



The Sword of Dido: Pain and Aristocratic Distinctiveness

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Since the beginning of Vergilian critical scholarship more than a hundred years ago, scholars have directed their attention to the complex texture of the *Aeneid*. The *Aeneid* is an arrangement of densely woven threads of poetic pictures and subtle meanings. Essential in this mental landscape is Vergil's exceptional sensibility to words and images. The depth of Vergil's rich texture comes to the surface in his use of words. The imaginative intensity of his choice of words blends with intellectual vigor and the capacity to feel and empathize. Vergil's words and images, their placement in the narrative, and their intricate interconnections unveil an enigmatic sense of structure. For Vergil, the word is mental activity in intricate placement to be deciphered by the reader. More precisely, the choice of word is the representation of a state of mind.¹

This is nowhere more evident than in the character of Dido, notably in Dido's suicide by the sword. Images of death and the act of suicide by the sword are standard vocabulary in elite cultures in which the sword represents male aristocratic identity. My aim is to explore the power of images for the sword for Dido as a uniquely Vergilian vision. In particular, I shall set Vergil's imagery beside the anonymous French

¹ The power and multiple perspectives of Vergil's art and language are beautifully demonstrated by Jenkyns 1998: 3-21 in particular.

interpreter of the *Aeneid* in the twelfth century. Through the image of the sword, I shall engage directly with the worlds and values of both poets, Vergil's distinguished Roman nobility and the French poet's aristocratic knights, the titled medieval ruling class of noble rank.²

The *Roman d' Enéas* retells Vergil's *Aeneid* in its entirety. It was written in the mid-twelfth century in Anglo-Norman French for the French court of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine in Britain. The poem is part of the so-called *romans d'antiquité* which have Rome as their subject matter and the legitimacy of power through the survival of Roman political sense as their aim.³

In the *Roman d' Enéas*, the poet relies on Vergil's account in a Homeric sense: the appeal for the poet is the *epos*, the story from the past, which he liberally adapts to the feudal aristocratic norms of his time. It is in the portrayal of Turnus that the poet departs most radically from Vergil's vacillating complex hero. Turnus' hauntingly violent death in the *Aeneid* is vastly amplified by the French poet to be in conformity with chivalric ideals. Turnus' claim to Lavinia is transformed to become the central stumbling block to achieving *joie de la cour*, the legal and moral reconciliation of knight and bride. This is articulated in expansive descriptions of the nuptials which terminate in appropriate and expected feudal distributions of lands and retainers. Turnus' death is thus wholly refashioned for the tastes of a medieval aristocratic audience. In the Lavinia story, the process of falling in love occurs in agreement with Ovidian love casuistry and is described in Ovid's erotic metaphors. Questions of right and wrong in the knight's conduct (Enéas) are resolved through monologue and lead to the knight's quest, in which he proves his prowess and worth by overcoming all obstacles in winning the bride.⁴

The sole exception in this pattern of adaptation are the Dido episodes, Books 1-4 in the *Aeneid*. The Dido passages are a phenomenon. They are a line-by-line translation of Vergil, an astonishing

² The symbolism of the sword transcends European traditions: the sword as a representation of aristocratic male honor along with suicide by the sword as aristocratic privilege are fundamental elements in the Japanese samurai code of honor. See Deist 2003b.

³ The *Roman de Thèbes* is, as the *Roman d'Enéas*, anonymous. The *Roman de Troie* and its author Benoît de Sainte-Maure is the subject of Matilda Bruckner's essay.

⁴ For courtly romance as a vehicle of feudal politics and moral didactics in the systematic instruction of aristocratic conduct, see Deist 2003a.

and captivating *translatio studii* and *imperii*, by transmuting Vergil's poetic sensibilities and Roman structures of power, by deconstructing Vergil's distinct vision for Dido, and by converting the understanding of history, tradition, and conventional attitudes in the *Aeneid* to another language and another culture.⁵

In the cultural and political *translatio* from Rome to the twelfth century, Dido emerges in three subtly joined phases (*Aen.* 1, 4, 6). They are Dido's leadership in Carthage (1), her dying and death (4), brought to a final result in the Underworld (6).⁶ All are constructed around the sword, the instrument of her suicide, and its Roman cultural significance. The image of the sword and Dido's suicide are enmeshed with the boy Ascanius (*Aen.* 1, 4). The greater meaning of Dido's suicide resides in the central symbolic references of these episodes.⁷

The occasion is the introduction of Ascanius at Dido's banquet for Aeneas' Trojans. The young boy Ascanius is the conduit to the queen's emotional transformation by activating her long-suppressed sensation of feeling through maternal emotions. The nurturing image of *gremio fovet* is the central topos in the entire passage. The force of the words in this dense scene is such that all thoughts are concentrated on Dido. She "warms and caresses the boy on her knees," and in simultaneous action

⁵ The method and process of *translatio* is discussed in the Introduction of this volume.

