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Awry Crowns: Queenship and Its Discontents

Edited by Rosy Colombo

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ANTONIO ZIOSI*

Wounds and Flames: Dido and Her Sisters[†]

Abstract

This paper explores how the symbolic use of the recurrent metaphors of the wound and the flame not only shapes Virgil's story of Dido (and her book in the *Aeneid*) but also the history of the reception of the queen of Carthage. Virgil had subtly exploited these metaphors (and their 'realisation') to deftly allude to the pre-Virgilian Dido – and to Dido's intertextual sisters. The way in which later poets and artists engage in acknowledging and representing this metaphorical play also defines their functional reading of Virgil's poetry.

KEYWORDS: Virgil; Dido; *Aeneid*; tragedy; imagery; metaphors; reception

At regina graui iamdudum saucia cura / uulnus alit uenis et caeco carpitur igni (Verg. *Aen.* 4.1f.: "But the queen had long since been suffering from love's deadly wound, feeding it with her blood and being consumed by its hidden fire").¹ *Vulnus* and *ignis*: the first proper 'action' (or indeed movement) of the 'tragedy of Dido' in Book 4 of the *Aeneid* is a rhetorical one. It is a trope.² The metaphors of the wound and the flame thus enter the dramatic imagery of the *Didobuch* from its very opening lines. But far from being a mere customary homage to the topic vocabulary of erotic poetry,³ this Virgilian use of the imagery acquires a pivotal role in the structural and properly dramatic unfolding of the story in Book 4, becoming fundamental for the entire epic poem and its reception.

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¹ The critical text used for all quotations from the *Aeneid* is Mynors 1969. The English prose translation, here and henceforth, is by West 2003.

² On the *tropus* as a "turn" and a "movement" away from the *puritas* (of the *verbum proprium*) and the *perspicuitas* (of the *verbum univocum*) see Lausberg 1949: §§ 168 and 174.

³ Cf. Pease 1935: 84-7 and Pichon 1902: 150, 302.

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The queen of Carthage had entered the poem in a sort of tragic prologue (1.338-368), where a disguised Venus, wearing a pair of very eloquent “tragic boots” (*cothurni*),⁴ tells her son Aeneas how Dido had fled Tyre after her brother, Pygmalion, had killed her beloved husband, Sychaeus, and how she then founded a “new city” (hence the Punic origin of the name *Karthago*) on the coasts of Africa, leading – she, a woman (*dux femina facti*, *Aen.* 1.364) – a band of followers and then becoming their new queen. The ‘real’ tragedy is of course encapsulated in Book 4, and begins on the dawn that follows the banquet offered by the queen to the shipwrecked Trojan refugees at the end of Book 1. During this banquet “the doomed Dido”, already struck by Cupid’s power, while “drawing out the night with all manner of talk, drinking long draughts of love” (*Aen.* 1.748-49: *nec non et uario noctem sermone trahebat / infelix Dido longumque bibebat amorem*), asks her guest to narrate “the treachery of the Greeks and the fall of Troy, and his wanderings at sea” (*Aen.* 1.753-56); as a new, Odysseus-like, epic narrator, Aeneas will unfold his tale in Books 2 and 3 of the poem. Finally, after Dido’s death, the hero’s meeting with her in the Underworld (6.450-476) provides a dramatic epilogue to the story. There, for the first time in the poem, Aeneas dares confess his heartache in his unwilling departure from the African shores and shows true pity for the queen, in spite of his *pietas* (his sense of obedience to the epic will of Fate).⁵ Like her Homeric model, the shade of Ajax in *Odyssey* 11, Dido only replies with a scornful silence.

Poets, scholars, critics and commentators have debated about the tragic status of Book 4 since classical antiquity (e.g. Martial, Servius, Macrobius). The *Didobuch* has indeed the tragic structure of an Attic play, according to Aristotelian dramatic dynamics, and a wealth of textual allusions to proper Greek and (as far as we can tell from the extant fragments) Latin tragedies. Yet another specific characteristic of the tragic genre becomes central – like a subtler underflow, in an almost contrapuntal way, underneath the narrative – in the course of Book 4: the recursive, meaningful, and ‘proleptic’ use of the imagery. Some of the most innovative and penetrating critical works on the *Aeneid* in the 20th century (e.g. Pöschl 1962, Otis 1963, Putnam 1988, Hardie 1986, Lyne 1987 and 1989) have shown how the intricately woven imagistic frames of the epic *ornatus* – similes, metaphors, *ekphrasis* – establish “multiple correspondences” (West 1969) with the encompassing narrative; they reinforce the structure and, at times, even enable the nar-

⁴ See Harrison 1972. On Dido, in the *Aeneid* and in previous mythological accounts, and on Dido and tragedy, see Heinze 1993: 95-120; Pease 1935: 3-79; La Penna 1985; Włosok 1976, Fernandelli 2002 and Ziosi 2017 (with further bibliography: 327-32). On tragedy and the *Aeneid*: Heinze 1993: 251-8, 370-3; Conte 2007: 150-69; Hardie 2019.

⁵ On *pietas* in the *Aeneid* see Traina 1988.

tive to proceed through images. Very often, like leitmotifs in music (Pöschl 1962: 13; Otis 1963: 76), they mirror and recall each other within the structure of the work, in order to set up “an internal abstract system of correspondences and contrasts . . . , so that individual passages only emerge in full relief when related to other passages, often separated by a considerable gap” (Hardie 1986: 167). When this play (of internal rhetorical allusion and tragic anticipation) revolves on the figurative language, its effects are even more astonishing. As far as metaphors are concerned, in fact, Virgil often seems to exploit the passage from the *verbum improprium* to the *verbum proprium*, or indeed the ‘realisation’, in the course of the narrative, of images and facts that are first introduced in a figurative way. The practice of realising the tropes in Virgil’s poetry, along with the sustained and meaningful resonance of linked motifs in the epic imagery, has two significant literary antecedents. The first is Lucretius’ poem *De rerum natura* and its frequent reliance on the “poeticized use of scientific analogy” (Hardie 1986: 223);⁶ the other model is tragedy itself,⁷ where motifs of the imagery are subtly used (repeated and reverberated) as anticipation of real events in the course – or indeed at the end – of a play.⁸

Book 4, to be sure the most ‘dramatic’ and self-contained section of the poem, provides the most revealing examples, in the whole of the *Aeneid*, of this proleptic strategy in the use of the imagery. The metaphors of the fire and the wound, from the opening lines, are often alluded to in the course of the narrative, in a relentless progression towards the real, literal, wound that will kill Dido on the real flames of her sacrificial pyre at the end of the book.⁹ The reverberation at first occurs in the poetic vocabulary, with the abundance of verbs meaning “to burn” or “kindle”, like *ardere*, *urere*, *flam-*

⁶ On this characteristic of Lucretian imagery see Schiesaro 1990; Hardie 1986: 158–67, 220–237; Traina 2003; Dionigi 2005: 85f.; Pieri 2011: 87–125; Landolfi 2013.

⁷ See Hardie 1991; Hardie 1998: 90–4; Lyne 1987: 193; Knox 1950: 400 (“[Virgil’s] use of the sustained metaphor, a power which he shares with Aeschylus and Shakespeare”).

⁸ See e.g. Hardie 1991: 34: “The apparently innocent introduction of the hunting motif near the beginning of *Aeneid* 1, to be developed in most unexpected ways later on, is reminiscent of the Aeschylean practice of introducing themes and images at the beginning of the trilogy [of the *Oresteia*] to be fully unfolded or unpacked later on: Lebeck [1971: 63ff.] speaks of prolepsis, i.e. ‘a brief initial statement of several major themes *en bloc*’. The full development toward which each repetition builds may not occur for several hundred lines: compare for example Viktor Pöschl’s analysis of the first three hundred lines of the *Aeneid* as ‘symbolic anticipation of the whole poem’ [1962: 13ff.].” On the fundamental theme of the hunt in Book 4, see pp. 130–2.

⁹ See Hardie 1986: 232f. Brooks Otis (1963: 70) significantly resorts to *Aen.* 4.1f. to exemplify his conclusion that, in the *Aeneid*, “every incident, epithet, simile, motif, &c., is embedded in a coherent structure of motifs: their effect is thus cumulative since one ‘recalls’ the other in an intricately reciprocal arrangement”.

*mare, accendere, incendere, collucere*¹⁰ (all referred to Dido); through nouns like *flamma, ignis, fax, ardor, rogus, pyra* (“flame, fire, torch, burning, funeral pile, pyre”);¹¹ and likewise *vulnus* (“wound”, along with the all-important adjective *saucus*, “wounded, hurt”), *telum, ensis, ferrum* (“shaft, sword”)¹² and *figere, conicere* (“pierce”, “throw” darts);¹³ but then also through other elements of the *ornatus*, like the famous wounded doe simile at 4.68–73.¹⁴

Not just the dramatic, proleptic effect of this use of the imagery is exploited by Virgil however. The tapestry of images in Book 4 seems to point to a very meaningful allusive and poetic action: not only does the imagery shape the narrative, it also gives form to the Dido-character and, in fact, to the Virgilian version of the story of the queen of Carthage. In other words, the metaphors of the wound and the flames, in their sustained play, selectively allude to the many other literary (and, at times, historical) characters that concur to form the figure of Dido in the *Aeneid*. And since Dido is, as it were, Virgil’s most “intertextual heroine”,¹⁵ this turns out to be a metaphorical story of many intertextual sisters (and a few brothers too). And Dido’s pyre is not the end of the story. There are other intertextual sisters in the ‘afterlife’ of the queen of Carthage, and even ‘different’ Didos, as some acute readers of the *Aeneid* exploit (and even take to a different figurative level) the same metaphorical play, thus enabling us to sharpen our reading of the intricate Virgilian pattern. As is often the case, certain episodes of the two-millennia long story of the reception of the *Aeneid* shed light on our understanding of Virgil’s text itself.

1. Medea’s Fires (and Gadflies) and Phaedra’s Pangs

The most important literary model for Virgil’s Dido in *Aeneid* 4 is Me-

¹⁰ E.g. *ardo*: 4.101, 262, 281, 482; *uro*: 4.68; *flammo*: 4.54; *accendo*: 4.203, 232, 364, 697; *incendo*: 4.54 (reading of the M codex, Mediceus Laurentianus plut. 39.1, also in Servius and Tiberius Claudius Donatus), 197, 300, 360, 376; *coluceo*: 4.567.

¹¹ *Flamma*: 4.23, 66, 567, 605, 607, 640, 670; *ignis*: 4.2, 167, 200, 209, 352, 384, 661, 676; *fax*: 4.472, 567, 604, 626; *ardor*: 4.581; *rogus*: 4.640, 646 (in M and Tiberius Claudius Donatus), 676; *pyra*: 4.494, 504.

¹² *Vulnus*: 4.2, 67, 683, 689; *saucus*: 4.1; *telum*: 4.71, 149; *ensis*: 4.507, 579, 646, 664; *ferrum*: 4.71, 131, 547, 601, 626, 663, 679.

¹³ *Figo*: 4.70; *conicio*: 4.69.

¹⁴ For a thorough analysis of the vocabulary of this imagery in *Aen.* 4, see Ferguson 1970. Cf. also Newton 1957.

¹⁵ For the phrase, cf. Hinds 1993. In the Virgilian construction of the character of Dido one can detect intertextual echoes of Circe, Nausicaa, Calypso, Penelope, Medea (in Euripides and in Apollonius), Hypsipyle, Phillis, Ariadne, Ajax, Tecmessa, Phaedra, Deianira, Alcestis, Semiramis, Cleopatra; cf. Fowler 1997: 17; Hardie 2014a: 52; Lyne 1987: 100–144; Ziosi 2017; Finglass 2020a.

dea.¹⁶ Both Euripides' tragic heroine, who endows Dido with the vocabulary and the symptoms of frantic passion for the 'Lucretian' theme of love as *furor* (and even with the plans for devising tragic plots),¹⁷ and, as already remarked by Macrobius (*Sat.* 5.17.4) and Servius (*ad Aen.* 4.1), Apollonius' young Medea in love from *Argonautica* 3, almost a blueprint for the description of Dido's erotic imagery and for her subtle psychological progression towards destructive love. Virgil deftly combines these two Medeas – through the intratextual "window reference"¹⁸ of *Eclogue* 8 – in the magic scene at 4.478–521.¹⁹

Somehow unexpectedly, however, Medea (and, with an allusive movement that already gestures towards tragic irony, both the young Colchian in love and the ruthless sorceress of tragedy) lurks already in the very first lines of Book 4, and precisely in the "wound" and in the "fire": *at regina graui iamdudum saucia cura / uulnus alit uenis et caeco carpitur igni*. And, as is often the case with Virgil's poetry, in multiple layers of allusion.

