

1--31: Statius prefaces his catalogue with an introductory section in which preparations for the expedition are viewed from two angles, divine and then human. In the first part (1--12), we see the actions of Phoebus, who ensures the passage of the year, and the involvement of Bellona, shown declaring war and stirring up battle lust amongst the troops. In the next section (13--31), the focus is upon mortal behaviour. Signs of hostility to the war appear as the men's ardour falters in their parting from loved ones. This passage provides one of the poem's many instances in which humans are ignorant of the plans of the gods. The warriors are actually under the influence of Bellona but sacrifice to Jupiter and Mars (13--14). They seem unaware of their powerlessness, attempting to placate the gods as though the outcome of the campaign could be swayed in their favour. Humans are not, however, exonerated from blame by ignorance of divine machinations: as in the case of previous divinations, they proceed with the nefarious war despite the omens (see the dissimulation of the priest at 14--15).

In this prelude to the list of soldiers, Statius draws on the pre-catalogue scenes of several of his predecessors. Bellona shows something of Athene's hortatory function at Hom. *Il.* 2.450--2 (9--10 n.). However, she initiates war in a manner more akin to Juno and Allecto in Verg. *A.* 7 (5--11 n.). Moreover, the defeat of Adrastus' efforts against the war recalls Latinus' failure. In the *Aeneid* and in the *Thebaid*, an aged king, under pressure from people and a fury or fury-like deity (Allecto; Bellona: 5--11 n.), caves in to war and a gathering of forces quickly follows. In fact, the rush to war and overwhelming of Latinus depicted in *Aeneid* 7 have already been evoked at the end of Book 3, with the role of Latinus as *mora belli* shared between Amphiaraus and Adrastus (Fantham 2006: 158--61). For parallels between the two rulers, see nn. on 3--4, 38--73, 38, and 68; Legras (1905), 220; Vessey (1973), 94--5; Venini on 11.165; Davis (1994), 482, n. 55; Hershkowitz (1997), 44; Fantham (2006), 158--61; Ganiban (2007), 58; 168--9. Finally, Valerius Flaccus seems to provide the stimulus for the departure scene and the simile (nn. on 16--23 and 24--30).

1--2: these lines with their reference to the Zephyrs, the west winds associated with the coming of spring (cf. e.g. *Silv.* 4.5.8; N.-H. on Hor. *Carm.* 1.4.1), and Phoebus' loosening of the winter season (see below, 1 n.), date the narrative action of Book 4 to springtime (cf. nn. on 24--30; 96--7, 452--3, 691--2, 702--3, and 793). The arrival of spring, the start of the campaigning season, is similarly heralded at Sil. 12.1--4 but references to time at the beginning of books in epic are more usually figured in days, following the allusions to dawn at the start of Hom. *Il.* 8, 11, and 19: cf. Stat. *Theb.* 12.1--4; Verg. *A.* 11.1; Ov. *Met.* 8.1--2; Luc. 7.1--6 (below cit.); V. Fl. 3.1 *tertia iam gelidas Tithonia soluerat umbras*; 5.1; Sil. 6.1-4. Statius may well be playing with such expectations here, especially since Book 3 ends with the nocturnal visit of Argia to Adrastus (3.683--4 *iam nocte suprema / ante novos ortus*) which lasts until dawn (3.720--1 *nascens / lux*). *annum* at the end of line 1 brings the reader up short. *tertius* is used of years rather than days; language such as *Phoebus* (2) and *diem* (2) is not applied to the arrival of a new sunrise. Statius slips in the fact of the three year delay with pseudo-nonchalance, thereby making it more startling. Vessey (1973: 318) seems to underestimate the shock effect, viewing the lines 'as a logical sequence to Adrastus' words' (of 3.718--20: *neu sint dispendia iustae / dura morae: magnos cunctamur, nata, paratus. / proficitur bello*). Yet we are hardly prepared for the revelation of such a long interval: although the *mora* motif has been in play (see Vessey *ibid.*, 165--6), the overall time scale of events has been left vague. For the *Thebaid*'s use of narrative gaps between books, see Pollmann on 12.1--59.

tertius . . . / Phoebus: *tertius* signifies 'for the third time', a poetic adverbial use of the adjective (Harrison on Verg. *A.* 10.55--6): cf. e.g. 12.50 *tertius Aurorae pugnabat Lucifer*; Ov. *Met.* 10.78--9; V. Fl. 3.1 (below cit.); 5 n.; 10 n. (neuter adjective). *tertius* is a surprising opening of the *quartus* book: compare Lucretius' use of *primae* as the first word of *DRN* 6. For numerical puns, see also Valerius Flaccus' use of *prima* as the first word of the first book and *tertia* as the initial word of the

third (Feeney 1991: 315). It would seem that the troops are gathering for war in the third year since the brothers' quarrel and Polynices' exile: one year has been taken up by Eteocles' agreed term of rule (2.394 *completo . . . anno*); Tydeus' embassy (2.370--3.406) and the augury (3.451--565) take place in the second. The reference has alternatively been taken to indicate a two year gap between the end of Book 3 and start of Book 4 (Vessey 1973: 318); the notion of a three year gap (so e.g. Hershkowitz 1997: 44) is precluded by the ancients' custom of counting inclusively. In specifying a third year, Statius looks to Jocasta's complaint that her son has endured three years of exile at Sen. *Phoen.* 370--3 (where see Frank): *bruma ter posuit niues / et tertia iam falce decubuit Ceres, / ut exul errat natus et patria caret / profugusque regum auxilia Graiorum rogat*. There is a similar rush to war in the third year at Lemnos (5.112 *tertia canet hiems*) but whilst the Lemnian women are provoked by the absence of their dallying husbands, the Argives and their allies abandon their spouses.

