

**Communication failure and civil war in
Virgil's *Aeneid*, Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile*
and Statius' *Thebaid***

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Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

August 2022

Abstract

This thesis explores the presence and significance of scenes of communication failure in three Latin epics. It argues for a connection between these episodes based on the poems' shared interest in the experience of civil war, which, as the first chapter establishes, results from the recurrence of civil war throughout the first centuries BCE and CE. Although speech and rhetoric in Latin epic have been examined from a variety of perspectives, there has been no sustained analysis of the connections between the wide range of scenes in which communication seems ineffective.

In the introductory chapter, I summarise the significance of civil war in ancient Rome, the important role of communication in Latin epic, and the ways in which my three texts can be considered to be civil war poems. The following three chapters each contain an analysis of communication failure in one of my three epics, with a particular focus in each on the outbreak of war, the role of embassies and assemblies, the way that war disrupts communication between friends and relatives, and the ineffectiveness of attempts to use communication to create peace between warring parties. The focus throughout is on verbal and visual communication between characters who are engaged in the business of civil war, rather than on the tools which the poets use to communicate with their audiences. Each text is treated separately in order to explore how they emphasise different aspects of communication failure.

The final chapter draws out the similarities between these three texts, to offer overall conclusions about the role that communication failure plays in Latin epic. Key themes which emerge from this analysis include the marginalisation of certain speakers on the basis of their gender, age or opposition to war; the significance of appeals to family status and their failure in a world in which civil conflict is closely tied to the breakdown of the family; the impossibility of achieving reconciliation and ending cycles of civil conflict; and the way in which verbal communication is frequently supplanted by violence.

Acknowledgements

I feel I should begin by acknowledging, although certainly not thanking, the coronavirus pandemic which began in December 2019 and which has left its mark on all but the first 18 months of my time as a doctoral researcher. The pandemic brought stressful caring responsibilities, limited my access to resources, and at various points replaced the joy and excitement I felt in the initial stages of my PhD – as part of a thriving postgraduate community, and as someone who enjoyed sharing my ideas at in-person conferences and other research events – with a sense of isolation and frequent self-questioning and uncertainties. If not for this pandemic, I might have written a very different thesis; nevertheless, I am proud of the work which I have produced in these circumstances.

There is no doubt in my mind that I could not have completed this thesis without the enduring support and guidance of my supervisors, Helen Lovatt and Henriette van der Blom. Their comments, questions, and insights into Latin literature and Roman society have greatly improved my analysis; they have been patient and understanding of my personal circumstances and idiosyncratic work habits, and always enthusiastic about my research (even when my own enthusiasm was lacking); and I truly feel that they have both gone above and beyond what anyone could reasonably expect of their PhD supervisors. I am sincerely grateful for all that they have done for me over the last four years. I would like to thank my examiners, Lynn Fotheringham and Elena Giusti, for the care and attention which they displayed in reading my work, for their frank appraisal of its strengths and areas for possible improvement, and for our engaging and enjoyable discussion during my viva. I must also express my deepest gratitude to Ingo Gildenhard, John Henderson and Rosanna Omitowoju, who first instilled in me a love of Latin literature and the skills to analyse it: I would not be half the scholar I am today without the education, encouragement and support I received from each of them. If not for the four-year undergraduate Classics course at the University of Cambridge, which enabled me to study Latin and Ancient Greek *ab initio* despite no previous experience of classical subjects, I would never have encountered the area of study which has dominated my adult life so far, and which I expect to bring me more joy as I take the next steps in my career.

This research project would not have been possible without a studentship from the (AHRC-funded) Midlands3Cities Doctoral Training Partnership, which also funded my attendance at a number of conferences and workshops that facilitated my development as a scholar and made the process of writing this PhD more interesting and enjoyable. I have made use of the Hallward Library of the University of Nottingham, the Cambridge University Library, the British Library,

the library of Royal Holloway and the Combined Library of the Institute of Classical Studies and the Hellenic and Roman Societies: I am grateful to the staff working in each of these institutions. My particular thanks go to the Combined Classics Library bursary scheme, which enabled me to consult the collections in the final months of my thesis after my regular funding period had ended. I would also like to thank the teams behind Evernote and Zotero, two digital tools which have proven invaluable over the course of this project.

I have moved across cities and institutions several times over the course of my academic career, and I am fortunate enough to have made too many friends and colleagues in academia to name here. However, I must give my thanks to the strong PhD (and post-PhD) community in the Department of Classics and Archaeology at Nottingham, and particularly to Becky Batty, Thea Lawrence, Matt Myers, Jason Porter, Charlotte Round, Mike Welbourn and Ben White. I consider it a real source of regret that my departure from Nottingham in the first weeks of the pandemic deprived me of an additional two and a half years of their regular company. I would also like to thank my mother, Debbie, who taught me the value of education and who has been a constant source of support across my entire academic career. If not for her, I could never have attended university in the first place, let alone made it as far as a doctorate; and without her encouragement, I would have given up on my PhD a long time ago.

The last few years have been a difficult time to be a queer person of colour in the UK, in academia and perhaps particularly in a discipline like Classics. When I first conceived of this project in 2017, I was driven by an awareness of the conflicts and divisions in British (and global) society which seemed to make communication impossible between the 'opposite sides' of various issues. Such divisions have worsened considerably in the last five years, and at several points I have found it impossible to think about Latin literature while the world seemed to be falling apart around me. I have tried, over the course of my PhD, to push for equality, inclusion and antiracist practices in my own university and beyond, and I am immensely grateful to all the friends and accomplices who have helped me in this endeavour. In particular, working alongside the other members of the Sportula Europe team has been a privilege and a pleasure which I would not have had if not for this PhD. I have especially come to appreciate the importance of having a community of BIPOC classicists, former classicists and scholars in adjacent fields of study who have understood, educated, uplifted and restored me at various points in my journey. As such, I would like to end by thanking Sam Agbamu, Qasim Alli, Lylaah Bhalerao, Hardeep Dhindsa, Bet Hucks, Ashley Lance, Krishnan Ram-Prasad, Molly Richards and Mathura Umachandran. To adapt a line from my favourite ancient poet: *uirtutem ex illis didici, uerumque laborem*.

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Chapter 1: Civil war and communication

Civil war in the Roman world

During his description of the battle of Pharsalus, the decisive engagement in the civil war between Julius Caesar and Pompey the Great, the poet Lucan shies away from his duties as narrator and threatens to fall silent:

hanc fuge, mens, partem belli tenebrisque relinque,
nullaque tantorum discat me uate malorum,
quam multum bellis liceat ciuilibus, aetas.
a potius pereant lacrimae pereantque querellae:
quidquid in hac acie gessisti, Roma, tacebo. BC7.552-556

Flee from here, my mind, and abandon this portion of the war to the shadows, and let no generation learn from me, the prophet-poet, of evils so immense that they are permitted in civil wars. Oh, rather let my tears and lamentations disappear: whatever you did in this battle, Rome, I will not speak it.¹

Lucan does not end his epic here, but he does pass over much of the battle and, with the exception of Domitius, refuses to commemorate or mourn the individual dead.² Consequently, he deprives his characters of the immortalisation typically associated with epic.³ Civil war, Lucan suggests, is so unspeakable – such an act of *nefas* – that it prevents him from achieving his goals as an epic poet.⁴ As Christine Walde observes: “Lucan reduced to absurdity all strategies of commemoration, thereby even calling into question his own position as harbinger of a negative Roman history.”⁵ The chaos and destruction which civil war inflicts on the community surpasses the limits of Lucan’s communicative powers.

This thesis analyses the relationship between civil war and communication failure, as explored and presented in the Latin epics of Virgil, Lucan and Statius. In

¹ Quotations of my three key texts are taken from Mynors (1969), Housman ([1926] 1927) and Hill ([1983] 1996). When quoting ancient material, I have occasionally adjusted the typography to avoid printing the lunate sigma or lowercase Latin *v*, and in cases where my quotation of a passage does not accord with the end of a sentence, to ensure consistency of style. All translations are my own.

² Roche (2021a) 122-124 notes how little space Lucan devotes to this climactic battle. See Johnson (1987) 98-100 and Anzinger (2007) 153-154 on Lucan’s self-silencing at Pharsalus.

³ Gorman (2001) 267-268, 271-272; Narducci (2002) 75-76. Asso (2010) 11-13 writes that Lucan’s focus on civil war and consistent criticism of imperial power challenges the notion of epic as a genre of celebration and commemoration.

⁴ Masters (1992) chapter 1 explores *nefas* in Lucan; Ganiban (2007) 33-43 summarises its importance in the *Thebaid* and more broadly.

⁵ Walde (2011) 301.

this introductory chapter, I will first indicate the importance of civil war during the late Republic and early Principate and argue for a close connection between civil war and communication failure. I will then provide a summary of scholarship connected to communication in ancient epic, before establishing the particular relevance of civil war to my chosen Latin texts. Finally, I will outline the content of subsequent chapters in this thesis.

Civil wars were a frequent occurrence in the Roman world during the first century BCE: the Social War between Rome and its Italian allies (91 to 88 BCE); two wars between the factions of Sulla and Marius (88 to 87 and 82 to 81 BCE); the conflict between Caesar and Pompey (49 to 45 BCE) and the subsequent battles between Caesar's murderers and his successors; and the war between Octavian and Marcus Antonius (32 to 30 BCE) which led to the establishment of the Julio-Claudian imperial dynasty. Communicative acts shaped the conduct and outcome of such wars: for instance, Federico Santangelo has explored the impact of rumours on military morale during the early stages of Caesar's civil war, "in a context in which the circulation of information plays a crucial role and being able to display and perform one's strength was almost as important as actually having it";⁶ while Josiah Osgood has argued that Caesar's *Commentarii de Bello Ciuili* might have been designed to persuade individuals or communities to join or remain on his side, whether or not the text was published early enough to have this effect.⁷ Henning Börm emphasises the importance of communication in every stage of Roman civil wars: "All three aspects – escalation, justification and reintegration – required communicative acts."⁸ Almost a century after Octavian's victory at Actium, the assassination of Nero in 68 CE saw the resurgence of civil war in a bloody contest for imperial power. It is therefore unsurprising that civil conflict appears prominently in many texts from the first centuries BCE and CE. As Peter Toohey writes (in a discussion of Statius' *Thebaid*): "Civil conflict was as much a persistent theme of Roman literature as it was a real-life event."⁹ Understanding civil war and its consequences is fundamental to any understanding of Roman society and literature during the late Republic and early Principate; and since Roman concepts of civil war were central to the construction of later European civil war discourse,¹⁰ investigations into Latin civil war epic can also have wider significance for later literature.

⁶ Santangelo (2016) 137.

⁷ Osgood (2019); Osgood notes that combatants switch sides much more frequently in internal than in external conflicts.

⁸ Börm (2016) 20.

⁹ Toohey (2010) 45.

¹⁰ As Armitage ([2017] 2018) argues.

As early as Thucydides (3.82.3-4), we find an explicit connection between civil conflict and linguistic disarray: in a passage about στάσις (which can include factionalism, revolutions, sedition and other types of civic strife),¹¹ the historian argues that language is stripped of its meaning in times of discord, as conventional moral values are discarded and previously blameworthy actions are praised. Debra Hershkowitz suggests that Thucydides' prose style in this passage enacts the linguistic instability that he is describing: this shows how writing about civil war offers a space to explore issues around literary communication.¹² William Batstone, in an analysis primarily focused on Sallust, takes up this passage to argue that both historians are aware of the inherent instability of language: civil discord does not hinder communication, so much as it sees the exploitation of this linguistic instability for the benefit of some citizens at the expense of others.¹³ In Sallust's history of the Catilinarian conspiracy, Cato the Younger argues that words have lost much of their meaning: *iam pridem equidem nos uera uocabula rerum amisimus* ('for some time now, we have lacked the true words for things', Sall. *Cat.* 52.11).¹⁴ Hannah Cornwell writes of this passage that "the reorientation of such words around new concepts is, in itself, a cause of social disorder" in Sallust's estimation.¹⁵ In the same speech, Sallust's Cato indicates Caesar's command over language but suggests that Caesar cannot be trusted (Sall. *Cat.* 52.13, 16): this might imply that men who are at ease with this linguistic chaos are similarly adept at manipulating civil strife. Both Thucydides and Sallust indicate that discord and disorder within a state are accompanied by the disruption of ordinary language and speech: this thesis will explore how this disruption is depicted in Latin epic.

In the seventh poem of Horace's *Epodes*, which focuses on the memory of recent civil conflict and the threat of its resurgence,¹⁶ the breakdown of communication in times of civil war manifests as silence. Horace decries the

¹¹ Hornblower (1991) 477-487 translates στάσις as "revolution" in this passage, while Lattimore (1998) 168-170 renders it as "civil war". Lange and Vervaet (2019) consistently pair *stasis* with civil war and write (p. 1): "while there may at times be a difference in scale, *stasis* and *bellum civile* were at their core manifestations of the same phenomenon".

¹² Hershkowitz (1998) 205-206; Hershkowitz draws a particular connection between this passage and Lucan's poetic style, as does Martindale (1976) 47-48.

¹³ Batstone (2010) 46-50. See also Kennedy (1992) 34-36 on the connections between linguistic and social instability in the late Republic, which necessitated the redefinition of key terms during the Augustan period as part of the restoration of political stability.

¹⁴ Ramsey (1984) 208 notes the parallel with Thuc. 3.82.4.

¹⁵ Cornwell (2017) 49; see pp. 73-76 for a more detailed analysis of Sallust's presentation of linguistic disorder during civil war.

¹⁶ See Watson (2003) 266-286 for a close reading of this poem.

shedding of Roman blood in service to self-destruction, rather than imperial expansion, and locates the cause of this internal conflict in the city's foundation:

furorne caecus, an rapit uis acrior,
an culpa? responsum date!
tacent et albus ora pallor inficit
mentesque percussae stupent.
sic est: acerba fata Romanos agunt
scelusque fraternae necis,
ut immerentis fluxit in terram Remi
sacer nepotibus cruor.

Epod. 7.13-20

Does blind rage, or a harsher force seize you, or guilt? Give an answer!
They are silent, and white paleness stains their faces and their
battered minds are stunned. It's like this: bitter fate compels the
Roman people, and the crime of a brother's murder, when the blood
of blameless Remus, cursed to his descendants, flowed into the earth.

By connecting recent conflicts to Romulus' fratricidal murder of Remus, Horace suggests that civil violence is at the root and heart of Roman society past and present. This poem points to the difficulty of explaining civil war: while Horace understands its true nature,¹⁷ and therefore knows to avoid it, other participants of civil war cannot tell him why they are fighting. Horace presents the Roman people as more irrational than lions and wolves who at least know not to attack their own kind, and as humans slip under the influence of the *furor caecus* which pushes them into civil war, they also lose their capacity for speech.¹⁸ In foregrounding the silence of the combatants, the physical markers of their emotions, and their loss of rationality and self-control, Horace hints at the difficulty of talking about civil war and of communication within a civil war context.

Civil wars in the ancient world have been studied from a range of different angles and perspectives. The continued vibrancy and variety of this area of scholarship is attested by a number of recent edited volumes focusing on civil war, including *Citizens of Discord: Rome and Its Civil Wars* (edited by Brian Breed, Cynthia Damon and Andreola Rossi, 2010); *Civil War in Ancient Greece and Rome* (edited by Henning Börm, Marco Mattheis and Johannes Wienand, 2016); *After 69 CE – Writing Civil War in Flavian Rome* (edited by Lauren Donovan Ginsberg and Darcy Krasne, 2018); and *The Historiography of Late Republican Civil War* (edited

¹⁷ Hor. *Epist.* 2.2.46-49 indicates that Horace served in the civil war and was discharged after the battle of Philippi.

¹⁸ Horace focuses on living combatants, but those who lose their lives in any war also lose their ability to communicate.

by Carsten Hjort Lange and Frederik Vervaet, 2019).¹⁹ Such volumes often take an expansive view of civil war, including acts of sedition or rebellion such as the Catilinarian conspiracy; but even the act of terming a conflict a civil war can be contentious and contested, as it both relies on and constructs partisan ideas about the scale or importance of a conflict, and the proximity or distance between the different parties involved.²⁰ The difficulty of determining the boundaries between civil and external wars might be intrinsic to civil war, since, as Matthew Roller indicates, an enemy in civil war is simultaneously included in and excluded from one's own community.²¹ This theme is clearly visible in Henriette van der Blom's analysis of Cicero's use of civil war terminology – such as *bellum ciuile*, *bellum domesticum* and *hostis* – to construct figures such as Catiline and Marcus Antonius as enemies of the state.²² Antonio Duplá Ansuategui has connected this kind of alienating language and rhetoric to the increased polarisation and heightened political violence of the Late Republic,²³ and notes the apparent impossibility of compromise and negotiation between the political opponents of this period.²⁴ Duplá Ansuategui points to the significance and impact of communication failure in the build-up to civil war by encouraging scholars to “approach the situation in the Late Roman Republic in terms of a failure of politics and political communication”.²⁵ Hannah Cornwell has charted the role of political rhetoric and discourse in establishing new ideas about war, peace, citizenship and enmity during civil disorder of the 50s and 40s BCE, and how this process changed political language itself; Cornwell writes that Caesar used these shifting definitions to justify his own actions in the civil war in his *Commentarii*.²⁶ Although epic poetry has an additional degree of separation from the kind of political discourse found in many prose accounts, these poems are influenced by contemporary debates about the nature of civil war and, considering their prominent role in the education of Roman elites, could influence them in turn.

¹⁹ An ongoing major international project on civil war in antiquity, entitled ‘Interner Krieg: Gesellschaft, soziale Ordnung und politischer Konflikt in der Antike’, also demonstrates the vitality of this area of research.

²⁰ Börm (2016) 16-19 discusses the difficulties of defining civil war. For an example of the blurring of distinctions between civil and foreign wars see Lange (2009), especially pp. 79-90, on Octavian's war against Marcus Antonius and Cleopatra. Armitage ([2017] 2018) 232-239 comments on the tensions around labelling various modern conflicts ‘civil war’, and the implications of this label.

²¹ Roller (1996), particularly p. 322 commenting on the terms *ciuuis* and *hostis*.

²² van der Blom (2019).

²³ Duplá Ansuategui (2017).

²⁴ Duplá Ansuategui (2017) 186-188.

²⁵ Duplá Ansuategui (2017) 196.

²⁶ Cornwell (2017) 48-55.

Attempts to move from civil war to peace will feature heavily in my analysis, as this is an aspect of war in which communication plays a particularly vital role. The difficulty of justifying civil (rather than external) war often makes it necessary for parties to place all the blame on each other, which is often a barrier to reconciliation;²⁷ while the narratives which are told about a war by the survivors and their descendants can hinder the reconstruction of a society torn apart by internal conflict.²⁸ Negotiation of peace is not without risks, as evidence from modern civil wars demonstrates: when mediation fails, it can cause an escalation of violence by strengthening the position of belligerent hardliners, reducing the flexibility of the negotiating parties' demands or granting legitimacy to independent groups waging war against the state.²⁹ The experience of civil war seems to have changed how Roman society conceived of peace and social concord. Kurt Raaflaub argues that peace only became a long-term goal in Rome during the Augustan period, with a focus on ending or preventing civil war in particular,³⁰ and observes that public worship of Pax only developed after the civil wars of the late republican and early imperial periods;³¹ Carlin Barton argues that civil war led Romans to understand Octavian's imposition of peace as preferable to the instability of civil violence, even if this required subjugation and submission to an emperor.³² Carsten Hjort Lange's analysis of civil war historiography identifies "two basic approaches towards civil war: one that focuses on the terrible, destructive and violent side of a war amongst citizens, and one that focuses on the positive outcome by emphasising peace";³³ this thesis will demonstrate that the first approach is particularly prevalent in my chosen texts.

Civil war can have a significant impact on a national psyche or the conventions of a literary genre, and Andrew McClellan has argued that the experience of successive civil wars may explain Latin epic's obsession with the abuse and mutilation of corpses.³⁴ Christine Walde identifies artistic production (particularly poetry) as a way to process the trauma associated with civil war and re-establish disrupted social norms, and writes: "Wars... and civil wars especially, suspend the entire system of norms and values, causing long-lasting psychic and

²⁷ Börm (2016) 19. The challenges of achieving reconciliation after civil war are explored in detail in Osgood (2015).

²⁸ Börm (2016) 15-17.

²⁹ Vüllers and Destradi (2013).

³⁰ Raaflaub (2007) 7.

³¹ Raaflaub (2007) 14-15.

³² Barton (2007) 251-252.

³³ Lange (2019) 191.

³⁴ McClellan (2019), especially pp. 16, 42-46, 62-66.

social disintegration. To heal this kind of rupture, increased cultural and social productivity from more than one generation is necessary.”³⁵ Just as civil wars are harder to justify, they are harder to retrospectively valorise than external wars, and harder to interpret as an ultimate force for good: historical epic, with its traditional commemorative functions, faced new challenges when required to describe civil wars.³⁶ Walde argues that, while the generation which lived through civil war might avoid discussing it directly to avoid reopening fresh wounds, subsequent generations can offer a more detached evaluation of how the lingering trauma of civil war has affected their society.³⁷ In this analysis, civil war epic becomes a significant tool for processing what happens in the real world, and for engaging in the difficult business of rebuilding a state which, once it has once fallen into civil conflict, is at risk of never healing its divisions.

The substantial body of Roman literature about civil war includes first-hand accounts, such as Caesar’s *Commentarii* and many of Cicero’s letters, as well as subsequent prose histories by authors such as Tacitus and (in Greek) Appian. Civil war has a prominent enough position in Latin epic to receive parody: in Petronius’ *Satyricon*, a prose text conventionally dated to the same approximate period as Lucan’s *Bellum Ciuile*,³⁸ the character Eumolpus presents three hundred lines of verse on the civil war between Caesar and Pompey.³⁹ As Eumolpus indicates, a poet of civil war must be familiar with a significant literary tradition on the subject:

ecce belli ciuilis ingens opus quisquis attigerit nisi plenus litteris, sub
onere labetur. *Satyr.* 118.6

Note that anyone who would accomplish a huge work of civil war will fall under its great weight, unless he is full of literature.

Texts which narrate or analyse Rome’s history of civil war are situated in dialogue with each other, with a shared vocabulary and similar metaphors and imagery. This tendency only strengthens the intertextuality which permeates Greek and Latin literature more broadly, and which some scholars have described as an

³⁵ Walde (2011) 284.

³⁶ Walde (2011) 286-290.

³⁷ Walde (2011) 290-295, discussing the differences between Virgil’s and Lucan’s approaches to the civil wars of the late Republic.

³⁸ Rose (1962).

³⁹ There is some debate over whether or not Eumolpus’ poem parodies the *Bellum Ciuile* specifically: for instance, George (1974) argues that Petronius is mocking a wider trend in contemporary literature of (perhaps mediocre) civil war poetry. For more analysis of this issue see Schmeling (2011) 451-452.

enactment of civil war on a textual level.⁴⁰ It also helped to create a sense of Roman history as a succession of civil wars, and of civil war as an inescapable feature of Roman identity.⁴¹ This significant intertextual tradition makes it important to explore how a theme such as communication failure recurs across civil war poems, rather than considering one text in isolation.

My analysis focuses on three poems with strong intertextual and thematic connections to each other: Virgil's *Aeneid*, Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile* and Statius' *Thebaid*. Under the strictest definitions, such as Stathis Kalyvas' classification of civil war as "*armed combat within the boundaries of a recognized sovereign entity between parties subject to a common authority at the outset of the hostilities*",⁴² only Lucan's poem focuses on an actual civil war; but as I will indicate, the conflicts of the *Aeneid* and *Thebaid* are also presented as akin to civil war in many respects, and show the influence of contemporary civil wars on their poets. Each of my chosen texts also has a focus on the extreme violence and intimacy between combatants which Kalyvas argues is characteristic of civil war.⁴³ These poems contain hundreds of instances of communication, many of which include significant elements of failure: this thesis will focus on detailed analysis of a few key episodes or characters from each epic, rather than attempting a comprehensive overview of every instance of possible communication failure in these poems.

Communication in Latin epic

Communication has long been considered fundamental to human nature and society. For Aristotle, speech sets humans apart from animals, and is the basis of morality and the creation of families and communities; Cicero similarly emphasises the importance of *ratio et oratio* ('reason and language') in distinguishing man from beast and providing the foundations of human society.⁴⁴ This idea continues to influence modern political discourse. For instance, Hannah Arendt argues that

⁴⁰ For instance, Sklenář (2011) 322 writes of the competing Virgilian and Ovidian models at the beginning of Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile*: "One might almost say that civil war is playing itself out on the literary allusion, as Lucan forces one Augustan poet to take up arms against another." Similarly, McNelis (2007) argues that Statius' *Thebaid* represents the tensions of civil war – both the reluctance and the desire to fight – in the way that it sets Hellenistic (Callimachean) models that delay the narrative against epic models that drive it forwards.

⁴¹ Ginsberg and Krasne (2018) 2-3.

⁴² Kalyvas (2006) 17, with Kalyvas' italics.

⁴³ Kalyvas (2006) 11.

⁴⁴ Arist. *Pol.* 1.1.1253a10-19, Cic. *Off.* 1.50; see also Cic. *Inv.* 1.2-3 on persuasive speech as a prerequisite for human justice. The use of speech to distinguish humans from animals is also found in Varro's *De Re Rustica* 1.17, where enslaved agricultural workers are categorised as *uocale* ('speaking'), farm animals as *semiuocale* ('half-speaking') and inanimate objects as *mutum* ('silent').

communication is necessary for humans to create meaning and have an impact upon the world: “Men... in so far as they live and move and act in this world, can experience meaningfulness only because they can talk with and make sense to each other and to themselves.”⁴⁵ Arendt pairs speech with action as the method by which people differentiate themselves from others around them, and argues that speech in particular is used to indicate a person’s individual identity, but that, in times of societal conflict, it loses this capacity as it is put into the service of partisan rather than personal goals.⁴⁶ In the twenty-first century, scholars in fields such as evolutionary linguistics and cognitive science maintain that the ability to communicate complex ideas is a unique and defining feature of humanity.⁴⁷

In the Routledge *Pragmatics Encyclopedia*, communication is defined as “a social process that requires the participation of two or more persons. It involves the human ability to use abstract concepts in order to affect the actions and thinking of other individuals... Communication indicates a sense of commonness with others by sharing information, signals, and messages.”⁴⁸ As these sentences make clear, communication relies on individuals acting within a social community, and its success or failure can express something about the strength or unity of that community. Even statements of fact rely on social relationships, as they depend on collective agreement as to what counts as a relevant ‘truth’ of the world, and this is particularly significant in literary texts which construct their own version of reality.⁴⁹ Communication failure – defined in the *Pragmatics Encyclopedia* as “an unsuccessful attempt on the part of the speaker to modify the partner’s mental states in a desired way”⁵⁰ – suggests disunity and a lack of commonality between individuals, which is of particular interest in the context of civil war.

Speech plays a prominent role in epic, and Christiane Reitz and Simone Finkmann describe scenes in which characters talk to each other as “the most pervasive, and perhaps also the most influential structure in epic poetry”.⁵¹

⁴⁵ Arendt (1958) 4.

⁴⁶ Arendt (1958) 175-180. For Arendt, the breakdown of communication seems to be a feature of all wars.

⁴⁷ Cf. Friederici (2017) xii: “Language makes us human. It is an intrinsic part of us.” Friederici, whose research focuses on the neurobiological basis for language acquisition and use, describes language as “a cornerstone of human cognition” (p. 3) and indicates that, although other species may communicate, they do so without language and syntax.

⁴⁸ Bosco and Angeleri (2010) 59.

⁴⁹ Petrey (1990) 8-12, 30-41. Petrey’s work presents the speech-act theory developed by Austin ([1962] 1980) and Searle (1975) as a tool for analysing literary representations of speech, including misunderstandings and ‘infelicities’ in performative utterances.

⁵⁰ Bosco and Tirassa (2010) 63.

⁵¹ Reitz and Finkmann (2019) 471.

Although, as they comment, communication can occur partially or wholly in the divine realm or the realm of the dead,⁵² this thesis will concentrate on communication between the mortal characters who engage in and suffer the consequences of civil war. Reitz and Finkmann emphasise the importance of rhetorical skill for the protagonists of epic: “a successful epic hero is not only a great warrior but also an excellent leader, and therefore a skilled speaker with the ability to inspire, sway or re-motivate his entire army.”⁵³ Communicative failure therefore undermines notions of conventional heroism. At the same time, epic poetry often reduces communication to the aspects which are most relevant for characterisation or narrative development, at the expense of a realistic representation of the way that frequent conversations develop relationships and social norms.⁵⁴ Despite the importance of communicative acts within martial epic, there is a sense in some texts that combat is opposed to, or has no place for, speech. For instance, in book 16 of the *Iliad*, Patroclus tells his companion Meriones to focus on deeds over words, since speeches will not win the battle for Sarpedon’s remains, and argues that words belong in council meetings rather than in combat (Hom. *Il.* 16.627-631). This idea is also found in Latin literature: Suzanne Adema has noted the relative paucity of battlefield speech, although words play a significant role in the wider context of war, and writes that “the battlefield is not a place for words in Roman war narratives”.⁵⁵ Speech can seem less effective in war than other forms of action, but speeches and conversations remain present at all stages of martial epic narratives.

Epic is by no means the only ancient genre in which communication and communication failure can be studied, and there is already scholarship exploring this theme in other ancient texts. For instance, Catherine Steel has explored a range of instances in Cicero’s career in which his oratorical skills were insufficient to achieve his goals, and has argued that he published modified speeches and rhetorical treatises in an attempt to compensate for his political failures and marginalisation;⁵⁶ Christina Shuttleworth Kraus has identified episode in books 1 and 5 of the *Bellum Gallicum* where Caesar indicates the difficulty of communicating through the noise and chaos of battle or without the aid of messengers;⁵⁷ and Ellen O’Gorman has analysed the way that Tacitus shows

⁵² Reitz and Finkmann (2019) 475. Communication between gods and mortals is a large and complex topic which cannot be covered in depth within the scope of this thesis.

⁵³ Reitz and Finkmann (2019) 474.

⁵⁴ Cf. Anzinger (2007) 16.

⁵⁵ Adema (2017) 384.

⁵⁶ Steel (2005) chapter 4.

⁵⁷ Kraus (2010).

senatorial speech and writing as a way to shape power, truth and political discourse during the Principate.⁵⁸ Sociolinguistic approaches have been adopted by scholars such as Ruth Scodel and Jon Hall, who use ‘politeness theory’ to analyse communicative strategies in Homeric epic and Ciceronian letters respectively.⁵⁹ The elevated status of epic in Roman society,⁶⁰ and the opportunity to compare multiple distinct texts in the same genre and literary tradition from different stages of the early Principate, makes epic a particularly suitable area of study for this topic. Epic poetry was the primary vehicle for experiencing extended narratives in the Roman world, which was expansive enough to include a wide variety of stories and borrow from multiple other genres, and ancient epic often focuses on key issues affecting relationships within or between communities.⁶¹ Epic is a genre with important social functions: historical epic commemorated warfare and military excellence, and both narrative and didactic epic played a key role in moral, civic and rhetorical education.⁶² Roman epic has a particularly close connection with systems of power and authority: as Federica Bessone writes, “epic discourse is related to political discourse and, from Virgil onwards, to imperial discourse”.⁶³ There are also formal features which make epic particularly suitable for this topic of enquiry: the narrative mode of epic – its mixture of mimesis and diegesis⁶⁴ – means that the written text includes dialogue appropriate to the characters, descriptions of gestures and appearances, and narratorial comments on context, intention and levels of understanding. The narrative voice can intervene directly to guide the reader’s interpretation and even state when communication failure occurs; alternatively, the narrator may remain silent about a character’s internal

⁵⁸ O’Gorman (2020).

⁵⁹ Scodel (2008) and Hall (2009), both building on Goffman (1967) and Brown and Levinson (1987).

⁶⁰ As Keith (2004) 18 writes: “It is testimony to the prestige of epic throughout the imperial period that quotations from Roman epic... feature so prominently in the Latin prose of the early empire.”

⁶¹ Toohey (2010) 33–36.

⁶² For analyses of these social functions, see Keith (2004) chapters 1 and 2, Syed (2005) chapter 1, Pitcher (2009) 73, and Peirano Garrison (2019) chapter 3 (exploring the influence of epic poetry on Quintilian’s *Institutio Oratoria*). Gale and Scourfield (2018) note that literary depictions of violence often have an exemplary function, and reinforce norms about the acceptable or unacceptable targets of violence: this applies to martial epic as well as several other genres.

⁶³ Bessone (2013a) 145. See also Kennedy (1992) 29 for the argument that communication always “enacts a relationship of power, challenging or confirming superiority or inferiority” and contributes towards the construction of social norms and hierarchies.

⁶⁴ Plat. *Rep.* 3.392d–394c establishes that tragedy and comedy operate through imitation of speech and action (*mimesis*), dithyrambic poetry operates through narration in the poet’s own voice (*diegesis*) and epic combines both modes, since the narrator speaks in both their own voice and in the voice of their characters; see Arist. *Poet.* 1448a for a similar argument. Genette (1988) 18 explains these terms as follows: “*Diégésis* is pure narrative (without dialogue), in contrast to the *mimésis* of dramatic representation and to everything that creeps into narrative along with dialogue, thereby making narrative impure – that is, *mixed*.”

state and motivations in certain circumstances, a device which is prominent at the end of the *Aeneid*.⁶⁵ Epic poets have a significant amount of freedom and flexibility in the way that they present their material, which allows them to explore a wide range of themes and concerns.

Much of the existing scholarship on speech, silence and communication in Latin epic is quantitative and typological. Herbert Lipscomb's statistical analysis of the frequency and average length of speeches within various Latin epics indicates that Latin epic makes less use of direct speech than the Homeric poems, and contains fewer scenes with multiple speakers and three or more speeches.⁶⁶ This creates the impression of a world with less dialogue and deliberation than that of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Gilbert Highet and William Dominik categorise instances of direct and reported speech in the *Aeneid* and *Thebaid* respectively, according to different types of formal or informal structure;⁶⁷ Andrew Laird's analysis of 'speech presentation' across a range of Latin texts focuses on the rhetorical and literary techniques used to construct a relationship between the poet-narrator and the audience: Laird provides an interesting exploration of the power dynamics inherent in who speaks and who is silent, according to the literary conventions of different genres,⁶⁸ but Laird's broader emphasis on the specific details of free direct or indirect discourse is less relevant to this thesis. Suzanne Adema also categorises different kinds of discourse presentation (primarily in Caesar's *Bellum Gallicum* and Virgil's *Aeneid* 11 and 12), but gives more attention to its impact on characterisation, and is concerned with the different perspectives on war which these narrative techniques can offer.⁶⁹ Highet briefly raises the issue of deception and a lack of truthfulness in the persuasive speeches of the *Aeneid*,⁷⁰ but there is otherwise little focus in these monographs on the successes or failures of speech. Non-verbal aspects of communication are also largely elided. Rather than taking this typological approach, this thesis focuses on close reading of a selection of

⁶⁵ As Adema (2017) 98 argues.

⁶⁶ Lipscomb (1909) 114-115. According to Lipscomb, direct speech makes up 38% of the *Aeneid*, 32% of the *Bellum Civile* and 37% of the *Thebaid*, compared to around 50% of the Homeric epics; the average length of such speeches is given as 11.35 lines in the *Aeneid*, 21.55 lines in the *Bellum Civile* and 14.42 lines in the *Thebaid*. Dominik (1994) 6-7 questions Lipscomb's approach and finds different values for the *Thebaid* – according to Dominik, 35.4% of the *Thebaid* is direct speech and the average length of speeches is 13 lines – but the exact numerical details are not important for my analysis.

⁶⁷ Highet (1972), Dominik (1994).

⁶⁸ Laird (1999) 2-16.

⁶⁹ Adema (2017), with a focus on the *Aeneid* in chapter 5.

⁷⁰ Highet (1972) 285-289.

passages which have particular significance for the progress of war in each text, and the qualitative effects of various communicative situations.

Silence is an important aspect of communication failure, and its presence in Latin epic has received detailed analysis from Donald McGuire and Silke Anzinger. McGuire's work on Flavian epic (including the *Thebaid*) emphasises the connections between silence and tyranny, as epic tyrants hide their true thoughts and emotions and suppress opposition,⁷¹ and between silence and self-destruction or suicide, which McGuire attributes to anxieties around poetic impotence and belatedness.⁷² Anzinger identifies a connection between silence and power, arguing that silence is only meaningful when it is attributed to characters who have the authority and freedom to speak and be heard.⁷³ Anzinger's work includes analysis of how silence constructs Aeneas' isolation from his men and overwhelming sense of responsibility,⁷⁴ Caesar's violent energy and terrifying nature which places other characters in a subordinate position to him and forestalls any useful resistance,⁷⁵ Cato's innate superiority,⁷⁶ and Eteocles' and Polynices' shared propensity for tyranny.⁷⁷ Oliver Taplin's analysis of Greek tragedy also comments extensively on the power of silence,⁷⁸ which, Taplin argues, "can, at times, say more than words... In the tragedians' workshop silence is a basic tool for conveying a crisis in human relationships".⁷⁹ These works have provided a useful starting point for my own analysis, which covers a broader range of communicative instances and pays more attention to scenes in which verbal communication occurs but is nevertheless ineffective.

Communication is not limited to speech, but is also conducted through actions and appearances.⁸⁰ Non-verbal aspects of communication are not always recorded in literary texts, but they are more likely to be present in written epics than in genres such as oral poems, rhetorical speeches or tragedies designed to be staged. Jon Hall's analysis of 'judicial theater' identifies references to soiled

⁷¹ McGuire (1997) chapter 4.

⁷² McGuire (1997) chapters 5 and 6.

⁷³ Anzinger (2007) 19, 307-309.

⁷⁴ Anzinger (2007) 29-42.

⁷⁵ Anzinger (2007) 112-124.

⁷⁶ Anzinger (2007) 143-146.

⁷⁷ Anzinger (2007) 235-272.

⁷⁸ Taplin ([1978] 1985) chapter 7.

⁷⁹ Taplin ([1978] 1985) 102.

⁸⁰ Bosco and Angeleri (2010) 60-61 provide an overview of non-verbal and paralinguistic features of communication; Cutica (2010) 176-178 summarises gestural communication; Anzinger (2007) 6 notes the importance of non-verbal communication alongside speech and silence in Latin epic.

clothing, gestures towards family members, tears, embraces and physical supplication in Cicero's legal speeches, and their broader political contexts, which indicate their use in eliciting pity for the orator and his defendants.⁸¹ As Hall points out, Quintilian's description of such dramatic appeals to emotion includes references to the risk that they will fail, for instance if they are prolonged (6.1.27-29) or rely on the assistance of unhelpful clients (6.1.37-38).⁸² Quintilian is careful to note that only strong speakers should attempt to elicit tears in their audiences, because this powerful technique can backfire and rouse laughter instead of pity (6.1.44-45). He also describes the powerful persuasive effects associated with wearing tattered or bloody clothing, displaying wounds, or presenting children or parents to the court (6.1.30-33). The importance of physical appearance in attempting to convey a certain message or emotional state will recur throughout this thesis.

One area of potential communication failure which may seem curiously absent from my analysis is extradiegetic communication, which occurs between the narrator and the audience of a poem.⁸³ This kind of communication is widely explored and discussed in most scholarly analyses of ancient texts: representation of communication failure between characters has received less attention so far, and is in greater need of detailed study. As a piece of literary analysis, this thesis inevitably involves assessment of the effects which a text can have on its readers. However, it does not attempt to determine authorial intent, or the responses of any specific ancient reader or interpretative community, and therefore cannot judge whether any given act of poetic communication in an ancient text achieves (or fails to achieve) its goal.⁸⁴ This thesis will present a way of reading Latin epic which privileges communication failure as a site of meaning: it will not state that this is the only way of reading any of the texts under discussion, or that this is necessarily how the texts were consciously understood by their authors or their original audiences.

⁸¹ Hall (2014). For the importance of non-verbal behaviour in Roman society, see also Clark (2008) 257-259.

⁸² Quint. *Inst.* 6.1.9-49; cf. Hall (2014) chapter 5, especially pp. 144-152.

⁸³ For the theoretical distinctions between extradiegetic, intradiegetic and metadiegetic narrative instances, see Genette (1980) 228-248 and Genette (1988) 84-95.

⁸⁴ Edmunds (2001) chapter 2 suggests that it is not even possible to analyse poetry in this way, since written poems differ from speech acts and ordinary uses of language in several respects. Edmunds writes (p. 26): "Poems do not succeed or fail in the same way as speech acts."

Selection of texts

The following chapters will examine my chosen poems in the order of their composition, starting with Virgil's *Aeneid*. Virgil was an adult during both the Caesarian civil war and the wars of the Second Triumvirate,⁸⁵ and references to civil war (and its lasting impact on society and the Italian landscape) can be found in both his *Eclogues* and *Georgics*.⁸⁶ The *Aeneid* was written during the early years of the Augustan period, a time when social and artistic endeavours emphasised the restoration of peace (and the rebuilding of a city) after decades of conflict;⁸⁷ and its protagonist has been analysed as demonstrating effects of combat trauma, which Virgil may have recognised from veterans in his own society.⁸⁸ The *Aeneid* is not wholly or explicitly a poem about civil war: it can also be read as a foundation epic for the settlements that will become Alba Longa and Rome,⁸⁹ and a poem of homecoming (*nostos*) as the Trojans return to their ancestral home.⁹⁰ The narrative ostensibly predates any idea of Roman 'citizenship', which, on a strict etymological reading, must be necessary for a *bellum civile*.⁹¹ However, the second half of the poem presents a conflict which, from the perspective of Augustan Rome, certainly looks like a civil war, with the two foundational strands of the Roman race – Trojans and Italians, who are already related to each other due to the Trojans' descent from the Italian Dardanus⁹² – killing each other on the soil of Latium. Several scholars have interpreted the conflict of these books as symbolising the civil wars of Rome's history, in particular the Social War which pitted Romans

⁸⁵ Wilkinson (1969) chapter 2 summarises the available biographical information about Virgil.

⁸⁶ See especially *Ecl.* 1.67-72, *Geo.* 1.489-497 and *Geo.* 4.67-90. Weeda (2015) chapter 5 offers a strong political and historicising reading of Virgil's poetic corpus: some of Weeda's anti-Augustan readings feel laboured, but this work is still useful for exploring the prevalence and variety of references to contemporary politics in Virgil's poetry.

⁸⁷ Cornwell (2017) chapters 4 and 5 explores the emphasis placed on affirming the presence of peace and stability in Roman society during the Augustan age.

⁸⁸ Seider (2013) 101-107 explores how the acts of remembering, describing or being the audience for stories of the Trojan war cause Aeneas pain during his time in Carthage; Skinner (2013) interprets several episodes in the poem as replaying the traumatic destruction of Troy; Panoussi (2020) uses trauma theory to explain Aeneas' reaction to the death of Pallas and his subsequent slaying of Turnus.

⁸⁹ Miles (1999).

⁹⁰ Cairns (1989) chapter 8 argues that the entirety of the *Aeneid* can be read as an epic of *nostos*, making it significantly more Odyssean than Iliadic. Toohey (2010) 51-52 discusses the significance of homecoming (and the related issue of nostalgia) in ancient epic.

⁹¹ Cf. van der Blom (2019) 115-117. As Warwick (1975) 143 indicates, the word *ciuis* appears 16 times in the *Aeneid*, while *ciuilis* appears only once: both Trojans (at 2.42, 5.196, 5.671, 9.36, 9.783 and 12.572) and Latins (at 11.243, 11.305 and 11.459) are addressed as *ciues* in direct speech, but there is no use of the term to refer to both groups together.

⁹² Cf. Cairns (1989) 116, West ([1998] 2009) 306-307, Nakata (2012) 340-351.

against Italians who, within a few decades, would themselves be considered Roman.⁹³ The conflict between a potential father-in-law (Latinus) and son-in-law (Aeneas) creates a parallel with the civil war between Caesar and Pompey;⁹⁴ and the death of Turnus which ends the *Aeneid* ensures that Rome's story still begins with the slaying of an Italian youth.⁹⁵ The similarities between Aeneas and Turnus also suggest civil war, in which it can be difficult to distinguish the opposing sides.⁹⁶ Malcolm Willcock's analysis of Virgilian battle scenes highlights the proliferation of minor characters whose affiliation to the Trojan or Italian side is not immediately obvious, and the confusing jumble of anaphoric pronouns in certain scenes which makes it harder to distinguish different warriors:⁹⁷ Willcock reads this as a failure of Virgil's poetic technique, particularly in comparison to Homeric battle narrative, but it creates the powerful impression of a war in which the two opposing sides are virtually indistinguishable. For these reasons, my analysis of the *Aeneid* will focus on books 7 to 12, which are most closely connected to the theme and context of civil war.⁹⁸

This thesis will complement existing scholarship on speech and communication in the *Aeneid*. Therese Fuhrer's analysis of speeches in *Aeneid* 1 and 8 highlights the possible humour of communicative failure, due to incongruities between the expected and actual circumstances and outcomes of speech: this requires enough emotional distance between the reader and the characters to allow an undercutting of the epic's seriousness.⁹⁹ However, in many of the episodes under discussion in this thesis, the threat or fatal reality of civil war makes it harder to find the requisite emotional distance; as a result, comic (mis)readings will not feature heavily in my analysis. Denis Feeney has argued that

⁹³ Pöschl (1962) 14; Harrison (1988) 60-65; Cairns (1989) 93; Keith (2002a) 106-107; Reed (2011) 25; Fedeli (2018) 162-165. For additional echoes of historical civil wars, see the analysis of Aeneas' shield in Rossi (2010).

⁹⁴ Tarrant (2012) 6-8; Skinner (2013) 43-44; Lowrie and Vinken (2019) 273.

⁹⁵ In fact, multiple Italian youths – see, for instance, James (1995) for Virgil's use of the verb *condere* to connect the establishment of the city with Italian deaths, or Stover (2011) on how Lausus' similarity to Aeneas and embodiment of Roman virtues causes his death to evoke ideas of civil war. The same idea was presented by Drew (1927) 89: "Pallas and Lausus represent the young warriors of Rome sacrificed in the civil wars."

⁹⁶ Thomas ([1998] 2009) 275-282 explores these similarities and parallels.

⁹⁷ Willcock (1983) 89-97.

⁹⁸ This is not to say that civil war imagery does not occur elsewhere in the epic. To give two obvious examples: the imagery of Priam's decapitation at *Aen.* 2.554-558 recalls the death of Pompey and may derive from Asinius Pollio's history of Caesar's civil war, as Moles (1983) argues; and the 'parade of heroes' includes an address from Anchises to Caesar and Pompey (*Aen.* 6.826-835) in which they are encouraged not to wage war against each other.

⁹⁹ Fuhrer (2010), especially pp. 63-68, 72-75.

the character of Aeneas makes little use of rhetorical speeches, in contrast to other more passionate speakers in the poem, and appears to be isolated from most other characters due to his lack of sustained conversations with them.¹⁰⁰ In an analysis of the breakdown of communication between Aeneas and Dido, Feeney writes: “What does emerge from the *Aeneid* is a mistrust of powerful language that divides into two aspects, corresponding to the two heads under which Aeneas criticizes Dido’s speech: powerful language distorts reality, or the truth, in its single-minded pursuit of its particular aim; and it exploits ungovernably the emotions of speaker and audience.”¹⁰¹ This thesis will explore the wider implications of this suspicion of speech and rhetoric. Feeney’s article focuses almost exclusively on the characterisation of Aeneas specifically in the poem’s first four books of the poem; my work on the *Aeneid* will extend the scope of Feeney’s work by analysing the second half of the poem,¹⁰² and by considering how Aeneas’ isolation affects the portrayal of civil war and how other characters contribute to a broader impression of communicative failure.

The importance of civil war for my second chosen text is clear and unambiguous; the relevance of communication failure to it should be equally apparent from the quotation with which I began this chapter. Lucan’s *Bellum Ciuile*, which narrates the war between Caesar and Pompey, references civil war in its first line: *bella ... plus quam ciuilia* (‘wars worse than civil war’, *BC* 1.1). The epic covers the same period of history as Caesar’s *Commentarii de Bello Ciuili*, from the crossing of the Rubicon to the outbreak of the Alexandrian war: Jamie Masters has argued persuasively that the relationship between these two texts is one of competition and rivalry that operates as a literary enactment of civil conflict;¹⁰³ similarly, Andrew Zissos suggests an attempt to replace and erase Caesar’s work,

¹⁰⁰ Feeney (1983).

¹⁰¹ Feeney (1983) 216.

¹⁰² Aeneas’ taciturnity increases in the second half of the poem: Highet (1972) 25 observes that, excluding Aeneas’ role as the narrator of books 2 and 3, he speaks almost twice as many lines in the first six books of the poem as in the last six. Anzinger (2007) 38-39 argues that Aeneas’ silence is often the result of the stresses and anxieties associated with leadership; similarly, Hardie (1993) 4 attributes this isolation to Aeneas’ position as a “synecdochic hero... who stands for the totality of his people present and future”. This suggests that Aeneas uses speech less, and experiences more isolation, as his responsibilities grow during the conflict in Italy.

¹⁰³ Masters (1992). Masters does not understand this relationship as purely antagonistic, but instead emphasises the way that this literary competition sometimes positions Lucan against Caesar, and at other times puts them on the same side: this helps to establish the conflict as reminiscent of the changing identities and allegiances found in civil war in particular. I follow Masters (pp. 17-19, 92, 241-245) in interpreting Lucan’s extant 10-book epic as substantially complete – in contrast to the argument of Ahl (1976) chapter 9, recently restated by Roche (2021b) 3-4, that Lucan intended to extend the epic until the death of Cato – but the question of the intended ending of the *Bellum Ciuile* is not directly relevant to my analysis.

since literary adaptations of strictly factual military *commentarii* often pushed the original text into obscurity.¹⁰⁴ The poem has also been interpreted as an attack on or subversion of the *Aeneid* or the epic genre as a whole.¹⁰⁵ Unlike Virgil and Statius, Lucan did not live through a period of civil war, but according to the biographical tradition, Lucan was heavily involved in the Pisonian conspiracy which aimed to assassinate Nero.¹⁰⁶ This conspiracy and other instances of opposition to the emperor (such as the rebellion which resulted in his eventual fall from power) suggest that Lucan was writing at a time when a return to the chaos of civil war could appear as a very real prospect.

Although Lucan did not live to see Nero's fall from power, the epic poets active in the Flavian era which followed lived through the brief period of civil war in 68 and 69 CE; as such, it is unsurprising that civil war themes and imagery occur across their texts. In the words of Lauren Donovan Ginsberg and Darcy Krasne: "Writing civil war – if not necessarily writing *about* civil war – was an inescapable project in Flavian Rome, whether as the subject of a head-on engagement or as a voice that can be heard in the erasures and unfilled spaces of a textual enterprise."¹⁰⁷ Flavian epicists were also influenced by Lucan's own poetry, which shaped the genre much like the *Aeneid* before it. Of the Flavian epics, Statius' *Thebaid* places the greatest emphasis on civil conflict, which is fundamental to the plot of the poem.¹⁰⁸ The primary narrative of the *Thebaid* describes the violent rivalry between the two sons of Oedipus, Eteocles and Polynices, which causes the latter to raise an army from Argos to attack his native city of Thebes and which has been compared to the fraternal rivalry of the Flavian emperors Titus and

¹⁰⁴ Zissos (2013).

¹⁰⁵ Henderson ([1987] 1998) situates Lucan's disruptive use of language and syntax in opposition to the models of the *Aeneid*. Narducci (2002) chapter 5 analyses the *Bellum Civile* as being opposed to the *Aeneid* in ideology, language, structure and its systematic use of paradox, and as working to destroy the pro-Augustan or pro-Caesarian model of telic history found in the Augustan poets. Casali (2011) identifies places where Lucan weaponises Virgilian imagery and vocabulary in service of anti-Caesarian and pessimistic views of history, and thereby encourages readers to notice the pessimism and ambivalence in Virgil's own poetry.

¹⁰⁶ Lucan's involvement in the conspiracy is recorded at Tac. *Ann.* 15.49, 56-57 and 70, and in Suetonius' *Vita Lucani*; Tac. *Ann.* 15.65 records rumours that some of the conspirators aimed to replace Nero with Lucan's uncle Seneca. Martindale (1984) analyses the political stances suggested by Lucan's epic, and argues that we must take Lucan's political ideas seriously if we are to value his poem as a masterpiece. See Fantham (2011) for Lucan's biography more broadly.

¹⁰⁷ Ginsberg and Krasne (2018) 6.

¹⁰⁸ In *Silu.* 5.3, Statius praises his father's poem on the clash between Vitellian and Flavian forces on the Capitoline Hill, and this might have influenced his own civil war poetry – cf. Delarue (2000) 23-27. Newlands (2012) 3 n. 18 suggests that the Flavian epicist and his father were probably in Rome itself either during or immediately after this incident, so Statius may have had direct experience of living through civil conflict.

Domitian.¹⁰⁹ Polynices' army includes Theban soldiers (as mentioned at *Theb.* 4.76-80), which is enough to position this as a civil war, but there is also a broader relationship between the Argives and Thebans. Jupiter states that both cities are ruled by his descendants (who are therefore related to each other as well as to the god who seeks to harm them): *nunc geminas punire domos, quis sanguinis auctor / ipse ego, descendo* ('now I, who am the founder of their bloodline, lower myself to punish twin houses', *Theb.* 1.224-225).¹¹⁰ The language of blood, descent and twinship here places a particular emphasis on a familial connection; and the shared desire of Oedipus and Jupiter to punish their respective descendants, representing cross-generational family conflict, is the driving force behind the Theban war.¹¹¹ If the battles which Lucan narrates are 'worse than civil war' because they are fought by men related through marriage (as father-in-law and son-in-law),¹¹² Statius' wars are worse again: whether the conflict is between Thebes and Argos, or just between Eteocles and Polynices, the principle combatants are related by blood. The importance of kinship is marked in the very first words of the poem: *fraternas acies* ('brotherly battle-lines', *Theb.* 1.1), an echo of Lucan's references to *cognatasque acies* ('related battle-lines', *BC* 1.4) in his own proem.¹¹³ This foregrounds the breakdown of family relationships as a factor in initiating and prolonging conflict.

Statius' complex intertextual relationship with the poetry of Virgil and Lucan, as well as the Attic tragedians (and their Roman successor Seneca) who covered much of the same material as Statius' epic, is well established.¹¹⁴ Indeed,

¹⁰⁹ Bannon (1997) 182. Ahl (1986) 2813-2814 points out that the war which Statius narrates is concerned with which individual will hold absolute power (like the wars of 68 and 69 CE), rather than a contest between competing visions of politics and power (as could be argued for the civil wars of the first century BCE), and therefore has particular resonance in the Flavian context.

¹¹⁰ Hill (2008) 134-135, citing various passages of Pseudo-Apollodorus, explains how Adrastus and Oedipus could claim descent from the two sons of Libya, daughter of Jupiter's son Epaphus, but notes that ancient readers would expect Statius to provide this genealogical information directly: as such, its absence from this speech shows Jupiter's rhetorical weakness. See also Gervais (2017a) 223-224, commenting on Eteocles' reference to shared descent from Jupiter at *Theb.* 2.437-438.

¹¹¹ Gervais (2015a) 221.

¹¹² Lowrie and Vinken (2019) 263-266 analyse the significance of the phrase *plus quam ciuilia* in Lucan's opening line and argue that it indicates the effect of war on people who are not citizens, such as Marcia, Cornelia and Cleopatra. Even on this reading, Statius surpasses: his narrative of war not only includes female suffering, but also gives it a prominent role in initiating the final conflict between Athens and Thebes.

¹¹³ Roche (2015) 393-394. For the widespread association between fratricide and civil war in Latin literature, including Lucan's use of fratricidal imagery, see Bannon (1997) chapter 4.

¹¹⁴ Delarue (2000) offers an overview of Statius' relationship with his predecessors, with chapters 2 to 6 covering the influence of Homer, Callimachus, Virgil, Lucan and Seneca. For the influence of Greek tragedy on Statius see e.g. Ripoll (1998), Estèves (2005), Heslin (2008), Hulls (2014), Soerink (2014), Marinis (2015), Parkes (2021) and Marinis (2021).

François Ripoll has interpreted the poem as “[une] tentative de fusion complète d'une matière tragique dans un cadre épique”,¹¹⁵ and suggests that this blend of genres can be attributed in part to “[la] tension entre le souvenir encore vif des déchirements passés et une aspiration au retour de l'ordre et de la paix intérieure”.¹¹⁶ Unlike the *Aeneid* or *Bellum Ciuile*, the *Thebaid* is not directly concerned with Roman history, but Statius does borrow imagery from contemporary Roman life.¹¹⁷ Helen Lovatt describes the epic as “polychronous”, writing: “the myth comes before Homer, let alone Virgil; yet the epic universe is often assimilated to Rome”,¹¹⁸ while Peter Toohey has positioned Statius' work within a tradition that understands “mythological time as somehow providing a direct commentary on contemporary history”.¹¹⁹ Statius' choice of Greek subject-matter may indicate his distance from Roman and Italian identity, as a native of Naples (a city heavily influenced by Greek settlers);¹²⁰ it also helps the poet to deal with the sense of belatedness which sometimes accompanies later epic poetry by returning to a narrative which precedes those of the *Iliad*, *Odyssey* and *Aeneid*.¹²¹ Nevertheless, Statius' focus on the fratricidal episode of Theban mythic history suggests that his epic will have a particular relevance for Rome, a city founded on Romulus' fratricidal slaying of Remus.¹²² As Susanna Braund writes, in an article

¹¹⁵ Ripoll (1998) 324: ‘an attempt at the complete fusion of tragic subject matter with an epic frame’.

¹¹⁶ Ripoll (1998) 338: ‘the tension between the still-vivid memory of past destruction [associated with tragedy] and a hope for the return of order and peace within the empire [associated with epic]’.

¹¹⁷ For instance, Snijder (1968) 188 identifies echoes of Roman practices in the prophetic rituals of *Thebaid* 3, while McGuire (1997) 76 notes the anachronism of referring to Eteocles as a *princeps* at *Theb.* 1.169.

¹¹⁸ Lovatt (2010) 76.

¹¹⁹ Toohey (2010) 36.

¹²⁰ In *Silu.* 5.3, Statius emphasises his father's Greek identity and the importance of Greek literature in Statius' education and his own literary production. On Statius' biography and his relationship to Greek culture and identity, see Hardie (1983), Delarue (2000) 3-18, Newlands (2012) or Hulls (2014) 193-199.

¹²¹ For the concept of literary belatedness see Bloom (1973); Goldschmidt (2013) 10-11 uses Bloom's theory to explain how Virgil outdoes his predecessor Ennius by focusing on an earlier period of Roman history than the *Annales*, while Hardie (1993) 116-119 explores the validity of this theory in relation to ancient epic more broadly. Bernstein (2008) chapter 6 identifies anxieties amongst the Flavian epicists about their ability to address and critique contemporary issues (in contrast to earlier poets), and this might also contribute to Statius' choice of subject matter.

¹²² Cf. Braund (2006) 266-270, Bernstein (2008) 161, Toohey (2010) 45, Rebeggiani (2018) 176-181. See Pollman (2004) 30-31 and Criado (2015) 306 n. 59 for texts which position the Theban war as archetypal for Rome's civil wars. Literary depictions of Thebes have invited other comparisons with Athens and Rome: Zeitlin (1990) argues that Attic tragedy uses the critical distance granted by Theban settings to explore central issues in Athenian society, and describes Thebes as “an anti-Athens” and “the obverse side of Athens, the shadow self” (p. 144); Hardie (1990) analyses the portrayal of Thebes in *Ov. Met.* 3 and 4 as a mirror-inversion of the Roman foundation myth seen

establishing the significance of Thebes alongside Troy in the literary tradition: “The myth of the Seven against Thebes in particular, with brother fighting brother for sole power, clearly offers potential resonances for a period so marked by civil warfare as was the period from the so-called Social Wars onwards.”¹²³ The relevance of this myth might be indicated by Cicero’s claim that Caesar was in the habit of quoting Eteocles’ words on the route to power (from Euripides’ *Phoenissae*) as a model or justification for his own transgression of legality in engaging in civil war.¹²⁴ The myth of the Seven Against Thebes has occasionally been understood (from antiquity onwards) as the attack of a foreign army on a city, rather than a civil war: Stefano Rebggiani argues that this complexity allowed Statius to explore the dual presentation in Roman political thought of civil wars as simultaneously internal and external conflicts.¹²⁵ The complex nature of the conflicts in the *Aeneid* and *Thebaid* (particularly when compared to the *Bellum Civile*) is not a barrier to analysing these texts as civil war poems, and in fact aligns with the difficulty of defining real civil wars.

In the following chapters, I will explore a selection of episodes which demonstrate the significance of communication failure to each text and its relationship to civil war. I will focus particularly on the outbreak of war, communication between friends or relatives, embassies and assemblies and attempts to restore peace: these are key aspects of war which help to explain why it begins, escalates and frequently continues to an extremely bloody conclusion. Civil war divides communities and families, as diplomatic or domestic relations break down and armies are raised, and the escalation of tensions offers the first glimpses of the destruction which can result from failed communication. My analysis will not be restricted to warriors and leaders, since domestic scenes involving non-combatants (especially women) frequently contribute to the construction of themes and characters, or suggest the wider human cost of war.¹²⁶ I will also examine the speech acts surrounding climactic battles, to explore why attempts at communication in these poems seem incapable of resolving civil wars successfully and ending the cycle of civil conflict. Each of the next three chapters is devoted to a single epic, in order to explore how each text emphasises different

in the *Aeneid*. The influence of Ovid’s depiction of Theban myths on Statius’ epic is explored by Keith ([2004] 2016).

¹²³ Braund (2006) 266.

¹²⁴ Cic. *Off.* 3.82, translating Eur. *Phoen.* 524-525; Braund (2006) 266 notes the significance of this passage; Beneker (2011) 76-82 provides a more detailed analysis and explores Cicero’s wider characterisation of Caesar as akin to Eteocles.

¹²⁵ Rebggiani (2018) 32-37.

¹²⁶ Hinds ([2000] 2016) and Keith (2004) establish the significant presence of women in epic, despite claims from ancient writers that epic is a genre focused on men.

Chapter 1: Civil war and communication

aspects of communication failure; the final, concluding chapter will focus on points of contact between these poems and the wider issues that they raise. Key themes which will emerge from this analysis include the marginalisation of certain speakers on the basis of their gender, age or opposition to war; the significance of appeals to family status and their failure; the impossibility of achieving reconciliation and ending cycles of civil conflict; and the way in which verbal communication is frequently supplanted by violence.

Chapter 2: Virgil's *Aeneid*

Introduction

The *Aeneid* is a prime example of 'successful' literary communication: it is one of the most celebrated works of ancient literature, known for its complex allusions, poetic texture and multivalence, and has had immeasurable impacts on a range of audiences for over 2000 years. It is also a poem filled with numerous striking and memorable scenes of communicative failure, as a handful of examples will demonstrate. Consider Venus' deceptive disguise as she directs her son towards Carthage, after which Aeneas complains that they cannot speak honestly to each other (1.314-410);¹ Anchises' misinterpretation of prophecies about the Trojans' future homeland, which leads to an abortive attempt to settle in Crete (3.93-192);² Dido's bitter remonstrances against Aeneas that cannot convince him to remain with her in Carthage (4.304-415); the carvings on the doors of the temple of Cumae, left unfinished because Daedalus could not bring himself to depict the death of his son (6.14-33);³ Numanus Remulus' taunts about Trojan effeminacy and weakness, which are silenced by his death at the hands of the young Ascanius (9.590-637); or Turnus' final plea for mercy, which fails to elicit sympathy from Aeneas or save Turnus' life (12.930-952). These episodes, and others like them, create the impression of a world in which both verbal and visual communication often results in pain and suffering, and contributes to divisions and isolation rather than to the construction and strengthening of interpersonal bonds.

