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Deathly Erichtho as Vital to Lucan's Bellum Ciuile

John Byron Young
young200@marshall.edu

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John Byron Young

Approved by

Dr. Christina Franzen, Committee Chairperson
Dr. Caroline Perkins
Dr. E. Del Chrol

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For Mollie

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John Byron Young

Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile* has provided much difficulty for scholars in the identification of a hero, as none of the main characters of the epic, Caesar, Pompey, and Cato, fully become a hero. I argue that a minor character, Erichtho, the necromancer in book 6, is not only the hero, but also the supreme *uates* and reflection of the poet. Through her comparison with Scaeva in book 6 as well as Aeneas of Vergil's *Aeneid* and her interactions with Sextus Pompey, her heroism becomes fully developed. She creates a corpse *uates* through her vatic powers and gains access into the Underworld deeper than conventional oracles. Her vatic connection to the poet gives insight into the poet's own magical abilities. Once her various important roles in the *BC* are understood, her infernal powers can be seen to permeate the whole of the epic as she becomes the poem's central figure.

INTRODUCTION

Marcus Annaeus Lucanus, was born in 39 CE and was the grandson of Seneca the Elder and the nephew of Seneca the Younger.[1] He was friends with the young emperor Nero early on, from whom he received advancement and was a prolific poet. However, his relationship with Nero became strained and he committed suicide in 65 after becoming involved in the Pisonian conspiracy against Nero (Braund xiv). Although he is known to have produced many other works whose titles remain for us, his unfinished epic poem, the *Bellum Ciuile* is his only extant writing (*ibid*). The *BC* is an epic that provides us with no immediate nominee for a hero, leaving scholars to speculate as to who best fits the role. Among all of the violence and terror of the *BC*, emerges the Erichtho episode (6.413-830) in which Sextus Pompey, son of Magnus Pompey, seeks a necromancy to foresee the outcome of the civil war. Erichtho, the necromancer, is a minor character, a woman, and a non-Roman, all of whom seem to deter candidacy for a legitimate choice as a hero. However, I argue that Erichtho is not only the heroic figure of the *BC* but the premier *uates* and greatest reflection of the poet within the *BC*. She is the microcosm of the horror set about her and appears at the climax of the atrocities brought on by the civil war.

[1] All translations of the Latin in this paper are my own.

In chapter I, Erichtho, in achieving heroism, will be compared to the only other character in the *BC* to have a moment of *aristeia*, the resilient soldier named Scaeva, and in doing so becomes the very image of *uirtus*. She will be compared to Aeneas as she gains access to the Underworld and exemplifies the opposite of the *pietas* that is so characteristic of the hero of the *Aeneid*. She will be proven to trump Sextus in a *neikos* and thereby achieves her own moment of *aristeia*. In chapter II she will be shown to fulfill the role of a *uates* that proves more effectual than the Pythia in book 5 and even to become greater than Apollo in her ability to reach the secrets of the Underworld hidden from the supernal gods. In her comparison to the Sybil of the *Aeneid*, it will be considered how she creates a stronger corpse *uates* and carries out the heroic function of a *katabasis* herself by bringing the Underworld into her cave. In chapter III, her connection to the poet in their vatic functions will give insight into the possibility of the poet's own practice of necromancy. Also, it will be demonstrated how Erichtho's role in the epic helps to indicate Lucan's relationship to the political events of his time surrounding Nero.

I: ERICHTHO AS HERO

Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile* has provided scholars with much to dispute concerning the identification of a hero for the epic. It has been argued that there is in fact no principal character or true hero of Lucan's *BC* (Conte 446). According to others, the would-be heroic figures, Caesar, Pompey, and Cato, do not measure up fully to the role (Nutting 41), or are just paradigms of heroism without actually attaining the status of hero (Ahl 156). The lack of a hero would certainly be a reflection of the hopelessness due to the way in which the fatality of war makes the vanquished equal with victors (Johnson 806) and the best of the two sides of the war is the one who loses so that the civil conflict may cease (Ahl 145). Some argue that Pompey, as the defender of the Republic with whom the poet seems to politically sympathize, is the heroic figure (Bartsch 77, Moore 142, and Nutting 41). There has even been a discussion of the *BC* containing a series of four heroes, including Erichtho, Caesar, Pompey, and Cato (Johnson, Preface x). However, I argue that, in the case of Lucan's portrayal of the civil war, a most apt representation of the dire circumstances of the war would be to have the sole hero of the epic be the necromancer, or one who produces divination by means of the dead, named Erichtho. As she becomes the very image of *Virtus* through her connection to Scaeva, she becomes heroic and is compared to such great heroes in ancient epic tradition as Achilles and especially Aeneas, since Lucan modeled his

BC after Vergil's *Aeneid*. She also becomes a hero in her quarrel with Sextus Pompey where she gains her moment of *aristeia*. I argue that in becoming the hero of the *BC* through her association with *uirtus*, Erichtho wholly embodies the darkest horrors intrinsic to civil war that Lucan wishes to convey in his epic.

Before Erichtho is considered to be a possible heroic figure, it should be considered concerning whether she is even a candidate for such a role. Ahl (130) lists her as a minor character due to her relatively short appearance in book 6. However, Ahl (150) also notes that the major characters of the *BC*, Cato, Caesar, and Pompey, have no means of achieving heroism either. Johnson (19) does not end up seriously considering Erichtho as a hero due to her role as a minor character in the poem, but does admit that she, although a "monster" is not a "momentary" figure, unlike the other three "momentary monsters," Caesar, Pompey and Cato, since she is a part of the fabric of what he calls the "bad eternity" of the epic, or the "repetition of the inane." Even when Johnson designates the moment of *aristeia* for Caesar (7.789-99), whom he eventually chooses as the greatest of the four "momentary monsters," he admits that it is achieved in the manner and in the universe of Erichtho when Caesar "rejoices in mutilated corpses and is loathe to have his masterpiece ruined by funerals" (102). Ahl (150) explains that the inability for one character to fully achieve heroism is due to the relative similarity of importance and length of appearance within the

epic of these three characters, leaving each to fall short of rising above either of the other two candidates in becoming the true hero. He also observes that, as a result of the similarly limited importance of the major characters, there arises a distribution of the major and minor characters almost evenly that allows the minor characters to have an unusual level of significance within the epic. I argue that this even distribution allows Erichtho to be just as legitimate to champion as hero as any other character in the *BC* due to the relevance of her persona throughout the whole of the *BC*.

In addition, the Erichtho episode itself is at the center of the epic both literarily and physically.[2] Ahl (148) believes the Erichtho episode is the climax of the "disintegration of the Roman world." Hardie (108) believes that the Erichtho episode is at the center of the poem due to its analogy to the Sybil episode in the *Aeneid*. Johnson notes that the epic has no need for conventional heroes than for conventional gods (xi), who, by Lucan's time, are replaced with strange gods and unnamed powers (4). Erichtho would certainly not be a conventional hero due to, among other things, her status as a minor character in the *BC*; but the fact that she would not be a conventional hero makes her an attractive choice for heroism in the convoluted context of the civil war. The placement of the Erichtho episode

[2] O'Higgins (208) notes that the intended scope of the *BC* is disputed, but suggests that it would probably have become twelve books, much like Vergil's *Aeneid*.

as near as possible to the center of the epic emphasizes Erichtho's importance to the epic at the climax of the horrors of the civil war.

In order to prove that Erichtho is in fact the hero of the *BC*, a few tasks must be accomplished. First, the hero must be defined in the context of its ancient tradition so that the way in which she fulfills the role through her association with Scaeva and his *uirtus* may present itself. Next to be addressed is the philological and contextual connections that exist between Erichtho and such an archetypal hero as Aeneas. Lastly, it must be proven that Erichtho appoints herself as hero after Sextus fails to take upon himself a journey into the Underworld. Then the picture of Erichtho as hero can emerge as her role in the *BC* unfolds through her interaction with and victory over Sextus as Pompey's proxy.

In concordance with epic tradition, some social Greek values are useful to understanding different aspects of the heroic figure. These are, to some extent, reflected in Roman literature. Normally there is no direct confluence of these social ideals due to separate cultural frameworks between the Greeks and Romans, but the epic tradition that flows between the two cultures allows for some means of translation. The nature of this epic tradition as it comes into Lucan's era is dubious concerning whether it is an actual transference of standard epic values or the poet produces an illusion of receiving this epic

tradition in order that he may break its conventions. Sklenar (2003), whom I will be using in order to discuss certain aspects of this transference, seems to prefer the former mode of tradition, although, as Cowan (2004) notes, he also demonstrates the latter. Regardless of whether the tradition comes to the poet or is contrived by him, it exists and is worth discussing in order to better see how Lucan's Roman heroic values fit in his epic and how they are employed by various characters in the epic.

