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# TO YOUR PROMISED EMPIRE FLY AND LET FORSAKEN DIDO DIE: CHARACTER AND DESTINY IN THE EARLY MODERN ERA

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### **Abstract**

Nahum Tate and Henry Purcell's early modern opera *Dido and Aeneas* has been popular since the early nineteenth century. Librettist Nahum Tate inherited and adapted topoi representing *fate, destiny, love, death, grief* and *piety* among others from Ancient, Medieval, Renaissance, Elizabethan and seventeenth-century literary sources. This article reconsiders Dido's traditional representation as a heroic victim reappraising her legacy. It argues that rather than simple reproducing the meeting between Dido and Aeneas in Virgil, Tate combined Ovid's heroine, Tertullian's 'monument to chastity' and other characterisations in Virgil's *Aeneid* (29–19 BCE); Ovid's *Heroides* (c. 5 BCE–8 CE); Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* (14--); Douglas' *Eneados* (1513); Howard's *Virgiles Æneis* (1557); Phaer and Twynne's *AEneidos* (1573); Stanyhurst's *Aeneis* (1582); Marlowe's *The Tragedie of Dido, Queene of Carthage* (1594); Tertullian's *Ad Nationes* (published 1625) and Dryden's *Aeneis* (1697) transmogrifying Dido's portrayal. The list itself demonstrates the transmission of Dido's story from antiquity to the Early Modern era. 'When I am laid in earth' is part of Britain's national consciousness performed in an arrangement for brass band on Remembrance Sunday every year since the 1930s. Why does this piece of music still have so much significance? The article calls for Dido's re-evaluation as a phoenix rising again every year on the second Sunday in November — today's erstwhile symbol of remembrance.

# **Keywords**

Dido and Aeneas, Early Modern Era, Phoenix, Pantomime Witches

This article considers *Dido*'s originating narratives by comparing textual versions of the alleged meeting contained in Virgil exploring how the principal characters' literary portrayals were altered over the centuries following the first iteration of the myth. It encompasses close readings of multiple versions most significantly Virgil's *Aeneid IV* and Ovid's *Heroides VII* all of which are interpreted hermeneutically. Dido in the opera is a fully-fledged, complex protagonist rather than merely a simplified character-type as Joseph Kerman regarded her. Kerman's attitude toward other characters likewise ignored multifaceted interpretation. Kerman famously described Aeneas as foolish and 'a complete booby' terming Tate's enchantresses 'pantomime witches.' Edward Said positioned Dido as a problematic sexual stereotype noting that 'exotic' women in opera were presented as either victim or victor. Said made connections between psychopathological portraits representing female characters and cultural politics implying that aesthetic autonomy was motivated by ideology. "

Dido and Aeneas librettist Nahum Tate and other writers generated a series of affects: sublime, irenic and tragic by alluding to topoi such as fate, destiny, love and death among others. Topoi here mean characteristics which generate similarities creating labels or templates to aid recognition. The article considers topoi behind both general character status — queen, hero or entourage — and specific 'personalities.' In a tragic opera like Dido fatidic topoi are germane which are harder to experience than eudaemonic topoi but lead to catharsis. Tate's evocation of character not only arose out of affective topoi derived from the literary sources but went beyond.

Opinions about the extent to which Dido's general representation was indebted to Virgil varied. Ellen Harris inferred that Tate's re-imagined Dido as a tragic heroine differentiated her from Virgil's character. Nevertheless Harris did not suggest any other influences although there were other key literary sources which substantially altered Dido interpretation. <sup>iii</sup> Publius Ovidius Naso (Ovid)'s *Epistulae Heroidum* [*Letters of Heroines*] known as *Heroides* [*Heroines*] or *Epistles* (c. 5 BCE–8 CE) was another essential classical source for Tate and contemporaries as numerous scholars have argued. <sup>iv</sup> Noting the exclusion of Virgil's transcendent justification for Aeneas' acts in Ovid, Roger Savage posited the notion that Ovid's Dido was a tempestuous, contradictory victim

alternately furious, shamefaced and tearful. Cecil Bowra believed that Ovid created a precedent which subsequent writers followed. Several scholars agreed with Bowra to some extent but attributed Ovid's effect on Tate's Dido to have different significance.

John Watkins signalled that Ovid's Dido contradicted Virgil's, reasoning that the epithet *pious* Aeneas was misleading as Dido's fate was more a result of treachery than self-sacrifice. Watkins' opinion was supported by Tate's libretto to some extent when false Mercury was sent by the Sorceress catalysing Aeneas into leaving Carthage. A flaw in Watkins' argument was that he did not attribute the effects of Tate's Dido characterisation which conjoined both Ovid's and Virgil's thereby ignoring Virgil's reading of Dido as the guilty party discernible by *culpa* [blame] in relation to her. Andrew Walkling's stance was that Purcell and Tate's final scene was muddled leaving neither Aeneas nor Dido culpable but Aeneas was clearly 'at fault' in Ovid which resonated with Purcell and Tate's work.

