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**‘O the fortytude viryle of wymmen’:**

**Dido’s exceptional status in William Caxton’s *Eneydos* (1490).**

In 1490, William Caxton published *Eneydos*, his own translation of an anonymous French medieval text called *Le Livre des Énéydes compilé par Virgile, lequel a esté translaté de latin en françois* (1483). *Le Livre des Énéydes* and *Eneydos* are not verbatim translations of the ancient poem though. They hinge on the character of Dido and provide two versions of her life: the first, drawn from Boccaccio’s *De Casibus virorum illustrium* (1373), in which Dido, a respected ruler, never meets Aeneas or kills herself in order to stay true to her vow of chastity; and the second, drawn from Virgil’s *Aeneid* (BCE 29–19), in which Dido falls in love with Aeneas and commits suicide out of madness and despair when he leaves Carthage.

*Le Livre des Énéydes* and *Eneydos* puts her centre stage as two different accounts of her life are incorporated into the epic background. Virgil’s *Aeneid*, however, primarily focuses on Aeneas’ quest from his flight from Troy to the conquest of the Latium: Dido only occupies a marginal role in the epic poem. It should also be noted that the anonymous

*Le Livre des Énéydes* and Caxton's *Eneydos* was published in the overarching context of the *Querelle des Femmes* – a literary, European debate on the condition of women – which also had an influence on Caxton's translation practices.

This article aims at analysing how *Eneydos* depicts Dido's journey from exception – i.e. excluded from society – to exceptional – i.e. how Dido becomes a venerated character. I also consider how rewritings and transmission processes reshaped the character of Dido while remaining true to a traditional depiction of the character.

I will first analyse how elements that traditionally refer to the character are still present in both the anonymous *Le Livre des Énéydes* and Caxton's *Eneydos*. Indeed, despite numerous rewritings, she is still depicted as a hybrid, marginal character that stands apart from the rest of society and is still destined to die. This will lead us to reflect on the significance of her death, as it is here a necessary stage that allows her to become an exceptional character. Second, in highlighting how *Eneydos*' hypotexts reinterpreted and reshaped Dido, we will see that Caxton's rendition of the text is an exceptional rewriting, as it provides English readers with a different, novel representation of the character.

### **Understanding Dido's hybridity through textual transmission**

The characterisation of Dido in *Le Livre des Énéydes* and *Eneydos* is, to a certain extent, indebted to the way she is portrayed in the two source texts: Boccaccio's *De Casibus virorum illustrium* and Virgil's *Aeneid*. Despite numerous processes of transmission and translation, some of her attributes have been preserved. Both Boccaccio's *De Casibus* and Virgil's *Aeneid*

highlight her dual nature as she is portrayed as being both male and female – an aspect that detaches her from the rest of society.

In the paraphrase inspired by *De Casibus* that appears in both *Le Livre des Énéydes* and *Eneydos*, Dido resorts to subterfuge to achieve her goals, subsequently tricking:

- Pygmalion: as Dido tells her brother that she intends to leave Tyr, her husband Sychaeus' murderer rejoices and provides her with a fleet to assist her exile. But Dido does not leave without secretly loading the vessels with her dead husband's treasure – the same treasure that Pygmalion was after when he killed Sychaeus (sig. C1<sup>r-v</sup>).

- the Tyrians who leave Tyr with her: right after they sail away from the Lybian shore, she tests her men and asks them to throw overboard the sacks that contain Sychaeus' treasure – except that they were full of copper (sig. C1<sup>r-v</sup>).

- the people from whom Dido buys a piece of land – which could be contained in an ox hide. Instead, the queen cuts it into thin strips and sews the ends together, so that the skin can cover a bigger surface area (sig. C3<sup>r-v</sup>).

- both the citizens of Carthage and Iarbas, the neighbouring king: as Iarbas threatens to invade the city should Dido refuse to marry him, Carthaginians try to trick Dido into accepting. But Dido tricks them in turn as she asks for a three-month delay, during which time she fortifies the city and plans her death (sig. C5<sup>r</sup>).

