

VOLCANIC ERUPTIONS IN LATIN POETRY

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Se analizan varios problemas textuales y de interpretación en el poema *Etna* de Virgilio.

Several textual and interpretative problems in Virgil's *Aetna* are analyzed.

I. NOTES ON THE TEXT OF "VIRGIL'S" *AETNA*

Lines 4-6:

dexter venias mihi carminis auctor
seu te Cynthos habet seu Delo est gratior Hyla 5
seu tibi Dodone potior
line 5 illa. SAR: Hyla Munro

Apollo is addressed in these lines. I would like to point out that textual alteration is not necessary in line 5. We should translate as follows: "Come with favour to be my inspirer in song, whether Cynthos¹ entertains you, and is more pleasing to you than famous Delos (*Delo ... illa*)², or if Dodona is preferable to you". The poet alludes in line 5 to Apollo's two titles, i.e. *Cynthius* and *Delius*. He then mentions Dodona. It should be noted that the people of Dodona received the first-fruits of Apollo: cf. Callimachus, *Hymn* 4, line 284.

¹ Cynthos is a mountain in Delos. It was celebrated as the birthplace of Apollo. Cf. Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, s.v. *habeo*: "to have ... cherish, entertain".

² Cf. Lewis and Short, s.v. *ille* II, A: "Pregn., that, to indicate some well-known or celebrated object, equivalent to the ancient, the well-known, the famous".

Lines 9-15:

aurea securi quis nescit saecula regis?
 cum domitis nemo cererem iactaret in arvis 10
 venturisque malas prohiberet fructibus herbas,
 annua sed saturae complerent horrea messes,
 ipse suo flueret Bacchus pede mellaque lentis 13
 penderent foliis et pinguis Pallas olivae
 secretos amnes ageret: tum gratia ruris.

In this passage the Golden Age³ of Saturn is described. At line 13 the poet mentions wine. I would like to suggest that we should translate as follows: “Wine (*Bacchus*)⁴ would flow (*flueret*) freely (*ipse*)⁵ in his territory (*suo ... pede*)⁶”. For the fact that rivers of milk and wine flowed in the Golden Age cf. Ovid., *Met.* 1.111: *flumina iam lactis, iam flumina nectaris ibant*.

Lines 79-82:

mentiti vates Stygias undasque canesque.
 hi Tityon poena stravere in iugera foedum;
 sollicitant illi te circum, Tantale, cena
 sollicitantque siti;
 line 81 cena Baehrens: poena mss.

At line 81 the poet refers to Tantalus. The reader will note that Baehrens printed the alteration *cena* in line 81. Textual alteration is, however, not necessary. We should translate as follows: “They torment you, Tantalus, with hunger pangs (*poena*)⁷ and they torment you with thirst”.

Lines 105-110:

et qualis acervus
 exsilit imparibus iactis ex tempore saxis,
 ut crebro introrsus spatio vacuata charybdis 107
 pendeat in sese, simili quoque terra figura
 in tenuis laxata vias, non omnis in artum
 nec stipata coit. 110

³ Cf. Ovid., *Met.* 1.89 ff.

⁴ Cf. Lewis and Short, s.v. *Bacchus* B,3: “Wine”.

⁵ Cf. Lewis and Short, s.v. *ipse* II,B: “of or by one’s self, of one’s own accord”.

⁶ Cf. Lewis and Short, s.v. *pes* II,D: “Ground, soil, territory”. Scholars have not understood the relevance of *pede* if it meant “foot”. *Suo ... pede* “in his territory” denotes vineyards as distinct from olive-groves (v. 14).

⁷ The conjecture *cena* was rightly rejected by Vessereau, *ad loc.* Tantalus was punished with “Hunger und Durst” (Roscher, s.v. Tantalos, 79). Here, *poena* means “hunger pangs”. Cf. Hier. *epist.* 39.3.5 (Thes., s.v. *frugalitas*, 1402,42 ff.) *cibum tibi denegas non ieiuniorum studio, sed doloris*: Sen. *epist.* 5.5 *frugalitatem exigit philosophia, non poenam* (= “hunger-pangs”). Richter’s conjecture *poma* is ingenious, but unjustified. For the repetition of *poena* and *sollicitant*, in lines 80-82, cf. *Mus. Phil. Lond.* 10 (1996) 51.

