

Dido: a Myth Enlightened

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Introduction

A significant amount of our current knowledge relies on theories from ancient times, when the Romans and Greeks still roamed the earth. Yet our knowledge is not the only aspect affected by the ancient times. Our art and architecture have been infiltrated by Roman and Greek features, like colons and the ancient gods, as well. Most importantly, however, many works in the current literary canon, the collection of works deemed as high class literature by critics, are based on ancient values or stories as well. Many writers adapted ancient works into plays, operas, novels and short stories, which causes the stories to live on. One of these ancient works that has been adapted into other forms is the *Aeneid*; more specifically, within the Aeneid, the story of Dido and Aeneas. After Vergil's¹ carefully written *Aeneid*, writers and composers like Ovid, Macrobius, Geoffrey Chaucer, Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare and Henry Purcell mentioned Dido and adapted the story of Dido in all sorts of different manners.

A typical feature of works from ancient times, however, is that they were usually based on works or reports by other writers as well. Like many others, Vergil is known for

¹ There are some writers that refer to Vergil as Virgil, but since there is no definite reason for either, in this research, I will use Vergil seeing as it is closer to his actual Latin name, Vergilius.

looking into many reports and descriptions for his *Aeneid* and as a result, it is a well-researched epic. Written mostly around 20 BC, the *Aeneid* tells the story of Aeneas, who encounters Queen Dido on his way to the coasts of Italy (Maynard, IV). This, however, is not the first time Dido was discussed: Vergil based her character on a report by Timaeus of Taormina. Timaeus had mentioned Dido of Carthage three centuries before Christ (Davidson, 65) as a woman who, after her brother, the king, killed her husband, “put all her property in a boat and fled, taking with her some of the citizens” (Davidson, 65). When she arrived on foreign land, she turned out to be in Africa. Dido and her people managed to gain land from a king, but only as much as an ox hide would cover. Dido cleverly let her people cut the hide up into thin strips and secured a significant amount of land for their town. On this land, they built the city of Carthage. Timaeus claims she was then courted by an African king, in contrast to Vergil’s story. She refused to marry him, since she was a widow, but the people of her town forced Dido to marry him and “to escape this impasse she built an enormous pyre near her house, pretending she was carrying out a ritual in fulfillment of a vow, but having lit the pyre she threw herself in it” (Davidson, 65-67). This is the first historical source on Dido and regarded as one of Vergil’s primary sources for his work.

This small piece of text by Timaeus, however, has grown from a piece of maybe ten lines to works or references by many well-known writers and playwrights. As a result of Vergil’s famous epic, which mentions at least a fall from grace, two deaths and a destroyed town without an heir, the adaptations by those who used Vergil’s story as their source tend to have elements of classical tragedies in them (Pobjoy, 41). The genre of Didonian literature has more in common than that, however. In his adaptation of the story, Vergil added the classic dilemma of love versus duty. This predicament has been adhered to in all adaptations and is a connection between all books in the genre. By adding new elements to the original

story, the writers usually deal with this predicament in different ways. The discussion of this dilemma and its adaptation by writers will be the subject of my research.

For my research I have, therefore, chosen three key texts to examine. The first one will be Vergil's adaptation of the story in the *Aeneid*. This work will be examined because it is one of the primary sources of the other adaptations that will be discussed. Subsequently, there will be Geoffrey Chaucer's narrative on Dido in *The Legend of Good Women*. Lastly, Christopher Marlowe's theatre adaptation *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, as a tragedy, will be discussed.

A reason to look into this subject is that there has been virtually no research that discusses these three specific works and their relation to each other and their day and age. Writers like Roger Savage do discuss works on the myth and the dilemma, but not how the writers balance the themes, or why (77-79). Some did discuss the pieces of Vergil (Davidson, 65-88), Chaucer (Atwood, 454-457) and Marlowe (Purkiss, 151-167) and link them to their own respective ages, but then neglect to discuss the balance of the themes in the pieces. In contrast, Sara Munson Deats discussed the dilemma in Marlowe's adaptation, but did not link her findings to Marlowe's time (193-206). In other words, nobody has ever discussed these three works together and linked the conclusions to their day and age.

As these three works are all from different ages, however, it is to be expected that they portray different views and opinions. In the conclusion, these views will be connected to their time and age and a possible cause will be discussed. In the rest of the chapters, these three works will be discussed, examined and scrutinized to find out how they portray and balance love and duty as morals in Dido and Aeneas' story.

Chapter 1

Vergil's Views on Love and Duty

The first allusion to Dido, Timaeus' description, describes a woman who is still loyal to her deceased husband and would rather take her own life than remarry. In the famous epic by Vergil, she has changed. Dido has been altered to a seductive lady, meant to draw out Aeneas' journey to Italy to build Troy. This is not strange, considering that the fact that heroes landing in a dangerous country and being seduced, like Odysseus by Circe in Homer's *Odyssey*, was a trend set by writers of epics before Vergil. By adapting Timaeus' story, then, Vergil followed this trend (Davidson, 77). Not only did Vergil follow the trend, however, he also modified the story so the themes of duty and love became essential. Vergil used these themes to define Aeneas, by making him become the ultimate hero and making him pick duty when given the choice between love and duty. This is epic tradition; it is something heroes in all epics do (Monti, 42). Vergil's creation, the *Aeneid*, is a complicated work due to these themes and all its references, problems and innovative thinking. It is also a work of consecutive adventures, built on paradoxes.

