby and whose memory knows but of one cottage as the scene where so long a life was played out. No turns of fortune vexed him with their sudden storms; he never travelled nor drank the waters of unknown rivers. He was never a trader to fear the seas nor a soldier to dread the trumpet's call; never did he face the noisy wrangles of the courts. Unpractised in affairs, unfamiliar with the neighbouring town, he finds his delight in a freer view of the sky above him. For him the recurring seasons, not the consuls, mark the year: he knows autumn by his fruits and spring by her flowers. From the selfsame fields he watches the sun rise and set, and, at his work, measures the day with his own round of toils. He remembers yon mighty oak an acorn, and sees the plantation, set when he was born, grown old along with him. Neighbouring Verona is, for him, more distant than sun-scorched India; Benacus [Garda Lake] he accounts as the Red Sea. But his strength is unimpaired and the third generation see in him a sturdy, stout-armed grandsire. Let who will be a wanderer and explore farthest Spain: such may have more of a journey; he of Verona has more of a life."[171]

The above poem shows the general image a Roman could have of the farmer. The reference to the 'sudden storms' that the farmer is not troubled with, by fortune, is the one that jumps out in regard to the previous chapter: the storm as a metaphor for tumultuous life. Besides that, the sky and the oak are references to Jupiter's might and protection. For he must have been blessed since he is a felicitous farmer. 'Felix, qui propriis aevum transegit in arvis, ipsa domus puerum quem videt, ipsa senem;'[172] The farmer is happy, although he has seen nothing, he lives close to nature. In nature, one can find gods. Interestingly, Whitmarsh argues precisely the other way around, proposing one has to substitute the word 'gods' with the word 'nature'.[173]

The sheer amount of magical spells that are appealing to the divine not to intervene are an interesting category in regard to the main question. This category of spells aimed at protection are often found on materials such as lead, special stones, and other materials which are called phylacteries or amulets. Both the steady belief in the practice of magic – and doubt in certain practices – are often expressed by Pliny in the *Naturalis Historia*. Deities able to control things, such

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[171] Claudian, *Shorter Poems,* transl:. Platnauer, in: *Loeb 136* (1922) 194 – 195.
[172] Ibidem.
[173] Whitmarsh, *Battling the gods*, 54.*"*When the pre-Socratics speak of divinity, we can often substitute "nature". "God" often seems to be a metaphorical way of referring to the interconnectedness of al life. There is certainly no sense that these cosmic beings are divinities one can worship, or even interact with: the sources never speak of prayer, sacrifice, temples, or ritual."

as the weather, are found in collections of spells, amulets or inscriptions throughout the whole of the Roman empire, most are written in Greek such as the PGM.[174] At first, deities with the power to do so caused – through use of the weather – adversity as well as well-being. "However, from the Hellenistic period, and especially among Christians, natural catastrophes came increasingly to be attributed to the anger of *daemones*."[175] Not only did deities have the power to 'ward off bad weather',[176] but were seen to cause the bad weather as well. Within the first two centuries of Christianity, the role of the *daemones* changed – from simple supernatural beings that were generally speaking not ill-disposed – into the cursed beings that worked for Satan and all the evil in the world.[177]

> "It is said that there are men whose special skill is to watch the clouds and predict when it is going to hail. They managed to learn how to do this thanks to experience, by noting the colour that the clouds usually take on before a hailstorm. 2. It is hard to believe that in Cleonae (= Kleonai) there were some public servants, the chalazophylacae , whose duty was to calculate when it was going to hail. When they had given the sign that hail had arrived, do you think that the men ran out to get their woollen or leather capes? Not a bit of it. Everyone offered a sacrifice: some a lamb, others a chicken. Immediately the clouds would move somewhere else once they had tasted a little blood. 3. Did you think that was funny? This will make you laugh even more. Anybody who did not have a lamb or a chicken would wound himself slightly; and just so you don't think that the clouds were greedy, he would prick a finger with a sharp point and offer his blood: the hailstorm would move away from his land, the same as for those who had made more valuable sacrifices. 7.1. There are those who seek an explanation for this. Some, as you would expect from the wisest, say that it is impossible for anyone to negotiate with hail and ward off storms with gift s, even though the offerings may have influence, even on the gods. Others say that they suspect that the blood itself contains a certain energy that can divert and drive back a cloud. 2. But how can such a small quantity of blood contain energy enough to soar up and be noticed by the clouds? The easy answer would be to say that it is untrue and a legend. And yet the inhabitants of Kleonai would bring charges against those who had been given the task of predicting storms, in the belief that it was through their lack of engagement that vineyards were destroyed or cornfields ravaged."[178]

Roman society is not a group of homogenous believers. As one can see in the above quote by Seneca, in Lucretius,[179] and in the following quote by Pliny, scepticism about the practice of using magic was profound.

> "There are in existence, also, certain charms against hail-storms, diseases of various kinds, and burns, some of which have been proved, by actual experience, to be effectual; but so great is the diversity of

[174] H.D. Betz, *The Greek magical papyri in translation including the demotic spells. 2nd edition (London, 1992).*
[175] Nieto, 'A Visigothic Charm', 572.
[176] Ibidem.
[177] Ibid., 573 – 574.
[178] Ibid., 554 – 555.
[179] Lucretius, this chapter: 44 – 45.

