

EDWARD COURTNEY'S REVIEW OF MY EDITION AND CRITICAL COMMENTARY ON
STATIUS, *SILVAE* : A SHORT REPLY

At the beginning of his review (*ExClass* 16, 2012, 295-301), E. Courtney states that «it is invidious for an editor to review the work of a subsequent editor». Indeed there could (I believe) be no better word than «invidious» to describe Courtney's review, even though he makes some good points¹.

At the end he says that if he had to sum up my book in one word, that would be «irresponsible». This in his view is supposed to account for the «*mésaventures*» which the book has experienced and the fact that it was originally advertised by another publisher. This is not only invidious but slanderous: I entrusted another publishing house with my book because the former one worked on it too slowly. To escape the invidiousness of an editor's reviewing the book of a subsequent editor Courtney claims that he will refer as little as possible to passages in which he may be thought to have a vested interest. I am not quite sure he does what he says, but I grant him the right not to do so. But I find fault with serious misrepresentation of words and facts, not to be expected of a responsible reviewer judging an irresponsible book. The most telling case is when Courtney blames me for misunderstanding 1.2.10, *medias fallit permixta sorores*: «*medias* is absurdly interpreted 'trompe les Muses jusqu'à leur sein'; substitute 'taille' for the last word and the absurdity is manifest». It is indeed, but the French text and the explanation are Courtney's, not mine, which are «*medias* signifie qu'Élégie trompe les Muses jusqu'en leur sein» (she is bold enough to deceive them standing among them). This indeed is a very responsible kind of criticism: first misquote an author, then misinterpret him and eventually lay the blame on him². The reader of Courtney's review could not guess the

¹ Thus he rightly queries my objection to the conjecture *suspensio pollice* (*poplite* M) at 5.4.19 (Love is asked to fly past the lonely unsleeping man). In his edition he quotes «Reposian. 70», but those who will check this passage will realize that there *suspensio pollice* is said of Venus dancing on tiptoe. The irrelevant parallel led me to reject the conjecture based on it, but the conjecture (meaning the same as the supposedly conjectural reading *suspensis plantis* at Prop. 1.20.27) is as good as the parallel is bad. At 4.6.43 *dant* (*ac* M) *spatium tam magna breui mendacia formae*, he rightly defends *mendacia*, which he refers to the illusionist effect of works of art. The meaning seems to be that the powerful impression of realism makes up for the size of the statuette, which looks bigger than it is and as big as what it represents, Hercules. But the reading *AC* may point to *SIC* and *TAM* may conceal *DANT*. In her 2010 commentary on the poem, A. Bonadeo reads *ac spatium tam magna breui mendacia formae!*, «e poi in uno spazio tanto ridotto che impressione di imponente fisicità!», but this translation is not faithful to the barely intelligible and very awkward Latin, where *ac* is fully objectionable.

² I am also blamed for misunderstanding «the construction introduced by Markland's

main defect of my note on 1.2.10: it criticizes his text *mediis fallit permixta sorores* and his strained interpretation of *fallit* «imitates deceptively» (such a fine metrist did not find fault with the first half of a hexameter ending with an adjective referring to a substantive in another case at the end of the second half). Nor, it is true, could the reader guess that, when Courtney sarcastically remarks that we need not be told that Paris was a shepherd, the criticized note on 1.2.214-5 is as follows : «pour *pastor* (Pâris), cf. Nisbet-Hubbard à Horace, *Odes*, 1.15.1, et voir *Silves*, 2.6.28, *rusticus*, avec la note [dealing with a textual issue involving the literary characterization of Paris], sans oublier le v. 43 du présent poème». Here is a selection of other typical examples of fair criticism.

I am charged with defending the spelling *Sylla* on p. 508 «as a Grecism (!) by Statius». The reader will find this on p. 508: *tamquam formam uocabuli Graecam a Papinio adamatam uindicare conatur Engelmann*. That is clearly enough (or so it seems to me) an opinion I quote, not one I endorse³. I have a similar problem with Courtney's remark on my note at 4.8.30-1, which (he says) «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». My note begins thus: «Stephens pense à Castor et Pollux représentant *Lucifer* et *Hesperus* (ou plutôt l'inverse)». I provide the reader with Stephens' explanation not as being mine but as being challenging (see my note on 4.6.15-6). The Ancients did not always identify the two stars as being one and the same. Is it impossible for a poet like Statius to have thought of Helen (already called up along with her two brothers in the first comparison, 4.8.28-9), Lucifer and Hesperus when he compared Julius

emendation *lustra* [at 5.3.232, the transmitted reading being *dusce*], which is *caneres quam inuida <essent> lustra parentis Tarpei*. This construction is introduced not by Markland's conjecture but by Courtney's reuse of it, for Markland reads the passage quite differently. I do not see that my objection to Courtney's text («curieuse réaction du père de Stace face à l'échec de son fils que *inuida lustra canere!* Et quelle est alors la pertinence de *quam?*») implies any misunderstanding of the construction. My query is with the meaning of Courtney's text and the otioseness of *quam*: «for inasmuch as oak mingled with olive did not press my bow and the hoped-for honour eluded me, you would have sung how grudging was the lustre of the Tarpeian Father». Shackleton Bailey (Loeb edition, p. 402) wittily objected to Courtney that «as a subject for paternal celebration Statius's disappointment at the Capitoline festival may seem unpromising». The true reading may be *heu* (Markland's emendation of *nam* l. 231)..., *quam lustra parentis inuida Tarpei feres* (or *flesses*)!, «alas,... how (if you had lived to see it) would you have wept over my failure!». Shackleton Bailey keeps the transmitted reading *caperes*, «would you have endured», but our poet's failure would certainly have been a terrible blow for his father to see. It is difficult to account for the corruption of *feres* into *caperes*, but some corruptions «defy explanation», as Courtney is ready to acknowledge. Anyway *caneres* is a merely «palaeographical» conjecture, wholly unsatisfactory in point of sense.

³ «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»: could one guess that my critical index has a note on that, commending Morgan's paper and his spelling as more correct?

Menecrates' daughter between her two brothers to the moon surrounded by two stars? It is true that I am supposed to suffer from a «lack of sympathy for the highly mannered diction of Statius», as can surely be seen in my treatment of 1.3.42, where I refuse Courtney's text and interpretation, *nox silet et pigros mutantia murmura somnos*, «night is silent, and so are the noises which break sleep». I share with Shackleton Bailey *inter alios* my lack of sympathy for the «mannerism» of *mutantia* meaning «breaking» and the silence of those *mutantia somnos murmura*. The way Courtney defends this text in *HSCPh* 102, 2004, 445 suggests that more modesty might not be unseemly. This is also suggested by the following kind of criticism: «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». How can *mollis* convey such a point? I did not claim that *mollis* is wrong but suggested that it is a *calque* of Greek ἀμαυρός and referred the reader to Wilamowitz on Eur. *Hercules* 124, where the adjective, famously used to describe ghosts, is shown to mean sometimes «faint». But why should a reviewer read Wilamowitz if invited to do so by the author of the book he is reviewing?

At 3.5.11 Courtney may be right to defend *unde alia mihi fronte et nubila uultus* with *nubila* meaning «cloudy» and *uultus* accusative plural, «why, pray, do you have this changed countenance and are cloudy in expression?» (Courtney's translation). At any rate I should have mentioned this interpretation. Reading the idiomatic *unde aliam mihi frontem et nubila uultus* («these clouds on your face»⁴), I am exposed to this Housmanian burst of anger, already used by Courtney against Shackleton Bailey⁵: «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?». I am at least not egotistic enough to rush into criticism before reading. My note *ad loc.* indicates that I borrowed the accusative from L. Grasberger 1877. Courtney rightly (I believe) objects to the accusative that «then it is hard not to refer the line to the demeanour of Statius rather than that of his wife». Grasberger's change is so simple (as Courtney acknowledges), the diction it produces is so excellent (as I think) and I am so irresponsible (as Courtney thinks) that I dare suggest now, in compliance with Courtney's objection, *unde aliam tibi frontem et nubila uultus*, «cependant, pourquoi, sur tes traits, cette altération et ces nuages» (Delatour's 1802 cleverly unfaithful translation). But what is the point of Courtney's philippic? If all simple and

⁴ For the phrase in Greek and Latin see Didot's revision of Estienne's *Thesaurus Graecae linguae*, VI 1466 D, quoting Cicero's *frontis tuae nubeculam (...) pertimescerem*.

⁵ See the latter's response, *HSCP* 102, 2004, 458.

true or probable changes were made centuries ago, why does he approve of my emendation *lata* for *longa* at 3.3.27? Housmanian rhetoric, better when backed by Housman's scholarship and judgment, seems to be quite misplaced here. What would Housman say if he saw that an editor of the *Silvae*, not reading Markland's commentary, attributes to himself Markland's conjecture at 4.6.45?

«At the end of [prose preface] 1 the emendations which preserve clausular rhythms are not mentioned». Let me quote the relevant part of my note: «Courtney 2004, p. 447, (...) vante *prouolassent* (...), pittoresque et métrique»⁶.

«In 3 pr. *omnis* is obelised without any note». The text is *quotiens, in illius facundiae tuae penetrabile seductus, altius litteras intro et in †omnis† a te studiorum sinus ducor*. Here is the supposedly missing note: «*in intimos...sinus* Barth: *in imos...sinus* Baehrens». I have sometimes relied on the diagnostic function of conjectures; comments may help little when mention of one or more conjectures aiming at solving the problem indicates its nature. I think that the two conjectures do point the difficulty of *omnis* clearly enough to one who wants to see⁷. Courtney also observes that sometimes I do not «settle on one conjecture, but offers a medley from which to choose». One (I believe) must acknowledge that choice between equally possible emendations is sometimes difficult, if not impossible, and that alternatives may be looked for and mentioned.

I could go on but let me conclude. The aim of my edition was not to provide the best possible text of the *Silvae*, one which may claim to be the standard one: there has never been any, there is none, not even Courtney's, and there will be none, because the text is too corrupt and disagreement among scholars on what Statius can or cannot have written is too strong. My main purpose was to point to the reader of Statius' *Silvae* the textual issues I was able to discern and to expound or propound solutions. Actually I see more difficulties than Courtney did in the text of the *Silvae*⁸ (as in that of Valerius Flaccus' *Argonauticon*, edited by both of us): does it imply that

⁶ Courtney blames my conjecture *experiaris* (*praef.* 3.1) for introducing a hexameter clausula, but this adonian clausula is no regular hexameter clausula, and this makes a difference (see K. Müller's edition of Curtius, Munich 1954, 764-5), though there is no certain example of adonian clausula in the prose prefaces, which offer scanty material.

⁷ I would never have expected Courtney to need any special explanation for the deletion of *in hoc libro* in the following sentence: *cuius (the uia Domitiana) beneficio tu quoque maturius epistolam accipies quam tibi in hoc libro a Neapoli scribo* (*praef.* 4.4).

⁸ I was not the first and very probably will not be the last to challenge his claim *nihil, ut spero, dubitationi cum ratione obnoxium praeteriui* (better *praeterii*). This implies that whoever queries the transmitted text when Courtney sees no problem queries it *sine ratione*. Even Housman did not make such a claim in his edition of Manilius, nor would he have ever made it: he knew that progress was possible after him. But Courtney's edition also ignores many textual issues raised by former scholars, whose queries were far from being *sine ratione*.

the problems I see and he did not are unreal? When both of us see a problem, if our solutions differ, is mine worse because it is not Courtney's⁹? Well, the only way for the reader to know will be to check my commentary. I am confident that he will then discover a book appreciably different from that known to him through Courtney's review.

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⁹ At 1.6.12-3 *quicquid nobile Ponticis nucetis | fecundis cadit aut iugis Idymes*, he grants that *cadit* is a wrong anticipation of *cadit* l. 16 but suggests that his *datur* would be «less unconvincing» than my *uenit*, a word idiomatically used about things that grow (*OLD* s. v. 5): the only reason I can find for the stopgap *datur* to be more convincing is that it is Courtney's.