In the first four books, where the focus lies on the story of Dido and Aeneas, there are some interesting paradoxes. First, there is the fact that Iarbus, the only man that does court Dido according to etiquette, is not accepted. This is not a logical choice, since Iarbus is the only man who treats Dido like an actual queen. Also, Roger Savage compares Vergil's Dido to Helen in terms of doubt about their exact time and place in history: scholars doubt the historical correctness of Vergil's *Aeneid* since nobody is sure how long the destruction of Troy and the founding of Carthage were apart. This is connected to Helen because her exact location at the time of the Trojan War is doubted as well; some scholars believe she might have been hiding in Egypt rather than staying in Troy (6). Savage does not, however, mention

a comparison between Aeneas and Paris, or even Helen. This is strange, since Aeneas leaves Troy, a city that was destroyed due to Helen and Paris, only to become a Paris to Dido himself. Like Paris, Aeneas gives in to love and sweeps the foreign woman he falls for off her feet. He neglects his duty, like Paris, and causes Dido to do the same. Aeneas, however, is able to come to his senses again and to leave. Paris abducts Helen and refuses to give in to reason. When regarding Aeneas' actions from another point of view, however, Aeneas could be compared to Helen, up to a certain degree: Aeneas is kept on the shores by Dido, like Helen was by Paris, and turns out to be a danger to the city. He leaves the city in a state of ruin, since its Queen and her sister are dead and there are no heirs, which is considerably like Helen's situation. In other words, Aeneas is just as much the perfect hero as he is the destructive force Helen and Paris were. Aeneas is not the only reason the city is in ruins, though, since other individuals like Venus, Dido herself and Jupiter play a role in the downfall too. This is why Aeneas can only be compared to Paris and Helen up to a certain degree. Whether he is compared to Paris or Helen or not, it is clear that Vergil creates a paradox here, since Aeneas leaves Troy to create a new metropolis, not destroy one. The greatest contradiction in the story, however, is how Aeneas is true to Rome and his duty to the Gods, but not to women or love in general (Abbott, 23). This last paradox is what the *Aeneid* and most of the afore-mentioned paradoxes center on, and as a result, love and duty are the most significant themes in the *Aeneid*. In the story of Aeneas and Dido particularly, though, Vergil portrays duty as the most significant theme.

One of the reasons for this statement is that with his plot, Vergil seems to be saying that love complicates everything. It causes Aeneas to get delayed, it makes Iarbus suffer and it causes Carthage's queen to take her own life. In Vergil's version of the story, however, it is Venus and Juno, both women, who cause the tragic story to happen. Juno causes Aeneas'

shipwreck and the scene in the cave and Venus causes Dido to fall in love with Aeneas and vice versa. So instead of love complicating everything, in Aeneas and Dido's life, it is women that complicate all. This is typically Vergil, since he "associates the feminine with unruly passion, the masculine with reasoned (self)-mastery" (Martindale, 303). Evidence for his association of women with wild excitement can be found in the *Aeneid*, as well. One of many examples is when Aeneas and Dido's relationship has just bloomed; Dido's passion "feeds at her veins the wounds, whose hidden fire/ consumes her" (Vergil, IV, ll. 2-4). Using words like 'consumes' and 'fire', 'carpitur' and 'igni' (Vergil, IV, ll. 2-4), however, immediately give the idea of love being unruly, or rather, destructive. The "unruly passion" (Martindale, 303) can be found in Juno and Venus as well: their reasons for meddling with Aeneas and Dido are rather trivial. Juno meddles with Aeneas because he is a Trojan and she hates them, since a Trojan chose Venus over her in a contest of beauty, and Venus meddles with him because she is worried for her immortal son Cupid, who is being threatened by Juno. These petty reasons and the imagery used for Dido's love shows that Vergil links women to wild ardor. This is typical for Vergil and fits the idea that women complicate life. Since women that complicate everything actually stands for love that complicates everything, however, a negative image of love is created here.

Vergil also gives Dido a choice in whether or not to break her vow to her dead husband, by giving her and Anna a chance to talk about it. After Anna has encouraged Dido to choose for Aeneas, Vergil writes that "So saying, she [Anna] set the love-lit heart ablaze, / Made bold the wavering mind, and banished shame" (Aeneid IV. ll. 54-55). By making Anna convince a doubting Dido, Vergil smartly creates the idea that Dido made a conscious choice to accept Cupid's influence and neglect her duty. Consequently, he creates a negative image of her. Since Dido is under Cupid's influence, however well-meant by Venus and Juno,

though, this negative image of Dido is more of love in general (Williams, 33). As a result it can be concluded that love is being represented as a negative and dangerous emotion that holds Aeneas back.

I would, however, argue that Vergil portrays love negatively but does not seem to dislike Dido. This is the result of Vergil's depiction of Dido despite his sources. Even though one of the most significant influences, next to Timaeus' report, on the story of Aeneas and Dido is the lethal Medea, Vergil makes Dido the queen of a flourishing city. She is loved by her people and "ashamed when she falls below the high standard she has set" (Davidson, 79). Instead of resorting to killing, like Medea did, Vergil only gives Dido leave to be angry and make her people hate Aeneas' people when Aeneas leaves her (Davidson, 77-78). Due to this representation of Dido, Vergil subtly hints that Dido is a naturally innocent, not violent, character. He portrays Dido like this to explain that Dido must have suffered considerably to take her own life.

The fact that Vergil does not detest Dido also becomes clear when he adds his present-day gods, who play with Aeneas and Dido mercilessly. He shows this by explaining the almost petty reasons the gods have for meddling with Aeneas' life. Juno is angry at Aeneas because she hates Trojans because a Trojan, Paris, chose Venus as the prettiest out of her, Venus and Minerva. Venus, however, meddles with Aeneas to protect her son Cupid, who Juno tries to murder for causing Ganymede and Jupiter to fall in love. Then there is Jupiter, who wants Aeneas to venture to Italy and does not care what happens to Aeneas, as long as he arrives in Italy. These divine interventions for seemingly insignificant reasons imply that the Gods do not care about what they do to either Aeneas or Dido. In effect, their actions cause Dido to come across as blameless: she is merely a pawn that is used in the game.