> opinion upon them, that I am precluded by a feeling of extreme diffidence from entering into further particulars, and must therefore leave each to form his own conclusions as he may feel inclined."[180]

At the same time, these testimonies provide the proof that appeals to divine intervention or protection were very much still practiced. The farmer of Verona did not have many worries according to Claudius. Except, of course, for the one livelihood-threatening worry: the destruction of his crop. Phylacteries, providing protection against hail, were thought essential to prevent disaster. The invocation of supernatural beings on anti-hail amulets reveals Christian as well as non-Christian names. More importantly, the charms used to coerce deities to intervene on one's behalf do not seem to have changed all that much. The same tradition of using magic to move deities to act can still be found practiced in seventh and eighth-century Spain.

> "The magical power of menstrual blood to ward off bad weather and crop damage by pests is also noted in Roman sources. Pliny, HN 28.77 for example notes that hail and storms are driven away if a menstruating woman shows herself naked to the lightning, and that the same device will avert storms at sea. Palladius, Op. agric. 1.35.1, records that brandishing bloodstained, i.e. sacrificial, axes threateningly at the clouds will ward off hail."[181]

Hail prevention rituals included 'hanging crocodile, hyena, or seal skin from the door of the house or the yard.'[182] A mirror placed on the ground facing up at the clouds would be enough to scare the clouds away. One could also try to 'sacrifice' a turtle by carrying it around the yard upside down and placing it on its back on the ground again at the point of departure, before walling it in with earth, thereby ensuring that it would die – and guaranteeing that deities accept the sacrifice.[183]

In short, the workings of spells providing protection are enhanced by bloody animal hides, repetition and circumambulation during the accompanying ritual. In general, the working of magical spells is enhanced by the mystery surrounding the words, deities, numbers and drawings used in the process. In Nieto, as well as in Morgan and McCartney, all quoted above, the two most important sources are Pausanias and the *Geoponika*. Morgan is right to criticise the uncritical use of the sources. The *Geoponika* is reliable for forming a general image, precisely because of the fact that it is a collection of material from many different authors, times, and places. The sources on magic concerning the weather that are under consideration paint a remarkably consistent picture. Within the farming encyclopaedia, the special position of blood as a substance enhancing the protection of

[180] Pliny *Naturalis Historia. 28. 5.*
[181] Nieto., 'A Visigothic charm.' 555 – 556. In book 28 chapter 23, one can read: "For, in the first place, hailstorms, they say, whirlwinds, and lightning[1] even, will be scared away by a woman uncovering her body while her monthly courses are upon her. The same, too, with all other kinds of tempestuous weather; and out at sea, a storm may be lulled by a woman uncovering her body merely, even though not menstruating at the time." Pliny. *Naturalis Historia. 28. 23*.
[182] Nieto., 'A Visigothic charm.' 557.
[183] ibidem. 557.

the land is underscored time and again. For instance, in the translation of the *Geoponika* by Dalby, one can read the following:

> "14. *On hail* Africanus
> If a menstruating woman displays her private parts to hail she will ward it off; all wild animals, too recoil from this sight.
> Take a girl's first towel, bury it in the middle of your land, and the vines or crops will not be injured by hail.
> If a thong made of sealskin is hung on one of the prominent vines there will be no damage from hail, according to philostratos in *historical research*.
> some say that if you display a mirror to overhead clouds the hail will pass by. (…)"[184]

Many spells on menstruating women exist in the PGM as well. Some to stop the bleeding, some for other effects.[185] Menstruation made a woman unclean and she was consequently barred from religious acts such as entering a temple. The use of blood in spells or ritual has connotations with the earliest forms of belief from hunter-gatherer societies.[186] Blood is a metaphor for life and thus the most important thing to offer to the supernatural. This can be seen in the role it has in many rituals. Later, wine can be viewed as substituting for blood. In rural areas traditions changed less fast and blood rituals likely continued to be performed long after they had fallen out of fashion elsewhere. [187] A large part of the continued belief in these methods comes from the fact that the way they work is not understood. The mystery and the secrecy contributes to the attribution of powerful outcomes to spells protecting the land. Writers preserving religious tradition by relating of it in consecutive versions of the Geoponika, from antiquity to now do not always understand all the formulae or text fully. Dalby admits: "I do not understand this text [on hail]: nor did Cornarius. Owen's text did not include this [the following] chapter."[188] "Xyla daphnesas parthenou knemas alleoresai: tes de hekastou kath' hekaston klema chre einai te kai chosai." [189]

Besides blind, hopeful belief there was scepticism as well. In the *Geoponika*, as well as in Seneca and in Lucretius, with the writers, one encounters resistance to simply believing in some things that others did clearly believe:

> "Take a piece of paper and write on it: *I conjure any mice caught here to do me no harm and to prevent other mice doing so. I give you the following land* (and name it)*. If I find you still here, I take the Mother of the Gods to witness, I will cut you into seven pieces*. After writing this, fix the paper before sunrise against a natural rock in the field where the mice are (the writing must be visible on the

[184] A. Dalby, *Geoponika (2011)* 67 – 68.
[185] Betz, *The Greek magical papyri.*
[186] Walter Burkert, *Homo Necans*.
[187] Nieto, 'A Visigothic Charm From Asturias And The Classical Tradition Of Phylacteries Against Hail'.; P.J.J. Botha, 'Blood sacrifice and moral formation: Violence as a facet of Christian traditions', *HTS Teologiese Studies 64, 4,* (2008) 1601 -1615.
[188] *Geoponika,* 68, note 2.
[189] *Geoponika*, 68.

