

EARLY MODERN *THEBAID*: THE LATIN COMMENTARY TRADITION

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Statius' various poems received strikingly contrasting attention in early modern exegetical endeavors.¹ Following their rediscovery in 1417 and their belated diffusion among humanist circles, the *Silvae* were intensely discussed in the second half of the century.² While Perotti's attempt (ca. 1469-1470) remained unpublished, that of Calderini, a pioneer in spreading his commentaries in print, went to press as early as 1475 -- and prompted Poliziano's vigorous, but unpublished, reaction.³ Widely distributed through *opera omnia* editions published from 1483 on, and later in 1600 by Lindenbrog⁴ and in 1618 by Cruceus, Calderini's work was crucial in shaping the exegetical tradition of this collection. Another early contribution that reached a wide readership is Avanzi's list of emendations added to the *opera omnia* of 1499. The *Achilleid*, too, aroused interest: Maturanzio's (Matarazzi's) commentary was included in the edition of 1483, and Giovanni Britannico had his own printed in 1485; both were gathered together in 1618. The *Thebaid*, on the other hand, did not attract any new exegesis in printed form until the final part of the sixteenth century.

The notes included in the rare and uninfluential *editio princeps* of Statius' epics (Rome 1470?), which relate to only the first book of the *Thebaid* (and the *Achilleid*), are medieval.⁵ The commentary that spread in print in the fifteenth century is the late-antique effort commonly attributed to "Lactantius Placidus,"⁶ which Italian humanism had preferred to the materials that had developed in the

¹ As yet, we still lack a comprehensive study of humanistic (handwritten and printed) commentaries on Statius, but a *CTC* article has been announced in H. Anderson (2009) I, XXXVII; cf. Clogan (1995). For an overview of the reception of Statius in the printed age, see the epilogue in H. Anderson (2009) III, 122-129. The materials discussed here will be developed in a forthcoming book on the commentaries on the *Thebaid* published between the sixteenth and the mid-nineteenth centuries. Part of these materials were presented in an earlier form in my doctoral thesis (Berlincourt [2008c]); cf. Berlincourt (2006) for a brief survey.

² See Reeve (1977a).

³ G. Abbamonte is preparing an edition of Perotti's commentary; see Abbamonte (1997). Poliziano's commentary has been edited in Cesarini Martinelli (1978).

⁴ Some copies only actually contain Calderini's commentary.

⁵ The text and the commentaries of the *princeps* are discussed in H. Anderson (2010).

⁶ On the problematic attribution, see Brugnoli (1988).

Middle Ages;⁷ it is this Servian-type exegesis, first printed in 1476, that was included in *opera omnia* from 1483 on.⁸ In addition to the existence of that work, a significant factor that may account for the absence of new printed commentaries on the *Thebaid*, despite its popularity in the medieval period, is its minor importance as a school text -- as compared to the *Achilleid*, which was deeply rooted in early education.⁹ Moreover, the Theban poem lacks features that made the *Silvae* particularly appealing to Poliziano and Renaissance commentators in general: novelty, variety and critical challenge. A text whose rough places had largely been smoothed thanks to its medieval diffusion was unattractive to the competitive context of humanist teaching, where reputations and careers were often built on reviving extremely difficult and corrupt texts.

The first original printed exegesis of the *Thebaid* may be termed indirect: the Italian notes published in 1570 by Cesare Pavesi (*alias* “Pietro Targa”) bear on Valvasone’s *volgarizzamento* rather than Statius’ poem. Starting from Bernartius (1595), however, sets of Latin notes developed into a tradition that remained especially dynamic until Beraldus (1685). This tradition represented the main contribution to Statius’ epic until the twentieth century, and its legacy is still felt today in scholarly works. Comparatively, contemporaneous exegeses in modern languages related to translations -- very short English notes by Stephens (1648),¹⁰ then French notes, combined with minimal Latin annotations by Guyet and by Peyrarède, in the complex book published by Marolles (1658) -- had much less to contribute, though they prove interesting in some regards. In later periods a few sets of notes are worthy of notice, in particular that of Lewis (1767);¹¹ the *Thebaid*, however, received no attention comparable to Markland’s accomplishment about the *Silvae* (1728).¹²

The present chapter aims at giving a glimpse of what lies behind the names of those who commented in Latin upon the *Thebaid* in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and at showing something of their significance as instances of reception. Many readers of Statius know of them mainly through mentions and quotations (often abridged and cut from their original contexts, unavoidably) in recent commentaries or editions. Sometimes they do not even know their names,

⁷ The best known of these is the “*in principio* commentary” first identified and discussed in D. Anderson (1988) 226-234; D. Anderson (1994). See also de Angelis (1997); H. Anderson (2009) I, XXV-XXVI. The starting point for any study of the manuscript transmission of the *Thebaid* and of its handwritten exegetical materials are the catalogue by H. Anderson (2009) and the third volume of Hall-Ritchie-Edwards.

⁸ By contrast, the commentary on *Ach.* attributed to “Lactantius Placidus”, a medieval work as it turns out, did not enjoy wide circulation and was not published before 1600 (Lindembrog).

⁹ Black (2001) shows the contrasting fortunes of *Ach.* and *Theb.* in Italian school manuscripts.

¹⁰ See, in this volume, Newlands on Stephens’ translation, and Braund on translations in general.

¹¹ On Lewis’ translation, see Braund in this volume.

