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Impersonating Hypsipyle: Statius' *Thebaid* and Medieval Lament¹

Carole Newlands

- 1 In 1936, a period in which interest in Statius was generally at a low point, C. S. Lewis in *The Allegory of Love* drew attention to the *Thebaid* as innovative in its development of personification and influential on the course of subsequent narrative poetry, particularly medieval romance.² Statius' epic has often been faulted for its episodic nature and digressiveness; Lewis, writing from the perspective of a medievalist, remarked that medieval readers and writers were drawn to the *Thebaid* precisely for its "departure from the heroic tension" and its pioneering penchant for narrative interweaving. Lewis cites Books 4 to 5 as offering particular instances of these elements of the *Thebaid* that the Middle Ages found valuable.³ These are the books of the so-called "Hypsipyle digression," in which the Argive army stops its advance on Thebes to listen to queen Hypsipyle narrate at length the story of her exile from Lemnos (*Theb.* 5.48-548); during the narration her foster child Archemorus is accidentally killed by a snake, thus occasioning further delay to the war with funeral rites and games (*Theb.* 4.646-7.104). Statius' epic is extraordinary for this prominent use of a female narrator who, moreover, like Aeneas in book 2 of the *Aeneid* with his account of the fall of Troy, can spellbind her audience with her compressed epic tale of the Lemnian massacre.⁴
- 2 Hypsipyle was an important figure for the development of new forms of narrative poetry. The *Thebaid* however was itself never subject to the systematic allegorical treatment accorded Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in the Middle Ages.⁵ Hypsipyle's role in the *Thebaid*, as I shall argue in this article, also suggests that the Middle Ages understood Statius' epic as antiquity's great poem of lament, a genre strongly gendered as feminine. Dante describes the *Thebaid* as tragic epic, focused on women's grief, "the cruel warfare of Jocasta's twofold sorrow" (*Purg.* 22.55-6).⁶ Indeed the *Thebaid* played an important role in the burgeoning Latin lyric tradition where medieval writers mined Statius' epics as a source of powerful, dramatic speech. In the famous 11th C poetry collection of medieval Latin lyric known as the *Cambridge Songs*, Hypsipyle's lament for her dead foster child Archemorus appears along with Argia's lament for her dead

husband Polynices, extracted directly from Statius' poem (CC 32, 29 and 31 respectively). The *Cambridge Songs*, which will serve as the focus for this article, demonstrate the interpretive and aesthetic possibilities offered by the prominence of female voice and lament in the *Thebaid*. As I shall argue in this paper, Statius' *Thebaid* provided an alternative vector to Ovidian poetry for the female voice; that is, while Ovid's *Heroides* loom large over the medieval Latin love lyric as a model of abandonment in love and victimhood, Statius' epic provided a model of female critical opposition to male-centred secular goals; it privileged the strong-minded, if suffering mother and wife, not the lovesick woman. In short, as I hope to show from this case study of its reception, the *Thebaid* contributed importantly to the burgeoning medieval tradition, both religious and secular, of female lament for untimely death.⁷

- 3 Hypsipyle's and Argia's laments in the *Cambridge Songs* fall directly into a long tradition of male impersonation of the female voice, starting with school exercises for the young. The appearance of their laments in a prestigious medieval song collection thus draws attention not only to the importance of female voice and experience in the *Thebaid*, but also to the poem's continuing potential in its reception to question conventional gender roles.⁸ Contrary to recent work on male impersonation of the female voice in classical declamation and oratory, which claims that the practice reinforced elite male bonding,⁹ I will further argue that the extraction and impersonation of female lament could in certain contexts counter the misogyny of much medieval Latin poetry, including love lyric, by conferring value on the female voice and experience.
- 4 I will begin with a few words on the intellectual and political climate in which the *Thebaid* was extracted from, read, and transformed. We have very few accounts of the impersonation of female lament, despite the importance of the practice of *ethopoeia* (impersonation) by ancient schoolboys as one of the set educational exercises known as *progymnasmata*. Kraus' study of *ethopoeia* argues that around a third of the examples of such exercises preserved in ancient authors or suggested as themes in textbooks impersonate women, mostly mythical.¹⁰ The educational system was surprisingly stable; the secular lament of Niobe for her children, for instance, remained a topic of school composition from at least the fourth century through the Renaissance.¹¹ Two examples from St. Augustine (354-430 CE) are particularly valuable for their detail and their demonstration of the continuing importance of impersonation in elite male education. In the *Confessions* (1.17), Augustine tells us that as a student he won the school prize in a declamatory competition; the set exercise required him to turn into prose Juno's angry, self-addressed speech about the Trojans (A. 1.37-49), with the aim of conveying effectively the furious emotions of the goddess.¹² He also tells us that he was forced to write school exercises in which "he wept for Dido" because she died of love (*plorare Didonem mortuam, quia se occidit ab amore*, *Conf.* 1.13). Augustine does not specify the exact Vergilian source for this exercise; he may have rehearsed Aeneas' speech to Dido in the Underworld, when Aeneas for the first time wept before her in the Mourning Fields of Women (A. 6.456-66);¹³ or he may mean that he composed and recited Anna's speech over her sister Dido's dying body (A. 4.675-85).¹⁴ Although Augustine in the *Confessions* condemned his boyhood readings of the *Aeneid* as diversions from the truth, symbols of an educational system that was closely bound up with male status and authority, his admission of weeping over his composition on Dido's death suggests a response that goes beyond delight in the rhetorical value of

female lament to a deeply emotional identification with the female reaction to Dido's death.¹⁵