First, Apollonius. *Apollonius Argonautica scripsit et in tertio inducit amantem Medeam: inde totus hic liber translatus est* ("Apollonius wrote the *Argonautica* and in the third book he introduced Medea in love: from that the entire book [*Aen.* 4] is 'transferred'"): so writes Servius (*ad Aen.* 4.1), at the beginning of his commentary to Book 4. But, *pace* Servius' exaggeration, Virgil really opens the book with a patent allusion to the text of the *Argonautica*; and, very revealingly, to the imagery that portrays Medea's falling in love in the Hellenistic epic poem, in a crucial passage for the figurative use of the "pangs and flames". As Arthur Pease (1935: 84f.)²⁰ noticed for the adjective *saucia* ("wounded" – a true and multiple allusive fulcrum for the entire Book) in *Aen.* 4.1f., "there . . . appears a double result of Cupid's weapon and fire" as in *Arg.* 3.286f. and 3.291–8:

βέλος δ' ἐνεδαίετο κούρη
νέρθεν ύπὸ κραδίῃ, φλογὶ εἴκελον.
...
ώς δὲ γυνὴ μαλερῷ περὶ κάρφεα χεύατο δαλῷ
χερνήτις, τῇπερ ταλασήια ἔργα μέμηλεν,
ώς κεν ύπωρόφιον νύκτωρ σέλας ἐντύναιτο,
ἄγχι μάλ' ἐγρομένη· τὸ δ' ἀθέσφατον ἐξ ὄλιγοιο
δαλοῦ ἀνεγρόμενον σὺν κάρφεα πάντ' ἀμαθύνει·
τοῖος ύπὸ κραδίῃ εἰλυμένος αἱθετο λάθρῃ
οὖλος Ἔρως· ἀπαλάξ δὲ μετετρωπᾶτο παρειὰς

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¹⁶ See Pease 1935: 13f.; Otis 1963: 62–96; Schiesaro 2008; Nelis 2001: 125–85; Ziosi 2016.

¹⁷ Which reach their allusive climax at 4.600–02.

¹⁸ Cf. Thomas 1986: 88f.

¹⁹ Cf. Pease 1935: 388–98; Ziosi 2016.

²⁰ See also Nelis 2001: 13of.

ές χλόον, ἄλλοτ' ἔρευθος, ἀκηδείησι νόοιο.

[And the bolt burnt deep down in the maiden's heart like a flame . . . And as a poor woman heaps dry twigs round a blazing brand – a daughter of toil, whose task is the spinning of wool, that she may kindle a blaze at night beneath her roof, when she has waked very early – and the flame waxing wondrous great from the small brand consumes all the twigs together; so, coiling round her heart, burnt secretly Love the destroyer; and the hue of her soft cheeks went and came, now pale, now red, in her soul's distraction. (trans. Seaton 1912)]

At this point of the story Medea has just been pierced by Eros' arrow, and the shaft that wounds her heart "burns" like a "flame". Significantly, in addition to the figurative shift (from the wound to the burning fire) in the vocabulary of love, Apollonius depicts the effects of the love wound with a crucial simile that introduces the image of the fire smouldering, secretly (*λάθρη*, 3.296), under the ashes. This image of the secrecy and concealment,²¹ or in fact "invisibility", of the fire of love is allusively condensed by Virgil in the important (and much discussed) adjective *caecus* (*Aen.* 4.2 *et caeco carpitur igni*), through the powerful filter of Lucretius (4.1120 *incerti tabescunt uulnere caeco*, "in such deep doubt they waste beneath their secret wound", Bailey 1947, with reference to the effects of the furious burning of passion, described as a disease)²² and Catullus (67.25 *caeco flagrabat amore*): Dido is consumed by an invisible fire. For this seems to be the proper meaning of *caecus* here: "a passive sense, meaning not 'blind' but 'invisible'" (Pease 1935: 86), confirmed by *Aen.* 1.688: *occultum inspires ignem fallasque ueneno*.²³ The context of these "fire and poison" is crucial too, as it 'transfers' in the Carthaginian banquet the Eros passage that, in the *Argonautica*, immediately precedes Medea's burning wound and the smouldering fire simile. At the

²¹ A value that already appears in the first occurrence of the *topos* of the smouldering fire in Hom. *Od.* 5.488-91.

²² See also Lucr. 4.925-28 *quippe ubi nulla latens animai pars remaneret / in membris, cinere ut multa latet obrutus ignis, / unde reconfungi sensus per membra repente / posset, ut ex igni caeco consurgere flamma?* ("for indeed, when no part of the soul stayed behind hidden in the limbs, as fire is hidden when choked beneath much ashes, whence could sense on a sudden be kindled again through the limbs, as flame can rise again from a secret fire?" Bailey 1947). An all-important Virgilian variation of the *topos* will be of course *Aen.* 4.23 *agnosco ueteris uestigia flammae* ("I sense the return of the old fires"). See also *infra* pp. 124-30. The image of fire smouldering under the ashes is rather frequent in Hellenistic poetry; see e.g. Call. *Ep.* 44 Pf. (A.P. 12.139), Mel. *A.P.* 12.80 (also important for the love wound), Theoc. *Id.* 11.51.

²³ Literally: "(to) breathe into her a hidden fire and deceive her with your poison"; West 1990 exegetically translates: "you can then breathe fire and poison into her and she will not know".

end of *Aeneid* 1, Venus, for the sake of her son, decides to deceive the queen of Carthage and to “surround her with fire” (*capere ante dolis et cingere flamma / reginam meditor*, 1.673f.) so that she be in the grip of a great love for Aeneas (*magno Aeneae cum teneatur amore*, 1.675), and then commands her (other) son Cupid to put on Ascanius’ looks for one night and, during the banquet, as we have just seen, to “breathe a hidden fire” into her and entrap her with the poison of love (683-8). This act suddenly eradicates Dido’s memory of her murdered husband (717-22) and, after the most famous sleepless night in Latin literature, drives us directly to the opening of Book 4. The Apollonian hypotext for Cupid’s action in *Aeneid* 1 is crucial to understanding the origin of Dido’s wound and fire; then to strengthening even further the allusive Dido-Medea relationship; and, finally, on a linguistic level, to confirming the proper meaning of *caecus*. In addition to that, and somehow unexpectedly, the same hypotext also introduces to the ‘stage’ another tragic intertextual sister for the queen of Carthage. The passage is in *Argonautica* 3.275-7 (just before the smouldering fire simile):

τόφρα δ' Ἔρως πολιοῖ δι' ἡέρος ἔξεν ἄφαντος,
τετρηχώς, οἴόν τε νέαις ἐπὶ φορβάσιν οἴστρος
τέλλεται, ὃν τε μύωπα βοῶν κλείουσι νομῆες

[meantime Eros passed unseen through the grey mist, causing confusion, as when against grazing heifers rises the gadfly, which oxherds call the breeze.
(trans. Seaton 1912)]

Besides being a model for Cupid’s agency during the Carthaginian banquet, this description of Eros’ arrival and the ensuing simile are also very significant for the development of Virgilian imagery and for the play on the reification of tropes discussed earlier.

“Invisible love” and *caecus ignis*. Eros who comes to Medea is ‘really’ invisible (3.275: ἄφαντος, predicative adjective from the verb φαίνω). Richard Hunter (1993: 128) notes the Platonic model for the *topos* of Love’s hidden and stealthy attack (*Symposium* 196a);²⁴ and the idea of secrecy is reinforced, a few lines later (3.296), in the aforementioned simile, by the adverb λάθρῃ (“secretly, by stealth”), connoting Love, that “burns secretly, hidden deep the heart”. Along with λάθρῃ and lines 3.296f. then, ἄφαντος and Arg. 3.275-7 become fundamental²⁵ to explaining the *caecus* (then certainly ‘passive’) *ignis* of *Aen.* 4.2.

²⁴ This is Agathon’s view in *Symposium* 196a (“If Eros were not a supple being, he would be unable completely to enfold one’s whole soul and both to enter and leave one without being noticed”), cf. Hunter 1989: *ad* 275-98. But possibly more important for Apollonius is Call. *Ep.* 44 Pf. (A.P. 12.139); see also Philodemus A.P. 5.124 with Sider 1997: 119-22.

²⁵ And, as far as I can gather, not noticed by commentators.

All the more so since the reification of the process that ‘happens’ in the simile of *Arg.* 3.276f. (i.e. the gadfly as the secret and stealthy arrival of violent passion)²⁶ proves crucially important for Virgil’s poetry in a passage, in *Georgics* 3, that boldly plays with its models, through the literalisation of the tropes and the correspondences of the imagery. In the didactic poetry of *Georg.* 3.146–50, real cattle are attacked by the ‘real’ gadfly, which anticipates the figurative (and “invisible”!) pangs (literally, “goads”) of destructive love (*Georg.* 3.210).²⁷ The same invisible pangs which, in turn, will become figurative again in Dido’s “secret fire” of *Aen.* 4.2. But let us unravel, in order, the very intricate intertextual threads that, ultimately, give shape to the Virgilian trope.

With the gadfly (*οἴστρος*, the *secundum comparatum* of the simile at *Arg.* 3.276f.) Apollonius “gives concrete form to the metaphorical ‘frenzy’ of love found in earlier literature” (Hunter 1989, 128).²⁸ The simile, Richard Hunter adds, “is tied closely to the main narrative by the easy identification of Medea with a young heifer”; *οἴστρος* is in fact the gadfly sent to Io by Juno (e.g. in Aesch. *Suppl.* 308 and *PV* 567), a story that Virgil, very significantly, recalls, in the very same context (of *Georg.* 3)²⁹ that we have anticipated: *hoc quondam monstro horribilis exercuit iras / Inachiae Iuno pestem meditata iuuенcae* (3.152f., “with this monster Juno once wreaked her awful wrath, when she devised a pest for the heifer-maid of Inachus”, Fairclough 1916).

The *οἴστρος* then is not an innocent fly, at least when passions are involved. And another tragic heroine paid dearly for its sting. A very revealing occurrence of the term (important both for Apollonius and for Virgil) is in fact in *Hippolytus* 1300, where Euripides depicts, in a figurative way, Phaedra’s furious pangs of love. As we find out from Artemis’ revelation (*ex machina*) at the end of the tragedy, Theseus’ son Hippolytus dies innocently as his stepmother, Phaedra, was “stung” by “maddened frenzy” (*οἴστρον*):

ἀλλ’ ἐς τόδ' ἥλθον, παιδὸς ἐκδεῖξαι φρένα
τοῦ σοῦ δικαίαν, ὡς ὑπ' εὐκλείας θάνη,
καὶ σῆς γυναικὸς οἴστρον ἦ τρόπον τινὰ
γενναύότητα: τῆς γὰρ ἔχθιστης θεῶν
ἡμῖν ὄσοισι παρθένειος ἡδονὴ

1300

²⁶ *Arg.* 3.275ff. τόφρα δ' Ἔρως πολιοῖ δι' ἥρος ἔζεν ἄφαντος, / τετρηχώς, οἴόν τε νέαις ἐπὶ φορβάσιν οἴστρος / τέλλεται (“meantime Eros passed unseen through the grey mist, causing confusion, as when against grazing heifers rises the gadfly”) where the *pri-mum comparandum* is indeed the idea conveyed by the two predicatives ἄφαντος, “in-visible”, and τετρηχώς “stirring (passions)”, the *secundum comparatum* being the ‘objec-tified’ gadfly.

²⁷ See also pp. 121–4.

²⁸ Cf. Hunter 1989: *ad* 26f., with literary antecedents.

²⁹ See Thomas 1982: 85 and also pp. 121f.

