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The Body of Emotions, the Emotions of the Body: Embodied Emotions from Homer to Byzantine Poetry

a cura di
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Editorial

Abstract: While it is widely accepted that emotions are connected with the body, the precise nature of this connection remains difficult to pin down. Recent theories from different fields suggests a somewhat flexible interplay between bodily states and emotion categories, in which social or cultural contexts play an important role. Such generalising theories are helpful to understand the nature of emotion, but it remains important complement them with case studies from other fields, one of them being literature. The contributions to this volume exemplify different forms and aspects of the interplay between emotions and the body, e.g. involuntary bodily reactions vs. consciously controlled expressions of emotion, or subjective vs. intersubjective experiences – but also the difficulty or impossibility of sorting embodied emotions into neat categories.

Keywords: Emotions, body, predictive processing, categorisation.

That emotions are connected with the body is nowadays widely accepted, but the precise nature of this connection remains difficult to pin down. During the last 150 years, psychologists, philosophers and neuroscientists have proposed strikingly different views on this matter. William James, challenging the traditional assumption that emotions as primarily mental states, famously claimed 'that *the bodily changes follow directly the* PERCEPTION *of the exciting fact, and that our feeling of the* | *same changes as they occur* IS *the emotion*' (James 1884, pp. 189-190, emphasis original). Needless to say, this is an extreme position, and also in some ways an inadequate one: as recently emphasised by Lisa Feldman Barrett (2017a, pp. 12-15) and others, the same bodily states do in fact not always lead to the same emotions[1]. Some other theories have tried to combine physiological and cognitive aspects. James Russell's circumplex model (1980) distinguishes between two dimensions of emotion, valence (positive or negative) and arousal (from low to high), which can be visualised in a two-dimensional space[2]. Klaus Scherer's component process model (1982) suggests five

[1] See also Wilkinson et al. 2019, p. 103; Gallese and Morelli 2024, pp. 129-131. For other objections against James' definition, see Scherer 2005.

[2] Another approach combining cognitive and physiological aspects is Schachter and Singer 1962.

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components of emotion, cognitive appraisal, physiological activation, motivational tendencies, motor expression and the subjective feeling state[3].

One of the remaining difficulties is to understand how cognitive and physiological aspects interact. In this respect, recent approaches from cognitive studies are helpful. The predictive processing theory, to name one, describes the brain as a hypothesis testing machine organised in hierarchical levels: sensory inputs from the bottom of the hierarchy are processed against the backdrop of predictions from higher levels; if they are unpredicted, they move up to the next, more abstract level, where the processing continues[4]. Andrew Clarke (2016), Lisa Feldman Barrett (2017a and b) and others have used this theory to explain how emotions arise[5]. Emotions, then, are not just experiencing and feeling bodily changes, as claimed by James, but 'integrate basic information (e.g., about bodily arousal) with higher-level predictions of probable causes and preparations for possible actions' (Clarke 2016, p. 234). As per Barrett's theory of constructed emotion, this process involves concepts shaped by experience: 'When past experiences of emotion (e.g. happiness) are used to categorize the predicted sensory array and guide action, then one experiences or perceives that emotion (happiness)' (Barrett 2017b, p. 9).

The details of this theory need not be discussed here, but an important insight for the understanding of embodied emotions is that the connection between bodily states and emotion categories is somewhat flexible, not only due to different previous experiences, but also to varying social or cultural contexts. This latter aspect has also been emphasised by some of the most recent contributions to the understanding of emotions, for instance Vittorio Gallese and Ugo Morelli, who speak of the relational nature of emotion (2024, pp. 128-131), or Douglas Cairns and Curie Virág, who describe emotion as intersubjective, contextual and culturally embedded (2024, pp. 10-14). Against this backdrop, it may seem almost anachronistic to focus on the relationship between emotions and the body, but in fact the recent developments in the study of emotions make it all the more important to ask how this complex relationship can be best understood and described. Theories from neurobiology or cognitive studies tend to remain vague in this respect because the possibilities are simply too varied; this special issue is motivated by the assumption that – for the reasons described – it is useful to complement generalising theories with case studies from other fields, one of them being literature.

[3] For a summary of his component process model, see also Scherer 2005, esp. p. 698.
[4] See e.g. Clark 2016; 2023.
[5] See Wilkinson et al. 2019 for an overview.

The study of embodied emotions in literature of course involves many specific problems. Language shapes the perspective on embodied emotions; language can be ambiguous or difficult to interpret, especially when it comes to historical languages; moreover, language can represent the same embodied emotions in different ways, depending on literary conventions and aesthetic preferences. To give but one of many examples, conceptual metaphors are a rewarding subject for the study of embodied emotions because many of them are based on sensorimotor experience[6]. However, it is often difficult to decide whether a speaker or author actually thinks of these bodily experiences when (s)he uses a metaphor, and if so, which physiological processes are meant exactly. In short, literature never offers an 'objective' perspective on embodied emotions but always also reflects cultural factors[7]. That said, one of the most quintessential insights from theories of emotion is that there is no such thing as an objective perspective on embodied emotions. If it is true that there is no one-to-one correlation between bodily states and emotions but rather a complex interplay shaped by contextual factors, there is perhaps no better means to study the range of possibilities for this interplay than to analyse a variety of literary texts dealing with emotions and the body[8].

This special issue concentrates on Greek and Latin literature, which not only includes a large number of texts in which embodied emotions are either represented or discussed, but also offers some descriptions of emotional and bodily experiences that differ from modern conventions and may thus help us understand aspects of embodied emotions that we tend to overlook. With this choice of texts, this issue inserts itself into the burgeoning field of the study of emotions in ancient literature[9]. Its original contribution to this field is the systematic focus on the bodily aspects of emotions. To avoid misunderstanding, the contributions do not discuss the concept of embodied emotions as such; rather, they focus on how emotions are represented by means of their physi-

[6] In the terminology of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, these are called 'primary' or 'correlation metaphors'; see Lakoff and Johnson 1999; Kövecses 2020, pp. 34-35. On the experiential basis of some conceptual metaphors cfr. already Lakoff and Johnson 1980, pp. 14-21.

[7] On this fundamental dialectic of all historical studies of emotion (anthropological constants and cultural factors overlap), see e.g. Reddy 2001.

[8] For a more detailed justification of the importance of literature for the study of emotions, see Del Zoppo in the last issue of this journal, who discusses and contextualises the important book by Gambino and Pulvirenti 2024.

[9] During the past decade, numerous monographs and edited volumes on emotions in Greek and Latin literature and philosophy have been published, including programmatic titles such as *Emotions in the Classical World* (Cairns and Nelis 2017), *A Cultural History of the Emotions in Antiquity* (Cairns 2019) and *Emotions and Narrative in Ancient Literature and Beyond* (de Bakker, van den Berg and Klooster 2022).

cal phenomenology, including such questions as whether certain elements are conventional or adopted from earlier models. This hermeneutic approach is indispensable to contextualise the representation of embodied emotions in ancient culture and literature. What makes the contributions valuable to the general study of emotions is that they allow for a comparison between different possibilities of how emotions can relate to the body: the examples discussed in the articles are highly specific manifestations of embodied emotions in individual works of ancient literature, but on a more abstract level they allow us to explore different facets of what the term embodied emotions stands for.

The six contributions to this special issue cover a large chronological range, from Homer to the Byzantine period, and a variety of genres, including narrative, dramatic, philosophical and theological texts in both poetry and prose. More importantly, however, they exemplify different forms and aspects of the interplay between emotions and the body – as well as the difficulty or impossibility of sorting embodied emotions into neat categories. The most classical and commonly considered type of embodied emotions are involuntary and uncontrollable bodily reactions associated with negatively or positively evaluated events or thoughts (in Scherer's model: the neurophysiological activation). These symptoms are often, though not exclusively, governed by the autonomous nervous system, which is responsible for agitation (sympathetic division) and relaxation (parasympathetic division). Several of the contributions deal with cases that can be subsumed under this category: Thomas Kuhn-Treichel discusses how Homer and Euripides employ a metaphor that denotes tears and the loss of bodily tension; Lien Van Geel compares descriptions of female fainting in Homer and Plutarch; Camille Guigon offers a new interpretation of a famous passage in Plato's Phaedrus that presents shuddering and sweating as symptoms of love.

However, there are also bodily manifestations of emotions that can be consciously controlled, at least in principle or to some extent, for example facial expressions or gestures involving the limbs (in Scherer's model: the motor expression). The most pertinent study of this type of embodied emotions in this issue is Maria Ortori's analysis of looks expressing emotions in Apollonius of Rhodes; these looks are of course not always deliberately chosen but can nevertheless be influenced by the individual in question, whereas shuddering or fainting are usually beyond one's control. A more intricate case of a consciously chosen bodily expression of emotions is discussed by Pamela Zinn, who shows how Lucretius associates the positions adopted during sexual intercourse with the emotional and relational states of the couple. Cristina Cocola explores an even more complex case, namely how 'katanyktic' poems from the middle and

late Byzantine period try to elicit tears as an element of compunction, thus provoking a bodily symptom that can usually not be controlled. What the examples show is that involuntary and consciously controlled bodily symptoms should not be seen as binary opposition; conscious and unconscious processes overlap, but their relative proportions vary from case to case.

The same holds true for another opposition that could be used to categorise the contributions to this issue: that of subjective and intersubjective bodily experience. There are bodily symptoms that can take place in an individual body, whereas others presuppose an interaction between several bodies. Tears (Kuhn-Treichel, Cocola), bodily tension (Kuhn-Treichel), fainting (Van Geel) as well as shuddering and sweating (Guigon) seem to fall into the former category, whereas emotional looks (Ortori) and sexual intercourse (Zinn) necessarily involve more than one body. However, even here the distinction is not neat: the embodied emotions of an individual can be contagious, be it when a state of embodied grief is passed on between two characters of a tragedy (Kuhn-Treichel), or when symptoms of compunction are enacted by a group rather than an individual (Cocola). Besides, bodily processes taking place in one individual are often the result of an interaction, for instance when the lover of Plato's *Phaedrus* reacts to beautiful bodies (Guigon), and more generally, inherited linguistic expressions such as metaphors (Kuhn-Treichel) lend a certain degree of intersubjectivity even to the descriptions of individuals.

Finally, the contributions showcase different literary and conceptual perspectives on embodied emotions in ancient and medieval Greek and Latin literature. Authors of narrative and dramatic texts (Kuhn-Treichel, Van Geel and Ortori) describe embodied emotions in specific individuals and situations, typically with a focus on their phenomenology. By contrast, medical, philosophical and, to some extent, theological writers provide a more generalising perspective on embodied emotions, with particular interest in the processes or principles that (allegedly) lie behind them. Plato foregrounds the changes taking place in the soul, which are supposed to be mirrored in the body (Guigon), whereas Lucretius additionally analyses love and sexuality from a materialist – but also strongly Roman – perspective (Zinn). The katanyktic poems do not provide a theory of embodied emotions, but nevertheless integrate them into a Christian ethics (Cocola). But again, the distinction between story-based and theoretical texts is not always clear-cut: both Plato and Lucretius draw on lyric language, including certain conceptual metaphors, whereas literary authors such as Euripides sometimes react to medical or philosophical theories.

The different aspects of embodied emotions also shed light on the complex dialectic of anthropological constants and cultural factors. On the one hand,

spontaneous, uncontrollable bodily reactions are more likely to be universal than consciously controlled bodily expressions of emotions, on the other, the linguistic and literary frames used to describe the spontaneous reactions lend a cultural element even to them (see e.g. Van Geel on the trope of the fainting female). In fact, this applies not only to literature but, to some extent, to the experience of emotions in general, as higher-level cognitive processes involve linguistic concepts. Conversely, the concepts of emotionality expressed in philosophical or theological texts are often not in line with modern psychological or neurocognitive theories and could thus be seen as purely specific to their culture. However, even these texts provide universal insights in that they demonstrate to which degree similar experiences can be transformed into different concepts – and how highly theoretical concepts sometimes include very basic experiential elements, for example when Plato links his theory of the soul to aspects such as shuddering and heat (Guigon).

Overall, the contributions to this issue demonstrate the variety of entanglements and interactions between emotions and the body. They make it clear that the term embodied emotions refers to a complex reality, all the more so since it cannot be clearly separated from other aspects of emotionality such as its intersubjective or psychological dimensions. But precisely because of the different perspectives discussed in them, the case studies from Greek and Latin literature assembled in this issue can help us understand a bit more of the essential and yet elusive phenomenon that emotion is.

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Thomas Kuhn-Treichel

Melting as a Metaphor of Embodied Emotions in Homer and Euripides*

Abstract: Metaphors of melting (τήκειν) applied to human beings or parts of their bodies have a long and complex history in ancient Greek literature. This paper focuses on Homer and Euripides and examines how metaphors of melting are or can be used to describe embodied emotions, thus forming 'primary' or 'correlation' metaphors according to Conceptual Metaphor Theory. In Homer, the most common target of melting metaphors is weeping, but we also find cases where the association with bodily experience remains more open. Euripides sometimes constructs more daring melting metaphors, especially cases referring to abstracta or the soul. Even in these cases, however, the context mostly suggests an association with embodied emotions; when the tragedies were performed, this bodily dimension could even be visible on stage. Overall, while Homer's and Euripides' melting metaphors differ due to literary factors and evolving anthropological concepts, they share a strong interest in emotion as bodily experience.

Keywords: Homer, Euripides, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, embodied emotions, melting.

Metaphors of melting applied to human beings or parts of their bodies have a long and complex history in ancient Greek literature[1]. The earliest instances, often associated with weeping, are found in Homer. Early lyric poets, beginning with Alcman, apply the idea of melting to erotic contexts, a use that is later imitated and developed in Hellenistic poetry. The classical tragedians, on the other hand, use melting metaphors for a wide range of emotionally charged situations. Around the same time, medical writers begin to use the same terms to describe physiological processes in the human body, while Plato mixes lyric and medical uses in a philosophical context[2]. This paper explores how metaphors of melting, understood in the sense of Conceptual Metaphor

* This article forms part of a monograph project on expressions of dissolving from Homer to Ovid. I would like to thank Sotera Fornaro and the anonymous readers for their astute and constructive comments, from which this paper has benefitted greatly. Moritz Schwemer has my thanks for improving my English.

[1] To my knowledge, there is no comprehensive study of melting metaphors in Greek literature. Arnould 1986 discusses Homer and tragedy, but does not focus on embodied emotions; on melting in lyric, see also Cyrino 1995 (index s.v. τήκω/κατατήκω), on lyric and Plato, Kuhn-Treichel 2024a, pp. 14-21 and 2024b, pp. 22-24.

[2] Some examples not discussed in this paper: Alcm. *PMGF* 3.61; Pi. fr. 123.11 M.; Hp. *Aër.* 7;

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Theory (CMT), are or can be used to describe embodied emotions[3]. In order to limit my material, I will focus on expressions with τήκειν or its compounds and concentrate on two groups of texts that use these verbs very prominently: the Homeric epics, where we find the earliest attested cases, and the tragedies of Euripides, who uses this metaphor far more frequently than the other tragic poets (we find few cases in Sophocles, which I will briefly consider at the end of this article, none in Aeschylus).

What makes this question so intriguing is the very metaphorical nature of this expression. The concept of melting is obviously transferred from another conceptual domain, namely that of solid objects (snow, ice, wax) turning into a liquid. This makes expressions with τήκειν applied to the human body more conspicuously metaphorical than, for example, those with λύειν, another notion of dissolution that occurs in both Homer and Euripides. When the knees or the limbs are 'loosened', this is a relatively straightforward description for a loss of tension in the muscles that hold the limbs together; but what does it mean when a person or her heart 'melts'? What makes the situation so complex is that, as a physical process, melting involves different aspects, including heat, loss of shape and the emergence of a liquid. Each of these aspects can be mapped onto bodily experiences: a rise in body temperature, a loss of muscle tension and tears or sweat, all of which are often related with emotions.

From the perspective of CMT, then, melting seems to be a 'primary' or 'correlation' metaphor, i.e. one based on a correlation with sensorimotor experience[4]. As such, it can also refer to embodied emotions associated with the physical states mentioned. Some of the relevant sensorimotor experiences may be felt only by the character in question, but many of them are likely to be perceptible to an external observer, be it through blushing, a drooping posture or tears, thus giving an intersubjective quality to the experience of embodied emotions[5]. This can also apply to spectators of a tragedy or recipients of a narrative who imagine a given situation. Taking up a term suggested by Marco Caracciolo for narrative texts, one could perhaps speak of 'phenomenological metaphors', i.e. 'metaphors that are meant to convey the phenomenology of

Nat. hom. 12; *Nat. puer.* 33; *Aff.* 24; Pl. *Phdr.* 251b3; Theoc. 1.66, 82, 87, 90; 2.28; A.R. 3.1020; *AP* 5.210.2; 7.31.1.

[3] CMT was developed by Lakoff and Johnson 1980; for an up-to-date version of this theory, see Kövecses 2020. CMT has been successfully applied to texts such as the Homeric epics, see e.g. Horn 2018; Zanker 2019.

[4] For these terms, see Lakoff-Johnson 1999; Kövecses 2020, pp. 34-35.

[5] For the intersubjective quality of emotions more generally, see e.g. Cairns and Virág 2024, pp. 10-14.

a character's experience' – an experience that, in the case of expressions with τήκειν and its compounds, may include a strong bodily component[6].

But are these bodily implications actually relevant to our texts, or more precisely, do the passages in question encourage the readers to associate the metaphor with bodily experiences, and if so, which ones? This is often a tricky question, because metaphors are usually open to a certain range of interpretations and the context does not always give clear indications for a disambiguation. Moreover, Euripides sometimes uses metaphors of melting in ways that are associated with emotions but not explicitly with the body, referring to abstracta or the soul. On the following pages, I will analyse Homeric and Euripidean metaphors of melting with a focus on how they support an association with embodied emotions. I will argue that while Euripides' metaphors of melting are less closely connected with the body than their Homeric counterparts, their context often suggests that they can still stand for embodied emotions, making the distance to Homer less than the linguistic differences suggest.

From tears to heart: metaphors of melting in Homer

The verb τήκειν (in the active: 'melt [an object]'; in the mediopassive: 'melt [oneself]') is attested seven times in the Homeric epics; in addition, there are three instances of κατατήκειν. Remarkably, all but one of the occurrences are found in the *Odyssey*, and even more remarkably, all of them are used in a figurative sense or a figurative context (one simile uses melting both in the tenor and the vehicle)[7]. The most common target domain onto which the concept of melting is mapped is weeping, so that we can speak of a conceptual metaphor WEEPING IS MELTING. In the *Iliad*, a rueful Helen declares that she should have rather died than coming to Troy and therefore has 'melted with weeping' (κλαίουσα τέτηκα, *Il.* 3.176). In the Odyssey, the metaphor is first used of Odysseus, whose cheeks become wet with tears as he listens to Demodocus and is overcome by his emotions (τήκετο, δάκρυ δ' ἔδευεν ... παρειάς, *Od.* 8.522). A veritable cluster of occurrences is found in *Od.* 19. Apart from two other instances to be mentioned below, the most famous case is the simile of melting

[6] Caracciolo 2013, the quotation on p. 61. Caracciolo argues that such metaphors have a significant cognitive effect on the readers, as they allow them to experience the storyworld through the consciousness of a character. On the possible cognitive effects of metaphors of dissolving, see also Kuhn-Treichel 2024a, p. 12 and 2024b, p. 20.

[7] Cfr. *LfgE* s.v. τήκω, where all examples for '*schmelzen* im heutigen physik. Sinne' are from Hesiod. As Rutherford 1992, p. 166 observes, all occurrences in the *Odyssey* refer to Odysseus and Penelope – an interesting parallel to expressions of limb-loosening for sleep, to which the same applies.

snow that illustrates how Penelope weeps inconsolably for her husband, whom she believes to be still absent:

> τῆς δ' ἄρ' ἀκουούσης ῥέε δάκρυα, τήκετο δὲ χρώς.
> ὡς δὲ χιὼν κατατήκετ' ἐν ἀκροπόλοισιν ὄρεσσιν
> ἣν τ' εὖρος κατέτηξεν, ἐπὴν ζέφυρος καταχεύηι,
> τηκομένης δ' ἄρα τῆς ποταμοὶ πλήθουσι ῥέοντες,
> ὣς τῆς τήκετο καλὰ παρήϊα δάκρυ χεούσης,
> κλαιούσης ἑὸν ἄνδρα, παρήμενον.
>
> As she listened her tears ran and her skin was melting, as the snow melts along the high places of the mountains when the West Wind has piled it there, but the South Wind melts it, and as it melts the rivers run full flood. It was even so that her beautiful cheeks were melting, as she wept for her man, who was sitting there by her side. (*Od.* 19.204-209, transl. Lattimore mod.)

In all of these cases, melting is clearly figurative; the fact that the simile uses (κατα)τήκειν both in the tenor (metaphorically) and the vehicle (literally) makes it clear that the poet is aware of the conceptual mapping involved in the use of this verb[8]. The figurative use is grounded in an evident analogy: the liquid emanating from the eyes evokes the idea of melting ice or snow. Understood thus, the verb, though literally denoting a form of dissolving, does not even necessarily indicate a loss of firmness or cohesion. To be sure, especially when the subject is a person, one can imagine a body pining away with sorrow as ice or snow melts in the heat; this applies in particular to the case of Helen, where τέτηκα (the intransitive perfect of the mediopassive τήκομαι) denotes the result of the weeping rather than the process[9]. On the other hand, especially with the skin or the cheeks as subjects, one can just as well simply think of the water bedewing the cheeks, which seems to be the main point of the simile (perhaps together with the idea of 'snow-white' cheeks becoming red and hot)[10].

In this latter case, the metaphor of melting would privilege an external perspective, as the weeping characters *look like* they are melting from the outside

[8] This is worth noting because it refutes the (misconceived) objection against CMT that the metaphors postulated by it are not consciously identified as such by the poet; cfr. Leidl 2003, p. 38; Cairns 2014, n. 67.

[9] Bowie 2019, p. 128 suggests the translation 'I am worn out by weeping'.

[10] Cfr. *LfgE* s.v. τήκω 2: 'die Tränen werden als Produkt des "Abschmelzens" aufgefasst'; see also Onians 1951, pp. 201-202. But contrast Fränkel 1921, p. 33, who compares lines 136 and 264 (on which see below) and considers whether the simile might also hint at 'Penelopes Seele, die ... sich löst aus ihrer Starre'.

whereas the state of their body as a whole is, with the possible exception of Helen, not in the foreground. Notably, this is only a tendency, and it does not preclude the possibility that intradiegetic observers or recipients imagining the scene before their inner eyes may form an idea of how this process feels to Penelope. As indicated in the introduction, embodied emotions always have an intersubjective dimension, which involves not only the direct interaction between individuals but also the use of terms and concepts shaped by a linguistic community. For the quoted simile, this implies that even if the perspective is more external, the metaphor may induce some recipients to imagine a subjective experience of dissolving that goes beyond mere tears on the cheeks. There is no strict boundary between the subjective and the external perspective, but a considerable range of possible interpretations on the part of the recipient.

There are only three occurrences of verbs for melting that do not, or not necessarily, refer to weeping. In a simile, the verb refers to a father pining away with a lengthy illness (δηρὸν τηκόμενος, *Od.* 5.396). Here, the metaphor clearly indicates the state of the body as a whole, which loses its firmness in an existentially threatening way, but not due to emotions. Besides, there are two further occurrences in *Od.* 19. Before the simile, Penelope remarks: 'longing for Odysseus, I melt in my dear heart' (Ὀδυσῆ ποθέουσα φίλον κατατήκομαι ἦτορ, *Od.* 19.136). After the simile, Odysseus, still pretending to be a stranger, addresses Penelope with the words: 'do not melt away your spirit in lamentation for your husband' (μηδέ τι θυμὸν / τῆκε πόσιν γοόωσα, *Od.* 19.263-264). Given that the simile itself uses the idea of melting for Penelope's weeping, we may be tempted to associate these two occurrences with weeping as well, and indeed the repetition of the verb (κατα)τήκειν can hardly go unnoticed. However, the lines themselves do not refer to tears; on the contrary, they apply the verb to such nouns as ἦτορ and θυμός, which cannot be not physically affected by the emanation of tears[11].

In these cases, the idea of dissolving seems to prevail over the association with emerging water. Especially the two last cases are worth discussing, as they describe emotional states that can (probably) be felt in the body[12]. The expression φίλον κατατήκομαι ἦτορ recalls the common formula λύτο γούνατα

[11] The rich bibliography on θυμός need not be repeated here; important studies include Schmitz 1965, pp. 374-414; Jahn 1987; Pelliccia 1995, pp. 200-268; Clarke 1999, pp. 61-126; Cairns 2014 and 2019; Zanker 2019, pp. 52-56.

[12] Latacz 1966, p. 227 remarks on *Od.* 19.227 (cfr. Krieter-Spiro 2009, p. 73): 'τήκομαι bezeichnet ... im psychischen Bereich stets das Dahinschmelzen, Sich-Verzehren vor Leid oder Sehnsucht (vgl. noch Γ 176. τ 204ff.), im physischen Bereich das Sich-Verzehren vor Schmerz (ε 395) ...' This dualistic distinction may be helpful for a categorisation but is problematic in that it suggests that psychic processes cannot be felt physically.

καὶ φίλον ἦτορ, which occurs later when Penelope finally recognises her husband (*Od.* 23.205, preceded by remarks about her hardened heart in lines 103, 167 and 172)[13]. According to the scattered expressions, Penelope's heart goes through a complex process: it melts when she talks to Odysseus disguised as a beggar, then stiffens again when she sees him as himself and fears falling for a fraudster and finally loosens when she recognises him through clear proof. Since melting is a metaphor, recipients are free to choose whether they associate the expression with specific bodily symptoms or rather with a more abstract mental experience, and in the former case, which symptoms these might be.

But what kind of bodily experience would make sense for the metaphor of melting in the given context? Perhaps the most plausible option is a reduced tonus, probably not in the heart itself but in the intercostal muscles surrounding it. The term ἦτορ would then stand for what the phenomenological philosopher Hermann Schmitz called a *Leibesinsel*, a vaguely defined area of the felt body (the *Leib* as opposed to the *Körper*, i.e. the physical body)[14]. The character could experience this loss of firmness in the body and the chest region in particular *as though* her heart was melting. The fact that Penelope complains a few lines before that the gods have destroyed her 'excellence in beauty and figure' (ἀρετὴν εἶδός τε δέμας τε, *Od.* 19.124), lends further plausibility to a corporeal interpretation of the melting metaphor: apparently, Penelope herself believes that the prolonged waiting for her husband has a detrimental effect on her body, and the metaphor of melting can be understood in the same sense.

The negated phrase θυμὸν τῆκε is more difficult to interpret. Given that the θυμός is typically (with a number of exceptions)[15] not conceptualised as a solid body, the metaphor may focus on the aspect of dwindling away implied in melting, a notion that is also known from statements about the θυμός with the semantically related verb τείρειν[16]. How this may feel is up to the recipient to decide, but it could involve a loss of perceived vitality in the whole body[17]. Overall, the idea of melting in the Homeric epics can be associated with different bodily experiences, ranging from tears to a general loss of firmness or tension. The crucial point is that, at least in most of the cases, the recipients

[13] On this formula, see Kuhn-Treichel 2024b with further references.

[14] Schmitz 1965; cfr. my remarks on ἦτορ in Kuhn-Treichel 2024b, p. 18. The concept of the *Leib* goes back to Husserl; Merleau-Ponty developed it under the term *corps vécu*.

[15] See e.g. the notion of the 'beating' θυμός (θυμὸς ἐνὶ στήθεσσι πάτασσεν, *Il.* 7.216; cfr. 23.370, explained by *LfgrE* s.v. θυμός 14 as 'Gebr. nach Anal. des Herzens').

[16] See *Il.* 17.744-745 (θυμός / τείρεθ' ...); *Il.* 22.242; *Od.* 10.78. The verb is also applied to κῆρ (*Od.* 1.341-342).

[17] Cfr. Schmitz 1965, p. 410 on the θυμός as 'gespürte Erfülltheit des eigenen Leibes durch Regungen'.

are encouraged to associate the melting metaphor with some sort of bodily experience related with what we would call emotions, even if the metaphor allows for a certain range of interpretations. Does this apply to Euripides, too?

Melting and embodied emotions in Euripides

Euripides frequently uses the verb τήκειν and its compounds with reference to a character's emotional state, and in some of the cases he does so in ways that differ from extant older authors. As in the Homeric epics, there is a certain conceptual link between expressions with τήκειν and those with λύειν. This becomes particularly obvious in the *Hecuba* (staged around 424), where, as we shall soon see, both of them are used in close proximity to each other, thus helping us understand the implications of τήκειν. Polyxena, about to be led away by Odysseus and to be killed by Neoptolemus, remarks in what is her last speech on stage:

> κόμιζ', Ὀδυσσεῦ, μ' ἀμφιθεὶς κάραι πέπλους,
> ὡς πρὶν σφαγῆναί γ' ἐκτέτηκα καρδίαν
> θρήνοισι μητρὸς τήνδε τ' ἐκτήκω γόοις.
>
> Wrap this garment about my head, Odysseus, and take me away, for the heart within me, before my slaughter, has been melted by the lamentations of my mother, and I melt her with mine. (E. *Hec.* 432-434, transl. Kovacs mod.)[18]

The metaphor of the melting heart is known from the *Odyssey*, where Penelope uses it with regard to her longing for her husband, albeit with another term for the heart (κατατήκομαι ἦτορ, *Od.* 19.136, cfr. above)[19]. Here, the situation is evidently different, although it too has to do with the separation from a loved one, and ultimately with the experience of losing control: the fact that Polyxena is about to be killed causes shock and grief both in herself and her mother. There are three aspects that deserve our attention. The first is the parallel, or interplay, between the daughter and her mother. According to Polyxena's words, they are connected through their melting, which is caused not so much by the imminent death itself but by each other's lamentations. Apparently, the emotional reaction expressed by the metaphor of melting is based

[18] Kovacs translates 'I melt her heart', which is grammatically possible if the accusative of respect καρδίαν is supplied after τήνδε τ' ἐκτήκω. Battezzato 2018, p. 130 translates 'I melt her'; cfr. Matthiessen 2008, p. 124.

[19] Besides, it is attested in a fragment from an unknown play by Euripides, where the reason is fear (fr. 908.6 Radt, cfr. below).

on a strong sense of empathy[20]. The interaction between the mother and her daughter intensifies the emotional experience because emotion is essentially a relational, socially embedded phenomenon. Mutual lamenting can therefore result in a sort of intersubjective emotional and bodily state, which anticipates the ultimate dissolution of death that Polyxena will soon experience[21].

In this context – and this is the second aspect –, the plea to wrap a garment around the head can be seen as a form of emotion regulation or emotion management[22]. The πέπλοι form a barrier between Polyxena and her mother, which, at least in Polyxena's eyes, may mitigate the distress that she and her mother are causing each other. The wish to break the visual contact – known as one of the earliest means of emotion regulation learned by young infants – underscores the interactive and intersubjective character of the emotions on stage, as well as their embodied nature, which requires a physical means of control. At the same time, the veiling recalls funerary rituals, all the more so since Hecuba follows her daughter in covering her head, as shown soon afterwards (*Hec.* 486-487)[23]. It thus anticipates another, more ritualised form of embodied emotions: the collective mourning for Polyxena's death.

My third point is the link between the metaphor of melting and another common expression of dissolving, viz. the idea of loosening the limbs. A few lines after the quoted passage, Hecuba wails as Odysseus leads away her daughter Polyxena to be killed by Neoptolemus, describing what seems like a sudden loss of muscular tension, a natural physiological response to the terrifying news concerning her daughter[24]:

> οἳ 'γώ, προλείπω, λύεται δέ μου μέλη.
> ὦ θύγατερ, ἅψαι μητρός, ἔκτεινον χέρα,
> δός, μὴ λίπηις μ᾽ ἄπαιδ᾽. ἀπωλόμην, φίλαι.
>
> Ah, ah! I am faint! My limbs are unstrung! Daughter, take hold of your mother, stretch out your hand, give it to me, do not leave me childless! My friends, my life is over! (E. *Hec.* 438-440, transl. Kovacs)

As explained in the previous section, the strongly metaphorical character of

[20] I use this term in the basic sense of 'feeling with'; for its complex history, see Lanzoni 2018.

[21] For the effects of mutual lamentation, one may compare the encounter of Achilles and Priam in *Il.* 24; cfr. the discussion of this scene in Cairns 2023.

[22] On the use of garments in emotion regulation, see Cairns 2009 and 2011.

[23] For the different functions of veiling, including mourning, see Cairns 2002.

[24] From a neurobiological perspective, this loss of tension can be explained as the shock phase of the General Adaptation Syndrome (dominated by the parasympathetic system, cfr. e.g. Morschitzky 2009, pp. 239-244).

expressions with melting in reference to the human body opens up a certain range of interpretations: one can think of specific bodily sensations, but also of more abstract mental processes. Against this backdrop, it is interesting to note that Hecuba takes up the idea of dissolving in a varied form, replacing the image of melting with that of loosening, with a strong emphasis on bodily weakness. When Hecuba asks Polyxena to stretch out her hand, this can be understood both as a whish to remain in contact and as a request for physical support. Read together, Polyxena's reference to her mother's melting and Hecuba's own remark about her loosened limbs suggest that both expressions describe a state of physical weakness or, more precisely, a loss of bodily tension due to the shocking events. This does not make the expressions with melting less metaphorical, but it supports the possibility of understanding them in a bodily way, as an image for a feeling of weakness or a lack of energy, be it in the chest region or the whole body[25].

Apart from this passage, Euripides uses expressions with τήκειν, ἐκτήκειν and συντήκειν in a considerable number of other plays, in some cases in the active, with a person or a part of the body as an object, in others in the mediopassive, sometimes with supplements such as λύπαις or νόσωι[26]. Several of the other occurrences of ἐκτήκειν are explicitly connected with tears[27]. In the *Helen*, Theoclymenus exhorts the eponymous heroine not to 'melt away your skin with tears' (σὸν δάκρυσιν ἐκτήξηις χρόα, E. *Hel.* 1419); in the *Orestes*, we twice find the idea of melting away the eyes with tears (ὄμμα δ' ἐκτήξουσ' ἐμὸν / δακρύοις, *Or.* 134-135; δακρύοις ὀφθαλμὸν ἐκτήκω, *Or.* 529). These cases come very close to melting metaphors in Homer, which also often refer to tears; in particular, the line from the *Helen* recalls the passage in which Penelope's skin is described as melting (τήκετο δὲ χρώς, *Od.* 19.204, cfr. above). Perhaps Empedocles' theory that tears come about when blood is 'liquefied' (αἵματος τηκομένου, 31 A78 DK), thus deriving from 'real' and not just metaphorical liquefication, was a further motivating factor for the repeated use of the ἐκτήκειν for tears in Euripides.

However, we also find instances of the metaphor of melting in Euripides in which the connection with the human body and embodied emotions is more difficult to assess. The following sections of this paper will discuss two groups

[25] Cfr. the explanation in Battezzato 2018, p. 131.

[26] Apart from the cases mentioned below, Euripides uses τήκειν and compounds in the active in *IA* 398 (ἐμὲ συντήξουσι νύκτες ἡμέραι τε δακρύοις) and *Cyc.* 459 (ὄμμα τ' ἐκτήξω πυρί), in the mediopassive in *El.* 240 (with λύπαις), *Or.* 34 (with νόσωι; cfr. 283) and *Or.* 860 (ἐξετηκόμην γόοις).

[27] These cases are the primary focus of the study of τήκειν in Homer and tragedy by Arnould 1986.

of such cases: metaphors referring to the abstracta life and time (occurring in the *Medea*) and those dealing with the soul (in the *Heraclidae* and the *Electra*).

Special cases 1: melting life and time

A remarkable cluster of verbs of melting is found in the *Medea*. All of the expressions refer to Medea herself, who is distraught after being deserted by her husband. The situation recalls *Od.* 19, where the metaphor of melting is applied numerous times to Penelope longing for her husband, who has in fact already returned. Some of the uses in the *Medea* are rather conventional, especially against the backdrop of the Homeric epics. The chorus exhorts Medea not to 'melt excessively' by mourning for her husband (μὴ λίαν τάκου δυρομένα σὸν εὐνέταν, E. *Med.* 159), just as Odysseus, in the guise of the stranger, urges Penelope not to melt away her spirit in lamentation of her husband (μηδέ τι θυμὸν / τῆκε πόσιν γοόωσα, *Od.* 19.263-264). Aegeus asks her why her 'eyes and skin are dissolved' (τί γὰρ σὸν ὄμμα χρώς τε συντέτηχ' ὅδε, E. *Med.* 689), apparently referring to her tears and their effect on the skin, which are also mentioned by Penelope (ῥέε δάκρυα, τήκετο δὲ χρώς, *Od.* 19.204).

The cases quoted so far are immediately comprehensible, at least in light of their epic precursors, and can easily be associated with bodily manifestations of emotions such as tears, swollen skin and general weakness. However, there are also more unusual applications of the metaphor of melting in the *Medea*. The nurse explains to the chorus that her mistress is 'melting away her life-force (or: lifetime) in her chamber' (ἡ δ' ἐν θαλάμοις τήκει βιοτήν, E. *Med.* 141)[28]. Compared to the tragic examples discussed so far, the object βιοτή adds another degree of metaphoricity. While the body or its parts do not actually melt, they are at least physical objects that can actually undergo changes of their consistency. The abstract βιοτή, by contrast, cannot be affected in a physical way; it must be imagined as a solid object that comes to be dissolved[29]. This does not exclude further associations with bodily weakness, especially when βιοτή is understood on a physiological level, but the expression has such a high degree of metaphoricity that different interpretations are possible.

The most debated occurrence of the melting metaphor in the *Medea*, howev-

[28] On βιοτή as 'life-force', see Mastronarde 2002, p. 194. One of the anonymous readers suggests 'lifetime' instead, like αἰών in *Od.* 5.151, 160; I will come back to this possibility below.

[29] The conceptualisation of abstract concepts as solid objects (i.e. ontological metaphor) is of course a common strategy. My point is only the difference between the instances of the metaphor of melting in tragedy and the possible associations with the body.

er, is the very first one, also voiced by the nurse, which poses severe problems of translation and interpretation:

> κεῖται δ' ἄσιτος, σῶμ' ὑφεῖσ' ἀλγηδόσιν,
> τὸν πάντα συντήκουσα δακρύοις χρόνον
> ἐπεὶ πρὸς ἀνδρὸς ἤισθετ' ἠδικημένη,
> οὔτ' ὄμμ' ἐπαίρουσ' οὔτ' ἀπαλλάσσουσα γῆς
> πρόσωπον· ὡς δὲ πέτρος ἢ θαλάσσιος
> κλύδων ἀκούει νουθετουμένη φίλων ...
>
> She lies fasting, giving her body up to pain, making the whole time melt away [or: melting away all the time] with her tears since she learned that she was wronged by her husband, neither raising her face nor taking her eyes from the ground. She is as deaf to the advice of her friends as a stone or a wave of the sea ... (E. *Med.* 24-29, transl. Kovacs mod.)

The first aspect that catches the eye in these lines is the detailed and extended description of Medea's bodily state. The description is not limited to an expression of dissolving, but we learn in an unambiguous, almost medically accurate way that she lies motionless without eating or interacting with others. These indications seem to fit in well with what we have seen so far, but this makes the precise wording all the more puzzling. The problem starts on the grammatical level[30]. Given that συντήκουσα is active, an object seems to be needed, and from a syntactical point of view, τὸν πάντα ... χρόνον is the easiest option. This would result in the notion of making time melt away. The metaphor then would rest on the concept of time as a solid object, and the idea of making this object melt could imply that the time is wasted away, or that its subdivisions (something one could associate with a solid aggregate state) are blurred. To be sure, this is only one of the grammatical interpretations suggested by scholars, and before asking how this metaphor relates to embodied emotions, the alternative constructions have to be briefly considered.

One possibility is to take σῶμ(α) from the line before as the object and τὸν πάντα ... χρόνον as an accusative of time ('making her body melt away all the time'). This is grammatically possible but less likely because it disregards the rhetorical structure of the sentence, i.e. the tricolon (ἄσιτος, σῶμ' ὑφεῖσ' ..., τὸν πάντα ...) and the parallel of object plus participle (*σῶμ'* ὑφεῖσ' – *τὸν πάντα* συντήκουσα ... *χρόνον*). Another solution would be to

[30] On the problems, see Mastronarde 2002, p. 168, who describes the line as 'conflating the consumption of time (normally διάγειν or ἀναλίσκω) with the wasting away of the person crying (συντήκεσθαι).' Cfr. also Manuwald 2024, p. 80.

take συντήκουσα, which should be normally transitive, as intransitive like its perfect συντέτηκα, with τὸν πάντα ... χρόνον again as an accusative of time ('melting away the whole time'). However, the evidence for an intransitive use of τήκειν or its compounds in the present tense is thin at best: a fragment from an unknown play by Euripides contains the line τήκω τάλαιναν καρδίαν ὀρρωδίαι (E. fr. 908.6 Radt), in which τήκω is sometimes taken in an intransitive sense ('my poor heart melts with fear', with καρδίαν as an accusative of respect as in *Hec.* 433); but καρδίαν could just as well be the object, which is grammatically clearly preferable ('I let my heart melt')[31]. In short, the alternative constructions are not very convincing; but what can we make of the metaphor of melting time?

First, it should be noted that this metaphor is less peculiar than it may seem. Depending on the understanding of βιοτή in line 141 ('life-force' or 'lifetime'), Euripides might reuse the idea in the same play. More importantly, however, the idea of time as a liquid can be traced back to Homer. When Odysseus longs for his home on Calypso's island, 'his eyes never became dry from tears and his sweet lifetime was flowing away' (οὐδέ ποτ' ὄσσε / δακρυόφιν τέρσοντο, κατείβετο δὲ γλυκὺς αἰών, *Od.* 5.151-152)[32]. The verb κατείβετο does not necessarily imply that the lifetime passes from the solid to the liquid state, but at any rate it describes time as a liquid[33]. What makes this example so interesting is that Odysseus, just as Medea, is also described as crying, a process that not only involves a liquid but is elsewhere in Homer described with the very verb here applied to time (κατείβετο δάκρυ, *Il.* 24.794). This suggests a convergence of time and tears, which is also relevant for the Euripidean passage, provided that my translation is correct: on the one hand, the metaphor describes an abstract experience of time, without reference to the body, but on the other, it alludes to the bodily phenomenon of tears, whose liquid aggregate state is projected on time, as well as Medea's physical weakness in general. In other words, even if the metaphor of melting refers to an abstraction, it is still closely associated with embodied emotions.

[31] The translation by Collard and Cropp ('my poor heart is worn down') suggests an intransitive sense, whereas Radt, in his apparatus, adduces *Med.* 141 (τήκει βιοτήν) as a parallel, suggesting a transitive sense. Cfr. also the parallel transitive construction in *Od.* 19.263-264 (μηδέ τι θυμὸν / τῆκε).

[32] In *Od.* 5.160-161, this is taken up in the similar but less liquid-focused expression μηδέ τοι αἰὼν / φθινέτω.

[33] The most extensive discussion of conceptual metaphors of time in Homer is Zanker 2019, pp. 61-102, where these examples are however not included. The idea of liquid time can be subsumed under the larger category ABSTRACTIONS ARE LIQUIDS, which is also instantiated by examples such as χέω with abstract nouns.

Special cases 2: the melting soul

The *Medea* is not the only play in which Euripides uses the metaphor of melting in ways hitherto unseen. We have already seen the idea of the melting heart, expressed with καρδία as an accusative of respect. In two other plays, Euripides exchanges the heart in this expression for the soul. This is a noteworthy innovation in the use of metaphors of melting, and it raises important questions with regard to embodied emotions. Early and classical Greek authors did not consider the soul a bodily organ comparable to the heart, but the precise understanding of the soul and its possible interplay with the body differed considerably. In Homer, ψυχή only means 'life' or 'departed spirit' (*LSJ* s.v. I and II)[34]. It is not a body part, but contained within the body, as can be seen when it is localised 'in' a living person (ἐν δὲ ἴα ψυχή, 21.569) or leaves the physical body in death (e.g. τὸν δ' ἔλιπε ψυχή, *Il.* 5.696; 14.426). It can also, by means of ontological metaphor, be reified as an object and even be said to be 'dissolved' in death, a concept close enough to melting (λύθη ψυχή τε μένος τε, *Il.* 5.296; 8.123, 315)[35].

