

**A STUDY OF P. PAPINIUS
STATIUS' THEBAIS AND HIS
IMITATION OF VERGIL'S
AENEID**

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A study of P. Papinius Statius' Thebais and his imitation of Vergil's Aeneid by Ernest D. Daniels

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ERNEST D. DANIELS

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NEW YORK UNIVERSITY: GRADUATE SCHOOL

A STUDY OF
P. PAPINIUS STATIUS' THEBAIS
AND HIS IMITATION OF VERGIL'S
AENEID

A THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DOCTORATE
OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

ERNEST D. DANIELLS, A. M.

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Omnibus meis grammaticis et rhetoribus qui mihi principes et ad suscipiendam et ingrediendam rationem humanitatis fuerunt atque doctoribus Gulielmo Everett Waters imprimisque Ernesto Gottlieb Sihler doctissimo sermones utriusque linguae maxima cum gratia haec dissertatio inscribitur.

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*Author is not responsible for errors
as proofs were read in Berlin.*

Expedient it is in any undertaking to have not only the end clearly determined, but also the limits of the endeavor. This thesis, then, will present arguments to prove that P. Papinius Statius, though employing the form, has neither the merit nor content of an epic writer in the Thebais. It is, further, limited to a comparison of the aforesaid poem with the Aeneis of P. Vergilius Maro. Each in differing epochs, was the foremost poet of his type.¹⁾ Poetry arising from *ἡ μυμητικὴ καὶ ἡ μετρικὴ* is the language of imagination, of strong emotion. It is man's perpetual endeavor to express the spirit of the thing, *τὰ καθόλου*, and reveals that what he values as substances has higher value as symbols. The Epic is a form of narrative poetry *ἀπαγγελία*. It must have a great and noble theme, *Θαυμαστός*, preferring not *τὰ γινόμενα* but *οἷα ἐν γένοιτο* even *τὰ ἀδύνατα καὶ εἰκότα μᾶλλον ἢ τὰ δυνατὰ καὶ ἀπίθανα*. It must have unity in itself *μία πράξις*, either being *ἀπλός* or closely *πεπλεγμένος* with complete plot development from *ἡ ἀρχή* through *τὸ μέσον* to *τὸ τέλος*. Its *λέξις* is the heroic hexameter. *ἡ διάνοια* of Homer was to tell a good story for the joy of the telling; of Vergil, it was Rome's glory, that is, national; of Statius, it was purely artistic, „*divinam Aeneida longe sequi*“. Th. XII 816.

Imaginative races have always had their primitive or natural epics, poems narrating the achievements of gods and

¹⁾ Aristotle *Τὰ Ποιητικά*.

heroes handed down from father to son, such as the Mahábhárata, the Iliad, the Odyssey, the Nibelungenlied, and Les Chansons de Roland. Rome, too, had early ballads of which only faint echoes remain. Later, in 235 B. C., Cn. Naevius, in Saturnian verse, wrote a narrative poem of the first Punic War.¹⁾ C. Octavius Lampadio Naevii Punicum Bellum . . . uno volumine et continenti scriptura expositum divisit in septem libros, and¹⁾ Q. Ennius, 239 B. C., in his eighteen books of the Annals recorded the traditions of Rome from Aeneas' arrival in Italy down to his own time. This poem is important for the introduction of the hexameter and frequent imitation of Homer. Epos Latinum primus digne scripsit Ennius.²⁾ Both of these writers would be more accurately classed as patriotic and poetic annalists rather than epic writers.

Vergil's primacy in Latin literature is due to the fusion of the patriotic purpose of the annalist and the native beauty and art of the primitive narrative epic. The unity of his poem was the grand central idea, Rome's mission, „Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento“. VI, 852. His success in this field of art occasioned many imitations, Pharsalia of Lucanus (39—65), Argonautica of Valerius Flaccus, a poet under Vespasianus, the Punica of Silius Italicus (25—101) and Thebais of Statius (40?—96?).

¹⁾ Teufel and Schwabe.

²⁾ Diomed. Ars Gram. p. 480—2 (Ksil).