

Awareness of such a superstition will affect our interpretation of Juno's action and our view of the effect it has on the Italians. In this brief but potent and climactic episode the Italians are unable to see Juno⁸ and only witness the effect of her sudden intervention. Not only does this come as an evident shock but the ominous nature of the gates' opening also foreshadows the grim intensity of the war to come and perhaps also the tragic outcome for the Italians themselves.⁹ As when the Wooden Horse stumbles on the threshold of Troy, however, the evil omen is disregarded by the characters themselves,¹⁰ and it is for the reader to notice the significance of these events in the wider context of the *Aeneid*. This is not the only instance in the poem where Virgil expects his readers to be alert to resonances which are not obvious to the characters involved in the action.¹¹

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⁸ Similarly, Amata and Turnus are unable to recognise Allecto: she reveals her hellish origin to Turnus when provoked, but he does not identify her of his own accord.

⁹ Such sinister hints are also evident in Juno's monologue (*Aen.* 7.293–322) when she says 'sanguine Troiano et Rutulo dotabere, virgo' and 'funestaeque iterum recidiva in Pergama taedae'.

¹⁰ 2.242–3; cf. R. Heinze, *Virgils epische Technik* (4th ed. Stuttgart, 1957), 316–17.

¹¹ Cf. for example the baleful implications of the simile at *Aen.* 10.272–5 and the comments of Williams op. cit. 65: here, under cover of the simile, the reader is given information about Aeneas which is not available to Turnus in his misguided interpretation of the situation.

CORRIGENDUM

In *CQ* 34 (1984), 457, on Lucan 4.664 *indulsit castris*, I wrote 'Housman... explains "...inuitantibus ad desidiam": read rather *ad temeritatem*'. Mr S. J. Heyworth has kindly pointed out to me that Housman in his corrected impression (1927) does in fact write *temeritatem*. I was myself (as was evidently *TLL* vii. i. 1252. 10ff.) using the first impression (1926), where H. has *desidiam*. It had not occurred to me that H. would so drastically alter an interpretation in a 'Second impression (corrected)'.

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NESTOR'S WAR EFFORT (STAT. *ACH.* 1.422)

aera domat Temese, quatitur navalibus ora
 Eubois, innumera resonant incude Mycenae,
 Pisa novat currus, Nemee dat terga ferarum,
 Cirrha sagittiferas certat stipare pharetras,
 Lerna gravis clipeos caesis vestire iuvenis.
 dat bello pedites Aetolus et asper Acarnan,
 Argos agit turmas, vacuantur pascua ditis
 Arcadiae, frenat celeres Epiros alumnos,
 Phocis et Aoniae iaculis rarescitis umbrae,
 murorum tormenta Pylos Messenaeque tendunt.

(Statius, *Ach.* 1.413–22)

Here in the *Achilleid* Statius catalogues the contributions of Greek towns to Agamemnon's expedition against Troy. Every item of equipment is appropriate to its

origin. There is one puzzle, however: why is it that *murorum tormenta* are the peculiar contribution of Pylos and Messene? O. A. W. Dilke (1954) suggests that the proximity of classical Messene to Mt Ithome would have reminded Statius of the siege of that place by the Spartans in 464–59 B.C., when they were aided by the Athenians, experts in siege warfare. This solution is undoubtedly ingenious but, based as it is upon association, it places this last entry in a quite different category from the previous entries: all the preceding items have been very definite products of their places of origin. K. von Barth (1664), while noting the not unparalleled anachronism, attempts to account in another way for the siege-engines: ‘quia ibi silvae crassissimas arbores habent’. But there is no evidence to support this: Messenia features neither in the pages of Theophrastus (*Περὶ Φυτῶν Ἱστορία*) or Pliny (*N.H.* 16) as a source of quality timber, nor in the poets as an area which is characterised by the stoutness of its trees.

These theories pay insufficient attention to the verb *tendant*, the *vox propria* for exerting a strain on rope, making it taut (cf. Stat. *Sil.* 3.2.26f.: ‘stuppea tendite mali | vincula’). Some commentators note an allusion to the way in which war-engines were manoeuvred;¹ but had it occurred to anyone that rope might be of particular relevance to Pylos and Messene, an investigation would have failed through want of evidence. However, more information is now available and it enables us to show that Pylos and Messene *strain on* siege-engines because the region in which they were situated was known as a centre of rope manufacture.

Michael Ventris’ decipherment of Linear B in 1952 afforded an insight into the life of the communities which centred on the Mycenaean palace of Pylos. The tablets show that the manufacture of flax was one of the major industries at Pylos in the Mycenaean Age. The ideogram which represents the Greek *λίνον* is found at Pylos on what is known as the N-series of tablets.² Another series looks like a census: it enumerates over six hundred women identified either by place-names, trade descriptions or adjectives indicating ethnic origin. They seem to have been recruited as part of a labour force for the industries which formed the basis of the prosperity of Mycenaean Pylos. Many of these women were employed in working the flax plantations and in the manufacture of the commodity in its varying forms.³

