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April 20, 2011

Dux Femina Facti: Gender and Ethnicity in the Aeneid

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Abstract

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The women of Vergil's Aeneid are among the poem's most memorable characters. Readers and scholars alike have given much thought to the doomed, love-struck Dido in particular, and the traditional interpretation of this character has been one that positions her as a pitiable foil to Aeneas, an antagonist who serves to underscore the necessity of the imposition of Roman civilization upon a disordered world. The second half of the 20th century, however, saw a reconsideration of the poem's more ambiguous elements and the increasing popularity of a reading that found in the Aeneid a challenge to Roman imperialism. Greater attention has also been given to the poem's large cast of female characters, extending the analysis of the poem's gender representations beyond Dido. A considerable amount of this scholarship has focused upon the negative gender stereotypes these characters embody. Interest in the Aeneid's ethnic representations has grown recently as well. I propose to take these trends even further, by examining the intersection of gender and ethnicity in the Aeneid and the ways in which these constructs, as presented by the poem, can be used to either glorify or problematize the concept of empire. The women of the Aeneid, while being used to contrast Roman masculinity, also provide an alternative to Roman imperial values.

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Introduction

The *Aeneid* charts not only Aeneas' physical travels from Troy to Rome, but his emotional and ideological journey as well. To complete his mission, Aeneas must abandon his feminized Trojan identity and victim status to assume the mantle of Roman masculinity. Five women in the novel – Dido, Andromache, Camilla, Creusa, and Lavinia – play an important role in shaping Aeneas' and the readers' conception of this Romanness through their performance of their gender and ethnicities.

The importance of these female characters has not always been acknowledged. Fourth century commentators Servius and Tiberius Claudius Donatus have much to say about Dido and Camilla, expressing qualified pity for one and fascinated distaste for the other, but write comparatively little on Andromache, Creusa, and Lavinia. Writings on the *Aeneid* continued in this vein, with Dido receiving most of the attention and the ideological implications of the poem's discourse on gender going unexamined.

A more pessimistic reading of the *Aeneid* gained traction during the Vietnam War.¹ In this anti-authoritarian climate, the poem's supposed endorsement of imperial values was reconsidered, and scholars became divided as to whether the text provides an "optimistic" or "pessimistic" perspective on the Roman Empire. In 1981, Christine Perkell brought gender into the debate, examining the ways in which the harsh fates of Creusa and Dido call into question the desirability of Aeneas' mission, and therefore Roman rule.² A new interest in the women of the

¹ Perkell, Christine G. "Introduction." *Reading Vergil's Aeneid: an interpretive guide*. Ed. Christine G. Perkell. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999. 15

² "On Creusa, Dido, and the Quality of Victory in Virgil's *Aeneid*." *Reflections of women in antiquity*. Ed. Helene P. Foley. New York: Gordon and Breach, 1981. 355-378

Aeneid, and women in antiquity generally, followed.³ Of the *Aeneid*'s female characters, Dido has still garnered the most critical interest, but with other female characters being treated with close, individual readings.

Within the last ten years, scholarly interest in the intersection of gender and ethnicity within the *Aeneid* has increased. Scholars such as Keith, Reed, and Syed have expanded upon the work of Perkell, Skinner, and Desmond in order to consider the way ethnicity further "others" these women and places them in conflict with Rome.⁴ This scholarship has generally found the representation of women in the *Aeneid* consistent with the misogynist cultural norms of antiquity. This thesis, however, will examine not only the ways in which the gender and ethnic identities of Dido, Andromache, Camilla, Creusa, and Lavinia help define Romanness, but also how they challenge it.

The term "ethnicity" is used here to describe groups of people allied on the basis of a shared ancestry and culture. "Gender" will refer to the set of cultural expectations applied to a biological sex. Gender will be discussed as a binary, with "masculinity" as those qualities associated with men and "femininity" as those attributed to women.

The characters discussed in this thesis are only a few pieces of the *Aeneid*'s gender and ethnicity puzzle. I have limited this thesis to the mortal, mythical female characters whose identities are strongly shaped by both gender and ethnicity. Much could be written, and has been written, on the ways in which Juno's gender and ethnic affiliations shape her role as the poem's antagonist. Likewise, Cleopatra's appearance in Book 8's ekphrasis provides a fascinating contrast of femininity and Oriental ethnicity with Roman manhood. Their positions, however, as,

³ Desmond 1994, Skinner 1997, and Hughes 1997, to name but a few.

⁴ Keith 2000, Reed 2007, Syed 2005.

respectively, a goddess and historical contemporary of Vergil and Augustus further complicate the equation and place them outside the scope of this thesis. Other characters may raise questions of either gender or ethnicity without fully exploring the intersection of the two, and so are not discussed here. The ethnicity and gender presentation of male characters are touched upon briefly, but primarily in regards to the ways in which they are constructed in relation to the identities of the female characters.

Chapter One begins with Dido, the *Aeneid*'s most prominent female character. As a Carthaginian "woman who leads exploits," Dido exists outside the perimeter of Roman womanhood. She is the femininity to Aeneas' masculinity, the East to his West, and the *furor* to his civilization. Her relationship with Aeneas establishes the dichotomies that will influence the intersection of gender and ethnicity throughout the rest of the poem. Even as the Dido episode serves to establish these dichotomies, it also undermines their desirability.

Chapter Two will look at Andromache as a victim of cultural displacement brought upon by war. Andromache's identity was once constructed around her role as the ideal Trojan woman and Hector's wife. Now that Troy and Hector are gone, she is identity-less, struggling to define herself by things that no longer exist. Her city, the little Troy, also cannot be what it was (the true Troy), nor does it have anything of its own to be. Her inability to move on, physically and mentally, reinforces Aeneas' need to do exactly that.

