Horace and Statius at Tibur: an Interpretation of Silvae 1. 3

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Silvae 1. 3, Statius's poem describing the villa of Manilius Vopiscus at Tibur, has been long regarded as a versified commonplace of minor topographical importance. In this poem, and its companion-piece Silvae 2. 2, Statius's approach to description is markedly unsystematic. Unlike Pliny the Younger, who in his descriptions of two of his villas shows a passion for methodical, exact detail, Statius makes it impossible for the reader to reconstruct his patrons' villas. He gives little in the way of explicit or technical detail. In Silvae 1. 3, for instance, he refers to only two types of rooms indoors, the cubilia (37) and the aula (40), and these are the most common components of any house.

With its unsystematic approach to description, Silvae 1. 3 may well seem to earn the label of mannerist. In the past, this term has been generally used of Statius's poetry to suggest that he is a poet of virtuosic display rather than serious depth. Recently, this generally negative view of...
Statius has been persuasively challenged by Ahl who, in his analysis of *Silvae* 1. 1—a political poem conventionally thought to flatter the emperor—shows that Statius in fact conveys powerful criticism of Domitian through his masterful and ambiguous use of figured speech.7

*Silvae* 1. 3, as far as we know, is not connected with Roman politics.8 Yet Szelest, Newmyer, and Hardie9 have done important work in showing that this private, descriptive poem is the result of more careful planning and original thought than had previously been supposed. In her formal reevaluation of the descriptive *Silvae* Szelest, for instance, points out that Statius is original in two ways. First, he makes ecphrasis the entire subject of an extended poem10—before Statius similar descriptions appeared only as digressions in epic poetry11 or else formed the subject matter of epigrams12—and second, he uses the extended poem to fuse ecphrasis with encomium.13

Hardie suggests that Statius’s unsystematic approach to description can be seen as a result of this fusion of encomium with ecphrasis. Despite the appearance of randomness, Statius is deliberately attempting to reproduce his initial impressions of almost overwhelming wonder and thus, through such

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8 A marble inscription found at Tibur refers to a Vopiscus who was consul in 114 A.D.; he is probably the son of Statius’s Vopiscus. We know no more of Statius’s Vopiscus than what the poet tells us. See A. Hardie, *Statius and the "Silvae"* (Liverpool 1983) 68.


10 Szelest (above, note 9, 1972) 90: "Statius unterscheidet sich dagegen von seinen Vorgängern vor allem dadurch, dass er die Beschreibungen von Bauten, Villen oder Statuen zum Hauptthema längerer Gedichte machte." See also Z. Pavlovskis, *Man in an Artificial Landscape: The Marvels of Civilisation in Imperial Roman Literature*, Mnemosyne Suppl. 25 (1973) 1: "Statius . . . may well have been the first to devote whole poems to the praise of technological progress, as well as the delights of a life spent in a setting not natural but improved by man’s skill."


12 See Hardie, 128–36, for an overview of the epigrammatic tradition of ecphrasis.

13 Szelest (1966) 196.
hyperbolic praise, to please his patron.\textsuperscript{14} Statius's chief focus in his villa poems is not the house but its owner. Newmyer points out that Statius combines panegyric successfully with ephrasis by making the beauties of the house correspond to the virtues of its owner.\textsuperscript{15} For instance, in the conclusion of \textit{Silvae} 1. 3, Statius invokes a blessing upon Vopiscus's goods of the heart and mind, \textit{bona animi} (106), a metaphor that stresses the link between material and spiritual well-being. The poet earlier had singled out for praise Vopiscus's most outstanding qualities of character in lines 91–93:\textsuperscript{16}

\begin{quote}
hic premitur fecunda quies virtusque serena
fronte gravis sanusque nitor luxuque carentes
deliciae,
\end{quote}

With the words \textit{quies} and \textit{serena} Statius emphasizes the tranquility of Vopiscus, just as he claims that the landscape possesses \textit{aeterna quies} (29). Vopiscus's \textit{nitor}, radiance of soul, corresponds to the radiance of his house's interior with its \textit{nitidum . . . solum} (54–55). This parallelism breaks down with the last attribute, \textit{luxuque carentes / deliciae}, however, for Statius's previous description of Vopiscus's villa with its precious gold and ivory (35–36), its modern amenities such as hot baths (43–44), running water indoors (37), outdoor dining tables (64), and its elaborate mosaic floor (55–56), have created the impression of nothing but luxury. Newmyer's hypothesis seems in practice to work only partially in \textit{Silvae} 1. 3.

