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Fama and Fiction in Vergil's Aeneid

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Monstrous *Fama*

Approving and disapproving talk classifies characters and their actions in a moral and political framework. *Fama* puts people in their place, but it thrives on anomaly and other forms of disorder. This is partly for the simple reason that people who earn either praise or censure need first to step out of order in some way. Both praise and blame, whether expressed through highly wrought song, ephemeral gossip, or some combination, then in turn magnify any forces of disruption.

But *fama* also arises from difficulties of interpretation. Prodigies, puzzles, and dilemmas of all kinds provoke rumors, speculative chatter, and pronouncements which become part of *fama*'s larger commemorative and evaluative discourse. *Fama* itself is in turn imagined as a prodigy (a *monstrum*): the anomalies and excesses of *fama* demand an interpretive response. At the same time, the prodigiousness of *fama* conveys the difficulty of managing this discourse, either at its source or through interpretation.

Many details in *Aeneid* 4's depiction of *Fama* as a horrifying divine prodigy emphasize her role as a scandal monger. Yet the perversity, excess, and sheer power that define the monstrous goddess are as fully incorporated into epic's genre-defining

discourse of remembrance as the utterances of Jupiter.¹ Aeneas in Book 8 lifts on his shoulder the *fama* as well as the *fata* of his descendants (8.731) in the form of Vulcan's shield, and it would be a mistake to draw too sharp a distinction between Book 4's prodigious *fama* and the shining proleptic monuments of the shield.

When Aeneas shoulders the burdens of his descendants' *fama* and *fata*, he takes pleasure in the likeness of events that are wondrously depicted, rather than meaningful to him: *rerumque ignarus imagine gaudet / attollens umero famamque et fata nepotum* ("and ignorant of the events, he rejoices in their appearance, as he raises to his shoulder the *fama* and *fata* of his descendants," 8.730–31).² The act of taking up the shield is itself *fama*-generating, as an example of Aeneas' special form of excellence, celebrated by the epic: from the moment in *Aeneid* 2 when he shouldered Anchises, who will lead him on a circuitous route through exile, Aeneas has taken on the burden of a barely understood future.

Because this future (the *res*) is embodied in a physical object, the *imago* transmitted visually by Vulcan must be put into words if it is to become part of the more widely transmissible discourse of *fama*. This passing of visual images into words forms part of a cycle: Vulcan's authority as artist comes partly from the fact that he is *haud uatum ignarus*—"not ignorant of prophets / inspired poets" (8.627). So the images themselves come from knowledge of a spoken future, though they surpass what this poet can communicate or explain. The poem has already disavowed its ability to put the shield fully into language, referring to the "inexpressible fabric of the shield" (*clipei non enarrabile textum*, 8.625).³ It is worth remembering that Vulcan destroys Aeneas' city (2.311) and threatens his ships (5.662, 9.76), as well as crafting his prophetic armor.⁴ The uncontrollable power

1. Hardie 1998, 259 suggests that the "personification of *Fama* in Book 4 is [. . .] a demonic double of the epic voice and of the epic tradition itself." In his subsequent explorations of *fama* (and *Fama*), Hardie has gone gradually further, first making the case (2009a, 67) for it/her as "a figure for a Virgilian brand of the epic sublime" and most recently (2012, 109) suspecting that "she is not simply the negative Other by which the poet defines his own, positive evaluated, verbal powers, but that she represents another side of the poet's own self." See also Hardie 2012, 90–94.

2. See Hardie 1986, 369–76.

3. This much-discussed phrase is inordinately hard to translate; if a translation gets across the precise disavowal of storytelling, it overemphasizes the *narro* in *non enarrabile* ("inexpressible" by contrast underemphasizes it). See especially Laird 1996, 77–81 for some of the questions raised by the shield ekphrasis.

4. Vulcan at times is fire itself, though at other times he is the craftsman god who uses fire to create art and tell stories visually. The strong connection between *fata*, *fama*, and destruction is reinforced by another item of weaponry created for Aeneas by Vulcan, his *fatiferus ensis*—"fate-bearing sword." This is the sword that will bring Turnus his fated death, and will shorten the lives of many other warriors.

of fire can be linked figuratively to the reach of the imagination, but that figurative connection does not in itself allow such force to be fully harnessed by poetic language. The poetic fashioning of the divine shield is pointedly inadequate, though verbally dazzling. The poem puts itself in a similar position to Aeneas, part way between mortal and divine, weighed with responsibilities to a vision of history that is incompletely understood.

2.1 *Fama's* tongues

The tragedy of *Aeneid* 4 provides the bait with which many of us are lured in high school or college to continue reading Latin literature. At that stage, students are often left with the impression of a Dido who goes mad and kills herself because she just can't stand being *so* in love with a man who has abandoned her. This impression is not wholly misleading, of course: the poem makes clear that Dido's *furor* (frenzy) stems from the special flaming madness of love. We hear in vivid detail how Cupid poisons her soon after Aeneas arrives at Carthage (1.657–722), and Dido eventually finds shelter in the underworld among “those whom unbending love has eaten up with its harsh wasting-sickness” (*quos durus amor crudeli tabe peredit*, 6.442). But the ingredients of Dido's destruction emerge with more distinctness, the more seriously we take the presence of another inflammatory deity in Book 4: the foul goddess *Fama*.⁵

Dido's death and her curse, though they have a complicated network of causes in the poem, result most immediately from the activities of this scandal-mongering *Fama*, who is copiously equipped with means of seeing, hearing, talking, and moving. From the day that Dido and Aeneas are united in their ambiguous cave wedding, surrounded by divine attendants though with no humans to acknowledge the marriage, Dido is unmoved by the look of things or by *fama* (4.170). The moment the poem announces Dido's newfound indifference to her reputation, *fama* gets on the move in the region—or *Fama*, as the word is printed at this point in most editions, now personified by the poem as a divinity.

At first *fama* is described in terms that could refer simply to “talk” itself, without reference to a deity. Most of us would probably recognize our encounters with gossip, either from our lived or textual experience: we are told of its exceptional swiftness, gathering strength by means of its motion;

5. Yet I would not wish to set *amor* and *fama* in artificially polarized opposition—see Reed 2007 for an analysis that brings together the erotic and the commemorative drives of the poem.

it begins small out of fear, but soon enough lifts itself to the breezes, walking on the ground but concealing its head among the clouds (4.173–77).