- 5 Another reason for the continuing popularity of classical laments in the Middle Ages, apart from the stability of the educational system, was their alignment with the Biblical tradition of lament, which was incorporated into the liturgical life of the church. The lament of Rachel for her slaughtered children, the Old Testament type of the mourning mother (*Jeremiah xxxi.15*), was foundational for the genre and widespread in the Middle Ages.¹⁶ Subsequently the burgeoning cult of the Virgin Mary elevated the figure of the suffering mother in a period when female literacy was becoming more widespread.¹⁷ The practice of excerpting laments from classical texts seems also to have inspired the development of original secular compositions. The *Thebaid*, for instance, contributed to the growing tradition of Biblical and secular lament by generating a new poetic lament, the *Planctus* of Oedipus, which first appears in a twelfth century manuscript and tells the story of Oedipus in his own voice, giving it psychological depth.¹⁸ But it was woman's lament that was particularly prominent in this medieval genre. Excerpts from the *Thebaid*, the majority of which were female laments by wives and mothers, circulated independently from the poem, thus drawing attention to the importance of feminine experience and voice for medieval readers of the *Thebaid*. This practice of excerption and fragmentation was characteristic of medieval aesthetics.¹⁹
- 6 Our earliest evidence for such excerpts from the *Thebaid* occurs in the eleventh century collection of medieval poems known as the *Cambridge Songs*, found in a unique manuscript residing since the seventeenth century in Cambridge University Library, hence their name; the collection was made on the Continent. At some point in the eleventh century this song collection came to pre-Conquest England where the monastic scribes of St. Augustine at Canterbury made the one copy we have now; what happened to the original is unknown.²⁰ The collection is generically and metrically varied, consisting of love-songs, comic songs, celebratory and political songs, religious songs and laments, including five classical Latin laments, three of which are extracts from the *Thebaid* (29 = *Theb.* 12.325-48; 31 = *Theb.* 5.608-16; 32 = *Theb.* 12.325-35, 322-4), one from the *Aeneid* (34 = *A.* 268-83), and one from Horace (46 = *Carm.* 3.12). Aside from the classical Latin extracts, the songs reflect a continental provenance, heavily but not exclusively associated with German courts; others seem to have been written in France, Italy, and Spain.²¹ The original occasion for the individual songs must have varied widely, but medieval readers were used to mixed forms and juxtapositions. In the *Cambridge Songs* the secular and the religious, the classical and the contemporary, coexist. At a time when vernacular lyric was beginning to flourish in Europe, this collection of medieval Latin lyric remains an enormously important collection, "the most varied and substantial assemblage of Medieval Latin lyrics that is extant from the centuries between the Carolingian corpora of the ninth century and the *Carmina Burana* of the thirteenth."²² Significantly, all but one of the excerpted classical laments in the *Cambridge Songs* are spoken in a woman's voice.
- 7 The five excerpts from classical texts are interspersed among the medieval Latin lyrics towards the end of the collection; all are first person, passionate laments.²³ Aeneas recalls in grief the apparition of Hector and laments the terrible change in him (34); Horace's Neobule laments her love-sickness for a young man (46); Statius' Argia voices her sorrow over Polynices' corpse, a lament that occurs twice in the collection but with slightly different line ordering and length (29 is longer than 32); and Hypsipyle

laments over the corpse of the infant Archemorus (31). Female lament is dominant ; the three extracts from the *Thebaid* are also the longest.

- 8 In the *Cambridge Songs* Rachel's lament for her children (in the third-person, not direct speech) follows directly after the Horatian lament (47). Apart from her name, there is nothing in its opening line that directly indicates its Biblical source, for Rachel implores the stars, not God (1) : *pulsat astra planctu magno Rachel plorans pignora* (Rachel implores the stars with loud lament, weeping for her children). Furthermore, the opening words echo Vergil *Aeneid* 3.619-20 (of the Cyclops), *altaque pulsat / sidera*. The line emphasises the dramatic setting ; indeed the lament was sung in church in musical dramas at the massacre of the innocents.²⁴ The laments of Argia, and of Hypsipyle in particular, a mother weeping for her dead child, could thus have been quite smoothly accommodated to Biblical tradition. Although Ovid's *Heroides* provided a model for erotic abandonment laments of a sympathetic nature,²⁵ Statius' *Thebaid* provided the recurrent figure of the grieving mother.²⁶ The sentiments of the Biblical and classical laments moreover cohere in their recognition of the transience of earthly goods and joys.
- 9 The particular attraction of such female lament was fostered by the roles of education and of music in medieval society. In the Middle Ages excerpts from Roman poetry such as the laments from the *Thebaid* were sometimes set to music. Indeed, all the classical excerpts in *The Cambridge Songs* were most likely meant to be sung, for in other manuscripts where these same excerpts appear, they are marked with neumes, a rudimentary form of musical notation used from the early ninth century to the twelfth ;²⁷ Statius' verse was thus reconceptualised as song.²⁸ Although the excerpts are fairly short, the verbal patterning tends to the elaborate and dramatic, thus providing a flexible vehicle for melodic settings.²⁹ The second appearance of Argia's lament (32) in the *Cambridge Songs* with a slightly different arrangement of lines is perhaps to be explained by their having different melodies.³⁰ It seems that the *Thebaid* held special emotional appeal and musical possibilities ; the extracts were meant to be performed.
- 10 Ziolkowski has argued that neumed classical texts were especially associated with the schools.³¹ Reading and singing were complementary, fundamental studies for the young student.³² Curiously, while neumes were lavishly used for religious poetry, they were not generally provided for secular texts in the vernacular ; only a small but significant selection of secular classical texts was neumed. Ziolkowski argues that musical notation was provided for select secular classical texts because of the rhetorical emphasis in medieval education.³³ The available manuscript evidence shows that many of those neumed classical passages were speeches, or direct addresses, which thus reveal a fascination with sophisticated patterns of speech and a spectrum of emotions ;³⁴ these extracts were also chosen and designed to be sung.³⁵ Chanting or singing the classics in school may well have been in part a mnemonic aid for remembering the text ;³⁶ but it also taught an appreciation for the aesthetics of the classical dactylic hexameter and the melodic and performative possibilities of lament. Neumed excerpts from classical poetry therefore seem generally to have been chosen for their expressive quality. Although the reception of Latin texts was based on exclusionary practices, for Latin was generally taught in schools only to young males,³⁷ the impersonation of women's speeches, so Ziolkowski suggests, would have encouraged expressive experimentation in song.³⁸ Whereas in ancient Roman declamation moderation in speech was traditionally the ideal for the orator,³⁹ in the Middle Ages a strong musical tradition

sought out elaborate rhetorical possibilities through the excerption of dramatic speech, which thus crossed the bounds from written text to oral performance.

- 11 Impersonation was learned from an early age. As we have seen, this method of learning Latin seems to have remained remarkably stable from antiquity through the Middle Ages.⁴⁰ Although we are not well informed about what actually went on in the medieval classroom, the foundation of medieval education, the learning of correct Latin speech, seems to have been essentially dialogic and included boys' performances from an early age of various character roles in short dramatic sketches ; surviving colloquies from the late tenth and eleventh centuries teach Latin grammar and vocabulary through role-playing of figures such as a shepherd or a monk engaged in dialogue.⁴¹ At a more advanced level were the memorization and recitation of poetry, including female speech.⁴² Poetry, as Ziolkowski comments, was in the classroom as well as the choir "a performing art."⁴³
- 12 The three laments from the *Thebaid* offered great expressive, lyrical possibilities. Let us look at the extract from Hypsipyle's lament (*Cambridge Songs* 31) :

O mihi deserte natorum dulcis imago
 Archemore, o rerum et patrie solamen adempte
 seruitii decus, qui te, mea gaudia, sontes
 extinxere dei, modo quem digressa reliqui
 lasciuum et prono uexantem gramina cursu ?
 heu ubi siderei uultus ? ubi uerba ligatis
 imperfecta sonis risusque et murmura soli
 intellecta mihi ? quoties tibi Lemnon et Argos
 sueta loqui et longa somnum suadere querela.

