

# A Note on *Digenis Akritas* G 5.242 and Z 6.1813

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IN 2001 A. KAMBYLIS published an article on the text of Grottaferrata version of *Digenes Akritas*<sup>1</sup> in which he offered a number of corrections, conjectures, and grammatical and orthographical notes on Trapp's critical edition of the G version.<sup>2</sup> As no new edition or critical study of this text has since been published, his emendations and conjectures have remained unadopted, but also unquestioned. Indeed, among many valid corrections—particularly regarding grammar, accentuation, and orthography—there are nevertheless some conjectures that do not seem to rest on similarly solid grounds. This paper aims to reject one of these, namely his proposal to insert Z 6.1813 after G 5.241 and to relocate G 5.242 after G 5.244. I will do so by showing that G 5.242 and Z 6.1813 derive from the same line in the common ancestor  $\gamma$  and that, between the two, the former probably retains the text of  $\gamma$ , while the latter innovates on it. I will then suggest a simpler

<sup>1</sup> A. Kambylis, "PARASEMEIOMATA. Zum Text der Grottaferrata-Version des Digenes Akrites," *ByzZeit* 94 (2001) 29–61 [repr. A. Kambylis, *Graeca – Byzantina – Neograeca. Schriften zur griechischen Sprache und Literatur* (Berlin 2019) 639–680].

<sup>2</sup> E. Trapp, *Digenes Akrites. Synoptische Ausgabe der ältesten Versionen* (Vienna 1971). Kambylis also discusses several proposals and notes made by previous scholars. See A. Tsopanaki, "Ερμηνευτικά και διορθωτικά στο κείμενο του Διγενή Ακρίτα (χειρόγραφο Grottaferrata)," *Hellenica* 17 (1962) 75–94; N. Eideneier, "Διορθωτικά στο κείμενο του Διγενή της Κρυπτοφέρρης," *Hellenica* 23 (1970) 299–319; L. Politis, "Digenis Akritas. À propos de la nouvelle édition de l'épopée byzantine," *Scriptorium* 27 (1973) 327–351.



Regarding the daggers in Trapp's edition, although he does not offer an indication of why he modifies or obelizes the line, he presumably does so because he detects inconsistencies in either the metrical form, the grammar, or the meaning. G 5.242 is a perfect example of decapentasyllabic verse (i.e. it has exactly fifteen syllables, with a break after the eighth and accents on the sixth, eighth, and fourteenth), so the metre could not have been Trapp's concern. The grammar too does not pose problems, although some peculiarities can be detected: in particular, the adverbial τὸ λοιπὸν ("so") has only one other occurrence against eleven for λοιπὸν without article,<sup>5</sup> τάχα ("quickly/rapidly") has no other occurrence against six for ταχέως and two for ταχύ,<sup>6</sup> and the final infinitive (ποιῆσαι) is somewhat uncommon.<sup>7</sup> Instead, Trapp must have been puzzled by the meaning of the line and, in particular, of the participle καταβαλόντες: on the one hand, considering that Haplorabdis' daughter resisted sexual intercourse and that G 5.245 has a singular first person verb (ἠρξάμην), we would expect a singular participle referring only to Digenis instead of plural; on the other hand, this verb has only three other occurrences, in which it is always transitive and means "overthrow/defeat" (G 1.139, 4.662) or "throw down [someone from his horse]" (G 8.76),<sup>8</sup> neither of which seems possible here. Indeed, as Kambylis points out, E. Jeffreys does not print G 5.242 within *crucis*; but it must be noted that she retains Trapp's daggers only for G 1.50, so silence does not mean that she regards G 5.242 as unproblematic.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> G 1.160, 4.65, 4.90, 4.447, 4.681, 4.868, 4.1026, 6.214, 6.471, 6.571, 6.775.

<sup>6</sup> Respectively G 1.294, 3.8, 3.63, 4.362, 6.81, 6.699, and 2.84, 4.753.

<sup>7</sup> E.g. G 6.405, 6.632.

