

EXCAVATING *SILVAE* 1.1 OF STATIUS

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To my grandmother Martha Ann Michael,
who first taught me to read,
without whom I could not have begun to translate and write.

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Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School
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Silvae 1.1 introduces what scholars generally call Statius' sycophantic collection of occasional poems. Because Statius wrote *Silvae* 1.1 as an ekphrastic representation of Domitian's equestrian statue, crafted by a sculptor and commissioned by the Senate and people of Rome, the poem is unique. Yet, how the poem and its subject affect Roman viewers is unclear. Statius initially seems to praise Domitian excessively, but upon a closer examination Statius praises only the statue. Moreover, this praise does not flatter Domitian clearly.

Ambiguous allusions throughout the poem evoke questionable mythological scenes, recent history, and topographical features within and beyond the Forum Romanum. Examining these allusions combined with the archaeological background of equestrian sculpture and how Statius presents Domitian's work in the Forum is a fruitful line of inquiry. We then see that Statius explores the limits of panegyric and subverts Domitian's public image with his careful poetics in *Silvae* 1.1.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

In her social commentary on the “half-people,” American author Marya Mannes critiques public representation: “People on horses look better than they are. People in cars look worse than they are.”¹ Viewers see only half of a car-riding person's body, but horse-riding people are in full view. The medium for one's representation also creates different impressions for different audiences. Modern people traveling in public can represent themselves and their political views through vehicle choice, for example by choosing the environmentally conscious options of hybrids or carpools. Leaders can commission statues of themselves in a certain style, or the public can commemorate leaders in a certain manner by choosing a particular monument type or statue pose. This modern phenomenon is not much different from practices of the ancient Romans. Poets in antiquity represented their views through their poetry. When leaders and poets deal with the same subject, the emphases or modes of representation contrast. The audience then must interpret the competing messages conveyed by the competing representations. Because Statius wrote *Silvae* 1.1 as an ekphrastic representation of Domitian's equestrian statue, crafted by a sculptor and commissioned by the Senate and people of Rome, the poem is unique.²

Regarding equestrian sculpture, if a culture associates the horse with grandeur, honor, and power, then the horse's rider maintains a positive image. Yet, the positive associations with a mode of representation go only so far in flattering the subject. The rider possesses these valued traits through his association with the horse. Upon first

1 See Mannes (1958) 38-39.

2 For an analysis of the poem as *ekphrasis*, see Newlands (2002), Marshall (2011), and Duffalo (2013) 206-219.

consideration Domitian on horseback appears honorable and respectable. Indeed, Roman equestrian sculpture is a grand and expensive work of honorary art with respectable military associations; however, Domitian's representation is problematic because his campaigns against the Dacians and Chatti were neither entirely successful nor popular at least among the senators.³ The confusing depiction detracts from any perceivable honor provided by the statue type.⁴

How accurately the representation mimics reality draws attention to and away from the subject. Romans discontented by Domitian's reign might have spotted the emperor's equestrian sculpture and then could have made observations and judgments similar to those of Mannes. *Silvae* 1.1 praises Domitian on a surface level; however, this flattery does not align with the image of Domitian handed down elsewhere.⁵ At times, allusions bearing negative associations in the poem contradict this praise. Is the poem merely praise, or does it register discontent among its audience? If *Silvae* 1.1 registers discontent with Domitian's rule, then how does the medium of equestrian sculpture and its surroundings as described by Statius contribute to a politicized reading of the poem?

Silvae 1.1 is the first poem in the collection of poetry published perhaps in 93 CE.⁶ Statius (ca. 45 - ca. 96) first composed *Silvae* 1.1, however, around the year 90 on the day after the statue's dedication in the Forum Romanum. This event, Statius admits, is the inspiration for the poem (*Silv.* 1. *Praef.*): *centum hos versus quos in eum maximum feci indulgentissimo imperatori postero die quam dedicaverat opus tradere*

3 Suet. *Dom.* 6.

4 See for instance Tacitus' account of Domitian's mocked triumphs at *Agr.* 39.

5 Domitian's reputation commonly seen in Roman literature derives primarily from senatorial ranked authors. Because Statius was not in this biased class of writers, an analysis of his work offers a different perspective with which we may contrast the typical image we have of the emperor.

6 For discussion of the dates regarding the life and publications of Statius, see Coleman (1988). *Silvae* will hereafter be abbreviated *Silv.* I follow standard abbreviations from the third edition revised of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*. See Coleman (1988) for a summary of the career of Statius.

iussus sum, “I was requested to hand down these hundred verses, which I composed on 'the largest horse,' for (our) very kind emperor on the day after he had dedicated the work.”⁷ Domitian as subject of *dedicaverat*, however, is striking when contrasted with the statue being described as *populi magnique senatus munere* “a gift of the people and great Senate” when we would expect Domitian as the dedicant in the dative case. The authority is divided between the emperor, people, and Senate (*Silv.* 1.1.99-100). Interpretation of the poem is further complicated by ambiguity in the manuscript reading. Throughout this thesis, I follow the text of Courtney, except for *ausus sum*, for which I read *iussus sum*.⁸ Ahl accepted the earlier manuscript reading of *iussus sum* and made it the foundation of his subversive interpretation of the text; I agree with Ahl.⁹ In poetry written under Domitian, we may recognize a particular severity of expression with the verb *iubeo*. With this manuscript reading and interpretation of the verb in mind, we can focus more on the meaning of the poem and its relevance to Domitian's public image. The reading of *iussus sum* in the context of the poem as subversive to Domitian's portrayal is consistent with other surviving accounts of Domitian in Suetonius and Tacitus.

Interpretation of *Silvae* 1.1 must begin with discussion of panegyric and *ekphrasis* because the poem first appears full of praise, ekphrastic language, and honorary art. Panegyric developed from formal public speeches that praised politicians, and so *Silvae* 1.1 does not seem too different from earlier Greek *encomia* upon first

7 All translations are mine; I follow Courtney's Latin text (1990) except for the preface to *Silv.* 1 where I read *iussus sum* instead of *ausus sum*. I cite *Silv.* 1.1 by line numbers only, unless the citation seems ambiguous.

8 See Geysen (1996) 27-30 for further discussion of manuscript readings, although I disagree with his overall approach to allusions and his final interpretation of *ausus sum* as the correct reading.

9 See White (1993) 64-99. In his study of the verb *iubeo* in Augustan poetry, White found that poets were not ordered to write poetry so much as requested without fear of death. They then exaggerated the emperor or patron's request by describing it in terms of an order.

consideration. Yet, Romans of the imperial age lived in a different political climate from the Greeks. For example, fear of Domitian's strict control of literature permeates Tacitus' *Agricola* in which Tacitus recounts the dangers of panegyric in particular at the beginning of the text.¹⁰ Because of Domitian's politics and reputation, scholars take one of three stances on this poem and usually direct primary attention to panegyric.

First, Ahl interprets the poem as subverting praise of Domitian, but his analysis meets much criticism.¹¹ No one since Ahl's interpretation has argued in print that the poem is primarily subversive. Subversive poetry is thought to undercut an authority figure or a political structure while avoiding detection. Subversion is the act of transforming an opinion, idea, ideology, or a group influenced by these subjects against itself. Under Domitian's reign, subversive literature criticized his abilities, policies, habits, and public representation; however, a subversive interpretation of the *Silvae* has fallen out of favor among scholars. Second, Geysen argues that Statius sincerely praises Domitian in a specific style he calls "imperial panegyric."¹² This proposed style of panegyric, Geysen asserts, is less political in its aims, less formulaic, and more open to innovation than other prose and poetic panegyrics; he contends that the innovative technique of Statius leads scholars to misread the text. Third, Newlands presses for a more balanced reading between the two extreme sides of the debate.¹³ Her notion of the poetics of empire explains how the use of *ekphrasis* comments "in a dynamic, evocative way ... upon the social conditions of art and patronage within Flavian Rome"

10 Tac. *Agr.* 1-3. See Coleman (1986) for discussion of Domitian's relationship with literature and authors writing under his rule. See Sailor (2008) Chapter 1 and 2 for an exploration of the dangers expressed in *Agricola*.

11 Ahl (1984) 78-102. For Ahl's critics, see Geysen (1996), Nauta (2002), and Newlands (2002). Coleman (2003a) summarizes the status of scholarship on the *Silvae*.

12 See Geysen (1995).

13 See Newlands (2002).

and thereby displays the politicized nature of the poem.¹⁴ This mode of social commentary captures an aspect of subversion whereby Statius indirectly challenges Domitian's characterization. In reviewing the scholarship, Coleman maintains that the *Silvae* reflect Domitian's autocratic rule.¹⁵ Along this spectrum of critical interpretation, this thesis first reevaluates *Silvae* 1.1 with consideration for Ahl's argument and then incorporates later readings into an updated evaluation. This approach will help reconcile the poem's ekphrastic and archaeological aspects.¹⁶

Ahl cites the presence of Quintilian's "figured speech" (*schema*, *Inst.* 9.1.14), "pretending to say one thing and actually saying something else" in *Silvae* 1.1.¹⁷ Moreover, when discussing rhetorical training for authors writing under tyrants, Quintilian writes (*Inst.* 9.2.67):

quamlibet enim apertum quod modo et aliter intelligi possit in illos tyrannos bene dixeris quia periculum tantum non etiam offensa vitatur. Quod si ambiguitate sententiae possit eludi nemo non illi furto favet.¹⁸

Indeed, against those tyrants you can safely say as publicly as pleases what should be able to be understood in one way or another, since such danger is avoided without even having caused offense; if such danger can be evaded by ambiguity of expression, anyone would be in favor of that trick.

This passage accommodates a subversive reading of works written under tyrants and especially under Domitian since Quintilian himself was writing of this practice in Flavian Rome. *Silvae* 1.1 represents the first and most public poem of the collection because

14 Newlands (2002) 87.

15 Coleman (1986); (2003a) 12.

16 Scholarship on *Silv.* 1.1 avoids the details of equestrian sculpture scholarship, which remains primarily in German. Newlands (2002), for example, defers to North (1985) on poetry's connection with modern sculpture as a comparison to equestrian sculpture rather than exploring Roman equestrian portraiture.

17 Ahl (1984) 82-83. See Roche (2009) 373-374 for full discussion of Quintilian's writing on figured speech under Domitian.

18 I follow the Loeb text edited by Goold (1976) 416-417.

Stattus presented it directly to Domitian after the statue's dedication ceremony.¹⁹ Quintilian's insistence upon a work being interpretable "in one way or another," (*modo et aliter*, Quint. *Inst.* 9.2.67), is key for analyzing *Silvae* 1.1. Although the poem is a panegyric that applauds Domitian's vanity, the incongruity between the praise and the mythological, historical, and topographical allusions overshadows the flattery. This form of writing "with ambiguity," (*ambiguitate*, Quint. *Inst.* 9.2.67), constitutes subversion because it is a poetic "trick," (*furto*, Quint. *Inst.* 9.2.67). Stattus was without doubt indebted to his father's high education in and teaching of rhetoric and poetry.²⁰ It is likely then that Stattus was aware of all the tools which Quintilian discusses. I explore the ambiguity of praise in the poem through the equestrian statue's presentation and the topographical allusions.

When panegyric is at the forefront of discussion, scholars often overlook details, such as the equestrian statue type, and context, such as the location of the statue in the Forum. So narrow an approach that considers only praise denies the poem its unity. It pays to consider the value of the sculpture type, its relation to the topography as Stattus presents it, and its relation to the actual topography of the Domitianic Forum.²¹ Poets of the imperial court needed to be able to write without risking exile or death, especially under Domitian's rule with the threat of "informants" (*delatores*).²² Bartsch's notion of

19 I single out *Silv.* 1.1 as one of the few poems which we have evidence for Domitian as the recipient (Stat. *Silv.* 1. *Praef.*), although Domitian either is a subject of or also allegedly received *Silv.* 1.6 and 4.1-3. See Newlands (2002) for further discussion on Domitian throughout the *Silvae*.

