

WHO SPEAKS AT PRUDENTIUS, *PER.* 9.65-6?

In the ninth poem of Prudentius's *Peristephanon* the poet relates a visit to Imola. In a church there he sees a painting of the martyr Cassian, a Christian teacher of shorthand sentenced to be stabbed to death by his students with their styluses. The story behind the painting is explicated for him by a church functionary (*aedituus*), whose narrative is reported in direct speech and occupies much of the poem. At lines 59-72 this internal narrator emphasizes Cassian's sufferings: the blows of his youthful torturers were strong enough to cause him agonizing pain, but not forceful enough to put him out of his misery:

*Maior tortor erat qui summa pupugerat infans,  
quam qui profunda perforarat viscera;* 60  
*ille, levis quoniam percussor morte negata  
saevire solis scit dolorum spiculis,  
hic, quanto interius vitalia condita pulsat,  
plus dat medellae dum necem prope adplicat.  
“Este, precor, fortes, et vincite viribus annos;* 65  
*quod defit aevo, suppleat crudelitas!”  
Sed male conatus tener infirmusque laborat;  
tormenta crescunt, dum fatiscit carnifex.  
“Quid gemis?” exclamat quidam; “tute ipse magister  
istud dedisti ferrum et armasti manus.* 70  
*Reddimus ecce tibi tam milia multa notarum,  
quam stando flendo te docente excepiimus.*

A greater torturer was the child who only pricked the surface than he who bored deep into the flesh; for the light hitter who will not wound to the death has the skill to be cruel with only the piercing pains, but the other, the farther he strikes into the hidden vitals, gives more relief by bringing death near. “Be stout, I beg, and outdo your years with your strength. What you lack in age let a savage spirit make up”. But the young boys from lack of vigour fail in their efforts and begin to be fatigued; the torments worsen while the tormentors grow faint. “Why do you groan/complain?” calls one; “you yourself as our teacher gave us this iron and put the weapon in our hands. You see we are giving you back all the thousands of characters which as we stood in tears we took down from your teaching.”<sup>1</sup>

Lines 65-6 clearly constitute a direct address to the youthful torturers, and modern editors and translators are unanimous in placing them in quotation marks<sup>2</sup>. That the lines are uttered by Cassian himself is an assumption al-

<sup>1</sup> Translations of Prudentius are from H. J. Thomson, *Prudentius*, vol. 2. *Contra orationem Symmachi liber II, Peristephanon liber, Tituli historiarum, Epilogus* (Cambridge MA-London 1953), sometimes slightly adapted. Other translations are my own except as noted.

<sup>2</sup> So Th. Obarrius, *Aurelii Prudentii Clementis carmina* (Tübingen 1845) 247; A. Dressel, *Aurelii Prudentii Clementis quae exstant carmina* (Leipzig 1860) 386; J. Bergman, *Aurelii*

ready to be found in the 1703 edition by Christoph Cellarius, who comments on *este, precor, fortes*: “Vox martyris, celeriolem exitum desiderantis” (“The words of the martyr, who seeks a quicker death”)<sup>3</sup>. Indeed, it can be traced back even further than that. The prose paraphrase of *Per.* 9 made ca. 900 A.D. by Hucbald of St. Amand expands the two lines into a longer and more elaborate speech, explicitly attributed to the martyr (*Passio Cassiani* 15)<sup>4</sup>:

*Quos [sc. pueros] ipse martir venerabilis talibus videbatur compellare verbis: “O filioli, utinam tam validi ictibus quam pessimi mentibus, conatibus quid moras innectitis? Etatem ipsam obsecro superare viribus. Impii votum persecutoris perficite citius, interna viscerum rimamini profundius, novale perscisum innovate exultius quo terra corporis mei fructum ferat uberius et qui seminat in gemitibus metat in alacritatibus”. Ad hec fertur ex nefandis respondisse unus...”*

*Prudentii Clementis Carmina* (Vienna and Leipzig 1926) 369; J. Guillén and I. Rodríguez, *Obras Completas de Aurelio Prudencio* (Madrid 1950) 616-17; Thomson (as in n. 1 above) 226-7; Sister M. C. Eagan, *The Poems of Prudentius* (Washington, D.C. 1962) 186; M. Lavarrenne, *Prudence. Tome IV. Le livre des couronnes (Peristephanon liber). Dittochaeon. Épilogue* (Paris 1963) 114; M. P. Cunningham, *Aurelii Prudentii Clementis Carmina* (Turnhout 1966) 328; R. Argenio, *Due Corone di Prudenzio: S. Quirino e S. Cassiano*, “RSC” 18, 1970, 76; M. Bless-Grabher, *Cassian von Imola. Die Legende eines Lehrers und Märtyrers und ihre Entwicklung von der Spätantike bis zur Neuzeit* (Bern 1978) 35; P.-Y. Fux, *Les sept Passions de Prudence: (Peristephanon 2.5.9.11-14); introduction générale et commentaire* (Fribourg 2003) 337; M. Spinelli, *Prudenzio. Gli inni quotidiani. Le corone dei martiri* (Rome 2009) 214. I have not been able to consult C. Marchesi, *Le Corone di Prudenzio* (Rome 1917).

