The Classical Review

<http://journals.cambridge.org/CAR>

Additional services for *The Classical Review*:

Email alerts: [Click here](#)

Subscriptions: [Click here](#)

Commercial reprints: [Click here](#)

Terms of use : [Click here](#)

Statius *De P. Papirii Statii Thebaide*: scripsit Rudolphus Helm, Dr. Phil. Berolini, apud Mayerum et Mullerum. 1892.

W. R. Hardie

The Classical Review / Volume 7 / Issue 05 / May 1893, pp 220 - 222
DOI: 10.1017/S0009840X00197690, Published online: 27 October 2009

Link to this article: http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0009840X00197690

How to cite this article:

W. R. Hardie (1893). The Classical Review, 7, pp 220-222 doi:10.1017/S0009840X00197690

Request Permissions : [Click here](#)

cernatur, ubi diremptio sententiarum post priorem versum interpunctione significatur, credendum videtur illius iterationis ipsius causa hac licentia usum esse poetam, non versuum coniungendorum causa. Retineri igitur non potest epicus noster, quin etiam tum *que* encliticam iteret, ut assolet, cum una syllaba longior fiat versus. Quamobrem alienum non est putare hunc usum hypermetrorum versuum in elegantia et venustate quadam ponendum esse, qua poeta decus versibus addere voluerit' (p. 15). It is amazing how before the advances of research the licentious poet, imagined of schoolboys, insensibly discovers himself as the friend of order and subject of law.

The monosyllabic endings of lines are neatly assorted; these we find that the poet employs sometimes for sonorous effect, sometimes for emphasis, and sometimes to produce an archaic colour. Ionic a minori closes are rare in Vergil, such as *animamque, terebintho*; they are chiefly confined to Greek proper names. Dr. Rönström supplies full references on this and on many other points.

It is a pity that Dr. Rönström did not add to the completeness of his work by a full account of that branch of Vergil's prosody which concerns the quantities of letters and syllables. Vergil writes *quas non oraveris urbes* (*Aen.* vi. 92), Horace *dixeris esse satis*

(*Sat.* i. 4, 41, cp. ii. 3, 220), but Ovid *dederis in carmina vires* (*Fast.* i. 17); it would have been instructive to see how so excellent a metrist would have discussed this question. Indeed the whole subject of Roman prosody requires a methodical treatment. Some scholar with leisure at his command would confer a great boon by compiling a complete digest of Latin prosody. The nature of the Saturnian, the metres of Plautus and Terence, the prosody of Catullus and Lucretius, of Vergil and Horace, of Phaedrus and the elegiac poets, of Manilius, of the poets of the silver age and the decadence, would afford a noble field for the application of exact knowledge. Why are we in England inundated with school editions of Vergil and Cicero and Livy, tedious repetitions of perfectly ascertained facts, when so many questions connected with the classics remain unexplored or only partially investigated? Alas! the siren bookseller is too much with us; our younger scholars listen mainly to the music of his familiar exhortation—*O cives, quaerenda pecunia primum est*. Dr. Rönström has broken fruitful ground; Sweden speaking through him may perhaps suggest to England better things.

S. G. OWEN.

STATIUS.

De P. Papirii Statii Thebaide: scripsit
RUDOLPHUS HELM, Dr. Phil. Berolini, apud
Mayerum et Mullerum. 1892.

UP to the end of last century Statius was reckoned one of the considerable poets of the world. Then a change took place. The new interest in science and in the most imaginative kind of poetry—things which are Greek—cast into the shade the more rhetorical literature of Rome. Statius' master, Virgil, his acknowledged superior—

of my flame

those sparkles were the seeds, which I
derived

from the bright fountain of celestial fire
that feeds unnumbered lamps: the song I
mean

which sounds Aeneas' wanderings—¹

was depreciated in comparison with the more natural and simple Homer: and for

¹ Dante, *Purgatorio* xxi. (Cary's translation).

Statius himself the change meant extinction. He ceased to be read except by a few scholars and specialists. This fate was not altogether deserved, though it is difficult to see how it can be reversed. Statius labours under an accidental disadvantage. He wrote for an audience which knew well all the names and stories of Greek mythology, and he could be allusive without being obscure: but ignorance of these stories is now becoming more and more common. When Statius writes:—

quis non in funera cunctos

Heliadum ramos lacrimosaque germina duxit
et Phrygium silicem atque ausum contraria
Phoebo

carmina nec foeda gavisam Pallada buxo?—
(*Silvae* v. 3, 85 f.)

there are few schoolboys who would recognize quickly the stories of the sisters of Phaëthon, Niobe, and Marsyas: and the invention of the flute by Athena is still less

familiar.¹ Besides this allusiveness Statius no doubt has positive faults, such as misplaced ingenuity and misplaced inflation of style: 'tumidus poeta' he has been called 'et omnia ridicule exaggerans.' But these faults do not pervade all his work: much of it is subtle, pleasing and graceful in a high degree.

