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## Stattus Silvae 4. 9: Libertas Decembris?

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## Statius Silvae 4. 9: Libertas Decembris?

### Disciplines

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Stattus *Silvae* 4. 9: *Libertas Decembris?*

CYNTHIA DAMON

The last poem of Statius' 4th book of *Silvae* is generally taken to be a Saturnalia-inspired reproach directed at a well-connected *patronus* by a poet who has come off rather the worse in an exchange of gifts. The connections with Catullus' 14th poem—a poem in which Catullus commemorates a Saturnalia gift-book—and with Martial's complaints about meagre gifts from patrons have been noted.<sup>1</sup> It has even been argued that in *Silvae* 4. 9 Statius makes use of the license of the season to produce a poem in which "he accuses his addressee of a lack of literary taste."<sup>2</sup> A closer examination of the "parallels" in Martial, together with a glance at Statius' other poems in hendecasyllables (*Silvae* 1. 6, 2. 7, 4. 3), will reveal some of the problems which arise if one reads the poem this way. By defining the tone of *Silvae* 4. 9 in terms of the distance between it and the poems in which Catullus chaffs his literarily inclined friends one can get a better sense of the *délicatesse* that Statius applies in managing his relations with Plotius Grypus.

The epigrams in which Martial expresses a sense of injury at having received a gift of little market value, parallel to 4. 9 as they appear at first glance, are in fact all addressed to fictitious donors and celebrate the poet's ingenuity, not the receipt of real, if paltry, gifts. On the disappointing half-pound of pepper sent by the "Sextus" who had sent a pound of silver the

<sup>1</sup> In the commentaries of F. Vollmer (*P. Papini Stati Silvarum libri* [Leipzig 1898]) and K. M. Coleman (*Stattus. Silvae IV* [Oxford 1988]), and in discussions by R. E. Colton ("Echoes of Catullus and Martial in Statius *Silvae* 4. 9," *AC* 46 [1977] 544–56) and H.-J. van Dam ("Stattus, *Silvae*, Forschungsbericht 1974–84," in *ANRW* II.32.5, ed. by W. Haase [Berlin 1986] 2740 n. 50). References to Statius, Martial and Catullus are to the Oxford Classical Text editions by E. Courtney, W. M. Lindsay and R. A. B. Mynors, respectively.

<sup>2</sup> K. M. Coleman, "Silvae 4. 9: A Statian Name-Game," *PACA* 14 (1978) 9–10. She continues: "in addressing his accusation to a Grypus, Statius uses the associations of 'nasutus' to draw attention to sensibilities which are noticeably lacking in Plotius." In her more recent commentary (previous note) she is less precise about who the target of the poem, which she calls "a satire on poor literary taste and the absence of social graces," is. Her final remark on the tone of the poem, that "in all, the teasing note, familiar from Catullus (and also Cicero and Horace), is not meant to be taken seriously," is too much *ex cathedra*; it is my aim to show how Statius' teasing differs from that of Catullus.

year before, for example, he quips *tanti non emo, Sexte, piper* (10. 57. 2).<sup>3</sup> And the long tirade in 11. 18 on the insufficiency of a rural property given the poet by "Lupus" only prepares for the joke at the end (25–27):

Errasti, Lupe, littera sed una:  
nam quo tempore praedium dedisti,  
mallem tu mihi prandium dedisses.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, the thank-you notes that Martial addresses to real people are always grateful, not to say effusive, in tone. Hyperbolic gratitude is perhaps to be expected in an epigram acknowledging the gift of a toga from the imperial freedman Parthenius (8. 28), but the toga from M. Antonius Primus is warmly received as well (10. 73):

Littera facundi gratum mihi pignus amici  
pertulit, Ausoniae dona severa<sup>5</sup> togae,  
qua non Fabricius, sed vellet Apicius uti,  
vellet Maecenas Caesarianus eques.  
vilior haec nobis alio mittente fuisset;  
non quacumque manu victima caesa litat:  
a te missa venit: possem nisi munus amare,  
Marce, tuum, poteram nomen amare meum.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> For more abuse of "Sextus" see 2. 3, 13, 44, 55, 3. 11, 38, 4. 68, 7. 86, 8. 17. The Sextus who is praised in 5. 5 is carefully differentiated from these disgraceful Sexti in the first line of his epigram: *Sexte, Palatinae cultor facunde Minervae*.