Only after giving vivid figurative expression to familiar qualities does the poem fully embody *Fama* as a goddess, spelling out the circumstances in which the Earth bore her in anger at the gods as a youngest sister to her Titan children. Yet just at the moment when the poem performs this embodiment, giving a genealogy and fleshing out this daughter of earth with feet, wings, and all the rest, the poet offers a surprising caveat, throwing in a parenthetical *ut perhibent* “so it’s thought” (4.179). As both Hardie and Servius (among others) have noted, this comes very close to saying *ut fama est*.⁶

illam Terra parens ira inritata deorum
 extremam, ut perhibent, Coeo Enceladoque sororem
 progenit pedibus celerem et perniciousis alis,
 monstrum horrendum, ingens, cui quot sunt corpore plumae,
 tot uigiles oculi subter (mirabile dictu),
 tot linguae, totidem ora sonant, tot subrigit auris.

The mother Earth, when the gods provoked her anger, bore
 her as the last—so it’s thought—sister to Coeus and Enceladus,
 fleet of foot and fast-winged,
 a prodigy to be shuddered at, huge, who has, in exact proportion to the
 feathers on her body,
 just so many watchful eyes below (marvelous to say),
 just so many tongues, just so many mouths resound, she pricks up just so
 many ears. (*Aen.* 4.178–83)

The word order is ambiguous, putting weight on the word *extremam*, which might limit the caveat. *Fama* is supposed to be the last sister, but that could just be the popular belief, the tradition; maybe she is really the middle child, or the eldest. But what if *ut perhibent* applies to the whole realization as a goddess? Then instead of undercutting the poem’s description, adding *ut perhibent* would ascribe to the monstrous goddess a share in the poet’s work: *fama* (or *Fama*?) bestows on the poem her own ability to realize the divine force of her activities.

6. Hardie 1986, 275 n. 118. Feeney 1991, 187 also briefly discusses the self-referentiality of this section of the *Aeneid*, noting “the baffled comments of Servius on Vergil’s use of the phrase *ut perhibent* (‘so they say’) to introduce the family connections of *Fama* (4.179).”

The *fama*-monster's excessive number of eyes, tongues, mouths, and ears are all carefully arranged in equilibrium, with unusually precise correlatives.⁷ The Latin language loves using correlatives to show equivalence. Here *fama* is embodied in a strange balance that makes her monstrous appearance match her abilities to travel, observe, and communicate, all in equal proportions. She is a *monstrum* in every sense: the kind of sight that reveals, through its anomalous appearance, something amiss in the relations between humans and gods.⁸ The lines following the description of her monstrous appearance present her as very similar to a bird that communicates terrifying news from the gods (4.184–87)—a near-twin of the *Dira* turned bird that Jupiter sends to terrify Turnus before his death (12.849–64). And as with many god-sent omens, as we see elsewhere in the poem, *Fama* causes action as much as she describes or reports it.⁹

The precision with which *Fama*'s ability to spread news matches her powers of absorbing information points forward to another important pair of correlatives a little later in the passage, when we are told that *Fama* is “as prone to keep hold of what's made-up and skewed as she is a messenger of truth” (*tam ficti prauisque tenax quam nuntia ueri*, 4.188). The balance is important here too: *fama* in the *Aeneid* transmits truth as much as imagined and distorted material (outright lies are not mentioned as a possibility). Hardie, discussing “evil” *Fama* as an “emblem of hyperbole” points out that “she represents the power of the spoken word to exceed the truth while yet remaining anchored to it.”¹⁰ He suggests that one might see this *Fama* “as a perversion of the ideal of the poet: she achieves the horizontal and vertical extension that the poet desires for his works (e.g. Hor. *Carm.* 2.20); she has the many tongues that the epic poet conventionally wishes for (e.g.

7. It is hard to reproduce the force of the correlatives *quot . . . tot* in English, which is much less given to this kind of parallelism than Latin. But the repetition and precision (*totidem*, 4.183) are striking even in Latin.

8. Cicero, *De divinatione* 1.42.93 (see also *ND* 2.3.7): *Quorum quidem vim, ut tu soles dicere, verba ipsa prudenter a maioribus posita declarant. Quia enim ostendunt, portendunt, monstrant, praedicunt, ostenta, portenta, monstra, prodigia dicuntur* (“As for the force of these ideas, this is made clear—as you often say—by the words themselves that our ancestors wisely established. Because they reveal, portend, display, and predict, they are called revelations, portents, displays, and predictions [prodigies]”). Other ancient etymologies connect *monstrum* with *moneo*, placing the emphasis on warning and advising rather than showing.

9. Miller 1981, 114 remarks on a phenomenon in the figuration of talk as social control that suggests an inversion of the *Aeneid*'s monstrously ordered *Fama*. In the perceptions of the community in *Middlemarch*, as Miller puts it, “a social novelty invariably becomes a lapse of nature. Even when the narratable difference is not construed as an unnatural monster, it is taken for a supernatural prodigy” (114).

10. Hardie 1986, 274.

Aen. 6.625); [. . .] like the poet, from at least the time when Hesiod met the Muses (*Theog.* 27f), she utters a mixture of truth and untruth.”¹¹ *Fama* here is an evil (*malum*, 4.174), a filthy goddess (*dea foeda*, 4.195), who brings terror (*territat*, 4.187); later in Book 4 she is called *impia* (4.298): all good reasons to call this figure a “perversion.” The personification dramatizes the most frightening, ominous, and even polluting possibilities of communication.¹²

But this allegorization of *Fama* does not so much pervert an ideal poet-figure as it distills poetry’s reliance on the effects of memory, observation, imagination, and verbal power. This is the reliance that poetry shares with other forms of human and divine communication in the *Aeneid*, including Vulcan’s prophetic shield in Book 8.