For Savage Dido was not *Didone abbandonata* an epithet coined by Wendy Heller — the voice of chastity, stimulating pathos — she was Virgil's Dido at the end of book IV filled with anger and vengeance. Savage's one-sided interpretation was problematic as it omitted Dido's characterisation in Ovid thus strengthening Virgil's portrayal. A nuanced assessment of Dido (which this article advocates) agrees somewhat with Savage's *antiabbandonata* notion but from a slightly different perspective demonstrating that Tate's Dido was not a flat type based solely upon what Virgil gave but melded both Virgil's and Ovid's characterisations together with others Tate's depiction uniting character-types in various adaptations and translations composed in Latin and the vernacular throughout the High Middle-Ages and the Renaissance.

Legendary figures including Dido have been thought to exemplify broad moral traits related to topoi like *chastity* and *fidelity* and there have been some attempts to read the Dido text as a moral lesson. It was Charles Perrault in the late seventeenth century who first expressed an opinion which was critical of the underlying morality of the classical Dido narrative. Perrault questioned where Aeneas had left his *piety* when he went into the cave with Dido nonetheless there is an argument that a demi-god lives by a different moral code and Perrault did not apprehend the meta-narrative of empire-building coinciding with *love* and *duty* topoi in Virgil. But moral explanations of the Dido myth which conflated her *destiny* with her *chastity* failed to address the role of *fate* in her story.

In 2009 Anthony Welch read the Dido and Aeneas myth within a modern paradigm as a bourgeois shetragedy fuelling a fascination with distressed women thereby fusing Marxist and feminist discourses. Welch's perception had no obvious literary or historical precedents. Since Welch's critical judgements were based upon 'postmodern' values not those of the seventeenth-century Welch's over-arching ideas about women may have appeared crude to Tate and contemporaries. Dido's construal by contrast is endorsed by Tate's other works such as King Lear and A Present for the Ladies. Early modern writers took advantage of an ideational shift from renaissance attitudes towards females as both in need of protection and dangerous exemplifying a hermeneutic dialogue between literary traditions. Xiii

Fragments attributed to Greek historian Timaeus of Tauromenium (c. 356 BCE–260 BCE) which are now lost submit disputed facts about Dido roughly sketched as follows. In 839 BCE, Princess Elissa was born in Tyre ( $\S\bar{u}r$ ) a town on the Mediterranean coast of Phoenicia (Southern Lebanon). In 831 BCE King Mátγηνος/Matgenus, thought to be Mattan I died. Mattan's son Pygmalion took the throne. In 825 BCE Elissa's Tyrian uncle and husband Sychaeus/Acerbas (a 'priest of Hercules') died — probably poisoned by Pygmalion. In 814 BCE Elissa fled Tyre with an entourage and founded the city-state of Carthage (now a seaside suburb of Tunisian capital, Tunis). In 759 BCE she died at Carthage. <sup>xiv</sup> 753 BCE is the date of the official founding of Rome.

From this biographical sketch it is clear that *fate*, *destiny*, *love* and *death* were implicit in Elissa/Dido's story from the start but Virgil vastly altered historical facts extending Rome a largely imaginary past accentuating the meaning of historical events rather than their accurate depiction. The story told in the *Aeneid* is set just after the fall of Troy. Some ancient sources claim that Troy fell in 1184 BCE. Archaeological evidence confirms violent destruction during the second half of the twelfth century BCE. These dates mean that the main action of the *Aeneid* (and the meeting between Dido and Aeneas in book IV) took place three hundred years before the foundation of Rome. There is therefore no historical accuracy for the story — Carthage was founded c. 814 BCE three centuries after the fall of Troy. The *Aeneid* unarguably merged *historia* [history] and *fabula* [myth]. Plutarch and Horace among others interpreted *fabula* allegorically and as morality tales. A distinction between *theologia* [speaking about gods] and *theologia mythice* [mythical narratives] was given by Varro terms — which apply to Tate and Purcell's topoi. *Fate* and *destiny* were 'theologia', *love* and *death* 'theological mythice'. The *Aeneid* and *Dido and Aeneas* were heroic legends incorporating *love* and *death* topoi, and myths about gods dispensing *fate* and *destiny*.

Virgil equated Dido with Cleopatra. Both Cleopatra and Dido were African queens who fled from their brothers had relationships with notorious Romans and took their own lives. Virgil wrote: 'sequiturque, nefas, Aegyptia coniunx' [and follows, shame on it! Th'Egyptian bride] (VIII 688)<sup>xviii</sup> on Aeneas' shield critiquing the relationship between Antonius Marcus (Mark Antony) and Cleopatra VII (VIII 684–87) — a historical event still fresh in the minds of the audience (Antony met Cleopatra at Tarsus in 41 BCE). Tate would have known Shakespeare's play *The Tragedy of Antony and Cleopatra* (1623). A close reading of the *Aeneid* reveals several

resemblances between Virgil's Dido and Cleopatra — predominantly with respect to *love* and *death*. But Virgil reversed the role of 'slave to Venus' attributing 'vulnerability in love' to Dido, rather than Aeneas/Antony. xxi