This sense of isolation is heightened by the limitations seemingly placed on speech in the *Aeneid*. Denis Feeney has observed that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* present dialogue and conversation as productive and useful for creating a sense of community between different people, in a way that is largely absent from the *Aeneid*.⁴ Compared to the Homeric poems, the *Aeneid* has fewer speaking characters, fewer conversations with multiple participants, fewer responses to speech (particularly encouragements, challenges and commands) and fewer speeches that contribute primarily to characterisation rather than narrative

¹ Fuhrer (2010) analyses this from the perspective of communication failure. Van Nortwick (2013) 137-142 argues that Venus' interventions in Carthage are cruel and bring Aeneas more pain than comfort or assistance.

² Nakata (2012) 336-343 analyses this misinterpretation, and Anchises' justification for his choice of destination, in depth, and argues that the fault lies in the inherent multivalence of prophecy (rather than any specific ignorance on Anchises' part).

³ Putnam ([1987] 2000) 220-226 connects this failure with the lack of closure at the end of the poem as a whole.

⁴ Feeney (1983) 211-216.

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progression.⁵ Gilbert Highet contrasts Aeneas with the heroes of Homeric epic as follows: “Flexible, garrulous, frank, Homer's heroes give utterance to every emotion as it possesses them. Aeneas always says less than he feels, and often remains silent when a Greek would be talking.”⁶ The relative paucity of conversations characterises Aeneas as a solitary figure with an “inclination to internalize sorrow rather than to communicate it and so release it”,⁷ whose sacrifices for and separation from his community indicate the high cost of leadership. In this chapter, I will explore how this uncommunicative protagonist is placed into a world – and more specifically, a war – in which speech, gesture and other forms of communication cause divisions rather than unity and are unable to comfort characters or provide a pathway to peace.

This chapter will focus on a number of episodes from books 7, 10, 11 and 12 of the *Aeneid* which pertain to the conduct of civil war. Book 8, in which Aeneas travels to the peaceful Pallanteum, has less relevance to this theme; while Aeneas' absence from book 9 limits its usefulness for analysing the poem's uncommunicative protagonist or the process of ending the war which requires his presence.⁸ I will begin with an analysis of Allecto's role in *Aeneid* 7 as the initiator of civil war. I will explore Allecto's connections to issues around (poetic) power and the use of intermediaries; Amata's futile attempt to engage in rational dialogue with Latinus after Allecto has infected her; Allecto's failure to persuade Turnus to take up arms while she is in the guise of Calybe; and the suggestion of communication failure in the first deaths of this conflict. I will then consider the council scenes and embassies of book 11, which are directed either towards prolonging civil war or finding a conclusion for it: the nature of such scenes means that they foreground dialogue, communication and questions about the role of messengers such as Venulus and Drances, and the limitations of discussion and political deliberation. Finally, I will explore how book 12 of this epic presents the climax of this war and the movement towards an eventual reconciliation, in both the divine and mortal realms, and the way that Turnus' death suggests that peace and persuasion remain out of reach at the end of the poem.

⁵ Highet (1972) 22-23; see also Mackie (1988) 7-14 for Virgil's limited use of speech as a tool of characterisation, in comparison with the Homeric poems.

⁶ Highet (1972) 194.

⁷ Johnson ([1976] 2015) 107, commenting on Aeneas' silence after Anchises describes the death of Marcellus (6.868-886). Feeney (1983) 215 makes a similar argument about Aeneas' solitude.

⁸ See Wiltshire (1999) for the effects of Aeneas' absence here.

Messengers and intermediaries

The second half of the *Aeneid* begins with the poet promising war (7.37-45), but from the perspective of the characters, peace seems to be within reach. When Ilioneus and other Trojan ambassadors reach Latinus' city, they find the king keen to build a relationship with them. Yet before he will form any alliance with the Trojans, Latinus wishes to speak to Aeneas in person and clasp hands with him:

ipse modo Aeneas, nostri si tanta cupido est,
si iungi hospitio properat sociusque uocari,
adueniat, uultus neue exhorrescat amicos:
pars mihi pacis erit dextram tetigisse tyranni. 7.263-266

Now let Aeneas come here himself, if he has such a great desire for our kingdom, if he is in a hurry to be joined in friendship and be called my ally, unless he is afraid of friendly faces: I will consider it part of the peace treaty to have grasped the right hand of your king.

This begins a theme which will recur throughout this thesis: the importance of face-to-face communication, and the limitations of speaking through intermediaries. This emphasis on physical contact seems to reflect the realities of Roman society, in which “touch could facilitate social bonds and reconciliation in the community and gestures of touch, implied or performed, were crucial elements in legal and religious rituals”.⁹ Latinus seems disappointed or even offended by Aeneas' absence, although his tone remains friendly (and is received in this way by the Trojans): there is a hint of sarcasm in *tanta cupido* and the notion of rushing implied by *properat*, since this desire does not seem strong enough to make Aeneas visit in person, and Latinus wonders if Aeneas stayed away because he fears danger or treachery. As such, the use of an embassy to negotiate this alliance might be considered a snub, albeit one which should be easily remedied. Ilioneus' role in this episode should remind readers of his embassy to Dido (1.520-560), in a parallel position near the beginning of the first half of the poem, which also seemed to end well.¹⁰ In the Carthaginian scene, Aeneas soon appears and establishes a personal connection with Dido; but in Latium, despite the verbal and physical proof of Latinus' intentions as he sends the Trojans back to their leader with gifts and friendly words (7.284-285), no treaty can be enacted without Aeneas' presence.¹¹ However, the Trojan leader is occupied with building fortifications around his

⁹ McAuley (2021) 248.

¹⁰ On Ilioneus' eloquence and rhetorical skill, see Peirano Garrison (2019) 184-185.

¹¹ Cf. Feeney (1983) 215, who argues that treaties which Aeneas makes in person are generally successful; Anzinger (2007) 55 notes that if Aeneas had been present here, war might have been avoided.

ships (7.157-159) in case of conflict, which indicates that he foregrounds his position as a warrior and general over his role as a public speaker and political negotiator.

The use of intermediaries in this first encounter between the Trojans and Latins proves to be a mistake, and not one which Aeneas will make again: in book 8, he travels to Pallanteum himself to forge an alliance with Evander – as he emphasises in the lines, *me, me ipse meumque / obieci caput et supplex ad limina ueni* ('I place myself and my own head before you and have come to your threshold as a suppliant', 8.144-145) – and is able to remind the Arcadian king of an earlier positive encounter with Anchises (8.154-168).¹² In book 7, before Aeneas' messengers can reach him with Latinus' offer and carry back a response, the narrative perspective shifts to Juno. Her opposition to the destiny of the Trojans continues unabated, and after failing to prevent Aeneas from reaching Italy, Juno decides to resort to infernal assistance:

quod si mea numina non sunt
magna satis, dubitem haud equidem implorare quod usquam est:
flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta mouebo. 7.310-312

But if my great divinity is not enough, I should not hesitate to appeal
to whatever is: if I cannot sway the gods above, I will stir up the
underworld.

In two earlier usages in this text of the verb *flectere* to describe persuasive efforts, it is associated with mortals praying to the gods, and in one subsequent usage, it is accompanied by tears;¹³ *flectere* also describes Turnus' final speech as he lies defeated before Aeneas.¹⁴ As such, its use here suggests that Juno's failed attempts to persuade other gods to help her have put her into a position of weakness, which she now rejects in favour of a more violent and forceful alternative. Indeed, Juno's weakness in negotiations is apparent from the beginning of the poem, when she must approach the lesser god Aeolus as a 'suppliant' (*supplex*, 1.64) and bribe him

¹² Gransden (1976) 100 notes the contrast with Aeneas' use of ambassadors to negotiate with Latinus. See also Nakata (2012) 354-355 on how Evander ignores Aeneas' careful construction of a shared genealogy through Dardanus – an argument which any Trojan could theoretically have made – to emphasise instead his personal admiration for Anchises.

¹³ Anchises' prayer to Jupiter in Troy begins: *Iuppiter omnipotens, precibus si flecteris ullis* ('almighty Jupiter, if you can be persuaded by any prayers', 2.689); in the underworld, the Sibyl advises Palinurus' shade, *desine fata deum flecti sperare precando* ('stop hoping to sway the gods' dictates by praying', 6.376); and Venus refers to the persuasive tears of Tethys and Aurora in a speech to Vulcan: *te filia Nerej, / te potuit lacrimis Tithonia flectere coniunx* ('Nereus' daughter and Tithonus' wife were able to persuade you with tears', 8.383-4).

¹⁴ *et iam iamque magis cunctantem flectere sermo / coeperat* ('and already now his speech was beginning to sway Aeneas as he delayed further', 12.940-941).

with the promise of a bride in order to obtain his assistance (1.65-75): although her status as a goddess should grant her power, the divine realm is still markedly patriarchal.¹⁵ Juno's chosen agent in book 7, Allecto, uses both force and persuasion, but it is clear that she too is more successful when resorting to violence. Both Aeneas and Juno work through intermediaries – the group of orators and the Fury respectively – but Allecto's supernatural origins give her a speed and effectiveness which the mortal ambassadors cannot match, as she moves quickly between Latinus' palace, Ardea and the Trojan camp. Allecto embodies “unleashed passion as well as the insanity of civil war”,¹⁶ and she is so powerful that Juno must eventually place limits on her involvement with the mortal world.¹⁷ When Allecto asks if she can spread word of war further afield to bring more armies into the fray (7.545-551), Juno denies this request and instead instructs her to retreat to the underworld before Jupiter intervenes (7.557-560): although the Fury obeys, she does not show any personal fear or concern at this danger. Whereas Aeneas' messengers have less power to negotiate with Latinus than he would have had in person, Allecto's potential for direct intervention seems greater than that of Juno.¹⁸

As Allecto initiates civil war, her voice and presence are destructive and bring bloodshed and death to the poem; but she is also a creative force, who rouses new emotions and instils madness in her targets.¹⁹ Allecto is described as a *uates* ('prophet' or 'divinely-inspired poet') by the narrator at 7.435 and by Turnus at 7.442, which aligns her with the position that Virgil claims for himself in the 'poem in the middle' found earlier in this book:

tu uatem, tu, diua, mone. dicam horrida bella,
dicam acies actosque animis in funera reges,
Tyrrhenamque manum totamque sub arma coactam
Hesperiam. maior rerum mihi nascitur ordo,
maius opus moueo.

7.41-45

¹⁵ Cf. Sharrock (2021) 100, 113.

¹⁶ Pöschl (1962) 30.

¹⁷ Note, however, that Allecto's power does not prevent her (or other Fury-like figures in the poem) from being subordinate to Olympian deities. Gilder (1997) 31 (and *passim*) suggests a contrast with equivalent figures in later Latin epics, including Lucan's Erichtho and Statius' Tisiphone, who flaunt their power over the gods.

¹⁸ Fredricksmeyer (1984) 12 claims that Aeolus, Allecto and Juturna are “merely [Juno's] instruments, little more than extensions or metaphors of Juno herself”. I do not agree that Allecto can be described in this way, as she seems more powerful and effective than Juno and appears to follow her own methods to achieve the ends which Juno desires.

¹⁹ Hershkowitz (1998) 54, 61-67 explores the close connection between madness and poetic creativity.

You, goddess, you, advise your prophet. I will speak of terrible wars,
I will speak of battle lines and royal souls driven into death, and the
Etruscan band and all Italy forced into arms. A greater order of things
is born for me, I move a greater task.

Allecto's parallels with the poet may be strengthened by her similarities to the personification of Fama in *Aeneid* 4, since Fama herself can stand for epic poetry and the poet's role in blending facts with fantasy.²⁰ Virgil, like Allecto, is a surprisingly powerful and unfettered intermediary. Whereas the poet of the Homeric epics appears almost as a mouthpiece for the Muse, who is asked to narrate in the first lines of both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*,²¹ Virgil is more independent: the *Aeneid* begins with the statement that the poet himself will sing (*arma uirumque cano*, 'I sing of arms and a man', *Aen.* 1.1), and its first request to the Muse – *Musa, mihi causas memora* ('Muse, remind me of the causes', 1.8) – is for a reminder, rather than information that the poet does not already know.²² Furthermore, although the historical poet was supported by the patronage of Maecenas and the imperial family and may have composed with their desires in mind, the *Aeneid* resists classification as having a straightforward pro-Augustan message: this demonstrates again the creative and poetic freedom and independence which Virgil enjoyed.²³ The association which Virgil creates between himself and Allecto as paired *uates* may have been noticed by Lucan: he describes himself as a *uates* in the important passage from the battle of Pharsalus which opened this thesis (*BC* 7.552-556), and also attributes the term to the oracle Phemonoe and the Fury-like necromantic witch Erichtho, who each echo aspects of his poetic power.²⁴

The similarity between the Fury and the poet indicates problems inherent in narrating the horrors of violence, which becomes a type of enactment. Scholars such as Shadi Bartsch have analysed how artistic depictions of violence within the poem, such as Pallas' sword-belt with its imagery of the maritidal Danaids, can

²⁰ See Hardie (2012) 101-102 for Allecto's connections to Fama, and pp. 106-110 for Fama's similarity to the narrator's poetic voice.

²¹ Respectively, *μητιν ἄειδε, θεά* ('sing, goddess, of rage', *Il.* 1.1) and *ἄνδρά μοι ἔννεπε, Μοῦσα* ('Muse, tell me about a man', *Od.* 1.1).

²² The verb *monere* at 7.41, which I have translated as 'advise', can also mean 'to remind': as such it repeats the implication that the poet already knows what the Muse is going to say. Scholars have recognised this different attitude towards the Muses for a long time: see, for instance, Bassett (1934) 106, 108, or Fredricksmeyer (1984) 13.

²³ See Dalzell (1956) for the argument that Maecenas' poetic patronage was indirect and relatively limited.

²⁴ O'Higgins (1988) explores how Lucan's use of the term *uates* aligns him with these figures; see also Hardie (1993) 76-77 on Erichtho's similarity to Virgil's Allecto.

Chapter 2: Virgil's *Aeneid*

tu potes unanimos armare in proelia fratres
atque odiis uersare domos. 7.335-336

You can incite harmonious brothers to war against each other, and
overturn households with hatred.

The emphasis on fratricide indicates Juno's desire for a civil war specifically.²⁹ Allecto's choice of tactics tears apart Latinus' household, exacerbates existing underlying tensions and creates far more discord than if the king had been made to break the peace with the Trojans himself. She ensures that the breakdown of peace is a process involving a whole community, rather than just the two individuals who wished to create the treaty – men whose moral excellence and virtues, as representatives of the best that their people have to offer, might have helped them to resist Allecto's violence.

As Allecto approaches Amata, the queen is already concerned by the arrival of the Trojans, which threatens her plans to marry Lavinia to Turnus:

tacitumque obsedit limen Amatae,
quam super aduentu Teucrum Turnique hymenaeis
femineae ardentem curaeque iraeque coquebant. 7.343-345

Allecto besieged the silent threshold of Amata, who was aflame with thoughts of the Trojans' arrival and Turnus' marriage: the cares and angers of a woman made her stew.

These lines emphasise Amata's identity as a woman (more than as a queen, for instance) through the reference to the threshold which maintains the boundary between public and private spheres, the silence associated with remaining inside (with *tacitum* operating as a transferred epithet), the concern with the wedding ceremony, the emphasis on a specifically female mode of anger and worry and the reference to cooking at the end of 7.345. There is nothing to suggest here that Amata intends to speak out against the proposed marriage, but she clearly finds it troubling. Allecto does not attempt to persuade her to act, but instead seems to throw a snake from her head which wraps itself around the queen's neck and chest (7.346-353):³⁰ the intervention has a violent physicality, which is emphasised by the description of flames running through Amata's bones as she is stirred into

²⁹ As Horsfall (2000) 233 notes.

³⁰ Pace Horsfall (2000) 241-242, who argues that iconographic depictions of Furies have them pointing (rather than throwing) snakes at their victims and that therefore Virgil's Allecto must do the same.

action (7.354-356).³¹ This language echoes the earlier association between Amata's emotions and fire, which suggests that Allecto brings out the flaws and negative emotions that are already present within her victim.³² This suggests that personal identity, which can endure through times of war and peace alike, becomes crucial for thinking about the methods of communication which different characters use or which are effective against them.

Although she has been infected by Allecto's corruption, Amata's first method of opposing Lavinia's marriage to Aeneas is to attempt to persuade Latinus to support her cause. She is initially able to maintain a normal degree of calm in addressing her husband:

necdum animus toto percepit pectore flammam,
mollius et solito matrum de more locuta est,
multa super natae lacrimans Phrygiisque hymenaeis. 7.356-358

Her spirit had not yet drawn the flame into her whole body, and she spoke softly in the usual manner of a mother, weeping greatly over her daughter and Trojan weddings.

Her method of speaking seems dignified, although it is still full of emotion and pathos and is strengthened by a visible display of sorrow (which should have an impact on her husband). Amata makes an argument based around issues of sympathy for herself and her daughter (7.359-362), the dangers of trusting a Trojan man who might be another Paris (7.363-364),³³ Latinus' pre-existing agreement with Turnus and his duty to his people (7.365-366), and the way in which Turnus might fulfil Faunus' prophecy (7.367-372).³⁴ As such, she appeals to familial affection, history, social customs and religion, and devotes most time (and the final climactic place) to the specific issue which seems to have most persuaded Latinus to form the marriage alliance with Aeneas. Although she unknowingly opposes the will of the gods, it is easy to see how her position might, in the words of Elaine

³¹ McAuley (2021) 257-260 explores the tensions and connections between the physicality of this image and the psychological effects of Allecto's intervention.

³² Hershkowitz (1998) 48-52 argues that Allecto develops Amata's pre-existing anxieties to produce madness in her, but that Amata would not have gone mad without this intervention and that Amata takes her madness further than expected. Feeney (1991) 165-171 interprets the text as suggesting that Amata would have gone mad even without Allecto's influence, but that Turnus would not have done so (due to his rational behaviour before Allecto's attack).

³³ Cf. Seo (2013) 50-66 for comparisons between Aeneas and Paris which might support Amata's argument here.

³⁴ Fantham ([1998] 2009) 140-142 explains how logical and rational Amata's argument is, in contrast to the mindless *furor* which grips Turnus after his encounter with Allecto. For Horsfall (2000) 249, only lines 7.359-364 contain rational concerns.

Fantham, seem to be in “the best interests of the family and its continuity”.³⁵ Allecto’s influence has not yet removed Amata’s capacity for skilful and rational argument, although the *necdum* of 7.356 suggests that this is only a matter of time. Nevertheless, the silent Latinus remains unconvinced, and does not acknowledge Amata’s concerns as a mother or attempt to refute her arguments. Latinus’ (lack of) response pushes Amata further into madness:

his ubi nequiquam dictis experta Latinum
 contra stare uidet, penitusque in uiscera lapsum
 serpentis furiale malum totamque pererrat,
 tum uero infelix ingentibus excita monstribus
 immensam sine more furit lymphata per urbem. 7.373-377

When she sees that Latinus stands firm, having tested him with these words to no effect, the frenzied evil of the serpent slipped deeply into her innards and wandered throughout her whole self. Then indeed the doomed woman is roused by huge unnatural powers, and she rages as a maenad through the great city without her usual manner.

When Amata’s persuasive speech does not work, she, like Juno before her, resorts to the methods of the Furies. There is a degree of desperation in these actions, as Amata succumbs to the powerful infernal influences which, as her rational speech demonstrates, she initially resisted; as Homer Rebert argues, the statement that Amata is *infelix* at this point encourages the reader to sympathise with her.³⁶ The shift from Amata’s earlier method and perspective is emphasised by the phrase *sine more* (‘without her usual manner’), which contrasts with the earlier description, *solito matrum de more* (‘in the usual manner of a mother’). Instead of acting like a mother (or a dignified proto-Roman *matrona*), she becomes a wild bacchant, whose rage (*furit*) shows her resemblance to the violent Fury who has infected her, and the madness which she experiences as a result of Allecto’s intervention spreads through the city and corrupts other Latin women to her cause (7.392-396).³⁷ Amata also engages in direct action, as she seizes Lavinia and hides her in the wilderness (7.387-388). This episode shows Amata’s movement from silent worries (which have a clear negative effect on her even before Allecto’s intervention), to an

³⁵ Fantham ([1998] 2009) 142.

³⁶ Rebert (1928) 64.

³⁷ Gilder (1997) 19-22 argues that the serpent which is bound into Amata’s hair (7.353), the use of *furit* here and the infectious quality of Amata’s madness all indicate that Amata becomes a human Fury after her contact with Allecto. This might provide the inspiration for Statius’ presentation of Jocasta as a human Fury, as discussed below in chapter 4.

attempt at rational persuasion within a close interpersonal relationship, to a more violent and forceful method of imposing her wishes on the Latin people.

Allecto's next victim is Turnus. Although the young Rutulian is the poem's primary mortal antagonist, he is initially introduced in particularly positive terms:

petit ante alios pulcherrimus omnis
Turnus, auis atausque potens, quem regia coniunx
adiungi generum miro properabat amore. 7.55-57

Before all the others, the finest man desires Lavinia, well-born Turnus, whom the queen was eager to bond as her son-in-law with remarkable affection.

These lines emphasise his nobility, his physical attractiveness, his interest in Lavinia (in contrast to Aeneas, who never meets her within this poem and barely even mentions her)³⁸ and the fact that he has the approval of his potential mother-in-law. Virgil continues to highlight Turnus' nobility and skill on the battlefield as the narrative progresses, and his desires for glory and self-respect (which might be interpreted as character flaws) are equally present in Aeneas, Ascanius and Pallas.³⁹ Allecto approaches Turnus while he is sleeping peacefully, and there is no indication of pre-existing worries (such as those which trouble Amata).⁴⁰ Christopher Mackie, commenting on this contrast, notes that Turnus' lack of affinity with Allecto at this stage requires her to use more forceful tactics than in her encounter with Amata;⁴¹ Mackie refers specifically to Allecto's violence, but her initial attempt at persuasion also suggests that she must put more effort into rousing Turnus. In fact, her initial attempt to convince Turnus to take up arms is a complete failure.

Allecto assumes the guise of an aged priestess of Juno, Calybe: this is indicated both by physical changes to her appearance, such as the adoption of white hair and wrinkles, and by accessories such as a holy headband and an olive branch symbolising peace (7.415-419).⁴² The importance of this visual aspect to her

³⁸ Todd (1980) notes that Aeneas' only references to Lavinia are his mention of a *regia coniunx* ('royal wife', 2.783) when he repeats Creusa's final speech to Dido, and his inclusion of her name at 12.194 (in reference to naming a settlement after her) at the end of the pact he makes with Latinus.

³⁹ Pöschl (1962) 91-94.

⁴⁰ O'Hara (1990) 69-71 argues that Allecto in fact attacks Turnus precisely because he is too calm and quiet; this would align with the reference to Amata as being on the 'silent threshold' (*tacitumque ... limen*, 7.347) when Allecto attacks her. If Turnus had been preparing war of his own volition, Allecto's intervention would not have been needed.

⁴¹ Mackie (1991).

⁴² For associations between olive branches or leaves and peace or supplication, see Smolenaars (1994) 222 or Horsfall (2003) 213.

message, which is conveyed in uncharacteristically gentle language (7.421-434), is emphasised by the statement that she appears 'before the young man's eyes' (*iuueni ante oculos*, 7.420): the phrase *ante oculos* also appears at 2.270 in Aeneas' dream of Hector,⁴³ where significant emphasis is placed on Hector's physical appearance (2.270-279). The persona of Calybe should invite religious respect for her position and age,⁴⁴ particularly when she says that her message comes from Juno (7.427-428): despite her false identity and concealed motives, it is in fact accurate for Allecto to say that she is acting on Juno's behalf. However, Turnus shows little reverence towards Allecto-as-Calybe, whom he 'mocks' (*inridens*, 7.435) and attempts to ignore:

ne tantos mihi finge metus. nec regia Iuno
 immemor est nostri.
 sed te uicta situ uerique effeta senectus,
 o mater, curis nequiquam exercet, et arma
 regum inter falsa uatem formidine ludit.
 cura tibi diuum effigies et templa tueri;
 bella uirique pacemque gerent quis bella gerenda. 7.438-444

Don't invent such horrors for me. Royal Juno does not forget me. But old age, which is conquered by decay and has used up its truth, worries you with cares for no reason, mother, and deceives the priestess with false fears amongst the martial affairs of kings. Maintaining the statues and temples of the gods is your concern; men, by whom war must be conducted, will conduct war and peace.

This speech suggests self-confidence but no irrational rage, and Turnus refuses to be roused by the priestess' worries. He dismisses her fears as unfounded, and argues that he knows enough about Juno's feelings towards him that Calybe's religious guidance is unnecessary. There is a particular tragic irony to these lines, with their references to falsehood and deception: Allecto's disguise may be a fiction, but her knowledge of and ability to create horror is all too real; and while Juno and her agent have not forgotten Turnus, they give him no privileged knowledge and do not reveal that they cannot stop Lavinia from marrying Aeneas (as stated at 7.314-315). Turnus dismisses Calybe's advice on the grounds that she is a woman and that knowledge of and decisions about warfare should be left to men.⁴⁵ Since Allecto,

⁴³ Horsfall (2000) 286.

⁴⁴ Horsfall (2000) 416.

⁴⁵ Hinds ([2000] 2016) 303-304 points out the parallel between Turnus' argument here and that of Hector in *Il.* 6.490-496, when he argues that Andromache should not concern herself with warfare; but whereas Hector addresses his wife with affection, and wishes to spare her from anguish, Turnus' tone is patronising and dismissive.

as the Fury, is the “very voice of violence and war”,⁴⁶ this claim highlights Turnus’ ignorance about her identity.⁴⁷ The visible elements of the ‘Calybe’ disguise become targets of Turnus’ scorn, as he uses Calybe’s age and gender as reasons to disregard her concerns and expertise.⁴⁸ Allecto has lost her violent power, which (as the use of snakes in her hair against Amata suggests) has a strong element of physicality, during her transformation into someone who uses persuasive words instead of force. She has adopted the kind of persona which, as Amata has already demonstrated through her one-sided conversation with Latinus, is incapable of convincing men to change their minds.⁴⁹ Allecto has clearly misjudged how Turnus will react to her persona, and failed to tailor her argument to those expectations.

Turnus’ failure to comprehend Allecto’s true identity means that his attempt to persuade her through speech also fails. Enraged, the Fury reverts to her natural appearance, and as she makes this revelation, she throws Turnus’ words back at him (7.452-453). This indicates the flexibility of language to create different meanings with the same words: by pointing out the irony of his comments, Allecto shows that Turnus is the one who lacks knowledge of the truth. Allecto’s true form strips Turnus of the capacity for speech, although he continues to try to make himself heard:

tum flammae torquens
lumina cunctantem et quaerentem dicere plura
reppulit. 7.448-450

Then turning her flaming eyes, she pushed him back as he was
hesitating and trying to say more.

The savage sight and contagious touch of Allecto are directly opposed to discourse. This opposition suggests that her disguise as Calybe was a necessary prerequisite for being able to convince Turnus through speech, but his response demonstrates that it is not in fact sufficient. After the failure of speech, Allecto – much like Amata under her influence – turns to her earlier violent methods, and effects a drastic (psychological and physiological) change in Turnus’ character. Allecto throws her torch into Turnus’ chest (7.456-457), a gesture reminiscent of her attack

⁴⁶ Keith (2004) 69.

⁴⁷ Turnus’ ignorance about the plans of the gods is significant throughout the second half of the poem, as Thomas ([1998] 2009) 291-293 argues.

⁴⁸ Horsfall (2000) 296-299 notes that Turnus’ characterisation of Calybe ignores her rational arguments in favour of focusing on her appearance.

⁴⁹ Gilder (1997) 23 identifies similarities between the persuasive techniques used by Allecto-as-Calybe and Amata.

on Amata but with additional overtones of the wedding torch, and he is transformed:

olli somnum ingens rumpit pauor, ossaque et artus
perfundit toto proruptus corpore sudor.
arma amens fremit, arma toro tectisque requirit;
saeuit amor ferri et scelerata insania belli. 7.458-461

Great fear breaks his sleep, and sweat bursts from his body and poured over his bones and limbs. Mindlessly he growls for weapons, and searches for weapons in the bed and the buildings; a love of weapons rages, and the criminal madness of war.

Allecto's power is demonstrated once again in physical terms, and this attack on Turnus' mind has a visible, physical effect on his body. Although the Fury's silencing of Turnus is not explicitly attributed to the fear which he experiences in these lines, it seems reasonable to understand a causal link between these two elements of the passage. An equivalent association between fear, sweat and an inability to speak is found in Lucretius' description of fear's effects on the body:

uerum ubi uementi magis est commota metu mens,
consentire animam totam per membra uidemus
sudoresque ita palloremque exsistere toto
corpore et infringi linguam uocemque aboriri. Lucr. 3.152-155

When, indeed, the mind is more greatly moved by forceful fear, we see the whole spirit act in the same way throughout the limbs, and in this way we see sweat and paleness arise across the entire body and their tongue breaks and their voice fails to emerge.

This Lucretian passage, which closely echoes aspects of Catullus 51 and its Greek model Sappho fr. 31 but removes the erotic context,⁵⁰ looks back to Lucretius' earlier analysis of the impact which fear of death – which is presented as fear of Acheron at 3.37 and 3.86 – has on people's actions and emotions (Lucr. 3.31-93). Nicholas Horsfall's commentary does not draw any parallels between Turnus' reaction and this Lucretian passage, but it does note several linguistic echoes of Lucretius in these lines:⁵¹ such intertextual references suggest that Virgil had the *De Rerum Natura* in mind at this stage of composition.⁵² Lucretius claims that such

⁵⁰ For the correspondences between the Lucretian passage and its Sapphic and Catullan models, see Bailey (1947) 1014, Kenney ([1971] 2014) 99, Fowler (2000a) 149-154 or Clark (2008) 260 n. 15.

⁵¹ Horsfall (2000) 307-310, commenting particularly on *somnum ... rumpit, ingens ... pauor, ossaque et artus, perfundit* and *toto ... corpore sudor*.

⁵² Turnus' use of the word *uates* to describe Calybe at 7.442 might also suggest Lucretian influences across this whole episode, since, according to the argument of Hardie (1986) 16-22, Virgil's

fear often drives men to commit civil violence (Lucretius 3.70-73, 83-86), and Turnus demonstrates the same reaction when he responds to his fear of Allecto, the monster roused from Acheron, by taking up arms. Turnus' fear has a silencing effect, and leaves him unable to argue against Allecto or resist her forceful instructions.

As a *uates*, Allecto is aligned with the voice of the poet, who also speaks civil war into existence and can manipulate emotions with his words. Yet despite the immense linguistic power which this implies, Allecto can only get her way through force: her attack on Amata is violent from the very beginning, and when she confronts Turnus, the failure of her persuasive powers forces her to resort to a physical attack. The indication that Turnus is *amens* ('mindless') as he looks for his weapons shows that he follows Allecto's proposed course of action unthinkingly, rather than because he has been convinced by her argument. This failure to convince is clearly connected to Calybe's status as a woman who lacks the authority to discuss political and military matters: this is the same lack of authority which prevents Amata from persuading Latinus through rational arguments, and which causes Amata – like Allecto – to resort to drastic physical actions to achieve her goals. Ultimately, Allecto achieves what she sets out to do here, but she does so through the revelation of her own violent nature, rather than through persuasive speech in character as the priestess Calybe.

The outbreak of war

In Allecto's final intervention, she initiates the first skirmish of the war by giving Ascanius' hounds the scent of a stag which is loved by the local Italians, and by guiding Ascanius' arrow so that it wounds the creature (7.475-502). This manipulation is more subtle and indirect than Allecto's previous activities: neither the stag nor Ascanius encounters Allecto directly, and the Italians respond with a call to arms of their own volition.⁵³ Nevertheless, Allecto does add her own voice to the chaos of this battle:

pastorale canit signum cornuque recuruo
Tartaream intendit uocem.

7.513-514

construction of himself as a *uates* is particularly indebted to Lucretius' presentation of himself as combining both divine inspiration and poetic skill. Dalzell (1996) 42 similarly positions Lucretius "squarely in the vatic tradition of didactic poetry".

⁵³ Allecto only signals battle after Silvia has called for help (7.504) and her father Tyrrhus has summoned an army (7.508).

Chapter 2: Virgil's *Aeneid*

She sounds the pastoral signal and amplifies her infernal voice with a curved horn.

These lines suggest that Allecto's role is one of amplification, as she exacerbates pre-existing tensions by adding her own call to arms,⁵⁴ and of perversion, as she twists the peaceful world of pastoral poetry into the violent world of martial epic. Allecto's infernal voice overwhelms the peaceful function of this horn, just as louder and more aggressive voices drown out the proponents of peace throughout this poem.

In the battle which follows, two casualties are named – Almo and Galaesus – and both deaths suggest the difficulties of communicating in a time of war:

hic iuuenis primam ante aciem stridente sagitta,
natorum Tyrrhi fuerat qui maximus, Almo,
sternitur; haesit enim sub gutture uulnus et udae
uocis iter tenuemque inclusit sanguine uitam.
corpora multa uirum circa seniorque Galaesus,
dum paci medium se offert, iustissimus unus
qui fuit Ausoniisque olim ditissimus aruis. 7.531-537

Here a youth in the front line, who was the oldest son of Tyrrhus, Almo, is laid low by a hissing arrow; for the wound stuck in his throat and closed both his wet voice's path and his young life with blood. The bodies of many men were strewn around, even old Galaesus, killed while placing himself in the middle for peace, who was a very just man and once the richest in the Italian countryside.

These names are connected to Italian rivers: as Sara Mack observes, this connection represents the destructive influence of Roman civil war on the Italian landscape and the way that the whole region is drawn into this conflict.⁵⁵ As such, the choice of names suggests that these two figures – despite their brief appearance in this poem – hold wider symbolic significance. Almo seems eager for war as he stands at the front, but by entering into combat, he exposes himself to the wound which will strip him of his voice: the horn which calls both sides to war, the arrows which hiss through the air towards their targets, and the blood which is spilled as a result all work to drown out speech. His identity as a young man, defined in relation to his still-living father, aligns him with other important (and youthful) victims in the second half of the poem such as Pallas, Lausus and Turnus. Almo can represent the way that ordinary warriors are excluded from conversations about their own

⁵⁴ Cf. Horsfall (2000) 237-238 on how Allecto's attack on Amata seems to heighten existing marital discord.

⁵⁵ Mack (1999) 130.

fates, and the suffering which they experience as a result; this theme will recur in book 12, when Turnus is put forward as a sacrifice before his duel with Aeneas.

Meanwhile Galaesus strives for peace, much like Latinus (another older, wealthy and morally upright man),⁵⁶ but his attempt at mediation makes him a target. The irony of the death of this peacekeeper can be seen in a bitter pun when the bodies are carried to the city, immediately after Allecto has handed control of the war over to Juno:

caesosque reportant
Almonem puerum foedatique ora Galaesi,
implorantque deos obtestanturque Latinum. 7.574-576

They carry back the murdered, the boy Almo and the face of
mistreated Galaesus, and they appeal to the gods and demand for
Latinus to bear witness.

The verb *reportare* has a literal meaning relating to the conveyance of the corpses, but also suggests the act of reporting a message and thereby plays on Galaesus' attempt to intervene and end the conflict with his words. The description of Galaesus as *foedatus* indicates the disfigurement and pollution of death, but there is also an uncomfortable echo of *foedus*, the kind of treaty that he was not able to accomplish. This is made more striking in a passage where the carrying of bodies contrasts sharply with the earlier message of peace conveyed by Ilioneus and his companions (*pacemque reportant*, 'and they report peace', 7.285), and where the use of *implorare* to beseech the gods recalls Juno's use of the same verb (7.311) when deciding to call upon Allecto. The slippery nature of language and its capacity for multiple meanings, necessary for the production of wordplay such as the possible pun identified here, is highlighted by the use of the same verbs to refer to directly opposed speech-acts: reports of peace and of war, appeals to the underworld and to the gods above. In this first skirmish, Almo's death indicates the silencing of warriors and combatants in battle, and the limitations placed on their individual self-expression by the movement from peace to war, while Galaesus' death shows how war overwhelms and dominates the voices of those who seek to maintain or re-establish peace.

Allecto does not target Latinus directly, but he is exposed to the effects of her interventions. These effects resonate and spread through Latium even after Allecto's return to the underworld, which reflects the way that civil conflict can

⁵⁶ Cairns (1989) 101. Similarly, although Allecto-as-Calybe advocates war, her olive branch suggests that she will be a peacemaker, and this strengthens the association between pacificism and the older generation. A further parallel between Allecto-as-Calybe and Galaesus is seen in the echo of *se offert* from 7.420.

escalate even after the inciting incident has been forgotten. When Latinus is first confronted by his wife Amata, he ignores her complaints: his failure to speak or act in this scene allows Allecto's madness to spread through his city. Even after the effects of this madness have escalated, Latinus responds with inaction: here it looks less like resistance and more like avoidance and inactivity.⁵⁷ As the crowds surround Latinus' palace and clamour for war, he is described as an unmoving rock lashed by the sea (7.585-590): this image can represent Latinus' mental state (he remains unpersuaded by their calls for war), but it does not reflect his control over the external situation. The adverb *nequiquam* ('in vain', 7.589) is applied to the roaring of the cliffs, although, as Nicholas Horsfall observes, we would expect *nequiquam* to describe the waters which cannot move the cliffs.⁵⁸ As such, the application of *nequiquam* to the rock which stands for Latinus hints at the futility of his objections to the upcoming war. More broadly, the imagery alludes to Neptune's calming of Aeolus' storms, an action which is itself compared to a statesman ending civil conflict, at *Aen.* 1.148-156:⁵⁹ a comparison between Latinus and Neptune might suggest that mortals cannot effect the peace which comes so easily to the gods – a theme which will recur in my analysis of *Aeneid* 12 below. Suzanne Adema accurately summarises Latinus' position of both understanding and impotence: "Although Latinus in his mind realizes what should be done, he fails to fulfil this task in an attempt to keep the peace, both in his city and in his own house."⁶⁰ Latinus does not seem convinced by these popular calls for war, yet neither is he able to resist them. The short speech which he offers at 7.594-599 indicates his fear and sense of impotence, and his view that Turnus and the other Latins commit 'unspeakable crimes' (*nefas*, 7.596), but at no point does Latinus ask the crowd to reconsider. Instead, he surrenders power, in an act of both self-silencing and self-seclusion away from the public sphere:

nec plura locutus
saepsit se tectis rerumque reliquit habenas. 7.599-600

Saying no more he confined himself in the palace and abandoned the
reins of public affairs.

⁵⁷ Cowan (2015) 116-118 suggests that the king's failure to prevent civil conflict might be ultimately indistinguishable from a choice to actively initiate it, which gives Latinus a particular responsibility to act.

⁵⁸ Horsfall (2000) 384-385.

⁵⁹ Cowan (2015) points to this parallel as evidence that Latinus, like Aeolus, is a weak and ineffective king who lacks control over the situation.

⁶⁰ Adema (2017) 94.

A similar abdication of responsibility will be seen after the council scene in book 11, which indicates Latinus' repeated and consistent failure to lead.⁶¹ As a consequence of Latinus' self-seclusion in book 7, Turnus is able to take charge and lead the Italians into the war they now desire.

Rather than being compelled by the Fury to lead the Italian armies against the Trojans, Latinus succumbs to the pressure placed on him by his furious subjects, and gives in to the will of the people without attempting to dissuade them from their wrongdoing. Since Allecto does not directly interfere with Latinus, he must be held wholly responsible for his own inaction, and his weakness here shows that a single voice of reason cannot overcome the crowd's desire for blood. Latinus does not lose control of his mind, but he does surrender his capacity to act and rule. While Latinus appears to be a noble and rational king with proven diplomatic skills, all the power here lies with the maddened crowd.

Councils and embassies

In *Aeneid* 11, after a number of casualties on both sides, the prospect of a peace treaty is raised for the first time since fighting broke out. However, the attempts at peace-making in this book are unsuccessful, and the war in Latium will not end until after another bloody battle and the violent death of Turnus. In this section, I will analyse the debates and persuasive speeches which work to establish peace as a possibility, and which contribute to the ultimate failure of this option; in the next section, I will explore issues around communication in the final battle itself.

In a break from the bloodshed which ended *Aeneid* 10, a delegation of Latin orators approaches Aeneas and requests a brief truce to bury the dead:

iamque oratores aderant ex urbe Latina
uelati ramis oleae ueniamque rogantes:
corpora, per campos ferro quae fusa iacebant,
redderet ac tumulo sineret succedere terrae;
nullum cum uictis certamen et aethere cassis;
parceret hospitibus quondam socerisque uocatis. 11.100-105

Already veiled spokesmen came from the Latin city with olive branches asking for a favour: that he would give them back the bodies which lay dead by the sword, spread throughout the countryside, and allow these to go under a mound of earth; for he had no battle with

⁶¹ Cf. Cowan (2015) 114-115.

the breathless dead; he should spare those whom he had once called hosts and kin through marriage.

They show their status as suppliants and messengers of peace through the symbol of the olive branch, and emphasise their former alliance with Aeneas and the fact that the dead are no longer a threat to him. The rhetorical move which positions the Latin people (and particularly their king, who would have been Aeneas' literal *socer*) as former, rather than future, in-laws indicates the importance of family bonds in the creation of peace and heightens the impression of this war as a fundamentally civil conflict. However, the use of indirect speech here reduces the emphasis on this request, in favour of the conversation which will follow, and suggests that its details are not important because Aeneas, thanks to his *pietas*, does not have to be convinced at length.⁶² In fact, the Trojan hero suggests a more permanent reconciliation. He develops the idea of no longer needing to battle with the dead by saying that he would prefer to offer peace to the living (11.110-111). However, he criticises Latinus for rejecting his friendship in favour of an alliance with Turnus, who, Aeneas says, should have fought Aeneas himself:

aequius huic Turnum fuerat se opponere morti.
si bellum finire manu, si pellere Teucros
apparat, his mecum decuit concurrere telis:
uixet cui uitam deus aut sua dextra dedisset. 11.115-118

It would have been better for Turnus to put himself against this death. If he is ready to end the war with his hand, to defeat the Trojans, he should have run against me with these missiles; whomever the gods or his own right hand gave life would have survived.

Aeneas argues that, if Turnus is the driving force behind opposition to the Trojans, he should have the courage to challenge Aeneas on the battlefield, rather than leaving other Italians to die in his place. There is some dramatic irony in these lines, as Turnus' survival in book 10 – like Aeneas' survival in the Trojan war (*II.* 5.311-346, 5.445-453, 20.318-340) – is due to the intervention of a deity who protects him (10.633-688). Significantly, Aeneas does not, at this point, request a duel with Turnus, although this idea will be taken up later in the narrative.⁶³ Neither does Aeneas take responsibility for his own indiscriminate slaughter when he could not locate Turnus after the death of Pallas. When the crowd falls silent (11.120-121), it is not clear if they are impressed by his eloquent offer of peace,

⁶² Cf. Adema (2017) 256-259.

⁶³ As Fratantuono (2009) 80 observes in passing.

surprised by the solution he offers (as Lee Fratantuono suggests)⁶⁴ or shocked and scared by his lack of remorse.

The silence is broken by Drances, who speaks on behalf of the group. His high praise for Aeneas (11.124-127) shows respect, from a professional orator, for Aeneas' skill in delivering speeches,⁶⁵ but this praise is undermined by the poet's criticism of Drances:

tum senior semperque odiis et crimine Drances
infensus iuueni Turno... 11.122-123

Then Drances, who was older and always hostile to young Turnus with hatred and crimes...

This criticism, as Gilbert Highet notes, does not seem motivated by the content of the speech that follows, which takes much the same line as Latinus' proposal for compromise and peace.⁶⁶ It may be motivated by Drances' disregard for previous bloodshed provided he has found a way to get rid of Turnus, or by the sense that this praise is mere sycophancy. Drances does not respond directly to Aeneas' analysis of the battle, but does promise to suggest that Latinus makes peace with Aeneas:

nos uero haec patriam grati referemus ad urbem
et te, si qua uiam dederit Fortuna, Latino
iungemus regi. quaerat sibi foedera Turnus. 11.127-129

Indeed, we will gladly take these words to our native city and join you, if fortune gives us any way, to king Latinus. Let Turnus seek his own treaties.

He follows this by suggesting that he would gladly help build a new Troy (11.130-131), a hyperbolic statement which goes beyond Aeneas' plans and what is permitted by fate. Drances' suggestion here differs significantly from the version of this discussion which he presents to the Latin council. Aeneas has argued that his personal conflict with Turnus should not be fought by intermediaries, but he does not seem to realise that the use of an intermediary to report his wish for peace to Latinus – perhaps inevitable at this stage, since Aeneas cannot safely enter the hostile city – means that his proposal is vulnerable to manipulation.

Drances returns to a grieving city, and it will be useful at this juncture to consider how such grief interacts with the drive towards peace or war. Following

⁶⁴ Fratantuono (2009) 53-54.

⁶⁵ Anzinger (2007) 56.

⁶⁶ Highet (1972) 282-283.

the conversation between Aeneas and Drances, the narrative perspective shifts to Pallanteum, where Evander's grief strengthens his desire for a violent resolution. He encourages the Trojans to return to warfare and specifically calls for Aeneas to kill Turnus (11.175-180). Similarly, Mezentius responds to the death of Lausus by seeking revenge or death in battle (10.844-882). These scenes contrast with another figure who experiences the loss of a son: the unnamed mother of Euryalus,⁶⁷ whose expression of grief is presented at 9.473-502.⁶⁸ Euryalus' mother seems to be the only woman still in the Trojan camp,⁶⁹ and Nisus comments on the unusual bravery and loyalty to her son which prevented her from staying in Sicily with the other Trojan mothers (9.216-218). The camp also lacks other non-combatants, in part because the Trojans have journeyed for so long that old men like Anchises have died and children like Ascanius have grown old enough to participate in battles. When Euryalus' mother hears of the death of her son – who had previously chosen not to bid her farewell or warn her about his plan to raid the Italian camp (9.287-289) – she rushes 'madly' (*amens*, 9.478) towards the battlelines in order to deliver her lamentations. She complains that he has abandoned her and that she was not able to bid him farewell or give his body the proper burial rites, and asks why she followed him to Italy only to lose him to an early violent death. Philip Hardie has described her speech as "a carefully constructed representation of violent emotion":⁷⁰ it contains a large number of short, rhetorical questions interspersed with longer complaints, and includes numerous second-person pronouns, all of which serves to emphasise her desire to address Euryalus (or perhaps his head, impaled in front of the Trojan camp) directly. This highlights the inadequacies of lament: her addressee is dead, and cannot respond to her questions, or change his behaviour to lessen her pain. Euryalus' mother ends by calling on the Italian soldiers, and then praying to Jupiter, to kill her, in order to end a life which has been rendered worthless by the loss of her son. Even this wish is denied to her, and there is no indication that her enemies react to her words and display of grief.

Alison Sharrock has emphasised how the rhetorical skill of this speech, and its speaker's fearlessness in approaching combat in order to deliver it, challenges epic ideas about gendered lament and public displays of mourning.⁷¹ If this speech is ineffectual, it is not because Euryalus' mother lacks valid complaints or

⁶⁷ Wiltshire (1999) 173 suggests that her lack of a name allows her to stand in for all mothers.

⁶⁸ See Hardie (1994) 158-167 for the Homeric resonances in this episode, which particularly align Euryalus' mother with Andromache's response to the death of Hector.

⁶⁹ As Hardie (1994) 14 notes.

⁷⁰ Hardie (1994) 161.

⁷¹ Sharrock (2011) 56-67.

confidence as an orator, but because Euryalus (and the poet) does not allow her to speak to him until he is already dead and unable to hear her or respond. In fact, the speech does have a clear impact:

hoc fletu concussi animi, maestusque per omnis
it gemitus, torpent infractae ad proelia uires.
illam incendentes luctus Idaeus et Actor
Ilionei monitu et multum lacrimantis Iuli
corripiunt interque manus sub tecta reponunt. 9.498-502

The warriors' spirits are shaken by this lament, and a sad groan issues from them all, and their eagerness for battle is broken and slowed. As Euryalus' mother set their grief aflame, Idaeus and Actor – at the warnings of Ilioneus and a weeping Ascanius – seize her and forcibly place her inside again.

Acutely aware of the cost of war, Euryalus' mother starts to discourage the Trojan warriors from fighting and dying like her son. As Georgia Nugent argues, whereas Evander's grief inspires heroism and encourages further warfare, this expression of female suffering is turned against the community.⁷² Euryalus' mother might be able to save the soldiers' lives by dissuading them from fighting, but this would jeopardise their settlement in Italy and could easily, by enervating her audience and sapping their courage, hasten their deaths. The potentially dangerous impact of these words, as Turnus is preparing to attack the Trojan camp, means that she must be removed from the scene, in what amounts to a physical act of silencing. Alison Sharrock suggests that the speech and actions of women in the *Aeneid* "have a substantial effect on men's emotional state, but no effect on policy... [perhaps] because they attempt to enter directly into the man's world, rather than using traditional domestic influence on members of their family who also have political authority".⁷³ By this stage in the narrative, Euryalus' mother has no remaining family members, so speaking in public is the only way that she can make her voice heard; and as a solitary voice for peace, she can be quickly removed from the public stage by men who have the physical strength and military authority that she lacks.

The emotions of the Latin people at the beginning of book 11 are closer to the seemingly dangerous mode of grief shown by Euryalus' mother than that demonstrated by Evander, as loss pushes many people in the city to criticise Turnus' belligerence:

⁷² Nugent (1999) 253-258; see also Panoussi (2019) 87-88 on gendered mourning in Latin literature.

⁷³ Sharrock (2011) 69.

hic matres miseraeque nurus, hic cara sororum
pectora maerentum puerique parentibus orbi
dirum execrantur bellum Turnique hymenaeos;
ipsum armis ipsumque iubent decernere ferro,
qui regnum Italiae et primos sibi poscat honores.
ingrauat haec saeuus Drances solumque uocari
testatur, solum posci in certamina Turnum.
multa simul contra uariis sententia dictis
pro Turno, et magnum reginae nomen obumbrat,
multa uirum meritis sustentat fama tropaeis. 11.215-224

Here mothers and unhappy daughters-in-law, here mourning sisters' familiar hearts and boys bereft of fathers curse the terrible war and the marriage of Turnus; they command him to take up arms and himself determine with the sword who should obtain the Italian kingdom and highest honours for himself. Cruel Drances aggravated these words and attested that Turnus alone was called, Turnus alone was challenged to combat. At the same time, many opinions were voiced against these with different words in favour of Turnus, and the queen's great name shaded him, and his great reputation protected him with well-deserved battle-spoils.

The voices criticising war are those of women and young orphaned boys, which is to say, non-combatants who also lack political power.⁷⁴ Kurt Raaflaub suggests that this kind of perspective may have been common across the ancient world, even if the available sources and historical record do not indicate this: "No doubt, peoples everywhere, oppressed by frequent war, conscription, destruction, and death, yearned for peace and security. But we rarely hear their voices – sometimes because this kind of evidence has simply not survived, in other cases because the extant evidence reflects only the perspective of the mighty elites."⁷⁵ Drances' speech seems, thanks to the structure of this passage, to be produced by and to develop upon these complaints, as if he were a spokesperson for this group;⁷⁶ but he is motivated by his personal enmity towards Turnus, and he misrepresents his earlier conversation with Aeneas (who did not actually call for a duel with Turnus). There are also those who defend Turnus, on the grounds of Amata's patronage and

⁷⁴ Nugent (1999) 269-270 notes that women such as these often challenge the imperial voice of the epic, but that their voices are frequently marked by failure and a lack of authority. Stahl (1990) 183-184 emphasises how this passage shows that Turnus is not fighting on behalf of all the Italians, and therefore reduces the reader's sympathy towards him.

⁷⁵ Raaflaub (2007) 12.

⁷⁶ Gildenhard and Henderson (2018) 402-404.

Turnus' military reputation and successes: it is not clear whether Turnus can also include the grieving amongst his supporters, or just other warriors. Amata herself does not defend Turnus here, but rather her previous support for him is used by those who speak in his favour: her voice is female, like the voices of many of those who criticise Turnus, and she is also a mother and sister (whose relatives are still alive); but her royal status lends her an authority that the mourning women and children lack. Amata's opinions might also hold more weight because they align with the proponents of war rather than peace.⁷⁷ These divisions within Latinus' city recur towards the end of the epic, when Aeneas has turned to attack it: some of the inhabitants call for the city gates to be opened to the Trojans, much as the gates of Troy were (fatally) opened to the Greeks, while others take up arms to defend the walls (12.583-586).⁷⁸ Francis Cairns contrasts the discord found in Latinus' city with the concord demonstrated by the Trojans and their allies;⁷⁹ Cairns does not seem to notice that this Trojan concord is only made possible by the abandonment of most Trojan non-combatants at various stages of the journey to Italy.

The scene of the Latin council begins with another attempt to discourage warfare, conveyed through an ambassador: Diomedes' response to the Italians' request for military aid against Aeneas. The plan of action for this embassy is described at 8.9-17, where emphasis is placed on the Trojans' position as an invading force from overseas and Diomedes' previous knowledge of them. This seems misjudged, as it may remind Diomedes that the Greeks were the invading force in the Trojan war, that Italy is not his original homeland, and that his own experience of fighting Aeneas showed him to be a powerful warrior protected by the gods. The failure of the meeting is summarised upon the ambassador Venulus' return to Latinus' city at 11.225-230, and the full report of Diomedes' words is presented to a council of leading citizens at 11.243-295. As Suzanne Adema rightly observes,⁸⁰ the initial summary differs from the later, more comprehensive, report:

nihil omnibus actum
tantorum impensis operum, nil dona neque aurum

⁷⁷ Sharrock (2021) 108, 113 argues that women in the *Aeneid*, particularly low-status women, can only make their voices heard when they encourage a course of action that their audience already wishes to follow. The same interpretation can be applied to Amata, who is tokenised as a lone voice of female support for Turnus and the war in order to counter the pacifistic voices of women who blame Turnus for the deaths of their loved ones.

⁷⁸ This passage contains a striking line, *exoritur trepidos inter discordia ciuis* ('divisions arise amongst the frightened citizens', 12.583), which, as Tarrant (2012) 239 observes, alludes to civil war by juxtaposing *discordia* and *ciuis*.

⁷⁹ Cairns (1989) 103.

⁸⁰ Adema (2017) 265-266.

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nec magnas ualuisse preces, alia arma Latinis
quaerenda, aut pacem Troiano ab rege petendum. 11.227-230

Nothing from all of the many labours they had accomplished, no gifts or gold or great prayers were of any use; other weapons must be found for the Latins, or peace must be obtained from the Trojan king.

The gifts and gold are not described in detail, being absent from the passage in book 8 and only mentioned in passing (*munera praeferimus*, 'we offer gifts', 11.249) in the full account, which suggests that such gifts have little persuasive power when discussing such serious matters. This summary presents two courses of action: either find other allies, or sue for peace. However, when Venulus reports Diomedes' own words, it is clear that the Aetolian warrior offered only one option, and advocated strongly for peace:

ne uero, ne me ad talis impellite pugnas. 11.278

Please, I beg you, do not force me into such a fight.⁸¹

munera quae patriis ad me portatis ab oris
uertite ad Aenean. 11.281-282

Transfer these gifts, which you are bringing me from your ancestral shores, to Aeneas.

coeant in foedera dextrae,
qua datur; ast armis concurrant arma cauete. 11.292-293

Join hands in the treaties which are offered, but be wary of clashing your weapons against his.

This extended report of the embassy, conveyed in direct speech and presented in front of an internal audience, has more authority and dramatic significance than the summary. Furthermore, the inclusion of several stories about the diverse (but uniformly negative) fates of the Greek kings who fought at Troy (11.255-274) gives evidential depth to Diomedes' pessimism about the Italians' prospects if they continue to oppose Aeneas, in a way that the abbreviated summary does not.⁸² In the light of this passage, Venulus' earlier, private summary seems deceptive. Much like the differences between Aeneas' speech and Drances' report thereof, the contrasting accounts of this embassy highlight the risks involved with

⁸¹ Horsfall (2003) 190 comments that this repeated *ne* is "a sign of urgent prohibition; the old hero pleads paradoxically with the suppliant envoy".

⁸² Hardie (2012) 140-141 analyses the importance placed on sensory and experiential evidence in this scene.

communicating via messengers who may manipulate their messages to suit their own agendas.

Diomedes' disturbing speech creates anxieties amongst Venulus' audience, and Latinus develops upon several of Diomedes' points to strengthen his own arguments for peace. For instance, Latinus emphasises the Trojans' divine blessing and martial endurance (11.305-307), echoing Diomedes' references to the hatred of the gods (11.269), his personal conflict with Venus (11.275-277) and the stature of Trojans such as Hector and Aeneas (11.282-292). Latinus stresses that Diomedes' message should be enough for his council to abandon their hope of Aetolian allies (11.308-309). He follows Diomedes in suggesting a peaceful resolution – which does not include any kind of duel – which he expands into a detailed scheme to give the Trojans land or help them to build new ships; and he ends (11.330-334) by echoing Diomedes' suggestion to offer the Trojans gifts. This is not a particularly inspiring speech: Nicholas Horsfall writes that Virgil “avoids stylistic ornament to the brink of drabness” in this passage and that the “studiedly unexciting content” of Latinus' proposal is “couched in the dry, bleak tones of a man making the best of a lost situation”.⁸³ Latinus concludes by inviting his audience to ‘consider’ or ‘discuss’ his proposal (*consulite*, 11.335), seeking their approval rather than asserting monarchical authority;⁸⁴ this strips Latinus of the ability to negotiate peace, his preferred course of action, on his own terms. This rejection of responsibility takes on political significance if, like Philip Hardie, we understand the debate which follows to contain “echoes of the contests of oratory of the late Republic, which issued in no solution to the political problems of the time”.⁸⁵ In refusing to act as an autocrat, Latinus unleashes the demagoguery and indecisiveness which are weaknesses of a democratic system.

Drances takes this opportunity to address the council with an attack on Turnus.⁸⁶ This speech imitates Thersites' attack on Agamemnon at *Il.* 2.225-242,⁸⁷ but as Gilbert Highet observes, Drances shows greater rhetorical skill.⁸⁸ Drances

⁸³ Horsfall (2003) 200.

⁸⁴ In contrast, as Tracy (2016a) 222-223 notes, Aeneas never consults the ordinary Trojans on his decisions.

⁸⁵ Hardie (2012) 147. See Peirano Garrison (2019) chapter 5, especially pp. 189-199, for an excellent analysis of the blending of Greek and Roman literary and political models in this episode.

⁸⁶ See Highet (1972) 57-65 and Fantham (1999) 266-274 for detailed structural analyses of the competing speeches in this scene; Fantham also identifies (pp. 274-276) parallels with the divine council in *Aeneid* 10, which strengthen Turnus' association with Juno (who uses him as a weapon against Aeneas).

⁸⁷ Cf. Peirano Garrison (2019) 192-194.

⁸⁸ Highet (1972) 248-251; see also Horsfall (2003) 221 or Keith (2020) 114 on Drances' Iliadic models.

suggests that his fellow attendees agree with Latinus, with no need for further discussion, but are reluctant to speak in favour of peace because they fear Turnus' reaction:

rem nulli obscuram nostrae nec uocis egentem
consulis, o bone rex: cuncti se scire fatentur
quid fortuna ferat populi, sed dicere mussant.
det libertatem fandi. 11.343-346

You are not consulting us on something unknown to us or requiring our voice, good king: everyone admits to knowing what the people's fortune may bring, but they are hesitant to speak. Let Turnus give us the freedom to speak.

dicam equidem, licet arma mihi mortemque minetur. 11.348

For I will speak, although he might threaten me with weapons and death.

This suggests that the silence of the council can be read (simultaneously and paradoxically) as indicating genuine assent (for Latinus' plan) and a fear of dissenting (from Turnus' interest in further warfare). Silence remains open to interpretation, and therefore manipulation; when Latinus fails to interpret this silence or elicit any other response, Drances seizes control of the narrative and presents the silence of his companions in a way that suits his own goals. Drances is motivated by envy of Turnus (11.336-337), and his insulting speech is calculated to appear reasonable to a wider audience while rousing Turnus' anger.⁸⁹ Particularly striking is Drances' suggestion that Lavinia should be married to Aeneas, which seeks to ensure that the proposed peace causes Turnus personal harm: Latinus' speech to the council made no mention of the (ostensibly personal) issue of his daughter's marriage, seemingly to avoid alienating Turnus.⁹⁰ Drances also encourages Turnus to fight Aeneas directly, a sharp departure from both Diomedes' and Latinus' proposals to negotiate an immediate peace. Gilbert Highet claims that Drances shows consistency in "supporting and strengthening Latinus's peace proposal and endeavoring to isolate Turnus",⁹¹ but these two goals are in fact contradictory: the attack on Turnus jeopardises Latinus' chances of negotiating a treaty. Drances claims to be seeking peace, with plural verb forms that might suggest that he speaks on behalf of the non-combatants excluded from this assembly: *nulla salus bello, pacem te poscimus omnes* ('there is no salvation in war,

⁸⁹ Highet (1972) 58.

⁹⁰ As Adema (2017) 271-272 argues.

⁹¹ Highet (1972) 250.

we are all asking you for peace', 11.362).⁹² Although Drances is successful in angering Turnus (11.376), Drances' speech can be judged a failure on the basis of his claim to value peace: his provocation of Turnus initiates a return to war, and Drances' vendetta against Turnus is given precedence over the needs of the community.⁹³ Owen Lee writes of this council scene: "No rhetoric has the power of a direct narration of what happens when lives are lost. The speeches distance us from the terror we have waded through."⁹⁴ In this context, I would argue that the verbal sparring which Drances initiates allows the Latin council, and individuals such as Drances and Turnus, to forget the bigger picture in which a continuation of the war will lead to greater loss of life.⁹⁵

In Turnus' angry response (11.376-444), he criticises Drances' use of speech by contrast with his own military activity and record of recent successes; despite his emphasis on military action over oratory, Turnus speaks for longer than Drances and shows a significant degree of rhetorical skill.⁹⁶ The discussion is cut short by the news that the Trojan army is on the move. Lee Fratantuono suggests that Aeneas might be acting before the end of the 12-day truce negotiated by Drances,⁹⁷ which explains why the attack comes as a surprise to the Italians; if so, this casts the sanctity of the later truce – which will be broken by the Rutulians – into doubt. The violent disruption of a peace built on the words of an ambassador suggests a connection between rhetoric and empty promises; the speed at which the young men in Turnus' audience take up arms affirms his argument about the necessity of swift action in times of war:

extemplo turbati animi concussaue uulgi
pectora et arrectae stimulis haud mollibus irae.
arma manu trepidi poscunt, fremit arma iuuentus,
flent maesti mussantque patres. hic undique clamor
dissensu uario magnus se tollit in auras... 11.451-455

Immediately their spirits are agitated, and the hearts of the crowd are stirred and their anger is roused by this harsh prodding. They seek

⁹² Alternatively, Fantham (1999) 267 and Adema (2017) 276 each understands the plurals to refer to Drances' audience in the council and show his apparent affinity with them.

⁹³ Cf. Fantham (1999) 268: "he has subordinated the proper goal of obtaining peace to the self-interested aim of intensifying ill will against his enemy".

⁹⁴ Lee (1979) 1994.

⁹⁵ Stahl (1990) 185 seems to miss the fact that Drances initiates this conflict, and places all the blame on Turnus: "Turnus' flaming outburst has kept the assembly from finding the peaceful solution old King Latinus had hoped for."

⁹⁶ Cf. Hight (1972) 59-65, 210-212; Hardie (2012) 132-133.

⁹⁷ Fratantuono (2009) 147.

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weapons with trembling hands, the young man clamours for weapons, and the sad old men weep and mutter. Everywhere a great noise of disagreement raises itself to the sky...

‘immo,’ ait ‘o ciues,’ arrepto tempore Turnus,
‘cogite concilium et pacem laudate sedentes;
illi armis in regna ruunt.’ nec plura locutus
corripuit sese et tectis citus extulit altis. 11.459-462

‘Look, citizens’, says Turnus, seizing the moment, ‘while you are sitting here, take council and praise peace; they are rushing against the kingdom with weapons.’ Saying no more, he took himself away and quickly left the high-roofed building.