> outside). I included this instruction rather than omit anything, but I reject such practices (may they not be true!) I advise others to do the same, and never to use such ridiculous methods."[190]

In fact, the whole tradition of Roman literature spanning over a thousand years from Lucretius, through the phylacteries reported on by Nieto, to the *Geoponika*, paints the same picture of a tradition of magical charms that the writers reluctantly report – sometimes with disgust – but which refuses to go away. The introduction of Christianity merely effectuates slight changes to the names invoked within these spells. It certainly does not exclude deities from being named in phylacteries.[191]

Widespread belief in the power of spells is quite plausible, considering the general collection of spells in the PGM and the various reports by such diverse authors as Lucretius, Seneca and Pausanias. The writing and reading class did have its beliefs, as can be read in, among other places, the famous novel by Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*.[192] It differed, however, from what later historians have dubbed primitive belief. Nieto, for instance, states that "In primitive belief, storms were caused by Sky-gods who controlled the weather."[193] In this way, whatever one believed – or chooses to show that one believed – contributes to perpetuate class differences as well. The division between the sorceress and the saint jumps from the pages:

> "The saint contrived to win the friendship of a sorceress who manufactured and sold amulets. One day he asked her: "would you like me to make you an amulet so that you will never be touched by the evil eye?" When she replied "yes," the saint went away and engraved on a tablet the following words in Syriac: "May God render you ineffective and may he prevent you from turning men away from him toward you." He gave her the tablet, and she wore it, presumably not understanding what it said. From that day on she was unable to manufacture amulets for anyone."[194]

'Primitive belief', mysterious and secret as it was, took place at night, while state religion was practiced by day. Herein may lie a reason for the continuity of traditional practice. Nieto brilliantly chronicles the despair of Christians and their measures to incorporate commonplace Roman magical practices within Christian orthodoxy.[195] And although the Christian god is all powerful, there had to be made room for misfortune: "the idea became rooted among Christians that neither God nor his host could be held responsible for all the misfortunes in the world"[196] and because magical practice had the "tendency (…) to absorb elements of diverse origin so long as they were considered powerful",[197] both became inseparably linked. Although Christian dogma claimed its victory over magic they became the same thing. There was the priest who forbade using non-christian charms for

[190] *Geoponika*, 271.
[191] Nieto, 'A Visigothic charm',
[192] Apuleius, *The Golden Ass, or a book of changes,* transl: J. C. Relihan *(2007).*
[193] Nieto, 'A Visigothic charm', 571.
[194] H. Maguire, 'Magic and the Christian image', in: H. Maguire (ed.), *Byzantine magic (Washington, 2008)* 62.
[195] Nieto, 'A Visigothic charm', 574 – 587.
[196] Ibidem, 574.
[197] Ibid., 577.

protection against hail. But forbidding it was not enough, it needed to be substituted, since old habits die hard. This resulted in some protective effort of Sykeon of Galatia 'who aided a village (…) whose vintage had been ruined by hail: he said a prayer and erected a cross, and in years, though storm-clouds gathered, they did no damage.'[198]

[198] Ibid., 578.

4. Connecting previous chapters: the imagined and portrayed instruments of divine intervention

"'If a man were called to fix the period in the history of the world during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous, he would without hesitation, name that which elapsed from the death of Domitian to the accession of Commodus.' This is the well-known verdict of Edward Gibbon on the condition of life in the Roman Empire between a.d. 96 and 180, a happy period of stable government, benevolent rulers, and more or less peaceful frontiers. It ended, in Gibbon's opinion, with the death of the last of the good emperors, Marcus Aurelius. But a strong argument can be made that things had ceased being 'happy and prosperous' well before the philosopher-emperor passed the throne to his delinquent son."[199] On some level, these romantic lines by Gibbon as quoted by Beckmann may hold truth. On the other hand, it is occasionally wholesome – especially in regard to the violence on the column of Marcus Aurelius, discussed in chapter one – to remind oneself that "'Rome was a cruel society. Brutality was built into its culture, in private life as well as in public shows … It is worth stressing that we are dealing here, not with individual sadistic psychopathology, but with a deep cultural difference.'[96] People who enjoyed themselves by watching 'fatal charades' and other less sophisticated but still deliberately cruel forms of executions were hardly repelled by the depiction of atrocities against barbarians who had been (and presumably still were) the nightmare of the empire."[200] The importance of reminding oneself in this way of the distance between a Roman world and modern society may not be overestimated. It guards against accepting a simplified image that can be misused or misunderstood easily. Roman religion often fails to get more than a mention in short versions of modern popular history. This is why Smith said: "The historian's task is to complicate, not to clarify".[201] To complicate history a bit more, I have chosen to ask about divine intervention, a subject as silly as it is difficult. Three differently-themed chapters have been featured to illustrate the ways in which divine intervention is part of the Roman world.

