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Telling the Story of a Fallen Queen Dante's Artistic License in Canto 5 of the Inferno with Dido's Fate in Book 6 of Vergil's Aeneid

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**TELLING THE STORY OF A FALLEN QUEEN DANTE'S ARTISTIC LICENSE IN
CANTO 5 OF THE INFERNO WITH DIDO'S FATE IN BOOK 6 OF VERGIL'S
AENEID**

An honors paper submitted to the Department of Classics, Philosophy, and Religion
of the University of Mary Washington
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Departmental Honors

Kara E. Anthony-Price
May 2015

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05/03/15

TELLING THE STORY OF A FALLEN QUEEN
DANTE'S ARTISTIC LICENSE IN CANTO 5 OF THE *INFERNO*
WITH DIDO'S FATE IN BOOK 6 OF VERGIL'S *AENEID*

A THESIS BY

KARA E. ANTHONY-PRICE

SUBMITTED ON APRIL 22, 2015

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR DEPARTMENTAL HONORS IN CLASSICS

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ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to answer the question of why Dante treats Dido so harshly for her “fault” (*culpa*, 4. 172), when Vergil treats her so leniently for the same *culpa*. To answer this question, the paper discusses the nature of Dido’s roles in the *Aeneid* and in the *Inferno*, respectively, as well as the role of the gods in the *Aeneid* in her *culpa*, the role of Dido’s *furor*, and the implications behind Dante’s change in Dido’s fate.

One opinion among scholars is that Dante’s *Inferno* was a “Christianized” redaction of the *Aeneid*, so that Dido’s punishment would fit her crime exactly. In his article, “Vergil’s *Inferno*,” Putnam (1991) argues that, Dante, by reviewing the *Aeneid* through a theological and a teleological lens, was able to conclude his poem in a way that satisfactorily concluded what Vergil had begun.

The second approach is that Dante was aiming for the maximum aesthetic effect. In Dante’s mind, Dido makes a better adulteress than a suicide; through the Dantean lens, one sees Dido as both the beautiful adulteress and the tragic suicide. Poggioli (1957), in his article “Paolo and Francesca,” argues that Dante was more concerned with the spirit of the works he alludes to, rather than being literally accurate.

Vergil’s Dido is made to suffer needlessly on account of the machinations of the gods, and the nature of fate. This is because in Vergil’s ontology the gods use mortals to tweak Fate, and the mortals suffer the consequence. Thus, Dido is more sympathetic as a victim in Vergil’s *Aeneid*, and therefore, she is treated kindly in the afterlife. Conversely, Dante turns the “Dido story” into a didactic exposé of the nature of lust. Therefore, Dante’s rendition of Dido in the *Inferno* enhances and explains Vergil’s rendition of her in the *Aeneid*.

Pledge: _____

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INTRODUCTION

To the modern reader the fate of Dido in Book 6 of Vergil's *Aeneid* may appear inconsistent in light of his portrayal of her in Books 1 and 4. Under the influence of Cupid, she falls madly in love with Aeneas, and their affair results in the neglect of her kingdom. In despair of his absence, Queen Dido is driven to suicide. Yet for all her impious deeds (*facta impia*, Verg. *Aen.* 4.596), Dido has a relatively peaceful afterlife, and is even reunited with her husband Sycheaus.¹ In contrast, in Canto 5 of his *Inferno*, Dante places Dido in the Circle of the Lust-driven. Here she stands in line with other notable “scarlet women” of classical antiquity, condemned to be buffeted by violent winds for eternity.

Obviously Dante read the *Aeneid*, and admired Vergil as a poet—so much so that he modeled the *Inferno* on Book 6 of the *Aeneid*, and made Vergil his authoritative guide through the Underworld. Yet Dante's rendition of Dido's postmortem fate seems to fly in the face of what Vergil created. This disparity begs the following question: why does Dante treat Dido so harshly for her faults, when in Vergil's Underworld (on which the *Inferno* is based) there are no punishments for carnal sins? This paper seeks to explore and answer this question by considering the nature of Dido's role in Vergil's *Aeneid*, and her role in the *Inferno*.

A search for the answers to these questions raises other questions. What is the role of the gods in Dido's fate in the *Aeneid*? Does Dido's *furor* absolve her of her *culpa* (4. 172)? Why does Dante place Dido among the lust-driven rather than among the suicides? Finally, how do these two representations of Dido relate to each other? Specifically, what did Dante hope to accomplish by altering Dido's fate that he could not do if the allusion had been a

mirror translation of Vergil's rendition? An examination of the poets' portrayals of Dido may provide some insights.

I prefer to integrate the scholarship into my discussion of specific passages, so for now it is sufficient to mark general trends, pet peeves, and small matters. One opinion among scholars is that Dante's *Inferno* was a "Christianized" redaction of the *Aeneid*, so that Dido's punishment fits her crime exactly. In his article, "Vergil's Inferno," Putnam (1991) argues that as Book 6 of the *Aeneid* can be read as an allegory of the soul's spiritual journey, so can the entire *Commedia*. Dante, by reviewing the *Aeneid* through a theological and a teleological lens, was able to conclude his poem in a way that "reversed Virgil's² tone and generically completed what the Augustan writer had left unfinished."³

This view is supported by Freccero in his lecture, "Dante's Cosmos," who argues that like Vergil's *Aeneid*, the logistics of "how it really works" are secondary to the truths communicated. Vergil wrote an epic, not a book on metaphysics or theology. Dante wrote a book on theology and spirituality, not on philosophy or science. For his evidence Freccero cites examples of how the metaphoric language Dante uses when talking about the spiritual life is realized as "literally true." Everything, from the punishments of the sinners to the geography of the *Inferno*, can be read metaphorically and literally. Yet if this were the case—that Dante simply imposed his Christian beliefs on the *Aeneid*—wouldn't Dido have been punished for her suicide—the "greater sin"?

The second approach is that Dante was aiming for the maximum aesthetic effect. In Dante's mind, Dido makes a more beautiful adulteress than she does a suicide: "There is much more to contemplate beneath Dido's adultery than there is beneath her suicide."⁴ Only through the lens of *Dido id est libido* does one truly see Dido as both the beautiful adulteress

and the tragic suicide. This view is supported by Poggioli (1957) in his article “Paolo and Francesca,” who argues that Dante was more concerned with the spirit of the works he alludes to rather than being literally accurate.

This view is complimented by a third approach, which proposes that Dante’s reading of the *Aeneid* was filtered through several interpretations and translations. According to Hawkins (1991) in his article “Dido, Beatrice, and the Signs of Ancient Love,” there was the possibility that some of Dante’s “artistic liberties” were attributed to a process called “literary transvaluation.”⁵ Hawkins argues in partial favor of the possibility of a transvaluation of the Dido story, and also gives several examples of instances where Dante made redactions of the text.

VERGIL’S DIDO: THE QUEEN IN THE DIVINE CHESS GAME

Like so many heroes before him, Aeneas journeys to the Underworld to seek guidance about his mission, i.e. to found Rome. He also unexpectedly meets Dido—not in Tartarus (Hell)⁶—but in Asphodel, the classical equivalent to the Christian “Limbo.”

inter quas Phoenissa recens a vulnere Dido
errabat silva in magna; quam Troius heros
ut primum iuxta stetit agnovitque per umbras
obscuram,

Verg. *Aen.* 6.450-453⁷

among whom, Phoenician Dido, fresh from the wound,
was wandering in the great woods; whom the Trojan hero
at first near the darkness stood, and as soon as he recognized among the shades...

Only now does the full reality of her rumored death affect him, and he mourns for her bitterly. He entreats her to speak with him, recalling their last encounter before he left Carthage.

“infelix⁸ Dido, verus mihi nuntius ergo
 venerat exstinctam ferroque extrema secutam?
 funeris heu tibi causa fui? per sidera iuro,
 per superos et si qua fides tellure sub ima est,
 invitus, regina, tuo de litore cessi...”

Verg. *Aen.* 6.456-460

“Unhappy Dido, was the message which had come to me thus true
 that you, having been followed by the sword, to the farthest limit?
 Alas, was I the cause of your death? By the stars I swear,
 by the gods above and if, in whichever bottommost part of the Underworld there is
 faith,
 reluctant, queen, I left your shores.”

Dido is still angry with him even in death, and she leaves him for the embraces of her
 deceased husband Sychaeus. “No less Aeneas, struck by the unjust fate, / followed her as she
 went for a long time with tears, and was wretched as she went away,” (*nec minus Aeneas
 casu percussus iniquo/ prosequitor lacrimis longe et miseratur euntem*, Verg. *Aen.* 6.475-
 476). Vergil almost seems to excuse Dido, referring to her ordeal and her untimely suicide an
 injustice (*percussus casu iniquo*, 6.475).