O image of my sons, sweet to me in my exile, Archemorus, o consolation for my fate and lost country, and pride of my slavery, what harmful gods, my joy, have wiped out your life, you whom I, when I "digressed," left just moments ago playing and ruffling the grass as you crawled ? Alas, where is your starlike face ? Where are your babbling, tongue-tied words and smiles and cooings understood only by me ? How often I would speak to you of Lemnos and the Argo and lull you to sleep with my long lament.

- 13 This passage is from *Theb.* 5.608-616, the opening, most emotional part of Hypsipyle's lament as she grieves over the baby's dismembered body. The initial vocative *Archemore* and the concluding references to Lemnos and the Argo provide rudimentary clues to the background plot and the speaker's identity. In the first two lines Hypsipyle represents herself as an exile (*desert(a)e*), not as a woman abandoned by her lover, and she recalls her separation from her biological sons. Archemorus was compensation for that loss and for her slavery as an exile in a foreign land ; with great pathos she recalls the last time she saw the infant, crawling playfully among the grass. She addresses the child as if he were still alive ; repetition of the exclamation *o*, echoed in *imago*, and *Archemore*, suggests the musically expressive possibilities of these lines. Repetition of *ubi* resonates with the familiar medieval *ubi sunt* lament for the transience of all earthly beings. The second half of the extract also includes a high number of words referring to sound, *uerba, sonis, risusque, murmura, loqui, longa . . . querula* ; the -a ending, like the -o ending, lent itself to considerable melodic variation in medieval music.⁴⁴ The rhetorical devices used here, apostrophe, alliteration, assonance, particularly of "s," and short, rhetorical questions, are all features of tragic lament.⁴⁵ Considerable rhetorical power here combines with a complicated psychological reaction to the child's death. A small gloss in another manuscript explains that Hypsipyle uttered her lament over Archemorus' body after she had recovered from a swoon.⁴⁶ Hypsipyle's lament is a

mixture of grief, regret and guilt expressed at a high rhetorical pitch. The lament has been found elsewhere with musical notation in at least seven manuscripts; as a mother's lament it fits into the Biblical tradition represented most prominently by "Rachel's Lament." Significantly it does not include the following part of her speech which express a strong desire for suicide (*Theb.* 5.620-35).

- 14 This brief extract frees Hypsipyle's voice from much of the intertextual and generic weight it carries in Statius' epic. Although I use the word "extract" to indicate that Hypsipyle's speech follows the Latin of *Theb.* 5.608-16, Hypsipyle's reliving of the earlier text in a mere nine lines constitutes a new poem. The *Thebaid* is a tormented text, a bleak reflection on civil war and the corruption of power. The so-called Hypsipyle episode however is a striking, innovative feature of the epic; it spans the three central books of the twelve-book epic (*Theb.* 4.646-7.104); it features a long speech by Hypsipyle to the Argive army in the Nemean grove; and it delays the onward progress of the army and the epic. Generically the Hypsipyle episode is disruptive in Statius' poem; in part it functions to explain the origins of the Nemean games (in the death of Archemorus in the Nemean grove) and thus harkens back to aetiological poetry; it resembles an epyllion in its compressed version of the epic massacre on Lemnos that Hypsipyle provides the Argive army; it is also in part, with Hypsipyle's lamenting but also self-defensive voice, influenced by Ovid's experiment with the feminine voice in *Heroides* 6, the letter of Hypsipyle to Jason.
- 15 In *Transvestite Ventriloquism*, Harvey explores post-structuralist interest in authorial presence or absence through Renaissance texts that are voiced by female characters, although written by male authors in ways that largely attempt to erase the gender of the authorial voice. The fictional reconstruction of feminine speech substitutes for actual feminine speaking. As she argues, when a male author appropriates a female voice, that voice moreover is often subject to the author's demands and plays a key role in his intertextual rivalries.⁴⁷ So it is with Statius' Hypsipyle. She has a long textual lineage, going back at least to Euripides' *Hypsipyle*; the text of this drama is fragmentary but parts of Hypsipyle's lament for Archemorus survive. More commonly she appears as the queen of Lemnos and the lover of Jason, her roles in Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica* (1.609-910), Ovid's *Heroides* 6 and, close in time to Statius, Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* (2.242-432). Statius' Hypsipyle represents an agonistic response to tradition: she is not a willing lover of Jason (*Theb.* 5.454-7); she is not, as she appears in Valerius Flaccus' epic, a pious, exemplary woman. Statius makes Hypsipyle a complex character, not a passive love-sick female but a figure of endurance; only the sudden death of Archemorus brings her close to breaking.⁴⁸ But in making Hypsipyle's version of her trials the definitive version of her narrative, Statius coopts the female voice for his own poetic ends, to demonstrate his mastery in a complex literary tradition. At the same time, by privileging the female voice at the centre of his epic, Statius draws attention to the social and emotional cost of war, to the displaced women and families who represent the alternative face of the heroic drive for war. Although therefore gender serves the anti-heroic politics of the poem which challenge the inevitable equation of war with glory, the *Thebaid* remains an important text in its shifting of the conventionally marginal status of women in ancient epic to a position of greater prominence and authority; and this, as I argue here, becomes an important feature of its reception.

