

GAUTHIER LIBERMAN, *Stace, Silves*, Paris: Calepinus, 2010, pp. 546, ISBN 978-2-9517-7594-7.

Since the second impression of my OCT of the *Silvae* was issued in 1991, four (counting this one) substantial works dealing with text and interpretation of these poems have appeared. It is invidious for an editor to review the work of a subsequent editor, so I shall refer as little as possible to passages in which I may be thought to have a vested interest. I stand corrected at 1.4.4, where Liberman has collected occurrences, overlooked by me, of the vocative *diue* attached to a proper name (none referring to a living person), but when he quotes Tac. *ann.* 15.74 as an instance of *diuus* applied to a living emperor (*diuo Neroni*), it should be remarked that these are the words of a toady and are prohibited by Nero. If I were editing Statius today I would mention up to 15 of Liberman's conjectures, and perhaps adopt 5; the most interesting seems to me to be 1.5.55 *hoc te per speculum*, 3.3.27 *lata*, 4.2.34 *succincta*, 4.2.55 *rex*. I note also that at 4.6.87-90 he adopts the punctuation of Shackleton Bailey, which must be basically right and needs only one small adjustment, so that, as I now recognise, it should read

... semper... felix dominorum stemmate signum,  
nunc quoque, si mores humanaque pectora curae  
nosse deis. non ...

Shackleton Bailey's full stop at the end of 88 impairs the link *semper ... nunc quoque* and requires us to understand not just *felix* but *felix es* in 89.

Unfortunately there are great problems with the book, and first is the ambiguity about its aims. On the cover it is described as 'Édition et commentaire critiques', but on 7-8 the author explains that, apart from criticism of the text, which is central to the book, he also discusses problems of interpretation (verbal or cultural). Yet the notes deal with many questions where neither text nor interpretation is involved. Here are a few specimens out of many.

Parallels from other authors are often dragged in though they shed no light on Statius (e.g. Sappho at 5.4.17), or are even misunderstood (Cicero on 3.2.12). He thinks that we need to be told that Paris was a shepherd (1.2.214), that the cretic name Phidias has to be paraphrased in dactylic verse (4.6.27), that Asclepius is associated with snakes and incubation (3.4.25), that military standards receive cult (1.4.9), that Iris is Juno's messenger (3.3.81), that we need to know who the Seven Sages were (3.5.95), that Alcman may not have been Spartan by birth (5.3.153; Statius says only that his poetry was

performed at Sparta, nothing about his race). The notes on 2.4.6 *mediae plus tempore noctis* and on 5.2.129–31 (lines which refer to hanging shields from the neck) are pure nit-picking. We are told how to construe in places where the construction is obvious and permits no variation (4.6.80–2 and 93–4, 4.8.10), or are presented with quite unnecessary verbal illustration (4.6.82). Half of the references on 3.3.189 are irrelevant, and the point (that Vergil does not link the parting of the flames at *Aen.* 2.633 with Aeneas' rescue of Anchises) is not mentioned. At 2.1.161 the occurrences of the name Palestine in ancient authors are assembled (elsewhere too Jewish matters and Josephus receive more attention than is warranted). Overall it must be said that the main purpose of many notes seems to be merely to flaunt erudition or to comment on the text of other authors.

Another problem is that reasons for altering the text, other than that Liberman personally does not like it, are often not given; the word 'soupçon' and expressions like 'je préférerais, me semble (paraît) faible (gauche, problématique, peu plausible, peu satisfaisant, peu naturel), je considère comme stylistiquement invraisemblable' multiply, usually with no reasons given, and often leading up to a suggestion by Liberman himself. This becomes explicit when we read 'une faute est possible (n'est pas exclue)' or 'le doute est au moins permis' or 'j'aurais attendu', and even when we have a 'peut-être' in such a phrase (5.2.178) a conjecture follows. In 3 pr. *omnis* is obelised without any note; in 5 pr. it is suggested that *nondum* should be *non*, in 4 pr. that *in hoc libro* should be deleted, in 3.1.99 that *alta* should be *apta*, but no reasons are given.