δηγθεῖσα κέντροις παιδὸς ἡράσθη σέθεν.
(1298-303)

[But it was for this purpose that I came, to make plain that your son's heart is guiltless so that he may die with a good name, make plain, too, the madened frenzy of your wife or, in some sort, her nobility. For she was stung by the goad of that goddess most hated by us who take pleasure in virginity and fell in love with your son. (trans. Kovacs 1995)]

In this Euripidean passage, the image of the figurative gadfly is then glossed by the description of Aphrodite's agency: Phaedra was "stung" by love's "goad". Here *οἴστρος* ("gadfly", used metaphorically as "stimulus, goad") is thus explained by the literalising *κέντρον* (properly "goad, sting", still used figuratively), in a poetic progression from the *verbum inpropium* to the *verbum proprium*. This movement of the imagery turns out to be pivotal for the whole play: it really encapsulates Phaedra's tragic plot, as, in the prologue (38-40), Aphrodite (with the same words and metaphors recalled by Artemis at the end, in a sort of divine frame to the action)³⁰ had informed the audience that:

ἐνταῦθα δὴ στένουσα κάκπεπληγμένη
κέντροις ἔρωτος ἡ τάλαιν' ἀπόλλυται
σιγῇ, ξύνοιδε δ' οὔτις οἰκετῶν νόσον.
(38-40)

[from this point on the poor woman, groaning and struck senseless by the goad of love, means to die (or, literally, "perishes/is consumed") in silence, and none of her household knows of her malady. (trans. Kovacs 1995)]

To close the circle, the fact that both Apollonius' simile on the gadfly (*Arg.* 3.275-7, which links Medea to Io) and Euripides' metaphorical play on gadflies and goads (*Hipp.* 38-40, 1298-303) – and, ultimately, that both Medea and Phaedra – are fundamental in the building of Virgil's imagery of the 'pangs of love that burn invisibly (and in silence)' is eventually confirmed, in an intricate and very Alexandrian multiplication of mirroring references, by a pivotal passage (that we have briefly mentioned above) in Book 3 of the *Georgics*. A famous locus (146-50) that treats of the destructive effects of love and passion on the animals patently alludes to Apollonius' gadfly simile (*Arg.* 3.275-7),³¹ and to the ensuing learned Alexandrian onomastic polemics on the name of the fly:

Est lucos Silari circa ilicibusque uirentem

³⁰ See Janka 2004: 223; Pieri 2011: 105.

³¹ "Meantime Eros passed unseen through the grey mist, causing confusion, as when against grazing heifers rises the gadfly, which oxherds call the breeze".

plurimus Alburnum uolitans, cui nomen asilo
 Romanum est, oestrum Grai uertere uocantes,
 asper, acerba sonans, quo tota exterrita siluis
 diffugint armenta
 (3.146-50)

[Round the groves of Silarus and the green holm-oaks of Alburnus swarms a fly, whose Roman name is *asilus*, but the Greeks have called it in their speech *oestrus*. Fierce it is, and sharp of note; before it whole herds scatter in terror through the woods. (trans. Fairclough 1916)]

In this learned and “difficult reference” (Thomas 1988: *ad* 3.147f.),³² not only does Virgil recall Apollonius in a very Alexandrian fashion (mentioning, like him, two different names for the gadfly, *oestrus*, an obvious calque from οἴστρος, and *asilus*, archaic and rarer than the common *tabanus*),³³ he also discloses (at *Georg.* 3.152f.)³⁴ the hidden mythological reference to the heifer Io (which is, in Apollonius, a metaphorical hypostasis of Medea’s love wound), and then, in a progression from the imagery to the real, goes on to describe (in a didactic manner) the effects of the “goads” of love on ‘real’ cattle (3.209-85). This is how this famous section of *Georg.* 3 revealingly begins:

Sed non ulla magis uiris industria firmat
 quam Venerem et caeci stimulus auertere amoris
 (3.209f.)

[But no care so strengthens their powers as to keep from them the desire and the stings of secret passion. (trans. Fairclough 1916)]

In this passage, with the “stings/goads of hidden/secret passion/love” (*caeci stimuli amoris*), through the usual and utterly meaningful linguistic filter of Lucretius (3.873f. *atque subesse / caecum aliquem cordi stimulum*, “and that deep in his heart lies some secret pangs” Bailey 1947),³⁵ Virgil is indeed re-

³² See also Thomas 1982; Hunter 1989: 129 and Aesch. *Suppl.* 306ff., Call. *Hec.* fr. 301 Pf.

³³ The two words have an interesting Romance development: from *asilus* derive the (mainly) ‘figurative’ Italian “assillo” (“worry, obsession”), whereas from *tabanus* the ‘concrete’ “tafano” (Italian), “tábano” (Spanish), “taon” (French, from *tabo*, Late Latin from the classical *tabanus*).

³⁴ *Hoc quondam monstro horribilis exercuit iras / Inachiae Iuno pestem meditata iuucae.*

³⁵ Where Lucretius describes the ‘pangs of fear’, cf. Kenney 2014: 189; Pieri 2011: 100; but see also the all-important (aforementioned) 4.1120 *incerti tabescunt uulnere caeco* for the passive value of *caecus* and for the relevance of the alluded context: it is said of “those afflicted by love” (cf. Thomas 1988: *ad* 3.210). For the topos in Lucretius (and the same play on the passage from the real to the figurative) see also 5.1074f. (and Campbell 2003: *ad loc.*) *inter equas ubi equus florenti aetate iuuencus / pinnigeri saeuit calcaribus ictus amoris* (“when a young stallion in the flower of his years rages among the mares, pricked by the spur of winged love”, Bailey 1947), recalled by *Aen.* 6.100f. *ea fre-*

calling the tragic *locus classicus* for the metaphor of the goads of love: precisely the passage from the prologue of Euripides' *Hipp.* (38-40) that we discussed earlier (see p. 121).³⁶

To be sure, the imagery, in the same book of the *Georgics*, had already prepared us (e.g. at 3.146-53, see pp. 121ff.), with the literary memory of Apollonius' Medea, both for the *topos* of the stings of love and for the metaphorical anticipation (i.e. the gadfly) of a real erotic stimulus; an even 'more real' one in the context of *Georg.* 3, as the metaphor here, with a bolder rhetorical trick, "stings" real "heifers", which are presumably familiar with real "goads" (and real gadflies). The gadfly (of *Georg.* 3.147f.) is definitely there *pour cause*.³⁷ In a very symbolic and Virgilian fashion then, the elements of the imagery (and significantly, Apollonius' image of the gadfly, sustained and reverberated in *Georg.* 3, is culled indeed from a simile!)³⁸ precede and – in a literal way – are proleptic to the metaphorical description of the *caeci stimuli amoris* in the all-important section that describes the destructive effects of *amor* and sexual passion on animals (3.209-85).

But this is not the end of the story, nor of the multiple correspondences: it is actually the beginning of Dido's tragedy. Because the *caeci stimuli amoris* (of *Georg.* 3.210) are clearly evoked³⁹ in the opening lines of *Aen.* 4: *at regina graui iamdudum saucia cura / uulnus alit uenis et caeco carpitur igni*. At the very outset of the book, then, along with Medea's "dart" and "smouldering flame" simile (*Arg.* 3.286-98), there allusively resounds the whole metaphorical play of *Arg.* 3 (275-7), of Euripides' *Hippolytus* (38f., 1298-303) and of *Georg.* 3 (146-50, 209f.). In Dido's *caecus ignis* (*Aen.* 4.2) there appear thus multiple allusions to Medea, and there already lurks Phaedra's looming shadow too. All the more so since, like Medea's "invisible" (ἀφαντός) gadfly (from *Arg.* 3.275), and like Eros, who "burns in silence" (λάθρη) in Medea's heart (at *Arg.* 3.296f.), in Euripides, the stimulus "consumes" Phaedra "in silence" (*Hipp.* 39f. ἀπόλλυται / σιγῇ). An invisible and hidden silence that does remind us indeed of Dido, who is *caeco carpitur igni* (4.2), where the verb (*carpo*) mirrors the other verb (ἀπόλλυμι) and the adjective (the pivotal *caecus*)⁴⁰ the adverb (σιγῇ).

na furenti / concutit et stimulus sub pectore uertit Apollo ("while Apollo shook the reins upon her in her frenzy and dug the spurs into her flanks") said of the Sybil, goaded to inspired excitement by Apollo.

³⁶ See also Plato *Rep.* 573a7 and Campbell 2003: 317 who links *Hipp.* 30f. and *Georg.* 3.209f. with Lucr. 5.1075f. Cf. also Halleran 1995: *ad* 38f. and Pieri 2011: 105.

³⁷ See Thomas 1982: 85; Ross 1987: 157-67; Pieri 2011: 106.

³⁸ *Arg.* 3.275-7.

³⁹ Cf. Thomas 1988 *ad* 3.210 Pease 1935: *ad* 4.2. On *caecus* though see also Traina 2003: 47.

⁴⁰ In *caeco* one might even detect a reflexive signal: all these allusions are working

To conclude on the “pangs of love”, this allusive detour makes of the Apollonian and Euripidean imagery in *Georgics* 3 (146-50, 209f.) an ultimate and compelling example of window reference for the whole of *Aeneid* 4 as it discloses how deeply Medea and Phaedra are menacingly ingrained in the Dido tragedy from its very outset. It also proves extremely functional as a rhetorical model, because this section of *Georg.* 3 also works as a blueprint for the sustained use of corresponding images that, in the shift from the figurative to the real, generate sense and anticipate the narrative in *Aen.* 4. If we follow this sort of allusive counterpoint woven by the imagery, we can start to truly fathom the whole significance of the allusion to Apollonius in *Aen.* 4.2 and to predict how the images of the wound and the flame can tragically develop – and become real – from the start to the end of the story. And this happens, as in Euripides, in a sort of metaphoric frame of tragic anticipation: as we have seen, this play on the real and figurative sense (working as an actual prolepsis to the tragic end) is precisely Euripides’ strategy with Phaedra’s “pangs of love” in *Hipp.* (from 38-40 to 1298-303). With the wound and the flame then, Medea and Phaedra’s tragic destinies are already nestled with Dido from the very beginning of her tragedy. Because it is precisely this ‘tragic’ use of the imagery that marks a substantial ‘epic’ difference between the poems of Apollonius and Virgil.⁴¹ In the *Aeneid* the same Apollonian imagery of the wound and the flame is not just an ornamental homage to the epic genre: as in tragedy, it is meaningfully developed, revisited and reverberated throughout the Dido book.

2. Old Flames and New Medeas

This first happens only some twenty lines later in the book, in the almost proverbial⁴² *agnosco ueteris uestigia flammae* (“I sense the return of the old fires”, 4.23), indeed Dido’s first powerful ‘variation’⁴³ of Apollonius’ smoul-

away under the surface, invisibly, until they are revealed.

⁴¹ As Brooks Otis (1963: 72) remarks: “Apollonius has no further use for the *wound* and the *flame*. His subsequent description of Medea’s love is not in the least mythological but quite realistic. The simile of the spinning woman has no relation to any recurrent motif. Indeed, all Apollonius’ similes simply explicate the immediate theme or action. They do not forebode the future, indicate a contrast with or a reinforcement of a recurrent motif”.

⁴² To the point that Dante, when Beatrice (indeed a rather unexpected sister of Dido’s) finally appears to him in *Purgatory* 30.48, will exclaim: “conosco i segni dell’antica fiamma” (which, significantly, are in fact Dante’s very last words to Virgil, who has silently left the poem). The quotation from *Aen.* 4.23 is anticipated by a ‘literalising’ rendering: “d’antico amor senti la gran potenza” (*Purg.* 30.39).

⁴³ Again via Lucretius: 4.925-28 *Quippe ubi nulla latens animai pars remaneret / in*

dering fire simile, where *agnosco*, *ueteris*, and *uestigia* can all be read, allusively, as ‘Alexandrian footnotes’. Dido’s interiorised metaphor marks a subtle change to the imagery of Arg. 3.286-98, a progression that Ovid – as always Virgil’s finest reader – does not fail to notice when portraying his ‘Apollonian’ Medea in the *Metamorphoses*. The love symptoms of Ovid’s young Medea, in fact, cleverly combine Apollonius’ simile and Dido’s “old flame” at *Aen.* 4.23:⁴⁴

et iam fortis erat pulsusque recesserat ardor,
cum uidet Aesoniden exstinctaque flamma relaxit.
erubuere genae totoque recanduit ore,
utque solet uentis alimenta adsumere quaeque
parua sub inducta latuit scintilla fauilla
crescere et in ueteres agitata resurgere uires,
sic iam lenis amor, iam quem languere putas,
ut uidit iuuenem, specie praesentis inarsit.

80

(*Met.* 7.76-83)

[And now she was strong and her passion, now conquered, had ebbed, when she saw the son of Aeson and the flame, that was dead, relit. Her cheeks flushed, and then her whole face became pallid. Just as a tiny spark that lies buried under the ashes, takes life from a breath of air, and grows and, living, regains its previous strength, so now her calmed passion, that you would have thought had dulled, when she saw the young hero, flared up at his visible presence. (trans. Kline 2004)]

Medea’s book in the *Metamorphoses*, like Dido’s, had in fact started under the spell of the fire-metaphor: *concepit interea ualidos Aeetias ignes* (*Met.* 7.9 “Medea, the daughter of the king, conceived an overwhelming passion”, Kline 2004).⁴⁵ This fire becomes a fundamental metaphor for the entire first part of Book 7, and then gives way to one of Ovid’s most daring ‘pyrotechnical’ resemanticisation of the erotic *topos*. At first, fire becomes the image of the incurable love sickness – in the crucial elegiac polarity *eros / nosos*⁴⁶ – but then, in the second part of the book, with a very Lucretian and didactic reification, the same fire/disease metaphor is ‘metamorphosed’ into a real plague; which, unexpectedly, turns out to be the most important metamor-

membris, cinere ut multa latet obrutus ignis, / unde reconflari sensus per membra repente / posset, ut ex igni caeco consurgere flamma? (“For indeed, when no part of the soul stayed behind hidden in the limbs, as fire is hidden when choked beneath much ashes, whence could sense on a sudden be kindled again throughout the limbs, as flame can rise again from a secret fire?” Bailey 1947).