1 horrentem zephyris laxauerat annum: compare the echoes at Alain de Lille, *planct. nat. V* (metr. 3) *floriger horrentem Zephyrus laxauerat annum / extinguens Boree prelia pace sui* and Joseph of Exeter 5.402--3 *uix flore solum laxauerat estas / tertia. annum* indicates winter (for this use of the word to signify part of the year, see e.g. *Silv.* 1.3.8; *Hor. Epod.* 2.29; *Verg. A.* 6.311 with Austin; Gow on *Theoc.* 7.85). *horrentem*, which Lact. ad loc. glosses as 'hieme asperum uel horridum frigore', probably suggests that winter is the season 'of shivering', with the effect ascribed to the cause like *Verg. A.* 6.275 *pallentes . . . Morbi* (see Quint. *Inst.* 8.6.27); the participle may also bring out the rigidity of wintry conditions. The verb *laxauerat* is primarily a reference to the dissolution of winter hardness by the warmth of spring: cf. 3.469 *ortus . . . argentes laxauit sole pruinas*; *Verg. G.* 2.330--1 *Zephyri . . . tepentibus auris / laxant arua sinus*; Fitch on Sen. *Her. F.* 8. However, the word also conjures up the lengthening of vernal daylight (for *laxare* of extended time, see Sen. *Her. F.* 8 *uere laxatur dies* with Fitch, where there is similar play on the meaning of the verb).

2--3: as often, Phoebus' status hovers between allegory (the sun melting winter in line 1) and deity: here we think of the god driving his chariot along either his annual or his diurnal course, depending on our acceptance of P or ω in the rest of the line (see below). Whichever reading we adopt, there is clear play with concepts of 'loosening' and extending (cf. 1 *laxauerat*; 3 *longius ire*) and 'forcing, compressing' (2 *cogebat*).

Phoebus . . . angustum cogebat limite uerno / longius ire diem: it is hard to decide between *angusto . . . uernum* (P; Hill; Steiniger; Micozzi) and *angustum . . . uerno* ($\omega\Sigma$; Garrod; Hall 2007a). A case can be made for either reading. Housman (1933a: 6 = 1972b: 1203) explains P's reading as follows: 'The ablative is of comparison and depends on *longius*, and *angustus limes* is the narrow bound of the winter day, whose measurement in space is less than half the circle of the heavens, and in time less than twelve hours of the twenty-four, until extended by the vernal equinox.' Under this interpretation, the reference is to the lengthening of daylight in spring: 'Phoebus was forcing the spring day to go on longer than its narrow limit' (i.e., the limit set by winter). Alternatively, we could understand *limes* as the sun's path (examples of its diurnal and zodiac course at *TLL* 1411.22--41, s.v.; here the former, as at 691): 'Phoebus was forcing the spring day on its narrow path to go on longer (than previously)'. However, although this would allow a contrast between the narrowness of the path of Phoebus and its increase in length, it seems less likely than Housman's interpretation since any ablatives in the vicinity of *longius* would probably be taken as ablatives of comparison, sense permitting. In support of P, one might trace the corruption of *uernum* to *uerno* from assimilation of the adjective to *limite*. Furthermore, Latin poets showed much interest in the lengthening and shortening of nights. Compare, for instance, Horace's image of the passing of seasons at *S.* 2.6.25--6 (although there, in the run up to the winter solstice, the days are thought of as concentric circles which are getting smaller): *bruma niualet / interiore diem gyro trahit*; Sen. *Her. F.* 842--3; Luc. 8.467--9; Sen. *Apoc.* 2.1--2. Against P is the transfer from the sun's annual path in 1 to its daily path in 2--3 (although line 2 may move to the minutiae of the season change, alluded to

in 1, with the shift from pluperfect to imperfect). If we read ω's *angustum . . . uerno*, we must understand *limes* as the path which Phoebus takes as he traverses the world circuit yearly, passing through the zodiac (see *TLL* s.v. *limes*, above cit., e.g. *Ov. Met.* 2.130 *sectus in obliquum est lato curuamine limes*). So: 'Phoebus was forcing the brief day to go further in its spring path' (Ritchie and Hall 2007a translate: 'was forcing the short time of daylight to travel a longer path in its vernal course'). The idea of the increase in daylight is still present but secondary, as part of a conceit: by forcing the day to go 'further' on the zodiac path (i.e., by driving his chariot along it), Phoebus was forcing the daylight to grow 'longer' (as he approached and passed the spring equinox). Statius' fondness for bracketing word-order (87 n.) might be used in favour of this reading. Against it is the danger of reading *limite uerno* as ablative of comparison with *longius* (i.e., an allusion to summer). Nevertheless, the typical density of Statian imagery inclines me towards ω.

