On the Construction *fatale peregi*
in *CIL* VI, 5953 (*CLE* 1068)[*]

To José Miguel

The aim of this paper is to put forward a significant observation about the recent correction of *CIL* VI, 5953[1], a *carmen epigraphicum*, proposed by M. Massaro[2]. This correction has resulted in a construction *fatale peregi* with no epigraphic or literary parallels, a construction to be included in the Latin dictionaries. *CIL* VI, 5953 contains an eight lined epitaph dedicated to a young man, *Successus*, by his sister *Primigenia*. The first three lines are in prose; the remainder make up a poem formed by two elegiac couplets with some prosodic faults. The text contained in the major editions and compilations, such as *CIL* (see fig. 1) or F. Bücheler's *CLE*, had been transmitted unaltered since it was established in the eighteenth century.

5953 tabulam marmoream fuisse in monumento supra aediculam muro affixam indicat PIRAN. t. IX. Nunc extat in museo Capitolino.

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        D·M·SVCCESSI PRIMIGENIA·SOR
        FECIT · FRATRI · BENE · MERENTI
        ET·PIISSIMO ITER·VII·ANNIS·EGO
        IAM FATALE·PEREGI NVNC·RAPI
   5    OR·TENEBRIS·ET·TEGIT·OSSA·LAP
        DESINE·SOROR·ME IAM·FLERE
        SEPVLCRO·HOC ETIAM·MVLTIS
        REGIBVS · ORA TVLIT ·
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Fig. 1. *CIL* VI, 5953

Massaro has rightly corrected the noun *iter*, at the beginning of the poem, in the third line, by the adverb *ter*, given that the stone clearly contains no *-i*. Consequently, the first verse of the *carmen* must be read *ter VII annis ego iam fatale peregi*. Most probably, this mistake was triggered by misinterpreting a stroke,

[1] Preserved in the *Palazzo Nuovo* of the Capitoline Museum, fixed in the wall of the *Sala delle colombe* (inv. NCE 1941).
[2] M. Massaro, *Un "iter" di fantasia. Revisione e commento di CIL VI 5953 / CLE 1068*, in *ZPE* 187, 2013, p. 164-172.

actually a *uirgula*, used to separate the *praescriptum* in prose from the verse[3]. This *uirgula* was wrongly understood as an *-i* giving as a result the reading of a word *iter* which no one had thus far questioned. As a matter of fact, from a semantic outlook, the sequence *fatale peregi*, at the end of the first hexameter, reflects the "life is a journey" metaphor of which there are close parallels in Classical Latin authors. In the frame of this metaphor, a construction with *peragere* demands a noun such as *tempus, aeuum, cursum* or *iter*. There are examples of *perago* construed with all these nouns with the meaning 'to live out / to complete (a period of time)' or 'to life out one's life'[4]:

– Verg., *A*. IV, 653: *et quem dederat cursum Fortuna peregi.*
– Ov., *Met*. XV, 485: *qui postquam senior regnumque aeuumque peregit.*
– Hor., *S*. I, 6, 93-94: *nam si natura iuberet / a certis annis aeuum remeare peractum.*
– Sen., *Epist*. XCIX, 12: *cui ante lassitudinem peractum est iter?*
– Val. Fl. I, 788-789: *et non segne peractum / lucis iter.*

According to these examples, the word *iter* was likely to be read on *CIL* VI, 5953. This would explain why the first editors opted for the *lectio facilior* by reading (or reconstructing) this word, which was perfectly appropriate in the context of the inscription.

In addition, some other examples of similar constructions with *perago* meaning 'to live' can also be found both in verse and prose epigraphs:

– *CIL* VI, 38425 (*CLE* 1948): *Hic ego nunc iaceo... peragens tertium et uicensimum annum.*
– *CIL* VIII, 27587 (*CLE* 1869): *annos peregit duos et octoginta.*
– *AÉ* 1364, 1995: *M(arci) Aurelii Sam*[---] *iter qui conducens uitam peregit.*

The closest parallel for the *fatale peregi* construction is in *CIL* VI, 25022: *nullum dolorem accepi tui nisi quod fatalem diem celeriter peregisti*[5]. Nonetheless, what we have in *CIL* VI, 5953 is a construction *fatale peregi* without the expected object. This *aporia* can be tackled from two different points of view: either *fatale* is substantivised as the object of *perago*, or *fatale* is used as an adverbial accusative modifying the verb. Massaro stands for the first solution by interpreting this construction as the result of the use of the adjective *fatale* as a noun[6]. This possibility is supported by the *ThLL*, where some instances of *fatale* used as a substantive are mentioned[7]. These instances can be divided in three categories, among which the following passages are significant:

1.1. Stat., *Silu*. II, 1, 226: *quae nubes fatale sonet.*
1.2. Cic., *Fam*. XII, 13, 1: *fatale nescio quid tuae uirtuti datum.*

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[3] About this *uirgula* see M. LIMÓN, *On the Recent Correction of CIL VI, 5953*, in *Tyche* 29, 2014, p. 273-274; MASSARO, *Un "iter"* [n. 2], p. 165 also mentions it briefly.
[4] See *perago* 10, in P. G. W. GLARE, *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, Oxford, 2012².
[5] I owe this example to one of the anonymous reviewers.
[6] MASSARO, *Un "iter"* [n. 2] p. 168.
[7] O. HEY, art. *fatalis*, in *ThLL* VI.1, 1912-1926, col. 334, 81ss.

2. *Fatale* referring to an infinitive clause: *CIL* VI, 22251 (*CLE* 1127): *si pietate aliquem redimi fatale fuisset Marsidia Stabilis prima redempta forem*.