While the end of the Dido story is not happy, it is still peaceful in light of her flagrant
 affair with Aeneas and in light of her violent death. The reasons for this apparent leniency
 have their roots in the prologue of Book 1—before Dido and Aeneas meet. Not surprisingly it
 begins with the gods.

Arma virumque cano, Troiae qui primus ab oris
 Italiam fato profugus Laviniaque venit
 litora—multum ille et terris iactatus et alto
 vi superum, saevae memorem Iunonis ob iram,
 multa quoque et bello passus, dum conderet urbem
 inferretque deos Latio—genus unde Latinum
 Albanique patres atque altae moenia Romae.

Verg. *Aen.* 1.1-7

Arms and man sing I, who, first from the shores of Troy

to Italy, by fate, having been driven forward, and to the shores of Lavinia, came, much that one, on land and sea, having been tossed about by the powers on high, on account of the not-forgetting anger of savage Juno, and, having suffered many things in war as well, until he might found a city and deliver the gods to Latium; from which comes the Latin people and the fathers of Alban and the walls of high Rome.

The culprit is none other than Juno the Queen of the Gods, who, in her hatred for the Trojan survivors, stirs up a sea storm of such force that Aeneas prays for death. The sea god Neptune, perturbed by Juno's infringement on his domain, calms the storm, and brings the ships safely to Carthage, the land that Juno is said to have cherished even more than Samo: "[The city of Carthage] Juno was said, more than all other lands, / to have cherished as one placed behind [i.e. second best to] Samo," (*[Urbs Karthaginis] Iuno fertur terris magis omnibus unam/ postahabita coluisse Samo*, Verg. *Aen.* 1.15-16).

Juno's instigations also catch the attention of Venus, the goddess of love, beauty, and sexuality, and also the mother of Aeneas. A mother's concern compels Venus to pay a visit to Jupiter. Luckily for her, the Fates have aligned in her favor: Jupiter agrees to help her, and sends Mercury to induce the Carthaginians to welcome the Trojans, "lest Dido, unknowing of fate/ prevent [the Trojans] from [reaching] her shores," (*ne fati nescia Dido/ finibus arceret*, Verg. *Aen.* 1.298-299). This is the first instance the reader hears of Dido, who will play a vital role in the divine chess game. By describing Dido as "ignorant of fate" (*fati nescia*, 1.298), Vergil is setting a precedent in which the divine agenda is supreme, and Dido is a victim of her circumstances. According to Feeney (1991) in his book, *The Gods in Epic*, this also implies that she would have refused Aeneas her hospitality had she known of the events that would unfold.⁹

Aeneas and his men arrive exhausted and waterlogged on the shores of Carthage. Venus appears to Aeneas disguised as a huntress, and tells him about Carthage and its queen.

Unfortunately for the readers, she only gives him the highlights of the story (“*summa fastigia rerum*,” Verg. *Aen.* 1.342), which means that Aeneas and the reader will only learn about Dido what the goddess tells them.

“Imperium Dido¹⁰ Tyria regit urbe profecta,
germanum fugiens. longa est iniuria, longae
ambages; sed summa sequar fastigia rerum.
huic coniunx Sychaeus erat, ditissimus agri
Phoenicum, et magno miserae dilectus amore,
cui pater intactam dederat primisque iugarat
omnibus.”

Verg. *Aen.* 1.340-346

“Tyrian Dido rules a state, having set out from the city,
fleeing her brother. Deep is the wound, and a roundabout peril;
but I shall only aim at the main points of things.
Her husband was Sychaeus, the richest of the Phoenicians,
and he was loved with the great love of a wretched woman,
to whom her father had given her as a virgin to him to marry first of all.”

Venus draws Aeneas’s attention to the parallels between his present and Dido’s past. For example, they are both previously married and recently widowed.

“Ille Sychaeum
impius ante aras atque auri caecus amore
clam ferro incautum superat...”

Verg. *Aen.* 1.348-350

“He [Pygmalion], the unsuspecting Sycheaus,
before the altars, impious and blinded with a love of gold,
secretly with a knife, conquered.”

As Aeneas was fleeing Troy, so Dido was fleeing her brother-in-law (*germanum fugiens*, 1.341). Finally, they are both leaders of new cities (*imperium Dido Tyria regit*, 1.340).

Dido is meant to be an example to Aeneas of what he currently is—a fugitive—and what he could be—the founder of a great city, like Carthage. By having Venus introduce Dido to Aeneas, Vergil emphasizes Dido’s role as the “pawn” of the goddess, specifically in

the capacity as Aeneas's love interest. One wonders whether these similarities would have been enough to secure a viable alliance between Dido and Aeneas, without Venus's help. In fact, Dido explicitly cites her empathy with Aeneas's travails as grounds for letting him into her palace:

“Me quoque per multos similis fortuna labores
iactatam hac demum voluit consistere terra.
Non ignara mali miseris succurrere disco.”

Verg. *Aen.* 1.628-630

“Me also cast through many similar hardships,
fortune allowed to rest at last on this land.
Not ignorant of evil, I learn to give aid to those in misery.”

Dido's words echo Vergil's earlier description of Aeneas, as “the man ... driven by Fate,” (*virum.../...profugus fato*, 1.1-2), who was also “tossed about” (*iactatus*, 1.3), and turned through many *labores* (1.10).

In the end, the legitimacy of Dido's compassion for Aeneas is irrelevant. It is not the change of heart in the queen of Carthage that impels Venus to act, but the possibility of sabotage by Juno, the queen of Olympus. After all, Carthage was reported to be Juno's favorite city, and Aeneas had already incurred her wrath (*saevae*, 1.4) by nature of his Trojan lineage. As extra insurance against Juno's anger, Venus enlists the help of her son Cupid, telling him to impersonate Aeneas's son Ascanius, and infect the unwary Dido¹¹ with love for Aeneas:¹²

“Ut, cum te gremio accipiet laetissima¹³ Dido
regalis inter mensas laticemque Lyaeum,
cum dabit amplexus atque oscula dulcia figet,
occulum inspires ignem fallasque veneno.”

Verg. *Aen.* 1.685-687

“So that, when into her lap most joyful Dido takes you

between the regal tables and the Lyaeian wine,
 when she gives you an embrace and sweet kisses she fixes,
 breathe into her the secret fire, and deceive with the drug.”

This is another example in which Dido is used by the god against her will. Later, Dido herself attests to this when she says: “I would not chose to associate myself to anyone with a marriage bond,” (“*ne cui me vinclo vellem sociare iugali,*” Verg. *Aen.* 4.16). Dido is not the only woman whom Venus targets.¹⁴ Ganiban (2012, 212) notes the similarities of Venus’s request to Cupid in *Aeneid* 1 with Hera’s request of Aphrodite in Book 3 of Apollonius’ *Argonautica*. According to Ganiban, Vergil used and adapted this model to “create scene that makes clear the impossibility of Dido’s situation.” In all three cases, Venus (Aphrodite) has an ulterior motive that supersedes any concern for the well being of the potential *femme fatales*.

In furthering the case for Dido’s victimization by the gods, Vergil frequently describes her in terms of her *furor*; she is intoxicated with lust, and then driven mad with fury. She wanders through Carthage like a deer wounded by an arrow.

Est mollis flamma medullas
 interea et tacitum vivit sub pectore vulnus.
 uritur infelix Dido totaque vagatur
 urbe furens,¹⁵ qualis coniecta cerva sagitta...

Verg. *Aen.* 4.66-69

There the flame eats her innermost bone,
 meanwhile a silent wound under her heart lives.
 unhappy Dido burns, and within the confines of the whole city she roams,
 mad, like a doe, by an arrow having been thrown...

However the gods are not finished with Dido yet. Her love for Aeneas is not enough for the Venus, and as a concerned mother, Venus convinces Juno to officiate the “marriage” of Dido and Aeneas by flattery: “You are [Jupiter’s] wife, it is your right to test his mind with

entreaties. / You lead, I will follow,” (“*Tu coniunx, tibi fas animum temptare precando. / Purge, sequar,*” Verg. *Aen.* 4.112-114),¹⁶ Juno agrees and a plan is set.

speluncam Dido dux et Troianus eandem
deveniunt. prima et Tellus et pronuba Iuno
dant signum; fulsere ignes et conscius aether
conubiis, summoque ulularunt vertice Nymphae.

Verg. *Aen.* 4.165-178

To the same cave Dido and the Trojan leader
come. Both the First Earth and bridesmaid Iuno
give the sign; fires flashed, and the aether as witness
to the marriage-rights, and on the highest peak the Nymphs sang.