20 See McNelis (2002).

21 By the term "Domitianic Forum" I mean the Forum Romanum under Domitian's rule. Evidence suggests that Domitian planned and implemented much of the foundational work for what Nerva gained credit after Domitian's memory sanctions; much of this work appears in what is called Nerva's Forum and the Forum Transitorium, but the Chronographer of 356 and Eusebius, as translated into Latin by St. Jerome, attribute to Domitian a great amount of construction and monuments. For further discussion, see Anderson (1983).

22 See Rutledge (2001) 9-19, 129-136.

“doublespeak” in panegyric offers praise for the patron and a means of expression for the poet. Focus on an honorary equestrian statue for Domitian permits Statius this opportunity for criticism. Praise for the statue veils any potentially negative criticism. Again the question arises: How accurately does the statue reflect Domitian, and does it create any tension among the viewers' perceptions? Statius mitigates the perception of his criticism by praising the statue, but is the criticism still perceptible?

The medium of equestrian sculpture, an art form with a complex history of its own, is the vehicle for Domitian's public image in this poem.²³ Attention to the medium sparks an important question to be explored: Does the equestrian statue have a certain political value that inspires Statius? Equestrian sculpture possesses a particular resonance with viewers in the Roman Forum. This portrait type is used for many leaders in public, politically significant spaces: Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Domitian, Nerva, Trajan, Marcus Aurelius, and lesser known celebrity generals and politicians of means. The sculpture type's stately grandeur and political capital demand attention, for Statius praises Domitian—and particularly the bronze horse—to such an extent that the panegyric lends itself to criticism. We must consider whether Statius is praising Domitian sincerely or is using rhetorical techniques with enough ambiguity to criticize the emperor safely. Statius writes of Domitian as publicly as he pleases, but any detectable criticism is safe because of its ambiguity hidden in allusions.

Because Statius emphasizes the historic event of the statue's dedication, he fixes the poem in real time and in a specific location, the center of the Roman Forum. Throughout the poem, Statius juxtaposes topographical referents with the equestrian

²³ See Eaverly (1995) for Archaic Greek equestrian sculpture and Bergemann (1990) for Roman equestrian sculpture.

statue. I contend that each noted monument bears upon the meaning of the statue. Some of these monuments have their own equestrian statues or equestrian relief sculpture; others have certain political associations. Still, some monuments allegedly in the Forum at the time and within relative proximity of Domitian's statue are absent. Why does Statius describe certain monuments to fix the statue's location in the Forum while excluding certain other monuments which seem to have been nearby and perhaps even prominent? Do certain monuments with particular associations add meaning to the poem, or does a monument's lack of mention in the poem possess any poetic value?

Contradicted panegyric, equestrian sculpture as a problematic mode of representation, and topographical allusions point toward a subversive reading. Chapter 2 examines the subversive criticism of Domitian and his image through a close reading of the text. Following upon Ahl's evaluation and his critics, my analysis focuses first on the poem as panegyric and then in the context of the statue's dedication ceremony in the public sphere. Chapter 3 explores the political nature of the equestrian sculpture type as it relates to the topography of Domitianic Rome and to the poem. By Chapter 4 we can see how presentation of Domitian's Forum and the topographical allusions being juxtaposed with the statue criticize Domitian's public image. In the end, I offer a reappraisal of *Silvae* 1.1 as subversive based on archaeological aspects of the poem left previously unconsidered.

Finally, I must note the shortcomings and limitations of this work. The intricacies of artistic choice, politics in poetry, and representation in Rome are no doubt complex topics. This thesis focuses instead only on a political reading of *Silvae* 1.1 in light of the portrayal of Domitian through the use of subversive praise and equestrian sculpture as

the primary media for representation within the poem. Due to the lack of biographical information on Statius that is available to modern scholars, certainty of the true intentions behind the poetry and politics of Statius is impossible; however, my approach is not unreasonable given the history of literary patronage by emperors, namely Augustus, Nero, and Domitian, and the questionable politics noticed in works by authors such as Vergil, Horace, Ovid, and Lucan. Moreover, the poetry of Statius, as one of the few non-senatorial sources from Flavian Rome, serves as an important avenue for research on the perception of Domitian. Likewise, I frequently cite details of Domitian's biography documented by Suetonius, although Suetonius does not provide an account which we should accept as totally unbiased truth.²⁴ The use of buildings, monuments, and images in general by emperors for propaganda has also been discussed thoroughly in prior scholarship; art under Domitian proves no different from propaganda under earlier emperors.²⁵

The survival of archaeological sources also obfuscates the reading of *Silvae* 1.1. The number of statues surviving fully intact is especially scarce due to the practice of melting bronze statues for weaponry. Even the remarkably preserved equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius does not survive with its base or in its original location. This issue is common for many statues; however, bases separated from equestrian statues are unique because they typically retain three or four hole-marks where the sculptors set up the horse statues. Archaeologists discovered an equestrian base in the center of the Forum and closely fitting with the description of Domitian's statue by Statius.²⁶ I

24 I follow the Loeb text with a translation by J. C. Rolfe (1965).

25 See West (1949), Jones (1971), Carradice (1983), Zanker (1988), and Vasta (2007).

26 I do not propose a specific location for the statue. I choose to settle on a relative location based on studies of equestrian statue bases and scholarship suggesting where Domitian's equestrian statue stood.

presume that Domitian's statue, as Statius knew it, stood in the vicinity of the unidentified equestrian statue base.

The most difficult task of this thesis is reconstructing the Forum as it existed under Domitian. I take a systematic approach relying on the most updated and thorough works on topography of the Forum. This endeavor is complicated, however, by the fact that I have not yet visited Rome myself. To remedy this issue, I rely on a series of maps of the reconstructed Forum that identify Domitian's likely changes between the reigns of Vespasian and Trajan.²⁷ I omit Nerva because he is not known for any major changes to the Forum during the brief time he was emperor. My approach also must consider events which heavily impacted the design of the Forum before, during, and after Domitian's rule, including but not being limited to fires, the relocation of buildings and monuments, and accidents of survival in either physical or literary form. Because the Basilica Aemilia is one of the most prominent buildings noted and remaining most stable through the Forum's history around Domitian's statue, it serves as my touchstone for analysis. It is the stable point around which I, beginning North and rotating counter-clockwise, survey the Forum.

In the end, my investigations of equestrian sculpture and of the topography of the Forum as presented by Statius support a subversive reading. *Silvae* 1.1 is a poem subversive to Domitian's public image and reflects Domitian's autocratic tendencies. The poem is independent of its preface yet dependent on its connection to rhetorical

See Thomas (2004) for a recent survey of the presumed location of Domitian's statue. While I maintain an ambiguous central location, I agree with Thomas (2004) 30, fig.7, 33, fig. 8, and 38, fig. 14, on the potential location near the Column of Phocas and the Rostra.

²⁷ See Seaman and Matzke (1972) 12 for the Forum of the Republic. In contrast, see Richardson (1992) 171, fig. 40 and Claridge (2010) 89, fig. 27, for imperial maps of the Forum which focus on the framed image Statius creates in *Silv.* 1.1. See Coarelli (2007) 48, fig. 14 for a three-dimensional reconstruction of the Forum, although it includes post-Domitianic constructions.

practices that Quintilian deemed common. Statius supplies a proper degree of ambiguity for an open interpretation and safe criticism according to Quintilian. Aware of this danger of criticism while writing under Domitian, Statius is a poet in control of his poetic and political agenda.

CHAPTER 2
IT'S JUST *SILVAE* 1.1 AFTER AHL

Approaches to *Silvae* 1.1

In 1984, Ahl published “The Rider and Horse: Politics and Power in Roman Poetry from Horace to Statius,” an analysis of the poetry written under the Roman emperors Augustus, Nero, Vespasian, and Domitian. Ahl argued that Statius subverts Domitian's rule in *Silvae* 1.1 through the use of “figured speech,” (*schema*, Quint. *Inst.* 9.1.14); later scholars, such as Geysen, heavily critiqued the article.¹ For when Courtney emended the Oxford manuscript reading of the first preface from *iussus sum* to *ausus sum*, scholarship on *Silvae* 1.1 reflected this change in how scholars interpreted this poem. Because the former manuscript reading served as the foundation for Ahl's argument, his subversive view of the poem lost much of its validity.² Since Ahl's study, Geysen and Newlands have reevaluated the poem; yet, these scholars have not provided a reading that sufficiently reconciles the poem's ambiguity with the preface, praise, the medium of equestrian sculpture, and the topographical referents in the Forum. Despite challenges to Ahl's reading, ambiguity is detectable in Statius' praise. The poem registers discontent with Domitian's public image through its use of mythological and historical allusions. In light of Ahl's critics, it is time to reevaluate *Silvae* 1.1 as subversive to Domitian's attempt at controlling and bolstering his public image.

Statius alludes to mythological and historical characters throughout *Silvae* 1.1. Although each allusion is situated in a positive light by praise, Statius permits the allusions, both positive and negative, to retain their mythological and historical background by not expanding on or altering any major details. Any negative

1 See Geysen (1996), Nauta (2002), and Newlands (2002).

2 Courtney (1990) accepts Sandström's reading for the Oxford text, which critics of Ahl follow.

connotations overshadow positive traits and color the poem subversive to Domitian's public image because Statius juxtaposes these allusions with the emperor's honorary statue. These duplicitous allusions promote an ambiguous interpretation, to recall Quintilian's words. Some of these allusions and references appear more than once. The following discussion of the preface and a line-by-line analysis of lines 1 through 83 pauses on allusions which are especially pointed, ambiguous, or lengthy. I discuss the rest of the poem (lines 84-107) only after examining equestrian sculpture.

Preface to *Silvae* 1

Statius introduces Domitian as a “most kind emperor,” (*indulgentissimo imperatori*, *Silv.* 1. *Praef.* 18). *Indulgens* derives from the verb *indulgeo*, meaning to be kind, to bestow kindness, to indulge, to concede, or to yield. When an author employs the adjective form, he can suggest multiple meanings, two of which contrast sharply in sense. When used for patrons and deities, the word denotes being looked on favorably, showing kindness to another, or acceding to a request. Because Statius conflates Domitian with the divine sphere in the poem's four initial rhetorical questions, the definition for patrons and deities fits well with praise and especially well when paired with Statius described as “having been requested to hand down [the poem],” (*iussus sum tradere*, *Silv.* 1. *Praef.* 19).

An alternative definition of *indulgents* connotes the modern English meaning of indulgence, giving into one's feelings, desires, and free movement; the verb form also denotes yielding or conceding, such as giving in to treaties.³ The definition associated with concession is especially relevant since Domitian ultimately resorted to entering a

3 *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (1982) “indulgeo;” “indulgens;” “indulgentia.”

treaty with the Dacians.⁴ This alternative definition would characterize Domitian not positively but as out of control as a military general. The meaning and use of the word is duplicitous. Quintilian remarks that the use of the superlative in panegyric sometimes creates a humorous effect opposite of what the intention might be.⁵ Thus a writer can employ the superlative as a form of mockery while still feigning praise. Because of the combination of the duplicitous word and its superlative form, we should recognize its ambiguity as potentially subversive and laudatory. Thus, a two-fold interpretation that takes into account these variant definitions best reconciles the poem with its preface.