<sup>3</sup> Chr. Cellarius, *Aurelii Prudentii Clementis quae exstant* (Halle 1703) 180. The note is repeated unchanged in Cellarius’s second edition (Halle 1739), except that *celeriolem* has become *clariolem*, probably through a printer’s error. I. T[eolius], *Aurelii Prudentii Clementis V. C. Opera Omnia*, vol. 1 (Parma 1788) 211, repeats Cellarius’s 1703 comment verbatim, bearing out the description of his edition by Bergman (as in n. 2 above) lii as “regio... luxu adornatam, sed nihil novi adferentem” (“dressed in regal array but offering nothing new”). Cellarius’s formulation also recognizably underlies that of Dressel (as in n. 2 above) 386: “Est martyris ad pueros monitum celeriolem quippe exitum exoptantis” (“This is an injunction to the boys by the martyr, who longs for a quicker death”). Editions only begin to employ quotation marks for direct speech in the early nineteenth century, so in the absence of a note like this it is impossible to tell whether earlier editors regarded the lines as *oratio recta* or not: so e.g. with N. Heinsius, *Aurelii Prudentii Clementis quae exstant* (Amsterdam 1667) 112; L. Gil, *M. Aurelii Prudentii Clementis V.C. Carmina* (Saragossa 1803) 122. For the development of modern quotation marks out of the ancient *diple* (used in antiquity for other purposes) see M. Parkes, *Pause and Effect. An Introduction to the History of Punctuation in the West* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1993) 57-61, who notes at 59 that “quotation marks were gradually accepted during the first half of the eighteenth century, and were used with increasing frequency to indicate quotations in English books in the second half of the century”. Classical editors seem to have been slower to adopt the convention.

<sup>4</sup> Ed. F. Dolbeau, *Passion de S. Cassien d’Imola composée d’après Prudence par Hucbald de Saint-Amand*, “RB” 87, 1977, 252-3.

The venerable martyr addressed them in words such as these: “O my children – would that your blows were as strong as your minds are wicked! – why do you snarl your efforts in delays? I beg you, show a strength beyond your age. Accomplish the will of the impious persecutor more swiftly, excavate the innards of my stomach more profoundly, plough the furrowed acre more deeply, that the field of my body may bear fruit more abundantly and he who sows in groans may reap in haste”. To this one of the wicked youths is said to have replied...

Glosses in medieval manuscripts occasionally attest to the same interpretation. Thus in Köln, Dombibliothek, MS 81, fol. 41v (saec. X/XI) we find the marginal annotation *s<cilicet> Cassianus inquit*. In Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS lat. 8088, fol. 60r (saec. XII) *fortes* has the interlinear gloss *ait*.

Both the medieval glosses and Cellarius’s note are the equivalents of the quotation marks used by modern editors. Yet their perceived necessity points to a problem with the text as thus interpreted. Precisely because they had no quotation marks to employ, ancient and medieval Latin poets are normally careful to alert the reader to the boundaries of speeches. The opening of embedded *oratio recta* can be signalled by a verb of speech such as *ait* or *inquit*, or by elliptical formulations like *tunc ille*. Readers also need to know when a speech is over and the main narrative resumes. Hence the familiar closing formulae of Vergilian epic: *sic ait...*; *haec ubi dicta...*; *vix ea fatus erat...*; *dixerat et...*, and so forth. Prudentius is no exception here. Table 1 offers evidence of his practice in the *Peristephanon*<sup>5</sup>.

Table 1.		Direct Address in the <i>Peristephanon</i>	
<i>P.</i>	O.R.	Start cue	End cue
1.	58-69	—	<i>Haec loquentes</i>
2.	25-8	<i>dixerat iam Xystus</i>	<i>Extrema vox episcopi</i>
	57-108	<i>inquit</i>	<i>ad ista</i>
	113-32	<i>Inquit</i>	—
	169-76	<i>Tum martyr</i>	—
	185-312	<i>Contra ille... ait</i>	—
	313-56	<i>exclamat... praefectus</i>	<i>Haec fante praefecto</i>
	329-30	<i>dicis</i>	—
	401-4	<i>compellat adfatu brevi</i>	—
	406-8	<i>Tunc ille</i>	<i>Haec... dixerat</i>
	413-84	<i>deinde... obsecrat</i>	<i>Hic finis orandi fuit</i>
3.	66-95	<i>vociferans</i>	<i>Talibus</i>
	97-125	<i>praetor ait</i>	<i>Martyr ad ista nihil</i>
	136-40	<i>Eulalia numerante notas</i>	<i>Haec... canebat</i>
5.	21-8	<i>Inquit</i>	—
	33-40	<i>Exclamat hic Vincentius</i>	—
	42-52	<i>Hic ille... ait</i>	—

<sup>5</sup> *Per.* 4 and the brief *Per.* 8 include no direct speech and are thus omitted.