Sklenar (101) begins a discussion of this transference of epic hero characteristics when he discusses a *synkrisis*, or comparison, between Pompey and Caesar. He argues that these two rivals display rivaling definitions of *uirtus* as a key aspect of the Roman epic hero in the following passage (1.120-7):

> stimulos dedit aemula uirtus.
> tu, noua ne ueteres obscurent acta triumphos
> et uictis cedat piratica laurea Gallis,
> Magne, times; te iam series ususque laborum
> erigit inpatiensque loci fortuna secundi;
> nec quemquam iam ferre potest Caesarue priorem
> Pompeiusue parem. quis iustius induit arma
> scire nefas:
>
> Rivaling *uirtus* gave them incentives. You, Magnus, fear that new deeds overshadow old triumphs and that a piratic laurel will yield to Gallic victories; a succession and practice of labors now rouses you (Caesar) and fortune is intolerant of a second place; neither is Caesar now able to tolerate anyone first nor Pompey anyone equal. It is *nefas* to know who more justly takes up arms:

Referencing this passage, Sklenar (102) explains that the *uirtus* has strong affiliations with the epic hero in that Pompey is motivated by a loss of *kleos* that would result if the *fama* of his actions were to be obscured by the more recent deeds of Caesar. The notion of *kleos* is best understood when considering that it is derived from the word *kluo*, which means "to hear" (Nagy 16). The way that *kleos* gains its substance is in the amount of people who hear of the hero's deeds, similar to the function of *fama*.

Sklenar (102) connects *kleos* to *fama* in the lines following the above passage (1.129-35):

> alter uergentibus annis
> in senium longoque togae tranquillior usu
> dedidicit iam pace ducem, famaeque petitor
> multa dare in uolgus, totus popularibus auris
> inpelli plausuque sui gaudere theatri,
> nec reparare nouas uires, multumque priori
> credere fortunae.
>
> One with years declining toward senility and more tranquil with the long use of the toga has in peace unlearned military leadership, as seeker of *fama* gave many things to the crowd, was completely impelled by popular winds and took joy in the applause of his theatre, did not recover new strengths, and believed much in his former fortune.

Sklenar points out that this passage highlights that Pompey caters to a Roman crowd especially in the phrase *petitor famae*. He argues that this is the poet's way of calling him a seeker of *kleos* "to the extent that *fama* is also *kleos*" and that the "*petitio famae* is an accurate description of the epic hero's *uirtus*" (103). This

instance of *uirtus* is "the qualities typical of a true man, manly spirit, resolution, valour, steadfastness, or sim. (esp. as displayed in war and other contests)" (*OLD uirtus* 1a-b) and extends it to the *fama* that is derived from the display of *uirtus*. The use of *fama* in this context is "the report which a person has, one's reputation" (*OLD fama* 5a).

Sklenar (110) further reveals another instance of a Greek value emerging as part of the epic tradition in one of Pompey's speeches (2.583-4):

> pars mundi mihi nulla uacat, sed tota tenetur
> terra meis, quocumque iacet sub sole, tropaeis:
>
> No part of the world does not lie open for me, but the whole land, under whatever sun it lies, is held by my trophies;

The words *pars mundi mihi nulla uacat*, according to Sklenar, amounts to his *aristeia* on a global scale, and could be no greater an exemplification of *kleos* and *uirtus* (*ibid*). According to Nagy, an *aristeia* is the hero's moment of recognition as such (24). The words *aristeia* and *kleos* among other social values that transfer well within the epic paradigm help to define the hero as traditionally characterized since Homer.

Erichtho must be proven to exhibit *uirtus* through the discussion of which these values have been compared before the epic social terms are further defined and compared. Although the word *uirtus* does not appear in the Erichtho episode, its discussion in an earlier part of book 6 helps give insight into

Erichtho's own relation to the term as a reflection of the personification of *uirtus*. Scaeva, credited by the poet (6.140-5) with being the one man in Caesar's army who fended off Pompey's forces in the battle of Dyrrachium, exhibits *uirtus* in a particular context (6.147-8):

> pronus ad omne nefas et qui nesciret in armis
> quam magnum uirtus crimen ciuilibus esset.
>
> He is inclined toward every *nefas* and is the one who knows not how great a crime *uirtus* is in civil warfare.

Although the poet is making it clear that *uirtus* is a *crimen* in the context of civil war, he has also made it clear that civil war itself is an atrocity, so having *uirtus* in an evil context means that he is exemplifying how horrific civil war is. Sklenar (113) notes that Pompey recuses himself from such a mode of *kleos* when he makes a false antithesis between *crimen* and *gloria* in with the line *Pompei nec crimen erit nec gloria bellum* (7.112) and ends his speech with the same theme with the phrase *omne nefas uictoris erit* (7.123). The *OLD* defines *nefas* as "an offense against divine law, an impious act, sacrilege" (*OLD nefas* 1a). Erichtho, unlike Pompey, has no problem identifying herself with Scaeva's sort of heroic *nefas* as an indication of her *uirtus* as the poet describes her magical power over the gods in 6.527-8:

> omne nefas superi prima iam uoce precantis
> concedunt carmenque timent audire secundum.

> Every *nefas* do the *superi* allow at the first utterance of prayer, and they fear to hear a second spell.

The words *omne nefas* connect Erichtho to the *uirtus* that is characteristic of Scaeva and is condemned by Pompey despite the apparent inevitability of this type of *uirtus* in civil war. Further confirmation of Erichtho's connection to Scaeva's *uirtus* is in Erichtho's reply to Sextus in 6.605-7:

> "si fata minora moueres,
> pronum erat, o iuuenis, quos uelles" inquit "in actus
> inuitos praebere deos."
>
> "If ever you moved the lesser fates, it was easy, O youth, to compel the unwilling gods into whatever acts you want."

Here the word *pronus* is used in the definition "(of affairs) proceeding without difficulty, hindrance, easy, straightforward" (*OLD pronus* 7), whereas in the depiction of Scaeva it has the sense of "inclined (to a given practice, course of action), disposed (to), liable (to). Although the words *in armis* do not grammatically follow *pronus,* the words *pronum...in actus* echo the line of Scaeva's description, *pronus...in armis* and equate Scaeva and Erichtho.

In Erichtho's comparison with Scaeva, I argue that the poet is comparing Erichtho to the very likeness of *Virtus* herself. When Scaeva finally collapses, yet living, due to the remarkable injuries sustained during the battle, his greatness is described by the poet as his comrades marvel at his heroism (6.253-4):

> ac uelut inclusum perfosso in pectore numen
> et uiuam magnae speciem Virtutis adorant;

> Both the entity like a deity enclosed in his transfixed chest and the living image of great Virtus they adore;

Johnson (57) explains that this scene is the moment of *aristeia* for Scaeva and crystalizes the pattern of the *uirtus* that arises in the context of the grotesque events in civil war. Fantham (1) and Hardie (68) state that Scaeva is the only character in the *BC* to have a moment of *aristeia*. I would agree with Fantham and Hardie, except that Erichtho, in her comparison to Scaeva as well as her interactions with Sextus to be discussed later, in fact achieves this epic moment and heroism. After establishing Scaeva's likeness to *Virtus*, the poet provides a recognition of Scaeva's *fama* in 6.257 in which he is portrayed with the phrase *felix hoc nomine famae*, or "happy in this name of *fama*" just as the poet describes Erichtho with the words *laetatur nomine famae* (6.604) or "she delights in her name of *fama*" as she is about to respond to Sextus' speech and advocate her own notoriety. In going with Sklenar's model of *uirtus* in epic, this *fama* compared between the two heroic figures is essentially the *kleos* needed in order to maintain their *uirtus*. Johnson (59) explains that the poet uses Scaeva to subvert epic *uirtus*. I argue that this subversion of conventional *uirtus* allows Erichtho to embody it as part of the distortion of traditional values in an epic about civil war. The poet, then, is using Erichtho as the likeness of *Virtus* to further demonstrate how great

a *crimen* that *uirtus* is in civil war, even if it eventually establishes the exemplum of *uirtus* as a hero.

Aeneas' association to *uirtus* is not as strong as Erichtho's, but her association with another heroic value that is exhibited by Aeneas allows a strong comparison between the two. As Fantham (1) notes, although *uirtus* is portrayed as a positive value in his parting words (*Aeneid* 12.435) *disce puer, uirtutem a me, uerumque laborem*, Turnus more fully exhibits *uirtus* when he is described as *ferox uirtus* (12.668, 714, 913) and *conscia uirtus* (12.20). Fantham (*ibid*) also explains that Turnus' *uirtus* is inferior to Aeneas' *pietas*. I believe that the great strength of *uirtus* in the *BC* relative to its weaker portrayal in the *Aeneid* is due to the circumstances of the civil war that call for a more extreme fury in battle as a reflection of the more dire circumstances of this epic. Nonetheless, in order that Erichtho reflect her heroic legacy, the poet provides comparison between her and Aeneas through heroic *pietas*, or in the case of Erichtho, *impietas*. Ahl notes that this all-important *pietas* as modeled by Aeneas breaks down in civil war (149), further evidence for Erichtho's *impietas* as fully representative of the civil war.

The titles given to both Aeneas and Erichtho are reflections of their heroic statuses. When a hero is in fact acting heroic, his epithets tend to allude to certain characteristics of his that are part of his *kleos*. Thus a hero being called by his homeland can be, depending on the status of the individual in that region, an

indication that at least some significant part of that land is a portion of his *timē* because presumably his *oikos* would exist within. Aeneas is referred to by his place of origin when the Sybil responds to him in 6.124-127 of the *Aeneid*:

> Talibus orabat dictis arasque tenebat,
> cum sic orsa loqui uates: "sate sanguine diuum,
> Tros Anchisiade, facilis descensus Auerno:
> noctes atque dies patet atri ianua Ditis;
>
> With such words he prayed, and held the altar, when thus the prophetess arose to speak: "Sown by the blood of the gods, Trojan son of Anchises, easy is the descent to Avernus; nights and days the door of black Dis lies open;

This appellation of Aeneas as *Tros* is similar to how the poet directly refers to Erichtho 4 times as *Thessala* in lines 519, 628, 651, and 762 of Book 6 of the *BC*. The poet calls Erichtho by name just as many times as he does by region in which she is famed for residing and practicing her arts as witches are notorious in this region. This is an indication that the author is at least somewhat concerned with Erichtho's *kleos* since a reference to her *oikos* as being in Thessaly brings with it not only its magical and deathly contents, but also the vast amount of *timē* in that whole region that can now be associated with her name because of her title as the *Thessala*.