- 16 In the *Cambridge Songs*, Hypsipyle is not a self-referential figure as she was for Statius. Goldberg has argued that the male poet's voice is frequently echoed in women's voices, thus disrupting the fiction of transparent, direct speech.⁴⁹ In the *Cambridge Songs*, however, Hypsipyle's lament is detached from its epic framework, and detached furthermore from her "master's voice," from the obvious presence of the male author behind feminine mimesis. The extract from the speech appears in the *Cambridge Songs* in epigrammatic form, a mere nine lines ; as I said above, it constitutes a new poem. In a concise form of ring composition, the last word *querula* defines her speech, with the final long "a" evocatively echoing the opening "o." Coded references to Lemnos and the Argo summarily identify Hypsipyle's mythological heritage as loyal daughter, queen, and mother of Jason's children, a shorthand for the dramatic character behind the speaking voice. With the dimming of the male authorial presence, her words of lament emerge as sharp, poignant, brittle, in a form that memorializes loss. Extracts from classical Latin poetry such as Hypsipyle's lament assumed new, independent life as a potent expression of female grief, still fictionalized to be sure, but unmediated by the epic, extradiegetic narrator and no longer structured as "digressive" or in service to a heroic ideology. Removed from its embedding in the masculine narrative of civil war, and included in a prestigious song book, Hypsipyle's voice temporarily loses its status as marginal discourse.
- 17 Of course, as Cerquiglini argues, lament in medieval poetry, including in the vernacular, is a signature speech-act for the female voice ; expected literary formulae convey female distress and shape an image of the female that male authors would have found familiar and comforting.⁵⁰ Certainly in the *Cambridge Songs* Hypsipyle and Argia speak in the time-honoured roles of bereaved mother and wife (Argia represents herself as a mother-to-be at the end of CC 29). But these laments from the *Thebaid* found in the *Cambridge Songs* are far from conventional. In a few short lines, but with marked changes in emotional register, Hypsipyle sketches with great pathos a complex personal history and set of relationships disrupted by savage, illegal wars : the first two lines alone convey the information that she laments a foster child, that she is separated from her own children, and that she is in exile. Argia's lament over her husband's body (CC 29, 32) likewise moves swiftly in a concise form through a range of emotions, accusation of her husband for his wasted life, for his excessive ambition, horror at the state of the body and nature of his death, as well as grief for her bereavement. CC 29 ends with some consolation in the birth of a future son, an allusion to motherhood that is omitted in the shorter version of her lament (CC 32 = *Theb.* 12.325-36, 322-4), where Argia's voice emphasizes instead the waste and transience of Polynices' life rather than personal pain. This alteration of her lament is probably not owing only to the desire for different musical settings, as Ziolkowski suggests, but rather represents an interest in the reshaping of the original Latin text both for dramatic effect and epigrammatic coherence.⁵¹ The concluding addition of three earlier lines from the start of her speech in the *Thebaid* (322-4) to the end of the extract helps further the emphasis on Polynices' tragic downfall and futile overreach ; it ends, as with Hypsipyle's lament, with an epigrammatic punchline, *aspicio talisque tuis occurro triumphis* ? (do I in this state see you at your triumph ?). The final word *triumphis* is ironical, indeed almost sarcastic in its emphasis on the drastic inversion of heroic goals. The female voice is scarcely comforting for a male audience, but in keeping with Christian insistence, questions the false lures of material goals in a dramatic form highly charged by Argia's personal circumstances : the verb *aspicio* ("I see") invites her audience to visualize her

destitution, the effects of false ambition and wrongful war. In their separation from obvious male authorial control and an overarching narrative context, these female laments can claim mimetic authority as a powerful expression of female suffering inflected by the Christian wisdom of *transitio mundi*; they assume a radically different form in a distinct cultural environment.

- 18 Indeed, while lament may be a conventional sign of femininity, the extracts from the *Thebaid* become even more complex when we consider that they were reconceptualised as song. In the schools adolescent males would have voiced these laments, thus taking on the persona of a woman and counterfeiting their voices with their own unbroken tones; like Achilles they would have assumed temporarily a female role, singing like women, an act of “transvestite ventriloquism.”⁵² In the Middle Ages Statius in the commentary tradition was widely regarded as a major *auctor*, in the medieval sense of a writer who represents learned authority.⁵³ In the sung lyric tradition, “Statius” disappears behind the woman’s voice, while the gender of the internal speaker becomes more important than the gender of the author; the young singer would literally reproduce the female voice with his unbroken tonalities, thus blurring the bounds between genders, and between fiction and reality.
- 19 Did this mean that male sympathies and imaginations would have been enlarged by impersonation of the female voice? While critics have generally agreed that female speech gave voice to emotions that were usually suppressed in public life as threatening to fully developed masculinity, in the classroom such emotions could be safely licensed and contained by a pedagogical system devoted to inculcating masculine ideals.⁵⁴ Gleason has shown that for ancient Greek and Roman society feminine habits and speech were deeply threatening to the maintenance of firm gender boundaries.⁵⁵ So too it seems that in the Middle Ages such impersonation, despite the long pedagogical authority behind it, occasioned clerical opposition at times out of a continuing fear that the practice was effeminate; there was the fear too that impersonation, despite its institutional containment, could arouse forbidden erotic feelings in the male listeners for adolescent boys.⁵⁶ Critical studies of impersonation therefore have tended to use female speech as a foil for exploring its rhetorical functions and possible erotic effects in a competitive male society.
- 20 An interesting example demonstrating the complex effects of the performance of female lament on its audience is found in a poem from the late eleventh century by Marbod, bishop of Rennes (close in time to the *Cambridge Songs*, therefore); Woods, who prints and discusses the poem, argues that it supports the claim that exercises in impersonation reinforced male elitism.⁵⁷ Entitled *de molesta recreatione* (about my uneasy recreation), the poem’s male narrator describes his feelings on watching a boy perform a woman’s lament over her dead lover:⁵⁸

Ad sonitum cithare solitus sum me recreare,
 Pellere sollicite quotiens volo tedia vitae.
 Est citharista meus non ipse puer Cithereus,
 Sed puer ipse deo paulominus a Cithereo,
 Cuius dulce melos transcendit acumine celos.
 Concinit hic odam misero de milite quodam,
 Cuius amica gemit, quod eum sibi casus ademit.
 Vulnera sunt mentis mihi singula verba gementis,
 Tacta sonora chelis replet atria tota querelis,
 Ad cithare questum fit cor mihi flebile mestum.
 Membra iacentis humo iam pallida iam sine fumo

Virgo levare parat, quem lancea lata forarat.
 Corpus ad exertis cadit amplexura lacertis,
 In medio nisu sine mente fit et sine visu,
 Vixque refecta mora crudis secat unguibus ora,
 Inmoritur terre, loquitur que nolo referre.

.....
 Hec puer effigiat, quasi res, non cantio fiat,
 Dum citharizatur, plus quam satis est, imitatur
 Virginis amplexus fidium vocisque reflexus.
 Transit in affectus varios mihi mobile pectus
 Meque pati credo, quicquid sonat a citharedo.
 Sic michi pro ludo succedit sollicitudo.
 Que dum me ledit, res in contraria cedit,
 Grata fit ingratus recreatio nam cruciatus.

I like to relax to the sound of the lyre, to dispel life's stresses whenever I wish. My lyre-player is not the Cytherean boy [the god Apollo] but this boy is not much different from the Cytherean whose sweet melody transcends heaven with its piercing notes. This boy sang an ode about a certain wretched soldier whose girlfriend mourned because chance took him from her. Each word of her lament wounds my mind; the playing of the sonorous lyre fills the halls with its complaint, and my heart becomes grieved at its sad sound. Now pale, now without breath, the virgin tries to raise the limbs of her lover lying on the ground, pierced by a broad lance. With arms outstretched about to embrace the body, she falls; in the middle of her effort she is without mind and sight; scarcely restored by this pause, she scratches her face with rough nails, she starts to die on the earth, she speaks things I do not want to say. . . These things the boy impersonates as if they were reality, not a song. While he plays, the entwining of lyre and voice imitates beyond strict necessity the young woman's embraces. My fickle heart moves through various emotions and I believe that I suffer whatever I hear from the lyre player. Thus indeed care befell me instead of play. With my pain a paradox occurs, for welcome recreation becomes unwelcome torture.