<sup>4</sup> On the fictionality of this "Lupus" see P. White, "The Friends of Martial, Statius and Pliny and the Dispersal of Patronage," *HSCP* 79 (1975) 265–300, esp. 271 n. 14, and N. M. Kay, *Martial Book XI: A Commentary* (London 1985) 249. Other abusive thank-you notes are addressed to "Galla" (5. 84, she sent nothing), "Umber" (7. 53, he sent along a variety of gifts, totaling only 30 *nummi* in value, however; cf. 12. 81, where despite his newly wealthy state he sends *alica*—barley water—when before he sent a cape—*allicula*) and "Postumianus" (8. 71, over the years his gifts have been shrinking in value). "Paulus," to whom the wry thanks of 8. 33 and the outright abuse of 2. 20, 4. 17, 5. 4, 22, 6. 12, 9. 85, 10. 10 and 12. 69 are addressed, may also be the addressee of the flattering poem 7. 72, or there may be more than one Paulus addressed in the collection (cf. 9. 31 for a poem seeking the favor of Velius [Paulus]). Among the more than 400 satirical epigrams in the *Greek Anthology* (Book 11) there are plenty of abusive poems, but none directed at givers of gifts and only a very small number directed at less-than-hospitable hosts (11. 14, 313, 314, possibly also 135 and 137).

<sup>5</sup> *Superba*, Heinsius. Cf. *Ausoniae decora ampla togae*, *Stat. Silv.* 1. 4. 24.

<sup>6</sup> This couplet is misleadingly mistranslated in the Loeb edition of W. C. A. Ker (Cambridge, MA 1920): "if I could not love your gift, I could love at least my own name." An exactly parallel construction is to be found at 10. 89. 4–5 (*Iunonem, Polyclite, suam nisi frater amaret, Iunonem poterat frater amare tuam*), where Ker translates, correctly: "Did not her brother love his own Juno, Polyclitus, that brother might well have loved this Juno of thine." In 10. 73 the imperfect *possem* does duty in a past contrary-to-fact protasis, and the indicative *poteram* stands in the apodosis because the *possibility* of enjoyment of the *nomen* is in no way conditional (cf. the pluperfect subjunctive in 8. 30—the topic is the Scaevola-like fortitude of a criminal in the amphitheatre: *quod nisi rapta foret nolenti poena, parabat / saevior in lassos ire sinistra focos* 7–8). The translation of the couplet should read: "had I not been able to love your gift [which of course I was], I was

munere sed plus est et nomine gratius ipso  
officium docti iudiciumque viri.<sup>7</sup>

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Some of the gifts mentioned by Martial are more valuable than the volume of Brutus' *oscitationes* that Statius received<sup>8</sup>: an ornate cup from Instantius Rufus (8. 50), a carriage from Aelianus (12. 24), an estate from Marcella (12. 31), but the difference in tone between Martial's complaining epigrams and his grateful ones is, I think, due more to the value of the addressee than to the value of the gift.<sup>9</sup>

If Martial's recipe for these thank-you notes calls for a large measure of gratitude with wit admixed to taste (more wit for Instantius Rufus, the addressee of 8. 50 and a number of other high-quality epigrams, less for Aelianus and Marcella, each appearing twice only<sup>10</sup>), how is it that we find Statius, whose attitude towards his patrons in the *Silvae* is consistently more reverent than that of the epigrammatist, sending young Plotius Grypus a poem in which he draws attention "to sensibilities which are noticeably lacking in Plotius"?<sup>11</sup> Statius' thank-you, despite the dues of flattery paid with the résumé of Grypus' public career (lines 14–19), would seem to push at the boundaries of acceptable *libertas Decembris*, and that too in a poem not for Grypus' ears only, but one included in a *liber* intended for a broader public (*hunc tamen librum tu, Marcelle, defendes* 4 pr. 34). Can this reading of the poem's tone be right? Would Grypus have read it thus?