In Chapter Three examines the gender contradictions embodied in Camilla. Camilla, as a virgin female warrior, transgresses gender boundaries aggressively, making her an anomaly amongst her male allies and enemies. She not only rejects the Roman female role of wife and mother but dares to take on the male role of soldier for herself. Her talent challenges gender restrictions while her misuse of her skills underscores their necessity.

Chapter Four examines the relationship between Aeneas' two wives, Creusa and Lavinia. They are at opposite ends of the poem and Aeneas' journey. Their identities are constructed, however, not as opposites but as complements. Together, they provide the possibility of ethnic harmony in Rome. This possibility stands in stark contrast to the bloodshed that surrounds Aeneas' unification of the Trojans and the Latins. The Roman masculinity seemingly prized and endorsed by the poem is ultimately less effective than the generosity of spirit Aeneas' sacrificed wives display.

Chapter One

Dido

The Punic Wars loom over the *Aeneid*, especially the first six books. Carthage had proven to be a formidable opponent, rising repeatedly to challenge Rome's military dominance. The Second Punic War had been particularly frustrating, with Hannibal delivering some of Rome's greatest defeats. Such a persistent and capable threat to Roman military domination fostered a long-standing resentment in Rome, and when Scipio Aemilianus' forces defeated Carthage for the final time, they showed no mercy. The city was razed, and the small surviving population was enslaved.⁵ The centuries-long struggle against Carthage and the resulting Roman victory remained a pivotal historical touchstone for the *Aeneid*'s audience. The beginning of the poem goes so far as to cite the future destruction of Carthage as the source of Juno's hatred for the Trojans (and thus the source of Aeneas' obstacles). Therefore, when Aeneas arrives at Carthage's shore in Book 1, conflict seems inevitable.

Arriving in Carthage, Aeneas sees, but perhaps does not understand, the first ill omen. Aeneas views the sack of Troy in the murals of Juno's temple and understandably feels self-pity. Reading the murals from his own Trojan perspective, he focuses upon the plight of the fallen and the mourners. Readers see, however, what Aeneas seemingly cannot: as decorations in Juno's temple, the murals are more likely meant to commemorate Greek victory rather than sympathize

⁵ Even a hated enemy like Carthage was not destroyed without misgivings, however. Polybius quotes Scipio himself: "O Polybius, it is a grand thing, but, I know not how, I feel a terror and dread, lest someone should one day give the same order about my own native city." *Histories* 39.5.

with Trojan loss.⁶ Aeneas is pondering over his people's previous defeat in the temple of the goddess who would like to see them defeated again. On this ominous note, Dido arrives.

Dido, however, makes a good first impression. She has ruled her kingdom capably, and her history, as related by Venus, emphasizes her virtue, fidelity, and courage. Her first speech is profoundly generous, as she offers a home to the Trojans and assures them, "Punic hearts are not so dull and unfeeling" (*Aen.* I.567). In addition to her initially flattering characterization, Vergil gives her perspective surprising weight in her ensuing affair. Book IV is focalized almost entirely through her experience. Aeneas remains largely silent, his emotions muted, allowing Dido to make her case to the reader loudly and forcefully.⁷ Yasmin Syed argues that this focalization is undermined by casting Dido as a spectacle and Aeneas and the reader as spectator.⁸ The language of the poem, she writes, has so thoroughly aligned the reader with Aeneas' gaze in the first three books that this alliance is unbroken even as the perspective shifts to Dido's. Thus, she becomes the object instead of the subject of the action, providing a tragic figure that provides the reader with a cathartic rather than empathetic experience. The echoes of Greek tragedy in Book IV have been noted before, particularly by Panoussi, although she finds

⁶ Horsfall, Nicholas M. "Dido in the Light of History." *PVS* Vol. 13 (1973): 1-13.

⁷ Steven Farron is perhaps too harsh when he writes, "Aeneas is a shadowy and uninteresting figure, whose main importance is the effect he and his mission have on Dido" (Farron 34). Nevertheless, Book IV's prioritization of Dido's experience renders Aeneas frustratingly passive and inscrutable.

⁸ *Vergil's Aeneid and the Roman self: subject and nation in literary discourse*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2005, pp. 92-103.

that this construction ultimately reflects more poorly upon Aeneas than Dido.⁹ Further, the reader has already been shown that Aeneas' gaze can be wrong. The disparity between Aeneas' reading of the murals and their context actually prepare the reader to consider a new perspective.

The poem's invitation to identify with Dido is at odds with its repeated references to her foreign status. Aeneas and his men attend a feast with purple furnishings and cups engraved with Tyrian history. Both Carthage and Dido are adorned with Tyrian purple, and Dido is never so elaborately Carthaginian as on the day of her "marriage" to Aeneas:

reginam thalamo cunctantem ad limina primi
 Poenorum expectant, ostroque insignis et auro
 stat sonipes ac frena ferox spumantia mandit.
 tandem progreditur magna stipante caterua
 Sidoniam picto chlamydem circumdata limbo;
 cui pharetra ex auro, crines nodantur in aurum,
 aurea purpuream subnectit fibula uestem. (4.133-139)

(She pauses at the threshold of her chamber
 While her stallion, resplendent in purple and gold,
 Champs the foaming bit. Finally, she steps forward
 With her retinue, wearing a Phoenician cloak
 Finished with embroidery. Her quiver is gold,

⁹ "...the new state [Aeneas] is about to create will be deprived of the heroic ideals that [Dido] champions." *Greek tragedy in Vergil's Aeneid: ritual, empire, and intertext*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 198.

Her hair is bound in gold, and the purple cloak
 Is pinned with a clasp of gold.)

Cloaked in the colors of her city, Dido is the embodiment of Carthage. As Aeneas' relationship with Dido grows stronger, so does his connection to Carthage.

