
I apologize for the almost ‘Nemean’ delay in finishing this review of Laura Micozzi’s commentary on Statius Thebaid 4,1–344. In the meantime, Ruth Parkes has published her commentary on all 850 lines of book 4, which further complicated my task.

The relations between Parkes’ (P) and Micozzi’s (M) excellent commentaries are rather intricate. M knows P’s unpublished diss. (Oxford 2002) on Theb. 4,1–308, and P in reworking this part for her complete edition (Oxford 2012), for obvious reasons and with full acknowledgment made extensive use of M’s commentary on lines 1–344 (Pisa 2007). In view of the resulting overlap between M and the first part of P (2012), I have decided to restrict myself in this review to M with an occasional glance at P. This is certainly not to suggest that Parkes in her notes at lines 1–344 did not contribute much to our understanding of Statius’ (St) catalogue of the Argives. She certainly does. But in order to demonstrate this, I would be compelled to analyze and compare in close detail these two valuable commentaries, instead of concentrating on the specific contributions of each scholar independently.

In a separate review (forthcoming), I will fully concentrate on the second half of P’s commentary, on lines 4,345–850, which is the first full scale discussion of these lines since Barthius (Zwickau 1664). ²

With M’s and P’s commentaries, most books of the Thebaid have received individual attention: bk 1 Heuvel (1912) and Caviglia (1973); bk 2 Mulder (1954); bk 3 Snydier (1968); bk 4,1–144 Steiniger (2003), Micozzi (2007); bk 4 Parkes (2012); bk 5,1–497 Mauri (diss. Bologna 1999, unpubl.); bk 6, 1–295 Fortgens (1934), Mottram (diss. Liverpool 2012, unpubl.), 238–549 Pavan (2009), 296–946 von Stosch (1968); bk 7 Smolenaars (1994); bk 9 (Dewar 1991); bk 10 Williams (1972); bk 11 Venini (1970); bk 12 Hoffmann and Pollmann (2004).

More commentaries are in the making: Kyle Gervais (Otago) on bk 2, Valéry Berlincourt (Genève) on bk 3, Jörn Soerink (Groningen) on 5,499–753), Anthony Augoustakis (Illinois) on bk 8.


In order to appreciate St’s learned poetry, we need good commentaries. His highly allusive and often experimental poetic style and intertextual engagement with many of his literary predecessors demand an extensive knowledge of the Greek and Latin literary tradition. The studied complexity of Flavian poetry and that of St in particular compares only to the Alexandrian poets, but the field of literature to be covered by these Roman poets was of course even wider. Identification of the underlying models is of the greatest importance to do justice to the

² See now Valéry Berlincourt’s massive study Commenter la Thébaide (16e–19e s.), Caspar von Barth et la tradition exégétique de Stace (Brill 2013).
poet’s literary intentions, and often recollection of the intertext is required for full understanding. Only if we are prepared to analyse the intricate fabric of literary allusions systematically and thus to map in full detail the references he probably had in mind, are we equipped to interpret the poem’s words and ‘meaning’.

As M shows in her informative Introduction (3–12) on the tradition of the catalogues from Homer to St, the subject is far more exciting than one would perhaps expect. Digressions, flashbacks and prospective references, suppressed thoughts and direct speech, all delivered at a dazzling speed are characteristic for Flavian catalogues. For instance, after the farewell episode (13–30) and the invocation to the Muse (38–38) follows the description of King Adrastus and his contingent (73); rex tristis et aegér...vix sponte incedit (38b–40) sets the pessimistic tone. Within this section we see the driver grooming Adrastus’ horses right at the gate (42), soldiers from several (Homeric) places with geographical details and references to far-off historical events in the future (48) and recent past (49), and the ‘savage privilege’ of the river Elisson, in which the Stygian Eumenides are reputed to bathe.

What do we learn from M about the catalogue of the Argives in book 4? I have selected some details, which are more points of contestation than my approval of the most greater part would perhaps justify.