The poet states that the earth contains hollows: cf. line 96 ff. Scholars have been puzzled by the meaning of line 107. Textual alteration is, however, not necessary. We should translate as follows: «like a whirlpool (*charybdis*)⁸, which is emptied within at frequent intervals (*crebro ... spatio*)⁹». The poet also mentions whirlpools at line 101: *terra voraginibus conceptas digerit auras*.

Lines 128-131:

quod ni diversos emittat terra canales,
hospitium fluvio det semita, nulla profecto
fontibus et rivis constet via, pigraque tellus 130
conferta in solidum segni sub pondere cesset.

line 129 fluvium CS aut CSHA: haud Clericus

In this passage the poet states that the earth provides channels for rivers and streams. Scholars have been puzzled by the text of line 129. I would like to point out that perfect sense can be restored to the text if we print the line thus: *hospitium fluvium haud semita, nulla profecto*. We should translate lines 128-130 as follows: “If earth did not produce different channels, there would not be¹⁰ a path of strange (*hospitium*)¹¹ rivers (*fluvium*)¹², and certainly there would be no road for springs and streams”.

Lines 140-145:

cernis et in siluis spatiosa cubilia retro 140
antraque demissas penitus fodisse latebras:
incomperta via est; aer tantum effluit intra.
argumenta dabunt ignoti vera profundi.
tu modo subtiles animo duce percipe curas
occultamque fidem manifestis abstrahe rebus. 145

line 142 aeri G: aer Jacob effluit intra CSZ

In this passage the poet describes caves, which are hidden in the depths of the earth. I would like to point out that perfect sense can be restored to the text if we print line 142 thus: *incomperta via est aeri. tantum effluit. intra*. We should translate as follows: “The path for air is unknown, but at any rate (*tantum*) it (sc.

⁸ For Charybdis, which was a dangerous whirlpool between Italy and Sicily, cf. Ovid., *Met.* 13.730 f. and my *Studies in the Text of Propertius* (Athens 2002) 66. Charybdis was said to suck water in and then spit it out again at regular intervals.

⁹ Cf. Lewis and Short, s.v. *spatium* II,A,1: “In gen., a space of time, interval, period”. Note the employment of the poetic singular: cf. my *Studies in the Text of Propertius*, p. 141.

¹⁰ For the ellipse of the *verbum substantivum* cf. my *Studies in the Text of Propertius*, p. 67.

¹¹ Cf. Lewis and Short, s.v. *hospes*: “(gen. plur. *hospitium*)”. Cf. also Statius, *Th.* 4.842 *flumina hospita*.

¹² Cf. Lewis and Short, s.v. *fluvius*: “(gen. plur.: *fluvium*, Val. Fl. 6.391)”.

the air) comes out (*effluit*)¹³. Inside (*intra*) they (i.e. the caves) will provide true evidence of an unknown abyss (*ignoti ... profundi*)¹⁴. The long ending -ri is normal; of course the scanning *ǎēr-* is correct, cf. *T'hes. s.v. aer*, 1047,27 ff., where late attestations are quoted, but the one in *Aetna* is missed.

Lines 279-282:

non subito pallere sono, non credere subter
caelestis migrasse minas ad Tartara mundi;
nosse quid impediatur ventos, quid nutriat illos,
unde repente quies et nullo foedere pax sit.

line 282 multo codd: nullo Unger

In this passage the poet states that we should try to understand nature. The reader will note that Unger suggested the alteration *nullo* in line 282. Textual alteration is, however, not necessary. We should translate lines 281-282 as follows: “to learn what hinders winds, what nurtures them, whence their sudden calm and peace due to many treaties (*multo foedere*)¹⁵”. Note that the poet has employed the poetic singular¹⁶.

Lines 294-301:

nam veluti sonat ora diu Tritone canoro,
pellit opus collectus aquae victusque moveri
spiritus et longas emugit bucina voces;
carminaque irriguo magnis cortina theatris
imparibus numerosa modis canit arte regentis,
quae tenuem impellens animam subremigat unda:
haud aliter summota furens torrentibus aura
pugnat in angusto et magnum commurmurat Aetna.

