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Through the Past to the Future of Naples

Text and History in *Silvae* 4.8

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When shaping a new interpretation of the pediment of the temple dedicated to the Dioscuri at Naples, which considers the local significance of its visual programme, Rabun Taylor resorts to Statius' *Silvae*.[1] His approach to one of the feminine figures which has eluded identification for centuries is supported by Statius' address to the *di patrii*, the fatherland's gods, in *Silvae* 4.8, where Ceres/Demeter features as a 'parent god' beside Apollo and the Dioscuri.[2] If recent scholarship has made us increasingly aware of the relevance of the *Silvae* for the study of Flavian history and culture, poem 4.8 features among the most significant for students of Flavian Campania. It is, simultaneously, one of Statius' most neglected compositions, and certainly one of the most challenging.[3]

Having announced the occasion by inviting Naples, the neighbouring cities, and the temples to join him in celebrating the birth of Menecrates' third child (1–14), the poet congratulates Menecrates (15–31), whilst gently rebuking him for not having communicated the news personally, since this has prevented him from responding with a timely expression of congratulations (32–44). Finally he asks the gods of the city to protect the family, predicting a bright future for the children, both at Naples and at Rome (45–62).[4] In commemorating the birth of Julius Menecrates' third child, a grandchild to Statius' important

[1] I am grateful to Paolo Fedeli, Gianpiero Rosati, William Dominik, and David Paniagua for their generous reading and kind comments on a previous draft of this paper, and to Joy Littlewood for revising my English.

[2] Taylor (2015b) 61. The best picture of the pediment available is a drawing by Francisco d'Ollanda dated to 1540, reproduced at Taylor (2015b) 41.

[3] On 4.8, see Vollmer (1898) 487–90, Cesareo (1935) 19–32, Vessey (1974b), Coleman (1988) 209–20, Zeiner (2005) 171–8.

[4] Vessey (1974b) 260–1 comments on the structure of the poem.

patron Pollius Felix,[5] the poem is inextricably entwined with the city, interweaving simultaneously both public and private rejoicing: the private celebration of the birth of a child is depicted as a matter of public relevance, achieving a *gratulatio* that blends the voice of a civic *vates* with the tone of an intimate friend, a portrait of the city with a profile of the illustrious family of the newborn.[6] The poet's strategy for interweaving Menecrates' family with Naples achieves an elegant union of past with future in which his ambitions for the children (45–62) are expressed through allusion to the foundation and ancestral cults of the city, transforming an 'occasion' poem into a valuable source for Naples' earliest history.[7]

Regrettably the poor transmission of the text, which relies entirely on the Matritensis (=M),[8] together with the paucity of traces of the *Silvae* between the sixth century and its 'rediscovery' in the fifteenth,[9] alongside the singularity of Statius' poetic idiom and the difficulties emerging from intertextual approaches, hinders interpretation of the poem's exploration of the history of the city and of its notable citizens. For example, there is no consensus regarding Apollo's gift to the children—his laurels, a long and virtuous life, artistic skills[10]—the city is probably not *fossa* ('pierced'), as the Matritensis transmits, but *fessa*, 'tired', whilst her fame may be evergreen, *viridis*, through a pun on the names of the earlier and the new settlements, Palaeopolis and Neapolis.[11] Finally, a frequent

[5] On Julius Menecrates see *PIR*² 2.1.430, Vessey (1974b) 257–9, Nauta (2002) 221–2 with bibliography. The grandchildren of Pollius Felix feature at *Silv*. 3.1.175–9 as well, in which they also constitute an *agmen* (3.1.178 ~ 4.8.44) and search for and receive the affection of Polla (3.1.179 ~ 4.8.13–14).

[6] Hardie (1983) 142–4 addresses the theme of public and private domains in the *Silvae*; Nauta (2002) 244–6 explores 4.8 in the context of 'initiative' in the relationship between poet and patron; Zeiner (2005) 171–8 is dedicated to 'the distinction of family'.

[7] Among the main sources are: Lycoph. *Alex*. 717–19, 732–7 with Hornblower (2015) 293–301; ps.-Scymn. *Perieg.* 252–3 with Meineke (1846) 17–18, 92; Str. 5.4.7 with Radt (2007) 118–21; Plin. *Nat*. 3.62; Sil. 12.27–58 with Spaltenstein (1990) 149–51; Schol. *ad* Verg. *G*. 4.564 (Iunius Filargirius); Schol. *ad* Verg. *G*. 4.564; Tzetz. Schol. *ad* Lycoph. *Alex*. 732. For other sources, see Buchner, Morelli, and Nenci (1952), Philipp (1968).

[8] The survival of the *Silvae* relies entirely on one manuscript, the Matritensis 3678 (Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España 3678, *olim* M 31), which is a copy ordered by Poggio Bracciolini of the manuscript, now lost, that he found in the area of Lake Constance in 1417. For a survey of the textual tradition of the *Silvae*, see Reeve (1983), Coleman (1988) xxxii–xxxiv, Gibson (2006) l–lii.

[9] See Gibson (2006) l n. 99 for a survey of bibliography on the subject.

[10] *Silv*. 4.8.19 M: *Atropos et patrius lauro promisit Apollo*. Coleman (1988) 214 maintains *lauro* ('Atropos and their family's friend Apollo, with his bay, have promised them old age and the distinction of a long and meritorious life'); Vessey (1974b) 263 reads *Cauros* (paraphrasing as 'he confidently predicts for them old age, honour and poetic skill'); Shackleton Bailey and Parrott (2015) 382 defend *lauros* ('their country's Apollo [has promised them] his laurels').

[11] *Silv.* 4.8.55–6 Coleman: *sint qui fessam aevo crebrisque laboribus urbem / voce opibusque iuuent viridique in nomine servent* ('let there be those who, by their eloquence and wealth, may support this city, which is wearied by age and repeated troubles, and let them keep its fame fresh'). On the pun on the names of the city, see Morell in Vollmer (1898) 490.

error of the Matritensis may even have fostered the reinvention of one of the city's earliest myths, that of Parthenope.[12]

Since this is hardly the place for a full reassessment of the text of *Silvae* 4.8, I shall confine myself to three problems raised by the poem, emphasizing the impact, for the history of the city and of its youth, of the textual problems posed by the *Silvae*, whilst highlighting the peculiarity of Statius' language and the originality of his imagery. I propose to reconsider the text and the interpretation of the following problematic points: the occurrences of *lumina* (4.8.15 and 4.8.17), the role of the daughter in the depiction of the siblings (4.8.25–31), and the reading *Eumelus* in the address to the Neapolitan gods (4.8.49).