Vergil adds to this by making Aeneas care about Dido, even if it is marginally. In Vergil's day and age, this was not normal at all for epic heroes. Love was a way to "express political solidarity" (Monti, 42) in epics; the only complaints from women about men were that they were obligated to uphold their promises to them, like Medea did: love was "below the dignity of a hero" (Monti, 42). Instead of making Aeneas a Stoic like all heroes, though, Vergil gives Aeneas the line: "Not self-impelled steer I for Italy" (Vergil, IV, 1.359). In this particular case, Aeneas strays from the norm. He implies that he would rather stay with Dido and shows that he does care for, if not loves, her. Readers in Vergil's lifetime would have, without doubt, noticed this (Monti, 42). As a result, Vergil did indeed show sympathy for Dido: he alters his epic hero for her and, by giving Aeneas this line, Vergil gives Dido back a bit of her dignity as a queen; she has not put everything aside for something entirely imaginary. This, Dido's innocent nature and her portrayal as a pawn of the gods show that Vergil's portrayal of Dido is sympathetic, unlike his negative portrayal of love as an emotion.

Yet since Vergil's work is based on two themes, it is expected that duty is represented positively, if love is depicted negatively. When looking at the narrative, we find that Vergil indeed lets his lead character choose duty over women every time he gets the chance. Aeneas leaves his wife and another woman behind, as him and his father run away from Troy. In the story of Dido and Aeneas, he chooses duty again, because unlike Dido, Aeneas "can be recalled to them [his duties]" (Williams, 34). In fact, Aeneas does not even think about staying for love. The first thing that Aeneas thinks of after Mercury's visit, as the perfect hero, is how to perform his duty, not whether he wants to. His thoughts are summarized as: "What can he do? Ah! With what words approach / The impassioned queen? What opening prelude try?" (Vergil, IV, ll. 83-84). These words show that Vergil meant for Aeneas to be loyal to the gods rather than Dido. Because an epic is a conduct book, though, it portrays a

perfect, or nearly perfect, hero and so Aeneas is expected to make the right choice.

Considering the fact that duty and loyalty to the gods were the most important virtues in Vergil's day and age, duty is confirmed to be the right choice (Savage, 8). Therefore it is only logical that Vergil makes his hero choose duty in his conduct book (Savage, 8). As a result of Aeneas being Vergil's epic hero, this portrays how Aeneas and Vergil felt about love: it was less important than duty.

In conclusion, therefore, Vergil encourages duty as a leading moral. He does this by creating a negative portrayal of love and letting his hero, a perfect hero, choose duty every time he is presented with the dilemma of love and duty. Vergil does not, however, have a dislike for Dido, who stands for love, since he makes her the victim and gives her a more emotional hero. Unfortunately, this does not mean that he sides with either Aeneas or Dido. Vergil seems to side with human kind more than either love or duty by showing how powerless both lovers are in comparison to the gods. As will be explained in later chapters, this is not always the view that is portrayed in later adaptations of Vergil and Timaeus' work. There are many ways in which Chaucer and Marlowe have altered their versions of the story, to portray a different point of view on the two themes.

Chapter 2

Chaucer; the Man in the Middle

The myth of Dido became quite famous and was referred to frequently just after the *Aeneid* was written. Writers like Ovid, Cato and many more wrote about Dido. Nevertheless, during the Middle Ages, not many scholars wrote about Dido; one of the few, however, was Geoffrey Chaucer. Simpson explains that, living in a world where the Black Death swept over Europe and the wealth of the church was genuinely questioned, Chaucer was placed in a higher class residence as a pageboy by his father. Eventually, this helped Chaucer a great deal and he worked himself up to notary of King Richard II. However, because he was a commoner by birth, Chaucer could never see the nobility as his equals. Accordingly, he acquired the ability to mock and also value their principles and manners (Simpson, 10, 213-214). In this chapter, I will focus on his adaptation.

This ability to scrutinize situations from different sides left traces in his work. In his adaptation of the myth of Dido, the *Legends of Good Women*, this habit shows up as well. In the prologue, Chaucer describes how he is asked by the god of love, Cupid, to do penance for the approach he had to love in earlier stories. In *Troilus and Criseyde*, for example, Criseyde deceives Troilus. According to Cupid, this is a wrong depiction of love and women (Simpson, 215). Therefore, Chaucer was instructed to write about women deceived by their men: legends of good women, not good men. Since Dido died for her love and was abandoned, Chaucer included her. Instead of writing legends that depict love and women in a more positive light, though, in Dido's story, Chaucer chooses to position himself between love and duty, holding them in balance. In other words, he looks at the story from both sides. Chaucer's choice to balance both themes is different from Vergil's emphasis on duty and therefore is a

modification in the right direction for Cupid's demands. This chapter will examine how Chaucer balances both themes.

The fact that duty is almost omitted, when compared to Vergil, shows that Chaucer is not on Vergil's side: he does not put duty above love. Some critics mention that by mostly neglecting the importance of duty, "Chaucer has lowered the story from its epic height by minimizing – almost omitting – Aeneas's Roman destiny" (Sanderlin, 331). Chaucer's portrayal of duty, however, is justified in light of the command Cupid gave to celebrate good women in the legends; not men. In this particular myth celebrating good women would be celebrating love, since Dido stands for love. She falls for Aeneas and dies for love. Aeneas, as a man, would stand for duty and destiny since he is the embodiment of the quest to create Rome. As women and not men are the central theme of the *Legend of Good Women*, then, duty and destiny are, rightfully, only mentioned two times. The first is when Chaucer explains that Aeneas left Troy and "sayleth forth with al his companye / Toward Ytaye, as wolde his destinee" (Chaucer, l. 950-1), and again when Aeneas explains that he has to go because

this nyght my faderes gost
 Hath in my slep so sore me tormented,
 And ek Mercurye his message hath presented,
 That nedes to the conquest of Ytaye
 My destine is sone for to sayle;
 for which, me thynketh, brosten is myn herte!"
 Therwith his false teres out they sterte,
 And taketh hire withinne his armes two (Chaucer, ll. 1295-1302).