¹² On Markland’s significance for the *Silvae*, see Liberman (2010) 19-21; cf. Hall-Ritchie-Edwards III, 69 on Markland’s plans with respect to the *Thebaid* and the *Achilleid*.

since, in some of these recent works, explanations and interpretations are attributed to the nineteenth-century compilers Valpy and Amar–Lemaire rather than to the original early modern commentaries. An overview of the exegeses of the *Thebaid* published between the sixteenth and the mid-nineteenth centuries -- including those in modern languages -- is provided in the list at the end of this chapter; a forthcoming book will analyze them more broadly from the perspectives of reception and erudite discourse, and discuss their bio-bibliographical and intellectual contexts.¹³

LATIN COMMENTARIES: BERNARTIUS (1595) TO BERALDUS (1685)

Latin commentaries on the *Thebaid* produced in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries “responded” in various ways to Statius’ poem (sections 2 and 3 below), but also to their own location within exegetical history. This genre had undergone significant changes since the pioneering works on the *Silvae* and the *Achilleid*. In the last decades of the fifteenth century the full-scale, all-embracing commentary had been supplanted by works focusing on more specific (notably critical) issues and by discussions tackling passages of several works in a free order, for which Poliziano’s *Miscellanea*, after Gellius, provided an inspiring model.¹⁴ Most commentaries on Statius’ epic are comprised of scattered notes, brief or extensive (Bernartius, Barclay, Crucé, Gronovius). Two full-scale commentaries are found, one huge and protean (Barth), the other much more regular (Beraldus).¹⁵ The following overview will disclose diverging attitudes towards the *Thebaid* and Statius’ other works respectively. A noticeable trend, especially during the initial phase, is a greater interest in the *Silvae*, as exegesis of this collection of poems was boosted by the blossoming genre of the *sylua* and by the contemporaneous appeal of occasional poetry; figures like Morellus and Gevartius neglected the *Thebaid* altogether.¹⁶

Bernartius was one of those many figures of his time who combined involvement in public life -- as a lawyer, in his case -- and participation in scholarly debates about the classics. His commentary on the epics published in 1595 together with a few notes on the *Silvae* -- the proper commentary on the latter work was delayed to 1599 for the lack of a manuscript -- was elaborated in close relation

¹³ See n.1.

¹⁴ On the temporary decline of the full-scale commentary, see e.g. Grafton (1983-1993) I, 9-44. On the connections between this form and those of the *uariae lectiones* and *miscellanea*, see notably Mouren (2001); Mandosio (2003); Blair (2006).

¹⁵ The important and influential *obseruationes* included in Lindembrog’s book (1600) are almost exclusively critical, not exegetical: see the brief presentation in Hall–Ritchie–Edwards III, 59-60.

¹⁶ Morel commented on the *Silvae* (1601 and 1602, partial commentaries from 1596 on) and the *Achilleid* (1601), Gevartius on the *Silvae* only (1616).

with Lipsius; it enjoyed the benefit of his advice and help, and shows strong connections with his works. Bernartius' endeavors with Statius matched the taste of Lipsius and his circle for the literature of the early empire. They are also part of a broader interest in Statius in the Netherlands, in which the *Silvae* played a leading role, notably through the influence of J.J. Scaliger -- who (unlike his father) gave the *Silvae* preference over the epics.¹⁷

In 1601, while still studying in France long before gaining literary fame as a polemicist and as a satirist, the Scotsman John Barclay produced a work that reacted to Bernartius' and would be used in its turn by the later tradition. A characteristic example of those early attempts that so many ambitious young men published on the threshold of their careers, it is composed of a commentary on the first four books and a mere sample of notes on the next four, and leaves out books nine to twelve altogether; Barclay declared he had to break off at the command of his father William. Among those who commented upon Statius in the seventeenth century, Barclay is the only one who dealt exclusively with the *Thebaid*, though it must be remembered that he was the author of a collection of poems entitled *Sylvae* (1606).

A complex figure, celebrated in other circles as a pioneer in irenic political thought (*Le nouveau Cynée*, 1623), the Frenchman Cruceus is now known to Statian scholars almost only for his edition of the *opera omnia* and his commentary on the *Silvae*, published in 1618, and for two polemics about the latter collection of poems -- first against Gevartius, who defended his previous commentary (1616) from Cruceus' criticism in his *Electa* (1619), then against Gronovius, whose *Diatribē* (1637) prompted reactions and counter-reactions.¹⁸ In spite of a few traces in recent editions, Cruceus' contribution to the epics has vanished from the minds of Statian scholars almost entirely;¹⁹ it was published in 1620 in a volume that also includes a section on the *Silvae*.²⁰

In the same years as he was involved in the controversy with Cruceus about the *Silvae*, Johann Friedrich Gronovius seized the opportunity presented by his travels throughout the Continent to gather materials relevant to the *Thebaid* and the *Achilleid*; but he delayed for years his projects in this regard, and the outcome, much less ambitious than the *Diatribē*, did not make the most of his preparatory materials. A hasty work commissioned by the publisher Elzevier, the edition Gronovius published in 1653 along with a "sample" on both epics and additional notes on the *Silvae* tackles only about two hundred passages in the *Thebaid*.

¹⁷ On the diffusion of Statius' *Silvae* in the Netherlands see van Dam (1996); van Dam (2008).

¹⁸ Cruceus' *Frondatio sive Antidiatribe* (1639); Gronovius' *Elenchus* (1640); Cruceus' *Muscarium sive Helelenchus* (1640).

¹⁹ On this process, see Berlincourt (2008b) 312-319.

²⁰ To the best of my knowledge, Liberman (2010) is the only recent scholar of the *Silvae* to mention this book.

However, the outstanding insight of his critical discussions, combined with his high reputation among his fellow Dutch scholars and the good editorial fortune of his book (on which more below), ensured that he remained a universally respected commentator of the poem in the next centuries.²¹

