

PAPINIAN MUTABILITY: STATIUS AND EARLY MODERNITY

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## ABSTRACT

DUSTIN LARRY MENGELKOCH: *Papinian Mutability: Statius and Early Modernity*  
(Under the direction of Jessica Wolfe)

This dissertation examines the reception of the epic and lyric works of the Roman poet Statius in the early modern period. Although the study of Statius is now relegated to only the most dedicated of classics departments, early modern readers from Dante and Petrarch to Shakespeare and Milton enthusiastically read Statius alongside other classical Latin poets such as Virgil and Ovid. While Statius's reputation during the period is well established, what is not as well known is how Renaissance readers interpreted Statius – how they made sense of his relationship to other ancient poets, how they understood his political sympathies, and above all how they labored to understand poems notorious for their opacity and difficulty. Whereas other classical poets were perceived clearly to state their poetic (and even political) ends, and thus to guide the reader, Statius offered no such guidance. The compressed nature of his poetry, in form and content alike, forced readers to fill in, rebuild, and expand wherever necessary. This process yielded a uniquely participatory form of reading that came to be associated specifically with Statius.

For Natalie

*...etenim tua, nempe benigna  
quam mihi sorte Venus iunctam florentibus annis  
servat et in senium...*

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction .....	1
Chapter One .....	14
Chapter Two .....	59
Chapter Three .....	114
Chapter Four .....	149
Chapter Five .....	212
Conclusion .....	247
Bibliography and Works Consulted .....	251

## INTRODUCTION

### Epic Reception and Interpretation: Statius and Early Modernity

The subject of this dissertation is the reception of Roman poet Statius, and in it I investigate the social and intellectual interpretation of his works, the *Thebaid* and *Silvae*, in the early modern period. Though he has largely been displaced in favor of Vergil, Horace, Ovid and Lucan (in the Roman corpus), Statius demands attention in the early modern period, for it was precisely because of his difference from the other great Latin poets that he received such a remarkably warm treatment.

In this study I have tried to show only some of the instances of Statius's reception. I make no attempt to cover Statius's reception in its entirety. In the main, I have focused on points which I think show Statius at his broadest appeal, points which display just how rich and varied his interpretation actually was. In fact, it is precisely Statius's variability which has been most striking to observe, and the theme of mutability is underscored throughout. Readers of Statius run the gamut from pedants to sophisticated statesmen, and they are all worth considering.

You may rightly ask yourself, *So, just what does Statius have to offer that these others do not?* That is a fair question. Statius, unlike those authors mentioned above used the *matière de Thebes* and everything that that entailed to draw a vivid picture of Roman reality and humanity at the end of the first century AD. Of course, Ovid describes Thebes in books three and four of the *Metamorphoses*, but he is concerned with mythology as most

early moderns understood him – Statius is not. So, *what about the Greeks?* A fair question as well. Greek literature on the whole was only available to a select few until the early-seventeenth century, and there were only a handful of truly good readers of it until then. Thus, by and large the imaginative interpretation about Thebes’s role in western civilization came from Statius. Additionally, Statius’s appeal was heightened by the rediscovery of his *Sylvae* and the kind of poetic heritage that connected him to both Roman and Greek literary traditions. As a result, publications of Statius’s works rival all his Latin *fratres*, with no less than fifty-five printings from 1472 to 1594 and one hundred and thirty-three from 1595 to 1700.

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Revival of interest in the works of Statius in the early modern period had what was certainly an unlucky start. In the heady days of the early fifteenth century, book-hunting had become a popular sport for northern Italian humanists, and the best among them was Poggio Bracciolini (1380-1459), a Florentine humanist and perennial combatant with Lorenzo Valla. Poggio is the figure most responsible for rediscovering many of the classical texts we have today, from Quintilian to Lucretius, and one may legitimately wonder about the arc of the early modern period without his efforts. In his letters to Niccolo Niccoli, a fellow Florentine bibliophile, he describes travelling throughout Europe on a quest for lost manuscripts. As much excitement as he recreates when describing the discovery of some new codex, Poggio is also as crotchety and pedantic towards those whose help he needs to make those discoveries. Such is the case in 1418 when he discovers Statius’s *Sylvae*, a text that had been unknown for nearly 1100 years. According to Poggio, the most dimwitted scribe in all of Europe copied the *Sylvae*

for him afterwards, and because of his blundering (he) caused a great delay in sending the text back to Italy. Of course, this is not the whole story. Poggio himself bears as much culpability as his obtuse servant for this misfortune, since he refused to transmit this copy to the broader scholarly community until 1452 when he finally allowed five (or six) copies to be made. The reception of these copies of the *Sylvae* immediately ignites interest in Statius among would-be poets and scholars, provoking various reassessments of Statius's poetry throughout the early modern period.

It has been observed that those individuals engaged in a new or fundamentally transformed social task will likely find themselves adapting one of a set of pre-existing pretenses to new ends. In the literature of early modernity we might more formally call this a *recusatio*; and indeed we find this to be the case with Statius's interpreters, who attempt to make their novel social and intellectual task comprehensible to their readers. For readers of Statius found it convenient to define themselves not only in structural *alignment* with certain more familiar social roles but also in structural *opposition* to others. During the early modern period, Statius, who had been deemed the ultimate imitator during the Middle Ages, came to signify more specifically a recognized authority in literary and social judgment – someone whom lawyers, historians, theologians, and others outside the field of literary studies could appeal to for specialized knowledge.

Statius came to early moderns by way of Italy, as I mentioned before, not by Poggio's promotion, but rather courtesy of Angelo Poliziano, another Florentine humanist who was also a close advisor to Lorenzo de' Medici and the leading scholar in Italy until his death in 1496. According to Poliziano, Statius is, first and foremost, an equal to, and the successor of, Vergil – and all that that entails – not merely an imitator. As such, Statius is not only thought to deal in words but in ideas, in manner as much as

matter, and in comprehension as much as emotion. His verse, syntax, vocabulary, because of the historical context, become the signs by which he is most readily identified: they are consistently overwrought, macaronic, and indulgently allusive. But for Poliziano he is more:

In hoc quidem, de quo agimus Statio, longe mihi ab iis, quae dicta sunt, aliena mens fuerit, ut enim non ierim inficias posse aliquid in tanta Latinorum supellectile inveniri, quod his libellis vel argumenti pondere vel mole ipsa rerum vel orationis perpetuitate facile antecellat, ita illud meo quasi iure posse videor obtinere eiusmodi esse hos libellos, quibus vel granditate heroica vel argumentorum multiplicitate vel dicendi vario artificio vel locorum, fabularum, historiarum consuetudinumque notitia vel doctrina adeo quadam remota litterisque abstrusioribus nihil ex omni Latinorum poetarum copia antetuleris.

(But concerning Statius about whom we are speaking, my own judgment is very different from that which has been said. I do not deny that any number of things could be found in such a wealth of Latin writers, or that they would easily surpass these little books of his in the gravitas of their reasoning or the significance of their content or the timelessness of their eloquence; but I think that I can rightfully claim, as it were, that books of this sort, in which either heroic grandeur, richness of topic, varied manner of speaking or recognizing places, fables, stories and customs are gained by a particularly comprehensive learning in rarified letters, are such that you would prefer nothing in the entire anthology of Latin poets above them.)<sup>1</sup>

It is important to note here that Poliziano's point can only be made now that all of Statius's works have come to light. Prior to Poggio's rediscovery, only the *Thebaid* and *Achilleid* were known – and well known at that. With the distribution of the *Sylvae*, Statius has now complicated his own corpus, letting his Renaissance readers see just how much material he was able to adduce to the Latin literary tradition. In many ways Statius's position as second only to Vergil, was never really questioned; only that being second doesn't necessarily mean to be *secondary*. This is an idea that is lost over time during the early modern period, coinciding roughly with the uber critics Dryden in England and Bossu in France.

I want to draw attention here to the fact that Poliziano built his understanding of poetics and historicizing poetry precisely from Statius. In the most copious work he ever undertook, Poliziano began writing a commentary on the *Sylvae* which expresses his fascination and admiration for Statius. And since he died before he completed it, one can still view his own manuscript with all the changes and redactions he made during the ten plus years he took to write it. The careful excerpting of passages for exegetical work not only shows a participation in the commonplace book type of culture, but also binds early moderns with the rest of us here today. We've all taken time to highlight and write down our favorite passages of an author; the only difference is that Statius was once considered eminently worthy of this honor. In fact, Poliziano's notes relate that the impromptu and epideictic nature of them is a type of poetic misdirection; and much as the modern New Historicist will come to do five hundred years later, Poliziano reveals the poetico-historical circumstances that make Statius's mutability his defining feature. As a result, and specifically through his methods for interpretation according to historical context and philology, subsequent readers will revisit Statius when and where the guidance of so many other poets, including Vergil, fails.

Indeed, whereas other classical poets were perceived clearly to state their poetic and even political ends, and thus to guide the reader, Statius, due to the difficulty of his poetry and content especially in the *Thebaid*, offered no such guidance. Since he composed the *Thebaid* under and perhaps complicit with Imperial Roman ideology during the reign of the Emperor Domitian (81-96 CE), early modern readers gladly accept his ambiguous narrative on Theban incest, patricide, and civil war not as a sign of weakness but as a cultural connective that responds to both social and intellectual pressures. In two particular instances, George Buchanan (1506-82), itinerant scholar, diplomat, and

bane of James I and Mary Queen of Scots, and Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), the Dutch polymath lawyer and theologian, expand the intent of parts of the *Thebaid* to alter the intense legal debates about sovereignty, tyranny, and civil war during the French Wars of Religion (1562-98) and the Eighty Years' War (1568-1648), respectively. Their attempts to nullify purely religious influence over the critical debates about authority allow them to develop and transform the *Thebaid's* antithetical examples of natural law and absolutism into mandates for returning to republican government and the establishment of international law and rights.

Beyond legal interpretation, readers of the *Thebaid* use its opacity for rebuilding how knowledge is organized in the early modern period. Jan Bernaerts (1595), a Dutch lawyer from Mechelen (in what is now Belgium) uses the most difficult moments of Statius's *Thebaid* to rewrite poetic commentary as an occasion for historical examination and broadly tangential exegesis. His commentary, which modern classicists find to be an embarrassment not knowing quite what to do with it, recuperated the text for his readers in ways we no longer find relevant. Yet Bernaerts' contemporaries knew precisely how to read his commentary. For Bernaerts, the humanist propensity for universalizing and connecting with ancient precedent was manifest. In Statius he would literally find a commonplace book, a florilegium of Christian morals, history, poetry; everything one man would need to live the good life is found by Bernaerts in Statius – or at least in the *Thebaid*. Justus Lipsius, Bernaerts' mentor and the leading continental humanist of the period offered this estimation of Statius:

Eccum Papinium, benigne Lector.  
Quis hic Papinius? Poeta magnus,  
Vel dicam potius poeta summus;  
Certe proximus est poeta summo,

Quod fateatur ipse Livor...  
Quas grates tibi posteris et iuventus  
Praesens est habitura? Credo magnas;  
Debebunt equidem. Tuam ipse quercu  
Frontem Papinius libens coronat,  
Hac quam Caesar ei negavit olim.

(Behold Papinius, kind reader!  
Who is this Papinius, you may ask? A great poet.  
Nay, I should say the best poet;  
Or certainly a poet nearest the best,  
As Envy himself confesses...  
What thanks the youth of the future  
Will immediately have for you? Great thanks I believe they  
Will owe. Papinius himself  
Freely crowns your brow with the oak,  
With that which Caesar once denied to him.)<sup>2</sup>

Prior to penning these verses, Lipsius had already put the art of commentating on the *Thebaid* into the realm of diplomacy and common good. For him, and for Bernaerts, the transmission of Statius's knowledge was for good of all. He writes to Bernaerts:

Statius autem tuus ubi est? Puto Antverpiae et ego ad Moretum scripsi.  
Quod rerum aliquid publicarum litteris inspergis, gratum est et saepe  
facito. Stilum et iudicia haec scriptiuncula exercet et nos delectat, qui  
fautores bonae causae sumus, etsi non auctores.

(Where is your Statius? I think at Antwerp and I have written to  
Moretus. That you sprinkle on only a limited amount in your letters  
about public affairs, it is welcome and often pithy. Your style and  
judgment both exercise these small letters and please us, who are  
promoters of the good cause, if not the authors.)<sup>3</sup>

Lipsius's ease and directness in asserting that the act of producing a version of Statius makes him and Bernaerts "fautores et actores bonae causae" is indicative of his view of classical history and literature being entirely relevant to contemporary ills – much in the same way we attempt to make our course on literature today. The result for Bernaerts is that whatever he can contribute to ending the current political strife engulfing Europe is relevant, warranted, and necessary.

Bernaerts' commentary sets in motion a wave, one might say a flood, of commentaries on Statius's works throughout the seventeenth century, which as I mentioned, before numbers one and thirty-three. Most of these commentaries and commentators were Dutch or studied under the tutelage of Lipsius or Joseph Scaliger. So it is not surprising to see a somewhat renewed interest in Statius by the English at the beginning of the seventeenth century since there was a great deal of intellectual, theological and economic activity between the two countries. Still, it is not until 1648 that Thomas Stephens (ca. 1617-1672) publishes the first English translation of the *Thebaid*. Stephens describes his work in translation by setting himself against those who have chosen to translate texts which have already been translated numerous times. He states:

For those Criticall pens ... would have deserv'd better of the Commonwealth of Learning, if they had held a torch to the darke and mysterious places of the Poem: Which, I dare say, would not be so much neglected, but that it is so little understood. The subject matter of the worke, is the most ancient of any History recorded by the Poets: And were it not preserv'd in our Authour, it had been, long since, worne out by Time: Appearing now like old ruines, which preserve the memory of a place, although the forme be wholly decay'd.<sup>4</sup>

Though incomplete, his translation paints an exemplary picture of how Statius's "darkness" helps to mediate the beliefs and concerns of an Anglican priest and schoolmaster, grappling with a failing monarchy and with religious and political revolution during the English Civil Wars (1642-48). By making no attempt to mitigate the problem of untranslatability, Stephens anticipates and challenges the debates over the nature of epic poetry from his contemporaries Hobbes and Davenant. For him, Statius contra Vergil and Homer questions whether epic poetry needs heroes or heroism at all. This, in fact, is an important assertion since other, contemporary political poems

and translations by Thomas May, Abraham Cowley, and Sir Thomas Fairfax also explore the complex relationship between epic form and historical memory. In a direct translation of *Sylvae* 5.2 Fairfax displaces much of Statius's own thoughts for his own and translates it thusly:

Oh Lett that Day from time be blotted quitt  
And lett beleefe of't in next age be waved  
In deepest silence th'Act concealed might  
Soe that the King-doms-Credit might be saved  
But if the Power devine permitted this,  
His Will's the Law & ours must acquiesce.<sup>5</sup>

Such emotional torture is hardly found in the verses supplied to Fairfax by Statius, but he has rewritten them to suit his own needs after the execution of Charles I.

Following the Restoration in 1660 subsequent imperial expansion by King William III and Queen Mary produces doubt among intellectuals about England's position as the new Rome. For John Dryden, Statius complies with and celebrates imperial despotism and authority, and as such Dryden harshly condemns him:

A famous modern Poet us'd to sacrifice every year a Statius to Virgil's Manes: and I have Indignation enough to burn a D'amboys annually to the memory of Johnson. But now, My Lord, I am sensible, perhaps too late, that I have gone too far: for I remember some Verses of my own Maximin and Almanzor which cry, Vengeance upon me for their Extravagance, and which I wish heartily in the same fire with Statius and Chapman: All I can say for those passages, which are I hope not many, is, that I knew they were bad enough to please, even when I writ them... and am resolv'd I will settle my self no reputation by the applause of fools ... If the Ancients had judg'd by the same measures which a common Reader takes, they had concluded Statius to have written higher than Virgil: for... Virgil had all the Majesty of a lawfull Prince; and Statius onely the blustering of a Tyrant.<sup>6</sup>

Dryden's vitriol, however, has a unique consequence: by having such an adverse reaction, Dryden politicizes Statius's poetry, particularly the *Thebaid*, and in doing so strips it of the ambiguity for which it had been so prized.

In response to Dryden's vehemence, Alexander Pope translates the first book of the *Thebaid* (1712), radically rewriting its focus on civil war and political intrigue as a manifesto against tyranny, slavery and imperialism. One need only read a few of his verses to hear the altered cadence of Statius's words:

But Fortune now (the Lots of Empire thrown)  
Decrees to proud *Etheocles* the crown:  
What Joys, oh Tyrant! Swell'd thy Soul that Day,  
When all were Slaves thou cou'dst around survey,  
Pleas'd to behold unbounded Pow'r thy own,  
And singly fill a fear'd and eny'd Throne!  
But the vile Vulgar, ever discontent,  
Their growing Fears in secret Murmurs vent,  
Still prone to change, tho' still the Slaves of State,  
And sure the Monarch whom they have, to hate;  
Madly they make new Lords, then tamely they bear,  
And softly curse the Tyrants whom they fear.  
And one of those who groan beneath the Sway  
Of Kings impos'd, and grudgingly obey;  
(Whom Envy to the Great, and vulgar Spright  
With Scandal arm'd, the Ignoble Mind's Delight,)  
Exclaim'd - O *Thebes*! for thee what Fates remain,  
What Woes attend this inauspicious Reign?  
Must we, alas! Our doubtful Necks prepare,  
Each haughty Master's Yoke by turns to bear,  
And still to change whom chang'd we still must fear?  
These now control a wretched People's Fate,  
These can divide, and these reverse the State;  
Ev'n Fortune rules no more: - Oh servile Land,  
Where exil'd Tyrants still by turns command!<sup>7</sup>

Pope's translation marks an ethical sensitivity to the glory of epic poetry and recreates in modern English terms the essential meaning of Statius's poem for him. A recent effort to read his *Windsor Forest* as his first politically charged poetic work – a claim that rests primarily on Pope's careful handling of verses 407-412, and in particular the half verse that states, "Slav'ry be no more" – is perhaps jumping the gun a bit. For it is clear his

translation to Statius's *Thebaid* is clearer and more substantial evidence of Pope's political and social concerns, making it perhaps Pope's first political poem.

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One final observation must be made here before launching full-bore into the reception of Statius: each reader of Statius presented in this study, including Dryden, is an admirer of his poetry first and foremost. The political, historical, societal, and religious aspects of his poetry are a far second place in terms of interest. It is a problem perhaps of scholarship today that relies solely on the historical to "prove" how one reads or has read a text. That is unfortunate, since this kind of study necessarily becomes one-sided. Whether it is a lack of comfort with aesthetic opinion or some other preventative measure that impedes these insights, it is to the benefit of those who can read Statius in the original to consider this characteristic of his reception.

Early modern readers enjoyed Statius's poetry; they reveled in his difficulty, wordplay, and lyrical brilliance. Early moderns understood that Statius's poetry was inherently interesting precisely because of its nature. In his *Poetics*, Julius Caesar Scaliger often mentions that Statius is *only* second to Vergil, he is hands down the second greatest poet of all time. This is the highest praise he extends to a poet. Whereas Dryden will understand Statius to be a "Capaneus of a poet," Scaliger approves of Statius's rivalrous behavior precisely because it is hubristic. It takes great fortitude to compete with Vergil on his own turf, and if Statius can do it, it gives everyone else hope that he may too. Hence, the detractors of Statius are very few and far between in the early modern period – I can really only think of three.

Though I have focused throughout this work on the historical import of Statius's poetry, I have tried to maintain, at times, an element of aesthetic appreciation as well.

Stattus's poetry is not easy to master in any real sense. However, in specific instances it is startlingly great. I hope I have done him some justice in this regard; his poetry is worth reading now just as much as it ever was.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Poliziano, *Oratio super Fabio Quintiliano et Statii Sylvis, Prosatori latini del quattrocento*, ed. Eugenio Garin (Milan: Riccardo Riccardi, 1952) 872. Where appropriate I have relied on the translations of others whether they be for Buchanan, Grotius, Bernaerts, Statius or Quintilian. It is a matter of efficiency over agreement, since there are many liberties taken with these texts that I do not approve of yet have not had the time to compose my own translations. Still, unless otherwise noted the translations are my own throughout – as is in the case here.

<sup>2</sup> Statius, *P. Statii Papinii Opera quae extant. Io. Bernartivs ad libros veteres resensuit [sic] & scholiis illustravit. Adiectis hac postrema editione, ad Sylvarum libros varijs lectionibus* (Lyon: 1612) 12.

<sup>3</sup> Justus Lipsius, *Iusti Lipsi Epistolae*, vol. 7, (Leiden: 1978) 94 03 09.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Stephens, *An essay upon Statius, or, The five first books of Publ. Papinius Statius his Thebais done into English verse by T.S., with the poetick history illustrated* (London: 1648) Dedication.

<sup>5</sup> Bodlein, MS Fairfax 40, fol. 600; given by Edward Bliss in “The Poems of Third Lord Thomas Fairfax,” *Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences* 14 (1909) 281; also, Brian Fairfax, *Short memorials of Thomas, lord Fairfax* (London: 1699) 6.

<sup>6</sup> John Dryden, *The Spanish fryar, or, The double discovery* (London: 1681) A2-A3.

<sup>7</sup> Alexander Pope, “The first Book of Statius’s *Thebais*,” *Miscellaneous Poems and Translations* (London: 1712) 192-264.

## CHAPTER ONE

### The Mutability of Poetics: Poliziano, Statius, and the *Silvae*<sup>1</sup>

By 1480 Angelo Poliziano had been hard at work for at least five years composing a commentary on Statius's *Silvae*. It was a response to what he deemed an atrocious and deplorable effort at emending and commenting on the *Silvae* put out by his former mentor, Domizio Calderini, in 1475.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, Poliziano never published his commentary – that took the extraordinary effort of Lucia Cesarini Martinelli nearly five hundred years later – and it was a substantial loss to Renaissance scholars that he was not able to do so.<sup>3</sup> Within its confines, that is, all 750 plus pages in the modern edition, it is a comprehensive unpacking of Statius's work that would not be rivaled until that of Kasper van Barth's three volume edition of Statius in 1664-65, which notably had the advantage of adducing the commentaries of Calderini, Bernaerts, Morel, Gevaerts, Cruceus, and Gronovius on the *Silvae* to produce five hundred plus pages of *animadversiones* on the *Silvae*.<sup>4</sup> Excepting Calderini and Bernartius, each of these commentators were true *virii Papiniani*, absorbing and following the poetics displayed by Statius in the *Silvae*; Poliziano, especially.

It is remarkable to note, in fact, just how thoroughly Poliziano absorbed the poetics of this Silver Age Latin poet, an observation that has yet to be made seriously. The recondite and erudite nature of his *Silvae* appealed to Poliziano like no other, except perhaps the Alexandrians, whom he paralleled in so many ways. Yet, it was Statius's

genre-bending hybridity that presented an opportunity for enriching Poliziano's own *multa et remota lectio* (much recondite reading). Thus in Statius's *Silvae*, Poliziano found a model not only for his own *Silvae* but also his sense of poetics and poetic history.

## I

Commencing, “*magni nomen celebrare Maronis*” (“to celebrate the name of the great Maro”) in the first of his *Silvae*, *Manto*, Angelo Poliziano relates two remarkably similar tales, one of Orpheus and Achilles in the preface, and another of the goddess Nemesis in the introduction to the poem proper.<sup>5</sup> Ostensibly anecdotes about a type of poetic *translatio imperii et studii*, the two display on a more fundamental level Poliziano's conception of evolution in the poetic process: Achilles's mimetic display harkens to the transfer of eloquence and classical inheritance expressed in Nemesis's glance from Greece to Rome via Homer and Vergil, and now, presumably, to Florence.<sup>6</sup> Since Poliziano now embodies these characteristics, he has become the vehicle through which adaptation of poetic alterity (i.e. historical, emulatic, and inherited contexts) and interpretation will occur. What I would like to put forward, then, is that Poliziano's use of the *silva* genre in a certain sense is precisely the arena in which he will express how the imitative literary traditions (primarily poetic) of Greece and Rome are now alive within his own work; and, in specific, that his perspective is extensively attuned by one author, namely, Statius. Throughout all four *Silvae*, Poliziano is openly concerned with imitation, inheritance and rivalry; his intense (and long-lived) scrutiny of Statius's *Silvae* in the *Commento*, *Miscellanea*, *Oratio Super Fabio Quintiliano et Statii Sylvis* and *Libri epistularum*, suggests that he develops these concepts in terms of how he sees Statius dealing with his own poetic belatedness, novelty and mutability in comparison with Vergil (*Manto*),

Hesiod (*Rusticus*) and Homer (*Ambra*).<sup>7</sup>

Though the recent reliance on grammarians, such as Diomedes, Hermogenes, Priscian, Demetrius, and Quintilian, to explain Poliziano's sense of poetics is certainly valid, it should not eschew the importance of his engagement with the poets of Greece and Rome – especially, Homer, Callimachus, Vergil, and Statius – who occupy his formative years during the 1470s.<sup>8</sup> It is Statius, in particular, who appears for Poliziano to serve as a way of introducing classical poetry from a perspective which accounts for literary tradition in terms of its historicity and rivalry.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, there is a somewhat nostalgic chronology to be seen by leading with the *Oratio super Fabio Qunitliano et Statii Sylvis* as his entrée to the *Studio*. For from it, Poliziano goes back to the beginning of poetry through the *Silvae* presenting his particulate style of scholarship, one which incorporates both Greek and Roman poetry and promotes pluralism over purism.<sup>10</sup> Grounding this type of pluralistic *paideia* in Statius not only supports intellectual exchange but also creates a means of understanding poetry and poets in their appropriate contexts, treating culture (both intellectual and historical) as a whole.

Returning briefly to the anecdote about Achilles mentioned above, two observations can be made. First, the scene of repose and banqueting at Chiron's cave on Mt. Pelion resembles that found in Statius's *Achilleid* (1.78-94), where Achilles, too, takes up the lyre to sing in a symbolic *translatio* of sorts. This time, however, Achilles takes his cue from Chiron and not Orpheus. Second, the instance of *imitatio* itself suggests the purpose of the *silvae* for Poliziano, namely, a genre of mimetic and interpretive responses to poetic forbearers – even if seemingly inappropriate, since Achilles's singing is classified as “indoctumque rudi personat ore” (“singing an unlearned tune with a rough

voice”). The allusion to Statius made here by Poliziano would have been easily recognized by his pupils, who, as Robert Black has recently shown, would have been very familiar with the *Achilleid* and its contents.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the tale harkens back to Statius’s classical and medieval designation as the greatest imitator of Vergil, while simultaneously highlighting Poliziano’s initial claim in the Manto, “Me quoque nunc magni nomen celebrare Maronis.” For those students at the *Studio* who were familiar with Poliziano’s first course there is an additional acknowledgment of Statius’s position as second only to Vergil among Latin poets in the *Oratio super Fabio Quintiliano et Statii Sylvis*.<sup>12</sup> Simply put, Poliziano is now taking up the mantle that Statius relinquished; he has become the poet of: *uiue, precor; nec tu diuinam Aeneida tempta, / sed longe sequere et uestigia semper adora*.<sup>13</sup> Still, these references are merely surface allusions; there is one more assertion to be made here, and it incorporates those aforementioned.

In his *Commento* on Statius, Poliziano specifically relates Statius’s *Silvae* to a type of poetry that Aristotle described through a reference to Chaeremon’s *Centaur*, writing that it is:

ut *Centaurus* ille Chaeremonis, cuius Aristoteles meminit, quod opus mixtum ex omni genere metrorum erat. Sed haec omnia uno communi nomine poemata appellari possunt, quemadmodum et singulae Statii *Sylvae*.<sup>14</sup>

(Just like the *Centaur* of Chaeremon, which Aristotle mentions, because it was a composite of every style of meter. But all these poems can be labeled under one common name, just as Statius’s individual poems are collectively called the *Sylvae*.)

It bears keeping in mind, no doubt, that Chaeremon is recognized by Aristotle and Poliziano as a poet, although his poem is a hybridization of different meters and genres, “a rhapsody in a medley of all meters,” as McKeon translates.<sup>15</sup> This hybridity, recognized

in the name, *Centaur*, deliberately parallels that of Chiron, the half-human, half-horse figure of Greek legend already mentioned above. Chiron's liminality and status as tutor to Achilles, among others, allows Poliziano to construct a much more complex suggestion than has been established so far.<sup>16</sup> By summoning Chiron first, the pedagogical stage is set: the Minyans, a motley bunch if there ever were one, become students for the evening, readying themselves for an Orphic, if not learned, display, much like Poliziano's own audience of young pupils would be doing.<sup>17</sup> Both audiences, then, represent the blending of the best of their respective, contemporary cultures, which is underscored by both the act of Hylas mixing the wine, and Poliziano's pun on Hylas's name, or more specifically, its root, *hyle*. In the "Vita Statii" of the *Commento*, Poliziano remarks that, "sylva indigesta materia a philosophis appellatur, ea quam Graeci hylen vocant" ("*silva* is called by the philosophers raw material, which the Greeks call wood").<sup>18</sup> At first glance, this statement seems to be a sweeping categorization of the *silva* genre as one which lacks refinement and coherence, or being a crude miscellanea. Poliziano is, in fact, quite clear that this is not the case. While the references to Chiron and *Centaur* exemplify what the *silva* achieves in *varietas* of style and content, Poliziano carefully shows that Statius's poems are "emendatiores" ("very polished"). Poliziano underscores the *Silvae's* refinement by noting that Statius follows Horace's advice, through a reference to Sidonius Apollonaris, that, "multis iisdem purpureis locorum communium pannis, semel inchoatas materias decenter extendit" ("once he has introduced the subject he appropriately enlarges it by the repeated use of stock purple passages").<sup>19</sup> Statius, according to Poliziano, makes certain that his *silvae* are in reality individuated as "eglogam' et 'soterion' et 'epicedium' et 'epithalamium' et

‘propempticon’.<sup>20</sup> By doing so, Poliziano legitimates Statius’s understanding of his *Silvae* as singular poetic efforts while concluding his synopsis of Statius’s introduction to the *Silvae*. Still, there remains to be understood how Poliziano attempts to open his *Commento*, for the preface has far reaching consequences for Statius’s *Silvae*, which, though unknown to his students, manifest themselves in his own *silvae*.

## II

In opening the *Commento*, Poliziano writes at length about the idea of *epistolae* as the means of communicating to a multitude of audiences: “quoniam et civitatibus aliquando et principibus scribimus” (“sometimes we write to princes and sometimes to citizens”).<sup>21</sup> More notably, however, he discusses how *epistolae* can introduce one person to another through the appearance of being extemporaneous, and hence singularly impressive. What Poliziano describes, in fact, is how Statius’s prefatory *epistolae* relate to a type of rivalrous emulation in which Statius can account for the ambitious nature of his *Silvae*. He says:

duo characteres epistolae accomodatissimi eique inter se mixti, alter qui subilitatem, alter qui gratiam prae se ferat: illum ischnon, hunc charienta Graeci vocant...<sup>22</sup>

(There are two characteristics that are most suitable for a letter and which merge into each another: one which exhibits subtlety, the other congeniality; the former the Greeks call *ischnon*, the latter *charienta*...)

Since a letter is both subtle (*ischnon*) and pleasant or graceful (*charienta*), the elaborate coverage of the prefatory *epistolae* becomes Poliziano’s attempt to give structure to Statius’s work. It is precisely this attempt which will validate Statius’s *Silvae* as an opposing or recusatorial poetic structure, which Poliziano needs in order to advance himself as a scholar and poet. In doing so, Poliziano both gainfully dismisses Statius’s

attempt to relate his *Silvae* to that of Vergil's *Culex* and Homer's *Batracho(myo)machia* and presents the *silva* genre and Statius himself as exemplars of "self-fashioning."<sup>23</sup> In other words, as McLaughlin notes concerning the preface to the *Miscellanea*, Poliziano is certainly interested in using remote and rare language and learning in order to grab the attention and approval of his audience straightaway.<sup>24</sup> Unlike Greenblatt's contention that self-presentation necessitates breaking down or destroying a predecessor, Poliziano is more interested in discovery and invention in light of the *Silvae*: he is concerned with innovation and imitation through rivalry.<sup>25</sup> In the context at hand, he presents this action as the re-appropriation and transmission of poetic identity: from Orpheus to Achilles, then Statius to Poliziano via the *silva* genre--since the *silva* genre is not his own invention--and, finally, Vergil to Poliziano.<sup>26</sup> Hence, Poliziano's *Silvae* are innovative poetic manifestoes, signaling an amalgamating effort, much like the *Miscellanea* themselves.

To be sure, Poliziano's *Silvae* are a series of encomia on Vergil, Hesiod, Homer, and poetry in general, published in 1482, 1483, 1485 and 1491, respectively. All serve as *prolusiones* to the courses he taught on these authors.<sup>27</sup> As has been long acknowledged, his *Silvae* are firmly rooted in the classical tradition, sampling broadly and deeply from Homer to Claudian and everything in between including philosophy, law, medicine, etc. They are, however, particularly indebted, as their title suggests, to Statius.<sup>28</sup> In his *praelectio* of 1480, *Oratio super Fabio Quintiliano at Statii Sylvis*, Poliziano sets the stage for his approach to classical literature. Instead of presenting his students with the apices of Republican and Augustan Latin literature and eloquence--Cicero and Vergil, respectively--Poliziano chooses to teach first the under-appreciated Quintilian and

Statius, whom he deems to be at least the equals of those aforementioned authors:

In hoc quidem, de quo agimus Statio, longe mihi ab iis, quae dicta sunt, aliena mens fuerit, ut enim non ierim inficias posse aliquid in tanta Latinorum suppellectile inveniri, quod his libellis vel argumenti pondere vel mole ipsa rerum vel orationis perpetuitate facile antecellat, ita illud meo quasi iure posse videor obtinere eiusmodi esse hos libellos, quibus vel granditate heroica vel argumentorum multiplicitate vel dicendi vario artificio vel locorum, fabularum, historiarum consuetudinumque notitia vel doctrina adeo quadam remota litterisque abstrusioribus nihil ex omni Latinorum poetarum copia antetuleris.<sup>29</sup>

(But concerning Statius, about whom we are speaking, my own judgment is very different from that which has been said. I do not deny that any number of things could be found in such a wealth of Latin writers, or that they would easily surpass these little books of his in the gravitas of their reasoning or the significance of their content or the timelessness of their eloquence; but I think that I can rightfully claim, as it were, that books of this sort, in which either heroic grandeur, richness of topic, varied manner of speaking or recognizing places, fables, stories and customs are gained by a particularly comprehensive learning in rarified letters, are such that you would prefer nothing in the entire anthology of Latin poets above them.)

A habit of consistently challenging the perceived academic authority (in this case, Cristoforo Landino) would become the hallmark of Poliziano's career, to be sure, but more importantly this speech suggests an innovative way of considering classical literature. By proposing that Quintilian and Statius were equally useful in terms of *paideia* to the likes of Cicero and Vergil, Poliziano has to make the argument that what these particular authors offer is a way of receiving and amending their own literary and intellectual traditions according to their own places in history.<sup>30</sup> In other words, each author is an interpreter of the preceding generation's wisdom, which is found by them in poetry, oratory, and philosophy; or better still, "vel in fabula vel historia vel consuetudine," as noted above in the *Oratio*. Moreover, in this oration Poliziano repeatedly refers to Statius and Quintilian as paths for literary models ("viae novae"), stating bluntly at the beginning: "Novas tamen quasique intactas vias ingrediamur,

veteres tritasque relinquamus” (“Let us nevertheless venture upon new and pristine paths, leaving behind the old and worn”).<sup>31</sup> Poliziano carefully states that he is not rejecting Cicero for Quintilian, or Vergil for Statius. Though he manages to develop his presentation with much veiled praise of the new models at the expense of the established ones, Poliziano’s comment about the paths offered by an author like Quintilian borrows “inusitatas vias indagamus” from Cicero’s *Orator*.<sup>32</sup>

In the years before he joined the faculty at Florence in 1479-80, Poliziano began collecting and organizing his observations on the philosophy and history of poetry, establishing much of his work on the concepts outlined by Plato in the *Timaeus* and *Phaedrus*, and Aristotle in the *Poetics*. His interest in the chronological (and, hence, historical) range of poetry, however, crystallizes while reading, copying, and annotating the *Planudean Anthology* and Eusebius. On the one hand, Poliziano had been studying the *Planudean Anthology* since 1472, noting with particular care that these authors of epigrams spanned the time from Plato to Callimachus, and, specifically, how each author fit historically into that time.<sup>33</sup> On the other, Poliziano found in Eusebius a way of classifying all poetry, placing “Zoroaster and Prometheus at the beginning of poetry, along with Orpheus and Linus, and establishes the end of classical poetry with Claudian.”<sup>34</sup> Poliziano’s efforts to scrutinize poetry through these works are notable for three reasons: they establish a Greek tradition as the touchstone for all poetry, a Roman end for classical poetry, and a taxonomy according to historical context, delineated neatly above in the *Oratio* (i.e. “ex omni...”).<sup>35</sup> In essence, what Poliziano seems to conclude from his readings of various epigrams of the *Planudean Anthology* (Callimachus and Meleager, in particular) and Eusebius is a sense of poetics that is synchronic in

nature, relying completely on a dynamic, pluralized perspective. In other words, Poliziano adheres to a poetics which accepts innovation and hybridity as a given.

Simultaneous to this research, Poliziano was also emending Calderini's commentary on Statius's *Silvae* (1475), an effort from which he intended to produce his own commentary.<sup>36</sup> During the composition of this *Commento*, Poliziano realizes the parallels of his own traditions and output with that of Statius. It was for him, then, personal in the sense that he and Statius are court poets relying on patronage for subsistence; cultural, in that each is a part of an autocracy, living at the pleasure of their respective leaders; and intellectual, in that both recognize and privilege the inheritance of Greek poetry over that of Latin, with the exception of Vergil.<sup>37</sup> This shared recognition ultimately underscores both authors' use of the *silva* genre, where each is able to convey moments of insight and brilliance gained through their learned observations and adaptations of other genres and poets.<sup>38</sup> Poliziano, in fact, shows a thorough understanding of Statius's historicizing and pluralizing tendencies through his philological unpacking of much of Statius's *Silvae* in terms of poetics, rhetoric, philosophy, and science. This penchant has recently led Michael Koorbojian to relate Poliziano's efforts in epigraphy and textual criticism as a type of literary archaeology, digging through the disparate likes of Pliny the Elder, Quintilian, Aristotle, Galen, and Pausanias (to name but a few) to explain Statius's allusions.<sup>39</sup>

Turning to Poliziano's own *Silvae*, then, one must assume he is attempting to distill his own vast investigations into a type of ekphrastic display, rivaling Statius by producing his own legacy through new, interpretative poems.<sup>40</sup> A brief qualification is necessary, however, since no other author except Homer occupies Poliziano's poetic

interests longer. Indeed, in terms of personal attention, no work (published or otherwise) is more dedicated to one author than his *Commento* on Statius. Its copiousness alone, even while incomplete, emphasizes Statius's significance for Poliziano. Through a close reading of his *Commento*, one sees the range of material Poliziano found available in Statius's *Silvae*. Especially apparent is a reliance on Greek authors, Homer initially, and the Alexandrians in particular, whom Poliziano cites as being instrumental in the shaping of poetry. This proclivity has led Peter Godman to conclude (correctly) that, "Alexandrian learning and literature...provided the context from which his understanding of the Greek canon grew: an understanding rooted in the particular; concentrated on personalities; mistrustful of broader periods, general trends, or wider movements; and largely exclusive of the evidence provided by Latin."<sup>41</sup> Statius's and Poliziano's *Silvae*, therefore, are intimately engaged with "the reshaping of the artistic and literary exchange of traditions," consistently drawing from other genres and poets, though, it seems for Poliziano, always in competition with Vergil.<sup>42</sup>

A contentious, if not emulatic, relationship is important for Poliziano, since he relates that Statius not only celebrates but entreats Vergil: "Fuit enim omnino hic poeta candidus, officiosus, pius, pudens ac modestus...Maronem ipsum quasi numen aliquod adoret ac celebret"<sup>43</sup> ("All together he is a brilliant, dutiful, devoted, modest, and restrained poet... and he adores and celebrates Maro as if he were some kind of god"). He also imitates him better than any poet who preceded him:

Itaque ut in Thebaide atque Achilleide secundum sibi inter eius ordinis poetas suo quasi iure locum vindicavit, ita in his Sylvarum poematis, in quibus citra aemulum floruit, tam sese ipse – ut meum est iudicium – post se reliquit, quam eundem Virgilius Maro in superioribus antecesserat.<sup>44</sup>

(Thus, when in the *Thebaid* and the *Achilleid* he claims second place rightly

for himself among the poets of his classification [i.e. epicists]; so that, with regard to these *Sylvae*, in which he flourished without a rival, he has left them behind – at least in my judgment – as much as Vergil had excelled his predecessors.)

Though Statius ultimately does not surpass Vergil, Poliziano recognizes the relationship of *aemulatio* (*aemulum*, above) between Vergil and Statius. It derives, “from the technical adeptness of the poet, whose attitude to his precursors is both mimetic and agonistic, involving progressive refinement and increasing complication.”<sup>45</sup> As such, both Statius’s and Poliziano’s *Silvae* take the shape of imaginative heuristics, discovering, confronting, and amending the specificity of prior texts in order to develop new ones. The *silva* genre offered Poliziano a chance for “[r]ecording and welcoming the process of change,” boldly contesting and reshaping Greek and Roman poetic traditions and their related systems of value in order to reflect its use of *varietas* and the complexity of its erudite environment.<sup>46</sup> Poliziano, after studying the Alexandrians for so long, heads directly for Statius, since his genre suits this catalytic, multi-valent role.<sup>47</sup>

### III

From its inception in Statius, then, the *silva* had become the proving grounds for the received critical wisdom about form, style and content: violating formal and stylistic preconceptions of the hexameter as a means for praise; sparking recurrent controversy on topics such as the literary value of *varietas*; perceiving of a form in terms of accumulation and incompleteness as in *indigesta materia*; and legitimizing it in terms of a raw literary style composed *subito calore* as opposed to the rhetorically finished and embellished. Yet, Statius’s appeal to Stella in the *epistola* to the first book of his *Silvae*, that he has composed his poems *extempore*, was rejected both by Quintilian and Poliziano,

with the latter referring to him in many instances as precisely the opposite, *emendatus*. Poliziano, therefore, dismisses the *silva* genre as a type of poetry-on-the-spot. However, the *silva* as a collection genre—a poetic form derived from a variegated genre heritage—is an important feature for both Statius and Poliziano. Since *silva* in Latin literally means “wood” or “forest,” its use as a literary term interacts with several metaphorical meanings, especially “pieces of raw material” or “material for construction,” i.e. *materia*.<sup>48</sup>

In an informative anecdote, Poliziano describes the poetic process of praising Vergil. Thus at the beginning of *Manto* (39-46), he likens the undertaking to being a lumberjack in a *silvae* on Mt. Ida:

Unde ego tantarum repetam primordia laudum?  
 Aut qua fine sequar? Facit ingens copia rerum  
 Incertum. Sic frondifera lignator in Ida  
 Stat dubius, vastae quae primum robora silvae  
 Vulneret: hinc patulam procero stipite fagum,  
 Hic videt annosam sua pandere bracchia quercum,  
 Illic succinctas caput exesertae cupressos  
 Metiturque oculis Phrygiae nemora alta parentis.<sup>49</sup>

(Where shall I begin to sing his praises? Or where shall I end? The abundance makes me uncertain. Thus does the woodcutter on leafy Mt. Ida stand undecided about which tree of the vast forest he will first strike down: here he sees a spreading beech rising on its towering trunk, here he sees an aged oak stretching out its branches, there he sees the bushy-topped pines reaching into the sky; and with his eyes he scans the deep groves of the Phrygian mother.)

Like a lumberjack, Poliziano stands there looking (*videt*) and judging (*metitur*) how all the trees have grown: *fagus patula*, *bracchia quercus annosa pandere*, and *cupressi succinctae*. The entire scene is, on the one hand, deliberately facetious, and, on the other, deliberately indicative of Poliziano’s poetic conceptions. The establishment of *copia* foregrounds *silvae* and plays on his use of *incertum* and *dubius*, which allows for the suggestion that the *silvae*

are indeed *indigesta materia*. But this is hardly true: by using the verb *metitur*, Poliziano has already declared that the *silvae* is only *indigesta materia ad primum*. That is, within the space of six lines he has decided which trees to harvest for the time being, and he begins to build his encomium immediately following. Moreover, the use of *hinc, hic, illic* underscores Poliziano's own methods of research. He is not content to survey one author (represented, here, by trees). He looks high-and-low, noticing the varied attributes of each: it is a process of discovery and privilege.<sup>50</sup> This sanction of selection and Coleridgean "fancy" provides for literary forms of mixed character and content, and proves to be of the greatest importance to Poliziano as the *silva* genre offers the means to display his erudition, or critical reflections (i.e., *metitur*). Thus, as Godman observes, "[t]he wood is relegated to the background; at center stage stand the trees--individual and the detail, meticulously observed."<sup>51</sup> What might be understood today as Heideggerian overtones of *Lichtung* are, here, recognized by Poliziano through highlighting and explaining his recognition of a Statian turn. The *silva* as a genre and physical location is not a place of darkness and confusion; but rather a place of openness, one that presupposes an act of recognition and comprehension, or "resonance and echo."<sup>52</sup> Returning to Poliziano as *lignator* suggests, as well, that *silvae* is not *indigesta materia*; for at its root *lignum* is distinctly the opposite of *materia*, being timber for construction. Being a *lignator*, therefore, is the first step in the civilizing project of poetry – the outline of which, in the guise of history, will come to fruition in the *Nutricia*--and the selection of trees (authors and their words, as well as "their sound, their rhythm") produces an atmosphere of contention, emulation and innovation.<sup>53</sup> As a result, there is a great degree of genre sophistication which is capable of registering conflict and

difference in the poetic sphere. For Poliziano, and hence for Statius, it provides a flexibility and comprehensiveness that encourages *varietas* in its intertextual arrangement, maneuvering between Greek and Latin poetry.<sup>54</sup>

Indeed, the image of *varietas* in the *silva* genre shows the vestiges of the Alexandrians for *poikilia* and gives the genre a refined disorder, rather than one of *indigesta materia* – the type of improvisation Quintilian condemns.<sup>55</sup> All the same, the dissonance in Statius's *Silvae* between varied form and style and pluralistic inheritance has led to another powerful stereotype of the *Silvae* as “mannerist” works that exalt artifice (*ars*) over sense. Perhaps, however, as Curtius and Vessey have suggested, we should think of “mannerism” not as a style of decadence but rather as the expression of a certain type of adventurous and incisive sensibility directly related to the concepts of *ingenium* and *iudicium*, both of which have been accounted for so far by Poliziano.<sup>56</sup> Additionally, there is an argument to be made about how the Homeric concept of *poikilia* and *poikilos* are used as terms of intellectual strength, being a quality of people as well as of things and works of art. Applied to poetry *poikilia* may have something to do with certain poetic skills or skills of heuristic imitation, since *poikilos* creatures are often ones that can change their appearance (or who have more than one aspect). Hence, innovation through variety.<sup>57</sup> Statius's and Poliziano's *Silvae* are therefore self-reflexive poems that continually draw the reader's attention to the diversity of their sources and inspiration, reshaping their varied poetic plunder into moving poetic verses.<sup>58</sup> This concept expresses itself particularly in the *Nutricia*, “where Poliziano openly presents the problem of the relationships between culture, poetry, and history.”<sup>59</sup>

Poliziano composed the *Nutricia* as an inaugural lecture for his course on poetry and poetics at the *Studio* for the university year of 1486-87. Contrary to his three preceding *Silvae*, the *Nutricia* does not introduce a lecture on a particular author. Rather it proposes a history of the transmission of poetry and an inventory of poets both obscure and famous. The poem begins with an allegorical fable dedicated to the divine mother-goddess, Poetry, who is able to both initiate civilization and nourish the arts. The goddess cures man of his savageness and ignorance by her charming mind and virtuous spirit, all for the common good of humanity.<sup>60</sup> After this introduction, Poliziano begins to narrate the history of poetry and poets from its origin. Importantly, however, is the missing and first preface to the *Nutricia*, where he refers to his objective as “poetica et poetarum historia per membra decurrens” (“poetry and a history of poets explained through genre”).<sup>61</sup> This statement, which is absent from the later dedications to Gentili, concludes clearly that Poliziano necessarily renders *historia* to lack historical fidelity; instead he places the emphasis of taxonomic assemblage on *membra*, or genre. It is quite clear from this statement that Poliziano has moved past Quintilian in terms of the organization of poetics, since he is willing to hold form as a means to an end, rather than the author himself, and certainly rather than ethnicity (e.g. Greek or Roman). Quintilian, however, remains a “reference” for him since he is allied with Statius, as we have seen before.<sup>62</sup> Poliziano is privileging Diomedes over Quintilian, since *membra* is precisely the way Diomedes denotes the different types of comedies in the section of his grammar designated *De poematis*, where he underscores the difference in type or form versus that of era (e.g., golden age versus silver age).<sup>63</sup>

The catalogue of the *Nutricia* then proceeds according to a division of genres and

individuation in terms excised from Diomedes. Poliziano is not willing to concede total disparation, though: it is precisely this type of poetic alterity and mutability (again, *fabulae, historiae, consuetudines*), which has played a part in Statius's development of the *silva* genre that unifies them. The same holds for the *Nutricia*.<sup>64</sup> Additionally, Diomedes's chronological perspective and contemporaneity with Claudius Claudianus (ca. 400 AD) would have been attractive to Poliziano. Diomedes's grammar, consequently, would be highly prized, as it was a retrospective in the sense that, Claudian, or more precisely the era of Claudian, signifies the end of the classical period for Poliziano. Diomedes, therefore, allows Poliziano to draw the conclusion that these genre distinctions were clearly understood to serve different social and communicative purposes, with a particular form engaging a particular class of readers (*eglogae, propemptica, epithalamia*, et al.) and arousing distinct readerly and critical expectations, while preserving the importance of the poets themselves.

As such, in the *Commento* on Statius, Poliziano employs three classes of genres, which are then highlighted by types of speech, and then further reduced to characteristics of style--all of which he copies directly from Diomedes:<sup>65</sup>

Est igitur primum genus eorum, qui poetae per excellentiam appellantur, qui etheroico utuntur metro et fabulam allegoricam usurpant et antiquam historiam asciscunt et sua quadam peculiarique oratione utuntur. Quorum, qui heroicum tantum usurpant metrum, cetera omittunt, hi graecae epopoioi dicuntur, ut si nos versificatores dixerimus.<sup>66</sup>

(There is, therefore, the first type of these who are called poets par excellence – those who use the heroic meter, present allegorical fable, and adopt ancient story while using its own distinctive idiom. Of these, those who use only the heroic meter and omit the other qualities are called *epopoioi* in Greek, and we may call them *versificatores*.)

Poliziano is explicit in the refinement of poetics, which he describes above with the

word *genus* and then subsequently illustrates with a list of authors.<sup>67</sup> The first category is that of the poets who write in hexameters, which he designates as the poets of excellence; however, within this group he includes allegorists, like Ovid, and ancient history, like Ennius, since they too write in the epic meter. This evaluation holds true throughout, and Poliziano counts among the excellent poets all who write in dactylic hexameter, whether their subjects are epic or not. He consents to them the Greek title, *epoioi*, which Diomedes has most likely glossed from Aristotle. Moving on, Poliziano groups into the second category those poets who are not necessarily fond of any one particular meter: lyric, comic, elegiac, iambic, bucolic, hymnic, etc. He then concludes with the rare and obscure meters: ichthyphallic, linic, etc.<sup>68</sup>

The significance of this classification can be seen through Poliziano's privileging of particular writers and genres in his following analysis, where he further divides poetry into three forms, distinguished by particular Greek, and their corresponding Latin, terms:

Poematis autem genera sunt tria. Aut enim activum ve imitativum, quod Graeci gramaticon vel mimeticon, aut enarrativum vel enuntiativum, quod Graeci *exegetikon* vel *apologetikon* dicunt, aut commune vel mixtum, quod Graeci *koinon* vel *mikton* appellant...<sup>69</sup>

(Nevertheless there are three types of poetry: Either active or imitative, which the Greeks call dramatic or mimetic; the narrative or declarative, which the Greeks call *exegetikon* or *apologetikon*; the common or mixed, which the Greeks call *koinon* or *mikton* ...)

This classification reflects the manner of poetics found in Plato and Aristotle where the *dramaticon* consists of dialogue with no inherent commentary; the *apologetikon* is narrative and observation; and the *mikton* is mixed with both the aforementioned. In addition, Poliziano gives an example for each genre: Lucretius for the *apologetikon*, theater for the

*dramaticon*, Homer for the *mikton*, Vergil for the *dramaticon* in his *Bucolics* and the *apologetikon* in the *Georgics*. Finally, Poliziano relates that Statius's first *Silvae* is of the mixed, or common, genre:

*Koinon* vel commune, in quo poeta ipse loquitur et personae loquentes introducuntur, ut est scripta Ilias et Odyssea tota Homeri. Haec ergo *Sylva* communi genere est. Nam poeta ipse loquitur in ea et Curtius loquens inducitur, ut suo loco videbitis.<sup>70</sup>

(The *Koinon* or common genre, in which the poet himself speaks and people speaking are led to the fore, as the entire Iliad and Odyssey of Homer was written. The *Sylva*, therefore, is of the common genre. For the poet himself speaks in it and Curtius is brought in speaking, as you shall see in its place.)

It is the mixed genre that Poliziano refines by drawing out the qualities of style that each category retains. He distinguishes four parts: *makros*, *brachus*, *mesos*, and *antheros*.<sup>71</sup> As can be seen, the first three characteristics (*makros*, *brachus*, *mesos*) correspond to style, respectively: the copious, the brief, and the intermediate, with the distinctions being about articulation and arrangement. To illustrate this point Poliziano presents examples only from the *Aeneid*, emphasizing, as Sérís notes, that the fundamental stylistic distinction between these three characteristics is that of abundance versus brevity, or *omnia complectatur* and *castigata narratio*.<sup>72</sup> However, the final characteristic Poliziano mentions is *antheros*. His quote from the *Aeneid* describes precisely how *antheros* is employed in the narrative; namely, it is a pleasant rush provided by (literally, in this case) verdant description. The distinction, therefore, is one of depiction and observation. Using the *varietas* of images and sounds, Vergil's description of the Tiber is pleasant both aesthetically and intellectually – something that Poliziano has already noted is present in the Statius's use of the *epistola* as a preface to his poems. This is clearly Poliziano's

preference in the estimation of the *silva*'s and Statius's attributes.<sup>73</sup>

V

Beyond this last point, however, Poliziano does not elaborate on his thoughts about the characteristics of the remaining *Silvae*, leaving off with an ellipsis in order to signal that he is going to come back and most likely expand at a later date. Still, since Poliziano is participating in the new style of commentaries which are written "for scholars, by scholars," the lack of explication is not necessarily an impediment. As is shown in the *Miscellanea*, whatever information he deemed obvious – which for Poliziano was extensive--he would leave for the reader to conclude.<sup>74</sup> Therefore a crucial point must be inferred: since Poliziano does not take the time to explain *antheros* fully, he is in fact using the term to describe Statius's *Silvae* entirely.