The gods then decide that Aeneas is too comfortable in Carthage. Venus "feared this dubious union, / Tyrians speaking two tongues" (1.661), and with good reason. Although Carthaginians and Trojans can coexist, Carthaginians and Romans cannot. The longer Aeneas stays, the more Carthaginian he becomes. Mercury, sent to remind Aeneas of his mission, finds him building someone else's city. His appearance has even begun to echo Dido's:

atque illi stellatus iaspide fulua
 ensis erat Tyrioque ardebat murice laena
 demissa ex umeris, diues quae munera Dido
 fecerat, et tenui telas discreuerat auro. (4.261-264)

(His sword was enstarred with yellow jasper,
 And from his shoulders hung a mantle blazing
 With Tyrian purple, a splendid gift from Dido,
 Who had stitched the fabric with threads of gold.)

Aeneas, however, is meant to transition from his Oriental Trojan origins to a new Western, Roman identity. To fulfill his destiny, Aeneas must reject the ethnic identity Dido

embodies. Furthermore, his complacent acceptance of his Orientalness coincides with his feminization. Jupiter is spurred to action following Iarbas' stinging rebuke:

et nunc ille Paris cum semiuiro comitatu,
 Maeonia mentum mitra crinemque madentem
 subnexus, rapto potitur.(4.215-217)

(And now this Paris, with his crew of eunuchs,
 The bonnet on his pomaded hair tied with ribbons
 Beneath his chin, makes off with the prize.)

Iarbas is furious that not only has his “prize” been usurped, but by a man he perceives as effeminate, implying that Iarbas' masculinity makes him more worthy. As an additional insult to Roman masculine standards, Aeneas is neglecting his own duties to do the bidding of a woman. In the eyes of Iarbas, Jupiter, and Mercury, Aeneas' stay in Carthage has made him soft, subordinate, and contemptible.

They find Aeneas momentarily weak for being distracted not only by his easy Carthaginian life, but by a woman. Capable and powerful though she may be, Dido is a woman first. Her accomplishments as a ruler are made acceptable by her accomplishments as a woman. She has led her people to safety and constructed a powerful new kingdom, but she has done so modestly and virtuously. Yet, in keeping with the Roman model of womanhood, her worst traits

– irrationality, hysteria, selfishness – are coded feminine.¹⁰ As the poem progresses, Dido’s feminine *furor* overwhelms her more admirable, masculine traits. Her city is neglected as she places her personal concerns over her civic responsibilities. Her modesty is forgotten as her “marriage” becomes public knowledge. She has chosen passion over dignity, lust over fidelity. As Aeneas accepts the inevitability of his departure stoically (one might say, coldly), Dido erupts in irrational, inconsolable fury. Vergil draws upon a literary history of dangerously uncivilized women, comparing her to a “maenad when the holy mysteries have begun” (4.300). Her vitriol towards Aeneas, her Fury-like promise that she will “pursue [him] with black fire” (4.384), leaves her completely transformed from the skilled ruler and gracious host of Book 1.

As Dido’s role shifts from ruler to woman, Carthage turns from ally to enemy. The dangers presented by a foreign state and a woman defying sexual expectations are thereby linked. Dido is constructed as Aeneas’ foil in every way: Oriental vs. Roman, feminine vs. masculine, *furor* vs. civilization. Thus, foreignness and femininity are conflated, with *furor* a characteristic of both.¹¹ Dido’s disappointment as a woman leads her to issue the curse that presages the Punic Wars:

¹⁰ Panoussi on Dido’s masculine/feminine duality: “Vergil thus invests Dido with the attributes of a male hero – the male hero par excellence – while he simultaneously casts her as unmistakably female by mobilizing the allusive framework of erotic poetry” (Panoussi 187).

¹¹ The inextricability of Dido’s ethnicity and gender is illustrated by the different interpretations of *Aeneid* I.302-304. Syed reads Mercury’s intervention as necessitated by Punic savagery (Syed 154), while A.M. Keith sees it as a comment upon female belligerence. Keith, A.M. *Engendering Rome: women in Latin epic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 75.

“tum uos, o Tyrii, stirpem et genus omne futurum
 exercete odiis, cinerique haec mittite nostro
 munera. nullus amor populis nec foedera sunt.
 exoriare aliquis nostris ex ossibus ultor
 qui face Dardanos ferroque sequare colonos,
 nunc, olim, quocumque dabunt se tempore uires.
 litora litoribus contraria, fluctibus undas
 imprecor, arma armis: pugnent ipsique nepotesque.” (4.621-628)

(“And you, my Tyrians, must persecute his line
 Throughout the generations – this your tribute
 To Dido’s ashes. May treaties never unite
 These nations, may no love ever be lost between them.
 And from my bones may some avenger rise up
 To harry the Trojans with fire and sword,
 Now and whenever we have the power.
 May coast oppose coast, waves batter waves,
 Arms clash with arms, may they be ever at war,
 They themselves and their children forever.”)

Thus, Dido exerts her power one final time. It is, however, a particularly feminine power, the
 curse of a woman scorned. The contradictions that arise from a woman in power are then

partially eased by having her put that power to ill use.¹² Dido's unnatural position results in a war that will destroy her people; the fate of Dido and the fate of Carthage are intertwined, the distinction between the female and the Eastern once again nearly invisible. Aeneas then must abandon Dido to reassert his masculinity as well as claim his Roman identity.

The misogynistic stereotypes found in Dido's characterization must be reconciled with her largely sympathetic portrayal, however. The language of the poem reveals sympathy even as she descends into madness; she is compared to a maenad and a Fury, but also to Pentheus and Orestes, thus underlining her status as a victim of her own furor.

