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Recognition and its Dilemmas

in Roman Epic

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in Classics

by

Diana Librandi

2021

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Recognition and its Dilemmas in Roman Epic

by

Diana Librandi

Doctor of Philosophy in Classics

University of California, Los Angeles, 2021

Professor Francesca Katherine Martelli, Chair

The present dissertation examines the widespread presence of tropes of tragic recognition in Roman epic poetry from an interdisciplinary perspective. I argue that Roman epic poets draw at once on tragedy and ancient philosophy to address the cognitive instability generated by civil war, an event which recurrently marks the history of Rome since its foundation. When civil conflicts arise, the shifting categories of friend and enemy, kin and stranger, victor and vanquished, generate a constant renegotiation of individual identities and interpersonal relationships. It is in light of these destabilizing changes that I interpret the Roman epic trend of pairing civil war narratives with instances of tragic recognition. Far from working exclusively as a plot device or as a marker of the interaction between the genres of epic and tragedy, tropes of tragic recognition in Roman epic are conducive to exploring the epistemological and ethical dilemmas posed by civil war. While civil strife permeates the fabric of all the epic poems considered in my study, each author magnifies the interplay between recognition and civil war in relation to specific categories: friends

and foes in Lucan's *Pharsalia*, hosts and guests in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*, kinsmen and strangers in Statius' *Thebaid*, and the human and the non-human in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

The dissertation of Diana Librandi is approved.

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2021

Ai miei genitori e a mia sorella Katia

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I was able to complete this dissertation thanks to the support of many people, near and far. I am indebted to my adviser and committee chair, Francesca Martelli, for her unswerving encouragement and intellectual generosity. She first saw this project take shape in her seminar on Caesar and Lucan in 2015 and believed in its potential since then. My doctoral committee improved every page of this study. Thanks to Rebecca Langlands for her eye-opening insights; to Giulia Sissa for always helping me see the big picture; to Lydia Spielberg for her profuse leads on the present version and future stages of this project; and to Adriana Vazquez for her thoughtful support and painstaking comments.

My years in the Department of Classics at UCLA would not have been as formative without the mentorship of Bob Gurval. I will cherish the memories of teaching in Rome under his supervision for many years to come. Thanks are due to Alex Purves, who has been an inspiring interlocutor both academically and pedagogically. I would also like to thank David Blank for his philosophical advice and Sarah Morris for her enthusiastic guidance in her role as Faculty TA coordinator. I owe much to Savannah Shapiro for her jovial help. Special thanks to my fellow graduate students: I am grateful for our exchange of ideas in our research workshops, for the good times in Dodd Hall, and lately for the pandemic videocalls.

A warm "thank you!" to the friends who crossed my path away from home: Anastasia Baran, Karime Castillo, Ana Guay, Milena Anfosso, Patrick Bonczyk, Leonardo Cazzadori, Iara Mantenuto, Jennifer Monti, and Vera Rondano. I found a precious ally in Roberto Petrosino, who has guided me through the maze of applications to doctoral programs in the US and encouraged me to apply in the first place.

Infine, qualche parola di ringraziamento nella mia lingua madre. Ai miei genitori, Eugenio e Maria, va la mia più profonda gratitudine e il mio bene infinito. Non avrei potuto concludere questo percorso né fare tanto altro se non aveste combattuto per me. A mia sorella Katia devo dire grazie per avermi tenuto per mano nei giorni più difficili e per le risate incontenibili. A voi tre è dedicato questo lavoro. Grazie ai miei nonni, esempio costante di tenacia e premura, per avermi regalato leggerezza e buonumore. Alle amiche e agli amici di una vita, fari luminosi nelle mie notti più buie, ora e sempre un grazie speciale. E grazie al mio sposo, Anton: in te solo mi riconosco.

Vita

Diana Librandi graduated in Classics (B.A. 2010, *summa cum laude*) and in Ancient Studies (M.A. 2012, *summa cum laude*) from the University of Siena, Italy. After joining the Ph.D. program in Classics at UCLA in 2014, she obtained a graduate certificate in Gender Studies from the UCLA Center for the Study of Women in 2018 and advanced to candidacy in the same year. Diana Librandi presented part of her research on ancient epic at professional conferences organized by the Society for Classical Studies and the Classical Association of Canada. Throughout her graduate career at UCLA, she taught a wide range of courses in the Department of Classics and collaborated with the Center for Advancement of Teaching as well as with the EPIC (Excellence in Pedagogy and Innovative Classroom) Program.

Introduction. Recognition in Roman Epic: the Emblematic Case of the *Aeneid*

Recognition at the end of the Aeneid: an Aristotelian test

At the end of the *Aeneid*, Aeneas hesitates between killing and sparing Turnus, between dismissing and heeding his last words. The Trojan hero eventually thrusts his unforgiving sword into his enemy's chest. A moment before, Pallas' baldric was shining before his eyes (*Aen*. 12.938-52):

> stetit acer in armis
> Aeneas uoluens oculos dextramque repressit;
> et iam iamque magis cunctantem flectere sermo
> coeperat, infelix umero cum apparuit alto
> balteus et notis fulserunt cingula bullis
> Pallantis pueri, uictum quem uulnere Turnus
> strauerat atque umeris inimicum insigne gerebat.
> ille, oculis postquam saeui monimenta doloris
> exuuiasque hausit, furiis accensus et ira
> terribilis: 'tune hinc spoliis indute meorum
> eripiare mihi? Pallas te hoc uulnere, Pallas
> immolat et poenam scelerato ex sanguine sumit.'
> hoc dicens ferrum aduerso sub pectore condit
> feruidus; ast illi soluuntur frigore membra
> uitaque cum gemitu fugit indignata sub umbras.[1]

> Fierce Aeneas stood in his armor, shifting his eyes, and curbed his hand. And now and now more Turnus' speech started to sway him as he was hesitating, when the unlucky[2] baldric came into view on Turnus' shoulder, and the belt of young Pallas shone with the familiar studs. Him, defeated, Turnus had laid low with a blow, and he was bearing on his shoulders the hateful emblem. After taking in with his eyes the memorials of that cruel grief and the

[1] In quoting Roman epic poets, I have used the following critical editions: *P. Vergili Maronis Opera*, R. A. B. Mynors (ed.), Oxford 1969; *T. Lucreti Cari De Rerum Natura Libri Sex*, C. Bailey (ed.), Oxford 1921; *P. Ovidi Nasoni Metamorphoses*, R. J. Tarrant (ed.), Oxford 2004; *M. Annaei Lucani Belli Civilis Libri Decem*, A. E. Housman (ed.), Oxford 1970; *P. Papini Stati Thebais*, A. Klotz, Th. C. Klinnert (eds.), Leipzig 1973; *Gai Valeri Flacci Setim Balbi Argonauticon Libros Octo*, W.-W. Ehlers (ed.), Stuttgart 1980. Quotes from other Latin and ancient Greek authors follow the most recent LOEB Classical Library edition unless otherwise indicated. Abbreviations of classical references primarily follow S. Hornblower, A. Spawforth and E. Eidinow (eds.), *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 4th edn., Oxford 2012, with a few exceptions.

[2] On the ambiguous meaning of the adjective *infelix* in this context, see Tarrant 2012 *ad Aen*. 12.941. The text is replete with adjectives that could refer both to the events narrated by the poet, that is, the killing of Turnus, and the scenes represented on the baldric, namely the Danaids' slaughter of their spouses. The *Aeneid*'s finale is among the most discussed and controversial passages in the poem. For an analysis of the ideological contradictions and divided truths that animate the characters of the poem and, by extension, its interpreters, see Hardie 1997 and Conte 2007 with further bibliography. In the *Aeneid*'s finale, as Conte (2007, 155) notes, we find two contradictory yet equally valid claims side by side: the imperative to exact vengeance and the moral duty to show mercy towards the enemy.

> spoils, inflamed by fury and terrible in his wrath: "And from here, girded with the spoils of my dear ones, are you to be snatched away from me? Pallas is the one with this blow, Pallas immolates you and exacts vengeance out of impious blood." Saying these words, furious Aeneas buries the spear in Turnus' chest. But Turnus' limbs are loosened with chill, and his life, with a sigh, flees indignantly to the shades below.[3]

Scholars have described the last scene of the *Aeneid* as a tragic episode. In ways that overlap yet differ significantly from today's common usage of the term "tragic," for classicists and philosophers the adjective "tragic" refers to a particular set of events and experiences that are not necessarily related to tragedy as a literary genre. This set includes the inscrutability of fate and the capriciousness of events; an idea of human responsibility bound by necessity rather than governed by personal freedom; the elusive nexus between such a conception of human responsibility and guilt; and the wisdom acquired through suffering.[4]

In the last scene of the *Aeneid* and elsewhere in the poem, the "tragic" permeates Virgil's poetic language, the internal conflict of characters, and the reactions of the audience.[5] As Gian Biagio Conte puts it, Virgil's epic poetry results from a "grafting operation which makes the bitter branches of tragic ambiguity spring from the ancient trunk of epic."[6] According to Conte, the connotation of Turnus' violent death as an immolation (*Aen.* 12.949: *immolat*) evokes the sacrificial aura of the murders announced on the tragic stage[7] and, with them, their moral complexity: a victim rightfully sacrificed for some might be an innocent scapegoat for others. As

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[3] Translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

[4] On the set of experiences which scholars and philosophers define as "tragic" in contrast with the modern day usage of the term, see Most 2000, esp. 21-22.

[5] All these features are examined in Conte 2007.

[6] Conte 2007, 156.

[7] Conte (2007, 154-6) dwells on the parallel between *immolat* at *Aen.* 12.949 and the theme of sacrifice in Greek tragedy.

if sitting on the steps of a Greek theater, Virgil's audience ponders the contradictions of Aeneas' final act, and of the poem's closure, as well as the subtle difference between rightful atonement and blind vengeance. Like tragedy, Virgil's epic blurs the line between justice and its opposite.[8]

If Conte examines the tragic conflicts that trouble both characters and readers of the *Aeneid*, Philip Hardie draws attention to other tragic elements in the poem's finale. In his view, the dreadful cooperation of the Olympians with the Furies evokes the final act of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, where the Furies are coopted as Eumenides in the Athenian judicial system. In particular, the allusions to the Aeschylean trilogy recast Aeneas' killing of Turnus as a sociopolitical act, one that should not be seen as a merely personal and private vengeance.[9] What is less discussed in the scholarship that engages with the tragic aspects of the *Aeneid* is that the poem ends with one of the most distinctive tragic tropes, a recognition scene or *anagnorisis*, which Aristotle defines in the *Poetics* (1452a29-32) as "a change from ignorance to knowledge, bringing the characters either a close bond, or enmity, with one another, and concerning matters which bear on their prosperity or affliction."[10]

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[8] Conte (2007, 160-2) elaborates on the tragic conflict experienced by the audience together with the characters on the tragic stage.

[9] See Hardie 1997, 315-6 on the influence of Aeschylus' *Oresteia* on the final scene of the *Aeneid*. More recent scholarship on tragedy and the tragic in the *Aeneid* does not examine the trope of recognition. For instance, Panoussi (2009, 1) argues for "the existence of a systematic use of tragedy in the poem, which consists of intertextual and ritual appropriations, and operates side by side with the poem's allusions to Homer." The trope of recognition, however, does not feature in her examination. Mac Góráin (2013, 138) provides evidence for "the modelling of Virgil's Turnus on Pentheus." Both Pentheus and Turnus are repulsed by the effeminate appearance of Dionysus and Aeneas, respectively, foreigners coming from the East, and vainly hope to defeat those whose power they fail to recognize. However, Mac Góráin (2013, 128) briefly mentions the question of recognition in the *Aeneid* in spite of the prominence of this theme in Euripides' *Bacchae*, which stages Agave's delayed recognition of her son and Pentheus' misrecognitions of the god.

[10] Translation by Halliwell 1987, 43. Cf. *infra* pp. 6-7.

The studies of this much-discussed episode are representative of the limited interest in tropes of recognition in the scholarship on Roman epic.[11] This occurs often in the scholarship on recognition, as Terence Cave notes:

> Recognition is reputed to be an implausible contrivance, a shoddy way of resolving a plot the author can no longer control. Only a handful of famous instances escape the slur, but even they are not immune: neoclassical critics and dramatists found plenty to rectify in Sophocles' *Oedipus*.[12]

Critics seem to have passed over Aeneas' *anagnorisis* because of their keener interest in what this recognition triggers, namely Turnus' *peripeteia*: the *balteus* is seen indeed as a tragic prop, but one which is, however, more functional to Turnus' tragic downfall than to Aeneas' recognition.[13] How could Virgil, the *summus poeta*, center the ending of his poem on the recognition of an object, and how should we, his readers, grapple with the idea that an object becomes a question of life or death? It is hard to resist speculating about an alternative ending of the *Aeneid*, one without Aeneas' recognition of Pallas' spoils.

This dissertation is about this and other instances of recognition in Roman epic. I take the recognition scene at the end of the *Aeneid* as my starting point because it aptly illustrates the main

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[11] Scholarship on recognition in Roman epic is limited. The recent volume edited by Papaioannou and Marinis (2021) and the contribution by Cowan 2021 represent the most recent exceptions. Several points I had made in this introduction found confirmation in Robert Cowan's examination of *anagnorisis* in Roman epic, an examination which focuses, however, on *anagnorisis* as a generic marker of tragedy in epic and as a metatextual hint at the readers' recognitions of the tragic in epic. As far as Greek literature is concerned, the question of recognition is at the center of studies of Aristotle's definition and meaning of *anagnorisis* in the *Poetics* (see, e.g., Sissa 2006). Recognition scenes in specific tragedies and comedies have also received consistent attention in recent years. Along the same lines, the theme of recognition in the *Odyssey* (e.g., Murnaghan 1987) and the centrality of recognition for the development of the plot in Greek romances (e.g., Montiglio 2013) continue to fascinate scholars. Whereas a few studies have been published on recognition scenes in Seneca's tragedies (e.g., Bexley 2016), the trope of recognition in Roman epic remains understudied.

[12] Cave 1988, 1.

[13] Thus Barchiesi (1984, 39) turns from Aeneas' recognition to Turnus' *peripeteia*: "Il balteo di Pallante, divenuto quasi accessorio di scena, è predestinato in qualche modo ad una ricomparsa che sa di peripezia tragica, di *anagnorismos*."

concerns of my study. For one, the recognition of Aeneas allows us to consider the ways in which recognition scenes in Roman epic defy Aristotle's definition of *anagnorisis*. This is not to say that every recognition scene should be categorized as in line with, or in opposition to, Aristotle's model. Rather, I contend that putting a recognition scene in dialogue with philosophical interpretations of recognition, and not necessarily Aristotelian ones, helps us gain further insights into the potential of Roman epic poetry to pose or rephrase philosophical questions.

Furthermore, Aeneas' recognition at the end of the *Aeneid* leads me to pose the guiding question of this dissertation: why do tragic recognition scenes abound in Roman epic, and at crucial points in the narrative? I argue that the widespread presence of tragic recognition scene in Roman epic has much to do with impact of civil war on Rome's history and society of the late Republican/early Imperial period and of the Flavian era. Virgil's *Aeneid* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* were composed in the wake of the civil war between Antony and Octavian, while Lucan's *Pharsalia*, centered on the civil war between Caesar and Pompey, was written under Nero's rule, a period marked by internal divisions of the imperial court and the revolts against the emperor in 62 CE.[14] Both Valerius Flaccus and Statius start writing their poems not long after 69 CE, the Year of the Four Emperors, which brought civil war to unseen levels of unpredictability and violence. If the experience of civil war permeates the Roman epic tradition in that Roman epic poets both narrate internecine conflicts and compose their poems in wake of, or throughout, such conflicts, then tropes of recognition constitute entry points into the cognitive dilemmas opened up by civil war. In addition, the recognition of Aeneas exemplifies how recognition ties into issues of identity that extend beyond the characters of a literary work to reach its readers. What exactly does

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[14] These revolts followed Nero's accusations against Octavia and her expulsion from Rome. In the pseudo-Senecan *Octauia* these insurrections are cast as civil wars. See Ginsberg 2016, 115-40.

Aeneas' recognition reveal about the making of Roman identity? And how does his recognition make the identity of the Roman reader?

Lastly, my reading of the *Aeneid*'s final scene seeks to show how epistemic aspects of recognition interweave with ethical ones. Aeneas recognizes Pallas' baldric because he knows both the object and the person to whom the object used to belong. This epistemic act preludes Aeneas' decision to kill Turnus and the ethical issues that come with it, such as the dilemma between vengeance and forgiveness and the ethical appropriateness of the autocrat's anger.[15] As I will discuss in more detail in the second part of this introductory chapter, the literary, epistemological, and ethical layers of recognition operate synergically, and this is also the case for Aeneas. In what follows, I will put the *Aeneid*'s finale to an Aristotelian test. What concerns me, however, is not the final result but the partial findings that the test will produce as it progresses.[16]

Aristotle's definition of *anagnorisis* (*Poet*. 1452a30-52b3) underscores how recognition, by effecting a change from ignorance to knowledge, makes a person fall into one of two opposite categories. These opposites can be close friendship or enmity, and prosperity or affliction:

> Recognition, as the very name shows, is a change from ignorance to knowledge, bringing the characters either a close bond, or enmity, with one another, and concerning matters which bear on their prosperity or affliction. The finest recognition occurs in direct conjunction with reversal – as with the one in the *Oedipus*. There are, of course, other kinds of recognition, for recognition can relate to inanimate or fortuitous objects, or reveal that someone has, or has not, committed a deed. But the type I have mentioned is the one which is most integral to the plot-structure and its action: for such a combination of recognition and reversal will produce pity or fear (and it is events of this kind that tragedy, in our

[15] On the anger of the autocrat and its political implications, see Hardie 1997, 317.

[16] Cowan 2021 also puts the final recognition scene of the *Aeneid* to a brief Aristotelian test and defines it as "perverted recognition scene" (49). Rather than "perverted," I would define the recognition of Aeneas as one devoid of the changes outlined by Aristotle.

definition, is a mimesis of), since both affliction and prosperity will hinge on such circumstances.[17]

To be sure, critics employ Aristotelian vocabulary to describe the recognition of Aeneas: if *anagnorisis* would describe Aeneas' cognitive act,[18] *anagnorismos* would aptly define Pallas' baldric.[19] But where are we to locate the "shift from ignorance to knowledge" which, according to the Aristotelian definition, takes place with *anagnorisis*?[20] What is it that Aeneas does not know before seeing Pallas' spoils, and what is the relationship between Aeneas and Turnus? The recognition of the studded baldric certainly determines Aeneas' decision to kill Turnus. It is not upon seeing the *balteus* and the *bullae*, however, that Aeneas learns about Turnus' responsibility. The following lines suggest that a messenger reports to Aeneas the news of Pallas' death soon after it happens (10.510-7):

nec iam fama mali tanti, sed certior auctor
aduolat Aeneae tenui discrimine leti
esse suos, tempus uersis succurrere Teucris.
proxima quaeque metit gladio latumque per agmen
ardens limitem agit ferro, te, Turne, superbum
caede noua quaerens. Pallas, Euander, in ipsis
omnia sunt oculis, mensae quas aduena primas
tunc adiit, dextraeque datae.

Now not the rumor of such a great misfortune, but a more trustworthy messenger flies to Aeneas: his men are at a small distance from death, and it is time to aid the routed Trojans. With his sword Aeneas mows down whatever is closest to him and, on fire, with the steel he cuts a broad path through the host, looking for you, Turnus, overweening because of

[17] Translation by Halliwell (1987, 43). Else (1978, 352) underscores that "[t]he effect of the recognition, in general, is to uncover a terrible discrepancy between the two sets of relationships: on the one hand, the deep ties of blood, on the other, a casual or real relation of hostility that has supervened or threatened to supervene upon it."

[18] Stahl (2015, 52-5) describes Aeneas' recognition process in detail, with a particular attention to the visual elements of the scene.

[19] Barchiesi 1984, 39.

[20] Arist. *Poet*. 1452a29-52b2. Cowan (2021, 50) notes that there in the final scene of the *Aeneid* there is "no change from *agnoia* to *gnosis*."

your recent slaughter. Pallas, Evander, everything is in his very eyes, the first hospitable table where he arrived as a stranger at that time, and the allyship sealed by the right hands.

There exists, however, a certain ambiguity in the text. The phrase *mali tanti* (10.510) might refer specifically to the slaughter of Pallas, an expression later echoed by *caede noua* (10.515), or, more generally, to the difficulties encountered by the Trojans as specified by the infinitive *esse*. Has Aeneas been made aware of Turnus' violent act, or does he come to know just the imminent perils faced by his men and allies? In other words, do the *balteus* and the *notae bullae* reveal knowledge previously unavailable for the Trojan hero? And if not, can we still consider the closing of the *Aeneid* as a recognition scene in the Aristotelian sense? The baldric and the *bullae* constitute *monimenta* (12.945) in Aeneas' eyes, mournful reminders of the crime committed against his dear ones (12.947: *meorum*). The *bullae*, in particular, little objects worn since birth until one's coming of age and strictly related to the identification and good fortune of Roman boys, have an emotionally powerful impact on Aeneas, who throughout the poem relates to Pallas as a father figure.[21]

The word *monimenta* (12.945), moreover, can indicate recognition tokens, which could be collected in a little chest as proof of someone's identity.[22] Aeneas' recognition of Pallas' spoils, however, does not reveal a person's mistaken or unknown identity nor do the spoils help identify for the first time the agent of a crime (in our case, the man who slew Pallas). Aeneas' recognition in *Aeneid* 12 thus differs from Oedipus' *anagnorisis* in Sophocles, where the identity of the son of Laius, which coincides with the identity of the slayer of Laius, becomes known. The *monimenta* elicit an interpretation of the meaning of the fateful objects, a hermeneutic process not primarily related to the identity of Pallas or the agency of Turnus but concerned with what these objects

[21] On the symbolic significance of Pallas' *bullae*, see Cucchiarelli 2002.

[22] An example of *monumenta* collected in a little chest can be found at Ter. *Eu*. 750-3.

represent both literally (Aeneas seems to recognize the representation of the *nefas* of the Danaids on the baldric) and symbolically. The meaning of these objects changes according to the person who sees them and/or wears them: first, tokens which (used to) make Pallas identifiable and recognizable; second, objects still tied to Pallas' identity but fatally worn by Turnus as spoils of war; third, spoils of war, still, this time reclaimed by Aeneas. In sum, these tokens are *monumenta* in two senses: they remind Aeneas of a person and his fate, but they are also objects of (and subject to) different interpretations. As Don Fowler argues:

> In one sense, [the *balteus*] is an archetypal Roman *monumentum*, the spoils of war taken from the enemy and put on display (…). Perhaps this is a private monument which should have been a public one but Aeneas' reaction to it can also be generalized to make it an example of the use in general of *monumenta*. For Pallas, presumably it meant one thing, for Turnus another: Aeneas then imposes on it his own reading, a reading which will be disastrous for Turnus.[23]

We too, as readers, are involved in Aeneas' backward reading of the baldric. Fowler goes on to remark:

> Whatever the scene on the baldric of Turnus' wearing it was supposed to mean, what matters is what Aeneas does with it: the *monumenta* mean what the audience wants them to mean. (…). The end of the *Aeneid* is the beginning of Rome but also, like all traces, all the monuments and ruins that I have been discussing, the beginning for us of our journey back.[24]

With his recognition not only Aeneas' but also the reader's backward journey begins. The Trojan hero sees past the *hic et nunc* of Turnus' plea. At the sight of the fatal spoils, he lingers in a recollection of the events leading to Pallas' death: the fatal wound, the youth's body thrown to the ground, the rejoicing of Turnus. As readers, we partake in the recognition of Pallas' tokens and the backward reading they set in motion. We turn back to *Aeneid* 10 and the description of the

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[23] Fowler 2000, 213-4.

[24] Fowler 2000, 217.

nefas—the Danaids' slaughter of their just-married husbands—impressed upon the *balteus*; we remember, reread, and reinterpret the poet's voice on the future of Turnus after his triumphant spoliation of Pallas (10.503-5: *Turno tempus erit magno cum optauerit emptum* | *intactum Pallanta*, *et cum spolia ista diemque* | *oderit*). We retrace the Homeric model,[25] the thematic analogy between Pallas' spoils and Achilles' armor, fateful for Turnus and Patroclus (then Hector), respectively. We observe the subtlety with which Virgil exploits the tragic potential of the Iliadic precedent by focusing on a warrior's spoils.[26] In short, we too are implicated in the epistemological consequences of Aeneas' recognition: we do not partake in an Aristotelian shift from ignorance to knowledge (nor does Aeneas) but in a hermeneutic process that brings the past in starker relief than the present. This hermeneutic process is far from linear: as the recognition of Aeneas is somehow double—the recognition of the baldric relies on the recognition of the *nefas* impressed upon it—so too the images of the slaughter perpetrated by the Danaids elicit multiple interpretations. Certainly, by wearing Pallas' spoils, Turnus takes upon himself a *nefas* that is consonant with his own unspeakable act against Pallas,[27] for both the young husbands of the Danaids and Evander's son die a premature death.[28] Aeneas' unforgiving murder repeats, however, a similar pattern: Turnus is young and unmarried. Unlike Hypermestra, the only Danaid who refrains from killing her spouse and with him founds a dynasty in Argos, Aeneas founds the empire-to-be on a murder for which he will not be judged in a trial.

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[25] This retracing is the focus of Barchiesi 1984.

[26] For the *balteus* as *anagnorismos* and the tragic potential of the episode of Achilles' armor, see Barchiesi 1984, 39.

[27] Alessandro Barchiesi 1984, 39: "Così l'azione di Turno è subito investita di un significato che trascende il contesto ed elude ironicamente la sua stessa consapevolezza: strappando il balteo egli si appropria di un *nefas* che vi è iscritto—come Enea, caricandosi sulle spalle lo scudo istoriato con i destini di Roma, si addossava ignaro *famamque et fata nepotum*."

[28] On the *immatura mors* of Pallas and the spouses of the Danaids, see Conte 1984, 96-107.

Although its complexity might not spare the recognition at the end of the *Aeneid* from being disparaged as artless contrivance,[29] Pallas' baldric is far from a trivial object. The baldric functions both as an identity token and as a memorial of a gruesome death. As such, it determines Aeneas' resolution to kill Turnus. Furthermore, the baldric stands out as a piece of art, a small object adorned with a crowded scene. As a semiotically complex object, it triggers a double cognitive act: in order to recognize that the baldric belongs to Pallas, Aeneas must first recognize what it depicts, namely the slaughter of the Danaids, the killing of forty-nine young men during their first wedding nights, an unspeakable crime (10.496-7: *rapiens immania pondera baltei* | *impressumque nefas*). This double recognition corresponds to a duplication, multiplication even, of ethical concerns: we wonder who is more worthy of *pietas*, Turnus kneeling for his life, or Evander, Pallas' father?[30] We could also ask ourselves how these ethical concerns intertwine with those raised by the slaughter of the Danaids. These ethical concerns often verge on political questions concerning the authority of Aeneas: the consequences of the hero's recognition make us wonder whether Aeneas is still the founding father endowed with *pietas* or an autocrat excessively prone to anger.[31]

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[29] Cave (1988, 2) explains what contrivance means in relation to recognition scenes: "Such scenes are somehow too neat to be real, like the mechanism of a cuckoo-clock, and so draw attention to themselves—and to literary form as a whole—as an artifice." Functioning as a recognition token, the baldric would determine the inclusion of the *Aeneid*'s finale in the group of the artless recognition scenes singled out in Aristotle's *Poetics* (1454b28-9).

[30] On the ethically questionable wrath of Aeneas, see Putnam 1990. On anger and Stoic ideals in the *Aeneid*, see Galinsky 1988.

[31] The contrasting views of Putnam and Stahl reflect the controversial nature of the killing of Turnus. Putnam (1965, 151) contends that "the end of the *Aeneid* presents a tragic victory of the very violence and irrationality which Aeneas had up to this point withstood." Stahl (2015, 57), on the other hand, observes that "[o]ne can hardly deny that it is, at least in Aeneas' own understanding, by all means a pious wrath that makes him strike the—in his feeling, deserved—death blow."

A second crucial point in Aristotle's definition of *anagnorisis* is the shift into friendship or into enmity based on the change from ignorance to knowledge. The *balteus* and the *bullae*—tokens which tell a story without speaking, objects more powerful than begging words—determine how Aeneas decides to *recognize* Turnus: not as a suppliant (12.930: *supplex*) who demands commiseration for his corpse and for his aged father, as dear to him as Anchises was to Aeneas (12.932-3: *miseri te si qua parentis | tangere cura potest*, *oro*), but as the murderer of Pallas, as an enemy unworthy of *pietas*.[32] Rather than prompting a shift from enmity into friendship, the recognition of the spoils impedes that shift which determines how a person receives recognition: Turnus has been and continues to be the enemy.[33] By contrast, the person who undergoes a change through recognition is Aeneas. His fury and anger (12.946-7: *furiis accensus et ira | terribilis*) exemplify how recognition, while evoking rationality and reasoning, may generate and be affected, in turn, by violent emotions.[34]

Aristotle's definition of *anagnorisis* puts the accent on pity and fear, the emotions stirred in the audience when recognition takes place at the same time as a reversal of fortune. Aeneas' recognition coincides with Turnus' *peripeteia*,[35] and pity and fear can be easily imagined

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[32] See Cowan 2021, 50: "it [the sword-belt] acts as a recognition token, changing Aeneas' perception and identification of Turnus from that of suppliant to be spared to a murderer to be punished." It is important to add that the identification of Turnus as a suppliant is in its incipient phase: Turnus' words only begin to weaken Aeneas' resolution to kill Turnus.

[33] On this point, see Cowan 2021, 50. Cowan notes that the recognition of Aeneas does not avert kin-killing, suggesting that Turnus can be considered Aeneas' *philos* in light of the connotations of their conflict as a proto-Roman civil war.

[34] The power of anger to affect recognition is worth noting. In Seneca's *De Ira* (2.36), anger is said to transform facial traits so much so that angry persons might not recognize themselves in the mirror: *perturbauit illos tanta mutatio sui*; *uelut in rem praesentem adducti non agnouerunt se*: *et quantulum ex uera deformitate imago illa speculo repercussa reddebat*! It is suggestive to think that Seneca might have had in mind the end of the *Aeneid*, especially because his illustration of anger's effects on one's recognizability follows a discussion on the appropriateness of forgiveness and the advantages of turning enemies into friends in the Roman empire.

[35] Cf. *supra* n. 13.

accompanying the audience's reactions to the final scene: pity for Turnus and his unheeded plea, fear of Aeneas' anger and unforgiving gesture. There are other ways in which the audience participates in recognition. Beyond Aristotle, the insights of a literary critic closer to our time invite us to consider what readers recognize or anticipate recognizing when a novel draws to an end. In *Fables of Identity*, Northrop Frye notes that readers usually expect to recognize the unity of a literary work as a whole when they are about to turn the last page:

> We are continually, if often unconsciously, attempting to construct a larger pattern of simultaneous significance, out of what we have so far read or seen . . . Hence we often keep on reading even a tiresome novel 'to see how it turns out.' That is, we expect a certain point near the end at which linear suspense is resolved and the unifying shape of the whole design becomes conceptually visible. This point was called *anagnorisis* by Aristotle, a term for which 'recognition' is a better rendering than 'discovery' . . . what is recognized is seldom anything new; it is something which has been there all along, and which, by its reappearance or manifestation, brings the end into line with the beginning.[36]

The ending of the *Aeneid* defies Frye's model in several respects. It does not resolve but builds back the tension which momentarily subsided thanks to Turnus' plea. Aeneas' final act, moreover, does not secure an appeasing closure for the poem's characters—Turnus is killed, and the reactions of his old father and the Rutulians at his death are anticipated by his words— nor for its readers.[37] If anything, Frye's model highlights the reader's ambition to recognize, through Aeneas' recognition of the baldric and its consequences, the whole design of the poem.[38] My reading is no exception as it attempts to bring the end into line with the beginning. Both the first and the last book of the poem are marked by a recognition scene performed by Aeneas: the recognition of the scenes on the murals of Juno's temple and the recognition of Pallas' baldric.

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[36] Quoted in Cave 1998, 193.

[37] On this point, see Cave 1988, 15.

[38] Cave 1988, 194: "From the outset, his [sc. Frye's] definition assigns anagnorisis to 'us,' the readers or spectators: *we* recognize the unifying shape of the whole design."

That these scenes involve ekphraseis, descriptions of complex works of art that require decoding and interpreting, should not obscure the fact that they are also objects that trigger complex procedures of identification and recognition. The sort of ring-composition between *Aeneid* 1 and 12 invites us to consider the larger meaning of these "liminal" recognitions, their function as signposts of beginnings and endings, and their significance within the larger scope of a poem which is foundational for Roman identity. Connecting the dots between these scenes allows us to move past an Aristotelian framework to focus on aspects of Aeneas' recognition(s) that are eminently Roman. These aspects are the formation of a Roman identity for both characters and readers, and the influence of civil war on this process. I contend that Aeneas' recognitions mark controversial moments in the definition of his identity as a Trojan refugee and Roman-in-the-making. The issues at stake here—and this is another way in which the *Aeneid* eludes an Aristotelian framework—extend beyond the recognizability of a single individual. The hero's evolving identity makes recognition a challenging endeavor also because the audience partakes in the ethical disorientation engendered by Aeneas' recognitions. This disorientation is particularly visible if we consider the interplay between recognition of individual characters in the text and recognitions by Roman readers outside the poem.[39]

Recognizing *Romanitas*

In the first book of the *Aeneid*, Aeneas recognizes scenes from the Trojan War depicted in the *imagines* of Juno's temple (1.464-94). He even recognizes himself among the leaders of the

[39] While my discussion does not aim to illustrate how Romanness is defined throughout the *Aeneid*, I second Toll (1997)'s interpretation of Romanness as an open category for newcomers. In her view, this openness pairs with the incipient stage of a unifying Roman identity after the social divisions caused both by civil war and by the political and ideological distance that separated the Roman ruling class from the other inhabitants of the Italian peninsula. On these themes, see Toll 1997. Syed (2005) examines the concept of *Romanitas* in the *Aeneid* with a particular focus on gender and ethnicity. She argues that Roman identity emerges through differentiation from ethnic and gender "otherness," an otherness which is, however, as fluid and discursive as the category of Romanness with which it interacts.

Achaeans (1.488: *se quoque principibus permixtum agnouit Achiuis*). While Aeneas' recognition of the panels is accompanied by tears and groans (1.465, 470, 485), little is said about the hero's emotional reactions to his self-recognition. Scholars have suggested that Virgil's reticence on the presence of Aeneas among the Greeks hint at the *Aeneid*'s break from the Homeric tradition;[40] others have seen in the same lines an allusion to myths depicting Aeneas as a traitor in collusion with the Greeks.[41] Michael Putnam claims that "[t]he sub-text of the murals is the metamorphosis of Aeneas, from victim in a shared defeat and lamenter upon viewing its stabilization in art first, into the once and future hero which the paintings postulate, but also more particularly into the vanquisher of someone nearer to hand."[42]

Putnam's observation alerts us to the fact that the tenses of *agnosco*, the present *agnoscit* (1.470) and the perfect *agnouit* (1.488),[43] mirror the temporalities at stake in Aeneas' recognition: the sight of the temple's *imagines* in the hero's present entails a projection into his past experience.[44] The absence of future tenses, by contrast, signals the hero's inability to interpret judiciously what his recognition foreshadows, especially in light of Juno's hostility and the Carthaginians' future enmity with Rome.[45] Aeneas' self-recognition in Juno's temple represents one of several controversial stages in the transposition of the hero's Trojan identity onto the future

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[40] Seo 2013, 39: "Paradoxically, Aeneas' self-identification illustrates Vergil's willful erasure of his past; he blurs the details of Aeneas' literary past to set the stage for his new identity as the founder of Rome."

[41] For an overview of unflattering accounts of Aeneas, see Reinhold 1966 and Austin 1971 *ad Aen*. 1.488.

[42] Putnam 1998, 263.

[43] Some manuscripts transmit the present indicative of *agnosco* also at *Aen*. 1.488, see Mynors 1969 *ad loc*.

[44] Putnam (1998, 254) notes "a lessening of intensity as we turn from the hero's immediate, emotional acceptance of what he sees to an act of mere cognition."

[45] On the emotions of Aeneas in the temple of Juno and his seemingly inexplicable delight and relief, see Johnson 2015, 244-51.

birthplace of the Roman empire. If the recognition of Pallas' baldric casts Aeneas as the leader unable to control his anger, contrary to Stoic ideals, or to comply with Anchises' precept to spare the humbled (cf. *Aen*. 6.853), the murals project Aeneas' ethical ambiguity further back in time by hinting at the hero's equivocal presence among the Greeks, a clue of his betrayal of the Trojans.[46] As the identity of the Homeric-becoming-Virgilian hero—from Trojan to (pre)Roman passing through his disguise as Greek—evolves, a fixed definition of what constitutes Roman identity[47] seems indefinitely deferred.

Such a deferral stands out in *Aeneid* 8, where Aeneas sees the future of Rome without recognizing it. In stark contrast with his recognition of the scenes in Juno's temple and of the baldric of Pallas, Aeneas is ignorant of the figures and events represented on his newly crafted shield (8.729-31):

> Talia per clipeum Volcani, dona parentis,
> miratur rerumque ignarus imagine gaudet
> attollens umero famamque et fata nepotum.

> Aeneas admires these scenes on the shield of Vulcan, his mother's gift. Ignorant of what was represented, he rejoices in the images, lifting up on his shoulder the fame and the fates of his children's children.

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[46] See Reinhold 1966 on mythical variants according to which Aeneas sold the city of Troy to the Greeks, a detail that would explain his place among the Greeks in the panels of Juno's temple. Lydia Spielberg brings to my attention that the presence of Aeneas among the Greeks can also be interpreted as a crystallized projection into the future, when the Trojan hero will become as archetypical as the Homeric heroes among whom he is portrayed in Juno's temple.

[47] The study of Roman identity entails several challenges. One of these lies in the absence of a Latin word for "identity." In addition, identity is a multi-faceted concept and construct, one which encompasses a number of aspects of an individual's life: race, ethnicity, sex, gender, nationality, language, ability, etc. Scholars may erroneously project modern constructs onto the ancient experience or even lose sight of intersectionality when, for instance, political or national identity is assumed to prevail over other components of identity in ancient Rome. These methodological and conceptual issues are discussed in Dench 2010, a contribution that also examines the most distinctive aspects of Roman identity as they were perceived and discussed by the Romans: blood, descent, language, and clothing.

The hero marvels (8.730: *miratur*) at the artistry displayed by the shield as he marveled at the murals (1.456: *miratur*). In contrast with his recognition of scenes from the Trojan War, however, Aeneas does not recognize what the shield displays. A blissful delight accompanies his unaware appreciation of scenes from the future of Rome. In contrast with Vulcan's knowledge of the future—Robert Gurval notes—"[t]he *ignarus* Aeneas inspects the future of his race. Vergil's omniscient reader reviews his past. The difference in perspective perhaps reflects the complex attitude of the poet toward his subject, a mixture of emotions and conflicting passions."[48] Unable to decipher the future impressed upon his shield, Aeneas also overlooks how history repeats itself in the succession of battles at Troy as in Rome (1.456: *Iliacas ex ordine pugnas*; 8.629: *pugnataque in ordine bella*), how the violence on Hector's body (1.483: *raptauerat*) replays in the tortures of Mettus (8.644: *raptabat*).[49] While admiration subtends Aeneas' reactions to the shield and the murals, indignation is a sentiment that unites the defeated on the shield and in the poem. The river Araxes, the last to be mentioned in the list of places and peoples subdued by the Romans, shares his indignation with Turnus' shadow on its way to the underworld (8.728: *pontem indignatus Araxes*; 12.952: *uita indignata*).[50] This alignment soon collapses. Carrying the shield onto his shoulders, together with the fate of his descendants (8.731: *attollens umero famamque et fata nepotum*), Aeneas seems to share the load with Turnus, who will carry on his shoulder Pallas' fateful baldric (12.941-2: *infelix umero cum apparuit alto* | *balteus*; 12.944: *umeris inimicum*

[48] I quote Gurval 1999, 245.

[49] On the parallels between Achilles and Mettus, see Gurval 1999, 222.

[50] On this adjective and its power to evoke sympathy for the defeated, see Gurval 1999, 243.

insigne gerebat).[51]

With Aeneas, readers too are involved in the web of recognitions and misrecognitions created by images and artifacts, and their ekphrastic descriptions in Virgil's poem.[52] With the shield ekphrasis, in particular, Virgil puts his contemporary audience in a position similar to that of Aeneas when he contemplates the panels in Juno's temple: both recognize past events. Like Aeneas marveling at his new shield but unaware of the future it represents,[53] the reader marvels at the artistry of Virgil's poetry, perhaps without being able to foresee the long-term consequences of Augustus' victory at Actium. After all, the battle of Actium represented a crucial moment in the definition of a collective Roman identity. In Gurval's words, "[v]iewed from the perspective of more than a decade that witnessed an enduring, if at times fragile, political success, the Augustan victory entered the Roman public consciousness as a critical moment of collective history and national culture."[54]

Even Augustus partakes in the chain of cognitive reactions set in motion by the shield ekphrasis; in fact, he presides over its climax. The emperor appears sitting on the threshold of

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[51] The parallelism between the baldric and the shield as burdens taken up by Turnus and Aeneas respectively is noted by Barchiesi (1984, 39). Cf. *supra* n. 27.

[52] Feldherr (2014, 288-99) offers an extensive examination of the overlapping and confounding temporal trajectories that past, present, and future observers and readers of the shield would follow in their appreciation of the shield ekphrasis. Ekphrasis, moreover, stands out as a privileged trope for readers to reflect on the destiny of Rome and the Romans. For instance, Rogerson (2002, 57-8) presents the ekphrastic appearance of Ascanius in *Aeneid* 10 as a privileged moment for reflecting on nationhood and the future of Rome: "Ascanius, both symbol and guarantee of his people's Roman destiny, offers opportunity for an audience to consider Rome, to contemplate the nature of a nation and of a people whose fate was so closely tied in with the destiny of this one young hero. And the ekphrasis in Book 10, which offers the prince on display, leads the reader on with the promise of understanding this symbolic aspect of Ascanius' role, of recognising and comprehending the prince, and the future he represents."

[53]Without connecting Aeneas' contemplation of the shield to his amazement at the art in the temple of Juno, Feldherr (2014, 308) suggests that the reference to the bridge on the river Araxes, not yet built in 19 BCE, brings Aeneas and Virgil's contemporary reader on a similar temporal level, as both contemplate history that has yet to take place.

[54] I quote Gurval 1999, 244.

Apollo's temple. He surveys the gifts of the peoples, then fits them on the proud doorposts (8.720-3: *ipse sedens niueo cadentis limine Phoebi* | *dona recognoscit populorum aptatque superbis* | *postibus*). In short, he occupies the focal point of a circular ekphrasis: Aeneas examines a shield, at the center of which Augustus examines war spoils, which are in all likelihood shields.[55] His recognition of the gifts of the conquered counterpoints the Trojan hero's unaware delight before his new piece of armor. This too a gift crafted by Vulcan.[56]

We cannot reconstruct the impact of these divergent cognitive reactions on the poem's readers in the Augustan age. Yet, no matter how unattainable the reconstruction of these reactions of an average Roman reader of the *Aeneid* under Augustus, a few hypotheses are worth making. At first sight it seems that, with Augustus' recognition of the spoils, the making of Roman identity reaches a degree of self-consciousness that did not surface in Aeneas' recognitions of the scenes from the Trojan War in the Carthaginian temple and, even less so, from his delight at the sight of the shield. A self-consciousness of this kind might have been reassuring for Roman readers who looked at their past on Aeneas' shield: Augustus surveys and acknowledges the spoils of the conquered, as if these were recognition tokens apt for forging the identity of an emperor-in-the-making. The battle of Actium was perhaps too close in time to the triumphal procession depicted on the shield for allowing emotions to surface. Delight would have been arrogant rather than oblivious; empathy, perhaps, hypocritical. The poet's silence on the emperor's emotions piques

[55] See Barchiesi 1997, 276 on the circular composition of the ekphrasis and on Augustus' role as most privileged and eminent spectator of the spoils of the conquered, Roman history, and Virgil's work.

[56] See Feldherr 2014, 298: "Even at Actium, however, Augustus is never described as seeing or perceiving anything; he is merely a figure on the shield. His moment as spectator comes when he beholds a representation of past events in the form of a triumph. His position therefore resembles that of the shield's viewer, Aeneas, who is just about to reclaim our attention as the ekphrasis ends. As the objects of Aeneas's gaze were described as *dona* (8.609), so Augustus recognizes the 'gifts of peoples' (*dona populorum*, 8.721)."

the readers' curiosity: what does Augustus think when he surveys the spoils of the conquered? What do we make of this unreadable act of cognition? Despite the fateful potential of the spoils, which dangerously resemble the golden ones on the doorposts of Priam's palace,[57] the emperor's recognition (8.721: *dona recognoscit populorum*) lacks the emotional force of *agnosco*, the verb which twice indicates the recognitions of Aeneas in Juno's temple (1.470, 488).

If we can only speculate about the reader's reactions to Aeneas' inability to see that future in which the reader lives and reads the *Aeneid* and about the reader's reactions to Augustus' emotionless recognition of the spoils paraded in his triumph after the battle of Actium, less of a conjecture is the desire of the Romans[58] to recognize themselves in their ancestors. Virgil's *Aeneid* partakes in the mythological retracing of the Roman past which underpinned genealogical writings from the end of the Republican period onwards.[59] The late Republic and early Imperial period, in particular, saw a growing interest in the genealogy, particularly the Trojan descent, of Roman families.[60] About Varro's genealogical writings, Cicero writes: "Your books led us, almost strangers and wandering guests in our own city, back home, so that we could recognize at last who and where we were" (*Acad*. I iii 9: *nam nos in nostra urbe peregrinantis errantisque tamquam hospites tui libri quasi domum reduxerunt*, *ut possemus aliquando qui et ubi essemus agnoscere*).[61]

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[57] Gurval 1999, 241.

[58] It is important to note that speaking of "the Romans" is approximative in this case, as Cicero is part of a particular group of wealthy and educated Romans who greatly influence the formation of cultural memory. See, e.g., Ginsberg 2016, 11 on the role of elite authorities in the creation of cultural memory.

[59] On genealogical writings at Rome in the late Republic and their importance for questions of identity, see Syed 2005 210-1.

[60] On the Roman interest in myths of Trojan descent as opportunities to differentiate Roman from Greek culture, see Dench 2010, 272.

[61] Syed (2005, 211) quotes this passage and briefly comments on its significance for the Romans' search for their identity throughout the *Aeneid*.

In Cicero's passage, recognition contributes to building the sense of identity which the Roman elites acquired through learning about their ancestors. Aeneas too contemplates his past in Juno's temple, and *agnoscere* will describe his recognitions.[62]

In their quest for recognition, Romans had to grapple with conflicting drives: the expansion of the Roman dominion, on the one hand, and the wars of Romans against Romans, on the other. The conquest of new territories led to the inclusion of non-Romans within the limits of the empire and the *urbs* itself. These historical circumstances might have coincided with a stronger desire to revisit the past, to forge a sense of identity anew. The Romans' interest in their ancestry and genealogical history, in those traditions living on in spite of geopolitical and sociocultural changes, powerfully emerges in the early imperial period, when "massive changes in power, status and membership of the citizen body w[ere] perceived in terms of general social, moral, and religious breakdown. It is against this backdrop that we need to understand the strong interest in the idea of what it was to be Roman."[63]

A destructive counterpoint to this Romano-centric turn towards the past is the inward turn of civil war, a phenomenon that questions and destabilizes Roman identity. Lucan comments on these contrasting drives when he claims that the very expansion of the empire and the arrival of foreigners to Rome should have made civil war impossible to wage (*Phars*. 7.404-7: *nulloque frequentem | ciue suo Romam sed mundi faece repletam | cladis eo dedimus, ne tanto in corpore bellum | iam posset ciuile geri*). Civil war further complicates what being a Roman means by bringing up a specific set of concerns about Roman identity and recognizability.

In short, civil war at once defines and destabilizes Roman identity. Civil strife has shaped

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[62] See *supra* p. 15.

[63] Dench 2005, 103.

Roman identity since its beginnings: Tertullian defines Romulus as *fratricida institutor* because he founds the city after killing his twin brother Remus.[64] Generations before Romulus' foundational fratricide, the arrival of Aeneas to Latium breaks the political balance among the Italic peoples. Even throughout periods of peace and political stability, civil war haunted the memories of the survivors and the thoughts of younger generations.[65]

While defining Romanness on a macrolevel, civil war undermines individual and interpersonal forms of recognition on a microlevel. These forms of recognition break down because civil war makes true statements that contradict one another: a person can be at the same time one's kin, friend, fellow citizen—and enemy. The formula of recognition "this is that"[66] collapses when the "that" can be substituted with contradictory terms, both of which are correct. Thus, if we take the example of Romulus and Remus, it will be equally correct to say, "Remus is Romulus' kin" and "Remus is Romulus' enemy." This contradiction generates a cognitive short-circuit of sorts and soon gives way to an ethical dilemma: how can Remus be Romulus' kin and enemy at the same time? And how should Romulus decide between these two forms of recognition? These dilemmas are readily applicable to Roman civil wars. Imagine old friends who become partisans of opposite factions: what is the form of reciprocal recognition that must prevail from an ethical standpoint?

Epic poetry also thematizes the ways in which civil war interferes with one's ability to

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[64] Morgan 1998, 186.

[65] On civil war as a proverbially ghastly event, see, e.g., Morgan 1998, 183-5.

[66] For an examination of the formula of recognition with a focus on Sophocles' *Electra*, see Dugdale 2017.

distinguish between "this and that" through the assimilation of opposing pairs.[67] The similarities between Aeneas and his antagonists, for instance, increase the difficulty of distinguishing between the hero and his doubles, figures that range from his image in Juno's temple to the Etruscan Lausus and, finally, Turnus.[68] This assimilation takes on a cosmic dimension in the fight between Hercules and Cacus, in which the good side (Hercules mirrors Aeneas and Augustus) seems distinguishable from the evil one (Cacus mirrors Turnus and Antony) only for the winning outcome of its violence.[69]

If civil war has an impact on individual, interpersonal, and collective forms of recognition, it is no surprise that tropes of recognition feature extensively in epic narratives where civil war features prominently, as is the case for Roman epic. The *Aeneid* gives space to the conflict between Italic peoples; Lucan's *Pharsalia* centers upon the war between Caesar and Pompey; Statius' *Thebaid* narrates the strife between Eteocles and Polynices and the ensuing conflict between Argos and Thebes; Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* starts with a conflict between relatives, Jason and his uncle. Back to the Augustan age and its foundation upon long years of civil wars, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* stages the consequences of such conflicts within the individual. Within these poems, recognition scenes and tropes of recognition abound: the recognitions of Aeneas, the mutual recognition of Roman soldiers at Ilerda in Lucan's *Pharsalia*, Jason's recognition of his responsibility for the death of his host Cyzicus in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*, Hyspipyle's recognition of her long-lost children in Statius' *Thebaid*, and frequent episodes of recognition loss

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[67] On the assimilation between hero and villain in the *Aeneid* and, in particular, in the episode of Hercules and Cacus, see Morgan 1998. On assimilation beyond recognition in Statius' *Thebaid*, with a particular focus on Eteocles and Polynices, see O' Gorman 2005.

[68] On the sameness between Aeneas and Lausus and the theme of the double, see Stover 2011 with further bibliography.

[69] On the "constructive" violence of the winning side, see Morgan 1998, 185-7.

in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* make an incomplete list of examples.

While scholars have offered valuable insights into these and other scenes by reading them through the lens of genre interactions,[70] the interplay between epic and tragedy is only part of the picture. An interdisciplinary perspective, one that considers both the historical realities of civil war and the ancient philosophical interests in ethics and epistemology, should be adopted to explain why Roman epic authors consistently engage with tropes and themes of recognition in their poems. It is from this interdisciplinary perspective that my dissertation examines the widespread presence of tropes of tragic recognition in the Roman epic corpus.

I argue that tragic tropes and philosophical discourse speak to one another about recognition in its range of forms and distortions within the capacious genre of epic poetry because epic is *the* genre which most distinctly deals with issues of identity in ancient Rome. Roman epic poets draw at once on tragic recognition and philosophical theories to address the cognitive instability generated by the recurrent civil wars in ancient Rome. When civil conflicts break out, the shifting categories of friend and enemy, kin and stranger, victor and vanquished, generate a constant renegotiation of individual identities and interpersonal relationships. It is in the light of these fluctuating categories that we can better understand the Roman epic trend of pairing civil war narratives with the tropes of tragic recognition and misrecognition.

Misrecognition can be viewed not only as a common preamble to recognition but even as the other face of the same coin. Lucan telescopes recognition and misrecognition when he describes the troubled nights of the Romans who killed their dear ones at Pharsalus: in their mind they felt the same tumult of Pentheus when he was hallucinating, and of Agave when her frenzy subsided (*Phars*. 7.779-80: *nec magis attonitos animi sensere tumultus*, | *cum fureret*, *Pentheus*,

[70] See, among others, Curley 2013, Augoustakis 2014, Buckley 2013, and Sauer 2011.

aut cum desisset, *Agaue*). As Paul Ricoeur poignantly explains, misrecognition is the necessary premise for dramatic recognition to ensue:

> Change has to put its mark on the beings of the world, and most significantly on human beings, for there to be a hesitation, a doubt that gives recognition its dramatic character. Then it will be the possibility of *misrecognition* that will give recognition its full autonomy. Misrecognition will be an existential, worldly form for which the more theoretical form of uneasiness—misjudgment—will not exhaust the meaning.[71]

In addition to signposting the interplay between epic and tragedy, recognition provides a *locus* for poets to draw on ancient philosophical theories, and even to pose questions that resonate with modern and contemporary philosophy. Far from functioning exclusively as a plot device and genre marker, then, tropes of tragic recognition in Roman epic are conducive to exploring the epistemological and ethical dilemmas posed by civil strife in Rome. The dialogue between tragedy and ancient philosophical doctrines within the frame of Roman epic mirrors a tension between two ways of thinking about recognition and, at the same time, two intellectual needs: one is the need to create and to think with categories, such as "tragic" *anagnorisis* or "recognition scenes;" the other is the need to go beyond these categories in order to consider the larger philosophical question of what recognition *is*. It is my contention that Roman epic allows us to rethink recognition against the backdrop of historical circumstances that produce cognitive uncertainty and, as such, pose dilemmas pertaining to the interrelated fields of epistemology and ethics.[72] In this sense, the present dissertation aims to be a preliminary attempt to situate Roman epic at a foundational point in the long intellectual history of recognition.

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[71] Ricoeur 2005, 36.

[72] For an overview of the ways in which epistemology and ethics intertwine, see Feldam 1998, and, for the ancient world, see, e.g., Striker 1996, Baima and Paytas 2020.

Recognition at the crossroads of epic, tragedy, and philosophy

Any research on the influence of tragedy on Roman epic faces considerable limitations. To a greater extent than the Greek tragic corpus, and with the exception of Senecan drama, the Roman tragic corpus is irremediably fragmentary. The influence of ancient Greek drama on Roman theater is largely assessed on hypothetical grounds. Scholars tend to agree that the engagement of Roman playwrights with ancient Greek tragedy was active, inventive, and interpretative. The adaptation of Greek tragedies to Roman pieces may have varied in their degree of literariness, cultural adaptation, and autonomy from their Greek precursors. Yet, how Roman tragedians transposed recognition scenes from Greek tragedies onto the Roman stage remains virtually unknown.[73] Thus, it is not possible to assess thoroughly the extent to which Roman tragedy shaped and mediated tropes of recognition between Greek tragedies and Latin epic poems.

If my study of recognition in Roman epic, then, must do without a full appreciation of pre-Senecan tragedies, the irretrievability of a specific level of (Roman Republican as well as Classical Greek) intertextuality does not necessarily undercut an examination of the presence of tragic recognition in the Roman epic tradition. A number of tragedies may not survive, but the tragic in Roman epic is still alive and well.[74] Similarly, a number of recognition scenes may no longer be extant in the fragmentary tragic corpus, but it is still possible to define those recognition scenes in Roman epic, even those which neither imitate nor allude to a Greek model, and which cannot be pinned to particular intertexts, as tragic recognition scenes.

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[73] On these features of Roman theater, see the rich discussion in Manuwald 2011, 282-319.

[74] The tension between specific instances of recognition scenes and the concept of recognition somehow mirrors the tension between specific (and extant) tragedies and the tragic as a concept. On the latter, and for an analysis of the tension between historicist and universalizing interpretations of tragedy, see Leonard 2012.

I reiterate here that my study focuses on the ways in which recognition—whether or not it features in recognition scenes—opens up ethical and epistemological lines of inquiry. In particular, I am interested in the ways in which Roman epic poems subsume the ethical and epistemological questions about recognition to address the historical and sociopolitical phenomenon of civil war. An overview of recognition at the crossroads of epic, tragedy, and philosophy will illustrate why it is valid to speak about tragic recognition in the epic genre and how critical and metaliterary reflections on recognition in literary criticism and in works of literature verge on issues of epistemology and ethics.

Aristotle's *Poetics* shows that the attempt to define, categorize, and provide examples of *anagnorisis* poses questions that do not pertain exclusively to a playwright's mastery of combining recognition with reversal nor to the types of signs necessary for recognition between long-lost relatives to take place. These questions concern the ethical implications of recognizing a person as the one who did or did not do a certain deed (*Poet*. 1452a35-6) or, for instance, the logic and the reasoning behind recognition. Syllogistic reasoning underpins recognition at times. Aristotle (*Poet*. 1455a4-6) draws an example from the *Libation Bearers* and outlines the following logical passages in the recognition of Orestes: 1) someone similar (to Orestes) arrived (in Argos); 2) but no one is more similar to Orestes other than Orestes; 3) so it is this (Orestes) that arrived. Yet, the risk of false reasoning and unsound inferences looms large over recognition. Even the audience may fall for false deductions when the poet sets up false assumptions (*Poet*. 1455a12-6). As a controversial mode of knowledge, recognition is "a means of knowing which is different from rational cognition,"[75] because it relies on trivial details (tokens, signs, scars) and, therefore,

[75] Cave 1988, 3.

questionable proofs. Even when small tokens and childhood scars lead to happy endings, the knowledge acquired through recognition remains "dubious or disturbing."[76] Because of their potential to harbor tragic reversals, as Steven Rendall notes, even recognition scenes in comedy are haunted by the ghost of tragedy:

> Uncertainty concerning an individual's identity is inseparable from the danger of patricide and incest, as the archetypal recognition scene enacted in *Oidipos tyrannos* indicates. Even comic recognition scenes, in which foreigners regularly turn out to be long-lost relatives of the local citizens, are shadowed by the potential for tragedy inherent in cases of mistaken identity, for the *anagnorisis* might just as easily reveal the heroine to be the hero's sister rather than the daughter of his father's best friend.[77]

We cannot read what Aristotle wrote about comedy in the second book of the *Poetics* nor know if he mentioned comic recognition or the tragic potential of recognition scenes in comedy.[78] What we can read is Aristotle's definition of tragedy in order to better understand the connection between the plot device of recognition and the emotions generated by tragedy (*Poet.* 1449b24-28):

> Tragedy, then, is a representation of an action which is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude – in language which is garnished in various forms in its different parts – in the mode of dramatic enactment, not narrative – and through the arousal of pity and fear effecting the *katharsis* of such emotions.[79]

By stirring pity and fear, recognition brings into effect the purification of the audience from those emotions (*Poet.* 1452a30-38b3).[80] In order to be tragic and emotionally effective, recognition must take place between persons related by close ties. The relationship, whether manifest or not, of the

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[76] Cave 1988, 7.