Proem (1-10)

The poem's four initial rhetorical questions associate the emperor with the divine sphere. Emphasis on the statue's size replicates in bronze Domitian's divine genius. The statue, and thus Domitian, "stands embracing the Latin Forum," (*stat Latium complexa forum*, *Silv.* 1.1.2), a detail which accentuates the alleged might of Domitian's reign. Yet, in Flavian Rome the Forum was a crowded, noisy space, and the description of Domitian's statue as colossal indicates further crowding of the Forum.⁶ These four rhetorical questions shift focus from horse, to rider, and back to horse. Statius adheres to this programmatic arrangement in the poem before he evaluates, through the speech of Curtius, the monument as one complete subject. The sincerity of the praise hinted at in the proem is not apparent throughout *Silvae* 1.1, for the flattering rhetorical questions are overshadowed later by answers that deny the statue's divine origins.

The equine statue rather than Domitian's portrait takes center stage as the primary subject. Statius first attributes to the statue three material terms: *mōles* (1),

4 Stat. *Silv.* 3.3.168; Jones (1992) 150-151.

5 Quint. *Inst.* 8.6.74. See Roche (2009) 370-374.

6 Although I disagree with the conclusions, see Geysen (1996) for elaboration on the immensity of the statue in the crowded Forum.

opus (3), and *effigies* (4). Vergil employs these same three words in his description of the Trojan horse (*Aen.* 2.150, 2.184, 2.185, 2.235), which we are meant to recall by Statius' explicit intertextual reference in the comparison and contrast of Domitian's statue to the Trojan horse (*Dardanii ... equi, Silv.* 1.1.9). Statius affords both fame and wonder for the statue: "Come, let earlier fame known throughout the ages wonder at the renown of the Dardanian horse," (*nunc age fama prior notum per saecula nomen / Dardanii miretur equi, Silv.* 1.1.8-9). This phrase recalls Vergil's *molem mirantur equi* (*Aen.* 2.32) when everyone in the city first sees the Trojan horse; however, they collectively accept the horse into the city's gates without question. Statius presents Domitian's statue in the same way, for it appears in the center of the Forum as if it came "from the sky completed," (*caelone peractum, Silv.* 1.1.2).

The series of four opening questions flatters Domitian and doubles as an intertextual reference to Vergil's Trojan horse (*Aen.* 2.150-151): "For what reason did they build this huge horse? Who is the creator of it? / What do they seek? What religious thing or what machine of war is it?" *Quo molem hanc immanis equi statuere? Quis auctor? / Quidve petunt? Quae religio, aut quae machina belli?* Statius questions the origin of Domitian's statue in the same manner in which the Trojans investigated the wooden horse. The devastation caused by the Trojan horse in the *Aeneid* threatens that any comparison to it might result in a similar tragedy. Combined with Domitian's questionable military experience, this parallel between the *Aeneid* and *Silvae* 1.1 warrants suspicion that the poem is not sincerely laudatory.

Statius situates Domitian, as opposed to the horse, as a secondary focus; he is the "colossus" (*colosso*, 1), an addition which doubles the size (*geminata*, 1) of the horse statue as focal point. Describing Domitian as "placed above" (*superimposito*, 1)

does reiterate his pervasive control as emperor, but the imposing nature of the statue in the cramped Forum is the highlighted feature. The vocative *Germanice* shifts the focus of the poem from the horse to the emperor (5). Vollmer identifies this address as a reference to Domitian as “peace-giver.”⁷ As such, the title can recall either Augustan peace or even the Julian Germanicus. For Domitian, being addressed as *Germanice* would be favorable. Numismatic evidence shows that the emperor began using this name on his coins as likely propaganda.⁸ The moniker also can indicate criticism for Domitian's recent military affairs in Germany.⁹ For Domitian's critics, this reference might seem a joke given his lack of military experience when he is compared to Vespasian and Titus. Because of the ambiguous interpretations, Statius' choice of *Germanice* rather than Domitian is sensible, laudatory, and satirical at the same time.

The appearance of Pallas Minerva, shown by metonymy “with the hands of Pallas” is a powerful allusion (*Palladiae manus*, 5-6). In context, Minerva's presence most immediately acknowledges her role in creating the Trojan horse (*Verg. Aen.* 2.31) and assisting with the shield of Aeneas (*Aen.* 8.424-425, further indicated by Brontes and Steropes, *Silv.* 1.1.4). Moreover, Domitian is said to have worshipped Minerva as his patron goddess, and so we should expect her appearance here.¹⁰ A reading of this passage as sincere indicates that Domitian's statue represents his divinity supported by the hands of Pallas Minerva. The link to the deceit behind the Trojan horse, though, is explicit and warrants a pointed reading. Statius implies that the equestrian statue is as

7 Vollmer (1898, 1971).

8 See Carradice (1983) 142.

9 Suet. *Dom.* 6 attributes to luck Domitian's success in Germany.

10 See Geysen (1996) for further discussion and bibliography on Domitian's worship of Minerva; I agree with his conclusions regarding the significance of the *palladium* and allusion to it in *Silv.* 1.1.

duplicious a gift for Domitian's image and the Forum Romanum as the Trojan horse was for Troy.

The Horse Statue (11-21)

Focus in the poem returns to Domitian's horse, but the intertextuality with the Trojan horse continues from the previous description. What does Statius mean when he states: "Pergamum ...would not have seized this horse" (*neque ...cepissent Pergama*, 11)? Would the people of the city have doubted the statue's sincerity as a gift, or does this statement refer to the statue's size and inability to fit in the gates? Ahl notes the problem of the subjunctive verb in the passage, for it permits ambiguous interpretation.¹¹ For Statius, ambiguity is a tool rather than a problem. Geysen and Duffalo both emphasize the immense size of the statue.¹² Indeed, the statue's size is important in interpreting the passage, but the intertextual reading is most logical because overt allusions to the *Aeneid* continue.

The "mixed flock of boys and girls ... [who] would not have led it" (*nec grege permixto pueri innuptaeque puellae ... duceret*, 12-13) parallels the children who led the horse into Troy's walls (*Aen.* 2.238). Statius introduces Aeneas and Hector because neither man could lead the horse (13); this idea corresponds to praise first and subversion second. Where Aeneas and Hector fail, Domitian succeeds in controlling the horse. The direct reference to Aeneas and Hector indeed equates Domitian's horse with the Trojan horse. With Domitian shown in control of such a destructive subject, Statius shifts blame for destruction of the city to the emperor. The ambiguity of the allusion, however, urges the modern reader to consider the intertextuality with Hector's appearance in the *Aeneid* and to recall the appearance of Hector's ghost "bearing

11 Ahl (1984) 93.

12 Geysen (1996) 35-56; Duffalo (2013) 211-219.

wounds” (*vulnera gerens*, *Aen.* 2.270-279). Although Vergil depicts Hector imitating a hero superior to himself when he wears the armor of Achilles, Statius describes Domitian “bearing war and gentle peace,” (*bellum placidamque gerentia pacem*, *Silv.* 1.1.16).

The imperative *adde* shifts the attention in *Silvae* 1.1 from Hector to Domitian's face. Ahl emphasizes the ambiguity in translating the phrase *gerentia pacem*, which can mean either “bearing peace” or “waging peace.”¹³ Either the phrase praises Domitian's prowess in war and his ability to perpetuate the idea of Augustan peace as Flavian, or the phrase praises the idea of “waging peace” while war is only *mixta*, suggesting criticism of Domitian's questionable success on his campaigns from the years 88 to 89. Comparison of Domitian's horse to the Bistonian steed of Mars emphasizes divine weight as previously noted; more importantly, however, the connection with Mars reiterates Domitian's insistence that he is and should appear divine.¹⁴

Domitian's Statue (22-45)

Statius three times employs a form of the word “gentle,” (*mitis*, 15, 25, 102), to characterize the emperor's portrait, and thus the emperor himself. Such an adjective does not seem fitting as praise considering the historical allusion to Domitian's campaigns against the Chatti and Dacians (27) and the impression Suetonius leaves of the campaigns' lack of popularity.¹⁵ Should a successful military leader be gentle? However, given the emphasis on the statue's size and divine associations elsewhere, a

13 Ahl (1984) 93. The Latin can indicate nearly the same expression, but an idiomatic combination of words with the participle of *gerere* and the opposite of *bellum* where we normally translate “waging war” presents the opportunity for a pointed reading.

14 See also Marshall (2008).

15 Suet. *Dom.* 6.

gentle feature could allude to Domitian's status as a god. Indeed, Domitian's head is depicted high above Rome (*Silv.* 1.1.32-36):

ipse autem puro celsum caput aere saeptus
templa superfulges et prospectare videris
an nova contemptis surgant Palatia flammis
pulchrius, an tacita vigilet face Troicus ignis
atque exploratas iam laudet Vesta ministras.

Moreover the head itself surrounded by pure air shines high over the temples, and you seem to be looking out for whether the new Palatine arises more beautiful from the despised flames, or whether the Trojan fire keeps watch with its silent torch and already Vesta praises her investigated attendants.

Domitian, or at least his statue in the poem, looks to the Palatine perhaps anxiously because of the flames described as *contemptis* (34). By recalling the “Trojan fire ... with its silent torch,” (35), Vesta, and her “investigated attendants,” (*exploratas ... ministras*, 36), Statius draws a connection between the reign of Domitian and the longevity of Rome. The fire on the Palatine vividly recalls Troy's demise, and Statius identifies the gaze of Domitian's statue as directed at this site.¹⁶ This semantic signal from Statius shifts not just the emperor's gaze but the ancient reader's attention to the Palatine. The combination of the Trojan horse allusion and the Vestal fire having been brought to Rome greatly detracts from any praise of the emperor. Because the longevity of Rome is associated with the sacred flame of Vesta and because the emperor is in charge of keeping Vesta's vows protected via the Vestal Virgins, Statius does not positively portray Domitian's image as successful leader. Although Domitian investigated and severely punished Vestals who broke their sacred vows under his rule, this allusion to the incident also commemorates Domitian's failure and his questionable ability to rule

¹⁶ Robathan (1942) 132 roughly dates this fire to 80 CE. Therefore, the construction would have taken place between 80 and the composition of *Silv.* 1.1 around 92 CE.

because the Vestals had the opportunity to falter or to be corrupted under the emperor's tutelage in the first place.¹⁷

The “Tritonian maiden” (*Tritonia virgo*, 37) and “Medusa's head” (*colla Medusae*, 37), held by the goddess' statue which in turn is held by Domitian, spur on the horse and fortify Domitian's semblance of divinity. For Domitian's body, the statue's sculptor used bronze from Temese, famous for its high-quality, expensive metals. Statius first alludes to Temese after indicating the size and grandeur of Domitian: “And your chest which is able to solve the world's problems, to which Temese exhausted of all her metals, gave over herself,” (*pectora quae mundi valeant evolvere curas / et quis se totis Temese dedit hausta metallis*, 41-42). Because bronze sculpture is so expensive, Statius might be using Temese as veiled criticism for Domitian draining the Roman treasury of its funds.¹⁸ Next, Orion appears menacing as he “threatens in winter nights and frightens the stars,” (*minatur / noctibus hibernis et sidera terret Orion*, 44-45). Because Domitian's sword matches that of Orion, Statius characterizes Domitian too as threatening and terrifying.

The Horse Revisited (45-63)

As promised in the poem's programmatic introduction, Statius returns focus to the horse with an odd expression: *imitatus equestres* (46). Statius reveals that Domitian's horse imitates an equestrian horse. Sincere panegyric would not admit imitation when elsewhere Statius emphasizes the statue's immense size and superiority over gods. Domitian's public image appears less genuine from this statement because this expression cannot easily align with the notion of praise. Despite the comparatively

¹⁷ Suet. *Dom.* 8.