⁶ In Books 2 and 3 Dido is silent, nevertheless her presence is overwhelmingly felt. Grimal 1992: 51-52, makes the strong point of Dido's unmatched dominance among female characters in epic.

⁷ Dido's suicide is complex. It is the result of the two wounds she suffers, the metaphorical wound of love and the physical wound from the blade of the sword. Vergil links both wounds structurally by the much discussed image *vulnus sub pectore* (4.67 and 689). *Pectus*, the breast and the seat of deep affections, is pierced by the sword, reinforced by the preposition *sub*. The ablative of place directs attention to the placement of the wound deep inside the breast; Austin 1955: 45 and 198, observes that the wound is "graphic" ("vivit," 67), then "cries aloud" by the whistling noise of the breath forced between the lips from the lung pierced by the sword ("stridit," 689). The image is reconsidered as *sub corde* for Aeneas struggling with his feelings, thrust deep beneath his heart, when confronted with Dido's despair at his leaving (4.333). But *cor* is the heart as the seat of judgment and thought, thus capturing the depth of Aeneas' conflicted decision: Aeneas' words "come slowly and with effort, ("pauca") as Conington 1876: Lib.IV,332, has remarked. Through two images that cannot be seen and described, Vergil "paints the view of each character," as Otis 1963: 49, observes.

unknowingly triggers her own destruction prefixed by Venus' plot to exchange Ascanius with Amor.⁸ (1.718: "gremio fovet inscia Dido, insidat quantus miserae deus"). *Gremium* carries the meaning "womb," linked with *infelix*, "barren" along with "causing and bringing unhappiness." Both images are carriers of strong emotions. The memory of her murdered husband as the catalyst for Dido's unfulfilled yearning for motherhood is the solid underpinning of Dido's character. *Gremium* and *infelix*, released by the young child Ascanius, are critical to provoke Dido's decision of suicide.⁹

Woven into this web of Dido's mind is the image of *venenum* in Book 1, when Venus replaces Ascanius with Amor or Cupid (688). Vergil psychologically reconstructs Amor's traditional role of archer causing instantaneous falling in love.¹⁰ The external impact of Amor's arrow is reversed by endowing Amor with *venenum*, a powerful lethal potion causing ruin and destruction. *Venenum* is a drug and signifies imbibing the fire of passion internally: 1.688: "cum...occultum inspires ignem fallasque veneno" ("that you may fill her with secret fire and with an enchanted drug").¹¹ Dido's imbibing is a gradual escalation of passion in crescendo motion (1.749:"infelix Dido longumque bibebat amorem"). The effect of passion is inexorable by inflicting a wound that is kept alive by passion and cannot heal. Typical for Vergil's intense and condensed style, the destructive power of her passion is confined to carefully placed words of the opening lines in Book 4.1f; each word is a meaningful field of vision: "At regina gravi iam dudum saucia cura/

⁸The image of warmth and nurturing is even stronger in Venus' instructions to Amor to take on the shape of Ascanius: 4. 685-87 „ ut, cum te gremio accipiet laetissima Dido...cum dabit amplexus atque oscula dulcia figet“ (*that Dido at the height of joy and happiness take you on her lap into her arms and give you sweet kisses*).

⁹For *gremium* as a central motif, see the discussion by Lesky 1966: 599. Stroppini 2003: 59ff. and 68 links the root 'fe-' in *felix*, breastfeeding, ("allaiter") and the rupture of generating in *infelix* with Dido's passion and unfulfilled maternal needs; Dido's "maternité frustrée" is the author's central argument.

¹⁰ See Lesky 1966: 594, for Vergil's unconventional use of the mythological tradition of Amor as archer.

