

VIOLATING THE BODY'S ENVELOPE:
THE EFFECTS OF VIOLENCE AND MUTILATION
IN FOUR POEMS OF PRUDENTIUS' *PERISTEPHANON*

Lisa Nicole Reynolds

Thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Arts
in the Discipline of Classics,
Centre for European Studies and General Linguistics
University of Adelaide
February 2009

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE	i
TABLE OF CONTENTS	ii
ABSTRACT	iv
DECLARATION	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
INTRODUCTION	1
1. CHAPTER 1	14
1.1. Disgust and Horror	14
1.2. How did the Romans Experience Disgust and Horror?	15
1.3. The Intensity of Disgust and Horror	18
1.4. Violence in Roman Society: General Remarks	19
1.5. Slaves	20
1.6. Interrogation under Torture	23
1.7. Condemned Criminals	24
1.8. The Arena Games	26
1.9. The Work of Elias and Dunning	28
1.10. The Arena Games: Enjoyment of Violence and Reactions of Spectators	31
1.11. The Gulf of Sympathy	33
1.12. Lack of Sympathy and Blaming the Victim	34
1.13. <i>Fortitudo</i> , Stoicism and Pain	36
1.14. Summary	38
1.15. Violence in Roman Literature: Prudentius' Heritage	39
1.16. Violence in Life and Violence in Art	39
1.17. Declamations	41
1.18. Ovid: Flaying of Marsyas	42
1.19. Seneca: Death of Hippolytus	43
1.20. Lucan: Naval Battle of Massilia	45
1.21. The Effect of Violent Scenes in the <i>Peristephanon</i> : Disgust and Horror	47
1.22. Disgust Elicitors: Assaults on the Senses	48
1.23. Contagion and Contamination	50
1.24. Non-sensory Disgust	50
1.25. Divisibility of the Human Body as a Major Cause of Disgust	52
1.26. The Allure of the Disgusting	53
1.27. Horror	54
1.28. Characteristics of Horror	55
1.29. The Paradox of Horror	55
1.30. The Enjoyment of Horror	56
1.31. The Paradox of Horror and the Effect of Violence	57
1.32. Disgust and Horror in Roman Literature	58
1.33. <i>Enargeia</i> and <i>Ekphrasis</i>	61
2. CHAPTER 2: <i>PERISTEPHANON</i> II	64
2.1. Hinting at Horror	64
2.2. Interior and Exterior	65
2.3. Lawrence's Group of Disabled Beggars	66
2.4. The Spiritual benefits of Suffering Attacks on the Body	70
2.5. Diseases of Eminent Romans	72

2.6.	Lawrence's Punishment: The Horror of a Delayed Death	78
2.7.	The Paradox of Gentle Torture.....	79
2.8.	The Smell of Burning Flesh	80
3.	CHAPTER 3: <i>PERISTEPHANON</i> III.....	83
3.1.	Hinting at Horror.....	83
3.2.	Eulalia's Character	83
3.3.	Reason vs Irrationality.....	87
3.4.	The Horror and Awe Evoked by Self-Inflicted Suffering	89
3.5.	A Bloodthirsty God	90
3.6.	A Bloodthirsty Emperor	91
3.7.	Eulalia's Suffering and Death	92
3.8.	Torture and Eloquence.....	93
3.9.	Eulalia's Final Torment.....	94
4.	CHAPTER 4: <i>PERISTEPHANON</i> IX	97
4.1.	A Visual Spectacle	97
4.2.	Communication Through Wounding.....	98
4.3.	Attacking the Skin: Unattractiveness and Disgust	99
4.4.	Youthful Executioners	100
4.5.	The Instruments of Torture.....	101
4.6.	The Poet's Reaction.....	104
4.7.	Cassian's Unique Sentence: Moral Considerations.....	105
4.8.	The Suitability of Youth to Cruel Punishment	107
4.9.	The Relationship Between Teacher and Student	108
4.10.	A Reversal of Roles	109
4.11.	The Cruelty of Youth	110
4.12.	Acting <i>En Masse</i>	111
4.13.	The Frailty of Youth.....	112
4.14.	Gentle Torture.....	113
5.	CHAPTER 5: <i>PERISTEPHANON</i> XI	116
5.1.	An Array of Martyrs	116
5.2.	Anonymity and Loss.....	117
5.3.	One of Many.....	118
5.4.	Exceptional Punishments.....	121
5.5.	Hippolytus' Spectacular Punishment.....	125
5.6.	Forces of Nature	126
5.7.	Giving up Control	126
5.8.	Wilderness and Civilization	127
5.9.	Hippolytus' Injuries	129
5.10.	A Visual Record	130
5.11.	The Living Flock and the Dismembered Body.....	131
6.	CHAPTER 6: THESIS CONCLUSION	133
6.1.	<i>Peristephanon</i> II	138
6.2.	<i>Peristephanon</i> III	139
6.3.	<i>Peristephanon</i> IX.....	141
6.4.	<i>Peristephanon</i> XI.....	144
6.5.	Closing Thoughts	147
7.	BIBLIOGRAPHY	149

Abstract

This thesis examines the violent punishments undergone by various martyrs in Prudentius' *Peristephanon*. In particular, it explores how the poet's depiction of this violence and suffering might affect readers of the collection. Four poems (poems II, III, IX and XI) are studied from the point of view of the emotions they are likely to evoke in the reader.

The question of whether different types of readers might undergo different emotional experiences while reading these poems arises as a result of the proposed study. The first chapter of this thesis thus examines the nature of emotions, focussing on their sources and composition. This examination suggests that an individual's emotional experience can be influenced both by biological factors and by social and cultural environment. With this in mind, an examination follows of various aspects of Roman society and culture which were likely to influence the ways in which its citizens, in particular, reacted to the violent scenes in the poems. We will also consider how our own specific cultural milieu may influence modern readers to sometimes react differently to Roman readers.

In particular, it is proposed that most readers of the *Peristephanon* will react with varying shades of disgust and horror. These two emotions are thus used as a framework for discussing reader reactions to the poems. Disgust and horror are understood in a very broad sense, allowing for different varieties of these emotions, which at times even give rise to contradiction and paradox.

The remaining chapters of the thesis are devoted to examinations of the four chosen poems which explore the various ways in which they might evoke horror and disgust among both Roman and modern readers. Often, there is considerable overlap between these two groups. These examinations provide a way of understanding why these poems are so striking, and have impacted so strongly on readers through the ages.

Declaration

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis being made available for photocopying and loan.

SIGNED: _____

DATE: _____

Acknowledgements

I am very grateful for the advice and assistance I received from my supervisors, Dr Jacqueline Clarke, and Dr Ronald Newbold. In addition, I owe much thanks to my parents. My mother, Helen Reynolds, assisted in formatting the thesis, and my father, Noel Reynolds, proofread the final draft.