We do not have to wait until Book 8 to see *fata* entangled with *fama*. Jupiter and his utterances are already implicated in the out of control activities of Book 4’s monstrous *fama*, which eventually grant Dido a role in speaking out the fates of Aeneas’ descendants. The horrifying divine *Fama* spreads a sordidly judgmental distortion of the love between Dido and Aeneas, claiming that they are both forgetting their kingdoms (*regnum immemores*, 4.194).¹³ On her rounds, *Fama* makes a detour to Dido’s unsuccessful and resentful suitor Iarbas, “and sets his spirit ablaze with what’s said, and heaps up his reasons for anger” (*incenditque animum dictis atque aggerat iras*, 4.197). Jupiter Hammon fathered Iarbas by raping a nymph, and Iarbas solidifies his filial ties to the god with lavish worship.

In a peculiarly recursive tribute to the power of *fama*, the maddened Iarbas, now “on fire with the bitter rumor” (*rumore accensus amaro*, 4.203), “is said” (*dicitur*, 4.204) to have prayed to Jupiter. By inserting *dicitur* here, the poet acknowledges the importance of *fama*-work in providing the material for narrative, even more emphatically than with *ut perhibent* in the animation of the *Fama*-monster (see above).¹⁴ Iarbas takes the posture

11. *Ibid.*, 275 n. 118.

12. More recently, Hardie (2009b, 100) has noted the extensive connections between *Fama* and Book 7’s Allecto, including Allecto’s final offer (which Juno turns down) to use rumors to extend the war against the Trojans into neighboring cities (7.548–51).

13. The poem indicates that this is indeed a distortion, though not an outright lie; building stops when Dido is uncertainly yearning for Aeneas (4.86–89), but by the time Mercury visits, the works at Carthage have resumed with Aeneas’ help (4.260).

14. Feeney 1991, discussing how “the fiction of the *Aeneid* must be asserted with so much power that it will become a tradition” (186), suggests that the implied agent of *dicitur* in 4.204 is “none other than the poet, the author of the new tradition which is evolving as we read” (187). Iarbas more or less bookends his prayer with the threat that talk of—and fear of—Jupiter will be proved baseless. When he suggests that lightning flashes blindly produce empty murmurings (*caeci . . . in nubibus*

of one praying for help (4.205), but uses that supplication as a challenge, hurling accusatory questions at his father. He imagines provocatively that Jove's thunderbolts emit mere hollow rumblings (*inania murmura*, 4.210), exactly the vocabulary that also describes subdued and anonymous human talk.¹⁵ He describes Aeneas as a Paris enjoying his spoil; evidently in bringing gifts to Jupiter's temples, Iarbas and his people have been cherishing hollow *fama* (*fama inanis*, 4.218).¹⁶

While Iarbas provocatively imagines as “hollow” the power conferred on the supreme Olympian by the human imagination, Jupiter's actions confirm the importance of human *fama* in his methods of wielding power. Jupiter responds to Iarbas' fiery anger by taking advantage of his *fama*-based report and turning his gaze to the lovers in Carthage, whom he sees as *oblitos fama melioris* (“heedless of their better *fama*,” 4.221). He reacts by making Mercury, in effect, a vehicle of *fama* and *fata* together, passing on to his messenger the news about Aeneas' indifference to the cities granted by the fates (4.225), and giving him a rundown of what to say. This amounts to the command to get under sail (*nauiget!* 4.237). That final imperative is grounded in a reminder of the beliefs that comprise Aeneas' *fama melior* (apparently Venus has given a pledge for what sort of man he is—Jupiter hints at a bargain over Aeneas' fate during his Iliadic battles, 4.227–28), and an awareness of the *gloria* and *laus* that are due to result from Aeneas' imperial destiny (4.229–33).¹⁷ Mercury fits his own goads into the message—he improvises from the sight of Aeneas at work on Carthaginian building works—but he passes on the essence of what *Fama* has been reporting and what Jupiter has perceived, upbraiding Aeneas for indifference: *heu, regni rerumque oblite tuarum!* (“Ah, forgetful of your kingdom and your achievements!” 4.267). Mercury's reproachful vocative combines the words attributed to *Fama* on the rampage (*regnorum immemores*, 4.194) with Jupiter's perception of the lovers as insufficiently attentive to the quality of their *fama* (*oblitos fama melioris amantis*, 4.221).

ignes . . . inania murmura miscent, 4.209–10), his vocabulary connects groundless human chatter with perceptions of the noises made by the natural world. Macdonald 1987, 27–28 briefly discusses such layerings of *fama* in Book 4. Hardie 2012, 88–92 has now analyzed in detail Iarbas' relation to *fama*.

15. In Ovid's House of *Fama* Iarbas' idea is reversed; the noises there are *murmura* (not an outcry, *clamor*), like the waves—or like the sound made by Jupiter's thunder (*Met.* 12.49–51).

16. Iarbas' hostility, however, focuses more explicitly on common presuppositions about Phrygian “half-men” than on a violation of guest-friendship, which Jupiter might be expected to avenge.

17. That destiny includes conflict between Carthage and Rome, evidently: Jupiter has made efforts to make sure that the Carthaginians will not be hostile to Aeneas, but he wonders what hope drives Aeneas to hang around in a hostile nation (*qua spe inimica in gente moratur?* 4.235).

When Aeneas hesitates over how to find a gentle way to tell Dido that he must leave Carthage (*quae mollissima fandi / tempora*, 4.293–94), *impia Fama* gets in first (4.298). As we saw in chapter 1.3, this *Fama* is *impia* from both Dido’s and Aeneas’ perspectives. For Aeneas, it disrupts the line of command, and throws into disarray his own plans for careful speech. But we are more emphatically directed towards Dido’s reasons for regarding this *Fama* as *impia*. We have just been told that she has sensed the Trojans’ tricks ahead of time (*dolos [. . .] praesensit*); the narrative implies that her sensitivity to the truth results from her state of frenzy.

at regina dolos (quis fallere possit amantem?)
 praesensit, motusque exceptit prima futuros
 omnia tuta timens. eadem impia Fama furenti
 detulit armari classem cursumque parari.