NAPLES' CHILDREN: NEAPOLITAN (DE)LIGHTS? NOT A TWINGE OF ENVY

The image of the children's noisy play at home in verses 15–16 is the concluding point of a gradual physical and genealogical approach to them which is outlined from the beginning of the poem. Statius starts by summoning the city and surrounding harbours, culminating at Surrentum, where the famous villa of Pollius Felix, celebrated at 2.2 and 3.1, is situated.[13] This point effects the transition from region to family. Unsurprisingly, Pollius is the first to deserve mention; the next place belongs to the winner of a military distinction in an African campaign (probably a son of Pollius and therefore the new baby's uncle);[14] Polla, the grandmother who loves the children as their own, paves the way into the intimacy of the household.[15] Next comes Menecrates, whom Statius praises for having graced the city with abundant offspring.[16] Lastly his children stir the household into turmoil. From this picture of happiness and prosperity Statius moves to avert Envy since, as he laments, *Fortuna* and *Inuidia* frequently abide together (*Silv.* 2.1.120–4, 2.6.68–70, 5.1.137–41):

> … macte, o iuvenis, qui tanta merenti
> lumina das patriae. dulci strepit ecce tumultu
> tot dominis clamata domus. procul atra recedat

[12] *Silv*. 4.8.45–55. This problem is discussed below in the section *The Matritensis, Eumelus' daughter, and Housman*.

[13] See the discussion by Rosati and Bessone in this volume.

[14] See the discussion at Coleman (1988) 212.

[15] Nauta (2008) 171–2 studies Statius' forging of a private and intimate atmosphere in *Silv.* 4.8.

[16] A compliment anticipated in the *Praefatio* to Book 4, 18–20: *iuncta est ecloga ad municipem meum Iulium Menecraten … cui gratulor quod Neapolim nostram numero liberorum honestaverit'* ('next is a select piece to my fellow townsman Julius Menecrates … whom I am congratulating for having done honour to our city of Naples by the number of his children').

Invidia atque alio liventia lumina flectat… (Stat. *Silv*. 4.8.14–17)[17]
15 dulci *c*: dulcis *M* strepit *Baehrens*: tremit *M*: fremit *Heinsius* tumultu *c*: tumultus *M*
17 lumina *Markland*: pectora *M*

Bravo young man, who bestow such ornaments on the country to which you owe so much. Look, the house shakes with sweet confusion, ringing with the shouts of so many masters. Let black Envy retreat afar and divert elsewhere her malicious gaze…

From the several problems that have been recognized in these verses I will focus on the readings *lumina* (15) and *pectora* (17) of the Matritensis.[18] Since the word *lumina* is a serious candidate for correcting *pectora* in line 17, generating a repetition, the two loci are to be examined together.

Other editors (Vollmer, Postgate, Saenger, Phillimore, Marastoni, Traglia, Frère, Courtney, Liberman, and Shackleton Bailey and Parrott) do not find it necessary to correct the manuscript,[19] whereas some (Markland, Klotz, and Coleman) change *pectora* to *lumina* in line 17.[20] Another possible correction of *pectora* is Cornelissen's *tempora* (in the sense of *vultum*),[21] which has no support among the editors of the *Silvae*. Regarding *lumina* (15), Saenger alone questions its authenticity and advanced an alternative that merits attention.

The main argument in favour of substituting *pectora* for *lumina* is that, from its own etymology, *Invidia* is clearly primarily associated with the eyes. Nevertheless, Ovid comments on *Invidia*'s *pectora* (describing them as green with bile), as Saenger claims against Markland's *lumina*,[22] and the iunctura *pectora flectere* is attested elsewhere in Statius in the same metrical position as in *Silvae* 4.8.17.[23] Vollmer confronts Markland's suggestion by proposing that *pectora* may have the sense of 'thoughts' or 'intentions' (Gendanke, Absichen).[24] Nevertheless, Coleman adopts Markland's and Klotz's position regarding the reading. In addition to proposing that *lumina* 'matches the root notion in *Invidia*', she appeals to the fact that dactylic words, such as *lumina* and *pectora*, in the fifth foot of the hexameter are 'easily interchangeable' and presents an example of the reverse change, *lumina* for *pectora*.[25] Markland collects several examples of this phenomenon in the introduction to his edition of the *Silvae*,[26] one of them being a passage of Seneca's *Hercules Furens* which is relevant for

[17] I have used the following editions: for *Silv.* 4, Coleman (1988), but Shackleton Bailey and Parrott (2015) for the rest of the *Silv*.; for Propertius, Fedeli (1985) and Goold (1990); for Seneca, Fitch (2002); for Virgil, Faiclough and Goold (2000).

[18] For a discussion of lines 15–16, see Håkanson (1969) 123–5.

[19] Vollmer (1898) 488, Postgate (1905) 411, Saenger (1909) 154, Phillimore (1917), Marastoni (1970) 99, Frère and Izaac (1961) 165, Traglia (1978) 177, Courtney (1992) 111, Liberman (2010) 376, Shackleton Bailey and Parrott (2015) 280 (although acknowledging the strength of the reading *lumina* in line 17).

[20] Markland (1827) 336, Klotz (1911) 126, Coleman (1988) 213.

[21] Cornelissen (1877) 290–1.

[22] Saenger (1909) 154 chooses *pectora* from Ov. *Met*. 2.777.

[23] *Theb*. 8.119 and 10.541; see Coleman (1988) 213, Liberman (2010) 376.

