

lem)<sup>33</sup>). Um solche könnte es sich etwa auch bei jenen *vinci* handeln, die bei einem reichen Grundherren *vasta spatia terrarum* bearbeiten müssen, und zwar aufgrund von *sanguinolentae centesimae* (Seneca De benef. 7, 10,4–5): Eine derartige *centesima* war ebenso ein Zins- wie ein Steuersatz<sup>34</sup>).

Kiel

Fridolf Kudlien

---

33) Vgl. etwa M. I. Finley, *Ancient slavery and modern ideology*, London 1980, 70–72 oder R. MacMullen, *Roman social relations*, New Haven 1974, 34 u. 51 f.  
34) Vgl. H. Hausmaninger, *Kl. Pauly I* (1975) 1108 s.v. *Centesima*.

## DEATH BY LIGHTNING, POMPEIUS STRABO AND THE PEOPLE\*)

During the confrontation between the Marian forces and the 'State' in 87 B.C., Cn. Pompeius Strabo played (what now at least seems) an ambiguous game, and one subject to controversial interpretation at the time also<sup>1</sup>). His aims were, and have remained, obscured by his premature death, the precise nature of which has become, fittingly, the subject of modern academic debate, a suitable memorial for the historical enigma that Pompeius Strabo is.

The sources dealing with his death do not advert to this controversy. Each seems sure of the facts. Appian (*bell.civ.* 1.68) records that a bad storm broke over his camp, and that Pompeius "and other notables" were killed by thunderbolts<sup>2</sup>). Orosius simply reports that Pompeius died having been struck by lightning<sup>3</sup>) (and Obsequens apparently confirms that this was the Livian ver-

---

\*) I would like to thank Dr. J. L. Beness, Mr. J. Hamilton and Prof. E. A. Judge who read an early draft of this paper and suggested improvements.

1) E.g. *Liv. Per.* 79; *Vell.* 2.21.2; and *Gran. Lic.* 35.13, p. 14 *Critici* (if correctly restored); *ibid.* 22, p. 15 *Cr.*; and 31, p. 16 *Cr.*: *Nec desinebat Pompeius interim miscere omnia*. Cf. Gelzer, *Kleine Schriften* 2, Wiesbaden 1963, 121–125.

2) Cf. *Bell. Civ.* 1.80. Plutarch (*Pomp.* 1.1) does not record the historical context, but also records death by lightning.

3) 5.19.18: *Pompeius fulmine adflatus interiit*.

sion by recording that Pompeius was “struck down from above” in the context of lightning strikes on his camp<sup>4</sup>). Velleius, on the other hand, has no reference to lightning, merely noting the death in the context of a pestilence raging through the armies (although he does not explicitly identify disease as the cause of death<sup>5</sup>). Granius Licinianus, who is also, it is thought, deriving his information from Livy, offers an apparent reconciliation if one is needed (without indicating in any way that he is consciously aligning mutually-exclusive versions<sup>6</sup>): after registering the devastation caused by disease (in the consul Octavius’ camp at least), he records that Pompeius, being unwell, was confined to bed where he was directly injured when a storm arose and lightning struck his tent-pole. After initial despair of his life, a sudden but illusory recovery after the arrival of a suffect-commander and consequent confusion, he died some days later – not clearly from the effects of the lightning strike alone<sup>7</sup>). The weight of testimony alone, it might be imagined, would lead to acceptance of accounts claiming the more extraordinary death. Certainly it is the less likely to have

4) 56a: ... *in castris Gnaei Pompei caelum ruere visum, arma signaque tacta, milites exanimati. ipse Pompeius afflatus sidere interiit*. It was argued by Mommsen that *afflatus sidere* might mean “seized by pestilence” (*von der Pest ergriffen*). That proposition receives full discussion in O. D. Watkins, *The Death of Cn. Pompeius* Strabo, *RhM* 131 (1988) 143–150, see esp. 144–148.

5) 2.21.4: ... *cum utrumque exercitum ... laceraret pestilentia, Cn. Pompeius decessit*. Other sources, it must be said, are not unaware of the pestilence. Orosius (*loc. cit.*) reports that 11,000 died in the camp of Pompeius, 6,000 on Octavius’ side. Granius Licinianus (35. 35, pp. 16–7 Criniti) simply has 17,000 dying on Octavius’ side.

6) That is, I see no evidence necessarily of “an ingenious hybrid account” (as Watkins *art. cit.* 149–150 suggests). Nor is there any reason to suggest either deliberate or careless conflation.