<i>P.</i>	<i>O.R.</i>	<i>Start cue</i>	<i>End cue</i>
	54-92	<i>Respondit ille</i>	<i>His intonantem martyrem</i>
	95-116	<i>iudex... conclamat</i>	<i>Ridebat haec miles Dei</i>
	129-44	<i>Datianus aiebat</i>	<i>His contra</i>
	146-72	<i>Levites refert</i>	<i>Haec fatur</i>
	177-84	<i>Cui praetor... exsibilat</i>	<i>His... auditis</i>
	185-200	<i>martyr... ait</i>	<i>His</i>
	206-8	<i>Decernit</i>	—
	285-304	<i>conpellat his dictis</i>	<i>Haec ille</i>
	329-32	<i>Inquit</i>	—
	383-92	<i>Ait</i>	<i>Sic frendit</i>
	433-64	—	<i>Haec iussa</i>
6.	22-7	<i>praeceptor...firmat</i>	<i>His dictis</i>
	37-42	<i>ait</i>	<i>Haec fanti</i>
	44-7	<i>refert sacerdos</i>	—
	48	<i>ait ille</i>	—
	54-60	<i>Ait</i>	—
	77- 84	<i>Inquit</i>	<i>Vix haec ediderat</i>
	94-9	<i>spiritus... serit loquellam</i>	<i>Haec inter</i>
7.	56-85	<i>Ait</i>	<i>Orantem... vox deserit</i>
9.	17-98	<i>Aedituus... ait</i>	—
	35-6	<i>Respondent</i>	—
	37-42	<i>Conclamat</i>	—
	65-6 (?)	—	—
	69-82	<i>exclamat quidam</i>	<i>Talia</i>
10.	18-20	<i>talia praecepta</i>	—
	38-40	<i>ille serpens... clamat</i>	—
	76-95	<i>sic tyrannus incipit</i>	<i>His... contra</i>
	97-107	<i>ille... reddit</i>	<i>his</i>
	116-20	<i>Inquit</i>	—
	123-390	<i>martyr... inquit</i>	<i>disserente martyre</i>
	396-425	<i>vim furoris evomit</i>	—
	426-45	<i>Tunc ille</i>	—
	446-50	<i>clamitans iudex ait</i>	—
	459-545	<i>addit... Romanus loqui</i>	<i>Vixdum elocutus martyr</i>
	548-55	<i>interiserit Asclepiades</i>	—
	561-70	<i>Martyr... fatur</i>	—
	573-85	<i>tunc sic ait</i>	—
	586-660	<i>Romanus inquit</i>	<i>Hanc... vocem</i>
	664-5	<i>Inquit</i>	—
	667-70	<i>Ait</i>	—
	672-5	<i>infans... rettulit</i>	—
	680	<i>Inquit</i>	—
	681-5	<i>Respondit ille</i>	—
	686-95	<i>exclamat... Asclepiades</i>	<i>Vix haec profatus</i>
	721-90	<i>vocibus sic increpat</i>	<i>Talia canente matre</i>
	764-5	<i>clamabat illa</i>	—

<i>P.</i>	<i>O.R.</i>	Start cue	End cue
	767-75	<i>mater aiebat</i>	<i>His... stimulis</i>
	794-5	<i>cognitor pronuntiat</i>	—
	801-10	<i>quos... ignavos vocat</i>	<i>istis</i>
	812-15	<i>se... in supremam concitat sententiam</i>	—
	818-20	<i>Ait</i>	—
	820-25	<i>inquit ille</i>	—
	833-5	<i>Ait</i>	<i>Dixit</i>
	839-40	<i>hymnum canebat</i>	<i>Talia retexens</i>
	852-5	<i>inquit ille</i>	<i>Haec eius</i>
	868-95	<i>Inquit</i>	—
	922-5	<i>Asclepiades... addit deinde</i>	—
	928-60	<i>Romanus... sic orsus est</i>	—
	982-1000	<i>refutat medicus... calumniam</i>	<i>His</i>
	1006-1100	<i>Respondit his Romanus</i>	—
	1101-5	<i>iudex minatur</i>	<i>Dixit</i>
	1139-40	<i>diceret rex</i>	—
11.	29-34	<i>Respondit</i>	<i>His</i>
	63-76	<i>quaesitor ait</i>	<i>Haec persultanti</i>
	85-6	<i>Inquit</i>	—
	87-8	—	<i>Vix haec ille</i>
	110	<i>Ultima vox... haec est</i>	—
12.	1-2	—	—
	3-66	—	—
	26	<i>Ipse prius... dixerat</i>	<i>inquit</i>
13.	55-69	<i>nomen Patris invocat</i>	<i>Vocibus his</i>
	90-91	<i>Inquit</i>	—
	92-4	<i>Ille sub haec</i>	—
14.	21-30	<i>Tum... tyrannus... ait</i>	—
	31-7	<i>inquit Agnes</i>	<i>Sic elocutam</i>
	64-6	<i>hostis... ait</i>	—
	69-84	<i>haec ait</i>	<i>Sic fata</i>

As the table shows, Prudentius's handling of closing cues varies considerably. About half the time we find an explicit marker, often including some form of *haec* or *talia*. In other cases a report of the interlocutor's reaction makes clear that the speech has ended, e.g. 10.676 *stupuit tyrannus* ("the tyrant was dumbstruck"). In sections of animated back-and-forth, the opening of a new speech can simultaneously make clear that the previous one has ended. Thus at 10.821 *inquit ille* simultaneously opens the persecutor's speech and makes clear that Romanus has finished. Sometimes no closing cue is needed, either because the speech is so short that the initial *ait* or *inquit* cue is still in force or because the end of a speech coincides with the end of the poem (as at 10.1140). By contrast, in nearly every case, and regardless of the length of the speech, Prudentius provides some kind of introductory

cue to signal a shift to direct discourse and to clarify who is speaking (if that is not obvious from the context).