Similarly, Dido is portrayed as a cunning leader in the paraphrase inspired by Virgil's *Aeneid*. When the paraphrase does acknowledge her

crafty acquisition of Carthage, certain details are omitted. After Aeneas and his men sail away from the burning Troy towards Italy, Juno and Venus raise a storm that diverts the Trojans from their course, to the shores of Carthage: "The navye arryved almoste alle to broken upon the coste of the see of Libya, nygh the sayd place of Carthage, / whiche Elissa dyd doo edyfie / by grete and subtyll moyens of the whiche I passe over" (sig. C7<sup>v</sup>). Yet, as the paraphrase drawn from *De Casibus* appears before the *Aeneid*-inspired account of Dido's life in *Le Livre des Énéydes* and *Eneydos*, the ellipsis "of the whiche I passe over" is more of an allusion to the episode in which Dido oversees the building of Carthage than an actual omission. In Virgil's *Aeneid*, Dido's flight from Tyr is narrated as well, but she does not trick her men. She is also depicted in this instance as a good ruler, but her cunning nature is not highlighted in Virgil's poem (1.335–68).

Dido's attributes as a leader may also be read through the prism of transmission. Her clever ways of achieving her goals contrast with the importance of honour and righteousness that seems to prevail in the representation of classical and medieval heroes, and as such the reader is provided with a late-fifteenth-century view and reception of the character. Although her portrayal differs from the traditional depiction of heroes in this regard, Dido's acts before her death do nevertheless reflect a medieval reading of what was expected from a ruler. As she is planning on her death, Dido ensures that her death will not trigger legacy issues. Indeed, when she learns Aeneas' decision to leave Carthage, she asks her sister to find the Trojan hero to remind him that she was not involved in the Trojan war and to ask him to stay a bit longer. Contrarily to Virgil's *Aeneid*, Dido specifies

in *Le Livre des Énéydes* and *Eneydos* that should her sister perform this duty, she will inherit Dido's realm and her wealth:

so doo, I praye the, my suster, havinge of me remembraunce / that it playse the to goo and make unto hym this my present req[u]este / and, thus doynge, I shalle make the myn heyre to enjoye and receyve after my deth the renues of all my londe. (sig. F3<sup>r</sup>)

Dido only decides to take her own life after she has settled her inheritance.

Her male attributes are also highlighted when she secretly plans her suicide: she takes the time to fortify her city to protect her citizens and, in the paraphrase inspired by Virgil's poem, she even appoints her sister as her successor. This addition from the anonymous French compiler and translated by Caxton reflect a process of *acculturation*.<sup>58</sup> Dido, a classical figure, is now evolving in a medieval setting as she is concerned by the importance of legacy and succession. That Dido bequeaths her title and her goods to her sister highlights the fact that she does not have any direct successors – and that she is not carrying Aeneas' child. Another tradition, derived from Ovidian *materia*, contradict Virgil's version. At the end of Ovid's *Heroides 7* – a proto-feminist letter from Dido to Aeneas, accusing him of his treacherous nature – Dido is with Aeneas' child. In Caxton's *The Booke of Ovyde named Methamorphose*, a manuscript translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (though an intermediate French source, *l'Ovide moralisé* [second edition]), the French translator and Caxton insert this excerpt from *Heroides 7* into their renderings of *Metamorphoses*. In these vernacular

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<sup>58</sup> See Anne Coldiron, *Printers without Borders* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014).

rewritings, Dido is expecting a child: "Yf he dayne not to com I shal make an ende of my lyf, and yet I shal not dye allone, for I am grete with chyld which he hath engendred on me" (fol. 155<sup>b</sup>).<sup>59</sup> Caxton's works therefore attest to two different receptions of the Dido character in Tudor England<sup>60</sup> – descending from two different lines of transmission and interpretation.

Dido's male attributes and her political acts are underlined in *Le Livre des Énéydes* and *Eneydos*, but her subjects and other male leaders still see her as a woman. In the paraphrase drawn from Boccaccio's *De Casibus* that appears in both *Le Livre des Énéydes* and *Eneydos*, a neighbouring king – the king of the Musitaynes – is attracted to her: he summons some of Dido's citizens and threatens to invade the city should she refuse to marry him. Here, Dido's chastity and determination to remain as such are praised throughout the narrative. In the paraphrase inspired by Virgil, Dido's beauty and body are also key points in the narrative: Aeneas is attracted to her and deceives her, which follows the medieval reading of the character.<sup>61</sup> Interestingly, however, medieval rewritings tend to further differentiate Dido from other women: an aspect that is diminished from one vernacular rewriting to the next and which may be explained by the gradual loss of interest in the traditional (and misogynistic) Christian representation of the "chaste widow." As there are only early printed translations and no

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<sup>59</sup> William Caxton, *The Booke of Ovyde*, ed. Richard J. Moll (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2013), p. 449.