⁴⁴ Cf. Ziosi 2016, 71f.

⁴⁵ This time, through the filter of yet another crucial older sister of Dido’s, Catullus’ Ariadne (whom we shall meet again soon): *concepit corporeflammam* (64.92).

⁴⁶ See Conte 1989.

phosis in Book 7: a rhetorical one.⁴⁷

The same metaphorical progression, from the same fire of Apollonius' 3.286-298 and *Aen.* 4.23 to the incurable love fire of Latin elegy, had occurred in the other extant Ovidian account of Medea. At the beginning of her letter, ironically quoting *Aen.* 4.23, Medea from the *Heroides*, plays with "not known" fires (12.33 *Et uidi et perii nec notis ignibus arsi*, "I saw you, and I was undone; nor did I kindle with ordinary – literally "known" – fires", Showerman 1914). Then, at 12.137-49,⁴⁸ she deliberately alludes to the "marriage torches" of Dido's *coniugium* in the cave (*Aen.* 4.165-70: one of the most evocative and ambiguously ominous reworking of the imagery of fire in Book 4).⁴⁹ Finally, in an exquisitely elegiac paradox (12.165f. *quaeque feros pepuli doctis medicatibus ignes, / non ualeo flamas effugere ipsa meas*, "I, who could beat back fierce fire with wise drugs, have not the power to escape my own passion", Showerman 1914) Medea, like Dido but *contrario motu*, becomes a rhetorical victim of the passage from the real epic fires (mastered by her magic when Jason tamed the fire-breathing bulls, *Arg.* 3.1047-49) to the figurative elegiac flames of love. But since this Medea is also aware of the ending of her Euripidean tragedy, she 'transforms' – with a literalisation of the metaphor that, again, recalls Dido's flames in *Aen.* 4 – the same love fire into the flames that will, literally, burn Jason's new wife Creusa: *flebit et ardore uincet adusta meos* (12.180: "she shall weep, and the flames that consume her will surpass my own", Showerman 1914).⁵⁰

⁴⁷ See Ziosi 2016.

⁴⁸ *Vt subito nostras Hymen cantatus ad aures / uenit et accenso lampades igne micant / tibiaque effundit socialia carmina uobis, / at mihi funerea flebiliora tuba* ("when, all suddenly, there came to my ears the chant of Hymen, and to my eyes the gleam of blazing torches, and the pipe poured forth its notes, for you a wedding-strain, but for me a strain more tearful than the funeral trump", Showerman 1914).

⁴⁹ 4.165-70: *Speluncam Dido dux et Trojanus eandem / deueniunt. prima et Tellus et pronuba Iuno / dant signum; pulsere ignes et conscius aether / conubiis summoque ulularunt uertice Nymphae. / ille dies primus leti primusque malorum / causa fuit* ("Dido and the leader of the Trojans took refuge together in the same cave. The sign was first given by Earth, and by Juno as a matron of honour. Fires flashed and the heavens were witness to the marriage while nymphs wailed on the mountain tops. This day was the beginning of her death, the first cause of all her sufferings") and cf. Pease 1935: *ad loc.* See also Ovid's Dido's 'unambiguous' version of the same story in *Her.* 7.93-96: *illa dies nocuit, qua nos declive sub antrum / caeruleus subitis conpulit imber aquis. / audieram uocem; nymphas ululasse putaui: / Eumenides fatis signa dedere meis.* "That dreadful day was my ruin, when sudden downpour of rain from the deep-blue heaven drove us to shelter in the lofty grot. I had heard a voice; I thought it a cry of the nymphs – 'twas the Eumenides sounding the signal of my doom", Showerman 1914.

⁵⁰ See Bessone 1997: *ad loc.*; Rosati 1989: 246f. "il consueto concettismo che gioca sul significato proprio e metaforico del fuoco (quello dei tori domati grazie a Medea e quello della sua passione) si inserisce in un campo semantico dominante per tutta l'episto-

As it happens, all Latin Medeas written ‘after Dido’ share in fact an even stronger and, as it were, multiplied bond with Virgil’s intertextual heroine.⁵¹ Like Ovid, Seneca, in his *Medea*,⁵² alludes to Virgil’s imagery and develops new metaphors for the same “old fire”. After the all-important second chorus of the tragedy (301-79), the *nutrix* thus marks the point in which Medea starts to conceive her revenge on Jason:

se uincet: irae nouimus ueteris notas.
magnum aliquid instat, efferum immane impium:
uultum Furoris cerno
(393-96)

[she will outdo herself. I know the hallmarks of her old anger. Something great is looming, savage, monstrous, unnatural. I see the face of Rage. (trans. Fitch 2018, as henceforth for Seneca)]

Line 394 is particularly noteworthy: an almost word-for-word quotation of *agnosco ueteris uestigia flammae* of *Aen.* 4.23, with a most significant substitution. Instead of the fire there stands out *ira*, “wrath, anger”, to be sure the most important word (and passion) in Seneca’s *Medea*.⁵³ And indeed a byword, along with *furor*, for the ‘tragic Medea’ model for Dido in *Aen.* 4. With this substitution in the *variatio in imitando* Seneca thus couples, in one line, and in ‘one’ Medea, the ‘two’ different Medeas (Apollonius’ Medea, or the ‘love flame’, and Euripides’ Medea, or *furor*) who, as we have seen, more than any other literary character, allusively shape Virgil’s Dido.⁵⁴ But with the advantages of hindsight reading provided by intertextu-

la (il fuoco è il segno di Medea, nipote del sole), preludendo all’immagine della vendetta su Creusa e Creonte, che moriranno tra le fiamme”.

⁵¹ Cf. Schiesaro 2008: 222.

⁵² Cf. Hardie 2014a: 72: “The impress of *Aeneid* 4 is clearly visible in the tragedies of Seneca the Younger. In the *Medea* and the *Phaedra* Seneca chooses protagonists whose careers in previous tragedies had been part of the intertextual mix out of which Virgil had forged his Dido. Tragic aspects of Dido return, as it were, to their original owners in Seneca’s plays.”

⁵³ An important passage in Lucretius’ psychology (in the analysis of the effects of the four elements on the soul) already combines fire and anger: anger is fiery in the soul of lions. See *Lucr.* 3.294-8 (*sed calidi plus est illis quibus acria corda / iracundaque mens facile efferuescit in ira, / quo genere in primis uis est uiolenta leonum, / pectora qui fremitu rumpunt plerumque gementes / nec capere irarum fluctus in pectore possunt*): a significant intertext for Virgil (in *Aen.* 12.527f. *fluctuat ira intus, rumpuntur nescia uinci / pectora*), cf. Bailey 1947: *ad* 3.297.

⁵⁴ This most meaningful union of *amor* and *ira* is then led to extreme consequences by Seneca’s *Medea* and is thus described by the fourth chorus (866-9): *Frenare nescit iras / Medea, non amores; / nunc ira amorque causam / iuxtere: / quid sequetur? (“Medea cannot rein in / her feelings of love or anger. / Now anger and love have joined / their*

ality, Seneca's union of the two Medeas in this allusion to Dido also makes us look at the beginning of Book 4 in a more tragic light: from its very first symptoms, Dido's love is already meant to turn into proper destructive folly.⁵⁵ Finally, if there were any doubts left about the intertextual origin of Medea's fire turning into fury, the following passage⁵⁶ from the third chorus of Seneca's *Medea* would suffice to dispel them:

caecus est ignis stimulatus ira
nec regi curat patiturue frenos
aut timet mortem: cupid ire in ipsos
obuius enses.
(591-4)

[Blind is the fire whipped up by anger, / careless of control, impatient of curbs, / fearless of death, longing to attack / straight against swords.]

This time Medea's merging of fire and rage allusively⁵⁷ represents a four-line compendium of the whole imagery of *Aen.* 4, from the *caecus ignis* (and its long history)⁵⁸ of 4.2 to the all-important sword – as we shall see soon – that kills Dido at the end of the book. Moreover, like Dido on her pyre (and Ovid's Medea in *Her.* 12.180), Seneca's Medea has learnt how to literalise her metaphors. In her final revenge, the 'fire of her anger' becomes the real fire that destroys Creusa and Creon (a fire, *ignis*, that, most significantly, like Dido's *caecus ignis*, is *clusus* and *latet obscurus*):

Tu nunc uestes tinge Creusae,
quas cum primum sumpserit, imas
urat serpens flamma medullas.
Ignis fuluo clusus in auro
latet obscurus
(817-21)

forces: what will follow?"].

⁵⁵ After all, fire (of love) and *furor* were already coupled in a crucial passage (on which our analysis will hinge in the next paragraph) in *Aen.* 4.66-9: *est mollis flamma medullas / interea et tacitum uiuit sub pectore uulnus. / uritur infelix Dido totaque uagatur / urbe furens, qualis coniecta cerua sagitta* ("the flame was eating the soft marrow of her bones and the wound lived quietly under her breast. Dido was on fire with love and wandered all over the city in her misery and madness like a wounded doe").

⁵⁶ Just preceded by a most revealing verbal *iunctura* (*ardet et odit*) in this crucial lines (579-82): *nulla uis flammae tumididue uenti / tanta, nec teli metuenda torti, / quanta cum coniunx uiduata taedis / ardet et odit* ("No violence of flame or swelling wind, / no fearful violence of a whirling spear, / matches a wife bereft of her marriage, / burning and hating").

⁵⁷ See Boyle 2014 ad 591-4; Hine 2000 ad 579 and 591; Biondi 1984: 147-9.

⁵⁸ See above pp. 116-24.

[to Nurse] You must now tinctor the clothes for Creusa, / so the moment
she wears them, crawling flame / may burn its way deep into her bones. /
Enclosed and lurking in the tawny gold / is shrouded fire]

Once again, the allusion to Dido's flame in *Aen.* 4.66f. is patent:⁵⁹

est mollis flamma medullas
interea et tacitum uiuit sub pectore uulnus.

[the flame was eating the soft marrow of her bones and the wound lived
quietly under her breast].

Furthermore, as Medea had announced at 147f.,⁶⁰ this fire operates a significant change to the ending of her tragedy. In Euripides (*Med.* 378-83) Medea considers – but then rejects – the idea of setting fire to the bridal chamber; Seneca's Medea realises the “fire of her anger”, and, along with Creusa and Creon, the entire royal palace is burnt and collapses.⁶¹

Auidus per omnem regiae partem furit
immissus ignis: iam domus tota occidit,
urbi timetur.
(885-7)

⁵⁹ As far as hermeneutics is assisted by allusion and reception, here Seneca with *serpens* (*Med.* 819), “crawling / creeping along, imperceptibly” (reading of the E codex; *re-pens* in the other family) seems to interpret the much debated Virgilian *mollis* as nominative (and not accusative, agreeing with *medullas*, as in David West's translation provided here), thus meaning “subtle” and modifying *flamma* (cf. Pease 1935: 143): a further and very meaningful variation on the crucial “hidden”, *caecus*, character of Dido's flame. For the vocabulary of the *topos* see also Catull. 100.7 *torreret flamma medullas*.

⁶⁰ 147-9 *alto cinere cumulabo domum; / uidebit atrum uerticem flammis agi / Malea longas nauibus flectens moras* (“I shall bury his home in deep ash; the black plume raised by the flames will be seen at Malea, the turning point in ships' long detours”). See Boyle 2014: *ad* 147-9; Hine 2000: *ad* 147; Németi 2003: 173 and cf. Ov. *Met.* 7.394f. For the image of the fire/pyre seen from the sea, cf. *Aen.* 4.661f. (*hauriat hunc oculis ignem crudelis ab alto / Dardanus, et nostrae secum ferat omina mortis*, “let the Trojan who knows no pity gaze his fill upon this fire from the high seas and take with him the omen of my death”) which are, significantly, dying Dido's very last words in the poem, and *Aen.* 5.3f. Also, the sacrificial preparation of Medea's avenging fire (577f. *sacra letifica appara: / statuantur arae, flamma iam tectis sonet*, “prepare the deadly rites. An altar must be set up, and flames must sound in the house”) is modelled on Dido's instruction (in her *Trugrede*, see p. 134) to her sister Anna at *Aen.* 4.494f.

