IN THE WAKE OF LATONA:
THETIS AT STATIUS, *ACHILLEID* 1.198–216

> At Thetis undisonis per noctem in rupibus astans,
> quae nato secreta velit, quibus abdere terris
> destinet, huc illuc divisa mente volutat.   200
> proxima, sed studiis multum Mavortia, Thrace;
> nec Macetum gens dura placet laudumque daturi
> Cecropidae stimulos; nimium opportuna carinis
> Sestos Abydenique sinus. placet ire per artas
> Cyclades; hic spretae Myconosque humilisque Seriphos   205
> et Lemnos non aequa viris atque hospita Delos
> gentibus…
> qualis vicino volucris iam sedula partu
> iamque timens, qua fronde domum suspendat inanem;
> providet hic ventos, hic anxia cogitat angues,
> hic homines: tandem dubiae placet umbra, novisque   215
> vix stetit in ramis et protinus arbor amatur.   (*Achilleid* 1.198–207; 212–16)

Standing on the shores of Thessaly, Thetis deliberates about where to hide Achilles so as to prevent him from joining the expedition to Troy. Statius' geography has troubled critics in various ways. D.R. Shackleton Bailey, for example, asks whether Statius' mind was 'in Lemnos, with memories of Hypsipyle' when the poet claimed that Thrace was nearest to Mt Pelion (*Ach*. 1.201); on Statius' inclusion of Lemnos among the Cyclades (*Ach*. 1.205–6), Shackleton Bailey accurately states that Lemnos is not, in fact, located there, but he does not elaborate.[1] Similarly, O.A.W. Dilke, seemingly in an effort to explain geographic 'mistakes', suggests that Statius had never visited Greece and thus his use of Greek topography is second-hand and imprecise.[2] Examples of such criticisms could easily be multiplied.[3] Absent a recourse to textual emendation, for which the mansucripts offer no grounds, we are left with limited explanations for the apparent oddities. One is to continue to suggest (or imply) that Statius was misinformed, incompetent or both; another, that this geography serves literary ends. This paper argues for the latter.

The ancients themselves knew that poets represented lands that were, in fact, distant from one another as contiguous and ones that were contiguous as distant.[4] Moreover, the constitution of the Cycladic islands in particular was hardly fixed in antiquity: Strabo, for example, claims that twelve islands were initially classified

[1] D.R. Shackleton Bailey, *Statius: Thebaid, Books* 8–12; *Achilleid* (Cambridge, 2003), 328.

[2] O.A.W. Dilke, *Statius: Achilleid* (Cambridge, 1954), 129.

[3] E.g. J. Méheust, *Stace, Achilléide* (Paris, 1971), 15. See P.J. Heslin, *The Transvestite Achilles: Gender and Genre in Statius'* Achilleid (Cambridge, 2005), 135, n. 64 for further bibliography.

[4] Strabo 1.2.20 comments on geographic oddities in, for instance, Sophocles and the prologue of Euripides' *Bacchae*. Geographies in Roman poetry were also challenging: the *Propempticon Pollionis*, the work of the meticulous poet Cinna, contains an itinerary for the area around Actium that provoked questions from ancients; cf. A.S. Hollis, *Fragments of Roman Poetry c. 60BC–AD20* (Oxford, 2006), 25–6. W. Kroll, *Studien zum Verständnis der römischen Literatur* (Stuttgart, 1924), 293–307 is a standard discussion of geographical knowledge (or the lack thereof) in Roman poetry; cf. too R. Mayer, 'Geography and Roman Poets', *G&R* 33 (1986), 47–54.

among the Cyclades but that additional ones were added later (10.5.3); yet Pliny names thirteen islands that make up the chain (*HN* 4.65–8). In part this loose classification is likely to stem from the fact that the Homeric poems – an authoritative though hardly indisputable source of geographic knowledge – do not mention the Cyclades. Not surprisingly, poets such as Pindar (fr. 33d), Callimachus (*Del.* 36) and Virgil (*Aen*. 3.75–6) variously utilized the shifting position of Delos and the instability of the Cyclades for their own poetic ends.[5] Indeed, in the *Achilleid* itself, Peter Heslin has already demonstrated that Statius creatively uses Delos as a foil to Scyros in order to enhance an understanding of the doomed attempts of Thetis to save Achilles.[6] Such a marked literary history suggests that Statius' topography warrants closer analysis.