- 21 This poem describes the performance of lament as highly dramatic; not only the boy's voice but also his extravagant bodily gestures convey a woman's extreme emotion, including fainting (11-12); we might remember the gloss on Hypsipyle's lament that instructs the performer and audience to imagine that Hypsipyle utters these words directly after she has woken from a swoon.⁵⁹ Gunderson has argued that Roman discussion of effective oratorical delivery recognised a fine, troubling line between the actor and the orator, a line that declamation and impersonation also blurs; "the adjectives *fortis* and *virilis*, which are unambiguously masculine, are set up as virtual antonyms to the stage and its actors."⁶⁰ But in Marbod's poem the boy's feminine persona paradoxically weakens the male narrator of the poem, who feels all the emotions that the boy performs (26-7). The "wounds" that he feels (8) suggest the common metaphor of the pain of both grief and sexual arousal; *cruciatus* and the harsh sounds of the final line suggest that he has become the slave of passion by the end.
- 22 The poem interestingly suggests two levels of response to female impersonation, critical distance and emotional identification. On one level the narrator/audience always knows that the boy is performing a role; the description of the boy as very beautiful (3-5) and the final emphasis on "torture" suggests the arousal of sexual desire by the boy's performance (26-30). At the same time, the boy's highly wrought performance metamorphoses him into a woman; this is marked by the shift in the grammatical gender from masculine to feminine at line 11-12 (*pallida* / *virgo*), followed by the enactment of conventional feminine gestures of grief, swooning and scratching

the face with fingernails (14-15). Absorbed in the illusion (which is “more than enough,” *plus quam satis*, 24, that is, ultrarealistic), the narrator seems to suffer all the emotions that the boy evokes, to empathise in other words with the suffering of the “woman.” The boy player and the speaking character occupy separate orders of reality at the beginning and end of the poem ; but with the narrator’s temporary identification with the feelings of the female character, these orders merge. The initial play on *citharista*, *Cithareus*, demonstrates more than the poet’s rhetorical skill ; rather, the verbal similarity cleverly suggests both the physical and musical similarity between the boy and the “long-haired” god Apollo, known for his androgynous beauty and brilliance with the lyre. The pun thus anticipates the gender ambiguity on which the poem is predicated.

23 This lyric poem demonstrates the prestige attached to skilled impersonation which, as the *Cambridge Songs* also suggest, was learned in schools but became a popular form of musical entertainment outside the walls of a monastic community ; the narrator of Marbod’s poem is seeking relaxation through musical entertainment in perhaps the context of an episcopal court (*atria*, 9). But the poem seems to me to demonstrate more than possible anxiety about the potential erotic effect of the performance of lament on a male audience and the consequent challenge to essentialised notions of masculinity and femininity ; indeed, rather than demonstrating anxiety, the poet seems to delight in the possibility of play upon gender ambiguity. Moreover, although the narrator’s identification with the woman’s suffering certainly demonstrates the instability of gender boundaries, it is uncertain whether he is aroused by a person that he temporarily believes to be a woman, as the grammatical shift to the feminine gender suggests, or by the boy acting out the woman, or, in a situation that plays with illusion, by both ? The poem blurs the boundaries between sexes and between fiction and reality. But despite the rhetorical playfulness of the poem, what particularly interests me about this poem is how it conveys the enormous power of female lament when performed by a skilled boy musician to the extent that during the performance, at any rate, his audience could imaginatively identify with the deep emotions of a tragic woman.⁶¹

24 Generally, however, the performance of female speech in the schools has been regarded, rather reductively in my view, as an exercise that furthered misogyny and male elitism.⁶² Studies of Roman declamatory practice have been influential for medievalists’ thinking about the social and educational role of impersonation. For instance, Bloomer has argued that male identification with a woman in Roman declamation reinforced traditional social hierarchies and gender roles by asserting the exclusive right of the male elite to control public speech and learn to command.⁶³ He represents declamatory practice as a kind of Oedipal contest : “declamation thus does not simply mimic gendered speech types but represents the right to speak in gendered terms . . . thus declamation is no romantic quest for genuine voice, speaking for those denied expression, but more like a jousting among the male elite for the right to speak. What stands against it is not some other genre, or women’s speech or servile, vulgar frankness, but the silence imposed by paternal speech.”⁶⁴ Woman’s speech in this view therefore was important only as an anti-model of elite, masculine controlled discourse. Woods, a major authority on impersonation in the medieval classroom, holds a higher opinion of the value of female speech ; like Ziolkowski, she emphasises its rhetorical and affective attractiveness in a literary and pedagogical tradition that coded women as highly emotional. However, she has also argued that impersonation possibly

furthered gender differentiation rather than creating empathy between boys and women.⁶⁵ Although boy performers shared an affinity with women not only in voice but also in social standing, since both were relatively powerless within a patriarchal order, Woods argues that such shared powerlessness was only temporary since boys acted out emotions that, she assumes, they would not experience in real adult life.⁶⁶

- 25 Common to such arguments is the assumption that the representation of feminine speech was strictly emotional, and that talking like women did not mean empathizing with them.⁶⁷ As I argue here, however, the *Thebaid* offers another approach for looking at feminine speech, as highly wrought, to be sure, but offering valuable alternative perspectives on male ideals; the extracts, while rich in lyrical and dramatic expression, also contain that richness in epigrammatic form, dignifying women's suffering and demanding that their voices be heard and attended to. In their reception, detached from a manipulative male authorial presence, and sung too by ambiguously gendered voices, these extracts offered access to a heightened view of female experience, dignified moreover by the tradition of Biblical lament. Skinner has argued that in the Greco-Roman world "identification with emotionally prodigal figures" offered men "a channel for imaginative escape" from social and political pressures and the chance for the development of a more capacious, more generous, concept of adult masculinity.⁶⁸ And perhaps, I would add, to a fuller understanding of adult femininity.
- 26 Indeed, in certain respects, Roman declamation can only be a partial model for talking about female impersonation in the Middle Ages. First of all, Roman declamation was part of an elite training dedicated to producing orators and civic leaders, although our extant texts suggest that this genre was not as narrowly competitive as Bloomer, for instance, suggests but, importantly, had a broadly humane basis in that it explored ethical concepts through the moral contradictions that its cases exposed.⁶⁹
- 27 Second, declamation assumed a male audience. In the Middle Ages, female impersonation took place in schools, it took place in church on feast days and in popular dramatic performances such as Mystery plays, and it took place in secular society in performances at episcopal and royal courts. The context of the *Cambridge Songs* was not only educational but courtly. Even although our sole surviving manuscript was copied in the scriptorium at Canterbury, the collection seems to represent a connoisseur's poetry or music book.⁷⁰ It was possibly used in monastic communities for its musical qualities but also at a court, where minstrels provided popular entertainment and women would have been in the audience. The diverse nature of the song collection itself, with its mixture of religious, secular and classical songs, its exploration of love and different voices, clearly also suggests a diverse audience.⁷¹
- 28 Interestingly, England at the time that the *Cambridge Songs* probably came to Canterbury had a powerful queen, Edith, who had been well educated in several languages at Wilton Abbey and seems to have been an active royal patron of literature.⁷² It is possible therefore that female sponsorship was behind the arrival of the *Cambridge Songs* to pre-Conquest Anglo-Saxon England. Desmond has shown that the women of Anglo-Saxon England had a good deal more authority and education than their continental counterparts at this time.⁷³ The reign of Edward the Confessor and his queen Edith (1042-65) was one of flourishing cultural activity. England had close political, ecclesiastical and intellectual links with the continent; monks and scholars travelled freely across the Channel. Edward and his wife Edith were highly educated,