1f The time-reference in 1f is a good example of St’s style and M’s approach: tertius horrentem Zephyris laxaverat annum/ Phoebus: Phoebus is interpreted correctly as ‘cursus solis’ and annum qualified by horrentem as ‘winter’. Parallels in Ovid and Seneca support the interpretation that ‘now for the third time the Zephyres have dissolved the cold of winter’, or more prosaically: it is springtime, two or more likely three years later. But later than what? Either ‘ex emisso pacto fratrum’ (Lactantius followed by Steiniger), or after the time-reference in bks 3 (Vessey). If the latter, a mora of 3 (M) years between bks 3 and 4 is implied, in accordance with Adrastus’ warning in 3.718f. Thus, bk 4 at its beginning implies a long delay, after which the Nemean mora will follow. M’s discussion of these difficult lines is important for understanding the complex structure of bks 4–6. Such a long gap between these books is most likely, as appears I think from the flashbacks in the necklace-episode (190–213). On the day of departure (13 dicta dies aderat), the priest sacrificing to Jupiter and Mars finds no favourable omens. M points out that secundus is taken from Aen. 11.719–40, his reaction pallet (15) from Arruns’ in Luc. 1.626. The priest’s decision to hide his true feelings and the outcome of the omens, however, has no precise parallel. For the latter both M and P refer to Arruns in Lucan. Arruns, however, actually does tell the truth, only adumbrates it multaque...ambage, and then expresses hope that his art itself will prove to be a lie. M’s reference to Theb. 3.456–59, where priests ignore the ill-boding entrails and proceed to seek omens in the sky, comes close, but still is not the same. Perhaps the only other example of an outright cheating priest is Calchas in Aen. 2.126–29, but this of course is Simon’s version of the truth.

5–12 The introductory note to Bellona’s entering stage in 5–12 offers many informative parallels. However, I fail to see why we should think of Aen. 6.518f. (Helen’s treacherous torch). The phrase simul sperare (15) recalls Aeneas after his first speech in Aen. 1.209f spem vultu simulat; here a great leader, from good motives, tries to protect his people from his (sincere) fear of the future. In St, the priest hides the truth from the soldiers, perhaps in

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order not to discourage them, in any case nolens volens helping to bring about the catastrophe. St’s further use of this primary source needs more attention than M allows us. Vergil’s description of Aeneas’ simulation of hope is split up by St and is as often distributed over two different passages: in our case, the fateful simulation of hope by the priest (15) and Adrastus’ first appearance on stage in lines 38–9: *rex tristis et aeger/ pondere curarum*, an obvious condensed echo of Aeneas’ true feelings in *Aen.* 1.208 *curisque ingen- tibus aeger* and 209 *premit altum corde dolorem*. Both phrasing and position within the narrative structure are strikingly similar, which emphasizes the difference: no simulation in Adrastus! Like Aeneas, he is sincerely sad, but he does actually show his feelings as, I think, appears from the contrast between *inter adhortantes* and *six sponte incidit* (40). His age and reluctance closely associate him with Latinus in the *Aeneid* and himself in Eur. *Suppl.,* 21f (M). His lack of enthusiasm is, I think, further suggested by carrying only a sword, *contentus ferro congì latus* (41; also P), where *latus* should not be taken as referring at the same time to soldiers escorting the king.

M offers a good introduction to the traditional epic farewell-scene. The interpretation of *summisque a postibus* (17) is difficult: either ‘limine urbis’ (Hill), i.e. the gates of the city, or the ‘outermost doorways’ (Shackleton Bailey (SB) of their houses. Perhaps *domus* (20) tips the scales in favour of the latter.

Lines 18–30 deal with the topos ‘Tears and kisses of loved-ones’. In lines 20–21 M points at the *ricontestualizzazione staziana* of both a Vergilian (kissing through helmet) and a Homeric motif (taking off helmet). The kissing in *galeis ueat oscula clasius inserere* is taken from *Aen.* 12.43f *summisque per galeam delibans oscula* (Aeneas kisses Ascanius), with a typical change of subject. The scene in *Il.* 6.46ff (Hector taking off his helmet and putting it on the ground in order to embrace his frightened son), is the source of St’s *amplexuque truces deducere conos* (21). M takes *deducere* not as ‘inclinare apices’ (Lact.), but as ‘deponere’ in close imitation of Hector’s gesture. I prefer Lactantius’ (and Lesueur’s) *amplexu*:

I think M is right at 27 *manantes oculos* ... *turbant* (M). His lack of enthusiasm is, I think, further suggested by carrying only a sword, *contentus ferro congì latus* (41; also P), where *latus* should not be taken as referring at the same time to soldiers escorting the king.

