

***P.Vindob. G 26768a:* Non-Antimachean *Thebaid* (with Possible Associated Fragments from Other Collections)**

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Abstract In this chapter I take a fresh look at the hexameter *adespoton P.Vindobonensis* G. 26768a, arguing that the text does not cover the events preceding the race between Atalanta and Hippomenes, and that is not by Hesiod, as proposed by its editor. The name of Parthenopaeus, Atalanta's son, who participated in the War of the Seven against Thebes, should be supplied in l. 12. Lines 20 ff. deal with Atalanta's dream of her son's death. The chapter also discusses the relation of this poem with two other anonymous hexameter fragments from Oxyrhynchus, *P.Oxy.* 2519 and *P.Oxy.* 859, which seem to deal with Parthenopaeus' departure from Arcadia to Thebes.

Keywords Atalanta. Parthenopaeus. Epic. Hexameter. Adespota.

In the catalogue of epic adespota contained in my *Adespota Papyracea Hexametra Graeca (APHex, vol. 1)*, the reader finds six papyrus fragments either centring on or making tangential reference to the city of Thebes and/or the War of Thebes with Argus: *P.Berol. inv.* 5226 = *BKT V 2*, p. 147(a) = Heitsch, *GDRK XL*; *P.Berol. inv.* 17060 = *P.Schubart 6* = Antimachus, fr. dub. 200 Matthews; *P.Hamb. II 122* = [Hes.] *Cat. fr. inc. sed.* 37-38 Hirschberger; *P.Oxy. VI 819* = Antimachus fr. dub. 151 Wyss = fr. dub. 189 Matthews; *P.Oxy. XXX 2519* = Lloyd-Jones, Parsons, *SH 912* = Antim. fr. dub. 198 Matthews; and *P.Vindob. G 26768a* = [Hes.] *Cat. fr.* 16 Traversa.



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At least three of these, *P.Vindobonensis* G. 26768a, *P.Oxy.* 859, and *P.Oxy.* 2519, appear to be connected in content, and gravitate around the same episode of the expedition of the Argives against Thebes, the conversation between Atalanta and Parthenopaeus and the subsequent departure of Parthenopaeus to join the Seven. Building on recent, important contributions on *P.Oxy.* 859 and 2519 by, respectively, C. Meliadó¹ and A. Silvestro,² this article will focus on *P.Vindobonensis* G 26768a, proposing a new interpretation based on a fresh examination of the papyrus, and assessing its possible connections on a narrative level with the two *P.Oxy.* fragments.

P.Vindobonensis G 26768a was published in 1939 by Hans Oellacher in the series *Mitteilungen aus der Papyrussammlung der Nationalbibliothek in Wien* as MPER N.S. III 6,³ as part of the Sammlung's major effort to publish their literary papyri. Oellacher offers a helpful palaeographical description of the hand, which he dates to the III century AD, but does not provide a full-scale commentary on the text, which is admittedly very scanty.

] ...[
]ς Ἀρτεμι[
ἀπ]ώλεσε λαὸν ἐγείρας	
]ν ἐμφύλιον ἀρχήν	
] χρυσάμπυκα Λητώ	5
].. Ἀταλάντη	
]///αία	
]//υστους	
] . [.] . .	
(eine oder zwei Zeilen fehlen)	
ἀτά]λαντος[?	
]χευς . [?	10
]ς	
πα]ρθεν[∪ — ∪	
πο]λεμισταί	
ὤτρ]υνε τελέσσαι	
τ]ὸ δὲ Λητώ	15
]α, τῆ]λε δ' ἐοῦσα	
μυχ]οῖσι μελάθρου	
]εῖ]πε τελέσσαι	
ἐπιεῖ]κε]λον ἠελίοιο	
]ῆ]εσελίγη	20

1 Meliadó 2018.

2 Silvestro 2016.

3 Oellacher 1939.

ἔ]νδυε χιτῶνα
ὀ]νείρων
]ωι

In his note on v. 6 Ἀταλάντη, however, he wrote:

Der sichere Name gibt einen Fingerzeig für die Einordnung des Papyrus. Wir werden auf die Kataloge des Hesiod geführt. Vielleicht werden die Vorgänge vor dem Wettlauf der Atalante mit Hippomenes geschildert, ihr Bemühen mit Hilfe der Artemis und der Leto zu siegen, also zwischen Frag. 21 Rzach [= 73 M.-W. = 47 M.] und den obegenannten Papyrus der Soc(ietà) It(aliana) 130 [= 75 M.-W. = 48 M.] einzuordnen sein (Körte).

Körte's inference was accepted by Augusto Traversa, who included the fragment in his edition of the Hesiodic *Catalogue* about a decade later.⁴ Atalanta did feature in the *Catalogue of Women* as the daughter of Schoeneus and granddaughter of Athamas, son of Aeolus (fr. 72 M.-W. = 50+51 M.). The episode of the race of Atalanta and Hippomenes (fr. 75 M.-W. = 48 M.) was included at the beginning of book 2 as part of the genealogy of the Aeolids which started, presumably, at the end of book 1 and continued into book 2.⁵

However, two issues arise:⁶ first, the involvement of Leto (5, 15) in the story, which -as far as I know- is not otherwise attested in myth; second, the mythical profile of Atalanta, which is incompatible with the Atalanta we know from Hesiod.⁷ Atalanta the 'racer', daughter of the Boeotian king Schoeneus, is generally distinguished by ancient sources from the 'huntress', the daughter of Iasus, the son of king Lycurgus of Arcadia. Since in our papyrus Atalanta occurs in conjunction with Artemis (2), it looks likely that the character we are dealing with is the Arcadian huntress rather than the Boeotian racer. Of course, the two figures could have been conflated some time after Hesiod by a poet eager to have the two traditions reconciled, imagining e.g. Schoeneus emigrating to Arcadia before conceiving Atalanta or a footrace set among the Arcadian hills, a chief seat of Artemis' cult.⁸ Such a 'syncretic' treatment of Atalanta is seen in Callimachus' *Hymn to Artemis* 215-224, where the daughter of Iasus, the Arcadian, is listed among Artemis' nymphs and is introduced with an epithet,

⁴ Traversa 1951, fr. 16.

⁵ West 1985, 67. Alternatively, at the beginning of book 3: see D'Alessio 2005, part. 213-16.

⁶ Cf. already Schwartz 1960, 363 fn. 3, for a brief reassessment of frs. 15-16 Traversa.

⁷ On the two profiles, see Immerwahr 1885, 26-7.

⁸ Jost 1985, 393-425.

ποδορρών, which directly recalls the ‘racer’, the daughter of Schoeneus. Similarly in Propertius 1.1, Melanion/Hippomenes falls in love with the Arcadian Atalanta, who is called *velocem*.⁹

There are elements in the papyrus which point, in fact, to a completely different narrative context, most likely a military one (cf. l. 13 πολεμισταί). In l. 3 ἀπ]ώλεσε λαὸν ἐγείρας, a commander is portrayed as either ‘laying waste’ to some territory or ‘losing’ – it would seem – his own life, dying as he leads his army. In l. 4, ἐμφύλιον ἀρχήν seems to refer to an intestine conflict, a desire for (?) ‘power within one family’. In Greek mythology, the fratricidal strife *par excellence* is, of course, the conflict between the Argives and Thebans culminating in the military expedition of the Seven against Thebes. The progeny of Atalanta is involved in the war; her son with Hippomenes (or Meleager, or Ares),¹⁰ Parthenopaeus, was persuaded to join in the war by Adrastus,¹¹ and will later die fighting in it.¹² It has gone unnoticed that his name can be conveniently restored as a hexameter-end at l. 12. I would then argue that πα]ρθεν[√ √ likely refers not to Atalanta, the hunting ‘maiden’, but to her son.

