

Recent scholarly attention to Statius' unfinished poem, the *Achilleid*, has emphasized the fragment's blurring of generic lines between the poetry of war and sex (e.g., Hinds 2000, Feeney 2004, Heslin 2005, Parkes 2008), with a special focus on how Achilles' transvestism epitomizes an epic hero suspended between masculinity and femininity. Furthermore, as Feeney has correctly observed (2004, 103), the Trojan war as the first clash between Europe and Asia, with its Homeric and Herodotean roots, would have been a major theme in the rest of the poem, beyond the end of the extant fragment in the second book. In this paper, I shall discuss the role of the binarism Europe/Asia as a means whereby Statius further destabilizes polarities such as male/female, West/East, Roman/non-Roman. By transferring Achilles from Pelion and mapping him on to the royal court at Scyros, Statius forces the epic hero to progress from Europe to Asia in a reversal of Paris' treacherous trip from Troy to Sparta to 'steal' Helen. Paradoxically, however, whereas Asia occupies a prominent place in the literary imagination's orientalist prejudices, in the *Achilleid* it becomes the prospective locus for the realization of Achilles' manhood. Through his own cross-dressing and the rape of Deidamia, Achilles comes of age on the liminally *other* island of Scyros by replicating Paris' *rapina*. Therefore, the 'European' Achilles incorporates both the effeminate traits of the East and the warlike manliness of the West, but also he ultimately embodies the 'Asian' *other*, which he is destined to overcome and annihilate by sacrificing his own life, an ending never fulfilled but only anticipated by Statius.

From the outset of the poem, the Trojan war is viewed as a conflict between Europe and Asia: on the one hand, the gods have decided to engage the two continents in a bloody war (*ratus ordo deis miscere cruentas / Europamque Asiamque manus*, *Ach.* 1.81-82), while on the other hand, Asia fulfills the role of the 'penetrator' of Europe, when Paris ravishes Helen (*Oebalio de litore pastor / Dardanus incautas blande populatus Amyclas*, *Ach.* 1.20-21). Europe and Asia, formerly disjoined only geographically by the Hellespont (*admotas Phruxi qua semita iungi / Europamque Asiamque uetat*, *Ach.* 1.409-10), are now finally separated on the grounds of moral and cultural differences (*iura, fidem, superos una calcata rapina*, *Ach.* 1.403). Even though Ulysses accentuates the Asian shepherd's lack of masculinity (*Phryga semiuirum*, *Ach.* 2.78) to 'educate' Achilles and shape his future role as *euersor Asiae* (*Ach.* 1.530), Statius, however, fashions the hero of the poem as the effeminate, Eastern *other*, by metamorphosing him into a girl, the cross-dressed Achilles. As the poet fits Achilles in his new feminine role and garment, manifestations of his otherness soon break to the fore of the narrative: the rape of Deidamia duplicates Paris' *rapina* (*raptumque pudorem*, *Ach.* 1.671). Furthermore, by eschewing easy categorization, Statius underscores the collapse of boundaries between male and female, West and East, since the raping Achilles is presented with a dilemma: what would he do, should someone else abduct Deidamia (*quid si nunc aliquis patriis rapturus ab oris / Deidamiam eat uiduaque e sede reuellat / attonitam et magni clamantem nomen Achillis?* *Ach.* 2.81-83)? In other words, Achilles' transition to masculinity becomes viable only through the assumption of a feminine garb and the repetition of the act of raping. In Statius' poetics of manhood, the construction of Achilles' heroism reveals an amalgamation of Eastern (feminine, non-Roman) and Western (masculine, Roman) qualities and therefore refashions the epic canon through a re-weaving of the cyclic saga to fit the cosmopolitan attitudes of a Flavian audience.