The chaos and noise of warfare drowns out the old men who are opposed to war,⁹⁸ and they seem to resign themselves to a marginalised position. The immediacy of battle, with the Italians caught unawares due to their focus on the debate, seems to confirm Turnus’ argument that conversations about peace are a useless distraction from the real business of war.

The council scene highlights issues around individuals’ abilities to speak and influence events. The opposition to war shown by the grieving Latins is meaningless when those individuals lack the authority to communicate with those in power, and the orator who seems to take up their cause (Drances) is motivated by his personal emotions at the expense of the group. Latinus’ plan does not elicit dissent or disagreement from the council, but the establishment of peace requires a collective effort (involving agreement between Latinus, Aeneas, the Latin council, and a hundred negotiators), and his status as a ruler means that individual arrangements (such as the gift of some of his own estates to Aeneas, or the marriage of his daughter to an appropriate suitor) have an impact on the community as a whole. In contrast, violence can be stirred up by just one angry individual: Drances’ personal aggression towards Turnus creates an aggressive response, which grows into the renewal of conflict more broadly. Although Drances claims to seek peace, his attack on Turnus ultimately leads to the deaths of more Italians: his personal motivations means that he fails to achieve his political goals and his responsibilities as an envoy and as a spokesperson for the Latin people. The conversations held in the council appear to depend less on reasoned debate and more on passionate verbal duelling, backed by the possibility of physical violence.⁹⁹ As Irene Peirano Garrison argues, Turnus’ potent use of rhetoric dismantles any idea of a straightforward opposition between skill in words and deeds (which are both core

⁹⁸ Anderson (1999) 201.

⁹⁹ Feeney (1983) 216 observes that speech is often weaponised in the *Aeneid*, including in this scene.

components of Homeric heroism);¹⁰⁰ but Turnus' opinion prevails because he can back his words with weapons and decisive action, in a situation where speech alone results in uncertainty and a political stalemate.

Preparations for the final battle

Book 12 is a crucial book for any interpretation of the *Aeneid*, with particular significance for the characterisation of both Aeneas and Turnus and the definition of key concepts such as *furor* and *pietas*. My analysis of this book is split into several sections. First, I will explore Latinus' and Amata's attempts to dissuade Turnus from fighting, and the disruption of his plans to meet Aeneas in a formal duel, paying particular attention to the ambiguities around the silence and non-verbal communication which characterises both Lavinia and Turnus. Next, I will analyse how this book suggests tensions in Aeneas' relationship with his son, before turning to the divine realm, to argue that the reconciliation of Jupiter and Juno establishes impossible preconditions for peace. I will end this chapter by arguing that the final speeches of Mezentius and Turnus suggest that Aeneas' anger, and the divisions between the communities involved in this war, cannot be ended by their deaths.

The book begins with Turnus finally recognising his responsibility to his people – *sua nunc promissa reposci*, 'what he promised is now demanded' (12.2) – and committing himself to further warfare. He tells Latinus that he is prepared to face Aeneas in a duel, with Lavinia being married to the victor (12.13-17): she, of course, has no say in this decision. In response, Latinus (12.19-45) and Amata (12.56-63) implore Turnus not to throw away his life like this. Latinus' speech is largely based on rational arguments, although it contains moments of high emotion; Amata relies on emotional appeals throughout.¹⁰¹ Amata's plea for Turnus not to abandon her, and her promise that she will die by suicide if he does, aligns her with Dido's futile attempt to keep Aeneas in Carthage: this foreshadows the fact that Amata, like Dido, will fail.¹⁰² Latinus' and Amata's speeches emphasise the community which surrounds Turnus: as well as the speakers, who both seem to care for him, there are mentions of his father Daunus (12.22, 12.43-45) and his Rutulian supporters (12.40). These speeches do not have the desired effect, and Latinus' attempt to calm Turnus only enrages him further:

¹⁰⁰ Peirano Garrison (2019) 175-177, 195-196.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Tarrant (2012) 97, 103.

¹⁰² Fantham ([1998] 2009) 147; on Amata's connection with Dido see also Tarrant (2012) 102-105.

haudquaquam dictis uiolentia Turni
flectitur; exsuperat magis aegrescitque medendo. 12.45-46

The violent aggression of Turnus is not swayed at all by these words; it overpowers him even more and he grows sicker by this attempt to heal him.

Richard Tarrant notes that this is the only use in the *Aeneid* of *haudquaquam*, an intensified form of *haud*,¹⁰³ and this places particular emphasis on Turnus' unchanged state of mind. As W.R. Johnson comments on this passage, "Latinus' gesture is, like all of his gestures, futile: not because it is in itself unreasonable, but because Turnus suffers from an irrational sickness that is beyond this help or any help".¹⁰⁴ Johnson contrasts this with the failure of Priam and Hecuba to dissuade Hector from fighting in *Iliad* 22: whereas the Homeric characters seem to understand each other and be motivated by reason, Virgil's Turnus is – unbeknownst to his interlocutors – still under the influence of *Allecto* and therefore impervious to reason.¹⁰⁵

Both Latinus and Amata clearly show that they expect Turnus to die if he faces Aeneas;¹⁰⁶ and over the course of their speeches, Turnus realises they are correct.¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, he tells Latinus that he is willing to die for the sake of his honour (*letumque sinas pro laude pacisci*, 'you must allow me to exchange my death for praise', 12.49). The use of the verb *sinere* here suggests that Turnus feels Latinus is attempting to control his actions, particularly since Latinus' emphasis on fate and omens indicates the cosmic limitations which have been placed on the young Rutulian. Turnus' rejection of Latinus' concern might be best understood as an attempt to 'save face': in particular, 'negative face', which Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson define as "the want of every 'competent adult member' that his actions be unimpeded by others".¹⁰⁸ Latinus seems to recognise the importance of 'face' to Turnus, since he is careful to avoid "offending [Turnus'] pride as a

¹⁰³ Tarrant (2012) 98.

¹⁰⁴ Johnson ([1976] 2015) 52.

¹⁰⁵ Johnson ([1976] 2015) 51-54.

¹⁰⁶ Tarrant (2012) 103 sees this as the only point of agreement between their speeches. Anzinger (2007) 91-92 observes that, despite appearing together, Latinus and Amata do not seem to share their concerns with each other or respond to each other's speeches: this highlights that the division in their marriage caused by Latinus' earlier disregard for Amata's concerns still persists.

¹⁰⁷ See Casali (2000) 116-121 on Turnus' unusual level of foreknowledge about his death, which first becomes apparent in his conversation with Latinus and Amata, and the Iliadic models for this scene.

¹⁰⁸ Brown and Levinson (1987) 62. The importance of 'face' to Homeric characters has been demonstrated by Scodel (2008), and Turnus' concern with 'face' in this scene might mark him as particularly Homeric.

warrior".¹⁰⁹ Turnus is willing to meet his (probable, but perhaps not yet certain) death because to do otherwise would be to accept that he has no control over his life, but is instead controlled by (and subordinate to) Latinus. Once Turnus has embraced the likelihood of death in this way, the threat of it holds no power. Neither Latinus' rational arguments nor Amata's appeal to his presumed affection and pity for her can sway Turnus at this stage, who is driven by the irrational passions of *uiolentia* and (at 12.70) *amor*. These failed attempts to calm Turnus suggest that, in some circumstances, no amount of logic or rhetorical skill can persuade someone who wishes to make war that peace is the better option.

Much has been written about Lavinia's enigmatic blush in this scene, which is her only real act of communication in the poem:

accepit uocem lacrimis Lauinia matris
 flagrantis perfusa genas, cui plurimus ignem
 subiecit rubor et calefacta per ora cucurrit. 12.64-66

Lavinia heard the voice of her impassioned mother, covered her cheeks with tears, and a blush took on much fire and ran across her warm face.

Ruth Todd, who describes this blush as "an eloquent and personal response to a deeply private emotion",¹¹⁰ argues that it represents Lavinia's interest in marrying Aeneas;¹¹¹ R.O.A.M. Lyne believes it demonstrates Lavinia's problematic love for Turnus;¹¹² Francis Cairns claims authoritatively that "Lavinia blushes out of shame when she hears her marriage being spoken of in her presence by someone else";¹¹³ other scholars have considered how the blush relates to the prospect of Amata's death.¹¹⁴ The imagery is both violent and erotic, and Turnus' reaction reinscribes Lavinia as a female cause of war: *ardet in arma magis* ('he burned even more for weapons', 12.71).¹¹⁵ However, the silent blush is wholly open to interpretation:

¹⁰⁹ Tarrant (2012) 91; Highet (1972) 252-253 also comments on Latinus' tactfulness in this scene.

¹¹⁰ Todd (1980) 27.

¹¹¹ Todd (1980) 29-30. Rutledge (1987) 19 and Nelis (2001) 379 – the latter quoted by Cairns (2005) 196 – also indicate that the blush is most likely motivated by thoughts of Aeneas.

¹¹² According to Lyne (1983), Lavinia weeps because she shares the weeping Amata's love for Turnus, and then blushes because she is embarrassed to have revealed her own love in this way; see also Lyne (1987) 115-122. In a similar vein, Fantham ([1998] 2009) 147 argues that Lavinia blushes at the thought that "her lover... must decide in front of Lavinia whether to risk his life for her".

¹¹³ Cairns (2005) 197; Tarrant (2012) 105. Cairns argues that the most important precedent is Callimachus' story of Acontius and Cydippe: if so, Lavinia's silence is even more striking, since Cydippe famously (if unwittingly) vocalises her intention to marry Acontius.

¹¹⁴ Woodworth (1930) 186; Formicola (2006) 84-85, 90-91.

¹¹⁵ Cf. Keith (2004) 69-78 on the presentation of women as a cause of epic warfare.

Turnus seems to perceive it as a sign that she favours him over Aeneas, precisely the kind of meaning which he wants to see, but the audience is not shown whether or not this is true.¹¹⁶ Lavinia's silence throughout the poem indicates a lack of autonomy that comes with being a young woman, and makes her more open to manipulation and (mis)interpretation. To speak in favour of a marriage to Turnus would mean an opposition to fate which would not be suitable for Aeneas' future wife,¹¹⁷ but to speak in favour of Aeneas would risk the anger of the aggressive man in front of her (and, on the level of poetry, risk turning him into a less sympathetic character). With no way to influence which of the men she will marry, Lavinia cannot afford to show a preference for one over the other; but at the same time, complete aloofness towards Turnus could be read as hostility. The dynamic tensions which drive the narrative, and the realities of Lavinia's life as the potential bride in a political marriage, require her silence. As Crescenzo Formicula notes, "her words would have given a unique and indisputable meaning to her presence and behavior on the scene, which is exactly what Virgil wants to avoid".¹¹⁸ In this instance, the ambivalence and ambiguity associated with non-verbal communication, which allows viewers to make their own decisions about hidden meanings, provides a degree of safety which more clear and explicit communication could not.

The proposed duel must be preceded by a ritual truce, where Aeneas speaks first, speaks for the most lines (12.176-194) and states the terms of the agreement. It is clear that he already has control over the situation: for instance, his promise that, if he loses, the Trojans will retreat to Evander's city (12.184-187) establishes that there is no prospect of them leaving Latium altogether.¹¹⁹ Aeneas alludes to Lavinia through application of the term *socer* to Latinus and through the city which will be named after her (12.192-194), but she is otherwise not a focus of the treaty.¹²⁰ Neither does Aeneas' speech focus on the details of the duel, perhaps because he is so confident that he will win.¹²¹ Latinus follows his lead – *sic Aeneas*

¹¹⁶ Cf. Anzinger (2007) 95-97. Formicula (2006) 88 argues that Virgil's choice not to show if Latinus or Amata agree with Turnus encourages the reader to realise that Turnus' interpretation is partial and personal.

¹¹⁷ Lyne (1983) 55. Mack (1999) 139 suggests that Lavinia might have good reason to fear Aeneas, a foreigner, refugee and complete stranger whose arrival has brought death to her city and people.

¹¹⁸ Formicula (2006) 89.

¹¹⁹ Miles (1999) 235 notes the importance of this promise in showing that Aeneas is fighting for Italy and the incorporation of the Latin people into his new community: if the physical site of the future Rome had been the focus, there would have been no need for the final duel with Turnus.

¹²⁰ Tarrant (2012) 140 writes that Aeneas "tactfully leaves unstated the fact that Lavinia will become his bride", but it is difficult to tell whether this is tact or mere disinterest in a woman Aeneas has never met.

¹²¹ Highet (1972) 118-119; Mackie (1988) 194.

prior, sequitur sic deinde Latinus ('like so Aeneas first, like so Latinus then follows', 12.195) – and agrees to Aeneas' terms (12.197-211): he speaks on behalf of Turnus, even though he no longer endorses Turnus' claims to marry Lavinia. The two leaders confirm the treaty between themselves (12.212-213), but Turnus is wholly sidelined from this activity.

As Turnus approaches the altar, the pale, silent youth appears more like a sacrificial victim than a suitable combatant:

at uero Rutulis impar ea pugna uideri
iamdudum et uario misceri pectora motu,
tum magis ut propius cernunt non uiribus aequos.
adiuuat incessu tacito progressus et aram
suppliciter uenerans demisso lumine Turnus
pubentesque genae et iuuenali in corpore pallor. 12.216-221

But indeed, to the Rutulians he already seemed unmatched for that battle and their hearts are stirred with a different movement, when then they realise closer by that the two are not equal in strength. Turnus contributes to this impression, moving forwards with a silent step, and honours the altar, like a suppliant, with his light already lost, and his boyish cheeks and a youthful pallor on his body.

Turnus' role in this final book has been analysed as akin to a ritual *deuotio*, in which one warrior gives his life to gain the support of the gods in protecting his people.¹²² His new silence and passivity – the loss of his familiar boldness and quick tongue – create an impression of weakness and helplessness, particularly in contrast to Aeneas' long speech, and the idea that he will be yet another young victim of this war.¹²³ This indicates that even speechlessness can have communicative significance; and Turnus' presence in this scene might recall the similar ambiguous silence of the blushing Lavinia, suggesting that both figures are powerless pawns in the negotiations between Aeneas and Latinus. Juturna, in the guise of the respected warrior Camers, emphasises this idea that Turnus is being sacrificed, to stir the Italians to break the truce and take up arms in his defence:

non pudet, o Rutuli, pro cunctis talibus unam
obiectare animam? 12.229-230

Does it not shame you, Rutulians, that one soul is thrown aside for all these?

¹²² O'Hara (1990) 83-84.

¹²³ On Turnus' silence and passivity in this scene and again after the intervention of Jupiter's Dira, see Anzinger (2007) 66-67.

ille quidem ad superos, quorum se deuouet aris,
succedet fama uiuusque per ora feretur. 12.234-235

Indeed, that man who consecrates himself at the altars of the gods will reach them in fame and be carried alive on everyone's lips.

She easily convinces the warriors who previously desired peace to take up arms again (12.238-243) by taking advantage of their sense of shame and the pity which Turnus' appearance, so different from his previous displays of strength and fearlessness, evokes.

As a minor deity, Juturna has the power to supplement this successful act of persuasion with an omen (12.247-256). The Italians falsely take this as a sign of divine favour for the continuation of war against the Trojans, to justify or excuse their chosen course of action: this indicates another parallel with Lavinia's blush, which, as an ambiguous visual rather than verbal method of communication (like the birds in Juturna's omen), can be understood by Turnus in a way that suits his prior beliefs and desires. As the augur Tolumnius makes clear as he encourages the Italians to fight (12.259-265), this is exactly what he has been looking for: *hoc erat, hoc uotis ... quod saepe petiui* ('this was the thing which I have often sought in my prayers', 12.259).¹²⁴ In fact, by leading the Italian warriors to breach a peace sanctified by rituals and sacrifices, Juturna weakens their cause: as Kurt Raaflaub writes of the broken truce before the duel of Paris and Menelaus in *Iliad* 3 (a clear model for this Virgilian episode), the party which disrupts the truce "will be responsible for the recurrence of the war; the other side will fight for a just cause and enjoy the support of the gods".¹²⁵ Tolumnius' actions demonstrate Latinus' position of weakness, since the king has just promised that no Italians will break the peace-treaty (12.201-203) but is unable to stop them from doing so. Both Aeneas and Latinus deliver accomplished speeches in the formal truce, but these are not sufficient to ensure their control over the situation: this shows the limits of even successful communication.

¹²⁴ We can compare this with Amata's interpretation of Faunus' prophecy as a reference to Turnus (7.367-372), on which Horsfall (2000) 255 writes that Amata "naturally interprets the oracle in her own interest". Wider issues around the unreliability of divine communication have been analysed by O'Hara (2007), who argues (chapter 4) that Jupiter's manipulation of prophecy indicates his untrustworthy nature and thereby destabilises any sense of divine order within the world of the *Aeneid*.

¹²⁵ Raaflaub (2007) 20.

Aeneas and Ascanius

Ideas of descent, family and lineage are at the heart of the *Aeneid*, and fundamental to the contemporary reshaping of Augustan morals and social norms, yet the episodes which I have analysed so far give little sense that Aeneas might be situated within a family network. This contrasts sharply with that pivotal role played by family relationships and conflicts in Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile* and especially Statius' *Thebaid*, as I will demonstrate in subsequent chapters. Most of the key encounters between Aeneas and his family members are separated from the process of civil war which is the primary focus of this thesis: several important scenes are placed before Aeneas reaches Latium, while Aeneas' receipt of a new shield from his mother Venus takes place away from combat in the secluded grove at Caere. In book 12, however, in the middle of the climactic battle, the poet presents a striking encounter between Aeneas and his son Ascanius. What should be a moment of closeness between father and son instead highlights the sense that Aeneas is isolated from members of his family, and struggles to communicate in a private and personal, rather than public and political, manner.

When the truce of book 12 breaks into violence, Aeneas attempts to calm his troops, not to establish peace but to allow him to have his own vengeance on Turnus.¹²⁶ He begins to deliver a speech asking his men to control themselves (12.313-317),¹²⁷ but he is interrupted by a shot from an anonymous archer (12.318-323). This scene is the final point in the poem where Aeneas is described as *pius* (12.311), which suggests that there is *pietas* in his attempt to restore peace but not in his subsequent return to battle.¹²⁸ Although Aeneas survives this injury, it ends his calls for calm: as such, the scene might recall the killing and silencing of Almo (the first death in the conflict between Trojans and Italians at 7.531-534) by an arrow to the throat. This is a clear example of violence hindering communication in such a way that it perpetuates further violence, since this attack encourages Turnus to slaughter the leaderless Trojans (12.324-327), and it also demonstrates the ease with which proponents of peace can be disrupted by people with far less power. As the wounded Aeneas struggles off the battlefield and back to the Trojan camp, he is accompanied by Mnestheus, Achates and his son Ascanius (12.384-

¹²⁶ Mackie (1988) 196.

¹²⁷ Hershkowitz (1998) 200-201 and Tarrant (2012) 167 observe that the speech's opening words – *quo ruitis?* ('where are you rushing?', 12.313) – allude to the first line of Horace's *Epode* 7 about the madness of civil war, and that the term *discordia* (also in 12.313) heightens this association with civil war; Hershkowitz emphasises how Aeneas fails to imitate the political leader in the simile of *Aen.* 1.148-153, who calms *sedition* with his words. Tarrant (2012) 166 suggests that Aeneas' focus on the broken *foedus* makes him seem "out of touch" and "naive or slow-witted", which might resonate with his characterisation as an ineffective speaker.

¹²⁸ Putnam (1999) 215.

386). Aeneas is impatient to return to battle, angry at the delay (*saeuit*, 'he rages', at 12.387), and largely unfazed by the injury. In contrast, Ascanius weeps at the sight of his wounded father:

stabat acerba fremens ingentem nixus in hastam
Aeneas magno iuuenum et maerentis Iuli
concurso, lacrimis immobilis. 12.398-400

Aeneas, groaning bitterly and straining against the giant missile, stood with a large crowd of young men and weeping Ascanius around him, but Aeneas is unmoved by tears.

The way that Ascanius is singled out here indicates the gap between him and the other warriors (including Aeneas), and serves as a reminder that – for all that he has played at being a leader and fighter in book 9 – he is still a child, worried about his father and unable to suppress or disguise his emotions.¹²⁹ In the lines which follow, the poet describes Iapix's inability to remove the arrow from Aeneas' leg (12.400-406), and the noises of battle which indicate the approach of danger and direct threats to the Trojan camp (12.406-410): these details help to explain the source of Ascanius' fears and anxieties. The young man's tears when faced with his father might recall the tears of the dead Hector at 2.270-280 or the spirit of Anchises at 6.684-699, two scenes in which Aeneas also weeps; although both of these meetings with the dead are private, Aeneas cries publicly at 11.29 after ordering his men to return Pallas' body to Evander. However, Aeneas is completely unmoved by his son's tears, and makes no attempt to comfort him;¹³⁰ this emotional distance between father and son is highlighted by the positioning of their names at the beginning and end (respectively) of line 12.399, with a 'whole crowd of youths' (*magno iuuenum ... concurso*) standing between them. Aeneas' impassive nature is also emphasised through a contrast with his mother Venus, who secretly prepares a medicinal concoction which heals her son's wound (12.411-424): she is moved by her son's pain – *indigno nati concussa dolore* ('roused by the undeserved sorrow of her son', 12.411) – in a way that Aeneas is not. The hero's success and survival are shown to depend on the affection and support of his mother and his companions, but he seems incapable of expressing (or even feeling) a similar affection himself.

¹²⁹ Cf. Petrini (1997) 88, Tarrant (2012) 193. Without discussing this episode specifically, Merriam (2002) 852-853 argues that Ascanius remains a child throughout the epic and fails to grow into a selfless hero like his father; see Rogerson (2017) 184-188 on the way that Aeneas' final words to his son also position Ascanius as a young child.

¹³⁰ Lyne (1987) 151-152, 191 comments on Aeneas' lack of warmth towards his son.

Chapter 2: Virgil's *Aeneid*

After he has been healed and has taken the opportunity to rearm himself, Aeneas offers some advice to Ascanius. This is significant as the only point in the epic where Aeneas addresses his son directly,¹³¹ and for the emphasis which Roman society placed on a father's duty to educate his sons.¹³² Aeneas' words are preceded by a description of a somewhat perfunctory embrace:

postquam habilis lateri clipeus loricaque tergo est,
Ascanium fuis circum complectitur armis
summaque per galeam delibans oscula fatur:
'disce, puer, uirtutem ex me uerumque laborem,
fortunam ex aliis. nunc te mea dextera bello
defensum dabit et magna inter praemia ducet.
tu facito, mox cum matura adoleuerit aetas,
sis memor et te animo repetentem exempla tuorum
et pater Aeneas et auunculus excitet Hector.'

12.432-440

Once the shield has been fitted to his side and the cuirass to his back, he embraces Ascanius with his weapons spread around him, and he takes a final kiss through his helmet, and says: 'My boy, learn courage and true hardships from me, good fortune from other people. Now I will give my right hand in battle to defend you, and it will lead you into great rewards. Make sure that, when your youth has grown older, you keep this in mind, and that the models of your kin, both your father Aeneas and your uncle Hector, encourage you as you go over them again in your mind.'

These words read like a final goodbye, as if Aeneas is expecting and preparing to die: he gives Ascanius instructions for how he should behave when he is older, indicating that Aeneas does not expect to witness him growing up, and he positions himself as an *exemplum* akin to that of the dead Hector. The text does not include a response from Ascanius or indicate how his development will be guided by Aeneas' advice, and the audience can only guess at the success or failure of this act

¹³¹ Tarrant (2012) 202. Seider (2013) 161-167 suggests we should imagine this scene as the culmination of all their previous conversations, and argues for an optimistic reading of Aeneas' relationship with his son; my own interpretation focuses on the lack of previous conversations within the poem, and a sense of despair in this encounter.

¹³² Cf. Bradley (2017), especially pp. 326-327 and 329-331, who situates this episode in its historical context to argue that it demonstrates the centrality of children to Roman society. I would suggest instead that, if Bradley is correct on this point, then the marginal status of Ascanius (including his silence in this scene) becomes more significant and surprising. See Rogerson (2017) for an analysis which emphasises both Ascanius' importance and marginalisation within Virgil's poem.

of instruction.¹³³ However, as Carol Merriam observes, the “failure of heroic fathers to pass on their virtues and values to their sons” is a central theme of the *Aeneid*;¹³⁴ and Merriam argues that Ascanius consistently “fails to live up to his father’s ideals of *pietas* and concern for the community” throughout the poem.¹³⁵ As such, the text creates an expectation that Aeneas’ first and final explicit attempt to educate his son in matters of Roman *uirtus* will be unsuccessful.

There is an obvious precedent for this scene within the *Aeneid* itself: Anchises’ speech in the underworld in which he instructs his son on the arts of leadership and military conquest (6.851-853). Aeneas’ use of a future imperative in *tu facito ... / sis memor* (‘make sure that you keep this in mind’, 12.438-439) echoes Anchises’ own command, *tu regere ... memento* (‘remember to rule’, 6.851):¹³⁶ as such, Aeneas imitates his own dead father. Nora Goldschmidt has argued that both Anchises (in book 6) and Aeneas (in book 12) offer instructions which seem to extend beyond their immediate addressees, which reflects Virgil’s attempt to establish his epic within an (Ennian) exemplary tradition;¹³⁷ but there are notable differences between these two scenes. Virgil’s underworld is a place where Aeneas and Anchises meet the spirits of men who are yet to be born: as such, it is appropriate that Anchises looks to future audiences, addressing either his son or the reader as *Romane* (‘Roman’, 6.851).¹³⁸ Aeneas’ message could have a similar dual focus – the instruction to learn *uirtus* and *labor* from the poem, and to remember the examples set by Aeneas and Hector, could be valuable lessons for any Roman reader – but this is complicated by the specificity in his words: his speech is addressed, not to any Roman, but to this boy in particular; and it references Aeneas and Hector, not simply as Trojan heroes, but as the father and uncle of the addressee. As Mark Petrini observes, there is an obvious allusion here to Andromache’s questions about Ascanius in book 3: *ecquid in antiquam uirtutem animosque uirilil / et pater Aeneas et auunculus excitat Hector?* (‘do his father Aeneas and uncle Hector encourage his heroic spirit and urge him towards any of

¹³³ It will be noted that Aeneas’ instruction of Pallas (cf. 8.514-517, 10.160-162) – which Rogerson (2017) 194-196 views as a parallel to Aeneas’ instruction of Ascanius – is not enough to save the young Arcadian from death in his first battle.

¹³⁴ Merriam (2002) 853. Hardie (1993) 93 connects this theme to the particular dangers of civil war, in which “the orderly succession of generations through father and son is cut off by mutual destruction within one generation”.

¹³⁵ Merriam (2002) 853. Similarly, Lyne (1987) 199-205 argues that Virgil shows Ascanius at risk of developing Aeneas’ least positive qualities.

¹³⁶ Rogerson (2017) 186-187.

¹³⁷ Goldschmidt (2013) 149-150.

¹³⁸ Anzinger (2007) 53-54 comments on the impersonal nature of this section of Anchises’ speech, which suggests that it is primarily not addressed to his immediate audience.

our ancient courage?', 3.342-343).¹³⁹ However, Andromache is stuck in the past, making futile attempts to recreate Troy at Buthrotum, and viewing Ascanius as a substitute for her dead son Astyanax, rather than creating a new city and dynasty which will endure into the future (as Aeneas is required to do).¹⁴⁰ Aeneas' attempt to create a larger meaning results in a speech offering little consolation to the worried young man in front of him, but he lacks the temporal perspective to fit his message to the circumstances of an external audience, and the parallels between his speech and Andromache's earlier lamentation suggests that he shares her parochial perspective. Aeneas' limited perception and understanding manifests in other ways as well. In this speech to Ascanius, Aeneas presents himself as someone who has faced great struggles with strength of character but little good fortune: this indicates ignorance about the divine support which he has enjoyed throughout the epic, which has just offered him miraculous healing, and which will ensure his success in the poem's final battle.¹⁴¹ This ignorance shows the failure of both Anchises and Venus' attempts, in books 6 and 8 respectively, to inspire and reassure their son with visions of the future.¹⁴² Aeneas lacks the insight and awareness which would make his suffering seem worthwhile, and which would show that the gods are clearly on his side; as a result, Aeneas is unable to offer any reassurances or optimism to his own son, or to a wider Roman audience.

The details of this (seemingly final) embrace, enacted through a barrier of armour, weapons and a helmet, recall Hector's farewell to his wife Andromache and infant son Astyanax in *Iliad* 6: Aeneas' mention of Hector, and his echo of Andromache's words from *Aen.* 3.342-343, helps to ensure that this episode is present in the reader's mind.¹⁴³ In the Homeric passage, Hector removes his helmet to give his son a kiss and an affectionate embrace (since Astyanax finds the helmet frightening), and prays aloud for his son to surpass his own example of military success (*Il.* 6.466-480). Whereas Hector doffs his helmet in order to experience a tender moment of closeness with his son and to express his hopes and prayers for a brighter future, Aeneas arms himself before thinking to address Ascanius, and

¹³⁹ Petrini (1997) 108; see also Tarrant (2012) 205.

¹⁴⁰ Quint (1982) 30-34, Hardie (1993) 16-17; Andromache draws explicit comparisons between Astyanax and Ascanius at *Aen.* 3.486-491.

¹⁴¹ MacKay (1957) 15. Tarrant (2012) 203 describes it as a "considerable risk" for Virgil to present these complaints so close to Venus' intervention as it makes them seem less credible.

¹⁴² Aeneas' ignorance is highlighted at 8.730-731, when it is clear that he doesn't understand the extravagant artwork which decorates his new shield (and which should fill him with love of Rome).

¹⁴³ This comparison, and the contrast between Aeneas and Hector in these farewell scenes, is discussed by Belfiore (1984) 28-30 and Skulsky (1985) 454.

seems to envisage only a continuation of suffering for the young man.¹⁴⁴ The distance suggested by this partial embrace and conversation is highlighted through Aeneas' use of the word *puer* which, according to Eleanor Dickey, is normally used to address boys who are not related to the speaker:¹⁴⁵ Aeneas treats Ascanius as if he were someone else's son, rather than his own. Richard Tarrant claims that Aeneas' embrace of Ascanius "is both touching (arguably more so than the speech that follows) and meaningful" because it shows that Aeneas "allows himself no respite from the impending battle", and does not see the barrier of the helmet as reducing the emotions of the scene.¹⁴⁶ I disagree with this interpretation, particularly as Aeneas is already removed from the battlefield, and could presumably remove his helmet with ease if he so chose without creating any more delay than his speech does.

The presence or absence of physical contact is important in Aeneas' family relationships.¹⁴⁷ In book 1, when he encounters Venus in disguise, and doesn't recognise her until she has departed, Aeneas complains: *cur dextrae iungere dextram / non datur ac ueras audire et reddere uoces?* ('why can't we join right hands and to hear and speak in our true voices?', 1.408-409).¹⁴⁸ In book 2, Aeneas is able to rescue Anchises, whom he carries on his shoulders, and Ascanius, whose hand he clasps, but not Creusa, who follows close behind but does not seem to be touching her husband (2.721-725);¹⁴⁹ and Creusa's death is given additional pathos by Aeneas' failed attempts to embrace her ghost (2.792-794). This failed embrace is repeated verbatim in the underworld (6.700-702),¹⁵⁰ when Aeneas encounters the spirit of his father Anchises: both father and son express their sorrow at their long separation with tears and words, before the scene progresses towards a more

¹⁴⁴ Mackie (1988) 197-198 comments that Aeneas' speech, although affectionate, lacks the pathos found in the Iliadic scene, and also notes that Aeneas' pessimism is undermined by his recent experience of divine salvation.

¹⁴⁵ Dickey (2002) 192, quoted by Tarrant (2012) 203. Tarrant argues (pp. 203-204) that the use of *puer* here suggests that Aeneas is speaking to future Romans as much as to his son: this would be oddly infantilising and, as I have indicated, I believe that Aeneas' speech is too limited in its referents to function in this way.

¹⁴⁶ Tarrant (2012) 434.

¹⁴⁷ McAuley (2021) offers a wider exploration of the importance of touch in the *Aeneid*, particularly in relation to female characters and feminist readings of the poem, but does not focus on the paternal relationships which are crucial to my analysis here.

¹⁴⁸ McAuley (2021) 263-265 explores the emotional impact of this episode.

¹⁴⁹ See McAuley (2021) 249-253 on the way that the absence of touch marginalises Creusa and excludes her from the male dynastic line.

¹⁵⁰ McAuley (2021) 254 comments that this repetitiveness heightens the emotional power of Aeneas' failed embraces.

optimistic explanation of Rome's future glory.¹⁵¹ Elizabeth Belfiore has drawn out the connections between Aeneas' failures to embrace Venus, Creusa and Anchises, and argues that Aeneas' time in the underworld adjusts his perspective so that he values the impersonal *pietas* of patriotism and obedience to the gods over the personal *pietas* towards his family which motivated his desire to embrace them: as such, for Belfiore, Aeneas is disinterested in physical touch by the second half of the poem.¹⁵² However, affectionate physical contact is still important to other characters: when Aeneas reaches Italy, Latinus wishes to clasp hands with his future son-in-law before peace can be brokered (as discussed above), and the lack of contact here is a factor which permits the outbreak of war. In book 8, when Venus brings Aeneas the shield which will help him to defeat Turnus and his supporters, they share an embrace – *amplexus nati Cytherea petiuit* ('Venus sought the embrace of her son', 8.615) – which seems to answer Aeneas' earlier complaint that he could not touch her during their earlier meeting.¹⁵³ In this context, the barrier created by Aeneas' armour and helmet in book 12, which is given additional significance through a comparison with the Homeric Hector, reproduces and exacerbates, rather than alleviating, the emotional distance indicated by Aeneas' lack of reaction to Ascanius' tears; and we might imagine Ascanius feeling the same sorrow which his father demonstrated in the first half of the poem, after his own failures to embrace his loved-ones.

The infant Astyanax cannot respond to his father; but book 6 of the *Iliad* shows Hector in dialogue with his mother, brother, sister-in-law and wife, and thereby situates him within a family context in which everyone has the capacity for speech and self-expression. In contrast, Ascanius is certainly old enough to speak, and expresses affection for his father through his tears at Aeneas' wounds; but the narrative gives him no space to respond to Aeneas' instructions and farewell.¹⁵⁴ In effect, this *puer* is treated as if he were still *infans* ('unspeaking'). Even in this scene where Aeneas is finally shown to address his son directly, the act of communication appears one-sided: Aeneas appears isolated even from the

¹⁵¹ Aeneas' second separation from his father is passed over very quickly in lines 6.897-899, without any indication that either party finds this sad or distressing – Belfiore (1984) 25 describes this as a "remarkably casual" farewell that feels as if Anchises were "an ordinary host seeing his guests off" – which suggests that their conversation has helped to alleviate Aeneas' grief.

¹⁵² Belfiore (1984).

¹⁵³ Belfiore (1984) 26-27 argues that Aeneas' muted response to this successful embrace indicates his disinterest, at this stage of the narrative, in this kind of contact; but it should be noted that Aeneas is consistently bad at expressing happiness or satisfaction.

¹⁵⁴ As Feeney (1983) 215 observes. Laird (1999) 193-194 attributes Ascanius' silence to his position of inferiority as a child, son and student of Aeneas. Even if this is the case, an emphasis on hierarchical relationships does not reduce (and may actually amplify) the sense of isolation in this passage.

people who are closest to him. Aeneas is witness to his own suffering, but he cannot see the broader picture which should make that suffering worthwhile; and all he expects for his son is a repetition of his own struggles and isolation. The tensions in this scene can be attributed, at least in part, to Aeneas' focus on his military responsibilities which he places ahead of other aspects of his identity; to the clear and present risk that he will die in this battle; and to his anger at the broken treaty. Although this particular civil war has not turned father against son, it does appear to have weakened the bonds which should hold this quasi-dynastic family together.

Divine reconciliation

Although the mortal actors of the *Aeneid* are unable to achieve peace, there is a significant successful act of communication in the poem's final book: the reconciliation of Jupiter and Juno (12.791-842). This episode can offer insights into the reasons why communication in the mortal realm is so frequently unsuccessful in this poem, and it reveals that even divine communication has its limitations.

While Turnus and Aeneas recover their weapons and turn to face one another, the scene dramatically shifts to the battle's divine spectators, as Jupiter asks Juno: *quae iam finis erit, coniunx? quid denique restat?* ('what will the end be now, wife, what indeed is left?', 12.793). The two figures are literally above and detached from the concerns of war, and their close relationship is indicated by the term *coniunx*: as Silke Anzinger notes, this marital conversation contrasts with the gulf that seems to exist between Latinus and Amata.¹⁵⁵ Closeness is also suggested by the possible playfulness in Jupiter's reference to *finis*, when he has already promised that Rome will have 'power without an end' (*imperium sine fine*, 1.279), and when endings and closures are his domain, and Juno's responsibility for childbirth makes her a goddess of opening.¹⁵⁶ Jupiter is aware that Juno cannot challenge him, but he shows some concern for how she will feel if she attempts to do so:

desine iam tandem precibusque inflectere nostris,
ne te tantus edit tacitam dolor et mihi curae
saepe tuo dulci tristes ex ore recursent. 12.800-802

¹⁵⁵ Anzinger (2007) 91-94; see also Feeney (1983) 214. Fantham ([1998] 2009) 148 notes that Amata and Juno each display opposition to their husbands, but that Amata lacks Juno's supernatural ability to intervene.

¹⁵⁶ Lee (1979) 140-142 identifies the blurring of the distinctions between Juno and Jupiter as a sign of destabilisation, inversion and the absence of an ordered world; Hershkowitz (1998) 101-124 comments on the interplay of openness and closure between Juno and Jupiter.

Now cease, at last, and bend to my entreaties, so that such great pain does not eat away at you in silence and sad worries do not keep coming frequently to me from your sweet mouth.

As David West indicates, Jupiter shows Juno his affection and respect by referring to the dictates he is able to impose by force of will as *preces* – ‘entreaties’, as West has it, but also ‘prayers’, the means by which mortals communicate their requests to powerful and distant gods – to which Juno should consent.¹⁵⁷ Jupiter is aware of the pain which can result from self-silencing and the suppression of thoughts and emotions, which can itself be considered a kind of communication failure, and we might recall how Allecto pushed the silently-stewing Amata to express her pent-up frustration publicly in *Aeneid* 7. Despite this explicit concern for Juno’s feelings, there remains a power imbalance, in which Jupiter’s wishes take priority, and this is reinforced by the slight threat which hangs in his final words: *ulterius temptare ueto* (‘I forbid you to try anything else’, 12.806). Juno’s body language shows that she submits to his will – *sic dea summisso contra Saturnia uultu* (‘with her face turned down, the goddess, Saturn’s daughter, responded’, 12.807)¹⁵⁸ – but she is not completely powerless.¹⁵⁹ She is able to ask that the Latin people should retain their name, language and appearance after their merger with the Trojans (12.823-825). In doing so, Juno reaffirms the importance of physical appearance and a shared name and language as key markers of identity,¹⁶⁰ consequently, the loss of language becomes a loss of identity, and this is the punishment she wishes to impose on the Trojans.

Juno’s request changes the model of communication, from one of a powerful man issuing orders that he knows must be followed, to an instance of give-and-take, negotiation and compromise. Both figures appear happy with the final result: Jupiter smiles at 12.829, and Juno cheerfully agrees with him at 12.841. The contrast with the grief and pain being enacted on earth suggests that these divinities are emotionally detached from mortal affairs,¹⁶¹ and that this reconciliation is possible only because the issue of the war is less important to these

¹⁵⁷ West ([1998] 2009) 308-309. Tarrant (2012) 294 sees hints of love elegy in these lines, including the use of *preces*.

¹⁵⁸ Amerasinghe (1953) reads references to Juno as *Saturnia* throughout the poem as reminders of the goddess’ failure to maintain the dignity and high status which her heritage and position as Jupiter’s wife should provide.

¹⁵⁹ Her body language might also suggest this: Lovatt (2013) 71-77 argues that when epic gods avert their gaze, it can indicate disrespect or disregard for the person or people at whom they would otherwise look, as well as or instead of representing powerlessness.

¹⁶⁰ West ([1998] 2009) 304-307 analyses the importance of these features for the construction of Augustan Roman identity.

¹⁶¹ Johnson ([1976] 2015) 124-126.

individuals than their interpersonal status.¹⁶² Jupiter suggests that he has been persuaded, not by Juno's deference or rational argument, but by the passion and fierceness of her words:

es germana Iouis Saturnique altera proles,
irarum tantos uoluis sub pectore fluctus.
uerum age et inceptum frustra summitte furorem:
do quod uis, et me uictusque uolensque remitto. 12.830-833

You are a true sister of Jupiter and another child of Saturn, you turn such great waves of anger about in your heart. But come now and put aside the rage begun in vain: I give what you wish for, and retreat beaten and willing.

Juno's enduring anger, strength of character and refusal to submit silently to his will is a reminder of her high status and, more significantly, her kinship with and similarity to Jupiter.¹⁶³ As he agrees to Juno's request, Jupiter describes himself as *uictusque uolensque*, suggesting that Juno has some measure of power over him, while restating that his actions fall entirely within his own will.¹⁶⁴ As Denis Feeney notes, this level of respect and compromise to create a lasting peace contrasts both with the lack of a mortal reconciliation in the *Aeneid*, and with the tenuous and breakable agreements made between Hera and Zeus in the *Iliad*.¹⁶⁵ This (largely positive)¹⁶⁶ moment of reconciliation highlights power dynamics, suggesting that negotiation can only take place between people of near equal status who recognise their closeness to each other, and that peace requires the party in the position of greater power to willingly surrender a measure of their status and authority. Alternatively, this episode might indicate that peace is only possible in the divine realm, between individuals who are ultimately unbothered by mortal struggles and the loss of life associated with war:¹⁶⁷ this would encourage a much more pessimistic reading of the poem.

¹⁶² Cf. Lyne (1987) 86, 97-98.

¹⁶³ Hershkowitz (1998) 116-117.

¹⁶⁴ West ([1998] 2009) 311; West emphasises the comedy and playfulness of this scene.

¹⁶⁵ Feeney (1991) 148-149.

¹⁶⁶ There are certainly darker undertones to the passage. Harrison (1984) 108-115 argues convincingly that their reconciliation relies on Jupiter's deceptive failure to reveal to Juno that Roman ascendance will entail the destruction of her favoured city Carthage; see also West ([1998] 2009) 303-304. Alternatively, Feeney (1991) 147-149 sees it as only a partial reconciliation, suggesting that both Jupiter and Juno are aware that it resolves Juno's grudge against Troy for Ganymede and Paris but not her grudge against Rome for the future destruction of Carthage.

¹⁶⁷ Lyne (1987) 86, 98.

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The reconciliation of Jupiter and Juno indicates that the world of the poem allows for the resolution of conflict through conversation rather than violence. However, Jupiter quickly undermines this message by sending one of the Dirae, a creature not dissimilar from Allecto,¹⁶⁸ to attack Turnus and hasten his death (12.843-855). Far from encouraging dialogue and negotiation, the creature silences Turnus, replacing his words with the beating of its wings:

hanc uersa in faciem Turni se pestis ob ora
fertque refertque sonans clipeumque euerberat alis.
illi membra nouus soluit formidine torpor,
arrectaeque horrore comae et uox faucibus haesit. 12.865-868

The curse twisted itself against Turnus' face and went back and forth, making a noise and beating his shield with its wings. A new sluggishness weakened his limbs with fear, and his hair stood up with horror and his voice stuck in his throat.

Turnus' loss of speech here is aligned to a loss of action and of autonomy ahead of his defeat and death,¹⁶⁹ and is used to encourage Juturna to adopt a similar level of passivity and inaction;¹⁷⁰ it also echoes and inverts Turnus' earlier encounter with the Fury Allecto, another scene in which fear inhibited his speech, which forced him into a rush of violent activity.¹⁷¹ Juturna recognises the creature as a sign of Jupiter's displeasure, and submits to his wishes (12.875-878): although she is a goddess, she has far less power than Jupiter and Juno and cannot oppose them. It is not simply the case that gods can resolve conflict peacefully, while mortals cannot: even on a divine level, peaceful resolution is reserved for situations of closeness and near equality. According to Gunther Gottlieb, the reconciliation of Jupiter and Juno demonstrates the construction of a divine *consensus* to parallel the significance placed on societal agreement in the early Principate, after the divisions occasioned by civil war.¹⁷² In the *Aeneid*, however, this divine *consensus* is not paired with peaceful agreement in Latium, but is instead contrasted with the violent divine intervention that leads to the death of Turnus. As such, the episode

¹⁶⁸ See Johnson ([1976] 2015) 127-130 and 144-148, Feeney (1991) 151, Hershkowitz (1998) 88-89, 113-115 and Tarrant (2012) 306-307 on the similarities between Dirae and Furies in this text.

¹⁶⁹ Panoussi (2020) 37-39, analysing Turnus' silence and weakness at 12.903-912 after his failure to throw a rock at Aeneas, argues that Turnus' loss of speech indicates his experience of combat trauma.

¹⁷⁰ See Anzinger (2007) 18 on the widespread close connection between silence and inaction.

¹⁷¹ Hershkowitz (1998) 118 notes that the Dira is not used to release Turnus from Allecto's infectious madness, but instead focuses on persuading Juturna to drop her rational opposition to Jupiter's plans.

¹⁷² Gottlieb ([1998] 2009) 23-24.

serves to foreground the lack of *concordia* or reconciliation through speech in the mortal realm.

The deaths of Mezentius and Turnus

The violent death of Turnus which ends the *Aeneid* is a product of the poem's final attempt to persuade. This shocking ending contrasts with the endings of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, in which the final acts of violence are followed by scenes to establish emotional closure and the reintegration of the hero into the community;¹⁷³ but it also contains a number of closural gestures that mark the poem as complete.¹⁷⁴ While some scholars believe that the killing of Turnus accords with Anchises' advice to Aeneas in the underworld – *pacisque imponere morem, / parcere subiectis et debellare superbos* ('impose peace and customs, spare the defeated and subdue the arrogant', 6.852-853) – and therefore re-establishes order in the world of the poem,¹⁷⁵ others have argued that Turnus' death shows Aeneas rejecting his father's advice.¹⁷⁶ On the latter reading, Anchises' act of paternal instruction fails to have a lasting impact on his son's behaviour, which does not bode well for Aeneas' own attempt to educate Ascanius on the model of his father's speech (as discussed above). Much of the power of the poem's ending derives from the shocking nature of Turnus' death, which relies on the reader's surprise that Aeneas ignores Anchises' instructions, and as such I find the 'pessimistic' interpretation of this scene more convincing. The adjective *subiectus* suggests someone in a weaker position, while *superbus* indicates someone who is or considers themselves to be superior or more powerful: as such, this advice offers no guidance on how to deal with someone as an equal, which, as the reconciliation of Jupiter and Juno suggests, might be necessary for the achievement of lasting peace. Carlin Barton has argued that the Roman understanding of *pax* ('peace') involved the supplication and

¹⁷³ Putnam ([1987] 2000) 231-233; Hardie (1997) 142-144.

¹⁷⁴ See Hershkowitz (1998) 101-112 for the blurring of openness and closure enacted by Virgil's gods, O'Hara (2010) for some of the closural gestures in the ending of the *Aeneid*, and Tarrant (2012) 16-33 for the abruptness of the poem's ending and the continuations it inspired.

¹⁷⁵ Lloyd (1972) argues that Turnus remains *superbus* until the poem's final lines; Mackie (1988) 213-215 sees Turnus' death as being fully in accordance with the demands of *pietas*; Tarrant (2012) 19 writes that Turnus' killing "is only unjust according to an interpretation of *parcere subiectis* that no Roman of Virgil's time is known to have endorsed".

¹⁷⁶ Cf. Pöschl (1962) 136; Putnam (1975) 188; Lee (1979) 103, 140-142 and 155-156; Lyne (1987) 111-112; Putnam ([1987] 2000) 231; Agri (2010) 145-147; Seider (2013) 201-202; Gildenhard and Henderson (2018) 8. Thomas ([1998] 2009) 274-275 argues that the emphasis on Octavian's clemency towards those who asked for pardon in *RGDA* 3.1 suggests that Turnus also deserves to be spared. Fedeli (2018) 152 offers the fascinating suggestion that Turnus (as a character in Virgil's narrative) is in some sense aware that Anchises' instructions should lead Aeneas to spare him, and that this is why his final plea includes a reference to Aeneas' father.

surrender of a party that had already been utterly defeated, and contained no guarantee of mercy or respect and no real attempt at reconciliation; as such, the Romans were willing to impose peace on others but reluctant to accept it from foreign enemies for themselves.¹⁷⁷ At the truce, it seems that Aeneas and Latinus may be able to reach an agreement that removes the need for the unilateral imposition of peace; but the killing of Turnus demonstrates the Roman model of unconditional surrender, which does not ensure any rights for the defeated. To return to Carsten Hjort Lange's formulation quoted in the first chapter of this thesis, the absence of a peaceful settlement from the *Aeneid*'s final scene leads the text to focus instead "on the terrible, destructive and violent side of a war against citizens".¹⁷⁸ Lange indicates how important the imposition of peace (and freedom from a renewal of civil war) was for the justification of Augustus' autocratic position in the Roman state,¹⁷⁹ but Virgil does not offer any equivalent demonstration of peace under Aeneas.

The poem does not answer the question of what will happen after the death of Turnus, but a comparison with the death of Mezentius – who, like Turnus, makes requests relating to how Aeneas will treat his body – offers some hints.¹⁸⁰ Mezentius is one of the few individuals who can engage Aeneas in battlefield conversation, a sign of his high social status, and his loquaciousness is matched with frenetic activity, as he hurls multiple spears at Aeneas.¹⁸¹ His death, which is followed by a description of funerals and communal grieving, has a structural parallel to the death of Hector in *Iliad* 22,¹⁸² and is therefore given an elevated significance in the poem as foreshadowing for the death of Aeneas' principal antagonist Turnus. Unlike Turnus, but like Aeneas and Hector, Mezentius is a father, and he asks Aeneas to protect his body from mutilation and to bury him alongside his son:

¹⁷⁷ Barton (2007) 247-251.

¹⁷⁸ Lange (2009) 191.

¹⁷⁹ Lange (2009) 204-205; see also Rosenstein (2007) 242 for the argument that Augustus emphasised reconciliation rather than violent pacification in order to "secure the cooperation of the vanquished in defending the victor's rule".

¹⁸⁰ James (1995) 630-633, Fratantuono (2009) 13, Tarrant (2012) 331 and McClellan (2019) 59-61 establish that these deaths should be read alongside each other. Further hints of Turnus' fate might be found in the death of Amata, who ties her life and fate to that of Turnus at 12.61-63. Amata ends her life by hanging herself at 12.595-603, and Fantham ([1998] 2009) 148 comments, on the authority of Servius, that in early Rome there were prohibitions on burying people who died in this way. To a reader who knows that Amata would not typically receive burial, her death might suggest that the same fate applies to Turnus after the end of the epic.

¹⁸¹ Anzinger (2007) 61-62.

¹⁸² Mackie (1988) 179. Mackie argues that Turnus' death, by ending the Italian war, is more akin to Paris' death than Hector's.

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‘unum hoc per si qua est uictis uenia hostibus oro:
corpus humo patiare tegi. scio acerba meorum
circumstare odia: hunc, oro, defende furorem
et me consortem nati concede sepulcro.’
haec loquitur, iuguloque haud inscius accipit ensem
undantique animam diffundit in arma cruore. 10.903-908

‘I beg for this one thing, if there is any kindness owed to conquered foes: let my body be covered by the ground. I know that the bitter hatred of my people surrounds me: defend me, I pray, from their rage and allow me to be my son’s companion in the tomb.’ He said this and, not without realising what he did, welcomed the sword into his throat and poured out his breath and wet blood over his armour.

This appeal for clemency, focusing on a good burial rather than having his life spared, asks for the victory of *pietas* over *furor*, a key theme of the *Aeneid*. Mezentius focuses on the love for his son which makes this otherwise villainous character more sympathetic, and his position as a father which aligns him with Aeneas’ own identity. His willing acceptance of a martial death, his clear affection for Lausus (whose death means his own life is no longer worth living) and his ability to acknowledge his own failures offer some redemption and regained nobility to the criminal king.¹⁸³ The request for a proper burial alongside his son recalls Aeneas’ promise to the dead Lausus:

arma, quibus laetatus, habe tua; teque parentum
manibus et cineri, si qua est ea cura, remitto. 10.827-828

Keep your weapons, which brought you joy; I am returning you to the hands and ashes of your ancestors, if this fate causes you concern.

This respect towards Lausus is motivated by a consideration of the importance of father-son relationships, since Lausus’ loyalty to Mezentius reminds Aeneas of his own filial *pietas*.¹⁸⁴ this seems to suggest that an appeal to family bonds, such as that which Turnus will pursue in his final speech, might be successful.

Aeneas does not give Mezentius a verbal response, and neither confirms nor denies his final request; instead, his slashing of Mezentius’ throat silences him and cuts off any further conversation. Aeneas frequently avoids speech on the battlefield (although he does engage in conversation with Mezentius before his death), and Silke Anzinger argues that this demonstrates Aeneas’ lack of

¹⁸³ Anderson (1999) 258-259.

¹⁸⁴ Mackie (1988) 175.

enthusiasm for combat:¹⁸⁵ on this reading, the experience of war is directly responsible for Aeneas' taciturnity in this half of the poem. Nevertheless, the treatment of Mezentius' remains at the beginning of book 11, which contrasts sharply with the respect and dignity shown to Pallas' corpse in the same book, suggests that Mezentius' final request is denied.¹⁸⁶ Mezentius' blood-stained helmet and broken weapons are dedicated to Mars (11.5-11); included in this monument is Mezentius' 'chest piece, which had been attacked and pierced in twelve places' (*bix sex thoraca petitum / perfossumque locis*, 11.9-10).¹⁸⁷ This damage cannot be the result of Aeneas' slash to Mezentius' throat, and suggests instead that Mezentius' body, instead of being respected, has been posthumously attacked by representatives from the twelve Etruscan cities allied against him.¹⁸⁸ The phrase *petitum perfossumque* is darkly ironic, since *petere* can mean 'to beg, to plead' as well as 'to attack', and *perfodere*, the verb which here means 'stabbed or pierced through', has etymological links to digging and the kind of respectful burial which Mezentius desired. Aeneas uses this display of Mezentius' remains to assure his men that Latinus' city will be easier to conquer without his presence – *nunc iter ad regem nobis murosque Latinos* ('now there is a route for us to the king and walls of Latium', 11.17) – and thereby points towards a continuation of violence, rather than the achievement of peace, after the killing of his principal enemies. The death of Mezentius prepares readers for the death of Turnus by showing that Aeneas is not moved to grant the dying pleas of his enemies, even when the importance of family and dignity are evoked, and suggests that victory may be followed by further violence towards those who are helpless and defeated.

The defeated Turnus positions himself as a suppliant, in a way that Mezentius did not, as he asks for Aeneas to put aside his enmity:

ille humilis supplex oculos dextramque precantem
 protendens 'equidem merui nec deprecor' inquit;
 'utere sorte tua. miseri te si qua parentis
 tangere cura potest, oro (fuit et tibi talis
 Anchises genitor) Dauni miserere senectae
 et me, seu corpus spoliatum lumine mauiis,
 redde meis. uicisti et uictum tendere palmas

¹⁸⁵ Anzinger (2007) 62-63.

¹⁸⁶ Pace Harrison (1991) 283, who claims – without clear support from the text – that "Mezentius' request seems to be fulfilled in the general burial-amnesty". McClellan (2019) 49-52 agrees with my argument that Mezentius' corpse is mutilated between books 10 and 11.

¹⁸⁷ Fratantuono (2009) 18-20 indicates that *thorax* could refer to Mezentius' actual chest, so that his corpse – rather than just his armour – might be placed on display.

¹⁸⁸ Widely observed: cf. Anderson (1999) 198; Fowler (2000b) 106-107; Fratantuono (2009) 18-19; Gildenhard and Henderson (2018) 187-188.

Ausonii uidere; tua est Lauinia coniunx,
ulterius ne tende odiis.' 12.930-938

He, as a humble suppliant, stretching forwards his gaze and his right hand in prayer, says, 'I have truly earned this and do not try to avert it with prayer. Enjoy your fated victory. If any concern of a wretched parent can touch you, I pray (Anchises was a father like this to you too) that you pity the old age of Daunus and return me, or my body stripped of life if you prefer, to my people. You have won and the Italians see the defeated stretch out his hands; Lavinia is your wife. Don't take hatred any further.'

The language here is a little chaotic, as the exhausted Turnus begs for his life,¹⁸⁹ and it is unclear whether Turnus believes that he has earned death or just defeat. Mezentius questions (in fairly abstract terms) whether the victorious owe any kindness to the defeated; Turnus goes further by asking specifically whether Aeneas himself would be moved to pity by thoughts of a parent's sorrow. These doubts and questions seem to reflect the realities of both Homeric and Virgilian combat: as Alison Keith observes, the *Iliad* contains "no instances of successful supplication on the battlefield",¹⁹⁰ and the *Aeneid* is similarly lacking in clemency.¹⁹¹ We might recall here Magus' failed supplication to Aeneas at 10.521-530,¹⁹² or Aeneas' slaying of Tarquitus mid-entreaty – *tum caput orantis nequiquam et multa parantis / dicere deturbat terrae* ('then he knocked to the ground the head of the man praying in vain and preparing to say many things', 10.554-555) – after which he taunts Tarquitus' corpse by saying that his mother will not be allowed to bury him (10.557-558).¹⁹³ Turnus' reference to Aeneas' father is clumsily inserted partway through his reference to his own father Daunus, and emphasises Anchises' death through use of the perfect tense; similarly, Turnus inserts the possibility of

¹⁸⁹ Hight (1972) 215 seems to consider this pleading, after Turnus had previously resolved to die, a failure in its own right, and argues that it shows Turnus to be "a weaker figure, less nobly tragic" than his Iliadic model Hector; Stahl (1990) 195-196 takes a similar position.

¹⁹⁰ Keith (2020) 116. Keith adds (p. 117): "The Homeric intertext that makes Aeneas an Achilles 'redivivus' requires him to kill Turnus."

¹⁹¹ As Fedeli (2018) 151 notes.

¹⁹² Nielson (1984) analyses the failed supplications of Magus (whom Nielson calls Mago) and Turnus together, and points to a similarity between Aeneas' invocation of Pallas at 12.948-949 and his statement that Anchises' spirit rejects supplication at 10.530. For Nielson, this indicates Aeneas' *pietas* towards the dead; I interpret it as a complete failure to understand Anchises' posthumous views on clemency. Panoussi (2020) 35 attributes Aeneas' killing of Magus to the beserk state associated with trauma responses (after Pallas' death), which aligns more closely with my argument.

¹⁹³ As Mackie (1988) 168-169 indicates, this scene is based on Achilles' killing of Lycaon in *Iliad* 21, but with more unnecessary cruelty, especially considering that Tarquitus – unlike Lycaon, Hector's half-brother – has no direct connection to the killer of the hero's companion.

Aeneas killing him before he completes the idea that Aeneas might give him back alive. Turnus still has a living father, an immortal sister and a number of loyal followers: he lacks the utter isolation which seems to motivate Mezentius' willingness to die (after the death of Lausus), and this suggests that Turnus himself has greater reason to live and hopes that Aeneas might spare his life.¹⁹⁴ However, in referring to his body as a *corpus spoliatum*, he recalls his own mistreatment of Pallas' body and possessions.¹⁹⁵ Thoughts of Evander's grief did not dissuade Turnus, and even seemed to encourage him to kill Pallas: as such, this reference undermines Turnus' plea for Aeneas to pity the elderly Daunus.¹⁹⁶ This plea also looks back to Latinus' request, at 12.43-45, that Turnus should consider his own father before risking his life:¹⁹⁷ this might indicate that Turnus has come to his senses and realised that he should have followed Latinus' advice; but it also suggests hypocrisy, in as much as Turnus requests Aeneas to act towards Daunus in a way that Turnus himself would not.¹⁹⁸ Turnus' use of imperatives (*utere* and *ne tende*) is not deferential,¹⁹⁹ and the word *ulterius* in his final line might remind readers of Jupiter's injunction to Juno – *ulterius temptare ueto* ('I forbid you to try anything else', 12.806) – which rounds off his speech asking for an end to her opposition: the contrast with Jupiter highlights Turnus' lack of power in this scene.²⁰⁰

The gestures which accompany this clumsy speech – *oculos dextramque precantem / protendens* – also act against Turnus, since they encourage Aeneas to view the spoils he wears:

stetit acer in armis
 Aeneas uoluens oculos dextramque repressit;
 et iam iamque magis cunctantem flectere sermo
 coeperat, infelix uero cum apparuit alto
 balteus et notis fulserunt cingula bullis
 Pallantis pueri, uictum quem uulnere Turnus
 strauerat atque umeris inimicum insigne gerebat. 12.938-944

¹⁹⁴ Rosati (2017) 378-380 argues that Aeneas' attack merely completes a death which really begins at the moment Mezentius embraces the corpse of his son. There is no equivalent moment for Turnus.

¹⁹⁵ Tarrant (2012) 333.

¹⁹⁶ As Stahl (1990) 201-205 argues.

¹⁹⁷ Tarrant (2012) 98.

¹⁹⁸ Tarrant (2012) 332 writes that it is "a sign of [Turnus'] humiliation that he echoes appeals to him that he rejected at the opening of the book".

¹⁹⁹ See Adema (2017) 303 for the effect of Turnus' frequent imperatives in his conversations with Latinus.

²⁰⁰ Tarrant (2012) 296, 333.

Fierce Aeneas stood, turning his eyes on Turnus' arms and holding back his own right hand; and already now his speech was beginning to sway Aeneas as he delayed further, when the doomed sword-belt appeared on Turnus' high shoulder and shone with the familiar baubles of the boy Pallas, the defeated man whom Turnus had laid low with a wound and whose hated emblem Turnus wore on his shoulders.

Turnus' right hand raised in prayer is paralleled by the sword-hand which Aeneas tries to stop himself from using; Turnus' upturned eyes, and his focus on the watching soldiers, invite Aeneas to look over him and see Pallas' sword-belt. This undermines Turnus' words (which almost persuade Aeneas)²⁰¹ and heighten Aeneas' hatred instead. The imagery on the sword-belt can be connected to the circumstances of Pallas' and Turnus' deaths, as several scholars have argued: for instance, Nandini Pandey identifies the way that the myth of the Danaids, who faced punishment in the underworld after obeying their father's instructions to kill their husbands, foregrounds both the tragedy of premature death and the self-destructive nature of revenge.²⁰² Neither Aeneas nor Turnus learns the power of grief from this artwork, or that they should spare their fallen foes; as such, Pandey argues, "the epic ends with a failure of interpretation" as Aeneas "appears blind to the visual text's narrative content and ethical relevance to his own situation".²⁰³ In the context of viewing this sword-belt, Turnus' reference to himself as 'defeated' (*uictum*, 12.936), and his focus on paternal grief, reminds Aeneas of the defeated Pallas and his mournful father.²⁰⁴ The visual communication which Turnus cannot control makes Aeneas understand his verbal communication in a way that Turnus did not intend.

Instead of clemency, Aeneas gives in to his *furor* which, once roused, is difficult to suppress or control.²⁰⁵ Turnus' previous violence has lasting consequences for the way that Aeneas sees him, and the conflicting visual and verbal signs – those which position him as a suppliant, and those which remind

²⁰¹ Tarrant (2012) 334 notes the contrast with Latinus' inability to persuade Turnus at 12.45-46, where the verb *flectere* is also used; see also Hardie (1997) 150.

²⁰² Pandey (2017) 19-20. Petrini (1997) 82-83 and Keith (2004) 78 indicate that this iconography also emphasises the potential violence of marriage.

²⁰³ Pandey (2017) 20.

²⁰⁴ Seider (2013) 159-161, 178-182, 184-187, 201 explores how the recent and vivid memory of Pallas' death overwhelms Aeneas' memories of Anchises' posthumous instructions. See also Kirichenko (2013) 82-86 on how Virgil plays with similarities between Pallas and Turnus and the reader's ability to sympathise with both.

