

### *Fama* in *Thebaid* 5.486–504

The personification of Rumor, known in Greek as Ῥόσσα and in Latin as *Fama*, has played a prominent role in epic poetry since Homer (cf. *Iliad* 2.93–4 and *Odyssey* 24.413–14). Virgil is particularly notable for his vivid account of personified *Fama*, and especially for his extended description of *Fama* in *Aeneid* 4. 174–197. Philip Hardie and Gianni Guastella have written extensively on depictions of Rumor in western literature, examining both Virgil's *Aeneid* and Statius' *Thebaid* (Hardie 2012, Guastella 2017). However, their treatments of *Fama* in Statius' *Thebaid* do not examine the depiction of *Fama* in *Thebaid* 5.486–504, a passage with markedly Virgilian overtones. Moreover, as S. Georgia Nugent argues, the Hypsipyle narrative within book 5 of the *Thebaid* is particularly evocative of Aeneas' narration of the fall of Troy in book 2 of the *Aeneid* as well as Aeneas and Dido's love affair (Nugent 2016, 172). This thematic similarity between Statius' Hypsipyle narrative and Virgil's account of Aeneas and Dido's love affair offers fertile ground for exploring the function of each author's characterization of *Fama* in their respective narratives.

This paper thus examines the relationship between the narrative function of *Fama* in *Aeneid* 4.174–197 and *Fama* in *Thebaid* 5.486–504, and argues that Statius' presentation of *Fama* in *Thebaid* 5.486–504 is particularly indebted to Virgil's depiction of *Fama* in *Aeneid* 4.174–197. This narrative similarity will be demonstrated on the basis that both passages follow a storm and episodes of romantic encounter; both concern the effects of *Fama* on female rulers; and both passages outline the repercussions of *Fama* for the kingdoms of their narratives. This paper will then outline a strong thematic resonance within the two passages: in both cases the tale carried abroad by *Fama* concerns the dedication of each queen to their duties as a ruler, and

both narratives contain significant reference to a funeral pyre (*rogos*) (Vessey 1970, 47). Furthermore, this paper argues that Statius draws a comparison between the two love-affairs, and, in particular, contrasts each woman's attitude toward their lover's departure, in order to emphasize the differences between Hypsipyle and Dido as rulers. For example, while *Fama* argues that Dido's marriage to Aeneas should be understood as a failure in her duty to her kingdom (*Aeneid* 4. 191–194), Hypsipyle argues that her marriage to Jason is compelled (*Thebaid* 5. 463), and thus not a significant lapse in her duty to her kingdom. However, like Aeneas, Hypsipyle tells the story of her and her people's tribulations at the instigation of a foreign ruler. Thus, the effect of Statius' reference to *Fama* in *Thebaid* 5.486–504 is that Hypsipyle is directly compared and contrasted with the actions of both Dido and Aeneas.

Through an argument based upon close readings of each passage, with particular attention paid to lexical similarity, narrative function, and the description of events in each author, this paper argues that Hypsipyle parallels Dido in her reactions and interactions with *Fama*, and that Statius depicts Hypsipyle as responding in a more restrained manner than Dido, while also reflecting features of Virgil's characterization of Aeneas. In conclusion, this paper will demonstrate that Statius' reference to *Fama* and his characterization of Hypsipyle as a "Dido" or "Aeneas" figure have implications for Statius' literary relationship to Virgil (Gibson 2004, cf. *Thebaid* 12. 810–819).

#### Bibliography

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