The geography of this particular passage of the *Achilleid* reworks passages from Homeric and Callimachean hymns, Euripides, Virgil and Ovid in ways that, for the most part, create a Thetis who is modelled upon Latona, the mother of Apollo and Diana who was forced to travel around the Aegean in order to find a place to give birth. Though Thetis is not about to deliver a child, the parallels between the two divine mothers highlight constraints against which the Nereid contends. Yet, as is suggested by the simile of the mother bird that immediately follows Thetis' deliberations (*Ach.* 1.212–16), the mother of a child who is fated to a *mors immatura* must – and does – think and act differently from Latona, the mother of the eternal youth Apollo. Indeed, the analogy between Thetis and Latona ultimately draws a strong contrast between the mortal Achilles and the divine Apollo. Statius' Aegean topography and the subsequent simile thus show that Thetis persistently looks to yet alters Leto's path where necessary in order to try to keep Achilles safe.

In trying to circumvent the heroic narrative(s) by which Achilles dies and gains his epic fame, Thetis is certainly doomed to failure. But whereas she often seems inept and a poor 'reader' of the literary tradition,[7] in this case her assessment of the best location to keep Achilles safe shows her to be a cautious and alert reader of past poetry. It is just unfortunate for Thetis that her very awareness of the literary past also emphasizes her experiential understanding of fundamental distinctions between humans and the gods in the world of epic.

I. *PROXIMA … THRACE*

Statius' statement that Mt Pelion is next to Thrace seems patently wrong in terms of actual distance, but this juxtaposition of Pelion and Thrace is paralleled in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*. Specifically, a catalogue of the wanderings undertaken by the pregnant Leto places Mt Pelion next to Thrace, or at least to Thracian Mt Athos and Samos (*h.Ap.* 33–4 Θρηΐκιός τ' Ἄθόως καὶ Πηλίου ἄκρα κάρηνα | Θρηϊκίη τε Σάμος). These seemingly distant lands are literally juxtaposed, suggesting that for a goddess, spatial arrangements may be viewed from an entirely different perspective.

[5] For Pindar and Delos, see I. Rutherford, *Pindar's Paeans: A Reading of the Fragments with a Survey of the Genre* (Oxford, 2001), 243–52, 364–72; for Callimachus, see M. Giuseppetti, *L'Inno a Delo di Callimaco: aspetti del mito e dello stile* (Diss., Università degli Studi Roma Tre, 2008); M. Depew, 'Delian Hymns and Callimachean Allusion', *HSCP* 98 (1998), 155–82; J. Nishimura-Jensen, 'Unstable geographies: the moving landscape in Apollonius' *Argonautica* and Callimachus' *Hymn to Delos*', *TAPA* 130 (2000), 289–99; A. Barchiesi, 'Immovable Delos: *Aeneid* 3.73–98 and the Hymns of Callimachus', *CQ* 44 (1994), 438–43 discusses the Virgilian island.

[6] Heslin (n. 3), 134–7.

[7] Heslin (n. 3), 105–9.

Moreover, these locations appear in the itinerary that Leto follows as she moves from Crete up the western side of the Aegean to Thrace to the eastern Aegean and then down towards the Cyclades. The hymn's description of her circular pattern of movement establishes a kind of proximity between the western Aegean (and specifically Pelion) and Thrace.[8] Thetis' mental movements, then, recall Leto's actual wanderings.

Statius' reworking of the Homeric hymn not only links Thetis with Latona but it also situates his poetic geography in a tradition of topographical incongruity. After all, the itinerary of Leto's travels in the hymn is hardly precise, since Scyros, for example, is mentioned among islands that are found in the eastern Aegean (*h. Ap.* 35).[9] Additionally, the famous division of the hymn into Delian and Pythian halves dispenses with cartographic tidyness.[10] Clearly, then, the hymn itself is predicated upon geographic displacement, and Statius' claim about the proximity of Thrace to Pelion thus locates his scene in a tradition that operates with a fluid sense of geography.

