TWO EMENDATIONS ON STATIUS, *THEBAID* BOOK 6

ABSTRACT

This note discusses two places in Statius' Thebaid *(6.22 and 6.224), in which the transmitted text may be improved, and proposes new emendations.*

Keywords: Latin literature; epic; Statius; *Thebaid*; textual criticism; emendation

THEBAID 6.22

At the start of Book 6, the poet compares the funerary games for Opheltes, presented as an unarmed preparation for war, to a class of sailors who train in calm waters before setting out to sea. The end of the simile reads (6.21–2):[1]

> tranquillo prius arma lacu clauumque leuesque
> explorant remos atque ipsa pericula discunt.[2]

The transmitted *discunt* in 6.22 contradicts the sentiment conveyed by the simile—namely, that the *tranquillus lacus* provides the sailors with a safe environment to hone their craft. How, then, should they 'learn actual perils'?[3] Fortgens suggests that *pericula* be understood in a sense akin to *temptationes* or *experimenta* (*OLD* 1).[4] This usage occurs, for example, at Ter. *Eun.* 476–7 *fac periclum in litteris | fac in palaestra, in musicis* ('test him in literature, test him at sports and music'), Cic. *Diu. Caec*. 27 *sed tute tui periculum fecisti?* and Tac. *Ann*. 14.28.1 *ut . . . eiusdem pecuniae periculum facerent*. But these examples point to the flaw in Fortgens's suggestion: the proposed meaning of the word only appears in the expression *periculum facere*.[5] Moreover, the presence of *ipsa* is not accounted for. Allowing for an adversative function of *atque* ('and still'), *discunt* may have been introduced through corruption caused by a superficial interpretation of the context. If we emend the verb to *desunt*, the line expresses the contrast drawn between *ipsa pericula* and the safety of a *lacus*: 'they explore the rudder and the light oars, and yet actual perils are absent'. *desunt* appears in the final position on two other occasions in the *Thebaid* (5.109 and 12.705). What is more, the simile would now seem to carry an ironic note in keeping with Statius' paradoxical style: the purportedly harmless environment of the games will be as perilous as war for those participating in the chariot race, the boxing match and the wrestling bout.[6]

I would like to thank *CQ*'s anonymous reader and the editor for their comments. I am grateful to Stephen Oakley for discussing these passages with me. Unless indicated otherwise, translations are my own, as are any remaining errors.

[1] The discussion of these two passages draws on the corresponding lemmata of my unpublished doctoral thesis, P.M.A. Puente Gamero, 'A commentary on selected passages of Statius, *Thebaid* 6' (Diss., University of Cambridge, 2023).

[2] The text of the *Thebaid* follows J.B. Hall, in collaboration with A.L. Ritchie and M.J. Edwards, *P. Papinius Statius. Thebaid and Achilleid*, 3 vols. (Newcastle, 2007–8), unless otherwise indicated.

[3] D.R. Shackleton Bailey, *Statius II. Thebaid, Books 1–7* (Cambridge, MA, 2003), 329.

[4] H.W. Fortgens, *De Opheltis funere carmen epicum, Thebaidos liber VI 1–295* (Zutphen, 1934), ad loc.

[5] Cf. Plaut. *Asin*. 617, *Bacch*. 63; Sen. *Ep.* 74.13; [Sal.] *Ad Caes. sen*. 2.4.3.

[6] I thank *CQ*'s reader for making this observation. For a further example of 'tragic irony' in this book, cf. *Theb*. 6.558 with Puente Gamero (n. 1), ad loc.

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THEBAID 6.224

After the pyre of Opheltes has been kindled, the Argive army performs a funerary procession (*decursio funebris*) around the *rogus*. When they have made three leftward rounds, Amphiaraus calls them back (6.221–4):

> hic luctus abolere nouique
> funeris auspicium uates, quamquam omina sentit
> uera, iubet. dextri gyro et uibrantibus hastis
> hac redeunt.

I am here concerned with the last sentence. Criticizing its 'jarring inelegance' (presumably taking aim at the accumulation of ablatives with only one finite verb), Hall proposed emending *gyro et* to *gyrant*.[7] His conjecture is improbable: non-participial forms of *gyro* appear only in Late Antiquity, and the verb's single occurrence before the *Vetus Latina* (Plin. *HN* 5.62 *ad effigiem Macedonicae chlamydis orbe gyrato*) carries a somewhat different meaning ('make round').[8] His suspicion of *hac* ('by this route'), on the other hand, seems more justified: it is not clear what exactly the adverb describes. If the word describes the direction of the procession, its inclusion would be otiose ('they return in this direction [that is, rightward] brandishing their lances'). Even if *hac* is taken to refer to the manner of the procession ('and so [they] return with quivering spears', Mozley translates)[9]—a doubtful usage found possibly at Plaut. *Stich*. 463, where Gelasimus reports a favourable omen (*item me spero facturum: augurium hac facit* 'I hope to act in this way: my omen makes it so')—the sentence does not become any easier to understand. Hall's conjecture (*ac*) can only be accepted if we follow his emendation of *gyro et*. It seems, rather, that *hac* has taken the place of a temporal adverb. I propose that *tunc* should be read. Compare Prop. 4.1a.36 *tunc* (*hac* MSS) *ubi Fidenas longa erat isse uia*, where Ritschl's *tunc* (accepted by modern editors) solves the same problem.[10]

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[7] J.B. Hall, 'Notes on Statius' *Thebaid* Books 5 and 6', *ICS* 17 (1992), 287–99, at 295.
[8] See *TLL* 6.2385.1–2386.2.
[9] J.H. Mozley, *Statius II. Thebaid V–XII, Achilleid* (Cambridge, MA, 1928), 77.
[10] For the delayed position of *tunc* in the word order, cf. *Theb*. 10.633–6 *uirtus* | … | … *caelestibus ut tunc* | *desiluit gauisa plagis* with R.D. Williams, *P. Papini Stati Thebaidos liber decimus* (Leiden, 1972), ad loc.

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