However, none of these cases is concerned with embodied emotions. When Euripides uses the term ψυχή, this may be different. By his time, the ψυχή had acquired an important position in anthropological thinking as well as poetic expressions[36]. To be sure, the term was still rather vaguely defined and certainly not used in the same way by every author, but it came to be understood as an essential feature of man. Pre-Socratic philosophers variously associated the soul with air, fire, blood and water[37]. More frequently, medical authors refer to the soul as a counterpart to the body, including ideas such as a warming of the soul[38]. Poetic appropriations of the idea of the soul can be found in authors such as Pindar or, more prominently, Sophocles. In scholarship, the rise of the concept of the soul is often taken as a, if not the, major transition in ancient anthropology, leading from a unified concept of man to psychophysical dualism. According to Schmitz, this transition can already be seen between Aeschylus, whose language is still body-centred, and Sophocles, who privileges the idea

[34] On ψυχή in Homer, see *LfgrE* s.v. ψυχή with doxography; prominent studies include Bremmer 1983; Jahn 1987; Clarke 1999.

[35] For further metaphorical reifications of the soul, see Cairns 2014, §§11-17.

[36] On the rise of the concept of the soul before Plato, see Claus 1981; cfr. also the brief overviews by Ricken 1995; Rowe 2016. For the semantic range of ψυχή in Euripides, see Schlesier 1998; Cairns 2017, pp. 251-254.

[37] For an overview of ideas of the soul in the pre-Socratics, see Claus 1981, pp. 122-155.

[38] On σῶμα and ψυχή in Hippocratic medicine, see Gundert 2000; the warming soul is discussed in Hp. *Vict.* 3.61.

of the soul[39]. The adequateness of this and similar teleological narratives is subject to debate, but the question remains how the rise of ψυχή affects the expression of embodied emotions in poetic language.

Indeed, one can observe how the ψυχή takes over functions of body-related phrases in older poetry. While Homeric characters can address their heart in self-exhortations (e.g. τέτλαθι δή, κραδίη, *Od.* 20.18), Pindar refers to the soul in a similar context (μή, φίλα ψυχά ..., Pi. *P.* 3.61). While in Homer, the heart can be said to groan (ἐν δέ τέ οἱ κραδίηι στένει ἄλκιμον ἦτορ, *Il.* 20.169), in Sophocles it is the soul that groans (ἡ δ' ἐμὴ / ψυχὴ πόλιν τε κἀμὲ καὶ σ' ὁμοῦ στένει, S. *OT* 63-64). In both cases, one can argue that the Homeric expressions are, or can easily be, associated with bodily sensations, also because the contexts give indications to this effect: in *Od.* 20, the heart is first said to 'bark', which seems to denote violent pounding; in *Il.* 20, the statement about the heart is preceded by a remark about 'foam around the teeth', which suggests a physical stress reaction[40]. In Pindar and Sophocles, by contrast, the analogous statements seem to denote abstract mental processes without a physiological component; at any rate, there are no indications that suggest that the body may be involved[41]. On the other hand, the Theognidea mention the ψυχή alongside the θυμός, with a metaphor of biting that associates the former with a discomfort that *could* have a bodily component (δάκνομαι ψυχήν, Thgn. 910).

Against this backdrop, Euripides' metaphor of the melting soul – as an adaptation of an expression that is otherwise often associated with the body – offers a welcome opportunity to pursue the question whether references to the soul are necessarily opposed to the body or to corporeal sensations. But how exactly does Euripides employ this metaphor? In the *Heraclidae*, Iolaus uses it to describe Alcmene's fear for her grandchildren; an analogous metaphor is used by Electra in the tragedy of the same name, with regard to her own state, dispelled from her father's home and living in the countryside as the wife of a peasant. How unusual this metaphor is, at least for modern ears, can be seen from the fact that translators often render it rather freely; a near-literal translation would run as follows:

[39] Schmitz 1965, pp. 457-461, who inverts Snell's much-criticised idea of a discovery of the mind by postulating a gradual concealment of the *Leib*. He boldly concludes: 'Die Ablösung des Aischylos durch Sophokles scheint mir daher zu den tiefsten Einschnitten in der Geschichte menschlicher Selbstdeutung zu gehören' (p. 457).

[40] On the famous metaphor of the barking heart, see e.g. Schmitz 1965, p. 446; Rose 1979; Pelliccia 1995, p. 30; Grethlein 2017, pp. 79-80

[41] S. *OT* 64 is also adduced by Schmitz 1965, p. 459 in the context of the aforementioned argument.

πάλαι γὰρ ὠδίνουσα τῶν ἀφιγμένων
ψυχὴν ἐτήκου νόστος εἰ γενήσεται.

For you have long been in agony, and your soul melting, whether those who have now arrived would ever return. (*Heracl.* 644-645, transl. Kovacs mod.)

αὐτὰ δ' ἐν χερνῆσι δόμοις
ναίω ψυχὰν τακομένα
δωμάτων φυγὰς πατρίων ...

And I myself in a toiler's cottage dwell with a melting soul, exiled from my father's house ... (*El.* 207-209, transl. Kovacs mod.)[42]

By replacing καρδίαν with ψυχήν (or in a lyric passage -άν), the lines evoke the image of the soul as a solid object that comes to be dissolved; the underlying conceptual metaphor would be THE SOUL IS A SOLID OBJECT. This evidently involves a farther-reaching mental projection than in the case of the heart, which does not melt either, but is an actual physical object. But does this rule out an association with a bodily experience? In the *Heraclidae*, the situation is equivocal. The other verb used in the expression, ὠδίνω, is originally body-related ('have the pains of childbirth'). By Euripides' time, it had become a common metaphor for emotions, but perhaps the original association with physical pain could still be felt, especially when the verb was applied to a woman[43]. Alcmene, who enters the stage after Iolaus' words, admits that her 'strength is weak' (ἀσθενὴς μὲν ἥ γ' ἐμὴ / ῥώμη, E. *Heracl.* 648-649), but it remains unclear whether this has to do with the sorrow described by Iolaus or simply with her old age.

The *Electra* gives some more explicit indications. A little earlier, in the *strophe* of the song in whose *antistrophe* the melting metaphor is used, Electra points out that she is weeping night and day (*El.* 181-182). In this way, she explicitly mentions the very bodily phenomenon that is already associated with the metaphor of melting in the Homeric epics. In the following lines (*El.* 184-185, metrically corresponding to those in which the melting metaphor occurs), she goes on to describe her dirty hair and worn-out clothes, further details that

[42] Kovacs translates 'you have long been in painful suspense' and 'dwell heart-worn', without the term 'soul'; Cropp renders *El.* 208 more literally: 'my soul wasting away'. The commentaries are surprisingly reticent about these melting metaphors (nothing in Wilkins 1993; Denniston 1939; Roisman-Luschnig 2011).

[43] On the different usages, see *LSJ* s.v. ὠδίνω I and II. The verb is also connected with ψυχή in E. *Hipp.* 258-260 (also with reference to women), instructively discussed by Cairns 2017, pp. 251-252 with n. 19.

show how her state involves her body or her physical appearance, probably including the actor's costume. Through these descriptions, it is clear that the state of despair, to which the melting metaphor refers, is by no means restricted to an immaterial inner self. This is not to say that the soul is necessarily conceived of as part of the body, but apparently there is an analogy between the state of the body and the state of the soul, both of which are somehow in bad shape. The state of the body is visible on stage, and the audience can infer that this state reflects the character's personal bodily experience, which mirrors the state of her soul[44].

At least in the *Electra*, then, the melting metaphor applied to ψυχάν is used in a way that does not differ so much from its counterpart with καρδίαν. The passage from the *Heraclidae* is less clear, but does at any rate not rule out such an interpretation. To be sure, this impression, in particular in the *Electra*, is mostly a result of the accompanying references to the body, whereas the metaphor in itself could also be understood in a purely abstract way, as an illustration of an immaterial inner state that need not manifest itself in a physiological way. In the end, as so often, it is up to recipients how they understand the metaphor, which, precisely due to its high degree of metaphoricity, allows for different interpretations. The reference to the soul rather than a part of the body remains a significant innovation, both in Greek thought in general and in the history of melting metaphors, but the examples demonstrate that the new way of speaking does not automatically rule out old ways of thinking about the body and emotions. Unlike Homer, Euripides has a term for an abstract inner self, i.e. ψυχή, but this does not mean that he contrasts body and the soul; rather, his use of ψυχή goes hand in hand with a focus on bodily experience[45].

A sideways glance at Aeschylus and Sophocles

This article has concentrated on Homer and Euripides, who both provide rich material for studying the use of melting as a metaphor for embodied emotions. Before reaching conclusions, it is worth asking whether anything comparable exists in the works of the other major tragic poets. Aeschylus does not use this type of metaphor in his surviving plays. What comes closest is an expression

[44] Electra's outward appearance can also be seen as part of a ritualised mourning for her lost home, but this does not rule out that it reflects her 'inner' state.

[45] Cfr. Schlesier 1998, p. 38: 'ψυχή [ist] bei Euripides grundsätzlich physisch fundiert und niemals im spirituellen Sinne als rein geistige Seele – im Gegensatz zum rein materiellen Körper – zu interpretieren.' See also the examples from *Hipp.* discussed by Cairns 2017, pp. 251-254, including such body-related cases as a bed-bound ψυχή (εὐναία δέδεται ψυχά, *Hipp.* 160) and the marrow of the ψυχή (μυελὸν ψυχῆς, *Hipp.* 255).

with λύειν in *Pers.* 913, where Xerxes, returning to his court after his fleet has been defeated and seeing the old men who are left in the city, exclaims in emphatic anapaests: 'for the strength of my limbs is dissolved' (λέλυται γὰρ ἐμοὶ γυίων ῥώμη, A. *Pers.* 913). Sophocles employs a limited number of expressions with τήκειν or its compounds in the *Antigone* and the *Electra*, but with remarkable differences between these two plays. In the older *Antigone*, first performed probably 442 BCE, τήκειν is only applied to predominantly physical contexts such as a rotting corpse (εἰ πόσις μοι κατθανὼν ἐτήκετο, *Ant.* 906) or men suffering after being blinded (κατὰ δὲ τακόμενοι, *Ant.* 979). The latter case is relevant for the study of embodied emotions insofar as the blinded men are also described as crying (κλαῖον, *Ant.* 980); apparently, the suffering expressed through the metaphor of melting is at least in part caused by emotional rather than just physical pain.

In the *Electra*, by contrast, the expressions refer to the heroine's state of despair after her father's death; in one case, tears are mentioned, as in the Homeric epics (κλαίω, τέτηκα, *El.* 283), in the others, the description is more general (the chorus asks Electra: τίν' ἀεὶ / τάκεις ὦδ' ἀκόρεστον οἰμωγὰν / τὸν ... Ἀγαμέμνονα; *El.* 122-125; cfr. ἄνευ τοκέων κατατάκομαι, *El.* 187; ἐμοῦ τακομένας, *El.* 835)[46]. As the Electra was written relatively late in Sophocles' career, it is possible that he was inspired by Euripides' use of melting metaphors. In fact, there is a remarkable parallel between Euripides' Medea and Sophocles' Electra in that the eponymous heroines of both plays, suffering from emotional pain, are repeatedly described with metaphors of melting. An important difference between these two tragedies is that Sophocles' metaphors of melting are – apart from the one referring to crying – less explicitly associated with bodily manifestations of emotions. It is certainly still possible for the spectators to imagine a bodily experience when they hear these metaphors, all the more so as they see Electra on stage, but the text places less emphasis on the physical aspect than Euripides does.

Conclusions

What can we learn from comparing the metaphors of melting in Homer and Euripides? First, as far as embodied emotions are concerned, melting is a rather complex metaphor. It can be associated with different bodily experiences

[46] *El.* 122-125 is difficult to translate verbatim. 'Why do you let such unceasing lament for Agamemnon ever melt away?' comes close; *LSJ* s.v. τήκω I.2 explains: τί ὧδε τήκει οἰμώζουσα τὸν Ἀγ. ('why do you melt away mourning Agamemnon').

induced by strong negative emotions, but there are also cases where recipients can think of more abstract 'mental' experiences. Expectably, this latter case is more common in Euripides, but already in Homer melting metaphors applied to the ἦτορ or the θυμός allow for a certain range of interpretations, including bodily and non-bodily ones. The most interesting result is that even in Euripides, in spite of his at times seemingly more artificial melting metaphors, the recipients are more often than not encouraged to associate the expressions – which always refer to negative experiences – with bodily symptoms. This is true even in the case of the metaphor of the melting soul, which seems to correspond to a certain bodily state. For Euripides as a tragic poet, such somatic manifestations of mental processes were probably particularly appealing when they could be made visible on stage, as in the case of the physical interaction between Hecuba and Polyxena or Electra's neglected appearance[47].

Overall, Euripides' appropriation of the metaphor of melting, as well as his way of depicting emotions more generally, reflects several overlapping factors. On the one hand, a new anthropological terminology is emerging, including the concept of the soul. On the other hand, there is still the integrative concept of the body known from the Homeric epics, in which almost every experience is felt in or connected with the body – a concept transmitted through literary models, but probably also rooted in bodily experience[48]. Finally, there is the dramatic genre, which fosters a perspective on emotions as subjective experiences visibly expressed on stage. Euripides' melting metaphors represent not only a new time with new ideas about human nature, but even more so a *tragic* expression of embodied emotions, recognisable enough to be parodied by Aristophanes[49]. In some ways, however, the Homeric and Euripidean metaphors have more in common than one might expect in view of the obvious differences between the texts – most importantly, a strong interest in emotion as bodily experience.

[47] Medea is a special case because she is not on stage in the first part of the play and has to be imagined.

[48] Schmitz 1965, p. 339 characterises this concept succinctly, if perhaps too boldly, as a time 'in der nichts erlebt wurde, ohne daß dieses Erleben am eigenen Leib gespürt worden wäre.'

[49] Ar. *Ve.* 317; *Plu.* 1034. In the latter passage, the parodical twist is particularly evident: Γρ. ὑπὸ τοῦ γὰρ ἄλγους κατατέτηκ', ὦ φίλτατε. / Χρ. οὔκ, ἀλλὰ κατασέσηπας, ὥς γ' ἐμοὶ δοκεῖς ('Old Woman: In fact I'm pining away with grief, my dear man. Chremylus: No, you're rotting away, if you ask me.' *Plu.* 1034-1035, transl. Henderson). See also Piqueux 2022, pp. 270-271 on comic parodies of passages such as E. *Hipp.* 198-200.

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Lien Van Geel

Andromache's Swoon: the Fainting Female in Homer and Plutarch*

Abstract: Graeco-Roman fainting is a generally understudied subject. Homeric syncopes appear in an overview by Alfons Nehring 1947, who notes that the percentage of male fainting incidents is considerable, whereas female episodes are less common. Although Homeric fainting is not strictly gendered, it typically functions as a commentary on a character's weakened vulnerability when the character in question is either elderly or female. This article examines one crucial episode of female fainting through the character of Andromache in *Iliad* 22 and explores her subsequent influence in Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*. Plutarch develops this paradigm in the *Lives* of Pompey and Brutus, as the works feature lively moments of feminine lament, fear, and collapse. Plutarch's anecdotes of the swoons from the Late Republican Julia, Cornelia, and Porcia are prime instances of embodied emotion that can be traced back to Andromache's swoon. Ultimately, the transformation of the Andromache paradigm perceived in Plutarch illustrates how this literary tradition of the gendered swoon has evolved gradually.

Keywords: Homer, Plutarch, *Parallel Lives*, *syncope*, fear, Andromache, Julia, Cornelia, Porcia.

Introduction

The anti-conformist 1970 rock n' roll song «Sweet Jane» by The Velvet Underground challenges cinematic clichés as follows: «You know that women never really faint / And that villains always blink their eyes». By the seventies, the fainting female had been comfortably engrained in the cultural imagination, but to what point can we trace back this cliché? For one thing, Victorian literature has had a significant impact on the cultural trope of female fainting that we still know today[1]. These swooners were, of course, by no means the

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[1] For the trope of the Victorian fainting lady and its association with feebleness as an ideal, see Thorpe 1991 and Van Dijk & Wieling 2009. For ancient medical views on *syncope* and fainting, often associated with feebleness as a symptom, see Salazar 2001 and Papavramidou & Tziakas 2010. Recent medical studies, however, note that fainting generally affects more female than male

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first to succumb temporarily to their excitement or suffering. Their ancient Graeco-Roman sisters, both mythical and historical, are equally portrayed as swooning because they are unable to endure their excessive emotions. To name just two early instances of literary female *syncope*, Andromache's swoon in *Il.* 22.475 or the psychosomatic suffering of Sappho's poetic persona in Fragment 31 come to mind.

Homeric swoons have overall received the most attention: Alfons Nehring 1947 provides an overview of instances of *syncope* in Homeric epic, and Elton Barker 2011 focuses on Sarpedon's swoon and its significant, innovative position in the narrative in relation to the fainting of Hector, Aeneas, and Andromache[2]. These scholars reveal that Homeric epic fainting is not necessarily a female embodied experience, as multiple warriors lose consciousness after having been severely wounded. Fainting can thus have causes that range from inherently medical ailments to severe wounds and extreme emotion. The latter type of emotional fainting will be the focus of this article. The aim of this article is to uncover ancient trends in female fainting through the character of Andromache specifically and her subsequent influence in Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*.

Even with the Homeric articles above, Graeco-Roman fainting seems to have received relatively little scholarly attention, whereas, for instance, ancient tears have been subject to more academic scrutiny[3]. Additionally, Aeneas' words *sunt lacrimae rerum* (*Aen.* 1.462) have taken on something of a life of its own[4]. The *Aeneid* as a work itself was reported to have collapsed the boundary between narrative and audience and mind and body. Virgil's recital of the end of *Aeneid* 6 – the *tu Marcellus eris* during the Parade of the Heroes – famously caused Augustus' sister Octavia Minor to faint as she was unable to bear the lugubrious cameo of her prematurely deceased son in the epic:

patients; see Van Dijk & Wieling 2009 (following Ganzeboom et al 2003) and Raj 2020. Salazar 2001, p. 171, however, notes that ancient women were not deemed to have fainted more easily, or in her words, that «Ohnmachten zwar auch in den gynäkologischen Schriften erwähnt werden, es aber nirgendwo behauptet wird, daß Frauen leichter oder häufiger bewußtlos werden als Männer (wie man es aus späteren Jahrhunderten gewohnt ist».

[2] See Nehring 1947, pp. 106-121 and Barker 2011, pp. 2-14. Such instances of Homeric fainting prompt questions about the nature of consciousness and the implications of the loss thereof, and the associations between death and fainting: see Clarke 1999, pp. 139-147, and de Jong 2012, pp. 182, 185. For Homeric falling, see Purves 2019.

[3] See Fögen 2009 for a compiled volume on ancient weeping. The «Boys Don't Cry»-cliché, it turns out, is a fairly recent development, as public crying did not become taboo until the nineteenth century: see Rey 2015, p. 226 n. 2 and de Libero 2009, pp. 209-210 for attitudes towards weeping and gender.

[4] See Wharton 2008.

> Cui tamen multo post perfectaque demum materia tres omnino libros recitavit, primum, quartum et sextum, sed hunc notabili Octaviae adfectione, quae cum recitationi interesset, ad illos de filio suo versus, «tu Marcellus eris», defecisse fertur atque aegre focilata.
> (Don. Auct.: Suet. *Vita Vergili* 32-33)[5]
>
> But, not until much later when he had finally some material, Virgil at last recited three books in their entirety to Augustus – the second, fourth, and sixth – but the latter with a remarkable effect on Octavia, who, as she was present at the recitation, is reported to have fainted at those famous verses about her son, «You shall be Marcellus»; she was revived only with difficulty.

The historicity of this anecdote is often disputed[6]. Even so, the impact of the eulogy for the unfortunate youth suggests how intensely audience members are imagined having engaged with the text's performance and its possibilities for immersive experiences. This likely fabled swoon is then an illustration of how, as Douglas Cairns and Damien Nelis 2017, p. 16 puts it, «there is no absolute gulf between the material and the textual, the physical and the mental, in the study of emotion». Octavia's reaction to the *tu Marcellus eris* of *Aeneid* 6 is a prime example of an immersive experience where emotion becomes embodied.

So too, roughly a century later, Plutarch, in, e.g., the *Lives* of Pompey and Brutus, builds upon this trend, as the works sport lively moments of feminine lament and fear and, remarkably for our purposes, fainting. Plutarch's anecdotes of the swoons from the Late Republican Julia, Cornelia, and Porcia are instances of embodied emotion. Upon further examination, we see glimpses of Andromache recurring in these matrons' physical and verbal reactions: I will demonstrate Plutarch's literary innovation on this theme. This article will examine female fainting in the two genres that are combined in the Octavia episode, on the one hand, Homeric epic, on the other in a selection of Plutarch's *Lives.* Thus, in reading this selection of instances of swooning in Plutarch against the paradigmatic Homeric background, I will offer new insights on these passages and their relation to one another in the process. Ultimately, the transformation of the Andromache paradigm perceived in Plutarch is an example of how the gendered swoon has evolved gradually.

[5] Text from Rolfe 1914; the translation is my own.

[6] Servius (*ad Aen*. 6.861), in fact, claims that Octavia and Augustus had been weeping and does not mention any type of swooning. For recent treatments of the Octavia episode, see Ziogas 2017, Hope 2020, pp. 276-281 and Hallett 2020, p. 122.

1. The Epic Faint

The study of emotions in epic has been one of the catalysts of emotion studies in classical studies. Emotions are crucial driving forces of epic: Achilles' *mênis* launches the problem of the *Iliad*, whilst Juno's *ira* steers the course of the majority of the *Aeneid* and Aeneas' final murderous outburst continue to occupy scholars for centuries[7]. Classical fainting, while common, is a generally understudied subject. Homeric syncopes appear in an overview by Alfons Nehring 1947, who indicates that the percentage of male fainting incidents is considerable, whereas female fainting moments are less common. One might call this a logical finding for the *Iliad*, especially if one considers that most of these swoons are battle-related. Take, for instance, Sarpedon's swoon in *Iliad* 5: τὸν δὲ λίπε ψυχή, κατὰ δ᾽ ὀφθαλμῶν κέχυτ᾽ ἀχλύς (*Il.* 5.696)[8]. In Homer, the loss of one's ψυχή usually denotes death, instead of this temporary state of unconsciousness. Other breath-taking phrases and verbs occur: Christine Salazar 2001, pp. 169-172 focuses on appearances of *syncope* in the context of trauma and surgery in Galen, while Elton Barker 2011, p. 2 provides a helpful overview of descriptions of fainting elsewhere, for instance, in the Hippocratic corpus and beyond. λιποθυμία and λιποψυχία (as well as λιποψυχέω) are common term for this physical reaction, and, according to Michael Clarke 1999, p. 147, fainting also appears in the range of meanings of ἀποψύχω[9]. While this article will not investigate swoons in Latin literature, it is worth noting that verbs such as *langueo* and *stupefacio* are common but that linguistic parallels occur between Greek and Latin. That is, *intermorior* preserves the liminal state

[7] Much ink has rightly been spilled on the topic. For just a few studies on Achilles', Juno's, Aeneas' and Turnus' wrath, see Braund and Most 2004, pp. 50-75, 208-229, Cairns and Nelis 2017, p. 16, de Bakker-van den Berg-Klooster 2022, p. 5, and Agri 2022, pp. 3-7. Allan 2018, pp. 59-60 applies theories of cognitive narratologist Marie-Laure Ryan and cognitive psychologist Rolf Zwaan onto the Homeric epic and identifies a host of immersive narrative strategies. Most recently, see especially Fornaro 2024, pp. 5-11 for a embodied emotion reading of Achilles' wrath as having an 'emotional quality and bodily resonance'; *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Greek Epic* (2024), which features an entire section on 'epic feelings'.

[8] Barker 2011, in the most extensive recent study of Homeric swoons, investigates the nature and significance of Sarpedon's swoon through similar uses of the underlined phrase. See also Purves 2019, pp. 63-77 on falling in Homer (esp. p. 41 n15 on the different falling gestures of Andromache and her association with warriors, beginning with Segal 1971, pp. 43-51, and p. 155 n9). Kuhn-Treichel 2024, p. 26 focuses on the dissolution of and loss of control over Homeric bodies in the line λύτο γούνατα καὶ φίλον ἦτορ and demonstrates its cognitive and embodied effectiveness in the narrative: 'da una prospettiva moderna la rappresentazione stereotipata di alcune emozioni può sembrare strana, persino primitiva, ma da un punto di vista cognitivo si può vedere in essa una strategia narrativa efficace, poiché le espressioni incarnate contribuiscono a rendere percepibili le esperienze di perdita di controllo del corpo'.

[9] See Barker 2011, p. 2 n1.

between life and death in the moment of loss of consciousness; *linqui animo* indicates the interest in the plight of one's spirit in this passive state.

1.1. Andromache's Swoon

Let us now turn to the first fainting incident in this article, namely Andromache's swoon in *Iliad* 22. The context is as follows: Achilles has just slain Hector and is dragging his body behind his chariot. The principal Trojan characters in *Iliad* 22 then commence the informal mourning, which will be reprised more formally at the end of *Iliad* 24[10]. Grief is a major theme in *Iliad* 22: Andromache's tears during Hector's farewell speech in *Iliad* 6 foreshadow both his death and her mourning abilities[11]. Initially, Hecuba and Priam lead the lament for Hector. This type of lament makes no gender distinction: the expression of emotion is just as intense for either gender in this episode[12]. Andromache was not yet aware of Hector's death, as she – the picture of domestic virtue – had been weaving in her inner room and preparing a bath for her husband (*Il.* 22.438-446). It had not been until her kinspeople's wailing reaches her that she started to panic. The disturbing aural impression causes a physical reaction in her body: she starts to reel and drops her spindle: κωκυτοῦ δ᾽ ἤκουσε καὶ οἰμωγῆς ἀπὸ πύργου· / τῆς δ᾽ ἐλελίχθη γυῖα, χαμαὶ δέ οἱ ἔκπεσε κερκίς («But she heard the shrieking and lamentation from the rampart, / and her limbs trembled, and the shuttle fell from her hand to the floor» *Il.* 22.447-448)[13]. This physical reaction, then, is the forerunner of her actual swoon, which occurs after her address to her handmaids. In this address, she identifies her mother-in-law's ululations as the catalyst for her distress and thus reiterates the observation of the epic's narrator. As she sets out to investigate the situation at hand, she starts to describe her psychosomatic symptoms as follows:

> δεῦτε, δύω μοι ἕπεσθον, ἴδωμ᾽ ὅτιν᾽ ἔργα τέτυκται.
> αἰδοίης ἑκυρῆς ὀπὸς ἔκλυον, ἐν δ᾽ ἐμοὶ αὐτῇ
> στήθεσι πάλλεται ἦτορ ἀνὰ στόμα[14], νέρθε δὲ γοῦνα

[10] For lament in the *Iliad*, see Alexiou 2002, p. 2, Tsagalis 2004, Segal 1971, Muich 2011, p. 12, and Hauser 2024.

[11] For Hector's farewell and the emotions it arouses, see Föllinger 2009, p. 33.

[12] Föllinger 2009, p. 21 and, esp., p. 25: «there is no difference between the weeping of men and that of women: when Priam and Hecabe, Hector's parents, see that their son is about to attack Achilles and will not let himself be dissuaded from doing so, they both weep».

[13] The text is from the *Loeb Classical Library* (*LCL*) edition; for my own translation, I consulted and regularly followed de Jong 2012. See also de Jong 2012, p. 177 for the shock and panic in these verses.

[14] Compare to Sappho's later description of her symptoms in *Sappho* 31.5-6 (text from *LCL*):

πήγνυται· ἐγγὺς δή τι κακὸν Πριάμοιο τέκεσσιν.
αἰ γὰρ ἀπ᾽ οὔατος εἴη ἐμεῦ ἔπος· ἀλλὰ μάλ᾽ αἰνῶς
δείδω μὴ δή μοι θρασὺν Ἕκτορα δῖος Ἀχιλλεὺς
μοῦνον ἀποτμήξας πόλιος πεδίονδε δίηται,
καὶ δή μιν καταπαύσῃ ἀγηνορίης ἀλεγεινῆς
[...].
(*Iliad* 22.450-457)

Come on, you two, and follow me, so that I may see what deeds have been done. I heard the voice of my revered mother-in-law, and, in my very breast, my heart leaps up to my mouth, and underneath my knees are locked[15]; there is certainly some trouble near at hand for the children of Priam. May my word be away from my ear, but I fear quite terribly that godlike Achilles may have put my over-confident Hector to flight by himself alone, cut off from the city, to the plain and has by now made him cease from his grievous excess of courage [...].

Andromache's reaction starts of as fairly rational. Even though she has a premonition of Hector's imminent demise (her words indeed echo both those of her earlier fears in *Iliad* 6 and the description in *Iliad* 22.189-198[16]), even though she experiences such disturbing sensations, she beckons her handmaids to confirm whether her anxiety is warranted. Only then is she willing to yield to this list of anxiety-driven symptoms. She attaches more value to gathering information through sight than through hearing, as she does not trust the sound of her kinspeople's wailing. Her reaction here is worth comparing to her behaviour in *Iliad* 6.496-502, where she prematurely and proleptically mourns Hector with her handmaids. Here, too, she starts to describe Hector in the past tense before confirming that he indeed has died. As she investigates the situation, the following onrush of emotions kicks in:

Ὣς φαμένη μεγάροιο διέσσυτο μαινάδι ἴση,
παλλομένη κραδίην· ἅμα δ᾽ ἀμφίπολοι κίον αὐτῇ.
αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ πύργον τε καὶ ἀνδρῶν ἵξεν ὅμιλον,
ἔστη παπτήνασ᾽ ἐπὶ τείχεϊ, τὸν δ᾽ ἐνόησεν
ἑλκόμενον πρόσθεν πόλιος· ταχέες δέ μιν ἵπποι
ἕλκον ἀκηδέστως κοίλας ἐπὶ νῆας Ἀχαιῶν.
τὴν δὲ κατ᾽ ὀφθαλμῶν ἐρεβεννὴ νὺξ ἐκάλυψεν,

τό μ᾽ ἦ μὰν / καρδίαν ἐν στήθεσιν ἐπτόαισεν. See Cuomo 2022, pp. 7-18 for a reading of these psychosomatic symptoms through the lens of a panic attack.

[15] Cfr. Kuhn-Treichel 2024, pp. 13-21, 26-27: the knees here not loosened but locked.

[16] As de Jong 2012, p. 179 observes.

ἤριπε δ᾽ ἐξοπίσω, ἀπὸ δὲ ψυχὴν ἐκάπυσσε.
[...]
ἀμφὶ δέ μιν γαλόῳ τε καὶ εἰνατέρες ἅλις ἔσταν,
αἵ ἑ μετὰ σφίσιν εἶχον ἀτυζομένην ἀπολέσθαι.
ἡ δ᾽ ἐπεὶ οὖν ἔμπνυτο καὶ ἐς φρένα θυμὸς ἀγέρθη,
ἀμβλήδην γοόωσα μετὰ Τρῳῇσιν ἔειπεν·
(*Iliad* 22.460-477)

As she was speaking, she rushed through the palace like a maenad with a quivering heart. She made her way together with her handmaids. But when she came to the tower and the mass of Trojans, she stood still on the wall looking around [anxiously] and perceived him being dragged in front of the city; the swift horses were dragging him ruthlessly towards the hollow ships of the Achaeans. Then gloomy night threw a cloud over her eyes; then she fell backwards and breathed out her spirit. [...] And around her stood her sisters-in-law – her husband's sisters and his brothers' wives –, who held her, terrified almost to death, between them. But when she revived, and her spirit returned into her breast, wailing with sudden bursts, she spoke among the Trojan women.

Whereas just previously the acoustic triggers merely instilled concern, the visual experience – «perhaps the most moving instance of focalisation in the whole of the Homeric epics»[17] – has a decidedly different effect. Once she sees the gruesome, immersive[18] spectacle of Hector being dragged, her body succumbs. Homer's diction in the description of her swoon again focuses on the impact of sight[19]. It is as if the obscuring shade protects Andromache from the emotional burden. Homer reuses this phrase five times throughout the *Iliad*[20], with Andromache as the only female recipient of this diction; while

[17] de Jong 2012, p. 181.

[18] Allan, de Jong and de Jonge 2017, p. 42 read the description of the treatment of Hector, and especially the narrator's use of the adverb ἀκηδέστως, as an example of 'identification' in the shape of 'embedded focalization', as the adverb presents Andromache's emotional reaction. Ready 2023, pp. 17-20, 27-29 urges to proceed with caution when assigning the label of 'identification' on the basic of merely focalisation: he later, esp., pp. 94-100 provides an extensive reading of identification with Andromache in *Iliad* 22.

[19] The omitted lines (on Andromache's casting off her headdress) similarly touch on the visual, as the narrator embarks on a climactic, decelerated *ekphrasis* of her clothing, and especially four items of wedding paraphernalia, which, according to Ready 2023, p. 95, enhances the reader's identification process. The activation of the memory of their wedding, de Jong 2012, pp. 182-183 reads as an 'external analepsis' to the wedding of Hector and Andromache, which Sappho would later treat in Fragment 44. The presence of the latter could therefore function as a link between *Iliad* 22 and Sappho's Fragments 31 (in its description of similar psychosomatic symptoms) and 44 (in its focus on the wedding of Hector and Andromache); see Nagy 2015 and 2024 for similar connections between the Hector and Andromache of Homer and Sappho.

[20] Barker 2011, pp. 10-11.

fainting is common in Homer, Andromache's loss of consciousness receives the most elaborate description[21]. The phrase is, then, not markedly gendered, as we mostly see it reserved for the valiant yet falling warriors in the *Iliad.* Reversely, the phrase's application to a female character potentially complicates her position within the epic as a marker of strictly female virtue. She – named after manly battle – after all, offers valuable military advice to Hector in *Iliad* 6. Her husband insolently discredits her suggestions, even if the focalisation of her lament complicates the masculine experience and ideology at the end of the *Iliad*[22]. Moreover, Elton Barker 2011, p. 9 n28 also makes the connection between Sarpedon and Andromache, «two of the epic's key swooners», based on the description of their respective moments of losing and regaining their *psyche*. Another close parallel merits specific attention: Laertes, Odysseus' father, faints in a remarkably similar fashion as Andromache does in *Od.* 24.345-349[23]. The connection between the two characters can be explained as follows: through their *anagnorisis* or recognition of, on the one hand, Hector's tragic fate, and, on the other, Odysseus' successful return[24]. Moreover, the description of Andromache as, on the one hand, a 'falling warrior'[25], and, on the other hand, an elderly male figure makes sense. In both readings, she is described in masculine terms, yet, either way, she is described as a weakened male. While Homeric fainting may, then, not be strictly gendered, it only appears as a commentary on a character's weakened emotional state when said character is either elderly or female.

Finally, if the swoon can also be read as another iteration of death – or at least a temporary one – Andromache here mimics her husband's sorry plight. Hector himself had experienced not one but two swoons and therefore near-death experiences before his actual death, which is the catalyst for Andromache's own swoon[26]. Andromache's premature lament in *Iliad* 6 may be the

[21] de Jong 2012, p. 182 and 185. For Andromache's position among these male warriors who faint, see Graziosi and Haubold 2010, p. 129. The other key fainters in the *Iliad* are Aeneas (*Il.* 5.308-317), Sarpedon (*Il.* 5.696-698), and Hector (*Il.* 11.349-360, *Il.* 14.419-439).

[22] Muich 2011, p. 3.

[23] As Barker 2011, p. 4 n13 and p. 12 n39 and de Jong 2012, p. 182 have noted. ὣς φάτο, τοῦ δ᾽ αὐτοῦ λύτο γούνατα καὶ φίλον ἦτορ, / σήματ᾽ ἀναγνόντος τά οἱ ἔμπεδα πέφραδ᾽ Ὀδυσσεύς. / ἀμφὶ δὲ παιδὶ φίλῳ βάλε πήχεε: τὸν δὲ ποτὶ οἶ / εἶλεν ἀποψύχοντα πολύτλας δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς. / αὐτὰρ ἐπεί ῥ᾽ ἄμπνυτο καὶ ἐς φρένα θυμὸς ἀγέρθη, [...] This text originates from the *LCL* (Murray 1919); the echoes of the description of Andromache's swoon are indicated in bold. See de Jong 2012, p. 185 for the similarities between Andromache's and Laertes' regaining consciousness. See also Kuhn-Treichel 2024, pp. 15-16 on the diction used of Penelope's and Laertes' dissolution of their limbs upon recognising Odysseus.

[24] Segal 1971, p. 5.

[25] Segal 1971, p. 54.

[26] Barker 2011, p. 11 n37.

parallel here. As soon as Andromache regains her consciousness in the midst of the crowd, she seems to realise her assigned function in the lament tradition and starts her second (but not final) lament for Hector. Andromache's multiple initiations of lament may then mirror this structure of Hector's multiple near-deaths.

To conclude this first section, we have seen that, like weeping, fainting is not a markedly female embodied emotion. We, in fact, see more male characters losing their consciousness because of physical trauma. Even if Andromache does not fail because of a battle wound, her swoon does not necessarily represent the female feebleness. Even if she is unable to bear the sight of her slain husband, she initially attempts to remain rational upon hearing the commotion surrounding Hector's demise. She does not faint until she is visually triggered. Sight, then, emerges as a particularly potent fainting catalyst amongst the senses. The correlation between the bodily and the visual persists in the set of swoons that follow in the second section of this paper: those which Plutarch seemingly modelled after the Homeric paradigm in the *Parallel Lives.*

2. Fainting Matrons of the Late Republic: Plutarch's *Life of Pompeius* and *Life of Brutus*

Now we turn to a selection of female fainting moments from the Late Roman Republic, a time of incessant civil strife, during which the classic dichotomy between public and private becomes increasingly blurred[27]. An author who seems to pay particular interest to these fainting matrons and his female characters in general is Plutarch of Chaeronea[28]. This second part of the article will take three instances of female fainting in two *Lives*, that of *Pompeius* and *Brutus*, each in connection with political moments that feature particularly heightened embodied emotion and female involvement. In these instances, Andromache's paradigm and presence will become apparent.

[27] See Milnor 2005, Rohr Vio 2023, and Foubert 2024.

[28] For all the centrality of Plutarch's statesmen in the *Lives*, gender and female characters in Plutarch's works have become more in vogue so much so that some have entertained the idea of Plutarch as a proto-feminist (cfr. Flacelière 1971), while scholars including McInerney 2003 and Chapman 2011 and onwards question this view quite rightly. Although Plutarch focuses on his statesmen and their characters and deeds, Le Corsu 1981 was the first to demonstrate that the *Lives* teem with female characters: *Plutarque et Les Femmes* is the first and still the most extensive study of women in Plutarch to date but is of a mostly encyclopaedical nature, a strand of research that Nikolaidis 1997, Blomqvist 1989, Walcot 1999, Marasco 2008, Chapman 2011, and Castellani 2002 have continued. See Caterine 2019 and Warren 2018, 2019, and 2022 for investigations of Plutarch's attitudes towards gender and gender-bending. For a recent overview on Plutarch's *Mulierum Virtutes* and the place of women in it, see Tanga 2019, pp. LXIV-LXII (and esp. n10).

2.1 Emotions in Historiography and Plutarch

At this juncture, it is then fitting to regard the interplay between historiography and emotion studies. For instance, Cynthia Damon 2017 provides an insightful overview on emotions in historiography. She applies it to three strands: emotion in the matter and effect of the story, in the audience, and lastly in the author. Damon reminds us of the historiographical philosophy of Plutarch, who strives for an immersive alignment of emotion in historiography with Thucydides as the ideal paradigm in *Moralia* 347A (*De gloria Atheniensium*): the emotions of the participant ideally equal those of the reader (2017, pp. 151-2). Historiographers often achieve this immersivity through their craft of speeches, as Dennis Pausch 2010 has shown for historiography in general and Bradley Buszard 2010 for Plutarch in particular. Unlike swoons, tears in historiography have received considerable attention. Loretana de Libero 2009 provides an overview of the many tears in Roman history and historiography, while Donald Lateiner 2009, p. 106, 128 identifies Plutarch's historiography as a particularly tearful *étape* in the genre[29]. Unlike the airtime given to Homeric *syncopes*, historiographical swoons have not been studied as extensively. Fainting in Plutarch, in a similar way to and, as I suggest, influenced by that of the theme and diction of Homeric epic, is by no means strictly female[30]. Plutarchan *Lives* (or *Moralia* for that matter) feature just as many male figures fainting from battle or emotion or medical conditions[31]. In this part of the article, we will regard three instances where female characters faint, whilst comparing them to the paradigm of Andromache already presented in *Iliad* 22, with the following fourth instances as its point of departure.

This is not to say that the three examples of the two *Lives* on which this

[29] Cfr. Lateiner 2009, p. 128: «In the *Lives*, δάκρυ [tear] terms appear 134 times, 79 for Romans and 55 for Greeks».

[30] For an overview of some Homeric references and citations throughout the *corpus Plutarcheum* as well as *De Homero*, see Díaz Lavado 1999, D'Ippolito 2004, pp. 11-35, and Kim 2010, pp. 11, 51, 96 and *passim*, who examines Plutarch's views of Homeric material with respect of his handling of morality and truth and Homer's status as 'the fountain of all knowledge.' Fernández-Delgado 2020, pp. 86-97 similarly focuses on Homeric quotations in a selection of political *Moralia* and identifies Homer as a figure of great authority and instruction.

[31] Salazar 2010, p. 173 identifies a number of *syncopes* resulting from physical trauma and surgery in Plutarch, such as in *Ages.* and *Alex.* For uses of λιποθυμία and its variants in Plutarch, see *Them.* 10 (where a dog is said to have fainted after attempting to reunite with the owner who abandoned the poor creature; the anecdote serves as an explanation for the name 'Dog's Mound') and *Pomp.* 49 (where it denotes weakness of spirit rather than a swoon), *Brut.* 25 (where the meaning shifts to hunger-faintness) as well as the Licinia and Porcia episodes below. See also *Quaest. conv.* 695a.

contribution focuses most heavily are the only such occurrences of female fainting. In the *Lives of Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus,* Licinia, the wife of the titular character of the second of the double *Life,* is already depicted as another Andromache figure, albeit in a compressed fashion. Indeed, Bradley Buszard 2010, pp. 88-89 already links Andromache and Licinia (for they both entreat their husbands not to depart) and focuses especially on the two wives' utterances, though the execution of each fainting incident differs[32]. For our purposes especially, Plutarch places Licinia's swoon directly after her lament for her husband, thus compressing Andromache's lengthier arc reaching from *Iliad* 6 to *Iliad* 22 into a single vignette:

> τοιαῦτα τῆς Λικιννίας ὀδυρομένης, ἀτρέμα τὰς περιβολὰς ἀπολυσάμενος αὐτῆς ὁ Γάϊος ἐχώρει σιωπῇ μετὰ τῶν φίλων, ἡ δὲ τοῦ ἱματίου λαβέσθαι γλιχομένη καταρρυεῖσα πρὸς τοὔδαφος ἔκειτο πολὺν χρόνον ἄναυδος, μέχρι οὗ λιποθυμήσασαν αὐτὴν οἱ θεράποντες ἀράμενοι πρὸς Κράσσον ᾤχοντο τὸν ἀδελφὸν κομίζοντες.
> (*C. Gracc.* 36(15).4)[33]
>
> And as Licinia was lamenting in this way, Gaius, having loosened himself from her embrace without trembling, advanced in silence with his friends. But she, striving to clasp his toga and falling down, was lying on the floor, speechless, for a long time, until her servants, raising her up as she had fainted, carried her to her brother Crassus.

Like Andromache, Licinia pleads her husband – a juxtaposed picture of serenity – not to venture out in public (an echo of Andromache in *Iliad* 6). Then Plutarch starts to blend certain elements: Licinia similarly dreads and attempts to prevent her husband's departure (*Iliad* 6), which immediately causes her to faint (*Iliad* 22). One could read this mixture as an interpolation of *Iliad* 22, where a concrete visual image is the catalyst, as opposed to the more abstract anxiety, which Andromache initially was able to bear until faced with Achilles' treatment of her husband. In both instances, too, the inability to speak that a loss of consciousness causes is starkly contrasted by an initial, heavily rhetorically charged speech[34]. In any case, Andromache emerges as a paradigm

[32] For Plutarch's choice of speech and citation material (including Homer) in the *Lives*, see Rose 2022, pp. 69-70.

[33] The text stems from *LCL* (Perrin 1921); the translations are my own.

[34] Buszard 2010, p. 88 views the 'circumstantial similarities' between Andromache and Licinia as elements that «serve to highlight the fundamental differences between them» (to him, Andromache's motivations are self-centred as opposed to those of Licinia in *Gracchus* and Ari-

for not only the aforementioned women[35], but also for Cornelia of the *Life of Pompey* and Porcia of the *Life of Brutus*, two of the principal women in this part of the article.