<sup>60</sup> Although no printed version of *The Booke of Ovyde* is known today, some critics assume that the manuscript was copied from a printed book. Caxton, *The Booke of Ovyde*, pp. 6, 41–45.

<sup>61</sup> Indeed, Aeneas is depicted as a 'traytor' in medieval tradition, see Emma Buckley, "Live false Aeneas! Marlowe's Dido, Queen of Carthage and the limits of translation," *Classical Reception Journal* 3.2 (2001), pp. 129–47.

modern editions of *De Casibus* available, I use Laurent de Premierfait's translation of Boccaccio's work into French – *Des Cas des nobles hommes et femmes* (1409) – which insists on portraying Dido as a woman who is poles apart from Venus and the Cypriot women.<sup>62</sup> A whole story surrounding Venus' lasciviousness and numerous affairs is developed:

Et ceste venus fut femme de vulcanus [...]. Et apres la mort de vulcanus elle fut femme de Adonis [...] Apres la mort de Adonis ceste venus chey en si grant chaleur de luxure que par fornications et ribauldies elle ordoya toute la clarte de la beaulte. Car il fut notour en chipre que le roy vulcanus son mary la trouva couchee avec un sien escuyer. dont les poetes feignirent que cellui escuier estoit un dieu appelle mars. Derienierement a fin que venus ostaat aulcun peu de la honte de son ribault visaige. et que elle eust plus grant loisir et comgie de mignoter. elle pourpensa et trouva les nourdeaulx publiques. Et par ses loys contrigny et admonesta les femmes de y aler soir. ainsi comme len voit encores par la coustume gardee entre les chipriens qui envoient leurs filles jouer et ribaulder sur les rivaiges de la mer avec les juenes estrangiers pour les causes que ja dictes sont dessus. (fol. 44<sup>b</sup>)

In this instance, Venus acts as a foil to Dido's chastity: Venus adopts a deviant behaviour after her first husband dies, in contrast with Dido's moral perfection in *De Casibus* and, to a certain extent, in response to Virgil's depiction of the Queen of Carthage. In de Premierfait's translation of *De Casibus*, Dido's actions are praised in an envoy written at the end of the hagiography:

Juste femme constant saige princesse tresbonne a tous et chaste  
Juene vesue. sont louanges de vertus. mirouers de vie honneste.  
exemples de bonnes oeuvres. et fermete de courage qui selon cours

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<sup>62</sup> Laurent de Premierfait, *Boccace des nobles maleureux* (Paris: Guy Marchant? for Antoine Vérard, 1494).

de commune nature se trouvent en peu de femmes. Je vueil o dido en brief racompter tes louanges en aulcune partie car je ne puis en tout. Tu as eu force de homme dedans corps feminin. tu as gardee honneur de chastete outre les aultres femmes de la loy et de ton temp. (fos. 45<sup>b</sup>–46<sup>a</sup>)

The envoy mainly revolves on Dido's chastity and morality, once again distinguishing Dido from other women ("se trouvent en peu de femmes," "tu as gardé honneur de chasteté outre les autres femmes"). In *Le Livre des Énéydes* and *Eneydos*, although Dido is still praised for her chastity, the moral tone is underplayed and the contrast between Dido and other women is absent. Here is the corresponding passage in Caxton's *Eneydos*:

O the fortytude viryle of wymmen, or loos<sup>63</sup> and pryce of chastyte femynyne, digne and worthi of honour, celebreed and magnyfyed in grete loange and preysynge, wythoute ende perpetuel. Thou lovest and haste liever to submyse<sup>64</sup> to fortune adventurous of deth cruel, for to kepe thy pudyke chastyte unhurte, wythoute ony spotte, / than to rendre or yelde thyselve in applicacion of lyf perysshable to dyshonoure (sig. C6<sup>r</sup>).

