First of all I apologize for the encyclopedic title, which refers to a more extensive research project yet to be pursued. Here I will limit myself to analyzing the programmatic passages of the two epics in relation to the *Siluae*, focusing on Statius’ self-representation as a poet and on the importance of Greek models in it. I will argue that mythic, literary, and sociological models of the poet as a *uates* or a performer, “singing with the lyre”—whether a real or a symbolic one—in front of an audience, on a given occasion, are crucial to Statius’ construction of his poetic persona.\(^1\) Different phases of Greek literary culture serve to define the role of a professional poet, confronting the diverse modalities of literary communication in Flavian Rome.

An archaic and yet contemporary poet, Statius constructs himself as a living myth, an inspired *aoidos* invested with an outstanding social function; by recalling the mythic origins of the poet’s trade, he ennobles the role he plays in imperial society, in a context of recovered orality: a situation in which writing cohabits with performance in the Hellenizing *agones*, with commissioned improvisation or high-speed composition, as well as with the practice of *recitationes*.

The omnipresent and omnivalent symbol of the lyre (competing with that of the file) holds the oeuvre of Statius together under a single sign, as I will demonstrate; from epic to the generic experimentalism of the *Siluae*, from the poem which is *uigilatum* over long years to the occasional poems for the cultural consumption of the élite, different poetic forms appear to be connected by a common trait: the claim to the social status of the poet *as such* and of the prestige due to him, *whatever* performance he offers to the audience, or to the different kinds of audience. The distance between literary genres, which are distinct, but practised in parallel by a complete professional, tends to diminish: the consciousness of a hierarchy persists,

---

\(^1\) My debt to Rosati (2013) will be acknowledged below.
but it is one that is modified by a new generic relativism, in response to the socio-cultural and economic conditions of the Flavian age.

The crisis of Maecenatism and the evolution of patronage in comparison to the Augustan model lead to a redefinition of the system of genres and to a new assessment of the literary tradition, for a personal and self-interested use. In Statius as in Martial, we observe creative strategies of adaptation to the circumstances, a daring revision of aesthetic canons, and the proposal of new artistic forms for the cultural consumption of the imperial élite—the *Siluae* are the most interesting outcome of this tendency.

A poetry that bestows distinction upon the upper class society bases itself on an assertion of the poet’s social prestige: a circle of reciprocal legitimation between the artist and his patrons is created. Statius fosters his own myth through incessant self-promotion and, as he advertises himself as an epic poet temporarily lent to a minor genre, at the same time he sponsors an image of himself as a Hellenizing epideictic poet, successful performer, virtuoso improviser, extempore or high-speed composer: an image of a professional poet which is presented not as alternative, but as complementary to that of the epic *uates* (and which seems to insinuate itself even into some parts of the major poem, the *Thebaid*). Driven by concrete necessities, a polyvalent author—in the Ovidian manner—awards in fact equal nobility to poetic forms of different rank, continually alternating in his production: Statius innovates the model of Virgil’s poetic career, which was teleologically oriented towards the sublime; and, as a full-range professional, he tries to harmonize his own choices as a poet with the different needs of his audience, from literary friends to the general reader, from private patrons to the emperor.

1. Greek Origins and Imperial Rome

1.1. A Living Myth: The Proem to the *Achilleid*

The epilogue to the *Thebaid* is perhaps the most studied passage of all Flavian epic. Here I would like to focus just on two verses: *iam te magnanimus dignatur noscere Caesar, / Itala iam studio discit memoratque iuuentus*

---

2 Zeiner (2005); Newlands (2009).
3 On the epilogue see Rosati (2008) with bibliography (176 n. 1); Gärtner (2008); Bessone (2011) 34–36.