2.2. Julia's Swoon in the *Life of Pompey*

The *Life of Pompey* lends itself particularly well to investigations of emotions. Plutarch in fact starts the *Life of Pompey* with the juxtaposed feelings that Pompey and his father elicit from the general Roman opinion: intense goodwill towards the former, and equally blazing hatred towards the latter in *Pompey* 1-2. Jeffrey Beneker 2012 offers an extensive study of how, in Plutarch, Pompey's passion came to function as a chronic distraction and his ultimate demise. Pompey's amorous pursuits and its impact on his career could be read in stark contrast with, for instance, how Plutarch manipulates Caesar's chastity, potentially as a foil for his antagonist Pompey[36]. In this section, I will regard the two final marriages of Pompey, for which Plutarch both includes two anecdotes that feature a fainting female[37]. The first instance is the swoon of Julia Caesaris, Caesar's daughter and Pompey's third wife[38]. Plutarch uses Julia's vehemently emotional reaction to illustrate the closeness between Julia and Pompey. The latter is a knowing nod to their union, which elicits a variety of criticisms ranging from their (to some excessive) age difference to Pompey's alleged neglect of the state in his predilection to act as a doting husband (*Pomp.* 53.1)[39]. This fondness proves to be reciprocal and much talked of, as Plutarch informs his readers (καὶ περιβόητον ἦν τῆς κόρης τὸ φίλανδρον, *Pomp*. 53.2):

stomache in *Dion*, whom he deems «more aware of civic concerns»). Buszard 2010, p. 86 generally reads Andromache as a 'selfish' character, which strikes one as a rather uncharitable (though common) view of the grief-stricken woman, at least, when read through a masculine lens. Muich 2011, p. 12 does not exactly describe Andromache's lament in those terms. She does, however, point out that she shifts the focus from the martial to the marital sphere, as it were.

[35] Cfr. Buszard 2010, p. 89 n18.

[36] See, esp., Beneker 2002/2003 and De Wet 1981.

[37] In one chapter of my forthcoming monograph, I trace the appearances of female characters in the *Pompey*, ranging from the intense emotions that Pompey arouses through his series of marriages and military conquests alike.

[38] For the most recent overview to date of the literary appearances of Julia Caesaris, see Trine Arlund Hass and Sine Grove Saxkjær 2024. For an overview of Pompey's five wives, see Haley 1985 and Aguilar Fernández 2002.

[39] Plutarch's exemplary depiction of Julia is not uncommon: Valerius Maximus, in his *Memorable Deeds and Sayings,* already includes Julia – and Porcia in the section immediately following – as one of the exemplars of conjugal love. See *Val. Max.* 4.6.4, which Plutarch seems to have followed faithfully: [...] *territa metu ne qua ei vis esset adlata, exanimis concidit partumque, quem utero conceptum habebat, subita animi consternatione et gravi dolore corporis eicere coacta est magno quidem cum totius terrarum orbis detrimento* [...].

οὖν ἀγορανομικοῖς ἀρχαιρεσίοις εἰς χεῖράς τινων ἐλθόντων καὶ φονευθέντων περὶ αὐτὸν οὐκ ὀλίγων ἀναπλησθεὶς αἵματος ἤλλαξε τὰ ἱμάτια, πολλοῦ δὲ θορύβου καὶ δρόμου πρὸς τὴν οἰκίαν γενομένου τῶν κομιζόντων τὰ ἱμάτια θεραπόντων, ἔτυχε μὲν ἡ κόρη κύουσα, θεασαμένη δὲ καθημαγμένην τὴν τήβεννον ἐξέλιπε καὶ μόλις ἀνήνεγκεν, ἐκ δὲ τῆς ταραχῆς ἐκείνης καὶ τοῦ πάθους ἀπήμβλωσεν.
(*Pomp.* 53.3)

Once, while during aedile election some came to punches and not a few men around him [Pompey] were murdered, since he himself was stained by the blood, he changed his garments. There was, however, much uproar and running about at their house, as the servants were bringing back the garments, and it happened that the maiden – pregnant – having seen the bloody toga, fainted and was revived with difficulty, but, because of all the confusion and emotion, she miscarried.

This anecdote relates Julia's embodied emotion as the visual of Pompey's bloody toga and its recognition causes her to faint. Such visuality and embodiment are common techniques to immerse an audience further into the narrative. The Andromache paradigm similarly comes to mind in the following ways. First, public uproar penetrates the private sphere through external shouts. Secondly, whereas the external noises cause consternation – Plutarch generally sprinkles in those terms, emphasised in bold in the text and translation –, the visual trigger of the bloody garment causes the young maiden to faint. Moreover, she loses consciousness out of tragically misplaced conjugal concern, yet her pregnant and therefore frail state causes her miscarriage. And thus, whereas Pompey's life is preserved, that of their unborn child is lost: as soon as one fear disappears, another materialises.

The feeble Julia's swoon foreshadows her premature demise, a fate that not even Pompey's affection could prevent. Soon after, we learn that this harmonious union came to a tragic end in Julia's next miscarriage (*Pomp.* 53.4-5). The knowing reader knows that, with it, ended the marriage alliance between Pompey and Julia's father Caesar. The death of the young maiden seems to have sparked deep emotion within the general people as well as within her kinsmen. Plutarch mentions that the former intercept her body for burial at the Campus Martius instead Pompey's own wishes: «rather because of compassion for the maiden than to gratify Pompey and Caesar» (οἴκτῳ τῆς κόρης μᾶλλον ἢ Πομπηΐῳ καὶ Καίσαρι χαριζόμενος). In any case, though the element of speech is lacking in the case of Julia, like Licinia's, Julia's swoon is another variation on the theme of that of Andromache.

2.3. Cornelia's Swoon in the *Life of Pompey*

Though Julia features only sparingly in the *Life of Pompey,* her main impression in Plutarch elicits strong emotions for the unlucky couple as well as for the bystanders. At first glance, the betrothal to Pompey's last wife Cornelia and the characterisation in Plutarch's introduction appears conventional, as merely a replacement and different version of Julia[40]. Plutarch's diction and close placement of the two maidens in the narrative indeed suggest as much. Plutarch, however, adds dimension to Cornelia's characters as he soon has his readers know that Cornelia is exceptionally educationally engaged[41]. This seemingly small detail will be important, especially when compared to, on the one hand, her inability to bear the intensity of her emotions in her time of need, and, on the other, Porcia's preparation in *Brutus*[42].

In *Pomp.* 72, when Pompey's demise looms following his defeat at Pharsalus, he himself is represented as fearful and forgetful of himself; Cornelia will later mimic this behaviour. In *Pomp.* 74, Plutarch's provides a stark contrast with the measured characterisation by which he introduced the educated Cornelia. The reason for this consternation is of course Pompey's escape from Caesar, in which he involves his wife and his son Sextus by his previous wife Mucia. Pompey's episode teems with embodied emotion and features a by now familiar fainting incident:

> ἐν τούτοις οὖσαν αὐτὴν καταλαβὼν ὁ ἄγγελος ἀσπάσασθαι μὲν οὐχ ὑπέμεινε, τὰ δὲ πλεῖστα καὶ μέγιστα τῶν κακῶν τοῖς δάκρυσι μᾶλλον ἢ τῇ φωνῇ φράσας σπεύδειν ἐκέλευσεν, εἰ βούλεταί πως Πομπήϊον ἰδεῖν ἐπὶ νεὼς μιᾶς καὶ ἀλλοτρίας, ἡ δὲ ἀκούσασα προήκατο μὲν αὐτὴν χαμᾶζε καὶ πολὺν χρόνον ἔκφρων[43] καὶ ἄναυδος ἔκειτο, μόλις δέ πως ἔμφρων γενομένη καὶ συννοήσασα τὸν καιρὸν οὐκ ὄντα θρήνων καὶ δακρύων, ἐξέδραμε διὰ τῆς πόλεως ἐπὶ θάλατταν.
> (*Pomp.* 74.2)

The messenger, happening upon her in such a state, could not bear to greet

[40] For Cornelia in the *Life of Pompey* and Plutarch in general, see, e.g., Aguilar Fernández 2002, pp. 200-207 and 2008, pp. 13-14.

[41] *Pomp.* 54. Both the compared appearances of Julia and Cornelia and the latter's erudite representation, I examine in a forthcoming piece.

[42] *Pomp.* 54.4: ἐνῆν δὲ τῇ κόρῃ πολλὰ φίλτρα δίχα τῶν ἀφ᾽ ὥρας. καὶ γὰρ περὶ γράμματα καλῶς ἤσκητο καὶ περὶ λύραν καὶ γεωμετρίαν, καὶ λόγων φιλοσόφων εἴθιστο χρησίμως ἀκούειν. «In this maiden, there were many charms beyond those of her youth. For she had been trained very well in literature, the lyre, and geometry, and she had been accustomed to listen to philosophical lectures profitably».

[43] Compare to Pompey's πάθος and own state of mind in *Pompey* 72.1-2: ... μάλιστα δὲ ὅμοιος παράφρονι καὶ παραπλῆγι τὴν διάνοιαν.

> her. Pointing out those most numerous and largest of troubles through his tears rather than his voice, he urged her to make haste if she wished to see Pompey in his ship, one in number and not his. Having heard these things, she let herself fall [fainted] and was lying on the ground for a long time without sense or speech, having become sensible somehow with difficulty, she reflected that this was not the right time for wails or tears, she ran out, through the city, towards the sea.

Cornelia's swoon is a far cry from the expectations of the protection that her education might offer, which the initial introduction sets up. Her emotion is so deep that she is neither able to draw from her hardly acquired education, nor to bear the heightened emotion caused by the messenger's unfavourable news. In this variation of Andromache's swoon – mirrored by the echo in her speech, as identified by Bradley Buszard 2010, p. 89, who compares the varying depictions of Andromache, Licinia, and Cornelia –, Cornelia reacts not to any visual trigger, but to the report of the messenger. In each case, females faint out of fear. Plutarch suggests, however, that Cornelia is able to stop herself from lamentation within the city limits. For all her fear, she is still able to maintain a sense of propriety. It is at the fringes of society, however, that she lets herself go and fall into her husband's arms. Whereas the description of their brief reunion contains language of tottering and falling, it does not count as a proper swoon exactly because of the speech that so quickly follows: ἀπαντήσαντος δὲ τοῦ Πομπηΐου καὶ δεξαμένου ταῖς ἀγκάλαις αὐτὴν ὑπερειπομένην καὶ περιπίπτουσαν [...] εἶπεν [...] (*Pomp.* 74.3) «and as Pompey met and received her in his arms, tottering and falling over, she spoke [...]». If the visual triggers of the Andromache swoon are lacking in this passage, Plutarch revisits Andromache's reaction to the visual horror at the end of the *Life*[44]. Thus, another variation on the theme of the Andromache paradigm emerges, though Plutarch's use thereof does not reach its full effect until it culminates in his representation of Porcia in the *Life of Brutus*[45], the final example of this article.

[44] The following elements recur: Cornelia mourns Pompey beforehand in his embrace (ἀσπασάμενος οὖν τὴν Κορνηλίαν προαποθρηνοῦσαν αὐτὸν τὸ τέλος... [*Pomp.* 78.4]); Cornelia beholds his impending death from afar in company (ἡ μὲν Κορνηλία μετὰ τῶν φίλων ἐκ τῆς τριήρους περιπαθὴς οὖσα τὸ μέλλον ἀπεσκοπεῖτο... *Pomp.* 79.3); the murder prompts lament expressed through the same word-use as in *Iliad* 22.447 (οἱ δ' ἀπὸ τῶν νεῶν ὡς ἐθεάσαντο τὸν φόνον, οἰμωγὴν ἐξάκουστον ἄχρι τῆς γῆς ἐκχέαντες ἔφυγον... *Pomp.* 80.1) and is treated as a fear-inducing visual spectacle (τοῦ δὲ Πομπηΐου τὴν μὲν κεφαλὴν ἀποτέμνουσι, τὸ δὲ ἄλλο σῶμα γυμνὸν ἐκβαλόντες ἀπὸ τῆς ἀλιάδος τοῖς δεομένοις τοιούτου θεάματος ἀπέλιπον. παρέμεινε δὲ αὐτῷ Φίλιππος, ἕως ἐγένοντο μεστοὶ τῆς ὄψεως. *Pomp.* 80.1-2).

[45] It is worth noting that the chronology of the publication (though not the composition) of

2.4. Porcia's Swoon in the *Life of Brutus*

The interplay between emotions, philosophy, and historiography brings us to the *Life* on the other side of *Caesar*, namely *Brutus*. As one might expect, Plutarch's sections around the conspiracy and assassination of Caesar attract ample instances of anxiety. Porcia's swoon appears in the context of her knowledge and anxiety surrounding Brutus' involvement in the conspiracy. In this episode, we get, as it were, a glimpse of the backstage affairs of arguably one of the most infamous assassinations in history (Plutarch mirrors this glimpse with Calpurnia's anxiety in *Caes.* 64)[46]. Porcia, as one might expect from Cato Minor's offspring, strives to depend on her family's trademark stoicism to keep her anxiety at bay. Donald Lateiner 2008, p. 107 sees these two *Lives* as apt displays of «the contrary ability to restrain tears, a self-control that inhibits the escape of tears, while other men and women sob and cry» with examples of «the philosophical Roman Stoics' self-control: Cato Minor and Brutus (Plutarch, *Them*. 10.9, *Cato* 67-70, *Brut*. 52; cfr. 53.1)». Even so, Lateiner 2008, p. 127 declares the *Cato Minor* as «the weepiest of all the *Lives* (10 examples [of the *dakru-* root])»[47]. In these findings, however, Lateiner 2008, p. 130 records the tears of Cato's kinswomen without any further mention of the *Brutus.* The *Brutus*, however, displays moments in which self-control is sought, yet ultimately unattained (or indeed unattainable).

Porcia's swoon occurs in this very context. Try as she might, and, for all her philosophical pedigree and preparation, like Cornelia, she is unable to bear the intensity of the situation. Her swoon results from the combination of her self-inflicted physical wound and her crippling concerns thus already combining Homeric swoon elements: the Andromache paradigm only sets in gradually. Plutarch first sets up a structure of anxious reactions similar to the one we just perceived with Pompey and Cornelia: first, we learn about the husband's emotional state, after which that of his wife follows, usually in a heightened

the *Parallel Lives* places *Brutus* slightly in front of *Pompey*. For a recent overview, see van der Wiel 2024, p. 468 for the most recent overview of the chronology of the *Lives.*

[46] Conjugal concern is a common theme in the Late Republic; see Rohr Vio 2023, pp. 125-128. For a recent historical overview of the assassination, though mostly through the lens of Marc Antony's experience, see Tatum 2024 as well as Tatum 2008 (chapters 6 and 7) for a sole focus on Caesar.

[47] In this particularly tearful *Life,* Lateiner 2008, p. 131 demonstrates that the specific statistics of gendered weeping remain fairly balanced: «In this weepiest *Life*, then, women weep thrice, dependent men twice, peers thrice and Cato Uticensis himself twice. Others weep for the paragon of courage Cato (or themselves). Cato weeps for the doom of his countrymen, friend and foe. Very philosophical of the philosopher».

mode[48]. Porcia's particularly empirical approach is meant to prove her worthiness to share in Brutus' disquietude (Plutarch later has Porcia express her wish to be his confidante)[49]. It is almost as if Plutarch's character Porcia has learned from Julia and Cornelia to check first if she will be able to bear the emotion: for the latter, she devises a physical test[50]. Porcia, emphatically identified as the famous Stoic martyr's daughter, attempts to test the firmness of her mind to control her passions[51]. In her thought experiment, however, she equates the strength of her body to that of her mind. In this line of thinking, then, the demarcation between mind and body blurs to the extent that it becomes one entity. Indeed, as with the observation of Douglas Cairns and Damien Nelis applied to Octavia's fabled faint above, Porcia already subscribed to the idea that an absolute gulf did not quite exist between body and mind. For, if her body would be able to stand the pain, surely her mind would exhibit a similar fortitude, would it not? Her physical preparation to achieve mental self-control is, in a sense, comparable to Cornelia's training of her mind in *Pompey*, though both prove to have been in vain. Through her wound, Porcia also transcends the boundaries of the separate spheres, as she inflicts a wound upon herself that recalls descriptions of the battle wounds found around the Homeric *syncopes* at the beginning of this article. As such, the circumstances surrounding her impending swoon resemble more those of Homeric warriors and are thus more akin to typically masculine swoons.

While Maria Teresa Galaz Juárez 2000 and Bradley Buszard 2010, pp. 87-88 have already examined Porcia's speech, it is worth revisiting considering the character's comments on gender and the bodily reaction surrounding the speech:

> [...] οἶδ᾽ ὅτι γυναικεία φύσις ἀσθενὴς δοκεῖ λόγον ἐνεγκεῖν ἀπόρρητον· ἀλλ᾽ ἔστι

[48] *Brut.* 13.1.

[49] *Brut.* 13.4.

[50] φιλόστοργος δ᾽ ἡ Πορκία καί φίλανδρος οὖσα καί μεστὴ φρονήματος νοῦν ἔχοντος, οὐ πρότερον ἐπεχείρησεν ἀνερέσθαι τὸν ἄνδρα περὶ τῶν ἀπορρήτων ἢ λαβεῖν ἑαυτῆς τοιαύτην διάπειραν. λαβοῦσα μαχαίριον ᾧ τοὺς ὄνυχας οἱ κουρεῖς ἀφαιροῦσι, καί πάσας ἐξελάσασα τοῦ θαλάμου τὰς ὀπαδούς, τομὴν ἐνέβαλε τῷ μηρῷ βαθεῖαν, ὥστε ῥύσιν αἵματος πολλὴν γενέσθαι καί μετὰ μικρὸν ὀδύνας τε νεανικὰς καί φρικώδεις πυρετοὺς ἐπιλαβεῖν ἐκ τοῦ τραύματος ... (*Brut.* 13.3) «Porcia, being affectionate and fond of her husband and full of sensibility and in possession of a good mind, did not try to question her husband about his secrets sooner than she herself had taken up a trial of this type. Having taken a small knife with which barbers cut nails and having dismissed all her servants out of her bedroom, she made a deep cut in her thigh so that a vast flow of blood came forth and, after a small period of time, vehement pangs and shivering fevers followed from the wound».

[51] Plutarch both repeats and has his character Porcia repeat that she is Cato's daughter in *Brut.* 2.1, 13.3, 13.7, and 13.10. In Plutarch's view, philosophical aptitude seems hereditary.

τις, ὦ Βροῦτε, καὶ τροφῆς ἀγαθῆς καὶ ὁμιλίας χρηστῆς εἰς ἦθος ἰσχύς· ἐμοὶ δὲ καὶ τὸ Κάτωνος εἶναι θυγατέρα καὶ τὸ Βρούτου γυναῖκα πρόσεστιν· οἷς πρότερον μὲν ἧττον ἐπεποίθειν, νῦν δ᾽ ἐμαυτὴν ἔγνωκα καὶ πρὸς πόνον ἀήττητον εἶναι». ταῦτ᾽ εἰποῦσα δείκνυσιν αὐτῷ τὸ τραῦμα καὶ διηγεῖται τὴν πεῖραν. ὁ δ᾽ ἐκπλαγεὶς καὶ ἀνατείνας τὰς χεῖρας ἐπεύξατο δοῦναι τοὺς θεοὺς αὐτῷ κατορθοῦντι τὴν πρᾶξιν ἀνδρὶ Πορκίας ἀξίῳ φανῆναι. καὶ τότε μὲν ἀνελάμβανε τὴν γυναῖκα.
(*Brut.* 13.9-10)

«[...] I know that a feminine nature is reputed to be [too] feeble to bear a secret. But, Brutus, some good upbringing and useful company [strengthen] one's character. And for me, I happen to be both the daughter of Cato and the wife of Brutus. Previously, I trusted less in these facts, but now I have come to know that I myself am not to be conquered by pain». Having spoken these words, she showed her wound to him and set out her experiment in detail. And Brutus, shocked and lifting his hands, prayed that the gods grant him to be successful in his operation and to prove himself a worthy husband of Porcia. And then he helped his wife recover.

Plutarch's Porcia here reiterates Plutarch's repetition of Porcia's pedigree, making it the fourth mention of her being Cato's daughter. Her argument makes a distinction between (the albeit anachronistic) nurture and nature dichotomy in the following two ways. In her evaluation of her nature, she subscribes to the traditional prejudice of female feebleness, but then qualifies her statement by referring to her status of Cato's daughter, an identity that boosts her Stoic credentials[52]. Her connection to Cato and Brutus seems to undo part of the gender limitations she seems to believe in. Thus, she relies on the two following nurture aspects: her upbringing and surroundings. Her experiment, she believes, confirms the effectiveness of the mixture between nature and nurture by which she might be prepared to bear her husband's anxiety after all. While Plutarch focuses on Brutus' reaction to his wife's deed, we are not told explicitly that Porcia faints. The phrase καὶ τότε μὲν ἀνελάμβανε[53] τὴν γυναῖκα, however, reveals that Porcia had fainted, albeit outside of the narrative focus.

Plutarch is not the only or the first to have Porcia's mind divert from her actual gender: Valerius Maximus already was an impactful exemplar for the Chaeronean[54]. Valerius Maximus, in *Val. Max.* 3.2.15, already uses Porcia as

[52] Plutarch's use of ἀήσσητος is, per the *LSJ*, commonly used of the Stoic sage, as, e.g., Zeno Stoic. 1.53.

[53] See *LSJ* II 3 and 4 for this sense of recovering and regaining one's senses or strength.

[54] For Plutarch's use of Valerius Maximus, see van der Wiel 2024. See also Warren 2022, pp. 37-38 for Plutarch's use of female exempla in *Conj. praec.* 145f.

an exemplar in the category of courage, in which her father Cato precedes her: *cuius filia minime muliebris animi* (whose daughter's spirit was not at all womanly)[55]. In this reading, a Stoic sage requires a mind that is as little 'feminine' as possible. As such, with these Stoic aspirations, authors such as Valerius Maximus and Plutarch represent Porcia as subverting the gender norms and expectations because of her Stoic practice. These depictions then align with her more masculine swoon in *Brut.* 13.10, that is, one resulting from a simulated battle wound. The actual Andromache paradigm, however, appears gradually more explicitly as the narrative progresses.

Plutarch introduces the Ides of March in the chapter that immediately follows Porcia's experiment, after which he places the episode of Porcia's frenzy and subsequent swoon[56]. As with Pompey's defeat in *Pompey,* a messenger bridges the gap between husband and wife with the news of her death[57]. In *Brutus,* though, the direction of the flow of information is reversed as the domestic sphere reaches into the public. The tidings present a domestic situation tortured by unrest. It now appears that Porcia's experiment was not as reliable as she had hoped. First, Plutarch addresses her mental difficulties: he presents her as unable to bear the size and weight of her anxiety[58]. Secondly, Plutarch demonstrates that her body is not able to endure the strains of her anxiety either. In spite of her preparations, she is neither mentally nor physically fit to stand by Brutus in his conspiracy:

> τέλος δὲ τοῦ χρόνου μῆκος λαμβάνοντος οὐκέτ᾽ ἀντεῖχεν ἡ τοῦ σώματος δύναμις, ἀλλ᾽ ἐξελύθη καὶ κατεμαραίνετο τῆς ψυχῆς ἀλυούσης διὰ τὴν ἀπορίαν· καὶ παρελθεῖν μὲν εἰς τὸ δωμάτιον οὐκ ἔφθη, περιΐστατο δ᾽ αὐτήν, ὥσπερ ἐτύγχανεν, ἐν μέσῳ καθεζομένην λιποθυμία καὶ θάμβος ἀμήχανον, ἥ τε χρόα μεταβολὴν ἐλάμβανε καὶ τὴν φωνὴν ἐπέσχητο παντάπασιν. αἱ δὲ θεράπαιναι πρὸς τὴν ὄψιν ἀνωλόλυξαν, καὶ τῶν γειτόνων συνδραμόντων ἐπὶ θύρας ταχὺ προῆλθε φήμη καὶ διεδόθη λόγος ὡς τεθνηκυίας αὐτῆς. οὐ μὴν ἀλλ᾽ ἐκείνην μὲν ἀναλάμψασαν ἐν βραχεῖ καὶ παρ᾽ ἑαυτῇ γενομένην αἱ γυναῖκες ἐθεράπευον· ὁ δὲ Βροῦτος ὑπὸ τοῦ λόγου προσπεσόντος αὐτῷ συνεταράχθη μέν, ὡς εἰκός, οὐ μήν γε κατέλιπε τὸ κοινὸν οὐδ᾽ ἐρρύη πρὸς τὸ οἰκεῖον ὑπὸ τοῦ πάθους.

[55] For an earlier account of the trial, see *Val. Max.* 3.2.15.

[56] *Brut.* 14, 15.4-9.

[57] *Brut.* 15.6: Ἐν τούτῳ δέ τις οἴκοθεν ἔθει πρὸς τὸν Βροῦτον ἀγγέλλων αὐτῷ τὴν γυναῖκα θνήσκειν.

[58] ἡ γὰρ Πορκία πρὸς τὸ μέλλον ἐκπαθὴς οὖσα καὶ τὸ μέγεθος μὴ φέρουσα τῆς φροντίδος ἑαυτήν τε μόλις οἴκοι κατεῖχε, καὶ πρὸς πάντα θόρυβον καὶ βοήν, ὥσπερ αἱ κατάσχετοι τοῖς βακχικοῖς πάθεσιν, ἐξάττουσα τῶν μὲν εἰσιόντων ἀπ᾽ ἀγορᾶς ἕκαστον ἀνέκρινεν ὅ τι πράττοι Βροῦτος, ἑτέρους δὲ συνεχῶς ἐξέπεμπε (*Brut.* 15.6-7). Cfr. περιπαθὴς οὖσα τὸ μέλλον ἀπεσκοπεῖτο (*Pomp.* 79.3). Cfr. πολλοῦ δὲ θορύβου ... (*Pomp*. 53.2).

(*Brut.* 15.9)

> At last, after a length of time, the strength of her body could no longer hold its ground; her strength was faint and quenched her mind, stirred by distress. She could not even go to her bedroom beforehand, but as it happened, her swoon and unmanageable shock surrounded her, sitting in the midst. She took on a different colour and let her voice escape entirely. Her handmaids bewailed the sight, and, as the neighbours were running together to the door, a rumour quickly went forth, and a tale spread about that she had died. The women cared for her, as she nevertheless 'shone again' in a short time and came to herself. But Brutus, on the one hand troubled by the news that reached him, as is reasonable, however, he did not abandon his public [duty] and was not rushed by his anxieties at home.

As commonly happens with the Homeric *syncopes,* her swoon is briefly mistaken for death, yet she comes to eventually. Multiple Homeric elements recur in the description of her swoon, which recalls that of Andromache. For one thing, there is the intense physicality expressing the embodied emotion. Additionally, the presence of reported messages here recalls the lamentations that Andromache hears surrounding her husband's death. The situation, however, differs in that Porcia does not undertake to find out the precise situation at hand, nor is she triggered by any visual element. The overall Homeric tint is also mixed with Sappho's later symptoms in Fragment 31 (the inability to move and speak and the change in complexion). Moreover, the overall situation of a warrior being kept from the battlefield by private matters resembles that of Hector and Andromache, as the former similarly still returned to the battlefield after his wife's ardent pleas.

In *Brutus* 23, Plutarch explicitly ties the two couples by means of a painting that depicts Hector and Andromache. As Plutarch busies himself with its aftermath – including young Caesar's arrival at Rome – Porcia slowly reappears in the focus of the narrative. It turns out that she had been kept at Elea, so Plutarch reveals in *Brut.* 23.1-2, but that she now has returned to Rome. Here, Plutarch incorporates a final reminder of Porcia's distress. Even as she attempts to conceal it, a visual prop unravels her composure:

> ταῦτα θεωμένην τὴν Πορκίαν ἡ τοῦ πάθους εἰκὼν ἐξέτηξεν εἰς δάκρυα· καὶ πολλάκις φοιτῶσα τῆς ἡμέρας ἔκλαιεν. Ἀκιλίου δέ τινος τῶν Βρούτου φίλων τὰ πρὸς Ἕκτορα τῆς Ἀνδρομάχης ἔπη διελθόντος,
>
> Ἕκτορ, ἀτὰρ σύ μοι ἐσσὶ πατὴρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ
> ἠδὲ κασίγνητος, σὺ δέ μοι θαλερὸς παρακοίτης,

μειδιάσας ὁ Βροῦτος, «Ἀλλ᾽ οὐκ ἐμοί γ᾽», εἶπε, «πρὸς Πορκίαν ἔπεισι φάναι τὰ τοῦ Ἕκτορος,

ἱστόν[59] ἠλακάτην τε καὶ ἀμφιπόλοισι κέλευε·

σώματος γὰρ ἀπολείπεται φύσει τῶν ἴσων ἀνδραγαθημάτων, γνώμῃ δ᾽ ὑπὲρ τῆς πατρίδος, ὥσπερ ἡμεῖς, ἀριστεύει».

The likeness of her own anxiety melted [reduced] Porcia, seeing such things, into tears. And often resorting to it throughout the day, she would weep. But as Acilius, one of the friends of Brutus, recounted the words of Andromache to Hector –

«But, Hector, you are to me both father and revered mother,

as well as brother, but you are also my vigorous husband.»

Brutus smiled and said: «But I, indeed, would not speak to Porcia in the words of Hector,

«[Ply] the loom and distaff and give orders to your handmaids»,

for when it comes to the nature of her body she is wanting in heroic feats [to match to those of men], but in her mind she prevails for the sake of the fatherland, just as we do.»

Once again, Plutarch addresses Porcia's inability to bear the emotions that the post-assassination atmosphere stirs up. The visual cue of the painting at last makes Porcia think of their parallels with Hector and Andromache, which Plutarch had her act out a few chapters earlier both in speech and in affect. Smiling Brutus, however, rejects his friend's suggested *synkrisis*, as he dissociates Porcia from Andromache's domestic sphere and comments upon her masculine spirit. Brutus' assessment of his wife proves to be inaccurate, however, when placed next to the episodes examined in this article. Her suicide by coals, too, in *Brutus* 53, has some gendered undertones, as it is not quite yet the quintessential *mors Romana* by sword. If Homeric fainting initially started off as a fairly ungendered paradigm, the same embodied theme now has become a commentary on gender and emotion. It is still worth noting that the swoon does not quite yet seem to be as gendered as the more modern (or at least Victorian) stereotype.

Conclusion

This article has considered the evolution of the trope of the ancient *syncope* against the background of the Homeric paradigm of Andromache. The be-

[59] See Nagy 2015 and 2024 for the elided citation and the connections between the two scenes.

ginning of this article served as a reminder that swooning was not particularly gendered in Homeric literature. Indeed, swoons were often reserved for valiant warriors who fell in battle: their faint appeared antithetical to a wound's resulting weakness. The expectation that the feeble (and especially the females) were more prone to faint is thus a later development. Andromache's swoon has received particular attention; these close readings serve to set up the parallels that Plutarch creates in a selection of Roman *Lives.* I have demonstrated that Plutarch especially practices creative licence in terms of the manner, chronology, and narrative compactness to fashion these thematic (and in some cases literary) echoes with the intertext. As such, we notice the pliability with which Plutarch approaches this earlier epic paradigm, which did not exactly pass for a gendered emotion or expression thereof, suggests a movement towards a trope.

As with Octavia's example with which we opened this contribution, confirming historical validity of these Plutarchan swoons of Licinia, Julia, Cornelia, and Porcia remains out of reach. Regardless, the point still stands. It is exactly the presence of this female faint in the cultural and literary *imagination* that matters. The dichotomy between the gendered swoons, however, seems to fluctuate, as Kenneth Heaton 2006 notes that for Shakespearean characters, the frequency of swoons seem to fluctuate throughout his plays; like the Homeric *syncopes,* there is no real gender distinction to be observed[60]. For this collection of characters evolved from Homer to Plutarch, after a period a little short of a millennium, it has become the expectation that female fainting may occur at moments of intense emotion, in a similar fashion as the trope of the female swoon is still standing today.

[60] Plutarch generally had a significant influence on Shakespeare. For instance, Mandel 2016 investigates the similarities between the Porcias of the two authors.

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Camille Guigon

Le corps comme point de départ de la psychologie : la description de la folie amoureuse dans le *Phèdre* de Platon (250e1-252a1)

Abstract: In a very famous passage, Plato gives a poetic description of the feeling of love, which is compared to the growth of wings and feathers in the whole soul. In this article, I would like to show that this description can be read in a psychological way, in the sense that it actually describes the behaviour of the three faculties: the θυμός, the ἐπιθυμία and the λόγος. The occurrences of each important word in the description of wing growth show that they all have a psychological meaning in *Phaedrus* or in other dialogues. This interpretation proves that the *Phaedrus* 250e1-252a1 is not only a poetic description of love, but also a reflection on the soul and its interactions with its body. The madness described by Plato concerns only the λόγος, while the θυμός tries to control the ἐπιθυμία, which is reinforced by the sight of the beautiful young man. This proves that the θυμός is much more active than the description of the white horse shows, which is consistent with the psychology of the *Timaeus*.

Keywords: Psychology, soul, body, love, Plato, *Phaedrus*, wings, madness, θυμός, ἐπιθυμία, λόγος.

Les pages 250e1-252a1 du *Phèdre* prennent place dans la palinodie de Socrate[1]. Après avoir répondu au défi de Phèdre qui voulait l'entendre reprendre l'argumentation du sophiste Lysias sur l'idée selon laquelle l'aimé doit prendre comme amant celui qui ne l'aime pas plutôt que celui qui l'aime[2], Socrate considère qu'il vient de commettre une impiété à l'encontre d'Éros et qu'il ne peut pas rentrer à Athènes tant qu'il n'aura pas réparer sa faute dans un autre discours qui démontre que l'amour est un don divin[3]. Ce second discours est sans aucun doute l'un des passages les plus remarquables de toute l'œuvre platonicienne. Pour prouver que l'amour est la meilleure chose qui puisse nous arriver, en particulier dans une perspective philosophique, Platon entremêle des thèmes cosmologiques, psychologiques, physiques, poétiques, ontologiques et livre des enseignements centraux pour la compréhension de son système de

[1] Werner 2013, pp. 44-45.
[2] *Phèdre*, 235d4-e1.
[3] *Phèdre*, 242b8-243b6.

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pensée, à commencer par celui sur l'immortalité de l'âme, la contemplation des Idées avant la descente dans le corps et la réminiscence.

L'extrait qui va de 250e1-252a1 est surtout réputé pour sa fameuse image des plumes de l'âme qui poussent à la vue du beau jeune homme[4]. Le texte a une dimension poétique indéniable et évoque avec une véritable acuité et un certain réalisme l'émotion amoureuse. Notre propos ici n'est cependant pas de nous pencher sur la poésie de ces pages, mais bien plutôt sur ce qu'elles nous disent de la façon dont Platon conçoit le corps et l'âme. Selon nous, Platon ne fait pas ici qu'une description allégorique d'une expérience humaine courante : il livre un enseignement psychologique et physiologique. Cette idée se justifie par le fait que la description que rédige Platon des effets de l'amour sur l'âme et le corps entre dans un cadre plus large et essentiel à sa pensée, qui est celui de la façon dont l'âme est en interaction avec le corps[5]. Cette question est particulièrement redoutable dans la pensée platonicienne, à cause de sa difficulté, de son importance et de son mystère. Du point de vue de la difficulté, il faut en effet que Platon puisse expliquer comment une âme de nature intelligible[6], sans aucune caractéristique corporelle, est capable d'agir sur le corps sensible. Du point de vue de l'importance, la nature intelligible de l'âme justifie la théorie de la connaissance[7] et de l'éthique platonicienne[8]. Si Platon ne parvient pas à expliquer le procédé de l'incorporation de l'âme, son système peut s'effondrer, perdre sa cohérence et son efficacité. Du point de vue du mystère, il semble que Platon n'ait jamais réussi à expliquer de façon claire et concise comment l'âme agit sur le corps et inversement. Le *Timée*, le texte qui aurait pu exposer une réponse à ce problème du fait de sa présentation de la physique et de la cosmologie platoniciennes, présente surtout une image spatiale de l'âme, qui contredit totalement la psychologie de Platon sur le fait que l'âme ne peut pas être dans l'espace car elle n'est pas un corps[9].

[4] Comme le rappelle Werner 2013, p. 110, dans la mythologie classique, les ailes sont souvent liées à un acte de transgression qui entraine toujours un châtiment, comme dans le mythe d'Icare. Prenant à contre-pied la tradition, Platon encourage l'homme à effectuer la montée vers le divin.

[5] Nous suivons Werner 2013, pp. 47-48 sur le fait que l'âme est le sujet central de la palinodie.

[6] L'âme ressemble aux formes intelligibles, bien qu'elle ne soit pas elle-même une forme : « Whereas soul is subject to change and motion – indeed, its very οὐσία is self-motion – the Forms are immutable and motionless; whereas soul exists in time, the Forms do not; whereas soul is composite, the Forms are not; and whereas soul is a particular – we can speak of my soul versus your soul – the Forms are not. At most, the soul is like the Forms or is akin to them, but is not itself a Form » (Werner 2013, p. 56).

[7] Morgan 1992, p. 236 ; Kraut 1992, p. 6 ; Fine 1992, pp. 207-208.

[8] Mabbott 1971, p. 58.

[9] Pradeau 1998, p. 517 est le seul à affirmer clairement que Platon ne résout pas le problème de l'incorporation de l'âme. Quant aux grandes monographies sur le *Timée*, comme Brisson 1998 ou Johansen 2004, elles éludent la question.

De façon générale, nous pensons que Platon a en réalité réussi à expliquer le mécanisme de l'incorporation de l'âme, même s'il n'en fait jamais un exposé intégral. Sa réponse doit être reconstruite, non seulement à partir du *Timée*, mais aussi d'autres textes comme le *Phèdre* 250e1-252a1[10]. Notre but est ici de présenter l'enseignement que nous pouvons tirer de ce passage sur l'interaction entre l'âme et le corps. Pour ce faire, nous commencerons par décrire les différents phénomènes physiques et psychologiques qui se produisent en *Phèdre* 250e1-252a1, puis nous montrerons le phénomène psychologique auquel correspond la pousse des plumes de l'âme, et enfin, nous expliquerons les causes de cette relation complexe entre le corps et l'âme.

1. Les phénomènes physiques et psychologiques de *Phèdre* 250e1-252a1

Pour commencer, nous allons nous intéresser à la façon dont Platon décrit les effets du sentiment amoureux sur le corps et l'âme. La première chose qui apparaît est qu'ils sont intimement liés à la qualité de la contemplation des formes intelligibles par chaque âme avant sa descente dans le corps :

> « Celui qui n'est pas un initié de fraîche date ou qui s'est laissé corrompre, celui-là n'est pas vif à se porter d'ici vers là-bas [...]. Aussi n'est-ce point avec vénération qu'il porte son regard dans cette direction ; au contraire, s'abandonnant au plaisir, il se met en devoir, à la façon d'une bête à quatre pattes, de saillir [βαίνειν][11], d'éjaculer, et, se laissant aller à la démesure, il ne craint ni ne rougit de poursuivre un plaisir contre-nature. En revanche, celui qui est un initié de fraîche date, celui qui a les yeux pleins des visions de jadis, celui-là, quand il lui arrive de voir un visage d'aspect divin, qui est une heureuse imitation de la beauté, ou la forme d'un corps, commence par frissonner, car quelque chose lui est revenu de ses angoisses [δειμάτων] de jadis. »[12]

[10] Ce n'est pas l'interprétation majeure de ce passage par les commentateurs modernes. Le commentaire de Hackforth 1996, p. 96 est très bref, l'auteur affirmant qu'il n'y a pas grand-chose à tirer concrètement de ces pages. Ferrari 1987, p. 164 considère que le langage allégorique se justifie par le fait que le philosophe est incapable de décrire précisément et objectivement ce qu'il ressent. Si l'auteur met en avant, avec raison, l'importance du *Philèbe* pour comprendre le mélange entre le plaisir et la douleur qui apparaît dans le texte, il n'approfondit pas sa dimension physiologique et psychologique. Quant à Lebeck 1972, pp. 273-274, elle considère que la pousse des plumes n'est que de l'ordre de l'imagination, et ne possède aucun contenu physiologique ou psychologique.

[11] Selon Plato 2011, pp. 151-152, la forme transitive de βαίνειν évoque la copulation animale. De façon générale, la sodomie était perçue comme une forme d'ὕβρις, qui déshonorait le partenaire passif.

[12] Platon, *Phèdre*, 250e1-251a4. Nous suivons la traduction de L. Brisson, publiée aux éditions GF Flammarion en 1989.

Platon différencie ceux qui ont été initiés récemment de ceux qui l'ont été il y a longtemps ou qui ont été corrompus[13]. Ce langage de l'initiation tiré des Mystères renvoie en réalité à la contemplation des formes intelligibles par les âmes avant leur descente[14]. Les hommes qui ont été initiés depuis longtemps désignent les âmes dont la contemplation n'a pas été approfondie et qui ont donc chuté très rapidement[15]. Leur souvenir de l'intelligible est assez faible et ne permet pas une réminiscence efficace. Ceux qui ont été corrompus ont eu une bonne contemplation des formes intelligibles, mais après leur chute, leur âme a été soumise à de mauvaises influences comme la débauche, les sophistes, les démagogues, etc. Le résultat de cela est une réaction inadaptée à la beauté physique d'un beau jeune homme, qui est donc, comme on le voit clairement, une réaction sexualisée[16]. Le cadre du *Phèdre* est la pédérastie, c'est-à-dire la relation pédagogique entre un adolescent et un homme mature, qui peut prendre une tournure amoureuse[17]. Il ne sera donc pas question dans ce dialogue de la relation hétérosexuelle. Pour Platon, qu'il y ait un sentiment amoureux dans la relation pédérastique n'est pas un problème d'un point de vue éthique et philosophique. En revanche, le rapport sexuel est totalement condamné. Dans les *Lois* (I 636c, VIII 835d-842), il explique notamment que c'est une relation contre-nature, parce qu'elle emploie la sexualité non pas pour perpétuer l'espèce, mais pour le pur plaisir[18]. En d'autres termes, le rapport homosexuel participe au renforcement de la partie appétitive, ou ἐπιθυμία. Cette domination de l'ἐπιθυμία sur la totalité de l'âme est qualifiée de démesure (ὕβρις), puisqu'elle suppose que chaque faculté n'est plus dans le rôle qu'elle doit jouer selon la nature et que l'appétit a pris une place qui n'est pas la sienne[19].

Le troisième cas est celui de l'initié de fraîche date, c'est-à-dire de celui qui a eu une contemplation approfondie et complète des formes intelligibles. En d'autres termes, c'est le philosophe qui est ici décrit. Sa réaction face à la beauté physique est de l'ordre de la terreur. En effet, le verbe « frissonner »

[13] Griswold 1986, p. 200.

[14] McGibbon 1964, p. 56.

[15] Ryan 2012, p. 207 considère que ce premier état est plutôt celui d'une âme qui a connu plusieurs réincorporations.

[16] Kraut 2008, pp. 304-310 et Ferrari 1992, p. 263. Ryan 2012, p. 207 pense que c'est l'acte sexuel en général qui est condamné ici. Mais puisque le contexte de ce passage est celui de la pédérastie, et que des textes comme la *République* ou les *Lois* reconnaissent l'importance de la reproduction, il n'est pas certain que la relation hétérosexuelle soit visée.

[17] L'amour pédérastique est supérieur pour Platon, parce qu'il l'interprète avant tout dans sa dimension spirituelle, sans aucune implication sexuelle (Platone 1998, p. 224).

[18] Platone 1998, p. 225.

[19] *Phèdre* 238a2 ; 253e3 ; 254e6 ; *Gorgias*, 525a4; *Lois*, VIII, 837c5.

renvoie à l'idée de nervosité, nervosité qui repose sur la réminiscence non pas tant de l'Idée elle-même que de la peur qu'elle avait inspirée lors de la contemplation. Il est intriguant que la première chose que suscite la réminiscence soit de la peur et que cette dernière soit même le premier ressenti que crée l'amour dans l'âme philosophique[20]. En premier lieu, il faut garder à l'esprit que le divin, dans la culture grecque, est très souvent lié à l'idée de crainte. Puisque les dieux ont tout pouvoir et qu'ils peuvent faire tout ce qu'ils veulent des mortels, leur puissance suscite une certaine terreur. En second lieu, la peur peut être aussi perçue comme une forme de respect. Dans le cas des Idées, leur puissance est telle qu'elles sont objets de crainte pour l'âme, non pas parce qu'elles pourraient lui nuire, mais du fait de leur puissance et du respect qu'elles inspirent[21].