This assertion is more substantial than it first appears, since it is fundamentally aligned with the concept of *varietas* already noted as being substantive for the *silva* genre. For *antheros*, roughly translated, means "florid, ornate or decorative" and in Latin has its counterpart *floridus*. The apparent reciprocative simplicity of these terms belies *antheros*'s actual difficulty. At the root of *antheros* is the noun *anthos*, "brilliance," which relies upon the Greek concept of color and perception as it is tied together in this stylistic instance above with the production and vigor of flowers – something that Poliziano had to deal with in his translation of Homer's *Iliad* 2.468.<sup>75</sup> The term *antheros*, therefore, is observational in nature, relying on a person's acuity to notice and distinguish the many and varied colors produced by flowers in bloom. Alice Levine Rubenstein has noted as well Poliziano's penchant for "expanding and emphasizing the images of light and color" in his translation of Homer, concluding that he has more than is necessary.<sup>76</sup> Admittedly,

there is an alternate and much more sexual explanation of *anthos*. One which finds its way most noticeably, and often, into the *Planudean Anthology*, where the term is applied to a young male and indicates that the flowering of his adolescence is being actively noticed. But even this salacious use helps return us to Poliziano's reliance on his earliest endeavors in poetry as the foundation of his poetics, and specifically through Homer.

Poliziano's interaction with Homer is relevant and pertinent to the discussion and comprehension of Statius. For as noted above, Poliziano designates Statius's *Silvae* as *mikton* or *commune*, and places it on the same level as Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Interestingly, and importantly, in the Pseudo-Plutarch, which Poliziano used as the foundation for his *Oratio in expositione Homeri*, Homer, like Statius, is also deemed *antheros* through no less than his use of *poikilia*:

Hoti de kai to *antheron* eidos ton logon esti polu para toi poietai, kallos echon kai charin eis to terpein kai edein hwsper *anthos*, ti an tis kai legoi; meste gar estin he poiesis tes toiautes kataskeues, e men de tes phrasews idea toiauten echei *poikilian* para toi Homeroi hoian dielthomen, oliga paradeigmata themenoi, ex hon esti kai ta alla katanoein.<sup>77</sup>

(Why would one think it necessary to add that the flowery style – with beauty and grace to warm the heart, like a flower – is frequently encountered in the works of the poet? His poetry is filled with sort of thing. The form of the diction of Homer's poetry shows tremendous variety, as we have demonstrated with a few examples. These will be sufficient to suggest the rest.)

In many ways the observations by the Pseudo-Plutarch and Rubenstein, though millennia apart, highlight the perspicacity previously noted in the *Manto*. Poliziano reinforces the *varietas* adhering to the style of Homer's narration, which he deems to be composed of “sublime, tenue et medium” styles, all of which are bound by the overarching pattern of enrichment in his works. In fact, it is this very use of florid language

that makes his poems so grand. Poliziano states: “Neque item apud eundem floridum elocutionis genus desiderabis, ubi scilicet et pulchritudine splendeat et gratia ... plena quippe his ornamentis tota sunt Homeri volumina” (“Similarly, you will not find any category of his style lacking in floridity, since he naturally shines in both beauty and pleasantness ... indeed, every book of Homer is filled with such decorations”).<sup>78</sup> For Poliziano, *antheros* and *floridus* become terms synonymous with *poikilia* or *varietas*, with no discernible derogatory affiliation such as “merely decorative.” As is clearly indicated, the Plutarch whom Poliziano was consulting deemed Homer’s poems to be quite often decorative and varied. Though he seems to be displeased by this ornament, he concedes that it is nevertheless a great part of Homer’s work. In a similar fashion, both Ida Maier and Rubenstein underscore Poliziano’s transition from a strict reliance on a type of “Vergilian cast” for his translation of Homer to a looser, more descriptive style.<sup>79</sup> Yet, both are at a loss to account for such a shift.<sup>80</sup> By viewing Homer and Statius together, the importance of *antheros* as a key component of poetic necessity becomes apparent. *Antheros* and *mikton*, therefore, are the true measures of great poetry for Poliziano, and the shifting nature of *poikilia* (or *poikilos*), *varietas* and *floridus* allow for greater intellectual, if not aesthetic, achievement.<sup>81</sup>

Additionally, as Quintilian is never far from Poliziano’s thoughts, his passage on *antheros* (12.10.58-59), though not cited in the *Commento*, must also be kept in mind.

Quintilian states:

Altera est divisio, quae in tris partis et ipsa discedit, qua discerni posse etiam recta dicendi genera inter se videntur. Namque unum subtile, quod *ischnon* vocant, alterum grande atque robustum, quod *hadron* dicunt, constituunt, tertium alii medium ex duobus, alii floridum (namque id *antheron* appellant) addiderunt. Quorum tamen ea fere ratio est, ut primum docendi, secundum ovendi, tertium illud, utrocumque est

nomine, delectandi sive, ut alii dicunt, conciliandi praestare videatur officium...<sup>82</sup>

(There is another division—also into three parts—by which distinctions can be made even between correct styles of speaking. One style is defined as plain (*ischnon*, the Greeks call it), a second as grand and robust (Greek *hadron*), and to these has been added a third, called by some “intermediate,” and by others “flowery” (for the Greeks call it *antheron*). The guiding principle, more or less, is that the first supplies the function of giving information, the second that of appealing to the emotions, and the third, whatever name it is given, that of pleasing or, as others say, conciliating.)

Quintilian’s concern here is a further elaboration and clarification of his definition of eloquence, which he gives as having three divisions: *ischnon*, *hadron*, and *antheron*. Arguably, there remains for Poliziano, in this reference, an eye towards the shift in eloquence that Nemesis has already indicated in the *Manto*, but more importantly there is a reiteration of subtlety and pleasantness that Poliziano already noted in his reference to the *epistolae*’s inherent characteristic of *ischnon*.

## VI

Since many of Statius’s poems are encomia, his main goal is to impress and win-over (*conciliare*) his audience with his skill as a keen and subtle observer of their attributes, whatever they may be. In the same vein, Poliziano’s goal for the *Silvae* becomes to display his own observations, founded on his *multa et remota lectio*, as mentioned in the preface to the *Nutricia*. He gives himself the chance to promote a pluralized *paideia* and inspire his own students to follow him in further exploration of the past.<sup>83</sup> In this dynamic context, the re-emergence of the *silva* genre invites Poliziano’s students to explore the supple and nuanced relationships that each poem and tradition draws upon, according to each its own cultural weight and situation. It also further “underscores

rather than obscures the historicity of its sources, and so permits a flood of imaginative energy to flow through it unimpeded.”<sup>84</sup> In Statius’s own words, it allows for “qui mihi subito calore et quadam festinandi voluptate fluxerunt” (“those [poems] which poured out in a sudden heat and a particularly delightful rush”).<sup>85</sup>

Because their intended audiences were such that would be receptive to a display of this kind of erudition, it is not surprising to see Poliziano relate Statius’s poetry in terms of rhetorical artifice and eloquence. In fact, immediately following his remark in the *Commento* that the first *silva* can be classified as *antheros*, Poliziano states:

Sed ut distinctius agamus utque vos facilius singula percipiatis, talem rationem inivimus, ut sententiam primo ipsam explicemus, tum ordinem lectionis aperiamus, mox singula ipsa verba diligentissime exponamus, deinde quae ad artificium pertinerent exequamur ac, siqua interim adnotatione digna elici sententia possit, eam ex abdito erutam afferamus in medium.<sup>86</sup>

(Be that as it may, so that I may speak more clearly and so that you will very easily comprehend each word, I have come upon a specific method of argumentation: First, I will unfold the basic idea, then lay out the structure of the reading, next comment on each word very diligently, and then investigate the craftsmanship of the work; if in the process I can tease out some worthy thought by annotation, I will bring it forward into the middle ground already having been extracted from its hiding spot.)

Within this statement, Poliziano uses a number of verbs (*explicare*, *inire*, *aperire*, *exponere*, *exaequeri*, *afficere*) which evoke a sense of scholarly care as well as the apprehension of Statius’s refined artifice and hidden (*ex abdito*) wisdom; all of which Poliziano both complicates and compliments the in composition of the *Nutricia*.

In the *Nutricia* the poets *par excellence* are now divided according to Poliziano’s conception of their genealogy, both in terms of their manuscript traditions and their larger cultural exchange. What Poliziano realizes more precisely than any other humanist of the period is that “the Latin poets – whose works were his primary interest

– had drawn heavily on Greek sources in a variety of ways.”<sup>87</sup> Only a critic trained in Greek poetry could adequately explain its history (vv. 1-132). Thus Poliziano starts with hymns (133-338), passes to the heroic (339-407), then the allegoric (407-498), the historic (499-539), and, finally, all other genres (539-714). While the order and the distribution has very clearly been dislodged from that established in the *Commento*, Statius and his *Silvae* still retain a prime place among the *epopoioi*, following no less than Homer and Vergil themselves (353-360). Poliziano concludes the genres with elegiacs (540-554), bucolics (555-557), lyrics (558-639), satire (640-651), tragic (652-678), comic (679-702) and epigrammatists (703-719).<sup>88</sup>

## VII

On closer inspection, the difference appears to be between those poets who use the epic meter and those who do not – à la *makros* versus *brachus* as seen earlier. The poets who were separated in the *Commento* according to terms like *exegetikon* and *mikton* are no longer separated in such a manner in the *Nutricia*, with some categories apparently disappearing completely.<sup>89</sup> Still, the *Nutricia* explicitly lays out how Poliziano treats the generic structure and limits of the *silva*, using the genre itself as a compendium of aphoristic and encyclopedic knowledge continuously in dialogue with his research, and presenting proper exegesis by identifying the philosophical theories and myths which were interchanged between poets; though using their own metaphors and grammatical constructions to do so.<sup>90</sup> The result is a form “intended to transfer culture and to communicate important values” by highlighting sources.<sup>91</sup> Hence, *varietas* or *poikilia* indeed lends an authoritative nature to the *Nutricia*, acting as references for his students and readers. The *Nutricia*, therefore, undeniably acts as an encyclopedia of ancient

poetry, delivering a whole system of knowledge, and offering readers a sense that an entire intellectual world has been condensed into a series of verses.<sup>92</sup> At least one scholar has deemed it an autobiography of Poliziano, which displays a lifetime of wisdom.<sup>93</sup>

Although the *Nutricia* is by far the longest *silva* Poliziano composed, at nearly 800 verses, much erudition is compressed into a small form and that very smallness makes his expertise effortlessly “communicable.”<sup>94</sup> Certainly, Poliziano’s affinity for the *Planudean Anthology* (and to a lesser degree, Martial) suggests a source for this type of compressed epigrammatic explication of inheritance; but it does not adequately explain the *paideia* and sense of rivalry so far noted in this compressed genre. For that, there is yet again Statius.

In his *Silvae* there is one especially revealing moment where Statius clearly indicates his views on poetry, inheritance and rivalry; namely, the poem dedicated to his father, 5.3. As Poliziano knew, Statius’s family was distinguished by intellectual achievements, not by birth. Statius’s father competed and won all the important contests in the Greek literary world, and was the tutor of rhetoric and poetics to the elites of Rome during the Flavian dynasty, including Domitian.<sup>95</sup> What is understood and intimated by Poliziano throughout the *Commento* is that the loyalties of Statius as a poet lay within the competitive Greek culture as much as with the civic Roman culture.<sup>96</sup> In other words, as Carole Newlands has recently commented, “in the *Silvae* [Statius] provocatively fashions Naples as a kind of counter world to Domitianic Rome.”<sup>97</sup>

The passage that is the poem’s most instructive is Statius’s recollection of his father’s poetic pedagogy:<sup>98</sup>

Hinc tibi vota patrum credi generosaque pubes  
te monitore regi, mores et facta priorum

discere, quis casus Troiae, quam tardus Vlives,  
quantus equum pugnasque virum decurrere versu  
Maeonides quantumque pios ditarit agrestes  
Ascraeus Siculusque senex, qua lege recurrat  
Pindaricae vox flexa lyrae volucrumque precator  
Ibycus et tetricis Alcman cantatus Amyclis  
Stesichorusque ferox saltusque ingressa viriles  
non formidata temeraria Chalcide Sappho,  
quosque alios dignata chelys. tu pandere doctus  
carmina Battiadae latebrasque Lycophronis atri  
Sophronaque implicitum tenuisque arcana Corinnae.  
sed quid parva loquor? tu par assuetus Homero  
ferre iugum senosque pedes aequare solutis  
versibus et numquam passu brevior relinqui. (146-161) <sup>99</sup>

(Hence parents' hopes were entrusted to you and noble youth governed by your guidance, as they learned the manners and deeds of men gone by: the tale of Troy, Ulysses' tardiness, Maeonides' power to pass in verse through heroes' horses and combats, what riches the old man of Ascra and the old man of Sicily gave honest farmers, what law governs the recurring voice of Pindar's winding harp, and Ibycus, who prayed to birds, and Alcman, sung in austere Amyclae, and bold Stesichorus and rash Sappho, who feared not Leucas but took the manly leap, and others by the lyre approved. You were skilled to expound the songs of Battus' son, the lurking places of dark Lycophron, Sophron's mazes, and the secrets of subtle Corina. But why speak of trifles? You were wont to bear equal yoke with Homer, matching his six feet with verse turned to prose, never outpaced and left behind.)

At first glance, the passage is obviously a much more succinct, and yet similar, inventory than that offered by Poliziano in the *Nutricia* – and similarly, the poem as a whole is the longest of Statius's *Silvae*. Nevertheless, Statius cites twelve poets (or at least suggests them), distributing them into groups pertaining to specific genres. Homer stands appropriately enough as the progenitor, and following him is Hesiod and Epicharmus (whom Statius appears to have cultivated from, one of Poliziano's favorites, Columella); next the lyricists, Pindar, Ibycus, Alcman, Stesichorus, and Sappho; following them the Alexandrians, Callimachus and Lycophron; then, curiously, Sophron and Corinne. <sup>100</sup>

The order of these poets is significant, since they are composed somewhat

chronologically. However, it is clear that Statius is not wholly concerned with the chronology itself, but with the transference from form to form, a type of poetic *sprezzatura*, which clearly appears as Statius places Pindar in the first row of the lyricists. For some, Sappho should precede all, yet she occupies the final position of Statius's testimony. The reason for her position is not well known at this point, but the reason for Pindar's prominence is. In *Silvae* 4.7, Pindar, according to Statius, inspires a new type of verse:

tuque, regnator lyricae cohortis,  
 da novi paulum mihi iura plectri,  
 si tuas cantu Latio sacravi,  
                   Pindare, Thebas.  
 Maximo carmen tenuare tempto.  
 nunc ab intonsa capienda myrto  
 certa, nunc maior sitis, at bibendus  
                   castior annis.<sup>101</sup> (5-12)

(And you, Pindar, ruler of the lyric band, grant me for a little while the right to change my quill, if I have hallowed your Thebes in Latian song: for Maximus I essay to trim my verse. Now my garlands must be taken from unpruned myrtle, now my thirst is livelier but I have to drink of a purer river.)

Pindaric poetry was forged out of competition and was freshly attuned to a dynamic literary and social culture in its own context – the same type of environment in which Statius was reared—and takes advantage a culture's new found magnificence and luxury.<sup>102</sup> Hence, Statius's transition back to Homer with “sed quid parva loquor?” (5.3.159) grants a double meaning to *parva*. Statius's father, and so, too, Statius, is not content with solely interpreting poets, he wants to rival them; however, *parva* suggests that Statius, after having evoked the greats (i.e., Homer and Hesiod), is free to investigate the poets of other genres and periods, if only to return to Homer, and thus frame his development.<sup>103</sup> The parallel with Poliziano's development is just as clear. For Poliziano

also begins with Homer – his first claim to fame – then ventures through the rest of poetry, only to arrive back again at Homer.<sup>104</sup>

Statius's erudition permits him to become a much more liminal, or intermediary, poet, since he partakes of the problems found in the very difficult Greek lyricists. It is through his attempts to imitate and praise Pindar that he is able to illuminate his obscurity and necessity. Thus, "Tu pandere doctus"<sup>105</sup> qualifies both Statius and his father as *poetae docti* – better still, *lignatores* – of poetry, placing importance on the selection from the very great through the supposedly inferior, or what we might term the subtle or liminal poets.<sup>106</sup> Subtlety, indeed, is all the final poets named by Statius have in common (e.g., Lycophron, Sophron and Corinna): seemingly all *ars*, and no *ingenium*. Statius is, however, clear that it is only through Homer that poets such as Pindar (and to a great degree, alleged lesser poets) exist. Consequently, the self-fashioning *ars* and *inventio* (Pindar) necessarily equates with *ingenium* (Homer).<sup>107</sup>

It is not necessary to insist on the idea of *varietas* or *poikilia* here, for Statius, as an intermediary figure, assumes it. The concept of *ars*, encompassing all mimetic art and assimilating the poet to an abstract, impersonal tradition, was the polar opposite of Poliziano's Alexandrian insistence on the importance of individual writers, and the same, too, for Statius in his preference shown for Pindar. Statius's historical pluralism, espoused in *Silvae* 5.3, specifically denies any type of natural perfectibility or historical decline from its inception. Statius is, in fact, just as eager to return ("recurrat") to the lyricists, as Poliziano is to Statius and Homer. Neither is not content to describe virtuoso poetic production, but seek to cultivate the material of the multi-colored *mélanges* left to them.

## VIII

In *The Light in Troy*, Thomas Greene contends that a subtext exists for the most adept imitators of the Renaissance, who would always acknowledge up-front whom and what they were imitating, thereby allowing their readers to acknowledge the distance traveled between the author or work being cited and themselves.<sup>108</sup> Yet, Poliziano does not easily ally himself to this concept. It seems that instead of a subtext Poliziano's own philology makes him more prone to a dialectical approach to literature. That is, for him a text does not remain in the background but occupies the foreground. The premise for such a claim is bound closely to his perception of rivalry with those ancients whom he is in dialogue with, providing a means of cultural continuity. Accordingly, as the "[h]eir of Cicero, beneficiary of the Latin heritage and interpreter of the Greek, Poliziano stationed himself on par with the ancients, not beneath them," and "the assumption of equality is borne out in his practice, which unites exegesis with poetry."<sup>109</sup> Hence, Poliziano's conception of inheritance in the poetic sphere was conversational, simultaneously mediated and complicated by one's interaction and imitation of those past, as McLaughlin has indicated earlier. In the end, it strives for its own uniqueness in terms of *fabulae, historiae, and consuetudines*.

Still, it is important to note just how far Poliziano is willing to take his theory of imitation. In his oft-cited letter to Paolo Cortesi, Poliziano refused to accept the constraints of Ciceronianism weighed down by its Neo-platonic overtones; and in a forceful and unmistakable way he condemns Cortesi as an ape for his unquestioned mimicry of Cicero.<sup>110</sup> As harsh as these censures seemed, they were mitigated by his suggestions of other literary models worthy of imitation, or at the very least consideration (i.e., Horace, Seneca, Quintilian, or Plautus). What is notable about the

use of these authors is Poliziano's lack of concern for the chronological distance away from Cicero, for whom Cortesi advocates, and, therefore, the alleged apex of Latin literature. Indeed, Poliziano's own statements that "Non enim sum Cicero. Me tamen, ut opinor, exprimo" ("Of course, I'm not Cicero. Though, I trust, I make myself clear") and "Postremo scias infelicis esse ingenii nihil a se promere, semper imitari" ("And, lastly, you should know that there is nothing but miserable ingenuity in always imitating rather than producing from your own mind") are indicative of his emulatic and pluralistic approaches to literature relative to its history. First, as McLaughlin has made clear, Poliziano places tremendous importance on his ability to express himself, and, second, as Scaglione and Grafton have suggested, Poliziano does not see history as being able to repeat itself.<sup>111</sup> Thus, to imitate only Cicero would be at the very least anachronistic and at its worst would belittle Poliziano's own sense of worth, if not his *multa et remota lectio*. If we linger for a moment on Poliziano's use of "me exprimo" a telling observation can be made concerning his vast readings. By separating himself from the ancient world, Poliziano is better able to perceive how its culture was transmitted and amended according to each period – hence, the reliance on Diomedes as a model surveyor already noted. This separation ultimately comes to fruition for him in the ancient poetic sphere through Statius's *Silvae* and the modern poetic sphere through his *Nutricia*. Here the culmination of Greek and Roman poetry is expressed, and is able to take advantage of all the attributes that Poliziano thinks important in poetry.

Poliziano's reliance on philology to compare and diligently evaluate his sources in a historical and chronological way presented him with various kinds of problems, some more trivial than others. However, by relegating the value of chronology to textual criticism and not to the poets themselves he freed himself from the mimicry that

enthralled Cortesi and many others. Instead, reveling in the quality and quantity of his sources, he creates a true encyclopedic knowledge. Beginning with Statius's *Silvae*, then, Poliziano is able to address the feature he deems most interesting: exegeses of the *varietas* found in the "qui poetae par excellentiam appellantur."<sup>112</sup> What is notable here is the fact that though Poliziano is willing to categorize poets according to form, he is never amenable to the idea that poets ought to be chained to them.<sup>113</sup> Rather, it is through authors like Statius (and to a lesser degree the grammarians like Quintilian, Diomedes, Priscian, Demetrius, et al.), who provide some kind of poetic definition, that Poliziano can make the claim that poetry itself. The mutability of poetry is what first bound, and continues to bind, human civilization together:

Haec igitur una res et dispersos primum homines in una moenia congregavit, et dissidentes inter se conciliavit, et legibus moribusque denique humano cultu civilique coniunxit.<sup>114</sup>

(Therefore, this one event first gathered into one fortified place for the first time men who had been previously scattered, and united them, even though they disagreed among themselves, and finally joined human refinement and civilization with laws and customs.)

In other words, poetry as it is represented in the *Nutricia* is about cultural change as much as it is about poetic change; each goes naturally with the other. What is unique, however, is that

Poliziano sees this process as a type of pluralistic synchronism best exemplified and captured by Statius in the *silva* genre, where he is able to introduce his own version of "poetica et poetarum historia."<sup>115</sup> Moreover, as "conciliavit" indicates above, a certain degree of floridity or *antheros*, along with its inherent reliance on *varietas* or *poikilia*, is expected and even necessary when composing *silvae*.

Since Statius's *Silvae* purport only to be occasional poems, they were often

dismissed as trivial--and still are to some to degree today. It is clear, however, that to Poliziano these poems were bold and dynamic literary devices, taking seemingly mundane events or objects and transforming them into energetic explorations. They celebrated and surveyed all the variety of a flourishing literary and artistic culture during a time of heavy-handed dynastic rule, but they retained “eternally valid principles” of poetics and rhetoric.<sup>116</sup> By understanding the complexity of Statius’s *Silvae*, Poliziano attempts to follow as closely in his vestiges as the Florence of the 1480s would allow. The shift from the busy scholar-citizen, e.g. Coluccio Salutati, had clearly given way to a much more specialized and relished scholarly *otium*.<sup>117</sup> The product of such *otium* is the *varietas* which Poliziano’s *multa et remota lectio* produces in the *Nutricia*, but which he fashions by innovation, invention, and re-appropriation of Statius’s *Silvae*.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to the many readers of this chapter and would like to extend a very gracious thanks to all of them, including those at *MLN*. Nevertheless, I am especially obliged to Jessica Wolfe and Charles Fantazzi for their careful suggestions and patience, as well as to Alan Cottrell for his advice on translating Poliziano's prose into English--a task which he makes easier than it is, for Poliziano's Latin has a Horatian kind of slickness to it that is matchless in Quattrocento Italy, and I dare say the rest of the Renaissance.

<sup>2</sup> Poliziano's dislike of Calderini following his publication of Statius's *Silvae* was well-known during his life. In rather crass fashion, he never missed an opportunity--whether in his correspondence, the *Miscellanea*, or his burgeoning commentary on Statius--to condemn Calderini for his blunders. Beroaldo, among others, disapproved of his vitriol towards a fellow humanist, especially after his death. See Carlo Dionosotti, "Calderini, Poliziano e altri," *Italia medioevale e umanistica* 11 (1968): 151-79 for an unparalleled analysis of this relationship.

<sup>3</sup> Poliziano, *Commento inedito alle Selve di Stazio*, ed. Lucia Cesarini Martinelli (Florence: Sansoni, 1978). From here referred to as "Poliziano, *Commento*."

<sup>4</sup> Domizio Calderini, *Hoc volumine Domitius inseruit Sylvarum Statii Papinii quinque a se emendatos Comentarios quos in Sylvas composuit* (Venice: Johann von Köln and Johann Manthen, 1475); Johannes Bernartius, *Joh. Bernartii Ad P. Statii Papinii Sylvarum libros, commentarius* (Antwerp: Plantin, 1599); Federicus Morellus, *In Papinii Surculi Statii Sylvas Fed. Morelli commentationes et coniectanea* (Paris: Morellus, 1601); Casperus Gevartius, *Publii Papinii Statii Opera Omnia* (Leiden: Marcus, 1616); Emericus Cruceus, *Publij Papinij Statij opera* (Paris: Blaise, 1618); Johannes Fredericus Gronovius, *Johannis Frederici Gronovii In P. Papinii Statii Sylvarum libros V* (Hague: Maire, 1637). Of these, Bernartius's commentary on the *Silvae* is the weakest and most paltry. Still, his and Gevartius's commentaries rely on Poliziano's *Miscellanea* for textual exegesis--I have never been able to confirm which edition each used, however. Returning to Barth for a moment, his three volumes included a horse-choking, twelve-hundred plus page effort commenting on the *Thebaid*.

<sup>5</sup> All translations are my own unless otherwise noted. I have chosen to transliterate the Greek even though the intention and preference of Poliziano is clear: Greek is privileged and expected to be understood with as little reference to the Latin equivalent as possible. I have also provided translations of the Greek texts in the notes while not retaining this practice for the Latin, a measure done out of expediency and expectation. Both languages are translated where appropriate in the main text.

<sup>6</sup> See Francesco Bausi, *Angelo Poliziano: Silvae* (Florence: Olshcki, 1996) 4-7; Attilio Bettinzoli, *A proposito delle "Sylvae" di Angelo Poliziano: Questioni di poetica* (Venezia: Instituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 1990) 22-24; and Perrine Galand-Hallyn, *Ange Politien:*

*Les Silves* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1987) 31-33. Each aforementioned scholar reaches essentially the same conclusion, albeit naturally in different respects, that Poliziano's preface indicates a type of anecdotal poetic *translatio*.

<sup>7</sup> It is interesting to note that the chronology of authors here may suggest how Poliziano waded into classical poetry from a pedagogical perspective. If the actual poetic chronology of his courses is observed, the outcome looks like this: Statius, Ovid, Vergil (explained via Theocritus and Hesiod), Horace (and Persius) and lyric satire, Homer, then poetry in general. For a detailed delineation of Poliziano's course chronology, see: Francesco Tateo, *Lorenzo De' Medici e Angelo Poliziano* (Bari: Laterza, 1972) 71.

<sup>8</sup> In many ways, this essay builds on the argument by Martin McLaughlin's *Literary Imitation in the Italian Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995), concerning Poliziano's concept of imitation. McLaughlin makes a number of critical points in his chapter about *varietas* which are, I think, correct and critical to understanding Poliziano's literary career. More to the point: whereas McLaughlin has had to take a broad look at Poliziano's poetic endeavors because of his book's trajectory--leaving him to suggest that there is no *one* model to follow--I am taking a much narrower tact. In doing so, I hope to show that Poliziano did have one specific model he emulated and imitated beyond others; and he did so for a historically (one might even say, chronologically) based reason, something that McLaughlin does not suggest.

<sup>9</sup> On Poliziano's historical perspective, see: Aldo Scaglione, "The Humanist as Scholar and Politian's Conception of the Grammaticus," *Studies in the Renaissance* 8 (1961): 49-70; Anthony Grafton, "On the Scholarship of Politian and its Context," *Journal of the Warburg and Courland Institutes of Ideas* 40 (1977): 155-88 and *Joseph Scaliger: A Study in the History of Classical Scholarship* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1983); Peter Godman, *From Poliziano to Machiavelli: Florentine Humanism in the High Renaissance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1998).

<sup>10</sup> On pluralism in Poliziano, see Scaglione.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Black, *Humanism and Education in Medieval and Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001). See especially "Appendix IV" for a detailed list of manuscripts and locations. Moreover, it has been well documented that Statius was a part of the *Liber catonianus*, a medieval epitome and schoolbook containing Cato, Theodolus, Maximianus, Avianus, Statius, Claudian. See, Paul Clogon, *Medieval Achilleid of Statius* (Leiden: Brill, 1968). As an aside, it would be worth investigating these manuscripts to see if any of them may contain the hand of Poliziano, since currently only two copies of Statius have been retained and it seems all together likely that one may have been lost either during the subsequent disbursement of his library after his death, or perhaps following the conquest of Napoleon and the disbanding of the Medici collection.

<sup>12</sup> See Harald Anderson, *The Manuscript Tradition of Statius* (Washington, DC, 2000); and Dominique Battles, *The Medieval Tradition of Thebes* (New York: Routledge, 2004) 1-16. A

further discussion on this topic follows below.

<sup>13</sup> Statius, *Thebaid* 12.816-17.

<sup>14</sup> Poliziano, *Commento*, 59.

<sup>15</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. R. McKeon (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1973) 1447.23.

<sup>16</sup> The various students of Chiron include Achilles, Actaeon, Aeneas, Ajax, Aristaeus, Asclepius, Aristaeus, Caeneus, Theseus, Jason, Peleus, Telamon, Heracles, Oileus, Phoenix, and even Dionysus.

<sup>17</sup> The Argonauts were truly a motley bunch comprised of Jason, Oedipus, Orpheus, Amphion, and Theseus, to name only a few.

<sup>18</sup> Poliziano, *Commento*, 8.

<sup>19</sup> Poliziano 9. Sidonius Apollonaris, *Poems and Letters*, trans. W. B. Anderson (Cambridge, MA: Classical Library, 1963)1: 283.

<sup>20</sup> Poliziano, *Commento*, 9-10.

<sup>21</sup> Poliziano, *Commento*, 16.

<sup>22</sup> Poliziano, *Commento*, 17.

<sup>23</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1980) 9.

<sup>24</sup> McLaughlin 196-97.

<sup>25</sup> That is, imitation and rivalry of ancient poets, not his contemporaries, like Michele Marullo.

<sup>26</sup> It should be noted as well that Orpheus was in many ways Vergil's model; one thinks easily of Orpheus when thinking of the *Georgics*.

<sup>27</sup> There was some confusion as to whether Poliziano actually published the *Nutricia* in 1486, or if the *editio princeps* was produced in 1491. It has now been well concluded that Miscomini published the *Nutricia* at Florence in 1491; though it was recited in 1486 and dedicated twice to Mattias Corvinus before Poliziano dedicated it to Gentili. See the detailed explanations in Mario Martelli, "Il 'Libro delle Epistole' di Angelo Poliziano," *Interpres* 1 (1978).

<sup>28</sup> Statius's novelty as an author rises quickly in the middle part of the Quattrocento.

Following Poggio Bracciolini's rediscovery of the *Silvae* at Lake Constance in 1417 and its subsequent publication and commentary by Domizio Calderini in 1475 (a mentor to Poliziano in the 1470s), Statius becomes appealing to many humanists. However, the transmission following Poggio's rediscovery of the *Silvae* is fairly complicated. Barring the lull in interest (due to Poggio himself), it is sufficient to say that when Poggio returns to Florence in 1453 manuscript M is copied and emended at least six times before 1463. These emendations bear fruit in the *editio princeps* of 1472 and Puteolanus's 1473 edition; though Perroti works on a commentary during 1469-70. Indeed, interest in Statius reads as a veritable who's who of Quattrocento Italy: Battista Guarino, Niccolo Perotti, Pomponio Leto, Angelo Poliziano, Ermolao Barbaro, Philipo Beroaldo, to name only the most notable, all exhibited interest, and were not solely focused on the *Silvae*, either. Additionally, if we allow our imagination to run free for a moment, there is a conjecture to be made about how Poliziano arrived at teaching Statius over Vergil. Namely, that during his exile in Ferrara and Mantua, Poliziano would have seen Guarino teaching the *Thebaid* to only his most capable students, a tradition his father had initiated long before, with the explicit goal of detailing Statius's imitation and mastery of Vergil. Thus, it seems, at the very least, that Poliziano (long the tutor of Piero di Lorenzo) would have been able to question Guarino about Statius's effectiveness as a model for poetic imitation. For further details on the MS tradition, see: L. D. Reynolds, *Texts and Transmission* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1983) 398; Abraham Wasserstein, "The Manuscript Tradition of Statius' *Silvae*," *The Classical Quarterly* 3 (1953): 69-78, and Wasserstein's continuation, "The Manuscript Tradition of Statius' *Silvae*," *The Classical Quarterly* 8 (1958): 111-112; M. D. Reeve, "Statius' *Silvae* in the Fifteenth Century," *The Classical Quarterly* 27 (1977): 202-25.

<sup>29</sup> Poliziano, *Oratio super Fabio Quintiliano et Statii Sylvis, Prosatori latini del quattrocento*, ed. Eugenio Garin (Milan: Riccardo Riccardi, 1952) 872.

<sup>30</sup> Promoting Quintilian as superior to Cicero in terms of pedagogy was nothing new, Valla made the same argument well before Poliziano; however, the use of Statius was completely unique at the *Studio* in Florence, and still is, generally speaking. In addition, Poliziano also carefully adapts the sentiments of Aper (at the beginning) and Maternus (at the very end) from Tacitus's *Dialogus de oratoribus*, in the *Oratio super Fabio Quintiliano et Statii Sylvis*, to express what his perspective is: "Quintilianum vero non nos quidem illum Ciceroni praetulerimus, sed has certe eius *Oratorias institutiones* rhetoricis Ciceronis libris *pleniores uberioresque* esse exitimamus..." (Garin 876); and "Postremo ne illud quidem magni fecerim, quod horum scriptorum saeculo corrupta iam fuisse eloquentia obiciatur, nam *tam corruptam atque depravatam* illam, quam dicendi mutatum genus intelligemus. Neque autem statim deterius dixerimus quod diversum sit" (Garin 878). The emphasis is my own, and is meant to highlight the similarities between Tacitus and Poliziano. On Valla's work, see Salvatore Camporeale, *Lorenzo Valla. Umanesimo e teologia* (Firenze: Nelle sedi dell'Istituto, 1972) 91-100, and Lorenzo Valla, *Antidotum Primum. La prima apologia contro Poggio Bracciolini*, ed. Ari Wesseling (Amsterdam: Assen, 1978) 1-2. See, Godman 44-45 and McLaughlin 194 for similar discussions on Tacitus.

<sup>31</sup> Garin 870.

<sup>32</sup> *Orator* 3.11.

<sup>33</sup> For Poliziano's interaction with the *Planudean Anthology*, see James Hutton, *The Greek Anthology in Italy Before 1800* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1935) 124-40.

<sup>34</sup> Godman 56.

<sup>35</sup> The use here of "touchstone" is deliberate, since it is well known that Poliziano accepted, at least somewhat, the conception of poetic transference found in Plato's *Ion*.

<sup>36</sup> Ida Maier, *Ange Politien; la formation d'un poète humaniste, 1469-1480* (Genève: Droz, 1966) 119, and Wasserstein. See, too, Poliziano's "Stattus," known as the *exemplar Corsinianum*, in which his notes range from the early 1470s through the early 1490s, including annotations that are contemporaneous with his first year at the *Studio*.

<sup>37</sup> The relationship of Lorenzo and Poliziano is developed through his encomiastic poetry: Galand-Hallyn 17-61. Additionally, it needs no elaboration here concerning the fear and oppression with which Domitian ruled, but the repression following the Pazzi conspiracy, Poliziano's own exile, and the remembrance of his own father's murder may do well to be remembered. Alan Cottrell thoroughly discusses the subtleties of Poliziano's early relationship with Lorenzo de' Medici: "Calliope and Clio: The influence of historical context on Angelo Poliziano's classical scholarship," diss., U of Texas, Austin, 1995, 82-144.

<sup>38</sup> Poliziano's reliance on Statius, however, belies the actual importance of his own *Silvae's* influence throughout the Renaissance, which in terms of pedagogical *praelectiones* (i.e. a showcase for erudite observation, adaptation, and praise) is practically nil. Later poets, such as Balde, Buchanan, Beze, Heinsius, Quevedo, and Jonson will adopt the more traditional role of *silva* as a genre with a pronounced, occasional bent. While it is true that their poems are a mixture of encomia and lamentation, and still very learned, none will attempt to display such knowledge, fidelity, and understanding--not to mention forsaking the genre as a useful and entertaining *prolusio*--in their own *silvae*. Besides, perhaps, Hugo Grotius and Johannes Vaccaeus, it seems no one grasps Poliziano's change in form concerning the *silva* genre, leaving the ground that he has carefully furrowed and cultivated to lay shamefully fallow. See Harm-Jan van Dam, "Wandering woods again: from Poliziano to Grotius," *The Poetry of Statius*, eds. Johannes Smolenaars, Harm Jan van Dam, Ruurd R. Nauta (Leiden: Brill, 2008) and Perrine Galand-Hallyn, *Un professeur-poète humaniste: Joannes Vaccaeus, La sylve parisienne (1522)* (Geneva: Droz, 2002).

<sup>39</sup> Michael Koorbojian, "Poliziano's role in the history of antiquarianism and the rise of archaeological methods," *Poliziano Nel Suo Tempo*, ed. Luisa Secchi Tarugi (Florence: Franco Cesati, 1996) 265-74, especially, 272. See, too, Grafton's two works mentioned

earlier and for general discussions on Poliziano's antiquarianism, Alan Cottrell, "Renaissance Codicology: Poliziano's Early Practice of a Modern Discipline," *Manuscripta* 41 (1997): 110-26.

<sup>40</sup> McLaughlin only allows for Poliziano's interest in ekphrasis to be a quality of his Italian poetry, not his more serious Latin poetry: McLaughlin 212.

<sup>41</sup> Godman 59.

<sup>42</sup> See Carole Newlands, *Statius' Silvae and the Poetics of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002) 7; and David Vessey, "Transience preserved. Style and theme in Statius' Silvae" *ANRW* 32.5 (1986): 2754-802.

<sup>43</sup> Poliziano, *Commento*, 5.

<sup>44</sup> Garin 872.

<sup>45</sup> Godman 69.

<sup>46</sup> Godman 69. Poliziano cites a passage from Lucretius (3.11-12) in the *Oratio* to express his distaste for purism: "Itaque cum maximum sit vitium unum tantum aliquem solumque imitari velle, haud ab re profecto facimus, si non minus hos nobis quam illos praeponimus, si quae ad nostrum usum faciunt undique elicimus atque, ut est apud Lucretium, *Floriferis ut apes in saltibus omnia libant, / omnia nos itidem depascimur aurea dicta*": Garin 878.

<sup>47</sup> The *silva* genre is generally considered to be Statius's; though not the inventor of the form, he is the only classical model left. Lucan is said to have also produced *silvae*.

<sup>48</sup> Poliziano pieces this definition together from those offered by Sidonius, Quintilian, and Cicero primarily. It is, however, described similarly by other authors, such as, Macrobius and Aulus Gellius.

<sup>49</sup> Poliziano, *Silvae*, ed. and trans. Charles Fantazzi (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP 2004) 8-9.

<sup>50</sup> Robin Nisbet has keenly noticed the tradition of *lignator* and poetic privilege and its symbolic use: "The Oak and the Axe: Symbolism in Seneca, *Hercules Oetaeus* 1618ff," *Homo Viator: Classical Essays for John Bramble*, eds. M. Whitby and P. Hardie (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1987) 243-51. See, too, Perrine Galand-Hallyn, *Les yeux de l'éloquence: poétiques humanistes de l'évidence* (Orleans: Paradigme, 1995) 147-48.

<sup>51</sup> Godman 59.

<sup>52</sup> For an interesting explication, see: Poliziano, *Miscellanea* I. XXII, "Echo," *Opera omnia*

(Basel, 1553).

<sup>53</sup> Ernesto Grassi, *Humanism and the End of Philosophy* (Binghamton, NY: MRTS, 1988) 11-13.

<sup>54</sup> Poliziano, *Commento*, 52-61.

<sup>55</sup> Godman 66.

<sup>56</sup> Ernst Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1973) 296-97; Vessey 2754-2760.

<sup>57</sup> Marcel Détiéne and Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Cunning and Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1978) 11-23.

<sup>58</sup> Perrine Galand-Hallyn, *Le reflet des fleurs: Description et métalangage poétique d'Homère à la renaissance* (Geneva: Droz, 1994) 259-60.

<sup>59</sup> Alain Michel, "La parole et la beauté chez Ange Politien," *Angelo Poliziano. Validità Perenne Dell'Umanesimo*, ed. Giovannangiola Tarugi (Florence: Olschki, 1986) 198-99.

<sup>60</sup> Emilie Séris, *Les étoiles de Némésis: La rhétorique de la mémoire dans la poésie d'Ange Politien, 1454-1494* (Geneva: Droz, 2002) 323. Interestingly, this anecdote's soothingness sounds vaguely similar to that told by Juvenal about Statius's abilities to quell the *turba vulga* in *Satire* 7.82-86: "curritur ad uocem iucundam et carmen amicae / Thebaidos, laetam cum fecit Statius urbem / promisitque diem: tanta dulcedine captos / adficit ille animos tantaque libidine uolgi / auditur."

<sup>61</sup> Poliziano, *Epistola*, IX I, *Liber Epistolarum* (Lyon: Gryphium, 1553) 258-62. See, also, Peter Godman, "Poliziano's Poetics and Literary History," *Interpres* 13 (1993): 113; and Mario Martelli, "Il 'Libro delle Epistole' di Angelo Poliziano," *Interpres* 1 (1978): 235-36.

<sup>62</sup> Godman 66.

<sup>63</sup> H. Keil, ed., *Grammatici latini ex recensione Henrici Keilii, Diomedis Artis Grammaticae Libri III* (Lipsiae: Teubner, 1897)I: 491.

<sup>64</sup> Séris 324.

<sup>65</sup> The following description of Poliziano's generic descriptions closely parallels the analysis and substance provided by Séris 328-331; but it is critically different in aim and tenor, with the intent being to propose a reliance on *antheros*, and not merely the breakdown of genres as each corresponds to the *Commento* and *Nutricia*. Still it is necessary here to tread the same path, if only lightly.

<sup>66</sup> Poliziano, *Commento*, 52.

<sup>67</sup> Their distribution corresponds directly with that found in the *Panepistemon*. See Séris 328 and Poliziano 52-59.

<sup>68</sup> Séris 328-29.

<sup>69</sup> Poliziano, *Commento*, 60.

<sup>70</sup> Poliziano, *Commento*, 60.

<sup>71</sup> Poliziano, *Commento*, 60: “Quattuor sunt poematos characteres: brachus, macros, mesos, antheros. ‘Macros,’ ut apud Vergilium in X de Camilla facit narrationem sic: pulsus ob invidiam regno, viresque superbas (*Aen.* 11.539)... aut ut se habent secundi et tertii libri narrationes. Brachus, ut in V ubi Ganymede strictum narrat sic: victori chlamydem auratum, quam plurima circum/ purpura maeandro duplici Meliboea cucurrit./ intextusque puer frondosa regius Ida / veloces iaculo cervos (*Aen.* 5.250-53). Mesos, ut in primo: Huic coniunx Sychaeus erat (*Aen.* 1.343). Est enim castigata narratio, sic tamen ut omnia complectatur. Antheros, ut in VII, ubi amoenitatem luci ac fluminis describendo facit narrationem sic: Hunc inter fluvio Tiberinus amoeno/ vorticibus rapidis et multa flavos harena/ in mare prorumpit; variae circumque supraque/ adsuetae ripis volucres et fluminis alveo (*Aen.* 7.30-33). Atque in genere est huius primae Sylvae character...”

<sup>72</sup> Séris 331.

<sup>73</sup> Poliziano states at the beginning that he thinks Statius clearly excels in this type of genre, and that he prefers it to his *Thebaid*: “Atque eius generis ii sunt Statii libelli, in quibus adeo excelluit, ut etiam putetur reliquos suos libros emendatories supervectus. Credo quod in longo opere, quasi vasta planitie...flaccescebat oratio”: Poliziano, *Commento*, 9. See, too, Séris 331.

<sup>74</sup> Grafton 156.

<sup>75</sup> It can also mean “flower.” It makes one think as well of “anthologia.”

<sup>76</sup> Alice Levine Rubenstein, “Imitation and Style in Angelo Poliziano's *Iliad* Translation” *Renaissance Quarterly* 36 (1983): 55-56. She notes, here, the range of use Poliziano gleans from words related to light, heat, etc.

<sup>77</sup> J. Keany and R. Lamberton, eds., [*Plutarch*] *Essay on the Life and Poetry of Homer* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996) 139; the emphasis is my own. As a point of reference, the modern concern over the speciousness of the Pseudo-Plutarch versus the legitimacy of (the real) Plutarch is irrelevant, since the wholesale pilfering that Poliziano undertakes for his *Oratio in expositione Homeris* indicates quite clearly that he relies on the Pseudo-Plutarch for his historical and philosophical understanding of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

<sup>78</sup> Poliziano, *Oratio in expositone Homeri*, ed. Paola Megna (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2007) 19.

<sup>79</sup> Poliziano, *Oratio in expositone Homeri*, 52.

<sup>80</sup> Indeed, Rubenstein sees Poliziano as both failing and misrepresenting the original Greek in his translation of the *Iliad*. Still, she notes Poliziano's penchant for *poikilos*. See, Rubenstein 64.

<sup>81</sup> Here, we also have the opportunity for conjecture and further substantiation of Poliziano's interest in the concepts of *poikilia*, *anthos* and *antheros*. Namely, the way these words are used in Diodorus Siculus 2.52.5-7. It is worth quoting in full (the emphasis is my own): Παράπλησις δὲ καὶ τὰς τῶν ὀρνέων μορφᾶς ἐπιχρῶσθαι, τὰς μὲν ὁλοπόρφυρους φαινόμενα, τὰς δὲ κατὰ μέρος παντοίαις χροαῖς διεϊλημμένας: τὰς μὲν γὰρ φλογίνα, τὰ δὲ κροκώδε, τῖνα δὲ σμαραγδίζοντα, πόλλα δὲ χρυσοειδῆ φαινεσθαι κατὰ τὰς πρὸς τὸ φῶς ἐγκλίσεις αὐτῶν, καὶ καθόλου πολυεῖδεις καὶ δυσερμενεύτους ἀποτελεῖσθαι χροᾶ: ἡπὲρ καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς κατ' οὐρανὸν ἰρίδος ὀρασθαι γινόμενον ὑπὸ τοῦ περι τὸν ἡλίον φῶτος[. . .] καθόλου δὲ καὶ τῆς περι τὰ *anthe* διαφωρας τῆς χροᾶς καὶ τῆς τῆς *poikilias* τούτων ὑπάρχειν αἰτίον καὶ δειμιουργόν: οὐ γὰρ τὴν φύσιν ἐνεργείαν τὰς θνητὰς τεχνὰς μιμῆσάμενας βάπτειν ἕκαστα καὶ *poikillein* μαθητρίαις γινόμενας τῆς φύσεως. (“In like manner, it is reported, the different kinds of birds get their colouring, some kinds appearing to the eye as pure red, other kinds marked with colours of every variety one after the other; for some birds are flaming red in appearance, others saffron yellow, some emerald green, and many of the colour of gold when they turn towards the light, and, in brief, hues are produced in great variety and difficult to describe; and the same thing can be seen taking place in the case of the rainbow in the heavens by reason of the light of the sun...And it is generally true, they continue, that of the varied colours of the earth the sun is the cause and creator; and the arts of mortal men, imitating the working of the sun in the physical world, impart colouring and varied hues to every object, having been instructed in this by nature.”): Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca historica*, trans. C. H. Oldfather, Classical Library (Cambridge, MA, 1933)2: 56-57. The point, keeping in mind Poliziano's substantial use of Diodorus, is that *poikilia* and *antheros* are fundamental principles of poetry and clarification on these notions for him is not in any way out of his reach. Additionally, if a close eye is kept on the quotation above, there is an apparent connection between the terms *energeia* and *entelecheia*, though not cited, and *dynamis*, revealing Poliziano's reliance on Aristotle (and later Galen), which would be easily supportable as points of discussion about Statius's poetics. For a very early citation of *dynamis* via Quintilian in the *Commento*, and *Miscellanea* I.1 for his thoughts on *entelecheia*, see Poliziano, *Commento*, 8.

<sup>82</sup> Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, trans. D. A. Russell Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA, 2001)5: 312-15.

<sup>83</sup> For the dedication of *Nutricia*, see Bausi 163 or Fantazzi 110.

- <sup>84</sup> Thomas Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Poetry* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1982) 40.
- <sup>85</sup> Statius, *Silvae*, I, Letter to Stella.
- <sup>86</sup> Poliziano, *Commento*, 61.
- <sup>87</sup> Grafton 172.
- <sup>88</sup> Séris 331.
- <sup>89</sup> Séris 331.
- <sup>90</sup> Grafton 175.
- <sup>91</sup> Rosalie Colie, *The Resources of Kind; Genre-Theory in the Renaissance* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1973) 33.
- <sup>92</sup> Colie 34.
- <sup>93</sup> Claudio Mutini, *Interpretazione del Poliziano* (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1972) 72.
- <sup>94</sup> Colie 34.
- <sup>95</sup> Poliziano, *Commento*, 3-11.
- <sup>96</sup> Alex Hardie, *Statius and the Silvae: Poets, Patrons, and Epideixis in the Graeco-Roman World* (Liverpool: F. Cairns, 1983) 14.
- <sup>97</sup> Newlands 30.
- <sup>98</sup> Fernand Delarue, *Poète épique: originalité et cohérence* (Paris: Peeters, 2000) 9.
- <sup>99</sup> Both text and translation are found in *Statius Silvae*, Loeb Classical Library, (ed. and trans. D.R. Shackleton Bailey [Cambridge, Mass.: 2003]) 358-61.
- <sup>100</sup> Poliziano, *Commento*, 9.
- <sup>101</sup> Shackleton Bailey 288-91.
- <sup>102</sup> Newlands 31.
- <sup>103</sup> Delarue 10. Maier notes that “Pour les érudits d’une génération en quête d’un idéal de

culture encyclopédique, Homère va donc représenter le type le plus accompli de l'*homo sapiens*": Maier 91.

<sup>104</sup> Poliziano's affinity for Homer, as mentioned already, is only rivaled by that of Statius in terms of its encyclopedic function. Hence, Maier cites Poliziano's introductory statements about Homer: "...Quo effectum est, ut Homeri poesi virtutum omnium, vitiorumque exempla, omnium semina disciplinarum, omnium rerum humanarum simulachra, effigiesque intueamur, ipsaque illa nobis expressa expromptaque ante oculos constituent..." and "...Dum constet universis omnium scientiarum, omnium artium, omnium denique virtutum semina in Homericis utrisque operibus inveniri, omnis, descripsisse omnis effinxisse rerum omnium voces...": Maier 93.

<sup>105</sup> It seems altogether likely that Poliziano is playing with the use of *pandere* here as well as in the earlier quoted passage concerning the lumberjack in *Manto*, since the idea of selection and privilege is certainly present in Statius's poem.

<sup>106</sup> Indeed, Poliziano hints at as much in his own understanding in the *Oratio*: "...sed hos ita placet inferioribus quasque secundae notae auctores ediscendos praebere, ut imitari illos facilius possint?" (Garin 870). He furthers this line of thought by offering the synonyms (*humiliora, pedamenta, humilioribus, iacentes*) in the subsequent sentence.

<sup>107</sup> Delarue 11.

<sup>108</sup> Greene 40.

<sup>109</sup> Godman 90.

<sup>110</sup> Garin 902 and 904.

<sup>111</sup> McLaughlin 203; Scaglione 50; Grafton 182.

<sup>112</sup> Poliziano, *Commento*, 52.

<sup>113</sup> Anthony Grafton reaches a similar conclusion about Poliziano and his use of Statius's *Silvae*: "Renaissance Readers and Ancient Contexts," *Renaissance Quarterly* 38.4 (Winter 1985): 632-34.

<sup>114</sup> Garin 882. This reference is to Quintilian, but Poliziano has taken pains to set up this passage earlier with: "Nos quidem, cum poetam legere institueremus, ante omnia quod ad ipsam poetice pertineret ea quae maxima in nobis fuerit diligentia enucleavimus": Garin 880.

<sup>115</sup> See note sixty.

<sup>116</sup> Grafton 633. Statius himself seems to be of the same thinking, for in the preface to

book three of the *Silvae* he writes: “Tibi certe, Polli dulcissime et hac cui tam fideliter inhaeres quiete dignissime, non habeo diu probandum libellorum istorum temeritatem, cum scias multos ex illis in sinu tuo subito natos et hanc audacitatem stili nostri frequenter expaveris...”: Shackleton Bailey 172-73.

<sup>117</sup> Poliziano, *Miscellanea*, I. XLI: “Cuius tamen volumini legendi ac versandi per otium mihi est uni facta copia, Laurentii Medicis opera causaque.”

## CHAPTER TWO

### The Disintegration of Natural Law: George Buchanan, Hugo Grotius, and the *Thebaid*.

In the previous chapter I focused on how Angelo Poliziano transformed Renaissance poetics, finding a philosophical and aesthetic exemplarity in the occasional nature of Statius's *Sylvae*, one, in my view, that sets a standard for the interpretation of Statius in the early modern period. By recognizing that the impromptu and epideictic nature of the *Sylvae* as a type of poetic misdirection, Poliziano reveals the poetico-historical circumstances that make Statius's mutability his defining feature. As a result, Poliziano places interpretive agency in the hands of the individual learned reader, and it is my contention that his methods for interpretation according to historical context and textual philology, found especially in the *Miscellenea*, *Oratio*, and *Silvae*, impel subsequent readers to revisit Statius when and where the guidance of so many other poets fails.

It is a significant fact that Poliziano's work on Statius remained largely (and deliberately) apolitical. With the exception of his treatise on the Pazzi Conspiracy and his eulogy for Lorenzo de' Medici, Poliziano rarely expresses political or social ills openly; and, as was mentioned before, he had very good reason not to do so. For Poliziano the understanding of later scholars, such as Muret and Lipsius, among others, of *similitudo temporum* as a normative impetus for Renaissance scholars and politicians does not hold up. Poliziano did not see his world as a *simile* of Rome, in which studying the ancient authors becomes a way of defining, correcting, and, in some cases, predicting

modern social ills. Rather he maintains a conviction that to pursue antiquarian knowledge was important for its own sake, participating in a type of Petrarchan *vita contemplativa*. But this view was not widely shared even during his own time. As a result, both during his life and especially afterwards, during the great Ciceronian controversy, Poliziano's work comes under heavy scrutiny.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, scholars neither condemn wholesale nor disregard his philological discoveries and methodological improvements in textual emendation and conjecture. Poliziano, in fact, remains a guiding figure for much of the sixteenth century; only limited approximately to matters historical, philological, and antiquarian. Thus, the *otium* Poliziano so valued and cherished is not the path chosen by our subsequent readers of Statius. In fact, quite the opposite.<sup>2</sup>

## I

Speaking very generally, in northern Europe at the beginning of the sixteenth century more and more humanists attempt to access and seize ancient and classical precedent so that they may gain political and social authority rather than explore it purely on its own merits. This movement coincides with the efforts of many humanists to include their versions of Christianity in intellectual endeavors, and ultimately helps reform not only the Catholic Church but also the remaining medieval social and intellectual structures and institutions. Promoted most vociferously and vigorously by Erasmus of Rotterdam, this movement has far-reaching consequences throughout the period and across Europe, many of which are outside the scope of this chapter. Yet, through the intellectual battles fought by Erasmus and many other scholars a different kind of scholarship arises and then coalesces.