The poet compares the noise produced by Aetna with the sound made by a water-organ. Scholars have been puzzled by the meaning of lines 294-296. I would like to suggest that the poet is referring to the fact that Triton¹⁷ blew his horn in order to make the sea calm or to rouse it. We should translate as follows: “For just as the shore echoes for a long time due to harmonious Triton (*Tritone canoro*) -the contracted (*collectus*)¹⁸ breath (*spiritus*), which has been forced to be moved, sets

¹³ Cf. Ovid., *Met.* 6.233 *levis effluat aura*.

¹⁴ Cf. Lewis and Short, *s.v. profundum*: “a depth, abyss”.

¹⁵ Cf. Lewis and Short, *s.v. foedus* (1): “*pacem foedusque facere*, Cic. *de Sen.* 6.16”. The treaties which create peace are of course metaphorical.

¹⁶ For the poetic singular cf. my *Studies in the Text of Propertius*, p. 141.

¹⁷ Cf. Lewis and Short, *s.v. Triton* l.

¹⁸ Cf. Lewis and Short, *s.v. collectus*.

in motion (*pellit*) the action of the water (*opus*¹⁹ ... *aquae*), and the trumpet (*bucina*) emits a prolonged blare”.

Lines 340-343:

placantes etiam caelestia numina ture
summo cerne iugo, vel qua liberrimus Aetna
inprospectus hiat, tantarum semina rerum,
si nihil irriret flammam stupeatque profundum.

line 342 inprospectus CSZ: introspectus Schrader

Scholars have been puzzled by the meaning of these lines. Textual alteration is, however, not necessary. The poet describes a group of people who scale Aetna: on these cf. *RE*, s.v. Αἴτνη. He distinguishes between those who, at the top of the mountain (*summo* ... *iugo*) offer sacrifices to the gods, and a very bold man (*liberrimus*)²⁰ who goes from the top of the mountain down to the crater²¹ in order to see the abyss. We should translate as follows: “Look at those who, on the very summit²², placate with incense the deities of heaven, or how (*qua*) the most bold man (*liberrimus*) utters (*hiat*)²³, unforeseen (*inprospectus*)²⁴, the causes of such great events of Aetna, if nothing arouses the flames, and wonders at (*stupeatque*)²⁵ the abyss”.

Lines 349-358:

quod si fallor, adest species tantusque ruinis
impetus adtentos oculorum transfugit ictus.
nec levis astantes igitur ferit aura movetque
sparsa liquore manus, sacros ubi ventilat ignis;
verberat ora tamen pulsataque corpora nostris
incursant, adeo in tenui vim causa repellit!
non cinerem stipulamve levem, non arida sorbet
gramina, non tenuis plantas humus excita praedas.
surgit adoratis sublimis fumus ab aris,
tanta quies illi est et pax innoxia rapti!

Scholars have been puzzled by the meaning of this passage. I would like to suggest that the poet states, in lines 349-350, that if the gods are propitiated with

¹⁹ Cf. Lewis and Short, s.v. *opus* II.C: “In gen., a deed, action, performance, business”.

²⁰ Cf. Ter. *Eun.* 430 *imprudens et liber*.

²¹ Claudian, *De raptu Pros.* 1.158 ff.: *Aetnaeos apices solo cognoscere visu, non aditu tentare licet*.

²² *Summum jugum* (cf. O.L.D. s.v. *jugum*, 8 b) denotes the dangerous part of Aetna, out of which the lava may erupt.

²³ Cf. Lewis and Short, s.v. *hio* II.B: “To bawl out, utter”.

²⁴ Such a man acts unexpectedly.

²⁵ Cf. Lewis and Short, s.v. *stupeo* II: “Act., to be astonished or amazed at, to wonder at”.

incense (cf. line 340), eruptions of Aetna can be avoided. Therefore such a great rush of lava, which causes ruin, will elude our eyes. Moreover, bystanders on Aetna will not be struck by wind from an eruption, if the priest's hand kindles the sacred fire: cf. line 352. The poet then adds that «a good reason (*causa*)²⁶ removes violence (*vim ... repellit*)”. He means that the offering made to the gods constitutes a good reason for the avoidance of a violent eruption of Aetna.