Classical studies frequently address the question of whether or not Virgil created a relationship between Dido and Aeneas. xxii Naevius' third-century epic Bellum Punicum [Punic Wars] contended that a meeting between Aeneas and Dido was an ancestral cause of the enmity between Rome and Carthage. xxiii At the start of the Aeneid Virgil contextualised the scene with descriptions of the past and future predictions: 'Arma virumque cano, Troiae qui primus ab oris / Italiam fato profugus Lavinaque venit litora' [Arms and the man I sing, who first from the coasts of Troy exiled by fate, came to Italy and Lavine shores] (I 1–2). xxiv The action began in media res seven years after the end of the Trojan War. Within the first three hundred lines of the poem Virgil had devised Jupiter's prophecy which foresaw Augustan peace as an aim for the totality of human history: 'aspera tum positis mitescent saecula bellis' [then wars shall cease and savage ages soften] (I 291). Virgil supposed the Carthaginians 'genus intractabile bello' [a race unconquerable in war] (I 339). As events unfolded Dido was in fact 'conquered' not by war but love. Virgil's first work Bucolica or Eclogae X [Eclogues X] contained: 'omnia vincit amor' [love conquers all]. Virgil's topoi were consistent. In the Aeneid Dido welcomed the Trojan exiles of her own free will. Although her love was 'a culpa' [fault/blame] (IV 172) she was not immoral and according to Virgil she did not believe Aeneas was sustained by the gods which was a flawed battle strategy: 'nec tibi diva parens, generis nec Dardanus auctor' [false one, no goddess was your mother, nor was Dardanus founder of your line] (IV 365). Virgil refers to the love Dido felt for her deceased husband Sychaeus: 'agnosto veteris vestigial flammae' [I feel again a spark of that former flame (IV 23) within her feelings for Aeneas firmly placing him in the role of conduit.

In Virgil's work *fate* and *destiny* topoi were represented by mythological gods. Characterising both Dido and Aeneas Virgil expressed sympathy for human suffering together with the language of delusion: 'falsi' [false], 'imagine' [invent], 'fallere' [cheat], 'luderet' [play]. Virgil's Venus agreed a plan with Juno (both gods representing *fate*) transforming Dido's *love* into *destiny* and causing her *death* by instigating Aeneas' arrival in North Africa. Thus Virgil equated Dido's *love* with *destiny* dictated by  $\pi\rho \acute{o}voia$  / pronoia [providence]. Jupiter's symbolic and fatidic roles were consistent in Virgil. The goddesses' actions were traceable back to the enmity between Juno and Venus at the judgement of Paris which instigated the Trojan War. Within a teleological discourse Juno's  $ou\acute{\mu}\acute{o}$  / oimos [pride] and characterisation as goddess of marriage and protector of Dido was put at the heart of a conflict with Venus, Aeneas' mother and champion, and goddess of victory and fertility among other things. A classical thematic source preceding Virgil was Empedocles' notion of  $\phii\acute{\lambda}\acute{o}\eta$  / philia [love] — a force of attraction and combination — opposed to  $ve\~ikos$  [strife] a force of repulsion and separation.

The Aeneid was written after the Punic wars when Augustus was using Carthage as an administrative base due to its proximity to Africa. In media res as in Tate's libretto Virgil's Venus goddess of love guided and protected son Aeneas leading him to Dido's new city. Aeneas' destiny therefore coincided with both love and fate. Virgil's characterisation of Dido represented Carthage the hostility between Carthage and Rome, and Dido/Carthage's ultimate destruction — fate and destiny. Porcius Cato 'Cato the Censor' famously demanded that: 'Carthago delenda est' [Carthage must be destroyed] at the end of every speech he made in the senate until the third and final Punic war was declared in 149 BCE. \*\*

By conflating Dido with Cleopatra and equating Dido with Carthage Virgil tapped into Roman hostility towards her enemies while advancing a paean for Augustus reflecting the political climate in first-century BCE Rome. Virgil also generated and sustained fate, destiny, love and death topoi among others to support his patron.

Tate's portrayal of the protagonists differed from Virgil's and this naturally affected Tate's topoi system. Tate's audience would have known Virgil's text wherein Dido screams for vengeance before ending her own life and also various later versions.

Aeneas' character inherited from classical sources was developed by Virgil into an idealised patriotic Roman who subordinated his own interests in favour of the greater goals of nationalism. xxviii Tate's depiction of both characters agreed with this representation of Aeneas to some extent. Virgil designed Aeneas' flight to Rome in response to the will of the gods: 'saevae memorem Iunonis ob iram' [through cruel Juno's unforgiving wrath] (I 4) portraying the actions of Aeneas' journey from east to west as one part of a larger, colonial, empire-building story. Aeneas' persona in Tate still embodied 'piety of hope' — a sincere wish unlikely to be fulfilled singing at his first appearance: 'I'le defie, / the Feeble stroke of Destiny.' Virgil's Aeneas was a hermeneutic hero whose actions followed prophecies, omens and signs. XXX This character trait was substantially altered by Tate creating an Aeneas almost unrecognisable in comparison to Virgil's hero. In Tate it was Aeneas who was 'ignorant of fate' singing: 'Aeneas has no Fate but you.'xxxi But Virgil attributed being 'fati nescia' [ignorant of fate] to Dido. Tate's Aeneas was firmly in the *anti-hero* category making him the antithesis of Virgil's. xxxii An additional difference between Virgil and Tate follows the arrival of 'false' Mercury sent by the Sorceress to call Aeneas away from Carthage. In Virgil Aeneas reacted strongly: 'at vero Aeneas aspectu obmutuit amens, arrectaeque horrore comae et vox faucibus haesit' [but in truth Aeneas, aghast at the sight, was struck dumb; his hair stood up in terror and the voice choked in his throat] (IV 279-80). Tate's Aeneas responded with 'To Night' and then 'Joves Commands shall be Obev'd.'xxxiii The epithet pius [pious] Aeneas and Aeneas' pietas [piousness] were consistent throughout Virgil's epic.