[24] Vollmer (1898) 488. [25] Coleman (1988) 213. [26] Markland (1827) viii–xi.

the simile studied in the next section of this chapter: *gemina cristati caput / angues ferebant ora, quos contra obvius / reptabat infans igneos serpentium / oculos remisso lumine ac placido intuens* ('twin snakes with crested heads pushed their mouths forward; directly in their path crawled the infant, looking into the serpents' fiery eyes with a relaxed and benign gaze', *Her. F.* 216–19). In this case, according to Fitch's apparatus, the reading *lumine* occurs in an extensive part of the manuscript tradition—but so does *pectore.*[27]

In my view, a further point might be produced in favour of *lumina flectere*: the word *lumina* in line 17 would support alliterations in *-l*, *-i*, and *-a* in the sequence *alio liventia lumina*. What is more, such a stylistic feature was identified by Carole Newlands in another relevant passage concerning *Invidia* and her eyes in the *Silvae.* In 2.6.68–70, Statius implies that *Invidia*'s sight is sharp: she literally sees ways of hurting (*laedendique vias*), whilst, in Newlands' words, 'the entire line is striking for the sound patterning of *in, vi*, *d* and *l* that reinforces the ominous presence of *Invidia*…'[28] Statius comments again on Envy's gaze in *Silvae* 5.1: the poet laments that Fortuna takes up residence in 'no home without Envy at once fixing it with her grim gaze' (*toruo… lumine… figat*…).[29] Contradicting the need to 'normalize' the picture of Envy in *Silvae* 4.8, Statius' zealous readers may reply that his poems often display unexpected images, comparisons, and similes, as is the one discussed in the next section of this chapter. Indeed in the *Silvae* there are impressive images featuring *Inuidia* at work without resorting to her eyes: in 2.1.121, *Invidia* holds the deceased child in her lap; in 5.1.141, her hand performs the task of destroying joy. Nevertheless, it would be surprising if in 4.8 she might mark her victims by directing her breast to them.

If correcting *pectora* for *lumina* in line 17 might seem reasonable, the fact that it requires the repetition of a word, which occurs two verses before, militates against it.[30] Indeed an intentional repetition of *lumina* would bring together the celebrated children and the dangerous eyes of Envy; it is hard to devise a plausible sense for the resulting stylistic effect.[31]

We should examine more closely Saenger's suggestion concerning *lumina* in line 15 which he signals as a *locus desperatus;* in the apparatus he calls attention to a parallel in Ovid's *Fasti* (*ut huic urbi semina digna dares*, 'that you might give upon this city a great seed', 3.10).[32] In Ovid's passage, the *semina* offered to the city are Romulus and Remus and the addressed parent is Mars. The parallel is indeed pertinent, exhibiting a very similar syntax and expressing an idea analogous to that of Statius: Ovid highlights the value of the children as a

[27] Markland (1827) ix. Fitch (1987) 74 opts for *lumine* against *pectore*.
[28] Newlands (2011) 216. [29] I quote Gibson (2006) 13.
[30] The problem is identified by Liberman (2010) 376.
[31] Such repetition would not suit any of the framing patterns recognized by Wills (1996) 426–35, since they operate in sequential verse.
[32] Saenger (1909) 154, who accepts *pectora* in line 17. The iunctura *semina dare* occurs once in Statius (*Theb*. 3.235–6); other instances are Ov. *Fast*. 2.628 and V. Fl. 7.68–9.

'contribution' to the city, and one given by a most distinguished father. In fact, it is difficult to imagine a more suitable intertext for Statius' eulogy of Menecrates and his offspring, charged as they are throughout the poem to play eminent roles in the future of Naples and Rome. In spite of this, subsequent editors have not taken into consideration Saenger's doubts about the authenticity of M's reading.

If these suggestions were to be followed, Statius would commend Menecrates' *semina* (15) and *Invidia* would be asked to direct her eyes, *lumina*, away from the children (17). However, we would in that case be changing two readings of M which convey an acceptable meaning to the poem and that are, in both cases, convincing for almost all the editors of the *Silvae*. That said, the resemblance between the passages of Ovid and Statius on the offering of descendants to the city is too serious to be dismissed as mere coincidence. I regard it as highly probable that Statius had the Ovidian passage in mind. It might also be considered that *lumina* is a Statian variant for *semina*, and one that might have been suggested by the positive adjective which Ovid uses to describe *semina*, whatever it was in the text that Statius read. In other words, *semina magna* or *semina digna* corresponds well with the more imposing *lumina*, in both senses recognized for the word in the *TLL*: an affective designation of loved ones or *decus patriae*.[33] However, that would, again, result in the vexatious repetition of *lumina.* Returning to line 17, the existence of syntactic parallels for *pectora flectere* does not favour the authenticity of M's reading. The problem lies not so much in the syntax as in situating the core of *Inuidia*'s action in its *pectora*, even if the word assumed a metaphorical sense, such as Vollmer's 'intentions'.

To sum up, it is indeed hard to draw the line between bold poetic imagination and lack of sense. If the cautious approach would be not to change the text, we would be incurring the danger of losing the rich intertext provided by Ovid and imagining Envy's breast hurting children.

WHO'S THAT GIRL? BABY HELEN AND A MEETING WITH THE STARS

At the core of the section devoted to congratulating his patron, Statius creates a double simile involving the children. As an introduction, the poet insists that Menecrates has been blessed: the boys are in larger number (25–6) and a girl is a delight (26). The relationship between the three is depicted by means of two unprecedented images in literature, through a comparison first with the siblings

[33] Cf. *TLL* vii/2.1821.65 and 1821.41. In his recent edition of the *Fasti*, Ursini (2008) 74 adopts *magna* in place of *digna*, a reading that appears only in one of the five most important manuscripts and results from an attempt to complete *-gna*.

Dioscuri and Helen, thereafter with heavenly bodies with which they are commonly identified, the constellation Gemini and Selene, the moon:[34]

> macte, quod et proles tibi saepius aucta virili
> robore, sed iuveni laetanda et virgo parenti!
> aptior his virtus, citius dabit illa nepotes,
> qualis maternis Helene iam digna palaestris
> inter Amyclaeos reptabat candida fratres;
> uel qualis caeli facies ubi nocte serena
> admovere iubar mediae duo sidera lunae. (Stat. *Silv*. 4.8.25–31)
> 26 sed *M*: sic *Heinsius*: se *A* laetanda et *Saenger*: letam dat *M*: laetandast *Baehrens*: laeta addita *Owen* 27 *del. Markland*

Bravo, in that your stock has been more than once increased by sturdy males, whilst you also have a girl to delight her young father! Courage befits the former more, the latter will give you grandchildren sooner, just as Helen, already worthy of her mother's wrestling-floors, crawled radiantly between her Spartan brothers, or like the appearance of the sky when, on a calm night, two stars have brought their light close to the moon between them.