As later vernacular rewritings tend to turn away from the Christian ideal of the "chaste woman," the discourse surrounding Dido's gender is less fierce: although she is both man and woman, she is not so much described as a "woman different from other women" anymore. She is still hybrid in *Le Livre des Énéydes* and *Eneydos* – when Dido choses to take her own life, she opts for a pyre – a traditionally "feminine" way of dying –

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<sup>63</sup> *Lose*: Praise; renown, fame. Also in neutral sense, (good or bad) reputation; occasionally ill fame. out of loss: to one's dispraise (*Oxford English Dictionary* ["*OED*"]).

<sup>64</sup> *Submise*: submit (*OED* n. 1). To place (another) in a position of submission; to refer for arbitration or consideration (*OED* n. 2).

as well as a sword – the sword of the male conqueror. But, unlike previous narratives, she is not depicted as "unnatural." Therefore, although the male/female tension is still at the heart of the depiction of Dido, the French compiler's and Caxton's readings of the character alleviates misogynistic representations and contributes to a slightly more positive portrayal of Dido – in comparison to earlier rewritings. Some of her traditional characteristics are therefore read through the prism of medieval literature and religion and interpreted accordingly. She is more cunning in vernacular rewritings, and less of an embodiment of chastity. But Dido remains a hybrid character and, by essence, a character belonging to the margin – an exception that is destined to die.

### **Dido's death: from "exception" to "exceptional"**

Death is another aspect that Dido inherits from the classical and historical accounts of her life. Death is inherent to the character and, as a marginal, hybrid character in *Le Livre des Énéydes* and *Eneydos*, she is bound to die. Although Dido's death is narrated differently in the paraphrases inspired by Virgil and Boccaccio, both accounts agree that her death, while tragic, was not in vain. In the paraphrase drawn from Boccaccio, she is praised and becomes a goddess:

longe tyme after bi grete waillynges, *in pyetous remembraunce* of theyr ryght goode quene, / whom they callyd from thenne forth on moder of theyr countrey, / and enforsed them to attribute all honours humaynes and devynes by manere of the cruelte of hir deth, / [...]. [A]nd they shold make temples and aultres dedyed and halowed in hir name, / in whiche she sholde be embraced and honowred as a goddess. (sigs. C5<sup>v</sup>–C6<sup>r</sup>)

In the paraphrase inspired by Virgil, Dido does not die straight away but she remains in limbo for a while, further emphasising her liminal nature. This account plays on the contrasting representation of Dido before and after her death. Before killing herself, Dido is compared to a corpse: "Dido kept herself still, without eny wordes more to speke, all pale and discoloured as a body *that* is taken out of the erthe or fro some grete and sodaine peril" (sig. F7<sup>v</sup>); "Her tendre chykes and vysage, that afore was playsaunt and debonnayre of sangwyne coloure, tournyng upon white, / becam alle pale sodaynly in hydouse manere, and all mortyfied for the cruelle deth" (sig. G7<sup>v</sup>). The queen, who formerly had a pink complexion, is now as pale as a dead body. Just as she was nor male or female, she is now neither dead or alive: after she stabs herself with Aeneas' sword, she tries to open her eyes a few times: "Dydo, that forced her self for to open her eyen" (sig. H2<sup>v</sup>); "she dyd forse her owne self for to open her eyen / to see the lyghte of the daye" (sig. H2<sup>v</sup>) and tries to lean on her elbow – facts that are directly inherited from Virgil's *Aeneid*. But the French compiler's inserts a long digression narrating how Iris (sent by Juno) and Proserpina have an argument over who could rightfully claim her soul (sigs. H3<sup>v</sup>–H5<sup>r</sup>). This debate, which does not appear in the Latin poem, is reminiscent of a court trial, as the gods speak in turn and use legal terms to make their points. This addition to the Virgilian *materia* testifies of the French compiler's (and then Caxton's) reception and reinterpretation of classical figures. The French compiler's euhemerist reading of a quarrel between gods turns Iris and Proserpina into allegories of justice – a moral dimension that was common in euhemerist interpretations of the role of divinities.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Jean Seznec, *La survivance des dieux antiques: Essai sur le rôle de la tradition*

This addition is followed by long descriptions of Proserpina's actions on dead bodies (sigs. H3<sup>r-v</sup>) and on Dido's beauty (sigs. H4<sup>r-v</sup>), postponing Dido's death until Proserpina – who wins the argument – finally cuts off her hair and frees her spirit from her body.