Quel que soit le rapport de l'individu à l'amour, il est nécessairement lié, dans l'esprit de Platon, à la qualité de la contemplation avant la descente. Plus la contemplation est approfondie, plus l'âme ressent de la peur face à la beauté, qui se manifeste physiquement par des frissons dus à cette peur. La suite du texte se concentre uniquement sur le philosophe et ses réactions amoureuses :

> « Or, en l'apercevant, il frissonne et ce frisson, comme il est naturel, produit en lui une réaction : il se couvre de sueur, car il éprouve une chaleur inaccoutumée. En effet, lorsque, par les yeux, il a reçu les effluves de la beauté, alors il s'échauffe et son plumage s'en trouve vivifié ; et cet échauffement faut fondre la matière dure qui, depuis longtemps, bouchait l'orifice d'où sortent les ailes, les empêchant de pousser. Par ailleurs, l'afflux d'aliment a fait, à partir de la racine, gonfler et jaillir la tige des plumes sous toute la surface de l'âme. »[22]

Platon commence par une description uniquement physique. La peur à l'origine du frisson produit par la suite un échauffement et de la transpiration, à la façon de la fièvre[23]. La cause physique est l'action des effluves issues de la beauté du jeune homme. La théorie des effluves vient d'Empédocle[24], qui pensait que notre sensation était due à des pellicules qui se détachaient des objets, en particulier des quatre éléments (eau, terre, air, feu) qui composent

[20] Pour De Vries 1969, p. 154, le mot δείματον évoque les cultes à mystères.

[21] Ferrari 1987, p. 151 fait aussi le lien entre cette peur et la situation contemplative de l'âme, qui était assez agitée, à cause de la compétition entre les âmes pour accéder à la vision des formes intelligibles.

[22] Platon, *Phèdre*, 251a7-b7.

[23] Selon De Vries 1969, p. 154, le frisson est une référence à un poème de Sappho, ce qui serait cohérent avec 235c3. Voir aussi Ferrari 1987, pp. 153-154.

[24] *Ménon* 76c7. Voir Platon 1997, n. 231 p. 119 et Ebert 1993, p. 217.

chaque corps[25], et entraient ensuite dans les pores de la peau et des organes[26]. Elles atteignaient de cette façon le sang, dont la particularité était d'être le seul composant de notre corps à être constitué des quatre éléments[27]. C'est pour cela qu'Empédocle l'identifie à l'âme[28], dans le sens où puisque le sang est fait des quatre éléments, il peut nous permettre de connaître tous les objets auxquels nos sens accèdent par des moyens différents.

Platon entremêle totalement le mécanisme physique et la réaction psychologique, par un biais assez surprenant, qui est la longue description de l'effet de la chaleur sur la pousse des plumes de l'âme. Nous décrypterons dans notre seconde partie la façon dont on peut comprendre, du point de vue psychologique, cette description, mais la première chose à souligner est la difficulté théorique du texte platonicien, car l'âme n'est pas, du point de vue du système de Platon, une réalité corporelle[29]. Elle ne peut pas avoir des plumes ou même être affectée par l'effet de la chaleur physique. Platon efface totalement ici la barrière entre le physique et le psychologique, alors que cette barrière est essentielle dans sa pensée. L'écart ontologique entre l'âme et le corps lui permet de préserver l'immortalité de la première, et toutes ses conséquences épistémiques et éthiques. Si notre âme pouvait être atteinte dans son être par le corps, puisque ce dernier est destructible, cela impliquerait qu'elle peut être aussi détruite, et surtout qu'elle peut même dépendre du corps pour son existence. De ce fait, l'âme ne pourrait pas contempler les Idées avant l'incorporation, ce qui rendrait la science impossible, et elle ne pourrait pas subir un châtiment ou recevoir une récompense après la mort, ce qui affaiblirait considérablement l'éthique platonicienne.

Cependant, ce texte, malgré sa difficulté quand on le prend dans une perspective philosophique et non pas seulement poétique, est en réalité riche d'informations sur la façon dont le corps et l'âme agissent l'un sur l'autre, et en particulier la façon dont le corps a des effets sur l'âme. En effet, le corps est le point de départ du processus, puisque c'est lui qui est le premier à recevoir l'image de la beauté[30]. Ce faisant, Platon fait référence à une des particularités de l'Idée du Beau, qui est plus visible dans le sensible et plus simple d'accès pour l'âme incorporée que les autres formes intelligibles[31]. Ce n'est que parce

[25] Fr. A XXVIII. Voir Brisson, Macé, et Therme 2012, pp. 168-169.
[26] Fr. B 17, 18-26. Voir Bluck 1961, p. 251 et Kahn 1960, p. 9.
[27] Fr. B 105. Voir aussi Barnes 1999, p. 386 et Kahn 1960, pp. 15-16.
[28] Fr. A IV.
[29] *Phédon*, 79d1-7.
[30] Griswold 1986, p. 124.
[31] *Phèdre*, 250b1-2. « The Form of Beauty has an extraordinary status in that it is the only Form whose earthly likeness is recognizable by all human beings. Bodily inhibitions and limitations

que l'âme a accès à la vision du corps qui perçoit la beauté qu'elle ressent de la peur, ce qui entraîne les frissons, l'augmentation de la chaleur dans le corps, qui, à son tour, provoque la pousse des plumes de l'âme. Ces plumes sont dites être la cause de la légèreté (κουφίζεται) de l'âme et ont la vérité pour nourriture (*Phèdre*, 248c2)[32]. Ce qui est important à noter pour le moment est que tous les termes que Platon emploie ici dans un sens physique (frisson, réaction, sueur, matière sclérosée, plumage, aliment, racine, plumes, surface, tige) ont tous une signification psychologique dans d'autres dialogues[33]. Cet état de fait est absolument nécessaire à notre compréhension du passage, puisque cela signifie que quand Platon emploie ces mots dans une description physique, il a aussi en tête un arrière-plan psychologique, ce qui est important pour la compréhension de la suite de notre extrait :

> « En effet, l'âme était jadis tout emplumée ; la voilà donc, à présent, qui tout entière bouillonne, qui se soulève et qui éprouve le genre de douleurs que ressentent les enfants qui font leurs dents. Les dents qui percent provoquent une démangeaison, une irritation des gencives, et c'est bien le genre de douleurs que ressent l'âme de celui dont les ailes commencent à pousser ; elle est en ébullition, elle est irritée, chatouillée pendant qu'elle fait ses ailes. Chaque fois donc que, posant ses regards sur la beauté du jeune garçon et recevant de cet objet des particules qui s'en détachent pour venir vers elle – d'où l'expression "vague du désir" –, l'âme est vivifiée et réchauffée, elle se repose de sa souffrance et elle est toute joyeuse. Mais, quand elle se trouve seule et qu'elle se flétrit, les orifices des conduits par où jaillissent les plumes se dessèchent tous en même temps et, parce qu'ils sont fermés, bloquent la première pousse de la plume. Or, cette pousse emprisonnée avec le désir, palpite comme un pouls qui bat fort ; elle vient frapper contre ce qui obstrue les orifices, et cela orifice par orifice, si bien que l'âme, aiguillonnée de toutes parts, est transportée de douleur. Mais, parce que le souvenir de la beauté lui revient, elle est toute joyeuse. Le mélange de ces deux sentiments la tourmente ; elle enrage de se trouver démunie devant cet état qui la déroute. Et, prise de folie, elle ne peut ni dormir la nuit ni rester

adversely affect the recollection of Forms, restricting the recognition to a special few, but Beauty is relatively unaffected by the fallen nature of humankind (250b-d). Its likeness in material form maintains a "lustre" that these other Forms cannot » (Stoeber 1992, p. 276).

[32] Le terme κουφίζειν n'est remployé, dans toute l'œuvre de Platon, qu'en *Phèdre* 249a8, où il désigne le fait, pour l'âme, de rejoindre son lieu céleste après la mort du corps si elle a mené une bonne vie sur terre.

[33] Kuhn-Treichel 2024, pp. 20-22 démontre l'origine poétique de certaines de ces expressions corporelles, comme la chaleur ou le frisson, que l'on trouve déjà dans les descriptions de l'amour chez Sappho et Pindare. Cependant, la volonté platonicienne de séparer le corps de l'âme empêche le *Phèdre* d'aller trop en avant dans la reprise de ces sources poétiques, qui ont une forte tendance à accentuer le ressenti physique de l'émotion amoureuse.

> en place le jour, mais, sous l'impulsion du désir, elle court là où, se figure-t-elle, elle pourra voir celui qui possède la beauté. Quand elle l'a aperçu, quand elle a laissé pénétrer en elle la vague du désir, elle dégage les issues naguère obstruées. Elle a repris son souffle et, pour elle, c'en est fini des piqûres et des douleurs de l'enfantement : pour le moment, elle cueille, tout au contraire, le plaisir le plus délicieux. »[34]

Platon décrit ici les effets de la folie amoureuse, qui est, selon lui, proprement philosophique, dans le sens où elle ne peut être provoquée que par la réminiscence de l'Idée du beau[35]. De ce fait, la relation sexuelle est exclue, car elle concerne ceux qui sont au contraire incapables de se souvenir de l'origine de la beauté physique et d'en ressentir crainte et respect[36]. Quand il s'agit de décrire la façon dont l'âme philosophe réagit face au beau, Platon emploie deux images qui sont corporelles : la pousse des dents[37] et la pousse du plumage[38]. La première image tend à expliquer l'agacement, le chatouillement, l'irritation que l'âme ressent du fait de l'influence de la beauté[39]. Cette pousse des plumes est soumise à l'influence de la vague du désir (ἵμερος). L'ἵμερος, qui n'est possible qu'en présence du beau jeune homme, provoque un réchauffement, qui lui-même enlève la sclérose qui se trouve au niveau des orifices, afin de libérer les plumes[40]. Dès que le jeune homme n'est plus là, la vague du désir cesse, ce qui entraîne de nouveau de la douleur, puisque les plumes continuent à pousser, mais sans pouvoir sortir des orifices qui les bloquent.

Cette description de l'âme comme emplumée est unique dans la psychologie platonicienne[41]. D'ailleurs, un certain nombre d'hapax sont présents dans le texte[42]. Mais certains éléments physiques sont pleinement cohérents avec les descriptions que fait Platon du fonctionnement du corps dans d'autres ouvrages, notamment dans le *Timée*. Le lien entre la chaleur, la respiration et l'âme est en particulier mis en avant, pour la raison suivante : dans la pensée

[34] Platon, *Phèdre*, 251b7-252a1.

[35] Ferrari 1987, p. 163 explique que ce processus interne est une folie dans le sens où c'est un état mental sur lequel le philosophe n'a aucun contrôle.

[36] Comme le souligne Ferrari 1987, p. 159, il y a bien un désir sexuel de la part du philosophe (254a3-7), mais qui est oblitéré par la dimension émotionnelle du ressenti amoureux. Même idée chez Plato 2011, p. 152, qui interprète les différents symptômes physiques ressentis par l'amoureux comme la manifestation d'une tension sexuelle.

[37] Platone 1998, p. 225.

[38] Nicholson 1999, p. 202 met en avant la dimension sexuelle de ces différentes images.

[39] Ferrari 1987, p. 157 considère que l'image de la pousse des dents fait aussi référence au fait que, par l'amour, l'âme renaît et entame une nouvelle vie.

[40] Ferrari 1987, p. 160.

[41] Nicholson 1999, pp. 201-202.

[42] C'est le cas de καυλός (251b6), ἀνακηκίει (c1), συναυαινόμενα (d2), σφύζοντα (d4).

grecque, le fait qu'un corps respire est la preuve qu'il est vivant, c'est-à-dire qu'il possède une âme. Le terme même de ψυχή désigne à l'origine le souffle, qui est considéré comme un mouvement interne automoteur et qui ne dépend pas d'une cause extérieure, ce qui est une caractéristique du vivant[43]. Même chose pour la chaleur qui, selon Platon, est causée par le cœur qui impulse le sang dans le corps[44]. La respiration permet de rafraîchir l'animal et de diminuer cette chaleur vitale pour la rendre supportable[45]. Même chose pour l'irritation et le chatouillement qui, selon le *Philèbe*, reposent sur un mélange de douleur et de plaisir, le plaisir étant dominant[46]. Cette cohérence dans la physiologie platonicienne est capitale car elle montre que notre texte n'est pas simplement une belle métaphore du sentiment amoureux, mais qu'il est pensé par Platon en accord avec ses conceptions scientifiques. Le problème est bien sûr que cette description physiologique ne peut pas être adaptée à l'âme, qui n'est pas corporelle. Cela ne signifie pas, cependant, que l'on ne peut pas en tirer un enseignement en psychologie, ainsi que sur l'interaction entre l'âme et le corps.

2. L'interprétation psychologique de la pousse des plumes

Nous allons à présent approfondir l'étude lexicale grecque de 250e1-252a1 pour identifier quels sont les mécanismes psychologiques qui se cachent derrière cette description physique :

> « Or, en l'apercevant, il frissonne et ce frisson [φρίκης], comme il est naturel, produit en lui une réaction [μεταβολή] : il se couvre de sueur [ἱδρὼς], car il éprouve une chaleur [θερμότης] inaccoutumée. En effet, lorsque, par les yeux, il a reçu les effluves [ἀπορροὴν] de la beauté, alors il s'échauffe et son plumage [πτεροῦ] s'en trouve vivifié [ἄρδεται] ; et cet échauffement faut fondre la matière dure [σκληρότητος] qui, depuis longtemps, bouchait l'orifice d'où sortent les ailes, les empêchant de pousser. Par ailleurs, l'afflux d'aliment [τροφῆς] a fait, à partir de la racine [ῥίζης], gonfler [ᾠδησέ] et jaillir la tige [καυλὸς] des plumes [πτεροῦ] sous toute la surface [εἶδος] de l'âme. »[47]

Le lien entre l'âme et le plumage réapparait dans le *Timée*, lors de la description de la transformation de l'homme en oiseau. Selon Platon, se réincor-

[43] Gundert 2000, pp. 13-14 ; Edinger 1999, pp. 21-23.
[44] *Timée*, 79d1-2.
[45] *Timée*, 78e1-79e1-3.
[46] *Philèbe,* 47a5
[47] Platon, *Phèdre*, 251a7-b7.

porent en oiseau les âmes qui étaient admiratives des mouvements célestes, mais qui ne comprenaient pas qu'ils cachaient autre chose que ce que l'on voit dans le sensible, à savoir la régularité et l'ordre de l'intellect[48]. Dans le cas du *Phèdre*, l'âme qui voit ses ailes poussées n'est pas punie, puisque c'est une âme philosophique[49]. Ce que veut dire ici Platon est que l'âme a une nature intelligible, d'où la référence au fait qu'avant la descente, l'âme était emplumée.

Dire que l'âme voit ses plumes pousser n'est rien d'autre qu'une évocation de sa relation avec l'intelligible qui est rétablie, relation qui est possible car l'âme a une nature similaire aux Idées[50]. Le terme de μεταβολή sert à désigner non seulement le changement d'état, mais surtout le passage d'un état à un autre qui lui soit opposé[51]. Du point de vue du corps, le frisson passe à la chaleur, et l'on peut supposer que l'âme elle-même passe à un opposé, qui serait dans son cas la transition d'une connaissance purement sensible à une intuition de l'intelligible. La chaleur est un effet physique de la vie et de l'âme sur le corps[52]. En elle-même, l'âme ne peut pas être chaude ou froide. Cependant, dans de nombreuses descriptions, Platon lie l'échauffement à l'activité d'une des facultés de l'âme qui est l'irascible ou θυμός. C'est notamment le cas avec l'emploi du verbe ζεῖν, qui désigne parfois le bouillonnement du θυμός face à une injustice[53]. Le fait que l'irascible soit présent dans le texte est confirmé par l'usage d'ἰδρώς, la sueur causée par le θυμός dans un but de purification[54], et de σκληρότης, qui désigne ici la matière dure qui bloque les orifices. Le terme est utilisé en *République* (III, 401d1) pour désigner la rudesse du caractère due au θυμός. Ici, rien ne dit que le θυμός est forcément la cause de la sclérose des orifices, c'est-à-dire qu'il empêche la relation avec l'intelligible. Σκληρότης peut désigner tout ce qui, dans le fonctionnement des facultés de l'âme, gêne la raison, qui est la seule puissance psychologique capable d'accéder aux formes intelligibles. Cette idée se confirme par l'emploi de ἄρδεσθαι, qui est utilisé par Platon, toujours dans la *République* (X, 606d4), pour désigner le développement d'une faculté de l'âme[55]. Si l'on traduit psychologiquement le début du

[48] *Timée*, 91d6-e1.
[49] Impara 1993, p. 301.
[50] *Phédon*, 79a1-e5 ; Werner 2013, pp. 80 ; 91.
[51] *Phédon*, 78d4 ; *Politique*, 269a1 ; *Parménide*, 156e8, 162c1 ; *Timée*, 82b2 ; *République*, X, 619d5.
[52] *Timée*, 85c5.
[53] *Timée*, 70b3 ; *République*, IV, 440c6.
[54] *Phèdre*, 254c4 ; *Protagoras*, 340d3 ; *Timée*, 83d7.
[55] Voir également *Cratyle*, 414a6 ; *Phèdre*, 276d6 ; *Timée*, 76a5, 77c9, 82d7 ; *République*, X, 606d4. Voir Werner 2013, p. 113.

texte, Platon explique que la raison se développe du fait de l'action du θυμός, qui élimine la sclérose qui empêchait l'âme de se tourner vers l'intelligible[56]. Puisque le développement du θυμός est causé par la réminiscence de l'Idée du Beau, il est logique de penser que le σκληρότης est une référence à l'appétit (ἐπιθυμία), la troisième faculté de l'âme, qui est considéré, dans la psychologie platonicienne, comme le principal adversaire de la raison. En effet, chargé du fonctionnement du corps, il ne cesse de nous tirer vers le sensible. Dans le cadre du phénomène amoureux et si l'on se réfère aux pages 254b7-d1 du *Phèdre*, il est hautement probable que l'appétit réagisse à la beauté physique par une envie sexuelle, à la façon de ceux qui ne sont pas initiés de longue date. Cependant, à la différence de ces derniers, elle n'est pas concrétisée par l'acte, puisque la terreur ressentie par la raison l'en empêche. D'après *Phèdre* 248a1-5, c'est le λόγος qui contemple les formes intelligibles[57]. Mais l'on sait aussi qu'il transmet quelque chose de cette contemplation aux facultés inférieures[58]. Autrement dit, le θυμός comme l'ἐπιθυμία subissent les effets de la contemplation. Plus cette dernière est approfondie, plus le θυμός se renforce et plus l'ἐπιθυμία s'affaiblit.

Le fait qu'un θυμός fort soit une arme contre l'ἐπιθυμία est repris dans le *Timée*, qui s'intéresse autant à la dimension physique que physiologique du processus[59]. Le θυμός a la capacité de traduire en images les ordres issus de la raison, puisque l'ἐπιθυμία ne parvient pas à comprendre des argumentations rationnelles[60]. Ces images, projetées sur la surface du foie, ont pour but d'intimider l'appétit pour qu'il se soumette[61]. Mais dans le même temps, le θυμός agit aussi sur le corps, puisque la colère augmente la chaleur par le rythme cardiaque qui s'accélère et cette chaleur augmente à son tour la bile qui rend

[56] Comme le souligne Hackforth 1996, p. 98, l'amour guérit l'âme de ses troubles spirituels. Il la rétablit dans son état sain d'origine.

[57] Nicholson 1999, p. 199.

[58] *Phèdre*, 247e4-6.

[59] Pour un approfondissement du mécanisme par lequel le θυμός et λόγος agissent sur l'ἐπιθυμία, nous nous permettons de renvoyer à Guigon 2021.

[60] Par ailleurs, Werner 2013, pp. 68-73 met en avant un point important, bien que peu souvent souligné les commentateurs : le mythe est très compréhensible pour le θυμός, qui en est donc le premier destinataire. Selon nous, cela est cohérent avec le fait que l'irascible semble être la faculté la plus à l'arrière-plan de la pousse des plumes. Par ailleurs, cela serait aussi en accord avec le fait que, selon Asmis 1986, p. 154, le *Phèdre* est une illustration de la psychagogie platonicienne, c'est-à-dire du fait, pour un discours, de provoquer un effet particulier sur l'âme, comme la tristesse ou la colère. L'auteur rappelle aussi que le terme même de ψυχαγωγία est utilisé en *Timée* 71a pour désigner le fait de charmer l'ἐπιθυμία par des images. La psychagogie s'applique aussi à la raison, notamment par le mythe cosmologique, comme celui de la contemplation des Idées avant la chute (Kélessidou 1993, p. 268).

[61] *Timée*, 71a7-c3.

l'estomac malade[62]. Soumise à la nausée et à la douleur, l'ἐπιθυμία est obligée de se ranger du côté de la raison[63]. Si on compare l'argumentation du *Timée* avec notre extrait du *Phèdre*, il y a des points de ressemblance, à commencer par le rôle de la chaleur et le contrôle de l'appétit impulsés par le θυμός. Ce dernier augmente la chaleur du corps quand il est témoin d'une injustice. Sachant que l'injustice consiste, pour une chose, à ne pas être à la place qui est la sienne selon la nature[64], le fait que l'ἐπιθυμία tente de prendre le contrôle de la totalité de l'âme, par la relation sexuelle avec le beau jeune homme, est une forme d'injustice. Mais pour que le θυμός puisse identifier le désir sexuel comme une injustice, il faut qu'il y ait déjà eu, de la part du λόγος, une contemplation suffisante de l'Idée du Beau avant la descente dans le corps.

Comme nous l'avons dit auparavant, la contemplation des Idées par le λόγος ressurgit sur le comportement des deux autres facultés. Dans le cas du θυμός, la connaissance de l'Idée du Beau prend la forme de la pudeur (αἰδώς)[65], qui est le rejet de la relation sexuelle considérée comme contre-nature. Mais pour cela, il faut que la beauté soit déjà perçue comme objet de respect et de crainte, ce qui n'est pas le cas, par exemple, chez celui qui est un initié de longue date. Chez ce dernier, la contemplation ayant été trop superficielle, non seulement il ne fait pas le lien entre la beauté physique et son origine divine, mais son θυμός est trop faible pour s'élever contre l'ἐπιθυμία. Même chose pour le corrompu (διεφθαρμένος). Dans le *Timée*, le terme sert à désigner le désordre des cercles de l'âme immortelle provoqué par l'incorporation[66]. Sachant que l'âme immortelle possède la raison, il en suit que la corruption de l'âme est un affaiblissement du λόγος à cause de l'effet du corps sur elle, et en particulier de l'effet de l'ἐπιθυμία[67]. Le corrompu avait à l'origine une contemplation approfondie des Idées, mais il a tout perdu à cause de relations délétères avec des gens malintentionnés, qui ont renforcé son appétit et affaiblit sa raison. Cette dernière est donc incapable d'avoir un quelconque contrôle sur le reste de l'âme. Mais la suite du texte montre que l'action du θυμός ne suffit pas, car Platon souligne aussi l'importance de l'aliment (τροφή) dans le développement des plumes, c'est-à-dire de la raison et de la relation de l'âme avec l'intelligible :

[62] *Timée*, 77b5-6.
[63] Fletcher 2016, p. 431.
[64] *République*, IV, 434c7-10.
[65] *Lois*, II, 671d2 ; XII, 943e1. Voir aussi Werner 2013, pp. 68-69. Pour une présentation complète du concept d'αἰδώς chez Platon, nous renvoyons à l'excellente analyse de Cairns 1993, pp. 370-391.
[66] *Timée*, 90d2.
[67] *Timée*, 44a1-b1.

> « Par ailleurs, l'afflux d'aliment [τροφῆς] a fait, à partir de la racine [ῥίζης], gonfler [ᾠδησέ] et jaillir la tige [καυλὸς] des plumes [πτεροῦ] sous toute la surface [εἶδος] de l'âme. »

Τροφή représente très bien le dédoublement du lexique entre le corporel et le psychologique, car ce mot peut signifier autant la nourriture que l'éducation[68]. En *Phèdre* 248b5, Platon présente déjà l'opinion (δοξαστής) comme une τροφή pour l'âme qui s'est éloignée de l'intelligible. Surtout, dans le *Timée*, il écrit : « Il y a donc pour tout être une seule façon de tout soigner : accorder à chaque partie les aliments [τροφὰς] et les mouvements qui lui sont appropriés. Les mouvements qui sont apparentés à ce qu'il y a de divin en nous, ce sont les pensées et les révolutions de l'univers »[69]. L'astronomie joue un rôle important dans l'éducation du *Timée*, car la régularité des mouvements du ciel est à l'image de la pensée de l'intellect, qui est la connaissance de l'intelligible[70]. La réminiscence de la beauté n'est donc pas que la cause de la colère du θυμός contre l'ἐπιθυμία. Il faut aussi que la raison se renforce par son accès privilégié à l'intelligible. Cela implique que la relation à la beauté du beau jeune homme ne soit pas que physique, mais prenne aussi en compte une dimension morale et intellectuelle[71]. Le *Phèdre* insiste beaucoup sur la vertu du beau jeune homme qui est aimé par le philosophe. S'il est seulement beau, mais avec un caractère vicieux, l'amour véritable ne peut pas s'installer[72]. Cela montre donc qu'il y a fondamentalement un écart entre la réaction que nous pouvons tous avoir face à la beauté physique, qui est une attraction sexuelle, et l'amour proprement dit, en tant que folie philosophique. Cette dimension morale et intellectuelle nourrit la raison, car la beauté n'est pas que corporelle, comme on le voit d'après les différentes étapes de la dialectique dans le *Banquet*[73]. Si la beauté physique est le point de départ de la remontée (et l'on peut même considérer qu'il est absolument essentiel car la beauté, nous l'avons dit, est la forme intelligible la plus visible, raison pour laquelle on la retrouve dans le

[68] Pour le sens épistémique de τροφή, voir *Philèbe*, 55d3 ; *Phèdre*, 248b5 ; Phèdre, 272d6 ; *Alcibiade*, 121b5 ; 122b3 ; *Lachès*, 186e5 ; *Protagoras*, 313c9 ; *Timée*, 18a9 ; 19c6 ; 20a1 ; 86e2 ; 87b7 ; *République*, III, 402a6 ; IV, 423e5 ; 424a6 ; 431a7 ; 441a3 ; 445e1 ; V, 450c2 ; 451e2 ; 453d2 ; VI, 491e4 ; VIII, 552e5 ; 560a10 ; X, 608a1.

[69] Platon, *Timée*, 90c6-8. Nous suivons la traduction de L. Brisson chez GF Flammarion, publiée en 2002.

[70] *Timée*, 34a1-3.

[71] Ferrari 1992, p. 265.

[72] *Phèdre*, 239c3-d7.

[73] Griswold 1986, p. 125 considère à l'inverse que le caractère du jeune homme ne joue aucun rôle dans le sentiment amoureux. Cependant, Platon met en avant, à de nombreuses reprises, le lien entre le physique et la psychologie de l'aimé (*Phèdre*, 252a1-253c2).

Banquet et le *Phèdre* qui tous deux traitent de la dialectique), elle n'en est que le premier degré, inférieur à la vertu, à la pensée, aux lois[74]. Pour que notre raison puisse se renforcer, il faut que le beau jeune homme lui propose autre chose qu'une beauté seulement physique. Cela se confirme par la présence de ῥίζα, la racine, que l'on trouve dans un passage important du *Timée*, où Platon explique que la racine de l'âme se situe dans l'intelligible et c'est d'ailleurs pour cela que l'homme se tient droit, car il est une plante céleste dont la tête, où loge l'âme immortelle, est attirée vers son origine divine[75]. Selon nous, le passage du *Phèdre* tente de souligner cette origine intelligible de l'âme avec laquelle cette dernière renoue, du fait de la réminiscence. Cela implique que la raison elle-même se renforce, ce que représente l'image de la pousse des plumes, plumes qui sont déjà présentes en elle dès le départ, car l'âme a une nature intelligible. Il nous paraît important de noter que l'expression « τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς εἶδος », que L. Brisson traduit par « la surface de l'âme », réapparaît dans notre extrait du *Timée* sur la racine intelligible, où L. Brisson traduit « ψυχῆς εἴδους » par « l'espèce de l'âme » qui est l'âme immortelle, celle qui possède le λόγος[76]. L'expression du *Phèdre* est très difficile à traduire et il est compliqué de saisir exactement ce que Platon a tenté d'expliquer ici, d'autant plus qu'il utilise ce langage corporel de la pousse des plumes pour évoquer un phénomène psychologique. Mais rien n'empêche de penser qu'il y a une éventuelle ressemblance entre le *Phèdre* et le *Timée* dans l'emploi qui est fait d'εἶδος. Sans remettre en cause la traduction de L. Brisson par « surface », qui est cohérente avec le cadre corporel de l'image employée par Platon[77], on peut légitimement penser que c'est surtout le λόγος qui est concerné par cette pousse des plumes[78], c'est-à-dire par le renouveau de la relation à l'intelligible, dont les deux autres facultés subissent les effets indirectement.

Dans ce premier moment du texte, il est donc possible de décrypter l'enseignement psychologique qui se cache derrière l'image de la pousse des plumes. La vision de la beauté, reçue en premier lieu par le corps, provoque une terreur dans le λόγος qui a la réminiscence de l'Idée du Beau. Cette réminiscence n'est probablement pas complète et au niveau de la contemplation qui avait lieu avant la descente. Mais elle est suffisante pour que le θυμός ressente de la pudeur face au beau jeune homme, ce qui lui permet d'avoir un sentiment

[74] Sur la différence entre la beauté dans le *Phèdre* et la beauté dans le *Banquet*, voir Ferrari 1992, p. 268.
[75] *Timée*, 90a2-b1.
[76] *Timée*, 90a3.
[77] Ryan 2012, p. 209.
[78] Verdenius 1962, pp. 148-149.

d'injustice face à la tentative de l'ἐπιθυμία d'imposer à l'âme et au corps la relation sexuelle[79]. Cette réaction du θυμός se manifeste physiquement par l'augmentation de la chaleur corporelle, ce qui est, par ailleurs, un phénomène courant quand l'irascible entre en jeu. D'après le *Timée*, cette chaleur permet de réduire l'activité de l'ἐπιθυμία, et donc de permettre au λόγος de se nourrir de la beauté physique, morale et intellectuelle du beau jeune homme. Il est aussi intéressant de voir de quelle façon le *Timée* complète le *Phèdre*, alors qu'il y a vraisemblablement un écart chronologique entre les deux, puisque le *Timée* est souvent daté de la fin de la vie de Platon, comme étant son avant-dernier, voire dernier, dialogue[80]. La *République* joue aussi un rôle important quand il s'agit de comprendre la psychologie du *Phèdre*.

> « En effet, l'âme était jadis tout emplumée ; la voilà donc, à présent, qui tout entière bouillonne [ζεῖ], qui se soulève [ἀνακηκίει][81] et qui éprouve le genre de douleurs [πάθος] que ressentent les enfants qui font leurs dents. Les dents qui percent provoquent une démangeaison [κνῆσίς], une irritation [ἀγανάκτησις] des gencives, et c'est bien le genre de douleurs que ressent l'âme de celui dont les ailes commencent à pousser ; elle est en ébullition, elle est irritée [ἀγανακτεῖ], chatouillée [γαργαλίζεται] pendant qu'elle fait ses ailes. Chaque fois donc que, posant ses regards sur la beauté du jeune garçon et recevant de cet objet des particules qui s'en détachent pour venir vers elle – d'où l'expression "vague du désir" [ἵμερος] –, l'âme est vivifiée et réchauffée, elle se repose de sa souffrance [ὀδύνης] et elle est toute joyeuse. Mais, quand elle se trouve seule et qu'elle se flétrit [αὐχμήσῃ], les orifices des conduits [διεξόδων] par où jaillissent les plumes se dessèchent [συναυαινόμενα] tous en même temps et, parce qu'ils sont fermés, bloquent la première pousse de la plume. Or, cette pousse emprisonnée avec le désir [ιμέρου], palpite [πηδῶσα] comme un pouls [σφύζοντα[82]] qui bat fort ; elle vient frapper contre ce qui obstrue les orifices, et cela orifice par orifice, si bien que l'âme, aiguillonnée [κεντουμένη] de toutes parts, est transportée [οἰστρᾷ] de douleur [ὀδυνᾶται]. Mais, parce que le souvenir de la beauté lui revient, elle est toute joyeuse. Le mélange de ces deux sentiments la tourmente ; elle enrage de se trouver démunie devant cet état qui la déroute. Et,

[79] L'amour est donc perçu différemment par les facultés (Impara 1993, p. 303).

[80] Robinson 1995, p. 15 pense que le *Timée* comme le *Politique* seraient des textes de maturité, mais antérieurs au *Phèdre*, ce qui place ce dernier à la fin de la vie de Platon. Il aurait donc abandonné l'idée selon laquelle le monde est constitué dans le temps au profit d'une éternité de l'âme et de la réalité sensible (p. 16). Mais ce n'est pas une datation courante chez les chercheurs.

[81] C'est un hapax chez Platon. Selon Lebeck 1972, p. 275, le terme est employé par Homère pour désigner l'effusion de sang ou de sueur.

[82] À l'époque de Platon, le fait que les veines et artères pulsent était considéré comme un symptôme d'inflammation et non comme un comportement vasculaire normal (Plato 2011, p. 153).

> prise de folie, elle ne peut ni dormir la nuit ni rester en place le jour, mais, sous l'impulsion du désir [ποθοῦσα], elle court là où, se figure-t-elle, elle pourra voir celui qui possède la beauté[83]. Quand elle l'a aperçu, quand elle a laissé pénétrer en elle la vague du désir, elle dégage les issues naguère obstruées. Elle a repris son souffle [ἀναπνοὴν] et, pour elle, c'en est fini des piqûres et des douleurs de l'enfantement : pour le moment, elle cueille, tout au contraire, le plaisir le plus délicieux. »[84]

Dans la suite, Platon choisit d'employer l'image de la pousse des dents pour représenter le phénomène que subit l'âme soumise à ce retour à l'intelligible. L'exemple en lui-même convient à la représentation de quelque chose qui tente de sortir, de s'extérioriser, de venir au jour, mais par un processus long et laborieux. Le terme ζεῖν réapparait, ce qui renvoie à une activité permanente du θυμός, vraisemblablement pour bloquer l'ἐπιθυμία qui est surtout intéressée par l'acte sexuel. Ἀνακηκίειν est un hapax, mais ἀγανάκτησις[85], ἀγανακτεῖν[86], γαργαλίζεσθαι[87], apparaissent tous les trois ensemble dans un même passage du *Philèbe*, qui porte sur le mélange du plaisir et de la douleur. L'irritation, qu'elle soit physique ou psychologique, est liée au fait que l'on cherche à conserver un état et à se débarrasser de son opposé[88]. Par exemple, si l'on a trop chaud et que l'on cherche à se rafraîchir, il y a une irritation due au fait que le rafraichissement ne soit pas assez rapide et que l'on garde donc, durant une certaine période, l'état de chaleur non désiré. Le chatouillement est la sensation qui résulte parfois de ce mélange entre le plaisir et la souffrance, en particulier quand le plaisir est plus important que la douleur. Il est important de noter, pour la compréhension de notre passage, que la douleur est souvent présente dans le processus philosophique. C'est par exemple le cas dans l'allégorie de la caverne. Le fait de sortir de l'obscurité de la caverne pour aller à la lumière du jour est un passage très douloureux. La douleur philosophique est aussi présente dans la fameuse image de la maïeutique du *Théétète*, où Socrate compare la dialectique à un accouchement, accouchement que l'on retrouve d'ailleurs à la fin de notre extrait : « Maintenant, ceux qui se font mes partenaires éprouvent aussi ceci, qui est identique pour les femmes en couches

[83] « In nonallegorical terms, this would represent someone inclining to act in an other- worldly fashion, as if not tied to a social and timebound existence; ready to throw all else to the winds for the sake of his love » Ferrari 1992, p. 267.
[84] Platon, *Phèdre*, 251b7-252a1.
[85] *Philèbe*, 46d1.
[86] *Philèbe*, 47a5.
[87] *Philèbe*, 47a7.
[88] *Philèbe*, 46d1.

: car ils sont dans les affres [ὠδίνουσι], et ils sont emplis, pendant des nuits et des jours, beaucoup plus qu'elles, de quelque chose qui ne trouve pas d'issue ; et ce malaise, l'éveiller aussi bien que le faire cesser, mon art peut le faire. Et ceux-là, c'est bien ainsi qu'il en va pour eux »[89]. Le texte du *Théétète* qui porte sur la maïeutique a une particularité, qui est qu'il présente les mêmes catégories d'hommes que notre texte du *Phèdre* : il y a des hommes qui sont stériles, d'autres qui auraient pu être fertiles mais ont avorté à cause de mauvaises influences, à commencer par celle des sophistes, et les derniers, qui sont fertiles et parviennent à accoucher d'un être viable grâce à la dialectique[90]. Le terme important dans cet extrait du *Théétète* est ὠδίς, la douleur, qui apparaît aussi dans notre texte du *Phèdre*. On peut alors se demander pourquoi la douleur fait partie du processus philosophique. Il y a plusieurs réponses possibles. L'allégorie de la caverne met en avant la violence pour l'homme de se rendre compte que le monde dans lequel il vit n'est pas le monde réel et que la vérité n'est pas celle qu'on lui a présentée depuis son enfance. La philosophie implique de remettre en cause nos croyances et le monde qui est le nôtre depuis toujours, ce qui peut être angoissant et déstabilisant. À cela s'ajoute un procédé long, laborieux, qui exige que le philosophe s'habitue à l'abstraction et à la conceptualisation, rôle préparatoire qui est accordé en particulier aux mathématiques. Il n'y a pas de connaissance directe et instantanée des Idées. Les exemples de dialectique qui sont offerts par Platon dans plusieurs dialogues mettent en avant l'importance de la méthode, des étapes, de la progression et du fait que l'âme doit s'habituer à chaque stade de la remontée avant de poursuivre. Comme on peut le lire dans le *Phèdre* comme dans le *Théétète*, la douleur est aussi liée à la réminiscence, car l'âme possède un contenu de connaissance qu'elle ne parvient pas tout de suite à identifier. On peut en effet s'interroger sur le fait que la remontée soit aussi longue et difficile pour l'âme alors qu'elle a elle-même une nature intelligible. La solution se trouve dans l'influence du corps et du sensible. L'incorporation obscurcit la vision de l'âme, notamment parce qu'elle est obligée de composer avec le corps qui a des besoins en permanence et qui est lui-même stimulé par les objets extérieurs. L'objet intelligible est si différent de l'objet sensible, en particulier du point de vue de sa nature, qu'il est compliqué pour notre âme de penser une réalité aussi distincte de celle dont elle a l'habitude depuis sa descente.

Pourtant, l'expérience du sensible est absolument nécessaire à la dialectique et à la remontée, comme on le lit dans le *Phèdre* : « Il faut en effet que l'homme

[89] Platon, *Théétète*, 151a5-b1, trad. M. Narcy, GF Flammarion, 2016.
[90] *Théétète*, 150b6-151b6.

arrive à saisir ce qu'on appelle "forme intelligible", en allant d'une pluralité de sensations vers l'unité qu'on embrasse au terme d'un raisonnement »[91]. Il n'y a pas de retour à l'intelligible sans le sensible. Dans le cadre du *Phèdre*, c'est la « vague du désir », ou ἵμερος, qui permet à l'âme de se tourner vers l'intelligible et cet ἵμερος n'est possible que par la vue du beau jeune homme, car il est une manifestation de l'idée du beau. Platon le définit dans le *Cratyle* comme un fort courant qui entraîne l'âme (419e3), à la façon d'un cours d'eau[92]. Or, c'est l'étymologie que reprend ici Platon : les particules qui se détachent du corps du jeune homme pour venir dans les yeux forment une vague au sens physique du terme. Platon ne prend donc pas ἵμερος dans un sens totalement psychologique, mais bien physique. Le flot physique des particules provoque, dans l'âme, un état de joie et de calme, parce qu'elle est en train d'être nourrie par la réminiscence. En réalité, Platon utilise certes ψυχή, mais c'est surtout le λόγος qui est concerné par les effets positifs de l'ἵμερος. Il est douteux que l'ἐπιθυμία, qui ne parvient pas à concrétiser son désir sexuel et qui est en train d'être maltraitée par le θυμός, soit très épanouie, ce qui est d'ailleurs confirmé par la suite du texte sur le cochet et les deux chevaux, où le cheval noir qui représente l'appétit ne cesse de se rebeller parce qu'il ne parvient pas à ses fins[93].

Cependant, quand l'âme est seule (χωρὶς), le flux du désir ne parvient plus à elle. Le philosophe ne voit plus le jeune homme, il est séparé de lui, et logiquement, il n'a plus accès à l'objet qui permet la réminiscence, même si, on le constate ensuite, la mémoire suffit à apporter de la joie, au moins au λόγος qui détient les souvenirs de l'intelligible. Il y aurait donc une dissension entre les facultés qui ont besoin de la vision du jeune homme, à savoir les facultés inférieures, et le λόγος, qui emploie le souvenir de la beauté[94]. Les facultés inférieures sont en état de souffrance, en particulier le θυμός, parce qu'il réagit surtout à la vague du désir et à la dimension visuelle de la beauté[95]. Le processus par lequel l'âme se dessèche fait écho au moment où elle se vivifie, c'est-à-dire où elle est arrosée. Puisqu'il n'y a plus de nutriment, le renforcement de la relation avec l'intelligible ne progresse pas et stagne, ce qui fait que le λόγος et le θυμός ne parviennent pas à se développer. La douleur est due à la fois à ce

[91] Platon, *Phèdre*, 249b5-c1. Pour un commentaire approfondi de ces lignes, lire Griswold 1986, pp. 111-121.

[92] Le *Cratyle* (420a9-b2) considère également que l'étymologie d'ἔρως repose sur εἰσρεῖ, qui veut dire couler de l'extérieur vers l'intérieur, en particulier par les yeux de celui qui le reçoit. Voir Ferrari 1987, p. 155 et Platone 1998, p. 226. Nous sommes donc en désaccord avec Ryan 2012, p. 210, qui pense qu'il n'y a aucun point de contact entre l'étymologie du *Phèdre* et du *Cratyle*.

[93] *Phèdre* 254c5-d7.

[94] Sur cette idée de la dissension entre les facultés face à la beauté, voir Price 1993, p. 245.

[95] Werner 2013, p. 131.

dessèchement et au début de la pousse, qui est toujours en marche[96]. Le nom πήδησις (même famille que πηδᾶν) est en particulier employé dans le *Timée* pour désigner l'activité du θυμός, notamment quand il perçoit un danger et qu'il répond par la colère[97]. Dans le *Philèbe*, le même terme sert à décrire la réaction qui suit le mélange de plaisir et de douleur[98]. Le fait que le θυμός soit en activité à ce moment peut se justifier par la crainte que le λόγος soit affaibli du fait de la privation de l'ἵμερος et donc que l'ἐπιθυμία reprenne le contrôle sur l'âme. Le θυμός est la cause de la mise en mouvement vers le beau jeune homme, ainsi que l'objet de la douleur. Le terme ποθεῖν est très intéressant dans le sens où, quand on regarde les occurrences de ce mot, il n'a jamais le sens de désir corporel, comme l'ἐπιθυμία[99]. Il a plutôt une valeur intellectuelle et émotionnelle. Ce sont donc surtout le λόγος et le θυμός qui sont en action, et en particulier le θυμός, qui n'a pas la mémoire pour le réconforter. Le verbe κεντεῖν évoque l'idée de lutte, de combat, qui est cohérente avec le θυμός, puisqu'il est la faculté qui nous permet de nous défendre ou d'attaquer. En d'autres termes, ce n'est pas le λόγος qui est le moteur de la lutte ici, mais le θυμός, qui cherche à rencontrer le beau jeune homme, pour sortir de la douleur qu'il subit. Οἰστρᾶν est employé dans la *République* pour désigner la folie impulsée par l'appétit. Ici, la folie paraît être causée par la douleur du manque[100]. Mais cela ne veut pas dire que l'ἐπιθυμία n'est pas aussi concernée. La description du comportement des deux chevaux montre qu'au début de l'interaction avec le beau jeune homme, même si l'ἐπιθυμία est sous le contrôle des deux autres facultés, elle continue à avoir pour objectif la relation sexuelle. Elle peut donc aussi être motrice dans la recherche du beau jeune homme, mais pour des motivations différentes de celles de la raison et de l'irascible[101].

L'âme est donc dans un état chaotique quand elle est privée de la présence du beau jeune homme[102]. Le λόγος est relativement calme du fait du souvenir

[96] Comme le dit avec justesse Ferrari 1987, p. 150, Platon «felt beauty to be less a cohesive than a potentially explosive force in the philosopher's life». Le fait que la pousse continue, même si elle est bloquée par les pores, renvoie à l'idée qu'il n'y a pas de retour en arrière (Ferrari 1987, p. 157).

[97] *Timée*, 70c1 ; d4.

[98] *Philèbe*, 47a6.

[99] *Phédon*, 98a1 ; *Phèdre*, 255d8 ; *Protagoras*, 352a6 ; *Ménon*, 84c6 ; *Timée*, 19a8 ; *République*, IX, 571a5.

[100] *République*, IX, 573b1 ; e7.