²⁰⁵ As Hardie (1997) 147 writes: "The problem is that the emotion of anger is inherently unbounded; it does not know how or where to stop."

Aeneas that he is Pallas' murderer – are only resolved by Aeneas' adoption of a new persona for himself.²⁰⁶ The hero of *pietas*, whose father recommended clemency towards the defeated, hesitates to kill Turnus; but as he channels the spirit of Pallas, he has no such qualms: *Pallas te hoc uulnere, Pallas / immolat et poenam scelerato ex sanguine sumit* ('Pallas sacrifices you with this wound, Pallas takes this punishment from your criminal blood', 12.948-949).²⁰⁷ Instead of reconciliation, there is a display of the unceasing cyclical nature of violence: as David Quint puts it, Turnus' death is "an instance of old scores being settled rather than cast into healing oblivion" which suggests a fear that Augustan Rome might not be able to put aside the tensions of the civil war era and end its cycle of self-destruction.²⁰⁸ Turnus' supplication fails to save his life, and Aeneas' extreme anger at this final moment – alongside the earlier mistreatment of Mezentius' corpse, and in the absence of any final promises such as those addressed to the dead Lausus – suggest that he has also failed to secure the respectful treatment of his remains. Although the poem does not explore the aftermath of Turnus' death, I have argued that, by offering Mezentius' death as a parallel, Virgil suggests that Turnus' dying request will be ignored and that Aeneas' enduring anger will prevent him from respecting Turnus' body after his death – a necessary step for the reconstruction and reintegration of a community which has been divided by civil war.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion, I will offer a brief analysis of the way that communicative failure relates to the issues of power at the heart of this poem. Aeneas' position as a single solitary hero, responsible for the fate of his entire community, is a clear response to the establishment of a more monarchic system of government in Rome in the aftermath of the civil wars of the late Republic. Communication failure is an important element of Virgil's engagement with questions about the benefits and drawbacks of one-man rule. I began this chapter by pointing to Ilioneus' failure to secure an alliance with Latinus, due to his status as an intermediary: the successful alliances which Aeneas establishes with Dido and Evander contrast with this failure, to highlight the importance of the ruler's physical presence and personal interactions. Building these personal relationships is an important part of Aeneas' role as leader, but one which he neglects, upon first landing in Latium, in favour of fortifying the Trojan camp: the war which follows is a powerful reminder that

²⁰⁶ Panoussi (2020) 40-41 argues that this represents disassociation, fragmentation and the loss of identity which results from the traumatic experience of war.

²⁰⁷ See Hardie (1993) 20-22, Tarrant (2012) 21-22, 337-340 or Fedeli (2018) 160 for the difficulties with viewing Turnus' death as a legitimate sacrifice.

²⁰⁸ Quint (1982) 38.

a ruler must be skilled at diplomacy and politics as well as the exercise of warfare, even in a system where power does not derive from public speeches and electoral canvassing. Ilioneus' inability to act on Aeneas' behalf can be connected to the manipulative envoys of book 11, Drances and Venulus, who cannot be trusted to give an accurate report of the conversations in which they participate. Drances twists Aeneas' offer of peace into a request for Turnus to meet him in a duel, in order to satisfy his own hatred of Turnus, and thereby prolongs the conflict which brings such sorrow to the ordinary people on whose behalf he speaks; Venulus' initial summary of his embassy to Diomedes is far more optimistic about the prospect of a war against Aeneas than his more detailed report of Diomedes' exact words. Latinus demonstrates the dangers of having a poor communicator as king: he neither embraces nor constrains his subjects' desires for war, a product of the infernal intervention of Allecto, but instead secludes himself in silence and rejects responsibility for their criminal behaviours; in the council scene, he invites his audience to make a decision on his behalf, and by ceding the floor (and his royal authority) in this way, he allows the demagogue Drances to prevent the peace which he desires and knows to be right. Latinus has the status of a ruler, but lacks the authority and persuasive skill which this role requires: his failure as a leader, the direct result of his failure to speak, results in the deaths of the people he ought to protect. Aeneas' final farewell to his son Ascanius highlights the hero's isolation and difficulties in interpersonal communication (particularly in terms of paternal education), and this suggests anxieties around the difficulty of ensuring dynastic succession within a monarchic system.

Closely connected to these questions of power and autocracy is the idea that, while the establishment of peace is an inherently collaborative process, conflict can be created through the actions of a single violent individual. This is most clearly seen in the actions of Allecto, whose effects on the narrative continue to resonate long after her departure from it, and who incites the entire community to war even as Aeneas and Latinus express their desires for peace. The speed with which the shooting of Silvia's stag progresses to the shooting of her brother shows how easy it is to slip into war. In contrast, the process of effecting peace, which requires a series of communicative acts to connect a divided community, is far more difficult. The divisions amongst the Italians, represented by the angry debate between Drances and Turnus but also apparent in the competing opinions of the people before this scene, disrupts Latinus' attempt to build a political consensus in favour of peace; the appearance of armed men outside the city cements the idea that debate is a distraction from the direct action which is required. The construction of a *foedus* between the Trojans and Latins requires a meeting between the two kings, the use of formal ritualistic language, and sacrifices to ensure the favour of a whole host of gods; yet this can be disrupted by a few well-

placed words from Juturna about the silent Turnus' pitiable appearance, and by Tolumnius' interpretation of Juturna's deceptive omen. The silencing of Turnus during Allecto's attack in book 7, and of Aeneas when he is shot after the breakdown of the truce in book 12, shows how violent deeds can disrupt rational speeches and rouse irrational anger and a desire for vengeance. Reasoned arguments, appeals to pity or familial affection and the promise of almost certain death are unable to persuade Turnus to give up his enmity towards Aeneas, since too much of his self-respect rides on his status as a fearless warrior; Turnus' appeal to Aeneas to lay down his weapon is equally futile. The verbal and visual reminders of Turnus' previous bellicosity which thwart his attempt to elicit pity show that Turnus cannot simply erase his previous violence: the memory of prior conflict causes additional conflict, in a small-scale re-enactment of the cyclical violence of Roman civil wars. The reconciliation of Jupiter and Juno shows one way in which peace can be achieved: in a close relationship between near equals who already understand each other due to their similarities, both figures are able to negotiate and accept the slight concessions required, without losing status or building resentment. Yet it remains unclear whether similar circumstances could be obtained in the mortal realm: Aeneas' final violent act, which disregards Turnus' attempt to persuade him to show clemency, suggests that they cannot; and the emphasis on relative equality as a prerequisite of reconciliation suggests, problematically, that the hierarchical power structure of Augustan Rome may act as a barrier to the future establishment of peace.

Power complicates communication, but so too does the absence of power. Several moments in the second half of the *Aeneid* foreground the dismissal, marginalisation or silencing of certain voices, particularly the voices of non-combatants: not only the women and children, who will be left to grieve the outcomes of war despite being told it is an issue only for grown men, but also the elderly pacifists Galaesus and Latinus. Allecto's persuasive power in her conversation with Turnus is constrained by the persona she adopts: this exposes her to the argument that, as a woman and an older person, she has no right to discuss political and military matters, an argument which can also be seen in Latinus' disregard for Amata's political opinions. Yet at the same time, Allecto's authentic self is shown to be diametrically opposed to peaceful communication: the revelation of her true identity shocks Turnus into silence and subjugation. Euryalus' mother highlights the cost of warfare (in much the same way as the poet does, through his focus on the premature deaths of a number of young warriors), and the powerful emotions of her speech reduce the Trojans' desire to fight; but as the only woman in the Trojan camp, without the protection of her recently-killed son, her voice is quickly suppressed, as she is forcibly carried back into a 'domestic' setting. In book 11, Italians who oppose the war must rely on Drances, an

unreliable messenger, to address the council on their behalf; and the opposition established between their views and Amata's well-known support for Turnus suggests that female voices can only make themselves heard when they align with the desires of warriors. Although Lavinia is the focal point for the rivalry between Aeneas and Turnus which lies behind this conflict, her only act of communication – her silent blush – is too ambiguous and unclear to reveal her inner thoughts or desires, or to give her any sense of agency or independent identity: indeed, her status and position within the poem means that any such agency would be undesirable. Even Turnus is sidelined during the truce between Aeneas and Latinus which precedes what should be the fateful duel: he becomes a silent, passive victim, more similar to the silent Lavinia than the commanding Trojan leader. Even Ascanius, the future Alban king who represents the poem's hopes of dynastic succession, is pulled from the battlefield by Apollo, and in his final scene we see only a scared and crying child who cannot talk to his father. Such episodes raise questions about who has the power to communicate, and how the different aspects of an individual's identity affect how they are able to express themselves and effect change in the world.

In this chapter, I have demonstrated how the *Aeneid* establishes communication failure as a persistent and powerful feature of a society torn apart by civil war. It is not merely the case that Aeneas himself is isolated from his companions and unable to create community through speech: these problems are equally visible in Latinus' city and on the battlefield. Many of the aspects of communication failure which I have highlighted in this chapter will resonate with my analysis of the *Bellum Ciuile* and *Thebaid*. This includes the character of the Fury, who embodies the power of violence over speech and the difficulties of communicating in times of civil war; the use of horror and violence to end attempts to communicate; the role of ambassadors, including those who carry an olive branch (as Allecto does) but have no interest in peace and no respect for a messenger's responsibilities; the tensions between crowds and individuals; the methods by which certain groups are sidelined and ignored because of their gender, age or other aspects of their identity; appeals to kinship as a persuasive technique; the complexities of familial dynamics and expressions of affection; and the importance of gestures and outward appearances in communication, alongside or instead of speech, even as these non-verbal methods retain a greater openness to different interpretations. Lucan and Statius build upon each of these aspects of communicative failure during civil war as part of their reactions to Virgil's epic.

Chapter 3: Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile*

Introduction

Failure is at the heart of the *Bellum Ciuile*. The poem centres around the Roman senate's inability to preserve its (ostensibly) democratic systems of governance in the face of Caesar's destructive desire for autocratic power. Lucan seems to feel the sting of this failure even a century later, as indicated by his passionate descriptions of contemporary life as a kind of enslavement to the emperor:¹

uincitur his gladiis omnis quae seruiet aetas.
proxima quid suboles aut quid meruere nepotes
in regnum nasci? 7.641-643

Every age of men that will be enslaved is conquered by these swords.
Why did the combatants' children or grandchildren deserve to be
born into tyranny?

Lucan is particularly critical of Caesar and his soldiers, whose bloodthirsty natures are emphasised throughout the poem;² but despite the poet's ostensible opposition to Caesar, Pompey does not escape criticism either. Historical fact makes Pompey's defeat and death unavoidable, but Lucan shows a clear poetic choice in presenting Pompey as an ambiguous or inadequate hero whose lack of control is expressed primarily through communicative failure.³ As W.R. Johnson argues, Pompey's inadequacy makes him the ideal hero for a poem which is also fundamentally about failure and meaninglessness.⁴

This chapter will focus on Pompey and his allies, whose defeat in the civil war gives them a particularly strong connection to failure. As I will demonstrate, Pompey's failings as a speaker in situations relating to military, political and personal affairs are a major aspect of his characterisation. The historical Pompey

¹ Leigh (1997) chapter 3 explores the power and significance of this and other narratorial interventions at Pharsalus.

² See especially Ahl (1976) chapter 6 and Johnson (1987) chapter 4 on Caesar's destructive power, and Leigh (1997) chapter 6 and Fucecchi (2011) 240-244, 248-250 on the extreme violence and *furor* of Caesar's men. Ahl (1976) 228 describes Lucan's characterisation of Caesar as "a study of demonic megalomania".

³ Cf. Ahl (1974) 308 on Lucan's "mixture of savage ruthlessness, and great tenderness" towards a character whose "weakness and vanity are not spared". Johnson (1987) 68-69 suggests that Lucan foregrounds Pompey's weaknesses in order to make him more sympathetic. Bartsch (1997) chapter 3 presents the inconsistencies in Pompey's characterisation as a reflection of the poet's active decision to believe in him despite historical evidence of his weaknesses, and desire to make readers aware of this ideologically-motivated belief.

⁴ Johnson (1987) 85.

was not known for his rhetorical skill or enjoyment of public oratory: he rarely spoke in the senate or law-courts, and seems not to have addressed his first *contio* until he was consul-elect in 71 BCE; he made use of Cicero as a speech-writer and took up rhetorical training as an adult, practices unusual enough to attract comment from historians; and he obtained political office and power primarily as a result of his connections and established military skill rather than through public speech and canvassing.⁵ As such, Lucan's focus on Pompey's rhetorical inadequacies develop upon an established aspect of his character; but Lucan takes this further by foregrounding Pompey's isolation, his lack of control over his army and the tensions which disturb his marriage to Cornelia. Furthermore, Lucan builds upon a poetic tradition: as many scholars have observed,⁶ Pompey's difficulties with communication position him as a spiritual (or intertextual) successor to Virgil's Aeneas, even as Caesar is said to be Aeneas' literal descendant.

Although my focus is Pompeian, Caesar will also feature in my analysis. I will begin by exploring how Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon demonstrates the inability of Italy or Rome to resist his violence through persuasive speech. I will then consider his exhortation in book 1, which only succeeds due to the intervention of Laelius, alongside Pompey's similarly inadequate exhortation in book 2. At this stage, my analysis will divert from the poem's principal characters. In the domestic sphere, I will argue that Julia's ghost, who appears to Pompey in book 3, may actually be an envoy for peace rather than war, before exploring the breakdown of family relationships and the imposition of strict hierarchies demonstrated by the soldiers at Ilerda. I will then focus on the climactic battle of Pharsalus and its immediate aftermath, analysing Pompey's weakness when faced with the rhetorical power of Cicero (in book 7) and Lentulus (in book 8), and the similarities between Caesar's and Pompey's second exhortations at Pharsalus itself, which each suggest that power lies with the armies rather than their generals. Although Caesar's speeches are generally successful, as befits a figure characterised by his good fortune and unrelenting energy, the Caesarian episodes which I have chosen to explore suggest that communication failure is not reserved for the losing side, but is instead characteristic of this conflict as a whole. The final section of this chapter will focus on the role that miscommunication plays in Pompey's relationship with Cornelia, to argue that the tensions in this marriage undermine

⁵ Pompey's reputation as a mediocre speaker is explored by van der Blom (2016) chapter 4.

⁶ Perhaps most significantly, in a foundational piece of scholarship for studies of Lucan, Ahl (1976) 156: "Each of the protagonists of the *Pharsalia* shares something of Aeneas... whose constant inner turmoil and uncertainty resembles that of Pompey." See also Anzinger (2007) 140-143, commenting on how both Aeneas and Pompey experience communicative failure in their romantic relationships.

Pompey's attempt to turn his death into a more effective method of communication.

Caesar at the Rubicon

Lucan begins his narrative of civil war at the Rubicon, which Caesar is briefly prevented from crossing by the appearance of a personification of Italy. This apparition attempts to dissuade Caesar and his soldiers from marching against their homeland:

ingens uisa duci patriae trepidantis imago
clara per obscuram uoltu maestissima noctem
turrigero canos effundens uertice crines
caesarie lacera nudisque adstare lacertis
et gemitu permixta loqui: 'quo tenditis ultra?
'quo fertis mea signa, uiri? si iure uenitis,
si ciues, huc usque licet.' tum perculit horror
membra ducis, riguere comae gressumque coercens
languor in extrema tenuit uestigia ripa. 1.186-194

A giant image of his unstable homeland, clear through the shadowy night, with a miserable visage, pouring white locks from her head, crowned with towers, seemed to the general to stand with torn hair and bare arms, and to say, sobbing: 'To what extreme are you striving? Where are you carrying my standards, men? If you come here lawfully, as citizens, you can only go this far.' Then fear struck the leader's limbs, his hairs stood up and weakness checked his step on the edge of the riverbank.

The apparition's tears and torn hair indicate mourning, foreshadowing the grief which will follow from the widespread slaughter of civil war and representing both the land itself and the women who inhabit it.⁷ The pathos of this image is heightened by the use of the word *caesaries*: the resemblance to the general's name emphasises that this is a war against Caesar's own nation and family, an act of self-destruction, rather than the conquest of a foreign enemy. Although the image addresses the army as a whole – as indicated by the vocative *uiri* and the plural verb forms⁸ – the only response is from Caesar: as a military leader and future autocrat, his reaction is the only one which matters, as his soldiers will fall into

⁷ Cowan (2021a) 276; see also Roche (2009) 207-208.

⁸ Cf. Roche (2009) 208-209.

line behind him.⁹ With the question *quo tenditis ultra?*, which marks the first line of direct speech from a character in this poem, Lucan recalls the end of Turnus' final address to Aeneas: *ulterius ne tende odiis* ('don't take hatred any further', *Aen.* 12.938).¹⁰ This links Italy's speech attempting to prevent civil war with the Italian warrior Turnus' ultimate (and similarly ineffective) plea for Aeneas to spare him, and positions Caesar's invasion of his homeland as a continuation and expansion of his ancestor's war in Latium. Caesar's elevated status, which allows him to attack Italy and ignore its pleas for peace, appears to be a direct result of Turnus' failure to persuade Aeneas to practice mercy. Both Caesar and Lucan extend hatred and civil violence beyond the ending which Virgil imposed on his narrative; as such, the *Bellum Ciuile* is positioned as a sequel to the *Aeneid* which explores the consequences of autocracy and discord that Virgil wished to leave unspoken.¹¹

Caesar's hesitation, like that of Aeneas, is brief. He quickly presses onwards, ignoring Italy's objections, with the claim that his invasion is enacted in defense of his nation:

non te furialibus armis
persequor: en, adsum uictor terraque marique
Caesar, ubique tuus (liceat modo, nunc quoque) miles.
ille erit ille nocens, qui me tibi fecerit hostem. 1.200-203

I am not attacking you with mad weapons: see, I, Caesar, am here as the conqueror of land and sea, everywhere your soldier (as I will be even now, if it may be permitted). It is the man who makes me your enemy that will harm you.

This apparition should be the expert on what the laws of the *patria* permit and on the distinctions between patriotic soldiers and invading armies, but Caesar claims that his knowledge and interpretation is superior. As such, he recalls Turnus'

⁹ Much of the direct discourse in this book involves Caesar as speaker or addressee, and Galli Milić and Nelis (2021) 31 argue that this positions him as the central character of book 1.

¹⁰ Roche (2009) 209 proposes a parallel with Mnestheus' speech encouraging the Trojans to stop fleeing Turnus' onslaught (*Aen.* 9.781-787), and argues that this presents Caesar's violence as akin to that of Turnus. The intertext which I have suggested instead foregrounds Turnus' weakness when faced with Caesar's ancestor Aeneas, and connects the end of Virgil's poem with the beginning of Lucan's (in a way that a link to *Aeneid* 9 cannot). Hardie (1993) 62 notes how the lion simile applied to Caesar at *BC* 1.205-212 echoes the presentation of Turnus as a lion at *Aen.* 12.4-8, while Spentzou (2018) 247-248 connects the description of Caesar as like a thunderbolt at *BC* 1.151-157 to the storm imagery around Aeneas' final spear-throw (*Aen.* 12.919-926): Spentzou's argument, that Lucan starts his poem by exploring the unspoken consequences of Aeneas' final violent act, matches my own.

¹¹ This aligns with the assessment of McClellan (2019) 68, according to which the *Bellum Ciuile* is "a poem born of Virgilian silence".

arrogant claim at *Aen.* 7.443-444 to know more about warfare than Allecto-as-Calybe, who shares with this personification the appearance of having white hair (*Aen.* 7.417-418), the ability to frighten those who see her and a key presence at the outset of civil war. Yet Caesar's claim to knowledge is successful in a way that Turnus' is not, a sign of Italy's weakness and inability to maintain peace. Whereas the personification of Italy attempts to remind the Caesarian soldiers of their duties as citizens (*ciues*), Caesar states that he will be made a public enemy of Rome (*hostis*) thanks to the actions of others. This aligns with Curio's later claim that identities such as *ciuis* are mutable and can be defined by the winners of this civil war: *patimurque uolentes / exilium: tua nos faciet uictoria ciues* ('we willingly suffer exile: your victory will make us citizens', 1.278-279). These passages reflect the contested nature of language about civil war in the late Republic,¹² and Caesar's willingness to manipulate this language and the identities associated with it in order to further his own ambitions.¹³ Caesar does not convince his *patria* that his cause is just: although the apparition itself does not speak again, the newly-swollen Rubicon which attempts to hinder Caesar's passage (1.204-205) demonstrates Italy's continued desire to resist him.¹⁴ However, Caesar does not need to persuade the apparition, as long as his silent soldiers will follow his commands: he can force his way across the river, despite Italy's objections.¹⁵

The appearance of this personification at the very beginning of the poem suggests that the *Bellum Ciuile*, like other historical epics, will include conventional divine machinery;¹⁶ yet Italy's failure to stop Caesar marks divine intervention as ineffective and obsolete, and as such, the gods have little place in the remainder of Lucan's epic. This episode provides a significant insight into the persuasive tools which are not effective against Caesar. He has little respect for legal or social conventions, supernatural appearances, or the pain and suffering which his war will cause; he dominates decision making, so that his soldiers do not have to react or think for themselves; and he is willing to twist events and identities to suit his own perspective and agenda. Furthermore, he indicates a preference for

¹² Discussed above in chapter 1.

¹³ Hershkowitz (1998) 217-218 argues that Caesar is particularly to blame for the destabilisation of language in Lucan's poem. See Bartsch (1997) chapter 2, particularly pp. 48-53, for a detailed analysis of this destabilisation.

¹⁴ Beneker (2011) 91-92.

¹⁵ Bartsch (1997) chapter 1 connects this violent transgression of a geographical boundary to the confusion of language and identities, and the focus on the violation of bodily integrity and social bonds, which characterises Lucan's depiction of civil war.

¹⁶ Aramampaslis and Augoustakis (2021) 213. For the presence of the gods in historical epic more broadly, see Feeney (1991) chapters 3 and 5.

warfare as a solution to his problems, setting aside any prospect of peace or negotiation at the very beginning of Lucan's poetic narrative:

procul hinc iam foedera sunt;
credidimus satis his, utendum est iudice bello. 1.226-227

Let treaties be far from here already; we have put enough trust in these, now we must use war as the judge.

From the outset of his epic, Lucan indicates that if civil war is to be prevented or ended, it will not be through persuasive speech.

Encouraging the Caesarian army

Soon after crossing the Rubicon, Caesar is joined by the exiled tribune Curio, who encourages Caesar to hasten the progress of civil war (1.273-291). Caesar attempts to do so by delivering an exhortation to his soldiers; but this speech does not have its desired effect. Instead, Caesar must rely on the support of Laelius, a centurion seemingly invented by Lucan,¹⁷ to inspire his troops. In this section I will analyse the speeches of both Caesar and Laelius to consider their contrasting failure and success and the implications of this foundational episode for the rest of the poem.

Caesar's exhortation begins with the general silencing his soldiers, whose noise signals the importance of Caesar's audience and their voices to this episode:

conuocat armatos extemplo ad signa maniplos
utque satis trepidum turba coeunte tumultum
conposuit uoltu dextraque silentia iussit. 1.296-298

Immediately he called the armed maniples to their standards: as the crowd came, he settled their nervous hubbub with a look and ordered silence with his hand.

By silencing the crowd with just a look and a gesture, Caesar indicates his control of (particularly non-verbal) communication; yet the episode which follows undermines this control. Caesar's speech has two main strands. He starts by arguing on the basis of fair treatment: both Caesar and his troops deserve rewards for their Gallic campaigns, rather than having an army raised against them (1.299-311, 1.340-345). He emphasises settlements for his veterans in order to gain the support of his audience and suggest that he is acting on their behalf rather than his own:

¹⁷ Cf. Roche (2009) 161, Leigh (2016) 260. In contrast, Fantham (2010a) 61 claims that "[t]he Laelius-figure must surely be historical" but offers no evidence to support this.

mihi si merces erepta laborum est,
his saltem longi non cum duce praemia belli
reddantur. 1.340-342

If the payment for my labours is to be taken away from me, at least let the rewards of a long war be paid to these men without their leader.

Secondly, he attacks the tyrannical behaviour of his opponent Pompey and his allies, emphasising Pompey's legal transgressions, his role in the Sullan civil war and his potential to surpass Sulla's brutality (1.311-340, 346-351). Although Curio motivates Caesar by promising him power over the whole world – 'you cannot share the world, you can have it alone', *partiri non potes orbem, / solus habere potes* (1.290-291) – this megalomania is completely absent from Caesar's exhortation. Instead, he claims that he is fighting against despotism, rather than for any personal gain:

nam neque praeda meis neque regnum quaeritur armis:
detrahimus dominos urbi seruire paratae. 1.350-351

For my weapons are not used to seek booty or a kingdom: we are dragging the masters from a city which is ready to be enslaved by them.

This second, more extensive strand of Caesar's speech echoes the justification for civil war found in Caesar's *Commentarii de Bello Ciuili*, such as in this passage where Caesar explains his motivations to Lentulus Spinther:

se non malefici causa ex prouincia egressum sed uti se a contumeliis inimicorum defenderet, ut tribunos plebis in ea re ex ciuitate expulsos in suam dignitatem restitueret, ut se et populum Romanum factione paucorum oppressum in libertatem uindicaret.

Caes. *BCiv.* 1.22.5

He had not left his province for ill, but so that he could defend himself from the abuses of his enemies, restore the plebeian tribunes who had been expelled from the citizen body in this affair to their usual dignity, in order to release into liberty himself and the Roman people who had been oppressed by a faction of the few.

Much as the historical Caesar used his narrative control in his *Commentarii* to grant himself the moral and legal high ground, Lucan's Caesar attempts to use his speech to shape political discourse and the characterisation of the poem's principal figures. As in his earlier (unconvincing) address to his personified homeland,

Caesar presents himself as a defender of Rome and upholder of morality and legality who partakes in civil war only because he is forced to do so.

This self-fashioning does not have its intended effect on Caesar's soldiers, who display a conflicted, uncertain and unenthusiastic response:

dixerat; at dubium non claro murmure uolgi
secum incerta fremit. pietas patriique penates
quamquam caede feras mentes animosque tumentes
frangunt; sed diro ferri reuocantur amore
ductorisque metu. 1.352-356

He spoke; but the doubtful crowd, murmuring vaguely, grumbled uncertainly amongst themselves. Although wild with slaughter, their swelling spirits and minds were crushed by duty and their ancestral *penates*; but their spirits were called back by an awful love of weapons and by fear of their leader.

Caesar's troops are bloodthirsty and keen to engage in warfare, but their leader's focus on justice and legality has reminded them that *pietas* should prohibit them from attacking their homeland and fellow Romans. Caesar's moral argument fails to convince his soldiers, and instead indicates the immorality and illegality of civil war. However, the soldiers' fear of Caesar fights against their *pietas*, and seems to prevent any explicit, vocal objections. This emphasis on fear risks positioning Caesar's soldiers as his victims. We can compare them with the inhabitants of Ariminum at 1.239-261, who are too scared of Caesar to voice their opposition to him:

deriguere metu, gelidos pauor occupat artus,
et tacito mutos uoluunt in pectore questus. 1.246-247

They stiffened with fear, fright occupied their limbs, and they thought over mute complaints in the silent hearts.

gemitu sic quisque latenti,
non ausus timuisse palam: uox nulla dolori
credita. 1.257-259

Each man is like this with his hidden groans, not daring to fear openly:
no voice was trusted with pain.

As Paul Roche notes on this passage, “[s]ilence is a defining characteristic of peoples subjected by Caesar”:¹⁸ although the Caesarian soldiers are not silent, they

¹⁸ Roche (2009) 228.

are unable to put their hesitation into words. The conflicted response of Caesar's soldiers, and their fearful and silent subordination to their leader, suggests that the divisions of civil war have permeated the Caesarian army.

In book 5, Lucan will depict a mutiny of Caesarian soldiers, drawing on historical mutinies in 49 and 47 BCE.¹⁹ Here, the prospect of mutiny is avoided by the intervention of Laelius, who seems to speak on behalf of the army as a whole: he makes frequent use of plural verb forms and pronouns, which suggests that his thoughts are shared with others in the group. Laelius' authority as a *primus pilus*, who bears the *corona ciuica* for saving the life of a fellow citizen (1.356-358) creates the expectation that he will pick up on Caesar's and Curio's concerns with legality and citizenship.²⁰ Matthew Leigh has argued that Lucan names this centurion after the principal figure of Cicero's *De Amicitia*, who questions whether loyalty or obedience to a friend would justify attacking one's own city: Cicero's Laelius takes a stand against this idea, but Lucan's Laelius is willing to attack Rome on Caesar's orders.²¹ Laelius functions as a spokesperson in this scene, but he does not voice the concerns which the narrator offers at 1.352-356. Whereas the ordinary soldiers are hesitant to attack fellow Romans in breach of *pietas*, Laelius urges quick and aggressive action in an "extremely dark and violent speech".²² Efrossini Spentzou has argued that the fear which controls and motivates Caesar's troops in the place of loyalty or social cohesion is a force which isolates individuals,²³ and this might explain why Laelius' speech is detached from the concerns of the other soldiers.

Laelius offers an interpretation of the army's grumbling which contradicts that provided by the narrator, but which will become true as a result of his persuasion:

¹⁹ Fantham (1985) 119-126 discusses Lucan's manipulation of the historical record in the mutiny of book 5, and its similarities with this episode in book 1. Particularly relevant is the point that Caesar's soldiers feel free to rebel when they view (and address) him as their *socius* ('companion'), adopting the term which Caesar uses at 1.299, but submit to his authority once he reasserts a sense of hierarchy and forcefully positions himself as a leader who can conquer even without their service. Tracy (2016a) 226-231 argues that Caesar's use of deception, omission and trickery to control his men, in the mutiny and elsewhere, echoes and perverts Aeneas' political isolation and repression of his own anxieties.

²⁰ Roller (1996) 329 comments that the *corona ciuica* indicates that Laelius' moral and martial excellence have received recognition from his community, which grants additional weight to his words. Leigh (1997) 204 notes the irony of someone wearing a *corona ciuica* and yet advocating for such violent actions in civil war.

²¹ Leigh (2016).

²² Galli Milić and Nelis (2021) 32.

²³ Spentzou (2018) 252-253.

quod tam lenta tuas tenuit patientia uires
conquerimur. deratne tibi fiducia nostri? 1.361-362

We are complaining because such slow patience restrains your strength. Have you no faith in us?

Laelius does not care about obtaining the rewards of long service or opposing tyranny, the dual priorities of Caesar's speech, or about the *pietas* and *penates* which trouble the other soldiers. Laelius is willing to follow Caesar to inhospitable environments across the world (1.367-372) and equally willing to engage in civil war. He will commit the most extreme crimes if ordered to do so:

nec ciuis meus est, in quem tua classica, Caesar,
audiero. per signa decem felicia castris
perque tuos iuro quocumque ex hoste triumphos,
pectore si fratris gladium iuguloque parentis
condere me iubeas plenaque in uiscera partu
coniugis, inuita peragam tamen omnia dextra. 1.373-378

Whomsoever I hear your trumpet directed against, Caesar, is no citizen of mine. I swear, by the standards which have been blessed through ten years of campaigns, and by the triumphs you obtain against any enemy (no matter who), if you order me to bury my sword in my brother's chest, and my parent's throat, and into the pregnant belly of my wife, although my hand does not want to, I will carry all this through to the bitter end.

Whereas Curio argued that Caesar's victory will return citizenship to his allies, Laelius claims that the mere fact of Caesar's enmity is enough to remove citizenship; he "grants Caesar the authority to define the community of Roman citizens as he wishes".²⁴ Laelius would turn a public war into a personal affair, attacking his own kin in the way that Caesar attacks his son-in-law Pompey, if Caesar ordered him to do so. He acknowledges that his personal feelings are opposed to this kind of violence – his hand would be unwilling to commit the parricide he proposes – but indicates that this would not be enough to stop him from following Caesar's orders. Laelius completely subordinates his will to that of his leader: morality and justice are meaningless concepts to him, because he does

²⁴ Roller (1996) 329. Whereas Roller argues (pp. 329-330) that Laelius persuades the other soldiers by redefining family-members as *hostes* rather than *ciues*, so that killing them does not contravene *pietas*, my position is that Laelius excludes *pietas* from his considerations altogether. See also Hershkowitz (1998) 209-211 for the argument that Lucan – in this scene and elsewhere – shows how *pietas* becomes aligned with and subordinated to the overwhelming *furor* which characterises civil war, and Coffee (2011) on the dismantling of social values such as *pietas* and *fides* in the *Bellum Ciuile*.

not act according to his own volition and does not take responsibility for his actions.²⁵ Although Laelius is introduced as a figure who cares about the lives of his fellow citizens, by the end of his speech it is clear that he does not care about the difference between a *ciuis* and a *hostis*: his only concern is obedience to Caesar. Throughout the epic, Caesar's mad energy spreads to his soldiers,²⁶ and this might explain Laelius' extreme views and extreme self-abnegation.

Laelius' passionate rhetoric is incredibly effective, as Paul Roche notes: "Neither the rationalizing approach of Caesar... nor the self-conscious justification of Pompey... will have the same immediate effect of energizing the soldiery as does the *furor* of Laelius."²⁷ His speech earns the immediate vocal approval of the whole army:

his cunctae simul adsensere cohortes
 elatasque alte, quaecumque ad bella uocaret,
 promiserere manus. it tantus ad aethera clamor,
 quantus, piniferae Boreas cum Thracius Ossae
 rupibus incubuit, curuato robore pressae
 fit sonus aut rursus redeuntis in aethera siluae. 1.386-391

At once all the cohorts agreed to this and promised their hands, raised high, to whatever war they were called to fight. Such a noise rose into the air as when the Thracian North Wind hangs over the cliffs of Ossa, covered in pines, and there is the sound of the forest being pressed down, the wood curving, or rushing back into the air again.

This approval seems to be expressed equally through sound and gestures: the imagery suggests that the hands rise and fall in the same way as the trees do, accompanied by a wave of noise. All three speeches in this episode – those of Curio, Caesar and Laelius – are followed in different ways by the noise of the crowd, which expresses its raw emotions without the use of rhetorical speech. The approval of the rest of the troops shows that Laelius' approach has helped the soldiers to clarify their priorities: whereas Caesar's talk of justice and defence of Rome seems to have confused the issue, Laelius' focus on obedience to the general aligns with their fear of Caesar to bring them back onto Caesar's side.

²⁵ Laelius' position seems to prefigure the legal defence of 'superior orders', made particularly infamous during the Nuremberg trials. Lucan dismantles the idea that the imperative to follow military orders is an excuse for extreme criminality by presenting Laelius (and his companions) as actively choosing to surrender their free will to Caesar, when they had the opportunity to resist him.

²⁶ Cf. Fucecchi (2011) 240-244.

²⁷ Roche (2009) 275.

When Caesar addresses his troops in *Bellum Ciuile* 1, just as when he addresses the personification of his homeland, he suppresses his personal motivations for war in order to focus his speech on justice, legality and appropriate rewards, appealing to his soldiers' sense of what is right and presenting himself as Rome's defender. His arguments fall flat, as they remind the soldiers about what actually counts as *pietas*. This indicates Caesar's misunderstanding of his soldiers' priorities and the limitations of his persuasive powers: it is clear that the army does not believe Caesar's claims to moral or legal superiority, but equally clear that they would prefer to ignore such issues. Caesar avoids the questions of power which Curio uses to persuade him towards aggressive action; yet Caesar's power becomes the primary issue of this scene. In this episode, Lucan presents Caesar as a figure who claims to rule on the basis of his moral greatness, but who actually rules through fear. When Laelius speaks in defence of Caesar, he argues forcefully for civil war precisely on the grounds that the concerns of *pietas* are not strong enough to oppose the will of the general. Laelius' power here indicates the potential for non-elite individuals to speak up and change the course of history, even if they lack political power or formal rhetorical training. However, in the paradoxical world of civil war, in which a man who has been rewarded for saving the life of a fellow citizen volunteers to kill his parents, wife and unborn child, Laelius asserts his individuality and personal voice by delivering a speech designed to absolve him of any individual choices. The success of this speech strips him of the capacity for further speech, as he submits himself to being a mere instrument of Caesar's will, in what amounts to a vocal act of self-silencing.²⁸ The war is reframed to remove the need for soldiers to make complicated moral decisions, and this allows Caesar to drop the pretence of having the moral high ground. As the epic progresses, Caesar can embrace his criminality and thirst for blood:

Caesar in arma furens nullas nisi sanguine fuso
gaudet habere uias. 2.439-440

Caesar, armed and raging, takes no pleasure from his journey unless
he gains the route by spilling blood.

concessa pudet ire uia ciuemque uideri. 2.446

He is ashamed to travel by a permitted path and to appear to be a
citizen.

²⁸ This is made more effective by the fact that Laelius is Lucan's own invention, who is absent from Caesar's account of the civil war: his self-silencing appears to result in his erasure from the historical record.

With the unconditional obedience of his army, Caesar can revel in his desire for civil war, and flaunt his rejection of what it means to be a Roman citizen.²⁹ Attempts to persuade are a waste of time, when the exercise of power can achieve the same results. Like Virgil's Allecto, Caesar adopts a persuasive persona, only to find that his more violent 'authentic' self is more successful at spreading discord and civil war.

Pompey's failure to persuade

Pompey's first exhortation to his own troops, presented at 2.531-595, provides an interesting point of comparison with Caesar's speech.³⁰ The exhortation marks Pompey's first speech of the epic and, after his brief appearance in Campania at 2.392-398, only the second time that he is physically present in the narrative. According to Elaine Fantham, Pompey "fails all the tests of practical rhetoric" in this scene,³¹ which indicates that this speech is particularly important for an analysis of communication failure. Exhortations, like all communicative acts, only function when addressed to an audience, and both of these episodes place significant emphasis on the audience's voice. Pompey's inability to encourage his soldiers, and the lack of a Laelius-like figure to help him in this task, demonstrates that he is doomed to isolation and failure in this poem. Pompey's weakness in this scene leads him to quit his homeland, in an echo of the Virgilian Aeneas' departure from Troy (in both cases, at the end of book 2 of their respective poems),³² and this suggests that Pompey's most obvious inheritance from this literary model lies in his inadequacy as a communicator.

Pompey is isolated even before he begins to speak, awaiting reinforcements that will not come. Many of his allies have fled at Caesar's approach and Domitius has been defeated at Corfinium (2.478-525), although Pompey does not realise this: Pompey is 'ignorant of the general's capture' (*nescius ... capti ducis*, 2.526). Elaine Fantham has argued that the most plausible setting for this scene is Luceria, which Pompey left before Caesar's capture of Corfinium:³³ as such, it seems that Lucan has adjusted the historical record specifically to strip Pompey of the support of

²⁹ Fantham (1992) 166 points out that if Caesar can only appear to be a citizen, this indicates that he is actually a *hostis*.

³⁰ Fantham (1992) 23-24, 180 and Roche (2009) 224 note that these two speeches should be considered alongside each other.

³¹ Fantham (1992) 179; Fantham is careful to note that this is not a failure of Lucan's poetry, as the speech is still significant for the characterisation of Pompey.

³² Thompson (1984) 209; Fantham (1992) 220-221. Rossi (2000) explores how Pompey's eastward journey in the *Bellum Ciuile* echoes and reverses the westward journey of the *Aeneid*.

³³ Fantham (1992) 178.

other Republican generals. This sense of isolation is further emphasised by Pompey's focus on individual (rather than collective) action.³⁴ Although Pompey begins his speech by addressing his army and audience as 'avengers of crimes, followers of the better standards, true band of Romans' (*o scelerum ultores melioraque signa secuti, / o uere Romana manus*, 2.531-532), he quickly presents himself, rather than his army, as Rome's guardian:

iam iam me praeside Roma
supplicium poenamque petat. 2.538-539

Already now, with me as its guardian, Rome will seek Caesar's
suffering and punishment.

Pompey then situates Caesar alongside a series of individual rebels who have attacked Rome (2.541-549), to reframe this combat as a revolt more than a war. In presenting recent Roman history as a battle of individuals, Pompey leaves no real space for his army to act, and foregrounds Pompey himself at the expense of his allies. Pompey returns to self-aggrandisement as he describes his own strength, to prove that he is not too old for physical combat:

te quoque si superi titulis accedere nostris
iusserunt, ualet, en, torquendo dextera pilo,
feruidus haec iterum circa praecordia sanguis
incaluit. 2.555-558

If the gods have ordered that you, Caesar, are added to my record, see,
my right hand is strong enough to throw a spear, my hot blood boils
again around my heart.

Pompey's use of apostrophe here means that his speech seems to be directed towards his absent foe, rather than the troops standing in front of him.³⁵ Even when Pompey notes that his troops are fresher than Caesar's, he does this without direct reference to his own army: *dux sit in his castris senior, dum miles in illis* ('let this camp's leader be older, as long as the soldiers are older in that one', 2.561). Pompey's self-obsession extends to the claim that his own power is the uppermost boundary of what is permitted within the law, such that anyone who attempts to surpass him can no longer be a *ciuis* or *priuatus* (2.562-565). He also elevates his status, in a way that suggests a dangerous amount of power, by boasting that other generals serve him as if ordinary soldiers: *hinc acies statura ducum est* ('this

³⁴ Leigh (1997) 151 observes that this whole speech shows how Pompey has begun to view himself as the cause of both the civil war and Rome's global power.

³⁵ Fantham (1992) 179, 181; Ormand (1994) 44.

temptandasque ratus moturi militis iras
adloquitur tacitas ueneranda uoce cohortes. 2.529-530

Thinking to test the anger of the soldiers who were about to move on,
he addressed the silent cohorts with a voice deserving honour.

As his speech draws to a close, the situation is unchanged – suggesting that Pompey's speech has had no narrative impact – and the continued silence of the troops dissuades Pompey from his planned course of action. Instead, Pompey decides to retreat:

uerba ducis nullo partes clamore secuntur
nec matura petunt promissae classica pugnae.
sensit et ipse metum Magnus, placuitque referri
signa nec in tantae discrimina mittere pugnae
iam uictum fama non uisi Caesaris agmen. 2.596-600

His faction did not support the leader's words with any shouting, nor did they seek the delayed war-trumpet of a promised battle. Even Magnus himself sensed their fear, and he preferred to call back the standards and not send his army, already conquered by the rumour of a Caesar they had not yet seen, into the contest of so great a battle.

Although the Pompeians do not question their general's speech and plan, in the way that the Caesarian soldiers do, the absence of assent (or the praise which Pompey expects and desires) speaks volumes to Pompey. This overwhelming concern with audience approval and lack of rhetorical skill might reflect accounts of the historical Pompey, whom Velleius Paterculus describes as only *eloquentia medius* ('average at speaking', Vell. Pat. 2.29.3-4).⁴¹ In the years preceding civil war, Cicero criticised Pompey for valuing his popular reputation above political principles and remaining silent on divisive issues to avoid losing support: this critique might lie behind Lucan's focus on Pompey's concern for his fame and name.⁴² Cicero also records Pompey's utter dismay and dejection when addressing an unsympathetic audience (Cic. *Att.* 2.21.3).⁴³ Within the poem, Pompey is a figure desperately in need of affection and approval, as Frederick Ahl has observed: "The desire to be loved is the very core of Pompey's being, and explains most of his actions in the epic... Pompey clearly believes that he cannot be loved unless he is

⁴¹ van der Blom (2016) 117-118 argues that this faint praise is made more striking by its position within an otherwise positive account of Pompey's deeds.

⁴² Cf. Holliday (1969) 24-27, focusing on the criticism expressed in Cicero's letters to Atticus in 60 and 59 BCE.

⁴³ Cf. van der Blom (2016) 134-135.

famous.”⁴⁴ The lack of attention from his soldiers here is enough to destroy his confidence.

Yet Pompey's soldiers do not make any disapproval explicit: his decision to leave Italy is based entirely on his own beliefs about the significance of their silence. The importance of the act of interpretation in this episode is hinted at by the plural *discrimina* of line 2.599, a suggestive word in a poem about crimes, cosmic dissolution, division and doubling. In this passage, *discrimina* appears to be used in the sense of 'crisis' to describe the horrors of battle which Pompey wishes to avoid; but *discrimen* can also refer to critical judgement, and the plural form here suggests that there are multiple ways to judge the soldiers' reaction to Pompey's speech. Pompey is discouraged by the thought that his soldiers' silence indicates a lack of enthusiasm and fighting spirit, but this is not the only way to interpret such silence.⁴⁵ At the beginning of *Iliad* 3, the noise of the Trojan army – including Caesar's ancestor Aeneas, named at *Il.* 2.811 in the Trojan catalogue – is contrasted with the silence of the Achaeans:

αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ κόσμηθεν ἄμ' ἠγεμόνεσσιν ἕκαστοι,
Τρῶες μὲν κλαγγῆ τ' ἐνοπή τ' ἴσαν ὄρνιθες ὦς... *Il.* 3.1-2

Then when both groups were arranged with their leaders, the Trojans moved with noise and shouting, like birds...

οἱ δ' ἄρ' ἴσαν σιγῆ μένεα πνείοντες Ἀχαιοὶ
ἐν θυμῷ μεμαῶτες ἀλεξέμεν ἀλλήλοισιν. *Il.* 3.8-9

... while the Achaeans advance silently, breathing their strength, eager in their hearts to defend each other.

According to this passage, silence can indicate determination, military focus, seriousness and unity amongst the troops (which contrasts with the disagreements that divide the Achaeans in *Iliad* 1 and 2). It is, in fact, the silent army which will prove victorious in this war.

Readers are encouraged to think of this Homeric parallel thanks to structural similarities between the opening books of the *Iliad* and the *Bellum Ciuile*.⁴⁶ In *Iliad* 2, Agamemnon, encouraged to action by a dream-vision of Nestor

⁴⁴ Ahl (1974) 315.

⁴⁵ See Anzinger (2007), especially the introductory chapter, for the multivalence of silence. Anzinger does identify a link between silence and fear in the *Bellum Ciuile* – see especially pp. 114-120 – but notes that silence can have other motivations as well: for instance, silence can represent resistance to Caesar's noise and rapid activity (p. 124).

⁴⁶ Green (1991) explores Homeric influences on the poem in detail, particularly with regards to the characterisation of Caesar and his forces in *Bellum Ciuile* 1. Green does not make the connection

(who might provide a model for both Caesar's nocturnal vision of Italy, as Carin Green has observed,⁴⁷ and his conversation with Curio in *Bellum Ciuile* 1), addresses the assembled Achaean forces. This crowd is noisy and must be silenced so that the king can speak (*Il.* 2.95-98), just as the Caesarian crowd must be silenced at *BC* 1.296-299. The soldiers do not respond to Agamemnon's speech by expressing their eagerness to fight, as he had hoped, and Odysseus must persuade them to obey the Mycenaean leader: as such, Odysseus fulfils a similar function to Lucan's Laelius. In both texts, the reconciliation of the army with their leader is followed by a catalogue (Achaean ships at *Il.* 2.484-759 and Gallic tribes at *BC* 1.392-465); *Iliad* 2 ends with a second (opposing) catalogue – a list of (doomed) Trojan forces at *Il.* 2.760-875 – which might have a structural parallel in the list of (defeated) Pompeian leaders at *BC* 2.462-500. Lucan also invites us to compare Pompey with Agamemnon (and therefore, the Pompeian soldiers with the Achaeans), as both leaders attempt to test the enthusiasm of their troops (*Il.* 2.72-75, *BC* 2.539-530) and have these plans backfire.⁴⁸ If, as I have argued here, the contrast between noisy Caesarians (1.386-381) and silent Pompeians (2.596-597) encourages us to think of the noisy Trojans and silent Achaeans of the *Iliad*, it should be clear to Lucan's audience that a silent army is not necessarily an unenthusiastic or ineffective one. Pompey's pessimistic interpretation of his soldiers' silence emphasises the overwhelming value that he places on active and vocal support: he views a lack of enthusiastic approval as equivalent to rejection, and interprets this as presaging such a defeat that retreat seems to be the better option. The ambiguity and multivalence of silence places the interpretative onus on Pompey; he understands this silence as cowardice or hesitancy and, as a result, pursues a course of action that will abandon Italy to Caesar.

Pompey's exhortation, with its focus on his individual greatness, fails to engage with his audience in any meaningful way. As a result, the Pompeian soldiers respond to his speech with silence and passivity. There is no single or obvious way to make meaning out of such silence, as my contrast with the *Iliad* has demonstrated, and it is left to Pompey to interpret this in a way that aligns with his own priorities and experiences. Like the historical Pompey, Lucan's Pompey loses his nerve when faced with an unenthusiastic audience. Whereas Caesar's failure of exhortation is resolved by Laelius, the isolation of Pompey within his own camp prevents an equivalent intervention. Pompey's choice to

with silence which I have suggested here, but does link the Caesarian noise of *BC* 1.388-391 with a description of the Achaeans at *Il.* 2.147-149.

⁴⁷ Green (1991) 239.

⁴⁸ Christophorou (2017) 352-358 identifies a number of similarities between Agamemnon and Pompey, in this episode and elsewhere; see also Ambühl (2021) 37 on their failed attempts to test their respective troops.

retreat as a direct result of his audience's lack of enthusiasm shows that silence and non-participation are not neutral actions, but instead enable Caesar's conquest of Italy. This silence seems to result directly from Pompey's self-centred rhetorical style: his failure to include and draw in his audience indicates that he is ultimately to blame for his soldiers' reluctance to speak.

Julia's ghost

Much of the horror of the civil war derives from the way it tears families apart by pitting close relatives against each other: this is particularly emphasised at Pharsalus, where the soldiers freeze at the sight of their brothers and fathers lined up against them (7.460-470), and are later haunted by the ghosts of the relatives they slaughtered (7.775-776).⁴⁹ Marital and quasi-marital relationships also play an important role in the poem, and in the characterisation of its principal figures. In this section, I will focus on Julia, to argue that her verbal assault on Pompey is a greater failure than has previously been acknowledged; I will also offer a brief contrast with the successful communication of Marcia and Cleopatra.

Lucan gives particular significance to Julia – Caesar's daughter and Pompey's fourth wife – at the beginning of the poem by claiming that she could have prevented the conflict between her father and her husband, if not for her premature death:

quod si tibi fata dedissent
maiores in luce moras, tu sola furentem
inde uirum poteras atque hinc retinere parentem
armatasque manus excusso iungere ferro,
ut generos soceris mediae iunxere Sabinae.
morte tua discussa fides bellumque mouere
permissum ducibus. 1.114-120

If the fates had given you more time in the light, you alone could have held back your raging husband and your father and knocked back their swords and united their armed hands, just as the Sabines intervened to unite sons-in-law to fathers-in-law. With your death, loyalty was shattered and the leaders were permitted to undertake war.

This passage emphasises the importance of women such as Julia for creating bonds between men who would otherwise be enemies, and the potential role of women

⁴⁹ Fantham (2010b) explores the significance of kin-killing in Lucan.

as both causes of war and advocates for peace.⁵⁰ The reference to the Sabine women creates a parallel between the Caesarian civil war and one of the first civil conflicts in Rome's history,⁵¹ and Lucan imagines Julia – who died after giving birth to a child who could have strengthened the alliance between Caesar and Pompey⁵² – risking her life by intervening on the battlefield to end their combat.⁵³ Lucan suggests that Julia would have opposed or forbidden civil war and encouraged peace between Caesar and Pompey, and the historical record emphasises the affectionate nature of her marriage to Pompey.⁵⁴ Yet when she enters the narrative in book 3, to haunt Pompey's dreams (3.9-40), she is unexpectedly aggressive towards her former husband.

With a terrifying appearance akin to that of a Fury, Julia complains that her guilt in causing the civil war (through her death) has resulted in her expulsion from Elysium:

diri tum plena horroris imago
uisa caput maestum per hiantis Iulia terras
tollere et accenso furialis stare sepulchro.
'sedibus Elysiis campoque expulsa piorum
ad Stygias' inquit 'tenebras manesque nocentis
post bellum ciuile trahor.'

3.9-14

Then an image full of terrible horror is seen: Julia, raising her sad head through the gaping earth and standing as a Fury on a burning pyre. 'Expelled from the Elysian seats and the field of the pious to the Stygian darkness and the harmful spirits,' she said, 'I am dragged after civil war.'

There are several epic and elegiac models for this scene,⁵⁵ but it is still strikingly unusual: as Angeline Chiu has noted, Julia's expulsion from Elysium marks the first

⁵⁰ See Keith (2004) 86-88 for the way that Julia, like other epic women, is positioned as a cause of war.

⁵¹ Sannicandro (2010) 43-47 analyses the Sabine myth as a prototype for the Caesarian civil war, and the importance this places upon the character of Julia.

⁵² Cf. Velleius Paterculus 2.47.2 and Plut. *Vit. Pomp.* 53.4. Roche (2009) 171-172 suggests that the mention of *pignora* of 1.111 refers to Julia's short-lived offspring; Lucan briefly mentions a child at 5.471-475 and 9.1049. Sannicandro (2010) 40-43 explores the importance of this potential blood-bond between Caesar and Pompey.

⁵³ This parallels the battlefield intervention of Jocasta between her sons in the Theban myth, discussed below in chapter 4; cf. Sannicandro (2010) 48 on this similarity.

⁵⁴ Cf. Haley (1985) 53-55.

⁵⁵ See discussions by Hübner (1984), Hunink (1992), Stok (1996) and Caston (2011) for parallels with other literary dreams or ghostly visitations.

instance in Latin literature in which a soul's position in the underworld is posthumously changed by events in the mortal world.⁵⁶ The imagery of the Fury indicates a particular resonance with Turnus' encounter with Allecto at *Aen.* 7.413-457,⁵⁷ and perhaps also with the Fury who drags Seneca's Tantalus from the underworld to create bloodshed between his sons (*Sen. Thy.* 1-121): these allusions position Julia as an agent of violence who wishes to perpetuate civil war. However, in an epic which is largely lacking in divine intervention, Julia's imitation of the Fury might also suggest her powerlessness.⁵⁸ Julia's hatred for Cornelia, whom she blames for Pompey's downfall (3.21-23), is evident: she dismisses Cornelia as a *paelex* ('concubine' or 'mistress', 3.23), and thereby indicates that she does not accept the validity of this new marriage. The apparent breaching and betrayal of Pompey's marital connection to Julia is closely connected to the breakdown of the political bond between Caesar and Pompey.⁵⁹

Julia's attitude towards Pompey is also typically seen as anger and aggression,⁶⁰ but this scene may be more ambiguous than it initially appears. Julia describes the horrors of the underworld and the widespread deaths, seemingly including Pompey's own,⁶¹ which will follow if Pompey wages war against her father (3.12-19).⁶² Considering the fact that this scene appears immediately after Pompey abandons Italy due to the fear that his unenthusiastic army cannot stand against Caesar, we might expect him to respond to this prediction with a similar level of cowardice, and to flee the fate that Julia predicts. Julia also threatens to appear before Pompey in the middle of the battlefield (3.30-31), and promises to maintain Pompey's connection-by-marriage to Caesar (3.31-33): these actions would enable her to fulfil the role predicted for her in Lucan's earlier description of Julia's hypothetical battlefield intervention and ability to unite her father and husband.⁶³ I would like to suggest that, despite her terrifying appearance and aggressive tone (which is in keeping with the violence, horror and perversion of Lucan's world and underworld), Julia may have the same desire for peace in death as she did in life; in fact, the use of terror here may be designed to scare the

⁵⁶ Chiu (2010) 351-352.

⁵⁷ As Keith (2004) 87 observes.

⁵⁸ See Gilder (1997) chapter 3 for the impotence of Fury-like figures in the *Bellum Ciuile*, including pp. 120-122 on Julia.

⁵⁹ Sannicandro (2010) 52.

⁶⁰ For instance, see Keith (2004) 87, Chiu (2010) 353-354 or Caston (2011) 136-137.

⁶¹ To judge from her closing comment: *bellum / te faciet ciuile meum* ('civil war will make you mine', 3.33-34).

⁶² Cf. Chiu (2010) 350, describing Julia's speech as a "forecast of unmitigated doom".

⁶³ Chiu (2010) 354 reads this as a point of contrast with the earlier presentation of Julia as a Sabine; I would like to emphasise instead an idea of continuity between these descriptions.

cowardly Pompey into surrendering to Caesar and effecting a bloodless peace. Caesar's bloodlust and love of slaughter makes such an outcome impossible, but Pompey will express his own desire to avoid bloodshed at 7.92-96. Whatever Julia's message, it is clear that the dream has little effect on Pompey, who dismisses its reality immediately upon waking (3.38-40).⁶⁴ The dream increases Pompey's desire for battle:

ille, dei quamuis cladem manesque minentur,
maior in arma ruit certa cum mente malorum. 3.36-37

Although gods and spirits threaten disaster, he rushes more eagerly into arms with his mind full of evils.

Both Pompey's dismissal of the dream and the contrastive adverb *quamuis* suggest that this outcome opposes Julia's intentions. If, as I have argued, Julia seeks to end the civil war – and presumably also her exile from Elysium, a punishment for causing this conflict – then the act of encouraging Pompey to fight constitutes a significant failure on her part. It also aligns her with the ghostly *imago* of Italy which attempts to halt Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon, but which is similarly ignored.⁶⁵ Helen Lovatt's analysis of the gendered aspect of ancient literary dreams establishes a distinction between traditionally epic dreams, which offer guidance or instructions to primarily male dreamers, and dreams with a more tragic colouring, which tend to terrify or upset primarily female dreamers and require interpretation by another character;⁶⁶ Lovatt argues that Pompey's dream in book 3, which scares him and lacks any clear instructions on how he should act, "casts him rather as a tragic woman than an epic man".⁶⁷ Yet Pompey, who is isolated here as at so many other points in the epic, has no confidant who can interpret this dream for him: this suggests once again that his enthusiasm for war after the dream indicates a misinterpretation. Pompey's separation from his community, which is itself a consequence of and will be exacerbated by civil war, prevents him from understanding Julia's message as an encouragement to make peace with Caesar.

⁶⁴ Hunink (1992) 34-35 notes that this lack of narrative impact is characteristic of dreams in the *Bellum Ciuile*, but contrasts with the effectiveness of dream messengers in other texts. Pompey's disbelief may reflect the realities of life in the late Republic and early Principate: Harris (2003) 27-31 argues that this was a period of increasing scepticism about the truthfulness of dreams. Rolim de Moura (2008) 145-146, 153-154 argues that Pompey's dream of Rome in book 7 shows lingering anxieties caused by his dream of Julia: it will be noted in this context that, immediately after awaking from his second dream, Pompey demonstrates his reluctance to fight.

⁶⁵ Morford ([1967] 1996) 77-81, Stok (1996) 53 and Rolim de Moura (2008) 155-156 comment on links between these scenes.

⁶⁶ Lovatt (2013) 205-216.

⁶⁷ Lovatt (2013) 214.

Julia's failure in this scene cannot be attributed solely to her gender and subordination to her husband. In book 2, Cato's former wife Cornelia convinces him to remarry her, by proving that she shares his grief, pessimism and disregard for social conventions; in book 9, Caesar is paired with Cleopatra, who shares his deceptiveness and lust for power,⁶⁸ and she persuades him to wage a war against her brother Ptolemy on her behalf.⁶⁹ Both of these episodes emphasise how the appearance of grief can aid a woman's persuasive efforts: Julia's sorrow is also indicated through the description of her 'sad head' (*caput maestum*, 3.10), although this seems subordinated to the terrifying aspects of her appearance. Marcia presents herself to Cato with torn hair, bruised arms and a layer of ash from Hortensius' pyre (2.333-336), even though, as Elaine Fantham notes, there was in fact a gap of several months between the historical funeral of Hortensius and the remarriage of Cato and Marcia.⁷⁰ This mournful appearance makes Marcia more acceptable to her sorrowful former husband, as the poet notes – *non aliter placitura uiro* ('she would not otherwise be pleasing to her husband', 2.337) – since Cato is also characterised by grief (2.297-303, 2.377-378). Cleopatra takes on a similar appearance to persuade Caesar, and the poet notes that her sorrow in this scene is feigned and calculated (10.82-84). Emanuele Berti sees a contrast here between Marcia's genuine grief and Cleopatra's falsity;⁷¹ but I am more convinced by Alessandro Rolim de Moura's argument that the similarities between Marcia and Cleopatra suggest that Marcia's appearance of grief is also calculated.⁷² Cleopatra's use of persuasive speech alludes to her famed intellect and rhetorical skills,⁷³ but Caesar is only moved by her beauty:⁷⁴ this reinforces the importance of appearance and visual signifiers in communicative acts. Both of these women show a significant degree of persuasive success which is absent from Lucan's portrait of Julia. Instead, Julia seems to have more in common with her rival Cornelia, whose relationship

⁶⁸ For instance, Caesar feigns grief at seeing Pompey's head (9.1062-1063) when he is gladdened by the death of his enemy, while Cleopatra hides her desire to capture Caesar and use him to conquer Rome (10.64-67). For Caesar's deceptiveness, see Anzinger (2007) 131-134 and Tracy (2016a) 226-238.

⁶⁹ Cleopatra's plots against Ptolemy indicate her desire for civil conflict, and when Pothinus and Achilles turn on Caesar, this is presented as a continuation of Caesar's civil war (10.391-393, 410-421). Roche (2021c) 186-188 also argues that the war in Egypt repeats and renews aspects of the civil war found in the preceding nine books.

⁷⁰ Fantham (1992) 40.

⁷¹ Berti (2000) 110.

⁷² Rolim de Moura (2008) 130.

⁷³ Cf. Plut. *Vit. Ant.* 25, 27.

⁷⁴ *nequiquam duras temptasset Caesaris aures: / uoltus adest precibus faciesque incesta perorat* ('she would have tested Caesar's resistant ears in vain, but her appearance adds to her prayers and her lustful face argues her case', 10.104-105).

with Pompey is often fraught and defined by miscommunication. It is as if their associations with the failed orator Pompey, or perhaps his presence as their interlocutor, prevent Julia and Cornelia from achieving the communicative success experienced by Marcia and Cleopatra.

The truce at Ilerda

The unique horrors of civil war are highlighted in book 4, when the Pompeian and Caesarian forces meet at Ilerda. Literal (spatial) proximity allows the soldiers to recognise their metaphorical proximity, as they see familiar faces in the opposed army, and their own involvement in *ciuile nefas* ('unspeakable crimes against their community', 4.172). The troops are initially silent and hesitant, but the strength of their former affection soon compels them to renew their familiar relationships:

tenuere parumper
ora metu, tantum nutu motoque salutant
ense suos. mox, ut stimulis maioribus ardens
rupit amor leges, audet transcendere uallum
miles, in amplexus effusas tendere palmas.
hospitis ille ciet nomen, uocat ille propinquum,
admonet hunc studiis consors puerilibus aetas;
nec Romanus erat, qui non agnouerat hostem.
arma rigant lacrimis, singultibus oscula rumpunt,
et quamuis nullo maculatus sanguine miles
quae potuit fecisse timet. 4.172-182

They briefly held their tongues out of fear, hardly acknowledging their friends with a nod or a movement of their swords. Soon, as affection burning with greater pains broke attention to the rules, a soldier dares to cross the ramparts, to stretch his hands wide in an embrace. One man produces the name of a guest, another calls a relative, a common age reminds that one of youthful pursuits; he was not a Roman, who had not recognised one of his foes. Their armour stiffens with tears, kisses burst through the sobs, and although a soldier is unstained by blood he fears what he could have done.

Communicative acts are fundamental to this restoration of communal bonds: gestures such as kisses and the opening of arms in an embrace; words such as those found in the act of naming or calling a relative, or the stories of battle which are

shared at 4.197-202; and visible and tangible signs of affection such as tears.⁷⁵ Familiarity enables an easy truce, but it also brings its own problems. Romanness comes to be defined, perhaps because of the pervasive role of civil war in Roman history, by the ability to recognise friends and family members amongst one's enemies; and the renewal of friendship, which turns out to be only temporary, exacerbates the criminality of military activity: *omne futurum / creuit amore nefas* ('the wickedness of all their future deeds increased by this affection', 4.204-205). The stronger the bonds between soldiers in civil war, the more unspeakably evil it is to fight.