Vergil presents the cave-scene as if it were an actual marriage by including elements commonly associated with a Roman wedding. For example, he describes Juno as the “bridesmaid” (*pronuba*, 4.166). Vergil summarizes the whole event with these words:

ille dies primus leti primusque malorum
causa fuit; neque enim specie famave movetur
nec iam furtivum Dido meditatur amorem:
coniugium vocat, hoc praetexit nomine culpam.

Verg. *Aen.* 4.169-172

This was the first day of her ruin, and was the first
cause of bad things; for neither by her reputation was she moved, nor by rumor
nor yet the secret-stolen love did Dido consider:
she calls it marriage, and with this name she cloaks her fault.

It is unclear whether Dido’s calling their union a marriage (her *culpa*, 4.172) is done aloud, or in her mind only. It is entirely plausible to think that Dido is deceiving herself to the point that, what seems abundantly obvious to her—that Aeneas is her husband—needs no official labels. According to Fowler (2000, 42) in his book, *Roman Constructions: Readings in Postmodern Latin*, the line could have been “focalized”—seen through Dido’s point of

view—so that she is covering over what she herself believed to be a “fault.”¹⁷ Aeneas, for his part, remains mysteriously quiet throughout this affair, until he is forced to leave.

So did Dido really imagine the marriage, as Aeneas later implies, or was Aeneas being unintentionally ambiguous? The answer to these alternatives is yes to both. According to Feeney in his article “The Taciturnity of Aeneas” (1983), “cohabitation and intent” alone constituted a legal Roman marriage, while the actual ceremonies involved had no legal status.¹⁸ For members of the Roman aristocracy and higher, the wedding ceremony functioned as a publicized political alliance.

Individuals of status and importance lived a public life in which such connections were formally marked and openly advertised. Aeneas’ later denial that a marriage exists between them, show[s] that for persons of this rank there is more to a marriage than mere cohabitation.¹⁹

By Feeney’s logic, it would have been easy for a Roman audience to see that this was clearly *not* a marriage, though it had all the appearances of one. Because there was no public ceremony, it was not an official marriage. The reader can assume, then, that to everyone *except* Dido, it was abundantly obvious that they were not married; Aeneas was under no (official) obligation to clarify his intentions. The question then becomes: is the fact that Dido still considers it a marriage a consequence of Juno’s deception, or of Dido’s preexistent lovesickness? The answer is still yes to both. Vergil’s leniency in calling Dido’s mistake a *culpa* (4. 172) —and not a *nefas* (a “violation of the divine law”) —only reinforces his presentation of her as the victim, and not the agent.

The resulting *mali* to which Vergil alludes are serious. In addition to the scandal threatening the reputations of both Aeneas and Dido, the consequences also include Dido’s neglect of her kingdom, and Aeneas’s neglect of both his destiny and his son’s inheritance, i.e. Rome. Aeneas and Dido have also provoked the wrath of the Gaetolian king Iarbas, who

was refused by Dido in the past, and could successfully conquer the deteriorating city of Carthage, should he chose to do so. Jupiter intervenes again, and sends Mercury to order Aeneas, forgetful of his fate, to leave Carthage and Dido.

“Tu nunc Karthaginis altae
 fundamenta locas pulchramque uxorius urbem
 exstruis? Heu, regni rerumque oblite tuarum!
 ipse deum tibi me claro demittit Olympo
 regnator, caelum et terras qui numine torquet;
 ipse haec ferre iubet celeris mandata per auras:
 quid struis? Aut qua spe Libycis teris otia terris?”

Verg. *Aen.* 4. 265-271

“Are you, now of the foundation of lofty Karthage
 putting in place, and the beautiful city in the manner of a wife
 Alas, you construct, forgetful of the matters of your kingdom!
 The ruler of the gods to you, me, sent from Olympus,
 the ruler, who by his divine approving spirit heaven and earth turns;
 he orders (me) to speak these things quickly, [which] entrusted to you on winds:
 What are you building?
 Or by what hope do you linger in *otium* in the lands of Libya?”

The only apparent solution to all of these problems comes at Dido’s expense: Aeneas must go, and he cannot take Dido with him.

Aeneas breaks the news to Dido, and just as he fears, it goes horribly wrong. Dido launches into a scathing invective (a *querela*): “Did you even hope to lie, traitor?” (“*Dissimulare etiam sperasti, perfide...?*” *Aen.* 4.305).²⁰ She insults his honor and his lineage, among other things.²¹ Dido reminds Aeneas of the good she did him, and accuses him of ingratitude: “Is naught our love to you, and is naught to you our right hands once joined?” (“*Nec te noster amor nec te data dextera²² quondam...?*” Verg. *Aen.* 4.307).²³

To Dido’s horror, Aeneas reveals that he never intended to marry her: “I did not ever, / in extending the marriage torches as a husband, enter into this agreement,” (“*Nec coniugis umquam/ preaetendi taedas aut haec in foedera veni,*” Verg. *Aen.* 4.338-339). He tells her

that the gods have a plan for him that (sadly) it does not include marrying Dido, nor does it entail having joint dominion over Carthage. The gods have spoken, and he must carry it out: “To Italy against my will, I go,” (“*Italiam non sponte sequor*,” Verg. *Aen.* 4.361).

Having failed to convince Aeneas to stay, Dido breaks off their discussion in angry tears, aborting any further attempt by Aeneas to resolve the conflict.²⁴ In her despair she cries, “What insanity changes your mind? / Unhappy Dido, now do you your impious deeds affect?” (“*Quae mentem insania mutat? / Infelix Dido, nunc te facta impia tangunt?*” Verg. *Aen.* 4.595-596).²⁵ As her madness intensifies with fury, Dido loses sense of herself to such a degree that Vergil describes her as a Maenad.

saevit inops animi totamque incensa per urbem
 bacchatur, qualis commotis excita sacris
 Thias, ubi audito stimulant trieterica Baccho
 orgia nocturnusque vocat clamore Cithaeron.

Verg. *Aen.* 4.300-303

She rages, incensed and deprived of all reason, through the whole city
 in a Bacchic frenzy, just as with the sacred emblems moved, a Thyiad, excited,
 when with Bacchus having been heard, they stir the secret triennial rites
 and at night the Cithaeron calls with a cry.

Thus Jupiter’s prediction at the beginning of Book 1 proves true: Dido, unknowing of her fate, was unable to keep the Trojans from her shores—a fate she regrets bitterly: “Happy, alas too happy [would I be], if only the Dardanian ships had never so much as touched our shores!” (“*Felix, heu nimium felix, si litora tantum/ numquam Dardaniae tetigissent nostra carinae*,” Verg. *Aen.* 4.657-658). Dido mounts the funeral pyre, and falls on Aeneas’s sword. Vergil grimly acknowledges the power of divinely induced passion as a dominant contributor to Dido’s *culpa* (4. 172):

Improbe Amor, quid non mortalia pectora cogis!
 Ire iterum in lacrimas, iterum temptare precando

cogitur et supplex animos summittere amori,
ne quid inexpertum frustra moritura relinquat.

Verg. *Aen.* 4.412-415

Wicked Love, to what ends do you not drive mortal hearts?
To go again in tears, to test again by pleading
she is driven, and as suppliant, to submit her senses to love,
lest, in vain about to die, she leaves something untried.

The apparent leniency of Dido's ultimate fate in the *Aeneid* can be explained by the events that transpire in Books 1 and 4. Dido is kept unknowing of her fate (*fati nescia*, 1.299), while Venus carefully constructs Aeneas's first impression of her, with the aim of making Aeneas and Dido more sympathetic both to each other and to the reader (*fato profugus*, 1.2; cf. *fortuna ... iactatam*, 1.628-629). Venus also contrives to make Dido fall in love with Aeneas against her will ("*inspires ignem fallasque veneno*," 1.687). Finally, Venus strategically beguiles Juno into officiating Dido's "marriage" (*coniugium*, 4.172) to Aeneas. In the end, even Juno expresses pity for Dido. Vergil writes:

Tum Iuno omnipotens longum miserata dolorem
difficilisque obitus Irim demisit Olympo
quae luctantem animum nexosque resolveret artus.
nam quia nec fato merita nec morte peribat
sed misera ante diem subitque accensa furore...

Verg. *Aen.* 4.693-696

Then all-powerful Juno, pitying the deep sorrow
and difficult death, sent Iris from Olympus
so that she would release the struggling soul from bound limbs.
neither by the fate merited nor in death had she died,
but wretched before the day suddenly and incensed with fury.