For this specific expression of Thrace's location, however, Statius most of all develops Virgilian geographical interests. At *Aen* 3.13, Virgil describes Thrace as *terra procul vastis colitur Mavortia campis*. The adverb *procul* often calls attention to long distances (*OLD* s.v. 2), and in the context of Thrace it may seem natural to take it in that sense. In fact, later in the poem Virgil represents Thrace as the prototypically distant land (*Aen.* 12.335–6 *ultima … Thraca*; cf. Hom. *Il.* 10.434 Θρήϊκες … ἔσχατοι ἄλλων). But since Thrace is Aeneas' first stop after he left Troy,[11] it is actually not all that far from the fallen kingdom and thus *procul* may signify here a separation that is not of great distance. Indeed, on this very passage, Servius explains that *procul* means 'not very far' (*non valde longe*), and elsewhere he notes that the word may mean both 'near' and 'far'.[12] Virgil's *procul* thus points to the difficulty of defining Thrace's position in absolute terms: is it near or far?

The Virgilian question is revisited by Statius in *Achilleid* 1.201. The adjective *proxima* establishes that Thrace is quite literally 'closest', yet the position of *Thrace* in the final foot of the hexameter is as distant as possible from its modifier that begins the verse. The hyperbaton and the adjective simultaneously suggest both proximity and separation. Moreover, Statius' description of Thrace as *Mavortia* (*Ach.* 1.201), an adjective that is first attested in Virgil, echoes the account of Thrace at *Aen.* 3.13.[13] Statius' *proxima*, then, seems to pick up on and respond to Virgil's geographic play with *procul*. That is, he offers that, to judge from the travels of Odysseus and Aeneas,

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[8] Nor is the geography of the hymn exceptional since even in the *Iliad*, Thrace's separation from mainland Greece is variable. At *Il.* 14.227, for example, the land that is defined as Thrace seems further west than does the very eastern territory that is dubbed Thracian at *Il.* 2.844–50; see R. Janko, *The Iliad: A Commentary. Volume IV.* (Cambridge, 1994), 186–7.

[9] Heslin (n. 3), 135–6 has shown the importance of the hymn's treatment of Scyros for Statius' own account.

[10] See J.J. O'Hara, *Inconsistency in Roman Epic* (Cambridge, 2007), 15–16 and 26 on the notorious geographical problems in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* that are then reworked by Callimachus' *Hymn to Artemis*. He suggests that the geographical incongruities may be seen as part of a tradition and literary technique rather than a point of confusion.

[11] Thrace is also the first stop for Odysseus (*Od.* 9.39).

[12] Cf. Servius' comments on *Aen.* 5.124 (where he also points to the example of *Ecl.* 6.16) and *Aen.* 6.10. N. Horsfall, *Virgil: Aeneid 3* (Leiden, 2006), 53 notes the need to read the sense of distance from Aeneas' Trojan perspective.

[13] Statius' engagement with the geography of *Aeneid* 3 is discussed more generally by H. Kuerschner, *P. Papinius Statius quibus in* Achilleide *componenda usus esse videatur fontibus* (Marburg, 1907), 62–4.

Thrace is a short distance from Troy.[14] It is no wonder, then, that Thetis avoids Thrace at the very moment when she is trying to decide how to keep her son from going to fight – and die – at Troy.

Statius' startling reversal of Thrace's conventional epic epithet suggests that this topographic account is relative. That is, it depends upon Thetis' perception of distance as it relates to Achilles and Troy. Nonetheless, her viewpoint is not without justification since it evokes Leto's wandering in the Homeric hymn. Both points indicate that Thetis' conception of Aegean geography depends upon the literary past.

II. STATIUS' CYCLADES

After she rules out Macedon, Athens, Abydus and Sestus (*Ach.* 1.202–4), Thetis focusses upon the Cyclades as a hiding place for her son. Once again, earlier poetic geography illuminates her decisions and motivations. Initially, the configuration of the islands seems odd: Myconos, Seriphos and Delos are all recognizable as parts of the Cycladic chain, but Lemnos, located in the north Aegean, is not even close to these islands. However, as mentioned earlier, the identity of the islands that actually made up the chain was debated in antiquity (Strabo 10.5.3), so it seems best to consider this strange arrangement of the Cyclades in light of literary history.