[77] Rendall 1989, 380.

[78] How Aristotle may have defined comic *anagnorisis* in relation to its tragic counterpart and how his definition could have influenced the critical debate on recognition remain matters of speculation.

[79] Translation by Halliwell (1987, 37).

[80] Translation by Halliwell (1987, 43). Else (1978, 352) stresses that "[t]he effect of the recognition, in general, is to uncover a terrible discrepancy between the two sets of relationships: on the one hand, the deep ties of blood, on the other, a casual or real relation of hostility that has supervened or threatened to supervene upon it."

persons involved in the recognition process is a quintessential component of the most powerful form of tragic recognition in contrast with less impactful (hence, less tragic) turnouts. As Gerald Else underscores:

> Recognition is in fact a way in which the emotional potential inherent in certain human situations can be brought to its highest voltage, so to speak, at the moment of discharge. It is evident then, how far Aristotle is from regarding recognition merely as a "plot-device," a matter of technique. Tragic recognition is indeed a technical device but its *raison d'être* is its power to concentrate an intense emotional change upon a single event, a change of awareness; for in that μεταβολή the whole depth of a human tragedy can be "contained."[81]

In the *Poetics* (1448b-49a), Aristotle dwells at length on the correspondence between tragedy and epic, between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, on the one hand, and specific Greek tragedies on the other. Both genres feature noble characters, yet they differ in an important way: while epic narrates a story in hexameters, tragedy represents a story through actions, words, and gestures with a variety of meters. Another passage from Aristotle's *Poetics* (1449b) is particularly significant in considering the position of tragedy and epic in the hierarchy of literary genres. Despite epic's chronological precedence on tragedy, the latter almost encompasses the epic genre while exhibiting some irreducible elements peculiar to itself only. Although the philosopher does not discuss in detail recognition scenes in epic,[82] it is possible to assume that tragic recognition scenes would befit the epic genre, especially in light of Aristotle's explanation of the effects of tragedy as a readable text that can evoke pity and fear in a written (and not necessarily performed) form.

Whereas epic has chronological priority over tragedy, tragedy acquires philosophical priority over epic so that, through tragedy, we are able to read the Homeric poems tragically. These constitute pre-tragic models for two different forms of recognition: the recognitions between

[81] Else 1978, 352-3.

[82] Aristotle (*Poet*. 1454b-55a) draws some examples of recognition from the *Odyssey*.

Odysseus and several other characters in the poem (Penelope, Telemachus, and Laertes, among others) become models for recognition scenes between long-lost relatives in tragedies (such as those, for example, between Ion and Creusa in Euripides' *Ion*, or between Orestes and Electra in several dramas). The *Iliad*, on the other hand, offers a repertoire of a different form of recognition, specifically "a tragic recognition in a broader sense, those moments when the characters realize that the stories of their lives have not been the stories they thought they were."[83] In the *Iliad*, themes such as self-knowledge and understanding of the gods' plans abound.[84] Achilles, for instance, recognizes his mistakes and responsibilities, while self-consciously accepting the inscrutable design of the gods. Achilles can be considered a pre-tragic hero also because, upon Patroclus' death, he recognizes his partial foreknowledge and limited understanding of the consequences of his actions:

> Thus the *peripeteia* of the *Iliad*, like that of the *Oedipus Tyrannus*, depends on a change in the hero's knowledge of his position, a change that confirms and explains past foreknowledge. This new knowledge also reveals the extent and the catastrophic consequences of past ignorance and error.[85]

Sheila Murnaghan explains one of the differences between 'recognition scenes' in the *Odyssey* and 'recognition' in the *Iliad* as follows:

> Thus, the recognition scenes of the *Odyssey*, in which Odysseus' return is announced and his continued capacity to claim the status that constitutes his identity is confirmed, express this exceptional hero's transcendence of the fluctuations of fortune and of mortality. The meaning of these scenes is therefore very different from that often attributed to episodes of recognition or (to use Aristotle's term) *anagnōrisis*, especially when they are found in tragedy: the confrontation of those harsh truths that people generally try to ignore. Thus it is significant that, of the two Homeric epics, the *Iliad*, which stresses the painful awareness of human limitation that is often labeled tragic, contains no scenes of recognition, while

[83] Scodel 2005, 186.

[84] On the presence of tragic themes in the *Iliad*, see Rutherford 1982.

[85] Rutherford 1982, 146.

> the *Odyssey*, which offers a counter to that vision, is, as Aristotle put it, «ἀναγνώρισις … διόλου» "recognition throughout" (*Poetics* 1459b15).[86]

Yet, these two forms of recognition are not mutually exclusive: a typically Odyssean form of recognition does not necessarily exclude certain Iliadic characteristics. Even in tragedies with a happy ending, such as Euripides' *Ion* and *Helen*, the recognition between long-lost or unknown relatives entails the tragic toil of reinterpreting and rereading the past, of giving new meanings to one's life and history.[87] Epic is, then, the source of conventions-made-tragic; tragedy, sprung from epic, reshapes in turn the epic genre for both authors (Apollonius models his Medea on the Euripidean precedent) and readers (we can read the Homeric poems through the lens of tragedy). On the interactions between the genre of epic and tragedy Ruth Scodel writes:

> Epic, having created tragedy, re-created itself on the model of its creation . . . Even without Aristotle's influence, we would see Achilles and Hector as tragic figures. Thanks to the *Poetics*, it is often impossible to distinguish what tragedy took from Homer from what we see in epic because tragedy, and the history of the criticism of tragedy, has directed our vision. Epic and tragedy are inextricably entangled.[88]

The intergeneric position of recognition between epic and tragedy created fertile ground for metaliterary reflections on the conventions of the trope. Recognition scenes become highly self-reflexive and metaliterary moments. As Isabelle Torrance shows,[89] the recognition scene in Euripides' *Electra*, in which the eponymous protagonist questions the validity of Orestes' footprint and hair lock as proofs of identity, is a highly metadramatic moment. Rather than critiquing Aeschylus' dramatic technique, Euripides critically engages with the conventions of *anagnorisis*

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[86] Murnaghan 1987, 16.

[87] Scodel 2005, 187.

[88] Scodel 2005, 195.

[89] Torrance 2011, reprinted in Torrance 2013, 13-32.

and the constraints of the tragic genre. This scene in the *Electra* does not obey tragic conventions and, as a result, Electra fails to recognize Orestes as conventions dictate. The old man, on the contrary, will be the one who recognizes Orestes by relying on the conventional (and Homeric) sign *par excellence*: the scar. The reflexive turn of the recognition scene in this play implicates the audience in the process of metaliterary recognition as well: "As a stock feature of tragic poetry, the recognition scene is also an obvious mechanism through which to invite audience recognition of metapoetic suggestions or narrative."[90] The audience gets involved in the process of recognition at a different pace and with an eye to different objects than the characters on stage.

With Euripides, then, the debate on recognition takes center stage while being all the more fueled by what Cave defines as the "scandal" of recognition. In Cave's view, recognition can be considered a scandal for three main reasons: it brings up or avoids, if performed in time, the scandal of incest and adultery; like the French *scandale*, "it is a stumbling block, an obstacle to belief;" as in the Greek *skandalon*, it ensnares the reader in hunting the truth behind the (recognition) scenes. At first sight, recognition constitutes a step into the rational and the plausible, a step which happens, however, by highly implausible means and proofs, trivial objects, negligible skin marks, and unverified stories. The implausibility of recognition from the rational standpoint of literary critics and philosophers is in tension with its high plausibility in a fictional world. This plausibility is, in turn, reinforced by the frequent resorting to recognition for the resolution of the plot. Recognition may formally solve the puzzle of the plot, yet rarely, if ever, dissolves the anxieties around newly uncovered knowledge.[91]

[90] Torrance 2011, 199.

[91] On the scandal of recognition, see Cave 1988, 1- 9.

Moving beyond the scandalous aspects of recognition within a literary and metaliterary framework, we should turn to Cicero's philosophical dialogues to delve into philosophical, and eminently epistemic, aspects of recognition. Cicero's works exhibit a wide range of concerns about the human ability to recognize that "this is that" and to distinguish between this and that. These concerns, however, are not drawn from a systematic theory of recognition but inscribe themselves into a wider debate on sense-perception: the possibility to recognize someone or something depends also upon the reliability of sensorial perceptions. This is a highly contested issue in antiquity, and Cicero offers a sophisticated account of divergent philosophical positions on this matter in the *Academica*. A brief sketch of these positions will prime our alertness to the epistemological themes in Roman epic beyond the widely acknowledged influences of the Epicurean Lucretius.[92]

Whereas the Epicureans argue for the reliability of the senses,[93] the Stoics contend that it is so only in specific circumstances. In particular, senses are reliable only when they are struck by cataleptic impressions, namely "impressions through which we can grasp" things: these come from existent objects, and are endowed with clarity and distinction that correspond to the object from which they come.[94] On the contrary, noncataleptic impressions lack clarity and distinction, come from nonexistent objects, and are as inconsistent as the visions of dreams and the suppositions of thought.[95] These points are contested by the New Academics. In their view, distinguishing with certainty between cataleptic and noncataleptic impressions would be as unlikely as distinguishing

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[92] See, e.g., Hardie 2009; Lehoux, Morrison, and Sharrock 2013.

[93] Senses never fail, but the mind can fail to elaborate what the senses experience. For a discussion of the reliability of the senses in Epicurean philosophy, see Vogt 2016.

[94] See Hankinson 2003, 60-1 (from which I quote) for a more comprehensive definition of cataleptic impression.

[95] See Hakinson 2003, 61-2.

between identical twins, eggs, or bees. Now, the Stoics do not deny that identical twins are almost indistinguishable. They note, however, that the trained eye of the mother will be able to tell them apart, in the same way in which the trained person will be able to tell apart cataleptic from noncataleptic impressions.[96] In addition to the issue of the reliability of the senses, ancient philosophical schools eagerly debate on issues of identity and individuality. What is it the makes each individual different from others? What and how much can be taken away from an individual before it becomes unrecognizable?[97] These questions will be relevant both for the (mis)recognition of mutilated or headless bodies in Lucan's *Pharsalia* and for the recognition of changing bodies in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

Besides his philosophical works, Cicero's reflections on topics as disparate as divination and prose meter bring out additional epistemic aspects of recognition. Specifically, recognition stands out as a form of knowledge that does not necessarily rely on logic and rationality. As Cicero notes, it is possible to recognize a phenomenon without fully appreciating its causes. For instance, one can recognize the foreboding signs of winds and storms without grasping their causes. The same happens for the prophetic meaning of entrails (*De Diu*. 1.16: *sic uentorum et imbrium signa*, *quae dixi*, *rationem quam habeant*, *non satis perspicio*; *uim et euentum agnosco*, *scio*, *approbo*. *Similiter*, *quid fissum in extis*, *quid fibra ualeat*, *accipio*; *quae causa sit*, *nescio*). What is more, Cicero observes that one can recognize a certain rhythm in Latin prose and acknowledge its existence without understanding its causes (*Or*. 183: *esse ergo in oratione numerum quendam non est difficile cognoscere*. *Iudicat enim sensus*; *in quo est inicum quod accidit non agnoscere, si cur*

[96] These arguments are explicated in Cic. *Acad*. 2.49-60.

[97] As Lewis (1995) demonstrates, Stoics argue that the criterion of identity for ensouled individuals is the persistence of the soul conceived of as quality.

id accidat reperire nequeamus). There seems to be a disconnect between the cogency of recognition and the unsound knowledge of the causes of the phenomenon that is recognized.

In addition to its strict relation to issues of identity and individuality, the particular type of knowledge associated with recognition contributes to its complexity as do the multiple meanings of the verb "to recognize" and of the abstract noun "recognition." Ricoeur's *The Course of Recognition* (*Parcours de la Reconnaissance*) offers sophisticated help to readers who grapple with these concepts. Starting from a lexicographical overview of the variety of meanings and subspecies of meaning under the lemmas "to recognize" and "recognition" (*reconnaître* and *reconnaissance* in French) and counting no less than twenty-three meanings, Ricoeur notes that the difficulty in conceptualizing recognition is also due to the slippage between the semantic nuances of the term in addition to their vague or loose overlapping.[98] To recognize means to know, to identify, to distinguish, to acknowledge, to confess, to express gratitude—the list could go on. Out of such a wide range of meanings three main senses of recognition emerge: 1) recognition as identification; 2) recognition as acknowledgement or avowal; 3) recognition as gratitude.

My dissertation will not consider the third sense, namely recognition as "bear[ing] witness through gratitude that one is indebted to someone,"[99] but will focus on the first and the second semantic family. In the first sense, recognition corresponds to identification: "to recognize something as the same, as identical to itself and not other than itself, implies distinguishing it from everything else." In this sense, recognition goes hand in hand with knowledge—its nature is theoretical and epistemic.[100] In the second sense, "to recognize" means "to acknowledge," "to

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[98] Ricoeur 2005, 1-22.

[99] Ricoeur 2005, 12.

[100] On this first sense of recognition, see Ricoeur 2005, 21 from which I quote.

admit," "to accept." In this family of meanings, the normative and evaluative sense of recognition is most prominent: what is recognized includes, but is not limited to, social roles, norms, values, responsibility, and ideas. Hegel's *Anerkennung*—a model which will be relevant for my examination of Statius' *Thebaid*—would appear in this family of meaning. According to Hegel's theory of the tragic, recognition coincides with the acknowledgement of the partiality of one's ethical claim. Antigone's burial of her brother, Polynices—the enemy of Thebes and of Eteocles, Antigone's other brother—comes to exemplify the forbidden action, the guilty deed. It is by performing this deed that Antigone understands the partiality of her ethical claim. In other words, her action makes her realize that her exclusive recognition of her brother Polynices entailed a neglect towards Creon's ethical imperative not to bury the enemy of Thebes. In Hegel's theory, knowledge becomes ethical knowledge: Antigone's one-sided ethical imperative derives from her partial ethical knowledge.[101] Hegel's model is not faithfully based on the plot of Sophocles' *Antigone* but draws from the tragic plot to outline a stage of the Spirit.[102] As such, it well exemplifies the tension between literary criticism, based on the plot, and philosophy, which transcends the plot to bring recognition into the realm of ethics and epistemology.

A brief overview of the occurrences of *agnosco* allows us to infer that in Latin "to recognize" presents analogous families of meanings to the ones outlined above. It is in Cicero's wide-ranging works that the second semantic family of *agnosco*, that which pertains to the

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[101] I rely on Billing's explanation of Hegel's *Anerkennung* in light of Sophocles' *Antigone*. See Billings 2014, esp. 170-2.

[102] The genealogical interpretation of Hegel's *Phenomenology* offered by Billings (2014) sheds light on historicity-related interests which persist in the German Idealists' take on tragedy. For Hegel and Hölderlin, in addition to being a literary genre in its own right and sociocultural specificity, tragedy is "a figure for understanding historicity" because it provides a model for understanding historical processes in ancient Greek society and their alterity to Christian religion and German philosophy. On this point, see Billings 2014, 161-3.

recognition of norms, values, or even guilt, come to the fore. Thus, for instance, it is possible to recognize virtues (*De or*. 2.362: *humanitatem et facilitatem agnoscimus tuam*), crimes (*Rab. Post*. 18.6: *hoc crimen agnoscerem*, *confiterer*), or the glory of a certain deed (*Mil*. 38: *facti illius gloriam libens agnouisset*). "To recognize" as in "to identify" is likewise attested for *agnosco*. For instance, a fragment attributed to Pacuvius (*ap*. Prisc. 887 P.) describes Orestes' recognition of his sister Iphigenia in a crowd: *in turba Oresti cognita agnota est soror*. The juxtaposition of the two participial forms, *cognita* and *agnota*,[103] serves to illustrate the difference between cognition and recognition. The crowd is objectively perceived by Orestes (*cognita*), but his perception of Iphigenia is subjective (*agnota*): only Orestes or some other relative or acquaintance could have recognized Iphigenia.[104]

A gem for lexicographers, Pacuvius' fragment appears also in Ausonius Popma's *De differentiis uerborum*[105] together with an overview of the differences between *agnosco* and *cognosco*:

> Agnoscere est recognoscere propinquos, amicos, aliasque res, quas ante nouimus. Cognoscere est noscere eos qui prius incogniti, ignoti et inuisi erant, seu diligenter et attente considerare; hinc etiam cognoscere ad magistratum pertinet, qui de haereditatibus, de causis cognoscit. Itaque agnoscere plus est, quam cognoscere. Illud adfectum simul et uoluntatem, prolixumque studium, hoc tantummodo nudum intellectum respicit; illud specialius, hoc generalius est. (…) Agnoscere erratum suum, est confiteri, cum affectu, cum dolore animi.[106]
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> *Agnoscere* is to recognize relatives, friends, and other things we knew before. *Cognoscere* is to know those who were previously unknown, not well known and unseen, or to consider diligently and attentively; hence, *cognoscere* pertains to the judge, who knows about inheritances and the cases in law. And so *agnoscere* is more than *cognoscere*. The first

[103] An archaic form of *agnita*, particularly interesting for lexicographers.

[104] For the difference between objective and subjective perception, expressed by *cognosco* and *agnosco* respectively, see Lewis-Short *s.v. agnosco*.

[105] Feenstra 2008 provides a short biography of Ausonius Popma.

[106] See Popma 1852 *s.v. agnoscere*.

> regards one's disposition and at once will, and a well-disposed inclination, the second merely regards the bare intellect; that is more particular, this is more general. (…) To recognize one's own mistake is to confess with some affection or pain of mind.

Despite its focus on the juridical and religious aspects of recognition, Popma's lemma clearly outlines the two senses of *agnosco*. The usage of *agnosco* and *cognosco* does not always reflect Popma's schema,[107] as they gradually become interchangeable especially in Christian authors.[108] Yet, *agnosco* still "implies to a certain extent the idea of a remembrance, a recognition, a re-appearance in someone's consciousness, a sense which conforms to the sense typical of the compound [with the preposition *ad*]."[109] In philosophical works an inchoative sense seems predominant: *agnosco* means to acquire some knowledge.[110]

A similar tension between recognition as identification and recognition as ethical acknowledgement, in addition to the complications deriving from their overlapping, stands out in civil war narratives in Roman epic. Civil war engenders a tension, even a disconnect at times, between the two senses of recognition above. To draw an example from Lucan's *Pharsalia*, Caesar and Pompey are not long-lost relatives who suddenly discover the truth about their blood ties. Caesar can still recognize, i.e., identify, Pompey as his son-in-law. However, he does not recognize Pompey for what he represents as his son-in-law, for he disregards the societal norms that do not

[107] Popma acknowledges some exceptions to the rule. See Popma 1852 *s.v. agnosco*: *Sed haec differentia non semper servatur*.

[108] Thomas 1938, 70.

[109] Thomas 1938, 70: "En réalité, beacoup d'exemples, notamment de Cicéron, impliquent encore à quelque degré l'idée d'une reconnaissance, d'une réminiscence, d'une réapparition dans la coscience, ce qui est conforme à la valeur propre du composé." The sense of *ad*, as Thomas explains, is the idea of proximity, with or without movement, and its metaphorical developments.

[110] Thomas 1938, 70.

approve of waging war against kin. I will consider this tension in many of the readings that follow this introduction.

Chapters Overview

This study offers an interdisciplinary interpretation of the widespread presence of tropes of tragic recognition in Roman epic. My chapters do not aim to examine each recognition scene or every trope of recognition in the Roman epic corpus but to demonstrate that recognition represents a recurrent preoccupation of epic authors in ancient Rome. While the attention to the influence of tragedy on epic has dominated the scholarly debate and illuminated important aspects of the interaction between these two genres, my study attempts to move beyond the classical canon of recognition, that is, beyond texts that are commonly considered in the scholarship on recognition: Homer's *Odyssey*, Greek and (albeit less frequently) Roman tragedy, and Aristotle's *Poetics*.

If, as we have seen in the first pages of this introductory chapter, Virgil's *Aeneid* highlights how difficult it is to recognize a nascent *Romanitas* through the prism of Aeneas' recognition of Pallas' baldric as more significant than Turnus' plea, Lucan's *Pharsalia* questions whether the very concept of *Romanitas* outlives civil war.[111] In the first chapter, I argue that the crisis set in motion by civil strife is particularly visible in Lucan's epic representation of the dilemmas faced by Roman soldiers who fight in opposite ranks. Drawing on contemporary theorizations of interpersonal and hierarchical recognition, I will examine the significance of recognition in the fraternization of Pompeians and Caesarians at Ilerda. The reactions of the soldiers at the sight of their dear ones in the ranks of the enemy bear striking similarities with Caesar's reaction at the

[111] On *Romanitas* outliving the battle of Pharsalus, see Bartsch 2001, 44.

sight of Pompey's head. Instead of interrupting civil strife, however, recognition amplifies the horror of fighting against friends and relatives.

The second and third chapter focus on the extensive engagement of Roman epic poems of Greek subject matter with the epistemological premises and ethical implications of recognition. The second chapter analyzes a self-contained episode in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*, namely the peaceful first encounter and the inadvertent night battle between the Argonauts and the Cyzicans at Cyzicus. I argue that the Cyzicus episode foregrounds the ways in which perceptual instability and the unreliability of the senses undermine recognition. Echoing the tenets of the New Academics, Valerius Flaccus puts on display his own epistemic failures, in particular his inability to extricate the tangle of causes that underlie the heroes' cognitive shortcomings. In the third chapter on Statius' *Thebaid*, I argue that, through Antigone's words, Statius conceptualizes recognition as an array of experiences that range from the identification of a perceived object to the ethical consequences of recognizing or deciding not to recognize as such one's own kin.

My fourth and concluding chapter examines Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, a poem that features Greek and Roman myths alike. Ovid's poem is the least explicitly concerned with internecine strife. Yet, the metamorphoses of the poem put the accent on the extreme consequences of the epistemological crisis entailed in civil war. The struggle for recognition becomes existential and totalizing. The cognitive dilemmas of the metamorphic world, however, are not as concerned with the distinction between this and that person as with the fine line between the human and the non-human.

Each author displays a peculiar take on the question of recognition that is never detached from larger questions on identity, the senses, the emotions, and rational vs. irrational cognition. While civil strife is a common thread among all the poems under my scope, each poet magnifies

aspects of the interplay between recognition and civil war focusing primarily on the following categories: Roman citizens in Lucan's *Pharsalia*, hosts and guests in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*, kin in Statius' *Thebaid*, and the human self in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Certainly, these categories can overlap, and this will be clearer in the ensuing discussion. However, the order of the chapters intends to reflect a gradual movement from the broadest to the narrowest category, from the most distant to the closest level of proximity: the proximity of the metamorphosed self exceeds that between relatives; the proximity between kinsmen, in turn, exceeds that between hosts and guests, who are expected to be more proximate than fellow citizens. Although my discussion will occasionally consider intertextual references across epic poems, and in particular the influence of Virgil's *Aeneid* and Lucan's *Pharsalia* on Flavian epic, the organization of the chapters aims to highlight each poem's original take on the dilemmas associated with recognition in civil war contexts.

Chapter 1. Recognizing Romans: Recognition and Civil War in Lucan's *Pharsalia*

At the end of *Pharsalia* 1, prodigies and omens spread terror among the Romans. A gigantic Fury roams around the city, blinding its inhabitants. Frenzy also grips a nameless *matrona*, who utters prophetic words on the impeding civil war (1.674-86):

> nam, qualis uertice Pindi
> Edonis Ogygio decurrit plena Lyaeo,
> talis et attonitam rapitur matrona per urbem
> uocibus his prodens urguentem pectora Phoebum:
> 'quo feror, o Paean? qua me super aethera raptam
> constituis terra? uideo Pangaea niuosis
> cana iugis latosque Haemi sub rupe Philippos.
> quis furor hic, o Phoebe, doce, quo tela manusque
> Romanae miscent acies bellumque sine hoste est.
> quo diuersa feror? primos me ducis in ortus,
> qua mare Lagei mutatur gurgite Nili:
> hunc ego, fluminea deformis truncus harena
> qui iacet, agnosco.'
>
> For as an Edonian woman, full of Ogygian Lyaeus, runs down from the summit of Pindus, even so a matron is carried away through the astounded city, revealing with these cries Phoebus' urging on her chest: "To what place am I borne, o Paean? To which land do you appoint me as I am carried off through the air? I see Pangaeus white with snowy ridges, Philippi stretching widely beneath the rock of Haemus. Tell, Phoebus, what fury is this for which the spears and troops and armies of the Romans clash and war is without a foreign enemy? Where am I borne, in different directions? You take me to the eastern threshold, where the sea is changed by the waters of the Lagean Nile: I recognize him, the deformed trunk lying on the river sands."

Stephen Hinds has interpreted the *matrona*'s prophetic statement as an example of "allusion troped as recognition." Hinds notes that "as a reflexive annotator, engaged in another kind of vatic interpretation, she recognizes Priam—dramatizing our own realization, as readers that we too have seen this decapitated trunk before, in the second book of the *Aeneid*."[112] Yet the *truncus* on the

[112] I quote Hinds 1998, 9. On recognition troped as allusion, see Hinds 1998, 8-10.

shore does not recall just Priam's headless body in Virgil's poem (*Aen*. 2.506-8): it also constitutes a historical reference to Pompey's decapitation.[113] The identity of the person to whom the corpse belongs is not clearly stated, yet the poem's readers would have likely caught the reference to Pompey. Although the headless corpse remains without a name, the mention of the Nile clearly hints at the fate of the Magnus in Egypt. The matron's nameless identification of a human body corresponds to a lucid recognition of the tragic consequences of civil war for its illustrious victims as well as for its anonymous actors. Pompey's headless corpse may very well stand for the many headless corpses of soldiers that await recognition on the battlefield in the aftermath of a gruesome fight. The matron's identification without names and without faces, however, does not detract from the recognition of the horror of civil strife. Linking a nameless subject with a nameless object, *agnosco* (1.686) stands out for its ethical force.

Because of its unique subject, the interpretations of the *Pharsalia* range widely: anti-Virgilian epic, critical counterpoint to Caesar's *Bellum Ciuile*, history abridged and expanded by poetic inspiration, poetry inspired by a graceless and tyrannic Muse, poetry for the sake of immortal poetry (*Phars*. 9.985-6: *Pharsalia nostra | uiuet*), and Stoic manifesto.[114] However divergent the readings of the poem, it is apparent that history, epic, and tragedy merge in unprecedented ways in the *Pharsalia*: Roman history becomes the subject of an epic poem permeated by tragedy. Lucan's poem, in turn, inscribes itself into an epic tradition that consistently drew inspiration from tragedy.[115] At the same time, as many before him, Lucan grafts history onto

[113] On the evocative power of the headless trunk see, e.g., Hinds 1998, 8-10 and Berno 2004.

[114] For an overview of the numerous interpretations of Lucan's *Pharsalia* see, e.g., Esposito 1999, 11-37.

[115] Ambühl 2015 offers a detailed examination of the reception of Greek tragedy in Lucan's poem. Particular attention is given to the tragic tradition on the war between Eteocles and Polynices and on the destruction of Troy. In addition to analyzing the correspondence between Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon and Eteocles' attack against his own city and the parallel between Polynices' burial and the burial of Pompey, Ambühl (2015, 24-33) provides a rich overview

tragedy (and vice versa): long before the composition of the *Pharsalia*, historical events appeared both in tragic and epic texts.[116] The interplay between history, tragedy, and epic is a distinctive, if not unique, trait of Lucan's *Pharsalia*, a poem in which history resembles tragedy and, at once, historical accuracy gives way to reflections on the phenomenon of civil war beyond the specificities of the conflict between Caesar and Pompey. It is also by means of this generic complexity that Lucan's *Pharsalia* magnifies a series of cognitive conundrums and ethical conflicts generated by civil war. By drawing on tropes of tragic recognition, Lucan delves into the effects of civil war on the Romans' ability to recognize themselves and their fellow citizens.

This chapter examines instances of individual and collective (mis)recognition in Lucan's poem. In particular, I will consider the ways in which the two senses of recognition outlined in my introductory chapter, namely recognition as identification and recognition as ethical acknowledgement, play out in Lucan's epic.[117] Recognition in the sense of identification is hindered by the mutilation of corpses on the battlefield: in the aftermath of the slaughter, oftentimes body parts need to be recomposed, with severed heads matched with the trunks to which they belong.[118] An exception to the limited recognizability of mutilated corpses is Pompey's body,

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of the complex interplay between the tragic and the epic genre and of the reception of Homer's potentially tragic themes in Attic tragedy. The influence of Attic tragedy on the *Pharsalia* is a different question than the tragic nature of the poem. If medieval commentators made Lucan the highest poet of the tragic Muse, as the commentary of Benvenuto da Imola shows, contemporary critics advanced the argument that the *Pharsalia* is rather grotesque and "fundamentally untragic, despite its subject matter and the high moral tone of its narrator… it is too ridiculous, too absurd, to be tragedy" (Bartsch 2001, 37). I am inclined to consider both the influence of Attic tragedy and the tragic as viable interpretative keys for at least some aspects of Lucan's poem.

[116] Suffice it to mention Aeschylus' *Persians*, preceded by the lost *Sack of Miletus* by Phrynicus, the *praetextae* based on historical events, such as Naevius' *Clastidium*, and the archaic Latin epic poems of historical subject, such as Ennius' *Annales* and Naevius' *Bellum Poenicum*.

[117] On the families of meaning of recognition, see my introduction, esp. pp. 35-8.

[118] Bodily dismemberment is a theme that features prominently in the scholarship on Lucan. Thus, Bartsch (2001, 10-47) examines the collapse of bodily boundaries and of the distinction between subject and object, human and non-human in relation to the integrity of the self, an integrity threatened by the Stoic disregard for the body. Dinter 2012

which can be identified precisely because of its missing head (8.710-1: *nullaque manente figura* | *una nota est Magno capitis iactura reuolsi*).[119] Whether dead and alive, the Great is hyper-recognizable: his face is too famous to escape recognition from the crowd (8.12-4); his headless body, which lies on the shores by the Nile, is both prophetically recognized by the *matrona furens* in the first book of the poem (1.685-6), as we have just seen, and later by one of his men, the *quaestor* Cordus (8.712-20).

Bodily dismemberment aside, identification is generally not the point at issue in the *Pharsalia*. Caesar and Pompey are well aware of their kinship, as Eteocles and Polynices were aware of their brotherhood throughout the Theban conflict. Along the same lines, Roman soldiers fighting on opposite sides are cognizant of their shared civic identity. Recognition in the sense of ethical acknowledgement, on the other hand, stands out as a temporary achievement or a feigned obligation both from an individual and collective perspective.

In the larger scheme of things, Pompey's death and the incompleteness of the poem would exclude either party's recognition of the one-sidedness and partiality of its claim to power within the narrative frame of the *Pharsalia*. Even within the limits of the poem, Caesar's recognition of Pompey's head does not coincide with his realization of the ethical implications of fighting against his own kin and fellow Roman. Recognition does not offer redemption. At times, it intensifies the enjoyment of the crime and worsens its horror. Before emerging in Caesar's recognition of Pompey's head, these mechanisms will come to the fore at Ilerda, where Pompeians and

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examines the ways in which body imagery connects several thematic layers of the poem (the cosmos, the state, the military corps, and the textual body) and focuses on the correspondences between the fragmentation of the body and the fragmentation of the text.

[119] Roche 2009, 386: "Lucan is playing off the paradox that Pompey's headless corpse and disfigured body are his distinguishing characteristics."

Caesarians are able to see, identify, and recognize each other. In this case, recognition leads to a fraternization that is, however, as ephemeral as the realization of the ethical consequences of the soldiers' mutual identification. Both parties quickly engage once again in battle, and the brief truce induced by recognition will worsen the impiety of their resumed fight.

Friends and foes, Romans and non-Romans

Before considering the impact of civil war on one's ability to recognize friends and foes, it is important to underscore that in ancient Greece and Rome the imperative "help friends, harm enemies" in itself generates a series of dilemmas.[120] The capaciousness of the categories of friendship and enmity produce moral conflicts and contradictory obligations precisely because the same individual can be at once someone's fellow citizen and personal enemy or, for instance, someone's kinsman and political rival.[121] The category of friendship in antiquity comprises more than personal friends. It includes family members related by blood ties or through marriage, as well as fellow citizens, all of whom are expected to reciprocate help, advice, and favors with gratitude and loyalty. Oftentimes extended kin may also be one's fellow citizens or politically allies.[122] Conversely, the category of enmity comprises more than personal and war enemies. Enmity between two individuals or two groups of people might arise from offenses, failures to reciprocate favors and benefits, or incompatible interests.[123] Transitivity adds other complications to the workings of friendship and enmity in the ancient world: societal expectations to help the

[120] See Blundell 1989, 26-49 for a detailed overview of friendship and enmity in ancient Greek popular thought. Many points which Blundell makes are applicable to Roman society as well. I rely heavily on Blundell's detailed discussion in this section.

[121] As Blundell (1989, 50-9) illustrates, ancient authors acknowledge the conflicts deriving from these contradicting obligations.

[122] See in particular Blundell 1989, 39-49 on the breadth of the categories of friendship and enmity.

[123] On the different aspects of enmity, see Blundell 1989, 37-8.

friends of a friend and to harm a friend's enemies produce a long chain of benevolent or hostile obligations which can easily cast the same person simultaneously as an ally and an enemy. [124]

To the modern reader, Jacques Derrida's *Politics of Friendship* offers insights into the lability of the categories of friendship and enmity.[125] Contesting Carl Schmidt's conceptualization of enmity as an exclusively public category, Derrida draws on classical theorizations of friendship, from Aristotle to Cicero, to examine the overlying concepts of fraternization, friendship, and political alliance, on the one hand, and the interferences between politics and friendship, conceptualized as fraternal and natural bond, on the other. The French philosopher's vision of a politics of friendship beyond polemology speaks to the difficulty of separating the personal from the political sphere and of recognizing what and who a friend or a foe is.

Difficulties of this kind are exacerbated by civil wars, when fellow citizens, expected to be on each other's side, become war enemies. These circumstances did not spare Roman society, in which dilemmas concerning recognition extended from individuals to collectivities. When the dichotomy of friend vs. enemy no longer maps onto that of Roman vs. non-Roman—in other words, when a fellow Roman citizen might also be a political or a war enemy—recognition turns into a cognitive and ethical challenge. This challenge concerns what it means to be Roman and the ethical stakes of fighting against other Romans. As the *Pharsalia* shows, failures of recognition are not limited to the strife between Caesar and Pompey but extend to the interactions between Romans fighting on opposite sides. If in the *Aeneid* the struggle for recognition entails the

[124] On the transitivity of these categories, see Blundell 1989, 47.

[125] Derrida 2020 calls into question the classical theorization of friendship as a natural or genealogical bond because this theorization generates conflicts between the personal and the political sphere. In order for the concept of friendship to function without contrasts with the political sphere, according to Derrida, friendship must be conceptualized as unnatural and non-genealogical.

difficulty of understanding when and how a Roman identity will (ever) become distinguishable and recognizable from that of the Trojan newcomers and Italic peoples, in Lucan's *Pharsalia*, civil war fuels self-destructive tendencies within Roman society: the thing which becomes difficult to recognize is no longer a budding identity but one that implodes by turning against itself.[126]

In Lucan's poem, challenges are shown to start with the very definition of civil war. The heinous crime of civil strife taints the two leaders as much as the soldiers who fight against their relatives (1.4: *cognatas acies*). Whereas Lucan condenses the essence of the conflict in the syntagm *plus quam ciuilia* (1.1), the looming battle of Pharsalus calls into question the appropriateness of the adjective "civil" for describing the war between the two Roman generals and their armies (7.270-5). The cognitive struggle of defining the war itself and deciding how to recognize one's opponents are particularly visible in the prelude to the battle of Pharsalus. Against the backdrop of humanity's ignorance before cosmic signs of looming destruction (7.201-4), each general reflects on the nature of the impeding battle. In his exhortations to his soldiers, Caesar presents the war against Pompey's militias as one fought against the real enemy of Rome, an army formed by Greek warriors accustomed to the soft gymnasium and the barbarians annoyed by the fanfare of Roman wars (7.270-4). Civil war, the real one, will be fought by a few ranks (7.274-5: *ciuilia paucae | bella manus facient*). Thus, civil war produces a double conundrum: on the one hand, it destabilizes the cognitive habits of the people involved, who need to reconsider the way that they would recognize the friends whom they will encounter in the enemy's ranks; on the other, the disorientation extends to the very definition of the event that is disorienting. How far, then, can

[126] On this point, see Bartsch 2001, 44: "Does true *Romanitas* live on under the emperors? Or, as Lucan puts it, did the battle at Pharsalus have the power to decide 'what Rome was'(7.132)?"

the battles between Caesar's and Pompey's soldiers be considered civil if the latter are mostly mercenaries?

Similarly, the tie between Caesar and Pompey resists any straightforward definition. The ethical obligations imposed by their kinship falters when Julia, Caesar's daughter and Pompey's wife, dies. Julia's sudden demise disrupts the equilibrium between her husband and father who remain, however, *cognati*. Appearing in Pompey's dreams, the woman threatens that her ghostly presence will not allow Pompey to cease being Caesar's son-in-law; in vain her husband will try to break their bond with the sword (3.31-4: *numquam tibi*, *Magne*, *per umbras* | *perque meos manes genero non esse licebit*; | *abscidis frustra ferro tua pignora*: *bellum* | *te faciet ciuile meum*). These words will be unheeded. Because of that, Julia resembles both as a *Sabina manqué*, unable to forestall a war between in-laws, her father Caesar and her spouse Pompey, and a second Jocasta, a figure who cannot avert the fratricidal conflict between Eteocles and Polynices.[127]

Throughout the war, Caesar is at once *socer* ("father-in-law") and *hostis* ("enemy") in relation to Pompey,[128] and as such defies the cultural pattern for which enemies (*hostes*) become relatives (*adfines*) for the sake of peace. The Theban war between Eteocles and Polynices, the mythical paradigm to which civil war is often compared, does not feature a hostile father-in-law. In contrast with Caesar, Adrastus, the Argive king who hosts the Theban exile and provides him

[127] See Sannicandro 2010, 148 on the ways in which Julia evokes the figure of Jocasta and the role of the Sabine women. The abduction of the Sabine women was, moreover, represented on stage in Ennius' *Sabinae*. For Julia as failing boundary between Caesar and Pompey, see also Bartsch 2001, 15.

[128] On the motif of hostile fathers-in-law, see Lentano 1995 and Lentano 2001. Commenting on Hor. *Carm*. 3.5, Lentano (esp. 1995, 164-5) notes that the categories of "father-in-law" and "enemy" are mutually exclusive according to the normative conventions of Roman society. The Roman soldiers who marry Parthian women after the defeat of Carre become the sons-in-law of the enemy. The Parthian old men, then, are at the same time *hostes* and *soceri*, an untenable combination.

with an army, consistently acts as is expected from a father-in-law. He remains an ally for Polynices before and throughout his armed conflict with Eteocles.

Caesar's status as both Pompey's "father-in-law" and "enemy" illustrates how the co-existence in the same person of mutually exclusive roles from a sociocultural standpoint generates cognitive short-circuits and casts recognition as a dilemma. Recognition is not exempt from the dilemmatic structures of thought that have been shown to cut to the core of Lucan's poem and align it to tragedy.[129] Rather, it features prominently among cognitive difficulties and ethical conundrums embedded into the very structure of civil war, which "is itself fundamentally dilemmatic: whether one chooses Caesar's side or Pompey's, one shares in the guilt of fratricide."[130] Unable to escape from sharing in the guilt, Romans are, moreover, confronted with the dilemma between recognizing those who fight on the opposite side as either friends or foes. Both horns of the dilemma are true and, as such, generate epistemic doubts and ethical uncertainty.

Recognizing Romans at Pharsalus and Ilerda

That the recognition of familiar faces in the enemy's ranks could undermine any soldier's fierce dedication to the cause of the war does not escape Caesar's attention. The preparation for the battle of Pharsalus shows the general's awareness of the risks posed by recognition to the military success of his ranks. An assault on recognition underpins the logic of Caesar's command: the less recognizable dear faces become, the lower the risk for soldiers to be swayed by awe-inspiring images.[131] The leader anticipates that *pietas* would prevent soldiers from exerting violence against their kin. Therefore, as long as the weapons shine, he summons his ranks to remain impassible

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[129] For instances of dilemmatic thought in the *Pharsalia* and in Seneca's tragedies, see Pandey 2014.

[130] I quote Pandey 2014, 121-2.

[131] See Roche 2019 *ad Phars*. 7.322.

before the faces of people worthy, instead, of *pietas* (7.320-2: *sed*, *dum tela micant*, *non uos pietatis imago* | *ulla nec aduersa conspecti fronte parentes* | *commoueant*). In addition, Caesar declassifies any crime against kin. In his view, it makes little difference whether a soldier kills a relative or dear friend, as this crime will be the same in the enemy's eyes: there would be no distinction between kindred and strangers (7.323-5: *siue quis infesto cognata in pectora ferro* | *ibit*, *seu nullum uiolarit uolnere pignus*, | *ignoti iugulum tamquam scelus inputet hostis*).[132] If Caesar wants to prevent recognition from inhibiting his soldiers' brutality, so much so that he exhorts his men to hit the face of their adversaries even in the middle of the battle (7.575: *aduersosque iubet ferro confundere uoltus*),[133] Pompey summons his soldiers not to forget their kin when fighting for Rome's freedom. However, he does not mention brothers and fathers. He evokes the image of mothers, Roman *matronae*, who would look with parenetic gazes at their sons from the walls of Rome (7.369-70).[134]

In the divergent exhortations of Caesar and Pompey, we discern what Matthew Roller has defined as "the fracturing of ethical discourses in Lucan," a fracturing which "may constitute a literary strategy for representing civil war: the warring of two groups within society is reflected in the competition between alternative ethical discourses."[135] Roller notes that the values of *uirtus*, martial prowess and courage, and *pietas*, respect and moral obligation towards family members

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[132] I see here another instance of dilemmatic thought as examined by Pandey 2014.

[133] It is worth noting that the manuscripts read either *confundere* (V) or *contundere* (Ω). The sense of the sentence does not change significantly: the latter presents a more violent connotation than the former. See Housman 1970 *ad Phars*. 7.575.

[134] Roller 1996, 326 inscribes Pompey's appeal into his communitarian view of the war. According to this view, the enemy is still considered part of the community. On the contrary, Caesar's view excludes the Pompeians from the Roman community.

[135] Roller 1996, 319.

and the community, inevitably clash when the same person can be simultaneously a fellow citizen and an enemy.[136] It is impossible, therefore, to show military prowess by fighting against kin and fellow citizens, the same people who deserve *pietas*.[137] Again, the choice between *uirtus* and *pietas* is a dilemma.

Caesar does not dismiss the significance of seeing brothers and fathers (and of being seen by them) on the battlefield. He aims, however, to provide his soldiers with other ways of seeing and feeling seen, albeit for their skills and military talent. As if to compensate for the coerced neglect of recognition required from his ranks, Caesar underscores that *he* recognizes each and every soldier (7.287-94):

> cuius non militis ensem
> agnoscam? caelumque tremens cum lancea transit
> dicere non fallar quo sit uibrata lacerto.
> quod si, signa ducem numquam fallentia uestrum,
> conspicio faciesque truces oculosque minaces,
> uicistis. uideor fluuios spectare cruoris
> calcatosque simul reges sparsumque senatus
> corpus et inmensa populos in caede natantis.
>
> Whose sword would I not recognize of any of my soldiers? When a quivering spear crosses the sky, I would not fail to tell which arm hurled it. If I look at the signs that never failed your leader, the stern faces and your threatening eyes, you have won. I seem to look on rivers of blood and at once kings trodden upon, the body of the senate scattered, and the people floating in boundless slaughter.

In addition to recognizing the sword of each combatant, Caesar is able to trace the way that a spear quivers through the sky back to the soldier whose arm hurled the weapon. For the purpose of recognition, weapons outclass physical traits. Faces and eyes, instead, function as body parts that infallibly allow the Roman general to predict the slaughter about to be perpetrated by his soldiers.

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[136] See Roller 1996, 322 on the simultaneous status as citizens and foreign enemies of the Romans.

[137] See Roller 1996, 321-2.

In the midst of the battle, swords do not only function as recognition tokens for each soldier but also as instruments to assess the enormity of the slaughter. Wandering throughout the battlefield like Bellona, Caesar inspects which swords are completely drenched in blood, which ones are just dipped into the gore (7.560-1: *inspicit et gladios*, *qui toti sanguine manent*, | *qui niteant primo tantum mucrone cruenti*). Emotional details do not go unnoticed: to Caesar's eyes, a change of expression on the face of a soldier who sees a Roman citizen die (7.564-5: *quis uoltum ciue perempto* | *mutet*) is hardly a good sign.[138]

The connection between the identification of kin, friends, and fellow citizens in the enemy's ranks and the recognition of the obligations of *pietas* towards them must be disrupted for the success of the war. The inhibiting effects of recognition on martial fury emerge once again from the narrator's comments on the battle of Pharsalus. While placing the mourning for the entire Roman nation above the individual fate of each soldier,[139] Lucan lists some of the ways of dying and dealing with a friend's death on the battlefield (7.626-30):

> quis pectora fratris
> caedat et, ut notum possit spoliare cadauer,
> abscisum longe mittat caput, ora parentis
> quis laceret nimiaque probet spectantibus ira
> quem iugulat non esse patrem.

> The soldier who strikes his brother's chest and, in order to be able to despoil a corpse known to him, he hurls away its severed head; or the man who tears his father's face and, through excessive wrath, he proves to the onlookers that the man whose throat he's cutting is not his father.

[138] Fertik (2018, 449) argues that "by expressing his dedication to his soldiers and recognizing their service to him, Caesar claims the role of kinsman as well as leader." In her view, this type of recognition would substitute for the warmth of family ties. Thus, Caesar replaces the role of mourning mothers and wives when he cares to press the wounds of the soldiers on the battlefield, a gesture of familial devotion (458). In the wider scope of the poem, substitutions of this kind, according to Fertik, reconfigure the ties of the community, with devotion to leaders replacing familial ties.

[139] On the narrator's comments on individual deaths, see Leigh 1997, 78-9.

Recognition must be promptly disregarded when a Roman soldier encounters his brother or father on the battlefield. Thus, the way to overcome the remorse of slaughtering an acquaintance or kinsman is by throwing his severed head away, by getting rid of the most identifiable and identifying body part; alternatively, the simulation of rage hides the struggle of cutting one father's throat when onlookers are watching.

The dilemma of choosing between *uirtus* and *pietas*—values that harmoniously coexist when a society is at war with a foreign enemy—is all the more pressing before the battle of Pharsalus. When brothers and fathers become visible on the other side of battlefield, *pietas* paralyzes the soldiers' determination to fight: a certain languor grips their chests, as cold blood congeals around their viscera (7.464-8: *uidere parentum* | *frontibus aduersis fraternaque comminus arma*, | *nec libuit mutare locum. tamen omnia torpor* | *pectora constrinxit*, *gelidusque in uiscera sanguis* | *percussa pietate coit*). This scene evokes the events at Ilerda in *Pharsalia* 4, where the armies of Caesar and Pompey are stationed in encampments so close that the soldiers can see one another: kinsmen, friends, and fellow citizens recognize each other and put a halt to the hostilities.

While dismissing the significance of peripherical or relatively bloodless battles that precede Pharsalus, the Ilerda campaign stands out as a determinant move for the outcome of the war (4.3: *maxima sed fati ducibus momenta daturum*).[140] The first day of the campaign, moreover, marks a new beginning, if not the beginning of the civil war as a whole.[141] It is in light of the programmatic significance of the Ilerda episode within the poem as a whole that I examine Lucan's

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[140] For the exceptionality of Ilerda in comparison with other battles, see Masters 1992, 43. For the general structure of book 4 and Lucan's narrative strategy in comparison with Caesar's, see Asso 2009, 14-7 and 100-3.

[141] See Masters 1992, 65-7.

emphasis on the recognition between Roman enemies. Casting the fraternization between Roman enemies as a recognition scene, Lucan delves into the effects of civil war on modes of interpersonal recognition and ethical acknowledgement. In addition to worsening the guilt of the soldiers who fraternized, recognition stands out as a fundamental building block in the construction and deconstruction of Roman identity. The Roman self takes center stage as the immaterial battleground where layers of other co-existing and competing identities generate internal conflicts and ethical challenges.

The narration of the fraternization in Caesar's *De Bello Ciuili* serves here as another example of the conflicting duties and desires of the soldiers engaged in the civil war. The men are coerced into a reluctant and fearful obedience to military oaths by the controlling presence of their leaders. Yet, the absence of the leaders and their gazes gives way to a certain disinhibition, to the fulfillment of otherwise prohibited desires, and to a longed-for fraternization (Caes. *BCiu*. 1.74):

> Quorum discessu liberam nacti milites colloquiorum facultatem uulgo procedunt, et quem quisque in castris notum aut municipem habebat conquirit atque euocat. Primum agunt gratias omnibus quod sibi perterritis pridie pepercissent: eorum se beneficio uiuere. Deinde imperatoris fide quaerunt, rectene se illi sint commissuri, et quod non ab initio fecerint armaque quod cum hominibus necessariis et consanguineis contulerint, queruntur. (…) Interim alii suos in castra inuitandi causa adducunt, alii ab suis abducuntur, adeo ut una castra iam facta ex binis uiderentur.
>
> When the generals went away, the soldiers with a newly acquired freedom and ability to engage in conversation, come forth openly, each one seeking and calling out any acquaintance or fellow citizen he had in the camps. First, they all thank everyone for having spared them the day before, when they were in dismay: they were alive thanks to them. Then they inquire about the general's good faith and ask whether it would be reasonable to surrender themselves to him; they regret the fact they had not done it from the beginning and that they fought against relatives and kinsmen. Meanwhile, some soldiers led their kindred and fellows into their camps to entertain them, some others in turn were taken away by their kin, so that it seemed that one single camp was now made out of two.

The regret for having fought against people with whom they are related indirectly and directly (*hominibus necessariis et consanguineis*) reveals the soldiers' emotional instability at

Ilerda and elsewhere throughout the war. The osmotic movement of soldiers between the two encampments can be read both as a symptom of a precarious sense of belonging and as the result of a disorienting interchangeability of bodies and faces that move back and forth in a reciprocal exchange. In Caesar's text, the indefinite pronoun *quisque* gives way to increasingly more specific definitions: known faces (*quem notum*), fellow citizens (*municipem*), blood-related family members (*consanguineis*), and less close relatives or friends (*hominibus necessariis*). As the repetition of the possessive pronoun (*suos*/*ab suis*) underscores, the soldiers reclaim some people, they are in turn reclaimed by some others. The unifying osmosis for which two camps become one (*castra una ex binis*) rests on a datum not particularly emphasized by Caesar but central in Lucan's epic: every soldier is, in the end, a Roman.

Building on Caesar's emphasis on the regret and the disorientation that fighting against friends and relatives entails, Lucan dramatizes the feelings connected to recognition while putting particular emphasis on the boundaries that recognition redefines. In addition to redefining demarcation lines between friends and foes, in Lucan's hands the fraternization at Ilerda also uncovers latent divisions between allies. The geographical distribution of troops at Ilerda aptly represents both the division between Caesar and Pompey and within the latter's party. The camps of Caesar's legate Fabius and of Pompey's lieutenants Afranius and Petreius[142] occupy opposing hills. Both are removed from the hill where the town of Ilerda is located. The triangulation of the strategic fulcra of the campaign—Pompey's hill, Caesar's hill, and Ilerda —reflects the "internal fracturing" within both the Roman community, as the separation between the two *triumuiri* shows, and Pompey's party: Afranius and Petreius are supposed to defend the hill of Ilerda but station

[142] For biographic information on Afranius and Petreius, see Asso 2009 *ad Phars*. 4.4-5. On the ambiguous description of the ostensible cooperation between Pompey's lieutenants, see Masters 1992, 44-5 and Asso 2009 *ad Phars*. 4.4 with additional bibliography.

away from it.[143] As Jamie Masters puts it, "it . . . looks as though Ilerda is the object of a Roman siege, except that the besiegers (Caesar plus the Pompeians) are at war with each other."[144] The topography of Ilerda helps visualize the divisions among the Romans as much as it displays how variable the boundaries which maintain these divisions are.[145]

Although scholars have underscored the exceptionality of the truce at Ilerda, the only occasion on which recognition puts a significant halt to the hostilities,[146] little has been said on the significance of recognition throughout the fraternization scene and its aftermath. This is notable because scholars have commented on the intertextual and thematic references to episodes of the *Aeneid* in which recognition is prominent. Thus, Paolo Asso points out that the shared meals and libations of the fraternizing Romans evoke the conviviality of the Trojans and their Latin hosts at Evander's hut, which in turn follows Evander's recognition of Aeneas (*Aen*. 8.154-5: *ut te*, *fortissime Teucrum*, | *accipio adgnoscoque libens*!).[147] In addition, Sergio Casali interprets the fraternization between Roman enemies as a clear allusion to the "fraternization" between Aeneas and Dido: at the end of *Aeneid* 1, telling and hearing stories kindle the love between the Carthaginian queen and the Trojan hero.[148] I would add that these allusions are reinforced by Dido's recognition of her love for Aeneas. Again, the verb *agnosco* in Dido's famous exclamation

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[143] For more details on the topography of Ilerda and the hills as symbols of internal division, see Masters 1992, 46-53.

[144] I quote Masters 1992, 51.

[145] On the symbolic significance of the flood as eraser of boundaries, see Masters 1992, 72-3. On the human body as boundary from the external world, but one which constantly collapses or is penetrated, see in particular Bartsch 2001, 10-29.

[146] See Leigh 1997, 47.

[147] Asso 2009 *ad Phars*. 4.197-8.

[148] For a thorough examination of the intertextual references between *Phars*. 4 and *Aen*. 4, see Casali 1999, 231-6. Casali points out the similarity between Mercury in the *Aeneid* and Petreius in the *Pharsalia*: both are agents that undo the fraternization between people fated to be enemies.

at *Aen*. 4.23, *adgnosco ueteris uestigia flammae*, will resonate more than once in Lucan's narration of the truce. After all, the peace between Romans is presented as a rekindling of love, and Dido too feels love again after putting it aside for a long time.

These intertexts underpin the significance of recognition at Ilerda, where anxieties around questions of identity and belonging come to the fore. In light of the reciprocity of recognition between friends and family members, the uncertainty around how one should recognize a familiar face in the opposite camp entails a more self-oriented disquiet. "Can I still recognize my friend as my friend now that he fights for my enemies?" is a question that subtends another pressing doubt: "Can my friend still recognize me as one of his friends now that I fight alongside his enemies?" With these questions in mind, it is possible to better appreciate how moments of construction and deconstruction of the soldiers' conflicting identities alternate through sudden and disorienting changes (4.169-78):

> postquam spatio languentia nullo
> mutua conspicuos habuerunt lumina uoltus,
> [hic fratres natosque suos uidere patresque]
> deprensum est ciuile nefas. tenuere parumper
> ora metu, tantum nutu motoque salutant
> ense suos. mox, ut stimulis maioribus ardens
> rupit amor leges, audet transcendere uallum
> miles, in amplexus effusas tendere palmas.
> hospitis ille ciet nomen, uocat ille propinquum,
> admonet hunc studiis consors puerilibus aetas

> After their eyes, weakened by no distance, mutually stared at their clearly discernible faces, [thereupon they saw their brothers, their sons, and their fathers], the crime of civil war was discerned. For a little while, they held their mouths shut in fear. They greet their dear ones just with a nod and by waving the sword. Soon afterwards, when love, burning with greater pangs, broke military laws, the soldiers dared to cross the rampart and to stretch forth their hands and arms wide open for embraces. One man invokes the name of a friend; another calls a kinsman; the time spent together in childhood endeavors comes as a warning to this man's mind.

Lucan lays emphasis on the physicality of the soldiers' first steps towards their mutual recognition: due to the proximity of the camps, faces are clearly and reciprocally visible (4.170: *conspicuos uoltus*) to the eyes (4.170: *mutua lumina*) of the soldiers on both sides. Through sight, the soldiers regain the cognitive and emotional ability of seeing again those familiar faces as they used to do, and for what they meant, before the conflict. A mutual identification leads, then, to an ethical recognition, one which presents tragic colors, of the nefarious aspects of civil war. In Seneca's tragedy, the verb *deprendo* (4.172) describes Oedipus' recognition of his fate and genealogical identity, a recognition soon followed by the Theban hero's self-condemnation for his own crimes (Sen. *Oed*. 915-7: *praedicta postquam fata et infandum genus* | *deprendit ac se scelere conuictum Oedipus* | *damnauit ipse*).[149]

At Ilerda, the Romans' realization of being implicated in the *nefas* of civil war is followed, at first, by a timid hesitation. The rules of war prevent the soldiers from acting on the recognition of their dear ones: mouths are shut with fear, a nod and a little movement of the spear make for a fearful greeting. In order to undermine the rules of an excessive conflict, familial love and personal affection need, in turn, to surpass the love for war: the soldiers, incited by greater impetuses, dare to cross the rampart. At this point, recognition can be fully performed with bodily and verbal language. In a tight embrace, the soldiers call out the names of their hosts, relatives, and friends of youth (4.177-8)—a significant counterpoint to Caesar's mention of direct and indirect relatives (*BCiu*. 1.74).[150] The men thus give and are given back an identity which transcends civil war by selectively activating shared memories of youthful endeavors and lighthearted adventures. The recovery of a shared Roman identity is then ritualized by shared meals and libations of mixed wine

[149] On other intertextual echoes of this line in Statius, see Esposito 2009 *ad Phars*. 4.169-72.

[150] See *supra* pp. 55-6.

(4.198: *permixto Baccho*), as *permixti* are the soldiers in both camps, and by the conjunction of the beds at night (4.199: *iuncto cubili*). Like Aeneas and Dido, and before them Odysseus with Penelope after her recognition of her long-lost spouse,[151] the Romans spend the night telling war stories in a newly found domestic dimension.

A shared, collective memory of recent and less recent events plays a key role in finding again a shared identity and harmony among now former enemies (4.196-210):

> pax erat, et castris miles permixtus utrisque,
> errabat; duro concordes caespite mensas
> instituunt et permixto libamina Baccho;
> graminei luxere foci, iunctoque cubili
> extrahit insomnis bellorum fabula noctes,
> quo primum steterint campo, qua lancea dextra
> exierit. dum quae gesserunt fortia iactant
> et dum multa negant, quod solum fata petebant,
> est miseris renouata fides, atque omne futurum
> creuit amore nefas. nam postquam foedera pacis
> cognita Petreio, seque et sua tradita uenum
> castra uidet, famulas scelerata ad proelia dextras
> excitat atque hostis turba stipatus inermis
> praecipitat castris iunctosque amplexibus ense
> separat et multo disturbat sanguine pacem.