In his commentary on *Aeneid* 4, O'Hara (2011, 169) remarks on the irony of the words *Iuno omnipotens* (4.693). "Juno's lack of power ... is evident here; she has been unable to protect Dido ... or to stop Aeneas, and will ultimately fail to protect Carthage."²⁶ Juno's pity in light

of her own powerlessness is the final piece of evidence that makes the case for Vergil's portrayal of Dido as the tragic victim.

VERGIL'S RECEPTION IN ANTIQUITY

Vergil's work enjoyed an unusually immediate degree of popularity. Propertius praised the work while it was still being written: "something greater than the *Iliad* is being born," (*nescioquid maius nascitur Iliade*, Prop. 2.34.66). Counter to his deathbed wishes, Augustus did *not* burn the *Aeneid*. In his article, "Aspects of Vergil's reception in antiquity," Tarrant (1997, 56) proposes that it was the *Aeneid* that made Vergil widely popular in literature and art.²⁷ Vergil's work earned him the attention of the second century writer Suetonius in his *De Poetis*, and of the fourth century commentator Aelius Donatus. Both sought to write biographical accounts of Vergil, however, Tarrant cautions against reading these biographies as historically true.²⁸

Vergil was the first Roman poet whose work received canonical status among Roman literary circles. Fascination with the poet's life extended to fascination with scholarly criticism of the work. Vergil's allusions to Homer in the *Aeneid* had not gone unnoticed, and his name was often paired with that of Homer. Propertius is recorded to have boasted in "Rome's having produced a poet worthy to rival Homer."²⁹ Vergil's death before the completion of the *Aeneid* opened the door for scholarly criticism, even to the point of the work becoming the subject of parody by citing lines out of context.

Under Augustus, shifting literary tastes tended towards an openly antagonistic critical approach to the *Aeneid*, peaking coincidentally with Ovid's emergence onto the literary scene. This trend witnessed the diminishing of Aeneas's role (the character most often

equated with Augustus), and a greater emphasis on the psychological-emotional aspects of the *Aeneid*. Here, one can see the seeds for what would later become the “rivalry” between the politically oriented, “pro-Aeneas” interpretation of the European school and the more psychologically oriented Harvard school, respectively. These two main approaches to the *Aeneid* exert the most influence in face of the teleological questions Vergil raises, and in how different writers (like Dante) seek to answer those questions.

By the European Middle Ages, Vergil had become popular among pagans and Christians alike. Vergil was considered one of the “big four” (the *quadriga*) of authors, including Terence, Cicero, and Sallust. However Tarrant notes that of those authors, only Vergil was “claimed a vehicle of divine inspiration.”³⁰ According to Burrow (1997), there were multiple copies of Vergil’s works circulating in Medieval Europe, which were translated into the vernacular languages. In his article, “Virgils, from Dante to Milton,” Burrow defines Dante as “the most sophisticated medieval renovator of Virgil.”³¹ Dante, who structured his *Commedia* partly on Vergil’s Underworld, and who nominates Vergil as his own authoritative guide through the *Inferno*, explicitly acknowledges Vergil as the model poet.³²

Burrow notes that Dante is careful to distinguish the pre-Christian Vergilian model from his own eschatological beliefs. Vergil is only able to guide Dante through the *Inferno*, and disappears shortly after Dante’s arrival in the *Purgatorio*. In this, Vergil is truly a *vates*—a “poet, or prophet”—in that he helps the pilgrim on the way *towards* God, but cannot actually *lead* him to his final destination:

“Dante’s view of Virgil is of a guide who cannot himself complete the course towards which he points his imitators, and who needs the benevolent reinterpretations of later readers to complete what in him is only suggested.”³³

All of these elements—the varied anecdotal accounts of Vergil’s life, the emotion-centric interpretation of the *Aeneid* (especially of Book 4), and the “multiplicity of Virgils” translated into the vernacular—have implications in Dante’s reading and subsequent re-presentation of the *Aeneid*, and—in the specific context of this paper—of Dido.

DANTE’S DIDO: THE SCARLET WOMAN

The relatively peaceful scene in which Vergil leaves Dido necessarily raises questions regarding fairness of judgment, to which Dante provides an answer. In Canto 5 of the *Inferno* he condemns the same Dido to the Second Circle of Hell—aptly named the Circle of the Lust-driven—to be buffeted about by gale-force winds.

Io venni in loco d’ogne luce muto,
che muggia come fa mar per tempesta,
se da contrari venti è combattuto.
La bufera infernal, che mai non resta,
mena li spirti con la sua rapina;
Voltando e percotendo li molesta.³⁴

Dant. *Inf.* 5.28-33

I came into a place mute of all light,
which bellows like the sea in tempest when
it is assailed by warring winds.
The hellish hurricane, never resting,
sweeps along the spirits with its rapine;
whirling and smiting, it torments them.³⁵

As they were in life whisked about by their lust, so they are in death. Freccero (1986, 106-107) discusses this irony in his book, *Dante; The Poetics of Conversion*.

If the bodies in hell are really souls, then it follows that their physical attitudes, contortions and punishments are really *spiritual* attitudes and states of mind, sins made manifest in the form of physical punishment. It is therefore correct to say that the punishments *are* the sins; sin bears the same relationship to punishment as the souls in hell bear to their fictive bodies.³⁶

Dido is described in two short lines, but they are a loaded two lines. “The next one is she who slew herself for love/ and broke faith to the ashes of Sicheaus,” (“*L'altra è colei che s'ancise amorosa, / e ruppe fede al cener di Sicheo...*” Dant. *Inf.* 5.61-62). She joins the ranks of such famous women as Queen Cleopatra of Egypt and Queen Helen of Sparta. Cleopatra had a love affair with many famous Roman men, e.g. Marc Antony and Julius Caesar. Helen of Troy—the wife of Menelaus—eloped with Paris, starting the war that served as the point of departure for the whole Trojan cycle of epics, and quite a few Greek tragedies. Dante even goes so far as to appropriate the entire group to Dido, naming it “the troop where Dido is,” (*la schiera ov' è Dido*, Dant. *Inf.* 5.85). Hawkins cites this line as evidence for the proposition that Dante sees Dido is the embodiment of *luxuria*—pleasure, or in this case, libido.³⁷

Though Dido’s story is only alluded to briefly, the aspects of her *culpa* (4. 172) can be drawn out from her association with the other “scarlet women.” For example Semiramus legalized adultery, echoing Dido’s “masking” her own affair as a marriage.

“La prima di color di cui novella
 tu vuo’ saper...
 fu imperatrice di molte favelle.
 A vizio di lussuria fu sì rotta,
 che libito fé licito in sua legge,
 per tòrre il biasmo in che era condotta.”

Dant. *Inf.* 5.52-57

“The first of these of whom
 you wish to know...
 was empress of many tongues.
 She was so given to lechery
 that she made lust licit in her law,
 to take away the blame she had incurred.”

In Dante's eyes, whatever guilt Dido incurred from her adultery with Aeneas was compounded by the fact that she tried to "legalize" it. She was a queen, and had the responsibility of building a nation. It appears that Dido rationalized her *culpa* (4. 172) so successfully, that she felt "wronged" when Aeneas left ("*Dissimulare etiam sperasti, perfide...?*" 4.305). Francesca, the gentle wife of Gianciotto, also tries to excuse herself of her *culpa* (4. 172) with an appeal to the rules of courtly love.³⁸ Francesca says:

"Amor, ch'a nullo amato amar perdona,
mi prese del costui piacer sì forte,
che, come vedi, ancor non m'abbandona."

Dant. *Inf.* 5.103-105

"Love, which absolves no loved one from loving,
seized me so strongly with delight in him,
that, as you see, it does not leave me even now."

A cursory read of most romance novels will attest to the fact that lust is a slippery slope, and its stages are not always clearly marked, as they are in the case of Dido. More often than not lust grows quietly, sometimes catching the sufferer by surprise. In the case of Francesca and Paolo, it was induced (or at least facilitated) by an erotic story. Francesca tells Dante:

"Noi leggiavamo un giorno per diletto
di Lancialotto come amor lo strinse;
soli eravamo e senza alcun sospetto."

Dant. *Inf.* 5.127-129

"One day, for pastime, we read
of Lancelot, how love constrained him;
we were alone, and suspecting nothing."