⁶¹ And the same fire seems about to destroy the whole city (*urbi timetur*, 887) thus further literalising Dido's imagery: *Aen.* 4.669-71 *non aliter quam si immissis ruat hostibus omnis / Karthago aut antiqua Tyros, flammaeque furentes / culmina perque hominum uoluantur perque deorum* (“it was as though the enemy were within the gates and the whole city of Carthage or old Tyre were falling with flames raging and rolling over the roofs of man and gods”). See *infra* pp. 142-5 for further implications of this simile.

[The greedy fire rages through every part of the palace as if under orders; already the building has collapsed completely, and they fear for the city.]

3. Another Tragic Medea, Ariadne, a Hunted Doe, and Phaedra's Darts

Tragic Medeas do not allude to Dido's imagery only from hindsight. If we go back, once again, to the opening line of Book 4 (*At regina graui iam-dudum saucia cura*), behind the crucial adjective *saucia* ("wounded, smitten")⁶² there emerges another Medea. As is known, "the queen" is not simply "wounded by a grievous love pang". She is precisely "smitten" again like Medea, and this time a Medea from tragedy, Ennius' lost *Medea exul* (254 V.² = 216 J.): *Medea animo aegro amore saeuo saucia* ("sick at heart, smitten with savage love", Clausen 2002: 75). Again through Lucretius, and, significantly, from *DRN* 4, the 'Book of love', in a passage where the "mind is wounded by love" (*mens unde est saucia amore* 1048f.) from the fierce passion (*dira libido*) for a desired body.⁶³ But the *iunctura* at the end of the line (*Aen.* 4.1), *saucia cura* ("wounded by the pain of love"), discloses another extremely powerful allusion to another intertextual sister of Dido's, with unmistakable implications of tragic irony.⁶⁴ Ariadne, from Catullus' *carmen* 64, who, like Medea and Dido, is 'seduced and then abandoned' by a foreign hero:⁶⁵

Quae tum prospectans cedentem maesta carinam
multiplices animo ualuebat saucia curas
(249-50)

[Then, gazing sadly after the receding sail, she revolved a multitude of sorrows in her wounded heart. (Clausen 2002)]

Alongside her 'tragedy of love' – ominously evoked by Apollonius' Medea and Euripides' Phaedra, Dido's 'tragedy of *furor*' and Dido's 'tragedy of abandonment' are then inscribed in the very first lines of Book 4.

The first and most important realisation of Dido's wound – this time still in the imagery: yet an amplified prolepsis of the real and final wound

⁶² Cf. Pease 1935: 85; Clausen 2002: 75f.

⁶³ The metaphor conveyed by the adjective (*saucia*) is then significantly reified by Lucretius in the next line (4.1049): *namque omnes plerumque cadunt in uulnus* ("for as a rule all men fall towards the wound" Bailey 1947). Cf. Clausen 2002: 76; Traina 1991.

⁶⁴ Clausen 2002: 76.

⁶⁵ The two 'heroines' had already been ominously paired in the all-important Book 3 of Apollonius' *Argonautica* (997-1006); cf. Hunter 1989: 207f. For Dido and Ariadne see e.g. La Penna 1985.

on the pyre – is portrayed by Virgil in the famous wounded doe simile at 4.66–73:

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est mollis flamma medullas
 interea et tacitum uiuit sub pectore uulnus.
 uritur infelix Dido totaque uagatur
 urbe furens, qualis coniecta cerua sagitta,
 quam procul incautam nemora inter Cresia fixit
 pastor agens telis liquitque uolatile ferrum
 nescius: illa fuga siluas saltusque peragrat
 Dictaeos; haeret lateri letalis harundo.

[the flame was eating the soft marrow of her bones and the wound lived quietly under her breast. Dido was on fire with love and wandered all over the city in her misery and madness like a wounded doe which a shepherd hunting in the woods of Crete has caught off guard, striking her from long range with steel-tipped shaft; the arrow flies and is left in her body without knowing it; she runs away all over the wooded slopes of Mount Dicte, and sticking in her side is the arrow that will bring her death.]

Virgil's strategy here develops the premises outlined, as we have seen, at the beginning of the embroidery of the Dido-imagery (*Aen.* 4.1f.). Again, the direct epic intertext for this simile brings back Medea: *Argonautica* 4.12f., where the young Colchian, afraid of her father, is compared to a doe hunted by dogs,⁶⁶ but, in the *Aeneid*, the simile is intertwined in a coherent net of mirroring images, all working in a tragic sense towards the heroine's fatal destiny (and its real image). Besides, this all-important hunt imagery even crosses the borders of Book 4 and plays a fundamental contrapuntal theme in the whole poem.⁶⁷

Apart from anticipating, in a tragic mode, “Love's hunting down of Dido” (Hardie 1991, 34), this simile joins, through the rhetoric of the comparison, the images of the wound and the flame (4.68f. *uritur . . . uagatur / qualis coniecta cerua sagitta*, literally “Dido is on fire and wonders like a doe

⁶⁶ The epic origin of the simile is again Homeric: in *Iliad* 11.473–81 Odysseus, pursued by the Trojans, is compared to a wounded deer pursued by jackals.

⁶⁷ Descriptions of real, and yet highly symbolic, hunts in the poem (Aeneas' deer hunt at 1.184–94, Dido and Aeneas' fatal hunt in 4.160–72, Ascanius' war-triggering hunt in 7.475–502) are in fact recalled and mirrored by a very rich hunt imagery that forms a sort of contrapuntal plot to the narrative that often anticipates the real ‘tragic’ end of the events: e.g. Venus, Penthesilea and Dido's attires (1.314–20, 1.490–3, 4.137–9), the predatory wolves simile in the battle of Troy (2.355–60), our crucial wounded doe simile (4.68–73), the hunting-dog simile of 12.749–57 (that anticipates Aeneas' hunting down of Turnus and the end of the poem). See Fenik 1959; Pöschl 1962: 62–79; Otis 1963: 72–4; Harrison 1972; Ferguson 1970: 62f.; Hornsby 1970: 2f.; Clausen 2002: 78f.; Lyne 1989: 77–9; Hardie 1991: 33f.; Perutelli 2000: 9of.

wounded by an arrow”), with the same daring conceits of Apollonius’ Medea, whose “arrow burns like a flame” ($\betaέλος \delta' \acute{e}νεδαίετο\ldots \varphiλογί \acute{e}ικελον$, Arg. 3.386f.) in the first Apollonian simile that we considered. And it is precisely this wounded doe simile that, for the first time, ‘represents’, albeit in an image, the passage from the figurative (the love wound) to the real (*sagitta*) in *Aen.* 4. As for the darts in the simile (*sagitta*, *Aen.* 4.68, and *tela*, 71), they too bring back – in a further allusive layer – Dido’s imagery to Apollonius’ Medea ($\betaέλος$, Arg. 3.386). And, from there, to tragedy, to the other Medea and to Phaedra, as the image of Cupid’s (and even Aphrodite’s) darts becomes topical in the erotic discourse with Euripides, and precisely with Medea (*Med.* 530f.; 632-5) and Phaedra (*Hipp.* 530-4).⁶⁸ The Euripidean image of the love arrow thus strengthen even further the tragic bond between Dido, Medea and Phaedra: with their erotic metaphors, both tragic heroines intertwine their destinies with Dido’s in a more and more inextricable way. As a result, tragic irony hides deeper and deeper in the imagery that opens Dido’s book.⁶⁹

But how does Medea and Phaedra’s figurative shaft become Dido’s actual sword?⁷⁰ Again, through tragedy.

4. From Phaedra’s Darts to Ajax’s Sword: Lucretia and the ‘Other’ Dido

Quin morere, ut merita es, ferroque auerte dolorem.

...
interiora domus intrumpit limina et altos
conscendit furibunda rogos ensemque recludit
Dardanium, non hos quaesitum munus in usus.

...
dixerat, atque illam media inter talia ferro
conlapsam aspicunt comites, ensemque cruento
spumantem sparsasque manus.

(*Aen.* 4. 547, 645-7, 663-5)

⁶⁸ A passage (*Hipp.* 530-2: οῦτε γὰρ πυρὸς οὔτ' ἄστρων ὑπέρτερον βέλος, / οἶον τὸ τᾶς Ἀφροδίτας ἵησιν ἐκ χερῶν / ”Ερως ὁ Διός παῖς, “For the shafts neither of fire nor of the stars exceed the shaft of Aphrodite, which Eros, Zeus’s son, hurls forth from his hand”) in a tragedy definitely important (besides the gadfly image) for Apollonius’ Medea (cf. Arg. 3.286ff.). After Euripides (see also *IA* 548f.) the image of the love darts becomes very common in Hellenistic poetry and then in comedy, cf. Zagagi 1980: 129, Preston 1916: 48 and Pichon 1902: 258.

⁶⁹ For Dido’s *sagitta* – in the usual Virgilian multiple-allusion strategy – the ‘usual’ didactic Lucretian imagery is also fundamental: cf. *tela Veneris* at *DRN* 4.1052 and *sagittae Veneris* at 4.1278; see Pieri 2011: 97.

⁷⁰ Significantly, Seneca’s Phaedra – unlike her Euripidean counterpart – through Dido’s example will literalise Phaedra’s βέλος (*Hipp.* 530) as well. See pp. 138f.

[No, you must die. That is what you have deserved. Let the sword be the cure for your suffering. . . . She climbed the high pyre in a frenzy and unsheathed the Trojan sword for which she had asked – though not for this purpose. . . . So she spoke and while speaking she fell upon the sword. Her attendants saw her fall. They saw the blood foaming on the blade and staining her hands.]

Aeneas' sword, with which Dido kills herself on the pyre (deceitfully built as a means for a *remedium amoris*) becomes the final and definitive realisation of the initial wound (4.1f.) and of the arrows of the doe simile (4.68-73). A sword and a pyre that pierce and consume the abandoned queen only when she realises that – since she has finally yielded to the “power of the old flame” – she has broken the oath of faith to the memory of her first husband Sychaeus, thus dissolving her *pudor* and blemishing her former *fama*:⁷¹ hence Dido's proper Aristotelian tragic *culpa*, and the real motive of her suicide in Book 4 (cf. Heinze 1993: 104f., 118; Pease 1935: *ad* 475).

But there was no sword – nor Aeneas – in the original Dido legend. There was fire and there was chastity. Dido's elder sister was in fact ‘another’ Dido, the ‘same’ queen of Carthage who had come from Tyre after the murder of her husband, but who threw herself in a sacrificial fire (here too prepared to mislead her subjects and to conceal her real intentions) in the manner of the Carthaginian ritual suicides, in order ‘not’ to be forced to get married again (with a local king who had convinced the Carthaginian peers).⁷² Dido's flames, originally, enshrined her marital chastity.⁷³

The sword – a gift from Aeneas, “sought not for this purpose” – with which Dido pierces herself in Book 4 represents therefore a further, and extremely meaningful, allusive gesture. A fundamental Virgilian innovation that will also become a sort of allusive objective correlative for future allusions and rewritings of the Dido tragedy and a sort of polemic watershed that conceals adherence or an attack to Virgil's story (and authority). If the pyre, in Virgil's multiple allusive texture, relates the literalised flame of

⁷¹ Cf. *Aen.* 4.24-9, 320-3; for the central (and allusive) role of *pudor* (a term and a concept with a long history, from heroic epic to tragedy and love poetry, with multiple meanings and difficult to translate: in Book 4, approximately, “the inner consciousness of the respect due to the chaste memory of the first husband”). For *pudor* in the ‘tragedy of Dido’ see Ziosi 2013; for *fama* see Hardie 2012.

⁷² Cf. Timaeus of Tauromenius, *Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* 566F82; Servius, *Ad Aeneidem* 4.36, 335, 674; Justinus, *Epitome of Pompeius Trogus* 18.4, 3-6, 8. See La Penna 1985; Ziosi 2017: 10-14; Hardie 2014a: 52-5; Quint 2018: 67-81. For the medieval ‘dialogue’ of the ‘two Didos’ see Desmond 1994: 24-33, 55-73.

