

REVERSAL OF FORTUNE: STATIUS' *THEBAID* AND VALERIUS' *ARGONAUTICA*

1) *Theb.* 1.364-89 (Polynices' journey to Argos):

ille tamen, modo saxa iugis fugientia ruptis  
miratus, modo nubigenas e montibus amnes  
aure pauens passimque insano turbine raptas  
pastorum pecorumque domos, non segnius amens  
incertusque uiae per nigra silentia uastum  
haurit iter; pulsat metus undique et undique frater.  
ac uelut hiberno deprensus nauita ponto,  
cui neque Temo piger neque amico sidere monstrat  
Luna uias, medio caeli pelagique tumultu  
stat rationis inops, iam iamque aut saxa malignis  
expectat summersa uadis aut uertice acuto  
spumantes scopulos erectae incurrere prorae:  
talibus opaca legens nemorum Cadmeius heros  
accelerat, uasto metuenda umbone ferarum  
excutiens stabula, et prono uirgulta refringit  
pectore (dat stimulos animo uis maesta timoris)  
donec ab Inachiis uicta caligine tectis  
emicuit lucem deuexa in moenia fundens  
Larisaeus apex. illo spe concitus omni  
euolat, hinc celsae Iunonia templa Prosymnae  
laeus habens, hinc Herculeo signata uapore  
Lernaei stagna atra uadi, tandemque reclusis  
infertur portis. actutum regia cernit  
uestibula; hic artus imbri uentoque rigentes  
proicit ignotaeque adclinis postibus aulae  
inuitat tenuis ad dura cubilia somnos.

Now he wondered at rocks fleeing from ruptured heights, now his ears feared cloud-born rivers coursing from the mountains and the dwellings of shepherds and flocks swept everywhere away in the mad whirl. Distraught and doubtful of his way, no less swiftly did he devour his desolate route through the black silences. Terror strikes from every side, terror and his brother. As a mariner caught in a winter sea, to whom neither lazy Wain nor Moon with friendly radiance shows directions, stands clueless in mid commotion of land and sea, expecting every moment rocks sunk in treacherous shallows, or foaming cliffs with spiky tops to run upon the rearing prow: so the Cadmean hero traversing the dark forest quickens pace, shaking out the perilous lairs of wild beasts with his huge shield, and with thrusting breast bursts open the thickets (grim force of fear spurs him on), until the darkness was overborne by the dwellings of Inachus and Larisa's pinnacle flashes out, beaming light upon the shelving town. Thither he darts, urged on by all his hope, to the left of Juno's temple of lofty Prosymna on one hand, with the black pools of Lerna's marsh, marked by the heat of Hercules, on the other. At last the gates are open and in he comes. At once he sees the royal forecourt; here he flings down limbs stiffened by wind and rain and leaning against the doors of the unknown palace invites light slumbers to his hard couch. (Trans. Shackleton-Bailey)

2) *Arg.* 2.38-71 (Argonauts' first night at sea):

auxerat hora metus, iam se uertentis Olympi  
ut faciem raptosque simul montesque locosque  
ex oculis circumque graues uidere tenebras:  
ipsa quies rerum mundique silentia terrent  
astraque et effusis stellatus crinibus aether.  
ac uelut ignota captus regione uiarum  
noctiuagum qui carpit iter non aure quiescit,  
non oculis, noctisque metus niger auget utrimque  
campus et occurrens umbris maioribus arbor,  
haud aliter trepidare uiri. sed pectora firmans  
Hagniaides 'non hanc' inquit 'sine numine pinum

Their fear deepened with the night as they beheld the face of the heavens turning and the mountains and all places rapt from view and all around thick darkness. The very stillness of Nature, the silent constellations in the heavens, the firmament starred with streaming meteors filled them with fear. And as a traveler by night overtaken in some unknown spot upon the road keeps ear and eye alert, while the darkening landscape to left and right and trees looming up with shadows strangely huge do but make heavier the terrors of night, even so the heroes quailed. But Hagnius' son comforted their

derigimus, nec me tantum Tritonia cursus  
erudit: saepe ipsa manu dignata carinam est.  
 an non experti, subitus cum luce fugata  
 horruit imbre dies? quantis, pro Iuppiter, austris  
 restitimus, quanta quotiens et Pallados arte  
 incassum decimae cecidit tumor arduus undae!  
 quin agite, o socii; micat immutabile caelum  
puraque nec grauido surrexit Cynthia cornu  
 (nullus in ore rubor) certusque ad talia Titan  
 integer in fluctus et in uno decidit Euro.  
 adde quod in noctem uenti ueloque marique  
 incumbunt magis et tacitis ratis ocior horis.  
 atque adeo non illa sequi mihi sidera monstrat  
 quae delapsa polo reficit mare—tantus Orion  
 iam cadit, irato iam stridet in aequore Perseus—  
 sed mihi dux, uetitis qui numquam conditus undis  
 axe nitet, Serpens, septenosque implicat ignes.  
 sic ait et certi memorat qui uultus Olympi,  
 Pleiones Hyadumque locos, quo sidere uibret  
 Ensis, et Actaeus niteat qua luce Bootes.  
 haec ubi dicta dedit, Cereris tum munere fessas  
 restituunt uires et parco corpora Baccho.  
mox somno cessere; regunt sua sidera puppem.