When she describes her first kiss with Paolo, Francesca likens herself to Queen Guinevere and Paolo to Sir Lancelot, thus romanticizing their love. Poggioli discusses the *mistranslation* of lust, from the imagination to actual deed, and enumerates the differences

between the “literary kiss,” and Francesca and Paolo’s kiss. For example, Guinevere and Lancelot were *not* alone, as Francesca would have Dante believe, but in the presence of the queen’s maids and their mutual friend Gallehaut, and the fictional Guinevere kisses Lancelot, not the other way around. In short, “The parallelism [Francesca] implies is partial or relative ... she recollects what she did experience far better than what she read.”³⁹

Like Francesca’s allusion to Lancelot and Guinevere, Dante’s allusion to Dido was not intended to be an exact translation. For Dante literal “un-truth” leads to spiritual truth.⁴⁰ By Poggioli’s logic, Dante took Dido from the *Aeneid*, and placed her where he thought she would be the most effective as a character. Dido’s suicide “is a mere consequence of her adultery, which in turn is a mere consequence of her lust.”⁴¹ In other words, the placement her character—and the placement of the other women among the lust-driven—is didactic in nature:

Dante cared more for the spirit than for the letter of his text; and this scorn for literalness must be certainly taken into account also in regard to what we have said about his decision to let Francesca speak according to the diction of the love romances.⁴²

Thus Dante presents *essentially* the same Dido, but her character is “reconstituted.” Her new place in Dante’s *Inferno* is a function of her new literary role, and her actions are re-examined in light of Dante’s ontology, as shaped by his Christian theology. Whereas Vergil expounded on the internal causes of her lust, here Dante focuses on and magnifies its external effects in the afterlife.

Yet this still does not really answer the question as to what role Dido plays. Why did Dante include Dido at all, and what purpose does she serve? Just as in Vergil’s *Aeneid*, the answer is in the “prologue” of the *Inferno* in Canto 1. Dante is in a state of spiritual darkness,

and has lost his way (1.3). Dante, like Aeneas, embarks on a journey to the Underworld to seek guidance. As Aeneas was lost at sea, so Dante was lost in “the bitter wood.”

Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita
mi ritrovai per una selva oscura
che la diritta via era smarrita.

Dant. Inf. 1.1-2

Midway in the journey of our life
I found myself in a dark wood,
for the straight way was lost.

Dante describes the wood as a foreboding, unwelcoming place (1.4-5), *tant' è amara che poco è più morte* (1.7), “so bitter that death is hardly more so.” As Ungaretti (1991) describes it, “This is the desert hour in which a man, alone, stands.”⁴³ It is in this spiritual darkness that a certain Roman poet comes to Dante’s aid. Dante describes him as one who seemed “faint through long silence,” (*per lungo silenzio fioco*, Dant. Inf. 1.63). When Dante asks who the stranger is, the shade replies:

“Nacqui *sub Iulio*, ancor che fosse tardi,
e vissi a Roma sotto ‘l buono Augusto
nel tempo de li dèi falsi e bugiardi.
Poeta fui, e cantai di quel giusto
figliuol d’ Anchise che venne di Troia,
poi che ‘l superbo Illiòn fu combusto.”

Dant. Inf. 1.70-75

“I was born *sub Iulio*, although late,
and I lived at Rome under the good Augustus
in the time of false and lying gods.
I was a poet, and I sang of that just
son of Anchises who came from Troy
after proud Illium was burned.”

It is no mistake that Vergil becomes Dante’s guide, not just as a character, but also as a poet. In fact, Dante directly names the *Aeneid* as the source of his work.

de l'Eneïda dico, la qual mamma
fummi, e fummi nutrice, poetando:
sanz' essa non fermai peso di drama.⁴⁴

Dant. *Purg.* 21.97-99

I mean the *Aeneid*, which was to me both mother
And nurse (to me) in poetry:
without it I had achieved little of worth.

However there are limits to using Vergil's *Aeneid* as the poetic model, since Vergil wrote before the advent of Christianity: "Virgil's initial appearance in *Inferno* 1 establishes both his authority as Dante's guide, and his limitations in terms of Christian truth."⁴⁵ This view is discussed in Brownlee's article, "Dante and the Classical Poets" (2007, 144):

The beginning of the otherworldly journey proper in *Inferno* 3 initiates the programmatic function of both Virgil as Dante's authoritative guide, and of *Aeneid* 6 as the privileged textual model for Dante's infernal descent. In both cases, the significant and systematic differences between the Italian poem and its Latin model work to highlight the former's Christian spiritual dimension.⁴⁶

Because Dante was Catholic, the *telos* of his "new *Aeneid*" is fundamentally different from that of Vergil's *Aeneid*. Dante makes this new *telos* evident by contrasting the ugliness of Dido's lust in the *Inferno* with the beauty of Beatrice's love in the *Purgatorio*. Whereas Dido's love was possessive, jealous, and ultimately destructive, Beatrice's love enables Dante (the pilgrim) to journey through the *Inferno*, the *Purgatorio*, and finally the *Paradisio*. Beatrice, at first indirectly in the *Inferno*, and then directly in the *Purgatorio*, models the ideal of Christian love.⁴⁷

According to Hawkins, Dante's encounter with Beatrice in the *Purgatorio* is meant to be the inverse of Books 4 and 6 of Vergil's *Aeneid*. Hawkins proposes that, "what [Dido and Aeneas's] story injects into *Purgatorio* 30 is a reality antithetical to all that is gradually to be unveiled there."⁴⁸ Upon arriving in Purgatory, Dante is overcome with emotion in the

presence of his beloved. He exclaims, “I know the tokens of the ancient flame,” (“*cognosco i segni de l’antica fiamma*,” Dant. *Purg.* 30.48). This echoes Dido’s complaint to her sister, Anna: “I recognize the traces of the old flame,” (“*agnosco veteris vestigia flammae*,” Verg. *Aen.* 4.23).⁴⁹ Here, *Aeneid* 4.23 is the link between Vergil and Dante. As with the Dido allusion, Dante again takes poetic license with Vergil’s work. As Hawkins argues,

When Dante-Dido feels the rekindled tokens of old passion, he does so in the presence of his *antico amor*... Not only is Dante here playing Dido; not only is Vergil serving as *soror Anna*; but Beatrice is at once Sychaeus *and* Aeneas, old flame and new. The Virgilian line that announces Dido’s self-division, her pull between two loves, is here transformed to signal the pilgrim’s return to unity.⁵⁰

Hawkins also points out that, whereas Dido’s love for Aeneas led them into sin, Beatrice’s love for Dante betters him, and is the driving force behind his spiritual journey:

[Dante] is confronted by the radical translation of [the] Virgilian ‘antico amor’ standing before him, who in her glorified body offers the antithesis of everything Virgil represented as the destiny of eros... Beatrice is none other than the ‘transvaluation’ of Dido: a woman who, rather than obstructing her Aeneas from his heaven-destined course, enables him precisely to find his home.⁵¹

It is at this point Vergil disappears from Dante’s side, and is replaced by Beatrice.

Hawkins interprets Vergil’s sudden absence as an indication that the Aeneidic model Dante has been using has reached its limit. After all, Vergil’s Underworld does not have a Purgatory or a Heaven, strictly speaking. More to the point, the Vergilian cosmos has no equivalent to divine love in the *Aeneid*. In this way, Dido really is a victim of the divine gods of Eros and Aphrodite. On the other hand, Beatrice represents a whole new ontological model of divine love that is life-giving and directed to the good of the other. This change in guides can also be indicative of the pilgrim’s advancement in the spiritual life.

Virgil’s stoic hero [Aeneas] becomes a Christian pilgrim [Dante] meant to be uprooted, to yield before a feminine wind that overcomes precisely in order that it—that she—may raise him up. A Virgilian ‘no’ becomes a Dantesque ‘yes.’⁵²

For Dante, the *telos* is the Beatific Vision of the *Paradisio*, i.e. seeing God as he is (the “Beloved”). Everything that happens to Dante, and every encounter he has in the *Inferno* is aimed to this end, i.e. the purification of his soul. Thus the purpose of Dido in the Second Circle of Hell is didactic. Just as she represented to Aeneas what he was leaving behind to follow fate, so she represented to Dante what *he* was leaving behind in living out the Christian ideal.

VERGIL’S *CULPA* AND DANTE’S *PECCATUM*

The *Aeneid*, like most epics, is hero-centric, and Vergil’s Dido will necessarily derive her significance as a character from her relationship with Aeneas. For example, in Aeneas’s Underworld speech to Dido, the focus is more on *his* culpability in Dido’s death, not hers (“*funeris heu tibi causa fui?*” 6.458). Aeneas never asks *why* she is down there (as Dante later does), specifically because *he* does not need to know, so presumably, neither does the reader.