¹¹ *Venenum* is any secret means of affecting a thing or a person. In meaning and effect it is related to *phármakon*, which functions as a medicine for disease and a remedy against grief; specifically see my discussion of *phármakon* in Euripides' *Hippolytus*, Deist 2003a: 31f. For the meaning and implications of *phármakon*, see Allen 2005.

vulnus alit venis et caeco carpitur igni” (“moreover, the queen, since a long time sick from grievous longing, nourishes the wound within her veins and is weakened by a fire unseen”). Fused with the metaphors of *venenum* and imbibing inextricable passion and desire is the word painting of fire; it exhausts Dido’s vital powers, consuming all obstacles of private honor and public duty.¹²

The French poet maintains the entire passage to the letter, except for one crucial modification: Ascanius arrives at the banquet “o son barnage” (781), “with his vassals.” In his function as Amor, Dido kisses him, and Ascanius returns her kisses many times over. The term *barnage* is a signifier of the vast feudal network of social and political dependencies in the élite male power structure. In one stroke, *barnage* eliminates the sequence of maternal images and their intricate linkage with Dido’s passion. The subtlety of innocence in Vergil’s child is replaced with the erotic virility of a young feudal lord. It is the suggestion of masculine vigor and procreative power tied to the kiss of Amor that causes in Dido a deadly and incurable intoxication from passion. As in Vergil, the properties of passion are internal and effected through imbibing. Passion is a poisonous inexorable liquid which runs through the queen’s body without measure. Along with poison and its possessive power are repeated allusions to death (1791ff.). For the French poet, such passion constitutes immoderation. The vocabulary for Dido (*boire, mortal, ivrece, poison, folie*) underscores the state of internal excess caused by drinking a poisonous liquid that renders one heady and incapable of reason and measure. These linguistic images are used again at Dido’s suicide to reinforce and finalize her frenzied submission to desire. The images of drinking a drug causing intoxication result in *folie*, a specifically female articulation of *démesure*. Excess and immoderation, *démesure*, are signifiers of the male hero. For the *Enéas* poet, *folie* is a quantitative difference to male excess because it is rooted in *mollitia*, an

¹² Austin 1955: 26 remarks on *caecus* as something not seen or deliberately concealed, hence not even Dido realizes the strength of her passion at this point; in my mind, this is enhanced by the passive of *carpere* as something completed in successive stages. “Venis,” (taken as instrumental ablative is, “probable” for Austin, “doubtless” for Conington 1876: 259), enforces the internal power of *venenum* by weakening Dido’s vital powers. Commenting on the power of the word “cura,” which drives Dido to her horrific purpose, Grimal 1992: 54, contrasts Aeneas’ disciplined Roman core with Dido’s lax “l’âme punique,” which prohibits him to give in to his immense desire; see earlier “sub corde,” n. 7.

inherently female weakness of character. *Folie*, precisely, is the cause for Dido's suicide. The message of the French poet is political: due to women's propensity for excessive emotions, women are unsuited to rule in the feudal aristocratic world.¹³

This interpretation is far from Vergil's uniquely personal and psychological vision. Dido's devoted warm tenderness is manifested in a series of sensations lavished on the innocence of a young boy. The child sets free Dido's capacity for affectionate emotions, which allows passion and desire for Aeneas. These sentiments foreshadow her end. Dido's feelings for Aeneas are a rekindled memory of her strong attachment for Sychaeus ("adgnosco veteris vestigia flammae," 4.23);¹⁴ her emotions for the young child, however, are of a depth and power she has never experienced before.¹⁵ The sequence of internal signs is complicated by Vergil's own warning; in Book 1 Dido is "in Scalia," not knowing the deadly consequences of her affection for the child which come to fruition in Book 4.

Book 4 is the shortest of the twelve books of the *Aeneid*. Vergil's power is nowhere more vivid than in the density and intensity of images and syntax. It is "Vergil's masterpiece," and it overshadows all other books in the *Aeneid*.¹⁶ The same can be said about Dido herself. No other character, not even Turnus, can match the warmth and personal feeling that Vergil has lavished on Dido. Vergil exposes her thoughts and her mounting despair directly by projecting himself into Dido's mind. Everything is seen through Dido: we read her thoughts and share her feelings. Her personality and suffering eclipse Aeneas' experience and

¹³See my evaluation of Dido's incompatibility with the feudal male power structure, Deist 2003a: 115f. The case for *mollitia* is made and proven by Huchet 1984: 116f.