As an encomium, the poem has other puzzling inconsistencies. When Statius goes on to praise Vopiscus as worthy of the wealth of Croesus and Midas (105), his statement casts doubts over the proper use of Vopiscus's wealth, for Midas made notoriously foolish use of his riches.\textsuperscript{17} Complicating the picture further is Statius's concluding reference to Vopiscus's Epicureanism.\textsuperscript{18} Statius claims that the Greek philosopher would gladly have preferred Vopiscus's \textit{deliciae} to his own garden (93–94), but the Epicurean ideal of moderation is uneasily applied to a life of seemingly excessive wealth and ease. \textit{Silvae} 1. 3 poses a problem of inner

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\item Thus Hardie, 179: "Statius's personal entry makes us see the villa through the eyes of an excited visitor, recalling the highlights. The dominant emotion is expressed in the repeated \textit{minor} (37, 57). He is selective, impressionistic, and does not linger too long on individual detail . . . his real interest is in the villa as a physical foil to the character of its owner."
\item Newmyer (above, note 9) 40.
\item All quotations of Statius's \textit{Silvae} are from the Oxford text of J. S. Phillimore, 2nd ed. (1967).
\item See Ovid., \textit{Met.} 11. 92–193. Ovid's juxtaposition of the stories of Midas's golden touch and his asinine ears, along with his interplay between \textit{aurum} and \textit{auris}, emphasises the connection between love of wealth and stupidity.
\item Vopiscus's Epicurean beliefs are also suggested at the start of the poem through the supervision by Voluptas (v. 9) and Venus (v. 10) of the building of the house.
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consistency. If the poem is to be regarded as a straightforward encomium, the description of the estate and the owner's character do not properly mesh.

Rather than return to the acceptance of Statius as a mannerist poet from whom we should not expect consistency, I propose to seek an understanding of the poem through a hitherto neglected aspect, its debt to Horace. According to Hardie, Statius's imitative practices in the Silvae show that "the work which Statius held in highest esteem was the Odes of Horace" (p. 170). Apart from his two lyrical poems modeled on the Horatian Ode, Silvae 4. 5 and Silvae 4. 7, Statius makes unstated but pervasive use of the Augustan poet. Although Statius never mentions Horace by name in Silvae 1. 3, he brings the Augustan poet immediately to mind with the first line, cernere facundi Tibur glaciale Vopisci. The chiastic arrangement of nouns and adjectives that leads to the juxtaposition of Tibur with facundi reminds the reader of the association between Tibur and poetry that was first formulated by Horace in his Odes. Like Horace in Odes 4. 2. 27–32 and 4. 3. 10–12, Vopiscus is a poet living in Tibur, yet he follows a far more indulgent lifestyle than that of the Augustan poet. Silvae 1. 3 derives an inner coherence from its formulation as a deliberate response to Horace's philosophical and poetic beliefs. Its aims are more complex than has been generally allowed. Although at first glance the response to Horace seems critical of the Augustan poet, on another, deeper, level it is more truly critical of Vopiscus. At the same time as Statius expands the traditional nature of ecphrasis, he also undermines it.

Horace particularly cherished Tibur. In his last book of Odes he praises not the Sabine farm but Tibur alone as his source of poetic inspiration. In Odes 2. 6 he names Tibur as his chosen resting-place in old age and describes Tibur as a modus (7) to his wanderings as vates. With his choice of the word modus Horace suggests that Tibur provides not simply a

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19 Hardie notes the discrepancy between owner and villa and attempts to minimize it by claiming that a rather broad interpretation of Epicureanism can give the poem its coherence and avoid the embarrassing problem of excessive wealth. He thus claims, p. 178, that Statius accommodates "praise of Vopiscus' wealth" to a philosophy which preached the simple life... by reference to the principle ὑπερακοής και δύναμιν: we live according to nature, and nature determines our needs. Since nature has 'indulged herself' so expansively at the villa site (16 f.), Vopiscus must accommodate the house and its artifices to the splendour of its natural environment. "This is a good point, but unfortunately the principle in question is one developed by the Stoics rather than by the Epicureans; it does not therefore help solve the problem of consistency. See further notes 29 and 30.

20 I. Troxler-Keller, Die Dichterlandschaft des Horaz (Heidelberg 1964) shows how Horace develops the metaphor of poetic inspiration from an abstract, generalized landscape to one that is concrete and specifically Italian. C. Becker, Das Spätwerk des Horaz (Göttingen 1963) 249, suggests that Horace chooses Tibur to represent the condition of poetic inspiration, since the Sabine farm, after the first three books of the Odes, was too closely connected with ethical beliefs.

physical limit to his travels, but also a moral limit; Tibur is a symbol of the life of moderation which is intimately connected with Horace's poetic credo. Tibur's value for him is chiefly ethical and spiritual. Although Tibur was a popular holiday resort for the Romans, Horace makes no mention of villae in any of his poems referring to the place, for such a detail would introduce an inappropriate secular element. In Odes 4. 2 and 4. 3 he mentions only the water and trees of Tibur, general features that he associates with the symbolic landscape of poetic inspiration. Unlike the Sabine farm, the Tibur of the fourth book of the Odes is a landscape devoid of all particularizing detail apart from the fact that it is rooted in the Italian soil. Thus it is a symbol of the simple yet inspired existence of an Italian poet.

Although Vopiscus, like Horace, chooses Tibur as his home, Statius suggests that he leads there a life of luxury rather than moderation. From the start of the poem Statius describes the estate in such a way as to make clear that the villa, rather than the natural environment, is the dominant feature. Thus the river Anio has been artificially channeled between the two halves of the villa, inserto geminos Aniene penates (2), the ablative absolute here suggesting that the river has been made to fit in with the design of the house rather than vice versa. The banks of the river have been domesticated and are associated with materialistic values, for their closeness to one another is described in terms of commercial exchange, commercia . . . ripae (3). The business metaphor suggests the accommodation of the rural retreat to urban modes of life. Having recalled Horace in the first line of the poem, Statius now proceeds to introduce values that were alien to Horace's thought. While his ostensible aim is to show that Horace's Tibur can be adapted to the grand style of living that Horace consistently eschewed, the demonstration contains the seeds of doubt within it.

