

STRATEGIES FOR ELICITING EMOTIONAL RESPONSES IN THE *AEGRITUDO PERDICAЕ**

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to analyze the set of stylistic strategies and expressive features (such as adjectives, characterizations, expressions of sympathy, metaphorical representations) systematically employed by the author of *Aegritudo Perdicæ* to elicit emotional responses in the readers. *Aegritudo Perdicæ* is a Latin epyllion or epic miniature by an unknown poet, composed in the late 5th-early 6th century CE, during the period of *Regnum Vandalum* in North Africa. Its theme is Perdicæ's incestuous love for his mother Castalia, the depression into which the young man falls and his suicide. The present study considers the narrator's emotional intrusions, which serve as direct interventions in the narrative to guide the readers' emotional responses. These intrusions often heighten the emotional intensity of the scenes, as the narrator's subjective tone and personal engagement with the events influence the readers' perception. Through these diverse strategies, the author directs the readers' emotional engagement, guiding their responses toward specific characters, events, or situations, creating a profound pathos that resonates throughout the narrative.

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Keywords: *Aegritudo Perdicae*, *Regnum Vandalum*, epyllion, emotions, Poetics of Silence.

Introduction

The *Aegritudo Perdicae* (hereafter *AeP*) is a Latin epyllion or miniature epic of unknown authorship (Bright, 1987: 222), composed in 290 dactylic hexameters. The poem is preserved in a single 15th-century manuscript (Harleianus 3685) (Hunt, 1970: ii; Grillo, 2010: 7; Grillo, 2010: 140-149) and is likely dated to the late 5th or early 6th century CE. It thus belongs to the literary production of Late Antiquity, and more specifically to the Latin poetry of the *Regnum Vandalum* in North Africa¹.

The subject of the poem is Perdicas' incestuous desire for his mother, Castalia, the depression into which this feeling leads him, and ultimately, his suicide. The poet begins with an invocation to Cupid and offers a cautionary note, advising mothers not to read the poem. Following this proem, the narrative shifts to Perdicas' past; although he had honored all the celestial gods with due reverence and worship, he neglected Venus and her son, thereby incurring divine wrath. Therefore, upon his return to his homeland after many years of study in Athens, Cupid leads him into a grove to punish him. There, Perdicas falls asleep, and Cupid—having taken the form of his mother—appears to him in a dream and pierces his chest with an arrow. Upon arriving at his home, Perdicas beholds the woman from his dream and realizes that he has fallen madly in love with his own mother. From this point onward, his physical and emotional decline begins. Resolute in his decision never to confess his forbidden desire, he rejects food and water, progressively wasting away and approaching death with each passing day. Castalia summons various physicians to the house—including the famous ancient doctor Hippocrates—but they are unable to cure her son. Ultimately, having been defeated by his passion, Perdicas decides to take his own life.

As Bright notes, a central feature of the *AeP* is the combination of history with mythology (Bright, 1987: 223). The subject of the poem originates from two distinct historical figures: the Macedonian king Perdiccas II², whose story is first preserved

¹ Most scholars agree that the poem was written in Africa in the late 5th or early 6th century CE. See Bright (1987); Wolff (1988: 79); Malamud (1993: 155), Mattiacci (2007: 147); Wasyl (2011: 101); Shanzer (2014: 156); Miles (2017: 400); Zwierlein (2017: 297), Tempone (2023: 110) and Pappas (2025: 144). On the contrary, see Ballaira (1968), who believes that the poem was written in the 7th century CE in Visigothic Spain by an imitator of Dracontius.