The comparison of Menecrates' sons with the Dioscuri is most adequate, going far beyond the example of brotherly love. In fact, as gods of the city, the Dioscuri were the dedicatees of a new temple at Naples, vowed by a freedman of Tiberius. It might still be significant, some fifty years later, that the visual programme of its pediment, in which the Dioscuri are obviously central figures, might have suggested the closeness of Naples' relationship with the imperial house;[35] this is relevant for Statius' prediction of a future for the boys that will take them to the Roman senate (4.8.60–3). The freshness of Statius' artistry lies in his treatment of Menecrates' daughter. That a charming baby girl is compared to Helen in her guise of 'model' Spartan woman is well in line with Statius' unexpected similes, like the one equating the maidens of Scyros with the Amazons.[36] Yet it is a bold move, as we shall see, both because of the potentially negative image of Helen, a markedly heinous figure in so imposing a tradition as the Homeric myth of Troy, and of the potentially embarrassing implications that the elegiac passage underlying his simile might have acquired in the context of 4.8.

[34] The etymologies of Helen's name are 'souvent tout aussi hasardeuses, qui s'appuyant sur des textes tardifs', as Kahil (1988) 498 notes. For different approaches to the etymology, see Raeburn and Thomas (2011) 139 and Skutsch (1987) 188–93.

[35] The freedman who dedicated the temple of the Dioscuri was Tiberius Julius Tarsus. Tiberius' devotion to the Dioscuri led to the renewal of the temple in the Forum Romanum (dedicated 6 CE). Taylor (2015b) 60.

[36] *Ach.* 1.758–60 with Sturt (1982) 837–8. On similes in Statius, see recently Dominik (2015) on the *Thebaid*, McNelis (2015) and Sfyroeras (2014) on the *Achilleid*.

The first part of the simile is grounded on the rewriting of a passage of Propertius[37] in which Helen is said to wrestle alongside the brothers, naked, like Spartan girls, with no shame:

> qualis Amazonidum nudatis bellica mammis
> Thermodontiacis turba lavatur aquis;
> qualis et Eurotae Pollux et Castor harenis,
> hic victor pugnis, ille futurus equis,
> inter quos Helene nudis capere arma papillis
> fertur nec fratres erubuisse deos. (Prop. 3.14.15–20 Fedeli)

…like the warlike throng of Amazons with breasts exposed that bathe in the waters of the Thermodon; and like Castor and Pollux on the banks of the Eurotas, Pollux to be a champion at boxing, Castor in horsemanship, with whom Helen, her bosom bare, is said to have borne arms and not to have blushed with shame in front of her divine brothers.

Statius is interested in the fact that Propertius is describing an episode of the youth of the famous siblings (*futurus*, 18).[38] However, the Flavian poet relocates the Propertian scene to an earlier time when Helen still crawled, underlining this by using a rare verb, *reptare* (29), to describe her movement. Before Statius, *reptare* is applied to a baby only once. Significantly, it is applied to a divine child, Hercules, who was perfectly capable of killing the snakes whilst in his crawling years (Sen. *Her. F.* 218).[39] Therefore, the adoption of that verb invites the reader to imagine Helen as a very young infant, crawling or taking her first steps—as young Achilles in the Thessalian snows in the *Achilleid* (1.477)—an unparalleled scene in literature. Differently, Helen as a baby or a child in the company of her brothers, be they also babies or older than she, is a theme of iconography. In Roman times, the three are figured together still sitting in the middle of eggshells on a marble sarcophagus dated to the second century CE, where the siblings are represented as babies (*LIMC* 4.2 s.v. *Helene* no. 11, p. 293). Another relevant example is a stucco relief from the time of Vespasian depicting the siblings as children, also installed in the middle of eggshells (*LIMC* 4.2 s.v. *Helene* no. 12, p. 293).[40] If Statius was not influenced by a lost literary source, he might have found inspiration for the scene in art. The same has been suggested, for instance, about the simile of Hercules and Omphale (*Theb*. 10.641–9).[41]

[37] As noted by Vollmer (1898) 489 and Coleman (1988) 215. [38] Fedeli (1985) 459.

[39] The history of the verb is in accordance with the fact that in the first century CE there is increasing interest for the representation of childhood in arts, and that the gods did not have a childhood in ancient mythography. Statius is the poet who most frequently uses the verb *reptare* (*Theb*. 3.290, 4.802, 5.581, 6.245, 8.232, 9.620; *Silv*. 1.2.262, 2.1.98, 4.5.34, 4.8.29, 5.5.83). Shackleton Bailey and Parrott (2015) 281 n. 8 rejects Grasberger' correction of *reptabat* to *certabat*, but not for the right reasons.

[40] See Kahil (1988) 504 (text), Kahil and Icard (1988) 293 (plates). On the birth of Helen from an egg, see Allan (2008) 148, 180.

[41] Sturt (1982) 835. Duncan (1914) on the influence of art on descriptions in Statius includes a chapter on similes (81–8), but the *Silvae* are not considered.

If focusing on Helen's infancy relieves the negative charge of this feminine figure, it also mitigates the erotic malice of the Propertian simile. According to Federica Bessone, Statius achieves this by underlining the girl's childish innocence. But there was also the peril of bringing to the poem the charge of unfeminine Spartan behaviour. Bessone explains Statius' manoeuvre in terms of a 'censura allusiva' which, in her words, 'corregge le implicazioni negative attribuite all'uso spartano nella tradizione culturale greco-romana: persino l'antitesi fra cura della palestra e della maternità . . . viene neutralizzata qui dalla promessa della figlia femmina di dare presto nipoti (*citius dabit illa nepotes*, v. 27)'.[42] This cogent point might be adduced as a further element against Markland's deletion of line 27,[43] *aptior his virtus, citius dabit illa nepotes*. Indeed the adverb *citius* emphasizes the value of the girl for continuing the bloodline of the family, and the claim that she will give grandchildren sooner than the boys is explainable by the average age of marriage, which was lower in the case of girls.[44] As Bessone puts it, in his bold and refined rewriting of the Propertian simile, Statius manages to transform the 'illustration of a foreign habitude' into 'a noble paradigm of encomiastic poetry'.

