

Grieving Philosophically in Statius *Epicedia* and *Consolationes*

The majority of scholarship on Statius' four *epicedia* in the *Silvae*—2.1 (*Glaucias Atedi Meliori delicatus*), 5.1 (*Epicedion in Priscillam Abascanti uxorem*), 5.3 (*Epicedion in patrem suum*), and 5.5 (*Epicedion in puerum suum*)—and his two *consolationes*—2.6 (*Consolatio ad Flavium Ursum de Amissione pueri delicati*) and 3.3 (*Consolatio ad Claudium Etruscum*)—has emphasized one of two ideas: 1) these poems of lament present up-close impressions of relationships (Asso 2010, Bernstein 2005, McNelis 2002, Nagel 2000) 2) these poems are emotionally overexaggerative and, thus, theatrically intended (Markus 2004, Laguna 1996). The case is usually made in support of the latter that Statius overtly avoids the usual therapeutic argument that we see in other versions of the consolatory genre, such as Seneca's *Consolatio ad Marciam*. I believe that the view that Statius completely eschews philosophical therapeutic discussion in these poems of lament to be focused solely on literary features and thus it misses the subtler philosophical statements found in the poems. While Statius does skip the typical long sections devoted to the typical philosophical arguments, he does comment philosophically throughout all six poems (listed above) alluding to familiar views on grief from philosophers. When we analyze Statius' consolatory poems in light of Seneca's consolations (*Consolatio ad Marciam*, *Consolatio ad Helviam*, *Consolatio ad Polybum*), Plutarch's *A Consolation to his Wife*, Cicero's comments on grief in the *Tusculan Disputations* (3.31.76), Lucretius' arguments on death and grief (*DRN* 3.894-1050), and various fragments regarding Epicurus' views on grief, we see Statius' approach to consolation to be philosophically in line with the rest of the genre. We find specific references to philosophical views on grief, such as the benefit of remembering the dead fondly (see Hulls 2011), the naturalness of grief, the inevitability of death, the benefits of death to the dead, and that grief should not be judged. This paper thus teases out Statius'

subtle therapeutic statements in the six poems, argues that Statius uses a philosophically syncretic approach to grief that is consistent with the rest of the genre—especially Cicero, who argues the correctness of the syncretic approach to grief therapy at *TD* 3.36.76—and ultimately weaves his philosophical message within the fireworks of his poetic talents.

Bibliography

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