¹⁸ Suet. *Dom.* 45.

greater stature of Domitian's horse, the statue as Statius describes it still recalls Vergil's Trojan horse.

Statius next alludes to two famous mythological horses, Arion and Cyllarus. Arion earned his fame for obeying only one rider ("he will serve for one star," *atque uni serviet astro*, *Silv.* 1.1.55) and for racing in the funeral games of *Thebaid* (6.301-325).¹⁹

"Cyllarus, [the horse] of Leda's son," (*Ledaeus ... Cyllarus*, *Silvae* 1.1.53-54) is the fearful horse associated with Castor and Pollux, which also raced in the funeral games of *Thebaid* (6.326-331).²⁰ These two allusions repeat the notion of Domitian as respectable and divine because Statius compares Domitian's horse with the honors of funeral games and with the Dioskouri. The Dioskouri allusion at first seems to continue reinforcing the emperor's image of divinity, an aspect of which Domitian would approve and interpret as laudatory. However, in the same way other allusions in *Silvae* 1.1 suggest the notion of Domitian's divinity while also appearing ambiguous, the allusions to divinity warrant suspicion of total sincerity. Arion and Cyllarus in the *Thebaid* are not positive comparisons for Domitian's horse. Arion, famous for his fear, finishes the race in first place after growing afraid, bucking off his rider, and thus receiving second place as a riderless horse.

Statius next transitions to the statue base as his focal point (*Silv.* 1.1.56-59):

Vix sola sufficiunt inessaque pondere tanto
subter anhelat humus; nec ferro aut aere, laborat
sub genio, teneat quamvis aeterna crepido
quae superingesti portaret culmina montis.

The foundations are scarcely sufficient, set down by such weight; the ground underneath exhales, neither with its iron nor bronze does the

19 Ahl (1984) 95-96 establishes this connection between Domitian's horse and the horses of the funeral games in the *Thebaid*.

20 Coleman (2003b) 2-3 gives the *Thebaid* primacy of composition over the *Silvae*.

eternal foundation, which would carry the peaks of a heaped up mountain,
work under your genius, though it should hold.

The great weight of the statue is attributed to both the bronze and Domitian's divine weight. From a practical perspective, such an immense metal statue would weigh down on its base; however, as Geysen and Marshall note, the exaggeration of the ground exhaling points more to the inferiority of earth and of the statue base than to the divine weight of Domitian.²¹ Yet, the image of the heaped up mountain could easily recall the epic story of the Aloadai, giants whom the gods punish for attempting to overtake Olympus.²² Such a reading would seem appropriate given the ambiguity of the image Statius depicts and also the allusions to the *Aeneid* elsewhere in the poem.

Curtius (63-83)

Machines (64) used presumably for the statue's construction create a "commotion," (*fragor*, 65) so loud that the long-dead Curtius awakens. Reference to these machines in conjunction with the earlier choice of *sonipes* instead of *equus* (19) reiterates the noisy construction. Such a reference to issues of the statue's construction in the Forum complicates how the general public, or at least Statius, must have felt about the statue in the center of the Forum. Besides the question of the statue's reception, the modern reader must wonder about the purpose of Curtius.

Intensified by *ipse* (63), Curtius serves as an important mouth-piece for Statius. Yet, Statius does not even name the mytho-historical figure except for the title of *custos*. Curtius needs not be named specifically because of the "renown" *nomen* gained by his heroic deed, according to Livy who identifies him as Mettius Curtius.²³ Moreover, the features of long-dead Curtius' face remind us of the gory depiction of Hector (*Aen.*

21 Geysen (1996); Marshall (2008).

22 *Il.*5.385; *Od.* 11.305; Apollod. *Bibl.*1.7.4; Gantz (1993) 170-171.

23 Livy 1.12.10.

2.270-279); thus, we can see a further connection to Vergil's Trojan horse. Given that Statius chooses not to name Curtius, why name Domitian at all, even as *Germanice*, except to question his greatness compared to other memorable and hallowed (*sacrata ... famosique ... memorabile*, 66-67) features of the Forum?

The description of Domitian as “offspring and creator of the great gods,” (*magnorum proles genitorque deorum*, 74) might indicate Domitian's demand to be called *dominus et deus*, which Suetonius and likely much of the public thought was absurd.²⁴ This notion of divinity suits earlier associations of Domitian with Minerva and Mars, but it also suggests Domitian's insistence on his own deification after his death.²⁵ Curtius, rather than Statius speaking directly, praises Domitian through an elaborate list of accolades: “You win the wars of Jove; you win the battles of the Rhine; / you subdue unspeakable civic issues; you subdue the slow-climbed mountain into treaties” (*tu bella Iovis, tu proelia Rheni, / tu civile nefas, tu tardum in foedera montem / longo Marte domas*, 79-81). The four glorifying statements could represent a realistic view of Domitian's military accomplishments, but the emperor's military reputation handed down by Tacitus, Pliny, and Suetonius generally does not indicate such an impression among the people of Rome.²⁶ Because Statius does not directly communicate this praise, the modern reader can question the sincerity of the poem's seemingly laudatory nature. In the traditional format of panegyric, the speaker begins by praising ancestors followed by

24 Suet. *Dom.* 13.

25 Carradice (1983) 144 finds consistently repeated images of Domitian on coins that insist upon his *post mortem* deification.

26 See for example Tac. *Agr.* 39, Plin. *Pan.* 4 and 12 which shows a contrast of emperors' successes in war, and Suet. *Dom.* 2, 6, and 12. Carradice (1983) 144 does note the frequent phrase *IOVI VICTORI* on Domitian's coins following the German campaigns. The *bella Iovis* (*Silv.* 1.1.79) then seems to reflect Domitian's propaganda at least from numismatic evidence.

the living honorees. We can see that Statius turns this custom around and depicts the honorable dead honoring the living.

After using Curtius as a safely-distanced mouthpiece, Statius proffers that a positive view of *foedera* is dubious. Rather than win the battles, Domitian resorted to treaties by 89. Next, Curtius calls out Domitian for his courage: “Had our times not borne you, you would have tried to go in the deep lake when I wouldn't dare, but Rome would have held back your reins,” (*quods<i te> nostra tulissent / saecula, temptasses me non audente profundo / ire lacu, sed Roma tuas tenuisset habenas*, 81-83). What exactly does Statius/Curtius mean by Rome holding back Domitian's reins? The ambiguous phrase can either be praise and refer to Rome wanting to preserve Domitian from death because of his greatness, or the expression criticizes Domitian's overreaching control and inability to carry out military affairs successfully.

Before proceeding to the poem's ending (84-107), we are able to reach two conclusions regarding the use of allusions by Statius. We see first from a close reading of the poem that Statius controls the minute details of his mythological and historical allusions. The subjects and language with parallels in Book Two of the *Aeneid* together aid Statius in characterizing and criticizing Domitian's public image. Second, we realize that the initial laudatory tone of the praise does not establish the poem securely as panegyric. In light of these ambiguous allusions, is the same discontent with Domitian's self-representation detectable in the choice of equestrian statue as the poem's primary subject?

CHAPTER 3 DOMITIAN'S HORSE OF COURSE, OF COURSE

Because Statius composed the entirety of *Silvae* 1.1 as an *ekphrasis*, understanding visual culture in the Roman Empire is crucial for understanding the overall poem and the context of its social framework. Ancient poets such as Statius writing about the visual arts must have considered not only public consumption of their literature and the plastic arts about which they wrote but also the original artists' implications. Ancient Roman artwork represented different realms of life: the mythological history, real history, and the present age with gods and mortals alike. Blurring the lines between these spheres, Latin poets used artwork as inspiration and literary subjects to write innovative, memorable poetry. By incorporating the visual arts into the written art of poetry, poets could then imbue their poems with more complex layers of meaning.

For Romans the memory worked in such a way as to connect aspects of visual life with words in order to best remember material. The pseudo-Ciceronian *Rhetorica ad Herennium* reveals a general approach to memory (3.16):

Constat igitur artificiosa memoria locis et imaginibus. Locos appellamus eos, qui breviter, perfecte, insignite aut natura aut manu sunt absoluti, ut eos facile naturali memoria comprehendere et amplecti queamus: <ut> aedes, intercolumnium, angulum, fornicem et alia, quae his similia sunt. Imagines sunt formae quaedam et notae et simulacra eius rei, quam meminisse volumus: quod genus equi, leones, aquilae; si volemus habere imagines eorum, locis certis conlocare oportebit.¹

Therefore it is agreed that there is an artificial memory for places and images. We call those places the things which were quickly, completely, and conspicuously recalled by nature or by hand, so that we may express them easily by natural memory and so that we may be able to embrace them: such as temples, a space between columns, a corner, arch vaults, and others which are similar to these. Images are particular

¹ I use the Loeb text edited by G. P. Goold (1999).

forms, both notes and imitations of its subject which we want to remember: Because if what we wish to remember is a kind of horse, lion, and eagle, we have to consider images of them; we have to set them in a certain scenario.

Therefore, an important aspect of the process of remembering included these scenarios (*loci*) in which one would envision the object to be remembered. The Forum Romanum certainly served as a prominent repository for memorizing things.

When certain historical events occurred, the fervor and significance of the event often inspired the creation of art. The artwork then became a visual marker for the public commemoration of the event. For example, the portrait statue of Pompey the Great in his theater originally served as an honorary statue; however, after the assassination of Julius Caesar at the base of Pompey's statue, no longer did anyone consider the statue honorary so much as a reminder of Caesar's murder. In this way, ancient poets expressed their views in a public format with the ability to add to their poems a degree of ambiguity offered by the evoked visual arts. Transformed into poetry, this politicized art would have resonated with the audience because it would have recalled memories associated with each described image. It is therefore reasonable that Statius might have expected the people's general conceptualization and opinion of Domitian's equestrian statue to enhance the value of *Silvae* 1.1.

Augustus gained attention for his use of public art because he commissioned artists to craft a visual program to fit his political agenda, thereby creating propaganda which contemporary poets recognized and adapted into their poetry.² To a great degree “all Roman art...has something to do with power,” as Stewart notes, and equestrian

² See for example Winkes (1985) and Zanker (1988).

sculpture proves no different.³ In the same way that Augustus controlled his own representation, so too did Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian employ the arts for propagating authoritative public images.⁴ Like Augustus and Tiberius, the Flavian emperors established an air of divine authority, support, and religious piety.⁵ They indicated these ideals in and around the Forum by building or renovating such works as the Temple of Peace, the Temple of Concord, the Janus Quadrifrons temple, and the Temple of the Gens Flavia. Just as Augustan poets imitated and recreated the politicized visual arts in their poetry, so too does Statius encapsulate in *Silvae* 1.1 the political nature of Domitian's visual program and the equestrian statue in particular.⁶ Because Domitian and his equestrian sculpture are the first focal points of the *Silvae*, Statius introduces Domitian as the most important subject in primary position.⁷ Yet, Statius also introduces, explores, and even highlights the visual arts and their potentially political connections in *Silvae* 1.1.

As seen from Chapter 2, Statius scales down the grand epic tradition of the Trojan horse into the slender form of the *Silvae* via intertextual allusions. Like epic, the complex tradition of equestrian sculpture also figures into *Silvae* 1.1 because Statius replicates Domitian's statue via *ekphrasis*. Yet, a full understanding of the poem is not possible without consideration of what significance the poem gleans from the tradition of Roman equestrian sculpture.