The imagined and portrayed[202] actions of deities have, in chapter one, included the representations of the lightning and rain *mira* on the column of Marcus Aurelius. In chapter two, storms imagined in Roman literature were included and chapter three discussed the way in which deities were called upon to exert influence over the farmers' land. In chapter one, the manifestation of Jupiter-Dolichenus was presented as one of the more important wielders of the lightning bolt

[199] Beckmann, *The column of Marcus Aurelius,* 1.
[200] Pirson, 'Style and message on the column of Marcus Aurelius', 174 – 175.
[201] Smith, *studies in the history of religions*, 129.
[202] "Although Roman historians only rarely suggest that the gods directly participated in the action, their supportive presence could be imagined and sometimes portrayed." M. Beard, J. North, S. Price, *Religions of Rome: volume 2, a sourcebook (Cambridge, 1998*) 26.

instrument in the Roman empire. His wife, Iuno-Dolichena, carried around a round disc. Some see it as a mirror. Others think the disc must be seen as evolved from a representation of the moon, who was a powerful deity in her own right. One older structuralist account is worth bringing up in order to show the power of the metaphorical nature of divine instruments within these simulacra. In chapter two of Margarete Riemschneider's book *Der Wettergott*, which is titled 'der Adlermensch', a syncretistic account is given on the origin (and inherited meaning) of the earliest form of the disc that is held by the female companion of Jupiter-Dolichenus, stating that it originated with an eagle-headed Hittite god. The eagle itself, it must, of course, be noted, was the most important symbol of Roman power as well, a symbol that is almost equal in power to the lightning bolt – and both are 'carried' by Jupiter. The Hittite god is only eagle-headed since: "(…)der Hethiter will seinen Gott greifbar und menschlich haben." According to Riemschneider, the disc that in Dolichena's hands had, at some point, become a mirror, originated as a game board.

> "Wenn man das ursprünglich runde Spielbrett später für einen Spiegel gehalten hat und wenn die Ägypter den Spiegel „Leben" nennen, so scheint mir, dass sie den Ausdruck aus Kleinasien bezogen haben und nicht umgekehrt.(…) Dass sich der Spiegel aus dem Spielbrett entwickelt hat, ist noch ganz deutlich im Orakelspiegel, der sogar reden kann. „Speigelein, Spiegelein an der Wand, wer ist die Schönste im ganzen Land?"[203]

Following Riemschneider, two things are of interest for the purpose of getting closer to the place of the divine instrument in Roman religion. Firstly, the notion that attributed and imagined meanings can persist even though not every cue from the 'original' symbol may survive a transition, but only if the meaning it is imagined to represent is essential and popular. Secondly, that such an archetypical template can acquire other meanings in addition to the original one. The meaning of the game board is chance, fate, the prospect that fortunate players may be rewarded. I am at once reminded of the superstitious adage from modern western society that the breaking a mirror will incur seven years of bad luck. The game board[204] that originally represents luck (fate and fortune), acquires additional meaning in Egypt before ending up in the hand of a Roman Iuno-Dolichena, according to Riemschneider.[205]

While one has to be extremely careful in retracing meaning back into history to its earliest origin, some coincidences seem too good to be true. 'Zufälliger Gleichklang' between the attribute and the meaning that is ascribed to it throughout different times and cultures can, and often is separated from the logic that it may have had, as is the case with the game board that became a mirror, but retained its connotations as an object representing fate and fortune. Jupiter-Dolichenus, as shown in chapter two, and his consort Iuno-Dolichena, holding the mirror, can be seen to

[203] M. Riemschneider, *Der Wettergott* (Leipzig, 1956) 18.
[204] Ibidem, 9 – 45, 75.
[205] Ibid., 9 – 45.

represent all and every important power enhancing attribute, the eagle, the lightning bolt, the bull, the 'disc'. One question, that I cannot possible hope to answer given the necessary limits for this thesis, is whether there is a trend towards including more and more symbols relating to power in fewer important gods? The amalgamation of power in representations of deities and cults most popular with Roman soldiers – like in the Mithras cult and later the Jupiter-Dolichenus-Iuno-Dolichena couple cult – is not surprising, since those were the cults for which the worshippers had the most acute need of powerful support, the need for unabated strength, the support of force, and most of all, luck.[206]

In chapter two, the epic storm shows the power ascribed to the deity Fortuna who was thought to determine fate and destiny. If one was really felicitous, as felicitous as a good emperor was, the gods worked for you. Going against the natural order and lacking luck could frustrate one's safe journey. As was the case with Ovid's storm, which is wished upon him by the emperor and effected by the winds and an irate Jupiter. Divine favour, in Roman style, can be recognized in one other type of story, underscoring the connections between fortune, fate, destiny and *felicitas*, it is the story of two happily condemned Christians.