<sup>8</sup> This exact meaning is not uncommon in Byzantine texts: e.g. Malalas 5.26 ἀπὸ τοῦ ἵππου καταβάλλει; Anna Comn. 1.9.2, 10.4.7, 12.7.3; Niceph. Bryen. 2.13.

<sup>9</sup> Her note to G 5.242–244: "The earthiness of G 5.242 has struck com-

In fact, all translators, including Jeffreys, have struggled with it and no one has offered a fully satisfying and solid translation.<sup>10</sup> Mavrogordato renders *καταβάλλω* with “to rest,” holding that in this occurrence the verb is equivalent to *καταλύω* because *κατάβολος* (a word which is attested almost exclusively in lexicographical works) means “port of call.”<sup>11</sup> Odorico assumes τὸ λοιπὸν to be the object of *καταβαλόντες*, even if it appears to be adverbial in all other occurrences,<sup>12</sup> and renders *καταβάλλω* with “to drag.”<sup>13</sup> Jeffreys and Jouanno stretch the transitive meaning “to throw down [from a horse]” to the intransitive “to dismount.”<sup>14</sup>

Another minor but not negligible issue is raised by *χρεία*. In

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mentators as extreme bad taste (Trapp obelised the line) ... Probably the text has been distorted by a prurient reaction to its sexual content (cf. G 5.247–256 below), though it is unclear when in the poem’s textual history this happened.” In an email exchange (4 Nov. 2020) Professor Jeffreys wrote to me: “one principle I had [*scil.* in editing the text] was to obelize as little as possible, especially in G. In this case not only is line 242 very awkward but so is the subsequent syntax, with a singular 1st person verb in line 245 rather than a plural. So how much to obelize? At G 8.76 *κατέβαλον* is applied to Digenis unseating his bride’s brothers with the verb used transitively; in interpreting 5.242 I stretched this to an intransitive use ... and so ended up with ‘dismounted’. This is not at all satisfactory so perhaps an obelus is the right reaction.”

<sup>10</sup> Passing over that of Impelizzeri, who ignores the line: S. Impelizzeri, *Il Digenis Akritas. L’epopea di Bisanzio* (Florence 1940) 163–164: “e il desiderio dunque cresceva.”

<sup>11</sup> J. Mavrogordato, *Digenes Akrites* (Oxford 1956) 157: “so when we rested as for natural need”: “for *καταβάλλω* in this intransitive sense, like *καταλύω*, cf. *κατάβολος*, a port of call.”

<sup>12</sup> See G 1.160, 4.65, 4.90, 4.447, 4.681, 4.868, 4.1026, 6.214, 6.471, 6.571, 6.775.

<sup>13</sup> P. Odorico, *Digenis Akritas. Poema anonimo bizantino* (Florence 1995) 141: “†trascinando a fare il resto come fosse un bisogno†.”

<sup>14</sup> Jeffreys, *Digenis* 149: “dismounting then to perform our natural functions.” C. Jouanno, *Digénis Akritas, le héros des frontières* (Turnhout 1998) 262: “Alors, mettant pied à terre, sous prétexte de satisfaire un besoin naturel.”

its three other occurrences it means “supplies/things that are necessary [to do something]” (G 2.12, 2.21, 6.444), which would not make sense here as object of ποιῆσαι. Thus, as for καταβαλόντες, each translation is different and no one seems to hit the mark: Mavrogordato renders it “natural need” in connection with his assumption that καταβάλλω means “to rest”; Odorico renders it “need/urge [to have sexual intercourse]” and assumes that it is the object complement of τὸ λοιπόν; Jeffreys and Jouanno render it “natural functions,” in accordance with *LBG* s.v. χρεία “(Ort der) Notdurft, Abtritt, Latrine, Abort.” This last does not raise problems *per se*, but it would imply that Digenis stopped the horse with the excuse of needing to use the bathroom in order to rape Haplorabdis’ daughter, which is not consistent with the character of Digenis and the values of the poem,<sup>15</sup> nor with the Serb folk-song that, according to Impellizzeri’s hypothesis, served as model for the episode.<sup>16</sup>