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able to love my own name." On the meaning of the latter phrase, see D. R. Shackleton Bailey, *CP* 73 (1978) 287.

<sup>7</sup> Primus is also the addressee of 9. 99, 10. 23, 32.

<sup>8</sup> On the importance of gifts to Martial's finances, see R. Saller, "Martial on Patronage and Literature," *CQ* 33 (1983) 246–57. Saller's paper is a response to the very different claims of P. White's paper, "Amicitia and the Profession of Poetry in Early Imperial Rome," *JRS* 68 (1978) 74–92.

<sup>9</sup> Epigram 9. 72 might seem to constitute a counter-example: The boxer Liber, who is thanked for no more than a dinner, ought (Martial hints) to have paid heed to the suggestion inherent in his name and sent wine, too (5–6). The suggestion that the giver might make perfect his gift by supplementing it is used in epigrams prompted by more valuable gifts, too. Among the 21 epigrams addressed to Arruntius Stella is a poem acknowledging a gift of roof tiles: *plurima, quae posset subito effundere nimbos, / muneribus venit tegula missa tuis* (7. 36. 3–4). The epigram is capped by the couplet *horridus, ecce, sonat Boreae stridore December: / Stella, tegis villam, non tegis agricolam* (5–6), hinting that a winter garment would not have come amiss. I wonder, however, whether these "hints" were anything more than a convenient closing device, whether Martial really thought the supplemental gift might be forthcoming if only he made bold to ask. He uses the same tactic to conclude the thank-you note to Parthenius, an unlikely target, one would think, for carping ingratitude: *O quantos risus pariter spectata movebit / cum Palatina nostra lacerna togal* (8. 28. 21–22), where the humor at his own expense is at least as emphatic as the "hint."

<sup>10</sup> The other poem addressed to Marcella (12. 21) is even more unctuous than the thank-you note. Aelianus receives only a passing reference in 11. 40.

<sup>11</sup> See above, note 2.

One way to approach such questions is to examine generic precedents. The three other hendecasyllable poems in the *Silvae* provide a sense of what an ancient reader's expectations in approaching 4. 9 are likely to have been.

*Silvae* 1. 6 is perhaps the closest comparandum, being, like 4. 9, a Saturnalia poem (it has the *titulus* "Kalendae Decembres," and is addressed to Domitian). In this poem, too, Statius foregrounds the license of the season, seeking inspiration at the outset not from Apollo and company, but from *Saturnus, ridens Iocus* and *Sales protervi* (1. 6. 1–8; cf. 45 *libertas*). But it turns out that *ioci licentes*<sup>12</sup> (93) are among the features of the festival that surpass verbal expression (*quis canat . . . ?/ iamiam deficio* 94–95). As such, they are reproduced nowhere in the poem, which remains thoroughly panegyric.<sup>13</sup> Statius has another hendecasyllable poem addressed to Domitian, *Silvae* 4. 3, on the recently completed Via Domitiana from Sinuessa to Puteoli, and as the description that Statius provides for this poem in the epistle prefatory to Book 4 suggests—*tertio viam Domitianam miratus sum* (4 pr. 7)—its content, too, is praise and its tone lofty.<sup>14</sup> His choice of the hendecasyllable meter for *Silvae* 2. 7, the *genethliacon Lucani ad Pollam*, was, Statius tells us, a gesture of respect for the dead (hexameter) poet: *laudes eius dicturus hexametros meos timui* (2 pr. 25–26). The poem is no less respectful towards its subject (cf. *reverentiam* 2 pr. 25) than are 1. 6 and 4. 3.<sup>15</sup> My point, really, is that the meter of 4. 9 in and of itself ought not to create the expectation of Catullan or Saturnalian irreverence.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup> The phrase *locos licentes* which stands in the first impression of Courtney's OCT is a typographical error for *iocos licentes*.