> There was peace and the soldiers wandered, mingling in both camps. On hard turf they inaugurate meals in harmony and libations of mixed wine. Grassy hearths burnt with fire, war stories prolonged the sleepless nights in joined beds: on which battlefield they first held their place, which hand hurled the spear. While they boast what valiant deed they accomplished and deny many others, as they were only obeying their fate, they—wretched!— renewed their pact and each future crime was increased by their love. After Petreius learned of the pacts for peace and sees both himself and his camps sold, he incites the servile hands to the impious battle. Surrounded by his crowd, he chases away the unarmed soldiers from the camps, separates the joined embraces with the sword, and disrupts peace with much bloodshed.

[151] *Od*. 23.300-9 (trans. Lombardo 2000): "After Odysseus and Penelope had made sweet love, they took turns telling stories to each other. She told him all that she had to endure as the fair lady in the palace, looking upon the loathsome throng of suitors, who used her as an excuse to kill many cattle, whole flocks of sheep, and to empty the cellar of much of its wine. Odysseus told her of all the suffering he had brought upon others, and of all the pain he endured himself. She loved listening to him and did not fall asleep until he had told the whole tale."

Civil war is being turned into a story of the past, when Petreius disrupts the peace. After gaining knowledge of the truce, the general restores the love for war. He disjoins the soldiers' embraces with his spear and reminds his men of the homeland and the war standards (4.212: *inmemor o patriae*, *signorum oblite tuorum*). By activating a different type of memory than that which the soldiers selected for recognizing their dear ones, Petreius' wrathful words remind the soldiers of the rules of civil war, whereby the enemies on the opposite side of the rampart cannot be recognized primarily as fellows. Among those very tables and beds that symbolized the institution of peace and the restoration of harmony, the soldiers strike the breasts they had just embraced. Oscillating between love and hate, they kill with a certain reluctance their own dear ones (4.243-50):

> itur in omne nefas, et, quae fortuna deorum
> inuidia caeca bellorum in nocte tulisset,
> fecit monstra fides. inter mensasque torosque
> quae modo conplexu fouerunt pectora caedunt;
> et quamuis primo ferrum strinxere gementes,
> ut dextrae iusti gladius dissuasor adhaesit,
> dum feriunt, odere suos, animosque labantis
> confirmant ictu.

> The soldiers proceed through every unspeakable crime, and loyalty committed the monstrosities which fortune, with the ill-will of the gods, would have brought about in the blind night of battles. Among the tables and couches they strike those breasts which they lately warmed with their embrace. And although, at first, they draw out their weapons with groans, as soon as the sword, which dissuades from acting justly, adheres to their hand, they hate their dear ones while they give the death blow, and they settle their wavering feelings with their stroke.

How shall we interpret, then, the sudden change of spirit and the fickle memory of the soldiers, who easily forget the warmth of their friends' embraces? It is clear that the identity of the soldiers is torn between two forms of recognition that are incompatible or even mutually exclusive in a civil war context. When not influenced by the control of their leaders, the Romans perform a

mutual recognition along a horizontal axis. This "concerns recognition between persons or groups of persons, and it is this form of recognition that variably goes by the name of 'interpersonal recognition' or 'intersubjective recognition.'"[152] Then, when they are reminded of their military identity and the laws of war, the same soldiers long for recognition on a vertical axis, which "concerns recognition between individual persons or groups, on the one hand, and something higher than them, on the other hand."[153] It is the desire for recognition along the vertical axis that leads the soldiers to perpetrate the atrocities they themselves abhorred after the initial identification of their dear ones. As we have seen, the sight of familiar faces leads soldiers to recognize the impiety of civil war (4.173). The horizontal and interpersonal recognition of kin, friends, and hosts acquires a higher moral significance than the vertical recognition of military hierarchies.

To have recognized kinsmen and fellow citizens will render all the more unjustifiable the crimes perpetrated against other Romans (4.179-94):

> nec Romanus erat, qui non agnouerat hostem.
> arma rigant lacrimis, singultibus oscula rumpunt,
> et quamuis nullo maculatus sanguine miles
> quae potuit fecisse timet. quid pectora pulsas?
> quid, uaesane, gemis? fletus quid fundis inanis
> nec te sponte tua sceleri parere fateris?
> usque adeone times quem tu facis ipse timendum?
> classica det bello, saeuos tu neglege cantus;
> signa ferat, cessa: iam iam ciuilis Erinys
> concidet et Caesar generum priuatus amabit.
> nunc ades, aeterno conplectens omnia nexu,
> o rerum mixtique salus Concordia mundi
> et sacer orbis amor: magnum nunc saecula nostra
> uenturi discrimen habent. periere latebrae
> tot scelerum, populo uenia est erepta nocenti:
> agnouere suos.

[152] Ikäheimo 2017, 569-70.

[153] Ikäheimo 2017, 569.

> Nor was he a Roman who had not recognized the enemy. They stain their weapons with tears, break kisses with sobs. And yet, stained by no blood, the soldiers fear what they might have done. Why do you strike your chest? Why, fool, do you groan? Why do you shed vain tears, and why don't you confess that you obey the crime on your own will? Is it to this point that you fear the person whom you yourself make one to be feared? Let war trumpets announce the war: do not heed the cruel songs. Let another carry the standards: you stop! Now, just now, the civil Fury is subsiding, and Caesar, as a private citizen, will love his son-in-law. Now assist us, Concordia, you who embrace everything with an eternal bind, salvation for a world in turmoil and sacred love of our earth: our generation is now at a great turning point for the future. The cover of all those crimes has been ripped off: forgiveness for people in mischief has been taken away. They have recognized their kinsmen.

These lines illustrate the ways in which recognition defines Roman identity in a civil war context, on the one hand, and leaves no space for a justification of crimes against dear ones on the other. The ethical import of the recognition, in other words, cannot be undone in the same way in which the Roman soldiers undo the truce. The verb of recognition, *agnosco*, occurs twice within a few lines, each time with a different direct object. *Agnosco* endows the Romans' cognitive act with an ethical significance which Petreius' cognition of the truce lacks (4.206: *cognita Petreio*).[154] In the first instance (4.179: *nec Romanus erat qui non agnouerat hostem*), the direct object, *hostem*, shows that the public and political dimension of the soldiers' identity is still prevailing: the recognizer is a Roman citizen (*Romanus*) and the recognized is the enemy. In the second instance (4.194: *agnouere suos*), the recognizer is no longer specified; we infer who the recognizer is from the object of the verb, i.e., the recognized kinsmen, as if kinship implied the mutuality of recognition. Lucan overwrites Caesar's text by making *suos* the object of recognition instead of the object of the less marked, from a moral point of view, *abduco*—the verb that indicates the

[154] On the differences between *agnosco* and *cognosco*, see *supra* pp. 37-8.

movement of the soldiers from one camp to the others (*BCiu*. 1.74). The poet, moreover, puts the accent on the *Romanitas* of the soldiers, an element which is missing in Caesar's narration.

What, then, do the events at Ilerda reveal about Roman identity in a civil war context? Should we consider the recognition of kindred and fellow citizens as an exceptional circumstance in the context of civil war? An answer could be found in Lucan's caption of *Romanitas*: *nec Romanus erat qui non agnouerat hostem* (4.179). I suggest that two slightly different translations put the accent on quite distinctive aspects of the recognition scene. Now, if we decided to translate the Latin as "nor was there a Roman who did not recognize the enemy," quantity would be stressed over quality: every Roman at Ilerda recognized the enemy, that is, there was not a single Roman who did not recognize the enemy.[155] If, instead, we rendered the Latin with "nor was he a Roman who did not recognize the enemy," we would lay emphasis on what it means to be Roman; in this case, being Roman means to recognize the enemy. To put it differently, the Romans would perform the recognition of their enemies precisely because they are Romans. In this case, the conflict between the horizontal and the vertical axis of recognition comes to be embedded within the Roman self, in the very conception of Roman identity. Rather than one camp made out of two—the image in Caesar's narration—Lucan places conflicting and intertwined identities within the Roman self.

Like general, like soldiers? Pompey's hyper-recognizability and Caesar's tragic recognition script

Whereas the fraternization at Ilerda illustrates the collective dimension of recognition, the actions of, and the interactions between, the two main protagonists of the civil war, Caesar and Pompey,

[155] Esposito 2009 *ad Phars*. 4.177-9 mentions Anderson's translation: "And he who did not find a known face among the enemy was no Roman."

showcase other important ways in which Lucan's *Pharsalia* magnifies a disconnect between recognition as identification and recognition as ethical acknowledgement. One of the most controversial examples of this disconnect is to be found in *Pharsalia* 9, when an accomplice of the Egyptian king presents Caesar with the severed head of his political rival (9.1031-6):

> 'si scelus est, plus te nobis debere fateris,
> quod scelus hoc non ipse facis.' sic fatus opertum
> detexit tenuitque caput. iam languida morte
> effigies habitum noti mutauerat oris.
> non primo Caesar damnauit munera uisu
> auertitque oculos; uoltus, dum crederet, haesit

> "If this is a crime, then you admit you owe us more, because you didn't commit this crime with your own hands." So he [the accomplice of the Egyptian king] said. He, then, uncovered and held Pompey's head in his hands. Now the effigy deformed by death had changed the aspect of that familiar face. Caesar, at first sight, did not reprove the gift nor did he turn away his eyes. He stared at the face until he believed.

This scene full of suspense and hesitation brings together several paradoxical, theatrical, and ethically ambiguous aspects of recognition that stands out in Lucan's poem: the hyper-recognizability of Pompey in spite of his mutilation, the theatrical and particularly tragic tones of the scene, and the severance between identification and ethical acknowledgement. In this section, I will first focus on the ways in which these aspects intertwine throughout Lucan's poem by examining the connection between Pompey's recognizability and his enduring ties with theatrical performances in ancient Rome. Caesar's behavior at the sight of Pompey's head bears a striking resemblance to the reactions of Roman soldiers after their mutual recognition at Ilerda. The intratextual references that connect the recognition scene at Ilerda in book 4 and the recognition of Pompey in book 9 give the impression that the combatants and the victorious general share a script for their performances of recognition. Lucan's flaunted disbelief in Caesar's sincerity casts shadows over the authenticity of the soldiers' temporary recognition of the impiety of civil war.

That Pompey remains recognizable after his death represents a further variation on the theme of his hyper-recognizability in the *Pharsalia*. The appearance of Pompey's head before Caesar's eyes is the last of several close-ups on the general's face. His expression and traits were well known to the Roman people and are said to slightly change after death in ways that are inconsequential for identification purposes (9.1033-4). The theatrical developments in Pompey's life long precede the tragic reversals of fortune symbolized by his headless body and severed head. Measuring the Roman people's admiration for the Magnus, the theater appeared as the venue of a mutual recognition between the general and the plebs. Pompey continues to enjoy the applause of the audience in his theater even after his retirement to a private life (1.132-3: *totus popularibus auris | inpelli plausuque sui gaudere theatri*).[156] The theater, moreover, appears consistently as the background of Pompey's dreams of glory both at the outset of the poem and immediately before his defeat at Pharsalus (7.7-14):

> at nox felicis Magno pars ultima uitae
> sollicitos uana decepit imagine somnos.
> nam Pompeiani uisus sibi sede theatri
> innumeram effigiem Romanae cernere plebis
> attollique suum laetis ad sidera nomen
> uocibus et plausu cuneos certare sonantes;
> qualis erat populi facies clamorque fauentis
> olim, cum iuuenis primique aetate triumphi

> But the night, the last part of Pompey's successful life, deceived his anxious sleep with an insubstantial apparition. For it seemed he could see the image of the countless faces of the Roman plebs in his own theater. His name was brought up to the sky and the resounding seats of the theater were competing with the applause. Such was the expression and the clamor of the cheering people when, at a young age, he celebrated his first triumph.

[156] On Pompey's theater as a sign of vanity and frailty, see Roche 2009 *ad Phars*. 1.132-3.

After his defeat at Pharsalus, Pompey's efforts to hide himself inverts the scenario of his dream before his last battle. Popularity and recognizability will turn out to be undesirable characteristics (8.12-23):

> deserta sequentem
> non patitur tutis fatum celare latebris
> clara uiri facies. multi, Pharsalica castra
> cum peterent nondum fama prodente ruinas,
> occursu stupuere ducis uertigine rerum
> attoniti, cladisque suae uix ipse fidelis
> auctor erat. grauis est Magno quicumque malorum
> testis adest. cunctis ignotus gentibus esse
> mallet et obscuro tutus transire per urbes
> nomine; sed poenas longi Fortuna fauoris
> exigit a misero, quae tanto pondere famae
> res premit aduersas fatisque prioribus urguet.
>
> Pompey's famous face does not allow him, who was seeking desolate places, to hide his fate in safe recesses. When they were hastening towards the camps of Pharsalus, and word of mouth had not disclosed the defeat of the general yet, many, astonished by his reversal of fortune, were confounded by meeting him. He himself was hardly a trusted reporter of his defeat. Whatever witness to his downfall weighs down on the Great, and he would have preferred to be unknown to all people and safely to pass through cities. But Fortune exacts from the hapless man the price of a long favor. With a weight as heavy as his fame, adversity oppresses him and brings him down with his past successes.

The contrasts between Pompey's fantasies of glory and his flight from recognition are apparent. The clamor of the mob shouting Pompey's name to the sky (7.11-2: *attollique suum laetis ad sidera nomen | uocibus*) gives way to the frightening noise of the wind (8.5-6: *pauet ille fragorem | motorum uentis nemorum*). The change of scenery from a swarming theater in Rome to the desolate lands of Thessaly coincides with a shift of focus from the crowd's innumerable faces to that of the general alone. Whereas in his dream the general discerns the image of the Roman plebs in his theater (7.10: *innumeram effigiem Romanae cernere plebis*), a vision evoking the many faces of the people celebrating his triumph in Iberia (7.13: *qualis erat populi facies*), in his flight away from Pharsalus Pompey seeks to hide his illustrious and famous face (8.14: *clara uiri facies*).

The defeat at Pharsalus followed by a gruesome death takes away the glorious ending that Pompey had envisioned for his life. Rather than proudly offering his face to a cherishing and recognizing crowd, Pompey aims to elude recognition. When he eventually understands the intention of their soon-to-be murderers, he covers his face while offering, indignant, his head to Fortuna (8.613-5: *ut uidit comminus ensis,* | *inuoluit uoltus atque, indignatus apertum* | *fortunae praebere*, *caput*).[157] Those who saw Pompey's severed head will report that the august elegance of his sacred figure was not lost; moreover, his countenance expressed anger at the gods whereas nothing in his face and bearing changed (8.664-7: *permansisse decus sacrae uenerabile formae* | *iratamque deis faciem*, *nil ultima mortis* | *ex habitu uoltuque uiri mutasse fatentur* | *qui lacerum uidere caput*).

The hyper-recognizability of Pompey receives further emphasis in Lucan's description of the mummification of the head, a token of Ptolemy's faithful devotion to the victorious side. In the zealous efforts to preserve this body part, there could be a hint at recognizability as necessary for Caesar to enjoy the sight of his rival's severed head. In the aftermath of the battle of Pharsalus, Caesar orders a feast to be set up in a place from where it is possible to recognize the faces of the fallen, a delightful spectacle (7.792-4: *et Magni numerat populos*, *epulisque paratur* | *ille locus*, *uoltus ex quo faciesque iacentum* | *agnoscat*; 7.797: *laeta spectacula*).

The veil covering Pompey's head and the gesture of removing it are details which Lucan brings more than once to the reader's attention. Thus, a veil is first rent asunder by Septimius right after Pompey's death, before his beheading (8.669: *ac retegit sacros scisso uelamine uoltus*); again, another veil is removed by Ptolemy's anonymous attendant from Pompey's head before

[157] Much has been said on the significance of Pompey's head as symbolic counterpart of the head-of-state. See, e.g., Mebane 2016. On Pompey's long death scene and the ways in which Lucan's detailed description of the decapitation fills in the gaps of Virgil's silence on the decapitation of Euryalus and Nisus, see McClellan 2019, 67-79.

Caesar's eyes (9.1032-3: *opertum* | *detexit tenuitque caput*). Both Caesar's insincere grief and the gesture of removing the veil recall Aegisthus' and Clytemnestra's insincere mourning at the (false) news of Orestes' death. In Sophocles' *Electra*, for instance, at the sight of what he thought was Orestes' shrouded corpse, Aegisthus exclaims: "Remove the coverings from his eyes, so that our kinship, at least, may receive due mourning from me as well" (1468-9: χαλᾶτε πᾶν κάλυμμ᾽ ἀπ᾽ ὀφθαλμῶν, ὅπως | τὸ συγγενές τοι κἀπ᾽ ἐμοῦ θρήνων τύχῃ). The obligation to mourn Orestes, his kinsman, clashes with Aegisthus' delight for his death, as Orestes embodies the feared and inexorable avenger of Agamemnon's death. The contrast between feigned sorrow and authentic delight also characterizes Clytemnestra at the news of Orestes' death. In Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers*, Orestes' nurse points out the hypocrisy of Clytemnestra, who puts on a sad face in front of her slaves while rejoicing inside (734-6: πρὸς μὲν οἰκέτας | θετοσκυθρωπῶν ἐντὸς ὀμμάτων γέλων | κεύθουσ᾽ ἐπ᾽ ἔργοις διαπεπραγμένοις καλῶς κείνῃ). The queen conceals her joy in order to comply with what is socially expected from a mother who receives the news of her son's death.

Caesar's reaction at the sight of Pompey's head presents a similar contrast between outward manifestations and inner authenticity (9.1037-43):

> utque fidem uidit sceleris tutumque putauit
> iam bonus esse socer, lacrimas non sponte cadentis
> effudit gemitusque expressit pectore laeto,
> non aliter manifesta potens abscondere mentis
> gaudia quam lacrimis, meritumque inmane tyranni
> destruit et generi mauolt lugere reuolsum
> quam debere caput.

> When he saw the proof of the crime, he thought it safe, then, to be a good father-in.law. Not spontaneously Caesar shed tears and forced out sighs from his delighted chest. Not otherwise than with tears was he able to hide the joy in his heart; he discredits the king's monstrous merit and prefers to mourn his son-in-law's severed head rather than owing gratitude for it.

As Orestes' nurse casts doubts on Clytemnestra's sorrow, so too the crowd who witnesses Caesar's mourning did not believe in his sincerity (9.1105-6: *nec turba querenti | credidit*). It is tempting to interpret this affinity of Caesar with Clytemnestra in light of Pompey's self-fashioning as Agamemnon throughout his life. In 55 BCE the inauguration of Pompey's theater[158] saw the staging of Accius' *Clytemnestra*, a *fabula praetexta* of which only a few fragments are extant. Rather than the murder committed by Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, the play was meant to highlight with its mighty scenography the triumphal aspects of Agamemnon's return and, thus, to evoke Pompey's triple triumph of 61 BCE, when the Roman general fashioned himself as a new Alexander the Great in a lavish ceremony.[159] The chain of allusions is remarkable: Agamemnon on stage alluded to Pompey, who was in the audience and looked at an onstage reenactment of his glorious triumphal procession in which he played that other Magnus after which he was named.[160]

In addition to hinting at Clytemnestra's double-faced reaction at the presumed death of Orestes, Lucan connects Caesar's recognition of Pompey's head and the recognition scene at Ilerda through conspicuous intratextual references. In both episodes, direct questions mark the narrator's comments on the reactions of the soldiers at Ilerda and of Caesar at the sight of Pompey's head (4.182-5; 9.1947-8).[161] In addition, the claim of Ptolemy's accomplice, according to whom Caesar

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[158] See Erasmo 2004, 83-5 on the space shared between Pompey's theater and the temple of Venus Victrix, and Caesar's later appropriation of the complex after his victory over Pompey.

[159] On the emphasis on Agamemnon's triumph, see Erasmo 2004, 87.

[160] Erasmo (2004, 89) notes that the chain of allusions represented a remarkable cognitive toil for the audience. Erasmo wonders: "At what point, for example, did the audience interpret the triumphal entry as Pompey's rather than Agamemnon's? If the returning and soon-to-be-murdered Agamemnon is equated with Pompey, does the audience need a selective response to know when Agamemnon ceases to be Pompey and when to return to the play proper and cease reading topical allusions into it?"

[161] Tears and the groans receive particular emphasis in both scenes: 4.183: *gemis*, *fletus*; 1041: *gemitus*; 9.1046: *gemitus*; 9.1048: *flendus erat*, 9.1105: *fletus*. Note also that the direct questions present a gerundive (4.185: *timendum*; 9.1048: *flendus*).

should have considered himself even more indebted to the Egyptians if he had thought that killing Pompey was a crime (9.1031: *si scelus est, plus te nobis debere fateris*), rechannels the narrator's voice which, at Ilerda, asks the soldiers why they do not admit that they willingly obey the crimes ordered by their generals (4.185: *nec te sponte tua sceleri parere fateris*?). Whereas at Ilerda the narrator invokes *Concordia* to strengthen the embrace and preserve the harmony among fraternizing soldiers (4.190: *o rerum mixtique salus Concordia mundi*), in book 9 it is Caesar who laments that *concordia* has perished: by killing Pompey, Ptolemy and his accomplices have robbed the Romans, and the entire world, of a happy day (9.1097-8: *laeta dies rapta est populis*, *concordia mundo* | *nostra perit*). The murder of Pompey, moreover, deprives Caesar of the chance to ask for an embrace from his son-in-law (9.1099: *conplexus positis felicibus armis*). Again, the embrace stands out as one of the main symbols of the soldiers' fraternization at Ilerda (4.176: *in amplexus*, 4.209: *amplexibus*, 4.246: *conplexu*).

Against the backdrop of these evident lexical and thematic reprisals, it is striking that *agnosco* does not describe Caesar's recognition of Pompey's head. Rather, Caesar is said to stare until he believes (9.1036: *uoltus*, *dum crederet*, *haesit*). At Ilerda, by contrast, *agnosco* indicates the mutual recognition of the Romans (4.179, 194) and, later, after the responsibility for interrupting and reversing the fraternization falls on the Pompeian Petreius, Caesar's recognition of the gods and their favor (4.254-5): *tu*, *Caesar*, *quamuis spoliatus milite multo*, | *agnoscis superos*. In his mourning performance, on the other hand, Caesar counterfactually imagines his reconciliation with his son-in-law as a day in which Pompey, as the losing side, would have forgiven the gods for his defeat (9.1102-3: *tunc pace fideli* | *fecissem ut uictus posses ignoscere diuis*). *Ignoscere* counterpoints *agnoscis*, as *superos* parallels *diuis*. Here, Lucan's strategic omission of *agnosco* is all the more evident: *ignosco* is phonetically similar, yet semantically

distinct from *agnosco*. From a conceptual point of view, Caesar's recognition of the favor of the gods towards him and Pompey's imagined forgiveness of the gods for siding with Caesar are two faces of the same coin.

At the end of *Pharsalia* 9, then, when Pompey's head is finally unveiled, Lucan seems to excise *agnosco* from a scene that otherwise draws extensively on the language and themes of the recognition scene at Ilerda. Gestures, whether performed or summoned, evoke tragedy: Caesar's exhortation to give proper burial to the head of Pompey (9.1089-90) follows the *quaestor* Cordus' actual burial of Pompey's headless trunk, a scene modeled on Antigone's forbidden burial of Polynices.[162] Caesar, by contrast, limits himself to an identification of Pompey: his gaze at the head and his trust in the Egyptian crime do not coincide with the recognition of the crime of civil war.

This disconnect of sorts between identification and recognition as ethical acknowledgement emerges as well in the interaction between Argus, a Massilian youth about to die, and his old father (3.732-40):[163]

> peruenit ad puppim spirantisque inuenit artus.
> non lacrimae cecidere genis, non pectora tundit,
> distentis toto riguit sed corpore palmis.
> nox subit atque oculos uastae obduxere tenebrae,
> et miserum cernens agnoscere desinit Argum.
> ille caput labens et iam languentia colla
> uiso patre leuat; uox faucis nulla solutas
> prosequitur, tacito tantum petit oscula uoltu
> inuitatque patris claudenda ad lumina dextram.

[162]We know little about the *quaestor* Cordus, likely an invented character and perhaps a homage to the historian Cremutius Cordus and his sympathies for Pompey's party (Ambühl 2015, 277 n. 237). Ambühl (2015, 276-87) examines the points of contact between the burial performed by Cordus (*Phars*. 8.717-58) and Antigone's burial of Polynices also by looking ahead at Statius' *Thebaid*. Both the Roman *quaestor* and the Theban woman take advantage of the night to bury the dead. While we fear for Antigone and her defiance of Creon's decrees, Cordus fears retaliation from the Caesarians. In addition, Cordus' concerns for a potential angry reaction of the dead recall the indignant reaction of Eteocles and the splitting flame of the Theban brothers' pyre.

[163] For the discrepancies between Lucan's narration and Caesar's account of the battle of Massilia and on its larger significance in the poem, see Masters 1992, 43-58.

> Argus's father reached the stern of the ship and found (his son's) breathing limbs. No tears fell on his cheeks, nor does he strike his chest, but with his hands stretched out, he becomes rigid with all his body. Night comes over him and immense darkness drew over his eyes. Although he sees the pitiable Argus, he ceases to recognize him. That one (Argus), having seen his father, lifts his sinking head and his neck which was already collapsing. No voice comes forth from his opened throat. He just asks kisses with a silent face and invites his father's hand to close his eyes.

This scene shows that civil war might hinder the performance of familial duties and the display of compassion for the dead (or almost dead) even when no apparent obstacle intervenes. The juxtaposition of *cernens* and *agnoscere* (3.736) captures the difference between identifying and recognizing. The old man's sudden blindness, which is concomitant with other physical symptoms, seems hardly metaphorical. Yet, it is not the loss of sight that forestalls recognition in this case. Argus' father, in fact, can still discern (3.736: *cernens*) his son, but ceases to recognize him.[164] The father's inability to read the movements of Argus' head and to understand what he would want to say does not result from issues of perception. Rather, it represents an ethical failing which adds to the father's unconventionally tearless reaction at the sight of his dying son. Hardly conforming with what is expected from a grieving and mourning parent,[165] Argus' father lacks the conventional *pietas* that would prescribe him to embrace and kiss his dying son.

Agnosco, featuring prominently in the Ilerda episode and missing in Caesar's recognition of Pompey's head, activates a series of intertextual allusions to the lexicon of recognition in Seneca's drama. Here *agnosco* occurs in instances of dismemberment, mutilation, or even dissolution of a body. Consider, for instance, the use of *agnosco* in the pseudo-Senecan *Hercules*

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[164] The oxymoron between *cernens* and *desinat agnoscere* complicates the interpretation of the father's cognitive process. Hunink 1992 *ad Phars*. 3.736 notes that "depersonalization and alienation . . . are carried one step further: a father almost ceases to recognize his own son. Though his eyes still function, he is equally struck with a form of 'blindness.'"

[165] Hunink 1992 *ad Phars*. 3.733 notes the paradoxical reactions of Argus' father.

Oetaeus. When the poison comes into effect, the slow consumption of Hercules' body determines his gradual loss of self-recognition. The hero asks his father whether he is recognizable in spite of his unusual lack of strength (1233-4: *cernite ex illo Hercule* | *quid iam supersit*. *Herculem agnoscis, pater*?) and lists the parts of his body on which he is no longer able to rely: his arms (1235: *lacertis*), hand (1236: *manu*), and feet (1238: *gressibus*); then again, his hands (1240: *manibus*), shoulders (1242: *umeris*), the massive frame of his body and his neck (1242-3: *haec moles mei est* | *haecne illa ceruix?*), and again his hands (1243: *hasne manus;* 1244*: mea manu*). Later in the play, Hercules' mother struggles to recognize what is left of her son. Alcmena repeats the painful list of body parts, asking where her son is (1338: *ubi natus, ubinam est?*), and where his limbs and neck are for a last embrace (1343-4: *ubi membra sunt*? *ubi illa quae mundum tulit* | *stelligera ceruix*?). Hercules' response to Alcmena recalls his earlier question to his father (1234). This time, the hero does not ask his parent if he recognizes him but bids her mother to do so (1347: *agnosce*, *mater*).

In Seneca's *Hercules Furens* the verb *agnosco* marks instances of recognition of a person as a whole through the recognition of body parts. This is apparent in the interaction between Amphitryon and his son Hercules. At first, the father wonders whether his eyes are seeing his son. He is afraid that he might be looking at an empty shade. After some hesitation, however, he recognizes Hercules upon recognizing parts of his body: his shoulders and his hand (623-5: *teneone in auras editum an uana fruor* | *deceptus umbra*? *tune es? agnosco toros* | *umerosque et alto nobilem trunco manu*). The importance of recognizing the part in order to recognize the whole also subtends Megara's plea before a frenzied Hercules. After she bids the hero to recognize her as his spouse—a powerful reminder that one cannot enforce nor command recognition—Megara attempts to activate Hercules' recognition of their son by inviting him to see himself, his face and

his bearing, in the little one (1016-8: *parce iam*, *coniunx*, *precor*, | *agnosce Megaram*. *natus hic uultus tuos* | *habitusque reddit*; *cernis*, *ut tendat manus?*). Hercules will not perform the recognition summoned by Megara and will kill his offspring. The hero's misrecognition results in the gruesome dismemberment of his child's body (1025-6). In this case the dismemberment of bodies can be the consequence of a misrecognition.

In some cases, human bodies become objects of challenging recognition from objective and emotional standpoints. In Seneca's *Phaedra*, for instance, the simile used by the messenger to describe the horses' disruptive force and the death of Hippolytus hinges upon the verb *agnosco*: the horses do not recognize the weight of Hippolytus' body, so they throw him away from the chariot (1090-2: *talis per auras non suum agnoscens onus* | *Solique falso creditum indignans diem* | *Phaethonta currus deuium excussit polo*). This leads to the dismemberment of Hippolytus' body: his head, dashed on the rocks, bounds back from them, his limbs are dragged along by the wheels. At some point Hippolytus' body and a tree trunk form a whole, so that the *truncus*, the metaphor for a headless body, becomes indiscernible from the body itself. Both the tenor and the vehicle of the metaphor form a single, macabre image (1104).

Glenn Most starts with Hippolytus' dismembered body in Seneca's *Phaedra* to explore the "rhetoric of dismemberment" in the Neronian age and, *inter alia*, Lucan's excessive "fascination with dismemberment," exemplified in particular by the detailed description of Pompey's mutilated corpse.[166] Most relates the predilection for mutilated corpses in the Latin poetry of the Neronian age to the Stoic reflection on personal identity. Poets such as Seneca and Lucan were likely familiar with the principles of Stoic physics, according to which bodies could be divided into smaller parts

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[166] Most (1992, 397) observes that "the amputation of Pompey's head is not only the most important and memorable of a whole series of mutilations: it also becomes a central symbol for a world in which divine providence seems no longer to function but instead to have been severed from the universe which it should rule as, by a Stoic analysis, the head rules the body."

ad infinitum. The identity of human beings seems to be related to the integrity of their body: a maintaining force, an invisible glue, is what keeps together both the infinitesimal parts of a body and its identifiability. Stoic philosophy urges us to consider what defines Pompey's identity and how his decapitation affects his identity and recognizability. If the head and the facial traits (more than other body parts) are essential for identifying and eventually for recognizing a person, the recognition of Pompey's headless body at the end of the poem's first book, which opens this chapter, defies the principles of Stoic physics. The uses of *agnosco* in the context of uncertainty and doubts in Senecan drama sets into relief the adamant certainty of some agents of recognition in Lucan's poem: the *matrona* never doubts the accuracy of her prophetic recognition (1.686), nor does Cordus seem to admit the possibility that the body he takes care of is not Pompey's (8.715-20).

Lucan's narration of the cognitive disorientation generated by civil war will exert a strong influence on later accounts of civil strife in the Roman epic tradition. Not only do later epic authors recast the themes of the *Pharsalia* through intertextual references and shared imagery, as we will see, but they also engage with the philosophical questions that extend beyond the recognizability of bodies and faces *post mortem* or the identification of mutilated corpses.

Chapter 2. Repetition Blindness: The Cyzicus Episode in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*

At the end of Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* 2, favorable winds lead the Argo to the land of the Cyzicans. Their king, whose name is Cyzicus like his kingdom, welcomes the Argonauts with a rich banquet. On this occasion, he shows his guests a golden cup with illustrations of his people's recent endeavor: the last of many successful counterattacks against the Pelasgians, who repeatedly violate the Cyzicus harbor (2.634-64). Three days after their arrival, the Argonauts prepare to set sail yet again. Before their departure, the hosts and guests exchange gifts and join hands (3.1-13). A little time after the Argo leaves the hospitable land, the helmsman Tiphys is overwhelmed by sleep. Contrary winds push the ship and its crew back to the harbor they have just left (3.32-42). It is night and neither the Argonauts nor the Cyzicans realize that their encounter has already taken place. A gruesome battle starts between hosts and guests (3.43-248). Only at dawn and with Jupiter's intervention, both sides become aware of their mistake. Jason realizes that he inadvertently killed Cyzicus and mourns over the wounded body of his host (3.249-313).

Valerius Flaccus (VF hereafter) casts the night battle between the Argonauts and the Cyzicans as a civil strife, second only to the narration of civil conflict in *Argonautica* 6, worthy of Lucan's pen. Raging in a frenzied city, the nyktomachy at Cyzicus is unspeakable (3.14: *infanda proelia*), impious (3.30: *impia bella*),[167] and dreadful like a Gigantomachy.[168] The Cyzicus episode inscribes itself in the Roman epic trend of pairing civil war narratives with tragic tropes of

[167] See Stover 2012, 123-5 on Lucanean echoes in the Cyzicus episode.

[168]Stover 2012, 113-7. Stover contends that the gigantomatich motifs cast the conflict at Cyzicus as a civil war with clear-cut distinctions between right and wrong, good and evil. The defeat of the Cyzicans, who are represented as terrestrial Giants and chaotic forces, would point to the potential of civil war to restore and maintain cosmic and Jovian order. On civil war in VF's *Argonautica* besides the Cyzicus episode, see Penwill 2018. For a review of Stover's optimistic interpretation, see Heerink 2016.

(mis)recognition.[169] In contrast with Lucan's epic, in which Roman soldiers consciously engage in battle with kinsmen, friends, and fellow citizens, in the Roman *Argonautica* the mutual misrecognition of hosts and guests is a misidentification: at night and in the fury of the battle, the Argonauts do not identify the Cyzicans, and vice versa, until they both recognize their mistake.

The Cyzicus episode is distinguished throughout as being marked by repetition, a process that lends itself to epistemological errors in counterintuitive ways. Whereas experience teaches us that repetition helps our memory—for instance, one of the ways in which one can memorize a poem is by repeating it—repetition might also interfere with human perception and cognition. Human beings might be blind to repetition.[170] A blindness to repetition is what characterizes the Argonauts and the Cyzicans, who do not realize that the Argo arrives to the shores of Cyzicus for the second time in a row. VF's narration of these incidents intertwines with a learned commentary on perceptual instability and the unreliability of the senses.

In this chapter, I examine the Cyzicus episode by focusing one thematic and allusive layer at a time. First, I will suggest that VF's variations on Apollonius' version of the Cyzicus episode highlight his attention to the ways in which repetition interferes with recognition. If the Argonauts arrive at the harbor of Cyzicus twice—so their arrival repeats itself once—the attacks of the

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[169] Recently, Cowan 2021 has provided an overview of the tragic motifs related to recognition and kin-killing in the Cyzicus episode, arguing that the presence of these motifs allows readers to recognize tragedy in epic. An analysis of other tragic elements, in particular ignorance and guilt, filtered through a Virgilian lens in the Cyzicus episode can be found in Papaioannou 2021, 74-80.

[170] The failure to see a repeated visual item in a rapid series of visual presentations has been described by cognitive theorists as "repetition blindness"(Kanwisher 1987). For instance, a picture of the same object is displayed twice in a rapid succession of images, chances are that observers will fail to detect the repetition and will report seeing the repeated object only once. As I write this footnote, I may type the same word twice in a row without being able to detect the mistake, which will be signaled, instead, by my writing software. I am not suggesting that VF intuited the existence of this phenomenon nor that it describes the cognitive failures of the Argonauts and the Cyzicans. Nevertheless, the theoretical framework of repetition blindness might be a useful heuristic tool for interpreting the Cyzicus episode because it alerts us to the ways in which the human senses and the human mind can be blind to the repetition of the same event.

Pelasgians against the Cyzicans take place again and again. The different frequency of these repeated events will deceive both groups. While the Cyzicans confuse the second arrival of the Argonauts with another of the frequent incursions of their Pelasgic enemies, the Argonauts did not repeat the same route often enough to recognize that they arrived again on the same shore.

Part of my analysis of the epistemological agenda of the Cyzicus episode will focus on VF's indebtedness to the Virgilian *doloneia*. The story of Euryalus and Nisus is famous for being one of the most tragic episodes of the *Aeneid*. While the Trojans, besieged by the Rutulians, retreat into their ramparts, Euryalus and Nisus sneak through the enemy's camp to reach Aeneas and bring the news of the siege. Their mission fails. The Rutulians kill them after perceiving their presence thanks to the gleam of the helmet worn by Euryalus. The night of *Aeneid* 9 sets the stage not only for the youths' brave and fateful endeavor but also for a meditation on perception and knowledge.

Virgil's *doloneia* invites us to reflect on the reliability of the senses, a point of contention among philosophical schools in antiquity. While the perception of a gleam of the helmet would attest to the keenness of the human sight—an echo of Epicurean theories on the reliability of the senses?—the tragic fate of the youths attests to failures of perception and cognition. In the night Euryalus and Nisus are disoriented despite their knowledge of the places they must cross to accomplish their mission. Their fate warns us against trusting our senses. I argue that Virgil's *doloneia* displays a philosophical component with which the Flavian poet engages in the Cyzicus episode. By emphasizing the instability and the limits of perception on and off the Argo, at sea and at Cyzicus, VF weaves an intertextual dialogue with the Virgilian *doloneia* and produces a narrative which evinces an affinity with Skeptical arguments on the fallacy of the senses.

VF's epistemological concerns intertwine with his metapoetic musing on his own repetitions and on the recognizability of his own Roman *Argonautica* when it comes to episodes

already present in the literary tradition, as is often the case. I will consider, in particular, the metapoetic relevance of the Argo's backward route to Cyzicus and the peculiar disorientation that the belated position of the Roman *Argonautica* in the epic tradition generates in the reader's mind.

Failures of Sight or Failures of Mind? Repetitions and Blindness between Apollonius of Rhodes and Valerius Flaccus

In contrast with the long years that separate Odysseus and Penelope, or Orestes and Electra, the amount of time between the first and the second arrival of the Argo to Cyzicus is a matter of a few days. We would not describe Odysseus' arrival on Ithaca after twenty years of war and wanderings as a repetition, nor would we see Orestes' arrival to Argos as the second occurrence of a similar event. By contrast, the Argo arrives for the second time to same harbor after a brief period of time. This detail is fundamental for understanding how VF narrativizes an epistemological interest in the interplay between repetition and recognition. By placing the misrecognitions of the hosts and their guests within a specific timeframe, VF invites us to consider how we can fail to see, hence fail to recognize, a person or a place we have just seen.

That VF pursues an epistemological agenda becomes all the more apparent if we compare his version of the Cyzicus episode with the Hellenistic precedent. While stretching across two books (2.634-3.416) and over four hundred lines in the Roman *Argonautica*, the Cyzicus episode occupies a short section in the poem by Apollonius Rhodius (1.947-1075).[171] Such a discrepancy in length is sufficient to highlight VF's interest in expanding the Cyzicus episode and the narrative paths left open by his predecessor. As far as the failures of recognition in the night battle at Cyzicus

[171] Finkmann 2019, 147-51, offers a detailed comparison between Apollonius' and Valerius' versions of the Cyzicus episode with special attention to speech acts and the role these play in the misidentifications between the Argonauts and the Cyzicans.

are concerned, VF retouches the Greek model with two bold strokes: on the one hand, he puts the accent on the interplay between repetition and recognition, already hinted at in Apollonius' poem; on the other, he teases out the ambiguity of verbs of perception and cognition in the Greek version and intensifies such ambiguity by complicating the causes of the heroes' perceptual and cognitive failures.

It is worth rereading the Greek text to contextualize VF's adaptations (1.1015-24):

> ἡ δ᾽ ἔθεεν λαίφεσσι πανήμερος. οὐ μὲν ἰούσης
> νυκτὸς ἔτι ῥιπὴ μένεν ἔμπεδον, ἀλλὰ θύελλαι
> ἀντίαι ἁρπάγδην ὀπίσω φέρον, ὄφρ᾽ ἐπέλασσαν
> αὖτις ἐυξείνοισι Δολίοσιν. ἐκ δ᾽ ἄρ᾽ ἔβησαν
> αὐτονυχί (Ἱερὴ δὲ φατίζεται ἥδ᾽ ἔτι Πέτρη
> ᾗ πέρι πείσματα νηὸς ἐπεσσύμενοι ἐβάλοντο),
> οὐδέ τις αὐτὴν νῆσον ἐπιφραδέως ἐνόησεν
> ἔμμεναι. οὐδ᾽ ὑπὸ νυκτὶ Δολίονες ἂψ ἀνιόντας
> ἥρωας νημερτὲς ἐπήισαν, ἀλλά που ἀνδρῶν
> Μακριέων εἴσαντο Πελασγικὸν ἄρεα κέλσαι·
>
> The Argo ran all day long under sail. When night came, the gusts no longer stayed constant, but contrary storm winds violently led it backwards, until the heroes drove back again to the hospitable Doliones and disembarked that very night. The Rock, around which they hurriedly cast the ship's cables, is still called Sacred. Nobody carefully noticed that it was the same island, nor the Doliones at night did unerringly perceive that the heroes had come back again, but it seemed to them that a Pelasgic war band of Macrian men put to shore.

On the one hand, the Argonauts do not realize they have reached the same island again; on the other hand, the Doliones,[172] misled by darkness, do not perceive that the same heroes have come back shortly after their departure. The lines describing the failure of both groups present the same construction: an adverb (1.1021: ἐπιφραδέως and 1.1023: νημερτές) modifies a verb (1.1021: ἐνόησεν and 1.1023: ἐπήισαν) in a negative sentence (1.1021: οὐδέ and 1.1022: οὐδ'). The

[172] This is the name of the inhabitants of Cyzicus in Apollonius' *Argonautica*. I cite Apollonius Rhodius following the Oxford critical edition by Hermann Fränkel, 1961.

parallel construction suggests the cognitive failure could be evenly ascribed to hosts and guests, who will simultaneously recognize their mistake (1.1053-6):

> ἠῶθεν δ᾽ ὀλοὴν καὶ ἀμήχανον εἰσενόησαν
> ἀμπλακίην ἄμφω· στυγερὸν δ᾽ ἄχος εἷλεν ἰδόντας
> ἥρωας Μινύας Αἰνήιον υἷα πάροιθεν
> Κύζικον ἐν κονίῃσι καὶ αἵματι πεπτηῶτα.
>
> At dawn both sides perceived the ruinous error without remedy; a terrible pain gripped the Minian heroes as they saw in front of them Cyzicus, the son of Aeneus, lie on the ground in the midst of blood and dust.

It is apparent that the rising sunlight is determinant for recognition to take place. Dawn (ἠῶθεν, emphatically placed at the beginning of line 1053) counterpoints three references to the night (1.1019: αὐτονυχί) in which the winds cease to blow (again, νυκτός opens line 1016 in *enjambement*) and the Argonauts arrive for the second time at the land of Cyzicus; night again (1.1022: ὑπὸ νυκτί) prevents the Doliones from seeing the Argonauts upon their return. In addition to the nocturnal setting of the events, the Argo's backward movement receives particular emphasis: Argo's spatial trajectory, conveyed by the adverbs ὀπίσω "backwards" (1.1017), ἄψ "backwards, back again" (1.1022), and the preposition in the compound ἄνειμι "to return" (1.1022), intertwines with the temporality of repetition, the "again" (1.1018: αὖτις) implied in the backward re-turn.

Repetition and darkness are important themes in VF's version of the Cyzicus episode as well. As we will see, darkness can be said to amplify the confusion deriving from repetition. In contrast with the four occurrences of rewinding verbs and adverbs in Apollonius, VF's narration is replete with verbs prefixed with *re-*, a prefix which resounds ominously in relation not only to the Argo's backward movement but also to other returns: Cyzicus kills the lion sacred to Cybele when the animal was spontaneously returning to his bridles (3.23: *redeuntem ad frena leonem*); in

his blindness the king resembles Athamas returning from the hunt and carrying on his shoulders his son Learchus, his prey, in the wise of a trophy (3.67: *qualsiue redit uenatibus actis*). The backward movement of light features among those uncanny returns marked by the prefix of repetition. The fire uncannily glows back on the weapons which Genysus re-finds (3.115-6: *reluxit* | *torre focus*: *telis gaudes*, *miserande*, *repertis*). Castor's fatal spear becomes slightly visible because moonlight shines back on it (3.195: *refulsit*).

In line with the uncanny resonances it tuned on from the outset of the episode, the prefix *re-* marks the tragic discovery of the men's inadvertent crime: the horror for the mutual slaughter reaches its peak with the re-trieving of the lifeless body of Cyzicus (3.280: *rege reperto*); the king, without lineage, is imagined returning to his father their dynasty's royal scepter (3.346: *ipse decus regnique refert insigne parenti*).[173] The tragic second arrival to the land of the Cyzicans, so cruelly orchestrated by chance (3.293: *cui me hospitio fortuna reuexit*!), takes away from the Argonauts the future possibility of returning to Cyzicus after the defeat of the Colchians (3.306-9). Jason, in fact, asks what return will be possible after the nyktomachy at Cyzicus, what land will be willing to welcome his men after their heinous crime (3.304-5: *quinam reditus*, *quae me hospita tellus* | *accipiet*).

Most importantly, the prefix re- in *refertur* (3.42) signals Argo's backward movement and second docking in Cyzicus. A single occurrence of the Argo's repetition suggestively corresponds to the single occurrence of the verb which describes the Argo's return, the ship's only repetition; the same prefix marks the verbs, this time several, which describe the iterated incursions of the Pelasgians into Cyzicus' harbor (2.657: *refert*; 3.45: *soliti rediere Pelasgi*; 3.126-7: *aciemque Pelasgum* | *per nocte remeasse*). It is apparent that two levels of repetition compete and interfere

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[173] Manuwald 2015 *ad Arg*. 3.343-6.

with the recognition process: if the arrival of the Argonauts to Cyzicus repeats itself once, the hostile Pelasgic incursions occur so often as to prompt the Cyzicans to summarily identify unexpected visitors, in this case the Argonauts, as the usual enemy. The force of repetition generates an automatic response and prompts an incorrect identification, for which the Cyzicans attack Jason and his crew, who blindly counterattack. "As if" subtends the actions of the Argonauts as well. They do not believe that they had reached the land of the Colchians. However, after the first spear of the Cyzicans reaches the ship's decks, Jason himself summons his men to act as if the Colchians were the attackers (3.82: *uosque*, *uiri*, *optatos huc adfore credite Colchos*).

These events raise questions about the similarity between the Argonauts and the Pelasgic groups who repeatedly attack the Cyzicans. The Cyzicans mistake the Argonauts as being something other than they are. Yet, a closer look at the broader category to which both the usual intruders and the Argo's heroes belong show that they are not as different as one would presume. Both the Argonauts and the usual intruders are Pelasgians. VF plays with tragic irony on the fact that the name "Pelasgians" indicates both the Thessalian heroes of the Argo and the tribes from Asia minor whom the Cyzicans often push back. When the people of Cyzicus cry "the enemy occupies the harbor, the usual Pelasgians are back!" (3.45: *hostis habet portus*, *soliti rediere Pelasgi*) they succeed in identifying the broader category, i.e., the Argonauts are indeed Pelasgians as VF calls them more than once, but refrain from recognizing the subcategory, namely that the Argonauts are Pelasgians from Thessaly specifically.[174] The Argonauts, in turn, act on a wrong assumption at Jason's command: they fight *as if* they were fighting against the Colchians. The assumption is partially correct, as they are engaging with a people who, like the Colchians, are

[174] On the ambiguous use of the name Pelasgians, see Manuwald 2015 *ad Arg*. 3.45 and Finkmann 2019, 153 n.7 with further bibliography.

non-Greek inhabitants of a foreign land, forgetting that the Cyzicans represent a particular subcategory of the broader category of foreignness.[175]

As well as underscoring the epistemological instability that repetition opens up at Cyzicus, VF further emphasizes such instability by laying emphasis on the blinding of the senses through phenomena that undermine their reliability: darkness, noise, and frenzy. Darkness is thematized as blindness in the Roman *Argonautica*. In the first place, VF lengthens the nocturnal timeframe of the Cyzicus episode. Night, regularly followed by dawn in the Greek model, self-consciously delays its end (3.211: *lentis haeret nox conscia bigis*) in the later version and provides the space for the narrative description we encounter. In VF's version, the blindness of the heroes is caused both by the dim moonlight and by the general frenzy stirred up by the gods. In addition to being disoriented, the men become disorienting like the places they fortuitously reach. Connatural with the land of Cyzicus are hidden shallows (2.630-1: *caecis* | *uadis*; cf. 3.43: *notis uadis*). The Argonauts form blind ranks on the march (3.110: *agmine caeco*) after they catch their weapons with blind hands (3.79-80: *rapere obuia caeca* | *arma manu*). Jason resembles a blinding storm in the depths of the sea (3.151-2: *ut caeca profundo* | *currit hiems*).

In addition to the thematization of darkness as general blindness, VF lays further emphasis on the ambiguity of the causes which determined the mistakes of both groups. While repetition does interfere with the ability of hosts and guests to recognize one another, it provides only a partial explanation of their misrecognitions. The Flavian poet intensifies the elusive nature of the men's mistakes by pointedly amplifying some lexical ambiguities in the Greek text. Let us go back to Apollonius' version for a moment. The verbs ἐπαΐω and νοέω (1.1021: ἐνόησεν; 1.1023:

[175] This type of mistake bears some similarities to the "token individuation hypothesis" formulated by Kanwisher 1987. The Cyzicans and the Argonauts are both tokens of the same type, i.e., specific groups within the larger category of Pelasgic people.

ἐπήισαν) can mean both "to perceive" through the senses[176] and "to understand" by the mind; while the poet's repeated references to the night point at the limits of sight in the darkness, the adverb ἐπιφραδέως, which modifies νοέω, seems to emphasize the mental component of the misrecognition. Apollonius' phrasing recalls the Homeric use of ἐπιφράζομαι in conjunction with νοέω: in the *Odyssey,* the coordination of these verbs describes Alcinous' realization that Odysseus was weeping (*Od*. 15.444).[177]

With this ambiguity in mind, VF asks himself and the readers whether the collective misrecognition at Cyzicus can be ascribed to a failure of sight or a failure of mind.[178] In other words, was it possible for the Argonauts to understand by their mind that they had reached the same island in spite of the limits imposed by darkness on their sight? While setting up this question, VF removes its narrative from the possibility to provide a definitive answer. Cognitive obstacles pile up as the events unfold: darkness, the helmsman's sleep, and madness generate a type of blindness that oscillates ambiguously between a literal and figurative level. Limits belonging to the human condition intertwine with the impairing influence of divinity, in such a way as to leave the reader wondering if either of the two, and which of the two, is more responsible for the cognitive failures of both parties. Comparable questions remain unanswered when the Argonauts eventually recognize their crime: is the coming of the dawn as determinant as the subsiding influence of the gods for the collective *anagnorisis* of Jason and his crew to take place?

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[176] In particular, *LSJ* indicates the eyes in the case of νοέω and the ears in the case of ἐπαΐω.

[177] See *LSJ s.v.* ἐπιφράζομαι.

[178] I reuse here the dichotomy outlined in studies of repetition blindness. Cf. Morris and Harris 2004.

If we transpose these questions onto the context of the *Argonautica*, we will ask whether the heroes failed to see or to understand that they reached Cyzicus for the second time. Such uncertainties are relevant because they complicate the Roman replay of the events at Cyzicus, an episode throughout which the poet poses epistemological questions that are not as concerned with the reliability of signs and recognition tokens (elements whose reliability was questioned as early as in Euripides' *Electra*)[179] as with the limits of the human senses and the connection between such limits and cognitive failures. In light of this shift in focus, I propose to situate VF's emphasis on the limits of the senses in the context of ancient epistemological theories. My reading aims not to determine whether or not the poet unwaveringly adheres to a specific philosophical school—an impossible task anyway— but to show how epistemological theories, themselves mediated by the Roman epic tradition, bear on the poet's attention to the limits of perception and cognition at Cyzicus. It will be clear that one way in which the poet expands on Apollonius' outline is through pointed intertextual references to Virgil's *doloneia*. These references retroactively highlight the philosophical import of the Virgilian intertext while advancing VF's epistemological agenda.

Philosophical tropes of perceptual instability on and off the Argo

The influence of Greek philosophy on Roman epic has received particular attention in recent years.[180] While scholars have acknowledged the presence of Stoic philosophy in the Flavian *Argonautica* as well as the pervasive intertextual references to Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*,[181]

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[179] See Torrance 2011.

[180] Garani and Konstan 2014.

[181] Krasne (2018) proposes a new approach to VF's poetry, one which takes into account the poem's layers of literary and philosophical intertexts in spite of their disheartening complexity. In this section, I will consider a few of the passages examined by Krasne to contextualize, however, the perceptual disorientation of the Argonauts at sea.

little attention has been given to the epistemological concerns of VF's poem, despite the fact that the epistemological significance of the Argo is embedded in the very making of the ship.

It is noteworthy that Roman authors present the Argo as mankind's first ship more consistently than their Greek counterparts. In many a text, the Argonauts' vessel represents a marvel of artistry admired by the gods and a source of fearful wonder for those who are confronted with its appearance for the first time. In a long fragment from Accius' *Argonautae siue Medea*,[182] the shepherd's reaction at the sight of the Argo exemplifies the epistemological challenge of naming and making sense of the unknown. At first the shepherd has doubts about the nature of the massive structure which loudly roars as it glides on the surface of the sea (*dubitat primo quae sit ea natura quam cernit ignotam*). Yet, as the Argo draws closer to the shore, the observer starts making sense of the unknown by comparing it to the known: he likens the sailors' songs to the strain of Silvanus and the sailors to dolphins who swiftly "cleave a way with their snouts."[183] As Fiachra Mac Góráin notes, the tragic fragment aptly fits the philosophical disquisitions in Cicero's *De Natura Deorum*, where Balbus argues that, in order to grasp the divine agency behind the making of the world, philosophers should resort to deductive reasoning, the procedure showcased by Accius' shepherd.[184]

Like the shepherd looking down from the mountaintop, Boreas discerns the Argo from mount Pangaeus in *Argonautica* 1 (1.574-7, 598-600).[185] Alarmed by the ship's threatening appearance, Boreas reaches Aeolus, to whom he starts reporting what he saw only to realize that

[182] Accius, *Argonautae siue Medea* 391-402 R^3, Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.89.

[183] Trans. by Brooks in Mac Góráin 2015.

[184] As Degl'Innocenti Pierini (1999, 230) notes, the shepherd performs a series of false identifications.

[185] Zissos 2008 *ad Arg.* 1.574-7.

the Argo defies description. The words *nefas uidi* (1.588) concisely cast the massive vessel as a material embodiment of the unspeakable. If seeing the Argo for the first time entails the difficulty of translating the unknown, no matter how clearly perceived, into words, being *on* the Argo does not come without its own epistemological challenges.

Much like the Accian shepherd, VF's Argonauts try to make sense of the unknown after the winds summoned by Boreas and Aeolus stir up the sea. Unaware of the causal relation between winds and sea storms, the heroes suppose that high waves are connatural with the sea (1.625-6: *non hiemem missosque putant consurgere uentos* | *ignari*, *sed tale fretum*) and believe that the violence of untamable waters was what kept their ancestors from seafaring. Passing from Boreas' perspective to the Argonauts' inaccurate interpretation of the storm, the poet shifts our attention from the bewilderment of the observers *off* the Argo to the disorientation of the men *on* it. If the Argo is the first ship built by humankind,[186] it follows that the Argonauts are the first to be confronted with novel, whether distorted or amplified, sensory experiences peculiar to seafaring. Zooming in on such perceptual instability, VF merges epic narrative with epistemological concerns that evoke the arguments advanced by ancient Skepticism on the unreliability of the senses.

Before examining the continuity of themes and images across the destabilizing effects of seafaring on the senses and the misrecognitions of the Argonauts at Cyzicus, it is important to dwell on the effects of sailing on the senses of the Argonauts. It is through their eyes that the reader partakes in visualizing the changing appearance of the surroundings. As the Argo slides away from the Thessalian shore, the lofty trees on mount Pelion, submerged by the sea, disappear from sight. The temple of Diana, seen from the side, sinks in the waters (2.6-7: *iamque fretis summas*

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[186] Or at least the first ship with a massive structure to sail from Greece to Asia. On this vexed question, see Manuwald 2015 *ad Arg*. 3.108-10.

aequatum Pelion ornos | *templaque Tisaeae mergunt obliqua Dianae*). The water conceals Sciathos, and cape Sepias recedes far in the distance (2.7-8: *iam Sciathos subsedit aquis*, *iam longa recessit* | *Sepias*). The Thessalian mountains of Ossa merge into the clouds (2.15-6: *in nubem Minyis repetentibus altum* | *Ossa redit*). In addition to being confronted with the changing appearance of the shoreline and its landmarks, the heroes misidentify the places they pass by: they believe that they see the tomb of Dolopes and the river Amyros (2.10-1: *uidisse putant Dolopeia busta* | *intrantemque Amyron*).

Experiencing how sailing alters the appearance and the perception of the surrounding landscape, the Argonauts echo the anonymous sailors who populate seafaring-related tropes in ancient poetry and philosophy. One such trope is to be found in Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* (4.387-90, 397-9):

> qua uehimur naui, fertur, cum stare uidetur;
> quae manet in statione, ea praeter creditur ire.
> et fugere ad puppim colles campique uidentur
> quos agimus praeter nauem uelisque uolamus.
>
> exstantesque procul medio de gurgite montes
> classibus inter quos liber patet exitus ingens,
> insula coniunctis tamen ex his una uidetur.
>
> The ship in which we are borne, moves swiftly while it seems still; one which stands still seems to be passing by; the hills and the fields, by which we lead our ship and fly with sails, seem to flee astern.
>
> And mountains that tower far off from the middle of the sea, between which a path large enough for a fleet lies open and free, seem joined as to form a single island.

Lucretius' text is a portal into the Skeptical arguments that adduce the perceptual instability associated with navigation as evidence for demonstrating the unreliability of the senses. The Epicurean poet makes clear that optical illusions should be ascribed to fallacies of the mind and

do not detract, therefore, from the reliability of the senses.[187] Yet, whether or not the mistake originates in the sight or in the mind of the viewers, it is worth noting that the ship stands out as a *locus* of perceptual uncertainty, where humans question the reliability of sight. In the *Academica*, whose second book offers an overview of ancient theories of perception, Cicero mentions the destabilizing effects of a moving ship not only for the sailors on board but also for those looking at the ship while being onshore. He asks Lucullus "Do you see that ship? To us it appears to be anchored, while to those on its board this house appears to be moving" (*Luc.* xxv: *Videsne nauem illam*? *Stare nobis uidetur*, *at iis qui in naui sunt moueri haec uilla*). Cicero does not dwell further on his example, being aware that seafaring-related tropes were overused in philosophical debates and that his interlocutor had scorned the trite trope of the split oar under water (*Luc.* xxvi: *uidi enim a te remum contemni*) in his defense of Stoic epistemology.