In the second part of the simile, Statius compares the brothers and sister to the stars, alluding to the constellation of Gemini and the moon. Again, the description of the Dioscuri and Helen identifying the girl with the moon is unprecedented in extant literature. Vollmer has seen here a reminiscence of Horace, who in *Carm.* 1.3.2 refers to *fratres Helenae, lucida sidera*.[45] However, despite a possible influence of Horace's expression, the ode does not provide a background to *Silv.* 4.8, since it depicts Helen as a menacing star,[46] in the tradition of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* continued by Statius in his propemptikon to Maecius Celer and in the *Thebaid*.[47] More relevant to the discussion in this respect is Euripides' *Orestes* which narrates the catasterism of Helen, making of her a protecting star for navigation in the company of her brothers,[48] in 'a sophisticated reversal of the literary tradition that saw Helen as destroyer of ships'.[49] Yet Statius specifically implies an identification of Helen with the moon.

[42] Bessone (2018). [43] Markland (1827) 337–8.

[44] Zeiner (2005) 177. On the age of marriage, see Hopkins (1965) and Shaw (1987).

[45] Vollmer (1898) 489. The point here is not the equation of the Gemini with St Elmo's fire, which might be quite at home in Horace's *propemptikon*, cf. Nisbet and Hubbard (1970) 46–7; see also Laguna Mariscal (1992) 202–4.

[46] Nisbet and Hubbard (1970) 46.

[47] See Aesch. *Ag.* 689 with Raeburn and Thomas (2011) 139; Stat. *Silv.* 3.2.11–12: *Iliacae longe nimbosa sororis / astra fugate, precor, totoque excludite cael*o, 'banish afar, I pray, your Ilian sister's stormy light, shut her out from all heavens'; *Theb.* 7.791–3: *non aliter caeco nocturni turbine Cori / scit peritura ratis, cum iam damnata sororis / igne Therapnaei fugerunt carbasa fratres*, 'not otherwise does a ship at night in a northwester's blind turmoil know that she will perish when the brethren of Therapnae have fled sails doomed by their sister's fire'.

[48] Eur. *Or*. 1635–7, 1683–90 with Willink (1986) 352, 360. For an overview of literary sources on Helen's catasterism, see Moya del Baño (1984).

[49] Willink (1986) 352.

Kathleen Coleman adopts another approach to the problem. She recalls the encomiastic topos that 'the subject surpasses other people like the moon (or the sun) outshining other heavenly bodies', as illustrated in Horace, for example.[50] Nevertheless, as Coleman observes, Statius would not intend the girl to outshine the brothers. The focus of the simile is that the three children are valuable to their father.[51] Differently, the solution may come from outside the literary realm. Statius might be describing a real astronomical phenomenon, easily visible to anyone, whilst playing with the etymology of *Helene* as *Selene*. Indeed the two stars which compose Gemini are, so to speak, brought together by the moon for some months per year. Actually this phenomenon is not characterized by the moon's passage through the constellation, but when it passes beneath Gemini, in the local sky, it does appear to bring both stars together.[52]

To sum up, a clear idea emerges that the comparisons are constructed around the figure of Menecrates' daughter. This is conspicuous both in the structure of the passage (the double *qualis* that introduces the simile in lines 28 and 30 continues the expression *laetanda…virgo* of 26) and in the two images described. Yet the girl's relevance for assuring the continuation of Menecrates' and Pollius' bloodline does not explain, in my opinion, the care with which Statius forges this poetic piece, brilliantly dissolving the negative potential of the comparison by picturing Helen as a baby and converting her proverbial charm into the attractiveness of the moon towards the stars of Gemini. If there was not a reference to a boy and a girl in *Silvae* 3.1, I wonder if we might not find in these verses good reason to think that 4.8 commemorates the birth of Menecrates' daughter.[53]

THROUGH THE PAST TO THE FUTURE: THE GODS OF THE CITY, IULUS, AND MENECRATES' OFFSPRING?

The interest of *Silvae* 4.8 for the study of the early history of Naples lies in the final section of the poem. Statius addresses a prayer to the gods of the city, first collectively, then approaching them individually and framing each address with an invaluable comment on the foundation, the mythology, and the cults of the city (4.8.45–54). In accounts of the early history of Naples, these verses have

[50] Coleman (1988) 215. See Hor. *Carm.* 1.12.46–8 with Nisbet and Hubbard (1970) 162–4, who list examples of the topos.

[51] Coleman (1988) 215.

[52] I am grateful to Rui Agostinho (Universidade de Lisboa, Faculdade de Ciências; Observatório Astronómico de Lisboa) for his kind support.

[53] *Silv*. 3.1.176: *donec et hic sponsae maturus et illa marito* ('until he is ripe for a bride and she for a husband'). Nauta (2002) 443–4 dates 3.1 to the summer of 91 and 4.8 to the summer of 92 'at the earliest'. Nothing further can be added on the basis of the date.

been cited repeatedly.[54] They support an interpretation of sources and theories about the cults and about the important role of certain characters in the Neapolitan mythical tradition:

> Di patrii, quos auguriis super aequora magnis
> litus ad Ausonium devexit Abantia classis,
> tu, ductor populi longe migrantis, Apollo,
> cuius adhuc volucrem laeua cervice sedentem
> respiciens blande felix Eumelus adorat,
> tuque, Actaea Ceres, cursu cui semper anhelo
> votivam taciti quassamus lampada mystae,
> et vos, Tyndaridae, quos non horrenda Lycurgi
> Taygeta umbrosaeque magis coluere Therapnae:
> hos cum plebe sua patriae servate penates. (*Silv*. 4.8.45–55)
> 46 Abantia ς: abanxia *M* || 49 Eumelus *Housman:* eumeliss *M:* Eumelis *vulg.*
> 50 Actaea *c*: acea *M*
> 54 patriae *Gronovius:* patrii *M*

Gods of my homeland, whom the fleet of Abas with portentous omens brought over the sea to the Ausonian shore, and you, Apollo, guide of your seafaring people, on whose left shoulder still perches the bird that is worshipped by fortunate Eumelus as he looks back at it affectionately, and you, Ceres of Attica, for whom we silent initiates cease not to shake the votive torch in our breathless course, and you, sons of Tyndarus, whom Lycurgus' awe-inspiring Taygetus and shady Therapnae have not worshipped more: keep this household with its people safe for their fatherland.