Dido, even in death, is both an example of what Aeneas could become (a leader), what he was *not* (*furens*), and what he would have to sacrifice—and had already sacrificed—to follow his own fate (a settled domestic life). Even Dido’s funeral pyre itself becomes a kind of altar, on which she is the “sacrificial victim” for Rome. In the introduction to Lombardo’s translation of the *Aeneid*, Johnson (2005, lii) discusses the full significance of what *pietas* means with respect to one’s fate:

The price Aeneas himself pays should not be ignored. In losing Dido, he loses not a little of himself. That huge loss for the lover foreshadows what his steady pattern of total submission to his nation’s demands will finally inflict on him, the diminution of his humanity.⁵³

The focus of the drama is not on Dido's inner struggle with *eros*, but on Aeneas's struggle in following his fate, though we see Dido's struggle very clearly in Book 4. The more she rebels against Fate, the more she suffers. The culmination of that suffering comes when, in confusion and despair of her past faults, she takes her life (“*Infelix Dido, nunc te facta impia tangunt?*” 4.596).

On the other hand, Dante's Dido is the archetype of lust: beautiful, powerful, and attractive, with a compelling backstory and a more dramatic scandal. For this reason, Dante capitalizes on her affair with Aeneas—the true *malorum causa* (4.169-170). It was her unchecked passions that resulted in the neglect of her kingdom, Aeneas's fate, and ultimately her untimely death. Only in her capacity as “adulteress” is Dante able to show the reader what is so attractive and so tragic about the sin of lust, especially since that is the source of her tragedy.

So far, this paper has cited the difference in Dido's roles as reasons for why Vergil portrays Dido the way he does, and why Dante portrays Dido the way *he* does. It still does not answer the underlying question raised by the discrepancy: on what grounds did Dante place Dido in Hell rather than the Fields of Asphodel? While it appears that Vergil made an ambiguous case for Dido's innocence as the victim of Fate, the excuses he provides for her behavior are too convenient, i.e. she was infused with lust via a supernatural trick; that Dido's *furor* drives her to suicide. At the very least the Dido story required an explanation, which Dante, whether originally he intended to or not, provided. Thus, Dante's redaction was not so much a matter of “tampering” with the *Aeneid*, as it was a matter of explaining it.

As for the grounds on which he made those redactions, Dante found a loophole in the Dido story. At the beginning of Book 4 Dido confides in her sister Anna about her feelings

for Aeneas. It is just before dawn, and memories of Aeneas have kept Dido awake all night. “Much the virtue of the man, and many things to her mind recur repeatedly, / and the honor of his lineage,” (*Multa viri virtus animo multusque recursat/ gentis honos*, Verg. *Aen.* 4.3-4). This scene is similar to Act 1 of Seneca’s *Phaedra*, where Phaedra is confiding to her nurse about her frustrated advances towards her stepson, Hippolytus.⁵⁴ Like Dido, Phaedra’s love for Hippolytus has rendered her sleepless: “Not (for) me is there nocturnal quiet, nor is there deep sleep to relieve (my) cares,” (“*Non me quiet nocturna, non altus sopor/ solvere curis...*” Sen. *Phae.* 100-101).

At this point, Dido has all but succumbed to Cupid’s poison. Her conscience will not let her call this deed as any other than a *culpa* (4. 172). She knows it is wrong and that she may pay dearly for it, but for what *reasons* she cannot quite say exactly, at least, not yet.

“Ne cui me vinclo vellem sociare iugali,
postquam primus amor deceptam morte fefellit,
si non pertaesum thalami taedaeque fuisset,
huic uni forsant potui succumbere culpa.”

Verg. *Aen.* 4. 16-19

“I would not chose to associate myself to anyone with a marriage bond,
after which the first love led me, deceived, astray by means of death,
if the marriage chamber and pine torches had not (so) thoroughly disgusted me,
then perhaps I could have succumbed to this one fault.”

Surprisingly Anna, “the sister of one mind,” (*unanimam...sororem*, 4.8) counters Dido’s concerns about Aeneas. If they are truly “of one mind,” does this mean that Dido is not serious about staying chaste?

“O luce magis dilecta sorori,
solane perpetua maerens carpere iuventa
nec dulcis natos Veneris nec paremia noris?
id cenerem aut manis credis curare sepultos?
esto: aegram nulli quondam flexere mariti,
non Libyae, non ante Tyro; despectus Iarbas,

Ductoresque alii, quos Africa terra triumphis
Dives alit: placitone etiam pugnabis amori?"

Verg. *Aen.* 4. 31-38

“O woman having been loved by a sister more than light,
will you alone in perpetual youth, grieving, be consumed,
neither sweet children nor the rewards of Venus will you have known?
You think ashes or the Manes buried to entrust this?
Let it be so: no husbands formerly turned you, sick,
neither in Libya, nor before in Tyre; looked-down-upon Iarbas
and the other leaders, who in the lands of Africa, rich in triumphs
nourishes; against a pleasingly permissible love also will you fight?”

In any case, any reservations Dido had about her love for Aeneas—including her oath to Sycheaus—are gone. This brief event is deceptively insignificant in light of the spectacular events that follow. This passage shows that Dido is close to temptation, with only her will standing in the way. She allows herself to be guided away from her resolve because the persuader (Anna) offers a convenient rationale for doing what is desirable, rather than what is right. In short, this shows that even in Vergil’s world, there was a concept of free will. For example, Aeneas expresses several times his unwillingness—or at least, reservations—to go along with Fate.

“me si fata meis paterentur ducere vitam
auspiciis et sponte mea componere curas,
urbem Troianam primum dulcisque meorum
reliquias colerem...”

Verg. *Aen.* 4. 340-343

“If my fates allowed me to live life
with my auspices, and by my free will to settle my cares,
I would inhabit the first Trojan city
and the sweet remains of mine...”⁵⁵

Even though she is *fati nescia* (1.298), Dido herself knows full well the consequences of her actions *before* she commits them, and is the first to object: she does so on the grounds that

pursuing Aeneas would be breaking a prior oath. So the question now is: did Vergil's Dido have a choice? Yes. She had the choice to control her passions, just as she had the choice to give in to them.

It is very likely that Dante read this passage, and saw this as Dido's escape route—one that is promptly cut off at Anna's urging. The critical difference here is that Dido makes a deliberate *choice* to actively pursue Aeneas—to give in to her temptation to lust. For Dante, her choice is the true *malorum causa* (4.169-170). It is only *after* she decides to act on her lust that Dido's mental state begins to deteriorate. She imagines she and Aeneas are married when they clearly are not. She forgets that she is the queen, and therefore responsible for the welfare of her kingdom. Finally, she suspects that Aeneas is sneaking away, but without tangible proof on which to base her claims (although in her defense, he is actually sneaking away). By the time the sun sets, Dido is already planning her death. Hawkins writes:

It is over the course of Book 4 that we note how quickly the unseen fire spreads throughout [Dido's] system, overriding her vow of chastity to the memory of her dead husband, melting her heart and her sense of restraint, eventually driving her in a frenzy around a city she can no longer rule.⁵⁶

By recognizing her free will Dante offers an answer to the question Vergil raises, but which Vergil himself never explains: is Dido responsible for the consequences of her actions, and does she therefore suffer justly? In Dante's theology the answer is yes. Dante considers her suicide a *consequence*—albeit a serious and tragic one—of her lust. Her compromised mental state—the *furor* in Vergil—diminishes her culpability in her suicide, but *not* in her adultery. This explains why Dido is in the Circle with the Lust-driven, and *not* in the Circle with the Suicides.⁵⁷

CONCLUSION

To the modern reader Dido's suicide seems to be the bigger sin and the greater tragedy, especially in light of the way Vergil develops her character, her role, and her story. Vergil's Dido is made to suffer needlessly on account of Juno's wrath, the machinations of Venus and Cupid, and the inexorable nature of Fate. This mimics the pattern commonly found in the *mythos* of the Greco-Roman world. In Vergil's ontology, the gods use mortals to tweak Fate, and the mortals are made to suffer unfairly the consequences of the gods' selfishness. Thus Dido is more sympathetic as a victim in Vergil's *Aeneid*, and is "punished" as such in the afterlife.

On the other hand, Dante, as a philosopher, as a poet, and as a man of Catholic faith, makes literary decisions based on the *causes* of things—not solely their effects. Based on Dido's conversation with Anna at the beginning of Book 4, it can be reasonably argued that Dido had the ability to choose, and was therefore responsible for her *culpa*e (4. 172). Therefore it was entirely plausible for Dante to reconstitute Dido as a "sinner" rather than as the "victim."

Dante effectively turns the "Dido story" into a didactic exposé of the nature of lust. Dido's presence in the *Inferno*, when examined in tandem with Francesca's story, gives the reader a textbook definition of what lust essentially *is*, its onset, its development, and its temporal and eternal consequences. Conversely, by contrasting Dido in the *Inferno* with Beatrice in the *Purgatorio*, Dante also shows the reader what lust is *not*. Therefore not only is Dante's rendition of Dido in the *Inferno* *not* in direct conflict with Vergil's *Aeneid*, but in fact, enhances and explains it.