Highly prolific both as a commentator and as a Neo-Latin poet, Barth (†1658) composed by far the most comprehensive discussion of Statius' works, published in 1664-5. His interests were oriented primarily towards the *Thebaid*, as shown in particular by the greater detail of his exegesis of this poem (little short of *three thousand* in-quarto pages). Except for superficial revision, Barth finished his work long before the publication of Gronovius' notes on the epics; on the other hand, the correspondence reveals that his silence concerning Gronovius' *Diatribes* on the *Silvae* (1637) resulted from a decision motivated by hostile feelings. Rediscovering Barth, a rewarding task in itself,²² requires overcoming prejudice; in his *Statius*, the German scholar neither invented the manuscript readings he quoted, nor tried to sell as scholia his own explanations and interpretations. The authenticity of the readings he quotes has long since been proven by their connection with well-known extant manuscripts;²³ in addition, many of those hitherto unattested elsewhere have been found in manuscripts collated recently,²⁴ and other will emerge from further study.²⁵ Barth is explicit that what he calls "vetera scholia" represent a generic category for materials drawn from preparatory notes;²⁶ the assertion that he uses it for fear of ascribing to himself other people's findings may arouse suspicion, but it makes clear that the term is not meant to refer specifically to scholia in the sense we mean.²⁷ Not only present-day scholars, but also many contemporary scholars, have been annoyed by the fact that Barth's notes are prolix, often tangential to the text, and sometimes muddled. However, such striking features deserve to be seen in a broader context. The globalizing trend had some justification at a time when commentaries could still claim an important role in the production and transmission of knowledge, in relationship with other erudite discourses and with specific reading strategies; Barth's commentary also shows specific points of contact with the expansion of erudite discourses that claimed great freedom in content and composition, as mirroring the complex movements of a scholar's mind. In any case, Barth's commentary is a personal and deeply involved response to Statius' poem and, as such, a fascinating expression of its reception.

²¹ Berlincourt (2008a).

²² Wolff (2006) 59.

²³ Klotz (1904).

²⁴ Innumerable cases are found in the apparatuses of Hall–Ritchie–Edwards; cf. III, 67-68.

²⁵ For example, 3.310-311 *cara ... corde* is found in BL Reg.15.A.29.

²⁶ Preface ("Amico lectori") preceding the commentary on *Theb.*, p.2.

²⁷ Cf. Dill (2004) on the history of the term *scholion*.

As much as the works mentioned up to this point, the *notae variorum* published in 1671 had an impact on later exegeses. Veenhusen made materials widely accessible, but his selection only partially reflected the significance of the respective contributions of his predecessors. As far as the *Thebaid* was concerned, the book published in Leiden reproduced all the notes of Gronovius', a most esteemed figure in Dutch philology; but it retained only a small portion of Bernartius', and a much smaller of Barth's.²⁸ Later generations often did without consulting the original commentaries, and repeated Veenhusen's bias instead. The impact of his selected notes was revived at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when they were reprinted by Valpy (1824, endnotes) and then partly assimilated in the influential edition of Amar–Lemaire (1825-30).

In 1685, Beraldus added Statius' *opera omnia* to the pioneering collection *Ad usum Delphini*, which was aimed at making the Latin classics more easily read in the original and at remedying the decline in language skills.²⁹ His two volumes gain importance from the fact that they offer the only running commentary on the whole poem except Barth's, and also a full Latin paraphrase (*interpretatio continua*). Subject to constraints of format and guided by pedagogical considerations, Beraldus' often derivative notes are much less erudite than Barth's. However, they proved much more influential in the long term. They were not forced into the mold of *notae variorum* and later enjoyed the same fortune as Veenhusen's selected notes, since they were reprinted in Valpy's edition (1824, under the Latin text with Beraldus' paraphrase), and then used in the notes elaborated by Amar–Lemaire (1825-30).

COMMENTING ON STATIUS?: CENTRIPETAL AND CENTRIFUGAL RESPONSES

Early modern commentaries are varied and complex responses to the classical works they deal with. In addition to information of a critical, linguistic, literary and factual kind essentially centered on the text, they often constructed and transmitted a broader knowledge relevant to these fields; they may also include other elements such as edifying remarks, whose connection to the text ranges from close to very loose. Moreover, they may turn their attention to other works than that commented upon; Barth, in particular, has long discussions of authors such as Lucretius and Martianus Capella.³⁰

²⁸ Berlincourt (2008a) 6-9 and n.24 discusses Veenhusen's role as a filter in more detail.

²⁹ On the collection, see Volpilhac-Augé–Furno (1997-2005); on the *Statius*, Delarue (2005).

³⁰ On discussions of this kind, see Berlincourt (forthcoming a).

Textual criticism takes up much space in the Latin exegetical tradition of the *Thebaid*.³¹ The aim was not then, as it is now, to establish the “original” text with reference to a reconstruction of the manuscript transmission based on *recensio*; rather, one strove to improve a printed vulgate text, with limited other resources at best. Bernartius, who corrects a few passages in the Aldine text, documents with a precision unusual in his day the readings he quoted from his sources -- an attitude he shares with other members of Lipsius’ circle.³² Gronovius’ notes, nearly all centered on textual issues and generally brilliant, are the most manifest contribution of the seventeenth century to the text of the *Thebaid*. More controversial (often unjustly so, as was said above), Barth’s interventions are uneven, but they tackle infinitely larger portions of Statius’ text. Predictably, those lacking direct access to manuscript materials, above all Barclay and Beraldus, have much less to say; a few conjectures by Cruceus deserve to be recorded nonetheless.³³ Some critical discussions attest a great feeling for the peculiarities of Statius’ style, such as the unusual meaning or use of some words,³⁴ the ellipsis of the copula in passive or deponent forms of the *perfectum* tenses,³⁵ or the repetition of the same word in close proximity; for example, Barth suggests at line 8.268 a correction that would *create* such a repetition.

Tantique maris.] [...] In optimis tamen membranis aperte scriptum est *tacitique maris*. Quod non ausim damnare, licet eadem vox praecedenti insit. Solet enim sic Papinius [...].³⁶

Tantique maris [“the huge sea”].] [...] In the best manuscript, however, is clearly written *tacitique maris* [“the silent sea”]. I would not dare to find fault with it, although the same word is present in what precedes. For Statius is accustomed to do this [...].

Together with textual criticism, clarification of the literal meaning is the main reason why present-day philological works still quote early modern commentaries -- whether to agree with their findings, to contrast them with other views, or to ridicule them. Barth and Beraldus throw light on a considerable number of tricky passages, the former often through “vetera scholia”, the latter as much in his Latin paraphrase as in his notes. This task is given room, too, in the scattered observations of Bernartius, Barclay and Crucé -- and, in connection with textual criticism, of Gronovius. The passages discussed allow us a glimpse of those characteristics which potentially hindered the literal understanding of Statius’

³¹ Hall–Ritchie–Edwards III, 58–68 surveys the textual criticism of most of the scholars discussed here. The forthcoming book mentioned in n.1 contains a chapter on the subject; in addition, I am preparing a book dedicated to the history of the printed text of the *Thebaid*.

