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FASHIONING CRISPINUS THROUGH HIS ANCESTORS: EPIC MODELS IN STATIUS *SILVAE* 5.2¹

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Silvae 5.2 is an encomium of Crispinus upon the occasion of his appointment as *tribunus militum* at the unexpectedly early age of sixteen. The son of Vettius Bolanus, Crispinus is one of only five addressees of senatorial rank in the collection, and he is further distinguished by his patrician pedigree.² At the same time, however, his family represents a source of social stigma: Crispinus's mother was charged with the attempted murder of her child and condemned to death by Domitian. In this paper, I examine one of the rhetorical strategies that Statius uses to fashion an ideal image of Crispinus. As in many of the other poems of the collection, Statius uses comparisons drawn from Greco-Roman mythology in order to glorify his subject.³ The poet associates the young man with the ephebes of Greco-Roman

1 All quotations of Statius's *Silvae* are taken from Courtney's Oxford Classical Text (1990). All translations are my own. Warmest thanks to the participants at the Madison conference for their helpful comments, suggestions, and encouragement. Thanks also to Francis Newton, Sabine Huebner, and Judith Hallett.

2 In contrast to the republic, few members of the ruling class of the early imperial period had lengthy aristocratic lineages. Garnsey and Saller estimate that senatorial families died out at the rate of seventy-five per cent per generation in the early empire, while Hammond shows that the percentage of identifiable patricians of republican ancestry in the senate declined from "about 16 per cent under Augustus" to "slightly over 2 per cent" in A.D. 69 (Garnsey and Saller 1987.123, Hammond 1957.75; cf. Saller 1994.74–101, Hopkins 1983.120–200).

3 For example, according to Statius's narrator, it would have been worthwhile for Stella to undergo the labors of Hercules or the Argonautic expedition in order to secure Violentilla

epic, such as Ascanius, Parthenopaeus, and Pyrrhus.⁴ Statius draws on these epic models in order to exhort Crispinus, to praise him through flattering comparisons, and to shield him from potential criticism. Allusions to Virgil's *Aeneid* help affirm Crispinus's ability to emulate his deceased father, exclude his criminal mother as a formative influence, and specify the roles of the young man's other preceptors, including Statius himself. Allusions to Statius's own *Thebaid*, meanwhile, highlight the emperor's successful resolution of Crispinus's familial conflict through contrast with the epic's fratricidal violence.

As Noelle Zeiner argues, Statius represents Crispinus's elevated ancestry as a form of symbolic capital, a means of differentiating him from other elite Romans of the Flavian era. Zeiner observes that Crispinus's youth and pedigree are the forms of "distinction" (employing Bourdieu's concept) that Statius selects for commendation (Zeiner 2005.201–09; cf. Bourdieu 1984). Statius's praise of Crispinus's lineage is the longest such passage in the *Silvae* (5.2.15–30); it features an extended comparison of the young man to a prized race horse (21–28), a *topos* used to highlight distinguished ancestry in several genres of Roman literature (e.g., Virg. *Geo.* 3.75–94, Sen. *Ep.* 95.67–69, Mart. 6.38, Sil. 16.426–30; cf. Vollmer 1898.512).

Though Statius chooses to praise Crispinus's youth and ancestry, each of these forms of distinction can also be read as a potential character flaw. While Crispinus's pedigree is a significant social asset in general, the memory of his mother's conviction and execution for attempted murder diminishes its value. Furthermore, Crispinus took a risk in starting his career so early: his appointment as *tribunus militum* comes two years earlier than the expected age of eighteen. There is some precedent for the appointment: Cicero's son Marcus held a command under Pompey at the age of seventeen (Cic. *Off.* 2.45), but in the extraordinary circumstance of civil war. The fact that Crispinus's illustrious father Bolanus died without appointing a guardian (*sine praeside*, *Silv.* 5.2.65; cf. Zeiner 2005.202–03) could highlight the liabilities of Crispinus's youth and inexperience. Statius acknowledges the absence of a father as guide and mentor as potentially hazardous for young men (*Silv.* 5.2.68–69). Roman elite sources generally

(*Silv.* 1.2.38–40); the service of the father of Claudius Etruscus to successive emperors was comparable to the obedience of Mercury to Jupiter, Iris to Juno, and Triton to Neptune (*Silv.* 3.3.79–84); and Apollo might mistake the hair of Flavius Earinus for that of his brother Bacchus and contribute his own to the offering (*Silv.* 3.4.6–11).