Although Dido is destined to die and that her suffering is endless, and despite the fact that she dies twice in *Le Livre des Énéydes* and *Eneydos* (first in the paraphrase drawn from Boccaccio's text, and then from Virgil's poem), her death is depicted as a positive event. It is presented as a metamorphosis, a step which will allow her to attain the status of goddess. In the account drawn from *De Casibus*, Dido is beautiful until her death: "thy ryght dolorouse deth, which hath quenched the playsaunt fygure of thy grete beaulte by thy fruytful deth" (sig. C6<sup>r</sup>). In the account inspired by Virgil, death triggers a metamorphosis which is detailed at length in Iris's *descriptio* [sigs. H4<sup>r-v</sup>]: the goddess minutely depicts each part of Dido's elegant and proportionate body. Dido's perfection culminates in the last sentence: "plaisaunt for to see and replenysshed of all good condicyons; like as it were one *the* wymen best accomplished *that* nature had produced syth her begynnyng unto that tyme" (sig. H4<sup>v</sup>). Although in the first part of this analysis, we saw that late medieval rewritings discarded the unnatural side of Dido as a human; her difference from the rest of human kind is here used to portray her as a divinity. The chromatic description that Iris makes – Dido has green eyes, red lips, white teeth, fair hair and a fresh and pink complexion – forms a hypothyposis and raises her to the rank of goddess as she transcends death.

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*mythologique dans l'humanisme et dans l'art de la Renaissance* (Paris: Flammarion, [1993] 2011), pp. 101–124.

The envoy at the end of the paraphrase inspired by *De Casibus* puts Dido on a par with other mythological figures as she is venerated as a goddess: "and my fyrst fame and goode renomme, wherbi I was electe and taken up to the sterres as a veraye goddesse, / is now by thy departynge sodaynly extyncted" (sig. E6<sup>v</sup>). These words can be read as an echo of the conclusion of the paraphrase inspired by *De Casibus*, as if she attained that status in the Virgilian paraphrase thanks to the events that happened in the *De Casibus* paraphrase:

longe tyme after bi grete waillynge, *in pyetous remembraunce* of theyr ryght goode quene, / whom they callyd from thenne forth on moder of theyr countrey, / and enforced them to attribute all honours humaynes and devynes by manere of the cruelte of hir deth, / [...]. [A]nd they shold make temples and aultres dedyed and halowed in hir name, / in whiche she sholde be embraced and honowred as a goddesse. (C5<sup>v</sup>–C6<sup>r</sup>)

Both versions therefore agree on Dido's divine qualities and *Le Livre des Énéydes* and *Eneydos* end the Dido section with a lyrical, almost biblical sentence that highlight Dido's eternal reign. The sentence appears at the very end of a chapter called "Of the beauty of Dido" (sig. H3<sup>v</sup>) and reads:

and thenne [Proserpina] toke up on herselfe for to unbynde the membres from the spyrite of lyffe, [...] and delyvered her free and quytte to that place, after her demeryte, that to alle folke is propyce, as it is ordeyned by the provydenge devyne; wherof the regne shalle never fynyshe.

Dido's status as an exception allows her to become exceptional, as she transcends gender issues, hybridity and death and becomes a goddess

of exceptional character. The depiction of Dido in *Le Livre des Énéydes* and *Eneydos* therefore reflects that translation practices and social as well as literary context (acculturation, euhemerist interpretation, Christian ideal of the "chaste widow" and *Querelle des Femmes*, as we shall see in our last part) contribute to a proto-feminist interpretation of the character and reshaped Dido to a new readership. Dido's hybridity is inherent to her and pro-Dido accounts of her life were not uncommon in medieval vernacular literature. Yet, Dido's death is depicted in a way that is specific to *Le Livre des Énéydes* and *Eneydos*, which therefore offer an exceptional – in the sense of "original" – rendition of the queen's life. More elements make Dido's characterisation in *Eneydos* different from other narratives.

### **Dido's "exceptional" status in *Eneydos***

Dido ends up becoming a divinity in *Le Livre des Énéydes* and *Eneydos*, and she is also given new attributes. Just before she dies, in the paraphrase inspired by Virgil, she is compared to Pentheus, who sees the city of Thebes. The comparison is directly borrowed from Virgil's *Aeneid*, but the French compiler uses this allusion to digress and insert an etiological commentary on Cadmus, who invented the art of writing. The passage is translated by Caxton as follows:

How be it that there was never but one [city of Thebes], whiche a kyng of Greece called Cadmus made somtyme, that founde first the lettres and the arte of wrytyng, whiche he sent in to diverse countrees, and pryncipally in the land of Fenyce, where he made scriptures, grete bokes and cronicles, / lerned the folke to rede and to write / [...]. But in token of this, that the first lettres wherof he was inventour, came out of Fenyce. (sigs. F5<sup>r-v</sup>).