Often we find that Liberman does not settle on one conjecture, but offers a medley from which to choose. Thus at 3.4.73 we read '*pulchra* m'est suspect; *mira? rara? pura?*', at 4.3.79 'sous *terras* se cache peut-être un mot (*petras...? cautes? rupes?*) équivalent a *scopulos*', at 1.1.96 '*iuxta* semble ici plutôt oiseux ... je suggère a) *oscula blanda* ... b) *dulces ibit in amplexus* ... *Vastos* serait dans l'esprit de ce passage hyperbolique', at 1.2.105, after a pedantic objection to *uultu*, 'je suggère, en ordre décroissant de probabilité, a) ... b)...'. To explain the postulated path of corruption is not the first duty of an emendator, since there are corruptions which defy explanation (e.g. that of *coetu(s)* to *questus* in 1.2.235 and 5.2.160), but to presume such a corruption (as Liberman does in the three examples quoted above and also e.g. at 5.3.222) is something to which one should resort with caution. Where Liberman does provide explanations, these are often far-fetched in the extreme. Thus at 5.1.66 *fors* or *sors* is presumed to have dropped out after *anCePS* and to have been replaced by *metus*; at 5.1.101 *uix cuncta* is supposed to have been corrupted to *cunctaque si* because (for no reason) *uix* dropped out; at 5.2.145 it is suggested that *speculas istas* was corrupted to *istas speculas* and the former word, which now upsets the metre of the line, was replaced with the nonsensical *uitae*. At 3.5.64 it is suggested that

an original *quatit* was glossed by *ferit*, and that this gloss was taken into the text and then corrupted to *petit*. The index (522) lists nine alleged examples of glosses, four of them accompanied by question marks and one discounted. Of the others 1.6.80, 4.6.65 are fantastic, and indeed one would be surprised to find that such a rarely read text had been glossed, but I am now convinced that at 1.6.64, a passage which I hope to discuss elsewhere, *pumilos* must be such a gloss. Often it is urged that a corruption is due to the influence of a passage far ahead; thus at 5.3.232 it is argued that *dulce* was anticipated from 248 and then corrupted to *dusce*. Liberman here fails to see the construction introduced by Markland's emendation *lustra*, which is *caneres quam inuida <essent> lustra parentis Tarpei*, and for some reason finds it odd that this should be the reaction of Statius' father to his son's defeat.

Of his own conjecture many are unnecessary; thus 3.1.77-80 cause him quite imaginary difficulties, and at 4.6.34, though Phillimore's conjecture *satiavi* is reasonable, *satiavit* can be defended by Mela 1.72 (*specus mentes accedentium aspectu*) *non satiet*. At 4.6.43 he objects to *mendacia* (a term used in relation to the illusionist effects of works of art) as disrespectful to Hercules, though he raises no objection to *ib. 21 mentito corpore ceras*. Others are exceedingly bad. Thus at 2.1.101-2 Statius claims that he has seen grafted branches *alieno in robore* grow higher than the stock's own, *altius ire suis*, which Liberman alters to *sui* (i.e. *ramis sui roboris*), which seems more difficult than the transmitted text. Or they can be pointless, as at 2.3.23 *paenituit uisi diuam* for *paenituit uidisse deam*. Or they may be buttressed by bad parallels, thus at 1.2.116 *Nereisin* for *Nereides* by Ov. *Her.* 13.135, where Salmacius restored *Troasin* for *Tro(iad)as*, but the following word explains the corruption, *Troas<in> inuideo*. Frequently after he has defended the manuscript reading he nevertheless adds a conjecture; thus at 1.5.63 ('s'il fallait corriger'), 2.1.86 ('si l'on refuse cette explication, il n'y a plus qu'à soupçonner le texte'), 2.2.6 ('si *laetum* est gâté, je suggère *lassum* ou *fessum*'), 3.3.7 ('si le texte était fautif ... je préférerais ... *undata*'), 4.1.42 ('je suggère, si fautive il y a, *iacent'*'). The list of Lucan's poems in 2.7 certainly poses problems, but Liberman's transposition of 73-4 to follow 57 cannot be right, since *iuuenis* 73 must come after *coepta iuuenta* 64. At 1.2.258 *laetumque* is suggested for the perfectly inoffensive *multumque*; no reason is given for alteration, but one can be detected, which is to buttress an unwarranted idea at 3.1.163. At 2.3.76 after defending (and misinterpreting) *teste*, he absurdly suggests *cote*. At 2.4.11 for *at tibi quanta* he suggests 'something like *stat lacrimanda*'. At 2.7.33 for *attollat refluos in astra fontes* he suggests *fontes aurifluos in astra tollat*; at 3.3.57 *immitis* for *et saeui* ('substitution du synonyme *saeui* et insertion de *et* pour faire le vers'), at *ib. 96 nec non zephyrus quaeque eurus et auster* for *quaeque eurus atrox et nubilus auster* ('La perte d'une séquence telle que *nec non zephyrus*'; 'perte' for what reason? The 'reason' given at 5.4.12 for suggested

replacement of *tamen* by *sacer* is abbreviation, which explains nothing); at 4.4.66 *propere* for *tarde* (alleged as a ‘polar error’; so also 5.3.63 *dulci* for *toruo*). At 5.1.181 there is nothing wrong with *mortis* (*mostis* M), but it is called a ‘sorry explanation stuffed in’ and is to be replaced by *cedo* or *linquo* or *fati*. At 5.1.183 *pridem te flore nitentem* he claims ‘une faute n’est pas exclue’ and intends to suggest ‘for example’ *nitidum te in flore iuuentae* (a slip of the pen puts this wrong, and there are a few other comparable errors of this general nature; e.g. 5.3.263 is not printed as Liberman wished, and at 5.5.1 the reading of M is listed as a conjecture). At 5.4.17 *compello* is doubted for no good reason and it is suggested that the word is due to *repellit* 15, but the proposed replacement is *nunc posco*, not anything beginning with *com-*.