But the queen grasped the deception beforehand (who can escape the awareness of one in love?), and first got wind of the movements to come in her fear of everything, even when safe. To Dido in her frenzy the same reckless *Fama* brought news that the fleet was being equipped and their voyage prepared. (*Aen.* 4.296–99)

This *Fama* perhaps consists of her super-alert perception—or even imagination, at first—rather than a fully articulated report. So *impia* reflects Dido’s view of what *Fama* tells her, that is, the unspeakable treachery of her supposed husband (which she calls *nefas*, a crime against divine law, 4.306).

Aeneas himself, in Book 1, had linked his own memories of Dido with the rewards reciprocally due to her as one of the *pii* (1.603):

‘in freta dum fluvii current, dum montibus umbrae
 lustrabunt conuexa, polus dum sidera pascet,
 semper honos nomenque tuum laudesque manebunt,
 quae me cumque uocant terrae.’

“While rivers run into the sea’s shallows, while shadows scan the hollows among the hills, while the pole gives pasturage to the stars, always your honor, your name, and your praises shall last, whatever lands call me.” (*Aen.* 1.607–10)

With this set of carefully balanced *dum* clauses, Aeneas exactly aligns Dido's lasting reputation with the eternal forces of nature.¹⁸ Her *fama* is to be underpinned by the imperatives of *pietas*.

Dido's madness then comes to appear as a collapse of the sense of self that had been rooted in her own *fama*. After learning that Aeneas hears the call of other lands more clearly than he hears her pleas, Dido mourns the loss of her identity as ruler. She has aroused the hostility of the neighboring peoples, she tells Aeneas; her *pudor* and *fama* have been smothered (*extinctus*, which continues the fire imagery): *te propter* [. . .] / *extinctus pudor et, qua sola sidera adibam, / fama prior* ("Because of you [. . .], my honor has been smothered, along with my one route to the stars, the *fama* I once had," 4.321–23).

Fama as a blend of news and perception in 4.298 suits the vocabulary of *fama* throughout Book 4, as it brings together all the inflammatory and Dionysian language of *furor*, which readers have already seen raging out of control in Aeneas' account of the Fall of Troy in Book 2. *Fama* in its various permutations sets people on fire—Iarbas (4.197), Dido (4.300), maybe Aeneas (4.361)—and possesses them with Dionysus' wildness (4.300–303), but it also raves like a bacchant itself (4.666). Through a reimagining of the Sophoclean hero Ajax's sufferings, the *Aeneid* acknowledges how both madness and poetic narrative can ensue when a character's sense of self becomes elided with her public *fama*.¹⁹

The history-making force of epic storytelling feeds on the scandalous monstrosity of gossip, when Dido reaffirms her disintegrating identity by

18. In Book 4, as if to preempt being cast in the role of a Catullan Theseus (whose heedlessness of his obligations to Ariadne is extended by her prayer/curse into near-murderous forgetfulness of his father), Aeneas restates in personal terms his commitment to remembering Dido and what she deserves of him (*ego te, quae plurima fando / enumerare uales, numquam, regina, negabo / promeritam, nec me meminisse pigebit Elissae / dum memor ipse mei, dum spiritus hos regit artus*; "The many things which you have the power to reckon up in your speech, never, queen, will I deny that you have deserved, and I won't tire of remembering Elissa, as long as I remember myself, as long as breath controls this body," 4.333–36). In Book 1 he emphasized the agency of the gods, and her own intrinsic worth, in making her repute coterminous with the natural world. In Book 4 he says that thoughts of her are locked into his mind and body, along with his breath. Modern English speakers often find inadequate this simultaneously personal and impersonal expression (*nec me meminisse pigebit . . .*) as a response to Dido's grief, but it is hard to know whether the impersonal main verb *pigebit* would have discomfited Roman readers too.

19. The connections between madness, *fama/kleos/timê*, anger, reciprocity, and suicide are deeply woven into the multiple allusions to both Homer's and Sophocles' presentations of Ajax. See Tatum 1984 for an exploration of Dido's *fama* in relation to the intertextuality between *Aeneid* 4 and 6 and Sophocles' *Ajax/Aias*. As Tatum puts it, "*fama* is as central to Dido's view of her role in the world as *timê* is to the mind of Ajax" (1984, 448).

means of her curse and magic-wielding suicide.²⁰ Dido's wild sorrow and its expression in her ritualized suicide give her own angry memory its power to become part of fate. As her grief progresses, we hear a development of her briefly articulated wish that Aeneas should be driven to remember her when he suffers the punishment that must come to him, "if mindful divine wills have any power" (*si quid pia numina possunt*, 4.382).

This development culminates in Dido's curse on Aeneas and his race; she adjusts her own wishes for Aeneas' suffering, so as to make the future she speaks out, which will commemorate her own suffering, compatible with the fixed utterances of Jupiter (4.612–14), as *fama* joins with *fata*.²¹ The magic rites surrounding Dido's suicide employ objects that embody memories, to aid her in making her death an act of ritual slaughter, which will add divine force to her words: "this I pour out as my last utterance, with my blood" (*hanc uocem extremam cum sanguine fundo*, 4.621), she declares.²² She prays to the Sun and to *conscia* Juno as forces of knowledge, as well as to Hecate and the avenging Furies (*ultrices Dirae*); she then reenergizes her imprecation, first with a general call to Tyrians to harry Aeneas' stock and the whole race to come with acts of hatred (4.622–24), then to some particular avenger (*ultor*, 4.625) who will pursue the settlers with a fire-brand (*face*, 4.626), just as she had earlier envisaged herself pursuing Aeneas with black flames (4.384). Dido's prayers to the divine forces of knowledge, death, and vengeance, along with her apostrophe to future Tyrians and her command to an avenger to rise from her bones, turn the Punic wars into a manifestation of renewed control over her *fama*, making them a series of struggles that will commemorate and avenge her own suffering with due recompense.²³

A new type of balanced disorder—akin to the balanced correlatives we saw in the goddess *Fama*'s characteristics—marks the conflict to come: *litora litoribus contraria, fluctibus undas / imprecor, arma armis: pugnent ipsique*

20. Dido resorts to magic language after her attempts at persuading Aeneas with non-supernatural forms of speech have so notably failed; see Allen 2000, 147 on curse tablets in classical Athens as a potential substitute—especially for women—for the power of speech that is exercised by men in the law courts.