Another epithet given to Aeneas is reflected by an epithet of Erichtho, yet is given in such a way as to provide contrast between the two characters. One of the most common and famous epithets of Aeneas is *pius*. This indication of Aeneas' *kleos* is in reference to him as "faithful to one's moral obligations" (*OLD*

pius 1a). Part of Aeneas' *kleos*, then, is his adherence to a moral code that seems to be derived from the orders of the Sybil in 6.175-178 of the *Aeneid:*

> ergo omnes magno circum clamore fremebant,
> praecipue pius Aeneas. tum iussa Sibyllae,
> haud mora, festinant flentes aramque sepulcri
> congerere arboribus caeloque educere certant.
>
> Therefore they all wailed around him with great clamor, especially pious Aeneas. Then, with no delay, they hastened the orders of the Sibyl weeping, and fought to build up the altar of the sepulcher with trees and to lift it up to the sky.

As soon as Aeneas is called *pius*, he immediately carries out the instructions of the Sybil. This is a mark of his character as one who obeys that which is commanded him. *Pietas*, "an attitude of dutiful respect toward those to whom one is bound by ties of religion, consanguinity" (*OLD pietas* 1a), then, is a notable characteristic of Aeneas as he is true to that which is fated him to carry out at the command of others. Moore even identifies *pietas* as the "great moral of the epic" (142).

Strikingly similar to Aeneas' description as *pius* is this epithet of Erichtho: *impia*. This epithet is found in line 6.604 of the *BC* in which the author describes her as she is about to respond to Sextus' address. The use of this epithet calls into question why the poet chose to make this contrast with Aeneas if I am arguing that Erichtho is the hero of *BC*. If Aeneas' moral obligations are derived from the commands of someone, whether the Sybil or the gods, then Erichtho's lack of

pietas may be derived from her lack of subordination to anyone. The notion that her lack of *pietas* is an indication of her independence from subjection to authority could certainly be the case since she needs no instruction to gain access into the Underworld let alone follow any orders to do so. She is aware of superiority and even points out to the gods that she actually commands the gods themselves in line 6.710 of the *BC* where she orders *parete precanti*, "Obey my prayers." Thus her lack of *pietas* is a result of her being insubordinate to no one. She bids the gods to heed her words, and she knows how to control the shades of the Underworld. She is only responsible to recognize her moral obligations to herself.

Erichtho's *impietas* is a result of her active control of her own *oikos*, *timē*, and even her *moira*, or "one's lot in life" (*LSJ moira* III) that can be in terms of one's fate as well as one's social standing (Adkins 19). Erichtho's active exertion of her own will over her *moira*, similar to how she can determine the *fata* of others with her magical speech, is in contrast to Aeneas' external obligations that cause him to become a more passive character. Although Erichtho's *impietas* is in contrast with Aeneas' *pietas*, Erichtho is still measured by her *pietas,* or lack thereof in her case, just as Aeneas is. *Pietas*, then, as similar to the Greek *kleos* in how its quantity determines one's status in society, is a measure by which a Roman hero can be determined, depending on how pious or impious the hero is. Erichtho's

impietas is especially notable because it gives insight into her magical knowledge powers as superior to any other, meaning that she has no master but has much to demonstrate to any who would wish to seek her out for instruction.

Erichtho fully achieves her heroic status in her moment of *aristeia* through her dialogue with Sextus and taking over the role of one who undergoes a *katabasis* as part of being a hero. Instead of Sextus experiencing a *katabasis*, Erichtho brings the Underworld to the world above (Ahl 143) by entering her cave near to Dis. If Pompey is in fact a heroic figure as the defender of the Republic, as argued by several scholars including Bartsch who calls him the traditional epic hero (77), Erichtho takes that heroism from him by means of her interaction with Sextus. Erichtho cannot take away Pompey's status directly as the poet would not, as Dick (44) notes, alter history so much so that he would allow Pompey to travel to Thessaly and consult a necromancer. However, as Masters (208) notes, the poet, like Erichtho, has the power to change the *minora fata* (6.605), and is able to place Sextus in Erichtho's land in order to consult her, even though historically, as Masters notes (209), he was with his mother in Lesbos. Sextus is a prime candidate for one who is a seeker of a witch such as Erichtho because it is known that Sextus was fabled to be involved with the art of necromancy. Ahl (134) notes that Pliny, a contemporary of Lucan, relates a story that provides an instance of Sextus' involvement with necromantic practices in the *Natural Histories*

(7.178-179) in which Sextus receives a prophecy from Gabienus, who had already had his throat slit at the orders of Sextus. The poet uses Sextus, the lesser of Pompey in relative importance in the epic, as a means by which Erichtho can interact with Pompey without altering the major events of the civil war.

Sextus begins a making a claim to his *kleos*, thereby challenging his addressee, Erichtho, to present her own claim. Sextus attempts to allude to his heroism as he becomes what Johnson calls a "witty parody of Aeneas" (21) as he falls short of heroism in his approach of the *uates* Erichtho. Sextus' request for a necromantic divination in which he provides a description of himself as an indication of his recognition of his own heroic *kleos* begins the scene in which Erichtho begins to establish her heroism (6.593.5-595):

> non ultima turbae
> pars ego Romanae, Magni clarissima proles,
> uel dominus rerum uel tanti funeris heres.
>
> Not the last part of the Roman crowd am I: I am the most illustrious son of Magnus, either master of things, or heir of so great a funeral.

By noting that he is not the least amongst the Roman crowd, he is using *litotes* with a superlative as a rhetorical device to suggest that there is an implication that he may be one of the best amongst his countrymen, and he does say that he is in fact the best of his brothers as a child of Pompey. He appoints himself

dominus rerum, or the "supreme ruler" of political affairs (*OLD dominus* 3). These two words appear juxtaposed in another section of the *BC* (5.698-9):

> hine usus placuere deum, non rector ut orbis
> nec dominus rerum, sed felix naufragus esses?
>
> Do these favors of the gods please, that you would neither be the ruler of the world nor the master of things, but lucky having been shipwrecked?

This passage is found in the context where Caesar's companions question his ability to continue tempting fate with his daring exploits and, in doing, so calls him the *dominus rerum* to remind him of the potential he could be relinquishing in choosing rather to be tossed upon another shore. Thus the title given him is spurious as it is in a challenge to Caesar and is not in praise of his current *kleos*. The way in which the lines containing *dominus rerum* mirror each other metrically and the uniqueness of their juxtaposition in the epic strengthen this direct correlation. The precedent, then, to the title Sextus applies to his name is that of falsity and increases the evidence for Sextus' imminent downfall. In the same manner he calls himself the *heres tanti funeris*, or the "heir" of so great a funeral (*OLD heres* 1). Sextus again wishes to expand his *kleos* by claiming his father's funeral, despite the poet's previous admission of Erichtho's blatant disregard of loved ones' presence at funerals as she desecrates them (564-569):

> saepe etiam caris cognato in funere dira
> Thessalis incubuit membris atque oscula figens

truncauitque caput conpressaque dentibus ora
laxauit siccoque haerentem gutture linguam
praemordens gelidis infudit murmura labris
arcanumque nefas Stygias mandauit ad umbras.

Often, even in the kindred funeral with loved ones attending, the dire Thessalian leaned over the limbs and laying kisses she maimed the head and with her teeth she opened wide the closed mouth and biting off the tongue sticking to the dry throat she poured murmurs in the icy lips and sent secret horror to the Stygian shades.

This last instance of the word *funere* sets a precedent for Sextus' use of the word. Like *dominus rerum*, the metrical placement of *funere* in the passage is immediately above mirrors that of the instance found in Sextus' speech. The repetition of *funere* strengthens Erichtho's influence in and control over the funeral of Sextus' father before the funeral occurs. Nonetheless, Sextus attempts to establish his status to Erichtho, however tainted it may be due to the poet's previous observations. These terms that he uses to describe his status are both references to his role as *agathos* or a "local chieftain" (Adkins p.11), who must defend his *timē* (*ibid* p.15). By claiming such statuses, Sextus sets himself up to have to defend his claim and ensures that Erichtho will eventually and inevitably respond with a claim of her own *kleos*.

Erichtho immediately defends her own *kleos* and effectively overcomes Sextus' challenge as part of a *neikos*. The recognition and propagation of Erichtho's own *kleos* in response to that of Sextus is an acceptance of a challenge.