Two points emerge from doing so. First, Statius' geography calls to mind the passage from Euripides' *Trojan Women* in which Poseidon assures Athena that he will rouse the waters around Delos, Myconos, Scyros and Lemnos in order to destroy the Greeks upon their return home from the Trojan War (89–90). Euripides does not classify these islands as the Cyclades, but none the less the islands he mentions are relevant for Statius' passage. After all, Statius mentions three of the Euripidean islands, and the fourth (Scyros) need not be cited since it is where Thetis ultimately chooses to hide her son. In addition to the topographical similarities, however, the context of the Euripidean passage matters because it points to a crucial difference between the goddesses. Specifically, Athena is able to convince Neptune to rouse a storm and to overwhelm the Greeks who sailed to Troy, whereas Thetis has failed to convince Neptune to create a storm that would destroy the Greek fleet and thus save Achilles (*Ach.* 1.61–95). Moreover, Statius' Neptune is like the Euripidean sea-god (to say nothing of Poseidon in the *Odyssey*) in that he looks to the Greek return trip – not the outbound one – from Troy as the moment to destroy the fleet. The timing of the divine assault upon the Greek fleet is crucial for Thetis' hope to save Achilles, but the Euripidean geography, evoked by Statius in part through the unusual inclusion of Lemnos among other Cycladic islands, highlights the futility of her attempts. She is truly a weakened and desperate goddess.[15]

The second point is that Statius' description of the Cyclades also situates the passage in an Ovidian tradition that creates and exploits geographic incongruities. The collocation of Seriphos and Myconos, for example, alludes to Ovid's catalogue of

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[14] Indeed, Thrace is the European land closest to Troy. The problematic proximity of Europe and Asia is brought into sharper relief when Thetis decides to avoid Sestus and Abydus (*Ach.* 1.204). These two sites were conventionally seen as the shortest crossing point of the Hellespont and thus the closest point of contact between Europe and Asia (e.g. Hdt. 7.44; Ov. *Ep.* 18.127). When discussing the Trojan War earlier in the poem (*Ach.* 1.82), Statius, echoing a Virgilian expression (*Aen.* 10.90–1 *quae causa fuit consurgere in arma | Europamque Asiamque*), tellingly views it as the collision of Europe and Asia. Thetis' decision to pass over certain sites, then, has real justification. For more on the boundaries between the continents, see D. Feeney, '*Tenui latens discrimine:* spotting the differences in Statius' *Achilleid*', *MD* 52 (2004), 85–105, at 101–5.

[15] On Thetis' lack of power, see Heslin (n. 3), 160–4.

islands that join Minos in his attack on Athens (*Met*. 7.463–4),[16] and perhaps the martial heritage of these islands prompts Thetis to avoid them. However that may be, Statius' handling of Myconos is particularly revelatory. Two of the three appearances of Myconos in extant Latin literature before Statius come from Virgil (*Aen*. 3.76 *Mycono e celsa*) and from this section of Ovid's catalogue (*Met*. 7.463 *humilem Myconem*). The conflicting descriptions of the island's height – is it *celsa* or *humilis*? – that the Augustan poets offer are acknowledged by Statius' juxtaposition of Myconos with the epithet *humilis*,[17] but he ultimately sidesteps the issue by transferring the Ovidian adjective for the island to Seriphos.[18] Nonetheless, Statius' diction calls attention to the (deliberate) confusion and contradictions that appear in poetic decriptions of the Cyclades.

Statius' designation of Delos, the eventual centre of the island group, as *hospita* introduces even greater topographical confusion. The phrase *hospita Delos* replicates the language used by the Ovidian Niobe when she, the mother of fourteen children, rants against her townspeople for worshipping Latona, who has only two offspring. In the midst of her speech, Niobe imagines that the wandering Delos said to Latona that they are counterparts in that one wanders on land, the other on sea (*Met*. 6.190–1 '*hospita tu terris erras, ego*' *dixit* '*in undis*' | *instabilemque locum Delos dedit*). The idea of movement, suggested both by *erras* and *hospita*,[19] creates the expectation that Statius' Delos will be like Ovid's wanderer and that Thetis once again envisions the Aegean in relation to Latona's movements.

In terms of understanding Statius' geography, a wandering Delos matters because its movement precludes a fixed constitution of the Cyclades.[20] Disturbed boundaries caused by a floating Delos are already manifest in Callimachus' hymn, in which the island moves south from Euboea, the northernmost boundaries of the Cyclades, before reaching its fixed location in the centre of the chain (*Del*. 196–8). According to such a principle, Heslin argues, Scyros, which had created geographic problems as far back as the Homeric hymn, could be positioned among Statius' Cyclades.[21] Perhaps, then, Statius' representation of the Aegean is so distorted that even more northern locales such as Lemnos may be represented among the Cyclades.[22] If so, the inclusion of Lemnos among the Cyclades not only echoes the passage from Euripides' *Trojan*

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[16] Ovid's lengthier arrangement focusses on the Cyclades but, like Statius', also includes outlying islands such as Astypalaia (*Met*. 7.463; one of the Sporades: cf. Strabo 10.5.14) and Peparethos (*Met*. 7.470; not classified among Strabo's list of the Cyclades at 9.5.16). G.L. Huxley, 'Arne Sithonis', *CQ* 32 (1982), 159–61 fruitfully discusses Ovid's inclusive geography.