21. *si tangere portus / infandum caput ac terris adnare necesse est, / et sic fata Iouis poscunt, hic terminus haeret, / at [. . .]* ("if it is necessary for his unspeakable head to reach harbor and swim to shore, and this is what the fates of Jupiter demand, this boundary-point is fixed, but . . .," 4.612–14).

22. See Graf 1997, 8–19 for a discussion of the problems with anachronistic oversimplification when we try to draw sharp lines between religion and magic in antiquity. Dido's rites mingle the two. We do not need to suppose that either Dido or the poet would expect her actions and words to succeed wholly as rituals. Rather they spell out the figurative force of her prayer/curse. That figurative force is then still more fully embodied within the poem's story in the perverted sacrifice of her suicide.

23. Panoussi 2009, 45–56 assesses the ritual efficacy of Dido's actions in Book 4.

nepotesque (“shores opposed to shores, waves to billows, I call down in my prayer, weapons to weapons: may they themselves and their descendants battle it out,” 4.628–29). The matched pairs of opposing forces listed by Dido convey at an elemental level the extremes of destruction anticipated in a long conflict between Rome and Carthage as competing imperial powers.²⁴

But these matched forces (shores against shores, waves against billows, arms against arms) also express in material terms the reciprocity that Dido has found wanting in Aeneas and the Trojans—the awareness of what *pietas* demands.²⁵ To make up for present forgetfulness, their nations’ histories will provide the remembrance due to Carthage and its queen, in return for the generosity that the Trojans have first enjoyed and then rejected. So Dido’s personal *fama*, in all its manifestations, fuses with epic *fama*, which aligns Rome and Carthage’s past and present with the *fata* of the *Aeneid*.

2.2 Jupiter’s bargain

When Hercules weeps helplessly for the boy Pallas, Jupiter serves up an understanding of death and time so elegantly pithy, and so resonant in its intertextual echoes, that it is tempting to make his short speech into a master-code for understanding epic *fama*. Appealing to the ties his family has established with Hercules, Pallas in Book 10 has been praying not merely to defeat Turnus; Turnus needs to be aware of his defeat and see Pallas taking blood-smeared weapons from his half-dead body. That Turnus should perceive Pallas’ power over him is crucial to the victory Pallas visualizes, which implies a particular vision of *fama* in its need to be authenticated by the gaze of his dying enemy.

But Hercules can give Pallas neither this acknowledged victory nor life alone:

Audiit Alcides iuuenem magnumque sub imo
corde premit gemitum lacrimasque effundit inanis.
tum genitor natum dictis adfatur amicis:
‘stat sua cuique dies, breue et irreparabile tempus

24. Some readers (Hexter 1992, 344; Panoussi 2009, 46) have suggested that Hannibal’s eventual defeat expresses a failure, or partial failure, of Dido’s curse. But she does not call for victory; she calls for reciprocal suffering and for commemorative hostility. And if the *Aeneid* is clear about anything, it is clear that the winners sometimes suffer as much and longer than the losers.

25. Gibson 1999 clarifies some of the complex questions of reciprocity raised by the ethical vocabulary of Dido and Aeneas in Books 1 and 4.

omnibus est uitae; sed famam extendere factis,
 hoc uirtutis opus. Troiae sub moenibus altis
 tot gnati cecidere deum, quin occidit una
 Sarpedon, mea progenies; etiam sua Turnum
 fata uocant metasque dati peruenit ad aeuī.’

Alcides heard the young man and a huge groan
 he presses beneath the depth of his heart, and he pours out helpless tears.
 Then the father speaks to his son with affectionate words:

“There stands as his own, for each man, a particular day; short and
 irretrievable

is the time of life for all. But to stretch out *fama* by doing things,
 this is the task for a man’s excellence (*uirtus*). Under the high walls of

Troy

so many men born of gods fell—in fact there died with them
 Sarpedon, my own offspring; his own fates summon even Turnus,
 and he has come right up to the turning posts of the stretch of life
 granted him.” (*Aen.* 10.464–72)

Jupiter presents *fama* as a particularly human—and perhaps especially male—goal and privilege, but one that is divinely ordained. As is usual with Jupiter, he purports simply to affirm the way things are, but at the same time authorizes the situation he explains. The scheme of things that he describes seems to be brought into being in some unfathomable way by Jupiter’s utterance, as he speaks to (*adfatur*) Hercules of what is fated/spoken (*fata*).²⁶ Yet we are never steered decisively to categorize *fama* as either fully divine or fully human discourse. *Fama*, as a bridge from mortality to story-borne immortality, belongs to humans, but it is also a form of speech that has special links to the divine realm.

As well as obfuscating the borders between truth, fiction, and lies, the connections between the discourses of *fama* and *fata* point to epic’s special task of using both memory and imagination to cross boundaries of time. Perhaps even more than the *Iliad*, the *Aeneid* is interested both in human time, defined above all by the temporariness of human life, and in another kind of time, figured as divine, where knowledge and imagination—even the human imagination—roam unconstrained by mortal fragility.²⁷

26. The verb *adfari* is not reserved for divine speech, however, and its uses in the poem are varied, though it very often occurs at moments of critical importance for fate’s story.

27. For an analysis of time and *kleos*, see Bakker 2002. When in *Aeneid* 8.731 Aeneas raises to his shoulder *famamque et fata nepotum* in the form of Vulcan’s shield, we could understand “the *fama* and

Jupiter lays out plainly for his son the heroic bargain that encapsulates, on one level, the *raison d'être* of epic narrative: “There stands as his own, for each man, a particular day; short and irretrievable is the time of life for all. But to stretch out *fama* by doing things, this is the task for [a man’s?] excellence (*uirtus*)” (*stat sua cuique dies, breue et irreparabile tempus / omnibus est uitae. sed famam extendere factis, / hoc uirtutis opus*, 10.467–69). Jupiter’s words adjust a rhetorical question posed by Anchises to express confidence in the Trojans’ mission, as he displays the Roman future to Aeneas in Book 6. Anchises focuses on *uirtus* itself, rather than *fama*: *et dubitamus adhuc uirtutem extendere factis, / aut metus Ausonia prohibet consistere terra?* (“And do we hesitate still to stretch excellence with achievements, or does fear prevent us settling on Ausonian soil?” 6.806–7). Jupiter makes *fama* the one thing that grants *uirtus* any efficacy, when human time is described from a divine viewpoint.