Since virtually all of the examples include an introductory marker, it is worth looking briefly at the four (in addition to 9.65-6) that do not. Three of these cases involve an exchange of questions and answers. One is the dialogue between persecutor and crowd at *Per.* 11.85-8:

*Ille supinata residens cervice: "quis" inquit  
 "dicitur?" adfirmant dicier Hippolytum.  
 "ergo sit Hippolytus, quatiat turbetque iugales  
 intereatque feris dilaceratus equis".  
 Vix haec ille...*

The judge, sitting with head thrown back, asked: "What is he called?" and they stated that he was called Hippolytus. "Hippolytus let him be, then. Let him get a team frightened and agitated and be torn to death by wild horses". His words were hardly spoken when...

Here the crowd's answer, reported in *oratio obliqua*, is virtually parenthetical; it is hard to see how any reader could feel confused as to the speaker of 87-8 (and the opening of 89 would make things clear in any case).

A more striking case is the opening of *Peristephanon* 12, where an unknown speaker (A) asks a two-line question, which a second voice (B) will spend the remainder of the poem answering:

*"Plus solito coeunt ad gaudia: dic, amice, quid sit.  
 Romam per omnem cursitant ovantque."  
 "Festus apostolici nobis redit hic dies triumph..."*

"People are gathering more than is usual for rejoicings. Tell me, friend, what it means. All over Rome they are running about in exultation". "Today we have the festival of the apostles' triumph coming round again..."

The abruptness of this opening is clearly intentional. As previous scholars have noted, Prudentius is here using a technique he would have encountered in earlier poetry, including Propertius 4.1 and Ovid's *Fasti*<sup>6</sup>. In this case readerly disorientation is a goal deliberately sought. But the disorientation is, by design, only momentary. While the changeover from A to B here is not explicitly signaled, A's *dic, amice* ("tell me, friend") in line 1 sets up a dialogic situation: we expect a response from the *amicus*, and at line 3 we get one.

The third such case is *Per.* 5.433 ff. We will be looking at this passage more closely below; here we can note simply that the opening of the prefect's speech, *Nullus, nec umquam desinam* ("None. I shall never give up") responds to a question, *nullusne te franget modus?* ("Will no limit break you?") posed in the previous line. The shift in person from *te* to *desinam* clearly implies a change of speaker, and the shift is emphasized by the place-

<sup>6</sup> A.-M. Palmer, *Prudentius on the Martyrs* (Oxford 1989) 118-19.

ment of the new utterance at the beginning of a new four-line stanza.

By contrast, *Per.* 9.65-6 answer no question previously posed and are not part of any dialogue already in progress (or imagined to be in progress). One might argue that the student's *quid gemis?* (69) refers to Cassian's supposed speech at 65-6 and thus retrospectively establishes those two lines as *oratio recta*. But the introduction to that speech (*exclamat quidam*) hardly compels such a reading. Nor does the opening of the student's taunt really respond to 65-6: *quid gemis? ... tute ipse magister / istud dedisti ferrum et armasti manus* ("why do you groan/complain? you yourself as our teacher gave us this iron and put the weapon in our hands"). If this implies any preceding utterance at all, it is not "Strike harder, boys!" but "Ungrateful whelps! Why do you turn your styluses upon your teacher?" Cassian's alleged utterance is also separated from the student's putative response by 67-8: *sed male conatus tener infirmusque laborat, / tormenta crescunt, dum fatiscit carnifex* ("But the young boys from lack of vigour fail in their efforts and begin to be fatigued; the torments worsen while the tormentors grow faint"). The phrasing here suggests that some indeterminate but considerable time elapses before the student speaks, making it still less likely that his speech responds to 65-6. And while *quid gemis* could in theory mean "what are you complaining about?" (implying a previous complaint) it could also mean "What do you have to complain of?" or – what it literally says – "Why do you groan?"<sup>7</sup>.

Here again it is useful to contrast the prose paraphrase by Hucbald. The latter equips the enhanced speech he attributes to Cassian with a proper introductory cue: *quos... martir... talibus videbatur compellere verbis* ("The venerable martyr seemed to address them in the following words"). Hucbald also omits the mention of further torture, making the student's speech at *Per.* 9.69-82 follow directly on from, and explicitly answer, the martyr's: *ad hec fertur... respondisse unus...* ("To this one of the wicked youths is said to have replied..."). This is all perfectly clear – and it is exactly what we do not find in Prudentius.