2--3 Phoebus . . . cogebat . . . / . . . diem: *dies* contains the notion of the chariot of the sun (for which see *Ov. Met.* 2.47--318): cf. *Sen. Thy.* 120--1 where, at the fateful approach of Tantalus which will eventually lead to the sun's flight from paternal cannibalism (307--8 n.) *ipse Titan dubitat an iubeat sequi / cogatque habenis ire periturum diem*; *Sil.* 11.267--8 *iamque diem ad metas defessis Phoebus Olympo / impellebat equis*. Statius reworks the *Thyestes* passage (Parkes 2005a, 364--5), replacing the hesitant sun-deity (*Sen. Thy.* 120) with a sure one. The allusion helps suggest parallels between events at Mycenae and Thebes (305--8 n.). The implication is that, as in the Senecan lines, the horses of the sun-god are reluctant. It is as though they are attempting to stall time, in awareness of the wicked events to come. Similar instances of pathetic fallacy occur at 3.31--2 (the day is unwilling to rise on the scene of the ambush slaughter); *Luc.* 7.1--6 (the sun is reluctant to witness Pharsalia) *segnior, Oceano quam lex aeterna uocabat, / luctificus Titan numquam magis aethera contra / egit equos cursumque polo rapiente retorsit, / defectusque pati uoluit raptaeque labores / lucis, et attraxit nubes, non pabula flammis, / sed ne Thessalico purus luceret in orbe*; *Sen. Ag.* 53--6 (at the ghost of Thyestes) *sed cur repente noctis aestiuae uices / hiberna longa spatia producunt mora, / aut quid cadentes detinet stellas polo? / Phoebum moramur. redde iam mundo diem*. Note also the *Titan dubius* of *Sen. Oed.* 1 and the sun which is hidden by mist during the defeat of the Romans at *Liv.* 22.6.9. For divine manipulation of time, a motif which goes back to Homer (West 1997: 357), cf. also *Theb.* 5.177--80 (Jupiter lengthens the last evening of the Lemnian men); 10.1--2 (the massacre prompts Jupiter to hasten the fall of night); *V. Fl.* 3.211 (night pauses before the fight with the men of Cyzicus).

3--4 cum fracta impulsaque fatis / consilia: fate, or the Fates (i.e., Atropos, for whom see 190 and 601, Lachesis, for whom see 636, and Clotho) ordain war: see 1.213 *uocem fata sequuntur*; 3.241--2 *sic Fata mihi nigraeque Sororum / iurauere colus*; 638 n. Hence they 'shatter' and 'overthrow' (forceful language, picking up *cogebat* at 2) Adrastus' strategies of procrastination (for which see 3.718--19): compare Amphiaraus' helplessness against Atropos at 189--90. For the application of *frangere* to *consilia*, cf. *Cic. Fam.* 1.9.21 *consilia frangere*; 4.4.4 *fregit hoc meum consilium*. The combination of the verb with *fatis* picks up *Verg. A.* 2.13 (of the Trojans) *fracti bello fatisque repulsi* and 7.594 (Latinus' admission: for the resonance, see 1--31 n.) *frangimur heu fatis*. There are surely traces of the shipwreck metaphor which is employed by this latter Vergilian passage (Horsfall ad loc.) in continuation of the sea simile at *A.* 7.586--90 (an image reworked at *Theb.* 3.671--6: see Fantham 2006: 161). In light of the sailing simile of 24--31, this echo seems provocative: disaster is suggested before even departure. For Fate in the *Thebaid*, see further 787 n.; Dominik (1994a), 49--50; 110. On the inverse *cum* clause, see Micozzi ad loc.

4 tandem miseris data copia belli: *data copia belli* echoes *Verg. A.* 9.720 *data copia pugnae* (note the reworking of the following line at *Theb.* 4.356); cf. also *copia pugnae* at *Luc.* 7.251 and *copia Martis* at *Ov. Met.* 13.208 and *Sil.* 8.4. The reading *miseris* is defended by Håkanson (1973: 20) and adopted by the majority of editors. The men involved in this war are 'wretched' (see e.g. 3.629--30 and further Rieks 1967: 204--6) and a parallel for the dative alongside the genitive is provided by

3.58 *ut primum inuisi cupido data copia regis*. The manuscript variant *miseri*, printed by Klotz and Hill, is possible. For 'wretched war', see e.g. Cic. *Att.* 7.18.1 *misero bello* and Ov. *Her.* 13.51 *miserabile bellum*; cf. Hom. *Il.* 3.112 *ὄϊζυροῦ πολέμοιο*; 391 n. *tandem* continues to play with the idea of delay (Introduction, II.1). The first battle narrative does not, of course, start until Book 7.