³² Battezzato (2006) analyzes in detail the case of Livineius.

³³ These conjectures are discussed in Berlincourt (2011).

³⁴ Barth *ad* 3.30 *nescius*.

³⁵ Gronovius *ad* 3.563, who corrects *scrutamur* in *scrutati*.

³⁶ Cf. 8.253 *tacito ... uoto* and 8.268 (!) *conticuit*.

poetry: for instance syntactic constructions felt to be uncommon,³⁷ condensed expressions and ideas,³⁸ and periphrases.³⁹

The format of a lemmatized commentary favors the production and transmission of linguistic and stylistic knowledge. More than anywhere else, this is obvious in Barth's notes, for instance in long lists of verbs with prefixes or examples of oxymoron expressly pointed out as typical of Statius.⁴⁰ Such considerations often entailed a prescriptive dimension in books that were aimed at people who not only read but also wrote Latin -- and whose authors, in some cases, also composed literary works in that language. Normative judgments abound in Barth from the beginning of his notes on the *Thebaid*, in this case reproaches against excessive sophistication, stretched meanings of words, and precedence given to diction over reason⁴¹ -- though on the whole Barth' opinion about Statius is more favorable and often includes high praise. From the perspective of Statius' reception, another striking feature is Bernartius' proclivity to point out "archaic" linguistic usage, which mirrors an interest in "non-classical" Latin literature strong in Lipsius' circle, but also refers to a category instrumental in promoting a broad use of the resources of the Latin language.

Remarks on poetics bear primarily on *elocutio*, and also on *inuentio*, seldom on *dispositio*. The commentators' attention is directed much less towards interpretation, or even structure and narration, than towards comparison with other texts. They contrast Statius' treatment of myth with other versions, with the purpose of analyzing his creative work, but also of gathering materials as a handbook would do. At the level of detail, the perspective of *imitatio-aemulatio* is predominant. Barth's dense notes, in particular, are very much concerned with comparing Statius' expressions, images, and similes to their equivalents in the epic tradition and beyond; they give much less consideration to the actual interpretation of such findings. Here again, judgment is often present. The *Aeneid* takes pride of place as a point of reference everywhere, and especially, of course, in connection with those extradiegetical utterances that embed Vergil's epic into the Flavian poem: the apostrophe to Hopleus and Dymas (10.445-448) and the *sphragis* (12.810-819). Barth, above all, dwells on the subject of literary hierarchies with regard to the final lines of the *Thebaid*. The same passage shows his interest in literary reception and his eagerness to signal "Statian imitations" in medieval literature, of which he had a knowledge quite unusual in his day.⁴²

³⁷ Barclay *ad* 3.438 *reulli ... times*.

³⁸ Beraldus *ad* 3.160 *mihi quippe malorum causa labor*. Gronovius *ad* 3.211, where clarification is combined with textual correction.

³⁹ Beraldus *ad* 3.139 *natos* ("Thespiadas"). Bernartius *ad* 3.180 *Sidonius ... hospes* ("Cadmus").

⁴⁰ Barth *ad* 3.406 *adstupet oranti*. Barth *ad* 10.240-241 [234] *pulchra ... seditione*.

⁴¹ Notably Barth *ad* 1.3 *Pierius calor*, 1.5 *inexorabile pactum*, 1.7 *Martis operti agricolam*, 1.10 *Tyrios montes*.

⁴² Notably Barth *ad* 12.816[815] *nec tu diuinam Aeneida tempta* (Stephen of Tournai), 12.818 (Amadeus of Lausanne), 12.819 (Gerald of Wales).

Commentators often deal with customs and other elements of the real world reflected in Statius' Theban epic. While Barclay and Beraldus generally have a clear focus and a narrow scope, other commentators provide, at least from time to time, extensive discussions that surpass by far the requirements of explanation and interpretation. Bernartius mingles observations on the *bullae* (knobs) of a baldric mentioned in the poem with a long development about the *bullae* (loquets) that children wore around their necks.⁴³ Lingering over Amphiaraus' oracle, Barth mentions dietary restrictions, describes the cult-site, and leans on authorities ranging from Herodotus, pseudo-Dicaearchus and Plutarch to Tertullian and Solinus.⁴⁴ Such notes remind us that in the early modern period the reconstitution of ancient *realia* was essentially based on texts rather than on archaeological remains. In addition, knowledge of the past could be felt as being directly relevant for the present, notably when it came to the art of war. The utilitarian notion of such knowledge -- central in Lipsius' thought -- is obvious in Bernartius, but also in Cruceus and Barth.

Addressing another form of contemporary relevance, some commentators more or less explicitly draw from the *Thebaid* edifying, and in particular moral, lessons. To a certain extent, they respond to the peculiarities of this text. Bernartius uses for this purpose Statius' sententious style in an approach that is closely connected with that of commonplace-books in several respects, and he is also careful to identify as maxims (*gnomai*) the relevant utterances, while Barth often signals this characteristic of the Flavian poet only indirectly by referring his reader to printed collections of such maxims; both attitudes are clearly illustrated when Creon tells Menoeceus that "impetuousness serves all things badly" (tr. Ritchie–Hall) (10.704-705 *male cuncta ministrat | impetus*).⁴⁵ At least in Barth's work, edification also finds a different and significant expression with regard to the actions (and beliefs) represented in the poem. For example, the German commentator reacts to the horrors of the Theban conflict by recalling atrocious acts committed in the "barbarous" Middle Ages or in the European wars of his own time. It must be stressed, however, that the lessons Barth gives his reader – like any information provided by his commentary – do not always react directly to the contents of Statius' text, but can also appear in more or less unexpected places, as developments in digressive notes.

⁴³ Bernartius *ad* 6.77.

⁴⁴ Barth *ad* 1.398-399.

⁴⁵ Bernartius *ad* 10.699, Barth *ad* 10.698 (line count in early modern editions differs from ours, resulting from the absence of our lines 10.100-105).