Since conditions in the area were suitable for the crop, it is not unreasonable to assume that, though the site of Pylos was never reoccupied after the destruction of the palace around 1200 B.C., the working of flax continued. That it was being grown in the vicinity of Pylos in the classical period we may reasonably infer from an important reference to the seed of the plant in Thucydides’ account of the Pylos campaign of 425 B.C., when divers relieved the Spartans on Sphacteria with rations of honeyed poppy-seed and crushed linseed: ἐσένεον δὲ καὶ κατὰ τὸν λιμένα κολυμβηταὶ ὕφνδροι καλωδίῳ ἐν ἄσκοις ἐφέλλοντες μήκωνα μεμελιτωμένην καὶ λίνου σπέρμα κεκομμένον (4.26). In such a crisis, the factor determining the choice of food for the supplies would have been availability; linseed formed part of the package because it was readily obtainable from flax grown in the area. We know too that flax was worked in the region of Pylos in the 1950s; work has now ceased, but the river where the retting was done is still called *Linaria*.⁴

¹ Jannaccone (1950) has ‘con allusione alle funi con cui gli arieti o simili erano manovrati’. Ropes feature too in the notes of Bernartius (1595) and Stephens (1651).

² See Ventris and Chadwick, *Documents in Mycenaean Greek*, 295ff.

³ *Ibid.* 155–6.

⁴ See Michael Wood, *In Search of the Trojan War*, 161; also, Lord William Taylour, *The Mycenaean*, 153.

An important question must now be asked: how did Statius know that flax was grown in Pylos? In theory, his information could have derived from a number of sources. It might have come from the work of a geographer or other scientific writer, though Statius is unlikely to have employed such learning as would have baffled his readers. Then again, one might posit that ropes of Pylian provenance were objects familiar in a Roman household; this is highly improbable, though it cannot be utterly dismissed.⁵ The most likely hypothesis seems to be that an epithet alluding to the product and applied to Pylos survived in works which now are lost, works with which people of Statius' time were well acquainted.⁶

Without rope the mobilisation of weighty war-machines was impossible. We must envisage a scene like that at Verg. *Aen.* 2.234ff., where the Trojans draw inside their walls the mighty *machina* (ibid. 237; *machina belli* at 151) which the Greeks have left behind.⁷ The ropes which imagination must supply in the Statian line are emphatically present in the Vergilian passage: *stuppea vincula* (236) and *funem* (239). And they are made of flax: see Festus 317M = 418 L 'stuppam linum inpolitum appellant Graeci Dorii(s)'.⁸ Euripides in describing the same scene had said κλωστοῦ δ' ἀμφιβόλαις λίνου... (*Tro.* 537).

One other component in the line is also suggestive of rope: *tormenta*. The conjunction of *tendunt* and *tormenta* – *tormentum* is formed from *torquere*, 'to twist' – inclines one to see here a reference to ropes employed in torsion. However, we have no evidence that flaxen rope functioned as part of the internal mechanism of the torsion engine; springs were of more elastic materials: animal sinews (νευρά) or horsehair.⁹ But before we dismiss this interpretation on the grounds that it involves a factual inaccuracy, we must ask whether Statius himself is likely to have known what we have learnt from research. The poet might well have intended an allusion to torsion, under the very reasonable assumption that ballistic engines were powered by tightly-sprung rope.¹⁰

But if one inclines rather to the notion that *tendunt* implies dragging (as demonstrated above in the analogous scene from the *Aeneid*), *tormenta* may still have a function, be it merely supportive, in establishing the presence in this line of rope. Nothing can alter the effect of the associations which this word generates, *tormenta* introduces the

⁵ We know that there was a flourishing flax industry in Elis (see Paus. 5.5.2 and Frazer *ad loc.* for the identification of βύσσαν with flax). There was also in Elis a town called Pylos. Could it be that Statius has confused Elean Pylos and Messenian Pylos? Given that poets could confuse Pharsalus and Philippi, such a conflation is not unlikely.

⁶ A possible candidate is the Alexandrian poet and critic Rhianus. He wrote four epics, among them a *Messenica*, and, judging by the fragments preserved by Stephanus of Byzantium, they were packed with geographical and ethnographical detail. His works were read by the pedantic Tiberius (Suet. *Tib.* 70) and Statius' father, a poet and, like Rhianus, an Homeric scholar, had similar tastes: a penchant for *doctrina* and a love of the antique (see Hardie, *Statius and the Silvae*, 10). I owe this observation to the editors.

⁷ A verbal parallel strengthens the analogy: *tendunt* recalls *intendunt* in Vergil's '...stuppea vincula collo | intendunt' (ibid. 236–7).

⁸ See also P. J. Enk on Grattius, *Cynegeticon* 36, where he says of the poet 'stuppeam messem proventum lini vocat'.

⁹ See E. W. Marsden, *Greek and Roman Artillery: Historical Development*, 2 and *passim*.

¹⁰ An allusion to torsion is certainly the more appealing alternative as it evokes a pleasing picture of wooden mechanisms set in creaking motion. Poets like to refer to technical processes, though the veracity of their descriptions leaves much to be desired (cf., for instance, the confusion at Verg. *Aen.* 7.14, where *pecten* instead of *radius* is used for the shuttle of Circe's loom; see also K. D. White, *Roman Farming*, 39–40, for inaccuracies in Vergil's descriptions of technical operations in the *Georgics*).

important idea of twisting, which suggests not only torsion but the final stage in the production of rope: the twisting of the tough flaxen fibres into cord.

Attempts to relate siege-engines to Pylos and Messene are clearly misguided. It has proved more fruitful to pursue the area's connexion with rope, an approach to the line which is signalled in the text.*

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