The most complete source of information on the relationship between Atalanta and Parthenopaeus, and the events leading to his death is Statius’ *Thebaid*. In book 9, Statius goes into detail about Atalanta’s premonition of her son’s demise in a dream. She suddenly wakes up and rushes to Thebes to avert Parthenopaeus’s death (570-575): *tristibus interea somnum turbata figuris | torva sagittiferi mater Tegeatis ephebi, | ... ibat ... | purgatura malum fluvio vivente soporem. | namque per attonitas curarum pondere noctes ...* (Meanwhile the stern Tegean mother of the archer youth, troubled in her sleep by gloomy visions, was on her way ... to purge her sinister slumber in the living stream. For in nights dismayed by weight of cares...) (transl. Shackleton Bailey). This very scene seems to me to be referenced in lines 20 ff. of our papyrus. Mention of dreams (23 ὄ]νειρων) and the moon (24 σελήνη), and the presence of the expression ἐ]νδυε χιτῶνα in 21, which in Homer is said of characters putting their tunics back on after sleep,¹³ can hardly be coincidental.

⁹ For examples of conflation in Ovid, see Ziogas 2013, 156-7. Apollodorus, the author of the *Bibliotheca*, also does not seem to be bothered by this distinction: see Scarpi *ad* 9.3.2.

¹⁰ Escher-Bürkli 1896, 1891; Boardman 1984, 940.

¹¹ Diod. Sic. 4.65.4-5; but cf. Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.6.8 εἰς Θήβας ἔπεισε (*scil.* Tydeus) τοὺς Ἀργείους στρατεύεσθαι.

¹² Paus. 9.18.6 = *Thebais* fr. 10 W. = Davies, *Theban Epics*, fr. 4; Eur. *Phoen.* 1159-61; Stat. *Theb.* 9.877-907.

¹³ Hom. *Il.* 2.42* μαλακὸν δ’ ἔνδυε χιτῶνα | καλὸν νηγᾶτεον (Agamemnon after being visited by Dream/Nestor); *Il.* 10.21 ὀρθωθεὶς δ’ ἔνδυε περὶ στήθεσσι χιτῶνα (Agamemnon cannot sleep, puts on his tunic to go and see Nestor); 121 ὡς εἰπὼν ἔ. π. c. χ.

In Statius, Atalanta's plea to Artemis/Diana, who is mentioned here in l. 2, triggers the goddess's intervention, resulting in Parthenopaeus's *aristeia*. But what about her mother Leto, whose name occurs twice in the papyrus at ll. 5 and 15? The answer may come from Statius, as Leto does appear in Atalanta's prayer there; in 9.631-635, Leto is mentioned as the prototype of all suffering mothers, with particular reference to her troubled pregnancy: *quod si vera sopor miserae praesagia mittit, | per te maternos, mitis Dictynna, labores | fraternumque decus, cunctis hunc fige sagittis | infelicem uterum; miserae sine funera matris | audiat ille prior!* (But if sleep sends me, alas, true présages, by your mother's labour, gentle Dictynna, [= Artemis, lady of mount Dictys in Crete], and you brother's glory [Apollo], pierce this luckless womb. Let him hear first of the death of his unhappy mother) (transl. by Shackleton Bailey).

It has been argued recently that the episode of Parthenopaeus' departure from Arcadia to Thebes may have been at the centre of two further hexameter adespota, both dated, as is the *P.Vindobonensis*, to the III century. Atalanta may be the narrating character in *P.Oxy. XXX 2519 fr. 1 = SH 912* communicating to Parthenopaeus the predictions made by Amphiaraus of the Argive debacle at Thebes, to dissuade him from entering the conflict that will ultimately kill him:¹⁴

Fr. 1 col. ii 1-7 (supplements by Lobel)

οὐδέ (?) γὰρ Ἀμφιαρῆα . . [
 εἰδότα θάκηριν (?) Δαναοικο . [
 ἀλλ' ὅτε (?) κ[ε]ν διή ἀμωρο[(?)
 οὐ οἱ ἔτι δύναμίν γε τό[τε (?)
 ἀλλὰ καὶ οὐκ ἐθέλωγ . [
 ρπήζεται, εἴως κεν . [
 τύνη δ' ἴχγε[ο (?)