A moment of *aristeia* can occur in a quarrel between heroes, or *neikos*, in which the would-be hero verbally and/or physically challenges the "best" of his race, or vice versa (Nagy 22). One of them emerges either maintaining or newly achieving this moment of prestige and the title of the "best" (*ibid* 22). The outcome of the quarrel as a moment of *aristeia* ensures the maintenance and propagation of the glory bestowed upon the hero through his renowned deeds called *kleos* (*ibid* 29). The winner of a *neikos* can add the opponent to his own *kleos* (*ibid*). One of the most famous of these moments of *aristeia* is discussed by Nagy and is the instance in the *Iliad* when Hector challenged the *aristos Achaiōn*, or "best of the Achaeans." The "best" of one's race is hero who can win any *neikos* and can lay claim to the most *kleos* (*ibid* 26). The *aristos Achaiōn* is Achilles, who defeats Hector in a *neikos* and ensures the maintenance of his status as the *aristos* (*ibid* 28). The Erichtho episode does not result in the violence conventionally necessary to solve a *neikos* as found in the example of Achilles and Hector, but the witch is easily able to defeat the cravenu Sextus before the interaction reaches that stage. The lack of physical violence between Erichtho and Sextus is not only in keeping with the poet's continual deviance from precedent epic convention but also his way of simultaneously stressing Erichtho's prowess and Sextus' cowardice. The moment of *aristeia* that may arise from this *neikos* is one in which she may become the best of not only the Thessalians, for which she is already

well known, but that through a victory over him she may also become the best of the Romans.

In Sextus' address to Erichtho, he calls her *decus Haemonidum* or "glory of the Haemonians" in recognition of Erichtho's already prevalent *kleos* among her own people. Erichtho, in observance of Sextus' awareness of her *kleos*, takes this challenge as she replies to Sextus' address. Erichtho delights in her own notoriety, which a hero would certainly do as his status as a hero relies upon his ability to maintain such reputation among those who would hear of her exploits. In challenge to Sextus' meager representation of his fame, which relies mostly on the exploits of his father, Erichtho then begins to list some of her extraordinary abilities (6.604-605):

> inpia laetatur uulgato nomine famae
> Thessalis,
>
> The impious one delighted in her name of *fama* notorious among the Thessalians,

Her delight in his recognition of her *kleos* actually drives her to promulgate more of it, and so she boasts of powers greater than that which he requests, flaunting her magical prowess. Not only is she capable of great things even *minora fata* can do things greater than that which he asks (605-607).

> et contra 'si fata minora moueres,
> pronum erat, o iuuenis, quos uelles' inquit 'in actus
> inuitos praebere deos.

> And replied: "If you were moving lesser fates, it would be simple, O young man, to compel the unwilling gods," she said, "in whatever acts you wish.

She begins to praise of herself, which in epic is a legitimate and useful means of gaining *kleos* through the propagation of one's own deeds. It is interesting to see her use of the word *fata* here, which refers to not only to the fates themselves, but also the word's derivation from *for, fari*, she is emphasizing that her magical words manipulate what becomes the substance of the fates. Her powers lie in her ability to manipulate *mors*, death, whether she wishes to cause *morae*, delays, or even *adrumpere annos*, cut off years (607-610).

> conceditur arti,
> unam cum radiis presserunt sidera mortem,
> inseruisse moras; et, quamuis fecerit omnis
> stella senem, medios herbis abrumpimus annos.
>
> It is granted to my art, when the stars importune one death with their rays, to induce delay: and, although every star would constitute old age, we cut half off the years with herbs.

If her words having been spoken through her magical arts become the fates themselves, she is suggesting that she can change the length of one's life, or more aptly in this context, determine the time of one's death beforehand. A "*fatum-fortuna*" dichotomy (Johnson 28) emerges as Erichtho continues her boasting (611-615).

> at, simul a prima descendit origine mundi
> causarum series, atque omnia fata laborant
> si quicquam mutare uelis, unoque sub ictu

stat genus humanum, tum, Thessala turba fatemur,
plus Fortuna potest.

But from the first origin of the world a series of causes has descended, and all fates toil, if you wish to change something, and under one stroke the race of humans stands then, the Thessalian crowd confesses it, Fortune is more capable.

Johnson references this section when he observes that Erichtho's mention of the power of Fortune is "her only her way of expressing its violent aimlessness, which is the only truth that matters to her (and to Lucan)" (28). I agree with Johnson that Erichtho's recognition of the powers of *fatum* and *fortuna* is not for the purpose of acknowledging some limit on her powers but to demonstrate the horrors at work in the civil war.

Once Erichtho finishes her response to Sextus, Erichtho proves her claim of *kleos* by undergoing a heroic *katabasis* into her cave near to the Underworld and wins the *neikos* by calling attention to Sextus' inadequacies to perform such a task. As Erichtho begins to prepare her necromantic rituals, she recognizes fear in Sextus and his companions that causes her to respond with admonishment and disdain to their cowardice in lines 657-61:

ut pauidos iuuenis comites ipsumque trementem
conspicit exanimi defixum lumina uoltu,
'ponite' ait 'trepida conceptos mente timores:
iam noua, iam uera reddetur uita figura,
ut quamuis pauidi possint audire loquentem.

When she saw the timid attendants of the youth, and the youth himself trembling, stupefied in respect to his eyes and with a dead face: "Put away,"

she said, "fears conceived by a disturbed mind: now new, now true life will be returned to his form, so that you, however timorous you may be, are able to hear him speaking.

As Sextus and his attendants begin to show fear, Sextus' status as the current hero in the Erichtho episode is confirmed one last time before it is forever taken from him. The phrase *exanimi defixum lumina vultu* in the above passage mirrors line 6.156 of the *Aeneid*, *maesto defixus lumina vultu* in which Aeneas is reacting to the instructions of the Sibyl for entering the Underworld (Masters 191). This allusion not only attests to his status as a hero, it also intensifies the reason that he will lose his heroic status: his cowardice.

Erichtho finishes tending to the issue of Sextus' inadequacies and achieves her moment of *aristeia* with another boast of her powers (662-6):

si uero Stygiosque lacus ripamque sonantem
ignibus ostendam, si me praebente uideri
Eumenides possint uillosaque colla colubris
Cerberus excutiens et uincti terga gigantes,
quis timor, ignaui, metuentis cernere manes?'

If truly I could reveal both the Stygian lake, and the bank sounding with fires, if the Eumenides would avail to appear in person to me, and the Cerberus shaking his neck shaggy with serpents, and the Giants bound with respect to their backs, what fear, you cowardly ones, is there to see the apprehensive shades?"

Although the Sibyl did not upbraid Aeneas for his reaction to her orders, Erichtho has no problem doing so to Sextus. Erichtho sees it as an opportunity to end the verbal *neikos* once and for all. She admonishes Sextus to put away his

fear and that she will accomplish what she set out to do at his request. She then continues instill more fear into Sextus' already disturbed mind by explaining all of the wondrously terrifying things that she could show Sextus in the Underworld. She simultaneously emphasizes her own capabilities of being able to gain access to as well as withstand the horrors of the Underworld while stressing Sextus' incompetency to handle seeing mere trembling shades, much less the sights that Erichtho could reveal to him. Erichtho is once again challenging Sextus' *kleos*. Frozen solid in fear of these otherworldly sights in Erichtho's cave, Sextus is unable to respond. He cannot disagree with Erichtho who evidenced his inadequacy in the physical signs of trembling. He makes no response whatsoever.

The point at which Sextus makes no response to Erichtho's challenge of his courage and Erichtho continues on to begin her necromantic rites is Erichtho's moment of *aristeia*. Sextus maintains his heroic status as indicated by his reaction similar to that of Aeneas right up until the point in which Erichtho challenges it and he can make no reply. In fact, he says nothing for the rest of Book 6. At this point, Erichtho has won the *neikos* that allowed her by gaining Sextus' *kleos* in besting him to become not the least among the Roman people, if not the best. Now Erichtho can count Sextus' *kleos* as part of hers, as her claims to fame are better than his. Erichtho can even count Sextus' *timē* among hers now if she

wished to take it, which the poet recognizes that she wishes to do before Sextus even addresses her in lines 587-588:

> hic ardor solusque labor, quid corpore Magni
> proiecto rapiat, quos Caesaris inuolet artus.
>
> This is her passion, and her only labor: what she can seize from the thrown away corpse of Magnus, and on which limbs of Caesar she can fly upon.

She has already had the goal in mind to acquire the very bodies of these great leaders of the civil war. Taking the corpse of Sextus' father would certainly have encroached on his *timē*, but that is no longer a concern due to Erichtho's seizure of Sextus' *kleos* in her moment of *aristeia*. As the war continues, she will certainly be able to add more *timē* to her *oikos* and even establish herself as the best of the Romans as the Romans continue to fight against themselves, leaving her to stand triumphant in a heaping mass of corpses on a field of blood.

Erichtho is the heroic figure of the *BC*. Even Johnson (19), who argues that she is just one of four heroes of the *BC* whom he calls "momentary monsters," admits that she, although a monster nonetheless, is not momentary as she is a part of the fabric of bad eternity, the repetition of the inane. Erichtho's lasting impression of the horror of civil war is drawn from the circumstances, including Scaeva's criminal *uirtus*, leading up to her episode and has a lasting effect upon the events that follow her. She has taken upon herself the role of the hero in her comparison to Aeneas through the notoriety of her homeland and her impiety. She has

accepted a *neikos* with Sextus and has triumphed, reaching her moment of *aristeia*. She has proven herself the *agathos* of much *timē* as part of her great Thessalian *oikos* so that her *kleos* may spread far and wide, even to the point of being not only the best of her own Thessalian race, but even that of the Romans by adding Sextus' *kleos* to her own. She rises to be the hero *par excellence* of the *BC* by embodying the twisted evils of civil war.