[17] Bömer (on *Met*. 7.464) discusses the Ovidian 'correction'.

[18] Another allusion to Ovid is the connective -*que* placed at the end of *humilis*, resulting in a line ending that matches Ovid's mention of Seriphos (*Met*. 7.464 *planamque Seriphon*).

[19] For *hospita*, cf. *TLL* 6.3.3032.24–32; 3033.17–27.

[20] As Heslin (n. 3), 136 remarks on Thetis' speech to Scyros, 'In the world of the mythical past that Statius is describing, the geography of the Aegean was still somewhat unstable …'.

[21] Heslin (n. 3), 135; it is intriguing that Scyros seems out of place as well at Catullus 64.35, where the manuscript reading *Scyros* has been emended to *Cieros*. The poem, of course, takes Thetis' marriage as its subject.

[22] It should also be noted that, as she does with other locations that pose some sort of problem for her interests, Thetis is wise to avoid Lemnos. The island is hostile to men (*Ach*. 1.206), a claim that refers to the myth that with the exception of Hypsipyle the Lemnian women killed their husbands and indeed all of the men on the island. Moreover, at this point in the narrative, Thetis' plan to dress her son as a girl has only been hinted at obliquely (*Ach*. 1.141–2), so it seems that the *Achilleid*'s crucial question about whether gender and identity are essential or constructed (see, e.g., Heslin [n. 3], 294–5) is addressed right here, but Thetis knows that her son cannot escape his biology.

Woman, but it may also build upon the literary history of Delos' shifting position in the Aegean.

The Ovidian Delos, however, ultimately proves to be only part of Statius' picture. At the start of *Achilleid* 1.207, Statius' *gentibus*, emphatically placed in enjambment, clarifies that *hospita* functions attributively, meaning 'welcoming'. In other words, the initial reading and understanding of Delos as a wanderer was deceptively provisional.[23] In fact, rather than referring to travel and movement, *hospita* actually marks Delos' stability; for, as Callimachus indicates, only after it is rooted does Delos become open to people from all over the world (*Del*. 278–82; cf. *Ach*. 1.206–7 *hospita* … *gentibus*). And there is good reason to think of Callimachus' account here since after it is fixed, Callimachus' Delos celebrates the fact that it will no longer wander (*Del*. 4.273 ἔσσομαι οὐκέτι πλαγκτή). The Callimachean πλαγκτή is virtually glossed by the initial reading of Statius' *hospita*, and even after the enjambment changes the meaning of *hospita*, the meaning of the Callimachean phrase is still evoked since Statius implicitly makes the point that Delos is no longer a wanderer. Statius' diction and artful enjambment thus activate a second, distinct account about the (in)stability of Delos.

Ultimately, these two competing mythic versions about Delos are closely related. After all, before Statius, Ovid had exploited the polyvalence of *hospita* to suggest that Delos is on the move, the very opposite point that Callimachus had made through πλαγκτή. And while Statius' redefinition of *hospita* seems to stabilize Delos, the shifting, Ovidian Delos remains in play. In fact, later in the poem Thetis, having deposited Achilles on Scyros, leaves the island and again uses Niobe's language to prophesy that if Scyros protects her son, it will not be surpassed in fame by floating Delos (*Ach*. 1.388 *nec* instabili fama superabere Delo ~ *Met*. 6.191 instabilemque locum Delos dedit). Just as the literary tradition has it both ways, so too does the *Achilleid*: Delos is unstable, both fixed and moving.