FULL-SCALE COMMENTARIES: A READING OF THE DUEL

Barth's and Beraldus' commentaries offer a privileged opportunity to have a closer look at how exegetical discourses respond to the *Thebaid*, taking as an example the brothers' duel and the extradiegetic apostrophe that follows (11.497-579) -- a passage where they provide one hundred and twenty-four notes and twenty-six notes respectively, while Cruceus and Gronovius have just two, Bernartius only one.⁴⁶

From the early stages of the duel (11.497-551), Beraldus takes care to clarify the sequence of events and, where he thinks it necessary, to identify which brother is acting at each moment: at 11.499 the "impious king" is Eteocles, at 11.516 it is Eteocles who thinks that the blood on the ground is his own, at 11.546 the subject of *aeger anhelat* ("breathes heavily", tr. Ritchie-Hall) is -- so Beraldus believes -- Polynices. Much room is given to elucidation of the literal meaning and to textual criticism.⁴⁷ More shrewd than Beraldus, Barth feels that at 11.546 the character concerned must be Eteocles, not Polynices. A potential objection is that Polynices himself is designated in the note of "Lactantius Placidus" as printed in early modern editions.⁴⁸ Barth, however, is aware that displacements have affected the transmission of some scholia;⁴⁹ anticipating our editions -- which do not record his precedence -- he asserts that the utterance about Polynices has been connected with the wrong lemma and should be taken, rather, with the following line.⁵⁰ Barth discusses both lines together in his effort to establish which character "taunts" (*increpat*) the other at 11.547; he corrects the latter sentence in order to make "the enemy" Polynices the subject instead of the object (*hostis* instead of *hostem*), starting from the explanation in a "vetus scholion" and leaning, too, on a gloss from a manuscript. Gronovius' only note on the early stages of the duel is dedicated precisely to this critical problem and results in the same correction as Barth's, while Beraldus reports N. Heinsius' different solution.⁵¹

Language and style are discussed throughout, sometimes in a highly judgmental manner. Beraldus conveys some lexical information through rephrasing and parallels (11.523), in what turns out to be a mere repetition of Barth's note (reprinted by Veenhusen). Barth censures verbal repetition (11.503

⁴⁶ We have seen that Barclay does not comment on books 9-12.

⁴⁷ Bernartius' only note addresses another textual point: at 11.542 it briefly emends *quam* in *qua*.

⁴⁸ E.g. in Lindembrog's edition (1600): « MAGIS AC MAGIS AEGER. Polynices scilicet viso fratris vulnere imminebat. »

⁴⁹ Cf. Jakobi (1992) for a list of such displacements.

⁵⁰ Compare Sweeney (1997) and the apparatus in Jahnke (1898) *ad loc.*

⁵¹ Heinsius (ad Ov. *epist.* 2.74) reads *increpat hostes quo retrahis, germane, gradus?* (this reading is not mentioned in the editions of Hill and of Hall-Ritchie-Edwards).

funesta, cf. 11.500), signals a hyperbole (11.526), and declares an oxymoron typically Statian, quoting further examples from the *Thebaid* (11.541); he pays attention to semantic nuance (11.549).

The German commentator tackles the problem of verisimilitude: he reproaches Statius for having Polynices deliver a speech (11.504-508) or utter a *sententia* (11.551) in the midst of the fighting. On the other hand, both commentators prove receptive to the theatrical dimension of the duel from the outset:⁵² Beraldus explains 11.498 *uersae ... cohortes* as “[the armies] turned towards this fight, as towards a spectacle”,⁵³ and he takes 11.519 *turbatis gressibus* as meaning “the steps are merged and entangled, so that the spectators cannot tell to whom they belong”;⁵⁴ Barth already puts forward the notion of spectacle in relation to 11.498 *arma placent* (“battle is what they want”, tr. Ritchie–Hall), and then makes the connection between *uersae ... cohortes* and the spectacular setting that Turnus imagined for his duel against Aeneas (*Aen.* 12.15). He also shows his interest in characterization, insisting that Polynices’ crime is “more justified” than his brother’s (11.541-542).

Comparison with other texts is present at all levels. Beraldus draws attention to the similarity between Eteocles crouching behind his shield (11.545) and Aeneas protecting himself from Messapus’ blow (*Aen.* 12.491-492). From a broader perspective, Barth remarks (*ad* 11.539) that Statius, by having Eteocles fall first, inverts Euripides’ *Phoenissae*; he does not interpret the difference, but suggests that the Flavian poet borrows from Antimachus. On another level, he contrasts (*ad* 11.500) the whole episode with the Iberian brothers who fight for their father’s throne in the *Punica*’s funeral games (*Sil.* 16.533-548), reproaching Silius for lacking style and talent, but acknowledging that he wrote good Latin and was immune to excessive affectedness; he also stresses that Silius enters the realm of fiction by modeling his episode on Statius’ duel and diverging from Livy. Passing judgment again when the poet compares the entangled brothers to a shipwreck, he states (*ad* 11.522) that the best description ever of a sea-storm is that of Ovid relating Ceyx’s death (*Met.* 11.474-572).

The duel offers some opportunities to deal with *realia*. To take just one example, Statius’ description of the precise spot hit by Polynices (11.543) allows Barth some observations on armor, together with discussions of the word *plumae*; while Servius and Tiberius Donatus lead him to give considerable space to ancient exegeses of Virgil, precise references to Turnebus and especially to Lipsius’ *De militia Romana* invite his readers to look at Statius through the lense of the art of

⁵² On the other hand, they do not stress this dimension later (11.537-538, cf. 11.533 in a simile).

⁵³ Recent translators understand *uersae* differently: Shackleton Bailey “the troops are changed...”; Ritchie–Hall “the armies, changed yet again...”

⁵⁴ Compare Shackleton Bailey “steps are confused and both come crashing to the ground”; Ritchie–Hall “the horses’ hooves become entangled, and both men hurtle to the ground.”

war, ancient and modern. In the following line, Cruceus adopts, instead, a naturalistic approach to explain the sense of cold that Eteocles feels when hit by the sword (11.544): iron is said to be cold because smiths harden forged artifacts by plunging them into cold water.