The structure of the prayer is supported by the summoning of the *di patrii* (45), addressed individually in the following lines (*tu*, 45; *tuque*, 50; *et vos*, 52), and by the delay of the verb, *servate*, for ten lines.[55] The structure and the phraseology of the prayer have points in common with Virgilian passages that are worth recalling in this context: *di patrii Indigetes et Romule Vestaque mater, / quae Tuscum Tiberim et Romana Palatia servas* ('Gods of my country, heroes of the land, you, Romulus, and you, mother Vesta, who guard Tuscan Tiber and the Palatine of Rome', *G*. 1.498–9); *Di patrii, servate domum, servate nepotem* ('Gods of my fathers! Save my house, save my grandson, *A*. 2.702); *di patrii, quorum semper sub numine Troia est* ('Gods of our fathers, whose presence ever watches over Troy', *A*. 9.247). And finally:

> continuo 'salve fatis mihi debita tellus
> vosque' ait 'o fidi Troiae salvete penates:
> hic domus, haec patria est…' (Virg. *A*. 7.120–2)
> Straightway, 'Hail,' he cries, 'land destined as my due! And hail to you, faithful gods of Troy! Here is our home, here our country!…'

[54] See e.g. Vargas Macciucca (1764) 273, Barbati (1897) 33–4, Beloch (1890) 52, Capasso (1905) 175–6, Fiehn (1949) 1934, and Johannsen (2001) 570 (on Parthenope).

[55] See Vessey (1974b) 265–6. According to Hardie (1983) 68 (with n. 79) it is possible to deduce from these verses that Menecrates held priesthoods, what 'must remain uncertain', advises Nauta (2002) 221 n. 100.

The verses of the *Georgics* have an effect of closure, at which Statius also aims, and present a collective invocation of the gods followed by individual addresses,[56] whereas the structure of *Aeneid* 9.247—vocative followed by a relative pronoun—is similar to that of *Silv*. 4.8.45.

Without disregarding a reminiscence of the language of the *Georgics*, *Aeneid* 2.702 appears to be relevant to the Statian context, for it resumes not only the vocative *di patrii*, but also the verb of the prayer, *servate*. Moreover, the 'objects' which the gods are asked to preserve are the same: Virgil's *domum*, in the meaning of 'household', 'family', or 'race' (*OLD* s.v. *domus* 2b), becomes in Statius *hos . . . penates*, and the descendants of Menecrates, who are called *plebe sua* (55), are substituted for Aeneas' offspring, *nepotem*. What is more, the Virgilian context would lend to Statius' verses the brightness that the poet is predicting for the future of Menecrates' sons. In the *Aeneid* the prayer follows a highly significant omen, the tongue of fire appearing above the head of Iulus (*A*. 2.683–6). As is well known, this augury marks the boy as a fundamental player in the construction of Rome and is a sign that reassures the Trojans regarding their divine protection. The parallel between Iulus and Menecrates' children will sound all the more pertinent if we bear in mind that Naples, like Troy in the second book of the *Aeneid*, has recently faced a disaster—*insani . . . damna Vesaeui* (*Silv*. 4.8.5)—and the youngsters are regarded, at the beginning of 4.8, as a sign of renewed favour of the gods towards the city of Naples (*Silv*. 4.8.4–5, *A*. 2.680–704); their auspicious future, as we come to know some verses after (*Silv*. 4.8.62), is expected to culminate in the senate, at Rome.[57]

The diction of *Aeneid* 7.120–2 also deserves attention, for it displays resemblances with the last verses of Statius' prayer: the pronoun *vos* at the beginning of the line (*A*. 7.121 ~ *Silv*. 4.8.53), the location of *penates* after the imperative at the end of the line (*A*. 7.121 ~ *Silv*. 4.8.55), the 'objects' to be preserved by the gods (*domus*, *A*. 7.122 ~ *plebe sua*, *Silv*. 4.8.55; *patria*, *A*. 7.122 ~ *patriae*, *Silv*. 4.8.55), the similarity of sound and sense between *salve/salvete* and *servate* (*A*. 7.120–1 ~ *Silv*. 4.8.55). In addition, the context of this prayer in the *Aeneid* is again a highly symbolic episode, that of the 'eating of the tables' in fulfilment of Anchises' prediction.

I suggest that Statius' language in the prayer is indebted to Virgil's and that, even if subtly, the highly symbolic contexts of the *Aeneid* might enrich the reading of the prayer addressed to the gods of Naples, whose foundational legend, as well as historical characters, is being promoted and dignified in 4.8.

Independently of the Virgilian resonances, *Silvae* 4.8 shows hope in the future of the region under the protection of the gods that have protected the city for a long time. In this respect, the poem returns to Statius' perspective on Campania in 4.4. Contradicting Ekkehard Stärk's reading of 4.4 as the swansong

[56] Coleman (1988) 216 notes the similarity.
[57] On the relevance of this social move, see Nauta (2002) 221–2.

for Campania,[58] I share Newlands' understanding that, when the poet sings next to Virgil's tomb in 4.4.78–85, describing the landscape devastated by the recent eruption of Vesuvius, his focus is already on the regenerating power of the region.[59] Therefore, in my opinion, 4.8 continues and reinforces Statius' positive picture of a bright future for Naples in which Menecrates' offspring will participate. The expanding *suboles* is said to give 'comfort for the losses from crazed Vesuvius' (*insani solatur damna Vesaevi*, 5),[60] an observation that is indeed followed by the beginning of festivities and culminates in the description of a joyous house filled with the children's happy turmoil (6–19).