In a second fragment from the same roll, we seem to have a snippet of Parthenopaeus' response to Atalanta (cf. col. i 4 ἀλύτῃν), followed by her resigned acceptance of the inevitable upcoming tragedy:

(Nestor, following his conversation with Agamemnon). In post-Homeric times, a χιτών could be worn by both men and women alike, see Gow *ad Theoc.* 15.21 (on Simaetha at 2.73); Markwald, *LfrgE*, s.v. "χιτών"; Stephens *ad Callim. Hymn* 3.11 (of Artemis); Bagordo on Ar. fr. 641 K.-A. γυναικείον ... χιτώνιον.

¹⁴ Livrea 1985, 599.

Fr. 2 col. ii 4-8 (= *SH* 912 b; supplements by Silvestro, except l. 8 by Lobel)

ἀνέ]ρος ἔκφ[ατο μῦθον ...?]
“]ἔξ ἔμ[
..] []υτ’ Ἄργε[οc
ο]ὔδ’ ἐν ἀτεμβ[όμενος μετέειπεν μάντις
“ἔρχεσθ’ ὅππῃ δ[ί] τοι νόος ἔπλετο”¹⁵

The third fragment associated with this theme is *P.Oxy.* VI 859, now at Liverpool Sidney Jones Library. In it, we read of an unnamed character – almost certainly Parthenopaeus –¹⁶ ‘leaving the gates of Talaus’, king of Argus and father of Parthenopaeus, and ‘Mount Stymphalus’, in Arcadia, ‘where he resided’. His mother, Atalanta, appears to be checking on him (l. 6 μήτηρ θάλαμόνδ’ ἔμολε), unaware that her son is no longer sleeping (καταδράθοι) and has already left for Thebes. ὄνειρα in the final line may be a reference to her dream. Here are ll. 2-8 in Meliadò’s edition:

ὡς εἰπὼν ἀπέβ]η τε καὶ ἐς Ταλαοῖο θ[ύρετρα
χώρησε στ]ύμφηλον ἀποπρολι[πὼν νιφόνενα
ὡι ἐνι ναιετ]άσασκε. παροίθε δέ οἱ πρ[οῦβιαινε
λαδὸς ἐπαί]σ]ων. ἀλαβώδεος ἐνδ[ο]θι πύργου
τειρομέν]η μήτηρ θάλαμόνδ’ ἔμο[λ’ ὄφρ’ ἐν εἰδῆι
εἰ << —¹⁷ ἀμογ]ητὶ καταδράθοι ὡς τὸ [πάρος περ
]αίσι πελέσκετο ἔργου ὄν]ειαρ

Whilst the Vienna, Oxford, and Liverpool texts appear to be connected on the level of content, it is difficult to say whether they belonged to the same work. Granted *P.Oxy.* 2519 is about Parthenopaeus and Atalanta, none of the three adespota would come from Antimachus’ *Thebaid*, where Parthenopaeus is said to be the son of Lysimache, wife of the king of Argus Talaus (fr. 17 Matthews), rather than Atalanta.¹⁸ Narratively speaking, the fragments centre on the same epi-

¹⁵ Silvestro 2016, 119: “ella, narrando in breve a guisa di *exemplum* le predizioni di Anfiarao riguardo la disfatta argiva a Tebe, dapprima cercherebbe di dissuadere il figlio Partenopeo dal recarsi in guerra per evitare la fine che l’indovino ha previsto per tutti i sette (fr. 1); e avendo constatato, poi, che il figlio non vuole saperne di restare in patria (i vv. 4-6 b potrebbero quindi riportare le parole di Partenopeo, che si appellerebbe forse all’onore e ai doveri propri di un guerriero), guardandolo montare sul suo carro, gli rivolgerebbe un discorso d’addio («*Fa’ pure come...*», fr. 2 col. ii b v. 8).”