Barth's moral response is not limited to the judgment on the brothers. In a strikingly personal touch, the very first line in the initial stage of the duel, which mentions the goads that inflame their rage (11.497), evokes in his mind an "old Christian painting" in his possession. Beraldus' reaction is more focused on the text, but no less edifying, when Polynices says he is ready to expiate his crime should he succeed in killing his brother (11.506); it takes on the form of an exclamation against the deadly consequences of mad ambition and lust for revenge. In spite of appearances, however, Beraldus' note cannot really be compared with Barth's as a witness to the reception of the *Thebaid*: there is nothing truly personal in it, as will be seen below.

Let us examine what Beraldus has to say about the final stage of the duel and the poet's apostrophe (11.552-579). When Eteocles falls down on purpose in order to deceive his brother (11.554), the French commentator condemns him through a quotation from Publilius Syrus (*sent.* B 41): *boni est uiri etiam in morte nullum fallere* (it is the mark of a good man to deceive no one even as he dies). He considers it useful to make clear that the cry heard at this point (11.555) comes from the spectators. Beraldus then devotes a longer note to the words Polynices utters when he sees his brother on the ground (11.559-560): "*huc aliquis propere sceptrum atque insigne comarum, | dum uidet*" ("Here, someone, quick -- the scepter and the badge on his head while he still sees!", tr. Shackleton Bailey).

Aposiopesis. Supprimitur enim verbum, *Afferat*, aut aliud simile. Verba sunt Polynicis fratri morienti insultantis. Huc aliquis mihi protinus afferat sceptrum & diadema, quod Noster vocat *insigne comarum*, ut frater, dum exiguum adhuc ei vitae superest, aspiciat me regni Thebani insignia gestantem; eoque dolore moriens torqueatur. Haec enim fuit summa votorum ipsius, quae supra expressit his verbis. [11.505-508].

Aposiopesis. For the verb "let ... bring", or some similar verb, is suppressed. These are the words of Polynices scoffing at his dying brother. Let someone bring me immediately the scepter and the diadem, which our poet terms hair ornament, so that my brother may look at me wearing the ornaments of the Theban kingdom, while there still is a small part of life left to him; and so that he may be tormented by grief when he dies. For such was the culmination of his own wishes, which he expressed above with the following words. [11.505-508].

Identification and explanation of the figure, naming of the speaker and mention of his speech act, large-scale rephrasing, cross-reference to Polynices' vow expressed above in Statius' narrative, all these strategies are in line with Beraldus' usual practice. Contents and wording, however, are not his. He draws them

almost entirely from his little-known predecessor Cruceus.⁵⁵ On the other hand, Beraldus does not repeat here the final part of Cruceus' note, containing an edifying exclamation concerned with the quotation of lines 11.505-508 -- for the simple reason that he has transferred that exclamation to his own note on line 11.506 where Polynices expresses his readiness to expiate his crime. Therefore, what we have to deal with in Beraldus' exclamation *ad* 11.506 (see above) is not an expression of his reaction to Statius' text; rather, it is an illustration of his skills in recycling the exegetical tradition, and, more specifically, in putting together a running commentary through rearranging materials found in a set of scattered notes.

Beraldus' next three notes are concerned with textual criticism. Without mentioning his source, he draws from Barth (quoted by Veenhusen) the discussion of an additional line found in a manuscript facing line 11.560;⁵⁶ he signals a variant reading (11.563 *ultricem* instead of *ultrices*); with regard to the vexed line 11.567 describing the fatal blow Eteocles deals his brother,⁵⁷ he explicitly repeats a rather long note of Gronovius', cutting off some of its palaeographic considerations.⁵⁸ In one of the brief clarifications that follow (*ad* 11.569), he drastically abridges a discussion of Barth's (quoted by Veenhusen), again without acknowledging his debt. He also adds elements of his own, notably mythological information about Minos at line 11.571. Finally, the concluding words of Statius' apostrophe, 11.579 *soli memorent haec praelia reges* ("let ... only kings recall to mind this battle", tr. Ritchie-Hall), inspire Beraldus to offer a short explanation that clarifies their meaning.

Ut caveant, ne in similes incidant contentiones, quarum tam infaustus solet esse exitus.

In order that they take care that they do not fall into in similar disputes, the outcome of which is usually so infortunate.

Barth's discourse on the same passages is much more dense, but also quite different in some ways. Admittedly, the German commentator too gives ample room to elucidation of the literal meaning; the important role the "vetera scholia" play in this regard finds a good illustration in connection with the description of Eteocles' blow (11.564-567). Barth's interest in textual criticism is best seen here in the fact that he tackles from this angle, with the help of manuscripts, the aposiopesis in line 11.559. A quick survey is enough to show the broad range and

⁵⁵ Apart from the inversion "aspiciat me" (Cruceus "me aspiciat"), the only changes are "sceptrum & diadema, quod Noster vocat *insigne comarum*" (instead of Cruceus' "sceptrum & coronam") -- where the commentator's voice clashes with that of the intradiegetical character -- and the addition of "eoque dolore moriens torqueatur", which stresses the horror of Polynices' vow.

⁵⁶ The additional line reads *demens qui primo fratrem haud spoliauerit ense*.

⁵⁷ The primary and secondary apparatuses in Hall-Ritchie-Edwards, I and III respectively, clearly show how much this line varies in the manuscripts.

⁵⁸ Gronovius' note is erroneously referred to line 11.467 in the edition of 1653.

the significance of his response to Statius' epic. In the first part of his note on the cry following Eteocles' collapse (11.555), Barth identifies this incident as a rewriting of the duel between Aeneas and Turnus and reasserts Virgil's superiority with reference to the *sphragis*.⁵⁹

Ex illo Maroniano, lib.XII. *Cadente pariter Turno*. Sed Maronianorum tanta majestas & gratia est, ut admirari nemo satis possit. Nec umbram eorum, divinorum prorsus, versuum, assequitur Papinius: [*Aen.* 12.926-929]. [...] *Gemitus Rutulorum* tantus est, cum tanto dolore imis visceribus eductus, ut ipsa corpora eleuet. *Remugiens mons*, cui non tumultu acuto aures feriat, modo ullum iis insit acetum? *vocem late alta* & spatium & sonitum habent. Non intellexit artificium hoc Papinius, vel sapientius contempsit quam aemulari voluit. Unum illud: *Consurgunt gemitu Rutuli*. Ipsius montis erectione crassius aemulari voluit quam exspectabatur. Bene ergo quod in fine Operis *Vestigia se Aeneidos divina adorare*, non suum ei Poema componere edicit. [...]

