

Touch Me and You'll Burn: Fire and Foresight in Statius' *Achilleid*

This paper examines how flame and fire metaphors in Statius' *Achilleid* show young Achilles' burning intensity for love of both war and Deidamia. Drawing from the *Heroides*, I examine the similarities between Ovid's Helen and Paris and Statius' Deidamia and Achilles as they suffer due to their male counterpart's inability to notice the destruction of metaphorical fire. Statius primarily employs two types of fire and flame metaphors: the brightness of Achilles when he engages in acts of violence and war and the warmth and lust he feels when seeing Deidamia. These two metaphors resolve when Achilles at last reaches for his sword and the object of his attraction combines with the fire of his talent in war.

Comparing textual themes, word choice, and scholarship surrounding the *Achilleid*, the *Heroides*, and female characters in epic, I argue that Statius' use of fire metaphors positions Deidamia in the relative future, beyond the events of the *Achilleid*. She observes as Achilles' violent and passionate fire set into motion his ultimate fate and Deidamia does what she can to secure her place in the cycle by demanding that he have no children by other women. I show how Deidamia's role speaks to women in epic as making choices necessary for the story to happen but still suffering for the sake of male fate.