cultured rulers ; the court was closely tied to Canterbury where the *Cambridge Songs* were copied. Thus the court of Edward and Edith may well have provided the cultural impetus for the transmission of the *Cambridge Songs* from the Continent to England. We know too that Statius' epic circulated in England at this time. A *Thebaid* was owned by bishop Leofric, a close friend of Edward and Edith.⁷⁴ Such a possession was not an anomaly ; the eighth-century scholar Alcuin mentions a "Statius" in his library at York ; and four manuscripts of the *Thebaid* from pre-Conquest England are still extant.⁷⁵ The same period in France saw the emergence around 1150 of the first vernacular romance in the Medieval Ages, the *Roman de Thèbes*, an imaginative prose rewriting of the *Thebaid* linked to the Plantagenet court of Henry II and the powerful literary patron Eleanor of Aquitaine.⁷⁶ In the period represented by the *Cambridge Songs*, the *Thebaid* was a major, influential text.

- 29 While excerpted laments flourished in the classroom, they also, as the *Cambridge Songs* and Marbod's poem show, had independent life outside monastic walls where women, as well as men of different social ranks, would have constituted the audience. The highly educated Queen Edith and her female courtiers probably would have responded to Hypsipyle's lament for her lost child in a profoundly different way from a clerical audience. Shakespearean scholars have also shed light on possible audience reactions to female impersonation ; probably more so than in a medieval court, the audiences for Shakespeare's cross-dressing plays were socially and culturally diverse. Orgel, for instance, has argued that the effects on the audience of boy actors playing women's roles on the Elizabethan stage cannot be reduced to a single response such as same-sex arousal ; instead, there was a broad range of attitudes on the part of women as well as men.⁷⁷ It is important therefore to recognize that the ideological and affective consequences of *listening* to female lament and watching it being performed would have been different for different social groups ; and it certainly would have been different from simply reading female lament. Despite the longevity of the Roman model of education, the practice of declamation does not adequately explain the possible, multiple functions and effects of medieval impersonated lament. We thus should not foreclose the possibility that impersonation, both in its performance and its reception, could have sometimes fostered in both men and women the imaginative understanding and even appreciation of powerful, valid emotion coded as feminine.
- 30 Critical studies of medieval Latin lyric, and indeed of Roman declamation, have generally in common an understanding of women's voices as representative of passive femininity. This may well be often true of love lyric. But in the Middle Ages, as we have seen, classical lament flourished side by side with Biblical lament, which was believed to derive directly from lived experience. It was predicated moreover not on perceived female hysteria and weakness but on female strength and spirituality ; in this period too the cult of the Virgin Mary began to flourish, and it generated a rich tradition of lament that sought, through rhetorical and musical expression, to validate the heroic and spiritual significance of maternal suffering and experience.⁷⁸
- 31 Statius' *Thebaid* was therefore an ideal text for exploring new possibilities for the female voice in this transformative period of the eleventh century, which was marked by negotiation between written and oral traditions.⁷⁹ As I have argued here, the extracts from the *Thebaid* that are preserved in the *Cambridge Songs* show women of authority placed in unusual situations and almost at the limits of endurance ; they are emotional, to be sure, but also powerful. Keith's study of gender in Roman epic has

shown that in its representation of women, the *Thebaid* offers an exception to the norm of passive femininity;⁸⁰ the epic has three powerful, vocal queens, Hypsipyle, Jocasta, and Argia, two of whom appear in the *Cambridge Songs* in excerpted lament; Jocasta's speeches to her sons also circulated independently in medieval transmission. In its treatment of women's lament, Statius' *Thebaid* differs markedly from Vergil's *Aeneid* which expresses the conventional fear that women's laments are dangerous. The sole maternal lament in the *Aeneid*, that of Euryalus' mother, is represented as threatening to virility and Roman destiny; when her speech lamenting her dead son makes Aeneas' soldiers want to abandon the fight, she is quickly removed from the public eye and from the poem (A. 9.498-502). By contrast, in the *Thebaid* lament plays a major role and often inspires action, including positive acts of resistance to violence; Bacchic frenzy however is not the only recourse for grieving women. In the *Thebaid* Hypsipyle engineers her father's escape from murderous Lemnos and gives the epic's lengthiest speech, delaying the war (*Theb.* 5.48-548); Argia appropriates much of Antigone's traditional role by independently seeking her husband's corpse at great personal risk (*Theb.* 12.177-463).⁸¹ In addition, Jocasta, who traditionally commits suicide when she learns the truth of Oedipus' identity, survives in Statius' epic to attempt twice to forestall the sacrilegious fight to the death between her two sons (*Theb.* 7.470-563; 11.315-53).⁸² Statius' *Thebaid* thus provided exemplars of distressed but powerful queens and mothers, Hypsipyle, Jocasta and Argia, willing to act for their cities and families, and who have strong speaking voices against the madness of civil war.