There are similar problems with the incidental discussions of the text of other authors; for example on 4.1.31 *Epiced. Drusi 236 funera causa latet*, which is certainly corrupt, is altered to *funera clara tulit*, on the hypothesis that an abbreviation of *clara* (what abbreviation of *clara* does Liberman know?) produced *causa* and a metathesis of *tulit* produced *latet*. On 1.2.246 we are told that Ov. *Fasti* 4.343–4 originally stood after 328 (so Bömer) and read *multo celeberrima coetu*, that *multo* became *laeto* because of *laetitia* 328, and then for no reason *coetu* became *uoltu*. On 3.1.89 we are offered a menu of three conjectures, all quite unnecessary, on Val. Fl. 1.102.

The problem of words repeated within a small space raises particular difficulties. For instance, at 1.6.12–6 we have *quicquid nobile Pontis nucetis / fecundis cadit .... largis gratuitum cadit rapinis*, where the second *cadit*, referring to the *sparsio*, is guaranteed by 63, but Liberman has every justification to suggest replacing the first by *uenit*, though one might hesitate to adopt this (perhaps *datur* would be less unconvincing). Again, at 1.2.20–3 the manuscript makes Statius refer first to the *niueos artus* of Violentilla and then her *niueis uultibus*; I now regret that I did not record Markland’s *nitidis* here. At 2.2.70–1 also *quos tibi cura sequi ... expers curarum* seems almost self-contradictory, and Markland’s *turbarum* merits mention. Of the other examples listed by Liberman on 1.1.44 some seem intentional, others do not constitute a great offence, some seem certainly corrupt, as 1.2.118–9, 2.1.47–8 (where Liberman, following Delz, objects that Housman’s conjecture *mulsa* presumes a non-existent participle; but why can it not be just an adjective, though Housman certainly does seem to understand it as a participle?). Liberman’s list does not include 2.1.25–8, 5.2.26–30, 5.3.166–9, though he comments on two of these *ad loc.*

Liberman reveals the nature of many of his changes on 2.2.54, where we are told that the proprietor of a villa has replaced *lustra* with *tecta*. Liberman remarks on *lustra* ‘tesca eût fait un jeu de sonorité avec tecta’. Poor fumbling Statius! Bow down before one who can teach you how to write Latin poetry! Statius is explicitly chided on 4.4.35–6, and in 5.4.19 Liberman favours alterations which, he admits, may seem to be improving

on the author (and they do so seem). I do not understand his objection ('mais Somnus, aile, vole') to the conjecture *suspensio pollice*; surely it is more natural to say 'with toe in the air' than 'with knee (*poplite*) in the air'.

Many passages are misunderstood. At 1.1.55 I do not see what he means about displaced *atque*; I think that it means *perpetuus seruiet <unis> frenis atque uni astro*, just as in my view 5.5.10 means *non de stirpe quidem <mea> nec qui mea nomina ferret*. In 5.3.228 Liberman fails to appreciate the metaphor for bursting with pride. At 2.7.42, in a passage which concerns Lucan's precocious poetic facility, the *longaeui uates* whom he excels are certainly senior poets. In 2.2.116-7 *hinc ... hinc* mean 'on one side ... on the other', i.e. from the sea and the land, and have nothing to do with *hic* in 112. At 3.1.164 there is no anacolouthon in Macnaghten's conjecture, which means *nunc ipse <est> in limine*. At 4.6.61 *comitem occasus secum portabat et ortus* he absurdly takes *occasus et ortus* to be accusatives of motion towards, 'carried to west and east'; they are of course genitives, 'companion of <his travels to> west and east' (since Alexander did not actually travel west, it follows that this is a polar expression [see my note on Ennius fr. 43 with addenda in my *FLP*] meaning 'all over the world'). In 1 pr. *Batrachomachiam agnoscimus* the verb means 'recognise' (so Shackleton Bailey) as a juvenile work by Homer and not a composition by Pigres, as some have claimed. At 1.2.10 *medias* is absurdly interpreted 'trompe les Muses jusqu' à leur sein'; substitute 'taille' for the last word and the absurdity is manifest. The interpretation of 1.3.26 is obscure to me and, I think, ridiculous. At 2.1.203 *mollis Elysii* is quite right and conveys the point that even in the best area of the underworld the trees are fruitless, the birds silent, the flowers wilted; no connection with ἀμαυρός, which means 'dark', is intended. 3.2.59 means that Statius will jump on to dry land while the boat is already in motion. 4.8.30-1 is referred to Helen as Selene and Castor and Pollux as Morning and Evening Stars, but since these two stars (really of course one) never shine at the same time, the picture of the moon with one on each side is impossible. At 5.1.45 he adopts the conjecture *nuptumque* (*nuptuque*, the supine, M rightly), seeing in it the noun *nuptus* = *nuptiae*, a word quoted only from 'Hyginus' *fab.* 257.4 (remember that this work is known only from a renaissance edition) in the phrase *nuptui (col)locare* which is found also in *De Viris Ill.* 59 with a variant *nuptu* (Pichlmayer does not disclose the authority for *nuptum*, which he reads); this usage must have been extrapolated from the supine in the common phrase *nuptum (col)locare*, and Statius is very unlikely to have used the resulting noun. At 3.2.109-10 *cur ... ripa coerceat undas / Cecropio stagnata luto*, which Liberman thinks possibly corrupt, receives light from Justin 36.3.7, which explains the immobility of the Dead Sea as due to bitumen *quo aqua omnis stagnatur*; so here the nests and droppings of the swallows have pushed out the bank and thus retarded the flow of water, so that the bank is waterlogged.

At 3.5.11 (*unde alia mihi fronte et nubila uultus*) *alia fronte* is ablative of description, *nubila* means ‘cloudy’ and *uultus* is accusative plural (even without metrical advantage Statius often applies the plural of this word to one person, e.g. five times in 1.2 alone), so that the line means ‘why, pray, do you have this changed countenance and are cloudy in expression?’. Liberman alters to *aliam frontem*, takes *nubila* to mean ‘clouds’ and understands *uultus* as genitive singular, but then it is hard not to refer the line to the demeanour of Statius rather than that of his wife. Can Liberman really be so egotistic as to think that, after five centuries of Statian scholarship, including some of the most distinguished names in Latin studies, it was left to him to make a simple change like this?

The prose preface also shows problems. In the corruption at the end of 1 the emendations which preserve clausular rhythms are not mentioned and one which does not is proposed by Liberman himself, who in that to 3 suggests one which introduces a hexameter clausula. His feeling for hexameter metre too shows some shortcomings. At 1.4.64 after admitting that another conjecture (*tendentis iam* for M’s *tendatis iam*) is quite satisfactory he suggests that the line began *iam tenuantis fila colos*, but when Statius (rarely) in the *Silvae* ends a word at the end of the second foot and fills out that foot entirely with that one word, he always elides its last syllable and begins the third foot with *et, aut* or *atque*, as in 66 just below *nam neque plebeiam aut* (the other cases are 1.2.12, 2.2.71, 3.3.158, 4.4.48, 5.2.9). 3.3.174 also provokes a suggestion with a harsh rhythm ‘si le texte n’est pas correct’.

There are some oversights which need to be corrected. At 4.3.122 we are told that Statius would not scan *rēplet* or *rēclūsit*, but at 1.2.161 he scans *rēclinem* (cf. *Theb.* 4.163). At 5.3.222 the statement that *Achaei* is never used to mean ‘the Greeks’ is refuted by Juv. 3.61; like Juvenal, Statius here means the contemporary Greeks, whereas he employs *Achiui* (e.g. at 1.1.14) for mythological Greeks. The opportunity to restore the correct spelling *Molorcus* (see Morgan, *CQ* 42, 1992, 533) at 3.1.29 and 4.6.51 has been let slip; on another orthographical point, the spelling *Sylla*, endemic in French texts, is adopted at 4.6.86 and 107 and defended on p. 508 as a Grecism (!) by Statius, though *Sulla* is presented at 5.3.293. The Faber who communicated a suggestion to Cruceus at 1.4.27 was Nicolas Le Fèvre, not T. Faber (Tanneguy Le Fèvre), who was aged three when Cruceus’ edition was published.

Liberman undoubtedly possesses acumen, and it would be an error to pay no attention to many points raised by him, even if one reaches different conclusions. For this acumen is accompanied by impulsiveness, and the two reinforce a lack of sympathy with the highly mannered diction of Statius. Take for instance 1.5.1 *non Helicon graui pulsat chelys enthea plectro* and see if you can fit these words into a coherent picture; but even Liberman has to leave them unchallenged. If I had to sum up this book in one word, that



would be 'irresponsible'. It was originally advertised by another publisher, and the author (29) speaks of 'mésaventures' which it has experienced; one can see why.

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