7) 35. 36–37, p. 17 Criniti: *Pompeius minus validus cum in le[c]to decumberet, orta te[m]pestate et ipse fulmine adflatus est et culmen tabernaculi dis-sipat[um]. nec spem vitae ostendit*. Thus far the text is not contentious. The next three sentences (38–40) require too much speculation to be usefully retailed here, especially since the detail (so far as it can be retrieved) is incidental to the present argument. Suffice it to say that the events recorded consume *aliquot dies* (38). The similarities in phrasing in those earlier lines, however, suggest that here (as elsewhere) Licinianus had access to, and was following, the Livian tradition; see, e.g., O. Dieckmann, *De Granii Liciniani fontibus et auctoritate*, *Berl. Stud. für class. Philol. und Archäol.* 16. 3 (Berlin 1896) 66. Then follows the notice of Pompeius’ death. In the *editio princeps*, Karl Pertz, having read *TERTIUMPOST/ ... I. MPOMP EIUSMIRAT. . . I. . . IT*, supplied (with Mommsen’s concurrence) *tertium post diem Pompeius moritur* ... Criniti’s edition now endorses a reading suggested by the Bonn Seven which makes better sense of the manuscript, i.e. *mira t[abe ob]iit*.

crept into the tradition through confusion or carelessness in the historical record. In that light, I find hypotheses that the text of Velleius has lost a crucial phrase<sup>8</sup>) both attractive and easy to accept (though unprovable and even though there is no evidence whatsoever for a *lacuna*)<sup>9</sup>). And even without such hypotheses, the account of Velleius can be explained other than as a serious challenge to the majority version. Yet scepticism remains<sup>10</sup>).

The most recent investigation of all relevant ancient accounts, an investigation which focusses on reports of the death itself, ends inconclusively, suggesting that confusion on this point probably existed in the ancient world as well, and that “the truth about the death of Strabo may well have died with him”<sup>11</sup>). That may well be, though the debate was not academic (as will be shown below) and there must have been some who were close to Strabo, who

8) I.e. that some phrase such as *fulmine tactus* preceded *decessit* [see above, note 5, for Velleius’ text]; suggestions by Halm (*ictus*) and Sauppe (*fulmine* or *de caelo tactus*) are retailed by O. Dieckmann 93, n. 1.

9) Watkins (art. cit. 148–9, n.25) labels such arbitrary “tampering with the text” to be an “extremely dubious procedure.” Caution is sensible, and I would allow that “nothing should be built on such alleged lacunae” but I see no harm done by the suggestion of the possibility that Velleius’ text was fuller at this point.

10) Indeed it seems it is precisely the extraordinary nature of such a death which has caused scepticism – see, e.g., R. Seager, *Pompey. A Political Biography* (Oxford 1979) 5, for a recent interpretation, correctly noting, however, the implications of the lightning version. Seager is taking his cue here from Matthias Gelzer (*Kleine Schriften* 2, 125), who believed the lightning version a ‘tale’ based on the coincidence of the electrical storm and taken as a sign of divine judgment: “Da zu dieser Zeit während eines Gewitters auch der Blitz in sein Zelt einschlug, verbreitete sich die Mär, er habe ihn getötet, und das wurde als Gottesgericht für sein hinterhältiges und habgieriges Verhalten angesehen”. – Dr. C. E. V. Nixon reminds me of the scepticism surrounding the death of Carus in A.D. 283. The Latin sources generally report death by lightning: Fest. Brev. 24; Aur. Vict. Caes. 38.3–5; Epit. de Caes. 38.3; Eutrop. Brev. 9.18(13).1; Oros. 7.24.4 (with the first two opening divine intervention following Carus’ disregard of an oracle); but cf. H. A. Car. 8.5 ff., purporting to quote the contemporary report of Julius Calpurnius, one of the emperor’s secretaries, and which opts for death by illness and firing of the tent. Credulity has not won the day since: “Carus was laid low by a well aimed streak of lightning, forged no doubt in a legionary armoury” (M. Cary, *A History of Rome down to the reign of Constantine* [London, 1935, 2<sup>nd</sup> 1954] 730 [= repr. New York 3<sup>rd</sup> 1975] 516; cf. H. W. Bird, *Diocletian and the Deaths of Carus, Numerian and Carinus*, *Latomus* 35 [1976] 125, n. 8 for reference to other modern comments). Scepticism in this particular case is warranted, according to H. W. Bird, who suggests Diocletian as the culprit (124–125 and 131–132) – though F. Kolb (*Diocletian und die Erste Tetrarchie* [Berlin 1987] 11) in turn suggests that Bird’s imaginative suspicion here belongs rather to an Agatha Christie novel. The strike is not registered by B. McBain, *Prodigy and Expiation: a study in religion and politics in Republican Rome*. Collection Latomus 177 (Bruxelles 1982).

