

Generic Symbiosis and Self-Presentation in Statius's *Silvae*
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Statius's occasional, non-epic *Silvae* are generically and stylistically complex, integrating elements of various poetic genres such as epic, bucolic, and lyric, as well as secondary genres such as the *laudatio funebris*, the *genethliakon*, and the *propemptikon* (Newmyer 1979; Bright 1980; Hardie 1983; Newlands 2002). Further, Statius consistently incorporates the use of various compositional techniques such as ekphrasis and allusion as a way of enriching the fabric of his poetry. For some scholars, this stylistic richness and difficulty suggests an overwrought, mannerist poetic approach and thus elicits a lesser opinion of the *Silvae* (Vessey 1970, 1973, 1986). In this paper, I will argue that the variety of generic elements and stylistic devices that we encounter in the *Silvae* are proof of the high quality of Statius' non-epic poetry. Moreover, the generic and stylistic variety and complexity that we encounter in the *Silvae* offer the reader an even richer and more intricate poetic message, designed to showcase Statius' poetic talent and his approach to poetic composition within an entrenched cultural heritage.

Using Stephen Harrison's (2007) method of analyzing generic enrichment in Latin poetry, in particular his conceptions of "generic repertoires" and "modal uses of genre," I will analyze *Silvae* 4.7, the *Lyric Ode to Vibius Maximus*. *Silvae* 4.7 is one of Statius' most metapoetic and metageneric poems, invoking Pindar, Callimachus, Horace, and Vergil, as well as displaying elements of the epic, lyric, and bucolic genres—all while speaking to the personal occasion of the birth of Maximus's infant son. Statius structures this poem as a series of metaliterary debates, specifically between the influence of the Greek poetic tradition and the Latin poetic tradition. Ultimately, I argue that the expression of these debates in Statius's poem reveals a tension in the value and function that both literary traditions, Greek and Roman, hold for him. Further, by giving expression to the symbiotic relationship that these traditions hold for him as a kind of "twin inheritance," Statius attempts to establish that he is a poet of diverse poetic background and of special talents; a poet capable of composing poetry of import in multiple genres and forms and from multiple traditions. By putting his situation in these terms, he is able to negotiate and define exactly his status in both the Roman and Greek traditions and how he uses both of them, individually and in concert, in the production of his own poetry.

Works Cited

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