II: ERICHTHO AS *VATES*

As I argued that Erichtho is the heroic figure of the *BC*, I also wish to demonstrate that she increases her importance in the *BC* by becoming the epic's premier *uates*. In this chapter, *uates* will be referred to by its primary meaning as provided by the *OLD*, "a prophet, seer (regarded as the mouth-piece of the deity possessing him)" (*OLD uates* 1a). I will argue that the poet's use of *uates* fits the "*uates*-ideal" set forth by the Augustan poets (Newman 8). This *uates*-ideal is "a unifying factor in Augustan poetry" and is what "Vergil (has) in common with Ovid, but not with Lucretius" as it is something "on which Lucretius poured such contempt" (*ibid*). There exist two vatic teams in the *BC*: the Pythia and Apollo in book 5 and Erichtho and the corpse in book 6 (O'Higgins 210). The poet makes a clear contrast between Erichtho's prowess in divination and magic in general and the Pythia's inefficacy in the same realm in order to establish Erichtho's Underworld powers as superior to the conventional source of vatic inspiration, Apollo. Erichtho's ability to perform necromancy by raising a corpse to produce a divinatory response is an antithesis to the Pythia's feigned inspiration of her god. Erichtho becomes greater than a deity as her powers prove to be more potent than that of Apollo and set the *inferi dei* above the *superi*. Further establishment of the potency of Erichtho's role as *uates* is in her comparison to the *Aeneid*'s *uates*, the Sybil, along with the respective corpses that

they employ for the attainment of entrance into the Underworld. They each are highly instrumental in the movement of the plot of the epic in their vatic offices as entry into the Underworld is necessary in both epics. The difference is, however, that the Sybil instructs Aeneas to enter and also leave the Underworld behind, whereas Erichtho causes the physical world within her power to mirror the environment of the world below. This comparison indicates that Erichtho is at least as powerful as the Sybil but also is the much stronger of the two as she reflects the horrific circumstances of the civil war surrounding her. Erichtho's status as *uates* helps to further emphasize and expand her importance and even her status as the embodiment of the epic.

Makowski (197) and O'Higgins (211) mention that initially it appears that the episode of the Delphic oracle (*BC* 5.64-236) has little to do with the plot or the epic as a whole but that it turns out to be the beginning stages of an exploration of the role of the *uates* to be more fully fulfilled by Erichtho in book 6. The Erichtho episode and Appius' approach of the Pythia in the previous book are noted by Ahl to be nearly identical but with vastly different outcomes due to the range of prophetic efficacy (130). The Pythia gains her inspiration from Apollo, who in turn is inspired by an unnamed subterranean deity (212). The fact that the deity is unnamed could indicate exactly who he is: Pluto. While considering the identity of the god, the poet describes his nature in 5.86-87:

quis latet hic superum? quod numen ab aethere pressum
dignatur caecas inclusum habitare cauernas?

Which of the gods lies hidden here? What deity pressed down from the aether deigns to inhabit blind caves enclosed therein?

The *caecae cavernae* mentioned here appear again in the following related context that addresses the questions previously asked by the poet as Erichtho enters into the unholy grove near the Underworld in 6.642-645:

haud procul a Ditis caecis depressa cauernis
in praeceps subsedit humus, quam pallida pronis
urguet silua comis et nullo uertice caelum
suspiciens Phoebo non peruia taxus opacat.

Not at all afar off from Dis the earth sunken in blind caves slips headlong down: which the forest pallid with waning leaves oppresses, and looking upon the sky with no canopy, the yew casts shade impervious to Phoebus.

The litotes used to describe the proximity of the *caecae cauernae* to Dis with *haud procul* indicates a very close relationship between the two, as if one is a part of the other. The *numen inclusum* of the god and the *humus depressa* owned by Erichtho are compared in their respective passages since the phrase *caecae cauernae* physically brackets them in each context. The comparison of these phrases indicates a contrast between the divine power of the underworld god that the Pythia avoids in fear of channelling Apollo versus Erichtho's ownership of the land contiguous with the realm of the Underworld god. She has no problem approaching and even controlling him for the purpose of necromancy.

Erichtho is able to reach places that even Phoebus cannot enter, thus making Erichtho even more capable of gaining access to the darker secrets of the god of the Underworld inaccessible to even Apollo. In the consideration of O'Higgins' vatic teams, Erichtho and Apollo are compared in their respective contexts. This comparison is initially counterintuitive because the obvious comparison to be made would seem to be between Erichtho and the Pythia due to their role as human *uates*. Masters notes this role-reversal that occurs when Phemonoe becomes possessed in her scene whereas Erichtho is the possessor in her episode (192).

The shift of the possessor, from Apollo to Erichtho, in these scenes is what Masters calls the poet's "opposition technique" (193) and is reflective of the chaotic circumstances of the civil war. Furthermore, Erichtho is the one better able to delve into the more secret places of the Underworld god because of her ownership of the land adjacent to that of Dis than Phoebus is due to the concealing shade of the yew. This contrast between the powers of Erichtho and Apollo indicates that Apollo is a means by which Erichtho can be defined as a more fully developed and potent *uates* than would be previously understood without a standard as a comparison. The human taking upon herself the role of one more powerful than a god is again part of the poet's "opposition technique" and emphasizes the horrific powers at work in the circumstances of the epic.

Erichtho's ability to rise above the gods in power further indicates how her world operates as a microcosm of the *BC*. Her ability to supersede the gods in power indicates, at least in part, the poet's blatant disregard for the Olympians. Bartsch (111) mentions that he omits the Olympians from the very beginning of the epic in which conventionally there would be some sort of recognition of their inspiration. She (*ibid*) also mentions that the poet even addresses the impression given by Erichtho that the gods are "subordinates to powers stronger and more sinister" when he deliberates concerning what binds the gods to obey the necromancer in *BC* 6.493-5. Makowski (197) points out that the poet rightly calls the gods *superi minaces* (1.514) as exemplified by the Delphic scene as representative of the power of the *superi* (194). Makowski even goes as far to say that the Delphic scene exemplifies, among other things, the "malevolence of the *superi*" due to their unclear riddles (197). He also says that this is good reason for Sextus to reject conventional forms of divination "on the grounds that the *superi* know nothing" (198). In contrast to the incompetence of the *superi*, he explains that the Erichtho episode, in its glorification of necromancy, suggests "total superiority of the *inferi dei* over the *superi*" and the great emphasis on death in general (199). Makowski examines Arruns, another character of the *BC* who comments on the poet's placement of the *inferi* above the *superi*. He notes that the

inferi establish supremacy where Arruns, after performing extispicy, says (1.631-5):

> "uix fas, superi, quaecumque mouetis,
> prodere me populis; nec enim tibi, summe, litaui,
> Iuppiter, hoc sacrum, caesique in pectora tauri
> inferni uenere dei. non fanda timemus,
> sed uenient maiora metu."
>
> "It is hardly *fas*, *superi*, that I reveal to the people whatsoever you foretell: for I have not propitiated you, greatest Jupiter, with this sacrifice: into the chest of this slain bull the *inferi dei* have come. We fear the things which must not be spoken (*nefas*): but things greater in fear will come."

Makowski (*ibid*) observes that the phenomenon described with the words *maiora metu* is later confirmed by the success of Erichtho in ensuring the influence of the *inferi* over the *superi* in book 6. The *OLD* defines *nefas*, used over fifty times in the *BC*, as "an offense against divine law, an impious act, sacrilege" (*OLD nefas* 1a) and even more specifically "an unnatural event, portent, horror" (*ibid* 3a). The *superi* are scarcely in accordance with their own divine law that they have established as the *inferi* exert influence upon the sacrifice. In fact, even the *superi* provide *nefas* at the request of Erichtho and her infernal magic in 6.527-8:

> omne nefas superi prima iam uoce precantis
> concedunt carmenque timent audire secundum.
>
> Every *nefas* do the *superi* allow at the first utterance of prayer, and they fear to hear a second spell.

Erichtho can cause the *superi* to transgress their own divine laws. The *inferi* preside over the events of the civil war where death and chaos are so prevalent.

Erichtho, as a *uates* inspired by the *inferi*, is the instrument of the enforcement of their infernal laws at the center both physically in the epic and literarily at the heart of the civil crisis of the *BC*.

Erichtho not only demonstrates her vatic power to be superior to Apollo and the *superi*, she is even described as physically god-like. Martindale (380) notes that when Erichtho ends her response to Sextus and sets out to find her corpse *uates*, she is described as such in *BC* 6.624-6:

> dixerat, et noctis geminatis arte tenebris
> maestum tecta caput squalenti nube pererrat
> corpora caesorum tumulis proiecta negatis.
>
> She spoke: and with the darkness of night doubled by her craft, her sad head covered by a filthy cloud, she wanders through the bodies of the fallen, thrown from the denial of a grave.