⁷³ With the pivotal role of *pudor* in Book 4 – especially as a tragic motif – Virgil certainly alludes to the tragic faithfulness (to the memory of the murdered husband) of the ‘historical’ Dido; cf. Heinze 1993: 99.

love to the other Dido (as also the ‘misleading speech’ of 4.478–98 and the role of *pudor* recall her original chastity), the sword, on the other hand, alludes to two other fundamental figures.⁷⁴

The first is Ajax, a crucial model for Virgil’s Dido’s journey towards (and in) death.⁷⁵ Like Dido, the hero of Sophocles’ drama kills himself with a sword (here a gift as well, from his enemy, Hector) at the end of a tragedy of folly and heroic *pudor* (αἰδώς), and after a *Tragrede* (646–92).⁷⁶ But with the same sword – in a daring iconic ‘Romanization’ of her tragic end – Virgil also ties Dido to another example of female virtue and a real ‘foundation myth’ of the Roman *Res Publica*: Lucretia, Collatinus’ wife who stabbed herself to death to prove her innocence and to efface the shame of her lost chastity after being raped by the son of Tarquin the Proud, the last king of Rome. It is not by chance, then, that in her ‘afterlife’ Dido will often be paired with Lucretia by those authors who will be willing to redeem her (poetically) lost chastity (and therefore blame Virgil’s poetic choices): from the Fathers of the Church to Petrarch (e.g. *Africa*, Book 3).⁷⁷

As an acute reader of the *Aeneid*, Ovid does not fail to amplify the importance of this Virgilian change in one of the most daring passages of his letter from Dido to Aeneas in the *Heroides*, a text that constantly plays with Dido’s imagery and twists it into new conceits. Just before the end of Dido’s ‘writing’, in the fictional game of the epistolary genre, the sword, ready to be used, even seems to take the place of the stylus in the reader’s imagination (literally invoked by the ‘writer’: “if you could see me now as I am writing”):

adspicias utinam, quae sit scribentis imago!
scribimus, et gremio Troicus ensis adest,
perque genas lacrimae strictum labuntur in ensem,
qui iam pro lacrimis sanguine tinctus erit.
quam bene conueniunt fato tua munera nostro!
instruis impensa nostra sepulcra breui.
nec mea nunc primum feriuntur pectora telo;
ille locus saeui uulnus amoris habet.

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(Her. 7.183–190)

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⁷⁴ Or three, as Deianira, from Sophocles’ *Trachiniae*, also kills herself with a sword (923–31): an important departure from the usual tragic custom of female suicide (hanging); see pp. 138f. and Loraux 1985.

⁷⁵ And after death: Dido’s silence in her last meeting with Aeneas (*Aen.* 6.469–71) is modelled on Ajax’ scornful silence to Odysseus in the Underworld (*Od.* 11.563); see Norden 1957: *ad* 469ff.; Knauer 1964: 108ff.

⁷⁶ Lefèvre 1978; Conte 2007: 54f.; Panoussi 2009: 191f.

⁷⁷ See *infra* p. 141–2 and Hardie 2014b.

[Could you but see now the face of her who writes these words! I write, and the Trojan's blade is ready in my lap. Over my cheeks the tears roll, and fall upon the drawn steel – which soon shall be stained with blood instead of tears. How fitting is your gift in my hour of fate! You furnish forth my death at a cost but slight. Nor does my heart now for the first time feel a weapon's thrust; it already bears the wound of cruel love. (trans. Showerman 1914)]

After dissolving in the mere space of a couplet (189f.) – with the usual, and highly ironic, didactic naivety – the metaphoric architecture that sustains Book 4 from its initial to its final lines, Ovid's Dido brings the sword to the fore again, in the prominent position of the final distich of the letter, Dido's self-epitaph:⁷⁸

nec consumpta rogis inscribar Elissa Sychaei,
hoc tantum in tumuli marmore carmen erit:
PRAEBUIT AENEAS ET CAUSAM MORTIS ET ENSEM;
IPSA SUA DIDO CONCIDIT USA MANU
(193-6)

[Nor when I have been consumed upon the pyre, shall my inscription read: Elissa, wife of Sychaeus; yet there shall be on the marble of my tomb these lines: from Aeneas came the cause of her death, and from him the blade; from the hand of Dido herself came the stroke by which she fell. (trans. Showerman 1914)]

Here the sword almost becomes a “metonymic representation” of the beloved and an “instrument of *Liebestod* for the betrayed lover” (Piazzì 2007: 293; Knox 1995: *ad* 184, 195f.).⁷⁹ But the emphasis given by the daring syllepsis (*causam mortis et ensem*) also suggests that much more is at stake in the last couplet: there Dido's fires and wounds point at the tendentious (scholars have called them ‘Augustan’) choices of Virgil's “epische Technik” as Ovid's enters (or indeed inaugurates) the controversy on the ‘other Dido’ (but also on the ‘other *Aeneid*’, see Knox 1995: 202), and, more broadly, on the value and the limits of poetry. What the epitaph – with its meta-literary play on the conventions of writing (*inscribar*, 7.194) – really means is (as usual, in Ovid) a different story: when she will be consumed by the fire, she will be written down in history not as Elissa (her original Punic name),

⁷⁸ A couplet much loved by Ovid, who reuses it (for Dido) in *Fasti* 3.549f. and paraphrases it in *Ars* 3.39f. and *Amores* 2.18.25. With a slight variation, in *Her.* 2.147f., the self-epitaph before the suicide pairs (again) Dido and Phillis (see Barchiesi 1992: 180-2). The sword has a prominent role also in Ovid's famous four-line summary of the entire Aeneadic Dido story (cf. Casali 1995: 66-70; Hardie 2015: 383f.) in *Met.* 14.78-81: *excipit Aenean illic animoque domoque / non bene discidium Phrygii latura mariti / Sidonis; inque pyra sacri sub imagine facta / incubuit ferro deceptaque decipit omnes.*

⁷⁹ On Dido's wedding-as-funeral in *Aen.* 4.495-97 see also Nelis 2001: 169-72.

the wife of Sychaeus (i.e. the historical Dido); rather, the *carmen* (tellingly, “poem”) on her tomb will proclaim that, yes, she killed herself with her hands, but Aeneas (and therefore Virgil) provided the reason (i.e. love: a denial of the original Dido’s chastity) and the sword (twice ‘alien’ to her story: *ensis* is the elevated form for “sword” that belongs to the epic genre and not to elegy, the ‘language’ that Ovid’s Dido is ‘speaking’ here).

From this letter and this epitaph onwards, Aeneas’ sword becomes a sort of Freudian watershed in Dido’s afterlife and in the future allusions to her story, a further ‘phallic’⁸⁰ reification of Phaedra and Medea’s βέλος, through Dido’s *uulnus* and Ajax’s sword.

5. And Finally, Phaedra (and Procris): The Danger of Dido’s Metaphors

In an apparently paradoxical way Virgil seems to confirm this ‘Ovidian version’ of the story in the epilogue of the Dido tragedy in the *Aeneid*. When Aeneas meets Dido’s shade in the Underworld, his questions at *Aen.* 6.456-8 (*infelix Dido, uerus mihi nuntius ergo / uenerat extinctam ferro que extrema secutam? / funeris heu tibi causa fui?*, “so the news that they brought me was true, unhappy Dido? They told me you were dead and had ended your life with the sword. Alas! Alas! Was I the cause of your dying?”) seem to be waiting precisely for the answer given by Dido’s epitaph in *Her.* 7.195f.⁸¹ But at a closer look they even seem to question Virgil’s ‘au-

⁸⁰ See Fowler 2000: 156-67 and Segal 1986: 129 for the phallic symbolism of Aeneas’ sword; Desmond 1994: 70-3, 120-7 for medieval reading (and iconography) of such Freudian implications.

⁸¹ In a refined intertextual play of questions and answers, Alessandro Barchiesi (1992: 181) discloses the Homeric hypotext for this question, Odysseus’ words to Ajax (as seen, a fundamental ‘brother’ for Virgil’s Dido) in *Odyssey* 11.558f. οὐδέ τις ἄλλος / αἴτιος, ἄλλὰ Ζεὺς Δαναῶν στρατὸν αἰχμητάων / ἐκπάγλως ἥχθηρε, τείν δ' ἐπὶ μοῖραν ἔθηκεν, “yet no other is to blame but Zeus (literally “no one else is the cause, but Zeus”), who bore terrible hatred against the host of Danaan spearmen, and brought on thee thy doom” (Murray 1919). Interestingly (but with little likelihood) Eduard Norden (1957: *ad* 458) on the basis of Ovid’s quotation of *Aen.* 6.458 in *Her.* 18 (*Leander Heroni*) et ‘mortis,’ dices, ‘*huius ego causa fui!*’ (18.200, “and you will say: ‘Of the death he met, I was the cause”, Showerman 1914) had posited, as a source for both passages, a lost Hellenistic epyllion on the unhappy love of Hero and Leander: the couple of ‘star-crossed lovers’ used as a primary paradigmatic ‘human’ *exemplum* by Virgil precisely in the section of *Georg.* 3 on the effects of the pangs of love (*caeci stimuli amoris* 3.210) that we analysed earlier, and, again, and more importantly, with a vocabulary (intratextually) very familiar to Dido: *quid iuuenis, magnum cui uersat in ossibus ignem / durus amor? nempe abruptis turbata procellis / nocte natat caeca serus freta, quem super ingens / porta tonat caeli, et scopulis inlisa reclamant / aequora; nec miseri possunt reuocare parentes, / nec moritura super crudeli funere uirgo* (258-63), “What of the youth, in whose marrow fierce Love fans the mighty flame? Lo!

thorised version' of the Dido story, and namely the authority of the 'tragedy of *pudor*' (see Austin 1977: 162; Ziosi 2017: 26f.). The landscape of Virgil's Underworld and Dido's company in the *lugentes campi* are in fact equally eloquent in that respect:

nec procul hinc partem fusi monstrantur in omnem Lugentes campi; sic illos nomine dicunt. hic quos durus amor crudeli tabe peredit secreti celant calles et myrtle circum silua tegit; curae non ipsa in morte relinquunt. his Phaedram Procrinque locis maestamque Eriphylen crudelis nati monstrantem uulnera cernit, Euadnenque et Pasiphaen; his Laodamia it comes et iuuenis quondam, nunc femina, Caeneus rursus et in ueterem fato reuoluta figuram. inter quas Phoenissa recens a uulnere Dido errabat silua in magna (Aen. 6.440-51)	440 445 450
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[Not far from here could be seen what they call the Mourning Plains, stretching away in every direction. Here are the victims of unhappy love, consumed by that cruel wasting sickness, hidden in the lonely byways of an encircling wood of myrtle trees, and their suffering does not leave them even in death. Here Aeneas saw Phaedra, and Procris, and Eriphyle in tears as she displayed the wounds her cruel son had given her. Here he saw Evadne and Pasiphae with Laodamia walking by their side, and Caeneus, once a young man, but now a woman restored by destiny to her former shape. Wandering among them in that great wood was Phoenician Dido with her wound still fresh]

In this account, that brings to an end the imagery of her love wound, Dido rests in the place that hosts those who, literally, "were consumed by the cruel plague of harsh love" (thus confirming and literalising *Aen.* 4.66: *est mollis flamma medullas*) and in the company of a 'catalogue' of women, all victims of *durus amor*.⁸² From this 'infernal' perspective, Dido's story is

in the turmoil of bursting storms, late in the black night, he swims the straits. Above him thunders Heaven's mighty portal, and the billows, dashing on the cliffs, echo the cry; yet neither his hapless parents can call him back, nor thought of the maid who in cruel fate must die withal." Fairclough 1916), cf. Virgil's intratextual references at *Aen.* 4.101, 6.442, 4.308 and Thomas 1988: *ad Georg.* 3.259.

⁸² This 'epic catalogue' has Homeric origins, and again from the Underworld of *Odyssey* 11: Φοίδρην τε Πρόκριν τε ἵδον καλήν τ' Ἀριάδνην . . . Μαιράν τε Κλυμένην τε ἵδον στυγερήν τ' Ἐριψύλην (321, 326). On Phaedra from Homer to Attic tragedy see Finglass 2020b. For the unresolved coherence of Virgil's catalogue of women see Norden 1957: *ad* 445ff.; Austin 1977: *ad* 449.

definitely more a ‘tragedy of *amor*’ than a ‘tragedy of *pudor*'.⁸³

The first two heroines mentioned in the catalogue are quite important for our discourse on how Dido’s imagery shapes the (future) story or her ‘older’ literary sisters. We have argued that Phaedra (*Eur. Hipp.* 530) is fundamental in the formation of the crucial image and the *topos* of the love shaft. But if, in Euripides (*Hipp.* 770f., 776–83), Phaedra kills herself according to the more customary way of female suicide in classical tragedy, namely hanging (cf. Fraenkel 1932; Loraux 1985: 31ff.; Heinze 1993: 102), Seneca’s Phaedra, thus marking a fundamental difference from her Euripidean fate (cf. Segal 1986: 129–33, 208; Schiesaro 2003: 221), kills herself (*Phae.* 1197), like Dido, with the sword of her beloved (714).⁸⁴ Moreover, this sword becomes pivotal in the tragic dynamics of Phaedra’s *Liebestod*.⁸⁵

A woman already consumed by love grief and unable to sleep (*Phae.* 99–103 and Boyle 1987: *ad loc.*)⁸⁶ in the manner of Dido (in *Aen.* 4.2–5 and 4.522–32) and devoured by Dido’s same ‘flames of love’,⁸⁷ when she decides to die (*Phae.* 258–61 and Casamento 2011: *ad loc.*) Phaedra ‘quotes’ *Aen.* 4.475 (*decreuitque mori*) and even debates with herself, in a clearly allusive metaliterary way, about the most appropriate ‘literary’ suicidal model:

Decreta mors est: quaeritur fati genus.
laqueone uitam finiam an ferro incubem?
an missa praeceps arce Palladia cadam?
proin castitatis uindicem armemus manum.
(258–61)

[Death is resolved; the question is how to die. Shall I end my life with a rope, or fall on a sword, or jump and fall headlong from Pallas’ citadel? So I must arm my hands to defend my chastity]

⁸³ In *Inferno* 5.61f. Dante manages to blend both ‘tragedies’ of Dido in a single tercet: “L’altra è colei che s’ancise amorosa / e ruppe fede al cener di Sicheo”, thus referring both to *Aen.* 6.440–74 (Dido in the *lugentes campi*) and to 4.52 *non seruata fides cineri promissa Sychaeo* (Dido’s ‘tragedy of *pudor*’).