> "One day when we were having breakfast, we were suddenly rushed off for a hearing. We came to the forum and straightaway the news travelled all round the parts of the town near the forum and a huge crowd assembled. We stepped up onto the platform. The others were questioned and confessed their faith. Then it came to my turn. And my father appeared straightaway with my son and dragged me from the steps, saying: 'Perform the sacrifice. Have pity on your baby.' And Hilarianus, the *procurator*, who had then taken over the right to try capital crimes in place of the late governor Minucius Timinianus, said to me: 'Have compassion on the white hairs of your father; have compassion for your baby boy. Perform the sacrifice for the well-being of the emperors.' And I replied: 'I'm not doing it.' 'Are you a Christian?' Hilarianus said. And I replied: 'I am a Christian.' And when my father went on trying to sway me from my resolve, Hilarianus gave orders for him to be beaten with a rod. And I grieved for my father as if it was me that had been beaten; I grieved for his miserable old age. Then Hilarianus proclaimed sentence on all of us and he condemned us to the beasts; and joyfully we went back down to our prison."[207]

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[206] For a different opinion see: F.G. Naerebout, 'Cuius regio, eius religio? Rulers and religious change in Greco-Roman Egypt', L. Bricault, M.J. Versluys (eds.), *Power, politics and the cults of Isis* (2014). 54. "There is absolutely no indication that gods in military outfit would be in any way the preferred divinities of whatever soldiery. Most of our examples have no provenance. If there is one, it is not a military context. Even a god that is very often uniformed, Juppiter Dolichenus, is as much, or more, a god for the civilian population as he is for the military. A god that is strongly associated with the Roman army, Mithras, is only very rarely seen in armour. So we are speaking here not of military gods, but of militant gods. Indeed, the whole idea that armoured gods are armoured because this puts them in a relationship with the invincibility of the Roman army, and that this would appeal first and foremost to soldiers, is odd. One would expect such gods to appeal to civilians, because it is they who look up at the army, and it is for them that it makes most sense to put the gods, to whom they look up as well, in an army outfit.[75]"

[207] Beard, *Religions of Rome: volume 2, a sourcebook,* 164 – 165.

Coincidentally, the second name of our martyr, Vibia Perpetua, is eternal, and her slave is Felicitas.[208] Together, Perpetua and her slave die in eternal happiness; it is their fortuned destiny to die for the true faith and forever are they blessed. That Perpetua was the master of her situation is emphasised by the editor of the text who found it necessary to note it, not once, but twice.[209] In chapter two, the highest power on earth, the emperor is discussed in the light of a peculiar Roman tradition: the deification of the emperor – and the rituals honouring him – transform an institute of earthly power into an institute incorporating divine power. In the testimony by Perpetua, Hilarianus says: "Perform the sacrifice for the well-being of the emperors." According to the accompanying note by Beard et al., this does not mean a sacrifice to the emperor, just 'on his behalf', citing Price as a source.[210] The most prominent account on Emperor worship to date – more recent than both Price and Beard – is that of Ittai Gradel who has taken, he says in his introduction, most of his evidence from ritual.

> "The honours, such as temple, priest, the title of Divus Julius, the inscription to Caesar as 'Deus invictus' after Munda, should be seen as an expression of relative divinity, that is, divine status in relation to all other men. The words obviously did not exclude that Caesar really was a god in an absolute sense, but this question, one of dogma, was simply irrelevant. It was in fact generally irrelevant in pagan worship, whether of Caesar or of Jupiter. What mattered was power, again relative divinity, and Caesar's power was at this stage unquestioned, as was Jupiter's. Absolute power entailed divinity and vice versa. Caesar's heavenly honours expressed his new status far above the position of any other man, past or present, in the Roman republic."[211]

The possibility of sacrifice for the *beneficium* of the emperor as suggested by Hilarianus in the story of Perpetua's martyrdom still remains open as a 'real' sacrifice to the then living emperor. The ambiguity of the phrasing 'on behalf of the emperors' is sometimes interpreted as sacrificing to the genius of the emperor. From a certain point onwards, sacrifice to the genius of the emperor happened, but so too did sacrifice to the emperor himself.[212] Gradel, too, emphasises the close relation between (relative) divinity and (relative) power.

> "The fact that this notion [that emperors became divi just by dying] was apparently so obvious and wide-spread lends strong support to the view that divine honours were simply the 'natural' response

[208] Should one read into this master slave relation? Should one read that Perpetua is forever happy, rewarded in heaven, the old-world Roman divine favour she did not need since in her choice for martyrdom, she was master of her own happy situation. Additionally, there is the fact that Perpetua and her slave are female, which could mean a number of things. c.f.: B.D. Shaw, 'The Passion of Perpetua', *Past and present 139* (1993) 3 – 45; especially 16, note 41; and 4.: "Amongst the intended victims were a young woman called Vibia Perpetua, and her companion in prison, a young female slave named Felicitas. There were three men, Revocatus, Saturninus and Saturus, who were also part of the group."
[209] Shaw, 'The passion of Perpetua', 12.
[210] Beard, *Religions of Rome: volume 2, a sourcebook*, 164 – 165, 259.
[211] Gradel, *Emperor worship*, 72.
[212] ibidem, 70 -71.

> to absolute power in antiquity. It was also common knowledge that Jupiter himself would eventually receive the emperor in heaven. [13]"[213]

The status of emperors and gods was enhanced by depicting their close relation. This is visible in such iconography as discussed in chapter one, the emperor as well as Jupiter surrounded by the most powerful instruments, allowing them to intervene directly in the lives of any subjects. In chapter two, the entanglement of the highest powers can be seen in the *Tristia*, where Jupiter in his most powerful rage is the emperor and vice versa.