When Dido does commit suicide (by falling upon her sword, an act that subverts conventional portrayals of female suicide even as it reinforces her femininity through its erotic suggestions), the lamentation is immediate and on a scale comparable to that caused by the deaths of great heroes such as Hector:

it clamor ad alta
atria: concussam bacchatur Fama per urbem.
lamentis gemituque et femineo ululatu
tectae fremunt, resonat magnis plangoribus aether,
non aliter quam si immissis ruat hostibus omnis

¹² The contradictions continued to vex some readers. Tiberius Claudius Donatus could not reconcile Dido's femininity and *furor* with her capacity to bring about the Punic Wars and concluded that the prophecy was merely insane ranting and did not refer to the Punic Wars at all. Starr, Raymond J. "Explaining Dido to Your Son: Tiberius Claudius Donatus on Vergil's Dido." *The Classical Journal* Vol. 87, No. 1 (1991), p. 32.

Karthago aut antiqua Tyros, flammaeque furentes
culmina perque hominum uoluantur perque deorum. (4.665-670)

(A cry rises to the roof, and Rumor
Dances wildly through the shaken town.
The houses ring with lamentation
And the wails of women. Great dirges
Hang in the air. It was as if Carthage itself
Or ancient Tyre had fallen to the enemy,
And flames rolled through the houses of men
And over the temples of the gods.)

Anna's grief, more personal and humanizing, further elicits a sympathetic response from the reader. Dido's bloody death is a spectacle, but it is a moving one.

Had Book 4 been told from Aeneas' perspective, the opportunities to vilify Dido and Carthage would have been even greater. Book 4 would also have been considerably less passionate and tragic. Vergil instead forces the reader to intimately share Dido's turmoil and stay with her until the sad, bitter end. Aeneas' Roman masculinity permits him to express emotions only in ways that preserve his *pietas*, primarily on behalf of his father, his son, and his men. His feelings for Dido are at their most unrestrained during their encounter in the Underworld, when Dido is no longer a threat to his mission. Instead, Dido, as a woman and a foreigner, provides the outlet for the emotion that Aeneas must restrain.

Vergil does not lay the Punic Wars entirely at Dido's feet. Aeneas, who is so loyal to his father and son and speaks so assuringly to his men, seems unable to relate to Dido. His suspect plans for departure and his guarded, tepid farewell, predictably, serve only to inflame her. His masculine restraint and single-minded dedication to the future Rome contribute as much to the hostility between the two states as Dido's irrationality. Thus the end of a sexual relationship becomes a failure in international diplomacy. The Punic Wars are not the result of Dido's foreign femininity or Aeneas' Roman masculinity so much as they are the consequence of the polarity of Dido's and Aeneas' positions and their inability to reconcile the values they represent.

Chapter Two

Andromache

Aeneas' abandonment of Dido, and Carthage, marks an important advancement in his transition from Trojan to Roman, but as of his encounter with Andromache, his ties to Troy remain strong. He and Andromache are physically separated from Troy, but they continue to cling to it emotionally. Both would have preferred death in their homeland to their current displaced condition:

“o terque quaterque beati,
quis ante ora patrum Troiae sub moenibus altis
contigit oppetere!” (1.94-96)

(“Three times, four times luckier were those
Who died before their parents’ eyes
Under Troy’s high walls!”)

“o felix una ante alias Priameia uirgo,
hostilem ad tumulum Troiae sub moenibus altis
iussa mori, quae sortitus non pertulit ullos
nec uictoris heri tetigit captiua cubile.” (3.321-324)

(“Priam’s virgin daughter, Polyxena,

Was most fortunate of all, condemned to die
 At an enemy's tomb beneath Troy's walls,
 And never a slave in a conqueror's bed.'")

Aeneas, however, is ostensibly moving forward; his travels are taking him farther and farther from Troy. Physical distance has not impeded Andromache. Whereas Aeneas is destined to build a new, greater city, Andromache has settled for a lesser facsimile of the one she has lost. Her "little Troy" is of course inferior; its Xanthus is dry, and Helenus is no Hector. Yet Andromache clings to her identity as a Trojan. When she looks at Ascanius, she does not see the future king of Alba Longa, but rather her own Trojan Astyanax. While Aeneas has been instructed to look ahead to his new wife, Andromache persists in recalling Creusa.

As Dido's fate was intertwined with that of Carthage, so is Andromache tied to Troy. Unlike Dido, however, Andromache's attachment to her city is indicative of her limitations rather than her power.¹³ Andromache is unable to move forward as Aeneas does because her roles as a woman have left her with no other identity to fall back upon. Andromache has already lost one ethnic identity through marriage, as her Theban origins were sublimated by her assumption of the role of model Trojan woman. She became defined – by herself, by her countrymen, and by the Greco-Roman literary tradition – as Hector's wife, Astyanax's mother, and a Trojan woman. Having lost Hector, Astyanax, and Troy, it is unsurprising that she does not know what to do with herself. Having lost his identity as a Trojan, Aeneas has other roles to fill. He is a warrior and a leader; Andromache has only ever been Hector's wife. She cannot move

¹³ Syed applies her arguments regarding spectacles and emotional distance to Andromache as well (see note 8) (Syed 104-106). I am more fully convinced in this instance, as Andromache's lack of agency diminishes her subjectivity.

forward as easily as Aeneas because her limited roles as a woman have left her with nothing to move toward. Her predicament is implicit in Aeneas' supposedly comforting farewell:

“uiuete felices, quibus est fortuna peracta
iam sua: nos alia ex aliis in fata uocamur.
uobis parta quies: nullum maris aequor arandum,
arua neque Ausoniae semper cedentia retro
quaerenda. effigiem Xanthi Troiamque uidetis
quam uestrae fecere manus, melioribus, opto,
auspiciis, et quae fuerit minus obuia Grais.” (3.493-499)

(“Live happily. Your destiny is complete,
We are still called from one fate to another.
Your rest is won. You have no seas to plow,
No quest for ever-receding Ausonian fields.
Before your eyes is an image of the Xanthus
And a Troy that your own hands have built,
Under better auspices, I hope and pray,
And less vulnerable to the Greeks.”)