This episode also emphasises the domination of a general over his troops, and of a single voice arguing for war over the voiceless who seek peace. The power of the individual is first suggested by the single soldier who crosses the ramparts and causes the other soldiers to follow him: Gergó Gellérfi has identified a parallel here with Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon, a similar transgression of boundaries that is imitated by his soldiers, so that the Ilerda episode becomes a miniature version of the epic narrative as a whole.⁷⁶ The truce itself is disturbed by the arrival of the Pompeian general Petreius, who forces his soldiers to kill their friends and guests, and who reasserts control over the soldiers who had sought to act independently. Throughout the poem, the conflict-loving Caesar "continually strives to deny others either resolution or reconciliation",⁷⁷ and Lucan's portrayal of this Pompeian general indicates that this aversion to peace can be found on both sides of the civil war. Petreius turns his men against their Caesarian friends through his own violent actions, which are supplemented by an enraged speech:

famulas scelerata ad proelia dextras
excitat atque hostis turba stipatus inermis
praecipitat castris iunctosque amplexibus ense
separat et multo disturbat sanguine pacem.
addidit ira ferox moturas proelia uoces. 4.207-211

He stirs servile hands into criminal warfare and, surrounding his unarmed enemies with a crowd of men, he casts them out of the camps, and with his sword he separates men joined in embraces and upsets the peace with much bloodshed. Fierce anger added a speech which would move them to battle.

⁷⁵ Gladhill (2016) 176-180 analyses the establishment of peace in the Pompeian camp and the connections to the fatal *foedera* of the *Aeneid* which indicate that this episode will end in disaster.

⁷⁶ Gellérfi (2012) 56.

⁷⁷ Spentzou (2018) 251; see also pp. 256-258 on Caesar's attitude to the mutiny of his own troops in book 5.

Petreius initiates violence and thereby incites further violence, destroying the growing bonds of friendship and fragile peace.⁷⁸ Although it takes significant bloodshed to destroy the peace, this can be effected by an individual who arms enslaved attendants to attack citizen soldiers. By the end of Petreius' speech, which focuses on the need for his men to be loyal to their leaders rather than on the justice of their cause, the Pompeian soldiers have been convinced to fight again.⁷⁹ Their *amor* for their companions on the other side (4.205) is turned into hatred: *odere suos* ('they hate those close to them', 4.249). Instead, they feel an *amor scelerum*:

sic fatur et omnis
concussit mentes scelerumque reduxit amorem. 4.235-236

He spoke in this way and attacked all their minds and led them back
into a love of misdeeds.

Petreius' speech is figured as an attack on his own men, highlighting the inescapability of civil violence in this poem. The *fides* which was being renewed and which offered to bridge the gap between the two armies (4.204) is subordinated to the requirement of soldiers to follow orders, their *fides* to a leader:

itur in omne nefas, et, quae fortuna deorum
inuidia caeca bellorum in nocte tulisset,
fecit monstra fides. 4.243-245

Every crime is initiated, and loyalty effects horrors which fortune
might have enacted through the envy of the gods in the blind
darkness of battle.

Loyalty to Petreius causes the Pompeians to lose their moral high ground, and makes the brutal and bloodthirsty Caesar seem heroic by comparison.⁸⁰ Paolo Asso writes of this passage: "The *fides* to one's commander in war against foreign enemies is identical to the *fides* toward one's homeland, but in civil war *fides*

⁷⁸ Hershkowitz (1998) 202-203 connects this to a wider trend in the poem whereby a single frenzied individual can drag those around them into the madness of civil war, and notes that Petreius' actions invert the first simile of the *Aeneid* (in which a single leader calms the frenzied crowd). Esposito (2021) 80 writes that Petreius "rekindles the military spirit of his men" and "urges them to give up their outrageous peace with the enemy and to result the assault against their relatives and friends with renewed vigor", which downplays or ignores the violence of Petreius' intervention.

⁷⁹ Ginsberg (2021) 254-256 notes that, whereas the description in Caesar's *Commentarii* focuses on the Pompeians' attempts to help many of the Caesarian soldiers escape Petreius' violent edict, Lucan omits this idea altogether and instead foregrounds the widespread slaughter.

⁸⁰ Cf. Esposito (2021) 80-82.

breaks down into two conflicting values.”⁸¹ This is a valid assessment of the moral confusion effected by civil war, but it is important to note that the initial *fides* is not just to an abstract homeland, but also to the real Roman citizens with whom these soldiers are said to have shared their camp: the *fides* amongst men of equal rank, or even between close relations, is subordinated to the *fides* associated with military hierarchies.

While the attempt to create peace required a series of small interpersonal connections based on shared identity as a community of ordinary Romans (or Roman soldiers), the reinstatement of warfare is achieved through the actions and orders of a single leader. Similarly, a general can sue for peace – betraying his cause to do so – even when the ordinary soldiers are prohibited from seeking the same outcome. Petreius' colleague Afranius surrenders to Caesar without any apparent loss of dignity (4.337-343) and is permitted to negotiate on behalf of the whole army, with the soldiers expected to align with his position even as it contradicts Petreius' orders.⁸² The speeches of both Petreius and Afranius, although they advance different positions, and the responses of the Pompeian soldiers emphasise the loss of individual agency as a requirement for military life. Not only are the individual acts of soldiers unimportant, but even collective acts of resistance or attempts to create peace are futile if the leaders of each army want war. This episode initially suggests that ordinary soldiers can reject immoral orders to engage in civil war, just to reassert the idea that only the speeches and actions of their leaders hold weight and have an impact on the world.

Deliberation and exhortation at Pharsalus

The crucial seventh book of the *Bellum Ciuile* begins with competing speeches from Cicero, who encourages war, and Pompey, who attempts to argue for peace; the book also offers contrasting exhortations by Caesar and Pompey, and ends with Pompey persuading himself to flee the field and abandon his troops. These juxtapositions highlight Pompey's rhetorical weaknesses and inadequacy as a public speaker and political or military leader: his arguments and objections are ignored, and he is instead compelled to engage in the criminality of a civil war without the possibility of victory. As well as contributing to this characterisation

⁸¹ Asso (2010) 160.

⁸² Masters (1992) 74-77 argues that this episode foregrounds division within the Pompeian camp and points out that, whereas Caes. *BCiv.* 1.84 shows Afranius and Petreius presenting a united front, Lucan divides the two generals – so that Afranius is absent from the slaughter and Petreius from the negotiations with Caesar – and makes Afranius use his colleague's phraseology to undermine and ultimately reverse Petreius' position of refusing to surrender. In both cases the soldiers must submit to the instructions of their leader at the time.

of Pompey as powerless, these episodes foreground the issues with a 'democratic' mode of leadership – a theme which will recur in the council at Syhedra after Pompey's flight from Pharsalus.

At the start of book 7, Pompey is reluctant to participate any further in civil war, but his soldiers clamour for combat and criticise his hesitation (7.45-57): by forcing Pompey to fight, they hasten their own deaths. Cicero, who was absent from the historical Pharsalus,⁸³ and whose writings from the civil war demonstrate his preference for peace even as he sided with Pompey,⁸⁴ is introduced as a spokesperson for this bellicose crowd.⁸⁵ He is described as the *Romani maximus auctor / ... eloquii* ('greatest speaker of Roman eloquence', 7.62-63), who is 'frustrated by the war' (*iratus bellis*, 7.65) and by his prolonged absence from the Roman forum. This conventional praise for the famous orator suggests that his impact on this scene is representative of the best that Republican rhetoric and political discourse have to offer, and Annette Baertschi has argued that the episode is designed to evoke the declamatory practice of *suasoriae*, whereby students of rhetoric adopted a Ciceronian style for a wide range of arguments.⁸⁶ However, although Cicero is skilled in speaking, Lucan does not approve of his arguments: *addidit inualidae robur facundia causae* ('his eloquence added strength to their weak cause', 7.67).⁸⁷ This authorial comment recalls Virgil's criticism of the orator Drances, who also takes on a role as spokesperson for a larger group, as unfairly hostile to Turnus (*Aen.* 11.122-123, 220-221): Drances is often thought to be based on the historical Cicero.⁸⁸ Irene Peirano Garrison contrasts Drances, who (like the

⁸³ Lintott (1971) 489.

⁸⁴ Cf. Holliday (1969) 59-61, Brunt (1986) 19-20, 31-32 and Baraz (2021) 737-739. Baertschi (2020) 58-61 acknowledges Cicero's desire for peace but places more significance on his frequent criticism of Pompey's inactivity, to argue that his speech in *Bellum Ciuile* 7 is not wholly out of character.

⁸⁵ Lounsbury (1976) 211-214 notes that the idea of a reluctant Pompey being forced to engage in battle at Pharsalus by the encouragement of his allies is found as early as Caes. *BCiv.* 3.86.1, and argues that Lucan focuses on Cicero and the ordinary soldiers in order to remove blame from this disastrous advice from the Pompeian senators: Cicero becomes a scapegoat by voicing the historical complaints of a wide array of Optimates. Baraz (2021) 729-731 suggests that Cicero's warmongering might recall his violent suppression of the Catiline conspiracy during his consulship.

⁸⁶ Baertschi (2020); Baertschi argues (pp. 63-64) that Lucan, like other imperial writers, ignored Cicero's political activities in order to focus on his position as a paragon of eloquence.

⁸⁷ Holliday (1969) 67-69 argues that Lucan's criticism of Cicero might derive from his inconsistency, indecisiveness and failure to die for the Republican cause.

⁸⁸ As McDermott (1980) argues. Baraz (2021) 725-279 draws out the similarities between historical descriptions of Cicero, Virgil's Drances and Lucan's Cicero, including Lucan's borrowing of the term *eloquium* from Turnus' description of Drances at *Aen.* 11.383. Baraz argues that Lucan combines aspects of two distinct declamatory traditions about Cicero, one which highlights his eloquence and Republican values and another which foregrounds his political failures and death, by linking Cicero's eloquence to a desire for the civil war which will destroy the Roman Republic.

Homeric Thersites) presents an opposition between eloquence and martial activity, with the speeches of Cicero and Lentulus that propel the epic narrative towards violence, and argues that Lucan shows how speech and action combine to enact societal destruction.⁸⁹ This indicates the impossibility of obtaining peace through negotiation and verbal communication, since, in Lucan, even those who value oratory subordinate it to their desire for combat. Cicero's presence in this book hints at the dangers of powerful speech, which can contribute to the moral inversion of civil war by presenting unjust arguments in convincing terms; this expert orator also provides a contrast to Pompey, who speaks immediately after him. Yet as Yelena Baraz has argued, Lucan uses aspects of the historical Cicero as a model for his presentation of Pompey (especially in relation to his decapitation and burial), which complicates this contrast.⁹⁰ As such, the clash between Cicero and Pompey which leads to the latter's death can be read as an internal conflict between Cicero the orator and Cicero the failed peacekeeper, a miniature version of civil war which hints at the idea that this kind of conflict is ultimately suicidal.⁹¹

As Pompey consents to Cicero's demands for combat, he emphasises his own powerlessness. He suggests that he will set aside the position of leader and become just a common soldier: *si milite Magno, / non duce tempus eget, nil ultra fata morabor* ('if the times demand Magnus the soldier, not the general, I will not delay fate any longer', 7.87-88). Pompey also rejects any responsibility as a leader for moral judgement (*Pompei nec crimen erit nec gloria bellum*, 'war will be neither a crime nor a celebration for Pompey', 7.112) or the outcome of the war (*neque enim uictoria Magno / laetior*, 'for victory is no happier to Magnus [than death]', 7.119-120). In this episode where power lies with the army, Pompey must (paradoxically) discard his authority as a general in order to maintain any influence over events. As Andrew Zissos argues, Pompey's failure and impotence results from his willingness to consent to the will of other senators and govern by consensus – a departure from the individual power which Lucan presents as characteristic of Pompey's earlier career – in contrast to Caesar's successful use of autocratic powers.⁹² However, Pompey could have defended his position and convinced

⁸⁹ Peirano Garrison (2019) 210-216. I see more aggression and responsibility for war in Drances than Peirano Garrison does, and as such I would situate the collapse of distinctions between speech and violent action in the *Aeneid* itself.

⁹⁰ Baraz (2021) 732-737, making particular reference to Cornelius Severus' obituary of Cicero as recorded in the sixth *Suasoria* of Lucan's grandfather.

⁹¹ A similar conflict can be seen at the very end of the *Aeneid*, where, Hardie (1993) 34 argues, Turnus and Aeneas both take on the role of Pallas: Turnus through his assumption of Pallas' sword-belt before his premature death, Aeneas through his claim that Pallas deals the fatal blow.

⁹² Zissos (2021) 113-114. Ahl (1974) 310-311 and Ahl (1976) 161-164 point to the impossibility of Pompey's situation: he cannot overrule Cicero (or Lentulus at Syhedra) without embracing the tyranny that he purports to oppose.

Cicero and the soldiers to see the value of delaying battle, without rejecting democracy: his failure to do so demonstrates his communicative weaknesses. As in other scenes, Pompey's speech shows a lack of rhetorical skill: it is erratic and lurches between different thoughts and exclamations, many of which suggest that Pompey is disconnected from reality or lying to himself. He claims (unbelievably) at 7.92-111 that his side could win the war without bloodshed if the soldiers were not so desperate to fight, that Caesar's army is already half-defeated,⁹³ and that he is leaving Rome in a stronger position than when he took up power. The speech lacks a clear audience, in both its context and its expression: the only second-person verb forms and vocative nouns address Rome (7.91), Fortune (7.110-111) and Caesar (7.113-114), suggesting that Pompey speaks only to himself.⁹⁴ The outcome is also confused. The content of the speech emphasises Pompey's preference for peace, but the narrator indicates that it initiates combat and frantic preparations for battle:

sic fatur et arma
permittit populis frenosque furentibus ira
laxat. 7.123-125

He speaks these words and permits the people to take up arms and releases the reins on the men raging with anger.⁹⁵

Despite the apparent lack of an audience, this monologue has an impact on the world as if it has been heard; yet its effect directly contradicts Pompey's desires and intentions, which further emphasises "the tenuous authority he exercises over his soldiers"⁹⁶ and makes it seem like another instance of Pompey's failure as a speaker. This episode demonstrates a breakdown of causality,⁹⁷ as the effects of the speech are shown to be independent of the nature and content of its delivery, which hints at the inadequacy or irrelevance of conventional communication in these unconventional circumstances.

⁹³ Roche (2021a) 127-128 argues, largely on the basis of a brief reference to Caesar's troops plundering the fields (7.235-236), that Pompey's policy of delay could successfully starve the Caesarian soldiers into submission, but this evidence is weak and unconvincing. However, I agree with Roche's judgement (p. 128) that the "crucial shortcoming of Pompey in the area of generalship is the tenuous authority he exercises over his soldiers".

⁹⁴ For this reason, Fantham (2010a) 55 deems it "unlikely" that Pompey's speech is issued in public.

⁹⁵ Roche (2021a) 128 notes the clear echo of Latinus' surrender to the crowd at *Aen.* 7.600, discussed above in chapter 2; see also Anzinger (2007) 143 for Pompey's similarity to Latinus.

⁹⁶ Roche (2021a) 128.

⁹⁷ Without mentioning this passage specifically, Bartsch (1997) 63-64 identifies a wider breakdown of causality that results from Lucan's poetics of paradox.

Even Caesar is temporarily filled with fears and doubts before this battle (7.245-248), but he quickly suppresses these emotions in favour of the confidence required to encourage his soldiers: *formidine mersa / prosilit hortando melior fiducia uolgo* ('his dread sinks down and confidence, better for persuading crowds, rises in its place', 7.248-249).⁹⁸ Caesar's exhortation at 7.250-329 starts by emphasising the power of his army and their own desire to engage in civil war: *adest totiens optatae copia pugnae* ('the battle which you have so often wished for is at hand', 7.251). As in book 1, Caesar demonstrates his awareness that history is often written by the winners, since he claims that victory will grant absolution from the crimes of civil war:

haec, fato quae teste probet, quis iustius arma
sumpserit; haec acies uictum factura nocentem est.
si pro me patriam ferro flammisque petistis,
nunc pugnite truces gladioque exsoluite culpam. 7.259-263

This day will prove, with fate as our witness, who took up arms more justly; this battle will make the defeated guilty. If you fought your homeland on my behalf, with blade and flames, now fight fiercely and absolve your guilt with your sword.

This passage demonstrates the social and moral instability of civil war by defining guilt and morality merely on the basis of military success, and argues that the dead and defeated will be unable to defend their reputations, motivations and identities. This theme of moral inversion recurs in Caesar's instruction for his men to mutilate the corpses of their fathers, and to value the killing of their close relations, precisely because this is a *scelus* (7.320-325). Caesar promises to alleviate his soldiers' guilt and orders them to engage in further criminal behaviour at the same time, perhaps in recognition of the fact that legal and moral judgements mean no more to his soldiers here than they did to Laelius in book 1.

It is not clear if Caesar's speech has any real effect on the internal audience, although it is a significant piece of characterisation for Lucan's readers. Caesar acknowledges partway through his exhortation that it only serves to delay the actions which his soldiers already desire to take:

sed mea fata moror, qui uos in tela furentis
uocibus his teneo. ueniam date bella trahenti. 7.295-296

⁹⁸ See Anson (2010) 315-317 for the argument, based partly on Caesar's *Commentarii*, that visible displays of a general's confidence were a more significant part of battlefield exhortations than the words which might only be heard by the small portion of the army standing closest to the general.

But I delay my own fate, since I am restraining you with these words, although you are eager for weapons. Forgive me for prolonging the war.

Although Caesar states that he hesitates out of excitement (7.296-299) rather than the fear or reluctance to fight which characterises Pompey, his words echo Pompey's acknowledgement (at 7.87-88) that his postponement of this climactic conflict has merely delayed the inevitable. In both cases, there is an implicit opposition between speech and action, and the general's words are contrasted with the soldiers' desire to fight. Caesar's soldiers begin preparations for battle almost before he has finished speaking:

uix cuncta locuto

Caesare quemque suum munus trahit, armaque raptim
sumpta Ceresque uiris. capiunt praesagia belli
calcatisque ruunt castris; stant ordine nullo,
arte ducis nulla, permittuntque omnia fatis. 7.329-333

Caesar had hardly spoken these words when duties draw each man away, and weapons and food are quickly taken up by the soldiers. They accept premonitions of war and rush from the trampled camps; they stand in no order, with no strategy from their leader, and everything is left to the fates.

There is no applause or acclaim for Caesar's exhortation, and the demands of war drag the men out of Caesar's audience (suggesting that control lies with this *munus*, rather than Caesar himself). Caesar instructs his soldiers to tear down the walls of the camp and fill the ditch in order to march out in tight formation (7.326-329); in line 7.332 the camp has already been trampled over by the rush of men heading towards combat, where they seem to arrange themselves chaotically in contravention of Caesar's instructions. In short, the army seems driven by their own eagerness for civil war, rather than by the specific details of a speech which serves only to delay the activity of these impatient soldiers. My analysis of this passages contrasts with the views of scholars who attribute significant rhetorical success in this book to Caesar, such as in this argument from Christiane Reitz and Simone Finkmann: "How devastating a leader's failure to deliver an encouraging speech can be is perhaps best exemplified by Lucan's juxtaposition of Caesar's inspiring speech (Lucan. 7.235-302) and Pompey's lack of a similarly convincing exhortation (7.337-84)... The outcome of the battle is anticipated and seemingly decided by the respective success and failure of their speeches."⁹⁹ As I have argued here, the effect of Caesar's exhortation on his soldiers' conduct appears minimal.

⁹⁹ Reitz and Finkmann (2019) 475.

Assuming that a Caesarian victory proves Caesar's skill as a speaker is no different from assuming that it proves the justice and morality of his political endeavours.

Like Caesar, Pompey must check his fears before addressing his troops, although there is no indication that this is replaced with confidence: *premit inde metus* ('then he pressed down his fear', 7.341).¹⁰⁰ His speech is only half as long as Caesar's, at only forty lines (7.342-382), and it has fewer verb forms indicating orders or commands: this immediately heightens the impression, present throughout the epic, that Pompey has less power over his audience than Caesar does.¹⁰¹ Each speech presents the battle of Pharsalus as the final, climactic day of the civil war (7.254-260, 7.342-344); each suggests that only a few men will need to fight their fellow citizens (7.274-276, 7.366-368); each references victory as the gift of the gods (7.297-299, 7.348-351); each describes the imagined fate of their leader if they are defeated (7.303-310, 7.379-382). Such similarities point to the generals' shared access to the persuasive tropes of Roman oratory,¹⁰² and to the closeness between opposing sides in this civil war. Pompey's speech begins with a sense of optimism at 7.342-368: he reminds his soldiers that victory will allow them to see their homes and families again;¹⁰³ he argues that the moral superiority of the Republican cause will earn divine support for his army, as apparently evidenced by the fact that they have not yet ended Pompey's life; and he states that the Pompeians have so many troops on their side that should be able to win with ease. However, Pompey then switches towards a more pessimistic tone.¹⁰⁴ There is a transitional reference to the encouragement of Roman matrons and elderly politicians, and a personification of Rome (7.369-373): this looks back to his lines on the soldiers seeing their homes again, but the references to torn hair (7.370), prostrate senators (7.372) and the fear of the city (7.373) hint at a darker mood. These references also seem unsuited for an army which, as Caesar argues (7.274-284) and Pompey confirms (7.360-364), contains a large number of foreign troops

¹⁰⁰ Fucecchi (2011) 244 argues that the Pompeians' willingness to vocally oppose their leader reduces his confidence in addressing them, in contrast to Caesar's comfortable control of his men.

¹⁰¹ Helzle (1994) 133-134 identifies seventeen command forms in Caesar's 79 lines of exhortation in book 7 and only five in Pompey's 40 lines, and notes that Pompey issues far fewer commands than Caesar across the poem as a whole.

¹⁰² As Rolim de Moura (2010) 71-74 argues. The article as a whole focuses on the contrast between the two speeches, particularly the relative confidence and contrasting values of their speakers, rather than on their similarities (which I have emphasised here).

¹⁰³ Roche (2021a) 129-130 notes that this shows Pompey's humanity and focus on family relationships, in contrast with Caesar who inspires his troops with visions of slaughter.

¹⁰⁴ Anzinger (2007) 307 notes that, whereas Caesar can genuinely suppress his doubts for the sake of encouraging his troops, Pompey's pessimism shines through, and thereby indicates his weaknesses as a leader.

with little attachment to Rome itself. Pompey then considers the prospect of defeat:

credite qui nunc est populus populumque futurum
permixtas adferre preces: haec libera nasci,
haec uolt turba mori. 7.374-376

Imagine that current and future generations offer mingled prayers: one wishes to be born free, the other crowd wishes to die.

Magnus, nisi uincitis, exul,
ludibrium soceri, uester pudor, ultima fata
deprecor ac turpes extremi cardinis annos,
ne discam seruire senex. 7.379-382

Magnus will be an exile, unless you win, a joke to his father-in-law, a source of shame to you; I pray to avoid that final fate and shameful years at the end of life, I pray that I will not learn to be a slave in my old age.

In these lines, Pompey stresses the consequences of failure, for the city of Rome and for himself: characteristically for this egotistic general, his emphasis is on the latter. We can deduce that Pompey hopes his soldiers will wish to preserve him from this fate, and will fight harder in order to do so.

On a superficial reading, this speech might seem successful, since Pompey's soldiers, like Caesar's, are roused to war by their leader's exhortation:

tam maesta locuti
uoce ducis flagrant animi, Romanaque uirtus
erigitur, placuitque mori, si uera timeret.
ergo utrimque pari procurrant agmina motu
irarum; metus hos regni, spes excitat illos. 7.382-386

Their spirits are enflamed by the voice of the leader speaking such sad things, and Roman courage is strengthened, and it pleased them to die, if Pompey's fears were true. Therefore both armies rush to battle, equally moved by anger; fear of tyranny drives one side, hope of it drives the other.

However, it is immediately apparent that this army, despite its willingness to fight, has not been inspired by optimism. The description of Pompey's speech as *maesta*, and the phrase *si uera timeret* at 7.384, demonstrates his failure to hide his true emotions, and the *metus* which he displays at 7.341 spreads to the soldiers at 7.386; it also indicates that Pompey's initial confidence and optimism is ignored or

disbelieved, and only the final lines leave an impression on his audience. Richard Lounsbury's argument that Pompey's audience responds warmly and enthusiastically to this exhortation, and therefore increases our estimation of Pompey before this climactic battle,¹⁰⁵ seems to miss this detail: their enthusiasm is despite, not because of, Pompey's speech. Pompey's men are eager for death, not victory, and as such they echo Pompey's characterisation of the Roman people as desiring death at 7.376.¹⁰⁶ This desire may inspire the passivity which Lucan claims that the Pompeians display in the battle which follows:

ciuilia bella
 una acies patitur, gerit altera; frigidus inde
 stat gladius, calet omne nocens a Caesare ferrum. 7.501-503

One side suffers civil war, the other wages it; then their swords stand
 cold, all guilty iron burns from Caesar.

The soldiers' decision to die derives from Pompey's references to Caesar's potential victory and his own prospective exile, but although death will prevent the soldiers from experiencing exile or enslavement, the loss of the army will not save Pompey from the fate he dreads. Elaine Fantham has argued that Pompey's speech here includes "a brave pretence of confidence" which "provokes an outburst of loyalty" amongst Pompey's soldiers,¹⁰⁷ but this shows a misreading of the soldiers' response. They are not motivated to save Pompey (and Rome), as he had hoped, but rather to die before Pompey brings shame to them (as he suggests he will at 7.380) and before Caesar can enslave them. Rather than leading to victory, Pompey's exhortation demoralises the soldiers to the extent that it leads to their defeat.

Once the battle commences, there is little dialogue, and a general absence of the taunts, boasts, prayers and pleas for mercy which often puncture combat-scenes in epic. Ordinary soldiers do not address one another, even when they recognise men on the other side: they thereby avoid the *nefas* associated with renewing social bonds through speech only to break them again, which was seen to heighten the criminality of civil war at Ilerda.¹⁰⁸ As Caesar stalks the battlefield observing his army (7.557-581), he is full of activity, but is not given speech. When he encourages or directs his troops, the emphasis is on actions and gestures: Caesar

¹⁰⁵ Lounsbury (1976) 229.

¹⁰⁶ It is logical to interpret this line as indicating that the current generation wishes to die free (borrowing the adjective *libera* from 7.375), but on a strictly literal reading, Pompey's speech can be understood to refer to a more general death-wish: again, this demonstrates his clumsiness as a speaker.

¹⁰⁷ Fantham (1992) 181.

¹⁰⁸ Leigh (1997) 46-47 notes a contrast between these two recognition scenes.

places new weapons into his soldiers' hands, drives the line forward by charging with it, raps reluctant troops with his spear, and points to his desired targets (7.574-578). The sole battlefield conversation depicted is between Caesar and Domitius, whose death at Pharsalus is the only one to receive a detailed individual description.¹⁰⁹ Domitius is particularly significant due to his position as Nero's paternal great-great-grandfather, and his clash with Caesar represents a miniature enactment of civil conflict within the emperor's ancestral line.¹¹⁰

Domitius' elevated social status as a former governor of the same province as Caesar (who addresses him as *successor Domiti*, 'Domitius my successor', at 7.607) allows him to converse with Caesar on an equal footing.¹¹¹ His proximity to death – emphasised by the phrase which introduces his speech, *morientiaque ora resouit* ('he loosened his dying lips', 7.609) – allows him to speak freely. This contrasts with their previous encounter at Corfinium, where Domitius hid his hatred of Caesar – *premit ille grauis interritus iras*, 'undaunted he suppressed heavy anger' (2.521) – and accepted *clementia* in order to live to fight another day.¹¹² In book 7, Domitius' fatal wounds mean that clemency cannot help him to fight any longer and peace has nothing to offer him; on the other hand, vocal aggression in death and beyond allows Domitian to resist Caesar's authority and focus his attention on the prospect of a Pompeian victory. Domitius' death might be read as a twist on the Virgilian death of Turnus, in which the Caesarian figure slays the Italian begging for mercy and a dignified burial: unlike Turnus, Domitius has no wish to be spared (*uenia gaudet caruisse secunda*, 'he rejoices not to have had a second pardon', 7.604). Domitius' defiance against Caesar and the emphasis placed on his final words also suggests a parallel, as J. Mira Seo has argued, to the historical suicide of Cato, and thereby to the cause of *libertas* and the Republican values which Cato comes to represent.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ The historical basis for this is questionable: cf. Lintott (1971) 489 and Caes. *BCiv.* 3.99.

¹¹⁰ As Roche (2009) 9 writes: "Lucan has split the adoptive and biological lines of Nero's family into two warring factions: his blood ancestor fights to his death trying to prevent the victory of the legal premise of Nero's assumption of power." Similarly, Rolim de Moura (2008) 214 presents this as "an important confrontation between two likely projections of Nero in the poem".

¹¹¹ Fantham (2010a) 54-55 notes that Lucan's Caesar almost never speaks to individuals of his own social class: Domitius is one of very few exceptions.

¹¹² Ahl (1976) 191-197 argues that Caesar's *clementia* was an established positive aspect of the historical tradition which Lucan was unable to twist into criticism of Caesar; but Leigh (1997) 54-66, analysing the Ilerda episode, identifies clashes with Seneca's recommendations in the *De Clementia* and argues that Caesar's clemency shows his desire to position himself as an autocratic monarch.

¹¹³ Seo (2013) 82-83.

In both exhortation scenes, the soldiers' desire for war appears largely independent of the generals' speeches,¹¹⁴ and their actions – fighting without formation on the Caesarian side, seeking death rather than victory in the Pompeian camp – contradict their leaders' wishes or instructions. The two speeches have the same (limited) impact, despite their different attitudes towards civil war and the different skills of their speakers. Exhortation is unnecessary and ineffective: it only delays the inevitable. This seems to suggest that, in the late Republic at least, the Roman people have enough autonomy that they can be held partly responsible for their role in civil war.¹¹⁵ Resistance is certainly possible, as Domitius demonstrates: his eager embrace of death – *tunc mille in uolnera laetus / labitur* ('then happily he perishes to a thousand wounds', 7.603-604) – aligns Domitius with the soldiers who respond to Pompey's speech before Pharsalus by choosing to resist Caesar despite (or perhaps because of) his self-evident strength and power.¹¹⁶ The approach of death is not enough to make combatants set aside their anger and hatred for one another, or to seek peace and reconciliation in their final moments; instead, it empowers Domitius to speak his mind and assert his independence without fear of consequences or reprisals. Amidst the social breakdown of civil war, political communication is not effective enough for Lucan to place all the blame on Caesar (or Pompey): the guilt of civil war is shared between all its participants – including the poet and his readers.

Pompey's final plans

As Pompey witnesses the carnage of Pharsalus, he realises that defeat is inevitable, and he attempts to end the conflict. He asks his soldiers to stop fighting, on the grounds that his life is not worth their deaths (7.666-669), but this plea is unsuccessful. Pompey's failure in this scene demonstrates his lack of control over the conflict, and indicates that he misunderstands his soldiers' motivations: they are not simply following his orders, as he seems to think, but rather fight for their own reasons (as the poet emphasises again at 7.689-697). Pompey's lack of power and influence over his soldiers suggests isolation, an inability to persuade and a loss of allies and supporters after the battle of Pharsalus. In this section, I will analyse two scenes that focus on Pompey's interactions with his allies: his conversation

¹¹⁴ We can compare Lucan's earlier argument (at 1.158-182) that civil war has its roots in the desires and vices of ordinary people, not just their leaders.

¹¹⁵ See Millar (1995) for the role of the *populus Romanus* in the late Republic, the significance of collective protest as an expression of the will of the people, and the need for politicians to persuade them to support particular courses of action.

¹¹⁶ As Roche (2021a) 135 notes, this model of resistance and defiance in death will not be followed by Pompey himself.

with Deiotarus, which emphasises issues around fame and reputation; and his address to the senators at Syhedra, who overrule Pompey's plan to save his own life with Parthian aid.

After fleeing Pharsalus, Pompey attempts to continue the war by ordering the Galatian king Deiotarus to seek aid from Pompey's allies and clients in the East (8.209-243). This encounter seems to have been invented by Lucan, although other accounts indicate that Pompey sent a Roman messenger to Parthia before the battle of Pharsalus.¹¹⁷ The narrator does not explore the success or failure of Deiotarus' embassy, although the historical record reveals that, while the Parthians supported anti-Caesarian factions at various points after Pompey's death, they did not aid Pompey or his sons directly.¹¹⁸ Nevertheless, it is easy to see how the speech which Pompey asks Deiotarus to deliver might persuade his audience. Pompey appeals on the basis of treaties ratified by priests and gods (8.218-220), the loyalty owed to him for his previous services to and protection of the Parthians (8.224-225, 229-230, 232-234), his own record of military success (8.229-230), the unusual degree of respect which he has shown the Parthian king by treating him as an equal (8.231-232) and the Parthians' long-held desire to attack Rome (8.235-238). There is none of the fear, hesitation or sense of powerlessness which Pompey demonstrates in other speeches in this poem: as such, this scene suggests that – even after the battle of Pharsalus – Pompey is capable of issuing commands or persuading men to act.¹¹⁹

In order to undertake this dangerous mission, Deiotarus must obtain anonymity by disguising himself as someone of lower social status:

regem parere iubenti
ardua non piguit, positisque insignibus aulae
egreditur famulo raptos indutus amictus.
in dubiis tutum est inopem simulare tyranno. 8.238-241

It did not grieve the king to obey these harsh orders, and he put aside the symbols of wealth and left, dressed in a cloak taken from an enslaved attendant. In times of uncertainty it is safer for a king to imitate poverty.

¹¹⁷ Lintott (1971) 501-502, citing Caes. *BCiv* 3.82.4 as well as post-Neronian sources; see also Tracy (2016b) 605-606.

¹¹⁸ Nabel (2019a) 329-331.

¹¹⁹ In fact, he seems to find it easier to issue commands here than elsewhere: Helzle (1994) 134 notes that Pompey rarely gives orders, but does so several times in his speech to Deiotarus. Ahl (1976) 171 considers Pompey's speech to Deiotarus to be "the only instance of genuinely independent and positive action on his part in the entire epic".

This passage suggests total subservience, as the king becomes a pauper in order to follow Pompey's instructions. Jonathan Tracy has shown how this description evokes the historical Deiotarus' later defection from the Pompeian cause and reconciliation with Caesar, and argues that this indicates Pompey's naivety in trusting Deiotarus and other eastern allies.¹²⁰ This interpretation aligns with my reading of Pompey as a figure defined by the failure of his speeches, and with an understanding of ambassadors, messengers and other intermediaries as frequent agents of miscommunication in epic poetry. Yet Lucan chooses not to mention Deiotarus' subsequent Caesarism, or that of numerous senators after Caesar's victory.¹²¹ As such, Deiotarus' subjugation to Pompey, and the unusual confidence of Pompey's speech, also suggests that this is a (rare, and perhaps final) moment of effectiveness for the defeated Roman general. Perversely, Pompey exploits this effectiveness to initiate an attack on Rome by the foreign foes who embody monarchy and autocracy for the Roman audience and who, by killing Crassus and breaking the uneasy peace of the (so-called) First Triumvirate, are partially to blame for this civil war. Even Pompey's communicative success looks set to have disastrous consequences for his cause.

Pompey's fame and reputation, which he references in his appeal for Parthian support, bring Deiotarus to him in the first place. In Lucan's account, Deiotarus does not escape Pharsalus with Pompey but must track him down afterwards: *sparsa ducis uestigia legit* ('he read the scattered traces of the leader, 8.210). These *uestigia* cannot be literal footprints, since Pompey covers his horse's tracks after Pharsalus (8.4-5) and subsequently travelled by boat; instead, *uestigia* seems to represent rumours of Pompey's movements. Similarly, when Caesar tries to track Pompey after his flight from Pharsalus, he cannot read Pompey's *uestigia* but is led to Egypt by *fama* ('rumour' or 'renown') at 9.952-953.¹²² Reputation is also crucial to the speech which Pompey wishes Deiotarus to deliver to the Parthians, as Pompey evokes his earlier military successes as a sign of the Parthians' debt to him. Pompey is defined primarily by his name and reputation almost from his first mention in the poem – *stat magni nominis umbra* ('he stands, the shadow of a great name' or 'he stands, a shadow of the name Magnus', 1.135)¹²³ – and even after Pharsalus, the poet claims that Pompey's *nomen* could enable him to raise another army against Caesar (7.717-719). This contrasts sharply with the

¹²⁰ Tracy (2016b), especially pp. 607-610.

¹²¹ Cf. Tracy (2016b) 611-613.

¹²² As Hardie (2012) 184, 186 observes.

¹²³ See Feeney (1986) for the significance of this wordplay, and the importance placed on a famous *nomen*, for the characterisation of Pompey; Feeney emphasises Pompey's renewed power and greatness after his death.

anonymity upon which Deiotarus relies for his own safety, and which Pompey desired (but could not obtain) during his flight from Pharsalus:

non patitur tutis fatum celare latebris
 clara uiri facies. multi, Pharsalica castra
 cum peterent nondum fama prodente ruinas,
 occursu stupuere ducis uertigine rerum
 attoniti, cladisque suae uix ipse fidelis
 auctor erat. grauis est Magno quicumque malorum
 testis adest. cunctis ignotus gentibus esse
 mallet et obscuro tutus transire per urbes
 nomine.

8.13-21

The famous face of this man prohibits him from hiding his fate in safety. Many people who sought the camps at Pharsalus, before rumours had revealed his ruin, were shocked into silence by the general's swift downfall, and he was hardly trusted as an authority on his own disasters. Any witness to his misfortunes weighs heavily on Magnus. He would prefer to be unknown to all people and to go safely through cities with an unfamiliar name.

These lines hint at the dangers associated with fame and reputation: as Martin Dinter observes, the phrase *fama prodente* at 8.15 suggests obliquely that Pompey's fame may betray him, due to the multiple meanings of the verb *prodere*.¹²⁴ The power of Pompey's reputation has created an expectation of his victory which is so strong that, when people meet the real Pompey in person and hear of his defeat, they cannot believe their eyes and ears: this is another indication that Pompey is an unconvincing speaker and narrator.¹²⁵ Deiotarus indicates what can happen to a man who loses his status in the way that Pompey seems to desire, since, after his departure from this scene, he is not mentioned again: if he manages to reach the Parthian king and deliver Pompey's request on his behalf, this is not depicted within the poem, and we must assume that his journey ends in failure. Only anonymity can offer Pompey safety, but this would also strip him of his final source of power and influence, and perhaps even his sense of self and coherence as a character in this poem. Pompey's military record gives him a *nomen* worth mentioning, which in turn grants him the status to make his voice heard and issue commands to those with less power; but when Pompey falls short of his reputation, as is the case throughout the poem, this also limits his skill, confidence and

¹²⁴ Dinter (2021) 138-139.

¹²⁵ See Ormand (1994) 43-44 on Pompey's failure to convince his audiences here.

persuasiveness as a speaker. As such, this episode serves as a powerful reminder of the close connections between status, appearance, reputation, speech and power.

After delivering his instructions to Deiotarus, Pompey sails towards Syhedra, where he fails to persuade an assembly of Roman senators to support his efforts to obtain Parthian aid: this failure will result in his death in Egypt. Pompey seems to hesitate before addressing these senators, and his dejection is immediately apparent: *tandem maesta ora resoluit* ('at last he opened his sad mouth', 8.261). His pessimism and lack of confidence undermines his claims that Pharsalus is only a minor setback and that he is not yet defeated (8.266-274). These claims are crucial in a civil war such as this: surrendering to Caesar might mean receiving clemency and being accepted back into Roman society, whereas ineffectual resistance on behalf of a doomed general such as Pompey is likely to result in annihilation. Pompey attempts to re-establish himself as a leader in the Republican army, but he takes this too far: in lines 8.269-271, Pompey compares himself to Marius, and thereby reminds his audience of his own potential for tyranny. The idea that Pompey still has forces at his disposal – *mille meae Graio uoluuntur in aequore puppes, / mille duces* ('a thousand of my ships move across the Greek sea, a thousand generals', 8.272-273) – is undermined further by the second part of his speech, in which he requests the senators' approval to seek support from Parthia: the need for foreign soldiers is a sign of Pompey's military weakness.

Jake Nabel indicates how such a plan might have been viewed in the early Principate: "The Arsacid kingdom was the sole belligerent whose participation [in Republican civil wars] might be seen as an external intrusion on Roman affairs, a violation of the parameters of civil war through the invitation of a foreign power unsubordinated to any Roman party. Other groups of non-citizens could fill the Roman ranks without changing the internal nature of the conflict. Parthia alone intervened from outside."¹²⁶ However, Nabel argues that in the late Republic itself, the possibility of obtaining Parthian aid was considered no worse than the use of any other eastern soldiers in civil war.¹²⁷ As such, Pompey's plan could hold some appeal for his contemporaries, although perhaps not for a Neronian audience, if it were put forward with the right arguments. Instead, Pompey focuses on the Parthians' desire to rule,¹²⁸ their military strength, their previous success against

¹²⁶ Nabel (2019a) 328; see pp. 336-342 for a more detailed analysis of early imperial perspectives. Nabel (2019b) argues that Lucan's interest in Parthia derives from the contemporary conflict with the Arsacids over Armenia, including concerns over whether they could be trusted to abide by treaties.

¹²⁷ Nabel (2019a) 331-333.

¹²⁸ Housman ([1926] 1927) prints *regnandi sola uoluptas* ('their only desire is to rule', 8.294), but describes *regnandi* as an *absurdum uerbum* ('a ridiculous word') and suggests *bellandi* or *pugnandi* as alternatives. The phrase appears *absurdum* because a competent speaker would not mention the

Crassus, and their use of poison arrows (8.294-305): in fact, these are all reasons why the Romans should not trust the Parthians, as Lentulus soon makes clear. Even Pompey questions the strength of his faith in the Parthians, and seems to wish he did not trust them: *o utinam non tanta mihi fiducia saeuīs / esset in Arsacidis!* ('would that I did not have so much faith in the savage Arsacids!', 8.306-307).¹²⁹ We might note an ironic contrast between Caesar's *fiducia* at 7.249, the self-confidence that enables him to persuade his troops, and Pompey's excessive *fiducia* in the Parthians, which demonstrates his weak position. Pompey sows further doubts by suggesting that the Parthians might ignore their past treaties with him and simply end his life (8.311-316), a risk which he is willing to take.¹³⁰ Pompey ends his speech by stating that he would be happy to see either Caesar or the Parthians defeated in battle (8.322-327), and this only highlights the fact that the Parthians should be seen as enemies of Rome. When Pompey undermines his own argument in this way, it is no surprise that his audience of Roman senators – who are particularly concerned about the safety of Rome, a point which Pompey seems not to realise – objects to his proposal.

The failure of this speech is immediately apparent. Dissent is initially expressed through murmurs, in an echo of the Caesarian soldiers' response to the exhortation in book 1, before Lentulus gives voice to the senators' collective uncertainty:

sic fatus murmure sensit
 consilium damnasse uiros; quos Lentulus omnis
 uirtutis stimulis et nobilitate dolendi
 praecessit dignasque tulit modo consule uoces. 8.327-330

As he finished speaking he could tell by their murmurs that the men opposed his plan; Lentulus surpassed all of these men in honourable motives and noble sorrow, and he spoke in a way worthy of a recent consul.

Whereas Pompey addresses his audience dejectedly, Lentulus speaks with the confidence, rhetorical skill and moral authority of a consul. In Plutarch's account, Pompey's proposal is countered by arguments from the historian Theophanes of

Parthian propensity for tyranny in these circumstances; but Pompey is often an incompetent speaker, and might easily slip up in this way.

¹²⁹ Cf. Mayer (1981) 119; Mayer writes that "Lucan deliberately weakens the argument by letting Pompey voice his own misgivings".

¹³⁰ Gladhill (2016) 191-194 argues that Pompey's *foedera* with Parthia might retain power, in a way that *foedera* within the Roman world do not. Lentulus makes the opposite argument, defining Parthian society by its disruption of *foedera*, and the narrative does not offer strong evidence in either direction.

Mytilene:¹³¹ a long-term political advisor to Pompey famous for his knowledge of the East (particularly his native Lesbos, where Pompey hides Cornelia) and his enduring loyalty towards the man who granted him Roman citizenship.¹³² In contrast, Lentulus is a distinctively Roman interlocutor whose loyalty is to the state rather than to Pompey, and whose position as a senator and recent consul makes him Pompey's social equal and potential rival. Lentulus has already spoken in this poem, to persuade the senate-in-exile at Epirus to support Pompey (5.15-47):¹³³ his opinion holds weight with this assembly, and his new opposition to Pompey in book 8 shows the extent to which the general's fortunes have changed. Although Pompey did not address the senators at Epirus,¹³⁴ their meeting ended with loud exclamations in his favour and the bestowal of power upon him: *laeto nomen clamore senatus / excipit et Magno fatum patriaeque suumque / inposuit* ('the senate embraced Pompey's name with a happy shout and placed its fate and that of its country on Magnus', 5.47-49). The response to Pompey's speech at Syhedra is more muted, and Lentulus' own speech will strip Pompey of his authority.

Lentulus' response to Pompey here (8.331-453) focuses more on dismantling Pompey's arguments than on proposing an alternative: only his final lines (8.442-453) make a positive case to sail towards Egypt.¹³⁵ His speech is rhetorically adept: the series of rhetorical questions (which Pompey is not given space to answer) invites the audience-members to make up their own minds about Pompey's plans, rather than taking his words on faith alone; and there are neat connections between Pompey's defeat at Pharsalus, the ambitious and untrustworthy nature of the Parthian king, Parthian effeminacy, the potential sexual abuse and debasement of Cornelia (which may result from this lack of *uirtus*) and the need to seek revenge for the death of Cornelia's previous husband Crassus. Lentulus exploits the egotism of Pompey's speech to criticise Pompey's disregard for a cause greater than himself:

¹³¹ Cf. Lintott (1971) 502, citing Plut. *Vit. Pomp.* 76.4.

¹³² These are the aspects highlighted by Gold (1985).

¹³³ Rossi (2000) 579-583 argues that Lentulus' speech at Epirus, in which he claims that the Senate previously fled Rome (to escape the invasion of the Gauls) and took their authority with them to Veii until Camillus expelled the Gauls, is "a gross distortion of the events and of the paradigmatic behavior of the Senate and Camillus" (p. 582). This might suggest that Lentulus is a figure whose powerful command of rhetoric is not always connected to the truth or historical reality.

¹³⁴ Masters (1992) 100-103 draws a contrast with Appian's account of an assembly at Epirus (*BCiv.* 2.50-52) at which Pompey speaks to great applause. As such, Lucan's Lentulus displaces Pompey at Epirus in much the same way as he does at Syhedra.

¹³⁵ Nabel (2019b) 605-606 emphasises how little attention Pompey and Lentulus give to Egypt in these paired speeches.

quid causa obtenditur armis
 libertatis amor? miserum quid decipis orbem,
 si seruire potes? 8.339-341

Why was love of freedom put forward as the cause for war? Why did you lie to this wretched world, if you are willing to be enslaved?

Lentulus seems to dislike the idea of bringing any foreign army against Rome (8.351-356), but is particularly critical of the Parthians: whereas Pompey has extolled their military strength, Lentulus highlights their effeminacy and their cowardly use of archery, poison and skirmish tactics (8.365-390). In his earlier speech to Deiotarus, Pompey claimed that 'Rome will wish to be conquered' (*uinci Roma uolet*, 8.238) by the Parthians; Lentulus vehemently denies this, and thereby shows that he, rather than Pompey, has Rome's interests at heart. The primary function of this intervention is to utterly demolish Pompey's authority as a speaker. Lentulus' success in this goal, much like Pompey's failure, is immediate:

non plura locutus
 inpulit huc animos. quantum, spes ultima rerum,
 libertatis habes! uicta est sententia Magni. 8.453-455

He spoke no more, and pushed their spirits towards his plan. What freedom you have, final hope! Magnus' opinion was defeated.

In the phrase *inpulit animos*, it is not clear if Lucan is referring to Pompey – Lentulus' addressee throughout – or to the wider audience of senators, but the plural form suggests the latter option. In the passage following Lentulus' speech, both *inpulit* and *uicta est* have connotations of force or violence, which further suggests that Lentulus does not convince Pompey himself. The council makes the decision on Pompey's behalf, exercising the authority which Pompey has just given to them.¹³⁶ Although Pompey would prefer to seek Parthian aid, he acquiesces and sails towards Egypt instead.

Pompey's loss of power and control, as manifested through his inability to persuade the senators to follow his preferred course of action, means he cannot even choose where he will go – or, indeed, where he will die. Julia Mebane has

¹³⁶ Cf. 8.276-278: *uos pendite regna / uiribus atque fide, Libyam Parthosque Pharonque, / quemnam Romanis deceat succerrere rebus* ('you must weigh up, on the basis of its men and its loyalty, which kingdom – Libya, Parthia or Egypt – should intervene in Roman affairs'). Tracy (2016a) 243-246 argues that Pompey should have trusted himself to the democratic *uulgus* at Mytilene rather than asking the senators to choose between three despotic kings, but the fact that this senatorial crowd overrides Pompey's wishes suggests that democracy is not the answer to his problems. See Johnson (1987) 113-116 for a more pessimistic perspective on the power of common crowds in Lucan, which argues that they cannot ever be truly persuaded or controlled by rational arguments, and Fucecchi (2011) 244-246, 256 for the limits that democracy places on Pompey.

argued that the wider historiographical tradition (as represented by Appian) did not present this council as a conflict over Pompey's authority so much as a conventional deliberation between different options, such that Lucan shows "purposefulness in representing the Cilician assembly as a mutiny".¹³⁷ In Appian's account at *BCiv.* 2.83, Pompey suggests a Parthian alliance, but is not confident in this idea; after his allies indicate the problem with his plan, Pompey suggests Egypt or Libya, and the senators agree with the first of these two options. In contrast, Lucan's Pompey is emphatic about his choice of Parthia and undermines the possibility of travelling to Egypt or Libya (8.281-288); Lentulus comprehensively demolishes this proposal, in a way which calls Pompey's judgement into question; and after the senators have dismissed Parthia as an option, they do not ask for Pompey's opinion again. As such, it is clear that Lucan makes a particular effort to emphasise Pompey's persuasive failure here and the senators' disregard for Pompey's wishes.

Tensions between Pompey and Cornelia

In this section I will explore the marriage of Pompey and Cornelia, the poem's most prominent domestic relationship, before briefly considering the impact of Pompey's death on his sons. Cornelia is the only woman to have a speaking role in multiple books of the *Bellum Ciuile*. In book 5, Pompey sends Cornelia away for her own safety, shortly before the battle of Dyrrachium; in book 8, they are reunited on Lesbos, and Cornelia must watch Pompey's execution off of the Egyptian coast; and in book 9, Cornelia and her stepsons grieve after Pompey's death. Pompey's marriage to Cornelia seems to indicate real human emotion and affection as defining features of his character.¹³⁸ This aligns Pompey with epic heroes such as Odysseus, Hector and Aeneas, who are also defined in large part by similar affectionate relationships, and helps to uplift a figure who often appears unheroic; as Lynette Thompson writes, "Pompey's capacity for loving and inspiring love may arouse sympathy, understanding, and even at times, admiration".¹³⁹ Yet despite the love that Pompey and Cornelia feel for each other, their conversations are often strained, and their relationship provides "a poignant image of how civil

¹³⁷ Mebane (2016) 201.

¹³⁸ Ahl (1976) 173-183 argues that Pompey is defined by his desire to be loved. Coffee (2011) 421-423 views this affectionate marriage as one of the few areas of the poem in which *fides* retains its conventional worth, but argues that Pompey's attachment to outdated values such as *fides* contributes to his political failures in the poem.

¹³⁹ Thompson (1984) 214.

war destroys the personal as well as the political".¹⁴⁰ As such, this marriage is a particularly interesting site to explore for issues of communicative failure in the domestic sphere and the way that this relates to civil war. Pompey's relationships with his wives and sons demonstrate how failures in political and military communication are paired with, and exacerbated by, failures in familial communication.

The tensions, misunderstandings and communication issues which characterise Pompey's marriage to Cornelia are first demonstrated at the end of book 5. Pompey attempts to send Cornelia away for her own safety, and the poet emphasises the deep love and concern which motivates this decision:

seponere tutum
coniugii decreuit onus Lesboque remota
te procul a saeui strepitu, Cornelia, belli
occulere. heu, quantum mentes dominatur in aequas
iusta Venus! dubium trepidumque ad proelia, Magne,
te quoque fecit amor; quod nolles stare sub ictu
fortuna quo mundus erat Romanaque fata,
coniunx sola fuit. 5.724-731

He decided to put away the cargo that was his wife into safety, and to hide you, Cornelia, far from the uproar of savage war. Oh, what great power legal love holds over matched minds! Magnus, love made even you doubtful and frightened of battle; when the world and the fates of Rome stood beneath the blow of fortune, you wished that your wife, alone, was not.

The fact that Pompey is only thinking of his wife here shows that his love for her conflicts with his duties towards Rome, as Lynette Thompson has argued:¹⁴¹ this care and affection creates fear and hesitation which limits his capacity to act decisively in battle.¹⁴² The description of Cornelia as an *onus* suggests either a

¹⁴⁰ Cowan (2021a) 278. Lowrie and Vinken (2019) make a similar argument, in reference to the breakdown of familial and marital relations in the *Bellum Ciuile* more generally, and write (p. 274): "With Lucan's torn marriages, civil war surpasses blood-letting among citizens to stand for more pervasive social collapse."

¹⁴¹ Thompson (1984) criticises Pompey's inability to put *pietas* towards Rome ahead of his personal *amor* as a sign that he falls short of Aeneas' model of heroism. See also Littlewood (2016), who argues (p. 168) that Pompey's focus on erotic over political attitudes and attachments "is a manifestation of the disintegration of the Republic".

¹⁴² Similarly, it is the thought of Cornelia which motivates Pompey's cowardly flight from Pharsalus: *sed tu quoque, coniunx, / causa fugae* ('but you, his wife, are also the cause of his flight', 7.675-676). On Pompey's cowardice and lack of nobility at Pharsalus, see Leigh (1997) 118-142. There is a strong contrast between Marcia, Julia and Cleopatra, whose interventions in the narrative

precious cargo or a burden, and she could be considered to count as both: Pompey wishes to protect her, but also sees her presence on the battlefield as a potential source of anxiety. Pompey's hesitancy can also be seen in his reluctance to announce or enact this planned separation,¹⁴³ which he does not mention to Cornelia until after she has detected that he is hiding something:

mentem iam uerba paratam
 destituunt, blandaeque iuuat uentura trahentem
 indulgere morae et tempus subducere fatis.
 nocte sub extrema pulso torpore quietis
 dum fouet amplexu grauidum Cornelia curis
 pectus et auersi petit oscula grata mariti,
 umentis mirata genas percussaque caeco
 uolnere non audet flentem deprendere Magnum. 5.731-738

Speech abandoned him, although his mind was already made up, and he gladly permits himself to drag out the inevitable with pleasant delays. At the end of the night, when sleep had been beaten back, Cornelia comforts her husband's chest, heavy with cares, with her embrace, and seeks his pleasant kiss as he turns from her; she is surprised by his wet cheeks, shocked by his hidden wound and scared to discover Pompey weeping.

Pompey cannot find the words to express his plans, and lies silently weeping instead of addressing his wife; but his tears, and his reluctance to be held and kissed by Cornelia, reveal his hidden feelings. Pompey's silence cannot conceal his inner turmoil, but the absence of speech limits the effectiveness of communication, and body language alone lacks the detail and nuance which Cornelia requires to understand her husband's pain.

When Pompey does express himself verbally, his speech is clumsy. His opening lines, *non nunc uita mihi dulcior ... / cum taedet uitae, laeto sed tempore, coniunx* ('my wife, you are no longer sweeter to me than life when my life brings sorrow, although you were in happy times', 5.739-740), seem intended to mean that Cornelia was worth more to Pompey than his life even when life was worth living; but these lines also suggest that Cornelia's presence now contributes to Pompey's misery, and that he values her less than even his current miserable

are associated with encouragements to war, and Cornelia, who detracts from Pompey's desire and ability to fight.

¹⁴³ As Bruère (1951) 223 observes, this echoes Aeneas' reluctance to tell Dido about his planned departure in *Aeneid* 4. Bruère also explores the repeated echoes of the Ceyx and Alcyone episode in Ov. *Met.* 11, as well as the depiction of Ariadne in Ovid's *Heroides*.

existence. Pompey's focus is now wholly on Caesar, rather than on his wife: *iam totus adest in proelia Caesar* ('now Caesar is entirely present in battle', 5.742). He calls Cornelia's love for him into question, and suggests that their marriage has become a source of shame for him:

satis est audisse pericula Magni;
 meque tuus decepit amor, ciuilia bella
 si spectare potes. nam me iam Marte parato
 securos cepisse pudet cum coniuge somnos,
 eque tuo, quatiunt miserum cum classica mundum,
 surrexisse sinu. uereor ciuilibus armis
 Pompeium nullo tristem committere damno. 5.747-753

You only need to hear of Magnus' dangerous undertakings; your love is false if you can watch civil wars. For now that the battle lines are arranged, it shames me to have spent the night safely with my wife, and to have risen from her lap when the trumpets rouse a sorrowful world. I cannot resign myself to taking up arms in civil war unless I have lost something.

Pompey seems to claim that Cornelia's desire to accompany her husband on the battlefield as a sign that she does not truly love him, but merely wishes to witness suffering and bloodshed; that she is deceptive in her expression of love; that their marriage and time spent together is a source of shame and dishonour (with the reference to Pompey's sleep hinting at his earlier dream of Julia, who presented Cornelia as a mistress rather than a wife);¹⁴⁴ that Cornelia is a source of sorrow for Pompey; and (through the use of the legal and financial term *damnum*) that Pompey views the loss of his wife with cold calculation as a necessary price for victory in civil war. Pompey's speech does explain his desire to ensure his wife is safe, and his reference to her as *pars optima Magni* ('the best part of Magnus', 5.757) establishes the high estimation in which he holds Cornelia;¹⁴⁵ but in his desire to steel his own resolve for this course of action, he insults his wife and their marriage, and chooses civil war over Cornelia's presence. The narrator's introduction to this passage, which emphasises Pompey's care and concern for Cornelia, reveals his true emotions, intentions and affection for her; but in his struggle to express himself, Pompey fails to explain that his proposal is motivated by love, and instead seems to lack any regard for his wife.

¹⁴⁴ See Rolim de Moura (2008) 149-153 on how Pompey's reference to sleep echoes his dream of Julia.

¹⁴⁵ It also suggests her subordination to him, which Cowan (2021a) 277-278 indicates is in keeping with Roman expectations of a wife.

Cornelia is shaken by this speech, and, like her husband, struggles to express her response. When she does speak (after a prolonged pause, indicated by *tandem* at 5.761), she emphasises her feelings of being abandoned rather than protected:

uix tantum infirma dolorem
cepit, et attonito cesserunt pectore sensus.
tandem uox maestas potuit proferre querellas.
'nil mihi de fati thalami superisque relictum est,
Magne, queri: nostros non rumpit funus amores
nec diri fax summa rogi, sed sorte frequenti
plebeiaque nimis careo dimissa marito.
hostis ad aduentum rumpamus foedera taedae,
placemus socerum. sic est tibi cognita, Magne,
nostra fides? credisne aliquid mihi tutius esse
quam tibi? 5.759-768

The unsteady woman was hardly able to comprehend such great sorrow, and sensation stopped in her shocked heart. At last her voice was able to issue sad complaints. 'No ability to complain about the events of our marriage or the gods is left available to me, Magnus: death does not break our love, nor the final torch of the terrible pyre, but I am losing my husband for a reason that is too common, I am sent away from him like an ordinary reject. Let us break our marriage vows at the approach of our enemy, let us appease your father-in-law. Is this what you think of my faithfulness, Magnus?'

Cornelia starts her 'complaints' (*querellae*, 5.761) by paradoxically claiming that she does not have the power to complain (*queri*, 5.763): this might reflect a sense that Pompey can make a unilateral decision on where to leave Cornelia, so her objections have no force behind them. Her use of *relictum est* (5.762) evokes the idea of the elegiac *relicta* abandoned by her lover, while *dimissa* (5.765) suggests the threat of divorce.¹⁴⁶ Cornelia understands Pompey's attempt to safeguard her as if she is being punished for a lack of *fides* towards him. She is not convinced that she will be safe on Lesbos, and emphasises the dangers she will undergo in his absence (5.769-772). Her criticisms of Pompey as 'savage' (*saeue*, 5.770) and 'cruel' (*crudelis*, 5.777) suggest that she believes he has no concern for her wellbeing. Cornelia's final request that Pompey does not return to Lesbos if he is defeated (5.787-790), out of fear that his enemies will know to seek him there, will be wholly ignored; this will lead Cornelia to blame herself – and Pompey's delay on

¹⁴⁶ See Littlewood (2016) 159-161, Christophorou (2017) 370-371, Lowrie and Vinken (2019) 276-280 and Cowan (2021b) 204 for the elegiac and epic models behind this scene, including Aeneas' abandonment of Dido in *Aeneid* 4.

Lesbos after Pharsalus – for Pompey's murder in Egypt (8.639-642). Cornelia gives Pompey no time to respond to her arguments or attempt to comfort her, since as soon as she finishes speaking, she flees:

sic fata relictis
exiluit stratis amens tormentaue nulla
uult differre mora. non maesti pectora Magni
sustinet amplexu dulci, non colla tenere,
extremusque perit tam longi fructus amoris,
praecipitantque suos luctus, neuterque recedens
sustinuit dixisse uale, uitamque per omnem
nulla fuit tam maesta dies. 5.790-797

As she said this, she leapt from the abandoned bed, a mad woman, not wishing to defer her sorrow with any delay. She cannot bear to hold the mournful Magnus' chest or neck in her sweet embrace, and so the final pleasures of such a lengthy love perished, and they had rushed into their own sorrows, and neither was able to endure saying farewell as they left each other, and there was never a sadder day in all their lives.

The breakdown of communication portrayed here leads to an unnecessarily abrupt and sorrowful separation: Cornelia does not wait for an answer, and she internalises and imitates Pompey's earlier reluctance to be embraced; both Pompey and Cornelia are flung into a state of isolation, without affectionate words or gestures. The final lines quoted here seem to indicate that even Pompey's defeat and death will not be more upsetting to them – perhaps because, when Pompey flees Pharsalus, he will do so in order to reunite with his wife, and when he faces death in Egypt, it will be with the knowledge that Cornelia is watching. Cornelia's flight from Pompey means that she, in fact, leaves him: her sense of abandonment results not from Pompey's actions, but from the failure of his speech to demonstrate his love for her.

After the battle of Pharsalus, Pompey flees to the island of Lesbos, where he is reunited with his wife. Her misery before his arrival, described at 8.40-49, proves the accuracy of her earlier prediction that her distance from Pharsalus and ignorance about its outcome would cause her to worry (5.780-781). As Richard Bruère indicates, Plutarch presents Cornelia as optimistic before her husband's return to Lesbos, due to reports of his success at Dyrrachium;¹⁴⁷ Lucan chooses to present the separation as a source of anxiety and misery, rather than allowing Cornelia to be happily unaware of her husband's fate. Even when Pompey does

¹⁴⁷ Bruère (1951) 226, referencing Plut. *Vit. Pomp.* 66, 74.

reach his wife on Lesbos, their reunion brings little happiness to Cornelia. His speech is harsh, and Roland Mayer comments wryly that “it is unlikely to fall upon sympathetic ears nowadays” even if ancient audiences could find some logic or nobility in Pompey’s arguments.¹⁴⁸ Pompey criticises Cornelia’s reaction to seeing him (*inmodicos castigat uoce dolores*, ‘he reprimands her excessive sorrow with his voice’, 8.71)¹⁴⁹ and questions the strength of her affection towards him. Pompey urges Cornelia to love him more now that he is defeated – *et ipsum / quod sum uictus ama* (‘and love me because I am conquered’, 8.77-78) – and suggests that she previously only loved his fame and reputation:

deformis adhuc uiuente marito
 summus et augeri uetitus dolor: ultima debet
 esse fides lugere uirum. tu nulla tulisti
 bello damna meo: uiuit post proelia Magnus
 sed fortuna perit. quod defles, illud amasti. 8.81-85

While your husband is still alive, this extreme sorrow, which refuses to be alleviated, is disgraceful: your final act of faithfulness should be to mourn my actual death. My war brought you no harm: Magnus lives on after the battle, only his good fortune died. You weep for the thing you truly loved.