[101] De façon plus générale, l'appétit et l'irascible sont les responsables de la motricité de l'âme (Werner 2013, p. 62).

[102] Selon Hackforth 1996, p. 98, cette description ne rentre pas dans le cadre de la folie divine proprement dite, qui concerne l'amour pleinement établi entre les deux amants. Cependant, nous avons vu que l'état du philosophe est bien causé par la réminiscence de l'Idée du Beau, ce qui montre qu'il y a une origine divine à cet état de désorientation.

de la beauté, mais ce n'est pas suffisant pour qu'il puisse approfondir sa réminiscence de l'Idée du Beau[103]. Le θυμός est la faculté qui est la plus agitée, ce qui peut se comprendre dans le sens où il est l'intermédiaire entre le λόγος et l'ἐπιθυμία, en particulier quand les deux sont en conflit. Sachant que l'âme est en train de passer du sensible à l'intelligible et de se détacher de l'influence du corps, sans être totalement affranchie par la philosophie, elle est donc dans une situation assez critique où le θυμός joue un rôle décisif pour empêcher l'ἐπιθυμία de prendre le contrôle[104]. En effet, l'appétit a ses propres objectifs, raison pour laquelle il cherche aussi le beau jeune homme, sachant que le λόγος n'est pas pleinement capable de contrôler la totalité de l'âme. Une fois que le beau jeune homme est de nouveau présent et que l'ἵμερος revient, l'âme se calme, c'est-à-dire que le λόγος recommence à être vivifié. Platon précise qu'elle reprend son souffle, c'est-à-dire qu'elle se repose après avoir fourni un effort intense, qui est celui de ses tourments amoureux. L'image de la respiration est en réalité présente dans le texte avant l'introduction d'ἀναπνοή. En *Phèdre* 251d4, Platon utilise διέξοδος pour désigner les conduits des plumes. Or, ce terme, dans le *Timée*, est aussi employé pour désigner les voies respiratoires[105]. La référence à la respiration n'est pas anodine. Nous avons déjà expliqué le lien entre l'âme, la vie et la respiration[106]. Mais Platon lui donne une autre portée, toujours dans le *Timée*. Quand il décrit les différentes formes d'incorporations animales, il souligne le fait que les poissons, qui sont le pire degré d'incorporation pour l'âme, sont privés de l'accès à l'air pur. La seule chose qu'ils peuvent respirer est l'eau profonde et obscure. En d'autres termes, il y a aussi une dimension psychologique à la respiration, dans le sens où les conditions dans lesquelles nous l'utilisons sont adaptées au type de corps que notre âme est parvenue à obtenir du fait de son propre état éthique. Plus l'ἐπιθυμία gagne d'emprise sur l'âme, plus notre respiration est altérée, et ce, même d'un point de vue cosmologique, puisque toute âme soumise à son appétit finira par s'incorporer dans un animal aquatique. D'un point de vue purement physiologique, la respiration permet l'évacuation de la chaleur, ce qui a, là aussi, un lien avec le θυμός. Le fait de réceptionner l'ἵμερος renforce le

[103] Comme le dit très bien Ferrari 1987, p. 161, au début de la relation, le beau jeune homme n'est pas à une personne à part entière pour le philosophe. Il est à la fois un être divin à qui on pourrait rendre un culte, du fait de la manifestation de l'Idée du beau, et un ensemble de fragments de corps, comme si son visage seul existait.

[104] Nous pensons en effet, avec Ferrari 1992, p. 266, que le λόγος, absorbé par ses souvenirs, ne prête plus attention à l'activité des deux autres facultés.

[105] Selon De Vries 1969, p. 157, διέξοδος est un terme médical.

[106] Ryan 2012, p. 211 souligne, avec raison, que le flux de l'ἵμερος doit être renouvelé, comme l'est l'air dans la respiration. Confinés, ils deviennent tous les deux malsains.

λόγος et apaise le θυμός, car ce dernier n'a plus besoin d'affronter l'ἐπιθυμία avec autant de violence au fur et à mesure que la raison gagne en force.

Il est donc possible de faire une lecture psychologique de ces pages du *Phèdre*, même si les images employées sont corporelles. Cette analyse est importante car elle nous permet de constater que le θυμός est beaucoup plus actif que l'on pourrait le penser en lisant par exemple la description des deux chevaux. À première vue, le cheval blanc semble assez passif dans le conflit qui oppose le cochet au cheval noir. Cependant, quand on relit le passage sur la pousse des plumes, il apparaît que ce n'est pas le cas, ce qui est d'ailleurs cohérent avec le *Timée*. Mais quel enseignement pouvons-nous tirer de tout cela sur l'interaction entre l'âme et le corps et sur l'incorporation de l'âme en général ?

3. L'enseignement psychologique et physiologique de *Phèdre* 250e1-252a1

Le fait que Platon ait décidé d'utiliser des images corporelles pour parler d'un phénomène psychologique s'explique d'abord par la difficulté de rendre compte du fonctionnement d'une réalité intelligible, qui évolue hors de l'espace, dans un langage qui est forcément spatial[107]. Platon l'affirme dans le *Phèdre*, au sein même de la palinodie de Socrate : « Aussi bien, sur son immortalité, voilà qui suffit. Pour ce qui est de sa forme, voici ce qu'il faut dire. Pour dire quelle sorte de chose c'est, il faudrait un exposé en tout point divin et fort long ; mais, dire de quoi elle a l'air, voilà qui n'excède par les possibilités humaines. Aussi notre discours procédera-t-il de cette façon »[108]. C'est ce qu'explique le début du discours de *Timée*, qui reprend la même logique : parce que nous sommes des êtres incorporés, qui vivons dans l'espace et le temps, nous ne pouvons pas faire autrement que de nous référer à ces deux catégories de la réalité pour décrire le fonctionnement de l'âme[109]. Il y a donc une nécessité argumentative liée à notre mode de connaissance dans le sensible. Mais au-delà de cela, il est clair que l'amour est aussi un phénomène physique. Quand Platon décrit la chaleur, les frissons, l'agitation, il décrit aussi des phénomènes corporels qui imitent ce qui se passe dans l'âme, et inversement. C'est pour cela qu'il emploie un vocabulaire où les termes ont un sens à la fois psychologique

[107] D'où l'usage du mythe (Werner 2013, pp. 54-55). Werner 2013, p. 58 ajoute aussi que l'âme elle-même, n'étant pas une forme intelligible, est de ce fait incompréhensible pour la raison humaine, d'où la limite inhérente à tout discours psychologique.

[108] Phèdre, 246a3-6. Pour une analyse de ce passage, voir Stoeber 1992, p. 190.

[109] *Timée*, 29c7-d3.

et physique. C'est pour mettre en avant le parallélisme qui existe entre ce qui a lieu dans le corps et ce qui a lieu dans l'âme.

Dans un précédent article, intitulé « Explaining Embodiment in Plato's Philosophy; The Hypothesis of the Mirror »[110], nous avons tenté d'apporter une réponse au problème de l'incorporation chez Platon à partir du *Timée*. L'hypothèse du miroir, que nous défendons, implique qu'il n'y a pas de contact direct entre l'âme et le corps, dans le sens où il n'est pas possible qu'un être intelligible agisse sur le corps et inversement, car il n'y a pas d'intermédiaire entre eux. Platon ne décrit jamais une réalité qui pourrait assurer la continuité entre l'âme et le corps. En revanche, le sensible, dans le *Timée*, est présenté comme un reflet (εἰκών)[111] et comme nous l'avons montré dans l'article précité, la description physique que fait Platon de la formation d'une image sur la surface du miroir[112] peut parfaitement s'adapter à l'incorporation. Le corps est un reflet qui naît de la rencontre entre trois mouvements : le mouvement issu de l'âme, qui est un mouvement intellectuel et émotionnel[113], le mouvement physique issu des quatre éléments et le mouvement spatial issu de la χώρα, qui est l'espace dans lequel le sensible se meut[114]. Selon nous, ce que nous venons d'expliquer sur *Phèdre* 250e1-252a1 peut aussi entrer dans ce cadre. Le corps imite dans l'espace ce que vit l'âme, et inversement. Par exemple, la chaleur est le reflet corporel de l'activité du θυμός, les frissons de la peur du λόγος.

Mais ce qui est valable dans un sens l'est aussi dans l'autre[115]. Le corps est le point de départ de la réminiscence. L'âme ne peut rien faire sans lui, ce qui est finalement assez cohérent avec le fait que, même si elle existe avant notre corps terrestre, ce dernier est avant tout son reflet. Il faut d'abord que le corps réceptionne les particules issues du beau jeune homme pour que l'âme se rende compte de la présence de l'Idée du Beau qui se manifeste ainsi dans le sensible[116]. Cette reconnaissance de la beauté repose sur les mouvements spatiaux que présente le corps. Notre âme a une nature intelligible, mais elle a

[110] Guigon 2024.
[111] *Timée*, 50e8-b2.
[112] *Timée*, 46a4-b1.
[113] *Lois*, X, 896e8-b5.
[114] *Timée*, 52e4-53a5.
[115] Griswold 1986, p. 124.
[116] Il est évident que parler de la présence de l'Idée du Beau dans le sensible est très vague. Selon nous, cette présence peut être identifiée sous la forme de proportions mathématiques, ce qui serait cohérent avec le fait que les formes intelligibles peuvent servir de mesures (Mohr 2014, pp. XIII, 258, 259). Sachant que les quatre éléments sont eux-mêmes à l'origine composés de triangles (*Timée*, 54b8-c3), l'hypothèse d'une organisation mathématique harmonieuse nous paraît tout à fait envisageable.

aussi la capacité, selon le *Timée*, d'être divisible dans les corps[117], c'est-à-dire qu'elle peut reconnaître les mouvements spatiaux et de savoir à quoi ils correspondent. En d'autres termes, notre âme ne voit pas littéralement le beau corps, comme nos yeux le voient. Elle réagit aux mouvements qui ont lieu dans notre corps. Malheureusement, Platon ne nous dit pas grand-chose sur les particules qui se détachent des objets et causent notre sensation. Si l'on se réfère à Empédocle, qui est la source de Platon pour cette théorie, ce sont les quatre éléments qui composent le corps qui émettent les particules[118]. Par exemple, tout ce qui est lié à la vision et à la couleur repose sur le feu[119], et on sait que l'idée est la même chez Platon : le visible est dû au feu[120]. Si on prend le cas de l'ἵμερος, nous avons vu qu'il était dû à la réception par le corps des particules issues du beau jeune homme. Dans le cas de la vision, il est logique d'en déduire que nos yeux reçoivent des particules lumineuses, c'est-à-dire du feu. Comme tous les éléments physiques, le feu a un mouvement spatial qui lui est propre. Ce mouvement spatial est important car c'est lui qui est pensé par l'âme. Il est cependant difficile de dire, à la lecture des textes de Platon, si une image visuelle, comme celle du beau jeune homme, a un mouvement spatial propre du fait de l'organisation du feu qui la compose.

Cependant, comment expliquer le fonctionnement de la sensation autrement ? Si on part du principe que l'on peut expliquer l'interaction entre l'âme et le corps par la théorie du miroir, qui repose sur la rencontre entre les différentes formes de mouvements, nous sommes contraints de penser que l'image visuelle possède un mouvement spatial, ce qui est d'ailleurs possible du point de vue de la théorie des particules et des quatre éléments. Cela tend à montrer que notre corps ne reçoit pas une vague désordonnée de particules, mais qu'il y a une certaine organisation et structure qui lui sont données. De plus, le corps du beau jeune homme n'est pas que le reflet (ou l'imitation selon *Phèdre* 251a3[121]) d'une âme, il est aussi le reflet de l'Idée du Beau[122]. C'est d'ailleurs cela que reconnaît l'âme quand elle a accès aux mouvements du corps. Les mouvements intellectuels et émotionnels de notre âme s'adaptent alors à ce qu'elle comprend des mouvements spatiaux. En reconnaissant la ressemblance avec l'Idée du Beau, le λόγος ressent du res-

[117] *Timée*, 35a1-6.
[118] Fr. A LXXXVI, section 7.
[119] Fr. A LXXXVI, section 8.
[120] *Timée*, 31b4-6.
[121] Μιμεῖσθαι est parfois utilisé par Platon pour exprimer la manifestation de l'intelligible par le sensible (par exemple *République*, VI, 500c6-7 ; *Timée*, 38a7, 47c2, 81b2).
[122] L'idée de reflet implique que les Formes servent de paradigmes à la réalité, mais ne soient pas des causes efficientes (Robinson 1995, p. 15 ; Mohr 2014, p. 112).

pect et de la crainte, qui sont imités par le corps par des frissons. La peur ressentie par la raison entraîne une augmentation de l'agressivité du θυμός, qui a pour fonction de protéger l'individu quand il identifie une menace. Le corps reflète cette agressivité en augmentant la chaleur du corps. Il y a donc un parfait parallélisme entre l'âme et le corps, qui réagissent l'un à l'autre sans avoir besoin d'une interaction directe.

En conclusion, la lecture psychologique de cet extrait du *Phèdre* tend à montrer que la relation entre l'âme et le corps est beaucoup plus étroite chez Platon que ne le laisseraient penser des textes comme le *Phédon*, qui décrit le second comme le tombeau du premier. Même dans le *Phèdre*, la descente dans le corps terrestre est présentée comme une forme de punition, puisque l'âme a été incapable de se maintenir dans l'intelligible. Cependant, il est important de garder à l'esprit que le corps est le point de départ de la remontée vers les Idées. La dialectique ne présuppose pas un isolement total de l'âme envers le sensible. Au contraire, le corps est le premier déclencheur de la réminiscence. L'âme commence toujours par s'adapter à l'information sensible que lui transmet le corps. Mais on peut aussi constater, après analyse de *Phèdre* 250e1-252a1, que la relation entre le corps et l'âme est probablement de l'ordre de celle du reflet avec l'objet reflété, comme nous l'avons postulé avec la théorie du miroir, ce qui est aussi cohérent avec le fait que le *Phèdre* anticipe énormément d'affirmations du *Timée*, malgré l'écart de temps entre les deux[123]. Il y a donc une continuité entre les textes dans la pensée de Platon sur l'âme, notamment entre le *Phèdre*, la *République* et le *Timée*, ce qui est un élément important pour tous les chercheurs qui s'intéressent à ce sujet difficile, mais essentiel, qu'est la psychologie platonicienne.

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[123] Certains auteurs, comme Owen 1953 et Robinson 1992 présentent des arguments en faveur du rapprochement chronologique du *Timée* et du *Phèdre*: le *Timée* ne serait pas le dernier ou l'avant-dernier texte de Platon, mais suivrait immédiatement, voire précéderait, le *Phèdre*. Au-delà de la difficile question de la datation des dialogues platoniciens, leurs travaux mettent nettement en avant l'unité doctrinale du *Phèdre*, du *Timée* et de la *République* (voir par exemple Robinson 1992, pp. 26-27). De la même façon, Rowe 1993, p. 38-39 souligne la ressemblance entre le *Phèdre* et le *Sophiste*, notamment du point de vue de la formulation des définitions, ce qui impliquerait que le *Phèdre* soit plus tardif que ce que l'on pense traditionnellement.

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Maria Ortori

Parlare e tacere con gli occhi: le emozioni attraverso lo sguardo nelle *Argonautiche* di Apollonio Rodio*

Abstract: A distinctive feature of *Argonautica*'s narrative is the vivid depiction of emotions and feelings. Indeed, Apollonius Rhodius reports psychological processes with great objectivity, explaining and precisely narrating their physical embodiment. In this paper, I explore Apollonius' concept of the body's resonance with emotion, with particular attention to how this is expressed through the gaze. The analysis delves into the significance of "looking downward" and "looking from below". The first part of this study presents an overview of references to the gaze in the poem, followed by an analysis of two specific verbal creations (κατηφιάω and ὑπόφραζομαι) which allow for a deeper exploration of the semantic and literary meaning of the act of looking downward and from below.

Keywords: Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica*, gaze, gesture, semantics.

1. Premessa: le *Argonautiche* come epopea dell'uomo e il mondo interiore secondo Apollonio Rodio

Il grandioso *incipit* con cui Apollonio Rodio apre il suo poema epico, ἀρχόμενος σέο Φοῖβε παλαιγενέων κλέα φωτῶν / μνήσομαι [...] 'cominciando da te, Febo, ricorderò le gesta degli eroi antichi [...]' ha a lungo ingannato i lettori dell'opera, alimentando l'illusione di un'epopea dal respiro eroico più lontano del mondo omerico[1]. L'attesa tradita di esaltanti grandezze e l'inadeguatezza delle *Argonautiche* a rispondere a una tale aspettativa è stata perciò sovente scambiata per inadeguatezza strutturale[2]. Da qualche decennio, tuttavia, la

* Sono grata a Liana Lomiento, Poulheria Kyriakou e ai revisori anonimi, che con i loro suggerimenti hanno perfezionato e arricchito questo contributo. Rimane mia la responsabilità dei contenuti, come anche degli eventuali errori. Abbreviazioni presenti nel testo: *DELG* = Chantraine P. 1999², *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque. Histoire des mots*, Paris; *EDG* = Beekes R. S. P. 2010, *Etymological Dictionary of Greek*, Leiden, Boston; got. = gotico; gr. = greco. Il simbolo ° è usato per indicare i membri di un composto: quando posposto, indica il primo elemento; quando preposto, il secondo.

[1] L'esordio delle *Argonautiche* è solenne ma tutt'altro che tradizionale: ne rileva le innovazioni Fusillo 1993, pp. 109-110 con nn. 4-5, cui si rimanda per una rassegna bibliografica sull'argomento.

[2] Il persistere del giudizio negativo ancora in tempi recenti sull'opera apolloniana, valutata intrinsecamente carente soprattutto nel confronto con il modello omerico, è comprovato dalle

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critica si è mossa verso una più ragionata esegesi, che ha prodotto il decisivo riconoscimento che le *Argonautiche* hanno al loro centro non la realizzazione di uno statuto eroico, ma la definizione di uno statuto umano anti-eroico[3]. Non attorno alle gesta degli uomini antichi ma attorno all'*uomo*, Apollonio enuclea il suo poema epico, indagandone il mondo interiore. Peculiare della narrativa apolloniana è la rappresentazione vivida di emozioni e sentimenti che esistono soltanto nello spazio interiore della persona che sente, e che, talvolta, solo per essa hanno senso e significato. Con un gusto tutto alessandrino, Apollonio riferisce i processi psicologici con grande oggettività, spiegandoli e raccontandone precisamente la risonanza corporea, l'incarnazione.

La maggioranza di questi approfondimenti psicologici, ma non la totalità, riguarda Medea. Il punto focale dell'intera vicenda, l'ἔρως, è in gran parte narrato attraverso i suoi effetti visibili nella persona di Medea. Accanto al modulo sintomatologico ormai tradizionale della manifestazione di ἔρως, il racconto delle conseguenze fisiche dell'amore si estende nella narrazione dei gesti di Medea nel corso di tutto il terzo e quarto libro, caratterizzandone profondamente i cambiamenti e le evoluzioni[4]. Se in un primo momento, colpita da Eros, in un silenzio teso e commosso (3.284)[5], sente la ragione che esce dal petto (3.288-289, 3.962)[6], si dimentica tutto (3.289-

affermazioni di Luigi Enrico Rossi: «sembra un gioco o un indovinello o, nella migliore delle ipotesi, un lessico di parole omeriche (o quello che oggi si chiamerebbe un *index verborum*) ma sono invece le *Argonautiche*. Siamo, direi, al limite estremo del letterariamente appercepibile, o meglio siamo oltre quel limite, quasi all'enigmistica» (Rossi 1995, p. 18).

[3] Sul programmatico anti-eroismo delle *Argonautiche* la critica si è espressa variamente e a più riprese: cfr., tra gli altri, Carspecken 1952; Lawall 1966; Beye 1969; Beye 1982, pp. 77-99; Klein 1983; Hunter 1988; Clauss 1993 e bibliografia relativa.

[4] Per un approfondimento sulle influenze saffiche in Apollonio Rodio cfr. Privitera 1969, pp. 71-72 e Mignogna 1992 con bibliografia.

[5] [...] τὴν δ' ἀμφασίη λάβε θυμόν 'uno sbigottimento le prese il cuore'. I passi delle *Argonautiche* sono tratti dall'edizione di Fränkel 1970[2]. Ogni traduzione presente a testo, eccetto ove diversamente indicato, è opera e responsabilità di chi scrive.

[6] 3.288-289 [...] καί οἱ ἄηντο / στηθέων ἐκ πυκιναὶ καμάτῳ φρένες [...] 'e la saggezza / le volava fuori dal petto, per l'affanno'; 3.962 ἐκ δ' ἄρα οἱ κραδίη στηθέων πέσεν [...] 'il cuore le cadde dal petto'. Si nota che il sostantivo φρήν (3.289), come sovente accade con termini che afferiscono alla sfera psico-fisica, sfugge a una univoca ricostruzione etimologica e, di conseguenza, a una precisa definizione semantica. Le φρένες sono considerate un'entità psico-fisica che costituisce la sede tanto delle facoltà razionali quanto delle emozioni e delle passioni, «located generally within the chest region and capable of emotional, volitional, and intellectual functions» (Darcus 1979, p. 159). Nelle *Argonautiche* si registrano 30 occorrenze del termine in entrambe le accezioni di 'mente' e 'cuore'. Si nota che il numero di queste attestazioni si addensa progressivamente, con lieve diminuzione nel secondo libro, secondo il procedere del racconto: si contano 4 occorrenze nel primo libro, 3 nel secondo, 11 nel terzo, 12 nel quarto. Questa tendenza non sorprende, giacché nel terzo e quarto libro la narrazione valorizza maggiormente la dimensione interiore, di cui le φρένες costituiscono il nucleo. Per un approfondimento sull'uso del termine in Apollonio Rodio cfr. Sciarabba 2018, pp. 89-92. Allo stesso studio si rimanda per una ricognizione dei diversi tentativi

290)[7], gli occhi si annebbiano (3.962-963)[8], il viso si arrossa (3.963)[9] e la giovane si paralizza (3.964-965)[10], successivamente ella rovescia il codice: la gioia la solleva verso l'alto (3.1009-1010)[11] e vorrebbe dire tutto a Giasone nello stesso tempo (3.1011-1012)[12], con gli occhi che brillano (3.1018-1019)[13]. Non solo, il potere traumatizzante di Eros la induce a movimenti angosciati, a gesti irrazionali, che Apollonio ha cura di descrivere con grande minuzia. La donna tenta di prendere coscienza delle proprie emozioni muovendosi spasmodicamente per casa, senza una meta e senza vestiti, ripetendo gesti frustrati (3.645-651)[14]. In attesa di Giasone, ella vive una realtà distorta, modificata nell'idealizzazione di lui (3.451-458)[15]; le sue capacità cognitive

di ricostruzione etimologica e semantica del termine (p. 19, nn. 84-88 e bibliografia ivi riportata): ci si limita in questa sede a segnalare unicamente la recente e interessante proposta etimologica di Rossana Stefanelli, secondo cui φρήν e φρονέω sono formazioni radicali dalla radice indoeuropea *b^{h}*re/on-* 'diventare caldo', 'bruciare' (da cui anche got. *brinnan* 'bruciare' intransitivo e *-brannjan* 'bruciare' transitivo), che in greco si specializza per indicare la produzione del calore corporeo, cfr. Stefanelli 2006, pp. 277-298, ripreso e ampliato in Stefanelli 2010.

[7] [...] οὐδέ τιν' ἄλλην / μνῆστιν ἔχεν [...] 'non aveva più altro ricordo'.

[8] [...] ὄμματα δ' αὔτως / ἤχλυσαν [...] 'le si oscurarono gli occhi'. Il motivo di ἀχλύς 'bruma', 'nebbia' sugli occhi è tipico nella poesia omerica, in cui può indicare la nebbia che gli dèi pongono davanti agli occhi degli uomini per proteggerli (cfr. *Il.* 5.127 etc.) o che cala sulle palpebre per la morte di un guerriero (cfr. *Il.* 16.344 etc.). Nella letteratura posteriore, essa è sintomo di una malattia (cfr. Hp. *Mul.* 1.50; Hsch. A 8887 Latte-Cunningham etc.), ovvero indica l'accecamento amoroso: a quest'ultimo si riferisce Apollonio, facendo forse riferimento ad Archil. fr. 191 W^{2}. 2-3, probabile modello per la composizione di questo passo e, in generale, del terzo libro, date le numerose consonanze (per le quali cfr. Mignogna 1992, pp. 8-9; Pace 2003, p. 153, n. 2 con bibliografia). Sulla fortuna di Archiloco in età ellenistica cfr. Degani 1973; per una rassegna dell'uso di ἀχλύς in letteratura, invece, cfr. Agosti 2011.

[9] [...] θερμὸν δὲ παρηίδας εἶλεν ἔρευθος 'caldo rossore le prese le guance'.

[10] γούνατα δ' οὔτ' ὀπίσω οὔτε προπάροιθεν ἀεῖραι / ἔσθενεν, ἀλλ' ὑπένερθε πάγη πόδας [...] 'non aveva la forza di sollevare le ginocchia / né indietro né avanti, ma era immobilizzata sotto i piedi'.

[11] [...] χύθη δέ οἱ ἔνδοθι θυμός / ἄϊνῳ ἀειρομένης [...] 'dentro il petto sobbalzò il cuore di lei, levata in aria dalla lode'.

[12] οὐδ' ἔχεν ὅττι πάροιθεν ἔπος προτιμυθήσαιτο, / ἀλλ' ἅμυδις μενέαινεν ἀολλέα πάντ' ἀγορεῦσαι 'non sapeva quale parola dirgli per prima, / ma desiderava parlargli di tutto insieme e nello stesso tempo'.

[13] [...] τῆς δ' ἀμαρυγάς / ὀφθαλμῶν ἥρπαζεν [...] 'e lui le rapiva gli occhi lucenti'.

[14] Ἦ ῥα, καὶ ὀρθωθεῖσα θύρας ὤιξε δόμοιο / νήλιπος οἰέανος, καὶ δὴ λελίητο νέεσθαι / αὐτοκασιγνήτηνδε καὶ ἔρκεος οὐδὸν ἄμειψεν· / δὴν δὲ καταυτόθι μίμνεν ἐνὶ προδόμῳ θαλάμοιο / αἰδοῖ ἐργομένη· μετὰ δ' ἐτράπετ' αὖτις ὀπίσσω / στρεφθεῖσ'· ἐκ δὲ πάλιν κίεν ἔνδοθεν, ἄψ τ' ἀλέεινεν / εἴσω, τηΰσιοι δὲ πόδες φέρον ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα 'disse così e si alzò, aprì la porta della camera, / senza-calzari con-la-sola-veste, e voleva andare / da sua sorella e varcò la soglia della corte. / Ma ora, lungo tempo restò nel vestibolo della camera, / trattenuta dalla vergogna, e poi si allontanò voltandosi / indietro, e di nuovo da dentro si gettò fuori, e di nuovo indietreggiò / all'interno, invano i piedi la portavano avanti e indietro'.

[15] [...] πολλὰ δὲ θυμῷ / ὥρμαιν' ὅσσα τ' ἔρωτες ἐποτρύνουσι μέλεσθαι· / προπρὸ δ' ἄρ' ὀφθαλμῶν ἔτι οἱ ἰνδάλλετο πάντα, / αὐτός θ' οἷος ἔην οἵοισί τε φάρεσιν εἶτο / οἷά τ' ἔειφ' ὥς θ' ἕζετ' ἐπὶ θρόνου ὥς τε θύραζε / ἤιεν· οὐδέ τιν' ἄλλον ὀίσσατο πορφύρουσα / ἔμμεναι ἀνέρα τοῖον· ἐν οὔασι δ' αἰὲν ὀρώρει / αὐδή τε μῦθοί τε μελίφρονες οὓς ἀγόρευσεν 'ma nell'animo / meditava su quanto gli

sono alterate (3.948-955)[16]. La consacrazione dello spazio del racconto al mondo intimo della donna trova il suo coronamento nella rappresentazione del sogno di desiderio e, soprattutto, nei tre lunghi monologhi interiori[17].

Occorre nondimeno ricordare che l'articolata esplorazione psicologica che Apollonio mette in versi non si limita a Medea, ma sonda gli animi di molti dei personaggi delle *Argonautiche*: si pensi, ad esempio, alla rappresentazione dell'emotività di Ipsipile al cospetto di Giasone (1.790-792)[18], ovvero al racconto della monomania erotica di Eracle, disperato per la perdita di Ila (1.261-1272)[19]. Al contempo, l'interesse dell'autore si estende anche ad altre espressioni dell'interiorità dei personaggi, slegate dall'esperienza amorosa. Si tratta, ad esempio, della descrizione dello stato d'animo di Medea al momento della fuga dalla reggia di Eeta: per il terrore del padre, l'angoscia del futuro e l'imbarazzo per il giudizio altrui i suoi occhi bruciano, le orecchie rombano, si procura dolore e ha pensieri di morte (4.16-19)[20]. Similmente, gli Argonauti

impulsi d'amore spingono ad avere a cuore:/ e ancora davanti agli occhi le appariva ogni cosa, / com'era lui e com'erano gli abiti che indossava, / com'erano le cose che diceva, come sedeva sul seggio e come uscì / dalla porta; ed era inquieta e sentiva che simile a lui non c'era / nessun altro; nelle orecchie sempre risuonavano / la voce e le dolci parole che lui aveva pronunciato.'

[16] οὐδ' ἄρα Μηδείης θυμὸς τράπετ' ἄλλα νοῆσαι, / μελπομένης περ ὅμως· πᾶσαι δέ οἱ ἤντιν' ἀθύροι / μολπὴν οὐκ ἐπὶ δηρὸν ἐφήνδανεν ἐψιάασθαι, / ἀλλὰ μεταλλήγεσκεν ἀμήχανος· οὐδέ ποτ' ὄσσε / ἀμφιπόλων μεθ' ὅμιλον ἔχ' ἀτρέμας, ἐς δὲ κελεύθους / τηλόσε παπταίνεσκε παρακλίνουσα παρειάς. / ἦ θαμὰ δὴ στηθέων ἐάγη κέαρ, ὁππότε δοῦπον / ἢ ποδὸς ἢ ἀνέμοιο παραθρέξαντα δοάσσαι 'né l'animo di Medea si volgeva a pensare altre cose, anche se cantava: / quale melodia si-dilettasse-a-intonare, nessuna le piaceva e la divertiva a lungo, / ma continuava-a-cambiarla, angosciata: e non riusciva / a tenere fissi gli occhi sulla schiera di ancelle senza-tremare, ma di-continuo-scrutava, / i sentieri lontani, inclinando il viso. / E di continuo il cuore si spezzava nel petto, ogni volta che ella / era incerta se a passarle-vicino fosse il rumore di un piede o del vento.'

[17] Sul sogno di Medea e sul punto di contatto con la letteratura medica e filosofica che in questo è stato ravvisato cfr. Zanker 1987 p. 75 n. 73 e bibliografia. Sui monologhi interiori di Medea cfr. Paduano 1970; Paduano 1972, pp. 10-59; Fusillo 2008[2].

[18] Per un'indagine approfondita delle scene di innamoramento nelle *Argonautiche* cfr. Zanker 1979.

[19] Anche la reazione di dolore di fronte alla perdita di Ila è stata analizzata alla luce del modello saffico, cfr. Palombi 1986. Sulla rappresentazione delle emozioni di Eracle nelle *Argonautiche* cfr. Bär 2022.

[20] [...] ἐν δέ οἱ ὄσσε / πλῆτο πυρός, δεινὸν δὲ περιβρομέεσκον ἀκουαί· / πυκνὰ δὲ λαυκανίης ἐπεμάσσατο, πυκνὰ δὲ κουρίζ / ἑλκομένη πλοκάμους γοερῇ βρυχήσατ' ἀνίῃ. 'i suoi occhi / si riempirono di fuoco, le orecchie continuavano-a-rombare terribilmente. / Spesso si afferrava la gola e spesso, strappando / ciocche di capelli, urlava di disperato dolore'. Sul «terrore indeterminato» di Medea nei confronti del potere cfr. Paduano 1972, pp. 125-170: 162. È interessante notare che la stessa sintomatologia che qui indica la paura è da Saffo attribuita all'ἔρως (fr. 31 V.), con la specifica associazione di vista e udito, occhi e orecchie (per la quale cfr. Privitera 1969, pp. 65-66). Secondo Elisa Mignogna, anche quando la tensione narrativa si sposta sulla minaccia rappresentata da Eeta, il «retroterra sentimentale» (Mignogna 1992, p. 15) di Medea rimane ancorato all'amore, unica forza motrice del racconto. Del resto, il nodo indissolubile ἔρως-φόβος trova riscontro diretto nel testo saffico, come individuato da Privitera 1969, p. 74.

provano paura insieme a disperazione nel deserto di Libia e quando ogni via di ritorno sembra inaccessibile impallidiscono e piangono, col cuore ghiacciato (4.1277-1279)[21]. Anche l'ira di Ida, Telamone ed Eeta è rappresentata per mezzo del suo effetto fisico: col cuore gonfio di rabbia, si alzano in piedi di scatto e infuriano grida.[22]

Con il presente contributo si intende indagare il valore che Apollonio Rodio conferisce a una specifica risonanza corporea dell'emozione, che si manifesta attraverso lo sguardo, con particolare attenzione all'atto di guardare verso il basso e dal basso. A tale fine sarà delineato un quadro complessivo delle attestazioni relative allo sguardo nel poema, cui farà seguito l'analisi di due creazioni verbali (κατηφιάω e ὑποφράζομαι), che consentiranno di approfondire la valenza semantica e letteraria dell'atto di volgere lo sguardo verso il basso e di guardare dal basso.

2. La risonanza corporea dell'emozione nelle *Argonautiche*: il valore dello sguardo

Nella cultura greca il *guardare* costituisce un potente strumento di conoscenza dell'altro e di comunicazione emotiva. Non è un caso che il verbo 'conoscere' sia il tempo perfetto del verbo 'vedere' (οἶδα) e che il termine greco per indicare il viso, πρόσωπον, evochi l'idea di uno sguardo (*ωπ) socialmente orientato verso l'altro (προσ°): il volto è un mezzo per vedere ma anche per essere visti, dunque per comunicare[23].

Nelle *Argonautiche*, attraverso la rappresentazione delle interazioni visive,

[21] Ὣς φάτο δακρυόεις, σὺν δ' ἔννεπον ἀσχαλόωντι / ὅσσοι ἔσαν νηῶν δεδαημένοι. ἐν δ' ἄρα πᾶσιν / παχνώθη κραδίη, χύτο δὲ χλόος ἀμφὶ παρειάς. 'così disse piangendo: e concordarono con lui che era angosciato / anche quanti erano esperti di mare. A tutti dentro / si ghiacciò il cuore, e sulle guance si stese il pallore.'

[22] 3.367-368 [...] ἄναξ δ' ἐπεχώσατο μύθοις / εἰσαΐων, ὑψοῦ δὲ χόλῳ φρένες ἠερέθοντο 'ma il re si adirò / ascoltando queste parole, e il cuore si gonfiò dalla rabbia' (Eeta); 3.515-517 [...] Τελαμῶνι δὲ θυμὸς ὀρίνθη, / σπερχόμενος δ' ἀνόρουσε θοῶς· ἔπι δὲ τρίτος Ἴδας / ὦρτο μέγα φρονέων [...] 'A Telamone si agitò il cuore / e infuriato si alzò di slancio; per terzo, Ida / si levò in piedi, con animo altero' (Telamone e Ida); 3.556-557 [...] μοῦνος δ' Ἀφαρήιος ἄνθορεν Ἴδας / δεῖν' ἐπαλαστήσας μεγάλῃ ὀπί φώνησέν τε 'si alzò soltanto il figlio di Afareo, Ida, / e sdegnato urlò a gran voce' (Ida).

[23] La bibliografia relativa al tema dello sguardo nella cultura greca antica è molto vasta: si citano, a titolo d'esempio, il pionieristico studio di Deonna 1965 e, per l'attinenza con la materia trattata in questa sede, il contributo di Lovatt 2013, in cui si analizza lo sguardo come strumento narrativo nella letteratura epica. Per altri riferimenti si rinvia alla rassegna bibliografica fornita da Cairns 2005. Si sono occupati nello specifico dello sguardo nelle *Argonautiche* di Apollonio Rodio Helene Lovatt (pp. 88-112) e Alexandros Kampakoglou (pp. 113-139) in Kampakoglou, Novokhatko 2018: a questo studio in generale si rimanda per una trattazione del tema dello sguardo nella letteratura greca antica.

talvolta descritte con tale vividezza da assumere una qualità quasi scientifica[24], Apollonio Rodio non si limita ad accrescere la tensione narrativa, ma contribuisce altresì allo sviluppo delle dinamiche relazionali fra i personaggi, svelando al contempo gli strati più profondi e nascosti dei loro spazi interiori. Gli occhi raccontano l'ἔρως che anima Medea, lo sguardo ne sviluppa l'intreccio con Giasone e, insieme, l'evoluzione:

3.287-288 [...] ἀντία δ' αἰεί / βάλλεν ἐπ' Αἰσονίδην ἀμαρύγματα 'lei sempre / gettava su Giasone il lampo degli occhi': Eros colpisce Medea con la sua freccia, lei rimane muta (3.284) con gli occhi fissi sull'oggetto del suo desiderio;
3.444-445 [...] ἐπ' αὐτῷ δ' ὄμματα κούρη / λοξὰ παρὰ λιπαρὴν σχομένη θηεῖτο καλύπτρην 'e addosso a lui la fanciulla fissava gli occhi / obliqui, scostando lo splendido velo': Medea contempla Giasone, dopo il discorso di Eeta;
3.453 προπρὸ δ' ἄρ' ὀφθαλμῶν ἔτι οἱ ἰνδάλλετο πάντα 'e davanti ai suoi occhi comparivano ancora tutte le cose': la visione di Giasone si cristallizza nella mente di Medea;
3.820-821 [...] ἵνα οἱ θελκτήρια δοίη / φάρμακα συνθεσίῃσι καὶ ἀντήσειεν ἐς ὠπήν 'per dargli il filtro che incanta, / come da accordi, e poterlo guardare in faccia': il desiderio erotico è descritto come desiderio di vedere Giasone in volto;
3.951-953 [...] οὐδέ ποτ' ὄσσε / ἀμφιπόλων μεθ' ὅμιλον ἔχ' ἀτρέμας, ἐς δὲ κελεύθους / τηλόσε παπταίνεσκε παρακλίνουσα παρειάς 'e non riusciva / a tenere fissi gli occhi sulla schiera di ancelle senza-tremare, ma di-continuo-scrutava, / i sentieri lontani, inclinando il viso': l'ἔρως genera in Medea inquietudine, che si dimostra attraverso lo sguardo;
3.962-963, [...] ὄμματα δ' αὖτως / ἤχλυσαν [...] 'le si annebbiarono / gli occhi': per l'effetto di ἔρως a Medea si appanna la vista;
3.1010 [...] καὶ ἀνέδρακεν ὄμμασιν ἄντην 'e guardò su, dritto negli occhi': Medea riesce a guardare Giasone negli occhi;
3.1018-1019 [...] τῆς δ' ἀμαρυγάς / ὀφθαλμῶν ἥρπαζεν [...] 'e le rapiva / il lampo degli occhi': l'amore rapisce gli occhi di Medea;
3.1022-1024 ἄμφω δ' ἄλλοτε μέν τε κατ' οὔδεος ὄμματ' ἔρειδον / αἰδόμενοι, ὁτὲ δ' αὖτις ἐπὶ σφίσι βάλλον ὀπωπάς / ἱμερόεν φαιδρῇσιν ὑπ' ὀφρύσι μειδιόωντες 'entrambi tenevano gli occhi fissi per terra, presi / dal pudore, ma a volte lanciavano sguardi l'uno sull'altra, / sorridendo d'amore sotto le ciglia splendide':

[24] La nuova prospettiva attualizzata dell'ideale eroico si configura anche nella rappresentazione realistica dei fenomeni biologici a cui è soggetto il corpo umano, verso cui l'autore alessandrino dimostra spiccato interesse. Tale predilezione si realizza nel forte contatto linguistico e tematico con la letteratura medica e scientifica: non è questa la sede per approfondire l'argomento, per il quale si rimanda a Fränkel 1968 pp. 634-635; Zanker 1987, pp. 125-126; Solmsen 1961, pp. 195-197; Webster 1964, p. 72; Lombardi 1985.

il coronamento dell'amore tra Giasone e Medea è descritto attraverso la loro interazione visiva[25].

Gli occhi portano il segno della rabbia e della ὕβρις di Ida, Telamone, Amico ed Eeta, incarnazioni di un eroismo arcaico e marziale, ma anche dell'ira di Medea:

1.462 τὸν δ' ἄρ' ὑποφρασθεὶς μεγάλῃ ὀπὶ νείκεσεν Ἴδας 'allora, guardandolo-da-sotto, lo riprese a gran voce Ida': Ida, irato con Giasone, lo guarda dal basso;
1.486 καί μιν ἐπιλλίζων ἠμείβετο κερτομίοισιν 'e guardandolo-storto, gli rispose con scherno': Ida guarda male Idmone appena prima della contesa;
1.1296-1297 [...] τὼ δέ οἱ ὄσσε / ὄστλιγγες μαλεροῖο πυρὸς ὣς ἰνδάλλοντο 'i suoi occhi / brillavano come le spire del fuoco violento': Telamone, furente, si avventa su Tifi con occhi di fuoco;
2.25 ὣς φάτ' ἀπηλεγέως. ὁ δ' ἐσέδρακεν ὄμμαθ' ἑλίξας 'così disse con irriverenza, e Amico lo guardò roteando gli occhi': Amico è adirato con Polluce;
2.48-49, οὐ μὰν αὖτ' Ἄμυκος πειρήσατο· σῖγα δ' ἄπωθεν / ἑστηὼς εἰς αὐτὸν ἔχ' ὄμματα [...] 'ma Amico non attaccava: in silenzio, rimanendo / in disparte, puntava gli occhi sopra di lui': Amico fissa Polluce prima di attaccarlo;
3.371 ἐκ δέ οἱ ὄμματ' ἔλαμψεν ὑπ' ὀφρύσιν ἰεμένοιο 'e gli brillavano gli occhi sotto le palpebre, nell'impeto dell'ira': l'ira di Eeta si manifesta attraverso gli occhi, che brillano;
3.1115 ὄφρα σ' ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ἐλεγχείας προφέρουσα 'affinché ti rimproveri guardandoti negli occhi': Medea minaccia Giasone.

Gli occhi diventano veicolo della magia incantatrice di Medea e portano il segno del turbamento per l'uccisione di Apsirto[26]:

4.145 τοῖο δ' ἑλισσομένοιο κατ' †ὄμματος εἴσατο†[27] κούρη 'mentre lui si avviluppava, Medea gli incantò gli occhi': Medea incanta il drago attraverso gli occhi;
4.157-158 [...] ἀκήρατα φάρμακ' ἀοιδαῖς / ῥαῖνε κατ' ὀφθαλμῶν 'i filtri non mortali, con incantesimi, / sparse sugli occhi': Medea incanta il drago attraverso gli occhi;
4.465-466 [...] αἶψα δὲ κούρη / ἔμπαλιν ὄμματ' ἔνεικε, καλυψαμένη ὀθόνῃσιν 'e

[25] Per la seconda – e ultima – volta nel poema, Medea e Giasone sono confusi in un solo sentire: negli intervalli tra i discorsi parlati, spigolosi e aspri, il silenzio facilita la comunicazione tra i due, in una reciproca e intima intesa senza parole (cfr. anche 3.965-972). Il gioco degli sguardi, tuttavia, evoca un equilibrio solo momentaneo: il rapporto tra loro è tutt'altro che paritario, già a questo punto del racconto.

[26] Sul tema dello sguardo magico e incantatore di Medea nelle *Argonautiche* cfr., tra gli altri, Paduano 1970-1971; Dickie 1990; Buxton 2000; Powers 2002; Lovatt 2013, pp. 334-336 con bibliografia.

[27] Il testo è congetturale, cfr. il commento di Livrea (1973) *ad loc.*

subito la fanciulla / volse gli occhi all'indietro, coprendosi con la veste': di fronte all'omicidio di Apsirto Medea distoglie lo sguardo e si copre gli occhi col velo;
4.750 [...] ἀμφὶ δὲ πέπλον / ὀφθαλμοῖσι βαλοῦσα γόον χέεν 'e sollevando il peplo / sugli occhi emise un gemito': al cospetto di Circe, Medea si copre il volto per il rimorso del delitto commesso;
4.1669-1670 [...] ἐχθοδοποῖσιν / ὄμμασι χαλκείοιο Τάλω ἐμέγηρεν ὀπωπάς 'con occhi nemici / ammaliò gli occhi di Talos di bronzo': Medea incanta Talos tramite gli occhi.