Martindale (380) explains that scholars have debated the definition of *nube* and whether it is corrupt. I agree with him as he argues that it is in fact a correct reading. He mentions that Haskens deems it an entanglement of hair and that Francken reckons it to be a veil as used for funerals (*ibid*). He also notes that Oudendorp proposes instead *crine* or *in nube*, whereas Burman suggests *rupe* despite the fact that he was found on a plain (380-1). Rather, Martindale believes that it is in fact *nube* and refers to "a cloud" (*OLD nubes* 1a) that is in this case is "(applied to a supernatural cloud concealing a deity from human eyes)" (*OLD nubes* 2a). Martindale believes that this passage presents Erichtho as a "grotesque

theos epiphanes" (381). He compares this to Ovid's description of *Inuidia* in *Metamorphoses* 2.790 in which she is *adopertaque nubibus atris* and to Death in Tibullus I.1.70 where he is described as *tenebris Mors adoperta caput*. Martindale then explains that as Erichtho continues among the corpses in 627-8 that the flight of the animals further indicates her divinity. The animals' reaction to her presence arises as a reversal of the conventional rejoicing of animals at epiphanies found, for instance, in Lucretius 194-5 in which *uolucres* too appear (382).[3] Erichtho's epiphany occurring in the same location as her moment of *aristeia* discussed in my previous chapter emphasizes both her vatic and heroic prowess. It is no coincidence that Erichtho is god-like in appearance as she begins her excursion to obtain a corpse suitable to be inspired by her divine vatic powers to in turn become a *uates*. Johnson perhaps says it best when he, in recognition of her divine status, says that Erichtho is "at the very heart of Lucan's divine machinery" (20). Erichtho becomes part of what Johnson (25) calls the poet's *discors machina* in which resides an entirely different divine order that parodies and challenges the conventional order.

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[3] Martindale also explains that she may be parodying the "fear not" motif present in epiphanies occurring, for instance in Euripides *Bacchae* 607 and St. Luke 2.10, in *BC* 6.659 where she says:

> "ponite" ait "trepida conceptos mente timores."
>
> "Put away," she says, "fears conceived by a disturbed mind."

The poet, after establishing the comparison of Erichtho and Apollo, compares the Pythia to the rejuvenated corpse as the secondary members of the vatic teams. When considering that the first time that Apollo and Erichtho are called *uates* (5.85 and 6.651 respectively) they are in the nominative case, it is no coincidence then that the *uates* who channel them are first mentioned in the accusative case as they are called to their role during the time of prophecy. Phemonoe is called *uatem* in 5.124 as the priest summons her for prophecy, and the fallen soldier is called as such and Erichtho chooses him for reanimation in 6.628. O'Higgins notes that the fear of dire physical consequences may make a *uates* reluctant to speak (214). When Phemonoe is described as *metuens* in 5.128, the author is making a distinction between her and the corpse when he is described as *timentem* in 6.721. Where *metuens* takes an infinitive, as is the case here, the *OLD* defines the word as meaning "to be afraid to" (*metuo* 1b). Similarly does the *OLD* define *timens* as "to be afraid of, fear" when taking the accusative (*timeo* 2a). The distinction between the words, then, does not lie in its initial meaning, but the outcome of the fear. Phemonoe's fear ultimately causes her to feign possession by Apollo and fail to divine and fulfill her responsibility as *uates*. The corpse, however, despite his initial apprehension, is able to channel the powers conducted through the *uates* who selected him to be her own *uates*. The different words similar in their definitions are used to contrast how each *uates*

deals with her initial misgivings to channel the primary *uates* that caused them to have the same title. In a similar way do the Pythia and the corpse fall (*cadit* in 5.224 and *cadat* 6.823, respectively) after their prophesies have been given, but, as Masters observes, "one tragically, and the other eagerly" (195). The corpse, unlike Phemonoe, is successful in providing a true prophesy despite his initial misgivings. Both members of the vatic team in book 6 arise as the stronger of the two pairs in their ability to produce a prophecy despite any initial fear of possession.

Erichtho and the corpse' comparison to another vatic team, the Sybil and Misenus' body in the *Aeneid*, allows Erichtho's vatic powers to become even more powerful by comparison. The comparison is immediate because they emerge in corresponding books and both aid the would-be hero in gaining some sort of access into the Underworld. Although the *BC* provides the Apollonian vatic team as ultimately a failure in book 5, there are still comparisons between the vatic team of the *Aeneid* and that of Erichtho and the corpse to be made independent of the previous diminishment of Delphic prophecy. The Sybil is given the title *uates* (6.65) and is mirrored by Erichtho from the outset in the similar ways in which they respond to the suppliant heroes (or would-be hero in the case of Sextus). The Sybil's response includes this superfluous statement

about the ease with which one can descend into the Underworld in *Aeneid* 6.125-9:

> "sate sanguine diuum,
> Tros Anchisiade, facilis descensus Auerno:
> noctes atque dies patet atri ianua Ditis;
> sed reuocare gradum superasque euadere ad auras,
> hoc opus, hic labor est."
>
> "Sown by the blood of the gods, Trojan son of Anchises, easy is the descent to Avernus; nights and days the door of black Dis lies open; but to recall the step and to ascend to the airs above, this is the work, this is the labor."

As Masters explains, Erichtho gives "equally irrelevant advice" (189) concerning the fact that, if Sextus wished to move the lesser fates, that it, too, would be easy in *BC* 6.605-7:

> "si fata minora moueres,
> pronum erat, o iuuenis, quos uelles" inquit "in actus
> inuitos praebere deos."
>
> "If you were to wish to move the lesser fates, it would be easy, O youth, to compel the unwilling gods into whatever acts you want."

In these observations similar in their frivolity due to, as Masters describes, their hypothetical nature and obvious inapplicability (189) made by these *uates*, the parallelism is not without *uariatio* as the poet chooses *pronum* to replace *facilis decensus*. However, Masters (*ibid*) observes that the poet humorously utilizes *paranomasia* with the word *pronus* in two of its different definitions, "(of affairs) proceeding without difficulty, hindrance, easy, straightforward" (*OLD pronus* 7) and "(of terrain or other surfaces) Having a forward or downward incline,

sloping, shelving" (*ibid* 4a) to pick up on the *facilis* and *decensus*, respectively. Nonetheless, the poet does provide a direct reference to this speech of the Sybil in *BC* 6.615-7:

> sed, si praenoscere casus
> contentus, facilesque aditus multique patebunt
> ad uerum:
>
> But if you are content to know beforehand the outcome, accesses both easy and many will lie open to truth:

As Masters notes (190), this passage alludes to the *facilis decensus...patet* of the Sybil's speech with Erichtho's *facilesque aditus...patebunt*. Their speeches indicate similar vatic functions and are paralleled by the poet due to their similar roles. However, Erichtho is the one who actually carries out the instructions that she gives, unlike the Sybil whose instruction must be carried out by one other than herself, specifically the hero who must undergo a *katabasis*. Erichtho's importance in carrying out the heroic functions necessary for gaining access into the Underworld makes her the greater of the two in relative importance within the epic due to her dual *uates*/hero roles.

In consideration of the other two members of the vatic teams, the corpse of Misenus must be compared with Erichtho's chosen corpse *uates* in order that Erichtho's vatic team become fully superior to the team of the Sybil and Misenus' corpse. Vergil does not necessarily directly call Misenus' corpse a *uates*, but the poet seems to suggest that he is in fact making a comparison between the

functions of him and the fallen corpse *uates* of the *BC*. The body of Misenus is not directly named as a *uates*, but the Sybil's vatic inspiration of Misenus alludes to his own office as such. Evidence for the Sybil's influence in Misenus to become a *uates* is evidenced in *Aeneid* 6.187-189 where Aeneas speaks while setting out to search for Misenus' body and the golden bough in order to that he may begin his *katabasis*:

> "si nunc se nobis ille aureus arbore ramus
> ostendat nemore in tanto! quando omnia uere
> heu nimium de te uates, Misene, locuta est."
>
> "If only now that golden bough would stretch out itself to us from the tree in so great a grove, since the *uates* has spoken all things oh too truly concerning you, Misenus."

The *uates*, the Sybil, is at work within Misenus, physically in line 189 since *te...Misene* physically brackets *uates*, indicating that her vatic offices are at work in and inspiring Misenus. Isolating the words *uates Misene* gives the impression that Aeneas is actually addressing Misenus as a *uates*. Contextually, Misenus could certainly be a *uates* since he would be inspired by the vatic powers of the Sybil to gain access into the Underworld, much like the vatic function of Erichtho's corpse *uates*. The fact that the Sybil grants Misenus these powers gives clue to the Sybil's choice of Misenus as the secondary *uates* in her vatic team since she has chosen to imbue him with her vatic powers.

The poet recognizes the vatic function of Misenus' corpse in his comparison of Misenus to Erichtho's corpse *uates*. Masters (195) notes the poet's allusion to Vergil's burial of Misenus in *Aeneid* 6.214-5:

> et robore secto
> ingentem struxere pyram

And they piled up a monstrous pyre with cut wood.

with his eventual burial of the fallen soldier in *BC* 6.824-5:

> Tum robore multo
> extruit illa rogum

Then that woman (Erichtho) heaped up the pyre with much wood.

These mirrored passages not only show the poet's recognition of Misenus' similar role to that of his own corpse *uates*, this comparison, as Masters says, "gives a new force to the horror of the resurrection" (*ibid*). The corpse of the *BC* as a "neo-Misenus" is denied a proper burial for the duration of the Erichtho episode and is forced to become revivified for the sake of necromancy instead of being given a funeral before the *katabasis* occurs. The poet retroactively taints the Vergilian model while increasing the perversion of his own by means of this neo-Misenus.