4 For Statius's use of epic models in the *Silvae*, see Gibson 2006b and Van Dam 2006.

represent youth as an unstable age, in need of careful guidance (Eyben 1993.19–24).⁵ Crispinus's chosen career as an advocate and military officer leaves him particularly vulnerable to criticism of his inexperience. Young advocates could provoke the resentment of their seniors (e.g., Quint. *Inst.* 12.6.2, Plin. *Ep.* 2.14.2–4; Eyben 1993.74–76), while young military officers were criticized for their perceived lack of discipline (e.g., Tac. *Agr.* 5.2, Plin. *Ep.* 8.14.4–7; Eyben 1993.50–51).

When Statius chooses to praise Crispinus's youth and ancestry, therefore, he also leaves his subject open to the charges of immaturity and inexperience, as well as lack of guardianship and the criminal influence of his deceased mother. Rather than tactfully omit mention of these potential flaws in his subject's character, he chooses to address each directly. Alex Hardie suggests (1983.146) that Statius's encomium may have partly been intended to justify Crispinus's precocious ambitions. In her reading, Zeiner focuses on Statius's praise of Crispinus's virtues, such as his precocity and *pietas*, and his courage and loyalty in defending his friend in court. In what follows, I examine the relationship between the discourse of epic and the discourse of ancestry in *Silvae* 5.2. I conclude with an assessment of the dialogue that Statius creates throughout the poem between mythological and realistic modes and between mythological epic and his own briefer hexameter encomium. Statius employs epic comparisons in the service of a series of encomiastic goals: among other functions, they enable him to obviate criticism of his addressee's youth, to celebrate the *pietas* of both Crispinus and Domitian, and to certify that the young man will emulate his father's example rather than his criminal mother's.

In the prefatory letter to *Silvae* 5.1, Statius represents his own poetry as capable of presenting beneficial examples of virtuous behavior to the public. In praising the exemplary *pietas* of Abascantus toward his deceased wife Priscilla, Statius comments: "omnibus adfectibus prosequenda sunt bona exempla, cum publice prosint" ("Good examples ought to be honored with all eagerness, since they benefit the public," *praef.* 5.1–2). While it cannot be known whether *Silvae* 5.2 would have followed this poem had Statius lived to edit the fifth book for publication, it is nevertheless clear that he intends to represent Crispinus's father Bolanus as another publicly

5 The Younger Pliny, for example, observes that Corellia Hispulla's son, an *adulescens* whom Sherwin-White 1968.212 estimates was about fourteen years old, needs "not only a teacher but also a guardian and a master at this slippery period of life" ("cui in hoc lubrico aetatis non praeceptor modo sed custos etiam rectorque quaerendus est," Plin. *Ep.* 3.3.4).

beneficial *exemplum*. Bolanus was suffect consul, governor of Britain, and proconsul of Asia.⁶ Peter White conjectures that he was adlected into the patriciate as a reward for denying Vitellius reinforcements during the civil war (White 1973.282). While adjuring his addressee Crispinus to take his father Bolanus as a personal example to guide his own future career, Statius's lengthy praise also transforms Bolanus into a public example (*Silv.* 5.2.51–54, 58–60):

disce, puer (nec enim externo monitore petendus
uirtutis tibi pulcher amor: cognata ministret
laus animos. aliis Decii reducesque Camilli
monstrentur), tu disce patrem . . .

bibe talia pronis
auribus, haec certent tibi conciliare propinqui,
haec iterent praecepta senes comitesque paterni.