This is an unfair assessment, which indicates that Pompey no more understands Cornelia’s love for him than he did the love of the people of Larisa at 7.712-727.¹⁵⁰ There is no indication in the poem that Cornelia values Pompey for his fame; rather, this is a trait of Pompey himself.¹⁵¹ Cornelia’s sorrow when separated from her husband demonstrates the consistency of her love for him even in times of hardship, and Lucan will emphasise this point again in the praise he lavishes upon her at 8.150-158 (once Pompey’s defeat has been made clear to her). Pompey ignores Cornelia’s previous devotion to him, including her wish to accompany him into danger, by instructing her to begin to follow him into adversity as proof of her endurance: *incipi Magnum / sola sequi* (‘begin to follow Magnus by yourself’, 8.80-81). Cornelia’s response shows the pain which she feels at this criticism. She struggles to lift herself from the ground – *uix aegra leuauit / membra solo* (‘she scarcely lifted herself from the floor’, 8.86-87) – which suggests that Pompey, who took her in his arms after her faint (8.66-70), has let her down physically as well

¹⁴⁸ Mayer (1981) 92.

¹⁴⁹ Mayer (1981) 93 notes that, although Pompey criticises Cornelia’s grief for being excessive, “all Lucan has described is her fainting”: this adds to the impression that Pompey is being unduly harsh. Caston (2011) 142, 146 notes that Pompey seems to view Cornelia’s sorrow as a personal betrayal.

¹⁵⁰ Ahl (1976) 174-176.

¹⁵¹ Ahl (1974) 315 views Pompey as projecting his own insecurities onto Cornelia in this scene.

as emotionally, and no longer provides the support which she desires. Cornelia views herself as a cause of disaster, and suggests she should have been married to Caesar instead in order to bring misfortune to him (8.88-94): these lines construct a possible world in which Cornelia had never married Pompey, and thereby hint at her feeling that she has been abandoned and rejected by him. She imagines Pompey killing her and scattering her remains across the sea as a sacrifice (8.97-100), a further sign of her sense that Pompey no longer cares for her: this echoes Pompey's suggestion at Pharsalus that his wife and sons might be sacrificed for the sake of Rome (7.659-666). Like an elegiac mistress, Cornelia is troubled by the thought of Julia as a rival, and believes that her own death might be necessary to appease Julia and thereby lessen Pompey's defeat.¹⁵² She enacts this death by fainting once again: the physical affection from her husband which metaphorically restored her to life at the beginning of this scene is no longer strong enough to sustain her. Although the narrator indicates that Cornelia's speech has an effect on Pompey – *duri flectuntur pectora Magni* ('the hard heart of Magnus is moved', 8.107) – Cornelia does not witness his tears or hear his subsequent claim that her presence made Lesbos akin to Rome in his eyes (8.129-133), and he is not shown to change his attitude towards her. Despite their physical reunion, Pompey's speech, by insulting Cornelia and misinterpreting or misrepresenting her emotions – perhaps by imagining that she feels as he would in her circumstances – creates a new sense of distance between Pompey and his wife.

When their vessel approaches Egypt, Pompey re-enacts his earlier separation from Cornelia by heading towards his death without her. When Pompey instructs her to stay behind – *remane, temeraria coniunx* ('stay here, my reckless wife', 8.579) – Cornelia complains that this is another abandonment:

'quo sine me crudelis abis? iterumne relinquer,
Thessalicis summota malis? numquam omine laeto
distrahimur miseri. poteras non flectere puppem,
cum fugeres alto, latebrisque relinquere Lesbi,
omnibus a terris si nos arcere parabas.
an tantum in fluctus placeo comes?' haec ubi frustra
effudit, prima pendet tamen anxia puppe,
attonitoque metu nec quoquam auertere uisus
nec Magnum spectare potest. 8.584-592

'Where are you going so cruelly without me? Am I abandoned again, after my banishment from the evils of Pharsalus? Without ever receiving happy portents, we are dragged unhappily apart. You could

¹⁵² Cf. Caston (2011) 142-146.

have kept your ship on its course, while you fled across the sea, and left me in the hidden places of Lesbos, if you were contriving to keep me from land forever. Or do I, as your companion, only bring joy to you at sea?' After issuing these words to no effect, she leans forward nervously from the foremost ship, and, stunned by her fear, she can neither avert her gaze nor look at Magnus.

Cornelia does not listen to Pompey's instructions to watch as he approaches the shore, and he in turn is unmoved by her plea (uttered 'to no effect') and fails to answer the questions she throws at him. This separation is no more satisfying, and no less abrupt, than the separation of book 5; and although it is Pompey who departs this time, it is Cornelia who chooses not to watch him and thereby loses contact with her husband in his last moments. Pompey's final wish is to turn his death into a visible sign of his strength of character and endurance of misfortune, with his wife and son as his principal audience. He attempts to check his emotions and outward appearance in order to fulfil this goal:

ut uidit comminus ensis,
inuoluit uoltus atque, indignatus apertum
fortunaē praeberē, caput; tum lumina pressit
continuitque animam, nequas effundere uoces
uellet et aeternam fletu corrumpere famam.
sed, postquam mucrone latus funestus Achillas
perfodit, nullo gemitu consensit ad ictum
respexitque nefas, seruatque immobile corpus. 8.613-620

When he saw the sword at hand, he covered his face and head, unwilling to expose it openly to fortune; then he closed his eyes and held his breath, wanting to avoid releasing any noise and destroying his eternal reputation with a sob. Indeed, after the murderous Achillas pierced his side with the blade, he did not approve the attack with any groans, or pay any attention to this criminality, and he keeps his body still.

Pompey seems to successfully imitate a sense of Stoic calm, and he clearly demonstrates how silence and passivity can function as communication in their own right. It is ironic that a man who previously interpreted the silence of his soldiers as proof of their fear now views silence as a sign of strength. However, scholars such as Christina Clark have argued that Pompey's desire for glory – emphasised in his internal monologue at 8.622-635 – undermines his outward display of Stoicism, and that the sobs which issue from his decapitated head at 8.681-684 show that Pompey's self-control is limited and constrained by his

death.¹⁵³ Martha Malamud argues that Pompey's mournful appearance, self-silencing and attempt to maintain a Stoic calm in front of his audience positions him as an actor taking on the role and costume of Cato; yet Pompey cannot live up to Cato's model.¹⁵⁴ The idea of a character adopting the attributes and role of another, but failing to accomplish their goals in this new persona, will feature heavily in my analysis of the *Thebaid*, and Malamud's work suggests that the same theme can be found in the *Bellum Ciuile*. Pompey's death also suggests imitation of other important figures. Julia Mebane argues that, by covering his face in his final moments, Pompey echoes Caesar at his assassination (as recorded at Suet. *Iul.* 82), and thereby suggests the similarity between these opponents and the cycle of violence which will also capture Caesar;¹⁵⁵ Andrew McClellan points to *indignatus* (8.614) as a reference to Turnus' death, and notes that whereas Virgil is silent about the fate of Turnus' body, Lucan lingers on the abuse of Pompey's corpse.¹⁵⁶ These competing intertextual models – Caesar is an opponent of Cato, and a descendant of Turnus' killer – demonstrate the multivalence of Pompey's death, and the impossibility of imposing a single meaning on this act in the way that Pompey desires.

At 8.579-582, Pompey asked his wife and son to keep their eyes on him and watch what befalls him, and his desire for Cornelia to witness his final moments is emphasised at 8.632-635 as part of his internal monologue. Instead, Cornelia interrupts this scene of tranquillity and potential Stoicism with an outburst of emotion and self-recrimination.¹⁵⁷ Before Pompey is even dead, she blames herself for his murder, and turns the focus onto herself by proffering herself to the sword, lamenting her abandonment by her husband, and proposing that she end her life

¹⁵³ Clark (2015) 151-155; Johnson (1987) 80-81 and Bartsch (1997) 83 also comment on how Pompey's final desire for glory weakens his Stoicism. See Cowan (2021a) 269-271 for the contrast and tensions between Pompey's apparent self-control and his lack of control over the external situation, which throws Pompey's masculinity and heroism into question. Anzinger (2007) 138 notes that, although Pompey chooses to silence himself and cut off communication, he only does this at a point when he was about to be silenced against his will.

¹⁵⁴ Malamud (2003) 33-34; Seo (2013) 83-88 also explores the echoes of Cato's death in this scene, but interprets this comparison as elevating Pompey's death and positioning it as an act of self-sacrifice which will strengthen the Republican cause.

¹⁵⁵ Mebane (2016) 208. Bell (1994) 832 indicates that Lucan is the earliest extant source to include this detail in Pompey's death, suggesting that it is calculated. Johnson (1987) 80 notes that Pompey's hidden face undermines the idea that his death should be a spectacle on display.

¹⁵⁶ McClellan (2019) 78, citing *Aen.* 12.952 where Turnus' spirit is *indignata*.

¹⁵⁷ Anzinger (2007) 140 comments on how Cornelia's excessive noise undermines Pompey's conscious use of silence.

by suicide (8.639-661).¹⁵⁸ This echoes her suggestion after reuniting with Pompey on Lesbos that her death might improve his fortune, and shows how the earlier scene (and its strained conversation) lingers in her mind. Cornelia's lament ends in a faint and she is carried into the ship by her companions (8.661-662),¹⁵⁹ another separation: she does not watch his death as requested, and therefore fails to obey his final instructions. Her complaint and subsequent collapse distract from Pompey's death: she ends her speech when he is still alive – *uiuīs adhuc, coniunx* ('husband, you still live', 8.659) – but by the time she has left the scene, Lucan has begun to describe the aftermath of Pompey's murder and decapitation (8.663-667). Pompey's attempt to die well is rendered obsolete by Cornelia's distraction, which forces internal and external audiences alike to look away from the moment of death. He cannot become a spectacle of Stoic strength as he desires, and the moans which escape his lips after his decapitation show that he cannot maintain his silence either. Pompey's final attempt to control his verbal and non-verbal communication alike is ultimately a failure, thanks in no small part to the words and actions of Cornelia.

The hardship and heartbreak which Cornelia's marriage causes her is emphasised again after Pompey's death, and this scene also includes a significant failure of communication. At the start of book 9, Cornelia delivers a speech of mourning (9.55-108) which emphasises the tensions in this marriage, including her sorrow at being unable to care for his remains. Her extreme grief in this passage accords with a wider tendency in Latin literature which associates women (particularly mothers and widows) with excessive mourning, that prevents rather than restores social cohesion after death.¹⁶⁰ Cornelia ends her speech by expressing her desire to follow Pompey into death (9.101-108), just as she wished to accompany him into battle. She refuses to die by suicide – the course of action proposed at 8.653-658 – but expects that her grief alone will prove fatal. As her vessel departs the Egyptian coastline, she secludes herself within the ship and adopts the role of someone who is already dead:

saeuumque arte complexa dolorem
perfruitur lacrimis et amat pro coniuge luctum.
illam non fluctus stridensque rudentibus Eurus

¹⁵⁸ Mayer (1981) 21-22 compares this to Seneca's wife, who reportedly expressed her desire to die by suicide alongside her husband as an *exemplum* of loyalty, to argue that Cornelia's response here would not seem unrealistic to a Neronian audience.

¹⁵⁹ This echoes the seclusion of Euryalus' mother in *Aeneid* 9, although there the act of carrying away the mourning woman is more forceful. Mayer (1981) 159-160 and Littlewood (2016) 169 both comment on how Cornelia's claim (at 8.647-650) that she was the only Roman mother to go to war also positions her as akin to Euryalus' mother.

¹⁶⁰ See Panoussi (2019) chapter 6 for an overview of female grief in Latin literature.

mouit et exurgens ad summa pericula clamor,
uotaque sollicitis faciens contraria nautis
conposita in mortem iacuit fautque procellis. 9.111-116

She embraces her savage suffering closely, rejoices in tears and loves sorrow for her husband's sake. The waves do not move her, or the East wind hissing amongst the ropes, or the shouts rising at extreme danger, and she issues prayers opposed to those of the troubled sailors and lies in the position of one dead and encourages the storms.

Cornelia's excessive love for her husband is perverted into excessive sorrow, which becomes a new source of pleasure for her. Grief renders her insensible, and she responds to Pompey's death by attempting to cut herself off from the rest of the world. Cornelia's belief that Pompey's death will cause her own positions it as a potential act of uxoricide, while her prayers for a storm to destroy the ship and its crew suggests a new kind of civil conflict between Cornelia and the sailors who support her.¹⁶¹

As part of her speech of lamentation after Pompey's death, Cornelia delivers Pompey's final message instructing his sons to join Cato and continue the fight against Caesar (9.84-97).¹⁶² However, she argues that Pompey only entrusted her with this duty to prevent her suicide, and presents this as an act of deception: *insidiae ualuere tuae, deceptaque uixi / ne mihi commissas auferrem perfida uoces* ('your tricks worked, and I have lived on, deceived, so that I did not betray you by carrying off the words you entrusted to me', 9.99-100). This embedded speech suggests the limitations of speaking through a messenger or other intermediary, a theme familiar from my analysis of the *Aeneid*. Although Jonathan Tracy claims that Cornelia "conscientiously executes [Pompey's] final instructions",¹⁶³ Cornelia does not actually address her husband's intended audience. Pompey's orders are addressed to both sons, as indicated by the plural vocatives and imperatives,¹⁶⁴ but Cornelia uses single verb forms as she speaks to Sextus only: *tu pete bellorum casus et signa per orbem, / Sexte, paterna moue* ('seek the causes of war and carry your father's standards across the world, Sextus', 9.84-85). The fact that Cornelia only passes this message on to Sextus emphasises the sense that the task is futile

¹⁶¹ This theme of the destructive power of grief and mourning, particularly in the context of the breakdown of social order, will recur in my analysis of the *Thebaid*.

¹⁶² Bruère (1951) 232 notes that this is the first time in the epic that Cornelia plays an active role in the war.

¹⁶³ Tracy (2016b) 607, establishing a contrast with Deiotarus. Similarly, Sannicandro (2010) 39-40 claims that Cornelia plays a crucial role in legitimising Cato's command and effecting a transition between two phases of the civil war. I disagree with both assessments.

¹⁶⁴ For example: *excipite, o nati, bellum ciuile* ('sons, take up civil war', 9.88).

busywork: Sextus travels with Pompey after Pharsalus (cf. 8.204-205, 579-582) and could have spoken to his father on the journey, but appears not to have done so. Pompey's sons will continue the fight against Caesar, and they feature at various points in the poem in preparation for this, but their relationship with Pompey is given far less prominence than that of their stepmother Cornelia: this might echo the way that Ascanius is sidelined in the *Aeneid* and only addressed by Aeneas once, in comparison to a figure such as Dido who dominates an entire book.

Pompey's elder son Gnaeus is absent from Cornelia's speech, and does not re-enter the narrative until Cornelia and Sextus reach Cato's camp in Libya. Gnaeus has not been criticised by the narrator in the way that Sextus has,¹⁶⁵ he has already been entrusted with a task from Pompey (at 2.623-649)¹⁶⁶ and he is given the epithet 'Magnus' at 9.121 and 9.145: this suggests that he would be in a better position to take up Pompey's instructions than his younger brother, if he were present to hear them. When he is reunited with Sextus, Gnaeus learns about Pompey's murder and the disrespect paid to his body by the Egyptians (9.126-145); Sextus does not pass on the instruction to continue the war against Caesar, and states explicitly that Caesar was not responsible for Pompey's death (9.128-129). It is therefore unsurprising that Gnaeus declares his intent to attack Ptolemy rather than Caesar (9.148-164), and must be restrained by Cato (9.166).¹⁶⁷ Since Caesar himself wages war on Ptolemy in book 10, this plan suggests a problematic potential alliance between Gnaeus Pompeius and Caesar.¹⁶⁸ Pompey's death ensures that his final message to his sons must be transmitted to them via Cornelia, but she fails to pass it on to Gnaeus, who must instead rely on Sextus' account. This chain of transmission means that Gnaeus does not receive his father's instructions to continue to war against Caesar, and almost enters into a war which would contravene Pompey's commands. Considering the ease with which Pompey could have addressed Sextus while they travelled together, Cornelia's failure to convey

¹⁶⁵ Lucan describes Sextus as *Magno proles indigna parente* ('a child unworthy of his father Magnus', 6.420) and as *Pompei ignaua propago* ('the cowardly offspring of Pompey', 6.589). On Lucan's negative portrayal of Sextus more broadly, see Ahl (1976) 130-149 or Tesoriero (2002).

¹⁶⁶ Pompey orders him to seek allies from various Eastern kingdoms, but the appearance of these troops in the catalogue of book 3 is attributed to *fama* (3.229) and *fortuna* (3.169-170, 290-292) rather than to Gnaeus.

¹⁶⁷ Bernstein (2011) 268 notes a contrast between Cato's interactions with Gnaeus, whom he stops from engaging in war, and Brutus, whom he drives into action. This echoes the way that Virgil presents Pallas adopting the prominent role on the battlefield which we might expect Ascanius to enjoy instead: both Stahl (1990) 205-208 and Rogerson (2017) 193-200 suggest that Pallas usurps Ascanius as Aeneas' (surrogate) son.

¹⁶⁸ McClellan (2019) 155-157 argues that the poem implies that Caesar desecrates the tomb of Alexander the Great, which Gnaeus threatens to do so as well at 9.153-154: this similarity also positions Gnaeus as problematically close to his father's greatest rival.

her husband's final wishes to Gnaeus and Gnaeus' misunderstanding of his father's instructions and desires, Cornelia's role as messenger seems both ineffective and superfluous.

Pompey's strained relationship with Cornelia results from his insulting speeches towards his wife, his failure to understand her love for him and his inability to express his love for her. The tensions in their marriage can also, ultimately, be attributed to their experience of civil war: Pompey wishes to protect his wife from the Roman troops who seek to destroy him, but cannot leave her in Rome itself due to Caesar's occupation of the city. Furthermore, the disruption of their marriage symbolises and embodies the wider dissolution of social and familial bonds which characterises civil war. As a result of their strained relationship, Cornelia disturbs and distracts from Pompey's death, undermining his attempts to communicate his Stoic heroism, and fails in her task of transmitting Pompey's final message to his sons. Death strips Pompey of his ability – already tenuous – to control his own communication, and the breakdown of his marriage is a major contributing factor in this loss of control.

Conclusion

From the very beginning of his poem, Lucan is explicit about the inherent criminality of engaging in the civil war which he narrates. This might explain why he gives more prominence than Virgil or Statius to scenes of exhortation: soldiers in civil war may be more reluctant to fight. I have argued that Caesar's first exhortation shows a complete misunderstanding of his soldiers' motivations, which forces him to rely on Laelius for support. They do not believe his claims about the morality or legality of his orders, but neither do they wish to think about their own responsibility for his crimes: they merely wish to be forced to obey. On the other hand, I have argued that neither of the exhortations at Pharsalus has any real effect on the soldiers who, even without the encouragement of their leaders, are already eager to fight: by this stage in the narrative, their responsibility for bloodshed and societal breakdown is clear. The power to communicate is not restricted to the poem's protagonists: Laelius proves that soldiers can speak out and express their own desires (as do figures such as Scaeva and Vulteius who have not featured in my analysis); the soldiers at Ilerda use a wide array of communicative acts to effect their own private peace; and Domitius demonstrates how speech can express resistance against tyranny, even from someone in a position of weakness. The power of the people is also demonstrated by Pompey's inability or unwillingness to defy his soldiers or his senatorial colleagues, which seems to develop a Virgilian interest in the weaknesses of democratic and deliberative systems of governance. Yet even these episodes show failure: Laelius' speech leads

to his self-silencing; the Pompeians at Ilerda ultimately submit to their leader's savage commands; Domitius can only speak freely when he is about to die. Lucan also foregrounds the importance of the audience, whose acts of interpretation are partially responsible for the success or failure of communicative acts: in the exhortations of book 1 and 2; in the spectacle which Pompey makes of his death; and in his own frequent addresses to Neronian readers. Through the combination of these elements, Lucan suggests that responsibility for the *nefas* of civil war must be shared between all its participants – not just Caesar and Pompey, but also those who are complicit in their tyranny and powerlessness respectively.

Pompey's persistent communicative failures demonstrate his weaknesses: he seems wholly unfit to resist the furious activity of Caesar and his men. There is a clear contrast with the portrait of a successful general which Pompey presents in his speeches about his past. Much of Pompey's communicative failure is linked to his lack of confidence and reluctance to fight against his fellow Romans: this suggests that Pompey's political and military failures, and the consequent decline in his fortunes, are specific to his experience of civil war. Conventional epic heroism places importance on a man's skill as a communicator able to motivate the soldiers under his command,¹⁶⁹ and the *Aeneid* – in which Aeneas' strained personal relationships do not appear to limit his capabilities as a leader – suggests that this kind of heroism is possible even for those who struggle with interpersonal communication. Yet Lucan's presentation of Pompey, a man whose concern with his reputation and whose need to be loved and praised manifests in his difficulty in communicating with his soldiers as well as with his political colleagues and his wife, indicates the close connections between domestic, military and political communicative failures. For example, Pompey's love for Cornelia motivates his flight from Pharsalus, but his insecurities about the damage this does to his reputation mar his reunion with his wife; Lentulus uses the prospect of Cornelia's mistreatment in Parthia, and the disrespect which Pompey would pay to her former husband, to strip Pompey of his political power; and Pompey's final, dying attempt to secure his heroic status is undermined by the sorrow which his repeated separation has caused Cornelia to display. Pompey also shows a consistent inability to understand or relate to his audiences: he falsely believes that his soldiers fight at Pharsalus on his behalf, and cannot convince them to stop; at Syhedra, he fails to recognise that his arguments about Parthia's longstanding opposition to Rome cannot possibly convince an audience of Roman senators to support his plans; and as he approaches Egypt, he fails to realise that Cornelia has taken on the identity of an abandoned elegiac lover, rather than a reliable witness to his noble death. His political isolation in book 2, when his focus on individual opposition to Caesar

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Peirano Garrison (2019) 175-177 on the significance of rhetorical skills for epic heroes.

highlights his autocratic tendencies and distances him from his soldiers, is paired with the emotional isolation resulting from his strained communication with Cornelia. Pompey's weaknesses in each of these areas contribute to his construction as a character whose lack of successful communication reduces his overall heroism, even if it increases the sympathy he evokes in the reader.

In my analysis of *Aeneid* 12, I noted that Lavinia's silence is interpreted by Turnus in a way that suits his self-confidence and desire for war; I also argued that Juturna's interpretation of Turnus' silence and pallor demonstrates how non-verbal signs of emotion are open to manipulation. Perhaps inspired by scenes such as these, Lucan emphasises the ambivalence of silence in Pompey's first address to his soldiers. I have argued that parallels with the noise and silence of the Trojans and Achaeans in the *Iliad* offer an important (but previously unnoticed) model for the interpretation of silence in *Bellum Ciuile* 2, which shows how silence can display confidence and discipline. Pompey attempts to use this function of silence at his death, although he fails to achieve this goal; similarly, when Lucan threatens to fall silent during his narration of Pharsalus, he indicates that silence can serve as a form of resistance in its own right. The ambiguity of the Virgilian Lavinia's blush might also provide a model for Lucan's portrait of Julia, since, although Julia does speak, her significance for the poem has been understood – by previous scholars, as well as by Pompey himself – primarily on the grounds of her appearance as a Fury. Like Turnus witnessing Lavinia's blush, Pompey experiences new enthusiasm for war at the sight of Julia's ghost (despite the doom which her speech promises him). I have proposed an interpretation of Lucan's Julia as a woman who seeks peace in death as well as in life, and who unsuccessfully uses terror to try to achieve this goal;¹⁷⁰ Pompey's misinterpretation and misunderstanding of his wife would also align with his long-term character, since he frequently displays his ignorance of Cornelia's sorrow and love for him. Just as Caesar's *furor* infects his soldiers, and Pompey's pessimism at Pharsalus affects his own army, it seems that Pompey's tendency towards ineffective communication also infects his wives.

In contrast (and opposition) to Pompey, characters such as Laelius, Petreius, Cicero, Lentulus and – in many scenes throughout the poem, although not those which I have analysed in this chapter – Caesar are able to use speech to achieve their goals. Yet persuasiveness alone may not be enough to ensure true success, as Ruth Scodel suggests in an analysis of Greek epic: “The Homeric speaker's intended result is often double: he seeks to persuade, and to persuade to an action that will lead to success in the overriding result... Both the speaker's persuasiveness and the ultimate success of his policy will influence the evaluation of his excellence as a

¹⁷⁰ I will develop this theme further in my analysis of Jocasta, in chapter 4 below.

speaker.”¹⁷¹ Caesar and Laelius convince soldiers to commit acts of extreme evil, and Laelius’ speech, by subordinating his will entirely to that of Caesar, destroys his independence and sense of self; Petreius effects a massacre of peaceful soldiers and strengthens Caesar’s claims to moral superiority; Cicero compels Pompey to engage in the disastrous battle of Pharsalus; Lentulus’ speech drives Pompey towards his death. Pompey’s confident instructions to Deiotarus can be placed in the same context: he seems to reserve his rhetorical skills for an attempt to encourage the Parthians to invade Rome. These ostensibly successful speeches cause an escalation of civil conflict and ultimately contribute to the destruction of the Republic and, in Lucan’s eyes, the enslavement of the Roman people: their persuasiveness is largely divorced from success in decision-making. We might even imagine a Cicero or Lentulus being reassessed as a failure due to the consequences of their proposals, much as Caesar redefines the defeated, or the dead Julia is considered guilty after the outbreak of war.¹⁷² Lucan makes a virtue of failure, as his effusive praise of Pompey after his death makes clear,¹⁷³ and he invites his readers to question notions of successful speech as well as successful action. In the final assessment, it seems that all communication in this civil war – whether or not it achieves its goals – might be judged a failure, since it brings nothing but disaster in its wake.

¹⁷¹ Scodel (2008) 10.

¹⁷² Statius’ Tydeus offers another example of ostensibly successful speech which leads to civil conflict and disaster, when he rouses the Argives’ anger against Eteocles in *Thebaid* 3. Statius hints that this speech should ultimately be considered a failure by highlighting Tydeus’ rhetorical weaknesses. Tydeus also provides an example of a figure whose actions cause a reassessment of his character: Minerva is prepared to elevate him to immortality for his heroic conduct, until she witnesses his cannibalism at the moment of his death.

¹⁷³ On the elevation of Pompey after his death, see Feeney (1986) and Easton (2011).

Chapter 4: Statius' *Thebaid*

Introduction

The *Thebaid* is the story of a broken agreement and a fractured family relationship. To a greater extent than the *Aeneid* or *Bellum Ciuile*, it figures the tensions and violence of civil war, and the various attempts to broker peace, in terms of interpersonal conflict between people who are closely related to one another. Failure permeates this narrative, which Frederick Ahl describes as “the archetypal civil war in which no one triumphs”.¹ Eteocles and Polynices both die in their fight for the throne, as does their successor Creon; Oedipus realises too late that the price for vengeance is higher than he was willing to pay; and the only Argive leader to survive the war is Adrastus, whose hope to strengthen his family by marrying his daughters to Polynices and Tydeus is frustrated by the deaths of both men.² Death and defeat are not the only types of failure experienced by these characters: for instance, Henry Tang has analysed how various characters manipulate accounts of their ancestries to present themselves in a more heroic fashion, but are ultimately unconvincing in these attempts.³ The overwhelming power of divine and supernatural forces creates the impression of a world of human impotence: in William Dominik’s assessment, Statius “establish[es] a consistent picture of the weakness and suffering of the human race in an oppressive universe” in which mankind is powerless to resist the torments of the gods.⁴ The only mortal who clearly succeeds in their goals is Theseus, a character who is not introduced until late in the poem’s final book. As I will demonstrate in this chapter, many instances of failure in this epic are intimately connected with the breakdown or inefficacy of verbal communication; and in comparison with Virgil and Lucan, Statius places greater emphasis on the adoption of false *personae* to aid in persuasive endeavours.

My analysis of the *Thebaid* will start by considering the movement towards war in the first three books of the poem, focusing on a series of conversations between Polynices, Argia, Adrastus, Tydeus and Eteocles. In *Thebaid* 2, Polynices attempts to negotiate a peaceful handover of power with Eteocles, but his chosen ambassador, Tydeus, is wholly unsuitable for the job, and uses his position to

¹ Ahl (1986) 2869.

² Snijder (1968) 16 comments that neither the Thebans nor the Argives can be considered victorious. Parkes (2014) 785-786, in a study of the influences of Apollonius Rhodius and Valerius Flaccus on the *Thebaid*, contrasts the failure of most Argives to return home with the successful return voyage found in the Argonautic myth.

³ Tang (2019) chapter 1: see especially pp. 42-49 on Polynices, 60-75 on Adrastus and 80-104 on Parthenopaeus.

⁴ Dominik (2005) 521; see also pp. 519-520 on the cruelty of Statius’ gods and the absence of divine justice from the poem. The powerlessness of mortals is also explored by Burgess (1972).

exacerbate tensions and make war inevitable. Over the course of these books, Argia becomes an advocate for war, but although she uses all her persuasive powers against her father Adrastus, he remains unmoved. The second quarter of the *Thebaid* covers the Argive army's journey towards Thebes, and contains several interesting scenes of communication and communication failure; scholars have questioned the reliability of Hypsipyle's narration, the role which her storytelling plays in earning the protection of the Argives against her enslaver and the extent to which she may be deceitful.⁵ However, this section of the narrative is detached from the Theban civil war as a whole, and therefore beyond the scope of this thesis. As such, my analysis will move from the preparations for war in *Thebaid* 3 directly to a series of attempts to end the conflict in books 7, 10 and 11. I will explore Jocasta's two failed attempts to dissuade Eteocles and Polynices from fighting, where her aggressive words and a fearful appearance are unable to prevent the violence of her sons, alongside the similar failures of Antigone, Adrastus and the personification of Pietas. I will also consider the self-sacrifice of Menoeceus in terms of its effect in perverting and preventing Menoeceus' communication with his parents. Finally, I will look at Theseus' attack on Thebes, on the request of the Argive widows, to explore how the renewal of war in the poem's final book suggests the inability of speech and negotiation to bring an end to the cycle of civil violence.

Origins of the Theban war

I begin my analysis of the *Thebaid* with two episodes which seem at first glance to represent successful communication, but which both problematise issues around speech and discourse at the poem's outset: Oedipus' prayer and the council of the gods. The narrative starts with Oedipus calling upon the gods and the Fury Tisiphone, whose role in initiating civil war echoes that of Allecto in *Aeneid* 7,⁶ to punish his sons (1.53-87). Like the Virgilian Juno, Oedipus only turns to this method after a sustained failure to persuade the Olympian gods to support him.⁷ Oedipus' personal grievances result in death on a large scale: this episode disrupts the distinctions between personal and political matters, a disruption which will

⁵ See, for example, Nugent ([1996] 2016), Augoustakis (2010) 37-61, Brown (2016) and Heslin (2016).

⁶ The description of Tisiphone is also indebted to Ovid's Tisiphone, who attacks the Theban house of Cadmus in *Metamorphoses* 4, as Keith (2002b) 394-397 indicates. Ganiban (2007) 32 notes that, unlike Tisiphone, Allecto is subordinate to Juno and can be sent back to the underworld once released.

⁷ See Hershkowitz (1998) 247-248 for Oedipus' similarity to Juno. As Feeney (1991) 346 comments on this scene: "the channels of communication between humans and the Underworld are a good deal more effective than those between humans and the upper world".

cause intrafamilial conflict to escalate into a war between two cities.⁸ Oedipus complains that Eteocles and Polynices have ignored and disrespected him:

orbum uisu regnisque carentem
 non regere aut dictis maerentem flectere adorti,
 quos genui quocumque toro; quin ecce superbi
 – pro dolor! – et nostro iamdudum funere reges
 insultant tenebris gemitusque odere paternos. 1.74-78

When I was deprived of my sight and throne, my children – it doesn't matter which marriage produced them – did not attempt to guide me or prevail upon my grief with words; in fact, see, they are haughty – what suffering this is! – and, made kings already by my 'death', they mock my blindness and hate their father's groans.

This passage indicates the importance of speech and language as a motivator for martial conflict: Oedipus is enraged by his sons' insults towards him and lack of kind words. The seriousness with which Oedipus takes his perceived mistreatment is indicated by the use of the verbs *adoriri* (which has connotations of military attacks) and *insultare* (which can refer to an act of leaping upon or trampling as well as verbal insults), while *funus* is used metaphorically to demonstrate that he views his fall from power as a type of death. Oedipus seems to conceive of his sons' words and actions as equivalent to a physical attack, and in this way justifies the bloodshed which will follow from his prayer to the underworld.

Oedipus' entreaty to the Fury is successful, and Tisiphone foments civil war between Eteocles and Polynices. Yet by the time this conflict has reached its bloody conclusion, Oedipus has had a change of heart. He weeps wordlessly over the corpses of his sons, a sharp contrast with his earlier aggressive speech:

nec uox ulla seni: iacet inmugitque cruentis
 uulneribus, nec uerba diu temptata sequuntur.
 dum tractat galeas atque ora latentia quaerit,
 tandem muta diu genitor suspiria soluit. 11.601-604

The old man has no voice: he lies on the bodies and groans at their bloody wounds, and although he tries for a long time, words do not follow. While he drags off their helmets and searches for their hidden mouths, at last the father released the sighs which had been silent for so long.

⁸ Cf. Ganiban (2007) 28.

The pathos of Oedipus' grief is amplified by his inability to speak, which matches his powerlessness at this moment of deep regret.⁹ His silence is prolonged (as indicated by the repetition of *diu*): it is almost as if he has been holding his breath since the beginning of the epic, unable to show (or perhaps even recognise) his paternal feelings until it is too late. Oedipus claims that he did not intend this outcome and that his earlier angry rant – which was 'heeded more than was warranted' (*iusto magis exaudita*, 11.616) – was not an authentic expression of his desires (11.616-619): in accepting the literal meaning of Oedipus' words, Tisiphone apparently misinterpreted his wishes. In light of this complaint, Oedipus' prior voicelessness looks like a response to the realisation that his speech has wrought such disaster and cannot be trusted. Oedipus' regret suggests that the success or failure of a communicative act cannot be assessed until all the outcomes are known – and since mortals lack full knowledge of the future, it is impossible to be sure of one's success until long after one has acted. Although not all scholars consider this regret to be authentic or believable,¹⁰ it nevertheless points to the risk that both speech and violence can have impacts that exceed or even contradict the original intentions behind them. The horrors of civil and intrafamilial conflict, once unleashed, are difficult to control, and Oedipus claims that Tisiphone's creation of civil war in response to his prayer represents a misinterpretation of his wishes.

The poem's first dialogue is found in the divine council scene of 1.197-302,¹¹ in which Jupiter declares his own reasons for initiating a war between Eteocles and Polynices and between Argos and Thebes. Jupiter stands taller than the other gods (1.201-202),¹² who do not dare to sit without his permission (1.203-205), and controls speech and silence:

postquam iussa quies siluitque exterritus orbis,
 incipit ex alto (graue et inmutabile sanctis
 pondus adest uerbis, et uocem fata sequuntur). 1.211-213

⁹ Venini (1970) 152 points to the verbal echoes with *Aen.* 12.912, part of a description of sleep paralysis after Jupiter's Dira saps Turnus' strength in the final duel, and *Ov. Met.* 9.326, taken from Dione's slaying of the boastful Chione. Venini does not explore the significance of these intertexts, but both passages emphasise mortal impotence in the face of violent divine interference, and may suggest that the grieving Oedipus is also a powerless victim.

¹⁰ Dominik (1994) 134-137 considers Oedipus' regret to be authentic and a result of his manipulation by the Furies; however, Augoustakis (2016a) 294-297 argues that it is a cynical move to earn sympathy and avoid reproach, rather than a sign of true grief or remorse.

¹¹ For a systematic analysis of council scenes in Greco-Roman epic see Reitz (2019); for an analysis of the role of the gods in the *Thebaid*, see Feeney (1991) chapter 7 and Ganiban (2007) chapters 3 and 5.

¹² This detail echoes the description of the similarly-autocratic Eteocles at 1.165-168.

After he had commanded quiet and the terrified world fell silent, he began to speak from his high throne (there is a heavy and unchangeable weight to his sacred words, and fate conforms to his speech).

The silencing of the *orbis* refers to the gods of the rivers, clouds and winds whose noise is 'restrained by fear' (*compressa metu*, 1.207), and this kind of silencing is characteristic of tyrants in Flavian epic.¹³ It is Jupiter's ability to instil fear in the lesser gods attending the council which gives him the opportunity to speak, be listened to and obeyed: his decrees become fate.¹⁴ Yet Jupiter's authority does not depend on actual rhetorical skill: Donald Hill has indicated the weaknesses of his argument and rhetoric in this scene,¹⁵ which Hill sees as evidence of Jupiter's "weakness and stupidity".¹⁶ His power to speak derives from his prior status and his ability to back up his threats with force, rather than his competence as a speaker.

Jupiter's autocratic power is further emphasised in his dealings with Juno, who objects to his plan to drag Argos into this war (1.248-282). Juno builds on Jupiter's lack of clear justification for punishing Argos; she points to their close relationship by reference to their marriage bed, *thalami discordia sancti* ('the discord of our sacred bed', 1.260);¹⁷ and she uses both complaints and entreaties in an attempt to appeal to his better nature, *finierat precibus miscens conuicia Iuno* ('Juno finished by mixing reproaches with prayers', 1.283). Nevertheless, her speech is ineffective.¹⁸ Although Jupiter recognises his wife's special status and admits that he foresaw her objections to his plan (1.285-289), he makes no attempt to persuade her or allay her concerns. This contrasts with their meeting in *Aeneid* 12, where Jupiter makes concessions to Juno because she is also a child of Saturn. Jupiter simply states that his will is final and must be enacted: *obtestor, mansurum et non reuocabile uerbum, / nil fore quod dictis flectar* ('I swear, my word will

¹³ Cf. McGuire (1997) chapter 4. Feeney (1991) 353-355 argues that Jupiter's anger and autocracy is indebted more to Virgil's Juno and Ovid's Jupiter than to the presentation of Jupiter in the *Aeneid*; Ganiban (2007) 50-54 also comments on Jupiter's usurpation of the Virgilian Juno's role. Agri (2022) 134, 139-140 notes that the fear which Jupiter evokes in the other gods indicates his tyranny, but that he lacks the power of the more terrifying Tisiphone.

¹⁴ See Ahl (1986) 2849, Dominik (1994) 203-204 and Criado (2013) for the complexities surrounding Jupiter's relationship to *fatum* in the *Thebaid*. In *Thebaid* 1, Jupiter's words seem to establish fate; but at 3.239-243 and 7.195-198 he tells Mars and Bacchus respectively that he has no power to stop Thebes' fated destruction.

¹⁵ Hill (2008).

¹⁶ Hill (2008) 141.

¹⁷ This use of *discordia* suggests the risk that civil war will infect the divine realm and the marriage of Jupiter and Juno, as Bernstein (2015) 147 and Giusti (2020) 185-186 indicate.

¹⁸ Cf. Giusti (2020) 167-186, 194-196.

remain and cannot be revoked, nor will I ever be persuaded by words', 1.291-292).¹⁹ Christiane Reitz has compared the (lack of) reactions from the other gods in Jupiter's audience with similar council scenes in which there is a greater emphasis on the audience's audible consent or dissent or noticeable silence: this Statian council omits such reactions because they cannot affect Jupiter's decision.²⁰ The poem's first conversation includes its first persuasive failure (on the part of Juno) and a refusal to even attempt persuasion or mollification (on the part of Jupiter). As Elena Giusti writes, Juno's failure to persuade Jupiter "seems to cause a sort of narrative ostracization of the goddess", whose role in the *Thebaid* is far smaller than in the *Aeneid* or Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.²¹ Whereas the Virgilian Juno resorts to Allecto's violence when her persuasive attempts fail, Statius' Juno pairs ineffective speech with a wider lack of influence, control and effective action. Jupiter's position as chief of the gods, who can intimidate all others into submission with threats of violence, means that his voice and opinion are the only ones which matter. The motifs presented in this scene – the use of fear to command silence and assent, the significance of close relationships in persuasive appeals, the insignificance of rhetorical weaknesses when accompanied by physical strength and the power to impose one's will on others – each play a significant role in the narrative which follows.

Anxieties in Argos

Oedipus' prayers and Jupiter's plots do not lead immediately to war, but instead result in a gradual heightening of hostility. Polynices is exiled and settles in Argos,²² where a marriage alliance joins him to Adrastus and Tydeus, but he soon longs to return to Thebes (2.306-308). Although Polynices tries to keep his pain and anger to himself, Argia notices it – just as Lucan's Cornelia notices Pompey's nocturnal anxieties – and recognises its cause:

non alias tacita iuuenis Teumesius iras
mente acuit. sed fida uias arcanaque coniunx
senserat.

2.331-333

¹⁹ Jupiter later reminds the other gods not to try to persuade him: *uos, o superi, meus ordine sanguis, / ne pugnare odiis, neu me temptare precando / certetis* ('you gods, lineage of my blood, do not strive to fight me in hatred or to test me with your prayers', 3.239-241).

²⁰ Reitz (2019) 740-741.

²¹ Giusti (2020) 164.

²² Ahl (1986) 2871 notes that Polynices' flight from his homeland shows a similarity with Lucan's Pompey.

The young Theban sharpened a similar anger in his silent mind. But his faithful wife sensed his secret travel plans.

She explains that, although he has attempted to hide his thoughts from her, his restlessness has revealed his painful feelings:

nil transit amantes.
sentio, peruigiles acuunt suspiria questus,
numquam in pace sopor. quotiens haec ora natare
fletibus et magnas latrantia pectora curas
admota deprendo manu! 2.335-339

Nothing gets past lovers. I notice, when sleepless complaints sharpen your breathing, that there is never any peaceful sleep. How often I find, when I move my hand, this face swimming with tears and your chest howling with great trouble.

The phrase *numquam in pace sopor* can refer to Argia's own sleeplessness (as well as that of Polynices), which will be emphasised again in Argia's appearance in *Thebaid* 3.²³ Argia presents sight, touch and hearing as tools to interpret communication which seems to be unintentional on the part of Polynices. Although Polynices is able to control his speech and to use silence when required, just like his brother,²⁴ these bodily indicators of his thoughts seem harder to master. Argia attempts to dissuade her husband from seeking the Theban throne: she foregrounds her fears for his safety in the court of the cruel Eteocles (2.342-347), which she supports with reference to omens and messages from Juno (2.348-351), before ending with a worry that Polynices may be planning to abandon her for a new bride (2.351-352). In attempting to discourage her husband from pursuing civil war between Thebes and Argos, Argia mirrors the role of Juno in *Thebaid* 1; like Juno, Argia is unsuccessful.²⁵

Polynices' response does not address the substance of Argia's speech or any of these individual points, but attempts instead to calm her anxiety in general terms. As Kyle Gervais describes it, "Polynices' emotional reaction to Argia's

²³ Gervais (2017a) 84 notes that sleep is frequently restless and disturbed in the *Thebaid*, and that Statius' own poetic compositions are associated with sleeplessness at *Theb.* 12.811, suggesting a particular link between insomnia and the anxiety caused by thinking (or writing) about civil war.

²⁴ McGuire (1997) chapter 4, especially pp. 157-160, argues that there is a close link between silence, outward displays of happiness and the anger of the tyrant in Flavian epic: Eteocles demonstrates this at *Theb.* 2.410-414. Anzinger (2007) 248 suggests that Polynices' self-silencing and suppression of emotions indicates his own capacity for tyranny.

²⁵ Gervais (2017a) xxix notes this parallel. Cf. Giusti (2020), who writes (p. 167) that Juno is speechless for much of the poem because she "fails to take into consideration the gendered power dynamics of the poem" when she challenges her husband in *Thebaid* 1.

impassioned speech is brief and belated. His mind is elsewhere.”²⁶ His attempt at reassurance is enacted as much by gesture and non-verbal signifiers of emotion as by his words: he ‘laughs’ (*risit*, 2.353),²⁷ ‘consoles her with an embrace’ (*amplexu solatus*, 2.356) and ‘kisses her sorrowful cheeks and suppresses his tears’ (*oscula maestis / tempestiua genis posuit lacrimasque repressit*, 2.354-355). Like Turnus addressing Calybe in *Aeneid* 7 (and therefore also Hector addressing his wife Andromache in *Iliad* 6), Polynices tells Argia not to worry about matters of politics and war, although he does so affectionately and with a note of optimism. Whereas Turnus dismisses ‘Calybe’ for being elderly, Polynices uses the excuse that Argia is too young to worry about such affairs: *te fortior annis / nondum cura decet* (‘concern beyond your years does not yet befit you’, 2.357-358). Although Polynices asks Argia to trust him (*mihi crede*, 2.356), this episode has already exposed his emotional weaknesses and uncertainty. Scholars have compared this scene to Jupiter’s attempt to reassure Venus in *Aeneid* 1, but Polynices lacks Jupiter’s power and knowledge of fate and the future, and as such his assurances fall flat.²⁸ Debra Hershkowitz notes the uncomfortable way in which Polynices demonstrates his (erotic) affection to Argia to alleviate her fears of neglect, but then immediately leaves her alone in their bedchamber in order to consult with Tydeus and Adrastus:²⁹ consequently, his consolations lack credibility, and his affection seems like an act. A key intertext for this passage is the conversation between Lucan’s Pompey and Cornelia at *BC* 5.722-815, in which Cornelia’s sorrow for her upcoming separation from her husband is so great that she cannot bear to give him a final embrace or say goodbye (*BC* 5.792-798),³⁰ in comparison, Statius’ Polynices shows Argia physical affection, but his reasons for returning to Thebes show that he is more concerned with power than Argia’s happiness or safety.³¹ Kisses and embraces are used as a persuasive tool, an outward display of affection which is easily accomplished and which hides Polynices’ true feelings.

²⁶ Gervais (2017a) 198.

²⁷ Anzinger (2007) 250 suggests that Polynices’ laughter is calculated to elicit a desired response from Argia but does not show his inner feelings.

²⁸ See Hershkowitz ([1997] 2016), which situates Argia’s later conversation with Adrastus in the same context and notes the weakness of scenes of reassurance in the *Thebaid*. Gervais (2017a) 198 describes Jupiter as an “impossibly lofty model” for Polynices here which indicates the poem’s sense of “despair”.

²⁹ Hershkowitz ([1997] 2016) 136; Newlands (2016) 154-155 also explores Polynices’ erotic desire for Thebes.

³⁰ Anzinger (2007) 302 draws this comparison.

³¹ Gervais (2017a) 192.

The poem does not indicate Argia's reaction here; instead, the narrative perspective follows Polynices to a meeting with Tydeus and Adrastus, where he decides to send a peaceful message to Eteocles:

fit mora consilio, cum multa mouentibus una
 iam potior cunctis sedit sententia, fratris
 pertemptare fidem tutosque in regna precando
 explorare aditus. audax ea munera Tydeus
 sponte subit. 2.367-371

Planning creates delay; after going over many things together now an idea is settled which is better than all others: to test the brother's faithfulness and explore safe access to the kingdom through supplication. Reckless Tydeus takes up this duty eagerly.

The emphasis here is on supplication and an attempt to find a peaceful way to ensure a transition of power. We might recall the parallel use of ambassadors to broker peace in *Aeneid* 7, where Aeneas' decision not to travel to Latinus' city himself is part of the reason that peace fails: this suggests that the tactic might be unsuccessful, and the choice of Tydeus as messenger heightens this fear. The *consilium* ends in what is ultimately a disastrous embassy to Thebes, and one which will lead to a further disturbance of peace for Argia and others; but it also aims to alleviate Argia's anxiety that her husband will not return to Argos if he travels to Thebes in person (2.343-345), and fulfils Polynices' promise to Argia (at 2.356-357) that there will be peaceful deliberation before any action.³² By raising her concerns over Polynices' secret anxieties, Argia exposes that they are not very well hidden: this seems to give Polynices the impetus to air them openly and set Argos on the path to war with Thebes, an outcome which Argia had hoped to avoid.³³

By the end of *Thebaid* 3, Argia has changed her position. She calls on her father Adrastus to support Polynices' desire for war, since she can no longer bear her husband's nocturnal complaints (3.690-696). As I have indicated above, Polynices' sorrow is expressed through visual signs of his distress, and Argia imitates this tactic when she disturbs her father's rest with her own dishevelled appearance:

at gemitus Argia uiri non amplius aequo
 corde ferens sociumque animo miserata dolorem,
 sicut erat, laceris pridem turpata capillis,
 et fletu signata genas, ad celse uerendi

³² Gervais (2017a) 198.

³³ Anzinger (2007) 303-304. As with Oedipus' prayer, Argia's speech seems to have unintended and regrettable consequences.

ibat tecta patris paruumque sub ubere caro
Thessandrum portabat auo iam nocte suprema. 3.678-683

But Argia could no longer bear her husband's groans with equanimity, and as she pitied in her soul the pain she shared, just as she was, disfigured with hair that had been torn apart, her face marked by weeping, late in the night she went to the high roof of her revered father and carried small Thessander on her chest to his dear grandfather.

Just like her torn hair and tear-stained cheeks, visual signs of her disturbed mental state, the infant Thessander becomes a visible prop to support her argument:

da bella, pater, generique iacentis
aspice res humiles, atque hanc, pater, aspice prolem
exulis; huic olim generis pudor. 3.696-698

Give war, father, and see the mean fate of your overthrown son-in-law, and see, father, this child of an exile; he will bear the shame of his family.

The repetition of *aspice* emphasises the way in which Argia holds up her child for Adrastus to view him.³⁴ However, the fact that Thessander is not mentioned again until 12.348, after Polynices' death, suggests that neither Polynices nor Adrastus sees the dynastic succession he represents as an important factor in the drive to war.³⁵ By weaponising her pain and her status as a mother in this way,³⁶ Argia emphasises her position as a woman even as she argues about the masculine sphere of warfare. She also highlights her identity as Adrastus' daughter by repeating the words *genitor*, *pater* and *parens* (3.689, 3.690, 3.696, 3.697, 3.704, 3.710); Adrastus picks up on this with repeated use of term of address *nata* in his short response (3.712, 3.717, 3.719).³⁷ Carole Newlands analyses the contrast between Polynices' feminine weeping and Argia's desire for war, and views this scene as a performance of femininity to help reduce the transgressive masculinity of Argia's request;³⁸ for Newlands, Argia's numerous speeches in the epic show her imitation of male

³⁴ Quint. *Inst.* 6.1.30 mentions a similar use of children as props in Roman court cases.

³⁵ Agri (2014) 738. Thessander is notably absent from Polynices' departure from Argos, when the distracted Theban gets only a brief glimpse of a silent Argia (4.89-92).

³⁶ Agri (2014) 739-740 argues that Argia's relationship to Polynices in this incestuous epic is also figured as maternal, since her entreaty to Adrastus is akin to Thetis and Venus' entreaties towards Zeus/Jupiter on behalf of their sons Achilles and Aeneas respectively, and since she is compared in *Thebaid* 12 to Ceres searching for Persephone.

³⁷ Snijder (1968) 258.

³⁸ Newlands (2016) 154-157.

rhetoric and indicate that she “emblematises the social confusion of civil war”.³⁹ Argia focuses on an appeal to Adrastus’ emotions and his position as a father and grandfather, but pays little attention to the leadership role which he has as king of Argos and in which capacity he guides the conduct of war. This may reflect Argia’s lack of authority over politics and martial matters: she can only appeal to Adrastus as a family member, not as a political advisor. Argia follows her speech with a kiss and an embrace (3.711), similar to that which Polynices offered after her earlier speech: she uses the same tactics which worked on her – visible marks of grief and physical signs of affection – to try to persuade her father. Like Polynices, Adrastus encourages Argia to put aside her fears as he emphasises that he will take her views into account, but must balance them against other concerns (3.712-720). He gently denies Argia’s request to hasten the war effort, stating the benefits of slow preparation, and encourages Argia to console her husband, despite her clear statement that the need to do so has brought her great distress.⁴⁰ Two years (and presumably many more sleepless nights) pass between his meeting with Argia and the drawing up of troops which begins the following book of the epic. Neil Bernstein has criticised “Adrastus’ decision... to grant his daughter’s request to make war” as “a culpable misuse of his paternal and regal authority where ignorance cannot be advanced as an excuse”,⁴¹ but the long temporal gap between the end of book 3 and the start of book 4 suggests that the movement towards war is not closely linked to Argia’s pleas.

Argia is unable to convince either her husband or her father to treat her concerns seriously and follow her proposed course of action.⁴² Whether she argues for war or peace, Argia’s speeches are ineffective; it is only in the final book of the epic, when Argia takes matters into her own hands rather than trying to persuade others to act on her behalf, that her actions achieve their goal. Argia displays a belief that issues of affection and responsibility to family members should be the principal factor in Adrastus’ political decisions, and she relies upon her position as his tormented daughter in order to persuade him towards war; but in fact, in this poem about the breakdown of family relationships, this does not sway Adrastus at all. Statius devotes more attention to vocal female characters than many other epic

³⁹ Newlands (2016) 151. In contrast, Keith (2004) 96 situates Argia within a wider trope of wives who push their husbands towards war: on this interpretation, Argia’s behaviour conforms to epic expectations of female behaviour, even if it would be considered masculine and transgressive in other contexts.

⁴⁰ Cf. Hershkowitz ([1997] 2016) 137-139 for the inadequacy of Adrastus’ consolation.

⁴¹ Bernstein (2015) 143.

⁴² Hershkowitz ([1997] 2016) 143 describes Argia as being “bulldozed by Polynices and Adrastus”.

poets, but the communicative acts of women like Argia (and, later in the poem, Jocasta and Antigone) are not shown to be particularly effective.

Embassy and ambush

In this section I will explore Tydeus' embassy to Eteocles, which follows from Argia's conversation with her troubled husband in *Thebaid* 2. Tydeus is an unusual choice of messenger, and his journey to Thebes produces what Simone Finkmann has termed "the most complex and atypical messenger scene in Roman epic", particularly because Polynices does not dictate a message but gives Tydeus leeway to accomplish his goals in his own fashion.⁴³ He is first characterised in the poem by his extreme anger (1.41-42), and enters the narrative as an exile who has spilled his brother's blood:⁴⁴ as such, he provides a model for the recently-exiled Polynices, who will commit fratricide by the end of the epic. He also functions as a substitute for Eteocles: when Tydeus first encounters Polynices, the pair refuse to share their shelter from the storm and threaten to fight each other (1.408-413), much as Polynices cannot share Thebes with Eteocles;⁴⁵ after Tydeus' death, Polynices refers to him as *melior ... frater* ('my better brother', 9.53),⁴⁶ much as Euripides' Polynices only calls Eteocles a 'loved one' (φίλος) after he has fatally wounded him (Eur. *Phoen.* 1446). Tydeus is *audax* (2.370), a word which can mean 'courageous' but is better understood as 'reckless'.⁴⁷ Chaim Wirszubski has argued that, in the late Republic, *audax* was used as a partisan term (particularly by Cicero) to represent those who opposed and threatened established legal, political and social conventions.⁴⁸ For instance, Catiline is characterised by both *furor* and *audacia* in

⁴³ Finkmann (2019) 545.

⁴⁴ Gervais (2017a) 104-105, 134-135 identifies alternative mythic traditions which suggest that Tydeus may have killed a different relative, rather than his brother: Ps.-Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.8.5 mentions three distinct possibilities. In contrast, Statius is clear that Tydeus committed fratricide, and Laius will mention this specific detail to Eteocles at 2.113.

⁴⁵ Ahl (1986) 2870. Bonds (1985) explores parallels between this combat and the final duel of Eteocles and Polynices, including Adrastus' attempts to intervene in both. Dominik (1989) 78 and Ganiban (2007) 126 point out that Tydeus is a substitute for Eteocles during this initial conflict, and becomes a substitute for Polynices during the embassy of *Thebaid* 2.

⁴⁶ Bannon (1997) 185 suggests that Statius is here playing with a literary trope of comparing close friends to brothers, in order to show how broken real brotherhood is in the poem. De Gussem (2016) 164-166 argues that Statius applies bull similes to all three of Polynices, Eteocles and Tydeus in order to strengthen the equation between them.

⁴⁷ Cf. Gervais (2017a) 130 on Tydeus' haste and recklessness, particularly in comparison with Polynices.

⁴⁸ Wirszubski (1961) 13-14; for Wirszubski, the term is generally derogatory. Langerwerf (2015) 161-166 argues that Sallust views Catiline's *audacia* more ambivalently than Cicero, and notes that

the first lines of Cicero's *Catilinarians* (Cic. *Cat.* 1.1). Virgil applies this adjective to Turnus both before and after Allecto has roused his passion for war (*Aen.* 7.409, 7.475); Lucan uses it for the exiled Curio when he encourages Caesar to fight (*BC* 1.269), a description also applied to Curio by Velleius Paterculus (2.48.3) which may have been conventional by Lucan's lifetime.⁴⁹ Tydeus' characterisation as *audax* might also echo a concept found in Thucydides: as part of his famous passage on how words change their value in times of *στάσις*, Thucydides notes that recklessness comes to be esteemed as positive behaviour in a loyal ally, which certainly fits this episode.⁵⁰ Tydeus' boldness or recklessness extends to his quickness to speak, which contrasts with the frequent silence of Polynices. Tydeus has more speeches than any other mortal character in the epic, which signifies his importance to the narrative.⁵¹

Nevertheless, when Tydeus arrives in Thebes, the poet warns that speech is not his strong point:

utque rudis fandi pronusque calori
semper erat, iustis miscens tamen aspera coepit. 2.391-392

And as he was always rough in speech and quick to anger, yet he began mixing harsh words with just ones.

This assessment of Tydeus as *rudis fandi* is supported by close reading: for instance, Kyle Gervais' analysis of his speech at *Theb.* 2.176-197 notes inelegant features such as "Ennian' alliteration... awkward elisions... difficult grammar and sense... and constantly shifting focus".⁵² Tydeus' aggressive speech to Eteocles (2.393-409) elicits anger;⁵³ Eteocles responds by sending Thebans to ambush Tydeus. When Tydeus returns to Argos, he uses this incident to argue that war is necessary and to rouse the anger of the Argive people: Tydeus' failure as a messenger of peace strengthens his subsequent position as a messenger of war, which aligns more

Caesar uses the term in a positive sense. Being *audax* does not necessarily paint Tydeus as a villain, but it does suggest darker aspects to his characterisation which will be fully realised at his death.

⁴⁹ Wirszubski (1961) 12.

⁵⁰ τόλμα μὲν γὰρ ἀλόγιστος ἀνδρεία φιλέταιρος ἐνομίσθη ('for irrational daring is considered to be bravery and affection for one's comrades', Thuc. 3.82.4). Thucydides also writes that partisan alliances become stronger than blood – καὶ μὴν καὶ τὸ ξυγγενὲς τοῦ ἐταιρικοῦ ἄλλοτριώτερον ἐγένετο διὰ τὸ ἐτοιμότερον εἶναι ἀπροφασίστως τολμῶν ('and indeed kinship becomes less binding than partisanship, thanks to partisanship's more unhesitating preparedness for daring action', Thuc. 3.82.6) – and this could apply to Polynices' choice to align himself more closely with Adrastus and Tydeus than with his biological family.

⁵¹ Dominik (1994) 214.

⁵² Gervais (2017a) 130.

⁵³ Gervais (2017a) 208-209 highlights odd and ambiguous phrasing in this speech, a narrow argumentative focus and unusual metrical forms, which emphasise Tydeus' poor rhetorical skills.

closely with his strengths and the way in which he can hope to achieve power, status and glory. In the world of the *Iliad* – set a generation after the *Thebaid*, although composed centuries earlier – skill in warfare and skill at deliberation and public speech are both valued as interrelated aspects of heroism;⁵⁴ indeed, Tydeus' son Diomedes is praised for his pre-eminence in both fields.⁵⁵ In contrast, Statius' Tydeus' lack of rhetorical skill means that fighting is the only possible way for him to gain fame and honour.

When Tydeus first arrives at the court of Eteocles, his appearance indicates the role that he has assumed: *ramus manifestat oliuae / legatum* ('an olive branch showed him to be an ambassador', 2.389-390). The adoption of an olive branch by a warlike character to take on the role of a peaceful messenger is found also in *Aeneid* 7, when Allecto appears to Turnus as Calybe: this allusion foreshadows the violent outcome of Tydeus' embassy.⁵⁶ The term *legatus*, which Virgil uses for the Latin ambassadors who fail to obtain aid from Diomedes (*Aen.* 11.227, 11.239, 11.296),⁵⁷ is applied to Tydeus five times in books 2 and 3.⁵⁸ Interestingly, the limited historical accounts of Roman diplomatic legates' speeches from the Republican period tend to focus on their failure, so that "the impression given [of Roman diplomacy] is that of a barely effective institution compared to war".⁵⁹ Elena Torregaray Pagola's study of the Republican *legatus* emphasises that the need for ambassadors to speak through an interpreter made visual forms of communication (such as gestures), clarity of message and, often, the delivery of ultimata more important than persuasive or rhetorical skill.⁶⁰ The combination of diplomatic speech and threats of violence which Tydeus conveys is perfectly in keeping with the role of the Roman *legatus*,⁶¹ although he is clearly more skilled at the latter. Consequently, Statius' portrayal of Tydeus might well reflect ancient

⁵⁴ Schofield (1986) 9-10, 14-16.

⁵⁵ Schofield (1986) 30, citing *Il.* 9.54.

⁵⁶ Allecto, Tydeus and (in *Thebaid* 7 and 11) Jocasta each adopt a persuasive persona, and this may be influenced by the important role of impersonation in Roman rhetorical education: see Bloomer (1997) on this topic.

⁵⁷ Warwick (1975) 480. The term is also used at *Aen.* 8.143, when Aeneas tells Evander that he has come to Pallanteum in person rather than sending *legati*.

⁵⁸ Deferrari and Eagan (1943) 456-457 cite 2.374, 2.390, 2.487, 3.20 and 3.339, and three uses – 2.395, 3.351 and 3.656 – where it applies to hypothetical embassies modelled on Tydeus' journey.

⁵⁹ Torregaray Pagola (2013) 231; see also p. 234 n. 35, which cites Cic. *Phil.* 5.25-6 and 6.4 and Liv. 21.19 as Roman sources that present embassies as ineffective in times of war.

⁶⁰ Torregaray Pagola (2013) 231-232.

⁶¹ Cf. Torregaray Pagola (2013) 244.

criticism on the capabilities or necessity of a *legatus* when faced with the possibility or reality of war.⁶²

Tydeus' martial spirit quickly manifests itself in Thebes as 'heated' (*pronusque calori*, 2.391) and 'harsh' (*aspera*, 2.392) speech, tactlessness, impatience and a quick temper: these are not desirable qualities in an ambassador. The task set at 2.367-371 is to test Eteocles' *fides* and attempt to arrange a peaceful handover through supplication or prayers, but Tydeus seems to have already decided that this approach will not work. He begins his speech with a counterfactual that makes it clear that he does not believe Eteocles has any loyalty or trustworthiness: *si tibi plana fides et dicti cura maneret / foederis* ('if you had any plain loyalty or care for spoken agreements [then you would have handed over the throne voluntarily]', 2.393-394). He then warns Eteocles that he must prepare to experience misery and hardship in exile when Polynices takes the throne, and tells him to 'put aside happiness' (*pone modum laetis*, 2.406) and prepare to 'suffer in exile' (*patiensque fugae*, 2.409). Tydeus' tone is not deferential and he does not attempt to make exile seem appealing to the king:⁶³ this is not the prayer or entreaty which was decided upon in Argos. Donald McGuire has argued that Maeon's belligerence and bluntness towards Eteocles at 3.40-113 are necessary for conversing with a violent tyrant on his own level,⁶⁴ but this kind of explanation does not apply to Tydeus: his reputation as a great warrior and hero and as the son-in-law to the Argive king already elevates his status to the point where he could address and be heard by someone like Eteocles.⁶⁵ This indicates a similarity with Jupiter, whose status and aggression allows him to speak despite his lack of rhetorical skill: Statius suggests that such powerful men do not need to be effective communicators, as they can achieve their goals through other means. Tydeus' violence permeates all aspects of his existence, from his initial brawl with Polynices to his interruption of the Argive council and his final act of cannibalism: aggression is an inherent part of Tydeus' nature, not a result of his encounter with Eteocles, and this aspect of his character overwhelms the diplomatic role which he adopts.