The most striking difference between Virgil's and Tate's characterisations of Dido was at the end of Dido's life when fate and destiny were concluded and fulfilled — Dido's destiny was predicted by fate conflated with love and ended in death. Virgil's Dido was full of rage while Purcell and Tate's was poised and dignified. The first description of Dido in the Aeneid occurred when Venus informed Aeneas of Dido's love for Sychaeus — after Pygmalion's murderous usurpation: 'imperium Dido Tyria regit urbe profecta, / germanum fugiens' [Dido wields the sceptre — Dido, who, fleeing from her brother, came from the city of Tyrel (I 340-41). Dido was initially presented in book I in the temple of Juno where she acted as judge: 'iura dabat legesque viris, operumque laborem / partibus aequabat iustis aut sorte trahebat' [laws and ordinances she gave her people; their tasks she adjusted in equal shares or assigned by lot [1 507–8]. Virgil's Dido transformed from regal, dispenser of justice to deranged, vicious harridan overcome with anger. Dido was compared by Virgil to Diana goddess of hunting leading her dancers and Aeneas was likened to Apollo (sun god): 'qualis ubi hibernam Lyciam Xanthique fluenta deserit ac Delum maternam invisit Apollo' [as when Apollo quits Lycia, his winter home, and the streams of Xanthus, to visit his mother's Delos (IV 43-44). Thus Virgil's characters were deliberately matched (Aeneas/Apollo, Dido/Diana). But Tate's libretto contradicted the notion of Dido as Diana. In the grove scene immediately after Dido and Aeneas fell in love the chorus sang about Acteon pursued by his hounds — warning the hunter. Tate troped on the notion of hunting transforming Dido from predator to prey. 'Apollo quits...his winter home' alludes to Aeneas leaving Carthage troping on *fate* and *destiny*.

When Virgil's Dido realised, she had betrayed Sychaeus' memory: 'non servata fides cineri promissa Sychaeo' [the faith vowed to the ashes of Sychaeus I have not kept] (IV 552) the love she felt for Aeneas turns to hate: 'non potui abreptum divellere corpus et undis spargere?' [could I not have seized him, torn him limb from limb, and scattered the pieces on the waves?] (IV 600-01). Conversely Tate's Dido in her first appearance sang that she would languish until her grief was known. She was instantly passive and reactive while in Virgil Dido's very presence implied causation. Virgil's Dido was furious in book IV when she saw Aeneas' departing ships and in book VI she did not greet Aeneas in Hades: 'illa solo fixos oculos aversa tenebat' [she, turning away, kept her looks fixed on the ground] (VI 469). This meeting seems to have been Tate inspiration for the perfect calm of Dido's last moments in the expressive recitative 'Thy hand Belinda' at the end of the opera. Virgil's narrator interpreted Dido's death: 'nam quia nec fato, merita nec morte peribat, / sed misera ante diem subitoque accensa furore [for since she perished neither in the course of fate nor by a death she had earned, but wretchedly before her day, in the heat of sudden frenzy] (IV 696-97). In Tate's text Belinda defined the cause of Dido's grief: 'the Trojan guest / Into your tender Thoughts has prest. "xxxiv" Both authors subtly distance Dido from fate. Virgil evoking irrationality 'furore' [frenzy] while Tate expanded Belinda's role underscoring Dido's susceptibility and openness to persuasion. In Dido and Aeneas' first duet Dido sang: 'Fate forbids what you Ensue' answered by Aeneas: 'Aeneas has no Fate but you.'xxxv She was clearly coerced here and more subtly by Belinda's proposition: 'A tale so strong and full of wo, / Might melt the Rocks as well as you." Tate reminded his audience of Virgil's Cleopatra: 'Thus on the fatal Banks of Nile, / Weeps the deceitful Crocodile'xxxvii sung by Dido to Aeneas after he has explained that he has to leave. Tate turned Virgil's politically motivated metaphor around claiming that Aeneas was the deceitful crocodile which indicates that Tate was troping on his literary sources. xxxviii