⁸⁴ The same change in the manner of death, in Senecan drama, takes place also for Jocasta in *Oed.* 1028–32.

⁸⁵ Cf. Boyle 1987: *ad 706* and *711f.*; Segal 1986: 129.

⁸⁶ Sen. *Phae.* 99–103: *Sed maior alius incubat maestae dolor. / non me quies nocturna, non altus sopor / soluere curis: alitur et crescit malum / et ardet intus qualis Aetnaeau uapor / exundat antro* (“But another, greater pain weighs on my distress. No nightly rest, no deep sleep releases me from my cares. My trouble feeds and grows and burns within me, like the heat that pours from Etna’s cavern”).

⁸⁷ On Phaedra and Dido’s flames see *Phae.* 360–6 with Boyle 1987: *ad 362*. See also the first choral ode on the universal power of sexual love (Boyle 1987: 154), especially 274–80 for the union of flames and love shafts (*flammis simul et sagittis 276*) and the Virgilian filter for the use of this imagery (Casamento 2011: 166f.).

The Ovidian window reference (*Met.* 14.81 *incubuit ferro, Dido* in the *parua Aeneis'* four-line résumé of Book 4) reveals the origin of Phaedra's sword in Seneca, and anticipates her final choice.⁸⁸ In a relentless progression (e.g. *Phae.* 713f., 725-30, 866, 1157, 1176-8) the sword becomes more and more important in the tragic dynamics, to the point that, almost personified, it really takes the centre of the stage as a proper character, driving the plot to its tragic conclusion:

PH. Hic dicet ensis, quem tumultu territus
liquit stuprator ciuium accusum timens.
(896f-7)

[This sword will tell you: frightened by the outcry the rapist left it, fearing that citizens would gather.]

Until the climax of Phaedra's very last words and *Liebestod* on the sword of the beloved (1197-8):

mucrone pectus impium iusto patet
cruorque sancto soluit inferias uiro.

[My unnatural breast is justly opened by the sword (literally, “by a just sword”), and my blood pays funeral offerings to a righteous man.]

Not just *res* but *verba* as well: Dido lends Seneca's Phaedra not only her sword, but her rhetorical strategy as well. If we follow the, now familiar, multiple allusive threads of Dido's imagery, there appears that, exactly like Dido in *Aen.* 4, Phaedra too, in Seneca's tragedy, is killed by a dangerous rhetorical passage from the figurative to the real. Yet, with a more daring intertextual movement, Phaedra's figurative ‘sword’ is not at the beginning of her Senecan tragedy, but comes from Euripides: it is in fact the all-important βέλος from *Hipp.* 530, the actual tragic archetype of the metaphorical “love shaft”, the same image that, as we saw, through Apollonius' Medea (*Arg.* 3.386) had come to Dido in *Aen.* 4.⁸⁹ Seneca's Phaedra finally literalises (Euripides') Phaedra's metaphors.

The same metaphorical play is fatal for yet another sister of Dido's, Procris, the second heroine of the ‘catalogue of women’ in the *lugentes campi* (*Aen.* 6.445) and Phaedra's first companion in the Homeric catalogue of *Od-*

⁸⁸ And adds Thisbe (at *Met.* 4.163 *dixit et aptato pectus mucrone sub imum / incubuit ferro, quod adhuc a caede tepebat*) – another example of *Liebestod* – to our catalogue.

⁸⁹ To further entangle this intertextual skein, Seneca's Medea too (becoming more and more like Dido: cf. Boyle 2014 *ad* 136, *saeuit infelix amor*) ‘plays’ with Dido's sword in the progression towards her revenge and the killing of her children (cf. 166f., 970, 1006, 550). Phaedra and Dido (*Elissa*) are also paired in a new catalogue by Ausonius in *Epigr.* 103.12.

yssey 11.321. It is precisely Dido's proleptic imagery, and namely the incapacity of distinguishing the real from the figurative meaning in the erotic discourse, that kills Procris in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 7, 'coincidentally' the book in which Medea has lost herself, enmeshed in the metaphors of Dido's incurable disease.⁹⁰ In rewriting the story of the woman accidentally killed by the javelin (that she had given as a gift to his husband, the hunter Cephalus) Ovid relies once again on Dido's model.

Exploiting a tangible reification (that turns out to be a tragic prolepsis) of the ominous imagery that we are now familiar with, Ovid begins his account of the story of Cephalus and Procris (*Met.* 7.661-8.5)⁹¹ with an important and unexpected protagonist: a shaft, as Cephalus is induced to tell his sad story of love and death after a question on his magic javelin (7.675-82, 794), a gift from his lost wife Procris (7.756). Following this cue, two are the most important variations worth considering in the Ovidian rewriting of the myth in the *Metamorphoses*. The first concerns Procris' 'rhetorical tragedy'. Compared to the Greek sources of this myth of mutual and fatal jealousy and seduction, with Ovid this story becomes in fact a proper tragedy of rhetorical equivocation, as Procris is killed by Cephalus' javelin because she cannot 'read' the figurative language of his song to *Aurora*: unexpectedly, and lethally, she identifies the *verbum proprium* with the *verbum imprimum* of the conventions of the elegiac erotic discourse (Rosati 2016: 97-100; Labate 1975: 126f.). Which, again, can be read as another very daring Ovidian condensation of the metaphorical dynamics that sustain the entire *Didobuch* from 4.1f. to the final sword and pyre. But that Dido is the real key – here the second, allusive, Ovidian innovation – to understand Procris' tragedy is truly confirmed by the lines that portray her fatal wound when Cephalus discovers that his real shaft has accidentally pierced his wife (7.842-47):

Procris erat medioque tenens in pectore uulnus
 'ei mihi' conclamat! uox est ubi cognita fidae
 coniugis, ad uocem praeceps amensque curreti.
 semianimem et sparsas foedantem sanguine uestes
 et sua (me miserum!) de uulnere dona trahentem
 inuenio

[It was Procris. Clasping the wound in her breast she cried out 'Ah, me!' Recognising it as the voice of my faithful wife, I ran headlong and frantic towards that voice. I found her half-alive, her clothes sprinkled with drops

⁹⁰ See above pp. 124-30 and Ziosi 2016.

⁹¹ Also used as an *exemplum* in *Ars* 3.683-746. On Ovid's Cephalus and Procris see Pöschl 1959; Segal 1978; Otis 1970: 176-82; Tarrant 1995; Galasso 2000: 1119-24; Kenney 2011: 290.

of blood, and (what misery!) trying to pull this spear, her gift to me, from the wound. (trans. Kline 2004).

With the same ‘dramatic’ movement (and almost the same syntax and words: *semianimem et sparsas foedantem sanguine uestes*, *Met.* 7.845) of Dido’s maidens in *Aen.* 4.663-5 (*atque illam media inter talia ferro / conlapsam aspiciunt comites, ensemque crux / spumantem sparsasque manus*, “[she] fell upon the sword. Her attendant saw her fall. They saw the blood foaming on the blade and staining her hands”) and of Anna, Dido’s sister, in *Aen.* 4.686f. (*semianimemque sinu germanam amplexa fouebat / cum gemitu atque atros siccabat ueste crux*, “[she] was now holding her dying sister to her breast and cherishing her, sobbing as she dried the dark blood with her own dress”), Cephalus finds his wife dying, struggling to pull the shaft from the wound in her breast (*in pectore uulnus*, *Met.* 7.842). A real wound, whose intertextuality takes us back directly to Dido’s real wound at the very moment of her death (*Aen.* 4.689): *infixum stridit sub pectorre uulnus* (“the wound hissed round the sword beneath her breast”, cf. Segal 1978: 188; Hejduk 2011: 295f.) and, even more importantly and with the same words, to Dido’s figurative wound in *Aen.* 4.67: the crucial metaphorical *uulnus*, immediately followed by the all-important wounded doe simile (4.68-73; see pp. 130-2). From the perspective of *Metamorphoses* 7 then, Dido’s wounded doe simile seems precisely to announce the ‘metamorphosis’ of Procris’ story in Ovid, where Dido’s imagery becomes real . . . and lethal.⁹² Because these ‘younger sisters’ of Dido’s learn something more than mere intertextuality: they are already wont to play with the figurative meaning of her imagery. And as Seneca’s Phaedra literalises – through Dido – the topical shaft of her Euripidean ‘original’, thus Procris – through Dido’s words – brings to ‘life’ Dido’s most dangerous (and prophetic) simile: the hunted doe accidentally killed by the shaft shot by a *nescius* hunter/lover. But this realisation of the imagery also performs an exquisite Ovidian rhetorical trick, as in the *Metamorphoses* similes often work, in a proleptic way, as a real anticipation of a true metamorphosis:⁹³ yet here, with an acrobatic intertextual gap, the simile comes from Dido’s imagery in the *Aeneid*. In the moment of her death, Procris becomes Dido.

6. The ‘Removal’ of the Shaft

The attempt of removing the Freudian stigma of the sword (and Aene-

⁹² To confirm the Dido-Procris identification, Procris’ dying words (*Met.* 7.852-6) are a paraphrase (via *Her.* 7.177) of Dido’s most moving prayer to Aeneas (*Aen.* 4.314-19; see Segal 1978; Kenney 2011: *ad* 7.854; Pease 1935: *ad* 314).

⁹³ Cf. Barkan 1986: 20.

as too) from the story of the queen of Carthage will grip the Apologists and the Fathers of the Church (at times with a hint of nationalistic pride, as many of them were of African origin). And with a new powerful Christian resemanticisation of the fire imagery (cf. Ziosi 2017: 40-54). Tertullian, for example, in *Ad nationes*, while unleashing a real battle against the fictional falsehood of (Virgil's) poetry, posits the 'real' Dido who throws herself in the fire (with no sword) as an *exemplum* of pre-Christian chaste martyrdom. In *De exhortatione castitatis* (and then in many other works) Dido is praised – along with Lucretia – as an exemplar (and pagan) model of monogamy because she preferred to, literally, burn rather than marry. This new metaphorical play with fire unexpectedly combines, in a paradoxical way, Virgil's imagery with the New Testament as this time Dido's death 'literalises', in *contrario motu*, St Paul's advice in 1 *Corinthians* 7.8f: "I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn" (King James Bible). These 'new flames' will burn again, in the same way, in Jerome (*Against Jovinian* 1 and in *Epistula* 123) and from there the chaste example of Dido will shine in Petrarch (*Triumphus pudicitie; Africa* 3.420-3; *Secretum* 3; *Familiares* 2.15.2; *Epistulae sine nomine* 5; *Seniles* 4.5) and Boccaccio (*De casibus virorum illustrium* 2.10-11; *De mulieribus claris* 42; *Genealogia deorum gentilium* 2.60).

7. Helen: Burning Cities

Perhaps Dido's most unexpected sister lurks in the flames of her pyre (*Aen.* 4.463-71):

dixerat, atque illam media inter talia ferro
 conlapsam aspicunt comites, ensemque cruento
 spumantem sparsaque manus. it clamor ad alta
 atria: concussam bacchatur Fama per urbem.
 lamentis gemituque et femineo ululatu
 tecta fremunt, resonat magnis plangoribus aether,
 non aliter quam si immissis ruat hostibus omnis
 Karthago aut antiqua Tyros, flammaeque furentes
 culmina perque hominum uoluantur perque deorum.