Dr. Helm has set himself to investigate the obligations of Statius to earlier poets. Is this a profitable enquiry, and does it yield any interesting results? Nothing, it must be said, that quite justifies a dissertation of some 200 pages, but still some points worth noting. Homer, it appears, is directly imitated by Statius in many passages: for instance in *Theb.* vii. 261 f. there is frequent translation from the Νεὼν Κατάλογος. Virgil, therefore, has not yet entirely supplanted the Greek poet, as he did in later centuries. But Statius, no doubt, had special reason to be acquainted with the poets of Greece. His father lectured upon them, he tells us in the *Silvae*, not merely expounding the lyric poets and explaining the principles of the Pindaric strophe—

qua lege recurrat
Pindaricae vox flexa lyrae—
(*Silv.* v. 3, 151)

but also giving a paraphrase in prose of Homer, which reproduced all the force and fire of the original:—

tu par adsuetus Homero
ferre iugum senosque pedes aequare solutis
versibus et nunquam passu breviorē relinqui.²

It is not surprising that the son knows his Homer. Statius appears to have seen the force and picturesqueness of a touch in the Homeric Doloneia, an idea which some critics made away with by excision of a line—*Iliad* x. 496—

κακὸν γὰρ ὄναρ κεφαλῇφιν ἐπέστη
τῇν νύκτ' Οἰνείδαο πᾶσι διὰ μῆτιν Ἀθήνης—

¹ Heinsius' 'foeda' seems the best word to read in the passage (fida MSS., fissa, victa, *al.*). 'Athena who rejoiced not in the deforming flute'—who rejected it because it distorted her face—is an allusion to the δυσόφθαλμον αἰσχος which was the alleged cause of its rejection (*v. Telestes, fr. i., Bergk. Poet. Lyr.* vol. iii.).

² *i.e.* keeping stride with Homer. He was the 'Butcher and Lang' of the first century. 'versibus' for 'versibus' is one of Bährens' unfortunate conjectures. 'versus soluti' are verses with the metre taken out, *i.e.* prose: 'verba soluta' would presumably mean letters or syllables!

for in the *Thebais* he writes:—

fors illi praesaga quies, nigrasque gravatus
per somnum Thebas et Thiodamanta vide-
bat
(*Theb.* x. 324).

Passing to Latin poets, Dr. Helm finds that Statius took some hints from the plays of Seneca (*Oedipus* and *Phoenissae*)—Seneca having followed Euripides, whom Statius does not directly imitate. Statius also owed something to Ovid: compare *Ov. Met.* iii. 32 f. with *Stat. Theb.* v. 508 f., and *Met.* xi. 589 with *Theb.* x. 80 f. (the cave of Somnus). This examination results in showing the superiority of Ovid, who 'ut homo vere poeta' is more simple, natural and picturesque than his successor (Helm, pp. 59–67). The influence of Lucretius appears chiefly in the Invocation of the Earth-goddess, *Theb.* viii. 303 f., which is modelled on the Address to Venus. But it is to Virgil that Statius owes the largest debt; he constantly follows him in language, incident and versification. In the plot and structure of the epic Virgil's influence would seem to have been sometimes harmful. The fact that warfare begins in the seventh book of Virgil caused Statius to reserve the actual siege of Thebes for the same point in his poem, with the result that in the first six books the action drags a little and there is much that is not very important for the main story. Here however Statius had Epic precedent, for Antimachus of Colophon is said to have expanded the same theme with such skill 'ut xxiv. volumina impleret antequam septem duces usque ad Thebas duceret.' Further, imitation of Virgil's eighth book (Aeneas and Evander) has made Statius' first book obscure and inconsistent—it is night at the outset, but this is forgotten and we have a feast by day as in the *Aeneid*. Dr. Helm next proceeds to discuss various passages of doubtful authenticity, acting on the admirable principle 'libidini, qua viri docti quicquid ipsis displicet poetae adimere non verentur, quod eius per vires nostras fieri posset, obsistere' (p. 149). He then deals briefly with the relations of Statius to Lucan and Valerius Flaccus, both of whom died before the *Thebais* was written ('ante Thebaidem editam aut inceptam,' p. 150), and discusses at greater length the connexion between the work of Statius and that of his contemporary Silius, whose claims to priority are more doubtful, bringing his essay to a close with an encomium upon Statius, whom he places above Virgil in the art of delineating

character, and above Silius, Flaccus, and Lucan in the art of constructing an Epic narrative.