Responding to reforming efforts within and without the Catholic Church, the moral and ethical treatment of classical precedent and ideas generally pertaining to

religion, philosophy, government, and law, and their application within the modern context of a reformed (albeit thoroughly fractured) Europe, causes dramatic shifts in the thoughts and perceptions of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century humanists. Their reconsideration of classical precedent paves the way for bold new ideas especially within government and law, both positive and natural – the latter being the heart of this chapter. Consequently, the focus on classical texts in terms of law and philosophy allows for scholars to engage in politically sensitive debates without necessarily having to make direct overtures toward different Christian sects. Since ancient authors were very often precluded from being “enlightened,” their contributions could be used in purely epistemological exercises, a point which must not be overlooked.

The turn to classical precedent for many scholars of the period naturally begins with its leading Roman lights: Vergil and Cicero.<sup>3</sup> Entries from commonplace books of the period make it quite clear that the notions offered by both writers are absorbed and steeled in any number and variety of ways. What needs noting here, however, is that the reason each of these authors has such authority is not necessarily found solely in the ideas contained within their works – though this is certainly part of their appeal. Rather it is that the ideas they express are clear and for the most part well-defined. Cicero and Vergil, in other words, offer clear guidance to their readers, since there is very little ambiguity in their works. This is not to say that there are not dust-ups along their well-worn paths about various problems in lacunae, emendation, or interpretation; only that the authors themselves are not inherently difficult to read and digest. Their styles and content are, in the main, clearly and deliberately intelligible.<sup>4</sup> The same goes for many other classical authors as well. Yet, there are a select few Roman authors who could not, and were not to, be among the ranks of Vergil and Cicero with regard to these

aforementioned generalizations, authors such as Tacitus, Seneca, Lucan and Statius. Interest in such authors rises impressively during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in northern Europe due to their perceived political and social relevance. Indeed, of the first three authors much has already been said and needs no further elaboration here; for Statius, however, there is almost nothing.

Whereas other classical poets were perceived clearly to state their poetic and even political ends, and thus to guide the reader, Statius, due to the difficulty of his poetry and content, offers no such guidance. Since he composed the *Thebaid* under and perhaps complicit with Imperial Roman ideology during the reign of the Emperor Domitian (81-96 CE), early modern readers gladly accepted his ambiguous narrative on Theban incest, patricide, fratricide and civil war not as a sign of weakness but as a cultural connective that responds to both social and intellectual pressures. Two such readers of Statius, George Buchanan (1506-82) and Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) expand the understood intent in parts of the *Thebaid* to alter the intense legal debates over sovereignty and tyranny put forth by the Houses of Stuart and Orange, respectively. Buchanan's and Grotius's attempts to nullify purely religious influence over the critical debates about authority allows them to develop and transform the *Thebaid*'s antithetical examples of natural law and absolutism into mandates for returning to republican government and the establishment of international law and rights.<sup>5</sup>

It is, indeed, rather unheard of to mention Statius's *Thebaid* as an essential or even noteworthy text in Renaissance discussions on natural and positive law. And perhaps this is unjust. For through one of the happier coincidences of the Renaissance, Buchanan and Grotius both comment in their very own copies of the *Thebaid* in a manner which

suggests that Statius's text epitomizes the very breakdown of natural and positive law, and plays a significant role in their own primary works on law and moral philosophy. In light of this, Buchanan's *De iure regni apud Scotos Dialogus* (Dialogue) and Grotius's *De jure belli ac pacis* (DJBP), works that treat both topics – albeit in very different fashions – warrant a closer look with regard to Statius's *Thebaid*.<sup>6</sup>

It must be stated immediately that neither Statius nor his *Thebaid* is necessarily the impetus for the ideas expressed by Buchanan and Grotius in their works. Instead, the extant evidence suggests that Statius and the *Thebaid* help to refine and confirm the normative, lego-political thoughts that Buchanan and Grotius were struggling to resolve within their respective periods. In the *Thebaid* they read a work which commented on its own time during the reign of Domitian, but is also appropriate for understanding the politics of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Furthermore, it must be made clear that Buchanan's and Grotius's readings of the *Thebaid* are predicated upon the commentary proffered by Lactantius Placidus (5<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> century CE), one which explicitly highlights the degeneration of natural law and nature through terms such as *fas* and *ius*. To clarify, my assertion is not that Statius is explicitly interested in positive and natural law *per se*; but rather that both Buchanan and Grotius recognize, through Lactantius's commentary, the underlying moral and ethical concepts of *fas / nefas* and *ius / lex* to be uniquely employed and corrupted within the *Thebaid*. This recognition, in turn, ultimately helps order their respective treatises where they pertain to natural and positive law.

Looking at the *Thebaid*, one may first ask the question of why a reading of it would be important for either Buchanan or Grotius. To answer this question by simply stating that both scholars see the *Thebaid* through a lens of civil war, though somewhat differently, is tenuous at best. The obviousness of brother against brother, which would have easily appealed to any classical scholar of the sixteenth and seventeenth century, not the least of which to those in France, Scotland and the Netherlands, is too vague and unconvincing since these simplistic notions strain the understood political and historical import of Statius among Roman epicists during this period. Similar to our contemporary understanding of Statius, the early moderns held that, in contrast to the *Aeneid* where Vergil carefully reconstructs Rome's foundation in terms of religious motifs such as *mores*, *pietas*, and *fas / fatum*, Statius composes the *Thebaid* in terms of destruction and decivilization, that is *ira*, *odium*, and *nefas* – similar to Lucan's *Pharsalia*. Peeling away the Vergilian veneer, Lucan goes a step further than Statius and eliminates the gods themselves, removing all remaining notions that morals and ethics have any religious and (hence, substantive) political connection. Statius, however, maintains the presence of the gods throughout, and Jupiter himself holds the leaders and citizens of Argos and Thebes (and even Athens, eventually) accountable for their thoughtless transgressions. Statius's retention of the gods, specifically Jupiter's actions is, in my mind, particularly responsible for Grotius's and Buchanan's interest in the *Thebaid*. For through Jupiter, Statius shows how religion intersects with law; these are precisely the topics which are of most value to our scholars.

Further binding our scholars together are a number of similarities as both were equally prolific in matters literary, historical and theological. Each was a political exile

in Paris; each imitated Statius in the *silva* genre; each wrote legal treatises pertaining to the rights of man; each wrote famous Latin biblical dramas; and each even translated Euripides from Greek into Latin (*Medea* and *Alcestis* for Buchanan; the *Phoenissae* for Grotius).<sup>7</sup> This final connection through Euripides proves more than a little revealing, since it is from the *Phoenissae* that the ideas expressed by both Buchanan and Grotius merge – and why should they not, since the *Phoenissae* is the *Thebaid*'s precursor.

The seemingly simple comparison between the *Thebaid* and the *Phoenissae* is perhaps not so simple, especially when it is understood that during Buchanan's lifetime Greek texts were generally hard to come by and there were very few people who could actually read them. In fact, Buchanan himself becomes one of a handful of translators of Euripides, following the precedent of Erasmus; so it is no surprise to find him thinking of the *Phoenissae* when reading and commenting on the *Thebaid*.<sup>8</sup> It is equally unsurprising to find Grotius doing the same, since by his time (the late sixteenth, early seventeenth centuries) the greatest Greek scholars, except Isaac Casaubon, reside in the Netherlands and teach at Leiden University where Grotius was schooled. Still, while we might reasonably expect these scholars to have read the *Phoenissae*, it is quite unexpected to see them embrace both Statius and Euripides for similar ends. So it needs explaining how and why they did so; and to do that we must first turn to Cicero.

To reach the comparison of the *Phoenissae* with the *Thebaid* would not necessarily have been to simply compare one text with the other. Rather it seems much more probable that since the topics discussed under the pretext of moral philosophy (including natural and positive law, tyranny, and proper rule) are continually present in the minds of our scholars it is more likely that texts which pertain to them specifically

would have been at the forefront of their thoughts. In the early modern period, the classical author with the most to say about these topics and who was respected most was Cicero. In particular, his work entitled *De officiis* comments specifically on the topics that most interest Buchanan and Grotius. Here it bears stating how important the *De officiis* is to the early modern period, as it is literally the second book printed with movable type after Gutenberg's Bible. In total, there are ninety-one versions of it produced in one hundred years; and Erasmus and Melancthon published a pocket-sized version of it, so that it could always be at arms' length. Additionally, during the medieval period there were more copies of the *De officiis* produced than any other classical text. As a result church fathers, such as Jerome, Augustine and Aquinas, use it to develop their own perspectives on moral philosophy. All this is to say that the *De officiis* stands alone in importance and serves to a fair degree as a type of commonplace-book for early modern scholars, including Buchanan and Grotius.

One instance where the *De officiis* certainly retains this effect is in the third book where Cicero recalls an anecdote about Caesar and Thebes and addresses Euripides's *Phoenissae*. Specifically, he discusses how Caesar comes to use the perverted logic of Eteocles for justifying his pursuit of power.<sup>9</sup> Cicero quotes him as saying:

Ipse autem socer in ore semper Graecos versus de Phoenissis habebat, quos dicam, ut potero, incondite fortasse, sed tamen, ut res possit intellegi:

'Nam si violandum est ius, regnandi gratia  
Violandum est; aliis rebus pietatem colas.'

Capitalis [Eteocles vel potius Euripides], qui id unum, quod omnium sceleratissimum fuerit, exceperit!...ecce tibi, qui rex populi Romani dominusque omnium gentium esse concupiverit idque perfecit! Hanc cupiditatem si honestam quis esse dicit, amens est; probat enim legum et libertatis interitum earumque oppresionem taetram et detestabilem gloriosam putat. Qui autem fatetur honestum non esse in ea civitate, quae libera fuerit quaeque esse debeat, regnare, sed ei, qui id facere possit, esse

utile, qua hunc obiurgatione aut quo potius convitio a tanto errore coner avellere? Potest enim, di immortales, cuiquam esse utile foedissimum et taeterrimum parricidium patriae, quamvis is, qui se eo obstrinxerit, ab oppressis civibus parens nominetur?

(Caesar was always quoting those lines from the *Phoenissae* of Euripides (I shall translate them as well as I can, giving attention to intelligibility rather than elegance:

“If right be contravened, let it for rule

Be contravened; or else pursue the good.”

Eteocles, or rather Euripides, deserved to be put to death for making such an utterly unscrupulous exception... For here you have a supreme example of a man whose ambition was to be absolute ruler of the world, and achieved it! Anyone who says that this is an honourable goal is mad: for he not only assents to the abandonment of law and liberty, but glories in the foul and detestable act of their subjection. But what of the man who admits that it is wrong to establish absolute rule in a state which has a tradition of freedom which it deserves to maintain, and yet considers that it can be to a man's advantage to gain such rule? Is he not to be deterred from such a wrong idea by every conceivable condemnation and reproach? What advantage, in Heaven's name, could be deferred from that most foul and disgusting murder of the state? And yet the man who perpetrated it was given the title of 'Father' by the very people he had enslaved.”<sup>10</sup>

Cicero is more than clear here: the moral degeneration and the devolution of government under tyrants, both fictional and real, are detestable; and the loss of *pietas* (as Cicero translates and cites Caesar's rendering) in the *Phoenissae* is at the very heart of a corrupted state. Indeed, for Cicero both Eteocles and Caesar are madmen (*amentres*), literally losing their ability to rationalize while in pursuit of power as well as losing sight that duty should always be maintained.

There are two points here in which Cicero's work is eminently important to Buchanan and Grotius. First, is how he maintains the connection between reality and fiction vis-à-vis Caesar and Euripides; second, is how Cicero puts in its proper perspective a state's degeneration and death by underscoring that without *pietas* both liberty (*libertas*) and law (*ius*) also vanish. Both of these must be thoroughly unpacked

before moving on to a reading of each of our scholar's major works at hand in this chapter. Since there is no *prima facie* *victrix causa* for the story within the *Thebaid*, nor its primary source Euripides's *Phoenissae*, "fraternas acies" is nothing more than blood spilled in vain; in other words, it was done merely out of "regnandi gratia violandum est" and not for the good of the people.

### III

According to Theban mythology, it is the citizenry who decree the rules for governing Thebes, since they "elect" their king. It may seem somewhat misguided to call Oedipus an elected figure, but for Buchanan and Grotius Oedipus did not inherit the throne of Thebes, but was given it by the citizenry. Any and all power given to the king of Thebes after the murder of Laius is representative and not given by god. So it is this very electoral process that is precisely the backdrop to the entire Theban saga for both Buchanan and Grotius, though, not necessarily Statius or Cicero. It bears keeping in mind as well that Oedipus does not begin to seek out Laius's murder until he has four full-grown children, so that his leadership via the people has started a tradition, which for Buchanan and Grotius, cannot be overturned. As evidenced by their life-long efforts to combine civic and public acts such as communion, marriage, baptism, piety in the form of self-informed biblical study into a soteriological and civic existence, the people's will was of manifest importance to any governing philosophy set forth by Buchanan and Grotius. Hence, the subversion of normative politics in the *Thebaid* and *Phoenissae*, and by Caesar in the *De officiis*, too, underscores contemporary debates about what is good for the city and state.

In the case of Thebes, these disputations always take place out of sight of the citizens themselves – and most certainly to their detriment – while they ought to occupy the public space in which they were first debated and approved. For example, in the *Phoenissae* Jocasta moderates a clandestine meeting between Eteocles and Polynices, leaving Creon to search the entire palace and city for Eteocles, only to find him having concluded this meeting and a made a declaration of war. Grotius addresses this very topic in the *DJBP*, proclaiming that to declare war without public consent in a society that is organized through citizen involvement was against natural law:

Sed ut justum hoc significatu bellum sit, non sufficit inter summas utrinque potestates geri: sed oportet, ut audivimus, ut et publice decretum sit, et quidem ita decretum publice ut ejus rei significatio ab altera partium alteri facta sit... Cicero *Officiorum* primo: *at belli quidem aequitas sanctissime feziali populi Romani jure perscripsit est: ex quo intelligi datur, nullum bellum esse justum, nisi quod aut rebus reptitis geratur, aut denuntiatum ante sit et indictum.*<sup>11</sup>

(But that War may be called just in the Sense under Consideration, it is not enough that it is made between Sovereigns, but (as we have heard before) it must be undertaken by Publick Deliberation, and so that one of the Parties declare it to the other: ... Cicero in his first Book of Offices observes, *There is no lawful War but what is made after redemanding what was due, or after a Decleration in form.*)<sup>12</sup>

The disparagement of clandestine decision making becomes only heightened during Buchanan's and Grotius's eras where public debate in the form of town-hall meetings, known as *classis*, encourage participation which, much like the humanist enterprise itself, not only takes place in the public eye via publication of books, pamphlets, letters and debates for anyone with sufficient skill and learning to join in; it also entails at its heart a collective, or synchronic, commemoration of historical time past and the willingness to use established precedent to the advantage of the contemporary citizen. For Buchanan and Grotius, the citizen of Thebes as well as of Scotland and Holland is in possession of a

contract (*foedus, pactum*), consent (*condicio*) and duty (*pietas, officium*), not the government – a sentiment echoed throughout the *De officiis*. For our own purposes “contract” here is meant to be understood in terms of existing historical agreement between citizen and government resulting in expressed rights and laws; “consent,” a contemporaneous and dynamic agreement between fellow citizens and government, continuously modified and rethought; and “duty” or “commitment,” the obligation to maintain both contracts and consent. This last concept naturally leads to a broader understanding of civic and Christian *pietas* (not to say piety). Both Buchanan and Grotius hold a deliberate view of *pietas*,<sup>13</sup> one which continually interweaves both political and religious assumptions, at points making them nearly coterminous. For each its source can be found in the poetry of Statius and Euripides (for our current purposes) no less than in the sermons of Calvin, Beza, or Arminius.<sup>14</sup>

Returning for a moment to the passage quoted earlier from Cicero’s *De officiis*, it is easy to notice that the way Cicero has translated Euripides’s Greek is in fact to term the breaking of laws as the very destruction of *pietas*, something our humanist scholars notice as well. In fact, analogous acts of civic piety, Buchanan and Grotius emphasize, had been experienced by the great empires of antiquity and were examples of what should be done. Thus, according to Buchanan, Brutus used “holy daggers” on behalf of his country to rid itself of the malignity of Caesar in his preface to Muret’s play *Julius Caesar* (1552).<sup>15</sup> For him, Brutus’s act of *pietas* is at once political and spiritual, at once classical and Christian. In attempting to restore Rome’s civic patrimony, i.e. representative government, Brutus adheres “in omnibus rebus pietatem colare.” Indeed, Buchanan would return to the same subject again in the preface to Jacques Grevin’s 1561 French



Accustom the tender child from his young years  
 To the idea of justice, and let him imbibe the sacred love of virtue  
 With his mother's milk; let piety be attendant on his cradle...  
 So do the people found their behaviour on the character of the prince...  
 As does the reputation for genuine virtue, the character of a good king,  
 The glory and respect owing to blameless rule,  
 Convert the souls of subjects to an honorable way of life.)<sup>17</sup>

Talem Romulidae tranquilla pace fruentem  
 Sacrificum videre Numam, Solomonta potentem 65  
 Palmifer Euphrates: non illis lethifer ensis,  
 Non bellator equus firmavit regna, nec axis  
 Falcifer, aut densus legio conferta manipulis,  
 Sed pietatis amor, sed nulli noxia virtus,  
 Fretaque praesidio majestas juris inermi...  
 Dux Macedum, quique Ausoniam tenuere superbo  
 Imperio Reges, aut ferro aut tabe veneni  
 Effudere animas, et caedam caede piarunt.  
 Hanc seu Rex vitiiis contaminet ipse pudendis,  
 Sive alius ferro violet vel fraude, severas  
 Sacrilego Deus ispe petet de sanguine poenas,  
 Contemtumque sui simulacri haud linquet inultum.  
 Sic Nero crudelis, sic Flavius ultimus, et qui  
 Imperio Siculas urbes tenuere cruento,  
 Effigiem foedare Dei exitialibus ausi  
 Flagitiis, ipsa periere a stripe recisi. 85

(The descendants of Romulus saw Numa offering sacrifice, fostering  
 peace and tranquility,  
 The palms of the Euphrates saw mighty Solomon [wisdom/intellect  
 incarnate].  
 Neither the deadly sword nor the snorting warhorse strengthened their  
 kingdoms,  
 Nor did the two-edged axe, nor the legions in densely packed columns,  
 But love of piety and virtue injurious to no one,  
 And majesty supported by the power of unarmed law.  
 The Macedonian general, and those kings whose arrogant imperium  
 prevailed in Ausonia,  
 They died by the sword, they died by poison, and their blood paid for the  
 blood they had shed.

But if the king should contaminate this image by shameful vices,  
 Or if some person should desecrate it by force or fraud,  
 God Himself will exact a bloody punishment for such sacrilege [Jupiter,  
 contamination to root, punishment, Domitian Roman examples instead of  
 biblical]  
 Nor will he leave unavenged an insult to his image.

Thus did cruel Nero, thus did the last of the Flavians,  
And those who cruelly held sway in the Sicilian cities,  
Daring to disgrace the likeness of God with their execrable crimes.  
Thus did they [and their name] perish root and branch from the face of  
the earth.)<sup>18</sup>

Through James's sense of duty, that is, through his *pietas*, he will become a mirror for citizens and, for Buchanan, the antithesis of such leadership as evidenced in the historic past and in the immediate present. James, therefore, must never be like Alexander, "the conqueror who made his way to the riches of India;" nor ever must he be like the emperors of classical Rome, "those kings whose arrogant imperium prevailed in Ausonia," who "died by the sword" and "poison," and whose "blood paid for the blood they shed."<sup>19</sup> Instead, James will exalt the law, preserving it by imposing it upon himself not his subjects. In Buchanan's estimation monarchy is not tyranny only so long as it recognizes that the positive law, which gave authority to a ruler, was established by the people.

Grotius goes further in condemning Caesar than Buchanan. In the preface to his translation of the *Phoenissae*, he accuses Caesar of perverting all laws both divine and human:

Cicero in primo de Officiis tractans locum de injustitia ait facillime adduci homines, ut eos justitiae capiat oblivio, cum in imperiorum, honorum, gloriae cupiditatem inciderunt: quicquid denique ejusmodi est, in quo non possint plures excellere, in eo fieri plerunque tantam contentionem, ut difficillimum sit sanctam servare societatem. Exemplum deinde adfert viri maximi virtutibus praediti C. Caesaris, qui omnia jura divina atque humana pervertisset propter eum, quem sibi opinionis errore finxerat principatum. Atque hic est Caesar, qui, ut idem narrat Cicero, illos de Phoenissis versus, qui in Eteoclis persona sunt positi, & quos hic ne ponere quidem volo, adeo & quos hic ponere quidem volo, adeo eos detestor, in ore semper habebat. Accedit ad levandam Eteoclis invidiam, quod Polynices non ut apud Statium inducitur per legatos egisse antequam exercitum admoverat, sed castris demum ad urbem positus venire ad audiendas condiciones.

(Cicero in the first book of the *De officiis* cites that place concerning injustice and says that men are easily led to [it], with the result that forgetfulness seizes them from justice, because they fall for desire of power, respect and glory. Whatever there is of this type, in which many are not able to excel, against it such great strife arises, that it would be difficult to preserve a holy society. He brings forth the example of the greatest man, Caesar, full of manliness, who perverted all divine and human laws because of himself, whom he has made the principate through the error of his opinion. And here is Caesar, who, as Cicero says, those verses of the *Phoenissae*, that have placed in the persona of Eteocles, and those which I do not wish to place here, still those I do wish to place here, yet I detest them, in his mouth he always had them. He approaches mitigating the envy of Eteocles, since Polynices, not as among Statius, is led by messengers to have acted before he had moved the army, but when the camp had been established by the city he came to listen to conditions.)<sup>20</sup>

While Grotius shows that Cicero understands Euripides's *Phoenissae* to be harsh in its treatment of Eteocles, he is nevertheless in agreement that it is justified. Additionally, for Grotius, the crux of the *Phoenissae* is about contract and consent, and how it is literally perverted by the pursuit of power – or in the case of Caesar, the principate. And so we arrive at the critical point for each scholar.

The element which provokes further consideration here is that both Buchanan and Grotius note explicitly in their personal copies of the *Thebaid* the contractual obligations upon which the genesis of its story lay and use the *Phoenissae* for emphasis. The interest in contractual obligation, when viewed within their own major legal-political works, is more clearly expressed as the recognition of contractual consent and its limit(s). Within the framework of the *Thebaid*, and to a lesser degree the *Phoenissae*, this concept is refined and expressed through the interaction and dissolution of natural and positive law under regimes of tyranny.

This does not necessarily mean that Buchanan and Grotius hold the same opinion of what constitutes the breaking of moral and ethical obligations in the form of codes

and contracts that substantiated contemporary governmental authority, especially in light of the *Thebaid*. For instance, one can easily read Grotius's under-linings and marginalia to suggest that he read Statius through a Stoic lens filtered by Justus Lipsius and Michel Montaigne. However, this would only hold to be partly true since Grotius's conception of the Wise Man and Just King does not necessarily align with what any of the classical stoics, such as Seneca, Cato, Thrasea Paetus, or Helvidius Priscus, had in mind.<sup>21</sup> Yet, Statius's appeal as a moral philosopher is desired by both Buchanan and Grotius and substantiated by Cicero's comments on the *Phoenissae* and Caesar. So, while a moralistic reading of the *Thebaid* is necessarily myopic, it is what is considered appropriate by our humanists.

#### IV

There is little doubt that Buchanan and Grotius understood Statius's decision to reflect on civil war through the ancient saga of the sons of Oedipus and the Seven as, like Vergil and Lucan before him, the manifestation of what he thought about the civil strife which arose over power struggles within contemporary Rome up to and during the Flavian dynasty. It seems very likely that Buchanan and Grotius recognize Statius's *Thebaid* as a remark on events of the year of the four emperors (Galba, Otho, Vitellius, and Vespasian) and their wars of 68-69, a time that was without clear ideological order or moral merit. The internecine war between Polynices and Eteocles was symbolic. Extrapolating further, for Statius, and so for Buchanan and Grotius, their war did not have the pretext of Romulus's murder of Remus, or the bloodshed like that of Cadmus's slaughter; since out of the former, for better or worse, a new city and a new civilization emerged, and the same of Cadmus's sown men for the founding of Thebes. What

perhaps needs reiterating is that out of each of these acts a republican government eventually arises and regresses, falling first back into monarchy and then into tyranny. What needs to be shown here is how Statius demonstrates the degeneration of monarchical rule.

If there is one theme expressed throughout the *Thebaid* it is the unavoidable tyranny that evolves under monarchical rule. Without belaboring the point the reader finds Statius's disgust couched in the form of a rhetorical *vituperationes regis* – many of which are underscored by Grotius in his personal copy. For now we will focus on the first book since it is naturally the place where Statius foregrounds the rest of the epic.

The first of these instances occurs at l.164-196 where the picture painted by Statius shows the brothers' lust for *nuda potestas* (raw power), and its destructive consequences, framing it around the claim of Polynices to the throne and the determination of Eteocles to maintain sovereignty over Thebes.<sup>22</sup> In his own copy of the *Thebaid* Grotius dutifully underlines portions of this segment of text. Specifically he highlights 164-173:

Iam sorte iacebat  
Dilatus Polynicis honos. Quis tunc tibi, saeve,  
Quis fuit ille dies, vacua cum solus in aula  
Respiceres ius omne tuum cunctosque minores,  
Et nusquam par stare caput! Iam murmura serpent  
Plebis Echioniae, tacitumque a principe vulgus  
Dissident, et, qui mos populis, venturus amatur.  
Atque aliquis, cui mens humili laesisse veneno  
Summa nec impositos umquam cervice volenti  
Ferre duces...

(Already Polynices' royalty lay low, deferred by the lot. What a day that was for you, cruel monarch, when alone in an empty palace you saw authority all yours, every man your inferior, nowhere a head standing as high! Already grumbling creeps among the Echionian commons and the crowd is at silent odds with the prince. As is the way of a populace, the

man of the future is the favorite. Thus one of them, whose bent it was to harm the highest with lowly venom nor ever to bear with a willing neck the rulers placed over him...) <sup>23</sup>

And l.186-192:

Cernis ut erectum torva sub fronte minetur  
Saevior assurgens dempto consorte potestas.  
Quas gerit ore minas, quanto premit omnia fastu!  
Hicne umquam privatus erit? Tamen ille precanti  
Mitis et affatu bonus et patentior aequi.  
Quid mirum? non solus erat. Nos vilis in omnes  
prompta manus casus, domino cuicumque parati...

(See you how power, rising crueller with none to share it, threatens us straight of stance and stern of brow? What menace in his countenance, how his pride abases all things! Will *he* ever be a private citizen? Ah, but the other was gentle to a suppliant, kind of speech and more tolerant of justice. No wonder, he was not alone. As for us we are cheap company, ready to hand for any venture, for any master to use.) <sup>24</sup>

Grotius's notes emphasize the debasement of the brothers, from Polynices's insatiable quest for monarchical power to Eteocles's abuse of his position and desire to retain the throne.<sup>25</sup> In a move that aligns the *Thebaid* with the *Phoenissae*, Statius presents Polynices's claim to the Theban throne as just, demonstrating throughout the narrative the validity of Polynices's presumption that he has been wronged through the breaking of a contract.<sup>26</sup> Polynices therefore defends his claim to the throne numerous times throughout the poem.<sup>27</sup> Grotius presumes Polynices's is correct, stating in his preface to the *Phoenissae*:

Videbitur multis Eteoclis persona injustior fingi, quam opus est, quia in disputatione cum fratre quasi jus omne contemnere videtur eo ipso, quod id non affert, quod pro sua causa maxime videbatur favorabile, jus scilicet primi natu, quo utitur apud Papinium. Nam & Euripides, & Papinius, majorem natu faciunt Eteoclem, contra quam Sophocles Oedipode Coloneo. Sed mihi videtur hac in re sapienter egisse Euripides, qui sciebat, si eo tempore id jus viguisset, nunquam futurum fuisse, ut pactio ea iniretur, quae fundamentum est hujus fabulae.

(The character of Eteocles only seems to be painted more unjustly than is necessary, since in this dispute with his brother it is as though all law is condemned by him. Since he does not announce it, which on behalf of his own cause, he used to appear most favorable, as the law of the first-born, which is used in Statius. For both Euripides and Statius make Eteocles older by birth, in contrast to Sophocles in Oedipus at Colonus. I think, however, that in this instance Euripides has acted wisely, since he knew, if at that time the law had been strong, there never would have in the future, so the pact itself is devised, which is the foundation of the story.)<sup>28</sup>

Thus Polynices's claim is just and he clearly has been wronged.<sup>29</sup> But justness of cause does not equate to a diminished sense of potential tyrannical prowess or behavior; for Polynices is no less a tyrant at Argos than Eteocles is at Thebes. Neither is he superior to Eteocles in any moral sense nor is he more deserving of sympathy, as Tydeus believes.<sup>30</sup> Both men, according to Statius, are equally capable of abusing power when ruling alone and deserve to be chastised through the use of *vituperationes regis* for their actions, since they are solely concerned for themselves.<sup>31</sup>

In a telling correlation, Mary's desire to have James become the next Charlesmagne precisely replicates Polynices's own obsession with power and egotism.

Polynices obsesses:

...iam iamque animis male debita regna  
Concipit, et longum signis cunctantibus annum  
Stare gemit

(Already his mind envisages the royalty overdue and groans at the long year's halt and the loitering of constellations.)<sup>32</sup>

Polynices projects himself into the future much in the way Mary dreams of James's forthcoming glory. The impatience and lack of political foresight is striking because it shows just how vainglorious each ruler is. Just as Buchanan sets his poem in relief to Mary's wish, Statius uses the relationship between Polynices and Eteocles to alienate the

reader's sympathy for both brothers and to focus attention upon the cost of inherited monarchy.

The formative relationship between Polynices and Eteocles exemplifies the consequences of lust for monarchical power such as that displayed by Caesar and Mary as well. The actions of Adrastus and Theseus do not on the surface conform to this pattern of tyrannical monarchy, but these monarchs are not immune from destructive influences either. "Statius occasionally emphasizes the benevolence, piety, and self-restraint of Adrastus as well as the civilizing role of Theseus, but overall this plays a relatively minor part in the presentation of institutional monarchy in the poem. In fact, the poet extends his despairing picture of institutional monarchy to include the actions of these seemingly just and benevolent regents; for not even they are untainted by the madness that afflicts participants in war."<sup>33</sup>

It is surely significant that the idea of mixed or balanced government is notably absent from Statius's work, as it was a prevalent memory in both Tacitus's and Lucan's works. Instead it is made clear from the outset that only monarchy and its debauched form, tyranny, are to be considered in its fullest historical sense within the *Thebaid*. No doubt this is intentional since it allows Statius to comment on current political oppression in an indirect fashion – the direct route had killed Lucan. Buchanan parallels this type of indirect approach in the *Dialogue* where the relative merits of the various forms of government, such as monarchy, aristocracy, and constitutional rule and their degenerate forms tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy goes completely untouched. Still, there is much in Buchanan's thinking that links him with the developing tradition of classical republicanism (i.e. constitutional rule determined by the will of the citizens),

not least the high value he attaches to active citizenship and political participation as mentioned before.

## V

Turning to the *Dialogue*, a brief word would do well for those unacquainted. By design Buchanan's treatise is a fictionalized dialogue between himself and Thomas Maitland, recently arrived in Scotland from France following the death of Lord Darnley. Maitland begins the conversation by relating to Buchanan the outraged reaction on the continent to the murder of Darnley and the subsequent deposing of Mary Queen of Scots. Buchanan, with his personal animosity and assumption of Mary's complicity in her husband's murder,<sup>34</sup> asserts in return that one cannot disapprove of the crime without approving the punishment meted out to the criminal, especially if it is a monarch. Maitland replies that in Europe things are viewed in a rather different light. While rulers see the deposing of Mary as a slight on monarchical government, the people, although generally sympathetic to the humbling of tyrants, are confused over what precisely constitutes tyranny. Thus, in the *Dialogue* Buchanan's goal is to set kingship and tyranny as opposites so that through these contraries he may reveal the defining characteristics of tyrant – all very similar to the *Thebaid*.<sup>35</sup>

To begin Buchanan discusses human society and the origins of government, both of which he sees originating not out of utility or expediency but rather through a natural impulse (*vis naturae*) implanted in all men that makes them shun solitary life and seek companionship in society.<sup>36</sup> Pressed by Maitland to clarify his understanding of natural force, Buchanan glosses it as “a light divinely shed upon our minds.” Buchanan identifies

this light both with the law of nature and with God-given ability to distinguish base from noble things, otherwise known as wisdom, stating:

Nam cum Deus “sanctius hoc animal mentisque capacius altae / ...et quod dominari in cetera posset.” Formavit, non modo corpori eius oculos dedit quibus ducibus adversa quae essent suae conditioni fugeret, quae commode sequeretur, sed animo etiam velut lumen quoddam praetulit quo turpia ab honestis secerneret. Hanc vim alii naturam, alii naturae legem vocant; ego profecto divinam existimo, planeque illud habeo persuasum quod ‘numquam aliud natura, aliud sapientia dicat’...Huius legis omnes sacrorum voluminum libri qui ad mores formandos pertinent et iuris peritorum et philosophorum commentationes quae modo ad viam sunt utiles nihil aliud quam explicationem continent.

(For when God formed ‘this creature which is more holy and more capable of nobility of thought... and which could be master of all others,’ He not only gave eyes to man’s body as guides to aid him in avoiding what was harmful to his condition and in seeking what was advantageous, but He also set a kind of light before his soul by which he could distinguish base from noble things. Some call this power nature, others call it the law of nature. For my part, I think it is of divine origin, and I am quite convinced that ‘nature never says one thing and wisdom another’... All the books of Holy Scripture which are concerned with shaping human behavior and the commentaries of lawyers and philosophers which are useful to mankind are no more than an exposition of this law.)<sup>37</sup>

It is clear from this statement that Buchanan develops his theory within a broadly Stoic framework that understands God to have created the universe according to rational principles and to have endowed man himself with reason sufficient to comprehend those laws of nature by which he should govern both his own conduct and that of the society in which he is naturally disposed to live.<sup>38</sup> Beyond displaying that this passage harkens to a normative political allegory, the discussion by antithesis recalls Lactantius’s commentary, where he presents the *Thebaid’s* content as one of opposites. Lactantius states:

FRATERNAS ACIES ALTERNAQVE REGNA PROFANIS /  
DECERTATA ODIIS quia pacti erant fratres ut mutuis annis regnarent et  
sibi invicem succederent. Hoc dicit: narramus gesta certamina causa  
regnorum... ‘Profanis’ quia per eos violata sunt iura natura, et bene

profanis, quia nefas erat germanos odia retinere, ergo execrabilibus contra naturam sumptis.

(‘Brotherly battle lines and alternate rule fought because of profane hatred’ because the brothers had agreed to rule in mutual years and succeed each in his own place. Statius says: I am telling the battles that happened on account of the tyranny... ‘Profanis’ since through them the laws of nature were violated, and also profane, since it was against divine law (*nefas*) that the brothers retain hatred, therefore against nature they were consumed by rage/by the curse[of Oedipus].)<sup>39</sup>

The emphasis by Lactantius here is on natural law (*iura natura*) and divine law (*fas*) or rather anti-divine law (*nefas*), and significantly how one interferes necessarily with the other. Such an identification of nature and natural law, taken together to function in accordance with the divine will, in fact, was a characteristic of the type of Stoicism that was filtered through the writings of Cicero. Moreover, for Buchanan, as for Cicero, just as wisdom or right reason (reason in accord with nature) is the essence of moral worth in the individual, so it is the foundation of law and justice in a commonwealth; without which there was none – hence his *genethliacon* for James.

With the description of the interruption between divinity, nature, and humanity and its corresponding laws, Lactantius indicates that the story of Thebes is one of antithesis. In an illuminating turn, Buchanan himself has taken the time to note precisely how this breakdown actually occurs between the brothers, for in the margin he has written:

exethlon exo thsd’ hekon autos cthonos,  
dous toid’ anassein patridos eniautou kyklon  
hosst’ autos arxein authis ana meros labon

(I left this land myself of my own accord, granting this man the right to govern the country for a year. I was to rule again, taking my turn...)<sup>40</sup>

These are the words of Polynices in the *Phoenissae*, proclaiming his right to rule since Eteocles has broken their contract. Buchanan, in his copy of the *Thebaid*, by way of Euripides, thus explicitly highlights the contractual obligation as well as the understood indication of consent by both parties in the governance of Thebes. Once broken, Lactantius indicates, it is a violation not only of contract and consent but also of natural law itself, as he clearly indicates that what is profane is necessarily *nefas*, and what is *nefas* corrupts nature and natural law.

Buchanan, in addition to what he has already said above, that the foundation of human society is *lex naturae* (or *natura*) and that it is necessarily divine in origin, proceeds to clarify how and why this comes about. In particular, he reacts to Maitland's assertion that God is *auctor*:

Maitland: Igitur humanae societatis non tu oratorem aliquem aut iureconsultum qui homines dispersos colligeret sed ipsum Deum auctorem putas.

(You think, then, that was not some orator or lawyer who assembled men together, but that the author of human society was God himself.)

Buchanan: Ita profecto est, ac iuxta Ciceronis sententiam nihil quidem quod in terris fiat principi illi Deo qui hunc mundum regit acceptius puto quam coetus hominum iure sociatos, quae civitates appellantur. Harum civitatum partes similiter inter se iunctas esse volunt atque cuncta corporis nostri membra inter se cohaerent, mutisque constare officiis, et in commune elaborare, pericula communiter propellere, utilitates prospicere eisque communicandis omnium inter se benevolentiam devincere.

(Exactly so; for like Cicero, I think there is nothing on earth more pleasing to the supreme God who rules the world than those communities of men bound by the law which are called commonwealths. The various parts of these commonwealths want to be linked together in the same way as all the limbs of the human body work together, in order to balance reciprocal duties, to labor for the common good, to ward off common dangers, to provide for mutual benefits, and by sharing these things, to secure the goodwill of all towards all.)<sup>41</sup>

On the surface, Maitland's statement that God is the *auctor* of the *lex natura* seems innocuous. However, since Buchanan eschews defining precisely what the *lex natura* (or even *natura*) means, the reality of prescribing God as *auctor* becomes problematic and somewhat complicated. For Buchanan the definition of *auctor* inheres an amalgamation of knowing that *auctor* retains three meanings simultaneously when used in conjunction with God. First, *auctor* as author, that is God is the creator simply through the act of uttering (*fas*); second, that which is uttered literally becomes law (*ius* or *lex*) for mankind; and, third, since god uttered it, He is the owner of the law, natural or otherwise. Thus, morality and law are always combined in Buchanan's use of *auctor*.

Historically, culturally, and philosophically there are complex and shifting meanings and concepts in the use of the *lex naturae* or *jus naturale* (natural law, natural right). This historical confusion and conflation of word forms brings up a problem of logical and semantic discrimination in so far as the use of these words have as much variance as, for example, the term *res*. In the Neo-Latin culture of Buchanan's era *ius* becomes a synonym for *lex* and vice versa. This conflation of terms immediately raises philosophical problems for the modern reader, since to determine the boundary between *ius* (right) and *lex* (law), almost always implies a philosophically difficult choice in the application of the abstract concept of morality and the practical reality of jurisprudence. For Buchanan *lex* and *ius* are interchangeable; see, for instance, his use of "iure sociatos" above. The distinction, then, for Buchanan is not in the terms of *lex* or *ius* themselves, but rather in the application of, and relationship with, divinity when applying these terms to reality. In other words, as Lactantius suggests, it is the difference between *fas* and *nefas*

when applied to the fundamental construct of *lex naturae* that legal results cannot and should not be contrary to morality, which is defined by divinity. Further clarification of this point is necessary here, especially with regard to the *Thebaid*.

Lactantius offers his understanding of natural law using an example:

PERIIT IVS F(AS)Q(VE) B(ONVM)Q(VE) / E(T) V(ITAE)  
M(ORTIS)Q(VE) P(VDOR) ius legum est, quia unus foedus laesit; fas  
hominum, quia fratres contra se arma sumpserunt; bonum, quia usque ad  
interitum pugnaverunt; et vitae mortisque pudor, quod mutuis periere  
vulneribus et cremate sunt rogorum discrepantibus flammis.

(The rule of law is dead [periit=died], since the sole contract is broken; the divinity of man, because the brothers raised arms against each other; goodness, because they then fought to the death; and the respect for life and death, because they killed each other with mutual wounds and they were cremated by different fires of cremations.)<sup>42</sup>

My translation of *fas* “as the divinity of man” is made because *fas* is quite literally divine will and command or decree, and when it is broken the link between man and divinity is necessarily broken. The result is that whatever action is taken from then on has no approval by divinity, and hence no moral standing. Again, we see Buchanan having already arrived at this point earlier in his *Dialogue*, determining that Holy Scripture “mores formandos pertinent” (intertwine with making mores/morals).

Finally, Buchanan offers a clinching term for the suggestion that natural law inherently involves contracts or agreement, for he has already stated that part of being human requires involvement in *condiciones*. The word itself is derived from *condico*, naturally; but importantly it retains at all points its definitive inference that there is an agreement by two parties to a specific course of action reached by the consent of both parties through talking and compromise (it can, in fact, mean promise). This is always achieved in a manner such that has recourse to the limits established by nature, i.e. God.

It is important, therefore, to understand that when Buchanan speaks about the nature of tyranny and monarchy, it is always with an eye on nature and natural law and the obligations due to both.

Having established the origins of society based on a definition of natural law, Buchanan now proceeds to analyze the reasons for the creation of monarchy and its devolution into tyranny. In an argument that Buchanan admits draws heavily from Aristotle (primarily from the *Politics*), he begins by using the commonplace analogy between the body politic and the human body, contending that the former is just as susceptible to disease and ill-health as the latter and consequently equally in need of the services of a doctor. In a commonwealth, he continues, this task is performed by the ruler, whose principal function, as with the doctor, is to maintain harmony among the members of the body politic as well as ridding it of any malady, social or otherwise.

When Maitland objects to Buchanan's assertion that the task of maintaining harmony (*temperamentum*) should be attributed to justice rather than temperance, Buchanan replies that it matters little to which of the precedence is given, for virtues are so inter-dependent that "all seem to have a function, that is, restraint of the passions (*cupiditatum moderatio*)." Justice, it seems, is not so much a matter of administration as it is the state of equilibrium achieved when the members of the body politic are acting in harmony and right reason. This can only happen, however, if the ruler's own ability to subject his base appetites to rational control is in effect. So what would happen should the ruler become *amens* and act out of *odium*, *ira*, *discordia*, *caedes*, *scelus*: the *Thebaid*. Here Polynices and Eteocles purge *pietas*, *ius*, and *fas* for overwhelming lust of *regnum* and revenge. As noted before, Eteocles and Polynices are interested only in *nuda potestas*, so

that they may place themselves “loca dira arcesque nefandae / suffecere odio, furiisque immanibus emptum / Oedipodae sedisse loco.”<sup>43</sup> Thus to have Oedipus’s crown is to participate directly in his doom and in his act of *nefas*.

In keeping with Statius, it is the fixation on the latter (the interference of god) that proves to be the abiding preoccupation of Buchanan’s *Dialogue*. It is at this point that Statius has Jupiter declare that he is going to punish the houses of Thebes and Argos for their nefarious appetites; and, because of their crimes against the laws of nature (*terrarum delicta*), he will destroy them both.<sup>44</sup> In developing his argument as to why he must go to such extreme measures, Jupiter clearly shows that divine retribution comes forth when the law of nature is broken and threatens harmony of the body politic. For Statius, and so for Jupiter, natural law, then, becomes a necessary restraint on a ruler’s own destructive appetites, e.g. Cadmus, Oedipus, Tantalus; and when it is transgressed god will step in to set things right. Thus, Jupiter goes out of his way to implicate Adrastus’s guilt in altering the harmony of his own polis; in his view he has no reason to aid in Polynices’s bid to reclaim the throne of Thebes.

Jupiter’s significance in the *Thebaid* is hard to over-estimate. Where the modern interpretation sees a brooding self-centered tyrant, unwilling to be mollified by Juno’s considerate and well-argued plea, Lactantius and our scholars see God himself justifiably angry with the citizens of Thebes and Argos for enduring such poor leadership, especially when they had the opportunity and the means to replace their rulers. Jupiter is not, therefore, solely irritated by Eteocles and Polynices but with the alienation of man’s dominium via the citizenry, since they traded away not only their possessions but also their liberties in order to ensure self-preservation. Their actions led to overbearing

autocracy; whereby Statius maintains that the Thebans now groan at their own fate. “fraternasque acies fetae telluris hiatus / augurium seros dimisit ad usque nepotes?”<sup>45</sup> asks an anonymous Theban. Jupiter’s actions sanction the removal of a king when he becomes a tyrant (which Statius repeatedly indicates Eteocles is). Thus, for Buchanan the deposing of a king (Eteocles) or a queen (Mary) is warranted by God himself in order to maintain nature and natural law once it is apparent that it has been transgressed.

Buchanan further underscores this sentiment as he now turns to a discussion of tyranny. After a brief exchange over the etymology of the word tyrant and an explanation of how its pejorative connotations have been acquired, Buchanan refers Maitland to Aristotle’s classic distinction between a king who exercises authority over willing subjects and a tyrant who rules as a master over slaves.<sup>46</sup> This he proceeds to elaborate upon by stressing the extent to which, in contrast to a true king, the tyrant rules by force and fear for his own self-interested ends. Men such as this, he concludes, “are not joined to us by any bond of civility or common humanity but must be adjudged the most deadly enemies of God and man.”<sup>47</sup> Buchanan stops short of explicitly enunciating a theory of tyrannicide. Rather he draws the discussion of tyranny to a close by dwelling instead on the tortures and torments to which those who rule by fear must themselves inevitably be subject.<sup>48</sup>

Though lacking explicit approbation of tyrannicide, the removal of a tyrant is nevertheless advocated for by Buchanan, and, in fact, it leads to the *Dialogue* being singled out and condemned, most famously by William Barclay in 1593. Barclay declares that if Buchanan is correct in his assertion, the result would lead straight to chaos and legalize rebellion for those who were simply restless.<sup>49</sup> His principal point is defined by the role

of obedience in government, since he claims that the sovereign's right to rule is directed by God. Obedience to a sovereign (even Eteocles) is obedience to God. For Barclay, therefore, if Buchanan's assertion that man created sovereignty is correct, there is no strict obedience; furthermore, it is pointless to converse about pacts and promises – Eteocles's very attitude. But as we have seen Buchanan's conception of natural law prevents this over-simplification. All law emanates from God, it is a part of nature.

In contrast to Barclay, under Buchanan's theory of natural law citizens of a society must consider and uphold the interest of the society itself, doing nothing injurious to the general welfare; a lesson that is more than apparent in the *Thebaid*. Buchanan is clear, authority and sovereignty are inherent in the people. God is the *auctor* of natural law, which at its very heart is contractual when applied to human society. Barclay's sovereign, in contrast, is not bound to any contract, he can do as he pleases, just like Eteocles desires to do. For Buchanan the ruler serves not only as the instrument of the people, he is their paragon of morality; this very assertion is expressed in the contractual nature of their relationship. In reading the *Thebaid*, Buchanan finds a clear example of how the law of nature necessarily expresses this type of morality vis-à-vis *fas* and *nefas*, specifically through Jupiter's own statements concerning the recklessness of the leaders and carelessness of the citizens.

## VI

In general, Barclay's argument reflects the mainstream contemporary theory of the divine right of kings, which had progressed from the less specific Protestant and Catholic intimation of the origin of authority in whatever guise it occurred (the *Defensor Pacis*, for instance) to a theory that Bodin devises, which declares the monarchy to be the

only natural sovereign institution supported by God. Rebellion by citizens is, therefore, rebellion against God; more importantly citizens are not the authority. In contrast, under Buchanan's theory of natural law citizens of a society must consider and uphold the interest of the society itself, doing nothing injurious to the general welfare. Each citizen is obedient to the magistrate under which he lives; however, for those like Barclay and Bodin (though the two are hardly comparable in terms of intellect, influence and competence), or even Calvin, a conception of natural law like Buchanan's promotes a fluctuating sense of obedience, one which could promote a sense of rebellion since it presents a paradox (which Grotius deftly sidesteps by talking in terms of state and not citizen): under natural law no man has the right to command another, and no assembly of men can confer on anyone what none of them enjoys; so the minority is never explicitly obliged to the majority. It is a difference of recognizing that the state created under Buchanan's idea of natural law supposes society to be artificial, put together by mankind, versus Barclay's adherence to divine regulation and determination in arranging society.

The distinction between artificial state and natural state solidifies in Grotius's *De iure belli ac pacis*; but it is necessary to state that Grotius does not arrive at this conclusion via Buchanan's *Dialogue*. In fact, he does his best to hide that he read Buchanan's work at all. Although, he concedes in his correspondence to having read just about everything that Buchanan had published – even praising his Psalms and translations of Euripides – he, nevertheless, maintains a strident dislike for the Scot, often lumping him together with Knox and other critics of sovereignty, even though Knox and Buchanan famously differ in their political ideologies. The reason for Grotius's consideration seems to result from a nuanced combination of strict Calvinism, his position as a diplomat, and most importantly a political philosophy that has much in common with Jean Bodin. The first

two are necessarily combined, Grotius's work as a diplomat for Holland presupposes a strict form of Calvinism, which demands non-resistance and tolerance of kings and tyrants alike – it is in fact Grotius's tolerance which will land him in prison at Loevestyn following the beheading of Oldenbarnevelt – but the third has rarely been discussed.

Bodin is in many ways the link between Buchanan and Grotius because his works the *Methodus* and *Republique* wrestle with the same problems as do Grotius and Buchanan in their works. The works combine, on the one hand, the explicit moral nature inherent in government found in Buchanan and, on the other, the artificial nature of human society that Grotius articulates demands obedience through obligation in the *De jure*. Where Bodin and Grotius differ from Buchanan is in the recognition of the State's importance over that of the individual in offering moral authority.<sup>50</sup> In my opinion, Grotius realizes that Bodin exceeds his predecessors (Aristotle, Plato, More, and Machiavelli) in the area of political philosophy, since he considers the state precisely in reality *contra* More and Plato, as a moral vehicle *contra* Machiavelli, and as broadly as possible *contra* Aristotle. Of extraordinary importance, then, to Grotius is Bodin's use of history to support his political theorizing; since by providing the remnants of history Bodin would help his readers understand the worth and function of the state itself. History, then, provides precise conclusions about the laws governing human society. Indeed, Grotius agrees with Bodin that the study of history is a study of laws and systems of laws, and specifically it is a type of comparative study in constant dialogue with natural law. In the *Methodus* and the *Republique*, Grotius finds a study of formative factors that derive not from man's will but from nature and are permanent or

mutable only with some great determination – in fact, he admits this very same idea in the *DJBP*.

Returning to ideas of sovereignty, Bodin asserts that sovereignty is independent of form; so that when it resides with a single person it is monarchy (his preferred type of government), when with “numerical majority” democracy. Since there is some type of sovereignty, there is some type of law; and if there is law, there is an implicit mandate, and in a mandate an act of will, with the latter then generating a question concerning the obligation to obedience. According to Bodin, however, sovereignty is created by men and appropriated by force. What type of force is uncertain as he does not state it; perhaps the *vis naturae* as postulated by Buchanan, but more likely just *vis*. What he does say is that sovereignty arises from the nature of man and of human needs and aspirations. Hence, Bodin is not willing to go as far as Barclay; or rather Barclay is willing to go much farther than Bodin in stating that monarchy was instituted by God and, therefore, its sovereignty is impeccable and wholly distinct from man. Grotius comments on Barclay’s view, stating that while it is extreme it is much more correct than Buchanan’s, since the sovereignty of a constitutional ruler in a strict Calvinist sense can never be assailed. Bodin maintains, however, that sovereignty among men is artificial and that laws are created by men so there is no true form of government. This conflict creates a paradox in Bodin’s political theory: even though God approves of monarchy as a proper embodiment of sovereignty, obedience ultimately resides with the individual. As he postulates in the *Methodus*, absolute power has to have a degenerative effect on who ever has it, which invariably causes deterioration in contracts, treaties, and rights; it is only exacerbated

when there is any transfer of power. It is here where Grotius's reading of the *Thebaid* is able to mediate some of Bodin's and Buchanan's ideas.

## VII

Turning to Grotius's copy of the *Thebaid* it is not surprising to notice that the overarching pattern of his marginalia is directed toward noting Statius's use of *fas* and *nefas*. In fact, Grotius mentions that *nefas* is clearly a significant part of the Theban story (including Statius's *Thebaid*) in the preface to his translation of the *Phoenissae* from the beginning. Grotius states:

At quanto satius est dicere, nefas visum civibus, comitari hominem parricidio & incesto pollutum. Nam & per ignorantiam facta, quae talem habent atrocitatem, non evenisse putabantur, nisi in poenam criminis.

(But by how much it is more satisfying to say, nefas was seen by the citizens, pollution attended the man by parricide and incest. For through ignorance those things were made which have such atrocity that they are thought not to have happened except in punishment of crimes.)<sup>51</sup>

Of the nineteen times that Statius uses *fas* in the *Thebaid*, Grotius marks at least nine of them; and of the forty-two times Statius uses *nefas* Grotius marks thirty of them. Although the mundane application of *fas* or *nefas* with *esse* is found regularly in the *Thebaid*, its poignant use as adjectival "anti-divine" is what Grotius has marked repeatedly. In fact, Grotius marks its first use in the *Thebaid* at 1.85 where Oedipus begs to "see" his evil curse come true. Irony aside, the statement underscores the reversal of *pietas* by Oedipus in imprecating his own sons, since the act of imprecating is inherently one of *nefas*. (But what can we expect from Oedipus the tyrant at this point?) As mentioned before it is Oedipus's imprecation which incites Jupiter to respond by

annihilating Thebes and Argos. Yet, further refinement is necessary to understand how Grotius reconciled the concepts of *fas* and *nefas*.

Grotius's understanding of the *Thebaid* – much as Buchanan's – goes part and parcel with Euripides's *Phoenissae*, for he notes numerous times in the preface to his translation that Statius is correct in following Euripides's interpretation of the myth rather than Sophocles, praising precisely the episodic nature of this drama and epic because it more closely parallels actions that humans would take versus the actions and perceptions they might take. In other words, according to Grotius, both Euripides and Statius supply the reader with a tale that is much more human, if less civil. He says:

Itaque & Papinius, scriptor accuratus, ut alias partes ex Phoenissis, ita & hanc imitandam sibi duxit: adeo nihil in ea reperit, quod credibile non esset. Inserta, quae Graeci episodica vocant, in hac tragoedia haud multa, & satis probabiliter cum argumento cohaerentia, ut differtatio Iocastes & Polynicis de exsiliij incommodis, quae ipsa graviorem facit videri eam, quae secutura est, calamitatem Oedipodis: item colloquium Eteoclis & Creontis de belli gerendi rationibus.