Together with Virgil another Augustan poet known as Ovid was an appropriate literary source for Tate's libretto principally *love* and *death* topoi. Ovid's *Heroides VII* served as a model for Tate's Dido. \*\* *Heroides* was a series of twenty-one fictional letters from classical heroines to the heroes of their stories. Tate contributed to a volume edited by Dryden (1680) translating *Heroides XII* — Medea's letter to Jason. \*\* In *Heroides VII* Dido notoriously represented herself through a first-person suicide note narrative. Tate seems to have had a good knowledge of Ovid's works. In 1697 after the *Heroides* translation he edited a compilation of contemporary translations of the first five books of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* [*Book of Transformations*] (c. 8 CE). The first translation of *Metamorphoses* comprising fifteen books containing over two hundred and fifty classical myths was in 1480 by William Caxton out of 'Frensshe' into 'Englysshe.' Additional contributors to the 1697 *Metamorphoses* volumes were John Dryden, Alexander Pope, Joseph Addison and William Congreve. \*\*

Ovid's Dido — depicted in *Heroides* in approximately 170 lines — set an example for subsequent characterisations as vulnerable and pathetic. Close reading of the lines reveals a different Dido close to the character imagined by Tate but still far from Virgil's violently distressed antagonist. Contradicting Virgil's *rage* Ovid posited a *grief* topos. Ovid's Dido demanded: 'da veniam culpae!' [forgive me my offence] (VII 105) xliii and this was reflected in Dido's final line in Tate's libretto: 'forget my Fate.' xliv In Ovid Dido asked: 'quod crimen dicis praetor amasse meum?' [what can you charge me with but love?] (VII 164). Tate's prologue asked a similar question: 'and if the Deity's above, / are *Victims* of the powers of Love, / What must wretched Mortals do.' xliv Ovid's Dido differed from Tate's in tone. Dido's voice in Ovid was full of pathos: 'perdita ne perdam, timeo, noceamve nocenti' [undone myself, I fear lest I be the undoing of him who is my undoing, lest I bring harm to him who brings harm to me] (VII 61). In Tate's libretto her voice was powerful and strong. Both portrayals contrasted with Virgil's whose Dido for political reasons ended her life cursing Aeneas' people to perpetual enmity with her own race. xlvi Virgil's 'laeti nautae' [joyous sailors] (IV 417) were used by Ovid's Dido as a device to prolong Aeneas' sojourn in Carthage: 'et socii requiem poscunt laniataque classis / postulat exiguas semirefecta moras'

[your comrades, too, demand repose, and your shattered fleet, but half refitted, calls for a short delay] (VII 175–76). Following Virgil not Ovid, Tate and Purcell turned the sailor's preparations for departure into a light-hearted scene but retained the sense of 'moras' [delay]: 'Come away, fellow Saylors your Anchors be weighing, / Time and Tide will admit no delaying.'

Ovid began Dido's letter with an admission of its doomed character: 'nec quia te nostra sperem prece posse moveri, / adloquor [not because I hope you may be moved by prayer of mine do I address you] (VII 3–4). xlviii Dido's letter to Aeneas in *Heroides* depicted his cruelty not found in Tate or Virgil. In Ovid Dido's final lines were: 'et gremio Troicus ensis adest, / perque genas lacrimae strictum labuntur in ensem, / qui iam pro lacrimis sanguine tinctus erit.' [and the Trojan's blade is ready in my lap. Over my cheeks the tears roll, and fall upon the draw steel — which soon shall be stained with blood instead of tears] (VII 184–86). Tate's heroine demonstrated the same emotional affect in death as Ovid's singing: 'death must come when he is gone.'xlix Tate's *death* and *love* topoi were therefore more similar to Ovid's than to Virgil's. Another similarity between Ovid and Tate is *anger* — Dido's attitude toward Aeneas before the famous lament: 'no faithless Man thy course pursue, / I'm now resolved as well as you.' Dido's stance here followed inexplicably from her previous emotional range. Dido's rejection of Aeneas was taken directly from Ovid: 'certius ibis, / nec te, si cupies, ipsa manere sinam' [you shall go more safely, and I myself, though you desire it, will not let you to stay] (VII 173–74).

Unlike Tate's Dido Ovid's referred to her first husband introducing the *fidelity* topos: 'exige, lease pudor, poenas! Violate Sychaei / ad quas, me miseram, plena pudoris eo' [o purity undone! — the penalty due Sychaeus. To absolve it now I go — ah me, wretched that I am, and overcome with shame!] (VII 97–98). Dido's final lines in Tate's libretto: 'remember me, but ah! forget my Fate 'li are comparable. Ovid opened the poem with an explanation of the context of Dido's 'concinit albus olor' [swan-song] (VII 2) while Tate set Dido's lament at the end. In the libretto the chorus of enchantresses created a separation between Dido and Carthage: '*Elisa* dyes to Night, and *Carthage* Flames to Morrow.' In *Heroides* Ovid described Dido as wife (VII 22) daughter-in-law (VII 31) sister (VII 31–32) and *gravidam* [pregnant] (VII 33) separating Dido from a greater political context and placing her firmly in a domestic one. But when she implored Aeneas: 'per matrem fraternaque tela, sagittas' [by your mother I pray, and by the weapons of your brother] (VII 157) Ovid signalled *fate*, *destiny* and *war*. In Tate's libretto the sense of *fata* [fate] was retained: 'To Fate I Sue, of other means bereft.' Tate's *fate*, *destiny* and *death* topoi were linked as were Virgil's while Ovid's topoi firmly posited a causal link between *love* and *death*.