3.1. *Fatale* referring to a sentence: Ov., *Epist.* 4, 63: *hoc quoque fatale est: placuit domus una duabus*.

3.2. With *ut*: Tac., *Ann.* XII, 64: *fatale sibi, ut … ferret*.

However, all these examples can be refuted since it appears that *fatale* is rather used as an adjective. In the first case, *fatale* is considered by the *OLD*[8] as an example of adverbial accusative, a subtype of internal accusative whereby the adjective modifies the verb with which it is construed[9].

In instance 1.2, *fatale* clearly modifies the compound pronominal form *nescio quid* as an adjective. Similar constructions can be found, for example, in Cic., *Fam.* VII, 5, 2: *tanta fuit opportunitas ut illud nescio quid non fortuitum sed diuinum uideretur*. Example number 2 is rather to be understood as a copulative construction in which *fatale* applies to an infinitive complement sentence as an adjective. This construction is the same as in Hor., *Carm.* 3.2.13: *dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*, a well-known example. The third case is slightly confusing, because *fatale* does not apply to the following sentence, as implied in the *ThLL*, but to the pronoun *hoc*. In fact, that sentence is the referent of *hoc*. It is the same case as in Man. IV, 118: *hoc quoque fatale est, sic ipsum expendere fatum*. The same construction is to be found with different adjectives in Sen., *Phoen.* 368: *hoc quoque etiamnunc leue est: peperi nocentes*. Finally, instance 3.2 is similar to number 2 but, in the former case, *fatale* applies to a finite sentence instead of to an infinitive.

Then, how should we explain this *fatale peregi* construction? It is quite possible to understand the text without *iter* and still have it maintain its sense. According to the dictionaries, there is an absolute use of *perago* with the sense 'to live'[10] which is documented only once in the classic authors:

> Pers. V, 1389-1390: *regustatum digito terebrare salinum / contentus perages, si uiuere cum Ioue tendis.*

This is a poetic employment that may exhibit Greek influence (see intr. διάγειν 'to live' = tr. [βίον, αἰῶνα, χρόνον] διάγειν)[11]. We also have to bear in mind the possibility of an analogy after the attested use of *ago* and *dego* with the ellipse of *uitam*[12]. In this regard, another example of intransitive *perago* on Vet. Lat.,

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[8] *fatalis*, 1.b., in GLARE, *Oxford Latin Dictionary* [n. 4].

[9] Note that the neuter of an adjective is elsewhere used with this verb: VERG., *A.* 6. 50: *nec mortale sonans*. I thank one of the anonymous reviewers for this observation. See also *G.* 3.149: *acerba sonans*.

[10] A. PERI, art. *perago*, in *ThLL* X.1, fasc. VIII, 1994, col. 1178, 56-62.

[11] See διάγω in H. G. LIDDELL / R. SCOTT / H. S. JONES, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford, 1940[9].

[12] O. HEY, art. *ago*, in *ThLL* I, 1900, col. 1401, 51ss. and K. STÖGER, art. *dego*, in V.1, 1910, col. 385, 27 ss. On the example of Persius see also R. A. HARVEY, *A commentary on Persius*, Leiden, 1981, p. 165.

Tit. 3.3 is significant[13]: *seruientes… uoluptatibus uariis in auaritia et inuidia peragentes*. It is to be noticed that *peragentes* translates διάγοντες in the Greek original[14] and that it was replaced by *agentes* in the Vulgate and by *degentes* in Theodore of Mopsuestia's commentary[15]. As seen above, *perago* can occasionally become intransitive, and as such, it might be determined by a neuter adjective in the accusative which becomes adverbialised, i.e. an internal accusative. In Latin this kind of accusative is typical of pronominal forms[16], but it is also attested with adjectives, especially in poetical texts[17].

In my opinion, the best way to understand *fatale peregi* is by considering *fatale* an internal accusative. If this interpretation is correct, in *CIL* VI, 5953 we have a variant of the [*aeuum, uitam, tempus*] *peragere* construction, halfway between the absolute use of the verb and the expected transitive one, by employing the adjective *fatale* ('ordained by fate'/ 'according to fate') as a modifier of the verb. Despite its seeming rare, this verse must have been perfectly understandable to a Latin speaker:

> *Ter VII annis ego iam fatale peregi*
>
> "In 21 years I already lived fatefully (i.e. as decreed by fate)"

This is certainly most poetic, although we cannot determine whether it was the result of a conscious literary intention or of an awkward variation of an unknown model, since no exact parallels are known. Positively, this is not a common use of the internal accusative, but it is a more realistic option than the use of *fatale* as a noun, of which there seem to be no examples.

Universidad de Sevilla.   María LIMÓN BELÉN.

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[13] Two other late examples are also cited in the *ThLL*: CONC.[S] IV.2 p. 103, 36 (*nunc uestrum est … sic peragere, ut…*) and SACR. *Greg.* 31 (*fac nos ita peragere, ut tibi placere ualeamus*).

[14] ἐν κακίᾳ καὶ φθόνῳ διάγοντες.

[15] H. B. SWETE (ed.), *Theodori episcopi Mopsuesteni in epistolas B. Pauli commentarii. The Latin version with the Greek fragments*, II, Cambridge, 1882, p. 252.

[16] For the neuter adjectives as internal accusatives see A. ERNOUT / F. THOMAS, *Syntaxe latine*, Paris, 1959[2], p. 26, §35 ("accusatif de qualification"); H. RUHENBAUER / J. B. HOFMANN, *Lateinische Grammatik*, München, 1995[3], § 116.3.a.

[17] "dichterisch auch mit anderen als Quantitätsadjektive" (RUHENBAUER / HOFMANN, *Lateinische Grammatik* [n. 16], p. 132).