² After the death of his father, Alexander I, Perdiccas II succeeded to the throne and fell in love with his father's mistress, Phila. Hippocrates, who was a contemporary of the king, was summoned to the court to determine the cause of Perdiccas' suffering and to treat him. Indeed, Hippocrates observed that Phila's presence was responsible for the king's condition and recommended her removal, thereby successfully restoring Perdiccas' health. For the story of Perdiccas II, see Bright (1987: 224).

by Soranus in his life of Hippocrates, and Prince Antiochus I³, whose story is first recorded by Valerius Maximus in his *Facta et dicta memorabilia*. Beyond these two historical narratives, the anonymous poet was undoubtedly influenced by mythological stories found in literary texts, such as Euripides' *Hippolytus* (Bright, 1987: 230-231) and Seneca's *Phaedra* (Bright, 1987: 231), Sophocles' and Seneca's *Oedipus* (Bright, 1987: 232; Di Rienzo, 1999), the tale of Myrrha in Book 10 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (Ballair, 1968), Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* (Mattiacci, 2007), and Dracontius' *Orestis Tragoedia* (Privitera, 1996: 143-145). It is worth noting that the wide range of literary texts that appear to have influenced the poet of *AeP* reflects the literary culture of the period, which was highly elitist, as well as the poet's extensive mythological education, in an era when classical education was considered particularly important⁴.

The aim of the present study is to analyze the full range of stylistic strategies and expressive features systematically employed by the narrator of the *AeP* to guide the readers' emotional responses. Specifically, I will examine how the narrator's subjective tone, his personal involvement in the events, and his deployment of various stylistic techniques serve to heighten the emotional intensity of the scenes and shape the readers' affective engagement, thereby generating a powerful pathos that resonates throughout the narrative.

Strategies for Eliciting Emotional Responses in the Poem

To begin with, it should be noted that the narrator's constant presence and intervention is a defining feature of the Latin epyllion⁵, the genre to which the *AeP* belongs. Each scene of the poem is introduced through narrative intrusions, lamentations, and exclamations (Schetter, 1991: 95; Wasyl, 2011: 104), as evidenced in lines *AeP* 72-74 («**Heu**, Perdica, gravis aestus radiosque micantes / solis te fugisse putas lucosque petisse, / ignoras: intus gravior tibi flamma paratur!»), 92-93 («**Heu**

³ The story of Prince Antiochus I is set in 294 BCE, when Seleucus divided his kingdom with his son. The prince fell passionately in love with Stratonice, his stepmother and the king's wife. His unrequited passion led to a serious illness, as he could neither free himself from his desire for Stratonice nor openly express his feelings. His father summoned the physician Erasistratus, who observed that the prince's pulse quickened whenever Stratonice was near. Using a clever ruse, the physician informed the king that his son was ill because he had fallen in love with his own wife and could only be cured if he were allowed to marry her. He then asked the king for his counsel. The king asked him to give up his wife and assured him that he himself would do the same if his son desired Stratonice. When the physician revealed the truth, the king honored his promise, and Antiochus was healed, ultimately marrying Stratonice and succeeding to his father's throne. For a detailed account of all sources preserving this story, see Ogden (2017: 212-225).

⁴ Miles (2017: 400) states that classical education during the reign of the Vandals was a connecting link in the newly formed and heterogeneous society.

⁵ According to Perutelli (1979: 64), this is the characteristic that distinguishes the Latin epyllion from the Hellenistic one.

quotiens iuvenis mutata est mente figura / vel quotiens pulsante deo nova forma secuta est!»), and 111 («**pro dolor!** hoc scelus est soli vigilantis amor»). Another characteristic feature of the Latin epyllion of Late Antiquity is the poet's emotionally charged narrative voice, through which he expresses sympathy for his protagonist from the very outset (Wasył, 2011: 22). Apostrophes to Perdicas and emphatic repetition of his name⁶ occur at pivotal moments in the plot —during his departure from Athens (*AeP* 19: «infelix **Perdica**, tibi (nam nuper Athenas)»), upon his arrival at Cupid's grove (*AeP* 72: «Heu, **Perdica**, gravis aestus radiosque micantes»), and during both the first (*AeP* 104: «Sola tibi dulci nunquam, **Perdica**, quieti») and second (*AeP* 191: «at non te, **Perdica**, umquam puer ille Cupido») harrowing nights he spends in his family home. The poet underscores the hero's helplessness and expresses his compassion by characterizing him as «infelix» (*AeP* 19, 22, 262), «miser» (*AeP* 82, 94, 114, 205, 236), and «miserandus» (*AeP* 219)⁷. Thus, the narrator seeks to shape the readers' reception of the central character through his emotional involvement in the narrative and the consistent use of expressions of sympathy, which can be traced throughout the entire poem.