The description of what happened to Aeneas seems truthful, until Chaucer adds that there were "false teres". Those two words imply enough: Chaucer thinks Aeneas is a liar. Since there are only two descriptions of destiny in Chaucer's work, and both not exactly sympathetic, Chaucer almost omits Aeneas' destiny and duty is not celebrated.

This depiction, however, does not necessarily mean Chaucer celebrates love either. As Suzanne Hagedorn writes, "the god of love seems so concerned at redressing the poet-

narrator's crimes against women that he does not realize that tales focusing on male infidelity will probably do precious little to further Love's cause with female auditors" (160). Hagedorn is right, in this adaptation a horrible image of love emerges. The reason for this is that love causes suicide in Chaucer's story. As Dido stands for love, then, she even causes her own suicide. Dido is not the only one who is disappointed with love, however. Iarbus and Aeneas, who represent duty in this story, are disappointed as well: Iarbus is sorely disappointed when Dido chooses for Aeneas, and Aeneas becomes something akin to a beast or monster as a result of duty. The only person, in fact, who does not die or lose a lover, is Anna. Yet Anna barely has any duties as Dido's sister; neither does she have love in Chaucer's narrative. She will probably end up inheriting the status of sovereign from her sister, though. Except for in Anna's case, then, it can be concluded that love causes suicide and duty makes either depressed or a monster in Chaucer's adaptation. If so, Chaucer must be steering towards a position somewhere in the middle. It is no wonder, then, that Anna is the only one who stays alive and will probably inherit Carthage: she has neither duty nor love and consequently, represents the middle. The death of those who love, however, does mean that Chaucer did not celebrate love, either. Instead, he balances the two themes.

The fact that Chaucer positions himself in the middle of duty and love makes sense, however, when looking at the world surrounding him. Next to the fact that Cupid ordered him to promote love, during Chaucer's life, the "church had become the target of popular resentment because it was among the greatest of the oppressive landowners and because of the wealth" (Simpson, 11). This explains why Chaucer did not necessarily deem duty, or a destiny enforced by the gods, or god, right. On the other hand, the idea of life, and consequently, love, being temporary and not too important, was normal in the Middle Ages as well. That could explain why Chaucer did not necessarily like love either. Also, Chaucer

being a commoner but working in the higher classes can account for his in-between position: it was part of his everyday life (Simpson, 216). However, due to his neither celebrating love nor celebrating duty, Chaucer takes an equidistant position.

When looking at Chaucer's additions to the myth, however, Chaucer does seem to have an adaptation that is out of balance in terms of characters. His "carefully and subtly chosen" (Atwood, 454) additional details celebrate Dido, but create a negative image of Aeneas. This effect of the additions, for example, shows up when Dido gives Aeneas numerous gifts; the description of her gifts fills 8 lines alone. Aeneas' gifts, however, are described in one line. Chaucer is altering Vergil's text here to use this element to Dido's advantage, whereas Vergil did not care about a positive portrayal of Dido and mentioned her gifts significantly later in the *Aeneid* (Atwood, 455). This results in a negative, disrespectful representation of Aeneas. He is visiting the country and courting the queen; he should be the one bringing copious amounts of gifts. Also, the fact that Dido writes a letter before her death creates more sympathy for her. It portrays her as a noble woman who even puts her hurt into words before she takes her life. Aeneas is not depicted as an emotional man, however, since Chaucer says that "This Eneas, that hath so depe yswore, / Is wery of his craft withinne a throue; / The hote earnest is al overblowe. / And pryvyly he doth his shipes dyghte" (ll.1284-7), creating the idea that Aeneas is easily bored and does not care about Dido at all. Another addition is the fact that Chaucer's Dido mentions a pregnancy: this results in a monstrous image of Aeneas, for he still departs even though he knows this. Then, when he does leave, Aeneas departs at night without saying a word to Dido, whereas in Vergil, Dido had had a good conversation with Aeneas before he departed. These small but significant additions imply that Aeneas is an appalling character. Dido, however, benefits from the aspects Chaucer

decided to add. As a result, it could be said that character-wise, Chaucer does not balance the two themes, but seems to sympathise with Dido.

Dido's portrayal in the plot, however, suggests something different. In Vergil's *Aeneid*, Dido falls in love with Aeneas due to Cupid. Chaucer, by contrast, barely mentions Cupid. He explains that the *Aeneid* states that Ascanius, Aeneas' son, was seized and Cupid put in his place, but also Chaucer also says that "Be as be may, I take of it no cure" (ll. 1145). By altering the role of the gods, Chaucer creates the idea that Dido falls in love of her own accord. So in Chaucer's adaptation, Dido has recklessly chosen her fate instead of it being chosen for her. To complete this negative image that Chaucer has created, however, Dido says "I am with childe, and yeve my child his lyf" (l. 1323) when Aeneas leaves her. The idea of "the pregnancy is imitated from Ovid" (199), says Sheila Delany, who does admit that the sentence Ovid uses is more ambiguous. Ambiguous or not, this statement "creates a moral double bind. If it is untrue, Dido is a liar; if true, a double murderer- of herself and the unborn child" (Delany, 199). Accordingly, Chaucer makes Dido a murderer or liar by making her say these words. He also makes her seem suicidal because he does not take Cupid into consideration at all; Dido seems to fall in love of her own will. As a result, Chaucer does not depict Dido in a favourable light either, and since Dido stands for love, love is not encouraged either. As a result, even though Dido's image seemed to be positive at first, Chaucer turns out not to favour her in the end.

The features Chaucer omits, however, make it clear that Chaucer does balance love and duty in his work. To omit aspects, Chaucer uses a routine that is called "Self-conscious abbreviation" (Francis, 1126). According to Francis, this is a typical habit of Chaucer's and "the trick of calling to the reader's attention the fact that details are to be omitted, the pace of the story accelerated, unimportant or obvious events summarized or taken for granted, or any

one of a number of other devices employed to shorten the narrative” (1126). The abbreviations, however, are not used to Dido or Aeneas’ advantage.