¹⁴"vestigia" with "adgnosco" are tracks of memory firmly in Dido's mind; see the same exquisite subtlety of knowing and remembering mirrored in Lucretius' image of the cow in the meadows searching for her slaughtered calf: "noscit humi pedibus vestigia pressa bisulcis (*De rerum natura*, 2.356).

¹⁵Jenkyns 1998: 502 n. 114, rightly observes that the Ascanius who awakens maternal feelings in Dido and the boy of 7.107-19 in Latium is much younger than the still very young warrior in the passage of 9.267ff. whom Jenkyns considers to still have "some immaturity," 581. Heinze 1993: 158 n. 11 calculates his age at the burning Troy between 4 and 5 years old, at Carthage, after eleven years of wandering, between 11 or 12, in Latium one year older, while in 9.311 Vergil considers him wiser than his years. Heinze's estimation is supported by Kosthorst 1943: 107ff. Further references in Lesky: 599-600.

¹⁶Quinn 1968: 135.

mission. At the opening of the book Dido is deeply infatuated with Aeneas. Vergil narrates with respect and deep empathy the progressive degradation of her noble character to suicide.¹⁷

The integrity of Dido's character matches the weight and relevance of suicide in Roman ideology. The Carthage constructed by Dido is as dignified as the queen herself: "dux femina facti," a woman is the leader of the act, of the accomplishment, Vergil says (1.364). This is witnessed by Aeneas when observing Dido's dignified comportment as leader of her people. The noun "dux" for Dido is deliberate and full of purpose. The word is predominant among Roman leaders elucidating their qualities and responsibilities. It embodies the exercise of *imperium* and *iustum bellum*. In using *dux* for Dido, Vergil marks a clear distinction between Dido's human dimensions as betrayed woman and her role as *dux* exemplifying public duty.¹⁸ *Dux* is also the signifier for *virtus*, a specifically male contempt for death and pain. The Roman noble male, the *vir*, faces death with calmness, serenity, and courage. The key elements in *virtus* are *constantia*, the brave endurance of pain, and *fortitudo*, the physical and moral strength to face death without fear. Facing death is as important as actualizing it. The most prestigious and superior method of suicide of the noblest Roman hero is the painful and bloody stab wound of the sword, the archetypical Roman act of self-destruction. The wound of the sword is the essence of manhood. Choosing death at a particular time by means of the sword is an act of self-fashioning, of being self-conscious of one's name and accomplishment. This is the Stoic *virtus* of the distinguished Roman élite.¹⁹

¹⁷ Jenkyns 1998: 11-13, eloquently remarks on Dido's exceptional treatment and Vergil's sensitive interest in women.

¹⁸ Dido's vulnerable humanness encapsulates the Roman concept of *privatus*, not holding public office. Grimal confirms Vergil's duality between Dido's "personnalité humaine, de *privatus*," and her public duties as queen, p. 54. Conington, points out the contrast of Dido's hands-on accomplishment in Carthage with "opes," presumably the gold Pygmalion stole from her, in the same line; hence, the terseness of "dux femina facti" is intentional, Lib. I, p. 69.

¹⁹ Edwards 2007: 92, 150. The piercing with the sword is the quintessential Roman death, Martial's *Romana mors*, 111. Virility is "what can be seen on the male's opened body" where "the wounds speak for the quality of the citizen," see Loraux 1997: 89.

Vergil has made Dido a model of Roman male *virtus*. Shortly before her end, Dido takes notice of her life's accomplishments as the founder and ruler of Carthage (4.655). Her recollection brings back to memory Vergil's intentional appellation of *dux* for the queen's dignified leadership on equal footing with a noble Roman leader. Dido finishes her final reflections: "dixerat" (4.663). Next we, and her companions, see her fallen onto the sword, the blade dripping with blood. Dido's death is drawn out and audibly painful by her strenuous attempts to draw breath from her pierced lungs [see n. 7]; her suffering is an exemplar of *constantia* and *fortitudo*. Her suicide represents the Stoic freedom from death, "total independence of the person from all passions and from all wrong desires."²⁰ By focusing on the physical details of death, Vergil portrays her dying as an act of physical prowess. It is an act of self-actualization which is informed by the ethical quality of Stoic philosophy. Vergil embodies Dido with the *virtus* of the dignified Roman Stoic *vir* and hero. The values imbued in Dido are male and in opposition to the *vitia*, the vices of physical and moral weakness associated with women.