VF, on the other hand, doubles down on the thematization of perceptual uncertainty at sea by giving ample space to the Argonauts' first night on board of the Argo.[188] The heroes' nocturnal disorientation too is a first for mankind and ties into the "poetics of the unknown" peculiar to the Roman *Argonautica*.[189] If sailing during the day presents the heroes with the changing appearance of the Thessalian landscape, nightfall brings on further perceptual challenges not only for their eyes but also for their ears. First, the setting sun appears as an immense fire ball that splits the sea into two, hissing as its flames sink into the waters.[190] Once the shoreline and its landmarks fade away in the darkness, the Argonauts' disorientation resembles the lost sense of direction of a

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[187] See Long and Sedley 1987, 78-101 for an overview of Epicurean epistemology.

[188] Smith 1987 *ad Arg.* 2.37-41.

[189] Venini (1972, 12), in light of the Argonauts' necessity to face the unknown, defines VF's *Argonautica* as "poesia dell'ignoto."

[190] Cf. Lucr. *DRN* 4.432-5 for the optical illusions associated with navigation.

traveler who fears the silence of the night and trembles at the magnified shadows of the trees on his way.

The simile recalls the Accian shepherd's rationalizing comparison of the unknown with the known. If the shepherd makes sense of the sailors' singing by likening it to the songs of Silvanus, the poet finds in a nocturnal journey on dry land a suitable *comparandum* for the Argo's first nocturnal sailing (2.37-47):

> rupto sonuit sacer aequore Titan.
> auxerat hora metus, iam se uertentis Olympi
> ut faciem raptosque simul montesque locosque
> ex oculis circumque graues uidere tenebras.
> ipsa quies rerum mundique silentia terrent
> astraque et effusis stellatus crinibus aether;
> ac uelut ignota captus regione uiarum
> noctiuagum qui carpit iter non aure quiescit,
> non oculis, noctisque metus niger auget utrimque
> campus et occurrens umbris maioribus arbor,
> haud aliter trepidare uiri.

> The sun hissed as it sank into the sea that it splits into two. That time of the day had amplified their fear, as they saw already the face of the sky revolving itself and, at the same time, the mountains and the places fading away from their eyes, heavy darkness all around. The stillness itself of things and the silence of the universe frighten them, the constellations and the sky starred with comets; the heroes tremble no differently than a man who, misled by the route in unknown region, pursues a journey at night. He is disquieted by his ears, by his eyes, the black fear of night grows and the fields on both sides and a tree comes in the way with larger shadows.

Before a landscape that constantly changes until it fades into darkness, Tiphys reassures his crew that he will lead the Argo by relying on the unsetting constellations (2.61-2: *adeo non illa sequi mihi sidera mens stat* | *quae delapsa polo reficit mare*) and trusting in the guidance of Minerva.[191] In order to mitigate the crew's fear of darkness, Tiphys mentions the advantages of sailing at night: winds get stronger and ships sail faster during the quiet hours of darkness (2.59-60: *adde quod in*

[191] Spaltenstein 2002 *ad Arg*. 2.47.

noctem uenti ueloque marique | *incumbunt magis et tacitis ratis ocior horis*). The tragic irony of the helmsman's encouraging words will strike (almost exactly) one book later, when night winds push the Argo back to Cyzicus (3.37-42):

> ipse diem longe solisque cubilia Tiphys
> consulit, ipse ratem uento stellisque ministrat.
> atque illum non ante sopor luctamine tanto
> lenit agens diuum imperiis. cadit inscia
> dextera demittitque oculos solataque puppis
> turbine flectit iter portuque refertur amico.
>
> From afar Tiphys himself calculates the time and the setting of the sun, he himself directs the ship with the wind and the stars. But sleep, against which he never fought so much, impelling from the gods' commands, soothes him. His unwitting hand falls down, he lowers his eyes, and the ship, left by itself, turns its course with a whirlwind and brings itself back to the friendly harbor.

The unconsciousness of Tiphys extends to the rest of the crew. When they unknowingly fight against their hosts after their second arrival to Cyzicus, the Argonauts all resemble unwitting helmsmen who inadvertently guide their ship onto a hidden rock (3.108-11):

> ac uelut in medio rupes latet horrida ponto,
> quam super ignari numquam rexere magistri
> praecipites impune rates, sic agmine caeco
> incurrit strictis manus ensibus.
>
> As a dreadful rock lurks in the middle of the sea, upon which never did unknowing helmsmen sway their headlong ship without consequences, so the multitude in blind array rush against the unsheathed swords.

The simile subtly underscores the continuity between the perceptual limits of the heroes on and off the Argo, as if a sensorial osmosis blurred the boundaries between land and sea. It is important to note, however, that as soon as the Argo glides into the Propontis, a region to which Cyzicus belongs, another world begins to come into view (2.628: *incipiens alium prospectus in orbem*): this world is "other" not only because of the foreign peoples it hosts, such as the Cyzicans, but

also for the perceptual challenges it offers, as if it represented a further alteration of the perceptual scenarios disclosed by the Argo's first departure.

VF expands his focus from the perceptual instability on the Argo at sea in *Argonautica* 2 into an extensive reflection, in *Argonautica* 3, on the failing capacity to recognize places, faces, and voices when darkness, noise, and frenzy hinder clear perception. At Cyzicus, the Argonauts are off their portentous ship, yet they remain ensnared in the unstable perceptual world disclosed by seafaring. If we try to explain why hosts and guests at Cyzicus fail to recognize one another, scarce light and loud noise must be considered. Yet, as we will see in the next section, the night at Cyzicus is not too dark at times; other times the tumultuous clamor stirred up by Pan and Bellona subsides. In spite of the Cyzicans' god-sent frenzy and the Argonauts' battle fury, intervals of light and moments of quiet allow recognition to happen.

In what follows, I will suggest that the minor recognition scenes that precede the collective *anagnorisis* undermine the poet's attempt to determine whether or not that infamous battle could have been averted, in other words, whether or not hosts and guests would all have been able to recognize one another in spite of darkness and noise, both significant hindrances to clear perception, and in defiance of the frenzy sent upon the Cyzicans by Cybele. Those of the characters end up mirroring the poet's epistemic limits.

The senses off the Argo

In the previous section I have examined the ways in which the Argo, the first ship, represents a locus of perceptual instability, on which the Argonauts, the first humans to sail, may start questioning the reliability of the senses once sailing discloses a new perception of the world. In the literary tradition the Argo is also said to destabilize those who are confronted with its appearance for the first time. Through Boreas' definition of the ship as *nefas*, VF pays homage to

the traditional presentation of the Argo as a technological wonder that embodies an epistemological challenge.[192] Yet, when the Argo reaches the harbor of Cyzicus for the first time, the king's reaction at the sight of the ship does not accord with the typically disoriented reaction of the first-time observer, as exemplified by the Accian shepherd (2.635-48):

> rex diuitis agri
> Cyzicus. Haemoniae qui tum noua signa carinae
> ut uidet, ipse ultro primas procurrit ad undas
> miraturque uiros dextramque amplexus et haerens
> incipit: 'o terris nunc primum cognita nostris
> Emathiae manus et fama mihi maior imago,
> non tamen haec adeo semota neque ardua tellus
> longaque[193] iam populis imperuia lucis eoae,
> cum tales intrasse duces, tot robora cerno.
> nam licet hinc saeuas tellus alat horrida gentes
> meque fremens tumido circumfluat ore Propontis,
> uestra fides ritusque pares et mitia cultu
> his etiam mihi corda locis. procul effera uirtus
> Bebrycis et Scythici procul inclementia sacri.'
>
> The king of this rich land is Cyzicus. As soon as he sees the unknown signs of the ship, he himself spontaneously hastens to the water's edge and marvels at the heroes. Clasping their hands and keeping close to them, he begins: "Oh Emathian heroes, whom our land knows for the first time now, to me your presence looks greater than your fame. After all, this land is not so remote nor difficult to reach, and the far eastern lands are not inaccessible for people, now that I see so many valiant heroes and that captains of such kind made their way into it. For although on this side a harsh land nourishes frightful people and the raging Propontis flows around me with its swelling mouth, I have here loyalty like yours, and equal rites, and hearts made gentle with culture. Far away from us is the fierce strength of the Bebryci, far away is the unmerciful rituals of the Scythians.

The contrast between the Greek and the Roman *Argonautica* is again telling of VF's careful handling of the Argo as simultaneously old and new material. In Apollonius' poem (1.962-71) Cyzicus, warned by an oracle to receive foreign heroes without hostility, welcomes the Argonauts

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[192] See the discussion in the previous section of this chapter.

[193] Thilo corrects *longaque* in *regnaque*.

only after hearing about their journey and birthplace. In VF's *Argonautica*, on the other hand, Cyzicus' recognition process is counterintuitive. Although his kingdom encounters the Argo for the first time (2.639: *o terris nunc primum cognita nostris*), Cyzicus looks at the ship's new standards (2.636: *noua signa*), correctly identifies the Argo,[194] and greets the heroes with an erudite epithet (3.640: *Emathiae manus*).

Cyzicus is not the only one to catch sight of the Argo. Cybele's gaze points at the shields fixed onto the hull of the ship. Although these shields may or may not correspond to the signs recognized by Cyzicus, they can be considered, nevertheless, as recognition tokens. Sharing a convergent gaze onto the ominous ship, Cyzicus and Cybele interpret the novelty of the Argo in divergent terms: if the king reads the standards as a sign that his land does not stand too far away from the civilized world, Cybele looks instead at the shields fixed onto the ship to plan unseen monstrosities (3.28-9: *aerisono de monte ratem praefixaque regum | scuta uidet, noua monstra uiro, noua funera uoluit*). The adjective *nouus*, which first indicates the ships's *signa* and then the dire monstrosities schemed by Cybele, further emphasizes the man's and the goddess's divergent interpretation of the signs of the Argo.

The "new, unseen" (*nouus*), unlike its opposite "known, previously seen" (*notus*), seems to prompt recognition in counterintuitive ways. If, as the recognition of the Argo by the king shows, being new does not mean being unrecognizable, to be known does not mean to be recognized. For example, if Cyzicus recognizes the new and previously unseen (2.636: *noua signa*) signs of the Argo, the Argonauts do not recognize the known shallows of Cyzicus (3.43: *notis uadis*) towards which the Argo glides. Only later in the episode will the Argonauts recognize what they had come to know: at the break of dawn the towers clearly appear to their eyes and represent

[194] See Smith 1987 *ad Arg*. 2.636.

the first visual prompt of the recognition process. Seeing clearly the known towers on the walls coincides with recognizing the crime committed against friends (3.258: *notae turres*).

Cyzicus' ability to identify the Argo by recognizing its previously unseen standards, a metapoetic hint at the popularity of the Argonautic saga in the literary tradition, also signals a move beyond that tradition's concern with the Argo effect[195] on first-time observers. As if the appearance of the Argo has exhausted its power to generate wonder, VF delves into another set of epistemological issues in the Cyzicus episode: what prevents the Argonauts and the Cyzicans from recognizing one another? Why did the Argonauts not realize that they had landed on the same island again? Why were the Cyzicans not able to recognize their guests? And to what extent would it have been impossible for recognition to happen at Cyzicus? These questions subtend VF's invocations to the Muses and take on programmatic relevance in the Flavian version of the Cyzicus episode. In the first proem, the poet summons Clio to disclose the causes of the men's unspeakable war (3.14-8):

> tu mihi nunc causas infandaque proelia, Clio,
> pande uirum! tibi enim superum data, uirgo, facultas
> nosse animos rerumque uias. cur talia passus
> arma, quid hospitiis iunctas concurrere dextra
> Iuppiter? unde tubae nocturnaque mugit Erynis?

> You, Clio, now lay bare for me the causes and the unspeakable battles of men. For you, oh virgin, were given the faculty to know the minds and the course of things. Why did Jove suffer such battles and that the right hands joined in hospitable pacts engaged in combat? From where did the trumpets and the nocturnal Erynis bray?

The proem's last question, *unde tubae nocturnaque mugit*[196] *Erynis*, conveys the inextricable combination of darkness, noise, and madness: the Erynis, creature of the night and agent of

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[195] Degli'Innocenti Pierini (1999) uses the phrase "Argo effect" to describe the sense of wonder and fear stirred up by the sight of the Argo in those who see for the first time the portentous ship.

[196] I accept Shackleton Bailey's proposal to read *mugit* instead of *mouit*. See Shackleton Bailey 1977, 203.

madness, brays together with war trumpets. VF further underscores the programmatic relevance of darkness, noise, and madness, inextricably intertwined in the first proem's ending, in his second invocation of the Muses (3.212-9):

> perge age Tartareae mecum simul omnia noctis,
> Musa, sequi. trepidam Phaeton adflauit ab alto
> Tisiphonen grauiorque locos iam luce propinqua
> umbra premit. non signa uirum, non funera cernunt,
> et rabie magis ora calent. uos prodite, diuae,
> Eumenidum noctisque globos uatique patescat
> armorum fragor et tepidi singultibus agri
> labentem atque acti Minyis per litora manes.
>
> Oh Muse, proceed together with me, I pray, and go through the whole of that infernal night. Phaeton was breathing on Tisiphone from the deep sea and heavier darkness now presses upon the places as the light comes close. They do not discern the signs of the men nor the lifeless bodies, but their faces glow more with rage. You, goddesses, reveal the cloud of the Eumenides and the night.[197] Let it be disclosed for the poet the crashing of weapons and the fields warmed by the gasps of the fallen and the shades of the ones dragged through the shores by the Minyans.

The poet's concern with recognition and the men's inability to discern signs and to recognize the identity of the dead comes forth explicitly in this second proem. Once again, darkness and the influence of the Eumenides form a blinding cloud which the poet invites the Muses to dispel; noise and sounds too should be laid open, as if their interference with the heroes' ability to recognize faces and places were not immediately obvious. VF conjures up a particular acoustic ambience for the nocturnal battle, a succession of sounds telling the story of the defeated: the clash of the weapons, the gasps of dying soldiers, and the sound of lifeless bodies dragged through the shore.

In light of the programmatic relevance of darkness, noise, and madness, it is important to see how their interference with recognition plays out. Let's start with sound. In Apollonius'

[197] Different translations have been proposed for the phrase at 3.217 *Eumenidum noctisque globos*. Manuwald 2015 *ad Arg*. 3.217 translates "bands gathered by the Eumenides and the night." Other critics see in *globi* a reference not to the bands of warriors fighting in the night but to the throng of the Eumenides only. See Spaltenstein 2004 *ad Arg*. 3.216.

Argonautica loud tumult rises no earlier than the beginning of the battle (1.1028-9), at the end of which the cries of the defeated resound throughout the city (1.1051-2). In the Roman poem, by contrast, tumult and cries anticipate the battle. When the Argonauts reach the harbor of Cyzicus for the second time, the sound of war-trumpets and the cry "the enemy occupies the harbor" break through the silence of the night (3.43-5). Pan's own voice with its special acoustic effects add to the turmoil of the city: his hair hisses in the wind; his voice towers over the surrounding noise and indirectly amplifies it as it makes helmets and spears, charioteers, and gate bolts tremble and fall onto the ground (3.46-57). The tumult reaches the house of Cyzicus, who shakes off dreadful dreams only to be haunted later by another set of delusions. Bellona, the giant goddess of war, appears at the doors of Cyzicus' palace and brings on the tumult of war: at her steps, her brazen armor loudly shakes with a metallic sound, her triple-crested helmet knocks against the gable and stirs up the men (3.61-2: *passuque mouens orichalca sonoro* | *adstitit et triplici pulsans fastigia crista*). The first lance hurled by the Cyzicans resounds while cracking the rowers' seats. No less tumultuous is the reaction of the Argonauts to the unexpected attack. The simile illustrating the fury of Jason conjures up the sounds of war: the hero invades the shore like the chariot of Mars leaping forth from the sky when the clamor and the blood-red war trumpets delight the god (3.84-5: *clamorque tubaeque* | *sanguineae iuuere deum*). This acoustic scenario takes place in a city which was already known in antiquity for its aesthetic wonders. It may be interesting to bring VF's attention to the sounds of the Cyzicus night into conversation with Pliny the Elder's overview of the wonders of the city: we read that the city's seven towers, located near the Thracian Gate,

"repeat with numerous reverberations any sounds that strike upon them."[198] The builders did not purposefully contrive this acoustic effect, which is instead the result of chance.

An overwhelming acoustic dissonance pairs with the obscurity of the night. After the welcoming banquet upon the heroes' first arrival, the familiarity between Argonauts and Cyzicans develops similarly during night and day: *nox* and *lux* occupy the same metrical position in two consecutive lines, both monosyllables preceding the bucolic diaeresis (2.663-4: *sic ait hasque inter uariis nox plurima dictis* | *rapta uices nec non simili lux postera tractu*). How much darker is the tragic night compared to the other nights spent by the Argonauts at Cyzicus? How dark is the shore where the battle takes place? When the Argonauts arrive for the second time at the friendly harbor, they are struck with fear not only because they cannot discern the region they have reached but also because of the unexpected glimmering of shields and helmets (3.75-6: *nec quae regio aut discrimina cernunt*, | *cur galeae clipeique micent*). The gleams of weapons receive particular emphasis for their ambivalent effect on visual perception: while they seemingly dispel the darkness,[199] they also produce unstable and dazzling reflections.

The first close encounters between hosts and guests well exemplify the interplay of light and darkness at Cyzicus. Mopsus, the Argonauts' seer, notices the starry armor of a fighter (whose name is not otherwise specified, 3.98-9: *stellantia Mopsus* | *tegmina*), Eurytus sees instead the shadow of Corythus (3.99: *ingentem Corythi notat Eurytus umbram*).[200] The shining of the steel

[198] Plin. *HN* 36.23: *eadem in urbe iuxta portam quae Thracia uocatur turres septem acceptas uoces numeroso repercussu multiplicant*.

[199] Manuwald 2015 *ad Arg*. 3.76 notes that "*micent* suggests that the darkness is not complete but that there are flashes of light allowing the Argonauts to understand that their opponents are armed." In Virgil's *doloneia* as well, the light in the night is dim, yet the gleam of the helmet allows the Rutulians to see the enemy.

[200] Mauwald 2015, 93 discusses the motifs of light and darkness, noise and silence, and their relevance for the salvation of some and dooming of others, and *ad Arg*. 3.98-9 interprets the scene as follows: "a flash of light falls on a fighter and reveals him to his opponents. This interpretation allows *umbra* to have its literal meaning of 'shadow' rather than 'silhouette' (thus Nováková 1964: 41)."

causes one warrior to halt his steps (100: *lumine ferri*). The shining metal of weapons and armors reflects and amplifies the dim moonlight: Medon's sword shines forth as he rushes to battle (3.119: *strictoque uias praefulgurat ense*), Telecoon's embossed belt, when shaken away from his corpse, flashes in the faintly gleaming night (or, according to some other interpretations, it faintly illuminates the night) (3.142: *cingula sublustri uibrantia detrahit umbra*). The moon shines over Castor's sword, which briefly gleams in the dark night (3.195-6: *piceo comitem miserata refulsit* | *Luna polo*). In addition to the occasional glimmering of weapons, gleaming torches often break through the night at Cyzicus: their flames make light, but their smoke cloaks the surroundings.[201] Smoky torches are thrown at the Argonauts by the Cyzicans (3.96: *faces atras*), but they are of no avail in revealing the faces of the (purported) enemy.

In spite of the limits imposed on the senses by darkness and noise, before the dawn and the gods reveal the fatal mistake of both parties, recognition does take place at Cyzicus. Preceding the collective *anagnorisis*, two minor recognition scenes cast doubt on the actual perceptual limits of those fighting at Cyzicus. Sight plays a significant role in the first recognition scene, which takes place when the war between *socii* is about to turn into a fratricidal war and the unaware Dioscuri are about to fight against one another (3.186-9):

> accessere (nefas) tenebris fallacibus acti
> Tyndaridae in sese. Castor prior ibat in ictus
> nescius, ast illos noua lux subitusque diremit
> frontis apex.
>
> Driven by the deceptive darkness the Tyndarids drew (unspeakable!) against each other. Castor is the first to go into fighting without knowing. But a new light and the flame on their forehead, having come up suddenly, divide them.

[201] Manuwald 2015 *ad Arg*. 3.129 points out the paradoxical nature of this image.

The new light mentioned in the passage was given to the Dioscuri by Jupiter. When the heroes are about to depart from Thessaly, the divine thunder (1.569: *facem*), crossing the void, splits into two and gently lands on the middle of the Dioscuri's foreheads (1.571: *placida et mediis in frontibus haesit*), harmlessly effusing a glowing light (1.572-3: *lumenque innoxia fundit* | *purpureum*). The averted fighting between the divine brothers at Cyzicus allows us to read retrospectively into the gentle harmlessness of that flame: as if it suddenly revived, light dissipates darkness and forestalls the fratricide. Thus, the portentous flame, itself a recognition mark of the divine nature of Castor and Pollux, will later reveal itself as *innoxia* because it preserves the innocence of its bearers.

In the second recognition scene, which also precedes the collective *anagnorisis* of the Cyzicans and the Argonauts, sound is the key element. Before looking at this moment in more detail, it is worth noting that the scene is part of Hercules' *aristeia*, which is paradigmatic of the inconsistencies emerging from the relation between light and sound, on the one hand, and recognition, on the other, in the Cyzicus episode. One of the hero's victims is Phlegyas, who runs down from the citadel waving a torch heavy with knots and pitch (3.124-5: *ecce grauem nodis pinguique bitumine quassans* | *lampada turbata Phlegyas decurrit ab urbe*); amidst the cloud of smoke released by the torch he appears widely gleaming like Typhon glowing red with winds and flames (3.129-31: *arduus et late fumanti nube coruscus.* | *quantus ubi immenso prospexit ab aethere Typhon* | *igne simul uentisque rubens*). Although Hercules can better take aim thanks to the torch's light, he does not realize that his arrows, which in turn catch fire, pierce his host's chest.[202] Higher flames flare up as Phlegyas falls on the ground and his hair catches fire in turn. Yet the brighter light does not lead Hercules to identify his victim nor the surrounding landscape.

[202] Manuwald 2015 *ad Arg.* 3.135-6 explains that "the arrow is envisaged as going through the masses of pich on Phlegyas' torch (124-5), catching fire and then running through the middle of his chest."

As the Dioscuri's divine flame breaks through the night more powerfully than glimmering weapons and smoky torches, so Hercules' proud words, shouted closely to his unrecognized addressee, resound over the top of loud noise. In contrast with war cries uttered by other heroes at a great distance from those who could have found clues for recognition or lacking such clues altogether, Hercules shouts his last threat and his name, a loud and clear identity mark, closely to his opponent. Hidmon, the hero's victim, whose name is put between cruces by editors,[203] and ironically so if we read it against Hercules' loud and clear voicing of his own name, is the first to be able to recognize the identity of his opponent and guest (3.168-72):

> occupat os barbamque uiri clauamque superne
> intonat 'occumbes' et 'nunc' ait 'Herculis armis,
> donum ingens semperque tuis mirabile fatum.'
> horruit ille cadens nomenque agnouit amicum
> primus et ignaris dirum scelus attulit umbris.
>
> He seizes the bearded face of the man and with a thundering sound from above brings down the club: "You will die now" and "now" he says "under Hercules' arms, a remarkable gift and a death forever wondrous for your family." That man, falling down, shivered and was the first to recognize his guest-friend and brought the dire crime to the unaware shades of the underworld.

The *error* is out in the open and the name, rather than the voice of Hercules, brings a momentary revelation.[204] The awareness of the *error* dies with the person who acquires it. By showing that recognition does take place, albeit one-sidedly, during the nocturnal fight before the break of dawn, which corresponds to the moment in which Jove intervenes, the scene poses yet again questions

[203] See Manuwald 2015 *ad Arg*. 3.167. Editors put Hidmon between *cruces* because the name bears a suspicious similarity with the name of one of the Argonauts, Idmon. This could be, instead, a hint to the similarities between the Argonauts and their hosts.

[204] See Manuwald 2021 for an overview of the echoes of tragedies about Hercules in VF's *Argonautica*.

about the men's effective ability to recognize their opponents in the darkness. A brief passage further comments on the importance of voices and words for recognition (3.243-5):

> talia magnanimi diuerso turbine fundunt
> tela uiri sonitusque pedum suspecta motu
> explorant, prensant socios uocemque reposcunt.
>
> The great-souled heroes throw arrows of this sort whirling from different directions, they put to the test sounds and suspicious movements, they clutch their allies and ask their voice in return.

Manuwald[205] notes that "[t]he potential consequence that this interaction might lead to the realization of the true identity of the opponents (cf. 169-72) is ignored." I suggest, on the other hand, that VF exploits the "potential consequences" of this scene to cast doubts on whether fighters were actually unable to recognize their allies or opponents at night. Commentators mention the unclear meaning of *uox* in the passage above. Some believe that it indicates the voiceprint, a mark that would be recognizable to one's ally; some others contend that it refers to a word, perhaps a watchword, able to reveal the speaker's belonging to one side or the other.[206] Yet, the point worth emphasizing is that *uox*, whether or not it indicates the voice itself or a specific word, may reveal the identity of the interlocutor even when it remains unuttered. This is the case in Virgil's *doloneia*, when Euryalus and Nisus do not react to Volcens' questions (*Aen.* 9.375-8):

> conclamat ab agmine Volcens:
> 'state, uiri. quae causa uiae? quiue estis in armis?
> quoue tenetis iter?' Nihil illi tendere contra,
> sed celerare fugam in siluas et fidere nocti.

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[205] Manuwald 2015 *ad Arg.* 3.244-5.

[206] Spaltenstein 2002, *ad Arg.* 3.243 suggests that *uocem* refers to an identifying word which need not be a watchword. Manuwald 2015, *ad Arg.* 3.244-5 writes that "*reposco* implies that the warriors first identify themselves by the sound of their own voices and then demand the same from their interlocutors." Manuwald corroborates her interpretation by comparing VF's phrase to *Aen.* 2.376-7.

> Volcens shouts from his throng: "Halt, men! What is the reason of your wandering? And why are you in arms? Where do you keep your course? They did not exert themselves in opposition,[207] but they hastened their flight into the woods and entrusted themselves to the night.

If the gleam of Euryalus' helmet in the night alerted the Rutulians to the enemy's presence, the silence after their questions confirms their suspicions. VF sketches *en passant* an apparently insignificant scene that strongly evokes the story of Euryalus and Nisus. The importance of "returning the voice" is but one link between the Cyzicus episode and Virgil's *doloneia*. As we will see in the next section, the Flavian poet foregrounds the epistemological component of its model through pointed intertextual references.

<u>Gleaming in the night: Virgil's *doloneia* and the Cyzicus episode</u>

In line with the dynamics of imitation and allusion of Flavian poetry, VF's poetry by alluding to multiple sources at the same time, comments on his models as he weaves his own text.[208] As he rewrites Apollonius' *Argonautica* through a Virgilian lens, the Flavian poet comments on his models while composing his own poem.[209] The Cyzicus episode displays the typically Flavian balance of imitation, interpretation, and creation: VF creates a largely new version and, as he draws on Apollonius' *Argonautica* 1 and *Aeneid* 9, comments on his sources. I have examined above VF's main interventions on Apollonius' version of the Cyzicus episode. In this section I will turn my attention to VF's engagement with and commentary on *Aeneid* 9. I will seek to show that the aesthetic significance of the imitation of *Aeneid* 9 and its *doloneia* bridges form and concept: on a

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[207] Hardie 1994 *ad* 9.377 translates *nihil illi tendere contra* with "they did not press on to meet them." Hardie also invites the reader to compare this passage with Eur. *Rhes*. 778, where Odysseus and Diomedes do not reply to the charioteer's questions.

[208] Malamud and McGuire 1993, 192.

[209] On this feature of the Flavian *Argonautica*, see also Hershkowitz 1999, 35-8.

formal level, the Flavian poet borrows colors peculiar to the long night of Virgil's *doloneia*; on a conceptual level, through those same colors and visual effects which he reproduces via intertextual references, he sheds light back on the epistemological concerns of the Virgilian intertext.

Scholars have noted that *Aeneid* 9 thematizes perception and knowledge. As Hardie observes, the book "makes a central issue of the reality and the intelligibility of the divine for humans."[210] Turnus, for instance, showcases the limited ability of humans to understand the divine, when he interprets the metamorphosis of Aeneas' fleet as a portent favorable to the Rutulians (9.126-31) and decides to attack the Trojans acting on his flawed interpretation.[211] On the Trojan side, Nisus and Euryalus, excessively confident in the soundness of their plan, display a similar inability to anticipate the consequences of their own actions and the intentions of the gods. The Rutulian leader and the Trojan youths represent two faces of the same coin. As a result of an unclear perception of the human and the divine world, they take a self-destructive path: clearly-lit in the beginning, obscure and confounding in the end.[212]

The shift from light to darkness (and vice versa) and its mapping onto the shift from clear perception (hence knowledge) to ignorance is a motif that VF replays in the Cyzicus episode. Clouds of mist and darkness, gleaming weapons, the sudden light of a thunderbolt compose the imagery shared across text and intertext, yet their impact on the perception and knowledge of humans undergoes changes and, oftentimes, inversions. In the *Aeneid,* the *globus* of dark mist rising from the ground (*Aen*. 9.36: *globus caligine uoluitur atra*) allows the Trojans to realize that

[210] Hardie 1994, 20.

[211] See Hardie 1994, 18-23 for a discussion of Turnus' perceptual limits and his similarity with Nisus and Euryalus in this respect.

[212] Hardie 1994, 21: "The ignorance of Nisus and Euryalus as to what is in store for them is related to the more profound delusions under which Turnus labours, from the time that he is got at by Allecto to his final recognition of the truth at 12.894-5." For the relation between clear vision and the image of the path, see Hardie 1994, 22.

the enemy is approaching, whereas the *globus* of darkness and furies obscures the sight and the mind of the men at Cyzicus (VF 3.217: *Eumenidum noctisque globos*). Caicus' cry "the enemy's here!" (*Aen*. 9.38: *hostis ades*, *heia*!) contrasts with the authorless voice uttered from the middle of darkness (VF 3.44-5: *uox et mediis emissa tenebris*: | *hostis habet portus*.)

While the Trojan fleet eludes the murky torches kindled by Turnus and his men (*Aen*. 9.74: *atque omnis facibus pubes accingitur atris*), the Argonauts sustain the impact of stones and smoky torches (VF 3.96: *saxa facesque atras et tortae pondera fundae*). In both epic poems, the phrase *noua lux* marks a revelation. In the *Aeneid,* a new light shines upon the eyes, and thunder traverses the sky right before Cybele announces that the Trojan fleet will not catch fire (*Aen*. 9.110: *hic primum noua lux*[213] *oculis offulsit*). Later in book 9, Turnus, who was not able to see the *noua lux* as a portentous sign of the metarphosis of the ships, will himself make a portentous appearance. The Trojans recognize the Rutulian hero: from his eyes a new light shines forth (*Aen*. 9.731: *noua lux oculis effulsit*). At Cyzicus a new light, *noua lux* again (VF 3.188), allows the recognition between Castor and Pollux, a revelatory moment that changes, however, the course of events for no other character than the divine twins.

The emphasis on light and darkness ties into a shared concern between Virgil's *doloneia* and the Cyzicus episode, namely the theme of the recognition of the enemy at night. Nisus and Euryalus plan to take advantage of the darkness and drunk sleep of their enemies to accomplish their mission. They are confident that they can pass unobserved through the enemy's camp. Their plan sounds daring but reasonable: the two invite the elders to disregard their youthful age and to trust, instead, their knowledge of the places they must cross to reach Aeneas. Darkness cannot deceive them because they know the way and the whole course of the river (*Aen*. 9.240-5):

[213] Cf. Servius *ad Aen*. 9.109 on the meaning of *noua lux*.

'si fortuna permittitis uti
quaesitum Aenean et moenia Pallantea,
mox hic cum spoliis ingenti caede peracta
adfore cernetis. nec nos uia fallit euntis:
uidimus obscuris primam sub uallibus urbem
uenatu adsiduo et totum cognouimus amnem.'

"If you allow us to rely on chance to seek Aeneas and the Pallantean walls, at once you will see us come here with spoils after having shed much blood. Nor will the path fail us as we go: we saw the nascent city under the dark valleys in our constant hunting and we learned to know the whole course of the river."

Darkness is crucial for the success of their mission; reminding his fellow that "the light is the enemy" (*Aen*. 9.355: *lux inimica*), Nisus summons Euryalus to stop with the slaughter of the sleepy and drunk enemies. And light, even if dim, will indeed be the enemy of the two: the gleaming of Messapus' helmet now worn by Euryalus (*Aen*. 9.365-6: *tum galeam Messapi habilem cristisque decoram* | *induit*) betrays their presence in the night (*Aen*. 9.372-4):

cum procul hos leauo flectentis limite cernunt,
et galea Euryalum sublustri noctis in umbra
prodidit immemorem radiisque aduersa refulsit.

When from afar they see them turning to the left, the helmet betrayed the forgetful Euryalus in the dim shadow of the night and shone back before the moonrays.

These lines resound in VF's description of the gleam of Castor's spear under the moon's dim light: we find again the two verbs in *hysteron proteron* in the same position at the beginning and the end of the hexameter (3.194-6: *breuis hanc sed fata ferentem* | *prodidit et piceo comitem miserata refulsit* | *Luna polo*).[214] It is important to add that the same Virgilian passage will later resonate when Peleus despoils Telecoon of his belt, which vibrates in a faintly gleaming shadow (VF 3.142: *cingula sublustri uibrantia detrahit umbra*; cf. *Aen*. 9.373: *et galea Euryalum sublustri noctis in*

[214] Manuwald 2015 *ad Arg*. 3.141-2: "The limited light in the darkness of the night is sufficient to reveal the decorated belt as 'glittering' (*OLD uibro* 6)."

umbra). These intertextual references bring to the fore how light is determinant (or not) for the plot: the gleaming of Messapus' helmet on Euryalus' head is a key moment for the reversal of events, whereas the metallic glimmers create a visual effect, a *chiaroscuro* peculiar to the night at Cyzicus but irrelevant for arousing in the Argonauts (and their hosts) any suspicion about their opponents' identity. VF splits a single Virgilian scene into two distinct moments. This fragmentation coincides with a dispersion of the gleam's significance, a detail that catches the reader's attention by virtue of its insignificance: in VF's hands, it serves to reveal nothing but the men's inability to see. When he describes the first night of the Argo at sea, perhaps VF has in mind the scene in which Euryalus' "fear leads him astray from the line of paths"[215] (9.384-5: *Euryalum tenebrae ramorum onerosque praeda* | *impediunt*, *fallitque timor regione uiarum*), and the shades of tree branches hamper his steps. VF uses the image of the night traveler caught in an unknown "line of paths" (VF 2.43: *ignota captus regione uiarum*), with a tree and its larger shadows obstructing his path (VF 2.46: *occurrens umbris maioribus arbor*), to describe the fear of the Argonauts.

The helmet of the enemy is another detail whose significance changes across the two poems. During the night battle at Cyzicus, the Argonaut Idmon wears the helmet received from Ornytos. Idmon wears this helmet when he kills no Cyzican other than Ornytus (3.173-7).[216] Whether or not VF implies that the victim is able to see the helmet, thus recognizing his opponent, is not the point. The point is that this helmet, in contrast with the one worn by Euryalus, is devoid of any revelatory function. Virgil, on the other hand, points at the multiple ways in which the gleaming helmet takes on a revelatory function. Euryalus wears the helmet snatched away from the Rutulian Messapus.

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[215] Hardie 1994 ad *Aen*. 9.385.

[216] See Finkmann 2019, 164-5 on the miscommunication between Idmon and Ornytus.

Yet, it is not upon recognizing the helmet as belonging to Messapus, rather upon perceiving its gleam, that the Rutulians' allies intercept the Trojan youth (*Aen.* 9.372-4). Wearing one piece of the enemy's armor is fatal for Euryalus not so much because it functions as a recognition token as for its ability to reflect the light and to generate a visual stimulus promptly intercepted by an unwanted observer. Volcens and his people conclude that the youth they have intercepted is a Trojan or one of their allies. However, they do not recognize the enemy they captured as Euryalus, nor they identify the helmet he is wearing as belonging to the Rutulian Messapus. The fatal helmet will function, instead, as a recognition token for other viewers in the Rutulian camp, who identify each victim of the Trojan youths (*Aen.* 9.454-72). As the helmet relates specifically to Messapus for the Rutulians, so the heads on the spikes can be traced back to specific individuals, namely Euryalus and Nisus in the passage below.

Virgil crafts two distinct recognition scenes in the aftermath of his *doloneia*. First, after Volcens' ranks, now without a leader, bring back to the Rutulian camps the booty taken away from Euryalus, the Rutulians recognize Messapus' gleaming helmet and Rhamnetis' metal breast ornaments among the spoils. Second, looking down from their towers to the Rutulian camps, the Trojans recognize the heads of Euryalus and Nisus carried on the spikes (*Aen.* 9.454-61, 465-72):

> ingens concursus ad ipsa
> corpora seminecisque uiros, tepidaque recentem
> caede locum et pleno spumantis sanguine riuos.
> agnoscunt spolia inter se galeamque nitentem
> Messapi et multo phalera sudore receptas.
> Et iam prima nouo spargebat lumine terras
> Tithoni croceum linquens Aurora cubile.
> iam sole infuso, iam rebus luce retectis
>
> quin ipsa arrectis (uisu miserabile) in hastis
> praefigunt capita et multo clamore sequuntur
> Euryali et Nisi.
> Aeneadae duri murorum in parte sinistra
> opposuere aciem (nam dextera cingitur amni),

ingentisque tenent fossas et turribus altis
stant maesti; simul ora uirum praefixa mouebant
nota nimis miseris atroque fluentia tabo.

A mighty throng moves to the very bodies, the half-dead men, the place warm from the recent slaughter, and the rivers foaming with much blood. They recognize the spoils among them, Messapus' shining helmet, and the breast ornaments retrieved with much sweat. And now Dawn, leaving the golden bed of Tithonus, was spreading a new light onto the lands. Now the sun pours forth, now things are uncovered by light.

Indeed (pitiful to see) they fix the heads of Euryalus and Nisus on lifted spikes and follow them with much clamor. The enduring Trojans place a rampart to the left side of the walls (for the right side is surrounded by the river) and guard the broad trenches. With sadness they stay on the high towers. At once the men's transfixed heads started moving, too familiar a sight to the hapless viewers and dripping with dark gore.

The recognition scene at Cyzicus also starts with the break of dawn, modeled on the Virgilian text (*Aen*. 9.459: *et iam prima novo spargebat lumine terras*; VF 3.257: *ecce leui primos iam spargere lumine portus*).[217] The later poem, however, inverts the spatial dynamics of recognition of the *Aeneid*: if the Trojans direct their recognizing gaze from the high towers (*Aen*. 9.470: *turribus altis*) to the lifeless faces of their comrades, the Argonauts who were fighting on the shore lift their eyes to the towers (VF 3.258: *turres*) just illuminated by the sunlight. The heads of Euryalus and Nisus and the towers of Cyzicus are modified by the same participial form from *nosco* (*Aen*. 9.472: *nota*; VF. 3.258: *notae*). Yet in the *Argonautica* the interjection *nefas* ("unspeakable!") signals the recognizers' own involvement in the slaughter.[218] If the Rutulians recognize the weapons belonging to Rhamnetis and Messapus, slaughtered in the night, at Cyzicus the women recognize the embroideries they have woven to gift their sons or spouses (3.257-76):[219]

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[217] Manuwald *ad Arg*. 3.257-8 signals the Virgilian intertext without further comments.

[218] Manuwald, *ibid*., observes that *notae* "sums up the tragedy, especially in juxtaposition with *nefas*."

[219] And if Virgil could read VF's epic, he would probably recognize bits of his text in the Cyzicus episode (*agnoscit… sua texta parens*).

> ecce leui primos iam spargere lumine portus
> orta dies notaeque (nefas) albescere turres.
> ‘di maris,’ attonito conclamat ab agmine Tiphys
> ‘ut mea fatali damnastis pectora somno.
> heu socii quantis complerunt litora monstris!’
> illi autem neque adhuc gemitus neque conscia facti
> ora leuant. tenet exsangues rigor horridus artus
> ceu pauet ad crines et tristia Pentheos ora
> Thyias, ubi impulsae iam se deus agmine matris
> abstulit et caesi uanescunt cornua tauri.
> nec minus effusi grandaeuum ad litora uulgus
> ut socias uidere manus dare uersa retrorsus
> terga metu. dextram tendens proclamat Iason:
> ‘quos fugitis? uellem hac equidem me strage meosque
> procubuisse magis. deus haec, deus asper utrisque
> implicuit. sumus en Minyae, sumus hospita turba!’
> tum super exsangues confertae caedis aceruos
> praecipiti plangore ruunt, agnoscit in alta
> strage uirum sua texta parens, sua munera coniunx.
>
> There, now the rising day shines a delicate light on the first parts of the harbor and the known towers turned white (unspeakable!). “Gods of the sea!”—Tiphys cries out from the astounded ranks—“How you condemned my heart to a fatal sleep! Oh, with so many monstrosities with my comrades filled the shore!” Those, however, do not groan yet, nor raise up faces that are conscious of the misdeed. A horrid rigidity grips their bloodless limbs like Thyias [Agave] struck with terror at Pentheus’ hair and stern face, when the god withdrew from the ranks of mothers and the horns of the slaughtered bull faded away. Not differently the old men poured out to the shore, terrified, turn to flight when they saw the multitude of their friends. Stretching his right hand, Jason cries out: “You run away from whom? I truly wish that I and my men had fallen in this massacre! A god contrived these things, a cruel god entangled both of us! See! We are the Mynians, we are the band you have hosted!” Then, wailing, they rush headlong over the lifeless heaps of the joined slaughter. A mother recognizes her embroideries in the deep carnage of men, a spouse her gifts.

Modulation, if not inversion, of elements related to perception and recognition in *Aeneid* 9 describe VF’s engagement with the Virgilian intertext. As we have seen, the Flavian poet voids the gleaming piece of armor, a central object of Virgil’s *doloneia*, of its revelatory power and nuances the way in which a military object, such as the helmet belonging to Messapus but worn by Euryalus, may or may not function as a recognition token. By VF’s comprehensive standards, however, Virgil’s *doloneia* provides only a partial overview of the perceptual and cognitive limits

of human beings. It is worth looking at the onset of Cyzicus' madness to delve into another cognitive obstacle that adds on the limits of the senses and the failures of knowledge thematized in Virgil's *doloneia* (3.58-69):

> ilicet ad regem clamor ruit. exsilit [ab] altis
> somnia dira toris simulacraque pallida linquens
> Cyzicus. ecce super foribus Bellona reclusis
> nuda latus passuque mouens orichalca sonoro
> adstitit et triplici pulsans fastigia crista
> inde ciere uirum. sequitur per moenia demens
> ille deam et fatis extrema in proelia tendit,
> qualis in Alciden et Thesea Rhoecus iniqui
> nube meri geminam Pholoen maioraque cernens
> astra ruit qualisue redit uenatibus actis
> lustra pater Triuiamque canens umeroque Learchum
> aduehit, at miserae declinant lumina Thebae.

> From there the loud call rushes down to the king. Cyzicus leapt from his high couch, leaving behind dire dreams and faint visions. There! Bellona, standing over the open doors, her side bare, shakes the brazen weapons with loud steps. She stood still, striking against the roof with her triple-crested helmet, and stirred up the man from there. Cyzicus follows the goddess, out of mind, through the city, and marches to his last battle with his fate, like Rhoecus when clouded by the excess of wine, seeing the Pholoe double and the stars larger, rushes against Hercules and Theseus, or like that father who, once the hunt was over, returns singing of the woods and Trivia, and carries Learchus on his shoulders. But the hapless Thebes turns down her eyes.

In the figure of Cyzicus and his mythical parallels VF brings together three of the four conditions or circumstances associated with the experience of "unreal presentations:" sleep, drunkenness, and insanity. Leaving imagination aside, Lucullus lists sleep, drunkenness, and insanity in Cicero's *Academica* (probably following the conventional order in which they were listed in other treatises) in the same order in which they apply to Cyzicus in the *Argonautica*. The context of the Stoic Lucullus' discussion of these altered perceptual and mental states is his attempt to argue, against the Academics, that it is possible to distinguish between true and false presentations (*Acad.* II xvi, 51); in support of his argument, Lucullus makes the example of the presentations which human

beings experience during sleep, under the influence of wine, or when affected by madness, and goes on to argue that it is possible to distinguish between unreal and real presentations because the latter are endowed with that perceptual clarity which the former lack (Cic. *Acad*. II xvi, 51):

> Omnium deinde inanium uisorum una depulsio est, siue illa cogitatione informantur, quod fieri solere concedimus, siue in quiete siue per uinum siue per insaniam: nam ab omnibus eiusdem modi uisis perspictuitatem, quam mordicus tenere debemus, abesse dicemus.
>
> Then there is a single defense/warding off against unreal presentations, either if they are shaped by imagination/thought processes, which we concede happens usually, or during sleep or by effects of the wine or because of madness: for we will say that every presentation of the same kind lacks perspicuity, which we must hold fast to.

Lucullus proceeds to illustrate in more depth each instance of unreal presentations. The overlap between VF's illustration of Cyzicus' state of mind and the order in which "unreal presentations" are discussed in the *Academica* would stand out to readers learned in philosophy. These readers would notice VF's orderly allusion to the epistemological theories on unreal presentations illustrated in Cicero's *Academica* and consider Cyzicus as a novel, quite comprehensive case study. The enclitic *-ue*, in particular, speaks to the compendious nature of Cyzicus' description, insofar as it subtly links the second simile, which describes his altered state of mind (3.67: *qualisue*), with the list of states (i.e., sleep, drunkenness, and madness) correlated to unreal presentations in Cicero's work (*Acad*. II xvi, 51: *siue in quiete siue per uinum siue per insania*). It is important to underscore that the king's madness affects his sight and hearing, the senses already undermined by darkness and inarticulate noise. Madness becomes an overwhelming multi-sensorial experience for Cyzicus: in addition to the dreadful appearance of Bellona with her rattling weapons (3.60),[220] he hears lions roaring and horns blowing, and in the mist, he sees Cybele's

[220] Manuwald 2015 *ad Arg*. 3.60 on the terrifying effects of Bellona.

towers approaching (3.237-8: *audit fremitus irasque leonum* | *cornuaque et motas uidet inter nubila turres*) before being reached by Jason's spear.

The *furor* experienced by king Cyzicus is a result of Cybele's influence and differs from Jason's *furor* which indicates, instead, the fury of battle.[221] The king's madness is one manifestation of the extent to which gods interfere with the perceptual abilities of individuals. Since both Jason and Cyzicus are equally involved in the fight, the reader is left to wonder whether the fury of battle is as blinding as the frenzy stirred by the gods. VF's attention to the gods' interference with the senses and the mind of humans another point on god-sent presentations made in Cicero's *Academica*. Before discussing the nature of unreal presentations and whether or not they detract from the reliability of the senses—Lucullus states against the Academics—one must yield to the assumption that gods are omnipotent and can send forth, therefore, any presentation they want. Even if we take for granted, Lucullus continues, that gods *can* send forth any kind of presentation, to what extent are we to assume that they will do so (*Acad*. II xvi, 50: *Quis enim tibi dederit aut omnia deum posse aut ita facturum esse si possit*?). These questions, which undermine the Academics' claim that to distinguish between real and unreal presentations is impossible, allows us to look at the philosophical import of the Cyzicus episode from yet another perspective. Perhaps the Cyzicus episode, with its minor recognition scenes preceding the collective *anagnorisis* of the Argonauts and their hosts, invite readers to ponder the extent to which gods can interfere with the capacity of humans to recognize faces, places, and objects.

If not on the omnipotence of the gods, the Cyzicus episode certainly raises questions on the heroes' wisdom, were their conduct to be measured against the prescriptions of more than one

[221] Manuwald 2015 *ad Arg*. 3.86.

philosophical school. If he were Cyzicus, for instance, the Stoic sage would likely be able to recognize the onset of his madness and to abstain, therefore, from action. By the same token, against what Stoicism would prescribe, the Argonauts took action against unidentified opponents in spite of the fact that their cognitive impressions were impeded by darkness and noise.[222] The Argonauts, moreover, do not seem to comply with the suspension of judgement encouraged by Skepticism: at Cyzicus they rush to conclusions (and battle), thus resembling inferior individuals who "are characterized by their 'precipitancy' (E, G5), or disposition to assent to 'unclear impressions', their 'erroneous' assent where suspension of judgement is in order, and their 'self-deception in yielding to false impression.'"[223] The appropriateness of the Argonauts' conduct from a philosophical point of view in the night battle at Cyzicus may be not as explicit a theme as the question of the reliability of the senses but would accord with an important instance in which Mopsus, the seer of the Argonauts, resorts to a Stoic theory to explain the torpor which prevents his comrades from proceeding with their journey. A Stoic elucidation of the Argonauts' condition after the tragic discovery of their mistake, then, marks the ending of the Cyzicus episode, but does not represent a sporadic intrusion of philosophical theories into this particular section of the epic poem. Rather, it inscribes itself into VF's sustained interest in advancing an epistemological agenda in the Cyzicus episode. Although (at times dissonant) echoes of competing philosophical theories resound throughout the text, the Academics could have used the blindness of the Argonauts and their hosts as mythical evidence for their arguments on the limits and the

[222] See Long and Sedley 1987 I, 251 on Stoic epistemology and Sext. Emp. *Math*. 8.331a-332a: "The mental state of the perception, and all the other perceptual conditions, are allowed to be factors which can prevent a cognitive impression from performing its criterial function." Krasne (2018, 248) provides examples of the Argonauts' Epicurean achievements, such as the distant and atharassic observation of the remnants of the Gigantomachy.

[223] Long and Sedley 1987 I, 258.

unreliability of the senses. If on the Argo the heroes are confronted with altered perceptions of the surroundings, off the portentous ship the misrecognition of their hosts (and vice versa) highlights the limits of the senses and, in some cases, their being susceptible to the influence of the gods. In the Flavian version of the Cyzicus episode, the causes of the tragic mistake form an intricate bundle that reflects the poet's ambition to provide a comprehensive overview of the ways in which perception can be flawed or hindered as much as it exposes the poet's own epistemic failures to determine where the gods' blinding influence ends and the limits of the human senses begin.

The Argo's Backward Route: Revisiting the Epic Canon through the Lens of Recognition

Scholars have noted the disorienting effects that a belated text about origins, such as VF's *Argonautica*, may have on its readers. More often than not, these effects concern issues of temporality. For one, the presentation of the Argo as the first ship is constantly undermined by references to earlier sailing. Cyzicus' concern about the recurrent incursions of the Pelasgians into his city's harbor, for instance, contradicts the primacy of the Argo: "[t]he *Argo* myth which seems at first glance to be about origins, exploration, and innovation, becomes in VF' hands a vehicle for exploring the endless repetitions and variations of a profoundly derivative literary world."[224] The tension between innovation and derivation is particularly visible in the Cyzicus episode, where the repeated occurrence of the adjective *nouus*, which describes the novelty of Cybele's revenge plans (3.29) against Cyzicus, signals an important variation from the Hellenistic precedent.[225] Much like the conflicting statements on the Argo-as-first-ship, the interplay between new and old material, seen and unseen scenes, may generate disorientation in the readers, who grapples with the

[224] Malamud and McGuire 1993, 197.

[225] Manuwald 2015 *ad Arg*. 3.29.

coexistence of two temporalities in the *Argonautica*. A belated prequel,[226] the poem comes after the epic poems of Virgil and Lucan but narrates myths that precede the Trojan War.

In this last section, I will examine how the Cyzicus episode, which in content thematizes only the perceptual instability and cognitive failures, also reflects the poet's canonizing and, as such, stabilizing ambitions. From a generic point of view, scholars have noted the tragic structure of the Cyzicus episode, an inset narrative that gives the illusion of being based upon a tragedy irretrievable for us, but which may be reconstructed thanks to the epic text. In his monograph on VF's narrative technique, in particular, Christoph Sauer details the tragic traits of the narration of the events at Cyzicus:[227] the digression on the king's offense to Cybele functions as explanatory prologue, the inversion of the Argo's route Cybele's revenge plan, the battle between hosts and guests and the death of Cyzicus at the hands of Jason take place are example of tragic blindness, and the discovery of the inadvertent crime resembles a tragic *anagnorisis*.

The tragic tint of the episode is visible also from the characterization of Jason. As Sauer underscores, Jason speaks with tragic irony: he wishes to come back again to Cyzicus, so that his king and host could see the valor of their guests, the Argonauts, in arms.[228] This is what will happen precisely in the nyktomachy. Like Pentheus, Cyzicus pays the price for his offense towards a divinity, the resentful Cybele, who turns the Argonauts into unaware avengers of her sacred lion. The Aristotelian definitions of *hamartia* and *anagnorisis*, Sauer underscores, are suitable for describing the nature of the mistake and the following recognition of both the Argonauts and the

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[226] Heerink (2014, 81) applies Barchiesi's definition to VF's *Argonautica*.

[227] Sauer 2011, 133-50. More recently, see Papaioannou and Marinis 2021.

[228] On Jason's tragic irony, see Sauer 2011, 203.

Cyzicans. Both recognize an error that can be defined as *hamartia* in the Aristotelian sense, an "unintentional but culpable offense."[229]

Yet, acknowledging the tragic outline of the Cyzicus episode does not fully explain why cognition-related themes exceed the *anagnorisis* of the characters and pervade this poem's section as a whole. At this point in the history of the Roman epic genre, when three epic poems are in the making under the Flavian emperors (VF's *Argonautica*, Statius' *Thebaid*, and Silius Italicus' *Punica*), the trope of tragic recognition obeys a well-established law of generic interaction. Applying Barchiesi's insight on genre-crossing to VF's poem I will say that, by the second century CE, lodged within the heart of the Roman epic genre lies a law of impurity or a principle of contamination that requires tragic recognition to merge with epic.[230]

The return of the Argo to that city between Phrygia and mount Dindimus, more than representing a tragic detour, constitutes a re-tour of the Roman epic tradition. As it turns back to the harbor of Cyzicus, the Argo functions as a metapoetic vessel[231] on board of which VF at once revisits and establishes the trope of recognition in the Roman epic genre. To revisits and to establish at the same time becomes possible if we consider, once more, that the poem's status of

[229] On the relevance of Aristotle's *Poetics* for the Cyzicus episode, see Sauer 2011, 200-2.

[230] I rephrase here Barchiesi's quotation of Derrida (2001, 153): "Useful alternative provocations have been contributed by Derrida, who notes that quotation and recontextualization make change simultaneous with the law of genre: 'what if there were, lodged within the heart of the law itself, a law of impurity or a principle of contamination?'" and apply it to the generic ambiguity of the Cyzicus episode.

[231] The connection between sea travel and poetry stands out as early as Apollonius' *Argonautica*, where the poet assimilates himself with the seafaring Argonauts, see Albis 1996, 43-66. One of the finest examples of the allusive potential of the Argo's enterprise is to be found in Catullus 64. Harrison (2007, 9) examines the overlapping vocabularies of sailing and poetic activity. At the outset of the poem, the Argo's course over the flat surface of the sea recalls the flow of poetry over the page. Catullus would be drawing a parallel between the Argo's unprecedented voyage and his own innovative poetic enterprise, i.e., the composition of the epyllion on the wedding of Peleus and Thetis. For other examples of metaphors of seafaring for poetic activity, see Harrison 2007.

"belated prequel"[232] doubles the registers in which the trope of recognition operates: its belatedness makes the poem a locus of literary reception that draws from the trope of recognition in the previous tradition; at the same time, its status of mythological prequel turns the poem into a reservoir of variations on the trope of recognition, upon which poems on post-Argononautic myths will seem to draw. The author of any epic poem, even one which precedes the epic by VF, will seem to draw on the repertoire of mis- and re-cognitions that span books two and three of the *Argonautica*.

The Cyzicus episode displays a reservoir of scenes in which recognition, or its failure, is central. These scenes appear in this order: Cyzicus' recognition of the standards of the Argo upon its first arrival (3.635-42); Jason's blindness to the prophetic ekphrasis of Cyzicus' golden cup (3.659-61); Athamas' madness and misrecognition of Learchus describes Cyzicus' hallucinating state (3.67-9); Idmon's recognition of Hercules' name (3.171-2); the mutual recognition of the Dioscuri (3.3.186-9); the Argonauts' recognition of the towers of Cyzicus (3.257-8) and their crime, a scene that evokes Agave's *anagnorisis* (3.263-6); the Cyzican women's recognition of their dead spouses and sons (3.274-6); and Jason's recognition of Cyzicus (3.286-9).

An encyclopedic ambition underlies the presence of a wide range of recognition modalities and their failure in the Cyzicus episode: the recognition of signs (such as the Argo's standards); the failed recognition of the prophetic quality of an ekphrastic scene (Cyzicus' golden cup); the recognition of persons with or without tokens (the mutual recognition of the Dioscuri, Jason's recognition of Cyzicus, or the women's recognition of their kin), after hallucinations and madness (Athamas and Agave), or just by hearing one's name (as in the case of Hercules); the recognition of one's inadvertent perpetration of a crime (the Argonauts resemble Agave).

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[232] Heerink 2014, 81.

The learned reader will recall the relation between ekphrasis and recognition in other epic poems when it becomes clear that Cyzicus' golden cup[233] displays an ekphrastic prophecy: as he hands it over to Jason, Cyzicus explains that the cup reliefs illustrate the recent attack of the Pelasgians, successfully pushed back by the Cyzicans.[234] In contrast with Aeneas' recognition of himself at the outset of the *Aeneid*—an ekphrastic recognition of past events—Jason does not recognize that the scenes on the golden cup prefigure the Argonauts' inadvertent attack against the Cyzicans. Jason himself is aware of his failure to foresee the tragic event. When, after the recognition of the mistake, Jason launches into a complaint about the silences of prophets on the *nefas* against his host (3.300-5), the learned reader may recall recognitions of prophecies in Roman epic: Aeneas' recognition of Anchises' prophecy (*Aen*. 7.116-26) and the recognition of the body of Pompey in the frenzied prophecy of the Roman *matrona* in Lucan's poem (*Phars*. 1.685-6). [235] Two scenes speak to the function of pieces of armor as recognition tokens. The Argonaut Idmon kills Ornytus while wearing the red-crested helmet received as a gift by his victim (3.175-7). It is unclear whether Ornytus recognized his gift or the identity of his opponent.[236] Yet the focus on the helmet highlights the potential function of weapons or pieces of armor as recognition tokens, a potential that is never realized during the night battle. The weapon, once the night battle is over, reveals the identity of the Argonaut who killed Cyzicus. As he reaches the king's lifeless body, Jason does and does not recognize at the same time. He does not recognize his friend's face as it

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[233] Cf. also Dido's gesture of libating and drinking from the golden cup (*Aen*. 1.736-7), a symbol of heart-felt hospitality that prefigures the tragic fate of the host as well.

[234] Manuwald 1999, 33-4 dwells on the similarities between the banquet at Cyzicus and Dido's hospitality. See also Smith 1987 *ad Arg*. 655, who mentions the parallel with Adrastus' *patera* at Stat. *Theb*. 1.540.

[235] Cf. also Adrastus' recognition of the prophecy of the lion and the boar, whose fiece traits he discerns respectively in Polynices and Tydeus in Statius' *Thebaid* 1.