<sup>13</sup> During the imperial period praising the emperor was not so much an expression of approval as it was a public declaration (which might be true or false) that one was not subversive. The warmth of the praise necessary to make this declaration persuasive varied under different emperors—warmer under Nero, for example, and cooler under Trajan. In pronouncing *Silvae* 1. 6 panegyric I simply mean to say that Statius is taking a non-confrontational stance, and I leave open the possibility that he may have reserved for himself and perhaps a circle of friends a private laugh at the absurdities of contemporary panegyric and imperial posing. I would not go as far as F. M. Ahl does (in "The Rider and the Horse: Politics and Power in Roman Poetry from Horace to Statius," in *ANRW* II.32.1, ed. by W. Haase [Berlin 1984] 40–110) and say that Statius' purpose in flattering Domitian is "to hold the emperor up for the ridicule of later generations" (91), nor as far as J. Garthwaite does (in the analysis of *Silvae* 3. 4 which is appended to Ahl's article, pp. 111–24), when he suggests that there are elements of "satire against Domitian" in the *Silvae* and the *Thebaid*, and that Statius had to leave Rome in consequence (124).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Coleman (above, note 1) ad loc. on the high tone of the extended anaphora of lines 9–26, and note the lengthy speeches by divinities in 72–94, 124–64.

<sup>15</sup> H.-J. van Dam (*P. Papinius Statius. Silvae Book II: A Commentary, Mnemosyne* Suppl. 82 [Leiden 1984] 453) remarks that "the other long and serious poem [sc. besides *Silvae* 2. 7] in this metre before Ausonius is *Silvae* 4. 3, *Via Domitiana*," and concludes his discussion of 2. 7 by saying, "Statius, in a way, deifies Lucan" (506).

<sup>16</sup> On the tonal variety possible in poems of this meter, cf. Pliny, *Ep.* 4. 14. 3: "his [sc. in hendecasyllabis] iocamur ludimus amamus delemus querimur irascimur, describimus aliquid modo pressius modo elatius, atque ipsa varietate temptamus efficere, ut alia aliis quaedam fortasse omnibus placeant."

Of course Statius himself proclaims that both will be forthcoming (*hendecasyllabos quos Saturnalibus una risimus* 4 pr. 23–24), but forewarned by the example of 1. 6—that is to say by the overwhelming presence of panegyric in a poem which claimed to offer *libertas*<sup>17</sup>—we can perhaps reach a more satisfactory understanding of the Catullan and Saturnalian components of *Silvae* 4. 9.