Andromache has no destiny or quest. Her little Troy is all she has, and even that is precarious, as Aeneas' final comments (“less vulnerable to the Greeks”) suggest. Admittedly, Dido, also

widowed and displaced, managed to go on to found a new and powerful state, but doing so placed her outside the bounds of conventional female behavior and brought catastrophe upon her.

By remaining emotionally attached to her conquered homeland, Andromache remains attached to grief. She becomes a perpetual mourner, another role that is available to her as a woman. The mourning process, particularly its visible aspects, was the domain of women and was expected to be highly emotionally charged.¹⁴ Andromache is no exception:

“dixit, lacrimasque effudit et omnem
impleuit clamore locum. uix pauca furenti
subicio et raris turbatus uocibus hisco” (3.312-314)

(“She spoke
And poured forth her tears, filling the place
With her cries, so frantic I was scarcely able
To reach her with my few stammered words...”)

The dramatic gestures of mourning – hair-rending, wailing, and self-laceration – make women an effective symbol of conquered nations. The enslaved, lamenting women of a conquered nation (Troy, more often than not, given the Trojan War’s significance in the ancient

¹⁴ Mourning could be too highly charged, in the opinion of lawmakers such as Solon and the authors of the Twelve Tablets. Their funeral reforms regulated this rare opportunity for women to be visible in order to prevent public displays of emotions from becoming excessive. Corbeill, Anthony. *Nature embodies: gesture in ancient Rome*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.

literary tradition) were used by Greek and Roman tragedians and poets to portray the horrors of war (and to serve as a reminder of what is at stake for nations at war). Suffering and subjugation then take on a feminine quality as the raped, enslaved, and displaced woman becomes the face of the conquered. Troy, and Trojan identity, is therefore further feminized by having been conquered.

As of Book III, Aeneas is still mourning Troy. The encounter with Andromache, however, underscores the futility of dwelling in the past. Aeneas' mission is leading him away from Troy to Rome, and in the process he will have to transition from the femininity of subjugation to the masculinity of conquest. He must forget his grief, as Creusa instructs him, in order to inflict that grief upon others. Andromache's model of womanhood keeps her trapped in the position of the conquered, but Roman masculinity will provide Aeneas with yet another role, that of conqueror.

Chapter Three

Camilla

While Andromache is limited by gender roles, Camilla boldly transgresses them. She “had not trained her hands to women’s work, / spinning and weaving” (7.805-806), but has instead been raised upon the arts of hunting and combat. As a virgin devotee of Diana, Camilla further eschews the role of wife and mother, a role to which even Dido aspired. Her perpetual maidenhood emphasizes her femininity in its own way, however, and the reader is invited to marvel with the Italians at this coexistence of masculine and feminine qualities:

Ilam omnis tectis agrisque effusa iuuentus
 turbaque miratur matrum et prospectat euntem,
 attonitis inhians animis ut regius ostro
 uelet honos leuis umeros, ut fibula crinem
 auro internectat, Lyciam ut gerat ipsa pharetram
 et pastoralem praefixa cuspide myrtum. (7.811-817)

(All the young men, and their mothers too,
 Flocked from their houses and left their fields
 To watch her ride by, mouths open in wonder
 At how the royal purple draped
 Her smooth shoulders, how her hair
 Was bound in gold, and how she carried

A Lycian quiver and an iron-tipped spear.)

This description bears echoes of Dido, but significantly, Camilla is equipped for combat, not sport.

Camilla not only assumes a masculine role – she excels at it. Her skills are described in appropriately valiant terms:

illa uel intactae segetis per summa uolaret
 gramina nec teneras cursu laeisset aristas,
 uel mare per medium fluctu suspensa tument
 ferret iter celeris nec tingeret aequare plantas. (7.808-811)

(She could sprint over a field of wheat
 And not even bruise the tender ears,
 Could cruise above the open sea's waves
 And never wet the soles of her feet.)

She has the respect of Turnus, who gladly welcomes her contributions. Despite her youth and inexperience, she proves more than capable in battle, as the Ligurian son of Aunus discovers to his detriment. He taunts her by insulting her sex and her vanity in an attempt to trick her off her horse; Camilla, however, proves to be faster on foot than the Ligurian is on horseback. When she kills him, Vergil compares her to a male falcon, while the foolish Ligurian is cast as her female dove prey. It is clear who is dominating the battlefield.

As with Dido, however, Camilla's masculine accomplishments are undone by a feminine weakness. Whether she wants to devote the spoils in a temple or keep them for herself, her fatal pursuit of Chloereus is motivated by "a woman's love of spoils" (11.782). Why this particular kind of greed is a woman's weakness when Euryalus is undone by similar greed in Book 9 is not immediately apparent. Donatus approves of Euryalus' spoils, finding them suitable for a warrior, perhaps in contrast to the effeminate Oriental garments that catch Camilla's eye.¹⁵ It may also be that Euryalus' greed is also meant to be viewed as a feminine mistake,¹⁶ one in keeping with his youthful effeminacy and the homoerotic undertones of Book 9.¹⁷

Euryalus' death is not the only way in which the Trojans' masculinity is addressed in the latter half of the poem. Numanus sneers at the Trojans much as Iarbas did in Book 4:

"uobis picta croco et fulgenti murice uestis,
desidiaie cordi, iuuat indulgere choreis,
et tunicae manicas et habent redimicula mitrae.
o uere Phrygiae, neque enim Phryges..." (9.614-617)

(But you! You wear embroidered saffron

¹⁵ Keith 31.

¹⁶ Stuart Small reads the deaths of Euryalus and Nisus as part of a purging of weaknesses from the Trojan ranks. Small, Stuart G.P. "Virgil, Dante and Camilla." *The Classical Journal* Vol. 55, No. 7 (1959): 295-301.

¹⁷ Williams, Craig Arthur. *Roman homosexuality: ideologies of masculinity in classical antiquity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 116-120.