11) Watkins art. cit., see esp. 149–150.

survived him and who knew the truth (whether they told it or not), and for whom the finally-accepted version was of some importance. Given the surviving evidence, their protestations cannot be known. But it is rather in the immediate sequel – i.e. the dramatic disruption of his funeral by Roman citizenry – that a way forward might still be found; and a rarely-noted item (and one that so far as I know has never been applied to this case) indicates that death by lightning was the version which prevailed at the time. On the event itself there is no confusion or contradiction in the sources. Plutarch, Granius Licinianus and Obsequens all record that ‘the people’ disrupted the funeral, wrecking the bier and dragging the body from it, Obsequens<sup>12</sup>) adding the grisley detail of a hook. Velleius merely alludes to harsh treatment of the corpse. On the reasons for this extraordinary display there is also general agreement, though varying detail. Plutarch simply says that the Romans never hated any of their generals so much. Velleius speaks of a popular delight (*voluptas*) at his death that almost offset the general sense of loss due to plague and war, adding that the populace vented on his body the rage he had deserved while alive<sup>13</sup>). Granius Licinianus says his body, it was generally agreed, finally paid the price to heaven for his perfidy and avarice<sup>14</sup>). Obsequens offers by way of explanation the fact that the Roman populace had been incensed by Pompeius’ menacing and ambivalent behaviour (or what at least, we might cavil, may have been presented to them as menacing behaviour) outside the city of Rome. (Velleius’ preceding narrative may be held to point in the same direction.)

Yet there was another dimension to the affair which may explain the form of the demonstration. In politically-charged circumstances, it was not unknown for individuals to have been denied funeral rites, and it would happen again; examples include Tiberius Gracchus (Plut. Ti. Gracch. 20), C. Gracchus (Plut. C. Gracch. 17) and Sulpicius ([Cic.] ad Herenn. 4.31). Sulpicius, however, had been declared *hostis* and the other two were being treated

---

12) and Licinianus, if the Pertz reading (suggested by Mommsen) had been followed. It supplied *unco suspensum*, where the firmer second Teubner edition now endorses Keil’s reading *lecto decussu(m) [p]er caenum trahere*.

13) *cuius interitus voluptas amissorum aut gladio aut morbo civium paene damno repensata est, populusque Romanus quam vivo iracundiam debuerat, in corpus mortui contulit*.

14) 35.43, p. 17 Criniti: ... *omnibus consen[t]entibus dignam caelo poenam et perfidiae et ava[r]itia[m] pessimum hom[in]em expendisse*.

as such, and these were acts of severe policy imposed by those ‘in power’ (which, for all that, did not fail to shock those who recorded the facts). Even given the turmoil of the times, the circumstances of Pompeius’ aborted funeral were altogether different<sup>15</sup>) (and the act fails to elicit horror or even criticism in any of the extant sources, none of which is prone to display sympathy with popular outbursts such as this act apparently was)<sup>16</sup>). Moreover,

15) That is to say, he had been a triumphant general. And although his fiercely – not to say seditiously – loyal army (on which, see, e.g., Liv. Per. 77; Val. Max. 9.7.2; App. B.C. 1.63) may have evaporated after his death (Oros. 5.19.18 suggests plague; Granius Licinianus 35.46, p. 18 Criniti asserts that Octavius transferred the remnants to his camp), sufficient numbers of his troops must have survived in the days immediately following the death to combat gratuitous (or politically-inspired) victimization; and, for what it is worth, the sequence of Licinianus’ narrative implicitly puts their transfer after the funeral riot. – Speculative appraisal of the troops’ loyalty is, of course, based on their murder of Pompeius Rufus sent to relieve Strabo in 88 (see, e.g., Seager op. cit. 3–4) and their apparent willingness to follow his ambiguous moves in 87. The trauma of civil war, however, and of the fratricidal strife so tragically-illustrated by the notorious incident following one of Pompeius’ battles with Cinna or his legate Sertorius (Sisenna frag. 129 Peter = Tac. Hist. 3.51; Val. Max. 5.5.4; Liv. Per. 79; Oros. 5.19.12–13) may have put a strain on that loyalty. The odd item recorded at Plut. Pomp. 3 [the report of an attempt to murder Pompeius *junior* and fire Strabo’s tent, and of subsequent rioting], despite the internal illogicalities which may lead to suspicion that the tale is apocryphal, cannot be dismissed out of hand. It suggests, at the very least, tensions in Pompeius’ camp – and possibly that Pompeius’ general unpopularity had infected his troops. Yet following that incident (which Plutarch depicts as a mutiny), Pompeius and the bulk of his troops “reconciled”. (Presumably, the 800, whom Plutarch reports as remaining disaffected, deserted or transferred to one of the other armies. For a possible qualification to this, probably unnecessary, see the following note with reference to the *Padani*.)