THE MATRITENSIS, EUMELUS' DAUGHTER, AND HOUSMAN

In the chapters devoted to Apollo as a god related to Cumae, Baiae, and Misenum, and anew as a god of Naples, the first text cited by Roy Peterson in his classic *The Cults of Campania* is *Silvae* 4.8.[61] And again Statius' poem provides an argument in favour of the importance of the phratry[62] god Eumelus when Peterson discusses the distinction between θεοὶ φράτριοι and θεοὶ πάτριοι:

> Yet this distinction does not seem always to have been observed, at least in the later times, because in one instance the image of the eponymous phratry god Eumelus is designated by the epithet πατρῷος. It may of course be true in this case that the god was honored by a wider circle than the members of a single phratry; he seems in fact to have been of some prominence from the circumstance that Eumelis replaces Parthenope as a designation for the nymph who guarded the city [Stat. *Silv*. 4.8.49]. But it does not seem possible, as is claimed by De Petra, that this god should be put in the same category as the major *dii patrii* of the community—Apollo, Demeter, and the Dioscuri.[63]

We gather from inscriptions, as Peterson says, that there was a god called Eumelus and that he gave his name to a Neapolitan phratry, the *Eumelidae*.[64] Little can be said about this character. An analysis of the word does not take us far: signifying 'rich in sheep', it easily assimilates its adjective *felix*, picking up the prefix *eu-*.[65] To search for an identity for Eumelus in classical mythology is unproductive, as Alfred Schiff observes whilst dismissing an identification

[58] Stärk (1995) 140–1. [59] Newlands (2010) 111.
[60] On the passage, see Sacerdoti in this volume. [61] Peterson (1919) 182–4.
[62] For a brief survey on the phratries of Naples with bibliography, see Lomas (1995) 112.
[63] Peterson (1919) 168–9.
[64] See Schiff (1939), Beloch (1890) 43, and Buchner, Morelli, and Nenci (1952) 399 for other inscriptions on the *Eumelidai*.
[65] Coleman (1988) 217. Vollmer (1898) 490 conveniently suggests that the adjective might be seen to roughly translate the Greek word *eumelis*.

with the Homeric Eumelus, the son of Admetus, one of Helen's suitors, and commander of the Thessalian troops from Pherae.[66] Cautiously, Peterson concludes that the character in question 'is probably another hero of Boeotian or Euboean extraction about whom nothing further is known'.[67]

Peterson relies on Statius' verses to affirm Eumelus' prominence, calling attention to the fact that Eumelis, and not Parthenope, as would be expected, designates the guardian nymph of the city.[68] The leading role of Parthenope in the foundation legend of Naples is well attested in ancient sources, of which *Silvae* 3.5 is part. Statius tells that the Siren Parthenope was guided by Apollo to the shore where the city now lies, and that the god's instrument for leading her to the spot was a dove (*nostraque nec propriis tenuis nec rara colonis / Parthenope, cui mite solum trans aequora vectae / ipse Dionaea monstravit Apollo columba*, 'There also is our Parthenope, neither meagre in her own folk nor lacking in settlers; to her, a traveller from overseas, Apollo himself showed a gentle soil with Dione's dove', 3.5.78–80).[69] Further, this appears to be the scene described by Statius in the passage on which Peterson is commenting, and that the Matritensis preserves as follows:

> tu, ductor populi longe migrantis, Apollo,
> cuius adhuc volucrem laeua cervice sedentem
> respiciens blande felix *eumeliss* adorat (Stat. *Silv*. 4.8.47–9)

A character depicted as *felix* is looking back at a dove sitting on Apollo's left shoulder and worships him with affection. This passage has been correctly interpreted as the description of a funerary monument commemorating the foundation of Naples, recalling several sources that mention a memorial of Parthenope (*σῆμα*, *μνῆμα*, *tumulus*), such as Lycophron, Strabo, Pliny the Elder, and some scholia to Virgil.[70] It is in this context that, returning to Peterson, one

[66] Schiff (1939).

[67] Peterson (1919) 170. The identification of Eumelus with the Homeric character, proposed by Beloch (1890) 148, was also rejected by Schiff (1939) and Vollmer (1898) 490. Heydemann (1866) does not present further conclusions.

[68] Surveys of the foundation myth and extensive catalogues of sources are available at Malkin (1987) 84–5, Fiehn (1949) 1934–6; see also Peterson (1919) 174–81 on Parthenope.

[69] On this passage, see also the chapters by Buogiovanni, Bessone, Esposito, Rosati, and Sacerdoti in this volume.

[70] Lyc. *Alex*. 719–21: *οὗ σῆμα δωμήσαντες ἔγχωροι κόρης / λοιβαῖσι καὶ θύσθλοισι Παρθενόπην βοῶν/ἔτεια κυδανοῦσιν οἰωνὸν θεάν* ('There the locals will construct a tomb for the maiden, and will honour her with yearly libations and sacrifices of oxen, Parthenope, the bird-goddess'); Str. 5.4.7: *…Νεάπολις ἐκλήθη διὰ τοῦτο, ὅπου δείκνυται μνῆμα τῶν Σειρήνων μιᾶς Παρθενόπης…* ('… a monument of Parthenope, one of the Sirens, is pointed out in Neapolis…'; cf. also 1.2.13 and 18); Plin. *Nat.* 3.62: *Neapolis Chalcidiensium, et ipsa Parthenope a tumulo Sirenis appellata…* ('on the coast stands Naples, itself also a colony of the Chalcidians, named Parthenope from the tomb of one of the Sirens…'); Schol. *ad* Verg. *G*. 4.563: *Parthenope id est Neapolis, quae primo ex corpore unius sirenis illic sepultae Parthenope est appellata* ('Parthenope, that is, Naples,

is invited to imagine Eumelis substituted for Parthenope: in a commemorative recreation of the very scene of the founding of the city. This explains why Eumelis, the daughter of Eumelus, had to be Parthenope in some way. In other words, the Matritensis fostered the creation of a new genealogical tree for the Siren.[71]