The whole enquiry is a somewhat unattractive one. You do not account for or exhaust the qualities of a poet by tabulating the passages which have influenced him 'any more,' as Goethe said, 'than you explain away the strength of a strong man by reckoning up the nourishing food which he has eaten.' Echoes or reminiscences of an earlier poet are things which an instructed reader will feel; but there is no good reason for collecting and analyzing them at length. A long dissertation could be justified only by unusual insight or by a successful attempt to make the two poets illustrate and explain each other: and though Dr. Helm does not descend to the level of the scholar (Friesemann) who proposed 'arcano fulgentes lumine postes' in *Theb.* i. 210,

forgetting the Virgilian 'florentes aere catervas,' he does not seem to be acutely sensitive to the recurrence of a Virgilian cadence (e.g. on p. 27 he quotes 'unde haec tam clara repente | numina,' *Theb.* x. 236, apparently without any suspicion that it is an echo of 'unde haec tam clara repente | tempestas), and he sometimes misses the obvious in his reading of Statius, e.g. on p. 42 he does not quote Oedipus' speech to the end, although the last words make his point much clearer—'modo digna veni, mea pignora nosces,' 'come but in thy full malignity, and thou wilt find them true sons of mine': this speech, he wishes to show, has reminiscences of Seneca, who had written

agite, o propago cara, generosam indolem
probate factis.

W. R. HARDIE.

A. COLLIGNON ON PETRONIUS.

Étude sur Pétrone; la critique littéraire, l'imitation et la parodie dans le Satiricon.

A. COLLIGNON. Pp. viii. + 406. Paris: Hachette. 1892.

M. COLLIGNON'S study is chiefly concerned, as his second title indicates, with the relation of Petronius, as critic or imitator, to other authors and forms of literature.

Chap. I. (pp. 1-49) deals with the analysis and form of the *Satiricon*, and with its place in Roman literature. There is little in this chapter that calls for remark, except the statement on p. 5, note 1, that the Trau MS. begins with the words *Ipse nescit quid habeat* c. 37. The MS. really begins with the words *uenerat iam tertius dies* c. 26. The results which the author draws from his comparison of the *Satiricon* with the *Menippean Satires* of Varro, the 'Ἀποκολοκύντωσις of Seneca, the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius and the Greek novels are not in any degree new. On the

other hand, the important suggestion of Elimar Klebs (*Philologus* xlvii. 623 ff.) that the wrath of Priapus incurred by Encolpius served as a *Leitmotiv* to give unity to the composition, is relegated to a footnote on p. 8, although quoted with approval; it reappears in a position of greater honour on p. 323. It was scarcely necessary to waste words on the theory that the *Satiricon* is identical with the sealed document despatched by Petronius to Nero.

Chap. II. (pp. 51-108) proves, at considerable length, that Petronius was an Epicurean in morals and religion, and a supporter of the 'Classical' theory in literature. This part of the book would be improved by compression. The passages of Petronius which contain literary criticisms (cc. 1-5, 88, 116) are printed at full length, with illustrations from other authors in parallel columns. These are sometimes filled with unnecessarily diffuse references, e.g.

Sumendae voces a plebe semotae, ut fiat 'odi profanum vulgus et arceo.'

La citation d'Horace: *Odi profanum, &c.*, est tirée de l'Ode I. du livre III., vers 1.

Most of c. 118 is treated *twice* in this manner.

Chap. III. attacks the question of parody and imitation in the *Satiricon*, with special reference to the 'Troiae halosis' and the 'de bello ciuili.' As to the first, M. Collignon concludes, no doubt rightly, that there is no intention of parodying Vergil,

and adopts the opinion of M. Souriau (and others) that Petronius utilized an exercise in the free adaptation of themes already treated by classical authors, which he considered of sufficient merit to be put into the mouth of Eumolpus. Little, however, is gained by printing the poem at length, with interspersed quotations from Vergil which