3 Stewart (2008) 108.

4 See Vasta (2007).

5 See Scott (1975) for discussion of the Flavians' cultivation of the imperial cult.

6 See Dewar (2008), especially 74-77, concerning the equestrian statue's location and its function within the Flavian building program.

7 Compare the placement of Maecenas in the works of Horace. See Bright (1980) and Hardie (1983) for Statius' organization of the *Silvae*.

Roman Equestrian Sculpture

Unlike equine statues with horses and humans separated, equestrian sculpture depicts horses with mounted riders in the round. According to Kleiner, the type represents “one of the most important classes of honorary statuary in the Roman world” because of its multiplicity of connotations.⁸ This statue type differs from typical sculpture in the round because sculptors seem to have employed equestrian sculpture primarily for prominent men and on special occasions in highly public spaces such as the Athenian Acropolis or a forum, whether in Rome or in other cities such as Herculaneum.⁹ Eaverly provides the backdrop from which scholars tease out the origin of equestrian statuary as a grand-scale portrait type to the sixth century Acropolis of Archaic Greece. As she notes, however, the discovery of early figurines and terracotta examples of riders on horses complicates our understanding of the portrait type's development before the rise of marble equestrian sculpture in the Archaic Period.¹⁰ The Rampin Rider as an unidentified man on horseback, which archaeologists generally date to circa 550 BCE, serves as our earliest and most secure example of Greek equestrian portraiture in the round, but Roman equestrian statues represent specific, identifiable portraits of men mounted on horses.

Roman equestrian sculpture depicts portraits of affluent, influential men—including members of the imperial family or administration, senior military officials, senators, and other members of the “urban elite”—all usually in military garb regardless of military service; the most documented and remarkable cases are emperors.¹¹ The horse for the Romans symbolized military prowess, virtue, wealth, and leadership

8 Kleiner (1992) 390.

9 See Bergemann (1990) and Kleiner (1992) 390.

10 See Eaverly (1995) and (2010) 95-97.

11 Bergemann (1990) 12 writes “Führungsschichten.”

because of the scenarios in which they used the horses.¹² Yet, just as Mannes wondered at the crises of representation and interpretation highlighted by horse-riding people versus car-riding people, through *ekphrasis* Statius introduces the equestrian portrait as something to observe and critique. These statues were expensive, highly visible, and worth recognizing and observing, but they were not uncommon.

It is important to recognize how many other equestrian sculptures of prominent Roman men, including previous rulers or religious figures, stood in and around the Forum.¹³ Alexander/Caesar, Sulla, Pompey, Lepidus, Octavian, and the senator Lucius Volusius Saturninus along with two unidentified statues which were on the Rostra with Saturninus all precede Domitian's equestrian portraiture in or near the Forum center.¹⁴ Nerva, Trajan, Marcus Aurelius, Severus, and Constantius II provide notable examples of Domitian's successors who also erected equestrian portrait statues of themselves in or around the Forum's center.¹⁵ Because the placement of an emperor's large equestrian statue in a prominent central location occurs both before and after Domitian's reign, we can safely trust the general location of his statue in the center of the Forum Romanum. Before examining the literary evidence for Domitian's equestrian sculpture, the physical evidence for the *ecus maximus* and similar equestrian imagery depicting Domitian should be considered first.

12 See Bergemann (1990) for a full explanation and survey of Roman equestrian statues and the iconography that defines the portrait type.

13 Geysen (1996) 32, n. 10, incorrectly identifies the number of equestrian statues known to be in the Forum around the time of Domitian's own statue.

14 Cic. *Phil.* 5.41; Zanker (1988) 38; Bergemann (41); Flower (2006). The shorthand "Alexander/Caesar" denotes the statue of Alexander which was later changed into Caesar, as referenced in Stat. *Silv.* 1.1.85-87.

15 Claridge (2010) 87. The original location of Marcus Aurelius' equestrian statue is undocumented because of its separation from its base in the Italian Renaissance.

Physical Evidence for Domitian's Equestrian Portraiture

Due to the Roman Senate's condemnation of Domitian's memory after his assassination, few public representations of Domitian survive.¹⁶ As with all Roman equestrian sculpture, the exceptions being the equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius and some examples preserved in Pompeii and Herculaneum, we have relatively few traces of this portrait type.¹⁷ What the manuscripts label in the preface to *Silvae* 1 as the *ecus maximus* of Domitian does not survive in its bronze form. For the purposes of this study, two surviving representations of Domitian serve as comparanda: the reverse of a *sestertius* coin depicting Domitian in a pose similar to the description of *Silvae* 1.1 and a bronze equestrian sculpture of Domitian from Misenum, with his head refashioned in Nerva's image after the *damnatio memoriae* of 96 CE.¹⁸

Multiple rare coins depict Domitian on horseback; however, we should not assume that the coins represent Domitian's infamous equestrian statue in the Forum so much as the emperor's cultivation of the honorable, virtuous image which the equestrian portrait afforded him. Therefore, these equestrian coins of Domitian should instead serve as points of comparison for the equestrian portrait description that we gather from *Silvae* 1.1.

A small head, which could be the personified version of the "head of the Rhine" (*crinem ... Rheni, Silv.* 1.1.51), appeared underneath the horse's hoof. Domitian wears a Greek military cuirass (*chlamys*) and raises his right hand (37-38). One primary

16 See Plin. *Pan.* 52.4-5 for an explanation of the condemnation of Domitian's memory, which then led to destruction of his statuary.

17 Most of these sculptures are either anonymous or local officials; see Bergemann (1990) Tafeln 59-65 for the most prominent example from Herculaneum, the statue of Marcus Nonius Balbus.

18 The best images of the coin are found in Bergemann (1990) Tafel 92, fig. C, and Thomas (2004) 28, fig. 5, and the best images of the Misenum statue are found in Bergemann (1990) Tafeln 56-58.

Regarding the term *damnatio memoriae*, see Varner (2001) and (2004). For an overview of ancient memory sanctions see Flower (2011) Chapters 1, 3, and 9 for elaboration.

difference from the coin is that Statius describes Domitian holding out Medusa's head (38). The coin provides only an impression of how the statue might have looked. When Statius mentions Domitian's cloak and raised right hand, he acknowledges the two most frequent iconographic aspects of Roman equestrian sculpture besides the rider and horse.¹⁹ Because the coin dates to around 95 or 96, we can surmise either that Domitian's equestrian sculpture survived at least until the destruction of his public images with the coin representing the same statue or that the image of Domitian on horseback served as part of his propaganda. Both scenarios indicate a highly public and political use of the equestrian portrait by Domitian.

Found in Misenum, Domitian's surviving equestrian statue and its fragments provide valuable insight as to how the body and horse of the Forum's *ecus maximus* might have appeared. We should note that discrepancies in the types and functions of different poses available to artists are not known, and so we must assume that the pose of the Misenum statue is not necessarily a pose similar to the description in *Silvae* 1.1. Except for Nerva's head added later, we should view the statue as Domitian. Replacing the body and horse in bronze were expensive and exhaustive endeavors (recall the image of Temese as *hausta* "exhausted," 42).²⁰ The Misenum equestrian statue presents Domitian in an awkward position with strange body proportions and spindly legs, which Suetonius describes as characteristic of Domitian's later years before his assassination.²¹ Domitian's body, including his chest, is slender rather than robust. The legs are outstretched rather than secured around the horse. The remnants of the horse's face depict the animal as out of control with a wide-open mouth; no traces of

19 See Bergemann (1990) 6 for the cloak and 6-8 for the gesture of the raised right hand. For further discussion of the ambiguity of Domitian's raised right hand in *Silv.* 1.1, see Ahl (1984) 94.

20 Flower (2006) 234-275.

21 Suet. *Dom.*18.

bridle or bit were found accompanying the statue. However, the breast-plate features the head of Medusa, recalling the description from *Silvae* 1.1 although Medusa's head does not seem to have been held at any point by this statue.

The Equestrian Sculpture of *Silvae* 1.1

We can now return to the poem and its most political content (*Silvae* 1.1.84-107), Statius compares and contrasts Domitian's statue to the equestrian statue of Julius Caesar and Alexander the Great. Caesar's statue once depicted Alexander, but Caesar replaced the portrait of Alexander with a bust of his own head. Hence Statius addresses the altered identity of the statue: "Caesar's horse ... should yield; (the horse) which you Lysippos dared to hand down to the Pellaeian general (Alexander), soon wondered at the face of Caesar on its neck," (*cedat equus Latiae qui ... quem traderis ausus / Pellaeo Lysippe duci mox Caesaris ora mirata cervice tulit*, 84, 86-87). Through his connection of Domitian with Alexander, Caesar, and the practice of replacing the statue's heads, Statius highlights the mutability of equestrian sculpture, and especially of military leaders' honorary artwork. A reference to the Greek sculptor Lysippos reinforces the comparison to and distinction from Alexander's greatness; Lysippos achieved fame for being the only sculptor permitted to portray Alexander.²² Although we might infer prestige in the comparison to Lysippos, the horse wondering at the change of riders creates a humorous image and addresses the mutability of both portraiture and of rulers despite the attempts by Statius to emphasize permanence. This reference to Lysippos rather suggests Statius rivaling the artist and critiquing Domitian, not Statius praising Domitian as Alexander's successor in greatness.

²² Plin *HN* 7.125; Plin. *Ep.* 2.1.240; Cic. *Fam.* 5.12-13.

Domitian's statue as a "gift of the people and great Senate" (*populi magnique senatus / munere*, 99-100) is most enticing for the subversive reader. Just like the Trojan horse, the statue serves as a gift. However, in the poem's closing description Statius dwells more on the hubristic comparison of Domitian as rival to Jove and Phoebus. If we are supposed to think that *colosso* (1) identifies Domitian's statue as equally grand as the Colossus of Rhodes, Statius likely alludes to a nearby statue of Nero also called a colossus. A connection between the statues of Nero and Domitian is possible. Geysen connects the images of the two emperors by comparing Lucan's introductory reference to Nero and the treatment of Domitian in the *Silvae*.²³ The result of linking these two colossal statues is valuable for two reasons: first because Domitian, like Vespasian, tried distancing himself from Nero as much as possible; secondly, because Nero's statue was refashioned as the sun-god after his assassination. Both scenarios contribute to an ironic use of *colosso* in the poem's opening line.

The ending of *Silvae* 1.1, though seemingly laudatory and still contemplative of the statue, admonishes Domitian: "Determined, you should love the lands, and you yourself should inhabit the temples which we call yours. The halls of heaven should not delight you," (*certus amet terras et quae tibi templa dicamus / ipse colas, nec te caeli iuuet aula*, 105-106). Statius suggests that rather than strive for an image of divinity, Domitian should lead Rome effectively. The ending of the poem addresses Domitian more as human than divine. If the poem were intended to be considered as sincere praise, Statius would not counter notions of divinity with clear implications that Domitian is human and that the statue lacks a divine origin.

²³ Luc. 1.53-57; Geysen (1996) 100-102.

Roman equestrian sculpture indeed serves both as a commemorative and honorary type of portraiture for Roman men of means and especially emperors; only emperors, however, were able to locate their statues in the Forum's center. The iconography of emperors' equestrian statues remains consistent with other Roman equestrian statues. Although Bergemann acknowledges that erecting an equestrian statue in a public space "was subject to decision by the municipal bodies" in charge, Domitian's case is puzzling.²⁴ Should we assume that the public treasury funded the statue's construction, or did Domitian cover the expense from his own funds? In his survey of numismatic evidence and Domitian's finances, Carradice notes that the public treasury and the emperor's private funds had essentially been integrated during Domitian's reign.²⁵ The questionable funding for the statue, given Domitian's vast spending elsewhere in the city, suggests discontent with the emperor. Disregarding whether or not the privy purse of Domitian funded the statue construction, the expensive equestrian statue of Domitian erected in the center of the Forum to celebrate his Dacian campaigns would have incited criticism.