16) Where the MS of Granius Licinianus apparently read ]EIUSFUNUS POPULUS] . . . PADANUSDIRRUIT] (and the two Pertz judged that about four letters were to be supplied for the lacuna here), Flemisch restored *populus* [Subur]anus as the agency of disruption. If *populus suburanus* had been allowed to stand, it would have suggested that Licinianus disapproved of the act (since the adjective itself was likely to have carried more than a hint of disapprobation), but that reading was unlikely given the parallel texts: *populus* (Obseq.), *populusque Romanus* (Vell. Pat.), Πρωμάτου (Plut.). There is in those uncorrupt texts nothing to suggest that this was regarded as it was by Ellis (The Annalist Licinianus. A Lecture delivered in the Hall of Corpus Christi College, Oxford. May 29, 1908 [London 1908] 21): “an act of popular barbarity.” This will explain perhaps why Karl Pertz opted for *populus Romanus* rather than follow his own reading. He presumably also found the latter unsatisfactory on the grounds that the fortuitous appearance of such a specific pressure group was unlikely to say the least – and especially unlikely in the light of Strabo’s relatively-progressive consular policy towards the Transpadanes (on which Ascon. p. 3 St.; Strabo 5.1.6; Plin. NH 3.138; cf. G.E.F. Chilver Cisalpine Gaul [Oxford 1941] 7f.; U. Ewins, The Enfranchisement of Cisalpine Gaul, PBSR 23 [1955] 75 ff.). For what it is worth, however, it is not beyond

Granius Licinianus speaks of a general consensus (see above) and his text, though corrupt, suggests that if anything the ‘authorities’ (in this case, the Senate and tribunes) eventually intervened in the riot and oversaw a return to normality<sup>17</sup>).

Licinianus again provides a clue when he alludes to the interest of heaven in the matter. Those who dishonoured Pompeius could have had recourse to, or been motivated by, *religio*. An antique law attributed to Numa and recorded by Festus<sup>18</sup>) laid down that anyone struck by lightning was not to be lifted above the knees and that no funeral ritual was to be performed in that instance: *si hominem fulmen* (MS *fulminibus*) *occisit, ne supra genua tollito. Homo si fulmine occisus est, ei iusta nulla fieri oportet*<sup>19</sup>). It has been suggested that the prohibition of lifting was simply a command to bury the body on the spot<sup>20</sup>), but it is surely an injunction against lifting up whom the god has struck down<sup>21</sup>).

---

credence that *Padani* (not necessarily *Transpadani*) were present in Strabo’s army – and also possible (though totally confined to the realm of speculation) that they were amongst the 800 troops who disdained reconciliation (for whatever reasons now unknown) after the curious incident recorded at Plut. Pomp. 3. The use of *populus* would, of course, be a rather unlikely way to refer to such a group. – Criniti’s firmer establishment of the text, however, offers relief with the reading *populus [subu]rbanus*. This designation of the crowd was neutral in tone, and requires no further explanation in terms of provenance. The reference was to those who happened to be on hand outside the walls. The very useful recent edition of B. Scardigli (and A. R. Berardi) accepts Criniti’s reading but translates “il popolo della Subura” (Grani Liciniani Reliquiae [Firenze 1983] 142) and its commentary goes on to (implicitly) elaborate what would have been the negative tone (e.g. “Il distretto densamente popolato era noto per le sue attività disordinate, la sporcizia e l’equivoca moralità . . .” etc. p. 82) – had that been the correct translation (which I very much doubt).