Throughout his poetry, and particularly in his later works, Horace treats the country as definitively opposed to Rome, the city with its wealth and corrupt morals. In Odes 4. 3. 1–9, for instance, he sets the simple

22 C. P. Segal, "Horace: Odes 2. 6," Philologus 113 (1969) 235–53, convincingly demonstrates how central to the poem is the concept of moderation. I therefore accept the case that he makes (p. 240) for retaining the reading modus instead of Peerlkamp's emendation domus.
23 Apart from Odes 4. 2 and 4. 3, Horace describes Tibur in Odes 1. 7. 12–14 and 20–21, and refers briefly to it in Odes 1. 18. 2. Although in the latter poem he mentions the city walls of Catillus, the mythic founder of Tibur, he offsets moenia with its associations of human works by means of the preceding phrase in the line, miie solum Tiburis.
24 Lines 5–8 of Odes 3. 4 provide an example of a generalized poetic landscape to which Horace imagines he is summoned by the Muses: audire et videor pios / errare per lucos, amoenae /.quos et aquae subeunt et auras.
25 J. Öberg, "Some Notes on the Marvels of Civilization in Imperial Roman Literature," Eranos 76 (1978) 146, sees as an important theme in Horace "the repudiation of all contemporary extravagance and artificiality as contrasted with the simplicity of the ancestors and even of primitive peoples . . . Horace's ideals obviously are in strict keeping with Augustus' program for moral rearmament and return to ancient customs." The country offered Horace a
Tiburtine landscape against the famous centers of power and worldly ambition of Greece and Rome and shows that it alone has true value. Tibur may be a quiet spiritual retreat, but it is no backwater, for like a skillful sculptor it fashions Horace into a noble poet (10–12):

*sed quae Tibur aquae fertile praefluunt et spissae nemorum comae fingent Aelio carmine nobilem.*

The landscape of Vopiscus's Tibur likewise is not simply passive but has *ingenium* (15), creative power. Yet to this noun Statius adds the adjective *mitis* (15): the landscape is gentle and therefore unthreatening to man. Nature's power, such as it is, is directed not towards the fashioning of a poet and his innermost being but towards the development of a landscape that will complement a grand house and provide a comfortable home for Vopiscus. Thus the landscape and the house have similar qualities. In keeping with the extravagance of the villa, nature has lavishly indulged herself (16–17). The groves are lofty, *alta* (17), like the house whose radiance floods down *ab alto* (53); and the illusive gleam of the river, *fallax*. .. *imago* (18), corresponds to the brilliance of the mosaic floors, aflood with light like water, *defluus* (54).

This correspondence between the house and its landscape is not one of equals. Nature's *ingenium* has limited scope, for the landscape serves as well as complements the house. Man, not nature, is the main fashioner here. The river, like an obedient slave, *veritus* (22), ceases its customary roar as it passes Vopiscus's villa. The Nymphs (a metonym for water pipes) are sent through all the bedrooms (37), and different rooms offer different views of the river or trees, according to the time of day and individual need (38–42). Like Horace Statius emphasizes trees and water as the main features of the Tiburtine landscape, but he turns them to different ends. They have become the providers of human comfort and pleasure rather than of poetic inspiration.

Statius shows that Vopiscus has attempted to adapt Horace's simple Tiburtine landscape to his personal needs for citified comforts and sophisticated pleasures. What Horace would see as a travesty of his Tiburtine ideal Statius presents, on the surface at least, as a positive improvement upon nature. In several places he recalls and tries to refute

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convenient symbol for the life of *paupertas*, but he was *not* unaware of the ambiguities implicit in such a choice. Thus in *Satires* 2. 2 Horace puts the *laudatio ruris* into the mouth of a usurer. In *Epistles* 1. 10 he handles the dichotomy between city and country with a certain amount of ironic, humorous distance; his addressee, Aristius Fuscus, is an old friend with whom Horace had made lighthearted use of convention in *Odes* 1. 22. See also Pavlovskis (above, note 10) 1–5, particularly n. 9.
statements from Horace’s *Epistles* that defend the simple life of the country against the decadent temptations of the city.

*Epistles* 1. 10 is worth close scrutiny, for it seems to have particularly influenced *Silvae* 1. 3.26 Addressing a city dweller who is his old friend Aristius Fuscus, Horace argues somewhat lightheartedly for country as opposed to city life. By contrasting a series of urban luxuries with their natural equivalents, Horace shows how unnecessary the former are and how irrational therefore the desire for them is. First he asks his friend if grass shines or smells worse than a colored mosaic floor: *deterius Libycis olet aut nitet herba lapillis* (19)? The answer to this rhetorical question occurs in *Silvae* 1. 3. On Vopiscus’s estate the mosaic floor represents a definite improvement over the untreated soil, for nature as well as for man, since the earth rejoices at its adornment, *varias ubi picta per artes gaudet humus* (55–56).