Virtus cannot meaningfully extend a man’s life, but it can extend his existence in *fama*.²⁸ The tendency of classical epic is to turn this bargain into a question, as the *Iliad* does, and ask whether the deal satisfies those who suffer while they live, die violent deaths, and are celebrated in poetic memory.²⁹ Jupiter, on the other hand, rejects the kind of questions that humans might wish to ask about death and memory. He is teaching his newly immortal

fates of his descendants” as “the *fama* and fates consisting in his posterity” as much as “belonging to” that posterity. The emphasis on the *fama* belonging to and maintained by Aeneas’ descendants bridges those visions of mortality and time that treat *kleos* as an alternative to the continuation or renewal of life (as the *Iliad*’s Achilles sees it in 9.412–16) and those that see *kleos* perpetuated through the birth of subsequent generations, who will renew life both by remembering their predecessors and by replacing them.

28. In some ways the *Aeneid* does claim to speak for humanity as a whole, not just men, defining humans inclusively (in contrast to gods) by their vulnerable mortality. It is hard to tell how consistently or consciously “manliness” would have been heard in the word *uirtus* by a classical audience. Cicero remarks on the gendering of *uirtus* in *Tusc.* 2.43; the very fact that he needs to point it out suggests that the *uir* in *uirtus* would not have been omnipresent in his readers’ minds (but perhaps this is because it is taken for granted as the unmarked, dominant gender). The Roman vocabulary of excellence is deeply bound up in gender and status distinctions; see further, for example, Santoro L’Hoir 1992; Connolly 2007 offers a concise overview of these issues.

29. In my reading, Jupiter implicitly presents the reckoning of death and fame as an exchange; Turnus in 12.49 then makes the language explicit when he demands that Latinus should allow him to make a bargain of death for distinction (*letum [. . .] pro laude pacisci*). This view contrasts with the approach of Coffee 2009, 97, who argues for a more precise, but also more rigidly evaluative, understanding of exchange-based language, which would sharply differentiate between Jupiter’s wording and Turnus’ terms. According to Coffee’s analysis (39–114), the *Aeneid* offers two models for exchange, which are defined through a system of moral evaluation governed by aristocratic ideology. A commodity-based view of exchange threatens to expose the contradictions inherent in the aristocratic model of reciprocity valued by the poem; Turnus and Juno are among the characters who undermine successful reciprocity with their mercantile, transaction-based language.

son to think like a god. *Fama* and *uirtus* become the tools to bring time as mortals experience it into line with a divine temporal scheme.

Jupiter flattens out the problems of life and death that preoccupy mortals, as if they are oversubtle nuances that can and should disappear in the glare of divine reasoning (*breue et irreparabile tempus / omnibus est uitae*). Provided that the fates have had their say, for Jupiter there is no such thing as dying before one's time—no shock to be felt in the awareness that mortal fathers like Peleus, Priam, Evander, or Daunus must mourn the deaths of their young sons.³⁰ He makes Achilles' dilemma—a return to his father and the dismissal of lasting *kleos*, or grief for Peleus but a story worth remembering and lamenting in the *Iliad*?—into an irrelevance, since the lifespan of a Pallas and that of a Nestor look equally skimpy alongside eternity.

The conversation between Hercules and Jupiter is one of those that makes a point of rewriting a moment from the *Iliad*, in this instance the passage where Zeus mourns his son Sarpedon, after being convinced by Hera that he must not alter what is fated. Jupiter's words intensify the effect of this rewriting by directly recalling that earlier scene: "Under the high walls of Troy fell so many men born of gods—in fact there died with them Sarpedon, my own offspring; his own fates summon even Turnus, and he has come right up to the turning posts of the stretch of life granted him" (*Troiae sub moenibus altis / tot gnati cecidere deum, quin occidit una / Sarpedon, mea progenies; etiam sua Turnum / fata uocant metasque dati peruenit ad aeuu*, 10.469–72). In his speech to Hercules, Jupiter borrows what Sarpedon says to Glaucus in *Iliad* 12, where Sarpedon presents *kleos* and *timè* as a substitute for immortality.³¹ Jupiter combines his own version of Sarpedon's view of death with a distillation of the argument Hera gives when Zeus is tempted to rescue his son: Sarpedon is by no means the only mortal son of an immortal god to fight at Troy, she reminds him—what would happen if all the gods started whisking their sons away? Instead, Hera tells Zeus, he should worry about what happens after Sarpedon's death and make sure he

30. Perhaps because of Aeneas' role as father (father of Iulus, father-figure for the Trojans, and in some sense father of Rome), which aligns him as much with the Iliadic Priam and the Odyssean Odysseus as with younger Homeric heroes, we see in the *Aeneid* more sorrow and anxiety over living too long and watching others die than over a memorable, youthful death (examples include Aeneas 1.94ff.; Anna 4.678ff.; Euryalus' mother 9.481ff.; Mezentius 10.846ff.; Juturna 12.879ff.). For a metapoetic discussion of this theme, see O'Sullivan 2009.

31. Hejduk 2009, 301 remarks on this allusion as part of the inhumanity of Jupiter in Vergil's characterization. Hejduk holds a similar perspective to my own on the need to complicate schematizations that would align Jupiter with the forces of rationality and order, in opposition to Junonian chaos and irrationality. Our approaches to Vergilian *fama*, however, are very different; she regards Jupiter's preoccupation with *fama* as uniformly negative and most often translates the word as "adulation."

receives his full privilege of burial by his family in Lycia (*Iliad* 16.441–57). The *Iliad* here uses mourning rituals both to set limits to the gods' powers of intervention and to demarcate different ranks among mortals—this provides divine backing for Sarpedon's point to Glaucus, that since they have to die some time, they may as well make sure that they earn well-deserved *timê* among the Lycians.