The characterizations «miser» and «infelix» are, of course, typical adjectives attributed to the elegiac *amator*, endowing Perdicas with traits of the elegiac poet-lover. These particular adjectives evoke the mournful tone of elegy and function as generic markers (Pappas, 2016: 13). Moreover, Perdicas is described as «iuvenis», indicating that he is at the typical age of the elegiac lover⁸, an aspect of his character that is emphasized repeatedly throughout the poem (*AeP* 6, 81, 92, 134, 143, 219, 225). Already in the proem, the narrator reveals to the reader that the subject matter of the poem is the «dirus amor» (*AeP* 6) of Perdicas⁹. The adjective «dirus» signals the deviant nature of this *amor*, recalling the *furtivus amor* of Roman elegiac poetry¹⁰, while the noun *amor* itself serves as a symbolic metonymy for the elegiac genre (Harrison, 2007: 31-33). Thus, in addition to eliciting sympathy and compassion for Perdicas, the narrator also anticipates the poem's generic identity, instilling in the reader a sense of expectation regarding its content and outcome. Furthermore, considering that Roman love elegy is quintessentially a genre of failure, the poet predicts the tragic ending of his narrative.

⁶ For the emphatic use of words that can emotionally stimulate the reader, see Dainotti (2024: 124).

⁷ For the emotional characterizations of the hero, see Schetter (1991: 95). See also Bright (1987: 241), where he points out that the characterizations «miser» and «infelix» emphasize Perdicas' helplessness.

⁸ Ovid specifically argues that love is only appropriate for young people and is something shameful for the elderly, cf. *Ov. Am.* 1.9.4: «[...], turpe senilis amor».

⁹ It is worth noting at this point that the genre of erotic elegy was absent in Late Antiquity (until the appearance of Maximus' elegies in the mid-6th century CE). Love poetry at this time was represented by other genres, mainly the epyllion and the epigram, and elegies took on other themes besides love. Pappas (2025: 1-6) provides an informative overview of this issue.

¹⁰ For «dirus amor» as an expression used for adultery, see Hunt (1971: 38). Cf. *Ov. Met.* 10.426: «multaque, ut excuteret diros, si posset, amores».

Perdicas' unfortunate condition arises as a result of Venus' wrath. He is portrayed as a pious young man who honors all the gods (*AeP* 14-15: «Namque omnes superos et cetera templa deorum / ture pio sacroque mero votisque colebat»); however, it is emphatically stated —through a deliberate repetition— that he has neglected the worship of Venus and her son (*AeP* 16: «**oblitus** Veneris puerique **oblitus** Amoris»), thereby incurring divine *furor* (Tziora, 2024: 67). This tragic reversal from happiness to misfortune («pathos a fortuna») (Dainotti, 2024: 120-122) and the emphatic repetition of the adverb «hinc» —which marks the precise moment at which the incestuous passion is divinely ordained (*AeP* 17: «**hinc** offensa dea est, haec diri causa furoris», 18: «**hinc** quoque partus amor redeundi ad tecta parentum», 21: «**hinc** quoque regreditur matris periturus amore») — aim to arouse the readers' pity for Perdicas' fate, thus serving the emotional response the narrator seeks to provoke.

Perdicas' arrival at Castalia's house evokes the behavior of the *exclusus amator* in Roman elegiac poetry. Perdicas is addressed with the stock epithet of the elegiac poet-lover (*AeP* 82: «miser»), consumed by the intense passion of a *furtivus amor* (*AeP* 83: «ardet in incestum»), and reaches the threshold (*AeP* 84: «limina») of his beloved —that is, his mother— an element that functions as a generic marker of the *paraklausithyron* motif. Upon seeing him, Castalia greets Perdicas with maternal kisses —gestures that cause him pain (*AeP* 91: «oscula quoque dedit materna et **plena doloris**»), as he now fully realizes the meaning of his dream (Grillo, 2010: 56). The term «dolor» here clearly echoes the emotional suffering typical of elegiac poetry and thus reinforces the connection to the elegiac tradition. Moreover, the very name of the mother, Castalia, reflects her defining quality —her chastity (*casta*)— which stands in stark contrast to her son's incestuous desire (Hunt, 1971: 55; Bright, 1987: 242-243). It is worth noting that, at this moment and throughout the entire poem, the readers remain the sole witnesses to Perdicas' feelings (Wasyl, 2011: 107).