Lines 430-434:

dicitur insidiis flagrans Aenaria quondam,
nunc extincta super; testisque Neapolin inter
et Cumas locus ex multis iam frigidus annis,
quamuis aeternum pingui scatet ubere sulphur:
in mercem legitur, tanto est fecundius Aetna!

line 433 pinguescat et CH: pingui scatet Ellis

The poet states that the island of Ischia (*Aenaria*) once suffered a volcanic eruption. He then refers to the region between Naples and Cumae, which is also volcanic. I would like to suggest that we should print the mss reading *pinguescat et*, in line 433, and translate as follows: “Another witness is the region between Naples and Cumae, now cool (*frigidus*) for many years, although it constantly grows fat (*pinguescat*). And its sulphur is collected for sale due to its fruitfulness (*ubere*)”. The poet means that the area between Naples and Cumae is constantly producing sulphur.

Lines 462-466:

nam simul atque movet viris turbamque minatur,
diffugit extemploque solum trahit undique rimans 463
et grave sub terra murmur demonstrat et ignes.
tum pavidum fugere et sacris concedere rebus
par erit; e tuto speculaberis omnia colli.

line 463 undique rimans Vessereau: ictaque ramis CZ

The poet describes an eruption of Aetna. Scholars have been puzzled by the meaning of line 463 ff. It is, however, possible to restore perfect sense to the transmitted text if we translate as follows: «For when it (i.e. Aetna) stirs its forces and threatens the crowd, Aetna makes the crowd scatter (*diffugit*), and immediately it (i.e. Aetna) makes the soil contract, and shaken on its spurs (*ictaque ramis*)²⁷ it shows under the earth a deep rumbling and fire²⁸”.

²⁶ Cf. Lewis and Short, s.v. *causa* II,A: “= *justa causa*, good reason, just cause, full right”.

²⁷ Cf. Lewis and Short, s.v. *ramus* B,2: “A spur of a mountain chain”.

²⁸ Note that the poet has employed *hendiadys*. Thus *murmur et ignes* means “a rumbling fire”.

Lines 495-498:

sicut cum rapidum curvo mare cernulat aestu,
ac primum tenuis imas agit, ultiores
progrediens, late diffunditur et succernens

.....
flumina consistunt ripis ac frigore durant

line 495 cernulus codd.: cernulat Jacob

line 496 tenuis sinuans agit unda priores Jacob

line 497 succernens CZ: succrescunt Jacob

In this passage the poet describes the flow of the rivers of lava. Perfect sense can be restored to these lines if we follow Jacob²⁹ and print them thus:

sicut cum rapidum curvo mare cernulat aestu,
ac primum tenues sinuans agit unda priores,
progrediens late diffunditur. et succrescunt
flumina, consistunt ripis ac frigore durant.

We should translate as follows: «Just as when the rushing sea summersaults and first drives curving (*sinuans*) feeble waves in front, advancing it spreads far and wide. And the rivers (of lava) increase slightly (*succrescunt*)³⁰, come to a standstill due to the shore (*consistunt ripis*³¹), and harden as they cool”. The poet means that the lava flows from Aetna to the sea.

Lines 532-534:

quin ipsis quaedam Siculi cognomina saxis
inposuere rhytas et iam ipso nomine signant
fusilis esse notae; nunquam tamen illa liquescunt.

line 533 frichas AR: chytas or rhytas Scaliger

The reader will note that Scaliger suggested the alteration *chytas* or *rhytas* in line 533. There is, however, no need to alter the transmitted text. We should translate as follows: “The Sicilians have given those stones a name, *fricae*³², and due to their reputation (*nomine*)³³ they point out that they are of a fusible character”.

²⁹ I would like to suggest that Jacob used manuscripts which are now lost in order to correct the text.

³⁰ Cf. Lewis and Short, *s.v. suburo*: “to burn slightly”.

³¹ Cf. Lewis and Short, *s.v. ripa* II: “Transf., the shore of the sea”.

³² Cf. Lewis and Short, *s.v. fricae*.

³³ Cf. Lewis and Short, *s.v. nomen* II ,A: “Name, fame, repute, reputation”.

Lines 555-558:

quae maiora putas artem tormenta movere
 posse manu? quae tanta putas incendia nostris
 sustentare opibus quantis fornacibus Aetna
 uritur ac sacro nunquam non fertilis igni?

line 555 autem C: artem Ellis
 line 558 ac sacro C: arcano Ellis

The poet describes here the powerful fires of Aetna. The reader will note that Ellis proposed the two textual alterations *artem* and *arcano*. Textual alteration is, however, not necessary. We should translate as follows: “But (*autem*)³⁴ what greater pain (*tormenta*)³⁵ do you think you can produce (*movere*)³⁶ by hand? What fires do you think we can support with our resources to compare with the mighty furnaces with which Aetna burns, and is never not fertile with sacred fire?”.