Because the *ecus maximus* of Domitian does not survive, we have only the poem on which to rely. We cannot reach any definitive conclusions regarding the actual statue described in *Silvae* 1.1 and its potentially ironic representation of Domitian. If we are unable to detect sufficiently discontent from the poem in the medium of equestrian sculpture, then we ought to turn to the topographical references in the poem.

²⁴ Bergemann (1990) 13: "Sie unterlag vielmehr der Beschlußfassung durch die städtischen Gremien."
²⁵ Carradice (1983) 157.

CHAPTER 4 A HORSE OFF COURSE IN THE FORUM

It is apparent from Chapter 3 that Statius chose a prominent and politically charged portrait type employed exclusively in the public sphere. Therefore, the manner in which Statius presents the Forum Romanum deserves equal consideration. Because the Forum is an archaeological site, we can compare and contrast its presentation in *Silvae* 1.1 with the Forum as it is preserved in the archaeological record and its topographical layout as restored by archaeologists. We then can determine the neighboring landmarks which Statius emphasizes or omits from the poem. Furthermore, we must interpret the message which Statius conveys when he juxtaposes the equestrian statue with these included and omitted topographical features. Examination of the topographical allusions in the poem and the memories they would have evoked among Romans forces a reconsideration of the sincerity of *Silvae* 1.1 and its portrayal of Domitian's public image.

Methodology

Chapter 4 focuses on the relative locations and significant features of topographical allusions in *Silvae* 1.1. Each allusion represents a landmark mostly or partly within the Forum Romanum (archaeological Regio VIII) except five: the Palatine Hill, Temese, Tarentum, the Temple of Elean Jove, and the Colossus of Rhodes. After surveying the topographical features within the Forum, I discuss these five external topographical allusions in greater detail. The ancient reader would have noticed that the Forum Romanum of *Silvae* 1.1 is incomplete. Certain monuments which should have been in the sight-line of Domitian's equestrian sculpture are absent. Statius describes landmarks in the background or sidelines of the Forum while sometimes skipping over

larger monuments in the vicinity. The landmarks which are omitted from the poem possess potentially equal value to the landmarks which Statius mentions. If we presume that the excluded monuments contribute as much as the included landmarks, we can reevaluate how the topography at large relates to the poem and to the presentation of Domitian in the poem.

In order to determine which monuments Statius omits from his description of the Forum, I employ a strict methodology throughout my study, surveying the topography as it existed under Domitian. Beginning with the Basilica Aemilia in the northeastern section of the Forum Romanum and rotating counter-clockwise, this survey turns to the *lacus Curtius* and *ecus maximus*. Since we presume that the statue dedication ceremony occurred in 90 or 91 CE, caution must be taken to avoid buildings, such as the Curia Julia, which were damaged by fires and not yet restored. There must also be consideration for Domitian's various ongoing building projects and whether or not these monuments were present by the time Statius wrote and first presented *Silvae* 1.1.¹ A definitive account of the monuments progress by the time of the statue's dedication and the composition of *Silvae* 1.1 is unavailable. However, because Domitian's name was erased from inscriptions and replaced with Nerva's name, it is generally agreed that dedications attributed to Nerva belonged to Domitian's reign.

The intersection of the physical aspects of Rome and its written descriptions became strongly linked with the collective memory of the Roman people. Edwards views Rome as a "written city," meaning that much of the ancient city as we think of it depends on written representations rather than the archaeological evidence.² The

1 Anderson (1983) 93 discusses the account of the Chronographer of 356 a list of monuments on which Domitian had begun construction.

2 Edwards (1996) 4.

ancient Romans imprinted memories onto places like real-life maps. Pompey's Theater serves as a useful example for relating the significance of historic events connected with monuments in terms of public memory. The theater functioned as an important meeting place for the Senate, but this service became overlooked after Caesar's assassination. For Claridge, the Forum Romanum represented then and still represents today "a museum and a monument to the increasingly remote past."³ What can be seen is the value of the Forum as a public museum with monuments on display as the artwork. Thus, how Domitian appears in the Forum memorializes his image in public memory and positions the emperor in a position for criticism.

Topographical Allusions

In *Silvae* 1.1, ten topographical allusions are noted or highly suggested. Yet, eight topographical features that likely would have been present and possibly even prominent in or around the Forum Romanum are absent. Five features in *Silvae* 1.1 lie beyond the Forum. These topographical allusions must be explored in order to better evaluate Domitian's equestrian sculpture and how Statius' description of the Forum Romanum bears upon the meaning of *Silvae* 1.1.

The Basilica Aemilia, later called the Basilica Paulli, is one of the most apparent topographical allusions in the poem (30) and one of the most visible features located in the Forum Romanum of Domitian's time (although the technical locale is Regio IV).⁴ Lucius Aemilius Paullus began official construction around 55 BCE which replaced the older Basilica Fulvia from 179 BCE; his son Lucius Aemilius Lepidus Paullus completed the basilica with funding from Augustus by 34 BCE.⁵ On a most basic level, the allusion

3 Claridge (2010) 63.

4 Richardson (1992) "Basilica Paulli."

5 Claridge (2010) 69.

to this monument helps center the statue and audience in the Forum Romanum because the Basilica Aemilia framed the Forum Romanum. Archaeologists have found various pieces of shattered relief portraits nearby the basilica which seemed to have depicted scenes of Roman history and tradition. The only qualities Statius indicates are the war-waging character of Paullus (*belligeri ... sublimis*, 30).

To the west of the Basilica Aemilia, Julius Caesar constructed the Forum Iulium (85, *Caesarei ... fori*), which doubled the size of the Forum Romanum, with the intention of providing additional space for the increasing activities of the Roman Senate.⁶ Caesar's Forum also became a public monumental celebration of the Julian *gens*. The most important aspect of this topographical allusion for Statius would have been its similarity to the Forum Romanum but more importantly its ability to evoke Julius Caesar's suggested divinity through apotheosis and military prowess and virtue through his equestrian sculpture. Because Caesar dedicated his Forum on the last day of his triumph and before construction was even complete if we are to trust the relative chronology of Cassius Dio, we certainly can connect the swift construction of the Forum with Caesar's need for honor,⁷ an important quality which Statius explores in the process of describing Domitian.⁸

Since it lies within the Forum Iulium, the Temple of Venus Genetrix (84, *templa Diones*) allegedly derives from a promise Caesar made upon his victory at the Battle of Pharsalus to erect a temple in honor of Venus Victrix; he instead chose Venus Genetrix, the Julio-Claudians' patron deity. The most practical function of this temple for Statius would be its ability to recall Caesar's divine heritage and thus the divinity of all

6 App. *Bell. Civ.* 2.102; Anderson (1984) 39-63.

7 Cass. Dio 43.22.2.

8 Degrassi (1963) 514.

emperors. Statius already compares Domitian to Caesar via the mode of equestrian statue, so an additional connection would then reiterate Domitian's insistence upon apotheosis after death. It is worth noting that Domitian is said to have also rebuilt this temple; Trajan, however, rededicated the Temple of Venus Genetrix years later.⁹ If Domitian's reconstruction was ongoing or finished by 91 CE, it is sensible that Statius included the Temple because of its proximity to Caesar's equestrian sculpture. Because the Forum Julium was built for senatorial functions, a connection to the Senate with this temple and other topographical allusions is apparent.

Resting at the lower level of the unmentioned Tabularium just below the foot of the the Capitoline Hill, the Temple of Concord (31) has a rich history. Tradition claims that the Temple of Concord was first built by Camillus in 367 BCE after the reconciliation of the great struggles between the plebeians and patricians.¹⁰ After its first restoration, the temple frequently served as the location for Senate meetings during the late Republic; however, this temple is particularly evocative for public memory because it served as the location at which Cicero famously delivered his Fourth Catilinarian speech and where the Senate condemned Sejanus to execution.¹¹ In 10 CE Tiberius dedicated the temple after remodeling the original. The new artwork Tiberius installed conveyed a political message of continued Augustan peace and prosperity under his reign. Statues of Heracles and Mercury, who represented security, prosperity, and peace, surrounded the entrance. Sculptures of the emperor himself, depicted as a soldier alongside his brother, with both men holding spears, guarded the door where stood statues of three

9 App. *Bell. Civ.* 2.68; Richardson (1992) "Forum Julium."

10 Coarelli (2007) 67.

11 Grant (1970) 217; Coarelli (2007) 67-68.

deities (likely Concord, Pax, and either Salus, Securitas, or Fortuna).¹² Tiberius rededicated the Temple of Concord in the name of Drusus, with whom he successfully carried out campaigns in Germany. The German victories funded the temple construction. This aspect of the temple bears meaning for discussion of Domitian. He too celebrated German victories; however, more importantly, Tiberius overtook the image of concord as representative of harmony among the imperial family during his rule. It is likely then that Statius alludes to the Temple of Concord as a way of representing Domitian's ongoing propaganda comparable with the practices of Augustus and Tiberius.

The Temple of Deified Vespasian, also known as the Temple of Vespasian and Titus, rested beside the Temple of Concord also at the base of the Capitoline Hill and Tabularium. The only reference to this temple in the poem mirrors the reality of the Forum. Statius juxtaposes the allusion with the Temple of Concord (*terga pater blandoque videt Concordia vultu*, "Your father looks at your back, and Concord looks on with an agreeable countenance," 31). Within the temple Domitian placed marble portraits of both Vespasian and Titus, and the frieze decorating the temple depicted various sacrificial tools.¹³ By alluding to this temple, Statius is able to highlight Domitian's insistence upon a posthumous apotheosis following the deifications of Caesar and Vespasian.

Like a mirror image of the Basilica Aemilia, the Basilica Iulia (*Iulia tecta*, 29) of Domitian's time was constructed at the southwest corner of the Forum Romanum in the year 12 CE when Augustus replaced the original structure in honor of his two

12 Claridge (2010) 80-81.

13 Coarelli (2007) 66.

grandsons, Gaius and Lucius. Spoils from the Gallic Wars funded the original basilica's grand appearance. This monument housed the tribunal of the *centumviri* and so served as a large meeting place for civil law courts and a location for taverns.¹⁴ More importantly, this basilica served as a banking area for the nearby *tabernae*.¹⁵ If we are intended to draw a connection with Domitian's equestrian sculpture for reasons beyond proximity, the only logical connection would be between the statue's cost and the banking and law court services associated with the basilica.

The unique Temple of Vesta (suggested at 36) housed wills and most importantly the sacred fire of Rome allegedly brought from the burning city of Troy.¹⁶ Just behind the Temple of Vesta was the house where the Vestal Virgins slept, indeed recalling the scandal of the unfaithful attendants to which Statius alludes with *exploratas ... ministras* (36). The temple also housed the *palladium* of Minerva, which was incorporated in an allusion noted in Chapter 2. Domitian would inevitably have been connected with these aspects of the Temple because of his role as emperor. He needed to watch over the Vestals and keep the symbol of the city's life, the Vestal hearth and fire, safe.