A wandering Delos, as discussed above, allows Statius to avoid a fixed Aegean topography and to recall the wanderings of Latona. But a fixed Delos helps to explain why Thetis would avoid the island. That is, the rooting of the island coincides with a new name: what had been called Asteria, according to Callimachus, becomes Delos (*Del*. 40; 51–4).[24] This alteration of the name of the island seems to be a Callimachean innovation that puns upon the word ἄδηλος (*Del*. 53), which Roman readers treated as an alpha-privatized form of the Greek δῆλος, 'clear' or 'conspicuous'.[25] Because

[23] For this kind of reading of enjambment in Latin poetry, see, e.g., S. Wheeler, *A Discourse of Wonders: Audience and Performance in Ovid's* Metamorphoses (Philadelphia, 1999), 11–13; R. Jenkyns, '*Labor Improbus*', *CQ* 43 (1993), 243–8, at 247; W. Batstone, 'On the surface of the *Georgics*', *Arethusa* 21 (1988), 227–45, at 230. The phenomenon continually recurs in poetic language: at 228–9 Batstone discusses critical approaches to the phenomenon in Shakespeare; for Dante's *Inferno,* cf. J. Ferrante, 'A poetics of chaos and harmony', in R. Jacoff (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Dante* (Cambridge, 2007²), 181–200, at 187: 'The primary effect of enjambment in the *Inferno* is to force the reader to rethink a previous notion'.

[24] Giuseppetti (n. 5), 45–6 discusses the temporal relationship of the change of Delos' name in Callimachus and how his hymn relates to versions in Pindar and the Homeric hymn.

[25] J.J. O'Hara, *True Names: Vergil and the Alexandrian Tradition of Etymological Wordplay* (Ann Arbor, 1995), 165–6 cites Roman interpretations of the etymology. Giuseppetti (n. 5), 24 points out Callimachus' innovation with the island's name (cf. 46 as well for his discussion of Asteria, a name that itself probably involves etymological play upon the adjective στερεός ['firm, fixed'] and the alpha-privative). K. Ukleja, *Der Delos-Hymnus des Kallimachos innerhalb seines Hymnensextetts* (Münster, 2005), 129–47 and W.H. Mineur, *Callimachus: Hymn to Delos. Introduction and Commentary* (Leiden, 1984), 75 also discuss Callimachus' treatment of the island's name.

of the aid it provided to Latona, the Callimachean island turns from a floating, hard-to-find land mass to one that is fixed and clear to see. For Thetis' interest in keeping her son away from the Greek army and going to Troy, an open and accessible island should be (and actually is) the last place she should consider.[26] Thetis, then, once again astutely draws upon the literary past – particularly as it relates to Latona – in deciding where to hide her son.[27]

III. MOTHERS AND SONS

The simile of the mother bird that follows Thetis' deliberations reinforces this etymological play concerning Delos and Latona (*Ach.* 1.212–16). Though the content of the simile recalls Achilles' famous claim at *Il.* 9.323–5 that he is like a mother bird toiling on behalf of its young, Statius keeps Thetis at the fore. Indeed the points of contact between Thetis and the mother bird are numerous (*timens*, 1.213 ~ *timidae*, 1.211; *anxia*, 1.194, 214; the anticipation of threats to offspring (*providet*, 1.214 ~ *video*, 1.34); both settle on places that are pleasing (*placet*, 1.211, 215).[28] In this regard, it is intriguing that the mother bird ultimately decides that the *umbra* ought to be her nesting place (1.215 *tandem dubiae placet umbra*). The bird's choice may afford 'protection', but the fact that the semantic range of *umbra* includes 'darkness' and 'obscurity' pointedly counters the etymology of 'conspicuous' Delos. The obscuring shade pleases the mother bird,[29] and in this regard she shares even more common ground with Thetis, who sensibly did not want to hide her son on an island that is defined by visibility and clarity.[30]

   A deep poetic heritage underlies these maternal motivations. In particular, the language and imagery of light and darkness engage with central points of the *Iliad*. In *Iliad* 18, for instance, Achilles claims that by refusing to fight he was not a light for Patroclus or the other Greeks (*Il.* 18.102). Moreover, when he subsequently enters battle after having received his armour from Thetis, four similes describe Achilles' luminous brilliance (*Il.* 19.375–99). The implications are clear: the martial Achilles is

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[26] It is from this perspective of visibility that Thetis must avoid Delos, which otherwise would seem fitting since death and warfare are banished from the island (Call. *Del.* 276–7). But the point is that Thetis must shield Achilles to prevent his discovery, which will lead to his death at Troy.

[27] For potential connections between Callimachus' Asteria and earlier mythic accounts of Thetis (a point that would make Statius' engagement with Delos even richer), see Giuseppetti (n. 5), 43–6.