Learn, boy (for you need not seek the beautiful love of manly courage from an unrelated preceptor; let the praise of your relatives nurture your courage. Let the Decii and the returning Camilli be taught to others), learn of your father . . . Drink in such teachings with ready ears. May your relatives strive to convey these precepts to you, may old men and your father's companions repeat them for you.

Offering praise of male ancestors to their sons and grandsons is a familiar rhetorical move in the *Silvae*. Statius typically frames the praise in the language of competition, charging the descendants to emulate their ancestors and surpass them. Similar examples occur in *Silvae* 4.4, where Geta is exhorted to “outdo” (*deprende*) both his father Marcellus and his great-grandfather,⁷ and in *Silvae* 4.7, where Vibius Maximus's son is asked to

6 *Prosopographia Imperii Romani Saeculi I, II, III*, V.323.

7 “Ipse canenda geres paruoque exempla parabis / magna Getae, dignos quem iam nunc bel-liger actus / poscit auos praestatque domi nouisse triumphos. / surge agendum iuuenemque puer deprende parentem” (“You [Marcellus] will perform feats worthy of song, and you will provide splendid examples for little Geta. His warlike [great]-grandfather is already demanding worthy actions from him and makes it possible to learn of his triumphs at home. Come now, boy, rise and outdo your youthful father,” *Silv.* 4.4.71–74). Coleman 1988 ad *Silv.* 4.4.71–72 identifies Geta's *auus* as his great-grandfather C. Hosidius Geta.

emulate his father's *mores* and challenge (*prouocet actis*) his grandfather with his deeds.⁸

Through his extended praise of Bolanus in *Silvae* 5.2, Statius differentiates between two types of addressee: Crispinus, the named addressee, who can claim Bolanus as kin, and the unnamed members of his larger audience of listeners and readers, for whom Bolanus is a public example rather than a personal one. Bolanus's deeds are *praecepta* of unique value to Crispinus: while the young man need not seek for examples of conduct outside his family, those of less distinguished ancestry presumably must be satisfied with typical "public" examples of Roman virtue such as Camillus and the Decii. These unmarked examples recall the distant and glorious Roman past rather than a family record. They can also be used to exhort any young man: Valerius Maximus, who mentions Camillus and the Decii frequently throughout his collection of *exempla*,⁹ describes the public recitation of their exploits as designed to "make the young men more eager to imitate them" ("quo ad ea imitanda iuuentutem alacriorem redderent," V. Max. 2.1.10). Statius's evocation of Crispinus's kin relationship with Bolanus, by contrast, places higher expectations on the young man than would general examples that can be assembled for any patriotic exhortation.¹⁰ A man who has inspired others through his public example will necessarily exert further pressure on his nearest kin to be virtuous.

In addition, Statius selects examples for Crispinus to emulate from Greco-Roman epic, another publicly accessible literary tradition. Epic was a privileged part of the Roman educational tradition during the early imperial period (Keith 2000.10–11). For example, Quintilian recommends the reading of epic in order to shape the moral character of young men (Quint. *Inst.* 1.8.4–5; cf. Bonner 1977.212–14). Virgil's Ascanius, the son of Aeneas, is the first and most important of the epic models that Statius draws on in order

8 "Duret in longum generosus infans / perque non multis iter expeditum / crescat in mores patrios aumque / prouocet actis" ("May the well-born infant enjoy long life and may he grow into his father's *mores*, traveling along a way not traveled by many, and may he challenge his grandfather with his own deeds," *Silv.* 4.7.41–44). Cf. further *Silv.* 4.8.57–58.