The night that follows is particularly anxious for Perdicas, as he burns with desire (*AeP* 105: «ardentia», 114: «ardebat»), remains sleepless (*AeP* 106: «vigilat», 111: «vigilantis»)¹¹, and sighs (*AeP* 107: «suspirat», 114: «suspiria»)¹² —exhibiting the typical symptoms (*erotica pathemata*) of a lovesick young man. His behavior («vigilat») recalls the *pervigilium*, a conventional duty of the elegiac *exclusus amator*. The following day finds Perdicas physically weakened (*AeP* 134: «deficient iuveni paulatim fortia membra»), refusing both food and water (*AeP* 136: «namque undas Cereremque negat victumque ciborum»). An emotion can serve as the driving force behind both physical and psychological changes that influence an individual's thoughts and behavior (Giouli, 2020: 31). The detailed description of Perdicas' emotions allows the readers to focus on the protagonist's dominant emotional

¹¹ For insomnia as a sign of love, see Hunt (1971: 62).

¹² Cf. González (2022: 28), where he states that sighing was considered a sign of melancholy and lovesickness.

state, which is not a fleeting condition but rather the very engine of the narrative action (Manuwald, 2020: 34). His experience of love, in other words, afflicts him with insomnia, loss of appetite, and physical weakness — symptoms that reveal to the readers that he is suffering from melancholy, brought on by his pathological passion¹³.

The protagonist's romantic emotion is also conveyed in a metaphorical way within the text, following a convention frequently employed by Roman love poets (Buccheri, De Felice, Fedriani, Short, 2020: 170, 177). The poet of the *AeP* draws upon the motif of *militia amoris* five times¹⁴. From the proem itself, the poet evokes the imagery of arrows, flames, and darts (*AeP* 1: «tua tela», 7: «flammas», «sagittas») — traditional weapons of war which, in the hands of Cupid, are transformed into instruments of desire, capable of inciting passion in both gods and mortals. In lines *AeP* 23-24, the god of love is described preparing for a battle of love, armed with flames and darts (*AeP* 23-24: «[...] flammis atque sagittis / armatus [...]»), using a distinctly epic and military vocabulary (*AeP* 23: «praeda», 24: «armatus»). In line *AeP* 117 («“Nox sceleris secreta mei, Nox conscia cladis”»), Perdicas characterizes his emotional suffering as «cladis», a term rooted in military language. In lines *AeP* 194-195 («Continuus tollit pharetras ac tela furoris / et tecum vigilat per noctis tempora longa»), Cupid turns his erotic weapons once more against Perdicas. Finally, in lines *AeP* 261-266, epic and military vocabulary (*AeP* 261: «victus», «viorum», 262: «sternitur»¹⁵, 264: «triumphum», 265: «virtus», 266: «superaveris», «armis») becomes especially prominent, through which the poet describes the victory and dominance of the erotic passion over Perdicas. Another motif systematically employed by the poet of the *AeP* is the depiction of love as madness (Buccheri, De Felice, Fedriani, Short, 2020: 178-179)¹⁶. Throughout the poem, Perdicas' pathological condition is characterized as a form of insanity through the repeated use of the term «furor» (*AeP* 9, 17, 118, 194, 200, 216, 238) and the adjective «demens» (*AeP* 96, 276) (Mazzini, 2012: 568). These two metaphorical renderings of the emotion of love (*militia amoris* and *amor* as madness) reflect Perdicas' intense passion, which has led to the loss of his self-determination and ultimately to madness. They are thus deliberately

¹³ For Perdicas' symptomatology and the manifestation of his lovesickness through depressive manner, see Toohey (1992: 270-271) and Manuwald (2020: 32). For an extensive analysis of Perdicas' symptoms, see Mazzini (2012: 569-572). Cf. Ribeiro (2020: 64-65), who notes that in Late Antiquity, the illness induced by love (lovesickness) was regarded as a genuine disease. In later periods, Western medicine came to define this condition as erotomania: a depressive psychological disorder with significant somatic manifestations, affecting individuals suffering from unfulfilled or unattainable love.