Another relevant influence on Tate's portrayal of Dido was Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus (Tertullian) born in Carthage, Roman Africa (c. 155 CE–220 CE). In *Ad Nationes* [*To Nations*] Tertullian cited pagan women as models of fidelity, patience and forbearance to inspire Christian women prisoners. One of Tertullian's examples was Dido whose self-restraint was notable. Dido was termed *praeconium castitatis* [a monument of chastity]. Tertullian's Dido bears a passing resemblance to Virgil's and Ovid's *marriage* topos which is not present in Tate's libretto. *Chastity* and *fidelity* topoi are also lacking in Tate.

English authors before Tate understood and reproduced classical writings on Dido and Aeneas through their readings of commentaries or interpretations of classical literature. During the Middle-Ages the *Aeneid* was the subject of numerous Latin transcriptions. The Renaissance added vernacular adaptations and both the whole work, and significant episodes were widely translated. The Aeneas and Dido episode in book IV was frequently rewritten in Latin and vernacular languages in medieval and early modern renderings.

Towards the end of the Classical era Servius wrote *Vigilii Aeneida* (c. 400 CE) the first commentary to view the *Aeneid* allegorically. Macrobius (1401) and Servius (1534) accused Virgil of overwriting Dido and Augustine notably wept for Dido in *Confessions* (1 13) (1631). During the High and Late Middle-Ages hermeneutic approaches continued to develop and Virgil's *Aeneid* was thought to be canonical in various settings and institutions. Three main interpretative commentaries followed between the sixth- and fifteenth-centuries. These were Fulgentius' *On the Content of Virgil* (sixth century) Bernadus' *On Virgil's Aeneid* (twelfth century) and Landino's *Disputationes Camaldulenses* (fifteenth century). In 1159 John of Salisbury wrote of Fulgentius' commentary that 'for Eneas who therein represents the soul, it is so named for the reason it is a dweller in the body, for *ennos*, according to the Greeks, is *dweller* and *demas*, *body*.

The name Eneas is formed of these two elements to signify life dwelling, as it were, in a hut of flesh.' The idea that Aeneas was subject to *passion* was contained within John of Salisbury's depiction together with *destiny* the notion of a soul's journey.

By the time Geoffrey Chaucer included Dido in the *Legend of Good Women* the main school of thought about Dido's character was that her motivation was amorous. <sup>lxi</sup> Chaucer's text merged Virgil's Dido into the narrative hinting at empire-building's collateral damage.

for on a nyght sleping he let hir lye / And stal away unto hys companye / And as a traitour forth he gan to sayle / Toward be large contre of Italie' [For, one night, asleep he let her lie, / And to his company away did fly, / And as a traitour he set out to sea / Towards the large country of Italy] (1 1326–329). | xiii

Chaucer highlighted betrayal and treachery — Aeneas was a 'traitour' [traitor] — simultaneously humanising Dido.

The first translation of a major classical work into a British language and the first of two sixteenth-century versions of the whole of the *Aeneid* was Gavin Douglas' *Eneados* completed in 1513 in Middle Scots or northern English rhymed pentameters. Livii Ezra Pound praised Douglas' poem for its faithfulness to the Latin and thought it the best *Aeneid* translation. Douglas was probably an important source for Tate and Purcell's audience although Tate did not faithfully follow Douglas' topoi. In Douglas' poem Dido's *love* 'continewit in lust, and endyt with penance' [continued in lust, and ended with penance]. Douglas' rendering did not match Tate's characterisation of Dido — *Eneados* is an exemplum against *lust* a different Dido to Tate's.

In 1557 Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey published translations of books II and IV of the *Aeneid*. Surrey introduced blank verse and a heroic idiom into English thought by some to have established the accentual-syllabic system that would dominate poetry until the 1950s. Surrey's interest in the *Aeneid's love* topos is confirmed by the title *The fourth boke of Virgill, intreating of the love betweene Aeneas and Dido* in which Surrey like many others emphasised Dido and Aeneas' relationship above all else.

Following Douglas, Thomas Phaer and Thomas Twynne's *Aeneidos* translated into fourteeners of southern English was printed eight times in four different editions between 1558 and 1620. It was the first complete translation of Virgil's *Aeneid* into southern English. Phaer and Twynne's poem has been widely considered a cultural landmark. It was the most widely read renaissance translation of the *Aeneid* and achieved a line for line correspondence to the Latin hexameters.

Richard Stanyhurst completed a partial translation of *Aeneid* I–IV in 1582. Like Surrey Stanyhurst underlined *love* topos 'BVt the Queene in meane while with carks quādare deepe anguisht, / Her wound fed by Venus' (IV 1–2). In 1593 Thomas Nash criticised Stanyhurst's attempts to translate Virgil.