And purple satin. You like to loaf and dance.
 Your tunics have sleeves and your heads bonnets.
 You are really Phrygian women...)

He pays the penalty, however, for impugning the Trojans' masculinity; Ascanius responds by fatally shooting Numanus. This seemingly refutes the charges of Trojan femininity, but in fact it is a sign that Aeneas' men are growing both more masculine and less Trojan. Apollo tells Ascanius that he is surpassing his Oriental origins: "Troy is too small for your glory" (9.644).

Indeed, Aeneas' men are rapidly leaving Troy far behind. Camilla's comparison to an Amazon, complete with her own retinue of female warriors, brings to mind Penthesilea from the Book 1 ekphrasis. The comparison is potentially problematic; Penthesilea, after all, was fighting on behalf of the Trojans and is even the object of Aeneas' pity. The apparent contradictions, however, reveal how much the Trojans have changed since the Trojan War. To Servius, Camilla's inclusion in the Italian ranks was a sign of Turnus' desperation and a portent of the Italians' eventual defeat.¹⁸ The same could be said for Penthesilea at Troy. The Amazons are formidable, but they are always on the losing side. The Trojans no longer need to fight alongside women, and their own defeat of an "Amazon" marks the reversal of their position. They have advanced from being survivors of a conquered city to victors. Camilla thus serves to distance the Trojans from Troy and establish their masculinity in the process.

Even as it marks the Trojans' progress, Camilla's death is not a cause for celebration. Her killer, the cowardly Arruns, is painted in the most unflattering terms:

¹⁸ Keith 27.

ac uelut ille, prius quam tela inimica sequantur,
 continuo in montis sese auisus abdidit altis
 occiso pastore lupus magnos iuueno,
 conscius audacis facti, caudamque remulcens
 subiecit pauitantem utero siluasque petiuit... (11.809-813)

(Having killed a shepherd, or a great steer,
 A wolf will run before men can come after him
 With their hostile spears. Aware
 That he has done something reckless,
 He loses himself in the trackless mountains,
 Tucking his quivering tail beneath his belly.)

His cowardice emphasizes Camilla's own warlike strength; her dying words are a command to Turnus to defeat the Trojans. The elegant description of her death creates many similarities with Dido's suicide. They both die in the presence of a distraught and beloved female companion (Camilla even calls Acca "sister"). Their fate is tied to their countrymen; Camilla's death turns the tide of war in the Trojans' favor. Both are favorites of goddesses who lament the waste and needlessness of their deaths:

Tum Iuno omnipotens longum miserata dolorem
 difficilisque obitus Irim demisit Olympo
 quae luctantem animam nexosque resolveret artus.

nam quia nec fato merita nec morte peribat,
sed misera ante diem subitoque accensa furore... (4.693-697)

(Then Almighty Juno, pitying Dido's long agony
And hard death, sent Iris down from Olympus
To free her struggling soul from its moral coils.
Her death was neither fated nor deserved
But before her day and in the heat of passion.)

utque procul medio iuuenum in clamore furentum
prospexit tristi mulcatam morte Camillam,
ingemitque deditque has imo pectore uoces:
'heu nimium, uirgo, nimium crudele luisti
supplicium Teucros conata lacescere bello!' (11.838-842)

(When [Opis] saw, far off in the din of combat,
Camilla pay the penalty of death,
She spoke these words from her heart's deep core:
"Ah, Camilla, you have paid too cruel
A penalty, too cruel, for challenging
The Trojans in battle!")

Yet while Dido exhibited a certain duality of nature, Camilla is a study in contradiction. It is difficult to call Camilla sympathetic. Her talent and fearlessness are admirable, and her ferocity is fascinating; yet, there is something repulsive about her as well. Her considerable skill is put to violent use, and Vergil is frank in his description of the bloodshed she causes. Syed argues that Dido's ethnic differences undermine her sympathetic portrayal, to which one can counter that her sympathetic portrayal undermines her ethnic differences.¹⁹ No such case can be made for Camilla. Her complete *furor* is alienating, rendering her an absorbing spectacle, but one which the reader would prefer to consider from a safe distance. Whereas Dido undergoes a transition that prioritizes her feminine faults over her masculine strengths, Camilla is everything at once. Her youth and femininity are at constant odds with the hideousness of her actions. The repeated reminders of her sex emphasize the unnaturalness of her bloodlust. Vergil's descriptions of her oscillate between poetic beauty and unflinching gore; *horrenda* and *decus* are equally applicable to her. She fights viciously, but courageously, a claim her killer cannot make. Camilla's contradictory nature provides a useful lens through which to view the Trojans rapidly changing identities. Her *furor* shows the need for Rome's civilization while also revealing the dangers of unchecked masculinity.

¹⁹ Syed 144.

Chapter Four

Creusa and Lavinia

Aeneas' journey begins in Troy and ends in Latium. It also begins with Creusa and ends with Lavinia. Aeneas is destined for a new city and a new wife, which necessitates leaving the old wife behind in the old city. Creusa is therefore tied to Troy more closely than even Andromache; she is simply not permitted to leave it. As with the other women, her fate is linked with that of her city. Creusa and Troy are lost together.

Aeneas' first impulse as Troy burns is to die gloriously in battle. Only when his own mother scolds him does he think of the family he left defenseless. He finds them safe, thanks to Venus' intervention, but soon intends to return to battle. Creusa pleads with him:

“si periturus abis, et nos rape in omnia tecum;
 sin aliquam expertus sumptis spem ponis in armis,
 hanc primum tutare domum. cui paruus Iulus,
 cui pater et coniunx quondam tua dicta relinquer?”

(“If you go to die, take us with you,
 To whatever fate. But if experience has taught you
 To rely on your weapons, guard first this house.
 To whom do you leave us, little Iulus,
 Your father, and me, once called your wife?”)