Now, to emend the passage in G, Kambylis takes a line from Z, the lost common ancestor of T, A, P, and O reconstructed by Trapp on the basis of T and A. As supposed by Kyriakides, Grégoire, and Pertusi and then unequivocally proven by M. Jeffreys,<sup>17</sup> Z represented a compilation from E itself or a copy

<sup>15</sup> Jouanno, *Digenis* 262 n.135, notes a similar excuse, albeit in a different context, in Heliod. *Aeth.* 2.19.6–7. Some reflections of the *Aethiopica* are found in G, and Jeffreys, *Digenis* xlvi, suggested that it was one of the sources of \**Digenis*, but the matter is disputed.

<sup>16</sup> S. Impellizzeri, “Un episodio del ‘Digenis Akritas’ e un canto popolare serbo,” *AnnPisa* SER. II 11 (1942) 221–228. For other hypotheses see E. Trapp, “Hagiographische Elemente im Digenis-Epos,” *AnalBoll* 94 (1976) 275–287, at 277, 286; A. R. Dyck, “On *Digenis Akritas* Grottaferrata Version Book 5,” *GRBS* 24 (1983) 185–192.

<sup>17</sup> S. P. Kyriakidis, “Ακριτικά μελέται,” *Miscellanea Mercati* III (Vatican City 1946) 399–430, at 409–420; H. Grégoire, “Notes on the Byzantine Epic. The Greek Folk-Songs and their Importance for the Classification of the Russian Version and of the Greek Manuscripts,” *Byzantion* 15 (1940/1) 92–103; A. Pertusi, “Alcune note sull’epica bizantina,” *Aevum* 36 (1962) 14–45; M. Jeffreys, “Digenis Akritas Manuscript Z,” *Dodone (philol)* 4 (1975) 163–

of it and from a manuscript belonging to the  $\gamma$  branch (the same of G) and consequently called g. Since the whole episode is absent in E, the Z compiler relied only on g. The lines corresponding to G 5.240–244 (there is no line in Z corresponding to G 5.245) are Z 6.1811–1815:

οὐκ εἶχον, ὅστις γένωμαι, πῦρ ὄλος ἐφλεγόμην  
 τοῦ ἔρωτος ὄλοσχερῶς ἐμοὶ προσαυξυνθέντος  
 καὶ πάσας μου καταλαβὼν μέλεσι τὰς αἰσθήσεις,  
 ἐν κάλλει τε τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς, ἐν τῇ ἀφῆι τὰς χεῖρας  
 τὸ στόμα τοῖς φιλήμασι καὶ ἀκοῆν τοῖς λόγοις. 1815

As is immediately evident, almost all the lines in Z are basically identical to those in G: Z 6.1811 to G 5.240, Z 6.1812 to G 5.241, Z 6.1814 to G 5.243, and Z 6.1815 to G 5.244 (to which we could add Z 6.1816 to G 5.246). This suggests that both the Z compiler and the diaskeuast of the G version did not depart from their respective antigraphs. Hence, these lines are to be ascribed to the common ancestor  $\gamma$ . But what about G 5.242 and its corresponding Z 6.1813? Kambylis' proposal would require concurrently that in this passage  $\gamma$  had two lines (one corresponding to Z 6.1813 and one to G 5.242) and that the diaskeuast of the G version omitted the first one and transposed the second one, while the Z compiler (or the copyist of g) copied the first one in the right place and omitted the second one. Apart from being somewhat cumbersome, this reconstruction does not solve the problems posed by *καταβαλόντες* nor, as we shall see, the need for a verb that takes the four accusatives in G 5.243–244. Instead, the possible scenarios are these:

the line was missing in  $\gamma$  and both the diaskeuast of the G version and the Z compiler (or the copist of g) inserted one in the same place;

the line was present in  $\gamma$  and both the diaskeuast of the G version and the Z compiler (or the copist of g) modified it, hence we would have a case of diffraction;

201 [repr. E. Jeffreys and M. Jeffreys, *Popular Literature in Late Byzantium* (London 1983) article V].

the line was present in  $\gamma$  and the diaskeuast of the G version copied it while the Z compiler (or the copist of g) modified it, or viceversa.