One can see that totally different, almost opposite methods, result here in the same general picture. Although Riemschneider is of the opinion that "(…) wo die Götter handeln, können wir nicht gut von „Ritual" sprechen. Götter stellen keine Rituale an, aber sie „bestimmen das Schicksal", sich selbst und ihren Lieblingen."[214] And while Gradel insists on constructing Roman religion from the ritual, both he and Riemschneider suggest the total entanglement of power in the highest representation of embodiment of power in the political world, as well as the highest imagination of power in the religious world.

In chapter three, professor Morgan serves as a victim for McCartney in the discussion of whether praying was ever common among the Greco-Romans. His discussion of the evidence of absence, like Whitmarsh's, is actually very valuable and interesting. He concludes that "in the Arcadian rite described by Pausanias [whom Morgan says is one of the only Greek sources for prayer] we observed that it was the nymph Hagno, not Zeus, whom the priest addressed."[215] And here is an issue. Since mostly it is Zeus, or Jupiter. But sometimes not.

> "Most Roman state gods had clearly defined core areas in which they wielded this absolute power—Mars in war, Ceres in agriculture, the living emperor in what we would, anachronistically, term the political sphere, Jupiter in several areas."[216]

Nowhere in Greco-Roman religion can one find a doctrine prescribing to whom one must pray. One of the defining elements of Greco-Roman religion is precisely this absence of prescriptive doctrine. This is also why the main question concerning the role of divine intervention has a plethora of possible plausible answers and one cannot pinpoint any possible definite answer in anyone canonical text. [217]

I must admit to having started this exercise with certain preconceptions, premises, if you will.

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[213] ibid., 269.
[214] Riemschneider, *Der Wettergott,* 20.
[215] M.H. Morgan, 'Greek and roman rain-gods and rain-charms.' *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association 32* (1901) 109.
[216] Gradel, *Emperor worship*, 334.
[217] "On the contrary, traditional Graeco-Roman religion was characterized by the lack of any but the most rudimentary dogmatic system, and could indeed function and work with what would in terms of strict logic seem to be blatant inner contradictions." Gradel, *Emperor worship*, 72.

One was that the world of ancient Romans was overly and overtly brimming with religion. The other one that the gods were omnipotent since that must have been the foundation upon which their importance was built. The second premise is necessarily false if one is to accept the logic of evidence also advocated for by Whitmarsh: "to confront the gods was to deny their potency, what made them gods."[218] Precisely how potent gods were in antiquity is quite the question however. If one were to base the power of the Roman gods on their potency alone, one would be surely mistaken. To put the demand of omnipotence central, betrays a neutral view and shows Christian bias. The (amount of) power that deities have is always in relation to other gods, *daemones* and humankind. There is a hierarchy of power, Jupiter is the most powerful and therefore a point of comparison for Christians, but he is not the omnipotent god that later theologians of the church fathers come up with.

The difference is not just one in degree, but also in kind. "The transition from "powerful" to "omnipotent" is not merely quantitative. For the notion of "supreme in this or that class" cannot easily be transferred to a being who does not belong to a class (as God does not)."[219] While this sounds as a crude putdown of polytheistic religion, the reality is that when asking after the power of Zeus, an ancient Greek would immediately answer with the lightning bolt, the Sky-god's rain, his (thunder)storms and the conflicts Zeus would have with his family on mount Olympus. So there is a point Whitmarsh makes. It does, however, lead him to the wrong conclusion. The lack of omnipotence in ancient gods – because of the strife and conflict they displayed, even with the likes of simple heroes and simple *daemones* or simple men – is not a sign of them being less divine. To deny them divine status on this account would be too christianising. Their importance was clear to all and proven by the close relation of power shared between gods and men. Since the polytheistic Roman system of belief does require the sharing of power. The reciprocity requires it. At times, especially when Jupiter is irate, his anger uncontrollable, one sees something approaching the omnipotence that some ascribe to a Christian god. At those times, Jupiter shows blatant disregard for the condition of humankind. Coincidentally, this is one way to answer the problem of evil, which is a much, much bigger conundrum in Christian theology than it ever could be in antiquity. Because of the fact that Jupiter was like mankind sometimes – and like mankind, he was not perfect, nor was this expected from him or any of the other gods. The gods had and could have character, with flaws and virtues, making them thoroughly different than the later medieval Christian god. "The astronomer Manilius[298] thinks that knowledge (*ratio*) has taken the thunderbolt from the hand of Zeus",[220] said McCartney. Who then remarks: "It may have done so, but, if it did, it did so only in the

[218] Whitmarsh, *Battling the gods*, 48.
[219] A. McIntyre, 'Is understanding religion compatible with believing?', R.T. McCutcheon (ed.), *The insider outsider problem in the study of religion* (New York, 1999) 38.
[220] McCartney, 'Greek and Roman weather lore of hail land drought', 25 – 26.

case of the educated few."[221] A sentiment echoed by Gradel. The general Roman seemed not so much affected by what all the philosophers thought, *mos maiorem* prevails in worship.[222]