Gli occhi rivelano il pudore, lo αἰδώς che pervade tanto Ipsipile e Medea quanto Giasone e i suoi compagni:

1.784 [...] ὁ δ' ἐπὶ χθονὸς ὄμματ' ἐρείσας 'ed egli, fissando a terra gli occhi': Giasone al cospetto di Ipsipile;
1.790 [...] ἡ δ' ἐγκλιδὸν ὄσσε βαλοῦσα 'ed ella abbassando gli occhi': Ipsipile al cospetto di Giasone;
1.875-876 ὣς νείκεσσεν ὅμιλον· ἐναντία δ' οὔ νύ τις ἔτλη / ὄμματ' ἀνασχεθέειν οὐδὲ προτιμυθήσασθαι 'così ingiuriava il gruppo: dall'altra parte, nessuno osava / alzare gli occhi, né rispondere alle parole': gli Argonauti abbassano lo sguardo per l'imbarazzo dopo il rimprovero di Eracle;
3.1008 [...] ἡ δ' ἐγκλιδὸν ὄσσε βαλοῦσα 'ed ella abbassando gli occhi': Medea al cospetto di Giasone;
3.1022-1024 ἄμφω δ' ἄλλοτε μέν τε κατ' οὔδεος ὄμματ' ἔρειδον / αἰδόμενοι, ὁτὲ δ' αὖτις ἐπὶ σφίσι βάλλον ὀπωπάς / ἱμερόεν φαιδρῇσιν ὑπ' ὀφρύσι μειδιόωντες 'entrambi tenevano gli occhi fissi per terra, presi / dal pudore, ma a volte lanciavano sguardi l'uno sull'altra, / sorridendo d'amore sotto le ciglia splendide': gli occhi di Medea e di Giasone si rifuggono e si intrecciano, sotto la spinta di ἔρως e di αἰδώς;
3.1066-1068 [...] ἀνιηρῷ δέ μιν ἄντην / ἐξαῦτις μύθῳ προσεφώνεεν, εἶλέ τε χειρός / δεξιτερῆς, δὴ γάρ οἱ ἀπ' ὀφθαλμοὺς λίπεν αἰδώς· 'e poi di nuovo, guardandolo in viso, gli disse parole angosciose, e gli prese la destra: il pudore aveva lasciato i suoi occhi': l'assenza di pudore permette a Medea di guardare Giasone in volto;
4.44-45 λαιῇ μὲν χερὶ πέπλον ἐπ' ὀφρύσιν ἀμφὶ μέτωπα / στειλαμένη [...] 'sollevando con la mano sinistra il peplo sopra gli occhi intorno alla fronte': durante la fuga con gli Argonauti, Medea si copre il volto[28];
4.1315-1316 αὐτὰρ ὅγ' εἰς ἑτέρωσε παλιμπετὲς ὄμματ' ἔνεικεν, / δαίμονας αἰδεσθείς [...] 'lui volse gli occhi altrove, all'indietro, / per rispetto verso le dee': Giasone al cospetto delle eroine di Libia.

[28] Kost 1971, pp. 390-391 riconosce in questo gesto il timore più che la vergogna di essere riconosciuta.

Gli occhi rivelano la paura e lo sconforto, la ἀμηχανία che assale gli eroi argonauti di fronte alla missione in Colchide, alle sfide imposte da Eeta e alla disperazione nel deserto di Libia; che invade Medea davanti alla potenza devastante di Eros:

1.461 πορφύρεσκεν ἕκαστα, κατηφιόωντι ἐοικώς 'meditava ogni cosa, mesto d'aspetto': dopo avere ascoltato le predizioni di Idmone, Giasone, afflitto, 'guardagiù';
2.888 οἵδε κατηφήσαντες ἐμεῦ πλέον ἀσχαλόωσι 'e proprio quelli, più abbattuti di me, sono afflitti': Giasone definisce κατηφήσαντες, 'abbattuti', gli Argonauti;
3.422-423 ὣς ἄρ' ἔφη· ὁ δὲ σῖγα ποδῶν πάρος ὄμματα πήξας, / ἦστ' αὖτως ἄφθογγος, ἀμηχανέων κακότητι 'così disse: e lui, in silenzio, fissava gli occhi per terra / rimaneva senza parole, nella miseria della disperazione': Giasone dopo il discorso di Eeta, disperato fissa lo sguardo per terra;
3.503-504 δὴν δ' ἄνεῳ καὶ ἄναυδοι ἐς ἀλλήλους ὁρόωντο, / ἄτῃ ἀμηχανίῃ τε κατηφέες [...] 'a lungo, muti, senza parole, si guardavano gli uni con gli altri, / sconfortati per la sventura e per l'impotenza': l'angoscia degli Argonauti di fronte alle prove imposte da Eeta è espressa attraverso lo sguardo;
3.1063 ὣς ἄρ' ἔφη, καὶ σῖγα ποδῶν πάρος ὄσσε βαλοῦσα 'così disse, e in silenzio abbassava gli occhi a terra': Medea si dispera pensando alla partenza di Giasone;
4.16-17 [...] ἐν δέ οἱ ὄσσε / πλῆτο πυρός, δεινὸν δὲ περιβρομέεσκον ἀκουαί· 'i suoi occhi / si riempirono di fuoco, le orecchie continuavano-a-rombare-terribilmente': Medea è terrorizzata: la disperazione si evince dagli occhi;
4.1344 ἀγχοῦ δ' ἠγερέθοντο, κατηφέες [...] 'intorno a lui si radunarono, a-testa-bassa': gli Argonauti sono senza speranze nel deserto libico.

Nelle sue molteplici attestazioni, dunque, lo sguardo si configura spesso come strumento privilegiato di interazione interpersonale. Il suo potere comunicativo nelle *Argonautiche* può essere ricondotto a tre principali linee interpretative:

1. sottomissione: evitamento del contatto visivo, abbassamento dello sguardo;
2. intimidazione: concentrazione dell'attenzione sull'interlocutore, mantenimento del contatto visivo diretto;
3. attrazione erotica e desiderio: abbassamento dello sguardo, contatto visivo con l'interlocutore oggetto del desiderio.

Come si è anticipato, per approfondire la specificità e la pregnanza espressiva attribuita da Apollonio Rodio all'atto di *guardare*, è interessante analizzare i termini κατηφιάω 'guardare-in-basso' e ὑποφράζομαι 'guardare-dal-basso',

coniati dall'autore[29]. Infatti, osservando il passo di 1.460-465 in cui questi verbi compaiono, si può constatare come una gestualità apparentemente simile possa essere innescata da esperienze emotive opposte e definire tipi umani radicalmente differenti.

3. Guardare-verso-il-basso e guardare-dal-basso: il caso dei neologismi κατηφιάω e ὑποφράζομαι

1.460-465

ἔνθ' αὖτ' Αἰσονίδης μὲν ἀμήχανος εἰν ἑοῖ αὐτῷ
πορφύρεσκεν ἕκαστα, κατηφιόωντι ἐοικώς·
τὸν δ' ἄρ' ὑποφρασθεὶς μεγάλῃ ὀπὶ νείκεσεν Ἴδας·
Αἰσονίδη, τίνα τήνδε μετὰ φρεσὶ μῆτιν ἐλίσσεις;
αὔδα ἐνὶ μέσσοισι τεὸν νόον. ἦέ σε δαμνᾷ
τάρβος ἐπιπλόμενον, τό τ' ἀνάλκιδας ἄνδρας ἀτύζει;

Intanto l'Esonide, impotente, dentro di sé
meditava ogni cosa, *mesto* d'aspetto.
Allora, *guardandolo-da-sotto*, lo riprese a gran voce Ida:
Esonide, che disegno è questo che ti gira nella mente?
Dì in mezzo a noi il tuo pensiero. O forse ti domina
la paura che assale, quella che atterrisce i codardi?

Durante la prima assemblea (1.331-358), gli Argonauti eleggono Giasone capo della spedizione: il suo atteggiamento dubbioso e titubante rispetto al nuovo compito, a seguito dei dolorosi presagi di Idmone, fa sorgere una contesa con l'impulsivo Ida[30].

Il verbo κατηφιάω (1.461) 'essere-abbattuto' è un neologismo, costruito a partire dal già attestato κατηφέω, cui si modifica la terminazione -έω in -ιάω secondo un procedimento compositivo frequente nelle *Argonautiche*[31]. Il *pro-*

[29] Come è ovvio, non è possibile stabilire con sicurezza se Apollonio abbia in effetti coniato i termini in questione ovvero se le loro attestazioni pregresse siano andate perdute e li abbia soltanto riutilizzati: si tratta questa affermazione, dunque, ammettendo un certo margine di incertezza e fallibilità.

[30] Per un approfondimento sulla lite tra Ida e Giasone e, più in generale, per il valore narratologico della contesa nelle *Argonautiche* cfr. Harder 2022. Sulla contesa tra Ida e Idmone cfr. anche Clauss 1993, pp. 79-83.

[31] Sul verbo κατηφιάω cfr. i commenti di Ardizzoni 1967 *ad* 1.461 e Campbell 1994 *ad* 3.123. I neologismi apolloniani in -ιάω sono 8: ἐπανθιάω, κατηφιάω, ἐπιμητιάω, παρεδριάω, καπνιάω, μηνιάω, ἐνευδιάω, μεσημβριάω. I verbi in -ιάω, a differenza dei verbi in -άω, sono una categoria ancora produttiva al tempo di Apollonio: molti verbi non omerici in -ιάω impiegati nelle *Argonautiche* sono infatti attestati in prosa e in poesia di età ellenistica. I verbi omerici in -ιάω riutilizzati

ton legomenon apolloniano κατηφιάω è in seguito attestato, tra gli altri, in Plutarco, Quinto Smirneo, Eliodoro e Nonno di Panopoli[32]. I verbi κατηφιάω e κατηφέω sono connessi con l'aggettivo κατηφής, dal valore semantico chiaro *e contexto*, 'che-abbassa-gli-occhi' (per tristezza o per vergogna), ma dall'etimologia incerta. κατηφής è attestato tre volte nelle *Argonautiche* 1.267; 3.504; 4.1344, sempre in riferimento agli Argonauti, con il significato di 'abbattuto', 'sconfortato'[33]. Prima di Apollonio, esso ricorre in *Od*. 24.432 con il valore di 'coperto-di-vergogna', disonorato' (donde la formazione ulteriore κατηφείη, cfr. *Il*. 3.51 etc. 'infamia'); in Euripide (*Her*. 633; *Or*. 881)[34] e nel *Corpus Hippocraticum* (*Epid*. 7.1.25.32; 7.1.41.7 etc.). Per via dell'incertezza etimologica non è possibile stabilire con sicurezza se κατηφέω sia denominativo da κατηφής o, viceversa, se l'aggettivo derivi dal verbo[35]. Il valore semantico del verbo e

da Apollonio sono in tutto 11: ἀνιάω; ἀντιάω; βιάω; δηριάομαι; ἑδριάω; ἐψιάομαι; κυδιάω; μειδιάω; μητιάω; σκιάω e φυσιάω (per i verbi in -άω e -ιάω in Omero cfr. Chantraine 1958, pp. 354-362). A parte per il suffisso comune -ιάω, non formano una categoria morfologicamente omogenea: sono tendenzialmente verbi denominativi (eccetto μειδιάω), in particolare derivati da sostantivi (eccetto ἀντιάω, legato all'aggettivo ἀντίος). L'uniformità della categoria dei verbi in -ιάω, dunque, risiede pressoché unicamente nella loro suffissazione e, di conseguenza, nella possibilità di essere utilizzati nelle cosiddette forme in *diektasis*, che, oltre ad essere di grande comodità metrica per l'esametro dattilico, devono essere state percepite come particolarmente caratteristiche della lingua omerica (per la *diektasis* dei verbi in -αω in Omero cfr. Chantraine 1958, pp. 79-81). I verbi in -ιάω non sono soltanto alternative utilizzate da Apollonio *metri gratia* per rispondere alle esigenze dell'esametro: talvolta, vengono sfruttati come veicolo per rimandi letterari. Per un'analisi specifica dei suffissi -ιάω e -άω in Apollonio Rodio, cfr. Morel 2019. Per una panoramica generale sui verbi in -άω e -ιάω cfr. Schwyzer 1953, pp. 730-732.

[32] Nelle *Argonautiche* κατηφιάω compare ancora in 3.123 per ritrarre Ganimede mentre gioca con Eros, suggerendo «emotional depression» (Hunter 1989 *ad loc.*). Altri esempi di attestazione letteraria del verbo sono Plut. *Cons. Apoll*. 119 C "cogli occhi bassi" (trad. Bergerard in Lelli, Pisani 2017); QS. 3.9 "abbattuto" (trad. Pompella 1987); Hld. 10.30.6 "avvilito" (trad. Colonna 1987); Nonn. *D*. 8.211 "sofferente" (trad. Gigli Piccardi 2003), 13.218 "abbattuto"; 18.337 "addolorato"; 21.193 "intristito" (trad. Gonnelli 2003); 25.310 "afflitto"; 33.25 "afflitto", 230 "abbattuto"; 37.701 "mesto" (trad. Agosti 2004); 48.370 "triste" (trad. Accorinti 2004). Come si vede, molto spesso il verbo acquisisce valore traslato e indica la condizione emotiva di 'essere-abbattuto', 'essere-triste'. Sembra che questo sia il caso anche dell'occorrenza di κατηφιάω 1.461, come suggerisce la specificazione ἐοικώς 'nell'aspetto', 'all'apparenza', per cui è scelto di tradurre 'mesto' (cfr. anche Hunter 1993, pp. 19-20).

[33] Oltre al verbo κατηφιάω e all'aggettivo κατηφής nelle *Argonautiche* è attestato anche il sostantivo κατεφεία (3.1402; 4.205; 4.594).

[34] Euripide attesta anche κατηφέω in *Med*. 1012: τί δαὶ κατηφεῖς ὄμμα καὶ δακρυρροεῖς; "perché allora tieni gli occhi bassi e piangi?" (trad. Musso 1980). Sulla possibilità di correzione di κατηφεῖς in κατηφές concordo con Mastronarde 2002 *ad loc*.

[35] Szemerényi 1954, p. 244, propone di postulare un processo derivazionale κατηφέω > κατηφής. Sulla dubbia origine etimologica cfr. *DELG s.v*. κατηφής con bibliografia. Per riassumere, le diverse proposte ricostruttive sono state le seguenti: 1. κατη-φής originerebbe dalla composizione di κατα° e φάη (schol. ex. Hom. *Il*. 22.293a Erbse), oppure di κατα° e φύομαι (Brugmann 1901, pp. 103-104), o ancora di κατα° e °**bhe-* (Prellwitz 1911, pp. 123-124); 2. κατ-ηφής sarebbe la composizione di κατ° e °**ebhe-* (Fick 1912, pp. 56-57; Bechtel 1914, pp. 188-189), oppure di

dell'aggettivo è contestuale e generalmente inteso dagli studiosi come 'guarda-re-in-basso' (per la vergogna) da cui 'essere abbattuto' e 'che-guarda-in-basso' (per la vergogna o per la tristezza) da cui 'abbattuto', 'mortificato'[36].

In effetti, l'atto di chinare il capo e volgere lo sguardo verso il basso comunica uno stato di sottomissione: nelle *Argonautiche*, questa gestualità è ripetutamente associata a Giasone, che la mette in atto sotto la spinta di emozioni differenti[37].

Da un lato, come Medea e Ipsipile, l'eroe è vittima di αἰδώς, del pudore, che agisce sullo sguardo di chi lo prova inducendolo a distoglierlo o ad abbassarlo. Dunque, come Medea e Ipsipile[38], Giasone guarda in basso sotto la spinta di αἰδώς: in 1.784 al cospetto di Ipsipile ([...] ὁ δ' ἐπὶ χθονὸς ὄμματ' ἐρείσας 'ed egli, fissando a terra gli occhi'); in 3.1022-1024 di fronte a Medea (ἄμφω δ' ἄλλοτε μέν τε κατ' οὔδεος ὄμματ' ἔρειδον / αἰδόμενοι, ὁτὲ δ' αὖτις ἐπὶ σφίσι βάλλον ὀπωπάς / ἱμερόεν φαιδρῇσιν ὑπ' ὀφρύσι μειδιόωντες 'entrambi tenevano gli occhi fissi per terra, presi / dal pudore, ma a volte lanciavano sguardi l'uno sull'altra, / sorridendo d'amore sotto le ciglia splendide') e in 4.1315 davanti alle eroine di Libia (αὐτὰρ ὅγ' εἰς ἑτέρωσε παλιμπετὲς ὄμματ' ἔνεικεν, / δαίμονας αἰδεσθείς [...] 'lui volse gli occhi altrove, all'indietro, / per rispetto verso le dee'). Ancora, per l'effetto di αἰδώς, questa stessa gestualità è attribuita

κατ° e °**abh-* (Wackernagel 1889, p. 42), oppure ancora di κατ° e un neutro sigmatico *ἦφος o *ἄφος (Meyer 1901, pp. 255); 3. κατ-ηφής sarebbe la composizione di κατ° + °ἀφ-/ἅπτω (Schwyzer 1908, pp. 247-265); 4. κατηφής sarebbe aplologia per *κατα-τηφής, laddove il secondo elemento di composto sarebbe connesso alla famiglia di τάφος, in particolare al neutro *τῆφος (Pisani 1929, p. 4); 5. κατηφής sarebbe aplologia per *κατα-τηφής, laddove il secondo elemento di composto sarebbe di nuovo legato alla famiglia di θάμβος, ma in particolare alla forma di perfetto τέθηπα (Blanc 1988, per la cui ipotesi cfr. *infra*, n. 36).

[36] È da ricordare, tuttavia, un'ipotesi di significato alternativa proposta da Alain Blanc (Blanc 1988), che, come si è visto *supra* (n. 35), riconduce il secondo elemento di composto alla stessa radice della forma di perfetto τέθηπα 'essere stupito': secondo lo studioso, la forma κατηφής sarebbe aplologia di un originario *κατα-τηφής, e avrebbe il significato letterale 'troppo-stupefatto', dunque 'sconvolto', modificato per esigenza letteraria da Omero e successivamente dai suoi imitatori. Tuttavia, come nota Robert Beekes (*EDG s.v.* κατηφής), se il secondo membro fosse aplologia per una forma derivata dal perfetto τέθηπα, l'esito atteso sarebbe °θηπής, non °τηφής. Oltre a quest'incongruenza formale, anche il senso rende difficile accettare tale possibilità ricostruttiva: 'sconvolgere' e 'sconvolto' non sempre si adattano ai contesti d'occorrenza. Si ritiene dunque preferibile l'ipotesi interpretativa condivisa dalla maggior parte degli studiosi, ossia che tanto il verbo quanto l'aggettivo indichino uno specifico movimento degli occhi o del capo verso il basso, causato da una sensazione di sconforto o di vergogna.

[37] Per un'analisi di questa gestualità in Virgilio e Apollonio Rodio cfr. Muecke 1984.

[38] Ipsipile volge lo sguardo a terra per via di αἰδώς in 1. 790. Le emozioni di Medea, che più di tutti gli altri personaggi è connotata da αἰδώς, sono definite per mezzo di questa gestualità in vari luoghi del poema: cfr. 3.951, 1008, 1021-1024, 1064. Per un approfondimento cfr. Massimilla 2010-2011; per un'analisi dell'atteggiamento di Medea nel terzo libro delle *Argonautiche* in relazione con la lirica di Saffo cfr. ancora Mignogna 1992.

da Apollonio Rodio all'intero gruppo di eroi argonauti, rimproverati da Eracle che ne sottolinea la debolezza (1.875-876 ὣς νείκεσσεν ὅμιλον· ἐναντία δ' οὔ νύ τις ἔτλη / ὄμματ' ἀνασχεθέειν οὐδὲ προτιμυθήσασθαι 'così ingiuriava il gruppo: dall'altra parte, nessuno osava / alzare gli occhi, né rispondere-alle-parole'). Nell'analizzare la rappresentazione di αἰδώς in letteratura, Giulio Massimilla osserva che il tema degli occhi distolti o abbassati per effetto dell'αἰδώς è attestato in maniera esplicita proprio a partire dalla poesia ellenistica ed è riferito quasi esclusivamente al mondo femminile[39]. In questa sede, dunque, è interessante notare che Giasone e gli Argonauti fanno eccezione a questa tendenza.

D'altro canto, in 1.460-465 è l'ἀμηχανία, la disperata 'mancanza-di-mezzi', la costante sensazione di impotenza che distingue il quadro psicologico-caratteriale di Giasone[40], a indurlo ad abbassare lo sguardo. Una situazione analoga si verifica anche in 3.422-423: dopo il discorso di Eeta, l'Esonide prende coscienza delle prove impossibili che il re gli impone, dunque perde definitivamente le speranze e, in silenzio, guarda a terra (ὣς ἄρ' ἔφη· ὁ δὲ σῖγα ποδῶν πάρος ὄμματα πήξας, / ἧστ' αὖτως ἄφθογγος, ἀμηχανέων κακότητι· 'così disse: e lui, in silenzio, fissava gli occhi per terra / rimaneva senza-parole, nella miseria della disperazione'). Il silenzio e il capo chino sono forme espressive di sgomento e angoscia anche per gli altri Argonauti: in 2.888 è lo stesso Giasone in preda a ἀμηχανία (2.885 ἀμηχανέων) a definirli 'abbattuti' (οἵδε κατηφήσαντες ἐμεῦ πλέον ἀσχαλόωσι 'e proprio quelli, più abbattuti di me, sono afflitti'); in 3.503-504 i compagni, anch'essi ἀμήχανοι dopo il terribile resoconto delle prove impossibili imposte da Eeta, in silenzio, si rivolgono uno sguardo dal basso, sconfortati (δὴν δ' ἄνεῳ καὶ ἄναυδοι ἐς ἀλλήλους ὁρόωντο, / ἄτῃ ἀμηχανίῃ τε κατηφέες [...] 'a lungo, muti, senza parole, si guardavano gli uni con gli altri, / sconfortati per la sventura e per l'impotenza')[41]; allo stesso modo, in 4.1344, ormai perse le speranze di salvezza nel deserto libico, si radunano attorno a

[39] «Il nostro sondaggio, dunque, mostra che distogliere o abbassare lo sguardo a causa dell'αἰδώς (in quanto 'pudore') è tipico delle fanciulle: l'unica eccezione è costituita da Giasone, che comunque compie il gesto insieme a Medea. [...] Quanto al tema degli occhi distolti o abbassati per effetto dell'αἰδώς, abbiamo preventivamente limitato il campo di indagine ai casi nei quali la parola αἰδώς significa 'pudore' (in àmbito diverso, si è solo fatto cenno allo sguardo basso di Demetra nell'inno omerico a lei dedicato [...]). Abbiamo visto che questo motivo è attestato in maniera esplicita a partire dalla poesia ellenistica e si accompagna spesso a quello del rossore provocato dall'αἰδώς [...]. Per la sua stessa natura, il tema si trova riferito quasi esclusivamente al mondo femminile: fanno eccezione soltanto Giasone [...] e un ἐρώμενος», Massimilla 2010-2011, p. 247.

[40] La critica si è espressa variamente sul tema della ἀμηχανία di Giasone: cfr. a titolo d'esempio Carspecken 1952, pp. 99-125; Fränkel 1960; Beye 1969; Vian 1978; Hunter 1988; Belloni 2023.

[41] Come si evince da ἐς ἀλλήλους ὁρόωντο, in questo caso, il valore semantico dell'aggettivo κατηφές trasla e indica direttamente lo stato d'animo degli Argonauti 'mesti', 'sconfortati', similmente a quanto accade al verbo κατηφιάω in 1.461 (per cui cfr. *infra*, n. 32).

Giasone 'a-testa-bassa' (ἀγχοῦ δ' ἠγερέθοντο, κατηφέες [...]). Da questa prima analisi, si può affermare che distogliere o abbassare lo sguardo in segno di sottomissione, nell'universo narrativo delle *Argonautiche*, è un gesto comune alle donne Medea e Ipsipile e a Giasone e agli eroi argonauti.

È ora interessante soffermarsi sull'altra creazione verbale, ὑποφράζομαι (1.462). In luogo di ὑποφρασθείς, *P. Oxy*. 34.2695 trasmette la lezione ἐπιφρασθείς, che Peter Kingston (*ad loc.*) accoglie, adducendo a parallelo alcuni luoghi omerici e dubitando di ὑποφράζομαι in quanto unicismo lessicale di difficile comprensione[42]. Tuttavia, proprio in virtù dello *status* di *hapax legomenon*, dunque *lectio difficilior*, ὑποφρασθείς, tramandato dal consenso dei codici, è unanimemente accolto dal resto degli editori[43]. Il procedimento di formazione di ὑποφράζομαι è frequente e facilmente intellegibile (preverbo + verbo), così come anche gli elementi in composizione (ὑπό + φράζομαι). Ciò che invece ha costituito un problema per traduttori e commentatori è la semantica del termine, che ancora oggi è discussa. Il verbo φράζομαι ha anche un attivo causativo φράζω, 'dire': sebbene la diatesi medio-passiva sia indice della partecipazione del soggetto in quanto *experiencer* di una percezione, Rutger Allan ritiene che φράζομαι non sia un verbo di percezione giacché più spesso denota puramente attività cognitive[44]. In questa direzione, George Mooney intende ὑποφράζομαι come sinonimo di ὑπονοέω 'sospettare' (*ad loc.*)[45], e così anche Hermann Fränkel («er schöpfte Verdacht»)[46] e Malcolm Campbell («as

[42] «For ἐπιφράζεσθαι = 'to notice' cfr. *Od*. 8. 94 = 533. Editors have seen fit to retain ὑποφράσθείς, a ἅπ. λεγ., by equating ὑποφράζεσθαι with ὑπονοεῖν; thus ὑποφρασθείς (= 'having suspected') accomplishes (I suppose satisfactorily) the transition between κατηφιόωντι ἐοικώς 461 and νείκεσεν 462 and ostensibly motivates the subsequent speech of Idas. Yet it is only from the speech itself that we learn that Idas 'suspects' Jason of cowardice. It is difficult to imagine even the audience for which Apollonius wrote, steeped as it probably was in obscure learning, being capable of understanding opactic with nothing in the immediate context to clarify its meaning. ἐπιφρασθείς is preferable» (Kingston 1968, pp. 60-61).

[43] Si segnala che, oltre al v. 462 (ἐπιφράζομαι), P. Oxy. 34.2695 differisce dalla *vulgata* anche al v. 461, riportando la lezione κατηφείοντι in luogo di κατηφιόωντι dei codici. La lezione dei codici sembra preferibile, giacché κατηφιάω, anch'esso conio apolloniano, occorre altrove nelle *Argonautiche* (3.123). La *varia lectio* proposta dal papiro potrebbe essere segno di una uniformazione del testo di Apollonio al dettato omerico, in cui non è mai attestato κατηφιάω ma sempre κατηφέω: lo stesso potrebbe essere accaduto con ὑποφράζομαι, 'emendato' dallo scriba con l'omerico ἐπιφράζομαι.

[44] «The middle of perception relates to events in which an animate subject perceives an object through one of the sensory organs. The perceiver is mentally affected by the perception. The subject can, therefore, be considered an *experiencer*. [...] The verb φράζομαι 'notice, consider, observe' also has a causative active φράζω 'indicate, tell'. However, φράζομαι is not a true perception verb since it more often denotes purely cognitive activities» (Allan 2002, p. 69, n. 158).

[45] Mooney 1912.

[46] Fränkel 1968, p. 75.

a learned equivalent of ὑπονόησας ὑποφρασθείς is quite intelligible»)[47]. D'altra parte, lo scoliaste glossa il verbo con θεωρέω 'guardare' (schol. Ap.Rh. 1.462 Wendel 462 ὑποφρασθείς: θεωρήσας) e come 'guardare-da-sotto' lo interpretano anche Émile Delage («le regardant en dessous» *ad loc.*)[48] e Guido Paduano («guardò di sotto» *ad loc.*)[49]. In effetti, non di rado accade che, in Omero, φράζομαι abbia valore semantico di 'vedere', 'osservare' e, di conseguenza, come nota Vian (*ad loc.*), spesso sia glossato negli scolî con verbi che indicano l'azione di guardare (θεάομαι, ὁράω, σκέπτομαι)[50]. All'intersezione di queste due proposte interpretative si colloca quella di Anthos Ardizzoni, che traduce il verbo con 'accorgersi' («accortosene» *ad loc.*)[51]. In questa sede, l'accezione di origine percettiva del verbo φράζομαι ('guardare-da-sotto') sembra essere preferibile rispetto a quella di origine cognitiva ('pensare-sotto' dunque, 'sospettare'), giacché maggiormente adatta al contesto di attestazione. Infatti, 'guardandolo-da-sotto', Ida risponde alla prossemica di Giasone, che, come si è visto, al v. 461 è detto essere abbattuto, 'a-testa-bassa' (κατηφιόωντι ἐοικώς). Questo scambio di sguardi, sottolineato e valorizzato tramite la creazione dei due nuovi termini κατηφιάω e ὑποφράζομαι, mette in luce la particolare attenzione dell'autore alle dinamiche relazionali tra i diversi personaggi, nonché a quegli aspetti della comunicazione che oggi sono definiti prossemica e cinesica: concentrandosi sull'uso e sulla funzione del linguaggio non verbale, Apollonio Rodio esplora la costruzione di nuovi significati attraverso il contesto e le interazioni tra i partecipanti all'atto comunicativo[52].

Se si accetta l'interpretazione 'guardare-da-sotto' di ὑποφράζομαι, si può istituire un parallelo fraseologico con la formula omerica introduttiva al discorso ὑπόδρα ἰδών, 'guardando-dal-basso', 'guardando-storto', che ricorre 17 volte in *Iliade* e 9 in *Odissea*, sempre in coincidenza della cesura pentemime-

[47] Campbell 1971, p. 405.

[48] Delage in Vian 1974.

[49] Paduano in Fusillo, Paduano 1986.

[50] Cfr. *Il.* 10.339; 23.453; *Od.* 4.71; 21.222; 23.75; 24.331; schol. D Hom. *Il.* 9.423 Van Thiel φράζωνται. σκέπτωνται. μῆτιν δὲ βούλησιν ἢ γνώμην; schol. D Hom. *Il.* 9.426 Van Thiel ἐφράσσαντο. ἐλογίσαντο, ἐσκέψαντο; schol. D Hom. *Il.* 10.339 Van Thiel [ἐφράσατο] εἶδεν· κατάχρησις ὁ τρόπος.; schol. D Hom. *Il.* 14.470 Van Thiel [φράζεο] νῦν ὅρα; schol. D Hom. *Il.* 15.163 Van Thiel φραζέσθω. λογιζέσθω, σκοπείτω; schol. D Hom. *Il.* 15.671 Van Thiel ἐφράσσαντο. ἐθεάσαντο; schol. ex. Hom. *Il.* 24.352b Erbse ἐφράσσατο κῆρυξ: ἔγνω, συνεῖδε etc.

[51] Ardizzoni 1967.

[52] Per quanto mi consta, uno studio esclusivo sulla comunicazione non verbale nelle *Argonautiche* rimane un *desideratum*. Si propongono di seguito alcuni contributi che trattano argomenti affini da diverse prospettive. Su vari aspetti della comunicazione nelle *Argonautiche* cfr. Ibscher 1939; Cuypers 2005; Hunter 2008[2]. Per la comunicazione non verbale nella letteratura greca da Omero a Platone cfr. Boegehold 1999; nell'epica cfr. Lateiner 1995; nel teatro cfr. Taplin 1978, Mastronarde 1979, Wiles 2000, Goldhill 2002.

re.[53] In particolare, come notato da Vian (*ad loc.*)[54], il passaggio apolloniano di 1.462 (τὸν δ' ἄρ' ὑποφρασθεὶς μεγάλῃ ὀπὶ νείκεσεν Ἴδας) sembra essere strutturalmente affine con *Il.* 2.245 καί μιν ὑπόδρα ἰδὼν χαλεπῷ ἠνίπαπε μύθῳ 'e guardandolo-dal-basso, lo insultò con un aspro discorso'. L'espressione omerica ὑπόδρα ἰδών 'guardando-dal-basso' rappresenta di solito un segnale della rabbia dell'interlocutore: l'espressione facciale a cui si riferisce, un'inclinazione della testa con lo sguardo fisso in avanti, indicherebbe una prossemica funzionale al conflitto[55]. Nei contesti in cui è presente la formula, infatti, non si osserva un abbassamento dello sguardo o una fuga dal contatto visivo, giacché, come si è visto, entrambi questi gesti sono tendenzialmente associati alla sottomissione. Al contrario, i discorsi introdotti con uno 'sguardo-dal-basso' sono di norma seguiti da azioni aggressive. Di conseguenza, l'espressione ὑπόδρα ἰδών potrebbe non essere semplicemente una metonimia della rabbia, ma anche un segnale di imminente ricorso alla violenza; è possibile, dunque, che la formula realizzi una cosiddetta metonimia concettuale, comune nelle descrizioni che impiegano un evento fisico per rappresentare un'esperienza emotiva complessa, nell'ambito della quale un effetto (lo sguardo) sostituisce la causa (l'emozione della rabbia)[56]. Si è tentato di identificare una spiegazione evolutivo-biologica di questa espressione, considerandola come un atto istintivo volto a proteggere gli occhi (in parte coperti dall'osso frontale) e, al contempo, a salvaguardare la gola e la laringe con il mento, risultando così un riflesso di rabbia, che si inserisce nella preparazione per il conflitto fisico[57].

Quest'interpretazione si colloca perfettamente in linea con l'atteggiamento assunto dall'ὑπέρβιος Ida nel passo in esame e, più in generale, in tutto il poema. Il tracotante Argonauta, infatti, parla ad alta voce (1.462 μεγάλῃ ὀπὶ νείκεσεν), beve vino non diluito, secondo la prassi antica (1.473 χαλίκρητον μέθυ), confida solo nella sua lancia e nella forza bellica (1.466-467 ἴστω νῦν δόρυ θοῦρον, ὅτῳ περιώσιον ἄλλων / κῦδος ἐνὶ πτολέμοισιν ἀείρομαι [...]) anche provocando e offendendo gli dèi (1.467-468 οὐδέ μ' ὀφέλλει Ζεὺς τόσον

[53] *Il.* 1.148; 2.245; 4.349, 411; 5.251; 5.888; 10.446; 12.230; 14.82; 15.13; 17.141, 169; 18.284; 20.428; 22.260, 344; 24.559; *Od.* 8.165; 17.459; 18.14, 337, 388; 19.70; 22.34, 60, 320; *hHom* 7.48; [Hes.] *Sc.* 445.

[54] Vian 1974.

[55] La formula è stata variamente esaminata dagli studiosi: cfr. in merito Holoka 1983; Horn 2022. Per un'etimologia di ὑπόδρα cfr. Xian 2017. Sull'uso e sul significato della formula cfr. anche Kirk 1985, p. 68 *ad Il.* 1.148-171: «a formula associated with speech and expressing extreme displeasure and rebuke».

[56] Per un approfondimento sul valore biologico evolutivo della formula cfr. Horn 2022 pp. 232-233.

[57] Sulle metonimie che riguardano le emozioni cfr. Kövecses 2000, pp. 5, 133-134, 171-172, 176-177.

ὀσσάτιόν περ ἐμὸν δόρυ [...]). Guarda-dal-basso Giasone – appena eletto capo della spedizione – in segno di sfida e si gloria della sua forza fisica: subito dopo, aggredisce con violenza il compagno Idmone, vate e modello di profeta apollineo (cfr. 1.439-449). Contrapposto a Giasone, Ida incarna un modello di eroismo marziale e impulsivo arcaico, che nelle *Argonautiche* non trova spazio: messo in ridicolo per la sua inadeguatezza, dimostra la sua inattualità e il suo anacronismo[58]. Non è forse un caso, dunque, che, all'opposto di Giasone e degli altri Argonauti, Ida parli come gli antichi eroi, e che parli con le parole e i gesti degli antichi eroi, dall'autore svuotati del loro significato originario e rivalorizzati, messi a dialogo con l'attualità.

4. Conclusioni

Con il presente contributo si è tentato di far luce sull'articolata valenza semantica, letteraria e antropologica dello sguardo nelle *Argonautiche* di Apollonio Rodio. Dall'interpretazione generale è emerso che l'atto di *guardare* diviene potente mezzo di comunicazione emotiva, strumento che da un lato amplifica la tensione drammatica e, dall'altro, rivela alcuni strati nascosti della psicologia dei personaggi. Lo sguardo, infatti, non è solo un atto visivo, ma un gesto intrinsecamente legato alla percezione e alla gestione del potere, della vulnerabilità e del desiderio: le differenti manifestazioni dello sguardo – l'abbassamento per vergogna o disperazione, l'intensificazione in segno di sfida o di rabbia – diventano così espressioni di un ampio spettro di esperienze emotive che plasmano le relazioni interpersonali all'interno dell'epica apolloniana.

L'analisi dell'impiego particolare dei neologismi κατηφιάω e ὑποφράζομαι ha consentito in seguito di proporre una nuova interpretazione del passo 1. 460-465 e, al contempo, di formulare considerazioni generali sulla tecnica compositiva apolloniana. Infatti, queste creazioni verbali documentano la meticolosa riflessione dell'autore sull'interconnessione fra corpo e psiche, tra gesto e intenzione emotiva; l'attenzione al linguaggio non verbale che arricchisce la comprensione dei rapporti tra i personaggi; la capacità di modellare la lingua per rendere visibili esperienze umane intime e nuove. Gli sguardi di Giasone e Ida preannunciano le parole e i comportamenti dei due eroi, dimostrandone in anticipo il carattere. In questo senso, lo sguardo, non soltanto mero atto di percezione visiva, diventa veicolo di norme sociali e rappresenta il mezzo

[58] Su Ida come 'eroe automatico' nelle *Argonautiche* cfr. Fränkel 1960. Per altri contributi sulla figura di Ida nell'economia narrativa delle *Argonautiche* cfr. Dräger 2001, pp. 102-103; Mori 2008, pp. 74-82.

attraverso cui i personaggi interpretano la realtà e si confrontano con essa. Nella poetica delle *Argonautiche*, dunque, la pregnanza semantica del *guardare* si iscrive all'interno dinamico processo di trasmutazione della scala di valori proposto da Apollonio.

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Love and Love-making in Lucretius' *De rerum natura*

Abstract: Lucretius famously concludes the fourth book of *De rerum natura* with an account of love; reading that finale as the analysis of an emotion, rather than a diatribe against it, shows that what Lucretius offers is not a cure for love, but a path to experiencing *amor* in a way that is both Roman and Epicurean. To that end, challenging the traditional interpretation of *DRN* 4, 1263-1277 – namely, that wives have no need to please their husbands sexually and take little or no pleasure in sex themselves, this study argues that according to Lucretius there can and should be mutuality and reciprocity in love and its pleasures. Male or female, human or (other) animal, the position adopted by a mating pair during sexual intercourse reflects and embodies their emotions, and thus illuminates the complex neurophysiological processes and ethical choices behind them. Love, sex and marriage can coexist; when that happens, love and the pleasures of love-making are mutual, natural and necessary and 'doggie style' is the natural choice for coupling – or so Lucretius teaches.

Keywords: Lucretius, Epicureanism, emotion, love, women, (non-human) animals.

'I wonder why Lucretius seems to reject the "doggie" position, given that other animals, including dogs, naturally adopt it'. David Konstan had a way of asking questions. A few months before his passing, he kindly took the time to read some of my thoughts on human-animal emotions in Lucretius' *De rerum natura* and as soon as I read that question (*per litteras*), I knew – as he did – it needed answering. This study is that answer.

Lucretius famously concludes the fourth book of *DRN* with an account of love (*amor*). It is often regarded as a diatribe against love and the excesses that love drives one to[1]. In it, Lucretius engages with traditions as diverse as Roman

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[1] This trend may go back as far as St Jerome and his claim that Lucretius went mad as the result of drinking a love potion, wrote *DRN* during moments of clarity and committed suicide. For this and the range of views on the diatribe question (sometimes excepting the physiologically-oriented sections of the finale), see Betensky 1980 (including for an overview of earlier bibliography); Brown 1987, pp. 70, 112, 137-139; Caston 2006; Pope 2020, pp. 47-48.

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comedy, satiric invective, Alexandrian poetry, Hippocratic medicine, myths about Venus and Cupid, and conventional Roman norms around gender and sexuality. His primary aim is to show the reader that love is not some divinely sent blessing or curse, but an emotion with natural causes. While many interesting and important scholarly contributions furthering that scholarly consensus have been made in recent years, not least by Brown and Landolfi, somewhat less attention has been paid to the nature and workings of the emotion of love per se[2]. This is a bit surprising, given the surge of interest in the emotions in ancient philosophy more generally over the past three decades or so, including in conjunction with the sensory turn[3]. Naturally there are some noteworthy exceptions, and thanks particularly to the work of scholars such as Annas, Asmis, Fowler, Gill, Konstan, Landolfi, Nussbaum and Procopé[4], it has been possible to begin answering Fowler's call to analyse the relationship between the physiological and psychological when it comes to the emotions, as well as the dialogue between such ideas and their context – including with respect to love[5].

The finale of *DRN* IV is not a diatribe against love per se, but in fact a case study of an emotion, not unlike Philodemus' *On Anger*. In it, Lucretius analyses the emotion of love in several related ways. He explains the nature of love, i.e. its underlying physiological and psychological causes and their phenomenal manifestations; he also uses the ontology and aetiology of love to shed light on common (mis)conceptions about love, as well as to explain love's role in emotionally charged experiences ranging from sexual intercourse to procreation to marriage. Lucretius thus shows that, like all emotions, love is a feeling that emerges from certain internal bodily motions and manifests at the level of consciousness, such that we experience love in and from our whole body and being – and particularly our hearts and minds, as it were. All creatures are capable of love. The potential for love is inherent to our natures; it cannot be uprooted, but it also does not need to be. That is not just because love is within our control. There is a version of love which is conducive to one's equanimity and consistent with the nature of things. Therefore, what Lucretius offers is not a cure for the emotion, but rather a path to experiencing love – and even to engaging in acts of love – in a way that is both Roman and Epicurean. Or so I have argued[6].

[2] Brown 1987; Landolfi 2013.

[3] Braund-Gill 1997; Sihvola-Engberg-Pedersen 1998; Konstan 2006a; Nelis 2017; Cairns 2019.

[4] Annas 1989; Annas 1992; Procopé 1993; Nussbaum 1994; Fowler 1997; Gill 2006; Konstan (e.g.) 2006b; Konstan 2008; Gill 2009; Asmis 2011; Landolfi 2013; Asmis 2020.

[5] Important inroads to this end were made, e.g., in Landolfi 2013, pp. 23-58.

[6] Lucr. *DRN* 3, 94-322; 4, 1030-1287. Zinn forthcoming, cap. 3.

Building on that, this study argues, according to Lucretius, the position that a mating pair adopts during sexual intercourse reflects and embodies their emotions; the individuals' underlying neurophysiology, psychological experiences and bodily movements are all interrelated phenomena. In the process, it also challenges the traditional interpretation of Lucretius' views on particular sexual positions. Lucretius does not reject the 'doggie' position, as has been conventionally supposed; rather, quite the opposite[7]. Lucretius represents 'doggie style' as the natural choice for coupling, especially in cases of what we today might call 'true love'[8].

1. Love and/or Sex, and Marriage

When is sex 'just sex', and when is it 'making love'? Is it natural to feel love? Can we help it if we do? Should we? The ancient Greeks and Romans were no more immune to such questions than we are, and perhaps even less so. At the risk of overgeneralisation, in a society where marriages were often arranged, and arranged for the benefit of the families rather than the couple, one which placed so great a value on the production of legitimate heirs that insofar as possible women were scarcely allowed out of the house without the supervision of a male chaperon, one which at the same time countenanced a certain amount of male promiscuity outside of marital relations (as long they did not stray too far beyond a range of normative limits) – it is hardly surprising that its cultural production frequently represents the relationship between love and sexual intercourse as somewhat fraught, that indeed some preferred to keep the two mutually exclusive so as to better engage in each without the complications of the other, or even preferred to forego love altogether. As Lyne argues, there is good reason to suppose that that by the mid-first century B.C.E. many of the Roman elite may well have been asking themselves if sex, love and marriage could actually coincide, and if so under what circumstances[9].

Love was no less complicated for those trying to approach it philosophically, such as the Epicureans[10]. Epicurus wrote a treatise *On Love* (Περὶ ἔρωτος) – which may have been of some note, judging among other things by its prom-

[7] That Lucr. *DRN* 4, 1264-1267 refers to sexual intercourse wherein a woman is more or less down on all fours and being entered from behind by the male, i.e. 'doggie-style', cfr. e.g. Brown 1987, pp. 360-361.

[8] This and similar expressions are presented in quotations when first introduced; the same qualified apparent similarity between ancient and modern conceptions also applies to their subsequent use unless otherwise specified.

[9] Lyne 1980, pp. 1-18.