¹⁶ Meliadò 2018, 56.

¹⁷ εἰ δὴ παῖς, which Meliadò and suggested independently, is probably too long for the space available.

¹⁸ Cf. Cingano 1989, 30 fn. 13: “Partenopeo è argivo, figlio di Talao, in Ecateo, *FGrHist* 1 F 32 (così pure Paus. 9,18,6 = Theb. fr.7 Allen, 6 Bernabé; Aristarco, *TrGF* 14 F 5; Filocle I, *TrGF* 24 F 3; Antimaco, fr. 17 Wyss), ma diventa arcade, figlio di Atalanta,

sode, and there appears to be no overlap in the treatment of the mythical events. The conversation between mother and son in the Oxford fragments may have preceded the dream described in the Vienna fragment,¹⁹ with the Liverpool scrap illustrating the tragic moment in which the mother wakes up from the dream and realises Parthenopaeus has already left. In Stat. *Theb.* 9.570 ff., Atalanta's prayer to Artemis follows the dream, and by 9.670 ff. Parthenopaeus is already in the midst of the battle.

If it is not Antimachus, who then is the author of the *P.Vindobonensis* (and possibly the other two fragments)? Nurturing doubts that the Cyclic *Thebaid* was still available to read in third century Egypt is, I believe, legitimate.²⁰ If this is a postclassical *Thebaid*, the author could have been that Menelaus of Aegae known to have composed a *Thebaid* in 11 books (*SH* 551-553), or Antagoras of Rhodes, a contemporary of Callimachus (Powell, *Collectanea Alexandrina*, p. 121), but neither is known to have survived on papyri. Nothing prevents us, of course, from thinking of a later *Thebaid*, one composed locally by an Egyptian author, whose name never reached us, and yet still in vogue – we presume – at the time the papyrus was copied.

A new edition of the Vienna fragment follows.

Perale, *APHex* 99 = *P.Vindob. G 26768 a*

.
] . [.] . [.
] Ἄρτεμι[—Ϛ
 ἀπ]ώλεσε λαὸν ἐγείρας
] ν ἐμφύλιον ἀρχήν
] χρυσάμπυκα Λητώ 5
] ν Ἀταλάντη
] ... αἶα
] . [.] υς τους
] . [.] . .
 desunt versus unus vel duo
] ... [

nei tragici ateniesi (Eschilo, *Sept.* 532sgg.; Sofocle, *Oed. Col.* 1320sgg.; Euripide, *Suppl.* 888sgg.) e nei mitografi, ad es. Ellanico, *FGrHist* 4 F 99 e Ps. Apollod. *Bibl.* 3,6,3, che attinge a fonti più tarde rispetto a quelle utilizzate nel primo libro?; see also Meliàdò 2018, 57 fn. 11.

19 Unless ἐνδουε χιτῶνα in 21 refers to Parthenopaeus' last night at Stymphalus, rather than Atalanta's.

20 Cf. the introduction in Perale (forthcoming). West 2015, 106-7, like Wilamowitz 1884, 328-80 and Severyns 1928, 75-81, believed that the poems of the Epic Cycle were no longer circulating after the first decades of the second century.