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[So she spoke and while speaking fell upon the sword. Her attendant saw her fall. They saw the blood foaming on the blade and staining her hands, and filled the high walls of the palace with their screaming. Rumour ran raving like a Bacchant through the stricken city. The palace rang with lamentations and groaning and the wailing of women and the heavens gave back the sound of mourning. It was as though the enemy were within the gates and the whole of Carthage or old Tyre were falling with flames raging

and rolling over the roofs of men and gods.]

The simile at 4.669-71 takes the literalisation of Dido's imagery to a further level as the flames of Dido's pyre here seem to turn into the flames that destroy a sieged city, conquered and sacked by the enemies (see Hardie 1986: 282-5). But here too Virgil relies on allusion to amplify the power of Dido's imagery in the usual passage from the figurative (*Aen.* 4.1f.) to the literal (4.663-5), then back to the figurative (4.669-71) and, as we shall see, back again to a 'future' historical literal. The epic model for this acrobatic expansion of the imagery is here Lucretius with the description of Paris' love for Helen: a burning passion that will eventually kindle the flames of war and lead to the actual burning of the city of Troy. "The development of the erotic image of flame into the real flames of the funeral pyre and of the sack of the city", in *Aen.* 4.669-71,⁹⁴ "is paralleled at *De Rerum Natura* 1.473ff." (Hardie 1986: 232):

numquam Tyndaridis forma conflatus amore
ignis Alexandri Phrygio sub pectore gliscens
clara accendisset saeui certamina belli
nec clam durateus Troianis Pergama partu
inflammasset equos nocturno Graiugenarum
(473-7)

[Never would the flames have been fired by love through the beauty of Tyndaris, nor swelling deep in the Phrygian heart of Alexander have kindled the blazing battles of savage war, nor unknown of the Trojans would the timber horse have set Pergama aflame at dead of night, when the sons of the Greeks issued from its womb. (trans. Bailey 1947)]

Such daring concettism could not fail to entice Ovid, who exploits these 'love-flames burning cities' in *Her.* 16 (*Paris Helenae*). In his passionate letter to Helen, Paris, starting with a bold rhetorical interpretation of his mother Hecuba's prophetic dream of fire, with naivety (all the more ironically tragic) discloses the 'Lucretian' figurative meaning of his love metaphors: so powerful is the "torch of his heart" that it can kindle the flames that, as foreseen, shall burn, for real, the city of Troy (cf. Rosati 1989: 296f.):

arsurum Paridis uates canit Ilion igni
pectoris, ut nunc est, fax fuit illa mei!
(16.49-50)

[one of the seers sang that Ilion would burn with the fire of Paris – that was the torch of my heart, as now has come to pass! (trans. Showerman 1914, as

⁹⁴ The intertext of the simile at *Aen.* 4.669-71 already pairs Carthage with Troy: *Iliad* 22.410f., cf. Pease 1935: *ad* 669.

below)]

Finally, with an ominous promise to Helen, Paris closes the circle of this acrobatic play on the figurative and literal value of his flames with a reference to Dido's final love fire/pyre:⁹⁵

Da modo te, quae sit Paridis constantia, noscet;
flamma rogi flamas finiet una meas.
(16.163-4)

[Only give yourself to me, and you shall know of Paris' constancy; the flame of the pyre alone will end the flames of my love]

From tragedy to epos and back to tragedy. We considered, especially through Euripidean examples, the tragic origin of the proleptic use of Virgil's imagery. A most striking Renaissance example shows that this very use of the imagery, and the ironic play on the literal and the figurative meaning of metaphors, can sustain a proper dramatic plot. In his first tragedy, *Dido Queen of Cartage*, the Elizabethan playwright Christopher Marlowe,⁹⁶ with his very Ovidian reading of the *Aeneid*, manages to acknowledge – in an astonishingly elaborate way – the very subtle (and 'Lucretian') meaning of Virgil's imagery and then develops Dido's metaphors into new very powerful conceits that properly 'generate' the dramatic action.

By recovering Virgil's symbolic use of fire in Aeneas' account of the fall of Troy in *Aen.* 2,⁹⁷ Marlowe 'translates' for the stage the entire Book 2 of the *Aeneid* in the second act of *Dido Queen of Cartage* and transforms it into a huge metaphorical prolepsis of the real fire (without a sword!) that will burn Dido (inflamed by love) at the end of the play, thus turning Dido's simile of the burnt and sacked city (*Aen.* 4.669-71) into an entire dramatic act. Moreover, as in Lucretius (1.473-7) and in *Her.* 16, Helen, as a true hypostasis of the real burning of Troy, becomes the most powerful incarnation of the destructive power of love and desire in *Dido Queen of Carthage*, and, from there, in the whole of the Marlovian poetic imagery. In the hyperboles of her paradoxical desire, Marlowe's Dido even wishes, overtly, to become another Helen and thus to literalise, like Troy's, the figurative (in *Aen.* 4.669-71) destruction of Carthage:

⁹⁵ As we saw, at the end of her letter in the *Heroines* Dido is precisely *consumpta rogis* (7.193).

⁹⁶ In an age in which artists and poets are wont to allude to the royal status of the 'virgin queen' Elizabeth through Dido's original (and 'chaste') name, Elissa: see Ziosi 2015: 51-8, Hardie 2014a: 60-4.

⁹⁷ Cf. Heinze 1993: 17f., 95f.; Fenik 1959, Pöschl 1962: 87; Lyne 1987: 18-20 and Ziosi 2015: 99-103.

Hast thou forgot how many neighbour kings
 were up in arms, for making thee my love?
 How Carthage did rebel, Iarbas storm,
 and all the world calls me a second Helen,
 for being entangled by a stranger's looks:
 so thou wouldst prove as true as Paris did,
 would, as faire Troy was, Carthage might be sacked,
 and I be called a second Helena!

(*Dido Queen of Carthage* 5.1.141-8) ⁹⁸

Marlowe makes his dizzy intertextual game even more explicit in the ‘Ovidian’ ekphrasis on the temple of Venus in his poem *Hero and Leander* (an old Virgilian acquaintance of Dido’s and of her *durus amor!* cf. *Georg.* 3.258-63, *Aen.* 6.442 and above, n81) as he uses the literalisation of Paris’ flame as ultimate paradigm for the power of love: “Love kindling fire to burn such towns as Troy” (*Hero and Leander* 1.153, see Ziosi 2015: 86-91). And, finally, in one of the most celebrated passages of the entire Elizabethan theatre, Faustus resorts to the same image, intratextually quoting *Dido Queen of Carthage* (and, from afar, Virgil’s metaphorical strategy), in the famous Helen of Troy monologue, where Helen is hyperbolically posited almost as a ‘unity of measure’⁹⁹ for the destructive power of the realisation of love metaphors (cf. Ziosi 2015: 107-12):

Was this the face that launched a thousand ships,
 And burnt the topless Towers of Ilium?

...

I will be Paris, and for love of thee,
 Instead of Troy shall Wittenberg be sacked
 (Doctor Faustus 5.1.1768f., 1775f.)

8. Hannibal and Cleopatra: Burnt Cities and the Wounds of (Roman) History

But some cities were burnt for real. As a final twist in the reading of Dido’s imagery, in the simile of the ‘burning cities’ (*Aen.* 4.669-71) the passage from the figurative to the real is paralleled by the passage from the private to the public and, more broadly, from fiction to history.¹⁰⁰ As Brooks

⁹⁸ Marlowe’s works’ line count, as elsewhere, is from Bowers 1981.

⁹⁹ As is known, wittingly alluding to Marlowe’s Helen of Troy monologue, Isaac Asimov is credited for the coining of a proper humorous unity of measure for beauty, the “milli-Hellen”: “if Helen of Troy represents the amount to launch a thousand ships, a “milli-Helen” is the amount needed to launch just one” (Maguire 2009: 161).

¹⁰⁰ On Dido and Hannibal and Cleopatra (and yet another Medea) see Giusti 2018.

Otis (1963: 72) pointed out: “the wound and the flames that mark Dido’s end, and proleptically Carthage’s end as well (*flammea furentes*, 670), are thus the visible signs of an inner tragedy: the course of the book has developed Dido’s *private* wound and *private* conflagration into a *public* catastrophe, foreshadowing a greater one to come”. With the simile at 4.669-71 Virgil certainly also alludes, in fact, to the historical destruction of Carthage in 146 BCE. After all, one of the ‘Naevian’ functions of Dido in the *Aeneid* is to provide a mythological *aition* to the enmity between Rome and Carthage in the Punic Wars (cf. Pease 1935: 493f.; Hardie 1986: 282-85). What is more surprising is to find Dido’s imagery (here *face . . . ferro*, “torch” and “sword”) as Hannibal’s weapons¹⁰¹ in Dido’s final curse (*Aen.* 4.622-9):

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

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[As for you, my Tyrians, you must pursue with hatred the whole line of his descendants in time to come. Make that your offering to my shade. Let there be no love between our peoples and no treaties. Arise from my dead bones, O my unknown avenger, and harry the race of Dardanus with fire and sword wherever they may settle, now and in the future, whenever our strength allows it.]

Yet again, from Dido’s pyre another historical ‘sister’ emerges as well, and in a rather unexpected fashion. In a fundamental passage for the evolution of her imagery (and for her literary ‘life’), Dido is depicted by Virgil as *pallida morte futura*, “pale as she is about to die”:

at trepida et coeptis immanibus effera Dido
sanguineam uoluens aciem, maculisque trementis
interfusa genas et pallida morte futura,
interiora domus inrumpit limina et altos
conscendit furibunda rogos ensemque recludit

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On the meaning of Dido (or the two Didos) for the opposition between Rome and Carthage see also Quint 2018: 67-81.

¹⁰¹ But also with Dido’s ghost haunting Aeneas in *Aen.* 4.384-6: *separ atris ignibus absens / et, cum frigida mors anima seduxerit artus, / omnibus umbra locis adero* (“I shall follow you not in the flesh but in the black fires of death and when its cold hand takes the breath from my body, my shade will be with you wherever you may be”). Silius Italicus’ young Hannibal will remember Dido’s curse in his oath in *Punica* 1.114f.

Dardanium, non hos quaesitum munus in usus
 (Aen. 4.642-7)

[Dido (was) full of wild fears at the thought of what she was about to do. Her cheeks trembling and flecked with red, her bloodshot eyes rolling, she was pale with the pallor of approaching death. Rushing through the door into the inner courtyard, she climbed the high pyre in a frenzy and unsheathed the Trojan sword for which she had asked – though not for this purpose.]

The same words¹⁰² – and such intratextual links in Virgil's poetic design are always meaningful – are used (in *Aen.* 8.709: *pallentem morte futura*) to define Cleopatra – whose dangerous historical destiny of African female menace for Rome's hegemony is allegorically mirrored by Dido (Pease 1935: 24-28; La Penna 1985; Hardie 2014a: 57) – in the ekphrastic prophecy of the Battle of Actium on the shield of Aeneas at the end of Book 8.

Significantly, and to conclude, the afterlife of the Dido-Cleopatra pair brings us back to the (initial) figurative meaning of Dido's imagery, as in Dante's *Inferno* Cleopatra, along with the same tercet, shares Dido's love passion, and the same doom, amongst the Lustful, where the pair is significantly followed by Helen:

L'altra è colei che s'ancise amorosa,
 e ruppe fede al cener di Sicheo;
 poi è Cleopatràs lussuriòsa.
 Elena vedi, per cui tanto reo
 tempo si volse.
 (5.61-5)

[Lo! she that slew herself for love, untrue / to Sychaeus' ashes. Lo! lost on the blast, / voluptuous Cleopatra, whom love slew. / Look, look on Helen, for whose sake rolled past / long evil years. (trans. Sayers 1949)]

After all the 'afterlife' seems to be a somehow soothing place in which to rewrite, with a happy ending, the destinies of both heroines. Or at least so does – in an unconscious metaliterary way? – Antony in the *Liebestod* of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* (4.14.45-55):¹⁰³

I will o'ertake thee, Cleopatra, and
 weep for my pardon. So it must be, for now
 all length is torture; since the torch is out,

¹⁰² Only with a slightly more vivid brushstroke given by the present participle instead of the adjective.

¹⁰³ Cf. Wilders 1995: 66f., 257; Hardie 2014a: 57; see also Pelling 1988: 17f. for the similarities between Antony and Cleopatra in Plutarch and Dido and Aeneas in Virgil.

lie down and stray no farther.

...

Eros! – I come, my queen. – Eros! – Stay for me.
Where souls do couch on flowers we'll hand in hand,
and with our sprightly port make the ghosts gaze.
Dido and her Aeneas shall want troops
and all the haunt be ours.

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