(Thus Statius, an accurate author, as other parts of the *Phoenissae*, thus he decides to imitate him. Finally he discovers nothing in it which is not believable. The things inserted, which the Greeks call episodes, in this tragedy are not many, and are probable enough with the argument hanging together, that in differing Jocasta concerning the rough exile of Polynices, makes herself appear more serious, which should follow, the calamity of Oedipus. The same conference between Eteocles and Creon concerning the reasons for waging war.)<sup>52</sup>

Furthermore, the actions taken by the characters maintain a tangible verisimilitude; so that according to Grotius:

Optimus, non cum vulgo, sed ex arte loquendi magister Aristoteles poesis esse dixit imitationem humanarum actionum: quo iudice, Heliodori fibula poema erit, Lucani Carmen non erit. Hic enim maxima ex parte narrat, ille fingit, quae vero sunt similia...

(The greatest, not with the common, but from the art of speaking the teacher Aristotle said that the imitation of human actions is poesis. In

which judgment, the tale of Heliodorus will be a poem, and the song of Lucan shall not be. For here from the greatest part he speaks, that fashions, which indeed they are similar...) <sup>53</sup>

Grotius proceeds to talk about the action of drama being composed of direct discourse; light, heavy, and middle actions; and finally he gives the palm of tragic drama to the Greeks, “supra Latinos,” since there remains none of Latin contemporaries to the Greeks. The highpoint of tragedy for Grotius is found in Sophocles and Euripides: “Inter eos, quos dixi, duos acre certamen.” Ultimately, however, he follows Quintilian’s and Aristotle’s judgment for Euripides’s supremacy in conveying realistic emotional reaction from the audience and action from his characters.

When Eteocles reneges on his agreement with Polynices, in effect terminating *all* law in Thebes, his one action spawns a generation of destruction and ends the Cadmean sovereignty and civilization. Grotius states:

...quia in disputatione cum fratre quasi jus omne contemnere videtur eo ipso...ut pactio ea iniretur, quae fundamentum est hujus fabulae.

(Since in a disagreement with his brother it is as if every law is despised since the agreement itself was the starting point, the foundation of the story.) <sup>54</sup>

While this statement borders on the banal and simplistic, it is actually quite revealing of Grotius’s interest in both Statius’s and Euripides’s presentation of Eteocles’s motives and results. For simultaneously to translating the *Phoenissae*, Grotius is composing the *DJBP*. In the “Prolegomena” he defines what a contract means as it relates to natural and positive law:

Jus civile, sive Romanum, sive quod cuique patria est, aut illustrare commentariis, aut contractum ob oculos ponere aggressi sunt multi; at jus illud quod inter populos plures aut populorum rectores intercedit, sive ab ipsa natura profectum, aut divinis constitutum legibus, sive moribus et pacto tacito introductum, attigerunt pauci, universim ac certo ordine tractavit hactenus nemo: cum tamen id fieri intersit humani generis.

(The civil law, both that of Rome, and that of each nation in particular, has been treated of, with a view either to illustrate it or to present it in a compendious form, by many. But international law, that which regards the mutual relations of several people, or rulers of people, whether it proceeds from nature, or was instituted by divine command, or introduced by custom and tacit compact, has been treated as a whole in an orderly manner by no one. And yet it is essential for the human race that this be done.)<sup>55</sup>

Within this statement there are echoes of that already covered by Buchanan in his *Dialogue*; namely, *pacto*, *natura*, and *divinis legibus* (which I have identified as *fas*). Eteocles's vacating of an agreement (*pactio*) causes the deterioration of all laws within Thebes and hence its society.

Although *ius* and *lex* are synonymous at most points for Grotius, as they are for Buchanan, he does take the time here to define *ius* as something that can only be done rationally not thoughtlessly, and without favor for oneself or one's own pleasure. He states:

Haec vero, quam rudi modo iam expressimus, societatis custodia, humano intellectui conveniens, fons est eius iuris, quod proprie tali nomine appellatur: quo pertinent alieni abstantia, et si quid alieni habeamus aut lucri inde fecerimus restitution, promissorum implendorum obligatio, damni culpa dati reparatio, et poenae inter homines meritum.

(This indeed, which we have already expressed in a rough manner, the care of society, comes together in human intellect, there is the fount of the, which nearer is called by such a name. Pertaining to the right of property, whatever we may have of another we shall then make restitution through money, the obligation of fulfilling promises, reparation by guilt of injury, and the punishment deserved among men.)<sup>56</sup>

What Grotius understands in terms of the *Thebaid* is that Eteocles's decision is made via his intellect (*intellectus*). Thus, *ius* is unequivocally natural law founded on human intellect:

Ab hac juris significatione fluxit altera largior: quia enim homo supra ceteras animantes non tantum vim obtinet socialem, de qua diximus, sed et iudicium ad aestimanda quae delectant aut nocent, non praesentia tantum, sed futuro, et quae in utrumvis possunt ducere; pro humani intellectus modo etiam in his iudicium recte conformatum sequi, neque metu, aut voluptatis praesentis illecebra corrumpi, aut temerario rapi impetus, conveniens esse humanae naturae; et quod tali iudicio plane repugnant, etiam contra jus naturae, humanae scilicet, esse intelligitur.

(From this signification has flowed another larger sense of jus...we may understand that it is congruous to human nature to follow, in such matters also, [the estimate of future good and ill, and of the consequences of actions] a judgment rightly framed; not to be misled by fear or by the temptation of present pleasure, nor to be carried away by blind and thoughtless impulse...)<sup>57</sup>

According to Grotius, then, natural law itself stipulates that positive law, even if it has laid down a different rule, should be obeyed.<sup>58</sup> However, if we examine the four primary tenets Grotius proposes as the substance of natural law, not one that necessarily demands civil obedience. Thus, Grotius postulates natural as:

quo pertinent [1] alieni abstinentia, et si quid alieni habeamus aut lucri inde fecerimus restitutio, [2]promissorum implendorum obligatio, [3] damni culpa dati reparatio, et [4] poenae inter homines meritum.<sup>59</sup>

- 1) Refraining from that which is another's and to restore to another of anything of his which we may have
- 2) To fulfill promises.
- 3) To make good of a loss incurred through fault
- 4) To impose penalties upon men as they deserve

So natural law does not tell us to comply with positive law. The only way in which natural law can be understood as commanding us to obey positive law is to construe this obedience as the implementation of a promise. In fact, this is what Grotius had in mind:

Deinde vero, cum juris naturae sit stare pactis, (necesse enim erat inter homines aliquis se obligandi modus, neque vero alius modus naturalis fingi potest,) ab hoc ipso fonte jura civilia fluxereunt. Nam qui se coetui alicui aggregaverant, aut homini hominibusque subjecerant, hi aut expresse promiserant, aut ex negotii natura tacite promisisse debebant intelligi, secuturos se id quod aut coetus pars major, aut hi, quibus delata potestas erat, constituissent.

(In the next place, since it is conformable to natural law to observe compacts, (for some mode of obliging themselves was necessary among men, and no other type of nature can be imagined)...those who had joined any community, or put themselves in subjection to any man or men, those either expressly promised, or from the nature of the case must have understood to promise tacitly, that they would conform to that which either the majority of the community, or those whom the power was assigned, decided.)<sup>60</sup>

These agreements form the link connecting positive law to natural law. Hence, the stories told by Statius and Euripides, as already attested to earlier by Buchanan, play out similarly here. That is, a broken promise, when broken in terms of government, is irreconcilable with natural law. The precept that we should fulfill promises can only become effective after we have consented. It is only by means of this link of consent that positive law is related to natural law, consisting of four elements: human nature, natural law (which is the obligation to keep promises), consent, such as a promise, and positive law. This assertion appears modest, but it has important implications since the result seems to be that it is only by the notion of *promissorum obligatio* (the very same type of accord struck by Eteocles and Polynices) that positive law can ultimately be justified by natural law.

A closer look at the other three tenets clarifies that they can operate, at best, only as a marginal justification of positive law. Tenet one, to abstain from another's property, can only proceed after public authority has decided how to organize property. The same goes for tenet two, since the precept regarding compensation can only come into being when a "loss" has been decided by positive law – it cannot serve as a standard according to which positive law itself can be evaluated. Tenet four, that penalties may be inflicted on transgressors, merely points out that one has a right to punish. But if one has consented to the establishment of society, it only informs us that *states* have a right to

punish not individuals against the state – something Buchanan would surely dispute. Moreover, this tenet is able to serve only as a global justification of penal law, not inform on how the right to punish should be carried out. This is bared out both in the *Thebaid* and the *Phoenissae*.

To confine ourselves to Grotius's translation of the *Phoenissae* for a moment, we see that he understands *ius* has a moral obligation that only exists if natural law is maintained. In a series of examples, his translation shows that Polynices has a correct understanding of both positive and natural law. In the first example Antigone's servant recognizes this, she states to her that:

Haec mitte: freti iure in hos fines eunt:  
Eo faventes metuo ne inveniant Deos.

(Send this: Those relying on the law run among these limits: / I fear lest the Gods favor him.)<sup>61</sup>

In other words, Polynices has the assent of the gods because he has the right according to law to pursue his chance at ruling Thebes. When Polynices arrives at his clandestine meeting with Eteocles and Jocasta, he himself points this out:

...inque hoc advoco testes Deos,  
Cum ius petam praestemque, me patriot amen  
Eliminari fine, ius contra ac fidem.

(I call the Gods as witnesses to this / Since I shall seek the law and honor it, I allow myself like a madman / to be eliminated withing the my own country – a though law is against loyalty.)<sup>62</sup>

Not only does Polynices recognize that he is in the right, he demands that the gods become witnesses to him seeking out the law, since they prefer that the law remain intact. Instead he is prevented by Eteocles whose actions are both contrary to law and to that which which makes promise keeping possible.

Eteocles sees it differently. He ridicules the very idea of law and morality:

Si ius bonumque ducerent omnes idem,  
Dissidia generi nulla mortali forent.  
Nunc aequitas nihil ipsa, nisi Concordia,  
Nisi vox inanis: facta discedunt procul.

(If everyman believed in the same law and the same good / there would be no dissent of the race of mortals./ Now there is no justice, unless Concord / Unless the empty voice: these deeds teach from afar.)<sup>63</sup>

In fact, he quips there is no such thing as justice except in empty words and agreement. His lust for power has deprived him from acting according to his intellect. Ultimately, he states that he has use for only one law:

Una lex est pactionis quae satis est semel,  
Ut mihi Thebana tota pareant regni sola.

(There is a single law of pact which is enough, once upon a time / that for me all Thebes should obey the rule alone.)<sup>64</sup>

Eteocles has become the very tyrant that Buchanan feared most, and the one portrayed most convincingly by Statius. His lack of respect for law means for Grotius that he has lost the ability to act morally, and in a normative sense to act according to what is right. Therefore, the conclusion drawn by Grotius in the *DJBP* seems to be correct. On the basis of tenets one, three, and four, natural law only comes into play in assessing the moral quality of actions within the framework of these human institutions. Whether the institutions themselves are justified or not according to the law of nature can only be decided by the question of whether someone consents to positive law. It is here, namely through the role played by Jupiter, that Grotius makes a remarkable statement about natural law, and comes full circle with Statius's *Thebaid*.

Statius has Jupiter play his role as closely to the ideal monarch as possible, an anti-Eteocles of sorts, using right reason and acting in accordance with *fas* and *aequitas* –

more or less because he has to – so that he can punish transgressors. To be sure, Jupiter is a brooding monarch, but, according to Statius, he is not often prone to judgments informed by his emotions. Furthermore, it should be noted that it has taken quite a long time for him to arrive at his current decision during the action of the *Thebaid*, giving ample time to Theban citizens to correct their behavior. Thus, Jupiter makes decisions thoughtfully and rationally, maintaining harmony and morality, something Eteocles specifically revokes in the *Phoenissae*.

These assertions are further underscored if Grotius's understanding of how *ius* should be derived are looked at. For Grotius, Jupiter is the root of the word (and concept) *ius*, as well as man's ability be moral. He states:

Et haec jam alia iuris origo est praeter illam naturalem, veniens scilicet ex libera Dei voluntate, cui nos subjici debere intellectus ipse noster nobis irrefragabiliter dictat. Sed et illud ipsum de quo egimus naturale ius, sive illud sociale, sive quod laxius ita dicitur, quamquam ex principiis homini internis profluit, Deo tamen adscribi merito potest, quia ut talia principia in nobis existerent ipse voluit: quo sensu Chrysippus et Stoici dicebant, iuris originem non aliunde petendam quam ab ipso Jove, a quo Jovis nomine jus Latinis dictum probabiliter dici potest.

(And here we are brought to another origin of jus, besides that natural source; namely, the free will of God, to which, as our reason irrefragably tells us, we are bound to submit ourselves. But even that Natural Law of which we have spoken, whether it be that which binds together communities, or that looser kind [which enjoins duties,] although it proceeds from the internal principles of man, may yet be rightly ascribed to God; because it was by His will that such principles came to exist in us. And in this sense, Chryssipus and the Stoics said that the origin of jus or natural law was not to be sought in anywhere else than in Jove himself; and it may be probably conjectures that the Latins took the word jus from the name Jove.)<sup>65</sup>

Grotius's proto-linguistic theorizing aside, he confirms in the above passage that there is a direct link between *ius* (*ius naturale*) and *ex principiis homini internis* (or what I have suggested to be Jupiter's decree, or *fas*). In the *Thebaid*, therefore, Grotius recognizes a

shift from the question of whether positive law is congruent with natural law via the juxtaposition of monarchy and tyranny to whether society as such is congruent with natural law and ultimately with human nature.

Eteocles's inability to understand the moral implications of forsaking his agreement with Polynices directly usurps Jupiter's role as the owner of all law – as already demonstrated by Buchanan. For Grotius, then, it is a revelation of sorts: Eteocles's actions allow him to view society no longer as a natural association, but as an artificial one. And, although these artificial bodies may resemble natural ones, the fact that they are essentially man-made makes it necessary to justify them as an artifice that is congruent with human nature. Once it has been established that these artificial unions and their primary institutions are in harmony with natural law, and consequently with human nature, there is no longer any need to justify the positive laws of society; all of which is strikingly similar to Eteocles's argument in the the *Phoenissae*.

In itself this shift could have implied an enhancement of the critical potentialities of natural law, since moral evaluation no longer confines itself to the legal system alone. The result would be that from now on society as a whole could be critically examined on the basis of natural law. Grotius's turn could have paved the way for systematic social criticism. But it did not, and there are two reasons for this. The first reason was already mentioned above: consent itself cannot be evaluated according to the four primary tenets of nature. The second reason is that Grotius, like Statius (and Bodin for that matter), notices the alienability of man's dominium. That is people can trade away not only their possessions but also their liberties in order to ensure self-preservation. This is precisely why Jupiter is so angry with the Thebans and Argives: these cities traded in their human

abilities to make reasonable treaties for tyrannical rule. Thus, their own morality lies with that of their respective leaders. Grotius offers this:

Nam naturalis juris mater est ipsa humana natura, quae nos, etiamsi re nulla indigeremus, ad societatem mutuam appetendam ferret: civilis vero juris mater est ipsa ex consensus obligatio...

(For the mother of natural law is human nature itself, which we, even if we required nothing, would bring about the act of seeking out mutual society: The mother of civil law is the obligation of consensus ...) <sup>66</sup>

According to Westermann, “This reduction of natural law to the precept concerning promises has important implications. Since the other three laws of nature can only be put into operation within the framework of municipal law, they only marginally inform one” about whether he ought to consent to a system of law in which no system of property is introduced – remember Polynices is an exile, without property or legal recourse.<sup>67</sup> We are not provided with “a standard according to which we can decide which kind of government we ought to consent to,” these are furnished through *intellectus* and concepts like *fas* and *nefas*.<sup>68</sup> In this regard, *fas* only tells us that because we have consented, we are bound to the natural obligation to keep promises, just as Polynices’s argued.

For Grotius, then, the primary question which the *Thebaid* helps to resolve is no longer whether positive law is congruent with natural law, but whether society as such is congruent with natural law, and ultimately with human nature vis-à-vis Polynices and Eteolces. This question arises because he no longer views society as a natural association, but as an artificial one. Artificial bodies may resemble natural ones, but the fact that they are essentially man-made makes it necessary to justify them as an artifice that is congruent with human nature. As such, in reality positive law trumps natural

law. Within the confines of the *Thebaid* and *Phoenissae* this holds especially true. Eteocles's ability to modify any contract he sees fit would be legitimate since he is the ruler and Polynices is not. Grotius, in fact, recognizes this as one of the reasons that alternate rule did not work in Thebes as it had elsewhere:

Et sane dubitari non debet, quin pleraque eo tempore Graecorum regna communia interplures, aut dividua fuerint. Nam & in ipsa hac Boeotia ante Thebas conditas regnaverant Zethus & Amphion; & Mycenis Atreus ac Thyestes; & posteriori aetate Lacedaemone, Castor & Pollux.

(It surely should not be doubted, that at that time many kingdoms of the Greeks were shared among many men, or they were divided. For in Boeotia itself before the founding of Thebes Zethus and Amphion ruled; and at Mycenae Atreus and Thyestes; and further back in time in Sparta there was Castor and Pollux.)<sup>69</sup>

He also gives the example of Romulus and Tatius for the Romans. Then he says:

Sed & apud alias gentes idem diu usurpatum est, donec expertum discordiis remedium ab unius potestate quaesitum. Prudenter igitur hoc praeteriit: at caeterorum, quae ad culpam minuendam faciebant, praeteriit nihil. Nam injustitiam non defendit universim; sed excusandam putat excellendi cupiditate, quae in magnis animis maxima est.

(But among other races for a long time it was usurped, until a remedy of the known discord from the power of one was sought. Thus wisely he passed it by. But of the rest, which they made in order to blame to be diminished; he passed over nothing. For he does not generally defend justice; but thinks it must be excused due to its ability to excellerate desire of power, which in the greatest minds it is greatest.)<sup>70</sup>

The lack of respect for obligations is the most important factor for maintaining any sort of governmental authority both in terms of state-to-state relationship and ruler-to-ruled. If the bonds of promise are broken the pretext of natural and positive law are broken with them and man-kind reverts back to a kind of primitivism that results in tyranny, since at their core tyrants are ruled by *cupiditas* not *ratio* or *intellectus*.

To a great degree Grotius relies on the reader's knowledge of Cicero's *De officiis* to shed light on this observation; specifically that the sole aim of life is to the type of Stoic

Cicero was right action, not because of what it produces – wealth, pleasure, ease – but because it is good. According to Zeno of Citium (335-263 B.C.), the father of Stoicism, along with Cleanthes and Chrysippus, the pursuit of virtue would lead one to right action and the perfect good. Since man alone has reason, the natural outcome his own nature would lead him to virtue. As a result Diogenes Laertius postulated that pursuing virtue means living according to natural law. Of course one can find concepts of natural law in Greek thought long before Zeno. Heraclitus and Plato both consider divinity a part of natural law. Cicero more than likely has these in mind when he make the claim that law is “that supreme reason, embedded in nature, which orders what must be done and forbids the reverse.”

Cicero’s assertion that to keep one’s violent emotions and appetites, like *cupiditas*, in check contributes to his understanding of natural law. Restraint for him, as well as Diogenes and even Grotius, was an act of self-preservation, so that to preserve oneself is natural but so to family since they are considered an extension of oneself – an observation which is amplified by Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus. This expansion of *oikeiosis* at the end of Book I of *De officiis* applies then to all of human society and is thus natural, not artificial. The result is that each man is dependent upon those around him and so he must be aware of this dependence and respond accordingly. This is especially true in light of things produced by nature which enhance the general good. Since positive law is reached through natural law it is something that enhances the general.

Since neither Beuchanan nor Grotius admitted the “Stoic paradox,” each relied on a type of *officium medium* to refine their interpretations of obligation. In both cases Cicero’s *via media* approach is understood. In Book III of *De officiis* he observes the distinction

that the execution of a promise is usually obligatory, but not invariably. In some cases, such as when the fulfilment of a promise is to the detriment of the promiser or the promisee it may be broken. Since Polynices's triumph over Eteocles lasts not even a single day, only a matter of seconds, and the control of Oedipus's house will pass from Creon to a foreign king, Theseus, in a matter of days, destroying all of Thebes a generation later; the story within the *Thebaid* and its primary source Euripides's *Phoenissae* offer highly pessimistic evaluations of the conditions for civilized life when broken promises rule. In fact, the story of the *Thebaid* and *Phoenissae*, as Grotius and Buchanan surely recognizes, deliberately reverses the thematic movement of Aeschylus's *Oresteia* (*Agamemnon*, *Choephoroi*, and *Eumenides*). Specifically, the curse of the house of Atreus, beginning with Tantalus, grows gradually to embrace the entire city, but in the end proves progressive and civilizing. In other words, the down fall of one household leads to the advancement of the polis and society itself. Orestes's vindication by jury in the murder of his mother, Clytemnestra, symbolically affects political life in Argos as a whole by presenting the polis self-governed by consent through lawful institutions, as opposed to tribalism and superstition. In the *Phoenissae* and *Thebaid*, by contrast, the curse is originally attached to the city's founder, Cadmus, and therefore to the city as a whole. The civilizing effort is consequently tainted from its inception and can only be undone by god himself.

Stadius's retention of Jupiter is the lynch-pin which binds not Buchanan and Grotius to him, but also to themselves. Unlike Lucan, a poet much beloved by both Buchanan and Grotius, Stadius maintains a divine apparatus which ultimately informs how Buchanan and Grotius respond to contemporary legal and moral predicaments. The

intellectual pressures faced by them during their lives prompted a reading of the *Thebaid* that altered the intense legal debates over sovereignty and tyranny put forth by the Houses of Stuart and Orange, respectively. Buchanan's and Grotius's attempts to nullify purely religious influence over the critical debates about authority allowed them to develop and transform the *Thebaid*'s antithetical examples of natural law and absolutism into mandates for returning to republican government and the establishment of international law and rights.

To mention Statius's *Thebaid* as an essential or even noteworthy text in early modern discussions on natural and positive law is certainly unique. Highlighting the degeneration of natural law and nature through terms such as *fas* and *ius* Grotius and Buchanan rewrite the *Thebaid* as a treatise as much interested in moral philosophy as it is with tyranny and law. Through their marginalia in Lactantius's commentary, the underlying moral and ethical concepts of *fas / nefas* and *ius / lex* to be uniquely employed and corrupted within the *Thebaid*, something that carefully contradicts the religious motifs such as *mores*, *pietas*, and *fas / fatum* in Vergil's *Aeneid*.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> It is not important at this point to discuss who liked or disliked Poliziano's Latin prose style; it is much more important to understand just how viciously the labels of Ciceronian and non-Ciceronian were applied and how many ridiculous academic skirmishes took place because of its application. In many instances, these were more than childish in nature; however, it is important not to diminish what took place either, since in a very real sense what was at stake for the participants in these battles of words was a deliberate and considerate way of perceiving not only the ancient world but also their own.

<sup>2</sup> Before moving too far along on, it should be noted that the evidence of Statius in Cinquecento- Italy is substantial. An exploration of the relationship between Tasso and Statius; or Signorelli and Statius; or the influence of Statius in Mantua, Venice, and Ferrara would be a remarkable and significant contribution for many reasons, not the least is to the study of the broad intersection of art and literature during this period. Additionally, expanding the reception of Statius to the humanist efforts of sixteenth-century Spain would do well, too. Analyzing the momentum created and sustained by Statius and Poliziano on behalf of the *silva* genre shows that it is the Spaniards who show the greatest facility in understanding both the change initiated by Poliziano and the antecedent laid down by Statius. See in particular, Francisco de Quevedo, *Cinco Silvas*, ed. Maria del Carmen Rocha del Sigler (Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 1994); and Craig Kallendorf, "Conversations with the Dead: Quevedo and Statius, Annotation and Imitation," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 63 (2000): 131-168.

<sup>3</sup> In an effort to be efficient with time and space, I must generalize.

<sup>4</sup> Nor is it the case that Virgil and Cicero are the predominant political and poetic figures during the sixteenth century. While it is frankly indisputable that each of them reigned supreme over classical studies, they were not regarded, in the least, as the end point for these studies.

<sup>5</sup> I have drawn on the works by I.D. McFarlane, *Buchanan* (London: Duckworth, 1983); Philip Ford, *George Buchanan, Prince of Poets*, (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1982); George Buchanan, *A dialogue on the law of kingship among the Scots : a critical edition and translation of George Buchanan's De iure regni apud Scotos dialogus*, ed. and trans. Roger A. Mason and Martin S. Smith (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004); and George Buchanan, *George Buchanan: The Political Poetry*, ed. Paul J. McGinnis and Arthur H. Williamson (Edinburgh : Printed for the Scottish History Society by Lothian Print, 1995).

<sup>6</sup> These works were never considered by their authors to be their most important. Indeed, each thought of their own efforts in historiography (the *Historia rerum Scottorum* and *Annales et historiae*, respectively) to be their gifts to posterity. Yet, history has shown the opposite; the *DJAS* and the *DJBP* became indisputably significant to legal and

political evolution, with the *DJBP* becoming the legal text of the seventeenth century and the *DJAS* being continually referenced following the Restoration.

<sup>7</sup> In a letter dated 12 September 1621 G.J. Vossius commended Grotius on his *Sylvae*, “Quod amoenissimo Sylvae tuae vireto animum oculosque meos pascere suaviter volueris, quantas possum gratias ago. Equidem multum in ea me delectavit. Cuiusmodi so primum calorem atque impetum secutus facis, quod Sylvae nomen ostendit: quid fuisset, si lenta Maronis cura placuisset? Neque enim quid nunc desiderari posit, video. Statium sane longe post te relinquere mihi videris. Itaque toties me legere iuivit, ut bonam iam partem memoria teneam.”

<sup>8</sup> Buchanan, *George Buchanan Tragedies*, ed. Peter Sharrat and Patrick Walsh (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1983), 6-7.

<sup>9</sup> Cicero, *De officiis*, 3.21.

<sup>10</sup> Cicero, *On Moral Obligation*, trans. John Higginbotham (Berkeley: UC Press, 1967), 166.

<sup>11</sup> For all of Grotius’s Latin for the *DJBP* I have used *Hugonis Grotii De jure belli ac pacis*, ed. and trans. William Whewell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1853) 3: 3.5.

<sup>12</sup> This translation is provided in *Hugo Grotius The Rights of War and Peace*, ed. Richard Tuck trans. Jean Barbeyrac 3: 3.5.

<sup>13</sup> Buchanan’s concept of *pietas* comprises all definitions of *pietas* simultaneously: namely, maintain a connection between duty to God and parents, justice (*ius*), and gentleness (*humanitas*).

<sup>14</sup> Buchanan, *Political Poetry*, 28

<sup>15</sup> Buchanan, *Political Poetry*, 14.

<sup>16</sup> Buchanan, *Political Poetry*, 14.

<sup>17</sup> Buchanan, *Political Poetry*, 154-155.

<sup>18</sup> Buchanan, *Political Poetry*, 158-161.

<sup>19</sup> Buchanan, *Political Poetry*, 30.

<sup>20</sup> Euripides, *Eurpidis Tragoedia Phoenissae; Interpretationem addidit H. Grotii ed. Valckenaer* (Leiden: 1802) XIII.

<sup>21</sup> Frankly, this task becomes increasingly tangled when trying to figure out whether Theseus or Adrastus becomes the Just King, and thus the moral hero.

<sup>22</sup> Statius, *Thebaid*, 1.150.

<sup>23</sup> The edition being cited here and throughout unless otherwise noted for both Latin and English translation is Statius, *Thebaid*, ed. and trans. D.R. Shackleton Bailey (Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library, 2003) 52-53.

<sup>24</sup> Statius, *Thebaid*, 1.54-55.

<sup>25</sup> William J. Dominik, *The mythic voice of Statius : power and politics in the Thebaid* (Leiden: Brill, 1994) 76.

<sup>26</sup> In addition, the etymology of Eteocles's name suggests that he is in fact in the right for his decision to remain in control of Thebes. According to Dominik, direct or oblique references to the justice and justness of his cause occur in the speeches of Argia, Adrastus, the queen of the Bacchanals, Jocasta, and Antigone: 3.342; 4.79f.; 8.615; 11.540-42.

<sup>27</sup> For instance, Statius, *Thebiad*, 2.358-62.

<sup>28</sup> Eurpides, *Phoenissae*, XIII.

<sup>29</sup> Dominik 79

<sup>30</sup> Statius, *Thebaid*, 2.462-66

<sup>31</sup> Dominik 80.

<sup>32</sup> Statius, *Thebaid*, 1.64-65.

<sup>33</sup> Dominik 77.

<sup>34</sup> Buchanan's falling out with Mary is substantially documented elsewhere by McFarlane and Mason.

<sup>35</sup> Buchanan, *Dialogue*, li.

<sup>36</sup> It is interesting to note that Lactantius relies primarily on Vergil and Cicero (and Lucan to a lesser degree) to make some of the same points concerning government and right rule as Buchanan does in his dialogue.

<sup>37</sup> Buchanan, *Dialogue*, 18-19.

<sup>38</sup> See, too, “Primum igitur convenit internos homines a natura ad societatem et vitae communione esse factos.” (First of all, then, we agreed that men were made by nature for living together in society. And “Recte iudicas, et quod tu magis fortasse mireris, aliquot ante Paulum saeculis hoc ipsum viderat Aristoteles, naturam secutus ducem. Quod ideo dico ut quod ante probatum fuerat manifestius videas, eandem scilicet Dei et naturae vocem esse.” (You are right, and what may surprise you more, under nature’s guidance, Aristotle had seen this very point some centuries before Paul. I mention this to let you see more clearly what was proved earlier, namely, that then voice God and of nature is the same.) Buchanan, *Dialogue*, 40.

<sup>39</sup> Lactantius Placidus, *Lactantii Placidi in Statii Thebaida commentum. Anonymi in Statii Achilleida commentum. Fulgentii ut fingitur Planciadis super Thebaiden commentariolum*, ed. Robertus Dale Sweeney. (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1997) 1.1-2.

<sup>40</sup> Euripides *Phoenissae*, trans. David Kovacs. Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA, 1994) 476-78. A word about Buchanan’s interaction with Statius is due here. As previously stated before, Buchanan’s interest in Statius seems to stem from his interest in Statius’s narrative on tyranny. While he never explicitly states such a notion, his marginalia in his copy of Statius shows a deliberate interest in the writings of Statius and Euripides together. However, his copy, the 1510 edition, residing in the special collections at St Andrews, displays a range of marginalia in Buchanan’s hand from both earlier and later periods in his life. The discrepancy in years presents somewhat of a challenge as it is difficult to know precisely at what date Buchanan was annotating his copy of Statius. However, there are clues that the earliest he would have read Statius in the lone volume which remains – it is of course possible he owned multiple copies – is during his first years at the College of Guyenne in Bordeaux, 1539-1545, where he was required to write and produce a series of dramas, namely his plays, *Jephthes* and *Baptistes*, and his translations, *Medea* and *Alcestis*, for the college – a few of which Montaigne claims to have been part of. Buchanan’s marginalia, in many instances, in the *Thebaid* read as sourcing notes on the history and volatility of Thebes as well as a particular interest in Lactantius’s notes on *Medea*. Overall, he heavily annotates in Latin the first four books of the *Thebaid* with two notes in Greek, both excerpts from Euripides’s *Phoenissae*. In addition, Buchanan scratches through the text in some instances to make an emendation or adds specific *loci* identifying a particular point in the commentary. Buchanan’s annotations to his copy of Statius, nevertheless, show him to be an avid reader of the *Thebaid* and *Silvae*; and as will be shown in the following pages in at least one instance Statius serves to hone and mediate Buchanan’s conceptions of law and government.

<sup>41</sup> Buchanan, *Dialogue*, 20-21.

<sup>42</sup> Lactantius, *Commentum*, 1.154-55.

<sup>43</sup> Statius, *Thebaid*, 1.162-4. In fact immediately (1.184-5) after this recognition an anonymous Theban asks the gods whether Cadmus’s sowing of the dragon’s teeth must

be an omen of internecine strife forever: “fraternasque acies fetae telluris hiatus / augurium seros dimisit as usque nepotes?”

<sup>44</sup> Statius, *Thebaid*, 1.214ff.

<sup>45</sup> Statius, *Thebaid*, 1.184-5.

<sup>46</sup> Statius, *Thebaid*, 1.50-3.

<sup>47</sup> Statius, *Thebaid*, 1.54.

<sup>48</sup> Buchanan, *Dialogue*, 57 and lvi.

<sup>49</sup> For a more detailed understanding of Barclay’s arguments see, J.W. Allen, *A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, (New York: University Paperbacks, 1960), 386-393.

<sup>50</sup> See Allen, *History*, 394-444, for a very considerate and insightful understanding of Bodin’s thoughts. See, too, Donald Kelley, “The Development and Context of Bodin’s Method”; J.H.M Salmon, “Bodin and the Monarchomachs,”; and R.J. Schoeck, “Bodin’s Opposition to the Mixed State and to Thomas More,” in *Jean Bodin International Conference on Bodin* (Munich: Beck, 1970) 123-150; 359-378; 399-414, respectively.

<sup>51</sup> Euripides, *Phoenissae*, XII.

<sup>52</sup> Euripides, *Phoenissae*, XII.

<sup>53</sup> Euripides, *Phoenissae*, IX.

<sup>54</sup> Euripides, *Phoenissae*, XIII.

<sup>55</sup> Grotius, *DJBP*, “Prolegomena,” 1.

<sup>56</sup> Grotius, *DJBP*, “Prolegomena,” 8.

<sup>57</sup> Grotius, *DJBP*, 9.

<sup>58</sup> Pauline Westerman, *The disintegration of natural law theory : Aquinas to Finnis*, (Leiden: Brill, 1998) 161. Westerman’s reading of Grotius is the most accurate to date concerning natural and positive law. Additionally, she provides the connections that are continuously attenuated and unnoticed by other scholars about Grotius’s interaction with such predecessors as Aquinas and Suarez. I am following her argument closely in order to show how Grotius’s thoughts are affected by Statius in terms usually reserved for legal interpreters.

<sup>59</sup> Grotius, *DJBP*, “Prolegomena,” 8. I am retaining Westermann’s delineation of this passage in the Prolegomena; however, I have enumerated where she has used letters to separate each thought.

<sup>60</sup> Grotius, *DJBP*, “Prolegomena,” 16. Translation provided by Whewell.

<sup>61</sup> Euripides, *Phoenissae*. 154-155.

<sup>62</sup> Euripides, *Phoenissae*, 494-496.

<sup>63</sup> Euripides, *Phoenissae*, 501-505.

<sup>64</sup> Euripides, *Phoenissae*, 593-594.

<sup>65</sup> Grotius, *DJBP*, “Prolegomena,” 12.

<sup>66</sup> Grotius, *DJBP*, “Prolegomena,” 17.

<sup>67</sup> Westermann 162.

<sup>68</sup> Westermann 162.

<sup>69</sup> Euripides, *Phoenissae*, XIII.

<sup>70</sup> Euripides, *Phoenissae*, XIII.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Commonplace-books and Commentary: Lipsius's *Politica* and Statius's *Thebaid*<sup>1</sup>

In 1595 the printing house of Plantin-Moretus in Antwerp published the first new commentary on Statius's *Thebaid* in nearly eleven hundred years.<sup>2</sup> Prompting this edition during the 1570s, Justus Lipsius sets out for himself the task of recruiting his friends and colleagues for the purpose of composing new commentaries on each of Statius's works, not just the *Thebaid*. At one point, he even goes so far as to offer his own notes and the different editions he has acquired to his friend and colleague Janus Lernutius, if only Lernutius would undertake such a project. But it was to no avail; Lernutius had other priorities, and, besides, he did not even like Statius. Undaunted, Lipsius now at Leiden University (1579-1590) continued to think critically about Statius during the 1580s, exhibiting his enthusiasm for Statius to his pupils and colleagues alike. At last, near the end of the decade an up-and-coming lawyer and scholar from Mechelen (in what is now Belgium), Jan Bernaerts, eagerly takes up the project. As it turns out, Bernaerts would focus his efforts primarily on the *Thebaid*, but at long last there would be a new edition of Statius's works.

At this point in time Bernaerts's enthusiasm for Statius is, in an academic sense, popular. Lipsius's efforts pay off substantially as interest in Statius among Dutch scholars of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries rises dramatically. In truth, there is a zeal for Statius that swells to its greatest heights during this period, a veritable

Papinian renaissance. Besides Bernaerts and Lipsius, other Dutch scholars, such as Daniel Heinsius, Gaspar Gevartius, Petrus Scriverius, Johannes Meursius, Hugo Grotius, Johannes Woverius, Federicus Lindenbrogius, Johannes Gronovius, and Joseph Scaliger are now all working on Statius's *Thebaid*, *Silvae*, and, even, *Achilleid*.<sup>3</sup> Just as significant, they are in constant communication with each other about their discoveries and conjectures.<sup>4</sup> Eventually, their efforts produce eight editions of Statius's works during the period from 1595 to 1618, totaling at least thirty-six different printings. (Though this number is not even a third of the approximately one hundred and thirty-three printings of Statius's works from 1595 to 1700.)<sup>5</sup> With so much activity centered on Statius, especially by the two most influential scholars of the period, Lipsius and Scaliger, who are diligently reading and promoting Statius, the obvious questions beg being asked: What is it that intrigues these scholars about Statius, and how does this interest arise and differ among them?<sup>6</sup>

For the most part, these questions have fairly stale and unexceptional answers. For Scaliger, Meursius, Woverius, Lindenbrogius, Gevartius, Scriverius, and Gronovius, Statius's works are of a purely philological interest.<sup>7</sup> Statius's *Thebaid* simply has not been annotated adequately since Lactantius Placidus; and Calderini's commentary on the *Silvae* had long been chastised in print by the likes of Poliziano – among others – for its incompetence both in terms of annotation and emendation.<sup>8</sup> With specific reference to the *Thebaid*, there had never been a significant effort to collate manuscripts in order to produce a critical edition, so that new conjectures and emendations might be had. This does not mean, however, that Statius's works are neglected by publishers in the interim. Rather, from Calderini's edition in 1475 to that of Bernaerts in 1595, there are fifty-five

printings of Statius's works with commentary.<sup>9</sup> Still, the introduction of new commentaries is both timely and welcome, and the efforts of those scholars mentioned above in emending Statius's texts are critical to understanding his transmission from the classical period through the Middle Ages.

As was shown in the previous chapter, not all Dutch humanists are interested in Statius's works for purely philological reasons. Grotius, for instance, is far from considering Statius's works solely as emendatory exercises – though his notes are highly prized and sought after by Gronovius and Gevartius when each composes his own commentary.<sup>10</sup> Grotius's readings of the *Thebaid* open an entirely new avenue of insight into the use of classical authors for Dutch readers. It seems as well that his interest in mixing the *vita activa* through diplomacy and politics with the *vita contemplativa* through legal and theological exegesis reflect a specifically non-academic interaction with popular thought and culture, one which sets him distinctly apart from the other aforementioned Dutch scholars.

We do well to remember that Grotius by trade was a diplomat and lawyer not a scholar; but when he thought of himself as a scholar it was as an antiquarian, historian and moral philosopher in the vein of Justus Lipsius. Lipsius's influence on early seventeenth-century intellectual activity is difficult to over-estimate, and as has already been alluded to, his determination to have the best and brightest scholars work on Statius pays dividends. What needs to be illuminated here is just how much Statius's reception in the Lowlands relies on Lipsius's belief in the utility of ancient texts and commentaries for understanding and ameliorating contemporary social ills. Lipsius believes profoundly in the scholar's ability to cultivate morals and ethics from the ancient stories he comments on and edits. So it should come as little surprise that his

own works and the ways in which they are composed affect the composition of Bernaerts's commentary on the *Thebaid*. In fact, it is perhaps best to begin this chapter by recognizing what Bernaerts's contemporaries understand about his commentary: namely, that it is as much his as Lipsius's.<sup>11</sup> Intriguingly, Bernaerts puts it this way: "facem interpretationis ita praetuli" (I have brought forth the light of interpretation [to Statius]). As pedestrian as this quotation seems, it is in fact one of those paratextual moments that scholars today enjoy discovering, since this particular line Bernaerts steals from Lipsius himself, and it is the first indication of how he intends to interpret Statius. The context from which Bernaerts takes Lipsius's words have nothing to do with Statius; yet he thinks they are appropriate enough to reflect his own sentiments – there is something of flattery in them, too. If one were to look at Bernaerts as he sees himself, we might recall that now-infamous bromide attributed variously to Picasso, Eliot or Stravinsky, among others: "Good artists imitate, great artists steal." And so it goes, Bernaerts's pastiche of thoughts on the *Thebaid* produces the most unique, intriguing and wide-ranging commentary on epic poetry during the Renaissance.

## I

. Lactantius Placidus, Bernaerts's predecessor wrote his commentary during the fifth century AD.<sup>12</sup> It was (and still is) quite useful, since its structure is basic, one of explication of grammar and vocabulary with a primary focus on how Statius imitates Vergil's *Aeneid*. The nature of Lactantius's work, therefore, left Bernaerts with a wide berth for composing his own commentary. Bernaerts recognizes this leeway and does his best to tell the reader what his intentions are and how the reader ought to read his text.

It may seem a bit simplistic and even lacking in nuance to observe that Bernaerts offers a great deal of information about how he desires his text to be read in both the "Ad

Lectorem” and the commentary itself.<sup>13</sup> But when the first edition of Bernaerts’s commentary comes out it is very rare for a commentator and editor of classical poetry to mention his intentions for his newly printed edition. Of the examples (both ancient and contemporary) that Bernaerts has available to him only a few may have served him as models.<sup>14</sup> Beginning with the most evident and readily available ancient commentators and their texts there is Lactantius (*Thebaid*), Servius (*Aeneid*), and Eustasthius (*Iliad* and *Odyssey*) – though Bernaerts does not distinguish between him and Aristarchus. None is explicit in what he intends the reader to get from his commentary, and Bernaerts derides each one in-turn in his edition – though not necessarily for their lack of guidance.<sup>15</sup> Whether these ancient scholars did at one time or another mention their intentions matters little to Bernaerts; the fact is that those portions of the text which might have had instructions for the reader are no longer extant – and still are not.

As for contemporary editor-commentators, they number just as few. Joseph Scaliger, Henri Estienne, Adrien Turnebe and Marc-Antoine Muret are those most likely to have interested Bernaerts, since their editions are readily accessible and popular among scholars and critics of the period. Taking a closer look shows the differences between these scholars’ editorial and commentary outputs. Adriene Turnebe in his commentary on Varro (1573) and Marc-Antoine Muret in his commentaries on Catullus and Horace (1555 and 1558, respectively) do not offer a preface and never directly say a word about what they intend the reader to get from their commentaries.<sup>16</sup> Estienne and Scaliger, however, are different.

In their editions both Scaliger and Estienne state, in one way or another, that their primary goal is to clean up the textual miseries left behind by printers, commentators and manuscript scribes. Bernaerts himself follows the both of them in

citing the ineptitude of the publishers, blaming them for a lack of sophistication in those poetical commentaries which precede his. He determines the culprit to be the printing press, the corruptor of books and arts as he puts it, since this device allows for mistakes to be made and repeated by hasty and ignorant printers – even though it is clear that the printing press was a boon for him:

Aevo avorum Barbaries vixit. Nostro nata Typographia. Illa corruptrix librorum ... ut ministrorum imperitia, calida excudentium festinatione, turbari saepissime, imo obstrui, purissimos illos veterum fontes docti omnes ingemiscant... Fidem vel unus fecerit elegantissimus noster Papinius, qui in vulgus eo usque deformatus circumfertur, ut plus vulnerum unus ex eo liber, quam Scaevae apud Caesarem clypeus, tela praeferret. Plures sordes contraxerit, quam si aetatem in Camarina palude iacisset. Vulnera haec, omnibus artis ingeniique ascitis subsidiis, sanare, maculas iudicii (ut sic loquar) spongia eluere, princeps mihi cura, modeste tamen. Ut decet hanc aetatem.<sup>17</sup>

(In the age of our grandfathers rudeness lived. In our age the printing press was born. That corruptor of books ... through the ignorance of her helpers, through the hot hastiness of the press, the ancient founts of knowledge are very often confused and obstructed so that all learned men now groan...Our most eloquent Statius alone shall have preserved his trustworthiness, he who is now published deformed so that his book bares forth more than one wound from it, as though it beared forth arrows like the shield of Scaeva upon Caesar. He contracted more filth than if he had lain an eternity in the Camarine swamp. These wounds, with all art and auxiliary genius, I carefully cleansed and washed the stains away with the sponge of judgment.)

Because of these printers Bernaerts claims that Statius, most unfortunate of all, has suffered more wounds than Scaeva's shield and accrued more filth than if he had lain in the Camarine swamp for a lifetime, leaving him "to cleanse the blemishes with the sponge of judgment."<sup>18</sup>

Bernaerts's comments echo those of Estienne in the preface to his edition of Horace (1575), where he too laments the faultiness of modern printers:

Plane enim de arte typographica fateor dici posse quod poeta noster de  
natura humana dixit, paucis mutatis. Ut enim ille de hac scripsit,

*Nam vitiis nemo sine nascitur: optimus ille est*

*Qui minimis urgetur,*

Ita de arte typographica vere hoc dicere possim,

*Haud vacuus mendis liber editor: optimus ille est*

*Qui minimis urgetur.*

Qui autem plura de hac nostrorum temporum misera, vel potius de hac  
veterum scriptorum misera hoc seculo ob depravatores conditione scire  
volet ... eum libellum legat quem inscripsi ...

(Certainly, I have to confess that what our poet said concerning human  
nature can be said without much change about the art of printing. For  
about it he has written: "For no one is born without vice, he is the best  
who is provoked less." Thus I can say this about the art of printing: The  
book publisher least devoid of fault is he who is rushed the least.  
Nevertheless, he who wishes to know the wretched state of this  
enterprise during our time, or rather the many wretched errors of ancient  
scribes – those men depraved by circumstance – ... let him read that little  
book which I have written...)<sup>19</sup>

When either of Estienne's editions are read against Bernaerts's edition of Statius one  
notices a completely different tenor. Besides the physical difference of Estienne's  
incorporation of the scholia into the text itself, his notes are decidedly less wide-ranging  
than Bernaerts's. Additionally, Estienne is clear in his Vergil that his edition is a  
response to Servius specifically and no one else.<sup>20</sup> The same holds for his Horace where  
he is even more specific about how it is structured and carried out.<sup>21</sup> Estienne makes  
both of these statements in order that his reader not be misled into thinking that his  
edition attempts something more wide-ranging than he wishes. It is these attempts at  
being direct that Bernaerts adopts from Estienne.

In more ways than one, the model for Bernaerts's annotation is Scaliger's Catullus  
of 1577.<sup>22</sup> In it he reads notes and references that clearly prize erudition above all else.  
Scaliger's profound knowledge of Latin and Greek makes him a master of conjectural  
emendation and his notes are studied diligently by his own generation of textual

scholars. Nevertheless, it is apparent that in his early career Scaliger chose to follow Estienne's sentiments in protesting the lack of skilled philologists and commentators who had preceded him in working on Catullus. Scaliger states:

Multa enim quae ignoratione priscae lectionis Grammatistae contaminaverant, restituimus: non pauca, quae aliquot ab hinc saeculis vitio potius aetatis suae, quam suo imperiti homines illi praetermiserant, e penetralibus vetustatis in lucem protulimus. Quid multa? Nolui simplicem insaniam insanire...

(I have restored many things which the grammarians through their ignorance of the original text have damaged. I have brought forth many things into the light from the ancient recesses, which just a few things from this corruption of this era more of his own era than those unskilled men passed over before in their own time. How many more? I do not want to rave incoherently...)<sup>23</sup>

This excerpt is remarkable in two ways: first, it is as specific as Scaliger gets in attempting to relate what he has done in the commentary – his later commentaries are completely devoid of this specificity. Second, it is nowhere near as direct as that of Estienne. This is due in large part to the breadth of the findings Scaliger imparts to his readers through the commentary. At two hundred and fifty-two pages Scaliger has the room to elaborate on things that Estienne never does. As a result, it seems that Bernaerts at points attempts to one-up Scaliger's erudition, since he creates a commentary which reaches a length of two hundred and seven pages in length. This is not to say that he does not discount other poetic commentaries such as Estienne's editions of Vergil and Horace. He certainly does not. Rather he relies on Scaliger to provide the framework which he would then use to complete his own commentary, but only to a degree. Certainly, as seen above there is a fair amount of braggadocio in telling the reader to what extent the commentator has triumphed in his current edition by recreating, and thus re-establishing, an ancient poet's glory. However, *how* Bernaerts explains what his

methods actually are when creating his commentary sets him distinctly apart from the precedent established by Estienne and Scaliger as commentators of poetry. Working within their structure Bernaerts manages to remain singularly peculiar. Bernaerts's commentary is so peculiar, in fact, it presses one to question whether Bernaerts came up with method himself or took it from another text and commentator? And if the latter, from where did he get it? As it turns out it is Lipsius who provides the kind of asymmetrical approach and openendedness of Bernaerts's work. In particular, Bernaerts draws on Lipsius's *Politica*, a commonplace book.

## II

During the sixteenth century, across Western Europe, humanists recognized the commonplace-book as a critical tool for understanding the books they read, for “assimilating the written culture transmitted to them,” and for reappropriating them for employing them in turn. Recently, scholars such as Ann Moss have shown how important these texts were as mechanisms for archiving information rather than “mere banalities.” Commonplace books are lenses through which we may peer into “procedures of investigation and debate and into the dialectical and rhetorical modes of articulating thought which were agreed to have persuasive force,” demonstrating “commonality of expectations, the common places, which ensured common route into a shared communication when cultural consensus of Western Europe was strained to the breaking point.”<sup>24</sup>

Interestingly, Moss herself has attempted to test how loosely constructed the notion of commonplace-books was conceived; or as she puts it: “texts which fit badly into interpretative frames familiar to the modern reader.”<sup>25</sup> In particular Moss is interested in redeeming Justus Lipsius's *Politica*, a work that he thought among his most

important. For Moss it is most important to uncover the “historically probable reading strategy” so that she may “fully recuperate the text for the modern reader.”<sup>26</sup> Still, Lipsius, as Moss acknowledges, tells the reader what his work is: “For what is it but a well-arranged register of accounts of COMMONPLACES?” By the time Lipsius wrote the *Politica*, commonplace books had evolved from Erasmus’s suggested guidelines in the *De Copia* to schoolchildren and scholars underlining texts as they read, “either under the schoolmaster’s instructions or at their discretion.”<sup>27</sup> Their efforts became “a probe and an instrument for redistributing a text so as to ensure maximal retrievability and optimum application.” But what of the texts that are not as clear as Lipsius’s? What about the texts that do not proclaim themselves to be commonplace-books, but indeed books that should be common to all, those inspired by Lipsius’s example: What of them?

Lipsius, according to Moss, continuously promotes the use of the common-place book and the practice of excerpting while reading.<sup>28</sup> In his edition of Tacitus, Lipsius insists that his readers create *tituli* which are divided into *moralia*, passages which shape a young man’s life in terms of virtues and vices, and *civilia*, political topics, both *tituli* correspond to Ethics and Politics which are taught in school. Through the compiling and organizing this information, Lipsius intimates that a citizen may “recycle, reproduce, and recombine in compositions where authorial control is most evident in the choice and development of quotation.”<sup>29</sup> This is not to say, however, that common-place books are for scholars or *discipuli* alone, far from it. Lipsius advocates for a lifelong *imitatio virilis*, in which the commonplace-book “at its most eclectic” expresses “the communication of the soul.”<sup>30</sup> Indeed, the *Politica* is not meant for school boys, but rather experts both in Latin and things (*rerum*).<sup>31</sup> It is a manual that is meant as both a model to follow and a display

of intellectual connection with the past and present that Lipsius expects and desires to be imitated. It is only fitting that one of his pupils should follow suit.

Lipsius serves as Bernaerts's model not only in life but also in scholarship and politics. For Lipsius the idea that academic scholarship was outside the political, everyday realm of influence does not exist; everything he does has a political and pedagogical motive. This belief carries over into both his studies and publications (on stoicism, Tacitus, Seneca, etc.) as well as into his students and admirers, or even his familial relations, as Bernaerts liked to style himself.<sup>32</sup> The result of Lipsius's dedication to maintaining the scholar's importance to and in civil society is that Bernaerts could and does treat his commentary on Statius as both a treatise pertaining to the pedagogical and scholarly as well as the political and cultural.

Bernaerts begins his preface by side-stepping the convention of ancient testimonia; instead he opts for quotations by men of his own age. He cites Lipsius, "optime doctissimeque virorum," and Julius Caesar Scaliger, "bellissime flos tui aevi," both of whom think Statius is a sublime and lofty poet, not bombastic in the least."<sup>33</sup> These early references to Scaliger and Lipsius prove an important feature of Bernaerts's preface and are useful to explore at some length.

In fact, as already alluded to he explicitly expresses this sentiment:

P. Statium volenter accipe, mi Lector, utilem (Deus bone!) magnumque Poetam. & quem non solum in manibus iuventutis esse expediat, sed etiam eorum, quibus in litteraria nostra Republica ius spectandi in Quatuordecim; imo in ipsa Orchestra.

(Take willingly Statius, my dear Reader, a useful and (Good God!) great Poet, who not only should find his way into the hands of our youths, but even of those for who have the right of being seated in the fourteen front rows of the theater in republic of letters, nay even in the Orchestra itself.)<sup>34</sup>

Bernaerts's intent is clear, the wisdom found in Statius is for both students and princes. This statement, while seemingly mundane, is in fact fairly politically charged. Lipsius and Scaliger are often referred to as "consules" by their contemporaries, who in turn consider them part of the "Quatuordecim" of the *respublica litterarum*.<sup>35</sup> So when Bernaerts declares that the same sense of approval for Statius should hold for those of the "Orchestra," he is openly attempting to persuade the leaders of the body politic to realize that the utility of Statius is not purely academic, it has broad application – a sentiment that Joseph, his son, never shares and in fact abhors. This heavily laden sentence, which Bernaerts actually pilfers from Suetonius, becomes a manifestation of scholarship for public benefit.<sup>36</sup>

Lipsius himself could not agree more with Bernaerts's assertion, for his dedicatory poem in Bernaerts edition reiterates these same sentiments:

Eccum Papinium, benigne Lector.  
Quis hic Papinius? poeta magnus,  
Vel dicam potius Poeta summus;  
Certe proximus est Poeta summo,  
Quod fateatur ipse Livor...  
Quas grates tibi posteri et iuventus  
Praesens est habitura? Credo magnas;  
Debebunt equidem. Tuam ipse quercu  
Frontem Papinius libens coronat,  
Hac quam Caesar ei negavit olim.