The hexameter verse I grant to be a gentleman of an ancient house (so is many an English beggar); yet this clime of ours he cannot thrive in. Our speech is too craggy for him to set his plow in. He goes twitching and hopping in our language like a man running upon quagmires, up the hill in one syllable and down the dale in another, retaining no part of that stately smooth gait which he vaunts himself with amongst the Greeks and Latins. Ixx

Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragedie of Dido, Queene of Carthage* (1594) substantially altered Virgil's *Aeneid* in several key places. When Marlowe's Aeneas remembered Troy he reacted passionately. Marlowe introduced a *memory* topos but retained *war* and *fate* topoi. Tate's Aeneas made no mention of his own history apart from: 'make not in a hopeless Fire, / A *Hero* fall, and *Troy* once more Expire. Marlowe's Dido stole Aeneas' oars to prevent him from sailing away but Tate's angrily demanded that he leave. Tate's libretto (c. 1689) was followed by John Dryden's *Aeneis* (1697). Dryden described *Aeneid IV* as: 'a noble episode wherein the whole passion of love is more exactly described than in any other poet. Dryden's topoi were similar to Virgil's but Dryden's narrator described Dido's feelings for Aeneas utilising similar vocabulary and topoi to those in Tate's libretto.

But anxious cares already seiz'd the queen: / She fed within her veins a flame unseen; / The hero's valor, acts, and birth inspire / Her soul with love, and fan the secret fire. / His words, his looks, imprinted in her heart, / Improve the passion, and increase the smart (IV 1–6).

Dryden thus extended Tate's *love* topos beginning in book I when Aeneas praised Dido promising to remember her forever.

While rolling rivers into seas shall run, / And round the space of heav'n the radiant sun; / While trees the mountain tops with shades supply, / Your honour, name, and praise shall never die (I 607-10). lxxv

Aeneas' first speech to Dido in Dryden (above) must be understood in relation to Dido's *fate*. Roughly ten years earlier Tate's libretto gave: '*Aeneas* has no Fate but you. / Let *Dido* Smile, and I'le defie, / The Feeble stroke of Destiny' representing *fate* and *destiny*. In Dido's final prayerful: 'remember me, but ah! forget my Fate' Tate developed Marlowe's *memory* topos which Dryden adopted.

Tate had a compassionate attitude towards classical heroines. In the preface to A Present for the Ladies: Being an Historical Account of Several Illustrious Persons of the Female Sex (1692) he asked: 'was it not Ingratitude of Heroes that more than half furnish Ovid with Subjects for his Epistles?' A Present for the Ladies quickly sold enough copies to warrant a second edition one year after publication. Tate's popularity and positive reception was exemplified further when he was mentioned in an advertisement in the Grub Street Journal on 14 April 1737.

Part of the 'Preface to the MEMOIRS of the SOCIETY of GRUB STREET, in two Volumes, which will be published next week' describes how 'The Author of the 'Tale of a Tub,' in his 'Dedication to Prince Posterity,' represents Mr. DRYDEN as a Grubean, and joins him with Mr. DENNIS, Mr. RHYMER, NAHUM TATE, and TOM DURFEY: and this particularly on the account of his translation of VIRGIL. lxxix

Tate's *love* topos in *A Present for the Ladies* written a few years after the *Dido and Aeneas* libretto evolved from: 'Pursue thy Conquest, Love — her Eyes / Confess the Flame her Tongue Denyes' (Belinda in Tate's libretto)<sup>lxxx</sup> to: 'For though her Heart consent, her Tongue denies, / And modestly from her own Wish she flies' (177–78) alluding to *chastity* topos.

Tate replaced the machinations of the gods in Virgil with the supernatural characters a Sorceress and witches. With these additions Tate reinvented classical perceptions of the gods as dispensers of *fate* and *destiny*. The Sorceress represented *evil* — a topos grafted onto pre-Christian sources. Witch characters in early modern literature were thought to represent Catholics. The witches in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (1606) may have been political lampoons of the gunpowder plotters. There were historical precedents throughout the seventeenth century ranging from the three witches in *Macbeth* produced on stage by Sir William Davenant in 1674 to twelve in Ben Jonson's *The Masque of Queens* (1609). The most significant cultural context for the appearance of witches in early modern literature was the witch-finder mania which swept through Europe during the Medieval and Early Modern eras. *Maleficium* was a term for the causing of harm by certain individuals. The last person executed as a witch in England was in 1685 roughly four years before *Dido and Aeneas* was performed at Josiah Priest's school. Actual events meant that Tate would have found *evil* topos a contemporary undercurrent. *Witchfinder General* Matthew Hopkins and colleague John Stearne had over one hundred people executed as witches in East Anglia in 1645–47 so there are clear historical and literary models. Vaxivi While Tate's invented characters may be 'an outrageous set of restoration witches' people were genuinely superstitious. Vaxxvi Public spectators believed that thunder and lightning at Charles II's coronation were a sign of God's blessing. Vaxxvii