Dido is here linked to the invention of writing through the reference to "Fenyce," which refers to Dido's native land and, through metonymy, herself, as she is regularly called Fenyce in *Le Livre des Énéydes* and *Eneydos*. Dido's part in the invention of writing is also highlighted in the paraphrase drawn from Boccaccio's account of her life, as a similar etiological commentary has also been inserted:

Oute of the whiche Fenyce and prosapye ancienne, / as it is to byleve by theyr wrytyngys, / yssued a kynge named Belus, / after the dethe of whome / one his sone, named Pygmalion succeded hym / and obteyned the Royalme of the Fenyces. He hadde also a doughter named Elissa, whiche afterwarde was named Dido, and was *maryed* to one named Acerbas. (sig. B8<sup>r</sup>)

Dido's new role is highlighted through a genealogical account here, as Belus, native of Phoenicia – the place where the alphabet was invented – had a daughter called Dido. Dido's link to the invention of writing is even stronger when considered in relation to *Le Livre des Énéydes* and *Eneydos*'s hypotexts, as a similar anecdote appears in de Premierfait's translation of *Des Cas des nobles hommes et femmes*:

Fenice est une province ou pays de surye. Et en celle province entre les aultres y a une cite appallee sydoine en laquelle anciennement regna fenix. Un des freres Cadinus roy de thebes en egypte. Cestui cadmus [...] trouva la forma des lettres. et les donna aux grecs qui encores navoient certaines figures de lettres pour escrire. Fenix son frere trouva la maniere de faire le vermeillon dont len fait les grosses lettres. [...]. En ceste fenice qui est surnommee du dict fenix est une aultre cite appallee thyre [...]. En la cite de thyre [f]ut trouve lart et la maniere de taindre la fine pourpre. Et de ceste cite de thyre qui est en la province de fenice fut la royne dido [...] (fol. 43<sup>r</sup>).

*Des Cas des nobles hommes et femmes* features a character called Fenix – Cadmus’s brother, who invented red capital letters. Dido is traditionally associated with the red/purple colour – this correlation can already be found in Virgil’s *Aeneid* and still resurfaces in *Le Livre des Énéydes* and *Eneydos*. Fenix – Cadmus’ brother – does not appear in *Le Livre des Énéydes* and *Eneydos*, so that Dido inherits from Fenix’s attributes. Fenix’s disappearance from the narrative may result from a typographical mistake due to the fact that Fenix and Fenyce are homophones. Fenix is indeed another way of writing Fenyce (the region). In *Le Livre des Énéydes* and *Eneydos*, Fenix’s part in the invention of the alphabet is transferred to Dido – who ends up playing an essential part in the history of writing.

The connection between Dido–Phoenicia–"Fenyce"–Fenix, and the characterisation of Dido is not specific to *Le Livre des Enéydes*<sup>66</sup> and *Eneydos*, as it appears in de Premierfait’s translation, but it is a new addition to the English readership: John Lydgate, who translated de Premierfait’s *Des cas*, refers to Fenix in *The Fall of Princes*, but the passage is more concise and his qualities are not transferred to Dido:

Hir [Dido] fadir Belus, falle into gret age, / Kyng off Tire, and she  
 queen off Cartage. / And it is rad in bookis that be trewe, / How first  
 in Tire was founde purpil hewe. / Cadmus fond first lettres for to  
 write, / Gaff hem to Gerkis, as maad in menciou, / Whos brother  
 Fenix, as clerkis eek endite, / Fond firste the colour off vermelioun. /  
 And off Cartage, the famous myhti [sic] toun, / This said[e] Dido, hir

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<sup>66</sup> To the best of my knowledge, the relationship between de Premierfait’s translation and *Le Livre des Enéydes* has never been explored.

story doth expresse, / How she was bothe queen and founderesse [...] (2.1901–1911).<sup>67</sup>