Horace uses a second rhetorical question in lines 20–21 to suggest that the confinement of water within pipes is unnecessary and unnatural:

\[
purior in vicis aqua tendit rumpere plumbum, 
quam quae per pronum trepidat cum murmure rivum? 
\]

Statius adopts Horace’s unprecedented use of *plumbum* to mean pipe. But instead of opposing the piped water to the stream, Statius makes them complementary, with the natural stream subservient to the conduit. The Marcian aqueduct crosses the river Anio on Vopiscus’s territory, bearing its piped water to Rome. It is a sight to be admired (66–67):

\[
teque, per obliquum penitus quae laberis ammem, 
Marcia, et audaci transcurris flumina plumbo. 
\]

Horace’s imagery of violence—*tendit, rumpere*—is negative in intent. Statius’s attachment of the epithet *audaci* to *plumbo* retains the violent note but places it within a positive context since the piped water, rather than struggling to break its bonds, glides as smoothly as Horace’s unrestricted brook. *Audaci* therefore suggests the heroic, pioneering spirit of Roman technology; the piped water represents material advance rather than moral decadence. The natural stream, on the other hand, is reduced in value to an ornament of the estate that lacks independent life, for it can be swiftly crossed without difficulty. The dominating presence of the Marcian aqueduct symbolizes the close links between Vopiscus’s Tibur and the city of Rome.

Horace’s third cause for complaint is the urban taste for planting trees among the columns of a house’s inner courtyard: *nempe inter varias nutritur*

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26 The poem is set not at Tibur but on the Sabine farm. Horace claims to have written the epistle behind the shrine of a local Sabine deity, *post fanum putre Vacunae* (49).
silva columnas (22). Vopiscus has followed this fashion with his cultivation of one large tree within the atrium (59–63):

quid te, quae mediis servata penatibus arbor
tecta et postis liquidas emergis in auras,
quo non sub domino saevas passura bipennis?
et nunc ignaro forsans vel lubrica Nais
vel non abruptos tibi debet Hamadryas annos.

Again Statius recasts in a positive light what was for Horace a sign of urban decadence. Statius justifies the tree's presence by making its preservation seem an act of benevolence on Vopiscus's part, as if nature were grateful for the incursions of "civilization." Yet he does so rather frivolously, by turning the reader's attention to the anthropomorphism of the tree and entering into the fanciful idea of a nymph, who is grateful to have been spared the axe. The motif of the tree within the house of course originates in the Odyssey (23. 190–204), where it symbolizes the strength of the royal household and of Odysseus' and Penelope's love. More importantly for our purposes, in Aeneid 2. 512–14, Vergil describes a huge, ancient laurel in the center of Priam's palace that overshadows the Penates. Vergil's tree has a protective, sacral function; it symbolizes the strength and antiquity of the Trojan household as well as its piety. Significantly, the collapse of this household, with the murder of Priam, takes place under this laurel (550–58). Although Statius's tree, like Vergil's, protects the Penates (59), the rather frivolous fancy about the nymph deprives the tree of its religious awe and gives it the type of ornamental, secular function that Horace derided.

In the same Epistle Horace tries to convince Aristius Fuscus that the Stoic ideal of living according to nature, vivere naturae . . . convenienser (12), by which the Stoics meant life according to the principles of right reason,29 is identical with country life, for those who dwell in the city do not conduct their lives according to rational principles. Vopiscus's concept of vivere naturae convenienser is rather different from Horace's. True, he lives in the country, but he possesses luxurious accoutrements of the sort that Horace decries as unnecessary. His life therefore may seem to accord

27 Cf. also Odes 3. 10. 5–6.
28 Cf. Martial, Epigrams 9. 61, who gives the motif of the tree's invulnerability a biting political significance, for it was planted by Julius Caesar.
29 A. A. Long, "The Logical Basis of Stoic Ethics," Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society 6 (1971) 85–104, demonstrates how the Stoic goal of living in accordance with nature entails obedience to sound reason; such obedience is a moral principle. In Stoicism, then, "nature should be understood as first and foremost a normative, evaluative, or . . . moral principle" (p. 88). Cicero, De Officiis 3. 3. 13 defines the phrase vivere convenienser naturae as equivalent to cum virtute congruere. Horace, playing on the ambiguity of the word natura, equates this Stoic ideal with country life; in a playful spirit he tries to show Aristius Fuscus that the life of sound reason endorsed by the Stoics can be led only in the country, since city dwellers are possessed by unnatural and therefore unreasonable desires.
with neither Epicurean nor Stoic principles. It can be seen to have positive ethical value, nonetheless, if we accept Statius's fancy that the land welcomes its transformation. According to this conceit, Vopiscus's improvements do not bring him into conflict with nature. His desires are in accordance with right reason, for like the Stoic wise man he has not put self before the good of the whole. Vopiscus may then seem to have the best of both worlds. He possesses the peace and the apparent harmony with nature that Horace sought after in the country, yet with some philosophical justification he enjoys all the comforts of the city. If we accept that Vopiscus is not only the transformer of nature but also its benefactor, the instruments of his comfort and pleasure such as hot baths and mosaic floors can perhaps be acquitted of the charge of luxury, and therefore of moral decadence. We can then after all fit the troubling phrase *luxuque carentes / deliciae* (92–93) into the eulogistic schema of the poem, since Vopiscus's wealth is used for the good of the land rather than purely private pleasure.