Lines 574-576:

nunc iuvat Ogygiis circumdata moenia Thebis
 cernere quae fratres, ille impiger, ille canorus

 +condere+ felicesque alieno intersumus aevo:

line 576 felicesque: felices v.l.: cf. Goodyears’s apparatus ad loc.

The poet refers here to Amphion and Zethus, who built the walls of Thebes. The reader will note that scholars have been puzzled by the meaning of lines 575-576. Perfect sense can, however, be restored to the transmitted text if we translate as follows: “Now it is pleasing to see the walls which surround Ogygian Thebes, which the brothers, one active (*ille impiger*) and one tuneful (*ille canorus*), were happy to build (*condere felices*)³⁷. We live in a bygone age”.

Lines 586-589:

tu quoque Athenarum carmen. iam nobile sidus,
 Erigone, sedes vestra est: Philomela canoris
 evocat in silvis, et tu, soror, hospita tectis
 acciperis, solis Tereus ferus exsulat agris.

line 586 tam CZ: iam Ald. 1534

³⁴ For the position of *autem* cf. Lewis and Short, s.v. (9). Cf. also Virgil, *Aen.* 2.101: *Sed quid ego haec autem nequiquam ingrata revolvo?*

³⁵ Cf. Lewis and Short, s.v. *tormentum* III,B: “Transf., in gen., torture, anguish, pain, torment”.

³⁶ Cf. Lewis and Short, s.v. *moveo* 2,a: “To excite, occasion, cause, promote, produce”.

³⁷ Cf. Lewis and Short, s.v. *felix* II,B: “With inf. (poet.): *quo non felicior alter unguere tela manu ferrumque armare veneno*, happier, more successful in, Verg. *A.* 9.772”. Note the employment of an ellipse of the *verbum substantivum*.

The poet mentions in this passage Philomela, who was turned into a nightingale, and her sister Procne, who became a swallow. I would like to suggest that we should translate lines 586-589 as follows: “You too (i.e. Theseus) are a song of Athens. Now, Erigone, a noble star is your abode. Philomela³⁸ calls out in the harmonious woods, and you, her sister, are welcomed in houses, while cruel Tereus is an exile in the deserted fields”.

Lines 600-603:

haec visenda putas dubius terraque marique.
artificis naturae ingens opus aspice; nulla
tum tanta humanae plebis spectacula cernes
praecipueque vigil, feruens ubi Sirius ardet.

line 602 cum CZ: tu Clericus humanis codd.: humanae Ellis Phoebus CZ: rebus
Ald. 1534: plebis Ellis

The poet praises, in this passage, the wonders of nature. Scholars have been puzzled by the meaning of line 602. I would like to point out, however, that perfect sense can be restored to the transmitted text if we print lines 601-602 as follows: *nulla / tu tanta humanis rebus spectacula cernes*. “You will see no sights which are so great due to human events (*humanis rebus*³⁹)”. In other words, no human events can equal the wonders of Aetna.

Lines 627- 630:

cum iam vicinis streperent incendia tectis,
aspiciunt pigrumque patrem matremque senecta
ehe! defessos posuisse in limine membra.
-parcite, avara manus, dites attollere praedas!

line 630 manduces corr. in manuducens C: manus dites Ald. 1517: manus dulces
Ellis

The poet describes how two brothers saved their parents from death when Aetna erupted. Scholars have been puzzled by the meaning of line 630. It should be noted, however, that perfect sense is provided by the reading of the Aldina⁴⁰. We should translate as follows: “Forbear, greedy crowd, to lift rich spoils (*dites ... praedas*)”.

Conclusion. In his edition of *Aetna* (Cambridge 1965) Goodyear chiefly deals with *Realien*, and does not, as a rule, try to explain or emend the difficulties presented by the Latin text. Vessereau, in his excellent Budé edition (Paris 1923), and

³⁸ The nightingale, unlike the swallow, was famous for being a solitary bird: cf. my *Studies in Theocritus and Other Hellenistic Poets* (Amsterdam 1979) 11.