[10] For what follows, see also Brown 1987, pp. 108-122; Nussbaum 1994, pp. 140-191.

inence in Diogenes Laertius' catalogue of his best works; regrettably, it has since been lost[11]. Some of the surviving evidence suggests Epicurus believed that the emotion of love (ἔρως) was tantamount to what we might call lust and viewed it in a rather negative light, but thought that sex itself was not inherently problematic[12]. While that evidence is consistent with the views of some later Epicureans, like Philodemus, it cannot be the whole picture[13]. After all, marriage was not unheard of within the Garden, at least under Epicurus, nor was having children; Epicurus even makes provisions for the children of his friends in his will[14]. And Demetrius of Laconia attests that Epicurus also used ἔρως with reference to children[15]. Moreover, *DRN* does not neatly map onto that picture. For example, Lucretius almost exclusively uses the word *amor* when referring to the emotion that we today might call 'romantic love', i.e. love with a distinctive sexual component; it is never used in the sense of one's feeling of affection towards biological kin[16]. Lucretius also refers to children (*gnatis dulcibus* 4, 1234) and their kisses as sweet and speaks of the charms (*blanditiis* 5, 1018) they hold for their parents[17]. Finally, as we shall see, Lucretius offers a path to enjoying romantic love within the context of a conventional Roman marriage, sexual intercourse included.

That path and possibility have often been neglected, debated or dismissed, in part due to the way that scholars have traditionally read the penultimate passage of book four, *DRN* 4, 1263-1277. That reading, reflected in David Konstan's question, is perhaps best epitomised by the translation of Rouse and Smith's 1992 edition:

> Another thing of very great importance is the position in which the soothing pleasure itself is taken; for wives are thought generally to conceive better after the manner of wild beasts and quadrupeds, because in that position, breast

[11] Laertius places *On Love* third in the catalogue, just behind Epicurus' magnum opus *On Nature* and another whose title suggests its importance, given Epicurus' atomist philosophy – namely, *On Atoms and Void*; *Diog. Laert.* 10, 27.

[12] Usener 483, cfr. 67, 464. Cfr. e.g. Bailey 1947 vol. 3, p. 1303; Rist 1980, p. 126; Brown 1987, p. 217.

[13] Phld. *D.* 3.76.6 ff in Brown 1987, p. 217.

[14] *Diog. Laert.* 10, 19-22. However 10, 119 suggests marriage and children were also not standard practice in the school; cfr. e.g. Bailey 1947 vol. 3, p. 1316; Godwin 1986, pp. 169-170; Pope 2020: 47-48.

[15] Cfr. Procopé 1993, pp. 372-373.

[16] The other uses occur in the context of depicting devotion and certain strong non-sexual desires; it is also never used of what we today often call 'Platonic love', such as non-sexual affection for close friends; Zinn forthcoming, cap. 3. Cfr. Dover 1973, p. 59; Adams 1982, pp. 57, 188-189; Osborne 1994; Konstan 2006b, pp. 169-184.

[17] With Lucr. *DRN* 4, 1234, cfr. e.g. 3, 894-896.

> down and loins up, the seeds can occupy the proper places. Lascivious movements are of no use whatever to wives. For a woman forbids herself to conceive and fights against it, if in her delight she thrusts against the man's penis with her buttocks, making undulating movements with all her body limp; for she turns the share clean away from the furrow and makes the seed fail of its place. Whores indulge in such motions for their own purposes, that they may not often conceive and lie pregnant, and at the same time that their intercourse may be more pleasing to men; which our wives evidently have no need for[18].

This interpretation suggests that 'our wives', the wives of Lucretius' intended readership (*coniugibus nostris* 4, 1277), have no need to please their husbands sexually and possibly take little or no pleasure in sex themselves[19]. Possibly even that Lucretius intended the expression to mean 'Roman wives' and was himself unmarried[20]. It also reinforces an idea that Roman moralists of the late Republic often railed against, namely that for sexual intercourse which they would really enjoy and – increasingly – for the possibility of romantic love, mature aristocratic Roman men generally had to look elsewhere than their virtuous, monogamous and largely chaste wives[21]. Nussbaum was the first to challenge this reading, and rightly so[22]. In fact, according to Lucretius, they actually have to look no further.

2. What is Love?

Love is a complex psychophysiological phenomenon, for Lucretius, as are one's emotions more generally. In Epicureanism there is no mind-body dualism; what we today would call the mind and/or soul, the Epicureans believe are bodily, parts of the rest of one's body and only exist within the context of and for as long as the whole. As Lucretius represents it, each living creature is an interdependent system which is more than the sum of its parts; those parts include, at minimum, the flesh, sinews, veins and something rather like a central nervous system centred in the heart rather than the head – namely, the *animus-anima* complex. While properties like the capacity for emotions emerge from the integral whole as such and exist at the level of experience,

[18] For the Latin text, see below.

[19] Cfr. e.g. Godwin 1986, p. 169; Brown 1987, pp. 360-371.

[20] Cfr. e.g. Bailey 1947 vol. 3, p. 1319. For other views, cfr. e.g. Brown 1987, p. 371; Rouse-Smith 1992, p. XVI.

[21] Cfr. e.g. *ps.-Dem.* 59, 122 in and with Brown 1987, p. 371. See also Edwards 1993, pp. 5, 9-12, 78-82.

[22] Nussbaum 1994, pp. 182-186; cfr. Betensky 1980 with regards to the finale of *DRN* IV writ large.

they are also powers particularly of the *animus-anima* complex – not least as the mechanisms underlying their manifestations necessarily involve the motions of its constituent matter. The *animus-anima* complex is comprised of four primary constituents: assemblages (not unlike what we might call molecules) of fire, assemblages of wind, assemblages of air and the so-called 'nameless fourth'; there are many others as well, but these are the main sorts – and this is true of all living creatures alike. Like all matter, these constituents are in constant motion, however both their flux and their relative proportions are both generally stable; i.e. they are typically in a state of equilibrium. The balance can also vary. When one feels an emotion, for example, that feeling will entail a surge of one sort of constituent of the *animus-anima* complex relative to the others. That surge is both a microlevel manifestation of the emotion and to some extent accounts for the macrolevel experience, but not entirely[23]. As scholars like Fowler and Gill have rightly underscored, when it comes to Lucretius' philosophy of mind – the macro and micro levels are two sides of the same coin, two ways of looking at the same phenomenon; neither the psychological nor the physiological can be completely understood or reductively explained in terms of the other[24]. To put it another way, on the one hand, an emotion is an instance of feeling; on the other, that feeling is itself a process and also involves underlying processes and mechanisms, with many causes working together in concert on many levels. Love is no exception.

As Lucretius represents it, love is a fiery emotion. Moreover, that conventional metaphor speaks to a literal truth[25]. As with other such emotions, like anger, love entails a surge of the fiery constituents of one's *animus-anima* complex. Love also entails sexual arousal. Both love and sexual arousal are typically catalysed by the perception of a potential partner whom one finds attractive. Sexual arousal manifests in ways ranging from the gathering of seed in one's genitals to the desire to copulate with the attractive individual, often simultaneously. The whole body thus engages in the experience of love, with the feeling proceeding from the heart (including in its capacity as the seat of our consciousness) to the rest; and, at least insofar as the processes governed by the autonomic nervous system go, the entire body embodies the emotion[26]. In

[23] Lucr. *DRN* 3, 94-160, 231-257, 288-322; 4, 1192-1208 (on which, see below). Zinn forthcoming: capp. 1, 3.

[24] Fowler 1997; Gill 2006; Gill 2009.

[25] Cfr. e.g. καίω *LSJ* II.4; Sappho 31; Pl. *Phdr.* 251a-252b; Catull. 51. See also n. 16 (above).

[26] See Lucr. *DRN* 4, 1030-1120, n. 23 (above) and further discussion below. All of these interrelated phenomena are themselves also processes, with their own corresponding and inter-entailing underlying mechanisms; belief also plays an important role in them. Cfr. Zinn forthcoming.

every possible sense, then, one becomes inflamed in love, and burning with love has a distinctively sexual dimension[27].

3. When to Love

Love is not the goal of life in Epicureanism, nor does it guarantee a happy ending, so to speak. Not all love is even choice-worthy, and sometimes love is downright destructive – as Lucretius shows in 4, 1076-1191, the part of the finale of *DRN* IV which *does* qualify as a diatribe against (counterproductive) love. There, having demystified and demythologised the nature of love at 4, 1030-1075, Lucretius proceeds to lambast the false beliefs associated with love and the foolish things people do in the name of love, and to shed a searing light on the ways in which those false beliefs and foolish choices are linked. He reserves a particularly satiric invective, for instance, for the delusions men have about their respective beloveds. It is bad enough that they are obsessed with their mistresses and treat these women as goddesses whose favour they cannot live without, squandering upon them undue attention and even the hard-won family estate; but they are also blinded by love to the actual qualities of the women themselves[28]. 'This is our Venus' (*haec Venus est nobis* 4, 1058), or so he reveals, in every possible sense of the word *Venus*; by the end of the first half of the finale, Lucretius has subverted or corrected all of the conventions and motifs surrounding the traditional notions and representations of love, ranging from a form of warfare (*militia amoris*) and of slavery (*servitium amoris*), to an illness, affliction and/or irrational madness, to a divine force over which one has no control – and sent, perhaps, by the mythical arrows of Cupid, in order to humiliate them viz traditional gender norms, family values and views of excess as depravity[29]. Having read this traditional, highly rhetorical moralising discourse, the reader might well be wondering if it might not indeed be better – both healthier and more useful – to let off his steam, as it were, with a prostitute or 'wide-wandering Venus' (*volvivaga Venere* 4, 1071),

[27] That sexual dimension is part of what distinguishes love, both mechanistically and experientially, from other fiery emotions.

[28] Being blinded by love may well be more than metaphorical; the neurophysiological mechanism likely entails the *animus-anima* complex's surge of fire instantiating in the eyes as well as in the heart, as happens, for example, in instances of anger; Lucr. *DRN* 3, 288-298.

[29] Lucretius employs a range of meanings for *Venus*, including via euphemism and metonymy; the valences at play in any given instance both reflect and play an important role in his broader didactic programme as well as his more specific arguments about love. Cfr. e.g. Betensky 1980, pp. 295-297; Asmis 1982; Brown 1987; Gale 1994 *passim* and pp. 208-223; Caston 2006. See also Adams 1982, pp. 57, 188-189; Landolfi 2013; Gellar-Goad 2020, pp. 125, 197-198.

than to indulge in the emotion of love, much less to pursue it[30]. Then, in the second half of the diptych, Lucretius flips the script and offers the reader a better alternative – namely, love (*amor*) that meets the standards of both Epicurean ethics and Roman morality.

To start from the end – immediately after the passage that allegedly rejects the possibility that wives might enjoy sex, Lucretius continues:

> nec divinitus interdum Venerisque sagittis
> deteriore fit ut forma muliercula ametur;
> nam facit ipsa suis interdum femina factis
> morigerisque modis et munde corpore culto,
> ut facile insuescat te secum degere vitam.
> quod superest, consuetudo concinnat amorem;
> nam leviter quamvis quod crebro tunditur ictu,
> vincitur in longo spatio tamen atque labascit.
> nonne vides etiam guttas in saxa cadentis
> umoris longo in spatio pertundere saxa?
>
> Nor, meanwhile, does it happen by divine-will and by means of the arrows of Venus that a dear wife with lesser beauty is loved; for a woman sometimes brings it about herself, through her own deeds and accommodating ways (*morigeris modis*) and genteelly cultivated body – with the result that she easily accustoms you to spend your life with her. What is more, habit inculcates[31] love. For what is struck by a frequent blow, however lightly, nevertheless in the long run is conquered and yields. Do you not see that even drops of water falling upon stones in the long run bore through them?
>
> *DRN* 4, 1278-1287[32]

These lines serve several important functions, as indicated – among other things – by their position in the text. In addition to concluding both book four of *DRN* and its account of love, they also close a circle construction begun at 4, 1192; the subject of that kuklos is love without false beliefs[33]. In the process of discussing its phenomenal manifestations and functions, Lucretius shows that love, properly understood, is universal; in turn, the fact that all living creatures

[30] Cfr. Lucr. *DRN* 4, 1058-1072. On the traditional discourse and its equation of excesses and of excess itself with immorality, cfr. e.g. Edwards 1993, pp. 5, 9-12, 78-92, 178-180, 188-204.

[31] For this interpretation of *concinno* in context, cfr. *OLD* §4 and n. 78 (below).

[32] Latin quotations of the text of Lucretius' *DRN* are drawn from Rouse-Smith 1992 (occasionally with minor adaptations), in consultation particularly with Bailey 1947 and Deufert 2019. All translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

[33] The segue into it, Lucr. *DRN* 4, 1190-1191, is also not without relevance.

are capable of love, and experience and express it in more or less the same ways and for essentially the same reasons, irrespective of gender or species, shows that love can occur in a way that is both natural and necessary[34]. Such instances of the emotion may thus be called true love. In 4, 1192-1208, Lucretius treats the mutuality and reciprocity of love, and also of sex in the context thereof. In 4, 1209-1277 he analyses how heredity works; from 4, 1209-1262 he focuses on the contributions of both partners to successful procreation, from 4, 1263-1277, as seen above, on the importance of position to their chances of conception. Finally, though much scholarly debate argues to the contrary, in these concluding lines of *DRN* IV Lucretius describes romantic love arising within the context of marriage – where it can lead to the production of legitimate offspring[35].

Many details of *DRN* 4, 1278-1287 support reading it as an account of love within marriage[36]. Some have rightly pointed to the expression *morigeris modis*, which cannot be fully captured in a single translation; it signifies 'wifely ways' as well as accommodating and obedient ones – and in fact suggests all of these ideas simultaneously[37]. To this we might add the wordplay in the diminutive *muliercula*; coming as it does on the heels of *coniugibus nostris* (4, 1277) and sexual reproduction, *muliercula* suggests one's dear wife, as well as the complementary and often preferred interpretation of a 'mere woman' – i.e. one who seems less than goddess-like, as well as less goddess-like than the women men tend to fall for[38]. Lucretius' joint emphasis on the habitual and the long term further indicate that he is discussing a married couple. Hearkening back to his account of the physics and metaphysics of love (4, 1030-1075), Lucretius here argues that the emotion can develop and the feeling can be deepened, reinforced and refined through the habitual – i.e. repeated and frequent, virtually constant – interactions that characterise married life. This is the woman with whom one is spending one's life, and she can actually make that state of affairs quite a pleasant experience, pleasant indeed to the point where one begins to rather enjoy it (*insuescat*) and even, eventually, to feel love. Earlier Lucretius

[34] Zinn forthcoming, capp. 3.

[35] The (non-human) animal equivalent seems to be mated pairs propagating *generatim*, i.e. each according to their own species and kind; cfr. e.g. Lucr. *DRN* 1, 19-20; 4, 1192-1208 (both discussed below).

[36] For similar readings, cfr. e.g. Betensky 1980, pp. 293-294; Godwin 1986, pp. 169-170.

[37] Cfr. Lucr. *DRN* 4, 1090-1091. The expression *morigerus* could have sexual connotations as well; Williams 1958, pp. 19-22; Adams 1982, p. 164. Lucretius often choses expressions which encompass and thereby convey several related concepts at once; cfr. n. 29 (above).

[38] For the range of interpretations of this diminutive, some more consistent with the traditional interpretation of Lucr. *DRN* 4, 1263-1277, see Leonard-Smith 1942, p. 638; Bailey 1947 vol. 3, p. 1319; Godwin 1986, p. 170. Landolfi 2013, pp. 192-193; *OLD*.

suggests a happy home (*domus laeta*), a great wife (*uxor | optima*) and sweet children (*dulces nati*) are among life's treasures, entirely possible – and even normal[39]. At 4, 1278-1287 he explains the way that comes about. This love arises and grows slowly, over time, with none of the false beliefs or deleterious effects of the amours or love-affairs in fashion with many of his contemporaries that he satires earlier; it is thus not contrary to the readers' peace of mind, but conducive to it – not unlike friendship[40]. There is a love worth having, then: this one.

4. It takes two to tango

The evidence presented thus far points to another important way in which the traditional reading of 4, 1263-1277 is peculiar[41]. According to Lucretius, pleasure (*voluptas*) – properly understood – is the guide of life for all living creatures, and all actively pursue it from birth, untaught and of their own freewill[42]. Why should wives be any different, then? Or women more generally? Indeed, they are not, as Lucretius demonstrates by way of beginning the second half of his account of love.

> nec mulier semper ficto suspirat amore,
> quae conplexa viri corpus cum corpore iungit
> et tenet adsuctis umectans oscula labris;
> nam facit ex animo saepe et, communia quaerens
> gaudia, sollicitat spatium decurrere amoris.
> nec ratione alia volucres armenta feraeque
> et pecudes et equae maribus subsidere possent,
> si non ipsa quod illarum subat ardet abundans
> natura et Venerem salientum laeta retractat.
>
> A woman does not always sigh with feigned *amor* – who, when she has embraced the body of a man, joins it and holds it with her own – moistening kisses with sucked lips. For she often does this from the heart, and, seeking shared joys, incites him to 'go the distance' of *amor*. Nor for any other reason would

[39] Lucr. *DRN* 3, 894-899; cfr. 4, 1234.

[40] Lucretius' word choice surrounding the mechanisms by which true love is inculcated is reminiscent of the language used of the pleasures of Roman friendship. Brunt 1965; Nussbaum 1994, pp. 140-191; Konstan 2006b, pp. 169-184; Zinn forthcoming, cap. 6. For a qualified take on this view, cfr. Brown 1987, pp. 89-91.

[41] Cfr. e.g. Brown 1987, pp. 366-367.

[42] Lucr. *DRN* 2, 251-293; cfr. Cic. *Fin*. 1, 29-30; *Diog. Laert.* 10, 137; Brunschwig 1986; Sedley 1998.

> female birds, cattle and beasts, and herds and horses be able to submit to the males, if it were not for the fact that their very nature – because it is on fire – blazes up, overflowing and glad, and draws in and out of itself the 'Venus' of the mounting ones.
>
> *DRN* 4, 1192-1200

These lines show that love and love-making are universal; Lucretius introduces the possibility that a woman's *amor* may be sincere and genuine, then emphasises that often her engagement in sexual intercourse is related to that emotion. The expression Lucretius choses, *ex animo*, is significant; with it, Lucretius encompasses several meanings, and shows how they are related. For one, it conveys that the woman is acting sincerely, i.e. on the basis of heart-felt emotion; it also speaks to the mechanism underlying that feeling. Her choices to engage in sexual intercourse and her actions during them are to some extent a manifestation of the surge of fire underlying and coordinate with her love. And, as *ex animo* confirms, that surge proceeds from her *animus-anima* complex – specifically from the part localised in her heart and seat of consciousness – to the rest of her body[43]. The same is true of non-human female animals; their very nature (*ipsa illarum natura*) burns with love, the same as any man's or males', and not for any other reason (*nec ratione alia*) – i.e. according to the same processes at both the micro and macro levels[44]. In other words, it is on the basis of that feeling, the emotion of love, that animals too – genuinely willing and glad – retract the 'Venus' (i.e. penis) of those mounting them (*salientum*). In the process, Lucretius also shows that, across the species, female sexual intercourse on the basis of love is no passive reception of penetration, as it was so often portrayed[45]. These females have agency in their sexual acts, even at the level of syntax. The woman is the subject of all the active verbs of 4, 1192-1196, she is the one pursuing the shared joys (*communia gaudia*) of sexual intercourse, she the one stimulating (*sollicitat*) her partner to go the distance sexually (*spatium decurrere amoris*) – i.e. to achieve orgasm[46]. Similarly,

[43] Cfr. Lucr. *DRN* 3, 57 *pectore ab imo*; with both, see Catull. 109, 4. Cfr. Bailey 1947 vol. 3, p. 1312; Brown 1987, p. 311. For this and what follows, cfr. also Betensky 1980, p. 293.

[44] The conjecture of *illarum* advanced by Bockemüller and Winckelmann has become the standard reading, and Bailey (1947 vol. 3, p. 1312) makes a powerful argument for it. Deufert, however, has recently made a case for returning to the manuscript reading of *illorum*; Deufert 2018, pp. 278-279 and Deufert 2019, p.183. While this reading would affect the emphasis of the lines, it would not substantially impact their sense as interpreted here; cfr. n. 47 (below).

[45] Cfr. Edwards 1993, pp. 63-97, especially pp. 70-73; Pope 2020.

[46] On Lucretius' euphemisms and other wordplay in these lines, cfr. e.g. Bailey 1947 *ad loc.*; Adams 1982, pp. 57, 144, 166, 184-189, 206-208; Godwin 1986, pp. 165-166 and, throughout the second half of the finale, Brown 1987, pp. 360-371. Context shows that *retractat* should be read

and echoing the polyvalent signification of *ex animo*, the nature of the female animals is the subject of *retractat*[47]. Therefore, not only can sexual intercourse be enjoyable for a woman, or indeed any female, it can also coincide with and be an expression of love. Accordingly, such sexual intercourse as Lucretius describes here can indeed be called 'making love'. Two other complementary details are also worthy of note. First, Lucretius' choice of *mulier* includes the possibility that the woman in question may be one's wife[48]. Second, *subsidere* not only refers to females sinking or crouching down before their male mates for the purposes of sexual intercourse, it further suggests that the females are also settling down with them – i.e. mating for life, a permanent coupling[49].

Building on those ideas, Lucretius then proceeds to establish that love is not inherently one-sided, and neither is sexual intercourse; making love takes two.

> nonne vides etiam quos mutua saepe voluptas
> vinxit, ut in vinclis communibus excrucientur,
> in triviis cum saepe canes discedere aventes
> divorsi cupide summis ex viribu' tendunt,
> quom interea validis Veneris compagibus haerent,
> quod facerent numquam, nisi mutua gaudia nossent,
> quae lacere in fraudem possent vinctosque tenere?
> quare etiam atque etiam, ut dico, est communi' voluptas.
>
> Do you not often see also that there are those whom mutual pleasure has bound, with the result that they torture themselves in their common chains? That often at the crossroads, when dogs are desiring to pull apart – facing opposite, they strive eagerly with their utmost strength, while in the meantime they cleave to one another in the strong couplings of Venus? Do you not see they would never have done that, if they had not known that that the joys are mutual – joys which can lure them into the trap and keep them chained? Therefore again and again, as I say, the pleasure is shared.
>
> *DRN* 4,1201-1208

The textual difficulties with these lines notwithstanding, a number of impor-

medially; the females are engaging in an action upon their own bodies and also doing so for their own benefit; cfr. n. 47 (below).

[47] The expression *ipsa illarum natura* is synecdoche and periphrasis for the agency of the female animals themselves, emphasising that their actions are rooted in and consistent with their psychophysiological natures; cfr. n. 46 (above).

[48] Compare Lucretius' usage of *mulier* (cfr. *OLD* §1, 3), *uxor* and *coniunx* at Lucr. *DRN* 4, 1263-1277; on which, see below.

[49] *OLD* §1c, 3.

tant things are clear[50]. Lucretius believes that the sexual intercourse he is describing is mutual in every respect – from the shared pleasure of a mating pair, to the joint nature of the coupling actions, to the fact that both are willing and eager participants[51]. Lucretius also emphases this mutuality by continuing several trends from the preceding lines, like his use of the middle voice (here with a plural subject) and of expressions very like *communia gaudia*. Perhaps in the event that his readers might have not personally experienced this mutuality in their own love lives, Lucretius offers an example from the animal world that he believes *DRN*'s readers will have seen for themselves, as per the emphatic rhetorical question *nonne vides* – namely, the example of dogs coupling in the streets[52]. He evidently expects the readers will take their empirical observations of dogs' love-making as convincing evidence for his arguments. The expression *validis Veneris compagibus* is not only 'in the strong embraces of Venus', with Venus as metonymy for both love and sexual intercourse; it also has the sense of 'by means of the joining structures of the penis', referring to the way the penis of a dog changes shape upon ejaculation to ensure successful procreation, resulting in the painful process of physical separation to which *excrucientur* alludes. Similarly, the 'trap' (*fraudem*) in which mutual joys can hold them chained, encompasses both the pair's love-based relationship (cfr. *nec ficto amore ... ex animo* above), as well as, as Godwin notes, 'the post-coital lock' – i.e. both their parallel emotional and physical interlocking bonds during sexual intercourse; it also evokes the female's anatomy in counterpart to the male's and as her contribution to their physical joining. In both senses, as Garani rightly observes, said bonds are not unlike those of magnets (*DRN* 6, 1002-1089)[53]. But perhaps the most telling confirmation that love

[50] On the state of the text of *DRN* 4, 1201-1210 see e.g. Bailey 1947 vol. 3, pp. 1312-1314. Some, recently Deufert (2019 *ad loc.*), prefer the manuscript reading of *iacere* to Lambinus' conjecture of *lacere* at 4, 1207; *lacere*, however, is more consistent with the nature of pleasure and creatures' natural inclination to actively pursue it.

[51] Lucretius' juxtaposition of *aventes* and *cupide*, for instance and particularly in the context of this pursuit of *voluptas*, echoes that of *cupidam ... avet* at *DRN* 2, 265 and with it his whole account of freewill (2, 216-293). For similar interpretations of the mutuality depicted at 4, 1192-1208, cfr. Nussbaum 1994, pp. 182-185, 260 n. 26; Pope 2020, pp. 138, 153-154. See also n. 52 (below).

[52] *In triviis* carries both senses; cfr. e.g. *Hecate Trivia*, Catull. 58. The mating of these dogs, then, is up to them, not guided by humans' dog-breeding practices. See also n. 51 (above).

[53] Left to their own devices, canines tend to mate for life and, in sexually competitive environments, the copulatory lock (by deployment of the baculum, swelling and inflating) plays an important role in ensuring that their procreation reflects this; Asa-Valdespino 1998. For discussion of Lucr. *DRN* 4, 1200-1208, with particular emphasis on the mechanics of canine coupling, many thanks to Gracie Singleton. See Godwin 1986, p. 166; Nussbaum 1994, pp. 183-184 n. 79; Garani 2007, pp. 174-175 (also on potential Empedoclean resonances). Pope (2020, pp. 138-139), interprets 'trap' in a negative light. Others – e.g. Flores 2004, p. 103 – tend to read *fraudem* as

and love-making take two Lucretius saves for the last line. There he illustrates the inherent physical and emotional entanglement of love and love-making in discussing the shared pleasure they engender – by embodying them in the metrical structure: *quare etiam atque etiam ut dico est communi' voluptas*. In other words, by using four instances of elision and then one of prodelision, Lucretius crafts an auditory mirror of the phenomena – one which drives home his point to *DRN*'s readers as they read the line aloud[54]. There is no doubt, then, at least as far as Lucretius is concerned. True love is mutual and interactive, not an active-passive power dynamic, and so is the sex that occurs as an expression of it.

The mechanics of procreation are also inherently interactive, in Lucretius' view. Contra, e.g., Aristotle, according to Lucretius, both parents contribute seed to the mix during sexual intercourse and the seed from both parents materially and meaningfully contributes to the nature of their progeny – 'for the offspring always consists of two-fold seed' (*semper enim partus duplici de semine constat*)[55]. But this joint contribution is no battle between the sexes, as Pope would have it, whereby the female is masculated and the man effeminised[56]. The complementarity between the seeds of both partners is a key factor in whether or not a couple will conceive, and there are many dimensions to that. Moreover, in ways ranging from context to word choice, Lucretius makes clear his focus is on sexual intercourse within the context of marriage[57]. Indeed, perhaps lest the reader harbour any lingering doubt, Lucretius states that, to be sure of protecting one's old age with children, men must find for themselves a wife who is an equal and mate in nature (*compar | natura*)[58]. Coming as it does at the end of a chiastic construction which makes clear that women and men alike have better chances of conception with some spouses than with others,

deception or error (*vel sim*), but that would be inconsistent with Lucretius' focus throughout *DRN* 4, 1192-1287 on love that is both sincere and not coloured by false beliefs. With the echo of 4, 1205 with 4, 1113 (cfr. Landolfi 2013, p. 143), the variation of *quom interea validis* for *usque adeo cupidine* speaks to the fact that the animals, unlike the humans, are not cleaving to one another from excessive *amor*. On Lucretius' potential targets, sources and intertexts at 4, 1192-1208, cfr. Tutrone 2012, p. 300; Landolfi 2013, pp. 135-145.

[54] As was typical of reading practices at the time; Zinn 2019, pp. 138-139. Classic treatments of the full range of wordplay and its functions in *DRN* include Friedländer 1941; West 1969; Synder 1980.

[55] Lucr. *DRN* 4, 1229. On Lucretius' potential targets, sources and intertexts at 4, 1209-1262, cfr. Bailey 1947 vol. 3, pp. 1313-1318; Brown 1987, pp. 320-323; Tutrone 2012, pp. 299-301; Landolfi 2013, pp. 147-181 and now Pope 2020, pp. 35-56.

[56] Pope 2020, pp. 35-56 – a point he later (pp. 177-178) softens to similar effect as what follows.

[57] Cfr. e.g. Lucretius' juxtaposition of *sterili Venere* (*DRN* 4, 1235), *multum harmoniae Veneris* (4, 1248) and *multae steriles Hymenaeis* (4, 1251) together with his use, at key points in the discussion, of *uxores*: *gravidas uxores* (4, 1238), *domi fecundae uxores* (4, 1254-1255).

[58] Lucr. *DRN* 4, 1255-1256.

due to issues of physiological complementarity, Lucretius' emphasis on the importance of total equivalence and fit between sexual life partners is quite striking[59].

While the fundamental complementarity between the seed and nature of a married couple is of crucial importance to their chances of conception (*usque adeo magni refert* 4, 1257), and even the food they eat is important (*in eo refert* 4, 1260) insofar as it can temporarily influence that complementarity, perhaps the most important factor of all (*permagni refert* 4, 1264) is the position that they adopt during sexual intercourse.

5. Passion and Position

Drawing together the preceding threads, it is now possible to take another look at 4, 1263-1277 and venture an answer to David Konstan's question.

et quibus ipsa modis tractetur blanda voluptas,
id quoque permagni refert; nam more ferarum
quadrupedumque magis ritu plerumque putantur
concipere uxores, quia sic loca sumere possunt
pectoribus positis sublatis semina lumbis.
nec molles opu' sunt motus uxoribus hilum.
nam mulier prohibet se concipere atque repugnat
clunibus ipsa viri Venerem si laeta retractat
atque exossato ciet omni corpore fluctus;
eicit enim sulcum recta regione viaque
vomeris atque locis avertit seminis ictum.
idque sua causa consuerunt scorta moveri,
ne complerentur crebro gravidaeque iacerent,
et simul ipsa viris Venus ut concinnior esset;
coniugibus quod nil nostris opus esse videtur.

And in what ways the charming pleasure itself is performed is also of very great importance; for wives are thought to conceive for the most part in the manner of animals and particularly by the rite of quadrupeds – since, in this way, with their chests having been placed down and their loins having been raised up, their 'places' are able to take up the seeds. Wives have no need at all for sinuous movements. For a woman prevents herself from conceiving and fights against it with her hips, if she herself, glad, draws the 'Venus' of the man in and out *and* having made her entire body flexible, moves herself in wave-like motions;

[59] Lucr. *DRN* 4, 1248-59, especially 4, 1249-1256.

> for she throws off the plow's furrow from the right region and direct path and turns the thrust of the seed away from her places. And prostitutes accustomed themselves to move that way for their own motive – namely, in order that they might not often be filled and lie pregnant and in order that the sex itself might, at the same time, be more refined for the men. For our spouses, it is seen that there is no need of that.
>
> *DRN* 4, 1263-1277 (emphasis mine)

As is now evident, a nexus of verbal and conceptual intratextual echoes link both 4, 1263-1277 and 4, 1278-1287 back to 4, 1192-1208; they must be read in light of it, as well as the intervening lines.

Lucretius imbues these lines with a quality that is at once clinically detached, almost impersonal and simultaneously quite evocative. There is considerable wordplay, for example, in *blanda voluptas*. Context suggests the expression means more than just charming pleasure; it is also a euphemism signifying sexual intercourse, its pleasures and possibly the penis. The verb *tracto* has the potential for sexual innuendo, related to handling of and penetration by the membrum virile[60]. That sense is reinforced here by hearkening back to *Venerem laeta retractat* at 4, 1200 – words which Lucretius echoes (with some important variations) a few lines later. But *tractetur* already primes the reader to think of his description of females gladly and actively engaging in sexual intercourse, seeking shared joys and mutual pleasure, on the basis of genuine heartfelt love. Even the adjective *blandus* has sexual connotations; it signifies charming in the sense of coaxing, with the physical and the psychological as two sides of the same coin. Charming entails the smooth stroking motion of one body against another – whether one is speaking of the body in whole or part, and/or their microscopic corporeal constituents; such motions are pleasurable to the perceiver and thereby potentially enticing and/or persuasive[61]. But Lucretius is not trying to be salacious in all this; his aim, rather, is to bring forward and correct several related ideas. While *blandus* occurs most frequently in *DRN* as an epithet of *voluptas*, Lucretius first introduces it in the proem to book one – as an epithet of *amor*; indeed, he introduces love here too. The charming love (*blandum amorem*) of all living creatures, and animals in particular, inspire them to procreate – each according to their own kind. The paradigm from which the reader begins in *DRN*, then, is of love as

[60] Cfr. Adams 1982, pp. 149, 186, 208.

[61] On the sexual valences, cfr. Adams 1982, pp. 183-187; Brown 1987, p. 362. On the mechanism, compare, for example, the blandishments or charms (*blanditiae*) of the first children, and their effect on the first parents (p. 114 above); cfr. Zinn 2021, pp. 180-181, 191-192.

something naturally charming, pleasurable and procreative – and animals' love and love-making embody that[62]. His point, then, is that there must be a way in which love, sex and pleasure are compatible for humans as well – and that this compatibility (or not) is embodied by and reflected in the position they adopt during sexual intercourse.

As the readers know from their own experience as well as from 4, 1192-1208, many animals procreate 'doggie style'. Not coincidentally, as Lucretius, continues, wives (*uxores*) conceive best in this position. The position is useful because it allows the generative seeds to flow to where the mutual 'fit' of seed and place may lead to conception[63]. In the 'doggie' position, then, love, sexual intercourse and mutual pleasure can coincide – and be useful for procreation.

The usefulness of love and love-making is well worth underscoring; the Epicureans placed great stock in utility and – as noted above – both Lucretius and the Romans more generally placed a premium on procreation, specifically on propagating one's lineage. Now, the last line of this passage, *coniugibus quod nil nostris opus esse videtur*, seems really to have been key to the conventional interpretation that wives have no need to please their husbands and take little or no pleasure in sex. But what if Lucretius is using *opus esse* here (and throughout this passage) in relation to the Epicurean hierarchy of desires? What if he is speaking of utility in that sense?[64]

According to the Epicureans, there are natural and necessary pleasures, natural but unnecessary pleasures, and unnatural unnecessary pleasures. One should pursue one's desires for natural, necessary pleasures like simple food, clothing and shelter; our nature requires it and thus our survival depends on it. One may indulge in natural but unnecessary pleasures, like fancy food, clothing and shelter when they are on offer, as long as they are unlikely to result in pain in the longer term. But the best that excess can do is vary pleasure, not increase it. As for fame, power, glory and the like, the desire for such things have no basis in one's nature; they arise rather from false beliefs. Pursuing one's desire for such things is typically counterproductive for one's peace of mind and sometimes even for one's survival. Ideally one should limit one's desires to those which are natural and necessary; everything else is superfluous and should be of no concern to us[65]. So, where does sex fit in? Where do love and love-making?

[62] Lucr. *DRN* 1, 19-20. For similar views, cfr. e.g. Betensky 1980, p. 298; Landolfi 2013, p. 141; Pope 2020, p. 56.

[63] Lucretius' *loca sumere possunt ... semina* is polyvalent; the places in question must take up the seeds and the seeds must occupy those places.

[64] For another view, see Bailey 1947 vol. 3, p. 1318.

[65] Cfr. n. 42 (above).

The schema that Lucretius presents at 4, 1263-1277 is telling. He proceeds from sexual intercourse between husband and wife with the aim of procreation, to a man and woman having extramarital sex that the woman is actively pursuing and enjoying, to a man having sex with a prostitute who is trying to avoid conception and to make the sex pleasing to him. As Lucretius presents it, each of these representative examples of sexual intercourse involves pleasure, but each does so differently and with different emotional states.

The members of the married couple are jointly pursuing the same natural and necessary pleasure, which – if 4, 1192-1208 is anything to go by – is both shared and also an expression of mutual love; the echoes with the immediately preceding account of heredity (4, 1209-1262) support this as well. Moreover, as Lucretius has already shown, while love may not be necessary for one's personal sexual fulfilment in the form of short-term pleasure, marital sex is necessary for the long-term pleasure of having children – a pleasure which is also mutual, natural and necessary[66]. Making love within the context of marriage, therefore, offers the maximal natural and necessary pleasure to a couple, individually and collectively, in both the short and long term.

The next instance is of sexual intercourse as a natural but unnecessary pleasure; by indicating that procreation is not the goal Lucretius confirms that he is speaking of extramarital love-making, at least in the first instance[67]. Lucretius emphasises that the woman takes her enjoyment of sexual intercourse a step further than what is useful for conception – including by making undulating movements (*fluctus*) during the act. This mating pair recalls those lovesick individuals whom Lucretius critiques at 4, 1058-1191; their pleasure may be mutual, but it is not pure – rather mixed with unnecessary pain. Moreover, the fire of their love is, literally and figuratively, something that also moves in a wave-like manner (*fluctuat*), fluctuating and unfixed, not unlike the psychophysiological disturbances that typically accompany it[68]. Such *amor* is counterproductive in part because it is in excess of what is necessary, in part because it is often mixed with false beliefs that detract from the reader's peace of mind and lead him to do foolish things, like festooning the threshold of *her* home when he, the excluded lover (*exclusus amator*), is shut out, and even immoral things, like bringing one's good name into disrepute and squandering the family estate on gifts (perhaps implicitly rather than increasing it by a wife's dowry)[69]. Thus

[66] Cfr. Lucr. *DRN* 4, 1073-1076, 1141-1148, 1233-1256.

[67] See pp. 113-114 above.

[68] Cfr. especially Lucr. *DRN* 4, 1073-1083. Epicurean equanimity is often represented as a calm sea; the opposite is a sea whose surface is stirred up and rough with waves.

[69] Lucr. *DRN* 4, 1073-1191.

such couples may enjoy pleasure in the short term, and particularly when they have sex, but in the longer term their desires are unfulfillable and in vain and their love brings mainly pain and worry – i.e. the opposite of the Epicurean pleasure (*voluptas*). Therefore, as Lucretius presents it, such love is not worth having, even when the feeling is mutual and the sex is good.

Lucretius does not present a moral judgment about the not uncommon practice of his readers engaging in sexual intercourse with prostitutes – at least, not explicitly; instead, he shows them that it is an unnatural, unnecessary pleasure in a way that they can reach that conclusion themselves. As the reader will have already seen, if a man is inflamed with excessive – or, as Konstan puts it, 'obsessive' – love for a particular mistress, then it can be useful to quell that surge of fire by having one-off sexual intercourse with and/or temporarily turning one's thoughts to another woman – but only as the lesser of two evils, so to speak[70]. In fact, it is better to avoid love and sex altogether[71].

The best of all is to pursue them exclusively within the context of marriage; only then are they both natural and necessary. Being excessively inflamed with excessive and/or delusional love does not happen in marriage; true love arises gradually, over time, through the continual experiences of a shared life[72]. By contrast, the *amor* one feels for a mistress is an emotional state that arises, to some extent, from the false beliefs that mistresses do their best to cultivate – fanning the fire as much through absence as through occasional, selective interactions. At best this *amor* is excessive and counterproductive. Moreover, there is no guarantee that a mistress is sincerely 'in love' or that she is faithful, whatever her feelings[73]. Finally, sex between man and prostitute Lucretius presents as a loveless, transactional interaction. The man is engaging in the unemotional, unnecessary pursuit of pleasure for pleasure's sake. The prostitute is engaging in sexual intercourse for her own reason (*sua causa*); context suggests she does so freely but out of necessity – i.e. her concern with the man's pleasure is no more than a means to her own survival. For the same reason, she is also not seeking the pleasure of having children, and deliberately trying to avoid becoming pregnant. Across these three exempla, Lucretius shows that even when women willingly choose to engage in sexual intercourse and actively participate in it, only marital sex on the basis of mutual love with the aim of having children qualifies as a choice-worthy pleasure.

[70] Konstan 2008, pp. 146-148.
[71] Lucr. *DRN* 4, 1063-1072, 1141-1144.
[72] Lucr. *DRN* 4, 1278-1287.
[73] Lucr. *DRN* 4, 1058-71, 1171-1193; that such practices were typical of mistresses, cfr. Lyne 1980, pp. 1-18.

Each of Lucretius' representative examples of sexual intercourse also involves a different sexual position. Marital love-making is exemplified by the doggie-style position: wife on all fours (*more ferarum | quadrupedumque magis ritu*) with breasts down and loins up, husband mounting from behind; Lucretius also mirrors it here in the text[74]. Animals adopt the position when coupling because they are engaging in procreative sexual intercourse as an expression of genuine mutual *amor*, burning equally but not excessively for one another; the same is thus true of human marital love-making. As for extramarital love-making and sexual intercourse with a prostitute, several variations on the intratexual echoes with 4, 1200 indicate positions other than doggie-style. For one, there is the anatomic detail of the haunches or hips, the substitution of *clunibus* for *natura et*. When a woman literally and figurative burns too hot, it manifests in the sexual intercourse; she goes too far – acts in excess of what is natural and necessary and prevents procreation. How? With the most significant variation of all, line 4, 1271: she makes her body pliant and flexible (*exossato*) and thus moves in wave-like motions (*molles motus*, *fluctus*) from the hips[75]. Such movements, as the reader would know from experience, are not typical of the doggie position. The polyptoton linking *ipsa viri Venerem* (4, 1271) and *ipsa viris Venus* (4, 1276) indicates there is also a third position. Lucretius consistently represents extramarital love-making as a face-to-face interaction – couples hungry with love and insatiable longing, trying to devour one another in their tangled turbulent embraces; so the third must be something else. These things, taken together, suggest that extramarital love-making is exemplified by face-to-face sexual intercourse – encompassing a range of positions in which women could make undulating movements; they also suggest that sexual intercourse with prostitutes (*scorta*) is exemplified by sexual intercourse with the woman astride the man (so as to make such movements), but facing away, towards his feet[76]. Wives (*uxoribus*) have no need to adopt

[74] Lucretius embodies and illustrates the phenomenon using the chiastic structure of this expression and its placement over two lines; the form and content of 4, 1263-1266, particularly together, recall both senses of *subsidere* at 4, 1198.

[75] The word *clunes* is often used of rhythmic motions during sexual intercourse; Brown 1987, p. 366. The alliterative quality of 4, 1273-1274 may mirror both those rhythmic motions and their varied nature; cfr. Landolfi 2013, p. 188.

[76] Clausen's conjecture of *corpore* for *pectore* at *DRN* 4, 1272 may thus be unnecessary and perhaps also distract from Lucretius' emphasis on the visibility of the breast; Lucretius often uses periphrasis and synecdoche to highlights a salient aspect of the phenomenon. Facing away is suggested by mechanics of the third position, together with the idea that taking pleasure with a wide-wandering Venus is a strategy for avoiding the *simulacra* sought by those engaging in counterproductive feelings of love and love-making; cfr. n. 29 (above); Godwin 186, p. 163 and 4, 1171-1172. For the typical sexual positions in Roman art, cfr. e.g. Marcadé 1965; pp. 90-91 may

such positions or to move with those sinuous, undulating movements during sexual intercourse; they adopt the position and direct motions consistent with their pursuit of procreation. Wives (*coniugibus*) also have no need for such things because sexual intercourse as an expression of mutual feeling is already pleasurable for both. Wives therefore do not go to excess, as mistresses do, nor do they have to compensate for lack of love, as prostitutes do. Prostitutes deliberately accustom themselves to contort their bodies in a way that makes their sexual intercourse more refined (*concinnior*) – i.e. both elegant-seeming and bespoke – in order to ensure that their clients enjoy it, for neither feels the fire. Wives, as the reader will have just seen, e.g., with *compar natura*, are already a good fit sexually – which Lucretius' word choice here both recalls and confirms. The word *coniunx* is a hapax in *DRN*; it signifies not only spouse but also yoke-mate, thus particularly connoting mutuality and partnership, a shared purpose and existence[77]. Lucretius then goes on to show how true love can kindle in the context of marriage[78]. In every case, then, the emotions, the physical movements and the position of a mating pair are coordinate with whether and to what extent there is a surge of fire underlying them, as well as the degree to which these things are mutual; every level embodies and mirrors the others.