¹ Also spelled "Sichaeus."

² There are two ways of spelling Vergil's name: Vergil (the original), and Virgil (a Christian redaction). For the purposes of this paper, I will use "Vergil" unless the quote spells his name otherwise.

³ Michael C. J. Putnam, "Virgil's *Inferno*," in *The Poetry of Allusion: Virgil and Ovid in Dante's 'Commedia'*, ed. Rachel Jacoff and Jeffrey T. Schnapp (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 96.

⁴ I owe much thanks to Dr. Federico Schneider for pointing this out to me. "She is, if you allow me, a much more beautiful adulteress than she is a suicide," email sent to author, February 12, 2015.

⁵ Peter S. Hawkins, "Dido, Beatrice, and the Signs of Ancient Love," in *The Poetry of Allusion: Virgil and Ovid in Dante's Commedia*, ed. Rachel Jacoff and Jeffrey T. Schnapp (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), 119.

Cf. Joseph Farrell, "The Virgilian intertext," in *The Cambridge Companion to Virgil*, ed. Charles Martindale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 224.

Farrell discusses the allusive nature of Vergil's works. According to Farrell, there are two main approaches to this: 1) that Vergil "copied" his predecessors, and 2) that Vergil was part of a wider discussion:

"Virgil's poetry has affinities with both styles of allusion. On the one hand, the reader who knows Virgil's favourite authors even casually will not fail to catch their voices in Virgil's words, or to recognise his imitations of famous Homeric or Sophoclean scenes. On the other hand, those who prize Virgil's ability to arrest their attention with a single word and who savour his sheer command of the Latin language, eventually discover that behind many individual words there is a history, a history that is written in the texts of other authors. The two styles are sometimes thought to be at odds, the former representing a perspective on the literary past as the common property of a cultivated readership, the latter marking out a kind of *pomerium philologiae* to which only initiates can gain access. But the difference between the two styles should not be exaggerated. Both types of allusion serve similar rhetorical ends, drawing the reader into a dialogue that transcends the limits of the individual text and establishing continuity between Virgil's poetry and the work of his great predecessors."

⁶ In epic, Tartarus was reserved only for those who had sinned against the gods.

⁷ Vergil, *Vergil: Aeneid: Books 1-6*, ed. Randall T. Ganiban, Joseph Farrell, Patricia A. Johnston, James J. O'Hara, and Christine G. Perkell, (Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing/ R. Pullins Company, 2012), 29.

⁸ 'Infelix Dido' is a common epithet for Dido; this is also translated as "ill-fated."

⁹ Dennis C. Feeney, "Vergil's *Aeneid*," in *The Gods in Epic: Poets and Critics of the Classical Tradition*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 141.

¹⁰ According to Servius *auctus*, Dido was initially *Elissa*, but after she committed suicide (rather than marry King Iarbas), she was called *Dido*, which is Phoenician for *virago*--"heroic woman." However, the name *Elissa* seems to have found its way into the *Aeneid* as a pet name, since Aeneas is the only person (apart from Dido) who calls her "Elissa" (Verg. *Aen.* 4.335; 610).

¹¹ Dido is also like Sychaeus in this regard, whom Vergil describes as *incautum* (1.350).

¹² Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica*, Book 3, available online, accessed April 9, 2015, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0227%3Abook%3D3%3Acard%3D52>. (Used for Greek Text)

Apollonius Rhodius, "Book 3," in *Argonautica*, edited and translated by William H. Race (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 223.

¹³ Randall Ganiban, *Vergil, Aeneid 1* (Focus Publishing 2009), 214.

As a twist of "malevolent irony," Venus describes Dido as *laetissima* before sending Cupid.

¹⁴ Cf. Homer, *The Iliad of Homer*, trans. Richmond Lattimore. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 128.

The goddess of love plays a similar role in the *Iliad*, when she bullies Helen into sleeping with Paris (again): "Wretched girl, do not tease me lest in anger I forsake you/ and grow to hate you as much as now I terribly love you, / lest I encompass you in hard hate, caught between both sides, / Danaans and Trojans alike, and you wretchedly perish" (Homer, *Iliad* 3.313-318).

Available online, accessed April 20, 2015.

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0133%3Abook%3D3%3Acard%3D383>.

ἴμή μ' ἔρεθε σχετλίη, μὴ χλωσαμένη σε μεθείω, / τὼς δέ σ' ἀπεχθήρω ὡς νῦν ἔκπαγλ' ἐφίλησα, / μέσσω δ' ἀμφοτέρων μητίσομαι ἔχθρα λυγρὰ Τρώων καὶ Δαναῶν, σὺ δέ κεν κακὸν οἶτον ὄληται' (3.313-318).

Cypria, translated by Gregory Nagy, available online, accessed April 21, 2015.

<http://www.uh.edu/~cldue/texts/epiccycle.html>.

In Proclus's summary of the *Cypria*, Helen plays the part of Dido as hostess to Paris, while her husband Menelaus sails away. Aphrodite induces Helen to sleep with Paris, and then elope with much of Menelaus's wealth. Just as in Book 1 of the *Aeneid*, Hera, in anger, causes a storm and wrecks the ship.

¹⁵ Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *Phaedra*, edited by Michael Coffey and Roland Mayer. *Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics*, edited by E.J. Kenny and P.E. Easterling, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 50.

Dido's questioning herself echoes Phaedra's own self-questioning: "*Quo tendis, anime? Quid furens saltus amas?*" (Sen. *Phaed.* 111), "In which direction do you turn, mind? Why do you, furious, love, the forest?" According to Coffey and Mayer, *furens* here indicates erotic madness (Commentary, 101).

¹⁶ Here, Vergil departs from the model Apollonius presents in the *Argonautica*. In *Argonautica* 3, Hera, desiring Jason's success, appeals to Aphrodite to infect Medea with love for Jason. Both goddesses knew that without Medea, it would have been impossible for Jason to succeed. See Apoll. *Argon.* 3. 84-88.

‘οὔτι βίης χατέουσαι ικάνομεν, οὐδέ τι χειρῶν./ ἀλλ’ αὐτως ἀκέουσα τεῶ ἐπικέκλειο παιδὶ/ παρθένον Αἰήτεω θέλξαι πύθω Αἰσονίδαο./ εἰ γάρ οἱ κείνη συμφράσσεται εὐμενέουσα,/ ῥηιδίως μιν ἐλόντα δέρος χρύσειον οἶω/ νοστήσειν ἐς Ἴωλκόν, ἐπεὶ δολόεσσα τέτυκται’ (Apoll. *Argon.* 3. 84-88).

“We have not come in need of force or strength of hands. No, just calmly call upon your son to enchant Aeetes' daughter with desire for Jason, for if she will give him kindly advice, I believe that he will readily seize the golden fleece and return to Iolcus, because she is very cunning.”

¹⁷ Don Fowler, “Deviant Focalization in Vergil's *Aeneid*,” in *Roman Constructions: Readings in Postmodern Latin* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2005), 41.

Fowler defines focalization as such: “By *deviant* focalization, I mean instances where in normal language we should expect focalizer and narrator to coincide but they do not. There is no general rule of ordinary language which requires the coincidence of narrator and focalizer, and there are a host of familiar devices which allow a point of view to be | ‘embedded’ But I am concerned now with these explicit devices but which what de John terms ‘*implicit* embedded focalization’, where there are no explicit signals in the text.”

¹⁸ D.C. Feeney, “The Taciturnity of Aeneas,” *Classical Quarterly* 33 (1983), 204-219.

Feeney cites Donatus and Servius Auctus: “Donatus paraphrases Aeneas's words thus: ‘*iunctus sum, inquit, tibi, sed illud non potest coniugium vocari; non enim semper mulieris ac viri conventio matrimonium facit. Aliud vocatur quod gessimus. Quale enim matrimonium est ubi nullus testis interfuit, nulla ex more sollemnitas, nulla pactio, faces nullae, nulla ipsius foederis consecrationem?*’ Servius ‘*auctus*’ has similar comments.”

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 205.

²⁰ *Catullus* 64, translated by Leonard C. Smithers, available online, accessed April 21, 2015.

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0003%3Apoem%3D64>.