A good wife, she is willing to die by Aeneas' side, although, understandably, she would prefer not to.

Having only recently received his mission, Aeneas displays the lack of restraint and absence of *pietas* subsequent books will show to be associated with women and Oriental ethnicities. His mother and wife must remind him of his duties. He begins showing the stirrings of *pietas*, however, after the first portent of his mission, the ghostly flame surrounding Ascanius' head, reveals itself. Aeneas appropriately attends to his father, son, and *penates* as they flee the city. There is no place for Creusa in this Roman, masculine conception of virtue, and so she is left to trail behind.²⁰ There is no place for Creusa in the mission at all, and she vanishes.

“hic mihi nescio quod trepido male numen amicum
 confusam eripuit mentem. namque auia cursu
 dum sequor et nota excedo regione uiarum,
 heu misero coniunx fatone erepta Creusa
 substitit, errauitne uia seu lapsa resedit,
 incertum; nec post oculis est reddita nostris.
 nec prius amissam respexi animumue reflexi
 quam tumulum antiquae Cereris sedemque sacratam

²⁰ Perkell observes: “Since the exclusive maleness of Aeneas’ *pietas*, as reflected in his flight from Troy, was not demanded by the tradition Virgil inherited but rather occurs as a result of Aeneas’ forgetfulness of Creusa, Virgil may have intended it to express Aeneas’ own unarticulated and unacknowledged values.” “On Creusa, Dido, and the Quality of Victory in Virgil’s *Aeneid*.” *Reflections of women in antiquity*. Ed. Helene P. Foley. New York: Gordon and Breach, 1981. 362

uenimus: hic demum collectis omnibus una
 defuit, et comites natumque uirumque fefellit.
 quem non incusauī amens hominumque deorumque,
 aut quid in euersa uidi crudelius urbe?" (2.735-746)

("I panicked. Some malignant spirit
 Robbed me of my wits, for while I ran
 Down back alleys, leaving the familiar streets,
 My wife, Creusa, was taken from me
 By some evil fortune. Had she stopped,
 Or got lost and sat down exhausted?
 I never saw her again, didn't even look back
 Or think of her behind me until we arrived
 At the mound by Ceres' ancient temple.
 When finally we were all gathered there,
 She alone was missing. No one had seen her,
 Not her husband, not her son, no one.
 What man or god did I not accuse
 In my delirium? What crueler thing
 Had I seen in our overturned city?")

Upon noticing Creusa's absence, Aeneas is genuinely distraught. In his distress, he reverts to his previous emotional recklessness, "robbed of his wits" and spiraling into a

“delirium.” It is telling, however, that, as with Dido in the Underworld, Aeneas’ feelings toward Creusa are only visible once the poem has removed her as an obstacle to his mission. In addition, he acknowledges his carelessness but still attributes her disappearance to larger forces. Some spirit made him run; some evil fortune took Creusa.

The shade of Creusa, ever the good wife, absolves him of responsibility and soothes him:

“quid tantum insano iuuat indulgere dolori,
 o dulcis coniunx? non haec sine numine diuum
 eueniunt; nec te comitem hinc portare Creusam
 fas, aut ille sinit superi regnator Olympi.
 longa tibi exsilia et uastum maris aequor arandum, 780
 et terram Hesperiam uenies, ubi Lydius arua
 inter opima uirum leni fluit agmine Thybris.
 illic res laetae regnumque et regia coniunx
 parta tibi; lacrimas dilectae pelle Creusae.
 non ego Myrmidonum sedes Dolopumue superbas 785
 aspiciam aut Grai seruitum matribus ibo,
 Dardanis et diuae Veneris nurus;
 sed me magna deum genetrix his detinet oris.
 iamque uale et nati serua communis amorem.” (2.776-789)

(“What good does it do, my sweet husband,
 To indulge in such mad grief? These things

Do not happen without the will of the gods.
 You may not take your Creusa with you;
 The Lord of Olympus does not allow it.
 Long exile is yours, plowing a vast stretch
 Of sea. Then you will come to Hesperia,
 Where the Lydian Tiber runs gently
 Through fertile fields. There, happy times,
 Kingship, and a royal wife shall be yours.
 Dry your tears for your beloved Creusa.
 I shall not look upon the proud domains
 Of the Myrmidons or Dolopians,
 Nor go to be a slave for Greek matrons,
 I, a Trojan woman, and wife of the son
 Of the goddess Venus. No,
 The Great Mother keeps me on these shores.
 Farewell, and keep well your love for our child.’’)

Creusa’s role here is complex. She is both a casualty of Aeneas’ mission and an agent of it. On one level, Creusa is what Aeneas will have to reject to fulfill his Roman destiny. She identifies herself as a Trojan woman to the last, and it is the Great Mother, Cybele, a distinctly Oriental goddess, who claims her. Yet, she provides his first instructions on becoming a Roman. She tells him not only what he must physically accomplish to found Lavinium, but also what

changes he must make in himself. She advises emotional restraint; to move on from Troy, Aeneas will have to move on from her, and Creusa permits him to do so.

Aeneas does move on to Italy. His mission is to acquire Lavinia and Lavinium, in that order. Lavinia is most remarkable for what she does not do. In a poem full of passionate, expressive women that elicit some sort of response from the reader, be it pity or revulsion, Lavinia is a non-entity. Despite being the motive behind the war, she makes only a few brief appearances and never speaks. Does she want to marry Turnus? Does she want to marry Aeneas? She does not say, and neither does Vergil. The only indications that Lavinia has any thoughts at all are her mysterious blush in 12.64-69²¹ and her grief over Amata's suicide. It simply is not necessary for Lavinia to have thoughts, opinions, or emotions. The ethnicities of Dido, Andromache, and Camilla are significant because those women represent groups of people; Lavinia, however, represents the physical land, the actual Italian soil. As such, no interiority is required of her.