The original performance context would have affected Tate's topoi. The article concludes by briefly considering for whom *Dido* may have been composed together with when and where *Dido* may have been performed. Tate's Dido is likely to have been portrayed by a schoolgirl like Molly Verney. A child actress would have portrayed topoi very differently to an adult and this may well have affected Tate's libretto. Extant school records detailed that Molly Verney — daughter of Edmund Verney and heir to Sir Ralph Verney — was charged £5 for schooling and board at Priest's Chelsea school. Schools like Priest's provided lodging, laundry and lessons. D'Urfey's epilogue might have intimated that the 1689 staging featured schoolgirls and professional actresses like Mary Hodgson, Elizabeth Barry or Anne Bracegirdle. The epilogue may have implied that girl performers were separated from actresses behind the school's 'nunnery-door' which was 'charm'd to shut out Fools.' The epilogue may have implied to shut out Fools.' The epilogue may have impl

This article appraised various topoi in variations of the Dido and Aeneas story over centuries. The comparative analysis has revealed that different eras represented topoi with varying emphases. In the Ancient world Dido and Aeneas were first mythologised and then made to serve the requirements of empire so duty and honour were important. Early Christians emphasised the value of chastity and patience. Medieval writers debated abandonment and despair, and during the Renaissance the *love* topos rose to prominence. Seventeenth-century authors tended towards *fate* and *destiny* topoi, and the supernatural with Tate portraying both Dido's and Aeneas' predicaments sympathetically.

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ii Edward W. Said, Musical Elaborations (London: Vintage Books, 2006), 58.

iii Ellen T. Harris, Henry Purcell's Dido and Aeneas (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 42.

iv I-Rn 6.13.B.40: Ovid, *Heroides* (Macerata: Giuseppe Piccini, 1682).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>v</sup> Roger Savage, "Dido dies again," in *A Woman Scorn'd: Responses to the Dido Myth*, ed. Michael Burden, 3–38 (London: Faber & Faber, 1998), 11–12.

vi Cecil M. Bowra, From Virgil to Milton (London: Macmillan & Company Ltd., 1960), 50.

vii John Watkins, The Specter of Dido: Spenser and Virgilian Epic (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 3.

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ix Wendy Heller, "Didone and the Voice of Chastity," in *Emblems of Eloquence: Opera and Women's Voices in Seventeenth-Century Venice* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003); Savage, "Dido dies again," 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>x</sup> D-FRu E259916./17. Jh: Charles Perrault, *Paralèlle Des Anciens Et Des Modernes / Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns* (Paris: Coignard, 1697).

xi Anthony Welch, "The cultural politics of *Dido and Aeneas*," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 21, no. 1, 1–26 (November 2009): 25.

xii GB-Lbl BLL01003352326/841.d.39.(7.): Nahum Tate, *King Lear* (London: E. Flesher, 1681); GB-Lbl BLL01019957341/8415.aaa.37: Nahum Tate, *A Present for the Ladies* (London: Francis Saunders, 1693).

xiii Andrew Baswell, *Virgil in Medieval England: Figuring the Aeneid from the Twelfth Century to Chaucer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 268.

xiv Frank M. Cross, "An Interpretation of the Nora Stone," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 208 (1972): 18. According to some sources, after landing on the North African coast the Berber King Iarbas (a Roman mythological character probably based on a historical king of Numidia) agreed to give Dido a small portion of land on which to rest temporarily — as much as could be enclosed by an ox hide. After cutting it into narrow strips she encircled a nearby hill (which came to be called *Byrsa* [ox hide] in Greek). The isoperimetric or Dido problem in modern calculus describes enclosing maximum area within a fixed boundary.

xv Cecil M. Bowra, From Virgil to Milton (London: Macmillan, 1960), 34.

xvi Simon Price and Emily Kearns, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of Classical Myth & Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 164.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>xvii</sup> Fritz Graf, "Myth in Ovid," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ovid*, ed. Philip Hardie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 109.

xviii Virgil, *Aeneid books 7–12 Appendix Vergiliana*, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough, rev G. P. Goold (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1918).

xix Stephen Bertman, "Cleopatra and Antony and Models for Dido and Aeneas," *Echos du Mande Classique/Classical Views* XLIV, no. 19 (2000): 395; Bowra, *Virgil to Milton*, 70; Marilynn Desmond, *Reading Dido: Gender, Textuality and the Medieval Aeneid* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 31; Wendy Heller, "A Present for the Ladies: Ovid, Montaigne, and the Redemption of Purcell's Dido," *Music and Letters* 84, no. 2 (May 2003): 197; Savage, "Dido dies again," 10; Welch, *Cultural politics*, 18.

xx William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Antony and Cleopatra* (London: The Arden Shakespeare, 1995).

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xxii Howard Jacobson, Ovid's Heroidos (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), 76.

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xxiv All quotations from Virgil's *Aeneid IV* in this article are taken from Virgil, *Eclogues. Georgics. Aeneid*, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough, rev. G. P. Goold (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1916).

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xxvi Bowra, Virgil to Milton, 70–78.

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xxx Baswell, Medieval Virgil, 227.

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xxxii Anthony Welch, "Songs of *Dido*: Epic Poetry and Opera in Seventeenth-Century England" (PhD diss., Yale University, 2006), 299.

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xxxiv Ibid., 106.

xxxv Ibid., 107.

xxxvi Ibid., 106.

xxxvii Ibid., 111.

- xxxviii Welch, "Songs of Dido", 337; Welch, Cultural politics, 7.
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- <sup>1</sup> Ibid., 111.
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