In Dido’s case, there are two abbreviations that disadvantage her: the first is Chaucer’s abbreviation of Anna and Dido’s conversation. Chaucer does this, he mentions, because “love wol love” (l. 1187). In fact, Chaucer even says that Anna “Seyde as hire thought, and somdel it withstod” (l. 1183), but in Vergil, Anna encourages her sister to fall in love, instead of discouraging her. This small omitted conversation brings with it the implication that Dido chose to fall in love. The gods having a minute role in Chaucer’s legend strengthens that implication, because it makes it seem as if Cupid never intervened and that it was Dido that chose to fall in love and die in the end. Also, by omitting the conversation, it appears as if Dido scarcely thought about her resolution to be enamored of Aeneas. The next abbreviation that disadvantages her is the shortened description of Dido by Venus. This was because “it wolde laste al to longe while” (l.1002) according to Chaucer. This represents Dido as less honorable and as a flat character without history. So both self-conscious abbreviations cause the image of Dido as a woman that rushes decisions and has no history. In other words, Chaucer does not celebrate Dido, or love, as a result of his abbreviations.

Then there are the abbreviations that disadvantage Aeneas. In Aeneas’ case, Chaucer does not exactly mention the abbreviations, but there are many. The fact that the gods are barely mentioned from the beginning onwards, for example, has direct consequences for Aeneas. It causes the tempest at the beginning of the story to seem quite feeble and as if it is Aeneas’ decision to approach the shores of Libya. In Vergil’s *Aeneid*, though, Aeneas is caught in a tempest dispatched by Juno, and is saved by Jupiter. As a result, there is so much damage that they have to make for the shore to repair the ships. Chaucer completely disregards this part of the story because it would cause sympathy for Aeneas’ situation.

Another omitted aspect is the fact that Chaucer does not portray Aeneas as having Mercury come to him, but has Aeneas explain Mercury came to him in a dream. This makes Mercury's call on Aeneas seem more of a suggestion to leave than an order by Jupiter. As a result, Aeneas becomes more monstrous since he leaves nonetheless. Accordingly, though, because of the aspects Chaucer has omitted, Aeneas is portrayed negatively and duty as well. Consequently, it can be established that Chaucer's abbreviations are not contributing positively to both themes and therefore, Chaucer does not side with either love or duty in his adaptation.

As a result I have established, then, that Chaucer chose to take position between love and duty, and not favour one over the other. Although he is supposed to portray love positively, the fact that duty is omitted and that Chaucer lets passionate people die and seems to prefer Anna, who does not have either, shows he balances the morals. Also, the negative portrayal of Aeneas, who stands for duty, and the negative portrayal of Dido, who stands for love, show that Chaucer does not favour either of them. After Chaucer, however, the influence of the Renaissance caused a shift from being in the middle to almost disregarding both themes, the complete opposite of Vergil, as is the case in Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage*. Yet it is clear, that in this adaptation, Chaucer does not side with love or duty. As a result, then, "the story is not of Dido only but 'of hym and of Dido' (956): both of them of heroic stature, both of honorable history (hers summarized by Venus but not by the Narrator: 994-97), and with faults" (Delany, 196).

Chapter 3

Marlowe's Passionate Portrayal

The version of Vergil's story that will be discussed next was written during the Renaissance by Christopher Marlowe. After it was staged and published, however, *Dido, Queen of Carthage* was claimed to be a simple "imitation of classical literary models" (Crowley, 408) by critics, made just after or during Marlowe's university time. The play has not been discussed by many, since critics put the play into a "critical Limbo" (Godshalk, 1). This is due to the title page of the earliest known edition from 1594. It mentions Thomas Nashe's involvement in the theater piece, but since there is no clear record of the two actually working together, or features typical for Nashe, Godshalk and many other critics claim that Marlowe was the sole writer of the piece (1). He does acknowledge, however, that if Nashe was involved, Marlowe and Nashe either coordinated their work extremely well or went over it later to edit it (Godshalk, 1-2). For the sake of the discussion of love and duty, I will also assume that Christopher Marlowe wrote the piece, as so many other critics do.

In his version of the narrative, Marlowe introduces many new aspects to the story that are crucial to the portrayal of love and duty in his play. It is, therefore, only appropriate to look at the piece from all different angles before deciding if this adaptation has balanced both themes, as well.

An interesting difference between this theater adaptation and Vergil's version is the role of Dido. Dido is, as the title implies, more significant in the play due to the use of techniques and her role in the story. By recreating Iarbus' role and giving him his own suitor, Anna, Marlowe creates a difficult love triangle that begins and ends with Dido. As Anna's sister, she is the cause of Anna's acquaintance, love for and social contact with Iarbus. Iarbus himself, however, is Dido's suitor. In other words, Marlowe enlarges Dido's role by adding

Anna's love to the equation. By doing this, he increases Dido's role as the embodiment of love, since she now stands for a love triangle as well as the opposite of Aeneas and duty. Next to that, Dido also becomes the person responsible for the suicide of the other two. Since Anna and Iarbus both depend on Dido, it is only logical that when she falls away, they do, too. As Gamel says, Marlowe "affirms Dido's centrality" (18) in the play by making Dido's role considerably more important than Aeneas' role. By doing this, Marlowe basically creates a "Dido script" (Kinney, 262), focusing on Dido alone. He also emphasizes her importance by giving Dido more wealth and, like Chaucer did, by making her offer Aeneas "tackling made of rivel'd gold" (3.1.115) and "Oares of massie ivory" (3.1.117). She offers him this if he remains in Carthage and with this offer comes more power because she knows Aeneas needs these things, so she is in a position to bargain. Marlowe emphasizes Dido's power even more by making her ruthlessly reject Iarbus, even though he is a powerful neighbor of Carthage. She even tells him, that "we could have gone without your companie" (3.3.14). Next to that, though, Dido also gets the better lines in Marlowe's play (Gamel, 618). Lines like "For in his looks I see eternity, / And he'll make me immortal with a kiss" (4.4.123-134) are for Dido, whereas Aeneas gets a "great speech, but it is a set-piece" (Gamel, 618). Due to the lines, love triangle and enormous wealth she has acquired, Dido becomes more significant and powerful in the play.