[28] G. Aricò, 'L' *Achilleide* di Stazio', *ANRW* 2.32.5 (1986), 2925–64, at 2937 notes the simile's relevance for Thetis. As noted by D. Mendelsohn, 'Empty nest, abandoned cave: maternal anxiety in *Achilleid* 1', *Classical Antiquity* 9 (1990), 295–308, at 301, Thetis is also connected with the lioness whose cub Achilles had taken (*Ach* 1.168–70). A triangulated relationship between Thetis, Latona and the bird may also be suggested by the fact that the mother bird, like Latona, is seeking a place to give birth.

[29] There is no strong reason to correlate the name Scyros with *umbra*, but one may wonder whether Statius puns not upon σκῦρος but σκῖρον in relation to the island: Σᵀ *Il.*23.332–3, for example, quotes Aristarchus and connects the Greek verb σκιάζω 'to shade' with σκῖρον. Moreover, Hesychius claims that Philetas connected σκῖρον with groves and woods, a place in which one would naturally find shade (cf. K.Spanoudakis, *Philetas of Cos* [Leiden, 2002], 330–2). See also P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque: histoire des mots* (Paris, 1983), 1019.

[30] D. Kozák, 'The dawn of Achilles. Light imagery in the *Iliad* and Statius' *Achilleid*', *Acta Ant. Hung.* 47 (2007), 369–85, at 376–7 convincingly discusses from another perspective the 'veil of darkness' that surrounds Achilles' time on Scyros and its lifting when Achilles joins the Greek army.

characterized by light, whereas his withdrawal and separation from the Greek army are a period of darkness. By avoiding Delos Thetis seeks safe obscurity for her son as opposed to providing the weapons with which he becomes resplendent. She thus reverses her Iliadic actions and attempts to thwart essential imagery of the Homeric poem.

Statius' contrast between light and darkness as it pertains to Delos also entails distinctions between the human Achilles and the divine Apollo. The comparison between the two is set up at the beginning of the scene in Thessaly, when a simile – modelled upon a Virgilian comparison in which Apollo returns to his mother's Delos (cf. *Aen.* 4.143–9 *qualis … Lyciam … Apollo*; cf. *Aen.* 4.144 *Delum … maternam*) – describes Achilles' return to Thetis in terms of Apollo returning to his mother (*Ach.* 1.165–6 *qualis Lycia venator Apollo | cum redit et saevis permutat plectra pharetris*).[31] This explicit comparison is reinforced by the recurring similarities between Thetis and Latona in subsequent verses.

The relationship between Achilles and Apollo, however, is qualified in large part through the imagery of light and darkness. Whereas the Homeric Achilles could be compared to the sun (or Hyperion; cf. *Il.* 19.398), Statius' Thetis declares in frustration that if Achilles' father had been divine, then her son would have been a great star (*Ach.* 1.253–5 *aetheriis ego te complexa tenerem | sidus grande plagis, magnique* <u>*puerpera*</u> *caeli | nil humiles Parcas terrenaque fata vererer*). Thetis' use of *puerpera*, an exceedingly rare word in epic, certainly recalls Ovid's Latona (*Met.* 6.337) and furthers the comparison between the mothers and sons. In addition, while the contra-factual life that Thetis fantasizes about for Achilles sounds Jovian,[32] *sidus* may also describe the sun (e.g. Tib. 2.1.47; Ov. *Met.* 1.424). By Statius' day the connection between Apollo and the sun had been made through consistent puns upon his appellation *Phoebus* (e.g. Lucr. 6.1197; *Aen.* 8.720),[33] so Thetis' fantasy raises the possibility that the comparison between the sons operates on an astral level. But of course Thetis is aware that her son will not achieve such a position in the universe, and in this sense Apollo's association with the sun distinguishes the god from Achilles.

It is in the earthly manifestations of their brilliance that the crucial distinction between Achilles and Apollo is made. Earlier literature had naturally transferred to Delos the brilliance and visibility that is associated with Apollo (e.g. Arist. fr. 488 Rose; Pliny, *HN* 4.66). Yet it is striking that one of the earliest descriptions of Delos' radiance is predicated upon Achilles' own brilliance. Specifically, Pindar describes the island as 'far-shining' (fr.33c.6 τηλέφαντον), and his use of the rare adjective surely recalls the cognate form that describes Achilles' highly visible tomb in the *Odyssey* (*Od.* 24.83 τηλεφανής). In its characterization of sites sacred to Achilles and Apollo, literary history had linked the god and hero in terms of their visibility and brightness. But for Statius' Thetis, Achilles is not Apollo because, instead of being an ethereal,

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[31] Heslin (n. 3), 183–4 and 253 well discusses the simile in light of connections between Apollo and Achilles, both of whom are paradigms of ephebic beauty; cf. *Ach.* 1.167–8; *Il.* 2.673–4. Achilles is a virtual doublet of Apollo elsewhere: see, e.g., W. Burkert, 'Apellai und Apollon', *RhM* 118 (1975), 1–21, at 19; R. Rabel, 'Apollo as a model for Achilles in the *Iliad*', *AJP* 111 (1990), 429–40.