- 32 The *Thebaid* was thus a particularly influential text for the Middle Ages since it did not sideline female lament, as Vergil did in the *Aeneid*, but explored it. In extracts the parameters of femininity could be imaginatively explored outside the constraints of the master narrative, while imposing their own epigrammatic limits on emotionally dramatic expression. The circulation of the epic's female laments in the Middle Ages merged Theban mythology with Christian belief. These extracts thus suggests an interest not only in their rhetorical possibilities--though obviously these were important-- but also in their articulation of a concept of female heroism tied not to virginity, as was traditional, but to motherhood.
- 33 In conclusion I have argued here that studies of the female voice in medieval Latin lyric should take into account the significance of Statius' *Thebaid* as a vehicle for the feminine voice distinct from that represented by the Ovidian tradition. Statius' epic was an important poem not only in the development of romance, a genre that developed from female sponsorship and from an increase in female literacy, but also in the development of female lament for untimely death, of mimetic discourse of a strong-minded female voice. In the Middle Ages at least six excerpts circulated from the *Thebaid*, all laments or complaints of some form, and they are predominantly female; apart from the laments of Argia and Hypsipyle found in the *Cambridge Songs*, there is Jocasta's speech before the battle between her two sons (*Theb.* 11.329-33, 343, 346-7), and a short extract from the end of Argia's lament to Polynices (*Theb.* 12.334-52). The two speeches in the male voice are Tydeus' dying command for Melanippus' head (*Theb.* 8.736-41), and Polynices' lament for Tydeus (*Theb.* 9.49-62), an unusual masculine lament. In terms of appearance in surviving manuscripts, the laments of Hypsipyle and Argia outweigh the men's speeches in number.⁸³ As selections from the epic that are reconstituted as new texts and new songs, these laments in their prevalence suggest a disposition to reading the *Thebaid* as a poem that is not only rich in rhetorical possibilities but that privileges and gives validity to female experience. In the Middle

Ages the *Thebaid* was heard as passionate, beautiful song that delved into tragic female experience, particularly maternal experience, with great rhetorical and emotional power and authority, producing undoubtedly diverse effects depending on the context of performance and the composition of its audience. This aspect of the poem's reception is a fitting development for the author who in the *Achilleid* in particular explored the flexibility of gender roles.

- 34 Studies of ancient Roman declamation, a genre which addressed an exclusively male audience, have focused on masculine subjectivity. In the Middle Ages the female voice in classical texts assumes new vitality and authority in different cultural contexts, particularly in a period that saw the development of religious female lament and the rise of the cult of the Virgin Mary, along with the emergence of powerful, educated queens such as Edith of England. When women's voices were detached from their master text and the strong presence of a male author, and when sung too, perhaps, by unbroken male voices, the fiction of authentic female speech would have been powerfully enhanced. It is thus important not to efface the woman in these laments, whether performed in classroom or court, not to invalidate the experiences of motherhood and marriage or subordinate them to an exclusive emphasis on idealised masculinity. At the very least I have tried here to show that Statius' *Thebaid* was an important text for the development within medieval Latin poetry of a powerful, authoritative female voice that is independent of the Ovidian amatory tradition ; in the excerpted laments from the *Thebaid* in the *Cambridge Songs*, the marginal discourse of women becomes, temporarily at least, central.

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NOTES

1. This article develops from a section of chapter 5 in my (2102) book on Statius. I wish to thank Jacqueline Fabre-Serris for giving me the opportunity to develop the ideas first expressed there.
2. Lewis (1936) 48-56. On the recontextualisation of Statius' epic as romance see Newlands (2012) 131-5; the first vernacular romance was based on the *Thebaid*, the Old French *Roman de Thèbes* (c. 1150).
3. Lewis (1936) 56.
4. On the importance of Hypsipyle as narrator in Statius' *Thebaid* see Newlands (2012) 40-4.
5. The pseudo-Fulgentian allegorical commentary *super Thebaiden* was probably a twelfth century anomaly; see Hays (2002). As Lewis (1936) 50-2 noted, in the *Thebaid* the gods too act as virtual personifications; Mars for instance has no other interest outside war.
6. Modern critics likewise have responded to the prevalence of lament in the *Thebaid*. See for instance Fantham (1999) 232: "the *Thebaid* conveys the message that the "grief" is greater than the glory. There is no glory in this war. These heroes have died for nothing. There is no new liberty, no heroic code of values, to celebrate: there is only a tale of destruction willed by the gods as punishment for humankind. Statius' poem goes a long way to becoming the negation of epic."
7. On the influence of Ovid's *Heroides* on medieval love poetry see Schotter (1981); Dronke (1984) 84-106.
8. Heslin (2005) demonstrates the centrality of gender to the narrative dynamics of the *Achilleid*. The *Thebaid* has so far not received comparable treatment though Keith (2000) and Augoustakis (2010) offer important studies.
9. See note 56 below.
10. Kraus (2007).
11. Woods (2002) 286-8.
12. See the discussion of Augustine's declamations in Woods (2002) 284-7; also Kraus (2007) 458-9. On women's speeches performed by boys in the medieval classroom see Kraus (2009) who offers valuable insight into the links with Roman and late antique practice; Woods (2009) examines glosses to understand medieval classroom practice.
13. O'Donnell (2002) 79 (on *Conf.* 1.13.22) notes that, in a later reference to this exercise on Dido's death, the words *extinctam ferroque extrema secutam* directly quote from *Aeneid* 6.457, where Aeneas wept (455) as he addressed Dido in the Underworld.
14. Kraus (2007) 459.
15. It is significant that Aeneas finally weeps in the Fields of Mourning (A. 6.455), and is thus temporarily assimilated with the heartbroken women who inhabit this melancholy part of the Underworld. On Augustine's affective response to Dido's death see Desmond (1994) 73-9. Desmond argues that for Augustine Dido is paradigmatic of the seductive allure of classical education and illustrative of the conjoint need for disciplined sexuality and reading practices.

16. Stevens (1986) 351-61; Ziolkowski (1994) 304.
17. Dronke (1992) 457-89 discusses the rise of laments associated with Mary the mother of Jesus and Mary Magdalena in the twelfth century, the same period in which laments for Dido become popular. See the following note 18 below. Desmond (1990) points out that late Anglo-Saxon England, where the *Cambridge Songs* were copied, was notable for its educated women.
18. The *Planctus* of Oedipus discussed and edited by Clogan (1970). Free-standing laments (*planctus*) of Dido became immensely popular in the Middle Ages in the century after the *Cambridge Songs*. For instance, the *Planctus* of Dido, a lament for her abandonment by Aeneas, occurs in the next major collection of medieval Latin poetry, the twelfth century *Carmina Burana*. See Desmond (1994) 49-50.
19. Ziolkowski (2007) 189.
20. On the provenance of the songs and their manuscript see Ziolkowski (1994) xxxi-xxxix.
21. The entire manuscript, however, into which the *Cambridge Songs* were bound, contained Christian Latin poetry and works by predominantly early English authors. On the contents of the manuscript see Rigg and Wieland (1975); Gibson, Lapidge and Page (1985).
22. Ziolkowski (1994) xviii.
23. Ziolkowski (1994) xxvi-xxx points out that while it is clear where the *Cambridge Songs* start in their manuscript, it is not clear where they end. He advocates considerably extending the standard 49 poem collection (Strecker, 1926) by the addition of Boethian *metra* that were part of the manuscript; these are included in his edition.
24. Ziolkowski (1994) 304.
25. The *Planctus* of Dido, a century later than the *Cambridge Songs*, is based on Ovid's *Heroides* VII as well as on *Aeneid* IV. See Dronke (1992) 431-56; Desmond (1994) 48-50; Ziolkowski (1994) xxxi-xxxix.
26. On the importance of the mother figure in the *Thebaid* see the discussion of Statius' Hypsipyle, Jocasta and Argia by Augoustakis (2010) 30-91.
27. Ziolkowski (1994) 20.
28. Ziolkowski (2007) 36. No neumed classics are extant however before the tenth century.
29. Stevens (1986) 154-5.
30. Ziolkowski (1994) 273.
31. Ziolkowski (2007) 32-3.
32. Riché (1999) 225; 240-2.
33. Ziolkowski (2007) 143-72.
34. Ziolkowski (2004) 116-17 points out for instance that the speeches of Dido are "supremely complex" in both prosody and psychology.
35. Ziolkowski (2004) 112. See also his appendix of classical speeches with medieval musical notation, 119-26.
36. Ziolkowski (2007) 144 suggests that one function of neuming was to facilitate recollection of the text by associating it with music.
37. On the exclusion of women from learning and reading classical languages see Desmond (1994) 67-73.
38. Ziolkowski (2007) 212. Ziolkowski (1994) lii-liv suggests that the songs of the *Cambridge* collection were chosen for their musical performability.
39. Gleason (1995) 103-121.
40. E.g. Ziolkowski (2009) 159.
41. Orme (2006) 44-6; Gwara (1996); Riché (1999) 228-9. Kraus (2009) 64 points out that we know very little about the day to day pedagogical experience in the medieval classroom. Since many classroom exercises were performed orally or were recorded on perishable materials such as wax tablets or wood, they have not left material traces.