³⁹ It will be noted that the reading *rebus* was preserved by the Aldina. For other cases where the correct text has been preserved for us by an early edition cf. *Habis* 33 (2002) 130.

⁴⁰ The correct text has once again been preserved for us by an early edition: cf. my note on line 602.

Richter, in his learned edition (Berlin 1963), tend to accept or propose conjectures, whenever they are faced with textual problems. I think that I have shown that an analysis of the poet's *Sprachgebrauch* enables us to understand many passages which have hitherto puzzled editors and commentators.

II. LUCAN AND VOLCANOES

In my paper "Notes on the Text of Lucan" (*Veleia*, in the press) I have rapidly dealt with and explained, *inter alia*, *Phars.* 2.663 ff. I should like now to dilate on this paper, in order to clarify a few details which I did not dwell upon in the said paper. The correct text is the following:

cedit in immensum cassus labor:omnia pontus
 haurit saxa vorax montesque inmiscet; harenis
 ut maris Aeolii medias si celsus in undas 665
 depellatur Eryx, nullae tamen aequore rupes
 emineant, vel si convolso vertice Gaurus
 decidat in fundum penitus stagnantis Averni.

665 Aeolii Bentley: Aegaei mss.

Lucan imagines two volcanic eruptions of immense proportions, which cause two mountains situated near a volcanic area to explode into the air and fall into neighbouring waters. In the volcanic region of Campania, dominated by Vesuvius, mount Gaurus (667) is envisaged to have lost its top (*convolso vertice*), evidently because of the eruption, be "wrenched from its place" (so Duff, in his Loeb edition) and to be thrown to the bottom of *Lacus Avernus*; on the edge of the volcanic region occupied by the Αἰόλου νῆσοι (Stromboli, etc.)⁴¹, mount Eryx is imagined to be cast into the Aeolian sea⁴², owing to an eruption indicated by *harenis*, which means "lava".

The word *harenis*, connected in elegant *enjambement* with the phrase *ut maris Aeolii* ..., cannot be governed by *inmiscet*, because the masonry (*molibus*, *saxa*) and the rocks (*rupibus*, *montes*) are swallowed (*haurit*) and mingled together (*inmiscet*) by the sea: the sea does not mix such stones and rocks with its sand, because they lie scattered on the surface of the sand (*vado*, line 669) at the bottom

⁴¹ Cf. *Der Kleine Pauly*, s.v. Αἰόλου νῆσοι ("vulkanisch").

⁴² For *maris Aeolii* (665), suggested by Bentley, cf. *Aeolius pontus* Sil. Ital. 15.424. I have shown elsewhere that Bentley recommended readings which he found in manuscripts now lost, and *Aeolii* is, in my view, a case in point. Of course one could defend the mss. reading *Aegaei* by supposing that the volcanic eruption imagined by Lucan was so powerful as to cast the whole of Mount Eryx (*celsus*, 665; *summus*, Sil. Ital. 6.697, *magnus*, Val. Fl. 2.523: Mount Eryx was regarded to be "high", cf. Haskins *ad loc.*) to the furthest archipelago (in the Aegean sea), where it proved not tall enough to stick out of the sea (*emineant*), together with the other islands.

of the sea⁴³. The ablative *harenis* is either *ablativus causae* or *separativus*⁴⁴: Mount Eryx was thrown upwards, either by the explosive lava, or away from the explosive lava, which is amassed at the bottom of volcanoes (cf. *Aetna* 199 ff.: *volvuntur ab imo fundamenta ... tota rumpitur Aetna*).

In sum: both *harenis* and *convolso vertice* are not otiose, but used, in an emphatic position, by Lucan in order to indicate to readers that the two phenomena he describes (mountains flying into the air) are not devoid of a cause, but are imagined to be due to volcanic eruptions.

⁴³ *Inmisceo* means “blend”, “mingle”: cf. Lewis and Short, s.v. Examples in Luc. *Phars.* 2.527, 4.320 and 5.715.

⁴⁴ On *depello* + abl. *separativus* cf. Bennett, *Syntax of Early Latin II*, p. 282: cf. *Phars.* 2.468 *depellitur arce*, 9.368 *depulsa locis attigit undas*.