It is possible, however, that Statius intended the careful reader to see such justification of Vopiscus's villa as strained. The denunciation of wealth was a common literary topos even in Statius's day. If Statius diverges from contemporary wisdom in his praise of ostentatious wealth, perhaps his praise is not altogether what it seems. White rightly cautions, "the language of a poet who lives by patronage is not always to be trusted." We cannot tell the precise nature of the relationship between Vopiscus and Statius. Since Statius addresses only this poem to him, and does not use any terms of affection, it is unlikely that the two men were very close; certainly Vopiscus was not another Maecenas. Apart from the references to Midas and to Epicurus, there are other, disturbing elements in this poem that subtly undermine the positive view of Vopiscus's villa and character that Statius presents on the surface. These suggest that Statius's

30 See Cicero, *De Finibus* 3. 64. A. A. Long, "Greek Ethics After MacIntyre and the Stoic Community of Reason," *Ancient Philosophy* 3 (1983) 188, cites Epictetus' definition of the wise man as "acting always for the good of the whole and never for exclusively private advantage, treating oneself as a member of a rationally organized structure."


32 Hardie, 174 ff., finds it strange that since Statius lived during the post-Neronian decline in luxury, he did not praise frugality or at least restraint in wealth, a popular literary theme at the time. Cf. Martial, *Epigram* 3. 58 and *Epigram* 12. 50, where he denounces the type of luxury villa Statius describes. Seneca, *Epistles* 90, cites architecture as the first of the artisan crafts which signify man's historical degeneration.

33 P. White, "The Friends of Martial, Statius, and Pliny, and the Dispersal of Patronage," *HSCP* 79 (1975) 265–300, 267. White concludes that the relationship between poet and patron in the late first century A.D. was fairly tenuous and that there is no evidence for a literary circle around Statius and Martial.
response to Horace's Epistle 1. 10 represents more truly Vopiscus's views than the author's own.

The description of Vopiscus's villa, for example, concludes with a list of Italian places to which Vopiscus's Tibur is superior: Tusculum, Ardea, Baiae, Formiae, Circeii, Anxur, Caieta, Antium (83–89). These towns, linked by the anaphora of cedant, are not praised for their natural beauty, as we might expect: Martial, for instance, bestows on the Lucrine Lake the epithets bland and lascivi (Epigrams 4. 57. 1) as well as mollis (Epigrams 6. 43. 5); Statius, on the other hand, simply says Lucrinalaque domus (84) without further elaboration. Moreover, he refers to Anxur in partly negative terms that suggest overbearing pride, arcesque superbae /Anxuris (86–87). Statius describes the rest of the towns he lists, with the exception of Antium, in terms of their mythical past. Yet this too is strange, for these towns have unhappy or sordid pasts which Statius, by his deliberate allusions, brings to the forefront. Tusculum is named after Telegonus, son of Ulysses and Circe, and a parricide: Ardea is named after Aeneas' maddened foe, Turnus; Formiae is named after Antiphates, who is described as cruenti (84), because as king of the Laestrygonians he killed his guests; Circeii is referred to as iuga perfida Circes (85), howled upon by wolves. The transference of the epithet perfida to the mountain ridges suggests the unattractiveness of the terrain as well as recalling the theme of moral perfidy. The effect of this catalogue of impieties is to diminish the stature of Vopiscus’s Tibur. Many places could be better than the ones named in Statius's catalogue without having any great virtue in themselves.34

By naming only Italian towns, Statius automatically narrows the bounds of his encomium. In Odes 1. 7 Horace praises Tibur through the same device that Statius uses here, the catalogue. But in Horace's catalogue he lists the most famous cities of the ancient world, those in Greece (1–11). Furthermore, he endows them with encomiastic epithets. For instance, he describes Rhodes as brilliant with sunshine and fame, claram (1), Thebes and Delphi as distinguished for their gods Bacchus and Apollo, insignes (4), Athens as the city of virgin Athena, intactae Palladis (5), the plain of Larissa as fertile, opimae (10). Unlike Statius's Italian places, those that Horace lists are physically and morally worthy of great praise. Furthermore, they offer fit subjects for inspired song.35 Thus, unlike Statius, Horace uses the catalogue to throw into sharp relief the virtues of Tibur, a humble

34 In Silvae 3. 4. 40–44, Statius uses the same form of catalogue, beginning with cedet, to compare the beauty of Earinus to handsome youths of myth. J. Garthwaite's perceptive comments on these lines in the appendix to Ahl (above, note 7) 115–16, reveal that Statius's emphasis is in fact not on the beauty of the youths but on the sterile and destructive passion they inspired. Their fate thus prefigures Earinus's own.