¹⁴ For the *militia amoris* motif, see Drinkwater (2013).

¹⁵ Cf. Mariotti (1969: 386), where it is noted that the phrase «sternitur infelix» (*AeP* 262) is used twice by Virgil in Book 10 of the *Aeneid* to describe warriors struck down in death. Cf. Verg. A. 10.730: «sternitur infelix Acron et calcibus atram», 781: «sternitur infelix alieno vulnere, caelumque».)

¹⁶ Cf. Mazzini (2012: 560), who notes that unfulfilled or illicit love conceived as a form of madness constitutes a widespread poetic motif already attested as early as the 5th century BCE.

employed by the narrator in order to elicit the readers' sympathy for Perdicas, who struggles against love while having lost control over his actions.

Another strategy employed by the narrator of the *AeP* to emotionally intensify the text is what may be termed «emotional intertextuality» —that is, the phenomenon whereby the text acquires heightened emotional resonance by drawing upon the pathos of a prior literary model (Dainotti, 2024: 111). In such instances, the affective charge of the source text is transferred to the new context, enriching the emotional texture of the narrative. Perdicas himself explicitly compares his incestuous desire to that of Oedipus (*AeP* 125-127: «[...] Adgressum namque parentem / **Oedipoden** thalamos matris vult fama subisse / **incestosque toros** [...]»). The reference to Oedipus by name (*AeP* 126) functions as a clear intertextual marker¹⁷, while his passion is described as an error (*AeP* 128: «culpamque nefandam»), mirroring that of Perdicas —an association grounded in the incestuous nature of both relationships. Later in the poem, Castalia voices her fear that an intense and dangerous passion might lead her son to illicit marital beds (*AeP* 182-183: «[...] hoc maesta verebar, / **illicitos** ne forte **toros** temptare mariti»). The phrase «illicitos toros» serves as an intratextual marker of the impious bed («incestos toros») shared by Oedipus and his mother. Through these references, the narrator seeks to underscore the incestuous nature of Perdicas' love, infusing it with additional emotional intensity drawn from the tragic pathos of Oedipus' story.

Another narrative strategy employed by the narrator of the *AeP* is the use of expressionistic descriptions¹⁸. The poem includes two passages in which the disfigured body of Perdicas is depicted with grotesque detail. The first occurs during the medical examination conducted by Hippocrates¹⁹. After checking whether the patient has a fever, palpitations, or difficulty breathing (*AeP* 156-160), the physician proceeds with a thorough inspection of the intestinal membranes, the fluid in the lungs, and the youth's ribs (*AeP* 161-164):

non omenta suas per mollia viscera sedes
 <— ∪ ∪ —>, non corda vagi pulmonis anhelant
 intercepta sero, non ilia concita costis
 incutiunt saevos iaculata saepe dolores

The second passage appears in lines *AeP* 250-256, where the physical deterioration of Perdicas as a result of his incestuous passion is described in detail: pallor has spread across his limbs (*AeP* 250: «Primus languentes pallor perfuderat artus»); his temples and nose have receded (*AeP* 251-252: «tempora demersis intus cedere

¹⁷ For the myth of Oedipus and its broader influence on the anonymous poet, see Bright (1987: 232) and Di Rienzo (1999).

¹⁸ For expressionism (an extreme form of realism) in descriptive passages as a means of generating emotional intensity, see Dainotti (2024: 110).