Marlowe does not just give Dido more supremacy and superior lines, though. By making Dido pitiless and impressing the men with her gallery of suitors, Marlowe gives Dido the role of a suitor. She turns into a predator instead of prey. This is why she shows Aeneas all her suitors, conveying to him that there is something lovely about her, as most suitors try to do; she wants to appear perfect to him. The role of suitor, however, is conventionally associated with men, which would give her masculine traits instead of feminine. By giving

Dido a more significant role, then, Marlowe also gives her more masculine traits than feminine traits.

Surprisingly, as a result, he also gives Aeneas feminine behavior instead of masculine. An example of his feminine behavior is the way Aeneas succumbs to Dido's love in the cave. When Dido mentions she never imagined a "King like thee" and a "Crown" (3.4. 35-36), he accepts Dido immediately. This is exactly the manner in which a woman in Marlowe's days would give in to a powerful, wealthy man and assent to marriage, afraid of her unsure future otherwise. Another example is the way Aeneas gives up his first attempt to leave when Dido finds out, like a girl unable to break free.

Not Aeneas, however, but Dido gets her gender traits back a few times: she becomes feminine when she "talks directly to Aeneas about her desire for him" (Kinney, 265). Kinney is pointing towards the scene where Dido tells Aeneas "O, if I speak, / I shall betray myself: Aeneas, speak" (3.1.171-2). In other words, Dido here turns into a frail woman again, who needs a man to talk for her. Because Marlowe makes her stand out, he puts Dido in a much more significant role than Aeneas. Therefore, in terms of preferences between Dido and Aeneas, who stand for love and duty, Marlowe gives Dido, and, therefore, love, more significance.

Next to attracting attention to Dido, however, Marlowe makes love on its own all-pervading as well. Since there are numerous ways in which the play is passionate, it is better to discuss the love affairs in levels. Clifford Leech mentions that the play is constantly divided into "two planes, the human and the divine" (71), and he is correct. From the beginning onwards, the audience is confronted with the gods on one side and the mortals on the other side. It seems only fitting, then, that the discussion of love in Marlowe's work should be divided into these two planes as well.

First, there is the divine world. Contrary to Chaucer, Marlowe gives his gods notably more lines and scenes. Don Cameron Allen even goes as far as to say that the gods almost occupy a third of *Dido, Queen of Carthage* (67). Marlowe uses this excess to show he has chosen Ovidian gods for his tragedy. His gods come across as “selfish and petty, concerned only with status and pleasure, using human beings only to satisfy their desires” (Gamel, 614): exactly like Ovid’s gods, they are “mere men” (Solodow, 93). This choice is only logical since Marlowe needed Ovidian Gods, because they portray more emotions and love. As it is, however, Jupiter is seduced by a human, Ganymede, Mercury is found sleeping and Juno and Venus are conniving “fishwives” (Kinney, 263) fighting for the ones they love. In short, to portray them like this, Marlowe had to make the gods Ovidian for his tragedy; also, they attract more attention that way. As it is, in the strictly divine section of the play, there are three relationships. Firstly, there is Venus and her son Cupid: this parental relationship causes Venus to make Dido fall in love with Aeneas, to protect her son from Juno’s wrath, who is angry at Cupid for making Jupiter fall in love with Ganymede. Then there is the married couple of Juno and Jupiter. Due to their bad relationship, at that precise moment due to Ganymede, a Trojan, Juno is out to get Venus’ son Aeneas and all other Trojans. Then there is the relationship between Jupiter and Venus. Because Jupiter has taken to a parental role regarding Venus, Jupiter has to save Aeneas from shipwreck, since Venus asks him to and because he has plans for Aeneas. In other words, most of the gods that are present in Marlowe’s tragedy have a certain connection to each other: love is abundant.

Then there is the mortal world, where Marlowe introduces more love, next to Aeneas and Dido’s mutual adoration. Due to his additions, he “expands these unhappy amours” (Deats, 197). This is a result of Anna’s added love for Iarbus. Iarbus, however, does not pay her any attention, even when she says “Be rul’d by me” (4.2.35). Marlowe also implies an

extremely good bond between Aeneas and Achates by making Achates say things like “My sweet Aeneas” (2.1.2). Love between characters is not the only way in which he introduces more love in this level, however. Marlowe also changes the end of the tragedy. Instead of having Dido commit suicide with Aeneas’ sword, she burns on the pyre of Aeneas’ things, where flames that stand for passion slowly consume her, like she has been consumed by her love for Aeneas. Love is represented here as fire and seen as a destructive emotion.

Consequently, by adding in imagery for love and deeper bonds, Marlowe creates a play filled with passion.

As I have shown, love is all-pervading on both levels of the play. It is, however, true that the occupants of the levels sometimes sneak away with occupants of other levels. It is therefore only appropriate to note that Marlowe has created a third, in-between level in his play that Clifford Leech neglects. On this level the relationship between Jupiter and Ganymede is one of the main relationships. Their homoerotic scene could be a wink to Marlowe’s own sexuality, which, according to David Riggs, although there are many hints by Marlowe himself, nobody is sure about (35). Next to Ganymede and Jupiter, there is the case of Cupid and the Nurse. When Dido realizes Aeneas will not leave without his son Ascanius, she orders a Nurse to take Ascanius away; but Cupid has taken Ascanius’ place. Cupid uses his powers on the old Nurse and she falls for him immediately. Their relationship even gets an entire scene (4.5), which shows us that Marlowe has indeed separated their relationship from the other levels. Because this level is inhabited by lovers again, it is true that love is present on this level, too. The fact that love is present in all three levels and in abundance, therefore, has been established. Hence, love is ubiquitous in the theater piece.