35 E.g. lines 5–6: Sunt quibus unum opus est, intactae Palladis urbem /Carmine perpetuo celebrare . . .
Vopiscus has to leave Tibur in the winter because of the foggy weather. With the final word bruma, Statius emphasizes that the climate at Tibur is far from ideal. One would expect Statius's list of Italian towns to end with a resounding note of praise and with a positive affirmation of the superiority of Tibur. In Odes 1. 7, for instance, Horace’s concludes with a brief but evocative sketch of Tibur’s echoing beauty (12–14). Instead, Statius undercuts our expectations by ending on an anticlimactic note that suggests one of Tibur’s faults, its poor climate in winter. Horace found the perfect year-round climate at Tarentum where, he tells us in Odes 2. 6, spring was long and winters mild, tepidasque . . . brumas (17–18). In Silvae 1. 2, the epithalmium for Stella and Violentilla, Statius praises the home of the happy couple for its mild climate where Bruma tepet (157). Since Statius dedicates the entire first book of the Silvae to Stella, and addresses to him an affectionate and fairly personal preface, he presumably had closer links to Stella than to Vopiscus. Vopiscus's Tibur, on the other hand, is no ideal landscape free from the encroachments of either bad weather or time. Statius's use of bruma here has rather sinister overtones, for by linking the word with solibus artis, a phrase that also occurs at the end of the line, Statius draws attention to its original meaning of the shortest day in the year, a time associated with the brevity of human existence. There is a similar connection of thought in Silvae 2. 1. 215, where bruma with its chilly jaws, orat jentia Brumae, is cited in a catalogue listing the violent means by which we mortals inevitably meet our end (213–18). The preceding place mentioned in Statius's catalogue is Caieta, the name of Aeneas's nurse, whose death at the start of Aeneid 7 is her sole mention in Vergil’s epic. Thus, the conclusion of this rather strange catalogue in Silvae 1. 3 subtly associates Vopiscus's Tibur too with the transience of human life and glory.

The partly negative impact of this conclusion is reinforced by the position of the catalogue within the structure of the poem. The catalogue of

36 Since Antia is a reading from marginalia, Vollmer, 278–79, argues for retaining M's reading of avia on two accounts, first that Statius is making a personal reference to Vopiscus's choice of a winter retreat, and second that Statius means us to understand the line in the sense of avia a nimbo bruma. The preceding catalogue of towns, however, seems to call for one final name in conclusion, particularly since Statius again uses cedant (88), the verb that has linked the other place-names together. M's reading can be ascribed to the copyist's unfamiliarity with the name of an obscure Italian town.
towns concludes the section describing the villa and its landscape (1–89); the account of Vopiscus's character follows and completes the poem (90–105). The description of the villa is framed by references to winter, for in the opening line of the poem Statius refers to Tibur as *glaciale*. In a hot climate, coolness is highly desirable but *glaciale* is an odd word to choose, as it connotes not only coolness but unpleasant cold. Elsewhere in Latin literature it is chiefly used of harsh, wintry conditions. Statius emphasizes the extreme cold of Tibur again a few lines later (7–8):

> talis hiems tectis, frangunt sic improba solem
> frigora . . .

The adjective *improba*, in particular, suggests an extremity of temperature that is inappropriate to the general context of eulogy. The adjective also conflicts with the Epicurean motifs of *Voluptas* (9) and *Venus* (10) that Statius introduces at the start to suggest that Vopiscus is an adherent of Epicureanism. Moderation was a key concept of Epicurean thought, but *improba* emphasizes that the cold is excessive. At lines 4–5 Statius mentions the Dog Star and the constellation of Leo as signs of unbearable heat. Likewise, at the start of *Epistle* 1. 10, Horace contrasts *rabiem Canis et momenta Leonis* (16) to the coolness of the country which he describes as *hiemes* (15). Unlike Statius, however, he immediately moderates the force of the word by juxtaposing a word suggesting a temperate climate, *tepeant*. Thus Horace maintains the concept of moderation that is so important to his rural ideal. By exaggerating an unpleasant aspect of Tibur's climate at the beginning and end of his villa description, Statius strikes a discordant note that culminates in his suggested reminder of the brevity of human life and possessions. He thus destabilizes the general pattern of the eulogy.

Statius's emphasis on Tibur's coldness jars metaphorically not only with Vopiscus's philosophical pursuits as a quasi-Epicurean but also with his poetic pursuits. Unfortunately we know very little about Vopiscus. Our sole source of information for his literary activities resides with Statius. In the preface to Book 1 of the *Silvae*, Statius describes Vopiscus as a very learned man who is a patron of literature, *vir eruditissimus et qui praecipue vindicat a situ litteras iam paene fugientis* (25–26). In *Silvae* 1. 3. 90–104, Statius tells us that Vopiscus is a poet who has practised a variety of

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38 Hardie p. 176, describes Vopiscus's philosophical attitude as an "emasculated Epicureanism."

39 J. Conington, *P. Vergilii Maronis Opera*, ed. H. Nettleship (London 1898), vol. 1, comments on Vergil's use of *improbus* for a goose in *Georgics* 1. 119, that the word denotes the absence of "the civic virtue of moderation . . . and is applied to the wanton malice of a persecuting power, E VIII 51, to the unscrupulous rapacity of noxious animals, (G) III 431, A. II 356, etc., and even to things which are exacting and excessive, (G I) 146 'labor.'"
genres. Vopiscus’s choice of Tibur as a home thus throws him into comparison with Horace in poetry as well as in landscape. As a poet himself and an admirer of Horace, Statius doubtless had strong feelings about Vopiscus’s literary efforts at Tibur. Through his implicit but pervasive comparison between the poetic styles of Horace and Vopiscus, Statius subtly suggests that the latter is an inferior poet.