In Roman ideology, fear of death is associated with *libido*, violent desire and appetite, caprice, and whim, in short, immoderate passion and lust. It is a feminine and effeminizing vice without dignity or honor; it is the failure to endure pain. The classical Greek and Roman mind believed in a hierarchy of methods of suicide. Death by hanging with the device of the noose was a discourse of shame and despair without manly courage. Hanging was disgraceful and unbecoming of a distinguished hero. Because it does not require *constantia*, it implies moral weakness and is reserved for women.²¹

The sword is the quintessential Roman weapon of destruction. Vergil employs three words for the sword. For Aeneas in battle it is the *gladius*, the sword of the Roman legions and the emblem of the

²⁰ Seneca's "freedom to withdraw" ("libertas recedendi"), Edwards 2007: 101 and n. 109.

²¹ On *libido* and female death, see Edwards: 108, 197-98. On hanging and the noose as a specifically female form of death, "a woven trap" and the interconnections with the feminine values of weaving, see Loraux 1997: 110-11. This brings to mind the suicide hanging of Amata as "hideous death" ("nodum" 12.603). In the *Civil War*, Lucan (9.850), specifically comments on death by poison as an "inactive death" for men and warriors; for the edition see Shackleton-Bailey: 1988. The development and hierarchy of suicide are traced by Fraenkel 1964: 465-67.

experience of war and the warrior. It occurs in the second half of the *Aeneid*, which describes Aeneas' war against the native Italic peoples. For Dido he uses *ensis* and *ferrum*. *Ensis* is a neutral word for the sword without special or heroic effect. It is used in Latin texts as signifying the sword as the instrument that it is. *Ferrum* is the steel of which the sword is made. In this sense, the reality of the sharp steel blade, *ferrum*, slices deeply into the body of Turnus (12.950) and Dido's murdered husband Sychaeus (1.350). But some two hundred lines before Turnus' supplication and death, he rouses his warriors by raising his sword, *ensis*, as the emblem of his fearless prowess in Vergil's admiring vision for Turnus' courage and nobility (12. 730).²²

For Dido, Vergil uses *ensis* and *ferrum* in uniquely original and unexpected ways. *Ensis* occurs twice, first suggestively, when Dido unsheathes Aeneas' sword ("ensemque recludit Dardanium, 4.645), then descriptively, showing the sword foaming with Dido's blood ("ensemque cruore spumantem, 664f.). Typical for Vergil, he does not describe the sword piercing Dido, but rather the effect from falling on the blade after she has spoken her last words, "dixerat" (663f.). The finality of life, enforced by the pluperfect tense, heightens the terrible wound with its unstoppable streams of blood.²³ With *ensis* Vergil forges a link to Aeneas' heroic *virtus*: the sword was Aeneas' gift to Dido in exchange for the jewel-studded sword Dido had given him earlier.²⁴ In the same dense syntactical arrangement of words, Vergil lets us see the cutting blade of the sword, Aeneas' sword, *ferrum* (663f.), in Dido's body.

The neutral meaning of *ensis* is an expected word choice in a poetic setting. From this neutrality, Vergil wrests an entirely unexpected bloody reality and thus an unexpected meaning and reaction: Dido dies a heroic

²² The reality of the blade, *ferrum*, occurs nearly twice as many times in Vergil's works than *ensis*: 131 times for *ferrum*, and 67 times for *ensis*, Wetmore 1961.

²³ For *cruor* and the virility of blood that has been spilled by the blade, see Ernout-Meillet 1985.

²⁴ The difficulty of the two swords, prompted by "quaesitum," (Dido "having asked for it") has been much discussed. For Bradley 1956: 224-236, there are two swords, Dido's jasper-studded Tyrian sword, unfit as a weapon to Aeneas, and Aeneas' Trojan sword for Dido; *ensis* on the pyre designates the *virtus* of the Trojan sword. Basto 1984: 333-338, sees *ensis* as a reference to Aeneas as being the cause of Dido's death, 335; the Tyrian sword transforms Aeneas from warrior to lover, and with this sword Aeneas severs their relationship when he cuts the cables of the departing ships. Aeneas' warrior sword, his gift to Dido, becomes her weapon of suicide. For the diction of *ensis*, see Lyne 1989: 103.

warrior death by the sword that was the conspicuous symbol of Aeneas' warrior prowess and identity. With *ferrum*, however, Vergil operates in the obvious, colloquial, and expected sense of the word. The link is with the blade that cuts; it cuts her body and thus "cuts" Dido from Aeneas. By combining poetic and prosaic words in the elevated setting of epic, Vergil transforms the expected effects of word choice by endowing the sword with unexpected meanings and thereby giving an unexpected meaning to the queen's dignified emotions and death.