¹⁹ For a different interpretation and the function of these details as an Ovidian technique, see Tziora (2024: 85-86).

latebris / et graciles cecidere modo per acumina nares»); his eyes betray his sleeplessness (*AeP* 253: «concava luminibus macies circumdata sedit»), his entrails reflect his prolonged fasting (*AeP* 254: «longaque testantur ieiunia viscera victus»); the nerves in his arms are exposed, and his ribs are wasted away (*AeP* 255-256: «arida nudati distendunt brachia nervi, / ordine digestae consumpto tegmine costae»)²⁰. Furthermore, the poem employs the theme of untimely death («pathos ab aetate») (Dainotti, 2024: 116). Perdicas, who—as already mentioned—is emphatically characterized throughout the text as a young man (*AeP* 6, 81, 92, 134, 143, 219, 225), ultimately chooses to die (*AeP* 270-290). In fact, through a rhetorical enumeration of possible methods of suicide (Grillo, 2010: 65), Perdicas masochistically provokes Cupid with various options²¹. These strategies, which portray in disturbing detail both the young man's physical degradation and his tragic end, are intended to elicit a strong emotional response from the readers, cultivating their pity and compassion for the protagonist.

Finally, it is worth noting that poets who write love poetry often incorporate the emotional experiences of their contemporaries into their work (Farron, 1983: 86). In the late antique poetry, a very common feature is the so-called «Poetics of Silence»—a term of Hernandez Lobato. This period is marked by strong conservatism, rendering the human expression potentially dangerous (Hernández Lobato, 2017). During the time of the *Regnum Vandalum*, Christian faith dominates, and erotic emotion acquires specific moral connotations, as it is increasingly perceived as both a fault and a sin²². This perception of the era becomes evident in Perdicas' speech during the first night he spends at his home, as he states that to confess his erotic passion would be sacrilege, and to admit it a crime—thoughts which, according to the narrator, he repeats constantly (*AeP* 99-100: «“nam fari scelus est, admissi quoque crimen.” / Talia constanter secum Perdica locutus»)²³. Perdicas equates his romantic feelings with an impious and criminal act (*AeP* 99: «scelus», «crimen»), evidently due to its incestuous nature but also in light of the moral conservatism of the time. However, these lines also contain terms related to speech (*AeP* 99: «fari», 100: «locutus»), which allude to the «Poetics of Silence».

²⁰ It is worth noting that the incredible delicacy of Perdicas' body described in lines *AeP* 253-255 resembles the slender bodies of the elegiac *puellae*, who embody elegiac poetry itself. Through the refinement of Perdicas' body, the poet signals the refinement of his own poetry. For this observation, see Tziora (2024: 98-99).

²¹ For this observation, see Shanzer (2014: 158). Cf. *AeP* 272: «“Quod superest, moriamur, <Amor>. Letumne bibamus?” / 275: «“[...] Ferro resecemus amorem?”», 278: «“Praecipit amare libet? [...]”», 281: «“Stringamus laqueum? Sic finis detur amanti!”».

²² It is characteristic that sexual love is absent from the erotic poems of late Antiquity. This behavior, i.e., sexual renunciation, was promoted as ideal by the Church Fathers (cf. Ambrose's *De virginibus*, *De viduis*, *De virginitate*, *De institutione virginis*, and *Exhortatio virginitatis*). The conservatism of the time restricted the love poets, forcing them to omit erotic descriptions in their works and to be silent on these subjects ('Poetics of Silence'). For all this information, see Pappas (2025: 6).

²³ For this and other passages analyzing the phenomenon of the «Poetics of Silence» in *AeP*, see Tziora (2024).

The verbal utterance of Perdicas' desire is equated with sin (*AeP* 99: «nam fari scelus est»), and in this, the poet possibly hints at his own difficulty in composing love poetry under the constraints of a socially conservative society.

Later, when Castalia engages in dialogue with her son and urges him to reveal the identity of the person he is in love with, Perdicas remains silent and only sighs (*AeP* 185: «Ille silet solumque trahit suspiria longa»). His deep sighs (*AeP* 185: «suspiria longa») are a clear symptom of erotic longing; however, he does not externalize his emotions but instead remains silent. The phrase «ille silet» (*AeP* 158) could self-reflexively refer to the poet himself: just as his protagonist is unable to articulate his erotic feelings, so too is the poet unable to truly compose an authentic love poem —and thus remains silent. Perdicas even averts his eyes from his mother, unable to look at her out of modesty, and asks her to leave, as her presence only intensifies the torment of the lover (*AeP* 186-187: «avertens faciem nec matrem cernere rectis / luminibus poterat sacro prohibente pudore»). This moment echoes a Christian moral sensibility, since according to the Gospel (*Matt.* 5:28), «whoever looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart»²⁴. These lines, however, when read alongside the immediately preceding one (*AeP* 185), may once again allude to the «Poetics of Silence». The poet subtly signals the transformations occurring in the content of love poetry under the influence of Christianity and the prevailing conservatism of the time. The protagonist of a love poem can no longer be portrayed as committing incest —nor even allowed to gaze upon the object of his desire.