[236] Spaltenstein 2002 *ad Arg*. 3.175.

used to appear while recognizing, instead, the changes bestowed upon Cyzicus' face and body by a violent death. The sight of Cyzicus' body also coincides with an implied recognition process, as Jason becomes aware that he killed Cyzicus once he recognizes his own spear broken into his friend's chest (3.286-9):

> ille ubi concretos pingui iam sanguine crines
> pallentesque genas infractaque pectore caro
> tela neque hesternos agnouit in hospite uultus,
> ingemit atque artus fatur complexus amicos:
> 'te tamen ignarum tanti, miserande, furoris,
> nox habet.'
>
> When Jason saw the hair of Cyzicus already hardened with thick blood, his pale cheeks, and his own spear broken into the dear chest, he did not recognize in his host his face of yesterday. He groaned and embracing his friend's limbs, he says: "Night holds you, wretched, ignorant of such an excessive frenzy."

The poet's ambition to craft the Cyzicus episode as a foundational prequel emerges from the details of Hercules' *aristeia*, an anticipation of the hero's tragic failure to recognize his victims. VF dwells on the sounds produced by Hercules' deadly club: bones and jaws crack under the club's strokes as oaks, fir trees and pitch-pines, hit by an axe, groan falling onto the ground. The victims' brain whites the ground (3.161-7):

> nec pharetram aut acres ultra Tirynthius arcus
> exercet, socia sed disicit agmina claua.
> ac ueluti magna iuuenum cum densa securi
> silua labat cuneisque gemit graue robur adactis
> iamque abies piceaeque runt, sic dura sub ictu
> ossa uirum malaeque sonant sparsusque cerebro
> albet ager.
>
> Nor does Hercules use any further the quiver and the Tirynthian bow, but scatters the throngs with his trustworthy club. And as when some thick forest falls to pieces under a mighty axe and a heavy oak groans under the biting wedges, and now pine and fir begin to fall, in this way the men's bones and jaws sound, and the field turns white with spattered brains.

We find a similar imagery in Hercules' tragic *aristeia* in Seneca's *Hercules Furens*, where his spouse's bones shatter smashed by the club and his son's head resounds with spattered brains (Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 1006-7: *ast illi caput | sonuit*, *cerebro tecta disperso madent*; cf. 1024-5: *in coniugem nunc claua libratur grauis | perfregit ossa*). In Seneca's tragedy, moreover, the onset of madness corresponds to the hero's obscured sight: his eyes see darkness in the middle of the day, an image of the oscillation of blindness between a literal and figurative level in the *Argonautica* which I have examined above.

An important indicator of the saturation of the Cyzicus episode with recognition-related motifs is an abundance of references to mythical figures whose perception is altered, an alteration which oftentimes bears tragic outcomes. For instance, the disorientation of Cyzicus finds not one but two (3.65; *qualis*, 3.67: *qualisve*) *comparanda*: the centaur Rhoecus, whose perceptual disorientation is due to drunkenness, and Athamas, known for having carried his son Learchus on his shoulders, mistaking him for a hunt prey (3.65-9). The comparisons between the characters of the *Argonautica* and other mythical figures famous for their misrecognitions abound. Like Pentheus, Cyzicus shows a contemptuous attitude towards Cybele. The king's rebuke to his men, who prefer the fields of mount Dindimus and the cult of Cybele to the battlefield, echoes Pentheus' speech in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.[237] The Argonauts who shiver in horror at the sight of their slain hosts are likened to Agave when she returns to see Pentheus' face once the bull's horns disappear from her hands (3.263-6).[238] Hershkowitz notes[239] that "by using imagery conventionally

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[237] Manuwald 2015, 125.

[238] Manuwald 2015 *ad Arg*. 3.264-6 lists the references to the myth of Agave in other epic texts, in particular in Lucan's *Pharsalia*.

[239] Hershkowitz 1998, 40.

associated with women, the simile contributes to a destabilization of epic norms, in which masculinity and heroism are closely linked." While destabilizing the gender norms of epic, the reference to Agave does contribute to both stabilize (if we consider the belatedness of the poem) or establish (if we consider its status as prequel) a new epic canon in the wake of Lucan's poem. There too, Agave exemplifies the restlessness of soldiers haunted by ghostly images of their victims after a civil war battle (*Phars*. 7.779-80). Only after the battle, Roman soldiers seem to realize the nature of their mistake.

The pervasive thematization of recognition in the Cyzicus episode reveals VF's acknowledgement of Lucan's conceptualization of civil war as a cognitive crisis, a conceptualization that the Flavian poet aims to render canonical for the epic genre. A look at the historical circumstances of the year of the four emperors, 69 CE, when outbreaks of civil war take place within a short period of time, might explain VF's keen interest in the Cyzicus episode because of its emphasis on the temporal sequence of similar events in a brief amount of time.

Chapter 3. "Don't You Recognize Your Enemies?" Antigone, Jocasta, and Maternal Recognitions in Statius' *Thebaid*

Antigone before Hegel

Oedipus' discovery of his genealogical identity changes the nature of his deeds. The homicide of a stranger after a fight at a crossroads and the marriage with the queen of Thebes, Jocasta, must be redefined as a parricide and as an incestuous union, respectively. Oedipus, then, recognizes at once his identity (he is the son of Laius and Jocasta) and agency (he kills his father and marries his mother), who he is, and what he has done. Antigone, like her siblings, must redefine her identity when the truth about her father, Oedipus, comes to light; she will no longer be recognized as the fruit of a blessed union between Jocasta and the clever Theban man who solved the riddle of the Sphinx but as the fruit of unspeakable incest. In addition to experiencing the consequences that Oedipus' tragic *anagnorisis* brings to bear on her life, Antigone refuses Creon's injunction to recognize Polynices as the enemy whose body is forbidden burial at Thebes. Establishing who Polynices is and whether or not it is right to grant him burial presents a different set of ethical implications than discovering the identity of Oedipus. It is by looking at these implications that in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel draws on Sophocles' *Antigone* to outline a post-Aristotelian theory of tragic recognition:

> Ethical consciousness is more complete and its guilt more pure if it knows beforehand the law and the power against which it takes an opposing stance, takes them to be violence and wrong, to be an ethical contingency, and then, like Antigone, knowingly commits the crime. The accomplished deed inverts its point of view. What the accomplishment itself expresses is that the ethical must be actual, for the actuality of the purpose is the purpose of acting. Acting directly expresses the unity of actuality and substance. It says that actuality is not accidental to essence but rather that, in league with essence, there is nothing which is granted that is not a true right. On account of this actuality ethical consciousness must bestow recognition on its opposite, and on account of its own doing, ethical consciousness must acknowledge its guilt: "Because we suffer, we recognize that we have erred" (Soph. *Ant*. 926). This recognition expresses the sublated conflict between ethical purpose and actuality, and it expresses the return to the ethical disposition which knows that nothing counts but the right. However, as a result the agent gives up his character and

> the actuality of his self and is brought to his downfall. His being is to belong to his ethical law as his substance but in the recognition of the opposition, this law has ceased for him to be his substance, and instead of attaining his actuality, the agent has attained a non-actuality, a disposition.[240]

These famous pages have left a lasting impression on the modern reception of Antigone as the epitome of the conscious ethical subject who is able to bestow recognition on the claims of her opponent and, by doing so, to recognize her own guilt through suffering. According to Hegel's model, after knowingly transgressing the decree against the burial of her brother Polynices, Antigone begins to recognize her own error once she realizes that her claim to justice for her kin is as partial as Creon's defense of state decrees.[241] It is precisely because of Hegel's influential interpretation that for the modern reader—whether or not she is a connoisseur of the *Phenomenology of* Spirit—the association of the name of Antigone with the complexity of recognition is not an unusual one.

Hegel's emphasis on Antigone's *Anerkennung*, however, is seemingly at odds with the space that recognition formally occupies in Sophocles' *Antigone*, where neither a recognition scene nor an explicit statement of recognition ("I recognize!") on the protagonist's part appears. In explaining how Antigone's recognition unfolds, Hegel explicates what remains implicit in the Greek text, thus eliciting a retrospective reading of the tragedy in light of the dialectical process of recognition as he envisions it. The shift from implicit to explicit terms is clear from the philosopher's programmatic use of the verb *anerkennen*, "to recognize," not only for exposing his theory but also for translating those words of Antigone which sound *like* a statement of recognition:

[240] Hegel, *Phen.* 469-70, trans. by Terry Pinkard with minor modifications.

[241] Billings 2014b, 174-5: "[i]n the recognition of the justice of fate, Antigone embodies the ethical agent [that] comes to acknowledge the equal validity and invalidity of two partial claims to justice."

παθόντες ἂν ξυγγνοῖμεν ἡμαρτηκότες (Soph. *Ant*. 926). Hegel's translation, "because we suffer we recognize that we have erred," however, lacks rigor: first, the syntax does not reflect the conditional structure of the original, where Antigone claims "in suffering we would know that we have erred;"[242] second, the German *anerkennen*, "to recognize," renders συγγιγνώσκω, which means "to be conscious, to acknowledge, to confess."[243] The discrepancy between the Greek text and its translation is significant because it shows that whereas in Sophocles' play Antigone's recognition remains hypothetical, in Hegel's framework it is actual and coincides with the acknowledgement of her error, with the consciousness of her judgement's partiality, and with the realization that Creon's advocating for justice is indeed one-sided but as valid as hers.[244]

Hegel's model captures the final stage of a struggle with recognition that for Antigone is not limited to her fight for the burial of Polynices represented in Sophocles' *Antigone* in 444 BCE: Antigone deals with the complexity of recognition on the tragic stage in Euripides' *Phoenician Women* in 409, in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* in 401, and in particular, in the epic rewriting of the fratricidal war between the Theban brothers in Statius' *Thebaid*. The brilliance of Hegel's argument, in other words, contributed to overshadowing those *other* struggles for recognition undertaken by Antigone in other texts, epic and tragic, across Greece and Rome.

In my reading, I seek to show that Hegel's *Phenomenology* is but one link in the hermeneutical chain that has turned Antigone into the recognizer *par excellence*. Far from being a

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[242] I quote here the translation by Joshua Billings (2014, 174), who underscores that "Hegel's translation ignores the fact that the citation is the second part of a conditional sentence, with the optative verb expressing irreality." Billings notes that Hegel's free translation does not undermine the soundness of his argument, which does not aim to interpret the play but to theorize a stage of the Spirit.

[243]Hugh Lloyd-Jones (1994) proposes yet another translation of Soph. *Ant*. 924-5: "Well, if this is approved among the gods | I should forgive them for what I have suffered, since I have done wrong."

[244] On this point see Billings 2014, 174: "Where Sophocles' Antigone expresses only a slight uncertainty about the justice of her action, Hegel's ethical subject acknowledges that suffering is proof of error."

modern construct, the (re)making of Antigone into a *persona agnoscens*, a figure who is able to perform recognition while reflecting on its meaning from a cognitive and ethical standpoint, is already operating in antiquity. My discussion will focus on Statius' *Thebaid*, a text fundamental to our understanding of the classical and pre-Hegelian reception of Antigone. After tracing the fabrication of Antigone as *persona agnoscens* back to the Theban plays performed in the wake of Sophocles' *Antigone*, I argue that Statius systematically associates the figure of Antigone with recognition, thus fully developing her self-conscious reflection on recognition that was emergent, but not as systemic, in the tragic corpus. It will be clear that in retelling the Theban myth, Statius, an attentive reader of Greek tragedy, picks up on Antigone's engagement with recognition on the tragic stage and magnifies her traits which are all the more apparent in Euripides' *Phoenician Women*.

My reading of Antigone in Statius' *Thebaid* will set the ground for my discussion of maternal recognitions in the second part of my argument and of this chapter. I will argue that the recognitions of Antigone are better understood if read against the recognitions (or lack thereof) of mothers in the *Thebaid*. Specifically, Antigone's intellectualized reflection on recognition conjures up the specter of past misrecognitions in the Oedipodean family and derives from the fear of those tragic consequences deriving from un- or mis-recognizing once more. The specter evoked by Antigone, in particular, bears the name of Jocasta.

Before delving into Statius' *Thebaid*, I will examine Antigone's recognitions in Euripides' *Phoenician Women*, a fundamental intertexts for the Latin epic poem. Second, I will discuss Statius' refashioning of the figure of Antigone by focusing on the recognition scenes she performs. Among these, the teichoscopic scenes of book 7 and of book 11 deserve special attention. Lastly, in light of intratextual reprisals and thematic parallelisms, I will put Antigone *qua persona*

agnoscens in conversation with the recognitions performed by the mothers of the *Thebaid* and in particular with *the* mother of the Theban saga, Jocasta.

Reading the Signs from Afar: Antigone's Recognitions on the Tragic Stage

While it is unclear whether Hegel was familiar with Statius' *Thebaid*, it is certain that he read Euripides, to the extent that he did not appreciate the sentimental pathos of his characters.[245] Whether or not a matter of personal taste, the absence of the Euripidean Antigone from Hegel's writings is conspicuous, if nothing else for the fact that, as if aware of the future tradition that will cast her as *the* recognizer, the Antigone of the *Phoenician Women* invites us to reflect on both the process and the meaning of recognition: how can we recognize someone from afar? How does the armor's concealing qualities interfere with the observer's ability to recognize the person underneath it? To what extent should the observer rely on signs and symbols to identify this or that hero?

These broader issues underpin Antigone's brief question to the Servant in the *teichoscopia* of Euripides' *Phoenician Women* (141-4):

> AN. σὺ δ᾽, ὦ γέρον, πῶς αἰσθάνῃ σαφῶς τάδε;
> ΘΕ. σημεῖ᾽ ἰδὼν τότ᾽ ἀσπίδων ἐγνώρισα,
> [σπονδὰς ὅτ᾽ ἦλθον σῷ κασιγνήτῳ φέρων·]
> ἃ προσδεδορκὼς οἶδα τοὺς ὡπλισμένους.
>
> ANT. but, old man, how can you perceive these things so distinctly?
> SERV. I recognize the signs of the shields having seen them then,
> when I went to offer a truce to your brother;
> having seen them [the signs] before, I know the men in arms.[246]

[245] Houlgate (1986, 199) explains that Euripides is not Hegel's favorite because his plays "tend frequently to locate the source of conflict in mere subjective emotion and passion (as is the case in most modern tragedy) and thus tend to diminish the rightfulness and justness of the characters' motivations."

[246] While the authenticity of Euripides' *teichoscopia* is widely accepted (Mastronarde 1994, 167-173), that of ll. 141-4 (above) continues to be questioned by scholars. The passage is suspected to be an interpolation for the *verbatim* repetition of line 97 in 143 as well as for the redundancy and ambiguity of several lexical choices. For a detailed discussion of the alternative solutions proposed by critics, such as the deletion of 143 alone (Burges, Geel) or 143-4 (Busche) see Mastronarde 1994, 192-3. If we were to assume that ll. 141-4 are interpolated, it is nonetheless worth to

A disconnect between Antigone's question and the Servant's answer is apparent.[247] While Antigone asks how her interlocutor can clearly perceive from afar what and whom he points out, the Servant explains that he knows the men in arms because he recognizes the signs of the shields he has previously seen. Such disconnect sets into relief two elements—perhaps two different priorities—necessary for the performance of recognition: for Antigone, the clear perception of who or what needs recognition seems to have priority over the reliance on signs and symbols; for the Servant, the reliance on signs and symbols in order to recognize whom and what has been seen before has precedence over a clear perception of what is being seen.

The misalignment between Antigone's question and the Servant's answer is better understood against the backdrop of Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes*, which famously features a complex scene, in which the Messenger extensively describes the shield signs in a long report to Eteocles. There too, the interplay between sight, signs, and knowledge emerges as a compelling theme. In the *Seven*, the Messenger's pride in the autoptic (*Sept*. 41: αὐτὸς κατόπτης) quality of his report aligns with the importance of sight in teichoscopic scenes, and in our specific case, in the Servant's words (*Phoen*. 141: ἰδών, 144: προσδεδορκώς).[248] Both the Messenger of Aeschylus and the Servant of Euripides inform their interlocutors, who have however different degrees of visual access to the information content: while Eteocles, preparing for the defense of Thebes, has not seen yet the shield signs described by the Messenger, Antigone observes the

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noting that the interpolator chooses Antigone as the interlocutor who questions the Servant's purportedly clear perception of the signs (142) of the shields. *Mutatis mutandis,* Antigone's doubts evoke Electra's skepticism when she is confronted with the signs which her Servant proposes to examine for recognizing Orestes (Eur. *El*. 520-84).

[247] See Mastronarde 1994, 192-3.

[248] From a formal point of view Messenger's report in Aeschylus's *Seven* can be categorized as a hybrid of two epic tropes, the catalogue and the *teichoscopia*: the Messenger's list of the heroes coming from Argos to which Eteocles responds with his list of Theban leaders, is in essence a catalogue of war forces. On the common features between the Messenger's report in Aeschylus' *Seven* and the *teichoscopia* of Euripides' *Phoenician Women*, see Lamari 2010, 131.

Argive host with the Servant from his same viewpoint on the roof of the Theban palace. In other words, while the Messenger presents himself as the eye of Eteocles outside the royal house (*Sept*. 67-68: ὀφθαλμὸν ἔξω), the Servant does not see *instead of* Antigone but functions as *another* set of eyes that can tell who the heroes Antigone names or indicates are and where (*Phoen*. 158: ποῦ) Polynices is.

Antigone's unmediated vision of the Argive host in Euripides' *Phoenician Women* is extraordinary in several respects. To start, Antigone takes initiative to view the Argive host with her own eyes: she obtains Jocasta's permission to observe the Theban plain from the roof of the royal palace. She, a Theban young woman, thus gains visual access to a scene that was precluded from the young Theban women of the chorus in the *Seven*. Antigone's visual agency, as it were, overcomes the contrast between two ways of aesthetically experiencing the threatening presence of the Argive host in Aeschylus' *Seven* where, on the one hand, the young Theban women cannot see the enemy but can hear the shields clashing so clearly that the sound becomes visible (*Sept*. 100: ἀκούετ᾽ οὐκ ἀκούετ᾽ ἀσπίδων κτύπον; 104: κτύπον δέδορκα) and, on the other, the Messenger witnesses (*Sept*. 41: αὐτὸς κατόπτης) the events at the gates and equates clarity of vision with soundness of knowledge (*Sept*. 40: σαφῆ φέρων, 67-68: πιστὸν ἡμεροσκόπον ὀφθαλμὸν ἕξω, καὶ σαφηνείᾳ λόγου | εἰδὼς τὰ τῶν θύραθεν).[249]

Euripides' Antigone is a young woman unlike the Theban girls of Aeschylus' chorus also because she conflates traits of the Messenger and Eteocles: like the Messenger, Antigone's experience of the spectacle of the Argive army is autoptic; like Eteocles, she responds to the threats each hero embodies with curses and prayers. Yet Antigone's visual access to the outside of the

[249] On the contrast between sound and sight in this scene, and on the vividness of sound, which turns into images, see Trieschnigg 2016.

walls dismantles the Messenger's assumption that "a trusted eye watching by day" (*Sept*. 67) results in clear knowledge. Rather, in the *Phoenician Women* Antigone embodies a type of sight that casts doubt and produces uncertainty, when certainty is most needed for identifying, and recognizing, Polynices.

It is my contention that Antigone's uncertainty does not detract from the validity of her reflection on recognition. I would disagree with those scholars who have consistently read Antigone's reliance on the eyes and the knowledge of the Servant for naming and locating the heroes at the gates by contrasting it with Helen's ability to name the Achaeans at Priam's request in the *teichoscopia* of *Iliad* 3. Unlike Helen, in their view, Antigone would be the inexpert maiden dreading the imminent attack against Thebes. It would be reductive, however, to interpret Antigone's inquiring nature in Euripides (and, as we will see, in Statius' *Thebaid*) as a sign of naïveté, childishness, or as a result of the overwhelming spectacle she witnesses, a spectacle "too powerful to allow the spectator to try to understand it."[250] Whether or not it coincides with a greater narrative authority,[251] Antigone's role as focalizer — a role that is typical of female figures in teichoscopic contexts — retains its power not in spite of the questions she asks but precisely because of them.

Antigone challenges the conventions of teichoscopic recognition not only by questioning the Servant's clear perception but also by introducing in the conversation (and requiring the

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[250] I quote here Scodel (1997, 87), who in turn calls attention to Mastronarde's observation (1994, 553) that "Antigone is full of questions, and freely expresses almost childlike emotions." Cf. also Ganiban 2007, 167 who claims that Antigone in *Thebaid* 7 is "a spectator, interested in learning about the combatants but expressing no concern about the criminality of the war or of the very participants being described to her."

[251] Women's narrative authority in teichoscopic scenes has been either emphasized or questioned in the scholarly debate. Ruth Scodel (1997, 81) maintains that "Helen's knowledge is reduced to the bare ability to match bodies with formal epic identities. The narrator stresses not her knowledge but her ignorance, and the painful gap between the present spectacle and the absent past." For a discussion of Helen's *teichoscopia* in relation to the female gaze see Lovatt 2013, 220-3.

informant to introduce) focal points that she can discern and detect, marks on which she can rely that are different from the signs of the shields. Th gleams of weapons and armors catch Antigone's eye. As far as signs are concerned, however, other elements which mark the landscape direct the viewers' gaze. Antigone indicates Zethus' tomb (*Phoen*. 145), when she asks the name of the hero beside it; in order to locate Polynices she relies on another σῆμα,[252] the tomb of the Niobids (*Phoen*. 160-1). The dissociation of Antigone's hyper-viewing (Zeitlin 1994, 173) from the signs of the shields then results in a dwindling presence of such signs in the *teichoscopia* of the *Phoenician Women*,[253] where the servant does mention the σημεῖ' ἀσπίδων (142) to explain how he is able to name and locate the heroes but never describes them in detail. This does not mean, however, that in Euripides' *Phoenician Women* the Aeschylean shield signs disappear. On the contrary, the signs are traceable in the appearance and the character of the Argives. Isabelle Torrance notes:

> Euripides brings Aeschylean shield symbols to life as actualized warriors. He also (conversely) inscribes Aeschylean warriors and/or their attributes into the shields of his warriors. Image and metaphor from Aeschylus are transformed into material embodiment in Euripides and vice versa.[254]

Such an intertextual move is particularly visible in the case of Polynices. In Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes*, the shield of Polynices is perfectly circular and displays a double symbol: a woman claiming to be Justice (*Dikē)* leads an armed man beaten in gold. In Euripides, instead, Polynices *is* the man with the golden armor that appeared on his shield. His description evokes the artistic

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[252] Euripides seems to play here with the meaning of σῆμα as "tomb."

[253] Shields are indeed mentioned but not their signs. Antigone notices Hippomedon's bronze shield (121: πάγχαλκον ἀσπίδα) and the old servant defines the Aetolians as shield-bearers (139: σακεσφόροι γὰρ πάντες Αἰτωλοί).

[254] Torrance 2013, 105.

process of molding an object, of beating or striking the metal into shape.[255] The hero at the seventh gate "has been brought to life from the typology of the Aeschylean shield *ekphrasis*."[256] It is significant that we see Polynices through the eyes of Antigone, whose hazy vision is in stark contrast with the Servant's clear (*Phoen*. 141: σαφῶς) perception of the warriors. Antigone sees Polynices but not clearly (*Phoen*. 161: ὁρῶ δῆτ' οὐ σαφῶς); she wishes to fly as a cloud through the sky to embrace him,[257] since from a distance she can only perceive the gleaming of the golden armor, "the moulded outline of his form and the semblance of his chest."[258] While she effortlessly points out the strange color of Tydeus' weapons (*Phoen*. 119) and the flowing locks of Parthenopeus (*Phoen*. 146), Antigone does not single out identifying signs when it comes to Polynices: she does locate her brother next to the tomb of the Niobids, where the old man directs her gaze, but her vision seems out-of-focus, and the flashing gold of the armor is almost blinding.

How does the metamorphosis of the Theban hero into the living sign of his shield affect Antigone's ability to recognize her brother, then? The magnification of the shield sign does not result in a clearer perception and an easier recognition on the observer's part. The symbol totalizes the hero's identity, for it is magnified to the extent that it is no longer an external decoration but an all-encompassing frame. Such totalizing process, however, is reductive, for it reduces the hero's identity down to a (material) symbol. In the *Phoenician Women*, as we have seen, Euripides turns a decorative miniature into a life-size body, the man hammered in gold which appeared on the shield of Polynices in the *Seven* into Polynices himself. At the same time, once refashioned into

[255] Torrance 2013, 106.

[256] Torrance 2013, 107.

[257] Statius picks up on Antigone's wish to run as a cloud through the sky in the metaphor at *Theb*. 11.365 (*uolat*), but leaves the distance between brother and sister unabridged.

[258] I quote Mastronarde's translation (1994, 196).

the sign of his shield, the hero becomes a molded outline, a gleaming profile, which Antigone can see but not clearly.

The woman's blurry vision is symptomatic of her refusal to reduce her brother to a mere symbol. To Antigone's eyes Polynices occupies a different place than the other champions[259] in the symbolic horizon of the *teichoscopia*. Her struggle with discerning Polynices (*Phoen*. 156-69) is an element of realism that clearly sets the brother apart from the other six heroes. That familiar yet indistinct figure, while emphasizing the distance and the fading familiarity between the two,[260] shows that to recognize Polynices at the Theban gates is cognitively and emotionally more challenging for Antigone than asking about the origin of that hero with a white-crested helmet (*Phoen*. 119) or the name of that old man on a white chariot (*Phoen*. 172). Antigone's sight grapples with competing symbolic levels: on the one hand, the symbolic dimension of shield signs and the symbolic dimension of kinship, two realms that both shape a warrior's identity.

The relevance of shield signs for the identity of the hero has been extensively analyzed by Froma Zeitlin. As the scholar has shown, its semiotic power turns the shield both into a symbolic extension of its bearer and into a tool for defining the multi-faceted identity[261] of that *other* hero who will be placed against it. In the *Seven* the clashing interaction between the two heroes of each

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[259] Zeitlin (1994, 176) mentions Euripides' uneven distribution of figures.

[260] Scodel (1997, 86) interprets Antigone's difficulty in seeing from afar as an element of Euripidean realism and notes the echoes of Helen's vain search for Castor and Pollux in *Iliad* 3. The reference to Helen's desire to see her brothers contributes to the pathos of the scene and to "heighten the poignancy of Antigone's separation from his brother" as Mastronarde (1994, 196) underscores.

[261] On the overlapping identities of Eteocles, see Zeitlin 2009, 21-5 and 90-100. Eteocles is not only the brother of Polynices but also the son of Oedipus and the king of Thebes. His standing at the seventh gate obeys a series of overlying desires: to defend the city as its sovereign, to preserve the Cadmean *genos* as son of Oedipus, to demarcate his selfhood from his brother's. These overlying desires, each corresponding to a facet of Eteocles' identity, remain mostly unfulfilled: the city if safe, but the fratricide will determine the annihilation of Cadmus' (and Laius' and Oedipus') genealogy as well as the collapse of the differences between brother and brother.

pair does not stand in isolation, rather it symbolizes one step in the developmental process of the self represented in the shield scene. In Zeitlin's words:[262]

> If the shield scene can be charted as an evolutionary progression in the making of the self ... each link in the series forms a chain that extends along the developmental line of a single individual. From this point of view, the alien, the Other, is only a disguised representation of a facet of the self, and each new scene adds still another representation until the series is complete in itself and final recognition is achieved. Since the scene is constructed as a segmented confrontation between one self and an other, it would seem that the means to establishing the self is, in fact, to be found only through the representation of the Other, and that each Other can only be constituted in a relation of doubling with his particular Other.

The fight between brothers represents, then, the culmination of that development of the self which starts with the opposition between Tydeus and Melanippus at the first gate and ends with collapse of the siblings' selves into an identical fate, the death at the hands of the brother. The final stage of the process coincides then with Eteocles' recognition that Polynices is his double and "the identity of one cannot be repressed without the repression of the other's."[263]

The interplay between signs and identity is central as well in Euripides' versions of the Theban myth. In his *Phoenician Women*, the commentary on the signs of the shields as symbolic elements of the heroes' identity extends beyond Antigone's *teichoscopia*. The misalignment between persons and symbols comes into view yet again in Jocasta's conciliating words (455-60):

> σχάσον δὲ δεινὸν ὄμμα καὶ θυμοῦ πνοάς
> οὐ γὰρ τὸ λαιμότμητον εἰσορᾷς κάρα
> Γοργόνος, ἀδελφὸν δ᾽ εἰσορᾷς ἥκοντα σόν.
> σύ τ᾽ αὖ πρόσωπον πρὸς κασίγνητον στρέφε,
> Πολύνεικες· ἐς γὰρ ταὐτὸν ὄμμασιν βλέπων
> λέξεις τ᾽ ἄμεινον τοῦδέ τ᾽ ἐνδέξῃ λόγους.

> Restrain your fierce look and your angered spirit. For it is not at the severed head of the Gorgon that you are looking but at your brother who has come here. You, in turn, Polynices,

[262] Zeitlin 2009, 132.

[263] Zeitlin 2009, 97.

> turn your face towards your brother. If you look at him in the eyes, you will speak better and will give ear to his speech. [264]

The monstrous head of the Gorgon help us visualize Eteocles' attitude towards his brother: a fierce and angry look, perhaps the standard "turning away from the sight."[265] It recalls the image of a mask, an empty frame, endowed however with the power of diverting, even petrifying the gaze, of the observer. Yet in light of the concealing power of the shields and their signs that operated in the *teichoscopia* — and will be operating in new ways in the Messenger's reports — the severed head of the Gorgon strongly evokes the image on the shield of Athena. Not only does Jocasta hint at the monstrous transformation of Polynices to Eteocles' eyes but also at the dangers of diverting the gaze from a person's eyes to his shield's symbols. Misleading the audience to think that Polynices' shield sign in the *Phoenician Women* will be the head of the Gorgon, Jocasta's words prompt an association between the figure of Polynices and the emblem that famously appears on the shield of the war-goddess. Ironically, Pallas of the golden shield (*Phoen.* 1372: Παλλάδος χρυσάσπιδος)—as golden as the armor of Polynices in the *teichoscopia*—will be invoked by Eteocles before he fights against his brother.

The commentary on the ambiguous power of shield symbols continues in the first Messenger's report to Jocasta on the attack of the Argives (*Phoen.* 1090-199) and in the second Messenger's report to Creon on the mutual slaughter of the brothers (*Phoen.* 1356-1424). The first one features an extensive description of the shield signs in dialogue with the Aeschylean model.[266] In contrast with the *Seven*, where Eteocles responds to the catalogue of the shields "in a semiotic

[264] For Jocasta's emphasis on the eyes of the brothers, see Zeitlin 1994, 186.

[265] Mastronarde 1994 *ad loc*.

[266] See Lamari 2010, 96.

tour de force,"[267] in the *Phoenician Women* the narratee of the first Messenger's report/shield catalogue is Jocasta: the first Messenger calls the Theban queen to announce the salvation of the city and dwells on the modality of the Argive attack and the Theban defense. After reassuring Jocasta that her sons are alive, he describes the signs of the Argives' shields thus postponing—and critically, since Jocasta and Antigone will arrive on the battlefield when it is too late—the news of the imminent duel between Eteocles and Polynices.

The symmetry between Antigone and Jocasta—an element that will be prominent in Statius' *Thebaid*—begins to take shape in Euripides' *Phoenician Women*. In addition to their synergic effort to dissuade Eteocles and Polynices from fighting against each other, each woman is confronted with the ambivalent power of shield emblems: in the *teichoscopia* (*Phoen*. 103-81), the residual framework of the Aeschylean shield emblem, that is the man beaten in gold led to Thebes by Justice, blurs the identity of Polynices before Antigone's eyes; in the first Messenger's report to Jocasta, the description of the shield emblems postpones the news of the brothers' imminent duel. In the second instance, the shield signs operate as distracting narrative embellishments: used by the Messenger to obscure a cogent truth, they lead Jocasta to assume that, in addition to Thebes, the house of Oedipus and the life of her sons are safe (*Phoen*. 1200-8).

The second Messenger's report of the fratricidal duel adds to the commentary on the ambivalent power of shield signs in the *Phoenician Women* from yet another perspective. It draws attention to the ways in which the shield functions both as protective and obscuring device. The brothers' strategic use of shields in their final encounter can be seen in itself as a symbolic representation of the dangers that looking outside of the shield and its emblems entails. Both are

[267] Thus Zeitlin (2009, 174) defines Eteocles' response to the catalogue of the shields.

careful not to peer over the edge of the shield[268] to avoid being hit by the rival's spear; yet to look outside of the weapon's rim entails another danger the brothers seek to elude, that is to recognize what the eyes of the other may, and will only *in mortem*, signify. The eyes of Eteocles, speaking by means of tears, return to signify love and affection (1440-1: ὀμμάτων ἄπο |προσεῖπε δακρύοις, ὥστε σημῆναι φίλα) in the same way in which Polynices on the point of death returns to acknowledge his love for his brother when he claims—in a formulation of Aristotelian recognition *ante* litteram—that Eteocles is nevertheless dear to him, although he turned from friend into enemy (1446: φίλος γάρ ἐχθρὸς ἐγένετ', ἀλλ'ὅμως φίλος).

The commentary on the ambivalent power of shield signs, which starts with Antigone's hazy sight of Polynices, and continues with the strategic use the shield as tools that prevent the brothers from recognizing one another by looking into the other's eyes, should be read in light of Euripides' interventions in the conceptualization of recognition on the tragic stage. Antigone's inquiring nature, for instance, in that it shifts our perspective from the signs of the shields as identity tools to their obscuring quality, also reflects a larger shift from poetry to metapoetry. From an intertextual and metapoetic perspective, Antigone's dialogue with the Servant in the *teichoscopia* poignantly illustrates the modalities of Euripides' interaction with the previous literary tradition. In particular, Antigone's questioning mode functions as a commentary on the convention for which shield signs serve to identify persons and to define them as either friends or enemies in Aeschylus' *Seven*. In the same way in which Electra's famous doubts on the identity tokens for recognizing Orestes call into question the conventions and the constraints of tragic tropes, Antigone's inquiring nature in *Phoenician Women* reflects a broader move from poetry to

[268] See Mastronarde 1994 *ad Phoen*. 1385-6; also Zeitlin 1994, 186 mentions the strategic use of the eyes in the brothers' fight.

metapoetry, from Homer's (creation of or the critic's individuation of) literary tropes and type-scenes to Euripides' self-reflexive dialogue with literary precedents.[269]

The traits of Antigone in the Greek *Phoenician Women* are essential for understanding the balance between continuity and rupture in Statius' *Thebaid*. The Latin epic poem weaves a meta-commentary on Euripides' tragedy: it comments on the play's own commentary on Aeschylus' *Seven* and the issue of recognition on the tragic stage at large. By such meta-critical engagement, Statius builds on the compelling questions on recognition arising from tragedy, particularly through the figure of Antigone.

Agnouit Nefas. Antigone in Statius' *Thebaid*

In the previous section I have discussed how in the *teichoscopia* of *Phoenician Women*, Euripides displays the ambiguous power of signs. The sign (σῆμα) *per se* presents the ambiguous potential of both revealing and concealing. On the one hand, it allows for the identification of this or that hero; on the other, it may blur, if not conceal, other significant yet immaterial symbols, such as kinship, which also define the hero's identity. The mechanism for which the magnification of the (shield) sign conceals the complexity of a person's identity is particularly clear in the case of Polynices. We have seen that Euripides turns the Theban hero into the living embodiment of the man hammered in gold that appeared on his shield in Aeschylus' *Seven*. Again, the magnification of the shield sign from miniature to life size corresponds to the reduction of Polynices' identity to a mere symbol. Such a reduction explains why Antigone's eyes cannot see her brother clearly: from the roof of the Theban palace, she is not looking for the man in arms but for "the man born from her same mother with the same fate of suffering" (*Phoen*. 156-7). The blurred vision of

[269] In the particular case of the representation of Polynices in the *Phoenician Women*, Euripides draws attention to the process of poetic composition by means of imagery which evokes the molding and striking of gold. See Torrance 2013, 106-7.

Euripides' Antigone when the moment comes to locate and identify Polynices is in itself a commentary on the ambiguous semiotic power of heraldry signs. It is also revealing of the subtle line that divides identification (i.e., the individuation of this or that warrior on the basis of signs) from recognition (i.e., an identification that is not confined to the matching of names and persons but operates on a markedly symbolic level).

The figure of Antigone in Statius' *Thebaid* is in line with the Euripidean tradition. A Hegelian precursor of sorts, the heroine signposts Statius' hermeneutic spin on the Theban myth and signals his (re)interpretation of such myth via the trope of recognition. It is telling that Oedipus' daughter is confronted with the challenges of recognition since her first appearance[270] in the poem, in the *teichoscopia* of book 7, until the aftermath of the battle, when she recognizes a fragment of the shield and the half-burnt belt of Eteocles (12.439-40: *en clipei fragmen semiustaque nosco* | *cingula, frater erat*!), and makes sense of the pyre's reluctant embrace of Polynices' corpse.

My discussion of Antigone's dance with recognition in Statius' *Thebaid* will start with Antigone's *teichoscopia* in book 7, a scene closely modeled onto the survey of the Argive host in the *Phoenician Women*. I will read Antigone's survey of the Seven's allies from the Theban walls in tandem with Antigone's explicit appeal to recognition in her distant encounter with Polynices in book 11. The mistakes of Antigone in her identifications of warriors and signs appear, however, negligible against the backdrop of the recurrent misrecognitions that characterize Oedipus's family. These mistakes, in particular, draw a contrast between Antigone and Jocasta.

[270] Cf. *Theb*. 2.313-4, where Antigone features in Polynices' memories from his last day at Thebes but does not actively partake in the plot.

The *teichoscopiae* of the *Thebaid*: Antigone's *Error Videndi*

In this section, I will argue that in the teichoscopic scenes of the *Thebaid*, Statius weaves a commentary on Euripides' *Phoenician Women* by addressing themes such as the relation between signs and identity and between visual perception and recognition. The *Thebaid* responds to the cognitive questions posed by the Greek intertext in three moves which I now introduce briefly and will later examine in depth.

First, Statius shifts the descriptive focus from the signs of the shields to the signs of the helmets. The helmet becomes a new focal point not only because it bears the signs that distinguish one hero from the other but also because it draws attention to the identity markers it conceals, i.e., the facial traits.

Second, like Euripides, Statius uses the dialogue between Antigone and the servant, between narratee and narrator, to undermine the reliability of the latter. Whereas it is Antigone who questions the Servant's clear perception of the warriors in the *Phoenician Women*, in the *Thebaid* the servant himself, Phorbas, detracts from his own reliability as an interpreter of signs by indulging in a brief account of the death of Laius. If he realizes too late, as he claims, that Laius was hit and his head rolled under the chariot, are we to assume that he should have been able to recognize, by hints and clues, the murderer as promptly as he is able to identify the Theban allies from afar?

Third, Statius partially fulfills Antigone's desire for a clear vision of her brother. As we have seen, the *Phoenician Women* thematizes clarity of sight/perception in two significant moments of the *teichoscopia*: Antigone grapples with its relevance when she questions how the servant might clearly perceive the men in arms and when she can see but *not clearly* the figure of Polynices. It seems that Statius provides his Antigone with that clear perception she lacked when

she desired it most, only to question the assumption that a clear perception equates a correct identification/recognition.

Statius does not dismiss the possibility of relying on signs and symbols for purposes of identification and recognition. In contrast with the *Phoenician Women* where the Servant mentions, without a detailed description, the signs of the shields, in the *Thebaid* heraldry signs take again center stage. Phorbas — this is the name of Antigone's servant in Statius — plays the role of the informant, in line with the Euripidean model but this time is summoned by Antigone to tell not of the Argive host but of Thebes' foreign allies (7.249-52):

> 'dic, o precor, extera regum
> agmina; nam uideo, quae noster signa Menoeceus,
> quae noster regat arma Creon, quam celsus aena
> Sphinge per ingentes Homoloidas exeat Haemon.'
>
> Tell me, I pray, the ranks of the foreign kings, for I see what standars our own Meneceus and what arms our own Creon lead, how towering with his brazen Sphynx Haemon marches out through the massive Homoloian gates.

In a lengthy and erudite overview, Phorbas pairs names and signs that generally adorn helmets rather than shields. Dryas is the exception to the rule, for he is recognizable thanks to the golden trident and thunderbolt on his armor (7.255-6). Eurimedon stands out for his helmet's pine crests (7.263: *pinuque iubas imitatur equinas*), the rustic warriors from Onchestos are recognizable because they wear empty lion's heads worn as if they were helmets (7.276: *galeae uacua ora leonum)*. A Theban hero, Amphion, mentioned in the list of allies for his leadership of leaderless troops, is easily recognizable for the lyre adorning his helmet (7.278-9: *Amphion en noster agit - cognoscere pronum*, *uirgo* -, *lyra galeam tauroque insignis auito*). Haemon too is a Theban hero whom Antigone is able to recognize because of the brazen Sphinx displayed on his helmet. The detailing of the heroes' helmets moves away from the Aeschylean and Euripidean focus on the

shield. This shift is present not only in the erudite description of the heroes but also concerns nameless warriors visible from the Theban walls. The brief scene preceding the appearance of Antigone on the Theban walls sets up such shift from shields to helmets, for it calls attention to that particular part of the armor which hides a man's facial traits; in what can be labeled as "micro-teichoscopia" in its own right. Mothers ascend the Theban walls and show their children the shining armors and the frightful traits of their fathers under the helmet. Helmets and fathers, concealer and concealed, are emphatically placed at the end of the line (7.240-3):

> nondum hostes contra, trepido tamen agmine matres
> conscendunt muros, inde arma nitentia natis
> et formidandos monstrant sub casside patres.
>
> The enemy is not yet facing them. Nevertheless, the mothers, in ranks, ascend the walls, and from there they point to their children the shining weapons and the dreaded fathers under their helmets.[271]

The preeminence of the helmet over the shield is consistent throughout the *Thebaid* and becomes all the more significant if read against the attention to the shield and its signs in Greek tragedy. The helmet thematizes identification and recognition from yet another perspective that brings the theatrical mask into the realm of warlike epic. On the one hand, exactly like the masks of tragic heroes on stage, the helmet exhibits signs useful for the identification of its bearer; on the other, the helmet conceals the face of the warrior, in the same way in which the mask hides the traits of the actor. Significantly when Jocasta irrupts into the Argive camp, she asks under which helmet she can find Polynices (7.491-2: *quanam inueniam*, *mihi dicite*, *natum* | *sub galea*); the blind Oedipus will later attempt to locate the bodies of his sons by touching the helmets covering the lifeless heads of the dead on the battlefield (11.603: *dum tractat galeas atque ora latentia quaerit*).

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[271] As we will see, the shift from the signs of the shield to the signs of the helmet—in other words, from the symbolic concealment of the shield to the material concealment of the helmet—emerges in the account of the fratricide.

A second innovation in Statius' *teichoscopia* lies in the way in which the reader is summoned to question the reliability of Antigone's informant, Phorbas. Phorbas briefly deviates from the listing of warriors when he mentions Iphitus, whose father, Naobulus, was Laius' host. He recalls then the day of Laius' murder with these words (7.354-8):

> 'Iphitus asper agit, genitor cui nuper ademptus
> Naubolus Hippasides, tuus, o mitissime Lai,
> hospes; adhuc currus securaque lora tenebam,
> cum tua subter equos iacuit conuulsa cruentis
> ictibus, o utinam nostro cum sanguine, cervix!'
>
> Their leader fierce Iphitus, who recently lost his father, Naubolus Hippasides, your guest-friend, oh most gentle Laius. As yet I was holding, untroubled, the reins of your chariot when your head, rendered by blood-stained blows, lay underneath the horses.

These lines are enigmatic and not only for the unclear dynamics of Laius' murder. Are we to assume that Phorbas witnessed the fight at the crossroads without anticipating Oedipus' fatal blow? Is it likely that Phorbas saw the face of Laius' aggressor and, if so, could he have been able to recognize him once he sat on the throne of Thebes? In addition to casting doubts on the extent to which Phorbas may or may not have been able to see the face of the murderer, the passage is obscure in its purpose. It certainly underscores the emotional involvement of the servant in the tragic events of the master's family and his affection for Antigone.[272] But why does the traumatic memory of the master's murder come after a precise and detailed overview of the Theban allies, after the servant shows his expertise in a modality of recognition that relies on symbols and signs?

From Statius we learn that Phorbas was Laius' shield-bearer (7.245-6: *iuxtaque comes, quo Laius ibat* | *armigero*) and his charioteer at the moment of the slaughter. However, a character named Phorbas also features in Seneca's *Oedipus* as well: he was the shepherd who saved the life of baby Oedipus as he handed him to a shepherd from Corinth, the same shepherd who arrives to

[272] See Smolenaars 1994 *ad Theb*. 7.358-73.

Thebes to announce the death of Polybus, Oedipus' adoptive father. Whether or not Statius invites the reader to imply that his Phorbas is the same as Seneca's,[273] the name itself is sufficient to bring to the reader's memory that *a* Phorbas is determinant for Oedipus' *anagnorisis*. Phorbas is, in fact, the man who reveals that the baby with swollen feet was Jocasta's son. If Statius suggests that his Phorbas is Seneca's Phorbas (and why choose the same name, if it were otherwise?), i.e., if Statius hints at the fact that his Phorbas witnesses Laius' murder years after he handed baby Oedipus to the Corinthian shepherd, then his erudite ability to associate names and signs in the *teichoscopia* of *Thebaid* 7 acquires a new (in)significance in light of his hesitation to put together *other* signs: the speaking name of Oedipus and the swollen feet of the baby he spared.

In Seneca's play, in fact, Phorbas explains that the baby abandoned on mount Cithaeron could not have survived because a subtle metal rod was piecing his feet and the swelling wound infected his whole body (857-9: *ferrum per ambos tenue transactum pedes* | *ligabat artus; uulneri innatus tumor* | *puerile foeda corpus urebat lue*). The details provided by Phorbas coincide with the marks on Oedipus' body recalled by the old man from Corinth (811- 3: OED. *Nunc adice certas corporis nostri notas*. SEN. *Forata ferro gesseras uestigia* | *tumore nactus nomen ac uitio pedum*). In contrast with the *anagnorisis* in Sophocles' play, where the Corinthian Messenger recognizes the Shepherd without hesitation, in Seneca the encounter between the two old men is indecisive: the face of Phorbas is not very familiar, yet not unfamiliar to the old Corinthian man (841-2: *nec notus satis*, | *nec rursus iste uiltus ignotus mihi*). Likewise the memory of Phorbas at

[273] I follow Smolenaars' suggestion that Statius combines the evidence from Sophocles and Seneca for his biography of Phorbas, in particular for the gruesome detail shared by the former servant about the murder of Laius. The evidence would be that in Seneca' *Oedipus* Phorbas is the person who takes pity on baby Oedipus and that in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* the shepherd who saves Oedipus is also the only survivor of the slaughter at the crossroad. On Statius' handling of the evidence on Laius' death, see Smolenaars 1994 *ad Theb*. 7.245. Boyle 2011 *ad Oed*. 838-40, in light of his different understanding of the identity of Phorbas in Seneca's *Oedipus* and in the *Thebaid*, believes that Seneca's Phorbas is not Laius' shield-bearer but the shepherd who saves Oedipus.

the sight of the man from Corinth is doubtful and wavering (847: *dubitat anceps memoria*). If Phorbas can still remember that the baby had his feet pierced, then how could he not associate that memory with the speaking name of Oedipus upon his arrival to Thebes?

Phorbas' emotional parenthesis on the death of Laius arrives unexpectedly at the end of the second section of the teichoscopic catalogue. The second round of names and places has begun after a question on Antigone's part, an inquiry based on a wrong assumption. Antigone draws his attention to a pair of warriors among the allies. Although she can clearly see the two, so clearly that she points out their matching arms and helmet crests equally rising upwards, Antigone assumes that Lapithaon and Alatreus, father and son, are instead brothers (7.290-304):

> dixerat, et paulum uirgo interfata loquenti:
> 'illi autem, quanam iunguntur origine fratres?
> sic certe paria arma uiris, sic exit in auras
> cassidis aequus apex; utinam haec concordia nostris!'
> cui senior ridens: 'non prima errore uidendi
> falleris, Antigone: multi hos - nam decipit aetas -
> dixerunt fratres. pater est natusque, sed aeui
> confudere modos: puerum Lapithaona nymphe
> Dercetis expertem thalami crudumque maritis
> ignibus ante diem cupido uiolauit amore
> inproba conubii; nec longum, et pulcher Alatreus
> editus, ac primae genitorem in flore iuuentae
> consequitur traxitque notas et miscuit annos.
> et nunc sic fratres mentito nomine gaudent,
> plus pater; hunc olim iuuat et uentura senectus.
>
> So he had said, and the maiden briefly spoke in between: "But those, what is the lineage of those brothers? Surely in like manner they have equal armors, in like manner their helmet's cone rises in the air; if only this harmony belonged to my brothers!" The old man smiling at her: you are not the first to be deceived, Antigone, by an error of sight. Many (for their age is deceiving) said that these are brothers. They are father and son, but their age confounds their boundaries: the Nymph Decertis, impudent for sex, violated the boy Lapithaon, free from wedlock and immature for the nuptial torches, with lustful desire, before the time was right. Not long afterwards, the beautiful Alatreus is born, and follows his father in the prime of his youth. He acquired his distinguishing marks and confounded the years. So now the brothers rejoice of their false name, the father more than his son: at times also his approaching old age delights him.

The significance of Antigone's misinterpretation lies not in the obvious reference to her brothers' *discordia*[274] as much as it does in the symmetry between the confusing age proximity of father and son (7.296-7: *aeui* | *confudere modos*) and the uncanny confusion of kinship relations in the house of Oedipus (1.17: *Oedipodae confusa domus*).[275] There, however, father and son do not (just) look like brothers but *are* brothers: the confusion does not result in a joyful mistake nor in a false definition (7.303: *mentito nomine*) but functions as a constant reminder of a prolific incest. It is hard to resist making a connection between the nymph Decertis' impudent desire for intercourse (7.300: *inproba conubii*) with the young Lapithaon and Jocasta's intimacy with Oedipus. The mature widow and the youth in search of his real identity meet at the crossroads of experience and inexperience much like the lusty nymph and the sexually inexperienced young boy (7.298: *expertem thalami*) in the mythical digression of *Thebaid* 7. The figure of the mother then takes on an etiological function in Phorbas' response to and rationale for Antigone's erroneous conjecture: the *genetrix* embodies not only the biological origin (7.291: *quanam origine*) of a son excessively close in age and appearance to his father, but also the primal cause of the observer's deception. In other words, the mother generates a child whose age and appearance, in turn, prompt the viewer to make assumptions, like Antigone's supposition, that turn out to be wrong (7.294-5: *non prima errore uidendi* | *falleris*, *Antigone*). Not only is Antigone's *error uidendi* inconsequential when compared to Jocasta's inability to see how closely her husband is to her own son but it also powerfully speaks to Antigone's keen eye and ability to recognize the close kinship between figures never seen before.

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[274] She wishes that a similar harmony would reign between Eteocles and Polynices (7.293: *utinam haec concordia nostris*).

[275] Lovatt (2006, 63) notes that "deception and confusion of family relationships cuts to the core of what it is to belong to the family of Oedipus, to mistake father for brother and brother for father."

We can start seeing now how Jocasta and Antigone compose a misaligned symmetry in the *Thebaid*, which furthers a pattern already visible in Euripides' *Phoenician Women*. I will explore in more detail the parallels between Antigone and Jocasta in the next section. For now, suffice it to say that Antigone's recognitions are inscribed into an intratextual net that connects them with other recognitions performed by maternal figures and, in particular, with the recognitions Jocasta failed to perform herself and to generate between her sons.

As I have anticipated above, the *teichoscopia* of *Thebaid* 7 should be read together with its mirror scene of book 11. In line with Statius' tendency to reduplicate scenes and characters, Antigone appears twice on the Theban walls. First, we find Antigone, already on a fortified tower and careful to remain unnoticed by the crowd (7.243-4: *nondum concessa uideri* | *Antigone populis*), together with the old Phorbas, Laius' former shield-bearer. From there she surveys the army of the Theban allies. Later, however, Oedipus' daughter walks furtively through the crowd and flies up to the walls. From there she addresses her brother Polynices. This time, however, she leaves behind her old servant, Actor, who is unable to keep up with her frenzied steps.

It is significant that in the *Thebaid* Antigone does not see Polynices during the *teichoscopia*, as it is the case in Euripides' *Phoenician Women*. She sees her brother later in the poem, in book 11, shortly before the fratricide takes place. By separating the encounter with Polynices from the teichoscopic overview, Statius aims at making conspicuous the absence of Polynices — a Theban citizen by birth — among the Theban allies catalogued by Phorbas. This absence also neatly shows the exceptional status of Polynices, in that he appears in *another* book, at another time in the poem. Polynices is not one among many, a hero about whom Antigone would be willing to hear the story from her servant Actor. The encounter with Polynices does not allow time for an erudite excursus, nor does Antigone need the help of her informant to learn about the

origin of her brother. On the contrary, by letting Actor slowly disappear from the scene, Statius clears the field for Antigone, who rises to the walls as the ultimate authority in matters of recognition(s).

In fact, the two scenes of Antigone on the walls are strictly related for their common setting and because each explores recognition from different, yet complementary angles. If the *teichoscopia* of book 7 deals with that aspect of recognition which overlaps with the identification of this or that warrior through the signs of his shield, the distant encounter between Antigone and Polynices in book 11 transcends recognition meant as identification. After Antigone identifies her brother with some hesitation, her words express a philosophical meditation on the larger implications of that identification, such as the ethical dilemmas and the cognitive short-circuits that that very identification, now turned into a frightful recognition, entails. Antigone appeals explicitly to recognition to dissuade Polynices from engaging in battle with Eteocles and weaves a sophisticated plea that exemplifies the way in which the concept of recognition subsumes an array of cognitive experiences that span from the identification of a perceived object to the ethical consequences of recognizing or deciding not to recognize as such one's own kin. The semiotic plurality of recognition in the voice of Antigone will be the subject of my next section.

Agnoscisne hostes? The voice of Antigone

In *Thebaid* 11 the strife between Eteocles and Polynices is coming to a close after much delay. Yet, before the two brothers kill each other on the battlefield, the reader can imagine, though for a moment, a different finale, in which Polynices ceases the hostilities against Eteocles, who in turn yields his throne, and the two alternate holding the regal scepter. The reader's hopes for an ending that, if not happy, may be different from the myth as known from the literary tradition, are placed in the hands of Antigone. She runs up to the walls and sees Polynices as he approaches, threatening,

the gates of Thebes. At Antigone's words, Polynices' fury begins to falter, his groans are audible, his tears visible in spite of his helmet (11.382-6).[276] Before Eteocles breaks the suspense and challenges Polynices to a duel, the reader is left wondering whether this time, that is to say in Statius' version of the myth, Antigone will succeed in restoring the peace between her two siblings (11.359- 82):

> utque procul uisis paulum dubitauit in armis,
> agnouitque - nefas! - iaculis et uoce superba
> tecta incessentem, magno prius omnia planctu
> implet et ex muris ceu descensura profatur:
> 'conprime tela manu paulumque hanc respice turrem,
> frater, et horrentes refer in mea lumina cristas!
> agnoscisne hostes? sic annua pacta fidemque
> poscimus? hi questus, haec est bona causa modesti
> exsulis? Argolicos per te, germane, penates -
> nam Tyriis iam nullus honos-, per si quid in illa
> dulce domo, summitte animos: en utraque gentis
> turba rogant ambaeque acies; rogat illa suorum
> Antigone deuota malis suspectaque regi,
> et tantum tua, dure, soror. saltem ora trucesque
> solue genas; liceat uoltus fortasse supremum
> noscere dilectos et ad haec lamenta uidere,
> anne fleas. illum gemitu iam supplice mater
> frangit et exertum dimittere dicitur ensem:
> tu mihi fortis adhuc? mihi, quae tua nocte dieque
> exsilia erroresque fleo, iamiamque tumentem
> placaui tibi saepe patrem? quid crimine soluis
> germanum? nempe ille fidem et stata foedera rupit,
> ille nocens saeuusque suis; tamen ecce uocatus
> non uenit.'

> She hesitated awhile as soon as she saw him in arms, and recognized the unspeakable, him advancing towards the city, with his javelins and proud voice, first she fills all around with immense wailing and as if she was about to come down from the walls, she tells forth: "hold back your weapons with your hand and look back at this tower for a little, brother and turn back your helm's bristling crest towards my eyes! Do you recognize your enemies, yes or no? In such a way we request a pact for a yearly alternance of power and loyalty? Are these the complaints, is this the just cause of the humble exile? Brother, for the Argolic Penates, (for there is no reverence now for the Tyrian household gods), for the sweet that is left, if it is, in that house, quell your passions: both crowds and peoples ask you so and

[276] Lovatt (2013, 245) points out the parallel between Polynices' reaction and Aeneas' at the speech of Turnus.

> both armies; that famous Antigone, devoted to the misfortunes of her family and a suspect to the king, the sister devoted to you only, oh cruel, asks you so. At the least set free your face and your stern eyes (from the helmet); let me recognize, perhaps for the last time, your beloved face and let me see whether or not you cry at my laments. Now our mother with her begging and groaning softens that one and he is said to put away the sword he had taken out. You still oppose resistance to me, although I cry for your exile and your wanderings as things are now and I often placated the father raging against you? Why are you setting free from crime our brother? Without doubt he was not in good faith and broke the pacts agreed on, he is guilty and cruel to his dear ones; nevertheless here he is invoked but does not come."

Although Statius does not go so far as to change the story's epilogue, it is the first time in the extant literary tradition that Antigone addresses Polynices with begging words to avert the fratricide.[277] In Euripides' *Phoenician Women* (1436-7) Antigone, summoned by Jocasta, reaches the battlefield when her brothers have already fatally wounded each other. In Seneca's *Phoenician Women* (403-6), instead, it is Antigone who urges Jocasta to interpose herself between Eteocles and Polynices. The unique Antigone of *Thebaid* 11 deserves particular attention and not only as an example of Statius' innovations; rather because her new epic persona ties into Statius' poetic and hermeneutic agenda to reread and rewrite the Theban myth through the lens of recognition in its range of forms and distortions.

In particular, the scene of book 11 best exemplifies the importance of recognition in Statius' *Thebaid* as a whole, for it is paradigmatic of the intertwining of plural forms of recognitions at play in the poem: it shows that recognition is rarely the definitive recognition but is oftentimes *a* recognition possibly linked to other forms of recognitions and misrecognitions. In fact, verbs of recognition, in particular *nosco* (11.374) and *agnosco* (twice, at 11.360 and 11.365), are foundational to Antigone's appeal. The demarcating line between one type, object, subject, or sphere of recognition and the other is at times blurred in the scene above and elsewhere in the

[277] On this point see Korneeva 2011, 59.

poem. The range of possible interpretations of Antigone's recognitions in *Thebaid* 11 speaks to the fundamental intricacy of recognition in and of itself and to the difficulty entailed in attempting to point out with certainty what or whom she (or anyone) recognizes. Yet, three main layers of recognition seem to build onto one another to compose the cognitive framework of this episode.[278] First, recognition is synonymous with identification. After some hesitation (11.359: *paulum dubitauit*), Antigone recognizes her brother as he assaults the city. The direct object of *agnosco* at line 360, its first appearance in the passage, is the participle which describes Polynices as he approaches Thebes. If we limit our scope to the object of Antigone's visual perception, then her recognition corresponds to the identification of Polynices.[279] Antigone identifies and re-identifies Polynices as the individual he is on the basis of material clues (his weapons, for instance, at 11.359: *uisis armis*) and his familiar appearance. Antigone's recognition, however, exceeds a mere identification. It involves an assessment on Antigone's part on which qualitative features are essential to the identity of Polynices. Does his hostility to Eteocles weigh enough for Antigone to identify Polynices essentially as an enemy? Should instead their blood ties be the determinant quality for identifying who Polynices essentially is?