Ἰζαντος	
Ἰχευσε	
Ἰ. [.] c	15
πα]ρθενο [—υ	
πο]λεμισταί	
Ἰ... ε τελέσσαι	
Ἰτο δε Λητώ	
Ἰα, τῆλε δ' ἔοῦσα	20
Ἰοιαι μελάθρου	
Ἰεῖτε τελέσσαι	
Ἰμον ἠελίοιο	
Ἰεῖε Cελήνη	
Ἰ ἔγδυσε χιτῶνα	25
ὀ]νεῖρων	
Ἰ . ωι	

Hesiodo dederunt Körte ap. Oellacher et Traversa, sed in Hesiodi catalogo Atalanta filia Schoenei (ffr. 72, 76.9 M.-W = 51, 48.12 M.) cursu celeberrima, hic lasii, virgo venatrix Arcadica ancillaque Dianae (2, cf. Eur. *Phoen.* 151; Callim. *Dian.* 215-220; Ov. *Am.* 1.7.13-14; Prop. 1.1.10) materque Parthenopaei (16?), qui ad Thebarum portas pugnavit. Thebaidi suffragantur etiam ll. 3-4 λαὸν ἐγείρας et ἐμφύλιον ἀρχήν, i.e. bellum intestinum ad Thebas capiendas necnon ll. 23ss., quae Atalantae somnium de morte Parthenopaei narrare videntur, vd. 24 Cελήνη et 26 ὀ]νεῖρων; cf. Stat. *Theb.* 9.570-571 *tristibus interea somnum turbata figuris / torva sagittiferi mater Tegeatis ephebi, 575 per attonitas noctes, 622 quid trepidae noctes somnusque minantur?* quid Leto (5, 19) agat, omnino non intellegimus, nisi exemplum mulieris laborantis memoratum, cf. Stat. *Theb.* 9.631-634 *quod si uera sopor miserae praesagia mittit, | per te maternos ... labores | ... cunctis hunc fige sagittis | infelicem uterum.* poeta Antimachus non est. Parthenopaeus in Thebaide eius Argivus, non Arcadicus (fr. 17 M. = 17 W.) || **3** suppl. Oellacher || **4** κακ]ήν Cartlidge* || **7** fort.]ον δ' αἶα || **8** ἄ[π]ί]ψτους, ἄ] κ[ο]υ]ψτούς, -κλ[α]υ]ψτους possis || **13** scripsi: ἀτά]λαντος dub. Oellacher || **14** ἦν ἐλό]χευσε (cf. Callim. *Hymn* 4.326 ἦν ἐλοχεύσαο Λητώ) vel ἠνιό]χευσε possis (ἠνιό]χευεῖ iam Oellacher) || **16** Πα]ρθενοπ[αι- suppleverim: παρθέν[ο]c ἀδμήc Oellacher || **18** fort.] εῖ]τε, cf. 22: ὠτρ]υνε Oellacher || **21** μυχ]οῖαι Oellacher: προθύρ]οιαι etiam possis, cf. Nonn. *P.* 5.4 ὑπ' αἰθούσῃcι μελάθρου. μέλαθρον = *domus*, vd. e.g. Hom. *Il.* 2.414 et C. Brügger, M. Stoevesandt, E. Visser *ad loc.* || **23** ἀυγαῖc ἐπιείκε]λον ἠελίοιο dub. Oellacher, sed λον non legitur: fort. (cυν)δρό]μον ἠελίοιο 'circumitum solis' (cf. Eur. *Phoen.* 163; D.P. 237*; Nonn. *Dion.* 4.277) vel δό]μον ἠελίοιο i.e. ad orientem, cf. Nonn. *Dion.* 11.487, 521, 37.91 || **24** ἀντήc]εῖε possis, ita Man. 1[5 K.].50-51, cf. Nonn. *Dion.* 38.346* Ἠριγένεια συναντήcειε Cελήνη:] ἠε c. Oellacher || **25** ἔγδυσε χιτῶνα Hom. *Il.* 2.42* et Nonn. *Dion.* 18.204*, 20.101*, semper post alicuius somnium. | υ ex o corr. || **26** suppl. Oellacher: βωτια]νεῖρων, κυδία]νεῖρων (Cartlidge*) etiam possis.

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