

Modal Pastoralism in Statius, *Silvae* 4.7

Statius' *Silvae* 4.7 (*Ode Lyrica ad Vibium Maximum*) is, on its face, a lyric poem dedicated to the author's friend Vibius Maximus begging Maximus to return from Dalmatia, where he has held bureaucratic assignment. Yet, as some have noted (Nagel 2009, O'Sullivan 2009), 4.7 is about more than a desire to see one's good friend again; it is a metaliterary meditation on the dynamic relationship between Statius' lyric and epic poetic sensibilities. In the first half of the poem (lines 1-28), Statius carefully shifts the boundaries between these two genres so as to destabilize the generic space created by the poem's formal characteristics (i.e. Sapphic stanzas, lyric diction, addresses to Pindar and Erato, allusions to Callimachean aesthetics, etc.) and argue positively for his talents. Yet, even further underneath this interaction between lyric and epic modalities, we also find a strong and sustained body of allusions to the pastoral genre, in particular Vergil's *Eclogues* and *Georgics*. In this paper, I will argue that Statius animates his interpretive space in *Silvae* 4.7 by destabilizing the generic boundaries of lyric, epic, and pastoral poetry, thereby creating a kind of generic chaos that he can shape to his ends. As I discuss the particular dictional and thematic allusions to Vergil's pastoral works, I will argue for a different understanding of genre as it appears in Statius' performance here (and the *Silvae* in general). I will argue that Statius moves away from a "genre" that is static, and based upon the Aristotelian tripartite typology, toward a more active and symbolically based "genre." By using a sense of genre that is "active," Statius is able to formulate more firmly his interpretive space and shape the poem's content according to his own interests and needs. As part of this proposition, I will argue that the pastoral allusions found in *Silvae* 4.7 are instances of modal genre and, thus, abstractions of generic kinds (Fowler 1982, Frow 2005), which allows for the "seasoning" of Statius' metaliterary meditation on lyric and epic with the political and moral

flavor of pastoralism. As occasional, and thereby performance-driven and epideictic, poetry Statius' *Silvae* offer us a pastoral idea: metapoetic concepts and the energies of the social and political world are dynamically intertwined.

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