The first option is the least economical and can be easily discarded by considering the verbs: if the two lines were composed *ex nihilo*, how could it be that they share almost the same verb? Between καταβαλώντες of G and καταλαβών of Z, apart from the number, the only difference is the inversion of beta and lambda, which is more likely a scribe's error rather than a coincidence or a case of multiple emergence. To determine whether the second or the third scenario has more chance of being right, it is crucial to investigate in each of the two lines whether there are elements that suggest a deviation from or the conservation of  $\gamma$ .

At first glance Z 6.1813 fits in the passage better than G 5.242: it has a singular verb that can take the accusative and it refers to “limbs” (μέλεσι) and “senses” (αἰσθήσεις) as in the two following lines. However, this line is only apparently less problematic than the one in G. First, καταλαμβάνω is always attested with the meaning “to reach” in its twelve occurrences in Z.<sup>18</sup> Therefore the translation of the line should be “and reaching [*scil.* I, Digenes] all my senses with the limbs,” which is odd since we would expect the subject to be *eros*, as in the previous line, and the cases to be inverted.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, μέλεσι clearly anticipates the datives in Z 6.1814–1815 (ἐν κάλλει, ἐν τῇ ἀφῇ, τοῖς φιλήμασι, τοῖς λόγοις) and αἰσθήσεις the accusatives

<sup>18</sup> Z 2.536, 3.909, 3.940, 3.1158, 5.1822, 5.2264, 6.2560, 7.3096, 7.3420, 8.3958, 10.4231, 10.4490. Also in G the verb has always this same meaning: G 1.50, 1.295, 2.4, 3.89, 3.248, 4.405, 4.447, 4.621, 4.764, 4.879, 4.1059, 5.25, 5.111, 6.63, 6.148, 6.244, 6.532, 6.706, 6.797, 7.112, 8.5.

<sup>19</sup> See Trapp, *Digenes* app. ad loc. : “versus ita corrigendus esse videtur: κ. πάσαις μου κατ. αἰσθήσεσι τὰ μέλη.” It is noteworthy that, in their translation of T (which in this passage is identical to Z), Sathas and Legrand felt the need to change the subject and add a verb: C. Sathas and É. Legrand, *Digénis Akritas. Épopée byzantine du dixième siècle* (Paris 1875) 151: “l’amour ne cessait de croître en moi et se glissait par mes membres dans tous mes sens.”

(τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς, τὰς χεῖρας, τὸ στόμα, ἀκοήν), but in the first group no word can be referred to one of the senses, while in the second τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς, τὰς χεῖρας, and τὸ στόμα are indeed limbs, but ἀκοήν is unequivocally a sense. Trapp's suggestion to swap the cases and Kambylis' to have both words in the accusative do not improve the coherence of these three lines. The same difficulties must have been detected by the redactors of A and P, who modified the passage, and by the redactor of O, who got rid of the rape scene altogether:

A 2759–2763<sup>20</sup>

δὲν ἤξευρα τὸ τί γενῶ πῦρ ὅλος ἐγενόμην,  
ὁ ἔρωσ μέ ἐνίκησεν· καὶ αὖξησεν μεγάλως  
καὶ πάσας μου καταλαβὼν μέλεσι καὶ αἰσθήσεις  
ἐκάλει τε τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς κρατῶντάς την εἰς χεῖρας  
τὸ στόμα εἰς τὰ φιλήματα, τὴν ἀκοήν ᾗς τοὺς λόγους.