9 E.g., V. Max. 1.5.2, 1.7.3, 1.8.3, 2.2.9b, 2.9.1, 4.1.2, 5.3.2a, 5.6.5–6, 5.6.8, 6.5.1a, 7.3.ext 9, etc.

10 For example, Lucan's Pompey represents Camillus and the Decii as models to be emulated by the defenders of the republic. In exhorting his troops at Pharsalus, he claims: "si Curios his Fata darent reducesque Camillos / temporibus Deciosque caput fatale uouentis, / hinc starent" ("If the Fates gave the Curii to this age and the returning Camilli and the Decii who vowed their lives to fate, they would stand on this side," Lucan 7.358–60; cf. Vollmer 1898 ad *Silv.* 5.2.53).

to generate an ideal image of Crispinus. In the same passage quoted above from *Silvae* 5.2, Statius alludes to a well-known scene featuring Aeneas and his son Ascanius from the last book of Virgil's *Aeneid*. Immediately before returning to battle, Aeneas instructs Ascanius to recall the examples of his family members, in particular his father and maternal uncle, as inspiration for his own conduct (Virg. *Aen.* 12.435–40):¹¹

disce, puer, uirtutem ex me uerumque laborem,
 fortunam ex aliis. nunc te mea dextera bello
 defensum dabit et magna inter praemia ducet.
 tu facito, mox cum matura adoleuerit aetas,
 sis memor et te animo repetentem exempla tuorum
 et pater Aeneas et auunculus excitet Hector.

My son, learn virtue and true labor from me, learn fortune from others. Now my right hand will give you defense in war and will lead you among great rewards. When your growing age shall have brought you to adulthood, make sure that you remember, and as you recall examples of your kinsmen in your mind, may your father Aeneas and your maternal uncle Hector inspire you.

The passage of *Silvae* 5.2 evokes this scene of the *Aeneid* both in its opening phrase (*disce, puer*) and in its similar situation of a preceptor presenting the example of a father as inspiration to a son. The poem offers several additional comparisons of Crispinus to Ascanius, who is otherwise mentioned only once elsewhere in the *Silvae* (5.3.39). Crispinus riding his horse along the bank of the Tiber resembles Ascanius at the hunt of *Aeneid* 4 (*Silv.* 5.2.118–20), an example of the intertwining of mythical and realistic modes that occurs frequently in the *Silvae*.¹² Statius also praises Crispinus's forgiveness of his mother in terms that evoke Apollo's praise of Ascanius after his first combat in the *Aeneid*: "macte animo, iuuenis! sed crescunt crimina matris" ("Hail to your spirit, young man! but your mother's crimes

11 Aeneas adapts Hector's similar prayer for his son Astyanax (*Il.* 6.476–81); cf. Soph. *Ajax* 548–77, Virg. *Aen.* 3.343; Petrinì 1997.106–08.

12 The statue of Aeneas (*Dardaniusque senex*) also watches Crispinus as he defends his friend in the Forum (*Silv.* 5.2.107–09).

are increasing,” *Silv.* 5.2.97); “macte noua uirtute, puer, sic itur ad astra” (“Hail to your new manhood, boy, this is the path to the stars,” Virg. *Aen.* 9.641).¹³ There are some noteworthy differences, however, between this passage of the *Silvae* and its Virgilian exemplar. First, while Virgil embeds Aeneas’s brief address in an aetiological narrative predicting the future domination of the world by Aeneas’s descendants, Statius implicitly forecasts a somewhat more limited future for Crispinus. The young man cannot become the founder of a dynasty that will eventually replace the Flavians; he can only aspire to becoming, like his father, the emperor’s loyal and competent subordinate. Statius also reverses the roles of warrior and student from the *Aeneid*: Aeneas is going off to battle as he addresses his son, while Statius addresses a young man who will soon take up a military assignment.

