

MANUSCRIPT 704

Statius, ca. 50-95

Achilleis  
MS. 704

Italy (in Latin)

Ca. 1400-1415

All that exists of Statius' projected epic on the life of Achilles is one book and part of another, 1127 lines of verse in all; Statius died not long after he began the poem. The fragment that is left to us tells the story of how young Achilles' mother hid him on the island of Scyros, disguised as a girl (to prevent his participation in the Trojan War then beginning) and how he was found by Ulysses and Diomedes.

Modern editors divide the Achilleid into book 1, containing 960 lines, and a fragment of book 2, containing 167 lines. In the Middle Ages, however, the work was sometimes divided into 4 or 5 books, in an effort to give it an appearance of completeness. Our manuscript divides it into five books, with books beginning at lines 1, 198, 397, 675, and 961. The last line found in this manuscript, "Aura silet . . .," is spurious and often found in late manuscripts. The text of this manuscript belongs to the editors' "inferior" class (see Dilke, p. 22, with n. 2). The scribe, Iohannes de Sancto Quirichio, is perhaps to be connected with the San Quirico family of Verona.

Bibliographical note:

- Statius, Achilleis, ed. M. R. J. Brinkgreve (Utrecht, 1913)  
 \_\_\_\_\_, Achilleid, ed. O. A. W. Dilke (Cambridge, 1954)  
 \_\_\_\_\_, Thebais et Achilleis, ed. H. W. Garrod (Oxford, 1906)  
 \_\_\_\_\_, L'Achilleide, ed. Silvia Jannaccone (Florence, 1950)  
 \_\_\_\_\_, Achilleis, ed. Alfred Klotz (Leipzig, 1926)  
 \_\_\_\_\_, Achilléide, ed. Jean Méheust (Paris, 1971)  
 \_\_\_\_\_, Achilleid, tr. J. H. Mozley (London, 1957)  
 \_\_\_\_\_, Achilleide, ed. Antonio Traglia (Rome, 1967)

DESCRIPTION. Small quarto, on parchment, written in Italy (Bologna? Verona?) ca. 1400-1415 : 207 X 155 (144 X 92) mm. : collation, ii, 1-2<sup>8</sup>, 3<sup>7</sup>, iii = 23 ff. + v : 26 long lines ruled in dry point on the hair side : flesh sides out : catch-words in bottom of lower margin. Modern gold-tooled vellum, rather warped.

2° folio: Ionium egeumque

Fol. 1 (argument): Primus semiferi matrem deducit ad antra . . .  
 Atque super cenam docta testudine cantat beg. Magnanimum eacidem  
 formidatamque tonanti Ends (f. 23<sup>v</sup>) Aura silet . pupis currens ad  
 littora uenit; (colophon) Finit liber quintus et ultimus Achilleidos  
 Statij quem scripsit Iohannes Francisci Iohannis de Sancto Quiricho;

SCRIPT. Written in a competent Italian gothic book-hand with seminal humanistic characteristics. The letters are airy and

uncluttered, although a certain tendency to jerkiness can be described. The script shows interesting affinities with the script used by Coluccio Salutati and some of his associates at Florence. For example, final s is either long or, if of the round form, extended considerably below the line (Coluccio, however, also uses the plain round form). The bowl of g is open, uncial d has a long ascender, z-shaped r is frequent, i is dotted (when necessary) with a thin stroke, and N often has a semi-Roman form. The spellings michi and nichil are preferred, and cedilla'd e is used instead of the diphthong. These similarities seem too striking to be the result of coincidence; it is clear, however, that neither the text nor the annotations are the work of Salutati himself. The form of a is quite different and without Salutati's prominent horizontal stroke at the top; single-compartment a hardly occurs except in the notes. The middle stroke of S is slanting, not horizontal, and Salutati's peculiar D does not occur. Enim is abbreviated eĩm and -bus is bʔ, not b3. The notation "al" written before a marginal variant is different from the way Salutati makes his and the abbreviation stroke through the l is often extended to make the bowl of the a.

This manuscript is also noteworthy for having its pages ruled with a dry point. This was the usual method of ruling in the earlier Middle Ages, and was done with a needle or similar tool, which, being pressed against a straight-edge and run across the sheet, produced a small furrow on that side and a corresponding ridge on the other; dry-point ruling had the advantage over other types of ruling in that it was not terribly noticeable and could

not be rubbed away; since only one side of a page had to be ruled, half the labor of ruling was saved. The scribe found it easiest to see the little ridges and furrows when his light source was directly in front of him. Dry-point ruling began to be replaced by ruling with lead or silver-point (and later, ink) about the 11th century, but never completely died out and made a comeback in Italy in the 15th century because the humanists generally preferred it (the Carolingian manuscripts they took as models for their book-hands used this sort of ruling, and they seemed to feel it had a greater savor of antiquity). It is said that Niccolò Niccoli was one of the principal boosters of dry-point ruling. The presence of dry-point ruling in this manuscript is probably due to humanistic influence, though this cannot be definitely asserted.

Fruitful comparison may be made between this codex and U.C. MS. 187, which contains a work of Salutati's copied in gothic script about 1405 or so; the marginal notations of this manuscript, though gothic, show many of the same humanistic modifications as the script of MS. 704 and indeed rather resemble Salutati's own handwriting. The parchment of the two manuscripts is similar as well, both apparently being goatskin.

DECORATION. On f. 1 is a 5-line initial Lombardic M, counter-charged red and blue, with red and blue line-work. At the beginning of each of the other four books, as well as at the beginning of the verse "argument" at the head of f. 1, are 3-line red or blue Lombardic caps, with blue or red line-work in the Italian style.

Other verse "arguments," and "chapters" of books, begin with one- or two-line plain red or blue Lombardic caps. The initial capital of each line of verse has been stained yellow. Headings to books, and paragraph marks, have not been filled in.

PROVENANCE. Obtained (1929) from C. E. Rappaport, Rome.