Antigone's striving to identify the essential Polynices blends with her desire to know how Polynices would define her essential self. Her yes or no[280] question (11.365: *agnoscisne hostes*? "Don't you recognize your enemies?"), which contains the second instance of *agnosco* in the

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[278] To unpack Antigone's multilayered recognitions, I rely on the mapping of three families of meaning of the term recognition in critical theory in Ikäheimo 2017.

[279] See Ikäheimo 2017, 568: "First, there is "recognition" in the sense in which it is more or less synonymous with "identification": we recognize or identify (and re-identify) things *numerically* as the individual things they are (say, "that there in the horizon must be Uluru"), *qualitatively* as having these or those qualitative features ("wow, it is really red") and *essentially or generically* as belonging to this or that genus or species ("it's actually a rock, not a mountain"). Identification applies to *any* objects of perception, thought and discourse."

[280] The particle -*ne* signals a polar or alternative question and puts special emphasis on the word to which is attached.

passage and urges Polynices to name whom he sees as either friends or enemies, is indicative of the challenges civil war poses on the conventions of recognition among kin and fellow citizens. If civil strife [281] challenges the task of categorizing individuals as either this or that, friend or foe, kin or stranger, then Polynices leaves Antigone's question unanswered not just because of Eteocles' sudden appearance at the gates but because he may not be able to give an answer in terms of yes or no, this or that, friend or enemy.[282]

Yet, the urgency to identify or to be identified as either friend or enemy cannot do without acknowledging the social norms for which one belongs to the first or the second category. The instance of *agnosco* in Antigone's question to Polynices, then, is an example of the second meaning or family of meanings of recognition, that includes "appreciating the value or importance of something; or accepting norms or institutions, and thus the normative or 'deontic' powers (such as rights and duties) and roles of persons that go with them."[283] This second family of meaning stands out also in the first instance of *agnosco* at 11.350. In fact, before the syntax of the line clarifies that Polynices is the person whom Antigone recognizes, for a moment the reader is left to understand that Antigone *agnouit nefas*, "recognized the *nefas*"[284] ... of the fraternal warfare? Of the sight of Polynices attacking his brother that soon will lead to their death? Or does *nefas*, if

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[281] A sort of causality dilemma arises when we think about the entanglement between civil war and recognition. It is challenging to determine which of the two comes first and if the outbreak of civil war precedes, follows, or coincides with a change in the ways in which, for instance, Eteocles recognizes Polynices, or Caesar recognizes Pompey. For now, suffice it to note the entanglement between the occurrence of civil war and altered forms of recognition.

[282] An answer, though inconclusive, is to be found Euripides' *Phoenician Women* (1444-6), where Polynices says that "from friend (*philos*) he [Eteocles] became enemy but remains dear (*philos*) to me nonetheless."

[283] Ikäheimo 2017.

[284] In her discussion of the gaze of Antigone in the *Thebaid*, Lovatt (2013, 245-6) summarizes the events as follows: "Finally she eliminates the distance and makes eye contact with him... She controls his gaze, by making him look back at her (*respice turrem*, 363) and demanding that he recognise her (*agnoscisne hostes*?, 365), at the same time recognising the *nefas* of his attack." The scholar then gestures to the recognition of the *nefas* without explaining the syntactical short-circuit it generates. It is unclear, moreover, whether Polynices makes eye contact with Antigone. It seems, on the contrary, that his reaction results from Antigone's words (11.382: *dictis*).

taken as a stand-alone interjection, define recognition in itself? If the *nefas* signals that the implications of Antigone's recognition of her brother at the gates are unspeakable, should we look at the recognition from the side of feelings and emotions that cannot be expressed in words? Is the *nefas* then another way of expressing *horror*, a sentiment that often accompany tragic revelations? The first instance of *agnosco* as it describes Antigone's action of recognizing Polynices is split from within between two objects: on the one hand, Polynices is the object of the recognition, meant as identification, performed by Antigone; on the other hand, the *nefas* which for a moment appears as the object of the recognition and later must be syntactically interpreted as an interjection suggests that, in identifying Polynices, Antigone is also appraising the (violated) social norms that turns the marching of her brother against his own fatherland into a nefarious sight.

We can add a third layer of recognition to the structure of the episode once we consider that Antigone's desire for being recognized by Polynices falls into the category of interpersonal or intersubjective recognition. Antigone wishes to be recognized as the person devoted to the ills of her dear ones (11.370-1: *illa suorum | Antigone deuota malis suspectaque regi*) and therefore suspicious to Eteocles. She defines herself as sister to Polynices only (11.372: *et tantum tua, dure, soror*), thus declaring a greater love for only one of her brothers. Such love gains priority over the blood tie with Eteocles, because Eteocles himself was the first to harm his own kin by violating the familial trust and the pacts for the throne (11.380-1: *nempe ille fidem et stata foedera rupit*, | *ille nocens saeuusque suis*). It seems that precisely this violation of trust leads Antigone to favor one brother over the other, although she invites Polynices to comply with those kinship-related norms which Eteocles disregarded. It should be clear by now that interpersonal recognition can in turn be mediated by norms not necessarily codified in state laws or agreements, such as the ones Eteocles infringed but pertaining to family laws (in Hegelian terms) or the Symbolic order of

Lacan's theory. The mediation of written and unwritten laws shows that the third semantic sphere of recognition overlaps with the second, which, as we know comprises the acknowledgement of "norms and evaluative entities."[285]

It is evident that the semantic spheres of recognition, far from being neatly distinct, overlap inextricably, and nowhere is this more obvious in the *Thebaid* than in Antigone's teichoscopic encounter with Polynices in book 11. After the instances of *agnosco* in the passage, *nosco* at line 374 deserves a closer look. Antigone wishes to see again the beloved face and eyes of Polynices, now hostile and grim, (11.372-4: *saltem ora trucesque* | *solue genas*; *liceat uoltus fortasse supremum* | *noscere dilectos*). Thus, she summons him to remove his helmet. Antigone's desire to recognize Polynices, perhaps for the last time, may very well fall into the first semantic sphere of recognition and coincide with an identification or re-identification: Antigone would re-identify his brother upon seeing his unmasked (unhelmeted?) face. Why would Antigone need to see her brother's face if she has already recognized him?

Antigone's request to see Polynices's face without the helmet inverts the pattern of the *teichoscopia* for which the helmet is the predominant token of identification/recognition. Antigone herself, before inviting Phorbas to illustrate the ranks of the Theban allies, states that she is able to recognize Haemon thanks to the sphinx on his helmet. When Polynices is at stake, however, the helmet becomes a superfluous metonymic extension of the face: in fact, Antigone invites Polynices to turn towards her eyes, not his face or his head, as we would expect but the crests of his helmet (11.364: *horrentes refer in mea lumina cristas*), a moment before she invites him to remove it. The helmet filters, as it were, the mutual recognition between brother and sister, not only because it hinders Antigone's desire to look at her brother's face but also because it conceals Polynices'

[285] Ikäheimo 2017, 568. See also *supra* pp. 35 ff.

reaction to her entreaty. Although Polynices will not remove the helmet, his reaction to Antigone's words will nevertheless be visible (11.382-7):

> his paulum furor elanguescere dictis
> coeperat, obstreperet quamquam atque obstaret Erinys;
> iam submissa manus, lente iam flectit habenas,
> iam tacet; erumpunt gemitus, lacrimasque fatetur
> cassis; hebent irae, pariterque et abire nocentem
> et uenisse pudet.
>
> At these words, his fury had started to subside a little, although the Erinys was noisily protesting and restraining him. Already his hand is held up, already he turns the reins, already he is silent. Groans break out, the helmet confesses his tears. His wrath is blunt, he is ashamed equally of departing, guilty, and of having come.

The helmet speaks for Polynices: likely shaken by his groans, the helmet, the Latin *cassis*, is the subject of the sentence put emphatically in enjambement at the beginning line 386. It speaks for Polynices: it confesses his tears. The suspenseful reaction of Polynices furthers the programmatic thematization of recognition also by means of its compelling intertextual dialogue[286] with the *Aeneid*'s final scene (*Aen.* 12.938-44):

> stetit acer in armis
> Aeneas uoluens oculos dextramque repressit;
> et iam iamque magis cunctantem flectere sermo
> coeperat, infelix umero cum apparuit alto
> balteus et notis fulserunt cingula bullis
> Pallantis pueri, uictum quem uulnere Turnus
> strauerat atque umeris inimicum insigne gerebat.
>
> Fierce Aeneas stood in his armor, shifting his eyes, and held back his hand. And now and now more Turnus' speech started to sway him as he was hesitating, when the unlucky baldric came into view on Turnus' shoulder, and the belt of young Pallas shone with the familiar studs. Him, defeated, Turnus had laid low with a blow, and he was bearing on his shoulders the hateful emblem.[287]

[286] Lovatt (2013, 245) briefly points out the parallel between Polynices' reaction and Aeneas' at the speech of Turnus.

[287] On this scene, see *supra* pp. 1- 10.

The lexical reprisals are apparent: the repetition of *iam*, the *variatio* on *flecto*, the position of *coeperat* in *enjambement* at the beginning of the line. In both scenes, the hero's hesitation signals an incipient recognition of the validity of the interlocutor's plea. The *Thebaid*'s explicit thematization of recognition via the frequent occurrence of verbs such as *agnosco* and *nosco*, brings out the recognition content of the *Aeneid*'s final scene. In other words, Statius' text grounds a retrospective interpretation of the *Aeneid*'s finale as a recognition scene *sui generis*, an oxymoronic combination of the recognition of an object (i.e., Pallas' baldric), on the basis of the recognizer's (i.e., Aeneas') previous knowledge, and of a missed opportunity for recognition between persons mediated by unwritten norms of human piety and empathy for the grief of elderly parents. The backdrop of the *Aeneid*, where the enemy, Turnus, beseeches Aeneas in name of a universal sense of humanity that disregards the categories of friendship and enmity, foregrounds that the *Thebaid* features kin, a person who would not normally utters such plea, who demands recognition. A second element worth noting in the intertextual dialogue between the *Thebaid* and the *Aeneid* is the position of the object that impacts the outcome of recognition in *enjambement* (*balteus* at 12.942 and *cassis* at 11.386). The helmet and the baldric both impede that sort of recognition the speaker asks for. Both scenes, therefore, show the ways in which an object that can indeed lead to the identification of a person—the helmet for its bearer, the baldric for Pallas' murderer— can also impede the higher recognition invoked by the speaker.

The Virgilian intertext allows us to add a fourth layer of recognition to the three outlined above, that is intertextual and/or cross-generic recognition. The Antigone on the walls is that same Antigone who is aware of the literary tradition she partakes in when she claims the (literary) property on the recognition of Polynices (12.367: *nocte mea*) and regrets that Argia preceded her

in finding the dead body of her sibling (12.385: *haec prior*).[288] As she sees her brother approaching the Theban walls, then, Antigone is not forgetful of the literary models evoked by the scene (*nefas*!) she is witnessing. Statian characters, in fact, display that intertextual memory, a trait inherited from Seneca's *personae*, that allows the characters themselves, and the readers with them, to recognize the textual and/or generic model that looms over their present literary life. As Antigone recognizes her brother marching against their homeland, so is the reader summoned to recognize and/or misrecognize[289] the intertextual model Antigone might be referring to: Aeschylus' *Seven*, Euripides' *Phoenician Women,* or the tragic genre as a whole?

From a wider perspective, the distant encounter between Antigone and Polynices in book 9 best exemplifies the complexity of layered recognitions at stake in the *Thebaid*. In addition to illustrating the interplay of plural forms of recognition in the poem, the scene is significant because it is through Antigone's eyes that we, as readers, see Polynices from the Theban walls and through her words that we, as critics, are called to interpret Polynices' arrival to the Ogygian gate, one of the most emblematic scenes from the myth of the Seven. Antigone questions and asks questions about recognition. She asks others to recognize and demands to be recognized herself. I have argued, and I hope to have shown, that in the heroine's epic afterlife Statius programmatically magnifies Antigone's intellectual engagement with recognition by drawing on an incipient — and not as explicit — trend in Euripides' *Phoenician Women*.

The following pages will attempt to substantiate the second part of my argument. If it comes as no surprise that Antigone's almost obsessive and traumatic engagement with recognition builds on her awareness of the tragic consequences of misrecognitions for her family, it is less

[288] See Micozzi 2015, 331-2.

[289] Or to reflect on the loss of those literary models that s/he will never be able to recognize.

obvious that Statius' new take on the Theban myth gives prominence to the role of Jocasta in the saga of misrecognitions and belated *anagnorisis* of which the most recent instantiation is the strife between Eteocles and Polynices. Jocasta's misrecognition of Oedipus undermines her attempts to regenerate the recognition between her sons.

Ubi mater agnoscens? Recognition and the Absent Mother

Books 7 and 11 of the *Thebaid* are specular in several respects. In addition to Antigone's teichoscopic scenes, each book features Jocasta as she attempts to mediate between her sons by confronting them one at a time. In book 7, after the Argive hosts settle outside the Theban walls, Jocasta runs into the camp and entreats Polynices to stop the war. In book 11, instead, she strives to dissuade Eteocles from engaging in a final duel with Polynices. Antigone's and Jocasta's efforts are symmetrical in respect to their ineffective outcome, since neither succeeds in averting the fratricide. Such symmetry, however, conceals a misalignment between mother's and daughter's apparently interchangeable roles.

In book 11, the specular position of Jocasta and Antigone in their simultaneous appeal to Eteocles and Polynices respectively may aptly cast Antigone as her mother's double: if, at first, she is by Jocasta's side when they meet Polynices in book 7, she later gains autonomy from her *genetrix* when she speaks to Polynices from the Theban walls. Yet, if in book 11 mother and daughter share the load of pleas and entreaties, on several other occasions the presence of Antigone renders all the more conspicuous the absence of Jocasta. In book 11 it is Antigone who guides her father to the battlefield and helps him locate the bodies of Eteocles and Polynices, while Jocasta, who commits suicide as soon as she hears about her sons' imminent duel, does not attend to the mourning duties expected from her. By the same token, Argia, who is the first to find the unburied body of her spouse Polynices, asks herself (and the reader): "Where is the mother? Where is the

famous Antigone?" (12.331-2, *ubi mater*, *ubi inclyta fama* | *Antigone*?). While Antigone indeed reaches Polynices' body soon after Argia's question, Jocasta will never reach Polynices' body. Such imperfect symmetry between mother and daughter sheds a different light on Statius' reinterpretation of the Theban saga through the lens of recognition: if Antigone is the young woman who wishes to learn how to identify the Theban allies in the *teichoscopia*, the sister who addresses her brother with a plea for recognition, the daughter who guides Oedipus' blind hands on the corpses of the warriors, and finally (and again) the sister who recognizes the half-burnt piece of Eteocles' shield, where does Jocasta stand with respect to recognition? Where is the recognizing mother?

In order to answer this question, we should turn our attention once more to *Thebaid* 7. After Antigone's *teichoscopia* and Eteocles' speech to the Theban allies, the evanescent, yet looming presence of Jocasta materializes for the first time on the epic stage. Resembling a Fury, she irrupts into the Argive camp. Her sight terrifies the soldiers, even more frightened by her voice. After asking under which helmet her son hides (7.491-2: *quanam inueniam, mihi dicite*, *natum* | *sub galea*?), Jocasta first bids Polynices to hear her request and appeals to the compassion of the Argives. Polynices is ready to leave the camp with Adrastus' blessing. The soldiers, with their heads still covered by their helmets, nod in a sign of approval while shedding pious tears onto their weapons. Tydeus' intervention, however, thwarts Jocasta's nearly successful mission (7.527-44):

> tumidas frangebant dicta cohortes,
> nutantesque uirum galeas et sparsa uideres
> fletibus arma piis. quales ubi tela uirosque
> pectoris inpulsu rabidi strauere leones,
> protinus ira minor, gaudentque in corpore capto
> securam differre famem: sic flexa Pelasgum
> corda labant, ferrique auidus mansueuerat ardor.
> ipse etiam ante oculos nunc matris ad oscula uersus,
> nunc rudis Ismenes, nunc flebiliora precantis
> Antigones, uariaque animum turbante procella

exciderat regnum: cupit ire, et mitis Adrastus
non uetat; hic iustae Tydeus memor occupat irae:
'me potius, socii, qui fidum Eteoclea nuper
expertus, nec frater eram, me opponite regi,
cuius adhuc pacem egregiam et bona foedera gesto
pectore in hoc. ubi tunc fidei pacisque sequestra
mater eras, pulchris cum me nox uestra morata est
hospitiis? nempe haec trahis ad commercia natum?"

Her words were breaking the incensed ranks, and you could see the men's helmets nodding and their weapons scattered with pious tears. As when raging lions with a brave impetus strike down armed men, instantly their rage declines, and they take delight in deferring their unconcerned hunger because the prey has been taken, thus the softened hearts of the Pelasgians were beginning to yield, and the eager desire for war grew tame. Before everyone's eyes Polynices himself turns to kiss now the mother, now the young Ismene, now Antigone who utters prayers that bring even more tears. With this wavering storm troubling his mind the reign had fallen out of his memory: he desires to go, and the gentle Adrastus does not forbid him. Then Tydeus, unforgetful of his right wrath hits first: "Allies, let it rather be me, who has experienced just now how trustworthy Eteocles is and I wasn't even this brother, to stand against the king. On this chest I still bring the signs of his honorable peace and the noble pacts. Where were you then, mother, mediator of peace and loyalty, when you detained me during the night with warm hospitality? Without doubt, you are dragging your son to this kind of negotiations."

The Argive leader questions the sincere intention of the Theban mother. In particular, Jocasta's present attempt to mediate between her sons by invoking peace and loyalty stands in stark contrast with her absence when it was the time to defend those same principles in the preliminary stages of the war. Where was the mother, mediatress of peace and loyalty, when Eteocles set up an ambush for Tydeus who, peacefully exhibiting an olive branch, asked for the restitution of the reign?

The intertextual references to the Ilerda episode in Lucan's *Pharsalia* bring out the recognition content of the opposition between Jocasta and Tydeus and cast it as a struggle for recognition. At Ilerda the troops of Caesar and Pompey station in encampments so close that soldiers on opposite sides see and recognize one another (4.179: *nec Romanus erat qui non agnouerat hostem*; 4.194: *agnouere suos*). The Roman soldiers' reactions upon recognizing their opponents model the Argives' emotional response to Jocasta's words: in each case the soldiers'

tears bespatter their weapons (*Phars*. 4.180: *arma rigant lacrimis; Theb*. 7.528-9: *sparsa uideres | fletibus arma piis*).[290] It is the reader's task to infer that if the tears of the Roman soldiers at Ilerda result from the recognition of their dear ones among the enemies, the tears of the Argive soldiers signal their unspoken recognition of Jocasta's ethical claim.

The unmaking of recognition coincides with the restoration of specific memories. The emphasis on memory in the words of Petreius, the general who unmakes the truce which resulted from the recognition between Roman enemies, resounds in Tydeus' speech. If Petreius qualifies the recognizing soldiers as "forgetful of the fatherland and the war standards" (*Phars*. 4.212: *inmemor o patriae*, *signorum oblite tuorum*), Tydeus remembers well, instead, his wrath for Eteocles' ambush (7.538: *iustae Tydeus memor occupat irae*) and reminds Polynices of his kin's untrustworthy nature (7.547: *heu nimium mitis nimiumque oblite tuorum*?). Both Petreius and Tydeus suspect that peace—sealed by the mutual recognition at Ilerda, almost achieved thanks to Jocasta's appeal in the Argive camp—conceals a betrayal (*Phars*. 4.222: *trahimur sub nomine pacis*; cf. *Theb*. 7.544: *nempe haec trahis ad commercia natum*?).

Among these intertextual references, the reader would expect to find *agnosco*, the verb which explicitly thematizes the recognition content of the Ilerda episode. However, Statius frustrates the reader's intertextual expectations by temporarily withholding the use of *agnosco*, an intertextual marker that will be found, eventually, in a seemingly negligible detail. As if displaced from the human to the non-human realm, *agnosco* appears *en passant* in the description of the tigresses who, at Tisiphone's touch, attack the Argives shortly after Tydeus' response to Jocasta (7.579-81):

> has ubi uipereo tactas ter utramque flagello
> Eumenis in furias animumque redire priorem

[290] Smolenaars 1994 *ad Theb*. 7.528 cites Lucan's intertext and lists several *loci* of "the helmet filling with tears motif."

> inpulit, erumpunt non agnoscentibus agris.
>
> Tisiphone, having touched each of them three times with her serpent whip, induced them to return to wild raging and previous spirit, they break through the fields that do not recognize them.

Tisiphone's goal to prevent Jocasta's mediation from ending the war succeeds: Tydeus and the Argives assume that the tigresses' deadly attack is a plan orchestrated by Eteocles, a further proof of his untrustworthy nature. Aside from marking the beginning of open hostilities between Thebans and Argives, the incident illustrates Tisiphone's destabilizing effects on recognition. The tigresses sacred to Bacchus and revered for their docility, once touched by the Fury, return to their ferocious nature so much so that the fields where they used to roam no longer recognize them (7.581: *non agnoscentibus agris*). This detail helps us conceptualize the Fury's bearing on whom or what she touches as a shift from tameness to wilderness, from recognizability to unrecognizability. Tisiphone's influence produces similar effects upon Eteocles and Polynices when, shaking two serpents and raving with fury in both camps, she casts in front of each brother the image of the other (7.466-7: *it geminum excutiens anguem et bacchatur utrisque* | *Tisiphone castris*; *fratrem huic*, *fratrem ingerit illi*). Jocasta's plea, on the other hand, momentarily tames the warlike spirits of the Argives, whose softened rage resembles the appeased voracity of lions holding on their prey before devouring them (7.527-33). Such a simile, in addition to foreshawdoing the tigresses' assault, evokes once again the events at Ilerda. There the Romans, whose love for war is rekindled by Tydeus' words in spite of the recognition of their kin, resemble tamed beasts regaining their ferocity once they return to savor blood (4.237-42).[291] The effects of

[291] For the motif of tame animals dangerously returning to a prior state of unruliness see Smolenaars 1994 *ad*. *Theb*. 7.580.

the Fury on recognition exceed the sudden attack of the tigresses, as they reverberate in a battle where generals and soldiers cannot be told apart, infantry and cavalry form one indistinct mass, and there is no time to display one's own standards nor to recognize the enemy (7.620-1: *nec sese uacat ostentare nec hostem* | *noscere*).

If reading this section of *Thebaid* 7 against the backdrop of Lucan's intertext allows us to frame Jocasta's appeal as an appeal for recognition, then it is worth asking why *agnosco* occurs *en passant* in a figurative sense, the only sense in which inanimate subjects, such as the the fields hosting the sacred tigresses, could be said to perform recognition. The elision of *agnosco* from Jocasta's vocabulary is all the more apparent in *Thebaid* 11, where she entreats Eteocles at the same time as Antigone invokes Polynices from the Theban walls. The simultaneity of the mother's and daughter's pleas[292] brings to the fore the differences in their rhetorical strategies and, in particular, the absence of any explicit reference to recognition in Jocasta's speech. Whereas Antigone summons Polynices to recognize her not as the enemy, but as a sister devoted to her exiled brother, Jocasta does not appeal explicitly to recognition, but invokes the *pietas* she is entitled to as a parent. She claims that her prayer comes from a rightful place because, in contrast with Oedipus, she is not guilty of having pronounced infallible curses (11.346-7: *genetrix te*, *saeue*, *precatur*, | *non pater*). She displays her breasts and her womb, obstacles Eteocles must trample before he would be able to engage in battle with his brother (11.341-2: *hae sunt calcanda*, *nefande*, | *ubera, perque uterum sonipes hic matris agendus*). She asks to be recognized as a mother, yet she shuns from uttering the recognition word. A sort of unconscious censorship silences *agnosco*

[292] While Antigone tells Polynices that their mother "already softens [Eteocles] with her suppliant tears" (11.375-6), Jocasta claims that "no mother nor any of the sisters stands in Polynices' way as he comes forward" (11.349-40). The mother's lack of awareness or acknowledgement of the daughter's attempt further hints at the unprecedented nature of Antigone's anguished encounter with Polynices.

in Jocasta's appeal, as if she aimed to avoid the irony of exacting recognition from her sons, Eteocles and Polynices, while failing to recognize her other son, Oedipus.

Jocasta's struggle with performing and exacting recognition explains why, when she first appears on the scene, her eyes have precedence over her womb and breast, symbols of her motherhood. In book 7 the poet zooms in on the Theban mother's grim eyes before stating her name (7.474-5: *ecce truces oculos sordentibus obsita canis* | *exangues Iocasta genas*).[293] In book 11, Jocasta herself summons her eyes to pay their due by watching the brothers' duel (11.334-5: *datis*, *inproba lumina*, *poenas*. | *haec spectanda dies*). In Jocasta's *improba lumina*—impudently defective for not having recognized Oedipus to the point, perhaps, of turning him into an object of desire—we now glimpse the *improbitas* of Decertis (7.300: *inproba conubii*) — the Nymph who generated a son so close in age and looks to his father that he would often be mistaken for his brother.[294] The speaker's mention of her eyes links the simultaneous pleas of mother and daughter while, paradoxically, setting them apart. Whereas Jocasta vilifies her *lumina* (11.334), Antigone invites Polynices to turn his helmet crests, which metonymically denote his head, precisely towards her eyes (11.364: *horrentes refer in mea lumina cristas*),[295] with the hope that a reciprocal look, however much weakened by distance, could restore Polynices' recognition of Antigone as his sister and, by extension, of the Theban people as non-enemies.

The emphasis on the eyes ties into Jocasta's association with the blinded Agave. After learning of the imminent duel between her sons, Jocasta furiously hastens towards Eteocles in the

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[293] Jocasta's *truces lumina* remind us of Oedipus' eyes at Sen. *Oed*. 921.

[294] Venini 1970 *ad Theb*. 11.333 states that Jocasta's eyes are guilty because they survived, untouched, the revelation of the incest.

[295] Lovatt (2006, 66) suggests that Antigone's request "enact[s] a reversal of teichoscopy."

same way in which Agave climbed up mount Cithaeron carrying the head promised to Bacchus (11.318-20: *Pentheia qualis* | *mater ad insani scandebat culmina montis*, | *promissum saeuo caput adlatura Lyaeo*). If this simile were not already hinting at the fact that the similarity between the two Theban mothers lies not only in their distraught state but also in their troubled relationship with recognition, its intertext would insinuate so with force. The intertext in question is Seneca's *Oedipus*, where Jocasta's frenzy at the news of Oedipus' self-blinding is said to resemble Agave's recognition of her filicide (Sen. *Oed.* 1004-7: *en ecce, rapido saeua prosiluit gradu* | *Iocasta uecors*, *qualis attonita et furens* | *Cadmea mater abstulit nato caput* | *sensitue raptum*):[296] the necessary premise of each Theban mother's tragic recognition is the misrecognition of their offspring. In the *Phoenician Women* (363-70) Jocasta herself measures her fate against the precedent of Agave, fortunate because her crime ended with the filicide, without continuing with the generation of guilty sons, such as Eteocles and Polynices.[297] Throughout Seneca's Theban plays, in short, Jocasta gradually falls into place among the Theban *genetrices* who suffered and

[296] Agave appears elsewhere in Seneca's *Oedipus*. The second choral ode to Bacchus presents Agave as the unnatural maenad who dismembers her son, an unspeakable crime (Sen. *Oed.* 437-4). After the discovery of the incest, Oedipus bids the Cithaeron to send back Actaeon's ravening hounds and Agave as executioners of his punishment (Sen. *Oed.* 930-4). The mythology of Thebes abounds with numerous crimes inhering in misrecognition. Athamas, while hunting, fatally hits his son Learchus, exchanged for an animal; Agave, blinded by Bacchus, killed Pentheus; Autonoe mourns his son Actaeon, devoured by his hounds that cease to recognize him as their master. For a poetic overview of the pre-Oedipodean Theban past in Statius' epic poem cf. Manto's visions (*Theb.* 4.549-578) and the Aletes' catalogue of Thebes' *species malorum* (*Theb.* 3.179-206).

[297] Voigt (2015, 6) quotes these passages from Seneca's tragedies among the numerous intertextual matrices evokes by the simile at *Theb.* 11.315-23. The intra-familiar nature of their crime the main point in common between Agave and Jocasta according to Voigt, whose contribution illustrates the complex variety of maternal models encompassed in the figure of Jocasta in Statius' *Thebaid*. I claim, on the other hand, that Statius' allusion to Seneca's text insists on aligning the misrecognition of Agave with the misrecognition of Jocasta.

dared nefarious crimes. This process comes full circle in the *Hercules Furens*, where the Oedipodean saga belongs to the mythical past (Sen. *Herc*. 386-91)[298]:

> Thebana noui regna: quid matres loquar
> passas et ausas scelera? quid gemininum nefas
> mixtumque nomen coniugis nati patris?
> quid bina fratrum castra? quid totidem rogos?
> riget superba Tantalis luctu parens
> maestuque Phrygio manat in Sipylo lapis.
>
> I know the Theban kingships. Why should I speak of the mothers who suffered and dared crimes? Of the double crime and the mixed name of spouse, son, and father? Of the brothers' two couple? Of the double pyre? The haughty Tantilid mother is stiff with grief, a stone dripping mournful tears on Phrygian Sipylus.

This catalogue of mothers provides a useful framework to think about why, apart from her ostensible Theban origin, Jocasta is flanked by Agave and by Niobe,[299] two figures who already underwent a ranking of sorts in Creon's report from the underworld: the furious Agave is a mother worse than Niobe, who still counts with pride her dead children (Sen. *Oed*. 615-6: *peior hac genetrix adest | furibunda Agave*). If we were to classify the mythical figures by comparing the gravity of their actions and their consequences for Thebes, where does Jocasta stand with respect to mothers who, like Agave, cannot recognize their own son and mothers like Niobe, whose arrogance determines the destruction of the fourteen children she was so proud of? The figure of Jocasta bears, as it were, traits of each: like Agave, she does not recognize her son, Oedipus; like Niobe, whose crime does not inhere in a failure of recognition in and of itself but in her excessive pride in her children outnumbering Latona's twins, she partakes in the responsibility for the

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[298] With these *exempla* of Theban mothers Megara, Creon's daughter and herself a Theban mother, reminds the usurper of her father's throne, Lycus, of women's and mothers' harmful femininity, especially for tyrants.

[299] In Seneca's *Oedipus* and *Hercules Furens* respectively.

destruction of her offspring and Theban youths. When the characters of the *Thebaid* attempt to draw a parallel between their present incidents and Thebes' past *species malorum*, the slaying of the Niobids represents the most suitable *comparandum* for the death of many young men crushed by Tydeus' massive stone.[300]

Ashamed of pronouncing the name of Oedipus when Adrastus asks about his identity, Polynices presents himself as Jocasta's son (1.681: *est genetrix Iocasta mihi*). The omission of the name of the father does not spare Polynices from being recognized by Adrastus as a member of the Oedipodean family, whose disrepute reached beyond Greece. Yet, however much determined by the embarrassment of being associated with his father's parricide and incest, crimes that too originate in a failure of recognition, Polynices reminds us that he was born from the womb of a mother who too failed to recognize that the man on the throne and in her bed was her own son. As such, the seemingly extemporaneous omission of Oedipus' name in Polynices' self-presentation represents a thought-provoking lead: what if we were to examine recognition from the perspective of mothers? What if against the backdrop of a literary tradition where Jocasta's recognition takes place as a collateral effect of Oedipus' search for the truth, we were to give prominence, instead, to Jocasta's own vicissitudes with recognition?

Thereafter I intend to follow Polynices' lead in order to examine how Jocasta's relationship with recognition is construed with respect both to figures of a time that is past to the events of the poem, such as Agave, as the similes above show, and to mothers who partake in the action of the

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[300] As he lists Thebes' misfortunes in his attempt to find a mythical precedent that could align with the death of Theban young men crushed by Tydeus' massive stone (*Theb*. 3.188-206), Aletes mentions myths in which tragedy strikes a few individuals (Cadmus, Athamas, Agave, Actaeon, and Dirce). He claims, however, that only the day (*Theb*. 3.191-2: *una dies similis fato specieque malorum* | *aequa fuit*) on which the Niobids were slain, and on which Niobe had to pick up a great number of corpses from the grounds, could convey the collective dimension of the presents mourning for the victims of Tydeus.

Thebaid. In Statius' epic, where the collective dimension of the fraternal war receives particular attention, Jocasta finds her *comparanda* not exclusively in prominent mothers such as Hypsipyle and Atalanta but also in the ranks of mothers without name whose sons die on the battlefield. "Where is the mother?"—words that more than once resounds in the poem[301]— subtend another compelling question: *Ubi mater agnoscens*? "Where is the recognizing mother?"

Velut Mater Agnoscens: Hypsipyle's Recognitions and the Nemean Digression

In our search for the *mater agnoscens* we will necessarily stop at Nemea, the background of a long and intricate digression at the heart of the *Thebaid*. It may be helpful to refresh our memory of the events unfolding throughout the Nemean digression. When they eventually decide to march against Thebes, the Argives stop at Nemea; they cannot proceed further, exhausted by a drought devised by Bacchus. They search for water in vain, until a woman, with a baby in her arms, appears. She is humbly dressed but shows a dignified appearance. The woman walks the Argives to a nearby river. They regain strength and ask about the woman's identity. Her name is Hyspipyle, once queen of Lemnos. At this point a digression within the main digression begins. At the Argives' request, Hypsipyle gives a first-hand account of the infamous night on which the women of Lemnos slaughtered their male kin. Hypsipyle does not take part in the slaughter. She fakes her father's murder and saves him. Fearing the anger of the Lemnian women for her fake involvement in the massacre, she flees from the city, but she is kidnapped and sold as a slave at Nemea, where she is now a nurse to the king's baby, Opheltes. Opheltes is the baby she holds in her arms when the Argives and whom she leaves unattended on the grass while she walks the heroes to the river.

[301] See *Theb*. 12.331-2: *ubi mater, ubi incluta fama | Antigone*? and *Theb*. 7.542-3: *ubi tunc fidei pacisque sequestra mater eras*. A recent example of the search for the mother and the maternal in Roman epic and tragic texts is McAuley 2016.

While piously helping the Argives, then, Hypsipyle temporarily forgets about the baby, indulging for too long in the narration of the Lemnian night. Opheltes dies, killed by a monstrous snake. The Argives defend Hypsipyle from the anger of Opheltes' parents and their accusations. At last two young men, having arrived by chance at Nemea, hear the news of Opheltes' death and of the involvement of a woman from Lemnos. They realize that that woman is their mother, and they finally reunite with her.

Much has been said on the role of Hypsipyle in the *Thebaid*. For a number of critics, the former queen stands out as a pious daughter at Lemnos and as the loving nurse at Nemea, whose grief for the baby's death proves the good faith of her fatal distraction;[302] according to a different interpretative trend, instead, Hypsipyle crafts a misleading version of the Lemnian slaughter and maliciously exposes Opheltes to death.[303] While these two views polarize the scholarly debate, the significance of Hypsipyle's cluster of recognitions remains largely unexplored in spite of its exceptionality. The eventful Nemean digression, in fact, features three recognitions performed by Hypsipyle within the span of book 5. First she recalls recognizing (5.268: *adgnoui*) her grandfather Bacchus, despite his unusual and mournful appearance, when recounting to the Argives her attempt to smuggle her father out of Lemnos; second, she recognizes the mutilated body of the baby killed by the Nemean snake as that of her nursling, Opheltes (5.592: *agnoscitque nefas*); third, she

[302] Representative of this interpretative line are Vessey 1973 and Scaffai 2002.

[303] See Nugent 1996 and Casali 2003 for the parallels between Hypsipyle's and Aeneas' unreliable first person narrative. Ganiban (2007, 71-95) argues that Hyspipyle's Lemnian tale bears structural analogies with Aeneas' narration of the fall of Troy. The scholar, however, specifies that, in contrast with the Virgilian hero, Hypsipyle's narratives of *nefas* show "the inability of Aeneas-figures to exist in the *Thebaid*" (71) and, by extension, the disappearance of *pietas* as a moral value from Statius' post- Virgilian world (95). Falcone 2011 and Heslin 2016 examine the influence of literary genres other than epic on the Nemean digression, pointing respectively at Ovid's elegy and of the Hellenistic epyllion, in particular Callimachus' *Hecale*.

recognizes her long-lost sons, Thoas and Euneus, as she sees their faces, the signs of their swords, and the name of their father, Jason, embroidered in their cloaks (5.725: *ut uero et uultus et signa Argoa relictis* | *ensibus atque umeris amborum intextus Iason*).

Why would recognition be so prominent in a digressive section of the poem? And what can Hypsipyle's cluster of recognitions tell us about the *Thebaid* as whole? What is the significance of such an enticing and elusive character, capable of readily recognizing her dear ones? I suggest that the Nemean digression offers a reflection on recognition as maternal obligation. When she recognizes the mutilated body of Opheltes, the Lemnian woman doubles for those mothers who recognize their sons' lifeless bodies on the battlefield throughout the *Thebaid*. If the recognition of Opheltes epitomizes what it is, namely the reality of the conflict for mothers whose sons die at war, Hypsipyle's recognition of her twins, Thoas and Euneus, stages what it could have been and was not, the happy ending that is, the reunion between mother and sons. By showing what is expected from mothers when the opportunity comes to be reunited with their sons, be them dead or alive, Hypsipyle's recognitions are counterpoints to Jocasta's shortcomings: as we will see, the Theban mother, *la grande absente*, is nowhere to be found in the recognition scenarios, both factual or counterfactual, outlined in the Nemean digression.

It is important to point out that Hypsipyle's maternal feelings for her nursling, Opheltes, receive particular emphasis (*Theb.* 5.588-604):

> iamque pererratis infelix Lemnia campis,
> liber ut angue locus, modico super aggere longe
> pallida sanguineis infectas roribus herbas
> prospicit. huc magno cursum rapit effera luctu
> agnoscitque nefas, terraeque inlisa nocenti
> fulminis in morem non uerba in funere primo,
> non lacrimas habet: ingeminat misera oscula tantum
> incumbens animaeque fugam per membra tepentem
> quaerit hians. non ora loco, non pectora restant,
> rapta cutis, tenuia ossa patent nexusque madentes

sanguinis imbre noui, totumque in uulnere corpus.
ac uelut aligerae sedem fetusque parentis
cum piger umbrosa populatus in ilice serpens,
illa redit querulaeque domus mirata quietem
iam stupet inpendens aduectosque horrida maesto
excutit ore cibos, cum solus in arbore paret
sanguis et errantes per capta cubilia plumae.

And now the Lemnian woman, having wandered through the fields, as soon as the place was rid of the snake, discerns from afar, from the top of a little mound — pale she grows —the grass stained by blood drops. Frenzied she flies to this place, with heavy grief, and recognizes the unspeakable; she dashes herself onto the guilty ground like a thunderbolt, she has no words, no tears when tragedy first strikes, she only leans forward and doubles sad kisses, gaping she searches for the baby's soul which warmly flees through his limbs. His face, his chest are no longer in place, the skin is torn, the thin bones are visible and the sinews are drenched in a stream of fresh blood, his whole body is one wound. So when in a shady ilex tree an idle snake has ravaged the abode and the offspring of a winged mother, she returns, lost in wonder at the quiet of her chirping home, in horror she drops from her hapless mouth the food she was bearing, when on the tree only blood is left and feathers fly around through the ravaged nest.

When she returns to the spot where she left Opheltes, Hypsipyle resembles a mother bird, who abandons her nest to gather food for her offspring and finds it ravaged by a snake upon her return. The bird's horror for the unexpected tragedy aligns with the consternation of Hypsipyle. She too has abandoned the baby for too long, while having been fundamental for his survival up to that point. Hypsipyle herself insists on her maternal feelings when she mourns the death of Opheltes, who used to embody the sweet memory of her own children (5.608: *natorum dulcis imago*). Hypsipyle used to breastfeed him with maternal care (5.617-8: *ubera paruo* | *iam materna dabam*) and knew the lullabies to sing, the stories to tell to make him fall asleep.[304] Their bond entailed an exclusive and mutual understanding: Hypsipyle was the only one able to make sense of the baby's

[304] In Euripides' *Hypsipyle* (840-5), the eponymous character defends herself from the accusations of having killed Opheltes by asserting that she fed and loved the baby as if he were her own child in every way. For an examination of the influence of Euripides' play onto the Nemean digression in Statius' *Thebaid*, see Soerink 2014.

inarticulate babbling (5.614-5: *murmura soli | intellecta mihi*); and, in fact, as much as she was distracted by telling the story of the Lemnian night, we read that she could hear from afar the wheezing of the baby (5.541-4) woken up by the strokes of the snake's tail; in her attempt to locate Opheltes, she utters words known to him. Being used to recognizing what lacks articulation such as the babbling and the wheezing of the baby, Hypsipyle recognizes the unspeakable (5.592: *agnoscitque nefas*) when she sees the baby's displaced body parts; in other words, she recognizes Opheltes when, it seems, there is nothing left to recognize.[305]

When she searches for Opheltes and finds him dead on the Nemean fields, Hypsipyle acts like other mothers of the *Thebaid*, who perform an extreme form of recognition, that is the identification and recomposition of their sons's scattered bodies in the aftermath of battles and ambushes. When fifty Theban soldiers lie dead on the ground after being hit by Tydeus' massive stone, for instance, Ide combs weapons and corpses, upon which she cries while desperately searching for her twin sons (3.137-40: *per et arma et corpora passim | canitiem inpexam dira tellure uolutans | quaerit inops natos omnique in corpore plangit*). Ide[306] is not an isolated case but appears among the Theban mothers summoned by *Luctus*, the personification of mourning, to locate their dead sons on the battlefield. As she recomposes Opheltes' body, then, Hypsipyle

[305] As she recognizes the *nefas* of the baby's death (5.592: *agnoscitque nefas*), instead, Hypsipyle mirrors Antigone, who also recognizes the *nefas* embodied by Polynices at the gates of Thebes (11.360: *agnouitque nefas*). *Agnoscere nefas* indicates once more the difficulty of pinpointing a specific object of recognition. While it is certain that Hypsipyle recognizes, the object of recognition remains elusive, for *nefas* might refer both to the fearful sight of the baby's dismembered body and to the crime, the impious deed finally committed by Hypsipyle (whether willingly or not) to compensate for the betrayal of the women's plans at Lemnos (5.628: *exsolui tibi, Lemne, nefas*).

[306] Brown (1994, 74-5) points out that the fraternal devotion of the Thespiadae, Ide's sons, exemplified by their embrace, finds its inverted parallel in the full of hatred, in-death embrace of Eteocles and Polynices in books 9 and 11 of the *Thebaid*. Yet, it is important to specify the extent to which "Ide and her dead twins obviously foreshadow Jocasta and her sons in an epic full of bereaved mothers" (so Brown 1994, 75). As I seek to show in this chapter, rather than foreshadowing the mourning of Jocasta, Ide falls into the paradigm of bereaved mothers who relentlessly search for their children among the casualties of war.

resembles those mothers who take on the duty to recompose their sons' scattered limbs, arms back with trunks, heads back with necks (3.126-32):

> Luctus atrox caesoque inuitat pectore matres.
> scrutantur galeas frigentum inuentaque monstrant
> corpora, prociduae super externosque suosque.
> hae pressant in tabe comas, hae lumina signant
> uulneraque alta rigant lacrimis, pars spicula dextra
> nequiquam parcente trahunt, pars molliter aptant
> bracchia trunca loco et ceruicibus ora reponunt.
>
> Cruel Mourning with its stricken chest calls the mother. They examine thoroughly the helmets of those stiff with cold and show the bodies they have found, falling prostrate upon strangers and their own kin. Some press their hair in the putrefying moisture, some seal eyes and wet deep wounds with tears, some draw out darts with vainly merciful hands vainly, some softly fit severed arms in place and put heads back to necks.

If mourning calls mothers in general, we expect to find Jocasta as well, called upon by *Luctus*, on the battlefield where the bodies of Eteocles and Polynices lie after their mutual slaughter. As soon as the news of the fratricide reaches the Theban palace, instead, it is Oedipus who bursts out from his dark recess. Anxious to reach the bodies of his sons, he summons Antigone to guide his blind steps (11.594-615):

> 'duc' ait, 'ad natos patremque recentibus, oro,
> inice funeribus!' cunctatur nescia uirgo,
> quid paret; inpediunt iter inplicitosque morantur
> arma, uiri, currus, altaque in strage seniles
> deficiunt gressus et dux miseranda laborat.
> ut quaesita diu monstrauit corpora clamor
> uirginis, insternit totos frigentibus artus.
> nec uox ulla seni: iacet inmugitque cruentis
> uulneribus, nec uerba diu temptata secuntur.
> dum tractat galeas atque ora latentia quaerit,
> tandem muta diu genitor suspiria soluit:
> 'tarda meam, Pietas, longo post tempore mentem
> percutis? estne sub hoc hominis clementia corde?
> uincis io miserum, uincis, Natura, parentem!
> en habeo gemitus lacrimaeque per arida serpunt
> uolnera et in molles sequitur manus inpia planctus.
> accipite infandae iusta exequialia mortis,
> crudeles, nimiumque mei! nec noscere natos

adloquiumque aptare licet; dic, uirgo, precanti,
quem teneo? quo nunc uestras ego saeuus honore
prosequar inferias? o si fodienda redirent
lumina et in uoltus saeuire ex more potestas!

"Guide me to my sons," he says, "and, I beg you, throw the father upon the bodies just dead!" The maiden hesitates, not knowing what he has in mind; weapons, men, and chariots hamper their march and delay their entangled bodies, Oedipus' senile steps fail him in the deep carnage and the pitiable guide struggles. As soon as Antigone's shouting showed the bodies after a long search, he spread his all body over the corpses that were turning stiff with cold. No voice is left to the old man: he lies and bellows over the gruesome wounds, and words for long sought after do not follow. While he touches the helmets and looks for the hiding faces, at last the parent releases his long silent sighs: "at last, Pietas, you touch my soul after a long time? And is there some human clemency in the deep of this heart? You conquer me wretched, you conquer, Nature, the father! See, I can cry at last and tears creep through my dry scars of my orbits, and my impious hand pursues the effeminate beating of my breast. Receive the due funeral rites for your unspeakable death, oh cruel sons, too much mine! It is not allowed to me to recognize my children nor to adapt my allocution. Tell me, daughter, I pray, whom am I holding? How could a wrathful parent like me attend now to your obsequies honorably? Oh, if only I could return to dig out my eyes and to have the possibility to rage against my face as is my custom.

Recognition remains inaccessible to Oedipus (11.611-2: *nec noscere natos* | *adloquiumque aptare licet*), who needs to rely on Antigone's eyes to determine with certainty which of the two sons he holds in his arms (11.612-3: *dic*, *uirgo*, *precanti*, | *quem teneo*?). Antigone, in other words, functions as Oedipus' cognitive support in a scene exhibiting compelling intratextual similarities with *Thebaid* 3.126-32 where, in the wake of Tydeus' attack, *Luctus* summons the ranks of mothers to identify their sons among war casualties. As the Theban mothers closely examine the helmets on stiffening corpses (3.127: *scrutantur galeas frigentum*) and shed tears over the dead's deep wounds (3.130: *uulneraque alta rigant lacrimis*), so Oedipus relies on his touch to attempt to identify his sons, whose faces are concealed by the helmets (11.603: *tractat galeas atque ora latentia quaerit*), after throwing himself upon the bodies that too are stiffening (11.600: *insternit totos frigentibus artus*) and wounded (11.601-2: *cruentis* | *uulneribus*). In addition, Antigone's shout signals the sighting of her dead brothers (11.599: *quaesita diu monstrauit corpora clamor*)

in a way that evokes the mothers displaying the bodies they find (3.127-8 *inuentaque monstrant* | *corpora*). Oedipus' acknowledgement of his soft, even effeminate, beating of his breast (11.609: *in molles sequitur manus inpia planctus*) further highlights the feminine, if not maternal, connotation of the mourning scene of *Thebaid* 11. Moreover, Oedipus' voiceless reaction (11.601: *nec uox ulla seni*; 11.602: *nec uerba diu temptata secuntur*) and the eventual dissolution of his mute sighs (11.604: *tandem muta diu genitor suspiria soluit*) recall Hypsipyle's speechless bewilderment (5.593: *non uerba in funere primo*) at the sight of Opheltes' body, as her groans dissolved into words (5.606-7: *tandem laxata dolori* | *uox invenit iter*, *gemitusque in uerba soluti*).

It is only after the conclusion of the mourning scene of *Thebaid* 11, in particular after Oedipus' attempt to end his life, an attempt thwarted by Antigone, that readers are made aware that Jocasta, as soon as she heard the tumult of the incipient battle, receded to the innermost space of the house to retrieve Laius' sword and committed suicide (11.634-41). Her glaring absence in the aftermath of the battle signals Jocasta's withdrawal from yet another performance of recognition: unlike the other mothers of the *Thebaid*, the Statian Jocasta—herself invoking the sight of the duel as a worthy punishment for her eyes at *Theb*. 7.335—never sees her sons fight nor does she dutifully and mournfully identify the bodies of her sons on the battlefield.

Jocasta's withdrawal from this particular instance of maternal recognition is all the more conspicuous if read against the backdrop of Euripides' *Phoenician Women*.[307] In this tragedy, it is Jocasta who, together with Antigone, hastens towards the battlefield, where she wails mournfully as she throws herself now on Eteocles, now on Polynices, both wounded and about die (1427-35).

[307] Jocasta commits suicide with Oedipus' sword in Seneca's *Oedipus*. Seneca's *Phoenician Women* ends abruptly before the fratricide leaving to the reader the task to make conjectures about what Jocasta would have done in the wake of the fratricide.

Jocasta's last gesture is a *post mortem* embrace of their sons, after she succeeds in doing what the Statian Oedipus attempts, i.e., committing suicide with a sword taken from the brothers. In short, the *Thebaid* frustrates the reader's expectations, potentially set up by Euripides' tragedy, to see Jocasta engaging with the recognition of her dead sons. This is true not only in the immediate aftermath of the fratricide but also when the body of Polynices waits to be recognized and buried after Creon's decree. In fact Argia, after recognizing the body of her spouse Polynices thanks to the cloak she herself had embroidered, wonders "Where is the mother? Where is the renowned Antigone?" (12.331-2: *ubi mater, ubi inclyta fama* | *Antigone*?). Whereas Antigone[308] joins Argia in her mourning over the body of Polynices shortly thereafter, Jocasta remains conspicuous in her absence.

As I have anticipated above, in addition to the recognition of Opheltes, Hypsipyle is the protagonist of a second recognition scene where her maternal feelings take center stage once again. As the passage below shows, Hypsipyle's maternal recognitions, albeit antithetical in their ultimate outcome—grief and despair in the case of Opheltes, joy and disbelief in the case of the twin sons—mirror one another in other respects. In both cases, recognition results in Hypsipyle's startled paralysis before a collapse that is both physical and emotional. Before dashing to the ground over the body of Opheltes, Hypsipyle remains speechless, unable even to shed tears (5.593-4: *non uerba in fulmine primo* | *non lacrimas habet*). In similar ways, upon recognizing her twin sons, Hypsipyle is petrified and later falls onto the ground (5.715-30):

> causa uiae genetrix, nec inhospita tecta Lycurgi
> praebuerant aditus, et protinus ille tyranno
> nuntius exstinctae miserando uulnere prolis.

[308] The only component of the Oedipodean family to As Oedipus claims in Seneca's *Phoenician Women* (80-1: *Unde in nefanda specimen egregium domo?* | *unde ista generi virgo dissimilis suo?*), Antigone is the exception to the rule, for she an outstanding paragon who hardly fits in her nefarious house and family.

ergo adsunt comites - pro fors et caeca futuri
mens hominum! - regique fauent; sed Lemnos ad aures
ut primum dictusque Thoas, per tela manusque
irruerant, matremque auidis complexibus ambo
diripiunt flentes alternaque pectora mutant.
illa uelut rupes inmoto saxea uisu
haeret et expertis non audet credere diuis.
ut uero et uultus et signa Argoa relictis
ensibus atque umeris amborum intextus Iason,
cesserunt luctus, turbataque munere tanto
corruit, atque alio maduerunt lumina fletu.
addita signa polo, laetoque ululante tumultu
tergaque et aera dei motas crepuere per auras.

The mother was the reason of their journey, and the house of Lycurgus did not fail to offer them friendly shelter; right afterwards, the message arrives to the king about the death of his son, struck by a direful wound. Therefore, they stand there as friends (oh chance and the human mind blind to future events!) and support the king; but as soon as Lemnos and the name Thoas reach their ears, they rush their way through weapons and hands, and both weeping they tear away their mother with avid and alternate embraces. She stays still like a stony rock, with fixed eyes, and dares not to confide in the gods she had known from experience. When the faces and the Argive signs on the swords left behind and the name of Jason embroidered on their shoulders spoke the truth, mourning ceased, and unsettled by such a gift, she fell down, and her eyes were drenched with other tears. Signs were added from above, and with a joyful and ringing tumult, the tymbals and the horns of the god resounded through the moved air.

As scholars have noted, Hypsipyle's reunion with her twin sons, who share their mother's embrace with no rivalry, stands in stark contrast with Jocasta's unsuccessful attempt to reconcile Eteocles and Polynices.[309] Yet, Hypsipyle's recognition of her sons should remind us of another shortcoming of the Theban mother, a misrecognition that exceeds the narrative span of the *Thebaid* while being determinant for the events that do take place in the poem: Jocasta's failure to recognize her son Oedipus, her long-lost child as well, in spite of his speaking name and the marks on his

[309] See Vessey 1970a 48 in Korneeva 2011, 213. Tatiana Korneeva points out that Hypsipyle's reunion with her sons undermines the structural analogy between the Lemnian and the Theban mother, who are similar in other respects, such as their dignified appearance in spite of their grief and their efforts, whether or not intentional, to delay the war.

feet. In a way that evokes Oedipus' search for the truth about his parents and his fortuitous arrival to Thebes after the response of the oracle, Hypsipyle's sons stop at Nemea by chance on their journey in search of their mother (5.715: *causa uiae genetrix*). Hypsipyle, who promptly recognizes her sons after many years, projects a counterfactual scenario: what if Jocasta too had recognized her long-lost son, Oedipus? In short, whereas the recognition of Opheltes alerts us to Jocasta's missed recognition of the fatally wounded bodies of her sons, Hypsipyle's recognition of Thoas and Euneus stages a recognition which, if performed by Jocasta, could have averted the fraternal conflict and the subsequent Theban war from the start by forestalling the incestuous procreation of Eteocles and Polynices.

My reading of Hypsipyle's recognitions as counterpoints to Jocasta's shortcomings bears two important implications for our understanding of the *Thebaid*. First, it illuminates from a new perspective the elusive relation between the Nemean digression and the poem as a whole, a relation widely acknowledged in the scholarship.[310] Second, it foregrounds a significant programmatic move, whereby Statius turns the recognition *of* the mother from a case of objective genitive (Oedipus' recognition *of* Jocasta) to a case of subjective genitive (Jocsta's recognition *of* her offspring) to against the backdrop of a literary tradition that gave greater prominence to Oedipus' *anagnorisis*. Hypsipyle's significance as a foil for Jocasta, then, lies in the fact that her ability to recognize is an essential component of her experience of motherhood and inscribes itself into a digression, such as the Nemean one, that "allows for reflection upon the forces that drive the

[310] Augoustakis (2010, 47) underscores that the *nefas* ties together three distinct narrative levels (Lemnos, Nemea, the conflict between Thebes and Argos) "as in a set of Russian dolls."

poem."[311] In my view, the dilatory excursus of the Argives compels us to reflect upon recognition, whose distortions subtend the tragic core of the *Thebaid*, from Oedipus' misrecognition of Laius and Jocasta to Eteocles and Polynices' decision to recognize one another essentially as enemies rather than brothers.

It is worth examining at this point the role of Bacchus' significance, if any, for the thematization of recognition in the Nemean digression. In addition to devising the extenuating drought that forces the Argives to stop at Nemea, a move that buys some peaceful time to his motherland Thebes, Bacchus is essential for the successful escape of Thoas, Hypsipyle's father, from Lemnos. Hypsipyle herself recalls the epiphany of the god, no less than her grandfather, when she yields to the Argives' desire to hear about the Lemnian night (5.265-70):

> tunc primum sese trepidis sub nocte Thyoneus
> detexit, nato portans extrema Thoanti
> subsidia, et multa subitus cum luce refulsit.
> adgnoui: non ille quidem turgentia sertis
> tempora nec flaua crinem destrinxerat uua:
> nubilus indignumque oculis liquentibus imbrem.
>
> Then for the first time Thyoneus revealed himself in the night to us in apprehension, bringing help in extremis to his son, Thoas, and when he suddenly shone forth with much light I recognized him. Yet, he had not adorned his tumid temples with wreaths nor with golden grapes his hair. He was gloomy, with his eyes pouring an unbecoming rain of tears.

The recognition of her kin, Bacchus, in spite of the lack of his distinctive marks, sets into relief Hypsipyle's mastery of recognition not only at Nemea but also at Lemnos. Such mastery would

[311] McNelis 2007, 95. McNelis contends, in particular, that at Nemea the martial agenda of Jupiter, aided by Vulcan and Mars, clashes with the dilatory desires of Venus and Bacchus. Such conflict reflects a generic friction between a teleological drive, oriented towards the narration of heroic warfare, and the dilatory aims of the aetiological digression. The scholar (2007, 87) emphasizes the Callimachaen locale of the Nemean digression and interprets the drought as a metaphorical symbol of Callimacheon opposition to the loud river of epic poetry. For a detailed examination of the Callimachean motifs in the *Thebaid*'s Nemean digression see McNelis 2007, 76-96.

be indisputable even if we were following the lead of several scholars[312] to question, instead, the reliability of Hypsipyle as a narrator and suspect (running the risk of being carried away by that scholarly lead) that the epiphany of Bacchus' too must be ascribed to Hypsipyle's interventions on her version of the story. A significant difference, in fact, sets the recognition of Bacchus apart from the maternal recognitions examined above: only the first one is inscribed into Hypsipyle's metadiegetic narrative of the Lemnian night, a narrative unequivocally modeled onto Aeneas' first-hand account of the fall of Troy.[313] It is precisely the trustworthiness of the metadiegetic narrator that is later questioned by other voices in both poems: just as Opheltes' parents disbelieve Hypsipyle's Lemnian narrative for its stink of "self-advertisement,"[314] so too does Dido question the candor of the Trojan hero's narrative of *pietas*.[315] If Hypsipyle were indeed manipulating the narrative of the Lemnian night to her own advantage, her recognition of Bacchus would then be a skillful move aiming to confer credibility on her version, a move that would still attest to Hypsipyle's mastery of recognition not so much for her ability to recognize the god in spite of his unusual appearance as for her self-aware use of recognition as a narrative trope.[316] It is worth dwelling on the fact that the Bacchus[317] who features in the Lemnian digression, as Hypsipyle

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[312] See Heslin 2016 with additional bibliography.