One last example – that perfectly fits Roman beliefs from the early empire and is at the same time at the centre of Christian doctrine – is the story of the conversion of Saint Paul. En route to Damascus with orders to eradicate a Christian sect there, Saul was struck by lightning and became saint Paul. In a medieval representation of this event[223] – *the "conversion of St. Paul in the frescoes of the Pauline Chapel at the Vatican*, that is depicted on the cover of this thesis – from the sky a bearded, long-haired and bare-chested man can be seen with his arm and hand stretched out. From his hand, a beam of lightning strikes down on a man falling from his horse. In Christian tradition, as the story goes, this is Jesus or the Christian god, who intervenes to make Saul into the most zealous Christian, Paul. Besides the fact that a lightning bolt is seen as the most powerful attribute of gods, a lightning bolt striking a person is also seen as imbuing him with luck. Evidence suggests that anything hit by lightning is claimed for Jupiter. As is the case in the sacred *puteoli* or *bidental* discussed in chapter one, or when certain buildings in Rome are struck by lightning.[224]

Resulting from the examples of statuettes and the column in chapter one, is the idea of expressing power through iconography. An influential discussion of figurines of gods depicted with armour shows the apotropaic power that is ascribed to them. "(…) they use these Roman symbols of invincibility that go with the emperor (and the god) as their tutelary and sovereign, to enhance their apotropaic qualities."[225] A major theme that emerges from the cases and examples discussed in this thesis is that the attributes enhance the power of gods. Both quantitative and qualitative attributes add to divine power: better attributes show off different aspects of power, and more of those powerful attributes add to that divine power.

In the beginning, the conspicuous contrast between a role for divine intervention in Christian canon and Roman texts lead me to enquire after the role of divine intervention. That seemingly conspicuous contrast hides the fact that Christianity has a doctrine and Roman religion does not. The role of divine intervention within a Roman system of belief is therefore not as clear cut. The role of divine intervention in Roman imperial iconography does present a clear picture: it serves to underscore imperial power by connecting the most important Roman beliefs to the highest powers. Those beliefs form no doctrine and vary from person to person and change with time, but they nonetheless paint a picture of shared beliefs. These shared beliefs are shown when they are put

[221] Ibidem.
[222] Gradel, *Emperor worship*, 333 – 336, and: 334: "Even so, the force of the mos maiorum in a strongly traditionalistic society usually overrode philosophical scruples or doubts."
[223] J. Bullock, 'Was saint Paul struck blind and converted by lightning?', *History of ophthalmology 39 2 (1994)* 151 – 160.
[224] Ibidem.
[225] F.G. Naerebout, 'Cuius regio, eius religio? Rulers and religious change in Greco-Roman Egypt', 48.

under pressure, challenged by other more radical ideas. “The owl of Minerva flies only at dusk: basic mental notions will typically find explicit expression only when challenged or under pressure from outside.”[226]

[226] Ibidem, 1.

Conclusion

The place of divine intervention is right at the centre of Roman religion. The reason why divine intervention, both imagined and portrayed, can be found at the centre of Roman society is because the Roman system of belief allows intervening deities to be found in the Roman world, in nature, all around. Through this enquiry after the place of divine intervention, several elements central to Roman religion have been laid bare. One of the most important for divine intervention has been the role of the intervening deities. Performing miracles, or either coercing or asking deities to perform miracles, are all about power. Gradel concludes: "scholars have then, I believe, failed to distinguish between these different aspects, or rather taken it for granted that the aspect of absolute divinity was, as in Christianity, the important and decisive one."[227] A Roman deity's power is relative. Inquiring after the place of divine intervention has inadvertently lead to a characterisation of a Roman world in which religion fulfils a necessary and important place.

In chapter one, the scenes of divine intervention on the column of Marcus Aurelius were studied and supplemented by a look at the iconography of a manifestation of the god likely to be held responsible for these *mira*: Jupiter. In the iconography of Jupiter-Dolichenus, symbols with which this god was adorned were interpreted. The column, its scenes, the virtues exhibited through symbolic positioning of the specific scenes as pointed out by Maffei, and the most powerful attribute of the lightning bolt, all contribute to the power of the emperor who was perceived to be blessed by divine luck. This concept of divine luck, *felicitas*, was found to be a central concept to the power of the emperor that was exhibited and promoted through religious images. The best expression of divine luck is the lightning miracle scene on the column of Marcus Aurelius; the soldiers saved by the presence of the felicitous emperor one whose behalf Jupiter intervened by destroying the siege tower with a bolt of lightning.

In chapter two, the weather phenomenon storm closely examined. Storms are indeed used as a metaphor very often in Greco-Roman literature. A template for the standard storm was constructed from Virgil's *Aeneid* and used to compare with the storms in Ovid's *Tristia*. In Ovid's *Tristia*, an angry emperor banishes Ovid from Rome, who, on his outward journey, compares the emperor with Jupiter. The emperor as well as Jupiter are all-powerful and totally unreasonable. Jupiter chooses to avenge the honour of the emperor that was tarnished by Ovid's *carmen et error*. Ovid desperately prays for his salvation since his life is over anyway. The god mostly appealed to for procuring a safe journey over sea is the deity Fortuna. She can be seen depicted in simulacra holding a rudder. The journey over sea is often used as comparison to the journey of life. The storm

[227] Gradel, *Emperor worship*, 270.

expresses a tumultuous, unhappy and life-changing experience. The ship of state may, at times, find itself in a storm as well. In this way, victims of storms are powerless and unhappy when they lack *felicitas* and direction.

