

Statius' genius for adapting and incorporating the work of prior epicists continues to be an important focus of Statian scholarship; for example R. Ganiban (2007) has recently examined the debt Statius (in the *Thebaid*) owes Virgil. But Statius' reworking of the language and narrative of epic in his shorter poems has until recently been largely overlooked. In this paper, I examine how Statius built his epithalamium, *Silvae* 1.2, on both a Virgilian and Apollonian framework.

Commentators on Virgil have noted that individual terms in Book Four of the *Aeneid* seem to have been derived from epithalamium, without recognizing the book's greater indebtedness to the form. In fact Virgil may have written Book Four using the framework of a wedding-song, drawing on the epithalamic in Apollonius of Rhodes' *Argonautica* but also including most of the required elements of epithalamia recommended by rhetoricians: a discussion of marriage, an encomium on the couple, and a description of the bridal chamber and festivities including mention of song and dance, guests, and décor. While most readers of Virgil are aware that the tragic tale of Dido's doomed love for Aeneas is modeled on Apollonius' portrait of the young Medea's love for Jason, both of these epicists' influence on Statius' *Silvae* 1.2 has not been fully acknowledged. I argue that Statius clearly combines Apollonian and Virgilian elements to create his epic epithalamium, including a fantastic setting, a virginal bride and divine intervention on behalf of a heroic groom.

While the epithalamic debt both Virgil and Statius owed Apollonius has not to my knowledge been discussed fully, it has long been understood that the *Argonautica* had a direct influence on Catullus' own epithalamium (64), a poem that, in turn, heavily influenced Virgil's *Aeneid* and Statius' *Silvae* 1.2. It is striking that both Virgil and Statius were faced with a similar problem: how to praise a remarrying, and unconventional, bride. How Virgil reworked the Apollonian material, and how Statius interwove threads of both earlier epics in *Silvae* 1.2, was a function of their own epithalamic needs. For example each poet "restores" the virginity of the remarrying bride by likening her to the beautiful maiden Medea: Virgil's variations on the Apollonian theme include allusions to the destruction of Jason and Medea's love and serve to further foreshadow Dido's doom, while Statius' adaptation forecasts a happy ending for his bride by elevating his mortal subjects to semi-divine status and alluding only to the positive events in the early love of the Colchian princess and the Greek hero. Likewise divine intervention brings each couple together: while Dido and Aeneas know nothing of Juno and Venus' machinations, Statius' bride Violentilla is actually paid a visit by the goddess of love herself, acting on the groom Stella's behalf.

Virgil, a careful reader of Apollonius, heard the strains of epithalamium issuing from the *Argo*. In his own epic epithalamium Statius pays homage to—and declares independence from—his models, and sets the standard for the later epithalamia of Claudian and Sidonius Apollinaris.