Acknowledgment of the Temple of Castor comes not by mention of the temple proper but by its statue of Castor, whom its sculptor depicted standing beside his horse rather than in the equestrian style (*Ledaeus ab aede propinqua*, 53). Through synecdoche, this statue represents one of the earliest temples in the Forum along with the Temple of Saturn; however, by the time of Domitian, the facade would have reflected the restoration of Tiberius in either 9 or 14 CE.¹⁷ Besides its religious function, the Temple of Castor doubled as a frequent meeting location for the Roman Senate and as

14 Plin. *Ep.* 5.9.1, 6.33.3; Quint. *Inst.* 12.5.6; Mart. 6.38.5-6.

15 *CIL* 6.9709=*ILS* 7509; *CIL* 6.9711.

16 Richardson (1992) "Vesta, Aedes."

17 Coarelli (2007) 45, 75.

a storage building for the standards and measuring weights of the city.¹⁸ Since the cult of the Dioskouri was imported to Rome from Greece, the temple early on symbolized protection of the knights and aristocracy. This idea likely connects with the Greek origins of equestrian sculpture, but not enough evidence of equestrian sculpture survives to make this assumption.¹⁹

The historic feature known as the Lacus Curtius, the lake guarded by Curtius (66), predates the Roman Empire; however, Statius indicates that the remnants of the sacred lake are visible and prominent enough to compare with Domitian's statue. More importantly, Augustus commissioned a bronze relief portrait to mark the location, and this relief survives through the Flavians' rule.²⁰ The relief portrait represents a charging Roman *equites* riding in military garb with a spear and shield at the ready. Plautus attests that a place such as the Lacus Curtius could gain a reputation based on its daily appearance or function and thereafter evoke certain memories (*Curc.* 477-479):

confidentes garrulique et malevoli supera lacum,
qui alteri de nihilo audacter dicunt contumeliam
et qui ipsi sat habent quod in se possit vere dicier.²¹

There are those undaunted, chatty, and spiteful men around the lake, who boldly trash talk about nothing to one another and those who they adequately consider what really can be talked about regarding themselves.²²

Given the vast amount of time between Plautus and Statius, we should by no means believe the same crowd necessarily would have gathered around the lake; however, Plautus attests to the fact that these topographical features within the Forum certainly were politically charged as monuments in a public space.

18 Coarelli (2007) 45.

19 See Eaverly (1995) 59-61.

20 See Claridge (2010) 90, fig. 28, for an image of the bronze relief portrait.

21 I follow the Loeb text edited by G. P. Goold and translated by W. de Melo (2011).

22 See Moore (1991) 351 and n.26 for discussion of the lines, their ambiguity, and the people mentioned.

The Temple of the Flavian Gens does not appear in the poem expressed explicitly. The image Statius creates strongly alludes to this monument which was in the immediate vicinity of the Domitianic Forum by 91 CE when Statius composed *Silvae* 1.1. Archaeological evidence suggests that Domitian had the ceiling painted to resemble a starry sky.²³ Martial and Statius both described this aspect of the temple and its supposed symbolic value for Rome's eternity in a similar sense to the Temple of Vesta.²⁴

These ten topographical features might seem important only because of their vicinity to the statue, relevance to Domitian, or prominence in the Forum. Yet a more nuanced consideration for the history, functions, and connotations of these locations reveals an increasingly faulty connection between praise of Domitian and his equestrian statue. What about the topographical features conspicuously omitted from the poem's Forum?

The conspicuous absence of the following eight monuments urges further consideration for the function of topography in *Silvae* 1.1. In this catalog of topographical features, I begin at the northwest region of the Forum starting with the Comitium and rotating clockwise.

The creation of the Comitium dates to as early as the legendary Roman kings. Its ancient significance derives from its function as Rome's earliest primary public meeting place for politicians and as the original location of the Twelve Tables which were posted on the old Rostra. Despite the greatly decreased use of the Comitium for large public gatherings by the Flavian era, the historic events associated with the area would have

23 Richardson (1992) "Gens Flavia, Templum."

24 See Mart. 9.3.18-19, 9.34 and *Silv.* 4.3.19, 5.1.240-241 for evidence of the painting. See also Mart. 9.1.8, *Silv.* 4.3.19, and 5.1.240-241 for the temple and painting as a symbol for Rome's eternity.

remained in public memory. During the reign of Domitian, the lovers of Cornelia, the chief Vestal Virgin, were beaten by rods as punishment in this place.²⁵

The Rostra served as the speakers' platform for political issues in front of the Tabularium facing out toward the Forum center. It also remains unacknowledged, despite serving also as a location for equestrian statues of the past. The name derives from the famous bronze ship prows which Romans affixed to the platform's front, first as a commemoration of the Battle of Antium.²⁶ For whatever reason Statius omitted the Rostra, its political significance cannot be ignored. The monument would recall many famous speeches delivered in the Forum.

If we consider the relevant topography of the Forum latent in *Silvae* 1.1, the Tullianum prison (*carcer*, also called the Mamertine), lurks around the corner of the prominent Temple of Concord. A minor allusion to the prison (*carceris*, 92) of Aeolus, king of the winds, at first glance might refer to *Aeneid* 1.54 or 1.141, in light of the epic allusions elsewhere in *Silvae* 1.1. The *carcer* of the Forum most notably imprisoned Jugurtha, Vercingetorix, and the Catilinarian conspirators until their executions; the deaths of Gaius Gracchus and Sejanus also took place here.²⁷ Since Statius does not openly refer to the prison, he avoids directly connecting Domitian and his statue with these dark moments of Roman history.

A less prominent monument of the Forum, the Arch of Tiberius was erected in the Forum in 16 CE as a celebratory monument for Germanicus' recovery of the gold standards from Germany.²⁸ Tacitus tells us that the arch stood just beside the street *propter aedem Saturni*, "near the Temple of Saturn," but the archaeological findings

25 Suet. *Dom.* 8.4.

26 Claridge (2010) 85-87.

27 Coarelli (2007) 68.

28 Grant (1970) 212.

indicate that the arch stood high above the Forum.²⁹ If Statius included the Arch of Tiberius in his survey of the Forum, he would have set up the military accomplishments of Tiberius as an unfavorable comparison to Domitian's own campaigns.

In terms of practical functionality in the Forum, the *lapis niger* is a seemingly insignificant set of black stones in an area located just beyond the Comitium. Its notoriety derives from its demarcation as the sacred burial place of Romulus.³⁰ A curse-like inscription condemning anyone who violates the spot might explain why Statius omits this topographical feature and why Domitian otherwise was not connected with the *lapis niger*; however, the more probable reason for its omission is the landmark's small size and lack of elevation. We might contrast such an ancient and hallowed landmark with the *lacus Curtius* which Statius includes and actually highlights in the poem. We should presume that the lake appears instead of the *lapis niger* because of its proximity to Domitian's statue and the bronze equestrian relief portrait superimposed. Despite the significance of Romulus, the lake better serves the poem because of its combination of ancient honor and equestrian imagery.

A large building residing at the foot of the Capitoline Hill, the Tabularium functioned primarily as the archives office. Its remnants, dating back to the Republican era, are extensive and still prominent, indicating its visibility in the ancient Forum at least by Domitian's reign. An inscription within the building designates Catulus the consul of 78 BCE as the dedicator, although the building would have evoked memories of the dictator Sulla who designed the building.³¹ In terms of style, the architecture resembles the earlier Temple of Heracles at Tivoli, also dating to the reign of Sulla.

29 Tac. *Ann.* 2.41; Richardson (1992) "Arcus Tiberii."

30 Coarelli (2007) 54-55.

31 Grant (1970) 135.

Grant suggests that the Tabularium was intended to double as a substitution for the Temple of Saturn's treasury-holding capacity.³² Coarelli posits that the lower floor of the Tabularium was once connected with the *aerarium*, which was attached to the Temple of Saturn and housed the oldest archived documents.³³ When the Temple of Vespasian and Titus was built under Domitian, the Forum lower entrance of the Tabularium was likely obscured.³⁴ Yet, the elaborate second and third story arcades of the record office still would have overlooked the Forum and would have been seen looming above from the center of the Forum.³⁵ Why then does Statius omit such an imposing and important building? Because the Tabularium overlooks the Forum, it could have rivaled Domitian and countered the intended effect of creating his superimposing image.³⁶

The Temple of Saturn was an archaic monument in the southwest corner of the Forum Romanum. Attached to it was the *aerarium*, Rome's treasury throughout the Republic; by Varro's time, a set of scales served as a memorial for this function, even though the treasury remained in the temple.³⁷ This temple also housed an image of the old Italian Saturn for whose honor the Saturnalia events were held, yet Statius does not even note the temple. The absence of this temple from the poem is both conspicuous and confusing. The possible sight-lines between the Temple and the relative location of Domitian's statue match without obstruction; therefore, we must continue exploring the significance of omitted monuments.

32 Grant (1970) 136.

33 Coarelli (2007) 38.

34 Coarelli (2007) 38.

35 Although the Tabularium is largely absent from the surviving literary record, Grant (1970) 136 notes an allusion to the monument with the appearance of *tabularia* given by Vergil (*G.* 2.502).

36 Statius might also have wanted to avoid recalling Sulla in the same way that he avoided the Tullianum.

37 Richardson (1992) "Saturnus, Aedes;" Varro, *Ling.* 5.183. Plin. *Ep.* 10.3.1; Pliny distinguishes the *aerarium* from the emperor's *fiscus* (purse).

The Regia once served as the house of a king and possibly later the *rex sacrorum* or *pontifex maximus*.³⁸ By the time of Domitian's reign, the building served as a place where these two leaders performed sacred rituals. Like many of the monuments in this list, the Regia doubled as a storage location, housing a sanctuary for Mars, spears and shields carried by Salian priests, a sanctuary to the harvest goddess Ops Consiva, archives of high priests, the city calendar, and annals.³⁹ It is possible Statius omits the Regia because of its association with the idea of a king, but Domitian's willingness to insist upon his authority does not suit this reason for omission.

Five features mentioned in *Silvae* 1.1 lie beyond the Forum Romanum. The Palatine and Temese appear early in *Silvae* 1.1 (35 and 42). Because the Palatine is too large and complex a feature of Rome to discuss in this thesis, I only touch on aspects relevant to its role in *Silvae* 1.1.⁴⁰ Before Domitian became emperor, a vast fire of 80 CE on the Palatine destroyed much of the landscape, and so Domitian viewed the Palatine at large as a political disaster. When Statius describes the statue looking up at the Palatine's flames, one might wonder how anxious of an expression the sculptor cast on Domitian's portrait. It is important to realize, however, that Domitian was constructing his elaborate palace known as the *Domus Flavia*. Given the criticism for his spending habits already noted by Suetonius, it is likely then that Statius alludes to Domitian's concerns about the palace. Whereas the Palatine was a culturally significant repository for memory, Temese (42) was famous for its metals. The city's renown for metal is the only significant feature detectable in the poem. That Domitian's statue drained the land of its

38 Coarelli (2007) 45, 83-84; Claridge (2010) 109.

39 Claridge (2010) 110-111.

40 See Rea (2007) for a study of the cultural significance of the Palatine and Capitoline through the age of Augustus in Latin literature. For the topography of the Palatine, see also Coarelli (2007) 130-157 and Claridge (2010) 124-159.

metals is obviously exaggeration on the part of Statius. Should we consider this hyperbole to be laudatory or critical?

The poem's three final topographical referents are highly evocative of Domitian's public representation as a divine figure of authority (101-104):

Optassetque novo simile te ponere templo
Atticus Elei senior Iovis, et tua mitis
ora Tarans, tua sidereas imitantia flammis
lumina contempto mallet Rhodos aspera Phoebus.

The elder Athenian would have wished to put you similar in a new temple of Elean Jove, and gentle Tarentum would prefer your face; Rhodes would prefer your stern eyes, imitating starry flames, to a disregarded Phoebus.