The manner in which Marlowe makes love the largest theme of the piece, however, is not by idealizing it. In fact, in most scenes representing love, Marlowe ridicules it. There are

many examples of this. One example that ridicules love in the mortal world is the last scene. In Vergil's narrative, only Dido died. Due to Marlowe's interference in this adaptation, however, Iarbus and Anna die as well. As a result of this alteration, Dido's death becomes less noble since she takes two others with her. This makes her seem selfish in her love, a murderer and, therefore, love is ridiculed.

In the divine world, Venus is a prime example. When Venus discovers that Juno is trying to kill Cupid, she interferes and protects him. In return for his safety, she thoughtlessly gives her approval to Juno to give her other son, Aeneas, to Dido. She does not seem to mind. If Venus, as a loving mother, however, gives away her son without thinking, it implies that Venus' love is not worth anything. Since Venus is the goddess of love, that image can be projected on all love that exists on the planet. In essence, by making Venus react like this, Marlowe ridicules all love there is.

On the third level, both afore-mentioned relationships ridicule love. The relationship between Ganymede and Jupiter ridicules love because Ganymede tames Jupiter, as it were. Instead of the divine ruling the mortal, Ganymede, the mortal rules the divine Jupiter. In other words, Jupiter is being used by Ganymede. This implies that Ganymede's love is not real, though, but lust for power. Marlowe suggests here that love cannot be real, and undermines love with that statement. This relationship, however, is not the first scene of the play by accident. Marlowe did this to set the tone for the rest of the piece, portraying his cynical opinion of love immediately. The relationship between the Nurse and Cupid ridicules love as well. An old nurse falling for a young boy, after all, sounds absurd and perverted to our ears. The scene is meant to be comical, since the Nurse falls for Cupid immediately, but also satirical, Sara Deats points out. She notes that the couple is a satirical parody of the way Dido immediately gives in to Cupid's love, but also a parody of Mary holding Jesus (196). As a

result “these episodes are not supernaturally divine but mortally comic, and they are in keeping with Marlowe’s usual denigration of the divine” (Allen, 67). In other words, the love in all three levels is ridiculed, and sometimes the divine as well.

Even though the play has love aplenty, it has to be acknowledged that duty is reinforced, as well. There are a few examples of this to examine. One of the “Marlovian additions” (Godshalk, 2) to this piece is a failed first attempt to leave Dido. This addition to the play gives more time to build up Aeneas and Dido’s relationship and due to the fact that the audience knows Aeneas will leave, builds up the tension. The attempt also shows that Aeneas decides in favor of duty twice. Due to this first attempt, instead of making Aeneas the merciless monster that he was in Vergil, Marlowe actually creates the idea that Dido can be a monster, too, since she takes revenge by making it impossible for him to leave. Then, when Aeneas’ second attempt comes up, Marlowe even ventures as far as giving Aeneas more incentive to leave: he lets Mercury explain to Aeneas that Aeneas’ son Ascanius was taken and that Cupid has taken his place. Mercury, as a result, tells Aeneas that Dido’s love is artificial; the audience would have definitely realized that this is one of the main motives for Aeneas to go. By giving Aeneas more reasons, though, Marlowe considerably strengthens the logic in leaving Dido and, therefore, makes Aeneas’ reasoning seem fair: duty over artificial love seems a just choice. In the end, unfortunately, this fortification of duty does not weigh up to the new subplot of Anna and Iarbus and the agony of their deaths and Dido’s.

It can be concluded, then, that Marlowe gives love, or rather, passion, by far the major role in his play, but by ridiculing it. This extreme ridiculing veils the reasons that Marlowe deems just for Aeneas to choose duty every time. An instance where this happens is in the cave. Aeneas accepts and returns Dido’s love only after she mentions the words king and crown to him; an understandable choice since he is at her mercy in Carthage. This reason,

however, is completely overshadowed by Dido's sudden mentioning of wedding rings and the marriage in the cave. A similar situation exists when Aeneas deduces from Mercury that Cupid, or his mother rather, has "beguil'd the Queen" (5.1.42). But after he has found out, he has a passionate fight with Dido about his abandonment that attracts all attention. That is not all, because after he has left, love demands attention again, for Dido, Anna and Iarbus commit suicide. Due to all these interventions of love, however, the reasons Aeneas has would fail to be seen or remembered by the audience. So in fact, Marlowe does not give duty any significance in his piece, either: he lets it be overshadowed by the ridiculing of love.

Next to love overshadowing the rightful reasoning of Aeneas, though, the excess of it in the play also conceals the fact that not love or duty destroys all of their lives, but the divine. The gods seem to orchestrate everything that is happening, and the misery with it. Jupiter is responsible for getting Aeneas to Carthage in the first place and for sending Mercury to send Aeneas on his way; Mercury is responsible for giving Aeneas a reason to go on his way and Venus is responsible for getting Aeneas saved and the marriage of Dido and Aeneas. Juno is responsible for the latter as well, but she is also responsible for Aeneas' shipwreck. Lastly, Cupid is responsible for Aeneas' ultimate reason to leave and for all the love in the play. Due to that, however, he is also responsible for the imprisonment of the Nurse and the death of Dido, Anna and Iarbus. As a result of their actions, all of the gods seem to toy with the lives of the mortals and are therefore responsible for their endings as well. This negative view of the divine from Christopher Marlowe's side, though, is not new. During his life, Marlowe was accused of being an atheist and most of his plays portray an extremely cynical view of the divine, as in *Doctor Faustus*, for example (Ribner, 99). Irving Ribner states that Marlowe was opposed to the Christian view of human reason controlled by God, like nature. Instead, he believed nature was ruled by laws that could be deduced and then used by men to control

nature (99-100). Because he was quite opposed to the divine, then, it is not strange that some of his opinion slipped into his adaptation of the story of Dido and Aeneas. Yet since the sixteenth century was not particularly lenient to those who thought otherwise, Marlowe unconsciously, or maybe consciously, hid his view by adding in an extreme excess of ridiculing of love in his theater piece.