17) 35.44, pp. 17–18 Criniti: *sed p[ar]t[em] et tribuni repressa [m]ultitudine cadaver superiect[is] texerunt vestib[us]. Tradun[ct]ue auctores* in lecticula vulgariter eum elatum sepulturae datum. *This restoration indeed has the tribunes and senators perhaps offer the corpse a modicum of respect – though it need hardly mean “unfunerale dignitoso”* (as Scardigli op. cit. 83).

18) F. 178, v. *occisum*.

19) Bruns, FIRAntiqui 1.2 (a).3; Riccobono, FIRAntejustiniani 1.2.14.

20) C. Pharr (ed.), Anc. Rom. Statutes (Austin 1961) 6, n. 19. This is inspired perhaps by the belief that the *haruspices* collected the shattered limbs of the victim, as Seneca (Clem. 1.7) reveals they did, and buried them on the spot (as with a *bidental*), for which assumption I know of no ancient testimony. Indeed such a practice would have run foul of pontifical injunctions against burying anyone within the *pomerium* – should it have happened that the victim had been struck *in urbe* (as A. Bouché-Leclercq, ‘Haruspices’, Daremberg and Saglio 3.1.20 points out).

21) For the concept of strikes on powerful individuals as divine punishment, Sen. Clem. 1.7.2. Apparently without recognizing the significance of the disrupted funeral rites in this regard and without reference to any Roman evidence on this matter, Watkins (art. cit. 148, n. 24) provides a Greek parallel (i.e. lightning as a

The language of the second sentence (the relatively uncommon formula, avoiding the imperative) suggests a sacred law, if not confirming the antique authenticity of the item<sup>22</sup>). In what forms, and how, the laws of Numa may have been preserved, it is not necessary to discuss here<sup>23</sup>), but Cicero refers to such ‘statutes’, *quas in monumentis habemus*<sup>24</sup>) and various sanctions believed to

weapon of Zeus), allowing (in his text above) that “the ‘lightning’ story . . . would show Strabo in a very bad light, as a man hated by the gods”. The ramifications in fact went beyond that.

22) D. Daube, *Forms of Roman Legislation* (Oxford 1956) 8–9.

23) Whether or not the ‘laws’ of Numa, largely concerned it seems with a sacred code, were contained in the *ius civile Papirianum* (said to have compiled by a quasi-legendary, or legendary, figure in the reign of the last Tarquin, though surely this title is impossibly – anachronistic for the regal period), they (or subsequent creations purporting to carry Numa’s authority) had a long life and still carried (at least) moral force in later periods (see below). Plut. Marc. 8.5 speaks of the commentaries of Numa (which Plutarch clearly had not read at first hand). – According to Dion. Hal. 3.36, Numa’s rulings on sacred matters had been set up in the forum by Ancus Marcius on tablets of oak. These (said to have perished not unnaturally) and certain laws of Romulus and Numa which had been re-edited and published in the market place by Servius Tullius (Dion. Hal. 4.10.43) did not survive the regal period, the latter collection having been removed and destroyed by the last Tarquin (ibid.). The former compilation, however, was (it was said) publicly posted after the fall of the monarchy by a certain *M’* (or *C’*) *Papirius* (the *Pontifex Maximus* and/or *Rex sacrorum*, not to be confused with the *Sex*. [or *P’?*] *Papirius* of the *ius civile Papirianum*?); Dion. Hal. 3.36; 5.1. On this pedigree of regal law and modern scepticism, the coverage of E. C. Clark (History of Roman Private Law I [Cambridge 1906] 13 ff.) is still useful. On the law of the kings, cf. T. Mommsen, J. Marquardt and P. Krueger, *Manuel des antiquités romaines* (French trans. M. Brissaud, 1894) 3 ff.; on *Papirius*, ibid., 5; and 6–9; Pomp. Digest 1.2.2; 1.2.36; and the following note. (For what it is worth, Pomponius asserted that all the *leges regiae* were extant in this book.) – It is worth noting that in 148 B.C. the people, when the consuls insisted that Scipio Aemilianus was ineligible to stand for the consulship, had recourse (with some clamour) to the “laws handed down from Tullius and Romulus” which recognized their rights in the matter (App. Pun. 112): this is especially interesting in the context of popular assertion. – There is not space here to discuss fully the curious affair in 181 B.C., interesting though it is, of the discovery by ploughmen of books purporting to be the writings of Numa (Latin books containing pontifical lore and Greek containing philosophy). The works were destroyed on the recommendation of the urban praetor sanctioned by senatorial resolution (Liv. 40.29). More information about that event would be welcome, but the authenticity (or otherwise) of these remarkably pristine documents is not discussed. The books were destroyed because of the suspicious taint of Pythagoreanism.