Another relevant difference between the two scenes of instruction is a narratological one: Statius has altered the relationship between speaker and addressee. In adapting Virgil’s scene of paternal instruction, Statius has made his narrator Crispinus’s preceptor in place of the young man’s consanguineous father.¹⁴ This narrative frame, a didactic narration by a third party about the career of an absent father to his son, in turn evokes a further series of epic precedents and enables Statius to present Crispinus with a complementary set of epic models. Preceptors charged with commemorating the absent fathers of young men occur throughout the Greco-Roman epic tradition. Examples range from Homer to the Flavian epic poets contemporary with Statius. Homer’s Odysseus reminds Achilles of the words of his absent father Peleus (*Il.* 9.252–59), while Nestor and Menelaus instruct Telemachus about his father Odysseus, otherwise unknown to him (*Od.* 3.103–200, 4.266–89, 555–60); Ovid’s Nestor recounts selected exploits of Hercules to Hercules’ son Tlepolemus (*Met.* 12.536–76); and Statius’s contemporary Silius Italicus devotes the bulk of the sixth book of the *Punica* to Marus’s extended narration of the career of Regulus to Regulus’s son Serranus (*Pun.* 6.102–550). Like the ephebes of the Greco-Roman epic tradition, Crispinus will prepare to emulate his father’s exploits by learning about them from a preceptor. Through the epic comparisons, Statius obviates the question of Crispinus’s competence or suitability for his career.

13 Statius also uses the phrase *macte animo iuuenis* at *Theb.* 7.280 in Phorbas’s praise of the young Theban warrior Amphion.

14 “The imperative . . . conveys a precept and suggests the role of adviser, in the rhetorically appropriate ‘education’ section” (Hardie 1983.148).

Statius places the narrator in the position of an epic preceptor; he then pairs the narrator's injunction to Crispinus to learn from his father's career with similar recommendations from a subordinate preceptor, an anonymous Caledonian subject focalized by the narrator. Should Crispinus travel to Britain, the site of his father's career as governor, Statius imagines that the Caledonian would also take up the task of relating Bolanus's deeds (*Silv.* 5.2.143–44, 148–51):

cum tibi longaeuus referet trucidis incolae terrae:

“hic suetus dare iura parens . . .

hunc ipse uocantibus armis

induit, hunc regi rapuit thoraca Britanno,”

qualiter in Teucros uicticia bella paranti

ignotum Pyrrho Phoenix narrabat Achillem.

Then an elderly inhabitant of that harsh land shall tell you: “Here your father was accustomed to dispense justice . . . He himself put on this cuirass when battle called, this one he stripped from a British king.” Just so Phoenix told Pyrrhus about Achilles, a man unknown to him, as he prepared to make successful wars against the Trojans.

Statius associates all three characters in the imagined situation—Crispinus, his dead father Bolanus, and the anonymous Caledonian subject—with their counterparts in a mythological scene of instruction. In his comparison, Crispinus hearing about his father from the Caledonian would be like Pyrrhus hearing about his father Achilles from Phoenix.

The association of the Caledonian with Phoenix serves to disguise the true differences in status and authority between ruler and subject. Whether discussing empire or the household, Statius's rhetorical use of mythological comparisons obscures the inequalities of power obtaining in real-world situations. Reference to the work of mythological figures, for example, often disguises the real labor performed by servile or lower-status workers: thus Venus and Vulcan construct and heat the baths of Claudius Etruscus, while Hercules and Neptune oversee the fields and shore near the villa of Pollius Felix at Surrentum (*Silv.* 1.5.31–33, 2.2.21–25; cf. Newlands 2002.167–68, 217). As the gods' displacement of human laborers in the world constructed by Statius's poetry diverts attention from economic realities, so the Caledonian's figuration as a gentle and admiring mythologi-

cal preceptor similarly obscures political realities, such as the possibility of native dissatisfaction with imperial rule. In addition to praising Crispinus through his ancestors, the Caledonian's commendation of his former governor serves the equally important function of certifying the imperial ambitions of the Flavian regime. Rhiannon Evans calls the Caledonian's speech the "idealisation of imperial administration," the subject's approval of his former governor confirming that even the empire's most distant provinces welcome Roman rule (Evans 2003.259). The speech thus indirectly associates Crispinus's ancestry with the potential benefit of his future career to the empire. If the young man has indeed inherited his father's military prowess and talent for just governance, then the emperor has chosen wisely in allowing him to begin his career earlier than usual and trusting in him despite his lack of guardianship.

