

BOOK REVIEW

The Thebaid of Statius: The Women of Lemnos. By PATRICK YAGGY. Mundelein, IL: Bolchazy-Carducci, 2014. Pp. xxvii + 242. Paper, \$31.00. ISBN 978-0-86516-819-0.

Statius' *Thebaid* is a brilliant work – perhaps the greatest of all post-Vergilian Latin epics – but it is also difficult and obscure, sometimes maddeningly so. In seeking to produce an edition of the Lemnian episode from Book V (lines 1–637) suitable for use at the high school level, Patrick Yaggy has taken on an impressive challenge; and he is to be commended, even if the results are sometimes problematic.

The text Yaggy offers is sound, and in general he capably navigates the often thorny textual problems that Statius presents. Each short section of text is framed by full notes, which both gloss all vocabulary terms not previously encountered and offer commentary on various mythological and historical allusions, along with discussion questions. Throughout these notes, Yaggy does a fine job of framing the *Thebaid* against the backdrop of its predecessors; he repeatedly stresses—rightly, in my opinion—the vital importance of intertextuality in appreciating the subtleties of Statius' language and characterization. It is his central contention, reinforced in occasional sections entitled “Connections to the *Aeneid*,” that the poem generally, and the Lemnian episode specifically, should be understood as Statius' riposte to Vergil's portrayal of Augustan *pietas*; Yaggy argues that the oppressive rule of Domitian drove Statius to highlight the power of *nefas*, creating a much more morally grey world than that portrayed in the *Aeneid* (pp. xvii–xviii). This interpretation is not above challenge, but it certainly offers students a challenging and fruitful perspective from which to begin their analysis of the text. Those who wish to explore modern scholarship on the poem further will be helped by the selective bibliography Yaggy offers (although the absence of Denis Feeney's *The Gods in Epic* is puzzling, and one might wish that Yaggy had cited Shackleton Bailey's more recent Loeb, rather than the now outdated edition of J.H. Mozley).

Another point in favor of the edition is Yaggy's careful attention to matters of style. Not content to merely gloss vocabulary, he challenges students to pay

attention to Statius' deployment of all manner of rhetorical and metrical devices; a helpful list of such devices is offered in an appendix.

Unfortunately, the potential value of the text in the classroom is undercut by a number of errors in Yaggy's notes that may mislead students. Several of note: *obtenta* (line 45, page 17) is the participial form of *obtendo*, not *obtineo*; similarly, *insueta* (line 91, page 31) is a form of the adjective *insuetus*, not the past participle of *insuesco*. Yaggy claims that the adjective *exarmata* that Statius uses to refer to Lycaste (line 226, page 67) indicates that she has already murdered her brother and dropped her weapon, when in fact the next several lines make it clear that Lycaste has not yet committed the crime. His lengthy discussion of the use of the masculine adjective *pronos* modifying *crateras* (line 255, page 75) fails to acknowledge the extremely likely possibility that Statius has simply used the Greek accusative form of *crater*. And finally, Yaggy refers (lines 418–419, page 113) to Mopsus' holding out an olive branch to the Lemnian women, when it is actually Jason who does so (*Aesone natus*).

There are mistakes in the introduction as well: Statius appears in Dante's *Purgatorio*, not (xv) the *Inferno*, and the map of Greece presented on xxv places Arcadia in Laconia. A second edition would be very desirable to correct these mistakes, as well as the typographical errors that occasionally appear. That having been said, teachers who wish to introduce their students to the rich post-Vergilian epic tradition may well find Yaggy's text valuable. His efforts remind us that, however frustrating Statius may sometimes be, to ignore him is to deprive ourselves of exposure to a masterful literary craftsman.

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