(Behold Papinius, kind reader!  
Who is this Papinius, you may ask? A very great poet.  
Nay, I should say the best poet;  
Or certainly a poet nearest the best,  
As Envy him would admit...  
What thanks will the youth of the future  
Have for you? Great thanks I believe they  
Will owe. Papinius himself  
Gladly crowns your brow with the oak,  
With that which Caesar once denied to him.)<sup>37</sup>

Besides this poetic extolling, Lipsius shares his enthusiasm for Statius in a letter addressed to Bernaerts from 09 March 1594. Instead of merely asking about his progress, Lipsius conveys interest in its use for the public good:

Statius autem tuus ubi est? Puto Antverpiae et ego ad Moretum scripsi. Quod rerum aliquid publicarum litteris inspergis, gratum est et saepe facito. Stilum et iudicia haec scriptiuncula exercet et nos delectat, qui fautores bonae caussae sumus, etsi non auctores. Augusta ista stirps, nisi bona nostra auget, mala minuit, in exilium licet ire omnibus bonis. In Gallia novae turbae, ut audimus, et noster illuc miles...

(Where is your Statius? I think at Antwerp and I have written to Moretus. Since you sprinkle on only a limited amount in your letter of public affairs, it is welcome and do it often. Your style and judgment both exercise these minor writings and pleases us, who are promoters of the good cause, if not the authors. The root, the venerable stock, unless it increases the good, diminishes the evil; it is allowed to go into exile for the common good. In France there are new disturbances, as I hear, and our troops are there. ...) <sup>38</sup>

The world in which Bernaerts writes his commentary nearly mirrors that of the time Lipsius wrote the *Politica*, 1589. It is a world torn by political and religious dissension and active warfare in more than one European country. Ideological divisions are fragmenting the humanist cultural consensus, and universally accepted typologies of discourse are losing their cohesive power. During the 1580s, Lipsius himself was in a very precarious state of equilibrium since his emigration from Leiden to Leuven and Protestantism to Catholicism was imminent. As Moss correctly asserts, “the *Politica* appears to be an attempt to perform fragmentation and division into a nexus which its readers would immediately recognize as that which structured their universe of thought and culture.”<sup>39</sup> Still, Lipsius’s easy and direct assertion that the act of producing a commentary on the *Thebaid* makes him and Bernaerts “fautores et actores bonae causae” is indicative of his view of classical culture and literature being entirely relevant to contemporary ills, a salve which “mala minuit” – there is also an overt play on “stirps”

and “stirpe” from *Thebaid* 1.242. As a result, Bernaerts is to understand that whatever he produces can and will contribute to ending the current political strife engulfing France, the Netherlands, and Europe more generally. In essence, literary studies are relevant, warranted, and necessary. Additionally, in an even earlier letter addressed to Bernaerts, Lipsius will make his position very clear, if not personal: “In your commentary whatever it may, whatever new spark of life should please [you to tell], I wish to know. You are not able to deposit anything more freely or safely in a mother’s lap, than in mine.”<sup>40</sup> It is a statement of genuine *humanitas* to be sure, but more importantly it is also a kind of goad that compels Bernaerts to pursue the type of scholarship that Lipsius himself pursues: explication of texts without political or historical boundaries.

### III

As noted before, Bernaerts begins his commentary by defending Statius from both ancient and modern accretive criticisms: namely, that he is puffed-up and swollen (“inflatus & tumidus”). He dismisses these critiques by noting that Cicero was accused of the same and then by letting Lipsius and Scaliger further substantiate his opinion.<sup>41</sup> While Lipsius maintains a slightly understated and diplomatic tone, J. C. Scaliger is, expectedly, more blunt:

Graeculi quidam Statium tanquam tumidum damnarunt, sane quem tumorem dicant nescio, nam neque metaphoris fere is utitur e Pindaro, quem illi gentilem suum non audent indicare, et sonum si spectes in carmine, id vero tumidum non est, alioqui tumidus etiam fuerit Maro. Sed neque vividam orationem tumidum voces, hoc enim de Salustio dixeris ...

(Certain little greeklings condemn Statius for being so to speak swollen, what swolleness the speak of I certainly don’t know. For he scarcely borrows metaphors from Pindar, whom those critics do not dare to point out is his own kinsman; and if you look at the sound in his poetry, it is indeed not swollen, since then Vergil was puffed up. But nor can you say that lively oratory is swollen, for then you shall have indicted Sallust...) <sup>42</sup>

Still, both of these passages strike the reader as lacking imagination or innovation on the part of Bernaerts. Of course, he should offer these assertions; contemporary *testimonia* about Statius is valid, especially by Lipsius and the elder Scaliger. But these quotations lack subtlety and nuance.

Where Bernaerts provides his reader with a singular moment, a truly sophisticated allusion, is in the statement following these quotations. According to Bernaerts, wherever one goes in Statius, he will run into a flower that delights or a thought that educates: “Quacumque incederitis, vestigium ponetis vel in flore qui delectat, vel in sententia quae informat.”<sup>43</sup> Bernaerts’s words play with an analogy only to be found in the *Politica*, where Lipsius states that his efforts in constructing the *Politica* are similar to that of a spider’s web in that it is no whit the better because it spins it from its own entrails; nor is his text the worse because, as does the bee, he gathers its components from other authors’ flowers: “Nec araneorum sane textus ideo melior, quia ex se filia gignunt: nec noster vilior, quia ex alienis libamus, ut apes.”<sup>44</sup> Naturally, the bee is a familiar symbol for writers and readers of commonplace-books. Its use immediately notifies the reader of what he will find in Lipsius’s work: a collection of the best passages from a variety of authors.<sup>45</sup> Still, Lipsius’s allusion to other authors’ flowers is obscured and compressed by the use of “alienis.” Lipsius demands careful inference on the part of his reader, since flower is never mentioned, only implied. The same degree of imagination holds true for his use of the spider’s web, “textus,” with “gignunt.” Each insect action is one of forming and output. Whether the reader chooses to consider his production as honey or a web, the process of collection and formation is inherent. So Bernaerts’s implication is that Statius is one of those flowers a bee like Lipsius can draw from (“libamus”), or that he is an author who literally helps form Lipsius, and by

extention his own, web of thought. As a result, what Bernaerts tells the reader is that his commentary is not traditional in the sense of emendation and annotation; but rather it is a commentary that is primarily concerned with annotation and connection.

As Moss notes, in the *Politica* Lipsius makes it clear that he expects his reader to recognize his work as a commonplace-book and treat it as one. He says, “These are COMMONPLACES, under which you should duly register extracts from what you have read or will read on the same subject. Look and imitate.” The reader Lipsius imagines is one who is able to obey and innovate; one who understands that the editor’s control is merely in directing one’s attention to various over-lapping ideas which become entrapped in the editor’s mind. Lipsius’s ideal reader is Bernaerts, someone who would rather produce a commentary less concerned with textual emendation than produce one that lacks rich annotations which both entrap and release the reader. In other words, at any time Bernaerts’s notes may take a verse of Statius’s *Thebaid* and use it as a launching point, a *titulus*, which empties the present expectations and fills it with new quotations, which often are turned to other purposes. References to the original locations of the quotations send his reader away to their original contexts, where he picks up meanings which sometimes supplement and frequently complicate the sense that Statius probably intended.<sup>46</sup>

For Bernaerts the process of creating a commentary does not rely on reading every variant of Statius he could find. Far from it. In fact, “he considers that kind of labor vain and ridiculous.”<sup>47</sup> For Bernaerts the principle idea underlying his commentary is that “Statius advances cleansed of defects, and advances newly.”<sup>48</sup> “Noviter” is a peculiar word, indicating both newness and something that is extraordinary; so which one does Bernaerts want his reader to understand?

On the one hand, Bernaerts offers the reader this statement as an answer:

Hic trames quem calcavi. fulcrum quo superavi clivos, libri veteres, quo studiose conquisitos varios cum cura ipse vidi. Duos signate vere veteres. Elegantissimi Lipsii unus erat, qui admirabile dictum quas notas, sinceri codicis saepe praetulerit. Alter, in Lovaniensi hoc Athenaeo Buslidiani Collegi Trilinguis, optimae itidem notae. Laudo etiam interdum codices duos vetustissimos bibliothecae S. Laurentii Leodiensis: & unum nihilo deteriore, optimi Belgarum Caroli Langii. Sed, ut unicuique sum tribuam, eiusdem Langii industria. Is enim tres illos codices, studiose composuerat, & suapte manu variantem lectionem adnotarat libro, quem communicavit mihi Antuerpiensium Antistes, clarissimus Torrentius, sicubi, discrepant, in Scholiis signate expressi, ad marginem libri, initiali littera, discriminaui. Excusos quinque composui, apud Aldum duos, anno MD .II, MD .XIX. alios Parisiis, Lugduni, Basiliae. Accessit his editio Veneta vetus, anni - CCCC. XC. Quam suo merito, (bonitate enim cum MSS. certabat) indigitavi *Editionem principem*. Locum manifestarie mendosum sicubi non libri scripti solum, sed & ex editis unus aut alter argueret, medicinam indicaret, admisi: etiam nulla in Scholiis facta mentione. Nonnulli in Critico isto grege aliter scio, et ego non MSS. modo, sed & excusorum variantes lectiones congerere, vastum duco, imo vanum & ridiculum laborem

(I looked with care at various old books (two assuredly old) which were diligently collected. One belonging to the most elegant Lipsius, and it is admirable to say what notes of the unadulterated codex he often brought to light; the other was at the trilingual Buslidian College in the University of Leuven; likewise there were very good notes. I also quote at times two very old codices of the library of St. Lawrence in Liege and one just as good belonging to Carolus Langius, best of men in the low Countries, and give to each one his due, corrected through the industry of the same Langius for he had diligently compared those three codices and in his own hand had annotated the variant readings in the book which the bishop of Antwerp, the famous Torrentius, shared with me. If they disagreed anywhere I assuredly represented it in the scholia. I marked them off at the margin of the book with an initial letter. I compared five printed editions—two printed at the Aldine Press, in 1502 and in 1519, others at Paris, Lyon, and Basel. There is added to these the old Venetian edition of 1490, which on its own merit (for it rivaled the manuscripts in quality) I have designated as *Editio princeps*. I have admitted a plainly incorrect place passage wheresoever not only manuscripts but one or another of the printed editions supported it, or indicated a remedy, even with no mention made in the scholia.)<sup>49</sup>

On the other hand, it is a bit of a red herring, since Bernaerts does not come close to relying on any of these sources. A quick glance through Bernaerts's commentary shows

even a casual reader that he has no sustained interest in textual emendation through traditional conceptions of collation, that is where one text is read against another in order to denote discrepancies and correct them. There are, to be sure, points where he attempts to make conjectures, but his method is sloppy and disingenuous. For example, he mentions the Venetian edition of 1490 (printed by Jacobus de Pagininis) is his *editio princeps*; but he never mentions that “famous edition contains the commentaries by Maturantius on the *Achilleid*, Calderini on the *Silvae*, and Lactantius Placidus on the *Thebaid*.”<sup>50</sup> So the reader is left thinking, wrongly, that Bernaerts has an authoratative text from which he can make emendations and suggestions. Additionally, he advises his reader that because in correcting Statius he has no predecessor to follow the reader:

quo aequior sis industriae meae, neque tam reprehensione sicubi defecero,  
quam ubi perduxero, laude dignum iudices.

(So that you may be more favorable to my industry and judge me not so much worthy of blame if I shall have fallen short somewhere as worthy of praise where I shall have carried it off.)<sup>51</sup>

There is an air of desperation in both of these actions, and rightly so; since when Bernaerts attempts to play the philologist he knows he is at his weakest.

Of the many reasons that classicists find Bernaerts’s edition so feeble and embarrassing today it is his lack of skill in conjecture that causes it to be slighted most – something that can also be said of his mentor’s, Lipsius’s, conjectures in his editions of Tacitus. This is in stark contrast with Joseph Scaliger, whose edition of Catullus is a watershed moment for northern European philological procedure, and as we have seen so far a source for Bernaerts’s commentary as well. In brief, Scaliger reconstructs through conjecture the textual transmission and history of Catullus’s poetry, specifically speculating that errors were made by scribes transcribing *a* and *u*, tall *i* and *l*, *c* and *g*, of

the “Lombardic” script.<sup>52</sup> Still, the initial reaction to Scaliger’s edition is one of disbelief and uncertainty. Scaliger’s flaw, which was well understood even then, was that he was too hasty in the use of his sole source for making conjectures. As Grafton and others rightly observe, Scaliger’s impatience is his real detriment. Not collating sources with absolute precision and care makes his work sloppy at points, and unforgivable for someone with such genius. But for these flaws Scaliger’s edition is without doubt a monument in textual criticism, since it reveals a systematic process of emendation, one that will not be replicated until Lachmann. If one were to compare Bernaerts and Scaliger in terms of emendation, Scaliger would prove his Catullus to emerge “noviter,” while Bernaerts would not prove the same for his Statius; in fact, he would come up quite short. Scaliger’s Catullus emerges cleansed and new-ish from the midst of Muret’s mostly wretched edition – something Scaliger dearly desires.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, Scaliger’s edition shows what is possible through brilliant conjecture. So it is clear that if Bernaerts’s Statius does not “noviter prodiret” through collation, emendation and conjecture, it is fair to wonder how Bernaerts desires to show his Statius in this manner?

#### IV

To understand Bernaerts’s message the reader must attend to his medium. Since Bernaerts chooses to make his commentary read as a commonplace-book, he necessarily descends to a level below that of Scaliger’s finished work. Bernaerts’s readings of Statius expose his readers to the “stratum of reading and writing habits” which they all know and which underpin all their own surface differences.<sup>54</sup> In doing so he returns “his readers to the original matrix common to all humanist methods of conceiving, generating, and organizing knowledge: the commonplace-book.” Above all, perhaps, he deliberately reminds his readers that the commentary, like the commonplace-book, is the

source and emblem of their most productive intellectual habits, since both, for Bernaerts, have peculiar properties which balance unity and multiplicity. In the world outside of the commentary, multiplicity may indeed tend to disorder, unity to tyranny. But to minds, like Bernaerts's, schooled by commonplace-books, "a cultural model in which fragmentation and contradiction are contained new material is connected to the pre-existing and extendible body of the book without internal danger to it."<sup>55</sup> Statius, therefore, "noviter prodiret" precisely because Bernaerts's annotations take advantage of his historical moment, when it is finally possible to rid him of Camarine filth while augmenting his cultural significance and connection.

For Bernaerts annotations fall into two overlapping classifications: "euphonia" and "energia." He claims:

In contextu ipso nihil mutavi...minutula quaedam, in quis etsi vix ulla discrepantia saepe a sensu vulgato; euphonia tamen, interdum & occulta quaedam energia, ad oram libri reieci.

(I have changed nothing in the context itself except... a few small things in which scarcely there is any discrepancy from the original text; I have, however, referred [the reader] to points of euphony, and sometimes certain hidden energy in the margins of my book.)<sup>56</sup>

An initial reading presents these terms as completely innocuous, as though they are almost throwaway terms. On closer scrutiny, however, these terms are completely befuddling and overly ambiguous. "[E]uphonia" and "energia" do not share any inherent characteristics, nor are they particularly common words among classical Latin authors to whom Bernaerts would have had easy access. *Euphonia* is used only once by Quintilian, Aulus Gellius and Isidore; while *energia* shows itself primarily in Greek texts and once in Quintilian.<sup>57</sup>

For both Quintilian and Gellius *euphonia* has a direct, physical appeal to the aural nature of orations and orators. It is a telling feature of whether or not an orator has the potential to win over the crowd; while Isidore defines it simply as: “*euphonia est suavitas vocis.*”<sup>58</sup> Bernaerts complicates these definitions. By conflating them *euphonia* indicates a place where Statius provides an especially sonorous verse, one that is eminently reminiscent (or even an interpretation) of a prior poet’s work.<sup>59</sup> Poetically, this means that Bernaerts must leap with Statius from one genre and poet to the next. More often than not in the commentary these points of *euphonia* provoke specific memories of Vergil and Propertius in Bernaerts’s mind. In some sense this is expected, since Scaliger and Estienne provide the commentaries that Bernaerts uses to read these poets, as already mentioned. Estienne, interestingly, comments directly on the intellectual-aural phenomenon and offers a particularly revealing critical perspective.

In his treatise entitled *De criticis*, Estienne asks himself what the instrument and criteria are for judging poetry: “*Quomodo autem iudicandi instrumentum illi esse dicetur qui mente carere dici potest?*” In his opinion there is one sense which is most important to the critic: sound.<sup>60</sup> Citing Cicero’s *De natura deorum* (2.146 *inter alia*), Estienne explains how the ancient and well-accepted notion of sonority works:

The ears are likewise marvelously skilful organs of discrimination; they judge differences of tone, of pitch and of key in the music of the voice, sonorous and dull, smooth and rough, bass and treble, flexible and hard, distinctions discriminated by the human ear alone.<sup>61</sup>

To contrast this he adds that vision is less faithful than hearing: “*Quo igitur poetam respicere dicemus? Nimirum ad oculos minime [...] hi enim, fideles dici non possunt: nihilo certe magis quam aures.*” But to clinch his argument he offers this final anecdote from Horace, from the words of Quintilius in the *Ars* (438-444):

Quintilio siquid recitares: Corrige, sodes,  
hoc" aiebat "et hoc"; melius te posse negares,  
bis terque expertum frustra; delere iubebat  
et male tornatos incudi reddere uersus.  
Si defendere delictum quam uertere malle,  
nullum ultra uerbum aut operam insumebat inanem,  
quin sine riuale teque et tua solus amares.  
Vir bonus et prudens uersus reprehendet inertis...

(When someone was reading his poetry to Quintilius Varus, "Correct this line, my friend," Quintilius used to say, "and that one." If you'd say that you couldn't do better, that you'd corrected twice or three times already, he'd tell you to scrap the whole lot and start afresh. If you preferred to defend yourself rather than correct, he'd say nothing, give up his insistence and let you be alone without rivals. The good and wise man will criticize poetry done without art...)<sup>62</sup>

The point of Horace's anecdote is that a critic's best tool is his ear, it is the guide which a poet must follow when composing. Estienne relates the story for the same purpose, only in terms that apply to one judging poetry, since he is himself not considered a poet so much as scholar. For Bernaerts *euphonia* carries the weight of both Estienne and Horace. In Statius, he hears the echoes of other poets, poetic traditions, history, philosophy, religion; the topics are endless, though all are unified by Statius's poetry.

Directing Bernaerts in how he applies the principles of euphony is its interaction with *energeia*. For Bernaerts the easiest definition would have been that given by Quintilian, who in the *Institutio oratoria* defines it as something necessary to descriptive oration, especially, pertaining to force:

Virium non unum genus: nam quidquid in suo genere satis effectum est, valet. Praecipua tamen eius opera deinois in exaggeranda indignitate et in ceteris altitude quaedam, phantasia in concipiendis visionibus, exergasia in efficiendo velut opera proposito, cui adicitur epexergasia, repititio probationis eiusdem et cumulus ex abundantia, energiea confinis his (est enim ab agendo ducta) et cuius propria sit virtus non esse quae dicuntur otiose.

(Force also is of more than one sort, for whatever is properly executed in its own kind possesses its own strength. Its most important products

however are: (1) *deinosis*, which is a kind of elevation displayed in enhancing indignation and other feelings; (2) *phantasia* in conceiving imaginative visions; (3) *exergasia* in bringing a plan (as it were) to completion; with the addition of (4) *epexergasia*, a repetition of the same Proof and an abundant accumulation of arguments; (5) the closely related *energeia* (the name implies “action”), whose peculiar virtue is that nothing that we say is otiose.)<sup>63</sup>

Again, Bernaerts turns to oratory to orient his commentary – which is not unexpected either since he would have been trained in rhetoric and oratory during his grammar school years. Nevertheless, Quintilian’s main point is that *energeia* contributes to the overall impact of the narrative by supplying some type of action. Just what this action is for Bernaerts is now to be determined.

## V

The difficulty for many surrounding the term *energeia* currently rests on its use by Aristotle in the *Metaphysics*, where the term comes to mean actuality, or potentiality come to life. (Hence, Quintilian’s more diluted form of the term comes to mean energy or action (*actio*)).<sup>64</sup> In the context of his commentary Bernaerts thrusts the focus of this term on a recurrent dilemma in the poetics of the Renaissance; namely, that is how to deal with paratactic and hypotactic claims of language. In other words, how does a commentator unpack compressed language like that found in Statius? In the very arrangement of his commentary Bernaerts implies that there is a precise point at which Statius’s verses reach a state of fixed recession on the written surface of the page. The *energeia* inherent in each verse is then activated by his sense of euphony, which itself results in annotation. Put another way, *energeia* impels Bernaerts to activate the reader’s attention by assigning them value in the book’s liminary material. For Bernaerts, they have the stylistic elegance and sharpness of *sententiae*, *exempla* and *similitudes*, which

encourage the reader to join Bernaerts in a discourse reminiscent of a commonplace-book. In other words, *energeia* implies the use of received authority, becoming *testimonia*, *auctoritates*, and thereby elements in stratagems of cultural connectivity. For Bernaerts, *energeia* evolves in settings where there is a special need to resuscitate such authority through annotation.

At first sight Bernaerts annotations seem nothing except an exercise in marshalling his quotations onto the page. However, much like Lipsius in the *Politica*, who intrudes numerous times in his notes, an atypical habit for commonplace-bookcompilers who normally kept themselves to their prefaces, Bernaerts is ever present in his notes. The editor of the *Thebaid* is indeed present here in his own voice, connecting his gathered quotations so that Statius's flowers are easily recognized. Sometimes, however, Statius rises above the comprehension of even Bernaerts. When this happens he confesses by writing notes in the margin such as "occultus Statio intellectus" or "occultior Statio intellectus." For example, at 4.48 Bernaerts has given the following note:

"& Lacedaemonium Thyre lectura cruorem) Historica face opus, ad illustrandum hunc locum, quem peto ex Stobaeo, apud quem Theseus sermone de Fortitudine: Lacedaemonij (inquit) & Argivi, super Agro Thyraeo certabant, visumque est eligere trecentos vtrinque, & qui ex ijs victores fuissent habent agrum. Quo facto Orthyades Lacedaemonius, multis interfectis, & ipse saevius, inter mortuos Lacedaemonios iacuit. Duo autem Argivorum, Agenor & Chromius superfuere, quibus digressis Argos, ut victoriam nunciarent...: Orthyades spoliatis pluribus hostium, trophaeum erexit, usus vulnerum suorum sanguine, inscriptis Lacedaemonii de Argivis & hoc facto obijt, refert haec eadem Plutarchus in Parallelis, quem vide, nam non Papinij nostri solum, sed & Flori verbis ab hac re lumen, lib. II. cap. II. de Calphurnio Tribunio: Hoc illustrior noster, quod expeditioni tantae superfuit & supervixit, licet nihil scripserit sanguine, notat idem hoc Orthyadis factum. nec vnquam capies eius mentem, nisi historiam hanc scias."<sup>65</sup>

(“This verse must be made historical, to illustrate this location, which I have sought from Stobaeus, in whom Theseus in a speech on strength says: ‘The Spartans and Argives, when they waged a battle over Argos and Thyrea, it is known that three-hundred men were selected, and those from them who were victorious held the field. In fact, Orthyades, a Spartan, by killing many men, and himself very savage, among the dead Spartans lay. Two Argives, however, Agenor and Chromius, lived, having gone separately to Argos, they announced that they were victorious. In the words of Stobaeus: Orthyades when all was done took the armor from the enemy, erected it as a trophy and using the blood of his own wounds, he dedicated it to the Spartans. Plutarch says the same thing in the Parallel Lives, which you see, for not alone of our Statius, but there is the light of Florus for these words concerning this affair, Book 2.2 of Calpurnius Tribunius: Our author is very clear, what remained and survived of the great expedition, he wrote nothing in blood. He notes the same deed of Orthyadis. You will not ever understand his mind, unless you know this history.”)

Because of perceived remoteness and difficulty or obscurity (“*occulta*”), these instances prompt a sense of vigor and challenge, which naturally illumines the use of *occulta* (and equates it to something like *cultismo*).<sup>66</sup> When viewed as a mental challenge or puzzlement, *energeia* becomes the moment when Bernaerts feels taxed by Statius’s obscurity and compression and is moved, by practicality—that is, edification—to explain the difficulty.<sup>67</sup> However, it is entirely congruent with the nature and purpose of a commonplace-book that the dialectical force of its assembled quotations, their status as testimony and authority, should be demonstrated and utilized in liminary identifications. Thus when Bernaerts begins to marshal his quotations into argumentative positions, he is merely suggesting possible ways that a particular verse could be read.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, the entries that Bernaerts creates follow a pattern: First, there is an entry which introduces a concern. Collected underneath is a series of quotations that Bernaerts marks typographically in the liminal material. Third, they are read consecutively with the benefit of the interlinking passages, so that Bernaerts’s connections may be understood. Nevertheless, they are also eminently extractable, as

they have already been extracted from the texts clearly identified in the outer margins, just as they would be in a commonplace-book.”<sup>69</sup> In the end Bernaerts’s emphasis on *energeia* participates in an evolved state of the language and literary culture, connecting the erudite and *occulta* with the merely euphonic.

Even though Bernaerts is willing to concede that Statius’s use of language is: “Nusquam non electa verba, casta latinitas, hilaris color, agentes figurae, sensus acres, similitudinum vitalis succus, via alta, indoles rara, mira maiestas” (“Never are his words not choice, his Latinity chaste, tone jolly, figures active, sense keen, analogies essential, strength profound, character rare, grandeur wondrous.”), he is convinced that the impelling force behind his poetry is *energeia*. When *energeiac* language is “occulta” or the mind of Statius is “occultior” his language becomes elastic, able to bear the encumbrance of mass information that seems bent on restricting his *brevitas* to non-poetic expression. In other words, using fewer words to say more allows Statius’s poetry to participate in a kind of difficulty that is a welcome stimulus and challenge.

## VI

Rarely does Bernaerts in his commentary close out any connection. An entry may end with deliberative ambivalence, but to close off a connection completely would run entirely counter to the mentality of the commonplace-book, much less Bernaerts’s work. The quotations he collects are as diverse as could be, for not coherence but plenitude was the guiding principle, and open-endedness his characteristic feature. The reader-researcher would expect to find a plurality of opinions and only a modicum of logic.

Bernaerts edition of Statius took shape in a relatively short period of time. It is a pity that much of Bernaerts’s correspondence with Lipsius remains lost, since it would

certainly provide a much more vivid sense of the texture of his work. Unlike his mentor, Lipsius, Bernaerts does not go back and alter his commentary, he does augment it by providing a commentary to Statius's *Silvae*; but this work is as shockingly uninteresting as his work on the *Thebaid* is unique. In fact, of the few times Bernaerts's work is criticized during the early-seventeenth century it always pertains to his commentary on the *Silvae*.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Jeanine de Landtsheer her generosity during my stay in Leiden during the spring of 2008. Her friendship and vast expertise in Dutch Humanism has been instrumental in the inception of this chapter and made my stay in Leiden better than she knows.

<sup>2</sup> Statius, *P. Statii Papinii Opera quae extant. Io. Bernartivs ad libros veteres resensuit [sic] & scholiis illustravit. Adiectis hac postrema editione, ad Sylvarum libros varijs lectionibus* (Antwerp, 1595). Bernaerts wrote commentaries on all three of Statius's. The dedication of his commentaries on Statius bears the date of 01 October 1593, and the edition was first published in 1595 at Antwerp by Plantin-Moretus. It was reprinted at least five times from 1595 to 1618. His full length commentary on the *Silvae* was first published in 1599 by Moretus and then again in 1618 by Blaise in Paris. His commentary on the *Thebaid* has been little studied since the middle of the seventeenth century when it was incorporated into the works by Gronovius first and then Barth.

<sup>3</sup> Naturally, Joseph Scaliger was French, but since he resided in Leiden from 1593-1609 his interest in Statius is significant. This interest has been documented elsewhere by Grafton and van Dam. It is sufficient to note at this point that he mentions his work on Statius as early as 1565 to Louis Chasteigner de la Roche-Posay all the while emending his own edition of the 1547 Gryphius publication. By 1600 he was helping Woverius with his edition of scholia on the *Achilleid* and *Thebaid*, as well as Lindenbrogius's edition of the *Achilleid*. Moreover, he was even prompting Gruterus to his own edition between 1601 and 1605. Gronovius was German by birth but resided most of his life at Leiden. Lindenbrogius was also German.

<sup>4</sup> Harm Jan van Dam "Wandering the Woods Again: From Poliziano to Grotius" in Johannes J.L. Smolenaars, Harm-Jan van Dam, Ruurd R. Nauta eds. *The Poetry of Statius* (Leiden: Brill, 2008) 45-65; and "The Coming of the *Silvae* to the Netherlands," in Fernand Delarue, Sophia Georgacopoulou, Pierre Laurens, Anne-Marie Taisne eds. *Epicedion* (Poitiers: La Licorne, 1996) 315-25.

<sup>5</sup> Harald Anderson, *The Manuscripts of Statius*, (Washington D.C., 2000).

<sup>6</sup> I have not unwittingly omitted the contemporary editions by Morellus, Cruceus, or Barth; but since these scholars are French they do not fit within the current chapter. It is, however, important to note that Gevartius is aware of and had read Morellus's edition, as he cites him a number of times; and he denigrates Cruceus in his *Electorum Libri Tres* (Paris: Carmoisy, 1619).

<sup>7</sup> Among these scholars Gevartius is the most sensitive in a poetic sense to Statius's works. While his emendations and conjectures are not to be made light of; there is a fidelity to the *Silvae* by Gevartius which in many ways has yet to be surpassed. He seemed to have primarily cared for Statius's poetry in and of itself, and he wanted to

transmit that sentiment as much as his emendations. To be sure, any of the abovementioned humanists would make excellent candidates for discussion; however, each proves to be exceedingly difficult to discuss in terms of Dutch humanism alone, because of the wide paths they cut within this period; all for except Bernaerts and Gevartius whose impact beyond their commentaries on Statius is fairly insignificant in the scholarly world of humanistic pursuits. In truth, Lindenbrogius, Heinsius, Gronovius, Lipsius and Scaliger can easily be considered a part of the success of Bernaerts and Gevartius. And it is only Gronovius who manages, after Gevartius's 1616 edition of Statius's *Silvae*, to produce his own edition of Statius's works, a task which took him nearly thirty years and entailed collecting and emending countless editions of Statius.<sup>7</sup> The only problem being that his legendary philological battle with Emile Cruceus devolves into personal animosity and pedantry—on both sides. Nevertheless, the difference Bernaerts's commentary is the most interesting Renaissance commentary produced on Statius.

<sup>8</sup> Poliziano's *Miscellanea* was a watermark in philological scholarship for the Leiden circle of Lipsius and Scaliger. See among other instances in his works: Anthony Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger A Study of the History of Classical Scholarship* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983) 9-100.

<sup>9</sup> Harald Anderson, *The Manuscripts of Statius* (Washington, D.C., 2000).

<sup>10</sup> In point of fact, Grotius did emend Statius's works. He loaned Gevartius his own copy for two years so that Gevartius might use it to annotate his own edition of the *Silvae* which was published in 1616. Then in the 1620's and 1630's Gronovius belabors him with question after question about both the *Thebaid* and the *Silvae*.

<sup>11</sup> See A. Eyffinger, "Amoena gravitate morum spectabilis"—Justus Lipsius and Hugo Grotius" in Marc Laureys ed. *The World of Justus Lipsius* (Rome: Bulletin van het Belgisch Historisch Instituut te Rome, 1998).

<sup>12</sup>The last commentator on Statius's *Thebaid*, the pseudo-Fulgentius (twelfth century AD), had produced a work which was entirely interpretive in the medieval fashion. In fact, at present it still retains the dubious honor of the most distinctive readings of Statius's works, interpreting the text of the *Thebaid* as a metaphor for the body, inherently corruptible and degenerative through the intemperance of excessive power and greed. However, there is no evidence that suggests Bernaerts knew of or read the pseudo-Fulgentius's commentary. Fulgentius's commentary was found only in a few manuscripts of Statius; therefore, it was reproduced in print limitedly.

<sup>13</sup> The few letters of Bernaerts's that remain do not discuss in detail his project, merely its projected finish dates and questions about publication with the Plantin press. These can be found at the Plantin Moretus Museum Library, Arch. 90 and 76.

<sup>14</sup> It is clear from Bernaerts's letters to Lipsius that his library was well-stocked with a variety of prose authors—especially antiquarians and historians. He seems also to have

had the latest editions of the principle Roman poets: Vergil, Horace, Catullus, and Propertius—for whom he has a special affinity. As for the Greeks, he seems principally concerned with Homer. It needs to be emphasized as well that as Bernaerts deems editions prior to 1500 as ancient and hard to come by that he would be more likely to have editions fifty years prior to 1593, the date of the completion of his edition. It also makes sense that his library would be full of Plantin and Estienne editions as these were Lipsius's recommended publishers.

<sup>15</sup> These are the only ancient examples that Bernaerts mentions in the commentary.

<sup>16</sup> See *Catvllvs, et in eum commentarijs M. Antonii Mvreti. Ab eodem correcti, & scholiis illustrati, Tibvllvs, et Propertivs* (Venice: Manutium, 1558); and *Horatius, M. Antonii Mvreti in evndem annotationes. Aldi Manvtii de metris Horatianis. Eiusdem annotationes in Horatium* (Venice: Manutium, 1558). See, too, *M. Terentii Varronis Opera quae supersunt. In lib. De ling. Lat. Coniectanea Iosephi Scaligeri recognita & appendice aucta. In libros De re rust. notae eiusdem Ios. Scal. non antea editae. His adiuncti fuerunt Adr. Turn. Comment. in lib. De lingua Latina : cum emendationibus Ant. Augustini. Item P. Victorii Castigationes in lib. De re rustica* (Geneva: H. Estienne, 1573).

<sup>17</sup> Bernaerts, "Ad Lectorem," 6.

<sup>18</sup> "Iam in Scholiis quid praestare voluerim, quibus auxiliis quoque potuerim cognosce. Aevo avorum Barbaries vixit. Nostro nata Typographia. Illa corruptrix librorum, atque atrium merito audit. Haec ita propagatrix, ut ministrorum imperitia, calida excudentium festinatione, turbari saepissime, imo obstrui, purissimos illos veterum fontes docti omnes ingemiscant. & ni curtarent & perpurgarent quidam ex iis, eos diligenti opera, ausim ego sacramento quinquagenario contendere, si quis e veteribus illis Patribus conscriptis prodeat, vix versum unum e denis agnoscat. Fidem vel unus fecerit elegantissimus noster Papinius, qui in vulgus eo usque deformatus circumfertur, ut plus vulnere unus ex eo liber, quam Scaevae apud Caesarem clypeus, tela praeferret. Plures sordes contraxerit, quam si aetatem in Camarina palude iacuisset. Vulnera haec, omnibus artis ingeniique ascitis subsidiis, sanare, maculas iudicii (ut sic loquar) spongia eluere, princeps mihi cura, modeste tamen. Ut decet hanc aetatem." Bernaerts, "Ad lectorem," 6.

<sup>19</sup> Horace, *Quinti Horatii Flacci Poemata novis scholiis et argumentis ab Henrico Stephano illustrata. Eiusdem Henr. Stephani Diatribae de hac sua editione Horatii, & uariis in eum observationibus* (Geneva: Estienne, 1575).

<sup>20</sup> "Atque vt alijs editionibus taceam, quum Manutianam, a qua praesertim non parum adiumenti sperabam, pervolutassem, ibi quoque *omnia pro omina*, locis aliquot, & alia quaedam haud leviora errata deprehendi: ad scholia autem margini apposite vt veni, multa in ijs animadverti quae me Servium iisdem verbis legisse recordarer. Tandemque quum meae non fidendum esse memoriae putarem, ad Servianos commentarios accessi: ac statim, quod de paucis tantum annotationibus seu annotatiunculis suspicabar, verum esse in omnibus propemodum, easque velut riuulos quosdam esse ex illo fonte ... deductos, & Servij non Manutij annotations seu scholia vocari debuisse comperi. Vix

enim centesima quaeque aliquid habet quod inde non manauerit.” Vergil, “Preface,” *Publii Virgilii Maronis Poemata* (Geneva: Estienne, 1583).

<sup>21</sup> “...quoniam in scholiis quae margini sunt adscripta, ad meas annotationes interdum te remitto, quod angustum marginis spatium quae dicenda errant capere non posset: eas Diatribis subiungere in animo me habuisse, sed ne a Diatribarum quidem numerum implendum satis otij mihi fuisse scito. Illis enim quas dedi, addere statueram octo: quarum haec fuissent argumenta:

VI, De locis qui ut diverse interpungi, ita diverse exponi possunt

VII, De locis qui lectiones diversas habent caeteris rariores.

VIII, De locis Horatii qui falso ad sententias quasdam vel proverbias accomodantur.

IX, De locis in quibus Horatius diquirambizei, de iis item ubi a)[g]eizetai.

X, De quibusdam Horatiani sermonis idiomatic, sive neoterismis.

XI, De varietate & copia Horatiana

XII, De hellenismis Horatianis

XIII, De iis locis in quibus Graecos vel alios imitatus est Horatius, sive ex iis est mutuatus. Item de iis ubi posteri eum vicissim imitati sunt.” Horace 2-3.

<sup>22</sup> Catullus, *Catulli, Tibulli, Propertii nova editio Iosephus Scaliger recensuit. Eiusdem in eosdem castigationum liber* (Paris: Estienne, 1577).

<sup>23</sup> Catullus 2-3.

<sup>24</sup> Ann Moss, “The Politica of Justus Lipsius and the Commonplace-Book,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 59.3 (1998) 421. This article in particular has informed my thoughts about Bernaerts and his conception of commentary, specifically the seemingly tangential nature of his work. See, too, Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books and the Structuring of the Renaissance Thought* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996), for a broader conception of commonplace-books.

<sup>25</sup> Moss 422.

<sup>26</sup> Moss 422.

<sup>27</sup> Moss 423.

<sup>28</sup> Moss 423.

<sup>29</sup> Moss 342.

<sup>30</sup> Moss 424.

<sup>31</sup> Moss 424.

<sup>32</sup> Van Dam, “Silvae,” 317 n. 11.

<sup>33</sup> “Quid mirum? scitum est illud vetus, *ne Iovem quidem placere omnibus*. Quis Marcus Tullius? cum nomen posui, nunquid satis est? attamen eloquentiae his fons, Quintiliano teste. Censores habuit quibus inflatus & tumidus, nec satis pressus & parum antiquus videretur. Quinimo a Calvo & Bruto priscis oratoribus male audivit, ab illo, tanquam solutus & enervis, ab isto tanquam fractus atque elumbis. Quid post Musas natas venustius Plauto? Nunquid illi in sermonibus palmam tribuit ipse Varro? Nec desunt ideo quibus sordet, allium & hircum olet. Isti de Papinio nostro ita? at in diversam eunt sententiam legitimi multi Senatores & quidem Consulares. Dic tu optime doctissimeque virorum Juste Lipsi, quod felix ac faustum Reip. litterarie sit, de P. Statio Papinio quid videtur? *In Statium aliquid meditari te suadet mihi noster Modius. vix persuadet. Cur enim celes? Et quidem cum tuo damno. Nam et mihi notata quaedam ad sublimem illum et celsum Poetam (ita censeo et appello; non hercule tumidum) et libri apud nos veteres qui invent.* Dic tu magne Scaliger, bellissime flos tui aevi. *Graeculi quidam Statium tanquam tumidum damnarunt, sane quem tumorem dicant nescio, nam neque metaphoris fere is utitur e Pindaro, quem illi gentilem suum non audent indicare, et sonum si spectes in carmine, id vero tumidum non est, alioqui tumidus etiam fuerit Maro. Sed neque vividam orationem tumidum voces, hoc enim de Salustio dixeris.* Inibi Paulo postea. *Ceterum maximis ille ut dicebamus Poeta, cuius nomen haud quaquam tam frivolis recessibus obscurari decuit, multis profecto locis, nulli Poetarum secundus. Neque ullus veterum aut recentiorum proprius ad Virgilianum maiestatem accedere valuit.*” Bernaerts, “Ad Lectorem,” 4-5.

<sup>34</sup> Bernaerts, “Ad Lectorem,” 3. For the most part I have relied on the translation given by Paul Clogan, “Reading Statius in the Renaissance,” *Acta selecta Octavi Conventus Academiae Latinitati Fovendae (Lovanii et Antverpiae, 2-6 Augusti 1993)* 81-95. On the whole the translation is accurate; however, it is incomplete at points and misleading at others. It is referenced as “Clogan” from here on when used.

<sup>35</sup> See note twenty-six.

<sup>36</sup> Suetonius, *Augustus*, 35.2.

<sup>37</sup> Bernaerts 12.

<sup>38</sup> Justus Lipsius, *Iusti Lipsi Epistolae*, vol. 7, 94 03 09.

<sup>39</sup> Moss 430.

<sup>40</sup> *ILE* 94 02 14. “In tuis rebus quid sit et ecquid placeat novum hoc genus vitae, velim scire. Non potes in maternum sinum liberius aut tutius aliquid deponere, quam in meum...”

<sup>41</sup> “In Statium aliquid meditari te suadet mihi noster Modius. vix persuadet. Cur enim celes? Et quidem cum tuo damno. Nam et mihi notata quaedam ad sublimem illum et celsum Poetam (ita censeo et appello; non hercule tumidum) et libri apud nos veteres qui invent.” Bernaerts, “Ad Lectorem,” 4.

<sup>42</sup> Bernaerts, “Ad Lectorem,” 5.

<sup>43</sup> “P. Statium volenter accipe, mi Lector, utilem (Deus bone!) magnumque Poetam. & quem non solum in manibus iuventutis esse expediat, sed etiam eorum, quibus in litteraria nostra Republica ius spectandi in Quatuordecim; imo in ipsa Orchestra. Parum is vulgo notus, scio, sed dignissimus notitia, neglectus hactenus nostris Aristarchis iacuit. non Scholiis, non Notis, adeo non Commentario illustratus. miror, imo indignor. nam nullo id Papinii merito evenisse fidenter ego praesto. Adeste vos Critici, et oppressum per iniuriam, certe pressum, allevate virilem et gravem Poetam. Quacunque incideritis, vestigium ponetis vel in flore qui delectat, vel in sententia quae informat. Nusquam non electa verba, casta latinitas, hilaris color, agentes figurae, sensus acres, similitudinum vitalis succus, via alta, indoles rara, mira maiestas.” Bernaerts, “Ad Lectorem,” 3.

<sup>44</sup> Justus Lipsius, *Politicorum sive civilis doctrinae libri sex, qui principatum maxime spectant* (Leiden, 1589), “Breves notae,” 4. Cited from Moss 424.

<sup>45</sup> Moss 424.

<sup>46</sup> Moss 428.

<sup>47</sup> Clogan 92.

<sup>48</sup> “Curae fuit ut a mendis purus prodiret Statius, sed noviter prodiret; bene quid hactenus excusum? Maneat.” Bernaerts, “Ad Lectorem,” 10.

<sup>49</sup> “Modus tantum servetur. Quem secutum me scio, assecutum spero. Hic trames quem calcavi. fulcrum quo superavi clivos, libri veteres, quo studiose conquisitos varios cum cura ipse vidi. Duos signate vere veteres. Elegantissimi Lipsii unus erat, qui admirabile dictum quas notas, sinceri codicis saepe praetulerit. Alter, in Lovaniensi hoc Athenaeo Buslidiani Collegi Trilinguis, optimae itidem notae. Laudo etiam interdum codices duos vetustissimos bibliothecae S. Laurentii Leodiensis: & unum nihilo deteriore, optimi Belgarum Caroli Langii. Sed, ut unicuique sum tribuam, eiusdem Langii industria. Is enim tres illos codices, studiose composuerat, & suapte manu variantem lectionem adnotarat libro, quem comunicavit mihi Antuerpiensium Antistes, clarissimus Torrentius, sicubi, discrepant, in Scholiis signate expressi, ad marginem libri, initiali littera, discriminavi. Excusos quinque composui, apud Aldum duos, anno MD .II, MD .XIX. alios Parisiis, Lugduni, Basiliae. Accessit his editio Veneta vetus, anni - CCCC. XC. Quam suo merito, (bonitate enim cum MSS. certabat) indigitavi *Editionem principem*. Locum manifestarie mendosum sicubi non libri scripti solum, sed & ex editis unus aut alter argueret, medicinam indicaret, admisi: etiam nulla in Scholiis facta mentione. Nonnulli in Critico isto grege aliter scio, et ego non MSS. modo, sed & excusorum variants lectiones congerere, vastum duco, imo naum & ridiculum laborem.” Bernaerts, “Ad Lectorem,” 9. Clogan 91-92.

<sup>50</sup> Clogan 92. “At editionem principem interdum advocavi. Ita est. sed vice libri scripti. Ante centum annos excusa, spisso & raro hodie invenitur. Eo usque certe sustineas nigrum calculum, donec a Scholiis diverteris ad Statium ipsum, & cum eius lectione corectiones nostras composueris.” Bernaerts, “Ad Lectorem,” 10.

<sup>51</sup> Clogan 92. Bernaerts adds: “Quod superset, te benivole Lector cogitare velim corrigenda Papini praecedente, quem subsequeretur nullo, ingressum me viam.” “Ad lectorem,” 10.

<sup>52</sup> Grafton 173-174.

<sup>53</sup> Grafton 161-179.

<sup>54</sup> Moss 430.

<sup>55</sup> Moss 430.

<sup>56</sup> Bernaerts, “Ad Lectorem,” 7.

<sup>57</sup> Gellius and Isidore are cited a number of times in Bernaerts’s commentary, while Quintilian quite only infrequently.

<sup>58</sup> “sola est, quae notari possit velut vocalitas, quae euphonia dicitur; cuius in eo dilectus est, ut inter duo, quae idem significant ac tantundem valent, quod melius sonet malis.” Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, 1.5.4. Cf: “Quod a scriptoribus elegantissimis maior ratio habita sit sonitus vocum atque verborum iucundioris, quae a Graecis euphonia dicitur, quam regulae disciplinaeque, quae a grammaticis reperta est.” Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 13: capitula.

<sup>59</sup> In a sense Erasmus’s contention that Statius’s defining aspect, “suave quo vincit” (conquering through sweetness), becomes relevant since *suavitas* and *suavis* presume poetic eloquence as much as oratorical eloquence.

<sup>60</sup> I am closely following the argument presented by Dorothy Coleman, “Reflections Around a Treatise by Henri Etienne,” *French Studies* 35.2 (1981) 129-134.

<sup>61</sup> “Hoc addo, testari Ciceronem libro De natura deorum secundo, esse aurium admirabile quoddam artificiosumque iudicium, quo iudicatur, & in vocis & in tiliarum nervorumque cantibus, varietas sonorum, intervalla, distinctione, & vocis genera permulta: canorum, fuscum: leve, asperum: grave, acutum: flexible, durum: quae hominum solum auribus iudicantur.” Estienne, *De Criticis Vet. Gr. Et Latinis, eorumque variis apud poetas potissimum reprehensionibus, Dissertatio Henrici Stephani: Restitvionis Comment. Servii in Virg. & magnae ad eos accessiois Specimen* (Antwerp: Plantin, 1587), translation cited from Coleman 131.

<sup>62</sup> “Quintilio si quid recitares: ‘Corrige, sodes, / Hoc, aiebat, et hoc.’ Melius te posse negares, / Bis terque expertum frustra: delere jubebat, / Et male tornatos incudi reddere versus. / Si defendere delictum quam vertere malles, / Nullum ultra verbum aut operam insumebat inanem, / Quin sine rivali teque tua solus amares. / Vir bonus et prudens versus reprehended inertes...” Horace, *Ars poetica*, 438-45. Translation cited from Coleman 131.

<sup>63</sup> Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* (Loeb Classical Library trans. Donald Russell [Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2001] 8.3.88; pg 389, 91.

<sup>64</sup> The doctrine of *dynamis* and *energeia* are part of Aristotle doctrine of the four causes that can be used to describe natural or artificial change. In addition, Aristotle puts far more emphasis on the dynamic aspects of the process of change. If the clearest example to illustrate the distinction between the four causes come from artificial production, the notions of potentiality and actuality are best seen in the case of natural growth. The seed of a tree is “potentially” the mature tree: it is “potentially,” as Aristotle says, what the mature tree is “actually.” This doctrine draws attention to the continuity of natural change. The goals towards which natural changes are directed are the ends of continuous processes. But while the ideas of potentiality and actuality are obviously relevant in this way to natural growth, Aristotle generalizes the doctrine and applies it to other types of change as well.

<sup>65</sup>Bernaerts 91-92.

<sup>66</sup> *Cultismo* in its correct sense of erudition, elegance, and wit combined in a stylish if not polished artifice, the result of which is an aesthetic impression of vivid, disjointed images, which play much like images in a theater.

<sup>67</sup> Compression is take here and throughout to mean a type of literary style preferred by Silver Latin authors which replaces *concinnitas* in favor of *inconcinnitas*.

<sup>68</sup> Moss 425; 428.

<sup>69</sup> Moss 424-5.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### “Unnighting” Statius: Translating and interpreting the *Thebaid* and *Silvae* during the English Civil War

During the 1640s the *Thebaid* exerts a powerful influence on the way in which loyalists, in particular, respond to the events of the English Civil War. In it we find a narrative of Theban civil war that is psychologically motivated and in which the emotions of humans play a dominating and dominant role, so much so that English political figures during the 1640s and 1650s critically evaluate this conflict within man with respect to contemporary human turmoil. Although Statius's epic provides the cultural material to deal with conflict, the interpretation and application of his work is not fixed nor even confined to the *Thebaid* – far from it. This is due in large part to how he presents his poetry: namely, through a type of universal appeal and a lack of any appreciable Roman connection. The absence of immediate, local correlation is at the very heart of Statius's appeal to seventeenth-century English readers. Because Statius deals with universal topics, such as the pursuit of power and human frailty, that can be illuminated by the retelling of myth in his epic and the re-appropriation of his imaginative lyric poetry (*Silvae*), he is in fact considered by early modern English readers to write a kind of contemporary history. Hence the act of interpreting the myths of Thebes or any of those present in the *Silvae* serve to illustrate and to universalize the human predicament,

stripping his poetry of its national and patriotic appeal and replacing it with the cultural material to mediate a crisis of defeat.

To be sure, the vast majority of this chapter is devoted to how Statius's *Thebaid*, a poem based entirely on fraternal strife between Polynices and Eteocles, is translated and interpreted. Strife between those who share power is inevitable; more importantly, the horror of fraternal discord is always a potent and emotive force in the thoughts of early modern readers – this is to say nothing of Roman readers. In describing the cursed house of Oedipus, Eteocles, and Polynices, in which every moral restraint, every bond of *pietas* (piety) is eradicated, Statius highlights the degraded state of human affairs (both political and religious) for early moderns during the Civil War, especially loyalists. To help confront changing personal beliefs and concerns, while grappling with a failing monarchy and with religious and political revolution, Statius's *Thebaid* comes to define, anticipate, and challenge the debates over how the nature of epic poetry speaks to the complexity of the times. Other readers, however, such as Thomas May, Sir Thomas Fairfax, and Abraham Cowley, following the conclusion of hostilities (1646) find in Statius's *Silvae* a means for reconciling the physical and perhaps metaphysical dissolution of the monarchy by acts of remembering and forgetting. It is best, in fact, to begin this chapter by discussing how these significant political and intellectual figures organize, understand, and marshal their reactions to Statius's *Silvae* particularly as they come to terms with perceived and actual historical memory before advancing to the longer discussion of the *Thebaid*.

Beginning the second chapter of *The History of Parliament*, published in 1647,

Thomas May remarks:

It cannot but be thought, by all wise and honest men, that the sinnes of England were at a great height, that the injustice of Governours, and vices of private men, were very great; which have Once called downe from Almighty God so sharpe a judgement; and drawne on by degrees so calamitous and consuming a Warre. Those particular crimes an English Historian can take no pleasure to relate, but might rather desire to be silent in, and say with STATIUS:

*---Nos certe taceamus, & obruta multa*

*Nocte tegi nostrae patiamur crimina gentis.*

Let us be silent, and from after times

Conceale our own unhappy Nations crimes.<sup>1</sup>

The quotation, taken from Statius's *Silvae* 5.2, is part of a eulogy dedicated to Crispinus, the late son of Vettius Bolanus, a former consul and general. In this poem Statius praises Crispinus's short life (a scant sixteen years) and the deeds he manages to accomplish, or those Statius imagines he will accomplish, like accession to the Senate. The particular verses (88-89) that May plucks and then translates from Statius's poem come amidst an invented speech in which Crispinus forgives his mother for poisoning him and thus causing his death. In addition, by this act of forgiveness Crispinus hopes to prevent the Furies from seizing his mother and taking their gruesome version of vengeance. Both actions cause Statius to extol him all the more. In fact, Statius proclaims a few lines later that such exemplary loyalty and bravery has only been witnessed in Rome's founding figures, Aeneas and Romulus, though at much later stages of their lives in comparison to that of Crispinus. Returning to his speech, it is noteworthy that May does not translate the subsequent verses, the last of this fantastic oration, in which Crispinus reinforces his appeal to forgetfulness:

*exegit poenas, hominum cui cura suorum,  
quo Pietas auctore redit terrasque revisit,  
quem timet omne nefas. satis haec lacrimandaque nobis*

ultio. quin saevas utinam exorare liceret  
Eumenidas timidaeque avertere Cerberon umbrae  
immemoremque tuis citius dare manibus amnem.

(“He wreaked the penalty who hath care of those who are his, at whose word Loyalty hath returned and come on earth again, whom every sin doth fear. Sufficient for us and deserving of our tears is his vengeance. Nay, could we but implore the fierce Avengers, and keep Cerberus from that timid shade, ay, more swiftly grant thy ghost the waters of forgetfulness.”)<sup>2</sup>

By concluding that he wishes to have his mother drink from the river Lethe (literally, to drink quickly from the forgetful stream) so that she might pass swiftly into the paradise of Elysium, Statius presents Crispinus as a model son and citizen. May, however, pays little heed to the context of Statius’s poem generally; this is to say nothing of his neglect of the complexity of Crispinus’s speech specifically.

The complexity and ambiguity of Crispinus’s speech, as can be seen from the portion that May chooses not to translate, complicate his didactic use of history. In his effort to promote Statius’s verses as a way of remembering to affect change rather than forgetting, May dismisses Crispinus’s concern for the afterlife of his mother and plea for justice to an unnamed authority. These verses’ lack of specificity, however, leaves two clear conjectures for the reader to ponder. For the first, it seems that Crispinus calls upon a deity, Jupiter perhaps, for intervention in his mother’s case. This would certainly make sense as Jupiter has control over the Furies; and May could then easily interpret these verses to support his own contention of God bringing “so sharpe a judgement” on the people of England.<sup>3</sup> But he does not. The second deduction is that Crispinus could be referring to the emperor in his request, since the emperor is the representative of Jupiter on Earth and thus the person most responsible for upholding the rule of law. But

this, too, is not considered by May. By invoking only verses 88-89, May diminishes any gesture to authority that does not fit his purpose.