24) Rep. 2.14.26; cf. ibid. 5.2.3: [Numa] *qui legum etiam scriptor fuisset, quas scitis extare*. It has been opined that the real sources of regal law (esp. the *monumenta* of which Cicero speaks here) were the pontifical records; see, e.g., E. C. Clark (see note 23) 12–13, and on pontifical records, 31–33); followed by W. Kunkel, *An Introduction to Roman Legal and Constitutional History* (Oxford 1966 [21973] 25, n. 1), who tentatively sees a place for a compiler, compressing the

be from the regal period are known to have been preserved<sup>25</sup>). Moreover, in this area at least we know that the custom (to use the least prescriptive term) survived. Pliny records that cremation of a person who had been struck by lightning was *nefas*<sup>26</sup>).

For all that lightning strikes were a common occurrence<sup>27</sup>), such *prodigia*, even when no human had been touched, were not to be lightly dismissed. Interpretation was to be sought through suitably qualified agencies and expiation often demanded<sup>28</sup>). Strikes causing human fatalities were of special religious significance<sup>29</sup>).

---

identities of the Papirii into a *pontifex* called Sex. Papirius. More recently, see A. Watson, Roman Private Law and the Leges Regiae, JRS 62 (1972) 100–105, arguing for the intrinsic plausibility of regal legislation. Watson also (and unnecessarily?) identifies the Papirii as one individual (ibid. 104), which necessitates addressing the problem of the apparently-contrasting nature of the two collections – a *ius civile* (incorporating all the laws of Romulus and Numa) and the other, incorporating only the sacral laws of Numa and properly the concern of a *pontifex* or *rex sacrorum*: a problem not satisfactorily resolved, as Watson admits.

25) E.g. Plin. NH 14.88; cf. Plut. Num. 12.

26) NH 2.145: *hominem ita exanimatum cremari fas non est, condi terra religio tradidit*. This may have been influenced by the belief that bodies struck by lightning did not decay; Plut. Mor. 665C = Quaest. Conv. 4.2.3. This seems to have led Tertullian to the opinion that such bodies were fireproof; Apol. 48.15. Plutarch (loc. cit.), in a confused way, also provides evidence of the surviving custom, though he extends it to include burial as well.

27) Lightning indeed was considered more common in the districts of Rome and Campania than in other localities, and more frequent in Italy than other countries; Plin. NH 2.136.

28) Generally, see A. Bouché-Leclercq, 'Haruspices', Daremberg and Saglio 3.1.17–33, esp. 20–23; cf. E. O. Thulin, 'Etrusca disciplina', RE 6.1.725–730; P. Händel, 'Prodigium', RE 23.2.2283–2296, and esp. 2290–2295 on *procuratio*. To be consulted were the *libri fulgurales*, on which see Cic. Div. 1.33.72 and Amm. Marc. 23.5.13; cf. S. Weinstock, *Libri fulgurales*, PBSR 19, n.s. 6 (1951) 122–153. Fulgural lore was the special expertise, it has been argued (McBain op. cit. 50 ff.), which first recommended the *haruspices* to Rome. Lightning strikes are of frequent note in Obsequies; for a listing of relevant passages, see Watkins art. cit. 147, n. 15, to which add 7 (179 B.C.); 16 (156 B.C.); 17 (154 B.C.); 24 (137 B.C.); 27 (134 B.C.); 31 (124 B.C.); 46 (99 B.C.); 52 (93 B.C.); 54 (91 B.C.); 65a (48 B.C.); 69 (43 B.C.); cf. McBain op. cit. 86 ff. for references to other authors.

29) They were naturally more outstanding. Tullius Hostilius was remembered as an early victim, at least according to the annals of L. Calpurnius Piso frag. 10 Peter = Plin. NH 2.140. On the special problems posed by such strikes, see Bouché-Leclercq, art. cit. 20. – Aemulus, a king of the 'Latins', was said to have been struck down *divino iudicio* (Oros. 1.20.5). Lightning harassed the troops facing Pyrrhus (ibid. 4.1.16–18). – In 217 B.C., the death by lightning of some soldiers was registered among the alarming portents of that year. The Senate referred each case to the *decemviri* for appropriate action; Macrobi. Sat. 1.6.13–14. – In 216, after some men had been struck near the Campus Martius, the *decemviri* prescribed the appropriate response; Liv. 22.36.6–9. – In 190, expiation delayed the departure of the consuls to their provinces following a number of prodigies which



Pompeius Strabo earned his place in a *liber prodigiorum*. It is hardly remarkable that Obsequens found his death prodigious, if he had read in Livy, as seems likely, that lightning was the cause of death. Though *pestilentia* is on other occasions registered (as a manifestation of divine displeasure demanding propitiation)<sup>30</sup>, Obsequens, for what it is worth, does not record the pestilence known to have raged in 87.