Namque fluentisono prospectans litore Diae/ Thesea cedentem celeri cum classe tuetur/ indomitos in corde gerens Ariadna furores, / necdum etiam sese quae visit visere credit, / ut pote fallaci quae tunc primum excita somno/ desertam in sola miseram se cernat harena. / immemor at tuvenis fugiens pellit vada remis, / irrita ventosae linquens promissa procellae. / quem procul ex alga maestis Minois ocellis/saxea ut effigies bacchantis prospicit, eheu, / prospicit et magnis curarum fluctuat undis,

“For looking forth from Dia's beach, resounding with crashing of breakers, Ariadne watches Theseus moving from sight with his swift fleet, her heart swelling with raging passion, and she does not yet believe she sees what she sees, as, newly-awakened from her deceptive sleep, she perceives herself, deserted and woeful, on the lonely shore. But the heedless youth, flying away, beats the waves with his oars, leaving his perjured vows to the gusty gales. In the dim distance from amidst the sea-weed, the daughter of Minos with sorrowful eyes, like a stone-carved Bacchante, gazes afar, alas! gazes after him, heaving with great waves of grief.”

Cf. Lawrence Lipking, “Ariadne at the Wedding: Abandoned Women and Poetic Tradition,” in *Abandoned Women and Poetic Tradition*, (USA: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

²¹ Euripides, *Medea* (Greek), edited by David Kovacks, available online, accessed April 11, 2015,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0113%3Acard%3D545>.

Euripides, *Medea* (English), edited by David Kovacks, available online, accessed April 11, 2015,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0114%3Acard%3D545>.

Dido's words—and the whole scene—parallel the argument between Medea and Jason, in which Medea also accuses him of ingratitude and deceit: *χρῆν σ', εἴπερ ἦσθα μὴ κακός, πείσαντά με / γαμῆν γάμον τόνδ', ἀλλὰ μὴ σιγῆ φίλων* (Eur. *Medea* 586-587), “If you were not a knave, you ought to have gained my consent before making this marriage, not done it behind your family's back.”

²² This is an oblique reference to the marriage ceremony, which involved the exchange of right hands. Hence, the saying today of “giving one's right hand in marriage.”

²³ Arthur and Luce Klein, "The Myth of Medea," in *Medea: Myth and Dramatic Form* (New York City: Oxford University Press, 1992), 6.

In contrast to Hamilton's interpretation of the couple, Euripides' *Medea* is more sympathetic to Jason than to Medea. Jason is presented as a reasonable man and a loving father. Medea's character is similar to that of a typical goddess—a woman of many passions, easily slighted, vindictive, and always scheming. Vergil's representation of Dido and Aeneas closely resembles Euripides' representation of Medea and Jason, however Vergil's Dido expresses remorse for her deeds, and is therefore more sympathetic than Medea.

²⁴ Feeney, "The Taciturnity of Aeneas," 210.

²⁵ Cf. Seneca, *Phaedra*, 50. "*Quo tendis, anime? Quid furens saltus amas?*" (Sen. *Phaed.* 111), "In which direction do you turn, mind? Why do you, furious, love, the forest?"

²⁶ James O'Hara, *Vergil, Aeneid 4* (Focus Publishing 2011), 165.

There is some suspicion of whether this was Juno's original goal.

²⁷ R.J. Tarrant, "Aspects of Virgil's reception in antiquity," in *The Cambridge Companion to Virgil*, ed. Charles Martindale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 56

²⁸ Tarrant, "Aspects of Virgil's reception in antiquity," 57.

Tarrant points out that not all of the biographical information is true, and that most of it is in fact, anecdotal. "Virtually no component of the biographical tradition, however, is entirely free from the suspicion of being embellished or even invented, and the biographical picture may indeed have been elaborated precisely to compensate for the unhelpful personal reticence of Virgil's writing."

It is said that imitation is the highest form of flattery, and the fascination with the life of the poet who authored the great Roman epic gave rise to a number of "spurious" works attributed to Vergil in antiquity, for example, the "epyllion" of the *Culex* ("The Gnat") is attributed to him by Lucan, Statius, and Martial.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 70.

A perfect example of the "Christianization" of Vergil is *Eclogue 4*, which was interpreted as a prophetic announcement of the coming of Jesus Christ.

³¹ Colin Burrow, "Virgils, from Dante to Milton," in *The Cambridge Companion to Virgil*, ed. Charles Martindale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 80.

³² Cf. Dant. *Purg.* 21.97-99

³³ Burrow, 80.

³⁴ Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy: Inferno*, Vol. 1, trans. Charles S. Singleton (USA: Princeton University Press, 1970), 2.

³⁵ All Italian translations by Charles S. Singleton. See previous endnote.

³⁶ John Freccero, "Infernal Irony: The Gates of Hell," in *Dante: The Poetics of Conversion*, ed. Rachel Jacoff (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 106-107.

Freccero qualifies this point, with the caveat that scholars have difficulty coming to an agreement regarding the definition of "irony." "Since antiquity, it has been thought of as an unexpressed negation of what is expressly affirmed, sometimes extended over an entire discourse simply by a gesture or tone of voice. Context is all important in evaluating the negation, but it is precisely in defining context that difficulties in interpretation arise...Reference, allegory, is the rhetorical analogue of the journey. All things are to be used (*uti*), that is, treated as though they were signs, God only to be enjoyed (*frui*), as the ultimate signification."

³⁷ Hawkins, "Dido, Beatrice, and the Signs of Ancient Love," 119.

³⁸ Dante, *The Divine Comedy: Inferno*, vol. 2, ed. Charles S. Singleton (USA: Princeton University Press, 1989), and 89.

Singleton compares this courtly love to a cult, where Love is the god immorally worshipped. "Neither she nor Paolo was responsible, for, as she implies, none may withstand Love's power."

³⁹ Renato Poggioli, "Paolo and Francesca," in *Dante*, ed. John Freccero (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965), 71.

⁴⁰ Simon Brittan, "Dante Alighieri, Hermetism, and Renaissance Italy," in *Poetry, Symbol, and Allegory: Interpreting Metaphorical Language from Plato to the Present* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003), 45.

⁴¹ Dr. Federico Schneider, email sent to author, February 12, 2015.

⁴² Hawkins, "Dido, Beatrice, and the Signs of Ancient Love," 71.

⁴³ Giuseppe Ungaretti, "A Commentary upon the First Canto of the *Inferno*," in *Critical Essays on Dante*, ed. Giuseppe Mazzotta (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1991), 179-184.

⁴⁴ Hawkins, "Dido, Beatrice and Signs of Ancient Love," 117.

Italian and translation for the *Purgatorio* are taken from here.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 143.

⁴⁶ Kevin Brownlee, "Dante and the Classical Poets," in *The Cambridge Companion to Dante*, ed. Rachel Jacoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 144.

⁴⁷ The marks of Christian love are listed in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians: "Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, (love) is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is no quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails" (1 Cor. 13:4-8).

⁴⁸ Brownlee, 117.

⁴⁹ O'Hara, *Virgil, Aeneid 4*, 327, cf Coffey and Mayer, *Phaedra*, 101.

Like Dido, Phaedra also uses "*agnosco*" when referring to her loves: "*fatale miserae matris agnosco malum*" (Sen. *Phaed.* 113), "The fated evil of wretched Pasiphae I recognize." Coffey and Mayer write: "The alliterative line [Sen. *Phaed.* 113] is a reminiscence of Virg. *Aen.* 4.23...but it is designed to puzzle: what connects [Phaedra and Hippolytus's] love affairs with the woods (*saltus, silvis*)? The answer, for the learned audience, is provided by recollection of either Virg. *Ecl.* 6.56, where Pasiphae says '*Dictaeae Nymphae, nemorum iam claudite saltus*', or of Ov. *A. A.* 1.311 in *nemus et saltus...regina* (=Pasiphae)...*fertur.*"

⁵⁰ Hawkins, "Dido, Beatrice and Signs of Ancient Love," 121.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 120.

⁵² Hawkins, 123.

⁵³ W.R. Johnson, introduction to *Virgil: Aeneid*, translated by Stanley Lombardo (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc, 2005), lii.

⁵⁴ Seneca's *Phaedra* takes place *after* Phaedra's failed attempt to allure Hippolytus. The nurse attempts to uphold the social values transgressed by Phaedra's recklessness, suggesting death as a means of escape: "*nec me fugit, quam durus et veri insolens/ ad recta flecti regius nolit tumor*" (Sen. *Phaed.* 136-137). Ironically, it was the *nurse* who encouraged Phaedra to pursue Hippolytus in the first place. Anna, who first encourages Dido, then reprimands her for taking her own life, takes up these seemingly contradictory roles.

⁵⁵ He repeats the same sentiment in the Underworld ("*Italiam non sponte sequor,*" 4.361).

⁵⁶ Hawkins, "Dido, Beatrice, and the Signs of Ancient Love," 118.

⁵⁷ After all, Cleopatra also committed suicide, but she too is condemned to the Circle of the Lust-driven.