The farewell-scene is closed with a simile, illustrating the events in the narrative with very similar tears and kissing, but now the voyage is overseas. P takes the simile to describe not the moment of parting, but of sailing, «thus arousing expectations of an imminent march towards Thebes» (at 24–30). But *cum tam ad vela Notì et scisco redit ancora fundo* (25) rather points at the exact moment of departure, like in the narrative, and not beyond. M discusses the structural function of the simile in connection with its counterpart in 7.137–44: the repetition in 7 brings to a close the Nemean *mora* and marks the beginning of the action. Her interpretation of the simile is detailed and instructive: its tradition, its emulation with Valerius Flaccus here, to be continued in 4.74ff. (Hypsipyle) and the Lemnos-episode (5.40–498), the topos of the last lingering gaze (*visu dulce sequi*), and the *schelhasmos*-part of the propeptomik in line 35, where Francis Cairns’ *Generic Composition* (1972/2009) should have been mentioned.

I think M is right at 27 *manantes oculos* ... *turbant*, the sea’s fog blurs their flowing (i.e. already weeping, from grief) eyes. Immediately after, they are left behind on the shore (tandemque relicti 28), which confirms that the preceding words evoke the very final moments of departure, the last kiss and subsequent sailing away.

32–8 Invocation of Fama and Vetustas, as «puri simboli della memoria poetica» (cf *Aen.* 10.792 si qua fidem est... *latura vetustas*), and - more traditional- Calliope to set forth the troops leaving for war.

375 *neque... altior ulli mens*: M interestingly takes *mens* as referring not to Calliope, but to the «facoltà personale del poeta alimentata dall’ispirazione della musa», and compares 1.3 *Pierius menti calor incidit* where the poet more clearly refers to himself. According to
her interpretation, Statius proudly and selfconsciously speaks of his high capacities in the field of 'aemulatio', bausto de fonte referring to his subject matter, which often has been treated by other poets before. For altior 'of higher style' M compares a.o. 3.40 where, however, ala mente (in her quote mente directly after ala should go) means 'withdrawn in his mind’s depths'. If M’s view is correct, this statement would represent a unique variation on the Callimachean ideal of the fresh, untouched fountain, integros fontis in Lucr. DRN 4.1–4. The poet here would phrase a clear awareness of his ‘secondarietà’, which leaves him a divine, higher inspiration as the only means to distinguish himself. If the Muse would comply, Statius is simply the best: neque altior ulli mens scl. ‘quam mihi’. M’s tempting view depends on ulli (‘any other poet’) and bausto (attrib.) de fonte ‘el la fonte a cui molti hanno bevuto’. Barth (1664) agrees: «gloriatur ergo hic neminem eo vel altius sese de fonte hoc proliussesse». As an alternative, we may take ulli as implying Calliope herself: scl. ‘quam ei’, the justification being that she can possess (and provide) the highest inspiration after having drunk from the Castalian spring herself; bausto should be taken as ‘having drunk from’. This presupposes that the Muse is drinking from a fountain on Helicon herself, «for a refreshing course» in P’s phrase, who refers to Prop. 3.31f. In this case, we must sacrifice a possible statement by Statius on his own poetry. I personally prefer a middle course: ulli implies not the Muse, but any poet looking like Statius for inspiration; bausto de fonte represents the «stulta veterum traditio de fonte Castaliae» (Barth’s VS) as a metaphor for divine inspiration; neque altior scl. ‘quam data a te/ Calliope’. Calliope is invoked as she is particularly associated with epic, as in Aen. 9.525. At line 18 M has an excellent note on ‘aegritudo’ as negative passion in Stoic philosophy.

53–8 The image of the Eumenides bathing their faces and panting snakes in the river, could have been written by Ovid, but its grim tone, the references to criminal acts in Thrace (Tereus), Mycene (tecta impia) and Thebes itself (tecta impia) could have been written by Ovid, but its grim tone, the references to criminal acts in Thrace (Tereus), Mycene (tecta impia) and Thebes itself (tecta impia) 

73–7 cui bella faveunt: M justly rejects any conjectures, takes bella as abstract for ‘mutilis’ (subj.) or ‘war’ (obj.). Good note on melior causa (79), phrasing the usual preference for Polyneices in Theb. and tragedy, with the exception of Aeschylus.