In *Le Livre des Enéydes* and *Eneydos*, Dido even turns into a physical representation of writing. Just before she dies, Dido requests that her people should eternally hate the Trojans:

I exhorte and admoneste you to make eternall were ayenst theym; / this requeste and ordenaunce *that* I make unto you now, it is my bequest, it is my testament and my last will, my condicylle and my willynge inrevocable and permanent. And to the *ende that* yf by som wyse ye wil not accomplysse it, or that your children after youre dethe wold putte hit in oblyvion, / I have ordeyned and stablished that hit shalbe writon in ha[r]de stone, wherof my sepucle shalbe closed and right nyghe my bones it shalbe sette upon my visayge, to the *ende that* it shal bere testymonage ayenst you, yf in eny wyse ye putte hit out of memorie, / *that* God forbede it shulde so come to / [...] (sig. G6<sup>v</sup>)

Dido urges her citizens to respect her desire for revenge. She insists on the role of writing and on the importance of transmission so that her message does not fall into oblivion. Words can be forgotten, but writings remain: she wants her will to be "writon in ha[r]de stone," both literally, as an epitaph, and metaphorically, as sacred and eternal words. Dido is the embodiment of writing as her face becomes her own tombstone: ("it shalbe sette upon my visayge, to the *ende that* it shal bere testymonage ayenst you").

Dido has been objectified throughout the long literary history that surrounds her. As we have seen, her hybrid nature leads her to an inescapable death. The objectification goes even further in *Le Livre des*

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<sup>67</sup> John Lydgate, *Lydgate's Fall of Princes*, ed. Henry Bergen (Washington: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1923), pp. 253–54.

*Énéydes* and *Eneydos* as Dido becomes inseparable from the history of writing – she becomes a page on which a new narrative can be written. But in *Eneydos*, objectification is turned into a positive process. In *Ovidian Bibliofictions and the Tudor Book*, Lindsay Ann Reid explains how "women, like books, were treated as objects whose meanings could be endlessly (re)formulated and (re)interpreted."<sup>68</sup> This statement can particularly be applied to the portrayal of Dido in *Eneydos*, as issues related to gender and books and writing are handled. Dido is, through rewritings, gradually less marginal, depicted in a slightly more favourable light, as we have seen in the analysis of her death, and is given new attributes – which Cadmus, a male character, traditionally holds. The character of Dido is then reshaped at each rewriting, and the refashioning does not stop here as Caxton made few but subtle changes in the course of his translation. As part of my Ph.D., I have completed a partial, semi-diplomatic edition of *Eneydos* as well as carried out collation work on *Le Livre des Énéydes*. This comparison revealed that Caxton made small but meaningful pro-Dido changes during the course of the translation which have an impact on the reception of the text. I will only develop here two of the most striking changes.

In *Le Livre des Énéydes* and *Eneydos*, when Fame spreads rumours about Dido and Aeneas, Iarbas, who made overtures to Dido in the past, complains to the gods. The chapter heading which precedes Iarbas' protest reads: "Comment yarbas se complaignit a Jupiter **de dydo** qui ediffioit la cite de cartage Et comment Jupiter manda soudainement mercure a enee

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<sup>68</sup> Lindsay Ann Reid, *Ovidian Bibliofictions and the Tudor Book: Metamorphosing Classical Heroines in Late Medieval and Renaissance England* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2014), p. 42.

pour le faire retourner en la **cite de troie**" (emphasis mine) (sig. D3<sup>r</sup>). In Caxton's *Eneydos*, it reads: "How Iarbas complayned hym to Jupiter of **Aeneas**, that edefyed the cyte of Carthage, / and how Jupiter sente sodaynly Mercury towarde Aeneas for to make hym to retorne in **the country of Italy**" (emphasis mine) (sig. E2<sup>v</sup>). Here, Caxton translates "cite de troie" – city of Troy – by "country of Italy, which is a coherent change as Aeneas' mission is to conquer the Latium. But he also replaces "dydo" by "Aeneas." In this version, Iarbas is not complaining about Dido's deviant behaviour because she refused his overtures, but about Aeneas, for seducing Dido. Chapter headings have an explanatory function as well as a proleptic one, as they foretell what is going to happen and guide the readers in their understanding of an episode. Therefore, although the content of the chapter does not change, the way the reader is going to read it will be influenced by this change: readers expect Aeneas to be blamed in this passage, not Dido.