The importance of the Italian land even overshadows her at times. Aeneas vows, as a gesture of unity toward the Latins, to name his new city after Lavinia, but the "Lavinian shores" appear in the poem's second line, while Lavinia must wait until Book 6 to be referred to by name. Mihoko Suzuki observes that, unlike many of the female characters, Lavinia escapes the *Aeneid* with her life – the poem sacrifices her subjectivity instead.²²

Creusa was sacrificed more literally, losing her life to make way for the marriage that will merge the Trojans and the Latins into the Romans. Although once understandably concerned

²¹ Interpretations of the blush range from virginal embarrassment (D.C. Woodworth) to love for Turnus (R. Lyne).

²² *Metamorphoses of Helen: authority, difference, and the epic*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989, p. 130.

for her own safety, she accepts her fate gracefully, without Dido's bitterness or Andromache's overwhelming sorrow. Unlike so many of the other women of the poem, Creusa is not placed in opposition to the mission or to Rome.

The Italian War of the latter six books has more than a few parallels to the Social War that was waged less than a century earlier, recently enough that a portion of Vergil's audience had been naturalized as Romans within the last generation or two.²³ It is no surprise, then, that the *Aeneid* displays a certain anxiety regarding the ethnic harmony of the Trojans and the Latins. The ethnic peace Jupiter promises Juno would have been achieved only very recently. The violent resolution to the *Aeneid*'s Italian war is hardly reassuring. Rather, greatest promise of unity comes from the representation of the figures of Creusa and Lavinia.

Creusa's identities are not polarized against the Roman ideal like those of the other characters discussed here. She does not have Dido's emotional recklessness. She is not conquered the way Andromache is. She certainly does not flout standards of femininity as Camilla does. Creusa espouses Roman values while maintaining her Trojan ethnicity, thereby bridging the divide between Troy and Latium, between the poem's beginning and its conclusion. She sets Aeneas on his path, pointed toward Lavinia.

A sort of collaboration between the two women, in which Creusa passes the torch to Lavinia, and Lavinia accepts (or at least does not refuse), underlies the poem. The benevolence of this transition is in marked contrast to the bloodshed of the Italian War and, given the ambiguous and violent conclusion of Book 12, is one of the few indications that the Trojans and

²³ For a more complete discussion of the influence of the Social War on the *Aeneid*, see Johnson, W.R. "Imaginary Romans: Vergil and the Illusion of National Identity." *Poets and Critics Read Vergil*. Ed. Sarah Spence. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001. 3-18.

the Latins will successfully merge. As the untraversable chasm of polarized identities has been shown to contribute to conflict, so flexibility in identity provides the possibility of peace. Vergil has, even if inadvertently, provided another model for the mission, one that relies less on a strict adherence to the standards of Roman masculinity than Aeneas' ultimately violent conquest.

Conclusion

Aeneas' identity is in a state of flux throughout the *Aeneid*, and the women he encounters serve as markers of his progress along his journey. His experiences with these women define and/or reaffirm his masculinity and point him toward his new Western destiny. The dynamic and vividly drawn natures of these women (with the important exceptions of Creusa and Lavinia) provide various models against which the comparably inscrutable (perhaps even lackluster) Aeneas defines himself.

Dido, as the poem's most memorable female character, provides the sharpest contrast. Carthaginian, female, emotionally volatile – she is everything Roman identity must not be. Yet the poem highlights both her charms and Carthage's while underscoring some of the least desirable aspects of Roman conquest – its immovability, its heartlessness, and its high price – human life. The Dido episode thus reveals the limitations of Roman masculinity as a political strategy even as it trades in base gender and ethnic stereotypes.

The line between Aeneas and Andromache is less sharply drawn because Andromache is both what Aeneas was and what he could have been. Both are reluctant survivors of the same brutal war, but the position of the conquered is a feminine one and not fit for a Roman conqueror. Aeneas rejects Andromache's stationary role in favor of the Roman destiny that will necessitate the replication of the conquered state that he has escaped, but from which Andromache, because of her sex, cannot. The poem therefore shows both the undesirability of Andromache's position and the disquieting violent potential of Aeneas'.

Camilla, at first glance, makes the case for the necessity of rigid gender distinctions. Her feminine *furor* and her masculine capabilities make a dangerous and repellent combination. Her

savagery seems like a natural consequence of the untamed woman. Yet, her femininity provides an excellent canvas upon which the unnatural brutality of war can be emphasized. Camilla's ferocity, so readily identifiable in comparison to the gendered behaviors expected of her, is only an exaggeration of the belligerence of the men fighting alongside and against her. She serves not only as a measuring stick for the Trojans' masculinity, but as a slightly distorted mirror of it as well.

Creusa and Lavinia, perhaps the least interesting women in the poem, are also the most Roman. They are silent, acquiescing, and sacrificed for the good of Rome. They provide the model of Roman womanhood that complements Aeneas' Roman masculinity and his role as active agent and the one doing the sacrificing. They also, however, reveal Aeneas' failure to transition peacefully between them and between Troy and Rome. Creusa's noble abdication of her role as Aeneas' wife and Lavinia's silent acceptance of it provide a model of magnanimity that Aeneas, furiously executing the resentful Turnus, fails to live up to.

The roles gender and ethnicity play in the *Aeneid* are, like the rest of the poem, complex and ambiguous. I have written this thesis to offer another perspective on the women of the *Aeneid* that is more positive than the general tone of current criticism on the poem's gender and ethnic politics. The poem, while bearing the imprint of the values of its cultural context, expresses a deep sympathy for its female characters while subtly underlining the limitations and consequences of the model of Roman masculinity it presents. These women are victims of Rome, precursors to future conquests, but nonetheless challenge the dominant conceptions of gender and ethnicity in quiet, perhaps even inadvertent, ways that will hopefully be explored even further in future criticism.

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