Perdicas's illness arises precisely from his inner conflict between *amor* and *pudor*²⁵. These two emotions are personified during the second night he spends at home (*AeP* 198-199: «Stant duo diversis pugnancia numina telis / ante toros, Perdica, tuos: **Amor** hinc, **Pudor** inde»)²⁶, and their conflict brings the narrative to a moment of a great tension (Tempone, 2023: 113). At this point, the poet identifies himself with Perdicas, and the lines acquire a metapoetic significance, once again alluding to the «Poetics of Silence». «Amor», who represents love poetry, advises Perdicas/poet to

²⁴ This conception contrasts with earlier pagan traditions, in which guilt arises from the actual commission of incest. For all this information, see Bright (1987: 237-238).

²⁵ The internal struggle of the lover between *amor* and *pudor* constitutes a typical motif in incest narratives. This is exemplified by Byblis and Myrrha in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Cf. *Ov. Met.* 9.457-516, 10.320-355. For this observation, see Di Rienzo (1999: 548). Also, cf. Hunt (1971: 89), who notes that the dilemma between *amor* and *pudor* is faced by Phaedra in Ovid's *Heroides* as well as by Dido in Book 4 of Virgil's *Aeneid*. Cf. *Ov. Her.* 4.9-10: «qua licet et sequitur, pudor est miscendus amori; / dicere quae puduit, scribere iussit amor», *Verg. A.* 4.23 27: «impulit. agnosco veteris vestigia flammae. / sed mihi vel tellus optem prius ima dehiscat / vel pater omnipotens adigat me fulmine ad umbras, / pallentis umbras Erebo noctemque profundam, / ante, pudor, quam te violo aut tua iura resolve». It should also be noted that the contrasting pair *amor-pudor* appears in the poetry of Sulpicia, cf. [Tib.] 3.13.1-2: «Tandem venit amor, qualem texisse pudori / quam nudasse alicui sit mihi fama magis».

²⁶ Cf. Bisanti (2010: 216), who notes that battles between personified virtues and vices appear in Prudentius' *Psychomachia*.

reveal the secrets (*AeP* 200: «Cupido monet secreta referre»), that is, to cease concealing his erotic feeling and the amorous content of his poem. «Pudor», however, symbolizing the conservatism of Christian society, forbids him from expressing himself (*AeP* 201: «Pudor prohibet vocis exordia rumpi»). Thus, Perdicas finds himself caught in a dilemma: whether to externalize his love, as «Amor» urges him to do, or to suppress it, as «Pudor» commands. From a metapoetic perspective, these lines suggest that the conservatism of the era («Pudor») prevents (*AeP* 201: «prohibet») the poet from expressing himself freely and from composing openly love poetry («Amor»).

Conclusions

In conclusion, the analysis above demonstrates that the narrator of *AeP* systematically employs expressive techniques and stylistic strategies to elicit emotional responses from the readers. The depiction of the *furtivus amor* that consumes Perdicas, the metaphorical representations of his romantic passion, the adjectives consistently used to characterize him, and the expressions of sympathy toward him all shape the readers' perception, guiding their emotional reaction to the poem's central figure. Throughout the *AeP*, the poet builds the readers' expectation that he will compose love poetry; however, Perdicas's romantic feelings are never verbalized and ultimately remain hidden. In this sense, although Perdicas shares many traits of the elegiac *amator* and his behavioral patterns, he never utters a single romantic word and he is condemned to silence —a condition that clearly alludes to the so-called «Poetics of Silence».

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