Chapter three and four, in contrast to chapter one and two, zoom in further on the implications of belief in divine intervention and the power relations that have surfaced in chapter one and two. Chapter three discusses the difficulty of dealing with texts written by upper-class Romans. Romans who might have different religious beliefs than other Romans from the non-literary class. Religious practices like the use of charms to ward off bad weather and descriptions extracted from accounts by the writing-class paint a picture of a society with diverse beliefs. Nonetheless, a picture emerges of continuous belief in religious practices that are akin to earlier religious practices. The question remains precisely how much continuity there is at certain points. Christian and non-Christian magical practices resemble each other during the very long period from the empire to the publication of the *Geoponika*. The example of the martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas attests of fanatical conflict between different religious believers. In that respect, it is interesting indeed to contemplate the fact that the 'pagan' concept of *felicitas* is also the name of Felicitas the slave. Suggesting to me that she is named after the divinely inspired good luck that is usually perceived to be granted by Jupiter or Fortuna, while at the same time being the property, the slave, of the Christian heroine Perpetua. Riemschneider's analysis of the game board that may have evolved into the attribute held by Iuno-Dolichena, Jupiter's consort, does suggest the extent to which Romans were enthralled with securing (a chance at) divine luck. When a chance at gaining divine luck presented itself one took no risk on missing out. Jupiter-Dolichenus and Iuno-Dolichena form a divine pair that have all the possible attributes showing off their power.

The convergence of points made in chapter one, two and three, culminating in chapter four, lead to the conclusion that divine power in Roman society means relative power. The absolutely omnipotent god seems to be a Christian god. The acceptance of relative power for the *innerweltiche* deities in the Roman empire allows for an emperor to glide into divinity. The emperor being the embodiment of ultimate power among men, simply joins the gods after his demise in the afterlife at the bottom in the existing hierarchy of gods. The only problem is envisioning how to get him there. This serves to underscore the point that should be emphasised: all of this is not part of any policy, or doctrine, or canon. Not in any modern sense at least. There are though attempts by emperors to harness power – like the symbols of power that are exhibited through depictions on the column and through the column of Marcus Aurelius as an object of power itself – and use it to show off their divine luck. By using such brilliant and complete studies as that of Cook, this study has given some insight into the pervasiveness of religion in Roman society and thereby hopes to contribute to counterbalance popular histories that propose to paint a significantly atheist picture. Yes, there is

disbelief in antiquity, many instances of disbelief even. Nevertheless, these examples are often not connected to each other and are mostly exhibited by small groups of philosophers only, who did not have a religious doctrine. All of that does not constitute atheism, nor does it suggest widespread disbelief or any radical iconoclastic version of Roman history. The religious nature of the Roman world was completely and utterly fundamental.

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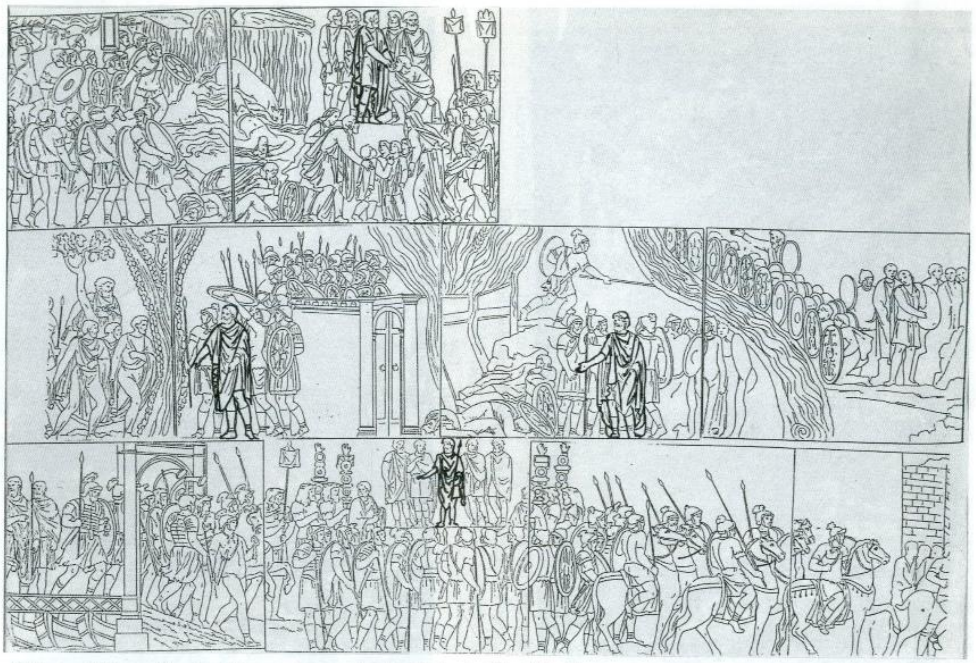
Appendix: Ch.2. drawings by Maffei that show the emperor's *felicitas*



Tav. V

Colonna di Marco Aurelio. Disegno ricostruttivo (da Reinach. *Rép. Rel.*) di parte delle volute I, II, III intorno alla scena XI.

Il pannello ritagliato sovvertendo l'ordinata sequenza delle spirali, trae il suo significato da una fitta rete di corrispondenze visuali che legano la figura dell'imperatore e il segno della volontà divina in una serie intrecciata di rapporti. Schematizzando, la struttura rigidamente simmetrica delle scene disposte intorno all'episodio del fulmine ha queste caratteristiche: