bias of the commentary as a form of scholarly composition rather than a blemish upon this particular commentator's achievement within the confines of that genre.

In summary, Costa's second selection from Seneca's philosophical prose complements his earlier published selection and furnishes a very serviceable vehicle for introducing students of Latin to Seneca and Roman Stoicism; but, because of the limited nature of his translation, it will be found much less attractive and instructive by those readers who do not have the requisite training to follow the Latin text alongside the English.

Marcus Wilson
University of Auckland

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The gradual resurgence of Statius studies in the English-speaking world over the last 25 years or so is very welcome and long overdue, given both the high quality of Statius' poetry and his Nachleben—the enormous influence of his work in the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and later, at least down to the end of the nineteenth century. In spite of the work of e.g. Watkiss (1966) and Vessey (1973) on the Thebaid, Coleman (1988) and Courtney (1989) on the Silvae, he is still too little read: there is a great deal of very fine material in the grimly colourful, massive and weighty Thebaid, the unfinished Achilleid is a masterpiece of post-Ovidian parodic epic, and the occasional pieces of the Silvae are skilful, personal, polished and pointed. The problem
with Statius in modern times has been threefold: the almost complete, and inevitable, domination of Vergil in the field of Roman epic; the changes that have taken place in poetic taste, and the related decline of interest in 'rhetorical presentation'; and the unfashionableness of writers who, however ambiguously, supported perceived unpopular regimes. Only the first of these held any great weight in the Roman world: in his own time Statius was the most distinguished poet of his age, and well-recognised by his public. The epics consciously adapted themes from the Aeneid and the Hellenistic and Roman predecessors; while they were vehicles for the display of his encyclopaedic grasp of the genre, Statius moulded them to his own individual style, by no means slavishly derivative. His Flavian audiences would have looked for and appreciated their complex literary resonances.

Dominik (D) has turned the spotlight onto the speeches of the Thebaid and the way rhetorical theory is exploited, manipulated or by-passed. According to D, 81 characters speak 265 speeches spread over 3448 1/12 lines (6): and here we are introduced to the most infuriating feature of the book, the relentless statisticisation of every aspect of the speeches within truly Aristotelian taxonomic headings—indeed, the last 100 pages are solely of statistical tables. The only statistic that is omitted is the use of the 'Golden Mean', beloved of some critics in the early sixties. To be sure, D explains his reasons for adopting this approach (4), but much of the treatment of his material seriously begs the question 'So what?'. This said, there are extremely useful insights and analyses buried in the text, the majority in Chapters 5 (Revelation of character in the speeches) and 6 (Elements of style in the speeches). Here in particular D breaks interesting new ground, away from the traditional prejudiced Statian criticism. He shows that the characters do not speak simply in rhetorical tropes as cardboard representations of particular characteristics, but their utterance is highly varied, according with their responses to the complexities of their situations. An example: D notes the characterisation of Polynices, who in speaking to his wife Argia is tender and concerned, but in other conditions is vicious, cruel and overbearing,
and in yet others corrupt (207ff.)—thus Polynices for one is fully proportioned as a dramatic figure, and the other important characters are similarly fashioned. Their characterisation is reinforced by the detailed care that Statius takes over selecting appropriate modes of expression in the speeches assigned to them (237ff.). D’s findings on the enormous range of stylistic exposition used by Statius for the speeches could easily be extended into the narrative and descriptive parts of every book in the poem—three random examples from the longest book, Ten, reveal it instantly: the transition between the opening of the Theban raid and the women of Argos in supplication, 10.35-64; the Cave of Sleep, 10.84-117; the furor of Capaneus, 10.899-939.

A small number of corrections to D’s text should be noted: 78, speech of Polynices—‘I should have fought Eteocles’ (not Polynices); 86, ‘too apparent’; 167, linquentem; 210, ‘human and divine’ (not ‘supernatural and divine’). Some of D’s fanciful latinate pomposities could be removed: ‘a lachrymatory Polynices’, ‘Oedipus’ hair indurate with blood...[obscures] traces of his ocular effusion’ (134); ‘the maddened colossus...lapidates [the city]’ (186); ‘Hippomedon [derides] the considerable fluviatile power of Ismenos as an aberration of effeminate predisposition’, ‘the fulminous acts of Jupiter’, ‘the god reflects exclamatively’ (174).

Readers of this review will wonder what conclusion to come to. In my opinion, this book should perhaps not stand on its own. D’s forthcoming companion volume, alluded to several times, The Mythic Voice of Statius: Power and Politics in the Thebaid, is evidently the result of thought-processes stimulated and supported by the work represented in the present book, which should therefore be seen more as a prolegomenon or appendix to the main work. D’s skills and profound knowledge of the Thebaid should there be displayed to greater advantage.

Norman Austin
Massey University