May's only real concern in the use of the verses he translates is how to deal with what Pocock describes as "the historiographic problems which authors of English history must face in a future beginning from its outbreak."<sup>4</sup> May does not exercise either conjecture mentioned above because his subsequent thoughts for both instances would force him into controverting his own practical literary concern: namely, that the Civil War could and should be commented on since its occurrence needs some kind of contemporaneous evaluation. May responds, therefore, to only the verses of his translation of Statius's poem by asserting:

But to be silent in that, were great injustice and impiety toward God, to relate his judgements upon a Kingdome; and forget the sinnes of that Kingdom, which were the cause of them. The Heathen Historians do well instruct us in that point of piety; who never almost describe any Civill Warre, or publike affliction, without relating at the beginning, how vitious and corrupted their State was at that time grown, how faulty both the Rulers and People were, and how fit to be punished, either by themselves or others.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, not only does May declare that to be quiet about the atrocities of citizen warfare is the wrong approach for a historian to take in relating contemporary events, it is inherently irreligious and as such an affront to God. For May, the very act of forgetting is a sin and only serves as an equivocation of the events that took place; thus he states: "And shall we Christians, who adore the true God, and live under the Gospell-light, not be sensible under so heavy a judgement of our owne offences."<sup>6</sup>

May's (mis)use of Crispinus's speech is one of quite a few instances of the mediating influence of Statius that can be perceived in participants on both sides of the Civil War and afterwards in the 1650s. Though Statius's portrayal of Crispinus hardly

has the simplistic implications that May draws from them; his concluding remarks about Statius's verses give some sense that he was aware of the more complicated aspects of Statius's poetry:

Nor doe any of the Roman Poets undertake to write of that great and miserable Civill Warre, which destroyed the present State, and enslaved posterity; without first making a large enumeration of such cause; how wicked the manners of Rome were growne, how the chiefe Rulers were given to avarice and oppression, and the whole State drowned in luxury, lusts and riot, as you may see upon that subject in two the most elegant of them.<sup>7</sup>

May's assertion that the two most elegant Roman poets who wrote about the decadence which led to civil war is well taken; but only if we assume he is speaking about Sallust, Lucan and Tacitus, and that by poets he means, more generally, authors. But what if he means Lucan's *Pharsalia* and Statius's *Thebaid*; what then? May is not entirely clear here, nor does the context give the reader any hint. At present, the role of Lucan's work in May's life has been clearly defined; Statius's has not. The slight and hurried notions expressed by May are overturned in favor of the much more complicated motives expressed by Statius on Crispinus's behalf through other scholar-poets, such as Sir Thomas Fairfax and Abraham Cowley.

In his retirement, Sir Thomas Fairfax wrote a poem entitled, "On the Fatal day, Jan 30. 1648." In his verses Fairfax channels his sorrow and guilt into a lament for Charles I's death; and similar to May he expresses this anguish by referring to (one might even say, clinging to) his belief in God's providence:

Oh Lett that Day from time be blotted quitt  
And lett beleefe of't in next age be waved  
In deepest silence th'Act concealed might  
Soe that the King-doms-Credit might be saved  
But if the Power devine permitted this,  
His Will's the Law & ours must acquiesce.<sup>8</sup>

Though these are the words of an eyewitness, Fairfax's verses have made no impact upon the weight of historical condemnations of the regicide. In fact, they have been utterly dismissed as trivial. In response to these verses Graham Edwards refers to them as "pusillanimous vapourings," while Lord Braybrooke remarks that "these wretched verses have obviously no merit."<sup>9</sup> Braybrooke claims further that they are not even Fairfax's, but rather a poor translation and interpretation of Statius that had earlier been used to describe the massacre of St Bartholomew, something that Pepys mentions as well.<sup>10</sup> Still, for Fairfax to subscribe to the notion of wanting to forget that dreadful day, while using Statius's poem to declare it, seems more than coincidental as the very last line of his poem seems downright paradoxical.

How can Fairfax proclaim that God promotes forgetting while he concedes that God fostered the actions that took place? This is, in fact, the question that Fairfax seems to struggle with; since from the same poem that May uses to condemn his countrymen's desire to forget, Fairfax uses it to state unequivocally that he understands personally, and even agrees with, Crispinus's decision. Using language similar to that of May, Fairfax charges that it is his duty to forget the King's wretched death. But unlike May, Fairfax clearly considers Crispinus's appeal for justice to fall upon the lap of God; and since it was divine will that allowed the death of the King to occur, silence and disbelief are for the benefit of the coming generations. Building on Crispinus's words Fairfax attempts to prevent a Fury-like revenge by remaining silent in his poem about the detailed events and considerations that brought about the King's execution. Instead he concentrates on revealing his reaction to the regicide, mixing penitence with a desire to be exonerated.

Fairfax, more than most, had a hand in deciding the fate of the King by winning at Naseby and Colchester and agreeing to punish Charles I following Pride's Purge. Not

surprisingly, then, his “Short memorials” fall silent in describing his conduct in January 1649. They do stress that he labors to save the King’s life; though he provides no details of how, only that when he was approached on 29 January to attempt a royal rescue he replied that he was “ready to venture his own life, but not the lives of others.” It appears, then, that the regicide so traumatizes him that self-doubt gnaws at his self-presentation ever thereafter. Questions, like *what could he have done differently?* Or *what if he had intervened?* seem to permeate his poems and writings. These are the same kinds of questions that seem inherent in “On the fatal day” especially. Brian Fairfax, Black Tom’s cousin and chronicler, notices this self-doubt and maintains that later in life Fairfax “never mentioned it [the regicide] with but Tears in his Eyes.” Thus, remembering even for the lord-commander of the New Model Army, the most powerful political outfit following the war, was difficult, even painful. Forgetting was not easy, but it was certainly better than remembering; and in Fairfax’s opinion it is a mark of loyalty to the kingdom to maintain such behavior. It is, like Statius’s implication about Crispinus, honorable and personal.

Shifting the meaning of this poem once more, Abraham Cowley makes a series of comments which moves Statius’s poem from the practical and personal to the societal. Cowley in the preface to his *Poems* (1656) recommends, like Fairfax, a kind of social or societal amnesia, one that in effect openly states:

*We ought not sure, to begin ourselves to revive the remembering of those times and actions for which we have received a General Amnestie, as a favor from the Victor. The truth is, neither We, nor They, ought by the Representation of Places and Images to make a kind of Artificial Memory of those things wherein we are all bound to desire, like Themistocles, the Art of Oblivion.*<sup>11</sup>

While not an exact parallel of Statius's poem, Crispinus's sentiments certainly find a home in Cowley's words.<sup>12</sup> Though his deliberate appeal for amnesia lacks any sense of divinity, Cowley takes Fairfax's proclamation a step further by stating in the same passage of the preface that "I have cast away all such pieces as I wrote during the time of the late troubles, with any relation to the differences that caused them; as among other, *three Books of the Civil War it self*, reaching as far as the first *Battel of Newbury*, where the succeeding *misfortunes* of the *party* stopt the work; for it is so uncustomary, as to become almost ridiculous, to make *Lawrels* for the *Conquered*." Thus he sets aside his epic following a series of Royalist setbacks after the Battle of Newbury in September 1643.<sup>13</sup> Cowley now in 1656 claims, "I would have it accounted no less unlawful to rip up old wounds, than to give new ones; which has made me not onely abstain from printing any thing of this kinde, but to burn the very copies."<sup>14</sup>

The physical manifestation of Cowley's response to Statius differs from both that of May and Fairfax. While the burning of his books are in some sense an expiation, Cowley's actions are deliberately secular or, better put, pragmatic; though not in the sense that seems apparent vis-à-vis Fairfax. It has been argued recently that we "cannot presume that Cowley abandoned *The Civil War* for the same reasons that he later renounced it;" that is, Cowley's sense of political pragmatism is not simply the result of royalist loss.<sup>15</sup> According to David Trotter, Cowley's development of *The Civil War* is untenable because he could not adjust the proceedings of the Civil War to the epic genre.<sup>16</sup> Specifically, for Cowley there are too many details which cloud a clear resolution both in terms of genre and scope, and it is certainly true that, in its engagement with the concrete historical detail of the Civil War, Cowley's poem shifts

between genres. A poem that begins in clear epic mode, taking a sweeping view of both England's current conflict ("What rage does England it self divide") and its previous military triumphs under past rulers, such as Edward III, Henry V, and Elizabeth, goes almost immediately awry; and Cowley is at a loss both literally and figuratively (or one might say *form-atively*) to forge ahead. By the mid-1650s, however, Cowley needs to construct a type of politics and poetics of loss to explain the difficulty he faced writing an epic during the 1640s. Perhaps, then, in the same way that May and Fairfax use him to exorcise their feelings of loss and confusion about civil conflict and regicide, Cowley is able to marshal the two sentiments together, allowing Statius's Crispinus to become a model for loss both poetically and politically. These brief examples pale, however, in comparison to the most revealing case of Statian mediation during the English Civil War.

## II

In the opening book of the *Thebaid*, Statius recites an infamous event which occurs between Oedipus and Laius, king of Thebes: namely, Laius's death. Instead of merely narrating the events for us, Statius has Oedipus admit to this crime and other heinous deeds while beginning to curse his sons, Eteocles and Polynices. In Statius's rendering Oedipus perceives the events of his life as a series of conditional actions all of which now lead to the legitimating of his imprecation, and it is during this overture that he mentions killing his father:

Si bene quid merui, si me de matre cadentem  
Fovisti gremio et traiectum vulnere plantas  
Firmasti, si stagna peti Cirrhea bicorni  
Interfusa iugo, possem cum degere falso  
Contentus Polybo, trifidaque in Phocidos arto  
Longaevum implicui regem secuique tremantis  
Ora senis, dum quaero patrem...

(*Theb.* I. 60-66)

(If I've won aught the merit, if, when I  
 Dropped from my mother's womb, thy loving arms  
 Enfolded me and when my feet were pierced  
 Thou gavest me new strength; if I sought out  
 Cirrha's lake-waters winding in between  
 The two-horned summit, when I might have lived  
 Content with Polybus' deceit, and in  
 The pass of Phocis, where the tree ways meet,  
 Grappled an ancient king and slit the throat  
 Of that old trembling dotard in my search  
 For my true father...)<sup>17</sup>

Oedipus continues after these verses to confess and elaborate on the crimes he has committed, including his sexual encounters with Jocasta before finally reaching the curse itself. This passage is, nonetheless, remarkably unexceptional in and of itself. The death of Laius at the hands of Oedipus was common knowledge among learned men of 1640s-England, Oedipus being a regular figure in both literature and theater of the time. Moreover, Statius does not alter Sophocles's commonly known rendering of the Oedipus myth – at least at this point – so there is nothing new concerning the information being transmitted by our poet. But in the English translation of 1648, the confessional nature of Oedipus's speech takes a decidedly different turn and the same verses cited above read differently in significant ways:

If I have serv'd thee truly, whom I found  
 Nurse to my infancy, who heal'dst the wound  
 They bored through my feet; If I did go  
 At thy command to *Cyrrha's* streames, which flow  
 Twixt the two-headed Hill, when I might rather  
 Have staid with *Polybus*, my supposed Father.  
 Where in the Tower of three-top'd *Phocis*, I  
 Grappled with th' hoary King, and did deny  
 Life to his trembling joints, seeking to find  
 What there I lost, a Father:<sup>18</sup>

Though the translator remains largely faithful to the Latin throughout the passage, at the end he egregiously alters the text. The deliberately violent mutilation and

death of Laius expressed by Oedipus – an unknown act of treason, regicide, and patricide – is neither mentioned nor even implied. The translator’s choice, to “deny life” versus that of slitting the throat (*secuique tremētis ora senis*), diminishes Oedipus’s act so that it reads as a mere trifle or at least he is vague about the bodily violence so that Laius’s death almost seems gentle. Statius’s words, however, read as an execution, lobbing off the head of a king or ruler is a grotesque act of treason – all the more so when a son kills his father. The change is somewhat akin to that of Tacitus having written that Galba had simply been murdered by stabbing instead of writing that his throat had been slashed; or Suetonius’s even earthier rendering of the same story.<sup>19</sup> The change is indeed striking, almost startling. The mention of regicide is heavy, but for the reader the translator’s action generates a few immediate questions: Why would he attempt, in the first place, to conceal the violence towards the monarch when it is a well-known part of the story? How often is there a clear instance of unmediated manipulation of Statius’s text? Is our a translator an outspoken royalist like his publisher, Londoner, Richard Royston? What does “essay” mean in, *An essay upon Statius, or, The five first books of Publ. Papinius Statius his Thebais done into English verse by T.S., with the poetick history illustrated*. And, finally, just who is “T. S.”?

“T. S.” is Thomas Stephens, an Anglican priest and schoolmaster at Bury-St Edmunds during the 1640s and 1650s. A true *vir Papinianus*, Stephens translates the first five books of the *Thebaid* during this period as well as writes a commentary on Statius’s *Silvae* (1651). Though each is an extensive effort by him, neither has garnered much attention since the early eighteenth century. As such they have never been published in a modern critical edition of early translations of Statius’s work, and the entire secondary

literature dealing with Stephens amounts to a few paragraphs in a couple of books, and the same in a single article.<sup>20</sup> In part, Alexander Pope is to blame for some of this neglect. Pope, though he never mentions Stephens by name, states that he had read “a translation of part of Statius, by some very bad hand,” thus minimizing Stephens’s effort.<sup>21</sup> Even though Pope admits later that he liked the translation “extremely,” Stephens has remained anonymous and irrelevant. This is both interesting and troublesome since on the one hand Pope appears to have become Stephens’s brightest pupil, highlighting Stephens’s skill as a commentator and translator; while on the other there is a great expectation by those who know Dryden’s influence on Pope that in his much maligning of Statius, one would anticipate Dryden, not Pope, to mention Stephens’s translation and condemn it, but he never does.<sup>22</sup> One wonders why since Dryden never shied away from writing and publishing his thoughts, even making a sarcastic remark (in its preface no less) about his brother-in-law’s, Sir Robert Howard’s, translation of the *Achilleid* (1660).

It seems most likely that Stephens himself is responsible for the unglamorous reception his translation has had up until now, and that by his very own estimation of the project. In the preface he proclaims:

The translation was meditated, midst all the clamour and imployments of a publike Schoole; and so, cannot be so accomplish'd, as might be expected from a vacant retirednesse. And, when I shall tell thee, that it was intended for a help to my Scholars, for understanding the Poet, thou wilt not wonder at my marginall explications of the Poetick story.

The acknowledgment that his endeavors are to the benefit of school boys and that he has completed his manuscript within the confines of a grammar school easily lead to thoughts of his work being for amateurs by amateurs, at least by the modern scholar. It can also be presumed reasonably that Stephens *needs* to compose this work; after all, how else would his students be able to read Statius? But Stephens is certainly being as

modest as he is facetious here, since there is no translation of Statius's *Thebaid* that precedes his; his is the first and only translation in English. He further diminishes his work, however, by claiming that his notes are not for the serious scholar: "Those grander proficientes, who have digested that in their owne braines, may save themselves a labour of glancing on them: (I would provoke no man to looke asquint:) For others that want bladders, however in honour perhaps they had rather sinke, safety will perswade them to swim with this inferiour help."

While Stephens modestly diminishes his work it remains a puzzle worth understanding why and how, at points, he deliberately misleads the reader in his translation when much of the time he is a remarkably faithful – this is not to say a poetic. In an effort to staunch his simplifying of the translation Stephens offers to qualify his work:

I know the common Fate of Translations, which are seldome read intire, but by snatches; and such pieces onely, as are pre-judg'd by the critick Reader, where the Translatour is sentenc'd, according as he jumps with the others fancy. Yet censure me as thou wilt: So I benefit any, I have my end...

His comments at this point generate the question of what would provoke Stephens to compose his translation, with or without a concern for objectivity, in the midst of such "clamour and employments" in the first place if he is going to take what we might view as a type of nihilism. The answer lies in his estimation of the "critic Reader."

Translating Statius during the 1640s, as we see with Thomas May, is a politically charged endeavor, one that requires Stephens to seemingly indicate quickly his political affiliation. By dedicating his work to two prominent, and old, royalist patriarchs from East Anglia, Sir William D'Oyly and Baron William Paston (later, Sir), Stephens's

political leanings appear to be clear. Unlike the rest of the preface which was written in English, Stephens writes the dedication in Latin. It reads:

NOBILI AMICORUM PARI, Do. GULIELMO PASTON BARONETTO,  
ET Do. GULIELMO D'OYLY EQV: AVRATO, MVSARVM EXVLVM  
ASYLIS, ET RELIGIONIS PROFLIGATAE ASSERTORIBVS, PATRONIS  
EIVS PLVRIMVM HONORANDIS, THOMAS STEPHENS VOTO ET  
MANCIPI CLIENS ADDICTISSIMUS, HASCE STATIANAS PRIMITIAS,  
IN GRATI ANIMI TESTIMONIUM, L. M. M.M.D.D.C.Q.

(To a noble pair of friends, Master William Paston, Baronet, and Master William D'Oyly, the Golden Knight, sanctuaries of the exiled muses, and claimants of a ruined religion, perpetual defenders of his honor; I, Thomas Stephens, an ally most dedicated to the purchaser dedicate these Statian verses as first fruits in evidence of a grateful soul.)

Though the reference to D'Oyly as the "Golden Knight" perhaps stands out most prominently to a modern scholar, since Sir Henry Cromwell (Oliver Cromwell's father) also referred to himself as such, what seems to stand out most for Stephens is that D'Oyly and Paston serve as stand-ins for a royalist prescriptive: defenders of the realm, reclaimers of faith, and, just as importantly, sanctuaries for literary production. What, or rather, who is missing from the preface is overwhelmingly obvious: Charles I. There is no mention of "regnum," "rex," or some other Latinate variation of Charles. Charles I is completely absent from Stephens's dedication.

At first glance this seems peculiar: why should there not be an ode or verse or few lines by Stephens dedicated to the king? After all Sherburne openly and decidedly dedicates his translation of Seneca to Charles I in 1648.<sup>23</sup> Yet, Sherburne's dedication gives false hope; the reality was that Charles I was already being mourned as a lost cause. Thomas Stanley, in fact, creates the Order of the Black Ribband to mourn the loss of the King following the defeat at Newbury in 1643 – the same time Cowley abandons hope of a Royalist victory. More importantly, when one compares contemporary dedications by

acknowledged royalists or loyalists to that of Stephens's a distinct pattern emerges, one that it is sufficient to observe by noting Robert Herrick's dedication to his *Hesperides*. It reads thus:

TO THE MOST  
ILLUSTRIOVS,  
AND  
Most Hopefull Prince  
CHARLES,  
Prince of Wales.<sup>24</sup>

There is no mistaking Herrick's appeal to Charles II; the *Hesperides* are not worthy of the King's attention, rather it is the son who bears responsibility for inspiring him to produce such verses. Thus, Herrick's is an appeal to the future – and one that will pay off following Charles II's return in 1660. For Stephens, however, it is difficult to surmise with whom he associates himself, since besides the use of "eius" the monarchy seems little favored. This seems to be precisely the point Stephens intends to make: the Latin deliberately clouds his political leanings more than it reveals them.

Though Stephens attempts to obfuscate his political affiliation, his translation comes to print through the royalist printing house of Richard Royston, a relationship which necessarily stamps its affiliation upon the text itself and its author – at least to a degree. At the time of the *Thebaid's* printing Royston was in the midst of producing, publishing and editing, in concert with king, the *Eikon Basilike*, Charles I's perspective about his role and duties as king. Thus, the political nature of any publication issued forth from Royston's press at this particular time would have been apparent to followers of the monarch.<sup>25</sup> Upon first glance, then, this estimation presents Stephens's translation as little more than that of royalist propaganda; and while Stephens's personal history will certainly confirm a type of monarchical support, his translation presents a

sophisticated confluence of contemporary political and scholarly care and interest. Accordingly, it is not a typical royalist canto; the history of Thebes does not allow for such ease and conformity.

Stephens in fact suggests to his reader how his tome ought to be taken.<sup>26</sup> In his dedication “To the ingenuous Reader” Stephens states:

For those Criticall pens ... would have deserv'd better of the Commonwealth of Learning, if they had held a torch to the darke and mysterious places of the Poem: Which, I dare say, would not be so much neglected, but that it is so little understood. The subject matter of the worke, is the most ancient of any History recorded by the Poets: And were it not preserv'd in our Authour, it had been, long since, worne out by Time: Appearing now like old ruines, which preserve the memory of a place, although the forme be wholly decay'd.

By emphasizing the dark and mysterious parts of Statius's poem as the impediments to understanding the *Thebaid* Stephens attempts to locate his work in the political and social imaginations of mid seventeenth-century English writers. In every sense, then, Stephens manipulates the reception of his translation by claiming Statius to be difficult to understand.<sup>27</sup> Such an attitude, in fact, seems to constitute an evasion of the critical task and indeed runs counter to the duty of the critic to interpret the text, to determine its verbal meaning, to get at its significance – all the more so for the translator during the seventeenth century. Peregrine D'Oyly (no relation to Sir D'Oyly mentioned earlier) clarifies Stephens's estimation here; in a prefatory ode he presents the achievement of his translation as:

That crown'd our *Author*? where's the *baies* that did  
Inrich his glorious head? shall *vertue* rise  
To a *higher* pitch, and have a *cheaper* price?  
Yet with *neglect* there's *safety*: Seldome's praise  
Secure, but *aemulation* blasts the *baies*.

The *Thebaid*, admittedly, makes heavy demands on the literary competence of even the most careful reader, but it is a challenge (“aemulation” in this case) that a serious critic should take up rather than avoid. Virtue itself is at stake.

Indeed, D'Oyly's insistence on “virtue” underscores that the normative and didactic function of poetry is altered during the Civil War, increasing the use of poetry and poets as mere objects in ever-increasing propaganda wars, as arbiters of righteousness and virtue as well as liars and heretics, depending upon one's perspective and political affiliation. . Most dedications to these texts during the period at hand have a certain audience in mind, and beyond this a cultural encoding works to create an intended reader, such as the “Critick reader,” or “reader extraordinary” as Jonson puts it. In dedicating his work to men such as D'Oyly and Paston, Stephens presumes a rank and a readership for his text.<sup>28</sup> Monarchal publications, presumably, were more interested in control – this text is explicitly called “dark,” for example – and show an awareness of how print culture can affect the opinions of the population. Their dedications construct a notion of a fit audience who were “true Christians, and right borne Englishmen” (or defenders of the faith, muses and sovereignty) within a specific community that excludes those who attempt to interpret or subvert the meaning of a text. So the textual space that the reader of Stephens's translation is invited to enter is one of fixed boundaries; one of set social rules and practices; and one of hierarchical rituals and structures.

### III

Much of the modern criticism of the *Thebaid* argues, correctly to my mind, that in addition to communicating his own feelings and thoughts, Statius delivers to those willing to listen a pointed message concerning government and politics through the use of myth and allegory, much as Sidney argues for in his own *Defense*. As Stephens's

interpretation will show, this is precisely what he attempts to undertake in his translation of the *Thebaid*. Stephens, in fact, presents the *Thebaid* as an instrument which is meant for the edification of its audience, relying heavily on the Jonsonian “reader extraordinary” to make his translation accessible. The literal effort of translation by this point in time, as Lois Potter convincingly shows, gives way to a “sense of tone and aesthetic evaluation” which is “accessible to readers in proportion to their worthiness.”<sup>29</sup> Put in his own idiom, Stephens offers this ode in the preface of his translation of the *Thebaid*:

“Singing in Thebes’s Ruines, hee does teach  
The listning stones to mend the breach  
Wouldst know! Read his straines Thoust find  
This shews his face, but Those his Mind.”<sup>30</sup>

By declaring that Statius’s genius and intention (i.e. his “Mind”) are present for those who know how to access them, Statius can teach Stephens’s audience about the downfall of Thebes in a way that reconstructs its ruins into previous form for historical analysis and political allegory. Stephens’s short, introductory poem about Statius is followed on the opposite facing page of the front matter by a fragment of Juvenal’s seventh satire. Instead of the expected and famous – well, to *viri Papiniani* – commendation of Statius for his ability to appeal beyond the implied learned audience to the *libidine volgi*, the lusty crowd, Stephens, intriguingly, quotes a subsequent pair of verses. In Latin they read:

tum par ingenio pretium, tunc utile multis  
pallere et uinum toto nescire Decembri.<sup>31</sup>

(Genius in those days met with its due reward; many then found their profit in pale cheeks and in abjuring potations all through December.)<sup>32</sup>

Juvenal's lament here is that poets like Statius do not have the patrons who understand them vis-à-vis Horace's Maecenas, whom he mentions later on in the poem. For Stephens, however, Statius deserves to have an understanding patron, albeit a seventeenth-century one, who has the ability to protect him and not allow him to grow wan and weak. In other words, to reinvigorate Statius and the *Thebaid* (contra *pallere*) by shining the light directly upon him in order to have his brilliance radiate forth according to its merit. But with great care Stephens does not present the ancient testimonia of Statius's significance and poetic brilliance; nor does he give the laudations of any early moderns (e.g. Poliziano, Scaliger, Erasmus, etc.), or even his vita. For Stephens, once he translates the *Thebaid* Statius will need no one's recommendation; his text will speak for itself – or perhaps Stephens will.

The neglect of, and impediment to, translating the *Thebaid* was, according to Stephens, its inherent darkness and mysteriousness. Stephens himself states that he will hold “the torch to the darke and mysterious places of the Poem,” so that it might be understood in terms of “the most ancient of any History recorded by the Poets.” The act of illuminating is in fact carried over by Thomas Poley, who states in his commendatory poem of Stephens's translation:

*Tis that which raises wonder to thy Booke.  
To see therein light out of darknesse strooke.  
Lucan and Ovid, with such easie men,  
Are fit worke for a mere Rimers pen:  
And cryptick Juvenal, though darke he be,  
We see unnighted is by Farnaby.*

For Poley Stephens's translation is in essence an act of “unnighting” Statius. But Poley leaves unsaid what this “dark and mysterious” characteristic is in the first place.

“Dark and mysterious” as a phrase connotes a lack of understanding or even misunderstanding; and more often than not it is found written in the explication of difficult parts of scriptural rather than secular exegesis. A quick glance back to chapter three details that there was no shortage of published editions of Statius’s *Thebaid* in the seventeenth century. Additionally, from a review of early seventeenth-century school curricula it is clear that Statius was as well known to the educated classes as any other Roman author during this period often showing up in scattered citations of the *Silvae* and *Thebaid*.<sup>33</sup> Sometimes this same observation can be about a poet’s style. If we were to interpret these words in terms of style, Statius’s alleged darkness or mysteriousness contrasts diametrically with the eyebrow-raising label, “easie,” given to Lucan; since in some way this description reads as a direct attempt to remove one of the foremost *auctores* of the art of *difficultà* from his post and put him on the same level as Ovid. This assertion is by its very nature counter-intuitive, since Statius was not known to be difficult in that way; nor do any of his Renaissance commentators, admirers (or detractors), comment on this apparent difficulty. Rather they state that Statius is *emendantissimus* (very eruditely refined), that he conquers with sweetness (“*sauve quo vincit*”), or he is *tumefactus* (swollen with pride in regard to his ability to imitate Vergil). “[E]asie,” therefore, as a term that designates stylistic difficulty must have an alternate meaning. Looking again at the context it can be asserted that instead of style what is meant is not that Lucan is “easie,” but rather in terms of what he implies within his verse is easily intelligible. In other words, according to Poley and confirmed by Stephens, Lucan’s story is easy to comprehend; it is very clearly a battle between republicans and imperialists, or Pompey and Caesar. Statius’ story is not so clear.

, “[E]asie” indicated that Lucan was a conduit for the truth rather than poetic fantasy; yet, in order to see this clearly, we must divert our attention to these men for a moment. In Sir Arthur Gorges’s translation of the *Pharsalia* (1614) he makes no mention of what he himself thinks of Lucan. His dedication in fact speaks to how this effort is a present to impress his Mistress – and that his father approved of such wooing! There is no talk of its importance as a historical document, epic poetry, or anything else. He left this effort to his extollers in their dedicatory poems, where they are quite clear that Lucan’s value resides in his ability to speak the truth about imperial aspirations and human nature. Their overarching conclusion is that his work is historical and true. It is necessary to read them all at length to get a sense of just how pervasive this idea was:

HAD *Lucan* hid the truth to please the time,  
 He had beene too vnworthy of thy Penne:  
 Who neuer sought, nor euer car'd to clime  
 By flattery, or seeking worthlesse men.  
 For this thou hast been bruis'd: but yet those scarres  
 Do beautifie no lesse, then those wounds do  
 Receiu'd in iust, and in religious warres;  
 Though thou hast bled by both, and bearest them too.  
 Change not, to change thy fortune tis too late.  
 Who with a manly faith resolves to dye,  
 May promise to himselfe a lasting state,  
 Though not so great, yet free from infamy.  
 Such was thy *Lucan*, whom so to translate  
 Nature thy Muse (like LVCANS) did create  
 W. R

HOMER and MARO, that did Poetize,  
 As much in matter, as in kinde of stile,  
 Did thereby dimme the glorious deeds the while  
 Of them, whose acts they meant to memorize.  
 So did not LVCAN, who (in other guise)  
 The gests of two great Worthies did compile;  
 S'deining their high atchieuements to defile,  
 Or inter-lace with idle vanities.  
 Therefore how farre from Fable Truth is set,  
 So farre aboue all feigners LVCAN shines;

While in his Muse both faculties are met,  
That with sweet Number beauteous Truth combines.  
And we to thee in endlesse debt must dwell  
For making *Lucan* speake our tongue so well.  
S. S.

LVCAN, that first in the Imperiall tongue  
(In naked truth of acted history)  
The ciuill wounds made for an Empire song;  
Hath checkt precedent, taught succeeding *Poesy*,  
That flatteries and fictions may delight,  
May please a Tyrant, wrong a rightfull King,  
May please an Orphan Iudgment, wrong the right,  
Enuelop Truth, proclaime an vntrue thing.  
*Lucan*, that first hath showne the force of verse,  
Relating onely what was seene, felt, donne,  
Of Conqu'rors triumphs, of the Conqu'reds herse,  
All as it left, all as it first begunne.  
Not like the *Trojan* Theamers, fit for schooles,  
Fabling of this and that in Heauen, Earth, Hell,  
Sober to mad-men, turning wise to fooles,  
Gods to be Neat-heards, men in starres to dwell,  
Hath match't the faith, that History requires:  
Hath match't best History in choyce of phrase:  
Hath taught, that History in nought aspires  
Aboue the truth of deeds, it selfe to raise.  
This *Lucan* for his truth a *Truch-man* gaines  
As true to him, as he to Truth remaines.  
T. W.

The word “truth” or its variant “true” is found so many times throughout these poems that there is no mistaking how *Lucan* was supposed to be read and thus how he was not to be read. “Fabling” poets, such as *Vergil* and *Homer*, pale in comparison to *Lucan*’s wit, according to these men. *Stattius* garners not so much as a syllable’s worth of interest.

*Thomas May*’s dedication to his translation of the *Pharsalia* in 1631 strikes a similar tone. In it he is at pains to combine *Lucan*’s truthfulness with that of his prowess as a historian. He states it like this:

The great subiect of this stately *Poem*, together with the worth of the noble *Author*, haue enboldned me to present the Translation... The matter

of this Worke is a true History adorned and heightned with *Poetical raptures*, which doe not adulterate, nor corrupt the truth, but giue it a more sweet and pleasant relish. The History of it, is the greatest of Histories, the affaires of *Rome*, whose transcendent greatnes will admit no comparison with other *States* either before, or after it...

To read Lucan, then, is to see the truth.<sup>34</sup> There is no searching for any meaning, no mulling over who is right and who is wrong, and there is certainly no room for darkness. Lucan's story happened; it is not fictive in the way of other epics. His characters are real and so too their actions. Moreover, there are no gods to confuse the situation, only men. It is, therefore, tempting to understand how Stephens's translation of the *Thebaid* is received vis-à-vis Lucan's *Pharsalia* – the *Thebaid*'s contemporary rival – after all each presents a bloody and horrific war between family members for control of the state. However, as many similarities as arise between the two epics there is one marked difference. Contrary to Lucan's *Pharsalia*, where the end of republicanism (and hence the Republic itself) is given a gruesome death, the *Thebaid* is clearly about monarchical control.

#### IV

While it is true that Lucan is regaled as the poet who perhaps best represented an emerging republican ideology and the political actions of Parliamentarians from the 1620s to the 1640s, it is also true that other classical epicists, such as Ovid, Vergil, and even Statius, are never out-shown by him, either as vehicles for political discourse or (especially) as models for poetical virtuosity in the normative and didactic realms. Keeping the latter in mind, it becomes equally tempting to argue that Stephens intends to set himself against both of Lucan's translators, Thomas May and Sir Arthur Gorges, since there are numerous characteristics about the *Thebaid* which make it a stronger candidate for disabusing one of the notions that civil war will have a result with

anything positive in nature. Still, the present-day assertion that republicanism is present in the minds and, therefore, the actions of seventeenth-century political operatives is difficult to eschew completely. Indeed, there is clear evidence that political thought prior to the Civil War is suffused by the political ideas drawn from both Roman and Renaissance republics (like Venice); and, moreover, the passion with which these assertions are made deeply affect the political milieu of the period. However, in presenting the likes of Lucan as a culmination of the political thought and action of republicanism there is an obfuscation of the distinction between the civic vocabulary in the run-up to the war and the contentions for a kingless rule following 1649. Using Lucan to symbolize a burgeoning constitutional republicanism is hardly unique, nor surprising – see More’s *Utopia*, Shakespeare’s *Coriolanus* and *Julius Caesar*, or Bacon or Sidney. Constitutional law and custom made moot the search of other (even ideal) models of governance – constitutional and parliamentary debate rarely converged in any meaningful or substantive way. In the end, these debates always take the monarchy for granted; it is part of the custom – republican political thought has to imagine that the monarchy is *always* the secondary method of governing, which is rejected as facetious at best.<sup>35</sup> The *Thebaid* never presumes that the people could rule more effectively without a monarch, only that tyranny is improper government; so too joint government for that matter. In the end, however, nearly any observation on civil war that one can derive from the *Pharsalia*, can be had from the *Thebaid*. So what, again, is the point of “easie?” Perhaps an additional tact will help clarify.

The extollers of Stephens saw their translator’s efforts as an action akin to *poesis*, building from Statius’s text a poem which becomes his own and owes nothing

necessarily to Statius except its moral, making Statius's Latin merely a medium through which Stephens works. The way, in fact, that they expresses this action was through a comparison between poetry and painting, and between the actual and the ideal. In specific, they attribute to Stephens the same abilities that the ancient painter Apelles had. It is worth taking a considerable look at their statements. They read, in order:

Quis novus hic Hermes vatem felicibus umbris  
 Evocat? & lucum cultore superbum  
 Elysium viduat? Manes, quibus esse sodalis  
 Dignatus f[...] m[...]rent; passim innuba laurus,  
 Et P[...]bi marcent myrti, florentque cupressi.  
 Post C[...]m quisnam Venerem tentaret Apellem?  
 Hoc fac[...]s! Authoris tamen hic Veneres, Charitesque  
 Spirat, & in versu redivivus Statius omni...  
*Reginaldus Bekenham*

... To overdraw  
 Were error in *Apelles* 'gainst the Law  
 Imagery commands, since in these arts  
 The beauty of the likeness wonder darts,  
 And makes the miracle, Hence flows your fame,  
 We can but only say 'tis not the same.  
 The short-liv'd issues then of such, whose braine  
 Needes others workes as bladders in the maine  
 Of wit and fancy, these we terme Translation;  
 You -'s brooke no other Title then creation  
*Rob: Baldocke*

ART, Sir, workes miracles: she can *Revive*  
 Men dead, in *years* and *Fame*, and bid them *Live*;  
 And *speake* a Language which *they knew not*, and  
 More *sense* perhaps, then *They did understand*.  
 (Some Comments *courteously bely*, and wit  
 Authors into more Raptures, then they writ.)  
 Your *Statius* ne're knew *English* sure...  
 His *text* owes wit unto your *Paraphrase*.  
 Which you *so* turn'd, wrought, sweat untill you hit  
 What *Statius* in English *should* have writ...  
 Strange Artist! who doest thus miraculously  
 Paint *Shapes*: And then paint 'st *Day* to view them by. *Clem: Paman.*<sup>36</sup>

Apelles's appeal to these English scholars signifies the efforts of both poets and painters to represent the actual and ideal in their works. The point of these allusions to Apelles is intriguing as connections between poetry and painting; but primarily they are used for expressing the "Art" needed to create both symbolic and realistic works, a feat that is inherently difficult to do, but one which is given great light by recalling Jonson's response in *Underwood* to the poem of Sir William Burlase.<sup>37</sup>

In his poem, Burlase (*Underwood* 52: "A Poem sent me by Sir William Burlase. The Painter to the Poet.") relates the painter's difficulty in painting the hidden qualities of a person's worth; that is, values that are easily assessed though not expressed.<sup>38</sup> (He is, in fact, trying to depict Jonson's worth.) Indeed, Jonson's reply is that Burlase's real problem is not painting Jonson's inner worth, but containing his own within a prescribed limit, namely, a small canvas.<sup>39</sup> In other words, how is he, Burlase, supposed to limit all that he can see? Jonson refigures Burlase's complaint into a question of idealization versus the truth, quipping: "You made it a brave piece, but not like me." The problem for us then, as Jonson presents it, echoes the division being played out between Statius and Lucan; for, at least according to those who have chosen to comment, Lucan represented truth and Statius art. For Jonson a poet is able to express in "black and white" the inner qualities of any person he deems appropriate because he is free to do so. So he does not have to idealize, since, if he wants, he can name the qualities he wishes in a person, offering a true (at least to him) depiction of that person. In reality, however, what Jonson suggests is that the poet has the ability to be didactic and normative through (actual) description.

Looking at Baldocke's assertion above that Stephens's efforts are comparable to Apelles's, one notices precisely the same contrast Jonson draws for Burlase. The Apelles-

Stephens idealization comments on how Statius swerves around the truthful and “easie” Lucan (as May and Gorges’s extollers would have it), so that he becomes the nominclator of actualization through idealization. Since Statius and Stephens rely on the reader, the onus of interpretation falls squarely back upon him. For in offering to depict Thebes Stephens’s work becomes a type of historical poetry, or rather “Poetick History,” recording and describing the realities of experiences which as poetry it necessarily transforms and idealizes. Therefore, the use of Apelles by Stephens’s extollers to describe what he achieves clearly prevents a comparison with Lucan, and makes Lucan’s work indeed “easie.”

## V

Now having moved past Statius’s and Stephens’s contemporary rivals there is one literary giant left to deal with: Vergil. Interestingly, Stephens does not mention Vergil but in his notes, which as mentioned before are rather simplistic and unassuming, though, not necessarily uninteresting. The same holds for his notes that cite Vergil; most of the time they are nothing more than mythological references. This lack of citation does not mean, however, that Vergil is absent from Stephens’s mind or text. In fact, I would argue it is quite the contrary seeing as how the Troy myth is a predominant theme of royalist poetry during the period. As Nigel Smith has argued, “Despite the military victories of Parliament in 1644 and 1645, royalist pamphlets continued to exploit epic language right up to the execution of Charles, even if they turned to the Troy legend as a far more fitting source than the Roman civil wars... But while the epic fittingly framed royalist degeneration, other epic theorists and practitioners were led to redesign the genre in very different terms.”<sup>40</sup> While Smith is concerned about the creation of puritan or parliamentary epic theory he overlooks how Stephens’s translation of the *Thebaid* so

easily inverts and complicates the perceived royalist failure to create epic by both co-opting and preceding the Troy myth through a Vergil-Statius dynamic.

Vergil is the poet who stands as the authorizing source for Latin poets writing about Thebes. That is, Vergil is the poet who signifies civilization and legitimates the vast project of establishing empire, national destiny, and heroic identity through Aeneas, “a vertuous man in all fortunes” and “so excellent a man in every way,” as Sidney put it. A career that included epic within its trajectory cannot but engage with the *Aeneid*, whether it comes in the first or seventeenth century. Certainly, that was the case for Statius; so it must be for Stephens as well. Thus, Vergil’s authority is, in this sense, inseparable from the narrative fiction of the *Thebaid*, as much as it is the *Aeneid*.

There is no greater proponent of Vergil’s epic in England prior to the 1640s than Sidney, and it is to him we turn in order to see how Vergil’s relationship with Statius was perceived in its poetical and epic terms. According to Sidney:

Nature neuer set forth the earth in so rich tapistry, as diuers Poets haue done... Her world is brasen, the Poets only deliuer a golden...so it seemeth in him her vttermost cunning is employed, and knowe whether shee haue brought foorth so true a louer as *Theagines*, so constant a friende as *Pilades*, so valiant a man as *Orlando*, so right a Prince as *Xenophons Cyrus*: so excellent a man euery way, as *Virgils Aeneas*: neither let this be iestingly conceiued, because the works of the one be essentiall: the other, in imitation or fiction: for any vnderstanding knoweth the skil of the Artificer, standeth in that *Idea* or fore-conceite of the work, & not in the work it selfe.<sup>41</sup>

Sidney recognizes Vergil’s brilliance is in his imitative quality and fictive ability; but his primary excellence lies in the intent of the work itself, the “fore-conceite” or “Idea.” What the author intends by his poem is of paramount importance for Sidney. For him there must a preconceived message for his audience to apprehend. Sidney’s epic poet therefore needs to create a “golden” world in order to achieve this goal. Stephens, too,

has recognized Sidney's conceit that the natural world is of a brazen nature, while the poets' is golden; but he inverts them.

Stephens has Statius as part of the brazen world in the front matter of his translation. There he is represented as a bust with the laureate crown, under which is this poem:

*Minervas* Laureate breaths, whose face  
Is heere acquainted first with brass:  
His lofty stile, yet smooth and trim,  
Can make ev'n Tumours beauteous seem  
Romes Orpheus, who creates a GROVE,  
Which t'o thers Musicke could but move:  
Singing Thebes's Ruines, hee does teach  
The listning stones to mend the breach  
Wouldst know him! read his straines Thoust find  
This shews his face, but Those his Mind.

For Stephens, Statius is only concerned with brass not gold. He sings of "Ruines" brought about by "fraternas acies" and "regna profanis" not "conderet ubrem" and "altae moenia Romae." Vergil's epic is precisely the opposite of the *Thebaid*. Sidney, in fact, in his only comment on the *Thebaid*, recognizes this fact when he remarks that the *Thebaid* is about "the violence of ambition in the two *Theban* brothers." It is, therefore, inherently different from the *Aeneid*, where the violence is underscored precisely because it is attached to an effort that is un-virtuous and un-heroic. Certainly the *Aeneid*, in its last books, is remarkably violent; however, the violence is condoned as ultimately necessary; Aeneas is not a character who can be labeled ambitious nor prone to violence for its sake alone. It is only for the sake of civilization and acts of *pietas* that Aeneas employs his *arma*. The *Thebaid* is precisely the opposite of the *Aeneid* in this regard; thus the violence attached to ambition is immoral.

Stephens's effort at translation therefore has to renegotiate and re-imagine the normative and didactic aspect of the Sidneian poet's expectation of heroism. Instead of relating an inspirational, heroic tale of civilization and empire, Stephens's times call for historical perspective through "Poetick History," a perspective that anticipated a bleak future full of rage, impiety, indecency, and Godly revenge. Statius invents, and Stephens adopts, the story of internecine warfare between Oedipus's sons Eteocles and Polynices within the ethics and ideology of Vergil's poem, but calls into question everything the *Aeneid* would have us believe about heroic enterprise and imperial culture. Stephens, therefore, inverts Sidneian poetics.

In the *Apology for Poetry* Sidney presents a seemingly dichotomous argument, one that appears to present the moral value of poetry, while also including historians as part of the poetic enterprise; since history could direct, charm, and motivate its readers with images of an archetype-virtue as well as could poetry. When compared to the strict historian, the poet was in Sidney's mind especially valuable and significant, for:

the Poet (as I sayd before) never affirmeth. The Poet never maketh any circles about your imagination, to coniure you to believe for true what he writes. Hee citeth not authorities of other Histories, but even for hys entry calleth sweete Muses to inspire into him a good invention; in troth, not labouring to tell you what is, or is not, but what should or should not be.<sup>42</sup>

Sidney, consequently, proclaims that poetry supplies its readers with an ideal moral standard. Poetry is normative since it teaches moral, civic and religious values to England. Poets pursued a transcendental truth.<sup>43</sup> But what does it say about Statius and Stephens that their epics do none of these things?

Stephens is quite clear in his translation that there are no heroes to be found in the *Thebaid*. Where Statius uses the word "hero," Stephens always translates it as

“champion,” the definition of which at the time has little to do with heroism and everything to do with violence. The most critical instance of this use happens to be its first. At l.41, Statius utters: “quem prius heroum, Clio, dabis?” Now, it is quite clear that Statius intends to call into question, at least here, whether his characters should be deemed heroes by the verses following his initial question:

...inmodicum irae  
Tydea? laurigeri subitōs an uatis hiatus?  
urguet et hostilem propellens caedibus amnem  
turbidus Hippomedon, plorandaque bella proterui  
Arcados atque alio Capaneus horrore canendus.

(Tydeus, untrammēd in his wrath? Or the laurellēd seer’s sudden chasm?  
Stormy Hippomedon too is upon me, pushing the river his enemy with  
corpses. And I must mourn the fight of the overbold Arcadian, and sing  
Capaneus in consternation never felt before.)<sup>44</sup>

These verses are hardly endorsements, and they beg the question: Why would Statius want to start with such un-heroic characters? Stephens, however, alters Statius’s questioning tone by translating the same passage in this way:

What Champion (Muse) do'st first remember? Is't  
Inraged Tydēus? or Apollo's Priest,  
Buried before he's dead? Or is't the proud  
Hyppomedon, whose slaughters stop the flood  
That overwhelm'd him? Or wilt weep the tale  
Of young Parthenopaeus funerall?  
When that's spun out, take Capanēus, and tell  
(But with a greater horrore) how he fell.<sup>45</sup>

There is no question for Stephens of whether or not there are heroes in the *Thebaid*. There are none. Eteocles is a full of rage and deceit, Polynices of anger and bitterness. The Argive band who attack Thebes represent horrifying excess or pathetic deficit: Tydeus dies gnawing the skull of the man; Jupiter strikes down Capaneus after he challenges the gods; Hippomedon becomes blinded by fury; and Parthenopaeus strikes one as a coward.

Heroism is replaced by nothing more than thuggery in the *Thebaid*, with the leaders indistinguishable from common soldiers – their heroism dissolves into human actions. Consequently, these are not the heroes defined as those “ancient Bastards, that the Poets called *Hero's*, or demy gods, have bin esteemed Sonnes of a god, and of a mortall woman, or of a Goddesse, and of a mortall man because of their admirable, and above humane vertue, as *Hercules*, *Achilles*, *Aeneas*, *Romulus*, and others;” or those “Princes, and men of conspicuous power (anciently called *Heroes*) a luster and influence upon the rest of men, resembling that of the Heavens.”<sup>46</sup>

The denial of heroism flies directly in the face of the prevailing epic theory, not only by Sidney as noted above, but in Stephens’s contemporaries Hobbes and Davenant. Hobbes in fact states that:

...the Poets, (whose work it is by imitating humane life, in delightful and measur’d lines, to avert men from vice, and encline them to vertuous and honorable actions)... But the subject of a Poeme is the manners of men, not naturall causes; manners presented, not dictated; and manners feyned (as the name of Poesy imports) not found in men.<sup>47</sup>

The normative aspect of poetry is therefore maintained by Hobbes, since heroic poetry (that is, primarily epic poetry) must pertain to virtue, honor, and manners of mankind. But as noted at the beginning of this chapter the manners and actions of mankind are necessary to forget, at least for Fairfax and Cowley. For May, however, who is presumably writing his history at the same time Stephens is translating, something else is in the air. The King is not quite dead yet. This fracture of divine governance has its parallel in the wholesale collapse of heroism.

For May it is an “impiety to God” to forget to relate “his judgement upon a kingdome.” Therefore, he is loath to make that mistake even if he has to be severe in his

assessment. Stephens similarly draws his own stakes; from the ruins of Thebes he will teach Statius's mind, and hence his memory. Stephens's recognition of Statius's world as brazen reasserts itself in identifying the world of Thebes with the world of man. In other words, Thebes which provided the negative model for Athens and Rome with regard "to notions of the proper management of city, society, and self" now is the reflection of London and England at large. The memory of the Civil War has altered Froma Zeitlin's plausible theory about Athens' tragic interest in Thebes "as the site of displacement." Rather, much as Hobbes conceived:

Time and education begets experience; Experience begets memory; Memory begets Judgement, and Fancy; Judgement begets the strength and structure; and Fancy begets the ornaments of a Poeme. The Ancients therefore fabled not absurdly, in making memory mother of the Muses. For memory is the World (though not really, yet so as in a looking glasse) in which the Judgement the severer Sister busieth her selfe in grave and rigide examination of all the parts of Nature, and in registering by Letters, their order, causes, uses, differences and resemblances.<sup>48</sup>

But whereas Hobbes intends his statement to be used to produce epic poetry which is virtuous and honorable and without divine inspiration, his estimation can only come at a distance from Charles I's death. It cannot be assumed beforehand. Nor for Stephens does Davenant's assertion hold true, that:

to derive my Theme from elder times, as thinking it no little mark of skilfulness to comply with the common Infirmitie; for men (even of the best education) discover their eyes to be weak, when they look upon the glory of virtue (which is great actions) and rather endure it at distance than near; being more apt to believe, and love the renown of Predecessors, than of Contemporaries, whose deeds excelling theirs in their own sight, seem to upbraid them, and are not reverenc'd as examples of Virtue, but envi'd as the favours of Fortune: But to make great Actions credible, is the principal Art of Poet

Perhaps this perspective could be spawned and maintained at a distance in time and space from England; but for those in the midst of the Civil War it is certainly not the case.

Still Davenant and Hobbes do have some insight to offer. Davenant in assessing his epic predecessors Vergil, Homer, Lucan and Statius states that:

*Statius* (with whom we may conclude the old Heroicks) is as accomptable to some for his obligations to *Virgill*, as *Virgill* is to others for what he owes to Homer; and more closely than *Virgill* waits on *Homer*, doth *Statius* attend *Virgill*, and follows him there also where Nature never comes, even into Heaven and Hell: and therefore he cannot escape such as approve the wisdom of the best Dramaticks...<sup>49</sup>

That is, because Statius follows Vergil so closely he necessarily shares the same flaws; namely, relying too much on tragedians. But, if that is so he also parallels Vergil's virtues which Hobbes defines:

As the Description of Great men and Great Actions is the constant is the constant designe of a Poet; so the Descriptions of worthy circumstances are necessary accessions to a Poeme, and being well performed are the Jewels and most pretious ornaments of Poesy. Such in *Virgil* are *The Funerall*, *The House of Astragon*, *The Library*, and *the Temples*, equall to his, or to those of *Homer* whom he imitated.<sup>50</sup>

For the both of them, then, epic is nothing less than an attempt to reestablish the education of princes:

The Common Crowd (of whom wee are hopelesse) wee desert; being rather to be corrected by lawes...then to be taught by Poesy...Nor is it needful that Heroique Poesy should be levell'd to the reach of Common men; for if the examples it presents prevaile upon their Chiefs, the delight of Imitation...will rectify by the Rules...<sup>51</sup>

But, as Hobbes admits, since epics traditionally reflect on the glory of the ruler in whose reign they are written, it is only fitting in the circumstances that *Gondibert* uses fictional

characters, taking the scene of heroism away from the historical stage. In this sense, “the royalist epic imagination retreats or internalizes, in a somewhat similar way.”<sup>52</sup>

In imperial Rome, then, as well as seventeenth-century London, events at Thebes still instruct the audience; but Thebes is no longer the other. It has become the self: civil war, monarchical power and problems of dynastic succession are real concerns. In brief, monarchy, inheritance of it and its role in society similarly confront Thebes, Flavian Rome, and London in the *Thebaid*. Thebes is a metaphor to examine civil war and its concomitant problems.

One way in which Roman imperial epic could address the topic of civil war was to engage the *Aeneid*. The nature of the relationship between Vergil’s poem and the establishment of the principate after the civil wars between Antony and Octavian is controversial now, but for early moderns the poem created a link between the two. Specifically at stake for them is Vergil’s connection between himself and Augustus, and the way he incorporates the gods into the arrangement of the narrative. For example, in the *Aeneid*, with the obvious exception of Juno, the Olympian gods act to help and to benefit the Roman state, highlighting simultaneously Augustan Rome. Remember, Jupiter’s speech in book one begins by discussing Rome’s earliest history, then moves towards the peace that followed Augustus’s victory in civil war. The teleological thrust of Jupiter’s speech is replicated by the account of Roman history that Vulcan puts on Aeneas’s shield, a narrative that also begins with the archaic city and culminates with Augustan Rome. In linking formal features of epic to the Roman state, Vergil creates an entirely new relationship between politics and epic, one which wins him praise from Hobbes.

For the choise of your subject you have sufficiently justified your selfe in your Preface. But because I have observed in *Virgil*, that the Honor done to *Aeneas* and his companions, has so bright a reflexion upon *Augustus Caesar*, and other great *Romanes* of that time, as a man may suspect him not constantly possessed with the noble spirit of those his *Heroes*, and believe you are not acquainted any great man of the Race of *Gondibert*, I adde to your Justification of the purity of your purpose, in having no other motive of you labour, but to adorne virtue, and procure her Lovers; then which there cannot be a worthier designe, and more becoming noble Poesy.<sup>53</sup>

Clearly Hobbes cannot praise Statius in the same way. The Theban story is particularly contaminated – and that corruption extends to the poet himself. The “reflexion” that Statius, and Stephens for that matter, is neither bright nor honorable. There is neither virture nor her lovers to be found in the *Thebaid*.

## VI

There is no explanation given by Stephens why he ends his translation where he does; but if the course of the *Thebaid* is kept in mind, the reason is apparent. The first five books present very little in the way of physical civil strife, Statius intends to build his narrative into a crescendo during the last seven books, where the horrors of war are on full display. The outcome is indeed nothing positive, tyranny is exchanged for tyranny and the destruction of Thebes and its citizenry is complete. Civilization has come to a halt; and a foreign king dispatches the Argives as well as Creon.

Stephens’s deliberate manipulation of the story suggests a specific reading of the *Thebaid* as a warning just as ominous to royalists as to parliamentarians. The *Thebaid* ends with decivilizing acts, opposite to the *Aeneid*, such that not even the gods watch the humans destroy themselves though Jupiter is the one who has set everything into motion. Contra Smith’s assertion that the Hobbesian and thus the royalist “epic poet is a slave to nature, to a repetition of what is naturally probable, not what is allegorized or

personalized fantasy” Stephens is working with fantasy and allegory.<sup>54</sup> It seems, in fact, that the allegorization of Oedipus at the beginning of the epic is the overthrow and then contamination of the divine right to rule by the Parliamentarians. By overthrowing the king, Oedipus pollutes the political structure of Thebes absolutely; so that no matter what occurs afterward, its structure is irrevocably altered for the worst possible outcome.