The French poet translates Vergil's ingenious interplay between tradition and unique intention into a statement of the dimensions of feudal power. This is accomplished by restructuring the image and significance of the sword. The method of suicide, fundamental for Vergil in signifying male character, puts the poet's message into effect. In medieval political theory, the sword is the emblem of justice and equity. It is wielded by the knight, the protector of empire and Church, to sever the wrong from the right for the common good.²⁵ Hence, the sword demonstrates the just transportation from life to death. For the poet it is a critical tool to justify Dido's suicide in feudal and political terms.

Dido's last reflections are the concerns of a feudal sovereign who has failed. She does not recall her accomplishments as Vergil's queen, but she laments the detriment of losing vassals and reputation (2050-53). Before she dies, Dido formally abandons passion (1976-2006). Dido's reflections before her suicide are a *plainte*, a monologue of love's emotional vagaries in the social context of gender. Excessive private female feelings are contrasted with public order and power that is upheld by males. On the pyre, she falls onto the sword, on the bed in which she and Enéas slept together. The French poet places emphasis on the bedcovers, the image of the physical union that signals *folie*, immoderate desire and *mollitia*, female weakness. The contrast to Vergil could not be stronger. The *cubile*, the sacred marriage bed of the *coniuges*, signals that the union of Dido and Aeneas is an offense to tradition. The union is out of custom, thus unstable and disrupting serenity. The diverging intentions of both poets have become obvious now; Vergil stresses character and continuity while the French poet operates within male qualifications of power in the feudal order. Dido, for the French poet, is not part of the system.

Dido's suicide is the poet's final assertion of being out of the feudal order. In a reversal from Vergil's monumental effect after the act, we

²⁵ Dickinson 1927.

witness Dido thrusting the sword into herself in a mere two lines (2031f.). It is an act that truly cuts out *folie*, female emotions and aspirations that are dangerous to society. This is the function of the medieval sword in the hands of the knight. The medieval sword is a cutting instrument, not the stabbing weapon of the Roman short sword. It is long and heavy, must be wielded with both hands, and is essentially unsuitable as an instrument of self-destruction. Dido's epitaph confirms that female rule constitutes intemperance because women are prone to emotional imbalance, "folement" (2138-44). Female rule upturns the divinely governed order of the world.²⁶ This instability has been corrected by the sword.

The sword is a symbol of justice exercised by an élite group of men. The poet uses the sword as a memento of female passion and the usurpation of feudal power by female *engin*. *Engin* is a talent of the mind by which Dido acquired Carthage from the reigning princes of the region. Political power is presented by means of Dido's mental powers. By relentlessly underscoring the absence of *engin* in the reigning barons, the poet magnifies her female gifts of wit and intelligence as unfit for public rule.²⁷ The sword is the realization of the aristocratic separation between gender and power. Therefore, immoderation and excess must lead to death; "moi, estovra morir," (1856), as Dido had realized at Enéas' departure. Her suicide is a moral necessity in that it is a social necessity (the verb *estovoir*). It is not the choice of Vergil's queen who painfully scrutinizes living against dying to restore her moral standing in line with Roman expectations of honor and continuity.

The death of Dido is brought to a final end in the Underworld. Vergil's Dido in Book 6 turns away from Aeneas and turns to Sychaeus. With this gesture she utterly rejects the liaison with Aeneas as out of custom and returns to the tradition and dignity of the Roman *coniunx* (6.472-74), which she had violated during the hunt in the grotto where she and Aeneas had wrongfully consecrated their physical union ("coniugium vocat, hoc praetexit nomine culpam," 4.173). The *coniunx* passages uphold the cherished and sacred Roman custom of *univira*, the woman who has only one husband and remains faithful to him after his

²⁶ The epitaph renders Dido "virtually out of time, literally monumental but historically ineffectual," as Baswell 1996: 200, has observed.