Unlike Ascanius, however, Pyrrhus represents a potentially problematic model of ephebic behavior. Virgil's Pyrrhus kills one of Priam's sons in Priam's sight (rather than following, as Priam wished, his father Achilles' example of clemency in ransoming Hector) and sarcastically agrees with Priam that he is a "degenerate" (*degenerem*, Virg. *Aen.* 2.549) as he kills Priam in turn. Seneca's *Troades* amplifies the *Aeneid*'s portrait of Pyrrhus's brutality through an extended scene where the young man demands Polyxena's sacrifice as honor for his father (Sen. *Tro.* 203–348). While Pyrrhus's negative associations may have been present in the minds of Statius's highly literate audience, the encomiastic context of *Silvae* 5.2 precludes paying undue attention to them. The emphasis of the passage is on the preceptor's account of the father's exploits, and the comparison with Pyrrhus instead emphasizes that Crispinus is an ephebe of great potential, descended from a famous father, and therefore facing a greater challenge than most young men in his attempt to avoid degeneracy from the ancestral standard. Both of the preceptors of *Silvae* 5.2, Statius's narrator and the anonymous Caledonian, focalize Bolanus's career for Crispinus in the manner of epic preceptors instructing sons about their absent fathers. These preceptors supplement the educational role that the deceased Bolanus would otherwise have fulfilled for his son. Like the preceptors of epic tradition, Statius personalizes his instruction of Crispinus through reminiscence of the young man's father, while adding Bolanus to the stock of instructive public *exempla* typically furnished by the genre of epic.

A final series of allusions to epic helps Statius to solve another of the difficulties that arises in fashioning Crispinus through his ancestors. Before the occasion of *Silvae* 5.2, the young man's mother had been charged

with the attempted poisoning of her son, tried, and executed. According to Statius, our only source of evidence for this case, Domitian himself had exacted retribution (White 1973.282–84). In a passage unparalleled within the *Silvae* for its vituperation, Statius condemns Crispinus's mother: he contrasts her cruelty in preparing "unspeakable cups and lethal poisons with her own hand" ("nefanda / pocula letalesque manus componere sucos," *Silv.* 5.2.77–78) with Crispinus's gentleness, and expresses his desire to exact further vengeance after her death by troubling her ghost (*Silv.* 5.2.81–82). He then abruptly changes tone and focalizes Crispinus's reaction. The young man is made to praise the emperor's *pietas* in passing the negative judgment against his mother (*Silv.* 5.2.88–94):¹⁵

excidat illa dies aeuo nec postera credant
saecula. nos certe taceamus et obruta multa
nocte tegi propriae patiamur crimina gentis.
exegit poenas hominum cui cura suorum
quo Pietas auctore redit terrasque reuisit,
quem timet omne nefas. satis haec lacrimandaque nobis
ultio.

May that day be lost in time, and may future generations not believe in it. Let us at least keep silent and allow the family crimes to be concealed, buried in much darkness. The emperor, a man who has concern for his people, determined the punishment. Pietas has returned at his lead and visited the earth once more. Every crime fears him. His vengeance is sufficient, and I must mourn it.

On the one hand, Ruurd Nauta criticizes Statius for his tactlessness in alluding to the affair at such length and suggests that Crispinus needed Statius's help in stressing his favor with the emperor (Nauta 2002.307). On the other hand, Zeiner observes that Statius draws a parallel between the emperor, who exhibits *pietas* toward the entire world, and Crispinus, who exhibits it toward his mother's memory. Crispinus's spirit of reconciliation is unusual

15 Quintilian provides an instructive parallel in his commentary on Cicero's *pro Cluentio* (Quint. *Inst.* 11.1.61–63). He suggests that recalling the reverence due to parents and the unfortunate necessity of the prosecution of a mother is a useful means of handling the antipathy of the audience roused by an intrafamilial conflict.

in one so young, and the association with the emperor through the virtue of *pietas* flatters both men (Zeiner 2005.203–04). The contrast that Statius constructs between the attitudes assumed by his narrator and his addressee Crispinus, coupled with the narrator's eventual rhetorical capitulation and praise of Crispinus's forgiveness of his mother (cf. *macte animo*, *Silv.* 5.2.97), further supports the narrator's argument that the young man has no need of guardians because he has already begun to surpass the wisdom of his preceptor. I shall focus attention on the epic models evoked by this passage and their implications for Statius's project of praising his addressee Crispinus.

