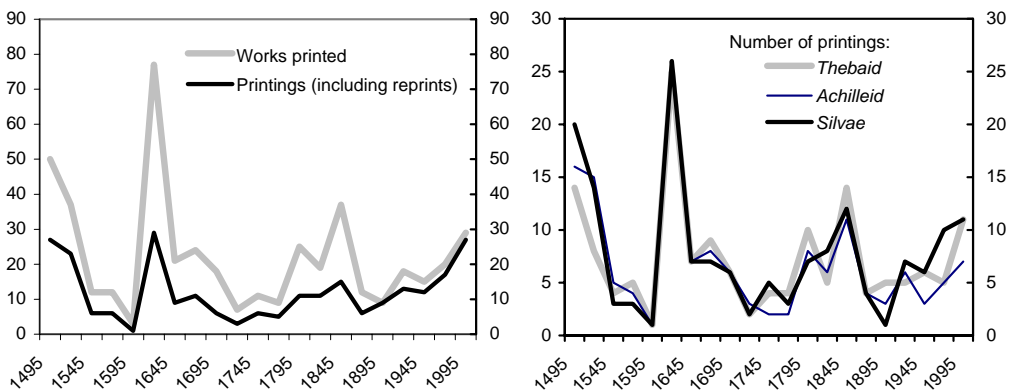


ture through the fifteenth, readership of the poem dropped after the Middle Ages, when the *Iliad* became available and authors composed more complete versions of his life.²⁷

The scholarly reception of Statius in the Middle Ages grappled with several issues, the most important of which was Statius' biography. Statius did not have a traditional biography nor, without the *Silvae*, was there one that could be gleaned from his texts. The only clear ancient reference to Statius was Juvenal's reference. As a result, Statius' biography developed dynamically throughout the Middle Ages, reflecting an ongoing debate about who Statius was and, by extension, how his poems should be interpreted. This facet spilled over into Statius' literary reception, the most famous example of which being Dante's assertion that Statius was a Christian (*Purg.* 21–22), but this is a topic for another venue.

Statius' popularity continued well into the age of the printed book. Between the *editio princeps* (1470–71) and 1501, there were at least 34 printings of one or more of his works. As the figures below show, the number of printings reflects the tendency of interest in Statius to wax and wane, with the peak being 1596–1675 with 67 printings and the trough following in 1676–1775—at the height of the paper shortage—in which there were just 18 (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Statius' Works: Number of Printings, 1470–1995 /
(By quarter-century; excluding editions of less than one book, translations, and the *Bell. Germ.*)



Source: Volume II Checklist of printed editions

1/ "Printing" indicates an edition of one or more works, corresponding to one entry in the checklist of printed editions.

Survival of the Manuscripts

Before discussing any findings from the manuscripts, we should first discuss how representative the extant manuscripts are. While it is not possible to estimate the number of manuscripts of Statius' works that actually circulated in the Middle Ages,²⁸ volumes listed in medieval in-

²⁷ The sources for later versions of the life of Achilles—from the late medieval Greek *Achilleid* (see O.L. Smith, *The Oxford Version of the Achilleid*, Opuscula Graecolatina 32 [København, 1990] and S. Georgacopoulou, "L'Achilleide de Stace et l'Achilleide anonyme byzantine," *C&M* 45 (1994): 251–86) to modern times (cf. K. Wróblewski, ed., *Stanisława Wyspiańskiego, Achilleis: Sceny dramatyczne* [Lwów, 1909], 88)—are Homer, Euripides, Virgil, and Seneca.

²⁸ In an important article, J.L. Cisne ("How Science Survived: Medieval Manuscripts' 'Demography' and Classic Texts' Extinction." *Science* 307 [2005], 1305–307) uses a population growth model to estimate the number of manuscripts of some of Bede's works that circulated in the Middle Ages. While this is not the place to debate Cisne's methodology, two facets of our manuscripts make it difficult to use here. (1) Since a large share of the later manuscripts of