88–9 matrisque sinus... spe votisque tenet: M justly rejects Hershkowitz’ interpretation as «displaying his equally hereditary sexual yearning for a return to the womb» (1998:278) as ‘forzata’, which in my mind is a euphemism. In line 95 M has an excellent note on ‘aemulatio’, in fine detail: its tradition, already in Aesch. Sept. 38f and its direct model Pyrrhus in Aen 2.47ff, itself after II. 22.93f. But the notes do not deal systematically with the primary source, as a closer analysis would show; for example also annis exatus transforms Vergil’s postis exausus and per gramina substitutes the location of the drama for Vergil’s poisonous food mala gramina pastus.

121 Nice play with the double nature of god and river, already in Ov. Met. 1.383 fletibus agua potus. M takes genero tumuit love as either the natural cause (Jupiter for ‘rain’), so Barth, or the psychological, like timidus of Asopos in Theb. 7.31f. If the latter, tumuit
is a fine choice of word indeed, 'swells with Jove' (SB). I prefer both interpretations to be present at the same time.

In 150 ter niveum scandente iuba, M justly defends Mss niveum (acc. adv.). P wonders how a plume does 'climb in a white manner', and prefers nivea (Hall): 'sits white plume rose', which seems a too easy way-out. Any solution must start from Turnus' helmet in Aen. 7.785 tripli erinita iuba (Fernandelli). 'scando' is used for 'rise upwards', for which M refers to Sil. 5.133 surgens [p 145 read ern for erte] and niveum scandente is I think a striking phrase to describe the visual effect of the three snow-white plumes on this helmet, each increasing in height and therefore seemingly 'climbing' (so also Barth). Daidalus' construction of wings in Ov. Met.8.186 is most helpful: ponit in ordine penas/ a minima coetaps, longa breviore sequenti, where line 190 offers a perfect illustration of St's scandente: at dico crevisse putes. St's use of advbl. acc. is certainly audacious, as is tumulus frensis in 10 and immaculate violatris in 137.

132–3 M provides a fine analysis of the ecphrasis, evoking the night of the Danaids as pictured on Hippomedon's shield. These lines transform thenox Danai in Aen. 10.497–99 pictured on Pallas' baldrick, now taken by Turnus, who is the main model for St's Hippomedon. The emblematic Chimaera on Turnus' helmet, bedecked with the triple plume (Aen. 7.785–8), was borrowed by St in 129–30; the Io-scene on Turnus' shield (Aen. 7.789–92) he alluded to in 121 genero Jove. The emblem of the night of Danaus on both Pallas' baldrick and Hippomedon's shield foreshadow the death of the owners. In Thebaid, moreover, the lines anticipate the Lemnian women killing their husbands in bk 4, Together with M's an P's analysis of this striking example of St's multiple-imitation technique, I recommend Marco Fernandelli's detailed study on these lines.4 In 135 M wrongly takes inspicet ervas as taking place before the slaughter; from cruentis / in foribus (134f) we gather that the nefas is already performed; so also P. We perhaps are invited at this very moment to wonder what will happen to Hypermenetra, who refused to follow orders and is not mentioned here at all. Will the inspection of the swords find her out?

139–44 The correspondence of the Centaur-simile with that in 7.425–40 (Hippomedon crossing the Asopos) is briefly mentioned at 119–21 and 139–44, but there are more intratextual echoes in these similes (e.g. 'obiectus' in 144 and 7.429) than M acknowledges. I therefore take the liberty to refer to my comm. (1994) on bk 7.424–40.

146 Often the recognition of a source is a prerequisite for understanding a phrase, as is demonstrated by M's note on mortale sonani (146) referring to Deiphobus in Aen. 6.50. Two words only in St suffice to evoke a long literary tradition, implying here that the poet needs divine help and inspiration to make up for his poetic incompetence.