P 372.30–33<sup>21</sup>

δὲν εἶχα τί νὰ γένω, μόνον ὅλον. Μου τὸ κορμὶ ἐγέμισε φωτία καὶ  
ὁ ἔρωσ ἐπλήθυνεν καὶ ἐγέμισεν ὅλας μου τὰς αἰσθήσεις. Διότις  
ἔβλεπα κάλλος ὀμμάτων. Ἐπιανα τὰ χέρια, ἐφίλουν τὸ στόμα.

O 2372–2373<sup>22</sup>

τῆς κόρης δὲν τῆς ἄγγιξεν οὐδὲ ἐπείραξέν την,  
μάλιστα τὸν Εὐδόξιον νὰ ᾽πάρ' ἐδίδαξεν την

Adding to these inconsistencies the fact that the noun αἰσθησις is never attested in G or E (so probably also not in the \**Digenis*) and instead occurs two other times in Z (Z 1.142, 3.1200), it seems legitimate to argue that Z 6.1813 does not represent the original line of g, but rather a clumsy attempt of the Z compiler to modify it. Now, it is not uncommon for the Z compiler to modify or rewrite its antigraphs, but the resulting

<sup>20</sup> Ed. A. Meliaraki, *Βασιλειος Διγενης Ακρίτας. Ἐποποιία βυζαντινῆ τῆς 10<sup>ης</sup> ἑκατονταετηρίδος* (Athens 1881).

<sup>21</sup> Ed. D. Paschalis, "Οἱ δέκα λόγοι τοῦ Διγενοῦς Ακρίτου," *Λαογραφία* 9 (1926) 310–440.

<sup>22</sup> Ed. S. Lambros, *Collection de romans grecs en langue vulgaire et en vers* (Paris 1880) 111–237.



line usually fits the text, while in this case it does not. Given this situation, we must conclude that the Z compiler did not grasp or deemed faulty the corresponding line in g, so he tried to ameliorate it.

As said above, G 5.242 is problematic both on its own and in its context. Therefore, if the diaskeuast of the G version modified its model, he did not succeed in making an intelligible line. However, while no evidence corroborates this possibility, two clues point to the contrary. On one side, the virtual agreement of G and Z regarding the verb (καταβαλόντες ~ καταλαβόν) assures that the diaskeuast of the G version, at the most, inverted two letters and changed a singular participle to plural. On the other side, the use of ποιεῖν with χρείαν, which has perplexed editors and translators, has an antecedent, previously unnoticed, in one of the probable sources of the G version, namely the *Alexander Romance*,<sup>23</sup> which describes—as in G 5.242—a man who forces himself on a woman:

*Historia Alexandri Magni* (recensio β 1.6 = recensio γ 1.6)

ὄν εἶδας ὄνειρός ἐστιν· ὅτε δὲ αὐτὸς αὐθεντὶ ἐπέλθη σοι, χρείαν σοι ποιήσει.

In conclusion, Kambylis' proposal should be rejected because it does not improve the understanding of the passage and does not abide by what we know about the textual transmission of the *Digenis Akritas*. As for Z 6.1813, it is certain that it does not reflect the corresponding line of γ and probably also not of g; by contrast, of G 5.242 the opposite is likely. This situation

<sup>23</sup> The matter of the influence of the *Alexander Romance* on the G version is disputed and no extensive study has been developed yet. See T. Korhonen, "Parva Litteraria Byzantina. Digenes Akrites – Byzantin Aleksanteri ja Herakles," *Skholion. The Bulletin of the Finnish Society for Byzantine Studies* 2 (2003) 15–17; C. Jouanno, "La réception du *Roman d'Alexandre* à Byzance," *Ancient Narrative* 1 (2000/1) 301–321, at 319–320; U. Moenning, "Digenes – Alexander? The Relationships between *Digenes Akrites* and the Byzantine *Alexander Romance* in their Different Versions," in R. Beaton et al. (eds.), *Digenes Akrites. New Approaches to Byzantine Heroic Poetry* (Aldershot 1993) 103–115.