In *Odes* 4. 2 and 4. 3 Horace claims a direct link between the Tiburtine landscape and his poetic inspiration. The type of poetry that he composes there is not epic but lyric, which is short and perfectly crafted. In keeping with his adoption of the short, carefully wrought poem, Horace compares himself to a bee collecting sweet honey from the moist banks and grove of Tibur (*Odes* 4. 2. 27–32):

\[
\ldots \text{ego apis Matinae}
\]
\[
\text{more modoque}
\]
\[
\text{grata carpentis thyma per laborem}
\]
\[
\text{plurimum circa nemus uvidique}
\]
\[
\text{Tiburis ripas operosa parvus}
\]
\[
\text{carmina fingo.}
\]

In this poem Horace is contrasting his style with the high-blown vehemence of Pindar. By referring to the banks of Tibur, Horace makes the reader envisage a river that is contained. When he describes Pindar’s poetry, however, Horace uses the contrasting metaphor of a river that has burst its banks and is racing down a mountain out of control (5–8):

\[
\text{monte decurrens velut annis, imbres}
\]
\[
\text{quem super notas aluere ripas,}
\]
\[
\text{fervet immensusque ruit profundo}
\]
\[
\text{Pindarus ore . . . .}
\]

In contrast to these images of violent energy, Horace describes his own poetry in terms of careful, orderly craftsmanship. At Tibur his songs are *operosa* (31), and he fashions them like a sculptor, *fingo* (32)—the same verb that he uses in *Odes* 4. 3. 12 to suggest the formative influence of Tibur on his poetry.

Statius tells us that Vopiscus is versatile as a poet. Like Horace, he writes satires, poetic epistles, and lyric (99–104). He also, however, attempts to rival Pindar: *seu tibi Pindaricus animus contendere plectris* (101). Unlike Horace, then, he attempts the grand style in his poetry as well as in his life. Just as Vopiscus conceives of the humble Tiburtine landscape of Horace on a far greater scale, so he attempts a greater scope as a poet.

The implicit contrast with Horace works to Vopiscus’s detriment, of course. History does not record any poet called Vopiscus of even minor fame. Tibur fashions Horace as a poet; at Tibur, as we have seen, Vopiscus
is the craftsman, fashioning the landscape to suit his needs for comfort and ease. Unlike Horace's bee, energetically flitting to and fro, gathering the sweet honey of the Muses, Vopiscus has no intimate poetic relationship with nature. He is also far different from the vehement, resounding Pindar. His poetic inspiration is not associated directly with the physical beauty of the landscape; only its quies is a contributing factor. Statius introduces the witty conceit that the Anio deliberately flows more quietly when it passes Vopiscus's villa, fearful of disturbing Vopiscus's poetic meditations and dreams (22–23):

... ceu placidi veritus turbare Vopisci
Pieriosque dies et habentis carmina somnos.

Like Horace, Vopiscus as a poet is associated with a quiet, contained river. But the later poet's river has no formative influence; it does not even provide background music.

Furthermore, the phrase habentis carmina somnos is rather a strange one. Sleep was often seen as the prelude to inspired song;\(^\text{40}\) that songs should "have sleep" is, however, another matter. Somnos appears again at the end of a line (42), and is again used to suggest the quiet of Vopiscus's house. But here the noun is qualified by nigras, an adjective that stands out as oddly sinister in this context.\(^\text{41}\) In Statius's poetry, niger almost invariably has negative connotations. In the Thebaid it is frequently used of death, the Underworld, or of places with infernal associations.\(^\text{42}\) In the Silvae the adjective appears six times, twice to suggest gloom,\(^\text{43}\) and three times to describe death.\(^\text{44}\) Its application to somnos here causes therefore a somber undercurrent. Silius Italicus uses the similar phrase niger somnus of the death of one of his warriors in battle.\(^\text{45}\) As a poetic as well as a physical environment, Vopiscus's Tibur is associated with the end of life and, consequently, with the lack of vibrant song.

Vopiscus's poetic landscape is marked by a curiously emphasized lack of noise and almost of movement. The woods are quiet, lacentis (40), the night is undisturbed, turbine nullo (41), and is silent, silet (42). These words, leading up to the climactic phrase nigras somnos, cumulatively suggest that the quiet is less peaceful than deadening. Such an atmosphere

\(^{40}\) The neoteric tradition of poetic inspiration gave special importance to the association between sleep and poetry. In a dream Callimachus was transported to Mount Helicon (Anth. Pal. 7. 42; cf. Horace, Odes 3.4. 9–11).

\(^{41}\) Hence the suggested emendation of nigras to pigros. See E. Courtney, "The Silvae of Statius," TAPhA 114 (1984) 331–32.

\(^{42}\) E.g. Thebaid 1. 307: nigras ... Tartara; Thebaid 9. 851: nigrae ... mortis; Thebaid 5. 153: niger ... lucus (where the Lemnian women swear to murder their husbands).

\(^{43}\) Silvae 1. 3.103 (of satire); Silvae 4. 4. 62 (of Thule).

\(^{44}\) Silvae 2. 1. 19; 3. 3. 21; 5. 1. 19.

\(^{45}\) Silius Italicus, Punica 7. 632–33: membris dimissa solutis / arma fluunt, erratque niger per lumina somnos.
of deep lethargy can scarcely be conducive to inspired carmina. In Odes 1. 7, Horace describes Tibur in terms of its resonant music, as domus Albuneae resonantis (12), and in terms of its movement, mobilibus . . . rivis (14). For a poet who models himself on Pindar and Horace, Vopiscus's landscape is strangely without movement or musical echo.