Another change occurs in the episode of the cave scene. Aeneas, Dido and their attendants organise a hunt. The gods create a storm and Aeneas and Dido take refuge in a cave. What happens in the cave is not clearly described as it forms an ellipsis.<sup>69</sup> It is acknowledged that the two lovers engage in sexual intercourse, but the meaning of such an act<sup>70</sup> –

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<sup>69</sup> "speluncam Dido dux et Troianus eandem / deveniunt. prima et Tellus et pronuba Iuno / dant signum; fulsere ignes et conscius Aether / conubiis, summoque ulularunt vertice Nymphae. / ille dies primus leti primusque malorum causa fuit" (4.165–70) – "To the same cave come Dido and the Trojan chief. Primal Earth and nuptial Juno give the sign; fires flashed in Heaven, the witness to their bridal, and on the mountaintop screamed the Nymphs. That day the first of death, the first of calamity was cause." Virgil, *Eclogues. Georgics. Aeneid: Books 1-6*, trad. H. Rushton Fairclough. *Loeb Classical Library* (Cambridge: Harvard University press, 1999), p. 433.

<sup>70</sup> "The narrative of *Aeneid* 4 plays on the indeterminacy of the cave scene and the audience's uncertainty, not so much about the events themselves (as one critic crudely

since Aeneas later denies the fact that a wedding occurred<sup>71</sup> – is problematic. The matter is intentionally left unclear in the *Aeneid*. In *Eneydos*, Caxton introduces a chapter heading and clarifies matters. He adds: "Of the grete tempest storme atte maryage of them" (sig. D6<sup>r</sup>). The fact that the term "mariage" is explicitly mentioned in a title heading entirely modifies the reception of this otherwise polemic episode. Here, we know that a wedding is going to take place; there is no room for misunderstanding. This blatant addition then alters the depiction of the cave scene, so that it becomes an episode which is in favour of Dido: she has been fooled by Aeneas – he is the one who is being insincere.

Caxton did not openly defend Dido's plight – only a very careful examination of the text and comparative work allowed me to uncover these changes. But the translator-*cum*-printer brings into England a less Manichaean version of the Dido story, an exceptional account that smooths rough edges, bringing the debate of the *Querelle des Femmes* to England and taking part in it. Research usually focuses on the role that Wynkyn de Worde (Caxton's successor) played in fueling the debate of the *Querelle des Femmes*,<sup>72</sup> although it is acknowledged Caxton originally imported the debate in England.<sup>73</sup> But a closer analysis at *Eneydos* testifies of the

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put it, "Dido and Aeneas copulate as wild beasts") but about the social significance of the events in the cave. [...] Although many scholars assume that Dido is deluded – perhaps understandably deluded – in her belief that a wedding has occurred, some assert that a wedding did in fact occur." Marylinn Desmond, *Reading Dido: gender, textuality, and the medieval Aeneid* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), pp. 29–30.

<sup>71</sup> "neque ego hanc abscondere furto / speravi (ne finge) fugam, nec coniugis umquam / praetendi taedas aut haec in foedera veni" (4.337–9) – "I did not hope – think not that – to veil my flight in stealth. I never held out a bridegroom's torch or entered such a compact." Virgil, *Eclogues. Georgics. Aeneid: Books 1-6*, p. 445.

<sup>72</sup> Reid, *Ovidian Bibliofictions*, pp. 47–9.

<sup>73</sup> Reid, *Ovidian Bibliofictions*, pp. 50–1; Coldiron, *Printers without Borders*, p. 81.

influence of the *Querelle des Femmes* on Caxton's reception of *Le Livre des Énéydes*: the ongoing debate had an impact on the reception of classical figures by Caxton and justifies the emendations he made to his text as well as his proto-feminist rendering of the story of Dido.

This article aimed at showing how the reception and representation of Dido in Caxton's *Eneydos* is influenced by translation practices as well as social and cultural changes. Through several rewritings, the representation of the character became more and more positive, allowing Dido to leave the margins and become a central character. Although there is no clear break from her traditional representation – she is still a hybrid character that is bound to die – these elements are turned into positive processes that allow the otherwise *infelix* Dido to become a divinity. Although Caxton is often accused of translating texts too closely, he does play a part in the transmission of the queen, as he provides the English readership with a whole new version of her life in *Eneydos*.