The violent cancellation of the last rites is, then, easily explainable. A directive was 'on the books' so to speak, to which the politically-motivated enemies of Strabo or those with genuine religious scruple might have had recourse. In the context of a prodigy list, Obsequens' connection of the popular rage to contemporary affairs (i.e. Strabo's prevaricating military stance) is at first sight strange, but need not be. Livy's incidental explanation of the crowd's behaviour, on which Obsequens presumably drew, was most likely intended to explain the intensity of the reaction; why ordinary citizens were prepared to take expiation into their own hands and, indeed, extend so dramatically the demands of heaven with violent abuse of the body. Obsequens clearly saw the whole incident as relevant to his prodigy list and the 'epilogue' is not simply the baleful outworking of a divine sign (as, for example, the defeat of Mancinus at Numantia in 137 [Obseq. 24], the eruption of the slave war in 134 [ibid. 27], the death of C. Gracchus [ibid. 33], the proscriptions of Sulla and the horrendous casualty lists of 83 [ibid. 57], the death of Crassus in Syria [ibid. 64], the outbreak of civil war in 49 [ibid. 65] or the assassination of Caesar [ibid. 67]). The popular outburst is here recorded as a direct response to the omen which had apparently been judged neither advisory (in a benevolent way) nor admonitory, but punitive.

At the very least, the events at Strabo's funeral suggest a

---

included the deaths by lightning of four individuals; Liv. 37.3.1–6, cf. Obseq. 1. – In 114, the death by lightning of a certain Helvia ultimately resulted in the execution of three Vestals in the following year; see McBain op. cit. 98 for references. – In 86, one of Sulla's soldiers was struck dead in the Piraeus during the siege of Athens. This was investigated and conveniently interpreted by an *haruspex*; Obseq. 56b. – In 63, a decurion of Pompeii was struck down from a clear sky. This was subsequently recognized as one of the portents of the Catilinarian conspiracy; Obseq. 61; Plin. NH 2.137. – For the death of the emperor Carus, see above, note 8. – A thunderbolt which narrowly missed Aurelian presaged his death (Oros. 7.23.6; 27.12). – As late as April 7, A.D. 363, a similar portent found its place in history when interpreted by the *haruspices* as a divine warning against Julian's Persian expedition; Amm. Marc. 23.5.12–13.

30) E.g. at 13 and 22.

source for the lightning version of his death, but more probably affirm that this was already the contemporary popular version (whether manufactured or not). Debate is likely to have been lively at the time, with the friends of Pompeius arguing in the man's favour that he had survived the bolt (which the fullest extant version, that of Granius Licinianus, in a sense allows) and that it was disease which took its toll<sup>31</sup>). Where it deals with Pompeius' death, Licinianus' difficult text (a confident translation of which is not here possible) is clear at least on this point: Pompeius did not die instantly and that in a hopeless condition he lingered for several days<sup>32</sup>). It even suggests that he revived at one point when faced with the imminent transfer of his command. This sequence would allow his supporters to argue that his death had not been ominous (in the technical sense) – all the more so if the 'wasting' which Licinianus reports (that is if the original text is accurately reflected in the restoration: *mira t[abe ob]iit*)<sup>33</sup>) is accounted the result of disease. The *populus* thought otherwise (or was persuaded to think so by enemies of Pompeius) – or that the putrefaction was the result of Strabo's burns: gangrene might perhaps have resulted. The apparent focus of the explanation of the popular riot in Vel-leius, Plutarch and Obsequens (i.e. on the worldly and vengeful rather than on scruple) probably emanates from Livy's explanation of the popular readiness to take such radical action<sup>34</sup>). But if fur-

---

31) Here, then, may be the ancient controversy which Watkins (art. cit. 149–50) senses. But if so, it was not an academic 'difficulty' as presented by Watkins (150). It was a hotly-contested issue at the time: the exact cause of death had immediate ramifications.