Tarentum, Elis, and Rhodes all housed colossal statues of Heracles, Jove, and Phoebus Apollo. Following these topographical features, Statius ends the poem urging Domitian to remain on earth for his people rather than seeking to represent himself as a Heracles, Jove, or Apollo (105-107).

Although Statius presents both the Temple of Elean Jove and the Colossus of Rhodes with ambivalence, the overall tone of the poem's ending condemns Domitian's hubristic attempts at divinity, especially given the pervasive notion of Domitian's deification elsewhere in the poem. We can closely connect Domitian with the Temple of Jove because Jove's statue too included a statuette of Victory.⁴¹ At first glance Statius praises the equestrian statue as a divine location at which the Roman people offer incense. Although the closing lines do at first seem to align with traditional endings of panegyric in which the poet requests the emperor to remain on earth, due to the careful attention to detail of allusions we should consider the message outside of the panegyric *topos*. The negative "nor should the halls of heaven delight you" (*nec te caeli iuuet aula*,

41 See Pollitt (1986) 49 and Duffalo (2013) 219.

106) serves as an admonition for Domitian. Because Domitian frequently tried representing himself as a god, this ending no longer can possess the same connotation as other poems with this *topos* could possess under other emperors. By using a negation rather than a request, Statius distinguishes *Silvae* 1.1 from traditional panegyrics and hones in on Domitian's megalomania.⁴² My inspection of the topographical allusions also reveals how Statius targets Domitian's strong indication of divinity throughout his reign and in his building program.

Let us revisit these allusions in the order in which they appear in the poem. Statius begins referring to the topographical features of the Forum Romanum by establishing the monuments that frame the area. He introduces the Basilica Iulia (29) followed by its opposite across the Forum, the Basilica Aemilia (30). Next, the Temple of Concord and the Temple of Deified Vespasian (31) appear joined together as they existed in the Forum. Panning to the opposite east end of the Forum, Statius refers to the Temple of Vesta (36). These five monuments describe the Forum as frame for the equestrian statue and anchor the setting of the poem.

Shifting focus, Statius depicts Domitian's head facing other topographical allusions. As the object of Domitian's gaze, the Palatine and presumably the construction of his new palace receive the attention of Statius despite being slightly farther beyond the Forum. After the allusion to Vesta located nearest the Palatine's slope, Statius again moves beyond the Forum to Temese, the quarry drained of its metal to supply the breast plate's bronze. If the prison of Aelous at line 53 does in fact allude to the Mamertine prison, Statius returned focus to the Forum, albeit the opposite

42 Geysen (1996) 132-133 agrees that the ending to *Silv.* 1.1 is notably different from other panegyrics employing this *topos*.

side from Vesta and the Palatine. Diagonally opposite the Mamertine prison, the Temple of Castor and Pollux is noted through synecdoche with its equestrian statue. As the center of both the Forum and the poem, the *lacus Curtius* submits to Domitian's statue at line 53 of the total 107. Repeating what lies behind Domitian's back, Statius expands the setting of *Silvae* 1.1 to include the Temple of Venus Genetrix and its own place within the larger Forum Julium of Caesar (84-85). Finally, Statius compares Domitian's statue with statues of Heracles, Zeus, and Phoebus Apollo far off in Tarentum, Elis, and Rhodes.

Although Statius does not seem to follow a strict pattern in terms of the organized location of monuments noted by the topographical allusions, he begins with a basic frame of the Forum, scans back and forth across the Forum, and occasionally alludes beyond the Forum's boundaries for the purpose of indicating an important relationship of a place with the statue. Because of this initial framing, it is reasonable to question the monuments omitted from the borders of the Forum, especially the Comitium, Tabularium, and Temple of Saturn. Except for the allusion to the Mamertine prison, Statius seems to follow a linear movement through the Forum after his initial framing of the statue. This interruption of direction caused by recognizing *carceris* as a potential allusion to more than just the mythical prison of Aeolus is telling. The pause in logic can perhaps represent the thought process of a Roman following an argument: accessing memory in the way noted in the *Ad Herennium*, a Roman would well know the Forum as a *locus* and not forget its monuments. Thus when Statius doubles back to the prison after already moving to the opposite end of the Forum, the audience could begin questioning the presentation of the Forum and its monuments. This is the point at which any omitted monuments should be recognized and their relevance questioned.

This survey of the Forum in *Silvae* 1.1 reveals that Statius alludes to events in Roman history and how these events resonate in the Forum. For instance, we can see clearly in the poem the presence of Domitian's triumphal celebrations for the alleged victory against the Chatti and Dacians (27) as well as his punishment of the Vestals (36). Considering that Domitian was the only documented emperor to have altered the Forum Romanum after Tiberius, should we dare link the detected criticism of Domitian with his willingness to intrude new monuments upon the historical, celebratory setting of the Forum Romanum?⁴³ We can be certain that Domitian's constructions drew criticism, as Suetonius documented, but this same discontent appears in how Statius presents the Forum. This discontent registers more clearly after considering the ambiguous allusions discussed in Chapter 2.

Yet, we must take caution not to over-analyze the topography of the Forum and its relationship with the poem. The omission of certain landmarks, as opposed to the included topographical features of the Forum, does not necessitate a subversive reading; however, the relationship among some of the omitted monuments is telling. For example, when Statius focuses on the Temple of Concord, and thereby omits the Rostra and the Temple of Saturn (both of which should have been visible from the statue's viewpoint), we can surmise that Statius must have decided to include the Temple of Concord for its associations. Therefore, a literary excavation of the poem can reveal how Statius subverts Domitian's public image after recalling the various artwork, historical events, and civic or religious functions of these landmarks in the Forum Romanum. Both ancient and modern readers of *Silvae* 1.1 could have and can connect

43 Richardson (1992) "Forum (Romanum or Magnum);" Coarelli (2007) 47.

the topographical allusions to Domitian either by surrounding equestrian imagery or by politically charged functions regarding Domitian's reputation or policies as emperor.

Undeserving of immediate trust because of the use of ambiguous allusions throughout *Silvae* 1.1, Statius sets up the poem's topographical backdrop in such a way as to urge further comparison of the physical Forum to its poetic presentation. Statius diverts the audience's attention from the suggested glory of Domitian's equestrian statue toward the other monuments by their conspicuous absence. The memories and functions associated with these various landmarks shape how a Roman audience would have heard or read the poem. The language and occasion of the poem register at first as praise, but the subtle details found in allusions register discontent with the increasingly embellished representation of the emperor.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

Because Statius urges the audience to interpret the poem in multiple ways, *Silvae* 1.1 is complicated. Chapter 1 introduced the divergent scholarship. I focused on the poem's ambiguity and the archaeological and topographical features rather than solely on issues of panegyric and *ekphrasis*. The layers of ambiguity afford greater depth to the poem and thus greater safety as a way for Statius to convey criticism of Domitian.

Chapter 2 revealed that *Silvae* 1.1 could have registered discontent with Domitian's self-representation. Considering Quintilian's documentation for rhetorical practices ongoing under Domitian's reign, a subversive reading of *Silvae* 1.1 is most sensible given the ambiguous historical and mythological allusions evident throughout the poem. As an audience we at once must confront the flattery of Domitian and question the sincerity of the praise because of the connotations the different allusions bear. We also have seen that Statius controls the details of allusions in *Silvae* 1.1. Ambiguity of expression affords the poem a sense of praise and veiled criticism for Domitian's public image. Statius even mirrors the grandiose and imposing statue in epic meter, although he diminishes what would be praise in epic proportions by writing, instead of an epic, the dainty occasional verse poem in 107 lines.

Chapter 3 added to the discussion of *Silvae* 1.1 the details of Roman equestrian sculpture relevant to *Silvae* 1.1 and to its audience living under Domitian's control. The Roman equestrian sculpture type must have signified military prowess, *virtus*, and honor in the eyes of Domitian. Indeed, Statius describes Domitian wearing the bellicose *chlamys* and holding a sword. However, Statius openly invites the ancient reader to

compare Domitian with Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar if not every other equestrian statue that ever stood in or around the Forum. Contemporary numismatic evidence suggests Domitian even promulgated this equestrian image on coins following his questionable military success. Therefore, Statius' focus on the medium of equestrian sculpture challenges Domitian's public image by setting it up for scrutiny in the Forum among other historical figures.

Given the prominence of the surrounding monuments in the Forum and the conspicuous absence of certain other landmarks, we learned from Chapter 4 that Statius draws attention to the memories associated with these features of the Forum. The incorporation of topography into *Silvae* 1.1 permits Statius to explore how Domitian's image becomes imprinted onto those memories. Thus, Statius focuses on the representation of the emperor in the expensive bronze equestrian portrait while omitting important monuments of the Forum.

Particular monuments and topographical features of the Forum identified in this thesis relate specifically to Domitian and either the treasury or the Senate. Given the lack of success and spoils from war which could have mitigated the treasury's depletion, Domitian did not gain a popular reputation in regards to spending habits. In contrast, Vespasian was well-known for funding his building projects with military spoils.¹ In this way, Statius calls into question Domitian's image of control. The juxtaposition of an expensive equestrian statue with an already vast and expensive building project might better indicate how Statius criticizes Domitian's expenses on public works. Above all, Domitian's attempts at deification receive the most attention in *Silvae* 1.1. The use of ambiguous mythological, historical, and topographical allusions frequently connects

¹ Jones (1992) 73-74. See 75-76 for Domitian's rapid response to economic changes.

Domitian with divinity. The medium of equestrian sculpture, thus, serves as the vessel for comparison within this system of allusions.

Indeed, the ending can double as admonition for Domitian to content himself with the Rome he remodeled rather than, as a deified god, attempting to leave the empire in economic woes and unconquered enemies against whom he tried waging wars. Yet, this treatment of epic poetry reconciles the allusions to Vergil noted earlier. Statius struggles with the idea of criticizing Domitian's politics and inaccurate representation on horseback while also dealing with the reality that he is commemorating Domitian in his poetry. What seems more important to Statius is the need to expose reality and comment on politics via *ekphrasis*, as Newlands argued.² The allusion to reworking one equestrian portrait of Alexander the Great into Julius Caesar most clearly reflects such a concern with history repeating for the worse. Past rulers of Rome started wars, both foreign and civil, and manipulated the past in such a way as to fuse their public images with historic greatness and gods for total control.

The combination of mythological, historical, and topographical allusions with careful intertextuality affords *Silvae* 1.1 a greater purpose beyond sycophantic praise. Armed with these poetic tools, Statius criticizes Domitian's public image while still safely feigning praise. More importantly, Statius takes on issues of politics and history. We see, in *Silvae* 1.1 at least, the same tension Malamud finds in *Silvae* 2.7 and the *Thebaid*. Statius recognizes the power of poetry and its connection to the political realm.

Because of these allusions, we can see how Statius balances the poem at the threshold of praise and subversion. *Silvae* 1.1 can register discontent with Domitian's

² See Newlands (2002), particularly 87.

public representation with mythological allusions, with focus on the equestrian portrait type, and with the city and its history. The nuanced allusions all bearing both positive and negative connotations allow Statius to convey and both the ancient and modern readers to interpret the presentation of Domitian in different ways. However, it is the medium of the equestrian statue and the occasion of the poem that indirectly address the emperor's image rather than Domitian himself. Statius condenses into *Silvae* 1.1 the immense equestrian statue of Domitian, problems of epic and history, the meter and mythology of epic, as well as praise and subversion. It is only after creating a laudatory atmosphere for safety under a regime unreceptive to open speech that Statius then is able to communicate his discontent with the disingenuous nature of Domitian's politics and public presentation.

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