The poet seems to cause his burial scene to have an effect on the meaning of Misenus' when his choice of using *rogum* instead of *pyram* is considered. The *OLD* defines *rogus* as simply "a funeral pyre" (*OLD rogus* 1a). The word *pyra*,

however, can, in addition to the primary meaning of "a funeral pile, pyre", be "used also of a similar pile for sacrifices to infernal deities" (*OLD pyra*). The poet's choice of *rogum*, as part of what Hardie (53) calls the poet's "sacrificial language", as the more simple word of the two could be his attempt to point out that the *pyram* in Vergil's scene can have more than one meaning and is doing so to suggest the latter and more specialized meaning that refers to a sacrifice to Underworld deities is now being used. This *paranomasia*, rather humorless as compared to the one noted earlier, could be a means by which the poet wishes to further alter Misenus' burial scene despite Aeneas' attempts to give him a proper burial so as to demonstrate again the power of necromancy even on Vergil's epic. Erichtho's fallen soldier *uates* is greater than the Sybil's vatic companion since the youth is a version of Misenus that is much more highly instrumental through the duration of the Erichtho episode and in doing so corrupts the image of Misenus' burial scene through through the description of his own funeral pyre.

In great feats of his "opposition technique" does the poet present Erichtho as a deified being more powerful than the *superi* in her infernal vatic powers. The poet also causes Erichtho to inspire a corpse *uates* to be the means by which he can pervert the Vergilian model of the funeral scene. He does this in order to demonstrate the power of death as well as provide evidence for the efficacy of necromancy by raising a corpse able to produce a clear prophecy. Erichtho and

her chosen corpse as a vatic team have proven more potent than Apollo and the Pythia as they successfully gain access to the secrets of Dis hidden to the Delphic team. Erichtho and her corpse *uates* also rise above the team of the Sybil and Misenus' corpse through heroism and effectively creating a neo-Misenus more instrumental to the scene where the Underworld is opened for the purpose of a *nekuia*, or consultation with the dead. Erichtho as *uates*, aided by the corpse *uates* that she as a deity who inspires a prophet generated, emerges as a character who emerges more fully as the embodiment of the epic in her intimacy with the *inferi* that inspire her to elucidate the coalescence of the world of war above with the world of death below. Both hero and *uates*, Erichtho is the central god, prophet, villain, and hero of the *BC* wholly representative of the *nefas* ever-present in civil war.

III: ERICHTHO AND LUCAN

Erichtho's literary relationship with the poet is striking in its implications of Erichtho's role in the *BC* as well as the poet's relation to the circumstances within and without the epic. When the poet, as *uates*, creates the vatic team of Erichtho and the corpse, he establishes a direct connection with the necromancer that gives insight into the nature of the poet himself. The deep relationship between the poet and Erichtho exemplifies the way in which the term *uates* has "generated a constant interplay between the roles of poet and prophet" (OCD *uates*) as their respective vatic roles coalesce. The poet's role as *uates* and its source of inspiration gives a better understanding of the poet's personal association with necromancy and magic in general. Also, how the poet portrays Nero's influence upon the formulation of the epic will indicate the "real world" situation that brought about the overall mood of the poem as epitomized by Erichtho. The poet's appointment of Erichtho as the premier heroic and vatic figure of the *BC* elucidates his purposes for the epic to serve both as a reflection of the contemporary social environment that mirrors the events of the civil war and as representation of the author himself in his political and magical associations.

Evidence for the connection between Erichtho and the poet can be found in the poet's personal investment, or inspiration, in Erichtho as he utilizes his own

role as a *uates* to give Erichtho the same title. The poet establishes his status as *uates* and the divine inspiration of this title from the outset of the poem. He calls himself a *uates* for the first time in the epic in his *apostrophe* to Nero in 1.63-6:

> sed mihi iam numen; nec, si te pectore uates
> accipio, Cirrhaea uelim secreta mouentem
> sollicitare deum Bacchumque auertere Nysa:
> tu satis ad uires Romana in carmina dandas.
>
> But to me you are already a deity: if I as a *uates* accept you in my chest, I would not wish to disturb the god manipulating the Cirrhaean secrets, or to avert Bacchus from Nysa. You are enough for powers to be granted in Roman songs.

In this instance, context suggests that the word *uates* here is best understood in its second definition provided by the *OLD*, as "a poet (regarded as divinely inspired), bard" (*uates* 2a). Again, the poet is adopting *uates* as a role antecedent in poetry yet breaks the conventions when explicitly rejecting the traditional sources of inspiration: Apollo and Bacchus. Bacchus was mythologically raised in Nysa and Apollo is alluded to in this passage as Cirrha was a town near to Delphi (Braund 224). This passage provides the *uates* as the poet's title, the *carmina* as the outcome of the exercise of his vatic power, and Nero as the source of his inspiration. Each of these elements is important when comparing the poet's vatic office to that of Erichtho in order to understand how the epic reflects events in the Neronian period.

Just as Erichtho inspires the corpse to be a *uates*, so does the poet imbue Erichtho with his vatic powers. When the poet appoints Erichtho to be a *uates* by bestowing upon her the role of a representation of the "poet figure" who sings, invents, and is well-versed the use of *carmina* (Masters 206), he establishes himself and Erichtho to be a vatic team. Erichtho, as part of her role to reflect the poet, more fully embodies her creator and inspirer when she, in turn, appoints the corpse as a *uates* and thus creates her own vatic team. The passage above from book 1 directly attributes the poet's power to produce Roman *carmina* to his office as *uates*. The *carmen* described here is not just "a magical chant, spell, or incantation" (*OLD carmen* 1b) but is "a song, poem" (2a) produced by the poet.[4]

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[4] Masters (206) notes that the correspondence between magic and poetry, specifically between these two definitions of *carmen*, "has a long history, whose ramifications have only partially been explored" and points to Ovid's *Amores* 2.1.23-4:

> carmina sanguineae deducunt cornua lunae,
> et revocant niveos solis euntis equos;
>
> Songs draw down the horns of a bloody moon, and recall the snow-white horses of the sun from their flights;

Ovid is addressing the magic of his own craft as a poet in this hexameter line, and by pointing out the magical power of songs imbues *carmina* within and without his poetry with such supernatural potency as he seems to be commenting on poetry as a whole while he discusses its magical powers. A description of Erichtho's craft follows the *topos* of the magical manipulation of lunar events in 6.479-480:

> inpulsam sidere Tethyn
> reppulit Haemonium defenso litore carmen.
>
> A Haemonian spell repels Tethys impelled by the moon, with the shore defended.

The poet's use of *uariatio* of *sidus* to reference the moon in place of the more conventional *luna* emphasizes the uniqueness and unnaturalness of Erichtho's power to change the course of both celestial and earthly events.

These instances of *carmina* in the *BC*, most of which (fourteen out of the total of twenty-two in the epic) are in book 6 in reference to the incantations of Erichtho, both refer to the product of the poet and the product of a witch or other agent of magic. Also, Erichtho's non-verbal spells in 6.667-9 reflect Ovid's discussion of *carmina*:

> pectora tum primum feruenti sanguine supplet
> uolneribus laxata nouis taboque medullas
> abluit et uirus large lunare ministrat.
>
> Then first with steaming blood she fills up the chest opened with new wounds, she washes off the innards with putrescence, and copiously she administers lunar poison.

The practice described in this passage is her physical magic process of preparing the corpse for reanimation. The use of *sanguinis* and *luna* in this passage brings to mind the *sanguinea luna* in Ovid's poem, adding poetic power to the physical spells performed by the witch in addition to her spoken art. These references to the potency of *carmina* and other similar spells confirms the poet's magical nature as well as his bestowal of this power to the character of Erichtho.

Another instance of a parallel between Erichtho's and the poet's vatic powers exists in their ability to change history. In response to Sextus' plea to know the fates, Erichtho says that she is able to even change the minor ones, although Sextus is not asking her to do so (6.605-7):

> "si fata minora moueres,
> pronum erat, o iuuenis, quos uelles" inquit "in actus

inuitos praebere deos."

"If you were to wish to move the lesser fates, it would be easy, O youth, to compel the unwilling gods into whatever acts you want."

Masters notes that these *minora fata* are essentially what the poet has the power to change although he cannot change the "major" ones (208). The poet must follow what is common knowledge about the events of the civil war that have greatly affected the state of Rome as it is in Lucan's time. The poet's desire to change only the minor fates can be seen in the poet's choice to send Sextus to Erichtho as a proxy for Pompey as discussed in my first chapter. As I discussed, the poet sent Sextus to visit Erichtho so that the necromancer can take Pompey's heroic status from him without blatantly altering the course of history in such a drastic manner as to say that Pompey consulted a necromancer. Even though it is known that Sextus was in Lesbos with his mother at this time (209), the poet feels that this is a *minus fatum* and freely changes it. Erichtho's ability to magically alter the *minora fata* as a witch operates exactly like the poet's power to do so, and no less magically than the necromancer.

The poet's association with the necromancer along with his vast knowledge of her craft is, in fact, a reflection of his own art. Masters (210) calls attention to the fact that the poet references a pun in Ovid *Ars* 1.134:

inque meo nullum **carmine crimen** erit

And in my song there will be no offense.

This joke plays off of the fact that the word *crimen* is literally contained in the word *carmine* (*ibid*). The poet employs this joke when he compares the two words in lines 6.443-4 and 507-9 of the *BC*:

> inpia tot populis, tot surdas gentibus aures
> caelicolum **dirae** conuertunt **carmina gentis**.
>
> Impious spells of her dire race alter the ears of the celestial gods deaf to all people and to all races.
>
> hos scelerum ritus, haec **dirae crimina gentis**
> effera damnarat nimiae pietatis Erichtho
> inque nouos ritus pollutam duxerat artem.
>
> These rites of wickedness, these crimes of a dire race has wild Erichtho damned for excessive piety, and she has lead her defiled craft into new rites.