<sup>7</sup> At Sen. *De ira* 3.15.4 *quid gemis, demens?*, the sense "complain" is at least possible. At Sedul. *Carm. Pasch.* 4.280 *quidve Maria gemis?* the context (mourning for Lazarus) would allow for groans, speech, or some combination of the two. More clearly non-verbal are Lucan 4.182 f. *quid pectora pulsas? / quid, vaesane, gemis? fletus quid fundis inanes?* (where the surrounding verbs argue against speech) and Stat. *Ach.* 1.656, where Achilles, after raping Deidamia, asks *quid gemis ingentes caelo paritura nepotes?* No previous speech by Deidamia has been reported (she is hardly in any condition to make one) and the questions that precede (650 *quid trepidas?*; 655 *quid defles...*?) make clear that *gemis* refers to groans or moans. Note that we should not take it for granted that Cassian is in fact groaning (or complaining); the student is hardly a good-faith reporter, and it is a common rhetorical technique to attribute unflattering reactions to an opponent ("Stop smirking!"; "Ah, he blushes!") regardless of accuracy. See H. Gotoff, *Oratory: The Art of Illusion*, "HSCPh" 95, 1993, 289-313, esp. 302-4.

The best – indeed, the only possible – parallel for the conventional reading of these lines would appear to be the soliloquy of the martyrs Emeterius and Chelidonius at *Per.* 1.58-69, introduced as follows:

*Hic duorum cara fratrum concalescunt pectora,  
fida quos per omne tempus iunxerat sodalitas.  
Stant parati ferre quidquid sors tulisset ultima,  
seu foret praebenda cervix ad bipennem publicam      55  
verberum post vim crepantum, post catastas igneas,  
sive pardis offerendum pectus aut leonibus.  
“Nosne Christo procreati Mammonae dicabimur  
et Dei formam gerentes serviemus saeculo?  
absit ut caelestis ignis se tenebris misceat.”      60*

Hereupon two brothers' loving hearts grew warm. Faithful comradeship had ever united them, and now they stood ready to bear whatsoever their fortune's extremity should bring, whether they must submit their necks to the executioner's axe after suffering the assault of the cracking scourge or the burning-hot gridiron, or must present their breasts to leopards or lions. "Shall we who are children of Christ dedicate ourselves to Mammon? Shall we who wear the likeness of God be slaves to the world? Never may the heavenly fire mingle with darkness."

The shift to direct discourse here is undeniably sudden, but even in this case there are palliating factors. Once more the appearance of a new speaker coincides with a new stanza. The sudden shift in person (*Nos...*) marks a disjunction and helps us guess the identity of the new speaker: it is natural to assume that the person saying "We..." is one of the *duo fratres* to whom we have been introduced in the previous sentence. The speech is substantial enough (twelve lines) to constitute a self-contained unit. And however abrupt the transition to direct speech may be on the front end, it is marked clearly on the back end by the closing cue *Haec loquentes...* ("So saying...") at 70.

The situation at 9.65-6 is different. While the quotation does begin a new hexameter, the epodic couplets of *Per.* 9 are not really substantial enough to constitute a "stanza". The first-person *precor* does suggest a shift, but who is the "I"? The preceding passage has been devoted to the contrasting figures of the shallow and deep stabbers. For the past ten lines Cassian has figured in the narrative merely as a succession of body parts (*viscus... cutem... membra... summa... viscera... vitalia...*). He has not been mentioned as an integral person or in the nominative since *Christi confessor* at 55. Perhaps influenced by such considerations, at least two modern translators have even tried to assign the two lines not to Cassian but to the persecuting judge, from whom



we have heard nothing since line 42.<sup>8</sup> This is surely mistaken: the verb *precor* seems too submissive for this official, and anyway why should he wish to spare Cassian suffering? (The more pain the better!) But the proposal does suggest that Cassian's claim on 65-6 is less than irresistible.

On the conventional reading, then, 9.65-6 is at best an extreme outlier and at worst literally unparalleled in the *Peristephanon*: a two-line speech dropped into the middle of a narrative, with no cue to the reader at either beginning or end, or any hint as to the identity of the speaker<sup>9</sup>. The problem is the more striking since it could so easily have been avoided, simply by inserting an introductory couplet: "As the agony grew greater the martyr broke into speech; turning to his tormentors he addressed them: ..."

Also problematic is the content of the supposed speech. It is not unusual for Prudentius's martyrs to urge their tormentors to greater effort, as Cassian would be doing here<sup>10</sup>. But they typically do so in order to increase their own glory (or rather, God's) and to enhance the force of their testimony. Quirinus, sentenced to drowning in *Per.* 7, does pray for death, but in his case out of fear that his miraculous floatation might deny him the palm of martyrdom<sup>11</sup>. His prayer, moreover, is directed (as one would expect) to God<sup>12</sup>. For a martyr to plead with his tormentors to be put out of his misery is not only unparalleled but, from a martyrological standpoint, positively unseemly. It is notable that one effect of the additions in Hucbald's prose paraphrase is to bring the passage more closely into line with the conventional motif of scornful challenge: *interna viscerum rimamini profundius, ... quo terra corporis mei fructum ferat uberius* ("excavate the innards of my stomach more profoundly, ... that the field of my body may bear fruit more abundantly").

