

AN EMENDATION IN STRABO (15.2.12)

15.2.12 τὸ δὲ μάλιστα ταραττον φουσητήρων μεγέθη, ῥοῦν ἀπεργαζομένων μέγαν ἀθρόον καὶ ἀγλὸν ἐκ τῶν ἀναφουσημάτων, ὥστε τὰ πρὸ ποδῶν μέρη μὴ ὀραῖσθαι· ἐπεὶ δ' οἱ καθηγεμόνες τοῦ πλοῦ, δεδιότων ταῦτα τῶν ἀνθρώπων, τὴν δ' αἰτίαν οὐχ ὀρώντων, ἐμήνυσαν ὅτι θηρία εἶη, τάχα δ' ἀπαλλάττοιο σάλπιγγος ἀκούσαντα καὶ κρότου, ἐκ τούτου Νέαρχος ταῖς ναυσὶν ἐπῆγε μὲν τὸ ῥόθιον καθ' ἅπερ ἐκόλυον, καὶ ἅμα ταῖς σάλπιγξιν ἐφόβει, τὰ δὲ θηρία ἔδυνεν.¹

“But what disturbed them most were the huge whales, which produced a great mass of spray and mist by their spoutings, so that what lay ahead could not be seen. But when the pilots of the voyage pointed out (the men being frightened by this and unaware of the cause of it) that they were sea creatures and would quickly disappear if they heard trumpets and crashing, as a result Nearchos ...”.

The following words ταῖς ναυσὶν ἐπῆγε μὲν τὸ ῥόθιον mean “he brought up against them (the whales) with his ships the splashing of oars”. ῥόθιον is the sound of the oars striking and churning up the water, and answers to κρότος (a percussive sound, for which “crashing” will serve). The translation “impelled the vessels with violence” (Falconer)² misses the meaning; “steuerte ... die rauschenden Schiffe” (Radt) perhaps sees the meaning but does not bring it out clearly; “led his fleet towards the tumultuous spoutings of the whales” (Jones)³ and “led his ships towards the roaring” (Roller)⁴ are completely astray. For the terror which can be created by the sound of oars see Thuc. 4.10.5 εἴ τις ὑπομένοι καὶ μὴ φόβῳ ῥοθίου ... ὑποχωροίη (“if an opponent stands his ground and is not intimidated into retreat by the crash of oars”)⁵, Hyp. fr. 157 τὸν τοῦ ῥοθίου ψόφον ... ἐκπεπληγμένοι δεινῶς ἦσαν.

That is the first response by the captain to the observation of the pilots. His second is to startle the whales with trumpets (καὶ ἅμα ταῖς σάλπιγξιν ἐφόβει). They disappear, as predicted, by submerging (τὰ δὲ θηρία ἔδυνεν).

This leaves one phrase still to be translated: καθ' ἅπερ ἐκόλυον. It is taken to mean “in the direction of the impediment” (Falconer), “where they impeded his progress” (Jones), “dorthin wo sie den Weg versperreten” (Radt), more loosely “(Nearchus) was blocked” (Roller). This is impossible, for several reasons. First, κωλύω is the wrong verb to describe what the whales

¹ Text as in S. Radt, *Strabons Geographika* IV (Göttingen 2005) 242.

² W. Falconer, in H. C. Hamilton and W. Falconer, *The Geography of Strabo* III (London 1857) 127.

³ H. L. Jones, *The Geography of Strabo* VII (Loeb Classical Library 1930) 149.

⁴ D. W. Roller, *The Geography of Strabo* (Cambridge 2014) 679.

⁵ As translated by M. Hammond, *Thucydides, The Peloponnesian War* (Oxford 2009) 193.

are doing: they are obscuring the way ahead, not blocking it. Second, καθ' ἄπερ does not mean “where” but “as”, like καθάπερ. Strabo has over three hundred and fifty instances of καθάπερ, and to spell the word as καθ' ἄπερ (here only) does not change its meaning⁶. Finally, θηρία, as subject, would require a singular verb, which it has elsewhere in the passage (εἶη, ἀπαλλάττοιο, ἔδυνεν) and three times more in the sentence which follows.

Read καθάπερ ἐκέλευον, “as they (the pilots) instructed”, a common collocation of words (Isae. 7.28 καθάπερ ἐκεῖνος ἐκέλευε, Dem. 17.17, 30, 49.61, Theophr. *Caus. pl.* 5.9.11, Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 10.24.8, Pl. *Plt.* 261e καθάπερ διακελεύη).

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ABSTRACT:

An emendation is proposed in the text of Strabo, *Geographica* 15.

KEYWORDS:

Strabo, Whales, Oars.

⁶ The *TLG* yields few other instances. The most notable is Plat. *Plt.* 276a κατὰ ταῦτα καθ' ἄπερ ἔμπροσθεν διηρούμεθα, “in the same way as we previously divided”, where it picks up κατὰ ταῦτα.