If the emperor himself had pronounced the sentence on Crispinus's mother, her crime was well-enough known that her son's reputation might suffer as a result. Though the emperor's judgment on Crispinus's mother should have been sufficient confirmation that Crispinus's motives in seeking reconciliation were sound, others might still be willing to charge Crispinus with having inherited aspects of his mother's evil character. Tacitus reports that, in the era of Tiberius, a mother suspected of driving her elder son to suicide was exiled in order to protect her younger son from her corrupting influence (*Tac. Ann.* 6.49). The examples of Violentilla in *Silvae* 1.2 and Statius's wife in *Silvae* 3.5 confirm that women can indeed be viewed as shapers of their children's characters in the *Silvae* (e.g., 1.2.272–73, 3.5.54–59; cf. *Plin. Ep.* 4.19, Newlands 2002.102). Statius's evocation of the themes, situation, and language of Roman epic, a genre that typically excludes mothers as formative influences, offers Crispinus some protection from the charge of inheriting his mother's criminality. In particular, the comparison with Ascanius discussed earlier suggests that Crispinus's formative influences are exclusively positive and male. Ascanius loses his mother Creusa at an early age, and Aeneas selects only male *exempla* (father and maternal uncle) for his son in the *disce, puer* passage echoed by Statius.

The language in which Crispinus praises the emperor's justice and *pietas*, however, also evokes a series of apparently disturbing epic models from Statius's own *Thebaid*. Crispinus describes the offenses committed by his mother as "the family crimes" (*crimina gentis*). Statius uses the same line ending, with slight variations, three times in the *Thebaid* to recall the crimes of the Labdacids (*crimina gentis*, 2.462, 11.734; cf. *crimina gentes*, 1.266). The family of Oedipus in the *Thebaid* is one in which no one can escape the ancestral stigma, where Oedipus's incest and parricide are answered in the next generation by his sons' mutual fratricide. Crispinus's prayer, "may that day be lost in time" (*excidat illa dies aevo*), is a further and more direct allusion to the crimes against kin that figure so prominently in the *Thebaid*.

This phrase precisely recalls the narrator's similar prayer immediately after Eteocles and Polynices have killed each other in the duel of *Thebaid* 11 (*Theb.* 11.577–79; words common to both passages in *italic*):

omnibus in terris scelus hoc omnique sub *aeuo*
uiderit una *dies*, monstrumque infame futuris
excidat, et soli memorent haec proelia reges.

In all the earth and in every age, may one day only have
seen this crime. May the infamous event be lost to future
generations, and may kings be the only ones to remem-
ber this battle.

In each case, memory is beyond the speaker's control, and his own speech act contributes to the commemoration of an event that he would rather have left unremembered. As Sophia Georgacopoulou argues (1998), the narrator prays in *Thebaid* 11 to remove memory of the duel from future generations, but he himself contributes to its commemoration by recording it in epic verse. In *Silvae* 5.2, Crispinus may pray to remove the memory of his mother's crime, but Statius causes him to recall it yet one more time in order to generate admiration for the young man's powers of forgiveness and the emperor's justice—qualities notable by their absence from *Thebaid* 11.

Crispinus's prayer also features specific contrasts with the situation of the *Thebaid* that permit a greater appreciation of the young man's *pietas* and the emperor's *cura*. The young man argues, for example, that the emperor's judgment represents "sufficient vengeance" (*satis . . . ultio*) in concluding the conflict with his mother. The phrase *satis . . . ultio* recalls Tiresias's unsuccessful attempt in the *Thebaid* to describe Laius as "sufficiently avenged" (*o iam satis ulte*, *Theb.* 4.612). Crispinus's generous spirit of forgiveness can be contrasted with the implacable anger of Laius in the *Thebaid*, who declares himself still unavenged even after the blinding of Oedipus and eager for the destruction of his grandchildren Eteocles and Polynices (*Theb.* 4.626–44). This allusion demonstrates the possibility of reconciliation between the generations that the *Thebaid* characteristically excludes. A second example of allusion through contrast occurs in Crispinus's account of the emperor's concern for his people, which has caused Pietas to return to the earth. Immediately before the duel of *Thebaid* 11 between the brothers Eteocles and Polynices, the intervention of the Furies causes Pietas to flee from the earth (*Theb.* 11.492–96). Consideration of