How are we to account for this apparent clumsiness? If the view of the

<sup>8</sup> Eagen (as above n. 2) 186: "'Be unflinching' *the judge cries...*" (my italics). The same assumption underlies the comment in Spinelli (as cited above n. 2) 214 n. 25 "*Este, precor, fortes*. Li ha eletti carnefici, li esorta a esserlo con zelo. L'autorità pagana è maestra di perversione e di violenza".

<sup>9</sup> It is telling that a number of translators feel compelled to silently insert such a cue. So Eagen (quoted above n. 8); also Guillén and Rodríguez (as cited above n. 2) 617: "Sed valientes, os ruego – *les dice el mártir* – , y vencid los pocos años con vuestros esfuerzos" (my italics); Thomson (as cited above n. 1) 227: "'Be stout, I beg,' *he cries*, 'and outdo your years....'" (my italics). I have omitted this phrase (for obvious reasons) in the version of Thomson's translation used at the start of this article.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *Per.* 5.118-20, 146-52; 10.801-10.

<sup>11</sup> *Per.* 7.51-3 *sensit martyr episcopus | iam partam sibi praeripi | palmam mortis et exitus* ("The martyr bishop felt he was being robbed of the prize of death and departure he had won").

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Fux (as cited above n. 2) 337: "Le fait que, dans sa détresse, le martyr ne s'adresse pas à Dieu... mais à ses bourreaux est unique dans le *Peristephanon*."

lines as *oratio recta* represented the only possible explanation, we might simply have to accept that – for whatever reason – Prudentius here departed from his habitual practice and exhibited less than his usual compositional skill. Alternatively we might posit a lacuna after line 64. But in fact there is another possible explanation, one proposed more than two centuries ago by one of Prudentius's most perceptive commentators. In his note on 9.65-6 Faustino Arévalo observes: "Cellarius et Teolius has voces martyris esse dicunt. Sed possunt etiam esse narrantis, qui, quasi praesens adesset, in eas voces eruperit" ("Cellarius and Teolius say that these are the martyr's words. But they could also be those of the narrator, who breaks into speech as if he were there in person")<sup>13</sup>. The two lines, in other words, can be understood not as an utterance by Cassian himself, but as an emotional apostrophe by the *aedituus*, whose sympathy for the martyr causes him to address the boys in the painting as if they were actually present before him (an effect made easier by the sequence of vivid present-tense verbs in the immediately preceding lines 62-4: *scit... pulsat... dat... adplicat...*).

Arévalo's suggestion was dismissed without argument by Prudentius's nineteenth-century editors, Obbarius and Dressel<sup>14</sup>. It appears to have been ignored ever since. Yet there much to be said for it. For one thing, it eliminates the problem of tone. While it would be unseemly for Cassian to appeal to his tormentors (and especially for him to do so in vain), there is no reason why the *aedituus* should not feel pity for the saint's suffering and beg the boys on his behalf for a swifter death.

Apostrophe of characters by a narrator is a standard device in ancient poetry<sup>15</sup>. It may be employed not only by the external or main narrator but by an internal sub-narrator, like the *aedituus* here<sup>16</sup>. In some cases it may be

<sup>13</sup> F. Arévalo, *M. Aureli Clementis Prudenti V.C. Carmina. Tomus Secundus* (Rome 1789) 1058. Since his text does not employ quotation marks (cf. n. 3 above), Arévalo is not compelled to decide between these options.

<sup>14</sup> Obbarius (as cited above n. 2) 247, "Verba sunt martyris, non poetae, uti Arev. vult" ("These are the martyr's words, not the poet's, as Arévalo would have it" – though Arévalo wrote "narrantis," not "poetae"); Dressel (as cited above n. 2) 386, "minus feliciter... Arev." ("less happily Arévalo").

<sup>15</sup> See in general E. S. Zyroff, *The Author's Apostrophe in Epic from Homer through Lucan* (Ph.D. Diss., Johns Hopkins University 1971) 125-316. Homeric instances are concentrated on a handful of characters, especially Menelaus and Patroclus in the *Iliad* and Eumaeus in the *Odyssey*: see, e.g., E. Block, *The Narrator Speaks: Apostrophe in Homer and Vergil*, "TAPhA" 112, 1982, 7-22; M. Edwards, *Homer. Poet of the Iliad* (Baltimore and London 1987) 37-8. For the use of the device in Roman poetry J. Endt, *Der Gebrauch der Apostrophe bei den lateinischen Epikern*, "WS" 27, 1905, 106-29 is more satisfactory than E. Hampel, *De apostrophae apud Romanorum poetas usu* (Jena 1908) (useful mostly for its collection of references).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. e.g. Verg. *Aen.* 2. 429 f.; 3. 710.