Masters points out that this "wicked *uates*" whose *carmina* are *crimina* refers not only to Erichtho, but also to the poet in the comparison of their vatic roles (*ibid*). The poet's vatic office, then, is associated with the wickedness of necromancy. It is no coincidence, then, that Lucan's Erichtho episode is "a careful account of the practice of necromancy, the fullest in Latin literature" (Morford 67). It is possible for the poet to produce the depth of the account of necromancy as Lucan may have practiced necromancy himself as Morford notes, "It will become evident later that Lucan's knowledge of the ritual goes far beyond that of Ovid and that he must either have attended magical seances or have consulted handbooks of the subject" (68). Johnson (21) suggests that Lucan may have practiced magic out of curiosity or even for use offensively against Nero. Certainly when Lucan

quotes Erichtho by writing her words, he has no problem speaking *nefas* as a reflection of the *nefas* of civil war, even if it is an impious act to speak that which must not be spoken (Masters 210-1). Erichtho is aware of her own *nefas* when she begins her incantation for the reanimation of the corpse by invoking various Underworld deities in 6.695:

Eumenides, Stygiumque nefas, poenaeque nocentum:

Eumenides, and Stygian *nefas*, and avengers of injuries:

Erichtho invokes *nefas* itself, as does the poet by quoting her magical invocation. Likewise, whenever Erichtho speaks or performs a necromantic ritual, Lucan does so at least in writing about it if not having done so outside the poem.

The poet's comparison to Erichtho indicates that his vatic office causes his *magnum opus*, the *BC*, to be a *carmen* in many of its definitions, including that which allows the epic to become a prophecy. As discussed in my previous chapter, Erichtho's role as *uates* ostensibly is "a prophet, seer (regarded as the mouth-piece of the deity possessing him)" (*OLD uates* 1a). Not only does the poet provide prophesies for events within the epic when the consultation of a another *uates* cannot be done at the moment (Dick 47), The poet provides a prophecy for events outside the epic that directly reflects him and the political scene in Nero's reign. When the poet employs Erichtho as a means of expressing his own necromantic craft, he indicates that he too takes upon this definition of *uates* in

addition to the role defined earlier as the divinely inspired poet. The epic *carmen* that he produces as both the poet and prophet is both a song/poem and that has magical qualities. Especially in consideration of his necromantic faculties, the *carmen* takes upon itself yet another definition: "an oracle or prophesy; a riddle" (*OLD carmen* 1c). When examining that Lucan poetically raises the dead when he revivifies the characters of Pompey and Caesar, the poet actually is consulting them to foretell what will happen in the future. O'Higgins recognizes that just as Erichtho raises a corpse, so does Lucan raise Rome's dead Republican past in the imperial present (219). She also says that as Erichtho can raise a dead army in 6.633-6, so does Lucan actually do so by recounting the events of the civil war (*ibid*).

Similar to how a *uates* is a device by which the events within an epic can be foreshadowed, so does Lucan use the *BC* to reflect the current political tension in his own time. To have a necromancer be the premier heroic and vatic character of his epic set in a time of horrific civil war in which a tyrant must be overcome by the defenders of the Republic could be Lucan's way of mirroring the turmoil that existed with the emperor Nero in his own time. By having the *BC* be a prophecy of sorts in that sense of *carmen*, he would more fully fulfill his vatic roles by allowing the epic to become a foreshadowing of his own contemporary political situation in which strain exists between the tyrannical figure and those who

would oppose him.[5] By having Erichtho be the central character of his epic, and if Erichtho is a reflection of the poet, is Lucan suggesting that he is the necromantic hero at the center of the political circumstances of his own times? Did he in fact use magic against Nero as mused by Johnson (21)? It is impossible to say, but the fact that the poet's connection to Erichtho is so strong that it could raise such interesting questions indicates how deeply the two are entwined within the epic and even outside of it.

If the *BC* is a reflection of its author, Erichtho's centrality to the epic, both literarily and physically (since the epic presumably would have twelve books if it were finished) causes her to be a reflection of the poet. As previously shown, Erichtho's centrality to the poem is due to her ascension to the status of the ultimate hero and *uates* within the epic. Masters, in beginning to examine the relationship between the poet and the necromancer notes that "to denounce Erichtho is to denounce Lucan; to come to terms with Erichtho is to come to terms with Lucan; she has been the very emblem of the poem, a compact consummation of all that we hate or love about the poet." (179). It is important to notice that Masters is using metonymy here in discussing Erichtho's significance to both the poem and the poet, but does bring up the question of whether or not

[5] Lucan and Nero's relationship became troubled at some point while Lucan was writing and by 64 Nero banned the public recitation of his poetry (Braund xiv). Whether or not Lucan and Nero had a falling out at the time that the *BC* was written, the political turmoil surrounding anxiety of tyranny leading up to the Pisonian conspiracy that produced the style characteristic of Neronian literature can still be seen and is alluded to by disorder of the civil war in his epic.

the poet can be synonymous with or connected to his poetry. Ovid says, *distant mores a carmine nostri*, or "my character stands apart from my *carmina*" (*Ars* 2.353). I believe that Lucan is aware of the way in which the poet is traditionally separate from his *carmina* since he has alluded to Ovid's use of the word as examined earlier, but in the demonstration of his exhaustive knowledge of necromancy and lengthy account of its effectuality wishes to suggest otherwise in continuance with his habitual practice of breaking poetic convention. As discussed earlier, Morford seems to believe that the poet's account of necromancy is indicative of real-life knowledge and even practice due to how it seems to demonstrate a great extent and depth of erudition. The poet's use of Erichtho as the potent practitioner of necromancy to be the means by which he can bring validity to the art and even connect it to Lucan the man even further emphasizes her importance in the *BC*. The Erichtho's status as the victorious hero and the effectual *uates* of the *BC* makes her the perfect candidate to be poet's counterpart in the poem and the way in which the poet can express a real world connection to the magic in his poetry.

CONCLUSION

Erichtho is the crucial character of the *BC*. Her heroism sets her above any would-be heroes such as Pompey as she exercises her incredible magical abilities to achieve her moment of *aristeia* and in doing so become the very image of *Virtus*. She also becomes the central *uates* who, like the poet in the creation of her vatic office, creates a corpse *uates* as part of her vatic team that presides over Apollo and Phemonoe through their effectual production of a clear divination. She rises above and projects her own infernal purposes upon Vergil's vatic team of Sybil and Misenus, displaying her far-reaching powers. She is the means by which the poet is able to manifest himself as a *uates* well-versed in, if not an adept practitioner of, necromancy outside the epic. She is the absolute manifestation of death that embodies the horrific environment of the civil war. No one is more heroic, vatic, or centric to the *BC* because of her intimate relationship with the poet as well as her position and predominance in the climax of the epic. Erichtho is the key to unlocking the secrets of necromancy, of the Underworld, and of Lucan himself, making her the perfect personification of the epic.

Once Erichtho's role in the *BC* is understood, it can be seen how Lucan is aware of his epic predecessors yet wishes to create an epic in which conventions are altered to the point of opposition. In order that the *BC* fully reflect its subject

matter of the civil war as well as the turmoil present in the literary climate of Lucan's time, the epic has to break tradition and become an anti-epic. Erichtho, then, is a hero in Lucan's anti-epic yet is an antihero in the scope of all epic poetry. If this anti-epic is invective against Nero in criticism of his tyranny instead of in praise of his reign, did Lucan, in the process of writing magical spells spoken by Erichtho, invoke Underworld powers to aid him in cursing his enemy? For such a question to be asked simply by analyzing Erichtho's role in the *BC* is fascinating in its implications. Even after discussing the reasons for the literary centrality of Erichtho to the epic, it is still marvelous that a non-Roman "minor" character could raise such a question. Yet once it is recalled to mind that this is in fact an anti-epic that exemplifies the tumult and horror of civil war, there is absolutely no other character better suited to become the pivotal character of the anti-epic than Erichtho. Through her grotesque arts, she has magicked her way into the center of Lucan's account of the civil war, illustrating the infernal powers at work in the *BC* and ensuring her eternal preeminence in the poem.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

John Byron Young
Email: young200@live.marshall.edu

Education

High School: Cross Lanes Christian School, Cross Lanes, WV 25313

- Graduated May 2005
- G.P.A. 4.0
- Ranked 3rd in class.

Undergraduate: Marshall University, Huntington, 25755

- Graduated May 2009 with a bachelor's degree in Classics with Latin and Greek minors.
- G.P.A 3.61

Graduate: Marshall University, Huntington, 25755

- Will graduate May 2011 with a master's degree in Latin.
- G.P.A 3.90

Experience

- Presenter, CAMWS Southern Section
  October 2010
  Experienced in the development and presentation of papers.

- Participant, Field School at the Villa of Maxentius in Rome with the University of Colorado
  May 2008 - June 2008
  Experienced in classical archeological methods and history.

- President, Marshall University Classical Association and Eta Sigma Phi
  August 2008 - May 2009
  Experienced in leadership and organizational skills

- Tutor, Marshall University HELP Program
  August 2009 - May 2011
  Experienced in tutoring students with learning disabilities.

Awards and Memberships

- Most Outstanding Humanities Student of Marshall University for the 2008-2009 school year.

- PROMISE Scholarship and Presidential Scholarship at Marshall University.

- CAMWS Award for Outstanding Accomplishment in Classical Studies 2009-2010