the role of *Pietas* as an “actant” in the *Thebaid* (e.g., Feeney 1991.385–89, Franchet d’Espèrey 1996) lends further point to this contrast. Only after *Pietas* returns to his mind, for example, can Oedipus begin to recognize the consequences of his curse on his sons and his identity as a father (*Theb.* 11.605–26); by that time, however, his sons have already killed each other and his wife has committed suicide (*Theb.* 11.634–47). The account of the return of *Pietas* to the earth in *Silvae* 5.2, focalized by Crispinus, evokes the *Thebaid*’s theme of violence against kin while showing how the actions of Crispinus and the emperor can contain it.

The mythological comparisons of the *Silvae* typically show the characters of the heroic past yielding to the superior individuals of the present day. Donka Markus describes (2003.449) the mythological comparisons as examples of the “topos of outdoing,” while Kathleen Coleman suggests (1999.79) that the language of myth itself is a means of constructing reality in Flavian poetry. In other poems of the collection, mythological comparisons enable Statius to obviate potential criticism of his addressee. For example, Statius praises the young freedman Glaucias in *Silvae* 2.1 by associating him with the divine Bacchus (97–98) and the royal Achilles (88–91), Perseus (94–95), and Romulus (99–100). The comparisons elevate Glaucias from the human level to a discursive environment where conventional measures of status no longer apply (Bernstein 2005). Servile birth is no longer a cause of shame in the world Statius has constructed from mythological comparisons. The comparisons of Crispinus to the ephebes of epic in *Silvae* 5.2 similarly permit the selection of and emphasis on the positive aspects of his ancestry and the obviation or amelioration of the negative ones.

Pietas and commemoration form the central themes of the fifth book of the *Silvae*. Four of the book’s five poems recount the *pietas* expressed by the living for the deceased members of their families, whether husband and wife (*Silvae* 5.1), sons and their fathers (*Silvae* 5.2, 5.3), or a father and his adopted son (*Silvae* 5.5). In addition to using epic comparanda to glorify its addressee, *Silvae* 5.2 draws on epic models in order to exhort Crispinus to admire and emulate his father and to shield him from potential criticism. Individual comparisons to epic ephebes, parents, and preceptors indicate the enduring power of Bolanus’s legacy, exclude negative maternal influence, and commend the emperor’s resolution of familial conflict. In contrast to his procedure in *Silvae* 5.2, a poem that draws several of its mythical comparanda from the *Aeneid* and *Thebaid*, Statius specifically distinguishes his work from epic through the figure of recusation elsewhere in the *Silvae*. For example, the narrator of *Silvae* 5.3 claims that *pietas* would equate him with

Homer and Virgil if he were able to commemorate his father properly, while even the powers of those poets would be insufficient to describe Domitian's banquet at the beginning of *Silvae* 4.2.¹⁶ *Silvae* 5.2, however, includes no similar recusation of the epic genre. The fathers, ephebes, and preceptors of Greco-Roman mythological epic are assembled to provide Crispinus with exemplars and comparanda. Allusion to the *Aeneid* lends Crispinus some of the idealized *pietas* of the Aeneadae, while allusion to the crimes of the Labdacids and to the return of Pietas permit the poet of the *Thebaid* to recall and reshape the fame of his own recently published epic.

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16 *Silv.* 5.3.61–63, *Silv.* 4.2.1–10; cf. Malamud 2001. Penwill 2000 argues that Statius covertly challenges Domitian as a poet of epic in *Silv.* 5.3.