addressed to a figure in an ecphrasis, a genre to which *Per.* 9 bears some obvious resemblances<sup>17</sup>. It is a trope particularly favored by Lucan, who is a major influence on Prudentius in other respects also<sup>18</sup>. And there is at least one example of narratorial apostrophe elsewhere in the *Peristephanon*. In *Per.* 5, the prefect Datianus's efforts to outrage the corpse of the martyr Vincent have been miraculously stymied. The narrator – in this case the poet himself – taunts him directly:

*Quis audienti talia,  
Datiane, tunc sensus tibi?  
Quantis gementem spiculis  
figebat occultus dolor,  
cum te perempti corporis 425  
virtute victum cerneres,  
ipsis et inpar ossibus  
vacuisque iam membris minor?  
Sed quis, tyranne pertinax,  
hunc inpotentem spiritum 430  
determinabit exitus?  
Nullusne te franget modus?*

What were your feelings then, Datianus, when you heard such news? How sore were the piercing pricks of hidden pain under which you groaned, when you saw yourself beaten by the virtue that was in the body you did to death, and were no match even for the bones, and inferior to a frame now lifeless? But, obstinate oppressor, what issue will put an end to this ungoverned wrath? Will no limit break you?

An answer to this rhetorical question comes, astonishingly, from Datianus himself, who responds directly to the narrator from within the poem:

*“Nullus, nec umquam desinam.  
Nam si ferina inmanitas  
mansuescit et clementia 435  
corvos voraces mitigat,  
mergam cadaver fluctibus...”*

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Aen.* 6.30-31 (the narrator to Icarus, omitted from Daedalus's carvings); 8.643 (the narrator to Mettus Fufetius on Aeneas's shield); 668 (similar apostrophe of Catiline). On the question of whether the narrative in *Per.* 9 can properly be called an ecphrasis see below.

<sup>18</sup> On Lucan's use of apostrophe see Zyroff (as cited above n. 15) 204-52, who for present purposes is more helpful than the recent treatments of R. A. Faber, *The Adaptation of Apostrophe in Lucan's Bellum Civile*, in C. Deroux, ed. *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History* 12 (Brussels 2005) 334-43; F. D'Alessandro Behr, *Feeling History. Lucan, Stoicism and the Poetics of Passion* (Columbus 2007); P. Asso, *The Intrusive Trope: Apostrophe in Lucan*, “MD” 61, 2009, 161-73. For Lucan's influence on Prudentius see G. Sixt, *Des Prudentius Abhängigkeit von Seneca und Lucan*, “Philologus” 51, 1892, 505-6; Palmer (as cited above n. 6) 184-8.

"None. I shall never give up. For if savage beasts grow tame and devouring ravens soft and gentle, I shall plunge the corpse into the sea. ..."

Next to this, the brief narratorial apostrophe of 9.65-66 seems hardly remarkable at all.

Narratorial apostrophe is sometimes merely a metrical convenience, but in most cases it carries an emotional charge. The poet may express sympathy for his characters, or reproach them for misbehavior, or speculate on their fates had things been different. But sometimes, as (I suggest) at *Per.* 9.65-66, the poet will go still further, exhorting his characters or even issuing instructions to them. Thus Vergil's Anchises calls on the souls that will become Pompey and Caesar to avert the Civil War (*Aen.* 6.832-5):

*Ne, pueri, ne tanta animis adsuescite bella  
neue patriae validas in viscera vertite viris;  
tuque prior, tu parce, genus qui ducis Olympo,  
proice tela manu, sanguis meus!*

My children, do not let such great wars become embedded in your hearts, or turn your powerful strength inward against your country; and you [sc. Caesar], who trace your lineage from heaven, be first to give way, and drop the weapon from your hand, o descendant of mine.

Here the effect is less striking than in some later examples: Anchises, narrating the Roman pageant, speaks to souls who are, at least in some sense, actually present, and who could in theory profit from his advice (not that they will do so). Similar in kind is the famous apostrophe at 6.851: *tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento* ("Be mindful, Roman, to govern nations by your power").

As often, Lucan goes further than Vergil. I offer one example of many. At 6.196-201, the narrator upbraids the soldiers opposing the heroic centurion Scaeva:

*Quid nunc, vaesani, iaculis levibusve sagittis  
perditis haesuros numquam vitalibus ictus?  
Hunc aut tortilibus vibrata falarica nervis  
obruat aut vasti muralia pondera saxi;  
hunc aries ferro ballistaeque limine portae  
promoveat!*

Fools! Why do you waste your shots of light javelins and arrows? They can never reach the seat of life. Let a missile sped by twisted cords crush him, or the wall-battering weight of a huge boulder! Let an iron battering-ram and a catapult drive him from the threshold of the gate!<sup>19</sup>

Note the similarity to the situation in Prudentius: here too the narrator ad-

<sup>19</sup> Translation adapted from J. D. Duff, *Lucan* (Cambridge MA and London 1928) 319.

dresses a group of attackers mounting an assault on a lone individual. And he addresses them not merely to reproach or pose a rhetorical question (though he does that too), but to urge them on to greater efforts and even offer unsolicited advice on tactics. This use of what we might call “injunctive” apostrophe seems distinctively Lucanesque – not least because of the way it flirts with absurdity<sup>20</sup>. The soldiers are long dead, after all, and their actions already fixed in history; they cannot obey the narrator’s instructions, or even hear them. But the narrator is no more deterred by that than are modern moviegoers who catch themselves shouting vainly at onscreen characters (“Turn around! It’s behind you!”)<sup>21</sup>. Like Prudentius’s *aedituus*, he has become so emotionally bound up in his own narrative that he forgets his words can have no effect.