The wit that Statius makes such a memorable characteristic of the addressee of 4. 9 is of a particularly Catullan variety (*quo soles lepore* 54; cf. *est sane iocus iste* 1),<sup>18</sup> and while the poem's verbal debt to Catullus has been examined by Vollmer, Colton and Coleman, more can be said about its situational debt to the polymetra. The Catullan poems most strongly evoked by 4. 9 are 14, 44 and 50, with less prominent echoes of 22 and 38. The selection is significant. These are all poems in which Catullus' friendships and the closely connected topic of literary aesthetics occupy center stage. A number of Catullus' actions are mirrored by those which Statius ascribes to Grypus. Like the Catullus of Poem 22, Grypus is the recipient of a lavishly produced volume (*cartae regiae, novi libri, / novi umbilici, lora rubra membranae, / derecta plumbo et pumice omnia aequata* 6–8; cf. 4. 9. 7–9), and like the Catullus of 14, who promises to requite the favor of a dull gift-book with the worst things he can find in the booksellers' cases (*nam, si luxerit, ad librariorum / curram scrinia, Caesios, Aquinos, / Suffenum, omnia colligam venena* 14. 17–20), Grypus revenges himself on Statius by sending *Bruti senis oscitationes / de capsula miseri libellionis, / emptum plus minus asse Gaiano* (4. 9. 20–22). The Calvus who is to be punished in Poem 14 is the same man as the Licinius with whom Catullus enjoyed the poetical field-day so warmly recalled at the beginning of Poem 50 (*Hesterno, Licini, die otiosi / multum lusimus in meis tabellis, . . . / reddens mutua per iocum atque vinum* 50. 1–6), a scene evoked not only by the *iocus* with which Statius begins his poem, but also by the words with which he presents the poem to the dedicatee of Book 4: *Plotio Grypo, maioris gradus iuueni, dignius opusculum reddam, sed interim hendecasyllabos quos Saturnalibus una risimus huic volumini inserui* (4 pr. 22–24).<sup>19</sup> Catullus' Poem 50 is a hendecasyllabic working-off of the effects of that poetic colloquium, and Statius ends his poem in mock

<sup>17</sup> The two are also combined in the verses of Martial to which Pliny took such a fancy (*adloquitur Musam, mandat ut domum meam Esquilis quaerat, adeat reverenter: "sed ne tempore non tuo disertam / pulses ebria ianuam, videto . . ."*, Ep. 3. 21. 5).

<sup>18</sup> If Coleman is correct in seeing in "Grypus," i.e. γρυπός, a calque on *nasutus*, it may reinforce the quality referred to here, not undercut it (see above, note 2).

<sup>19</sup> A generation before Statius a Greek poet, Lucillius, took Catullus 50 as the starting point for one of his satirical epigrams (AP 11. 134), but the difficulty of identifying its addressee Heliodorus (cf. 11. 137) and even of determining whether he is real or fictional make one wary of using it to justify a satirical reading of *Silvae* 4. 9. (For an attempt to identify Heliodorus and the arguments against the idea see J. Geffcken, s.v. "Lukillios," RE XIII [1927] 1777.28–78.10.)

apprehension lest Grypus be similarly aroused: *irascor tibi, Grype. sed valebis; tantum ne mihi, quo soles lepore / et nunc hendecasyllabos remittas* (53–55).<sup>20</sup> If the likelihood of his making a metrical retort aligns Grypus with Catullus, his *lepos* (54) and his oratorical prowess (14–16) are the virtues of Catullus' friend Calvus (*salaputium disertum* 53. 5, *tu lepore* 50. 7). And not only does Grypus possess qualities which pass for virtues in the Catullan world, but he is also honored for his freedom from failings obnoxious to Catullus. By refraining from sending his own speeches for the delectation of his sometime dinner companion, for example, Grypus shows himself very unlike Sestius, the perusal of whose *oratio in Antium petitorem* caused such physical distress to Catullus (44. 13).<sup>21</sup>

There is still more to be learned from the Catullan poems evoked by Statius' *hendecasyllabi iocosi*, however. For while Statius describes Grypus in terms which Catullus would have used to praise someone of whom he approved, he does not arrogate to himself equal standing in that world. Where the Catullus of 44 seeks to turn the effect that Sestius' *malus liber* had on him back onto its author (44. 18–20), Statius professes to regret the fact that Grypus did not send his own writings (4. 9. 14–16). And where Catullus admits the motivating effect that Sestius' *sumptuosae cenae* had on him (44. 9; cf. [*Sestius*] *tunc vocat me, cum malum librum legi* 21), the banquets with which Grypus has gratified Statius are kept entirely separate from the exchange of reading material (line 51). A similar restraint is observable in the way Statius adopts words that Catullus had used in a fond reproach to his friend Cornificius (*irascor tibi* 38. 6): Statius omits the note of intimacy which so pleases one in Catullus' protest, *sic meos amores?*, moving directly to his farewell: *irascor tibi, Grype, sed valebis* (4. 9. 53).