32) This claim *per se* need not have been greeted with contemporary incredulity. The Roman world knew of cases where lightning strikes had been survived. Pliny (NH 2.145) believed humankind to be above the rest of the animal kingdom in this respect; a compensation for the superiority in strength of so many other species. – What I find particularly wanting in a dismissal of the historicity of details in Licinianus' account (and/or, at least, in the implicit denial that he, or his source, found these details independently vouched for in the historical record) is the willingness to see the wealth of circumstantial detail (which Watkins op. cit. 149 acknowledges) as "an unhistorical rationalization" (ibid. 150). There is more here than "[a design] to furnish a plausible context for the 'blasting' of Strabo" (loc. cit.), to which Watkins' interest is confined. While it is open to all to doubt the authenticity of any otherwise-unsupported item in any source, the rich detail here (e.g. the uncertainties and tension caused by the despatch of a certain Cassius to relieve the ailing Pompeius, the short-term rallying of the commander on the suffect's arrival and other details of an apparent confrontation presently lost because of the state of the text) is surely too precise to be so characterized.

33) See above, note 7.

34) Only the recovery of Livy's seventy-ninth book will tell.

ther evidence should ever be found to confirm that Cicero really did describe Strabo as *dis ac nobilitati perinvisum*, as the manuscripts of Asconius (p. 79 C) have it<sup>35</sup>), then we may have here, as Gelzer felt<sup>36</sup>), the evidence on which the first part of that condemnation was based. This in turn may have served as a cornerstone for the extraordinarily-bad press that prevailed in the case of Pompeius Strabo in antiquity. The opening sentences of Plutarch's *Pompeius* adequately testify to that negative image to which Plutarch (it seems) knew no credible counter<sup>37</sup>).

Macquarie University (Australia)

T. W. Hillard

---

35) Though Badian's argument (*Historia* 18 [1969] 473–5) for Pighe's emendation is strong; cf. Seager *op. cit.* 59, n. 24; B.A. Marshall, *A Historical Commentary on Asconius* (Columbia 1985) 273–4.

36) *Op. cit.*, 125.

37) The negative image was not simply an impression which Plutarch had gained from specifically-directed research for the *Pompeius* – but one that was part of his general understanding of the period (cf. Plut. *Crass.* 6.5; *Mor.* 203B). As sympathetic as Livy might have been to Pompeius Magnus (see, most recently, L. Hayne, *Livy and Pompey*, *Latomus* 49 [1990] 435–442), his coverage of Strabo seems to have been hostile (see, e.g., Dieckmann *op. cit.* 66). Contemporary sources may not be far to seek. Sulla's *commentarii* are known to have focussed on manifestations of divine favour shown to himself (and presumably cast a haughty eye on the reverse, that is to say, signs of divine displeasure shown to the fortunes of enemies and rivals). We know that Sulla claimed a fulgural omen of sorts appearing during the Italian war foretold his coming primacy in the state; *Sull. Comm.*, frag. 8 Peter = Plut. *Sull.* 6.6 (McBain *op. cit.* 58, n. 151); cf. Plin. *NH* 2.144. Strabo was accounted an enemy of Sulla, *App. Bell. Civ.* 1.80. The memoirs of Rutilius Rufus also are known to have been markedly critical of Strabo (Plut. *Pomp.* 37.4), even if the precise reason for that antagonism is not known; cf. Watkins *art. cit.* 148; and Scardigli *op. cit.* 83 for further references to the contemporary negative judgment (though there seems to be no awareness there that the identification of Pompeius at *Ascon.* p. 79C has been called into question). – If the historical work of Voltacilius Plorus, which covered the career of Pompeius Strabo in some detail, was as sympathetic to the Pompeii as one might expect from the scholar's affiliations with the family (*Suet. Rhet.* 3), its images do not seem to have surfaced in the surviving tradition – unless, of course, it is assumed that a 'Pompeian' version of events need not have been favourable to Strabo (despite the hint at Plut. *Pomp.* 37 that such family loyalty was a hallmark of Theophanes' memoirs of Magnus and that such a line was designed to win the approval of the latter). The retelling of the incident at Plut. *Pomp.* 3 (which seems to come straight from some lionizing of the youthful Magnus and where the negative image of the one and the positive image of the other go hand in hand as part of the story rather than appear as part of later [or Plutarch's] embellishment) indicates what might have been expected in any case; namely, the need for the younger Pompeius in the tumultuous years following his father's death to distance himself from his early close association with his father, a need suggested at Plut. *Crass.* 6.5.