The most remarkable aspect of Peterson's exposition is that he is commenting on a Statian text that, from 1906 on, simply ceased to exist. Markland, Vollmer, and Postgate read *Eumelis*, a natural correction of M's *eumeliss* in line 49, but Housman's article on the *Silvae* published in 1906 led all subsequent editors to abandon the reading *Eumelis* in favour of *Eumelus*.[72] Housman argues that, since in the Matritensis *-iss* is a common error for *-us*—as is the case of *sitiss* for *situs* (*Silv.* 3.3.210), *boniss* for *bonus* (*Silv.* 4.3.134), *generosiss* for *generosus* (*Silv.* 5.2.22), *trucibiss for trucibus* (*Silv.* 5.4.5)—the ending *-iss* in *eumeliss* should be changed to *-us*, generating the reading *Eumelus*, 'whoever he might be'.[73] Housman claimed, in addition, that all the Sirens are daughters of Achelous (and Parthenope's parentage is even evoked by Silius, a contemporary, in *Pun.* 12.33–4). More recently, Liberman proposed that the reading *eumelus* of the Matritensis in *Silv.* 2.6.57, corrected by recent editors (including himself) to Eumaeus,[74] might be a reminiscence of Eumelus of *Silv*. 4.8.49, and that this might be a further point in favour of Housman's proposal.[75]

I believe that Housman's suggestion should be approached with caution. First, a fundamental question should be posed: how does 'Eumelus' fit into the scene depicted? Statius describes the action of the character through the verb *adorat*, that is, Eumelus would be the one adoring Apollo. However, since he is himself a god, this is, at the very least, peculiar. What led Coleman to suggest that Eumelus would not be a god but suggest instead that a 'hero, or a prominent Neapolitan citizen, seems more likely'.[76] It is also difficult to explain why this character would be playing exactly the Siren's role as it is described in the sources about the foundation of Naples. Since it is hardly conceivable that the Siren might be absent from a monument commemorating her own deed, the deed would have to have been attributed to another character, whilst the narrative

which was called Parthenope in the first place from the body of a siren buried there'). Peterson (1919) 178–80 discusses the sources about the location of the grave, collected by Buchner, Morelli, and Nenci (1952) 392–3.

[71] As Peterson (1919) 170 acknowledges, referring again to *Silv.* 4.8.49.

[72] Markland (1827) 121, Vollmer (1898) 490, Postgate (1905) 411, Klotz (1911) 127, Saenger (1909) 156, Phillimore (1917), Frère and Izaac (1961) 167, Marastoni (1970) 100, Traglia (1978) 134, Coleman (1988) 217, Courtney (1992) 113, Liberman (2010) 379, Shackleton Bailey and Parrott (2015) 282.

[73] Housman (1906) 46.

[74] This is the sole instance of the name in Latin literature, according to Newlands (2011) 214.

[75] Liberman (2010) 228 and 379.

[76] Coleman (1988) 217.

would be similar to that featured by Parthenope. This would not be the monument mentioned in ancient sources, since they specifically associate the name of the city with the memorial of the Siren—in some narratives, her grave. Moreover, it is possible to make sense of *Eumelis* in the context of Statius' *Silvae* 4.8, supposing that there was a Neapolitan version of the legend of Parthenope which transformed the Siren into the daughter of a locally eminent figure called Eumelus (how distinctive that would be!). Nonetheless, I do not see how the presence of Eumelus would be explained.

Secondly, returning to the Matritensis, an argument might be added in favour of maintaining the reading *Eumelis* of the manuscript. There are examples of words ending in *-iss* that are not an error for *-us*, but correspond to endings in *-is*. One case occurs at *Silv.* 3.1.13: the word *duniss* of the Matritensis is an error for *dumis*, which occurs in a sequence of ablatives describing the landscape. A correction to *-us* is out of the question for reasons of syntax:

> O velox pietas! Steriles hic nuper harenas
> ad sparsum pelago montis latus hirtaque dumis
> saxa nec ulla pati faciles vestigia terras
> cernere erat. (Stat. *Silv*. 3.1.12–15)

O rapid piety! A little while ago all we could see here was barren sand and sea-splashed mountainside and rocks shaggy with scrub and earth scarce willing to suffer print of foot.

The other example occurs also in the same poem. It is the word *templis*, which does not even admit an ending in *-us*:

> nam templis numquam statuetur terminus aevi,
> dum me flammigeri portabit machina caeli. (Stat. *Silv*. 3.1.180–1)

As for the temple, no limit of age shall be set so long as the fabric of the fiery sky shall carry me.

The existence of cases in which *-iss* is not an error for *-us*, but only the duplication of the final *s* of a word ending in *-is*, constitutes a strong argument against Housman's proposal. It shows that the error '*-is* for *-us*' is not systematic, reinforcing, on textual grounds, the hypothesis that Eumelis might not be an example of that error.

Considering the available sources on the foundation of Naples, whilst also having in mind how poor our knowledge of early Naples is and how problematic the textual history of the *Silvae*, I believe that we are not in a position to correct *Eumelis*, even if it were indeed an instance of the pattern of errors of the Matritensis. In this framework, changing the manuscript to obtain a reading that does not suit its context, or that suits it to a worse degree than the original reading, is not secure. Perhaps Eumelus was an error introduced in the textual tradition before the Matritensis was copied, and maybe it derives ultimately from a gloss of this erudite passage of the *Silvae*.

CONCLUSION

Silvae 4.8 is a most valuable source for the history of Naples, both early and contemporary of the Flavians. In the complex role of civic *vates* and intimate friend, Statius creates an appropriate context for commenting both on Menecrates' prominent household and on the lengthy and prestigious history of Naples. Yet the information available, both on early Naples and on the family (we do not even possess the names of Menecrates' wife or of the children), is scant and riddled with doubts. This, of course, does not facilitate the exegesis of a poem which constantly frustrates attempts at mapping allusions that might help us understand Statius' attitude towards the poetic tradition. If the Ovidian and Virgilian backgrounds might with all probability have influenced 4.8, the only influence which appears to be beyond doubt, that of Propertius, appears, in its particular occurrence, the least appropriate. This leads us to the nature of Statius' artistry. Bold imagination, refined interpretation, and reinvention of the poetic tradition are to be considered at all times, lest we adopt erroneous approaches such as trying to 'normalize' his poetry (and where would we draw the line?). Finally, when it comes to reading Statius as a historical source, the need to bring together exegesis and textual criticism becomes particularly clear, even if, at times, it simply leads us to recognize the limited nature of our conclusions.