From that passage in Virgil in the twelfth book, where *Turnus collapses in the same way*. But the majesty and the charm of the Virgilian lines are so great, that nobody can admire them enough. And Statius cannot achieve even a pale reflection of these quite divine lines: [12.926-929]. [...] The "Rutulians' groan" is so loud, and is uttered from their innermost parts with such grief, that it raises the bodies themselves. Whose ears would the words "the echoing mount" [*remugiens mons*] not hit with violent uproar, providing only that they have any sharpness? <The words> "voice ... widely ... high" [*uocem late ... alta*] are both ample and high-sounding. Statius did not understand this piece of skill, or he despised it more wisely than he wanted to emulate it. This one phrase, "the Rutulians rise up with a groan", he wanted to emulate with the rising of the mount itself in a more obscure manner than was expected. He was therefore right to declare at the end of his work that "he worships the divine footsteps of the *Aeneid*", and not to declare that he compares his own poem with her. [...]

The rest of the note carries on in a more digressive way, since it deals with Vergil's awareness of the quality of his work, relying on Macrobius' *Saturnalia* (1.24) and on a metatextual reading of an utterance in the apostrophe to Lausus (*Aen.* 10.792).

Polynices' last speech and Statius' concluding words give Barth the opportunity to transmit knowledge, but also to display an intellectual and moral posture. He recalls (*ad* 11.569) the belief in infernal punishments, and then dwells (*ad* 11.571) on the subject of their denial, with references to Juvenal, Callimachus, Seneca, Cicero,⁶⁰ and mentions of Vergil, Lucretius with "all the Epicureans", and "Lucian above all"; in shorter discussions of these punishments (*ad* 11.574, 11.575 and 11.576), he refers to Claudian's *In Rufinum*, to Passerat's notes on Propertius, and also to Seneca on the "very well-known" subject of the Furies. The notes thus appear as a showcase for readings and tastes, a place for celebrating fellow scholars and dismissing subjects unworthy of the attention of the commentator and his intended readers.

⁵⁹ Barth seems to consider that Statius rewrites not only the account of the Virgilian duel, but also its anticipation by Turnus in *Aen.* 12.15, as we have seen above (p.13).

⁶⁰ *Iuv.* 2.149-152, *Call. Epigr.* 13.3-4, *Sen. Marc.* 19.4, *Cic. Nat.Deor.* 2.5 and *Tusc.* 1.16.36-37.

Barth's involvement reaches a climax in his strongly moral reaction to the final line of Statius' apostrophe (11.579 quoted above). Stressing that this line is directed at "the furious desire to rule, be it according to or against divine law", he compares the passage of the *Punica* modeled on this one (Sil. 16.533-534 in particular), and observes the extreme frequency of similar utterances by way of examples and warnings. He says that Statius seizes every occasion to curse dire ambition, and then quotes Pothinus' justification of absolute power in Lucan (8.489-490), recalling that the author of the *Civil war* died as a victim of tyranny. Above all, he asserts that in his own wretched days, the ambition of a single man -- read: Ferdinand II, the Holy Roman Emperor -- has been devastating Germany for years. Though found only sporadically in his notes, such remarks most vividly show how Barth reads Statius against the background of the real world he lives in.⁶¹ They also illustrate with the utmost clarity the capacity of the *Thebaid* to gain contemporary relevance in the early modern period -- and the capacity of commentaries to shed light on its reception.⁶²

⁶¹ I discuss this dimension of Barth's commentary in a forthcoming article.

⁶² I should like to express my deep gratitude to Michael Dewar and Damien Nelis, who were so kind as to read the manuscript of this paper.

LIST OF MODERN COMMENTARIES ON THE THEBAID

The list mentions only the first edition of each commentary; it does not include commentaries that bear only on a small portion of the poem. The letters L and D E F I (or L*) indicate, respectively, that the book offers the Latin text of Statius and a German, English, French, Italian translation (or a full Latin paraphrase). The name in parentheses is that of the commentator.