[313] For a detailed overview of the similarities between Hypspiyle's and Aeneas' accounts, see Nugent 1996 and Casali 2003.

[314] Thus Nugent (1996, 55) defines Hypsipyle's story.

[315] On the self-advertisement qualities of Aeneas' narration, see Casali 2003 with further bibliography.

[316] The portrayal of Hypsipyle as a manipulative narrator is a tempting also because she is later abandoned by Bacchus, an abandonment seemingly at odds with the god's epiphany (5.496: *sed non iterum obuius Euhan*).

[317] See Parkes *ad Theb*. 4.652-7 for the similarities between these two appearances of Bacchus. See also the comment *ad Theb*. 4.652-79 for an overview of the important role of Bacchus in the *Thebaid*, where "more attention is devoted to Bacchus … [in the *Thebaid*] than seems usual in Roman epic."

recalls him, does not look much different from the mournful Bacchus who beseeches Jove in order to avert the destruction of Thebes (7.145-53):

> uiderat Inachias rapidum glomerare cohortes
> Bacchus iter; gemuit Tyriam conuersus ad urbem,
> altricemque domum et patrios reminiscitur ignes,
> purpureum tristi turbatus pectore uultum:
> non crines, non serta loco, dextramque reliquit
> thyrsus, et intactae ceciderunt cornibus uuae.
> ergo ut erat lacrimis lapsoque inhonorus amictu
> ante Iovem - et tunc forte polum secretus habebat -
> constitit, haud umquam facie conspectus in illa.
>
> Bacchus had seen the Inachian troops accelerate their fast march; turned towards the Tyrian city, he remembers his maternal home and the fatherland's fires, his beautiful face troubled by his sorrowful heart: his hair, his garlands were not in place, the thyrsus left his right hand, and untouched the grapes feel from his horns. Just as it were, unsightly in his sinking garment he took a stand before Jove (at that time), he was hardly ever seen with that look.

The mournful appearance of Bacchus is yet another point of contact between the Lemnian digression (in turn contained within the Nemean one) and the poem as a whole, a resemblance that speaks to Lemnian slaughter as being a thought-provoking foil for the Theban civil war. In both cases, the god mourns for a place dear to his heart: Thebes, house to his rites and altars, and Lemnos, the reign of his son, Thoas. In both cases, the god, a suppliant before Jove (5.275-6: *nec dictis*, *supplex quae plurima fudi* | *ante Iouem frustra*; 7.152: *ante Iouem*) stands out for his mournful appearance, grieving in tears (5.270: *oculis liquentibus imbrem*; 7.151: *lacrimis*) and lacking some of his defining traits:[318] garlands and vine are missing or out of place (5.268-9: *non*

[318] Smolenaars 1994 *ad Theb*. 7.148 puts the accent on Bacchus' "grotesque" and "burlesque" aspects. He deems the "[t]he slipping down of the god's garlands" as "of course, a very 'un-epic' motif, fitting well with the law of the bucolic and elegiac genres" and provides two examples from the *Eclogues* (6.16) and the *Amores* (1.6.38) in which the garlands have fallen off the heads of Bacchus and Silenus respectively. While I do not intend to dismiss the elegiac tones of the conversation between gods, father and son, I take the displacement of Bacchus' recognition tokens (indeed, garlands, vine, and thyrsus may well be defined 'recognition tokens' in that they allow us to recognize, for instance, a statue of Bacchus) as a sign of the generic displacement of the god of tragedy within an epic poem. It seems that Bacchus in the *Thebaid*, in that he becomes embodiment of a displaced tragic genre (the thyrsus has left his hand

ille quidem turgentia sertis | tempora nec flaua crinem destrinxerat uua; 7.149-50: *non crines*, *non serta loco*, *dextramque reliquit* | *thyrsus*, *et intactae ceciderunt cornibus uuae*), eventually the *thyrsus* leaves the god's hand on its own accord when the Argives are close to Thebes. Bacchus anticipates his imminent displacement and summons Jove to assign him a place on earth (5.182: *da sedem profugo*) before his own motherland, Thebes, would be utterly destroyed.

In several other respects, Hypsipyle is indeed her grandfather's worthy descendant: on the one hand, being an "exiled foreigner, a displaced mother with misplaced affections,"[319] she mirrors the displacement of Bacchus, the god of tragedy, in the *Thebaid*, an epic poem; on the other hand, the maternal paradigm she comes to embody is part of Bacchus' legacy as well. With the Statian Hypsipyle,[320] the Theban god contributes to creating the paradigm of the recognizing mother, a model which stands in stark contrast to the paradigm of Agave, whose tragic fate, put on stage in Euripides' *Bacchae*, is often evoked throughout the *Thebaid*,[321] and more compellingly so with Jocasta, who withdraws from the maternal recognitions performed by the Lemnian nurse and mother, as we have seen. The Roman Hypsipyle becomes the paradigm of the *mater agnoscens*, whose maternal qualities generate a poetic space that allows for a reflection on the ethical significance of recognition in the *Thebaid*. The dilatory *excursus* on Hypsipyle, in that it deviates from the heroes' martial agenda while paradoxically occupying a central position in the poem,

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on its own accord), becomes also challenging to recognize. An additional element in support of this interpretation would be the intratextual resemblance between 7.149 (*non crines, non serta loco*), a line indicating the displacement of Bacchus' hair and garlands, and the phrasing at 5.596 (*non ora loco, non pectora restant*), which describes the displaced body parts of the child nursed by Hypsipyle, who recognizes the tragedy that took place in her absence (5.592: *agnoscitque nefas*) even before seeing the mutilated body of Opheltes.

[319] Augoustakis 2010, 22.

[320] Perhaps even more so than with the Euripidean Hypsipyle, who recognizes his sons at the end of the play.

[321] Cf. *supra* p. 180, *passim*.

from book 4 to 6, is symbolic of the misalignment between the outmost importance of recognition in a fraternal and civil war and the confinement of recognition outside the battlefield. Recognition finds space in the time of digressions (such as the Nemean one) and aftermaths (such as Antigone's and Argia's recognition of Polynices' body). It is precisely in this ethical reflection on recognition as a maternal prerogative that lies the programmatic relevance of the Nemean digression and, within it, of Hypsipyle's epic persona. Through her cluster of recognitions, her figure ties into Statius' hermeneutic endeavor to reinterpret the Theban saga through the lens of recognition in its range of forms and distortions.

Chapter 4. What is Left to Recognize? Residual Recognitions in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*

Writing from Tomis, Ovid invites his friends to hold onto memories of him that would reflect the sadness of his life away from Rome. He first invites his friend to remove from his portraits the ivy wreath, an adornment apt for blessed poets and hardly befitting an exile (*Tr*. 1.7, 1-4). He then claims that the *Metamorphoses*, albeit interrupted by a rushed departure, traces a *maior imago* (*Tr*. 1.7, 11), a better portrait, of its author's poetic and perhaps private persona.[322] Ovid, then, concludes the poem with a few lines to be added at the end of *Metamorphoses* 1: this elegiac *addendum*[323] aids readers to recognize both the unpolished status of the *Metamorphoses* and its author's hapless condition. A less explicit way in which friends and readers can see the poet in his epic is by focusing on the parallel between the *mutatae formae* in the poem and Ovid's own transformation from urban poet to wretched exile. The loss of speech of the mutating subjects, a common side effect of the metamorphosis, would map onto Ovid's interrupted voice and onto his dehumanizing exclusion from the Roman community, with which he tries to re-establish a connection by means of the written word in ways similar to Io's and Philomela's crafty attempts in the *Metamorphoses*.[324]

Yet, it is striking that Ovid wishes to be recognized in and for a poem where recognition is elusive and the ability to recognize oneself and others constantly undermined. First, the literary genre of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* defies recognition: an "un-epic epic,"[325] the poem challenges the

[322] Ov. *Tr*. 1.7, 11-4.

[323] On Ovid's editorial and authorial revisions between *Metamorphoses* and *Tristia*, see Martelli 2013, 164-171.

[324] See Natoli 2017, 80-139 for an examination of loss of speech in Ovid's exile literature.

[325] Feeney (1991, 189) defines the *Metamorphoses* as "un-epic epic, uncategorizable multiform prodigy."

prescriptions of the epic traditions, hybridizes disparate generic tropes, and stands alone among the hexametric poems that dealt with the deeds of heroes. While it is true (and suggestive) that the voicelessness of the transmuted beings in the *Metamorphoses* maps onto the exiled poet's interrupted voice, it is also true that it does so retroactively, as it were. The extent to which Ovid was aware of his impending *relegatio* during the composition of his fifteen-book epic poem is a matter of speculation, as in Ovid's telling Augustus' decision seems to come about as a thunderbolt,[326] albeit perhaps not out of a clear blue sky, rather than as a highly predictable event. This is not to say that Ovid's wish to be recognized in his poem's *mutatae formae* cannot provide a window on his own exile-induced metamorphosis, nor that reading the epic through the lens of the elegiac corpus is not a valuable interpretative line. It is to say that to resist juxtaposing the author's identity onto that of his transmuting characters helps us see what the *Metamorphoses* can say about recognition *per se* in a metamorphic context, rather than the recognition of the poet.

In this chapter I will read a number of episodes from Ovid's epic by focusing on the cognitive shifts set in motion by the metamorphoses. I will examine the ways in which these shifts affect the transmuting/transmuted being's ability to recognize itself and to be recognized by others. I argue that the import of recognition in the metamorphic world reaches beyond the mutating subject's gradual erosion of recognizability in the eyes of the viewers, be they bystanders in the story or readers: it extends to the viewers' anxiety, even though they do not metamorphize, about their own recognizability in the eyes of the mutating creature. For the viewer, then, the question

[326] See Hejduk 2020, 274 for a discussion of Jupiter's thunderbolt in relation to Augustus' pronouncement.

“who or what is the mutating subject?” intertwines with the question “who or what will I be for the creature undergoing the metamorphosis?”

The epistemic doubts raised by the *Metamorphoses* unfold simultaneously at cosmic and individual levels. On a cosmic level, the Pythagorean theory of metempsychosis places the viewer in a permanent status of epistemic uncertainty: one can never know whether a human soul was born again in the body of an animal whose meat could be served as a meal.[327] On an individual level, the human being who undergoes a metamorphosis embodies an epistemological challenge: the creature inhabits the liminal space between humanity and non-humanity while ambiguously partaking in both dimensions— and neither—at the same time. As such, the metamorphic creature challenges a reductionist approach to reading reality in binary terms, for it cannot be defined as either this or that, nor can it be ascribed to the realm of nature or culture,[328] human or non-human. The metamorphosis then compels us to consider the continuities across species in the real world, while magnifying the blurred line that marks where the human ends and the non-human begins.

By examining the ways in which Ovid’s poem undermines the human tendency to organize the world into fixed categories, I address the power of the metamorphosis to affect the recognition performed by the mutating beings and by those who interact with them. My focus aims in two directions: on the one hand, I consider the epistemological challenges embodied by the metamorphic subjects both in their temporary lingering between the human and non-human condition and in their post-metamorphic state. As we will see, *quod superest*, i.e., what survives of the human subject past the metamorphosis (a residue that ranges from the mind, an entity

[327] See Sissa 2019 on the cosmic epistemic uncertainty derived from the Pythagorean theory of metempsychosis and the *Metamorphoses*’ taxonomy whereby human beings turn into inedible plants.

[328] On naturecultures as a new lens through which to read Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, see Martelli 2020, 36-55.

difficult to locate, to a color, a name, or a voice), rarely suffices to ensure recognizability for the subject itself and for others. On the other hand, I look at the alienating effects that witnessing a metamorphosis produces on the observer. As the mutating creature changes in the eyes of the observer, so too the observer will be seen differently from the mutating creature that comes to be in the world in new and different phenomenological dimensions. The loss of recognition, then, can operate bidirectionally.

I argue that the alienating and terrifying effects of the metamorphosis on the observer result not just from the fear of undergoing a similarly prodigious transformation someday, somehow, at the whim of a cruel god, but also from the anxiety around the potential of the metamorphosis to undermine the recognizability of the observer.[329] Such an anxiety translates into the viewer's epistemic desire to access the cognitive reality of the metamorphic subjects and, by extension, of the creatures that inhabit the non-human realm. That this desire takes center stage in the *Metamorphoses* is hardly a new observation: the poem stirs the human imagination on how it feels to live a non-human life.[330] The aspiration to know what it feels like to become and to be something other than human is, however, confronted by the ultimate illegibility of the other's inner experiences. Yet, by desiring to know what resists full legibility, readers reach with a Socratic and at once skeptical turn a metarecognition of their own cognitive limits.[331]

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[329] I use "viewer" here to indicate both other actors who observe the metamorphizing subjects in the poem and the readers who see the metamorphoses through Ovid's narration.

[330] For the role of imagination in the human experience of animal lives and different viewpoints on phantasy as epistemological tool, see Payne 2010, 13-22. Payne discusses the famous essay by Thomas Nagel "What is it like to be a bat" published in 1974. The importance of Nagel's piece for thinking about the metamorphic world is evident also in Tornau 2008, who starts with the philosophical essay to argue that the inner experience of the metamorphic subject remains illegible.

[331] The readers at times share these limits with the poet despite the latter's omniscience.

The variety of the poem's metamorphoses, as well as the repetition of their motifs, undermines any attempt to systematize the Ovidian text without yielding to repetitions or incoherencies. I do not intend to offer here a blanket interpretation of the *Metamorphoses*, but an analysis of recognition in those episodes which prominently stage a set of recognition-related concerns in the metamorphic world. The themes I will consider span most of the poem and include the mind, the voice, the sign, and the notion of (dis)similarity. I will examine, in particular, the cognitive mysteries surrounding the human mind into an animal body, the transformation of the voice, the reliability of signs, and the concept of "similar" as a mode of thinking about the non-human. Albeit concerned with these themes to different degrees, each metamorphosis provides a *locus* for reflecting on their relation to and influence on recognition. The dilemmas posed by civil war for the coexistence in the same person of contradicting categories such as kinship and enmity take another shape in the world of the *Metamorphoses* because the recognition formula "this is that" is challenged by other modes of conceptualizing "being." Some metamorphoses invite us to contemplate what it means to be *both* human *and* animal. Yet, the co-existence of "both/and" can quickly turn into "neither/nor." For instance, if after the metamorphosis Actaeon is both human (in his mind) and animal (in his body), we can also think about Actaeon as neither human nor animal, as I will show in the next section.

Hunting the metamorphosis: Actaeon (*Met*. 3.138-252)

Actaeon's metamorphosis stages the collapse of several intertwined forms of recognition, the most apparent of which is Actaeon's loss of recognizability despite the permanence of his old mind in a new body. The presence of Actaeon in an animal body, imperceptible to the senses of his hounds and fellow hunters, raises questions about what it is that makes someone or something recognizable and about the cognitive skills necessary to recognize that someone or something.

What is particularly striking in the Ovidian version of Actaeon's myth is the failure of the combined intelligence of human and non-human animals. In addition to undermining the anthropocentric assumption that human intelligence surpasses animal intelligence by showing that the cognitive abilities of the hunters are not superior to the sagacity of the hounds, the myth of Actaeon questions the opposite claim that many a time the instincts and intuitions of animals surpass human intelligence. Observations of this kind abound in the philosophical tradition. For instance, Sextus Empiricus challenges the excessive confidence in the cognitive capacities of humans via the trope of Chrysippus' dog. The so-called syllogizing dog proverbially arrives at a spot where three ways meet and, after smelling at the two roads by which the prey did not pass, he at once rushes off by the third. For the skeptical thinker, that the dog chooses the third road reflects an ability to reason syllogistically in these terms: "if my sense impressions show that this or that road does not bear traces of the prey's smell, then it follows that the third road must be the one taken by the prey."[332]

The intelligence of Actaeon's hounds is an important theme in the literary tradition that precedes Ovid's poem.[333] The most enticing detail in archaic accounts of Actaeon's myth[334] pertains to the reason for which the hounds fail to recognize their master: in contrast with Ovid's

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332 On the supposedly syllogistic abilities of dogs, see Tornau 2008, 244.

333 In the exile poems, the nature of Actaeon's crime and his later punishment represents a *comparandum* for Ovid's *error* and his own punishment. But, as I specified at the outset of this chapter, a retroactive association between the mythological character and Ovid's poetic persona will not be part of my reading.

334 Ovid's version accords with Callim. *Hymn* 5.107-18, where the fate of Tiresias, blinded for his inadvertent sight of Athena at the bath, appears more desirable than Actaeon's violent death. For an overview of the archaic and classical Greek versions of Actaeon's myth, reconstructed via mythographers and historians, see Schlam 1984. The most evident variation concerns the nature of the hunter's error: in contrast with the inadvertent sight of a naked Diana at the bath in Ovid's narration, an act of hubris (either Actaeon's attempts to seduce Semele or his claim to be a better hunter than Diana) emerges as the reason for Actaeon's punishment in earlier accounts. On Actaeon's punishment, see Schlam 1984, 85.

narrative, where the metamorphosis from human to animal stands out as the only determinant change that prevents Actaeon from being recognized, in other versions Actaeon's recognition is not exclusively undermined by the hunter's transformation into a stag, but also by the madness imposed upon the hounds by Diana.[335] Furious at first, in a way that evokes the fury of blinded tragic figures, the hounds eventually display human-like grief after realizing Actaeon's death and, it seems, their own involvement in it. The fragmentary *POxy* 2509, likely of Hesiodic origin, allows us to reconstruct that Diana takes away the madness she herself brought upon the hounds. Free from madness, then, the hounds can finally mourn the loss of their master:

> "[And at once] grief [for their dead master,] Actaeon, [seized the dogs,]
> And they recognized[336] [the murder] of their lord.
> They all filled the cave [with barking, and one after another,]
> With dust raised by their feet; [and all shed hot tears,]
> [Making the place resound] with divine lamentation"[337]

It is not by chance that Ovid de-humanizes[338] the hounds against the backdrop of a literary tradition where their error and ensuing *anagnorisis* seem to endow them with tragically human characteristics. That in the *Metamorphoses* Actaeon is devoured by his hounds *only* because[339]—not *also* because—of his new appearance is telling of Ovid's concern with the cognitive constraints

[335] On this point, see Schlam 1984, 84-5: "[i]n the archaic version not only was Actaeon transformed into a deer, but madness was said to be imposed on the hounds, that they might devour their master." The madness of the hounds is a motif confirmed by the presence of Lyssa in vase-painting. See Schlam 1984, 94.

[336] See Casanova 1969, 35-6 for the conjecture ἔγν]ωσαν. Even if we accept Casanova's conjecture, it is unclear whether the hounds' recognition should be considered as a recognition of their own role in the death of the master as opposed to the realization of the death of their master.

[337] I quote Schlam's (1984, 94) translation of the text as proposed by Casanova 1969, 36-7.

[338] By de-humanization I intend to say that Actaeon's hounds in the *Met*. do not show "human" feelings, such as grief, or "human" mental states, such as madness.

[339] As Barchiesi 2007 *ad Met*. 3.206-52, there is no sign in Ovid of a divine manipulation of the dogs' ability to recognize their master.

imposed by the body both on the transmuting subject and by those who observe a new, transformed being. In fact, in spite of Actaeon's *mens* remaining pristine in an otherwise new body, both hounds and fellow hunters cannot see Actaeon's mental and spiritual residue in his new shape. A similar emphasis on the extent to which Actaeon's outward physiognomy is liable to make him recognizable is to be found in the pseudo-Apollodorus (3.1.1), where we read that only an image, a statue of the hunter fashioned by his teacher Chiron, could soothe the grief of the hounds.

The hounds' failure to recognize their master in his new shape contrasts with the proverbial ability of dogs to recognize their masters, even when these are in disguise. Pliny gives several examples of the ability of dogs to recognize people and voices.[340] Pliny notes that dogs alone among animals are able to recognize their masters, were they to show up *in incognito*, their own names, and the voice of their household's members (*HN* 8.146: *soli dominum nouere*, *et ignotum quoque si repente ueniat intellegunt*; *soli nomina sua, soli uocem domesticam agnoscunt*). A dog from Epirus, Pliny reports, was even able to recognize its master's murderer in the crowd, coercing him to confess his crime by its insistent barking and biting (*HNt* 8.142: *ab alio in Epiro agnitum in conuentu percussorem domini laniatuque et latratu coactum fateri scelus*)—a striking example of effective, wordless communication. The most renowned dog of classical literature, Argos, recognizes his master Odysseus disguised as a beggar. Old age prevents Argos from fawning on his long-lost owner and, therefore, from sabotaging his plans. Yet by raising his head, wagging his tail, and dropping down the ears he previously pricked up, the old dog unequivocally signals tha he senses that Odysseus was there (*Od*. 17.301: ἐνόησεν Ὀδυσσέα ἐγγὺς ἐόντα).

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[340] Barchiesi 2007 *ad Met*. 3.206-52 directs us to this passage and notes the collapse of the proverbial ability of dogs to recognize their masters, a familiar voice, and their own names.

The radical transformation undergone by Actaeon is much different from Odysseus' deliberate disguise. Yet, the erudite and philosophical discourses that emphasize the ability of dogs to perceive what is often imperceptible to humans build some expectations that in the *Metamorphoses* too the hounds will sniff the presence of Actaeon under the deer's skin.

In that Actaeon experiences the constraints imposed by external appearance on what is beneath, intangible and invisible to the senses of those unaware of the metamorphosis, he becomes the object and the victim of a modality of recognition on which he himself relied to tell apart one hound from the other. The catalogue of the hounds' names, while sardonically paying homage to the epic tradition, remarks how exterior looks affect the recognition process.[341] Although some of the hounds' speaking names point to intangible traits—these too resulting from the hunter's limited and limiting focus on hunting-oriented qualities (swiftness, sagacity, fierceness[342])—some others are based on the hounds' appearance: Melampus "Black Leg," Melaneus "Blacky," Asbolos "Foggy," Sticte "Maculated," Leucon "White." The longest description in the catalogue, that of Harpalos, underscores the essential role of physical marks for distinguishing one hound from the other. The name Harpalos, the "Sacker," does evoke the hound's predatory attitude, yet the hound is recognizable for a white mark on an otherwise black forehead (3.221-2: *et nigram medio frontem distinctus ab albo | Harpalos*). Along the same lines, it is the deer's skin, the spotted fur, and the long horns that the hounds see, and it is according to Actaeon's new shape that their barking signals the vicinity of a prey (3.206-7: *uidere canes primique Melampus | Ichnobatesque sagax latratu*

[341] Payne 2010, 219-20 suggests that the technicality of the catalogue shifts the focus away from the scene's *pathos*, an element present both in Actaeon's self-pity and in the reader's sympathy for Actaeon's fate.

[342] For a detailed overview of the names of the hounds and their meanings, see Barchiesi 2007 *ad Met*. 3.206-52 with further bibliography on the tradition of the catalogue of Actaeon's hounds.

signa dedere). Clues of Actaeon's presence in a changed body go unheeded: the deer's movement of the head at the repeated sound of the name "Actaeon" alerts neither hounds nor hunters (*Met*. 3.242-52):

> at comites rapidum solitis hortatibus agmen
> ignari instigant oculisque Actaeona quaerunt
> et uelut absentem certatim Actaeona clamant
> (ad nomen caput ille refert) et abesse queruntur
> nec capere oblatae segnem spectacula praedae.
> uellet abesse quidem, sed adest, uelletque uidere,
> non etiam sentire canum fera facta suorum.
> undique circumstant mersisque in corpore rostris
> dilacerant falsi dominum sub imagine cerui,
> nec nisi finita per plurima uulnera uita
> ira pharetratae fertur satiata Dianae.

> But his fellow hunters, unknowing, instigate the fierce rank with the usual exhortations. They look for Actaeon with their eyes and, as if he were not there, they call Actaeon (he turns back his head at his name) and they regret that he is not there and that he, lagging behind, cannot catch the spectacle of the prey they encountered. He wishes he would not be there, but he is. He wishes he could see but not feel the cruel deeds of the hounds. They surround him from all sides, and with their teeth sunk into his flesh, they tear apart their master under the false image of a deer. They say that the wrath of quivered Diana was not satiated until his life ended because of the many wounds.

<u>Voicing the metamorphosis</u>

While the hounds can hear the hunters' usual exhortations (3.242: *solitis hortatibus*), Actaeon cannot voice his thoughts. Although his mind stays the same (3.203: *mens tantum pristina mansit*), when he becomes aware of his metamorphosis Actaeon is already physically unable to utter any self-pitying exclamation; rather, we are only able to access them because they are written down by the poet. *Me miserum* (3.201), an exclamation trapped in the mind, bypasses the oral formulation to land posthumously on the page. Indeed, Actaeon meets faithfully (and fatefully) the

definition of *Autonoeius heros* (3.198): his matronymic[343] turns out to be a witty wordplay on *auto noei* "it (the deer) thinks" or *autonous* "thought/mind itself."[344]

Actaeon's thoughts take center stage again later in the episode, when the hounds catch sight of him, now a deer (3.228-41):

> ille fugit per quae fuerat loca saepe secutus,
> (heu!) famulos fugit ipse suos. clamare libebat,
> ['Actaeon ego sum, dominum cognoscite uestrum!']
> uerba animo desunt; resonat latratibus aether.
> prima Melanchaetes in tergo uulnera fecit,
> proxima Therodamas, Oresitrophos haesit in armo
> (tardius exierant, sed per compendia montis
> anticipata uia est); dominum retinentibus illis
> cetera turba coit confertque in corpore dentes.
> iam loca uulneribus desunt; gemit ille sonumque,
> etsi non hominis, quem non tamen edere possit
> ceruus, habet maestisque replet iuga nota querelis
> et genibus pronis supplex similisque roganti
> circumfert tacitos tamquam sua bracchia uultus.
>
> He runs through the places where he often used to chase (his quarry)![345] Ah, he himself flees from his own helpers. He wanted to shout: "I am Actaeon, recognize your master!" Words fail his spirit: the air resounds with barks. Melanchaetes is the first to open wounds in Actaeon's back; Therodamas is next; Oresitrophos' fangs hold fast onto Actaeon's arms. (They had burst forth later but through shortcuts across the mountains they traveled over before). While they hold down their master, the rest of the pack comes together and sinks their teeth into Actaeon's body: space for the wounds is already missing. Actaeon groans and emits a sound, one which was not human, but which nevertheless a deer could not

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[343] Actaeon is the child of the nymph Autonoe, Cadmus' daughter.

[344] Anderson 1997 *ad Met*. 3.198-9 notes the comic paradox deriving from the contrast between the noun *heros* and the verb *fugit*. Barchiesi *ad Met*. 3.198-203, who does not propose a specific translation of the epithet, points out the possibility to read in *Autonoeius* the combination of *autos* (he, the same) and *nous* (mind), two concepts strictly related to the themes of identity and consciousness in the episode. The commentator, in addition, directs us to the analysis of the etymological play generated by *Autonoeius* in Michalopoulos 2001, 53-4. The latter, quoting Fulg. *Myth*. 2.12: *Autonoe quasi autenunoe*, *id est se ipsam non cognoscens*, argues that *Autonoeius*, translatable as "he who does not know himself," alludes to Actaeon's lack of awareness of his new identity until he sees his new shape reflected in the water. Michalopoulos also notes the same etymological wordplay for Autonoe at *Met*. 3.719-22, where Actaeon's mother would not know herself because of her Bacchic frenzy. I am inclined to think, on the other hand, that the matronymic powerfully alludes to Actaeon remaining Actaeon as far as his mind is concerned.

[345] A tragic inversion of Aphrodite's consolatory words to Sappho (1.21).

> produce. He fills the ridges known to him with sad laments and, as a suppliant prone on his knees, resembling someone begging, he casts around his silent eyes as if they were arms.

Like his self-commiserating thought "*me miserum*!" (3.200), the plea for recognition remains a thought that Actaeon is unable to translate into spoken words. Yet, to what extent would the hounds have been able to understand the meaning of *ego Actaeon sum, dominum cognoscite uestrum* (3.230),[346] had Actaeon been able to utter these words with a deer-like voice—the imaginative power of gods and poets can do anything after all—or with any voice different than his own? Or to obey the imperative *cognoscite*—a verb which would sound novel to ears used to hunting-related commands, the usual exhortations (3.242: *solitis hortatibus*) which he will experience on his own skin? It is tempting to read *cognoscite* as an excessively philosophical imperative for Actaeon's hounds, a punching allusion to the trope of the philosophizing and syllogizing dog.[347]

The ubiquity of *esse* and its compounds, which ambiguously oscillate between signifying presence and absence (and their degrees) in Actaeon's metamorphosis, hints at the difficulty of grasping the ontology of the metamorphosis for the not-so-philosophizing hounds and hunters. Despite their semantic opposition, the concepts of presence and absence coexist in Actaeon's metamorphosis and generate an ontological short-circuit across tangible and intangible realms. Actaeon's silent *sum* (2.230) overlaps with other ways of being: Actaeon is not there (3.245: *abesse*) to the eyes of his fellow hunters, who keep calling his name as if he were absent (3.244: *uelut absentem*). He wishes he were not there, but he is there (2.247: *uellet abesse quidem*, *sed adest*). Somewhere along the ontological spectrum, between *adesse* and *abesse*, between life and

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[346] Words express a way of thinking but not all ways of thinking.

[347] On the trope of the philosophizing dog, see Floridi 1997.

death, *desum* signals a gradual erosion of or de-traction from Actaeon's *esse*. At first, the existential erosion concerns speech (3.231: *uerba animo desunt*); later, the deer's flesh too is wanting, lacking space for new wounds (2.237: *iam loca uulneribus desunt*).

However crucial the impact of loss of speech on recognizability, there is more to Actaeon's new voice than his inability to articulate words. Logocentrism, the cultural practice whereby listeners value articulate speech more highly than inarticulate sounds, "arise[s] from assumptions and values concerning the usefulness of sound in constructing meaning."[348] Although Ovidian scholarship does not always advance logocentric views, the opposition between voice (*uox*), as synonym of articulate speech, and sound (*sonum*), as synonym of inarticulate noise, has nevertheless gained traction.[349] For instance, scholars have argued that loss of speech ultimately prevents metamorphic subjects from expressing their identity and from being recognized by others.[350] Yet, there is more to voice than speech, as there is more to sound than music.[351] Voice *as* sound is created not only by those who emit it, but also by the listener's experience. The hunters' deafness to the deer's groan speaks to Actaeon's inability to produce articulate sounds as much as it does to their encultured listening practices. The hunters act out of a cultural process whereby one values a groan, i.e., a sound which is not articulate but still significant and expressive, less

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[348] An overview of the semantic range of the Latin *uox* can be found in Butler 2015, 112.

[349] For an overview of the scholarship on voice and sound in the ancient world and new perspectives on these topics, see Natoli 2017, 17-32.

[350] Natoli (2017, 45) writes: "the transformed Actaeon is no longer able to speak to his comrades (*comites*) at all. Although they still look for him and consider him part of their community, they cannot recognize him in his animal form and Actaeon cannot reclaim his identity without his voice." Martelli 2020, 50 underscores how the cross-species alliance between dogs and human beings turns against Actaeon when he becomes part of the species against which the canine and human combo is allied.

[351] See Butler 2015, 113-115.

than the words, i.e., articulate sound,[352] so that when they repeatedly call Actaeon's name (3.244: *certatim Actaeona clamant*), they expect words in return. Their selective deafness starkly contrasts with Pythagoras' attitude:

> And they say that once, as he was passing by a puppy being beaten, he felt pity and spoke these words: "Stop, don't beat him, since in truth it is the soul of a friend; I recognized it when I heard him yelp."[353]

Pity for a mistreated living being sets up Pythagoras' recognition of a man's soul in a non-human body. This recognition hinges upon the Pythagorean theory of metempsychosis, according to which the soul of each being never dies but moves to inhabit other bodies. The torture of Actaeon-the-stag, by contrast, continues uninterrupted because both hounds and hunters lack an affective attunement to the suffering of the animal. It is also such a lack that prevents the hunters from listening closely to the voice of that stag and from being amazed at a voice that sounded neither human nor animal.

So, *what* is the voice of Actaeon, a being who keeps his old mind in a new shape, and how does this voice sound? An answer to this question needs itself time to take shape, as if the voice of (the no-longer-human-but-newly-animal) Actaeon needed time to be tuned as the metamorphosis happens, as well as time to be conceptualized and eventually fit into a new category as the text unfolds. So, the reader's expectation to know which sounds replace Actaeon's failing words (2.231: *uerba animo desunt*; *resonat latratibus aether*) is frustrated. Not a deer's roar but

[352] I employ here the framework outlined by Eidsheim 2015 in relation to speaker's inability to produce linguistic speech when a device such as the SpeechJammer throws the speaker's words back to him or her. The fact that the speakers present their humming or fragmented speech as an interruption of their voice, although the voice is not at all paralyzed, exemplifies the assumptions perpetuated by logocentrism. On these assumptions, see Eidsheim 2015, 100.

[353] Xenophan. 7a: καί ποτέ μιν στυφελιζομένου σκύλακος παριόντα | φασὶν ἐποικτῖραι καὶ τόδε φάσθαι ἔπος· | "παῦσαι, μηδὲ ῥάπιζ᾽,ἐπεὶ ἦ φίλου ἀνέρος ἐστὶν | ψυχή, τὴν ἔγνων φθεγξαμένης ἀΐων.

barks resonate through the air: music to the ears of those longing for epistemological stability, as barking can be readily traced back to the voice of the hounds.

The poet later grapples with the difficulty of telling how Actaeon's near-death *gemitus* sounds. As if the term *gemitus*—a sound, emitted by human and animal beings alike, and ranging from a deep groan to a gentle sigh[354]—were not in itself ambiguous, Actaeon's singular *gemitus* hangs between the human and the animal phonosphere. Even if not belonging to a human being, Actaeon's groan could not be emitted by a stag (3.238-9: *etsi non hominis*, *quem non tamen edere possit* | *ceruus*): his *gemitus* represents in and of itself a cognitive challenge for the listener because it resists categorization as either a completely human or a completely animal sound (3.237-9: *gemit ille sonumque*, | *etsi non hominis*, *quem non tamen edere possit* | *ceruus*).

The resistance to categorization is only one of the epistemological challenges that the voice of the metamorphic subject presents. Let us consider, for instance, Callisto's metamorphosis into a bear. Callisto-the-bear's frequent groans, the poet specifies, attest to her pain (2.486: *adsiduoque suos gemitu testata dolores*). But how can one distinguish between a bear's anguish or anger if the Latin *gemitus* indicates a bear's growl in general?[355] Even if Callisto's old mind (2.485) stays in her new body, readers still need the poet's "translation" of her groans to access her emotions. This translation in turn requires on the readers' part a leap of faith and trust in the omniscient voice of the poet.

How accurately human listeners recognize the affective states conveyed by the voice of animals stands out as a topical question in cognitive studies. Scholars have shown that the human

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[354] Even inanimate beings can groan. See OLD *s.v. gemitus*.

[355] Cf. Hor. *Ep*. 16.51.

ability to recognize emotional cues in speech and vocalizations is foundational to social interaction. Speaking the same language is not essential for listeners to recognize the emotions of speakers, singers, or vocalizers. It is by relying on prosodic cues, instead, that human beings perform voice-induced emotion recognition across languages and cultures. Recognizing animals' affective states, on the other hand, comes less easily for humans. Although experiments have demonstrated that listeners tend to individuate the affective states of animals with whom they are familiar, experience-based cognitive familiarity does not guarantee a correct classification of the emotional valence of animal sounds. Thus, while easily recognizing the hostility of canine growls, human listeners are rarely able to tell friendly barks apart from hostile ones and, as such, they likely fail to recognize the emotional valence of sounds produced by animals whose voice they cannot identify.[356]

Another metamorphosis thematizes the human inadequacy to interpret animal sounds. Cadmus' hissing voice after his metamorphosis into a snake (4.587-9: *nec uerba uolenti* | *sufficiunt*, *quotiens aliquos parat edere questus*, | *sibilat*; *hanc illi uocem natura reliquit*) casts further doubts on the human ability to decipher animal voices, in this case hisses. That the poet needs to translate Cadmus' *sibilus* as lament (4.588: *questus*) speaks to, and at the same time questions, the human convention to associate given sounds with specific emotions.[357] It further breaks down the human listeners' presumption about their ability to grasp the affective state behind a bear's or a deer's groans. This presumption, the episode of Cadmus reminds us, is based on the arbitrary projection of the emotions associated with human groans onto animal groans. Hissing might not be as

[356] See Scheumann et al. 2014 for a detailed discussion of voice-induced cross-taxa emotional recognition.

[357] Cf. the hoarse, shrill sounds of complaints of the Cercopes at *Met*. 14.100: *posse queri tantum rauco stridore reliquit*.

relatable to pain and suffering as groaning but may as well express such feelings when it is the only sound with which nature endows a creature. Opposite to the human tendency to project the emotions associated with groans and sighs onto animal voices is the deafness of human beings to animal sounds that unambiguously convey suffering. Thus, Pythagoras observes that human beings, because of their gluttony, do not perceive the cry of a calf about to be slaughtered as a terrified appeal (15.465: *immotas praebet mugitibus aures*).

Like a body in the process of turning from human to animal, the voice too undergoes a mimetic adaptation to the new bodily form. The gradual change in Ocyroe's voice, daughter of the centaur Chiron, who is turned by the gods into a mare, stands out in Ovid's account of her metamorphosis (2.665-9):

> talia dicenti pars est extrema querelae
> intellecta parum, confusaque uerba fuerunt;
> mox nec uerba quidem nec equae sonus ille uidetur
> sed simulantis equam, paruoque in tempore certos
> edidit hinnitus et bracchia mouit in herbas.

> As she was saying these words, the last part of the complaint was understood for a little while and the words become confused. At once that sound seems neither words nor the voice of a mare but of someone imitating a mare, and in a short time she emitted unequivocable neighs and moved her arms into the grass.

In ways that evoke the resistance of Actaeon's groan to clear-cut definitions, at the outset of her metamorphosis Ocyroe's voice sounds not as a mare but as an impression of a mare. Shortly into the metamorphosis, yet before its completion, she emits clear neighs (2.668-9: *certos* | *edidit hinnitus*). The metamorphosis marks Ocyroe's loss of articulate speech while silencing her prophecies. Yet the very metamorphosis at once crystallizes Ocyroe's last prophetic speech: she starts turning into Hippa (this will be her name) precisely when she is predicting her own metamorphosis. Ocyroe's loss of speech counterpoints the Sibyl's prophecy about her own voice.

Concerned for her invisibility once her body will be consumed away by the passing of time, the Sibyl trusts that even if Phoebus might not be able to recognize her, her voice will preserve her recognizability (14.150-3):

> 'Phoebus quoque forsitan ipse
> uel non cognoscet, uel dilexisse negabit.'
> [usque adeo mutata ferar, nullique uidenda,
> uoce tamen noscar; uocem mihi fata relinquent.]
>
> Perhaps even Phoebus himself will either not recognize me or deny that he loved me; changed to such a degree, not to be seen by anyone. Nevertheless I will be recognized for my voice; fate will leave me my voice.

The juxtaposition of Ocyroe's and the Sibyl's self-prophecy reveals a tension which lies at the heart of the *Metamorphoses*' phonosphere: it would seem that the voice is at once an intangible identifying mark that too changes with the body (2.674-5: *pariterque nouata est | et uox et facies*) and an intangible residue that in some cases ensures recognizability when the body which emits it is close to disappearing. When the voice changes with the body, viewers and listeners are left wondering what that voice could say about the inner experiences of the mutating subject.

Minding the metamorphosis

The desire to know whether the human mind remains the same after the metamorphosis is strictly intertwined with the anxieties concerning the possibility of beings belonging to different species to perform a mutual recognition. In addition to uniquely highlighting the mimetic changes in the voice of the mutating subject, Ocyroe's metamorphosis draws attention to the entwined epistemic desires of the mutating subject and its observer. The prophetess puts her metamorphosis into words inasmuch as she describes her new feelings and instincts. Yet, as her speech becomes confused and her prophetic voice turns into neighs, the access to Ocyroe's inner experience is denied (2.655-64):

restabat fatis aliquid; suspirat ab imis
pectoribus, lacrimaeque genis labuntur obortae,
atque ita 'praeuertunt' inquit 'me fata uetorque
plura loqui uocisque meae praecluditur usus.
non fuerant artes tanti, quae numinis iram
contraxere mihi; mallem nescisse futura.
iam mihi subduci facies humana uidetur,
iam cibus herba placet. iam latis currere campis
impetus est: in equam cognataque corpora uertor.
tota tamen quare? pater est mihi nempe biformis.'

> Something was left to say of her prophecies. She sighs from the bottom of her chest, tears busting forth slide on her cheeks and thus she speaks: "Fate anticipates me, and I am forbidden to speak further. The use of my voice is shut. My prophetic art had not been worth it, it brought the gods' wrath upon me: I wish I had not known the future! Now my human face appears to withdraw from me, now I like grass as food, now I feel an impetus to run through the wide fields: I am turning into a horse and into a kindred body. But why all of me? My father is without doubt two-formed."

Ocyroe tries to find a logic in the metamorphosis that she feels impending from within: she indeed finds a connection between her new shape and the shape of her father Chiron. Yet this partial similarity with her kin highlights the partial logic of the metamorphosis: why is she turned into a mare, if her father is only half a horse? In Ocyroe's thought process prophetic knowledge and logical reasoning coexist as two modalities of interpreting her prodigious change. Neither, however, ensures a satisfactory comprehension of the metamorphic phenomenon. She hints at the anger of the gods as one of the causes of her fate, which she foresees but cannot forestall. She lucidly describes her animal instincts, but she cannot resist them. Her desire to understand her transformation through logic, by calling into question the similarities and differences that make her both similar and dissimilar to her half-horse father, validates the reader's attempt to find a logical explanation to the metamorphoses throughout the poem and at once casts any such attempt as bound to fail. Right after Ocyroe asks "why" (2.664: *quare*), her words become confused, and, with her, we lose the chance to know what changes her mind undergoes in addition to the new

experiences of her belly (her appetite for grass) and of her legs (the impetus to run through the fields).

Like Ocyroe, Glaucus, the fisher who turns into a sea god repugnant to Scylla in spite of his divine nature, feels his metamorphosis impending from within: a forceful instinct compels him to dive into the sea. Yet, in the same way in which Ocyroe's live report of her metamorphosis slowly becomes incomprehensible, Glaucus' narration leaves much to our imagination (13.945-65):

> 'cum subito trepidare intus praecordia sensi
> alteriusque rapi naturae pectus amore;
> nec potui restare diu "repetenda"que "numquam
> terra, uale!" dixi corpusque sub aequora mersi.
> di maris exceptum socio dignantur honore,
> utque mihi quaecumque feram mortalia demant,
> Oceanum Tethynque rogant. ego lustror ab illis
> et purgante nefas nouiens mihi carmine dicto
> pectora fluminibus iubeor supponere centum;
> nec mora, diuersis lapsi de partibus amnes
> totaque uertuntur supra caput aequora nostrum.
> hactenus acta tibi possum memoranda referre,
> hactenus et memini; nec mens mea cetera sensit.
> quae postquam rediit, alium me corpore toto,
> ac fueram nuper, neque eundem mente recepi;
> hanc ego tum primum uiridem ferrugine barbam
> caesariemque meam, quam longa per aequora uerro,
> ingentesque umeros et caerula bracchia uidi
> cruraque pennigero curuata nouissima pisce.
> quid tamen haec species, quid dis placuisse marinis,
> quid iuuat esse deum, si tu non tangeris istis?"'

> "When all of a sudden I felt my lower entrails trembling with trepidation and my chest being seized by love for another nature; nor could I stay still for long. I said 'goodbye, earth never to be sought again' and I submerged my body under the sea. The sea gods deem me, having been received with hospitality, of the honor reserved to their rank and ask Oceanus and Tethys to take away from me whatever mortal thing I would carry with me. I am purified by them and after saying for nine times a song that purifies from impiety, I am ordered to put my chest under one hundred rivers. Without delay, rivers flowing from different sides and all the seas direct their way over my head. Thus far I can report the events to be remembered, thus far these events I remember, and my mind did not feel the rest. And when this came back, in all my body I was completely different than what I was

> just a moment earlier, nor did I come back the same in my mind: then for the first time I saw this sea-green beard and my hair, which I sweep on the long surface of the sea, the big shoulders and the dark-blue arms, and the last part of the legs twisted in the shape of a finny fish. What, however, is this species, which the sea gods liked, what good is it to be a god, if you are not touched by these things?"

The last of Glaucus' memories before his metamorphosis is the feeling of the water flowing from all sides onto his head. His mind can remember the events that lead to the metamorphosis up to a certain point. After losing consciousness, the fisherman comes back to his senses, but he is not the same person in his body and mind. While he dwells on the description of his colorful and hybrid new body, Glaucus cannot say much about his mind's changes.[358] Glaucus' immersion into the sea recalls a ritual in the Eleusinian mysteries, yearly initiations to the cult of Demeter and Persephone. On the second day of the mysteries the initiates responded to the call "To the sea, initiates!" and walked in a procession to the Bay of Phaleron to perform a "process of physical cleansing and spiritual purification [that] was further preparation for the initiates' pending experience of death and rebirth."[359] Part of the fascination with the Eleusinian mysteries lies in the vow of secrecy taken by their initiates. Since Glaucus' metamorphosis partly coincides with a purification ritual, his narration seems doubly reticent: he does not say because he cannot remember *and* because he is not allowed to say. When he says, "up until this point I remember, and my mind did not sense the rest" (13.957: *hactenus et memini*; *nec mens mea cetera sensit*), he seems to correct the previous statement "up to this point I can tell you the things to be remembered" (13.956: *hactenus acta tibi possum memoranda referre*). In Glaucus' metamorphosis, then, the impenetrability of the

[358] Payne (2010, 139-40) underscores the equanimity with which Glaucus accepts his metamorphosis because the "mind that would have been frightened by such an appearance has been left behind in the depths of the sea: he contemplates a body that is like the bodies of fish with thoughts that are no longer human."

[359] Keller 2009, 32.

mind of the metamorphic subject seems to intertwine with a certain secrecy about a purification ritual.

Whereas Glaucus' inner experience of the metamorphosis remains inaccessible because of his loss of consciousness and memory, the cognitive life of Actaeon and Callisto, whose mind is explicitly said to remain (2.485: *mens antiqua*; 3.203: *mens tantum pristina mansit*) in their new bodies, is no less mysterious. While we read Actaeon-the-stag's self-pitying thoughts, it is unclear whether his thoughts took the form of words in his mind or whether they were translated by the words of the poet. When we learn about Callisto's emotions after the metamorphosis, as we will see, we wonder whether the omniscience of the poet is trustworthy, or whether he interprets Callisto's unspoken feelings by human standards. Before considering what Ovid makes of a human mind placed into an animal body, it may be worth considering what the Latin *mens* indicates in the first place. Can we translate *mens* as "mind"? Does Ovid envision an absolute split between *mens* and *corpus* and, if not, how would the new body affect the human-in-the-animal's cognitive reality? In the following pages, taking the metamorphosis of Callisto as a case study, I will seek to answer these questions against the backdrop of ancient philosophical theories, not in order to infer Ovid's own philosophical views, but to explore how ancient theories of the soul would grapple with the permanence of a human mind with the body of a non-human animal. Ovid's focus on the mind of Callisto, Actaeon, and Glaucus, for instance, is more than a feature that titillates the curiosity of the readers about the mental realities of the metamorphosing subjects. This curiosity ties into the questions surrounding the interactions of humans with beings that belong to different species. Recognition becomes especially impredictable when the extent to which the animal mind differs from the human mind is difficult to assess.

Let us start with the theory of metempsychosis and the speech of Pythagoras at the end of the *Metamorphoses*. Pythagoras defines the soul as an immortal incorporeal entity that moves from one body to the other (15.158-9: *morte carent animae semperque priore relicta* | *sede nouis domibus uiuunt habitantque receptae*). The philosopher himself claims that he lived in the body of Euphorbos at the time of the Trojan War and that he recognized the shield he used to bear on his left hand in the temple of Juno at Argos (15.160-4):

> ipse ego (nam memini) Troiani tempore belli
> Panthoides Euphorbus eram, cui pectore quondam
> haesit in aduerso grauis hasta minoris Atridae;
> cognoui clipeum, laeuae gestamina nostrae,
> nuper Abanteis templo Iunionis in Argis.
>
> I myself, certainly I remember, was the son of Panthoos, Euphorbus, at the time of the Trojan War, and the heavy spear of the younger son of Atreus was fixed into my chest. I recognized the shield, the load on my left arm, a little time ago in the temple of Juno at Argos.

If the metempsychosis consists of a movement of the soul from one place to another, the paradigm of Callisto's metamorphosis implies a different type of change: the soul stays in a mutating body without migrating. Metamorphosis appears, then, as a shortened metempsychosis, one in which the *anima* skips the migration from one place to another. In addition to the different nuances of the prefix *meta-* in metempsychosis and metamorphosis, another discrepancy between Pythagoras' theory and Ovid's text stands out. Whereas *anima* and *spiritus* occur consistently throughout Pythagoras' speech, (15.158: *morte carent animae*; 15.167: *spiritus*; 15.171: *animam sic semper eandem*), Ovid consistently emphasizes the permanence of the old *mens* in a new body. Does *mens*, then, denote the same entity as *anima*/*spiritus*? If not, is there a hierarchy between them? Finally, do these terms refer to immaterial or material entities?

The answer to these questions would change according to the philosophical tenets we decide to think with. As Long and Sedley note, "'soul' (*psuchē*) is a term whose breadth varies

sharply in Greek usage. At its widest, notably in Aristotle, it embraces the entire range of vital functions of any living thing, plants as well as animals. At its narrowest, as in Plato's *Phaedo*, it is a largely intellectual force, housed in the animal body but ultimately separable from all bodily functions and sensations."[360]

Whereas the dualism of Plato and Platonic schools argued for the incorporeality of the soul in opposition to the corporeality of the body, from Aristotle onwards ancient philosophers view the soul as a material entity. A dualistic philosophy might aptly explain the prodigious permanence of an immaterial mind within a body that changes, instead, from human to animal. Yet, it is by reading the text of the *Metamorphoses* through an Epicurean lens that the mystery of Callisto's mind becomes more enticing. The Ovidian text itself sets up our desire to elucidate the mental dimension of humans turned into animals with a clear allusion to Lucretius' description of the *mens*/*animus* as the chief principle of life (*DRN* 3.402-7):

> at manet in uita cui mens animusque remansit.
> quamuis est circum caesis lacer undique membris
> truncus, adempta anima circum membrisque remota,
> uiuit et aetherias uitalis suscipit auras.
> si non omnimodis, at magna parte animai
> priuatus, tamen in uita cunctatur et haeret
>
> But that person whose mind and soul remained stays in life; although s/he is a mutilated trunk with limbs torn all around from everywhere, with the spirit taken away from all around and removed from the limbs, yet that person lives and, living, takes up the air; if s/he is deprived not completely but of a great part of the soul, nevertheless s/he lingers in life and clings onto it.

At manet in vita cui mens animusque remansit (*DRN* 3.402) resonates in the description of Callisto's *mens* (*Met*. 2.485): *mens antiqua manet* (*facta quoque mansit in ursa*).[361] In both lines

[360] Long and Sedley 1987, 70.

[361] I prefer reading *manet* instead of *tamen* at *Met*. 2.485.

we find the repetition of *maneo* (with the slight variation of *remaneo* in Lucretius) in the same tenses and in the same sequence. The Epicureans define the *mens* as the entity that ensures life even when other components of the body and the spirit undergo destruction. While resorting to Lucretian vocabulary, Ovid at once zooms in on a different transformation, one which no longer focuses on a quantitative change effected by the loss of limbs and the portions of spirit distri buted throughout them but on a qualitative one. Callisto does not lose part of her spirit (cf. *DRN* 3.406: *magna parte animai privatus*) but her whole spirit remains with her new body. Such a marked intertextual reference to *DRN* 3.402 illuminates the ways in which Ovid inflects its description of the metamorphic process with an Epicurean perspective. Not only does the didactic intertext teach us that the *mens* is the entity which allows beings to cling onto life. It also compels us to read more about the intellectual faculties which pertain to the *mens* for Epicurean philosophers (*DRN* 3.94-7):

> Primum animum dico, mentem quam saepe uocamus,
> in quo consilium uitae regimenque locatum est,
> esse hominis partem nihilo minus ac manus et pes
> atque oculi partes animantis totius exstant.

> First, I say that the *animus*, which we often call *mens*, in which the understanding and government of life is located, is part of a human being no less than the hand, the foot, and the eyes exist as parts of the whole living being.

These lines sum up two points fundamental to the Epicurean theory of mind. The first concerns the corporeality of the soul/mind, a part of the living being no different than a hand or a foot, two body parts on which Ovid's metamorphic descriptions focus insistently. The second point concerns the identity of *animus* and *mens*, which are both responsible for rational thoughts and emotions; *mens* and *animus* are used interchangeably or in pleonastic syntagms,[362] and a distinction between

[362] Negri 1984, 238.

a supposedly “rational” *mens* and “emotional” *animus* would reflect their overlapping polysemy. No dichotomy exists between rational thoughts and emotions in the Epicurean theory of mind: emotions are not detached from value judgements, and it is upon this very principle that the didactic function of Lucretius’ poem rests: because the readers of *DRN* will rationally appraise the nature of things, their fear of death will vanish. From an Epicurean perspective, then, Callisto’s feelings of pain (2.486: *dolores*), fear (2.492: *territa*, 495: *pertimuit*) and horror (2.494: *horruit*) are not in contradiction to the permanence of her old mind with her new body and the rational faculties of the mind itself.

But how does the *animus*/*mens* interact with the body? Lucretius holds that the *animus*/*mens* joins with the *anima*, the “spirit” dissipated throughout the body[363] (*DRN* 3.136-46):

> Nunc animum atque animam dico coniuncta teneri
> inter se atque unam naturam conficere ex se,
> sed caput esse quasi et dominari in corpore toto
> consilium quod nos animum mentemque uocamus.
> idque situm media regione in pectoris haeret.
> hic exsultat enim pauor ac metus, haec loca circum
> laetitiae mulcent; hic ergo mens animusquest.
> cetera pars animae per totum dissita corpus
> paret et ad numen mentis momenque mouetur.
> idque sibi solum per se sapit, <id> sibi gaudet,
> cum neque res animam neque corpus commouet una.

[363] As Mehl (1999, 272) notes, the difficulties of translating Greek philosophy into Latin lies in the latter’s lack of philosophical vocabulary. The linguistic and stylistic choices of translators generate additional confusion. If Cicero transliterates and invents novel words to best convey the meaning of Greek philosophical terms, Lucretius follows Epicurus’ exhortation to use ordinary language in order to express philosophical concepts. Therefore, the same word in Lucretius may refer to different concepts in Epicurean philosophy. Mehl (1999, 274-5) summarizes Lucretius’ translation of the combined soul (*psychē*), its rational part (*to logikon*), and its irrational part (*to alogon*) as follows: “For ψυχή, the union of τὸ λογικόν and τὸ ἄλογον, he uses *animus* alone, *anima* alone, *animus* and *anima* joined by a connective, and *mens* and *anima* joined by connective; for τὸ λογικόν he uses *animus* alone, *mens* alone, or *animus* and *mens* joined by a connective; and for τὸ άλογον, he uses without exception the word *anima*.” We find the double valence of “soul” in Stoic philosophy as well. As Sextus Empiricus (*Math*, 7.234) specifies: “Some [of the Stoics] . . . say that the soul has two meanings, that which sustains the whole compound, and in particular, the commanding faculty.”

> My next point is that the mind and the spirit are firmly interlinked and constitute a single nature but that the deliberative element which we call the mind is, as it were, the chief, and holds sway throughout the body. It is firmly located in the central part of the chest. For that is where fear and dread leap up, and where joys caress us: therefore, it is where the mind is. The remaining part of the spirit, which is distri buted throughout the body, obeys the mind, and moves at its beck and call.

Yet, despite its ability to feel pain and joy independently from the body, the mind interacts closely with the spirit and vice versa; thus, if the mind feels extreme terror, the body will share the mind's feeling to the point that it will fall onto the ground; conversely, if a spear not striking at life pierces the body, the mind too will be weakened (*DRN* 3.161-175). In sum, "these two parts of the soul (i.e., the *mens*/*animus* and the *anima*) fulfil more or less the roles which subsequent physiology has assigned to the brain and nervous system respectively."[364] To read Callisto's case through the lens of an Epicurean physics of the soul allows us to speculate on the effects of the metamorphosis on the corporeal interconnectedness between the *mens*/*animus* "mind" centered in the chest, and *anima* "spirit" dissipated throughout the body. Since Callisto's *mens* (i.e., her *animus*) stays the same, it is important to consider whether the change in her body affects both the *mens*/*animus* and the *anima*, the part of the soul dispersed through the limbs and intertwined with veins, flesh, and sinews (*DRN* 3.217: *nexam per uenas uiscera neruos*). Does Callisto's *anima* ("spirit") remain the "old" one like her *mens*? If yes, her *anima* would keep the same atoms but would be dispersed throughout a new body; if not, her *anima* "spirit" would change its atomic composition along with her body. Either way, throughout and after the metamorphosis Callisto's unchanged *mens* interconnects with an *anima* that, even if it preserved its atomic composition, would intertwine with an utterly changed body. In keeping with the physiological example discussed by Long and

[364] Long and Sedley 1987, 71.

Sedley, we could think of Callisto's *mens* as a human brain that would suddenly interconnect with a bear's peripheral neurological system.

This analogy simplifies a more complex Epicurean theory, one which considers the continuity between human and animal minds from a physical perspective. Lucretius describes the soul as a *compound* of heat, wind, air, and a fourth unnamed substance deeply seated in our body, the "spirit of the spirit" (*DRN* 3.275: *anima animae*). The predominance of one of these substances determines the nature of one's soul for animals and human beings alike. The nature of one's soul—for animals and humans alike—is determined by the predominance of one of these substances: heat causes anger, wind causes fear, and air causes peacefulness. It is because of the composition of their souls, then, that lions easily boil up in wrath, stags tremble with fear, and cows hold a balance between these two emotions. Human beings can, however, resort to philosophical training and *ratio* to control the nature of their souls (3.307-15):

> Sic hominum genus est: quamuis doctrina politos
> constituat pariter quosdam, tamen illa relinquit
> naturae cuiusque animi uestigia prima.
> nec radicitus euelli mala posse putandumst,
> quin procliuius hic iras decurrat ad acris,
> ille metu citius paulo temptetur, at ille
> tertius accipiat quaedam clementius aequo.
> inque aliis rebus multis differre necessest
> naturas hominum uarias moresque sequacis
>
> So is humankind. Although training could bring about an equal polish for somebody, nevertheless it leaves behind those original traces of the nature of each soul/mind. Nor one must think that it is possible to extirpate flaws, so that this man would not fall quite easily into bitter wrath, that man would not be assailed rather quickly by fear, and a third one would accept anything more peacefully than it should. It is necessary that the natures of men differ in many other respects and the customs they follow.