42. Kraus (2007) 457 suggests that exercises in female speech were set at an advanced stage and were appealing for their rhetorical difficulty.
43. Ziolkowski (2009) 160. See also Woods and Copeland (2009) 389: "memorization, recitation, imitation and translation, of increasingly longer Latin texts, sometimes communally, individually, or competitively, were core methods of the classroom."
44. Some of the *Cambridge Songs* discuss music history and theory; e.g. 10,12, 21, 45. See Ziolkowski (1994) xli.
45. See Barchiesi (1978). It is probably not irrelevant that Statius was admired in the Middle Ages for the loveliness of his spoken verse; the etymology of what was believed to be his *cognomen*, Surculus, was *sursum* (*canens*), for he was believed to have a pleasant and deep voice in recitation; see Anderson (2009) 2.
46. Ziolkowski (2007) 215-17.
47. See Harvey (1992) 116-39.
48. See Newlands (2012) 40-44.
49. Goldberg (1986) 12-13.
50. Cerquiglini (1986).
51. Ziolkowski (1994) 273.
52. The term is Harvey's (1992).
53. Minnis (1988) 10.
54. See for instance Kolve (1998).
55. Gleason (1995) 98-100.
56. Ziolkowski (2007) 197-9. On opposition to the arousing of emotions in ancient Roman declamation see Bloomer (2011) 171-2.
57. Woods (2001).
58. The title comes from the first edition of 1524; it may not be Marbod's own but the work of a moralist. The text is that of Bulst (1950) 296. The translation is my own. For a brief discussion of this poem see also Woods (2001) 144-6.
59. See note 46 above.
60. Gunderson (2000) 111-148; the quotation is from 133. In public life, however, as Barchiesi (2005) argues, the elite adult male in early imperial society had the need for a "flexible bi-facial model," incorporating the ability to shift between the two poles of military *uirtus* and courtly "softness" or, better yet, to find a middle course.
61. Gunderson (2000) elides woman with the passive homosexual (185): "Much as the orator is always prone to confusion with the actor, so is he open to confusion with a woman or the passive homosexual who serves as her conceptual isomorph." Marbod's poem--and the laments in the *Cambridge Songs*-- suggest that the woman's voice cannot be thus elided; nor should one assume that a woman's constructed identity is always or necessarily passive, as we see from the *Thebaid*.
62. See for instance Woods (2001).
63. Bloomer (1997) and (2011) 170-91; see also Gunderson (2000) 87-186; (2003) 1-58.
64. Bloomer (1997) 68; similarly Bloomer (2011) 185.
65. Woods (2001) 145-6.
66. A point also discussed by Shapiro (1994) 41-2, with reference to Elizabethan boy actors playing female roles.
67. Kraus (2007) 463-6 however argues against the common critical practice of using feminine speech as a foil for examining controlled, masculine discourse.
68. Skinner (2007) 472.
69. See for instance Beard (1993); Breij (2009).
70. Ziolkowski (1994), xxv compares the *Cambridge Songs* to the *Palatine Anthology*; as a collection, the poems may have functioned as a connoisseur's poetry or music book, though Ziolkowski concedes it could have been used in monastic communities for its rhetorical and musical

qualities; the poems themselves lack glosses. He rightly points out that we need to distinguish among reasons for the original composition of poems, reasons for which they were put in a collection, and reasons for which the *Cambridge Songs* themselves were copied in Canterbury.

71. Ziolkowski (1994) xxxix.

72. On the learning of Edith and her connections both with the court and with royal Anglo-Saxon nunneries, see Tyler (2009) esp. 152-5.

73. Desmond (1990) 584-5.

74. Lapidge (2006) 139-40.

75. Alcuin's book list appears in his poem "Bishops, Kings and saints of York" 1540-56. See Lapidge (2006) 230-33 on manuscripts of the *Thebaid* in pre-Conquest England.

76. Newlands (2012) 131-5.

77. Orgel (1996) 80-1. See also Shapiro (1994) 41-7 on the broad range of responses to boys impersonating women.

78. See note 17 above.

79. Stock (1986).

80. Keith (2000), esp. 95-100. See also Delarue (2003) 343-6.

81. Augoustakis (2010) 80-5.

82. Smolenaars (2008).

83. For a list of speeches extracted from the *Thebaid* see Ziolkowski (2004) 121-3.

RÉSUMÉS

This article argues that studies of the female voice in medieval Latin lyric should take into account the significance of Statius' *Thebaid* as a vehicle for the feminine voice distinct from that represented by the Ovidian tradition, for Statius' text makes prominent the figure of the grieving, but powerful mother rather than the lovesick, abandoned "heroine." It takes as a case study the eleventh century collection, *Cambridge Songs*, which include five laments excerpted from classical texts, three of them women's laments from Statius' *Thebaid*. Recited or sung by young students or male performers, these excerpted laments also raise the question of whether impersonation created a sympathetic understanding of female experience or reinforced gender differentiation and male elite values. This article suggests that the excerpted laments from the *Thebaid*, when detached from the epic narrative, give validity and authority to the conventionally marginal voices of women.

INDEX

Mots-clés : Cambridge Songs, female lament, impersonation, Marbod of Rennes, medieval education, medieval lyric, neumes, Ovid's *Heroides*, Roman declamation, Statius' *Thebaid*.