Jupiter’s role in the *Thebaid* is the most critical key to understanding Stephens’s translation and interpretation. In many ways it seems that Jupiter explains why Stephens would choose to translate the *Thebaid* at all. As has been noted already, Statius’s antecedents, Lucan and Vergil, weigh heavily on *Thebaid* both in terms of its reception and its structure. One of the substantial differences noted about the *Aeneid* but not about the *Pharsalia* so far is how the role of the gods affects the outcome of each poem. In the *Aeneid* the gods conspire to foster Aeneas’s task of nation-founding. In the *Pharsalia* the gods are completely absent, there is no religion and there is no god. The actions of Caesar, Pompey, Crassus and Cato are their own. The *Thebaid*, however, posits something unique in epic poetry of the ancient sort: divine retribution and annihilation. Naturally, there are some relation to the *Illiad* and *Odyssey*, where the gods fight amongst themselves, on the one hand, and where a single god pursues his victim, on the other. But Statius is clear in the *Thebaid*: both Thebes and Argos will be utterly erased through the actions taken by Jupiter. And as with Buchanan and Grotius, taking a closer look at Jupiter’s role not only explains more fully Stephens’s assertion that the *Thebaid* is dark and mysterious, it also sheds light on Stephens himself during the 1640s and what will be termed here a cumulative approach to translating the *Thebaid*.

In the first book of the *Thebaid* (1.214-47) Jupiter makes a speech which notes the reasons for Thebes's and Argos's destruction. It is worth quoting in full:

terrarum delicta nec exaturabile Diris  
ingenium mortale queror. quonam usque nocentum  
exigar in poenas? taedet saeuire corusco  
fulmine, iam pridem Cyclopum operosa fatiscunt  
bracchia et Aeoliis desunt incudibus ignes.  
atque adeo tuleram falso rectore solutos  
Solis equos, caelumque rotis errantibus uri,  
et Phaethonthea mundum squalere fauilla.  
nil actum, neque tu ualida quod cuspide late  
ire per illicitum pelago, germane, dedisti.  
nunc geminas punire domos, quis sanguinis auctor  
ipse ego, descendo. Perseos alter in Argos  
scinditur, Aonias fluit hic ab origine Thebas.  
mens cunctis imposta manet: quis funera Cadmi  
nesciat et totiens excitam a sedibus imis  
Eumenidum bellasse aciem, mala gaudia matrum  
erroresque feros nemorum et reticenda deorum  
crimina? uix lucis spatium, uix noctis abactae  
enumerare queam mores gentemque profanam.  
scandere quin etiam thalamos hic impius heres  
patris et inmeritae gremium incestare parentis  
appetiit, proprios (monstrum!) reuolutus in ortus.  
ille tamen superis aeterna piacula soluit  
proiecitque diem, nec iam amplius aethere nostro  
uescitur; at nati (facinus sine more!) cadentes  
calcauere oculos. iam iam rata uota tulisti,  
dire senex. meruere tuae, meruere tenebrae  
ultorem sperare Iouem. noua sontibus arma  
iniciam regnis, totumque a stirpe reuellam  
exitiale genus. belli mihi semina sunt  
Adrastus socer et superis adiuncta sinistris  
conubia. hanc etiam poenis incessere gentem  
decretum; neque enim arcano de pectore fallax  
Tantalus et saeuae periit iniuria mensae.

(Earth's sins and mind of man that no demons of vengeance can satiate I do protest. How much longer shall I be driven to punish the guilty? Weary am I of raging with flashing bolt, the busy arms of the Cyclopes have long been faint and the Aeolian anvils out of fire. And indeed I suffered the loosing of the Sun's horses under a false driver, the burning of the sky as the wheels ran wild, the world caked with Phaethon's ashes. It availed not; nor yet that you, my brother, with your strong spear let the sea go at large through territory not its own. Now I descend to punish

two houses, my own blood. One stream branches to Persean Argos, the other flows from its fount to Aonian Thebes. The character stamped on all of them abides. Who would not know of Cadmus' calamities, how often the host of Furies, summoned from their infernal dwellings, made war, the evil joys of mothers and their wild wanderings in the forests, the gods' reproaches best unspoken. Scarce in the space of daylight and of night expelled could I enumerate the unholy ways of that race. Why, this impious heir essayed to climb into his father's bed and defile the womb of his innocent mother, returning (of monstrous!) to his own origin. He, however, has paid an everlasting penalty to the High Ones, casting daylight away, and no longer does he feed upon our air; but his sons (outrageous deed!) trampled his eyes as they fell. No your prayers are answered, dire ancient. Your darkness has reserved, ay truly, to hope for Jupiter its avenger. I shall bring warfare on the guilty reigns and tear the whole deadly stock out from the root. Let Adrastus' gift of his daughter in marriage unblest of heaven be my seed of battle. This line also I have resolved to assail and punish for false Tantalus and the outrage of the cruel banquet have not vanished from my secret heart.)<sup>55</sup>

Of the many interesting things that Jupiter utters there are a couple which stand out in terms of what has been said so far. First, is his characterization of Oedipus's imprecation as *tenebrae*, here translated as "your darkness." Second, is his assertion of the earth's complicity in Thebes's and Argos's guilt; that is, all of humanity by way of these two cities is impious, or disloyal to God. As such, Jupiter has the license to destroy humanity down to its roots because of the crimes of the kings. These are obvious enough. What is needed now is to see how Stephens translates these verses (245-309):

But at Ioves high command the gods resort  
 To heavens Star-chamber: 'Twas the inner Court  
 Where they assembled, equally between  
 The East and Western houses: whence was seen  
 The confines of the earth and seas: The God  
 Shining i'th' mid'st, strikes terrour with the nod  
 Of his majestick countenance: A\*on  
 He sets him downe, in his bespangled throne.  
 The rest stand, and expect: not one presum'd  
 To sit, till leave was beckned: Then they assum'd  
 The Demy-gods, toth' place they had assign'd;  
 And th' heaven-begotten Rivers: Nay the wind  
 Comes whistling too; but's breath was stopt with fear.  
 Thus having fill'd the starry Quire, they wear

Such Majesty about them, that the face  
 Of heav'n's amaz'd: Such beauty fills the place,  
 That more then day breakes thence: The rooffe's all gold,  
 The beames of *Chrysolite* hidden flames doe hold.  
 Having commanded silence, all the round  
 Gave care and trembled: (for within that sound  
 Was an unchang'd decree; the Fates did make  
 His words a law:) thus then aloft he spake.  
 The tainted earth; and mans polluted soul  
 I here impeach, whom vengeance can't controul.  
 How long shall guilty cryes awake my rage?  
 This arme is tir'd with thundering. 'Tis an age  
 Has wearied out the Cyclops. Ev'ry cinder  
 In *Vulcans* shop's burnt out. I would not hinder  
 Thy horses (*Phoebus*) ranging where they list  
 To fire the world, when their false guide was mis't,  
 Hoping they would refine't: But all in vaine,  
 As was thy labour, *Neptune*, when the Maine,  
 Rais'd by thy trident, found a way to passe  
 Beyond its bounds, and wash'd Earths dirty face.  
 Now come we arm'd with vengeance 'gainst two Nations  
 Sprung from our loynes: One's *Greece*, the habitations  
 Of *Perseus*: T'other's *Thebes*, built in that tract,  
 Which men once call'd *Aonia*: One neglect  
 Has seiz'd on all their soules. Who does not know  
*Cadmus* his ruines? Whilst the powers below,  
 Charm'd from their darker vaults, oft quarrel'd here.  
 D'ee see their Matrons wicked joyes? D'ee heare  
 The out-cryes from their groves? I would conceal  
 Those daring sins that strike at heav'n: to tell  
 All those lewd manners, which defile that place,  
 One day and night would be too short a space.  
 Yet *O Edipus*, more fruitfull in his sin,  
 Covets his Fathers bed, and strives to win  
 Strange pleasures from his Mother. Who, before him,  
 E're forc'd a passage to that wombe that bore him?  
 But just revenge has reach'd him: He has banish'd  
 All day, and comfort: Heav'n it selfe is vanish'd  
 Out of his sight: whil'st his malignant brood  
 (Wicked beyond all president) have stood  
 Triumphant o're his blindnesse. Th' hast obtain'd,  
 Old Mischief, what thou ask'dst: Thy night has gain'd  
 Loves eare, and's hand: Ile arme their rage, and mock  
 At th' ruine of both kingdomes: All that stock  
 Ile root and branch destroy. The quarrel's spun  
 With ease: *Adrastus* pitying's exil'd son,

Joyn'd to that Line unhappily, shall give  
Assistance. 'Tis decreed: Nor must they live.  
Deceitfull *Tantalus* sticks in our breast:  
We han't digested yet his bloody feast.  
So spake the God:

At points Stephens's translation reads dramatically different from what Statius offers. He adds words (e.g. Star chamber) that are not there in Statius's Latin and removes some that are. He has altered the translation to read as he wishes it to read, making Jupiter much more sinister and frightening than Statius represents him. In Stephens's version Jupiter even mocks the destruction of Thebes and Argos! Stephens's translation recalls the vengeful God of the Old Testament. And while this comparison may seem a bit facile, it is my contention that Stephens did in fact read Statius's *Thebaid* as a type of Old Testament allegory.

## VII

In order to understand what Stephens offers his readers in his translation, we must start by understanding who his audience really is. As stated previously, Stephens has an idea of who would be reading this version of the *Thebaid*: students and "critick readers." But he knows as well that this assertion is somewhat facetious. For out of the prefatory odes a distinct audience emerges. Even though Stephens's background remains somewhat elusive, I have managed to discover that he took degrees from Jesus College, Cambridge during the 1630s. Enrolling as a sizar in 1629, he becomes a scholar in 1633, takes his B.A. in 1633-34 and his M.A. in 1637. Barring 1630, when all students were dismissed because of the outbreak of plague – which kills 35,000 people in London alone – Stephens is in residence at Cambridge from approximately 1631 to 1637. It was a time that shapes his outlook, and he seems to have developed a lifelong attachment to the place; so that after leaving he never lives more than twenty miles from Cambridge at any

given time, eventually returning in 1661 to take his D.D. and living at Fen Ditton (1665-1677), dying at Cambridge in 1677. It is no real surprise then to find that the contributors to Stephens's edition, made up of Reginald Bekenham, Clement Paman, Charles Woodward, Robert Baldocke, Thomas Poley, William Copinger, and Peregrine D'Oyly, are a Cambridge coterie.

It is necessary here to distinguish these men a bit before moving on. The first three, Bekenham, Paman, and Woodward, are Stephens's peers. They enroll at Caius and Sidney Sussex colleges, respectively, during the years 1628 to 1639. Following their time at Sidney, Paman and Woodward become deeply involved in the Anglican Church, with Paman becoming the vicar of Thatcham, Berkshire, and Woodward being ordained a deacon at Norwich and a priest at Lincoln.<sup>56</sup> Their interest in religion is shared by Stephens, who in 1640 is ordained a priest at Norwich under Richard Montague, and where Woodward would become a deacon under Joseph Hall in 1642. Bekenham, while he probably shared their interest in religion, took his degrees (B.A. and M.A.) from Caius college, being installed as a Fellow from 1646-1652, a time during which he would have had to been a puritan of sorts to be admitted to Cambridge.<sup>57</sup> As for Baldocke, Poley, Copinger, and D'Oyly they are Stephens's brightest students at Bury St Edmunds. In fact, it is safe to assume that since Copinger and D'Oyly enroll in St. John's College they received a local scholarship from Bury.<sup>58</sup> Baldocke and Poley meanwhile enroll in Pembroke College.<sup>59</sup>

Two characteristics seem to stand out among Stephens and his friends. In attending the colleges each did, their allegiances primarily fell with the royalists; and each, with the exception of Paman, has strong ties to East Anglia, returning to live and work following their stints at Cambridge.<sup>60</sup> East Anglia was a much richer region during

the early seventeenth century, where a learned clergy spread out into small and intimate parishes, and religious proclivities combined with geographical proximity to Cambridge brought both gentry and would-be students into more intimate and more frequent acquaintance in its colleges.<sup>61</sup> In fact, the conditions attached to many endowments, and the provisions enjoined by numerous statutory regulations ensured that college and local community were constantly participating in each other's lives.<sup>62</sup> Stephens's college life then "emerges in the realm of social history as it appears within the realm of political history and the history of ideas: not as the educational equivalent of the centralizing institutions of the Tudor state, but as one of the mechanisms which contributes to the regional differentiation which is the characteristic feature of English socioeconomic structure at this time."<sup>63</sup>

That being said, the Laudian reforms at Cambridge, promulgated most vigorously by John Cosin, have a profound effect on Stephens, Paman, Bekenham, and Woodward.<sup>64</sup> For Stephens specifically the presence of William Beale and Richard Sterne, who become Masters of Jesus College in 1631-34 and 1634-44, respectively, seems undeniable.<sup>65</sup> A graduate and fellow of Jesus, Beale was made Archdeacon of Camarthen when Laud was Bishop of St David's; he was a staunch supporter of the new ceremonies and a man whom Prynne accuses of being the "creature" of Archbishop Laud. Proceeding D.D. in 1635, Sterne defends two interesting theses: First, "It is lawful for a priest to exercise civil power;" and, second, "Sin is an adequate cause of divine enmity." The first is an open attack on the idea that civil and ecclesiastical authority are separate, Calvin's two swords argument. The second promotes "a theology that places emphasis on sin, not on the divine decrees. Sterne argues that, if our sinfulness is sufficient cause for God to

condemn us, we do not need to seek an account of how and why God himself decides on the numbering of the reprobate.”<sup>66</sup>

Sterne’s interest brings us back to Statius. For in his translation of Jupiter’s speech Stephens has given the same argument as Sterne’s second thesis, only elaborating Sterne’s assertion by naming the earth as tainted and dirty (which Statius does not offer), man’s soul (which does not quite represent *ingenium* accurately) as polluted, and calls attention to sins deliberately exposed to heaven – none of which was Statius’s intent. Jupiter’s hatred to be sure is palpable in Statius’s Latin, but Stephens’s insistence on calling Jupiter’s punishment “vengeance” does not follow, since Tisiphone is the fury and therefore the executor of vengeance. Statius’s use of *poenas* and *punire* has meanings of punishment but not necessarily vengeance. Why then does Stephens focus so intensely on vengeance? Why is he so concerned with divine retribution in 1648? To answer these questions we have to dig a little deeper into Stephens’s past.

## VIII

In 1642 Stephens was given the opportunity by vice-chancellor Richard Holdsworth to give two sermons at the Church of St Mary the Great, Cambridge. These sermons seem to have been Stephens’s first foray into public life, and perhaps such an honor inspires him to become the much more visible person he becomes afterward – though, that remains to be determined. What is immediately intriguing and apparently paradoxical about this opportunity is that Stephens is an Anglican priest and Holdsworth a Puritan, who presides over a program (established in 1641) to recharge St Mary’s Puritan base by bringing in more Presbyterian-leaning priests to give sermons. Holdsworth, however, is a moderate, and he appears to have been unmoved by this attempted shift in program. Stephens remembers the occasion thusly:

For the first of these Sermons was preacht in the University immediately after his Majesty of blessed memory had retired into the North to avoid the rude and unseemly deperiment of the tumultuous rabble, so to escape the raging of the waters and the madness of the People: Where the acceptance which is found arose not from any intrinsick worth it had (I dare not flater my self with so vain a conceit) but from the suitableness of the subject to the affections of that learned and religious Auditory: For the good King having Lately passed that way, had left so deep an impression upon the hearts of the Loyal Students that any man was welcome to them who was *a memoria* (his shall I say? Or) their Remembrancer of him...<sup>67</sup>

Stephens, then, came to Cambridge to celebrate the king's return from Scotland in November 1641.<sup>68</sup> More importantly Stephens notes how Holdsworth is directly responsible for helping him determine what kind of sermon he ought to give:

And here it had dyed with that Generation that soon after passed away, had it not come to the knowledge of some of Country-Committee-men, four years after (some men have long ears) for whom I have reason to bless God, who raised them up as instruments to make me be thought worthy to suffer any thing for that righteous cause. Yet the Reverend and pious Vice-chancellor [noted as Doctor Holdsworth] obliged me then to another course; to supply which, the Second Sermon was prepared, (upon a Text which had been blasphemed in that Pulpit not long before) which happened soon after the Signall battail of Edghill. But alas! When I came to suck the breasts of my dear Mother I found them rub'd over with gall and wormwood: The Scene was chang'd Athens was turned to a Mar's Hill. The Musick of Apollos harp could not be heard for the noise of trumpets: For on the night before, that MAN OF BLOOD came down with a troop of horse, which was then his only command (the Cockatrice at that time was but an egg) and had blockt up the Pulpit with his Janizaries; so that prudence bad me retire, unlesse I would mingle my blood with my sacrifice.<sup>69</sup>

Stephens's sermon was on Judges 21.25: "In those dayes there was no King in Israel; every man did that which was right in their own eyes." He begins by describing the how the political and religious atmosphere has been polluted by fanatics and those who think they know best for everyone:

Then those dayes have been, and they have been in Israel too; we have Scripture for it, sayes our Phanatick, and why may they not be again? This place I confess is plain enough, and as well urged on this occasion, as his,

who maintained his heterodox opinions from St. Pauls opinion Cor. I.II. Of necessity heresies must be amongst you----But wo be to that man by whom these things come to pass. When Every man must be his own Carver, and sits Judge upon his own actions, there is no King indeed, but whole legions of Tyrants... Kings we may have still, but no Subjects to obey; everyman will be his own Ruler, yet every man as unruly as he was before.<sup>70</sup>

The sermon is clearly against men of extreme ideologies. In this case those men would be the Puritans in Parliament, who in their zealotry decided that no king is better than Charles I. For such actions Stephens proceeds to accuse these “subjects” of being “Zorahs and Eshtaols enough, factious Towns and Cities, which can furnish us with a tumultuous brood of discontented Brethren, which think their borders are too straight, they must let out their appetites, and make more room for their active souls.” These Danites, as he eventually calls them, would alter law and religion in order to gain what they wished, thinking nothing of tradition or precedence.

Stephens’s argument, while using all examples from the Old Testament presages the commission of Dowsing while commenting sarcastically on the dismantling of religion (for the bill concerning the “Innovations in religion and abuses in government in Oxford and Campbridge” was given its first reading in August 1641):

But if the severity of the Law do restrain such private Burglaries, yet Gods house is sure to go to it. There be Idols in the Temple: force open the Doors, break down the Windows, let the spies enter and the armed men keep passage: but once in, tis not the Altar and Rails will serve them, no the Vestry and Library, yes the poor mans box shall be suspected to have a golden image in it: Nay there is no place secure, there is an Idoll in the Desk: away with the book of Comon prayer, teare it to pieces: There is an Idoll in the Pulpit too, or rather the Priest of Idolls; hale him, pull him out, tear off the sacred Vestements from his superstitious shoulders: The Surplice and the Hood: Cherubims and Seraphims must away, nay the very stones of the pavement shall be torn up, because men kneel upon them; Thus, O God, do they break down the carved works of thy house with axes and Hammers.<sup>71</sup>

According to Leedham-Greene, “Orders for the moving of communion tables from the east end of churches and chapels, and for the removal of altar rails and images, however, expressly include universities... Rather than proceeding directly against the university and colleges, Parliament chooses to direct its attack against individuals like John Cosin, Master of Peterhouse, who was arrested in November 1640 and impeached in March of the following year.”<sup>72</sup> William Beale (noted above as Stephens’s former mentor) is reported on for an anti-Parliament sermon, and then arrested in the summer of 1642.<sup>73</sup> As for the arrival of the infamous Mr. Dowsing, whose role was the “utter demolishing, removing and taking away of all Monuments of Superstition or Idolatry,” he did not arrive at Cambridge until 21 December 1642, where he found that King’s and Christ’s had obediently dismantled their altars in 1641, and Peterhouse, Jesus, and Trinity had taken some action in advance of the visitation but much remained.” Still, superstitious pictures, statues, and “chancels were levelled and all Laudian trappings were destroyed.”<sup>74</sup>

Of these actions the most offensive to Stephens is the removal of the Common-prayer Book and vestaments, since to remove them is no different than attempting to remove a king. Stephens puts it this way:

‘Yet let me tell you there is not great difference between having no King, and a King no whit obey’d’ Or if any be, the latter is the most extreme, if malum culpae exceed that of poenae for so we alter it from a punishment of God to a sin of our own.<sup>75</sup>

For a people who thinks they know better than God and king, the Civil War, now in full swing following Edge Hill, as Stephens mentions, and Charles I may be the punishment for England’s selfish populace. He even goes so far as to say, “But were he as detestable for his vices as he is now honourable for his vertues, this were no fair plea for our

disobedience: A wicked King may be an effect of Gods wrath against a Nation ; but the removal, the taking away this wicked King, that's hotter, that's plain fury, Hos. 13.11." Stephens would rather the subjects of Charles I endure his presence (a pestilence, though it may be) and profit from it:

Suppose him very wicked, he has the more need of thy prayers to make him better. Suppose him to be a Tyrant, he will give the fairer occasions to exercise thy virtue of Patience. Suppose him to be a Persecutor, hee'l do thee a courtesie, he will send thee to Heaven by violence. It is not *oleum gratiae*, but *Dominii*, that Kings are anointed with.<sup>76</sup>

The point that Stephens makes here is quite striking. On the one hand the oil of grace is something that comes from acceptance of Jesus Christ as one's savior, it is a spiritual grace.<sup>77</sup> The oil of the Lord (*oleum Domini*) is a direct line from Christ to the king. It is not administered by the Church, as it was prior to Henry VIII. So Stephens begins to question his audience as to what type of Christian congregation St Marys is:

For let me seriously put the question: Are we Christians? Do we know the virtue of an Oath? What think we then of that solemn Oath of our Allegiance? An Oath which can receive no dispensation, no absolution from what power soever: Are we Protestants? Nay one step farther; are we Protestors? What think we then of that branch of the late Protestation, that I will maintain the establishd doctrine of the Church as it stands in opposition to Popery and Popish Innovations:<sup>78</sup>

Stephens's oath to the Church then proves critical for the subsequent actions of his life and in fact it proves critical to his translation of Statius's *Thebaid*; for by taking his oath he is prevented from taking any other state compelled oaths, such as the Vow and Covenant in the following year, 1643.

## IX

The way oaths, or more specifically covenants, are used by Stephens is perhaps the most challenging and fruitful way to understand his translation of the *Thebaid*. The

use of covenant in the 1640s (“cov’nant”, Stephens) rings of a politicized lexicon. In the *Thebaid*, Stephens used it to portray Eteocles’s usurpation of Polynices’s time to rule:

“Such was the Brethrens discord, such sterne Ire  
Had set an edge, on their untam’d desire.  
At length they cov’nant, year by year, t’exchange,  
By course, their Crownes for banishment: ...  
And yet the world had not us’d then to guild  
Their seiled roofes, nor had it learn’d to build  
Piatzo’s rais’d with *Graecian* marble ...  
No pretious Goblets made their wine look neat,  
No plates of gold were sullied with their meat:  
’Tis a bare power they seeke, an empty prize,  
A naked kingdome crownes their victories.  
Thus whilst both strive for a neglected soile,  
The humble throne of *Cadmus*, they defile  
Religion and themselves: The laws and right  
Are beaten down, alive and dead they fight.”<sup>79</sup>

Stephens’s translation is deliberate and careful; the use of covenant replaces *foedere* in this instance by Statius. Still, when given the opportunity to portray Eteocles and Polynices as power grabbing tyrants Stephens is clearly restrained. In fact, by using terms such as “cov’nant” and “Brethren” where Statius’s Latin is precise and holds no tangible political value, Stephens mollifies the behavior in such a fashion as to ironize Parliamentary attitudes towards contemporary attempts to reorient power through covenant and religion.

What Stephens recognizes is that the discussion and representation of religion and broken covenant is at the heart of the *Thebaid*. There is no doubt that Stephens could have presented the *Thebaid* as just another diatribe against the wickedness of tyrants – and as was shown above tyranny was clearly on his mind in the sermons; instead he seems to recognize that these are portrayals of antithetical monarchical behavior, not incitements of anti-monarchical opinion, as displayed so far in the first sermon. Statius’s

presentation of limited rule and contractual or elective elements in Eteocles's oath to rule may display the gap between a true monarch and a tyrant; but by portraying the oaths as covenants Stephens changes their perceived obligation. In an oath, God is only involved as a witness, judging human testimony and threatening wrath if it should be proven false. In a religious covenant, God becomes involved as an active party in a contract, containing mutual obligations.

To understand why Stephens would use such a term, perhaps we should turn to Hobbes for an explanation, post-dated though it may be. Hobbes' attempt to use an appeal to covenant as a justification of absolute submission to civil authority is a historical oddity that he develops as a means of caricaturing the covenant arguments put forth by the Puritan (literally, Presbyterian) "first movers" during the Civil War. For them, it was Charles I's breaking of covenants that led to evidence of killing of his own people; specifically his swearing of an oath of office was cited.<sup>80</sup>

During the Civil War the Protestation of 1641, the Vow and Covenant, and Solemn League and Covenant of 1643 of the Long Parliament are all declared to be renewals of England's national covenant. As a measure to hasten loyalty to the Church of England the Protestation is introduced to the House of Commons in 1641, hence Stephens's appeal to Protestors and Protestation. It is initiated in response to the perceived threat of papal authority influencing Charles (or more specifically his army) to subdue and dissolve Parliament. While it is primarily aimed at preserving the Church of England, the oath, for those who take it, also maintains that one must defend the monarchy, while upholding a "duty of allegiance" and defending His Majesty's royal person and estate – as well as the power and privilege of Parliament, the lawful rights and liberties of the subject, and every person that shall make this Protestation.<sup>81</sup> In

essence the Protestation makes loyalty to the king conditional, dependant upon the king's willingness to uphold religion and law – a characteristic very similar to that outlined in the Scottish National Covenant of 1638.

Hobbes adopts the assumption of the necessity for “consent” and “agreement” as the basis for civil government. But, and this is the crucial point, instead of ending up with a theory of the conditional and limited nature of a subject's duty of obedience and the assertion of a popular right of resistance, Hobbes ends up by affirming the unconditional character of the obligation of obedience, and the absolute right of a ruler to issue commands that subjects have no right to resist.<sup>82</sup> As early as 1641-42 (the years of Stephens's sermon) it becomes clear that some English pamphleteers are in line with the Scottish covenanting doctrine, specifically indicating that the king could be held accountable for breaking his covenant.<sup>83</sup> Still, the Protestation does not explicitly contradict the Oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy. While there are some who portray it as the English National covenant, Royalists present the argument that for those who take the oath it would be sacrosanct to break their oath in harming the King. As a result the Vow and Covenant of 1643 leaves out the critical terms concerning the king's person, precluding any argument that the Royalists can make.<sup>84</sup>

The Solemn League and Covenant is a far less taxing document. In it there is a return to the former Parliamentary arrangement that the Civil War was in fact being fought for the king's protection.<sup>85</sup> Nevertheless, this document is to draw the most response from Royalists precisely because it is the most widely impressed of the Long Parliament's oaths of loyalty. Hence, being tendered to more people provoked more response, especially at Cambridge in 1644 and Oxford in 1647 – these are the years in which Parliament authorize the wholesale expulsion of Royalists, Anglicans and those

who would not take the oath at each of these institutions.<sup>86</sup> The Royalist response details that the Covenant is unlawful at its very core, since it lacks the appropriate reciprocal and voluntary nature allowed in a contract. In fact, since the Covenant lacks reciprocity, it is argued, God would not ordain it, thus making it an affront to God. Moreover, as the king is God's chosen voice on earth the Covenant would need his approval; when it is not given the Covenant is nullified and Jewish precedent from the Old Testament is identified.<sup>87</sup>

## X

This brings us nearly full circle. By deliberately interpreting *foedus* to mean covenant Stephens displays precisely in what light he intends his work to be read. Using covenant in its religious sense foreshadows Fairfax's rewriting of Statius while at the same time demanding that the reader recall and revisit just how seriously the political and social culture changes from 1640 to 1648. Just like Eteocles and Polynices destroy their state and polis over a broken covenant, so too had the royalists and parliamentarians England – and Charles I had yet to be executed.

The darkness Stephens imagines to be found in the *Thebaid* stems precisely from its subject in Stephens's mind: Godly retribution. The "long eares" of memory which Stephens mentions in the preface to his sermon given in 1642 cannot be confined merely to the 1640s, but to history more generally. Through the "ruines" of Thebes Stephens writes of the degenerate nature of England, which is now without a king, and hence, for him, has become godless. The wrecklessness, the recurrent iniquities, the tyranny of individual judges have led not merely to the annihilation of one party, but that of both – if we allow ourselves to oversimplify the fractured nature of Royalists and Parliamentarians.

If it is assumed – and I think rightly – that Stephens begins translating the *Thebaid* after 1645 his outlook would have had to be dire. In some sense this too explains why Stephens leaves his work unfinished. During 1646-47 it is quite clear that Charles I could have a prominent, if reduced, role in the governing of England; since popular sentiment is against those who had overthrown him. Yet, where Stephens leaves off indicates in no uncertain terms what civil war brings.

In book five of the *Thebaid* Hypsipyle recounts the tale of the Lemnian women. In it the gory details of civil strife are related. In a striking description of what has been wrought she describes (5.337-567) how Polyxo murdered everyone with only wrath (*ira*) in mind.

“Their slaughter'd corps, or with nimble fires  
Consum'd them. Glutt'd Venus now retire  
With all her Furies, from the Towne sh'ad sack'd:  
And then their leisure serv'd to recollect  
Their deeds: to tear their haire; and dew their face.  
Our fruitfull Isle was knowne by th' site, a place  
Once stor'd with wealth, Armes, Men; inrich'd of late  
By th' Getick triumph: Now's an empty state,  
Torne from the world, not byth' Seas breach, nor by  
The enemies force, or an unluckie skie,  
There's none alive to plough the ground, there's none  
To cut the Seas: Houses are silent growne:  
Blood covers all: black gore the fields does staine:  
We, onely wee, i'th' spacious streets remaine;  
And th' angry Ghosts hover about the spires.  
I too, did build a pile for lofty fires  
I'th' inner Court o'th' Palace, throwing on't  
My Fathers Armes, and robes our Kings were wont  
To wear, and's Scepter: Then I sadly stood  
Nigh the amaz'd flames: my sword was staind with blood:  
Where I wept ore the cheat o'th' empty pile,  
Fearing their rage; and prayd, that by this wile  
My Fathers Fate, and doubtfull fears of death  
Might vanish. For these merits, they bequeath  
This punishment, his Kingdome; I must sit  
I'th' royall Throne: Such faith, my craft did get.  
Could I refuse then, thus beset? I went:

But call the Gods to witnesse my intent,  
My faith, and my unspotted hands. I gain'd  
A bloodlesse Empire: ('twas a dire command:)  
Poor, sad, beheaded Lemnos. Sorrow tore  
Their waking souls, by this time, more and more.”<sup>88</sup>

For Stephens, much as Hypsipyle, the kingdom of England has now become the punishment. The invocation of gods as witness recalls once more the focus on covenant; and a kingdom without a king is no longer a kingdom. There is no more tradition, it has literally been thrown out, destroyed, or burnt – much as Dowsing did to the icons and paraphernalia of the Anglican churches. Hypsipyle’s realization of what has been lost speaks louder and more eloquently than Stephens can.

Ending his translation here is more than appropriate; it is necessary. In the following books Statius details the death and destruction of two leading cities of Greece. Though Theseus does preserve Thebes from utter ruin in Statius’s story, the fate of Thebes is sealed. It will be completely destroyed in the generation that follows. The uselessness of translating the subsequent books is clear; and the lack of them only serves to underscore how Stephens feels concerning the monarchy in England. There is not one; hence, there is no recourse to a monarch in his prefatory material. The lack of *pietas* / duty that Stephens is so stridently attempting to point out in his sermon (“Are we not Protestors?”) is no longer; and just as Eteocles and Polynices cannot maintain their own covenants, neither can Royalists and Parliamentarians. The inversion of Vergilian heroic *poesis*, one that civilizes through arms and poetry, is clearly not lost on Stephens. The “easie” truth of Lucan repels Stephens, turning him rather to the darkness of Statius’s allegory.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Thomas May, *The History of Parliament which began November the third, MDCXL with a short and necessary view of some precedent yeares* (London: Moses Bells, 1647) 15-16. It should be mentioned here that I have tried to retain the original spelling and typeset as closely as possible in all quotations, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>2</sup> Statius, *Stattus Silvae and Thebaid I-IV*, Loeb Classical Library (trans. J.H. Mozley [Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP 1967]) 294-297.

<sup>3</sup> See Statius in the *Thebaid* where Jupiter has specific control over the actions of Tisiphone.

<sup>4</sup> J.G.A. Pocock, "Medieval Kings at the Court of Charles I: Thomas May's Verse Histories" in *Perspectives on Early Modern and Modern Intellectual History* eds. Joseph Marino and Melinda W. Schlitt (Rochester, NY: Univ. of Rochester Press, 2001) 443.

<sup>5</sup> May, *History*, 15.

<sup>6</sup> May, *History*, 15. Intriguingly, there is much more Christian ideology as it was understood by English scholars of the 1640s and 1650s here than Roman ideology; moreover there is something more tangibly akin to the sentiment expressed in the gospels of the New Testament than the books of the Old Testament in Statius's verses as well. However, for May it is quite the opposite. There is nothing of the forgive-and-forget Christianity.

<sup>7</sup> May, *History*, 15.

<sup>8</sup> Bodlein, MS Fairfax 40, fol. 600; given by Edward Bliss in "The Poems of Third Lord Thomas Fairfax," *Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences* 14 (1909) 281; also, Brian Fairfax, *Short memorials of Thomas, lord Fairfax* (London: 1699) 6.

<sup>9</sup> Graham Edwards, *The Last Days of Charles I* (Stroud, Gloucester: Sutton, 1999) 185; *The diary of Sir Samuel Pepys, with Lord Braybrooke's notes*, H.B. Wheatley (ed.) (London: G. Bell, 1897) 1: 5-6n.

<sup>10</sup> Fairfax was an intense bibliophile so this may well be true, but the sentiments had retained some power as the verses were again utilized by William Pitt to condemn the murder of Louis XVI in 1793.

<sup>11</sup> Cowley, *Complete Works* (New York: AMS, 1967) I.CXXVIII-CXXIX.

<sup>12</sup> And it is little wonder since Cowley knows Statius's works very well, citing them frequently – especially the *Thebaid*.

<sup>13</sup> The route there dashes his anticipation of a Royalist triumph, something that he would, presumably, have celebrated at the conclusion of his poem.

<sup>14</sup> Cowley, *Complete Works*, I.CXXIX.

<sup>15</sup> Paul Salzman, "Royalist epic and romance," *The Cambridge Companion to Writing of the English Revolution*, N.H. Keeble ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001) 217-218.

<sup>16</sup> David Trotter, *The Poetry of Abraham Cowley* (London: Macmillan, 1979) 21.

<sup>17</sup> Statius, *Thebaid*, trans. A.D. Melville (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992) 7.

<sup>18</sup> *An essay upon Statius, or, The five first books of Publ. Papinius Statius his Thebais done into English verse by T.S., with the poetick history illustrated*, (London: Royston, 1648) 4. From here on: Stephens, *Essay*.

<sup>19</sup> Tacitus, *Histories*, 1.41; Suetonius, *Galba*, 20.

<sup>20</sup> W.A.L. Vincent, *The State and School Education 1640-1660 in England and Wales* (London: SPCK, 1950) 62 and 70; Augustus Jessopp, *The Lives of the Norths* Vol. 2 (London: George Bell, 1890) 271-277; Stuart Gillespie, "Statius in England, 1648-1767," *Translation and Literature* 8:2 (1999) 160-161.

<sup>21</sup> Joseph Spence, *Observations, Anecdotes and Characters of Books and Men: Collected from Conversation*, James Osborn ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1973) I, 233 (no. 551).

<sup>22</sup> It is notable that Dryden does not remark on Stephens translation given the readiness with which a copy of Stephens's translation could be had and Dryden's penchant for criticism of anything that was not his own.

<sup>23</sup> Sir Edward Sherburne, *Seneca's Answer to Lucilius Quaere* (London: 1648).

<sup>24</sup> Robert Herrick, *Hesperides or, The vvorks both humane & divine of Robert Herrick, Esq.* (London : 1648).

<sup>25</sup> For Royston's involvement in printing the *Eikon Basilike*, see Lois Potter, *Secret rites and secret writing: royalist literature 1641-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989) 7-12.

<sup>26</sup> Arguing that the social and political function of literature was still active in the early modern period, and putting a stop to the construction of the archetypal poet and social role as Sidney conceives them in his *Apology*, Annabel Patterson in *Censorship and interpretation: the conditions of writing and reading in early modern England* (Madison, Wisc.: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1984) claims that institutionalized censorship was the crucial factor that determined the conditions of writing and reading in the period. To

circumvent censorship, writers develop “codes of communication” to comment on important matters of public concern. And readers (often including censors) decoded them, joining writers in their effort to keep literature in its “privileged position of compromise” between the magistrates and the governed. She maintains that such dissemination of socio-political commentary was the *Underwood* lyrics were intended to achieve. The codes used in that dissemination were and still are “History,” or rather versions of facts about the Jacobean state available to the reader but made absent from the texts of the poems.

<sup>27</sup> It is not, as we may be led to believe today, a matter of Statius’s manneristic qualities that impede access to his text. This estimation is completely misinformed, since it does not coincide with any historically critical understanding of Statius – especially during the early modern period.

<sup>28</sup> Dedications to Parliamentary tracts, meanwhile, tended to privilege a general reader. The unknown reader has an active role in constructing and judging the text; the audience participates in the discussions and arguments. See, Potter.

<sup>29</sup> Potter 52.

<sup>30</sup> Stephens, *Essay*, front matter.

<sup>31</sup> Juvenal, *Satires* VII (95-96).

<sup>32</sup> *Juvenal Satires*, Loeb Classical Library (trans. G. G. Ramsay [Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1940]) 145.

<sup>33</sup> Milton and all others who attended Cambridge were required to read Statius and Lucan before moving on to Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey* during the final month of one literature study – Vergil’s works were not included in the final years of study. See, Harris Fletcher, *The intellectual development of John Milton* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956) 2.62.

<sup>34</sup> Davenant, May’s rival, states that “*Lucan*, who chose to write the greatest actions that ever were allowed to be true (which for fear of contemporary witnesses, oblig’d him to a very close attendance upon Fame) did not observe that such an enterprize rather besem’d an Historian, than a Poet: for wise Poets think it more worthy to seek out truth in the Passions, than to record the truth of Actions; and practise to describe Mankind, just as we are perswaded or guided by instinct, not particular persons, as they are lifted, or levell’d by the force of Fate, it being nobler to contemplate the general History of Nature, than a selected Diary of Fortune: And Painters are no more than Historians, when they draw eminent persons (though they term that drawing to the life) but when by assembling divers figures in a larger volume, they draw Passions (though they term it but Story) then they increase in dignity and become Poets.” *Sir William D’Avenant’s Gondibert* ed. David Gladish (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971) 68-81, p4-5. From here on referred

to as “D’Avenant” even though Gladish provides Hobbes’ response to Davenant. I might add as well this other bit from Davenant: “When I consider’d the actions which I meant to describe, (those inferring the persons) I was again perswaded rather to chuse those of a former Age, than the present; & in a Century so far remov’d, as might preserve me from their improper examinations, who know not the requisites of a Poem, nor how much pleasure they lose (and even the pleasures of Heroick Poesie are not unprofitable) who take away the liberty of a Poet, and fetter his feet in the shackles of an Historian: For why should a Poet doubt in Story to mend the intrigues of Fortune by more delightfull conveyances of probable fictions, because austere Historians have enter’d into bond to truth? an obligation which were in Poets, as foolish and unnecessary as is the bondage of false Martyrs, who lye in chains for a mistaken opinion: but by this I would imply, that Truth narrative and past, is the Idol of Historians, (who worship a dead thing) and truth operative, and by effects continually alive, is the Mistress of Poets, who hath not her existence in matter, but in reason.” Gladish, *Davenant*, 289-306, 10-11.

<sup>35</sup> Blair Worden, “Republicanism, Regicide and Republic: The English Experience,” *Republicanism* eds. Martin van Gelderen and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003) 1.309.

<sup>36</sup> Stephens, *Essay*, 4Av-5Ar.

<sup>37</sup> Davenant offers this thought: “And surely Poets (whose business should represent the Worlds true image often to our view) are not less prudent than Painters, who when they draw Landscaps, entertain not the Eye wholly with even Prospect; and a continued Flat; but (for variety) terminate the sight with lofty Hills, whose obscure heads are sometimes in the clouds.” D’Avenant 4.

<sup>38</sup> I am using the argument set forth by Jongsook Lee in *Ben Jonson’s Poesis: A Literary Dialectic Ideal and History* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989) 75-83, concerning epideictic poetry. Whereas Lee reads Jonson’s poem – rightly, I think – in terms of Goldberg, Patterson and a host of other new historicists; I am using the argument to pinpoint idealization and truth between Statius and Lucan.

<sup>39</sup> Lee 75

<sup>40</sup> Nigel Smith, *Literature and revolution in England, 1640-1660* (New Have: Yale University Press) 212.

<sup>41</sup> Sir Philip Sidney, *An apologie for poetrie. VVritten by the right noble, vertuous, and learned, Sir Phillip Sidney, Knight* (London:1595) C1v-C2r.

<sup>42</sup> Sidney, *Apologie*, G4v.

<sup>43</sup> Reid Barbour, *John Selden : measures of the Holy Commonwealth in seventeenth-century England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 65, offers this thought: “Just as Sidney knows that a poet must neither ‘build Castles in the ayre’ (Apology, 157) nor sacrifice vitality, delight, and wonder for ‘Mouse-eaten records’ (162) or ‘certaine abstract considerations’ (163), so the best poetry requires more than norms of reason, virtue, duty, and piety.” Barbour 69, “For all the normative and didactic claims of the poets, they are compelled to admit that actual poetry rarely achieves public effect, either because of the poetry’s own weaknesses or because of the readers’ inadequacies and stubbornness.”

<sup>44</sup> Statius, *Thebaid*, Loeb Classical Library (trans. Shackleton Bailey [Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2003]) 43.

<sup>45</sup> Stephens, *Essay*, l.55-62.

<sup>46</sup> Scipion Dupleix, *The resoluier; or Curiosities of nature written in French by Scipio Du Plesis counsellor and historiographer to the French King*. (1635) 35. For Hobbes see, Gladish, *Davenant*, 45.

<sup>47</sup> D’Avenant 45; 46.

<sup>48</sup> D’Avenant 49.

<sup>49</sup> D’Avenant 3.

<sup>50</sup> D’Avenant 51.

<sup>51</sup> D’Avenant 13.

<sup>52</sup> Smith 214

<sup>53</sup> D’Avenant 48.

<sup>54</sup> Smith 227.

<sup>55</sup> Statius, *Thebaid*, Loeb Classical Library (trans. Shackleton Bailey [Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2003]) 57.

<sup>56</sup> “Both, Sidney Sussex, and St John’s in the earlier part of Elizabeth’s reign, were essentially puritan seminaries and both had strong connections with the northern counties. Sidney Sussex in particular has benefited from the spate of early seventeenth-century grammar school foundations, the majority of which were concentrated in the dark corners of the land. Puritan missionary zeal exploited and reinforced local connections.” Victor Morgan, *A History of the University of Cambridge* (Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 1988) 190.

<sup>57</sup> After he had gone to Leiden in 1641.

<sup>58</sup> Sir Robert Jermyn, “a puritan gentleman with considerable influence in the town, should be nominated to oversee the establishment of a scholarship from the school at Bury St Edmunds to St. John’s College, Cambridge.” Morgan, *History*, 192.

<sup>59</sup> Of these four, Baldocke would have the most illustrious career, leaving Pembroke to enroll at Gray’s Inn in 1644 become a barrister in 1651, the recorder of Yarmouth, 1671. Knighted, 1671. Serjeant, 1677. Counsel for the King against the Seven Bishops. Justice, King’s Bench, 1668-9.

<sup>60</sup> The latter characteristic is both the most intriguing and most mysterious simply by virtue of a lack of information that remains today. Still, it is worth attempting to understand how their sense of “countray” affected their perspectives towards the Civil War. It is clear from Morgan’s study that students from Norfolk and Suffolk were in the majority at Caius, St. John’s, Jesus, and Corpus Christi (William Paston’s alma mater) colleges. Generally speaking the sympathies of the university were royalist: “The town was predominantly for Parliament: it had returned Oliver Cromwell, a graduate of Sidney Sussex College, and like-minded alderman to the second, or Long, Parliament. Increasingly, both in the council chamber of the mayor and in the streets, the town threatened the university.” See, Elisabeth Leedham-Greene, *A Concise History of the University of Cambridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986) 79-80.

<sup>61</sup> Morgan 191.

<sup>62</sup> See Morgan 181-240 for a detailed analysis of this interaction. See too John Morill, *Revolt in the Provinces: The People of England and the Tragedies of War, 1630-1648* (Longman: New York, 1999) for a detailed treatment of the environs of Cambridge and its participation in Civil War.

<sup>63</sup> Leedham-Greene 206.

<sup>64</sup> C.N.L. Brooke, *The History of The University of Cambridge Texts and Studies*, I (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988) 37-8, states, “Cosin is generally believed to have been the author of a report prepared for Laud in 1636 on religious practices in the university, which revealed considerable shortcomings there, and showed just how far Laudianism still had to go...Many colleges were said to use their chapels as ‘a common meeting place for ordinary dispatch of leases and such like occasions.’ Only Laudian bastions of St John’s, Queen’s, Peterhouse, Jesus, and Pembroke were praised.”

<sup>65</sup> Beale, recently been made Master of Jesus College, was removed and sent to St John’s by the King in 1634, following a rather nasty election dispute.

<sup>66</sup> David Hoyle, *Reformation and Religious Identity in Cambridge, 1590-1644* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2007) 164. Also, according to Hoyle, Sterne was also an advocate of ceremonies and acquired a reputation for forcing reverence on his students; he says that

“...there was little room in Jesus for the innovating Puritanism which colored most other colleges in Cambridge’s “easter belt.” Bryan Little, *The Colleges of Cambridge* (New York: Arco, 1973) 80-1, offers, “Orthodox Anglicanism remained dominant, and the way was clear for the strikingly Royalist posture of the college in the Civil War. The Master, by then, was Richard Sterne, an able administrator and a devoted Laudian High Churchman whose career, after the sufferings and disturbance caused by the Civil War and the Commonwealth period, ended in the Archbishopric of York.”

<sup>67</sup> Thomas Stephens, *Logoi Oraioi. Three seasonable sermons the first preach't at St. Mary's in Cambridge, May 31. 1642. The others designed for publick auditories, but prevented.* (London: 1660).

<sup>68</sup> With bonfires and verses, the king and his son Prince Charles were feted in the usual splendid style in March 1642.

<sup>69</sup> Stephens, *Logoi*, Preface A6r-A7r.

<sup>70</sup> Stephens, *Logoi*, 1.

<sup>71</sup> Stephens, *Logoi*, 17-8.

<sup>72</sup> Leedham-Greene 79.

<sup>73</sup> Leedham-Greene 79.

<sup>74</sup> Leedham-Greene 82. Emmanuel, Sidney, and Corpus alone provided no work for him.

<sup>75</sup> Stephens, *Logoi*, 23.

<sup>76</sup> Stephens, *Logoi*, 29.

<sup>77</sup> 1 Corinthians 8.6

<sup>78</sup> Stephens, *Logoi*, 31.

<sup>79</sup> Stephens, *Essay*, 1.173-194.

<sup>80</sup> I am following, specifically, the argument made by Jules Steinberg in *The Obsession of Thomas Hobbes: The English Civil War in Hobbes's Political Philosophy* (New York: Peter Lang, 1988) 131-45, in which he discusses Hobbes's ironic use of covenant – an argument that has been largely and ashamedly overlooked. His topic has not yet found its way into that of Tuck or Skinner.

<sup>81</sup> According to Edward Vallance in *Revolutionary England and the National Covenant: State oaths, Protestantism and the Political Nation, 1553-1682* (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2005) 52, John Pym, in fact, tried to enact the covenant as shibboleth from the book of Judges

12:5-6 and had the Protestation sent out among all shires in attempt to gather national support for the Church of England. Yet this attempt was largely ignored or allowed to be broken. Additionally, I might say that Vallance's work is by far the most critically accurate work on the covenant tradition emanating from Scotland to England, and is a worthwhile read for its discussions oaths and oath taking. In general, I am following his argument detailed between pages 51-133.

<sup>82</sup> "Hobbes simply rejects all of the essential features of sixteenth and seventeenth century appeals to covenant, contract, and consent, and substitutes a conception of the "terms of covenant" that literally turns this doctrine inside out, so that Hobbes has subjects agree to renounce every right that was asserted by the Presbyterian 'first movers.' Furthermore, since the Hobbesian sovereign is not a party to the covenant itself, which is solely based upon agreement between each of the individuals meeting to establish civil society, there is no possibility that the sovereign can act unjustly, that is, violate the 'terms of covenant.' In other words, every subject gives up any right of resistance to the commands of the civil sovereign. Steinberg." Steinburg 137.

<sup>83</sup> Vallance 67.

<sup>84</sup> Vallance 67-70.

<sup>85</sup> Vallance 70.

<sup>86</sup> Vallance 71.

<sup>87</sup> Vallance 71.

<sup>88</sup> Stephens 135.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Slavery, Empire and Tyranny: Dryden, Pope and Statius

As was established in the last chapter, poetic language is a form of memory; in the case of Stephens, May, Fairfax and Cowley it is fragmented and residual of previous texts, collecting their own traditions and cultural anxieties. Sometimes their intertextual recollections may be allusive requiring a skilled reader, sometimes overt and pompous. Other readers of Statius such as Poliziano, Bernaerts and Lipsius thought that they should be concealed and only revealed by those who had invested as much learning as they in seizing such allusions. Yet, their ancient counterparts, apart from perhaps Seneca, thought otherwise. Ovid delights in stealing and then altering Vergil's serious six-footers into trifles; while Vergil openly imitates Lucretius and Ennius. Whatever the case, readers of Statius knew their new text defined its own occasion, such origins are narrative fictions created specifically for the present moment.<sup>1</sup>

In the case of Stephens' *Thebaid* his translation entails the management of loss, a lot of it. Statius's text is no longer present, but only lurks behind his translation, temporarily displaced by it. Though inaccessible to those who do not have access to the original language, it haunts the page like a phantasm for those who do. Still, what went unmentioned in the previous chapter is that the original text has already been displaced and replaced several times through the activities of early modern editors. As a result, there is no longer an "original," only a series of perceived originals. Classical scrolls give way to medieval codices that give way to the *editio princeps*. Toward the end of the

seventeenth century composing a translation, a translator would work from as many different editions as he could buy or borrow. His sense of the original Latin poems becomes colored by the work of previous commentators, and by the translations and imitations which various hands (skilled or otherwise) had produced. In many respects, he does not work in a field defined classically, but rather created by learned scholiasts. In this era the translator has several different kinds of material available to him out of which he may reconstruct Homer's or Vergil's texts. The distinction between author and translator begins to be blurred.<sup>2</sup>

Recently, there has been recognition of translation as a cultural transaction, and in large part much of this contemporary figuration of translation finds its way out of the thoughts of scholars like Walter Benjamin, according to whom, "[t]ranslation is so far removed from being the sterile equation of two dead languages that of all literary forms it is the one charged with the special mission of watching over the maturing process of the original language and the birth pangs of its own."<sup>3</sup> In essence, translation is a process of understanding one's own culture through modes of change, where the reader mutates into the translator and then back. As Hammond says, "Through translation one confronts the mystery of how a sense of selfhood and identity persists in spite of change. On the one hand, the characteristics of a writer should be recognizable even when he has been translated into another language: we should recognize what it is which individuates him. On the other, the translator seeks to conform his own genius to that of his original, losing himself to some degree."<sup>4</sup>

From my own perspective, much of Benjamin's thought parallels those thoughts about translation flourishing during the second half of the seventeenth century, when, following the Restoration, the cottage industry of translation publishing becomes a

leading sector of the book trade. The reasons for this shift are many and varied and not up for discussion here; however, it can be said that with the solidification of the vernacular as the popular and official language of communication on both the continent and in England there is a sharp rise in the demand for translations, especially of classical authors. The resolve of Bacon in 1623 to say that “modern languages will at one time or another play bank-rowtes in books,” turns out to be inopportune, if not wholly inaccurate. In response to the growth of such an enterprise there is as well an increase in the discussion about what makes a good translation and what makes a translation good.<sup>5</sup> In England, at the time, John Dryden directs this discussion. In fact, it is through him that the first deliberate discussion of a type of translator’s taxonomy takes shape.

Although it is easy enough to find Dryden discussing the merits of different types of translation styles, in his *Preface to Ovid’s Epistles* (1680) we find his first and most cited treatment of the topic. In part, he states:

All translation, I suppose, may be reduced to these three heads:

First, that of metaphrase, or turning an author word by word, and line by line, from one language into another... The second way is that of paraphrase, or translation with latitude, where the author is kept in view by the translator, so as never to be lost, but his words are not so strictly followed as his sense, and that too is admitted to be amplified but not altered...The third way is that of imitation, where the translator (if now he has not lost that name) assumes the liberty not only to vary from the words and sense, but to forsake them as he sees occasion; and taking only some general hints from the original, to run division on the ground-work, as he pleases...

Concerning the first of these methods, our Master Horace has given us this caution:

Nec verbum verbo curabis reddere, fidus  
Interpres –

Nor word for word too faithfully translate; as the Earl of Roscommon has excellently rendered it. Too faithfully is, indeed, pedantically: ‘tis a faith like that which proceeds from superstition, blind and zealous.<sup>6</sup>

Dryden's assertion here rests on the assumption "that the meaning of a source text is fixed and largely known (or at least knowable)." <sup>7</sup> As a result, the concern for him is how this meaning is best conveyed to his target audience. If Dryden's bases his threefold scheme on the degree of "literalness," then he arbitrarily decides where to place his cut-off points or substitutions; besides, in practice most translations fluctuate in this regard anyhow. It seems that Dryden wants us to consider translations in terms of a range: "from extreme freedom at one end to exact metaphrase at the other."<sup>8</sup> Still, if he holds that the distinction between metaphrase and imitation where the latter brings the poem to the reader and the former the reader to the poem, then he is not concerned about the range away from one extreme or another but rather the underlying principle. As Martindale observes, Dryden's idea of paraphrase is "not so much arbitrary as tendentious," since he merely alludes to a mean between freedom and metaphrase. Moreover, there is something "provocatively" misleading about dragging Horace's authority into his argument. In the *Ars poetica* Horace is not talking about translation in the narrower post-classical sense at all, but about the Greeks concept of *imitatio*. Horace would of realized, as Dryden does later, that paraphrase homogenizes translations produced during a given period, so that the alieness of the original is lost. Where there is little risk as Horace hints the sensibilities of the audience are not provoked and hence enriched. For Dryden, the practitioner of metaphrase, attentive to this dullness, does not attempt to smooth over the rough manner which "help to make an author's style distinctive, but to highlight them."<sup>9</sup> At a certain point, however, there is a translator who says one thing and does another. Stephens, for instance, figures himself a metaphraser, when in fact his translation is a paraphrase according to Dryden's rules. Thus, remains Dryden's concern for pre-set knowledge.