Statius, then, does not quite credit himself with the behavior worthy of Catullus that he ascribes to Grypus. Nor does he lay claim to the refined literary sensibilities of Catullus' world. Catullus begins Poem 14 by asking what he had done to deserve this horrible book (*quid feci ego quidue sum locutus, / cur me tot male perderes poetis?* 4–5), but Statius begins 4. 9 with the answer—he sent a volume of his writings to Grypus. His fancy book is thereby implicated with the awful poems forwarded to Catullus by Calvus (*di magni, horribilem et sacrum libellum* 14. 12; cf. *saecli*

<sup>20</sup> Catullus' use of hendecasyllables as a weapon of attack is well documented in the collection: *aut hendecasyllabos trecentos / exspecta aut mihi linteum remitte* (12. 10; cf. *adeste hendecasyllabi* 42. 1; Poems 14, 16, 21, 23, 24, 28, 29 and 33 are attacks in hendecasyllables).

<sup>21</sup> There is a parallel for his drawing of Grypus as a contemporary Catullus or Calvus in the fifth poem of this book (Statius' only surviving experiment with Horace's Alcaics), where he conjures up a modern-day Horace in Septimius Severus: *sed memor interim / nostri verecundo latentem / barbiton ingemina sub antro* (4. 5. 58–60; cf. *Odes* 1. 1. 34, 1. 32. 4, 3. 26. 4, the only previous appearances of *barbitos* in Latin, unless one counts the probably spurious poem [Ov.] *Her.* 15. 8).



*incommoda, pessimi poetae* 23), and, given the details of the description, with Suffenus' dreadful (but nice-looking) collection.<sup>22</sup> Statius' reaction to the speeches of Brutus which Grypus selected for him may have a similarly modest point.<sup>23</sup> According to Coleman, the choice of these dull works reveals Grypus' poor literary taste,<sup>24</sup> yet it is surely not coincidental that in roughly contemporary discussions of oratory Brutus and Catullus' friend Calvus were repeatedly paired as the stylistic opposition to Cicero (Quintilian 12. 1. 24, 10. 12; Tac. *Dial.* 18. 4–5; cf. Cic. *Brut.* 280–84).<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup> On the physical resemblance of Statius' volume and Suffenus', see the discussions of Colton and Coleman (above, note 1). And yet, I wonder just how fancy Statius' offering really was. Coleman thinks that the 10-*as* production-cost indicates "very costly materials," but her examples do not bear her out (esp. the 5-denarius, i.e. 80-*as*, edition of Martial's Book 1 [l. 117. 17]). Vollmer, on the other hand, sees the cost as a "niedrigen, aber auch so in der Scherz passenden Preis."