150–5 The 'poesia della rovine' in the vignette of ancient Tyrins (in anachronistic) ruins, is well illustrated from Lucan, Plutarch and Tasso; the rariss habitator showing us around recalls Lucan's picture of desolate Italy after the civil wars (BC. 1.24ff) and Caesar visiting Troy (BC 9.46ff). Cyclopum ductus sudoribus arcis (151) reworks Aen. 6.650 (city of Dus) Cyclopum educta caminis/ moenia (i.e. of iron); note St's avoiding the elision and substituting the physical effect (sudoribus) for the 'means' (caminis). The compressed paradox 152f. tercentum ... vulgus/ innumerus bello is well illustrated from Sen. sius 2.18, (also Steiniger). Both P and M neglect Aen. 10.173–4 as St's source: Ilva trecentos/ insula inexhaustis. Recognition is triggered by St trecentum from Vergil's trecentos (173) and St's innumerus from V's 174; V's metallis is replaced with pharetris (156); V's Chalybhum (174) is omitted here, probably because of Cyclopum in 151, but is transported -with different sense- to St's line 174 (sic!), describing Capaneus' coat of mail: nexitis innumero Chalybhum subtemine thorax. St's lines 150–56 thus offer an interesting view on his art of poetic imitation: multiple, distribution of the source's elements within a brief distance, and transformation of sense.

187–213 A very long digression (24 lines) on the necklace, explaining Amphiaraurus' presence on the expedition. The whole episode is written as a flashback, containing a second previous flashback (192–210), a large part of which is made up by Argia's direct

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speech (200–210). Both M and P are very helpful in decoding the diffuse and often cryptic allusions and the narrative structure of this digression that could be a part of a modern novel. The recent past is introduced by iam (187) and closed by ring-composition with iam fulgurat (190): Amphiaraurus gave up his resistance (and now is leaving for war). In 190ff we go further back in time, leaning about Eriphyle’s selfish treachery of her husband and listening to Argia’s direct speech, in which she explains her decision to hand over the necklace. In 211–13 the digression is closed by ring-composition: we return to the recent past of the beginning. In her notes M points at the gradually and often fragmentary progressive distribution of information about the past and present events in terms of Genette’s narratology; for instance in 190f coningis.../ insidiae, any further information about Eriphyle’s motivation must be gathered from other parts of the Thebaid.

In the Catalogue we read a great many of short background stories, whose interpretation is strongly furthered by M’s helpful discussions and parallels. In 214f we learn about Cyllarus who fathered a horse ignaro Castore, truly a «riferimento compendioso e sibillino», told only here. The motiveau ‘without the knowledge of’ is repeated in 246, young Parthenopaues leaving home ignara matre.

In her Introduction M announces not to «limitarmi a conferire i modelli implicati nella fitta tessitura, ma di interpretarne le relazioni» (p 4). In this respect, she has been successful to a large extent. Also her detailed recognition and analysis of topoi, motifs and themes substantially improve our knowledge and appreciation of the Thebaid. She might have paid even more attention to scrutinizing her primary sources for every word and phrase St chose to transform and often distributed in various sections of his poem (‘Spaltung’ in Steiniger’s term). Moreover, I would have liked her to map the system of the (multiple) imitations she pointed out in her notes in a separate appendix. But these criticisms are insignificant in comparison with the generous gift she as an expert in this field here presents to the increasing number of students who, like Micozzi herself, love Statius.

In conclusion, I strongly advise students of Statius to take Micozzi as his/her expert and stimulating guide through the Catalogue in book 4, and thus to enhance his/her understanding of Statius’ demanding and fascinating poetic style. In particular, I recommend to study the Callimachean praise of Molorchus (159–64), the sad story of Thamyris (183–86) borrowed from Il. 2.595–600 and Luc. 6.332f, the excursus on the ethnography and history of the Arcadians, born from trees and frightened of the night (275–84), and the anti-war mood of the catalogue as conveyed by Tisiphone’s grim smile (231) and the nefas of the Danaids (132–35).

These are the (few) typos and misprints I found: p. 74 line 3 from bottom delete mente after alta; 123.18 delete ‘e’; 137.20 read Arcturus; 145.6 for ‘erta’ read erat; 186.14 read ‘prescent’; 218.2 for 43 read 42. The use of the hyphen in the case of Latin words often puzzles the non-Italian reader: for instance p.11 ho-spes, 147 fluctu-sque 149 nefa-sque.

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