6. Conclusion

One important goal of Lucretius' account of love is to show and thereby persuade the reader that love within marriage is possible, useful and the only love worth having. Also, as Nussbaum puts it, the 'goal of Lucretian therapy is to make a good marriage possible', by curing the reader of their false beliefs about love and love-making[79]. All living creatures are capable of love and all experience love the same way, according to the same underlying mechanisms; all burn with the same fire, and all act accordingly. Accordingly, the emotions of women and animals are legitimate comparanda for those of men. Women,

illustrate something like what Lucretius has in mind with his first two exempla, pp. 74-76 with all three. For other views of the positions indicated by Lucr. *DRN* 4, 1270-1274, and Lucretius' targets and intertexts in 4, 1263-1277 more generally, cfr. e.g. Leonard-Smith 1942, p. 637; Bailey 1947 vol. 3, p. 1318; Jocelyn 1983; Brown 1987, pp. 361-366.

[77] It also looks forward to the first instances of voluntary coupling and marriage-like partnership: Lucr. *DRN* 5, 962-963, 1011-1027; cfr. Garani 2007, pp. 174-175. For other connotations of *coniunx*, cfr. Adams 1982, pp. 159-161, 179-180; Brown 1987, p. 371.

[78] Thus *concinnat* at 4, 1283 echoes and offers a corrective to *concinnior* in 4, 1276; cfr. Godwin 1986, p. 170; n. 31 (above).

[79] Nussbaum 1994, p. 185.

then, love as men do; women can also enjoy sexual intercourse as much as men do, especially when it is an expression of love. Love can also be mutual – not just in love affairs, but also in marriage. The love that arises within marriage is true love. True love's manifestation in sexual intercourse truly is love-making. And making love in marriage means doing it doggie-style.

Wives, like animals, typically only engage in procreative sexual intercourse which arises out of genuine mutual *amor*; for this they generally assume the 'doggie position'. Lucretius thus presents the mating of dogs and married couples as mirrors of one another; they are also two mutually illuminating exempla of the same phenomenon – namely, of true love's manifestation in love-making. 'Doggie style' simultaneously embodies and facilitates the mutuality and reciprocity of true love, love-making and their shared pleasures; it is also the most effective position for conception or procreation. This sexual intercourse is natural and necessary by Epicurean standards, and consistent with Roman norms and values. Virtuous Roman matrons and animals thus function as didactic exemplars in the second half of Lucretius' account of love; *DRN*'s readers are meant to look to them in order to evaluate their own feelings and choices.

Unlike those exemplars, human men frequently have extramarital sex for the sake of pleasure alone, absent the aim of procreation – and Lucretius thinks his intended readers are among them. Such pleasures, and the desires which motivate them, are unnecessary, even when they are natural. In such intercourse, love may be mutual, one-sided, all-together absent, or illusory – i.e. a false belief related to the extreme desire for carnal/physical pleasure or pleasure for pleasure's own sake. And this too manifests in the positions chosen by the pair. If love is present at all, however fleeting and illusory, they will couple face-to-face. If love is absent, the sex will be purely transactional, as with the female riding the male, but facing away.

The position, therefore, that one adopts for sexual intercourse is often a manifestation and embodiment of the emotions of a mating pair, as well as an ethical choice informed by their feelings. In other words, just as the underlying mechanisms of emotions involve the motions and interactions of microscopic bodies, so too the phenomenal experiences of emotions manifest in the ways we choose to move our bodies and interact with one another sexually. While all of the positions that Lucretius uses as exemplars represent the male in the sexually normative role (by Roman standards of the time) – i.e. as the one penetrating, not being penetrated, Lucretius does not represent the penetrative act as one of sexual dominance, as it was usually taken; the female is never a passive party – quite the opposite. Even soft or *mollis* movements are signs of agency, of having some power in the dynamic between partners. Sexual penetrability

in these circumstances is not, then, tantamount to weakness, effeminacy or vulnerability, as it was so often portrayed. This makes sense in light of the broader context of Lucretius' account of Epicurean philosophy; *DRN* lays great emphasis on the fact that all living creatures are assemblages of matter and thereby penetrable at some level, and that likewise, and at the same time, all are sources of matter that penetrate others[80]. Just as with the collision of atoms or first-beginnings (e.g. *primordia*) in the void, then, so too in respect to sexual intercourse, Lucretius sees the joining of two bodies as a reciprocal interaction, not an active-passive power dynamic – and under the right circumstances the result is the manifestation of their fecundity.

Accordingly, it is not that 'our wives' have no need to please their husbands during sexual intercourse, they simply have no need to act like mistresses or prostitutes to do so. If the married couple are a good fit and love one another, then wives already please their husbands during sex – and vice versa. Engaging in sexual intercourse in the manner of a mistress or prostitute would at best vary the couple's pleasure, not increase it; and the process would hinder or event prevent them from reaching their shared goal. Lucretius teaches that the utility of love and love-making goes beyond personal and even mutual pleasure. Only sex in the pursuit of procreation qualifies as natural and necessary, and even then only when *both* partners desire and enjoy it; under those circumstances, it is useful to the pair, individually and collectively – useful for the pleasures of sex in the short term and for the pleasures of children in the long term. In other words, as Lucretius represents it, marital love and its pleasures – including if not especially sex – are natural and necessary, in a way very consistent with conventionally Roman morality. Lucretius might well agree with how Edwards once characterised that: '[r]eal Romans only had sex with their wives and even then not too often'[81]. But Lucretius also adds that when they do so, both husband and wife make love, both feel the same fiery surge of love rising within in them. Love, sex and marriage can, therefore, coexist – and should do; and when that happens, we make love as nature intended: 'doggie style'.

[80] Pope recently argued that this is both sexual and part of Lucretius' overall didactic programme; Pope 2020, pp. 26-28, 57-82, 181-183. For a non-sexualised interpretation, which also supports a non-hierarchical, non-anthropocentric worldview, cfr. Zinn forthcoming, capp. 2-3.

[81] Edwards 1993, p. 92.

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Cristina Cocola

When Poetry Becomes Emotion: Embodying Compunction in Selected Katanyktic Poems from the Middle and Late Byzantine Period*

Abstract: This article presents an analysis of the somatic effects of κατάνυξις ("compunction"), a prominent emotion within the Byzantine penitential tradition, as depicted in Middle and Late Byzantine katanyktic poetry. These texts provide a unique lens through which to examine Byzantine conceptions of interiority. Following an initial overview of katanyktic poetry and its defining characteristics, this study elucidates the concept of compunction and its significance within the Byzantine cultural and religious context. Subsequently, the corpus of texts selected for analysis is delineated. Finally, the article explores the corporeal manifestations of κατάνυξις in penitents, with specific consideration given to the physical mortifications employed as expressions of inner repentance. The analysis reveals that the Holy Scriptures served as a primary source of models for penitential behavior and provided vivid imagery for the representation of compunction.

Keywords: Byzantine Poetry, Middle and Late Byzantine Period, Byzantine Emotionality, Embodied Repentance, Scriptural Influence.

1. Katanyktic Poems: A Literary Genre on Emotions in Byzantium

Byzantine katanyktic poems are characterized as «personal texts in a first-person voice, with compunction (κατάνυξις in Greek) as their primary thematic focus»[1]. These poems are of significant value for the study of Byzantine emotionality, as they transcend mere literary composition, having been actively

* I wish to express my deepest gratitude to Prof. Sotera Fornaro and Dr. Thomas Kuhn-Treichel for kindly agreeing to host my study in this special issue of the journal. I also extend my heartfelt thanks to the anonymous reviewers, whose insightful comments not only contributed to significantly improving my article, but also provided me with valuable perspectives for the further development of my research. All translations of Old Testament verses are drawn from the NETS translation. Unless otherwise specified, all remaining translations are mine.

[1] Cocola 2023 vol. 1, p. 13. The first in-depth study on the emotion of κατάνυξις and the Byzantine poems related to it has recently been published by Cocola 2023, voll. 1-2. Studies on the expression of compunction in Byzantine hymnography and liturgy can be found in Krueger 2014 and Mellas 2020. For a general introduction on κατάνυξις, I refer to Giannouli 2009; Hinterberger 2006 and 2017. For a general bibliography on emotions in Byzantium, see: Hinterberger 2010; Cipolla et al. 2018; Cairns et al. 2022; Mullett, Harvey 2022.

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performed within diverse religious and spiritual settings, both individual and communal. The enactment of these texts facilitated the experience of compunction among Byzantine readers, predominantly monastic, thereby fostering repentance and the pursuit of post-mortem salvation[2]. A salient characteristic of these works is the articulation of a penitent first-person voice, acknowledging personal transgressions and expressing a fervent desire for conversion through penitential acts, including weeping and tears. Evidential sources, particularly hagiographical narratives, attest to the concrete performance and rehearsal of the acts of compunction described in katanyktic poems. A notable example is found in the twelfth-century *Life of Cyril Phileotes*, authored by Cyril's disciple, Nikolaos Kataskepenos[3]. Specifically, in chapter 42, Nikolaos narrates the account of the elderly monk Auxentios, who succumbed to severe illness resulting from the incessant recitation of katanyktic prayers in verse, performed both nocturnally and diurnally:

> And so great was his compunction that he hardly rested during the night itself and the day. For, after collecting the stichera of the eight tones and the katanyktic kanones, he composed a book and did not rest, but continued to sing that book night and day with a fervent heart. Within a few days, due to the abundant tears he had shed, *his body had become so parched that he could neither eat, nor drink, nor sleep*. [...] Because I constantly saw him taste water from the tip of his lips, and because I knew that his conduct of life was according to God, *I understood that his illness must have come from the book of the katanyktic kanones that he had recently composed*. By delighting in the words of the book, he had indulged in weeping without restraint[4].

This testimony indicates that the performance of katanyktic poems could provoke real tears in their performers, and indeed, weeping was actively pursued and highly valued by those engaging in such textual performances[5]. Con-

[2] I have dealt with these issues in my recent works: Cocola 2021 and 2022; and Cocola 2023 vol. 1, pp. 1-32.

[3] BHG 468. Ed. Sargologos 1964. For a general presentation of this text, see Mullett 2004.

[4] *Vita Cyril. Phil*. 42.9-10: Τοσαύτη δὲ ἦν ἡ κατάνυξις αὐτοῦ ὡς μὴ ἀδειάζειν ἀπ' αὐτῆς σχεδὸν νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας. Συλλέξας γὰρ τῶν ὀκτὼ ἤχων τὰ στιχηρὰ καὶ τοὺς κατανυκτικοὺς κανόνας καὶ ποιήσας βίβλον οὐκ ἐδίδου ἑαυτῷ ἀνάπαυσιν, ἀλλ' ἦν ψάλλων αὐτὴν νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας μετὰ ζεούσης καρδίας. Ἐντὸς δὲ ὀλίγων ἡμερῶν ἐκ τῆς πολλῆς ἐκχύσεως τῶν δακρύων οὕτως ἀπεξηράνθη τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ, ὡς μὴ δύνασθαι φαγεῖν ἢ πιεῖν ἢ ὑπνῶσαι. [...] Ὡς δὲ ἔβλεπον αὐτὸν συνεχῶς ἀπογευόμενον ἄκροις χείλεσιν ὕδατος, εἰδὼς τὴν κατὰ Θεὸν ἐργασίαν αὐτοῦ συνῆκα ὅτι ἐκ τῆς νεωστὶ ἐγχειρισθείσης βίβλου τῶν κατανυκτικῶν κανόνων συμβέβηκεν αὐτῷ ἡ νόσος διὰ τὸ ἐγγλυκανθῆναι τοῖς ῥήμασιν αὐτῆς καὶ ἐκδοῦναι ἑαυτὸν εἰς ἄμετρον κλαυθμόν. Ed. Sargologos 1964, pp. 200-202.

[5] In monastic circles, weeping and tears played a fundamental role during ascetic practices

currently, Kataskepenos cautions the reader of his *Life* regarding the potential hazards of excessive compunction, wherein a previously healthy and robust physique may degenerate into a state of frailty and morbidity. The ultimate sequela of such excess may culminate in mortality.

2. The Sting of Compunction

The English term "compunction", though exhibiting a degree of obsolescence, remains the most suitable translation for the Greek κατάνυξις. Paralleling its Latin cognate "compungo", the Greek verb κατανύσσω, from which κατάνυξις originates, signifies a piercing or stinging sensation, predominantly affecting the soul or heart of the individual experiencing it[6]. However, a crucial distinction must be drawn. The Byzantine conceptualization of κατάνυξις diverges from the contemporary understanding of "compungo". According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "compungo" denotes «the pricking or stinging of the conscience or heart; regret or uneasiness of mind consequent on sin or wrong-doing; remorse, contrition»[7]. Conversely, within the Byzantine worldview, κατάνυξις encompassed not only regret but also served as an impetus for self-amelioration and soteriological attainment[8]. While the piercing nature of κατάνυξις induces pain (πένθος), it simultaneously fosters repentance (μετάνοια) and facilitates the post-mortem salvation of the soul. Consequently, Byzantines regarded κατάνυξις as a «gift from God»[9] (Ἡ μὲν τοιαύτη κατάνυξις Θεοῦ ἐστι δῶρον) and characterized it as a «blessed joy-grief»[10] (τὴν μακαρίαν χαρμολύπην).

related to repentance. On this point, see Hunt 2004 and Hinterberger 2006. Giannouli 2009 shows the role of katanyktic poems in generating tears of repentance during their performance.

[6] For a definition of κατανύσσω, see Lampe 1961, p. 713.

[7] *The Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. [https://www.oed.com/search/dictionary/?scope=Entries&q=compunction].

[8] On this issue, Mellas 2020 and Chryssavgis 2002.

[9] Basil the Great, Asketikon, PG 31.1092D: Ἡ μὲν τοιαύτη κατάνυξις Θεοῦ ἐστι δῶρον, ἢ εἰς ἐρεθισμὸν τῆς ἐπιθυμίας, ἵνα γευσαμένη ἡ ψυχὴ τῆς γλυκύτητος τοῦ τοιούτου πόνου, σπουδάσῃ τοῦτον ἐξομαλίσαι· ἢ εἰς ἀπόδειξιν τοῦ δύνασθαι τὴν ψυχὴν διὰ σπουδαιοτέρας ἐπιμελείας ἐν κατανύξει εἶναι πάντοτε. "Such a compunction is a gift from God in order to stir up desire, so that the soul, having tasted the sweetness of such compunction or sorrow might be stirred up to foster it, or as proof that the soul is able through more zealous application to be always in such compunction". Translation from Silvas 2005, pp. 282-283.

[10] John Klimakos, *Heavenly Ladder*, PG 88.804B: Κατέχων κάτεχε τὴν μακαρίαν τῆς ὁσίας κατανύξεως χαρμολύπην. "Firmly hold the blessed joy-grief of holy compunction". On the concept of Byzantine χαρμολύπη, see the recent work by Chilikov 2021. See also the more dated but still valuable study by Hunt 2004.

The emotion of compunction is frequently depicted in literary sources through physical and concrete imagery. A notable description is provided by John Klimakos in his *Heavenly Ladder* (sixth-seventh century)[11], wherein κατάνυξις is likened to a golden κέντρον ("spur"), inflicting a piercing sensation upon the sinner's soul and heart[12]. Within the *Apophthegmata Patrum* collections (fifth century), individuals experiencing the sting of κατάνυξις are often portrayed as prostrating themselves in acts of penitence[13]. Subsequent to the onset of compunction, penitent sinners articulate expressions of self-reproach and contrition, often accompanied by tears[14]. These narratives of awareness consistently underscore the significant benefit (ὠφέλιμος) accrued by those undergoing such transformative experiences. The piercing effect of κατάνυξις is thus presented as an invaluable advantage for the afflicted.

This phenomenon is also evident within the katanyktic poems themselves. In these texts, the penitent sinner frequently portrays their own heart and soul as obdurate and insensate[15]. The piercing effect of κατάνυξις, therefore, functions to perturb the sinner, rousing them from the torpor of sin and instigating repentance (μετάνοια). In the katanyktic kanon composed by Neophytos Enkleistos (1134-1214) – a great exponent of Cypriot monasticism and spiritual literature[16] – sin, personified by the diabolical entity Beliar[17], has inflicted wounds upon the sinner in the form of arrows. The sinner's soul is described as replete with festering wounds[18]. However, due to the inherent obduracy of his soul, the sinner remains insensible to the pain. Consequently,

[11] CPG 7852. On the importance and influence of this text in the Byzantine spirituality of later centuries, see Ware 1982, pp. 1-70 and, more recently, Mellas 2020, p. 104 n. 186. The only currently available edition of the *Heavenly Ladder* is that contained in PG 88.632-1209. However, Maxim Venetskov has recently announced the forthcoming publication of a new critical edition of the text based on the Sinaitic manuscript branch in 2026. I also mention here the collectanea edited by Van Deun and Venetskov 2024 on the work of Klimakos.

[12] John Klimakos, *Heavenly Ladder* PG 88.801D: πένθος ἐστὶ κέντρον χρύσεον ψυχῆς πάσης [...]. As noted by Chryssavgis 1985, p. 132 n. 7, although in this passage the author employs the term πένθος ("sorrow"), he is actually implicitly referring to κατάνυξις. In fact, according to Klimakos the feeling of compunction is included in the more generic emotion of πένθος.

[13] On this point, see the fundamental work by Müller 2000, p. 226. Like Klimakos' *Ladder*, the collection of the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, although dating back to late antiquity, had a great influence in the later Byzantine world, especially in the ascetic sphere. On this collection, its forms and the available critical editions, see Wortley 2013.

[14] Müller 2000, pp. 226-227, offers several examples.

[15] Since the Old and NewTestament, sin leads to dryness of heart. Cfr., for instance, Ps 94:8 and Hebrews 3:7.

[16] On the figure of Neophytos and his literary works, see Galatariotou 1991 and Demosthenus 2005.

[17] For the scriptural figure of Beliar in katanyktic poetry, see Cocola 2023, pp. 238-239.

[18] I presented this poem in chapter 3: *The Corpus*. It has been recently edited and translated in Cocola 2025.

he implores Christ to intervene and effectuate the healing of his afflictions. Although κατάνυξις is not explicitly mentioned within the text, the therapeutic agent to which the sinner alludes is, in fact, compunction[19]:

Τοῖς βέλεσι τιτρώσκει με ὁ Βελίαρ
καὶ μάλιστα ἡδύνομαι ὁ παράφρων.
Ἐσάπησαν οἱ μώλωπες τῆς ψυχῆς μου
καὶ οὐκ αἰσθάνομαι
ἀπὸ πωρώσεως.
Σύ, Χριστέ μου, δώρησαι θεῖον φάρμακον.

Beliar wounds me with his arrows
and I, the madman, even delight in them.
The bruises of my soul have putrefied
and I do not sense it
because of the hard skin (that grew on it).
Christ, give me a divine medicine.

The sinner is afflicted with ἀναισθησία (lit. "lack of sensation") – v. 90 οὐκ αἰσθάνομαι – and consequently requires a piercing stimulus to attain salvation. Analogously, the penitent first-person voice in a katanyktic poem by Nikephoros Kallistou Xanthopoulos (1256-1335) proclaims its insensibility, comparing itself to a stone (λίθος ὡς ἀναίσθητος), and expresses the necessity of tears of compunction to rouse itself from the obduracy of its soul[20]. In alternative instances, sin is portrayed through the metaphor of profound somnolence,

[19] Indeed, Neophytos inherited this imagery from the *Great Kanon* by Andrew of Crete (seventh-eighth century). In the fifteenth troparion of the VIII ode (ed. PG 97.1377A), which was sung on the Wednesday of the first week of Lent, the sinful 'I' of the text invokes Christ as a physician to obtain compunction as a cure: Τὴν σηπεδόνα, Σωτήρ, θεράπευσον / τῆς ταπεινῆς μου ψυχῆς,/μόνε ἰατρέ· / μάλαγμά μοι ἐπίθες / καὶ ἔλαιον καὶ οἶνον, / ἔργα μετανοίας, / κατάνυξιν μετὰ δακρύων. "Saviour, my only physician, heal / the putrefaction / of my poor soul. / Apply to me a poultice / and oil and wine, / that is works of repentance, / compunction with tears." On the katanyktic kanon of Andrew of Crete and its usage during Byzantine Lent, see the works by Krueger 2014 and Mellas 2020.

[20] Ed. Jugie 1929/1930, pp. 362-365 (vv. 49-52): Λίθος ὡς ἀναίσθητος γεγονώς, / λόγοις οὐ μαλάσσομαι καθαγνίζουσι, [τὴν] ψυχὴν / πεπώρωμαι· ὅθεν μὴ στένων, μὴ δακρύων, / τίς γένωμαι ὁ τάλας; Κόρη, βοήθει μοι. "Since I am numb as a stone, / I am not softened by purifying words: I have hardened/my soul. So, without moans or tears, / what is to become of me, the unhappy one? Virgin, help me." Nikephoros Kallistou Xanthopoulos was an important spiritual figure in thirteenth-fourteenth century Constantinople. His literary production is extensive, both in verse and prose. Six katanyktic poems are attributed to him, which I have analysed in Cocola 2023 vol. 1, pp. 113-122. I also devoted a study on the presence of the Psalms in Xanthopoulos' katanyktic production (Cocola forthcoming). On his life and works, see also Antonopoulou (2007).

primarily affecting the ψυχή ("soul"): the puncturing effect of κατάνυξις thus functions to awaken the soul and guide it towards the path of repentance[21].

3. The Corpus

The selection of katanyktic texts from the Middle and Late Byzantine periods for this study was predicated upon the apogee of katanyktic literature, particularly the production of poetic katanyktic works, during these centuries[22]. All texts analyzed herein belong to the genre of Byzantine hymnography[23]. They comprise two kanones and a hymn in political verse, composed for utilization within primarily monastic contexts of individual or communal prayer[24].

The first text is an anonymous katanyktic kanon concerning the *Heavenly Ladder*, likely composed in the early twelfth century[25]. This hymn is dedicated to the so-called "holy condemned" (ἅγιοι κατάδικοι), the protagonists of the fifth chapter of Klimakos' *Ladder* (seventh century)[26]. In this chapter, dedicated entirely to penitence, Klimakos elaborates on a monastic foundation near Alexandria, Egypt, which included a designated penitential confinement, termed "Prison". The author provides a detailed narrative of the penitents' existence within this place, with particular emphasis on their corporeal mortifications. The kanon was intended to function as a "model of salvation" (v. 5) for its readership, predominantly monastic. Through the performance of this text, they sought to evoke tears and compunction by meditating upon the suffering and pain endured by the penitent sinners depicted in the *Ladder*[27].

The second kanon is a recently edited work by Neophytos Enkleistos[28]. Notably, this is not the sole katanyktic composition by Neophytos; within his catechetical treatise, *The Book of Fifty Chapters*, are found four additional

[21] On this point, see Cocola 2023 vol. 1, pp. 317-318.

[22] Giannouli 2013.

[23] Studies on Byzantine hymnography are numerous. For a general introduction, see Papaioannou 2021, Giannouli 2019 and D'Aiuto 2004.

[24] On Byzantine kanones, in addition to the bibliography cited in the previous footnote, see Frøyshov 2013.

[25] The only complete transcription and English translation of the text is that of Martin 1954, pp. 128-145. However, a proper critical edition is still lacking. See also the studies and transcriptions by Barnea 1963 and Avner 1984.

[26] The fifth chapter of the *Ladder* has been deeply analysed by Perrone 2019. As noted by Rigo 2008, p. 273, the katanyktic kanon is found added to the *Ladder* in a limited number of manuscripts, mostly from the post-Byzantine era. Despite this, it enjoyed some circulation and was also translated into Slavonic during the fourteenth century.

[27] I presented the text in depth, analyzing its content and performance contexts in my recent study: Cocola 2023, pp. 78-81.

[28] This figure has been previously presented. See *supra* footnote 18.

katanyktic prayers in verse, which Neophytos prescribes for monastic recitation and chanting to cultivate κατάνυξις[29]. The kanon under analysis is a first-person supplication addressed to Christ, imploring salvation from eternal condemnation through the bestowal of repentance and compunction[30].

The author of the third and final text is Germanos II, patriarch of Constantinople (1223-1240)[31]. He authored a poem comprising seventy-one political verses, organized into six strophes. Each strophe concludes with the recurring refrain, «Eyes, let flow bloody springs of tears», underscoring the significance of tears of compunction within the composition[32]. In the poem, the penitent first-person voice exhorts the soul to engage in repentance, expressing regret and contrition, particularly through the tangible act of weeping. Within each strophe, commencing with the second, the first-person narrator illustrates to the soul instances of penitent sinners drawn from the Scriptures and, in one instance, from pagan mythology[33].

4. Physical Transformation of the Repentant Sinner

Within katanyktic poetry, the principal focus of the penitent first-person voice (hereafter 'katanyktic I')[34] is predominantly directed towards the effects of sin and subsequent repentance upon its interiority. The soul, heart, and mind of the 'I' constitute the unequivocal protagonists of these texts[35]. Nevertheless, in

[29] In chapter 19 we find a katanyktic poem in anapestic verses (inc. Οἴμοι, οἴμοι, βοήθησον, Κύριε), which is followed by a short katanyktic poem in political verses (Ἐμέν' οὐ πρέπει νὰ λαλῶ οὐδὲ νὰ συντυχαίνω). In chapter 22, Neophytos presents two poems in political verses on the theme of the Fall of Adam (Τοῦ παραδείσου τὸ φυτὸν, and Παράδεισε τερπνότατε, ἡ χώρα τῶν δικαίων). These texts have been extensively studied by me in Cocola 2023 vol. 1, pp. 86-94. See also Giannouli 2013, pp. 94-97. *The Book of Fifty Chapters* has been edited by Sotiroudes 1996, pp. 279-289.

[30] I have presented the content in detail in Cocola 2023 vol. 1, pp. 93-94.

[31] On the figure of Germanos, see Talbot 1991, p. 847 and Kubina 2021. His literary works have been listed in Tessari, Migliorini 2012, p. 166, who also edited the katanyktic poem here analyzed.

[32] Ῥεῖτε δακρύων, ὀφθαλμοί, κρονοὺς ἡματωμένους. For the hymnographic usage of the text, see Tessari, Migliorini 2012, p. 159-161.

[33] The models of repentance that the 'I' presents to his soul are: Adam, Joseph, David and the Heliades. I analyzed the text in Cocola 2023 vol. 1, pp. 101-105.

[34] I coined this expression to denote the first-person voice in katanyktic poems in my doctoral thesis – see Cocola 2023 vol. 1, pp. 165-178. The 'katanyktic I' exhibits distinct characteristics that differentiate it from the first-person voice in other Byzantine texts, such as εἰς ἑαυτόν poems. Specifically, this 'I' is non-autobiographical, neither coinciding with the text's author nor with specific historical figures. It functions as a communal mouthpiece, allowing any Byzantine faithful to identify with it, akin to the first-person voice in the Psalter – for further discussion, see also Cocola 2022, pp. 177-179. Given that the 'katanyktic I' is exclusively masculine in the texts analyzed herein, I will also refer to it in masculine terms.

[35] See Cocola 2023 vol. 1, esp. pp. 313-326.

certain instances, the 'katanyktic I' also delineates the corporeal consequences of sin and/or compunction.

In the ensuing analysis, examples have been categorized into specific sections pertaining to: the head and chest of the penitent, his eyes, general somatic effects, and self-inflicted corporal mortifications.

4.1. Head and Chest

The 'katanyktic I' frequently references his posture, which resonates with that of biblical penitents and, more broadly, with the comportment associated with repentance and contrition[36]. His head is consistently directed towards the earth: cognizant of his transgressions, he abstains from elevating his gaze towards the heaven[37]. In the twelfth-century katanyktic kanon on the *Heavenly Ladder*, for instance, the penitent sinners utilize the conventional biblical metaphor of sin as an oppressive weight, compelling them to prostrate themselves and precluding any upright stance or upward gaze (vv. 71-75)[38]. This condition even likens them to beasts[39]:

Τὰ νῦν οἵῳ βάρει
τῶν πταισμάτων δεινῶς πιεζόμεθα·
ὑφ᾽ οὗ κάτω νεύειν
καὶ πρὸς τὴν γῆν ὥσπερ τὰ κτήνη
ἀποβλέπειν ἀεὶ βιαζόμεθα.

Now what a great burden of sins
we are terribly burdened with!
That is why we are always forced
to be bowed down
and look at the ground like beasts.

Within the aforementioned kanon, verses 61-64, the penitents depict themselves in the act of shacking and striking their heads, while crying and mourning incessantly:

[36] Maguire 1977 devoted a very detailed study to the posture and gestures of sorrow in Middle Byzantine art. There, the author also mentions the emotions of repentance and regret.

[37] For examples, see Cocola 2023 vol. 1, p. 209 n. 51.

[38] For an in-depth study of the metaphor of sin as a burden in the Bible, see Lam 2016, pp. 16-86. I analyzed this metaphor in katanyktic poetry in my recent work: Cocola 2023 vol. 1, pp. 211-216.

[39] See Cocola 2023 vol. 1, p. 2017 n. 42, on the *topos* of the penitent sinner as a beast.

Ῥαθυμίᾳ δουλεύσαντες,
στάσεως τῆς κρείττονος ἀπερρίφημεν·
διὸ στένειν οὐ παυσόμεθα,
κεφαλὰς κινοῦντες καὶ κοπτόμενοι.

Subjected to the slavery of indolence,
we have been banished from the most excellent condition:
therefore, we will not cease to groan,
moving and striking our heads.

These gestures are conventionally employed to denote affective states within the domains of repentance and compunction[40]. In katanyktic poetry, such actions frequently resonate with the biblical paradigm established by the publican in the Gospel of Luke[41]. One of the preparatory Sundays for the Lenten period (the "Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee"), in the Byzantine liturgical calendar, was entirely dedicated to this Gospel passage. This Sunday marked the beginning of the use of the book called *Triodion Katanyktikon*, a compendium of katanyktic hymns employed in Lenten celebrations to evoke in the faithful sentiments of repentance and contrition[42]. Consequently, it is unsurprising that the 'katanyktic I' often alludes to the publican and his contrite demeanor, characterized by a lowered head and a gaze fixed upon the earth, precluded from elevating his eyes towards heaven due to a sense of shame for his transgressions[43].

The postures described in the aforementioned passages can also be found in contemporary iconography. Manuscript Vat. gr. 1754 [Diktyon: 68383], which transmits the texts of John Klimakos' *Heavenly Ladder* and is dated to the

[40] Note that these acts also indicate sorrow and mourning in Greek funerary rituals and literature, as shown by Alexiou 2002, pp. 55-56, 68-69, and Zanusso 2019, pp. 105-131. For other examples of these gestures in katanyktic poems, see Cocola 2023 vol. 1, pp. 262-263.

[41] The parable of the publican and the Pharisee is narrated by Jesus in Lk 18:9-14. Within the narrative, Christ contrasts the pompous and arrogant attitude of the Pharisee, who believes himself to be perfect and sinless, with the subdued compunction and repentance of the publican, who, aware of his sins, repents before God.

[42] See Krueger 2014, p. 152 and 169. In the same publication, Krueger also dwells with the presence of the figure of the publican in early katanyktic hymnography (see pp. 195-196, 210-211). For information on the *Triodion*, see Getcha 2012, pp. 35-39, 141-232. Quinlan 1997 and 2004 has dedicated several studies to the manuscript transmission and editorial challenges associated with this liturgical book.

[43] Very often, the 'katanyktic I' does not merely mention the figure of the publican as an example to follow, but identifies perfectly with it, becoming its alter-ego. On this specific point and, more generally, on the role of biblical characters within katanyktic poetry, see Cocola 2021, pp. 342-344, and Cocola 2023 vol. 1, pp. 327-384.

twelfth century, features a wealth of such illustrations[44]. This codex is particularly pertinent to this study, as it contains the katanyktic kanon concerning the *Ladder* and includes miniatures that faithfully represent the poem's verses[45]. Folios 7v and 8v present depictions corresponding to the verses previously discussed[46].

4.2. Eyes

Katanyktic poetry frequently centers upon the eyes of the penitent sinner. Considering the paramount significance of tears within this literary genre, this emphasis is unsurprising[47]. Byzantine ascetical treatises, which address repentance and its attendant manifestations, consistently underscore the necessity of genuine tears of remorse as a prerequisite for compunction[48]. A recurrent *topos* in katanyktic poems portrays the impenitent sinner with dry and arid eyes[49]. He beseeches divine intervention to instigate κατάνυξις within his hearts and to facilitate the profusion of tears from his eyes. The incipit of the katanyktic poem by Germanos II (thirteenth century) elaborates upon this literary motif with considerable sophistication:

Ὁ πάλαι βλύσας ὕδατα πέτρας ἐξ ἀκροτόμου
καὶ τῆς Μερρᾶς μεταβαλὼν Ἑβραίοις τὴν πικρίαν,
κοσμοποιέ, τερατουργέ, θεέ μου, πλαστουργέ μου,
τῶν ἀκροτάτων ἐφετῶν ἀκρότης ὑπερτέρα,
δακρύων δεῖξόν μοι πηγὰς τὰ κύκλα τῶν ὀμμάτων,
τὴν κεφαλήν μου πλήρωσον ὑδάτων καθαρσίων
καὶ ποίησον τὰ βλέφαρα νεφέλας ἀειρρόους·
ὁ μολυσμὸς γὰρ τῶν φρενῶν καὶ τῆς ψυχῆς ὁ ῥύπος
ὑσσώπου δεῖται, δέσποτα, τῆς σῆς φιλανθρωπίας

[44] This manuscript is described by Canart 1970, pp. 47-51.

[45] Martin 1954 devoted his entire study on the miniatures that accompany the text of the *Ladder* and that of the katanyktic kanon.

[46] The two miniatures are available at the following link: https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.gr.1754.

[47] On the *topos* of tears in katanyktic poetry, see Cocola 2023 vol. 1, pp. 255-285.

[48] Hunt 2004, p. XI and Hinterberger 2006, pp. 33-34. I also add the study by Müller 2000, pp. 136-39 and 162-165, on the connection between mourning and κατάνυξις in Byzantine monastic literature.

[49] See, for instance, the kanon on the *Heavenly Ladder*, vv. 133-137, with reference to John 4:14: Ἀλλομένου καὶ ζῶντος / οἱ τὸ πρὶν πεπλησμένοι / εἰς κόρον ὕδατος, / ἐκείνου ξηρανθέντος / ἡμῶν τῇ ῥαθυμίᾳ. "Once we were filled with / the springing and living water / till satiety / but it has dried up / by our negligence." See also the katanyktic kanon by Neophytos Enkleistos, vv. 77-78: τὰ δάκρυα ἐψύγησαν τῶν ὀμμάτων/ἐμοῦ. "The tears of my eyes have dried up."

κἀκ τῆς πηγῆς τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν καρδιακῶν ὑδάτων.
Ῥεῖτε δακρύων, ὀφθαλμοί, κρουνοὺς ἡματωμένους.

You, who once drew water from a very hard stone
and changed the bitterness of Mara for the Jews,
Creator of the world, worker of miracles, my God, my creator,
You who are the highest among the highest desires,
let the sockets of my eyes become sources of tears,
fill my head with purifying waters
and turn my eyelids into ever-raining clouds.
For the defilement of my mind and the sordidness of my soul
need the hyssop of Your mercy, Lord,
and the waters of the heart that gush forth from the fountain of the eyes.
Eyes, let flow bloody springs of tears!

To substantiate his petition, the sinner invokes two biblical episodes involving Moses, thereby appealing to both the Lord's remembrance and the reader's cognizance. Firstly, he references the event wherein Moses miraculously procured water from the arid landscape (cfr. Exod 17:6, Deut 8:15, Ps 113:8). Subsequently, he recalls Moses' miracoulous transformation of the bitter, and hence, undrinkable waters of Mara's spring into potable liquid (Exod 15:23). The 'katanyktic I' draws a parallel between his own condition and the desert's stones, owing to the obduracy of his heart and the aridity of his eyes, and also between his soul and the waters of Mara, due to its bitterness stemming from sin's corruption. Consequently, he entreats God to replicate these miracles, causing a similar effluence of tears from his eyes and inundating his cranium with purifying waters to expunge his defilement (vv. 5-6). These verses also resonate with another biblical passage, Jer 8:23, wherein the prophet articulates a sorrowful lament concerning a desert famine[50]. The 'I' provides a detailed elaboration of his supplication, eschewing generic references to the eyes and instead meticulously delineating each constituent part. The ocular sockets are to become sources of tears (v. 5), and the eyelids, nimbus-like formations (v. 7). In verses 7-11, the 'I' further develops his plea for God to bestow cleansing tears, alluding to Ps 50: the stain of sin that has sullied the soul and mind requires the hyssop of divine mercy (Ps 50:9) and tears gushing from the fountains of the eyes[51]. Of particular relevance to this study is verse 11, which functions as

[50] τίς δώσει κεφαλῇ μου ὕδωρ καὶ ὀφθαλμοῖς μου πηγὴν δακρύων. "Oh, that my head were a spring of water and my eyes a fountain of tears!"

[51] ῥαντιεῖς με ὑσσώπῳ, καὶ καθαρισθήσομαι·πλυνεῖς με, καὶ ὑπὲρ χιόνα λευκανθήσομαι. "You will sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed; you will wash me, and I shall wither than snow."

a refrain, concluding each strophe ("Eyes, let flow bloody springs of tears!"). Here, the 'I' implores his eyes to emit "springs" of tears. This phraseology also echoes Jer 8:23, mirroring verses 5 and 6. The imagery of tears, both copious like a torrent and sanguineous, serves to vividly depict the desired compunction. The reference to blood likely alludes to the fact that the eyes, after much weeping, become so red that they appear to be bleeding[52].

4.3. Body and Corporal Punishments

The sinner, having experienced the piercing sensation of compunction, adopts a posture of supplication, kneeling and prostrating themselves before God[53]. In the opening verses of Neophytos Enkleistos' poem (twelfth-thirteenth century), the 'katanyktic I' exhorts his soul to engage in tears and prostration before Christ, mirroring his own corporeal actions, as if the soul possessed independent limbs for genuflection[54]: «Come, soul, / let us weep with much compunction, / come, let us prostrate ourselves before Christ»[55].

Within katanyktic poetry, the penitent is typically depicted as exhibiting physical debility. Their somatic state is characterized by profound fragility and enervation, attributable to both the metaphorical malady of sin and the implemented penitential practices. Indeed, the experience of compunction is invariably coupled with the acknowledgment of personal transgressions, thereby instigating within the penitent's soul a desire to manifest outwardly to the divine the attainment of κατάνυξις and repentance. For instance, in the katanyktic kanon concerning the *Heavenly Ladder* (twelfth century), the sinners perceive themselves as unworthy of the human condition due to the magnitude of their transgressions (vv. 97-103). Consequently, they resolve to impose self-punishment by abstaining from human sustenance and instead subsisting on ashes, a quintessential symbol of repentance, and ingesting their own tears:

> Ἀνάξιοι τῆς τρυφῆς
> τῆς τοῦ κυρίου γενόμενοι

[52] The editors of the text also believe that behind this image is the ancient and medieval theory that tears are a secretion of blood and pneuma. See Tessari, Migliorini 2012, p. 174 with the bibliography cited there.

[53] Cfr. the katanyktic kanon by Neophytos Enkleistos (twelfth-thirteenth c.), v. 39: νυνὶ προσπίπτω σοι. "I now prostrate myself before You (i.e. Christ)", and vv. 341-342: Συντετριμμένῃ τῇ ψυχῇ / καὶ καρδίᾳ ταπεινῇ προσπίπτομέν σοι. "With a broken soul / and with a wretched heart we prostrate ourselves before You (i.e. Christ)."

[54] On this frequent rhetorical figure, see Cocola 2023 vol. 1, p. 280.

[55] Vv. 1-3: Δεῦρο, ψυχή,/κλαύσωμεν ἐν κατανύξει πολλῇ,/δεῦρο Χριστῷ προσπέσωμεν.

δι᾽ ἡδονὴν βλαβεράν,
τὸ πόμα τοῖς δάκρυσι
κιρνῶμεν οἱ δείλαιοι,
καὶ σποδὸν ὡς ἄρτον
ἐπαξίως νῦν σιτούμεθα.

Having become unworthy
of the Lord's delight
because of our baleful pleasures,
we, unfortunate as we are, mix
drink with tears
and now with good reason eat
ashes as bread.

The aforementioned reference demonstrably alludes to Psalm 101:10, a psalm of lamentation, wherein the anguished supplication of an afflicted and defiant individual to God is articulated[56]. Within the same kanon, immediately following the verses previously cited, the penitent sinners also delineate the somatic consequences of protracted weeping and enforced abstinence (vv. 104-110). They meticulously detail their desiccated and dehydrated skin – a potsherd-like skin (ὄστρακον) – which adheres to their bones:

Ἰσχὺς ἡ πᾶσα ἡμῶν
ὡς ὄστρακον ἀπεξήραται,
καὶ τὰ ὀστᾶ τῇ σαρκὶ
εἰς τέλος κεκόλληται·
ἀπὸ τοῦ βαρύτατα
καὶ ἐκ βάθους στένειν
καὶ πενθεῖν τὰ παραπτώματα.

All our strength
dried up like a shard,
and our bones have finally
clung to the flesh
from the very heavy
and deep groaning
and from grieving over errors.

[56] ὅτι σποδὸν ὡσεὶ ἄρτον ἔφαγον καὶ τὸ πόμα μου μετὰ κλαυθμοῦ ἐκίρνων. "Because I ate ashes like bread / and would mix my drink with weeping."

The author of this anonymous kanon, once more, draws upon the vast repository of the psalms to depict the tribulations of penitents[57].

The katanyktic kanon concerning the *Heavenly Ladder* is a text notably replete with allusions to corporeal mortifications inflicted by penitents upon themselves. This is attributable to its utilization within monastic settings, as previously mentioned, where self-punitive penitential practices were prevalent[58]. In verses 125-132, to induce compunction, or "fervor of the heart", the penitent sinners subject themselves to frigid conditions and tremble, consumed by glacial cold:

Τῆς τοῦ πνεύματος θέρμης
ἑαυτοὺς ἀβουλίᾳ
νοὸς στερήσαντες,
ἐκτήξωμεν τὰς σάρκας
τῷ κρύει καὶ παγετῷ,
ἀεὶ ταλαιπωρούμενοι.
Εἴ πως τὴν ζέσιν αὖθις
εὕρωμεν τῆς καρδίας.

Since we have deprived ourselves
of the fervor of the Spirit
through thoughtlessness of mind,
let us consume our flesh
in cold and ice,
while suffering continuously:
perhaps in this way we can find
the fervor of the heart again.

Given that the sinners, through their transgressions, have forfeited the internal "warmth" of heart and soul – θέρμης (v. 125) and ζέσιν (v. 131), both belonging to the semantic domain of heat – their self-imposed penance manifests as exposure to frigidity. The internal chill mirrors the corporeal coldness they endure.

[57] Cfr. Ps 21:16 (ἐξηράνθη ὡς ὄστρακον ἡ ἰσχύς μου. "My strength was dried up like a potsherd") and Ps 101:6 (ἀπὸ φωνῆς τοῦ στεναγμοῦ μου ἐκολλήθη τὸ ὀστοῦν μου τῇ σαρκί μου. "Due to the sound of my groaning, my bone clung to my flesh").

[58] See the recent volume on Byzantine monasticism edited by Alice-Mary Talbot 2025, especially pp. 1-15, and the bibliography cited there. I also refer to the dated, but still valid, study by Talbot 1987.

5. Concluding remarks

Within katanyktic poetry, the penitent first-person voice also delineates the somatic effects of compunction and repentance. The penitents' heads are consistently oriented towards the earth, abstaining from elevating their gaze towards the celestial realm, thereby emulating the exemplary biblical penitents, and their bodies are engaged in perpetual genuflection. Particular emphasis is placed upon the penitents' eyes, which are desiccated by sin but transformed into perpetual sources of tears by κατάνυξις. This analysis has underscored the pivotal role of the Scriptures, particularly the Psalter, in providing imagery and linguistic constructs for the representation of the compunction-afflicted body within katanyktic poems. Indeed, since the nascent centuries of Christianity, believers have drawn upon biblical texts for vocabulary, *topoi*, and literary motifs to articulate their affective states, encompassing sorrow, compunction, repentance, and joy[59].

Unlike purely literary compositions, katanyktic poems were intended for performative enactment: the recitation of these poetic prayers aimed to evoke genuine compunction within the souls and bodies of their users. Seldom does language so directly translate into action as in the case of katanyktic poetry. There, words become emotion.

Abbreviations

BHG = *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca*
CPG = *Clavis Patrum Graecorum*
NETS = *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*
PG = *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series graeca*

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[59] On the influence of the psalms on Byzantine hymnography, see D'Aiuto 2004, pp. 270-271, Harvey 2017, pp. 199-218 and Wickes 2019. See also the forthcoming volume on the poetical value of the psalms in Byzantium and their presence in Byzantine poetry edited by Bernard et al.

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