<sup>23</sup> The other Brutus who has been cumbered with the authorship of these *oscitationes* is the Gracchan-era jurist M. Iunius Brutus. H. Mattingly ("Nomentanus," *PCPhS* 181 [1950–51] 12–14), for example, sees a nest of references to the age of the Gracchi in Statius' poem: Brutus is the jurist, the *as Gaianus* is a reference to C. Gracchus' revaluation of coinage (16 *asses* to the denarius, instead of 10) and *decussis* to the 10-*as* piece which went out of use after this devaluation. However, the shift from a 10- to a 16-*as* denarius seems to have preceded Gracchus' tribunate by more than a decade (M. H. Crawford, *Coinage and Money under the Republic: Italy and the Mediterranean Economy* [Berkeley 1985] 59–61) and is never elsewhere connected with the tribune. The 10-*as* piece, the *decussis*, was in fact rarely minted (10 *asses* being the equivalent of the silver denarius piece before the devaluation and an awkward denomination—2.5 sesterces or .625 denarius—after it). The only bronze coins with multiple-*as* values that were at all common were the *dupondius* (2 *asses*) and the *tricensis* (3 *asses*). And yet there are words, Varro tells us, for 4 *asses*, 5 *asses* and so on up to 9 *asses*, and also for 20 *asses* and 100 (*De ling. lat.* 5. 169–70, 9. 81–83; cf. Priscian, *GL* III 415.17 Keil). These words must refer not to coins, but to sums of money. This is easy enough to see in Festus' discussion of *peculatus*, for example: *ut bos centussibus, ovis decussibus aestimaretur* (237 M; cf. 54 M: *centussibus . . . id est centum assibus, qui erant breves nummi ex aere*), or when Horace's miser Opimius begrudges the eight *asses* his doctor spent on some soup for him (*octussibus*, *Sat.* 2. 3. 156). Lucilius seems to have created a metaphorical hundred-*as* piece, the *centussis misellus* of Fannius, the author of sumptuary legislation limiting expenditure on feast days to 100 *asses* (1173 M; cf. Gell. 2. 24. 3–6 for the context). Lucilius' *centussis*, in all likelihood, gave rise to that of Varro (*Men.* 404) and to the clipped hundred-*as* piece of Persius (*curto centusse* 5. 191).

<sup>24</sup> Coleman (above, note 1) 221. I would myself say that the rhetorical point of the two long lists which show that *Silvae* 4. 9 was written in the world which produced Martial rather than that which produced Catullus (lines 10–14, 23–45) is not to give vent to Statius' chagrin at the meagre value of the gift he received, but to show how modestly low he puts the value of his own offering: *sed certa velut aequus in statera / nil mutas, sed idem mihi rependis* (46–47).

<sup>25</sup> Vitorius Marcellus, the dedicatee of Book 4, ought to have understood the reference, at any rate, for he is also the dedicatee of Quintilian's *Institutio*. Interest in the matter seems to have inspired the composition of some spurious letters to Cicero from Calvus and Brutus, "ex quibus facile est deprehendere Calvum quidem Ciceroni visum exsanguem et aridum, Brutum autem otiosum atque diiunctum; rursusque Ciceronem a Calvo quidem male audisse tamquam solum et enervem, a Bruto autem, ut ipsius verbis utar, fractum atque elumbem" (Tac. *Dial.* 18. 5). Ovid's phrase, *doctus et in promptu scrinia Brutus habet* (*Ex*

Perhaps Statius means to point up Grypus' pure standards of taste, and simultaneously display his own lack of refinement—he professes to have found them boring, after all. He can afford such gentle self-depreciation in this, the most pleasant and lively of the *Silvae*.

For all its wit, however, the poem illustrates well some of the real differences between Catullus' world and Statius'. The Saturnalia festival must in fact have posed a tricky problem of etiquette for someone in Statius' position. The festival itself condoned, even invited a certain degree of impudence, and the literary tradition offered *exempla* of perhaps exaggerated license, but what sensible dependent would fail to take thought for the day after the festival? The fictional Davus' forthrightness had to be checked by a threat (*ocius hinc te / ni rapis, accedes opera agro nona Sabino*, Hor. *Sat.* 2. 7. 117–18), but Statius was not so heedless. Lest even this carefully unpresuming, subtly flattering Saturnalia-address seem too bold (at least to eyes not acquainted with both parties), he prefaced it with a disclaimer: *Plotio Grypo, maioris gradus iuueni, dignius opusculum reddam, sed interim hendecasyllabos quos Saturnalibus una risimus huic volumini inserui* (4 pr. 22–24). Statius never lost sight of the realities of his position.

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*Ponto* 1. 1. 24), can be read as further evidence of the esteem accorded Brutus' works with the aid of Martial 14. 37 (*selectos nisi das mihi libellos / admittam tineas trucesque blattas*, spoken by a *scrinium*): The *scrinia* served to protect valued rolls from damage.