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breasts, saying: “Not without the help of a god do we pilot this ship; nor has the Tritonian queen but taught me the ways of the sea; oft-times has she herself deigned to guide our keel. What? felt we not her hand when suddenly the light was quenched and the day grew rough with storm? How great, ye heavens, the tempests against which we have prevailed! How many a time through Pallas’ sovran skill the mounting heap of the tenth wave has fallen harmless! Nay then, courage, comrades! the sky shines unchanging, and clear with sharp horns the moon has risen; no ruddy glow is in her face, and Titan, who in such matters lies not, sank full-orbed into the waters, one blaze of gold. Moreover, at nightfall the breezes blow stronger upon sail and sea: the ship flies swifter in the silent hours. Furthermore, she teaches me not to follow those stars that go down to draw new strength from Ocean: see, mighty Orion is sinking, and Perseus is hissing in the angry waters; no, my guide shall be he that never hides beneath the forbidden waters as he shines about the pole, the serpent that enfolds the seven stars.” So spoke he, and showed them how clear the face of the heavens, where Pleione and the Hyades were, in what constellation flashed Orion’s sword, how brilliant shone the Actaeon Bootes. When he had thus spoken, they renewed their weary bodies’ strength with the gift of Ceres and a little wine; presently sleep overcame them; kindly stars guide the ship. (Trans. Mozley)

3) Theb. 3.67-9 (Maeon speaks to Eteocles):  
 sed mihi iussa deum placitoque ignara moueri  
 Atropos atque olim non haec data ianua leti  
*eripuerit necem.*

But the gods’ command and Atropos who knows not how to move from her decree and destruction by this door long ago refused me, snatched death away.

4) Arg. 3.384-7 (Mopsus speaks to Jason):  
 cum deinde tremendi  
 ad solium uenere Iouis questuque nefandam  
*edocuere necem, patet ollis ianua leti*  
 atque iterum remeare licet.

Thereafter when they are come to the throne of awful Jove and have set forth all the sorrowful story of their dreadful end, the gate of death is opened for them and they may return a second time.

5) Theb. 3.71-7 (Maeon foretells haunting of Eteocles):  
*bellum infandum ominibusque negatam*  
 mouisti, funeste, aciem...  
 ...te series orbarum excisa domorum  
 planctibus adsiduis, te diro horrore uolantes  
 quinquaginta animae circum noctesque diesque  
 adsilient, neque enim ipse moror.

Murderer, it is an unholy war you have launched, battle by omens disapproved...A line of orphaned, extirpated homes shall haunt you with continual lament—fifty spirits flying around you with dire terror by night and day; for I myself tarry not.

6) *Theb.* 3.99-102 (narrator's praise of Maeon):  
tu tamen egregius fati mentisque nec umquam  
(sic dignum est) passure situm, qui comminus ausus  
uadere contemptum reges, quaque ampla ueniret  
libertas, sancire *uiam*...

But you, splendid of fate and soul nor ever to suffer oblivion (so it is meet), who dared go flout monarchs face to face and hallow a path for ample freedom...

7) *Arg.* 3.391-7 (Mopsus explains things to Jason):  
at quibus inuito maduerunt sanguine dextrae,  
si fors saeua tulit miseros sed proxima culpa,  
hos uariis mens ipsa modis agit et sua carpunt  
facta uiros: resides et iam nil amplius ausi  
in lacrimas humilesque metus aegramque fatiscunt  
segnitiem, quos ecce uides. sed nostra requiret  
cura *uiam*.

But those whose hands have dripped with blood unwittingly—or were it cruel mischance, though near to guilt, that swept away the wretches—these men their own minds harry in diverse ways, and their own deeds vex the doers; languid now and ventureless they decline into tears and spiritless alarms and sickly sloth: such you do here behold. Yet shall my thoughtful care seek out a way.

8) *Theb.* 8.255-8 (Oedipus compared to Phineus):  
qualis post *longae* Phineus ieiunia *poenae*,  
nil stridere domi uolucresque ut sensit abactas  
(necdum tota fides), hilaris mensasque torosque  
nec turbata feris tractauit pocula pennis.

So Phineus after the fasting of his long punishment, perceiving that the screaming in the house had stopped and the birds had been driven away (but not yet quite believing), cheerfully handled the tables and couches and wine cups undisturbed by savage wings.

9) *Arg.* 4.535-7 (Phineus' post-Harpy happiness):  
hunc ubi reclinem stratis et pace fruentem  
aspicit ac *longae* ducentem obliuia *poenae*,  
talibus appellat supplexque ita fatur Iason...

Beholding him [sc. Phineus] as he reclines upon the cushions and enjoys peace and tastes forgetfulness of his long ordeal, Jason addresses him and supplicates him thus...

10) *Arg.* 4.632-3 (Phineus' rehabilitation):  
...dulcesque iterum mihi surgere soles  
nunc reor

...and I imagine that once more the sweet suns are rising for my eyes.

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