- I **Venice 1570 (“Targa” = Pavesi)** *La Thebaide di Statio ridotta dal Sig. Erasmo di Valvasone in ottava rima*. In Venetia, Appresso Francesco de’ Franceschi Senese.
- L **Antwerp 1595 (Bernartius)** *P. Statii Papinii Opera quae extant Joh. Bernartius ad libros veteres recensuit et scholiis illustravit*. Antverpiae, Ex officina Plantiniana, apud Viduam, & Ioannem Moretum.
- Pont-à-Mousson 1601 (Barclay)** *In P. Statii Papinii Thebaidis libros IIII. commentarii, et in totidem sequentes notae; cum argumentis summam cuiusque libri seriem | ac materiam explicantibus. Authore Ioanne Barclaio. Guili^{mi} I. C^{ti}. Filio*. Pontimussi, Apud Melchiorem Bernardum.
- Paris 1620 (Crucé)** *Emerici Crucei in I. <-XII.> Statii Thebaidos notae, <in lib. I.-V. Achilleidos notae, in Statii Sylvas succidanea>*. Parisiis, Apud Lvdoovicvm Bovlanger.
- E **London 1648 (Stephens)** *An Essay upon Statius, or, The first five books of Publ. Papinius Statius his Thebais done into English verse by T. S. [Thomas Stephens] with the poetick history illustrated*. London, Printed for Richard Royston.
- L **Amsterdam 1653 (Gronovius)** *P. Papinii Statii Opera ex recensione et cum notis I. Frederici Gronovii*. Amsterodami, Typis Ludovici Elzevirii.
- L F **Paris 1658 (Marolles–Guyet–Peyrarède)** [vol.1-2:] *P. Statii Papinii Thebaidos libri duodecim cum notis Francisci Guieti Andini, Io. Peyraredi nob. Aquitani, et aliorum, opera ac studio Michaelis de Marolles, abbatis de Villeloin = La Thébaïde de Stace, avec les remarques en Latin & en François.* / [vol.3:] *Les Sylves et l’Achilléide de Stace. avec des remarques en Latin & en François*. A Paris, Chez Sebastien Huré et Frederic Leonard.
- L **Zwickau 1664-65 (Barth)** *Publii Papinii Statii Quae exstant Caspar Barthius recensuit, et animadversionibus locupletissimis illustravit, inspersis ad Thebaida et Achilleida commentariis ac glossis veterum, hactenus bonam partem ineditis, et scholiaste Lutatio multis locis corruptis castigato, ad auctoritatem et opem manuscriptorum exemplarium, praecipue unius alteriusque admirandae bonitatis*. Cygnae, Ex Officina Melchioris Göpneri, Apud Johannem Scheibium.
- L **Leiden 1671 (Veenhusen)** *Publii Papinii Statii Sylvarum lib. V, Thebaidos lib. XII, Achilleidos lib. II, notis selectissimis in Sylvarum libros Domitii, Morelli, Bernartii, Gevartii, Crucei, Barthii, Joh. Frid. Gronovii Diatribe, in Thebaidos praeterea Placidi Lactantii, Bernartii, etc., quibus in Achilleidos accedunt Maturantii, Britannici, accuratissime illustrati a Johanne Veenhusen*. Lugd. Batav., Ex Officina Hackiana.
- L L* **Paris 1685 (Beraldus)** *Publii Papinii Statii Opera interpretatione et notis illustravit Claudius Beraldus, jussu christianissimi Regis, ad usum serenissimi Delphini*. Lutetiae Parisiorum, Apud Lambertum Roulland.
- L I **Milan 1731-32 (Argelati)** *Corpus omnium veterum poetarum Latinorum cum eorundem Italica versione = Raccolta di tutti gli antichi poeti Latini co la loro versione nell’Italiana favella*. [vol.1:] *Tomus primus continet P. P. Statii Thebaidos sex libros priores = Tomo primo contiene li primi sei libri della Tebaide di Selvaggio Porpora* / [vol.2:] *... Thebaidos sex libros posteriores. = ... li ultimi sei libri | della Tebaide ...* / [vol.3:] *... Sylvarum libros V. = ... li cinque libri delle Selve di P. P. Stazio, tradotti da un pastor Arcade [Francesco Maria Biacca]*. / [vol.4:] *... Achilleidos libros V. ... = ... li cinque libri dell’Achilleide di P. P. Stazio, tradotti da un Accademico Quirino [Orazio Bianchi]*. Mediolani, In regia Curia = Milano, Nel Regio Ducal Palazzo.
- E **Oxford 1767 (Lewis)** *The Thebaid of Statius translated into English verse, with notes and observations and a dissertation upon the whole by way of preface*. Oxford, Printed at the Clarendon-press.
- L I **Milan 1782-88** [vol.1-2:] *P. Papinii Statii Thebais cum appositis Italico carmine interpretationibus ac notis.* / [vol.3:] *... Sylvarum libri V. ...* / [vol.4:] *... Achilleidos libri V. ...* Mediolani. Typis Imper. Monast. S. Ambrosii Majoris. [Same translations as in Milan 1731-32.]

- L **Venice 1786** *Publii Papinii Stati Opera ex recensione Johannis Veenhusen cum notis selectioribus*. Venetiis Apud Thomas Bettinelli.
- L L* **London 1824 (Valpy)** *P. Papinii Stati Opera omnia ex editione Bipontina cum notis et interpretatione in usum Delphini variis lectionibus notis variorum recensu editionum et codicum et indice locupletissimo accurate recensita*. Londini, Curante et imprimente A. J. Valpy.
- L **Paris 1825-30 (Amar–Lemaire)** *P. Papinii Stati Quae exstant omnia opera*. [vol.1:] *Libri quinque Silvarum P. Papinii Stati cum varietate lectionum et selectis Marklandi aliorumque notis quibus suas addiderunt J. A. Amar et N. E. Lemaire*. / [vol.2-3:] *Thebais P. Papinii Stati cum varietate lectionum et selectis variorum adnotationibus quibus suas addiderunt ...* / [vol.4:] *In opera P. Papinii Stati cum testimoniis recensu codicum et notitia litteraria index universus rerum, nominum et vocabulorum quem plane confecit et disposuit N. E. Lemaire*. Parisiis, Colligebat Nicolaus Eligius Lemaire. [vol.3 also contains the *Achilleid*.]
- L F **Paris 1829-32 (Rinn–Achaintre–Boutteville)** [vol.1:] *Œuvres complètes de Stace traduites les livres I et II des Silves par M. Rinn, les livres III et IV par M. Achaintre*. / [vol.2:] ... *le livre V des Silves et les livres I à IV de la Thébaïde traduits par M. Achaintre*. / [vol.3-4:] ... *traduction nouvelle ... par M.-L. Boutteville*. Paris, C. L. F. Panckoucke.
- L **Frankfurt 1833 (Weber)** *Corpus poetarum latinorum uno volumine absolutum cum selecta varietate lectionis et explicatione brevissima edidit Guilielmus Ernestus Weber*. Francofurti ad Moenum, Sumptibus et typis Henrici Ludovici Broenneri.
- L **Paris 1835-36 (Dübner)** *Publii Papinii Stati Opera quae exstant cum notis aliorum et suis edidit Fr. Dübner*. Parisiis, Excudit C. L. F. Panckoucke.
- L F **Paris 1842** *Stace, Martial, Manilius, Lucilius Junior, Rutilius, Gratius Faliscus, Némésianus et Calpurnius: œuvres complètes avec la traduction en français, publiées sous la direction de M. Nisard*. Paris, J.J. Dubochet et compagnie.

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