Lucretius draws here a parallel between the natures of a lion and a human being easily prone to anger. Similarly, a person who easily becomes frightened shares with a stag an excess of cold in

the mind; air, which is predominant in the mind of cows, will also be predominant in the minds of those who peacefully deal with offenses. Ovid readily recasts these zoologic notions in the *Metamorphoses*: thus, the face of Hippomenes, turned into a lion, conveys anger (10.702: *iram vultus habet*), while his weight moves preponderantly onto his chest;[365] Actaeon's fear (3.198 *pavor*) evokes the trembling appearance of Lucretius' stags (*DRN* 3.299-301); Io finds herself between extreme hot and cold when Jove invites her to seek the shades of thick groves while the hot sun shines at the middle of its course.[366] Philosophical training will not be able to eradicate the traces left by nature in one's soul, but *ratio* allows one to control them so as to live a life worthy of the gods. Although rationality, especially if trained with philosophy, can differentiate human beings from non-human animals, several other traits highlight the contiguity between human and non-human animals, a contiguity which takes center stage in the *Metamorphoses*.[367]

Callisto's forgetfulness, for instance, characterizes both her pre- and post-metamorphic life. As if Jove violently took away her identity of huntress together with her virginity, Callisto nearly forgets to collect her identifying tokens (arch, quiver, and arrows) from the hateful grove

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[365] Cf. the emphasis on the lion's chest in Lucr. *DRN* 3.297-8: *pectora qui fremitu rumpunt plerumque gementes* | *nec capere irarum fluctus in pectore possunt*, and in Ov. *Met*. 10.700-1: *in pectora totum* | *pondus abit* and 10.706: *pugnae pectora praebet*.

[366] At *Met*. 1.590-3 and 1. 599, Ovid alludes to Lucretius's description of the cow's balance between hot and cold at *DRN* 3.303-5: *nec nimis irai fax umquam subdita percit* | *fumida, suffundens caecae caliginis umbram,* | *nec gelidis torpet telis perfixa pauoris*.

[367] Stoic theories too consider the contiguity between plants and non-human animals and between plants and human beings. All three are "ensouled" and receive impressions that call forth for impulses, but only a rational animal accepts or rejects impressions through reason. See Orig. *De princ*. 3.1.2-3 in Long and Sedley 1987, 313. Stoicism views every animal as a composite of body and soul: the soul blends with all body parts, and while making an impression on them receives an impression in response. One of the substantial differences between Epicureanism and Stoicism concerns the mortality of the soul. Whereas the soul dies with the body for Epicureans, Stoics maintain that the survival of the soul changes according to its virtues. Euseb. *Praep. euang*. 15.20.6 in Long and Sedley 1987, 318 reads that "the soul of the virtuous [survive] up to the dissolution of everything into fire, that of fools only for certain definite times. By the survival of soul [the Stoics] mean that we ourselves survive as souls separated from bodies and changed into the lesser substance of the soul, while the souls of non-rational animals perish along with their bodies."

that witnessed her rape (2.438-40: *huic odio nemus est et conscia silua*, | *unde pedem referens paene est oblita pharetram* | *tollere cum telis et quem suspenderat arcum*). A one-time, temporary forgetfulness of the signs that stand for *who* Callisto is turns, along with the metamorphosis, into a frequent obliviousness of *what* Callisto has become (2.489-95):

> a quotiens, sola non ausa quiescere silua,
> ante domum quondamque suis errauit in agris!
> a quotiens per saxa canum latratibus acta est
> uenatrixque metu uenantum territa fugit!
> saepe feris latuit uisis, oblita quid esset,
> ursaque conspectos in montibus horruit ursos
> pertimuitque lupos, quamuis pater esset in illis.

> Ah, how many times, not daring to rest in the forest, she wandered in front of her house and in her fields! Ah, how many times she was driven through the rocks by the barking of the hounds and, albeit a huntress, she ran in terror for fear of the hunters. Often she hid from the beasts she saw, forgetful of what she is, and, she, a bear, felt horror at the bears she sighted in the mountains. Often, she even feared wolves greatly, although her father was one of them.[368]

If Actaeon is never forgetful of his metamorphosis, which he discovers through marveling at his swift running (3.198-9: *fugit Autonoeius heros* | *et se tam celerem cursu miratur in ipso*) and through seeing his face and his horns reflected in the water (3.200: *ut uero uultus et cornua uidit in unda*),[369] Callisto's forgetfulness turns her self-recognition into a constant torture: by repeatedly forgetting what she is, Callisto is bound to repeatedly remember what she has become.[370] The fear of hounds and wolves might illuminate other aspects of Callisto's mental life, while further

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[368] See Bömer 1969 *ad Met*. 2.495 for the varying meaning of *in illis*. The commentator prefers a translation of *in illis* which does not imply that Lycaon is "among the wolves Callisto avoids," but that he is now one of these animals.
[369] Tarrant 2004, following Hensius, expunges 3.200. Barchiesi, on the other hand, argues for its authenticity.

[370] With the metamorphosis Callisto's ability to perceive itself falters. This phenomenon is interesting to investigate from a Stoic perspective. The metamorphosis of Callisto undermines what the Stoics consider as a primary faculty of a creature's experience, namely self-perception.

highlighting the contradictions that characterize the behavior of a human-minded animal. Her flight from hounds and hunters, for instance, does not decisively reveal what Callisto makes of her hunting skills as a human: her fear could be ascribed both to her awareness that fleeing will save her life and with her forgetfulness of tricks of the (hunting) trade she could use to her advantage. From an animal perspective, Callisto's fear of wolves seems unmotivated not only because bears do not seem to fear wolves,[371] but also because Callisto's father, Lycaon, was transformed into one of them. but how could Callisto recognize her father Lycaon, a wolf among other wolves, and be recognized in turn? Even if Callisto were aware of the metamorphosis undergone by her father Lycaon, on which signs could she rely to single out her kin? What would make Lycaon stand out from other wolves? It is hard to say, and the text does not give any hints. In fact, the traces of his earlier form in its feral shape, namely the same grayish-white hair, the same violent expression, the same shining eyes, and the same image of fierceness (1.237-9: *fit lupus et ueteris seruat uestigia formae*: | *canities eadem est*, *eadem uiolentia uultus*, | *idem oculi lucent*, *eadem feritatis imago est*), while pointing at a continuity of identity between the man and the beast, hardly make Lycaon-the-wolf distinguishable from other wolves. A wolf with grayish-white hair, shining eyes, and a fierce appearance would hardly be a rare sight.

This is another angle from which we can see how the mystery around the mental life of the metamorphic subjects intertwines with issues of recognition. The emphasis of Ovid's narration on the mental changes, if any, of the metamorphosing beings unveil several concerns about these creatures' ability to recognize whom and what they encounter. As Glaucus' account of his own metamorphosis and in Ocyroe's report of her transformation show, Ovid has readers come close

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[371] Some evidence from the interactions between

to discovering what happens in (and to) the mind of the changing subject. Yet nothing revelatory will repay their suspense. As a commentator, I embarked in the impossible attempt to square the circle by trying to understand, also with the help of ancient philosophical theories, how the metamorphosed mind or, alternatively, the mind in the metamorphosed body, operates. Forgetfulness of who and what one is (and was) appears to be one of the main corollaries of the metamorphosis. Forgetfulness, in turn, seems to undermine the ability to recognize what one was and what one has become. As my following discussion will show, the attempts to read the mind of the mutated creatures derive from a pressing concern, one which has less to do with the interactions among non-human animals but with the interactions between these and humans.

Cognoscenti Similis: Similarity and Cross-species Recognition

Callisto and Lycaon never meet in the poem, and their potential ability to perceive the presence of their kin in the shape of an animal is therefore only a matter of speculation. Another encounter, which does take place in the *Metamorphoses*, allows us to look in more detail at the challenges of recognition across species (2.496-507):

> Ecce Lycaoniae proles ignara parentis
> Arcas adest, ter quinque fere natalibus actis;
> dumque feras sequitur, dum saltus eligit aptos
> nexilibusque plagis siluas Erymanthidas ambit,
> incidit in matrem, quae restitit Arcade uiso
> et cognoscenti similis fuit. ille refugit
> immotosque oculos in se sine fine tenentem
> nescius extimuit propiusque accedere auenti
> uulnifico fuerat fixurus pectora telo;
> arcuit omnipotens pariterque ipsosque nefasque
> sustulit et pariter[372] raptos per inania uento
> imposuit caelo uicinaque sidera fecit.
>
> There! The offspring of Lycaon's daughter, unaware of his parent, Arcas appears, almost fifteen years old. While he chases wild beasts, while he chooses the narrow passes suitable

[372] *Contra* Tarrant, I read *pariter* instead of *uolucri*.

for the hunt and goes round the Erymanthian groves with snares bound together, he bumps into his mother who, having seen Arcas, stood still and was similar to one that recognizes: Arcas fled back, unknowing, and feared greatly the bear as she kept her fixed eyes upon him, endlessly; he was about to transfix her breast with a wounding dart. The almighty Jove held it off and took up them and the unspeakable crime alike, and equally placed them, carried off by the wind through the air, upon the sky and made them two near stars.

The fascination of this scene, which confronts us with the ultimate inscrutability of Callisto's cognition, is all contained in the phrase *et cognoscenti similis fuit* (2.501). Alfonso Traina[373] has traced out the instances of *iuncturae* such as *cognoscenti similis* (to which I will refer to as "*similis iunctura"* hereafter) starting from Virgil's *Georgics* (3.193): *sitque laboranti similis*, "let the colt be like one that works hard." Traina wonders what *similis* is supposed to mean and why it pairs with a substantivized present participle in the dative, if the training colt *laboranti similis* is not just like a colt that works hard, but does indeed work hard.[374] For Traina, the answer to this question is to be found in Hellenistic poetry. Both in Aratus' catasterisms and Apollonius' ekphraseis the pairing of *eoikos* with a present participle will not puzzle the interpreter, for it is an inanimate figure, fixed in the form of a constellation or in a work of art, to resemble real life. So, the constellation referred to as "the Kneeler" does not actually kneel, but resembles Hercules kneeling. Zetus, embroidered on Jason's cloak intent on building the Theban walls, does not endure real fatigue, but looks like someone who does.[375]

Unequivocal in catasterisms and ekphrastic scenes, the sense of the *similis iunctura* appears more problematic in different contexts, and even more so in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. As far as

[373] I summarize here the argument of Traina 1981.

[374] Traina 1981, 92 asks: "D'accordo: il puledro fatica a piegarsi al ritmo lento e ordinato (*gradibus compositis*) impostogli dal *magister*; ma fatica! realmente. E allora qual è il preciso valore di *similis*?" See also Mynors *ad Geo*. 3.193: "The colt is not working hard—he is still learning his paces—but he 'has a look of work', tense with controlled energy and breathing hard."

[375] For a detailed list of examples from Greek and Latin authors, see Traina 1981.

Callisto is concerned, Traina suggests that *cognoscenti similis* reveals the permanence of the human conscience within the bear; it does not serve the purpose of humanizing a quadruped (as *imploranti similis* does for Tirrus' stag at *Aen*. 7.502), nor does it describe a perceived analogy between a human and an animal being.[376] Traina's interpretation, as I understand it, implies that Callisto does recognize her son: Callisto resembles a recognizing mother on the outside and what can be gleaned from her appearance matches an actual cognitive act. I contend, on the other hand, that the same literary tradition examined by Traina does not decisively lead us to embrace his interpretation.

The phrase *cognoscenti similis* encloses in two words the inscrutability of Callisto's cognitive reaction at the sight of Arcas.[377] It also signals the anxiety of those who observe the metamorphic subject about their own recognizability. What if we stopped considering recognition and recognizability not only as a problem of the metamorphic subjects, whose changes undermine their recognizability to the eyes (and the senses more broadly) of the observers but also as a problem of those who interact with the metamorphic subjects? I suggest that recognition is at stake not only for the subject who changes shape but also for the subject who observes, encounters, and interacts with the metamorphic being. The observer of a prodigious metamorphosis will in turn be observed by the metamorphic subject. In a constant shift between subject and object of recognition, observer and observed, the subject of recognition, i.e., the person called to recognize the metamorphic creature, may or may not become the object of recognition of a creature whose mind resists legibility.

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[376] See Barchiesi 2005 *ad Met*. 2.501-2: "non si tratta di umanizzare un animale o di descrivere una percezione indefinita di analogia, ma di svelare l'essere umano *dentro* l'animale."

[377] Tornau 2008 argues for such inscrutability.

Back to Callisto. As readers, we are divided between trusting that Callisto recognizes her son and doubting that, even if her mind remained the same in the same body, the recognition of her son, fortuitously encountered fifteen years after his birth, would take place. It is important to note that the phrase *cognoscenti similis* is not followed by any disambiguating statement, which appear elsewhere in the literary tradition. For instance, in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* Cephalus' dog, Laelaps, looks like he is catching the Teumessian fox but does not (*Met.* 7.785-6: *parem similisque tenenti* | *non tenet et uanos exercet in aera morsus*).[378] Seneca's Jocasta resembles a frenzied woman because she is indeed frenzied (*Phoe.* 427: *uadit furenti similis aut etiam furit*).[379] We cannot tell with certainty, then, whether we ought to imply a negative (e.g., *non cognoscit*) or a positive clause (e.g., *aut etiam cognoscit*) after *cognoscenti similis* in the case of Callisto. A comparison with the same scene in *Fasti* would not be any more decisive (2.183-7):

> iam tria lustra puer furto conceptus agebat,
> cum mater nato est obuia facta suo.
> illa quidem, tamquam cognosceret, adstitit amens,
> et gemuit: gemitus uerba parentis erant.

> The child conceived with violence was fifteen years old when his mother happened in his way. As if she had recognized him, she stood by without mind and groaned: the groans were the mother's words.

Ovid reformulates *cognoscenti similis* as *tamquam cognosceret*, a hypothetical comparative clause. *Tamquam* indicates the way Callisto stood by *as* she would stand by if she were recognizing Arcas. The imperfect subjunctive *cognosceret*, moreover, indicates a contrary-to-fact scenario: Callisto stood by *as if* she were recognizing Arcas but—and this could be the omitted

[378] On the relation of this example to the Virgilian precedent, see Traina 1981, 97.

[379] For examples of this *iunctura* in Seneca, see Traina 1981, 101-2. The scholar argues that in Seneca the *iunctura* with *similis* and the present participles loses its hypothetical function.

conclusion—she did not. Exactly at the point when the reader assumes that, or wishes to know whether, it was the permanence of Callisto's human mind, pristine in the body of a bear, to make the recognition possible, Ovid disorients us by describing Callisto as *amens*, "without her mind," an adjective apt to convey the amazed reaction at the unexpected sight of her son, as much as to insinuate doubts about Callisto's actual recognition of Arcas.

The *similis iunctura* serves also to illustrate the difficulty of defining *what* or *who* the metamorphic subject is in-between-shapes. The metamorphosis destabilizes categories and calls for creating new ones suspended between humanity and animality, while often encompassing the idiosyncrasies of both. As such, metamorphosis makes recognition challenging, if not elusive. This epistemological and hermeneutic impasse—the struggle to define what something is, and to create a novel word corresponding to such definition —pertains both to the voice, as we have seen, and to the animal's postures that resemble human gestures. For instance, shortly after his uncategorizable *gemitus*, Actaeon appears on his (deer's) knees, a suppliant, resembling someone who begs for his life. He casts around his eyes as if they were arms embracing figuratively the knees of his captors (3.240-1: *et genibus pronis supplex similisque roganti* | *circumfert tacitos tamquam sua bracchia vultus*). How can one tell where the demarcation line stands between the deer who looks like a suppliant and the suppliant who looks like a deer?[380] As readers we are confronted not only with the elusive legibility of this posture that seems like a gesture (or the other

[380] On the fine line between seeming and being in the "perceptual blending of fast feet and wings" and its relation to pantomimic performances, see Lada-Richards 2018, 393. As the scholar puts it, "Ovid also loves taking us to that twilight zone of perception where no secure cognitive wedge can be placed between 'seeming' and 'being': is the speed we witness the outcome of running or flying, an earthly or aerial mode of locomotion? Impossible to tell— and this is precisely the point." On Actaeon, specifically, and on his resemblance with a suppliant after his metamorphosis, see the analysis in von Glinski 2012, 15-18, which considers the ways in which the simile, putting in relation tenor and vehicle, helps the reader consider the two ontological realities of the metamorphosis, human and non-human.

way around) but also with the reach of our empathy. Are we to feel pity for the deer because its appearance is nothing else than the false image of Actaeon (3.250 *falsi dominum sub imagine cerui*) or because a deer too, torn apart by ferocious hounds, would deserve compassion?

Ovid's detailed description of the hunter's transformation from human to animal well illustrates the difficulty of telling when Actaeon stops being recognizable as a human being and starts being recognizable as an animal. Diana besprinkles Actaeon with water which, like a magical potion,[381] sets in motion his transformation: she places deer's antlers onto his head, lengthens his neck, makes his ears pointy, change his hands into (hooved) feet, his arms into long legs, and turns his skin into spotted fur (3.193-8).[382] The goddess's final addition is an intangible trait: fear (3.198). Whether the metamorphosis of Actaeon is instantaneous (and it is the poet who breaks down for the reader the different segments of the metamorphosis as if they took place in distinct moments) or whether it happens indeed gradually,[383] the temporality of the metamorphosis ties in inextricably with the question of recognition, for it compels us to determine when, throughout the metamorphic process, one is more animal than human and vice versa.

In contrast with Actaeon, who falls onto its (deer's) knees like a suppliant *after* his metamorphosis, Callisto is already a suppliant *when* the metamorphosis begins. Ovid's close-up on Callisto's bodily figure, down on the knees, her arms stretching out, is significant because it is

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[381] See Barchiesi 2007 *ad Met*. 3.187-90.

[382] The poet takes away any doubt about the actual metamorphosis, perhaps addressing the ambiguity of the expression found in Stesichorus via Pausanias, an expression which means literally "to wrap the skin around" and metaphorically "to transform." Barchiesi 2007 *ad Met*. 3.197 underscores that the definition of the deer's skin as *uelamen* gives the impression that skin both preserves and hides the essence of Actaeon.

[383] Asyndetic and syndetic parataxis alternate in the description of Actaeon's transformation. Hints at the instantaneity of the transformation could be found in the anaphoric repetition of *dat* (3.194-5), and the double direct object of *mutat* (3.196), the syndetic conjunctions, *et et*, in the same metrical position but with different meaning at ll. 197 and 198, together with the passive *additus est*, give the impression that the metamorphosis unfolds gradually, piece by piece.

precisely her gesture, frozen for an instant by the onset of the metamorphosis, that comes to be a cognitive challenge once the transformation begins (2.476-81):

> dixit et aduersa prensis a fronte capillis
> strauit humi pronam. tendebat bracchia supplex:
> bracchia coeperunt nigris horrescere uillis
> curuarique manus et aduncos crescere in ungues
> officioque pedum fungi laudataque quondam
> ora Ioui lato fieri deformia rictu.
>
> Thus Juno spoke and, grabbing her hair from the forehead, threw Callisto, who was facing the goddess, down onto the ground. She was stretching out her arms, a suppliant: her arms started to bristle up with dark hair, her hands to crook and to grow into hooked claws and to perform their duty of forefeet; the face once praised by Jove to become deformed with a mouth wide open.

The epanalepsis of *bracchia*[384] (2.477 and 2.478) problematizes Callisto's categorization as a suppliant. The text draws our attention to the ways in which exteriority affects the legibility of a gesture as the nature of the being performing such gesture changes. It lures us into tracing distinctions and similarities, as we ask ourselves to what extent the *bracchia* at 3.76 are different than the *bracchia* mentioned in the preceding line. The iteration of *bracchia* marks both continuity and rupture with the humanity of Callisto. If the gesture itself—arms reaching out—were more essential to the act of supplicating than the anatomy of those arms, then Callisto would not cease to be a suppliant once her arms turn into shaggy limbs with bent claws instead of delicate hands. If, on the other hand, we were to hold that a supplication is such only when the arms reaching out are those of a human being, when exactly throughout her transition across species does Callisto stop being a human suppliant and start being a bear looking like a suppliant?

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[384] As Barchiesi 2005 notes *ad Met*. 2.477-8, the repetition of *bracchia*, a stylistic element, looks at the neoteric tradition, but functions as well as a close-up on the metamorphic process.

Callisto-the-bear raises her hands, whatever those may be, to the sky (2.487: *qualescumque manus ad caelum et sidera tollit*) and feels Jove's ingratitude although it cannot express it in words (2.488: *ingratumque Iouem*, *nequeat cum dicere*, *sentit*). The emphasis on loss of speech[385] stands here in false opposition to Callisto's pre-metamorphic life and keeps us from noticing that silence characterized her life (at least her textual one) all along. Callisto never speaks after greeting Jove disguised as Diana (2.428: '*salue numen*, *me iudice*' *dixit*, | '*audiat ipse licet*, *maius Ioue*.') It is not her speech but her intention to speak that Jove's violent embrace interrupts when she is on the point of telling the whereabouts of her hunt (2.432-3: *qua uenata foret silua narrare parantem* | *impedit*). It is as if Callisto remained silent in her own mind even after the metamorphosis: while we read the words Actaeon would have wanted to say after his transformation into a deer (3.201: '*me miserum*!'; 3.230: '*Actaeon ego sum, dominum cognoscite uestrum*!'), Callisto's unuttered thoughts do not land on the Ovidian page.

Callisto's metamorphic silence marks Callisto's life after Jove's violence, and itself changes from a sign of human shame to one of animal speechlessness. Even before turning into a bear, then, Callisto's body reveals what she does not say. It produces signs of the violated *pudor*: first, silence together with thousands clues of her shame, unnoticed by Diana while sensed by the nymphs (2.450-2: *sed silet et laesi dat signa rubore pudoris*; | *et*, *nisi quod uirgo est*, *poterat sentire Diana* | *mille notis culpam*. (*nymphae sensisse feruntur*)); then the gravid womb, impossible to hide with two hands (2.461-3: *una moras quaerit*; *dubitanti uestis adempta est*, | *qua posita nudo patuit cum corpore crimen*. | *attonitae manibusque uterum celare uolenti*). So, while the metamorphosis snatches away Callisto's ability to speak, entreat, and pray (2.482-3: *neue preces*

[385] On the speechlessness of Callisto, see Natoli 2017, 37-44.

animos et uerba precantia flectant, | *posse loqui eripitur*), her body-across-shapes continues to be scrutinized for the signs it produces. The continuity between the huntress and the bear lies not only in *her* mind's permanence in her new body,[386] but also, and even more so, in *our* mind's disposition to look for signs that denote Callisto's residual humanity. As virginity prevents Diana from seeing the signs of her follower's violated chastity, so the human observer's eye, intent on looking for what remains of the huntress' human nature, deciphers the groans and raised forefeet according to human rather than animal semiotics.

The metamorphosis of Cadmus brings to the fore similar concerns about the legibility of the changing subject's inner experience. We find again a *iunctura* which pairs the adjective *similis* with the present participle of *cognosco* when Cadmus, now a snake in full effect, licks his spouse's face and goes into her dear bosom, as if he recognized it (4.596: *inque sinus caros*, *ueluti cognosceret*, *ibat*). Although it shares patterns and motifs in common with Actaeon's and Callisto's metamorphoses, Cadmus' transformation nonetheless allows us to examine the metamorphic subject's internal perspective, and its resistance to external legibility, from other points of view. As the typology of metamorphoses changes from one myth to the other, questions about the categorization/classification of the mutating creature change, in turn, also according to the moment in which the metamorphosis starts, and on the basis of what sorts of actions and words the metamorphosis interrupts. The motif of supplication, for instance, stands out in several metamorphoses I have discussed thus far. Each directs us to consider, from a slightly different angle, the extent to which a supplication might cease to be considered as such throughout the metamorphic process. If in the case of Actaeon, the question is whether his eyes, rolling around in

[386] An ambiguous and problematic statement: does *mens* here refer to the brain, the soul, subjectivity and memory, or them all?

a figurative embrace of his torturers' knees (3.241: *circumfert tacitos tamquam sua bracchia uultus*), could still convey his supplicating intents as effectively as his human arms stretching out would, for Callisto the categorizing challenge derives from the transformation of her arms into forefeet *while* her arms stretch out to beg for Juno's mercy. In Cadmus' reptile transformation into one long belly, the categorical stability of the supplication, whose tone is different from Callisto's and Actaeon's because it is directed to his wife, is undermined not by the arms' change into bristly forefeet or furry legs, but into their gradual shrinking into an all-encompassing *aluus*. If the epanalepsis *bracchia* (2.477-8: *tendebat bracchia supplex*: | *bracchia coeperunt nigris horrescere uillis*), then, draws our attention to the extent to which Callisto's non-human arms may perform a supplicating act, and to the point in time when the observer's stops recognizing Callisto's stretched arms as composing a human gesture and starts seeing them as an animal body's posture, the chiastic repetition of *bracchia* (4.581: *bracchia iam restant*; *quae restant*, *bracchia tendit*) poses a different question when it comes to Cadmus. In fact, the recognizability of Cadmus' supplicating gesture is not undermined by a qualitative change in his arms (from human limbs to animal forefeet) but by a quantitative one (from human arms to no arms). His metamorphosis comes about through more than one merging of two into one (4.579-80: *commissaque in unum* | *paulatim tereti tenuantur acumine crura*) and splitting of one into two (4.586-7: *sed lingua repente* | *in partes est fissa duas*): two legs join into one tail, the tongue's single tip splits into two distinct tines.[387] These quantitative changes are worth noting also in relation to what remains of his human body before the metamorphosis is complete. That something which remains, and which Cadmus invites his

[387] As two are the snakes that seem to merge into one single body after the metamorphosis of Harmonia.

spouse to touch before his transformation comes to completion (4.583: *dumque aliquid superest de me*, *me tange*) is at the same time too much and too little: superfluous attachments to a snake's body and evanescent residues, slowly disappearing with Cadmus' recognizability, of a man's anatomy.

In addition to alerting us to the limited ability of humans to recognize the affective states conveyed by animal voices, a limit which oftentimes coincides with the tendency of humans to project their own emotions onto animals' affective states as we have seen above,[388] the metamorphosis of Cadmus spotlights the role of touch in cross-species relations and recognition. Cuddles between a dog and her owner would hardly be disgusting, let alone frightening, for many. Yet many would not find an affectionate interaction between a snake and a human being as endearing and warm. Humans often experience disgust at the sight of snakes, whether these turn out to be harmless creatures, poisonous vipers, or potent constrictors.[389] In addition, snakes induce fear in most humans, who evolved to perceive legless reptiles as life-threatening. It is hardly surprising that in the *Metamorphoses* terror grips the witnesses of the affectionate coiling of Cadmus-the-snake around Harmonia's body (4.590-603):

> nuda manu feriens exclamat pectora coniunx
> 'Cadme, mane, teque, infelix, his exue monstris!
> Cadme, quid hoc? ubi pes, ubi sunt umerique manusque
> et color et facies et, dum loquor, omnia? cur non
> me quoque, caelestes, in eandem uertitis anguem?'
> dixerat. ille suae lambebat coniugis ora
> inque sinus caros, ueluti cognosceret, ibat
> et dabat amplexus adsuetaque colla petebat.

[388] A variation of the readerly projection of human paradigms onto the inner experience of the metamorphic subjects is at play in the Hylonome episode that "stages an extreme contrast between actual inner experience and what we are tempted to conclude from the body in which it takes place" (Payne 2010, 123). I draw attention here to another set of readerly projections of human interpretations onto animal or hybrid behaviors and assumptions on correspondence between an external manifestation (Callisto's groans) and her presumed suffering or despair.

[389] See, e.g., Rádlová et al. 2020.

quisquis adest (aderant comites) terretur; at illa
lubrica permulcet cristati colla draconis,
et subito duo sunt iunctoque uolumine serpunt,
donec in appositi nemoris subiere latebras.
nunc quoque nec fugiunt hominem nec uulnere laedunt,
quidque prius fuerint placidi meminere dracones.

Striking her chest with bare hands, his spouse cries aloud: "Cadmus, stay, and you, hapless, divest yourself of this monster! Cadmus, what is this? Where are your feet, where are your shoulders and hands, your color, your face, and, while I speak, everything? Gods, why don't you also turn me into the same snake?" She said, and he was licking the face of his spouse and was moving towards her dear bosom, as if it recognized her, and was embracing her and creeping towards her familiar neck. Whoever was present (friends were there) is terrified; but she gently strokes the slippery neck of the crested snake, and all of a sudden, they are two and, their coils joined, they crawl until they enter into the recesses of a nearby grove. Even now they neither run away from human beings, nor do they harm them with wounds. Unharmful snakes, they remember whatever they were before.

Neither frightened nor disgusted by the touch of her spouse's new body, Harmonia fulfills Cadmus' last request, "touch me, take my hand while it is still a hand, while the snake does not occupy all of me" (4.584-5: *me tange, manumque | accipe, dum manus est, dum non totum occupat anguis*) when nothing is left, however, of her spouse's human anatomy. The scene's focus on hands, from the five-fingered extremities protruding from the snake's long belly to Harmonia's *nudae manus*, highlights the significance of touch in interpersonal relationships. Cadmus expects that his metamorphosis would entail losing "human" touch on the giving and receiving side: bereaved of the touch of his hands, he would in turn be untouchable for his frightening or disgusting appearance. After the metamorphosis, however, the disquieting contiguity of skin and scales supplies a momentary remedy to such loss. The couple's union does allow tactile reciprocity to resist between (and across) species that rarely interact as companions, albeit for a limited time. As if aware of the barren (or monstrous) prospects of cross-species companionship, Harmonia summons the gods to turn her into the *same* snake as her spouse (4.594: *in eandem anguem*). Only

at that point will their union re-produce a new species of snakes that, remembering who they were, neither harm nor flee from humans.

If we read this episode of the *Metamorphoses* through the lens of Haraway's naturecultures, the origin of the Cadmean snakes would lie not in the coupling of the newly morphed reptiles but in their proximity as exemplars of two distinct species. The poem circumscribes the process of cross-species recognition, which would span years of co-evolution in naturalcultural history, to the short timeframe between the metamorphoses of Cadmus and Harmonia. Witnessing the metamorphosis gives Harmonia an epistemic advantage: she knows that *that* snake coiling around her body is what her spouse has become, while Cadmus seems only to recognize that *that* woman gently stroking his neck is his wife. Harmonia's knowledge, however, does not make her relationship with the new shape of Cadmus less of an epistemological challenge: she ventures in a sensual and physical encounter with an ontologically mysterious creature.[390] Although she sees the metamorphosis, she cannot tell how she changes to the eyes of her changed spouse.

Scholars have profusely discussed the intertextual and thematic relation between the Cadmus episode and the Allecto-Amata encounter in *Aeneid* 7. Being herself a metamorphic agent, Allecto aptly inhabits the intertextual world of the *Metamorphoses*. By taking on different forms and thousands of names (7.328-9: *tot se vertit in ora*, *tam saevae facies*, *tot pullulat atra colubris*; 7.377: *tibi nomina mille*) she changes herself; by transforming her targets into human furies, she changes others.

[390] The sensual proximity of the non-human Cadmus and the human Harmonia inverts the paradigm of the marital union of human husbands with animal-like brides in Semonides. As Payne (2010, 120) notes, fascination and disgust lie at the heart of narrative forms that explore the continuities between the human and the animal sphere. Semonides' misogynistic poem "is not simply an epistemological allegory, nor is it a generalized lament," but an exercise in imagining inhabiting non-human forms of life analogous to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

In the *Aeneid* the touch of Allecto's snake onto Amata remains mysterious. How does Amata feel the crawling of the snake over her body? As Feeney puts it, the irresolvable tension between the physical and the supernatural traits of the serpent results in the recognition of

> our inability to understand madness in others or acknowledge it in ourselves. And this recognition should be allowed to come home with all the disgusted horror that Allecto's snake can evoke. It is a remarkable testimony to Vergil's confidence in his art that he can enmesh us in such reflections on human behaviour even as his technique flaunts the fictionality of the entire episode by continually unsettling us, keeping us dithering between two incompatible reading conventions.[391]

While molding Harmonia's description onto Amata's, Ovid changes the modalities with which the snake "touches" the woman's body. By replacing the contactless twisting (7.350: *attactu nullo*) of the infernal serpent with the (excessively) physical twirling of Cadmus-the-snake around Harmonia's body, Ovid at once twists the cognitive challenges posed by the Virgilian intertext. The *Metamorphoses* presents the interaction between the woman and the snake as unequivocally physical, thus resolving the ambiguities that characterize the Virgilian scene. Yet as they pause to consider the puzzling relation both across species and across the Ovidian text and the Virgilian intertext, readers as well engage in a process of (meta)recognition. They recognize that the physicality of Harmonia's gentle strokes and of Cadmus' sensuous coiling does not solve the cognitive impasse which Feeney addresses in relation to the Allecto-Amata episode. Rather, it shifts the focus from the ambiguous nature of touch (is the contact between the snake and Amata physical or supernatural?) and of the "touching" subject (is the snake a "real" snake or a "supernatural" snake?) in the *Aeneid* to the nature of the "touched" being. To paraphrase Haraway's question, ("whom and what do I touch when I touch my dog?"),[392] whom and what

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[391] Feeney 1991, 168.

[392] Haraway 2013, 35.

does Harmonia touch when she touches her spouse turned into a snake? And to what extent can we access the interiority and empathize with the feelings of the metamorphic body?

In *The Animal Part*, Mark Payne draws our attention to the exploration in the *Metamorphoses* of "the cognitive and affective possibilities that are not available in fictions that limit themselves to purely human subjects."[393] Ovid's poetry achieves what Pythagorean philosophy does not. On the one hand, the poet's omniscience surpasses the "cognitive limitations that afflict ordinary mortals."[394] On the other, poetic imagination favors an empathic understanding of the somatic and cognitive aspects of the metamorphic experience for humans, in ways more effective than philosophical precepts.[395] One of the cognitive mysteries of the metamorphoses lies precisely in the subjects' sense of their changing interiority as it changes with their bodies. The episode of Cadmus allows us to consider extent to which the reader may access the mutating subject's internal perception *on* the metamorphosis and for pondering whether the narrator's omniscience grants or limits the audience's access to the characters' changing interiority as this, too, changes with their bodies. The focalization on the inner feelings of Cadmus precedes his direct speech, which presents the metamorphosis as the new entity's relentless occupation of the old one and starts with the narrator's description of the changes felt within, and on, the body: the scales growing onto his hardened skin and his black body varying with caerulean spots (4.577-8: *durataeque cuti squamas increscere sentit* | *nigraeque caeruleis uariari corpora guttis*). This focalization opens a window onto the feelings of the metamorphic subject but one which is small

[393] Payne 2010, 121.

[394] Payne 2010, 120.

[395] On the "imaginative ambitions" of the *Metamorphoses*, see Payne 2010, 121.

and opaque. For how fully can a human being relate to Cadmus' sensations even after imagining what it means to *feel* instead of *seeing* the skin change color here and there? To what extent are we able to perceive the changes that happen in our bodies, such as new skin marks, hair growth, let alone the slow progression of a disease? Certainly, we can feel our cheeks blush together with the emotions that cause our face to change color. However, how often do imperceptible changes affect our bodies? Only the cumulative effect of those imperceptible changes makes them visible not as single events but for their overall effect.

The zeugma of *sentit*, the direct objects of which evoke first the sense of touch (the skin turning stiff) and the sense of sight (the skin becoming spotted), hints at the poet's acknowledgement that the metamorphic subject's interiority defies decipherment, even when the mind of the new animal does not change from the *mens* of the human being it replaced. The permanence of the mind in a non-human body keeps open the possibility for the human reader to feel "empathy" with the human part in the non-human animal. Yet empathizing with the residual "humanity" of the animal[396] endowed with a rational *mens*[397] betrays the same mind-centered perspective that the *Metamorphoses* challenges. It also betrays the same desire for certainty which reveals itself to be disastrous for more than one character in Ovid's poem.

The Sign: Dying for Certainty

The semantic sphere of certainty marks tragic scenarios in the world of the *Metamorphoses*. Ovid's characters literally die for certainty as they search for incontestable proofs or as they hasten

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[396] Cf. Barchiesi 2005 *ad Met*. 2.501-2 on the presence of the human in the animal.

[397] According to Lucretius' versification of the Epicurean theory of the soul, *mens* is synonymous with *animus*, and indicates the rational faculty that rules over the whole body. In contrast with Plato's theory of the soul, rationality allows us to feel emotions, as these follows a rational appraisal of events.

to (mis)interpret signs as "certain." Pyramus' rushed inference of Thisbe's death stands out as an example of the deadly consequences of an approximate interpretation of signs. By transferring certainty from the footsteps of a ferocious beast (4.105-6: *uestigia certa ferae*) to blood stains on a dress recognized as Thisbe's (4.107: *uestem quoque sanguine tinctam*; 4.117: *dedit notae lacrimas*, *dedit oscula uesti*), Pyramus infers the death of his beloved and decides to take his life. He dies, then, for transferring the "certainty" of one sign onto another and for associating a sign with a plausible yet unverified reality.[398] Throughout the episode, the contrast between Pyramus' precipitous conclusion and Thisbe's hesitation further comments on the risks entailed in hastily substituting the part for the whole, the sign for its referent. Pyramus decides to commit suicide without delay (4.120: *nec mora*), as without hesitation he presumes the death of his beloved. By contrast, doubts follow Thisbe's multiple recognitions: she recognizes the place and the shape of the tree, but she is uncertain about the color of its fruits (4.131-2: *utque locum et uisa cognoscit in arbore formam, | sic facit incertam pomi color*: *haeret, an haec sit*). While doubts grip her (4.133: *dum dubitat*), she sees a corpse lying under the tree. She defers her conclusions yet again before recognizing that corpse as Pyramus' (4.137: *postquam remorata suos cognouit amores*). As last steps of her hesitant yet sound reasoning, not only does Thisbe recognize her veil (4.147: *uestemque suam cognouit*), but she also reconstructs its misleading function as sign. Along these lines, Thisbe's last words too stand for a testament to certainty: what can be ultimately defined as *certus*, (4.156: *certus amor*) is the couple's love, while the dark mulberries, eternal bearings

[398] See Rosati 1983, 101-2 on Pyramus' association between the sign and the reality which the signs usually denote. The scholar places Pyramus' deception within the multiple levels of deception at stake in the episode and the polyvalent meanings of the verb *fallo*.

(4.161: *semper habe fetus*, *gemini monimenta cruoris*) which macabrely substitute for the couple's missed progeny, are nothing other than signs of the couple's tragic end.

The connection between the desire for certainty and the destructive outcomes of such a desire takes on a programmatic value in the first metamorphosis in the poem, the transformation of Lycaon, the king of Arcadia, into a wolf. Lycaon falls victim to his inability to linger in doubt, his unwillingness to read the signs that his subjects were interpreting as divine. He aims to prove whether the man whom the Arcadians worship as divine is indeed immortal. The murder plot would have followed a banquet of human flesh. The all-seeing Jove forestalls both the monstruous banquet and the attempted murder. Turned into a ferocious wolf, Lycaon becomes living proof of the divine nature of the man he puts to the test. The metamorphosis adds on the signs which the Arcadians were able to interpret as "divine" (1.220: *signa dedi uenisse deum*), but exacts, in turn, a leap of faith. Knowing that human flesh is on Lycaon's table proves Jove's omniscience. Transforming a human being into a wolf proves Jove's omnipotence. To the skeptical thinker (as much as for the Arcadian king) these (omni)powers would only incidentally prove Jove's immortality and would speak, perhaps, to the arbitrary assumption that one divine trait, such as the omniscience which allows Jove to know that Lycaon offered him a banquet of human flesh, will necessarily presuppose another divine trait: immortality.

Scholars have underscored that Lycaon's transition across species, far from detracting from his identity, enhances or essentializes his nature.[399] If the king's violence manifests itself in planned (in the case of Jove) and actual murders (in the case of the hostage sent by the Molossian) at the

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[399] Ahl 1985, 69-74 offers an extensive analysis of the wordplay in Lycaon's episode. The stem Lyc-, which evokes *lukos*, the ancient Greek for wolf in Lycaon's name reveals the hidden presence of the wolf both in name and in the places, Mount Lycaeus.

expenses of human (or supposedly so) victims, the wolf's ferocity falls onto non-human targets. Lycaon's victims change, then, but his ferocity stays the same: the repetition of *idem* highlights the ontological contiguity between the man and the beast. The emphasis on the permanence of Lycaon's essential nature across species comments as well on the (f)utility of trying to pin down a single ontological category to which divine beings belong. Gods and goddesses are metamorphic creatures *par excellence*. Imperturbable and immortal, they oftentimes take on anthropomorphic features, thus sharing with humans both looks and passions.[400]

The Lycaon episode marks a turning point in the history of humanity. The father of the gods annihilates a ferocious generation of humans, while punishing the skeptical mode of thinking exemplified by the Arcadian king's words: "I will find out through a decisive test whether this is a god or a mortal: nor will the truth be doubted" (1.222-3: *mox ait* "*experiar deus hic discrimine aperto | an sit mortalis*, *nec erit dubitabile uerum*.")[401] The adjective *dubitabilis* is worth pondering both for its exclusively Ovidian imprint (it appears twice in the *Metamorphoses* and nowhere else in Latin literature apart from Prudentius' *Apotheosis*) and for its occurrence in contexts where one's identity is put to the test. When Ajax aims to win the contest over the arms of Achilles, he presents his identity, hence his prerogatives for inheriting the weapons of the best of the Achaeans, as an ensemble of qualities all indisputably noble, some of which seem however more indisputable than others. "But," says Ajax, "if the valor in me should dubitable, I would be worthy because of my noble lineage" (13.21-2: *Atque ego*, *si uirtus in me dubitabilis esset*, | *nobilitate potens essem*). Being the son of Telamon and the grandson of Aeacus, Ajax directly descends from Jove. The

[400] See Sissa and Detienne 1989 for a rich discussion of this aspect of the gods in the classical world.

[401] On the Lucretian echoes in the episode of Lycaon, see Casanova-Robin 2017.

ruler of Olympus, who recognizes Aeacus as his offspring (13.27-8: *Aeacon agnoscit summus prolemque fatetur | Iuppiter esse suam*), provides proofs, albeit intangible, of abstract concepts: the power, and the immortality, of the gods at Lycaon's expenses and Ajax' nobility in a heroic contest. Ulysses twists Ajax' emphasis on his noble lineage by claiming that ancestry is no indicator of one's valor and simultaneously boasting of his own descent from Jove. His first statement comments on the extent to which one's identity partakes in the qualities of his ancestors, hence on one's own claim onto the merits of their lineage. So Ulysses claims, "I can hardly call 'mine' the lineage, the ancestors, and everything that I myself did not accomplish but then, since Ajax referred that he is the great-grandson of Jove, Jove is also the progenitor of my blood" (13.140-4: 'N*am genus et proauos et quae non fecimus ipsi*, | *uix ea nostra uoco, sed enim*, *quia rettulit Aiax* | *esse Iouis pronepos, nostri quoque sanguinis auctor* | *Iuppiter est, totidemque gradus distamus ab illo*).

The connection between doubt and ancestry features prominently in the myth of Phaethon. Far from avowing his divine ancestry or questioning with philosophical detachment one's rights to claim for himself the nobility of his ancestors, as the Homeric heroes do in Ovid, Phaethon begins a relentless search for proof of his divine origin once the grandson of Inachus accuses him of credulity, of foolish trust in his mother's words, and of excessive pride in a false image of the father (1.753-4: *matri omnia demens* | *credis et es tumidus genitoris imagine falsi*). Doubts grip the young man: to his mother Clymene, he asks to produce a note (1.761: *ede notam tanti generis*), to show signs of his real father (1.764: *traderet orauit ueri signa parentis*). From the Sun he demands tokens of his paternity (2.38: *da pignora*). But what makes a proof? What counts as evidence? For Phaethon, one cannot do things with words. In vain Clymene swears "may the Sun blind me, if I am making up the story of your birth." In vain the god confirms Clymene's version

(2.43: *Clymene ueros edidit ortus*) and presents his paternal apprehension for Phaethon's temerarious request as unquestionable "token" of his paternal love (2.92: *do pignora certa do timendo | et patrio pater esse metu probor*). When the Sun wishes that Phaethon could put his eyes into his chest so that he may see his paternal preoccupation (2.94-5: *utinam oculos in pectora posses | inserere et patrias intus deprehendere curas*), the god acknowledges an unbridgeable gap between what his own words and face express and his feelings, inaccessible to Phaeton. The gap stands once again between the visible and the invisible. If taken to the extreme, the inability of words to express feelings or to make them believable undercuts the significance of loss of speech in instances of human-to-animal metamorphoses: would hounds and fellow hunters have fully grasped Actaeon's feelings had he remained able to express his terror with words? Would Arcas have believed Callisto, had she kept her ability to word her relationship with the young hunter?

The difficulty of pinpointing what constitutes a sign, let alone an indisputable one, manifests itself in the "sliding" of key terms from one semantic level to another, adjacent but not equipollent. As a result, *signa* present overlapping but inequivalent meanings throughout the episode. The term indicates first the "signs" of the father (1.764: *ueri sibi signa parentis*), then the constellations that, in addition to being pictured onto the gates of the Sun's palace (2.18: *signaque sex foribus dextris totidemque sinistris*), mark the sky with their monstrous forms throughout Phaethon's fatal journey (2.197: *porrigit in spatium signorum membra duorum*). Along the same lines, the meaning of *munus* wavers from an immaterial "tribute" paid by the father to his son (2.44: *quoduis pete munus, ut illud me tribuente feras*), to a "reward" as opposed to punishment (2.99: *poenam pro munere poscis*), and lastly to gifts crafted by Vulcan (2.54-5: *magna munera*; 2.106: *Vulcania munera*) for the Sun and, therefore, inadequate for Phaeton's young age. A sign, be it a tangible "gift" or a "reward," would counterpoint the Sun's disturbing confirmation of

Phaethon's identity through double negation: "progeny by no means to be disowned by his parent" (2.34: *progenies*, *Phaeton*, *haud infitianda parenti*) and "nor you worthy to be said not mine" (2.42-3: *nec tu meus esse negari | dignus es*).

As the hapax *dubitabilis* flags the doubt driving the myth of Lycaon, so too the occurrences of *dubito* (2.20: *dubitati parentis*; 2.44: *quoque minus dubites*; 2.101: *ne dubita*) appoint "doubt" as *the* experience which Phaethon is not able to bear. Like the Arcadian king, Phaethon pays the price for his inability to live with uncertainty and to cultivate doubt without yielding to its overpowering insistence. His fate invites reflections on the dangers of a spasmodic search for the truth, especially when this search entails putting the gods to the test.[402] To be certain about one's own identity becomes as ambitious as it would be for a mortal, no matter how divine his origin, to replace a god. The words with which the Sun tries to persuade Phaethon to change his request, "Your fate is mortal but what you desire is not proper to a mortal being" (2.56: *sors tua mortalis*; *non est mortale quod optas*) address the mismatch between the youth's mortal condition and a desire that neither acknowledges the limits that mortality imposes on humans nor pertains to the gods themselves, satisfied as they are by their own prerogatives. Phaethon's request, in other words, sets him up for being an unworthy substitute for his father. Not even a god could give proof of descending from the Sun by occupying the rider's seat of the fire-bearing chariot.

The analogy between Phaethon's quest and Oedipus' search for his identity is clear. In both cases self-knowledge bears self-destructive outcomes and regret. Phaethon's realization, mixed with feelings of terror and despair, takes place when he is up in the sky. Wishing he had never touched the horses of the father (2.182: *et iam mallet equos numquam tetigisse paternos*), he

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[402] See Barchiesi 2005 *ad Met*. 2.19-20: "Il bisogno di risolvere un dubbio umano a proposito degli dèi aveva già avuto esiti catastrofici nella storia di Licaone."

regrets having known his origin and having prevailed over the Sun by begging (2.183: *iam cognosse genus piget et ualuisse rogando*). Phaethon's belated desire to be called Merope's child (2.184: *iam Meropis dici cupiens*) hints at a detail fundamental to the plot of Euripides' *Phaethon* and irrelevant for the Ovidian narration. Whereas Euripides' Phaethon believes that he is the son of the Aethopian king Merope until Clymene's revelation,[403] the Ovidian counterpart has been always aware of his descendance from the Sun and starts doubting his identity after Epaphus' insinuations. What does Phaethon come to know (2.183: *cognosse*) up in the sky? Through intertextual references to Lucretius' *DRN*, Ovid casts Phaethon's fatal journey as an equally ambitious counterpart to Epicurus' epistemic journey, a fearless endeavor that ensures a rational understanding of the nature of things. Alessandro Schiesaro has convincingly illustrated the subversion of Epicurean epistemology in Phaethon's episode.[404] What Phaethon comes to know is precisely the impossibility to know and the dangers which knowing entails.

Scholars have widely discussed the echoes of political discourses on succession and identity in Rome's ruling class in the Phaethon episode.[405]If the young man's journey dramatizes the anxiety around the ever-uncertain identity of fathers—*pater semper incertus est*, his failure to stay on the track marked by the Sun's chariot wheels (2.133: *hac sit iter* (*manifesta rotae uestigia cernes*)) reflect a certain disquiet, bound to grow stronger in the principate, around the ability (or lack thereof) of successors to follow in the footsteps of their fathers. Phaethon's quest for certainty from others is quite a different move from Augustus' fabrication of his divine lineage through the

[403] Ciappi 2000, 125-9 for the differences between the Euripidean and the Ovidian version.

[404] Schiesaro 2014.

[405] On the myth of Phaeton and its relation to anxieties about paternity in the Augustan age, see Poulle 2002.

deification of Caesar, a further step in that legitimation process begun with his adoption. The focus on the extent to which words count as proof when it comes to the recognition between fathers and sons removes our attention, however, from another set of concerns that loom large on the *Metamorphoses*: the anxieties around the recognition between humans and non-human animals, an anxiety which characterize most of the episodes I have discussed thus far. If Actaeon's hounds cannot recognize their master after his metamorphosis, the Sun's horses recognize too well that their rider is not the same (2.161-70):

> sed leue pondus erat nec quod cognoscere possent
> Solis equi, solitaque iugum grauitate carebat;
> utque labant curuae iusto sine pondere naues
> perque mare instabiles nimia leuitate feruntur,
> sic onere adsueto uacuus dat in aera saltus
> succutiturque alte similisque est currus inani.
> quod simul ac sensere, ruunt tritumque relinquunt
> quadriiugi spatium nec quo prius ordine currunt.
> ipse pauet nec qua commissas flectat habenas
> nec scit qua sit iter nec si sciat, imperet illis.
>
> But the weight was light, nor could the horses of the Sun have recognized it: the chariot lacked its usual weight. As the curved ships begin to sink without the right load, and they are carried, unstable, through the sea by excessive lightness, so too does the chariot, void of its usual weight, make leaps through the air and is flung high up, similarly to one empty. As soon as they sensed it, the four horses rush down and leave the oft-trodden route. They do not run according to their previous arrangement. Phaethon himself trembles with fear. He does not know where to bend the joined reins neither what the path is, nor, if he knew, how to rule them.

The horses cannot recognize Phaethon, or they recognize that whoever sits on the chariot is *not* the Sun, because they perceive a change in the physical, and, as commentators note, the metaphorical weight of their master, one that offsets a balance unchanged since the beginning of time. The youth's *in promptu* substitution for the father goes well beyond a physical change. The narrative breaks down the causes of Phaethon's catastrophic journey by addressing a series of "ifs" that too signal (and perhaps mock) that insistent desire for certainty which the readers share in

common with Phaethon. Would Phaethon have succeeded if he had been as heavy as the Sun? No, he would have not. Were then the light weight *and* his inability to bend the reins the causes of his failure? Not exclusively. Phaethon did not know the road, and if he did, he would not have been able to govern the horses even because he did not know their names (2.192: *nec nomina nouit equorum*): Pyrois, Eous, Aethon, and Phlegon. The epic catalogue of Actaeon's hounds, with details on their names, origin, physical marks and temperaments, contrasts with (and retrospectively comments on) the brief mention of the Sun's horses when Phaethon's fatal journey is about to start (2.153-4). Actaeon's knowledge of his helpers' identity contrasts with Phaethon's ignorance. If the hunter's recognition of his hounds does not falter with his metamorphosis, which thwarts instead his ability to communicate with them through speech, Phaethon never recognizes the horses for their synergic individualities. He never knows how to enter in communication with the animals through the touch of the reins or by voicing commands. Fear makes Phaethon speechless, overpowered by the non-human on several fronts: the untamable impetus of the winged horses and the terrifying appearance of the animal-shaped constellations that, like the Scorpio with its threatening claws, come to life. Phaethon, whose name appears as a conflation of Phlegon and Aethon, two of the four horses, is on the same plane as the creatures he is unable to command. This conflation speaks once again to the contiguity between the human and the non-human animal and the anxiety around cross-species recognition which I have analyzed in this chapter. Phaethon too undergoes a metamorphosis: his relentless search for a sign transforms what is left of him into a sign, the tomb which marks the place of his tragic fall onto the ground.

Epilogue

After opening this dissertation with the *Aeneid*'s final scene, yet another epilogue will mark the conclusions of my study on recognition in Roman epic. This time, the epilogue does not belong to an epic poem but to Sallust's *Bellum Catilinae* (61.7-9):

> Neque tamen exercitus populi Romani laetam aut incruentam uictoriam adeptus erat. Nam strenuissumus quisque aut occiderat in proelio aut grauiter uolueratus discesserat. Multi autem, qui e castris uisundi aut spoliandi gratia processerant, uoluentes hostilia cadauera amicum alii, pars hospitem aut cognatum reperiebant; fuere item qui inimicos suos cognoscerent. Ita uarie per omnem exercitum laetitia, maeror, luctus atque gaudia agitabantur.
>
> Nevertheless the army of the Roman people won no joyful or bloodless victory. For all the strongest had either perished in the battle or had left after being seriously wounded. Many indeed, who had gone out from the encampment to look around or to pillage, on turning around the bodies of the enemies, found some friend, some others a host or a relative; there were also those who recognized their own foes. Thus, delight and grief, mourning and manifestations of joy were drawn in various ways through the whole army.

Sallust's description of the Roman army's reactions at the defeat of Catiline offers insights into the cognitive and emotional scenarios opened up by civil war. The contrasting emotions of the Roman army result also from the recognition of the fallen soldiers on the battlefield at the end of a gruesome war. Joy and delight are manifested by those who recognize their foes (*inimicos suos cognoscerent*) among the dead bodies; grief and sadness afflict those who happen to turn around the body of a friend, host, or kinsman (*amicum alii*, *pars hospitem aut cognatum reperiebant*). Although Sallust points at the identification of various categories of *amici* and *inimici* on the battlefield, the juxtaposition of joy and grief, happiness and mourning, conveys the divisive effects of civil strife on the unity of the army of the Roman people. Furthermore, Sallust's chiastic list of antithetic emotions (*laetitia*, *maeror*, *luctus atque gaudia*) opens a window onto the ethical appropriateness of manifesting joy before a fellow soldier that grieves his friends and of expressing grief in front of a fellow soldier that rejoices for the death of his enemy.

Sallust's thematization of recognition in the epilogue of his *Bellum Catilinae* suggests that the trend of pairing civil war narratives with tropes of tragic recognition extends beyond the Roman epic tradition and the poems under my scope[406] to other works of literature and historiography in ancient Rome—an avenue worth pursuing in the future for a more comprehensive study of the cognitive instability in civil war contexts in ancient Rome. In my study, I have limited myself to consider civil war as a phenomenon that destabilizes epistemic tenets and ethical principles and to analyze the ways in which Roman epic authors address this instability by drawing on the tragic tradition and by creating and rewriting narratives of civil war that engage with philosophical ideas. As I have primarily approached tragic recognition as a trope rather than examining specific recognition scenes from extant tragedies, so too I gave priority to philosophical ideas, concepts, and debates over the peculiarities of philosophical currents and the minutiae of arguments of individual philosophers.[407] In this vein, I made use of inter- and intratextuality to examine the ways in which authors self-consciously reflect on their predecessors' engagement with specific set of epistemological and ethical issues.

Sallust's epilogue, or at least one of its points, could be said to validate the order of my chapters: as the historiographer mentions in ascending order of proximity first friends (*amici*), then hosts or guests (*hospitem*), then relatives (*cognatum*), I too have followed an ascending order from the least proximate to the closest tie: Roman citizens in Lucan's *Pharsalia*, hosts and guests at Cyzicus in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*, kin in Statius' *Thebaid*, the changing self in Ovid's

[406] The fall of Silius Italicus' *Punica* outside my scope of investigation is, I hope, a temporary shortcoming of my investigation.

[407] The only substantial exception is my examination of Antigone's recognitions in Euripides' *Phoenician Women* in chapter 3.

Metamorphoses. Yet, as it has emerged more than once across my readings, the involvement of society as a whole in civil war readily shows that my association of each poem with specific categories serves as an organizing tool but does not always reflect the complexity of the dynamics of civil strife nor the variety of its actors. Thus, the war between Roman enemies in Lucan is, importantly, also the war between two illustrious relatives, Caesar and Pompey. The night battle at Cyzicus features hosts fighting guests but also groups that share the same Pelasgic origin. Likewise, in the *Thebaid*, the conflict between the Theban brothers involves two Greek cities while women, unarmed bystanders, reflect on the meaning of recognition.

Placing my discussion of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in the fourth and last chapter disrupts the chronological order of the previous sections on Virgil, Lucan, Valerius Flaccus, and Statius. It does so with the aim of rethinking how civil war enacts a metamorphosis of its actors: the categories that are meant to define who is who and what is what collapse, change, or perish to become something else. While the theme of recognition in Ovid's epic is well worth a dissertation of its own, the variety of recognition-related themes in the world of the *Metamorphoses* serves to trace out a number of thematic threads in my study of recognition as both identification and ethical acknowledgement in Roman epic. The changing of the body from human to non-human stirs reflections on the ways in which death imposes irreversible changes to human bodies and, at the same time, poses threats to their recognizability even when these bodies are spared mutilations and beheadings. Issues of recognition across species, after all, invite us to ask where humans belong once death sets their souls in motion from body to body, as Pythagoras teaches us. In the same way in which the metamorphosing being is "neither this nor that" and "both this and that," so too does the interaction with the dead—exemplified by the compassionate burials performed by Antigone and the supposedly insincere mourning of Caesar before Pompey's head— invite us to ponder who

and what it is that we recognize and what the ethical implications of these recognitions are when death takes away the interactive and interpersonal component of recognition. In addition, the emphasis in the *Metamorphoses* on hides, fur, and bark concealing what is beneath opens up a related sets of concerns about the objects (such as pieces of armor, war standards, or veils) that conceal bodies and about phenomena (such as darkness, noise, and madness) that hinder the senses.

My conclusive chapter is consonant with the status of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as a poem of beginnings and endings: its cosmology and mythology encompass much of what later epic poets will choose as their epic subject, including the history of Rome and its civil wars; at the same time, its post-human approach to recognition opens up ethical concerns that transcend the interpersonal relationships between human beings but replicate, nevertheless, several of the cognitive and ethical shortcomings about recognition which subtend the experience of civil war. It might be an unfruitful thought experiment to surmise where the changing self of the *Metamorphoses* would have appeared in the list of gradually more proximate categories in Sallust's epilogue to his *Bellum Catilinae*. Yet, this very distinction between human and non-human animals famously opens Sallust's narration of the war against Catiline (1.1-2: *omnis homines qui sese student praestare ceteris animalibus*). This opening suggestively hints at the preoccupation with the recognition of categories in times of historical and sociocultural instability when the lines between friends and foes, allies and enemies, the self and the other, become blurred.

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