[32] *Magni … caeli*, for example, evokes Jupiter, whose association with the sky was widespread (e.g. Var. *LL* 5.67 *quod Iovis Iuno coniunx et is Caelum*; Virg. *Aen.* 3.171; Ov. *Met.* 13.707). See too Kozák (n. 31), 382, for a valuable discussion of the cosmic imagery of these verses in relation to Jupiter.

[33] The connection between Apollo and the sun also appears in Greek as well; cf. Euripides' *Phaethon* (*TGF* 781.11–13).

radiant divinity, like all mortals he is earth-bound and destined to die.[34] Indeed, it is through his death that Achilles' equals Apollo's brilliance.

Thetis knows all too well that her son is like Apollo – and she like Latona – in many ways except in the crucial one. Consequently, at a pivotal moment of Achilles' life she tries to prevent his death so as to deny Achilles the tomb that gives him a brilliance to match Apollo's. By fighting against the imagery of light and darkness that underscores the heroic version of Achilles' life and death, Thetis plays her maternal role differently from the way she does in the *Iliad*. While it has rightly become accepted that Statius turns to Ovidian epic to confront the Homeric tradition,[35] here Horatian lyric – specifically the ode about Sybaris and Lydia that ends with the equation of the hiding lover to that of Achilles on Scyros (*Carm.* 1.8) – provides an explicit model.[36] In addition, reconceptions of the kind of heroism embraced by the Iliadic Achilles appear even in Homeric epic, and perhaps no statement is more powerful than one offered by the shade of Achilles himself when he states that he would rather be alive as a labourer than be king of the dead (*Od.* 11.489–91).[37] In the *Achilleid*, Thetis' determined efforts to gauge the relative safety of various places in the Aegean poignantly show that she comprehends before his death what the poetic tradition has her son learn only after it.

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[34] In this regard the phrase that describes Lemnos (*Ach.* 1.206 *non aequa viris*) significantly points towards Achilles' human, that is, mortal, nature. In fact, the rare litotes *non aequa* is evocative of epitaphs or funerary contexts, and in this particular metrical *sedes* and in relation to Achilles, the phrase echoes Odysseus' lament over the death of the hero in Ovid's epic (*Met.* 13.131–2 *quem quoniam non aequa mihi vobisque negarunt | fata*).

[35] E.g. S. Koster, 'Liebe und Krieg in der 'Achilleis' des Statius', *Würzburger Jahrbücher für die Altertumswissenschaft* n.F. 5 (1979), 189–208; G. Rosati, *Stazio: Achilleide* (Milan, 1994), 25–33; A. Barchiesi, 'La guerra di Troia non avrà luogo: il proemio dell' Achilleide di Stazio', *AION* 18 (1996), 45–62; S. Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext: Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman Poetry* (Cambridge, 1998), 136–42.

[36] Horace claims that Sybaris shirks military and athletic training in the sunny Campus Martius (1.8.3–4 *apricum … campum … solis*) because of his love for Lydia. Sybaris' avoidance of the outdoors implies his effeminacy (cf. N–H on *Carm.* 1.8.4), but as M. Lowrie points out (*Horace's Narrative Odes* [Oxford, 1997], 120), Horace's emphasis on sunlight also evokes Pindar's sunny Olympia (*O.* 1.111). The heroic activity that takes place at the radiant Olympic games contrasts with Pindar's assignation of a shadowy existence to those who lack the courage to undertake heroic feats (*O.* 1.81–5; cf. σκότῳ). The lack of activity on the part of Horace's Sybaris is thus markedly antithetical to glorious, masculine endeavours, and this polarity between masculine military/athletic training and feminine hiding is enhanced by the opposition between light and darkness.

[37] For discussion of the Odyssean 'retrospective comment' upon the heroic values of the *Iliad*, see A. Edwards, *Achilles in the* Odyssey: *Ideologies of Heroism in the Homeric Epic* (Königstein/Ts., 1985), 50–2.