The *Aeneid's* rewrite, on the other hand, makes this an issue of time: human lives are short and are more or less interchangeable, except in the span of memory that may be prolonged by *uirtus*. Unlike Zeus, Hercules does not even consider trying to defer death for a cherished mortal; he simply grieves. And in place of the blood-rain with which Zeus honors Sarpedon (*Iliad* 16.459–60), we have “futile tears” (*lacrimas* [. . .] *inanis*, 10.465) shed by Hercules when he hears Pallas' equally futile prayer.

The near-interchangeability of mortal lives and deaths in Jupiter's speech has some strange effects. Far from supplying a simple master code for understanding the forces that drive epic narrative, it turns out that Jupiter's pithy reduction of the logic underpinning the genre simultaneously authorizes epic commemoration and risks reducing it almost out of existence. Even as Jupiter celebrates the power of *fama*, he submerges its ability to honor particular men or women, by drowning the memory of individuals among the collectivity of the dead.³²

Jupiter's notion of *fama*, it seems, presents renown as a kind of anonymity. When Jupiter tells Hercules *sed famam extendere factis, / hoc uirtutis opus* (“but to stretch out *fama* by doing things, this is the task for *uirtus*,” 10.468–69), it sounds at first as if he is proposing *fama* as a way to escape the uniform end that comes to all (*omnibus*, 10.468). Yet in the next sentence, he names Sarpedon and Turnus precisely to show that their deaths make them interchangeable with a whole series of others, including Pallas.³³ No wonder Hercules' tears are futile, and not only because of their inability to save Pallas' life: mourning works only up to a point even in maintaining the remembrance of individuals.

So Jupiter's emphasis on the day that stands fixed for each man (*stat sua cuique dies*, 10.467) elides the day when a man's actions are most *fama*-

32. Of course, another way to look at this would be to say that Jupiter submerges individual sorrows in a broader concern for the “human condition”; the story of a Patroclus or a Pallas would then be memorable for listeners or readers because it is driven by the one thing that anyone would share with those characters—the need to die, sooner or later.

33. As Hejduk 2009, 301 points out, Jupiter provides an oddly denuded version of a standard consolatory *topos*, which grants the mourner companionship in bereavement through a reminder of other deaths.

worthy with the day that assimilates him to all other mortals. Pallas' day of *aristeia* is also the day when his life ends. The day that can make him memorable is the day that makes him one among *omnibus* (10.468), defined communally by a share in death instead of being individualized with personal distinction.³⁴

The prodigious but precisely calibrated equipment of the animated *Fama* in Book 4 mirrors and helps communicate the monstrously ordered excess of Jupiter's *fata* in the *Aeneid*. It is clear that *fama*, according to Jupiter in Book 10, measures extremity; *uirtus* extends *fama* to the degree that it gets people to talk about someone as distinct from the common run. Yet in Jupiter's vision, the will to exceed becomes as regular a part of life as the knowledge that one will someday die. This vision of Jupiter's is characteristic of his role in the poem: he advertises as his chief priority the maintenance of some kind of cosmic order grounded in the prescriptions of fate, but he describes as normal—or prescribes as normative—a kind of excess that simultaneously maintains and threatens that order.

2.3 Sinon's *fama*

At the start of the *Aeneid*'s second book, Aeneas tells of the mountainous wooden horse left outside Troy by the Greeks after their pretended abandonment of the wearying siege. This episode brings together many of the problems posed by *fama* as fictive and collective knowledge. Aeneas first summarizes the persuasive technique that will induce the Trojans to comply with the Greeks' intent: *uotum pro reditu simulant: ea fama uagatur* ("they make out that it is a votive offering for their return: this *fama* roams about," 2.17). Aeneas' summary divides persuasive agency between the Greeks (as the subject of *simulant*) and unanchored *fama*, which wanders free of particular authors, speakers, or listeners. In the more detailed account which follows, Aeneas explains exactly how the Greek who goes by the name of "Sinon" insinuates himself into the Trojan deliberations over the prodigious offering. The repeated *fama* and *fari*-based vocabulary in this

34. This reflects a problem raised by epic battle scenes, which in some ways read as catalogues of death. On one level the attention to details of suffering in battle scenes in the *Iliad* and *Aeneid*—or even in Lucan's hyper-real *Bellum ciuile*—provides a way to duly mourn and remember the lives and deaths of individual fighters, with a range of attention that extends well beyond the central characters whose presence is felt in the rest of the poem. But the variation in names, emotions, relationships, and wounds, packed into a short space of narrative, overwhelms many readers into a generalized awareness of the chaos of battle, instead of creating and perpetuating distinctly delineated memories of individuals.

episode, including the words with which Aeneas marks his speech as a form of lament (2.3 and 2.6), weaves the one-day *fama* of the Trojan horse into the epic's broader discourse of *fama*.³⁵

"Sinon" both individualizes this roaming *fama* through his fictive self-representation, and embodies *fama*'s characteristic anonymity. His peculiar individualized anonymity stems partly from the way he serves as a vehicle for Ulysses' notorious guile, as Ralph Hexter has emphasized.³⁶ He hides behind the notoriety of Ulysses and his plots (and his famous victim, Palamedes, 2.81–82), but nevertheless achieves a kind of Odyssean *kleos* in Aeneas' description of him in 2.62 as ready either for successful deception or certain death.

At the same time, Sinon endows with the authority of a divine imperative the *fama* that explains the horse as a votive offering. He situates his mixture of lies, fictions, and truths in a ritual framework that the Trojans recognize as compelling. Sinon makes the Trojans' interpretation of the horse a matter of *pietas*, and turns Trojan *pietas* into the value that allows the Greeks to tear apart Troy.

Some of the anxieties in the episode, in which the perceptions of the "many" overpower the "one," suggest Roman aristocratic antipathy to popular governance. The role of *fama* as chatter here joins forces with the dangerous simplicity of the Trojans' group identity as *pii* (in contrast with the *impii* Greeks), so that they ignore the wisdom of potential leaders (Cassandra, who is a sort of anti-Sibyl, as well as Laocoon). Yet a straightforwardly polarized ideological conflict between the political authority of "one" and "many" is complicated by the investment of Jupiter—the ultimate "one"—in the *furor* shown by the Trojans en masse.