As was seen in the previous chapter an assumption of pre-set knowledge is highly suspect, especially concerning Statius. If anything has been shown throughout this dissertation it is that Statius's work is highly mutable and shows itself to be a willing partner and accomplice to unique interpretation – translation or otherwise. Since there was no real precision or long-standing argument about what Statius's poems provide to his reader, his poems allow readers and translators to fill in and rebuild the text in whatever ways they think appropriate, an approach that corresponds to Dryden's thoughts about paraphrase. But as Dryden will himself prove, there is a fine line between paraphrase and imitation, one which he will cross frequently.

Dryden's handling (or mishandling) of this task marks the difference between the prior chapter and the present. Whereas Stephens writes an "essay" on Statius's *Thebaid*, Dryden's *Aeneis* together with his maligning of Statius will bring Pope to cross the translation threshold from paraphrase to imitation. Specifically, what is at stake in this final chapter is *what* Dryden says about Statius in light of Vergil and *how* Pope responds to Dryden's *Aeneis* within his translation of the first book of the *Thebaid*.<sup>10</sup> Naturally, this goal is not that simplistic since Dryden speaks about Statius in a variety of contexts and over the course of his entire career, and Pope's translation of Statius has quite a long period of gestation and revision before being published. The result, however, of reading Dryden in order to unpack Pope's translation provides a unique opportunity to view the early development of his poetry and perhaps open a new discussion of Pope's politicization, which usually begins with discussions of *Windsor Forest*.

There is little exaggeration in stating that Dryden's thoughts about Statius are detrimental to his reception from the end of the seventeenth century until quite recently, specifically within literary criticism of Great Britain and the United States of America. In general, from Dryden forward there is much more of a concerted effort by poets and critics to rank classical poetry and poets (beyond Vergil and Homer) that did not take place earlier. Naturally, there were disagreements, but a truly concerted effort to solidify some type of universal order does not happen until the mid-seventeenth century. Whatever we may conclude as truth for ourselves once the Linnean push begins it gathers enough strength to maintain itself until the present – though taking a good beating first from the Romantics and later the post-Moderns. Though this does not mean that Statius's works vanish from the poetical consciousness, that happens more towards the end of the eighteenth century; it does mean that Statius's appeal and relevance grows dimmer both poetically and politically from this era forward.<sup>11</sup>

It is an interesting paradox that the beginning of Statius's demise should come at the hands of Dryden, whose poetry in so many ways reflects that of Statius's, especially in terms of occasional poems and poetical miscellany – excepting satire, of course. Dryden is no Milton or Spenser, just as Statius is no Vergil or Homer. This observation, however, does not diminish what each achieves in and through his poetry. It seems that Dryden himself does recognize that Statius's poetry is a great deal similar to his own. In many ways this recognition of self in Statius's poetry seems to scare Dryden into choosing other poets for promotion besides Statius. In one of his first remarks about Statius, Dryden says:

A famous modern Poet us'd to sacrifice every year a Statius to Virgil's Manes: and I have Indignation enough to burn a D'amboys annually to the memory of Johnson. But now, My Lord, I am sensible, perhaps too late,

that I have gone too far: for I remember some Verses of my own Maximin and Almanzor which cry, Vengeance upon me for their Extravagance, and which I wish heartily in the same fire with Statius and Chapman: All I can say for those passages, which are I hope not many, is, that I knew they were bad enough to please, even when I writ them... and am resolv'd I will settle my self no reputation by the applause of fools ... If the Ancients had judg'd by the same measures which a common Reader takes, they had concluded Statius to have written higher than Virgil...Yet Virgil had all the Majesty of a lawfull Prince; and Statius onely the blustering of a Tyrant.<sup>12</sup>

The act of burning Statius's *Thebaid* and George Chapman's *Bussy D'ambois* may strike the modern reader as a bit extreme, but what Dryden is truly concerned with here is underscoring his own lack of consideration, and, what he will later obsess over, "judgment." In other words, Dryden's close readings of both Chapman and Statius show him that whereas Vergil and Jonson master the art of learned imitation and restraint, Statius and Chapman never do. Nor does Dryden himself until, according to him, much later. In other words, Chapman and Statius represent for Dryden attempts at pleasing the very learned at the expense of achieving poetic legitimacy.

Intigueringly, the quotation above is written, not at the end of Dryden's career, but in the middle of it when he is at the height of his popular influence. The context of this statement, which has been reduced here, is the preface to *The Spanish Fryar*, a play about monarchical usurpation. As much as he derides Statius, Dryden is himself guilty of the same praise that Juvenal extends to Statius.<sup>13</sup> At the end of the passage Dryden comes clean: what is truly at stake for him in Statius's poetry is its perception as nothing more than the mere "blustering of a Tryant." Statius is for Dryden a representative of unrestrained autocracy and usurpation both in a political and poetical sense. That Dryden defines Vergil as the "lawfull Prince," in contrast to Statius, serves all the more to accuse Statius of denigrating poetry instead of elevating it. For this reason, Statius

becomes a favorite frame of reference for what Vergil is and is not (and hence what other poets ought to strive for), for the remainder of Dryden's career.

Dryden reinforces Vergil's primacy throughout his career, making that his criticism of Statius is all the more arresting. In the preface to *Sylvae; or, The Second Part of Poetical Miscellanies* (1685), for instance, Dryden and Tonson provide the reader with this quotation: "Non deficit alter / Aureus; & simili frondescit virga metallo." (Another golden one is not lacking; and a branch of a similar metal sprouts.) The quotation is from Vergil's *Aeneid* (6. 143-44), and, according to Hammond, its meaning is twofold. The Sibyl dictates to Aeneas that he must break a branch from a golden tree in order to find his way through the underworld, and as soon as he breaks this branch a new branch, equal in every way, will sprout. So this second volume is equal to the prior volume, *Miscellany* (1684). Consequently, since this volume is dominated by translations from Vergil, Horace, and others it does not fall short of the first volume in any way; moreover, by implication Dryden and his fellow translators are the second branch, worthy of, if not, rivaling their poetic forebearers. To put it another way: "to be second is not to be secondary."<sup>14</sup>

When a close reading of Dryden's various translations in the *Sylvae* is completed there is a clear distinction about his approach to translation. Rather than restrain himself with strictures pertaining to metaphrase or "Paraphrase, Translation with Latitude," Dryden actualizes a completely Augustan translation style: He composes poems that he thinks classical authors themselves would produce if they were Englishmen living in the seventeenth century. As a result, Sowerby notes that Dryden

“approaches his original very much in the spirit advocated by Horace for successful imitation and keeps to his Augustan formula:

nec verbo verbum curabis reddere fidus  
interpres, nec desilies imitator in artum,  
unde pedem proferre pudor vetet aut operis lex. (Horace, *Ars Poetica*, ll.  
133-5)<sup>15</sup>

To further underscore this approach Sowerby provides both Jonson’s paraphrase of his verses – “Not to imitate servilely, as Horace saith, to catch at vices, for virtue” – and his verse translation:

For being a poet, thou mayst feign, create,  
Not care, as thou wouldst faithfully translate,  
To render word for word: nor with thy sleight  
Of imitation, leap into a strait,  
From whence thy modesty or poem’s law  
Forbids thee forth again thy foot to draw. (Jonson, ll. 189-94)<sup>16</sup>

Dryden’s admiration for Jonson needs no belaboring here; stated simply, Jonson thinks that an imitative poet succeeds only by following a poet’s virtues not his vices. Taking this literally Dryden gets rid of a poet’s “vices, the obscurity, the scabrous verse, the hard diction, and the overstrained figures and strained metaphors.”<sup>17</sup> Instead Dryden gives the “great Augustan virtues of clearness, purity, and ease.”<sup>18</sup> By altering each poet’s work Dryden fits the ancient text nicely within his own contemporary poetical and even political perspective. Dryden’s translations, consequently, are nothing short of polished and untangled, and more often than not startlingly unlike the verses by the original author.

The observation that Dryden maintains complete freedom to alter poetry in translation strikes at the heart of his thoughts about translation; so much so that one may wonder whether his style is criticized or cherished at the time. The answer is

overwhelmingly positive. In his response to Dryden's translation of Persius, William Congreve clarifies what he sees in Dryden's work:

Thou great Revealer of dark Poesie.  
Those sullen Clouds, which have for Ages past,  
O'er *Persius*' too-long-suffering Muse been cast,  
Disperse, and fly before thy sacred Pen,  
And, in their room, bright Tracks of Light are seen.

Old *Stoick* Virtue, clad in rugged Lines,  
Polish'd by you, in Modern Brilliant shines

So now, whatever Praise, from us, is due,  
Belongs not to Old *Persius*, but the New.  
For still Obscure, to us no Light he gives;  
Dead in himself, in you alone he lives.  
So stubborn Flints their inward Heat conceal  
'Till Art and Force th' unwilling Sparks reveal;  
But thro' your Skill, from these small Seeds of Fire,  
Bright Flames arise, which never can Expire.<sup>19</sup>

Congreve's focus on Dryden's illumination of Persius by dispelling the gloomy clouds that surround him recalls the contrast between Lucan and Statius in the previous chapter. There the difference between light and dark and easy and difficult suggested that Stephens and his cohort were interested in making the politically dark implications of the *Thebaid* manifest. Congreve, in contrast, is simply thrilled to have Dryden, the "great Revealer," translate Persius's difficult Latin into skilful English, or what he dreadfully enjambs "Modern Brilliant shines." The "unwilling" and "obscure" (i.e. "sullen") nature of Persius's poetry yields before Dryden's "sacred pen," according to Congreve. The resulting picture indicates that Persius lay unread because he is both inelegant and uneloquent. There is not a hint of the political or philosophical difficulty contained within his verses. But why should there be? The verses are no longer his, they are Dryden's; and Congreve would not have it any other way.

The over-corrected nature of Dryden's *Persius* is not the point, however. Dryden knows perfectly well that he is re-creating *Persius* in his own way. Rather the aspect of revision and rereading, whether through historical, political, or poetical lenses, is the point. And to this end, Dryden is remarkably consistent in what he chooses to use as a criterion for deriding poets, *Statius* in particular: lack of restraint. Paradoxically, of course, Dryden shows none himself; but as shown earlier he is at the very least conscious of his own faults and attempts to better them. In a later treatise he offers this thought:

The remark, I must acknowledge, is not so proper for the colouring, as the design; but it will hold for both. As the words, &c., are evidently shown to be the clothing of the thought, in the same sense as colours are the clothing of design, so the painter and the poet ought to judge exactly, when the colouring and expressions are perfect, and then to think their work is truly finished. Apelles said to Protogenes, that he knew not when to give over. A work may be over-wrought, as well as under-wrought; too much labour often takes away the spirit by adding to the polishing so that there remains nothing but a dull correctness, a piece without any considerable faults, but with few beauties; for when the spirits are drawn off, there is nothing but *caput mortuum*. *Statius* never thought an expression could be bold enough; and if a bolder could be found, he rejected the first. *Virgil* had judgment enough to know daring was necessary; but he knew the difference betwixt a glowing colour and a glaring..<sup>20</sup>

While the allusion to Apelles again reminds us of the same made in Stephens' edition of *Statius*, here Dryden intends Apelles to remind the reader that, as much as he (Dryden) may seem to over-extend himself in his translations, he recognizes that the best poetry shows restraint and has as its primary characteristic, "judgment."

In many ways, the restraint for Dryden is not found in terms of interpretation, but rather in terms of who is worthy of translation. For Dryden *Statius* is simply not worthy, his poetry is excessive and "glaring." *Statius* tries too hard; continuously competing with *Virgil's* poetry and legacy perverts his own poetry, causing him to polish it into a dull luster and create something that is over-wrought. Equating *Statius's* poetry

to a type of useless substance of *Caput Mortuum* – the residue of distillation “good for nothing, but to be flung away, all vertue being extracted” – while contrasting Vergil as a poet with judgment and taste, highlights Dryden’s interest in perfection versus revision. On the one hand, Dryden allows for them both, they are necessary components of the creative process, *Art*. On the other, the indecision by Apelles and Statius creates ambiguity and imperfection, and a product that is indefinitely mutable. While this characteristic is prized by former readers of Statius, for Dryden the continual fussing by the artist does not allow for moral direction and instruction, or more importantly a type of any legitimation. Though Vergil may not excite the fool on the street, as Statius may; his restrained and curt verse provides Dryden with a type of directed, moral and poetical latitude.

## II

Still, what is it that attracts Dryden to Vergil? Dryden’s lifetime (1631-1700) corresponds with the bloodiest and most revolutionary changes in religious, social and political life that England has experienced. At Dryden’s birth Charles I claimed, as did his father, James I, to rule by divine right. During the 1640s there is the Civil War and Charles’s beheading. Subsequently, there is Cromwell and the Protectorate, the Restoration of Charles II, and, finally, the Glorious Revolution. For anyone it would have been tempting to support whichever side seemed to be at an advantage and forsake it when it was not. Certainly, Dryden does his share of flip-flopping: one easily notes his panegyrics to Cromwell and Charles II. Yet at the end of his life Dryden found in Vergil a poet who understands political revolution and the office of poet laureate for what it ought to be, a platform from which to advise and admonish monarchs.<sup>21</sup>

Despite the widespread admiration of the *Aeneis* by Pope, Scott, Saintsbury, Tillyard, Brower and others, Dryden has had, ever since Milbourne in 1698, a small but vocal army of detractors. The standard complaint turned against his work is its frequent and excessive amplification of Vergil's meaning. Van Doren accuses Dryden of composing verse translation in terms of formulae, that is, of laying in "a fund of phrases with which he could expand any passage that seemed to him curt." Dryden himself was well aware that Vergil "studies brevity more than any other Poet," but he also recognized that Vergil "had the Advantage of Language, wherein much may be comprehended in a little space."<sup>22</sup> As Corse puts it, Dryden feels that "way to please the best Judges is not to Translate a Poet literally; and Vergil least of any other."<sup>23</sup>

What Dryden means by not translating a poet literally is explained at some length in his *Dedication*:

The way I have taken, is not so streight as Metaphrase, nor so loose as Paraphrase: Some things too I have omitted, and sometimes added of my own. Yet the omissions I hope, are but of Circumstances, and such as wou'd have no grace in *English*; and the Additions, I also hope, are easily deduc'd from *Virgil's* Sense. They will seem (at least I have the Vanity to think so), not stuck into him, but growing out of him.<sup>24</sup>

Here Dryden finds the median way, instead of his earlier position, where "Paraphrase, or Translation with Latitude," in the *Preface to Ovid's Epistles* (1680), he holds a course in between the extremes of imitation and metaphrase.<sup>25</sup> Still, at nearly twice the length of Vergil's poem Dryden adds a good deal more. In fact as Corse carefully demonstrates he often goes in the direction of imitation, "where the Translator (if he now has not lost that Name) assumes the Liberty not only to vary from the words and sence, but to forsake them both as he sees occasion."<sup>26</sup> "Dryden's figurative language ('not stuck into him but growing out of him') tells something important about his theory of translation, not

readily apparent from this constant shuffling of critical terms: his additions to Vergil, rather than the result of some mechanical operation, are part of an organic process.”<sup>27</sup>

Corse proves his claim by looking at a “particularly curt passage” of Dryden’s *Aeneis* and Vergil’s *Aeneid*: Dido’s cursing of Aeneas:

spero equidem mediis, si quid pia numina possunt,  
Supplicia hausarum scopulis et nomine Dido  
Saepe vocaturum.<sup>28</sup>

Dryden offers these verses:

Yet if the Heav’ns will hear my Pious Vow,  
The faithless Waves, not half so false as thou,  
Or secret Sands, shall Sepulchers afford  
To thy proud Vessels, and their perjur’d Lord.

Corse takes the time to note Dryden’s substitutions and his insertions. For the former he has: “Heav’ns,” “hear my Pious Vow,” “Waves,” “secret Sands,” “Sepulchers afford,” the latter: “The faithless,” “not half so false as thou,” “Or,” “and To thy proud Vessels,” “and their perjur’d Lord.” It is easy to see from Corse’s observations that Dryden’s substitutions constitute well over half of the passage. Still, though Dryden’s varies from his source, the sarcastic epithets “faithless,” “false,” and “perjur’d” reiterate, with a vengeance, that earlier epithet, *perfide* (366); while the epithet “proud” cuts several ways at once: it glances at the splendid appearance of the “Vessels,” at the pride Dido took in restoring the “ruin’d Fleet” (541), and at the arrogance the ships assume from association with Aeneas, “their perjur’d Lord.” Thus, most of his additions grow out of Vergil, and serve a special purpose – “to heighten the sense of outrage Dido feels at being abandoned by her lover.”<sup>29</sup>

The use of substitutions allows Dryden to swerve away from his initial assertion about the value of epic poetry:

A heroic poem, truly such, is undoubtedly the greatest work which the soul of man is capable to perform. The design of it is to form the mind to heroic virtue by example; 'tis conveyed in verse, that it may delight, while it instructs. The action of it is always one, entire, and great.

It is true that the greatness of subject demands the intrusion of “Heav’n” and “Pious Vows,” since they elevate Dido’s sentiment to reflect Aeneas’s virtue by example. So he continues:

Even the least portions of them must be of the epic kind: all things must be grave, majestic, and sublime; nothing of a foreign nature, like the trifling novels, which Ariosto and others, have inserted in their poems; by which the reader is misled into another sort of pleasure, opposite to that which is designed in an epic poem. One raises the soul, and hardens it to virtue; the other softens it again, and unbends it into vice.

Though Dryden launches his dedication with reference to epic’s use for the “Soul of Man,” he does not at all address such a subject. In fact it appears that as soon as he mentions the good intentions epic retains he begins to note how easily an epic poet can be side-tracked into following the vices that Horace and Jonson have pointed out. This kind of contamination leads him to introduce Statius:

Statius, as Bossu has well observed, was ambitious of trying his strength with his master Virgil, as Virgil had tried his strength with Homer. The Grecian gave the two Romans an example ... Virgil imitated the invention of Homer ... Statius, who, through his whole poem, is noted for want of conduct and judgment ... went out of his way, as it were on premeditated malice, to commit a fault ... On these terms, this *Capaneus* of a Poet engaged his two Immortal Predecessors, and his Success was answerable to his Enterprise.

Dryden’s final blow, “this *Capaneus* of a Poet,” draws attention to the hubristic nature of Statius’s poem. For Dryden, Vergil and Homer reach a stage of apotheosis, they are gods. Statius’s fault is that he attempts to outdo what cannot be outdone. Humans do not rival gods, ever. Dryden goes on to say, in a very rambling manner, that what is at stake in the *Aeneid* is not the myth of Aeneas, but rather political revolution. Zwicker proclaims

Aeneas to be Augustus Caesar to Dryden; thus to celebrate Aeneas is to celebrate the overhaul of the political and moral spheres that Augustus brought about.<sup>30</sup> As a result, Dryden's *Aeneis* is about moral conduct and how conduct reflects political and pragmatic behavior. Unlike the Homeric poems the *Aeneis* is not concerned with "justice, charity, and honor;" but rather with how moral fiber is "entwined with political objectives."<sup>31</sup>

### III

Before turning our attention to Pope's translation we would do well to look once more at Dryden's *Preface to Ovid's Epistles*, since we have yet to fully understand what is at stake for Dryden in imitation. To define what he thinks imitation is Dryden sets as an example the Pindaric efforts of Cowley and Denham. Because Pindar's notoriously difficult poetry does not easily translate from Greek, Dryden praises the efforts of Cowley to "contrive" Pindar "into our Tongue." In specific, Dryden maintains that since Pindar is "wild and ungovernable" Cowley has every reason to ignore the conventions of paraphrase and metaphrase, and instead imitate. He states:

I take Imitation of an Authour in their sense to be an Endeavour of a later Poet to write like one who has written before him on the same Subject: that is, not to Translate his words, or to be Confin'd to his Sense, but only to set him as a Patern, and to write, as he supposes, that Authour would have done, had he liv'd in our Age, and in our Country...<sup>32</sup>

Remarkably this is precisely what Corse has demonstrated that Dryden does within his translation of Vergil; namely he brings him into seventeenth-century England. Yet, Dryden offers a caveat in the *Preface*:

But if *Virgil* or *Ovid*, or any regular intelligible Authours be thus us'd, tis no longer to be call'd their work, when neither the thoughts nor words are drawn from the Original: but instead of them there is something new produc'd, which is almost the creation of another hand...<sup>33</sup>

For Dryden, Vergil is “intelligible” and hence readily accessible; or at least he was in 1680. In 1697 Dryden has come full circle, from: “Let he who is inquisitive to know an Authours thoughts will be disapointed in his expectation”; to now realizing that:

Imitation of an Authour is the most advantagious way for a Translator to shew himself, but the greatest wrong which can be done to the Memory and Reputation of the dead.<sup>34</sup>

In some sense Pope’s *Thebais* must be read with this final sentiment in mind, since it responds both to Dryden above and Stephens before. Stephens, if we remember, proposes a similar sentiment in his own prefatory poem in which he states that the casual reader sees more or less only the poetical flourishes of Statius, those things that wow a crowd; whereas for the critic reader Statius’s mind is available for investigation. Now in 1697, as Corse shows, Dryden attempts to translate the mind of Vergil in his *Aeneis*. It is fair, then, to ask a couple of questions at this point: Why, if Dryden has strayed from his own contention, admittedly nearly twenty years old, can one not question his treatment of Statius? What if some wit thought Statius “wild and ungovernable,” would he then be worthy of imitation? Is his mind worth knowing? Pope thinks so.

#### IV

The generic question, *Why Statius?* which has been asked throughout this dissertation so far, again has much to offer. Dryden dislikes the *Thebaid* precisely because of its ambiguous nature, poetically, morally and politically. Pope, however, revels in Statius’s preceived ambiguity. In the *Thebaid* there is opportunity for Pope to express himself; or as he says in his *Essay on Criticism*:

True *Expression*, like th’ unchanging *Sun*,  
*Clears*, and *improves* whate’er it shines upon,

It *gilds* all Objects, but it *alters* none.<sup>35</sup>

These words offer Pope's early perspective on translation; the idea that someone else's poetry needs improvement is an idea that he most certainly derives in large part from Dryden. In fact, in his letters it is clear that Pope relies on Dryden to inform a great deal of his translation methodology. For example, in a letter to Ralph Bridges Pope states:

But you have made me much more proud of, and positive in my Judgment, since it is strengthened by your's. I think your Criticisms, which regard the Expression, very just, and shall make my profit of them: To give you some proof that I am in earnest, I will alter three verses on you bare objection, tho I have Mr Dryden's Example for each of them. And this I hope you will account no small piece of obedience, from one, who values the Authority of one true Poet above that of twenty Critics or Commentatours.<sup>36</sup>

So one wonders if the Pope is making some kind of overture to his *Thebais* in the verses cited above, since it too is published in the same volume as the *Essay*, by denoting that his poetry is a type of gilding, turning silver (Latin) to gold (English). In fact, Pope carries on:

Some judge of Authors' Names, not Works, and then  
Nor praise nor blame the Writings, but the Men.  
Of all this Servile Herd the worst is He  
That in proud Dulness joins with Quality,  
A constant Critick at the Great-man's Board,  
To fetch and carry Nonsense for my Lord.  
What woful stuff this Madrigal wou'd be,  
To some starv'd Hackny Sonneteer, or me?  
But let a Lord once own the happy Lines,  
How the Wit brightens! How the Style refines!  
Before his sacred Name flies ev'ry Fault,  
And each exalted Stanza teems with Thought!

The Vulgar thus through Imitation err;  
As oft the Learn'd by being Singular;  
So much they scorn the Crowd, that if the Throng  
By Chance go right, they purposely go wrong;  
So Schismatics the plain Believers quit,  
And are but damn'd for having too much Wit.<sup>37</sup>

Whether these lines are a bit of jab at Dryden for his much maligning of Statius, I doubt. However, Pope does present an interesting case for Statius here if we are so inclined to consider it. In Dryden's criticism of Statius, there is not a single instance where he gives a specific example of how Statius goes awry in his poetry. He does give one instance where a story Statius relates seems to him out of place and faulty; but not the poetry itself. In fact, the only time Dryden mentions specific verses of Statius (*Theb.* VI, 400-1) he praises them as the "true Image of their Author," "wonderfully fine," and "would cost me an hour, if I had the leisure to translate them, there is so much Beauty in the Original."<sup>38</sup> Whatever the case, Pope recognizes that though some poets are accused of being dull, that by following the consensus and not thinking for one's self an opportunity is missed.

## V

There has been a recent effort to read Alexander Pope's *Windsor Forest* as his first politically charged poetic work – even if it is a somewhat understated effort. The claim is one that rests primarily on Pope's careful handling of verses 407-412 and 413-422, and in particular the half verse that states, "Slav'ry be no more." These four words, indeed, offer the modern reader and scholar much to ponder, as early eighteenth-century discussions of trans-Atlantic slavery are quite rare, at least among the more famous authors of England. But the claim that *Windsor Forest* is Pope's first politically poetic venture is perhaps jumping the gun a bit, for a few years prior to its production Pope publishes his translation of Statius's *Thebaid*; wherein there is clearer and more substantial evidence of Pope's political and social concerns, making it perhaps his first political poem.

*The First Book of Statius's Thebais* is the title Pope gives to his translation and its context poses a challenge to the view of Pope's unease with entering the political fray of the early 1700s. Pope claims to have begun translating the *Thebaid* around 1703 at the age of fifteen; and while there is no evidence to suggest he did not begin then, this claim has allowed many prior scholars to underestimate and overlook the significance of his translation. By the time of its first publication in Lintot's *Miscellaneous Poems and Translations* (1712), Pope had overhauled much of what he had written nine years earlier, making his text not one of juvenilia but rather a poem that engages topics of a serious nature: namely slavery, empire and tyranny.

Revised, expanded, and politicized during the political foment of 1708-09 when the acts strengthening the Protestant succession were finalized – substantiating any anti-Catholic sentiment – Pope's *Thebais* has an important place in his writing as a whole. The *Thebaid's* subject of Civil War needed little if any provocation as an interesting and appropriate subject to undertake. The topics of tyranny, folly, usurpation, banishment, and foreign invasion would not be missed by a contemporary English audience.<sup>39</sup> As such, while his translation should not be regarded as the culminating poem of the first phase of his career, *that is still Windsor Forest*, the *Thebais* comments on Pope's England in a way that is perhaps less ambiguous than that presented in *Windsor Forest*.

## VI

It has been argued that Pope's translation of Statius can be read as his first foray into political satire.<sup>40</sup> This, I think, is not quite accurate. While his translation may be seen to have elements of satire, it would be hasty to conclude that the entire translation should be included under that rubric. For it is no more a satire than Dryden's translation

of the *Aeneid*. Moreover, like Dryden's *Aeneis*, Pope's *Thebais* is one which is interested in the political discourse and atmosphere of the day, and it can and should be read, in that way; Pope "distilled a subtle but unmistakable commentary on his own time and place – its civil war, revolution, agony between pretender and incumbent; its suspension between Williamite disappointment and Hanoverian prospect, its rape upon constitutional kingship, its party strife, and its fickle and compliant people."<sup>41</sup> Moreover, Pope presents Statius as Dryden does Vergil, bringing Statius in line with English and a purifying Augustan poetics. As a result, just as he will do in the translation of the *Iliad*, and paralleling Dryden's translations, Pope omits the low ideas and poetry he finds in Statius's *Thebaid*, refusing "to follow Statius into what he considers instances of bathos, or extravagant hyperbole," leaving untranslated a substantial portion of the first book.<sup>42</sup>

Pope's translation begins in an overstated manner. "Fraternal rage, the guilty Thebes's alarms, / Th' alternate reign destroyed by impious arms," is far from Statius's "Fraternas acies alternaque regna profanis / decertata odiis sontesque euoluere Thebas / Pierius menti calor incidit." From the outset his translation bypasses Dryden's conception of metaphrase, and immediately Pope begins rewriting what Statius offers. "Profanis" does not translate into "guilty" and nowhere does one find an equivalent of "impious arms." Still, Pope's translation does not strike the casual reader as shockingly incorrect; if anything it sounds very much like what one might imagine Statius's epic to be about: rage, guilt and impiety. After all, it is a story of fraternal strife (a more literal rendering of "fraternas acies"), imprecation and destruction. Pope is all too aware of this expectation; and, as Dryden before him, he eschews the course of the strict metaphraser

who enjoys nothing more than accounting for dull correctness. Instead Pope plays to his audience's interest: that is how *He* translates Statius.

Without overburdening ourselves with the countless times Pope chooses to alter the vocabulary of Statius's text, it is significant to account for a good deal of how he reads Statius's text. At points, and again similar to Dryden, Pope freely adds and substitutes words which heighten the effect of his *Thebais*. In verse six, for example, Pope translates "gentis" as "nation," a seemingly benign substitution. However, by altering the sense of *gens* from race, clan, line or tribe to something much broader, the reader is quickly made aware that Pope's emphasis is going to be openly social and political. "Nation" suggests not just a political body, but more so a heterogeneous body-politic or an aggregate of communities. *Gens*, on the other hand, for Statius in this instance is deliberately confined to the house of Cadmus, the ruling house of Thebes and it has no inherent authority beyond the city-state of Thebes. Pope's displacement of "nation" for "gentis" begins an effort of gradually rewriting Statius's *Thebaid*, so that it reflects Pope's concerns not Statius's. In fact, Pope clearly states that he feels compelled to change Statius's work to suit his perspective:

You will find, I doubt not, upon reading, that *Statius* was none of the Discreetest poets tho he was the best Versifyer Next to *Virgil*: In the Very beginning he Unluckily betrays his Ignorance in the rules of Poetry (which Horace had already taught the Romans) when he asks his Muse *where to begin his THEBAID* & seems to doubt whether it should not be, *ab Ovo Ledeano*? when He Comes to the scene of his Poem & the Prize in Dispute between the *Brothers* he gives us a Very Mean Opinion of it – *Pugna est de paupere Regno*. Very different from the Conduct of his Master *Virgil* whi at the Entrance of his Poem informs his reader of the Greatness of its Subject. *Tantae Molis erat Romanam Condere Gentem* – there are innumerable Litle faults in him among which I Cannot but take notice of one in this Book where speaking of the implacable Hatred of the *Brothers* he says, the *whole World would be too small a Prize to repay so much Impiety*:

Quid si peteretur crimine tanto  
Limes Uterque poli, quem Sol emissus Eoo  
Cardine, aut portu Vergens prospectat Ibero?

This was pretty well one would think already but he goes on

Quas procul Terras obliquo Sydere Tangit  
Auius, aut Boreae gelidas, madidive tepentes  
Igne Noti? –

After all this what could a Poet think of but *Heaven* it self for the *Prize* but what follows is astonishing

Quid si TyriaePhrygiaeve Sub unum  
Convectentur Opes?

I do not remember to have met with so great a fall in any ancient Author whatsoever – I should not have insisted so much on the faults of this *Poet* if I did not hope you would tak the same freed with and revenge it upon his *Translator*.<sup>43</sup>

Pope's insistence on Statius's faultiness allows for a wide berth in altering and heightening his translation. Though his concern that Cromwell be as critical of his translation as he is of the original is a bit facetious, Pope's insistence on rectifying Statius's verse is reminiscent of Dryden's Persius and Congreve's approbation. Just as important his concern to elevate Statius's poetry to its proper place, that is of elevating his topic to meet its required epic standard, comes deliberately from Dryden's translation of the *Aeneid*.

Moving only slightly ahead in the translation to verses sixteen and seventeen, while keeping Pope's description in mind, Statius tells the reader where in the history of *Thebes* he intends to begin his epic: "limes mihi carminis esto / Oedipodae confusa domus." (Let the confused house of Oedipus be for me the threshold of my song.) Pope translates them as: "And Fix, O Muse! The barrier of thy song / At Oedipus – from his

disasters trace the long confusions of his guilty race". It is obvious how Pope alters the sense of Statius's lines here; however, the peculiarity of "disaster" and "guilty race" are striking. *Domus* can easily follow *gens* in its Latin variances, since *gens* can retain a local sense vis-à-vis tribe or clan in its definition. But where "guilty" and "disaster" can be found in Statius's text boggles the mind at this point. It is only later and through a thorough investigation that it becomes apparent that Pope views the citizens of Thebes as guilty of wilfully yoking themselves to a tyrant and therefore deserving of the disasters that Oedipus brings upon them. Tangentially, one wonders if Pope has Lear in mind here?<sup>44</sup>

These two instances only begin to indicate the kind of liberty Pope takes with Statius initially; his politicization is not completely manifest at this point. Pope is quite right to imagine that Statius's epic is full of rage, impiety, and guilt; but it is interesting to see how quickly this evolves. Building on the nuanced manipulation of "nation" for *gens* Pope increasingly turns his readers eyes toward tyranny and empire. When, for example, Statius states (1.28-34):

ipse tuis alte radiantem crinibus arcum  
 imprimat aut magni cedat tibi Iuppiter aequa  
 parte poli, maneat hominum contentus habenis,  
 undarum terraeque potens, et sidera dones.  
 ... nunc tendo chelyn; satis arma referre  
 Aonia et geminis sceptrum exitiale tyrannis

Pope translates:

Tho' Jove himself no less content would be  
 To part his throne and share his Heav'n with thee[?]  
 Yet stay, great Caesar! And vouchsafe to reign  
 O'er the wide earth, and o'er the wat'ry main;  
 Resign to Jove his empire of the skies,  
 And people Heav'n with Roman deities...  
 Meanwhile permit that my preluding Muse  
 In Theban wars an humbler theme may choose.

Of furious fate surviving death she sings,  
A fatal throne to two contending kings...

Beyond the nearly doubling the verse count to say the same thing, Pope's translation is stunningly different from Statius's text. The agency of Jove is completely over-ridden by Pope, and he applies "contentus" to him rather than Caesar (Domitian), to whom it belongs. The offbeat and overextended translation irons out the syntactic complexities which exist in Statius's text. Pope confuses the arrangement of words so that an intricate and puzzling event occurs. Our very effort to overcome the difficulty of the lines in Latin involves us in them, and the text becomes the context of reality. In the translation, however, Pope raises the eye-brows by inserting "empire" where it is not found nor understood. Compounding this addition as well as deliberately softening Statius's "tyrannis" with "kings," Pope ostensibly creates an expectation by the reader that Statius's story concerns primarily "empire" and imperial aspirations, when in fact Statius seems little concerned with empire *per se* but rather the destructive nature of civil war in general.

Making matters ever more complicated and intriguing, Pope introduces overtly Christian overtones and a sense of providential nature with the additional use of "Heav'n." In doing so he sets up his audience to read the last line: "A fatal throne to two contending kings," in terms of the contemporary debate over divine right to rule. This is the only time in Book One that Statius uses the term "tyrannis" (or its variants) to describe Eteocles and Polynices, at no other point does he reiterate it. Yet, Pope does not metaphrase or paraphrase, instead he imitates. By combining "Heav'n" with "kings" Pope directs the reader to remember William III's usurpation during 1688, the action which creates the moral and political conundrum now in play at the beginning of the eighteenth

century. By softening his translation initially, Pope leaves room to amplify and alter the content of Statius poem so that he can orient his reader to rethink the constitutional kingship and party strife in the name of “empire” and “fate.”

Since Pope’s introduction to his translation lacks the expansiveness of Dryden’s *Dedication* to the *Aeneis*, the initial verses become a type of paratext. And from the briefest of surveys it is apparent how Pope conceives and produces his poem from that of Statius’s. Still, it bears looking a Dryden’s *Dedication* to gain some more perspective on what Pope can aspire to in terms of translating contemporary political ills into his poem.

In a passage of the *Dedication*, Dryden says:

we are to consider him [Vergil] as writing his Poem in a time when the Old Form of Government was subverted, and a new one just Established by *Octavius Caesar*: In effect by force of Arms, but seemingly by the Consent of the Roman People.<sup>45</sup>

As Pope knew that Stuart loyalists maintained that the Glorious Revolution came about through armed insurrection, a coup that held the pretense of defending liberty and property; in fact in result it was sedition, rewriting England’s “laws and constitutions.”

Dryden indicts the usurpers throughout his *Dedication*:

The Commonwealth had receiv’d a deadly Wound in the former Civil Wars betwixt *Marius* and *Sylla*. The Commons, while the first prevail’d, had almost shaken off the Yoke of the Nobility; and *Marius* and *Cinna*, like the Captains of Mobb, under the specious Pretence of the Publick Good, and of doing Justice in the Oppressours of their Liberty, reveng’d themselves, without Form of Law, on their private Enemies...Such was the Reformation of Government by both Parties. The Senate and the Commons were two Bases on which it stood; and the two Champions of either Faction, each destroy’d the Foundations of the other side: So the Fabrique of consequence must fall betwixt them: And Tyranny must be built upon their Ruines. This comes of altering Fundamental laws and Constitutions...Thus the Roman People were grosly gull’d; twice or thrice over; and as often enslav’d in one Century, and under the same pretence of Reformation.<sup>46</sup>

The political jibe here is openly directed at William III and his followers who, in Dryden's eyes, had precipitated the establishment of tyranny in lieu of elective kinship. It is clear as well the "Oppressours of their Liberty" and "Tyranny" built on ruins is in Pope's mind as he translates the *Thebaid*. So much so that he amplifies Dryden and Vergil, or better Dryden's Vergil, through Statius. For in contrast to Dryden, for whom Charles II had been a savior of sorts; for Pope, William was nothing but a tyrant, as a result there is a repeated inference on the faultiness of ruling monarchs in his text. Pope as mentioned earlier makes quite clear how the monarchs are to be phrased, by the term tyrant and always in collusion with slaves, slavery and empire. But this is to be expected, for like Statius Pope has no real experience with a ruler who is benevolent, or at least seen to be so.<sup>47</sup>

One need only to glance for a brief period, say verses 192-264, to get a sense of how Pope's *Thebais* crescendoes into thunderclaps of politicized vitriol:

But Fortune now (the lots of empire thrown)  
Decrees to proud Eteocles the crown.  
What joys, O Tyrant! Swell'd thy soul that day,  
When all were slaves thou could'st around survey,  
Pleas'd to behold unbounded power thy own,  
And singly fill a fear'd and envied throne!  
But the vile vulgar, ever discontent,  
Their growing fears in secret murmurs vent;  
Still prone to change, tho' still the slaves of state,  
And sure the monarch whom they have to hate;  
New lords they madly make, then tamely bear,  
And softly curse the tyrants whom they fear.  
And one of those who groan beneath the sway  
Of kings imposed, and grudgingly obey,  
(Whom Envy to the great, and vulgar Spite,  
With Scandal arm'd, th' ignoble mind's delight)  
Exclaim'd – "O Thebes! For thee what fates remain,  
What woes attend this un auspicious reign?  
Must we, alas! our doubtful necks prepare  
Each haughty master's yoke by turns to bear,  
And still to change whom changed we still must fear?"

These now control a wretched people's fate,  
These can divide, and these reverse the state:  
Ev'n Fortune rules no more – O servile land,  
Where exiled tyrants still by turns command!  
Thou Sire of Gods and men, imperial Jove!  
Is this th' eternal doom decreed above?

These verses attest to all the criticism that Pope can muster concerning contemporary woes. He repeatedly gives voice to his displeasure of the Protestant claim to the throne in 1688, William's desire to rule without Parliament, and William's belief that he should inherit the throne not James – one wonders whether Pope even considers mentioning Eteocles and Polynices at all. The use of tyrant, empire and slaves would raise the hackles of many of his readers. In case they are uncertain, Pope at points delivers his message with startling clarity:

Must we alas! Our doubtful necks prepare,  
Each haughty Master's Yoke by turns to bear,  
And still to change whom changed we still must fear?

“Each haughty Master's yoke” insures that Pope does not in fact play favorites, Whigs and Tories are part and parcel of the corruption of the “state” – which is another of Pope's additions not found in Statius. And though they may dislike their current circumstance, Pope labors to call them no better than slaves doing their master's bidding:

And one of those who groan beneath the Sway  
Of Kings impos'd, and grudgingly obey...

Pope regains his composure only to to sidestep Statius once more, concluding a series of damning blows with: “O Thebes! For thee what Fates remain, / What Woes tend this inauspicious Reign?” Pope achieves here much the same that the earlier quotation of Dryden's Aeneis – Dido's curse – does: namely, it heightens the effect of Statius's work and grows out of it. Pope is in fact inventing Statius. The idea redigning and inventing gives Pope some pause, and he takes a good deal of time to consider it in a

letter to Ralph Bridges. In it he writes about Homer and his experience thus far with him:

But tho' I speak thus of Commentators, I will continue to read carefully all I can procure, to make up, that way, for my own want of a Critical understanding in the original Beauties of Homer. Though the greatest of them are certainly those of Invention and Design, which are not at all confined to the Language: For the distinguishing Excellencies of Homer are, (by the consent of the best Criticks of all nations) first in the Manners, (which include all the speeches, as being no other than the Representations of each Person's Manners by his words:) and then in that Rapture and Fire, which carries you away with him, with that wonderful Force, that no man who has a true Poetical spirit is Master of himself, while he reads him. Homer makes you interested and concern'd before you are aware, all at once; whereas Virgil does it by soft degrees. This, I believe, is what a Translator of Homer ought principally to imitate: and it is very hard for any Translator to come up to it, because the chief reason why all Translations fall short of their Originals, is, that the very Constraint they are obliged to, renders 'em heavy and dispirited.<sup>48</sup>

Pope's insistence that to translate well the translator must not become "heavy and dispirited" is certainly found in his *Thebais*. And as Dryden noted earlier, Statius is a Capaneus of poets, which allows poet to be as spirited as he desires in his translation.

## VII

The bitterness of Pope's tone and the liberties that he takes in his translation suggest that his rendering has been seasoned by the same long periods of reflective thought, which inform much of *Windsor Forest*. Yet, unlike *Windsor Forest*, there is not much in the way of obscurity and ambiguity in his translation. The *Thebaid* presents a story that neither lacks complication nor avoids uncomfortable and uneasy perceptions. There is considerable potential for discomfort and unease in the context in which Pope's translation is written and revised, since in some ways the poem contributes to the debate, both polemic and poetic, that accompany the negotiations that ends in the

Treaty of Utrecht, and brings the Tory Peace. This makes his translation of Statius all the more poignant.

Although Pope's *Windsor Forest* is cautiously, if not moderately, cast among other Tory poems, his *Thebais* is a poem that greets the public in very different manner. While it is true that the praise of liberty and the revilement of servitude is a Whiggish enough sentiment, and that the denigration of Norman tyranny might have appealed to those Whigs who did not notice the implied comparison between the Norman Williams and their hero, William of Orange, *Windsor Forest* comes nowhere near the tendentiousness that the *Thebais* achieves.<sup>49</sup> Certainly, "it is inscribed to a Tory minister, lauds Queen Anne for being a Stuart, and, as Addison seems to have noted, says nothing of Marlborough."<sup>50</sup> But when the most politically partisan passage of the poem comes in the vision of banished vices at the end of Father Thames's prophetic speech it is hardly as impressive as the biting attack that Pope delivers to both parties in his *Thebais*.<sup>51</sup>

Detailed exposure to imperial culture, past and present, directs Pope's attention to its power and transitory nature. Even Rome, which had collected the whole of Europe, Mediterranean, and parts of the Mid-East, had been destroyed by Caesar before it began – the fate of imperialism is actually the result of political demise, as Pope's *Thebais* shows. For Pope, Dryden's *Aeneis* was more than a vehicle for drawing attention to contemporary politics, or judging William and the Glorious Revolution. By imitating Vergil, Dryden shows Pope an image of himself as poet: a man unafraid of criticizing the mythology of empire and tackling politics. For Dryden, politics and empire were always a matter of character. As Zwicker points out, "The political circumstances of Dryden's

translation are bared out in the translation itself, where Dryden never misses the opportunity to heighten contemporary political issues.”<sup>52</sup>

In one sense Dryden is absolutely correct that imitation is the worst thing a translator can do, since he is no longer translating but rather setting the author “as a Patern, and to write, as he supposes, that Authour would have done, had he liv'd in our Age, and in our Country.” On the other hand, imitation is the only time when a translator has true freedom. For Dryden, Statius blusters like a tyrant and is a Capaneus to Vergil's Jupiter. For Pope, however, Statius blusters like a tyrant because he truly understands what it means to live under one. Where Dryden sees political and moral ambiguity, Pope sees the vestiges of empire and Tyranny. As for Capaneus, well, Pope puts it this ways:

Then to fierce Capaneus thy verse extend,  
And sing with horror his prodigious end.<sup>53</sup>

There is only one carry-over from the Latin here, “horror” (horrore), and even here Pope has altered the lines so that they can be both positively and negatively read. Prodigious and horror are both good and bad things. Statius is ambiguous; Pope for once is too.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Paul Hammond, *Dryden and the Traces of Classical Rome* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999) 28.

<sup>2</sup> Hammond 147-48.

<sup>3</sup> Walter Benjamin, "The task of the translator," *Illuminations*, trans H. Zohn, ed. H. Arendt. (New York: Schocken Books, 1970) 73.

<sup>4</sup> Hammond 149.

<sup>5</sup> It is not suggested here that translation is only now the recipient of critical thought, only that at this point translation is widely discussed in print.

<sup>6</sup> John Dryden, *Poems of John Dryden* ed. James Kinsley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958) vol.1, 182.

<sup>7</sup> Charles Martindale, *Redeeming the Text: Latin poetics and the hermeneutics of reception* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993) 77.

<sup>8</sup> Martindale 83.

<sup>9</sup> Martindale 83.

<sup>10</sup> Statius, "The first Book of Statius's *Thebais*," in *Miscellaneous Poems and Translations* (London: 1712).

<sup>11</sup> Stuart Gillespie in "Statius in English, 1648-1767" *Translation & Literature* (8:2) 1999, 157-75, provides details of who translates Statius; but all efforts are fairly insubstantial and piecemeal.

<sup>12</sup> John Dryden, *The Spanish fryar, or, The double discovery* (London: 1681) A2-A3.

<sup>13</sup> Juvenal, *Satires*, 7.82-87.

<sup>14</sup> Hammond 25.

<sup>15</sup> Robin Sowerby, *The Augustan Art of Poetry: Augustan Translation of the Classics* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006) 159.

<sup>16</sup> Sowerby 159.

<sup>17</sup> Sowerby 159.

<sup>18</sup> Sowerby 159.

<sup>19</sup> Juvenal, *The satires of Decimus Junius Juvenalis translated into English verse by Mr. Dryden and several other eminent hands ; together with the satires of Aulus Persius Flaccus, made English by Mr. Dryden ; with explanatory notes at the end of each satire ; to which is prefix'd a discourse concerning the original and progress of satire ... by Mr. Dryden.* (London: Tonson, 1693) Ar-Av.

<sup>20</sup> C.A. Du Fresnoy, *De arte graphica The art of painting / by C.A. Du Fresnoy ; with remarks ; translated into English, together with an original preface containing a parallel betwixt painting and poetry, by Mr. Dryden ; as also A short account of the most eminent painters, both ancient and modern, continu'd down to the present times, according to the order of their succession, by another hand.* (London: 1695) lv.

<sup>21</sup> Dryden produces translations of Vergil's works much earlier than his 1697 translations but it seem that not until 1689 that he begins to actually read Vergil's Aeneid with an eye distinctly on the political aspects.

<sup>22</sup> Dryden, *Poems*, 5:329-30.

<sup>23</sup> Dryden, *Poems*, 5:329; Taylor Corse, *Dryden's Aeneid: The English Virgil* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1991) 15.

<sup>24</sup> Dryden, *Poems*, 5:329.

<sup>25</sup> Dryden, *Poems*, 1:114.

<sup>26</sup> Dryden, *Poems*, 1:114.

<sup>27</sup> Corse 15.

<sup>28</sup> Vergil, *Aeneid*, 4.382-84.

<sup>29</sup> Corse 16-17.

<sup>30</sup> Stephen Zwicker, *Politics and Language in Dryden's Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1984) 179.

<sup>31</sup> Zwicke, 179-80.

<sup>32</sup> Dryden, *Poems*, 1:184.

<sup>33</sup> Dryden, *Poems*, 1:184.

<sup>34</sup> Dryden, *Poems*, 1:184.

<sup>35</sup> Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Criticism*, 315-17.

<sup>36</sup> Alexander Pope, *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, ed. George Sherburn (Oxford: Clarendon, 1956) 1.44.

<sup>37</sup> Pope, *Essay*, 412-428.

<sup>38</sup> “stare adeo miserum est, pereunt vestigia mille/ ante fugam, absentemque ferit gravis unguia campum.” Statius 4.400-401.

<sup>39</sup> John Aden, “‘The Change of Scepters, and impending Woe’: Political Allusion in Pope’s Statius” *Philological Quarterly* 52: 729.

<sup>40</sup> Aden 728.

<sup>41</sup> Aden 729-30.

<sup>42</sup> “...it may be proper to tell You that this is not a Entire Version of the first Book. There is an Omission from the 128<sup>th</sup> Line of the Latin which begins – *Saevus amor ruptaeque Vices* to the 143d *At nondum Crasso* - & agen from the 167<sup>th</sup> Line *Iam Murmura Serpunt Plebis Agenoreae* – to the 310<sup>th</sup> *Interea patriis olim Vagus exul ab oris* (between these two Last places Statius has a Noble Description of the *Council of the Gods*, & a *Speech of Jupiter*; which Contain a peculiar beauty & Majesty; & were Left out for no Other reason but because the Consequence of this Machine appears not till the 2d Book) The Translation goes on from thence to the Words – *Hic vero rabiem fortuna Cruentam* – where there is an odd account of a Unmannerly Batle at fistycuffs between the two *Princes* on a Very sligh Occasion, & at a time when one would think the fatigue of their Journey in so Tempestuous a Night might have renderd ‘em Very unfit for such a Scuffle. This I had actualy translated but was Very ill satisfied with it ev’n in my own Words to which an Author cannot bu be partial enough of Conscience. It was therefore Omitted in this Copy which goes on above 80 Lines farther at the Words – *Hic primum Lutrare Oculis* &c to the End of the Book.” Pope, *Correspondence*, 1.36-37.

<sup>43</sup> Pope, *Correspondence*, 1.37.

<sup>44</sup> *Lear* 1.2. 131 “We make guilty of our disasters the Sun, the Moone, and Starres”; disaster literally meaning the bad star.

<sup>45</sup> Dryden, *Poems*, 3:1012.

<sup>46</sup> Dryden, *Poems*, 3:1012-1013.

<sup>47</sup> Although this is not historically accurate – Domitian was not considered a tyrant like Nero until much later – during the seventeenth century Domitian was considered equal to Nero in terms of tyranny.

<sup>48</sup> Pope, *Correspondence*, 1.44.

<sup>49</sup> Pope, *Windsor Forest*, 43-92.

<sup>50</sup> Pope, *Windsor Forest*, 5-6, 43.

<sup>51</sup> Pope, *Windsor Forest*, 413-22:

Exil'd by Thee from Earth to deepest Hell,  
In Brazen Bonds shall barb'rous *Discord* dwell:  
Gigantick *Pride*, pale *Terror*, gloomy *Care*,  
And mad *Ambition*, shall attend her there.  
There purple *Vengeance* bath'd in Gore retires,  
Her Weapons blunted, and extinct her Fires:  
There hateful *Envy* her own Snakes shall feel,  
And *Persecution* mourn her broken Wheel:  
There *Faction* roar, *Rebellion* bite her Chain,  
And gasping *Furies* thirst for Blood in vain.

According to John Richardson in "Alexander Pope's *Windsor Forest*: Its Context and Attitudes toward Slavery," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* (35.1) 10-11, this passage suggests some of the main arguments of Tory propaganda. *Discord* characterizes Whig politics; "Tory polemic regularly discovered the qualities of pride and ambition in Marlborough and his duchess; "faction" was a pejorative label for the Whigs; and their connection *via* dissent and libertarian rhetoric with the parliamentarians of the Civil Wars led to their vilification as rebels. No vague idealistic allegory, this passage looks forward to a new age from which specifically Whig vices are happily absent"

<sup>52</sup> Zwicker 189.

<sup>53</sup> Statius, *Thebais*, 1.67-68.

## CONCLUSION

### *vestigia Statii*

It is a difficult task to end this sweeping overview of the reception of Statius and his works the *Thebaid* and *Silvae* in the early modern period. There is still so much more that can be said about him that I hesitate to belabor the point any longer. So perhaps it is best to summarize what has been said so far and leave the playing surface prepped for more at a later date.

From Dante forward early moderns enthusiastically read Statius alongside other classical Latin poets such as Virgil and Lucan. Statius's reputation during the early modern period is well established, and in examining few of his readers we now have some sense of how they interpreted Statius – how they made sense of his relationship to other ancient poets, how they understood his political sympathies, and above all how they labored to understand poems notorious for their opacity and difficulty. In contrast to Virgil and Lucan who were perceived clearly to state their poetic (and even political) ends, and thus to guide the reader, Statius offered no such guidance. The compressed nature of his poetry, in form and content alike, forced readers to fill in, rebuild, and expand wherever necessary. This process yielded a uniquely participatory form of reading that came to be associated specifically with Statius.

From 1481-86, the Italian humanist Angelo Poliziano carried that association a step further by formally theorizing a poetics rooted in his reading of Statius that places interpretive agency in the hands of the individual reader. Far from discouraging, the

distinctive mutability of Statius's poetry invited readers to introduce his works into a variety of political, legal, religious, and literary debates from fifteenth-century Italy to eighteenth-century England. Famous readers from George Buchanan to Alexander Pope found in Statius an indispensable poetic resource for the discussion of everything from natural law to slavery.

If this dissertation has done anything, I hope it has shown that Statius had remarkably broad appeal during the early modern period. His readers really did try to understand "his mind" as much as his poetry. In the *Table Talk* of Martin Luther, which is as apochrypha as anything else, it is noted that of the very last thing that Luther spoke were lines 12.816-17:<sup>1</sup>

uiue, precor; nec tu diuinam Aeneida tempta,  
sed longe sequere et uestigia semper adora.

(I beg, you, live! And do not test the divine *Aeneid*,  
But follow its footsteps from afar in everlasting adoration.)

Why anyone would have Statius on his mind as they draw their last breath is perhaps a question for another time. What is just as significant is that these lines should move Luther to utter them. In the quotation above, excised from their context they read as a caveat, an admonition to all about the danger of rivaling divinity. For Statius they mean simply this: that he hopes his poem will always be thought of when one reads and recites the *Aeneid*. For Luther they mean something else.

Much as Fairfax and May twisted Statius's words to mean something entirely different from their intended meaning, so too does Luther. In fact, the context of these words shows somewhat clearly – as clearly as a dying person can be – that Luther is thinking of his work in reforming Christianity itself. He knows that as time advances his work will be overshadowed by a burgeoning new form of Christianity, but much like

Stattius he is content to follow in its footsteps seeking a smaller form of glory. Stattius is to Vergil as Luther is to Paul.

Of course, this last instance of reception could be expanded much more, but it is time to stop. Stattius was of critical importance to the early modern period. Some of the greatest minds of the period were fascinated by him of the course of their entire lives – even to their deathbeds. It is time for us to be as well.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Ebeling, Gerhard. *Luther* (Tübingen: Mohr, 4ed. 1981), 279.

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