²⁷ For *engin* as a specifically female quality in the aristocratic power structure, see Deist 2003a: 171-74. Baswell 1996: 184-200 explores *engin* as containing commercial and erotic excess linked to gender.

death.²⁸ The concept of *univira* must be seen in the nexus of the Augustan reforms of the marriage and divorce laws, the *Lex Julia (de maritandis ordinibus* and *de adulteriis coercendis)* or Julian Laws of 18 B.C. With these laws Augustus passed legislation enforcing remarriage for divorced women and widows and honing the attractions of marriage with penal legislation. In the intent of these laws, he shifted the guidance of private morality to the control of formulated law. In a direct rebuke to tradition, Augustus diminished the customary and official power, *potestas*, of the *pater familias*.²⁹ By making Dido an emblem of *univira*, Vergil questions the Augustan legislation. Instead, he advocates the restitution of marriage to its ancient dignity and a return to traditional social customs and structures because they alone guarantee a harmonious blossoming of human nature in continuity.

The French Dido's last words are in the spirit of feudal and Christian *miser cordia*: "Gel vos pardoins, sire Eneas,"(2067); she forgives Enéas. Dido's guilt is a female transgression of male values and Christian marriage vows (2652-60).³⁰ She regrets the excess of passion by which she dishonored her feudal husband and lord ("por son forfait se vergondot," 2662).The path of her destruction was invested in the transformation of Ascanius. Rooted in innate female *mollitia*, Dido succumbs to boundless desire manifested in *folie*, female *démesure*. While Vergil does not let Aeneas escape the range of Dido's suffering, the French poet lets Enéas affirm her admission of guilt by extricating himself from any culpability.

²⁸ The *matronae* riding in their carriages in the shield of Aeneas are depicted as "castae," morally pure, hence chaste and powerful symbols of *univira* (8.665); this honor is bestowed on them due to their loyalty to the state, see Williams 1983: 155. Austin 1979: 167, points out that Sychaeus, through his death by murder, has no place in the *lugentes campi*, but Vergil has placed him where he can protect Dido against Aeneas, whose presence interferes with her *univira* status.

²⁹ The literature on *univira* is not abundant but considerable, mostly of older date. The most recent study on Augustan moral reforms and legislation is Galinsky 1996:131, further 369: the consequences of the legislation and the risks for Augustus are "the profound disaffection of the very nobility, senatorial and equestrian, with whose consensus he wanted to govern." For earlier opinions, see Heinze 1994: 99 and n. 16 with further references; Williams 1958: 16-29; Funke1965-66: 183-89; Khan 1967: 34-36; Rudd 1976.

³⁰ Mora-Lebrun 1994 : 204, rightly sees the motif of culpability as the major departure from Vergil. *Engin* in this sense is the absence of authentic virtue; it is "faux savoir," and therefore a contamination of the true virtue of a king.: 197.

The guilt of both Didos is grounded in transgressions against authority. Vergil enforces obedience to the power of Roman tradition, while the French poet delegates Dido's offense to the recognized male rights and duties of the feudal order. The French poet maintains Vergil's physical framework of the Underworld, but he transforms it into a feudal state of mind. In the *Enéas*, Dido's death is the poet's final *translatio* of Vergil's autonomous male gesture of noble suicide, a meaning obliterated in agreement with the poet's political and moral intentions for a medieval aristocratic audience.

Vergil has pictured Dido's state of mind in a series of related parts. The duality of the woman betrayed by the innocence of a child and the Stoic *vir* dying by the sword is reconciled in the Underworld with Dido's foundational characteristic of honor in her role as the steadfast and morally pure Roman *matrona*, the exemplar of *univira*. Vergil's enigmatic art is nowhere stronger than in the complex compositional mastery of Dido. As I continue to study Vergil's exceptional artistry through his words and images, I have come to appreciate and admire the accomplishment of Vergil's French translator. The French poet has turned Vergil's unrivaled transfiguration of Roman male authority residing in the sword into a convincing affirmation of feudal moral duties. The vehicle for this thorough change in the form and substance of male power are the emotions of Dido. I conclude that the Dido episodes in the *Roman d'Enéas* are a veritable and bold *translatio studii et imperii* of Vergil's powerfully personal Dido and of Vergil himself as uniquely and distinctly Roman.

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