In conclusion, when looking at the balance of the two themes, Marlowe definitely makes love more important. He does not, however, idealize love; instead, he ridicules love and practically neglects duty because it is overshadowed. He makes love more important by putting Dido in a more important place as she becomes masculine and powerful. Aeneas, however, becomes feminine, which gives duty a bad reputation. Marlowe also adds love to all three levels of his play, even though he eventually ridicules love in all of them. Marlowe ridicules love as a decoy to distract the audience's attention from the fact that Aeneas has logical motives to choose duty, and unconsciously also uses it to distract the audience from his anti-divine tendencies that got transferred, probably involuntarily, into the text. When this conclusion is made, though, it can be said that Marlowe's play puts the themes of love and duty in the background, by ridiculing them, but uses them to hide the main theme, which is religion.

Chapter 4

Conclusion

Now, after careful consideration of each adaptation of the story of Dido and Aeneas, it can be noted that Vergil portrayed duty as the favorable moral, Chaucer balanced the two and Marlowe ridicules both themes. The question, then, becomes what the reason could be for this difference.

In Vergil's narrative, it has been established that he did not balance the two morals, but rather preferred duty as a primary moral for his hero. When looking at Vergil's environment, though, it is logical that he portrays duty as the more significant of the two. Vergil was trying to create a new Odysseus, but one with "*pietas*" (Savage, 8), something Odysseus lacked. *Pietas*, or rather, dutifulness, was a term that was defined by many famous ancient authors like Lucretius, Ovid, Seneca, Cicero, Lactantius and Aquinas (Garrison, 9-14). It was a term that was significant in Vergil's day and age and the fact that it was so important meant that loyalty and duty to the gods, state and family came first. These days, it still is important, but not as important as it was during Vergil's life. Since *pietas* was extremely important in Roman society and seeing as his work is a portrayal of a perfect hero, and thus a conduct book, it would be illogical not to portray the most important features in Roman society in his epic. As a result, then, Ovid portrays duty or *pietas* as the most significant moral.

Yet Vergil's depiction of love and duty pales in comparison to the way he portrays Aeneas and Dido as victims of the gods. It is known, however, that the gods the Romans and Greeks believed in were extremely strict. Actually, "the gods were to be approached like

magistrates” (Turcan, 4). This caused deep respect for them and, coincidentally, is also the reason why Vergil makes mankind a victim of the divine in his epic.

In Chaucer’s adaptation there is a balance between the two morals. Interestingly, Chaucer’s work celebrates good and important women and, therefore, commemorates Dido as a good woman, as well (Atwood, 454). In Chaucer’s day and age, however, the celebration of women was the most important aspect of the courtly love tradition. Chaucer’s adaptation appears to be influenced by it. In contrast with the actual tradition, Chaucer’s story is not about himself and how he longs after these good women, but about women who were victims of love or of longing after men. The same goes for Dido: she is given a predatory role in Chaucer’s adaptation (Tripp, 54). This aggressive role for Dido and the twist to the courtly love tradition fit Chaucer, though, because Chaucer was a man that did not approve of the medieval ideas (Tripp, 51). This rejection of medieval values is reflected in his portrayal of the balance of the two themes. In medieval times, religion was exceedingly important and love was not a significant element in religious lives. As a result, it is not surprising that Chaucer chose to rebel and that, instead of a positive portrayal of duty, he maintained a balanced portrayal of both morals.

Marlowe’s piece, in contrast, disturbs the balance Chaucer has created. Marlowe does not seem to balance the themes at all. In fact, he ridicules both love and duty; he barely seems to consider them as themes. Marlowe does this consciously; to conceal the motives Aeneas has to leave. Yet unconsciously, this also serves to hide the anti-divine opinion Marlowe had, which has automatically slipped into his cynical piece. The disrupted balance has a logical reason, though, because in Elizabethan England, “willful dissent from the Church’s official prescriptions of order and worship was not just a sin but a crime against the state” (White, 70). Marlowe’s views on religion, however, were far from those of the Church. Even though

there is no explicit evidence that Marlowe was an atheist, it is clear from his works and portrayal of religion that he definitely had contemplated religious themes (Mc Donald, 57). Yet as a result of the strict reign of the queen, Marlowe must have kept his views private and was used to only discussing them with a select amount of friends. The secretive demeanor around this subject has transferred itself into this work: he must have unconsciously ridiculed love and duty, quite forward for his day and age, so much that it luckily also hid his anti-divine point of view. If he had not done so, he might have been put away for defying the Church.

In summary; it can be established that there has been a shift in the balance of love and duty as portrayed in the story of Dido and Aeneas in its adaptations. This shift can be found when looking at Vergil's *Aeneid*, Chaucer's account of Dido and Aeneas in *The Legend of Good Women* and in Marlowe's adaptation *Dido, Queen of Carthage*. The shift can be explained by the environment of the writers. For Vergil, the cause of his encouragement of duty is the environment he lives in where duty, or *pietas*, was quite significant. For Chaucer, his rejection of the medieval pressure that was put on duty, religion and marriage for money and not for love were important. For Marlowe, both values are ridiculed and one could even say that they are removed from his focus; in his play, he ridicules all themes but unconsciously, the excess of ridiculed love masked his rebellious opinion. The topic was important in his life and Marlowe's cynical portrayal of all is a result of his education. As a result, however, the portrayal of love and duty in adaptations of the story of Dido and Aeneas throughout the ages has changed significantly since Vergil's *Aeneid*.

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