The case for the reassignment of *Per.* 9.65-6 to the *aedituus* rests on narratological considerations, specifically on the evidence for Prudentius’s normal practice as outlined above. Once accepted, however, it has an interesting interpretative consequence. Cassian speaks nowhere else in the poem, so the reassignment reduces his total lines from two to zero. This is, at first glance, surprising, for Prudentius’s martyrs typically have a lot to say for themselves. The classic example is Romanus in *Peristephanon* 10, who manages to deliver an extensive harangue (928ff.) even after having his tongue forcibly removed. Other martyrs also engage in animated dialogue with their persecutors: Lawrence (*Per.* 2), Eulalia (*Per.* 3), Vincent (*Per.* 5), Fructuosus (*Per.* 6), Cyprian (*Per.* 13), Agnes (*Per.* 14) – all toy verbally with the authorities or castigate their ignorance. Why, then, is Cassian silent? One explanation, that he is mute as a figure in a painting, we can surely dismiss. For one thing, it is not clear that the *aedituus*’s narrative, though it is triggered by a painting, is ecphrastic in a strict sense. But in any case the poet (or his stand-in) has no hesitation in attributing speeches to anonymous bystanders (35-6), to the persecuting judge (37-42), and to one of the youthful tormentors (69-82). Indeed, their volubility only underlines Cassian’s muteness.

I would suggest that Cassian’s silence has something to do with his profession. Prudentius goes out of his way to emphasize Cassian’s status as a teacher. And not any ordinary *grammaticus*, but specifically a teacher of

<sup>20</sup> Other examples: 4.110-120, 186-7; 5.297-9, 313-14; 7.24-5, 233-4, 590-92, 699-711, 803-8; 8.784-5, 806-15. Effectively in this category, though not containing an imperative or hortatory subjunctive, is 8.53-4. As M. Leigh, *Lucan. Spectacle and Engagement* (Oxford 1997) 326 n. 4 observes, “Lucan’s [Silver Latin] successors only felt comfortable giving instructions to their characters at the liminal point between life and death,” as, e.g., at Stat. *Theb.* 3.109 (the poet to Maeon): *Elysias, i, carpe plagas* (“Go, attain the Elysian fields”).

<sup>21</sup> I had written this before seeing Zyroff (as cited above n. 15) 225, who makes an almost identical comparison.

shorthand. He does this when we are first introduced to the martyr (9.21-4):

*Praefuerat studiis puerilibus et grege multo  
saepius magister litterarum sederat,  
verba notis brevibus comprehendere cuncta peritus,  
raptimque punctis dicta praepetibus sequi.*

He had been in charge of a school for boys and sat as a teacher of reading and writing with a great throng round him, and he was skilled in putting every word in short signs and following speech quickly with swift pricks on the wax.

When Cassian is haled before the persecutor, the latter asks his profession (9.35-6):

*respondent: "agmen tenerum ac puerile gubernat,  
fictis notare verba signis inbuens".*

they answered: "He teaches a company of young children, giving them their first lessons in recording words with signs invented for the purpose".

In *Per.* 11 it is Hippolytus's name that suggests to the persecutor an appropriate method of execution. Here it is the martyr's profession that does so, and of course that is why the persecutor is made to ask for it (why should he care what Cassian's profession is?). But Cassian's field is significant in another way as well. For the shorthand writer has no call to speak himself. His duty is to take down silently the words of others, to be the medium through which others speak. True to his avocation, Cassian registers the "speech" of his students as bloody *notae* inscribed on the tablet of his own flesh. His testimony as martyr is the fidelity with which he records, silently, what God and his tormentors have dictated. *Cum tacet, clamat.*<sup>22</sup>

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#### ABSTRACT

Recent editors and translators take it for granted that Prudentius, *Per.* 9.65-6 is spoken by St. Cassian. This assumption can be traced back to early modern editions; it is already found in medieval glosses and a prose paraphrase by Hucbald of St. Amand (fl. 900 AD). However, it violates Prudentius's normal rules for introducing *oratio recta*. I argue that these lines are better taken as an apostrophe by the poem's internal narrator, an interpretation first suggested by Arévalo but largely ignored since. This use of apostrophe by the narrator has precedents in earlier Latin poetry, especially Lucan. Cassian does not speak elsewhere in the poem, so reassignment of 9.65-6 would leave him a mute character. I suggest why Prudentius might have chosen to depict him in this way.

#### KEYWORDS

Prudentius, *Peristephanon*, Cassian, apostrophe, narrator, Lucan.

<sup>22</sup> I am grateful to Christopher Catherine for comments on an earlier version of this article.