⁶² The *legatus* was also a senior position in the Roman army. Tydeus is entrusted with the duties of an ambassador legate, but his violence and martial success during the ambush scene might indicate a shift into the role of a military legate.

⁶³ Cf. Dominik (1994) 84: "Not only is Tydeus unmindful of Eteocles' position in failing to address the monarch in a respectful manner, but also the hostile and threatening tone of his speech as well as his distortions are certain to alienate the monarch."

⁶⁴ McGuire (1997) 178, 184.

⁶⁵ Cf. Finkmann (2019) 546.

Eteocles takes Tydeus' speech as evidence of Polynices' hatred and violent intentions towards him:

cognita si dubiis fratris mihi iurgia signis
ante forent nec clara odiorum arcana paterent,
sufficeret uel sola fides. 2.415-417

If my brother's threats were only known through hidden signs before this and his hidden hatred were not plain to see, this alone would be proof enough.

It is clear that Tydeus has escalated tensions and exacerbated the suspicions set in Eteocles' mind by Laius at the beginning of this book. Eteocles perceives Tydeus' tone as so aggressive that he equates it to having his hand on his hilt and ready to make a physical attack;⁶⁶ but he blames Polynices instead of the messenger:

neque te furibundae crimine mentis
arguerim: mandata refers. nunc omnia quando
plena minis, nec sceptrum fide nec pace sequestra
poscitis, et propior capulo manus, haec mea regi
Argolico, nondum aequa tuis, uice dicta reporta. 2.423-427

I will not accuse you of a mind mad with crime: you are carrying out orders. Now, when everything is full of threats, and you make demands with neither a faithful sceptre nor a mediated peace, and your hand is closer to your hilt, take back in turn these words I speak to the Argive king – they are still not equal to yours.

Eteocles interprets Tydeus' words as an accurate representation of Polynices' message, although Polynices in fact asked Tydeus to look for a peaceful resolution. This is the key risk taken in trusting Tydeus to act as messenger, since the conventions of such speech – which Eteocles foolishly follows in giving Tydeus his own message to carry back to Argos – mean that the words spoken are expected to closely follow a message dictated by the initial speaker.

The second half of Eteocles' response speaks through Tydeus to an absent Polynices. It uses second-person verbs and pronouns directed towards Polynices – *te* (2.430), *regas* (2.433), *tibi* (2.436), *respice* (2.446), *te duce* (2.448), *fac uelle* (2.449) – which demonstrate that the speech is meant to be delivered verbatim. Eteocles' reference to shared ancestry from Pelops and Tantalus indicates that he

⁶⁶ This recalls Drances' claim at *Aen.* 11.348 that Turnus threatens those who speak out against him. Coffee (2006) 433-435 draws several parallels between this embassy and the council of *Aeneid* 11, and argues that Eteocles is given the worst characteristics of both Drances and Turnus.

perceives himself as speaking to Polynices (2.437),⁶⁷ but some of his comments can apply to Tydeus as well. When Eteocles notes the value of marrying into the royal family of wealthy Argos (2.430-432), to undermine Tydeus' argument that Polynices has suffered because of his exile,⁶⁸ this could apply to either son-in-law of Adrastus: this highlights the blurry distinctions between Tydeus, Eteocles' literal addressee, and Polynices, the intended audience for Eteocles' words. An even stronger instance of this can be found in the phrase *iratus, germane, uenis* ('brother, you come in anger', 2.449): although Polynices is Eteocles' brother, it is Tydeus who has actually come to his court and demonstrated his excessive rage. Such a slippage is dangerous in the context of this meeting, which was considered too perilous for Polynices to attend: if Tydeus takes on the role of Polynices, he risks falling into the familial violence which defines the house of Oedipus.

Tydeus interrupts Eteocles' response, issues additional threats and escapes from Thebes:

non ultra passus et orsa
iniecit mediis sermonibus obuia 'reddes,'
ingeminat 'reddes...' 2.451-453

Tydeus endured no longer and threw hostile words into the middle of
Eteocles' speech, repeating, 'you will give it back, you will!'

His outburst and haste to respond is a sign of his rash behaviour, in this scene and elsewhere. Tydeus' aggression guides his own mode of speaking, but his uncontrollable anger also leads him to disrupt the speeches of others: this will be demonstrated again when he interrupts Adrastus' council upon his return to Argos. Tydeus takes Eteocles' refusal far more personally than a messenger should, and his response is passionate and insulting:

'haec pietas, haec magna fides! nec crimina gentis
mira equidem duco: sic primus sanguinis auctor
incestique patrum thalami; sed fallit origo:
Oedipodis tu solus eras, haec praemia morum
ac sceleris, uiolente, feres! nos poscimus annum!
sed moror.' haec audax etiamnum in limine retro
uociferans, iam tunc impulsa per agmina praeceps,
euolat. 2.462-469

⁶⁷ Berlincourt (2010) 102-104.

⁶⁸ Ahl (1986) 2873 notes that Tydeus undermines his own argument by dishonestly claiming that Polynices suffers poverty in wealthy Argos.

'This is familial devotion, this is great trustworthiness! Now I can believe the crimes of your race: the first originator of your blood and of your ancestors' incestuous bed was just like this; but the family origin is deceitful: you were the only son of Oedipus, you will bear this price for your habits and crime, you thug! We demand our year! But I am delaying.' Shouting this behind him as he stood boldly on the threshold, already now rushing through the soldiers set against him, he escapes.

These lines, with their focus on family and heritage, seek to redefine the kinship between Eteocles and Polynices. Tydeus emphasises the criminality of Eteocles' family line, but detaches this from Polynices, arguing that Polynices is so different from Eteocles that he cannot be Oedipus' son;⁶⁹ in doing so, he inadvertently weakens Polynices' claim to the Theban throne. He also indicates, in line 2.462, how far he believes Eteocles to stray from the *pietas* which is due to a brother; this echoes Statius' ironic comment that the brothers' fraternal *pietas* only extended to a temporary delay of conflict (1.142-143).⁷⁰ Particularly significant is Tydeus' use of *nos poscimus annum*: Tydeus aligns himself very strongly with Polynices here, connecting the will of the messenger and the one who ordered the message to be delivered. The plurals also suggest that Tydeus views himself as having some ownership over Polynices' year of rule: this interpretation is supported by the later narratorial comment that Tydeus acts as if he has been denied the throne of Thebes (2.477).⁷¹ This equivalency between Tydeus and Polynices is emphasised again upon Tydeus' return to Argos, when Polynices views Tydeus' wounds as an attack on his own person.⁷² Tydeus blurs the differences between himself and Polynices, and consequently turns himself from an impartial and innocent intermediary into a cause and target of Eteocles' fratricidal ire. His departure from the conventions of the messenger speech removes the prospect of a peaceful resolution and hastens the movement towards war.

⁶⁹ Tang (2019) 48-49, building on a comment from Shackleton Bailey (2003) 129, analyses this claim as an attempt to rewrite history which inevitably fails – and which, perhaps, was never intended to be taken seriously – because Polynices' heritage is so well-known that characters such as Adrastus are aware of it before he mentions it.

⁷⁰ Delarue (2000) 80-86 points out that, while Virgilian *pietas* includes a heavy focus on obedience to fate and reverence for the gods, *pietas* in the *Thebaid* tends to focus on human relationships. Ganiban (2007) argues that characters who align themselves with *pietas* in the *Thebaid* frequently fail in their endeavours: see pp. 9-23 on Coroebus, 78-95 on Hypsipyle and 131-136 on Hoplesus and Dymas.

⁷¹ Cf. Vessey (1973) 145.

⁷² Polynices says: *hosne mihi reditus, germane, parabas? / in me haec tela dabas!* ('Were you preparing this return for me, brother? You threw these weapons against me!', 3.369-370).

The description of Tydeus as *audax* as he quits this embassy (2.467), shouting violently behind himself as he tries to make an escape, echoes the use of this word when he first volunteered for the role (2.370). This reminds the reader that Tydeus' behaviour here is in line with his long-term character: as David Vessey comments, "Tydeus, the man of violence, could never be a successful agent of peace".⁷³ Adrastus and Polynices should have foreseen this outcome.⁷⁴ Before he has even left Thebes, Tydeus makes it clear that he is done with playing ambassador:

talis adhuc trepidum linquit Calydonius heros
 concilium infrendens, ipsi ceu regna negentur,
 festinatque uias ramumque precantis oliuae
 abicit. 2.476-479

Raving like this, the Calydonian hero leaves the disturbed council, as if the kingdom has been denied to him, and he hastens on his journey and throws away the branch of supplicating olive.

The swiftness with which Tydeus casts aside the olive branch, which symbolises his status as a *legatus*, indicates both his quick abandonment of this attempt at a peaceful reconciliation and the way in which he shifts from being a messenger to being an addressee in his own right. It also shows the unreliability of (temporary) physical signs of a character's role and perspective. This symbol of Tydeus' temporary status can be compared to Laius' adoption of the priestly fillets of Tiresias in order to deceive Eteocles earlier in this book.⁷⁵ Kyle Gervais describes Laius' disguise as "the first instance in ancient literature of a shade not appearing *in propria persona*":⁷⁶ as such, this scene establishes that in the *Thebaid* (more than other ancient texts), messengers and intermediaries are not always what they appear to be. With the olive branch, Tydeus, just like Virgil's Allecto-as-Calybe, positions himself as lacking the power of both his interlocutor and the originator of his message, and suggests an interest in rational discussion and persuasion. Although Allecto is a lesser goddess than Juno, her supernatural powers are far greater than the Calybe disguise suggests; similarly, although Tydeus may be of lower status than Polynices (lacking any personal claim to the Theban throne), his physical force and martial experience are far superior to that of a normal messenger, and underestimating Tydeus on account of this temporary role is

⁷³ Vessey (1973) 141.

⁷⁴ Cf. Ahl (1986) 2872: "His ambassadorial failure is predictable."

⁷⁵ Gervais (2017a) 238; see also Hardie (2012) 203-204 on Laius' similarity to Virgil's Fama, Mercury and Allecto, and Seo (2013) 152-153 on Laius' use of priestly authority.

⁷⁶ Gervais (2017a) 98.

extremely dangerous. Whereas Allecto's supernatural powers mean she can completely change her physical appearance to match the persona of a persuasive speaker, Tydeus is limited to picking up a prop such as the olive branch; but such props can be easily discarded.

Following this violent departure, Tydeus is ambushed by fifty Thebans sent by a furious Eteocles: this is the poem's first extended battle narrative, in which Tydeus singlehandedly defeats waves of his opponents.⁷⁷ Within this battle, two deaths are particularly interesting for the theme of communication failure. Chromis, described as *audax* like Tydeus himself (2.618), is killed in the act of critiquing and haranguing Tydeus by a spear thrown into his open mouth (2.613-628): this indicates that aggressive words can provoke physical violence which will silence their speaker.⁷⁸ Menoetes addresses Tydeus in supplication and offers to carry a message back to Eteocles, but is killed regardless (2.644-660): this suggests that, despite his rage at being attacked while operating as a *legatus*, Tydeus has little respect for the role of messengers and intermediaries in warfare.⁷⁹ Instead of Menoetes, Tydeus chooses the augur Maeon as his messenger; yet Maeon's speech to Eteocles at 3.59-77 does not express the threats, boasts and instructions to fortify Thebes which Tydeus asked him to deliver.⁸⁰ Tydeus' inadequacy as a messenger limits his ability to choose his own messenger, and he loses control of the narrative. Both Tydeus and Maeon indicate that intermediaries – essential in times of war, when face-to-face confrontations between enemies are liable to result in death – cannot be trusted to accurately convey the messages delegated to them.

It is significant that, when the poet criticises Eteocles for attacking a *legatus* (albeit one who has discarded the physical manifestations of his role and duty), he asks rhetorically, *quas quaereret artes / si fratrem, Fortuna, dares?* ('what tricks would he have sought out, Fortune, if you had given him his brother?', 3.488-489):

⁷⁷ Gervais (2015b) analyses the numerous intertextual models behind this 'monomachy' and argues that the multiplicity of competing allusions imitates the confusion of identity found in civil war. Roche (2015) 395-397 emphasises parallels with Lucan's Caesar and Scaeva; Augoustakis (2016b) 327-328 comments on later Tydeus' similarity to Scaeva at *Theb.* 8.700-717.

⁷⁸ Hulls (2006) 138-139 observes that Chromis shares his name with a man who, in Ov. *Met.* 5, kills a vicious speaker mid-harangue, so that Tydeus' violent silencing of Chromis is touched with irony. On this silencing, see also Spinelli (2019) 307-308.

⁷⁹ On these passages see Gervais (2017a) xl-xli, 284-290, 298-303. Gervais (2015b) 68 and Spinelli (2019) 306-308 argue that the slaying of Menoetes replays Aeneas' killing of Turnus, so that the first combat of the *Thebaid* repeats the final combat of the *Aeneid*.

⁸⁰ Cf. Berlincourt (2010) 114-124 on this disjunction between Tydeus' instructions and Maeon's delivery, and on Maeon's assertion of his independence (rather than subordination to the dictator of his message). As McGuire (1997) 202-203 notes, the approach of death gives Maeon freedom to speak and criticise Eteocles: this can be connected to my analysis (above in chapter 3) of Domitius' final words to Caesar.

Eteocles' hatred for his brother is evident in his attack on Tydeus, and if he can disregard the status of a *legatus* it seems that he will have no qualms about fratricide. Moreover, as John Henderson points out (in typically oblique fashion), Tydeus' status as both a messenger and one of Adrastus' heirs means that an attack on him is doubly transgressive and liable to provoke war: "For Tydeus, the [Argive] attack [on Thebes] is Revenge. The Principle is Diplomatic Immunity. Theban Aggression assaults the Argive Nation when it assaults the person of its (second) Crown Prince-and-Envoy."⁸¹ An attack on Polynices would be criminal enough, but could at least be understood as a personal conflict; the attack on Tydeus has wider political implications and ensures that fraternal rivalry escalates into all-out war. The closeness and similarity between Tydeus and Polynices ensure that the latter trusts the former with his message for Eteocles, but this same closeness complicates Tydeus' role: he cannot conduct his duties effectively, and he becomes a target for the *discordia* which otherwise defines Eteocles' hatred of Polynices.

Just as he used the olive branch to present himself as an envoy to Eteocles, Tydeus uses his appearance after this battle to emphasise his position as both victim and victor of the ambush. In the immediate aftermath, Tydeus wishes to display his bloody visage and the spoils of battle in Thebes as a sign of his unexpected survival (2.682-684); the fearsome appearance of his wounds, dirty hair and puffy eyes is emphasised on his journey back to Argos at 3.326-330, indicating that Tydeus travels through the night without stopping to bathe; and when, in the court of Adrastus, he demands an immediate attack on Thebes, he makes a point of mentioning his bloody appearance:

nunc, socer, haec dum non manus excidit; ipse ego fessus
 quinquaginta illis heroum inmanibus umbris
 uulneraque ista ferens putri insiccata cruore
 protinus ire peto! 3.363-365

Now, father-in-law, while my hand has not been forgotten;⁸² I myself,
 tired by the immense spirits of those fifty heroes and bearing these
 wounds, wet with stinking blood, immediately ask to go!

There is a sense of manipulative theatricality here which, as I will argue in my analysis of Jocasta below, seems particularly characteristic of Statius. Tydeus uses his wounds to indicate both the crime which justifies an attack on Thebes, and the strength and valour which enabled him to defeat so many worthy opponents. Tydeus' fight against an entire army echoes the similar combat undertaken by

⁸¹ Henderson (1991) 50.

⁸² See Snijder (1968) 151 for the translation of *excidit* as meaning 'forgotten' here.

Lucan's Scaeva,⁸³ who seeks out wounds in *Bellum Civile* 6 in order to use scars as proof of his military valour. Matthew Leigh has explored how this recalls the display of scars in rhetorical appeals and political manoeuvres,⁸⁴ and the focus on Tydeus' wounds has a similar effect in this passage. The image of a bloody Tydeus bursting into the Argive council without warning or introduction and calling for the men to take up weapons – *improvisus adest, iam illinc a postibus aulae / uociferans: 'arma, arma uiri!'* ('unexpectedly he is there, and already he shouts from the doors of the court: 'Arms, arms, men!'), 3.347-348) – is horrifying.⁸⁵ Tydeus' tendency to interrupt and speak without much rhetorical skill, as demonstrated in the embassy scene,⁸⁶ adds to the power of his call to arms by creating a sense of immediacy or urgency and by arousing both pity and fear in his audience. In response to Tydeus' repeated narrative, most of the Argives are shocked into silence, while Polynices burns with anger, shame or a desire for battle:

cui fida manus proceresque socerque
astupet oranti, Tyriusque incenditur exul. 3.405-406

The faithful crowd and the nobles and his father-in-law are stunned
by his speech, and the Theban exile is incensed.

The metaphorical language of burning echoes the behaviour of Amata (*Aen.* 7.355-356), Turnus (*Aen.* 7.462-466)⁸⁷ and even Ascanius' hounds (*Aen.* 7.481) after their encounters with Virgil's Allecto: this positions Tydeus as akin to the Fury, whose horrifying appearance he shares, in stirring up irrational anger and the desire for war. The unpolished nature of Tydeus' speech should be viewed as rhetorical weakness, but here it increases his persuasive power: this suggests a failure of ordinary political language in the extraordinary circumstances and disorder of civil conflict.

⁸³ Roche (2015) 396.

⁸⁴ Leigh (1997) 221-233; see also Quint. *Inst.* 6.1.30-31, on the powerful effect of the display of wounds and bloody clothes in court.

⁸⁵ See Vessey (1973) 149-150 for analysis of the chaos and exaggerations of this speech.

⁸⁶ Statius provides a preview of Tydeus' narrative by recording, in indirect speech, the story that Tydeus repeats on his journey through Greece (3.336-344). This account contains a particularly striking passage of asyndeton describing Eteocles' crimes – *uim, noctem, scelus, arma, dolos, ea foedera passum / regis Echionii, fratri sua iura negari* ('force, night, crime, arms, trickery, he suffered these treaties from the Echionian king, denying his brother's own laws to him', 3.341-342) – which also suggests that Tydeus' speech is chaotic and unpolished; Vessey (1973) 148 comments that this asyndeton, alongside the use of "short stabbing phrases" and heavy enjambment, demonstrates Tydeus' fury.

⁸⁷ Turnus' silence and paralysis at *Aen.* 7.446-450 provides a model for the shock experienced by the rest of Tydeus' audience.

In contrast with the ease with which Tydeus' and Capaneus' speeches inflame violence, Amphiaraus indicates the inability of speech – even when it has the weight of religious authority behind it – to prevent the drive to war.⁹³

The entire episode of Tydeus' journey to Thebes and back raises questions about the reliability of messengers and other intermediaries, and their power to either escalate or de-escalate conflict (depending on their own interests and dispositions). Tydeus' innate power and aggression makes him difficult to control, and his role as a substitute brother to both Polynices and Eteocles makes conflict more likely in the fratricidal context of this myth; but Maeon's invention of his own speech to Eteocles suggests that this is a wider issue. Tydeus fails to fulfil the duty established by Polynices and Adrastus at 2.367-371, and fails to convey the message which Eteocles entrusts to him; but he seems to succeed in his own, personal goal of raising tensions and stirring both sides to war, a sphere of activity in which he is far more successful and able to earn glory and respect.

Jocasta the Fury

The Theban war fades out of narrative focus during books 4, 5 and 6 of the poem: as with the *Aeneid*, it is the second half of the *Thebaid* which has stronger connections to the civil war theme. The Nemean digression of books 4 to 6 includes a focus on two royal mothers (Hypsipyle and Eurydice) who each have prominent speaking roles, and as such it prepares for the significant presence of Jocasta in the books which follow. In my analysis of communication failure in books 7 to 11, I will focus on failed attempts at peace-making, starting with the intervention of Jocasta in *Thebaid* 7; my analysis of the poem's final book will consider the continuation and renewal of violence after the ostensible end of the Theban war.

Book 7 of the *Thebaid* begins with an atmosphere of heightened fear.⁹⁴ Jupiter sends Mercury to order Mars to hasten the progress of the war, after the long Nemean digression; but the sight of Mars is so terrifying that it stops the messenger-god from speaking:

⁹³ Dominik (1994) 196-198 and Lovatt (2007) 161-162 explore the inadequacy of prophecy in the *Thebaid* more broadly, and its inability to prevent disastrous outcomes.

⁹⁴ See Agri (2022) chapter 3 for the pervasiveness (and political and philosophical significance) of fear in the *Thebaid*. Agri includes detailed consideration of the Furies' associations with fear, including the connection between negative passions and Tisiphone's terrifying outward appearance (pp. 130-133), but does not analyse Jocasta's connections to fear.

deriguit uisu Cyllenia proles
 summisitque genas: ipsi reuerentia patri,
 si prope sit, dematque minas nec talia mandet. 7.74-76

At this sight, Mercury stiffened and lowered his head: revered father Jupiter himself would have withdrawn his threats and not issued such orders, if he had been at hand.

These lines demonstrate the silencing effect of fear, and indicate that Mars' terrifying appearance could compel even the king of the gods to change his course of action. They also highlight the gap between original speaker and messenger: while Jupiter could have retracted his orders, his envoy lacks that agency and must deliver them (despite his fear). Mercury remains silent until invited to speak, and his message is then described in a single short half-line, *ille refert consulta patris* ('he reports their father's decree', 7.80), which heightens the impression that Mercury has lost his usual eloquence. Mars sends Panic amongst the Argive troops, to create the visual and audible illusion of an approaching army (7.108-139), while in Thebes, frightening rumours of the Argive forces initiate widespread chaos (7.452-465): Jupiter's use of Mars in this way appropriates Juno's use of Allecto to stir up war in *Aeneid* 7.⁹⁵ Whereas Mercury's fear of Mars leads to silence and inaction, the Argive soldiers are motivated by their fear to fight; in Thebes, some of the frightened people take up weapons while others abandon the walls and start preparing for death. As such, these episodes show that fear can have unpredictable and uncontrollable effects.

Jocasta, when she enters this book, is herself frightening. Statius describes her fearful presence, appearance and behaviour, and indicates her resemblance to a Fury:

ecce truces oculos sordentibus obsita canis
 exangues Iocasta genas et brachia planctu
 nigra ferens ramumque oleae cum uelleris atri
 nexibus, Eumenidum uelut antiquissima, portis
 egreditur magna cum maiestate malorum. 7.474-778

Look – her eyes are savage, her face is covered with filthy grey hair, here's Jocasta with bloodless cheeks and arms bruised from being beaten, carrying a branch of olive with knots of black wool, like the oldest of the Furies, exiting the gates with the immense dignity of misfortune.

⁹⁵ Dominik (2005) 519.

The adjective *sordens* recalls the filthy clothes (*sordes*) worn by Romans in times of literal or figurative mourning. The imagery of female mourning might lie behind the conventional iconography of Furies and their connection to the underworld, as Dunstan Lowe argues,⁹⁶ and as such, Jocasta's sorrow and grief heightens her association with the Furies. Jon Hall has explored the use of *sordes* in Republican political discourse to elicit sympathy for grievances, misfortunes and acts of supplication,⁹⁷ and this might figure in the description of Jocasta. However, as Hall argues, this dramatic use of physical appearance for rhetorical purposes was "open to challenge and ridicule from onlookers" and "always ran the risk of failure":⁹⁸ it is not enough to ensure Jocasta's success in this episode. Like Tydeus in *Thebaid* 2, she carries an olive branch, and this combines with the idea that she is wearing *sordes* to suggest that Jocasta has adopted the costume of a suppliant. However, rather than marking her as an envoy of peace, this prop contributes to the impression of Jocasta as a Fury: Allecto in the guise of Calybe in *Aeneid* 7 has olive entwined in her white hair; Tisiphone in the *Thebaid* carries a branch of yew; and Johannes Smolenaars suggests that the black wool around Jocasta's branch evokes the black lamb sacrificed to the mother of the Furies at *Aen.* 6.249-251.⁹⁹ The use of the phrase *Eumenidum uelut antiquissima* might suggest a particularly Greek version of the Furies, in texts predating the *Aeneid*: whereas Allecto stirs up civil war, the Greek Erinyes are connected specifically with punishing people who transgress against their parents and other blood-relatives;¹⁰⁰ since Polynices has disrespected his father and waged war against his brother, Jocasta's aggression towards him suggests she seeks to avenge these crimes. Jocasta's dishevelled appearance and the way she throws herself violently against the gates – *pectore nudo / claustra aduersa ferit* ('she beats the gates which obstruct her with her bare chest', 7.481-482) – are unbecoming for a woman of her standing,¹⁰¹ and she moves with almost supernatural speed (7.479-481). Her journey across the battlefield might also align her with the Fury, as Robert Simms suggests: "Situated at the periphery of both sides, only Jocasta and the Fury have the freedom to cross lines."¹⁰² Jocasta demands entry to the Argive camp with an aggressive order (issued

⁹⁶ Lowe (2015) 148-150.

⁹⁷ Hall (2014) 40-44.

⁹⁸ Hall (2014) 63.

⁹⁹ Smolenaars (1994) 222-223.

¹⁰⁰ Gilder (1997) 4-5, 9-10.

¹⁰¹ Compare a phrase used at her later (similar) appearance: *non sexus decorisue memor* ('forgetting the dignity of her gender', 11.318). Cowan (2021a) 274-275, discussing the lamenting *matronae* in *Bellum Civile* 2, suggests that torn hair and clothes represent social decline and the destruction of civil war (as well as grief), and the same argument might apply to Jocasta's transgressive appearance here.

¹⁰² Simms (2014) 174.

without any introduction), although her trembling, pleading voice suggests her physical weakness and fear:

tremulisque ululatibus orat
 admitti: 'reseat uiam! rogat impia belli
 mater; in his aliquod ius execrabile castris
 huic utero est.' trepidi uisam expauere manipli
 auditamque magis. 7.482-786

With a shaking, howling voice, she pleads to be admitted: 'Open a path! The wicked mother of war requests it; in this camp, this womb has rights, however hated.' The nervous soldiers were terrified to see her, and even more so to hear her.

The soldiers, who have been primed for fear by the presence of Tisiphone immediately before Jocasta's appearance (7.466-469), are terrified. Readers might also be primed for fear by the alternative literary traditions which suggest that Jocasta died before the Theban war,¹⁰³ such that she enters the text here like a ghost or revenant raised – like the Furies – from the underworld.¹⁰⁴ Jocasta's position as both matron and Fury aligns her with the character of Allecto-as-Calybe in *Aeneid* 7, who persuades and compels Turnus to enter battle; but Jocasta aims for the opposite outcome, so her rage and fearsome presence may be counterproductive. By adopting the violence and aggression of civil war, Jocasta undermines her own attempts to make her sons behave more calmly.

Upon entering the Argive camp, Jocasta demands to be taken to Polynices, whom she terms a *hostis* ('public enemy') at 7.490. They embrace, which seems to comfort Jocasta and suggests that (despite her fearful appearance) their encounter might be affectionate: *raptam lacrimis gaudentibus implet / solaturque tenens* ('he fills the woman he grasps with happy tears and consoles her in his embrace', 7.493-494).¹⁰⁵ Both Euripides and Seneca portray affectionate encounters between Jocasta and Polynices, in which Jocasta sympathises with her son's experience of exile, and this Statian episode begins by suggesting a similarly affectionate reunion. However, Jocasta's words are angry (*fletus anus asperat ira*, 'the old woman makes her

¹⁰³ Smolenaars (2008). Oedipus' oblique reference to Jocasta at 1.72 has also suggested her premature death to some readers.

¹⁰⁴ Dietrich (2015) 307-310 argues that Jocasta is presented as both living and dead; as well as her similarity to a Fury, Dietrich emphasises parallels with the ghosts of Julia in *Bellum Civile* 3 and Laius in *Thebaid* 2. Dietrich also argues (p. 320) that Statius "regularly interjects allusions to differing traditions suggesting her ambiguous status as both living and dead". For the similar characterisation of Oedipus as akin to a corpse or revenant, see McClellan (2019) 219-221.

¹⁰⁵ Hershkowitz (1998) 281 analyses this embrace as an indication of Polynices' incestuous (Oedipal) desires.

weeping bitter with rage', 7.496) and she accuses Polynices of faking his tears and affection for her (7.497-499). She highlights her status as a mother;¹⁰⁶ she urges her son to enter Thebes and negotiate a truce with Eteocles, with her assistance (7.507-510); and she encourages Polynices' companions to think of their own mothers and children (7.519-520). This foregrounds the importance of kinship and family bonds for establishing peace and drawing the soldiers back into their community. Jocasta emphasises that civil war entails an attack on Polynices' family when she suggests that he should capture his mother and sisters now for his triumph (7.516-519), and when she threatens to die immediately if Polynices does not agree to peace: *adnuite, aut natum complexa superstite bello / hic moriar* ('consent, or I will die here, embracing my son, while the war lives on', 7.526-527). Her speech is well argued,¹⁰⁷ and initially seems effective: in lines 7.527-537, both Polynices and his troops look set to surrender. The image of an angry mother asking her son not to attack his own city echoes Veturia's successful persuasion of Coriolanus (Livy 2.40), which suggests that Jocasta might also be successful here.¹⁰⁸ Yet at the same time, ancient authors present other instances of female oratory as transgressive and in breach of social norms. Mary Deminion writes, in an analysis of Valerius Maximus' description of three Roman women who advocated successfully on their own behalf: "The appearance of a woman speaking in the forum was in itself enough to trigger male anxiety, and the contravention of social and gender norms was strongly linked to fears of disaster and unrest."¹⁰⁹ Valerius depicts Gaia Afrania as an inhuman *monstrum* for her public speech,¹¹⁰ and Statius' presentation of Jocasta as a Fury suggests a similar perspective.¹¹¹ The transgressive nature of Jocasta's verbal assault on her son suggests the chaos and disruption of society and speech which is associated with civil war.

Jocasta's encounter with Polynices, and her subsequent conversation with Eteocles in *Thebaid* 11, can be compared with two of Statius' tragic models:

¹⁰⁶ See Simms (2014) 177 on Jocasta's multiple references to motherhood, here and in book 11.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Gilder (1997) 148-150. Vessey (1973) 272 comments that both Jocasta's speech and Tydeus' response are skillfully composed to suit their characters and temperaments.

¹⁰⁸ Lovatt (2010) 81-82, building on Soubiran (1969); see also Voigt (2015) §§ 4-7, who argues that Jocasta's similarities with Veturia emphasise Jocasta's *pietas* and the praiseworthy nature of her attempts to intervene in the war. Leigh (2016) 269-270 argues that Veturia is a model behind the mournful personification of Italy which attempts to prevent Caesar from attacking Rome at the beginning of Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile*; as such, Lucan's passage might also contribute to Statius' presentation of Jocasta, and provide an 'unsuccessful' version of Veturia's address to her son.

¹⁰⁹ Deminion (2020) 200.

¹¹⁰ Deminion (2020) 203-204, commenting on Val. Max. 8.3.2.

¹¹¹ Augoustakis (2010) 62-63 argues that Jocasta's connection with the Furies undermines her sense of maternal presence. At 7.783-784, Jocasta refers to herself as the mother of war, which has a similar effect – cf. Keith (2004) 96, Ganiban (2007) 110-111.

Euripides' *Phoenissae* and Seneca's *Phoenissae*.¹¹² Euripides' Jocasta arranges for her sons to meet within the city of Thebes, and attempts to create a lasting truce through a reasoned philosophical debate, during which Jocasta advocates unsuccessfully for peace and equality. Later, when a messenger informs her that her sons are about to fight, Euripides' Jocasta rushes to the battlefield (with Antigone), but she arrives too late to intervene. Seneca develops the idea of a battlefield intervention further by depicting Jocasta interposing herself between her son's weapons (following Antigone's advice to do so at Sen. *Phoen.* 406).¹¹³ As she prepares for this course of action, Jocasta states that *pietas* should cause her sons to lay down their weapons, but if either son rejects *pietas*, he will have to strike her first (Sen. *Phoen.* 407-411). Her direct appeal to her sons is also based in *pietas*: *dexteris matri date, / date dum piae sunt* ('give your hands to your mother, give them while they are still dutiful', Sen. *Phoen.* 450-451). She attempts to comfort both sons, offers them her protection from each other and encourages Polynices to extend the affection and respect he has for her so that it applies to the whole city. The play is incomplete,¹¹⁴ but since it ends with a restatement of Polynices' anger and Eteocles' autocratic beliefs, it seems that Seneca's Jocasta also fails to broker peace. The methods of persuasion used in Euripides' and Seneca's plays – respectively, rational argument, and appeals to filial devotion and affection – cannot create peace between the brothers; the Statian Jocasta's attempts to evoke fear in her sons suggests her desire to try a different tactic.

Nevertheless, Jocasta's novel attempt at peace-making through fear fails. Tydeus, Polynices' closest companion and the most aggressive man in the Argive army, responds to Jocasta's speech by arguing that Eteocles and the Thebans cannot be trusted.¹¹⁵ In book 2, Tydeus' weakness as an ambassador prevented negotiation with Eteocles; here he prevents Polynices from entering Thebes to negotiate with his brother directly. Once Tydeus starts to change the minds of his troops, the Fury Tisiphone stirs up conflict again – through actions rather than words – by sending two tigers to attack the Argives and cause them to panic (7.564-607).¹¹⁶ This cuts

¹¹² For comparisons of Jocasta's role in these texts see: Vessey (1971a); Vessey (1973) 270-271, 274; Ganiban (2007) 110-111, 160-165; Smolenaars (2008) 223-224; Simms (2014); or Marinis (2015) 356-357.

¹¹³ Statius omits this intervention, although Adrastus intervenes in a similar way in book 11. Simms (2014) argues that this omission plays with the reader's expectations to increase the suspense surrounding the brothers' final duel, and notes (pp. 184-185) that this elision heightens the impression of Jocasta's failure as a negotiator.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Frank (1995) 1-2, 11-12 on this incompleteness.

¹¹⁵ On Tydeus' renewal of hatred here see Fantham (1997) 206.

¹¹⁶ Vessey (1971a) 89-90 draws a comparison with the killing of Silvia's stag (thanks to the actions of Allecto) in *Aeneid* 7, and argues that this infernal intervention is required because Tydeus'

short the conversation between mother and son, and the absence of a response from Polynices – whose only vocalisation is to sob for his mother (7.494-495) – highlights the inability of spoken communication to resolve this situation in favour of either war or peace. The interventions of Tydeus and Tisiphone function as a direct continuation of Jocasta's angry speech and frightful appearance. Jocasta, who has unwittingly invoked the Fury's image and terrible power, flees in fear, worried that the new outbreak of battle will cause her son and his men to turn against her: *fugit exertos Iocasta per hostes / iam non ausa preces* ('Jocasta flees through the enemies spread around her and already she no longer dared attempt prayers', 7.609-610). Jocasta's verbal aggression and frightening appearance is outdone by the threatening presence of the soldiers around her, and she reverts to silence; similarly, her use of angry words to motivate Polynices is outdone by the extreme rage of Tydeus and Tisiphone.

Menoceus' suicide

The next significant attempt to bring an end to the civil war occurs within the walls of Thebes itself, as Capaneus prepares to attack the city in book 10. The terrified Thebans within turn against each other, thereby doubling civil war and bringing it into the city (*Bellum intrasse putes*, 'you would think that War was inside', 10.560), as they clash over the best course of action: *nec non ancipitis pugnat sententia uulgi / discordesque serit motus* ('the opinions of the divided crowd warred and sowed discordant emotions', 10.580-581).¹¹⁷ Many Thebans wish to side with Polynices against Eteocles, while others fear his violent conquest (10.581-588). This demonstrates that the discord of civil war disturbs the bonds between friends and neighbours. During this chaos, the people seek guidance from the prophet Tiresias, who calls for the sacrifice of the youngest descendant of the Spartoi, in propitiation for Cadmus' slaying of Mars' serpent (10.610-615). The myth of the Spartoi is one of autochthony and conflict within a state which – like other Theban myths – highlights questions around family lineage and closeness or conflict between relatives;¹¹⁸ and the scenes which follow this prophecy draw out tensions between public and private (domestic or familial) duties and modes of communication. Menoeceus' self-sacrifice on the walls of Thebes demonstrates that even efforts to end civil war can tear families apart.

speech alone could not suffice to convince Polynices: this points to the power of violent action over speech.

¹¹⁷ Williams (1972) 101 notes an echo of the *discordia* of *Aen.* 12.583, when Aeneas turns to attack Latinus' city.

¹¹⁸ See Bernstein (2008) 171-172 for the connection between the Spartoi and civil war.

When Creon overhears Tiresias and realises that the prophecy requires the death of his son, he receives this terrifying news like a violent blow:

grandem subiti cum fulminis ictum,
non secus ac torta traiectus cuspide pectus,
accipit exanimis sentitque Menoecea posci.
monstrat enim suadetque timor; stupet anxius alto
corda metu glaciant pater. 10.618-622

Breathlessly he receives the great blow of this sudden lightning bolt like a twisted spear-tip piercing his chest, and he perceives that Menoeceus is demanded. For his fear showed and persuaded him of this; the anxious father falls silent and deep fear chills his chest.

The imagery of the lightning bolt parallels Capaneus' death later in this book, and suggests that Creon feels he is being punished by the gods; the imagery of the spear positions Creon as a victim of this civil war. His fear silences him for a moment, and when he regains his capacity for speech, he attempts to silence Tiresias in turn:

mox plenum Phoebos uatem et celerare iubentem,
nunc humilis genua amplectens, nunc ora canentis,
nequiquam reticere rogat; iam Fama sacratam
uocem amplexa uolat, clamantque oracula Thebae. 10.624-627

Soon he asks the priest, who is full of Apollo and ordering hasty action, to be silent – grasping now his knees in supplication, now his mouth as he chanted – but in vain; already Rumour seizes the sacred voice and flies around, and Thebes shouts the prophecy.

The text focuses on gestures over speech here, as Creon – despite his high status – debases himself and takes on the position of suppliant; the reference to grasping Tiresias' mouth might suggest that Creon attempts to literally close or cover it.¹¹⁹ However, the public nature of Tiresias' prophecy makes it impossible to stop this message from spreading. A private individual such as Creon (who is not yet king, and is acting here as a concerned father) cannot limit or control this public speech.

Menoceus is informed of this prophecy by the personification of Virtus. She changes her appearance in order to aid her persuasive efforts, although her fierce visage and large steps hint at her true, terrifying nature (10.639-646).¹²⁰ Her disguise (as the priestess Manto) and use of violent supernatural powers to force

¹¹⁹ Williams (1972) 105.

¹²⁰ Agri (2020) 132-137 explores this transformation as an act of cross-dressing which highlights the linguistic tensions in *uirtus*, a grammatically-feminine noun for masculine behaviour which is typically personified as a goddess, and the moral confusion around *uirtus* in civil war.

Menoceus to act according to her wishes (10.661-677) aligns her to Virgil's Allecto in her attack on Turnus in *Aeneid* 7.¹²¹ Dalida Agri emphasises Virtus' deception as she tricks Menoeceus into a pointless death,¹²² and this theme of deceit recurs throughout the episode. Menoeceus is described here as like a cypress which catches fire after being struck by lightning, an image which recalls the description of Creon after Tiresias' prophecy and ensures that the pained reaction of Menoeceus' father remains at the front of the reader's mind. Determined to die as requested, Menoeceus heads towards the city, where he has an awkward and unplanned encounter with his father:

iamque iter ad muros cursu festinus anhelō
 obtinet et miseros gaudet uitasse parentes,
 cum genitor – steterunt ambo et uox haesit utrique,
 deiectaeque genae. tandem pater ante profatus. 10.686-689

And he is already completing his journey to the walls, rushing and panting as he runs, and is happy to have avoided his pitiable parents, when his father is there – they both stood there with their voices stuck in their throats and their faces hanging in sorrow. At last the father speaks first.

They meet by chance, and find it difficult to talk: there is a clear delay before Creon begins to speak, and Menoeceus, who had hoped to avoid saying farewell to his father, cannot look him in the eye (10.692-693). The unexpectedness and awkwardness of this meeting is highlighted by the shocking use of aposiopesis in line 10.688, which Deryck Williams describes as “most striking” and “extraordinary” because it occurs in narrative rather than direct speech.¹²³ Menoeceus seems concerned with public speech that helps to construct a public image of heroism, as will be demonstrated by the last words he delivers atop the city walls before his self-sacrifice (10.756-773), and has no interest in engaging in more private and intimate conversations with his parents.

Creon attempts to persuade Menoeceus not to listen to or believe Tiresias' prophecy (10.670-703) in a speech full of pathos which, in Williams' assessment, contains “all the power which Statius' rhetorical skill can give it”.¹²⁴ Creon

¹²¹ As observed by Fantham (1995); Ganiban (2007) 142-143 also analyses the problematic models for the personification of Virtus, while Feeney (1991) 383 notes Virtus' association with personifications of negative emotions in books 4 and 7.

¹²² Agri (2010) 152-153.

¹²³ Williams (1972) 113-114, noting that Statius uses aposiopesis noticeably more frequently than Virgil; aposiopesis is also discussed by Dominik (1994) 262.

¹²⁴ Williams (1972) 113.

attributes Tiresias' prophecy to a treacherous plot by Eteocles: this shows the fear and distrust which permeates a city torn apart by familial conflict, and a concern that those in power are liable to manipulate and deceive. He states that he would not begrudge Menoeceus a glorious death in battle, but does not wish his son to die by suicide for no reason (10.713-718): as such, he advocates for a course of action that is more in line with a Roman *deuotio* (a practice which also lies behind Turnus' actions in *Aeneid* 12).¹²⁵ Creon also grasps his son, as if holding him back from an act of self-harm. Nevertheless, Menoeceus is unmoved by this emotional and rhetorical demonstration:

sic colla manusque tenebat
 implicitus; sed nec lacrimae nec uerba mouebant
 dis uotum iuuenem; quin et monstrantibus illis
 fraude patrem tacita subit auertitque timorem. 10.718-721

Like this he was grasping his neck and wrapping his hands about him; but neither tears nor words moved the youth vowed to the gods; in fact, even in the face of such signs, he supported his father with secret deception and turned his fear to a different target.

Menoceus is not swayed by his father's speech, gestures or outpouring of emotion, and rather than responding with an honest farewell or attempt to justify his planned course of action, he offers the disturbing lie that he is only entering the city to find a healer for his supposedly wounded brother Haemon (10.722-734). Menoeceus departs without finishing the conversation, an indication of the lack of closure in what will be the final encounter between father and son: *sic imperfecta locutus / effugit* ('he spoke these incomplete words and fled', 10.734-735). Rather than comforting his father, Menoeceus doubles the worry that Creon feels for his sons, in a way that aligns with the poem's interest in duplication and family conflict in a civil war context.¹²⁶ The description of Creon's thoughts – *pietas incerta uagatus / discordantque metus* ('duty is uncertain and wavers, and his fears clash', 10.736-737) – reflects the way that his concern is divided between Menoeceus and Haemon; it also indicates that this is a situation in which *pietas* lacks any fixed and certain meaning.¹²⁷ When Menoeceus lies to his father, he shows that even close

¹²⁵ Heinrich (1999) 184-185.

¹²⁶ Cf. Bernstein (2013) 242: "The episode thereby replays on a smaller scale the same fraternal competition and conflict between generations, driven by susceptibility to the destructive passions, that causes the civil war at Thebes."

¹²⁷ Agri (2010) 155-158 notes that, while Virgilian *pietas* combines duty to parents with duty towards the gods and one's homeland, Menoeceus is made to choose between these two types of *pietas* (and sides with the latter).

relations cannot be trusted, and demonstrates once again the overlap between political and personal, civic and familial concerns.

Menoceus' self-sacrifice earns respect from the Thebans and Argives alike, and there is a lull in the fighting to allow his corpse to receive appropriate honours. Yet this is short-lived – *repetunt mox bella peractis / laudibus* ('when this praise is complete, they soon seek battle again', 10.790-791) – and far from creating a lasting peace, Menoeceus' death motivates Capaneus to attack the city walls in order to prove that Menoeceus died in vain (10.845-847). Capaneus claims to be acting on the orders of Virtus, the same goddess who pushed Menoeceus towards suicide, and this raises questions about the role of the gods in this episode. Although Jupiter does eventually kill Capaneus, the other gods cannot persuade him to do so (10.897) until Capaneus has personally insulted the king of the gods (at 10.904-905). This suggests that Menoeceus' death has only a limited impact on the narrative and the course of the war. Alan Heinrich argues that "the episode begins as if it will form an integral unit of the plot, only to end as yet another digression, stripped of its relevance to the main sequence of events",¹²⁸ and positions Menoeceus' death as "a failed *devotio*, one distorted into a pure spectacle of self-destruction".¹²⁹ Randall Ganiban makes a similar point through comparison with Euripides' Menoeceus and Livy's Decius Mus, two key models for Statius' passage: "Within the terms of the narrative itself, Menoeceus' death does not achieve its larger aim... To say that Menoeceus' event is a victorious moment in this text is to read the *Thebaid* but to import the meaning of the self-sacrifices in Euripides and Livy."¹³⁰ As Neil Bernstein notes, in an analysis of the inefficacy of ritual murder and ritual suicide in the *Thebaid*, rituals are intended as a method of communication between mortals and gods;¹³¹ as such, if Menoeceus' death has no real impact on the narrative, it constitutes communication failure in its own right.

Immediately after Menoeceus' death and the renewal of battle, Statius turns his attention (for the first time) to Menoeceus' mother Eurydice, whose extreme sorrow is described at 10.791-826. Menoeceus makes no reference to her feelings

¹²⁸ Heinrich (1999) 166.

¹²⁹ Heinrich (1999) 182; see also Dominik (1994) 107-109 and McGuire (1997) 197-198 on the inadequacies of this self-sacrifice.

¹³⁰ Ganiban (2007) 139. For comparisons with Euripides and Livy that produce more optimistic interpretations of Menoeceus' death, see Vessey (1971b) and Bremmer (2014).

¹³¹ Bernstein (2013) 235. I agree with Bernstein's deeply pessimistic interpretation of Menoeceus' self-sacrifice (p. 244): "Self-interested prophecy and deceptive divine intervention taint the heroism of Menoeceus' suicide, and the deed itself is both ritually inefficacious and prone to manipulation by Menoeceus' opportunistic father. Menoeceus' suicide spurs on rather than forestalls the fratricidal duel of Eteocles and Polynices, marked repeatedly in the *Thebaid* as the worst of all crimes." The failure of this ritual can be connected to Statius' wider portrayal of the gods, and particular Jupiter, as indifferent to human suffering and unwilling to hear the messages of mortals.

when preparing for his suicide, and when she does enter the text, there is a sense that he has abandoned and forgotten her. Eurydice describes Menoeceus as a *deutumque caput* ('consecrated head', 10.794), a phrase which allows Statius to make an explicit connection to the Roman *deutio* designed to produce victory and salvation;¹³² but she sees this as a curse and punishment, rather than a service to the city that proves her son's heroism. At 10.795-801, she complains that, unlike Jocasta, she is innocent of incest and other such behaviour, but has nevertheless been punished by the loss of her son (10.795-801). By contrasting her position with that of her sister-in-law, Eurydice creates a comparison between Menoeceus and Eteocles that highlights their kinship, and suggests that Menoeceus' treatment of his parents (by dying without saying goodbye) is akin to Eteocles' conflicts with his own immediate family. Eurydice then blames Menoeceus for the effect that his death has had on her:

tu, saeue Menoeceu,
 tu miseram ante omnes properasti extinguere matrem.
 unde hic mortis amor? quae sacra insania menti? 10.802-804

You, cruel Menoeceus, you have hastened to kill your mother before everyone. Where is this love of death from? What is this holy sickness of your mind?

By addressing her son directly in this way, Eurydice highlights his absence. She answers her own rhetorical questions by complaining that Menoeceus has inherited his self-destructive tendencies from a paternal line that can be traced back to the Spartoi and their drive towards civil conflict (10.804-809). His method of suicide suggests a reconnection with the earth which birthed his autochthonous ancestors, and Alison Keith has argued that this exacerbates Menoeceus' separation from Eurydice (whose role as mother is replaced and sidelined).¹³³ Menoeceus' suicide is refigured as matricide;¹³⁴ the use of *ante omnes* might suggest that the public nature of Menoeceus' suicide only amplifies Eurydice's grief and pain.

Eurydice's weeping and complaints are cut short by her companions who escort her back into the house, in a strong echo of the silencing of Euryalus' mother – who also complains that she has been abandoned by a son who has died without

¹³² As Bremmer (2014) 201 indicates, the poet's earlier description of Menoeceus as *dis uotum* ('vowed to the gods', 10.720) has the same effect.

¹³³ Keith (2004) 60-63.

¹³⁴ In the same way, the deaths of Eteocles and Polynices cause the suicide of their mother Jocasta, as Simms (2014) 185-186 observes.

saying farewell – at *Aen.* 9.500-502,¹³⁵ but her utter sorrow and hopelessness after the death of her son are still apparent:

non illa diem, non uerba precantum
 respicit aut uisus flectit tellure relictos,
 iam uocis, iam mentis inops. 10.818-820

She does not look at daylight or at anyone who addresses her or turn
 her abandoned gaze from the earth; already she lacks her voice,
 already her mind.

The silencing of a grieving mother who might otherwise distract from martial exploits is familiar from Virgil, but Statius supplies an additional element: Eurydice's lack of motion or speech indicates an extreme loss of self after Menoeceus' self-sacrifice, such that not even lament is possible for her. The gaze fixed on the ground contrasts with Menoeceus' choice to scale the city walls, and his spirit's upwards movement after death, to focus instead on the lower level where his body came to rest. Any death acts as a barrier to communication with loved ones (except in cases where necromantic rites or katabases are possible), and Menoeceus cannot comfort his mother after his death;¹³⁶ but the process of mourning helps to maintain some relationship between the living and the dead.¹³⁷ As Eurydice will not engage in conversation, and will not look up to where Menoeceus made his final speech (and where his spirit continued to speak to Jupiter), there is no communication available between the mourner and the dead: Eurydice lacks the healthy grieving process which would reintegrate her into the society of the living.

In book 11, Creon's grief for the death of his son (11.264-267) leads him to accost Eteocles,¹³⁸ whose advisors have just attempted to persuade him not to fight Polynices (11.257-262). The scene resembles the beginning of *Aeneid* 12, in which Turnus' maternal aunt Amata and her husband Latinus attempt to dissuade him

¹³⁵ Williams (1972) 120-125 discusses Eurydice's appearance here, and the Virgilian models for this scene. Euryalus' mother might provide inspiration for the conflict between types of *pietas* mentioned in relation to Menoeceus' suicide above: at *Aen.* 9.493-494, she asks the Rutulians to kill her as an act of *pietas*, and as Egan (1980) 166 observes, there is irony in this request because "if the Rutulians actually performed this compassionate deed of *pietas*... they would simultaneously be committing an act of the most outrageous brutality".

¹³⁶ The image of a grieving parent who is unable to communicate with a dead child recurs at the end of book 11, when Oedipus wishes to reconnect with his sons after their deaths: see Anzinger (2007) 285-287 on this episode.

¹³⁷ See Panoussi (2019) chapter 6 for the way that funeral rites demarcate the dead from the living and reintegrate mourners into society, and the frequent failure to enforce this separation in literary depictions of grief.

¹³⁸ Heinrich (1999) 190.

from single combat with Aeneas: the fact that Eteocles receives similar advice from his companions rather than his relatives indicates the extent to which this soon-to-be-fratricidal king is isolated from his family. Creon, Eteocles' maternal uncle, instead persuades him – through an angry and insulting speech which blames Eteocles for Menoeceus' death – to risk his life in a duel with Polynices.¹³⁹ Eteocles dismisses Creon's apparent grief as a ruse designed to help him obtain the throne for himself (11.298-308),¹⁴⁰ and the narrative offers some endorsement of Eteocles' accusation, since when Creon does become king, his grief fades away in favour of a new lust for power: *iam flectere patrem / incipit atque datis abolere Menoecea regnis* ('already he begins to bend his position as father and to erase Menoeceus from the kingdom given to him', 11.659-660).¹⁴¹ This encounter between Eteocles and Creon emphasises the latter's cruelty and hatred towards his kin, which will lead to his refusal to bury Polynices' Argive allies and, ultimately, to the renewal of warfare in *Thebaid* 12 – all of which results from Menoeceus' death.¹⁴²

David Vessey writes of Eurydice's grief: "Not unnaturally, Menoeceus' mother cannot appreciate the triumphant aspect of her son's death; she sees only its injustice... Hers is the human view, the rational analysis, and she is thus prevented from grasping the nobility and greatness of her son's act."¹⁴³ This reading can be easily connected to communication failure, since Vessey views Eurydice as misinterpreting her son's final acts; but I think that Vessey misses the point of this scene. Eurydice's human perspective may be limited, but it represents the way that Statius' readers might realistically interpret the premature death (by suicide or other means) of their own loved ones; the attention which Statius lavishes on this scene grants additional weight and significance to her interpretation. As Charles McNelis writes, when discussing the end of the Theban war: "Collective benefits do not compensate for personal loss, and traditional motivations and benefits of

¹³⁹ Marinis (2015) 354 points out that Eteocles' decision to fight – despite his initial hesitation – is not affected by the Furies here. This adds to the sense that it is achieved primarily through Creon's speech, and the inherent anger which it rouses.

¹⁴⁰ As Venini (1970) 87 notes, Creon and Eteocles are equally suspicious of each other's motives and actions.

¹⁴¹ Vessey (1971b) 242 presents Creon's tyranny as proof that he has "failed to learn the lesson" of Menoeceus' death; to put this another way, we might say that Menoeceus fails to teach his father anything through his self-silencing self-sacrifice. Pollman (2004) 115 understands Creon's funeral speech for his son as "a performance by a powerful ruler who intends to manipulate the public politically and emotionally rather than a true and authentic mirroring of his own internal state". Similarly, Augoustakis (2016a) 293-298 interprets Menoeceus' funeral as a way for Creon to strengthen his own political power.

¹⁴² Lovatt (1999) 144.

¹⁴³ Vessey (1971b) 240. Dominik (1994) 129-130 also argues that Eurydice fails to understand the nobility of Menoeceus' self-sacrifice.

epic heroism are not possible in the context of civil war.”¹⁴⁴ Statius undermines any higher message which might be attached to Menoeceus' death by foregrounding the pain and suffering which results from it amongst his closest relatives. Menoeceus' self-sacrifice, far from healing the divisions in his own family and the wider community which have caused this civil war (and the discord within Thebes that precedes Tiresias' prophecy), destroys his mother and hardens his father's heart, and makes reconciliation and peace more difficult to achieve. The episode demonstrates Statius' focus on families and communities torn apart by civil conflict, and shows how the absence of healthy communication creates a vicious cycle of fear, insecurity, hatred and aggression.

Interventions in the final duel

Thebaid 11 contains a number of attempts – by Adrastus, Jocasta, Antigone and the personification of Pietas – to end the Theban war without a confrontation between its two principal figures. In this section, I will analyse the types of appeal which these attempts privilege, and the reasons behind their ultimate failure. Several of these scenes foreground references to family bonds as a persuasive tool; but since this conflict is based on familial conflict and a desire for fratricide, such appeals have little effect.

Polynices initially considers retreating, until the Furies inspire him with a renewed desire to fight his brother. Polynices tells Adrastus that he is committed to returning to battle (11.154-192), and states clearly that he cannot be persuaded to change his mind:

desiste morari,
nec poteris. non si atra parens miseraeque sorores
in media arma cadant, non si ipse ad bella ruenti
obstet et extinctos galeae pater ingerat orbes,
deficiam. 11.169-173

Stop delaying me – you cannot. I would not falter even if my gloomy mother and my sorrowful sisters were to fall in the middle of the battle, not if my father himself were to stand in my way as I rush into battle and force his ruined eyes upon my helmet.

Paola Venini notes that *desiste morari* echoes Turnus' words to Juturna at *Aen.* 12.676, *absiste morari*, with the same meaning and in the same metrical position;¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ McNelis (2007) 148.

¹⁴⁵ Venini (1970) 54.

but whereas Turnus' speech comes as the Fury's power over him wanes and he recognises that his death is fated,¹⁴⁶ Polynices' speech occurs at a moment of heightened madness. Polynices implies that his immediate family members would have the greatest likelihood of dissuading him from attacking Thebes, and in this he seems to echo Tisiphone's concerns, expressed to Megaera, about the kind of interventions which might delay or prevent the final duel:

ambo faciles nostrique; sed anceps
uulgus et adfatus matris blandamque precatu
Antigonen timeo, paulum ne nostra retardent
consilia. 11.102-105

Both brothers are pliant and belong to us; but I fear the wavering
crowd and their mother's speech and Antigone who is charming in
her entreaties, in case they slow our plans a little.

Nevertheless, Polynices states that he could even resist the words and gestures of his close kin. He also acknowledges the dangers which would be involved in these non-combatants entering the battlefield to urge peace, which could easily prove deadly (as the phrase *in media arma cadant* suggests). As I have noted above, Euripides' *Phoenissae* depicts Jocasta and Antigone entering the battlefield to intervene (although they arrive too late to do so), while in Seneca's *Phoenissae*, Jocasta does stand between Eteocles and Polynices on the battlefield. Polynices' reference to such a scene makes it seem almost as if he is aware of his place in a literary tradition,¹⁴⁷ and it is as if his knowledge of past methods of persuasion within this tradition has inoculated him against such tactics. Polynices rejects attempts to talk and negotiate precisely because, intertextually, he feels he has participated in so many failed conversations before.

Polynices demonstrates his determination to die through his farewell to his absent wife and his wish for Adrastus to look after his ashes (11.187-192). This might recall his intention to end his life after the death of Tydeus, a situation which Adrastus successfully de-escalated (9.76-81).¹⁴⁸ Adrastus also attempts to calm him here: *coeperat et leni senior mulcere furentem / adloquio* ('the old man had begun to soothe the raging Polynices with gentle speech', 11.196-197). However, in this case Adrastus is not given a chance to persuade Polynices, who might have been

¹⁴⁶ See Hershkowitz (1998) 70-76, analysing *Aen.* 12.665-671.

¹⁴⁷ For other instances of this kind of literary self-awareness in the *Thebaid*, see the various examples in Feeney (1991) 340-344 or Lovatt (1999) 134-135 on Creon.

¹⁴⁸ Note, however, that there are other points in the epic (including the games of *Thebaid* 6) where Adrastus demonstrates powerless and ineffective speech: cf. Lovatt (2005) 291-295, 299-305.

amenable to his argument.¹⁴⁹ Instead, Adrastus is silenced by the Fury, who puts a helmet on his head to stop him from speaking and then lifts him onto his horse and sends it across the plain (11.197-204).¹⁵⁰ This image of a helmet acting as a barrier to paternal communication (and physical affection) has precedents in Hector's encounter with Astyanax at *Il.* 6.466-470 and Aeneas' awkward embrace of Ascanius at *Aen.* 12.432-434, discussed above in chapter 2. Polynices emphasises the importance of face-to-face entreaties and supplications for attempts at peace-making: Adrastus, who is the only person in a position to address Polynices directly without risking his life by entering the Argive camp, is physically removed from the scene to prevent this kind of communication.

After her failed attempt in book 7, Jocasta does not attempt to persuade Polynices again, even though Tydeus, the previous barrier to successful communication from mother to son, has been removed from the epic. Instead, she challenges Eteocles as he arms himself for the final duel:

at genetrix, primam funestae sortis ut amens
 expauit famam (nec tarde credidit), ibat
 scissa comam uultusque et pectore nuda cruento,
 non sexus decorisue memor: Pentheia qualis
 mater ad insani scandeat culmina montis,
 promissum saeuo caput adlatura Lyaeo.
 non comites, non ferre piae uestigia natae
 aequa ualent: tantum miserae dolor ultimus addit
 robur, et exangues crudescunt luctibus anni. 11.315-323

But the mother, driven mad and terrified by the first rumours of her sons' fatal destiny (she quickly believed it), went out with her hair and face torn and a naked, bloody chest, forgetting her gender and her dignity: just like Pentheus' mother when she climbed to the peak of the mountain of madness, ready to offer the promised head of her son to savage Bacchus. Her companions and dutiful daughters were not strong enough to match her steps: this final grief adds so much strength to the unfortunate woman, and her greying years grow more violent as a result of her grief.

Jocasta's hair and face and breasts are torn, she has no regard for propriety, and she outruns her daughters and companions. The similarities with *Thebaid* 7 are clear, which means that – although this is not stated explicitly – the Jocasta of book 11 might also resemble a Fury. Indeed, Jocasta's opening reference to the Furies

¹⁴⁹ As Venini (1970) 62 suggests.

¹⁵⁰ Venini (1970) 62-63 notes the extreme violence and physicality of this intervention.

(11.329-330) ensures that her earlier characterisation is present in the reader's mind.¹⁵¹ Although Jocasta is motivated primarily by concern for her children, Statius compares her to her ancestor Agave, the maenad who tore her son Pentheus apart: spectators of this scene misinterpret Jocasta's appearance, fear and anxiety as anger, aggression and a capacity to kill her children. Her frightening appearance delays Eteocles' arming process and entry onto the battlefield:

ipse metu famulumque expalluit omnis
coetus, et oblatam retro dedit armiger hastam. 11.327-328

Eteocles and his crowd of enslaved attendants grew pale with fear,
and his weapon-bearer put back the spear he had just offered.

Jocasta berates her son, with a series of short exclamations and rhetorical questions which challenge his decision to fight. Again, she seems slightly supernatural: she 'appears suddenly out of nowhere' (*subito cum apparuit*, 11.326) like a spirit or apparition, and she promises to stand in his way as 'an unlucky auspice and monstrous image of crimes' (*auspicium infelix scelerumque immanis imago*, 11.340). Her terrifying aspect is augmented by the violence of her words, particularly the suggestion that Eteocles must trample her hair, breasts and womb underfoot if he wishes to ride into battle (11.341-342): this may allude to Agrippina the Younger's instructions to her assassins to stab her in her womb (as later recorded at Tac. *Ann.* 14.8).¹⁵² In *Thebaid* 7, Jocasta's terrifying appearance and emphasis on civil war as a matricidal attack almost persuaded Polynices to lay down his weapons, and Eteocles has no Tydeus to convince him otherwise: there is a tantalising suggestion here that, for once, verbal and visual communication may be effective enough to broker peace.

Before Eteocles' reaction can be depicted, the narrative shifts towards Antigone, who climbs the walls of Thebes to address Polynices on the battlefield below: this allows her to be seen and heard without finding herself in the dangerous position of book 7 when she and Jocasta were surrounded by enemies, and allows her to stay in a space that is conventionally appropriate for epic women.¹⁵³ Antigone is not hindered by any sense of propriety – *nec casta retardat / uirginitas* ('her pure maidenhood does not slow her', 11.355-356) – and her willingness to speak on military matters here might result from the breakdown of

¹⁵¹ Cf. Vessey (1971a) 88 and Ganiban (2007) 165.

¹⁵² Cf. Mayer (1981) 21, who uses a comparison with Agrippina's death to argue that the suicide of Seneca's Jocasta – who stabs her own womb at Sen. *Oed.* 1036-1039 for the crime of bearing Oedipus – is not unrealistic.