Statius also advances the pleasing fancy that Vopiscus's poetry charms the local divinities (99–100):

hic tua Tiburtes Faunos chelys et iuvat ipsum
Alciden dictumque lyra maiore Catillum.

If there is a compliment here, it is backhanded. The poets referred to by the phrase lyra maiore are presumably Vergil and Horace, and possibly also Silius Italicus, who all briefly mention Catillus in their poetry. Vergil and Silius say no more of Catillus than his name (Aeneid 6. 672; Punica 4. 225); Horace's reference too is exceptionally brief, for he calls Tibur moenia Catilli (Odes 1. 18. 2). Although it is flattering of Statius to compare Vopisus to such masters of epic poetry, it is decidedly less so when the basis of comparison involves only one or two words.

Also double-edged is Statius's preceding reference to the Tiburtine Fauns. Ennius set the precedent in Roman literature for associating the Fauns with a primitive form of poetry in the well-known lines from the Annales that condemn Naevius' uncultured verse and proclaim Ennius a pioneer in receiving both inspiration from the Muses and the enlightenment of learning:

206 (213) scripsere alii rem
Vorsibus quos olim Faunei uatesque canebant

208 (215) [cum] neque Musarum scopulos
Nec dii studiosus [quisquam erat] ante hunc

210 (217) Nos ausi reserare46

Moreover, although Faunus appears as a special symbolic patron of Horace's lyric poetry,47 in Epistles 1. 19 Horace associates the Fauns as a group with bad poetry. He begins the epistle jokingly with the idea that poets need strong drink, not water, to write immortal verses (1–3). But the result can be excess and lack of decorum (3–5):48

ut male sanos
adscripsit Liber Satyris Faunisque poetas,
vina fere dulces oluerunt mane Camenae.

46 Book 7. i–ia in The Annals of Q. Ennius, ed. O. Skutsch (Oxford 1985). See also the comments of Skutsch on these lines 366–75.
47 Odes 1. 4. 11; 1. 17. 2; 2. 17. 28; 3. 18. 1.
48 Martial likewise associates the Fauns with a fondness for strong drink. See Epigrams 8. 50.4; 9. 61. 11.
If this is the kind of audience that Vopiscus's poetry pleases, it is clearly one that does not have high standards of taste. What appears on the surface to be a pleasing rustic fancy turns out to undercut Vopiscus's literary pretensions.

At Tibur Vopiscus tries to be both a Horace and a Pindar in poetry, but he clearly fails at both. Since in his personal life he attempts an amalgam of Horatian principles with the grand style of living, the suggestion is delicately made that here too, in Statius's eyes, he failed. The nature of Vopiscus's art is reflected in his lifestyle. His poetic inferiority to Horace suggests that his physical alteration of Horace's beloved Tiburtine landscape may not, after all, be the unqualified improvement that it seems.

Statius's breathless style of wonder and enthusiasm may seem to militate against my interpretation of this poem. Certainly Statius's initial, and politic, intent is to please Vopiscus. He cannot afford to offend his patron. But in various ways Statius undermines the traditional nature of the encomium to show that he has deep reservations about Vopiscus's attempts to make Horace's Tibur his own. The answers to Horace's rhetorical questions in Epistles 1. 10 represent Vopiscus's views, not Statius's, for the comparison between Vopiscus and Horace in lifestyle and in poetry ultimately serves to demonstrate that Vopiscus has violated Horace's spiritual landscape.

Having compared Statius's Silvae 4. 4 to Horace's Epistles 1. 8, Hardie concludes that, as in Silvae 1. 3, the verbal reminiscences of Horace are slight. He still maintains that the Horatian model is clear: "Statius shows that his primary interest is not in superficial borrowing of vocabulary, but in the interpretation, understanding, and adaptation of Augustan ideas." Hardie's words are highly pertinent to my own discussion of Silvae 1. 3. It is through the medium of Augustan poetry, including particularly Horace, that we can best understand the ideas and purposes of Silvae 1. 3. The dominating position of Tibur in the first line of the poem invites us from the start to view Silvae 1. 3 as a careful reconsideration of the value and meaning of Horace's poetic landscape.

Statius's hyperbolic, quicksilver style reveals his virtuosity as a poet more than it catalogues his patron's wealth. While we learn very little that is concrete about Vopiscus's acquisitions, we are invited to admire a detailed display of Statius's literary skill. It is Statius, rather than Vopiscus, who is more truly the inheritor of Tiburtine Horace, for Statius's method of poetic composition is like that of the bee, flitting around Tibur gathering the sweet honey of poetry and shaping it into an artful poem.

49 Hardie 170.
This is a tactful poem. It presumably had to be, since Vopiscus was a patron of the arts, including presumably Statius himself. But beneath the fulsome praise lies an undercurrent of dissent. Through his Horatian allusions, Statius subtly undermines the type of life and poetry that Vopiscus displays at Tibur. Not only in his political poems but in seemingly straightforward private poetry, Statius reveals a complex, skeptical intelligence. On inspection, what seems to be a simple exercise in encomiastic description reveals itself to be showpiece of Statius' virtuosity in handling multileveled meaning. Ultimately, it celebrates not Vopiscus's powers or skill but Statius's own.

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