Sinon starts by characterizing himself as a near victim of the impious piety of the Greeks, who would have made him a human sacrifice. Then Sinon explains that the gigantic artifact has been left as an offering to Athena, to expiate an act of pollution, a grim sacrilege (*nefas quae triste piaret*, 2.184). Diomedes (*impius* [. . .] *Tydidēs*, 2.163–64) and Ulysses, in Sinon's story,

35. This vocabulary (including *fata* and *fas*) occurs (e.g.) in 2.3, 2.6, 2.13, 2.17, 2.21, 2.34, 2.50, 2.54, 2.74, 2.81, 2.82, 2.84, 2.107, 2.121, 2.132, 2.147, 2.157, 2.158. See also Hardie 2012, 74–75 (citing Clément-Tarantino's 2006 Lille dissertation) for further *fama*-related vocabulary not derived from forms of *fari*.

36. Hexter 1990, 110–13. Sinon's Odyssean—or rather Ulyssean—effectiveness in rhetorical manufacturing is further emphasized by interspersing forms of *fingere* into the *fari*-language that abounds in the first section of Book 2, especially in 2.79–84. Aeneas crystallizes this as he describes how Sinon puts the capstone on his self-characterization as near-victim: *ficto pectore fatur* (2.107); literally, "he speaks from his feigned heart." That is, he speaks with simulated emotion and from a carefully fashioned identity.

stole the Palladium from Athena's temple with hands still bloodied from murdering the citadel guards, and so defiled with their touch the sacred effigy and, more specifically, the goddess's virgin headbands (2.163–68). If the immense horse should enter Troy, the Trojans would obtain the divine protection sought through the artifact that the Greeks have created in recompense for their pollution, Sinon tells them—this is the reason why Calchas has told the Greeks to build it sky-high (2.185–86). By contrast, the original act of pollution, Sinon implies, would be transferred to the Trojans if they should violate the offering to Minerva (2.189), and would destroy them.

Aeneas' narrative invites his audience to assume that both Greeks and Trojans remember equally vividly the full scope of the impiety accompanying the violent theft. But the poem also allows readers to see Sinon as exploiting Trojan prejudices against the Greeks as the sort of people who would, of course, defile a sacred object with the filth of men's blood.³⁷ Equally the Trojans see themselves as so eager to obey the will of the gods and reassert divine order that their dedication to *pietas* can be exploited by the Greeks' willingness to enlist divine authority for their lies.

After Sinon's stories have elaborated the *fama* that was first summarized by Aeneas at 2.17, a horrifying divine sign clinches the matter in the eyes of the Trojans: a pair of enormous serpents apparently confirms the sacred inviolability of the wooden horse by rising from the sea and going after Laocoon, the one man who had correctly interpreted the practical function of the horse as troop carrier.

In this account, communications of the gods fuse with human chatter. Word goes round (*ferunt*, 2.230) that Laocoon is being duly punished for violating the offering with his spear. Aeneas, who speaks the whole of Books 2 and 3 to Dido and the other Carthaginians, never settles the question of which (if any) god has sent the omen. The divine sign takes on the kind of authorless authority associated with *fama*, disseminated among the voices of its many interpreters.

Their preoccupation with their own *pietas* makes the Trojans, as Aeneas puts it (and he includes himself in the first person plural here), heedless and insensible, blinded with frenzy (*immemores caecique furore*, 2.244) to the signs of disaster before their eyes and ears (2.242–45); their very *pietas* prevents them from experiencing the horse—even with arms clashing aloud in its belly—as itself a *monstrum infelix* (“an ill-boding portent,” 2.245).

37. Adler 2003, 256–63 makes some similar observations, though these lead to a very different reading for her.

Through the bewildered memories that he shares with his Carthaginian audience, Aeneas grapples with a confused impression that Sinon's use of *fama* to exploit the Trojans' piety provides a conduit for divine will. If the *fata deum* and their intentions were not adverse, Laocoon would have driven the Trojans to foul up the Argives' hiding places and the ultimate counterfactual would have ensued—Troy's survival (*si fata deum, si mens non laeua fuisset / impulerat ferro Argolicas foedare latebras, / Troiaque nunc staret, Priamique arx alta maneres*, 2.54–56; cf. 2.34). Aeneas' term *foedare* suggests a persistent feeling that an attack on the horse would amount to a violation, even as he points out that it would have meant the city's salvation.

The success of the Greeks' ruse, in which they provide a fake offering to expiate what the Trojans recognize as a real violation, communicates the perverse sanctity of Jupiter's intentions.³⁸ The divine plan here turns the capture of Troy itself into the necessary atonement, part of a cycle in which acts of expiation unleash violence and further defilement. This fits the larger pattern in the *Aeneid*, which asserts a Jovian order but repeatedly shows that it is indissociable from the disruptive energy of *furor*.

The gods' *fata* are unrolled through a well-proportioned amalgam of truth, distortion, and imagination—just the mixture to which Book 4's *Fama*-monster/goddess clings.³⁹ As Philip Hardie has recently emphasized, “the close relationship between Sinon and *Fama* in *Aeneid* 4 [. . .] extends to the irony whereby both creatures of the distorted word, for all their destructive effects in the immediate context, in fact collude with the wider design of the plot, the fulfillment of Trojan fate and the realization of Roman glory.”⁴⁰ Another way of looking at this question of agency is to ask how far the poem imagines fate and divine will colluding with *fama* to become part of the fictive knowledge it conveys. *Fama* forms part of the extensive apparatus of remembrance by which Jupiter simultaneously presides over and disrupts the structures that the poem imagines as ordering human experience.

38. Sinon's account of Diomedes and Ulysses defiling Pallas Athena's *uirgineas uittas* prefigures Aeneas' account of the virgin Cassandra being dragged from Priam's temple (2.402–15), an abduction that itself alludes to Iphigeneia's sacrifice in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*—another act of human defilement done in obedience to divine will, as the tragedy presents expiation and defilement blended together in such a way as to trigger further cycles of violence and confusion.

39. The rest of Aeneas' story in Book 2 confirms that in some ways the *fama* summarized at 2.17 is accurate. The horse does serve as a votive offering for the Greeks' return—their return to Troy.

40. Hardie 2012, 77.