¹⁵³ Augoustakis (2010) 66-68.

social norms in this fratricidal civil war.¹⁵⁴ It also creates a sense that Antigone is reacting to her previous literary incarnations. For instance, Euripides' Antigone is reluctant to join Jocasta in her entreaties to Eteocles and Polynices on the battlefield because she is ashamed to be seen in public (αἰδοῦμεθ' ὄχλον, Eur. *Phoen.* 1276); but after the deaths of her brothers and mother, the grieving Antigone says she will no longer cover her skin, her hair or her blush (Eur. *Phoen.* 1485-1492). The boldness of Statius' Antigone before this climactic battle might be drawn from the end of Euripides' play, where she is increasingly independent after Jocasta's death; here it is transferred to a point when Jocasta is still alive.¹⁵⁵ Antigone's speech at 11.363-382 emphasises her closeness to and kinship with Polynices: she asks him to look towards her and realise that she is not his enemy; she encourages him to remember loyalty (*fides*); she stresses that he is her brother (the vocative *germane* at 11.367) and she is his sister (*soror* at 11.372), and that she wishes to see him with affection rather than hatred in his eyes (11.372-375); and she emphasises how she previously defended Polynices from Oedipus' anger (11.378-379). At 11.375-376 and again at 11.380-382, she reassures Polynices that Jocasta will convince Eteocles not to fight him: this reassurance will soon prove false, but it highlights that negotiation and reconciliation are only possible when both parties consent and when both view the conflict and their wider moral values in the same way. Throughout her speech, Antigone foregrounds her desire for family unity, which builds on Polynices' display of affection for his family in book 7: she has learned from her own experiences within the epic narrative. Antigone and Jocasta use different approaches in their attempts to dissuade the warring brothers from fighting, and Antigone seems more effective; but ultimately, neither woman is able to prevent the inevitable fratricidal duel.

Antigone's speech is almost successful, until Eteocles appears on the battlefield:

his paulum furor elanguescere dictis
 coeperat, obstreperet quamquam atque obstaret Erinys;
 iam summissa manus, lente iam flectit habenas,
 iam tacet; erumpunt gemitus, lacrimasque fatetur
 cassis; hebent irae, pariterque et abire nocentem

¹⁵⁴ Anzinger (2007) 297-300. Hershkowitz (1998) 290-292 argues that the frenzied movement of both Jocasta and Antigone in these attempts to intervene shows that they have appropriated the madness of civil war. Lovatt (2013) 244-246 notes the contrast between Antigone's bold and transgressive actions here and her relative passivity in the teichoscopia of book 7.

¹⁵⁵ The eponymous heroine of Sophocles' *Antigone* is also daring and outspoken: Jocasta dies before the action of Sophocles' play, which again suggests that Antigone's boldness results from her grief.

et uenisse pudet: subito cum matre repulsa
 Eumenis eiecit fractis Eteoclea portis. 11.382-388

With these words, Polynices' rage had begun to ebb slightly, although the Fury was roaring and opposing him; already his hand drops, already he handles the chariot reins more slowly, already he is silent; he groans, and his helmet reveals tears; anger is blunted, and it shames him to have left and returned with harm: when suddenly the Fury throws back his mother and hurls Eteocles through the broken gates.

The gradual process of Polynices' anger abating is described in detail: there are physical signs of Polynices' emotions, as he begins to drop out of a martial stance and begins to cry, as well as verbal signs, both silence (which shows that he has no rebuttal) and wordless groans. Antigone only fails to persuade Polynices to stop fighting because Jocasta fails to persuade Eteocles, and this failure results from the violent, physical intervention of the Fury. Euripides and Seneca both show Eteocles offering a counterargument to his mother; Statius does not present any such rebuttal, suggesting that (like Polynices) he has none. Silke Anzinger's analysis of Statian silence is particularly relevant here: "Die stummen Szenen offenbaren Gefühle – bei kritischer Betrachtung offenbart das Schweigen aber auch eine Leerstelle, den Mangel an Worten, an überzeugenden Argumenten und praktikablen Alternativen zu dem *nefas*, auf das die Handlung unausweichlich zusteuert."¹⁵⁶ Eteocles' silence reveals the effectiveness of Jocasta's persuasive appeal, but this does not change his course of action. In a sense, Antigone's speech can also be considered a success: her appeal to filial affection is able to break down Polynices' defences and elicit regret, in a way that aggression would not (as shown by his response to Eteocles' aggressive speech, 11.389-395). Tisiphone feared that Jocasta and Antigone might delay (rather than prevent) the final duel, and this is exactly what they do.¹⁵⁷ Yet these interventions are not enough to prevent the final duel: they are overcome by the wider context, in which supernatural and psychological forces (and the established narrative of the myth) push the war on to its fratricidal conclusion.

As Eteocles and Polynices are about to meet, Adrastus attempts a second intervention on the battlefield. The scene is given a particular level of theatricality by the poet's emphasis on spectatorship: although the gods turn away, the Theban

¹⁵⁶ Anzinger (2007) 261: 'Scenes of silence reveal emotions – but when viewed critically, silence also reveals an empty space, the lack of words, convincing arguments and practical alternatives to the *nefas* that the action is inevitably heading towards.'

¹⁵⁷ As McNelis (2007) 145 observes.

people and the ghosts of Tartarus watch in horror (11.416-423).¹⁵⁸ Adrastus places himself between the two brothers, much like Jocasta in Seneca's *Phoenissae*, but Statius suggests he is unsuitable for this kind of intervention:

ipse quidem et regnis multum et uenerabilis aeuo.
 sed quid apud tales, quis nec sua pignora curae,
 exter honos? 11.427-429

Indeed, he greatly deserves respect both for his royalty and his age.
 But what effect can a foreign reputation have on such men, who have
 no care for their own relatives?

William Dominik has argued that Adrastus' failure to create peace between the brothers demonstrates the power of the gods, rather than Adrastus' own weakness,¹⁵⁹ but there is more to this scene than that. Adrastus has the authority which comes from age and social status, and he has a record of helping to avoid bloodshed,¹⁶⁰ but he cannot appeal to the brothers as powerfully as a close relative could.¹⁶¹ Adrastus attempts to establish kin relationships of both combatants, which also demonstrates the belief that appeals to kinship might work here. This tactic highlights again that even with the involvement of a foreign (Argive) army, this remains a (civil) war between relatives:

te deprecor, hostis
 (quamquam, haec ira sinat, nec tu mihi sanguine longe),
 te, gener, et iubeo... 11.431-433

I beg you, my enemy (although, if this anger were to allow it, you
 would not be far from my bloodline), and you, son-in-law, I order...

Adrastus notes the paradox of calling his daughter's brother-in-law his enemy, and attempts to impose a degree of paternal authority on Polynices; but as the narrator has noted, neither brother cares much for family bonds at this stage. This argument for kinship must be particularly meaningless for Eteocles, who states at 2.435-436 that he is proud to call Oedipus his father, and who cannot become closer to Adrastus' bloodline without widowing (and marrying) one of his daughters.

¹⁵⁸ See Bernstein (2004) for the operation of spectatorship and the gods' refusal to spectate in this final battle, and Lovatt (2013) 76-77 for the significance of Jupiter averting his gaze.

¹⁵⁹ Dominik (1994) 215.

¹⁶⁰ Bernstein (2004) 69-70 notes how Adrastus' presence facilitates peace between Polynices and Tydeus in book 1, between the Argives and the Nemean king Lycurgus in book 5, and between Capaneus and the boxer Alcidamas in book 6.

¹⁶¹ Jocasta suggests that this will be the case when she tells Eteocles (at 11.348-352) that Polynices is only attacking the city because, in comparison to the entreaties of a mother or sister, Adrastus' speech cannot dissuade him.

Adrastus offers to make Polynices king of Argos, but Polynices is now motivated by a desire for fratricide rather than by thoughts of power (as he states at 11.507-508). The combination of a request and an order echoes Jocasta's address to Polynices in book 7,¹⁶² and might remind Polynices of that earlier – more powerful, but still unsuccessful – persuasive attempt. Adrastus soon flees the battlefield entirely (11.435-446),¹⁶³ abnegating responsibility and refusing to be a spectator: in this he resembles Virgil's Latinus (*Aen.* 7.591-600), Lucan's Pompey (*BC* 7.677-701)¹⁶⁴ and Statius' Jupiter (*Theb.* 11.134-135). The brothers do not react, but continue to ride against each other as if he had never appeared: as such, Adrastus' attempt to create peace seems far weaker than the attempts of Jocasta or Antigone. Despite his status as a ruler and *paterfamilias*, Adrastus is unable to check civil war and bloodshed once it has been unleashed. His failure here suggests that social status and age have no meaning for, and no ability to persuade, those whose disrespect for social norms means that they are willing to engage in civil war to seize power.

Once the duel has commenced, Statius offers one last chance at peace. Lines 11.456-496 present an attempted intervention from the goddess Pietas, who is described as grieving in a way that suggests a close relationship with the combatants:

non habitu quo nota prius, non ore sereno,
 sed uittis exuta comam, fraternaue bella,
 ceu soror infelix pugnantum aut anxia mater,
 deflebat. 11.459-462

She lacked her usual outfit and peaceful face, but had cast the ribbons from her hair, and was weeping at the fraternal war as if she were the unfortunate sister or anxious mother of the fighters.

This establishes a strong parallel with Antigone and Jocasta (the actual sister and mother of the fighters); and like them, Pietas enters martial spaces, and achieves a temporary peace by horrifying the brothers and their armies:

¹⁶² Venini (1970) 116 compares 11.431-433 with Jocasta's earlier line, *iubeoque rogoque* ('I order and I beg', 7.506).

¹⁶³ Scholars note the irony in Adrastus' name, which is connected to the Greek adjective ἄδραστος ('he who does not run away') – see, for instance, Ahl (1986) 2857-2858 or Gervais (2017a) 131-132.

¹⁶⁴ As Bernstein (2004) 69 argues. Rebeggiani (2018) 182-184 demonstrates that Adrastus' first appearance in *Thebaid* 1 also combines allusions to both Latinus and Pompey.

uix steterat campo, subita mansuescere pace
 agmina sentirique nefas; tunc ora madescunt
 pectoraque, et tacitus subrepsit fratribus horror. 11.474-476

As soon as she had set foot on the field, the armies are softened with sudden peace and realise their criminality; then faces and chests are wet, and silent horror seizes the brothers.

The combination of tears and silence is familiar from Polynices' response to Antigone shortly before this scene; here, it is felt by Eteocles as well.¹⁶⁵ As Silke Anzinger has demonstrated, *Thebaid* 11 connects noise with the Furies' violent drive to war and silence with sorrow, regret, inaction and a reluctance to fight.¹⁶⁶ However, *Pietas* is no match for the truly horrifying presence of Tisiphone, who forces her from the battlefield (11.492-496). *Pietas*, like Jocasta, can temporarily adopt a frightful or warlike appearance, and enter into martial spaces, but she remains out of place and uncomfortable there, while the Furies are in their element on the battlefield and not easily defeated. It seems that any attempt motivated by love, fear or *pietas* to advocate for peace will fail in the face of the bloodlust and irrational anger which the Furies represent, and which characterises the criminality of a civil war in which conventional social bonds are wholly disregarded.

The aftermath of civil war

The Theban civil war ends, not with the truce requested by Jocasta and Adrastus, but with the simultaneous destruction of its two instigators. By 11.573, both Eteocles and Polynices are dead, as are five of the other six Argive leaders; the remaining lines of book 11 cover Oedipus' attempted suicide (11.580-633) and eventual exile alongside his daughter Antigone (11.648-756), the revelation of Jocasta's suicide (11.634-647),¹⁶⁷ and the silent retreat of the surviving Argive

¹⁶⁵ Marinis (2015) 355 notes an echo of Aesch. *Sept.* 654-656, where Eteocles almost cries at the sight of Polynices. Voigt (2015) §§ 12-13 draws a parallel with the momentary pause that results from Jocasta's intervention at Sen. *Phoen.* 434-441 to argue that Statius' personification of *Pietas* emphasises Jocasta's own *pietas* towards her sons.

¹⁶⁶ Anzinger (2007) 258-261.

¹⁶⁷ Augoustakis (2010) 74-75 argues that this scene suggests that Ismene, who does not appear again in the epic, and who is compared (at 11.644-647) with Erigone – who hanged herself after her father Icarus' death – will also die by suicide at this stage. If so, Thebes is entirely free of the house of Oedipus at the end of book 11.

warriors from Thebes (11.757-761).¹⁶⁸ This would be a perfect place to end a poem which claimed (at 1.16-17) to limit itself to the house of Oedipus, which no longer holds any power over the city. As such, the continuation of Statius' narrative is striking.¹⁶⁹ Although *Thebaid* 11 ends with the city of Thebes apparently free from both internal and external enemies, this peace is short-lived, and the poem's final book will see a new attack on Thebes. This book demonstrates that putting an end to conflict does not automatically ensure the resolution of conflict: without peace and reconciliation, both sides seek out ways to continue fighting.

After the final battle, the Theban soldiers can sleep at last, but they remain anxious about the possibility of a return to war: *aegra quietem / pax fugat* ('unstable peace routs their calm', 12.7-8). They are haunted by memories of the recent combat, and the fear they demonstrate when stepping out of the city and back onto the battlefield (12.9-14) indicates a trauma response.¹⁷⁰ They feel as if they are still fighting against the fallen Argives:

attoniti nil comminus ire
mirantur fusasque putant adsurgere turmas. 12.13-14

They are shocked and bewildered that nothing attacks them in close combat and they think that the scattered troops will rise up against them.

Soon other Thebans exit the city, to find the remains of their loved ones: they thereby repeat their response to Tydeus' victory over the Theban ambush in book 3, when they also sought to identify the dead and prepare them for burial (3.114-177).¹⁷¹ There is a lingering sense of the confusion of identities and alliances which characterise civil war:

at circum informes truncos miserabile surgit
certamen qui iusta ferant, qui funera ducant.
saepe etiam hostiles (lusit Fortuna parumper)
decepti fleuere uiros; nec certa facultas
noscere quem miseri uitent calcentue cruorem. 12.33-37

¹⁶⁸ Hardie (1997) 152 notes how the Argive flight into darkness at the end of *Thebaid* 11 echoes the departure of Turnus' soul into the underworld at *Aen.* 12.761, which adds a strong sense of finality to *Theb.* 11.761 that is undermined by the following book.

¹⁶⁹ Dietrich (1999) 42 indicates the particular power of *nondum* ('not yet'), the first word of book 12, in reopening a narrative which might have seemed closed.

¹⁷⁰ Pollman (2004) 95-96.

¹⁷¹ Lovatt (1999) 131-133; Pollman (2004) 97-99.

A pitiable contest arises around the misshapen bodies over who would carry offerings, who would conduct funerals. They were often even tricked into crying – Fortune toyed with them for a while – for their enemies; nor was there any guaranteed method for the grieving to know which remains to avoid or trample underfoot.

Civil war turns friends into foes, and the violence enacted towards Thebans and Argives alike makes it almost impossible to distinguish between their corpses.¹⁷² The Thebans quarrel over the bodies of their friends and enemies, suggesting a capacity for further civil strife. Epic poetry offers little guidance on how to behave in the aftermath of war, particularly in a case such as this where the gods have turned away (11.119-135) and refuse to give signs of their support: it is no wonder that these Thebans, soldiers and civilians alike, struggle to escape the lingering effects of war, and do not know how to re-establish peace.

The difficulty of telling friend from foe in *Thebaid* 12 is rendered particularly dangerous by the different levels of respect offered to the Argive and Theban corpses (insofar as they can be identified and separated). Issues around the treatment of the dead are fundamental to the myth of the children of Oedipus, and Statius returns to this theme throughout the *Thebaid*.¹⁷³ In the poem's final book, Eteocles and the Theban dead receive cremation, while Polynices and his supporters are denied these rites (12.53-59). The Thebans have no obligation to provide funerals for their fallen foes,¹⁷⁴ but the difficulty of telling apart the Theban and Argive dead in the passage preceding this suggests problematically that some unfortunate Thebans may be caught in the prohibition on cremations. Other Thebans will be intentionally punished: Polynices has been stripped of his Theban identity and classified as an Argive to deny him burial (12.58-59);¹⁷⁵ and following Creon's edict at 12.93-104, any Theban who offers funeral honours to an Argive corpse will be treated (and punished) as an Argive themselves. The beginning of *Thebaid* 12 demonstrates that the similarities between Argives and Thebans, which makes it difficult to tell them apart, do not alleviate the Thebans' hatred and fear

¹⁷² Roche (2015) 405-406 points to other instances where it is difficult to recognise or differentiate the dead at *Il.* 7.421-426, *Sall. Cat.* 61.8 and *Luc. BC* 2.166-173 and 3.758-761.

¹⁷³ Parkes (2013) explores the quasi-burials, denial of rites, necromancy, exaggerated funeral of Opheltes and interactions between the Seven and different types of afterlife; McClellan (2019) chapter 5 provides a comprehensive analysis of the mistreatment of the dead, including the lack of proper burials, across the *Thebaid*.

¹⁷⁴ McClellan (2019) 207-210 argues that the prohibition on burial in this myth aligns with the laws of classical Athens, which indicated that traitors should remain unburied.

¹⁷⁵ Pollman (2004) 104 notes that Polynices has already presented himself as an Argive at 2.426-427, 7.698, 10.488 and 11.367-368: this self-presentation has consequences for his treatment after death.

of their fallen foes. This passage points to a continuation of conflict and the possibility of a return to war. This is present in all conflicts which do not end in the complete extermination or subjugation of one side, but it may be particularly strong in instances of civil war where a single fractured community is required to put itself back together.

Conflict over corpses reappears later in the book in the tensions between Argia and Antigone, who come from different cities but become part of the same family through the marriage of Argia and Polynices.¹⁷⁶ They work together to cremate Polynices, an act which renews the conflict between Polynices and Eteocles as the flames from their burning bodies clash on the same pyre (12.429-450).¹⁷⁷ When the women are caught by Creon's guards, they argue over which of them should take the blame:

nusquam illa alternis modo quae reuerentia uerbis,
iram odiumque putes; tantus discordat utrimque
clamor, et ad regem qui deprendere trahuntur. 12.461-463

Now their competing shouts lack any respect, and you would think
that they felt anger and hatred; a great noise clashed on both sides,
and they dragged those who had arrested them towards the king.

The ease with which friendship and kinship can turn into enmity is a legacy of civil war that now comes to affect the war's female survivors.¹⁷⁸ Both Argia and Antigone expect (or even hope) to be put to death by Creon, although the mention of Argia at 12.804 indicates that she (at least) survives:¹⁷⁹ they fight each other to be the victims of the tyrant's violence. Iterative conflict, in which violence begets violence, is a key part of the Theban mythic cycle, which includes Oedipus' slaying of his father Laius and the later war in which the Epigonoï attack Thebes to avenge their fallen fathers. These cycles of violence align with Roman anxieties, discussed

¹⁷⁶ Ganiban (2007) 208-212 identifies parallels between Argia and Polynices and between Antigone and Eteocles which figure this quarrel as a repetition of the brothers' final duel. Keith (2016) and Manioti (2016) each analyse this as a sisterly relationship, a dynamic which makes Argia and Antigone vulnerable to the intrafamilial conflict which permeates the text.

¹⁷⁷ Agri (2014) 742-743 argues that Argia is described in terms reminiscent of a Fury that foreshadows her role in creating this discord; Hardie (1993) 45-46 makes a similar point in identifying her similarity to Lucan's Erichtho. McClellan (2019) 229-232 views this scene as evidence that burial renews conflict rather than providing closure in the *Thebaid*.

¹⁷⁸ Hershkowitz (1998) 293-296; Augoustakis (2010) 33-34, 84-85. Heslin (2008) 115-118 interprets this as a conflict between different tragic models for the end of the *Thebaid*, and argues that Argia usurps the role of the Sophoclean Antigone; Newlands (2016) 165-165 suggests it is a conflict between epic and tragedy.

¹⁷⁹ Pollman (2004) 194-196. Dietrich (2009) 190-193, 199 presents Argia's attempt at suicide as a (masculine) political act which she fails to complete.

above in chapter 1, about the repetition of civil war in Roman history and its connection to the city's foundational fratricide.

The risk of renewed warfare makes it important that a peacetime leader works to reconcile conflicting groups and prevent further hostilities; but this is not what we get in the final book of the *Thebaid*. Instead, Statius show a new invading force marching against Thebes: the Argive women, who are described as 'the only Argive army now remaining' (*iam super agmina Lernae / sola*, 12.146-147). They seek to bury their fallen husbands, but when they hear of Creon's edict against funerals, they are quickly persuaded (by the surviving Argive soldier Ornytus at 12.163-166, and by Argia at 12.196-204) to seek out the aid of Theseus' army in Athens. The grieving Argive widows thereby enact the epic pattern of women becoming a cause of war.¹⁸⁰ When Evadne address Theseus on behalf of the Argive women, she calls for 'vengeance' (*uindicta*, 12.570) against the surviving Thebans. Creon's behaviour is presented as barbaric, worse even than that of the foreign tribes that Theseus has just conquered (12.589-594), to suggest that he will be insensible to persuasion. Juno gives the Argive women olive branches as they enter the city (12.468-469), which suggests an association with peace and diplomacy, but their demands align them more closely with violence and war.

The belligerent Theseus is quickly convinced, and immediately settles on violence as his preferred way of dealing with Creon: *adsum, nec sanguine fessum / crede; sitit meritos etiamnum haec hasta cruores* ('I am here, and I am not tired of blood, believe me; my spear still thirsts for the blood of those who deserve death', 12.594-595). He declares an ultimatum – *aut Danais edice rogos aut proelia Thebis* ('either give funeral pyres to the Argives or war to Thebes', 12.598) – which is conveyed to Creon by Phegeus.¹⁸¹ His status as a messenger does not prevent Phegeus from displaying aggression towards Creon:

ille quidem ramis insontis oliuae
 pacificus, sed bella ciet bellumque minatur,
 grande fremens, nimiumque memor mandatis, et ipsum
 iam prope, iam medios operire cohortibus agros
 ingeminans. 12.682-686

Indeed, he was a bearer of peace with branches of innocent olive, but
 he roused conflict and threatened war, raging powerfully, too mindful

¹⁸⁰ See Keith (2004) chapter 4 on this theme.

¹⁸¹ There is also a Theban Phegeus, whose death at the hands of Tydeus is narrated at 2.608-610. Augoustakis (2016b) 242, commenting on a different repeated name, notes that such repetition connect to the poem's civil war theme as it "intensifies the confusion between Theban and Argive in this civil war poem": the Phegeus of book 12 might suggest that Athenians are also part of this confusion.

of his commands, and repeated emphatically that Theseus was already nearby, that the fields were already covered with soldiers.

With this combination of an olive branch indicating peace and an aggressive speech threatening war, Phegeus recalls Tydeus' earlier embassy to Eteocles;¹⁸² Theseus' choice of messenger therefore aligns him with Polynices. This account of Phegeus' embassy to Thebes makes no explicit mention of the issues around burial or the respect for customs, the gods and the dead which motivated Theseus to approach Thebes; the only message conveyed in this summary is the threat of an approaching army, more powerful than the Theban forces.¹⁸³ At first, Creon is unnerved by Phegeus' threats, which shows his lack of confidence in his power:

stetit ambiguo Thebanus in aestu
curarum, nutantque minae et prior ira tepescit. 12.686-692

The Theban stood in an uncertain swell of cares, and his threats wavered and his prior anger cooled.

However, he quickly shifts towards aggression as well, and warns that he will defeat the Athenians and leave them unburied (12.690-692). Creon's boastful speech signals to Phegeus, Theseus and Statius' readers that the new Theban king has taken on the despotism of his predecessor, and does not deserve sympathy or mercy. He encourages his people to prepare for battle, but his own fear is displayed through a pallor that undermines his bluster: *armari populos tamen armaque ferri / ipse iubet pallens* ('pale, he ordered himself and his people to be armed', 12.694-695).¹⁸⁴ Creon can exercise his control of speech, and the ability to issue orders, from a position of personal insecurity far more easily than he can control his emotions or outward appearance. The verbal content of his speech is undermined by visible signs of his weakness.

The Thebans put up little resistance against the Athenian attack, and Theseus is quick to kill Creon.¹⁸⁵ The final instance of direct speech included in the narrative establishes that Theseus will grant Creon a burial, a demonstration of his

¹⁸² Gervais (2017a) 208 notes this parallel. On Phegeus' free adaptation of Theseus' message, which might recall Tydeus' similar licence in deviating from his brief, see Laird (1999) 288-289.

¹⁸³ Heslin (2008) 119-120 notes that Phegeus has no real impact on the plot, since the Athenian army is already approaching Thebes, and argues that this marks him as a tragic rather than an epic messenger; Parkes (2021) 118-119 makes a similar point.

¹⁸⁴ Vessey (1971b) 242-243 comments in general terms that lines 12.692-697 reveal Creon's awareness of his doom; Anzinger (2007) 274 notes that Creon's attempt to hide his feelings of inferiority is unsuccessful.

¹⁸⁵ Gervais (2017b) 310-322 explores the relationship between Theseus' slaying of Creon and the Virgilian duel between Aeneas and Turnus, and notes that, whereas Virgil's Aeneas hesitates before delivering the killing blow, Statius' Theseus does not.

moral excellence and respect for the dead.¹⁸⁶ Peace follows immediately, despite the lack of a Theban leader able to negotiate the *foedera* of 12.783: this demonstrates that the Theban people had no wish for this new war, but no power to prevent it. The Athenians are quickly transformed from enemies to guests (12.782-785) in a final reminder of the blurring of such categories in civil war.¹⁸⁷ Scholars disagree on the interpretation of Theseus' final intervention: most see him as restoring order and positive values such as *clementia*;¹⁸⁸ others argue that he continues the cycle of violence and destruction shown by other Theban kings, without offering any sense of stable succession for the future.¹⁸⁹ I lean towards the 'pessimistic' reading, particularly as Statius emphasises the slaughter of ordinary Thebans who are not responsible for Creon's tyranny and have no wish to fight (12.720-725);¹⁹⁰ but on either interpretation, Theseus' arrival does not show the restoration of effective communication in Thebes. Alternative versions of this

¹⁸⁶ As Braund (1996) 4, 13-14 argues. Bernstein (2013) 245 questions the authenticity of Theseus' display of morality, claiming that "his promise of burial for Creon may be read not as the expression of heartfelt *humanitas*, but as a battlefield vaunt asserting a specious moral superiority".

¹⁸⁷ *Pace* Braund (1996) 8, who claims that "the removal of the categories of friend and enemy resolves the conflict that has driven the poem". I consider this blurring of distinctions to be characteristic of civil war: its presence here is a reminder that such conflict could break out again (as it does when enemies become guests and ordinary soldiers enact *foedera* at Ilerda in *Bellum Civile* 4).

¹⁸⁸ Cf. Snijder (1968) 17-18; Williams (1972) xiii, xxi; Vessey (1973) 307-308, 312-316, 328; Braund (1996) 12-16; Hardie (1997) 153; Delarue (2000) 82, 176, 241-249, 252; Keith (2004) 99; McNelis (2007) 160-163; Bessone (2013a); Bessone (2013b) 99-105; Criado (2015); Putnam (2016) 114-130; Rebeggiani (2018) 148-150, 173-175. Ganiban (2007) 213-231 acknowledges the uncomfortable elements in Statius' presentation of Theseus, but argues that he is still the best and most effective hero possible in the corrupt world of the *Thebaid*. Toohey (2010) 44 argues that Creon's death is not contrary to the exercise of *clementia* because "the Roman state, which espoused *clementia*, found nothing strange in capital punishment". Gervais (2017b) 324-326 presents an optimistic reading of Theseus' role in establishing order and closure, but notes that the subsequent lamentations show the limitations of Theseus' intervention. Rebeggiani (2018) 167-176, 270-276 argues that Statius presents imperial, monarchical power – despite its imperfections – as the only way to end the cycle of civil wars and bring a measure of peace and stability.

¹⁸⁹ Cf. Ahl (1986) 2896; Dominik (1989) 74-75; Hardie (1993) 14, 46-47; Hershkowitz (1998) 296-301; McGuire (1997) 52, 125; Dietrich (1999) 43-45; Lovatt (1999) 136; Dominik (2005) 521; Panoussi (2019) 110. Coffee (2009) highlights Theseus' bloodthirsty nature and makes a strong case that the contrast between the characterisation of Theseus and the description of the Altar of *Clementia* in *Thebaid* 12 means that Theseus' sacrifice of Creon cannot be seen as an act of clemency; Bernstein (2013) 246-247 offers a similar argument. Sacerdoti (2008) 285-286 and Newlands (2016) 170-171 identify allusions to Theseus' future filicide which also encourage a 'pessimistic' reading. Tang (2019) 166-167 argues that the ecphrasis of the minotaur on Theseus' shield aligns him problematically with the poem's first monster-slayer, Oedipus.

¹⁹⁰ The Thebans' lack of resistance in this battle echoes Lucan's description of Caesarian forces slaughter unresisting Pompeian soldiers at Pharsalus (*BC* 7.501-503, 532-535). This suggests a parallel between Statius' Theseus and Lucan's Caesar, which also throws Theseus' heroism into question. As Ganiban (2007) 61 notes, most ordinary Thebans also opposed the war against Argos.

myth, such as that found in Aeschylus' *Eleusinians*, state that Theseus achieved peace at Thebes through his persuasive powers: according to Plutarch, this is the more widely attested tradition about the end of the Theban war.¹⁹¹ However, Statius' Theseus resolves issues through force, and in this he resembles figures such as Eteocles, Polynices, Tydeus and Creon.¹⁹² In his final speech, Theseus asks if the efficient violence of his opposition to Creon can persuade the latter to act more respectfully towards the dead, but Creon cannot answer these rhetorical questions because he is already dead himself (12.776-781). Theseus reasserts a message found throughout the poem, that actions and activity are more effective than speech and attempts to persuade: he imposes peace through brutal violence, not through rational argumentation or rhetorical prowess.

Upon the achievement of this final peace, Statius hints at future mourning, but he refuses to narrate this in detail: instead, he offers a kind of combined *recusatio* and *praeteritio* (12.797-809), which sets a limit to his own powers of communication. The poet claims that describing the reactions of the Argive women to this new settlement is beyond his capabilities:

non ego, centena si quis mea pectora laxet
uoce deus, tot busta simul uulgique ducumque,
tot pariter gemitus dignis conatibus aequem. 12.797-799

I could not, if some god loosened my chest with a hundred-fold voice,
equal with worthy efforts so many funerals for the common people
and their leaders, so many unified laments.

Statius suggests that these stories are suitable for inclusion in an epic narrative, although he is not the right person to tell them:¹⁹³ this is a reminder of the close connection between (female) grief and the violence found throughout this poem. In the words of Alison Keith: "Statius' closing lines hint that no occasion is immune

¹⁹¹ Plut. *Vit. Thes.* 29.4-5; see also Criado (2015) 294-295 with footnotes 17 and 19.

¹⁹² Criado (2015) 295-300 notes that Statius places a greater focus on Theseus' anger, violence and battle-prowess than tragic treatments of this myth: for instance, there is no suggestion of the respect for democracy and diplomacy which Theseus displays in Euripides' *Suppliant Women*. De Gussem (2016) 166-167 argues that the comparison of Theseus to an angry bull (12.601-605) strengthens the association with Eteocles, Polynices and Tydeus.

¹⁹³ Pace Augoustakis (2010) 34, who interprets these lines as indicating that female lament is incompatible with (male) epic. This passage indicates a ring composition with Statius' earlier *recusatio* on the achievements of Domitian (1.17-33), which covers topics that could be found in (historical) epic: it follows that the activities which Statius names in book 12 have similar epic potential.

from women's violent summons to war."¹⁹⁴ Emma Scioli analyses wordless lament in the *Thebaid* as a symbol for the inability of language – particularly the limited capacity for speech afforded to female characters – to communicate the depths of sorrow which result from civil war,¹⁹⁵ and this suggests that the poem ends with an expression of communication failure. Vassiliki Panoussi has argued that lament as a female-dominated ritual offers a peaceful, merciful, collaborative solution to the civil wars of the *Thebaid*,¹⁹⁶ but I disagree with this assessment: the lament of the Argives pulls Theseus into this conflict, fails to unite Argia with her Argive compatriots, becomes a site of violent competition between Argia and Antigone and adds openness to the poem's ending by presenting Statius' poetic endeavour as impossible to complete. Lament is the motivation behind the renewal of war and is presented as dangerous in the aftermath of Theseus' victory, when mourning women are described like violent and mindless maenads (12.786-793). As such, although the *Thebaid* ends with Theseus' imposition of peace on Thebes, the risks to social cohesion associated with unresolved grief have not yet been expunged. No space has been given to the Theban survivors whose kin have been cut down in this second conflict, and who are still reeling from the war with Argos. Although Statius wraps up the poem neatly, there are hints beneath the surface that this method of resolution might not create lasting peace.

Conclusion

From the narrative's first conversation, the *Thebaid* signals the irrelevance of persuasive speech to decision-making processes in the presence of a tyrannical leader. Jupiter's position depends on the threat of violence, rather than consent; he is not persuaded by Juno's objections to the planned destruction of the Argives, and makes no attempt to persuade her in turn. A similar dynamic is found in the relationship between Polynices and Argia in *Thebaid* 2: although Polynices attempts to comfort his wife, his speech does not respond to any of the points which she had raised and he ignores her protestations about the possibility of war. Like Jupiter, Tydeus' speech in his embassy to Eteocles is rhetorically weak, and he fails in his stated mission to attempt negotiations; but the outcome of this failure,

¹⁹⁴ Keith (2004) 100. On the openness which results from Statius' final focus on female voices, see also Hardie (1997) 154-156, Dietrich (1999) 45-50, Lovatt (1999) 145-147 and McClellan (2019) 211-215.

¹⁹⁵ Scioli (2010) 231-235. Lovatt (1999) 139-147 also discusses the inefficacy of lament and burials throughout the *Thebaid*.

¹⁹⁶ Panoussi (2019) chapter 8. Panoussi acknowledges the transgressive aspects of lament, but argues that these are subordinate to a tendency towards reconciliation: I do not see any focus on reconciliation in *Thebaid* 12.

the initiation of a war which affords the belligerent Tydeus a chance to win glory, suggests again that power and physical force are more desirable tools than rhetoric. The image of a ruler who solves problems through violence rather than speech or negotiation recurs, problematically, at the end of the poem, when Theseus slays Creon and only addresses his rhetorical questions to Creon's corpse. Characters who lack power, like Juno and Argia, cannot ensure that their communicative acts are effective; but those who have power, such as Jupiter, Tydeus and Theseus, do not need to be effective speakers. This indicates a world in which communicative success is devalued, and where the weak or marginalised cannot hope to make their voices heard.

Many of the speeches I have analysed here are either aggressive and violent, delivered from a position of apparent strength, or show a degree of weakness, as sorrowful speakers attempt to entreat those close to them to act in a certain way. Some episodes blur the boundaries between these categories, indicating that this is not a straightforward division: Jocasta is angry and aggressive when she berates Polynices in *Thebaid* 7, but ultimately flees the Argive camp due to her fear of the armed soldiers around her; Creon responds to Phegeus' aggressive message in *Thebaid* 12 with bold threats, but his pallor reveals his anxiety and the narrative quickly proves that his monarchical power is not supported by physical strength or battle prowess. Although the brothers at the heart of this civil war, and the poet's persistent interest in doubling and repetition, suggest that this is a conflict between similar and equal combatants, the frequency of speeches where a clear uneven power dynamic is in play indicates a world governed by strict hierarchies. These hierarchies seem to hinder communication, even between those who are close to and feel emotional attachments for one another. Throughout the poem, aggressive speech is frequently met by physical violence. Oedipus treats the insults of his sons as physical attacks on his person and calls for divine violence against them; Eteocles responds to Tydeus' aggressive speech by sending fifty Thebans to attack him; Tisiphone follows Jocasta's violent words in the Argive camp by sending enraged tigresses to attack the soldiers; Theseus answers the news that Creon has denied funerals to the fallen Argives with a declaration of war. Verbal aggression is tied to the unreliability of messengers, a theme borrowed from the *Aeneid*, in the threatening speeches of Tydeus, Maeon and Phegeus. These episodes demonstrate how verbal clashes motivate and escalates into martial conflict.

Several characters believe that close family members are in the best position to direct someone into a course of action, and base their persuasive appeals on kinship: this includes Juno in book 1, Argia in book 3, Jocasta in book 7 and Antigone and Adrastus in book 11, after Polynices has stated his belief (seemingly shared with Tisiphone) that his parents or sisters have the greatest capacity to sway

him. In each case, these appeals fail. Menoeceus also shows the disruption of familial communication, as he deceives his father by inventing a threat to his brother's life and breaks his mother's heart by dying without bidding her farewell. These episodes indicate that the breakdown of the family which is occasioned by the conflicts within the (incestuous and parricidal) house of Oedipus, and which are characteristic of civil war more generally, disrupts what is conventionally a significant site for successful communication. As such, the specific circumstances of a civil war that destroys the family remove one of the major persuasive tools which can be ordinarily used to argue for peace.

My analysis has identified a particular emphasis on the role of appearances in communicative situations. This includes non-verbal signs of emotion, such as those which Argia perceives in Polynices and adopts in her entreaty towards Adrastus, and the embrace with which Polynices distracts his wife while hiding his erotic longing for Thebes, as well as visible markers of identity. The use of costumes and insignia (such as the thyrsus, wreath and caduceus) to take on the identity of a specific character or to transform into a different character is a regular feature of Athenian drama,¹⁹⁷ and characters in tragedy frequently dress in a way that will manipulate the emotions of their interlocutors and audiences.¹⁹⁸ Rosie Wyles has argued that ancient dramatists were aware that dressing as a certain character could change the way that a person speaks and behaves,¹⁹⁹ but notes that there are limitations on this: in Aristophanes' *Frogs*, Dionysus dresses as Heracles in order to behave like him, but is shown to be an inadequate and unconvincing imitator when face to face with the real Heracles.²⁰⁰ As Ruth Parkes observes, references to costumes in Latin literature often signal the influence of particular tragic texts.²⁰¹ Statius gives particular prominence to physical, temporary markers of identity, including the olive branch carried by Tydeus,²⁰² Jocasta and Phegeus; the infant Thessander whom Argia holds up to Adrastus; the symbols of priestly authority which Amphiaraus attempts to discard to avoid speaking a prophecy; and the torn hair and generally dishevelled appearance adopted at various points by Argia, Jocasta and the personification of Pietas. I would like to argue here that this

¹⁹⁷ Cf. Taplin ([1978] 1985) chapter 6 and Wyles (2011) 61-69.

¹⁹⁸ Wyles (2011) 76-79.

¹⁹⁹ Wyles (2011) 62-63, with particular reference to Dicaeopolis dressing as the tragic character Telephus in Aristophanes' *Acharnians*.

²⁰⁰ Wyles (2011) 64.

²⁰¹ Parkes (2021) 120-122; Parkes comments on Statius' presentation of Laius in the guise of Tiresias, but does not mention the costumes of Tydeus, Amphiaraus or Jocasta.

²⁰² See Ripoll (1998) 330-332 and Estèves (2005) 101-111 for the argument that the characterisation of Tydeus, as a figure of destructive anger who engages in the *nefas* of cannibalism, is particularly reminiscent of (Senecan) tragedy.

prominence reflects the importance of costumes and props in Greek tragedy, a major influence on Statius' work, as well as in Roman legal and political speeches.²⁰³

Moreover, in several of these episodes, Statius displays a particular interest in questions of authenticity. Tydeus takes up an olive branch to play the part of a messenger – a role which is undermined by the inherent aggression that weakens his rhetoric – but discards this just as quickly as he exits Thebes, and reverts to his natural bloodlust and use of violence; upon his return to Argos, his display of wounds and the artificial urgency in his call to arms grants Tydeus more success in installing the same bloodlust in his Argive audience. Amphiaraus attempts to discard his priestly attire in the same way, but is forced to assume the role of the prophet again by Capaneus' threats. Virtus approaches Menoeceus in Manto's long dress and sacred fillets, but her divine nature is betrayed by her face and bearing, and her role in driving Menoeceus towards suicide aligns more with her true (Fury-like) character than her disguise. Jocasta adopts the role of a Fury to terrify her sons into submission, seemingly without realising that the Furies are a cause of civil war rather than agents of peace; but her tears of joy at being embraced by Polynices, and the fear for her sons which lies behind her equally aggressive rebuke of Eteocles in *Thebaid* 11, indicate that Jocasta lacks the Furies' hatred, resolve and commitment to violence, and her performance is unconvincing as a result.²⁰⁴ She is a poor imitator, unwilling to follow through on her threats and unable to withstand the threats made against her: Jocasta's weaponisation of fear is no match for those who truly embody anger and terror, and her interventions are easily reversed and surpassed by the real Furies. Each of these episodes suggests that a lack of authenticity – the adoption of a persona or theatrical role which does not accord with a character's true feelings and identity, through external rather than internal changes – contributes towards communicative and persuasive failures. Statius' interest in this aspect of communication failure seems connected more to his tragic models than to the specific circumstances of civil war, but it may also be inspired by Allecto's adoption of the costume of Calybe in order to initiate civil war in the *Aeneid*, and perhaps even the way that Lucan's dying Pompey fails at the role of a Stoic sage. There is ample scope for future scholarship to investigate other texts and episodes which share this interest in authenticity and the use of costumes and disguises.

²⁰³ The role of costumes in Roman persuasive appeals is discussed above in chapter 1.

²⁰⁴ Gilder (1997) 158 makes a similar point, although without reference to the issues of costuming and authenticity that I have foregrounded here, and argues that Jocasta and Antigone are "ultimately doomed to failure precisely because they turn away from their powerful furial nature". I disagree with the implication that Jocasta chooses to reject the power of the Fury; rather, as a pale imitation, she is unable to evoke and embody it.

Chapter 5: Comparisons and conclusions

The *Aeneid*, *Bellum Ciuile* and *Thebaid* are all rich texts worthy of extensive study, each with enough material to fill a thesis on communication failure by itself. Thus far, I have not focused on the intertextual relationships between my chosen poems, which have already been covered extensively in a wide range of commentaries, articles and monographs. However, reading these texts together has revealed key themes and recurrent tropes relating to communication failure in civil war across all three poems. It is my contention that the depiction of communication failure is a significant point of contact between these texts, and an important site of allusion and macro-level (thematic or structural) intertextuality, beyond what might be expected based purely on the wider intertextual relationship between them. This suggests that Lucan and Statius, consciously or otherwise, perceived communication failure as an integral and intrinsic element of Virgil's presentation of civil war: as such, and perhaps also influenced by their own experiences of civil unrest in the early Principate, they integrated this theme into their own portrayals of civil war. In this concluding chapter, I will draw out the thematic connections between instances of communication failure across these three texts, and suggest some wider implications of my analysis.

My approach has differed from previous typological analyses of communication in Latin literature by emphasising the importance of a holistic understanding of communication, and by focusing specifically on scenes of failure and misunderstanding which have not been read together in the way that they ought to be. Significantly, my analysis demonstrates that instances of communication failure within and across texts are connected, and that this theme must be viewed as a persistent thread running through Latin epic, rather than as a series of isolated incidents and episodes occasioned by the narrative demands of specific points in a poem. For instance, it is not enough to simply note that Lucan presents Pompey as an unconvincing speaker: we must situate him within the historical context (with reference to the real Pompey's rhetorical weaknesses), but also within intertextual and intratextual networks of other figures who similarly display the limitations of speech and the problems of political systems based around group deliberation. My approach has included analysis of associated gestures and visible or tangible signs of emotion, that support or conflict with the words being spoken; descriptions of the speaker's appearance and physical accoutrements, which can suggest the adoption of a specific rhetorical persona; authorial comments about the state of mind of the characters involved in a communicative situation; shifts between direct and indirect speech, especially speech conveyed through an intermediary, which can involve adjustments of emphasis or introduce deceptiveness; the noise, silence or elision of an audience's response; and the

attendant circumstances and narrative developments which might affirm or undermine the significance of any given communicative act. I have paid particular attention to the tensions between verbal and non-verbal forms of communication, as the conflict between these elements frequently contributes to failure: this is most apparent in the death of Turnus, where the Rutulian warrior's speech is undermined by the sight of Pallas' sword-belt, but is also present in the nocturnal tears of Pompey and Polynices, who fail to hide their plans from their respective wives, and in the outward display of fear which undermines Creon's blustering confidence. Future analyses of speech and communication in Latin literature must take care to incorporate each of these different aspects.

In my analysis of these texts, I have paid particular attention to the voices of marginalised figures who are separated from the business of war. Often these characters are women, whose lack of communicative success is often connected to aspects of their identities. In the second half of the *Aeneid*, this idea is confirmed by Turnus' dismissal of Allecto-as-Calybe for speaking on matters of politics and warfare (which is echoed in *Thebaid* 2 by Polynices' attitude towards Argia); Amata's inability to assert her views as a mother and wife about her daughter's marriage; and the single silent blush, open to multiple competing interpretations, which constitutes Lavinia's only communicative act. Lucan and Statius extend this ineffectiveness to figures whose supernatural status should grant them more power, akin to Allecto's power when she reveals her true identity: the personification of Italy in *Bellum Ciuile* 1 cannot stop Caesar from crossing the Rubicon, and her moral and legal expertise is quickly dismissed; Lucan's Julia and Statius' Jocasta have limited impacts on the narrative when they appear in the guise of the Fury; and the goddess Pietas can only briefly delay the fratricidal combat of *Thebaid* 11. Euryalus' unnamed mother, Lucan's Cornelia and Menoecus' mother Eurydice all represent the dangers of female lament that questions optimistic narratives about war and premature death, and each of these figures is consequently confined in a way that limits their ability to express their grief and distract the wider community from military activity: this kind of silencing is clearly connected to their gender and their separation from characters (particularly husbands) who would be able to amplify their complaints in the male domain of politics. Characters such as Virgil's Amata, Lucan's Marcia and Cleopatra or Statius' Argive widows show that when their desires align with those of men who are eager for war, their voices are more likely to be heard, and their communicative acts may be more successful – yet Argia's failure to persuade Adrastus in *Thebaid* 3 demonstrates that success is still not guaranteed. The contrast between Virgil's Juno, who advocates for war and plays an active role in the narrative, with Statius' Juno, who opposes the war and is sidelined as a result, also illustrates this idea.

My comparison of communication failure across these texts suggests a particularly interesting development in the treatment of female grief and anger. The clear distinction in the *Aeneid* between Allecto, who drives people into furious martial activity, and Euryalus' mother, whose opposition to war has an enervating effect on her audience, is utterly demolished in the figures of Lucan's Julia and Statius' Jocasta, who each combine sorrow and grief with the outward appearance of a Fury. Jocasta's adoption of what is effectively a costume seems indebted, not just to Julia, but also to Lucan's portrayal of Marcia and Cleopatra as women who use the outward display of grief (whether real or feigned) to ensure their persuasive successes. I have argued that Julia attempts to frighten the cowardly Pompey in *Bellum Civile* 3 in order to end civil war, in keeping with her characterisation as a peace-maker in book 1. As such, we might expect her to take on the role of Euryalus' mournful mother; but she is instead understood as a new version of Allecto, and Pompey – even as he dismisses this dream and indicates that it has had no effect on him – finds himself more eager for war. Statius' use of the imagery of the Fury for Jocasta, a woman whose efforts to effect peace between her relatives are similarly dismissed and ignored, suggests an awareness of the complexity and contradictions inherent in Lucan's characterisation of Julia. The figure of the Fury, originally an avenger of transgression within the family who comes to embody the madness and violence of civil war, is used to explore issues around the breakdown of interpersonal relationships in a time of social upheaval which foregrounds military matters at the expense of the domestic sphere.

The marginalisation of non-combatants also applies to older men such as Latinus, Adrastus and – perhaps surprisingly – Pompey. These are men whose status should give them some control over the political and military situation but whose limited ability (or desire) to fight alienates them from the warriors who are intent on battle. The historical Pompey was barely six years older than his opponent and an active participant in civil war, but in Lucan's poem, his frequent communicative failures situate him alongside the aged kings whose faded glory, lack of control over their own subjects and conflict-aversion marks them as weak, irrelevant and at risk of being supplanted.¹ When Latinus, Pompey and Adrastus (or more minor figures such as Virgil's Galaesus and Statius' Amphiaraus) express their opposition to war, they find themselves sidelined from political decisions, as their audiences – or possible rivals, such as Lentulus in *Bellum Civile* 7 and Capaneus in *Thebaid* 3 – ignore their speech and seize control of the situation. These figures raise questions about democracy and autocracy, and the harm which can result from a leader who lacks the authority or confidence to impose their will

¹ See Ahl (1974) 307 and Ahl (1976) 157-158 for Lucan's characterisation of both Pompey and the Republic as old before their time.

on their subjects and supporters. Their communicative failures suggest the dangers and flaws of democratic and imperial systems of power alike.

There are specific points of contact between the final book of the *Aeneid* and the opening books of the *Bellum Ciuile* and *Thebaid* which encourage us to read the latter poems in the light of the former. I have argued that the vision of Italy which fails to stop Caesar from crossing the Rubicon in *Bellum Ciuile* 1 echoes Virgil's Turnus, who similarly fails to stop Aeneas from transgressing the limits of *pietas* in favour of unbound *furor*, such that Caesar's initiation of civil war seems to be a direct continuation of Aeneas' war in Italy. I have also explored the divine councils of *Aeneid* 12 and *Thebaid* 1: the former establishing peace and reconciliation between Jupiter and Juno, in contrast to the impossibility of reconciliation amongst the mortals below; the latter showing that Jupiter makes no concessions to those who disagree with him and pays no attention to his wife's persuasive speech, thereby providing a model for the divisions within mortal marriages in the poem. Both Lucan and Statius establish communication failure at the very outset of their poems – in the first dialogues presented in their respective epics – to establish expectations about the significant role which this will play in the epics which follow. The *Aeneid* ends with a striking and memorable depiction of communication failure, which Virgil establishes as an important aspect of Aeneas' experience of civil war and his identity as a leader and warrior, and the *Bellum Ciuile* and *Thebaid* both begin with the same pessimistic tone.

In my exploration of *Aeneid* 12, I identified two key areas where the poet leaves gaps that suggest deeper problems with communication: readers are invited to fill gaps such as these, and Lucan and Statius do so at length. The first such gap is Aeneas' relationship with Ascanius, which I interpret as lacking the closeness that Aeneas shared with his own father and which should make Aeneas' struggles worthwhile. Both the *Bellum Ciuile* and the *Thebaid* focus on martial conflict between actual family members (whereas the familial connection between Aeneas and Latinus is only hypothetical), which heightens the criminality ordinarily associated with civil war, but they also present conflict between relatives who do not take up arms against one another. I have explored the tensions in the marriage of Pompey and Cornelia, which is indebted more to the separation of Aeneas and Dido in *Aeneid* 4 than to the end of Virgil's epic; and the lack of communication between Aeneas and Ascanius appears to be a (previously unnoticed) model for the paucity of communication between Pompey and his own sons, which almost leads Sextus and Gnaeus to join forces with their father's opponent in civil war in order to avenge his death. The *Thebaid* places a particular emphasis on persuasive appeals from family members, which builds on the references to kinship in Latinus' and Amata's appeals to Turnus in *Aeneid* 12 and Turnus' final plea to Aeneas, and foregrounds the inadequacy of this technique in times of intrafamilial conflict.

Aeneas' emotional distance from Ascanius may provide some of the inspiration for Menoeceus' lies to Creon and neglect of Eurydice as he prepares to die by suicide, and for the lack of productive conversation and dialogue between Jocasta and her sons. We can also see echoes of Aeneas' desire for Ascanius to learn *labor* ('hard work' or 'suffering') in Oedipus' wish for his sons to suffer at the very beginning of the *Thebaid*. Familial tensions, which helped to characterise Aeneas as an isolated figure, become a core element of these subsequent civil war narratives.

The slaying of Turnus at the end of the *Aeneid* provides another gap in the text, with the suggestion that Turnus' failed plea for mercy and subsequent death will not be enough to prevent further conflict. Both Lucan and Statius develop the idea of a continuation of war after the defeat of its principal antagonist. Lucan demonstrates that clemency cannot lessen Domitius' opposition to Caesar, praises the continuation of military resistance even past the point where it can have an effect, continues the *Bellum Ciuile* for two books after the death of Pompey and shows Caesar engaging in an Egyptian conflict which is figured as a renewal of civil war. Statius shows how the Thebans still fear war after the death or flight of each of the seven Argive leaders, Argia and Antigone squabble over Polynices' body in a re-enactment of familial conflict, the Argive widows incite Athenian forces to attack Thebes and Creon's grief turns into a hatred that exacerbates the new conflict with Theseus. Each of these episodes demonstrates the inability of speech to end animosity, and the tendency of communicative acts to lead directly to more violence and bloodshed. Meanwhile, the death which results from this violence cuts off further communication: Mezentius, Turnus and Creon cannot respond to their killers or control the treatment of their remains; Pompey's execution limits his ability to establish his reputation as a Stoic hero and hinders the transmission of his final instructions to his sons; and Menoeceus' self-sacrifice prevents communication with his mother, who reinterprets his death as a selfish act of matricide.

Throughout this thesis, I have indicated episodes – from Allecto's attack on Turnus in *Aeneid* 7, to Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon, to the aggression demonstrated by both Eteocles and Tydeus in *Thebaid* 2 – in which characters threaten or use force and physical violence after the failure of rhetorical attempts at persuasion. Petreius' intervention at Ilerda in *Bellum Ciuile* 4 shows violence preceding speech as a tool to ensure obedience, while Theseus' and Phegeus' interactions with Creon in *Thebaid* 12 contain only minimal attempts to persuade through speech: in such cases, violence is clearly the preferred option. Virgil's Aeneas, and to a lesser extent Statius' Theseus, suggest that violence is connected to moral superiority and a divine right to rule; but in the *Bellum Ciuile*, the violence of civil war is criminal and used primarily by those whose actions and desires are unjustifiable. Movements from speech to violence (addressed to the

same person) imitate the wider processes of civil war, in which people in close proximity who previously conversed as friends, family-members and allies take up weapons against one another.

Such violence can also be considered a form of communication in its own right. This idea has been explored in other academic disciplines, but not, as far as I am aware, in scholarship on Latin literature. For instance, psychotherapist Stephen Blumenthal has written that violence “signifies the breakdown of thought and the failure of words, but it is powerful communication none the less”.² For Blumenthal, violence primarily communicates something about the feelings of shame and fear felt by its perpetrator: if we transfer this concept to literary analysis, we see that displays of violence are a powerful authorial tool for communicating characterisation to an audience. Hendrik van der Merwe and Sue Williams, analysing the role of mediators in civil conflicts, argue that there is a continuum of “constructive and destructive ways of communication between conflicting groups” which includes violence and terrorism at one end.³ They suggest that violence is most commonly chosen by members of groups which are alienated and excluded from power, or which aim at goals that it seems the political establishment would never allow (such as the end of apartheid in South Africa);⁴ and they write that, although violence “may be intended as communication, violence tends to evoke further violence and escalation by all parties”.⁵ In Latin epic, violence is usually a tool of the powerful; but figures such as Juno, Allecto, Amata, Julia, Oedipus, Jocasta and (to some extent) the exiled Tydeus and insecure Creon show how violence and horror can also be used by those who lack other means to effect their will. The evocation of fear through the threat of violence has the particular effect, across these texts, of causing silence and inaction, which can strip power from those who would normally retain it. The tendency of violence to escalate is found in all three of my key texts: for instance, the arrow which silences Aeneas during the truce of *Aeneid* 12 increases his anger to such an extent that he chooses to burn down Latinus’ city; Petreius’ enslaved attendants initiate a slaughter of Caesarian soldiers which is taken up by the rest of the Pompeian camp, and which seems to prevent the warriors at Pharsalus from re-initiating social bonds lest they become guilty of the same extreme criminality; and Menoeceus’ violent and premature

² Blumenthal (2006) 4.

³ Van der Merwe and Williams (1987) 8.

⁴ Van der Merwe and Williams (1987) 11. Although the article looks at collective power and group violence, their argument might also work on an interpersonal level: Babcock et al. (1993) suggest that domestic violence might be most common in marriages where the husband feels that his patriarchal status and power are threatened and where communicative and conflict-resolution skills are lacking.

⁵ Van der Merwe and Williams (1987) 11.

death hardens Creon's heart, motivates his hatred of Eteocles and Polynices and leads to the edict against burial that incites Theseus' bloody invasion of Thebes. Hugo van der Merwe notes that many cultures see violence as positive in some circumstances, such that "violence becomes an effective and commonly used form of communication, and those who are good at this form of communication are valued members of society",⁶ and warns that this valorisation of violence sidelines other forms of communication and thereby makes peace and social progress much harder to achieve.⁷ Martial epic traditionally celebrates violent acts as a way for heroes to win acclaim, but the pessimistic strand of each of my chosen texts, and particularly the hatred of civil war demonstrated through narratorial interventions in the *Bellum Ciuile*, raises questions about the dangers of this tendency, in much the same way as van der Merwe. My analysis has demonstrated that violence, while effective, is more limited in scope than persuasive speech, and tends to cut off conversations and end rational debate: when violence is the primary mode of communication, peace and interpersonal understanding become harder to obtain.

The breakdown or absence of communication can initiate civil wars, as demonstrated through my analysis of key scenes in *Aeneid* 7, *Bellum Ciuile* 1 and *Thebaid* 2 and 3; communicative acts (whether or not they are successful) are also shown to prolong war, as Caesar recognises explicitly in his exhortation of *Bellum Ciuile* 7, and this connects communication failure to the narrative delay which characterises each of these poems.⁸ The difficulty of achieving peace is also a key aspect of the relationship between communication failure and civil war. External wars can, theoretically at least, be ended by the slaughter, subjugation and continued suppression of the defeated; but taking this kind of extreme action in civil war weakens the victor's society. Theseus' easy conquest of Thebes demonstrates the risk that a community torn apart by civil war will be unable to defend itself against foreign invaders, and Pompey's plan to seek Parthian aid gestures towards the same possibility for Rome. In civil conflicts, reconciliation between warring parties and the restoration of communal bonds are more desirable, but extremely difficult to achieve. Each of my chosen poems demonstrates that combat can be initiated by a single belligerent individual, potentially even a minor or low-status character. Allecto's supernatural violence

⁶ Van der Merwe (2013) 73.

⁷ Van der Merwe (2013) 78-81.

⁸ See Dominik (1994) 28-34 and Adema (2017) 76-82 for the impact that speech can have on narrative pace. Scholarship which comments on the prominence of delay in these three texts includes Vessey (1973) 165-167, Lee (1979) 115-116, Henderson ([1987] 1998) 183-185, Harrison (1988) 53-54, Feeney (1991) 339, Masters (1992) chapter 1 (and *passim*), Gilder (1997) 142, Hardie (1997) 145-146, Leigh (1997) 21, Anzinger (2007) 135-137, Ganiban (2007) chapters 5 and 7, McNelis (2007) chapter 3 and Parkes (2021) 127-128.

maddens Turnus and drives him to war, but so does the snide speech of Drances, whose uncertain parentage and lack of battle prowess marks him as Turnus' inferior; while the truce of *Aeneid* 12 is broken by Tolumnius (who acts without instruction from his leader) and an anonymous archer, rather than Aeneas or Turnus. Much of the violence of the *Bellum Ciuile* is driven by Caesar, but he still requires the support of ordinary soldiers such as the invented centurion Laelius. At Ilerda, the renewal of social bonds is a slow process that is quickly shattered by the general Petreius and his unnamed, enslaved attendants. In the *Thebaid*, the power of a single violent individual is best represented by Tydeus, whose rhetorical weaknesses and failings as a *legatus* do not prevent him from rousing the Argives' desire for war or countering Jocasta's attempt to soften her son's resolve. In contrast, the process of creating peace requires the successful persuasion of both parties in the conflict, who must be convinced that a settlement is in their best interests: this is particularly evident in *Thebaid* 11. If a leader desires peace but their soldiers do not, violence is likely to break out again: this is demonstrated by Rutulians and Trojans alike in *Aeneid* 12, and by the Pompeians who seek death at Pharsalus in *Bellum Ciuile* 7. Meanwhile, the slaughter of Caesarians in *Bellum Ciuile* 4 and Thebans in *Thebaid* 12 shows that soldiers who seek peace without the endorsement of their leaders jeopardise their own lives in doing so. Mutinies have a prominent place in the *Bellum Ciuile*, and Lucan will have known how the Praetorian Guard turned against Caligula; for Statius, the deaths of Nero and Galba would also have demonstrated the independence of armed men and the emperors' reliance on their support.

Individuals who challenge the crowd's desires for war face personal risks in the process. When Aeneas calls for peace on the battlefield, he, like Galaesus before him, is shot; when Pompey seeks the support of the senators at Syhedra, he is quickly outvoted and sent towards his death; Jocasta and Adrastus each flee when they realise that their lives are endangered by their futile attempts to dissuade the brothers from fighting. Tydeus' embassy and the subsequent ambush offer further evidence that attempting to negotiate can lead to physical attacks: tyrants such as Eteocles, who are willing to engage in civil violence and fight against their kin, are unlikely to have much respect for the laws or the protected status of messengers and suppliants. Yet it is often necessary to take risks such as these, since face-to-face meetings are an essential part of the peace-making process: the war in Latium results from Aeneas' failure to meet with Latinus until the poem's final book; the temporary truce at Ilerda is born out of the proximity of the two armies; Caesar demonstrates his clemency when he meets with Domitius and Afranius, but does encounter Pompey until it is too late to make peace; similarly, Statius – in contrast to Euripides and Seneca – only allows Eteocles and Polynices to converse during their final fratricidal duel. The *Aeneid* offers an example of reconciliation in the

divine realm, which requires both Jupiter and Juno to recognise each other's status and offer concessions for the sake of peace, but this only serves to highlight the impossibility of an equivalent resolution amongst mortals, whose emotional investment in matters of life and death prevents them from achieving the requisite detachment. Lucan undermines this divine reconciliation further by removing the Olympian gods from his narrative, while Statius presents a version of Jupiter who refuses to be persuaded and does not even attempt to persuade others. Denis Feeney, in a discussion of *Iliad* 24, writes that "reconciliation [between Achilles and Priam] is made possible by the power of speech to draw men together and establish connections between them";⁹ the lack of human reconciliation in the *Aeneid*, *Bellum Ciuile* and *Thebaid* indicates the inability of speech to form such connections in these three poems.

I began this thesis by establishing the importance and pervasiveness of civil war in Roman society and in the three poems which I have analysed, and highlighting the connection in ancient thought – as represented by Thucydides, Sallust and Horace – between civil war and communication failure. Roman authors present cycles of civil violence as an inescapable aspect of their history: my analysis suggests anxieties around the possibility that problems of communication are similarly intrinsic to Roman society. In my analysis of the *Thebaid*, I argued that Statius positions authenticity as a prerequisite for successful communication: this raises questions about how Romans can act if they, like Statius' Thebans, are inherently predisposed to civil violence and communicative failure. Virgil's Anchises, in his address to future Romans in *Aeneid* 6, suggests that rhetoric is not an art at which Romans can excel – *alii ... / orabunt causas melius* ('others will be better at pleading their cases', 6.847-849) – and Lucan's perspective on the breakdown of legal language and political communication in historical civil wars can be read as proof of this claim. As I have demonstrated, the epics of Virgil, Lucan and Statius are each filled with instances of communication failure, and it is my argument that this can be attributed to these texts' shared interest in civil war. Additional evidence for this hypothesis could be obtained through a comparison with texts about external wars, or which are not directly influenced by Virgil and his poetic successors, to investigate whether or not these indicate the same fascination with communication failure. Similarly, an analysis of post-classical authors influenced by the *Aeneid* might determine whether or not this fascination is in some way characteristically Roman, and attributable to a period of history in which (personal and societal) memories of civil wars were particularly raw and potent. Questions around how accurately these poetic portrayals of communication failure represent real-life experiences – either through analysis of

⁹ Feeney (1991) 213.

Chapter 5: Comparisons and conclusions

more personal texts from the same period in Roman history (such as Caesar's *Commentarii*, Cicero's letters, Horace's lyric poetry or Statius' *Silvae*), or through comparison with modern accounts of civil conflicts – also merit further exploration. Such investigations are, however, beyond the scope of the current project. Whether or not an emphasis on communication failure is unique to civil war epics in a specifically Virgilian poetic tradition, I have comprehensively demonstrated its presence in and thematic significance to the *Aeneid*, *Bellum Ciuile* and *Thebaid*. Just as the history of civil conflict in ancient Rome is fundamental for our understanding of Roman culture and society, a consideration of the role of communication failure can greatly improve any analysis of these three poems.

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